

doubt that very many of our large-hearted people would gladly give of their abundance to save the lives of at least a few of the perishing. It is said that every pound now contributed will save a life.

WE do not suppose that any one now doubts the reality or the intensity of the famine in Russia. The facts which are coming to light from reliable sources would fill volumes with the records of such misery as was never surpassed in the world's history. It is indeed impossible that anything of the kind could surpass it. When hundreds of men, women and children are to be seen, as Nicholas Shishkoff, one of the Relief Committee of the Society of the Red Cross, saw them in Samara (*vide* article in the *Nineteenth Century*), slowly perishing from hunger and cold, the acme of human suffering from physical causes must have been reached. Mr. Shishkoff saw numbers of men in their prime with drawn stony faces and hollow eyes, miserable women clothed in rags (having sold their best dresses), and children shivering in the keen October wind. They told him everything saleable had been sold or pawned; they had seen no bread for a fortnight, but had eaten once a day of stewed cabbages or pumpkins. "Many of us," the spokesman would say, "have not tasted any food for three days. Have mercy on us, we are dying." And all the while tears were seen trickling down the faces of stalwart men. At one place the local doctor had just rescued a lad of seventeen and his ten-year-old sister. For five days they had had no food. They were found huddled helpless in the corner of a room. The lad's jaws had to be forced open with a knife before a little tea and brandy could be introduced. The population of Samara province is 2,500,000. At least half will have to be kept alive by Government help and private charity. From 175,000 to 200,000 will have to depend exclusively on private charity. And this, be it remembered, is but one out of the many famine-stricken districts. Evidence of another kind, scarcely less horrible in its suggestiveness, is furnished by the *Christian World*, whose Editor says:—

A mute witness of the sufferings of the Russian peasantry lies before us. No living voice could speak so eloquently. It is a piece of what, by a bitter irony, is called "bread." It was cut from a loaf by the English manager of a Russian estate near Nijny Novgorod. The nauseous composition is almost inky black, and emits an acrid odour. What it is made of we can only guess, but apparently the bulk of it is a mixture of dirt, ground bark, and dried dung, and there are faint signs of a modicum of some grain, such as rye. The manager says, in a letter to Miss Hesba Stretton, who kindly sends the package on to us, that there are 120 cases of spotted typhoid fever within a mile and a-half of his office. Looking at this lump of "bread," we can believe it.

Surely it is time that there was in Canada a spontaneous opening of hearts and purses in response to such a call. We have no doubt that there will be as soon as the way is made clearly open by which the sufferers can be reached by those desiring to contribute.

THE message of President Harrison to Congress in connection with the transmission of the correspondence with the Government of Chili is a well-written and dignified document. The important question in connection with it is whether, on its showing, the United States Government has accorded to the weaker republic the same rights which it would claim for itself were the situation reversed—the rights it would claim as against China, were the latter nation some day to call it to account for the many unprovoked and brutal and murderous attacks which have from time to time been made upon its citizens by those of the United States—the rights it did and does claim for itself in the case of the dispute with Italy. So far from doing so, it has never, so far as appears, shown the slightest disposition to attach importance to any investigation which the Chilean Government was making or might have been willing to make in accordance with its own constitution and through its own courts. On the other hand it has insisted on the absolute correctness of the conclusions reached by its own officials, and on the testimony of its own citizens, prejudiced as these may fairly be supposed to have been. Thus it happens that the President's elaborate statement of the case to Congress is, after all, but an *ex parte* version of the affair. On the other hand it can hardly be denied that Senor Matta's circular to Chilean Ministers was needlessly offensive, if not positively insulting, and should be withdrawn and apologized for; and that the spirit which the Chilean Government has manifested throughout has been hardly

respectful, not to say regretful or conciliatory. In this there has been a manifest lack, not only of right feeling, but of statesmanlike discretion. Nothing can be more unwise than for a feeble nation in such a case to irritate and pretend to defy a powerful one, only to find itself compelled to humiliate itself in the end. That is about what has occurred in the present case, if the latest despatch from Santiago can be relied on. The most probable explanation of Chili's conduct in the affair would seem to be that the leading members of the Government were unversed in diplomacy and relied on the reluctance of the people of the United States to engage in war, while the people of Chili generally had no conception of the serious aspect the dispute was assuming. Hence the present necessity for abject submission instead of the dignified and self-respecting settlement which might probably have been made. What must strike the disinterested onlooker is the extreme injustice of settling such a dispute by brute force, or by the threat of it, between two parties so unequally matched, instead of by a prompt resort to arbitration.

