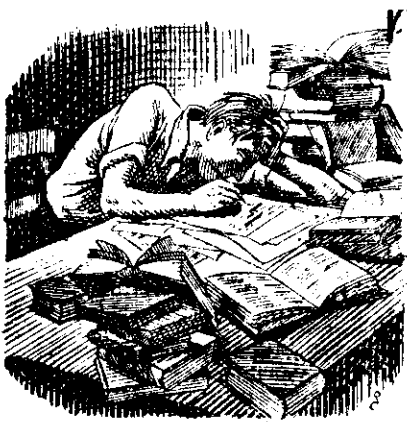


# A Few Simple Questions

ONE of the most lucrative employments in any "civilised" country just now is quiz-entering—spare time job, no expenses, all prizes in cash or kind. And yet there seems no informed work on the subject to guide the quiz-enterer to the right frame of mind or the right preparation for his task. To fill the gap, I've knocked out the following notes, and if anyone reading them feels like publishing the whole work—which will run to some 3000 pages, with illustrations—will they please get in touch with me, c/o the Editor.

First of all, PREPARATION.

The quiz-master has to know the answers, therefore it's unlikely that he will ask detailed specialist questions on, say, the finer points of blowing glass or



"Read any reasonably-priced encyclopaedia"

the technical terms used by newt-handlers. And if he ever does wander from the field of general knowledge bounded by the newspapers on one side and any reasonably-priced encyclopaedia on the other, he will probably ask questions about some activity that he's familiar with himself.

It follows that there are three points of attack:

- Read the newspapers.
- Read any reasonably-priced encyclopaedia.
- Study the life-story of the quiz-master.

The last subject is self-explanatory, but a cautionary word on the first two:

(a) Newspapers. After a few months of steady reading it'll be clear that the only things that change in the paper are the names of the people and the places—the occurrences are always the same. To illustrate with a quiz question:

You would not be asked, "Did a ship sink recently somewhere?" (Answer: Yes.)

You would be asked, "A fishing vessel sank recently in Lyttelton Harbour.

By ANTHONY BARTLETT

What was the captain's first name, and what was the parrot singing when they took to the boats?" (Answer: George; "I Saw Three Ships Go Sailing By.")

The inescapable conclusion is that you must study the paper in detail. But, at the same time, you must keep up to date—and a useful precaution here is to burn back numbers. I once knew somebody who never threw a paper away before he'd read it from front to back, and, in consequence, was 12 months behind and still losing ground. As he never talked about the sports results, none of his acquaintances ever noticed—but a quiz-master would have spotted it at once.

(b) Encyclopaedias. Choose one with the facts, briefly stated. Read a page a night, and incorporate the knowledge gained in your daily conversation—it's the only way to be sure of remembering. Should the subject be travel, and someone mentions the little township of Biala-Krakowska, in Poland, that's your cue to chip in with "Ah, yes, Biala-Krakowska, in the department of Krakow, if I remember rightly. Population of 30,377, an agricultural and trading centre particularly noted for cattle and textiles." On another occasion, a friend who has been to India may mention the Parsees; away you go with "If you know the Parsees, you must have seen the Kusti—their sacred cord or girdle consisting of 72 threads—the number of the chapters of the Izashue—and two branches, each branch containing six knots, together standing for the 12 months of the year." Concentrate on that sort of thing, and remember that after you've won that refrigerator you'll have plenty of time to make new friends.

Part the second—THE PLATFORM MANNER.

Don't be too slick. The audience likes to get to the answer before you do—and a friendly audience can be very valuable if morale slips just before the last vital question.

Therefore, take it gently; giggle now and again; allow yourself to be helped. And in this connection, take particular notice of anything the quiz-master does that is out of the ordinary. Instances:

Quiz-master: And now, John, we'll turn to—(fumbles)—to history. In what year did Columbus discover Jamaica? Was it 1486, 1494, or 1498?

You (knowing the answer): Er . . . Quiz-master: Not a whisper from the audience, now.

You (straining desperately): Er—well, I'll—I'll just have to guess, I'm afraid. 1494?

Quiz-master (shouts): That's right! (Applause, laughter, cheers.) Again:

Quiz-master: What is another name for Apteryx birds? Another name for Apteryx birds—it's spelt A-P-T-E-R-Y-X.

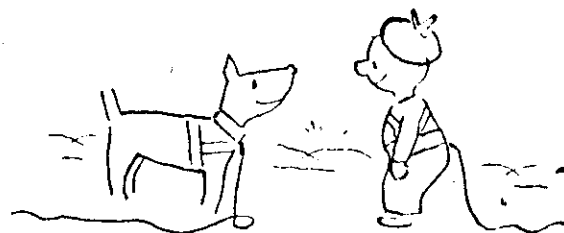
You (a red fog blots out everything. You don't know the answer. From long practice, you giggle.)

Quiz-master: It's quite near home, this one.

You (a chuckle comes through from the audience. Through the red fog, you catch a glimpse of the quiz-master. His arms held tight to his sides, he seems to be trying to hit his nose on the floorboards. The fog clears): KIWIS!

Quiz-master (purple in the face): That's it. Kiwis. (More applause, laughter, cheers.)

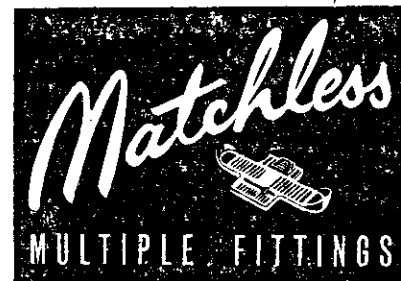
With a judicious mixture of knowledge from part one, and technique from part two, you should have an excellent chance of success. Practice, and luck; that's all you need. Lots of luck.



(C) Punch

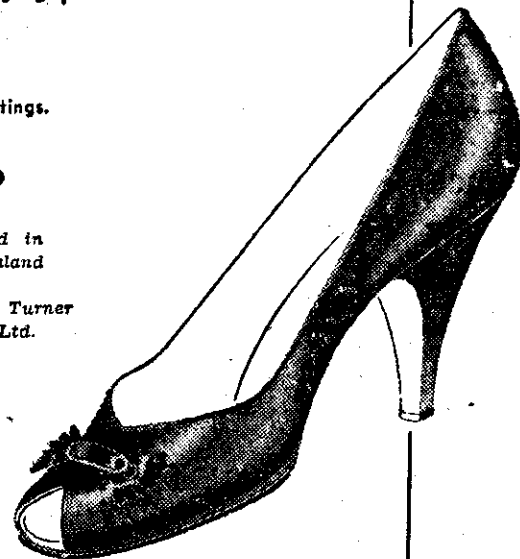


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COME round any weekend and visit our street  
And see us at our recreations.

The florist is fitting a tap with a washer,

The plumber is raising carnations.

The motor mechanic is painting his house,

The painter is changing a tyre,

And if I were only a jack-of-all-trades

I could just sit in front of the fire.

The accountant is busy constructing a shed

Which would be a disgrace in the slums,

While the carpenter sits at the dining room table

Misguiding his son with his sums.

The forty hour week gives us leisure for life

Until we are laid on the shelf,

So who'd have a tradesman and pay him the earth?

It's cheaper to do it yourself.

—R.G.P.