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EDWD. TROUT, MANAGER.

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THE SITUATION.

Mr. Foster, Minister of Marine and Fisheries, while on the Pacific coast, has been enquiring into the capture of Canadian fishing vessels by the Americans, in Behring Straits. From the information he has obtained, the captures took place not nearer than sixty miles off the coast of Alaska. The ground on which they were made was an alleged old Russian claim to exclusive sovereignty in these waters a hundred miles from the coast; the Americans assert that they came in possession of this right along with the territory of Alaska. Would not so extensive a claim leave Russia a very limited jurisdiction on the west coast of the Strait? But as this is a matter between Russia and the United States, it need not here be insisted on. If the United States took over Alaska with the privileges of water control which Russia, the previous owner of the territory, claimed, she must equally be bound by the obligations which Russia was under, including the Treaty of St. Petersburg (1825). The validity of so extensive a claim as sovereignty over the water, a distance of a hundred miles from the coast, must be very doubtful. We apprehend it is not one which can find any support in the law of nations. If this contention applies to the whole coast of Alaska, it ignores the treaty obligations of Russia.

In the recent capture of Canadian vessels in Behring's Strait, the hand of the Alaska Commercial Company of the United States, which has a lease of St. George and St. Paul's Islands, and acts as if it owned all Alaska and most of the adjoining sea, could doubtless be traced. This company has the exclusive right to kill seals in these waters, if its lease be valid; and it manages to make unusually large profits out of what is practically a monopoly. The American schooner, San Diego, of San Francisco, has recently been seized for catching seals in Behring Strait. Of course foreign governments have nothing to do with the company, whose pretensions perhaps a large majority of American citizens would dispute.

A Chicago journal points out that the recent circular of the Canadian Minister of

Customs will prevent American vessels going to one Canadian port after another to pick up a cargo, and that vessels employed in the Georgian Bay trade will be especially affected. Several of these vessels take up a part of their cargoes at Midland and the rest at Collingwood. Some call at a third port on an Island in the Bay. It cannot be denied that this is a coasting trade, such as is prohibited by the navigation laws of both countries. But it does not follow that this trade will suffer if these practices cease; it is one which can legally be done by Canadian vessels. The pretense that there are not Canadian vessels to do the work we very much doubt; and if it were true, the deficiency could no doubt in a short time be easily supplied. A loose administration of the law, in such cases, would lead to trouble in the end, and the law had better be enforced when its violation has become a matter of public observation.

In British Columbia the right of the Indians to occupancy of the lands has not been made the subject of treaty arrangement, and has not, in fact, been recognized, as it was in every other part of North America colonized by Europeans, except Lower Canada. As a result, the Indians of the Western Province have been dependent on the Local Government for reserves on which to settle, and complaint has been made that these were inadequate in extent. This complaint, let us hope, will now be removed, since Sir John Macdonald, on his late tour, induced the government of British Columbia to grant large reserves to the Indians, who are intelligent and willing to labor, and from whom, if from any Indians, we may reasonably entertain strong hopes of improvement as agriculturists.

Col. Gilder, the Arctic explorer has, according to a reliable Winnipeg journal, "no hesitation in undertaking to navigate Hudson Strait in an ordinary forty-ton yacht." Claiming to speak from experience, he pronounces the Hudson Bay route practicable for commercial purposes. We trust this may prove to be the case; but Col. Gilder's experience is too limited to settle the question, he having passed through the Strait only twice, in July, 1875, and in August, 1880, in both of which months navigation would be expected to be as easy as ever it is. The remainder of the year is not included in Col. Gilder's experience; and it is then that the chief difficulty is found.

Mr. Foster, from personal examination and enquiry, has come to the conclusion that it is desirable to establish a station on the south side of Vancouver Island, at the entrance of the Straits of Fuca, opposite Cape Flattery. This station, where vessels will be able to report, will be connected with Victoria by telegraph. The passage is to be improved by the erection of additional lights and the placing of a fog-horn at Port Atkinson. When this is done, the safety of the channel will be as much assured as that of any similar water in any part of the country.

The parties who are offering the Island of Anticosti for sale are, it is announced; resolved to do what we last week suggested as necessary: obtain an adequate exploration of the Island. This course was recommended by Mr. Tilley, as well as in these columns, and it is the only proper one, under the circumstances. It is satisfactory to know that a reliable engineer, Mr. A. L. Light, has been selected to do the work, and he is reported to have already gone to the Island. Though much can be done by coasting and striking into the interior, at different points, the remainder of the season will almost be too short for such a complete exploration as it is desirable to secure. It would seem as if the intending purchasers were represented on the exploratory survey, not less than the vendors, and it is desirable that they should be; for it is difficult for explorers to avoid an unconscious bias in favor of the employers. in such a case.

There has been some reduction of freight rates on the C. P. R. But it has not given universal satisfaction in Manitoba. A Winnipeg journal objects that the reduction is limited in respect of persons and localities, being confined to four leading points and to wholesale dealers. Objections, as might be expected, come from the places and individuals discriminated against. As usual, the advantages given appear to be in favor of long distances; though the point is left obscure by the complaining journal, which fails to make an intelligent statement of the alleged grievance. A partial reduction of rates is better than none; though it is to be regretted that the reduction could not be uniform and general.

Lake vessels have within a few days been getting good freight rates; 12 cents per bushel on wheat and 11½, from Chicago to New York, by lake and canal, having been paid. For the first time in several years, the equilibrium between water and rail freights has been established. Tonnage is reported scarce; and fears have been expressed that this gleam of shipping prosperity may lead to the speedy construction of an excessive quantity.

The sixth tea-ship with freight for the Canadian Pacific Railway, will soon be due at British Columbia. Thus early is falsified the prediction of those who assured us that two ships a year would carry all the tea that could be coaxed to take this route.

—The preliminary steps have been taken, by Sir A. T. Galt and others, for building a levee with the object of protecting the city of Montreal from inundation by the overflow of the River St. Lawrence. But the work to be done by the company is only a part of what is necessary; it requires to be supplemented by the city, and the corporation finds a financial barrier in the way, as it has not, till authorized by the legislature, power to borrow for this purpose. It will be unfortunate if the result be to cause delay which may subject the city to another flooding next spring. Sir A. T. Galt's company, it is claimed, could perform its part in time; but there will apparently be delay on the part of the corporation. Can no means of getting over the difficulty be suggested?