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## THE SITUATION.

A conflict of jurisdiction in the Klondyke district has arisen, its more special manifestation being in the exercise of two powers, the Federal and the Territorial, of the right to license the sale of liquor. With the Territorial Government it appears to be altogether a matter of revenue: \$82,000 has been got into the drag-net by this means. Mr. Haultain complains that Major Walsh, a Dominion official, pays no attention to his [Mr. Haultain's] Government. The mistake made has been in the Dominion Parliament not having separated the Yukon district from the Territories. In this way the Territorial Government gets some show of right where it has no means of governing. If the Yukon were left to Territorial management, chaos would reign there unchecked. Mr. Haultain threatens, if he has the power, to impeach Major Walsh for not obeying a Government to which he does not owe his office. This can scarcely be taken seriously, and in any case the Dominion Government is bound to protect an officer who acted under its orders. No time should be lost in detaching the Yukon from the Territories over which Mr. Haultain presides.

On the coming plebiscite it is confessedly difficult to excite interest, much less enthusiasm, on either side. The reasons for this prevailing apathy may be guessed at: intemperance is no longer the devouring monster it once was, and the horror its contemplation creates decreases in a corresponding ratio. Those who desire strong drink believe that under prohibition they would have no insuperable difficulty in obtaining it. But if this be true they would often have to put up with an article of inferior quality. There is no party spirit in the contest to give it zest and energy. Though the Government, of whomsoever composed, could scarcely contemplate the loss from one item of over \$8,000,000 of revenue, the voice of the electorate must be obeyed. A plebiscite is an extraordinary occasion under our system of Government, but when the electorate is called upon to say "yes" or "no" on a given question it is desirable that a full vote should be brought out. There is very much reason to fear that in the present instance it will not be. All who abstain from voting run the risk of investing a minority with the rights and powers of a majority. It is a majority of the electors

who vote, not a majority of the whole electorate, who decide. At an election for members of the Legislature there may be conceivable excuses for abstention; when it is a question of a law which is intended to exert the utmost rigor on the personal conduct of every individual the duty of voting becomes imperative.

A prohibition meeting which brought an ex-Minister of Finance and an actual Minister of Agriculture to the same platform exemplified the open nature of the issue. Neither the one nor the other spoke for his party; both appeared there as individuals. Neither the Government nor the Opposition party, as a party, makes a sign; both are divided on prohibition, and neither can act as an unit. In the past both sides have played for the prohibition vote and the anti-prohibition vote, and in a political election the same thing might be expected to occur again. But there is no room for such action now, no incentive to engage in it. Whatever make-believes there may be in action, party is as silent as the grave. Would an affirmative vote bring legislative action in the form of prohibition? No one has said, in so many words, that this would happen, but as much has been implied by the attitude of Ministers. The Premier has even named the articles on which the substitutionary taxes would be imposed; and if this forecast were carried out, over \$8,000,000 of taxes now borne by the drinkers of strong drinks would be transferred to tea, coffee and sugar. To a large extent the drinker of strong drinks would have shuffled out of the tax; would he be deprived of his usual beverage? He would have to get it either as an authorized drug, through means of a medical prescription, or by one of the many illicit means that would be open? These latter include manufactured and smuggled liquor, and whether the one or the other were most in vogue, the quality of the liquor would almost certainly be bad. A prescription might serve the purpose of a few, the majority would travel forbidden roads and pay the penalty of using bad liquor.

Startling statements have been made in the Church of England Synod about the abnormally low birth-rate in Ontario. The figures quoted by the Rev. Mr. Williams are one-third lower than those of England and Wales, and lower than France, whose population is at a stand-still. France feels alarm at the danger of the situation created by this stagnation in the population, but it cannot be said that any such feeling has been manifested here. The committee which Mr. Williams has obtained may serve to call attention to a serious evil, but that it will show us how a remedy can be enforced is more than doubtful. Religious sentiment may indeed do something. It is quite probable that the Church of Rome, which has a firmer hold of her adherents than most Protestant churches, has done something in this particular. If France be quoted as an example to the contrary, we must remember the small hold which religion has on the people of Old France, in these days. What the Church of Rome may be able to do in this particular, has the Church of England the machinery for doing? Any church can appeal to the conscience of its adherents, so far as the matter is one to be decided at the bar of conscience. Beyond this it can do nothing; the law can do nothing, unless in those rare cases in which crimes of which the law takes cognizance, are committed. Of such we hear from time to time, but they are but as a drop in the bucket compared with the whole result seen in the great decline in the birth-rate.

Nothing compels us implicitly to believe in the absolute accuracy of the Ontario statistics of births. Their