

Seeing Things

QUESTION AND ANSWER

THERE was that story we had read in *The New Yorker*. My wife and I had cherished it over the years. It had seemed the perfect anticipation of parental problems which we knew were bound to come our way.

I have in mind the anecdote about the little girl who one day confronted her mother with the sixty-four-dollar question, "Mommy dear, where did I come from?" The mother inhaled deeply, blushed, and shut the door. Although the dreaded moment had overtaken her sooner than she expected, she knew that as a modern she must face the facts, and face them squarely. Accordingly, she swallowed her modesty and plunged into a long and detailed, if un-Darwinian, lecture on the origin of the species. With a mother's generosity she gave her all. Yet to her amazement she found that her daughter, instead of being fascinated by her account of life's sweet mystery, was becoming increasingly bored by it. Finally the mother could stand it no longer. "Why, dear," she demanded, "if you won't listen to my answers, did you ask me such a question?" "Oh, don't you see, Mommy," replied the daughter, "in school today Agnes said she came from Buffalo."

By a tradition both venerable and comic this bees-and-flowers conference is held, at least among reserved Anglo-Saxons, to be parenthood's most blushful ordeal. I wish it were. Granting that at such moments children can reduce the most liberated of fathers and mothers to prudish Victorians; admitting that it is easier to call a spade a spade among strangers who are contemporaries than in the presence of one's own children, still there are other questions, asked far more often, which I find more embarrassing because I cannot pretend to know their answers. Among adults sex may, unfortunately, be Topic A, but fortunately among pre-adolescents it is Topic Z.

I cannot speak for other families. But, in my own, breakfast is the time when I am put on the spot. It is then that my boys turn inquisitors. It is then, when my eyes are scarcely open and when sometimes the night before is still rattling in my head, that they close in on me. They do this even before the first cup of coffee has been tasted. They do it without mercy until the moment comes for them to run off

to school where they can acquire more knowledge with which to expose my ignorance the next morning.

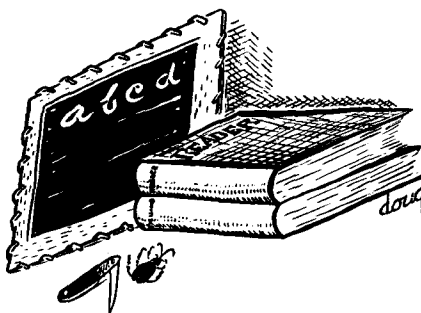
"Hi, Dad," or "Morning, Dad," they will gurgle through their orange juice as I struggle to my chair. "Let's have a quiz. Come on now, please." Before I can sit down, they are already at work. "All right," they say, "let's go. What's the color of obsidian?" Or, "Name the things made from calcite."

This passion for geology is new with them. Two boxes, sent from Salt Lake City, of multi-colored stones, mounted, labeled, and catalogued, have aroused it. For my sake I hope it will not prove lasting.

Nowadays there is no predicting the topics around which these breakfast quizzes will be built. My only certainty is that none of the questions asked will be slanted in my favor. A short time back, for example, we welcomed in our days with ornithology. For nearly a week my sons, fresh and rested, would greet me, as I tottered into the diningroom, with such eye-openers as, "Say, Dad, betcha don't know the habits of the Beardless Flycatcher." Or, "How would you identify a White-breasted Nuthatch?"

Prior to that their interests had been focused first on reptiles, then on animals. During these sudden and transitory absorptions I was supposed, while trying to steal glances at the headlines of the morning paper, to prove authoritative on the domestic habits of the Bushmaster and the Gaboon Viper, or the Mandrill and the Gaur. Fish, too, have from time to time swum into these matitudinal cross-examinations. There was a week—to me it seemed longer—when my ears had scarcely rallied from the alarm clock before they were assailed by questions about the Paddlefish, the Brindled Stonecat, or the Tessellated Darter.

As I say, the thematic variety of



these quizzes is infinite. Each of my awakenings is apt to be followed by unforeseeable challenges. State capitals, types of airplanes, rivers the world over beginning with "M" or "O," football heroes, stars of the radio and screen, tunes to be identified from off-key whistling, snatches of verse awaiting completion—yes, even the names of the heroes and heroines of comic books—any and all of these figure in the humiliations I undergo daily between orange juice and the last cup of coffee.

There was a time when I fared better. Much better. That was when I asked the questions. My sons were younger then. So was I. Every question I put to them was as chaperoned to protect my ignorance as it was to advance their knowledge. They really believed I knew all the answers. I was careful to do nothing to rob them of that belief. At seven and eleven they know better.

