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WHEN the sailor on the look-out makes the welcome cry from the crow's nest, he has just caught sight of the top of a mountain, but he has discerned the land and it is welcome news, no matter if it be a bleak and barren mountain.

But let us get down to the plains. Here we find the real land that will yield up its hidden treasure to the man who seeks it.

To the sailor, whether mountain or plain, it is merely land, quality not concerning him. But the practical landsman wants quality, and he will recognise the following as the right stuff.

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In any line,

At any time,

And especially now.

For a Soda Drink,

I do not think

You can surpass,

A delicious glass

Of our assortment.

"WHEN THE VICAR LIED."

(Continued from page 2.)

"I am—glad—very glad," he murmured. "I have not lived a good life and I should have continued bad to the end, but for you."

The vicar did not speak.

"You told a lie to save me," went on the man, "and that was the turning point in my life. From that moment what manhood remained in me came into being again. Since then I have starved and suffered, but I would have gone to my death gladly rather than the lie which you told to save me should have proved in vain. From then I made up my mind that nothing should make me go wrong again!"

"God bless you, my son," whispered John Stewart brokenly.

A silence fell upon them, for the clergyman was praying, and while he prayed, the soul of the man passed into the Beyond.

The Rev. John Stewart sat at his desk and gazed at the small gold watch. It was the gift from his parishioners, but it had been the means of working strange things. It had been the cause of changing a worthless outcast into a hero; it had brought about the saving of two precious little lives; and for the man who had played his part so well, it had won a peace which passes all earthly understanding.

The end.

INVERCARGILL R.S.A.**ANNUAL MEETING.**

The annual meeting of the Invercargill Returned Soldiers' Association was held in the Soldiers' Club on Friday night, Mr R. B. Caws (president) presiding over a large attendance.

Annual Report.

The annual report set out that a large increase in members was noticeable during the year, the membership having grown from 533 to 1716. The policy of the R.S.A. had always been sound, and had followed a line of action which, while recognising the claims of returned soldiers and their dependents upon the country, had also studied the resources of the country to meet the claims put forward, and by this means the R.S.A. had gained the confidence of the public. The increase of members early in the year decided the Association to form country sub-associations, and twelve were formed throughout the district. The appreciation of the R.S.A. was due to the Repatriation Department for the good work it had done during the year. The Department was in full sympathy with the returned men, and it was safe to say that no other department carried out its duties more sympathetically than the Repatriation Department. The Association had devoted a great amount of attention and time to land settlement, and lost no opportunity of pressing the importance of opening up more land under the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act. There was no doubt that a bold land policy was required to enable those lands that now were idle to be cut up for closer settlement. The N.Z.R.S.A. was preparing a land roll, and all those men requiring land had been requested to furnish that Association with full particulars of their requirements. The R.S.A. had pressed the Government to remove some of the anomalies existing under the present gratuity scheme, and a special Appeal Board had been established to deal with these. There was no doubt that the pensions at present granted were inadequate, and the Association had pressed for an increase by the addition of plus percentages up to 150 per cent. With regard to limbless men, it had urged that when proceeding for the fitting of limbs they should receive allowances that would bring the amount they received, in addition to actual expenses, up to the wages lost during their absence for fitment. The Association had also asked that the Financial Assistance Act be handed over to the Repatriation Department for administration, and unless that request was acceded to there appeared little possibility of men receiving assistance from the Act that was supposedly set up to grant assistance. The year just ended had been a busy one, some 250 individual cases having been dealt with, and it was apparent from the majority of those cases that returned soldiers and their dependents had not always obtained what they were justly entitled to without having to resort to the R.S.A. for assistance.

The Balance Sheet showed a credit of £561, an increase of £60 on last year.

The report and balance sheet were adopted.

The election of office-bearers for the ensuing year resulted as follows:—President: Mr Duncan Rae (unanimously elected). Executive: Messrs R. B. Caws, A. St. C. McGregor, Rev. H. McLean, Rev. H. G. Gilbert, R. M. Stead, W. Sutton, D. Cuthbertson, W. Grieve, A. Macklam and F. G. Hall-Jones. Auditor: Mr R. R. Binnie (re-elected).

