

Passing Notes.

BY JACQUES.

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

What vile looking wretches our enemies are.

Judges are suggesting more drastic penalties for bigamists. How would two years in one house with the two wives suit?

The self-made man has often little reason to crow about the job.

A British shipping company estimates its losses through cargo broaching at £250,000 annually. The shearers shorn.

The King's speech at the prorogation of the British Parliament "deplores the campaign of violence and outrage of a small Irish section seeking to sever Ireland from the Empire, and hopes for a return to constitutional methods!" "Irish violence and outrage!" "Constitutional methods!" H—m—m—m. Did I hear anybody laugh? Or any mention of Black and Tans?

Countering the Mayor of Barrow's opinion that "there are many ways to heaven," Mrs Bramwell Booth declares emphatically that "there is only one way." Exactly. Our way.

At the same meeting, the Mayor announced that his religion was "the brotherhood of man," whereon an excited Christain lady rose and declared that he "was not saved." The brotherhood of man must be a terrible thing, to damn a fellow like that.

Under the heading:—

SACRED MONUMENTS.

DISCOVERIES IN PALESTINE.

The "Times" reports the unearthing of among other things, "a footprint, a yard long, embedded in the sandstone." From which we may infer the extreme antiquity and sanctity of the John Hop.

At the outset of the war Lloyd George told us that "we were fighting not merely to beat the German, but for a better world, a brighter life." He was right. We licked the Germans long ago, but the fight for the other odds and ends is still going on, and seems likely to last for a good while yet.

In his New Year message Mr Massey again stresses the fact that "the loyalty of the people of this country to the British Crown is beyond question, and any attempt to interfere with the integrity of the Empire would receive little support in this Dominion." "I will never-never leave Mr Micawber."

The Pope, in a recent manifesto, declares that "five" evils afflict present society: (1) Lack of discipline; (2) hatred among brothers; (3) the craving for pleasures and enjoyment; (4) refusal to work; (5) loss of faith in God. Surely this catalogue is too limited. It might easily have included such things as the profiteer, the P.P.A., bad whisky, Bill Massey's policy, empty pockets, a night in the "booby-hatch," land agents, long sermons, nagging wives, the Southland climate, the public press, the price of butter, and a whole host of others. Bill Hinchey or Tom O'Byrne could furnish His Holiness with a pretty complete list.

MR Moate, the striking stewards' secretary, replying to Mr Justice Higgins, states that the latter is only heaping coals of fire to widen the breach. So runs a Sydney cable of the 21st ult. There seems some slight metaphorical confusion here. To most of us the words "coals of fire," connote attempt at reconciliation by kindness. "Return good for evil," said the Master Moralist; "so shall you heap coals of fire on your enemy." But possibly Mr Moate's experience has taught him the futility of such a course. The peacemaker's lot, like that of the policeman, is not always a happy one. Very often, his pacific efforts rather intensify than allay the trouble, and, as like as not, he himself, is dragged into the squabble. All this, however merely by the way. But the phrase reminded me of a rather good story. Here it is:—

The priest one morning received a visit from one of the daughters of the church, who had a long and harrowing tale to tell of her worse half's multitudinous faults and failings. And she wanted his Reverence's advice and assistance.

she said, "and wants to fight me, and

"Tis drunk he do be ivry night now," breaks up the furniture and bothers the neighbours with his noise, and plays up the devil ivryway. I've tried ivrything I can think of to quiet him, but devil a bit can I do it. I wish your Rivrence wud go along an' frighten him a bit."

The priest, who knew something of his visitor's temper and who more than suspected that the fault was not wholly on Pat's side, eyed her shrewdly for a minute, and then said:—

"Mary, you say you have tried everything possible to bring about a better state of things between you and Pat. Are you sure. For instance, have you ever tried the good old plan of heaping coals of fire on his head?"

Mary's eyes gleamed with a sudden light. "No, your Rivrence, I never thought of that. I tried pouring boiling wather on him once or twice, but coals of fire — Begobs I never thought of that."

