MR. WANAMAKER, Postmaster-General of the United States, has written two letters, advocating the establishment of a limited postal-telegraph system, in the interest of cheaper telegraphic rates and more efficient service. He argues that, in order to accomplish these ends, it is not necessary for the Government to buy out the telegraph companies, or even to increase the number of its employees. He would have the Government furnish merely the means of collecting and delivering the postal telegrams, and offices in which to carry on the new business. The telegraph business itself he would have awarded to private companies under ten-years' contracts. The maximum charges he would fix at fifteen cents for twenty-word messages between stations less than three hundred miles apart, and twenty-five cents for messages sent halfway across the continent. The *Christian Union*, from which the above facts are gleaned, says that the Postmaster-General believes that it would be easy to get telegraph companies to accept such contracts. No reasons for this belief are given, and it certainly does not seem a probable one. Unless in special cases, where the competitors are unusually numerous, or specially antagonistic, it would seem more natural for them to combine and bind themselves to accept no contracts on a much lower scale of rates than at present in vogue. It is not easy to see why they should voluntarily agree to do the work for the Government at charges so much smaller than those by which they are now enriched. Of course, as is suggested by the *Christian Union*, it is in the power of the Congress to reduce telegraphic rates by law, as the prices of gas and telephones have been reduced by some of the Legislatures. In that way the companies could be brought to terms. The Western Union Telegraph Company having claimed that its present rates are not exorbitant, Mr. Wanamaker replies that, according to uncontroverted statements, the capital stock of this Company in 1858 was $358,000. The stock dividends declared between 1858 and 1866 amounted to $17,800,000. In 1866 new stock was created to the amount of $20,000,000, and the present capital is $86,000,000. One thousand dollars invested in 1858 would have received up to the present time stock dividends of more than $50,000 and cash dividends equal to $100,000. Mr. Wanamaker further maintains that the Western Union plants, exclusive of its contracts with railroads, could be duplicated for $35,000,000, and that its net profits the past twenty-five years have amounted to $100,000,000. Certainly, if these figures make any approach to accuracy, the charge of extortion is proved to the hilt, and the Government and people will be strangely unwise if they do not promptly sanction Mr. Wanamaker's proposal and instruct him to put it into operation without delay.

ACCORDING to statistics furnished by the Odessa correspondent of the *New York Herald*, Russia is the most formidable competitor of the United States among the grain exporting countries of the world. The comparative statement in question shows that, though the United States exported during the period 1885-87 upwards of fifty per cent. more wheat than Russia, the total grain shipments of the latter country were the greater. An American exchange, quoting the figures, pertinently observes: "If they (the Russians) have been able to obtain this advantage despite our superior farming methods and machinery and our extraordinary facilities for transportation, what may we not expect in the near future as the Russian railways shall penetrate the grain-growing areas of that vast empire, and as our system of commercial warfare shall narrow the market for our surplus? We are doing our best to make smooth the way for the Russian export trade in every European market heretofore largely supplied by ourselves." This fact, so clearly foreseen by many of the more thoughtful among our neighbours, can probably be taught the politicians only by hard experience. As the politicians are mainly controlled by the monopolists whose interests are at stake, it may be that even experience may not soon suffice to convince the members of Congress of the need of tariff reform. But hard facts like those contained in the table of statistics from which the above is taken must sooner or later produce their effect upon the minds of the people. And the power of the people is, in the last analysis, the supreme power, to which both monopolists and politicians must bow.

