

Passing Notes.

BY JACQUES.

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

Since the war emigration had again trended mightily towards the United States of America, but none of us realised the full extent of that influx. It remained for the "Ne" to enlighten us. According to our estimable contemporary "the United States Government surveys show that more than 4,000,000 cattle and sheep on American ranges died of starvation and disease last winter. This means a loss of more than 1,500,000,000 lbs of meat, or enough to provide nearly 1 lb of meat for every man, woman and child in the nation." Lordy! Lordy! but the American nation must be a big thing nowadays, and the rest of the world a mere depopulated desert, of little or no account. But perhaps the figures merely furnish another instance of Brother Jonathan's pleasant tendency to mild exaggeration about the things pertaining to the "great and glorious Republic." Anyway, they somehow recall President Buchanan's famous faux pas. In a speech in one of the Southern States he said, "I do believe, gentlemen, that mankind, as well as the people of the United States, are interested in the preservation of this Union."

It was at the recent session of the Auckland Methodist Synod, and the question of whether clergymen should travel first or second class was on the tapis. Opinion was divided, but the majority favoured the more luxurious and expensive carriages and cabins. One—the Rev. Geo. Brown—was very emphatic in his insistence on the privileges of the cloth, and concluded his address with the remark: "Second-class travelling for second-class people"—the "second-class people" being, presumably, those who were too poor or too frugal to pay first-class fares. The remark was distinctly cadish and brutally insolent, and came, moreover, with especially bad grace from a professed disciple of One who did not disdain to make His most triumphal entry into Jerusalem mounted on a second-class animal—to wit, an ass. Much was said at the Synod about the dignity of the clerical calling, but methinks it is a poor sort of profession whose dignity depends on a first-class railway or steamboat ticket. The plain fact is that Bernard Shaw was not far wrong when he said that "Christ, as represented by His vicars to-day, showed a remarkable partiality for the society of the well-to-do." Which may, in part, account for the "beggarly array of empty" benches that most of our churches show o' Sundays.

Which somehow reminds me of a story of the Queensland backblocks. A bush missionary, mounted on a very emaciated and decrepit steed, encountered the young son of a local settler. He plied the youngster with questions concerning himself, his family and other more or less related matters. These the lad answered, and then took his turn at interrogation.

"Might I ask who you are?" he said. "Certainly, my boy," replied the missionary, "I am a follower of the Lord." The boy looked the horse over with a critical Australian eye and then: "By cripes, mister, but yer'll be a blanky long time catching up to Him on that old crock."

For the last few years we have danced merrily, but it looks as though the time has now come to pay the piper. From every quarter come reports and rumours which, if only a tithe are true, would seem to indicate an imminent crumbling of our seeming prosperity. In most of the older countries trade is in a bad way, and rapidly growing worse. Already in the States there are upwards of two millions of unemployed, and in England the position is, proportionately, even worse. Many of the greater old world markets are narrowing down, not because the peoples do not require things, but because they cannot continue to buy at present prices. Bankruptcies are becoming increasingly frequent, though so

far the failures have been confined to comparatively minor affairs. At any time one of the more colossal concerns may come tumbling to the ground, and bring half the commercial world down with it. All over the world the banks and other financial institutions are becoming alarmed, and are rigorously limiting their operations. Even in New Zealand—which is claimed to be one of the most prosperous and stable countries on earth to-day—the shadows of coming events are easily apparent to the observant, and it is by no means rash to say that within the next twelve months will be heard much weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth over the mad extravagance of the last few years. Things will ultimately right themselves, of course, but the process will probably be a long and painful one. But whether long or short, the man with a stocking will have reason to pat himself on the back.

The Bible-in-schools question never lacks champions. Its latest local advocate is Cr Preddy, who demands that manuals of Biblical instruction, wall cards of the Ten Commandments, and parsons' all be admitted to our schools. Probably the little man is sincere in his belief that Bible reading in our schools will result in our ultimate moral regeneration, but, unfortunately, that belief has no evidential foundation on which to rest. A few years ago criminal and other statistics of the various Australian States were published, and a comparison of these showed that the "secular" States enjoyed a distinct moral superiority over the "Bible" ones. And despite the dismal forebodings of our clerical pessimists, secular New Zealand to-day compares favourably, from a moral standpoint, with any country in the world where religious instruction obtains. Nay, more, it has reached a higher moral plane, judging by the only evidences available, than it had ever attained to in those days when every morning heard a prayer and a chapter from the Bible in our schools. Only a few days ago Sir Robert Stout congratulated the community on the remarkable diminution of crime during the last few years—that is (though he did not actually say so) since school Bible reading was abandoned. I do not suggest, of course, that the reading of moral maxims from the Bible is injurious, and I am in hearty agreement with those who aim at more liberal moral training for our youngsters. To that end let us take anything of moral force and value from wherever we may find it. The claim that the Bible is the only source of moral teaching is entirely gratuitous, and savours somewhat of fetish worship. The demand, moreover, for the admission of the parson into the school excites the suspicion that the advocates of Bible reading are concerned less for the moral welfare of our children than for the bringing of our whole educational system under clerical domination. Which, may the good Lord, in his mercy, forbid.

