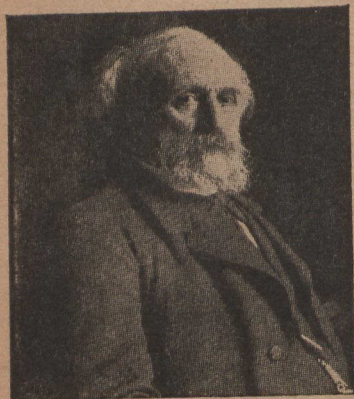


CONTEMPORARY CUTTINGS

A FEW months ago M. Alexandre Ribot became Premier in the Government which succeeds the Briand Cabinet. M. Ribot is a high-minded statesman and orator, says Maxime Vuillaume, in *The World's Work*, writing on this



"Grand old man of France." Born in February, 1842, he is now seventy-five years old. Age has whitened his hair, and bent his figure, but lightning still flashes from his eyes when the debate begins. Since 1878, when he first entered the Chamber, M. Ribot has never allowed a

single great question of the day to pass without entering into the discussion. He has been for many years prominent in French internal and foreign politics. As Minister of Foreign Affairs, under M. de Freycinet, he held office at a most grave period. Later, under M. Loubet, holding the same portfolio, he assisted in the working out of the Franco-Russian alliance. A short sojourn at the Ministry of the Interior led M. Ribot, in 1895, to the Ministry of Finance. Followed a period of nearly twenty years of retirement from office. He only came back in June, 1914, to be put at the head of the finances of National Defence. He was well chosen as chief treasurer for this war, which was going to disburse thousands of millions. To his knowledge and experience he adds a reputation for spotless honour. The work of M. Ribot since he took his place in the reconstructed Viviani Ministry, on August 26th, 1914, is considerable. Finance was disturbed, markets upset, and gold and silver disappeared from circulation as if by magic. France had not only to meet the expenses of the upkeep of millions of men, but had to create an immense amount of material which was almost entirely lacking. Millions piled on millions. The badly filled Treasury was emptied quickly. Vuillaume says:

"To fill these ever-yawning and ever-deepening gulfs, M. Ribot appealed to French thrift. He asked the famous 'woollen stocking' to empty its treasures into his hands. The 'stocking,' and with it the wealthy class, responded to his call with alacrity and enthusiasm. And here became apparent the confidence reposed in the man to whom were confided the financial destinies of France."

M. Ribot took the old treasury bonds, and by reducing their value made them accessible to the general public, under the popular title of *The National Defence Bonds*. The issue of the Defence Bonds and the two loans of 1915 and 1916, figure in the resources of the Treasury as over £1,600,000,000.

War and Education

SPEAKING of some of the many peculiar factors that go to the making of education in English schools, Ronald M. Burrows, in *The Fortnightly*, says:

If, however, there is much in the cult of games that is inevitable and admirable for a self-contained society of healthy Englishmen, there are sides of it that are dangerous, and can, and should, be checked. These are its faults bound up with the boarding school system, but are rather echoes within that system of faults in the larger world of elders outside. The first of these is an impatient and contemptuous attitude to theory as opposed to practice, to brain as opposed to muscle. The general race instinct to prefer gift to effort, is perverted for the public school boy, by the examples in which the comparison between the two is presented to him. A scholarship is won with toil and drudgery when compared with a place in the footer team. The thinking side of skill in games themselves is hard to disentangle from the first impression of spontaneous physical vigour.

Masterful will and strong body are presented to boys as all-desirable qualities, thoughtfulness and intellectual interest as negligible. Boys are not likely to look behind this obvious side of things if they notice that their parents give little honour to intellect, unless it presents itself in a material and practical form. The pure scientist, the philosopher, the historian, are unimportant people in England, more unimportant probably than in any country in Europe. It is only when brains are applied in a particular practical way, to politics, or law, or administration, or when they win their way to recognized prizes in the social hierarchy, that they receive homage. The best part of a century ago, Richard Cobbett asked, in the House of Commons: "When was the British Museum of the slightest use to the country at large? It was a place in which the rich were accustomed to lounge away their time at the expense of their poorer countrymen. For his own part, he did not know where the British Museum was." No leader of opinion to-day, least of all a leader of advanced working-class opinion, such as Cobbett was, would commit himself to such frank obscurantism.

The war has, for the time, brought seriousness into the nation's life. Dare we hope that it will teach the nation these three things?

First, That in every great undertaking, behind the able and masterful man who can practise, there must stand the thoughtful, and often shy and unimpressive man who can theorize, and that the one is as vital for the nation as the other.

Secondly, That, in modern society, industry and organization are needed from top to bottom, for the leader as well as the led.

Thirdly, That, if we are to justify our customary boast that our public schools train character, we must see to it that it is the right kind of character; that the sporting spirit, like the spirit of commercial speculation to which it is akin, is good or bad just so far as it is social or anti-social, as it serves or exploits society.

