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THE SITUATION.

Mr. Lowther, Secretary of the Foreign Office, has replied to an interpellation in the House of Commons that Mr. Blaine had made it a condition that the recent reciprocity conference with Canada, at Washington, should be informal. The question to which the answer was directed was whether Sir Julian Pauncefote, the British Minister, had assured the Canadian commissioners that Lord Salisbury would favorably consider any reasonable request which they might make. Such an assurance was not given, and it is safe to say was not asked; if it had been asked and given, its general character would have deprived it of any serious significance. There is no doubt that Canada is practically at liberty to make any arrangement which the Ottawa Government might consider reasonable; though, if formal negotiations were undertaken, the consent of the British Government might be expected to be required to each serious step that was taken. No question on this right to make a treaty is likely to have arisen; that is a formality which would not be wanting if the consideration of a treaty were once officially entered upon. Strictly speaking, Canada has not authority to make a treaty, but no one really doubts that her reasonable wishes, in this respect, would be allowed free scope, in the case in question.

Colonel J. W. Foster, who with Mr. Blaine, met the Canadian delegates at Washington, has made a deliverance at Delmonico's, on Reciprocity between the United States and Canada. The occasion was the annual dinner of the New York Board of Trade. He is reported to have said: "The fact that Canada does not possess the right of negotiating her own treaties, but must have them negotiated for her by a distant power, which is controlled by economic principles entirely different from those of both Canada and the United States, constitutes the chief barrier

to any arrangement." Col. Foster is in haste to forget the treaties made with the West Indies, whose scope of action is not wider than that of Canada. Beneath the formality mentioned by Col. Foster, Canada has in reality all the necessary power to make a treaty. The assumption that other interests than those of Canada would control the negotiations is not in accordance with the fact. Canada does not believe that it is her interest to give the United States paramount influence over her commercial destiny, by excluding the competition of other nations; and if the United States makes such subordination or condition, it is safe to say that no arrangement will be possible. The trouble is not with England, but with Canada. For "genuine Americanism" of the McKinley stamp Canada has no liking. She will not be a party to tying her own hands or restricting herself from buying goods where she can get them cheapest and best. Let there be no mistake; Canada is at full liberty to embrace unlimited reciprocity; but she has taken a firm and abiding resolution not to do so.

From the general bent of the bye-elections, the conclusion cannot well be avoided that unlimited reciprocity with the United States becomes more unpopular the better it is understood. There is no reason to believe that these elections do not present a fair expression of public opinion. If the attitude of a great church towards political parties had suddenly changed, the results might have been accounted for outside of the trade question; but there is no reason to suppose that anything of the kind has happened. The chief political issue in these elections was our commercial relation with the United States, which, since the general election, has been kept constantly before the public. Unlimited reciprocity with one country would almost cut off our commercial connection with all the rest of the world. There is not enough of Free Trade in it to suit Canadians; it is its restrictive side that causes its general rejection. Its acceptance at any future time cannot be counted upon; as an issue between political parties it has had its day; the electorate has pronounced upon it in an unmistakable way. No object can be served by continuing the battle; to do so would be a mere waste of strength. But we suppose unlimited reciprocity must continue to do duty till some new Opposition policy can be evolved.

Increasing uneasiness is felt in England over the immigration of objectionable aliens. Some take the ground that the example of the United States, in barring them out, ought to be followed. There is a growing opinion which takes that direction, but apparently it is not yet strong enough to influence the action of Parliament. A fact has recently been stated by Dr. Clarke, superintendent of the lunatic asylum here, which demands the serious attention of the Canadian authorities. It is that five-sevenths of the lunatics in Canada are foreigners. Vague statements have often been made that a large proportion of modern immigrants were affected with some form of hereditary disease, though it was easy to

discover that statements of this kind were often exaggerated. The information given by Dr. Clarke is precise and is one of the few statements on the subject which it is possible to accept as correct; for it is a melancholy fact that loose general statements about the causes of crime, for instance, are often made, even by judges, on the slenderest foundation of fact. If there be any possible way of preventing the immigration of persons tainted with insanity, it ought to be used. To permit lunatics to marry is clearly against the general interest of society; yet Dr. Clarke tells us that marriage is often contracted by persons after they have been discharged from lunatic asylums. The subject is one of great difficulty, but if the highest interest is to prevail, it must be dealt with.

Mr. Balfour's local government bill for Ireland is strongly criticised. The councils to be created will not be co-incidental with the counties, but somewhat more extensive. In this country the extension would probably get the name of gerrymander. The elective members will be returned by a parliamentary suffrage, and there will be four non-elective members in each council: the Lord-Lieutenant of the county, the sheriff, a nominee of the grand jury, and one of the presentment session. The official members will try to control the elective; the latter will resent the attempt, and a state of war in every council will be insured. The elective members will naturally be in the majority, though they will often have only their obstinacy to oppose to the greater personal force of the official members. The Nationalists may be relied upon, whenever they get control, to make these councils centres of political agitation, especially in times of crisis. When we see that the Poor Law Boards are so often willing to bring politics into their proceedings, baronial councils may be relied upon to go even further. The concession will be likely, almost certain, to help the Nationalists, though they are scornfully opposing it as inadequate. They will, however, be sure to try to make the most of it when once the new machine is set agoing.

In the Peace River district, in the far north, some cattle belonging to the Hudson Bay Company have come under suspicion of being affected by pleuro-pneumonia, and on this suspicion, they have forfeited their lives, though they were not within a hundred miles of any other cattle. And it was not at all certain that the disease was not tuberculosis. But, in such a case, so much depending on it, it is necessary to be on the safe side, at whatever cost. According to one account, the disease is traceable to one beast imported from the United States. Such importations have, it appears, occasionally been made into British Columbia and the North-West. On the ground of safety, such traffic will now have to cease, or our cattle will not long enjoy immunity from being scheduled in the English market. Just now, the British authorities are particularly sensitive over the appearance of foot and mouth disease in England. Denmark was made to suffer as the supposed offender; but she pleads not guilty, and