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THE SITUATION.

There is some prospect, the cable tells us, that colonial wines may not be subjected to the proposed extra wine duties. If this exception were made, foreign wines would be discriminated against. Between one foreign wine and another, discriminations have, for reasons of state, sometimes been made. The most notable instance, perhaps, is that in which, about the middle of the last century, England discriminated in favor of the wines of Spain and against those of France. This was the cause of Port and Sherry being largely used, in England; in the using of Port came gout, which in the end brought disgust, reaction and the Cobden treaty, in favor of French wines. The character of colonial wines has yet to be developed; at present, it is little more than an unknown quantity.

A further statement about the Pacific cable is that England finally consents to pay an annual subsidy in aid of the undertaking, in preference to going into a joint partnership with the colonies interested. This is very much to be regretted, as it gives Imperial countenance to a system which is working moral corruption in some of the colonies, where, if it is to continue, will become a menace to the political institutions.

Mr. Fielding fathers a bill intended to enable the Government to grant charters for insurance companies, without putting the companies to the trouble and expense of applying to Parliament. Special charters of any kind are liable to contain objectionable provisions, and to give to corporators special privileges which other people do not enjoy and cannot obtain. The value of a charter obtained under a general law is that such law is the grave of privilege, the guarantee of equity, and the assurance that all may enjoy equal rights or liberties. One inconvenience may attend the change in the undue multiplication of insurance companies.

A cablegram informs the Government of Newfoundland that the British Government has renewed for one year the *modus vivendi*, under which the French lobster factories on the island will be permitted to continue their operations. Ratification of the Act by the local Legislature is called for. This privilege depending for its con-

tinuance on an unusual vote of the Legislature, cannot be expected to last long. It is known that negotiations between the British and the French Governments for the extinction of the French rights and liberties on the coast of Newfoundland have for some time been in progress, and the renewal of the *modus vivendi* may give opportunity for their completion. Two or three weeks ago, some madman burnt down one of the lobster factories, and on being arrested avowed the act and boasted of his reliance on the excited state of local feeling to obtain acquittance. The natural effect of such an act of folly would be to damage the cause which he was anxious to aid, and must have made it difficult or impossible for the British Government to refuse to agree to a temporary extension of the *modus vivendi*. The British negotiations with France have accomplished their object in some parts of the world, notably in the Soudan, but in Madagascar and in Newfoundland they have not yet reached a conclusion. The impatience of the Newfoundlanders over a situation which is well nigh intolerable is natural; but there is at last a ray of hope that the end is almost within sight.

Estimates from the Klondike put the product of the clean-up of gold soon to be made, at \$19,000,000 to \$20,000,000. How near these sums will prove to the true figure is in the future. By a new regulation the first \$5,000 of the gross produce in each case will be exempt from royalty. It is perhaps difficult or impossible to contrive any plan under which instances of hardship would not be liable to occur. And yet it would not be reasonable to abandon the royalty altogether, as some miners ask and all naturally desire, though we have always thought it might be lowered. There is considerable expense to the public treasury in connection with the development of the country, and it is reasonable that the riches extracted should bear the burthen. No one has considered, or if he has, has concluded that some forms of mining might bear a larger royalty than others. Where a large extent of rivers has been given to individuals, the privilege conveys a monopoly, as far as it goes. Working on a larger scale is there possible, and these places ought, perhaps, to bear a larger share than small claims, which may be expected to produce less for the outlay upon them. If a distinction were made in this direction, the notion that the large grants were marks of favoritism would meet a practical negative; but the grants having once been made without such special conditions it would now be nearly or quite impossible to impose them.

In the Geological Report just issued, Dr. Dawson, chief of the Department, lets it be known that "the acquisition and locking up of mineral deposits [in the Yukon] for the purpose of speculation only has become a serious detriment to the development of Canadian mining." To some extent this result must have come from the granting of extensive dredging areas in the rivers. In all such cases as the Yukon gold discovery, unproductive speculation has specially to be guarded against. The country has had numerous examples of this, especially when, more than half a century ago, copper mine locations were granted on the north shores of Lakes Huron and Superior. As a matter of fact, many of these supposed mines were purely supposititious, and out of the whole, and their name was legion, only two or three were ever worked. There was, however, much speculation in copper-mining stocks, and the foundation of at least one fortune was laid in this way. The Klondike placer mines are rich, and it is important that no undue obstacles to their development should block the way. The way is, it now appears, to