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TORONTO, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1899.

THE SITUATION.

No time was lost in sending the Canadian contingent to South Africa to the front, and there is every reason to believe that our boys will soon get their baptism of fire. After the battle of Modder river, in which the British lost in killed and wounded 438, several days of preparation were spent, at different points, without another blow being struck. It is believed that before Kimberley is reached, General Methuen will have to fight one more battle on the way, the Boers having taken up a strong position a few miles west of Modder river. General Buller has kept his own counsel, and nothing about what he was doing was heard for several days. It is possible that delay may be dictated by policy, as a means of preventing the troops investing Ladysmith from joining the forces opposed to Lord Methuen. Ladysmith had for some days been under considerable pressure, the big guns of the Boers doing more damage than was done before, provisions getting short, and sickness being in the camp. What will be done with the two oligarchies which go under the name of Republics, when the war is over, excites a good deal of interest, but there is a general feeling among the British everywhere that they must come under British rule. Meanwhile, the Boers are systematically abusing the use of the flag of truce, and in their name designs the most diabolical are constantly set afloat.

The Toronto Board of Trade declares in favor of a commercial policy for the British Empire, "based on the principle of mutual benefit, so that each component part of the Empire would receive a substantial advantage in trade, as a result of the national relationship." How this task is to be accomplished the resolutions do not state. As the resolution is intended to be presented to the Chambers of Commerce, to assemble in London, England, next June, the question is sure to be asked, and if the Toronto delegates have no specific instructions on the point no one can say what their reply will be, but the resolution may provoke debate. On the last occasion of the meeting of the Associated Boards of Trade, the Canadian delegates, from different boards of trade in the Dominion, did not agree among themselves; care will be taken to guard against a like anomaly in future. If the policy now advocated looks

to the taxing of the food of the British workman it is not likely to prevail, even though Dr. Parkin assures us that "protection" is not to-day so great a bugbear in Britain as it was. Canada grants preference to Great Britain, where it does not injure herself, or controvene her general policy, but not otherwise; and England cannot be expected to do more on her part.

The question of the defence of the Empire, and the proportion which the several parts should in equity be required to bear, cannot well be wholly dissociated from the policy of preference. President Kemp must have felt this when he remarked that "the time has come when we must take a step forward in contributing to the permanent defence of the Empire." Of that defence, a continuous necessity, Canada enjoys the advantages, and ought, reciprocally, in fairness and honesty to bear her share. This would mean that she pays for her own defence as she pays for anything else she enjoys. The question is not whether we shall take part in all the wars of the Empire, but whether we shall by means of a national combination provide for our own defence. Whether this is to be done on the principle of a limited partnership, or otherwise, is an open question; but Mr. Kemp only expresses a prevalent feeling when he says, in general terms, that we ought to make a contribution in some form. In the South African war we are contributing to the defence of the Empire, of which Canada is a part, both in men and something in money. Our contingent are volunteers, and the fact that a much larger force than was required could have been obtained, proves, as the Minister of War remarked, the existence of a belief in Canada that the war is just. In Quebec that belief is somewhat restricted by the prejudice of the French nationality; but in the Crimean War, where the British and French fought side by side, this obstruction did not exist, the coalition silencing race feeling. A contribution, in a similar case, could easily be obtained from Canada, in men or money, or both, if needed. But our share of the defence of the Empire should be paid on the principle of insurance.

President McKinley's Message encourages us to expect that the negotiations now in progress between the Government of Great Britain and that of the United States "will end in an agreement for the establishment and delimitation of a permanent boundary." In the war in South Africa, the United States Consul at Pretoria, at the request of the British Government and with the assent of the other two belligerents, agreed to exercise the accustomed good offices of a neutral, and in this capacity had abundant opportunity to show the impartiality of the United States. The President does not mention that the U.S. consul there recently asked to be relieved and was succeeded by a son of the United States Secretary of State. President Kruger is reported to persist in refusing to permit an American to represent England at Pretoria. Attention is called to the growth of Trusts, with the view of making stronger, if necessary, the laws passed for the protection of the public. The President recommends that when greenbacks are redeemed they shall not be re-issued, unless in exchange for gold. The greenback is not now a special menace to a sound currency, and any question connected with it at present is rather one of how the profits of a paper circulation shall be distributed.

Ex-President Weir, of the Ville Marie Bank, whose trial and conviction on a charge of issuing false statements of the condition of the bank, were noticed last week, has since been sentenced to imprisonment for two years less one day. Judge Wurtele appears to have thought that