

COPPER.

THE history of the production and trade in copper during the last five years is not without interest. Five or more years ago the price of copper was in the neighborhood of twenty cents a pound. This was not considered high. Gradually the price dropped to fifteen cents, and it was thought that the bottom had been reached, and that the figures would never be lower, but the completion of the Southern Pacific and Northern Pacific railroads, and the consequent opening up to the world of the mines of Arizona and Montana, tended to a still further depression. The production of the mines was perhaps over-estimated, but the bears had their day in the market, and prices reached the low figure of ten and eleven cents. Improved methods in the extraction of the ore from the crude product of the mines also had their effect. With the abundance of copper and its low price, the consumption increased. It was widely used in the electrical appliances and household utensils. Factories started up throughout the world, notably in England, and the tendency in the price of copper was again upward. In this the French capitalists saw their opportunity. About a year and a half ago they devised the scheme of controlling the markets of the world, and the syndicate was formed and contracts were entered into with the owners of the large producers, principally the Calumet and Hecla and the Anaconda, to take all their products. Some opposition was presented by the French Government to the syndicate, but this was silenced by the argument that their English rivals would be shut out and that France would thus score a victory. Having made their contracts with the mine owners, they forced the prices up to fifteen and sixteen cents. A decline in the use of the metal followed, and there was an increase in the production. The English capitalists and manufacturers saw the new move in the game and did everything in their power to clog its progress. The amount of copper used has declined, the cheaper metals having been substituted in its place wherever it was possible, and the supply of the commodity has been greater than ever before. The result has been a large accumulation of copper—probably 120,000 tons, in the hands of the syndicate—for which they have paid the mine owners thirteen and a half cents.

PRISON LABOR.

ANENT the prison labor question the *Toronto News* suggests that instead of hiring out the convicts to contractors, or working them in prison shops for the sole benefit of the state, they should be kept employed at some remunerative and useful work, and the proceeds therefrom after deducting the expenses of their keep, etc., should be placed to the credit of the convict, to be paid to him at the expiration of his term, thus giving him a small fund with which to again start in life, or to be paid to his family from time to time.

The *News* argues:—"The state certainly has a right when any man commits a crime to remove him from contact with his fellows until he learns that to act honestly and unoffensively is the course fraught with the least unpleasantness to him, but it is a question whether it has any right to lock him in a cell to fret his way to the madhouse, or to hand him over to a contractor who will work him like a slave on slave wages—his food and clothing. It is not the work which makes the punishment, but the thought that he is altogether isolated from the world, that his offence has brought complete deprivation

of personal liberty, which is dear to every man, no matter what his condition. But if he works the fruit of his labor should not be filched from him to swell the purse of some contractor who has sufficient influence with the Government to have this cheap labor placed under his control. No difficulty stands in the way of paying the prisoner a just sum for the work he does in prison, and whatever remains after paying for his keep should be placed to his credit on the prison books or paid to his family. The offender may have been the head and supporter of a respectable family before he went astray, and although his wife and children are innocent of any offence the punishment often falls more severely upon them than upon the prisoner. Rendered helpless by the removal of their supporter, they soon sink into penury and swell the pauper class, yet that would not be the case if the proceeds of the prisoner's labor came to them, instead of going to a prison labor contractor."

EDITORIAL NOTES.

SHIPMENTS of Canadian butter have lately been made to China with very satisfactory results, says the *Manchester Guardian*. The butter is much liked in China, and is eagerly sought after as soon as landed, notwithstanding the relatively high cost of laying it down there. The success of the experiment seems to open up an indefinite prospect for trade in Canadian products *via* the Pacific to the far East.

MR. N. F. DAVIN, M.P., has sent us a copy of his speech delivered in the House of Commons, at Ottawa, on "The Demands of the North-West." In this speech is condensed a most valuable mass of facts regarding the great Canadian North-West, the richness and fertility of which are simply marvellous; and the style in which the facts are set forth is as glowing as was Mr. Davin's description of Erin's Green Isle, at the recent banquet of the Toronto Irish newspaper men.

CARDINAL GIBBONS and this journal are at one regarding our argument that instruction to convicts in prison should not be confined to teaching them manual trades, but should extend to law, medicine and divinity. On a recent Sunday afternoon his Eminence preached to the convicts in the Baltimore penitentiary, exhorting them not to fret, and to make the best possible use of their time. "I was in prison six years myself," he told them. "They called it a college, it is true, but it was not much different from a prison. The discipline was as rigid, if not more so, as at West Point. We had to go, whether we liked it or not, at the sound of a bell to our meals, to bed, everywhere. We had the same round of lessons, marching in procession and services, day in and day out, all the six years. We wore a black uniform, and had to obey a strict discipline. And yet, whatever I have learned of theology, history and other matters, I attribute to the work of those six years."

PR. F. EATON, of the Scientific Department of Yale University, has presented to the legislature of Connecticut strong objections to the granting of a charter to a newly organized company in New Haven, for the running of street cars by electricity conducted through overhead wires. Prof. Eaton says that he is opposed to the use of any naked wire carrying a current of electricity strong enough to run a street car, because of the great danger to life. Electric wires for other purposes are over the streets, and their insulation is so imperfect that to touch them would almost surely mean death. New Haven streets are lined with trees, and if a limb from one of