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## THE SITUATION.

Kingston bargemen are objecting to their American competitors being allowed to use the Rideau Canal, and have signed a petition asking the Government to put a stop to the practice. It is not at all certain that, under the Treaty of Washington, the Government has the right to comply with this request. The fact, if fact it be, that American bargemen are taking all the traffic does not enlarge the rights or lessen the obligations of this Government. An Ottawa paper alleges the want of reciprocity in the business, and states that Canadian barges are not allowed in American waters. If it be meant that they cannot go from Chicago to Oswego, or any two American ports, it is true, for to do so would be to do a coasting trade; but if it be intended to allege that a Canadian barge cannot go into an American port, we do not understand on what ground such alleged exclusion exists. But as the statement is made with great positiveness by more than one person, the question will doubtless be looked into by our Government when it comes to deal with the petition of the Kingston bargemen. If it be true that the American Government rules out Canadian barges from the rights of navigation in its ports, its own law of exclusion would surely be good if applied against itself.

A forced interpretation seems to be put upon the contract labor law by the administrative officers of the American Government. They have decided that emigrants sent from Great Britain to Texas with simple letters to agents in that State, and under no special contract, but only an agreement to accept the first employment offered them, are under contract within the meaning of the law. It is now attempted to bring within its extending purview, as executively interpreted, the case of a banker who resides on the Canadian side of the border and does business in the Republic. As he lives now, so he has lived forty years, but prescription has no force against the law. This question awaits decision, as does also that of a man living in Canada and crossing the border to do a day's work. If labor enriches a country, why reject it on grounds so frivolous as these? The facts show that the jealousy of the laboring classes in the Republic is increasing and has already reached the verge of the ridiculous. The movement of labor between St. Stephen, N.B., and Calais, Maine, is to give rise to a test case for decision.

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Lake and Canadian transportation competition is to be met by the lowering of rates on the roads under the North-Western Freight Association. At least a resolution to that effect was come to last week by a committee appointed by the president of the Inter-State Railway Association to take into consideration the conditions of North-Western transportation. To carry out this view the lines interested in the St. Paul and Minneapolis traffic were requested to open negotiations, "with a view to make such joint tariffs and rates between all points reached by the Canadian routes and the lake routes as shall meet any and all rates made by the Canadian and lake routes;" a resolution which it is sought to justify by "dissimilarity of circumstances." This at least shows a belief that the American lines in question are not incapable of doing something for their own protection; and it seems to mean that until they can get legal restriction or exclusion enlisted on their side, they are willing to try the effect of extended competition. If the all-rail lines intend to meet the competition of the mixed routes, they can only do so by coming down to an equality with the latter's tariff, and this is said to be what is intended.

A decision come to by the Parnell Commission to refuse to order the production of the books of the Loyal and Patriotic Society has a special bearing on the power of such commissions. Parnell's counsel said he wanted the books to enable him to show that this society had done this or done that, when Judge Hannen objected that this would be to implicate persons not before the Court. This was the ground taken in the Godson case in the municipal enquiry in Toronto by Mr. Justice Robertson, whose decision has since been unanimously set aside by the Court of Appeal, which tribunal would appear to be in direct antagonism to the decision of the Parnell Commission. The point was possibly raised to give Parnell an opportunity of withdrawing from the Commission, a step which he appears to have then contemplated but since abandoned. The point decided by the Parnell Commission is one which by no means appears to be settled, as the decision of the Court of Appeal here would have led the public to believe.

Among the latest "trusts" is the Salt Union, an English-American organization, which is issuing shares and debentures prior to putting the American half of the concern on the market, the English company having a prior existence. In all such combinations the parties combining get the greater number of the shares, which are often put at a total nearly double the market value of the combined properties, and on which a dividend is expected to be earned. Doubtless these combinations have

points of economy connected with their working, but they are nevertheless a menace to the public. For instance, the English agent who visited the United States and Canada expresses the opinion that the existing salt works in America can by consolidation be made so strong as to prevent opposition. The overcoming of opposition is the game of the combines, and when they are successful the public is at their mercy. If a single company can control the salt works in three countries, the public would be at the mercy of the monopoly unless so far as there might be a chance of relief from other countries which the monopoly did not cover.

Another Atlantic cable seems to be among the probabilities. An English journal goes so far as to say that most of the capital, £400,000, is already subscribed. The new cable is to start from the West of Ireland and run to the Straits of Belleisle, and is to be a Canadian cable. Mr. Dobell, of Quebec, the great shipper of lumber, is actively promoting the scheme, which is said to be favored by the Dominion Government. The Government can grant a charter and give its business. So much is certain. Rumor says that in addition it will build a land connection with the cable, and rent it to the new company at a moderate figure. Should this scheme be carried out, Canada may get European despatches for publication which have not passed through the crucible of the United States Associated Press or that of any other distorting medium.

A fast line of Atlantic steamers is said to have been secured by the Canadian Government through a contract with the Andersons, who have long been making proposals for this purpose. Nineteen knots an hour is the speed guaranteed, the passage to be made within six days. The vessels will have three ports of call on the other side, London, Cherbourg (France), and Plymouth; from the latter port the steamers will start, for Montreal in summer and Halifax in winter. Some time must elapse, a year at least, before the arrangement can go into effect.

Of late years there has been a remarkable falling off in the mackerel fishery, both of Canada and the United States, and the question naturally arises whether the diminution is to be permanent. Royal Commissions used to tell us that there was no danger of diminishing the quantity of fish in the sea by any possible implements of destruction. This assurance no longer assures. Can the fish have gone elsewhere? The Dutch used to believe that herring crossed the Atlantic. We do not hear of extra quantities of mackerel being found elsewhere, except that on the coast of Ireland they have been plentiful this year. The diminution has been going on for five years, and in the U. S. has declined from 478,076 barrels to 48,205 barrels.

The Canadian millers at their recent meeting complained that they are suffering from the competition of Canadian railways, which convey flour from Minneapolis to

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