

leave to substitute fur-lined circulars and cloaks for the sealskin or the lambskin.

Let us now look for a moment at the extensive provision made to fill the growing demand for fur-lined goods. There are 10,000,000 grey squirrel skins exported annually from Siberia. The backs of these will be used to line one sort of garment, the bellies, which are white, for another. There are other colors in the fur of these animals; shades of yellow or brown. The "chipmunk," the "hamster," &c., are varieties used for this purpose. Musk-rat skins plucked and dyed or dyed unplucked are also used for linings. Australian opossum is yet another variety of skin similarly utilized. Muskrat has sometimes been called a despised skin, but, "In this terrestrial scene nothing common is, or mean," that will constitute a fur lining. Even that familiar animal the "harmless necessary cat," is pressed into the service. It is said 1,000,000 catskins are used in the United States every year. Ohio furnishes some 350,000 per annum. We learn that last year over 1,500,000 cats were killed in Britain for their skins, which have become valuable as fur lining. Cat-skin collecting as an industry is of very recent growth. About the superiority of cats' skins in one way or another, over those of rat, rabbit or squirrel, there is no question, says the *Liverpool Courier*. "The cost of production, too, cannot be excessive seeing that each skin is stolen, the whole working expenses are the wear and tear of shoe leather in tramping the streets for prey, and a very casual \$2 penalty for such as are detected in the act."

It is, we would remark, not only a nursery myth, but a fact of commerce, that, nowadays, "papa buys a rabbit skin to wrap his baby-bunting in." White rabbit skins are extensively used for children's cloak-linings and servants' garments. This should be a practically limitless source of supply when we remember what John Burroughs tells us in the *Century Magazine*. That delightful observer of nature avers that "the British rabbit breeds seven times a year and usually produces eight young at a litter. It is calculated that a single pair of rabbits will, in England, in the course of four years multiply to 1,250,000. Then the western gray rabbit, less fertile, is said to produce three or four broods a year of four to six young. There are 30,000,000 rabbit skins used up annually in great Britain for linings, yarn, cloth, and bed-stuffing, besides several million hare skins." Among subordinate skins employed for children's cloaks and also sometimes for linings, is the Iceland white lamb. Finally, so handsome a fur as that of the mink, once counted among the most valuable and stylish of furs, is coming into vogue for over-coat linings, by reason of its lowered price.

—We regret to learn that the illness which has thrown Sir Leonard Tilley off duty in the House of Commons, is of a somewhat serious nature. It is doubtful whether he will be able again to resume his duties as Finance Minister. Meanwhile Mr. Mackenzie Bowell, the Minister of Customs, is endeavoring to fill his place.

THE WINE TRADE OF FRANCE.

By the end of March, the French wine growers had begun to count the prospects of the year's crop. The pruning of the vines was then over; the too sudden rising of the sap was feared and cold weather to keep the budding back desired; in the South vegetation was precocious, the rainy weather having caused the buds to burst, and danger from premature flowering was feared. The French wine grower seems to have a greater fear of frost than we have in Canada.

A correspondent of the *Paris Revue des Vins et des Liqueurs*, writing from Margaux, March 26th, says:—"For some days back we had intense cold, which causes great uneasiness to our vintors; every morning the thermometer falls below zero. [Reaumur is no doubt meant, of which zero is the equivalent of the freezing point of Fahrenheit,] and those repeated frosts finish by destroying a great number of buds." Before the budding takes place, frost does but little harm, judging by Canada we might almost say none. From Bommes, March 25, comes a complaint of an opposite kind; that the cold weather keeps the vines too far back, and vintors were becoming uneasy and discouraged in consequence. The thermometer was four degrees below freezing. "The vintors fear that something may happen some morning which will cause them to lose all the fruits of their labor since the last vintage." From Roussillon abundant snow and rain are spoken of as favorable to the growing vines; but there was a dread of frosts coming at a later date. Here we hear of the great progress which the Phylloxera is making, one-third of the vines being dead, and it was estimated that the crop would be reduced to a fourth of an average. From Nuits, at the same date, comes intelligence that the pruning was over; and, showing how much vintors fear the frost in France, a happy escape from any ill-effects from the winter frost was reported; hope, distant and uncertain, of a good crop was indulged, "but how many accidents have we to fear before the plucking." First among these are the spring frosts which, last year, proved disastrous in many vineyards; a too early budding, which would make the frosts a scourge, was feared. The sight of a few flakes of snow had brought joy to the heart of the vintor: "we congratulated ourselves on this weather," says the correspondent, always of the *Revue* before quoted, "and hope it will be prolonged to retard the opening of the buds." The vines were being treated with sulphuret of carbon; sometimes they are painted with lime as a means of destroying the eggs of the phylloxera and other parasites; an arsenical insecticide was also being applied. In Beaume, the weather was behaving well; to a too warm temperature the wished-for cold days had succeeded. The Burgundy vintors, March 25, were congratulating themselves that the month of March had been dry and cold. "This is the best thing," says a Dijon correspondent, "that could happen to the Burgundy vintor." So universal is the dread of a too early opening of the buds to be followed by injurious spring frosts. The thermometer at six below the zero of Reaumur was a subject of

real congratulation. "The main thing for the vine," we read, "is that the vegetation be checked." Experience tells the vintor that a late spring is generally favorable to his crop. The rising of the sap in March and the coming of the swallows are bad omens for him. An Epernay correspondent, March 24, has the same tale to tell. There had been very cold weather with useful frosts, which checked the rising of the sap. Fogs, an old prejudice says, are the harbingers of the dreaded May frosts.

Among the American vines, imported on account of their supposed superior power of resisting the influence of the Phylloxera, though that scourge is said to have come from America, another disease to which no more definite name than that of mildew is given, is reported to be making "rapid and terrible progress." But we hear few complaints of the deficiency of stocks of wine. Prices have receded from the points they reached in 1880 and 1883, and these high figures are not expected soon to return. An Epernay correspondent writes that the new wines added to the old stocks "ensures wines for about six years." From this point we learn that re-sales by merchants who had purchased of last year's crop were *nil*. In Burgundy there have been nine poor crops of grapes in succession; and as a consequence wines are scarce, prices high and qualities low, and only houses of the first class have their cellars full. The racking-off of the wines takes place about the end of March, but it is not done during rain and a dry north wind gets credit for clearing the wine. Complaints of the absence or scarcity of foreign orders are frequent. The export trade is chiefly done by the large houses who get their pick of the crop when the vintors begin to sell. At this season what is considered the speculative stocks are held by them. Commercial travellers were securing but few orders. The Gironde wines of 1884 are reported to be of excellent quality. In the borough of Libourne the old stocks are almost entirely exhausted. The fine Roussillons, too, are nearly exhausted and second choice, also good, is coming forward.

The period of scarcity of French wines appears to be over. In the Gironde districts three weeks of unwonted slackness of demand had passed. At Bommes auction sales of wines show a lowering of prices. At Margaux, though prices had risen slightly they were still in favor of buyers. The light wines of the South were going off at poor prices, though the highly colored wines sold better, being purchased for home consumption in preference to foreign vintages. Sauternes changed hands at distinctly lower prices than last year. The large Bordeaux firms refuse to overload themselves with stock for which they might not find an easy outlet. On the whole the time for purchasers appears to be favorable; though perhaps prices are not sufficiently settled to give great certainty to the operation.

—We learn with interest that Mr. John Taylor and Mr. John Hallam, of this city, are about to address the Hamilton electors on the subject of the free library. These gentlemen are fully conversant with the working of free libraries, and can give information and advice about them. They have rendered good service to the citizens of Toronto in connection with our free library.