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TORONTO, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1900.

THE SITUATION.

General Buller's third attempt to relieve Ladysmith has had no such ending as was confidently predicted. On the contrary, it was found necessary to withdraw once more to the south side of the Tugela river. The hope of immediate or direct relief of the beleaguered town seems to be abandoned. A great movement is making by General Roberts, for the invasion of the Orange Free State, and the question is whether Ladysmith can hold out till the besieging forces are drawn off, by the necessity of encountering the British forces in that Republic. Meanwhile General Buller's moves are regarded as tactical, and it is possible that he may once more cross to the north side of the river. To relieve Ladysmith, in that way, military critics tell us, would cost 3,000 men, and some put the figure as high as 5,000, either of which it is rightly judged would be too high a price to pay for the achievement.

General Roberts' plan of campaign has entered on the first stage of execution, General French having crossed the Reit River at Dekil's Drift, with a mounted force and captured three Boer laagers with their supplies, while General Gordon seized two more Drifts and captured two more laagers. General French met little opposition, and incurred but small loss. Infantry then moved to the support of the cavalry, twenty thousand in number. This move is regarded as an attempt to flank Commandant Cronje's force at Magerfontein with a view to the relief of Kimberley. Whether the effect will also be to bar the Boer route to Bloemfontein, will be known later. They are cut off from Jacobsdal, whence they derived their principal supplies. General French's movements were made with great rapidity and probably took the Boers by surprise. The great campaign which is to decide the war has now been entered upon, and we trust the hopeful view of the situation now taken in England will be justified by the event.

In the Speech with which the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario opened the session of the Legislature, on

Wednesday, many subjects are touched upon. A suggestion is made which implies a grant in aid of supporting the wives and families of our soldiers now in South Africa; the timber business is reported as having received a powerful stimulus from recent legislation, the validity of which by the bye is now before the courts; an Order-in-Council, requiring ratification, has been passed, requiring pulp wood cut on the Crown domain to be manufactured in Canada, not as Quebec provides in the province; mining and agriculture are reported to be in good condition. Then come the lugubrious item telling that additional asylum space for lunatics is required; swamp lands and cold storage are bracketed together for attention; a comprehensive exploration of the country between the C. P. R. line and Hudson Bay is required. This, interpreted in the light of a speech previously made by the Premier, probably covers large schemes of improvement, which will be developed hereafter. Reference is made to the relative jurisdiction of the courts of the province and to two commissions now sitting. Money for the soldiers' families will probably be voted without much debate.

Already there is a Congressional appropriation of \$100,000,000 for the Nicaragua Canal, which the United States Government will construct, and the Secretary of War is authorized to enter into contracts for the work to the amount of \$140,000,000. Of course the canal will be a Government work, differing in that respect from the Suez Canal, which was constructed and is owned by a company, in which, however, the British Government has a controlling interest. All nations will be at liberty to use the canal both in peace and war; it is never to be liable to be closed. War vessels as well as ships of commerce may use it, but they will be required to pass through in as short a time as possible. Belligerents are not to debark troops or materials of war at the canal, which is moreover not to be fortified, but the United States may, if necessary, land troops to secure its protection. The treaty is silent on the question of canal tolls. This can scarcely mean that there are not to be any. If it does not, it would seem to follow that the tariff of tolls will be formed by the Government that builds and owns the canal. We take it for granted that as between nations there will be no discrimination in the levying of tolls.

In a discussion, in the House of Commons on the question of transportation, some facts of interest were disclosed. The concession to the Connors' syndicate being arraigned, Mr. Tarte said that personally he had been in favor of elevators being erected at Montreal, at the public expense, and that an appropriation for this purpose was taken last year, but his colleagues objected to this item and he consented to sink his individual opinion. For the Connors' syndicate it can at least be said that it was willing to undertake what no Canadians offered to supply, and that the policy of the Government being not to build elevators at Montreal, there was no alternative but to accept the one offer available. The contemplated improvements at Port Colborne, Mr. Tarte said, would probably cost a million or a million and a half of dollars. When Mr. Haggart asked if the plans in the department did not show an estimated cost of \$5,000,000, Mr. Tarte did not say yes or no, but implied that, if there were such plans, they would permit