

# Chapter 15. Overseas Trips, Diary Extracts on Education

## Introduction

The Introduction to this biography explains the background to the material selected from the diaries produced on Charles Fenner's two overseas trips with his wife Peggy in 1931 and 1937 (C. Fenner, 1931, 1937). The 1931 trip was undertaken when he was chosen as one of the Australian delegates to the Centenary Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS); the others were: Sir Hubert Murray, President-elect of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS); Professors Kerr Grant and Chapman, of the University of Adelaide; Professors Ewart, Hartung and Skeats, of the University of Melbourne; and Dr Clive Lord of Tasmania, with funding from the British Association. Fenner was also instructed by the Director of Education 'to enquire into the question of broadcasting in schools, visual education and the operation of the Hadow Report in England and Scotland'. They travelled there, via the Suez Strait, on the *SS Balranald* and back, around South Africa, on the *SS Jervis Bay*.

The 1937 trip to North America and Europe was funded by a grant from the Carnegie Foundation and was focused on educational matters. They were accompanied on this trip by Dr Draper Campbell, Head of the Dental School in Adelaide and an active member of the Royal Society of South Australia, and his wife Elizabeth. On this occasion they went first across the Pacific Ocean to California, then across the United States and to Canada, and then to the United Kingdom and continental Europe and home via South Africa.

The extracts below come from diaries of both trips. They represent only a small fraction of the daily entries containing information about educational matters and have been severely edited. Throughout both trips, Father made diary entries every day. A few have been selected for his comments on educational matters; each entry is distinguished by the place and date.

## Some Emotional Reactions to Travel

I (Frank Fenner) recently watched a television documentary on the Australian SBS of the fish markets in Bombay, which showed the fantastic crowds of men and women, many carrying baskets of fish on their heads. This reminded me that Father and Mother made their overseas trips long before television showed us how people in different parts of the world lived. Even the glimpses of London that Australians received were in magazines such as *The Illustrated London News*. This needs to be borne in mind when reading their initial reactions to Colombo

and London, set out below; there were similar reactions to Aden in the 1931 diaries.

## 5 August 1931, the First Day at Sea

I am a bad hand at recalling dates, but I shall never forget 5/8/31. It seems to me that for years I have been preparing and arranging for August 5 as for the end of everything; the end of the world. And I can still remember how I, how both Peggy and me, just hung out to that date, so run down and so dead tired that we thought we should never get untired anymore.

And now August 5 has come and has gone, 'tis ever so far away in time, just as our dear home and family and friends are distant in space. I am scribbling this on the afternoon of August 6 lying on my back in the cabin and we are out upon the Great Australian Bight somewhere in the Roaring Forties and the little bit of sea I can see through the porthole is most unquiet and the decks are deserted. The sea and a high proportion of the passengers are heaving away most industriously. Poor old Peggy is very ill, and hasn't eaten or drunken anything all day. She is still in bed and is patiently waiting for whatever may be the end. Our greatest anxiety, the five dear kids and home, will I am sure be in safe keeping with Miss Hawson and Stella and with all the friends who have volunteered to keep an eye here and there.

## 19 August 1931, Colombo

Peggy's birthday. Many happy returns of the day. Today has been like no other day of the 17,520 days which I have lived. My mind reels before the idea of putting anything on paper about it that could be at all adequate. It would really be much wiser to make no entry at all. But Hartung says 'Go on. Write it up.' So I shall put down the inadequate words, and leave most that really matters unsaid.

Kerr Grant thinks that to an Australian, or to anyone from the colder less peopled lands, the first day at Colombo gives something that can never be repeated. I quite believe it, though the whole world lies ahead, and only Colombo is behind, and so little behind at that, that the smell of Colombo is still with me. That smell! The most powerful and all-pervading thing in all Colombo. It may be incense, or it may be the frangipani flowers and the innumerable other incredibly brilliant flowers, or it may be from trees, or damp earth and mould, or it may be a human emanation from these teeming myriads of people, a few of whom and a glimpse of whose life we have seen today.

It is perhaps the most close-packed series of experiences that I shall ever enjoy as new things in any one day. For Peg it has been the most outstanding of birthdays. It has overcome her. She dropped on the bunk in her clothes after dinner and there she is now, fast asleep. This seething, selling, begging, smiling, pleasant people, this mass of humanity spawned by a fertile soil, a hot sun and abundant rains, this race of courteous thieves and robbers, takers and getters. These altogether charming people, raucous robbers and all, in all their indescribable variety of form and colour, of clothes and caste, and race and religion. Men, hundreds of them, like beautiful bronze Gods; most shapely and beautifully coloured muscular bodies. The sweetest little girls, and the loveliest brown-eyed babies. Hartung and I were two whites in a crowd of jabbering slim-bodied brown men. They didn't gather round us, but we had to steadily ignore them or we should have been surrounded out of pure curiosity. Little kiddies crowded round us with hands held out for a penny—'Master', 'Sahib' and so on, to attract you. I think the outstanding human thing that remains in my mind is a myriad of outstretched pink palms, upturned for whatever 'Master' might be pleased to give. Hundreds of people have written all this down in their diaries and in published books before, with far more knowledge and art and insight than I have. Nothing I can write will really state the case in reality for those for whom this diary is being written. So I give it up.

From the point of view of economic and human geography, the experience of today has become a part of me and will never cease to colour and to affect what I say and do regarding man and his reaction to his environment.

## 12–13 September, 1931, London

It is seven o'clock Sunday evening in this great city and I sit down before our gas fire in our comfortable and cheap room at Endsleigh Street, WC1 and prepare to make a few inadequate entries in this diary. However, I must try to keep up daily entries, for the sake of preserving memories of this trip and for those for whom this is written, and to make up for the long letters we are not writing, and are not going to write.

Having been only thrilled by Colombo, and Suez, and Aden and Cairo, and Port Said and Malta and Granada and Gibraltar, I casually remarked to Peggy 'I expect a thrill also awaits us in London.' But I really did not think that cold, foggy, stodgy London could have much that was thrilling. For did we not already know Melbourne and Sydney! Ye Gods! Well, as I have said, it is useless to attempt description. It can't be done. Traffic! Strewth. It's marvellous. We ride everywhere we can on the motor buses, on the tops of the buses. And you whiz along at 30 mph

and you get where you're going very cheaply, and see the street at the same time. Traffic jams are quite common. But they clear up in no time once the way is open. The drivers are miracles.

