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TORONTO, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1895.

THE SITUATION.

Pending the enactment of remedial legislation on the Manitoba School Question, by the Dominion Parliament, the legislature of Manitoba has been dissolved, and new elections will be held on the 15th of January. The school question is the one on which the elections will turn. Premier Greenway, in an election manifesto, asks the constituencies to protest against Dominion intervention in the issue between the majority and the minority in Manitoba. He refuses to sanction the restoration of separate schools, in any form, and expresses the opinion that nothing less than such schools will satisfy those who speak in the name of the minority. He can count on an assured victory. But this victory will leave the school question unsettled. How far he would be willing to go, to satisfy the minority, he does not say. This point ought to be made plain to the electors. The Greenway Government has professed a vague desire to do something, and now is the time to make plain what that something is, what concessions will be made and what is the farthest limit that will not be surpassed. What is now authoritatively made known is, that the unity of the public school system will be maintained and that separate schools will be refused. This is clear as far as it goes; the position is defensive as to the main features of the system; what is wanting is a clear statement of what the Government is prepared to grant to the demands of the minority, consistent with what the Government will not yield. This is necessary to a clear understanding of the issue, in all its bearings, and until it is forthcoming, the electors must wait with patience for light as to how it is proposed to work the one-school system so as to include the minority with any hope that they will accept what is offered.

Dr. Montague has been transferred from the office of Secretary of State to the Ministry of Agriculture. Without regard to the ability of Dr. Montague to administer the new office, the appointment is sure to be criticised by the Patrons, on the ground that agriculture is slighted in the person of its chief representative. Farmers in most countries think they are entitled to fill any office representative of the class, but their wishes are not seldom disregarded. It may well be questioned whether it is wise, especially at a time like the present, when the farmer is critical and dis-

contented, to seek a Minister of Agriculture in the ranks of the professions; it might pay better to follow Sir Oliver Mowat's plan of putting a farmer at the head of agriculture. For the moment, no farmer in the Dominion House is conspicuous enough to command the position, and except as a matter of sentiment, and to get rid of the feeling that farmers do not get their due, it must be confessed that agriculturists, in this country, do not often possess executive abilities equal to the men that can be got outside the calling. The farm has nurtured the childhood and youth of many able men in the professions, but their affiliation to the farm has ceased. They follow other pursuits and are allied to other interests. When any one of them is made Minister of Agriculture, he does not necessarily act as alien to the office; he may give it his best attention if not his preference, his talents if not his heart. Nevertheless, the farmers would prefer to see one of themselves in the position.

As a means of creating suspicion and ill-feeling between the two countries, the statement has been industriously circulated, on the south of the border, that Canada was attempting to take forcible possession of United States territory in Alaska. The jingo journals of the United States are resolved to get up a boundary dispute between Canada and Alaska. The stories have assumed many different forms; sometimes the trouble is represented as being in the water boundary, sometimes on land; one day Canada is building forts on or unpleasantly near American territory; the next, she is establishing a post-office on American soil. No such encroachment has been made; if it had, the United States Government would have in the records of surveys made by its own officers the means of verifying the fact, and the President would not have neglected to bring the matter before the notice of Congress.

One of the plans for the relief of British agriculture, which the Government is said to be promoting, is rather economical than political. The President of the Board of Trade is credited with the intention to hold a conference with the chairmen of nine railroads which centre in London, to arrange "a plan for a uniform sweeping reduction in rates on farm produce." Where the burthen of the cost of the operation is to fall, on the railways or the public treasury, we are not informed. Complaints have long been made that the British railways discriminated against domestic traffic, as compared with that with Europe and America. Another device looking in the same direction, has already been put into operation by the Great Eastern Railway Company. It takes the form of enabling farmers to sell their produce without the intervention of middlemen. Such is the general statement. And other railway companies are expected to imitate the Great Eastern in this work. The statement that all middlemen are to be dispensed with will probably be found to be too sweeping when full explanations are received. The railways can scarcely enable the farmer to sell directly to the consumer; they may possibly enable him to dispense with one of the intermediaries. Some years ago Mr. Van Horne, impressed with the notion that the farmers of our North-West were not getting as much as they ought to for their wheat, caused arrangements to be made, partly by outside buyers, to remedy this defect. Unfortunately the new purchasers were too sanguine and their good intentions were rewarded by a loss.

If President Cleveland's Venezuelan message had not been issued it would have been necessary to do something to increase the gold in the National Treasury; but when a new cause of distrust began to operate, depreciating