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THE SITUATION.

An addition of \$20,000 a year to the subsidy of Prince Edward's Island, presents fewer objections than "better terms" generally do. Sir Charles Tupper gave as the reason for the grant that the island does not benefit as much by the Intercolonial and Canadian Pacific railways as the other provinces. Still, even this grant, and especially the way in which it was received, had its ludicrous side. Mr. Davis, who is thankful for nothing, led off by protesting that the amount was not equal to the merits of the island, and he was followed by other local representatives, in the same strain. Once, already, Prince Edward Island has been pointed to as an example of a province which had got relatively too much, and Manitoba called out that the simplest justice required that the government should even up. On the strength of this new appropriation which Mr. Davis says is too small, some province is sure to make the same demand. The worst of those demands is there is no end of them, and it is difficult to find anything like a principle capable of general application, on which they can be decided.

Nor had the additional grant to the Island a satisfying effect on Senator Howlan. He wants to secure a tunnel to the mainland. Continuous connection between the Island and the mainland, summer and winter, is in the bond, and he wants the bond enforced. But does he really believe that a tunnel was included in the agreement, or that anything beyond the utmost possibilities of steam navigation was intended? Senator Howlan has a friend who would do the job for a trifling subsidy of \$200,000 a year, and why should not Senator Howlan's friend be accommodated with the contract? The government will enquire into the feasibility of the scheme, and if the Islanders can be made happy in the matter of the tunnel, for a bagatelle of two hundred thousand a year, they may yet attain to a state of perfect bliss, in this mundane sphere. This would be an irresistible precedent for damming up the Straits of Belle Isle.

The dispute between the Niagara Central and the South Ontario and Pacific railway companies has been arranged. The latter road is to take the route along the north shore of the Niagara Peninsula, and the Ontario and Pacific is to assume the work done by the other company. A clause providing for this assumption and payment has been put in the Ontario Pacific bill. By means of this road, the Canadian Pacific will secure connection with the city of New York.

If the bison of the North-West is extinct, as a wild animal, it may leave a valuable half-breed progeny under the control of civilized men. Mr. Bedson, who gave evidence the other day before the Natural Food Products committee, at Ottawa, is carrying on the work of hybridization. His cross is a bison bull with a Durham cow, and the product is larger, stronger and heavier than the domestic animal; the meat, Mr. Bedson claims, is superior, while the pelt makes a better robe than that of the bison. Mr. Bedson possesses the only remaining bison known to exist in the North-West, and he has raised the number from nine, with which he began, to sixty-eight. One great advantage of the hybrid is that it can winter out-of-doors without shelter. At least, this is claimed for it; but it must be remembered that the bison liked to get the shelter of woods in winter, and the hybrid, however valuable it may be in other respects, must be less hardy. The experiment is a very interesting one, and may prove of great value. Mr. Bedson deserves every encouragement in the task he has undertaken.

The population of the North-West, according to Mr. Lowe, of the Emigration Department, was less last year than in 1881 by 40,000. The causes of the decline, Mr. Lowe classifies thus: the census of 1881 was taken at the time of the boom, when there were many casual visitors in the country, who have since returned; navvies engaged on the Canadian Pacific were counted as emigrants, and this floating population has disappeared with the completion of the work that attracted them. These causes are temporary, and there is nothing in them to cause discouragement. There is a third cause, which undoubtedly created some alarm, the frosts of 1882 and 1883. We are now in the year 1887, and there is every reason to believe that the summer frosts are rather accidental than constant. While we hear, now and then, that settlers are leaving our North-West for Dakota. Mr. Lowe concludes from the causes of decrease given that very few settlers could have left the country, and he is about the best authority, if not absolutely the best authority, we have on the subject.

Natural gas is said to have been struck at a depth of 220 feet, at Louisville, fifty miles from Montreal. The boring was done by a company, which expects to supply the city of Montreal with gas. The intention is to go to twice the depth attained, or even to 600 feet. Further developments will be watched with interest.

There has been a seizure by our government of an American fishing plant, comprising a tug and six boats, at Bustard Island, Georgian Bay. The principals, Davis & Co., who live at Detroit, allege that they merely purchased, at the French river, the proceeds of six Canadian fishing smacks which they shipped to Detroit. They pretend that they have complied with the Canadian law in every particular; but the presumption arising from the seizure is that they have not. Probably they merely attempted evasion. It would be interesting to know whether Davis & Co. entered this fish as Canadian, and paid the duty, or whether they took it in as American. But that is an affair between them and the American government. If Canadian fish can be purchased by American boatmen in Canadian waters it is easy to see what a thriving business in smuggling to the States could be done. The real facts, in this case, we may expect to see disclosed and determined before the business is ended.

There is no prospect of the parliamentary opposition at Ottawa taking up commercial union, on the floor of Parliament. If they believed that farmers were generally, or a majority of them, in favor of it, they would scarcely hesitate. Discussion and enquiry develop opposition among the mercantile class, not as universal, but still in many cases as deep as it is among the manufacturers. An influential minority still desire, it is true, to have the subject fully discussed. "Discrimination against Great Britain, which is softened down under the name of commercial union," does not appear to have taken the deep hold of the country which some pretend; and that it will become a winning card, in the near future, is difficult to see.

A bill providing for the construction of a railway by the local government, to the American frontier, has been passed by the legislature of Manitoba and been assented to by the Lieutenant-Governor. But this bill is just as liable to be vetoed as any previous bill, chartering a company to construct such road. The local government possess no immunity that saves the bill from the exercise of the veto power. If the federal government upholds the decision of Parliament, it will be bound to veto this bill; and if that is to be done, no time is likely to be wasted, as tenders for the construction of the road have been invited. Foreign railway companies are evidently at the bottom of this business, and they will have to be shown that we do not purpose to have our independent road strangled by the newly invented process, any more than by the old process which has been so often tried.

Unscrupulous as O'Brien has shown himself to be, he is not prepared, in sight of the public, to row in the same boat with Henry George and Dr. McGlynn. After the great labor demonstration in his favor, in New York, he declined to go on the platform to speak, because, in his own words, "I found that two of the resolutions distinctly characterized our movement as one to abolish private property in land, and