

# Passing Notes.

BY JACQUES.

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

A thing that puzzles me a lot  
Is that I always see  
The others fellows all have got  
A better job than me.

While we daily read the bitter complaints of the clergy about failing church membership and attendance, and other indications of decay in religious feeling, a recent cabled item informed us that Conan Doyle's initial lecture on Spiritualism packed the Sydney Town Hall. These two facts, considered together, are significant. No doubt many of Conan Doyle's vast audience were attracted by curiosity and other motives, but it is, I think, reasonable to assume that the majority were actuated by the hope of receiving some satisfying answer to that oldest and most absorbing questions, "Does Death End All?" If so, it would seem to prove that the clergy are at fault in their deductions; that the truly religious instinct in mankind is not moribund; that the hunger of the human soul for "the fruit of the tree of knowledge" still persists—in an even more intense degree, perhaps, because of the terrible events of the last few years. But men to-day want more nourishing spiritual pabulum than satisfied their forefathers, and the churches do not seem to be able to "deliver the goods." Spiritualism, on the other hand, makes the claim (with what truth, I know not) that it can and will. It promises something real, near, demonstrable, tangible. Can we wonder that the people in their soul-hunger are attracted by it as flies by sugar? Its following already runs into millions, and is daily increasing by thousands, despite the many exposures of fraud and trickery in connection with it. Small wonder that the churches dread and oppose the most formidable rival they have ever had. Whether it turns out a mere passing madness, or proven to possess the elements of a stable and satisfying religion, time alone will tell.

"I want to join the angel band,"  
Sang Willie in the choir—  
Next day his gun exploded and  
He got his heart's desire.

Recently a returned soldier in Buckinghamshire applied for a military pension, and was astonished to discover that he was dead. He hotly debated the matter, as up to that time he had received no intimation of the fact and so was naturally sceptical of its truth. The War Office, however, had no doubts at all; there it was in black and white, and the dispute was finally clinched by the authorities supplying the number of his grave and its location. And what adds to the humour of the incident is the fact that the authorities are now demanding income tax from this officially dead man. This he refuses to pay, on the reasonable grounds that if he is too dead to receive a pension he is surely dead enough to be exempt from taxation. At present there is a deadlock, but it would be hardly prophesying too much to say that red tape will win both ways. As an example of official ineptitude this instance must just about reach the dizzy limit.

Still a case within my own experience bore a close family resemblance to the foregoing. About 1892 the Queensland electoral rolls were being very drastically purged, and among others the name of "Jacques" was ruthlessly expunged. Learning of this I applied for its reinstatement, only to be gravely informed by a wise looking and bespectacled official that I was dead, done, deceased, defunct, a mere sad and beautiful memory. Like Mark Twain, I considered the report somewhat exaggerated, and produced documentary and other evidence to convince the authorities that I was really I and not some other fellow, that I was, actually above earth in Queensland, and not in h—though the difference is not great. But all in vain; the official mind is impenetrable by argument, evidence, or anything lighter and blunter than an axe. I was dead and buried, and that was all there was about it; and I was never resurrected, so far as the Queens-

land electoral roll was concerned. Truly the red-tape mind is a fearsome thing.

"We look before and after,  
And sigh for what is not—"  
The cards we throw away this hand  
Might help the next a lot.

"Vae Victis"—which is Latin, or something, for "God help the bottom dog in a scrap." In the good old days it was the custom for the victor to take and hold the vanquished in bondage, and sit back easy while the heliots sweated. It was a grand plan, and worked well for the top dog. It is pleasing to note a present-day tendency to revive those glorious old customs, and already considerable success has been achieved in that direction. The latest instance presents itself in the latest "stand-and-deliver" of the Sawmill Workers' Union. That body, flushed with their many recent successes over their hereditary enemies, the employers, have decided at last to put the shackles on the latter as a proper penalty for their presumption in opposing them. Note, for example clause 7 in their demands:

"Any member of the Union over 12 months in arrears shall have same deducted from his wages by his employer who shall pay the same over to the Union."

Could anything be more exquisitely ironical and better calculated to sink the iron deep into the souls of their adversaries and slaves. The proud and powerful conqueror sets the conquered at debt-collecting, tax-gathering and other humiliating tasks (presumably without commission or other remuneration) to still further strengthen the means of the latter's still greater subjugation. Verily it was a cynical genius who conceived the idea. Again Vae Victis.

By the way, it seems to me that there is an interesting legal point raised by the foregoing insolent demand. Under the Truck Act—which used to be regarded as one of the glories of Labour's political achievements—no employer may deduct any part of the wages of an employee (with the sole exception, I think, of cash actually advanced on account) without the latter's sanction. If that is correct, as I believe it to be, then the action of the Union in making such a demand is tantamount to inciting the employer to break the law. Therefore the Union would seem to lay itself open to prosecution and a short term of imprisonment—say twenty or thirty years. But, perhaps, Trades Unions to-day, like Kings, are above all laws. The plight of the employer, if the Courts concede the demand, will not be a pleasant one. He will have no other choice than between being punished for a fracture of the Truck Act on the one hand, or for violating the ordinances of the Union on the other.

## LOST WAR MEDALS.

An instruction as to replacement of lost war medals (1914-1915 Star) has been issued by G.I.I.Q. In order to prevent war medals falling into the possession of unauthorised persons, the replacement of lost medals can be authorised only when satisfactory proof of loss is forthcoming. Replacement of the 1914-1915 Star will be made only on the following conditions:—Serving soldiers—Claims for replacement will be investigated by a Board of Inquiry. Discharged soldiers.—Applications for replacement must be made in the form of a statutory declaration setting out the circumstances under which the loss was sustained; that six months have elapsed since the loss, and that every reasonable effort has been made to recover the medal. All applications must be accompanied by a remittance of 3s 6d to cover cost of replacement. The Department may refuse to make a fresh issue if the evidence of loss is considered unsatisfactory or to indicate that the loss was the outcome of carelessness.

The world's diamond industry is practically monopolised by the De Beers syndicate in South Africa.

## DRAUGHTS.

(Conducted by F. Hutchins).

All communications of interest to readers of this column to be addressed to "Draughts Editor," 28 Biggar street.

### PROBLEM 36.

By W. T. Broadbent, Oldham.  
(No. 53 in "Bolton Chronicle").  
Black.

