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THE SITUATION.

Strange to say, the French admiral has undertaken, in St. George's Bay, Newfoundland, to intervene in the bait question, and forcibly to prevent supplies being given to American fishermen. He denies the right of the colonists to fish in that bay, and has removed their fishing appliances from the water to the shore, and he refuses to allow them to supply bait to Americans. These are assumptions of authority which assuredly does not belong to France. The facts are not beyond dispute, the French Minister refusing to believe in the acts reported. This interference of the French goes farther than that of last year, though it does not appear to conflict with any positive treaty rights of the United States, which do not include the purchase of bait. Great Britain and the United States are put on the defensive against France, but they cannot, perhaps, well act unitedly in defence of their respective rights. Canada has no particular interest in seeing the Americans supplied with the bait, while our fishermen are denied bait by the Newfoundland authorities. The assumption of territorial rights on the part of France is being carried beyond endurance. Primarily it is an offence against Great Britain and Newfoundland, and the British Government has already complained to the Government of France of these unwarranted proceedings. The Americans may complain of unfriendly proceedings, but beyond that the ground of complaint scarcely goes.

Sealing in Behring Sea stands a fair chance of getting a respite from British subjects, if Imperial legislation can secure it. But the bill which the British Government is passing through Parliament, comes too late to be fully effective this year. Sealers who have gone on their voyage will know nothing about any order-in-council which, under the proposed law, the Government may issue, forbidding British sub-

jects to engage in sealing in Behring Sea. If the business was legal when they set out and they do not learn that it has ceased to be so, it is difficult to see how they could be held responsible. But others, whose vessels have not yet started for the sealing grounds, who know that it is proposed to prohibit their doing so, could not be said to have been wholly without warning. The measure will probably be pushed through Parliament with all possible speed, and the fact will be known to our sealers the next day. After this, all justifiable excuse for pursuing what would then be an illegal calling, would be at an end. In British Columbia, where our sealers live, it is hopeless to expect that the measure will be popular. But if the bill should become law, it can be disregarded only at the personal risk of those who engage in what would have become, for the time being, an illegal occupation.

Apparently Great Britain and the United States will each have to enforce the regulation for a close season in Behring Sea, and this service will be performed by cruisers of each nation respectively in respect to vessels belonging to that nation. Navigation in Behring Sea is not interfered with by the British bill, but the prohibition applies to "killing, taking or hunting, or an attempt at killing, taking or hunting of seals," and any British ship in that sea will be liable to examination and detention by a commissioned naval officer, if he has reason to believe that she "is being, or preparing to be used or employed in contravention of the regulations." If a vessel is found to have on board seals or sealskins or such implements as those animals are usually taken with, the onus of proof that she was not being unlawfully employed will be on the owner. Captured ships may be taken before a British Admiralty court and condemned to forfeiture and sale. Whether the United States will make regulations similar to those applicable to American vessels offending remains to be seen. In British Columbia, which is the province of Canada chiefly interested in sealing in Behring Sea, the British bill is naturally distasteful.

The Chignecto Marine Railway will take longer to complete than was originally supposed, with the result that the company comes before Parliament asking an extension of time till July 1, 1893. If we may judge by the items of cost, something more than half the work has been done, the expenditure to date being \$3,000,000, and the estimated amount necessary to finish being \$2,500,000. In consideration of a grant of \$170,000 a year, for twenty years, the company finds all the capital for the experiment, for such this marine railway is. The extension of time was granted. Some of the Maritime members showed their gratitude by repudiating this work as a concession to these provinces. The Parliamentary grant naturally came in for criticism; but we venture to think that so novel a scheme and one fraught with such immense results, immediate and remote, is worth what the Dominion contributes towards it. If successful, as it probably will be, it will be

only the first of a large number of similar undertakings, which will add greatly to the facilities of the world's commerce. It is true that in consequence of the delay, we shall have longer to wait for the assured result, but wait we must for the promised certainty before any more similar enterprises are entered on.

Under Mr. Balfour's Irish Land Purchase Bill the experiment of peasant proprietorship is to be tried at an expenditure, to be advanced out of the national resources, of £30,000,000. There must be an immense difficulty in transforming thousands of tenants into owners of land. But in this very difficulty much of the virtue of the Act is to be found. The stimulus to industry and economy which the prospect of land-owning holds out to the average mind may be relied upon to work every charm within the limit of the possible; but between the possible and the impossible there must be a line yet to be revealed by experience. What the Government advances is a certain amount; what it will get back is, we should think, very uncertain. Is there not danger that, when the pinch comes, the agrarian question will be found, to a large extent, to have merely put on another form? The peasants wanted the land for nothing before; now they will not relish the notion of being held for payment, which many will feel and more represent as impossible. The transfer is a worthy object, worth some risk and much encouragement. It can scarcely fail to produce some good and lasting results.

Leave having been obtained from the other governments interested, part of the correspondence on the proposed negotiations for a reciprocity treaty between Canada and the United States has been laid before Parliament at Ottawa. There was some misunderstanding about the initiation of the proposals; the Canadian order-in-council attributing it to a suggestion of Mr. Blaine's, and the latter referring it to Sir Julian Pauncefote. Sir Charles Tupper and Sir Julian had a conference with Mr. Blaine on the 2nd of April, when it was agreed that the negotiations should open on the 6th of that month. It turned out, however, that this date would not suit the convenience of the President, who had arranged to go west at once, and the 12th October was then named as the date of the conference. At the interview with Mr. Blaine, the question of the proposed treaty between the United States and Newfoundland was mentioned, Sir Julian Pauncefote explaining that there had been no authority to negotiate except through the British Minister, and that the later negotiations were entirely unauthorized. Mr. Blaine said the United States did not need any treaty with Newfoundland, as they were getting all the bait they wanted. October 12th stands as the date of the negotiations, and the death of the Canadian Premier will not alter the policy which it was proposed to act upon. It appears that Newfoundland proposed to make a convention with Canada similar to that which it desired to make with the United States.