

It is impossible to say what it cost France. If the hitherto unreckoned French agricultural loss gathered from a careful consideration of Lavergne's great work (subsequently referred to) be added, it will be found, contrary to the general belief, that the pecuniary loss to France exceeded that of Great Britain.

To this must be added the losses of all other nations. If we put these at a very low estimate, at only one-third of that of Great Britain, the grand total will amount to thousands of millions sterling.

In strictness a large proportion of the cost of the present excessive European armaments must also be added to the above.

An Unrecognized French Pecuniary Loss.

This, I believe, has never been adverted to. Lavergne was the greatest French agricultural authority of his day. During the reign of Napoleon III. he published "The Rural Economy of England, Scotland, and Ireland." He wrote painstakingly, truthfully, and exactly. He was one of the few who can reason truthfully upon figures. He shows, pp. 72-75, that at that time, after deducting 20 per cent from English value, the average value of the production per acre in England proper was exactly double what it was in France, that the climate and soil of France, for agricultural purposes, is, on the average, greatly superior to that of England. Writing under the Napoleonic upas-tree he was obliged to be guarded in what he said, yet he showed that the Wars of the Revolution and of the Empire, and the general state of insecurity and unrest existing for so many years, had greatly hindered the improvement of French agriculture. Although he does not strongly condemn it, yet the compulsory subdivision of land in France—one of the results of the Revolution, and one of the French Republican idols—has also greatly impeded agricultural improvement. In France there are about a million of farmers, owning, on an average, fifteen acres each. This makes six families seeking to get a living from one hundred acres; whereas in Ontario a farmer and one man, if industrious, will farm one hundred acres. Prices, etc., have risen since Lavergne wrote. If we add 50 per cent. to his estimate of the value of the average French yield, this will give £2 10s. per acre as the value of the average yield. Practically the average French small farmer gets about one-third of the income of the average Ontario farmer. Was it true statesmanship to bring about such a state of things? Think of the annual loss to France that such a fact means.

According to Lavergne, Louis XVI. was a great friend to agriculture, and, had there been peace and no Revolution, it is reasonable to believe that, at the time he wrote, sixty-five years after the event, France at peace, with a better soil and climate than that of England, an industrious population, and intelligent land-owners—not driven away or murdered—would at least have achieved one-half the difference between the French and English yield values of 1854—in other words, 16s. 8d. per acre. This on 100,000,000 of farmed acres would represent £83,000,000 as the annual national national loss at that date in one item, caused by the French Revolution.

Even now the average yield of wheat in France is only seventeen bushels against twenty-eight in England.

The Deterioration of Character.

Another result of the Revolution was the impoverishment and partial extermination of the cultured classes, and the bringing to the surface of a host of adventurers and energetic criminals. This was reversing natural laws. It takes a very long time to change the rough and uncultured into the cultured. Consider the tale told by Goethe of his father and the French general quartered in his house during the Seven Years' War. His father told the Frenchman his view of things in very plain words. Under the Republican or Napoleonic rule he would have come to grief, but Goethe's Frenchman, although constitutionally hot tempered, passed it over. Victor Hugo, whose father was one of the old nobility, and a French general, records a scene where a Spanish lady (in whose house he was quartered) offered him a part of the plate on his leaving, informing him that the French officers always made free with it. Hooper, in his "Waterloo" (considered to be the best account of the battle), reports the case of a French general who was wounded on the field. He caused an English officer who had just been made prisoner to be brought to him that he, the Frenchman, might kick him, to the great disgust of the surrounding French. Doubtless this general was spawned by the Revolution. Such conduct would have been impossible in the pre-revolutionary time, his own comrades would have prevented it.

Again, we read in "Stanhope's Anecdotes of Wellington" that, during the campaign in the Pyrenees, there was an educated Frenchman who acted as a double spy—sometimes for Soult, sometimes for Wellington. He was so useful to both that he was tolerated. He related that, being one day in the company of Soult and other French generals, one of them boldly told Soult that he, the speaker, and another officer, naming him, were the only honest men in the French army, and that Soult and the others, by their silence, admitted the fact. It could hardly have been otherwise, considering that Napoleon's armies mainly lived by organized plunder.

