the cartridges of its fighting men, it, in 1889, selected, of all others, cordite. Now cordite eats the 'innards' out of guns, left the most expensive heavy artillery useless after about a hundred discharges, and has been recently condemned by a committee of experts on explosives as dangerous, expensive, and 'worse than useless.' It never occurred to the War Office to get its Explosives Committee to work before adopting Sir Frederick Abel's mixture of gun-cotton, nitro-glycerine, and vaseline. And now Mr. Brodrick, Secretary of State for War, has issued an edict prohibiting its use in the army, and the cordite works in Arklow and elsewhere have their doors closed and their shutters up, and there is want and lamentation among some odd thousands of workers.

Thereby Hangs a Tale.

But thereby hangs a tale. On June 21, 1895, a half-mustered House of Commons was dozing in committee on the Army Estimates. A motion was tabled for the salary of Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, Secretary of State for War. Mr. Brodrick moved its reduction, and hacked and hewed at Mr. Campbell-Bannerman for not having in store a sufficient stock of cordite. All sorts of solemn assurances were given that Mr. Brodrick's charge was groundless. It was of no avail. A division took place. Mr. Brodrick scored by a catch majority of seven votes in a somnolent House from which half the Members were absent. This was, to all intents and purposes, a vote of censure on the Secretary of State for War. Lord Rosebery resigned the seals of office. Lord Salisbury stepped in, formed a Cabinet, and to the great astonishment of the average Briton, rewarded Mr. Brodrick with a seat in the Administration and the office of Secretary of State for War. And so Mr. Brodrick rose to place and pay on his beloved cordite. And now he has had to turn upon his best friend and—no doubt wi' a tear in his ee—sign and promulgate the sentence of its banishment as a pestiferous nuisance from the British army.

A Ponderous Genius.

A cable message from Paris in last Friday's daily papers ran as follows:—'There is a great celebration proceeding throughout France on the occasion of the centenary of Victor Hugo.'

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Victor Hugo was a genuine genius, a word-artist of the first order, and gifted with a mind of marvellous activity. His fame, such as it is, will rest upon his poetry. The writings by which it is best known to English-speaking readers are *Notre Dame* and *Les Miserables*—turgid, and pretentious works, abounding in absurdities. He was somewhat elephantine in proportions, affected, an inveterate *poseur*, irretrievably given to attitudinising and self-worship, and in and out of his books kept his eye for ever on the foot-lights. Innate and sedulously cultivated vanity spoiled some of his best work, as dyspepsia soured and poisoned Carlyle's. Victor Hugo dabbled considerably in politics, in which he was shifty and unreliable in his ponderous and elephantine way. Catholics will best remember him for his eloquent and stirring defence of Christian education in the French Chamber. He even went so far as to declare that the public prosecutor should deal with parents who would send their children to schools where religious instruction is not imparted. In his old and decadent days he veered around—after many a political *volte face*—to anti-clericalism, and wrote against the Papacy and the Church with a pen dipped in gall and vinegar. And so he died.

> The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
> And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
> Await alike th' inevitable hour;
> The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

*

Victor Hugo was accorded a public funeral. At his living request a pauper's hearse bore to the tomb the massive coffins that enclosed his embalmed remains. They were placed in the crypt of the Paris Panthéon, near those of Rousseau and Voltaire, the twin prophets and high-priests of the infidelity which had added such a weight of horror to the French Revolution. And there, in 1888—three years after his death—we saw the three big coffins covered in dust and faded wreaths and tattered ribbons far beneath Tissot's great dome. Hugo had, at least, the grace of a decent domestic life. And, despite the venemous anticlericalism of his senile decay, it was a cruel fate that flung his remains between those of Voltaire, who was imprisoned for gross crimes against morality, and Rousseau, who, in his *Confessions*, admits the soft impeachment of being a cheat, liar, thief, and *roué*.

Fame.

Horace Greely is right. Fame is a vapor; popularity an accident. In the seventeen years that Victor Hugo has been dead, people have been very busy doing a 'sight of forgettin'.' The once burnished Victor Hugo's name and fame have been dimmed, and in due course he will, like so many other greater and lesser lights, drop into his due perspective in the world of letters. Victor Hugo has written enough good poetry to make him famous, even if all his prose works found their way to the rubbish-heap or the paper-mill—where many of them have already gone. Fame sometimes hangs by a little thing—that of Thomas Gray lives on the 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,' that of Cervantes on *Don Quixote*, that of Rev. Charles Wolfe on the 'Lines on the Burial of Sir John More,' the curious literary history of which was told a few weeks ago in our editorial columns.

