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May 25, 1935

THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION

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far developed before 1910 that an International Convention had been held in Paris in 1909 which instituted the International Travelling Pass and the Triptyque to facilitate it. It would be true to say that in 1910 the motor car had not yet become democratic, although I remember it was always a source of surprise to me then that a class of people owned cars who would not be considered in the class of what were called "carriage folk."

There were very few "owner-drivers" as they are now called, so any need there might be to be athletic only applied to chauffeurs. It is true that self-starters were not part of the standard equipment of a car in 1910, but if the ignition and carburation were *au point*, as they always ought to be, an engine was quite as easy to start then as are the engines of to-day, if not easier, as cylinder bores did not become so quickly ovalised in those days and consequently engines held compression longer. H. R. POPE  
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### CONSUMERS' RESEARCH

SIR,—Many of your readers will doubtless remember the excellent article on "Consumers' Research" by Mr. W. T. Baxter, which appeared in your issue of the 2nd February, 1935. This article dealt with the organisation which has recently grown up in America to investigate the merits of various types of widely advertised proprietary articles, with a view to the protection of the consumer. It described how, under the auspices of this organisation, various brands of similar articles, ranging from vacuum cleaners to tins of sardines, are examined by scientific experts from the point of view of quality and price; the findings of the experts then being tabulated and passed on to the consumer, who in most cases must be a member of the organisation.

Feeling that there is a great need for a similar type of organisation in this country (as far as I know none exists), I communicated, through Mr. Baxter, with "Consumers' Research Inc." of America and they have very kindly sent me a considerable amount of literature describing their organisation and its activities. I should now like to get together a committee of persons interested in the formation of a Consumers' Research body in this country and shall be very glad to hear from experts in the realms of medicine, physics, chemistry, engineering, dietetics, cosmetics, etc. who are willing to co-operate in the scheme. I should also welcome assistance and advice from legal and financial experts.

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### OLD TESTAMENT EDUCATION

SIR,—Is it unreasonable to enter a protest against the method of teaching Divinity (so styled) which is still carried on in some schools? Boys have to "get up" such portions of the Old Testament as Judges and Joshua, for example, books which—whatever their possible value to historians or archaeologists—are certainly undesirable from the standpoint of religion or ethics. They are largely a record of treachery, plunder and blood, and appear to have no religious value at all. If these books are mainly legendary accounts of events supposed to have taken place over three millenniums ago, they cannot usefully form part of any "Divinity" course of study; if, on the other hand, they are mainly true, the result is still more unfortunate; they familiarise young people with things which, from any religious point of view, had far better be left untaught. The chronicles of the heroes, champions and Kings of Israel could very well be put aside, except in carefully selected portions. To familiarise boys with the Prophets and the Psalms, difficult as these are, is quite another matter; they do come within the ambit of religion, to a large extent.

E. H. BLAKENEY

## Miscellany

### CHELSEA

THE Spring show of the Royal Horticultural Society opened at Chelsea this week in weather that would have been appropriate to mid-Atlantic in mid-December. The tents were flapped and belled like sails and the delicate leaves of blood-coloured maples were torn like paper pennants. Chelsea, however, escaped a greater visitation; the bitterest May frost

within living memory occurred just a week too early, so that the show appears in its habitual glory, all the more lovely after a countryside of blackened oaks and potatoes, withered rhododendrons and lilies and chestnuts that seem to have been scorched by malicious fires.

