

It's all because of that John Dalton and his atomic theory. It was a fateful day when, in 1776, he was born, but some consolation when he died in 1844. Now, others have followed up his ideas and invented machines beyond his wildest dreams. Their wicked factories are springing up all over the country; even by the lochs in Scotland they are building atomic power-stations. Now we can't even stay there in peace.

The countries of the world are now developing fast and building more and more atom-splitting machines and atomic bombs. Catching devices are becoming more deadly, and soon we will be caught at the scientists' will; though I should think that, at the rate Russia and the United States are progressing, the human race will eventually be blown up by us folk. Serves them right.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

N. J. B. CRADDOCK

(P.S. For safety's sake, I must use a pen-name).

RACING PIGEONS

FIRST of all, a popular misconception must be put right: racing pigeons are not homing pigeons. Homing pigeons are merely birds which can be released and will fly around to return home in due course. Racing pigeons, however, are birds which are trained to fly as quickly as possible from various points in the country to home.

The greatest racing pigeon country in the world has always been Belgium. But the sport is popular in many parts of the world and it is to be found in most parts of this country.

A loft is the first requirement if one wishes to race pigeons. It must be light and airy and of a suitable size. If possible, the front of the loft should face south and it should be built about two or three feet above the earth in order to avoid penetration by damp. Glass should not be used for the windows: wire-netting is the best substitute. The loft should be divided into two halves by a partition: one half should be for the cock birds (male) and the other half for the hen birds (female). One of the halves should contain nest-boxes—one for each pair of birds (male and female) that one intends to keep. The boxes should be two foot square and two foot deep and should have a hinged landing-board so that the birds can enter. There must also be a landing-board on the front of the loft; otherwise, the birds will not be able to enter. From the landing-board, the bird enters the loft by means of "bob" wires; these are merely vertical wooden slats of equal length pivoted on strips of wire. The "bobs" give one way, but not the other, so that the bird can enter the loft but not escape. And that completes the loft.

Then the birds must be obtained. The experts suggest a minimum of three pairs—and they must be of good long-distance

racing-stock. The birds come in four main colours—white, black, blue and red—with some chequered, speckled, barred and pied varieties.

The first four or six birds are mated and placed in nesting-boxes. (The owner can teach each bird to keep to one particular box by opening that box when all the others are closed). A special earthenware dish, known as a nesting-bowl, is half-filled with straw and placed in the nesting-box. Within ten or eleven days, the hen birds lay one egg and, on the twelfth or thirteenth day, they lay their second and last egg. They then sit on the eggs to incubate them and, eighteen days after the appearance of the last egg, the two little pigeons break through their shells within a few hours of each other. Their parents feed the youngsters until they are one month old. They should then be removed to the other half of the loft to fend for themselves, whilst the parents lay a second round of eggs. Pigeons are mated from March to August inclusive.

When they are about five weeks old, the youngsters are moved by hand to the top of the loft via the "bob" wires (it is possible for a human to pull the "bobs" up, but the birds can't). From the top of the loft, the young pigeons survey their home and the neighbouring buildings. They soon learn to "trap" quickly to the sound of rattling pigeon corn in a tin ("trap" is pigeon-English for "return indoors"). After about seven weeks, they will fly to the rooftop and do this for several weeks to strengthen their muscles. At two months old, they fly high above the loft in huge circles. They continue to do this until they are three months old, when they are trained to fly home from progressively longer distances.

When the pigeons are fully trained, the owner must join a club before he can race them.

A typical racing day goes something like this: the owner takes two or four of his youngsters to a railway station and the pigeons' metal identification-rings are checked by club officials to establish ownership. These rings are numbered and worn permanently by the bird. The officials attach their own rubber rings to each bird's other leg: this ring is also numbered but is only a temporary one. The following day (which is nearly always a Saturday) the birds are liberated at the distant starting-point of the race. The time of liberation is relayed by telephone to the club and to the owner. When the pigeons return to the loft, the owner calls them in (they don't come in together, of course). The rubber ring is removed and placed in a special clock which registers the time of the pigeon's return. The clock is then taken to the club and checked by officials. The bird with the highest average speed wins the race—and a prize for its owner.

The youngsters eventually reach the breeding stage themselves, of course. But after this they take up racing again and are then classified as "old" birds.

All this may sound like plain sailing (or flying !), but, of course, some birds may be lost and break their owner's heart. However, new birds can always be bred and trained and, even if they never win, it's wonderful to see them returning home in a race. It's an interesting sport. Try it some time.

