

valuable than the political relation, and which, if not jeopardised by chimerical attempts to enforce political unity, may endure in increasing strength for ever. Imperial Federationists should remember that as soon as they set to work they will call all the centrifugal as well as the centripetal forces—all the jealousies and divergent interests, as well as the desire of closer connection—into play, and that the result may possibly be not only a miscarriage but a quarrel. For India, the population of which quadruples that of the rest of the Empire, and to which, indeed, alone the name Empire can be properly applied, no provision is made by the framers of these schemes. Is it to be governed as a mere dependency by a Federation comprising Cyprus, Labuan, and Fiji?

THE war cloud in Europe grows darker, and the faces of politicians gather gloom. All the Powers are increasing their armaments. Even those of which the finances are in the most desperate condition, and bankrupt Turkey herself, are putting a fresh strain upon their resources; and a state of tension is thus being produced which, in itself, it would seem must in the end compel one of the Powers to break. Three currents at once, as has been observed, set towards war: the temper and circumstances of the Czar, French desire of revenge on Germany, and German fear of the reviving military power of France. The Czar, who, by touching a bell, can, at any moment, set the world in a flame, is a Tartar in character, and whether he has arrived at the point of shooting his aides de camp or not, he has certainly been wound up by Nihilist threats to a pitch of mingled rage and panic at which he is no longer entirely master of himself. He has been hitherto ignominiously baffled in a most disgraceful attempt against Bulgarian independence. He, no doubt, feels that the conquest of Constantinople would produce a general outburst of Slavonic enthusiasm in his favour, abash his Nihilist assailants, and confirm his tottering throne. His father, had his armies entered Constantinople, would probably have reigned secure. The Russian finances are in the greatest disorder; but a half-barbarous nation, caring but little about its credit, does not shrink from bankruptcy, while the Government can lay its hands, to any extent, on men, horses, and provisions, so that it needs money only for arms and ammunition. If France were really governed by universal suffrage, she would remain at peace; for the mass of the peasant voters never think of Alsace-Lorraine, and hate war and the conscription with all their souls. But the French are a submissive, not to say a servile, people; they are easily dragged into war or anything else by any one who has grasped power; and Boulanger appears both to have grasped power and to be bent on using it for the purpose of renewing the combat with Germany. It seems certain that the French army has been greatly improved in character and equipment as well as increased in number under his administration, and by this time its spirit may have recovered from defeat. The German Emperor is known to be personally set against war; yet, if he sees that it must come, he will hardly prevent his generals from striking at the moment which they may deem the best. Mr. Blowitz, the famous correspondent of the *London Times*, has positively asserted that there is an agreement between Russia and Germany binding Russia to neutrality in a war between Germany and France, and Germany to neutrality in a war between Russia and Austria. This would point to an impending conflict between Russia and Austria, in which England, unless she altogether withdrew from the Eastern Question, could hardly fail to be involved; and though Mr. Blowitz's statement has been denied, diplomacy never shrinks from the formal denial of inconvenient facts. The science of destruction is hard at work in every arsenal, and all sorts of hellish engines and compounds are being prepared. Yet, war would be attended with havoc so dire, the interests opposed to it are so strong, so much diplomatic skill is being exerted to prevent it, and the feeling of humanity against it, whatever may be satirically said about our bellicose Christianity, is so decidedly on the increase, that we shall not believe it to be inevitable till the first shot is fired. If it is really coming, one of the Powers being resolved to attack, its coming will hardly be delayed till the spring. We look on calmly as though we were in no way concerned, but should England be involved in a maritime war, and the cruisers of the enemy get to sea, as if two navies were combined against her they almost certainly would, Canada, with her great mercantile marine, would be seriously concerned indeed.

AMERICAN universities are agitated by the question of compulsory attendance on religious services. If a religious service is a good thing in itself, which an Agnostic of course would deny, it is not quite certain that compulsory attendance, within moderate limits, is evil. A man who is got out of bed and taken to chapel by a rule may when in chapel join sincerely in the service and profit by it. But there is the danger, on the

other hand, of making religious services odious, which was certainly the effect of the daily attendance enforced at the English universities in former days. On the whole, probably, the voluntary system, with short prayers and private remonstrance in case of habitual non-attendance, is the best.

It is hard upon Carlyle that his best witness should step into the box when the court has risen and the jurymen, wearied with the controversy, have gone home. His "Early Letters," now published by his friend, Mr. Charles E. Norton (Macmillan and Co.), decidedly present his character and his relations to his wife in a far more amiable aspect than that in which they are presented by Mr. Froude. Mr. Norton indignantly exposes the use which Mr. Froude has made of his materials. Mr. Froude always makes the same use of his materials, and little does he care for the exposure so long as he creates a sensation, and his book succeeds. Mr. Norton, however, has done, with the utmost delicacy and good taste, his duty to the memory of his friend.

AN American sensationalist describes at great length the horrors of St. Lazare to show, if Lady Colin Campbell had been committed to it, what she *would* have gone through. He is determined to have his sensation in spite of fate.

AMONG other election reports it has been stated that Mr. Goldwin Smith has accepted an invitation to run for Lisgar, and that he is on the point of departure for that constituency. No invitation has been sent, and therefore none can have been accepted.

AMERICAN science has now started the theory of "inebriety by contagion." It is alleged that there are cases of men displaying all the symptoms of drunkenness from being in the company of drunkards, though they have drunk nothing themselves. This might be sometimes useful as a defence in the police court.

THERE has been another case of narrow escape from being buried alive. The son of the man about to be interred, recollecting the appearance of the body, was seized with a misgiving at the last moment, and had the coffin opened. When will the world mend its ways about burial, and put an end to the most hideous of all imaginable dangers?

HERE are two odd items of news, characteristic of social life in the States. In Kansas a woman on trial for murder has her divorced husband for her attorney. In Galveston a woman who worked as a union printer married a non-union printer, who was afterwards put under the ban. As the husband would not join the union, the wife left him at the command of her associates, and is going to sue for a divorce.

THE Americans who are always pointing the finger of reprobation at the social evils of England have themselves their tenement-house difficulty. The case seems almost desperate. If better houses are built, the low population does not live in them. Nothing apparently would cure the evil but the extinction of the low population itself, the extinction, in other words, of idleness, misfortune, vice, intemperance, and crime.

AN American journal moralises over the decline of political leadership, and finds the explanation in the prosperity of the country, which causes the minds of the people to be filled with other things than politics. That the minds of the people should be filled with other and better things than party politics is creditable to the good sense of the nation. But may not the explanation of the falling-off, which is not confined to the United States, be partly found in the growing ascendancy of stump oratory over statesmanship?

THE appearance of an Agnostic journal, entitled "Secular Thought," at Toronto, shows that all schools of thought have their representatives in Canada. The writing also shows that the representatives of Agnosticism in Canada are able men. No man of instructed and comprehensive mind can fail to understand or to respect conscientious doubt. "Secular Thought" is high in its tone, nor is there anything in its language to which exception can fairly be taken by any one who holds that religion must bear the test of free inquiry, and that when doubt is felt free inquiry becomes a duty. But we can hardly understand how any profound inquirer, however free, can at present feel warranted in treating the religious hypothesis as disproved; and this is what a man seems to do when he establishes an Agnostic journal.