

Passing Notes.

BY JACQUES.

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

A recent cable states, inter alia, that "Archbishop Clune throughout was trusted by both sides (in the Irish trouble) for his sincerity and honesty of purpose in a search for a settlement." This will be delightful reading for Howard Elliott.

The proposal that the Fallen Soldiers' Memorial should take the form of a bridge over the Estuary—which was at first regarded as a huge joke—has really become so serious that the "News" is actually "barracking" for it. Perhaps it really matters little what shape, the memorial will take, but one does not like to think that any class or district should desire to make capital of it. And one cannot escape the suspicion that the motive behind the suggestion is not altogether devoid of self-interest. It would, no doubt, prove instructive to learn whether the proposal emanated from this side, or the other, of the Estuary.

"I would just as willingly propose the toast of the American team as that of the Australians," said William Massey at the Davis Cup dinner in Auckland. "They are Anglo-Saxons just as we are." True. Except for a trifle of twelve million negroes, an inconsiderable fifteen million Germans, a sprinkling of ten to twelve million Irishmen, a scattered eight or ten millions of Dutch extraction, with a flavouring of Dagoes, Slavs, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Greeks, Scandinavians, Japanese, Chinese, Hindoos, and others from every country on the planet—ranging, say, from a million to four or five million of each—the American nation may be fairly included among the "Boys of the Bull Dog Breed."

"Audi alteram partem"—which is Latin, or French, or something for "There is always another side to the yarn." Like most others I had often felt my blood jump to 212 degrees Fahr. at the frequent newspapers stories of houseowners' heartless refusals to accept as tenants those whose quivers were too full. That a man's children should prove barriers between himself and comfortable domicile seemed simply damnable, and my feelings towards the whole landlord class became distinctly Irish. The other day, however, a friend of mine—a houseowner—gave me a new view of the question, from his standpoint. Though he has never actually refused it, he is reluctant to grant tenancy to those blessed—or cursed—with too numerous progeny. And he met my plain disapproval with his reasons. "I have no objection to children, as such, Jacques," he explained, "but I dread them as vandals. Many tenants are mere birds of passage, and are utterly indifferent to their temporary landlord's interests. Their children are veritable destroying angels, and, unrebuked, strip the papers from the walls, break windows, scratch the paint, carve their names on the doors, try their new knives on the mantels and wardrobes, wreck fences, and gates, and do many other things calculated to silver the landlord's head. If the parents were assured fixtures for any term, and were willing to put up with the damage during their tenancy, it would not be so bad. But that is not often the case. More than once," he continued, mournfully, "when a tenant has terminated his brief occupancy of my property the cost of necessary repairs has totalled more than the whole rent received from him. And all through the children's natural mischievousness and the parents' carelessness. Some tenants, I admit, are as careful of a rented house as of their own. But, unfortunately, these are few, and bear no distinguishing mark. It is really the careless tenant, rather than the landlord, who is responsible for that exclusive "No Children Wanted."

Which reminds me. It was at the time of the 'Frisco earthquake, and, fearing a repetition of the catastrophe, a doting couple sent their children for safety to some friends, a couple of hundred miles away. A week or so later came an urgent telegram: "For God's sake, take the kids away and send along the earthquake instead."

Some years ago some fellow or other wrote:—

"Extremes are counted worst of all;
The golden mean betwixt them both
Doth surest sit, and fears no fall."
We may assume that there was no trouble

in Ireland in those days, else those lines would have been written differently, or not at all. In the distressful country just now the lot of the moderate is not altogether one of peace and joy. On the one hand his premises are hourly liable to seizure by Republican terrorists for the purposes of ambush. To close the door is to invite an almost certain bomb or two, while information to the authorities is quickly followed by the funeral of the informer. If he takes the temporary line of least resistance, and yields to force, his house and furniture are later carefully fired by the military police, or the "Black and Tans." Also, his wife may have to take in washing while he takes on a Government job within four high walls for a few years. Truly, between the two extremes in Ireland the seat of the middle fellow is not nearly so secure as he could wish.

