



Life, Literature and Education.

It is a fact, lamentable, but true, that so often the sacrifice of human life seems necessary to a full realization of public dangers. Distressing as the recent accidents at Grimsby and Kingston, in which seven lives were lost, have been, they have yet served to bring vividly before the country a long and pressing need, namely, the necessity for better protection at railway crossings. At last, a Bill providing for elimination or protection of level crossings is before the House, and the Minister of Railways, Hon. Mr. Graham, has asked the Board of Railway Commissioners to make a thorough investigation of the whole problem. Inspectors will be sent out to make a report on all dangerous crossings, and steps will, no doubt, be taken in the early future to remove the menace from the points reported as most in need of attention.

The full significance of wireless telegraphy as a life-saver was well demonstrated within the last fortnight, in the sinking of the Republic, rammed by the Florida, off Nantucket, on January 23rd. There, during the fright and tumult, while the water surged into the hold, and the vessel gradually settled, the captain and the wireless operator stood side by side, the operator feverishly recording the captain's words, which were sent through space, reaching here the Acushnet, there the Baltic, the Lorraine, Lucania and City of Everett. And soon, looming through the thick fog, following the course indicated by the submarine signals used to supplement the wireless in showing the channels of approach, came the great Baltic, with other vessels following. The Republic sank, but not a life, save those crushed out by the impact, was lost. A great triumph for "wireless," a great triumph for Marconi, and for humanity.

The importance of insuring an absolutely pure supply of drinking water is well illustrated by the fact that at present over 2,000 inhabitants of Bellevue, a suburb of Pittsburgh, Pa., are ill from drinking raw river water. The filter, it appears, would not supply the demand, and so, without warning, river water was pumped in to make up the deficiency. Some farmers appear to think that the remoteness of the farm water supply from watercourses used to convey city sewage, is sufficient to insure immunity from pollution, but this is a great mistake. Farm sewage is practically of the same nature as city sewage, and, if permitted to enter the water supply, is just as pernicious in effect. Even mere distance of the well from possible sources of contagion cannot always be depended upon to insure safe water, as pollution may be insidiously conveyed by veins of underground drainage. Every person in Canada who has a well open to the slightest suspicion should have a sample analyzed. Send to Frank T.

Shutt, Chemist, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa, for directions how to procure and send a sample for this purpose. Take no chances with disease germs lurking in the well. A clear, limpid glass of water is not necessarily pure. It may contain the deadliest germs.

With Siberia looming up as a competitor against Canada in butter and No. 1 hard, there seems hope for the veriest desolations of the earth. And Siberia will no longer stand still. The heaven of responsible Government is working, and strongly, in Russia, as in Turkey and Persia, China and India, and the people are finding their feet. The result can only be the development of the vast steppes, stretching from the Volga to the Pacific, and from the Altai Range to the frozen slopes bordering the Arctic. What the commercial result of such a development must be, cannot but be evident. Competition is the life of trade, but it is surely up to Canada to solidify her position by giving of her best, if she is to hold a leading place in the commerce of the world.

It is said that a commission, to collect information about what has been done in other countries in the way of providing facilities for technical education, will be appointed by the Dominion Government at an early date. The commission will, in all probability, have little, if anything, to do with agriculture, a branch of industry not generally identified with technical education, yet such a movement is bound to stir those interested in agriculture to renewed efforts in its behalf. When industrial education is in the air, agriculture, the most varied and intricate of all industries, when regarded from a scientific standpoint, cannot lag in the procession. Eighty per cent. of the people in the Dominion are farmers. Surely the greatest expenditure of time and money for the promotion of education for life-work should be devoted to them. The greatest good to the greatest number.

The United States Government's suit for the dissolution of the Standard Oil Company was practically closed on Jan. 15th, but the arguments of both sides will be presented in April before the United States Circuit Court, in St. Louis, and will then be taken to the Supreme Court. The record so far comprises 22 printed volumes, and represents a cost to the litigants of nearly \$10,000,000. Query—If the Standard Oil Company wins out, who will pay the bill?

People, Books and Doings.

On an average, twenty-six books a day are published in the United States alone.

The centenaries of the present year include those of Tennyson, Gladstone, Darwin, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Poe, Edward Fitzgerald, Mrs. Browning, Mendelssohn, and Lincoln, each of whom was born in 1809.