T. G. ROBERTS (5B)

TOPICAL COSMOLOGY

EARLIER this year an announcement of considerable importance was made by certain research workers of Cambridge University concerned with the Cambridge University Radio Telescope. Martin Ryle, the head of the establishment, announced that he thought he had, to a certain extent, disproved the "Steady State Theory," and proved the "Primeval Atom Theory." These two conflicting theories are attempts to describe the evolution and state of the universe.

The "Steady State Theory" proposes a universe in which the galaxies (clusters of several thousands of millions of stars) are expanding away from each other. New matter is then created in the spaces between the galaxies. The expansion of the universe may be likened to several spots on the surface of a balloon as it is being inflated.

The other theory, the "Primeval Atom Theory," postulates that there was once a gigantic atom containing all the matter of the universe. This atom once exploded. As the matter flew out into space, it condensed into stars which gathered into galaxies.

If the first theory is correct, then there will be a constant amount of matter in any one part of the universe. But, if the second is true, the amount of matter in a given area will decrease as time progresses.

Martin Ryle and his assistants have been counting the number of galaxies in various parts of space and so far the results have tended to prove the "Primeval Atom Theory." But, the results are not conclusive as there could be several discrepancies.

T. D. RANDALL (6 LOWER SCIENCE)

THE GHOST OF CHARLES DICKENS

IT seems the school building is becoming a regular haunted house! First of all, we had Shakespeare's ghost walking the building; then we had the shades of Gilbert and Sullivan. When a ghost train arrived at the School last November, we thought the ghosts would be sent packing at last and off to some other school further up the line. But alas, it was not to be. It has now been reported to us that the ghost of Charles Dickens has been parading the corridors of the Bleak House on Trinity Avenue. Here are some of his comments:

Library Prefect, collecting fines :

"I am a demd villain. I will fill my pockets with change
for a sovereign in half-pence."

(*Nicholas Nickleby*)

A stumped teacher :

"I ain't quite certain where that's to be found, but,
when found, make a note of."

(*Dombey and Son*)

An incident in the Christmas Concert :

"In came a fiddler—and tuned like fifty stomach-aches."

(*A Christmas Carol*)

A boy's plea to the Deputy Headmaster :

"I feel it more than other people."

(*David Copperfield*)

The Prefects' Dance :

"The gay, the gay and festive scene, the halls, the halls
of dazzling light."

(*Our Mutual Friend*)

One boy's picture of a Prefect :

"A Being, erect upon two legs, and bearing all the
outward semblance of a man, and not of a monster."

(*The Pickwick Papers*)

Heard after a rugger match :

"If you could see my legs when I take my boots off."

(*Dombey and Son*)

Prefects, on hearing that the Tuck Shop has no food left :

"Something will come of this. I hope it mayn't be
human gore."

(*Barnaby Rudge*)

A first attempt in the Domestic Science Room :

"A highly geological home-made cake."

(*Martin Chuzzlewit*)

School Dinners :

"Potatoes, poultry, prunes . . . are all very good for the
lips, especially prunes."

(*Little Dorrit*)

(*Psychic research by P. DRINKWATER, L6 ARTS*).

POPULAR MUSIC IN 1961

POPULAR music has progressed a great deal in the right direction from the squeaking, hip-wriggling days of early rock 'n' roll at the beginning of the 1950's. The adult population, unfortunately consisting mainly of non-believers in popular music, refuses to accept this fact; but there is no doubt about it. The Hit Parade

(the only technical reference known to the general public) now contains a minority of "solid" rock 'n' roll. This type of music, which survived the crazes of skiffle, etc., is now giving way to the influences of the "country and western" style, and the ballad and the "light" serious composition, thus proving itself to be not an everlasting craze.

This is not an opinion, but a fact. The foremost popular artists, of the Elvis Presley and Cliff Richard type, who used to be present ten a penny in the early days of rock 'n' roll, have changed the styles with which they first found fame. The "Hound Dog" and "Move It" record sounds have been superseded by revivals of pre-war songs; "O Sole Mio" has been turned into "It's Now Or Never," for example. Beat ballad and the "Livin' Doll" type of song have also become more popular as rock 'n' roll has declined.

These new songs and revivals are the most popular types of songs at the present moment; but they are only a fraction more popular than the real ballad and "up-tempo" songs. The ability to sing both of these latter types is now one of the true tests of a singer's versatility. This versatility was first shown in 1957 by a hitherto unknown singer, namely Johnny Mathis, who achieved his popularity with young record-buyers with ballads and fast-paced songs—not rock 'n' roll.

