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## THE SITUATION.

President Cleveland's message in favor of the prompt repeal of the Silver Purchase Act cannot be accused of indirectness, or of being wanting in candor or explicitness. He points out that \$147,000,000 of Treasury notes, payable practically in gold, have been issued in payment of silver since the law went into force; that the purchases have failed in the object of keeping up the price of silver, that metal having recently reached the lowest price ever known; that if the purchases were to continue, either the Government would have to find gold by the sale of bonds, or a silver basis would have to be accepted; in the latter event the United States would have to accept an inferior position among the nations. The Government is required to maintain a parity between gold and silver, a feat which has become impossible. Fortunately the Act declares it to be "the established object of the United States to maintain the two metals on a parity with each other upon the present legal rates, or such rates as may be provided by law." Nominally, the Secretary of the Treasury is at liberty to pay the Treasury notes issued in the purchase of silver either in gold or silver; but the President holds that the officer's action is controlled by the declaration in favor of maintaining the parity of the two metals, and, in fact, he can only pay in gold. This is no doubt true. The fear that bonds and other obligations might be paid in silver frightened foreign investors, caused apprehension and a general lack of confidence at home, and produced a whole train of evils.

One sentence in President Cleveland's silver message is sure to be caught at by the silver advocates. "Possibly," it reads, "if the undertaking were the maintenance of a specific known quantity of silver as the parity with gold, our ability to do so might be estimated and gauged, and per-

haps, in view of the unparalleled growth and resources, be favorably passed upon." A certain amount of silver is required for change: and the suggestion of suppressing all bank notes under five dollars in favor of silver has elsewhere been made. It would be difficult to fix the amount of silver which could be maintained on a par with gold. The question of ratio derives its importance chiefly from the quantity of silver in use. Token money can be used for change; but anything beyond this point would be putting into the place of gold an inferior metal, which the fiat of the Government could not make acceptable. The silver men will extract but scant comfort from the statement that a certain amount of silver might possibly be maintained on a par with gold, since it leaves no room for additions to the present silver currency. Somebody has suggested a ratio of one to twenty-five; and the silver men, when beaten on free coinage, will probably try some new ratio. But the disease has become too desperate for a remedy which might have had some efficacy if tried at an early stage of the silver difficulty.

The silver men who met in convention at Chicago took up the extreme position in favor of maintaining the ratio between silver and gold at 16 to 1. They saw in the Act which they describe as demonetizing silver, in 1873 a conspiracy of Great Britain, accomplished through the agency of "one Ernest Sied, a London banker, who it is claimed was sent over to Washington by the money classes of the Old World to secure its passage by secret and corrupt means." And the resolutions declare that "the corrupt work of Ernest Sied and our foreign enemies is an insult to the dignity of the American people, a crushing burthen to their prosperity, an attempt to place us again under the yoke from which George Washington and his compatriots rescued us." A resort to such pretences shows the desperate nature of the case which the convention was called to champion. It is quite in line with the old trick of stigmatizing the Second Bank of the United States as a British contrivance. The convention adopted its resolutions and finished its work at a single sitting. Its members must know that there is not the slightest chance that their resolves will be acceptable to Congress. At Washington we may soon see them trying to make conditions of repeal.

Twice the Government of Ottawa has changed its mind in regard to the sale of the islands at the entrance of the St. Lawrence River. There are some 900 of them, and at first it was the intention to sell most of them; then the number to be sold was reduced to 350, in consequence of objections and protests forwarded to Ottawa from different quarters; now it is concluded not to sell any. Some of the reasons urged in favor of not selling the greater portion of the islands were valid, beyond doubt; others were not. It would not be desirable that a large portion of these islands should fall into the hands of foreigners, who it was thought would become the purchasers, for obvious inconveniences might result from such a dispo-

sition of them; but the notion that the national control would follow the private ownership is mistaken. It is sufficient that in a conceivable case, embarrassment might arise from foreign occupation of islands in a river at a point where the water communication of the country might be cut. Besides, there is something in the suggestion that as ground for a national park, many of these islands might reasonably be reserved.

The Earl of Aberdeen, the new Governor-General of Canada, approved himself a man of tact and judgment in the speech he made last week at a public banquet given to himself in London. Owing his appointment to a party of different politics from those of his Canadian advisers, he makes it plain that he understands the duty of a Governor-General to indulge no political bias. So desirable does he think it to make this clear, that he has stated it more than once on public occasions. At this time of day there is no danger of our receiving a political partizan for Governor, though in the remote past this was a thing of frequent occurrence. But this was before the principle of responsible government was thoroughly established. The Earl also touched on the benefits to Canada of "ample autonomy combined with a vital, but absolutely unhampered connection with the British Empire." This is another way of saying that Canada is contented because she feels herself full master of her own destiny. From these indications it is pretty plain that the new Governor-General is not a man to commit blunders or to fall into mistakes of meddlesomeness.

Though President Cleveland limits the business of the extra session to the repeal of the Silver Purchase Act, he regards tariff reform as a duty to be entered upon at the earliest possible date. To this reform, he distinctly says, every officer of the present administration is pledged, while a large majority of the people have by their votes demanded it. Next session we may look for tariff reform. Protection was regarded from the first as a temporary means intended to give aid to manufactures which, in their infancy, could not stand alone; but it is now nearly a century since the beginning of the experiment, which imposes sacrifices on the great body of the people. Continuous Protection would impose perpetual sacrifice, which was never contemplated, and to which the nation never consented, and never would consent. If after nearly a century's existence, Protection has not done its work, the cause is something else than the want of opportunity.

Rokeby, the ex-manager of the suspended Commercial Bank of Winnipeg, lies under charge of the unusual offence of making a false return to the Government of the condition of the bank. He is alleged to have reported the amount at the credit of the bank outside the country at more than it was. Not only does the charge affect him. It would be difficult to believe that Mr. McArthur, the president, had any guilty knowledge of the alleged transaction. The penalty for this offence is three years in the