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TORONTO, FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 1898.

THE SITUATION.

Whether Mr. Hamilton Smith would press his offer to build a couple of Klondyke railways on the Government, in such a way that the Senate could make special use of it, so long as the doubt existed, added to the uncertainty of the fate of the provisional contract in that Chamber. But since Mr. Smith has, under his own signature, advised the public that his "proposition is a thing of the past," neither he nor his offer can be appealed to except as a matter of history: as a rival bid it has lost its vitality. This deprives the Senate of one weapon with which to attack the agreement, but it does not, of course, settle the matter. The Senate will not be able to say, pointing to Mr. Smith's offer: "Here is a rival proposal open to acceptance, and it is so much the more advantageous that, whatever the Government may do, we dare not in the public interest refuse to endorse the more advantageous of the two plans." Mr. Smith's statement is worth some Senatorial votes for ratification, whether or not there be enough to ratify.

Mr. Hamilton Smith indulges in some criticism of the Stikine-Teslin route, which are certainly formidable, and from one point of view, unanswerable. He contrasts the route chosen with that of the Lynn Canal; saying the latter is open the whole year round, which is true, while the Stikine River is closed by ice seven months out of the twelve, which is equally true, and that when a miner gets to the northern end of the road now under provisional contract, he will be no nearer the mines than he would be before he stepped on the shore of the Lynn Canal. This last statement is evidently exaggerated; but making due allowance for the rhetoric, there is enough truth left to make the contrast a thing not pleasant to dwell upon. The explanation is that we shall, in the end, have to reach the present starting point of the railway otherwise than by water liable to be frozen up a part of the year, and that the road will have to be extended at both ends. This is the price we pay for the enjoyment of a purely national road. We trust Mr. Smith had nothing to do with engineering the bill of extraneous conditions for our enjoyment of the right of navigating the Stikine through the U. S. Senate; but whoever is responsible for that action did much to

stiffen the backbone of Canadians in their resolution to have a purely Canadian route to the Klondyke. We may buy such a route too dearly; but that an all-Canadian route is necessary is the general, if not unanimous opinion of Canadians, but upon what its location ought to be differences of view are met.

The Yukon railway bill having passed the ordeal of the House is now before the Senate where, it was from the first foreseen, whatever danger it was in would be encountered. A party opposition seems to be out of the question; the test division may, however, be partly local and partly on the merits, as viewed by the senators from the larger provinces. Any greatly preponderating vote of the senators from the Maritime Provinces against the bill would be a symptom of action from local motives. Alarmist stories about a possible attempt to bribe senators to vote for the bill have been told, and resented. Attempts to coax and attempts to bulldoze the Senate have been made. Neither of these is likely to produce any sensible effect. The Senate is a co-ordinate branch of the legislature, with the right to take its own course on any measure brought before it; and, using the word in its best and non-political sense, it may generally be relied on to take a conservative view. If it has a bias, as no doubt it has, it is in favor of established institutions of all kinds and of established corporations. On the Klondyke railway bill, it cannot have any prepossessions and may be relied on to take whatever course it deems best in the public interest.

If the Senate threw out the Yukon railway bill a crisis in the affairs of State would ensue. The Government would have to decide upon its course in the emergency. It might resign, which is improbable; it might appeal to the country, which it would probably not deem a necessary step; or it might, with perfect safety to its position in the House, withdraw the bill. But then some other means of getting to the Klondyke would have to be found.

The statement that a treaty delimiting the Alaska-Canada boundary had been signed, has received authoritative denial. The truth is that the statement was made before the negotiations were completed. This is not the first time that hints of the nature of the differences between the negotiations have been thrown out. One is said to have been as to the location of the Portland Channel, which forms part of the international boundary; another, whether at points where the depth of the American frontal strip was to be a measured distance of ten marine leagues from the shore, the sinuosities of the shore were to be followed into coves, or the line drawn from headlands where the width was not more than thirty-three miles. Where the mountain summits of the treaty are recognized as existing, as at Chilcoot and the White Pass, one account says, there it has been agreed the boundary shall be; but where the summits do not appear, and do not exist, the distance alternative of the treaty will come in. It is always difficult to get exact information of the course of a negotiation when a treaty is in process of formation, but it is probable that the main facts as to the contentions and a partial agreement are not far different from those stated.

Before leaving office the late Provincial Government of Quebec agreed to guarantee eight millions of bonds of the Atlantic and Lake Superior Railway Co.; and the present Government of that province, unwilling to carry out the arrangement will, report says, seek a judicial release from the Supreme Court. The ground of attack is more than technical. The local Act authorizing the granting of a guarantee makes conditions which, it is contended, were