THE NEO-CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT IN FRANCE.

UNDER the above title *Harper's Magazine* for January contains an interesting article from the pen of the Vicomte, Eugène Melchior de Vogüé. We have grown so accustomed to regard all that is called progressive in France, as given over to materialism of the most pronounced kind, that it affords a welcome surprise to be told that amongst the rising generation of educated thinking men, the tide of spiritualism which had fallen to such a low ebb is at length beginning once more to rise. The signs of this movement are at present neither very numerous nor conspicuous; they have not as yet risen to the surface of Parisian salons, nor supplied the material of the literature of the boulevard, but they are to be found "in the intellectual centre whence the influences of the future will start," in the Sorbonne, in the schools of law, and of medicine, in the more serious publications of the day, in the "nucleus of high culture wherein the directing ideas of the future are being elaborated—the writers, the professors, the students, the cultivated people in general who take an interest in philosophical speculations."

The attitude of the intellectual *élite* towards "the eternal want" which religion supplies can only be understood by reference to the influences which have swayed the preceding generations, and De Vogüé gives a lucid analysis of the trend of thought in France during the last hundred years.

At the close of the last and during the first half of the present century the influence of Voltaire ruled the free-thinking portion of the community, and religion was not so much a subject of argument as of ridicule. But by the middle of the century the scientific spirit was dominant, and the character of unbelief underwent important modification. The physical sciences were thought to contain a demonstrable disproof of the old arguments for the existence of a God, viz., those from Causation and Design. Historical criticism begotten and developed in Germany by Baur and Strauss was popularized in France by M. Renan, and the authority of the Bible long since contemptuously disregarded was now completely shattered. It was but a question of time and the very word theology would disappear from the dictionary.

Nevertheless the religious spirit was not altogether extinct; the very enthusiasm for science partook of the nature of a cult. Science indeed seemed "susceptible of indefinite progress." For a time the apparently illimitable field of its enquiry satisfied men's craving after the Infinite. Science in the abstract, apart from any concrete manifestation of it, was deified and fervently worshipped.

By the year 1880 Christianity was at its lowest ebb. The men who had grown up under the influence of the current of thought above described now held the reins of Government, and "everything seemed to have conspired against the religious sentiment—the official action of the legal power, the old Voltairianism of the middle-classes, the scientific disdain of the studios, the coarse naturalism of the literary men."

But human nature, as Carlyle never wearied of reminding us, demands realities not shams. It was no use loudly asserting that science sufficed to supply all human needs, when experience and fact proved the reverse. The present generation growing to years of discretion about the time of the Franco-Prussian war is experiencing a reaction against the philosophy of the schools and the maxims of the streets, in which they have been reared. For national life "revealed to them on all sides nothing but abortive hopes, paltry struggles of interest, and a society without any other hierarchy but that of money, and without other principle or ideal than the pursuit of material enjoyment. Literature . . . reflected those same tendencies; it was dejected or vile, and distressed the heart by its artistic dryness, or disgusted it by its trivial realism. Science itself . . . began to appear to many what it is in reality, namely a means and not an end. . . . Above all, it was clear from too evident social symptoms that if science can satisfy some very distinguished minds, it can do nothing to

moralize and discipline societies; criminal statistics loudly proclaimed this inefficacy."

Naturally enough the realization of these unpalatable truths was followed by a period of dismal pessimism. The authority of the Catholic faith rejected, the might of reason discredited, what else but pessimism was left. "Beware of deceitful nature, fear life, emancipate yourself from life."

