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All articles, contributions, and letters on matters pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

WE do not envy the gentlemen, who are just now, in virtue of a roving commission from the Dominion Government, going from place to place and collecting evidence on the prohibition question, the task with which they will have to grapple when they come to summarize the testimony and draw a conclusion from it. We are not sure on what principle the commissioners are proceeding in the receipt of testimony. Do they depend entirely upon volunteers, or do they also invite selected individuals in each community to appear before them? In either case, by what rule do they proceed and where do they draw the limit? They clearly cannot examine more than a small percentage of the persons whose testimony might be available in each locality. Nor have we been able to discover anything either in the position of those whose testimony has been taken, or in the dispassionateness of many of the views presented, to convey the impression that the witnesses heard are always those whose opinions on the question are of most value. In fact the evidence, if such it may be called, so far as we have found time to read it, gives one the impression of a mass of contradictions such as might well throw any court of justice into despair. In so saying we mean no reflection upon the veracity of the witnesses. In the main they no doubt state candidly enough their own observations, impressions, and, it may be, prejudices. Each records what is visible from his standpoint. The result is just what might have been expected. If any new light has been thrown upon the subject it has not dawned upon the public so far. If the object were to demonstrate the impossibility of enforcing prohibitory legislation within the bounds of a township, a county, or even a province, while the prohibited article continues to be freely manufactured, sold, and distributed on all sides of the locality trying the experiment, the expense of a commission might have been saved. The history of the different local option measures which have been tried in various localities has pretty well settled that question. But if we remember correctly, the demand of the Alliance, whose yearly petitions and motions in Parliament have led to the appointment of the Commission, is not for another local option law, but for the absolute pro-

hibition of the manufacture and sale of liquors throughout the Dominion. The question whether such a law could be enforced is a very different matter from that on which the Commission is taking evidence, and one on which the experiments hitherto made can have but a partial bearing. There can be little doubt that such a law might be enforced, provided a very large majority of the people were in favour of it, and the various authorities, from the Dominion Government to the parish constable, were honestly determined to enforce it. But whether those rather large conditions are at present attainable is a crucial question which the Commission will do little or nothing to answer. A vote of the whole people would be much more to the point.

NO one who has had occasion to read the editorial pages of a considerable number of the leading Canadian newspapers can have failed to note a marked and pleasing improvement in the tone of many of them within the last few years. This upward tendency has manifested itself in two ways—in the increase in the number of independent journals, and in greater moderation and fairness on the part of some, though by no means all, of the party papers. The latter change was in some instances quite perceptible during the late canal-tolls discussion. Perhaps not very many of the writers, on either side politically, made any special effort to rise to the height of putting themselves in the place of their neighbours on the other side of the line and tempering their own partial judgments by this most effective of all processes. But it was noticeable that some of the journals supporting the Government did not hesitate to do a good deal of independent thinking, while some of those whose reason-for-being has generally been supposed to be to oppose the Government, actually gave even more support to its contention than strict justice seemed to demand. We are not sure that the last-named phenomenon may not have been due in some cases to the influence of the prevalent but immoral maxim, "For my country, right or wrong," yet we cannot, we think, be mistaken in our impression that a gradual change for the better in the style and spirit of Canadian journalism is taking place. Probably only those who have had personal experience know how difficult it often is to preserve the moderate tone and the impartial attitude in the face of the taunts and jeers with which such a style is sure to be met, and the misinterpretations to which it is equally sure to be subjected. The writer well remembers the somewhat bitter complaint once heard from one who had already had a few years' experience, and who has since attained considerable distinction as a journalistic writer. He was at that time on the staff of one of the leading party journals. He had entered upon the work with lofty ideals, determined, as far as in him lay, to be always scrupulously fair to opponents. But, to his intense disgust, he soon found that the slightest admission made for the sake of candour would invariably be seized by some rabid opponent, torn from its proper connection, and twisted or exaggerated into something most damaging to the man or the party whom he was defending. Justice, to say nothing of generosity to opponents, seemed at that time to be a thing incapable of being understood or appreciated in journalistic controversy. It might not be hard to quote fresh instances to prove that too much of the same spirit still survives in certain quarters, and that if a journalist is afraid of being taunted as "namby-pamby," or denounced as treasonable, in certain newspaper circles, he must needs take care not to let his moderation, or his love of fair play, be too conspicuous. But on the whole the improvement in the style and character of Canadian journalism is sufficiently marked to be a source of present gratification and of large hope for the future, to those who have high conceptions of what journalistic literature might be and may yet become.