I HAPPEN to be one of those old people who dote on quizzes. I even like the guessing games with which some adults, in the name of entertainment, torture themselves after dinner. I like breakfast, too, and look forward to these sessions with my boys. I had started these breakfast quizzes long ago for a reason and with a theory. My reason? They seemed admirably designed to quiet gun noises, bread tossings, and other extracurricular activities with which breakfast had previously been enlivened. As for the theory, my hope had been (I blush to admit it) to persuade my sons that learning could be fun; yes, even be a game. I wanted to lessen for them the fear and the agony of those countless examinations which in time I knew they would have to face in school. That the three of us have enjoyed these quizzes, far be it from me to deny. What I had not counted upon, however, was how quickly my sons would begin interrogating me.

Astronomy was the first subject to tumble me from my pedestal of pretended omniscience. Without going to the Hayden Planetarium I am well aware that the moon, the sun, and the stars are in the skies. Yet for the life of me I cannot remember, nor do I really care, how many miles the moon and the sun are from the earth. My boys, however, do care. For the moment they are masters of these unnerving statistics. In spite of my discouraging them, they will tell me the distance between Pluto and Saturn, inform me of the number of Jupiter's satellites, or describe climatic conditions on the moon. At first they were surprised by my lack of information on such matters. They thought I must be pretending. Then they were pa-

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tient with my resistance to enlightenment. Now they are openly derisive at my inability to learn.

The ways are numberless in which we parents discover that our years are accumulating. Among the more reliable of these is the shock which overtakes us when we realize that many policemen (praise be, not all), instead of being old enough to be our fathers, are young enough to be our sons. There are, however, other indicators no less dependable and as unanswerable as our mirrors to remind us that time has marched on. Chief among these is what the years have done to our minds.

Once upon a time we, too, could absorb facts blotterwise. Once upon a time we, too, rushed forward to each fresh subject, unfaithful to the old, but eager to master the vocabulary of the new. Moreover, we were able to do so—once upon a time. But the moment does come when our minds bang themselves shut at the first sound of approaching statistics.

We trust, of course, that we have not ceased to be hospitable to new ideas. Even so, there is no denying that our allergy to new facts, especially, in my case, scientific ones, does against our will become both sizable and stubborn. We have made our choices, hence our discards. We are further into life, which means further from the blackboard. Most of us are indolent, foolish, or wise enough to abandon certain forms of study because we have learned there are many kinds of knowledge which we can either leave to others or ignore. Furthermore, we like to pretend to ourselves that the reason we neither can nor wish to learn, in the manner of our young, is because our minds, unlike theirs, are too crowded with memories, ideas, worries, and information (life-gained no less than book-learned) to admit easy storage space for more.

Although we may console ourselves with such an explanation, we do not convince our children. At any rate I know I cannot get away with such a line. The faces of my sons, when I fail miserably on the exams they give me or try to bluff my way through, plainly show the disappointment and incredulity they feel in having such a dope as a father.

The changed nature of these morning quizzes pleases and impresses me, parentally, as much as it exposes me. If these quizzes come as revelations of how much I, a grown-up, do not know and how much more I have forgotten, they also come as proofs of the expanding interests, the healthy curiosities, and the growing knowledge of my children. They are warnings that already the young have worlds of

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their own; worlds into which, though they would still admit me, I cannot enter. The outgrown clothes of babyhood and first boyhood, the two-piece cotton suits, the pants that button on, the first long stockings, even the advent of the first belt or the first long trousers—none of these, I have discovered, can serve time as more definite markers than do the altered questions which nowadays figure in our quizzes.

When I first took over the Fadiman

role, things were simpler and less taxing as a breakfast diet. In those early stages of the game I did not have to be fully awake. Often to include my younger son, I could fall back on such posers as "What was the color of Napoleon's white horse?" Or, "After what President was the George Washington Bridge named?"

The present questions are also advances over those hurled at me some three years back when, armed with joke-books and bulky collections of conundrums, my older boy would challenge me with such a wheeze as "Why, Dad, are you tired on April first?" I would have to pretend I had never heard the answer. Then at last it would come, accompanied by a chorus of delighted giggles. "Because you've had a March of thirty-one days! Catch?" Or there were the moron jokes. On these I was fed for breakfasts without number. My boys' favorite (and mine) remains, "Why did the moron put a chair in the hearse?" "I give up," I would have to say at least once a month. Then the triumphant answer would follow, "For Rigor Mortis to set in! Get it?"

