

population, it is pretty clearly but a question of time when the companies will have to face the alternatives of sweeping reduction of rates, or transference to State ownership and management.

THE *Commercial Bulletin*, No. 1, issued from the Finance Department at Ottawa, and dealing with the egg and poultry trade, contains some encouraging facts and statistics. The growth of the Canadian export of eggs since 1868 has been remarkable, having risen from 1,893,872 dozens, worth \$205,971 in that year, to 14,170,859 dozens, worth \$2,122,283 in 1888, in which year it reached the largest figures. Since that date the export has been about stationary, the total for 1890 (covering presumably about ten months) having been 12,844,610 dozens, sold for \$1,795,913. These figures, it may be observed in passing, are very suggestive as to the volume of trade that would flow back and forth between the two countries but for the customs' barriers. It is no wonder that when it became apparent that the McKinley Bill, with its almost prohibitive tax of five cents a dozen on eggs, would be passed by Congress, a feeling akin to dismay should have arisen, in view of the threatened destruction of this very profitable business. That feeling was happily of short duration. The eyes of the Government and of the tradesmen were at once turned towards other markets, and with the happiest results. In the short time that has since elapsed it has been ascertained, almost beyond question, not only that Great Britain offers a market ample to absorb all the eggs which Canada can produce for years to come, at prices at least equal on the average to those obtained in the United States previous to the imposition of the tax, but that the problem of transportation presents no insuperable difficulties. Thus the blow which it was feared the McKinley Bill would deliver at a very vulnerable point is effectually parried, and Canadian farmers may go on with confidence, increasing the quantity and improving the quality of their egg products. The latter point, the improvement of quality, demands special attention. It is demonstrated that the best class of Canadian eggs is fully equal to the best produced by any other country, but it is also seen that British buyers discriminate much more sharply in regard to qualities than do either the Canadian or the American. It has long been a matter of surprise to householders here that little or no distinction in price was made between eggs, in which there was a manifest difference of fifty or seventy-five per cent. in weight and flavour. The question of finding in England a market for Canadian poultry has yet to be settled by actual trial, but there seems excellent reason to hope that equally successful results will be attained, as the matter of transportation does not seem likely to be attended with any serious difficulty.

THE action of the Ontario Government in appointing a Game and Fish Commission meets with very general approbation. The plan of "governing by Commissions," which was at one time made a sneering accusation against the Ottawa administration seems to be of late used to good purpose by that of this Province. The "Commission" may sometimes be used as a device for shirking full ministerial responsibility, but it certainly has its advantages in many cases. Such cases are those in which legislation of some kind is evidently desirable, while no means are at hand of gaining the accurate information without which any action taken must be taken more or less at random. The information thus to be gained is indispensable when legislation is demanded for the proper care and husbanding of the country's resources. The Fish and Game Commission fittingly follows up the work begun by the Mining Commission, whose report is among the most valuable contributions that have yet been made to a knowledge of the natural resources of the Province. There can be no doubt that the fish and game of the Province are in danger of extermination. Such extermination would be nothing less than a national disaster. To incur any risk of such a disaster while it is in the power of the Legislature to prevent it would be criminal folly. There is every reason to hope that the information gained by a competent and painstaking Committee, with the facilities for investigation which a Government mandate affords at their disposal, will render it possible to take such precautionary measures as will at least greatly prolong the evil day which the thoughtlessness or greed of sportsmen and fishermen is always hastening on. There is another source of wealth in Ontario which is perhaps of greater importance than either its minerals or its fisheries, and which is almost surely in greater danger of early destruc-

tion. We refer to its vast and valuable forests. Can we be sure that all is being done that should be done to preserve our forests from deterioration by wasteful methods of lumbering and by fire? Ought not the next royal commission of enquiry be a Forest Commission?

THOUGH the decision rendered the other day by Judge Killam in the test case involving the constitutionality of the Manitoba School Act, which was brought before him on the initiative of a Roman Catholic of Winnipeg who refused to pay the rates levied under the Act, does not dispose of the question, it is still a very important decision. It is the first of what—unless the Dominion Government should intervene with a veto of the Act—will no doubt become a series of judicial decisions, ending only with that of the British Privy Council. It is well that this should be so, and that the legality of the Act should be settled once for all. It is clear that the main issue involved in the case as tried before Judge Killam is that covered by the clause of the Manitoba Act which provides that nothing in any Provincial law shall prejudicially affect any right or privilege with respect to denominational schools which any class of persons had by law or practice in the Province before the passing of the Act. The question is thus that of the status of Roman Catholic schools as they existed before the union. Were they or were they not recognized by the State in any such sense that the withdrawal of aid from them as Separate Schools, and the establishment of a uniform system of Public Schools, can be held to be prejudicial to a right formerly possessed? In his elaborate judgment, Judge Killam reviewed the position of affairs in Manitoba previous to its incorporation into the Dominion, and referred to the affidavits filed to show that there were before the union no State schools, but that all schools were supported voluntarily and entirely by the different churches. This being so, it is clear that, as the Roman Catholics of the Province are still at liberty to support schools at their own expense, they have been deprived of no right in the matter. Subsidiary to this was the question whether the schools established under the present Act are denominational in any such sense that the compulsory taxation of Roman Catholics for their support can be fairly regarded as an infringement on their liberty of conscience. Notwithstanding the affidavit of His Grace the Archbishop to the effect that the Public Schools are in reality Protestant schools, and so rightly obnoxious to the consciences of Roman Catholics—a view which his Lordship thinks supported by the affidavit of Professor Bryce—the court ruled that the present schools are free and non-sectarian, and that there is, consequently, no reason why the Legislature should not compel all citizens to contribute for their support. The question raised in regard to this point, and Judge Killam's remarks in connection with the evidence of the Archbishop and Professor Bryce, should impress upon the minds of all lovers of religious liberty and fair play the necessity of keeping the Public School systems free from everything savouring of disregard of the conscientious scruples of Roman Catholics.

