probably we all do, that no great city which has once been lighted by electricity will go back permanently to gas. What is wanted in that city is the abolition of the present unskilled board and the creation of a new one composed of competent electricians. The latter should be deemed indispensable wherever the electric light system has been or is to be introduced.

A FEW weeks since we had occasion to notice Professor Munro's admirable "Constitution of Canada." A volume in a closely related department of literature now lies before us, in the "Constitutional History of the United States, as Seen in the Development of American Law." This book contains five lectures delivered before the Political Science Association of the University of Michigan by eminent American jurists and legal authorities. "The Federal Supreme Court—Its Place in the American Constitutional System," the first lecture, is by Judge Thomas M. Cooley, of Michigan, who is said to be a worthy successor of Mr. Justice Story as an expounder of the Constitution. It is a somewhat singular, as well as a most fortunate circumstance, that for over sixty years the high office of Chief Justice of the United States was occupied by but two persons—Marshall and Taney—uniformity and completeness being thereby, in a large measure, secured to the national jurisprudence. The influence exercised on the constitutional development of the United States by Chief Justice Marshall is discussed by Henry Hitchcock, LL.D., of St. Louis, and that exercised by Chief Justice Taney, by George W. Biddle, LL.D., of Philadelphia. The Supreme Court decisions since 1864, under the *régime* of Chief Justices Chase and Waite, are treated of by Charles A. Kent, A.M., of the Michigan bar; and Daniel H. Chamberlain, of New York, treats of "The State Judiciary." In an admirable introduction to the book, Professor Henry Wade Rogers points out that constitutional law, as a distinct branch of jurisprudence, had its origin and development in the United States. "It was in this country," he says, "for the first time in the history of the world, that written constitutions, based on the idea of the pre-existent right of all men to be free, became the organic law of government." To-day not only do written constitutions constitute the fundamental law of most of the European governments, but one has been promulgated even in Asia by the Emperor of Japan. "However," says Professor Rogers, "it does not follow that because a State has a written constitution, constitutional law is to become a recognized branch of its jurisprudence. Constitutional law is a branch of the jurisprudence of our country, because in our written constitutions we have not only divided the powers of government between the three great departments, but have made the judiciary co-ordinate with the legislative and executive departments, giving it power to pass on the constitutionality of laws." Bearing this fact in mind, the value of a course of lectures such as those embodied in this volume becomes doubly apparent. Not only does the book commend itself strongly to those specially interested in legal pursuits, but it contains as well much of interest to the general reader. Its perusal will impress the fact that the men who are charged with the administration and interpretation of the country's laws are, if less conspicuously, no less truly, makers of national history than the men who place them upon the statute-books.

THE recently published proceedings of the Conference on Christian Unity, which took place some months since, between representative men of the Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist Churches, contain much food for reflection and anticipation. This conference was, moreover, but one in a constantly lengthening series of events of a somewhat similar character, all indicating the same general tendency. Strong currents of Christian thought and feeling are evidently setting in in the direction of Union. Few things are more remarkable in the history of Christianity, though its whole course has been marked at intervals by strange vicissitudes, than the change which has gradually come over the thought and spirit of the denominations, in their relations with each other, within the memory of a person of middle age. The era of belligerency has been gradually giving place to one of fraternization. It would be out of place, we suppose, for a secular journal to enter into the merits of the questions at issue, or even to attempt to balance the various considerations that make for and against the proposed union. A few somewhat desultory observations will exhaust our privilege. It is pretty safe to predict the ultimate success of the movement in some form. When a grand idea gets possession simultaneously of the minds of a good many thinkers, especially if they be moulders of thought as well, it seldom fails to prove fruitful. The strong desire develops into will force, and the will finds the way, or makes it. The results of a genuine union, whether federal or corporate, among the great religious bodies could scarcely fail to be universally beneficent. It is conceivable, of course, that some minds, recalling the history of the so-called Church, when in other times and centuries it has been all-powerful through unity of organization and purpose, might dread the restoration of so mighty a force in the nation. But the day of such union is as yet too remote to warrant serious apprehension. It is, too, pretty clear that no return to the state of things hinted at can be possible through a union of Protestants. The individualism which is fostered not more by education than by Protestant teaching itself, would prevent such a misuse of strength. The great, if not predominant, influence of the laity in any possible organization would also render its perversion, for purposes either of political aggrandizement or repression of liberty of conscience, impossible. With regard to the two modes of union suggested, the secular onlooker may be disposed to wonder that the federal system is not at once agreed upon as a first step. It is so much more simple and feasible that its attainment should be comparatively easy, and a few years of active and sympathetic co-operation on a federal basis could hardly fail, not only to pave the way to such degree of closer union as might be found practicable, but to draw irresistibly towards it. One more thought, of the many which such a theme suggests, we may venture to add. A pregnant fact brought out in the course of the discussion is that nearly all the questions of creed and polity which stand in the way of corporate union are questions belonging to the clergy alone. No such tests are now applied to the laity. The profession of faith required by any of the Churches as the condition of admission of the ordinary lay members who make up the body, and constitute its bone and sinew, is of the simplest possible description. Why, then, spend time in the almost hopeless task of formulating a compromise creed for the use of the clergy alone? Is it simply because the clergy have so far been the chief actors in the movement, and naturally look upon the matter from their own standpoint? May it not be feared or hoped that if they stay too long fencing over preliminaries, the laity, in whose eyes their abstract dogmas are of little importance, may take the matter out of their hands, and proceed to organize on the business principle of disregarding everything not absolutely fundamental and essential?

JURIES AND GRAND JURIES.