The London policemen and the London bus conductors are as wise and as pleasant and obliging as everyone has said they were. We ask scores of questions every day and scores of others we don't ask, and try to find our way about in this stupendous maze and whirl of life by means of things learnt from the guide books—often with disastrous results in long walks.

Home. We slept till eight. Up and about. Off to church at St Clement Danes. This was a rich and wonderful experience. Old Samuel Johnson always attended there. He was a bigoted, dogmatic old Londoner. I am more sympathetic with his opinion than I was. It must be a great thing for Londoners to have this great city as their own. It is a most stimulating place—stimulating thought and memory, and the climate is bracing and stimulating too. I have walked miles and miles today, and seen hosts of things, but am not tired. The evening meal, which is here called 'supper' on Sundays, is at eight o'clock.

### 13 May 1937, London

I sit here in the Imperial Hotel, at six o'clock, bright sunlight, wishing it was dinner time as I am very hungry, not having had anything since breakfast. But I see that dinner is not till 6.30 while lunch ceases at 2.30. In America, how different. Not only, from San Francisco to New York, is the food much more abundant, more varied, and more perfectly cooked and served, but the eating houses are always open and the eater is always welcomed and well treated. In this hotel management business, including lighting, plumbing, food, and service, the States (and Canada too) just leave this country standing. Compared with what we generally saw and enjoyed in the States, from California to Washington, the general conditions of London hotels is not far beyond the Noah's Ark stage.

### 24 July 1937, Geneva to London

We have wandered on the continent for seven weeks, from capital to capital, from school to school, museum to museum, crossing frontiers and passing terrifying customs, packing, unpacking, and repacking, changing our currency and customs. And we had never really had a REST. We left London seven weeks ago! Dieppe, Paris, Basle, Zurich, Ragatz, Leichtenstein, Innsbruck, Salzburg, Linz, Vienna, Budapest, Balaton, Graz, Villach, Cortina d'Ampezzo, Venice, Lake Garda, Verona, Padua, Milan, Chartreuse, Genoa, Nice, Monte Carlo, Grenoble, Geneva, Dijon, Paris, Liège, Aachen, Hannover, Hildesheim, Braunschweig,

Hamel, Berlin, Prague, Nuremberg, Rotenburg, Spangenberg, Hersfeld, Ziegenhain, Frankfurt, Geneva, Montreaux, Interlaken, Rhone Glacier, Lucerne, Basle, Calais, London.

## **Edited Extracts of Some of the Comments on Education**

### **24 March 1937, San Francisco**

Rang Dr Kemp, Head of Education in the University of California at Berkeley. Got from him the phone number of the City Superintendent, Mr J. P. Nourse. Took a taxi up to the Civic Auditorium and there had a great time with Mr Nourse, his assistant Mr Schmidt, and his director of publications Mr Mullaney. Most illuminating and interesting. They were questioning as much or more than I was. But we all four enjoyed the afternoon very much. The Easter holidays rather interfere with my visits to schools here.

They envy us our tenure of Director's and Superintendent's positions, our control of the Teachers' College, our powers of dismissal of insubordinate teachers. They said our Directors were 'entrenched autocrats' and that in these matters we were 100 years ahead of them. Am not sure whether I wouldn't be willing to see much more of those things go if we could in its place get such an enthusiastic public support for education as provides the school salaries, and the magnificent buildings, grounds, and equipment here. Our Australian education, much more so South Australian education, is miserly and parsimonious in costs. The Americans stoutly and doubtless rightly resent the idea that they are wasteful, but they do spend a much more generous amount per child, in all grades of education, than we do. This would not be a welcome statement to my lords and masters in South Australia, but it is true.

### **2 April 1937, Los Angeles**

It seemed a never-ending road to the University (UCLA), a great place, building after building, thronged with the young life of America, a few Japs and a Negro occasionally. Japs very small and capable, Negroes rarely up to average. Dress seemingly careless and independent. Boys with jerseys and pullovers. 14,000 students. A vast staff. Visited the Geography, Geology and Education departments, and met and talked with many very interesting folk. Dr Frederick Leonard, Astronomy, authority on meteorites. President of the Society for Research in Meteorites. Wants me to write a paper for their June meeting on Australites. Recommended me as a Fellow of his Society for Research into Meteorites, only one of its kind in the world.

Met and talked with Dr Marvin Darsie, very alert and interesting, Dean of the Teachers' College, about their courses, selection, training, teaching, and placing. Most of their teachers placed in this county. Some in others. May get married without resigning. Dr Seago and her offside, head of the statistical branch of the Education Department of the University. Very interesting talk also. Have notes and literature on all these educational things. Dr Kazuo Kawai, alert Jap, Oriental geography and history. The list of staff, showing just when they are lecturing and when they are free for interview (a very common thing) is like a department store catalogue.

### 3 April 1937, Pasadena

Taxi to Pasadena. Mr George Henck, who was hospitable and full of enthusiasm. We clicked at once, long talk on the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), education of adolescents, of apprentices, and of apprentice schools. Visited Pasadena Junior College, 18–20 years, first two quarters University, but more practical. No fees. Everyone here looks forward to 20–21 as the school leaving age. The fitting, turning, testing, electrical and other workshops excellent. Quite different from anything I had anticipated.

There had seemed to me to be little technical training in California but this was an illusion. They do not call it technical education, but in their secondary schools there is a most important, widespread, and valuable extension of what we would call technical training. For instance, the aeronautical courses in the Pasadena Junior College (18–21 years) are remarkably well equipped, very closely connected with the aircraft industry, and have the best instructors the craft can provide. They are making a full size all-metal (ALCLAD) plane to fly, tested and tried throughout, every stress designed and calculated here by the boys and masters, dies, rigs, moulds, patterns, everything. Far better workshops in this junior college than in the University, the School of Mines and all the other technical colleges in South Australia rolled into one. Had a long talk and inspection of these workshops and facilities and talked to the lads working there.

