

# Musings Meditations

By Dog Toby

## FIRESIDE REVERIES.

THE rain is falling steadily outside, dusk is setting in, it is already too dark to read any more of the gentle Elia. The fire in the library flares up and casts a red light on the serried ranks of books in the cases. I lean back in my chair, and gaze at the flames, seeing in their changing glow pictures of the past. Dream children and the winsome Alice Winn. What did Charles Lamb know of children? How many since his time have dreamt the same dream? I see a glorious summer day, a long stretch of green fields leading to a cool shady creek, sheep lazily browsing in the meadows. Now I am riding along the track that crosses these same pastures. My own Alice Winn is by my side, she hangs her head as she feels that I gaze too fondly on her face, then she shyly glances at me. I knew, she knew, but neither spoke.

We center on till we reach the beach, and see the long stretch of sand and catch the murmur and scent of the infinite sea. I think of the old Greek tragedian and his delight in the many twinkling smile of ocean. The day, the country, the far-stretching view—everything is perfect. I feel the glow and the joy that come of youth and bloom and this delightful world. Why did Matthew Arnold, who could write like a singer of sun-swept Attica on the beauty and happiness of life, write also of the unplumbed, salt, estranging sea? The memory of the line seemed to send a chill of apprehension through me.

Now we dismount. We walk along the beach picking up shells, dainty and fragile, but exquisitely formed. We pick our way over the rocks round the small headland, and climb the steep path that lay on the other side. From the top of the little hill we gain a glorious view of the country all round us. "Do you know," she said, "that I often feel that my life has been like the beach below us, shut in on all sides but one by hills, and that one by a sea I cannot cross as yet. I may cross it some day, perhaps very soon, and then what shall I find? What lies beyond that horizon? Oh, I feel so frightened sometimes. I have longings for something beyond. My life has been so narrow, so cramped. But I know that I must cross the bar to see the infinite." I wondered at this strange mood. I tried to cheer her. I began to tell her what she must have guessed, but what I had never dared before to put in words. But she stopped me. "No, don't speak like that just now. I know you love me, and I know that I am very fond of you. You came into my life as something new, something from the wider world I knew only from books. And you have been kind to me, very kind. I must seem so stupid and so ignorant; my little interests—my horse, my flowers, my simple friends—must all appear so small. Why should you care for me? You who have travelled and seen things, and met clever men and handsome and brilliant women. You say you would love me and cherish me, care for me, and teach me. You would take me into a wider world, and we would see other countries and other people. But I feel it is not to be. My wider life is only by way of the sea to the unknown land beyond."

The fire is dying. I take a log and cast it on, and the flame leaps up again. I am once more back in the old days. I have ridden out to the bush and tethered our horses to a tree. We thread our way through the thick growth till we reach a small open clearing. We seat ourselves on a fallen log, and I again plead my cause. This time she does not stop me, and when I have finished she says: "Dear, I do love you, and I cannot say I don't, and I know that you love me. If you wish it, and if God wills, I will be your wife. But, dear, remember what I said. I feel somehow that it is not to be. I see the hills all round me, and if I cross the sea I must cross alone."

The flame has died away, only the warm, rich glow of the embers remains. I see a smiling English garden, children—alas, dream children always—grouped

round their mother's knee. I see a look of infinite content and happiness on her face that has grown but more beautiful with time. I feel the beauty, the loveliness, the holiness of a God-sent love. My whole life is filled with a deep, abiding joy, the peace that passeth all understanding. Why place our Heaven beyond this earth? The children speak her name; she is telling them about her old home; she is describing the beach, and the bush, and the sea. Why the sea? All at once I give a start. I have been really asleep and dreaming. I only catch the words: "If I cross the sea I must cross alone."

The fire is almost out, a few charred sticks remain. This time I am standing bareheaded in a little bush cemetery. Heavy, soaking rain is falling, the hills beyond stand out black and grim. In front of me an open grave into which the coffin is being slowly lowered. As the minister says the words: "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," I see more than an earthly burial, I see the burial of my life, my love, my hope. I can only utter the one supreme cry of anguish, "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?"

The fire is out, darkness has closed in. Nothing remains but the steady drip, drip, drip of the rain outside.

## RHEUMATISM, STIFF JOINTS, SCIATICA AND ALL DEEP-SEATED PAINS.

ZAM-BUK BALM QUICKLY CURES.

