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THE SITUATION.

As might have been foreseen, the Imperial Government does not fall in with the aims enunciated by the Colonial Conference which met in Canada last year. The report of the Marquis of Ripon, which has been communicated to the colonies concerned, rejects the proposal of preferential trade within the Empire, and conveys the refusal of the Imperial Government to sanction the denunciation of the two treaties which make preference impossible in practice. For the reversal of the policy of Great Britain, which the resolves of the conference called for, the Rosebery Government was not prepared. Discrimination, it is pointed out, would divert trade from its natural channel; and if the colonies would make some gain, the loss to the Mother Country would be much greater. The purchasing power of wages in Great Britain would be diminished by the rise in price caused by discrimination; imports from foreign countries would be reduced and the carrying trade would be injured, while the demand for colonial produce would not be permanently enhanced. Besides, the different parts of the Empire would have to run the risk of having to face retaliation from abroad. Such are the principal objections taken to trade discrimination in which Great Britain was invited to take part. Nor is discrimination between the colonies alone viewed with greater favor. The effect of such an arrangement might be to divert trade from the Mother Country and from the colonies not included in the arrangement; and in these colonies discontent would ensue. The treaties in question could only be denounced in the bulk; the clause in them objected to by the conference could not, for this purpose, be separated so as to allow the rest of the compacts to survive.

The objections of the Imperial Government to discrimination were foreseen and pointed out in these columns at the time of the meeting of the Colonial Conference, and it is difficult to suppose that the representatives of the colonies who took part in the discussion could have seriously expected any other result than that now announced. Since the report of the Marquis of Ripon was written there has been a change of Government in England, and the new Colonial Minister expresses the hope that means may be found of drawing the colonies and the Mother Country closer together. But it may be assumed, with every assur-

ence of certainty, that he will not seek to do this by discriminating against the foreign trade of the Empire. It is doubtful whether a single member of the conference carried in his mind, or perhaps ever had in his mind, the strong and persistent demands of the United States to be placed on an equal footing with regard to the trade of the British West Indies at the time when the attempt was made to give other nations, which possessed colonies and were therefore in a position to reciprocate, an advantage over her; and the conference must have forgotten that phase of American history in which the United States was found fighting commercial battles by a resort to embargoes. But though its main objects will not be attained, the Colonial Conference cannot be said to have been wholly in vain. It is certainly desirable that the leading colonies should learn something of one another. From this conference some trade may follow as a remote result; and it is desirable that each should learn that the other is not indifferent to whatever concerns the efficient defence of the Empire.

When the Manitoba school question was under discussion, the Minister of Justice intimated an objection to Mr. McCarthy speaking on the question, on the ground that he was the paid advocate of one of the parties concerned. It is a good rule which excludes paid promoters of private bills from taking part in deciding upon them in Parliament. But where, as in the present case, the advocacy is in connection with proceedings which were judicial, and the question afterwards became one of public policy, the reasons for the restriction do not exist. If Mr. McCarthy appears as an advocate before the courts or before the Government when it hears an appeal, that is no reason why he should not do his duty as a member of Parliament as he understands it, when the question comes before Parliament, as a question of legislation. Burke, as the paid agent of one of the old American colonies, did not on that account deem himself disqualified to deal with the boundary line between Canada and the British colonies of that day; on the contrary, he went into a committee room and there traced the line that settled the question. By way of retaliation, the question was raised whether Mr. McCarthy's critic had not received pay from the Government in connection with Behring Sea case. But this was an international issue, to which even less would the restriction apply. No government in Canada has ever allowed private persons with special interests to play so great a part in connection with legislation as the present; and since they have stretched the line in one direction, they cannot subject it to unusual restriction in another. Mr. McCarthy was not happy in his method of meeting the objection, which was quite susceptible of being met on its merits.

Far beyond what any one had ventured to estimate is the numerical success of the Salisbury Government, in the elections. But this may prove to be a source of real danger. It looks like as if the Conservatives proper, without the Liberal Unionists, would have a reliable majority. But the notion that it would be possible to get on without the aid of Mr. Chamberlain's contingent is not likely to influence sober-minded Conservatives, who know the strength of their Liberal ally, though it may act as a lure to the factions and foster a tendency to intrigue in the minds of second or third-class politicians. If Mr. Chamberlain were to develop a socialistic radicalism, to which he was formerly thought to show some leaning, or the Tories to tend towards a reactionary policy, a serious split in the ranks of the Ministerialists might occur. A cabal of Conservatives to oust Mr. Chamberlain, if it produced any