

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

THE CROP PROSPECTS.

THE very important crop question is now assuming measurable dimensions. An eminent English authority on grain statistics, while anticipating an almost average British crop of wheat, estimates the deficiency in France at 130,000,000 bushels, and some French calculators place the deficit as high as 175,000,000. The total European deficiency to be supplied from external sources the English estimator places at 380,000,000 of bushels of wheat; or, if we were to accept the figures of the French statistician for France, the total European deficit would be about 430,000,000 bushels. Seemingly, therefore, it may be assumed that Europe will have to import about 400,000,000 bushels of wheat. Such a demand implies a higher price for that cereal than has prevailed during late years; and were the price estimated at the confessedly low figure of \$1 a bushel, it would follow that Europe will have to pay \$400,000,000 to other parts of the world for this cereal; which is an amount almost without precedent. Our own crop is variously estimated at between 500,000,000 and 550,000,000 bushels; and as prospects now stand, 550,000,000 is perhaps a fair estimate. Estimating our domestic requirements for various purposes at 360,000,000 bushels, we would have at this rate a surplus of 190,000,000 bushels for export, assuming the home stock to remain at its present quantity, whatever that may be. According to these estimates, we are in a position to furnish to Europe close upon—or possibly fully—one-half its total required imports of wheat. This means that this one item of our exports will amount to something near \$200,000,000. To the United States this is a very exhilarating prospect, but to Europe it is a very gloomy one. Even were the European nations in a prosperous condition, such an extraordinary necessity to buy bread from foreign countries would be appalling; but, coming after an enfeebling financial crisis on the heels of a large drain of gold into Russia, and at a time when industry is contracting and foreign trade is languishing, what may be the possible result of these short harvests to Europe? It is useless to predict; and it is imperative to wait for consequences. The present attitude of expectancy assumed by Wall Street is the only safe and wise one under such circumstances. It is not likely that we shall be permitted to reap this advantage of a great crop without some sort of drawback, and it is wise to wait and see in what form that drawback is likely to come. Europe will find it impossible to pay us for our wheat without making some sacrifice. She will offer her products to us at low prices, or consign them for sale at what they will bring; if we accept them freely our wheat will be so far paid for in goods instead of gold; if we buy only our usual quantity of imports, then Europe will be compelled to pay us largely in our securities held there; and in that case the settlement will not be conducive to buoyancy in the New York stock market. For these reasons we advise moderate expectations, at least until the future of Europe becomes plainer.—*From the Halifax Critic.*

M. RENAN ON IMMORTALITY.

WHAT M. Renan ignores is that all serious belief in immortality is founded on the conviction that the human heart craves rest on an eternal righteousness and blessedness the communion with which is by no manner of means a light pleasure of that butterfly order to which he chooses to attribute all the significance of finite immortality. The "beatific vision" is a vision for which finite minds can only be prepared by suffering or willingness to suffer—indeed, by the kind of suffering or willingness to suffer of which we have had a divine example. The only preparation for immortality is experience of a diametrically opposite kind from that on which M. Renan dilates with a sort of epicurish cynicism as the possible amusement of a wearisome eternity. To learn to fathom the depth of even the deeper human characters is a process which involves a great capacity for voluntary suffering. But to learn to grow up from the human standard of righteousness to the divine, is a process which involves the willing carrying of a cross in the infinite agony and blessedness of which M. Renan has long ago ceased to believe. Of course, having once reduced our nature to the level in which the capacity for ephemeral gaiety is all in all, he finds no difficulty in making the prospect of immortality look as absurd for man as it would be for the butterfly itself.—*Spectator.*

THE POPE'S ENCYCLICAL.

