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THE SITUATION.

At length the British and American Governments have come to an agreement as to the conditions on which the Behring Sea arbitration shall proceed. If the decision of the arbitrators be against the United States, the British sealers will have to be indemnified by that country for any loss they may have sustained by the interference with their right of sealing; and if the decision be against Great Britain, she will pay the damages which illegal sealing has caused to the United States. The ratification of the treaty by the United States Senate was virtually made a condition of the acceptance of this basis suggested by Lord Salisbury. As the British sealers had notice of their liability to interruption this year, it would appear to us they would not be entitled to any compensation, even from their own Government, if the decision should be in favor of the United States. The agreement embodies a principle of reciprocity, and the arbitration treaty has been unanimously ratified by the United States Senate. Unless the arbitration be at an end, some temporary arrangement would become necessary next year.

By an order issued from the United States Treasury Department, Canadian seamen cannot in future be employed on American lake vessels. This will lead to the discharge of a large number of Canadian sailors. The American Seamen's Union, which probably initiated the anti-Canadian movement, will do all it can to enforce the order of the Department. Labor unions are becoming more and more hostile to the employment of foreigners, in the United States, and newly arrived immigrants find it increasingly difficult to get employment.

An American sealing vessel, the "Swan," has been confiscated by Judge Hanford, at Seattle, for illegal sealing in "the waters of Alaska." It is some satisfaction to know

that the same measure is meted out to American and Canadian sealers, plying their vocation in "the waters of Alaska." The term is delightfully indefinite. Judge Hanford alluded to the doubt about the validity of the statutes, which assume to extend American jurisdiction to a greater distance than cannon shot from the shore; but he took the ground that this is a question not for the courts, but for Congress and the President to determine. If it is a political and not a judicial question, what becomes of the obligation of international law? Or is it assumed that Congress and the President in deciding the question will act judicially? And in that case, what becomes of the division of the powers of the Government into legislative, executive, and judicial?

The Bland Silver Bill came perilously near to obtaining the sanction of one branch of Congress, the vote on it being a tie in the House. However, it cannot be revived again this session. One avowed object of the author of the Bill was to enable debtors to elect to pay in silver, which is worth about 70 cents in the dollar. The effect would be a scaling of debts to that extent. If it were proposed to pay foreign creditors at this rate these creditors would have had the right to object. It is impossible to feel certain that a measure on which the vote has been a tie is not destined to succeed at some future date not far distant. Canada has received sufficient warning not to accept American silver or silver certificates, which in the near future may be made to do the duty of gold. There is a risk of loss in the transaction, of which every one should take notice. What a silver standard is doing for British India, reducing the incomes of persons who have remittances to make to England to about one-third their nominal amount, it is capable of doing here, if the Bland Bill should pass. Let Canada take care not to increase her stock of American silver or silver certificates.

The council of the Board of Trade of Montreal has asked the Provincial Government of Quebec to consider whether it cannot abolish the tax on commercial corporations and the tax on mines. Some hope was held out that the mining tax would be either abolished or modified. Mr. Hall, the Provincial Treasurer, admitted that he would like to see the tax on business corporations abolished, but he did not see, with the pressing demands on the provincial revenue, how this could be done at present. It was pointed out that the tax operated unequally against corporations. The mining tax, which yields but little, and effectually discourages that industry, is more destructive than productive. Mr. Hall admitted the Local Government was in correspondence with the Federal Government on the subject of one or both of these taxes. We trust it will not turn out that there is an attempt to put new burthens on the Dominion treasury. In whatever way it does it, the Province of Quebec must recognize the duty of bringing about an equilibrium between the revenue and the expenditure.

A labor deputation which waited on the Ottawa Government wanted to take from employers the right to import labor when they need it; to abolish the contract system for government works, and to provide that where contracts are awarded the prevailing rate of wages shall be paid. Major Stewart, the contractor for the Toronto drill hall, it was pointed out, employs non-union men to dress the stone before it reaches Toronto. From this fact, it is fair to conclude that when he tendered for the work, he based his estimate on the expectation of being able to get his stone dressed in this way. This would enable him to take a lower price, and the price governed the awarding of the contract. The public will have the benefit of the lower price. The right to import labor is the correlative of the right of labor to export itself. Before any one can be imported somebody must be willing to be exported; the two go together, and the working men have the greatest interest in maintaining their freedom to come and go as they like. The fifteen cents an hour by-law in Toronto is in favor of the young and strong, while it bars out the old and the feeble, who, though they are worth something, nobody would pay them the maximum rate.

The British House of Commons has rejected, by a large majority, a proposal to compel Irish landlords to sell their land to tenants. The Liberals joined in the vote in opposition. Agitators in the same line here will doubtless take note of the fact.

The Toronto public library is developing ambition in a doubtful direction. It is anxious to set up a museum as an annex to the library, with scant support from any quarter, and in opposition to a strong current of public opinion. It is not doing its special business too well to be entitled to claim a right to branch out, with or without legal warrant, in directions foreign to its chief design. Yielding to a demand for fiction which, perhaps, it was not easy to combat, the library managers have set people to asking questions in a critical spirit. It is not uncommon to hear persons ask whether the library is not doing more harm than good, and the answer is as often unfavorable as otherwise. It is matter of profound regret that such a state of things should have been developed. Then there is a scheme for buying part of the old Upper Canada College grounds for a new library building, art school and museum. If we go on at this rate, where are we to end? And if it were desirable that such a combination should take place, surely the last place for the building would be at one side of the city. A better place might be found some where near Bloor street, where the centre of the population will soon be. But apart from this, these ambitious schemes are conceived out of time, and the municipality is in no mood to nurse them into life. The library, stuffed with novels, will have enough to do to maintain its position. The aim should be gradually to provide a better class of literature and leave outside fancies severely alone.

A large number of Anarchists are on the point of being expelled from France; many