### 9 April 1937, Santa Fé, New Mexico

An extraordinary position can exist in an American State education department as a result of the appointment of State and County superintendents (directors) being a matter of politics. In a long and interesting conversation with Mr C. de Baca, Assistant Superintendent here in New Mexico, who has legally exactly the same powers as Mr Rogers the Superintendent, I learnt how he got his job. He was of an

influential Spanish family (dating back to the conquistadores of these parts). He has never been a teacher or administrator. Like Mr Rogers, he supported a Democrat, Mr Solid Smith, and when the Democrat representatives got in last election, he was appointed to his job, also Mr Rogers. Thus it may be that superintendents are more interested in politics than in education. For instance, there were no real biennial superintendent's reports issued until four years ago. Señor C. de Baca is strong on the statistics and he is anchoring the department in that way.

I found that this State has much in common with ours, but their problems are vastly different. I find, too, that States vary. As much as California is ahead of us in nearly every way educationally, so is New Mexico behind us in very many ways. In California the leaving age tends towards 20–21. Here in New Mexico, according to C. de Baca, the child is compelled to come to school at 6. 'Beyond that we have not much power.' It seems that there is no upper compulsory age. The Indian villages have their schools, as I saw at Taos (Towse) but are controlled from the Department of the Interior in Washington. The Mexican, some call them Spanish, and the Penitente folk, have schools. In all the primary language must be English, primary and high. There is no separate thing called technical education, though even at so small a place as Taos there was an Industrial Arts School. I imagine that in larger places like Albuquerque, Santa Fé, Gallup, and Raton the American boys and girls have just about as good educational opportunities as they have in California, but in the rural districts it is far different. The law of certification of teachers gives them some hold but does not remove teacher appointments from political control. Here, as in California, they were entranced by the scheme in operation in South Australia, and I was much cross-questioned as to our attitude and position during or consequent upon political changes. I admire almost everything American. I think, however, that the matter of political patronage is as utterly rotten as it can possibly be.

## 14 April 1937, Chicago, Illinois

Up early. Set out to go to the University of Chicago, a vast and beautiful series of buildings, away to the southern part of this vast city. Got straight to Professor Judd's rooms. The girl clerks are always very pleasant, intelligent, and helpful. Went to his office. The usual question, 'What aspect of education interests you?' is always embarrassing, because the whole gamut of matters interest me. However, I was ready for this question this time, and fired it at him. All my special queries: tendencies of secondary education, attitudes towards vocational education, place of cinema and radio in modern school, technical schools, apprenticeship,

rural education, the part education is playing in the field of unemployed youth, Civilian Conservation Corps activities, the effect of the depression on educational activities, and of the 'passing' of the depression. By the way, in this vortex of abounding wealth, they still consider they are not out of the depression period. Perhaps they regard the boom days of the pre-depression as normal and await their return.

It appears that the Army authorities were given the organization of the Civilian Conservation Corps, provisions, camps, food, etc. Then authorities from the labour department were put in charge of the general organization. Neither of these cared for the educational aspect. And indeed they urged that a large number of the Civilian Conservation Corps lads were at the best poor educational material. However, the educational authorities pressed for some part, and an educational adviser is appointed in each case, but he has no authority except to deal with boys who voluntarily come to him and ask for educational help. Chicago is the centre of the Fourth Army Corps Area, and the head of six or seven Civilian Conservation Corps camps. The officer in charge is an old educator. So matters educational may be a little better off here.

Teachers' colleges are State institutions but not under the Education Department. Re political matters, there are no less than 32 Superintendents elected by popular vote! But in advanced places such as New York the matter has been overcome; there the Superintendent (Commissioner) practically has a life tenure. He is appointed by a Board of Regents, representative educational men of high probity and no political colour that need obtrude. Possibly the more backward States will slowly come up to something like this.

Visited two very fine schools, an elementary and a high school, both laboratory schools of the University of Chicago. Wholly within the control of the faculty, each with 400–450 scholars. Children selected by the fact that there is a fee rising from \$150 for the kindergarten. Children come aged four, two years kindergarten, six years elementary, three years high, and two years Junior College (senior High) completing at age 16+. Saw through the whole of both schools. They are certainly superior places. The buildings are well lit, warmed, and ventilated. The classrooms are quite unlike ours, more 'atmosphere' in them, more equipment, more furniture. The science, botany, zoology rooms were like nothing I've seen except at Harrow (in England). The kindergarten was delightful, and I feel that there was more real joyousness, earnestness, friendliness, and freedom than in most of our schools, perhaps more than in other American schools. Headmaster of elementary school, Mr Gillette, very

charming and was stopped and spoken to by children in classrooms and corridors.

Then the High School. Most impressive were the dancing rooms, the gymnasiums, the gorgeous natatorium and the girls' class therein. Shower feet etc before entering. Water continually replenished and twice treated. Clear as glass. The school libraries remarkably good. Also the main library, a revelation of earnest application to reference and study books. They read much more than we do. The class room libraries are larger than the main library in some of our schools. The fact is we haven't begun to learn the elements of library education in our home country. The manual shops are less standardised than ours. For instance, there is a 'power unit shop' in the high school, a large place with all kinds of engines, electrical, gas, internal combustion, aeroplane, motor, and so on, merely so that they may each have an adequate understanding of the motor car they must drive. Pottery very good. Excellent kiln also. Smithing, cabinet making, wood turning, benchwork, fitting, turning, but they explained that their shops are not well equipped. They are far beyond Thebarton Tech., but our folk wouldn't stand for this, wouldn't send their boys up to 5 years high school because we have too poor an ideal of education.

In the days of the depression and since, the taxpayers' associations have violently attacked education. McCormick, editor or owner or both of the *Chicago Tribune*, is a violent antagonist of education. So that position is much like ours. But here the middle wealthy folk and the poor folk have a healthy belief in education and they sway the matter. The 200,000 Negroes get fine new schools, both here and in other Northern cities.

## 16 April 1937, Detroit, Michigan

Re the political control of public service appointments, which is so general here, and so dangerous, one wonders how a nation that grew largely on England's ideals could have adopted a scheme whereby Superintendents, Police, Judges, and other folk in public authority should be appointed according to their political party. Professor Judd explains it thus: About the time most of the States came into being and when their constitutions were being written, there was much mistrust and suspicion of public servants. The farmers, in particular, did not believe in them. So, in their excessive idea of the value and importance of the popular vote, they placed all these matters in the hands of the parties or people they (the voters) elected. So there you are. Leading and important centres such as New York have got away from this.

