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### THE SITUATION.

A point has been now reached when the significance of the Jubilee celebration can be fairly estimated. It means, whatever else, a United Empire, marching in the front rank of civilization, animated by a common impulse, and looking forward to new triumphs in the path of peace. This Empire desires nothing so much as peace. Her great navy looks only to the defence of her numerous possessions in all parts of the globe. One question is whether, in what form, and to what extent, the colonies should aid in the naval defence of the Empire. At a meeting of the United Empire League, in London, with the Duke of Devonshire for chairman and Lord Salisbury as vice-president, Col. Denison, of Toronto, suggested that 75,000 Canadian seamen be trained as a naval reserve. The mere magnitude of the proposal must go a long way towards proving fatal to it. Just as the million-dollar fund of Lady Aberdeen caused her scheme of a national nursing foundation to come into the world still-born.

It is undeniable that, if there is a weak point in the British navy, it is that it is insufficiently manned; it is also true that the nearest point at which this deficiency could be in part supplied is Canada. Training seamen by relays might do much to supply the present deficiency. Auxiliary naval aid is being supplied in different parts of the Empire, each in its own way. Besides the vessels which belong to the auxiliary naval reserve, the Cape of Good Hope and Australia are each doing something in the form of naval defence. The natural development of this force, the form it tends to take, will probably be found to be the best, since it develops the least friction and must give the best satisfaction.

The Imperial Confederationists have long been awaiting for some one to formulate for them a plan of procedure. At last, the word has been spoken, and it came from a quarter which, a year ago, seemed most unlikely to generate it. Addressing a meeting of members of the British House of Commons, Sir Wilfrid Laurier suggested a scheme of federation, in which the

Imperial Parliament would be the Grand Council of the Empire. He foresees, however, that the realization of this idea is a long way off, so far off that a fortnight ago he did not hope to live to see its accomplishment. He then declared that with him the work of the hour was to obtain the denunciation of two treaties which stand in the way of reciprocal preference in trade. Imperial confederation is then for Sir Wilfrid Laurier rather a distant ideal than a practical object of attainment in the near future.

In pursuance of the policy of reciprocal preference, New South Wales has been officially declared entitled to the benefit of the new rule. The objection will of course be raised, in the name of agriculture, that Australian mutton will too closely compete with Canadian. Australia has a decided advantage in the growing of mutton over most other countries, and the natural question to ask is whether this country cannot, by opening wide her ports, contrive to share that advantage. Even if there were no duty on Australian mutton, Canadian mutton would have the protection of the cost of carriage from one side of the globe to the other. To all except the growers of Canadian mutton, cheap Australian mutton will be a boon. A trade in this meat would not be one-sided. The producers of mutton in New South Wales, or their neighbors, may be expected to buy from Canada some products in return. Reciprocal preference, on the lines sanctioned by the Canadian Parliament, makes for free exchange between the nations.

On the practical question of denouncing the treaties that stand in the way of the policy of preference, on which Canada has entered, the cable reports a difference of opinion between the colonial premiers, who are unanimous for denunciation, and Mr. Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, who is said to be disinclined to put an end to the treaty with Germany. If this statement describes the real state of the case accurately, Mr. Laurier has told us in advance what must happen; if England does not advance, he has said, Canada must recede from her policy of preference. But the law according preference is in force and cannot be altered till next session. Whether any backward move can be made under the law, or whether it will be necessary to consider this question, in the meantime, are matters which, disquieting as they look, need not disquiet us. Canada's right to grant preference has taken the form of a legal assumption, crystallized in an Act of Parliament. Whether that Act is constitutionally assailable, the law officers of the Crown, in England, may enquire. If the decision be against the validity of the Act, what is the remedy? Resort to the use of the veto is not among the probabilities; perhaps there may be some way of bringing the matter before the Privy Council for decision.

A strike of coal miners in six States may give our neighbors and ourselves much trouble. One enigma connected with the situation is the admission, alleged to be generally made by the mine owners, that the demands of the workmen are entirely reasonable. And if the pictures given of the miserable condition of their surroundings be half true, this may well be believed. The puzzle is to know why reasonable demands are not granted. Machinery has abridged human labor in the mines, and the small amounts which some have earned for a month tell of an absence of full employment. The wages asked are relatively low, lower than they have often been in the past, lower than the workmen can live on in decency. It is not