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## THE WEEK:

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### CURRENT TOPICS.

The accounts which reach us by late mails of the reception given to Mr. Bowell and his mission in Australia are gratifying and to a certain extent encouraging. His visit will no doubt have a good effect in directing attention to this country and leading our Australian cousins to look more closely into the larger possibilities of inter-colonial trade. The conference which has been, or is being arranged for, to be held in Canada at a later date, will give the statesmen of both countries an opportunity to compare notes and see what can be done. While we have not very great faith in special trade arrangements of any kind, believing that the very best means of encouraging trade is for all parties concerned to throw off its shackles and give it free course, we do believe in extending knowledge of our country, its productions, resources, and possibilities, as rapidly and as widely as possible.

To this end Mr. Bowell's mission will no doubt conduce. While he will find most of the Australians too good free-traders to be willing to attempt to alter the course of trade to any considerable extent by confining it within narrow dykes, it is possible that he may become so convinced that their ways are better than ours that he may be ready to give valuable aid in effecting the tariff reform which the Canadian people are now so earnestly demanding. It is already proved that Canada can produce a variety of articles which the Australians need. The Pacific steamers now offer excellent facilities for the conveyance of such articles. What does not yet very clearly appear is what the Australians have to give in return which Canadians specially need. Mr. Bowell's mission should do much to supply this information. As trade is in its very nature reciprocal, it is indispensable, first that it be shown that Australia offers a sufficient supply of products for which Canada has a market to offset whatever Canadian goods she may need, and in the second place that Canada no longer fence out such products with a high tariff wall.

Everyone has foreseen from the first that the Manitoba language and school questions are really those of the whole North-West, and that whatever settlement was reached in the case of the one must be conceded sooner or later to the other. But we, at least, were not aware that the North-West Council had already followed so far in Manitoba's footsteps as the protest of the Roman Catholic Bishop of the territory would seem to indicate. This protest, if its tenor is correctly reported, goes to show that in the Territories the Council has already taken charge of Public and Separate Schools alike, so far as insisting that none but the authorized text-books may be used, that all teachers must be examined and licensed by the Education Department, that no religious instruction shall be given, no catechism used, etc., until within a half-hour of the time for the closing of the school, and that the children may or may not remain to take part in these exercises according to the wish of their parents. Of course all this, viewed from a purely political as well as from a Protestant standpoint, simply means that schools aided from the public funds, or from funds collected under powers granted by the Government, must be subject to Government regulations, and that the educational purpose of such schools must not be subordinated to a sectarian one. In so doing the Council but acts

in accordance with the well-understood principle that it is no function of the civil Government to oversee or provide for the teaching of sectarian dogmas to the children of any class, even though the majority in a given district may belong to that class. Sooner or later these broader views must prevail, and the Catholic prelates, if well advised, would submit to the inevitable and the just with as good a grace as possible. But whether the present constitution of the North-West empowers the local council to make such changes is another question, on which we are not prepared, at present, to express an opinion.

The settlement of the long and disastrous quarrel between the striking English miners and their employers, by means of a conference under the presidency of Lord Rosebery, is an event of far-reaching significance. The immediate success of the experiment has, of course, given unbounded satisfaction to the nation and is a matter for congratulation to all concerned. But unless we greatly misread it, the incident means much more than this. It is, we presume, the first case in modern British history in which a Government has intervened to settle a labour dispute. It thus establishes a precedent which no succeeding administration, under similar circumstances, can refuse to follow. Of course, in so intervening the Government laid no claim to authority. Its reliance was simply upon the prestige of the administration as such, and especially upon the exceptional ability and popularity of Lord Rosebery. But suppose the plan had failed. It is evident that the relations of the Government to the dispute would have undergone a material change. It could hardly, in view of the great distress which was being caused on all hands, by the obstinacy of the contending parties, have retired from the field, wringing its hands and protesting that nothing more could be done but leave the contestants to fight the battle to the bitter end, while the whole nation was the sufferer. Unless Mr. Gladstone and his clever Foreign Minister were more lacking in foresight than we have any reason to suspect, they must have considered the possibility of failure, and have reached some more or less definite conclusion as to what should be the next step. In a word, it is not a far-fetched inference from the occurrence to say that the British Government has by this act committed itself to the theory of the right of a Government to intervene in any future