

SNIPPETS FROM TALKS

Capturing the Magic of Westland

"Vagabonding" Far Off The Tourist Track—10 Per Cent. Of China's Population Equal To That Of The Whole Of Britain—Poets' Dreams Of Utopia—The Problem of Austria

MONA TRACY (3YA).

JUST about two years ago I happened to be spending a day in Hokitika, and there I came on rather an intriguing sight. Fairly in the middle of a road leading off Revell Street, the main thoroughfare, four men were engaged in sinking a deep shaft. Now, as a city dweller, I do not as a rule find anything remarkable or entertaining in the mere spectacle of men digging holes in streets; one regards it merely as a playful municipal habit. But in Christchurch, at least, it is not usual to find men carefully examining and panning samples of the dirt thrown up by the workers' shovels; and that was what was happening down in Hokitika. The diggers, I learned, were in search of a one-time rich gold-lead, which had been lost thereabouts about 50 years ago.

YET these little sketches which I am going to give you to-night, deal with an older tradition of gold-seekers. I have met them during many happy periods of vagabonding up and down in Westland.



I use the word "vagabonding" because, although my journeys in the west have mostly been done afoot, they have not been strenuous tramps between town and town, but just leisurely wanderings, sometimes far off the tourist track. It is only in the guise of a vagabond that one can capture the magic that is Westland.

ON a day of torrential rain, I once took refuge in the hut of a gentle-eyed old miner, set high above the road through Waimea. My old miner sat in the doorway gazing placidly out on his little plot of cabbages and beans; and on the rain and the mists, sweeping with ragged brooms the tops of the bush. He gave me the Westland weather forecast, and I have since found it to be quite infallible. It is this: "When one can see Mt. Cook, it is going to rain. When one cannot see Mt. Cook it is raining." And then he talked of gold: of the gold he had won and thrown to the winds, of the gold he hoped yet to win. And to show in what earnest he was, he hobbled painfully into the lean-to behind the hut and brought forth a new cradle he had lately made. He explained its use, while he sat fondling it, with old hands gnarled and trembling.

AND again, at Hokitika . . . There comes the memory of a tiny fruit shop, kept by a benevolent-looking old

Chinese, in skull cap and spectacles. He leaned across the counter and talked of his prospecting of 40 years' back, from the Lewis Pass in the north, as far as Okarito in the south. More reticent than his Occidental prototype, he did not speak of his gains; more philosophic, he indicated that the fruit shop contented his old age. But his speech was all of gold.

MRS. BEATRICE THOMPSON (2YA)

WHILE the whole of China is feeling the impact of Western ideas, the effects are more particularly marked among the wealthier, educated classes, who have made foreign contacts. It is the reaction of these people to Western ideas that is already beginning to influence world trade, and is causing men with far-seeing minds to turn to China as the region beyond all others presenting the greatest opportunities for trade expansion. If we assume that these Chinese number but ten per cent. of the whole, we still have a figure which equals the population of Great Britain, and it is the vastness of these figures which makes it so vitally important for other nations to study carefully the effects of the influence of the West on China. Particularly important is it to New Zealand, situated as she is on the outer edge of things.

A CHANGE visible to every visitor is that the Chinese have taken very largely to wearing foreign clothes. Tweed and woollen suits, collars and ties, have usurped the place of long gowns and padded coats. These are now made of imported material, but very shortly British and Chinese woollen factories in Shanghai will be turning out all that is needed. To any who are interested in wool, either as farmers or shippers, may I suggest that that question of where Shanghai is to buy all the wool needed for this new industry in China is one that will repay earnest consideration?

AS regards the Chinese ladies, they wear extremely smart and well-cut clothes, designed in their own style. They use imported shoes, lovely French and American silk stockings, and knitted underwear imported from Europe. Seldom do they wear a hat, and their hair is beautifully dressed, frequently in the style made popular by their favourite film star—among whom Greta Garbo ranks first. It is a common thing to see Chinese women driving their own cars, and very smart models they favour. At the numerous race meetings the Chinese women far outnumber their foreign sisters, and though they have not yet appeared as jockeys—as the Chinese men do—they are very fond of riding, and of most other sports.

MR. J. T. PAUL (4YA).

PHILOSOPHERS and poets have long had visions of the dawn of human equality, and various periods in our

literature reflect the marked efforts towards material betterment. Wordsworth saw in the travails of his time visions of the rebirth of humanity, and the establishment of Utopia not on "some secreted island, but in the very world, which is the world of all of us—the place where, in the end, we find our happiness or not at all."

IN the Utopia pictured by Sir Thomas More, no man was poor, no man was rich; no man had anything, yet all men had everything. "What can make a man so rich as to lead a serene and cheerful life, free from anxieties," asks More, "neither apprehending want him-



self, nor vexed with the endless complaints of his wife?" truly and surely and simply—Utopia.

MR. GEORGE McCracken (4YA).

THE union of Germany and Austria is by no means a new idea. Throughout the middle ages the Holy Roman Empire was mainly a German Empire, and the Emperors most often had their seats in Austria, or in one of the numerous German states. There is thus a long tradition of political association between Germany and Austria and the rest of Southern Europe, and this tradition still reasserts itself as a living force in the European politics of to-day. It might, therefore, have been expected that the question of a united Germany and Austria would again assume a position of importance. And it has done so. In Austria, the National Assembly, which met in 1919, desired to merge what was left of the country with the new German Republic, and the attempt was renewed in 1920 and 1921, but the movement was promptly vetoed by the allies.

ALONG the line of frontier readjustment and treaty revision it seems that most can be expected by those who hope for a peaceful solution of this serious problem of Austria's future. But it is going to be a stupendous task. Upon the reasonable solution of it the welfare not only of particular nations but of the whole world depends. The dreadful act by which King Alexander of Yugoslavia and others lost their lives recently reveals something of the hates and passions that smoulder in that region. There is something very wrong about the whole situation, and we may well hope that those who have the job in hand may soon find the right line of advance.