It was during an assault case brought by an Auckland "spiritualistic healer" against his apparently long-suffering wife. The plaintiff, examined by Mr Singer, "refused to say whether he had ever given her the 'massage kiss.' . . . To his knowledge, he had never given her the 'massage kiss.'" There is something new here. Of forms and varieties of kisses we have a many. There is "the first kiss of love," that many an old married man looks sorrowfully back upon as marking the first fatal step towards his subsequent undoing; also the "mother's kiss," which usually follows a spanking, as jam comes after castor oil; likewise the "kiss of peace," of which the late Mr Stiggins (vide "Pickwick Papers") was so proficient and admirable an exponent; the "angel's kiss," an unsubstantial and unsatisfying sort of thing; the "kiss of betrayal," "the zephyr's kiss," and a whole lot of others too numerous and varied to catalogue. But the "massage kiss!" Truly, we live and learn, and, despite old Solomon, there are some new things under the sun. Presumably, the "massage kiss" is a technical term for the osculatory treatment of the seat of disease. And, since we are told of the "electric" and "magnetic" qualities of kissing, such treatment may be at once beneficial to the patient, and pleasant to both parties. That is, of course, if the operator can always choose the location of the complaint. But, unfortunately, the human anatomy has many parts, differing from one another in dignity and glory, and disease is not very particular as to its place of residence.

And that reminds me of another story. One of our twentieth century educational prodigies, aged seven, had fallen down and hurt himself rather severely. His maiden aunt, witnessing the accident, ran to his assistance and comfort, and, as is the manner of women, cuddled him and crooned out: "And was auntie's poor little darling hurt? Let aunties kiss the place, and make it well again." One can imagine her feelings as the young Diogenes replied: "Madam, having regard to the location of my injuries, I cannot possibly acquiesce in your suggestion, since the operation proposed by you would prove not only embarrassing to both of us, but would be subversive of every rule of decency."

Save for a somewhat flushed face, and a seemingly shrunken hat, Bill appeared little the worse for his holiday festivities when he dropped in last Sunday.

"Well, Jase," he opened, reflectively, "The old year's gone an' the new one's 'ere."

This fact being attested by the calendar admitted no argument and called for no comment, so I waited.

"Yes," he continued, "it's 1921 now, though we'll still go on writin' '1920' on our letters for a while yet, an' swearin' about it. Funny 'ow 'abit sticks, isn't it? But there's funnier things than that about new years, an' the daddy of 'em is our good resolutions. I once read in a book that 'the road to 'ell is paved with good intentions.' I fancy most of that pavin' must be done just as the old year begins to stagger on 'is last legs. About that time we look back on what we've done and been since 'e started out on 'is promisin' career, an' were sorter dissatisfied with ourselves, an' sorry fer the wicked things we've done an' the good things we

didn't do. Then we get suddenly pious (p'raps its the beer) an' begin workin' overtime makin' first-class, gold-mounted resolutions for the future. But it's not much use startin' straight away; the proper time to turn over that lovely, spotless leaf is midnight, December the thirty-first. Then, from the last stroke of the clock our lives are goin' to be of a kind to make the angels feel rather shoddy. We're goin' to leave all our faults an' failin's behind us, an' be everything we should be, an' ain't. At twelve, midnight, precisely, December the thirty-first—that's when. Of course, we know in our 'arts we're not goin' to keep our lovely resolutions. We never do. I only know one man who ever did—an' 'e died at five past twelve one New Year mornin'. Most of 'em are smashed to smithereens January the first; an' none of 'em survive January the second. Still, that's no reason why we shouldn't enjoy the luxury of makin' 'em. I've 'eard it said, Jase, that "to be virtuous is to be 'appy," an' I think most of us like to kid ourselves into bein' 'appy by promisin' ourselves that, whatever we are now, we're goin' to be very virtuous an' respectable some time or other—by-an'-bye. But it's no good startin' too soon—we might miss a lot of fun if we did."

And the homely old philosopher walked off, possibly to mourn over his shattered resolutions in the privacy of the shed where he keeps his beer locked up.

Pen Pictures of the War.

(SERIES V.)

THE SUBMARINES.

(From "Bartimeus," in "The Navy Eternal").

— I. —

At three o'clock one summer morning a British submarine was sitting on the surface admiring the face of the waters. There was a waning moon, and by its light she presently observed a line of German cruisers stealing across her bow. She waited, because they were steering west, and it is not the custom of such craft to go west alone; two minutes later she sighted the smoke of five battle cruisers also going west. She allowed the leading ship to come within 800 yards and fired a torpedo at her; missed, and found herself in the middle of a broadside of shell of varying calibres, all pitching unpleasantly close. She dived like a cat, and with such good-will that she struck the bottom and stopped there for a quarter of an hour putting things straight again.

At 4 a.m. the submarine climbed to the surface and found two squadrons of battle-ships blackening the sky with smoke, screened by destroyers on all sides and brooded over by Zeppelins. She fired at two miles range and missed the flagship, halved the range and fired again—this time at the last ship in the line—and blew a hole in her side through which you could drive a motor omnibus. She then dived to a considerable depth and sat and listened to the "chug" of the destroyers' propellers circling overhead and the detonations of their explosive charges. These gradually grew fainter as the hunt moved away on a false trail.

