Passing Notes.

BY JACQUES.

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

dering respect. He is very tenacious and hard to satisfy. In an earlier letter he stridently demanded authorities for certain of my statements. These given, he sneers because "one is ten years old and the other six." Then he dubs my honest criticism of the great Joseph "aspersion." Really, "A" should consult his dictionary. Again, he accuses me of saying that McCabe was, in propria persona, offered £1000 for proof of telepathy. If "A" will re-read (carefully, this time) my statement he will find that it runs "to Joseph McCabe—or anyone else." The offer was a general one, and included the redoubtable Joseph as well as all other believers in telepathy. This metriculous quibbling is not worthy of 'A," and is sadly trying to one's patience. Further, he challenges my statement that the phenomena discussed in the "Debate" did not require telepathic explanation, and says that "the Piave, Raymond, Lusitania, and Morphia incidents, the cases of Mr Lethem, Dr Hutchison, and Mr Powell, "all came easily within the scope of the telepathic hypothesis." This statement, did space permit, is debatable in its every reference, but let us waive that. The simple fact is that McCabe is a too old and experienced campaigner to set a sort of thing is becoming so common that man at a boy's task. In each of the it is almost unsafe for a man to say "good cases cited he preferred the simpler and day" to women of this type, except in the (to him) more satisfactory explanation, presence of witnesses. tI is only a week (That is, in the few that he deigned to or two ago that a girl in one of our northreply to.) In the Piave incident (a pro- ern cities made a complaint aganst a busiphetic dream) the contention of unconsci-ness man, and supplied the police with a ous cerebration or coincidence was the written statement which embodied such most natural weapon. The Raymond a mass of circumstantial and filthy detail and Lethern incidents were inferentially as to give it a most convincing appearascribed to collusion between various ance of truth. The story was, moreover, The Lusitania and Morphia incidents McCabe flatly and contemtuously refused to discuss; while the Hutchison and Powell cases (the most remarkable of all the "evidences" adduced by pelled from their own lips and utter falsi-Doyle) seem somehow to have eluded Mc-Cabe's notice, since he never once mentions them. As Doyle complained, Mc-Cabe confined his attacks to the weakest points in the "evidences," studiously this he was, no doubt, perfectly within his rights, but most of us would have felt more satisfied if his efforts had been directed towards clearing up or explaining some of the greater mysteries, as, for instance, those very cases of Dr Hutchison and Mr Powell. Neither of these cases (so far as we can gather) was fraudulent, and neither admitted the telepathic

Among others, Bishop Richards has been taking part in the present bitter controversy on the Marriage Bill. As is so often the case with the public utterances of clergymen, the drift of his argurather obscure to the lay intelligence. But it seems to me that, insofar as they mean anything, his reported words may be briefly and fairly interpreted thus. Those married, say, at a registry office may be "legally" wed according to statute law, but since such unions have not received the benediction of the Church, they are not "truly and sufficiently" married according to Church doctrine and canon law. Therefore, I take it, Though such marriage contract may be legally regular and binding, it is somehow permeated with the taint of sin. This is surely a staggering view for priest or parson to take, and a most insolent dostrine to preach. True, the Bishop endeavours to qualify the nastiness of his words by the assertion that he would not for the world consider the issue of such unions illegitimate. But how on earth is he to escape from such a conclusion? If the parents are not "truly and sufficiently" married, then, by logical necessity, the fruits of their marriage are not "truly and sufficiently" legitimate. In other words, "theirs is a kind of limited bastardy; not so great in degree, perhaps, as that of those born out of the pale of wedlock altogether, but still somehow shameful, both to themselves and their parents. Now, this is not nice, and all the Bishop's subtle and sophictical distinctions between "canon law" and "statute law," their different scope and incidence, in this matter are not going to satisfy the man who feels that his impugned, even in the most delicate and the ordeal, whatever the consequences.

As a special pleader "A" has my won- underhand way. Small wonder, when such doctrines and decrees are promulgated by the churches in this educated century that the long-time indifference of the bulk of the people towards those churches is rapidly giving place to actual and active hostility.

