

been desirable ; for a very large proportion of people in business becomes insolvent sooner or later. The committee has rightly taken the ground that a discharge should neither be made easy nor be absolutely withheld. This bone of contention removed, the bill ought to pass. Each party to the contention over the discharge clause has been asking too much ; and extreme ground on either side once abandoned, as it seems now to be with a good grace, will probably never be resumed. Mr. Thomas Ritchie, President of the Belleville Board of Trade, opposes the enactment of a bankruptcy law apparently on the ground that it will lure traders into accepting credit, which will not be for their own or anyone else's good. There is some truth in the averment that the root of the evil lies in a too easy dispensing of credit. The man who thrusts credit upon persons who have little or no capital of their own, takes on himself the risk of their failure, and may fairly be called upon to share its consequences. But the debtor who, with better means of knowing his chances of success, clutches at the proffered credit is more than equally to blame. It may be true, as Mr. Ritchie contends, that legitimate traders, who pay their way, suffer more from the insolvency of irresponsible rivals under a bankruptcy law than in its absence. The objection, far from being new, has done duty every time the American Congress has passed a bankruptcy law ; but to make it true, the bankruptcy law must be so framed as to cause larger quantities of the goods of insolvent traders to be sacrificed than would otherwise be thrown on the market. And this will scarcely happen if a discharge is made the consequence of a course of conduct on the part of the insolvent which will commend itself to the approbation of a large majority of the creditors.

OUR treatment of the case of the Pacific Railway Company has, we hope, never been unjust, and we are sure that it has never been in intention unfriendly. As we have said before, we have not a particle of adverse interest or feeling of any kind. But the people have a right to an honest and independent discussion of this subject at the hands of journalists. When the total outlay on the Pacific Road shall have been added to the outlay on the Intercolonial, the people will probably have paid out of their earnings something like one hundred and forty millions for political and military railways ; and the fruits of this expenditure to them so far have been half a dozen Knighthoods, and a Grand Cross of the Bath. These enormous sums are wrung out of a population which is not so large and nothing like so wealthy as that of the State of New York, while it is burdened with an extravagantly expensive form of Government and impoverished by commercial isolation. We repeat, then, that the nation has a claim to have its interests in this matter faithfully watched by its press. We did not oppose, but on the contrary supported in the most decided manner, the application of the Pacific Railway Company for further assistance, but we did not conceal the fact that there were in their case one or two points requiring explanation, notably the distribution among themselves of an immense interest on their money while their work was at a stand and they were a second time calling for public aid. This it seems has given dire offence to their partisans. We suppose at least that we are to ascribe to it a personal attack of the grossest and most malignant kind made by the *Montreal Herald* upon a writer who contributes to this journal, but whom the *Herald* has no more right to hold responsible for any particular editorial than we have to fasten upon any one connected with the *Montreal Herald* the responsibility for everything that appears in the editorial columns of that journal. The person in question is told among other amenities that he has no country. We have had rather too much in this strain. Everybody who has ventured to discuss with freedom anything affecting the interests of the Pacific Railway Company—the political usefulness or the commercial prospects of the line, the climate of the North-West, the quality of the land there, the sufficiency of fuel, the condition of the settlers, the complaints of the Farmers' Union—has been at once denounced as devoid of patriotism and a traducer of the country ; and it has been broadly hinted that if things were in Canada as they are in the United States such traitors would be lynched. If it is the custom in the United States to lynch respectable citizens for saying what they believe to be true about public affairs, because it gives offence to a great commercial corporation, we cannot help thinking that Canada honours the custom more in the breach than she would in the observance. The country is not the Syndicate, neither is the Syndicate the country. The Syndicate is a highly respectable and very energetic body of Canadian, English, American, French and Dutch capitalists which has interests of its own. In writing about it, we shall always try, as we have always tried, to be perfectly fair and equitable, and we shall not allow personalities, or breaches of the rules and courtesies of the press to affect our judgment, or our mode of expressing it, in the slightest degree.