The wisdom of the measure prohibiting the carrying of firearms is open to question. That its purpose will be realised is very doubtful. It is not too much to say that far more firearms are carried for defensive than offensive reasons. Every man has a natural right to protect his own life and property; and, judging by daily newspaper reports, the jeopardy to both has increased to a very disquieting degree since the war. "Hold-ups" are of increasingly frequent occurrence, and often the victim is not only robbed, but sent a long way in the direction of kingdom come as well. With a weapon in his hip pocket, such a one has a fighting chance, and the very possibility of such may—and often does, no doubt—give would-be aggressors pause. The effect of the measure in depriving the law-abiding citizen of such means of self defence, will be to place him absolutely at the mercy of any garrotter stronger than himself. That the criminally inclined will be induced to surrender or abandon their arms is a foolish hope. Detection is difficult, and they are used to risks. And the knowledge that the public is more helpless than before will still further embolden them in their lawlessness.

During the war a certain camp was the dumping place for military damaged goods—or, in other, plainer words, syphilitic soldiers. It is said that there were over sixty thousand (some, in fact, say ninety thousand) such in segregation there. But be the correct figures what they may, the fact that they were not higher we owe almost wholly to the sane, practical efforts of Miss Ettie Rout; that they were not less was largely due to the active and insane opposition of smug, purblind pietists, and the timid poltroonery of those in authority, both in England and here. We all remember that while this heroic woman was fighting, almost single handed, to save our boys from the dreadful consequences of surrender to their natural impulses, deputations of Chadbands and Stigginses demanded that our Government should renounce that woman and all her wicked ways—and she was renounced accordingly. But, careless alike of praise or blame, she moved unswervingly along the path she had chosen, denying herself many of the commonest necessities of life (and even, it is said, disposing of her dearly cherished library) in order to enlarge the means of carrying on her good work. And to-day many a happy wife in New Zealand unknowingly owes this much maligned heroine a big debt of gratitude for the fact that she and her babes are free from the dreadful contamination of syphilis. I have never met a returned soldier who was not ready with unstinted praise for Miss Ettie Rout. The British Government has, I understand, officially recognised and acknowledged the value of her work. But I have yet to learn that Bill Massey has been equally generous or just. Nor do I remember ever seeing one line of apology or retraction from any of her multitudinous cowardly detractors, although they must, by this time, know something of the truth. It is, however, pleasant to note that Miss Rout and her work receive ample vindication at the hands of no less a person than the eminent physician, Sir G. Archdall Reid. In his work on the V.D. he refers most eulogistically to the achievements of Miss Rout, who, he says, "fought almost unaided a most strenuous battle, living among the men, providing disinfectants, lecturing, importuning authorities, writing letters to the press, establishing medical

clubs, and in every possible way endeavouring to stamp out or lessen the scourge." In conclusion he says: "I think that when the names of those who opposed her are forgotten, the memory of this brave lady will be green among the descendants of the valiant men for whose welfare she struggled." I wonder if anyone will ever write such nice words about William Massey, or any of the wowsing crew of whom he seems to stand in such fear.

Pen Pictures of the War.

SERIES VI.

THE HUSH-HUSH BRIGADE.

The "Dunsterforce" or "Hush-Hush" Brigade consisting of 70 officers and 140 N.C.O.'s left England in February 1918, to lead the Armenians and others to victory against the Turks and Bolsheviks. It was a remarkable force consisting entirely of Officers and Non-Coms carefully selected from the English and Colonial forces for their dash and ability and practically every member wore at least one decoration. The theory that called the force into being was that hundreds and thousands of Armenians, Georgians, Persians, Tartars, and Russians of first-class fighting value, only needed leading and training to roll back the Turks upon Constantinople and bar the Bolsheviks from the gates of India.

Major Donohue in "With the Persian Expedition" tells the tale of the force and explodes the theory that the native forces are valuable fighting material. The trenches at Karanja were held by native levies with a stiffening of officers and N.C.O.'s. The Persians as usual became "jumpy" whenever the Turkish bullets hummed in their immediate vicinity, and as they were utterly lacking in elementary fire control they were a source of vexatious perplexity to their British officers and sergeants. One officer, in despair at their utter unreliability under fire, pleadingly suggested that they might be withdrawn and himself left with the two British sergeants to hold the post.

The attack was delivered by the Turks on September 12th. The shock of contact was first felt on the right where the Persians were in position. These latter promptly broke and fled in utter disorder, all attempts to rally them proving futile. Our line was now in the air, so to speak, with the Persians scuttling like rabbits up towards the entrance to the Pass. It was short and bloody work. . .