Chelsea and its glories are never criticised; if there have been condemnations of anything inside the gates of the Royal Hospital in May I have never seen them. The words wonderful, joyous, marvellous are overworked in these days as they are never overworked at any other time in an age that is, even on commonplace tongues, too marvellous for anything. Chelsea is more than an institution; it is a manifestation of floral religion. The tents are places of horticultural worship; there is a look of half-solemn beatific wonder on the faces of old ladies there such as one sees at weddings and christenings; men and women gape at the blousy flowers, the dahlias and begonias, as they gape at arriving brides. And it is almost a heresy to say, as I heard a young lady say of a group of bosoming calceolarias, "Awful," to the profound pain of her adoring companion. Chelsea indeed is planned to be above criticism; more than that, it is planned to be above all the ordinary trials and disappointments of slugs and wind and frost and weeds that mortal gardens and gardeners are doomed to endure. In that sense it is a minor swindle. The rain never dashes to the ground the charming bright balloons of the poppies there, the east wind never lashes in fox-tail lilies, the sun never bleaches to dirty grey the flowering blossom of orange sweet-peas or of the Gloria Mundi roses. And the little delicate pentstemon which blooms so prolifically on the stand may never show another blossom when planted in the earthy and ordinary rock-gardens of those who buy it. Experience indeed has taught me to look with a hard and detached eye at the wonders of Chelsea. There have been times when, overcome by the sudden sight and scent of endless blossoms, I have stood and looked with tears in my eyes. But I never prepare to shed them now; for I know that I may well need them to shed later over the demise of some hard-bought gem that has perished of slugs or frozen heart. Excess of joy, as Blake truly said, weeps; but there are no tears, for the gardener, so bitter as the tears of excess in disappointment.

And looked at in this detached but not at all heartless way, Chelsea this year is very good indeed. There are some indecent displays of calceolarias and dahlias by firms who shrewdly cater for those who like their flowers bigger and blousier than their neighbours, and some antirrhinums so gigantic that they might have been fed on old brandy, but the general tone this year is quieter and in finer taste. There seems to be a revival in yellow flowers; and there was nothing more charming in the whole show than the little trees of Rose Hugonis, a pale lemon single flower of hedge-rose delicacy and shape from China; and among the half-hardy things nothing so good as the new gazanias, like daisies of lemon and white and terra-cotta and tangerine on silvery leaves, from South Africa. They were extraordinarily like another South African group, the ursinias, which in turn bear a resemblance to the far more glorious gerberas, delicate daisies of pink and cream and orange and yellow from the Transvaal. There were many yellow lilies, too, and yellow meconopsis and yellow verbasiums and little dusty yellow auriculas and, richest of all, the yellow trollius. This return to yellow is happy, a cool relief after some painful years of magenta and flame and scarlet, and I hope that in turn it may mean a return to white flowers, of which there are all too few at Chelsea. If some courageous nurseryman would take his heart into his hands and give us a display of white lilies and white phlox and white campanulas and white geraniums and white poppies and white roses, he might well create the kind of sensation that is now reserved for the more sinister orchids and horned and shaggy cacti.

Lastly, it is time that the bigwigs of the Horticultural Society recognised the existence of such a plebeian day as Saturday, the day above all others on which the show should

open, but on which it never does. Whether it fears such an inrush of working-class gardeners as it could not hope to sustain I do not know, but it is clearly time to consider a revolution of what sometimes seem to be principles of prejudice or snobbery.

H. E. BATES

## BRIEF ENCOUNTER

THE Mont Cenis is an easy pass. The corners are very wide and well banked, you can go round them as fast as you can climb the straight stretches on a small car, and there isn't much gradient anywhere. We wanted to get back into France that night; we were tired of Italy; we had come a long way that day, but we thought that we should manage to make France.

All day we drove through the heat along roads which were surfaced with two or three inches of clogging white dust. It was difficult to keep awake and we had a slow car. For miles the road was up and we had to crawl along behind farm carts. Always they were repairing the bridges. The fields near the road were white with dust and we left heavy clouds behind us. All that afternoon we travelled slowly across the plains of Lombardy.

In a dark café we drank some cool rasping wine. I went across the street and bought a dozen peaches for a few pence. We ate them as we rode along; we were determined to get into France that night.

In Turin we had another drink, but it was getting late. The sun, low in the sky, dazzled us as we drove due west along the wide road out of the town. It was a fine road, leading us back to the mountains which we had not seen for many days, and we made good going along it, but the setting sun was directly in our eyes and worrying.

By the time we reached the first Italian Customs it was dark. A soldier with a rifle slung across his shoulder came out of the post and examined our passports.

"Inglese?" he asked.

"Sì, signore."

"I have a great regard for the English," he said smiling.

"And I for the Italians."

"That is good."

He disappeared with the passports. Another soldier came out and poked his head into the car. "*Macchina fotografica?*" he asked.