IT is a curious fact, and one that may well give rise to reflections, that the old respect for trial by jury seems to be fading away from the public mind. It was not that men of former times had absolute faith in the decisions of juries. They knew that juries, like "General Councils," "may err, and sometimes have erred." But they considered that there was no more certain way of getting at the truth, and that it would be a dangerous blow to liberty if trial by jury were abandoned or suspended.

It would be interesting to examine, if that were possible, into the causes which have brought about the change in public sentiment on this subject. It is strange that, at a time when bribery at elections should have been reduced to a minimum, there should come a suspicion of the rise of a form of corruption unknown to previous ages, the bribery of jurors. It is quite clear that such bribery was deliberately attempted at Chicago in connection with the trial of the murderers of Dr. Cronin; and although there was no success, for this seems certain, this trial can certainly not be pointed to as a sample of the satisfactory character of the ordinary jury.

It is not often, however, that a grand jury stultifies itself; but a very remarkable example of this has been given in a case tried at the town of Peterborough, in this Province. We have no wish to anticipate the result of any inquiry which may hereafter be instituted. But it is impossible that such a case should be allowed to pass without comment, particularly as the facts are well-known, and are not denied by any of the parties concerned.

The beginning of the fray was on Friday, the 22nd of November, when Mr. Colbeck, a master of the Collegiate Institute at Peterborough, inflicted corporal punishment upon a boy, the son of Mr. McWilliams, who is one of the managers of the Institute. On the following Monday Mr. McWilliams went down to the school, and, in the presence of the same class which had witnessed the chastisement of the boy, he inflicted about a dozen blows on the shoulders and legs of Mr. Colbeck with a whip or cowhide. This was done quite deliberately; Mr. McWilliams purchased the instrument with the expressed intention of making use of it in this manner. He told several of his neighbours that he intended to thrash the master. After attending church twice on Sunday he found, apparently, that his purpose was strengthened. At any rate, on Monday morning he went down to the school and thrashed Mr. Colbeck. The master tried to explain the matter before the blows fell, but his assailant assured him that he had investigated the case quite sufficiently, and thereupon proceeded to execution. The victim accepted his castigation without resistance or complaint.

This is a very curious incident to have occurred—not in Texas or in Colorado, but in the Anglo-Scoto-Hibernian Province of Ontario, quite within the limits of Christian civilization, if such exists in this world; for Mr. McWilliams paid his "vows in the courts of the Lord's house" on the Lord's Day as a preparation for the flogging of the master.

One cannot be surprised that the Master commenced proceedings for assault, nor that the magistrate committed the assailant for trial. Perhaps, taking into consideration Mr. McWilliams's emotions as expressed in words and action, it is not wonderful that he should have brought a cross charge against Mr. Colbeck. But the wonder of all begins with the decision of the grand jury.

As we are dealing mainly with ascertained facts, we will not assume that any process had been gone through which could make the action of the grand jury intelligible. The presiding Judge made some very excellent remarks on a rumour which had been going about, to the effect that influence had been used with the grand jury, in order to bias their judgment. We trust that this matter will yet be fully investigated, if necessary, by a commission appointed for that express purpose, for the emergency seems to justify and to demand such a provision. But, as we have said, the wonder of this whole incident is the judgment expressed by the grand jury. Mr. Colbeck is charged with a brutal assault which exceeded the legitimate bounds of correction for misconduct in school. Mr. McWilliams is charged with assaulting Mr. Colbeck in his class-room, and he not only confesses the assault, but justifies it. And the grand jury *in both cases* bring in, NO TRUE BILL. It is incredible, but it is true.

Two or three other decisions are intelligible; but this is not. We can understand that the Jurors might throw out the bill against Mr. Colbeck, and thus find themselves compelled to believe that Mr. McWilliams had committed an unwarranted and unprovoked assault upon the master. Or, we might imagine that Mr. Colbeck's conduct might be doubtful, or that some of the jurors might think it was blameworthy; and in either case, they might have found a true bill against the master, and thus have sent the case to the petit jury for trial. But even in this case, we cannot understand why no bill should be found against Mr. McWilliams. If Mr. Colbeck behaved improperly to the boy McWilliams, of course he must suffer for it. He must receive the verdict of the jury, and the sentence of the Judge. But it is insoluble that anyone, whether father of the sufferer, member of the School Board or anything else, should be allowed to take the law into his own hands. Yet, this wonderful Peterborough grand jury seems to have so judged.

What is the meaning of their decision? If it has any logical meaning, if it has not been brought about by improper influences, as Judge Weller seems to have heard, then it means this:—First, that Mr. Colbeck committed an illegal act by unduly chastising a boy; but, inasmuch as he was thrashed by the boy's father, no further notice should be taken of his offence. Secondly, that Mr. McWilliams had committed an illegal act in whipping Mr. Colbeck; but that he did so under so great provocation that it may be held to be justified. And this is the theory, not of a half-civilized community where lynch law and other primitive institutions are recognized as indispensable, but in a civilized society which would be ashamed to think of itself as inferior to any other in the world. Are we right in saying that this matter demands the fullest examination? If these principles are to prevail, then we may expect the population generally to go about armed with clubs, bowie knives and revolvers.

Mr. McWilliams has written to the Peterboro' papers to explain his conduct. It is only fair to pay some attention to his defence. Generally speaking it amounts to this—that Mr. Colbeck had a grudge against Mr. Long, the head master, that Mr. McWilliams took Mr. Long's side in this quarrel, that Mr. Colbeck poured out his wrath on the boy in place of the father, and that he did so because he had just received another appointment and was