Our judges have frequently of late expressed alarm at the growing prevalence of sexual offences, and some of them have publicly declared their intention to use all the power the law gives them to stamp out this form of crime. This is right and proper; our women must be protected at any cost. But is it not about time that we began to consider the matter of protection of our men also. At present the law seems to look with a most lenient eve on one of the most vicious and dangerous types of criminals that society is cursed with. I mean those depraved and soulless women and girls who, with growing frequency, from motives of spite, the wish to blackmail, a morbid craving for even the ugliest kind of limelight, or for any other reason (or no discoverable reason at all), trump up hideous stories that may, and often do, blast an innocent man's career and blacken his reputation for all time. This corroborated by a second girl, and things looked pretty bad for the accused. Skilful examination in Court, however, broke down their brazen effrontery and comfication of the whole story. The accused's innocence was further established by medical and other tetsimony, and he was acquitted. Yet the law had nothing more to say to these dangerous young wretches dodging the more prickly problems. In than they were very naughty to say such things, or something to like effect. No talk at all of punishing, or taking steps to repress, this form of crime. In fact, though I (as have also most of my readers, no doubt) have known of many instances of most heartless and criminal perjury proven against girls and women in these "sexual" cases, I have never yet known of one single instance in which the filthy wretch was brought to book.

> The recent Bluff assault case presented some rather peculiar and unpleasant features. Perhaps the most unsavoury of these were the spectacle of an appointed guardian of the peace directly and deliber. ately (if newspaper reports are to be credited) conniving in an open breach of the law. Such a thing leaves a very uneasy feeling in the mind of the man in the street, who naturally begins to wonder if we are not trending towards the American system of policeocracy. The fact that the affair had a religious basis, and that the policeman's name was Murphy, is not sufficient for most of us. The whole thing demands investigation, and if this precious officer of the law is proven guilty of this offence and the further one (according to the Magistrate) of mendacity in the witness box, then he should be kicked out of the force, and the kicking should be pretty hard, too.

> KINGS AND PRINCES I HAVE MET.

H. M. BILLINCHEY.

The editor, learning that this potentate (who share with Henry the Eighth the sob. riquet of "The Bluff King") was about to reorganise the world, and being keenly interested in heavenly things, handed me a second-class ticket and a bob for refreshments, and despatched me to interview the royal reformer and obtain all possible details of his scheme. The mission was not altogether to my liking, since 1 understood that His Majesty had recently developed a pronounced and alarming grouch against pretty well everybody and everything in the world but himself. But, bread and butter is bread and butter (when it isn't margarine), and the kiddies' boots needed half-soling, so I had to choke mother's or his wife's honour is being down my fears as best I could and face

Still, it was with a quaking heart and very cold feet that I entered the reception hall and beheld His Majesty-who had evident. ly just struck another bad patch of grouch-striding agitatedly up and down, the while, that he muttered in tragic tones:

"The world is out of joint; oh, cursed

That ever I was born to set it right."

For a while he did not seem to notice me in his pre-occupation, but presently becoming aware of my presence, he skewered me with his eagle eye, and thundered out, "What seek ye here, varlet? Are you a parasite?" In apologetic and propitiatory tones I assured him that I had not that honour-that I was merely an Invercargillite. "Be silent, wretch, and answer my questions plainly," he vociferated; "Are you a theif and a liar? And have you got the germs of crime hidden under your garments?" To this I timidly replied that being a newspaper man, it was hardly fair to expect much from me in the way of truth and honesty, while, as for germs, he need not be alarm. ed, since I was too poor to support one. Besides, I explained, all the "Digger" staff were, in the interests of public health and a matter of general expediency, thoroughly fumigated every day. My humble confession of connection with the "mighty engine of the press" called to his face such an expression of withering disdain that I looked furtively around for a rathole to crawl into. In fact, I felt so small that the nearest crack in the wall would have been sufficient to hide me.

I knew, however, that if I returned empty handed the editor would demand the refund of that bob, so presently I took my courage in both hands and stated, with all deference, the object of my mission,which was to learn from his Majesty what had given him such a devil of a hump all at once, and, secondly, on what lines he proposed to regenerate this sad, mad, bad old world of ours. Then, for the firsttime in my life I fully realised what is meant by that common phrase: "Overwhelming torrent of eloquence." His words leaped out tumultuously at the rate of about seven hundred a minute as he told me what was wrong with the world and how urgently it needed physicking.

