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THE SITUATION.

For this Parliament, soon to expire, the question of prohibition is disposed of. Not all even of the Prohibitionist members stuck to their guns to the last; two of the most prominent of them being quoted as justifying the refusal of the Government to bring in a prohibition bill. During the debate, the Premier recalled the fact that, on the occasion of the plebiscite, only 23 per cent. of the registered voters declared for prohibition, but he evidently felt that it was not possible to count the result of the vote, for and against, by the rule of contraries, and so he selected another ground for the inaction of the Government. That ground—that one large province, Quebec, gave a majority against prohibition—may under the circumstances be exceptionally admitted as sufficient; but it is not one which can, with safety to future working of the constitution, be treated as a precedent. It is quite true that, under the old Legislative union, neither Upper nor Lower Canada was permitted to be governed by an adverse majority from the other. The rule of a double majority was early announced, and, with few exceptions, strictly carried into effect. Under Confederation the several provinces legislate each for itself, in all local matters, and on Federal questions a majority vote, however constituted, must, as a rule, prevail. It is strange that none of the speakers during the debate saw, or at least noticed, the constitutional point, which is far more important than the question under debate; no member protested, as all ought in prudence to have done, that the present exception could not be permitted to be drawn into a precedent for general purposes.

On the question of Emergency Food, purchased for use of the Canadian troops, in South Africa, the Government suffered a marked defection from its ranks. This was visible on the vote on the minority, as well as on the majority report, though largest on the latter occasion, when the deserters numbered ten, and the majority was reduced to fourteen. No set attack was made on the Minister of Militia; most of the criticism

being directed against Dr. Devlin, by whom the food was supplied. Not that the minister escaped criticism; on one or two points of detail he may be said to have been remiss, but there was no reason to believe that he had intentionally done wrong. Still, the Minister, as Mr. Richardson pointed out, had made himself responsible; and he was saved only by the narrow majority of 14, instead of 40 or more, as is seen on ordinary occasions. It is not quite clear that Dr. Neilson, the expert on whom the Government relied, showed all the caution that the case called for. The most outspoken critics were the ten Liberals in revolt. Their view was that an impudent fraud on the Government had been perpetrated; in this opinion a non-partisan jury would be likely to agree. The evidence of a competent chemist, like Mr. Ruttan, leaves no doubt that the stuff sold as an emergency ration was worthless for the purpose, and would sacrifice the lives of men who should have the misfortune to rely upon it, the quantity stated as a day's ration being only about one-tenth of what would be sufficient to keep a man in health. One member thought that Dr. Devlin ought to be criminally prosecuted; another that Dr. Neilson was the real culprit.

Premier Emmerson, of New Brunswick, is reported to have let drop some words in favor of Government railways. The original occasion of the utterance was upon the question whether the Government ought to retain in its hands the Intercolonial, which he answered, as we presume most people would, in the affirmative; and then he branched out into the general question of Government ownership of railways, declaring in favor of it. No special importance can, however, be attached to the incident, as it does not affect nor relate to any particular road, actual or projected. The incident is only worth notice as a straw on the ocean of public opinion.

The Legislature of Manitoba has come to the end of its Session. The Prohibition bill was passed; but the Government having doubts as to whether the Act be *intra vires* or *ultra vires* of the Legislature, the judicial question will go before the courts. It is not often that a Government voluntarily submits its own legislation to a judicial test, before putting it into operation; but the doubts which exist in this case had better be resolved with as little delay as possible. The special ground of the doubt being the reservation made by the Hudson Bay Company of its trading privileges, when it sold its territorial rights, in a roundabout way, which sale enabled somebody in England to make £70,000 out of the transaction, would not apply in those provinces to which the chartered rights of the company did not originally extend. Though the constitutionality of some other parts of the Act may also be put to the judicial test, no one outside the Government circle is at present permitted to know, even if there be a definite view, about it there, what these parts are.

If we may believe the late Governor McInnes, on the faith of his correspondence with the Dominion Premier, published in the Victoria Colonist, the owners of the Crow's Nest Pass Railway asked him not to assign to Mr. Martin the task of forming a Ministry. If he had taken this course without outside prompting, the event shows that he would have acted better than he