drive a Bismarck to despair. But it is an inspiring one, nevertheless. Is it not just possible that the young Emperor is capable of honestly cherishing it? No one knows. But where all are alike in the dark, why may we not be optimistic just for once? Though the Labour Conference may not accomplish much for the working classes, it may pave the way for other Conferences in regard to subjects coming more immediately within the scope of Imperial legislation. If the Emperor of Germany really has the will to bring about peace through disarmament, who can say that he may not find the way?

THE New York Court of Appeal having unanimously affirmed the judgment of the lower courts, in declaring the Electrical Execution Act constitutional, and affirming the legality and correctness of the trial of the accused, it is probable that the long pending sentence against the convict Kemmler will at last be executed. Should the experiment, for as such it must, we suppose, be in some sense regarded, prove successful in establishing the simplicity and instantaneousness of this mode of execution, it will, no doubt, be speedily adopted elsewhere. Assuming the necessity of the death penalty for the protection of society, it is time some mode less revolting, less spectacular, and less liable to bungling were substituted for hanging. If the causes of the general revulsion against the latter method of inflicting the death penalty were closely inquired into it would probably be found to lie deeper than any mere feeling of pity for the supposed sufferings of the victim. Does not the demand for a change grow rather out of the feeling that there is something brutalizing to minds of a certain class in the very conception of a human being thus suspended between earth and heaven. It is a singular fact, but it seems to be pretty well established as a law in penology, that the effect of punishment as a deterrent from crime diminishes instead of increasing in proportion to its frequency and brutality. We suppose it would be hardly possible to find now a man of intelligence and respectability who doubts that the old system of public execution was demoralizing and degrading, and that the present system by which the death penalty is inflicted within prison walls and in the presence of none but official witnesses, is directly in the interests of public morality. Is it not, then, about time that another step were taken in the same direction, by excluding the public (all exceptions needful to secure the ends of justice being made) from criminal trials, especially from the precincts of the police courts? Judging from the descriptions of the frequenters of these courts, and the manner in which many of them seem to gloat over the details of the foulest crimes, it is impossible to doubt that such scenes are, to a certain class of natures, but schools in iniquity. The foul and reckless prisoner at the bar is exalted into bad eminence as a sort of hero. Familiarity with crime and its punishment banishes horror at the one and breeds contempt for the other. The object-lesson produces an effect just the opposite from that designed and intended, and the sooner it is screened from the gaze of vulgar curiosity, the better for all concerned.

A NICE question of conflicting rights and liberties is just now before the Legislature and people of the State of New Jersey. A deliverance of the recent Roman Catholic Council at Baltimore requires that parochial schools shall be established in every diocese, and the children of the Church must attend them. The action taken by the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey, in order to carry out this mandate of the Plenary Council, has led to the introduction in the Legislature of that State of a proposed amendment to the State Constitution, prohibiting any local power from compelling or preventing the attendance of children upon any particular school—the object being to prevent the Church authorities from commanding the children to attend parochial schools on pain of a denial of the sacraments. The question whether such a prohibition would be consistent with the liberty of the subject in a free State, or would trench upon the rights of conscience of Roman Catholic citizens, is being earnestly debated. There is much to be said on both sides. *Harper's Weekly* puts the argument in favour of such legislation very succinctly and forcibly as follows: "The members of the Roman Catholic Church, like other American citizens, are protected in their civil rights by the Government. One of these rights is the choice of schools for their children, and any other citizen, or combination of citizens, interfering with that right, whether they call themselves priests or churches, may be justly restrained." On the other hand, it is argued, not only by Catholic but by Protestant journals, that to put such a clause in the Constitution would be to deny the right of the Catholic Church to administer its own government, as an ecclesiastical organization, in its own way; and so to set at naught the great principle of religious liberty. Now, it seems clear to us that the right of any voluntary society, religious or otherwise, to prescribe the terms on which membership may be granted and retained, and to enforce its rules by such penalties as it may choose, is indisputable, so long as membership in the society is purely voluntary, and its objects and acts not treasonable. The whole question resolves itself into this. Is there anything either in the mode of conferring membership, or in the nature of the penalties prescribed by the Catholic Church, which removes it from the category of voluntary societies, and justifies exceptional treatment? In the last analysis this question brings us to the point at which the nature of the penalty of denial of the sacraments, or excommunication as pronounced by the Catholic hierarchy, must be taken into the account. This, in fact, decides the question. Expulsion from other societies or churches involves simply the loss of certain privileges peculiar to members of that body. Excommunication, as taught by the Catholic Church, and believed by its devout adherents, carries with it not only temporal but eternal penalties of the most terrible kind. Hence the threat of excommunication becomes a mode of spiritual intimidation, vastly more fearful than the threat of bodily death. But no Government would permit a society to hold a threat of death *in terrorem* over its members for any purpose, most assuredly not to deter them from using public institutions which the State had established for their especial behoof. To put the question in a nutshell for Canadian readers, Is there any difference in principle between the proposed New Jersey enactment and that by which Canada forbids the Catholic clergy to use the same weapon of spiritual intimidation in order to control the votes of these members at elections?

BANKING LEGISLATION.

THE speech of the Hon. Minister of Finance, introducing the measure for the renewal of the Bank charters, foreshadows a Bill in substantial accord with the views expressed in these columns several weeks ago. The general principles upon which legislation is to proceed meet with approval from all quarters, except one. The Bank of Montreal is not satisfied; and Sir Donald Smith has given authentic expression to their views from his place in the House, already made known through other channels. The notice of amendment or addition to the Bill given by Mr. White, of Cardwell, is understood to be on their behalf.

