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Current Topics.

The Colonies and the Navy.

Correspondence, recently published, between the Imperial Federation Committee of Great Britain, and some of the Ministers of State raises again the question of the obligation of the self-governing Colonies to aid in the support of the Imperial navy. This, it will be remembered, is one of the rocks on which the most direct attempt which has yet been made to formulate a practicable scheme of Imperial Federation was wrecked. It is evident that, whether in connection with or apart from any scheme of federation, the question of aiding in the support of the Navy will sooner or later demand an answer from the Colonies. As the London Globe says, "Colonial Governments do not hesitate, even now, to claim the services of the Queen's ships when they are needed." Most certainly they do not. They claim to be a part of the Empire, and understand the Navy to exist for the defence of the Empire. Should the most insignificant Colony be left undefended, to fall beneath the attack of some foreign power, the injury to the prestige of Great Britain would probably far exceed any loss that could be inflicted upon the Colony. Although we have always been disposed to admit the soundness of the claim upon the Colonies in the matter, we cannot concede that the case is so simple as The Globe imagines. In this instance the principle that sharing in the expense of the maintenance of the Navy would carry with it the right to a voice in its management, seems to be conceded. But a divided control of this kind, Britons will be very slow to concede, and, in view of all that is implied in it, we can hardly blame them. If this were conceded, and a scheme could be agreed on, another and still more difficult question would emerge, touching the right of the contributing Colonies to a voice in determining the character and cost of the Navy. This would involve seats in Parliament for Colonial representation, a still larger question.

The Copyright Question

The latest news from the Colonial Office, if reliable, makes it clear that the Imperial assent will not be given to the Canadian Copyright Act in its present shape. The nature and extent of the modifications to be proposed, as a result of Mr. New-

combe's interviews with the Colonial Secretary, cannot, of course, be definitely known till they have been laid before the Government. Into the merits of these we cannot, therefore, in the meantime enter. As we have before intimated, it is quite possible that there are defects in the proposed Act which, in the interests of justice to British authors and publishers, or even to the American publishers, and so in the interests of Canada, which wishes, or should wish, only what is just and right, should be corrected. If so, it is to be hoped that, in the light of Mr. Newcombe's discussions with Mr. Chamberlain, and of those which Mr. Hall Caine, as the representative of the British authors, may have with our Government, the way may be clear to Canada's acceptance of mutually satisfactory concessions. But this is not, as it seems to us, the main point at present. What is of more importance is the question of the ground on which the British Government can justify its interference with the exercise of the right of self-rule which has been granted to the Dominion, in regard to this specific matter. That is a point upon which the Canadian people will rightly wish to be satisfied. They will wish to know whether their prized autonomy in all matters specified in the British North America Act is a reality or a delusion. The only ground on which we can conceive such interference to be even plausibly based is the rather indefinite one of conflict with Imperial policy. But if this ground is to be extended at the will of the Home Government until it covers every bit of legislation which may, for any reason, be displeasing to a larger or smaller number of interested persons in England, the sooner we know it the better. Moreover, if we are still to be to that extent in the position of a crown colony, it would be kinder if the revisers of our local legislation would act more promptly. To keep an Act important to us hanging for years, and then require it to be changed is not to exercise supreme authority in the most pleasing or merciful way.

The Water-Works Disaster.

The thing that we feared has come upon us. The second and very serious collapse of the water pipes upon which the city depends for its water supply must have convinced even the most optimistic of that which many of us have been striving earnestly to impress upon the city authorities ever since the previous disaster, viz., that the present source of supply is not to be depended upon. The fact which we, in common with other Toronto journals, have been doing our best to emphasize, is now so obvious that it is impossible to believe that longer delay in setting about radical improvements will be ventured on by officials or tolerated by citizens. Leaving aside that which is incomparably the gravest aspect of the question, the sickness and death which, in spite of all precautions and warnings, must almost inevitably result from the distribution of the polluted bay-water through the pipes into the hydrants and dwellings all over the city, and looking at the question simply from the financial point of view, can it be doubted that the loss to the ratepayers in the diversion of business and the deterring of those who will be prevented from coming to swell the population of the city, until, at least, they can be assured of an ample supply of pure water, will far overbalance the cost of a tunnel, or any other, if there be any other, efficient means of securing such supply.