

TRUTH.

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WHAT TRUTH SAYS

A few days ago those London papers which are supposed to voice the sentiments of the British Government on national and international questions, contained editorial references strongly condemning the policy of the United States Government in relation to the Behring Sea difficulty. The London Times declares, "that the order to despatch American cruisers to Behring Sea smacks too much of the methods of the first Napoleon in dealing with weak statesmen and that if the order is executed British men-of-war must follow. We can only imagine," the Times continues, "that pressure from Irish-Americans has induced Mr. Blaine to withdraw from his apparent desire for a diplomatic settlement. We believe England will agree to a close time for seals in the open sea, but such an arrangement must be international and cannot be imposed upon the world by American gun-boats at the bidding of Mr. Blaine." These strictures have led the American press to come to the defence of their government's action. Foremost among the apologists is the New York Sun. Its defence, which, perhaps, is as strong as can be made, contains nothing particularly new as compared with apologies previously made. The old argument of "necessity in the interest of mankind generally, and of Britain and the United States in particular" is again set up. It says:—"The history of seal hunting shows that indiscriminate slaughter of the animals has always been followed by their practical extermination, even where they have been as numerous as they now are around the Pribylov Islands. Such a result is against the interests of mankind, and even particularly against the interest of Great Britain, because she derives a large income from these very Alaska furs, which are sent to London for preparation and sale." The Sun scouts the idea of any resort to force on the part of Great Britain, and contends that should the British government undertake to forcibly destroy the system of protection which has been exercised for the past twenty years, while the two countries are trying to negotiate a settlement of the controversy, it would be acting the part of an aggressor. It claims that the condition of things in Behring sea is virtually the same as on the Atlantic coast, save that the position of the parties concerned is reversed: that there the American fishermen claim certain rights which the Dominion Government refuses to concede, and the result is a diplomatic negotiation between Washington and London. All this has been urged before and the analogy as often shown to be fallacious.

But the chief interest of the Sun's article centres in the candor and clearness with which it states the ground upon which the government at Washington bases its action. "Our government," it asserts "is not using its power to maintain an exclusive jurisdiction over the eastern half of Behring Sea. What it is really protecting is not the ownership of this vast marine area, but its right in the herd of seals that frequent a couple of islands in that sea, which islands are unquestionably its property. Had not these islands of St. Paul and St. George been for generations

the resort of those millions of seals, they would have practically no value whatever. But as seal rookeries they formed a very large part of the estimated value of Alaska when that Territory was purchased by our Government. It was then urged, and it proved to be true, by purchasing the rights over these Pribylov Islands and the Pribylov seal herd, the Government could lease the islands and the right of taking the annual increase of the seals for money enough to represent a fair interest on the price paid for Alaska. But the islands without the seals would become absolutely worthless; and yet the testimony of experts is that if poachers are permitted to attack the seals with firearms as they annually go to and from the islands, the herd will either be exterminated or will be driven away, and probably to islands which do not belong to the United States. The only other existing resort of the fur seal in Behring Sea is one of much less importance, a group of islands owned by Russia, and leased to a company and protected by her. This is the American position. The Government protects property which it has bought at a large price, from such molestation by those who have paid nothing as would not only render that property common spoil, but soon destroy it altogether." The coolness with which it is assumed that the purchase of the aforesaid islands involves also the ownership of the seals which habitually frequent their shores is matched only by the arrogance with which they are reducing their doctrine to practice. That they have a right to do what they will with those seals that remain within the limits of their waters as recognized by international law—catch them if they can, or proclaim a perpetual close season—no one will deny; but when these free dwellers of the waters assay to go beyond that limit, they become as much the property of one nation or individual as another, and none can say these are mine and I will protect them.

This wholesale destruction and indiscriminate slaughter by sealers whose methods are faulty and which result in exceptional loss of seal life may be greatly deprecated and heartily regretted, but the only power that can be legitimately used in restraining them is moral and not physical force. The argument that the islands would become unprofitable and worthless if minus the seals, ought never to have been introduced. If the United States paid too high a price for Alaska, providing the Pribylov Islands should become unproductive, that is a contingency they ought to have thought of in making the bargain. They may be commiserated for having paid too dear for the whistle, but they have no right to commit an injustice to save themselves from the effects of their lack of prevision. The mere fact of seals going to these banks to breed does not constitute them the property of the United States, any more than the coming of the fish into the bays and inlets of our St. Lawrence islands, makes them Canadian property, with the right of protecting them wherever they may go. If this argument of the Sun, which is the argument of the authorities at Washington, has any force, then Canada has the moral right (for of course the right the

United States talks about is moral) to place a fleet of cruisers upon the high seas and ward off all and sundry who might be disposed to interfere with the fish that seek our shores. What a howl of indignation would go up were such a suggestion to be made! And yet it is only the other agreement with fish in it instead of seals. If the American press is prudent it will not discuss this question on its merits, but will try to raise side issues; for the more plainly it is stated the weaker their cause appears.