Took a taxi to the Cass Technical High School, recommended by Eltham, where Mr Allen was the Principal. I had heard of million dollar schools, and had seen the Frank Higgins carefully and others less so, which I think are in this class. I have never seen anything so fine and well-organised and smooth running as this school. It was most delightful. Mr Allen took me to the top floor and worked down. Building cost \$4,000,000. Equipment \$1,000,000. Total = £1,000,000 English! They got their value. It was all planned out by this very wise gentleman, Mr Allen. Had a delightful time. The highlights were the general set-up, the locker system, the spaciousness, the originality, the senior students, the art classes, the electrical, aeronautical, motor, woodwork, mechanic, etc, so with physics, chemistry. We could not have such a school in Australia. It is a part of a social, economic, industrial, and financial system which we have not got. I have an excellent handbook, and I made some additional notes. Indentured apprenticeship here but little, mostly unindentured. 'Beginners' are taken from Cass. They place 300 every semester. These boys (and some girls) rise to the zone of skill and pay between the craftsman and the engineer, such as foreman, laboratory assistants, salesmen, and shop executives. If only our employers at home would realise that salesmen and directors should have a personal knowledge of processes! For every one university man, they need ten Cass-style men, and an army of skilled craftsmen and operatives. This Detroit area is one of high technological efficiency, no guesses, no trial and error, they must know.

## 26 April 1937, New York

We talked with Mr John Russell at Carnegie Corporation offices, 552 Fifth Avenue. He was pleased to see Peggy, thought maybe that I didn't have a wife at all. We had an interesting chat about schools in America, and about American life and homes and children, snobbery and 'snootishness'. They have private secondary schools that ape the 'great public schools' of England, classic and snobby. But all evens up when they get to the University. He suggested many things (not schools) that we should see in New York.

## 28 April 1937, New York

Shown in to Dr Lee. He is a Berkeley professor, first lent to San Francisco for Superintendent of Education, then lent to New York for this National Occupational Conference (NOC). Fine man. Had good long talk with him. Found out all I could about the NOC, also the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC, the US Youth Unemployment scheme), and the Works Progress

Administration (WPA), all doing so much for the unemployed and the unskilled.

The NOC was set up four years ago, by the Carnegie Corporation, the reason being that American youth was in a dilemma. Something had to be done. Seventy men and women form the conference, which meet for three days or so once a year, with an executive committee of six or eight. These folk serve as a clearinghouse for all experiments, research and publications dealing with occupational adjustment, so that teachers, and vocational guides and counsellors might have systematic and authentic material to help them. They do not teach. They coordinate and correlate. 'If the governments would do what they should, the NOC need not exist.' They stimulate the government and educate public opinion.

There is a Technical Committee in addition to the Executive Committee. One project is to take 14 leading school superintendents (collected from Seattle to Providence), have a two-weeks tour of selected places, with an implied obligation that they will put into operation the best of what they see. Twelve days travel, then two days discussion and conference in some quiet town. With this there are on four occasions a National Hook-up, that is, a USA-wide series of addresses on these problems, to enlighten public opinion. He also told me more of the CCC and gave me a letter of introduction to Mr Oxley, the educational officer for CCC camps, whom I shall see in Washington.

## 29 April 1937, New York

Got a taxi to the Metropolitan Vocational High School, which is a secondary school, free, compulsory, and secular. Mostly Italians, for the school is in a crowded Italian residential quarter down the East Side, just near the foot of Brooklyn Bridge. I spoke to two Negro boys, one from Harlem, one from Brooklyn, miles and miles away. In the later years boys and girls may specialise in printing, auto mechanics, cafeteria work, grocery (have a regular shop, two cafés, etc), plumbing, dentistry (saw boys 15+, first year, making crowns on sets of teeth and so on), building trades, fitting and turning, radio and electrical.

Then they may, in their last years, go to a separate division, the Printing School, the Maritime occupations, Needlework, Homecraft, or Fine Arts. In the evening the same classrooms are used for adult and apprentice evening classes, from 5 to 9.30 pm, also free. Noted again the freedom of these schools, the interest, the friendliness between instructors and scholars (much above ours in average age), and the variety of set-ups in the various workshops and craft rooms.

### 3 May 1937, New York

Having seen much of American schools and schooling, and the young women and men in large numbers, 80–90 per cent at school until 18 to 20 years old, I think I understand a number of American ideas better. They have a different background from us. They are more emotional and more friendly and kind. At General Motors today, with their young staffs of executives, I wondered to what extent their outlook was different, as men, because for generations these young people have lived longer under school methods of discussion, of emulation, reward, acclamation, etc. Perhaps they continue to evaluate things in those terms in their adult life, rather than get the different points of view that we think are proper to adults. Perhaps we're wrong, and they're right. Are these young men and women essentially different and more schoolboyish (or girlish) and so on than folk in our normal adult workaday world?

Another remarkable fact is the large part the Universities play in things. Executives everywhere are sticking close to their Universities and thinking in terms of academic men, books, etc. A final thought from my readings and wanderings in New York City and in USA is the enormous influence upon American life, reaching almost everywhere in visionary and idealistic matters, of those two men, Rockefeller and Carnegie.

### 26 May 1937, London

Went to Broadcasting House and met Mr McGregor of the Empire Broadcasts. Learnt of his schemes and methods. Felt that we should have a short-wave at home. Told him of what we could do so far as Australian schools are concerned, the Federal Schools Broadcast Committee, means of overcoming time difficulties, etc. Took several notes that will be helpful. Down to Mr Cameron, Secretary to the Schools Broadcast Committee. A past Director of Education. Very agreeable and helpful. Explained how the whole show works here, number of listening schools had increased enormously during past three terms. Explained how the schools cooperate with the BBC; the Committee decides on the personnel, the talks, the talk content is supplied by the broadcaster, but is edited and improved quite a lot.

Their scheme seems to be just the opposite of ours. No teachers. Get experts of all sorts, edit and arrange their stuff, and encourage schools to get this additional glimpse of things outside the curriculum. Aim to supplement the teacher's work by something the teacher can't do himself. Must have the expert. Initially there was much apathy, and much difficulty re reception. Now increasingly good.