Further, one of the Napiers, in his autobiography, tells us, that long after the war he was informed by a French general of how the French tortured the Portuguese peasants to make them disclose where they had hidden

their little stores of food. Napier gives the horrible details. Comanches could have acted no worse.

A Mistaken Belief in French Military Superiority.

This, as a war-breeder, has not been thoroughly considered. It is one of the evil results of the Revolution, and having been painfully challenged by the defeats during the Franco-German War, it makes for further wars, in the hope that fresh battles would result in French victories, and thus soothe the offended vanity and self-esteem of the nation.

Previous to 1789, the French military record was about the same as that of other nations. France could boast of great victories. She had also to lament great defeats. At that time the French officers were inclined to believe that the Prussian army formed in the school of Frederick the Great was the best in Europe.

During the French Republic and the reign of Napoleon, as all know, the French military record ranked very high, partly owing to the incompetence of opposing generals. Whenever Napoleon was resolutely opposed, and with a reasonable display of generalship, it was found that the French were not invincible. His plan, as he states, was always to have superior numbers at the vital point, and he almost invariably exhibited superior generalship. During his whole career the only time, when personally opposed to about an equal number of Prussians, that he triumphed was at Ligny. It was a general's victory. Blucher having greatly weakened his centre, Napoleon attacked it with all his reserves. But it was a defeat, not a rout, as Blucher showed two days afterwards at Waterloo.

One consequence of these victories, distorted and magnified by false bulletins, and by theatrical histories, like that of Thiers, has been to instil into the French mind a firm belief in the superiority of the French army, especially in comparison with the Prussians. Twenty years ago English statesmen observed what deference France required in all her dealings with other nations, and what care was necessary to avoid giving offence to a super-sensitive race of politicians and statesmen who religiously believe in their imaginary superiority. The war of 1870 dispelled that idea in the minds of outsiders, but the French still believe in it. They are a vain people. They firmly believe that they can vanquish the Germans, not knowing that, all other conditions being alike, the soldiers who are the more resolute and who show greater coolness (which is the case with the Germans) will win in the majority of encounters, although both may be equally brave.

This is the greatest danger to peace in Europe. It was very painful to lose Alsace and part of Lorraine, but, in addition, to lose military prestige, to lose every battle but one, to be ignominiously beaten by foes they despised, rankles in the French heart, and the nation is therefore wishful for war to redeem its military fame, if it can only get a powerful ally. There is no great Frenchman to point out the truth about their only possible ally—that Russia in 1807 robbed one ally, and in 1878 robbed another, without whose aid Turkey would not have been thoroughly vanquished—and that she would certainly leave France in the lurch if she could obtain any benefit or supposed benefit thereby. Also that she so persistently broke faith with England on the Asiatic question that her own ambassador officially reported that no belief was accorded to her solemn promises.

It is idle to suppose that there can be sure and permanent peace until the French belief in the superiority of their soldiers is dispelled; or until the real danger of their position, the danger of playing with fire, and of a war in which France, in the matter of allies, would lean upon a broken reed, are clearly made known to them by some one in whom they have confidence.

This is one of the lineal consequences of the Revolution, and at the present time it causes all Europe to suffer from excessive armaments.

Conclusion.

Although one hundred years have elapsed, France is still in a state of unrest; the ship of state still drifts within sound of the breakers. Before matters finally settle down there will have to be some great changes.

1. The regular large annual deficits in a time of peace must be put a stop to. Hitherto, under the Republic, no French statesmen has had sufficient moral courage to resolutely attempt this. Owing to the deceptive manner of keeping the French national accounts it is difficult to estimate what these deficits average, but apparently they exceed £8,000,000 per annum.

2. A resolute stand must also be made against Deputies raiding the public treasury in the interest of their constituents, and indirectly of themselves. Virtually it is wholesale bribery. Owing to members being paid, the majority are struggling, self-seeking men, and the belief is widely spread in France, that many of them make money by using their influence with the Government.

3. Some leading man—the President would be the only proper person—should lay a brief and plain statement before the nation giving the facts of the case—pointing out the rocks ahead, the daily increase of the national indebtedness—also the strength of the League of Peace numbering three times the population of France—and the uncertainty of an alliance with an unprincipled despotic power, antagonistic not only to Republicanism, but also to the bare beginnings of free government.

