

The Philosopher

THIS YEAR'S HARVEST

The fertile soil of Western Canada has loyally kept faith and yielded in great abundance a crop so great as to give unprecedented cause for thankful rejoicing. The only aspect of the situation which has given ground for anxiety is that of the question of ocean transportation for the grain which the West has this year to send across the Atlantic. British vessels from all the seven seas were requisitioned at the beginning of the war, and have been in constant use in immense numbers as troop-ships and for the carriage of military supplies. Canada has thus found herself confronted with the colossal problem of how to ship out a grain harvest unprecedentedly great by an ocean service which has shrunk to one-tenth of what it was when the war began. The Admiralty has not failed to be fully aware of this state of affairs. Its first duty is, of course, to insure the safety of troops carried to and from the different areas of active military operations, and to provision and supply the Empire's armies—in addition, needless to say, to holding the enemy's sea power throttled. Fast vessels, in great numbers, in addition to the vessels of the navy, are needed for the transport of men and supplies; but early assurances were given to the Dominion Government that, subject to military transport exigencies, every possible aid would be given to prevent any congestion of Canadian traffic.

AS TO BACKWARD SCHOOL CHILDREN

One of the most interesting documents which has come to the Philosopher's table in a long time is the first report of the official School Psychologist to the London County Council, Mr. Cyril Burt, whose work is the applying of tests to backward children in the area over which the London County Council has jurisdiction. He states in this report that he has examined more than 2,000 children—400 of them subnormal children, 200 certified mental defectives, and some 1,400 normal children. The great majority of the 400 children who were classified by the teachers as subnormal on the ground of mental insufficiency, were found to suffer from mere dullness, backwardness, or special and limited defects rather than from mental deficiency. Out of them all only 24 passed the mental examination for admission to a school for mentally defective children. Mr. Burt says in his report that there is a striking disagreement as to where the line between the defective child and the ordinary child is to be drawn, and remarks that progress in school is only a very indirect answer to mental ability or defect. He carried out an interesting investigation to show the influence of loss of sleep upon school work. In one school the children were divided into two groups. One group was allowed to sleep for two hours daily in school, the other group worked in the ordinary way. It was found that among the children who were thus allowed to sleep, those who suffered most from lack of sleep at home gained greatly in general ability. In the worst cases the gain more than made up for the loss of time while they were sleeping in school. Experiments of the same kind are being carried on by Mr. Burt which he says may show that lack of sleep is as injurious to school children as lack of food.

REGARDING GERMAN WOMEN'S SKIRTS

A dispatch from Berlin to the New York Times casts an interesting illumination on the isolation of Germany and its need of cotton for ammunition. The whole affair is also illuminating in regard to the iron hand which regulates the lives of Germans in a way which is almost unbelievable in free countries. It concerns the styles in women's skirts, and says:

"Narrow skirts will be worn by the women of Germany until the war ends, if martial law succeeds in its attempt to dictate fashions. The leading German dressmakers, in a patriotic desire to break away from the tyranny of Paris, went to the opposite extreme and decreed very wide skirts, mostly pleated, and also voluminous petticoats, for the autumn and winter. The menace of the new all-German fashion did not escape the eagle-eyed government, which is taking steps to prevent the resultant squandering of cloth, particularly cotton material. As a first step all the papers are printing an inspired warning against wide skirts by a 'highly placed personage.'"

This warning to German women from the Kaiser's palace at Potsdam begins by saying that "the German fashions in women's clothes has successfully freed itself from French and English leading strings." The amusing thing about this is that the change from wide skirts to narrow skirts for women was made fully a year ago in England, largely as the result of a rather remarkable controversy on the subject, which produced innumerable letters in the Times and the other London papers. So that this "new" German style (which was adopted also in France at the outbreak of the war, as a measure of economy) is, in reality, a following after English and French styles, after all. "The clothing trade," concludes the Government warning, "will do well, particularly so far as cotton goods are concerned, to come to an understanding with the Governmental authorities, before the Government finds itself compelled to see to it that its measures are not set at naught." There speaks the German system. The only wonder is that the ruling despotism has taken the trouble to use so many words in laying down its decree about women's skirts, instead of issuing a rigid "Verboten," forbidding any but the narrowest skirts.