When you have any deep-seated pain, as in rheumatism, sciatica, neuralgia, etc., in the joints, back, wrists, or elsewhere, place a liberal supply of Zam-Buk on the fingers, or on the palm, and rub it in. The penetrating power of this "embrocation-balm" kills pain and removes stiffness. Sound rubbings of the affected parts with this wonderful balm will drive out all pain, reduce swelling, strengthen the skin and tissues (enabling them to resist cold and damp better during the winter months), and restore perfect elasticity.

Mr. G. Parkinson, of the Marylands Dyeing and Cleaning Works, North Avenue, Marylands, Perth, W.A., says: "I suffered from rheumatism and stiff joints for a number of years, especially in the winter. I was hardly able to get about, and resorted to the usual remedies in the way of hot baths and rubbing with sundry liniments and embrocations, but all to no avail. Some eighteen months ago a friend recommended me to give Zam-Buk a trial, which I happily did. I derived great benefit from the first three or four applications, the wonderful soothing and easing effect being very gratifying. Persevering with Zam-Buk, I am glad to say the pains and stiffness disappeared. People wonder what I have used to get rid of my trouble: simply Zam-Buk Balm, without a pot of which no home is complete."

Zam-Buk is invaluable for all skin-troubles and muscular-affections, such as rheumatism, sciatica, gout, neuralgia, piles, chilblains, cold sores, eczema, ulcers, bruises, and all injured and diseased conditions of the skin. Of all chemists and stores at 1s. 6d. and 3s. 6d. per pot (3s. 6d. size contains nearly four times 1s. 6d.).

A suffragette lecturer recently brought down the house with the following argument:

"I have no vote, but my groom has. I have a great respect for that man in the stables, but I am sure that if I were to go to him, and say, 'John, will you exercise the franchise?' he would reply, 'Please, mum, which horse has that?'"

Employers of labour are alarmed and indignant over the award of the Special Board of Conciliation in the Auckland Tramways dispute, and there certainly appears to be some reason for those feelings on their part. The main effect of the decision is that the Tramways Company is denied the right to discharge employees without "valid reason," and is ordered to remove from his position a manager whose methods are considered by his superordinates to be objectionable. This looks very like taking the control of their own business out of the hands of the directors of the company and placing it in the hands of those who have no pecuniary interest at stake, and no interest in maintaining efficiency and discipline. If this be the meaning of the award, it must bring disorganisation and disaster. It does not follow, however, that such principles would apply to all kinds of employment. A tramway company is discharging a public service, and to some extent occupies an exceptional position; it must therefore be prepared to work under conditions and restrictions of a special kind. But in such cases duties and obligations should be mutual, otherwise there is a lack of equity. In other words, if tramway employees are to have special privileges, they ought to be under special obligations of service. It is difficult to see how such obligations could be enforced. For example, if it were enacted that they should not leave the employ without "valid reason," how could they be punished for breach of the law? One man might be imprisoned, it is true; but the trouble is that the whole body might strike work without "valid reason," and it would be impossible to enforce the law. The Auckland tramway men are said to be "jubilant" at the Board's finding, and well they may be. It is probable, too, that the finding will have an important bearing on the Sydney tramways strike, which is, to a large extent, induced by causes similar to those that led to the Auckland dispute. The industrial problem seems to become more abstruse with each successive development, and the end is still far off.

"Trades Unions have now a free hand to be as political as they choose, and to subsidise Socialism if they like." This remark of the London "Daily Chronicle" has been evoked by a legal decision just given by Mr. Justice Neville in England. A test case was brought by the secretary of a British union, and the Judge held that trade union funds could be employed to influence legislation by securing representation in the House of Commons, and that the union had as much right to support socialists as Unionists or Liberals. This is a most momentous ruling, and will probably lead to the wholesale adoption of Socialistic views by the Labour unions. In New Zealand, before the news of the English decision was received, this result was practically achieved, for the Trades and Labour Councils all over the country had embodied in their legislative programmes demands based upon purely Socialistic ideas. The Wellington Socialists have just been holding a "monster demonstration," in the course of which the workers were urged "to adopt straightout Socialism, capture the political machine, and use it for their own purposes." The trade-unionists of the Dominion have hitherto been Socialists of the Fabian order, declining to call themselves by their proper name or to ally themselves with the "straight-out" band, which is small in number. Now, encouraged by the English decision, they may come out into the open and show themselves in their true colours. Even should they fail to do so, their votes and influence will be on the side of ultra-Socialistic legislation, which the Government is pledged to resist. A coalition of the stable elements in our political life, with a view to resisting the extravagant claims of the Socialists and trade-unionists, may not be so remote a contingency after all.