AMONG the various schemes that are being devised for improving the condition of London's degraded poor, that of General Booth bids fair to take the palm for boldness and originality. This scheme is formulated in a book of 300 pages, and the policy outlined appears certainly to be one of "thorough." Its very largeness is likely to have a repellant effect on the minds of many by whom it will be at once pronounced impracticable and visionary. This same feature of it may, however, produce just the opposite effect upon others of more sanguine temperament. However stupendous and costly such a proposal may be, it must be admitted that the desperate nature and extent of the evil demand heroic projects and herculean efforts, and it may be that many will be ready to join in these, if only there can be held out, in connection with them, a reasonable hope of some measure of finality. As the *Daily News* says, "there is something captivating about the grandeur and completeness of the scheme." This scheme may be described as a series of transplantations from one colony to another until the colonists have reached a stage of development at which they may be trusted to stand and flourish alone in their final allotment. The hungry and homeless of the Metropolis are first to be removed to a city colony, where they will be employed at certain kinds of rough work such as they may be assumed to be able to do. Here they are to be supplied with broken victuals, old clothes, etc., sufficient for their needs, by a "salvage brigade," operating in the Metropolis. The second remove will be from the city colony to a farm colony in which other work of a somewhat higher kind will be provided, the salvage basis of support being continued. Each man here will be required to build his own house, or shanty. The third and final transplanting will be to a foreign colony, on a tract of land in South Africa, to which only the best workers of the farm colony will be promoted. It is better, certainly, as the *Daily Telegraph* says, "to dream of a social panacea than to acquiesce in things as they are," and, however defective General Booth's scheme may prove in point of practicability, or in working details, he deserves the thanks of the Metropolis and the nation for having thus suggested that the complete physical redemption of the lapsed, degraded and suffering tens of thousands in the great city is a thing to be thought of as a possibility and a duty. A new and startling idea, thus dropped into the fertile minds of a philanthropic generation, is pretty sure to bring forth sooner or later a grand harvest of results.

LEGAL REFORMS.

THE object of law was described by the great Roman jurist, Nepean, in these words: *Suum cuique tri buere*—to render every one his own. That principle seems so clear that the uninitiated are apt to wonder why the operation of an apparently simple rule should be fraught with such difficulty as is really the case. The test of applying the Roman jurist's principle, far from being simple, is one over which the brightest intellects have laboured sometimes vainly. Not only is it difficult in many cases to know which of two contestants has the righteous claim, but the claimants themselves do not arrive at a stage where their claims can be even heard until an infinite deal of routine has placed the matter in proper shape for hearing. From the time when kings themselves used to hear and decide suitors' claims beneath a pastoral oak (as described by Hallam) to the present time, when suitors rarely appear in person, however clear the justice of their cause may be, vast changes have taken place. Some of them no doubt are indispensable in an age that has reached an advanced stage in civilization. Others, it must be confessed, are the outcome of arbitrary, unreasonable and technical rules. Some consideration of this kind no doubt occasioned the saying of one of the greatest living American lawyers, who said that it was melancholy to reflect that after all the advances we have made in civilization and knowledge, the only way that a simple question of law or fact can be decided is in many cases by litigation lasting for years, after countless appeals and enormous expense.

It would, however, be hardly correct to say that the English-speaking race are retrograding in legal matters. Within a very few years legal procedure in England and in Ontario has been much simplified. That many unnecessarily technical rules still exist is only too true, but a reasonable man could hardly expect to see a system that has existed for centuries swept away in a moment, to be replaced the next moment by a complete and improved system. Slowly and gradually legal procedure is becoming simpler, partly owing to direct legislation which on the whole tends that way, and partly owing to the indirect legislation effected by judicial decisions.

So far as the principles of law are concerned, British lawyers and law-makers have been very conservative in regard to matters of procedure, much more so, indeed, than our American kinsmen. It is by no means meant that our legislators have not passed innumerable statutes on nearly every subject under the sun, nor that they have not tinkered with them, until those who are under the necessity of comprehending them (which the legislators seemingly are not) are driven to the verge of desperation. But statutes on special subjects might be passed every day in the year and amended equally often, without actually touching upon the principles of law which remain to us as British.