Kamerad Stories

MANY stories have been told of fraternal relations between enemy soldiers since the first Christmas truce in 1914. Here are two new ones of a decidedly different character; one serious, the other just Irish:

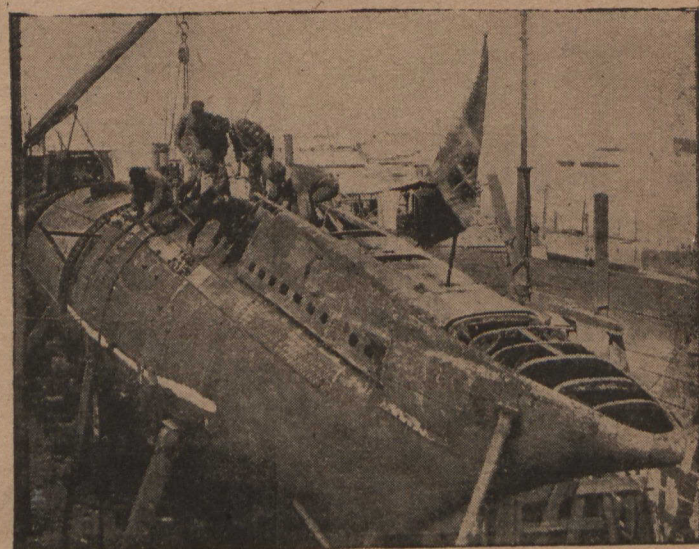
"Let me tell you," said a private of the Dublin Fusiliers, as related by S. Stapleton, in *The Contemporary Review*, "what happened to myself. As I raced across the open with my comrades, jumping in and out of shell-holes, and the bullets flying thick around us, laying many a fine boy low, I said to myself, 'This is going to be a fight to the last gasp for those of us that get to the Germans.' As I came near to the trenches, I picked a man out for myself. Straight in front of me, he was, leaning out of the trench, and he with a rifle firing away at us as if we were rabbits. I made for him with my bayonet ready, determined to give him what he deserved, when—what do you think?—didn't he notice me and what I was up to! Dropping his rifle he raised himself up in the trench and stretched out his hands towards me. What could you do in that case, but what I did. Sure, you wouldn't have the heart to strike him down, even if he were to kill you. I caught sight of his eyes, and there was such a frightened and pleading look in them, that I at once lowered my rifle, and took him by the hand, saying, 'You're my prisoner!' I don't suppose he understood a word of what I said; but he clung to me, crying, 'Kamerad, Kamerad!' I was more glad than ever that I hadn't the blood of him on my soul. 'Tis a queer thing to say, maybe, of a man who acted like that; but, all the same, he looked a decent boy, every bit of him. I suppose the truth of it is this: We soldiers on both sides have to go through such terrible experiences that there is no accounting for how we may behave. We might be devils, all out, in the morning, and saints,

no less, in the evening."

The relations between the trenches include even attempts at an exchange of repartee. The wit, as may be supposed, in such circumstances, is invariably ironic and sarcastic. My examples are Irish, for the reason that I have had most to do with Irish soldiers, but they may be taken as fairly representative of the taunts and pleasantries which are often bandied across No Man's Land. The Germans, holding part of their line in Belgium, got to know that the British trenches opposite them were being held by an Irish battalion. "Hello, Irish!" they cried. "How is King Carson getting on, and have you got Home Rule yet?" The company sergeant-major, a big Tipperary man, was selected to make the proper reply, and, in order that it might be fully effective, he sent it through a megaphone which the colonel was accustomed to use in addressing the battalion on parade. "Hello, Gerrys!" he called out. "I'm thinking it isn't information ye want, but divarshion; but 'tis information I'll be after giving ye, all the same. Later on we'll be sending ye some fun that'll make ye laugh at the other side of yer mouths. The last we heard of Carson, he was prodding the Government like the very devil to put venom into their blows at ye, and more power to his elbow while he's at that work, say we. As for Home Rule, we mean to have it, and we'll get it, please God, when ye're licked. Put that in yer pipes, and smoke it."

Italy and Ourselves

TO-DAY Italy, says Enrico Corradini, in *The Nineteenth Century*, finds herself under the hard strain of battle, side by side with her Allies, loyal to them and to her star. This nation, healthy, sober, and hitherto so largely emigrant, is sending her sons up amid the ice and snow of the Alpine summits and on the desert Carso to do and to suffer like their Roman ancestors. With valiant hearts the people are willing in the day of combat to give their property and their lives for the cause they have embraced, and no people can do more. They are not without genius, not soon tired out; they have multiplied tenfold their factories, shipyards, munition works, that army and navy may be well provided. The Allies, and especially your powerful Britain, know what a tremendous task it is to make sure of the nation's bread, to supply its furnaces with coal, and its artillery with steel. Let them rest in full confidence that Italy will not be wanting to the final victory by any default from her obligations. Our new people, with their profound commonsense, know what the War means. Like Janus, it has two faces, the German and the anti-German. It is the Kaiser's war, and the war of the Nations. East and west, sword in hand, rushed out the hosts of Pangermanism, full-fed with prosperity, lusting after the world's riches, bent on exploiting the inferior races from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf. This was Napoleon come to life again as a Teuton; for the Corsican had dreamed such dreams. And, as was to be expected, England, which had overthrown the original, detected the counterfeit sooner than her neighbours; she knew that the existence of a Free Europe was a stake. The German face of Janus



Italy is now hitting Austria harder than she has ever done. She is the only Allied nation fighting on enemy soil. This is a captured Austrian U-boat being repaired by the Italians.