

PENSIONS AND STANDING ARMIES.

GREAT BRITAIN, with a regular army of more than 225,000 officers and men, and a total force, effective and non-effective, of 618,000, pays annually less than \$75,000,000, and France, with a regular force of 580,000, besides an enormous reserve, pays \$111,000,000. The great army of the German Empire, the best appointed and equipped military force in the world, consisting, on a peace footing, of 492,000 officers and men, costs annually less than \$92,000,000, while the actual field force of Russia, numbering 814,000, is maintained at an expense of less than \$94,000,000. These are the annual charges to which the people of four great European nations are subjected in order to maintain a constantly available and effective force for their own defence in case of war, and for the preservation of the "balance of power" which their governments consider necessary to guarantee their independence. No standing army in the world costs the people so much as our army of discharged soldiers. Although we are at peace among ourselves and with all the world, and have no foreign or domestic policy to make such an expenditure necessary, we are paying more than \$135,000,000 annually to the soldiers of a war that closed twenty-five years ago. The payment of reasonable pensions, on account of wounds actually received and diseases actually contracted in the military or naval forces in time of war, is just and right in itself, and is, moreover, the wisest policy that can be adopted by a Government which relies for its defence almost exclusively upon the voluntary services of its citizens; but the gratuitous distribution of public money among certain classes of the people is neither just nor consistent with the character of our institutions.—*Senator Carlisle, in the Forum.*

ROBERT BROWNING'S VOICE.

TO-DAY was the anniversary of Robert Browning's death at Venice, and at five o'clock in the afternoon, in singular commemoration of it, an event unique in the history of science and of strange sympathetic significance took place at Edison House. The voice of the dead man was heard speaking. This is the first time that Robert Browning's or any other voice has been heard from beyond the grave. It was generally known that Col. Gouraud had got locked up in his safe some words spoken by the poet on April 7, 1889, at the house of Rudolf Lehmann, the artist. But up to yesterday the wax cylinder containing the record had never been made to yield up its secret. Yesterday Dr. Furnivall and Col. Gouraud happened to meet at my house, and the president of the Browning Society (Dr. Furnivall) reminded Col. Gouraud that it was the anniversary of their mutual friend's death, and that this would be a fitting occasion to test the integrity of the cylinder containing his voice. Accordingly, after wiring Rudolf Lehmann to meet us, we adjourned to Edison House. The small white wax cylinder containing the record carefully wrapped in wool was produced, and, on being put upon the machine, the voices at Rudolf Lehmann's house on the night of April 7, 1889, were accurately reproduced. First came a message in Col. Gouraud's voice, addressed to Edison, informing him that Robert Browning's voice would follow his own, and then, whilst in breathless silence the little, awed group stood round the phonograph, Robert Browning's familiar and cheery voice suddenly exclaimed "Ready!" and immediately afterward followed:—

I sprang to the saddle, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, etc.

And all went on in a most spirited manner down to the words:—

Speed echoed the . . .
then the voice said hurriedly, "I forget it! er—"
(some one prompts), and Browning goes on:—

Then the gate shut behind us, the lights sank to rest (and again the poet halted). "I—I am exceedingly sorry that I can't remember my own verses; but one thing that I remember all my life is the astonishing sensation produced upon me by your wonderful invention." Then there was a pause—Rudolf Lehmann reminded us that Browning left the speaking-tube, but, on being asked to authenticate his own words, returned. So presently in a loud voice came shouted at us "Robert Browning." The murmur of applauding voices and loud clapping of hands followed. After this extraordinary seance, the wax cylinder was taken possession of by Miss Fergusson, who had manipulated the phonograph on the night of April 7, 1889. The end for which the little company had met was accomplished; a few reliable persons could now bear witness to the fact that the record of Robert Browning's voice was audible, satisfactory, and considering that the cylinder did not represent the latest phonographic improvements, wonderfully perfect. The witnesses were then taken phonographically, each speaking a few appropriate words into the mouthpiece. The cylinder containing the record of the witnesses was finally added to the Browning phonogram, and this invaluable relic was then restored to its place in Col. Gouraud's already historic library of voices.—*H. R. Haws, in London Times.*

FRANCE produces annually 20,000,000 tons of coal, Germany 70,000,000, England 105,000,000. The annual consumption in Germany is 3,000 lb. for each individual, in France 1,560 lb., and in England 7,400 lb. In France wood and charcoal are far more largely used than in England.

IN NORTHERN SKIES.

