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TORONTO, FRIDAY, JANUARY 18, 1895.

THE SITUATION.

For the second time within eight months the Fraser River has overflowed its banks and flooded the lower lands. The first account received described the rise of the river as being two feet higher than in the flood of last June. Where dykes had been built the water flowed over them and generally swept most of them away. The flood of last year was regarded as so entirely exceptional that little danger of a recurrence of the dread visitation was apprehended. But the probabilities of the case are now reversed, and the danger of future floods is seen to be higher than the previous estimate put it. The authorities, it is said, put their reliance on dykes of greater height, and it is plain that every increase in height will require to be accompanied with increased strength. The source of danger is the liability to a sudden rise of temperature, under which the snow of the mountains melts faster than the water can be carried through the narrow gorges of the river. Much relief could be got if the capacity of these gorges was increased. This would serve a better purpose than dykes, which may give way under the action of water, even if they are higher than the highest flood. On this occasion the tidal water swept inwards by the Chinook winds did not recede till a second incoming tide added to their bulk and caused the mischief. The damage of last year's floods was much less than was at one time feared, and now there are no growing crops to be destroyed. But the crops of last year did not escape danger. On the present occasion the town of Vancouver has suffered, the flooding of cellars there being an addition to the calamity of last June. At this time of year a continuance of the temperature which brought on the trouble, 70° in the shade, for any considerable time, is improbable. Such freaks of temperature, if not exceptional, are not likely to be lasting in the month of January. In point of fact, the danger was, on this occasion, soon over.

It becomes more evident every day that the most drastic treatment of the Newfoundland case is regarded in England as the best, and indeed the only solution of the difficulty. Opinion seems to be rapidly shaping in favor of a suspension of the constitution, a royal commission, and the ultimate connection of the island with the Canadian confederation. Will the colony consent to

renounce the privilege of governing itself, or, in case it should not, will the Imperial Government undertake to suspend the constitution, as, under the influence of Lord Russell, it suspended that of Lower Canada in 1837? It is known that the Colonial Secretary will not even grant a Royal Commission unless at the request of the local legislature. It is alleged, not without truth, that the colony has abused the privilege of responsible government. But will men who have acted without reason become so completely sobered by the present calamity as to atone for past errors, and prove their readiness to make sacrifices for the public good? Will they be willing to renounce ambitions which have been carried to the verge of insanity? The temper of the parties which flew at one another's throats, a few weeks ago, is so changed that the more violent of the two is willing to share the responsibilities of government with their old enemies, if a chance were given. The party which expelled the leaders of the opposing party from the legislature, by means of an election law, is now in dread of retaliation for its own more grievous sins in connection with the Commercial Bank. All parties admit that the intervention of the Imperial Government, in some form, has become necessary. And intervention, to be of any use, must be effective. Before a settlement is arrived at, the question of union with Canada is likely to be presented as a remedy for existing evils. It may stand a better chance of being carried into effect than it ever had before.

A despatch from Newfoundland states that the Government there is conferring with the Government of Canada to ascertain what terms for the admission of the island to the Confederation can be agreed upon. If the basis of an understanding can be found, the local legislature, it is said, will be asked to do its part next week. Whatever is done will be done with the consent of the Imperial authorities. The break-up in the island is complete, and it is necessary to make a new start. Spite of the failure of the local banks, the fish harvest can be moved without difficulty. The means to man next year's fishing fleet cannot be found where it has hitherto been got; new arrangements with new parties will have to be made. This will probably not be difficult. Many complaints were made of the methods of "the planters," and if these were well grounded, the future may have something better in store for the fishermen, the chief producers of the colony. The holders of the discredited bank paper are much to be pitied; the bank wreckers are in some danger. Some of the politicians are hopelessly involved in the commercial disaster and bank discredit. Out of the slough of despond all parties ought to be anxious to evolve order and to enter a new path with prosperity for its goal. It will be a great achievement to bring future prosperity out of present disaster.

On the question of prohibition, the Supreme Court answers the questions put to it, saying that a provincial legislature has no power to prohibit either the wholesale or retail sale of liquors; that it has no power to do so in parts of the province in which the Canada Temperance Act is not in force; that it cannot prohibit the manufacture or importation of liquors. In a local option case, the court decided that a by-law providing for local option is legal. It is not easy to understand the apparent contradiction between the decision that local option is legal and the opinion that the local legislatures have no power to grant local option. One thing is clear: a province has no power to pass a prohibition act, either as to the manufacture, importation, or sale. But how comes it to pass that if a local option by-law is passed by a municipality, it is legal? Can a local legislature confer on a secondary authority