

CLIFTON SETTLEMENT.

Mr Watt gave an interesting account of the visit of a deputation of the Union to Clifton and of the conference with members of the Land Board, R.S.A., and the settlers there. The net result, he thought, would be more favourable terms for the soldier settlers. The big trouble there was that the pasture was generally bad—foggy rubbish that was the result of neglect. Some of the settlers wanted more land, and no doubt the sections were too small. In his own opinion another 100 acres each would be a good thing. That would increase the areas to from 350 to 400 acres. At present the sections averaged 200 acres. The settlers seemed to be doing their best, and some were good farmers.

Mr Maze endorsed, and said the settlers seemed "all triers" and good fellows.

Mr Laing said the settlers expressed themselves as very pleased with the action of the Union and the R.S.A. in arranging the conference. Members of the Board said so also, and added that the conference should have been held two years ago.

The Chairman said he was pleased to hear the result of the conference, and thought a hearty vote of thanks should be passed to the delegates.

Mr Watt: The idea that Clifton was "2½ ewe country" was blown out—the Land Board members do not hold that idea now.

"CABBY."

In the pleasant days of the long ago,
When our food was cheap and our traffic slow,

And the auto was a thing unknown,
And only Icarus ever had flown;

While life was a leisurely pilgrimage,
And five bob a day was a living wage—

Then one of the commonest, friendliest sights,
In the noonday glare, by the evening lights,

Was Cabby.

He was dressed in a long frock coat, once green,

Or a sober black, with a friendly sheen,
And an old top hat with a rakish "bell,"
And a pair of "pants" that he thought were swell;

And he sometimes shaved, but more often not,

Yet there wasn't a house or a vacant lot
In the whole blamed town that he didn't know,

And he drove at a gait that was sure,
Though slow,

Did Cabby.

He would dose in a most precarious style
On his box—glued fast, I'm convinced,
Meanwhile.

And a drop too much on his own inside
Made him steer, perhaps, just a trifle wide;

But to think that he might be drunk—oh, dear!

What a foolish thought for a glass of beer!

And he'd touch his hat with a kind "Good day!"

For a modest tip, as he drive away,
Would Cabby.

Oh, his was a pirate craft, I know,
And he drove at a pace that was far too slow

For the modern world with its mad, wild haste

And its dread lest a moment run to waste;

So we've gained, no doubt, by our loss of him.

In exchange for a chauffeur young and trim,

Yet I sometimes dream of the days now past,

And I long for a sight of the old outcast,
For Cabby.

—William Wallace Whitelock.

The Nature Column.

(By "Student.")

("Student" will be pleased to receive notes on any branch of Natural History. Observations on birds, insects, plants, etc., will be equally welcome. If using a pen-name, will correspondents please enclose real name and address.)

A correspondent has kindly sent me the following par from the "Bulletin": Character and colour in both plants and animals are tricky things. It has been found at Werribee (Victoria) that a cross between Indian H and Jonathan wheats gives every time a grass-like plant which probably resembles the common ancestor of a few tens of thousands of years ago, from which the hundreds of varieties of wheat have evolved. Other crosses with Indian wheat give very much this result sometimes, but in the case of these two the average is 100 per cent. Why, no one yet knows. With regard to colour in cattle, the late Robert Clark, a noted breeder,

used to boast that he could breed white cattle at any time he pleased. His method was to mate a bull of one colour with a cow of another, neither of them being white and he claimed that in every instance the calf was white. And while black sheep are seen often enough, those breeders who have tried to build up a black flock by using black rams and black ewes have always failed.

I noticed somewhere or other in "The Digger" that the smallest birch tree in the world grew in Canada, and measured, I think, 18 inches across. The botanist who wants to find things extraordinary in plant life has no need to go out of New Zealand. What Mr Cheeseman describes as "a very remarkable little species, probably the smallest known pine" is *Dacrydium Lavifolium*, a rather graceful, straggling shrub which grows on the mountains at from 2500 to 4000 feet throughout New Zealand. At Stewart Island it is found at sea-level. Fruiting specimens of this tree barely three inches in diameter are often to be seen, though generally it grows to a larger size. Usually the top is but four or five inches above the ground. In our so-called mountain lily we have the largest buttercup in the world, and a most beautiful flower. The common groundsel is represented in New Zealand by fine shrubs like the mutton bird shrub (*Senecio Rotundicolia*) and the common daisy by large shrubs. If these things grew in Java or Timbuctoo we would know all about them. Even in geography we find the average 6th standard schoolboy knows nothing of the country about his doors. If you ask him to point out the West Dome, Middle Dome, or some other prominent peak to be seen from Invercargill, he will want to know what you are getting at. In all probability, he could not compile a list of Southland's exports, though he might give a list of Auckland's.

