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TORONTO, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1894.

THE SITUATION.

A proposal has been made by the American Government to that of Great Britain to close Behring Sea against sealers for a whole year. What are the grounds of this demand? A strong case would have to be made to justify acceptance of the proposal. Canada is almost as much interested as the United States in the preservation of seal life, though the breeding islands are within the limits of the latter country. To anything really necessary for the preservation of these animals, it is Canada's interest to consent. But that it is necessary to prevent the taking of seals in Behring Sea for a year has yet to be shown. The Americans, on their part, are willing that the inhibition should apply to the Pribylov islands, as well as to the water. While they wish to tie the hands of Canadians, they are willing to tie their own. This would be all right and proper, if a real necessity for extending the close season during a whole year existed. We heard much about the diminution of seals at and before the Paris exhibition; but the fact that British Columbia sealers took no less than 95,000 skins this year, under the new restrictions, negatives the assertion. Nor can it be seriously contended that the catch of this year has had the effect of materially lessening the number of brood seals, or that seal life is in danger of ruinous diminution, much less of extinction? Are we to understand that the proposal to let the seals increase for a whole year, during which none are to be caught, is intended to meet some special emergency, or that a recurrence of the inhibition might become necessary from time to time? That no such emergency exists, the seal catch of British Columbia this year sufficiently shows. Is the Paris arbitration a failure? Has it left the sealing question still unsettled, or at least liable to be re-opened, as at present, at intervals of which no one can count the duration?

A deputation of authors and publishers has waited on the Marquis of Ripon, Colonial Secretary, to protest against the unlimited right assumed by the Parliament of Canada to legislate on the question of copyright. The Marquis assured them that the views they had expressed would receive careful consideration. There are people who fancy that this question can be settled by simply asking whether Canada is not a part of the British empire. The proper answer is that Canada is a self-governing province of the

empire. Does it follow, as a matter of course, that a British copyright should have the same force in Canada that it has in England? Take the analogous case of patents of invention. An English patent does not run in Canada; if the owner of that patent wishes to secure this market, he must take out a patent under our laws. On what principle, can the British author claim differential treatment in his favor? We have seen no attempt to answer this question. Whether the British North American Act gives an absolute right to Canada to legislate on copyright, or only a limited right, is a mere question of construction under that instrument. The whole history of the development of colonial liberties teaches us that in this contest Canada must win. We cannot be bound by the Berne convention, to which we never assented. The principle that we are not bound to accept commercial conventions, entered into by Great Britain, if we think they are not for our benefit, is admitted by the British authorities, and this is decisive of the question. In cases of this kind, political considerations override the commercial; plenty of people who have no sympathy with the interested parties in Canada who are calling out against the Berne convention, willingly join in the demand for complete liberty for Canada to legislate on every phase of the copyright question.

In England, Mr. Howard Vincent keeps hammering away at the two treaties which prevent the colonies making preferential arrangements with the mother country. He induced a meeting of the National Union of the Conservative and Constitutional Association, held at Newcastle, to resolve that these clauses ought to be removed from the treaties. Of course nobody likes to be inhibited in any direction; but the inhibition in this case is a barrier against restrictions in other directions. The treaties contain an inhibition against an exclusive arrangement which, so far as it went, would be in the nature of a monopoly. Preference between the colonies and the mother countries would burthen the trade of both with foreign countries in a way that must tend to its reduction by diminishing the consumption of foreign produce. When Great Britain makes a commercial treaty with a foreign State, she wisely forbears to give anything to the treaty nation which she does not give to other countries that rank among "the most favored nations." In this way she has built up her enormous trade. To attain this world wide trade she renounced her monopoly of colonial commerce, which was formerly one of mutual restrictions. She is now asked to go back to a monopoly which would leave her in possession of a narrower trade than her policy of treating all countries alike has given her. The colonies might welcome the removal of the inhibition contained in the treaties complained of by Mr. Vincent, but that the change sought for, as a consequence of this reform of the treaties, would be accepted by Great Britain, or that, if accepted, it would be for the best interests of the colonies and the mother country, is extremely doubtful.

At a meeting of the Executive Board of the Deep Waterways Association, held in Chicago, Mr. Flower, of Wisconsin, pointed out the difficulty of a country whose wheat fields are from 1,200 to 2,000 miles from the sea, and whose waters are ice-bound half the year, competing with countries whose wheat fields are near the ocean. Before the era of railways, no wheat could be exported unless it was grown near the sea coast, and in the state of cultivation then prevailing, the belief was current that England could never obtain food from other countries to sustain a population greatly in excess of what her own soil could feed. It was thought that the surplus of the colonies and foreign countries, which was within practicable distance of navigable