THE papal encyclical attempts to solve the social problem through the application of right and justice. But when we ask where these principles of right and justice are comparatively most lived up to, we seek in vain among the properly Roman Catholic countries. In the Protestant countries the labourer stands higher, the poor are less in need of charity, and justice is better administered. The social question is more agitated in liberal countries, not because there is more of that "general moral deterioration" of which the Pope speaks as an evil sign of the times, but because there is more progress. And progress is after all the test by which we shall recognize the worth of moral principles. We believe in conservatism, because we believe that the future must develop out of the past. We find no fault with the Pope's conservatism. There is, however, an ultra-conservative sentiment underlying the Pope's encyclical which we cannot

consider as promoting progress. In speaking of poverty, which "in God's sight is no disgrace," he advises "the rich to incline to generosity and the poor to tranquil resignation." "Generosity" together with "charity" would make a poor substitute only for justice, and "tranquil resignation" can never beget the spirit of reform. Progress is the hope and desire of those who toil, and our deepest instincts move us to obey its laws. It is the motive principle of human action in its highest form. To be better and to be better off, is a virtuous aspiration, and "tranquil resignation" with our own misery should be termed "indolence." Bad institutions that oppose our elevation ought to be improved, but they cannot be improved by tranquil resignation. We must labour to improve them, we must aspire and struggle for progress. We must study the truth freely and fearlessly, and the truth is found with the help of "right reason" and by a cognition of "the laws of nature." It is noteworthy how much the Pope endeavours to base his arguments upon natural laws and reason. In one passage he goes even so far as to propose "right reason" as a test for what is the eternal law of God. He says: "Laws bind only when they are in accordance with right reason, and therefore with the eternal laws of God." (Italics are ours.) We agree with the Pope, but we fear that many dogmas and church institutions do not agree with this saying of the Pope's, if his words mean what they purport.—*The Open Court.*

AGRICULTURE IN OUR SCHOOLS.

THE extent to which agriculture should be taught in our rural schools is a matter on which at present there will be a wide difference of opinion. The teacher who is not equipped for teaching in this subject may probably desire to evade teaching it altogether. . . . The missing link, however, will soon of necessity have to be supplied. It will have to be supplied for the reason that the pupils who enter the High School after having been grounded in agriculture in the common school will require more on this subject to enable those of them who enter upon the profession of teaching to pass their examinations in agriculture more creditably, and also to teach the subject more effectively. This instruction will have to be supplied for the further reason that teaching it in the High Schools will enable the pupils who enter the Ontario Agricultural College to prosecute further the study of the subject and to do so more effectively. Again, it will have to be supplied because of the return of many of those who graduate in the High Schools to the pursuit of agriculture as a life-work, since the continued exodus from the farms to other occupations cannot last forever. The relative importance of agriculture cannot materially change with the passing of the years, hence the time must be near at hand when our young people will cease to look upon agriculture as an ignoble pursuit compared with many other lines of life. That the farmers will yet demand that the teaching of agriculture shall be made compulsory in our rural schools is a settled conviction in the mind of the writer, as is also the conclusion that this demand will soon be made. Indeed, we have evidence of this in the resolution passed by the Central Farmers' Institute last winter, asking that the Minister of Education give this matter his careful consideration. That the trustees in rural schools will soon insist upon the introduction of the new text-book into these schools is a foregone conclusion, and that the teachers who have fitted themselves for teaching the subject with efficiency, all other things being equal, will soon get the preference in such schools, is equally certain. It is therefore of some consequence to the teacher that the warning note now given should receive some attention, and that he govern himself accordingly. It is not enough that the teacher be barely able to take the pupil over the ground covered by the text-book. Teaching after this fashion is never effective teaching. To impart instruction effectively the teacher must be a long way in advance of the ground covered by text-books, more especially those that are introductory. Where will those who have teaching in view as a life work get this information? They cannot get it easily and in best form until agriculture is extensively and efficiently taught in our High Schools.—*Prof. Thomas Shaw, of the Agricultural College, Guelph, in the Toronto Educational Journal.*

ELECTRIC STREET RAILWAYS.

THE generally received opinion that electric motive power will ultimately supersede the use of horses is markedly confirmed by the experience of the great Boston roads. According to the *Springfield Republican* the West End Street Railway of Boston is one of the largest street railway systems in the United States if not in the world. The service covers about 18,000,000 car miles run per annum, and a good deal of interest is manifested respecting the relative cost to the company of its horse and electric car systems. The electric system is in a transitory state now, so the figures would not show what may be done after the change from horse to electric motive power has been completed; but they give some idea of the saving which can be made and which is making now even during the process of transition. In May, 26 per cent. of the whole West End system was operated by electricity, and 74 per cent. with horses. The total receipts in May were about \$520,000 and the total expenses about \$353,000. The electric system earned net \$16.07 per mile, and the horse system

\$9.60 per mile. The cost of operating each system was \$22.36 per mile for the electric, and \$24.62 for the horse. The new long cars make even a better showing than the foregoing figures. Thus it will be seen what is in store for the company when its whole system is operated by electricity. It ought to be remembered in reference to this glowing statement, however, that this Boston Company is at present endeavouring to float a large amount of bonds.

