

# THE WEEK.

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## THE WEEK:

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THE question which "Canadian" opportunely brings to the front is one in which everyone who has anything to do with the railways, as almost everybody has in these days, is interested. However useful the Railway Committee of the Privy Council may have been in solving certain disputes, more or less legal or judicial in character, between different railways, and between railways and other corporations, we quite agree with our correspondent that a tribunal of a different kind, and easier of access to all classes, is needed to stand between the railways and the people. The success of the Interstate Railway Commission in the United States—a body whose usefulness has been so fully demonstrated that, if we mistake not, the majority of the railway authorities themselves now approve of it—has removed the project from the catalogue of doubtful experiments. But apart from any such practical trial, the establishment of such a Board, clothed with the legislative authority necessary to its efficiency, is so reasonable and fair on general principles, that the wonder is that the people should have so long been content without it as an ultimate authority to which they could appeal for even-handed justice. The fact that railways derive their existence from public charter, which alone can give them the right of way through private property, to say nothing of the immense endowments they have in Canada received out of the taxes of the citizens, places them at once on a different basis from that of any establishment or enterprise belonging exclusively to private individuals or corporations. The right of Government, that is of public control over the management of such roads, so far as their relations to the people are concerned, few will now care to dispute. The fact that no question of the kind which should come specially within the sphere of such a Commission, i.e., no question of "rebate, drawback, discrimination or exorbitant rates," is known to have come before the Railway Committee is, as "Canadian" points out, sufficient proof that that Committee does not serve the purpose for which a Railway Commission is specially needed. Whether such a Commission, when appointed, could be entrusted with the settlement of questions of the class which have come before the Privy Council Committee, or whether some tribunal of that kind would still be needed, would be a matter for consideration. Should it be found inadvisable to clothe a General Commission with authority to settle questions of a more strictly legal

character, it would seem better that such questions should be dealt with by some strictly judicial body independent of Government control. It is to be hoped that at the coming session of Parliament the appointment of a Dominion Railway Commission may again be brought forward. Would it not be desirable to add to the list of matters which "Canadian" enumerates as those which should come under the jurisdiction of such a Commission, that of passenger rates? It is at least an open question whether the existing tariffs of rates for travellers by rail standing, as we believe they do, at about the same level at which they were established many years ago, though freight rates have been greatly reduced, should not also come within the purview of an independent Commission. Is there not good reason for believing that those rates are altogether too high, and that while a considerable reduction would be a great boon to the travelling public, it would also benefit the railroads by greatly increasing the number of passengers?

WE comment, in another paragraph, on the suggestion of a correspondent that a Canadian Railway Commission is needed to decide business questions between the railways and their patrons. The ghastly details of the recent collision in the Fourth Avenue Tunnel, New York, should bring forcibly home to the thoughtful and humane the need of some law or authority to compel the abolition of the car-stove on all passenger trains. The feasibility of other and safe modes of heating is now sufficiently proved by the practice of the roads which use them, and it should no longer be possible that to all the unavoidable horrors of a railway disaster may be added the danger of being burned alive. In the case in question we are told that the fire "added to the agony of the death of some of the victims, and hastened the death of others." Surely Parliaments and Legislatures should promptly forbid that the greed or callousness of railway owners should any longer place travellers in danger of a fate so horrible. The cruelty and guilt involved in the neglect or refusal of railway corporations to take proper precautions for the protection of their employees from maiming or death in coupling cars, from unprotected frogs, etc., have often been dealt with in our columns. Now is an excellent time, at the opening of a new Parliament, for some friend of the railway employee to bring forward and press a stringent measure for the prevention of such criminal neglect. So laudable a proposal could scarcely fail to secure a majority in the new House. Possibly all such matters might be put into the hands of the general Railway Commission.

