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CONTENTS OF CURRENT NUMBER.

All articles, contributions, and letters on matters pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any other person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

A REPORT from Ottawa states that the American Government has at length consented to refer to arbitration the claims for compensation presented on behalf of the Canadian sealers seized in Behring's Sea by its revenue cutters. It is, we believe, scarcely correct to say, as some of the papers are doing, that this shows the Government of the United States to have withdrawn its claim to exclusive jurisdiction in the waters of Behring's Sea. As a matter of fact, it does not appear that any such claim has ever been specifically put forward, however it may have been implied in the acts complained of. So far as has been made public, the diplomatic attitude of President Cleveland's Administration has been non-committal in the affair. Its policy has been one of reticence and delay, rather than of refusal. Such a policy may have been prompted either by the exigencies of the present political situation, or by regard to the time limit of the agreement said to have been made with the Alaska Company, in whose interests the seizures have been made. Colour is given to the former supposition by the fact that, assuming the correctness of the Ottawa report, the Presidential contest will almost certainly be over before the earliest period at which there is any reason to suppose the decision of the arbitrators could be made known. On the other hand, it is not easy to credit that part of the rumour which ascribes the tardy consent to arbitration to the alleged purpose of the British Government to resort to the strong measure of commissioning a warship to recapture and release any Canadian craft which might hereafter be seized by the United States cutters outside the three-mile limit. It is very unlikely that the British Government would put forward any such threat at this stage of the negotiations—a threat which could only have the effect of making it trebly difficult for President Cleveland and his Cabinet to do the right.

THE Indians of British Columbia evidently require cautious and skilful dealing. It is difficult at this distance, and with the scanty information yet to hand, to form an opinion as to the origin and merits of the quarrel. So far as it is connected with the attempt to capture and punish an Indian for the murder of one of his own race, it is clear that the authorities must be firm at whatever cost. It would never do to give over any section of the country, however remote, to lawlessness. Subjection to law, and respect for life and property, are among the first lessons of civilization and must be strictly enforced. But it is pretty certain that the excitement cannot have been aroused solely by the simple act of attempting to bring an Indian to justice for taking the life of another Indian, if the meaning of that act was at all understood. The affair must have some antecedent history. The testimony of the agent of the Hudson Bay Company at Fort Simpson shows that the Indians on the Upper Skeena were in a state of disorder and lawlessness some weeks before the date of the murder in question. This and other circumstances indicate that considerable numbers of British Columbia Indians are exasperated by some real or fancied wrongs. The case is one that evidently demands prompt and decisive action, though not action of the summary kind which may find favour with traders who regard the question solely from the business point of view. It is to be hoped that the Local or Dominion Government—there seems to be some uncertainty to which the duty of pacification belongs— will take a broad and liberal view of its relations and obligations to the unhappy people, who, naturally enough, claim the country as theirs, and regard every settlement of the white man as an invasion of their rights of property.

THE difficulty with the British Columbia Indians, referred to in the above paragraph, suggests what seems to be an awkward anomaly in the working of the Canadian Constitution. The British North American Act places the Dominion Government under obligation to continue towards the Canadian Indians the same just and liberal policy which was pursued by the British Government under the previous colonial system. To the Central Authority must necessarily belong the treaty-making power, so far as any portion of its own subjects are concerned. But, on the other hand, any reservations which may be set apart for the tribes by such treaties become the property of the province in which they are situated. The tendency of such an arrangement must be to create a division both of interest and of authority between the Dominion and Local Governments. The one makes the bargains, the other has, so far, to carry out the stipulations and foot the bills. A somewhat similar incongruity has been developed in regard to several other subjects of legislation. The Dominion Parliament passed the Canada Temperance Act, and the Provincial authorities were made responsible for its enforcement. A Dominion Minister has recently taken the same position, it is said, with regard to the Bucket Shops Act of last session. Such complications are undesirable. It is surely a sound maxim that the power which makes the law should provide the machinery and assume the responsibility for its enforcement. Any other arrangement seems inconsistent with the federal principle. In regard to such points the Constitution surely needs some revision.

A MONTREAL correspondent of the *Empire*, who seems well informed in regard to the matter, states that the manner in which the customs laws and regulations are enforced in Canada is much milder than that in vogue in other highly protected countries. The point is proved and illustrated by reference to alleged rules and usages in the United States and elsewhere. This may be so, but is hardly reassuring to the importer who finds himself subject to such harsh and ruinous treatment as that which has been brought to light in the Ayer case. The experienced importer who writes the letter must be a good deal of a stoic in his way, as he seems ready to accept the hard and obviously unjust treatment as the penalty that has to be paid for the benefit of a policy which he deems essential to the public weal. But, granting that harsh and arbitrary measures prevail in every country with a high tariff, does it follow that such treatment is necessary and must be tolerated in Canada? By no means, unless it can be shown that the tariff cannot be collected otherwise. This we presume would be claimed, but the burden of proof must rest on those who make the assertion. We are quite unable to see why every proper end might not be just as efficiently gained by referring disputed cases to an impartial tribunal, and by also entrusting the interpretation of the Customs Act, in doubtful cases, like that of any other act, to to the proper judicial authorities—who could of course summon any expert aid they might need—instead of leaving it to the arbitrary fiat of collector or minister.