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THE SITUATION.

The bucket shop people are boasting that, by a feat of legal legerdemain, they will be able to defy the law which was specially enacted for their suppression. Counsel, it seems, are willing for a fee to aid in defeating the intention of the legislature; and the bucket shop men exult in their anticipated triumph over the law. They are to act, nominally at least, as the agents of parties in a foreign country. In this way they promise themselves immunity for their acts. The law seems to provide for this very case; but the difficulty will be to prove that there was no intention to deliver the things bargained for, in a foreign country. All laws of this kind are difficult of execution. They were tried in England long ago, without much success. The chief thing is to convince the foolish people of the risk that is involved in these transactions, and how certain to be fleeced is the new crop of fools, which is perennially renewed. And who is to protect silly people against themselves. It is doubtful whether the legislature can do it; and who that is intent on gambling listens to the moral teacher? The greenest of the adventurers who end by becoming victims of the bucket shops thinks himself astuter and likely to have better luck than the chief manipulators. He does not deserve much pity, and we fear that all moral lessons are thrown away upon him. It is stated that the Federal Government will leave to the Provincial Governments or the municipalities the task of enforcing the law. A law which nobody is obliged to enforce stands a good chance of becoming a dead letter.

While the Northern Pacific Railway is most anxious to secure connections in Manitoba, the Canadian Pacific is projecting opposition to its American arrival, on the south side of the international line. A link line between the Union Pacific and the Canadian Pacific has been projected, by which the latter road will obtain access to territory south of its present system, and the Union Pacific will find an eastern connection from the Missouri River to tide water 250 miles shorter than any now in

existence. The distance is said to be based on surveys on which about \$100,000 has been expended. The telegram announcing this project adds that the necessary capital has been secured, in New York. Should the connection be made, it must add considerably to the traffic of the Canadian Pacific, and be some compensation for the competition which that road is destined to meet from the Northern Pacific.

The business tax, from which a change of government was, at one time, vainly expected to afford relief, has just been increased by the legislature of Quebec. It is a kind of direct tax—for so the Privy Council has declared it—which operates in so indirect a manner that not only the average voter does not perceive it, but even those who ultimately pay do not come into personal contact with the tax collector. The impecunious among the local governments would put on a more general direct tax, if not restrained by fear of the opposition it would provoke. That fear sometimes prevents them from doing their duty, and, as in this case, makes them resort to the taxation of special interests, while the great body of the people are exempt. It is this discrimination which makes the tax odious in the eyes of business men. Tax all interests alike and no one will complain; but when some are taxed and others are exempted, the partiality is naturally objected to as unjust.

Stories of destitution in Newfoundland are again rife. Experience shows that they must be accepted with caution, the grossest fabrications about distress and starvation in the island having previously been sent to the American press. Now we are told that no less than one hundred and forty families in the northern part of the island are without food. If this were true deaths from starvation must be occurring daily. The statements about destitution, which are doubtless not wholly devoid of reality, are evidently exaggerated for political effect, and are even made to do service in connection with the question of confederation. The local Government, from time to time, has to distribute large sums in charity to relieve distress, and it is said to be moving, in a roundabout way, in the same direction now. Should the island enter the confederation, appeals to the charity of the Dominion Government are likely to become not uncommon.

The plumbers' license by-law of Toronto is said to contain a provision that no one except a British subject shall carry on the business. Where does the corporation get authority to make an exclusion of this kind? If the restriction may be made in one trade, it may be made in all, and citizenship and the right to earn a living in the country would be the same thing. This would be a revival of the old alien law, in a new and more odious form; for even under the old law no one thought of refusing to a foreigner the privilege of earning his bread in Canada. We suspect the Council has exceeded its authority, and doubtless the parties whose interests are affected will

enquire whence it gets the right to make such a restriction. It is apparently done in the interest of the working plumbers, who desire a monopoly, who have organized a strike, and want to keep out the competition of American workmen. But that would not make it either legal, or right if not otherwise legal. When the public asked that plumbing should be put under some sort of supervision, the object was to prevent work being scamped, in the interest of the public health. But if the license is to be turned into an odious monopoly, and the interests of the public sacrificed, a revision of the by-law will already have become necessary.

Judge Robertson, with the dislike natural to the Superior Court judges to fishing inquiries, has decided that the enquiry concerning Toronto civic contracts before Judge Macdougall cannot be allowed in future to implicate Contractor Godson unless charges against him be first formulated. A man under accusation has, to be sure, a right to know what he has to defend himself against. If there be grounds for a charge against Godson, what is to prevent its being put into shape? What necessity is there for doing indirectly, over the head of Lackie, the inspector, what, if grounds exist, could as well be done directly? Under the present reference, Mr. Justice Robertson interdicts Judge Macdougall from bringing in side charges against Godson. A couple of dismissed servants of Godson who tried to blackmail him, failing in that, made the present charges. If the evidence of these men, on which Mr. Justice Robertson would not place the slightest reliance, be sufficient ground to accuse any man upon, it might have come in one form as well as another. The charges cannot be allowed to rest where they are at present. Other persons have been implicated—an alderman for instance—and refused the right to cross-examine, at that stage of the proceedings when it would have been usual to allow cross-examination.

To prevent obstruction to traffic by encumbering the canals, an order has recently issued to allow vessels to pass through the locks early on Sunday mornings. Even this does not place canal vessels on the same footing as ships at sea or on the lakes, which are worked all day every day in the week, but it requires the additional labor of lock tenders. It is desirable if possible to give the regular lock hands rest on Sunday, even if extra help has to be obtained for that purpose. The regulation belongs purely to the order of civil government. Sunday labor is not desirable, if it can be avoided, but the exigencies of navigation are such that nowhere has it been found possible to dispense with it.

An incident has occurred which has brought into prominence Mr. Sandford Fleming's Pacific cable project to the east—the breakdown of the Eastern Telegraph Company's system, between Java and Port Darwin. The want of an alternative line was in this way brought home to practical business men, and at the annual meeting of