In connection with the Committee it was resolved, on the recommendation of the retiring executive, that any member of the executive absent from three consecutive meetings without a valid excuse, should cease to be a member of the executive and that the vacancy so caused be filled by the next in order on the ballot sheet.

Repatriation.

The Secretary, being the Associations' representative on the Repatriation Board, submitted a report of the Board's work

for the year, which set out, inter alia, that during that period advances amounting to £23,167, representing 119 cases, had been made. Many of these were assistance to soldiers starting in business, the majority of whom seemed to be firmly established. Furniture loans amounted to £9402, representing 216 cases, loans for tools of trade, £453, representing 28 cases. A total of 111 men, as against 65 last year, were receiving training. These were apprentices and subsidised men, a large proportion of them being disabled men, who were learning new trades. There had been 317 men placed in employment and £29 had been paid off for unemployed sustenance, representing 9 cases. Repayments were being made regularly, which proved that the returned soldier was making good. In conclusion the report paid a tribute to employers of labour and trades unions for their assistance in repatriation work, and also commended the sympathetic and just methods of dealing with the cases adopted by the Board. "A pension is not considered, in making a subsidised payment," said Mr Graham, "and I can assure you that if other departments attended to soldiers' affairs in the spirit that characterises the Repatriation Board, there would be little room for complaint."

The report was adopted.

Soldiers' Club.

The report of the workings of the Soldiers' Club for the year stated that though the attendance had improved, it had not been satisfactory. The Executive would recommend that an independent Club Committee be formed, so that all the time of that Committee could be devoted to the welfare of the Club. The Committee also recommended certain improvements to increase the comfort of the Clubroom, and suggested that during the winter months, debates, dances and concerts be held, a ladies' committee to be formed to assist in the latter.

In moving the adoption of the Report, the Chairman briefly set out the financial position, stating that although there was a deficit of about £195 showing, there was no cause for alarm in the position, as the Committee did not expect the Club to be anything like self-supporting at the present time.

The report and recommendations were adopted, and the following Committee set up: Messrs R. Stewart, Frank Wright, J. Dunbar, W. Paton, and Dr R. McDonald Wilson.

The R.S.A. Paper.

The managing-editor of the "Digger" (Mr H. Blake) reported that he was confident in the ultimate success of the paper. Its circulation was already making itself felt, and it was being more widely supported than was at first anticipated. There were 106 agents in the country, and the "Digger" was penetrating as far as Balclutha, Cromwell, and Arrowtown. They hoped to make it a force in the community and a help to returned soldiers generally, and they also were striving to make it an advertising medium of recognised value to business men. Though the first cost of production had been high, the first edition had shown a profit, and each edition since had shown a profit. So he considered the position to be extremely hopeful, and did not for one moment anticipate that there would be any deficit showing at the end of the year.

The following committee of management was appointed: Messrs Connor, A. Glass, F. G. Hall-Jones, R. B. Caws, and H. Macalister.

The Band Question.

The question of the Association having its own Band came in for a good deal of discussion. Some speakers were of the opinion that there was a good deal of dissatisfaction amongst members at the somewhat hurried manner in which the Hibernian Band was appointed, and they considered that it would be desirable to have it re-discussed by a general meeting. Each speaker made it clear that he did not desire to cast any reflection upon or belittle in any way the work of the band, but they thought that it would have the effect of silencing outside criticism if the matter were again gone into.

It was decided that the matter be reopened at next general meeting.

Votes of thanks to the chair and retiring executive concluded an excellent meeting.

BREAD FOR "BRICKS."

All "old inhabitants" of Gallipoli will remember the armistice in May, 1915, when for a whole day not a shot was fired at Anzac, and friend and foe wandered about the landscape trying to imagine that the war was but a myth.

