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TORONTO, CAN., FRIDAY, AUG. 14, 1891

## THE SITUATION.

As a result of the Tarte investigation the head of the Public Works Department has fallen. The sun of Sir Hector Langevin goes down in a cloud; his long public career has an inglorious end. The charges against him were that he took money from public contractors for political purposes: to carry elections and sustain newspapers, one of which was owned by his son-in-law. It was proved that contractors for public works subscribed heavily for political objects in which the fate of the Government was bound up. Sir Hector Langevin read a statement before the investigating committee, having previously given in his resignation, in which he denied nearly every charge in direct terms. He said he should have resigned sooner if charges had in the first instance been made directly against him, instead of being levelled principally at Thomas McGreevy, a Member of Parliament and a close friend of the Minister of Public Works. Engineers and clerks in the Department unduly favored contractors, and received gifts in return for these crooked services. Besides these flagrantly corrupt practices, a minor offence was committed by permanent clerks in more than one department, in which they acted in contravention of the statute law. No permanent clerk in any department is entitled to receive extras, no matter how long his hours of work at certain times may be. Extra clerks do not come under the prohibition, and permanent clerks sometimes received pay in the name of others. Sometimes, generally, perhaps, they did the work for which they were paid, and it was almost invariably done by some one. Several of the minor offenders have been suspended, and others may possibly follow. The exposure ought to lead to the erection of new safeguards against these several forms of corruption and wrongdoing.

An able defence was made by Sir Hector Langevin. And on some points it was not

unsuccessful. He showed that the Quebec Harbor Works being under a commission created by law for that purpose, the Public Works Department had very little to do with the details. The reasons given for changing the engineers for these works, who resided in England and did not get out their estimates as soon as they should, were theoretically valid, whatever there may have been behind in the mind of Mr. Thos. McGreevy, one of the commissioners. That there was no crookedness in the commission it would be difficult to believe. The lesson has its uses, and it is that commissions of this kind should not be entrusted with the expenditure of large sums of public money; all such expenditures should be on the direct responsibility of the Government. The admission that Sir Hector received a \$10,000 loan from Thomas McGreevy, who is accused of being a partner in the contract for the harbor works, and that he did not expect to repay it, is fatal. From the same source came a large subscription in aid of *Le Monde*, a newspaper owned by Sir Hector's son-in-law. Thomas McGreevy was for years a stand-by when political subscriptions were wanted; he was a close friend of the Minister's, at whose house he used to stay every year, when attending his duties as Member of Parliament. But the ex-Minister professes to have known next to nothing of what his guest was doing in connection with several matters on which guilty knowledge is charged. His accusers probably stretched the truth a good deal, exaggerated, and even invented; but when every allowance is made, there remain elements of grave doubt and suspicion which the defence has not removed.

A draft lease of the Toronto Street Railway to the Kiely Company has been prepared, Mr. S. Blake and the city solicitors having given it their attention, the charges against aldermen in connection with the lease having assumed no substantial form. At this point Mr. E. A. Macdonald comes forward, and in a letter to the Mayor says he is "at liberty to formulate and prefer charges of malfeasance in office against certain members of the Council," and that such charges will be placed before the Mayor early next week. "The document will aver and set forth that at least eight members of the Council were influenced by illegal and improper means to vote for the acceptance of the Kiely-Everet tender." On the mere credit of Macdonald, we should prefer not to believe any charge of the kind; but why did some one pay him \$4,500 to withdraw a suit in which similar exposure was threatened? He also promised silence if he got \$15,000, but failed to get it. Now he again threatens exposure. What does it mean? In the face of such a challenge, even from such a source, we think on the whole it would be best that the facts should be looked into.

Corruption scenters have found a new field of exploit. It is broadly charged that railway subsidies, instead of being used for the purpose for which they are granted, are sometimes in part diverted into political channels. The charge is made in con-

nection with the subsidies voted by the Quebec Legislature to the Baie des Chaleurs Railway. A large amount is represented as having been diverted, and it is more than insinuated that some of it went to pay the debts of Premier Mercier. The charges are now in course of investigation by a committee of the House of Commons at Ottawa, a bill having been introduced to authorize the transfer of the road from one company to another. The Bank of Ontario, which had advanced money to carry on the work, objects and alleges that the subsidy had been corruptly manipulated. In this way the enquiry arose. When an enquiry was threatened the promoters asked leave to withdraw the bill, on the assumption that this would remove the ground for investigation. The bill was not allowed to be withdrawn, and the enquiry went on against the protest of the Quebec Government. Practices similar to those charged were likely to be the result of such dealings between bonus-beggars and bonus-grantors. No direct value is given for the money received; the amount is handed over to those who ask it, generally not the most scrupulous of mortals, and no further questions are asked. No steps are taken to see whether the bonuses are applied to the purpose for which they are granted. This is true not less of municipal than of government bonuses. There is a story, never contradicted, we believe, that the municipal bonuses given to a railway built over twenty years ago all went into the pockets of the chief promoter. As a rule, nothing of this kind would be possible, and the majority of railway bonuses were probably applied according to the intention of the grantor; but the nature of the transaction makes division of part of the bonus an easy matter. There is a temptation, too, to commit this form of abuse. The recipients of the bonus can afford to give away a part of what costs them nothing, and there seems to be little doubt that in some cases corruption in this form has been practiced.

An attempt is being made at Ottawa to compel the Government to divulge in advance the lines within which it will conduct the negotiations for reciprocity, next October, at Washington. The treaty, if made, must of course be laid before Parliament for ratification; but the information asked for could not well be given, and if it could it would be wise to withhold it. We know from statements already made over and over again, on the responsibility of the Government, that anything like the acceptance of the American tariff by Canada is out of the question. Acceptance of unlimited reciprocity is not now in question; that question was put out of the way by the direct vote of the electorate. We also know that the Americans will not assent to a revival of the former reciprocity treaty or agree to a treaty limited to raw produce. But these are the two extremes of the reciprocity problem, and between them there is ample room for action. On a previous occasion, when the late George Brown was negotiating, a middle course was found. A middle course can be found again if both parties are