

The American farmer has to compete with wheat growers of the world in the British market, and any artificial addition to the cost of sending his produce to that market is so much taken out of his pocket. This consideration will not prevent American railway and elevator men striving to get a monopoly through retaliation, but it will be strange if American agriculturists allow them to succeed.

THE FREEDOM OF THE SEA.

If Mr. Blaine has pursued a different policy from that of his predecessor, pending an adjustment of the Behring Sea controversy, can it be that he has been acting in ignorance of what Mr. Bayard had done? The late Secretary of State at Washington had given the British Minister assurance that no further seizures of British vessels in Behring Sea would be made. And the American Minister in London had given the same assurance. But the communication of Mr. Bayard was unofficial, and not in writing, and if no note was made of it in the State Department, how was Mr. Blaine to know that the promise had been made? Yet, if this be possible, it is against all probability to suppose that there would be no record of what had passed on this point between the Cleveland Government and its Minister in London. Instructions to make such promise must have been sent, and a record of the fact that it had been made must have come back. Is it possible that Mr. Blaine was affecting surprise when he asked what authority there was for saying that Mr. Bayard had given the assurance in question?

However this may be, Mr. Blaine felt himself at liberty to disregard the obligation which the American Government had come under not to make further seizures of British vessels. This was a grave departure from the amicable course on which the previous administration had entered. And this change of course, not to say breach of faith, was not notified to the government interested. The fact only became known to that government by report, afterwards confirmed, of new seizures having been made. The British Government lost no time in entering a protest against a course which it regarded as illegal and unwarranted by international law.

At this point practically our information stops. Whether the United States Government recalled its orders to make seizures has not been formally asserted or denied. But no new seizures have since been made, and the general opinion seems to be that none will be made.

Mr. Blaine does not in so many words claim Behring as a closed sea. He prefers to claim the right of the United States to cover with its protection the wild animals that breed upon islands which form part of its territory. In the whole history of diplomacy no parallel claim will be found. If the United States has the right to follow the seal with its protection into Behring Sea, it must have an equal right to follow them to the other side of the breeding islands into the Pacific Ocean. To take seals in the open sea, the contention of Mr. Blaine is, tends to their destruction, and, he adds,

such taking of seals is therefore immoral. This tendency may be admitted, in degree, at least, without strengthening the supports of this unique claim. It is just as true that the taking of whales in the open sea tends to their destruction. In the seventeenth century the whale fishery of the north seas was practically destroyed. The whales were greatly reduced in number, and the few that survived were driven for shelter among the northern ice of Davis Strait and other remote retreats. Whale oil was then of vastly greater importance to mankind at large than the skin of the seal is in our day. Before the discovery of gas or the utilization of petroleum as an illuminator, whale oil fed the lamp of every condition of people who could afford anything beyond a rush light or a tallow candle. When Holland was sending hundreds of vessels every year into the northern seas, in pursuit of the whale, whose numbers were visibly decreasing, no rival nation set up the pretence that the pursuit of the whale in the open sea, or anywhere else, was a crime against mankind, only one thin remove from piracy. It remained for the genius of Mr. Blaine to make that discovery in the case of the seal. Whether the seals be increasing or decreasing is a question on which opinion is divided, and whether their total destruction would be a blessing or a curse to mankind is equally open to dispute. The opinion is gaining ground that, regard being had to the value of the food fish which they consume, humanity would, on the whole, gain by their extinction.

However this may be, no maritime nation can admit that, in the absence of special agreement, it is illegal to kill seals in the open sea. Acting on the assumption that they are worth preserving, Lord Salisbury is willing to establish for the seal a close season to be agreed upon. But Mr. Blaine and he cannot agree upon the months which should comprise the close season; and the only way that has been suggested for settling the matter has been a mixed commission. The suggestion came from the British Government, and we do not learn that it has yet been accepted by Mr. Blaine. He objects that a limit of exclusion of sealers of ten miles from the breeding grounds would not be observed; but the objection is self-destructive, for by going too far it implies that no stipulated limits would be observed; and as we have no other safeguard in maritime jurisdiction, the objection must be ruled out.

Mr. Blaine objects to the proposal that Canada should be allowed a voice in this seal question, in which her commerce is directly interested. He compares the admission of Canada to a voice in the negotiations, to the United States waiting to hear the opinion of California. But apparently he forgets that, at one stage of treaty-making, California, through her representatives in the Senate, has a direct voice; and we fail to see the reasonableness of the objection that Canada should be consulted, in another form. To consult Canada only means a short delay till her opinion can be heard. It says little for the liberality with which Mr. Blaine thinks Canada entitled to be treated that he grudges her

the right to express her views in an international negotiation in which she is deeply interested.

It is beyond the power of the British Government to constrain its merchant marine from visiting this or that open sea. In the absence of legal power, Lord Salisbury tells Mr. Blaine that it cannot be done. Mr. Blaine, at this point, seems to relent a little, and says he would be satisfied if a desire were expressed by the British Government that British vessels should not go to Behring Sea this season. This was on the 11th June, too late to be practicable, if the suggestion were not in itself objectionable.

Claims for compensation, on both sides, are not impossible—British claims for illegal seizure and confiscation, and American claims for any damage that may have been done for taking seals at an unsuitable time. The grounds of the latter would be slender, and it is doubtful whether an impartial tribunal would award damages. The claims for illegal seizure on the open sea require only to be stated to be made good. The American Government has no commission to set up a fictitious morality, and to constitute itself the police of the sea, with irregular power of seizure and condemnation of the vessels and property of other nations.

RESULTS OF FIRE UNDERWRITING.

The report now issued, under date 3rd July, of the Superintendent of Insurance for the Dominion, contains the conclusions of the Superintendent with respect to the various kinds of underwriting done in Canada, as well as the statistics of companies, whether singly or in groups. Much of the latter has already appeared in print, being taken from the abstract issued some weeks ago by Mr. Fitzgerald, but what he has to say about them is newly printed.

It appears, then, from this report, that the fire insurance business of the year 1889, which was done by 34 companies, against 32 in 1888, yielded in premiums \$5,588,016; and that it cost in losses paid \$2,876,211, equal to 51.47 per cent. of the premium income. This is the best showing since 1880; indeed it is the best exhibit but one for twenty years, for in the previous year the losses were 56.53 of the premiums, and for eight years previously they averaged 64.71 per annum. Leaving out of question the year of the St. John great fire, the average since 1869 has been 63.12. Of course if payments for losses outstanding at 1st January, 1889, are excluded, and an estimate made for those of the year yet unsettled, the showing is more favorable still, namely, 50.09. But the figure first named will be adhered to in these comparisons. The distribution of the business is as under:

1889.	Rec'd for premiums.	Paid for losses.	Losses p.c.
Canadian Cos...	\$1,173,948	\$ 678,752	57.82
British " ..	3,970,632	1,968,537	49.58
American " ..	443,436	228,922	51.62

Totals \$5,588,016 \$2,876,211 51.47
In the year 1888 the corresponding percentages were 66.29 for the Canadian, 54.27 for the British, and 51.33 for the Ameri-