

THE WEEK.

Vol. XII.

Toronto, Friday, May 10th, 1895.

No. 24.

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Current Topics.

Dr. Bourinot's Letter

Yesterday's papers announced the fact that Mr. D'Alton McCarthy would, at the afternoon sitting, ask the House "to consider the propriety of the conduct" of Lieutenant-Governor Schultz and the Clerk of the House of Commons, Dr. Bourinot, respecting the letter which the latter wrote to the former on the Manitoba School Question, and which Dr. Schultz appears to have had published in some of the Western papers. Dr. Schultz sets a high value on the opinion of Dr. Bourinot, knowing him to be strictly impartial. An opinion on this perplexing question, from one so eminently qualified to give it as is Dr. Bourinot and whose impartiality can be questioned by no one, is to be welcomed by the country at large, and any fuss about the matter is both uncalled for and ill-advised.

The Grand Trunk Board.

The reorganization of the Grand Trunk Board is now complete. It is tolerably radical, a large portion of the members being new. To say that the new Board is doubtless a very strong one, is not to imply that the old one was weak. Sir Charles Rivers Wilson, the new President, has a high reputation, as is evident from the long list of very important and responsible positions he has held, in connection with great financial concerns, though he has never before had charge of a great railway system. It is confidently believed that his efforts at reorganization and retrenchment will be very ably seconded by other members of the Board. The first step, and no doubt the most difficult and delicate one, will be the reconstruction of the Canadian service. Whether this will involve many changes is not yet known. Mr. Girdlestone, who has been the leading spirit in bringing about the changes, did well to caution the shareholders not to expect a sudden improvement in the finances of the road. The difficulties are, no doubt, due mainly to the business depression, and Sir Henry Tyler has been, like many another, in a larger measure, the victim of circumstances which no President could have controlled. Yet few, probably, of those who are in the best positions to judge will doubt that there is room for economy as well as increased efficiency on some parts of the line and its branches. Whether the changes will take the direction of having the management transferred in a larger degree to Canada cannot yet be known. Probably a vigorous and ever watchful Canadian management, with a greater flexibility and readiness to adapt its methods to Canadian and American ideas and tastes, may prove helpful, but large patience will still be needed.

Newfoundland and the Confederation

Discussing the probable entrance of Newfoundland into the Confederation, a week or two since, we mentioned, as one of the conditions which we thought all would agree should be insisted on, that her entrance must be by the free action of the majority of her own people. With the history of Nova Scotia in view, we cannot conceive how any true Canadian could consent ever to receive another province against the will of the majority, or even that of a very strong minority. This seemed to us so nearly axiomatic that we did not suppose that its soundness would be even challenged. We were, therefore, the more surprised to see evidences of reluctance on the part of the Government to pledge themselves that no negotiations for union shall be completed or ratified until such approval of the majority shall have been unmistakably expressed. The position, which has been at least hinted at, that that is a question between the Newfoundland Government and Legislature and their constituents, with which we have no right to interfere, cannot be maintained for a moment. We as Canadians are at least as deeply interested in the contentment and loyalty of a new province or prospective province, as the people of that province can possibly be. The argument of a Newfoundland correspondent of one of the papers, to the effect that the rank and file of the Newfoundlanders are not sufficiently intelligent and well-informed to be capable of pronouncing wisely on the question, cannot settle the question. On that same principle it might be argued that the people of Canada are not wise enough to determine for themselves whether they will accept some given scheme of Imperial Federation which may some time be proposed. If the people of the Island are not intelligent enough to appreciate the benefits of union, we do not see what can be done but wait until its advocates among them shall have had time to educate them up to that point.

The French Shore Difficulty.

The *Christian World* of the 25th ult. gives currency to a news item which we do not remember to have seen elsewhere, touching an alleged proposal for removing the French Shore Difficulty out of the way of Newfoundland's entrance into the Confederation. It is to the effect that legislation is pending in the Island Legislature, the object of which is to offer to surrender to the French Government absolute ownership or control over forty miles of the west coast of the Island, on condition of the abandonment of her claim over the rest of the west shore. This proposal is said to be under consideration, if not actually agreed on, between Great Britain and the Newfoundland Government, as a means of settling the whole difficulty. Whether there is anything in the rumor, or any good reason for believing that France would consider such a proposition, and whether the high-strung Newfoundlander would consent to it—are all points upon which no information is given. It is evident, however, that it would be vastly better for Newfoundland to know definitely her own territorial rights and limits, and to have full control within those limits, even at the loss of a small section of her coast line, than to continue in a state of perpetual friction and irritation with danger of embroiling two great nations in war, in consequence of uncertain and conflicting claims. Certainly such a solution of the difficulty, if possible, would have much more to recommend it to Canada than any attempted revival of the French bounty system.