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H. AND J. SMITH, LTD.,

Progressive stores,

INVERCARGILL AND GORE.

Passing Notes

BY JACQUES.

Laugh where we must, be candid where we can.—Pope.

The Boy Scout movement is one which merits more attention than it receives in Invercargill, offering as it does, a healthy counter-attraction to the picture theatre, trashy literature, the street corner "push," and the many other evils that we deplore so loudly and frequently. It is entirely democratic, the children of rich and poor standing on perfectly equal footing within its ranks. (There are, of course, official grades, but merit provides the only claim to promotion.) It aims at making gentlemen of the lads by keeping constantly within their view the highest ideals of honour, humanity, patriotism, and unselfish service. The little fellows are taught to respect age, to help the weak, to be kind to animals, to be loyal to their country and to each other, to be truthful, upright, and just—in short, to be and do everything that becomes a decent citizen. "Fear God and honour the King" is their motto; to "do at least one kind action each day" is a part of their law. They receive instruction in splicing, tying knots, first aid and ambulance work, bridge building, and many other useful subjects that do not come within the ordinary school curriculum. They are encouraged to study Nature and to cultivate habits of observation and reasoning. They receive physical training in the form of gymnastics and other athletic exercises, while frequent lessons in simple hygiene are given. And this list does not nearly exhaust the benefits of membership. The value of their training and organisation has been proven over and over again. In England the Boy Scouts rendered yeoman service throughout the war, while even in Invercargill the work of the many little fellows during the terrible influenza epidemic was such as we will not, or should not, soon forget. It is a thousand pities that a movement showing such splendid results in the past, and promising such great things for the future, should be allowed (in Southland at least) to languish and die for the lack of a little interest and encouragement.

The recommendations of public bodies often make funny reading. A northern branch of the S.P.C.A. recently protested against the trapping of rabbits because of its cruelty, suggesting poisoning as an alternative. I wonder if any of them had ever seen poor bunny writhing under the effects of phosphorus or strychnine, the usual "dopes." (By the way, why has some of our local beer not been tried on the pest? No doubt of its efficacy, but perhaps that also would be too cruel.) As for trapping, Brer Rabbit, probably found it unpleasant at first, but, as the old lady said of the live eels she was skinning, "they are used to it by this time." By the way, why does not the S.P.C.A. take notice of some of the grosser forms of cruelty, such as boiling crayfish alive, the screeching of our trams at corner turns, "painless" dentistry, the daily gassing of our Parliamentary reporters, dressing children for the seaside in their very best, not-to-be-boiled clothes, etc., etc.?

The Parliamentary jaunt is about over, and already we are getting some return for our money, in the form of opinions on (inter alia) the slave—I mean, the indentured labour question in Samoa—opinions which were, no doubt, supplied ready made by those in the Islands who are most interested in procuring cheap labour. It is just possible, too, that the convincing influence of the wine bottle was felt. We are not told what the natives think, though they are surely entitled to a voice in a matter so momentous to themselves. It is held that coloured labour is necessary, not because it is cheap, but because climatic conditions are hostile to Caucasians. Which is, most likely, fudge. The same excuse was used for the employment of the cheap and unpleasant Kanaka in Queensland years ago, but since the disappearance of Tommy Tanna the white man has easily proven equal to the work in the canefields and refineries. He is not so cheap, certainly, but there his disadvantages ends. Similarly it was once believed that Panama was fatal to

our race, but both the railway and canal were completed by white labour. The dangers of indentured labour have been shown in Africa, Australia, South America, the Fijian Islands, and elsewhere, and we have no guarantee that the experience of Samoa will be different. It is urged, in palliation of the proposal, that it is only intended to be a temporary expedient; that white labour will be later. But, if later, why not now?

A local brewing firm is advertising that all jars and kegs not returned by a certain date "will be sued for without further notice." If this threat is executed we may expect a remarkable display of ingenuity in explaining the presence of stray "pigs" in the outhouses of some of our unco' guid.

New Zealand is fast becoming a land of general inhibition. One can hardly wag the head now without splintering a statute. The latest "Thou Shalt Not" is a grandmotherly Order-in-Council excluding Sinn Féin literature, and de Valera's portrait. The logic of, or need for such a measure is not very clear. Surely the loyalty which sent so many thousands of our sons to Gallipoli, Flanders, and elsewhere is not so fragile as to be fractured by a photograph—which, by the way, has already appeared in some of our illustrated papers without any particularly catastrophic consequences. As for Sinn Féin literature; well, it is always wise to hear what the other fellow has to say. If it is right we should be open to conviction; if wrong, then we will learn better from it what we are up against, and our collective common-sense may be surely trusted to oppose it. It is said the predominant colour of our present Government is a bright yellow; but, be that as it may, they seem to see red in everything Irish just now.

THE LAST STRAWS.

[The high cost of living is strikingly exemplified in the case of the motor car. . . . Some of the better makes now command double pre-war prices.]—News item from a northern paper.]

Here! hand me out a bomb or two, a pistol and some knives; I'm desperate, and hungry for a fight; I'm as full of Bolshevism as a cat is full of lives, And my blood is up to boiling, Fahrenheit.

I tell you, fellow-citizens, it's time for us to act— To spicificate the present Government— When we find ourselves confronted with the agitating fact That motor cars have risen cent. per cent.

Oh! it makes me anarchistic when I read the printed news That furs are more than double what they were;

That they ask a pretty penny now for diamond-buckled shoes, And stockings (silk) are thirty bob a pair.

Champagne has grown expensive; so has whisky, sad to say, (A "spot" is ninepence now in every bar),

While for other necessities—why the pirates make you pay A shilling now for a sixpenny cigar.

Oh! the price of billiard tables, grand pianos, and the rest Of the things a fellow cannot do without,

Sends a thousand little devils romping round within my breast, And I feel inclined to scatter things about.

So, pass me out the dynamite, I'll make it hot and strong

For the Government and the robber profiteer, And if I fall—why, better that than worrying along

On a paltry little thousand pounds a year.

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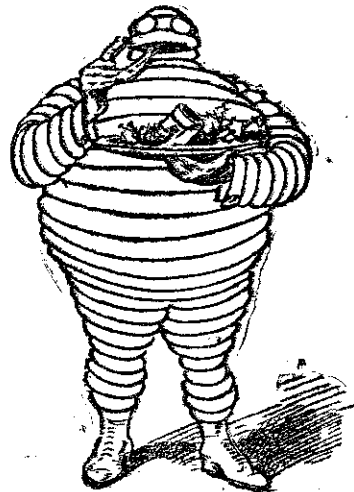
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