HINTS FOR CANADIAN FARMERS.

A MAN can scarcely do a more humane act than provide good watering places for the horses as they travel along the highway. Sometimes we may travel miles on miles and our thirsty horses may have no opportunity to quench their thirst except as they may cross a friendly creek. In some States, if not in all, the farmer who thus provides a watering trough or tub is entitled to a discount on his road tax, so that if he has not the desire to do the dumb brutes a favour he may find it a little to his interest to provide for their necessities when in so doing he helps himself by making his road tax less. It is also often convenient for him to make use of these drinking places for his own team as he drives to and from his work. Here is another important consideration. Indeed, to a traveller who is uncertain of his way, the finger-board at the cross-roads is a decidedly important consideration. When the town does not provide for the construction of these sign-boards, the farmer living near should not feel that he is going beyond the law or doing something very much outside the line of duty in erecting them. It may be a sign of the millenium's approach when farmers shall do such things as these *pro bono publico* and without the hope of reward, but their days would not be shortened nor their pocket-books be greatly depleted by devoting a day or two of the year to such little improvements as we have outlined. Public spirit is a good thing to button within one's coat, but it should not be forbidden an occasional expression.—*Springfield Republican.*

THE GROWTH OF CANADA.

THE expansion of any country is necessarily bound up in two factors nowadays—means of communication and population. It could easily be shown by statistics that immense progress has been made in all directions and in every province since confederation, but it is nothing to the advance which will be witnessed in the early future. It is only within the last few years that the vast resources of the Dominion have been placed in a position to enable them to be properly developed. Manitoba and the North-West can now be reached as quickly as, and cheaper than any other country in the world that is inviting immigration. Land can be obtained for nothing, and its fertility is unquestioned, while the climate is now recognized as perfectly healthy and favourable to agricultural operations. There are also large areas in the older provinces waiting to be occupied; and improved farms can be obtained there by persons, with some means, who desire to retain the social amenities to which they have been accustomed. The increasing population which these advantages is sure to attract will require the manufacturers of Great Britain, and will send in return additional supplies of grain, farm and dairy produce, cattle and fruit, of which the larger proportion is now imported from countries outside the Empire. In addition, the resources she possesses in the two oceans which wash her shores, in her forests, in the mineral deposits both of Eastern Canada and of the West, in the limitless riches of the Rocky Mountains north of the boundary line, remain to be exploited and made available to a greater extent than at present for the use of mankind. All this affords promise of such wealth, strength and power, that it is no wonder Canadians turn a deaf ear to the wiles of Uncle Sam, preferring to maintain their individuality, and to work out themselves the destiny which they believe to be before their country. It is this thorough belief in Canada, and in her resources and capabilities, that has always stimulated and inspired the leading statesmen of the Dominion, and is responsible for the wonderful transformation which has been referred to. Sir John was able to say, with pardonable pride, at a banquet given to him in London six years ago: "I have sat at the cradle of that strong bantling, the Confederation of the Dominion of Canada. The bantling, always a hopeful one, is no longer a child; it has grown up to manly youth, and it has such a promising vitality that if there were such a thing as a political insurance company, I am quite sure it would insure the life of the Dominion at a nominal premium."—*J. G. Colmer, in the Fortnightly Review.*

LANDOR needs a trained reader, able to tell the best and the second-best apart, and fully to enjoy the best. Such a reader must know more history and more literature than most people know. For Landor's usual method is to presuppose in the reader a knowledge of everything that concerns his speakers, and to put them on the stage not in any scene recorded of them, but in scenes not inconsistent with what is recorded of their lives and characters. Whereas Shakespeare is apt, in his historical plays, to follow history more or less closely, Landor is apt, as it were, to invent history; where Shakespeare tells what happened, Landor would tell something implying a knowledge of what happened.—*From "Landor Once More," by W. B. S. Clymer, in July Scribner.*