We took our camera into the building and handed it across the counter to a soldier with a short beard right on the tip of his chin. In a corner two boys were sitting talking, they looked very young in their dark green uniforms. The official on the other side of the counter painstakingly bound up the camera with string and fastened it with a lead seal, which he made fast with a "*plonqueur*," stamping it tight with a large pair of pliers.

Back in the car we waited for our passports and after a while the soldier brought them.

"I am the friend of the English," he said.

"And I of the Italians."

"Evviva!"

"Viva!"

"*Arrivederci presto!*"

"Addio!"

He drew himself up in a Fascist salute and I waved back.

As we started away up the pass it began to snow. It was only September, but by the time we got a little higher it was snowing hard.

"These Italians!" said my brother. "Do they really think I should rush about during a snowstorm taking photographs of their horrible little fortifications in the pitch dark?"

"It's a precaution in the military zone," I said.

"It's a bloody silly one," said my brother.

Soon the snow stopped and we went steadily climbing up the pass. There was no other traffic on the road and we toiled along making pretty good speed.

"If we are to get out of this god-damn country to-night I must eat," my brother said. He was tired, he had done most of the driving.

"Why not eat in France?" I asked.

"It will be too late by the time we get into civilisation."

I wanted to go on, but he was tired and determined to eat.

Just before the top of the pass he stopped the car at an *albergo*. While we were waiting for dinner we had several warming drinks; it was very cold and they kept some quite good whisky of unknown brand. I bought a packet of "High Life," cigarettes, but they were so damp that they would hardly burn.

Then we sat at our table waiting for the meal. There was an Italian lady at another table who spoke English, and when she heard us saying we were in a hurry she urged the old woman who was bringing the food into frantic endeavours. She ran backwards and forwards from the kitchen, gabbling away all the time, and very soon we had our dinner. Even when we had the food the Italian lady kept spurring the old servant on as though every second was of vital importance. And my brother said, "*Presto, presto*," and promised her not to take any photographs, but she did not understand.

When we came to go it was snowing again, already there were two or three inches on the road. It was cold and snow was blowing in our faces away from France into Italy.

Just as we were starting off another car, going towards Italy, drew up in the lights of the hotel and a young girl got out. Immediately I saw her something happened to me. Standing in the snow, talking to someone inside the car, she looked beautiful. She was tall and she was wearing a big mackintosh and a beret.

I remember every detail plainly. As we drove away she stood in the full glare of our headlights. She was smiling and talking to somebody I could not see inside the car. She had her mackintosh collar turned up and her back to the snow, dividing it so that it swept all round her. I knew quite clearly that this was the first girl in my life I had ever wanted to marry. Although I knew nothing about her I was certainly in love with that girl.

While I was thinking of an excuse to go back into the hotel my brother drove away. The snow was falling fast and freezing on the windscreen, so that the wiper kept on getting clogged, and every few kilometres we had to get out and clear it. The storm beat at us as we started the descent. Although it was difficult to see where we were going, we went sliding down the pass quite fast. On the corners we had to slow down, because they were so wide the snow made it difficult to know just where we were on them.

She would have been about twenty I supposed and she must have been English, it had looked like an English car. I could not explain why she had made such an impression on me, but she certainly had. Inexplicably I was in love with that girl.

The further down the pass we went the less violent became the storm, and by the time we arrived at the French Customs the night was clear. The official in charge was drunk, it was Sunday night. He was all muddled up and spent a long time laboriously writing out a new *laisser-passer* for the car, although we assured him that our old one had not yet expired. When he had finished he was very angry to find that we already had a current *laisser-passer*.

His young assistant was sober and seemed anxious for the man to make as many mistakes as possible. The boy must have known all the time his superior was scrawling away in his book, muttering to himself and continually ramming his pen into the inkpot, that it was all quite unnecessary. Although they never looked at any of our luggage it took us over half an hour to get through the Customs. The *douanier* had a savage bad-tempered Sunday night jag on him.

"We made it. It's good to be back in France," my brother said as we drove away. "Yes," I said. I was thinking of the girl up there on top of Gran Moncenisio in the snowstorm going into Italy, and wishing all I know that I was going back again too.