The submarine then came up and investigated; the remainder of the German fleet had vanished, leaving their crippled sister to the ministrations of the destroyers, who were visible casting about in all directions, "apparently" says the report dryly, "searching for me." The stricken battleship with a heavy list, was wallowing in the direction of the German coast, sagging through a right-angle as she went. The menace that stalked her fetched a wide circle, reloading on the way, and took up a position ahead favourable for the coup de grace.

She administered it at 1,500 yards range and dived, praising Allah.

Later, having breakfast to the accompaniment of distant explosions of varying forces, she rose to the surface again. It was a clear sunny morning with perfect visibility; the battleship had vanished and on the horizon the smoke of the retreating destroyers made faint spirals against the blue.

— II. —

A British submarine on patrol sighted through her periscope the periscope of another submarine. So close were the boats that to discharge a torpedo would have been as dangerous to the one as the other, and the commanding officer of the British boat accordingly rammed his opponent. Neither boat was travelling fast, and he had fully three seconds in which to make his decision and act on it.

Locked together thus they dropped down through the depths; the German blowing

all his tanks in furious efforts to rise the other flooding every available inch of space in a determined effort to force his adversary down and drown him.

Now the hull of a submarine is tested to resist the pressure of the water up to a certain depth; after that the joints leak, plates buckle, and finally the whole structure collapses like a crumpled egg-shell. With one eye on the depth-gauge the British lieutenant forced the German down to the safety limit and, foot by foot, beyond it. Then gradually they heard the enemy begin to bump along their bottom; he had broken away from the death-lock and was rolling helplessly aft beneath their hull. The sounds ceased and the needle on the dial jerked back and began to retrace its course. The British submarine rose, to contemplate a circle of oil slowly widening on the surface in the region of the encounter.

— III. —

Few of these grim games of Peep-bo! are without a moral of some sort. A gentleman adventurer within the mouth of a certain river was aware of a considerable to-do on board flag-draped tugs and river-craft; he himself shared in the universal elation on sighting through his periscope a large submarine, also gaily decked with flags, evidently proceeding on a trial trip. He waited until he was abreast of him and then torpedoed her, blowing her sky-high. Remained then the business of getting home.

Dashing blindly towards the open sea with periscope beneath the surface, he stuck on a sandbank and there lay barely submerged. A Zeppelin at once located him; but in view of his position and the almost certain prospect of his capture, forebore to drop bombs; instead she indicated his position to a flotilla of destroyers and stood by to watch the fun. The commander of the submarine raised his periscope for a final look round and found a destroyer abreast his stern torpedo tube. He admits that things looked blackish, but there was the torpedo in the tube and there was the destroyer.

He fired and hit her; the next instant, released from the embrace of the mud by the shock of the discharge, the submarine quietly slid into deep water and returned home.

In big brass letters on the ebonite panel in the interior of the submarine is her motto—one word: "Resurgam."

— IV. —

A certain lieutenant in command of a British submarine was returning from patrol in waters frequented by German men-of-war, when he rescued the crew of a Danish steamer torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine. It was blowing a gale and his timely intervention saved the lives of the castaways.

The Depot Wardroom listened to the tale and approved. It even warned the hero that he might find himself the possessor of a pair of presentation binoculars if he weren't careful. The hero expressed his views on that aspect of the affair (they need not be repeated here), and straightway forgot the incident.

He was on his way back from his next spell of patrol work a few weeks later when he again encountered in an open both the crew of another torpedoed ship. They were Dutch this time, and they had been pulling for nineteen hours in a winter gale, so that their hands were flayed to the bone. These he also rescued and brought back with him to the base; thence they were sent in comfort to their native land to reflect at leisure on Germany's methods of conducting submarine warfare, as compared with those of Great Britain.

A few days later a deputation of his brother submarine captains summoned the hero of the wardroom (what time the sun had risen over the force yard), and there, to the accompaniment of cocktails and an illuminated address, solemnly presented him with a pair of binoculars subtly fashioned out of beer bottles: in the wording of the gunner's supply note that accompanied them "complete in case, tin, black-japanned." That all things might be done decently and in order, the recipient was bidden to sign an official receipt-note for the same.

Now the moral of this may appear a trifle obscure; but it serves to illustrate the attitude towards life of the navy-under-the-sea. The lives of these defenceless victims of Hunnish brutality had been saved, therefore the occasion demanded not heroics but high mirth. The hero of the affair admits to having partly missed the joke. But this may be accounted for by the fact that the binoculars were empty and that later on when presented with his monthly mess bill he discovered that the official receipt which bore his signature included the cocktails ordered by the deputation during the presentation ceremony. So much for the jest of life.

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