

SNIPPETS FROM TALKS

“There’s Gold on Kelly’s Range!”

A Whisper from the Past in Westland — Herrings that Changed the Course of History — “What a Very Silly Place the World Is” — Amazing Navigation in the Fleet Air Arm

MONA TRACY (3YA).

WHEN first I went over into Westland I heard of Kelly’s Range. Then it was just a name tossed in conversational spray from a long roller of information. Kelly’s Range is a serrated wall of hills that fronts down Otira Valley, and the deep shadows of its ravines are a blue that is like to no other blue in the world. To one, however, who has been walking all day in the company of giants, great mountains crowned with snows, Kelly’s is just one of a hundred ranges whose grandeur is dwarfed by the Alps.

BUT again, and a dozen times, I heard of Kelly’s, and of gold on Kelly’s heights. Not long ago I stood again in Otira Valley, watching the wet mists wreath themselves down over Kelly’s Range, and the regiments of the rain march up from Westland. Then I recalled how many people had spoken to me of Kelly’s, and there came, like some wistful whisper from the past, the legend of the gold to be found on its far heights — the legend which has come down the years, and which still fires the imagination of lonely gold-seekers. Gold on Kelly’s — treasure unimaginable — truly, say the old prospectors, the gold is there. In proof they offer one the testimony of the bright, coarse stuff that is washed down every now and then by the streams which bicker their way about the foot of the range.

But the mountains, lonely and aloof, continue to hold their secret. Perhaps they are awaiting the coming of the fortunate one at whose “Open Sesame!” the reefs will split asunder, to disclose the treasure-house beneath.

MR. W. J. PHILLIPPS (2YA).

VOLUMES have been written on the North Sea herring. From the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries wool and herrings were the key industries. In the great struggle for maritime supremacy between Holland and Britain, the herring played no unimportant part. About the year 1400 a Dutchman discovered an improved method of preserving and bottling herring. This discovery was to change the whole course of European history, and was of great importance to the whole Christian world. As the herring fishery became better established the mercantile power and wealth of Holland grew apace, and the Dutch fishing fleets invaded British coasts right to the mouth of the Thames.

THROUGHOUT the history of the Dutch herring fishery and especially that part which deals with the Zuider Zee under the Republic of the United Provinces, runs the doctrine of the Dominion of the seas. The right to fish all over the open seas was the cause of endless disputes and claims by the Dutch, Zealanders and Frisians while fishing off Yarmouth; and it was not until the time of Elizabeth that the rights of foreign nations to fish in British waters were seriously considered. Later, Charles I determined to compel the Dutch to acknowledge the British overlordship of the seas, and as a preliminary, built the largest ship of war that had to that date been built in England — “The Sovereign.” A large fleet also was necessary, and some 44 ships were built and fitted out, manned by crews numbering 8,610.

MR. LEICESTER WEBB (3YA).

THERE is no doubt that the air race has done more than perhaps any other event in history to make us realise the possibilities of aviation. Incidentally, it should have made us realise what a very silly place the world is; really and truly the world doesn’t seem to be quite ready for aviation. Years ago, on one of my pre-war birthdays, my father presented me with a set of tools — saw, chisel, hammer, and all the rest of it. I celebrated the occasion by sawing the leg off a chair, by chiselling paint off the front gate, and by hammering my own thumb. My father said, severely but sadly: “The child’s not ready for these things, we must keep them until he is a little older.” If there were a large fatherly person at hand to keep the human race in order he would gather up all the aeroplanes and say: “Children, you must wait until you’re a little older. You don’t know how to use aeroplanes yet.”

FOR the truth is that aeroplanes, instead of being a great step forward in human progress, are threatening the present social order with destruction. Aeroplanes should have put us all on better terms with our neighbours in other countries. Instead, they have made us most horribly afraid of our neighbours. The other day I said to a man in the tram, in that profound manner that one develops in frames: “Aren’t aeroplanes wonderful? They will soon make it possible for me to get to England in a few days.” And he said to me gloomily: “More likely they will make it possible for someone to drop a bomb on you before that.” I hope the man was wrong, but I have an unhappy suspicion that he may have been right.

THE statesmen of the world are, of course, aware of the danger; and there have been many attempts to limit the military use of aeroplanes. The French delegates to the Disarmament Conference suggested limitation of bombing to battlefields. The Belgian delegate said: “My country happens to be just the size of a modern battlefield.”

MR. G. B. BELL (1YA).

THE activities of the fleet air arm are seldom brought to our notice on this side of the world. We read occasionally of co-operation between the New Zealand Air Force and the cruisers of the New Zealand Squadron, when the airmen, who work from a base on land, are employed in spotting for gunnery control and torpedo exercises. In the Royal Navy, however, aircraft are the eyes of the fleet. The larger cruisers and battle-ships carry amphibian planes which are launched from catapults, while aircraft carriers with wide expanses of open deck space act as floating bases for land planes, which take off and alight on the decks of their moving ‘dromes. In addition, there are squadrons of great flying boats which are capable of cruising about almost anywhere unattended.

THE problems of navigation which must be solved in the course of their ordinary duties by the pilots and observers of the fleet air arm are much more difficult than those presented to their colleagues ashore. The pilot of the Royal Air Force who finds himself in temporary difficulties can usually, as a last resort, land and ask a policeman where he is. The naval aeroplane takes off into the blue, from a ship which is steering a course of its own, a course which may be changed while the aircraft and its crew are away from the floating home. The aviators are frequently told off to patrol an area of empty ocean, far out of sight of the ship, to which they must return at a definite time. The problem is to find the ship. It does not require a very lively imagination to picture the plight of the crew if the navigator makes a mistake.

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