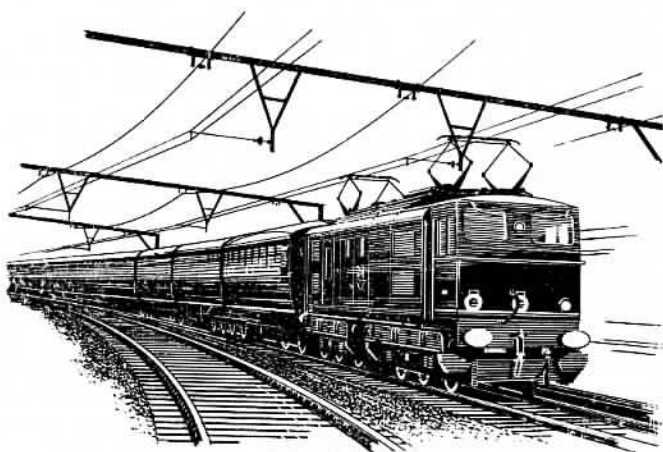
This type of artist has been followed and taken as a precedent, and new artists must have versatility in order to be successful. The success in this country of such artists as Matt Monro and Anthony Newley proves this.

Mention must also be made of instrumentalists, who are now almost as popular as singers in their own right. The two instruments which are the most popular are the guitar and the piano. The foremost exponent of the guitar is Duane Eddy, a very capable, versatile player, who can play either rock 'n' roll or expressive, emotional tunes equally well on his instrument. The most popular pianist is probably Russ Conway, who can play anything from honky-tonk to concerto music.

Thus, it can be seen that the field for new talent in the popular music world is now limited because versatility is necessary. So many new artists have one record hit and follow it with the same sound for a second record, and are thus forgotten as the record flops owing to its ordinariness. Record-buyers, even among the younger generation, are now more conscious of the fact that, if they demand a greater standard in their musical entertainment, they will get it.

I think a certain amount of rock 'n' roll is necessary in order to maintain diversity in the music field. But the proportion has been decreased recently because people now regard words as important, and quality as essential. All this has helped the popular music world to be proud of its music, despite the outside sceptics and critics.

R. DUNKLEY (L6 MODERN)

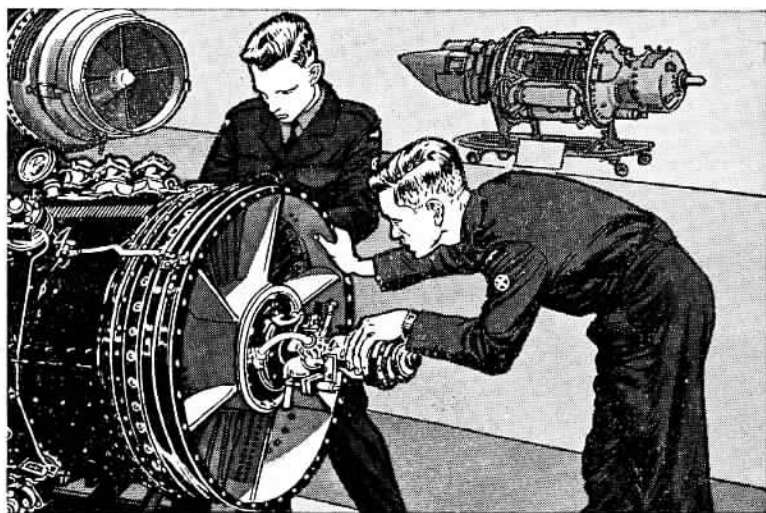


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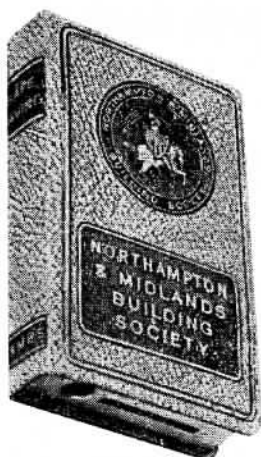
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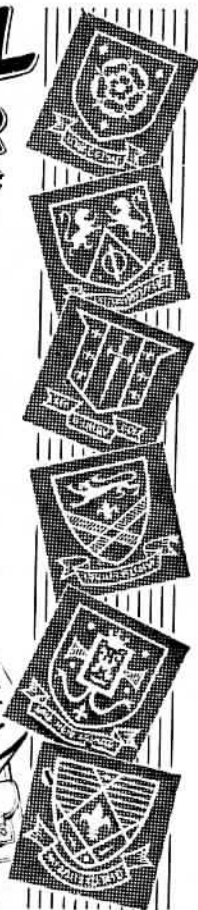
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