The plants of New Zealand possess a very special interest. Mr Cockayne says that of the 600 special alpine species, 94 per cent. are found in no other part of the world. Nearly all of these plants are very specially fitted to withstand the rigorous conditions under which they live. They also include nearly the whole of the most showy flowering plants of the Dominion. Perhaps the buttercups most deserve mention. There are a large number of these headed by the queenly *Ranunculus Lyallii*, the finest buttercup in the world. The mountain lily when at its best has a tall stem on which bunches of upwards of thirty flowers may be seen, each flower as big as a five shilling piece. To see hundreds of these plants blooming at the one time is probably equal to anything of its kind to be seen anywhere. Then there are the *Celmisias*. With one exception, they are all true New Zealanders, and there are fifty-one or more sorts. To see acres of this plant in bloom is well worth the climb to their home. The New Zealand Edelweiss far surpasses the Swiss variety, so much mentioned in books dealing with that region. But it is needless to go on making comparisons. There is perhaps no country on the earth offering better opportunities to the botanist. We look to the public school teachers to give the coming generation a lead in the right direction, but until we get the right sort of teachers I am afraid there will be little progress. The authorities in charge of the "School Journal" are certainly doing their little bit, but what of the large number of young teachers now in the profession. I am afraid many of these have no higher ambition than the lads we see at the street corner after work, discussing the latest picture sensation. So far, this column has had one communication from a back-blocks teacher. We would like to hear from others.

The par in last week's "Digger" with reference to cooking by means of sunheat, shows that attempts are still being made to use direct solar heat. Between the equator and latitude 45 degrees North and South, the sun gives forth heat which is the equivalent of 8000 foot pounds of energy per minute per square foot. Thus four square feet equals one horsepower. In practise it takes 100 square feet to provide one horse-power. A one hundred horse-power plant was in operation in Egypt several years ago. The sun is the source of nearly all our energy. It provided the energy to grow the vegetation that made coal. To-day by photo-synthesis it builds up complex hydro carbons from which we make alcohol for power. It vaporises water, and causes rain to supply our hydro-electric schemes. It makes the wind to blow. It causes the tides largely, and these are already harnessed in some places. Old Sol is our main generating station. If the fossil fuels of the world were to be exhausted within the next hundred years, he would supply us with all the power necessary and at a cost perhaps, not very greatly in excess of coal.

Look out for the Cuckoo, both longtail and shining. Systematic notes of their first appearance in this district will be of distinct scientific interest.

PASSING NOTES.

(BY "JACQUES.")

From an "Albion" picture advt:—

She's the very latest "World" Star, and she's the "some" girl. Who wouldn't like to spend a vacation on a lonely island with s, Crusoe"—especially when s'shDx'6(Hf

Which shows the value of a code—or French—when you get down to real delicate things.

The H. C. L. bacillus may now be regarded as quite ubiquitous; though we "take the wings of the morning and flee to the uttermost ends of the earth, yet shall we not escape it." It has even at last invaded the penetralia of the Law, that holy of holies, which most of us fondly believed to be superior to its vile infection. Court charges are to be, or have been, increased all round. This is about the last straw, surely. The almost daily rise in the prices of the things we ordinarily eat and wear and use we were becoming accustomed to, and resigned to. But when the grave and reverend Law descends to participation in the general orgy of profiteering, and calls on us to pay extra for the poor luxury of being summoned—well, it is surely time to call a halt. The reason or excuse for the extra charges is somewhat obscure; perhaps they are resultant on the increased cost of paper, or pen nibs, or something like that. It would not be so bad if we were sure it would stop where it is but now that a start has been made we may see the Law's enterprise extend in other directions. Probably our fines will be made more solid, cab fares will be elevated, and damaged uniforms reach famine prices next, with possibly charges for admission to gaol institutions. If so, it is safe to predict a great and speedy falling off in the patronage we have so liberally accorded that institution in the past.

