

Prominent Topics.

Ontario Law Reform. "He speaks ingeniously—but in the confined spirit of a lawyer," Lord John Russell once wrote to Her Majesty, youthful Queen Victoria. And when lawyers nowadays discuss any proposed legal reform, the average man is apt to recall this comment upon an old-time parliamentarian.

However, the Attorney-General of Ontario has this week introduced a long-promised law reform bill providing for certain changes that strike the lay mind as making for simplified legal process, and doing away with unduly frequent, and costly, appeals. Full details of the measure are not yet to hand, the first reading having been given the bill before it was formally printed. It is known, however, that the measure has four main features: The abolition of appeals to the present Divisional Court, limitation of appeals to the Privy Council, increase of the jurisdiction of country and district courts, and rendering permissible contracts between solicitors and clients.

Appeal by right to the Privy Council is abolished, and leave to appeal granted by His Majesty is also abolished except where some constitutional matter is concerned, or where the matter in controversy exceeds \$10,000 in value, exclusive of costs. In other words, the amount upon which appeal can be taken is increased from \$4,000 to \$10,000.

Canadian Railways. The annual report of the Railway Department for the year ending June 30, 1908, shows that there were 22,966 miles of railway in operation in Canada in that year, 514 more than in 1906-7. The total capital invested was \$1,239,295,013 exclusive of the cost of the Government lines, such as the International T. & N. O. and the Government section of the Transcontinental. Including these the grand total reaches \$1,564,640,044. The number of passengers carried was 34,044,992, an increase of 1,907,673 and the passenger mileage 2,081,960,864, a decrease of 636. The freight hauled was 63,071,167 tons, an increase of 1.24 per cent. The gross earnings were \$146,918,318, an increase of \$180,098 and the net earnings \$39,614,171 a decrease of \$3,375,366. The net earnings would yield 3.19 per cent. upon the capitalization of \$1,239,295,013 representing the stock and bond issues.

City of New York Stock.

The Comptroller of the City of New York on Tuesday opened tenders for \$10,000,000 of 4 per cent. corporate stock. The bids totalled \$63,000,000 and the average price is about 101.75. This means that the stock will be sold by the tenderers at 104 to 105 or probably more. New York's credit is naturally among the best municipal credits on the continent, but the average price just obtained is only about one point better than that obtained by Montreal's last 4 per cent. loan.

The Causes of Typhoid. The presidents of the principal hospitals in Montreal are asking the city to initiate proceedings to ascertain the cause of the recent outbreak of typhoid. The request is a most reasonable one and very much in the public interest. The calm

assumption that "the water" is always to blame is not satisfactory to the public. Every case should be investigated and then the probabilities are that many contributory causes will be discovered. Blaming the water every time is simply the wildest kind of guess work.

Railway Accidents in Canada. The Railway report for 1907-8 shows that 449 people including 20 passengers were killed on Canadian railways during

the year and 2,347 including 345 passengers were injured. These figures show as is everywhere and invariably the case that the employees and trespassers are the principal victims of railway accidents; but the figures all round are far too heavy for the amount of traffic in Canada. What is wanted, is not more stringent laws and regulations, but more strict enforcement of laws and regulations already in existence, and especially more rigorous punishment of criminal negligence. The sentences should not be proportioned to the seriousness of the consequences of a fault, but to the seriousness of the fault itself. Neither railway companies nor their employees have a right to take gamblers' risks involving danger to life and limb and the man who puts a train in jeopardy should not escape punishment simply because fatal consequences do not actually follow. Every accident and every known blunder, should be the subject of government investigation on the lines of the English Board of Trade investigations. The coroner's inquest and the enquiry by the company's officials are both ridiculously inadequate.

A New King. Yesterday President Roosevelt divested himself of the royal purple and from to-day President Taft reigns in his stead. History will rank Theodore Roosevelt among the great presidents of the United States, notwithstanding some well-meant mistakes, which worked much harm to the people. The man in high office who has never made a mistake is, however, either one of the wonders of the world, or a man who has never done anything worth talking about. President Taft is likely to perpetuate the Roosevelt tradition in American politics generally.

Dominion Iron and Steel and Dominion Coal. The directors of the Dominion Iron & Steel Company have forwarded their reply to the offer of the Dominion Coal Company to re-instate the Steel Company in its contract rights. It is understood that the reply does not commit the Steel Company to anything very definite, but may open the way to further negotiations. The situation has necessitated an adjournment of the Coal Company's annual meeting. The shareholders met pro forma and immediately adjourned.

Quebec Legislature. The Legislature of the Province of Quebec was formally opened on Tuesday last, by Lieutenant-Governor, Sir C. A. P. Pelletier. The legislative programme of the Government as outlined in the Speech from the Throne, deals principally with educational matters of a practical character. It also recommends the appointment of a permanent commission to deal with disputes between municipal corporations and contractors for public utilities.