

# The Catholic Journal.

—THE LEADING DIOCESAN NEWSPAPER—

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**Bit of Rock Revealed Its Secret and Mines of Phosphate.**

Christmas Island is a speck of land, shaped like a dumbbell, rising steeply from the Indian ocean, 190 miles south of Java, says the New York Sun. No one is known ever to have landed on it previous to 1887. It was thought of only as a little rock, without good anchorage, not worth examining while large regions were still white on the maps.

But to-day some fifty men are living on Christmas Island, and now and then we see a paragraph in the trade journals telling of the increase in quantity of phosphate that it is shipping. Last year for example, as we are told by one of these authorities, the island shipped 71,757 tons of phosphate and new methods of loading vessels were introduced, something like those by which iron ore is poured into the holds of Lake Superior steamers. The phosphate is tipped from a high pier into the ship. The last vessel to sail loaded in a day with 1,300 tons.

It was a deep sea research that pointed to Christmas Island as a source of wealth, and the facts in the case have only recently been told.

About 10 years ago a British naval vessel started for the Indian ocean to examine a part of its sea floor. Its main work was a long distance from Christmas Island, but Sir John Murray, the great Scottish oceanographer, in mapping out the project, happened to think of an area around Christmas Island where no investigations had been made. He suggested that the vessel diverge from its course to make soundings and collect samples from the ocean bed in the neighborhood of Christmas Island.

The work was thoroughly done, and in due time a list of soundings and specimens of the mud and bits of rock dredged from the bottom were delivered at St. John's laboratory near Edinburgh. In the collection was a fragment of rock which he could not identify on casual inspection, and it excited his curiosity. He made an analysis of the fragment and found that it was phosphate.

The results fulfilled the most sanguine expectations of the man of science. There was no longer any doubt of the existence of a thick bed of phosphate on the island. But to ascertain all the conditions and the prospects of mining with profit, Sir John made a journey to it. He found that the mineral offered a promising commercial possibility; that there was a good anchorage on one side of the island, and that by building a wharf with a second story, on which trucks could be run out, vessels might be loaded easily and cheaply.

A company was organized with the necessary capital. Parliament made a concession, giving the company the right to work the phosphate for a series of years, and development was begun. It has been a most profitable venture, and the best of it is that it has placed Sir John Murray, who, like most scientific men, had no superfluity of this world's goods, in very comfortable circumstances for the rest of his life.