Much less chary of change have been the Americans, who, inheriting and adopting the principles of English common law, so far as applicable to their changed condition, have not hesitated to modify or to annul principles of the common law wherever it appeared expedient so to do. In Canada many a reform has waited for English precedent; that is to say, Canada has moderately adopted English amendments, and not until the Mother Country has moved has she moved. However, conservative or not, it is safe to say that the next twenty years will witness many alterations (doubtless reforms) in the law, some of which have long ago been made in the United States, and it is almost equally safe to say that those who are living at that time to enjoy them will wonder that any other system was tolerated by a civilized people.

Perhaps the criminal law demands more sweeping reforms than law on its civil side. The theory of criminal law, which is always impressed upon juries with great fervour by counsel for the defence, is that every man is to be presumed innocent until he is proved guilty. Nevertheless, the presumably innocent man is not permitted to give evidence, whether for or against himself. Statements he may make, but he cannot be a witness for or against himself. It may be said that in most cases a man accused of crime, especially if guilty, would certainly not wish to give evidence, as he would be subjected to a cross-examination. Probably this is true, and the right, if it existed, would not be made use of by one man out of ten. But an innocent man, accused of crime, would almost certainly offer his evidence, and it is not hard to imagine some cases in which it might turn the scales in his favour. In nearly all the States of the Union there is a provision whereby the accused is not a compellable witness on his own behalf.

The question of the right of appeal in criminal cases is one which will probably be settled within the next few years, in one way or the other. In England the question is more discussed than here, the famous Maybrick case having brought it into the sphere of practical problems. The scarcely less famous Birchall trial has caused little discussion on the question of appeal, because the evidence upon which he was convicted was so strong that an appeal would have been useless. But every conviction is not made upon evidence so clear and convincing as that laid before a judge and jury in that celebrated trial, and the bare statement of the fact that in an action involving a square foot of land an appeal will lie, whereas in an issue involving the life of a human being there is none, is sufficient to carry condemnation of the system with it. That juries are not infallible where questions of property are concerned is admitted, but they are supposed to be infallible whenever the question of the commission of a crime arises. It may be said that in the United States the system of appeals prevails and that the delays in justice arise often from that very feature, but the reply is easy: that there should be a check upon the privilege of appealing. What that check should be would be a question to be decided when the greater question was decided of permitting appeals at all.

Will grand and petit juries be with us, like the poor, always? It would be easier to foretell the fate of the grand than of the petit jury. The old fiction, that the grand jury "stood between" the crown and the subject, is recognized nowadays as a very useless fiction. In backwoods' communities serving on the grand jury affords a species of education which is not without value, and that may also be said in regard to service on the petit jury. But happily backwoods' communities are lessening and education is spreading, and in a few years the grand jury will not even act as an educating influence. It is safe to conclude that it will ultimately vanish without in the least endangering the British Constitution. The petit jury, however, stands upon a different footing and its functions are widely different from those of the grand jury, where matters of fact are involved. Where the question is one of dealings between man and man then a jury is perhaps as likely to strike the truth as a judge would be. Nevertheless, it is always the opinion among lawyers that a jury is the last resort of a bad case.

The prejudices which always animate juries are a subject for calculation. Their dislike for corporations; their gallantry towards women; their distrust of policemen and detectives—all these are strings touched very vigorously by the legal profession, to which juries always respond. Yet the masses and the bulk of the people believe in juries, and, if they are satisfied, those who are only indirectly interested should not resist.

In one point of legal procedure, England, the very shrine of conservatism, is in advance of us. There, before bringing a criminal action for libel, a judge's order, permitting it to be brought on the criminal instead of the civil side, must be obtained. This is a great protection to the defendant, and, no doubt, when criminal actions for libel become more common in Ontario than they have been hitherto, the English practice will be introduced.

It is possible to imagine other sweeping changes in the mode of administering justice. They will all be in the direction of simplicity, and certainly anything that will shorten proceedings will be welcomed. The congestion of some of the American courts, on account of the immense number of cases which the judges have been unable to dispose of on account of stress of work, has led to numerous suggestions from various states as to the proper remedy.