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Manager.

TORONTO, CAN. FRIDAY, MAY 31, 1889

THE SITUATION.

Speculation is busy upon the object of the British Government in sending two war vessels to Behring sea. The fact itself perhaps requires corroboration, though it does not appear to be doubted at Washington, where it has been the cause of the American Government following the example. The despatch of British vessels to that sea has not been made known to the Canadian Government, much less the reasons that prompted it. Where maritime nations have interests to guard, nothing is more natural than that some war vessels should be there to protect them; a remark that applies equally to both countries in the present case. Coupled with the report of the departure of the vessels, the allegation is made that the American Government takes the ground that Behring sea is a close sea. This statement is highly improbable, and cannot be accepted on any less than positive official authority. Some time ago, the United States asked the maritime nations to agree upon some arrangement by which the destruction of seals in Behring sea would be prevented, thereby admitting that these nations had a right to be consulted; an admission that is utterly at variance with the pretension of a close sea. No such claim would be admitted by the other maritime powers, Russia perhaps excepted.

The Short Line of railway, connecting western with eastern provinces, will be in operation in a few days. On Monday next a train will leave Montreal at 8 o'clock p. m. and reach Halifax the following night. This line will be a competitor with the Intercolonial, the earnings of which it may tend to reduce. But it is probable that it will chiefly bring new business over this route. Passengers who are in a hurry will, of course, go by the short way. That the new line will create business for itself is beyond doubt; its shortness and its connection with the C.P.R. will both tend to ensure that result. The extra business will accrue to the benefit of Halifax, whose rising property will be still further enhanced. It is impossible not to believe that Halifax has a great future before it. The period of gloom and comparative dis-

aster through which it has passed may, we believe, be considered as closed. It possesses one of the finest harbors on the continent, and one that is open at all seasons of the year. The terminus of a transcontinental line, and within easy reach of the West Indies, it must become a great, populous, and opulent city within a reasonable space of time.

A statement comes from Petrolia that the difficulty in refining Canadian oil so as to clear it of sulphur and other impurities has at last been overcome. We trust the news may prove to be true. Owing to the difficulty in question, Canadian oil has had to take second rank even in the country of its origin, and it has not been a favorite anywhere. Much American oil is used in Canada, not on account of the shortness of the domestic supply, but because of the inferior quality of the Canadian article. It is claimed for the alleged discovery that it will enable Canadian oil to be made equal to the best American. Should this be the case, the domestic article will before long supplant the imported, the Canadian oil industry may be expected to prove more remunerative than heretofore, and the public ought to share the benefit in a reduction of price. The American oil now consumed in Canada sells at a high price. It is possible that, to give the public the benefit of a reduced price, the import duty may have to be revised by way of reduction, otherwise there is the danger to be feared that refiners would attempt to exact for Canadian oil as high a price as has to be paid for American with the duty added.

After Monday next the distance between Montreal and St. Paul will be reduced by 130 miles by the opening of the Canadian Pacific Sault Ste. Marie route. It is this competition and such as this that is causing the uneasiness among American railway managers which is showing itself in hostile moves in Congress and before the Inter-State Commission. The service of the new line will be of the first class. It is manifestly to the advantage of both countries that they should be at liberty to take advantage of these short cuts. Both money and time are thereby saved. It would be a great pity if international jealousy and narrow views of self-interest should curtail these mutual benefits.

It may safely be asserted that the collision between the "Cynthia" and the "Polynesian" is one that ought to have been avoided. Neither darkness nor fog precluded the view of one vessel from the deck of the other. Each vessel had a pilot on board, and there was ample water space to prevent the necessity of crowding. As always happens in such cases, those responsible for the management of each vessel try to throw the blame on the other. The official investigation may be relied upon to bring out the facts, which may have to be disentangled from a mass of conflicting evidence. From the time that a pilot boards a vessel he is responsible for her management, and there would be very little use in pilots if they could not prevent collisions

of this kind. An unwarranted conclusion has been attempted to be drawn from this incident: that navigation between Montreal and Quebec is unsafe for large ocean vessels. No such conclusion is, in the remotest degree, justified; if the channel had been so narrow that two vessels could not pass abreast there would be some reason in the pretence; as it is there is absolutely none whatever.

An effort is being made in Montreal to get rid of the police tax on shipping. This tax, it is alleged, leads to retaliation in American ports. Inland vessels which clear from Montreal for an American port are said to be subjected to a surcharge of from three to fifteen cents per ton per annum. The Dominion Government has been asked to assume the charge, at least for the present year; this however will not be done. From the Government point of view the duties properly fall to the city police, and as the Government police will be withdrawn at the end of the year the question will settle itself in this way.

There was frost in various parts of Ontario on Tuesday night last, and some damage has probably been done to fruits and vegetables. We do not believe, however, that the cereal crops have suffered any serious harm. We have special reports from various sections between Toronto and London which say "no damage reported to wheat; damage to barley small." Some alarmist telegrams appear in the daily papers of yesterday, but one who reads them with care will perceive that they made the worst of everything, and that they lack consistency. To say, for example, that the grape crop of Stamford township, in the Niagara district, "is almost a total loss, while small fruits such as strawberries, raspberries, and currants are almost as bad, early potatoes entirely killed, and clover flat," and then to wind up the story by "placing the total damage at \$8,000 or \$9,000" over the whole of such a township as that absurdly inconsistent. Telegrams or letters from points in Essex, Kent, Lambton, and Western Middlesex on the subject of the frost appear in western newspapers; and while they admit some damage to fruit, and possibly vegetables, in that part of the peninsula, but one of them considers serious damage to have been done to grain. We have reports from Montreal and Sherbrooke which say that the grain has escaped injury though a little damage is done by frost to some delicate plants.

THE "Short Line" railway, connecting the provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick by passing through the State of Maine is almost ready for traffic. The first C. P. R. train over it leaves Montreal on 2nd June at 8.30 p.m., and the running time to St. John is 18 hours. The passenger thus reaches St. John at 2.30 p.m. Hereafter, daily, a train will leave Montreal with a sleeping car, a first-class coach with Forney-reclining chairs, smoking compartments and lavatories, a second-class coldest sleeper, and a through bonded baggage car.