These enthusiastic Welshmen of the Dominion who are moving the Government to have St. David's Day declared a public holiday will deserve the thanks of the community if their action should have the result of abolishing "saints' days" altogether. The Minister for Labour, to whom they preferred their request, said there was no reason why St. David's Day should not be added to the list of public holidays, if the "days" of Sts. George, Patrick, and Andrew were to be still observed; but, he added, the probability was that all three would be "swept off the list of public holidays." There

never was any reason behind the observance to strip us away, since we are in some other country, because there was no sound reason for making these personages "patron saints," except perhaps in the case of St. Patrick, who really did good service to Ireland, apart from the mythical tale about his expulsion of the snakes. As regards St. George, the authorities are not quite clear whether he was St. George of Cappadocia, who was torn to pieces in the year 360, St. George of America, who was beheaded in 303, or a fraudulent army contractor of the same name who lived at a much later date. It is certain, however, that he neither killed a dragon, nor shielded distressed damsels, nor swam across St. George's Channel, carrying his head between his teeth; and why Edward III. made him England's patron saint and fixed his "day" for the 23rd of April are mysteries as dark as that of his identity. St. Andrew seems to have been a decent sort of individual who was martyred at Patras A.D. 70, and he was adopted by the Scots and Picts as their patron saint, because they saw a miraculous vision of his cross in the heavens the night before they gained a victory over the bloated Saxons. St. Patrick, as everybody knows, was a Scot by birth, but it is not so generally known that he had a strange "penchant" for changing his name. His surname when he was born was Succat, which he changed later to Corbriège, and finally took the name of Patricius at his ordination as a priest. The Welsh patron saint was a priest of Cardiganshire, who died in 544. It may be as well to explain that he was not the gentleman who had a drunken sow. An innkeeper named David Lloyd was fond of exhibiting a six-legged sow that he owned; but one day some visitors, on going to the sty, found Mrs. Lloyd lying in it in a state of intoxication, whence came the saying "As drunk as Davy's sow."

Now, these historical statements may or may not be accurate; but, it may be asked, What have they got to do with New Zealand, and why should the business of this country be brought to a standstill for several days every year in their honour? If report speaks truly, the Government has been brought to see the folly of observing these saints' days, and intends to legislate for their abolition and for the introduction of the more common sense practice of honouring "St. Monday," by ordaining that a number of holidays be observed always on the Monday nearest to the date upon which they fall. In the Old Country, St. Monday used to be observed by merchants, shoemakers, and other artisans, but it has fallen into disuse. Its origin is traced to Oliver Cromwell. When the Protector's army was encamped at Perth, one of his zealous partisans named Monday died, and Cromwell offered a prize for the best lines on his death. A Perth shoemaker was the winner with the following verses:—

"Blessed be the Sabbath Day,  
And cur'd he worldly self;  
Tuesday will begin the week,  
Since Monday's hanged himself!"

The grim old Protector, with an appreciation of humour not usual to him, was so well pleased with this that he decreed that Monday should thenceforth be a standing holiday for all shoemakers. There is just as good reason, and perhaps better, for honouring "St. Monday," as there is for observing any other saint's day. The chief qualification about St. George and the rest of them seems to be their antiquity. Perhaps in another thousand years or so the Dominion may have its "St. Tasman's Day," "St. Cook's Day," perhaps, even, "St. Richard Seddon's Day." In the meantime, we shall all be content to accept "St. Monday" as our patron saint. There must be holidays, and there must be some pretext for them; and the hanging of Mr. Monday is as good a ground for rejoicing as the martyrdom of George and Andrew, or the pious labours of Patrick and David.

Imported auction gas plants are seriously affecting the engineering trade in New Zealand.—Mr. J. P. Luke, Wellington.

The quantity of New Zealand made beer consumed during the past year was 739,687 gallons, more than that consumed during 1906. The excise duty went up from £103,986 to £113,120, or an increase of twopence-halfpenny per head of the population over 15 years of age.