

THE PHILOSOPHER

Current Events under Review.

THE GREATEST SOURCE OF WEALTH

Excellent advice was set forth by Vice-President George Bury, the western head of the Canadian Pacific Railway, in connection with his public statement issued a couple of weeks ago in regard to the crop prospects. After noting the increase of one and three-quarter million acres in the grain area this year, making a total grain area for 1914 of close upon 21,000,000 acres, and speaking of the outlook for a new harvest record, Mr. Bury spoke concisely and with a forcible directness to the point against unduly attracting people to centres of population. His advice is as wise and valuable as it is terse, and should be emphasized again and again, and acted upon, by every agency of public or private action that can thus co-operate in promoting the welfare and prosperity of the West. Mr. Bury has hit the bull's-eye. People can live and succeed only by productive industry—their own, or other people's. The crowding together of population in cities causes great increases in city land values, by which the early acquirers of city real estate are enabled to levy heavy drafts upon the product of the labor of those who come along later. It is a profitable operation for the fortunate, or foreseeing few, at the expense of the many; but it is the productive industry of the many that makes it profitable for the few. The great majority, the country at large, is not benefited by the crowding of people into cities, but by the promoting of the movement back to the land, which increases the production of wealth from the fundamental and the greatest source of wealth, namely, agricultural industry. The output of agricultural products is the foundation of Canadian national progress and prosperity. Every successful harvest in this country lessens the necessity for borrowing abroad and lightens the burden of repayment of money already borrowed.

PRINCIPLE AND PARTISANSHIP

The Philosopher has a friend who is inclined to use strong language when he becomes thoroughly aroused on the subject of the sacrifice of principle to political partisanship. When he is launched upon discussion of this subject he utters scornful condemnation of any man who will make it a boast that he never voted against his party. It is quite possible, of course, that a man in saying that may be able to declare truthfully that in every election in which he has cast a vote he has conscientiously believed his party to be in the right and the other party to be in the wrong; and to condemn such a man is, of course, unjust. Freedom of opinion must ever be preserved as the fundamental essential of self-governing progress. There are men whose loyalty to their party occasionally impairs their ability to maintain a judicial impartiality in coming to a decision upon public issues. This is stating it mildly. The friend of whom the Philosopher has just spoken is very decided in the view that the advance of the country rests with the men who are not rigid and unbending in their loyalty to party, but are ready to vote against their party when they believe it to be in the wrong and the other party to be in the right. In fact, he sometimes talks of attempting to form a new party, of which the conditions of membership shall be that you have not always voted for one party. It is, in sober truth, a good thing for the country that there is always a considerable element of the citizens who hold principle above party, and are not like the Democrat in the story—let us say Democrat, instead of either Conservative, or Liberal, because thus we can imply that such hide-bound partisanship is not found in this country—who, when he first heard the story of Cain and Abel, condemned the slayer in unmeasured terms, but when he was told that Cain was a Democrat, changed his point of view, and while still regretting the occurrence, said, "But what did that Republican Abel come around there for, looking for trouble? Why couldn't he stay away?"

AS TO CALLING OTHER PEOPLE FOOLS

Some hitherto unpublished letters of Thomas Carlyle were printed in the London Times recently. In one of them Carlyle advised the person to whom it was written to "avoid the society of fools." This is not wholly good advice. To set out with the notion that you are not a fool and that you will have no dealings with fools, is like setting out with the notion that you are a saint, and will not have any dealings with sinners. Most of us are fools and sinners; and our business, in the former respect, is to become less foolish, not by despising other fools and resolving to avoid their company, but by realizing our own lack of true wisdom and endeavoring to become wise.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

No observant person can fail to note the frequent occasions there are which furnish evidence of parental neglect of the duty of training children. A Winnipeg lawyer, speaking of certain cases of juvenile delinquency which had come to his attention, said recently, "What ails these youngsters, anyway? Are they victims of too much amusement and too much liberty?" The truth is that they are victims of parental neglect. In some cases the parents are either incompetent to discharge their obligations to their children, or have married and brought up families without realizing the serious responsibilities of their position. As for the question of moral training in schools, it has most unhappily been mixed up with that of denominational instruction. But all right-minded people are in agreement in regard to the essentials of morals; and it is hard to understand why a teacher of good character and education should not be able to teach morals. However, school training cannot take the place of home training. The notion that the state can relieve the parent of any of his responsibility is false and a source of the most serious evil both to the individual and the body politic.

THE RIBS OF THE ESKIMOS

The ancients used to have a saying that something new was ever to be expected from Africa. We moderns are getting into the habit rather of looking to the north for the unexpected. No sooner have we recovered from the surprise caused by the announcement of the discovery by our Manitoban explorer Stefansson of a tribe of blond Eskimos than another announcement is made, and accepted by various bodies of learned men, that every Eskimo has two more ribs than other human beings who are not Eskimos possess. This is an extraordinary thing. We are prepared to submit to the superiority of the Eskimos to ourselves in respect of certain qualifications which are needful in the Polar regions, but this Eskimo superiority in ribs is a different matter and touches us in a ticklish spot.