During the Easton perjury trial, the counsel for defendant, Mr T. M. Wilford, made some rather unpleasant insinuations against Mr Stout, the Magistrate of the Court, in which the earlier proceedings were heard. Being severely rebuked by Judge Edwards, Mr Wilford expressed his regret for the intemperate words used, and asked permission to make the "amende honorable"—which, later, he did. I merely cite the incident as reminding us of the great changes effected by Time in the meanings of phrases and words. Southwick informs us that, historically, the "amende honorable" was "a disgraceful punishment inflicted, principally, on offenders against public decency. The culprit was stripped to his shirt, when the hangman put a rope about his neck and a taper in his hand, leading him to the court where he asked pardon of God, of the King and of the Court." Nowadays it signifies nothing more than a polite apology, which is, we must admit, an easier and pleasanter method of expiation than that of older times. Still, for spectators, there were points about the old custom. Wonder how Tommy would

have looked in his shirt, and with a candle in his hand, asking pardon of, say, Bill Massey.

Things are rapidly getting no better in Ireland. A little while ago we set out to whip Paddy into better behaviour, but somehow he obstinately refuses to take his whipping quietly. We have gaoled quite a lot of him, and hanged and shot quite a lot more of him, but he still keeps bobbing up, though not at all serenely. And he is as turbulent as a sack full of wild cats. Possibly, with his innate love of a scrimmage, he is thoroughly enjoying himself. We are not. In fact, he is giving us a most anxious and exciting time, especially since he has daringly carried the war—for war it undoubtedly is—into that very Holy of Holies, England itself. So critical has the situation become that British Ministers have ceased to veil their threats, and are now talking openly of the "re-conquest of Ireland." This we may do—I believe we have the power but Ireland will be a shambles from end to end before we shall have succeeded. And the achievement will turn the cold shoulder of every civilised nation on God's earth towards us. We will become a pariah and an outcast among the peoples. And all because in the past we have, in obedience to British vested interests, refused Ireland the same liberal measure of liberty and justice that Britain's overseas self-governing dominions enjoy. Even now I believe—and I have discussed the matter with several recent arrivals from Ireland—that a show of sweet reasonableness on our part would meet with a ready response from the great bulk of that warm-hearted, if not hot-headed, people. I do not think we have yet passed the point of possible reconciliation, but whatever is to be done in the way of kissing and making friends again must be done very quickly—that is, if the British House of Lords will let us. Which, at present, seems doubtful.

WHAT A DUGOUT IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT.

(As told by a writer in the 37th Division). Dugouts are not dug out. They are dug in. The only ones who ever dug out of a dugout were the Germans, who dug out as soon as they saw the 37th Division stepping "Over the Top." Dugouts remind one of home because they are so different. To enter a dugout one must step forward in the dark and fall gracefully down the steps. A candle, several families of rats, water seeping through the roof and a gas-alarm bell are the usual furnishings of the modern dugout. Dugouts must be pumped out every day for fear of drowning the soldiers who are in them if the water is allowed to stand. Now that the war is over, there are many thousand dugouts for rent in France and Belgium. But like the hole in the doughnut, no one wants 'em. All dugouts smell like fertiliser factories. Some are deeper than others. The deeper the better. It is impossible to take one home for a souvenir. Your girl will ask for one anyway, but don't let that worry you. Give her a picture of yourself with your mouth open. She won't know the difference.

Dugouts are usually inhabited by officers. They are accustomed to them. There is no money in building dugouts, but they are worth a million dollars when you need 'em. One can catch hell and pneumonia in any dugout. You catch the former first and the latter afterwards.

THE GIRL YES CREDIT.

I consider Annabel a clever woman. Unusually clever, in fact. And I inwardly enjoy the opportunities I have of listening while she talks so devotedly to her husband, and then, somewhere in the conversation, brings in the excuse which explains why she must be away from her happy home that evening.

