

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM IN NEW ENGLAND.

NEW ENGLAND Catholic statistics, as a whole, count up as follows: Priests, 906; seminarians, 233; churches, 602; chapels and stations, 133; colleges, 7; academies, 38; parochial schools, 205; pupils, 69,105; charitable institutions, 36; Catholic population, 1,185,000. This estimate is based on the reports of the parish priests to their ordinaries. It is rather under than over the figures. Exceeding care is taken in making this census. Estimations are generally based upon baptisms, marriages, etc., which yield a certainty on the safe side, but which exclude that host of Catholics who hold their religion loosely, who seldom attend church, who frequently neglect to have their children properly baptized, yet who, with all their failings, are substantially Catholics, if anything, and who sometimes, sooner or later, return to the faith of their fathers. There are at least a million and a half Catholics in New England. It has been asserted, without contradiction, that over half the population of Boston are Catholics. —*The Catholic Review*.

DRINKING TO EXCESS AND INSANITY.

At the recent meeting of the American Medical Association, Dr. T. D. Crothers, of Hartford, read a paper on "Alcoholic Trance: its Medico-Legal Relations," in which he maintained the view that a frequent result of drinking to excess was an actual insanity, incapacitating the victim for intelligent action, and hence relieving him of moral responsibility for acts committed while in such condition, just as insanity of other kinds does. He instanced various cases which had come under his observation or otherwise become known to him, in which the ordinary characteristics of a man's actions were entirely changed by this "alcoholic trance" while he still was able to act with apparent clearness of intention. Sometimes, he says, the effect is seen in an entire absence of any originality or special intention in the actions of the victim—the activities are apparently in the line of those ordinary habits of life which long use has made a second nature. In other cases the character is so entirely changed as to be unrecognizable—as in the case of a clergyman who insisted on riding in the cab of a locomotive, or a well known skeptic who attended a prayer meeting with apparent earnestness. In all these cases memory is totally lacking, and, Dr. Crothers maintains, all ground for holding the individual to moral or legal accountability for his acts. He would have the courts recognize that inebriety is, in all cases, a disease, and one more or less affecting the mental powers; also that the state of "alcoholic trance" is a condition entirely precluding moral or legal responsibility, and that, where it is proved to have existed at the time of the commission of any unlawful act, it shall be considered a bar to any prosecution of the individual inculpated. He urges that all acts of an unlawful character committed when under the influence of liquor should be subjected to a careful study by competent physicians to determine if the element of responsibility was present, and finally he recommends that the State establish hospitals for the reformation of this class of persons. —*The American*.

A RISK OF TRAVEL.

The reported indisposition of the Duke of Edinburgh from drinking impure water at a foreign station gives prominence to what is perhaps the most usual and frequent source of danger in foreign and Continental travel. Many of the sanitary authorities who have looked into the question have from time to time uttered warnings to Continental travellers as to the dangers of the ordinary drinking-water to be found abroad. The pollution of table-water at foreign hotels and houses is due to a great variety of causes. The water-supply of foreign cities is as a rule, to which there are only few exceptions, taken from sources lamentably liable to sewage pollution, either in open streams or uncovered reservoirs, or from defective sanitation in the house-supply. A large part of the domestic supply of drinking-water is, moreover, from surface wells, which are constantly liable to sewage filtration. An examination, made only a few years since, of syphons of sparkling "seltzer," in a great Continental city disclosed the fact that they were horribly polluted with sewage, and that the effervescing fixed air with which they were charged only served to conceal unutterable contaminations of a most dangerous kind. Sir Henry Thompson and Dr. Herman Weber, who have both given attention to the subject, are very emphatic in their counsel to travellers to avoid ordinary drinking water abroad. The easiest and most agreeable means of avoiding the danger is the habitual use of a pure natural mineral water in lieu of the doubtful drinking water of the hotel or the private house. When the Prince of Wales went to India he took with him a large supply of the kind, and successfully avoided this risk. Another method in which safety is sought is by invariably boiling the water before drinking it. This, however, involves more trouble than many people are willing to take, and makes the table-water flat and insipid. This insipidity may be relieved by squeezing fresh lemons into the water. But for those who cannot always be bothered with the boiling-pot or troubled with performing this little domestic operation before taking a draught of drinking water, it would be wise when travelling abroad to select as a table-water a natural mineral water of undoubted purity rather than run the risk of blood-poisoning, typhoid, and diarrhoea to which so considerable a number of travellers at present fall victims, finding death and disease where they are seeking health and pleasure. The instances of typhoid, blood-poisoning, diarrhoea, and dysentery, of which we hear this year from Italy and Egypt, are very lamentable, and for the most part avoidable. —*British Medical Journal*.