It seems, so far as my bewildered wits could understand him, that His Majesty recently discovered that an era of moral deterioration had set in some time ago, with the result that the world to-day is showing quite a lot of really unpleasant excrescences in the form of usurers, pirates, drapers, pawnbrokers, spielers, commercial travellers, thieves, commission agents, garrotters, editors, thugs, plumbers, wowsers, assassins, politicians, sycophants, swindlers, charwoman, jugglers, parasites, plunderers, prohibitionists, may. ors, bloodsuckers, magistrates, profiteers and many other kinds of criminals, publicans and sinners. (No, I fear I am mistaken; I do not think he mentioned "publicans"). These he condemned as barnacles on the ship of State, which would have to be scraped off and sent to the bottom. When I asked him where he would dump them he showed some slight fogginess in the matter, since the place he mentioned has no bottom according to popular report. I then rather rashly ventured the opinion that possibly, after all, some et the barnacles might have some slight place and use in the general scheme of things.

"Take the pawnbroker, for instance," I said, "His functions are practically iden. tical with those of the banker-in fact, he has been called "the poor man's banker" yet, with strange inconsistency we despise the one, and court and flatter the other." His Majesty retorted that the pawnbroker differed from banker, in that, he did not rob on a big enough scale to be respectable. I recognised the truth of this reflection and accepted the implied rebuke. Again, when I offered a word of extenuation for the manifold sins of the tailor, the royal temper flared up violently. To these harpies, he declared, he could not possibly find forgiveness. He had just been charged fifteen quid for a suit.

When pressed for details of his scheme for clearing up the seemingly hopeless social tangle, His Majesty showed some slight embarrassment, and at length admit. ted that he had not got the thing quite clearly formulated yet, though he hoped to have it before long. At present it exis. ted in his mind rather as a dream, longing or ideal, which could best be expressed in the beautiful words of his favourite poet, Omar Khayyam: 'Ah, Love, could you and I with Fate

conspire To grasp this sorry scheme of things

Remould it nearer to the Heart's Desire.' I applauded the sentiment, and suggest. ed tentatively that an excellent first step towards he realisation of that beautific vision would be to bring the price of whisky down to sixpence a "spot." His Majesty, indignant at what he termed gross and unseemly levity" on my part told me to go to hell. So I came pack to Invercargille

(Held over from last week.)

THE DIGGER'S LETTER BOX.

A REPLY.

(To the Editor.)

Jacques.-Thanks for your courteous reply. It is so refreshing to take part in a newspaper discussion with one who does not use unpleasant personal insinuations which are so frequently used in place of arguments, that I cannot miss the opportunity of marking my appreciation. Neither would I seek to defend McCabe, were he guilty of calling his opponents fools and liars. Of course you only say he assumes that, and you assume that he assumes and you give as a reason that in referring to spiritualism he said: "It was born of a fraud, it was cradled in fraud, it was nutured in fraud. It is based today to an alarming extent on fraudulent performances. You left the words underlined out, which makes a difference in the construction that may be placed on it, and I still think that your assumption is unwarranted. I also think that McCabe supported the assertion with ample evidence to prove it. He has given the record of medium after medium exposed and convicted of fraud which justifies his reference to it as "unparalleled trickery." Mediums may be called the high priests of spiritualism and when fraud has been proved so often, what are we to call it. my dear Jacques, but fraud? It seems to me, however, that it is drawing the long bow to conclude that because he calls it fraud, he assumes that all those who attribute ever so little of the psychical phenomena produced by medium to other influences than fraud are therefore fools or liars. We are often deceived by professional conjurers and others, are we therefore fools? I am afraid very few of us will escape the imputation if this is so. However, I am not going to labour the point, I have no brief for McCabe, and it was only my sense of fair play which induced me to write, and I am quite satisfied to leave the question to the judgment of those interested in our little passage at arms. I will close with one more passage from McCabe's last speech in the debate which is inconsistent with your conclusion. He said: "I will respect any man or any woman, no matter what their conclusions may be, if they have used their own personality, their own mind and their own judgment, righteously and conscientiously. I do not care what conclusions they come to."--I am, etc.,

JOHN.

CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY.

