Is Shakespeare Ponderous.

The Lord Mayor of Sydney has expressed the opinion that the poetry of Shakespeare is too ponderous. He says that we want something more light and airy. In his judgment, the works of all great authors are more or less ponderous. But he was good enough to say that the poetry of Shakespeare was very nice for educated people. Nice seems the exact word to describe the works of the dramatist. It is peculiarly applicable to Hamlet. The Lord Mayor's high official position naturally gives great weight to his opinion, and one is not surprised to learn that quite a controversy has arisen over the matter. Admirers of Shakespeare appealed to Mr. James Bryce as one who might be considered, as far as literature was concerned, as only one degree removed from a Lord Mayor in authority. But the Ambassador, with the instinct of the true diplomat, declined to commit himself to an opinion that might seem to run counter to the opinion of a high dignitary. He merely suggested that the question might be made a subject for an annual discussion. Mr. Bryce has evidently got a subtle sense of humour.

The Intense Desire for Humbug.

Mr. J. P. Frengley, medical secretary to the Hospital and Charitable Aid Department, ascribes the increased cost of living to the intense desire for humbug which pervades all classes. He says that people like tomato sauce of a bright red colour, though they must know that this is not a natural colour. They would pay more for New Zealand jam if it had a label on the tin suggestive of Hobart. There is no doubt a great deal of truth in his contention. Most people buy things to impress other people. Men build houses far beyond their actual requirements, because to live in a place much too large for you is looked upon as a mark of social position. Some women keep their best things for callers, and make anything do for everyday use. The plated teapot and the china cups are sacred to the "At Home" days, while common earthenware spread on a newspaper on the kitchen table is good enough for the husband. Brass fireirons are kept for show, and the fire is stoked with an old shovel and a superannuated kitchen poker. It is a harmless foible, and it is undoubtedly good for trade. But for the intense desire for humbug half the jewellers and dressmakers' shops would have to close their doors.

The Mediterranean and the Triple Alliance.

Probably as the result of representations made by Lord Kitchener, the Admiralty has decided not to withdraw from the Mediterranean. Sir Edward Grey explained that though there was not the slightest prospect of a quarrel in the Mediterranean, yet if our naval strength were reduced the "diplomatic situation might be strained." It has been decided, therefore, to keep a sufficient force to be able to cope with anything the Triple Alliance might bring to bear against us. Sir Edward explained that our relations with Germany were excellent. The two Powers were perfectly frank with each other. Mr. Bonar Law supported the Foreign Minister, both in regard to his policy in the Mediterranean, and in regard to his remarks as to the friendly attitude of Germany. But they both thought that Germany would be still more friendly if she was convinced that England had a "sufficient margin of strength." The late naval review at Spithead has probably materially increased Germany's friendly attitude towards us, and helped to avoid what Sir Edward Grey so cautiously describes as a difficult diplomatic situation.

Considerate City Fathers.

Municipal rule in Geneva seems to be distinctly in advance of anything we can show in the Dominion. It was found by the city fathers that a large number of people were in the habit of losing their way in wandering about the streets of the town, especially at night. Geneva is associated in the public mind with a certain kind of mineral water, and the municipal authorities thought that this might have something to do with the propensity shown by many people to lose their way. They therefore issued a notice to the effect that on application at the police stations, residents and visitors would be supplied gratis with a certain number of tags bearing their name and address, with the printed request: "If I am found in a condition which renders me incapable of going home, kindly conduct me to above address." This seems so much more considerate than our own method of conveying people, who have lost their way, to the lockup.

The City of Morality.

Whatever may be the merits of the prevalent antagonism to the introduction of the Bible in State Schools in the Dominion, Sir Robert Stout was peculiarly unhappy in his defence of secular education before the Royal Commission on Education. He instanced France as an example to the nations in the matter of high morality, and he set out to show that the high moral tone of Paris was entirely due to the fact that morality was taught there without any religion. The popular mind has always associated Paris with an almost puritanical rigour in the matter of morals. French novels have become a synonym for all that is chaste and pure in literature. The can-can puts our own dances to shame in the delicacy of its conception. And it is particularly gratifying to know that this high morality has been achieved without any religion. The Apache, the motor bandits, the heroic Bonnot, are instances of the absence of crime in this favoured land. Sir Robert also argued with unanswerable logic that if it was the duty of the State to teach religion to the young, it was also the duty of the State to teach religion to adults. He might have carried the argument a step further, and pointed out that if it is the duty of the State to teach arithmetic to the young, it is also the duty of the State to teach arithmetic to adults. Many grown-up people need arithmetic quite as much as children, to judge by the way some trade people add up their accounts.

The Decrease of Illiteracy.

