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CURRENT TOPICS.

A very interesting experiment, and one which is much more likely to commend itself to the people generally than to the legal fraternity, is about to be tried in North Dakota. We refer to the "Courts of Conciliation" which have recently been created by law. In a local election of a justice of the peace, four commissioners of conciliation are to be chosen, two of whom are to act with a justice of the peace in hearing testimony and arguments in civil cases before action is brought into ordinary courts. No attorneys are to be allowed to appear and the chief testimony is to consist of the statements of the principal parties to the action. The justice and commissioners are then to try to induce the contending parties to adjust their differences on the ground of justice. Should this effort fail, none of the proceedings are to form part of subsequent litigation. The main

object of these courts is to prevent lawsuits over small matters. The results of the experiment will be awaited with great interest in other places. If successful—and we can see no reason why it should not be so—it will soon be widely adopted.

It is not greatly to the credit of those who are conducting the case for the United States before the Behring Sea Arbitrators that they are striving so strenuously to effect the shutting out of the supplementary evidence offered on behalf of British Government. Such tactics we are unhappily familiar with in the courts, where the object of the contestants is generally not justice but victory, but it seems hardly what was to be expected before an International Board of Arbitrators. There we should have hoped the wish of all concerned would be to have all the facts attainable brought forward in order that justice and right might prevail. We shall await with not a little curiosity the decision of the Board in regard to the admission of the evidence in question. It will afford some inkling of the spirit in which the arbitrators are going about the work and the ideas they have in regard to the nature of their duties.

The animated discussion that is now going on in the United States in connection with the Russian extradition treaty affords a curious comment upon the limitations of popular government in the republic. Press and platform are up in arms against certain rumored provisions of the treaty, but so long as the Senate chooses to continue its injunction of secrecy it is impossible for editors, orators, or people to know whether the objectionable clauses are or are not really to be found in the treaty. The two rumored features of the document which are giving rise to the most vigorous remonstrance are those supposed to relate to the crimes of forgery and of attempts upon the lives of members of the Royal Family. If the latter provides for the extradition of any one who may at any time have been found by the Russian authorities guilty of such plotting, the number of refugees who could be extradited under it would be legion. Even if limited, as is alleged by some official authority, to those who have been convicted of actual attempts upon the lives of some of the dignitaries indicated, it is believed by many that, under the peculiar tactics to which Russian officials do not hesitate to resort, the danger to political refugees would still be very great. As to the alleged provision in respect to forgery,

the danger lies in its applicability to the forging of passports, inasmuch as it is impossible for the poor victim of intolerance either to procure a passport by legitimate means or to leave the country without one. There is not much danger that the American people will permit the right of asylum for political refugees to be violated, but it seems strange that they should submit to be kept in the dark in such a matter.

It is doubtful if any country in the world is moving faster along the road to pure democracy than Great Britain. The passage already during the current session of a resolution in favour of the payment of members of the Commons, and the introduction and first reading of the Parish Councils Bill, are but two among many striking indications of this tendency. The legislative adoption of the resolution in question, which is but a matter of time, will go farther than almost any other change which could be proposed in modifying the character of the House, and by consequence, of its legislation; while the Parish Councils Bill is so radical in its provisions as to be almost revolutionary. What is most significant about these and other measures of like tendency is that they will not, like the Home Rule Bill, be opposed inch by inch by the United Conservative party. The latter may, indeed, venture to take pretty strong ground against the payment of members, hoping for more or less of popular support on the ground of economy and possibly in virtue of a traditional sentiment opposed to the payment of legislators. But it is already clear that no united party opposition will be offered to the Parish Councils Bill, albeit it destroys the vestry as the ruling force in parish politics, gives to every parishioner a voice in the management of local affairs, and even introduces the "one man one vote" principle in parish politics. No doubt the principle of the Bill is thoroughly distrusted and disliked by all genuine Tories, but the dread of the parish and popular vote will check active opposition. But what will be the end of this accelerated movement towards a "government of the people, by the people, for the people?"

Some of the bonusing proposals and requests now before the City Council should not, it seems to us, be entertained for a moment. We fear that the attention of the citizens is not fixed upon these proceedings as it should be and that they may wake up too late to save themselves from serious loss. The giving either of large sums of money