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THE SITUATION.

A demand for responsible government in the North-West Territories comes in a way for which it would be easy to find precedents. The Legislature declared its want of confidence in the Advisory Board. The governor supported the council, whose resignation he at first refused to accept, but afterwards accepted. There can be no question that the existing law under which the North-West is governed was not intended to establish a responsible government. Four years ago the population was only a little over 23,000, for which a demand for all the complicated machinery of such a government might well be considered premature. The demand, such as it is, comes from the Legislature, which naturally desires the extension of its own powers, and there is no evidence that it is as yet backed by strong outside support. The time will come when such a demand will have to be granted; it has come in every province of the Dominion, but as yet it will scarcely be contended that there is population enough to make a province out of. The North-West will in time make several provinces, and it would scarcely do to begin by making it all in one. If the Legislature acts as if it had a legal right to control the action of the council, as under a responsible administration, its pretension cannot be maintained. At the same time this course is very likely to be taken; and if it is, the history of responsible government in the old provinces will only be repeating itself in the North-West. In the meantime, the best thing is to exercise mutual forbearance and to do the work assigned to the Legislature and the Executive with as little friction as possible.

Merchants' day has not met the approbation of the railway companies. Mr. Edgar, of the Grand Trunk, puts the difficulties which prevent compliance by his company in a way that can at least be understood. He says that it would be impossible to prevent the privilege of low rates to merchants extending practically to the public, and that if Toronto were favored in the way asked, other towns would demand like privileges. There is truth in

both objections; the only question is whether they should have been held to be of sufficient force to be decisive of the question. In the letter to this journal which first broached the matter, it was not proposed that Toronto alone should be thus favored, mention being made of other cities as equally entitled. Mr. Edgar adds that the consequence of compliance with the request would be a serious loss of railway revenue. The decision of the companies is to be regretted. Perhaps at some future time the difficulties which now stand in the way of a Merchants' day may be removed. There is the precedent of a farmers' day, though it may be somewhat different from what is now asked. Still it is a precedent for a concession such as has been asked and refused in the case of the merchants. The railway companies have the power of decision in their hands; they have decided, and decided adversely. We can only hope that, at a later date, the obstacles at present in the way of establishing a Merchants' day may be removed.

The municipal representatives who met in Toronto had no difficulty in agreeing upon the abolition of exemptions. The decision fairly represents a large section of Ontario opinion, though there are some who support the existing exemptions, many who support some of them. A question of this kind will hardly be settled without an expression of opinion at the polls. The existing Legislature fights shy of it, and it would be hoping against hope to expect legislative action upon it next session. The exemptionists, when they declared in favor of free burial grounds and the taxing of churches, apparently acted on the conclusion that every one must die though he can do as he likes about going to church. A strong cry against taxing churches could easily be raised, and on prudential grounds it is questionable whether it is advisable to go so far. There is no certainty that the electorate would decide in favor of taxing churches; the probability is perhaps the other way. These municipal representatives were elected to do municipal work in their respective localities, and they had no mandate for sketching new municipal charters; their opinion is only valuable as that of individuals.

Secretary Windom, if report tells the truth, will recommend to Congress the modification of the Contract Labor law so as to prevent its application to Canada and Mexico. The object of the law was to meet the case of European emigrants who come from Europe under contract to work in the United States; its extension to Canada and Mexico was purely accidental, arising from the terms of the statute, which was found to be large enough to cover the case of men living in these two countries, and going across the lines to work. Collectors have been given to understand that it is not desirable to stretch the law or even harshly to enforce it in the case of these countries. Secretary Windom's resolution in regard to it will therefore not be a surprise to anybody. But while Mr. Windom may propose, it is for Congress to dispose, and it is impossible to tell the outcome of

the recommendation. It does not appear that he feels any strong confidence that this advice will be acted upon, for a partial suspension of the law as it affects Canada is hinted at as a possible aim should complete suspension, in the case of this country, be found impossible.

Sir Henry Parkes' scheme of Australian federation is variously estimated, some regarding it as pointing to a second Dominion of Canada, others as a prelude to independence. Federation may easily be conceived as a desirable thing for the scattered colonies of Australia, and if it comes it may prove to be the forerunner of independence. Sir Henry Parkes himself looks on independence of these colonies as not improbable in the next generation. All sorts of opinions of the future are held in Australia, and whatever comes England as the mother of nations will not the less, let us hope, have reason to be proud of her progeny. The colonies have carried her language and her civilization to the remotest corners of the earth, and ensured the reign of liberty wherever they have been planted. The defence of the Australian colonies is a subject of concern both to themselves and to Great Britain, and a report on the subject by a military officer is said to have given birth to the new proposal for colonial federation. The necessity of defence would exist whether the colonial tie remain or be severed; in which of the two conditions there would be most necessity to call the defensive forces into active exercise may be a question; but there can scarcely be one as to that in which defence would be carried on under the most favorable auspices.

No advance of their cause has been made by the bi-metalists in the recent international monetary congress held in Paris. The congress had no power to bind any of the countries which found a representation in it, and nothing beyond a comparison of views held by the different members was possible. The bi-metalists mustered in strong force. Senator Magnin, a bi-metalist, admitted that the divergence between gold and silver had grown wider, and that nothing but the existence of the Latin Union and the U. S. Bland bill prevents the indefinite depreciation of silver, which would produce a "terrible world-wide monetary and commercial catastrophe." Mr. Grenfell thought the governments should call a monetary congress, with power to take effective resolutions. M. Cernuschi once more aired his scheme of unlimited silver coinage. Strong arguments in opposition were presented. A monetary congress without power of action can produce only moral results, and unless it has the best of the argument, the impression produced is not likely to be in its favor. The staple arguments were on this occasion on both sides; no new views were or could be produced, and thus the question of bi-metalism stands where it was before. The congress has served to remind the public that advocates of bi-metalism still survive, but has apparently done nothing to produce the conviction that their views