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TORONTO, CAN. FRIDAY, OCT. 20, 1893.

THE SITUATION.

Cable communication between Australia and the Canadian Pacific coast has made an advance step, according to some, and has met a set back, according to others. What has been done is that Queensland and New South Wales have subsidized a French cable to New Caledonia, in the hope that it may prove the first link in the Pacific cable between Australia and Vancouver. Lord Ripon, on behalf of the British Government, expresses regret that this has been done, as such a means of communication, in time of war, might be used to the injury of Great Britain and Australia. For this very reason, there are people in Australia who argue that the cable to New Caledonia will be the means of creating a new and independent British cable. The French Government, it seems, is aiding the cable to New Caledonia, and the question is raised why the British Government should not aid an independent British line. So the question stands at present. A cable of this kind must be laid in a time of peace, when no interference with the work is feared, and is eminently a matter of foresight and calculation.

Rumblings of the afterclap of the Behring Sea Arbitration are heard. The question of damages arising from the seizure of British, chiefly Canadian, sealing vessels by the United States, remains to be settled. A list of claims in respect to the vessels seized, twenty in number, is now being scanned with anxious curiosity at Washington. Secretary Gresham is said to realize that the bill for damages is likely to be large. The value of the vessels and their contents may be expected to become a matter of evidence. It is not impossible that American citizens may have had an interest in some of these vessels; this is a question which it is open to the American Government to raise. The precise method of adjusting these claims was left open by the Paris Arbitration, but it is not probable that its solution will present any serious difficulty. The Government at Washington is likely to meet the issue in a spirit of fairness, and a like disposition on the part of Great Britain may be relied upon. Now that the particulars of the claims have been received at Washington, the way for negotiation, as to the form and manner of settlement, has been opened. No reasons for protracted delay in entering on the business are apparent.

While in Winnipeg, the visiting Ministers, Mr. Foster and Mr. Angers, were asked that the Government should consider a proposal to improve the Red River navigation between that city and Lake Winnipeg. All that is asked is that such improvements should be made as will enable boats drawing seven feet of water to make the passage. To accomplish this, little more would be necessary than to remove the obstructions to navigation which exist at Ste. Anne's Rapids, about twenty miles from the city of Winnipeg. It seems reasonable that something of this kind should be done; though we must not delude ourselves with the notion to which the deputation gave utterance, "that a canal toll on sand, stone, limestone, lime, lumber and cordwood would be sufficient to pay the cost of the construction of the proposed works." Nor would it be safe to conclude that seven feet of water would ultimately meet the full difficulty. This is the way all such improvements begin, but the ultimate extent of the work and the resulting cost far outstrip original calculations. This would be certain to recur here. But that would be no reason why the work should not be entered upon. There are plenty of precedents in favor of it. At the same time, it would doubtless be wise to begin on the moderate scale suggested by the deputation.

Mr. Foster, while at Winnipeg, gave as a reason for conducting the tariff enquiry in secret, that individual witnesses, if they may be so called, might speak with the utmost freedom, and that individuals might have no temptation to make set speeches for the love of seeing them in print. The last reason has some force in it, the first none. The public has a right to know what sort of arguments are used by gentlemen who may be interested in the retention or reduction of present duties, or an addition thereto, or the abolition thereof. When deputations have waited on the Government at Ottawa to argue in favor of the increase of duties on articles in which they had special interest, the public has always been permitted to learn what they said, and so far as we know, no inconvenience has resulted from the practice. The present policy of secrecy is a new departure. It is, certainly, not an improvement. The nuisance of set speeches must be borne with, for the greater good of publicity. Mr. Foster and the other travelling Ministers are not the only persons who ought to be in a position to understand the grounds on which alterations in the tariff may be proposed. These alterations concern the whole public, producers and consumers alike, and the materials on which the changes are based ought to be made common property, so that all may draw conclusions from them, if they desire to do so.

In the argument on the Manitoba Separate School case, before the Supreme Court, Mr. Ewart, precluded by the decision of the Privy Council from arguing that Separate Schools existed in the Province prior to the union, took the ground that the rights and privileges contended for by the advocates of Separate Schools were granted since the union, and that if the Act was repealed by the local legislature, an appeal could be taken to the Governor-in-Council. This right of appeal he extended much further; he claimed a right of appeal "from any wrongful administration of the Act." Administration is not interpretation, so that, even according to this argument, a judicial decision would be final. Any rights and privileges to Separate Schools, whenever acquired, "from time to time," yesterday, to-day, to-morrow, may, if interfered with, furnish ground of appeal. This may be ingenious, but it is impossible to believe that it is law. The reply of Mr. Christopher Robinson, who spoke under the direction of the court, was that "it was contrary to fundamental principles that a legislature which creates a right cannot disturb it," and that nothing less than express words could "introduce a state of things contrary to all principle and practice." Mr. Robinson contended that the Manitoba School Act of 1890 did not take away any right or privilege conferred by previous legislation, but that all must contribute to the national school system. Any denomination can set up Separate Schools at the cost of its members.

An early closing by-law passed by the municipal council of the city of Ottawa is meeting a great deal of opposition from milliners, one of whom declares that she will go to jail rather than obey it. If any litigation should arise out of the attempt to enforce the by-law, the objection that the Act which assumes to confer on municipalities power to make such regulations is *ultra vires* of the Ontario Legislature, may possibly be set up. Doubts on this head have before been expressed. On cognate questions, the test of judicial appeal has generally made it apparent that Sir Oliver Mowat did not act without full constitutional authority.

The presence of Mr. Van Horne in England has proved a temptation to a section of the press to connect his visit, in some way, with a fast line of Atlantic steamers. To such statements he replies that he is on a holiday trip; but he does not object to say that the success of the Australian line has emphasised the necessity for an improved Atlantic service. Anything there may be to be learned about such a line, Mr. Van Horne is very likely to find out.

The French have gone distracted over the fraternal embrace of their visitors of the Russian fleet. The overflowing enthusiasm is in marked contrast to the demonstration at the reception