

be forgotten that more than one supporter of the Government declared from their places in Parliament that they would vote against it should it attempt anything in the shape of remedial legislation, in gross violation, as they believe it would be, of the autonomy of the Province in local matters. What good end such members can suppose is to be gained by taking the judgment of the Court upon a question when it is decided beforehand that no action can follow such decision whatever it may be, or why they should approve such a course, it is hard to understand. It goes without saying that Sir John Thompson must be pretty certain of a negative answer from the judges, and that the whole Government must be earnestly hoping for it, seeing into what a sea of troubles the affirmation of their right to interfere would plunge them.

President Harrison, on the last day of his administration, signed a bill which makes it unlawful for any railway corporation engaged in inter-state commerce to run any train not equipped with power-brakes and automatic couplers. The bill also provides that the Inter-State Commerce Commission may prescribe certain regulations in respect to the construction of cars and their equipment with grab-irons and hand-holds. This is a measure which the outgoing President had advocated in each of his annual messages. The bill was strenuously opposed on the somewhat contradictory grounds that it was a long step toward "demagogism" and "populism," and that it was "simply imperialism gone mad." No other, certainly no stronger, argument is needed in its favour than the simple statistical fact that while in 1890 only 286 railroad passengers were killed in the United States, and 2,425 injured, there were during the same year no less than 2,451 employees killed and 22,000—injured. Surely there is nothing in the duties of railroad employees to make the employment so terribly destructive to life, apart from accidents. The wholesome dread of heavy damages has compelled the companies to reduce the latter to a wonderfully small minimum, considering the number of passengers carried and of miles travelled. There seems no reason to doubt that a few years of the enforcement of so salutary a law will have a similar effect in promoting the safety of employees. Their lives have hitherto been altogether too cheap in Canada, as well as in the States, and we hope that similar legislation will soon be in force throughout the whole Dominion. Congress has given the companies ample time for preparation, as the bill does not go into operation until 1898.

The signed and semi-official account of the conversations had at the Reciprocity Conference at Washington a year ago between the three Canadian ministers and Messrs. Blaine and Foster of the United

States, fully confirm our Finance Minister's verbal report of the tenor of those interviews. According to this report, which has the sanction of Sir Julian Pauncefote, the British Minister at Washington, as well as that of the Canadian representatives, the insistence by Mr. Blaine on making the Canadian tariff uniform with that of the United States, was unequivocal. The wonder is that this document should have been so long withheld from the Canadian Parliament. Under the circumstances, Mr. Foster has no reason to complain that members may have been disposed to question whether his understanding or his recollection of Mr. Blaine's words might not have been at fault, especially in view of the varying recollections of Mr. Blaine and the American Mr. Foster. At the same time our Mr. Foster is to be congratulated on the confirmation of his statements. How the memories of the other parties to the conference could have varied so widely from the stenographic record remains a mystery. A possible explanation is suggested by the somewhat remarkable fact that the Canadian Ministers seem to have been quite ready, almost anxious, to elicit the conditions which made an agreement impossible and that they made no attempt to test Mr. Blaine's firmness by submitting a counter proposition. May not the American Commissioners have stated their view in an extreme form, leaving themselves room to give way to some extent under pressure? Thus not expecting to be taken so literally, their recollections may be rather of what they possibly may have had in mind as the utmost limit of concession than of the words of their first proposition. We give the guess for what it may be worth. One has to guess at some explanation of so singular a discrepancy.

It is told of a distinguished jurist that, being at one time asked for advice by one who had been appointed to a judicial position for which he felt himself unfitted, he in reply told him to announce his decisions in the cases which might come before him with all confidence, for they would almost certainly be right, but to refrain from attempting to give reasons for them, for his reasons would almost certainly be wrong. One feels sometimes, when reading the speeches of Mr. Charlton and other earnest advocates of strict Sunday legislation, to wish that some one in authority would give them similar advice. Their opinions with reference to the national and moral blessings attendant upon the faithful observance and enforcement of a Sunday rest are confirmed by observation and experience, as well as in accord with the deductions of sanitary and medical science. But the reasons generally given in support of those opinions are not such as can be maintained on sound principles, either political or religious. It would be a right and fitting thing for the Government to have the Canadian section of the World's Fair closed on

Sunday, irrespective of the action of the United States Commissioners, or of the Mother Country. Canada believes in securing as far as possible to all her citizens one day in seven as a day of rest, and she ought to have the courage of her convictions on American as well as Canadian soil. But Canada has no right or authority, human or divine, to attempt to compel or to restrain her citizens on religious grounds. Neither Government nor Parliament may intrude into the realm sacred to the individual conscience. To attempt to do so is to put forth an unauthorized hand to steady the ark of God. No act which a man may do under compulsion of the State can be properly a religious act. We have no doubt that strict enforcement of a hebdomadal rest-day is in accordance with the teachings of the most enlightened physiological and sociological science, and that its moral effect is of the best kind. These facts are the warrant of Sunday legislation. But the laws of religion belong to a higher sphere than those of politics and are to be enforced by a higher sanction.

It is not a little amusing, as well as bewildering, to read the comments and criticisms of leading English journals upon Mr. Blake's maiden speech in the House of Commons. In the opinions of these critics, the speech ranges all the way from a tiresome performance and an almost complete failure, to one of the most powerful, eloquent and effective speeches ever made in that august Chamber. Such divergences in judgment are unusual, for the verdicts of the leading journals are generally reliable and on the whole tolerably uniform in regard to such matters. They are, in fact, about the best judges of such a speech. The explanation is probably to be found in the fact that both the voice and the style of Mr. Blake are harsh to the accustomed ears of British critics. His voice is distinctively Canadian and lacks the mellowness so pleasingly characteristic of the educated English. His style, in the length and often in the intricacy of its sentences, the redundancy of its language, and its lack of some of those finishing touches and graces whereby art conceals art, fails to satisfy ears made unconsciously fastidious by being long accustomed to the best models. For this reason it can be easily understood that many, especially of those who were utterly out of sympathy with his sentiments, may have lost interest at the outset and consequently failed to give their attention to the matter, as distinct from the manner, of the oration, which is necessary to the appreciation of one of Mr. Blake's masterly speeches. But it is not easy to understand how any mind capable of following a close and powerful train of reasoning can read the published report of that speech without perceiving that, as step by step he picks up the arguments of the keen adversary who preceded him, he outmatches and outmasters him at almost every point.