

# THE WEEK.

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## THE WEEK :

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All articles, contributions, and letters on matters pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any other person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

AN accumulation of testimony from various quarters, and from Liberal as well as Conservative sources, makes it impossible any longer to doubt that there are in Ontario many schools, classed as Public Schools and largely supported from public funds, in which the English language is neither used in teaching, nor itself taught with any degree of efficiency. The strong statement to the contrary made by the Minister of Education from his place in the House appears to have been singularly rash and ill-founded. Mr. Ross surely owes it to the public and to himself to offer some explanation. It seems scarcely possible that his words were misreported, nor has the correctness of the newspaper version, so far as we are aware, been called in question, unless, perhaps, by some of his friends, who, with indisputable evidence to the contrary before their eyes, find it difficult to conceive how the Minister's informants could have so misled him as to cause him to make the unfortunate assertion that English is now taught in every Public School in Ontario. Public interest in the question is now pretty thoroughly aroused, and, if it were not, a Cabinet Minister holding the important portfolio of the Education Department cannot afford to allow his accuracy in regard to a question of fact, touching a matter on which he should have the fullest information, to be openly called in question.

WHILE amending his Postal Bill in some important particulars, the Postmaster-General seems disposed to adhere to other objectionable innovations. As we have already observed, two cents per ounce is not an exorbitant charge for the delivery of dropped letters in a town or city, and the doubled rate is now made to apply only in those places which have free delivery. We still doubt whether resort to postal cards on the one hand, and to private agencies on the other, will not prevent any material increase of revenue from this source. Mr. Haggart has

done well to abandon his intention to charge postage on all periodicals issued less frequently than once a week. There might, perhaps, be a good deal to be said, on business grounds, in favour of charging for the carrying and distribution of all kinds of postal matter, newspapers included, but it would be hard to give any satisfactory reasons for collecting postage on the Sunday and other educational fortnightly and monthly while carrying the dailies and weeklies for nothing. A largely increased fee for registration will, it may pretty safely be predicted, fail of its object, while the proposal to give postmasters power to register at the expense of the recipient letters supposed to contain valuable matter, seems arbitrary and unworkable in the extreme. By what means is a postal clerk to ascertain the contents of a given letter, or on what grounds is he to suppose it to contain "valuable matter"? Whatever may be the custom in Europe, or even in England, we doubt if the Canadian people will take kindly either to such scrutiny of letters as would be necessary to guide the officials to anything like correct conclusions, or to the promiscuous and capricious exactions which would result from guess-work. A better plan for discouraging letter writing and reducing postal revenues could hardly be devised. The effect must be in many cases either to raise the rate of postage to eight or ten cents for an ordinary letter, or to leave the writer in dread lest his communication should be made the means of inflicting a fine of that amount upon his innocent friend.

IT ought, one would suppose, to be accepted as an axiom in legislation that whenever a law which may in any way have found a place on the Statute Book is shown to be both indefensible in principle and vexatious or unfair in working, it should be promptly repealed. Such a law, clearly, is that clause of the Canadian Customs Act which adds to the value of articles imported from a foreign country the cost of inland transportation to the boundary line or the place of shipment. It is not easy to conjecture what mode of reasoning could have led, in the first place, to the adoption of such a practice. Why should the Customs Department wish to discriminate against an inland in favour of a maritime city, or against cheap or bulky articles in favour of costlier and smaller ones from the same locality? Whatever may have been the origin of the custom, no one seems to have attempted to defend it on its merits during the recent discussion at Ottawa. It is no wonder that Germany and other foreign countries should object to the exception which has hitherto been made in reference to Great Britain and Ireland, an exception which violates the spirit, if not the letter, of existing agreements. The wonder is that instead of at once repealing the law when their attention was called to it, the Government should have gone from bad to worse by proposing to extend its operation to the Mother Country. The plea based on the loss of revenue that would result from its abolition is manifestly insufficient to warrant the continuance of a practice which is based on no equitable principle. The voice of the mercantile community is emphatic in condemnation of the proposed change. It is to be hoped that the Government will finally yield to the strong remonstrances that are being made in the matter.