It would seem that Edison and Bell are not to be allowed to remain in undisturbed possession of the honor which the world has been bestowing upon them as inventors of the telephone. A French electrician, one Bursual, now claims to have discovered the principle and actually applied it twenty years before the geni of the New World put the idea into practical form. Of course this dispute can only be settled by an appeal to history. Meanwhile, the tardy Frenchman may be assured that the world will hesitate to depose from their place of honor the men whose names have become so closely linked with this useful modern invention; the more especially seeing that there is nothing to show that the inventors on this side the ocean had any hint of what had been discovered on the other. Still if the French genius can establish his claim to priority of discovery he ought in justice to have his claim allowed.

If report speaks truly it is possible that we shall soon have another case for international negotiation. A correspondent at Little Lorraine, Cape Breton, says:—"On the 6th inst. three American sealers came right into the entrance of the harbor among our little fishing boats and hove their seines and captured about 600 barrels of mackerel. Not content with this they unceremoniously cut away the nets and buoys and anything else that happened to come in their way to impede them. They caused serious loss to the fishermen of this little harbor. A new net belonging to Patrick Burke, an industrious old man, who struggles hard for a living, was cut away and destroyed. Several others shared a similar fate. These vessels were a considerable distance inside of the headlands. The fishermen inform me that they were no more than a mile outside of the main entrance to this harbor. The Senator Morgan and Jennie Sovereign, of Gloucester, were two of the vessels.

Considerable speculation is being indulged in by European politicians as to the result should Prince Bismarck be induced to enter the Reichstag as a private member. It is stated that a deputation of conservatives waited on him recently, and offered him the candidature of a district rendered vacant by the death of its representative. The Prince promised to give the proposal his favorable consideration, which is taken to mean that he will stand. In his presence a new grouping of members would be almost certain to take place, and probably consist of Conservatives, National Liberals, and a small group of the moderate Freisinnige party. The

landowners, manufacturers, and bankers, who are opponents of the pro-Socialist policy, and would be certain to require the support of a number of Centrists, thus forming a strong combination. With such a force at his command it is evident that the ex-Chancellor could make the path of his successor very unpleasant and difficult. That he would be disposed to take advantage of his power is not probable, however, for though he no doubt feels and feels keenly the blow he has received, the Prince is first of all a patriot whose love for his country would not suffer him to imperil her interests in order to gratify any feeling of revenge for wounded vanity. Besides, he is philosopher enough to see that revenge at such a price would be dearly bought.

Whatever economists may think of the movement—and there are few who look upon it with unmixed approval—the fact is beyond gainsaying that Socialism has made wonderful strides in Germany during the last twenty, and especially the last ten years. Numbering 124,655 votes in 1871 they have grown to 1,341,587 in 1890, and claiming one social democrat in parliament at the former date they now have thirty-five. As might be supposed this success has greatly encouraged their leaders and inspired them to work the more vigorously for the final victory. That the movement should have made such progress is doubtless owing to the burdens which the laboring classes, who constitute the majority in the empire, were compelled to bear. These unredressed grievances have been rendered more oppressive by the indifference of the rich on the one hand and the disregard of the Church on the other. But the vote of February 20 was an eye-opener for those who had no eye to pity or heart to feel. From the Emperor through all classes of society the social questions are now studied as never before. The international congress to consider the problems of labor and the protection of laborers was of the Kaiser's doings, while he still shows himself intent on securing the best means for meeting the just demands of the workman. The church, too, is becoming more attentive. The religious journals are full of appeals to Christians to avoid every thing which tends to promote class distinction and bring into marked contrast the difference between rich and poor. In Berlin the rented pew system is vigorously attacked because it is a discrimination in favor of the rich. A significant ordinance has been issued by the Consistory, ordering that no one be admitted to church services who has been excommunicated. Such the great ocean to