Little by little, the questions and the questioners have changed. History ("Name the children of Charlemagne"); fractions ("How much is $2\frac{1}{2}$ times $3\frac{3}{8}$ "); geography ("Name all the rivers emptying into the Mississippi")—these along with astronomy, ornithology, geology, and other more recent subjects have long since undermined my boys' belief in my wisdom.

Yet, downing as I find the factual questions in these quizzes which I enjoy, they are as nothing compared to the questions put to me by my sons, not as a game, but in earnest. I mean those questions asked unpredictably at any waking moment when, instead of hoping to catch me, my boys are genuinely eager for an answer to a real problem. These questions touch upon fundamentals. With an arrow's accuracy they go to the heart of things. The simpler they seem, the more impossible I find them to answer.

If any of us had to explain to an inquisitive Martian the inventions, the social habits, or the principles which we assume in our living and of which we take daily advantage, we adults would be hard put. But no harder put, I'll wager, than is the average parent who seeks to reply honestly to the questions asked him by his children. A youngster discovering this world has much in common with the Martian seeking information about a strange planet. As mild samples, I offer, "Why does an electric light bulb light?" "What's the Electoral College?" "How do they determine

the wave lengths for radio stations?" "Why don't we wag our tails the way dogs wag theirs when we are happy?" Or, "Who wants war, anyway?"

The search is there—always there. So is the faith, the flattering, the touching, the timeless faith, of the young that their elders will know the answers in a world which proves they do not. So also is the relentless logic of childhood. I well remember, for example, the Sunday morning I turned to my younger son at breakfast, as I saw some egg trickling down his chin, and said, "Hurry up! You'll be late for Sunday school." He continued eating grimly for a few moments. Then he turned on me.

"This is what I don't get, Dad," said he at last. "Why does God need so many houses when we have to get along with just one apartment? Why isn't St. James's Church enough for Him?"

"Because," said I, and then I went into a long explanation about God's love being everywhere, extending to people of all creeds and in all places. I could tell from the boy's face that my discourse on divine love had left him unconvinced. Taking another forkful of egg, he suddenly said, "God wasn't so good to His Only Son, was He? He let Him be killed, didn't He?"

Instantly I mobilized. Instantly I explained to my son that he had missed the point of the whole Biblical story; that God's allowing Christ to die for men was the measure of God's love for mankind. Then I spoke of the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Holy Ghost. "That little bird," I added desperately by way of clarification.

There was a terrible silence. "Whoever heard of a pigeon having a ghost?" he asked. Since then I have referred all theological questions to his Sunday school teacher and his rector.

As a matter of fact, even on subjects temporal I find that I have come to depend more and more on the boys' teachers at school. There are some subjects I trust I can hold my own in. But in the face of recent questions these seem increasingly secondary.

Of course, I could stay home and read "The Book of Knowledge." I could spend my spare time at the Museum of Natural History. I could join the Audubon Society. I could fore-swear Broadway for the Hayden Planetarium. I could spend my nights in the Museum of Science and Industry. I could, and perhaps should, enroll in my sons' school. Somehow I do not think I will. A boy's best friend may be his mother. But the moments do come when a father's best friend is his son's teacher.

JOHN MASON BROWN.

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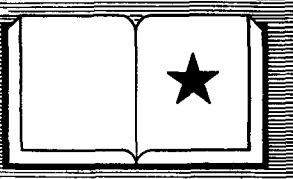
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SOME eleven years ago Walter Pack performed a notable service when he gave the English-reading public his vigorous translation, and judicious abridgment, of "The Journal of Eugène Delacroix"; and now Crown Publishers, in their turn, have perpetuated that service by issuing a new edition (\$5) of this extremely valuable work, which has been out of print. Largely concerned though it is with the special interests and problems of a painter, the "Journal" is an almost inexhaustible source of fascinating, stimulating, instructive reading for anyone who has any interest whatsoever in either the practice or enjoyment of the arts.

"What an adoration I have for painting!" wrote Delacroix at the age of fifty-five; and his "Journal" is full of that adoration. Like Titian, who used to say towards the end of his life that "he was beginning to learn his trade," Delacroix never ceased to study the craft upon which his art was based, nor to ponder the process whereby workmanship is transmuted into art of the highest kind. Tireless in the contemplation and analysis of his great predecessors, he was equally alive to the qualities of his contemporaries. Constantly busy with purely technical questions, he was no less concerned with questions of larger scope. To what extent was the imitation of nature desirable? How, in composition, make the part serve the whole? What was the ultimate function of color? Which was better: the perfectly regular proportions of the Greeks, or the effective irregularities of a Michelangelo? What is the relationship of art and science?