"John" demands that I justify my "outrageous statement" that McCabe, in his debate with Conan Doyle, assumed that all spiritualists were liars or fools. Very well. If "John" will look up "The Debate" (page 4) he will read McCabe's words: "It was born of a fraud. It was cradled in fraud. It was nurtured in fraud. It is based to-day . . . on fraudulent performances." Now, even "John" must admit that the very term "fraud" presupposes liars on the one hand and dupes or fools on the other. Again (page 5) he quotes Flammarion: "You may lay it down as a principle that every professional medium in the world cheats." In quoting this McCabe necessarily endorses it. So with his later quotation of Dr Stanley Hall: "I insist that there is no single grain of truth in all this mass of Spiritualistic dross." On page 18, he says: "Whatever other witnesses there may be you will find that distortion of judgment, that blurring of vision, which occurs whenever a man enters that wonderful world, that world of almost unparalleled trickery in the history of man." Now these few excerpts (which could be considerably multiplied) are sufficient to illustrate the general tenor of McCabe's argument, and if they do not show that he contemptuously classified all spiritualists as liars and fools, rogues and dupes, then there is no meaning at all in his words. It is true that, as "John" says, Conan Doyle thanked McCabe at the close of the debate for his "courtesy," but this was nothing more than the parting handshake of the generous pugilist. Earlier in the debate he said: "Mr McCabe has shown that he has no respect for our intellectual position." This was surely a polite way of saying that it was evident that McCabe regarded Doyle and his party as fools. I trust that "John" is now satisfied.

One or two passages in "John's" screed suggest that he considers me as possessed of a strong bias towards spiritualism. If that is so, he is most egregiously mistaken. I have been simply discussing certain weaknesses of McCabe, and am not at all concerned with the defence of spiritualism. I am not a spiritualist. But I do believe, on the evidence adduced, that (as in Mrs Piper's case), manifestations as genuine as baffling, of some mysterious force or influence have been repeatedly witnessed. I cannot accept the spiritist explanation of these phenomena. My reason forbids it; but, on the other hand, my reason equally rejects the telepathic hypothesis until telepathy itself is proven. Perhaps the solution of the whole problem will yet be found elsewhere in that vast psychic domain of which we, as yet, know so very little.

So poor old "Dick" Folley has passed over to the great majority. To most of us, who thought he had left the danger point in his recent illness far behind, the news of

his sudden death came as a distinct and unexpected shock. Few men among us numbered more friends than he. "Jacques," who had known him intimately for many years, tenders his humble tribute of respect to the memory of one whose sterling honesty of character, unfailing courtesy of manner, and kindly, cheerful disposition, proclaimed him one of Nature's gentlemen—one of the rare type that we can ill spare. Peace to his ashes.

Now that the people have lost faith in Plain Bill's "square deal," he has taken up "loyalty" and "patriotism" as the next best suit, and is rather overworking them. He does not want occasion, but merely opportunity, to trot them out. For practically every offender and offence he has one of two adjectives. A strike is invariably "unpatriotic"—though I have not read that a lock-out is so—; a cablegram of protest against foolish participation in an unnecessary war is "disloyal"—in fact everything which does not meet with his august approval is somehow treasonable. Evidently nothing short of slavish submission to every whim or caprice of our elected representatives can be deemed "loyal" or "patriotic." Ah, well! "loyalty" and "patriotism" are handy and portable virtues; convenient, effective, and very cheap—costing, too often, nothing more than easy lip service. They are handy for pasting your enemies with, and supply an easy means of gilding your own reputation. For how is the public to know that the man who is singing "God Save the King" loud-est is very likely devising means of taking down the "digger" who fought for him, in a land deal or piling up the prices of that same "digger's" kiddies' boots and clothes? Only the other day we read of millions of cardboard bullets having been sent for the use of the American troops in France. Probably the contractors who supplied these were among the foremost in singing the "Star-spangled Banner," and advising young America to go over to France and use those same bullets. It can be pretty safely accepted that those who prate most of their "loyalty" and "patriotism" have very poor samples of those qualities about them. True patriotism or loyalty DOES things, but babbles little.

So New South Wales, following the example of older countries, is about to institute the State lottery as a means of replenishing her depleted exchequer. True, the matter is only "under consideration" as yet, but in view of the present world-wide difficulty in raising funds by ordinary methods, it is safe to predict its early materialisation. And, in all probability, it will not be long before New Zealand follows suit. There is no earthly reason, apart from our thin-skinned, wows-eristic abhorrence of every form of gambling (other than church bazaar lotteries) why we should not. The State lottery would provide at once the means of raising easy revenue, and the healthiest conceivable outlet for that gambling propensity which, blink it as we may, is inherent in all of us, from the urchin who disdains to play marbles "for fun," to the speculator who invests in land or shares for the "rise." Of course, its introduction would meet with opposition from those who would deny the State's right to "rob the unlucky to enrich the lucky." But is the unlucky really robbed? Granted that he loses his money—a few pounds a year, perhaps—but does he not get full value for it in the rich measure of rose-hued hope that the lottery, more than any other form of gambling, yields. I think so.

KINGS AND PRINCES I HAVE MET.

H.M. TINIGAIT, J.O.N., B.U.L., Etc.

