

CORRESPONDENCE.

sudden jump of an hour in time in passing from one time zone to another, as many railways in both countries must do; and it seems the Grand Trunk, Great Western and Canadian Pacific are each run into two time zones within Ontario, and the Intercolonial into two such zones in Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. There must be many railways in the United States which violate the conference rule in like manner; and this is a very great imperfection in the rule itself. But this is a matter for the consideration of the railway magnates themselves. The matter to which I desire to call your attention is the legal aspect of the case.

Many people (not lawyers, of course) seem to suppose that standard time has become *legal* time, and seem inclined to govern themselves and their doings by it, thus putting the railway managers in the place of the Legislature. Now, looking for the moment at Ontario alone, standard time at London is about twenty-four minutes earlier than legal time; and there are places in Essex where the jump occurs from one time zone to another, and at which the standard time is an hour earlier on one side of an invisible line than on the other. Now our Act 32-33 V., c. 21, § 1, defines "night" for the purposes of that Act as commencing at "nine o'clock in the evening of each day and ending at six o'clock in the morning of the next succeeding day," so that by standard time it would be night on one side of the line when it was day on the other; and by sec. 50 *burglary* is defined to be the commission of certain offences in the *night* only, so that the same offence would be burglary on one side the line and not on the other. Mr. Robertson, of Hamilton, has now a Bill before the House of Commons making burglary punishable by imprisonment in the penitentiary for life. Fancy a man tried for burglary in the neighbourhood of that line, and a question arising as to the hour when the offence was committed. But, even in London, the offence would be burglary twenty-four minutes earlier in the evening by standard than by legal time, and the offender, if he did not break in, would have twenty-four minutes longer to break out. Then, again, the Ontario Revised Statute, c. 111, § 22, provides that no Registrar shall receive any instrument for registration except within the hours of ten in the forenoon and four in the afternoon, and he is to endorse on the instrument registered not only the year, month and day, but the hour and minute of registration. Now suppose him to shut and open his office in London by standard time, he would shut it twenty-four minutes before, and open it twenty-four minutes after the legal time. Might he not do serious wrong to a person whose mortgage or other claim he received or refused illegally? and might he not be

liable in heavy damages for doing so? Or suppose a Returning Officer closing or opening his poll twenty-four minutes before or after the legal time; or a tavern-keeper doing the same by his bar; or a case of insurance with a policy expiring at noon, and a loss occurring after *standard* but before *legal* noon. And so of an infinite variety of cases, where time is of the essence of the act done and its effect. In England, where they look closely into the consequences of such things, difficulties of this kind were foreseen when Greenwich time was adopted for all England in 1880, and an Act, 43-44 V., c. 9, was passed making it *legal time*, which, of course, they knew it would not otherwise be. I can believe that the advantages of the change may there have been greater than the disadvantages; for England is comparatively small, and the greatest difference between standard and the old legal time is only about twenty-two minutes, and there is no jump of an hour; the sea bounds the time zone, so that no one can mistake it; and they have taken care to leave Dublin time for Ireland. Our case, and that of the United States, is different. We have five jumps of one hour each; and with all due respect for the railway authorities, I think it would have been better if they had adopted or would adopt the time of 90° West Longitude as the standard for the United States and Canada right across the continent—one railway time without jumps or breaks, and the two oceans for the limits of the time zone. A clock with two minute hands, or one hand with two points, would show legal and standard time at once; and there would be no places with two standard times, as there are now at the boundary of each time zone. I am informed that the authorities of the Naval Observatory at Washington hold the same opinion. If any but the present legal time is to be used *as such* the change should be made by law, as it was in England. In the United States, it appears, that every State has power to fix its own legal time; Congress has it only for the District of Columbia (ten miles square, I believe), and has exercised the power by adopting standard time of 75° West Long. But the said District is smaller than England, and there could hardly be a minute of time difference between any two places in it. In Canada, I think the power rests with the Dominion Government. I am of opinion that there should be no change in the legal time; that Canada is too big to adopt one legal time for its sixty or seventy degrees of longitude, and that no jump system could be made rational and workable in law. But I hold that the Dominion Government and the Governments of the several Provinces should state authoritatively that the mean solar time of each place remains as hitherto