

abolition of bonuses, especially of Government money, to railways; and if this cannot be got, at once, the bonus ought to be changed to a loan, to become a claim, at some future time, or something of that sort. Anything rather than the naked and corrupt giving away to private individuals of the public resources.

The Canadian Society of Authors suggests an amendment to Lord Herschell's copyright bill, under which British authors may register copyrights in Canada, and under which, its promoters give the assurance, literary piracy could find no footing. Whether a British copyright runs in an autonomous colony may fairly be open to question; but nothing is to be gained by the Imperial and the Canadian Legislatures standing on their extreme rights. If Canada could exclude British copyrights, she could not without bringing on herself the mark of Cain, appropriate the author's property therein, without payment, or any terms to which he was not a free consenting party. The question is eminently one for compromise, and in this spirit the Canadian Society of Authors appear to be desirous of approaching it. Concurrent legislation, by the Imperial and the Dominion Parliaments, in identical terms, is proposed. This would be a novelty, but if there be no practical objection to it, the purpose aimed at might be attained. Complications might, however, result if, for any reason, the arrangement became objectionable to either party to the contract. But the danger of this would scarcely be a sufficient reason for not trying the experiment.

EXECUTIVE DECISION ON THE PLEBISCITE.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier has definitely announced that, in their opinion, an affirmative vote of less than 23 per cent. of the voting population would not justify the Government in assuming that the people of Canada are in favor of prohibition. The prohibitionists, the Premier recalls, represented that a plebiscite would prove a popular demand for prohibition, an assumption which, as he views the facts, the result has not at all justified. On the whole, the conclusion of the Government is "that the expression of opinion recorded at the polls in favor of prohibition did not represent such a proportion of the electorate as would justify the introduction by the Government of a prohibitory measure." There is, as far as we can see, no good ground for contesting this conclusion. No law, affecting the personal habits of the people, and while aiming to put down drunkenness, interfered with the innocent as well as the vicious habits of the people, if called for by less than twenty-three per cent. of the voting population, would stand a reasonable chance of being observed.

If the interpretation now, for the first time, be put upon a plebiscite, is to prevail hereafter, that means of ascertaining the opinion of the electorate will lead to the greatest uncertainty. There is no difficulty in agreeing that twenty-three per cent. of the electorate is not entitled to control the majority. But in all other cases, the majority of that portion of the electorate who vote decide, and it may fairly be asked why this rule is set aside in this case? Perhaps a sufficient answer might be found, where M. Laurier and his colleagues sought for it, in the small proportion of the affirmative vote. But it is obvious that this answer, even if it fits the present case, as we think it does, could not be carried to the extreme of saying that, in every instance, the result of a plebiscite, to be effective, must show a clear majority, on one side or the other, of all the electors. If this proposition be unassailable, the inconvenient question arises, what proportion of the electorate is necessary to a decision? Would it be a fixed

proportion, or would it vary with the nature of the question submitted? The only thing plain is that the adoption of the present rule would land us in no end of difficulties if plebiscites were to recur with anything like frequency.

For the prohibitionists the experiment of a plebiscite was a dead failure. The great majority of the electorate did not regard the test as serious, and did not vote. On the side of prohibition, the organized forces, nominally embracing two large religious denominations, did not show the enthusiasm which is necessary to bring success. Men who would resist to the death coercive measures exerted against their own opinions, have no difficulty in doing their utmost to coerce the conduct of others who hold different opinions of what is right and just, as between man and man. The general apathy which the vote revealed was due to the prevalent belief that no serious attempt would be made to coerce a majority or a minority from observing life-long habits which experience proves to be innocent, when kept within reasonable bounds. If the menace had been felt to be real, a very different result of the vote might have been shown. On the affirmative side, the belief in the necessity of coercion to supplement moral force, was strong. But here human motives, though necessarily stopping short of the infinite, are almost infinitely diversified. If we put philanthropy first on the list, room enough will be left for a variety of others. Grudging others the enjoyment of pleasures, which we cannot share, either because we have no liking or want capacity for them, is probably a more widespread feeling than most of us take account of.

The prohibitionists have already let it be known that they intend to appeal to Parliament against the decision of the Government. This is always a desperate measure, when, as at present, the Government is sustained by a large majority. Defeat in this attempt is certain in advance, but it is for the prohibitionists to say whether they think they can gain anything, and if so, what, by adding a defeat in Parliament to the demonstrated fact that they cannot command a quarter of the votes of the electorate.

DEVELOP ONTARIO.

We have already drawn attention to the speech of Mr. Stratton, M.P.P., and commended the spirit in which he appeals for united action in devising and pursuing a common policy for the development of the great natural resources of Ontario. Leaving the narrow and personal polemics of local party issues, it is refreshing to hear a member devote himself to subjects which concern practically the industrial life of the Province.

Mr. Stratton properly begins with the necessity for furnishing good facilities of transport; this is the first essential in the development of a mining district. In the rough and broken country of Algoma and Nipissing a standard gauge railway would be very costly and the traffic would not warrant its construction, but narrow gauge roads could be cheaply built and would be of sufficient capacity for many years to come. A recent number of *Engineering* advocates the construction of narrow gauge roads 2 ft. or 2 ft. 6 in. gauge for development of South Africa, and instances as an example the Festiniog line from the State quarries to Port Madoc, 14½ miles long, which in six months transported 75,805 tons of goods and 97,768 passengers.

There is yet a good deal to be done in the way of protecting our forests and promoting the growth of young trees. We have driven recently through twenty miles of country which had been formerly covered with a heavy growth of pine, but which is now a sandy barren. When the lumber-