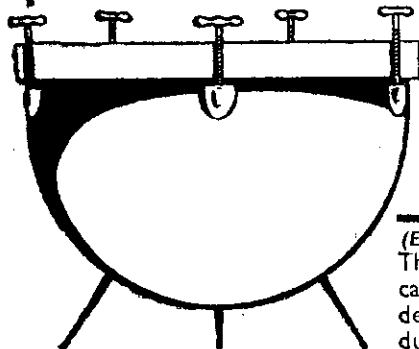


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Auckland Notebook

THE MANTLE OF POWER

WHAT is it about school teachers? Power, I suppose; a licence to hurt you if they wish. They are more terrible, and at the same time more petty than university teachers, who do not beset their students. It's a damaging trade. Our society still demands that teachers put up a moral front in the classroom different from the one they live by. Squeers, an unapproved model, was emotionally honest. Chips was a genuine phony. The pupils were out of luck with both of them. I don't know what we're getting now. It's hard to see

So was I, but now, 20 years away from school, knowing well how the pupil is damaged I wondered more what it would do to the teacher. I don't care a fig for the fat fellow, but I hope the pretty girl gets married and gets out of it soon enough.

Air Pollution

NATUROPATHS, although some of them can be almost as stupid as the orthodox medical priesthood, tend to speak simply. They have said for several thousand years, back to Zoroaster, that the best substance to breathe

is fresh air, and if you choose to mix tobacco and volatile petroleum fractions with it, then you will be less healthy. The orthodox priesthood, whose minds are filled with wonderful doctrinal complications, have now hacked their way through to clearer country bordering this truth, and some of them are said to be advising their patients not to smoke, or at least to smoke a little less. It is even possible that an apposite incantation is being chanted in the groves of the Health Department, and when the time is ripe, the oracle will speak. If the high priest is afraid of being torn to bits by the mob, he could start fairly safely by advising school children not to smoke.



more than a blur. They're pattering through training college faster than sheep through a gate. Even so, somewhere, very early, they learn they have The Eye, the power to awe. Three of them lit (alighted, if you don't like the American language) briefly for lunch in a juke box and toasted sandwich place I was in the other day. Quite a pretty, dark girl, wearing a blazer (odd hang-over from the twenties), a quiet boy in a light jacket, and a fattish fellow in a rumpled blue suit. No one over 20. They spun the juke and giggled, and the boys made passes at the girl; young and easy and normal. Then six secondary school men came in for a luncheon hamburger. They lined up at the counter while the short order cook tossed the chopped meat and onions on to his skillet. They were fairly large, long boned with the build of rowing men rather than footballers; all of them, I could see, at least a head taller than either of the training college fellows, who had left their table by the juke box and were coming to the counter to pay, still kidding each other and the girl. One of the hamburger men, talking and not seeing who was passing behind him, moved back from the counter, blocking the fattish fellow in the blue suit, now a little behind the other two. He stopped, stiffened, and fixed his gaze. You could see him assume the mantle of power. The hamburger man, still talking, suddenly became conscious of The Eye. He turned, received its full force, cowered and shambled sideways against a table, clearing the track. There was no word, no sign of recognition, but he knew The Eye of Authority, and he was awed.

The Auckland local authorities brought an expert from Australia to sniff the bad smell which sometimes rises from the Manukau mud flats. He sniffed, said he'd made a good start, and left, promising to return. I think he was wasting his time at Manukau. He should have come on a bus ride I made, a luxury limousine drive from Whenuapai to Auckland. I got in first and took a place three seats behind the driver. A notice above the windscreen read Smoking in Rear Seats Only. Three gentlemen got in. Two sat together in front of me and lit cigarettes. The third sat behind me (gloves and a homburg) and lit a pipe. A couple with a babe in arms took a front seat across the aisle from the driver. They lit cigarettes. The baby got a ham sandwich. A fourth gentleman sat across from the man behind me. He lit a pipe, too. The driver got in with a friend, another driver going off duty, who leaned forward and talked in his ear all the way to town. Away we went. On the journey the driver and friend smoked three

(continued on next page)

N.Z. LISTENER, SEPTEMBER 7, 1956.