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THE SITUATION.

Once more the Senate of the United States has refused to ratify a treaty agreed upon by the Governments of the Republic and Great Britain. This time the object of the treaty was the mutual surrender of criminals. The rejection can scarcely excite surprise. The alleged possibility of confounding political offenders with ordinary criminals is the rock on which this last treaty was stranded. The state of Ireland is at the bottom of the action of the Senate. Civil war is really being waged in Ireland from behind hedges, under the plan-of-campaign, and by means of the boycott; but it is not the sort of civil war which international law can recognize. In the eye of the law, municipal and international, the actors in these inglorious and unheroic scenes are vulgar criminals; in the eyes of Irish Americans they are political heroes, whom it is desirable to shield from becoming martyrs. No reasonable guarding of the treaty against misuse would satisfy these sympathizers. Of misuse there was little danger. Great Britain would never ask the surrender of an offender on one charge and then try him on another. She has before now felt it her duty to prevent the United States doing so. England herself never surrenders political offenders to the vengeance of their Governments; but she takes care to ascertain that the offence is really political and not a mere pretence. While anything like the present state of things exists in Ireland, all hope of enlarging the extradition treaty subsisting between Great Britain and the United States may as well be abandoned.

Mr. Wallace, who presided over the Anti-Combination Committee of Parliament last session, has followed up the evidence by introducing a remedial bill. He proposes to make it illegal for persons or corporations to deny to one person privileges granted to another, or to form combinations to restrict the manufacture and production of articles. These provisions it is proposed to enforce by fine and imprisonment. A bill of this kind might be expected to be introduced under responsibility of the Government, whose support or oppo-

sition means success or defeat. Though the main aim of the bill will receive popular approval there is an obvious difficulty in prohibiting the restriction of production. Such a prohibition might, perhaps, reasonably apply to coal or petroleum, the production of which is in a few hands, and may be easily converted into a monopoly. Overproduction in manufacture generally means waste, reduction of profit below the average, the destruction of all profit, and even an impairment of capital. Any one of these results is undesirable, and as a near approach to an equilibrium between supply and demand is the best prevention of these evils, there must be some means of avoiding a glut in any particular industry. A combination to create artificial scarcity is a crime against society, and may properly be punished as such; it is the more heinous in proportion as the article prohibited is a necessary of life. But when the public is well supplied at reasonable prices, self-preservation requires that manufacturers shall take some means of preventing a wasteful glut of the market. The problem is to draw the line in the right place, and it must be admitted that the task, if assumed by the Legislature, is one of no little difficulty.

Under menace of the veto, Premier Mercier has decided to repeal the compulsory clause in the Debt Conversion Act. He says he had thought that his disavowal of any intention to put this clause into force should be taken as proof that its existence was harmless. But when a man puts a dagger up his sleeve with the avowed object of striking an unoffending neighbor, and, after being asked to throw away the fatal weapon, replies that he is not willing to disarm but will promise not to strike, he cannot complain if his good faith is not regarded as above suspicion. Mr. Mercier, threatened by the veto, becomes willing to save the Conversion Act by the sacrifice of the compulsory clause. Let us congratulate him on a conclusion which he ought long ago to have reached by force of his own good sense.

Bismarck has yielded the position taken by the German military authorities, in the Island of Samoa on two points: the subjecting of foreign residents who have interests in the island to martial law, and the assumption of the administration of the local government by Germany. The United States Government had taken the ground that the German declaration of war could not affect Americans on the island. The notification of the declaration of war, when made to the United States, was accompanied by the assurance of Prince Bismarck that Germany would abide by the arrangements touching Samoa made by the three powers, England, Germany and the Republic. The German military authorities on the island did not live up to this declaration, and Prince Bismarck is able to throw the blame on them and to disavow their acts in the two particulars mentioned. The Foreign Relations Committee at Washington, it is said, may demand a restoration of the status which existed when

the international conference was held in 1887; which means that the puppet king set up by Germany be pulled down and Mataafa restored in his place. Should this be done, a settlement of the difficulty would still be a long way off. Bismarck suggests a reopening of the conference of that year, with the provision that it meet at Berlin this time, instead of Washington, and this proposal the United States Government is willing to accept.

A great scheme for the protection of the City of Montreal from inundation by the rise of the waters of the St. Lawrence, and to provide facilities for the trade of the port in the shape of extended streets and wharfage, is once more on the carpet. It is called, or rather miscalled, "harbor improvement," for it has little or nothing to do with the harbor proper. The cost is estimated at \$3,000,000, of which \$1,000,000 is expected from the city, and the rest from the railways and the Government. It is, however, clearly distinguishable from work which has hitherto been undertaken by the Government in connection with harbors. The duty of the City Council to protect the city from inundation seems to be recognized; railways must pay for the accommodation they get; and it remains to be seen whether the Government, provincial or general, will see in the extension of streets and shipping facilities on land, legitimate objects of public expenditure. The citizens will probably vote the \$1,000,000 to be asked for. The railway companies will not be willing to do more than their share; and what either Government may be willing to do it is quite impossible to conjecture. The expenditure in connection with Lake St. Peter was properly assumed by the Dominion Government, though the handling of the money had been done by others—a transaction which we venture to say will not be repeated—but the proposed new expenditure on the banks of the St. Lawrence, in the City of Montreal, is something quite different.

A request has been made by the Senate Committee on Commerce at Washington that the Secretary of War should appoint three army officers to enquire into the expediency of constructing a bridge across the Detroit River, at the city of that name. Commerce does not ordinarily defer to the war department without suggestion from the latter in cases of this kind. Commerce would build a tunnel between England and France if the war department of Britain did not interpose objections. But a bridge across the Detroit River could scarcely be a military question; certainly the military authorities of the United States would not be expected to object. The scheme of tunnelling the English Channel, over sixty years old, remains in a state of project overpowered by opposition, while several bridges have been built over the Niagara River. Would a bridge at Detroit interfere with the waterborne traffic? This is not a military but an engineering question. In any event a bridge can only be built by the consent of Canada and the United States. If it would not interfere with shipping, which is the