This great institution, of which all Canadians ought to be proud, has occupied a traditional attitude of superiority to all other Banks, and however becoming this may have been in the past days, it is somewhat out of place now. Certainly, its recognition by other institutions would have been in better taste than the intrusion of claims to pre-eminence by themselves, at a time when a common danger threatened the craft as a whole.

Public sentiment demanded, and justly, immunity from immediate, as well as from ultimate, loss upon the circulation, in the event of a Bank failure; it also required that notes should be rendered interchangeable at par throughout the wide Dominion.

The Bank of Montreal declined to take part in the discussion with the other Bankers as to how these reasonable requirements could be met, with least injury to the Banks, the directors urging their position as Government Bankers as the ostensible reason for declining.

A scheme having been devised, which meets the case, without the assistance of the premier Bank, it is much to be regretted that it should have adopted a narrow view, open to the construction that it should be asked to make neither concession nor sacrifice for the common weal, but that such legislative enactments as may be found needful should recognize the financial attitude and power of the strong Bank, its humbler and weaker brethren being compelled to suffer in proportion to the difficulties they might encounter in doing what, with the aid of Government patronage and Government deposits, it was easy for the strong Bank to do.

An appeal is therefore made for the adoption of the United States system, under which the circulation is obtained by a deposit of U. S. bonds with the Government, or at least Sir Donald Smith contends a move in this direction should be made by compelling the Banks to hold Government bonds against one-third of their average circulation.

The Privy Council has evidently agreed with the opinion of the other Bankers, that the development of our own system, with such improvements as may periodically seem desirable, is preferable to the adoption of the United States system, in the practical working of which many serious defects are conceded by its most enthusiastic admirers and advocates in that country.

We are apparently therefore in the way of having a circulating medium, of which it may be said that it is national, because of its being universally accepted everywhere, convertible, because of the reserves held against it, much more certain to be ample than when left to the necessities or caprice of a government, with the element of perfect elasticity, adapting itself automatically to the changing necessities of commerce, without any withdrawal of capital from the industries of the country. Its safety and stability are further assured by its being made a first charge upon all the assets of the Banks, including the double liability of the shareholders. In the course of the debate a notable admission was made by the Hon. Edward Blake, who approved generally of additional restrictions proposed to be placed upon the starting of new Bank industries, having in mind, no doubt, the history of the Central Bank, and possibly some others, which had not justified the opinion he formerly held that in the interest of smaller communities every facility should be afforded the establishment of local institutions. The system of Branch Banks which has grown up amongst us is calculated to effect this object much more satisfactorily than the multiplying of concerns weak in credit and inefficient in administration.

It is not at all probable that the proposal of Mr. White, "that any bank which deposits with the Finance Minister Dominion bonds to the amount of its maximum circulation shall thereupon be relieved from its obligation to contribute to the guarantee fund, and shall be entitled to print upon the face of its notes the words 'secured by the Deposit of Bonds with the Government of Canada,'" will be seriously entertained by the Finance Minister. This would involve a double standard of excellence in the currency of the country, or rather a triple standard if the legal tenders are included, and the certificate proposed would have to be extended to include—not the maximum circulation—but the entire circulation of the Bank, every bill emitted from its coffers, or printed by its authority, and liable to be issued. It is, indeed, doubtful in this view of it if the proposed amendment will be persisted in.

THE TRADE RELATIONS OF CANADA IN CONNECTION WITH RECIPROCITY.

IN entering upon any consideration of the trade relations of Canada in connection with the question of reciprocity with the United States, it is necessary first of all to inquire what our trade policy has been in the past, and if the conditions of the country have changed materially within recent years.

Prior to Confederation Canada consisted of two Provinces, contiguous to each other, and whose productions were practically the same. Their trade policy was known as revenue tariff, or, as Sir A. T. Galt styled it, incidental protection, the required revenue being raised by an inland revenue tax and an import duty on foreign manufactured goods of from five to seventeen and a half per cent.; raw material, like pig iron and coal, being allowed to come in free. In the Maritime Provinces the import duties before Confederation were not higher than ten per cent. There existed, however, from 1855 to 1866 a treaty which was negotiated between all the British Provinces then existing on this continent and the United States, which provided for the free interchange of all natural products such as fish, grain, cattle, lumber, etc.; and this treaty has been spoken of by all Canadian statesmen and publicists as having been of general benefit to the country. The United States Government for various reasons terminated the treaty in 1866, and this country reverted to its former policy.

In 1867 the aspect of affairs was changed by Confederation, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick becoming an integral part of Canada, and afterwards Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and British Columbia being all joined to the old Provinces of Canada proper and consolidated under one rule, becoming a country of enormous extent and vast possibilities. Development was sought by opening railway communication, first to the eastern seaboard and afterwards to the west, so that now the two oceans are united by the great Canadian railway. The trade policy of the country remained the same after Confederation, and the people lived under prosperous conditions from 1867 until 1875; but from the latter date until 1880 Canada, in common with the United States and other countries, suffered from a deep and continued depression of trade. In 1879 the policy of the country was changed from incidental to actual protection by increasing the tariff; and this still prevails, the tariff having been changed from time to time to make it still more protective in character.

At the present time considerable discussion is going on in Canada and the United States as to whether it would be an advantage to both countries, and how it would affect