## 27 May 1937, London

Thanet Street School, Mr White Headmaster. The school is a small one; kindergarten to senior, only 109 scholars all told. Headmaster and five teachers, though the staffing basis is nominally 40. Went round the classes with Mr White. Met and spoke with the teachers and spoke to one grade of boys on geography. The class I heard and saw, Grade A of Senior School, listened to a broadcast in the Regional Geography Series by Dudley Stamp. The pamphlets were excellent. That's where the lecturers put in their work. These are the charm and the success of English school broadcasts. Teachers prefer not teachers, but experts, folk who know something they don't know. Dudley Stamp spoke for 20 minutes, very slowly and simply, as a good teacher, of his and his wife's journey to Buenos Aires and across the Andes. Simple facts, references to the maps and photos in the book (which the boys in the class turned up quickly and readily as the talk went on). No statistics or anything heavy to remember. The teacher made no preparation, beyond handing out the books and atlases. Nor any close, except to ask the boys to write a composition on South America. We try to get our teachers to do much more, alert the whole lesson, with maps and chalk and blackboard. And I think that's a good idea.

## 4 June 1937, London

Strand School, Brixton Hill, with Mr Dawe, Headmaster. Strand School grew up in the Strand, from casual evening commercial classes, and was transferred away down to Brixton Hill, when all about there were open fields 30 years ago. Seems to me nothing is ever planned in England. Everything just 'happens', grows up, like Topsy, haphazard and undefined. A complete contrast to the more expensive, more scientific, more systematic work in USA (Civilian Conservation Corps etc). Something to be said for both. I think, if funds can be secured, the correct compromise is in the direction of something that meets a definite known demand (English scheme) and has been proved in practice (English scheme) but is then systematised, properly organised, and extended for all those who come within its definitions (American plan, which is more scientific, more democratic, and more costly).

To return to secondary education. I saw something of English secondary schools in 1931, during a very thorough look around Harrow, and a more superficial visit to Eton. And I have seen all types of elementary, central, and technical schools here. But today for the first time I saw a State secondary school. It was a picked school, rather good locality, quite a decent building. The Headmaster is an alert and doubtless very capable man. But the school itself is dead, stuffy and smelling of the ghastly

tradition of classicism and the 'great public schools' with all their frowsiness. The secondary schools I saw in America were immensely ahead of what I saw this morning. Strand School was proud of its library, which had many books, and was a lending library. But they haven't the slightest idea of using a library as a school activity, as it is every minute of the day at the Horace Mann (New York) and the University High School of Chicago. They are absolute back numbers, losing valuable possibilities and they don't know it. I feel sure England would scorn to learn anything from America. Bad as we are in Australia, we have that one advantage over England.

The Headmaster agrees that the school is bound hand and foot by the conditions of the public examinations of the University of London, which he regards as an absolute blight upon the whole field of secondary education in England. All I have seen, both at home in Australia, and in America and Europe, incline me to a primary education 5–11 or 12, two years general preliminary secondary education of the Junior Technical type, and then a selection into high school and technical schools of various kinds, not according to a literary examination, but on a basis of desire, school record, and potentialities of employment. Strand School has good standard labs, chemistry, physics, and nature study. A dead museum, a moribund library, unattractive classrooms, a good assembly hall and organ, fine playground with gymnasium being built. If it is general average of good State secondary education in England, then it is 50 years behind the same kinds of schools in America or Victoria.

## 2 July 1937, Hannover

I had two letters that were of the utmost value in opening doors in Germany. One I had obtained by my request through the Consul General in Australia and was a permission from the *Reichminister* to visit schools. The other and more powerful was a letter from the Chief Finance Minister of the Reich, Dr Hjalmar Schacht, approving of my visiting Labour Camps and *Landjahr* camps.

Today I visited three schools. First the Hindenburg Schule, Anderteusche Weise 26. Magnificent hall. Hobby rooms, planes, gliders, zoology and biology laboratories, physics, chemistry, gymnasiums and classrooms for over 100 students. An *Ober Realschule*, for 10–18 year-olds, a very fine institution. Then to an apprentice school. *Fach Schule*, Kleine Duven Strasse, an old primary school made into a trade school. Here we saw the workshops for the cooks, for the woodworkers, and for the electrical workers. Cooks get two days off, one for school, in their employer's time. Ditto others. The lads were young but very earnest. The teachers were

good tradesmen, also very earnest and anxious to show and tell all they could, even to the foreigner from Australia.

### 3 July 1937, Hannover

To the *Fachschule* again. The *Ober Direktor* took us around. These men speak only German, but when they speak of work and equipment and tools and operations there is but one language. And with Wolfgang Fenner [a relative] to interpret here and there, I got on famously and collected valuable information, the more so here where apprenticeship is so highly considered, where technical education is so long established, and where there is such a tradition. They do not call these schools trade schools, but professional schools. This school was for smiths, motor car mechanics, hairdressers, and dentists. I was most impressed by several things that I have not seen in technical schools in Australia, America, France or England.

There are always planes overhead here, and there are always numerous men about in uniforms; Army, Navy, Air, Labour Corps, Storm Troops, Motor Corps; many honorary, many official.

### 5 July 1937, Hannover

I was taken to see young men at work in four or five places, draining the moors, preparing the land, changing and widening the courses of streams, and then to four separate camps at widely different districts and countrysides, Neustadt, Hildesheim, and Braunschweig. I was shown every detail of the camps, and every query was answered, and I met all the Field officers, and saw the men at work, at play, in hospital, eating their camp food, and saw them at their drill with spades, and the changing of sentries, and the vegetable gardens, and the sanitary arrangements, and the issue and repair of clothes and tools, and the library and books, and the kitchens and cooks, and every bedroom.

Every boy in Germany who is not medically prevented must attend these camps for six months. Wolfgang [Fenner, a relative] did and enjoyed it. I had been told it was a remedy for unemployed youth. But it is not. It is totally different from the Civilian Conservation Corps of USA. There is throughout all these camps a strong military discipline, but everyone is happy and every room is named and decorated in a way that shows individual pride in their work and joy in life. The badge and symbol of the *Arbeitsdienst* is well chosen: the spade and two ears of wheat, digging, draining, clearing, planting, to promote and increase fertility. Germany, they will explain, has no colonies. Therefore she must make complete and full use of all the land she has. There must be no moor. There must be no flooded areas.

To the Australian mind, and more so to the American mind, there would be the mental reaction that this is militaristic. So it is. But these camps are not to make soldiers, for every man later serves in the army. They are not to relieve unemployment, although in their birth and origin that was one of the reasons for their establishment, but that exists no more. They are a part of the education of German youth. I questioned some of them, they were men 18–20 years old of all degrees of wealth and occupation, merchants, mechanics, teachers, students, labourers, wood cutters, clerks, every type and condition. For six months they eat, work, sleep, sing and drill together. They also have instruction in the principles of National Socialism, that also is a part of their education.