NOT only the financiers but the people of England have cause both to shudder and to be thankful when they look back upon the crisis which they have escaped, as it were "by the skin of the teeth." The first feeling of the onlooker is one of admiration of the broad-minded and brave liberality of the Bank of England and other great controllers of capital, by whose prompt action the danger was averted. One feels disposed almost to hope that in the presence of such financial ability and such a spirit of patriotic helpfulness, such terrible commercial disasters as those, some of which are now matters of history, may be hereafter impossible. Then as the thoughts revert to the causes which had well nigh wrought such frightful results, the feeling of admiration of the means by which the crash was prevented gives way to one of wonder at the infatuation which gave rise to the danger. There can be, we suppose, no doubt that transactions in the Argentine Republic had more to do with creating the crisis than any other cause. And yet when we look for a moment at the way in which the monetary affairs of this adventurous little Republic have been carried on for years, and then remember that the English firms which were prostrated by the collapse of the bubble were managed by men supposed to be among the shrewdest financiers in the world, the wonder grows till the fact seems almost beyond belief. Much has been heard of the "cedula" which played so large a part in the history of this strange affair. An

American Exchange very clearly describes this interesting method of land speculation. The cedula is a Government guarantee of bank loans of money on land mortgages. When all other processes of raising the money which it expended so recklessly had become exhausted, the Argentine Government authorized the establishment of two banks to issue loans of paper money to all comers, on landed security. The bank valued the land, took from the owner a mortgage, and gave him its own bond or paper money for an equal amount. When the owner wished to pay off the loan, bearing eight per cent. interest, he bought depreciated bonds of the same class and amount and presented them to the bank in settlement. Such was the simple process of floating and redeeming Argentine cedulas. With the guarantee of the Government, the bonds of the bank, and the land values there could be apparently no better security for money. Not less than \$400,000,000 worth of these cedulas is said to have been issued, of which \$200,000,000 were absorbed by the money markets of London and other European cities. The Baring Brothers, as is now well known, were among the largest investors. To this process of issuing money on land values there was no limit except the capacity of the paper-mills. Lands rose to fabulous prices, and as the value of lands became inflated the volume of the cedulas increased. There was a tremendous "boom" to business prosperity. But the premium on gold rapidly advanced to 25, to 30, and finally to 200 per cent. Land values fell more rapidly than they had risen. Then came the financial crash, ending with free fighting in the streets of Buenos Ayres and a political revolution. The immediate result in London is well known, the liquidation of Baring Brothers being one of the chief episodes. As the Exchange quoted says: "Though based upon Government credit and land values, the currency had no substantial foundation, in that it lacked the one essential quality of specie redemption. The very facility with which land could be turned into paper money for speculation and the paper money into land increased the financial ruin. It should not be necessary to insist upon so obvious and so costly a lesson." The lesson has no doubt been pretty well conned in England and will not soon be forgotten. But the end is not yet, in Argentina at least, and many interested spectators the world over will watch with interest the subsequent course and history of this enterprising but financially unscrupulous little community.

NOTHING has as yet come to light respecting the progress of negotiations between Secretary Blaine and Sir Julian Pauncefote, if it be really true that the Behring Sea question is again under consideration between them. The tone of many of the United States journals of the better class is commendably fair and reasonable, in discussing the propositions said to have been submitted by the British Minister. It is not, indeed, easy to see how they could have been otherwise, for those propositions, if correctly stated, are obviously most liberal to the United States. In fact it might be questioned whether the admission of Russia as a third party in the Convention would not give the Great Republic, with which Russia has long been on so friendly terms, an undue advantage. The interest and claims of Russia are, too, to some extent identical with those of the United States. It is true, as one of the leading American journals has pointed out, that Sir Julian does not propose to leave everything to the sense of justice of these two nations. It is reserved that in case of disagreement in the Convention, arbitration shall be resorted to. And, of course, any one of the three parties to the Convention may disagree. It is quite possible even that Sir Julian may regard ultimate arbitration as the only means of settling the question, and may have suggested the Convention as the most hopeful means of reaching the arbitration. Even so, no statesman or nation, minded to do what is just and right, should object to impartial arbitration. In one respect it is evident that the interests of the United States demand the earliest possible settlement of the difficulty. The report of Professor Elliott, of the Smithsonian institution, who visited Behring Sea last summer by request of the United States Senate to make a special investigation, is said to be strongly confirmatory of the view that the seals are rapidly diminishing in numbers under the system now in vogue, and will be utterly exterminated in a few years unless effective preventive measures are speedily taken. It is clear that England will not again submit to the high-handed protective measures of the American Government. On the other hand Sir Julian Pauncefote's proposals for the temporary regulation of sealing are all that could be asked by any fair-minded American, their own writers being