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### THE SITUATION.

The difference between the Governor-General and his late advisers is a matter of regret, and it may lead to embittered contentions over questions which ought to be approached in a calm judicial spirit, and disposed of without acrimony. If there had been shown something of a give-and-take disposition on both sides an open rupture might have been avoided, though the Ministry must not the less have resigned. In refusing to make appointments to the Senate, the Governor-General was bound to give his reasons in writing, which he did; but that it was his duty to redress the political balance which he assumes to have been overthrown, both in the Senate and on the Bench, is an assumption not likely to meet universal assent. Besides any one would in vain seek in their acts for political complexion in the opinions of the judges. In that respect their opinions, as they ought to be, are colorless. In desiring to smooth the way for the Ministry which it was foreseen would have to be formed, the Governor-General acted on a proper motive, though it was unfortunate that he did not ask the late Government to modify its demands, and thus make possible an amicable parting. The responsibility of his act must be covered by that of his new advisers, or His Excellency would be found in a position from which extrication would have proved costly. Technically he stands justified by force of ministerial responsibility.

There is no exact precedent for the act of Lord Aberdeen, in the issue between him and his late advisers, either in English or Canadian history. The most embittered quarrel between a Governor-General and his council was that which took place under Lord Dorchester. In the subject matter of the quarrel Lord Dorchester appears to have been mainly in the right, but the colonial office, which does not love refractoriness in its officers, recalled him soon after. Sir Charles Metcalfe, as Governor-General, laid down the rule that he would consult his council "on all adequate occasions," of which he was to be the judge, and on occasions which he did not deem "adequate" he considered himself at liberty to act without their advice. But then he did not admit that responsible government existed in Canada, in the sense in which it has been understood ever since his day. Neither of these precedents fit the present case, and

there is no other that approaches nearer to it. The question may be asked, would the Queen, whose representative the Governor-General is, have taken the same course? If she would, the case is made easy for Ministers whose responsibility covers the act; if she would not, is there a departure, in that act, from the constitutional requirement that British practice, which here means precedent, must guide in Canada? Delegated prerogative may stand on the same level as original prerogative, neither higher nor lower. The question, what would the Queen have done under like circumstances cannot be determined with certainty; it is only possible to surmise from what she has done, under circumstances which are not the same. It is unfortunate that one political party should be put in the position in which it may seem to have to defend prerogative, while the other inferentially opposes it. Will this precedent be found to give rein to Provincial Governors to follow their own judgment, on occasions in opposition to the advice of their sworn advisers?

In Parliament at Ottawa, a disposition is shown to have a better understanding of the tenure of office of civil servants. The Premier declared his opposition to the maxim that "to the victors belong the spoils," but he held that civil servants should not provoke reprisals; if they wanted to become active politicians, freedom from the restraints and the rewards of office would be their lot. He would not object to a public officer voting, and this implies that such officer may exercise a free choice; but if the officer "went on public platforms, wore party badges, took part in party processions, or offensively promoted the interests of a candidate of his party," he must understand that "he has taken his political life in his hands." Such a rule is not fairly open to objection, though it might, as Sir Charles Tupper pointed out, exclude from office some worthy men. But this would be the lesser of the two evils. Public men who possess the power to dismiss are not likely to permit their positions to be undermined by subordinates. During the discussion, Sir Richard Cartwright made the startling statement, broadly, that "in 1878 and 1874 the government of Alexander Mackenzie had daily and hourly evidence that they were carrying on daily and hourly their work in a nest of traitors. Every paper sent to council," he declared, "was communicated by somebody to the Opposition." The state of things here described is something more than partizanship of the rankest kind; it is a flagrant breach of confidence, which, in trusted officials, is the worst of vices. "Such a condition," Sir Richard gave notice, "would not be tolerated again."

Reasonable allowance for exaggeration being made, the known facts being submitted to such scrutiny as possible, at this distance, there is ground for concluding that the prospect of gold mining in British Columbia is full of hope. But, of course, selection requires to be carefully made, and the business must be approached with caution, and when entered on, conducted in a business-like way. In the initial stage, there is necessarily much of uncertainty; not every venture, even with the best of management, will succeed. The initial risk has to be taken by somebody. People of considerable means can reduce the risk to a minimum; they can employ their own experts, and if wide-awake, can guard pretty well against the possibility of deception. The small investor cannot do this, and necessarily, in depending upon others, takes more risk. The ore not being suitable for crushing has to be smelted; and this being more costly, prevents comparison with the working of the South Africa mines. At present, there is only one smelter at the British Columbia mines, and the cost of carrying the ore a considerable distance is heavy.