

# THE WEEK.

Vol. XII.

Toronto, Friday, July 12th, 1895.

No. 33.

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## Current Topics.

**That Statement.**

Whether the anxiously awaited statement of the Government concerning the resignation of the much-talked-about trio of recalcitrant French Ministers of State was actually made yesterday afternoon or not was not known at the hour THE WEEK was sent to press. Our latest advices from Ottawa were to the effect that Sir Adolph Caron, the Post-Master General, had been wise enough to accept the terms offered by the Cabinet and that he is acting as mediator between the striking Ministers and the Government.

**Dangerous Criminal Legislation.**

"Eternal vigilance" seems still to be the price of liberty, even in Toronto. With a freedom from publicity which needs to be explained, an amendment to the criminal code either has already been, or was on the point of being passed, through the last Parliamentary stages at Ottawa, under which it would be possible, our City Solicitor being judge, for a traveller on our street railway, through a slight mistake, either on his own part, or that of the conductor, to be adjudged guilty of fraud and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. The clause in question reads as follows:

"Everyone is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to six months' imprisonment, who by means of any false ticket or order, or of any other ticket or order, fraudulently and unlawfully obtains or attempts to obtain any passage on any carriage, tramway, railway or street railway, or in any steam or other vessel."

As Mr. Fullerton has pointed out to the Minister of Justice, it is quite possible under this clause that, through mere forgetfulness or inadvertency on his own part, or a mistake on that of a conductor, an innocent passenger might incur this severe penalty. The danger would be greatest under the operation of the transfer system. The rule of the Company is that the transfer ticket, in order to be valid, must be presented on the next car leading to the passenger's destination, after his arrival at the point of junction. Should he, through inadvertence, fail to take the next car and present his ticket on the second, he would be liable to the severe penalty provided under this clause. The penalty is, as Mr. Fullerton says, altogether too severe for the offence. But is it not also contrary to right principles? Is not the holder of the transfer entitled to the ride for which it pro-

vides, just as it has again and again been decided in the courts that the purchaser of a railway ticket is entitled to his ride irrespective of any time limitation which the sellers may have printed upon it? In both instances, the law which is broken is a law made, not by Parliament, but by a private company. Is it either safe for the citizen, or sound as a legal principle, that any individual shall be criminally punishable for the violation, not of the law of the land, but of a regulation of a private corporation? It is, of course, right and necessary that either the state or the corporation should sanction such regulations as, under the circumstances, may be necessary, to enable the company doing business under its charter to protect itself against fraud, but it is evidently equally necessary, on the other hand, that no national legislation, above all none of a criminal character, shall be based upon such regulations without the full knowledge and consent of the corporation, and of all concerned and then only upon clear evidence of intentional fraud.

**The Manitoba Question.**

The long-looked-for announcement has at last been made. On Monday Mr. Foster stated in effect, in the Commons, that the Government, finding, as they think, in the reply of the Manitoba Government some ground for hope of an amicable settlement of the difficulty, and being most unwilling to take any action which could be interpreted as forestalling or precluding such a settlement, has decided to introduce no remedial legislation this session, but to enter at once into communication with the Manitoba Government in respect to the subject. He further announced that another session of the present Parliament will be called, not later than the first Thursday of next January, and that, if the Manitoba Government fails to make a satisfactory settlement in the meantime, the Dominion Government will be prepared "to introduce and press to a conclusion such legislation as will afford an adequate measure of relief to the minority, based upon the lines of the judgment of the Privy Council and the remedial order of the 21st of March, 1895." This decision, it is at once apparent, rests the hope of the Government wholly upon the contingency of some satisfactory action by the Manitoba authorities. That hope, in its turn, is based upon certain words in the Reply, in which it is alleged that the action of the Dominion Government had been taken without proper knowledge of the state of the educational affairs of the Province under the discarded school system which they are now ordered to restore, and a suggestion made that some steps should be taken to gain the information needed. Mr. Foster admits that there may be difference of opinion as to the meaning of this clause of the Reply, but most readers will, we fancy, see in it only a respectful hint that if the Government had taken the trouble to acquire the information referred to, the remedial order might not have been passed.

**The Probable Outcome.**

The utmost that the Government can reasonably hope to gain from this action is an extension of time in which to search further for some outlet which has not yet appeared. Few persons, we believe, whether within or without Parliament, see any reason to believe that Manitoba will make any important