WEBS of silver, spun in the twilight's travail,
Spring into sight when the orange rim has pass'd;
Silver webs that a diamond dew-world spangles,
Webs of crystal glittering at glowing angles
Flash into flame at the zenith, rosiely mass'd;
Crowns of silver, colossal, shining, mighty,
Serenely set upon brows, straight, bright, and bland;
Girdles that grace a priestess high in the azure,
Zones that encircle a queen in her safe embrasure,
Gleam on the verge of midnight's velvet strand;
Shields of silver, studded with fires of topaz,
Harps that are silver-strung, rimm'd pure with pearls;
Rapiers rich with gems that the gloom encrusteth,
Scythes and scabbards that never a wet moon rusteth,
Wheels of gold that a tireless helmsman twirls;
Sails of silver, spread to the silent ether,
Ships of state that ride with a burnished keel;
Galleys grand that sparkle to magic measure,
Dipping divinely down in a radiant pleasure,
Hulls of gold that round with the star-worlds wheel—
All go by—sails, shields, crowns, gems and girdles.
Hearken the ring of the mighty silv'ry chains!
Hearken the clang and the clash, the reverberations,
The golden din, as the shining constellations
Slowly swing and sink to the dusky plains!
—*S. Frances Harrison, in Belford's Magazine.*

NANSEN'S PRECIS.

As you know already, we left the *Jason*, on July 17, with the best of prospects, and expected to reach the land the very next day. In this, however, we were disappointed. We were hindered by the packing of the ice, by the force of the currents, and by floes so impracticable that we could neither row between them nor pull our boats over them. One boat got crushed; but we mended her, and made her serviceable again. We were carried seawards by the current at the rate of thirty miles in the twenty-four hours. We drifted in the ice altogether twelve days. We struggled to reach the land, and were near doing so three times, but three times we were carried out to sea at a speed there was no contending against. Once, during a whole day and night, we were in continual risk of destruction in the heavy sea that broke upon the edge of the ice. After twelve days' drifting, we were carried ashore at Anoritok, which lies to the north of Cape Farewell, in lat. 61 deg. and some minutes, the number of which I do not remember at this moment. We then rowed northwards, and reached Umivik, and began the crossing on the "Inland ice" there on August 15. We steered first for Christianshaab, but, as we met with violent storms and heavy going underfoot, we saw we should not arrive there in time to reach home this year. By going to Godthaab I thought we should have more chance of this; and, besides, I considered that it would be more interesting to examine the ice in this quarter, as it was as yet quite unexplored. We, therefore, altered the course for the District of Godthaab, reached a height of nearly 10,000 feet, and experienced as much as—40 deg. or 50 deg. Cent. of cold. For several weeks we were more than 9,000 feet above the sea. We had furious storms, loose, fresh snow, and terribly heavy going. At last, towards the end of September, we came upon land not far from Godthaab. Though the ice here was nasty and rough, we found a passage, and, coming down at the head of Ameralikfjord, here made a boat out of our tent-floor, some bamboo-poles, and willow boughs. In this Sverdrup and I rowed off, and reached this place yesterday, October 3. The four others will be fetched as soon as possible; they have rather short commons to live upon in there. Here you have our "saga" in short. I may add that we are all perfectly well, and that everything has gone capitally.—*From "The First Crossing of Greenland," by Fridtjof Nansen. Translated by Herbert M. Gepp. Longmans.*

WHAT CHRISTIANITY'S FRUITS ARE.

CHRISTIANITY is our moral mother—the mother of our standards of justice; the mother of our noblest conceptions of duty; the mother of that spiritual sense which apprehends God; the mother of a civilization, more active, more moral, more progressive than any of which the world has a record. We speak of the waning interest in theological discussion. All this may be consistent with a growing interest in Christianity. Theology may need theologians to explain and defend it. Christianity needs only hearts to receive it, and lives to illustrate it. The Christian mind is outgrowing the need of striking symbols. It is also outgrowing the use of denominational barriers. The spirit is succeeding the letter of the law, the closer fellowship of religious denominations the more tolerant spirit, the larger charity which everywhere abounds, the liberal recognition of the normal differences which exist in the constitution and education of men show that the fruits of Christianity are constantly growing riper and richer. The spirit of Christianity is coming to dominate more and more the forces of the world. We dwell with satisfaction upon the achievements of our age; the progress which has been made towards national justice, even friendship; the wider diffusion of all