A half-dozen Canadian artists have formed a company to deal in pictures, frames and supplies. The concern, which is called "Canadian Art, Company, Limited," is capitalized at \$25,000. Its incorporators are Charles Macdonald Manly, Gustav Hahn, F. M. Bell-Smith, F. H. Brighden, of Toronto; F. S. Challener, Conestogo, Waterloo County; F. S. Haines, Meadowvale, and J. R. F. Row, manager, Toronto.

The Voisin factory, near Paris, which has been established solely for the manufacture of flying-machines, employs over forty workmen. All of the airships made at this factory are of the winged type used by Messrs. Farman and Delagrang, and the price of a complete machine is about \$5,000.

Prof. Percival Lowell, the American astronomer, has brought out a new book, "Mars as the Abode of Life," in which he emphasizes his idea that Mars is inhabited; that it is irrigated by canals cut to convey the water from the melting snow and ice at the poles, and that slowly yet surely the planet is drying up. In time, he says, the Martians will be parched out of existence. "The drying up of the planet is certain to proceed, until its surface can support no life at all. Slowly but surely time will snuff it out. When the last ember is thus extinguished, the planet will roll a dead world through space, its evolutionary career forever ended." The fate which is overtaking Mars, Prof. Lowell thinks, will be ultimately that of the earth.

The fulfilment of his prediction of an upheaval in the neighborhood of Mt. Etna will probably place Mr. F. Perrett, the American scientist, who was with Prof. Matucci at Vesuvius during the eruption of that mountain, in 1906, in the very foremost rank among volcanologists. In the fall of 1907 he wrote: "By the rational methods of scientific research, we know that a great eruption of Mt. Etna is impending, the only uncertainty at present being which side of the mountain will break open." Great volcanic eruptions are preceded by great earthquakes, and the Messina disaster occurred precisely on a date indicated by Mr. Perrett on his diagrams for 1908. An immediate result of the great catastrophe will no doubt be to incite deeper study into the conditions of the earth, with a view to foretelling such upheavals in time to prevent such sacrifice of human life.

The Czar has as many crowns as a fashionable lady has hats. He is regarded by his people as a religious, as well as a secular monarch, and, therefore, has crowns for every possible State occasion. The Russian Imperial crown is modelled after a patriarchal mitre. Five magnificent diamonds, resting on a huge glowing ruby, form the cross at the summit. Diamonds and pearls of utmost perfection render this crown unrivalled among all others, and there is one sapphire in it which is said to be the finest stone of its kind ever mined.

A Substitute for Model Schools Needed.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

The closing of the old County Model Schools last year has now passed into history. It is true ten of these Model Schools were retained to the end of the year 1908; it is true that it is still the intention of the Education Department to retain at least a few of these schools for the newer and less-densely-settled portions of the Province. It has been recommended that five Model Schools would be enough, and that these five be conducted by the Department at its own expense, as miniature Normal Schools, to issue district certificates.

The Department deserves credit for grappling vigorously with the professional training of teachers, and providing such facilities for Normal training as shall gradually elevate the type of teacher in scholarship, culture and general make-up. To abolish the County Model Schools was a policy that required courage. By many of our people they were regarded with favor. Many were friendly to them because they were cheap and local. Small towns made a little money out of the Modelites in board, etc. This was a sordid reason.

But there were other people who appreciated these local Model Schools, because they believed in the efficiency of the system. These friends of the Model Schools were numerous, and they are very skeptical now as to the merits of Dr. Seath's system of superior Normal Schools, which aim to train-to-teach students who have never taught one day, and to give them the finish, too. These people have a very serious argument, and it must be met on its merits, and not brushed aside as senile. For example, they argue that the old Model School was local and cheap, and that the students attending there for but a fall term got the rudiments of training, and were given certificates for three years. They then took schools, and in a year or two gained the most valuable thing teachers can have—experience. They were then eligible, after one year's experience, to attend Normal Schools. Having thus a year or more of experience, they were in a position to appreciate the higher training of the Normal Schools. They could observe, intelligently criticize and compare with their own experience what they saw. So far, this is admittedly good. It is better than having crude students enter Normal Schools, as they are now, without one moment's experience, because there is no way so effective in learning "how to do" as "by doing." However, it is impossible to have Normal School entrants take a year in actual teaching now under the "Pyne system," and I firmly believe that the new system is superior to the old, judged independently.

But, my object in writing this article is to suggest a modification of our new system, so as to combine in it some of the merits of the old Model-school system, and yet not impair our present excellent system; excellent, if our Normal Schools are properly staffed and equipped, and not overcrowded; excellent, if not paralyzed by the appointment of a