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THE SITUATION.

The first act in British Columbia Cabinet-making ended in the failure of Mr. Beaven, who had been entrusted with the task. Then Mr. Semlin was commissioned to try his hand. His first application to Mr. Jos. Martin to take office under him met a rebuff. Mr. Martin, the story runs, held that Mr. Semlin should have awaited the settlement of the leadership of the Liberal party, as he is reported to have agreed to do, before accepting an ascribed leadership by undertaking the task of forming a Government. But after a while Mr. Martin thought better of it and withdrew his refusal and consented to take the Attorney-Generalship, under Mr. Semlin. If Mr. Martin really desires the Chief Justiceship, as rumor alleges, he is putting himself in the direct road to get it, if a Semlin Ministry can keep its head above water. It may find this a difficult task, as the strict party vote in the new House is even, 18 against 18, with two independents to play for. Mr. Semlin would not like to go to the country till a new distribution bill has put a more favorable complexion on the constituencies; and unless he can carry on by means of some providential aid, not now in sight, he may have to appeal to the constituencies as at present arranged. The political future of the province is clouded with uncertainty.

Spain despairingly accepts the American protocol and thus ensures peace. Dewey has bombarded and the American forces have occupied Manila. Augusti, the Spanish general, has gone to Hong Kong, in a German vessel. The insurgents have still to be treated with by somebody. In Cuba, the Autonomist Government dies almost as soon as it was born. General Blanco has also resigned, not wishing, it is said, to witness the withdrawal of the Spanish forces. The Cuban rebels are becoming sullenly hostile to the United States, while the Autonomists, hitherto the principal friends of Spain in the island, are willing and even anxious to see the American protectorate established, or in the place of it annexation, which being inevitable and the best choice before them, they would prefer. Among the Cuban insurgents there are some reasonable men, but as usual in such cases, it is the more violent that are listened to. These latter will not listen to the proposal of an American protectorate.

They threaten to ignore the armistice and go on making trouble in a new form, by old methods. In American eyes the conduct of these men has come to have a wonderfully changed appearance. "Bands of marauders," as the New York Advertiser puts it, "cannot be permitted to destroy railroads with dynamite, or to burn dwellings and factories and ravage plantations. Effectual termination of all such outrages will be the first duty of the United States." This is true and it is well that the truth is recognized. The task may be onerous, but it must be performed. One account says that they can be bought off, but that the operation will cost the United States \$15,000,000. The American forces in the Philippines have been instructed to keep order without respect to Spaniards or insurgents.

At last the announcement of a Royal Commission for Newfoundland is definite. Its principal object will be, according to a semi-official statement, to enquire into the state of affairs on the French treaty shore; its report may possibly contain suggestions as to remedies for existing ills; legislation to carry out the treaty is suggested as a possible outcome of the enquiry. But the full scope of the enquiry, it is admitted, has yet to be settled. The actual selection of members has not yet been made. Sir John Branstons, Permanent Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, is said to be a probable appointment. He ought to be the chief of experts in colonial government, as some of his predecessors, notably Sir James Stephen, were. Admiral Erskine is thought of in this connection, from the fact that he was formerly in command of the British American fleet. Far different the circumstances under which he will be appointed, if at all, from those under which the Admiral of the station was formerly the supreme ruler in Newfoundland. Autonomy in the island has traced a thorny path, but it has weathered the many storms that have assailed it; and whatever else may happen, we may be sure that the Royal Commission will not mark the retrogression of the island to the infant condition of a Crown colony.

Once more there is talk of retrenching some of the branches of the Department of Agriculture at Ottawa, on the ground that quarantine, immigration, copyright, trademarks, patents and archives have no direct connection with or bearing on Agriculture. It has sometimes occurred to persons who have thought on the subject at all, that the Archivist's reports assumed the form of appendices to the Department of Agriculture merely as a matter of printing. But it is an absurdity to put this affix to them, and in any case the practice ought to cease. Laden down with branches enough to crush a vigorous trunk, the Department of Agriculture has been eminently successful in the line of its designation. Absurd to the verge of insolence would have appeared, before the days of Malcolm Cameron, the first Minister of Agriculture, that a Government department should have been able to teach the farmers how to farm; but accomplished facts bear witness that this has been done. In other directions the Government has done almost as incredible things. It has not taught the printers how to print, but it has so improved its own printing to put to shame the discreditable work of many previous contractors for public printing. If the Agricultural Department is weighed down by its too numerous branches, relief may reasonably be sought if there be a prospect that it can be found, without the multiplication of Departments, already numerous enough.

All the Ministers who will represent Canada at the International Conference, Quebec, are at present absent