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THE SITUATION.

General expectation was not disappointed when the Governor-General called upon Sir John Thompson to advise him on the formation of a new administration. He, however, if asked to form an administration himself, declined the task, and advised that Mr. Abbott be sent for. This substitute induced the old ministers to retain their portfolios for the present; but there is a rumor that Mr. Chapleau has made conditions which will require a reconstruction at the end of the session, when Langevin, Caron, Carling and Bowell will give place to others. The statement of the Premier of the acceptance of a new tenure by the old officials was not accompanied by an announcement of policy, which would not have been out of place on the occasion. Mr. Abbott afterwards made an explanation in the Senate, but he said nothing about the policy which the Government is to carry out. The conclusion seems to have been drawn from this fact that no change of policy will result from the death of the late Premier. Senator Scott failed to draw from the Premier any other reply to the question whether the purpose for which Sir John Thompson had, in the first instance, been called was to form a Government, than that that gentleman was asked "to advise with respect to the steps that should be taken in the formation of a Government," those being the written words used in the House of Commons by consent of the Governor-General. It has been assumed that Ontario bigotry had rejected Sir John because he is a Roman Catholic. There was in fact no rejection at all. Nor is there any objection in Ontario to him on the ground of his being a Roman Catholic. The Jesuit bill might have been objected to by a Roman Catholic as well as a Protestant; and there cannot be a doubt that there have been many Roman Catholic bishops, in different parts of the world, who would have declined to cover such a measure with the sanction of their au-

thority. Canada was only part of the North American dominions of France which she parted with in 1763. Louisiana fell to Spain, the most Catholic of European countries, and in Louisiana Spain confiscated every inch of the Jesuits' estates, in respect to which no compensation was ever granted.

Lord Salisbury tells a deputation, headed by Lord Brassey, that he cannot undertake to comply with the request to summon a conference of colonial statesmen, with a view to a federation of the empire, until a programme has been presented in the form of a definite scheme of Imperial federation. This leaves the question just where it was before, but it emphasises the necessity for a definite plan, and is equivalent to a declaration that the hour has come when Imperial Federationists must see the necessity of taking refuge in golden silence or setting vigorously to work to prepare the needed programme. Will they do the one or the other, and if either, which?

As a means of removing the objection on which a late Treasury order was issued at Washington, our Government has passed an order-in-council requiring swine and sheep, on their entrance at certain Canadian ports, to undergo a quarantine of fifteen days. The ports named for this purpose are Quebec, Charlottetown, Halifax, and St. John, N.B. This selection seems to imply that the quarantine will be confined to sea-borne animals. The ground of the American Treasury order establishing a quarantine against Canadian sheep and pigs was that, as we did not quarantine these animals on importation, there was danger that disease might be introduced into the Republic from Canada. This objection no longer existing, it is reasonable to expect that the Washington Treasury order will now be rescinded, and it is said that our Government has an assurance that this will be done.

No delay has been suffered in passing into law the British bill to secure the observance of a close season in Behring Sea, the royal assent having already been given to it. The indemnity to be given to Canadian sealers, as the condition of the assent of Canada, must have reference to such as may have set out when sealing in the open sea was not illegal, and who consequently may become innocent violators of the law now passed. If any set out when the bill was known to be before Parliament and likely to become law, how would it fare with them? That they would receive compensation is doubtful, as they might be considered to have gone at their own risk, under circumstances which made it unlikely that they would be enabled to pursue their usual calling. Some cases about which it may be difficult to decide may possibly arise, and something may depend upon the tribunal by which they are decided. The proclamation must issue before the legal prohibition will be complete, and sealing vessels continue to set out to the last moment. The President of the United States, on his part, has issued the necessary proclamation, which cites the agree-

ment of the two nations to prohibit the killing of seals till May next.

An incidental result of the establishment of a close season for seal in the Northern Pacific and Behring Sea is to make the Tasmanians conclude that protection to this valuable animal is required no less in that neighborhood. An Act has been passed restricting the catching of seals there within certain limits. The effect will be that the San Francisco sealing fleet, which has been accustomed to go to the South Pacific, is virtually deprived of its hunting grounds. Whether any question will arise about the extent of the limits of maritime jurisdiction claimed by Tasmania, remains to be seen; but if the three mile limit be exceeded, we may be sure that the stretch of jurisdiction will not be allowed to pass unquestioned.

At the instance of some of the stockholders of the Panama Canal, M. de Lesseps and his son are to be prosecuted for misrepresentation alleged to have been made by them as directors of the company, in connection with the financial arrangements. M. de Lesseps replies that all his acts in connection with this undertaking are legally unimpeachable. The trial will take place before the Court of Appeal of which, as a bearer of the cross of the Legion of Honor, he is a member. He built the Suez Canal in the face of hostile predictions that the achievement was impossible; and emboldened by this success, he seems to have concluded that nothing in this line of engineering was impossible. But the engineering problem was but half the battle which had to be gained to conquer success in the Panama venture: the financial difficulty, which was still greater, finally overwhelmed him, with the result that even his engineering was covered with doubt and brought into discredit. It is not likely that a judicial investigation can help the suspended enterprise to get on its feet again; if the late commission could not do so, a criminal prosecution will not, in this respect, make matters better, whatever may be the result so far as the accused are concerned.

Smuggling along our north west frontier is no new thing. Hitherto, we have heard chiefly of goods, especially whiskey, rushed illegally into Canada, but it seems that the trade flourishes both ways, that there is a return smuggling trade from Canada into the States. Potatoes, it is alleged, have gone that way, and strange to tell, agricultural implements, which had been regarded as more likely to go in the other direction. Smuggled Chinamen have been heard of as passing this way before the enquiries of Zochgen, of the Washington Treasury department, were made, and we are not surprised at their now appearing in the list. The length of the international frontier in the west, wherein the settlements are sparse, gives opportunities for the smuggler to ply his trade. Our own mounted police have done good service in checking the illegal traffic, and if the Washington authorities do their part, the evil will be mitigated, if it cannot be altogether cured.