THE *Hamilton Spectator* and the *Ottawa Sun*—the latter of which also continues to disregard our repeated protests against those who quote us conjecturally giving the names of individual writers—complain that THE WEEK has sinned against justice and fair-play by expressing the fear that General Middleton had more to apprehend from Governmental interference with his plans than from the Rielites. Our contemporaries protest against this assumption, "more especially as it is made after the distinct announcement of the Minister of Militia that the Government left the whole control of the campaign in the North-West entirely in the hands of General Middleton." Further comments follow upon debatable ground, and on matters concerning which THE WEEK and its critics are not likely to agree. But the primary objection is upon a matter of fact, and we are glad to be able to give an explanation. Mr. Caron's statement was made on the night of Tuesday, April 14th ; it is necessary that THE WEEK should be "made up" on Tuesday evenings ; and by the time the Minister of Militia's words were in the possession of this office, THE WEEK had gone to press. After all, would he not be a bold man or an extreme partisan who ventured to assert that General Middleton has not found political considerations to interfere with his free action ?

A BILL is before the Legislature of Quebec having for its object the placing of asylums for the insane under the direct surveillance and control of the Government. It gives the Government power to appoint the medical superintendents, and makes their salaries a charge on the Provincial revenue. To the Government it assigns the duty of making rules and regulations for the interior discipline of these institutions, while the medical officers are required to carry these rules and regulations into effect. The proprietors of the asylums and their superintendents are to carry out the orders which the medical officers may give respecting the internal management. If the proprietors employ incompetent servants, the resident medical superintendent may require their dismissal ; and in case of a dispute arising the inspector of asylums is to decide. These are very ample powers for the control of institutions the management of which has been impugned as grossly defective. The bill will not pass, if at all, without strong opposition. The objections offered are that it would destroy the authority of the Sisters of Providence in their own house, and practically abolish rules and regulations sanctioned by episcopal authority, if not by the Pope himself, and substitute in their place the arbitrary authority of the medical officers. These objections admit of a very decisive answer. In the fact that the Province pays for the support of the patients, there is an admission of its duty in the premises ; the duty of paying implies the right of superintendence and control, and the enforcement of this right is an imperative obligation. Some critics are asking whether this bill is opposed to the canon law ; and whatever may be the true answer, there can be little doubt that persons of unsound mind are best managed when placed under the control of humane civil laws specially framed for their protection. The enactment of the proposed law, which is doubtful, would be a hopeful sign of the times.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, if one of her representatives in the House of Commons be a true interpreter of the Islanders' desire, would like to be connected by means of a tunnel with the mainland. Here is a chance for Sir Edward Watkin. Without the fear of opening a dangerous way for a hostile invasion of the mainland before his eyes, he may experiment here in submarine tunnel-making with a clear conscience. If he will find the necessary capital, nobody will grudge him the benefit of the experiment. The Island representative in asking Canada to find the few millions which the experiment would cost seems to have spoken with a gravely serious air ; and his colleague, who was not quite sure that a refusal of the needful appropriation would not be a valid ground of secession, had an eye to the fitness of things in seconding the motion. If the Dominion were to make all the money grants which Provinces, or individuals in the name of Provinces, ask, how long a time would elapse before the doom of national bankruptcy would be pronounced ?

THE vigour and rapidity with which England has prepared for war must have dissipated in the minds of friends and enemies alike the notion that her military and naval powers have declined. Both are greater than ever they were, though those of other powers have come more nearly up to their level. The panic about the state of the navy was got up mainly by the *Pall Mall Gazette* for the purpose of increasing the circulation of that spirited journal. It was not very likely that the able and experienced members of the naval profession in whose hands the navy is would allow it to sink into a state of disgraceful and dangerous decrepitude till they were brought to a sense of their duty by the lash of a Cockney editor.