ON THE SHORE AT TWILIGHT.

A BARE, dun sky, a reach of cold, gray sea,
And the lurid moon just rising o'er the edge
Of dim-lit hills; a broken, weed-hung ledge,
That rises, huge and red, and mightily shakes free
The white, pearled spume; a shivering weird-limbed tree,
Upon its top amidst the sun-burned sedge;
Behind the height, a sinuous stream, to dredge
A broad expanse of oozy marsh; then the wild glee
Of sudden, boisterous wind,—o'erhead the screech
Of baffled gulls; succeeds the low, sad call
Of wave to wave, as on the rocks they fall,—
Crushed into ghosts of spray that upward reach
To glisten in the moonbeam, then a gush,
A sigh, the grate of pebbles and a downward rush.

—*New England Magazine*.

MR. GLADSTONE ON READING.

MR. GLADSTONE was present at the National Liberal Club on Wednesday for the purpose of opening the new library—named "The Gladstone Library"—a spacious and handsomely fitted apartment, provided with accommodation for about 30,000 volumes. He spoke in part as follows: "Books are a living protest in an age of necessity too much tempted to practise materialism. They are a living protest on behalf of mental force and life. I am far from saying that literary culture ought to be made an idol, or that any intellectual processes whatever will satisfy all the needs and wants of the human spirit. But they are full of noble elements and enable us to resist the invasions of the merely worldly mind. They assist us in holding our ground against the incessant and constantly growing hurry and excitement that are around us, and that carry us into a vortex from which we cannot escape. If you wish to provide yourselves with all the instruments which will aid you in forming sound judgments, and in expressing them when they have been formed, that can only be effectually done by combining study and reflection with the rapid and constant expression of ideas, which is our duty under the circumstances of the time, and which often becomes our snare. It is a common subject of lamentation that, although, in regard to the topics of the day, the sources of information at the command of the Houses of Parliament have largely increased, yet, in the knowledge of political economy and in the still larger subject of history, so far as evidence can be drawn from the indications given in our debates, we have not improved on the practice of our predecessors. It is, however, a matter of great interest to observe that this is not because the study of history is declining in our country. But there is one thing which appears to me very dangerous, and that is when a man goes suddenly out of his own line and delivers very positive objections on subjects to which he has not applied his mind. We all look with profound respect to the judges on the Bench, but if a judge were to plunge into the middle of a political controversies of the day, I am not sure that he would express himself with greater measures or sagacity than one of us ordinary politicians. I take an analogy from another profession. When engaged in county contests I have sometimes found that if a clergyman once did forget the restraints of his profession, he would indulge in more violent language than anybody else. These constant and rapid changes are not what I am endeavouring to recommend; but that every man, if called upon to deal with the politics of the day, should try to qualify himself for their consideration by reaping and garnering the knowledge that the study of other times and other countries will afford him. —*St. James's Gazette*.

AN ANCIENT JEWISH SETTLEMENT.

THE antiquity of Jewish settlements in the Danubian countries has been rendered a specially interesting question by the view of the Roumanians that, no matter how many generations may have resided in the country, they are always aliens. To this it has been retorted that Jews existed in Roumania before the present mongrel population was known. Curious proof of this has recently been discovered. While sinking shafts for gold-mining in Transylvania, traces of the ancient excavations of the Romans were discovered, and on the walls were found many Hebrew inscriptions. It is said that the inscriptions cannot be later than the time of Hadrian; and it is believed that they are the work of Hebrew slaves employed by Trajan in mining operations shortly after the Roman conquest by the Dacii. The Société des Etudes Juives would do well to try to obtain squeezes of these inscriptions, and to have them examined by competent scholars. —*Jewish World*.

THE LACK OF STRIKING THINGS IN THE LITERARY WORLD.

THERE are people who deplore in a melancholy way the loss of the "golden age of literature" that, they tell us, has gone forever. Every thing to-day is commonplace. There are no fine essays, no grand poems, no wonderful dramas that will live forever, no striking stories. The literature of to-day is only "the pouring of wine out of old bottles into new" and lots of wine spilled in the process. Our writers are busy over what some other men thought of what some other men said. If this be so, and in a certain sense it is true, what is the matter? Why is it no "Hamlets" are written to-day? It is said that there are in the United States about two thousand persons who fairly may be reckoned as writers. Why do we not find new Miltons and Shakespeares among them? We may be sure, if they were there, they would be found. Centuries have their indi-