Personally, I know rather well what Annabel does while away. At present she has a wealthy broker on the string, and he adores her. But I am always amused by the deceptions that she practices on that good-natured husband of hers, because for years I have practiced a similar line on my wife.

My wife, you know, is Annabel.

Owing to the failure of the employers to agree to an alteration to the present award, the Southland Sawmill Workers' Union are inviting their members per medium of the secret ballot to express their views on the desirability of going on strike.

DRAUGHTS.

(Conducted by F. Hutchins).

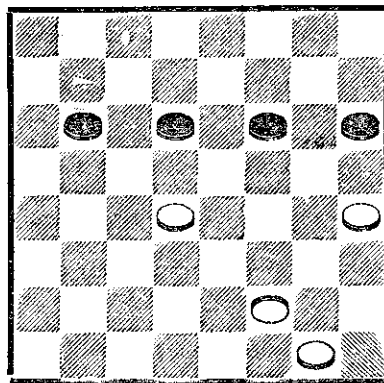
Let science give release
To minds o'erwrought by cars and thought;
Let the checker board be brought—
The battlefield of peace.

Those who wish to maintain interest in the kindly game of draughts are invited to send along games, problems or items that will be of interest to readers of this column. Address, "Draughts Editor, Digger," 23 Biggar street, Invercargill.

PROBLEM 38.

Author Unknown.

(Per favour of the Rev. J. Collie).



Black 9, 10, 11, 12.
White 18, 20, 27, 32.

White to play and draw.—Instructive.

SOLUTION OF PROBLEM 37.

Black 10, 24, King 23.
White 19, 31, King 11.

White to play and win.

19.15 10.19 11.16 24.28
31.27 White wins.

The value of draughts playing, not only as a recreation but in the development of the faculties of perception, concentration and foresight is not often realised by those who have the control and direction of young minds. The following clipping from an old "Draughts World" indicates that there are some exceptions:—The attention which public schools and schoolmasters gave to the game during Barker's tour was a feature that should not be overlooked. At Dows, Iowa, the high school took Barker's exhibition in charge and gave them in the school building. In Minneapolis, Mr Barker, found Dr. Jordan, superintendent of schools an interesting spectator of the game. This is as it should be and no doubt the time is coming when the value of the game as a mental training medium will be more generally understood.

WHILTER.

(By George W. Dent, Crook, Durham).

9.14	29.25	10.19	22.23
23.19	11.15	17.10	d, 7.10
11.15	20.76	6.15	18.22
22.17	12.19	13.6	21.17
7.11	23.16	1.10	22.26
26.23	8.11	26.22	17.13
3.7	16.7	23.26	26.31
30.26	2.11	c, 22.17	13.9
11.16	17.13	25.30	29.25
24.20	11.16	17.13	9.6
15.24	22.17	15.18	25.30
20.11	16.19	13.9	6.2
8.15	31.27	10.15	30.20
28.19	5.9	9.6	2.7
15.24	A, 32.28	30.26	15.18
27.20	15.18	6.2	10.14
7.11	B, 27.24	26.22	18.22
25.22	18.23	2.7	B. wins.
4.8	24.15		

A.—In Game 2125 of September, D.W. (note c.), 32.28 is given as seeming drawable. I submit the above continuation to show that it is a loss.

B.—26.22, 18.23, 27.18, 14.23.—B. wins.

C.—21.17, 26.30, 25.21, 30.25.—B. wins.

D.—7.11, 18.22.—B. wins.

The correspondent of "The Times" at Abo (Finland) reports that the death sentences passed by the Moscow Tribunals during September totalled 1286. They were mostly for treason and desertion, but 20 were for drunkenness. For drastic liquor legislation our local Prohibitionists compare rather unfavourably with the Bolshevik.

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NOBLE'S

DEE STREET, INVERCARGILL.

AN INGENIOUS SWINDLER.

The offer of a reward of 25 centimes for the body of each rat killed in Paris has not been long in producing the inevitable swindler. The authorities had specified that tails were insufficient and that the bodies must be delivered whole in order to prevent the possibilities of swindling. A bright individual, however, had been delivering tails—which, it now appears, were fabricated pieces of string and skin—at the rate of 50 tails daily since the opening of the rat offensive. When asked for the bodies he explained that he had discovered a new rat food which exploded after a few hours, leaving only the tails of the vermin as evidence. The explanation for a while was accepted, but the swindler has now been arrested. In his house 7000 artificial tails have been found.

It is announced that the net profits of J. P. Coats (the well-known cotton thread manufacturers) for last year, after deducting depreciation, excess profits duty, and corporation tax, amounted to £4,164,895.