

Minor Matters.

Although a soldier's life is not all beer and skittles, I daresay the thousands of cigarettes, the contributions of preserved fruits, the lollies—"from a Southland veteran"—the opium pills, the quinine, the music of the donated piano, and the memory of that tobacco bit of bunting, will (says a writer in a Nelson paper) make matters lively over the dreary ten thousand miles of ocean to Algoa Bay. Then the presence of a choice three hundred chargers will be welcome in case of any accident to the propeller shaft, for these noble animals can then be quickly turned into that Parisian favourite, "horse-beef." Dr. Bakewell used to delight to tell how the men of the Light Brigade at Balaklava, knowing the forlorn character of their ride, nonchalantly took out their tobacco pipes and smoked as they rode across the valley towards the Russian batteries. If our contingent wishes to emulate these heroes, they must be careful not to use up the cigarettes before they reach "Africa's sunny fountains," otherwise select Port Elizabeth and the Transvaal.

An old Hawkesbury settler was, according to the "Bulletin," up before the Court the other day, charged with making too violent love to a woman; and got off. The old man was 85; so there's hope for Australia yet. Case recalls that of another old Hawkesbury identity—a chicken of 80 or so, who drank his pint of rum daily (local made), and threw on it. The ancient had noticed with pain some of his neighbours being rammed into ready-made coffins, and charged a big price for them, too; and he thought he could do better than that. He had a nice bit of seasoned scantling in the yard, so he got a carpenter to measure him up, and make a coffin which should be a credit to the "Oxbery." When the job was half done, a thought struck the old man, and he went out and stopped the work. There was his son, a lanky six-footer, had heart disease, and might die any moment. The old man was only five-foot-four; but he reckoned that, if the coffin was made to fit the son, he could get into it too, if his turn came first, and all the contingencies would be provided for. So they measured up the son, and made the coffin his size, with a neat little sliding partition at the bottom that the old man could rest his feet against or the son could take out altogether. Sure enough, three months later, the son died, and they took the partition out, and gave him the right sort of funeral. Then the old man reflected that there was a bit of scantling left, and the carpenter set to work at his size, and finished a very neat suit of dovetailing—which is still waiting.

At the close of the late session, which terminated the thirteenth Parliament of New Zealand, it is interesting (says the "Post") to note the periods of service given by the leading members of our Legislature. Sir Maurice O'Rorke has attended no fewer than 40 sessions of Parliament. He was first sworn in as a member on the 3rd June, 1861. Seven years later Mr Rolleston came into the House, and he has seen 28 sessions. Major Steward has attended 27 sessions, and Captain Russell 26. The other members who have been longest in the House are:—Mr Seddon, 25 sessions; Mr J. W. Thomson (Clutha), 24; Messrs W. C. Buchanan, A. J. Cadman, and John McKenzie, 22; Mr A. R. Guinness, 19; Hon. Thos. Thompson and Mr T. Parata, 18; Messrs Scobie Mackenzie and George Fisher, 16; Hon. Mr Carroll, Messrs George Hutchison, John Joyce, F. Lawry, J. G. Ward, Robert Thompson (Marsden), 15; Hon. W. Hallson, Jones, 12; Messrs W. Carmichael, A. W. Jones, R. M. Houston, J. W. Kelly, R. Hogge, R. C. Mills, R. Moore, W. W. Tanner, 11; Mr Felix McGuire, 10. Mr Hawkins is the only member who has been present for only one session.

Mrs Goodwin, better known as "Biddy of Buller," died at Keefon last Thursday of senile decay, aged 96 years. As far as can be ascertained she was the only female miner in New Zealand, having pursued that occupation up till about three years ago, when failing health compelled her to desist.

A little contrivance that promises to confer a boon on the ladies and bring a handsome fortune to the owners has just been patented in New Zealand and Australia—a spiral hair-pin, the invention of Mr E. R. Godward, of Invercargill. It operates simply, cannot fall out, and from its construction one half of the ordinary number of pins will suffice to hold the hair securely even in a gale of wind. Arrangements are now under way to obtain the patent rights in America and Europe. An inspection of the pin and its application to the hair warrants the belief that it will come into firm favour and completely out the one now in use, and which is provocative of no end of annoyance to the fair sex.

A contributor to "To-Day" retells a story which went the rounds a few years ago. A man was going by the night mail to Carlyle. Before starting he called the guard, tipped him heavily, and said, "I am going to sleep, and am a heavy sleeper, but I must get out at Carlisle. Get me out at all hazards. Probably I shall swear and fight, but never mind that. Roll me out on the platform if you can't get me out any other way." The guard promised, the train started, the man went to sleep, and when he woke up he found himself at Glasgow? He called the guard, and expressed his views in very powerful language. The guard listened with a sort of admiring expression, but when the aggrieved passenger paused for breath, he said, "Eh, mon, ye have a fine gift o' swearin', but ye canna haud a candle to the ither mon whom I rolled out on the platform at Carlisle."

