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TORONTO, FRIDAY, JANUARY 18, 1901.

THE SITUATION.

Little as he must have known they were disposed to do it, Mr. Chamberlain has thought it advisable to ask the Newfoundland Government to renew, for a year, the *modus vivendi* with the French Government, on the case of the limitations of French rights, on the west shore of Newfoundland. The breathing time asked is to afford an opportunity for negotiations with the Government of France. Only the other day the French Foreign Minister, about to be badgered by the Opposition, stated in anticipation of an interpolation, which notice had been given, that the rights of France were incontestible and uncontested. The time for pressing the claims of the island is inopportune, and we are convinced, as we said the other day, that the best thing for all concerned will be to renew the unwelcome *modus vivendi*, for one year more. The problem will be to induce France to exchange her shore rights, whatever they may be, for some equivalent. The Opposition in the French Chambers will watch the action of the Government in the hope of extracting some party advantage from any step which may be officially taken.

On the subject of railway connection between British Columbia and the adjoining Republic, Mr. Blair is quoted by a morning journal as saying: "The people of British Columbia have a perfect right to have all railway connections, north and south or any other way, that they believe necessary to the rapid and complete development of the resources of that province." In a previous session, Mr. Blair supported the Kettle River Valley Railway bill; but the forces of the Opposition, led by the C.P.R., were strong enough to defeat it. It is probable, as the land now lies, that an attempt will be made to prevent Mr. Hill, of the Great Northern, getting railway connection with the Crow's Nest Pass coal mine. If the whole weight of the Government be brought to bear in favor of the bill, which it is said will be introduced to secure this connection, it can scarcely fail of success.

Mr. Blair, Minister of Railways, has announced his intention to prepare for Parliament, though it will not be ready for the coming session, a bill providing for the establishment of a Railway Commission, non-partisan in its composition; but as it is to consist of three members, this may be difficult, unless the judicial spirit can exorcise the political. Mr. Blair approaches the question with seeming diffidence and evidently appreciates the magnitude of the task; and he does not hope from its working the miracles that some appear to expect. He says it would be very easy to reduce railway fares; but you have to consider the effect of causing losses of perhaps millions to the companies, by forcing the trade into competing American lines. He evidently wishes to get rid of the suspicion of political motives, which he thinks liable to attack the Railway Committee of the Privy Council. It is a good sign to see the Minister approach this question with great caution; the late Mr. Dalton McCarthy could draft a bill for a railway with a light heart, but he could not get Parliament to sanction it.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Quebec, to whom the questions of dispute between the working shoe-makers and their employers were referred, has given his decision. It provides for a Board of Complaint and Conciliation, composed of employers, and a Board of Arbitration, of three members, one to be chosen by the employers, the other by the workmen, and the umpire by these two. This introduces arbitration, which is to be permanent, if indeed the Archbishop had power to go so far. This award, both parties agreed in advance, is to be final; so are future awards. His Grace recognizes the right of the workmen to organize, which he regards as material, and says it will always continue to exist. The form in which pledges were sought from the men, the Archbishop was unable to approve, and he suggests certain alterations. This will settle the difficulty for the present; about the future, it would not be safe to speak in a tone of certainty.

Mr. George Gooderham is credited with the statement that "if the C.P.R. does not reduce its rates on ore, all the mines of British Columbia, which are subject to the tolls of that corporation, will have to shut down," the War Eagle, in which he has a large interest, among the rest. Mr. Shaughnessy tells of the reductions he had proposed. When the War Eagle was paying \$2 per ton for carriage and \$9 for treatment, at the Trail smelter, he offered to reduce the amount for the two services to \$6 per ton, and afterwards to \$4.75. The upshot of the affair may be the transfer, by purchase, of the smelter to the Gooderham Syndicate.

Botha's proposal of peace, made in conjunction with Lord Kitchener, was answered by De Wett by first flogging and then shooting the messenger. The invasion of Cape Colony by the Boers has accomplished nothing, and has failed to induce the Colonial Boers to join the invaders. Still the war, in different parts of South Africa, drags; and a call for English volunteers to supply the place of those who have been in the field a year is made with good prospects of success. A call for 1,000 men was made also in Sydney, N.S.W., and as soon as the recruiting lists were