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THE SITUATION.

Yesterday, the session of the Dominion Parliament opened, at Ottawa. Some measures of commercial importance are foreshadowed in the speech read by the Governor-General. Among them will be subsidies for the improvement of the Atlantic mail service, and to aid in the establishment of a line of steamers between British Columbia and China and Japan. The question of communication with Australia, the West Indies, and South America will also come up. The making uniform the law relating to bills of exchange, cheques, promissory notes, and bills of lading will engage the attention of Parliament. A bill to prevent certain offences in connection with municipal councils, and to increase the facilities for enquiring into them, when they do occur, is promised. The criminal nature of the acts in question brings them under Dominion authority; in all other respects, municipal affairs are under local jurisdiction. Timber and lumber inspection will be the subject of legislation; so will the postal administration and the North-West mounted police.

Rumor begins once more to point emphatically to Mr. Blaine, as Secretary of State under the Harrison administration, which will be inaugurated on the 4th of next month. Such a choice was considered antecedently probable, but doubts were thrown upon its realization by the allegation that Mrs. Blaine was anxious to have her husband take the English mission. Should he become once more Secretary of State, what course of policy will he advise on the fishery question? The answer can best be found, if at all, by the recent attitude and utterances of Mr. Blaine. About the time when the Fishery Treaty was rejected by the Senate, Mr. Blaine made objections to the treaty, as it stood, but took the ground that the arrangement of the diplomacy, and moreover that the Republicans, when they came in, would be able to settle it. He pointed to a diplomatic achievement by this party, in the past, as guarantee for what would occur in the future. Mr. Blaine will no doubt try to get

somewhat better terms than those contained in the Chamberland-Bayard treaty; but if he show a real desire to achieve a settlement, as he probably will, there is no reason to regard success as impossible. Mr. Blaine has not in any way committed himself to policy that blocks the way to the accommodation of the difficulty; and should he succeed in negotiating a new treaty, the Senate may almost certainly be relied upon to ratify it.

If the popularity of Boulanger in Paris, indicated by his election in the city by a plurality of 80,000, means a menace to Germany, the peace of Europe is in a critical state. And the vote is so interpreted by a large part of the European press. But, even if this view of the situation be correct, the catastrophe may not come for some time. Boulanger is evidently prepared to do whatever the French electorate may, in its excitement, ask of him. His remark that France is hungering after peace, recalls Louis Napoleon's famous declaration *L'Empire c'est la paix*, which was followed by war and disaster for France and the flight of the utterer. Germany has got entangled in a small quarrel in Samoa, and Bismarck has created surprise and incredulity by the statement that Germany and Great Britain are rowing in the same boat. The Samoan difficulty may be brought to an end before Boulanger can be in a position to bring on war with Germany; otherwise Germany would be apt to bring its quarrel in that distant quarter to a speedy close. The greed of the East Africa Company is spurring on Germany to realize colonial projects in East Africa by violent means. The nation will probably find, in the end, that it has been spending vast sums for the benefit of favored individuals, by whom corresponding gains may or may not be realized.

In the Legislature of Quebec, Premier Mercier is supporting a bill which he describes as destined to put an end to a system of espionage and conspiracy of which hotel-keepers are the victims. The aim of the bill, he added, was to punish these spies, in the form of minors big enough to look as if of age, on the ground that the tempter is equally guilty with the party who yields to the temptation. In Ontario, espionage in connection with hotel management is treated as a virtue, and as such encouraged. Sooner or later, the whole system of espionage, as now organized and practised, must undergo revision. A few months ago, one of the judges of a Superior Court in Quebec took occasion to denounce from the bench the vices that connect themselves with the private detective system. He took the ground that either private detectives should be suppressed by the strong hand of the law, or if tolerated at all they should be licensed, and the authorities should have some means of knowing what they were doing. A few months ago one of these miscreants, in Ontario, made love to a young girl, a little more than a child, with the object of convicting her father of a capital crime. The trumped-up case utterly collapsed, but the wretch who "worked it up" got off scot free. The law

ought to provide condign punishment for a social atrocity of this kind.

The statement has been made, on the authority of its chief solicitor, that the C.P.R. intends to offer further obstruction to railway competition in Manitoba, by appealing to the courts on grounds that can only be regarded as technical. The intention is to impeach the charter of a rival. Does it not occur to the C.P.R. that this game may be carried too far for its own interest? Is there no danger that it will be met by reprisal? Nova Scotia business men have expressed the fear that the Short Line, which the C.P.R. has entered into an engagement to complete by the 1st July, cannot be finished by that date. If the company is on the verge of committing default in this particular, its attempts to bolster up, in Manitoba, the monopoly which it has been paid to surrender, come with a peculiarly bad grace. But its power of obstruction is practically gone. The Railway Committee of the Privy Council, in authorizing the disputed crossings, has given sufficient authority for proceeding, and Parliament would be perfectly justified in stepping in and saying, in plain terms, that this vexatious obstruction must cease without delay.

Mr. Van Horne has published a letter, in which he denies that the Canadian Pacific has assumed a position of hostility to the Grand Trunk. The two companies, he says, have avoided that wholesale cutting of rates which has proved so injurious to American railway property. He claims that the extensions by the C. P. R., which bring the two companies into competition were necessary for the development of the traffic of his company, a line of defence which is always taken in similar cases. While disclaiming hostility on the part of the C. P. R., Mr. Van Horne somewhat ungraciously attributes to the rival company unfriendly and hostile manifestations. But the Grand Trunk would be very likely to reply that it only sought a legitimate extension of its traffic, and it could do so with at least as good grounds as the similar plea of the C. P. R. has to rest upon. We shall probably, in good time, hear what the Grand Trunk has to say to Mr. Van Horne's exculpations and inculpations. Meanwhile the Grand Trunk proprietors are petitioning the Dominion authorities not to give pecuniary grants to competing railways.

So far, the mildness of the winter has been of great rarity, though it is not unprecedented in this neighbourhood. Selkirk has the openness of winter been so widely extended. The harbors on all the lakes, even those of Superior, are still open. The belief, once widely extended, that a mild winter is injurious to health is about exploded. To some of the industries of the country, notably lumbering, the absence of snow has been injurious; the growing grain crops would have derived protection from a mantle of snow; whether they have been injured, and if so seriously, it is too soon to tell. A mild winter curtails trade in certain directions, and makes locomotion on country roads difficult, delaying payments