MR. HICKSON, general manager of the Grand Trunk Railway, has given to a reporter of the New York Times his version of the difficulty between the Michigan Central and the Grand Trunk, which has led the former to appeal to the Inter-State Commerce Commission. The head and front of the Grand Trunk's offence is, according to Mr. Hickson, that it makes special rates for the carriage of coal from the Niagara frontier to Toronto, London, St. Thomas, Stratford and other places. These special rates, while not forbidden by Canadian law, are contrary to the regulations of the Inter-State Commission. As the Michigan Central rates are necessarily under the control of that Commission, that road is placed at a disadvantage to whatever extent it, as the Canada Southern, comes into competition with the Grand Trunk. The contention of the Michigan Central is that as the Grand Trunk receives the coal in yards on the American side of the frontier it comes within the jurisdiction of

the Inter-State Commission. Very well, says Mr. Hickson, if so we will have the consignor deliver the coal on the Canadian side, which will put an end to the matter. But it is evident that it will not put an end to the grievance, if any really exists, of the Michigan Central, and the latter will naturally strive to bring to bear other kinds of pressure, such as the threat to shut out the Grand Trunk from American trade. Meanwhile, it is said, that "the Senate Committee on Inter-state commerce are to be in New York on May 1, to begin a general enquiry into the relations of the Canadian railroads and Canadian traffic to the Commerce of the United States, and out of that some important legislation may grow." It is a pity that in a case of this kind the relations between the Governments of the two countries cannot be sufficiently cordial and sensible to admit of concurrent legislation. American railroads, as Mr. Hickson points out, derive a larger revenue from the transportation of commodities for Canadians, than Canadian roads do from the transportation of commodities for citizens of the United States, a fact which American newspaper and magazine writers are too apt to overlook. The transportation systems of the two countries are so interlaced that a clear and amicable agreement should be made in regard to such matters. Perpetual threats of non-intercourse are unworthy of American civilization.

THE presence of Gabriel Dumont among the Metis of the North-West, holding meetings and discussing grievances old and new, is a fact to which the attention of the Canadian Government cannot be too promptly given, not with a view to imposing any restrictions upon the fullest liberty of speech, but in order that no shadow of reasonable grievance may be left to retard the complete pacification of this important element in the North-West population. If the Government have, as it is alleged, adopted the principle in settling rebellion losses that no claim for compensation, even though made by one who took part in the insurrection, shall be refused unless it be found that the half-breed so applying was a party to his own loss, it is certainly impossible to deny the generosity of such treatment. But there seems to be again danger of the delay which was the proximate cause of the last rebellion. The half-breeds are a simple-minded people, unversed in constitutional forms, and unable to understand the round-about methods and interminable delays of officialdom. If the Government is wise it will see to it that no combustible material, in the shape of supercilious neglect or long-deferred fulfilments of promise, is left scattered about for fire-brand graters. It is of the first importance to the peace and prosperity of the North-West that this hardy and energetic race be thoroughly conciliated if possible. As the original occupants of the country they are entitled to much consideration on the ground of justice, as well as on that of generosity and of good policy. If their demands are extravagant beyond measure, if they utterly refuse to listen to reason, and are determined to remain disaffected and hostile, there is, of course, no help for it, and they will have to be dealt with as occasion demands. But Canada cannot afford to have a disaffected and dangerous race within her borders if it is possible, by any process of kind and liberal treatment, to make them permanently contented and loyal.

THOUGH Mr. Clark Wallace's Anti-Combines Bill has passed the committee to which it was referred, there is not much probability of its being brought to a vote in Commons, much less becoming law this session. Perhaps it is just as well that another year should be given for fuller consideration of the question, and fuller observation of the methods and workings of the combinations. Mr. Wallace has pushed his Bill with ability and resolution, and is not likely to be discouraged by two rebuffs. It is clear from the criticisms offered by several legal members of the Committee, who were favourable to the principle of the Bill, that very great care will be required in order to legislate effectively on the subject, and at the same time avoid hampering legitimate trade. Perhaps by next session some one may be prepared with a Bill providing for Government supervision of Combines, somewhat on the lines laid down by Mr. Hemming in our last issue. As