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After all, fame is a relative thing. Many of our readers may have heard of the laborer who said of Huxley: 'What a stunnin' navvy he'd 'a made!' Ruskin was known to a certain class as 'the old gent wot teaches drawrin' at the Taylorian.' Among the simple folk of Haslemere, Tennyson's fame is said to have largely depended on his being a lord and wearing 'an 'at big enough for onythin'.' Some time ago a native of Ecclefechan spoke as follows of the 'Sage of Chelsea' to a writer in the *Atlantic Monthly*: 'Oh, ay, I ken the Carlyles. Tam is a writer of books, but we do not think much of him in these parts. Jeems is the best of the family; he sends the fattest pigs to the Dumfries market.' Jeems was the youngest brother of the Carlyles, but he was by no means disposed to look upon Tam as the pride of the family. A gentleman was once introduced to the breeder of the fattest pigs about Dumfries, and remarked: 'You'll be proud of your great brother?' 'Me prood of him!' exclaimed Jeems in tones of emphatic contempt; 'I think he should be prood o' me!' 'And this is fame!' as Mr. Crummles observed.

THE DIVORCE EVIL.

THE Lenten Pastoral issued by his Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne dealt with the question of divorce. In the course of the Pastoral his Grace writes:

Thanks to the purity of English family life, and the conservative tendency of English national character, the attempt made by the early Reformers failed, and the 'Reformatio,' with its numerous causes for divorce, never received legislative sanction. Thus 'divorce a vinculo,' or from the marriage bond, continued, at least in theory, to be unknown to the English law, and the law of divorce in England was in accord with the Canon Law of the Catholic Church up to so recent a date as 1857. The Ecclesiastical Courts did two things. They declared some marriages null on account of an invalidating impediment existing before the marriage was celebrated, or, in other words, they declared that there never had been, in such cases, a valid marriage. Again, they granted divorce 'a mensa et thoro,' or judicial separation, which did not interfere with the bond of marriage, and gave no right to either party to re-marry.

It is true that in particular cases, between the Reformation and the passing of the first English Divorce Act in 1857, marriages were dissolved by private Acts of Parliament. But these cases were exceptional, and foreign to the spirit of the common law in England.

From the beginning of the century to 1830 there were 82 of these private Bills, and from 1830 to 1856 there were 99.

But in 1857 the whole theory of the law of England was changed by the abolition of the Ecclesiastical Courts, and the introduction of the Court for Divorce and Matrimonial Causes. This Court undertook to annul valid marriages for certain well-defined and not numerous causes. Indeed, it may be said that even still the English is the most conservative of all laws that recognise divorce. But still the principle was established, human law triumphed over the divine ordinance, and the warning words of Leo XIII. have been verified:

'The greatness of the evils engendered by divorce will be better understood when it is borne in mind that that the license of divorce once granted, no rein, however strong, can restrain it within bounds, not even within those which have been already fixed. The force of example is great, much greater still is the force of passion. Then it must come to pass that, like to sickness propagated by contagion, or to a mass of water which has overflown its banks, and spreads everywhere, the rage of divorce shall increase from day to day and shall obtain influence over the majority of minds.'

And so it has happened amongst ourselves. The colonies were not slow to follow the example of the mother country. They have done more; they have outstripped their guide, and have already widened the breach so as to give full room for 'that common sewer of the realm' to flow with disastrous results over the land.

The proceedings of our Divorce Courts arouse the just indignation of the very judges who preside over them, and the records of these Courts prove the utter demoralisation of society of which they are the springs and sources. Nor can we be at all sure that the evils of divorce and divorce laws have reached their utmost limit. On the contrary, there are manifest signs that concerted attacks on the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage will be more aggressive and hostile in the future than in the past.

'Materialism,' says Mr. Lilly, 'disguised and undisguised, is the fashionable philosophy of the day. It is fatal to the idea of human personality, and, consequently, to the spiritual prerogatives of woman. It means for her, as Dean Merivale has well observed, "a fall from the consideration she now holds amongst us." It means that she must "descend again to be the mere plaything of man, the transient companion of his leisure hours, to be held loosely as the chance gift of a capricious fortune."'