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## THE SITUATION.

The French Legislature seems bent on paying the American tariff debt in kind. The Senate has agreed to put heavy duties on Indian corn and meal. Meanwhile the exclusion of American pork, on the pretence that it is diseased, is continued. One member admitted that the trichinosis only served as a convenient pretext. This prohibition of American pork has lasted nine years, and has not tended to liberalize the American tariff. The two nations are playing the game of mutual restriction, and no one can see how far they will go in the pleasant path of mutual injury. *Le Temps*, which is regarded as a spokesman of the Government, admits that circumstances might occur in which the removal of the prohibition from American pork would be advisable. The contingency contemplated may be that of war. Corn and pork are more than convertible terms, corn being capable of development into pork; but the seeming logic of the exclusion of both is at fault, if we consider that French farmers might advantageously use American corn to make French pork.

The Behring Sea question, if we adopt a sensational theory which has been set afloat, is in a fair way of coming to a practical issue. A British naval squadron will go in the direction of these waters to protect British shipping in the pursuit of their lawful business. Precisely what form the protection will take may depend on circumstances; but the British squadron which goes to the Pacific coast of Canada has no doubt definite duties to perform. It has been asserted that President Harrison interfered to prevent an arrangement agreed upon between the British Minister and Mr. Blaine from going into effect; but this is probably no more than one of the sensations of the hour. The presence of squadrons of the two nations on the fishing grounds of one or other of these countries is no new thing. It has over and over again been witnessed in the Atlantic fisheries of British America and no collision has ever occurred. But, then, it must be remembered that the British squadron doing protective service did not

go beyond its recognized legal rights. The capture of British vessels found sealing in Behring Sea is not a right which the maritime nations generally recognize, or which even the American press finds it possible to defend. The sealing vessels going out from British Columbia are said to be armed, but single-handed one of them would stand a poor chance against an American cutter. We trust there is no truth in the story that two pretended sealers will go out from Maple Bay for the purpose of getting into a conflict with the Americans. Should such a thing happen, these vessels would merit the fate of pirates, and, like the "Georgian," would be treated as such not only by the United States, but by our own Government and that of Great Britain.

Canada is reported to have secured 50,000 cubic feet of space in the International Exhibition which is to take place in Jamaica next January. This incident has had the effect of once more directing attention to the trade relations of this country with the West Indies. Mr. Grant, a merchant from Trinidad, has had an interview with Mr. Foster on the subject; he is said to indulge the hope of a revival of the declining commerce of Canada with the West Indies. Our sugar tariff is probably to a large extent responsible for the decline of the trade, which equals nearly one-third, in the last eighteen years. The competition of beet sugar, too, has also had a part in it. Canada can scarcely afford, as a matter of revenue, to make sugar free, though our policy in favoring Canadian refineries as we have done, is chiefly remarkable for having created a monopoly and enriched a few individuals, some of whom no longer find the country good enough for their residence. Free sugar, in the United States, will give a great impetus to the trade of those States with the West Indies, and will decrease the chances of Canada retaining even the remnant of trade with these islands which remains to her. It is possible that some ameliorating measure may be within our reach; but the probability is that, under free sugar, a larger proportion of the West India trade will fall to the lot of the Republic.

From a statement made by Sir James Fergusson, in the House of Commons, there is no longer any doubt that proceedings have been taken against the British naval officers who interfered with the lobster fisheries on the Newfoundland coast. "Naval officers," Sir James added, "had general instructions to prevent British fishermen from interfering with the free enjoyment of rights of French fishermen. These instructions were framed in pursuance of Treaty obligations." In the United States a treaty is a supremelaw of the land, and it is absurd to suppose that any local law of Newfoundland can prevent the execution of the treaty rights of England and France. Technically, perhaps, the procedure of the British captain may be open to question. British subjects have no right to do anything to prevent the enjoyment by the French of their treaty rights. The anomalous character of these rights in no

way detracts from their binding obligation, so long as they are in force. The true and the only remedy is, find some acceptable means of putting an end to the anomaly. This is not to be done by a breach of treaty obligations, by violence in any form, a resort to either of which methods can only make bad worse. Encroachment on one side leads to an assertion of extreme pretensions on the other. It is doubtful whether either the French or the British have a right to erect lobster packing establishments on the "French shore," and when one erects such establishments, the other is impelled to do likewise. When they are both in the wrong, there is a double supply of combustible materials, and an explosion is always among the possibilities. A hopeful feature in this dispute is that the official delegates of the colony are leaving England under the impression that the question will be satisfactorily settled.

After all we have done on our canals, Mr. T. E. Keefer, C. E., is of opinion that the modern vessel is outgrowing them, and that a new canal system will be one of the needs of the near future. There can be no doubt about the constant growth in the size of lake vessels, and it is a question whether the maximum has been reached. Against continual enlargement is opposed the limited depth of harbors; but harbors, like canals, can have their capacity increased. Sometimes there is a physical limit to the size of canals, in the form of water supply, but this obstacle would not be likely to oppose itself to the enlargement of our great canals. Still, when Mr. Keefer speaks of a new system of canals, he uses words of startling import, and makes a revelation, if revelation it be, for which the public was not prepared. We had hoped that we were now enlarging on a scale which would meet all requirements, and almost the first intimation we have that we are hugging a delusion comes in the shape of the net statement that we shall soon require a new system of canals altogether. But we shall at least have time to recover our breath before we are called upon seriously to set to work to dig new canals on a scale not yet defined or ascertained.

A bill to fix with increased definiteness the responsibility of joint-stock companies, has passed through committee of the British House of Commons. According to the *Economist*, it "provides for the infliction of penalties upon those who, having accepted positions of responsibility and trust, are guilty either of fraud or culpable negligence in connection with the duties they have undertaken to perform." We learn further that "it is a fundamental principle of the measure that punishment shall only follow where, and in so far as, the shareholders of a company suffer loss arising from the fraud or culpable negligence of those who are appointed and paid especially to protect and promote the interests of the undertaking." Too many men, in more countries than Great Britain, undertake a larger number of directorships than they can properly attend to. Twenty-six members of Parliament are named by the journal in question who hold