THE VOLUME OF THE GRAIN

That the exportable surplus of Western Canadian grain this year will be of unprecedented magnitude is already a certainty. The exact number of millions can only be guessed at, for the present. Of the enormous volume of this year's grain that must find its way through the elevators at Fort William and Port Arthur before the end of this year some idea may be formed from the figures of the grain movement in 1913-14, the last big crop season. Of wheat alone the receipts at the two Lake Superior ports from interior points in the West during September, 1913, were 18,075,473 bushels, during October, 37,546,215 bushels, during November, 30,946,217 bushels, and during December, including wheat stored later in vessels for the winter, 17,883,688 bushels. That record-breaking flood of wheat was accompanied by floods of oats, barley and flax, amounting to close upon a total of 50,000,000 bushels of these three grains. The total quantity of grain received at the head of the Great Lakes during the four months beginning with September in that year was 150,156,455 bushels; during the remainder of that crop year, ended August 31, 1914, some 48,000,000 bushels were handled. It is plain beyond possibility of question or doubt that those figures are going to be completely eclipsed by this year's crop.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

For a century before the present conflict began, thinkers have indulged in speculations on how world history would have been changed if Napoleon had won Waterloo. In the time to come thinkers will speculate in like manner on what would have been the result if the German onrush upon France had not been checked heroically by the Belgian resistance at Liege, and if, later on, in September of last year, if the Battle of the Marne had not resulted in the beating back of the Germans to the Aisne. If the Germans had succeeded in taking Paris, which they were so confident of doing, France would be theirs, and following upon the conquest of France, Belgium, Holland, Poland, the Balkans, all central Europe from the Somme to the Dnieper, from the Elbe to the Dardanelles and beyond to the Euphrates, would have been counted upon as certain conquests, to form the vast new German Empire which had been planned out at Berlin during many years of careful and elaborate preparation. Berlin awaited confidently last September the news of German victory in the Battle of the Marne, awaited tidings of a Sedan far more colossal than that which forty-five years ago made the German Empire. Had the result of that battle been what Germany so confidently counted upon its being, the continent of Europe would have been as completely at the feet of the German Emperor as it was at the feet of Napoleon after the Battle of Austerlitz. Then would have come the struggle with the British Empire.

MOVING PICTURES AND HYPNOTISM

There was reported in the newspapers a couple of weeks ago the case of a young woman who was hypnotized by the eyes of Svengali, the hypnotizer of Trilby, on a moving picture screen, and remained in a trance after the show was over. This case would appear to afford pretty strong proof that people who are hypnotized are brought into that condition really by their own imagination. Here was no hypnotic operator—nothing but a picture, the reproduction of a photograph, the shadow of a shadow. The Philosopher has long held the view that the hypnotic state is a kind of emotional paralysis of the will, which is considerably more than half intentional. Certain it is that against a person of any real strength of character who was determined not to be hypnotized, even a super-Svengali would be impotent. As for moving pictures, they are, of course, often extraordinarily and startlingly vivid. The Philosopher has heard of a young woman who at a moving picture show was so deeply moved by the plotting of the villainous character in the piece to effect the ruin and death of a noble young man that she whispered quite loudly, "Stop him. Won't somebody stop him?" Whereupon an elderly gentleman sitting near said, "Certainly. I will go and stick my umbrella through the screen, if you insist." Characters on the screen are frequently applauded; hisses and other sounds of disapproval are also frequently heard. But the story that a bulldog viciously attacked a collier which was trotting about on the screen at a moving picture show, is one which the Philosopher cannot vouch for.

WHAT ARE EDUCATIONAL "FRILLS"?