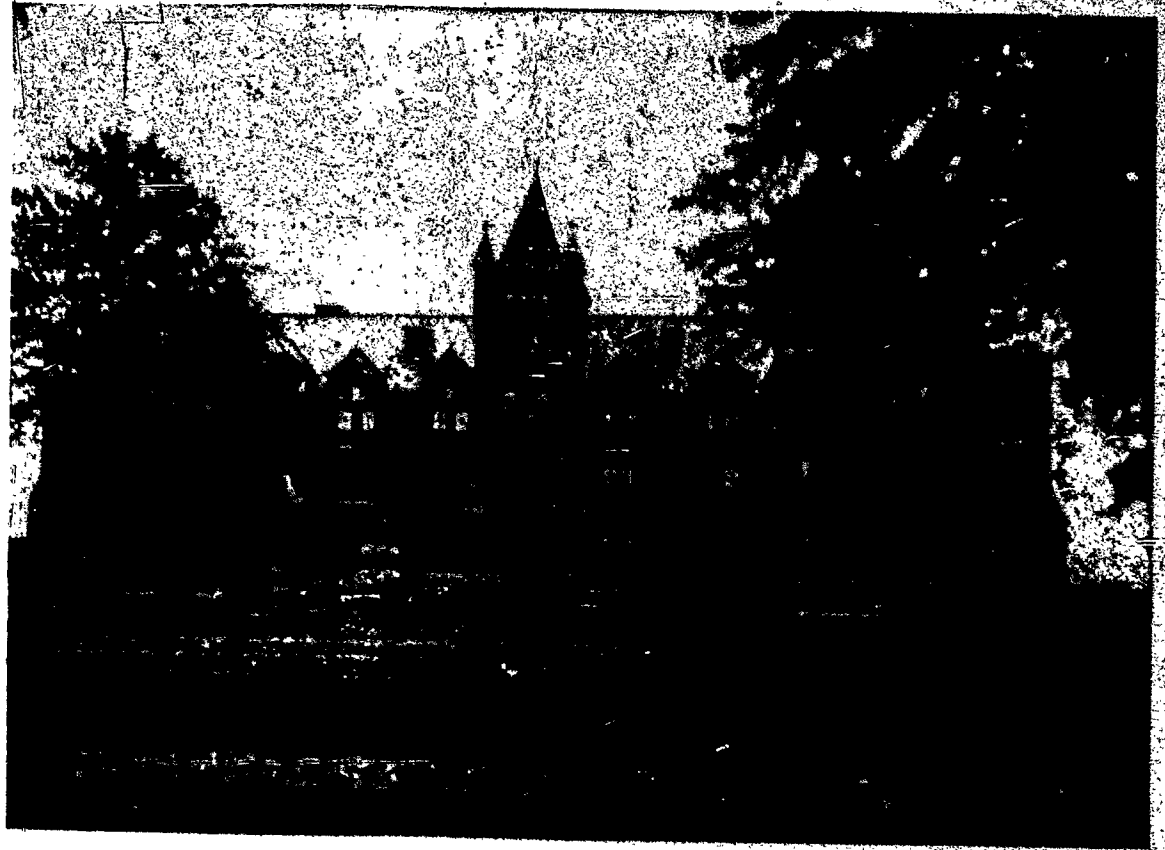
**What People are Reading.**

A member of the editorial staff of Public Opinion visited a number of prominent publishers in New York city and asked them the point-blank question, "What kind of books do people read?" The article in which the answers are recorded is concluded with this summary:

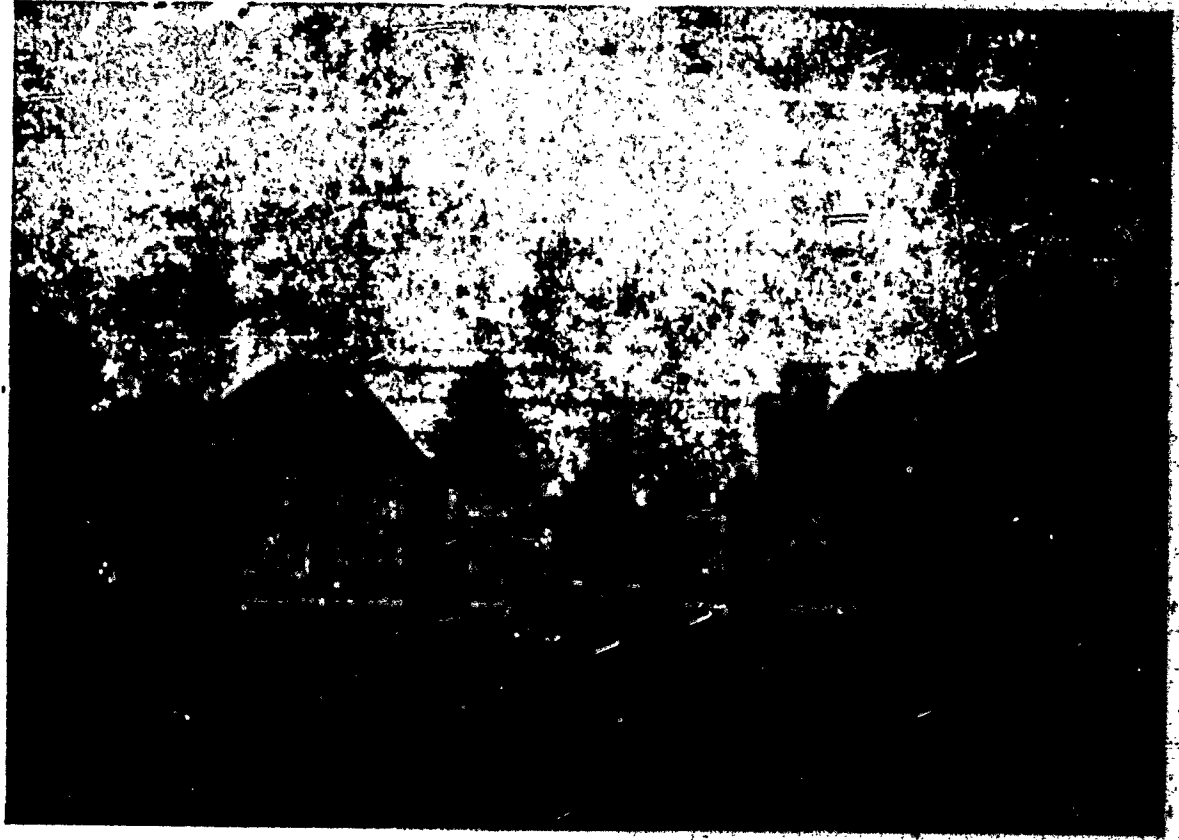
Looking back over these opinions of publishers who represent almost every side of the publishing business and who view the book-purchasing public from almost every possible angle, one is forced to a gratifying and highly optimistic conclusion.