The endless inquiry crossed the frontiers of literature and music. Delacroix balanced Homer against Virgil, Mozart against Beethoven. He sought the essence of Shakespeare with patience and understanding. He returned continually and with approval to the lucid intelligence of Voltaire; read Dickens critically, Balzac with distaste, and Dumas for relaxation. Intimate with the most gifted men of his age, he was also at home in merely fashionable society. Fond of the pleasures of the table, although forced to enjoy them with discretion, he agreed with Peacock that the new-fangled Russian method of service was the ruination of serious dining. Wherever he went his ears were open to wisdom, folly, and good anecdotes. His mind was never still. Work was

his unfailing defense against boredom. "Act," he prescribed, "so that you shall not suffer." It was a full life, and the record of it, from 1822 to 1863, poured into the "Journal."

"The men who know what they have to say," he declared, "write well." Eugène Delacroix knew what he had to say.

Another lifelong student of his craft was Henry James, who in this activity followed French rather than English examples, as Morris Roberts points out in his well-grounded introduction to "The Art of Fiction and Other Essays," by Henry James (Oxford University Press, \$3.75). In this volume the editor has brought together papers on Balzac, Flaubert, Maupassant, Trollope, Zola, Turgenev, and Emerson, along with "The Art of Fiction," "The New Novel," and an inferior note on criticism. James's opinions of the novels of others are, of course, so many lights to illuminate his own, and this collection may be heartily welcomed as an addition to the books that are making readily available the body of theory which controlled the Jacobean practice. Like Delacroix, James was always reconsidering evidence, with the result that his judgments often altered; but Mr. Roberts argues with justification that these judgments were "refined and composed" rather than "changed." As for James's style, its development was hardly less remarkable in criticism than in fiction. The 1913 essay on Balzac shows the master in mature form, coiling himself round and round his subject until, with the gentle pressure of a well-bred boa constrictor, he has squeezed from it, at last, its essential juices.

"Great Fishing Stories," compiled by Edwin Valentine Mitchell (Garden City, \$1.49), draws on such diverse contributors as Zane Grey, Hemingway, Maupassant, and Henry Williamson—that fine author of "Tarkar the Otter" and "Salar the Salmon," whose popular reputation does not yet match his merit . . . Margaret McKenny's brightly illustrated "Birds in the Garden and How to Attract Them" (Grosset, \$2.98) is a delightful book, written with love, which tells how to make feathered friends and influence warblers . . . Reissues in Black and Gold Library: Padraic Colum's excellent "Anthology of Irish Verse," and Brillat-Savarin's unique, entertaining "Physiology of Taste."

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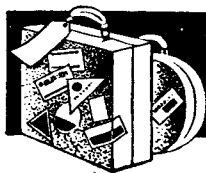
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LAND OF LUMBER AND LAKES

UP IN the Northwest, the Newburg Berrians, the Salem Cherrians, the Medford Craters, the Bend Skyliners, and the Coos Bay Pirates are busy. For the Portland Rosarians, who are mighty unlike a Rotarian or a Yosian, this will be the biggest celebration of the century. Oregon, which every year salutes its berries, its cherries, its flax, pears, apples, beans, timber, and roses through boosters clubs, is celebrating its territorial centennial as part of the U. S.