If the President did this, then he should ask for a national vote.

1. Whether they were for peace and a great reduction of expenditure, or

2. As at present increasing the national indebtedness day by day, playing with fire, and drifting they know not whither.

If this were done, and the French thus made to understand the real truth, instead of being kept in ignorance, and allowed to drift or be cheated into war, there is good reason to believe that the great majority would vote for peace and retrenchment.

This would lay the demon of unrest in France and Continental Europe, and the nations could then safely reduce their armaments. It would also ensure the permanence of the Third Republic. War would probably terminate it.

FAIRPLAY RADICAL.

Toronto, September, 1889.

LETTER FROM ERASTUS WIMAN.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—I have read with very great interest the weekly numbers of your paper, and desire especially to recognize the intelligent and thoughtful discussion of questions relating to the future of Canada. Inasmuch as I have given that matter no little attention, I take the liberty of enclosing to you two little pamphlets which you may like to have in your library. The last one—"What is the Destiny of Canada?" has been carefully amplified from the *North American Review*. I also send you a copy of the interview in the *Chicago Tribune*, about one half of which the *Globe* reprinted. I would like to ask you to read this whole interview very attentively and give me the benefit of any criticisms, adverse or favourable, to it.

I hope to have the pleasure of appearing before a Toronto audience some time toward the end of the month, in order to say what is in my heart to say to my former fellow citizens in relation to this great question. Meantime, I remain, with much esteem, truly yours,

ERASTUS WIMAN.

314 Broadway, New York, October, 11, 1889.

SONNETS ON THE SONNET.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—There is a quaint translation of Lope de Vega's sonnet on "The Sonnet" given in Dodsley's Collection, "transfused into English by Mr. Roderick," as Stevens puts it, and it reads as follows:—

Capricious Wray a sonnet needs must have;
I ne'er was so put to't before:—a sonnet!
Why, fourteen verses must be spent upon it:
Tis good, however, to have conquer'd the first stave.
Yet I shall ne'er find rhymes enough by half,
Said I, and found myself i' the midst o' the second.
If twice four verses were but fairly reckon'd,
I should turn back on the hardest part, and laugh.
Thus far, with good success, I think I've scribbled.
And of the twice seven lines have clean got o'er ten.
Courage! another'll finish the first triplet;
Thanks to thee, Muse, my work begins to shorten:
There's thirteen lines got through, dribbled by driblet;
'Tis done. Count how you will, I warrant there's fourteen.

This is an execrable composition *per se*; but may be of interest to those of your readers who care for the subject.

Mr. Andrew Lang, in his "Rhymes à la Mode," has prefixed to the section "Cameos" a fourteen line octosyllabic poem, which is evidently intended for a sonnet, and is well worth consideration for its lyrical beauty.

CAMROS.

The graver by Apollo's shrine,
Before the gods had fled, would stand,
A shell or onyx in his hand,
To copy there the face divine,
Till earnest touches, line by line,
Had wrought the wonder of the land
Within a beryl's golden band,
Or on some fiery opal fine.
Ah! would that as some ancient ring
To us, on shell or stone, doth bring
Art's marvels perished long ago,
So I, within the sonnet's space,
The large Hellenic lines might trace,
The statue in the cameo.

Yours truly,

SAREPTA.

SEPARATE SCHOOLS IN MANITOBA.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—Allow me to correct an error into which the *Mail* and seemingly most other people in Ontario have fallen. It is not the fact, as is constantly assumed, that either Dominion or Imperial legislation or any amendment of the constitution is needed to enable the Legislature of Manitoba to do away with denominational religious teaching in the public schools. The Manitoba Act gives the Local Legislature full and exclusive power to "make laws respecting education," subject only to a provision that no such laws shall prejudicially affect any right or privilege enjoyed by law or practice respecting "denominational" schools at the time of the Union. There were no public schools in Manitoba at the time of the union. There were denominational schools, both Catholic and Protestant; but they were not supported by the State. Many of them still flourish upon the support of the religious bodies to which they respectively belong. They are protected by the provision above quoted and it is not proposed to interfere with them.

As to the so-called separate schools, i. e., public schools in which denominational religious instruction is given at the expense of the State, they did not exist in Manitoba at the time of the union and do not come at all under the provision which has been erroneously and with wonderful