My strictures on the fighting value of the Persian may appear unduly severe, but I am hitting rather at the theory prevalent in certain quarters that one had only to send British officers into the highways and byways and they would find there "ready made" soldiers endowed with a fine spirit, hardly inferior in quality to our own infantry, men who would stand up to trained and efficient soldiers like the Turks. Having once got the untrained levies into the trenches their British officers were expected to hold them by sheer force of will power to hold them without shutting both eyes. Now the bubble of Persian fighting has been pricked.

THE MALINGERERS.

The following sample of malingering occurred while Major Donohue was out on a rescue expedition with a dozen Persian police and a few N.C.O.'s:—

My little command did not seem at all easy in its mind at the prospect of having a brush with the enemy and every hour that brought us nearer the hill country an increased number of Sowars reported sick and begged to be allowed to fall out. At first I was puzzled by the spread of this sudden malady for the symptoms were identical in each case: severe abdominal pains; but presently the mystery was explained. I encountered on the road a Persian Cossack who had ridden in from the Sarac district and had come across the mountains that lay ahead of us. He volunteered the information that in a village about twenty miles distant he had seen a Turkish cavalry patrol. Our Sowars on hearing this looked very glum and four of them at once complained of violent illness. They rolled on the ground in pretended agony, artfully simulating an acute cholera seizure. This time and without much difficulty I diagnosed the disease as being that of pure funk or what is commonly known in military parlance as "cold feet."

While sympathising with the sufferers I gravely told them that I had instructions to shoot off-hand any of my command who became cholera stricken and to burn their bodies in order to prevent the disease spreading. The result was little short of magical. The "severe pains" disappeared and the patients made

such a wonderful recovery that within half an hour they were able to mount their horses and turn their faces towards Sarab once more, and the "epidemic" did not re-appear.

THE STARVATION OF PERSIA.

Major Donohue graphically describes the starvation of Persia,—not famine, for there was food in the district, in the hands of the profiteering governors of the country. "Men and women, shrivelled and huddled heaps of stricken humanity lay dead in the public ways, their stiffened fingers still clutching a bunch of grass plucked from the road-side, or a few roots with which they had sought to lessen the tortures of death by starvation. At other times a gaunt, haggard figure bearing some resemblance to a human being would crawl on all fours across the road in front of the approaching car and with signs rather than speech plead for a crust of bread. Hard indeed would be the heart that could resist such an appeal! So over board went our ration supply of army biscuits, bit by bit, on this our first day in the hungry land of the Shah. . .

"At Kirind the Governor paid an official call on General Byron. He sent a servant to announce his coming, and presently arrived accompanied by a retinue of unkempt hungry-looking officials all wearing the chocolate-coloured sugar-loaf hat peculiar to Persians. The Governor himself was a fat pompous individual, with a drooping moustache, unshaven face and no colour. We wondered at first whether the stubble on his cheek was due to slothfulness or was a sign of mourning. We discovered it was the latter, a brother of his having died recently through over partaking in food at some local festivity. To look at the portly form of the Governor made it evident that every one was not going hungry. As he sat cross-legged on the floor, his fingers entangled in front of his breast and twirling his thumbs, he looked exactly what he was—the personification of hopeless incapacity and lethargy. 'What ashes are fallen on my head' he moaned aloud, by way of expressing sorrow for the death of so many of the villagers from starvation. Yet he himself had done nothing to lessen the ravages of famine in the district, and was content to see the wretched inhabitants die without moving a finger to help them. His attitude was typical of officialdom throughout this starving land. The Governor was a land-owner and probably had plenty of grain hidden away waiting for the day when the British Commissariat, in order to feed starving Persians would come and buy it at inflated prices, thus enriching a gang of hoarding avaricious rascals.

"At Maruadan, in order to supply the poor with money wherewith to purchase bread, some three thousand human wrecks were employed by the British on the nominal work of road mending at four francs a day. Our object was rather to be content with some colourable imitation of a quid pro quo for cash disbursements rather than to exact a stiff day's labour from people wholly incapable of performing it. In our blissful ignorance of Persian psychology we fondly imagined that the equivalent of £400 a day paid out in wages would alleviate the prevailing distress, but we had not reckoned on Persian avarice, selfishness, and untrustworthiness of character. The price of bread, somewhat to our surprise did not fall, in fact it became dearer than ever. The bakers saw to that. Money was beginning to circulate more freely; the very poor were no longer empty fisted, so up went the price of bread. Moreover the system did not ameliorate the lot of the women and children, for the men after satisfying their own wants, preferred to dissipate their earnings in a nightly carouse in an opium den. What a nation to overthrow the Bolsheviks and Turks! So a system of soup kitchens was inaugurated. The profiteers in wheat circulated the rumour that the soup was poisonous, but the pangs of hunger forced the starving population to take the risk. Not a single one died of poisoning, the profiteers were discredited, and the British were thereafter the idols of the populace.