As is usual at this season when the school year has begun to get well under way again, there is a revival of the discussion of what should be regarded as essential in education. "Frills" in education form a perpetual subject for debate. But what are the subjects which are rightly to be regarded as fundamental and not open to the charge in any manner, shape or form of being "frills"? The old proverb about the three r's contains the answer which comes at once to everybody's mind when this question is asked. Everybody must agree that whatever else is taught the primary sub-

jects in every school course must be those which will make the children able to read, and write, and do ordinary calculations rapidly and efficiently. The rigid objector to "frills" may declare that anything outside of this may rightly be considered a "frill." In this view history is a "frill" because a man or woman may be able to make a living without knowing the names of the kings of England or the annals of Canadian development. From the same point of view geography may be deemed a "frill" in that it has (as the stern unbending objector to "frills" may argue) no immediate utilitarian value, but no person with any conception of the real meaning and purpose of education would argue that history or geography should be cast aside. Both of these subjects have a distinct value in that they train the pupil's mind and give him an interest in this country and this citizenship and in the whole scope and view of human life and progress, and both history and geography and all the other subjects taught in our schools must, if they are to be true means of education, be taught in such a manner as to make the pupils use their own minds. The mere storing up of facts or dates or other number in the mind does not constitute education. Education is indeed something wider than mere knowledge, and this must ever be kept in mind in considering any question of what should be taught in our schools and how it should be taught.

ALCOHOL AND HIGH EXPLOSIVES

It was stated in the cable news a few weeks ago that the Government of France had requisitioned all the alcohol in the country, to be used in the making of high explosives. If all the alcohol in any country were to be converted into high explosives for use in war, it may perhaps be doubted, considering the manner in which explosives are used in war, whether it would, in that form, kill or maim many more persons, or inflict greater deprivation on more families than drunkenness does. That may be an extreme view; but it would be interesting to have, if it were possible, the facts and figures on which to base such a comparison. The war prohibition measures of France and Russia have taught the world more lessons than one in connection with the traffic in intoxicating liquors. Science and invention have found many chemical and engineering transformations of important industries to new purposes and for the filling of new vital needs, in all the countries involved in the war; and in reply to the plea that the manufacture of alcohol is an important industry which ought not to be destroyed without time for readjustment, it is to be said that it ought not to take science and invention long to find better uses for the plant and the energy employed in that industry than the production of a liquid which destroys efficiency and causes misery.

THE LEGACY OF JOHN LYNCH

Recent lynchings in the United States give evidence of deplorable conditions in certain parts of that country. Some of these lynchings are terrible manifestations of the racial problem with which every thoughtful and earnest citizen of the United States must feel a deep sense of his country's responsibility; but one recent lynching, which took place in Georgia, had nothing to do with that problem. It is stated by one of the leading newspapers of the United States that some two thousand persons have been lynched in that country during the past fifteen years, and that during the past six months there has been an increase of 60 per cent in the lynchings. The guilt or innocence of the persons lynched has nothing to do with the fact that a lynching is lawlessness in its extreme form. It menaces the very foundation of civilization. John Lynch, the Virginia farmer who took the law into his own hands, and from whom the word "lynching" is derived, made himself the executioner of a man who may, or may not, have been guilty of a crime which deserved the death penalty. It does not matter. Well it is for our own country that there has never been a Canadian lynching. It is undeniable that not a few of the lynchings in the United States are due to lack of respect for the law and lack of confidence in the courts.

FRENCH TRIBUTE TO BRITISH ACHIEVEMENT

A great English journal lately wrote that the British public must not, by the hero's deeds of the British army, be led to forget the preponderant part played by the French on land. This frankness must be mutual. If the support of our British allies on land is still limited, it must not be forgotten that at sea—on all the seas—it is they who have by far the heaviest task to fulfil. From the very first day of the war the British fleet gained such absolute control of the ocean roads and so evident a naval superiority that the public has come to take this state of things for granted. We must not lose sight of the advantage we gain by this uncontested supremacy. This cannot be repeated too often; if at the beginning of the war we were able to complete the equipment of our army with a rapidity which was not among the least of the surprises of the German staff, we owe it to the fleets which rendered us masters of the sea. Paris Temps.