

"SNYDER'S" TROUBLES.

"Snyder," in the *Coromandel "Mail"* thus humorously sets forth his first six months' experiences as a newspaper proprietor. Although written in a facetious vein, there is a deal of truth conveyed in "Snyder's" remarks:—

OURSELVES.

We desire to avail ourselves of the present opportunity to enter into confidential communication with our readers. We have a great horror of secrecy; but at the same time what we have to communicate need not to go outside the colonies. We should be sorry if what we are about to relate reached the ears of some of our friends in Kamschatka or Cochin China or Siberia or in Greenland's icy regions, or in India's coral strand.

OUR POSITION.

The *Coromandel "Mail"* under its present proprietorship has existed six months come to-morrow. Now we know it is quite usual for newspaper proprietors when they report of themselves at stated periods to tell their readers how they have doubled their circulation, their advertising supporters have largely increased; how they intend to enlarge their paper and do wonders.

We have nothing of that kind of thing to boast of. We have a large free circulation; but we have a poor paying one. In *Coromandel* proper; and upon the hills; in the flats and the valleys and in back settlements only about one in every six has paid his subscription. We have had during the first half of our six months existence a fair share of advertising support; but have received no money for the use made of our columns. We have eked out an existence upon

"CONTRAS."

We are open to confess that we have been allowed a fair share of tea and sugar and general groceries, of bread and butcher's meat, in return for newspaper subscriptions, advertising and job printing, but we have received no money. We have paid no one and no one has paid us excepting in the manner indicated, and last Saturday afternoon it came about that our hands positively refused to take for their joint weeks wages a ton of firewood, two hundred weight of potatoes, twelve full grown vegetable marrows, and an order we could have given them on a blacksmith for a set of horseshoes. We pointed out the ingratitude of their behaviour, but they were obdurate. They said they wanted money, and they did not intend to leave the office until they got it. We said under those circumstances that perhaps it would be as well if they sent for their bedding while we would go out and look up a little cheap furniture for them so that they would be able to make themselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit. The extent that the "contra" business has been carried on in this office is beyond ordinary belief.

THE SYSTEM PERFECTED.

To give only a few instances of the perfection to which the system of *contras* has reached in *Coromandel*, the writer of this has had his hair cut short, his coxus operated on; he has taken tonic and sedative medicines; he has been served with rock oysters; he has had his washing done; he has made charitable and benevolent gifts; he has made marine excursions; has found himself in mixed pickles and boot blacking and hair oil, all of which with many other things too numerous to mention has been written off in *contras*.

A MILCH GOAT.

It was only a week or two back that a man came to our office and wanted us to advertise a milch goat he had lost. We told him the cost for insertion would be half-a-crown. He said he had got no half-crown to give, and didn't think it was likely he should have so far as the appearance of things went, but if we didn't object he would send us a large bundle of sweet herbs in exchange; and there are the sweet herbs suspended to the ceiling of our kitchen, sufficient to flavour the stuffing of many thousands of joints of veal. We are at this moment open to exchange sweet herbs for some boys' boot laces.

AN EXPLANATION.

Of course when we stated we had received no money we don't mean to say absolutely no money; but only a very little money indeed, and then only pro-

vided at a great outlay. For instance an hotel-keeper will owe us a quarter's subscription for his newspaper. We call on him, and he says it is not convenient to pay then. But we know if we are ever to collect the money he expects us to shout, and we shout to the extent of a shilling. A week after we make a second application, when he promises to pay for certain in a few days. This time we shout eightpence because there happens to be a man we never saw before standing at the bar counter. But we have got used to this thing. The third time of calling we do get paid the seven and sixpence, but we found three of our supporters in the back parlour, where we were called to give a receipt, who with the landlord and ourselves led up a shout of half-a-crown.

WE RECKON UP.

We walk back to our office and enter upon a profit and loss calculation of the transaction, and find as follows:—That to collect three half-crowns we have outlaid in fluids five shillings and sixpence; cost of the paper for one quarter on which the "Mail" is printed say one shilling; paying for a quarter's delivery say ninepence, and we have just threepence left by way of balance for ourselves. In the language of he who wrote "Night Thoughts," "If this were not so frequent would not this be strange. That it is so frequent this is stranger still."

OUR GRIEF.