Groper. - You are a funny old fish. You talk of your disinclination to take me seriously and then write nearly two columns in reply to me. You make a number of unverifiable assertions, and are quite evidently trying to squelch me with a weight of words. I thank you for heading it all Hotch Potch! No! my dear Groper, I am not in the least chagrined, only amused. I am enjoying it immensely. You have had your fly, but now, I must bring you back to earth. It is not a question of whether I swallow McCabe or McCabe swallows me, or whether anti-Christian literature blinds a man to the beautiful, or whether our best men have been Christians, all of which questions I will be ready to debate with you in good time. The question at present is whether unbelief or Christianity was the more pottent factor in the abolition of slavery. 1 have already quoted a text, Leviticus 25th, Verves 45 and 46: "Moreover, of the children that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families. . and we shall take them for an inheritance and your children after you. They shall be your bondsmen for ever." For ever is a long time, Groper. I have challenged you to quote a text from the Bible which annuls that. It is no use to tell me that the Bible tells us to "Love one another." If the Bible is inconsistent that is Christians' lookout, not mine. You have not explained why, if the spirit of the Bible condemns slavery, it was such an extraordinary long time having effect, and why the Christians dealt in human flesh and blood all through the centuries for over a thousand years. I am not in the least annoyed, Groper, that you should differ from me, but my idea is that we have progressed, not only with regard to the abolition of slavery, but in other ways, in proportion to our unbelief and it was only when the nations had advanced far enough to question the infallibility of the whole of the Bible that we began to work towards a higher humanity by the abolition of persecution, trial for witchcraft, slavery, etc. Free thought and unbelief are of various grades, there are many unbelievers in the churches. The Bible, until very recently, was regarded as inspired

and no one dared to question. The minis.

ters you quote (and I take off my hat to

them) dared to question at least one ten quoted. They were unbelievers to that extent, they were more humane than their creed. Even Luther unwittingly drove in the thin end of the rationalistic wedge when he rejected the epistle of James. It the Bible is inspired, it is inspired right through. Once admit the right of individual judgment and you are in the rou to rationalism. The quotation you give from the "Encyclopedia Brittanica" on says Christianity "still further improved the condition of the slaves." But Leave says in his "History of European Morals" page 27, Vol. 11, "For about two banared years after the conversion of Constantine, the progress was extremely slight. The Christian emperors in AI. 319 and 326, adverted in two elaborate laws to the murder of slaves, but beyond reiterating in very emphatic terms the previous enactments it is not easy to see in what way they improved the condition of their class "One of the enactments pro vided that if a slave died under punish. ment not intended to kill him, the master should be blameless. How about the spring of the Bible here? There must be some reason for what you take to be the spirit taking so long to work. A thousand years is a long time, Groper. In conclusion me presume to advise you, when you reply again, get down off that high pedes tal. You appear to be away up in the clouds, and you cannot see clearly through clouds. Do not try and obscure the issue by throwing dust. Try to be calm and do not impute wrong reasons for other perples actions (intelligent men know you am only guessing), and above all have less conceit in yourself, do not imagine you have studied the right authorities, and everybody else the wrong ones. It is nossible to come to different conclusions even studying the same authorities. Remember that the evils of slavery according to his. tory (which I can quote if necessary) last. ed well into the seventeenth century last slaves were trafficked in and ill-treated by Christians at that time. Many other evils were also prolonged because we were not allowed to read the Bible as we read other books. Had this been possible we should have admired its beauties and tressured its worthy thoughts, without being called upon to bolster up those parts which are otherwise. Let us be thankful we are living in a later age when "The charm dissolves apace,

And as the morning steals upon the night, Melting the darkness,

So their rising senses Begin to chase the ignorant fumes That mantle their clearer reason.- l m, JOHN.

ADVANCES TO SOLDIERS.

COMPLAINTS OF DELAY.

DENIAL BY THE MINISTER

A question regarding applications to advances under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act was put by Mr G. Mitchell (Wellington South) to the Minister of Lands. Mr Mitchell asked whiteher applications for advances under the Act applied for as early as March, and up to August, had not yet been disposed of Whether the Minister was aware that options for property were continually lapsing before the department took action, and whether the delay was caused by the

shortage of funds or of staff? The Minister of Lands (the Hon D. H. Guthrie) said he understood that this que tion emanated from the Wanganui Be turned Soldiers' Association. As he had stated before, all applications up to the end of June had been cleared that had been sent to the head office to forward applications in order of priority. At the time he made that statement is was receiving applications for the month of July, and because of that he knew that all applications for June were cleared It must be understood, however, there were always outstanding tions. It was said that there were apple cations outsanding, which had been coming in since last March. If there ware they were applications for the purchase of houses that would not be entertained in fact the Government was not encount aging the purchase of houses, for the tended merely to raise the prices to soldiers and everybody else. What the were doing was to encourage the purchase of land and the erection of houses. The were exceptions to the rule, however Only that day he had sanctioned the put chase of a house because it was an ungent cases that of a married man whose wil was just coming out of a private hospital and had nowhere to go. There was no delay so far as he knew that could be avoided. In no case did they allow delay where the money was available and everything was satisfactory.