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THE SITUATION.

Two causes have been discovered which will delay the Franco-Canada commercial treaty taking effect. From England comes the news that the Canadian legislation for carrying the treaty into effect is defective. To Ottawa this is news, and thence comes a story that the interpretation of the instrument on the question of what constitutes direct trade between Canada and France, is in doubt, and that doubt must be cleared up before the treaty goes into operation. At this rate, the delay must continue till next Session of Parliament; besides, it remains to be seen whether the doubt about interpretation can be satisfactorily removed. This set-back, so unexpected, will take all interested by surprise.

On a question of privilege the Canada-Australian bill has, for the time, been dropped in the House of Lords. But it will now make its appearance in the House of Commons, and the only result of the hitch will be delay. So remote is the bill's relation to revenue that it seems hypercriticism to object that the introduction of it in the Lords before it had passed the Commons constituted a breach of the privilege of the representative chamber. The fact that the bill was challenged may be found to conceal an ulterior motive, but this is not certain at present. The possible effect of the objection taken may be to throw over the measure till next session.

A few days ago the announcement was made, on authority that would ordinarily pass unchallenged, that "a contract has, under order-in-council, been entered into which will ensure the immediate construction of the [Hudson Bay] railway, at the rate of at least 200 miles a year." But the statement was no sooner made than doubts as to its correctness arose. So many promises of progress have been made in the name of this road which failed to stand the test of experience, that it does not seem safe to accept too readily anything of the kind as certain. The tenor of the order-in-council which was to have this magic effect is not stated. It is known that the company had been trying to get the Federal Government to advance money for or upon the lands, and when an order-in-council was mentioned, the natural enquiry was, could it be for this purpose? No answer to the mental suggestion has come.

Suggestions of an extension of the projected Atlantic and Lake Superior Railway over the prairies and across the Rockies are already being made. It is of course as easy to talk of the larger as of the smaller scheme, and the chances of both are at present about equal. Even a gigantic scheme, when time and space are unpropitious, fails to prove inspiring.

A new feature in the bi-metal question has appeared. The statement comes from England that £50,000 has been raised in aid of bi-metalism and that there is a proposal to raise the amount to £100,000. This of course implies that a systematic agitation in favor of the cause is to be entered upon. This is taking a leaf out of the Anti-Corn Law League book. The League won its cause by means of organized agitation, carried on by lectures, pamphlets, and special organs in the press. It carried on the agitation four years before it was able to raise, in one sum, so large an amount as £100,000. But it does not follow that because these methods brought success to the League, they will have the same result when employed in the cause of bi-metalism. The League had Cobden for its prophet and Wilson and a host of other able men for its disciples. It appealed powerfully to the manufacturing capitalists and to the hungry workmen. Belief in the avowed aim of the agitators, untaxed bread, fired the enthusiasm of millions. Bi-metalism starts the agitation with the odds greatly against it, and the world will not be easily convinced that it is right; and not merely England, but all the great commercial nations, must consent. No doubt England holds the balance of power on the question, and with her more than any other country, perhaps more than all others, the decision rests.

If the decision of the United States Congress not to pay the British Behring Sea claims in a lump sum be definite, the next step will be a commission that will go over all the claims in detail and settle each according to the evidence The lump sum must have been arrived at by a less tedious process. Congress is within its rights in insisting that the evidence by which claims for compensation are capable of being supported shall be produced. The vote of Congress is not in reality the rejection of the claim, but the rejection of the method resorted to for establishing it roughly in lump. There are members of Congress who say that $450,000 is too large a sum to pay, that a less amount would compensate the owners of the vessels captured for the resulting losses. That the amount can be reduced by the method that must be used to establish it cannot be taken for granted. If the evidence should show that the aggregate loss was greater, it will have to be paid. The American Government, we may be sure, did not agree to $450,000 without being convinced that that amount was due. But the delay is unfortunate. It is inconvenient to the sufferers, and it keeps open the sore which policy and prudence would combine to heal at the earliest moment possible. It rests entirely with the United States to choose which of the two methods open to it of settling the claim it will follow, and certainly present indications almost make it certain that resort will be had to a commission.

The difference between the New York trunk lines and the Grand Trunk of Canada over the immigrant traffic a few days ago was forced on public attention by a request from the Transcontinental Association addressed to the commissioner of the Trunk Line Association that he would not, till further notice, send any immigrant passengers by the Grand Trunk to Chicago. Both the Grand Trunk and the Trunk Line Association purchase immigrant