But threepence is better than nothing, and the latter figure of nought is the exact price paid by many for the pleasure of reading the *Coromandel "Mail."* There are tradesmen in *Coromandel* who make it a rule to borrow the newspaper from their next door neighbor. There are eight or ten business people who do not subscribe to the "Mail" but get possession of it by other means than that of subscribing for it, and the surpassing audacity of this arrangement is that the paper which is lent in nine cases out of ten has not been paid for by the lender. We send a goodly number of papers to Tokatea ranges; but although the papers go up regularly by horse delivery no money ever comes down. Then there are people who insist they shall get their papers without paying—that is they demand they shall be placed on the free list. Why—we really don't know and can't say; but it is so.—*Coromandel "Mail."*

CONTRIBUTIONS BY "SNYDER."

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THE NOBLE GAME OF CRICKET.—A GRAND REMINISCENCE.

THE cricket season has taken the place of that which was devoted to football, and I have been pestered to state my views on the noble game. As one who above all things over anything else desires to live in strict privacy, I don't like coming into the arena of public life, or doing that which will make me immortal. I may mention that I am always to be found at home between two o'clock in the morning and daylight. After that there's an inscrutability as to my whereabouts. Perhaps I have my reasons for this. Perhaps bailiffs have not yet become fossils to be found embedded with crustaceans among the *pleistocene strata*. Perhaps bailiffs are still living entities, and that no one better than myself has reason to know it.

But this is by the way. A gentleman who says he admires me greatly (I wish some lady with an independent income with no objection to share it would just step on the platform and say as much)—a gentleman, I say, wishes me to write up the noble game of cricket. I did once write it up, and in such a manner that I considered it would never want writing up any more. It was when, twenty years ago, the All England Eleven came to Otago to play a Dunedin eighteen. I was a member of the Press in those days, attached to a leading journal—and here I may mention by the way and quite casually, which even to myself appears somewhat strange, that I never did belong to any paper that was not the leading journal, and I never knew any member on the literary staff of a newspaper but who always thought likewise regarding his own particular self.

Well, the editor called me into his room, and said, "Mr Snyder, do you understand the noble game of cricket?"

Now I had in my childhood's early days seen cricket played in what I may

call the distant vista—as for instance out of a railway carriage or the parlour window of an hotel; as, being short of sight, and never feeling certain where the ball might strike, I always kept a very reserved distance from the scene of operations. Still I did not think such a trifling drawback should prevent me feeling quite justified in saying that I knew all about the noble game of cricket; that it was one of the fine old Saxon games which my forefathers (who for generations had been city hosiers) had greatly excelled it.

Then the editor said, "Do you think, Mr Snyder, you could report the great cricket match coming off next week in first-class style?"

I made answer, and declared that if there was one thing that I was greater at than another it was at reporting cricket matches.

His reply was, "Mr Snyder, I feel proud at having a gentleman on my staff who is so universally posted up with every subject, remote or near, recondite or elevated, that can be dealt with in the columns of a leading journal. I never heard you say there was anything you could not do, while others have asserted they were not cognisant of anything you could. Consider yourself, however, as told off for the work."

When I left that editor's private sanctum I felt somewhat nervous. I certainly never had reported a cricket match, and an anxiety pervaded my soul as to whether I should be able to keep beyond striking distance of the cricket ball, yet still be near enough to watch its progress in mid-air, or as it bounded with playful violence over the green sward.

The eventful day came, and found me prepared for it. Three days before the event I had written in advance a most exciting account of the opening match. I had described the noble and manly bearing of the English team. I compared one to a swiftly bounding antelope combined with the gazelle-like sweetness of a soft blue eye. I spoke of Stephenson having the winged swiftness of the eagle, with the quick far-seeing eye of the hawk. I spoke of Tinley as graceful in his every movement. I drew a comparison between him and the Achilles of Homer. I described Caffyn's balls as being directed "dead on the wicket" with the force and precision as of having been discharged from a ten-horse catapult. The wicket-keeper, I remarked, had a grasp of iron, and a spring resembling in its lightning rapidity the movements of the order *felida*. I had praised the whole team individually and all round. In fact, I had used up the beauties of natural history in bringing out all their perfections. I did as much for the Dunedin eighteen. I left the animal world for comparisons, and went deep into botany. I described one as having the toughness combined with the elasticity of the mountain ash. Another as the sapling which bent to every movement of external influences, but always recovered itself with the swiftness of the bow of the archer. Three or four I described as being magnificent specimens of colonial cornstalks. Another, bronze of complexion, I compared to the bark of the sweet-smelling wattle, while at the same time he possessed all the toughness of the native eucalypti, under the fragrance of which he was ushered in life. Having a ticket for the refreshment tent, I praised the cuisine, the excellence of the viands, and the splendid brands from the choicest vintages placed upon the table in the shape of wines. I praised every arrangement, and having the entry to the grandstand, I praised the ladies. The only thing I left blank was the weather, which, in Otago, is rather difficult to prognosticate four days in advance. Having exalted everyone and everything in connection with the noble game of cricket, I knew it was impossible to go wrong.

