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The Week in Review

Chinese Literature.

MR. HWANG, the Chinese Consul in Wellington, is well known throughout the colony as an able speaker and lecturer, and he is also a man of considerable literary attainments. The Wesleyan Literary and Debating Society recently persuaded him to give a lecture on "The Religion and Literature of China," and the result was a scholarly and thoughtful address on this interesting topic. As showing the antiquity of written books in China, he mentioned that tradition taught that the inventor of Chinese letters lived about 5000 B.C. There were now nine classics which were read by all Chinese scholars, of which the first was written about 1150 B.C. The form and spelling of Chinese words had scarcely changed from the most ancient times until to-day, and this first book—the Book of Changes—could be read now without difficulty. The Book of Ceremonies, written over a thousand years before the Christian era, set forth the rites and ceremonies to be used on almost all occasions, and with few exceptions these were not departed from at the present day. The movement and spirit of English verse were lacking in the Chinese poetry; this was very noticeable to the speaker in translations of English lyrics. The Chinese should have their own hymns if they were going to become a great Christian nation. Mr. Hwang referred to others of the Chinese classics, and stated that these ancient works were very beautiful, and though the Chinese examinations had been modified lately to allow of an increased Western element in education, it would be a great loss if Chinese scholars should ever neglect their old literature. The Emperor, who built the great wall, had destroyed a vast number of the books extant in his time, but after his death there was a great recondescence of literary activity. Many of the old books were re-written from memory, an encyclopaedia in 10,000 volumes was compiled, and other remarkable works were produced. It would be seen that the Chinese mind was not like that of the African or North American Indian. The Chinese almost treasured learning, and despite their former hostility to foreign ideas, they were eager now to assimilate the knowledge and the wisdom of Western civili-

sation. The modern influence in China was greater than the influence of Napoleon or of Bismarck, because it would affect 400 million souls, a fourth part of the human race.

Royal Commissions.

The subject of Royal Commissions formed one of the most prominent and important matters discussed at the Farmers' Union dinner, recently held at Palmerston North. Mr. Bruce spoke very strongly on the modern tendency to set up Royal Commissions on all sorts of questions that could be quite as well dealt with by the Government itself. He thought that an administration which went too far in this respect was cradling its duties and responsibilities. There were times when the people expected a lead from the Government, but Ministers, when reluctant to give that lead, found a way out of the difficulty by the appointment of a Royal Commission which, in most instances, was not productive of any good. As a case in point he mentioned the Commission set up a few years ago in connection with the Federation of the Australasian colonies, and he defied anyone to find anything instructive in their report. As a matter of fact, said Mr. Bruce, these commissions were objectionable inasmuch as they had a tendency to disarm criticism, and that was not a desirable condition of things. There is no doubt that these commissions are very costly, and often they are anything but satisfactory, and Mr. Bruce has done good service by directing public attention to the matter.

The Meat Trade and American Trusts.

Anything that concerns our staple industry of frozen meat cannot fail to be of interest to New Zealanders, and it is disquieting to learn that this trade is already being threatened by the system of trusts, combines, and corners with which America has made us only too familiar. According to advices by mail, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the Dominion and Australia will shortly come within the sphere of influence of one of the most powerful of the American combines—the Meat

Trust. The British producer and consumer will be the worst sufferers by the operations of the trust, and some alarm is already being expressed in England as to the ultimate aims of the combine. The Central Markets Committee issued a report in March showing that of 409,732 tons of meat and provisions dealt with in the markets last year 88,262 were bred and slaughtered in the United Kingdom, 54,691 tons fattened in Canada or the United States and slaughtered in the United Kingdom, and 266,779 tons, or 65 per cent, were colonial, American, or foreign productions. At present nearly 40 per cent of the beef arriving at the market in London is derived from the United States, and these figures show how completely Britain depends on other countries for her food supplies, and also to what extent the United States dominates the markets. More important still is the fact that the meat-producing companies of that country have acquired productive works in South America, and that already supplies are being "regulated," the continued stoppage of live cattle importations from South America causing the gravest concern. It is pointed out that should the various overseas sources of supply become controlled by a group of powerful firms, then the price of meat on the market can be dominated, and easily, because the proportion of British productions—one ton in five—could not be increased under existing conditions. In this connection Australasia will probably be affected, since its competition is not likely to be acceptable to the trust. Developments will be awaited with interest, and they may be expected by an attempt to secure some measure of control over colonial resources.