Although I have said that Americans and Australians might think these camps military, it is true also, I am convinced, that the real spirit and effect of all these camps is in accord with the most treasured ideals of both those countries, namely to teach equality, to teach the labourer to know and to respect the merchant and the student, and vice versa. The whole impression is one of thoroughness, efficiency, unity, and joy in work, also of Service. The movement is embodied in its name, *Arbeitsdienst*, Service through labour.

Another impression I got was that to me, a foreigner and a stranger, everything, from the headquarter depot to the last point in work or play or housing or administration or equipment, everything was openly and freely and frankly shown and discussed. The officers and men believe deeply in the movement, are intensely proud of their organisation and achievement, and are anxious that anyone who is interested should have every opportunity of knowing all about it.

## 8 July 1937, Berlin

*Handwerkerschule der Reichshauptstadt*, Charlottenburg. This great five-storeyed brick building was specially built in 1900 or thereabouts for the 'professional' (that means trade in our language) school work for apprentices. The great forward move in concentrated technical education in Germany appears to have come in the late 1870s after the nation had settled down into peace following several wars.

First I went to the Technical School. There are departments for Architecture and Room decoration, Theatre scene painting, Painting generally, Masonry and sculpture, Gold and silversmiths, Pottery and ceramics and Artistic smithing. These German technical schools are very massively and 'deliberately' built; they don't look like schools, and have but a small sign by the door. The equipment in all cases is excellent, not halfhearted. The instructors, whether in art or trade (profession they

call it) are of very high standing and the heads of departments carry the title of Professor.

In the schools and workshops all the materials are insistently German, for, they say, we have no money to buy goods from other lands. Also, I think, there is the belief, pretty well founded, that anything they want can be found or made in the country. There is nothing unpleasant or belligerent in their attitude. It just comes casually now and then into the conversation. The quality of the work in this school was remarkably high. They work with good well-prepared material. Also the long hours, seven hours a day for six days a week, 42 hours compared with our 25 or less.

It was clear to me before I left Australia that everyone who wished to visit German schools must first inform the authorities of the Reich, and must get permission. That suggested that they were reluctant to show their schools, etc. This is quite a wrong impression. Everywhere they ask for, and receive, and welcome foreign students (there is a Technical School Guide, printed in English). Berlin is not a weaving or textile centre. But the school here is wonderfully complete, and has students from all provinces of Germany and from overseas. So I saw all through the *Textil und Moden Schule*. And that alone was an education and an inspiration. One idea is: Get teachers and leaders that know their jobs, pay them well, and give them the freedom and the equipment they need. They will deliver the goods. I recall particularly the remarkable equipment, three enormous workshops, for weaving, all manner of machines and looms. The history of textiles. The making of ersatz fabrics, *vistra* more like cotton, and *wolstra*, more like wool, and, of course, artificial silk. There they all are, and all their mixtures, also with wool and cotton in some cases, for the *vistra* and *wolstra* are not yet perfect. But they certainly do make beautiful fabrics.

One marked also the insistence on hand-work, in this machine age. They have the machines, but they do insist upon the importance of individuality and upon personal handmade work; smiths, masons, printers and weavers. The fashion design was enough to make one's mouth water, the thoroughness, the abundance of materials, the research in old designs, the school of theatrical design, the going back to Nature, copying and conventionalising native flowers, the beautiful delicate designs, the methods of working them up, the phosphor bronze plaques, the making of the materials, the mannequins, the fittings, the designs themselves, the cutting and fitting, all these in separate departments of the school, but all the girls (or boys) go through them, and all get work in the various factories of the textile industries.

In both these great schools there is the full time day school. In the same rooms there is also the evening school for those at work. The textile school with all its equipment and teachers and maintenance has but 250 or 350 evening students! But nothing seems to be spared to do the job well. Technical education in Germany is quite a different thing from technical education in England, again from the same thing in America.

## 9 July 1937, Berlin

*Höhere Graphische Fachschule.* The usual fine equipment, independent of the number of students, the chief point being that whatever is taught must be taught well. There were departments of typography, lithography, photography and reproduction, book-binding—the most beautiful books I have ever seen so far as covers, binding, and lettering are concerned. Also advertising art and cartography.

To indicate the thoroughness of the courses: cartographers, who are to be mere drawers of maps, must also study physiography, and they must go in the field and actually survey an area, make model relief maps, and so on, so that they thoroughly understand just what they are doing. Everything else was just as thorough. There are day-time courses, full-time, for about 250 students, to become commercial artists etc. And there are evening courses, four hours per evening, for tradesmen and others, about 350 of them. The day students, many of them girls, are from 16 to 20 years old.

Here a tradesman is first a *lehrling* (a learner), for four years, then a *gehilfe* (helper), for five or six years, and then, if he passes a stiff exam, a *meister* (master). These *meister* exams are hard, says the *Herr Direktor*, and will be harder. In the first year there is, each week: drawing 22 hours, typography 8 hours, geometrical drawing four hours, and lettering eight hours. Total 42 hours per week. In the second year much the same, up to 45 hours per week. The third and fourth years are stiffer in their requirements, but not longer in time.

## 16 July 1937, Rotenburg

Every German is not the devout worshipper of every aspect of the New Germany, as is generally thought outside Germany. I met and talked with several people who were very plainly spoken about things. In their logical German way they say of certain laws and movements, 'It is good, but it is bad, too.' Or 'That is bad, but it is also good in some ways.' I think the chief resenters are church folk. I talked with Jews there and with rebellious-minded people, but with them all is a strong love of Germany, and no hate or smouldering dislike of things. Just opinion.

## 19–21 July 1937, Geneva, International Education Conference

Sixth International Conference on Public Instruction, under the auspices of the International Bureau of Education, Geneva. I was given a seat at the top of the table. On the right is Mohammed Haidar Khan, who represents Afghanistan, then three Germans, including Dr Grafe, whom I had met in Berlin. Opposite me is the representative of Ireland, and on left was M. Piaget, the head of the Bureau. And there were representatives from Iran and Equador, and Colombia and Venezuela, Poland and Argentine, France and Iceland, Latvia and Esthonia, Spain and Portugal (though they are next door to being war enemies at the moment) and many more. The speeches are in English or French, and the Secretary, Miss Butts, translates them in a truly remarkable way.