That the contingent for the Transvaal was splendidly equipped becomes strikingly manifest on looking down the long list of articles provided by the authorities, says the "Times." In addition to all the necessary horse gear, arms and uniforms, the men were provided with cholera belts, great coats, holdalls complete with brush and comb, knife, fork, spoon and housewife, several different kinds of shirts and even blacking and shoe brushes were not forgotten. Those in charge evidently spared neither money nor trouble in fitting out the troop.

Apropos of this and of the collection of raisins, tobacco, cigarettes, etc., etc., for the men during the Waitera's voyage, one old soldier, who has seen much roughing, called on a Southland editor with a suggestion that some philanthropist should invite tenders for a supply "of lollipops packed in water proof paper, sucking bottles, and preserved milk" for the N.Z. contingent. He thinks that these would be fitting accompaniments of the cigarettes, quinine pills, etc., showered on our embryo soldiers by the beneficent Wellington public. He also suggests as a piano has been presented them, that an accompanist should also have been provided to enable them to thoroughly enjoy the trip.

A Sabbath School teacher in Auckland who had been telling the story of David ended with: "And all this happened over three thousand years ago." A little listener, her blue eyes opening wide with wonder, said, after a moment's thought, "Oh, dear! what a nicemory you have got!"

There is a very smart gang of pickpockets at Wellington just at present. At the Wellington Opera House last week two Wairarapa men were picked upon as fit subjects, and one had his hip pocket cut out and relieved of his money. The other nearly lost his watch, but felt it being slipped from his pocket, and caught hold of it. He failed, however, to see the would-be pickpocket. Several other cases are reported.

The latest cricket yarn is by no means a bad one. The occasion was a match of some moment, when an "All England" team were playing against a score and two of local luminaries in the South of England. Among the "All England" representatives were Abel and Lohmann, from whom great things were evidently expected by those who had engaged them for the match. A provincial fair was being celebrated on a part of the

field where the play was proceeding, and attached to these festivities were the ubiquitous coconut shies. Nearly all through the contest the play had gone distinctly in favour of the local team, and when their final batsman was sent in they appeared to have an excellent chance of winning. Presently, one of the batsmen sent a splendid ball clean over to the coconut stand, where Lohmann was watching his chance. The wicket-keeper saw the ball roll in among the coconuts, and it was very soon lost to sight. Resolved, however, to lose no time, he seized a small coconut and hurled it over to Abel, who was wicket-keeping. Abel at once got his man out, and slipping the nut into his pocket, kept his own counsel, until Lohmann indignantly returned the real man. And to this day the local twenty-two know not how the professionals won that match.

A curious thing about ladies' fashions is that we no sooner get accustomed to one style than the dear creatures are off in hot pursuit of another. Take, for instance, the fashion of hair. We had lately got to like the fringe, which was a vast improvement on the waterfall; but the fringe, among certain of the fair sex, is being supplanted by what may be called the whiskers—that style of arranging her tresses which makes Belinda look as if she had borrowed those side adornments from her brother. It is dreadfully ugly, this latest fashion. If it should "catch on," it will only be because Belinda desires more and more to lessen the distinction between the sexes. Having appropriated her brother's hat, collar, front, waistcoat, and—other things, why shouldn't she seek to get as near as may be to his hirsute attachments? And if whiskers, why not beards and moustaches? In that case, depilatories and processes for the removal of superfluous hair will be no longer in demand. But the new fashion may take a turn in the direction of the old chignon—a horrid and dirty arrangement that was in full swing thirty years ago. The chignon was accompanied by pads—resembling plumeets or polonies in shape and size—which were hung on each side of our darlings' heads. These pads were concealed of course under the hair, except at night, when they were hung—like McKenny cuts on a clothes line—over the back of a chair. It must be admitted that the chignon, especially a chignon net, had its uses when Belinda happened to have a back fall on the ice. But no use that anybody ever knew could be ascribed to the polonies. Nevertheless, there are many things much more unlikely than the development of the present side-whisker style into the old polonia fashion.

Coincidence reached its long arm out after a Victorian family a few weeks ago. The father and two sons were camped near timber on a windy night. A tree came down over the tent, killing the father, and pinning one son under the ruins. Son No. 2 in the endeavour to extricate his brother upset a billy of boiling water over his foot, scalding himself badly. Assistance was obtained and the two sufferers removed for medical aid, a third brother being wired for. He arrived the following evening, and when dismounting from his horse, got a kick from the faithful steed which laid him on his back beside the other two, with a badly damaged leg. Two sisters were also summoned, and in driving down were upset from a gir, and added to the list. Up to date the remaining unharmed member of the family has been able to successfully dodge misfortune.