FREE text books, as we have said on a former occasion, are the logical complement of free schools. It would be difficult to find an argument in favour of the latter which is not equally cogent on behalf of the former. Though the supplying of these books free to the pupils of the Toronto public schools, which is now being done for

the first time, is an experiment in Canada, the practice has long since passed the experimental stage in many cities and towns of the United States. So far as we are aware, none of these places has any thought of renouncing the plan, and returning to the old. The advantages of the free system to teachers will, we have no doubt, be very great. The chronic and vexatious delays inseparable from the old method will be done away with, and the teacher will have the gratification of being able to put the proper tool into the hand of each child worker, as soon as the particular work for which that tool is needed is required to be done. This advantage will, no doubt, more than compensate for any additional trouble or care, if indeed there be any, involved in the working of the free system. A good deal has been said about the additional expense for taxpayers imposed by the purchase of the books, but it is clear that on the whole the saving of expense will be considerable, as any one may see who will reckon the difference between the wholesale and the retail cost of the whole number of books required for the city schools. It is true that under the free system the expense will be distributed in proportion to ability to pay, rather than number of children to be supplied. But this, again, is in accord with the principle which underlies the whole free-school system. If the principle is right in the narrower, it can hardly be wrong in the wider, application.

A GOOD deal of discussion, some of it of the excited and indignant kind, has been caused by the despatch from Rome to the effect that the Pope has asked France to use her influence with England to prevent the carrying into effect of the decision of the Privy Council with respect to the Manitoba School Act. The despatch is so inherently improbable that we prefer to discredit it, in the absence of confirmation from some reliable quarter. In the first place, it is in the highest degree unlikely that, even if His Holiness thought the children of his Church in danger of being deprived of rights belonging to them by treaty, or in equity, he would take the needlessly offensive course of asking the interference of another nation before appealing directly to the British Government. To say nothing of the discourtesy of such a proceeding, it would be strange if the shrewd diplomatists of the Propaganda should betray such ignorance of human nature, and of the John Bull variety of it, as to suppose that the interests of their co-religionists in Canada could possibly be served by such a procedure. Again, the present relations between the Holy See and the French Republic are hardly such as to make such an appeal probable, save as a last resort. Still further, the ground, and the only one conceivable save possibly that of relationship, on which the alleged appeal is said to be based, viz., an article in the terms of the capitulation, is so far-fetched, and so manifestly inapplicable in the case, that its use is hardly supposable. It would require something more than the proverbial subtlety of even Jesuitic logic to convince either a French or an English Government that the right of the Catholics of Canada, the Canada of 1760, to the free exercise of their religion, is in any danger from the School Act in question. On the whole, then, we shall retain our incredulity until compelled to credit the strange story, by some unimpeachable evidence.

THAT so strange a statement has gained so ready credence in many quarters is, however, but another indication added to those given in most of the French and some of the English newspapers in the Dominion, of a tension of feeling that needs careful handling, if serious mischief is to be averted. There can be no doubt, we suppose, that many of our French-speaking and Catholic fellow-citizens are fully persuaded that some constitutional right is being taken away from them by that action of the Manitoba Government, which has now been declared by the highest judicial authority in the realm to be constitutionally valid. It is unfortunate, to say the least, that so many of the French newspapers should seek to confirm and intensify this unwarranted conviction, by their unreasoning and violent articles. Unfortunately the issue involved is of so great importance, not only to Manitoba