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THE SITUATION.

M. Mercier, in accepting the commission proposed by Governor Angers, avoids the alternative of resignation. The investigation before the Senate incidentally dealt with the charges against the Quebec Government, the object being to ascertain whether a bill relating to the Baie des Chaleurs railway should be reported or refused. The promoters offered to withdraw the bill when the charges of corruption were made, but Parliament, in refusing to consent, felt bound to ascertain whether there had been an attempt to make it a party to a fraud. The bill was finally reported, on certain conditions, and the enquiry was in this way justified. The Mercier Government was not on trial before the Senate committee; it came under accusation as an incident of parliamentary procedure. The real trial is to take place before the commission, where fair play to all concerned will be ensured. M. Mercier will be at full liberty to put in the defence which he refused to produce before the Senate committee. In the meantime the proper attitude of the public mind will be a readiness to weigh the evidence, and a determination to reach judgment only when the accusation and the defence have been formally made. In all trials now-a-days, even when life is at stake, it has come to be too much the fashion for the press to pronounce judgment in advance, creating a strong bias in the public mind. In political cases the tendency is all the stronger, and opinion divides on party lines.

The Grand Trunk tunnel under the St. Clair river, nearly 1.17 miles long, is one of the great engineering achievements of the age. The gradients which form approaches to the two sides of the tunnel make the whole length nearly 2½ miles. The grade from each side is one foot in fifty. This international railway connection has now been formally opened, and on the lowest

view of its utility, it will contribute materially to the safety and speed of the traffic. Its value in facilitating trade between the two countries will depend largely upon the liberal spirit in which their trade relations are treated by the legislative authorities. Most people admit that the tariffs of the two countries ought to be relaxed, but on the extent to which this should be done different views prevail. In this connection, two facts stand out with unmistakable prominence: the Americans will have no reciprocity which is confined to raw materials; Canada will not consent to reciprocity which would embrace the whole of the productions and manufactures of the two countries. If there is to be any agreement it must be between these two extreme limits, and there is nothing to do but search for a medium line, till one is found that would be acceptable to both, if this be possible; if not, nothing can be done, and each country must be left to work out its own salvation in its own way.

From Newfoundland comes intelligence which points to the ultimate death of the French dispute in a natural way. The strict enforcement of the Bait Act has so seriously diminished the French catch as, in popular belief, to have made it unremunerative. We have frequently pointed out that this is the true remedy for the unfair French opposition. There is no longer any political party in the island who favor the repeal of the Bait Act, though the Newfoundland fishermen who formerly made a living by supplying bait to the French, regret the loss of their occupation, and too frequently take refuge in smuggling as a means of evading the law. It is hoped that they may get into the way of depending upon curing herring, which would be likely to prove even more remunerative. Claims on the British Government for damages done to fishermen, through the orders of a British commander, Commodore Russell, are being prepared by Sir Robert Pinsent. It appears that they will number 200. Damages for what they were prevented from doing will rank as consequential, but if the prohibition was clear they will have to be considered by the British Government. About \$20,000 will pay the bill, though of course it will have to be shown to be fair and reasonable.

The British occupation of Sigri, as the event proves, was of a different kind from that at first announced and generally believed, in England as well as on the continent of Europe. A British fleet cruising round the ancient Lesbos did land some marines at Sigri, and from this the story of taking possession was easily developed. Russia, while believing in the reality of the alleged taking of possession, merely said the event did not concern her, and her ambassador at Berlin hastened to explain that Russia claimed no special privilege in the passage of the Dardanelles. From St. Petersburg, by the channel of the Novosti, came a proposal that England would join Russia, on condition of being forever left undisturbed in India. Even so small a thing as this is enough to create anxiety or suspicion in the Courts of the Dried.

A new pilgrimage to Rome has been set on foot, composed of working men who go to express their gratitude to the Pope for his recent encyclical on the labor question. The advance guard of a number estimated at 20,000 has already arrived in the Eternal City. The Pope, in receiving them, as in the encyclical, assumed that the labor question belongs to the jurisdiction of the Church, though it is doubtful whether employers or employed as a body are likely to accept that view of it. The object is to add to the power of the Church a motive which formerly led to the putting of most of the works of political economists into the Index. The Pope claims for the Church the right to impose on the consciences of employer and employed, but this claim is one which a large part of the Christian world has been denying for centuries, and to which only a limited adhesion will now be given. The intervention of the Church of Rome in this question will not be generally accepted. Protestant churches more and more show a meddlesome disposition in labor disputes; but they do not claim a right to impose on consciences to the same extent that the Pope does. The benefit of their intervention may be easily overestimated if it has a ratable value at all, which many are disposed to doubt. In spite of all that can be said, the workman must have the right of declining to work except on terms and conditions which he is willing to accept, and when it is added that this is true of the employer also, there is no room for the intervention of a third party except to offer advice that may lessen friction.

A new trial of an old scandal, practically in the form of an appeal from a commission to a committee of the House of Commons, is asked for by Mr. Lister. Section B of the Pacific Railway is the scene of the alleged scandal. The charge is that Mr. John G. Haggart, then as now a Member of Parliament, was interested, through Mr. Peter McLaren, in the contract, and that he received a share of the profits. Before the commission Mr. Haggart gave the most emphatic denial to this charge, and it was not proved by others. Now it is alleged that some one of the partners, who comprised Messrs. Alex. Mahning, Alex. Shields, John James Macdonald, Alex. McDonnell, James Isbester and Peter McLaren, has become leaky. One is dead, and most of the others are mentioned as witnesses. Claims arising out of alterations in the contract and on other grounds were made by the contractors, two arbitrations were held, and a large sum was awarded to them. It is alleged, in addition to the charge against Mr. Haggart, that contributions for political purposes were made by the contractors, whose axes were assumed to have been ground. As a reason for not making the accusation at an earlier period in the session, Mr. Lister says that he has only recently come into possession of the information on which the charges are founded, but he speaks as if he had everything ready to proceed.

Mr. Haggart again gave the charges the most emphatic denial, and said that in the suit Leacock vs. McLain, Mr. McLaren