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TORONTO, CAN. FRIDAY, MAY 17, 1889

## THE SITUATION.

Ownership of the timber in the late disputed territory being now recognized to belong to Ontario, all disputes over the granting of timber licenses between the Province and the Dominion will henceforth cease. Arrangements are being made for issuing all future timber licenses at Toronto. With regard to licenses formerly issued by the Dominion, without, as now appears, competent authority, the belief is expressed that an arrangement will be made by which lumbermen who obtained such permits with the intention of working their claims will be allowed to continue under the protection of the Ontario Government. They will, of course, be required to comply with the Crown timber regulations in force in this province. It is desirable, on every account, that an arrangement of this kind should be carried out as a means of preventing interruption to legitimate business. While the ownership of the timber was in dispute, lumberers had no certain knowledge of whom they ought to obtain licenses, and if some of them erred on the point of law, they did so innocently and ought not to suffer, since their good faith is in no way brought into question.

The exemption of ecclesiastical property from taxation is put by Bishop Laflèche, of Three Rivers, on a new ground: that the Church has a co-ordinate and independent right of legislation on this question with the State. His words are, "that the right of the State to hold property and exempt from taxation such portions of it as are necessary to the public service is possessed in an equal degree by the Roman Catholic Church." This is a declaration which is likely to do more than anything else could do towards the abolition of all ecclesiastical exemptions. The claim is one that cannot for a moment be admitted in a free country; it carries with it an intolerable usurpation of civil authority to which no Legislature in the Dominion, not excepting that of Quebec, would think of submitting. In Ontario no one, lay or clerical, would dream of making such a proposal or affirming such a doctrine, simply because there would not be the remotest chance of its being accepted.

Some dissatisfaction continues to be expressed at the raising of the rate of drop letters in cities to two cents, and in one place a suggestion has been made that an attempt be made to deliver letters by a private agency. But this is of course impossible, the Post-Office Department having a legal monopoly of delivering letters. As a whole, the Post-Office Department does not pay its way, and Mr. Haggart thought it desirable to remedy this defect. But is he not charging too much for drop letters? Does it cost two cents to deliver each letter? If it does not, he has varied from the strict line of cost of service, the only difference being that he has leaped to the other side. If a cent and a half would pay, it is unreasonable to collect two cents. Provided each part of the system can be made to pay for itself, there is no reason why drop letters should be an exception; but unless that be so, an amendment which is only partial and incomplete is not satisfactory.

Henceforth the netting of salmon in non-tidal rivers will extend to New Brunswick, to which province the law prohibiting it did not previously apply. The removal of the exception has the approbation of the Local Government. If netting in such rivers were allowed, the destruction of salmon might in time be carried to an extent that would threaten their extinction.

While the construction of a court-house for the county of York and the city of Toronto has from time to time been delayed, the extension of the city and the increase of its population have put out of date the original estimates of the cost of such a work. Over a million of dollars expenditure has already been authorized, and the buildings have fortunately not yet been begun. They will have to be erected on new and more suitable plans, and accordingly an additional appropriation is required to be authorized by the citizens, voting on which will take place on Saturday. In a construction of this kind it would be folly not to provide for the reasonable wants of the future for which the accommodation is required. To vote the additional amount necessary will, we must conclude, be the best economy, and therefore in the true interest of the city. The vote is required to be for \$600,000. In face of anticipated opposition, some effort may be required to carry the by-law.

Different views of the fate of the Harvey-Salisbury railway line are entertained in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. With many in the former province its future prospects are looked to with hopefulness, while in the latter there are not wanting persons who are willing to believe that they have heard the last of it. In one quarter the assertion is confidently made that the Dominion Government will at once cause a survey to be made, in the other the statement is treated as incredible. Amid these conflicting statements it sounds strange to be told that there has been no adequate survey of the line, and that the Government proposed an expenditure of three millions on a piece of road which still remains to be surveyed.

Procedures of this kind in the dark are too common in Canada. In some countries, no railway charter is granted until all the plans of the survey are forthcoming. When this is made a prerequisite, the legislative authority has the means of knowing exactly what is expected of it. In the present case, what distance would be saved is a matter of dispute; and without adequate information on this capital point the Senate cannot reasonably be blamed for refusing to "go it blind." It would be a good rule to adopt that in future no charter should be granted in the absence of such certain information about the proposed line as would enable the legislative authority to understand exactly what it is asked to do.

Work on the new legislative buildings of Ontario, suspended by the sudden and lamentable death of contractor Lionel Yorke, has been resumed. It is satisfactory to hear that the work will be completed at the contract price. Some delay arose in a new firm taking over the late Mr. Yorke's contract, but now that this has been arranged the work will go on as before. The centre of the building and the west wing are expected to be ready for the wall plates by the end of the year.

Will the American Government be bound by the Sugar Bounties Convention, to which it did not formally agree? This question is now interesting the countries which are parties to the convention. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, in answer to an interpellation in the House of Commons, is reported to have said that "the United States Government would be absolutely debarred by their own interpretation of the most favored nation clause from pleading that clause as a bar to the operation of the Sugar Bounties Convention against themselves." This statement rests on the fact that the United States had an official or non-active representative in the conference, and that it had not signified its opposition to the interpretation. Something more definite than this would be necessary to a satisfactory settlement of the question asked. The British colonies are bound by the convention, though they are at liberty to withdraw from it, and if any of them grant sugar bounties, the treaty nations will be bound not to buy their sugar, nor can it impose on beet a higher duty than on cane sugar. England binds herself not to levy higher duties on German than on British colonial sugar, though a similar restriction is not imposed on other treaty powers in the possession of colonies. So far the condition is one-sided.

Whatever may be the immediate result of the legal proceedings taken by the Senate of Victoria University to prevent a removal of the institution to Toronto, there can be no doubt that means will finally be found of overcoming every obstacle to removal. If any persons subscribed to its funds on condition that the University should remain at Cobourg, they will be entitled to compensation and will doubtless receive it, but they cannot expect to accomplish anything more: the tail will not be allowed to wag the head. The supreme