It was with most pleasurable anticipations, arising out of a lively recollection of his afortime hospitality, that I accepted the invitation of His Majesty to visit him at his beautiful country seat of Waianiawaberg, whither, as is well known, he had been compelled by failing health, to retire some time ago. Darkness was closing in as I alighted from the Lightning Western Express within easy distance of the castle, to which I walked, since, through my neglect to wire my royal host, he had not expected me so soon, and, therefore, had not sent his carriage to meet me. The walk was a pleasant one, and, except that I was now and then hung up in a barbed wire fence, stumbled over a few sleeping cows, fell into an occasional ditch, and was finally worried, on my arrival at the castle gates by His Majesty's favourite multicoloured hound, was without incident. But how can I describe my shocked feelings when I gazed once more on the face and form of my friend of other, happier days? What a

change a few short years had wrought! No! in his mind or manner, thank Heaven; these still retained their pristine charm and sweetness. His smile was as ever, and his kindly hospitality unimpaired by time. (I had three with him inside of ten minutes). But the tears were very close to my eyes as I noted the pitiful ravages the years and ill-health had made in his person. That massive figure (seventy-six inches around the stomach and forty-two inches across the seat were his undress measurements, it will be remembered), whose magnificent proportions were so admirably displayed by the tail coat, knee breeches, and gaiters that he most affected in those days, was now shrunk to the point of emaciation. There was something startlingly fragile and ethereal in his appearance; it seemed as though the lightest zephyr would buffet him about. On his own admission he is now rather under than over twenty-four stone. It was pitiful. His shadow, which, in the good old times, was as heavy as to leave a distinct impression in the mind, is now slender enough to pass through a wire hole in a fence post. But, with his cheerful spirit and indomitable courage, he refuses to abandon hope. He still cherishes the belief that he may yet restore his shattered health and rebuild his wasted frame by the liberal use of Old Special Liqueur Cod Liver Oil, and moderate indulgence in tea pulling, and other simple athletic exercises. His Majesty invited me to taste the former, which I did several times, finding it very palatable, mingled with a little water, and comforting taken any way. I earnestly hope that he will continue to derive benefit from its use, and that he will never be without it.

His Majesty's present life is almost Spartan in its severe simplicity. He rises early (says he can't sleep after 10 o'clock), and has the merest wisp of breakfast; just a couple of plates of porridge, half a dozen eggs, and a pound or so of bacon, a few buttered muffins and some toast and oatcakes, and he is finished. Then he goes outside and rests for half-an-hour, after which he visits the pigs and scratches their ears. Then he goes inside and rests some more, perhaps taking a dose of the aforementioned oil. And so on until lunch—which is a very simple repast—two or three pounds of roast beef or salt pork, with any other odds and ends about the place. His Majesty's appetite is very fickle and, as he himself says, requires a lot of coaxing. In the afternoon he scratches the pig's ears again has some more rests and oil, and then engages in his daily tea pulling and other recreations. These done will he dine. Dinner with him is a dainty little affair; a couple of dozen oysters, soup, a chicken or two, a roast leg of mutton (not too large), a couple of pounds of pudding and a few other trifles and nick-nacks are quite sufficient. Then, during the evening, a few more doses of oil with a friend or two, and "then to bed" as Pepys would say. Such is the austere simplicity of the daily round of His Majesty's life.

Yet, simple as it is, it is beset with vexations. For instance, as is well known, he has a fondness for "tripping the light fantastic toe," provided the floor is smooth and strong. But he is now almost afraid to engage in this innocent and exhilarating pastime owing to the carelessness with which other dancers persist, despite his frantic expostulations, in jostling him. He naturally fears that such roughness may result in serious injury to one in his present fragile condition. This fact in itself, shows what a falling off he has experienced since those glorious days when his prowess in the football field was the theme of every tongue. Then, merely to play against him required V.C. courage, while to collide with him was tantamount to suicide. As a sporting critic of the time remarked: "To play with Tiny means distinction; to play against him means extinction." It was said that the undertakers waxed wealthy, and the cemeteries became very populous during his career as a footballer. Still to-day his Majesty's boast is that there was no malice about it; he never killed a man except in a friendly way.

During our conversation I mentioned the current rumour that King Tiny had turned wowser. He was much perturbed at learning of the report, which he denounced as an infamous libel, and a dastardly attempt to besmirch an irreproachable character. At our parting I promised to publicly contradict the slander, for which His Majesty expressed his heartfelt gratitude, and pressed on my acceptance a bottle of his favourite Old Special Liqueur Cod Liver Oil, remarking that "stuff like that could not be got in Invercargill." I have since consumed it all, and wish the bottle had been a bigger one.