It is from this slough of despond that the young men of France are emerging. De Vogüé notes three symptoms of this renaissance of hope, which will surely be followed by renaissance of faith. First, he notes a sympathetic curiosity for religious questions. In the schools the most influential teachers are those who oppose the negative spirit of the older generations, and "not infrequently go back to Christian sources in order to support their independent conclusions." The Catholic students have no longer to suffer the ridicule or contempt of their fellows. "On the contrary, . . . it is the antiquated sarcasms of Voltairianism that are nowadays received with smiles and shrugging of the shoulders."

In the next place the great social movement which so profoundly agitates all civilized countries is attracting the attention of young France. Their sympathies have been aroused by the wrongs of the working classes, and a deep-seated sympathy for our fellows is near akin to religion. True in the Revolution period, the doctrine of the brotherhood of man was held together with a violent opposition to religion, but it is to be remembered that this hatred was really directed against a spiritless, and rotten Catholicism. In political economy the general reaction against individualist principles is felt in France, and in a sense the Neo-Christians are socialists.

Thirdly, in the sphere of literature this new school revolts against the disgusting naturalism which has so long obtained in France. "They have a marked taste for what is nowadays called symbolism, that is to say, a form of art which though painting reality, is constantly bringing reality once more into communication with the mystery of the universe." They read with "delight and praise" the "Imitation of Christ," and the writings of St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Francis of Sales.

What is the relation of this movement to orthodox Christianity? In answering this interesting question we must bear in mind that it is yet young, indefinite, inchoate. It is but a formless spirit, not yet an organized body. Its leaders or its writers, of whom three are named, M. Édouard Rod, M. Lasserre and M. Pouilhan, are not Christians in any definite sense of that word. "Their reason still revolts too strongly against the rigidity of dogma. The religion of science in which they have grown up retains the strongest hold upon their intelligence; and . . . they cannot make up their mind to abjure it. As long as they cannot see the possibility of fully conciliating their scientific conception of the universe and of man with the teaching of the Church, they will repudiate the latter. They make desperate efforts to invent a religious and moral ideal on the margin of the traditional doctrine. . . . They flutter around faith like iron filings round a magnet, secretly attracted by it, and yet not strongly enough to adhere firmly to it."

Space forbids us to illustrate these remarks by quotations from the representative writers above named. Readers of *Harper's* will find a sufficiency to satisfy them of the truth of the delineation given.

"The sense of the eternal mystery has returned to their souls," so says De Vogüé. He makes no attempt to prophecy the future of the movement, and herein we think he shows his good sense. We shall study it none the less with interest and hope, believing with our author that "however imperfect and vague the nebula may be, men of good-will prefer it to the gloom from which we are issuing. They are of opinion that the search after the ideal is a great sign of the raising up of France, where everything was on the point of sinking into gross realism, both characters and minds, both public morality and the intellectual productions." Not altogether in the sense of the old saying do we "speed the parting, hail the coming guest."

O. T.

A CANADIAN LITERARY EVENING.

FLETCHER of Saltoun's oft-quoted remark: "Give me the making of a nation's songs and I care not who make its laws," like many other antithetic aphorisms, is not absolutely perfect. Piquant *obiter dicta* are responsible for the currency of unsuspected half truths. In justice to the shrewd Scotchman, however, it is to be understood that he did not wish to convey the idea that it was a matter of indifference who legislated, but that the opinion and sentiment of a nation were formed by its gifted singers, and would, in due time, be embodied in prosaic Acts of Parliament. Much as we ought to value the gifted Canadian sons and daughters of song, we cannot afford to be negligent of the character and capacity of our legislators. Those dowered with "the vision and the faculty divine" can do much to give us "sweeter manners, purer laws," and especially in this young nationality they can awaken the fervid glow of an unsullied patriotism which the country so sorely needs.

The idea, therefore, of the Young Liberal Club of arranging for a Canadian Literature Evening, was in every respect an excellent one. That it was appreciated was clearly evidenced by the presence of a large and representative audience in the Art Gallery of the Ontario So-