

# HER MAJESTY'S MINISTRIES

A new series of articles explaining something of the work of the great State Departments which most directly affect the everyday lives of British citizens, young and old.

## 1. Education

EDUCATION in England and Wales has moved briskly—in more senses than one—within the last 15 years. The name of the central authority was changed, in 1945, from Board of Education to Ministry of Education. Before the war its headquarters were in Whitehall. Today they are in a famous street in Mayfair.

Here, from Curzon Street House, a modern building rising six floors from ground level, a staff of about 2000 experts control the adjustable web of formulae and rules within which our system of education operates.

### HUMAN CONTACTS

Some Government departments are of necessity remote from the general public. But not the Ministry of Education. A sick child, a brave child, a brilliant child, or a handicapped child is of direct personal concern to this Ministry.

Parliament lays down policy. The Ministry administers it through a dozen or more main branches, each recruited from specialists in some particular phase of education, though, of course, much of the work is done through the education committees of popularly-elected local authorities.

Most of the branches in Curzon Street are in intimate contact with the work of nine separate regions into which England is divided. Wales is represented by its own branch. (Education in Scotland is administered through the Scottish Office.)

The Awards Branch, for example, illustrates the down-to-earth character of the Ministry. It is not too much to say that a boy or girl of great promise is known, at any rate by name, to this branch, which (among other matters) deals with the Ministry's scholarship awards, including State scholarships.

### GRANTS-IN-AID

In the higher grades this branch may correspond with a pupil direct, paying out the cheques for his maintenance at university or medical school. So, by its system of grants-in-aid for further education and training schemes this Branch is in a close relationship with the public.

Perhaps the biggest component of this Ministry is the Schools Branch, split into a "functional" section and a "territorial" section. In a general way the first of these sections deals with management of schools—building regulations, road safety, building programmes, religious education, staffing, civil defence, school attendances, secondary schools, and other subjects.

The "territorialists" are more specific, concentrating upon the individual, more human, aspects of general problems. For example, it

is not uncommon that a parent fails to see eye-to-eye with a local education committee about the fitness (or unfitness) of Little Johnny for a secondary school education. If the dispute is serious it may be referred to this section.

When, too, the chairman of the local committee announces that a problem is so vast that it can be solved only by "sending a deputation to London," this is the section which usually meets the aggrieved educationists.

The Architects and Buildings Branch is responsible for matters ranging from the designs of the new comprehensive schools to the provision of telephones. The Legal Branch covers a wide field of difficult subjects, including the employment of children in entertainments.

Everything to do with the enlightenment of the public about education falls under the Information and General Branch. At their command is a library of 100,000 volumes.

### LIBRARY SERVICE

Anybody can consult this library at Curzon Street House, and books are frequently on loan for teachers' courses.

Teachers, External Relations (with overseas countries), Further Education, Special Services (such as school meals and handicapped children) and Statistics all have their individual branches, some of them housed elsewhere in the West End and at Canons Park, Middlesex.

In some way the ten million children attending 30,000 recognised schools, and their some 250,000 teachers, are all linked with the "Big School" in Mayfair.

## JUNIOR TRAFFIC POLICE

A road safety organisation known as The School Patrols is operating in several Danish cities.

The patrols are now active in over a score of schools in Denmark, and many more are planning to take up the idea in due course.

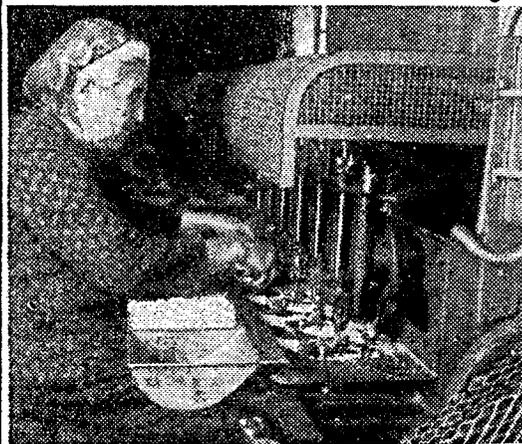


These junior "traffic police," recruited from the higher grades, are specially trained by members of the police force. They are on duty before and after school hours, and during recess.

They may only direct their schoolmates, and in no circumstances must they give traffic signals to other road users.

Their duty is to find breaks in the flow of traffic, and to keep their classmates and the tiny tots on the sidewalk until such breaks make it possible to cross the street safely. Their activities are carried on in a spirit of friendliness and good will, and the patrols are popular with grown-ups as well as children.