Advantage was taken of the temporary cessation of hostilities to get a closer acquaintance with friend Abdul, and many little conferences were held. Now, Abdul had a plentiful supply of bread, which we sadly lacked, and he was quite willing to exchange the staff of life with our substitute—Spiller and Baker's "roofing tiles" and "dog biscuits." You can lay odds we exchanged readily, and at the same time fervently hoped for an armistice about every second day.

The sequel came a few nights later. A solitary Australian was on duty at the end of a trench on Pope's Hill, just about 30 yards or so from the enemy. Perhaps he was thinking of home and mother, perhaps of Cairo—I know not—but suddenly he was brought down to earth by the sight of a dusky face peering over the trench about six inches in front of him. For a moment of terror he expected "mafiah," but the visitor was seeking joy for himself. The Turk passed over a loaf of bread, with a whisper: "Mistah, give it biscuit, very good."

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.)

Dear Student,—In your Nature Column of April 16th, appears a very interesting communication from Mr Jules Tapper, regarding the survival of native birds on the Titi Islands. On this matter I would like to hear more particulars, and there is no one more able to give them than Mr Tapper. In the first place, were the imported birds such as sparrows, thrushes, etc., to be seen? This is in regard to the food supply which some observers have held to be the cause of the disappearances of the native species. The more hardy or at least the more adaptive European species being able to starve out the less energetic native ones.

In this connection can you or any of your readers tell me if this disappearance of the native birds contemporary with the introduction of the imported ones, has been noticed in any other country than New Zealand. The clearing of the forest is not confined to New Zealand. Australia, North America and other parts have all been altered by the white man's cultivation, and no doubt its effect on the fauna of other countries will have been recorded by naturalists in these parts, but at the moment I cannot recall any notes on the matter. Any information on this subject would be appreciated by myself and perhaps others. Yours etc.,

BUSH LOVER.

I must thank "Bush Lover" for opening up this subject of the disappearance of our native birds. A lot of information is still needed on the subject and comment thereon will be appreciated.

Mr Tapper is at present on a voyage to Auckland but I hope to hear from him in due course. Mr Guthrie Smith in his highly entertaining and valuable record, "Mutton birds and other birds," does not mention the existence of imported birds on the islands, though I think they are to be found on Stewart Island.

I do not think the imported birds have had so much to do with the rarity of the native birds as the natural enemies introduced by man. The elimination of the forest would cause a great decrease in food supply. Even so however some of the bush birds seem to hold their own very well. They even invade the town. Bush birds are in the hedges round my house, and I have seen this close at hand. On the other hand blackbirds and chaffinches were noticed in the wild country at the back of Manapouri. I think however it will have diminished the chance of existence of the native birds. I have consulted a number of authorities but can find nothing directly bearing on the subject. Mr Guthrie Smith seems to put nearly the whole of the blame on to the rat, but particularly the black species. I quote the following from the before mentioned book:—

"Rats are the worst enemies of our birds; and perhaps the bush or tree rat is even more destructive than his grey relative. The former is really the old English black rat. On each of our mainland camps at Stewart Island, and also on one of our islet camps we were visited by one or two of these rats and the damage done by them was of the smallest. But although it is comparatively harmless to man and his property, it is the black rat that threatens the extinction of many of our forest birds. Even the weasels and stoats I believe do less harm, for though more blood thirsty and wanton in their hunting, their numbers are insignificant compared with these of the rat, they get throughout the colony the credit of all the damage done,—often I think because the result of their work is more apparent. A rat will devour his prey, whereas a stoat or weasel will after sucking his victim's blood, proceed on his way. Only those who see much of our bird life can appreciate the injury done in forest lands by this black rat."

Again he says, "In a part of Stewart Island where the wekas have been killed, I have seen the eggs of a colony of terns entirely destroyed in a single night; and on rat haunted islands, also in that region, have, hour after hour, got only nests plundered and containing broken shell." Space does not permit of further quotation but I hope to return to the subject later.

Mr Guthrie Smith puts in a strong plea for the encouragement of the weka. He considers this bird one of the main factors in the preservation of the other natives. The small tithe of eggs taken by it being a life insurance premium paid by the rest of the birds.

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