The reports were very interesting; Afghanistan, Spain, Denmark, Poland, Turkey, and so on, with troubles just like ours, and some different. The Spaniards for instance, who presented their report much better than anyone else to date, are engaged in a fierce war. Yet there were three delegates telling how, during the year, the amount of money spent on education had been increased, and the number of schools also increased. China was interesting with its account of 13,000,000 school children! Judging by what I see I have more notes than any others. Walking up with the British delegates this morning, they remarked on the international tensions that were around the table, not shown, but sometimes suggested. There were Bolsheviks and Nazis, Japs and Chinese, Spanish and Portuguese and so on. And all on the edge of great dangerous potentialities.

It has been most enlightening and stimulating to me to meet and to hear all these diverse peoples, with their varied problems, their differing geographical environments, and their political points of view; all races, political creeds and religions. Even to hear that another such man's problems were the same as one's own was very interesting. And how they were handling it. And how many countries, long settled in educational work, whom one would think would be stable, all engaged in 'reforming' their secondary and middle schools.

## 27 July 1937, London

This evening I sat down and wrote two rather long *Australasian* articles. It is very strenuous, after a long day. But it must be done, as the *Australasian* articles must be nearly run out, and I do not want to break the unbroken record of continuity of over 21 years.

Interviewed Mr St John Wilson, of the Instructional Centres of the Labour Ministry. Got some more literature, and have arranged to go to a city (Park Royal) and a country (Culford) centre, the first a Government Training Center (GTC), and the second an Instructional Centre (IC). Talked with Mr Wilson the whole afternoon about these things. The interesting point is the extraordinarily different way that almost the same problem is tackled in USA, Germany and England. Here (because of prosperity and abundance of employment, I think, especially since the re-armament phase opened) the scheme is much less than in either of the two other countries. Here are only 8,000 total, compared with several hundred thousand in each of the other two. But it is very interesting, the more so as it is likely to be the way that will appeal to the taxpayers of Australia. Here, as elsewhere, some effort was made for the girls, but with little success. Schools for domestic training are established, parallel with the boys' camps, but it is hard to attract girls to them. Indeed, all the boys' camps are at the moment a bit under their complements. A good deal of care is taken to get a favourable public opinion, but the interest is not so widespread as in USA, I think.

The Heads of a GTC and of an IC are selected public servants. The cost of an IC building and equipment is about £15,000. ICs are non-residential and technical, six months training, and are in and near industrial cities. GTCs are in the country, forests, roads, drains, etc, the period here is 12 weeks only, reconditioning and recuperation. Rag and bag places. The best lads are sent on for IC courses. The improvement noted in health, weight, and physique in these camps is remarkable, I am told. There is a wide range of age, 18–45 years. There is a selection panel, intelligence, adaptability and medical fitness, but this is easy to pass. There are 3,200 in ICs, 1,170 in summer camps, and 400 in non-residential (farm and local) centres = 5,000 total. About the same in the GTCs.

## 28 July 1937, London

Government Training Centre, Gorst Road, and Mr Smeddle, the Principal. Spent the whole morning and until well after lunch going about the shops, and having lunch in the school (they have a waiters' school as part of the outfit). Mr Smeddle was one of the divisional officers in charge of the Returned Soldiers' Vocational Training here. In England this scheme was called 'the Ministry of Labour's Independent Training School for disabled ex-soldiers and soldiers'. This soldier's scheme did not fade right out in England, as it did in Australia. The incidence of the Depression was different. There was the coal strike of 1925, and the General Strike, and in 1931 the Depression was worst. So it came about that while there were still some ex-soldiers training centres (for disabled

men) in being, a new movement was commenced for fit men who were unskilled and unemployed, or whose skill had lost its marketable value'. So the peculiar term, the Training of Fit Men (TFM), still sticks.

Mr Smeddle has been continuously on this job right through. It is, in effect, just like our own Returned Soldiers Vocational Scheme, with non-residential places, trade workshops, weekly allowances, six months (26 weeks) courses, and so on. The place is generously housed and equipped for 650 men. Brick and steel with factory lighting. All the trades to be seen in one sweep of the eyes, except the sheet metal workers and panel beaters, who are noisy fellows and must be kept to themselves, and the waiters who are attached to the dining rooms. Work is from 8 am to 4.30 pm. Discipline excellent. Every man, 438 here now, gets one good hot free meal at midday. The Instructors are all selected tradesmen, and are enthusiastic and successful. The head gets £800 per annum. They are under strength, can't get enough men wanting training, and can't supply all the demands for men that they receive. They place their men easily, 95 this month, and most of them do well, charge hands, foremen, managers, etc. There is a Selection Panel, with one man from the department representing the employment section and one representing the training section, which interviews the applicants, who have often been sponsored and directed by the officers of the employment bureau. Each lad has one hour refresher work in arithmetic etc every day. I saw them all working steadily at this as if welcoming it.

The classes I saw were: fitting, turning, tool making, cabinet making, upholstery, motor trimming, coach painting, electric welding, oxy-welding, sheet metal working, metal spinning, motor mechanics, hairdressing and hotel waiting. This is the nearest yet to the kind of thing we shall have, but there is still much we could learn from the vastly different USA and German schemes.

## 25 August 1937. London, Broadcasting

Went to the BBC. Had a very entertaining and profitable time. Saw all the ins and outs of the editing that is considered by them to be the chief factor in broadcasts. The principle is 'Give nothing that the teacher can give.' This means experts, explorers, adventurers, famous men, etc., folk not used to teaching nor trained in broadcasting, but people with first hand original information, not something stewed up from a book. All are required months ahead (the Spring addresses are now being galley-proofed nearly nine months ahead!).

They are first told the type of thing that will interest. Then they submit script. This is edited, especially the opening to arouse interest. It is

colloquialised, abbreviated, simplified. Saw some scripts and their notes and editings, much tact required. One of Sir Hubert Wilkins' (submarine), one of Dr Mackay's (excavation of ancient cities) and so on. I realise the importance of this. Means a long range selection of topics, and a staff for editing, selection and printing of pictures. Seems to me we try too much, too many topics, too many broadcasters. Schools will only listen to certain topics or a certain number of lessons. 'Atmosphere' (effects) used in almost everything, but with restraint, easily overdone, but necessary where possible. Most school listeners assumed to be 12-14 years old. Another good idea for criticism is the appointment of a special panel of headmasters or teachers, for a month, to frankly criticise all the broadcasts of a certain topic. This is good. Most reports favorable and friendly critical, some outspokenly severe—all helpful. Must get frankness here. Mr Williams assumes that frank criticism would be difficult to get in South Australia, as the Department controls the broadcasts. Maybe.

