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TORONTO, FRIDAY, AUGUST 26, 1898.

THE SITUATION.

Scarcely had the International Commission begun its labors in the ancient capital of Canada, when stories were circulated of impossible terms on which the American commissioners would insist, as a condition precedent to their agreeing to any measure of reciprocity. This foreshadows the sort of efforts that will be made to prevent the success of the Commission: Selfish interests opposing reciprocity is something to be expected; to the conference we look to estimate them at their true value. Political interests have properly no place here; but it will be an advantage to have it understood, once for all, that political conditions are not to be affected by trading facilities. The list of questions to be dealt with is large, but not unprecedented; indeed the number is considerably less than those which were outstanding between the two countries eighty years ago, and is not greater than that which could be counted at many subsequent dates. It is obvious that, if success is to crown the efforts of the conference, there must be give and take. The two sets of negotiators are probably on the whole fairly matched. This is not saying that the Canadian members of the Commission have all been ideal selections; but among them are special capacities for dealing with different questions. It is still true that in specialists, strictly so called, the Americans have somewhat the advantage. The Canadian case is said to be well prepared and we shall be glad to find this confirmed by the outcome. The real expert, on our side, is not on the Commission, and if he be near at hand for the convenience of reference, he may keep the commissioners posted from time to time; but it would have been better if some one of the commissioners had been thoroughly familiar with the facts on which the merits of our case rest; or better still, if each branch of the case had, as is true of the American, its own special expert. By the result of the conference the welfare of the two countries may be deeply influenced. We may well pray for a fortunate settlement of all existing differences.

American lumbermen holding timber limits in Ontario are using every means at their disposal to procure the annulment of the Ontario Act of last session respecting the manufacture of pine cut on the Crown domain. Their

representations have been forwarded to the Canadian and the Imperial Governments. The correspondence has been forwarded by the Ottawa Government to that of Ontario to give it an opportunity to put in its defence. It has done so, but as secrecy at present is enjoined by the Federal Government, the Ontario Government, Mr. Hardy stated in the House, is not at liberty to make the correspondence public. The reclamation of the American lumberers, Mr. Hardy has reason to believe, has been forwarded by the Federal Government to that of Washington. The American lumbermen expect to be heard by counsel at the Quebec Conference, and for that purpose have made preparation. A petition of American lumberers asks the Ottawa Government to disallow the Ontario Act. The Attorney-General of Ontario, in reply, took the ground that such disallowance would be *ultra vires* of the Federal Government, as the British North American Act places the Crown lands, with their growing timber, within the jurisdiction of the provinces exclusively. But would not this apply to all questions on which the provinces have the exclusive right to legislate? The veto power is not likely to be frequently called into action; but if Mr. Hardy's contention prevailed there would practically be an end, not only of the exercise of the veto, but to the right to exercise it. The real question is: Have the rights of American holders of timber licenses been interfered with? The complaint is, of course, of undue interference, carried to the extent of a confiscation of their rights. The Attorney-General lets it be known that he replied that the Ontario Legislature, in passing this Act, had kept strictly within its reserved rights, contained in the terms and conditions of sale. It is unfortunate that a question of this kind should be interjected into the Conference, but it will now have to be settled.

Like American lumberers having timber limits in Canada, Canadian sealers are appealing to the Quebec conference for compensation, in case further concessions, injurious to their interests, are made. Their business, they say, in a memorial to the Governor-General-in-Council, has ceased to be a steady and certain source of revenue, being hampered by international regulations and "unwarrantable interference" on the part of cruisers and revenue cutters "pretending to act under international regulations." Is it pretense merely or are the acts complained of done under authority? Sealing has come to be a business under close restrictions. Even the mode of taking the seals, when and where they may be taken, may be illegal, and against the possibility of abuse close watch has to be kept. The right of catching seals may, in the origin, be a natural right, but when it comes to be regulated by convention, precautions must be taken to see that the international agreement is honorably observed. If there were no convention on the subject, and nothing but natural right to guide sealers, they would still be bound so to conduct their business as not to injure others, including the users of seal skins. If wild seals are the common property of mankind, all who make any use of them are interested in seeing that, that they are converted into private property on such conditions as the public interest therein shall prescribe. If the Quebec conference is to put an end to pelagic sealing, it is a question whether sealers will be entitled to compensation; but the request of the sealers' memorial that that compensation should be based on what the business might have yielded if it had been let alone, can scarcely be admitted. This would be to pay for business which might under some circumstances, have been done, but was not; it is difficult to see in what way it would be distinguishable from "consequential damages," which were rejected in