A figure robed in white suddenly presenting itself in a lonely spot on a dark night is calculated to disturb the equanimity of the least susceptible, and it is not surprising that several young ladies, returning from church service at Woodlands on a recent Sunday became almost prostrate with fear when an apparition of this description suddenly hove in sight. Inquiries were instituted and revealed the identity of the practical jokers, who appeared before Mr Poynton, Stipendiary Magistrate, in due course. They were ladies named Joseph Mathieson and John Berry, who were charged with threatening behaviour and admitted the offence, one of them stating that when going home he took a sheet off the clothes line, and, throwing it over him, proceeded to enjoy himself at the expense of passers-by. They were also charged with removing gates and again pleaded guilty, though they denied the insinuation that they had

been connected with recent acts of larcinaria which had been committed at Woodlands. Each was fined 10/- with costs 3/6.

Mrs Langtry's new 28-year-old husband comes of very wealthy people, but his own future is believed to consist mostly of expectations. Mrs L. is said to have lost large sums on the turf, and to be under the necessity of retrieving matters. "The Degenerates," the new Haymarket piece in which she plays heroine, was written for her, and apparently round her own very mottled career. Writes Emily Soldene to Sydney "E. News": "The piece is audacious to a degree, inasmuch as it portrays the career of Mrs Langtry with wonderful fidelity and how well she plays it! She is a comedienne and polished woman of the world, par excellence—not a melodramatic-taking-the-stage-stand-in-the-Brimlight woman, but a delightful woman, who has lived her life, and owns up, 'I'm what I am,' says she with a charming moue, 'not what I ought to be.' I wish I could tell you half the clever things she has to say, and the clever way she says them. She likes a gallop in the morning with the 'Liver brigade'—because it's mostly men. She is a divorcee, and her late husband suffered dreadfully from 'decreed nisi,' and died—of 'rule absolute.' She races, she gambles (there's a roulette table in the drawing room). She owns horses. She's good for nothing, but such a fascinator. 'Well, Bobby,' says she to the Duke of Ome, 'you used to go the pace with me, only for a few furlongs,' says Bobby, 'cuddling his knee; 'you're such a stayer!' Talk about a stayer! Mrs Langtry played at the Haymarket Monday evening, was in the selling paddock, Doncaster, Tuesday morning, and played at the Haymarket Tuesday evening. Now, about Mrs Langtry's looks. She absolutely looks just about as old as she is, neither more nor less; a little thin in the face. The once beautiful ivory complexion, soft and white, has gone. She has the appearance of a real hunting woman—cross-country rider, flying her fences like a bird, her face tanned, figure slender, exquisite, shoulders square, head well up, the blue eyes, once upon a time soft and winking, are now bright, shining and bluer—much bluer. They rival the wonderful diamonds and turquoise she wears on her ears, neck, round the waist, on her diamond dusted bodice. Her expression is charming—such good temper, such a dare-devil, such a good heart—when you get at it (she doesn't wear it on her sleeve). No wonder the men fall in love. I myself am full of admiration for her and her special and highly entertaining gifts. But she is not an object of reverence to all persons. Dining up the river the other day a peripatetic nigger put his head in the open French window, 'Gif has er job, Mister. Hi can sing. Hi sang ter th' Prince down hat Cowes; an' Hi've sang ter Mrs Langtry an' hall'er husbands—dead an' halive.'"

It is reported to the Nelson "Mail" that certain agents are travelling around the orchards treating fruit trees with a blight specific for which they charge a patent has been applied for. The charge made is 1/- a tree for treatment and 17/6 a gallon for the specific, and it is alleged that the agents claim to be working under the sanction and approval of the Department of Agriculture, and "doing trees for the Government." An orchardist of the district recently made inquiries of the Department of Agriculture, and the appended telegram has been received: "Wellington. Have never recommended any patent blight specific. — has no authority to use my or any other Government officers' name. He has not applied to Registrar for patent. Letter follows. (Signed) Kirk, Government Biologist."

And now, say the authorities, the game which ousted croquet is itself fallen upon evil days, and croquet seems likely once more to enjoy a measure of what was her own. "The spread of golf has done for tennis what tennis did for croquet," but, curiously enough, the introduction of golf has rehabilitated the less imposing game. There is no longer need to be apologetic or deprecatory in confessing yourself a croquet-lover. It is now a strong, scientific pastime, recognised as requiring thought and skill, and grown only the more interesting from its remarkable series of vicissitudes.