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CURRENT TOPICS.

As we go to press, the Intercolonial Conference will be in session at Ottawa. A delegate from the Antipodes is reported to have said that Canada having called the Conference, Canadians must take the lead and direct its deliberations. There is a certain just force in this remark, yet if it should represent in any measure the spirit in which delegates from other colonies come together, the augury would not be a promising one. Let us hope rather that each delegate has come, not only with open mind to listen to suggestions and proposals, but with a genuine, hopeful enthusiasm which will be fruitful of suggestion and an earnest of a successful Conference. There seems good reason to anticipate that such will prove to be the case.

The end of litigation in regard to the Manitoba School question has, it appears, not yet been reached. The Judicial Committee of the British Privy Council has granted special leave to appeal against the judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada, given in February last. The result is, we suppose, that the question is in just the same position as before the pronouncing of that decision. It will be for the Judicial Committee to decide upon all the six questions submitted to the Supreme Court by the Dominion Government, or at least upon that which was, we take it, the crucial question, viz, whether the case is such as admits of the appeal to the Dominion Government for redress, provided for in certain now familiar subsections of the B. N. A. Act, and of the Manitoba Act. Should the Court of last resort reverse the decision of the Supreme Court in this particular, it will follow, we presume, that the appeal will be taken and the Government will be bound to take it into consideration and either reject the appeal, or take steps to constrain the Manitoba Government to redress whatever wrongs it (the Federal Government) may find to have been inflicted upon the Roman Catholic minority in Manitoba by the Provincial school legislation. No doubt the Dominion Government will devoutly hope that the judgment of the Supreme Court may be upheld by the Judicial Committee. Otherwise troublous times are in store for it.

There is so much that seems harsh and almost vindictive in the struggles of party champions in the House of Commons that one is disposed to welcome any incident which brings out a better side of human nature. Such an incident occurred last week in connection with the discovery that one of the members, Mr. Henry Corby, of West Hastings, had been inadvertently guilty of a violation of the Independence of Parliament Act, through the purchase from his firm without his knowledge, of a quantity of a certain kind of spirit, for the use of the Government. Mr. Corby, who was out of the city on the day the fact was brought to light, hastened to Ottawa, and, from his place on the floor of the House, promptly admitted the fact, declared that it had occurred without his knowledge, and placed his resignation in the hands of the Speaker. Of course it was possible for an ungenerous man to have said that he might well take prompt steps to free himself from the consequences, which could be made to assume the shape of a fine of some thousands of dollars per day. But so evident

was the innocence of Mr. Corby in the matter, and so convinced was every member of the honesty and frankness of his explanations, that the proposal made by Mr. McCarthy and seconded by Mr. Laurier, that an Act be passed to free him from the consequences of the mistake, as regards the penalties to which he had become liable, was accepted without a dissenting voice. One scarcely knows whether to admire most the manly frankness of Mr. Corby's explanation, or the ready generosity with which it was accepted by the leader of the Opposition and his followers, who might, perhaps, have made a petty little party capital out of the matter.

The rise and fall of Erastus Wiman has been the theme of many a homily during the last few weeks. The career has certainly been a remarkable and instructive one, while the fact that the condemned man is a native of this city gives his case a special interest for Canadians. It would probably be unjust to suggest that the almost universal readiness to accept the verdict and condemn the man displays an unamiable side of human nature. Not having ourselves followed closely the evidence published, we cannot refuse to accept the judgment of just and discriminating men who have done so, and who are forced to confess that the proof of his guilt, not simply on a single occasion but time after time, is overwhelming. Yet it seems impossible to doubt that the man was full of good and generous impulses. To many he proved himself a benefactor, not merely by lavish gifts bestowed on the impulse of the moment, but by friendly deeds which required time and trouble, and afforded ample proof of a genuine desire to do good to others. This suggests two reflections: First, Men are not necessarily wholly bad or wholly good. Many a character shows, when thoroughly analyzed, a strange mixture. A second inference, which should not be without its practical usefulness, is that the moral strength of a man is but his strength at his weakest point. Erastus Wiman's weak points were, evidently, his inordinate haste to be rich and the overweening vanity which craved notoriety. Let us not deny that the notoriety sought was often that of doing good. It is said that his trial revealed an almost abnormal lack of moral perception—in certain directions, we should be disposed to think. But what opportunity or training did he ever have to cultivate and develop the moral faculty whose function it is to make nice