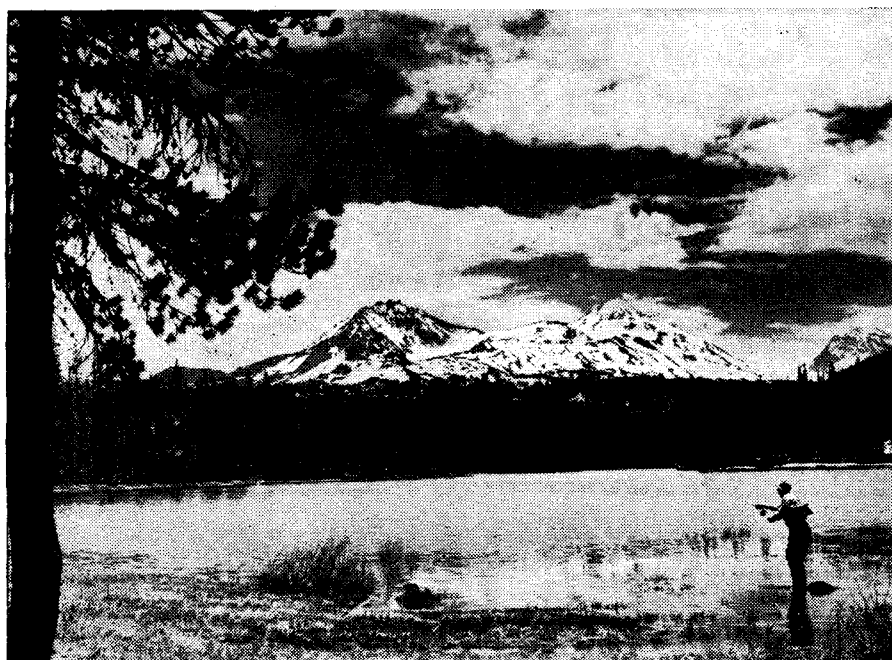
It was just a hundred years ago in Washington that, against all that's natural, a filibustering Mississippi Senator ran out of wind, and let the Oregon bill go through. President Polk signed the measure on August 14, 1848, and Oregon with 8,000 settlers, 300,000 square miles, and a mess of Indian wars on its hands entered the Union. The region included all of Washington, Idaho, and parts of Wyoming and Montana, but the Oregon territory was none the less a friendly land. The settlers gladly joined hands to set up a newcomer's cabin, thought little of ploughing his fields for him if he became ill.

Today there are five million people living in the territory, and things are hardly that uncivilized. Oregon by itself has gained a half a million people in seven years, and seventy per cent of its inhabitants were born

out of state. Among its million and a half population, the size of Los Angeles, are war workers who never went home, soldiers who were stationed in the state and came back, Basques who migrated from the Pyrenees [SRL May 1], and a tribe of cavemen who affect bearskins and claim residence in the caverns of the Siskiyou mountains. There are also a number of Indians of the Nez Perce, Warm Springs, and Umatilla tribes who, by treaty with the Government signed in 1855, still fish in Celilo Falls for chinook salmon, which is dried and stored for the winter larder by squaws.

There is no such thing as a cocktail bar in Oregon. All liquor is sold by the bottle in state stores. Although you cannot buy whiskey by the drink you may join a "bottle club," turn your bottle over to a bartender, and permit him to serve you. You may find them, but slot machines and pinball games are against the law. Parimutuel betting on horse and dog racing is legal. In Salem, the capital city, however, there are no slot machines, no pinball games, no betting, no night clubs, and no bottle clubs, the town being altogether as pure as a Harvard freshman.

Next to agriculture and lumber interests, the tourist business is Oregon's biggest source of revenue. Crater Lake National Park has a lodge



—Oregon State Highway Commission.

Scott Lake and the Three Sisters peaks . . . "A Mississippi Senator ran out of wind."

A Lexicon for Oregon

Donner und Blitzen River

U. S. troops crossing the stream during a storm in 1864 named it "Thunder and Lightning" in German.

Freezeout Saddle Mountain Pass

A rancher nearly froze to death one night trying to cross in the dead of winter.

Horsetail Falls

Somebody thought the cascading water looked like one.

Klickitat Mountain

A word meaning robber and applied to a tribe of marauding Indians.

Lookingglass

The grass in the valley reflects the sun like a mirror.

Mugwump Lake

The water level changes as frequently as that type of politician's mind.

Three-Fingered Jack Mountain

What the mountain summit looks like.

Yamhill County

Where farmers used to plant yams.

—Zell's "Oregon Names."

with 130 rooms, housekeeping cabins, last year charged \$9 a day for two, European plan. At places like Weasku Inn near Grant's Pass, sportsmen can rent a lodge room or a cabin for about \$4 a day, fish for chinook salmon and steelhead in the Rogue River. The Tradewinds Fleet at Depoe Bay offers four-hour fishing trips in trim, handsome cruisers at \$5.15 per person, half price for sightseers. Salmon will be running from now until October 15, and the tuna start in July.

If you want to get away from it all, you can fish right from the front door of your cabin at Red's Wallowa Ranch near La Grande, but the only way to get into the place is by plane or pack horse. You can rough it more smoothly at the Metolius Circle M ranch near Camp Sherman, where guests may live in the lodge or go off on two- or three-day fishing trips along the Metolius River, far from a newspaper or a radio. Like many another Oregon name, Metolius is an Indian word and means stinking. Actually the river is clear and silvery, bordered with fragrant evergreens, but once, during a salmon spawning season long ago, bears got into the river and threw thousands of dead fish up on the banks. The fish had lain in the sun for a couple of days when the Indians discovered the river. There was only one name that seemed appropriate.

HORACE SUTTON.