THE protest of "Phalacrois" against the decision of the trustees of the city collegiate institutes, to convert them into training schools for teachers, is forcible and timely. We have always maintained that the policy of the Education Department in this matter is a short-sighted and mistaken one. The same objections, which our correspondent urges with so much vigour against the attempt to train raw pedagogical recruits in the city institutes, apply with equal force to the plan in accordance with which a large number of the public schools have been converted into training schools for third-class teachers. Contrivances to make a single machine pay a double debt are seldom successful, either in the mechanical or in the intellectual sphere. We do not see how any one who has a moderate acquaintance with educational matters can doubt that the division of attention and the diversion of energy necessary to enable any staff of instructors to give efficient training in the theory and art of teaching, must deduct naturally from the sum total of educational force available for carrying on the true work of the school, in its relation to its pupils. We also deem it fairly questionable whether the student who has passed through a course of instruction under competent public and high school masters, and has thus been for years initiated into the methods and mysteries of the teaching art as practised by them, has much to learn from a few weeks of practice under the direction of the same teachers, or others of the same class. This is not to deny that a systematic study of the laws and principles of the honourable profession of the teacher, a profession which demands the highest qualifi-

cations natural and acquired, is not necessary and should not be required of everyone before he is permitted to enter upon the practice of the profession. But this study is of a very different kind from any that can be profitably pursued in either a common or a collegiate school. It is at least pretty clear that the more nearly such a school approximates the ideal of a training school for teachers, the farther it must diverge from the methods of a true educational gymnasium, and fall short of its duty to its patrons. It may be admitted, however, that the problem of the proper training of teachers is a very difficult one, and is yet to be satisfactorily solved, but we cannot resist the conviction that the method proposed is one of the wrong ways of attempting its solution. It would be interesting to hear the opinions of the most competent masters in our collegiate institutes and high schools upon the subject.

IT is to be regretted that, in consequence no doubt of the intense political excitement of the moment, the city papers contented themselves with giving so meagre reports of Sir Daniel Wilson's lecture to students of the College Young Men's Christian Association, the other evening. At a time when the subject is being so earnestly discussed and so profoundly investigated, thousands of readers of the city dailies would, no doubt, have been deeply interested in learning what the learned and venerable President of the University had to say on "The Supernatural in Religion." It is a matter for congratulation that the Head of the Provincial University does not hesitate to discuss such topics before his students and to throw the weight of his influence in favour of earnest and profound study of questions which, though incomparably the most important of all which can occupy the human mind, are, strange to say, among the last to which a large proportion of students at College are willing to give serious attention. We presume Sir Daniel Wilson has not failed to note a somewhat remarkable movement which is going on in many of the best American Universities, in the direction of giving the Bible a prominent place in the curriculum. Whatever our views in regard to such questions as those relating to its inspiration and authority, there can be no doubt either of the surpassing literary excellence and historical value of the Book, or of the fact that it has exerted and is still exerting a more powerful influence upon the thinking and the morals of the race than all other books combined. The wonder then is, not that institutions of learning are giving to the scientific study of the Bible, as a literary and religious work, a place amongst other subjects of far less importance, but that they have been so long and are still so slow in doing so. It is safe to say that the average University graduate is far better acquainted with the mythological deities and heroes of ancient Rome and Greece, than with the characters and teachings of the Old Testament, though no one can claim that the former are more interesting and important in any respect than the latter. Should not a chair for the scientific and critical study of the Bible have a place in the Provincial University, at an early date?

NOMINATION day has come and gone without affording any reliable indication of the comparative strength of the respective parties. Under these circumstances we shall not commit the folly of indulging in any forecasts, which, read without the light of the official returns from all parts of the Dominion, might only provoke a smile at the prophet's lack of prescience. When the dissolution was announced the general opinion of those who were sufficiently free from the spirit of party to take a calm view of the situation was, we believe, that a large majority of supporters of the Government would be returned. Probably that is still so far the prevailing opinion that a Government triumph would be accepted in most quarters as a matter of course. Yet, on the other hand, it must be admitted, we believe, that the policy of "Unrestricted Reciprocity" has developed surprising strength, especially in the rural constituencies, in so much that an Opposition victory would excite far less surprise than did the great Democratic triumph a few months since in the United States. Should such a political revolution take place it would be due to a very similar