But the strongest argument of all was that the decrease of illiteracy was due to the secular system of education. Few will be found to gain-say this contention. The most illiterate men have always been those of a strong religious instinct, such as Newman, Browning, Tennyson, Ruskin. Who would dream of comparing the English of Newman with the faultless prose of Hansard, or the French of Bossuet with the impassioned oratory of M. Clemenceau? If we compare the illiteracy of pupils brought up at Eton or Harrow, where religious education is given, with the high standard of literary attainment displayed by the average State school pupil we shall see at once what a serious bar religious teaching is to real educational advancement. It is hard to say why it should be so. But the fact remains, and it behoves all who value the purity of the English tongue to resist to the utmost of their power any attempt to substitute the debased English of the Bible for the classic grace of "English as she is spoke" in New Zealand.

The Grounds of Morality.

But the Chief Justice was on absolutely unassailable ground when he contended that morality was not founded on religion. The most moral persons may be without any sense of religion. Few people are so honest, sober and industrious, as the prisoners in our gaols. They do not steal, they don't drink, they don't gamble, they rise early, they smoke in strict moderation, they never visit houses of ill-fame. They are obedient to the orders of their superiors, they work hard at honest toil, they are never guilty of the sin of gluttony. They set an example to the rest of the community in these respects. If we deprive men of all chance to do wrong we can have a whole community as highly moral as our convicts. Morality may also be based upon reason. Men will not steal if they find it pays better to join a syndicate of some sort. Morality may also be based on a sense of fear. Certainty of detection and punishment will often prevent men from committing crimes. Mere morality may be valueless. It is the spirit in which a thing is done that really matters. In the memorable words of Canon Ainger, it is not morality that makes a nation great, but morals.

Germany's Ambassador in London

Baron Marschall Von Bieberstein—A Great Diplomatist

It is hoped and believed by the reasonable men of both England and Germany that the new Ambassador's tact will preserve the peace of the world and eventually make for a British entente with Germany.

It used to be the tradition of the British diplomatic service to send to the Embassy in Constantinople a man who was a personality and an intellectual force (says Mr. H. N. Brailsford in the "Daily News"). If Germany has obtained an ascendancy at the Porte it is largely because she found what of late our Foreign Office did not so much as seek—a representative who was himself a will and a mind. These words in this connection are apt to suggest a misleading portrait. The strong men of our own Oriental school have generally got their way by bullying. There was always something in their shadow when they entered an audience-room, which looked like an ironclad on the horizon. The success of Baron Marschall von when he knew that he was being "done"—"done" with incomparable charm. The success of Herr Marschall is due to more virile qualities. I have never in listening to any man expounding a policy at his desk been conscious of so much concentrated reason, so masterly a power of stating a case none too strong in itself, a habit of speech which conveyed in a fashion so magnetic the impression that the speaker himself was convinced and meant to convince. For the moment he was thinking of nothing else, and he took pains to summon all the powers of a very capable mind to drive his thesis home. It is the secret of the success of the orator and the pleader. But few men of affairs can command it in the routine of their official business.

Herr Marschall belongs to the modern school of diplomacy which understands the use of the newspaper. A philosophic journalist experiences no undue resentment when an old-fashioned Am-

BARON MARSCHALL VON BIEBERSTEIN, THE SUCCESSOR TO COUNT VON METTERNICH AS GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN LONDON.

Bieberstein lay in a certain directness and concentration which have nothing whatever in common with the cruder methods of handling Orientals. The physical impression of the man is one of massiveness and power. The features seem heavy and a little forbidding until he begins to talk. I do not know whether he has Hapsburg blood in his veins, but if for a moment the alert and genial play of feature were to cease he would resemble the Velasquez portrait of Philip V.

Never was a physical resemblance more delightfully misleading. One cannot have with Herr Marschall even the briefest of business conversations without realising the rare charm of his directness, without submitting to the force and impetus of his mind, and understanding the fame of the geniality and courtesy which made him for so many years the most popular European in Turkey. The success of some Eastern diplomatists has rested on a certain allurement and grace of mind, which gave their victim an aesthetic pleasure even bassador seeks refuge in a professional reticence. One merely reflects that the poor man is evidently too maladroit to trust himself to speak. I recollect with some amusement the reply of our envoy at the last Hague Conference to a collective approach from the representatives of three of the most important English newspapers. He curtly told us that "he had nothing to say to reporters." A note dispatched thereafter at a venture to Herr Marschall brought me back a prompt invitation to call upon him. His one desire seemed to be that the English public should know exactly what Germany was doing—why she advanced this proposal, why she objected to that. No question which I put to him was evaded, and with a good nature and a courtesy as rare as they were welcome he told me the main facts of public interest regarding the proceedings. He made sure that I should visit him again, and invariably his manner was designed to

Continued on page 62.