

## Prominent Topics.

### **Dominion Insurance Legislation.**

In the House of Commons this week, Mr. Monk asked if it was the intention of the Government to institute an appeal from the judgment rendered by Judge Leet in the case of the King vs. Willis, Faber & Co. Mr. Fielding replied the Government was not a party to the proceedings in question and is advised not to interfere in it. It was not the intention to delay proceeding with the Insurance Bill pending such appeal. The Government was not represented in the suit, and the opinion of counsel upon the question decided by Judge Leet had not been obtained.

This matter is of such importance, that measures should be taken to place beyond doubt the position of the Government with regard to the companies, and whether in future they are to be governed by Dominion or Provincial law.

In the meanwhile, the Government is practically ignoring the judgment by going on with its Insurance Bill. It is announced that the Bill will be dealt with after the Christmas vacation. There is something to be said in favour of the suggestion that the Bill be divided into two parts, so that the discussion on life assurance need not necessarily delay the passage of fire insurance legislation, nor *vice versa*.

### **Labour Unions and Public Safety.**

The Western States are suffering from a railroad tie-up that recalls the strike of 1894. Some 2,300 men of the Switchmen's Union are reported as now on strike, affecting thirteen roads running west and north of St. Paul and Lake Superior to the Pacific Coast.

In addition to their peremptory demands for increased pay and modification of various rules, the men are reported as insisting upon "the elimination of the physical examination and the age limit placed upon switchmen entering the service." If true, this affords one more instance of the menace to public safety in the stand-together-at-all-costs attitude so frequently adopted by railroad labour unions.

In fairness, however, it must be said that the switchmen refer to their demand as one for "modification of the physical requirements and age limit rules." So, too, some rather extreme radicals speak only of *modifying* the House of Lords.

The Kaiser's Speech from the Throne at the opening of the Reichstag was idyllic in its peacefulness and innocence. It dealt chiefly with domestic politics. His Majesty announced a Bill for extending sick benefit insurance to the working classes, and stated that one of the principal tasks of his Government was to fortify the financial position of the Empire.

This latter would seem to be highly probable. Dreadnoughts are like children in one respect. As the London General Omnibus Company so persistently proclaims "Children must be paid for." Sometimes children arrive at a stage of development at which they pay their own fares and sometimes they don't. Here also the parallel with the Dreadnoughts holds good.

### **Steel-Coal Matters.**

Dominion Coal Shareholders have until December 17th, to decide whether they will sell their shares on the same terms as arranged with Mr. James Ross, or will retain their stock and enter the Steel-Coal merger. Rumours abound as to the basis upon which the merger will take place, but no authoritative announcement has yet been made, nor has any statement been given out respecting the successor to Mr. F. P. Jones as manager of the Dominion Iron & Steel Co.

Now that St. Lawrence navigation is closed, the Steel company will be able to get its full quota of coal from the Coal Company, instead of importing part of it from the other side, as has been necessary during the Cape Breton mining strike. The Coal Company's November output was 225,000, tons, showing that the strike is practically over.

It was stated at the close of last week that the Dominion Coal Company had transferred under sublease, to the North Atlantic Collieries, Ltd., the block-house areas at Port Morien. The arrangement involves payment to the Dominion Coal Co., of a royalty of ten cents a ton upon all coal mined from these areas on the basis of a fixed annual minimum amount. It is of interest to note that it was in the vicinity of Port Morien that coal was first mined in America, away back in 1720.

The death of Mr. W. McLea Walbank came as a great shock to all the leading business men of Montreal with whom he had been intimately acquainted for many years. He looked such a picture of health that he seemed to be only upon the threshold of a great business career, much as he had already accomplished. Mr. Walbank had a quiet confidence in his methods and aims that was highly contagious and few had reason to regret sharing his confidence. He was a many sided man; successful as an architect, an engineer, an electrician, a financier, above all as an organizer; he would probably have succeeded in any enterprise he might have undertaken. Among other things he was successful in making a host of friends by whom he is sincerely mourned.

The unfortunate railway accident between Vancouver and New Westminster by which twenty or thirty Japanese lost their lives was a little out of the ordinary line of railway disasters. It was due to one of the perils of railway