

Answers to Correspondents.

"W. L. O'U."—The phrase "the King (or Queen) can do no wrong," does not imply the possession of the attribute of personal infallibility in royalty. The *London Times* some years back explained: "It seems incredible that we should have to remind Lord Redesdale that the Sovereign 'can do no wrong,' simply because the Sovereign can do nothing except by and with the advice and consent of the ministers of the Crown."

"EAVES-DROPPER" wants to know the origin of the term composing his signature. The owners of private estates in Saxon times were not allowed to cultivate to the extremity of their possessions, but were obliged to leave a space for eaves. The space was called the *ys. strypp* (eaves-drip). An eaves-dropper is one who places himself in the eaves-drip to overhear what is said in the adjacent house or field. Shakspeare (*Richard III.*) has:

Under our tents I'll play the eaves-dropper, To hear if any mean to shrink from me.

"A TYWONE MAN."—The total number of armed United Irishmen in 1793 was 270,386. Here is the document given to that infamous scoundrel Reynolds, 20th February, 1793, and to which you refer:—

	Armed men.	Finances in hand.
Ulster.....	110,990	£136 2 4
Munster.....	106,031	147 17 2
Kildare.....	10,363	110 17 7
Wicklow.....	12,895	93 0 4
Dublin.....	3,010	37 2 0
Dublin City.....	2,177	221 17 11
Queen's County.....	11,680	41 2 1
King's County.....	8,600	21 11 3
Carlow.....	9,114	49 2 10
Kilkenny.....	6,221	10 2 3
Meath.....	1,400	171 2 1
Total.....	270,386	£1,815 4 0

"A SUNDAY."—The English language is the most concise of any of the four named, and there is practical testimony borne on this point in a pleasant and instructive speech recently delivered by the President of the Western Union Telegraph Company. He stated that for all telegraphic purposes the English language was from 25 to 33 per cent cheaper, or more economical, than the French or German, or any other, and that the economy of its use had been well established by study and investigation. This was not the old-time view of the economy of English words. There are, however, enough of them and to spare, without coining any of the *slang phrases* common to the street, and sometimes having their origin in what are called the educated classes of the country.

"R. MCC." asks "What is the signification of 'a mare's nest,' so frequently referred to in newspaper writing." Rev. Dr. Brewes says, that "To find a mare's nest is to make what you suppose to be a great discovery, but which turns out to be all moonshine." What we call a nightmare was by our forefathers supposed to be the Saxon demon *Mara* or *Mare*, a kind of vampire sitting on the sleeper's chest. These vampires were said to be the keepers of hidden treasures over which they brooded as hens over their eggs, and the place where they sat was termed their *nidus* or nest. When any one supposes he has made a great discovery, we ask if he has discovered a mare's nest, or the place where the vampire keeps guard over the hypothetical treasures. Beaumont and Fletcher has:

Why dost thou laugh?
What mare's nest hast thou found?

"OMEGA."—Marshal MacMahon's income as President of France is \$124,000 per annum, besides which he is allowed \$78,000 for household and recreation expenses. We read, too, that the fortune of General Grant is now no less than a million dollars, and is still growing. In 1893 it was less than nothing, and he was drinking poor whisky out of his allowance of \$700 a year. His present wealth might perhaps be used by moralists as a text to illustrate the benefit of honesty and economy.

"A FRENCHMAN."—To all who will believe, the matter has been cleared up long ago; and there is no use in writing for those determined to cling to their prejudices. The Pope had a Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated, not for the massacre on St. Bartholomew's Eve, but for the safety of the royal family of France. A Protestant, examining all the records at the different towns in France, as well as at Paris, and found that 750 persons suffered in all France that night, and not 200,000 (!) as Protestant historians assert.

"INQUIRER" asks—1. What is the supposed rapidity of a message sent across the Atlantic by the telegraph? 2. How fast do messages travel by the wires on land? The most reliable answers we can give are these: Professor Gould has found that the velocity of the electric waves through the Atlantic cables is from 7,000 to 8,000 miles per second, and depends somewhat upon whether the circuit is formed by the two cables or by one cable and the earth. Telegraph wires upon poles in the air conduct the waves with a velocity a little more than double this; and it is remarked, as a curious fact, that the rapidity of the transmission increases with the distance between the wire and the earth or the height of the support. Wires buried in the earth likewise transmit slowly like submarine cables.

"A CATHOLIC IRISHMAN."—It is part of the system, friend. Without circumstantial falsehoods of the kind you refer to, the "unco guid" would find their occupation gone. Every Catholic book-store the world over gives contra fiction to the statement: besides, it should be known that the first translation of the Bible into English was made by Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborn, in the seventh century; the second, by Venerable Bede, in the seventh century; the third, by Alfred the Great, in the ninth century; the fourth is the "Durham Bible," in the ninth century; the fifth (now at Oxford), in the ninth century; the sixth (now at Salisbury), in the ninth century; Wycliff's is dated in the fourteenth century; the Douay Version (1532) sixteenth century; King James' Version (1611) seventeenth century.

"AN IRISH MERCHANT."—You say truly that "the Postal card system was designed for the convenience of the public; as well as for economy in trade correspondence"—but it was never intended to be turned to the service of unscrupulous scoundrelism and private malice. The case you bring before us is about the worst specimen we have seen of this species of libel. The fact of your accidental indebtedness for a small sum is no warranty for sending, broadcast through public offices what you describe as "villanous standers." If the fellow is worth it, proceed against him at law, for the Courts have already ruled that no libel is more deserving of punishment—if not worth it, give him a sound thrashing when you meet him, and pay off the account in that way—or, and this may be had morality, never pay the blackguard at all, and this requital he will feel the most. But after all—the best of all conduct in such a fellow's regard is contemptuous indifference.