

# DID YOU HEAR THIS?

## Extracts From Recent Talks

### Origin of the Anti-Macassar

THE Celebes are well to the fore in the news at the moment. Menado is at the top of the longest and most straggly leg of the Island, and Macassar, the main city and port at the other extremity, down in the south. The name Macassar always brings to mind that Victorian treasure the anti-macassar. In those Victorian days, Macassar oil was regarded as the best thing for the hair, and apparently men used to plaster this oil on their hair so liberally that the high backs of chairs and couches (or sofas I think they were called then) suffered severely from contact with the oil. This led to the vogue for white crocheted anti-macassars, which were spread over the backs of chairs — many of them were horsehair chairs, and of course, some were red or green plush—for protection. I don't know which went out of favour first, the Macassar oil or the anti-macassar. However, both are now among revered Victorian memories.—(*"Shoes and Ships and Sealing Wax."* Nelle Scanlan. 2YA, January 16.)

### Wit and Humour

LET me say a few words about the two main types, wit and humour. Wit, as compared with humour, is superficial. It sparkles, coruscates, and flashes, and need not penetrate far below the surface of things. It is rare indeed among us. We all know some humorists but how many of us have known a real wit? At its best it astonishes, takes away the breath, for it depends on a rapidity of mental action which is beyond the ordinary mortal mind. At its worst it is merely flashy, and the pun, however clever it may be, is a typical example of it. Humour is far commoner than wit, though perhaps the sense of humour is not so universally possessed as most of us seem to believe. We all, at any rate, think that we can appreciate it. Who has ever met any person—male or female—who will confess to a lack of the sense of humour? At its best it embraces the earth and the heavens and all humanity in all time; it is, I think, an essential ingredient in the make-up of every truly great man—wit is not. The names of the great humorists are enshrined in our memories together with those of the great poets, dramatists, composers, and artists in other arts—Shakespeare, Cervantes, Ben Jonson, Fielding, Jane Austen, Dickens, Thackeray, Chesterton, and so on.—(*"The Art of Jesting—Old and New."* Professor Arnold Wall. 2YA, January 27.)

### Mushroom Days at Epsom

EPSOM, in the 'eighties and 'nineties, was largely open country. Most people kept at least a horse and a cow. Behind our house spacious green fields sloped upward toward the Three Kings. At Easter-time we used to go to the top to roll down coloured Easter eggs, or to gather mushrooms. Perhaps it would be truer to say, to look for mushrooms. They are elusive things. The only way to be sure of finding them is to have nothing to carry them in. Then fairy rings spring up on every side. But whatever precautions you took, it would be a miracle to find a mushroom there to-day. . . . Even in so incomplete a survey of old Epsom as I have time for, it would be impossible to omit all reference to the old horse trams. The large and dignified Epsom Depot of today's electric tram system stands on the site of the former Tram Stables, then the Epsom terminus. There was no blinking the fact that they were

stables. It was a hard, cruel life for the tram horses. Few lasted more than three or four years. The cars often went off the line, especially on the run down to Newmarket, and that meant that the horses had to drag the heavy low-hung vehicles over the uneven surface.—(*"Auckland in the Good Old Days."* Miss Cecil Hull. 1YA, January 19.)

### "There's Plenty of Time"

THERE was, and still is, a fascination about South Westland which to those who have experienced it will remain for all time. Even the 'plane, motor-car, telephone and bridged rivers will not destroy it entirely. There was a tradition in South Westland which will be hard to kill and that is the feeling that "there is plenty of time." In the old days, time did not seem to matter: "Why hurry; there's plenty of time." This happy feeling certainly existed in the far south at my last visit a few years ago—will it be destroyed by the extension of the road, by the car and 'plane? I, for one, hope not, for one of the greatest fascinations in the old days was that once you got south of Ross, you felt that time didn't matter, news didn't matter, in fact nothing mattered which might interfere with the even tenor of a placid existence.—(*"Where Time Stood Still."* A. P. Harper. 3YA, February 2.)

