

work are limited in number, except in an occasional crisis which comes periodically to the industry and commerce of all countries. There is a very apparent disposition on the part not only of the people of Canada but the people of other countries to increase government and municipal activities. Without any increase in the number of undertakings in which the municipalities, the provinces, and the Dominion are engaged there would be little trouble in securing work for everyone upon the public highways of the provinces. The streets of our towns and cities alone would occupy almost numberless days of good hard honest labour before they are in condition, and every day of labour intelligently spent in this way would bring good interest to the taxpayers. Canada is almost destitute of parks, boulevards, and public improvements which are so characteristic of the Latin states of South America. It might be urged there would be difficulty in distributing the labour, but upon investigation it would be found that this is not a serious obstacle because poverty exists in the congested sections of population where public works are mainly required.

**WITHIN** the last ten years, there seems to have arisen an unusual number of fads about food, each of which is confident that it has found the dietary road to health and long life. The vegetarians are strong in England, especially in London, and number in their ranks, prominent literary men and politicians, while a Duchess has recently been added unto them. The roast beef of Old England may become a myth and Charles Lamb's essay on "Roast Pig" may be regarded at no distant date as a curious description of a vanished dish. It may be that our descendants will look back to our dinner-tables, much as we regard the feast of cannibals and shudderingly refer to their barbarous ancestors who actually devoured the flesh of cows and sheep. As yet, however, a vegetarian menu seems a comfortless affair, lacking in the good cheer which tradition associates with roast ribs and brown gravy. There will be a distinct loss to literature, if chops and veal cutlets disappear. Part of the homely charm of Charles Dickens' English scenes is due to those ample spreads where roast beef, fried ham and mutton chops make such a goodly show. But if these joys are to vanish, we must make the best of the lettuce and asparagus which remain. This continent is not nearly so affected by the food fad as seems to be the case with Europe. Even Mark Twain succumbed to the general topic when he made his last extended visit across the Atlantic and gravely considered how many meals he might safely ignore. Eatables and drinkables were never more closely and carefully analysed than in the year 1908 and it is simply wonderful how many microbes seem to flow from the water-tap and make themselves at home in the milk-bottle. Some day, but not yet, it will be quite safe to take a glass of city water or a mug of milk.

**THERE** is said to be a decided unwillingness on the part of those newcomers, the Mennonites, to obey the regulation in certain provinces with regard to flag-flying on the schools. According to the St. John "Globe," the Mennonite objects, not to the British flag in particular, but to any flag, considering it "a badge of power which is used to oppress simple people and to rob the poor toiler of the results and rewards of his industry." The Mennonites are described as decent and hard-working citizens whom it is desirable to keep in the country. But the flag, after all, is the symbol of our highly-valued constitution and the Mennonite might be persuaded to see the sweet reasonableness of recognising it as such. We must remember that he knows nothing of the Magna Charta, the Habeas Corpus Act, the British North America Act, nor any other of the steps by which we came into our present light and liberty. A flag does not mean to him security for his home and progress for his posterity. Wherefore, we should deal gently with the uncomprehending Mennonite and try to show him what the flag stands for before we expect him to desire its unfurling above the school-house. Should the Mennonite fold his tent and depart from a Union Jack country for the south he would find, so far as flag-honouring is concerned, that he had fallen from the frying-pan of Manitoba into the fire of Illinois or Michigan, for the citizens of the United States, above all other people that on earth do dwell, insist that their country's flag shall be duly honoured. Sometimes the methods of our neighbours in the instruction of the newly-arrived immigrants may have seemed crude; but their problem is a big one, the people who come must realise as soon as possible what the new country means and direct methods are likely to accomplish the naturalising miracle. It is only the abuse of the flag-flying that either Republic or Dominion needs to shun. Let us hope that the industrious and law-abiding Mennonite may be induced to smile upon the three-

crossed flag, which means to us what our fathers believed and achieved but which looks to him like another rag of tyranny.

**JUST** as everything has settled down into quiet and the noise of the Peace Conference is stilled, there arises a murmur on the shores of Lake Michigan and another Chicago professor makes a few remarks. The reason for the extra-activity of the Chicago instructor is not on the surface. There are many great educational institutions on the American continent, containing professors of amazing research and erudition; but in affinity for the spot-light Chicago leaves California, Harvard, Yale, Columbia, to say nothing of McGill and Toronto, in the dim recesses of obscurity. However, this time the Chicago savant, Professor Herbert McCoy, has made a more startling announcement than is usually uttered by the members of the Faculty, inasmuch as it would fairly shock the financial world, if taken as a near reality. The distinguished chemist read a paper in which the assertion was made that the transmutation of elementary metals is now possible, through the presence of radio-active conditions in the atoms. This all seems like the dream of the mediaeval alchemists; but our modern telephones and aeroplanes would have looked like witchcraft to our great-great-grandparents. The fairy tales of science are more entertaining than the stories of Grimm, and the electric bulb bids fair to eclipse Aladdin's lamp. So, the modern radium specialist may succeed in accomplishing that towards which Roger Bacon dimly strove. But it will be many silvery moons before we are practically indulging in the transmutation of metals. Otherwise, the new Canadian Mint might have a sad fright.

**JUST** whether it would be wise for the Dominion Government to inaugurate a period of economy is a question which might reasonably attract more attention than it is receiving. For the nine months ending December 31st, the Dominion revenue shows an increase of nine million dollars. December itself shows a decrease. The revenue for the fiscal year ending March 31st will probably fall short of the estimate. It is but reasonable to expect that the wonderful expansion in revenue which has marked the past few years will some day receive a check. It will not go back, perhaps, but it will increase more slowly for a time. In all probability that "some day" is here.

Given these facts, should the Government continue to increase its expenditures or should it like the business community adopt a careful attitude? Optimistic citizens and daring politicians will cry out for greater expenditures; the more sober-minded and less partisan members of the commonwealth would probably advise caution and prudence. A growing country, such as this is, must always find it difficult to retrench. New wants and new demands are arising every day. Even the Opposition is advising fresh expenditures for rural mail delivery and nationalisation of telegraphs and telephones.

Whatever the answer may be, the Government would be wise in limiting its expenditures on such public buildings as post-offices, customs-houses and armouries. Some of the larger canal projects may safely be left over until the Transcontinental is completed between Moncton and Winnipeg. There are other smaller undertakings which are not absolutely necessary and the postponement of which would do no more than pique certain members of Parliament who pride themselves on the amount of public money which is expended in their constituencies.

**THE** All-Red Line proposition calls for twenty-four knot passenger steamers which are likely to prove too extravagant for Canada. The backbone of Canada's steamer service is freight and little freight is carried by fast passenger steamers. The freight delays the steamer in port and hampers her speed. Yet freight service is even more important to Canadians than passenger traffic.

To go into details. A steamer which carries freight and passengers and which makes 15 knots an hour consumes about 140 tons of coal a day. To increase the speed to 17½ knots, the coal consumption rises to 250 tons a day. To reach a speed of 24 knots, requires 1,000 tons a day. This larger supply of coal takes space, which might be devoted to freight, and requires more men to handle it even with the aid of special machinery.

The fancy service, such as is given by the new Cunarders and the larger German vessels travelling between New York and Europe, is expensive. These vessels depend for their revenue almost entirely upon passenger traffic. For some years to come, Canada's passenger traffic must be small as compared with New York, and boats sailing to Canadian ports must rely to a considerable extent upon freight. For this general service, the slower and less expensive vessels are more suitable. Canada should have the best, but it would be foolish to pay for baubles.