forms of useful knowledge, the many ways by which the comforts of men have been multiplied. We realize that the present century holds more that may minister to the happiness and nobility of life than any that preceded it. There are no spasmodic movements before the people, but a peaceful flowing on of the current of progress, a steady rising of the tide of general intelligence. All this has come as Christianity has spread. Can it be continued without the aid of Christianity? Can this be done with the dumb, spiritless, nerveless, faithless principles of materialistic or pantheistic belief? They may build tombs and they may build temples, but can they comfort and strengthen and exalt the minds and hearts of men! Can they prepare this grand age for the duties and triumphs of the next? We stand looking into a future richer in promise than any age which has preceded it. It will have the accumulated wisdom of all the ages. What will enable men to grasp that wisdom and apply it to the ways of life? The heaven-born light of Christianity. The light that shines upon the path of the humblest individual and which is also sufficient to light up the highways of nations; the light that will never go out, because it is held by the hand of God. There is a hope in the world which neither this age nor any other has as yet realized. This hope is slowly assuming the stronger forms of belief—the belief that with so much light in the world there should be less darkness; the belief that with so much wealth in the world there should be less poverty and less sorrow; that in the race of life there should be fewer handicaps; that somehow in some way the opportunities of men should be less unequal.—*Christian Thought.*

PORTRAITS OF CLEOPATRA.

THE question of Cleopatra's beauty is an old one, but it has been brought into fresh prominence by Sardou's "Cleopatra" and Mrs. Langtry's revival of Shakespeare's play. The only authentic portrait of Cleopatra that is known to archaeologists is a bust which appears on a series of coins. It is on the reverse, and bears the inscription in Greek, "Queen Cleopatra, the Divine, the Younger," while on the obverse is a portrait of "Anthony, Dictator for the Third Time, Triumvir." The workmanship of the coin is far from good, and this accounts in some measure for the undeniably plain appearance of the Queen. Yet the likeness, so far as the features go, is a true one, for the other coins of the same series, though of a different type, give her the same features—an aquiline nose, a strong chin, a long neck and narrow shoulders. The fact is that her beauty was not so remarkable as one would think from the spell she cast over Caesar and Anthony. Plutarch, for instance, tells us "that her beauty in itself was by no means incomparable nor calculated to amaze those who saw her," but adds that the magnetic charm of her manner, the gracefulness of her movements, the persuasiveness of her conversation and her figure were most attractive.—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

A RARE COIN.

THE *World* was to-day shown a letter received from Capt. Robert H. Hughes, of the Allan liner, *Nova Scotia*, by Mr. Wm. McCarthy, late of Rockwood, Ont., but who intends to become a permanent resident of Vancouver, thanking him for the present of a quarter of a pistareen, dated 1740. When Mr. McCarthy was having the cellar excavated for one of the first houses in Rockwood many years ago the workmen came across this coin, buried quite a distance below the surface of the ground. He has always kept it until a few weeks ago when he sent it to Capt. Hughes. Mr. McCarthy crossed the Atlantic this summer in the *Nova Scotia* and noting that Capt. Hughes was an enthusiastic collector of old and rare coins acknowledged the courtesies he had received by this token. The pistareen was a Mexican coin passing current in the United States before that newly organized colony had a die cast for themselves. The quarter pistareen is now a great rarity.—*Vancouver World.*

ROYAL ENGLISH AUTHORS.

THE list begins, naturally, with Alfred, "the father of English prose," as the Rev. Stopford Brooke calls him. Next comes Henry II. and Richard I. Edward II. is said to have been an author, and Richard II. is also said to have "made ballads and songs, rondeaus and poems." Even Henry V. has been accredited with Latin verses, but this is doubtful. Henry VI. was an author, and Henry VIII. a writer on theological subjects; while Edward VI., Mary I., and Elizabeth, all wrote. James I. is better known as an author. Charles I. wrote, and even Charles II. has claims to a place in the list, he having written a curious account of his adventures after the battle of Worcester. James II. composed his own memoirs. About 100 years ago there appeared an account of a model farm at Petersham, near Richmond, in Arthur Young's "Annals of Agriculture," signed Ralph Robinson, of Windsor. Ralph Robinson was George III. George IV. published a folio on the Herculaneum MSS., and Her Majesty Queen Victoria closes the list.—*Spare Moments.*

A BATTALION of infantry has 150 picks, 150 shovels, 10 spades, 25 axes, 50 billhooks, and 4 crowbars. An engineer company has 130 picks, 130 shovels, 6 spades, 81 axes, 13 handsaws, 4 cross-cut saws, 40 billhooks, 13 crowbars, and 20 heavy hammers.