Even allowing for the natural and legitimate bias which would lead a man to take a favorable view of his own business, we must conclude that people are reading better books now than ever before. It is not only that each publisher is of the opinion that he is publishing better books than he did five years ago or ten years ago, but that he also believes that other publishers are doing the same thing. Examples of books brought out by other houses were cited to me constantly in proof of this.

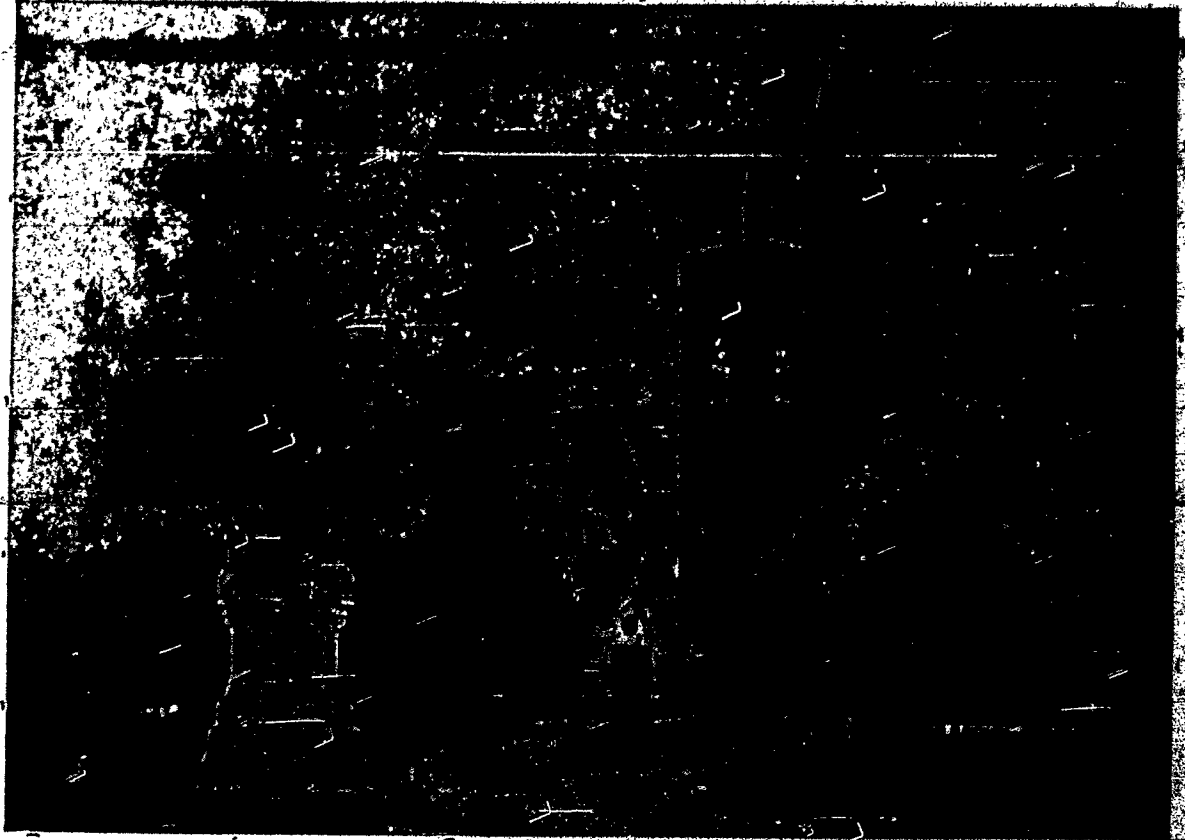
Another gratifying tendency upon which practically all agree is in the increased reading of history, and particularly of biography. While the scientific historians may not agree that this is a good thing, yet any careful reader who follows the current books steadily will conclude that even the scientific writers of history must look to their laurels. The writers of popular books are improving steadily in point of accuracy and general literary merit. Another good development is that away from tremendous hundred thousand editions. Such extraordinary sales are usually obtained at the expense of other books almost if not quite as meritorious. The result of the change is that the general average has gone up. Viewing the world of books from the standpoint of all those different publishers, each seeing it from a slightly different angle, one can only conclude again that people are reading more and better books and that in this respect at least the world is growing better.



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