As the game proceeded I interspersed the runs with comments, as after this manner—a magnificent cut for four; a side hit for two; a beautiful block; a splendid catch. I wrote about a slashing delivery, met by a grand defence of the wicket. The fielding I declared was superb, and the manner in which the "long stop" delivered up his ball was something never before witnessed in the annals of cricketing. It is true, I fell into a few trifling errors, as, for instance, when I said that Caffyn would have made a hit for twenty-two, had the ball in its flight not have struck young Redwood in the stomach, which enabled him to catch it backhanded. I had stated that the tremendous science which Tinley possessed

of giving the ball a screw in bowling was shown when he caused the ball to pass round the grandstand and afterwards gyrate with such wonderful precision as to cause the middle stump of the batsman to fly into the marker's tent and smash a dozen bottles of beer, which were not to have been consumed until later in the afternoon. These and some other trifling discrepancies were afterwards corrected for me by Mr Caffyn, who kindly undertook to overhaul my report before giving it in to the editor. Then, when I did give it in, and when it was printed and came out the next morning, filling thirteen columns, how the papers did sell like wildfire, to be sure. The English team candidly and with great honesty confessed they had never seen a report like it before—never. The Dunedin team said they didn't think it was possible that such a report could have been produced; and it was a general remark among the thousands of spectators what an advantage the reporter of the leading journal had in being allowed inside the ring, which enabled him to see what none outside had had the slightest opportunity of witnessing. The accuracy of my report was the general theme of remark. Four thousand extra copies went that day, and Saturday afternoon produced for me a cheque over and in excess of any amount I could have demanded by the strict letter of the law and in terms of my agreement.

It was on the morning of the last day of the concluding match of the noble game of cricket between the All-England Eleven and the Dunedinites that I was standing near the wickets, for the game had not been commenced. Then an idea seized and fastened on my mind. Tinley, the great slow bowler, ball in hand, was near to where I was standing. I walked up to him and said, "Mr Tinley, will you do me a favour?" and Tinley said, Mr Snyder, after what you have written of us, I will do you a hundred." "Then," I said, "lend me a bat, and bowl me a slow-bowled ball that I may have it in my power to hand down as an heirloom to my children and my children's children the fact that their great ancestor was once bowled to by the greatest slow-twist and artfullest bowler the history of the world ever placed on record." Tinley said he would. "Now," I said, "never mind aiming at the wicket; aim, I entreat you at my bat," and Tinley again said he would. Then I took my stand. I struck an attitude. The ball came gently on in a direct line with my bat. Swinging it high over my shoulder the bat decended, and the ball disappeared over the grandstand on to the main road nearly a quarter of a mile distant, where it was picked up and brought back by a cabman. Shall I ever forget the applause of the multitude which deafened my ears? Shall I ever forget the shaking of hands and the entreaties to take a drink? No, while my memory, &c., &c., holds its seat I never shall. Two days after this event I received four deputations from as many cricket clubs, asking me to join them. One offered me the presidency, another the captainship of the team, another offered to back me at single wicket against the best three of the English team for any sum I liked to incur on my own responsibility; but I held out against all temptations, and, like a Spartan, I declined. The reason why is concealed within the innermost depths of my bosom, behind a Crimean shirt and a flannel waistcoat.

SPURIOUS GENTILITY.

"MR SNYDER," said a friend and counsellor to me a day or two since, during a highly moral discourse we were engaged upon, "a social blight hangs over this city," bringing with it greater attendant evils than anything the police are called on to deal with. Drunkenness is bad, concubinage is bad, impurity of life is bad; but I can scarcely bring myself to think that any of these vices, taken separately, bring about more discomfort, more misery, or more evil consequences than the attempts made by hosts of families in this city to maintain and keep up a spurious gentility. This is a canker which is eating into the happiness of domestic life, and while it makes all to appear fair and goodly without, leaves all rotten and false within. I do not say the evil may not exist in other towns and cities of the colony; but my belief is that its head-quarters are where we are now dwelling. Your intelligent washerwoman, whom you lately referred to in print in her peculiar department, has told you of one or two matters which form a part, and only a small part