## Buttons by the Million



A drilling-machine operator at work



Counting buttons with a counting-board

BEFORE the war most of our button needs were supplied by Birmingham. But during and since the end of the war a button-making industry begun in Cyprus in 1937 has developed rapidly.

Today this small Mediterranean island rivals the English city in its output of buttons of all sorts and sizes, from the humble trouser button to the ornate pearl.

Figures for 1950 show that nearly 1,300,000 gross of buttons, worth approximately £160,000,

were sold abroad, and the biggest customer was the United Kingdom, whose trading account came to nearly £109,000 for 914,000 gross.

There are two factories; one is at Limassol, which manufactures buttons from the tough nut of the dum palm, a tree which thrives in the Sudan and East Africa, and the other is at Larnaca, where pearl buttons are cut from seashells imported from Australia and from islands in the Indian Ocean. From modest beginnings, both these

factories now work 2½ shifts a day, from 5 a.m. till 2 a.m., giving employment to some 470 people, mostly women and girls.

To watch the nuts and shells go through the various processes—cutting, shaving, facing, dyeing, and drying—is an interesting study, and there is no waste. The unused portions of the dum nut are used either as fuel or as animal food, while waste from the shells is used in the making of mosaic floors.

## BRITAIN'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Two hundred and fifty years ago, on March 11, 1702, Britain's first daily newspaper appeared in London. It was the Daily Courant, and its first nine issues bore the imprint: Sold by E. Mallet, next door to the King's Arms Tavern at Fleet Bridge.

So began the fascinating story of our daily Press. Until 1702 publication of news had been confined to journals issued weekly or at irregular intervals. Britain's first printed newspaper was probably the Weekly News, issued in 1622. It contained only news from abroad, for a strict censorship governed publication of all home news.

The forerunners of our regular papers were the news-letters, the earliest being hand-written. "These

were supplied to nobles and others who sought information, and the demand for them grew steadily. The pioneers of journalism were not all honourable characters; but as the yearning for knowledge spread, men looked forward to a truthful and genuine Press.

But newspapers still had to contend with official opposition, and the Star Chamber in 1632 forbade the issue of news from foreign parts. In 1641, however, this dictatorial court of law was abolished, and regular weekly journals multiplied.

Then, on Wednesday, March 11, 1702, came the Daily Courant. It was printed in two columns, on one side of the paper only. Its author, a serious journalist, explained that he would not be publishing views, for he "supposed readers to have sense enough to make reflections for themselves." He promised "news only, and that daily." The very first item was:

"Naples, Feb. 22. On Wednes-

day last our New Viceroy, the Duke of Escalona, arrived here with a Squadron of the Galleys of Sicily."

After the first nine issues, the ownership changed, for the next six were imprinted: Printed and sold by Sam Buckley at the Dolphin in Little Britain.

The Daily Courant became very popular, and increased in size to four pages, sometimes even six. It set the standard for the lay-out of the first generation of English daily journals, and sometimes had more than one edition. It was also the first daily paper to publish a special evening edition, when in May 1706, it gave the news of Marlborough's victory at Ramillies.

The Courant ceased publication in June 1735, the last issue being numbered 6002. This was a remarkable achievement in an era when the Government tax or stamp-duty on periodicals was so heavy that a single copy cost the equivalent of 1s. 6d. or 2s. today.

### EGG-SHELL ART

Having successfully painted a portrait of Queen Elizabeth in soft water colours on half a duck's egg, Mr. John T. Birch of Coventry is now at work on another of the Duke of Edinburgh.

Mr. Birch is an artist in metal and was trained in the jewellery trade at the Birmingham School of Art. Taking up painting at the Coventry School of Art, he was soon exhibiting in Midland shows, but his egg-shell painting is a recent venture.

When the painting is complete the shell is treated with a thin coating of clear lacquer to give added strength to the shell as well as to prevent yellowing and fading. With a gold-plated metal frame the miniature is complete.

## LAST WEEKS of the National WRITING TEST

ARE you taking part in the great C.N. National Handwriting Test of 1952? If you are but have not yet completed your Entry Form you should do so without delay, and then hand it to your teacher. Monday, March 31, is the last date for receiving entries, and teachers are asked to make sure that they are posted in good time.

Remember, there are Cash Prizes for both schools and pupils, as well as hundreds of consolation prizes.

Teachers are also asked to note that while each pupil's effort will be judged on its individual merits all papers must be returned together as the school's total entry. Every form returned must be completed by the addition of a token (marked "C.N. Writing Test, 1952.") cut from the back page of any issue of the CHILDREN'S NEWSPAPER. The last date for entries is

Monday, March 31