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TORONTO, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1898.

THE SITUATION.

Whatever else it may do the International Commission, sitting at Quebec, has developed a new arena for the lobby. We read indeed that at the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, Mr. Clarkson, on behalf of the African Institution, distributed a paper depicting the revived activity of the expiring slave trade. At Quebec we see the lobby transferred from Washington and Ottawa in full activity. Most of the arguments used there are old acquaintances, having done duty in the lobby at Washington or Ottawa or both. It is perhaps just as well that all interests should be heard now as afterwards in the corridors of the United States Senate and the ante-rooms of Ministers at Ottawa. It is desirable that all communications delivered to the Commission should be in writing, that posterity may see the arguments that do duty to make it difficult or impossible to agree upon any treaty on which the welfare of two countries may depend. If no interest is willing to abate one jot of its pretensions, and all are to be listened to, it is vain to hope for any practical result from the labors of the Commission. The appeals to the Commission are all partisan; they represent only one side of the case and that not always without exaggeration or unfair representation. The attitude of the various parties concerned was as well known before the Conference met as it has been since. The business of the Commission is to mediate between the contending factions. If the Commission were to divide on national lines, as its members are invited to do, nothing would come of their sittings. If they do listen to reason, which they will scarcely hear in an unadulterated form from the advocates who appear before them, they will run the risk of not getting their conclusions confirmed. With the Canadian commissioners that risk is not great; with an assured majority in Parliament the Government could obtain confirmation of any reasonable bargain which the representatives of the two countries might make; but there is no guarantee that any conclusion which the American commissioners might reach would be equally fortunate. What is requisite is that the two sides should abate something of their extreme pretensions.

If report may be relied on as correct, the Alaska boundary question will have to be remitted to an impartial arbitrament. Around this question active interests do not

show much concern, partly no doubt because the Commission is not likely to settle it, and partly because it does not appeal to immediate interests as the lumber question does. The interests connected with the boundary are national, and in these days it looks as if individuals were willing to postpone national to individual interests. But the dog that is apparently asleep is capable of being awakened, and if he were it would be found that the national interest was superior to any other. In an arbitration over an international boundary the lobby can find no standing ground. The duty of the arbitrators would be to do justice between nation and nation, and not to play into the hands of commercial factions. When the boundary question is settled we may hope it will be done equitably.

There is a question of the British Columbia sealers selling out their outfits and crying quits for ever. But, as Mr. Joseph Martin points out, their doing so would not dispose of the whole question; they could not sell the sealing rights of others, rights which, if dormant, nevertheless exist. But what the individuals cannot do a treaty could do. That it is desirable that Canada should relinquish her sealing rights, even for a consideration, it is difficult to believe, but if we are all to stand out for particular interests and be unwilling to barter equivalents, the Conference is merely wasting time in meeting at all. Mr. Martin talks about a British Columbia interest in sealing apart from the sealers actually engaged in the business. But it is clear that there is no such provincial interests as the imagination here pictures. There are no interests in which all Canada is not equally concerned. If it were conceded that any provincial interest exists apart from the general interest, it would speedily be made a ground for compensation from the Federal Treasury in case Canada, by treaty, debarred herself from pursuing the sealing industry in future. We have noted the straws at which the late Provincial Government caught with the object of obtaining an increase of the subsidy which it receives from Ottawa. Is Mr. Martin preparing the way for a demand of this kind in case a treaty should deal with the sealing question in the way indicated by the British Columbia sealers? Compensation to the present sealers by a sale of their vessels and apparatus would be no compensation to Canada for surrendering a lucrative branch of industry. That is a right which individuals cannot sell; it is a public right, compensation for which could only go to the country at large which would make the surrender. As little as an individual can a province sell what belongs to the Dominion.

The Quebec Conference has done well to decide not to receive any more deputations. A deputation, unless it delivers a memorial in writing, is a passing thing of which only the faintest record is kept. The so-called evidence taken before the last tariff commission was never embodied in a report. The world lost nothing by the omission, for persons speaking without contradiction in favor of their own interests, the utmost stretch of charity must declare unworthy of implicit belief. The arguments before the International Commission are of the same kind; but there is this advantage, that the two sides answer one another. Even so, they should be tied down to words committed to paper. Neither side speaks for its country; both speak for special interests, and not seldom in a way opposed to the general interest.

With the Ottawa Government prohibition is an open question, and while the Minister of Agriculture appears on the platform in favor of it, three members, M.M. Joly, Tarte