A STRONGHOLD WITH THREE DEFENCES

At the recent convention in London of the Association for the Prevention of Consumption, that great Canadian, Sir William Osler, M.D., than whom there is no higher authority in the medical profession of the whole world at the present time, said some plain things which deserve general attention. Practically every living human being, he told his hearers, has at some time or other harbored germs of tuberculosis. He went on to say that probably 90 per cent of people have somewhere within them a small area of tuberculosis. This statement has been unduly magnified in many newspapers and its significance entirely misapprehended. The plain truth is that the germs of many diseases are being constantly cast off by healthy people and the whole trend and purpose of Sir William Osler's address was to dwell upon the importance of creating and maintaining this condition of being able to cast off disease germs. Speaking of people in whom the beginnings of tuberculosis have actually declared themselves, he said that the conditions necessary to enable them to escape this doom are fresh air, good home lives and abundance of good food. The dangerous tendency could be arrested, "if the nation would spend on food what it spends on drink." Dr. Osler put the case impressively when he said: "The enemy has been traced to his very stronghold, which is defended by three allies—poverty, bad housing and drink."

AS TO WEALTH AND PRIVILEGE

A Tory of the Tories is Lord Willoughby de Broke, who yet delights to declare that "a title is nothing but a sound, unless the holder does his duty to his country." He is a foremost figure in the crusade in Great Britain in favor of compulsory military training, which he would apply to his own privileged class no less stringently than he would apply it to every other class. Lord Roberts, the veteran Field Marshal, is another member of the House of Lords who believes that compulsory military training for every class of the population, without exception, is needed in Great Britain. The advocates of this doctrine find themselves in a small minority, not only in the nation at large, but even in the House of Lords. Lord Willoughby de Broke's Bill, which, in his own words, was designed to "give effect to the idea that certain comfortable and privileged people should have to lead the way in the matter of compulsory military training," was supported by Lord Roberts and by a few other Lords, but was voted down by the great majority of the members of the hereditary House. Lord Willoughby de Broke, in commenting on the action of the major-

ity, says, "Most of them probably agree with Lord Lucas in thinking that the only use of money is to buy comfort and avoid responsibility." Continuing, he quotes with a great deal of scorn, this passage from the speech of Lord Lucas, who, by the way, is a Lord of recent creation:

"The primary object for which any man desires to accumulate wealth is to be able to obtain certain privileges which the possession of that wealth gives him. Those privileges consist of being relieved of certain obligations which press rather heavily upon a poor man—first, that he should have to work to support himself; second, that he should have to work to support his family; and third, that he should have to work in some form or another to support the State. It is because a man has the desire to relieve himself of these obligations that he sets to work to accumulate wealth, and the possession of wealth has always carried with it the enjoyment to a greater or less degree of all those privileges."

It is by no means necessary to agree with all the ideas of Lord Willoughby de Broke in order to appreciate with sympathy and with respect his attitude of anger against the smug doctrine of wealth and privilege set forth by Lord Lucas. The spirit that speaks in Lord Lucas's words is not the spirit that has won for Great Britain its place in history, nor will it make any country great or advance true progress and the betterment of the conditions of humanity.

THE STRUGGLE DOES AVAIL

How wonderful and mysterious the human lives around us and the inner visions and ideals that guide them. How marvellous the human spectacle, if we had but the power of insight into the meanings of all these lives. Every day, if we will try to see and to understand, we have before us men and women striving nobly and unselfishly towards the attainment of aims and purposes that will be for the good of others. They are true crusaders, often hiding under a commonplace exterior the spirit of striving towards an ideal, the spirit which finds expression in the poet's words:

"Say not the struggle nought availeth,
The labor and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain."

It is a fine and inspiring thing to know that, in spite of all discouragements, the average man faces front. It is part of our human endowment to meet life bravely, to fight for causes that outweigh any temporary ease or happiness. We are in a world of mystery and yet we find in our own natures a clue to the solution. The highest satisfaction comes from duty bravely done. We know from the approval of what is best within us that the struggle does avail and that the labor and the wounds are not in vain.

THE KING OF HISTORICAL NOVELISTS

Eminently worthy of celebration was the centenary, which fell within the past month, of the publication anonymously in Edinburgh of Sir Walter Scott's first historical novel, "Waverley." What that event meant for English literature everybody knows. It was the beginning of the reign of fiction. Before Scott's wonderful success, novels were relatively few in number and were written for special tastes. There were few novels that could be read aloud in the family circle. Scott wrote for everybody, and the long series of his novels, beginning with "Waverley," made the greatest literary success in all history. No other writer who ever lived has done as much to popularize literature as Scott. There may be those to-day who find some of Scott's novels slow, in comparison with the latest thriller; but it is unquestionable that future ages will endorse the verdict of the past century upon the masterpieces of Scott, whose strong and swift imagination and marvellous power of making the past live again won him the deserved name of "The Wizard of the North." He was a great genius. Nothing is more notable in his work than its wide sympathy and kindly tolerance. Take, for example, his historical novels of the times of the Cavaliers and the Roundheads. He shows us both sides, making both Cavaliers and Roundheads live in his pages as men with both virtues and faults, human beings with humanity's greatnesses and shortcomings. He does not picture them as heroes and noble fellows on one side, and scoundrels and knaves on the other. For, really, each side meant well, if the other would but believe it. This was the lesson which the unequalled master of historical romance drew from history—a lesson of invaluable importance, of which there is as much need in the world to-day as ever there has been.