### The Idealistic Husband

SOME wives find it difficult to decide whether the fixer is worse than the husband who just stays fixed in one place and ponders on all the things he is going to do when he gets round to doing them. This type of delayed-action husband is particularly noticeable in the spring; probably because spring is the season when his thoughts turn to gardening. He may be seen sitting in sunny corners of the garden turning his thoughts to gardening. He is found lying in a deck chair turning his thoughts to gardening. He is one of those poetic gardeners who would rather turn thoughts than sods. He likes to relax and observe the questing tendril and the bursting bud without profaning the poesy



of horticulture with a sordid spade. But the trouble is that his wife is so suspicious; she mistakes his joyous idealism for bone laziness. It is a great pity that spring produces in wives a horticultural urgency which is almost indecent to men who like to meditate on the mysteries of nature. The only mystery evident to wives is the mystery of why their husbands don't take up the white man's burden and stir nature into producing something they can put on a plate or in a vase. This materialistic attitude is most distressing to a meditative male. Even in the evenings when a man likes to rest after the toil of turning his thoughts to gardening all day, his wife strives to goad him on the propagation of parsley and the raising of radishes.—(*"The Man About the House."* Ken Alexander. 2YA, January 17.)

### Health and Happiness in Java

IN many ways the Dutch genius for colonisation is plain. The coastal cities are not built right on top of the wharves, but suitable sites have been chosen as much as six miles inland, where there is plenty of room for wise town planning. Big open spaces have been left for recreation grounds, and the houses have good gardens round them. They do not take for granted that the climate is unsuitable for children, and send them home as soon as they are

### Who Is Mr. Lumbricus?

"WHO is Mr. Lumbricus?" *Lumbricus terrestris* is the Latin name for the earth worm, who is probably, according to Cecil Roberts, the most important animal, except man, in all creation. He does more work in the garden than any of us. The earth worm has changed the whole face of the earth. At first it is hard to believe, but it is a fact that on each acre of land about eighteen tons of earth pass through the bodies of worms each year. This earth is brought to the surface by them. This means that they thoroughly plough the land in which they live. Worms also eat and digest half-decayed leaves, and the small stones that pass through their gizzards are ground up into minute particles by means of powerful action of the muscles in their insides. So you see that the worms renew the soil and ventilate it with the little tunnels they bore in the topmost layer of earth. In the heat of summer, and in winter when the ground is frozen, Mr. Lumbricus digs to a considerable depth, and has a spell from work until climatic conditions get better.—(*"Encyclopædia of the Air,"* by Ebor, 2YA, January 19.)

old enough to travel alone; they make their homes to suit the climate, and the children stay until they are old enough to go to universities. It is a refreshing sight to see the streets of Batavia thronged with blond boys and girls, all healthy and cheerful, sunburnt, bareheaded, riding bicycles home from school, like the boys and girls of any Dutch city in the summer. In their treatment of the native races, the Dutch policy for many generations has been wise and sympathetic. Visitors to Java would be impressed with the almost total lack of racial discrimination. The children of Dutch and Javanese or Malay parents are very often sent to Holland to school, and return to Java not as Javanese or Eurasians, but as Dutch citizens, and mix on equal terms with other Europeans; they are entered in census returns as Europeans. — (*"Java and the Netherlands Indies,"* National Service Talk, all stations, January 18.)

### Happy Man Jackie

I HAVE lived amongst the wild aboriginals of inland Australia for 18 years and got to know their habits pretty well. They sleep under the stars, so there is no house to be bombed about their ears. They have no money so they can't go broke. They don't cultivate any crops, so they don't know the meaning of "depression." They don't wear any clothes so the tailor can't send a bill, and when they fight, they use healthy lumps of wood, not high explosive and gas. I don't know happier people than the wild blacks of Australia. I've heard more laughter and songs in their camps in a day than you hear in a city in years. I've seen them roll over and over on the



ground, eyes streaming with tears, body convulsed with merriment, mouth bellowing laughter—because a simple thing had tickled their fancy. All the same, they can be cruel and harsh. They can be very sentimental about death. When my two camel boys saw "King," our favourite camel, die quickly after a snake had bitten him, they sat down under a bush and howled. Crocodile tears ran down their faces, they sat up all night crooning a mournful account of the death and just about gave us the miseries too. Yet the same people will break a kangaroo's leg to stop it hopping away before they are ready to eat it.—(*"A People Without Worries."* Michael Terry. 2YC, February 1.)