"By a ruse of war the grain-owners were induced to disgorge some of their hoarded stocks. Purposely concocted telegrams which passed between Bagdad and Maruadan made it appear that large supplies of wheat were being forwarded from Mesopotamia, whereupon the local Maruadan hoarders rushed into the market and sold readily at daily diminishing rates until something like normal prices were reached once more. The bottom had fallen out of the wheat ring."

For the operations of the Dunsterforce, the occupation of Maruadan, Teheran, the attempt to race the Turks to Tabriz, the fighting at Bakau, the treachery of the Armenians there, and the subsequent

withdrawal, the masterly quelling of mutiny at Maruadan, and a hundred other exciting incidents we refer the reader to the original work. It was a war unique of its kind waged distinctly off the beaten track among tribes whose names are legendary and to whom aeroplane and automobiles were undreamed of marvels. The honours of the campaign seemed to rest with the cars, principally the armoured cars. In dashing raids, protecting the flanks, covering the retreat, breaking up incipient attacks of Turks or brigands their work was splendid. We shall conclude this article with a sample of their work:—"In the attack on Petrovsk the armoured car unit lead under the command of Captain Crossing. Their fire threw the Bolshevik troops into confusion, and when the latter broke, the cars pursued them through the town capturing several hundred of their number. A battery of six inch guns which had subjected the attacking force to an annoying fire was with extraordinary temerity engaged by the armoured cars and put out of action by the simple but daredevil expedient of dashing up within range and

LIGHT AND SHADE.

(By "Commentator.")

"The ordinary affairs of this mortal world are run by Scotsmen, and when we get to the upper world, a Scotsman will be looking after us there," says Mr Lloyd George.

Hail Caledonia, rugged land,
Your sons control the world with ease;
And up above I understand,
'Tis a MacPeter keeps the keys.

A Dunedin land agent states that the greater proportion of the houses at present on the market are two-storied ones. Just so—the sellers and the buyers and then there is the tenant's—but that is another story.

Five shiploads of immigrants are due to arrive shortly.—News item.

Immigration is the sincerest form of flattery.

"Baby's Record" is the title of an artistic little booklet issued as a Christmas souvenir by the firm of Colin McDonald, R. B. Caws and Co. It is common knowledge that with at least two members of the firm the babies are still "white as snow," whilst the other two are still a few gallops short of the matrimonial stakes.

A correspondent writes stating that the most effective way of developing industries in Southland would be by having an exhibition in Invercargill. We pass the suggestion on to the Southland League with the comment that lots of slow growing things do better under glass.

Another new tax—this time on our credulity. Cr McDonald states that he does not do more than a shilling's worth of tram riding in a year.

It is a common thing for women to assume the duties of motherhood before 18. Occasionally men do so.—Brisbane "Standard."

These Australian men are wonderful. It must be the climate.

Through a painter hanging his pot on an electric cable while he was painting a standard, the whole of the Melbourne electric tram services were held up for 40 minutes one day last week.—"Southland News."

A new development of the "Go Slow" policy we presume.

A gardening acquaintance who has just returned from Sydney tells of an experience he had regarding weed eradicators. He answered an advertisement which claimed to provide a weed destroyer for 15/6, which would last a gardener with an acre allotment for at least three or four years. Its effect on the weeds, the advertisement went on to say, was almost instantaneous, besides acting as a soil fertiliser. My friend bit immediately, forwarded the 15/6 and received by return—a garden hoe. He sought legal opinion on the matter but was advised that the advertisement claimed nothing but what it could accomplish.

Silent contempt is the noblest way a man can express himself—when the other fellow is bigger.

Has anyone ever foreseen the necessity of establishing a league for the prevention of the sale of men's neckwear to feminine shoppers during the holiday season. If such a league gets going I will make one. I have just received my seventh necktie.