A Settlers' Information League.

The need of reliable information for intending immigrants has been frequently brought before our notice. Men come to the colonies who are utterly unsuited for colonial life, and loss and disappointment not infrequently result. It is gratifying, therefore, to learn that a Settlers' Information League has been established in England, and members, both at home and in the colonies, are to do everything in their power to disseminate reliable information and to assist emigrants on arrival. A letter has been sent to the colonies, in which the writers say:—"The responsibilities of Empire are very real and very weighty, and not the least real and the least weighty of them is that of settling before the Motherland the advantages of the colonies and of seeing that the colonies themselves are developed by a population British born. Some years have passed since his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, addressing one of the most representative of audiences ever gathered together in the Guildhall, and with all the freshness of the scenes he had just witnessed before him, referred to the importance of developing the outlying portions of our great estate, and reminded us that the one all-prevailing and all-persuading demand in the colonies was, as it is to-day, 'want of population.' His Royal Highness went on to refer to the boundless tracts of country yet unexplored, hidden mineral wealth calling for development, vast expanses of virgin soil ready to yield profitable crops to the settlers; adding, 'These can be enjoyed under conditions of healthy living, liberal laws, and free

institutions in exchange for the overcrowded cities and almost hopeless struggle for existence which, alas! too often is the lot of many in the Old Country.' One condition, and one only, his Royal Highness very truly observed, was made by the colonies—namely, that we should send them suitable emigrants—a condition which he thoroughly endorsed. Summing up his remarks on the need of a continuous flow of suitable emigrants from the Motherland to the colonies, the Prince said: 'By this means we may still further strengthen, or, at all events, pass on unimpaired, that pride of race, that unity of sentiment and purpose, that feeling of common loyalty and obligation, which knit together, and alone can maintain, the integrity of our Empire.' It will thus be seen that the object of the League is not in any sense to create a propaganda, but rather to make a reality of Lord Rosebery's fine definition of Empire, a passion of affliction and family feeling, of pride and hopefulness.

The Missing Maids.

Great losses have been felt in some quarters that girls suitable for domestic service would be able to be secured from Dr. Barnardo's Homes, but the Rev. W. J. Mayers, who is at present in New Zealand as visiting emissary, does not hold out much encouragement in that direction. He stated that the demand for servants in England was so heavy that he feared they could not begin to supply the Dominion yet. Mr. Mayers said that the servant problem seemed to be a grave one everywhere. Cases had come under his notice in different parts of England where families had had to move into hotels or flats on account of not being able to get domestics. There was an insatiable demand from Canada, and over 200 boys and girls are sent there every year. In this connection, the Canadian agent had travelled across the Atlantic over a hundred times in charge of such parties, and each time he has disappointed from 150 to 200 people in search of servants. He attributed the dearth of domestic workers to the factories, tea-rooms, and other avenues of employment that had been opened up for girls during recent years, that were not recognised as such a decade ago.

Protecting a Witness.

The announcement made recently that a young girl had committed suicide rather than undergo further cross-examination in the witness-box, has once more drawn attention to the fact that some method should be devised whereby an honest witness can be protected from undue annoyance by counsel when giving evidence. The counsel cannot be altogether blamed, he is merely doing his best for his client, and his daily bread depends on his success in court. But surely the magistrate should interfere to protect a witness from undue severity of handling, and a word from him would in most cases be sufficient. The late Mr. Justice Butt offered a good example of what might be done in this direction. A woman was being rather roughly treated by the opposing counsel, though she was obviously telling the truth. The judge turned to the barrister and said: "Mr. White, has this good lady offended you in any way? Is she a personal enemy of yours, or does she owe you money?" "No