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## THE SITUATION.

Threatening as matters look at times there is no great reason to fear that war will come out of the Fashoda affair. The claim of France to compensation as a condition of leaving Fashoda, as she puts it, is quite untenable. If she went there to fight against the Khalifa, she ran a great risk, with no possible chance of success. If Marchand had met the forces of the Khalifa his few men would have been annihilated; and if the English had not destroyed the army of the Khalifa they would have found out Marchand and wiped out his little exploring party, which, before this happened, would have tried to escape by alleging the sole object of their visit to be scientific. To claim rights at Fashoda against Egypt and England is to claim what France has no means of enforcing, which she could not maintain for an hour against the forces of the rightful owners. France is in no position to enter into a war against England, and the best informed Frenchmen know it. The *Siecle* says: "France would hardly come off better in a war with England than did Spain with the United States." She might be expected to do somewhat better than this, but there could be only one possible result. Speaking of evacuating Fashoda, another French journal, *L'Autorite*, says: "England calls on us to get out; there is no use talking, we shall have to get out, otherwise there will be war, which would be madness." A war between these two nations at the present time would indeed be a lamentable spectacle. It is more than doubtful that the weakening of France, which must result from such a war, would be to the advantage of England. At the close of the German war the expressed wish of England prevented France suffering more from the consequences of defeat than she did. The *Siecle* is right in saying that France would be better employed in developing her colonies than in thwarting, or rather trying hopelessly to thwart England. What is most essential for her to do is to abandon the policy of petty and, for the most part, impotent annoyance which she follows in different quarters of the globe.

Montreal is now considering the form to be given to the Central Board of the city council, under the new municipal charter obtained from the Quebec Legislature. Three or four different plans have been proposed by members of

the city council, all of which have some features in common, though differing widely as to particulars. One scheme would make the expenditure for public works controllable by the property-owners; but this feature, on a vote, found only one supporter. The different plans all embrace a sort of executive council, to which at least one of them would give the initiative in all expenditure. The general idea seems to be that the members of the board, by whatever name known, should be paid a yearly sum for their services, some of the proposals ranging from \$2,000 to \$3,000. It is doubtful whether the acceptance of unpaid services, where the duties are at all onerous, are, in a state of society like that of Canada, economical. There is reason to fear that the unpaid workers may be under a temptation to indemnify themselves by illegal gains. If it be said that payment by salary will not secure absolute honesty, it will at least enable the members to reject proffered bribes, while if unpaid members went wrong, the public which refused to pay them would be, in some sort, partners in the crime. It is best to pay a reasonable sum for the service required. There are communities in which payment may be dispensed with; but Canada has not yet reached that stage in which this can be done with advantage or even safety. One plan names the executive board the "Cabinet," and all of them tend to follow, more or less closely, at a greater or less distance, the organization of provincial executives. Some of the plans appear to have reference to local schemes, and even contemplate provision for future annexations of rural territory. These features, being local, cannot well be fully understood at this distance.

The attempt of the United States Joint Traffic Association to obtain from the Supreme Court a reversal of the ground taken in the *Trans-Missouri* case, which declared railway combinations illegal, has failed. The Joint Traffic Association was formed after the former judgment was given, and to onlookers it seemed as if they were attempting an impossible task: to find some way of doing what the Supreme Court had said could not be done legally. The judgment of the court declares that agreements of the nature of that entered into by the companies comprising the Joint Traffic Association, "which directly and effectually stifles competition must be regarded under the State as one in restraint of trade." The judgments of the lower courts favorable to the Joint Traffic Association are reversed. The constitutionality of the law, which was attacked only in the second trial, not on the first, was upheld by the court. One of the lawyers employed by the Government against the Joint Traffic Association expresses the opinion that there is "no possible way of evading the law." The companies, he says, must appeal to Congress for legislation, which they will probably now do; but will Congress, any more than the courts, reverse its judgment and authorize the companies to act in restraint of trade? Among the other railroad associations which this decision makes illegal are the Central Freight Association, the Central Passenger Association, the Western Freight Association, the Western Trunk Lines Committee. If the different Associations do not dissolve and cannot get legislation in their favor, they will no doubt be dissolved by legal process as the *Trans-Missouri* Association and Joint Traffic Association have been.

While the Peace Commission is discussing the terms of the treaty of peace in Paris, the Cubans are considering what their future is to be and what condition would be best for them. On this point the Spanish press of Cuba is divided, and the population even more so. The towns and the trading class, as a rule, favor annexation, which Maximo