

Highlights from the Talks

Music and Drama in Java: Wool: Education: Geneva

BROADCAST from 8YA by L. R. R. Denny, M.A.: When I first landed in Batavia I was quickly aware that if my curiosity was to be satisfied it could be only by reaching the interior. In Solo and Djocja, as in other parts, the primitive jostles the ultra-modern; with this difference, that in the main the primitive wins. Here in the deep interior, feudal pomp, stately ceremonial, and old world dresses hold sway, and within half a score square miles over a million people acknowledge in each State their allegiance to their sultan.

Here within the kraton the batik-sters ply their careful art; the brass-worker proves a cunning craftsman; and music and drama are untouched by European models.

The finest form of the drama, the "wayang-wong," is a curious blend of Javanese history, folk-lore, and Tindu mythology, and teems with religious ideas. A full performance lasts two whole days. There is no scenery, no wings, no curtains, and yet all is full of colour.

In a full wayang performance there may be as many as 300, all male. If the performance is a special one, many of the actors will be actual princes of high degree. The characters range through the gods, kings, princes, heroes, nymphs, demons of the lower world, priests, male and female attendants, and animals.

The costuming is magnificent. All the art of the batikster and the craftsmanship of the gold worker combine to render a brilliant spectacle, gorgeous and varied in its colouring, and intricate in its workmanship. All the clothing is batik—cotton dyed in varied colours and curiously designed.

There is no acting as we understand the word. Impressionist dancing, eurythmics and fighting take the place of the spoken word. Every movement is symbolical. One remarked especially the rhythmic motion of head and neck, hands and feet. So great a significance may movement possess that while the actor is playing no part he is absolutely motionless.

The most stirring scenes I witnessed were the single-handed combats, fought with kris, or clubs; there were some also who used dummy tances and bows and arrows. One marvelled that actual execution did not follow, so close did the krises come to the bare flesh.

Between the whitewashed walls that enclose the spacious palace grounds feudalism has maintained itself through the ages. Victorian furniture, a few French engravings, and four winged angels of white marble looked strangely out of place in these surroundings. They were the symptoms of a surface intrusion of Westernism, which touches the walls of the palatial porch but does not penetrate the life behind them. In the cities along the coast the Javanese workers are learning to assert their rights by trade unionism and occasional walk-outs, but within the palace walls at Djocja and Solo the native rulers are looked up to as demi-gods, whom one approaches with the humble devotion that is due to their sanctity.

Curious misconceptions are current concerning Javanese music—the most usual one being that it consists of banging any drum or piece of metal irrespective of pitch, with anything in the nature of a hammer that may be handy.

Actually the music is often very beautiful, and is in its general structure quite complex—the most complex of all Oriental music. There are two distinct tonal systems, the Slendro, and Pelog, and they each contain various types of scales. Between the two of them the scales number nearly 300, rather startling to a European mind used to between three and four dozen.

The notes of these scales, which are pitched between our own notes, sound curiously out of tune; the intervals are sometimes smaller; frequently, however, they are larger. Pelog scales have five notes; Slendro, seven.

The drummer is the conductor of the orchestra; he it is who gives the rhythm and changes of tempo. I can witness to my own delight at hearing and studying the orchestra rendering now a stately march, now a stirring battle piece, or again a curiously haunting melody.

The greatest weakness in Javanese musical performance, so far as the white listener is concerned, is in the quality of the female voices, which are shrill and thin. Men's voices are much more melodious, but they have not the same big range as women, and as Javanese melodies are so extended,

it is mainly women who take the solos, men joining in only occasionally.

Education and Unemployment

MR. H. AMOS, on "Education in its Relation to the Employment of our Young People" (from 2ZW):—

One of the most difficult problems confronting us to-day is the lack of openings for our young people, and little headway is being made in solving the problem.

Everyone recognises that the continued idleness of our young people is a grave menace. No doubt much could be effected with the removal of restrictions on the employment of apprentices in the various trades, and it is high time that the Apprentices' Act was amended so that our future carpenters, plumbers, masons, plasterers, bricklayers, etc., could be properly trained. The attempt in the past to provide a training at the Technical School has not been a success, and has proved a very expensive proceeding. Most of the practical training can be given only on a job by master craftsmen. All that the Technical School should undertake is the necessary theory to supplement the practical work.

Some time ago, it was suggested that many of our young people could be given employment at a nominal wage, or for part time—say mornings or afternoons. This seems an excellent

palliative, but I have not heard that the suggestion has been followed. May I revive it and emphasise that any employment just now, no matter how limited or how lowly paid would be better than none? If the present employment regulations will not allow this—amend them or forget them!

Boys and girls should not leave school until they have a position to go to. For those who have no fixed objective, English literature, history, geography, civics and economics can be recommended. The study of these subjects should not only be a pleasure, but will assist to fill up the present gaps, and prepare the boys and girls to tackle a job when they get one, with more satisfaction to their employer and themselves.

While many will agree that the suggestion is sound, the question of expense will be raised. In most cases this should not be insuperable.

For many years the people of New Zealand have been so accustomed to looking to the Government to supply the wherewithal, that they have lost much of the initiative and independence with which our pioneers were so amply endowed. "Where there's a will, there's a way."

Vocational training proper should not be undertaken except in very exceptional circumstances, under the age of 16. All the great nations of the world are agreed upon this, so that we cannot do better than profit by their experience.

The most important vocations in New Zealand are those connected with: (1) The professions. (2) The semi-professions. (3) Farming. (4) Business. (5) Trades. (6) Secondary industries. (7) Domestic.

The question is always being raised whether too many people are endeavouring to enter the professions. Undoubtedly there are, not only in New Zealand but in every country, but it must be remembered that there is plenty of room at the top. Many people endeavour to enter the professions without the necessary ability, and it would be wise for the fond parent first to consider whether his child has the requisite ability and whether he can assist him if he fails to "make good."

Commerce and business offer unlimited openings and advantages. Commerce, the highest type of business, is now recognised as a profession, and even in a primary producing country like New Zealand it offers higher rewards than other occupations, and I say this advisedly, notwithstanding the parlous position many of our great commercial firms are in to-day.

During the last few years many people have stated that too many people are qualifying for commercial work—but again there are bookkeepers and bookkeepers—secretaries and secretaries—accountants and accountants. One has only to read the various bankruptcy proceedings to learn that many of the bankruptcies (Continued on page 22.)

Mark Nicholls to Broadcast Series of Six Talks from 2YA

THE acting-general manager of the Radio Broadcasting Board has concluded arrangements for Mark Nicholls, whose name is a household word wherever football is played, to deliver a series of six talks from 2YA.

The subjects of the talks will be:—

- (1) Players I have met abroad.
- (2) International matches I will never forget (two talks).
- (3) Some of my contemporaries (two talks).
- (4) Advice to young players.

The series will begin on June 4 at 9 p.m., and will continue weekly at the same time up to and including July 9. Each talk will be of fifteen minutes' duration.



MARK NICHOLLS.