

feet deep was declared to be desirable, and an appeal was made to the Federal Government for the necessary pecuniary aid. The harbors would require to be deepened to the same extent, and even then vessels of this draught when they got down into eastern waters would find the harbors too shallow for them. So that if deepening is to be begun in the West, it would have to be made general in all connecting waters, or it would be of little use. For years the tendency has been to increase the size of vessels on the lakes, for the good reason that large vessels are found to be most economical. Whether the limit of size has been reached, and if not, when it will be, are questions of the day. Practically the Waterways convention answers the former by assuming that a still further increase in size would be beneficial. The Federal Government, which has done more to aid railways than to improve the navigation of the lakes, may or may not give assistance to the scheme. Should the Americans construct a canal twenty feet deep at the Sault, our canal at that point would be in danger of being out of date before it was finished.

THE BEHRING SEA EMBROGLIO.

Secretary Blaine is credited with a plan for settling the Behring Sea embroglio. This he will do, if report speak true, by proposing that the British, American, and Russian Governments establish a sort of police protection over Behring Sea, the object of which will be to keep out all poachers of whatever nationality. Rules will be laid down for the catching of seals, and each of the contracting powers will be required to do its share towards preventing their violation by keeping an armed force in these waters.

In this way Mr. Blaine hopes, so the story runs, to avoid the necessity of determining whether Behring be an open or a closed sea. This plan has been compared to that by which Mr. Bayard secured a settlement of the Samoan difficulty. But the cases are not parallel. A protectorate over Samoa concerns chiefly the three powers which are interested in it. Germany had a claim against Samoa, the United States wanted a coaling station, all three had some small trading interests there. But what right have we to conclude that the other maritime nations would consent to fold their hands and see the United States, Russia, and Great Britain settle for all countries the right of fishery in Behring Sea? Or that they would accept any conclusion to which these three countries might come? There is and can be none whatever. If there is to be a conference to settle the question, on what ground can any of the maritime nations be excluded? The ground for participation of the three countries named is probably that of proximity. This may be a good ground for participation, but is distance from the locality of the disputed waters a reason for exclusion? This question the nations concerned would be likely to answer in the negative. Mr. Bayard's plan of referring the question to a conference of the maritime nations was more in accord with equity or international usages. If no other nation desired

to be heard, then those more immediately interested would be justified in taking upon themselves a settlement. Proposals, we believe, were, in Mr. Bayard's time, made to other countries to join in a conference, and it was reported that some of them were not averse to doing so. By what authority could they be excluded now?

Russia and the United States pretend to divide Behring Sea between them. With the territory of Alaska, Russia pretended to convey to the United States one-half of this sea. This pretension has never received the sanction or confirmation of any other Government. The interests of these two nations have much in common in this controversy, and in a conference, no matter how composed, they would probably work together. If it were a question of a tripartite agreement only, the conference would stand a good chance of being two against one. In this manner the United States and Russia would get their own way or no agreement would be arrived at. At least that is a danger which it would not be safe to leave out of sight. It is known in advance that the majority of the maritime nations do not accept the view of Russia and the United States that Behring is a close sea, and this would be a reason why Mr. Blaine might not desire to see their opinion put into official form.

MUNICIPAL CONTRACTS.

Over the specifications for block paving in Toronto there has been some extraordinary wrangling. The ball opened in this way: The *Telegram* objected that the cedar blocks, which the specifications required to be sound, were not up to the requirements, many having pin-holes in the centre. A great libel suit arose out of this criticism, and the jury sustained the objection. The specifications had in fact been systematically ignored, contractors, engineers, and inspectors all acting as if they were non-existent. This evasion of duty by all these parties grew into a habit, on the strength of which the contractors were inclined to plead a prescriptive right to do wrong.

But in the face of the exposure made in the libel suit it became necessary to threaten that compliance with the conditions of the contract, as contained in the specifications, would henceforth be exacted. Whereupon the contractors went on strike, or declared their intention to do so, setting up the pretence that sound cedar, which is exacted and obtained in Chicago, could not be got in Toronto. If this were so why did the contractors come under an obligation, in the first instance, to supply what was unattainable? The city engineers claimed the right to alter the specifications, and some were actually altered by somebody. It is possible that a committee of the City Council might agree to specifications which were unworkable, and should this occur, it would be the duty of the engineer to report the fact. But no servant of the corporation has the right to assume functions which belong to aldermen, either in the legislative or the executive branch, and to alter on his own authority specifications which the City

Council has made part of a contract. The claim made by the engineers, in this particular, is one which it would not be safe to allow.

It is one thing for the engineers to have the responsibility of seeing whether the work is up to the requirements of the contract and another thing for them to claim the right to alter specifications without authority of the Council. It is their special duty to see that the work is properly done, and if they fail to do so they cannot be held inexcusable. The Board of Works has at last changed the specification from "perfectly sound" to "sound" cedar. This alteration will not authorize the acceptance of unsound blocks in any number whatever. It means literally that every block must be sound. Contractors should be given to understand distinctly that "sound cedar" does not admit any admixture of unsound, and that the alteration in the specifications is merely verbal and not substantial; especially that it will not permit of the use of a single block of unsound wood where sound wood is called for. The engineers should see that the specifications are interpreted in this sense, and the aldermen should hold them to their responsibility in this particular.

STREET CARS ON SUNDAY.

Whether street cars should be allowed to run on Sundays in Toronto is a question now exciting attention. The answer takes every possible shape, but the striking feature is that so large a number of citizens whose names have been published declare in favor of the change. A majority of the present aldermen are reported to be in favor of submitting the question to the electorate for a decision through the ballot box, but whether it will be submitted depends, perhaps, on the urgency of the demand for submission. If not submitted now, nothing can prevent the January elections taking it into account. The fairer way would be to submit the single question to a direct vote, for in that way only can complications be avoided.

A restricted liberty of running the cars on Sunday to accommodate church-goers is advocated by some, others favor unrestricted car service on Sunday. Against accommodating church-goers in this way there is little to be said, for the arguments in opposition cut both ways. Of course it would be impossible to guarantee that the cars, if on the streets, would be used only by church-goers. Practically then this restriction involves some impossible incidents. Still, if the times of running were coincident with the beginning and close of church services, church-goers would avail themselves of this aid. Not that all of them would require it: some, from proximity to church, would not need it; others would have scruples against the use which would be a law to them. But if the aid were there for all who needed many would accept it as a boon, while others would repel it as desecration. With many the affording a new facility for church-goers will be the pivot on which the decision will turn; and if the question were put in different shape, this

extent of liber would be likely frage.

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