**Comment by FF:** As mentioned in the Introduction to this chapter, the purpose of the 1931 trip was to attend the Centenary meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) and Father spent most of his time in the Geology and Geography Sections. By chance, he was in England at the time of the 1937 meeting of the BAAS in Nottingham, and used the opportunity to spend most of his time there in the Education Section.

## 2–6 September 1937, Nottingham, BAAS

H. G. Wells was President, Section L, Education. His Presidential Lecture was great. It was largely to hear and see him that I came here, and stayed long enough to do so. And it was worth it. He gave a slashing address of one hour and ten minutes. He is just like his photos, and in the life he has a whimsical humorous expression, as if that was his characteristic way of looking at things. Confined himself to the information about the world that a child should have, and the development and growth and presentation of that information. Great stuff. Stimulating and provocative. Said that looking around on the people he concluded 'that what they think and know and what they are ready to believe is very poor stuff'. Spoke of the difficulty of getting teachers, most of them should be superannuated or re-conditioned. Said that most of our teachers, like our average doctors and lawyers, were a mediocre lot. And so on. It was good to have heard H. G. Wells at his best.

At Section L there was a discussion on the function of the University in Education, followed by one on the Relations between Technical and General Education. H. G. Wells was chairman, and sat there with

downcast head most of the time, looking somewhat tired, and either bored or quizzical according as the speaker interested him or not.

Saw and talked with Dr Grafe, whom I had met in Geneva, and whose address on the aims of German education had aroused a great deal of interest and some opposition here. There is, by the way, a curious and often expressed friendliness with Germany in these north central counties. Doubtless there is some underlying reason or tradition.

To go back to where I was in these notes, I want to record something of the interesting discussion on Technical and General Education. Knowing the title I had thought up a few things that I should like to say, such as that Technical Education was the best kind of general education and so on. But all the things I wanted to say, and many more that I should like to have said, were said ever so much more cleverly and forcefully by the three speakers. I could not help thinking how our remoteness affects these things. Having now heard these men I am armed and reinforced to say the things I was already thinking. They in their turn said them well, that is, with special ideas and turns of speech that they had got from hearing a score of other men talking on the same topic. I am satisfied that any brilliant speech that one man makes is based on 100 others that he has heard and discussed. In Australia, each man is as a voice crying in the wilderness. He never hears any other speech on his topic but his own.

## 9 September 1937, London, Cinema in Schools

Last day in England. I had an appointment with Mr Oliver Bell, Head of the British Film Institute, Great Russell Street. We had a long talk about the film business. It is going well, the Educational Film he said is 'a rising market'. He gave me much informative literature, but what is said is always more meaty than printed reports. The Board of Education has become definitely sympathetic. Whitehall now believes there is a definite place for the cinema in schools. For instance: in their now famous *Handbook* there are paragraphs on the use of the film for Geography, History etc., and they will give 50 per cent grant towards the cost of projectors, local authority provides the other 50 per cent. The authorities do not specify projectors, but 16 mm is the preferred size. The majority of schools, on the basis of cost, prefer silent projectors, in one census 197 were silent, 72 sound.

The Film Institute advises to get a sound machine capable of taking silent films. The cost in London is about £100, £94.5 cheapest. The best machines are American. Very good ones for £120–140. The best on the

market costs £300 English, and is being used by wealthy schools, museums (Bristol for example), Universities, and local news theatres.

The idea of 'Film Appreciation' is stressed. Here and there are clubs and societies founded for that purpose. In all Adult Education circles they work towards film appreciation, something resembling dramatic criticism, plus movie technique. Schools are held to show teachers what can be done with films, also the making of films. Re subjects of most value, all depends on the enthusiasm of the teacher. Sound films help in the teaching of music, languages, and history. It is insisted that with all films there shall be included teaching notes, but the full technique of teaching is admittedly yet to be developed.

## 25 September 1937, Cape Town

Mr W. H. Hemer, Principal, Cape Technical College, came for us. I went through the printing department and the mechanical engineering department. It works under the Union (Federal) government, and is governed by a Council, the chairman is a medico. The principal gets £1,000 per annum. Senior heads of departments get £750. There are 5,000 of all sorts of students. The upkeep is £34,000 from the Government. Several thousand in fees, and that leaves three or more thousands still to be made up from 'subscriptions', and Hemer complains that he is expected to go around cadging for money to that extent. The building is an excellent one. Quite good equipment, but could be much better considering the population and status of the place. They even asked my advice re their equipment, and I feel sure from their eagerness to say how that appealed to them, will follow it.

The story of the rise, progress, difficulties and tendencies of Technical Education is very much (but not quite) the same here as elsewhere. A late growth, not coming from the Education Department, forced upon the Government by pressure of private bodies and practical men, antagonistically regarded by both university folk and secondary school authorities, both of whom see in it work they think should be theirs or which they think they could do better. In some cases they are right. Coloured people not admitted, but (because this is the Cape, not Johannesburg) there is a separate school for them. But the Principal admits that it is often difficult or impossible to draw the line. He then refuses admission and if they protest, the onus is on them to prove that they are 'European'.

This is a land of upside down and topsy turvy. Here a Kaffir is not a 'coloured', and the third or later generation of white born (if without tarry admixture) is by law 'European' but neither he nor his parents may

ever have seen Europe. In this hotel there is a notice 'This bar for Europeans only'. But the people meant are white native Africans. The hatred and loathing and scorn for the 'coloured' people here (who are a darkish and yellowish bastard mixture of English, Portuguese, Malay, Hottentot, Kaffir) is beyond belief. And they tell me that they are treated much better here than are the Kaffirs of the Transvaal. I am sure these people and the black people get something very far short of justice. But the gentlest women I have spoken to are just as keen and hard against them as the old hands from the Rand. It is an attitude that has got to be learnt. I expect its origin lies in two things. The only way to keep the blacks and the coloureds in their place is by hard definite fear, and it is essential to keep them in their place because of the fear of what would otherwise happen to the whites.

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