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THE SEALING SITUATION.

It would be amusing, were not the outcome so serious a one to an important industry in this Province, to notice the self satisfaction with which Great Britain and the United States regard the finding of the Behring Sea arbitration. The former—and we so far accord with them—claim that they have gained a signal victory as concerns what even the Americans now admit to have been fraudulent and groundless pretensions. As we remarked at the time, many of the United States claims were so very preposterous at the first sight that the wonder was that men of good faith and decency and representing a powerful nation which certainly lays claim to some vestige of honor, honesty and self-respect, should have preferred them. But it is now said that their very preferment is regarded by the Americans as having secured for them the consideration and adoption of the regulations, which the decisions of the arbitrators distinctly declared that they had no right to lay down. Behring Sea is distinctly affirmed not to have been a *mare clausum*, and that the Americans have no proprietary interest in or right to govern it outside of the well recognized territorial limit is definitely declared, nevertheless the arbitrators though fortunately, in our opinion, the report is not binding on the parties, lay down regulations to be observed by British and American sealers in the prosecution of what is declared to be a legitimate industry. They propose to prohibit pelagic sealing during the only months that it is possible to carry it on profitably and leak up the rookeries where the greater slaughter of seals is carried on for the exclusive use of the companies which the United States have licensed, and, we may add, may license in the future.

If Behring Sea is an open sea, who is there entitled to make special regulations regarding it and who has the right to say that seals shall not be taken on the broad Pacific? Even supposing that, by a stretch of authority, it is possible to prevent pelagic sealing by vessels carrying the British or American flags, is there not a gross injustice perpetrated on the people of the two contracting nations in shutting them out from waters to which crews belonging to other nations have free and unrestricted access? Under what law—human or divine—can Great Britain or the United States establish a protected zone of sixty miles around the Pribilof Islands, when those islands are let out to tenants

of the United States at so much per year and at a levy of so much per skin on the seals taken? This to be sanctioned by Great Britain, would be nothing short of a legalized robbery.

It has been very well pointed out that if the United States cannot close Behring Sea according to international law, they cannot do so acting in conjunction with Great Britain. To attempt such a thing would involve the sending out of armed cruisers whose guns might at any time be trained and fired with deadly effect upon the subjects of other countries with which the two powers are at peace and who have not nor would they have anything to do with the arbitration. Certain of the Americans are rejoicing over the outcome. They see money in it for themselves as protected monopolists and for the friends of the politicians who undertook to carry on the international controversy in their interest. Again, will the Americans have outwitted the British if the treaty in so far as the regulations go is carried into effect. Legitimate American sealers are no better off than our people. They are delivered tied and bound to the Alaskan Commercial combine, an influential member of which (Mr. Liebes) explains thus the situation: "We have the skins; Great Britain has the monopoly of drying and preparing them. What more do you want?"

But what does this all mean? Between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 of good British Columbia money invested in sealing schooners and their outfit is rendered unprofitable, 1,500 British Columbians are thrown out of work, with some 5,000 or 6,000 British Columbia people dependent upon them, and the results of the industry are thrown out of circulation in this Province and community. And they say in London and at Ottawa that they are well satisfied with the success of the arbitration. Moreover, they propose to dine and wine Sir John Thompson and Mr. Tupper on their return to the Dominion capital. Faugh! Let them come to Victoria and see what a reception they would get, or let it be ascertained how liberally Victoria would subscribe towards fettering the doughty champions of its interests!

DECREASE IN SALMON.

On the Columbia River they are beginning to fear that the steady and gradual decrease of the salmon output yearly, notwithstanding the decreased facilities, is a grim and serious reality, which is well calculated to cause apprehension. According to a calculation made by Mr. J. R. Rathon, formerly of this city, and published in the *Portland Oregonian*, there is a serious and alarming possibility of the Columbia River pack shrinking by 1898 to 50,000. Now, though it is believed that this is an extreme estimate, the announcement has been sufficient to cause a great deal of thinking and arouse a considerable amount of apprehension.

The main cause is believed not to be the wheels which are said to have been so continuously grinding the royal fish to destruction, but the dams and series of dams that have been erected for the utilization of the increase wealth of water power that exists. None of the indus-

tries, indeed—not all combined can, it is claimed, make up for the terrible destruction that is entailed, whose effects are being more disastrously experienced. It is said that during the running seasons salmon may be seen by the tens of thousands struggling and crowding each other out of the water below the obstructions. If all these obstacles were removed entirely, or the most adequate fishways built at once, it would, it is urged, soon prove the means of bringing millions of dollars into the country annually. Otherwise it will only be a very short time when the salmon will be a curiosity in the waters of the Pacific Northwest. How much of these remarks, it may be asked apply to British Columbia, the cause, possibly not the obnoxious dams, but other agencies equally destructive?

EXISTING CONDITIONS.

The *Canadian Journal of Commerce* has an editorial in its last issue under the title "The Tariff under Present Conditions." The editorial concludes: "The old woman who explained how she could sell apples so cheaply, said she lived on the losses. When a factory is making up goods which cannot be sold at ordinary prices, it may be better even to sell goods at a loss than to keep them. The shutting down of a mill or a factory is often a very costly business. Machinery unused will seriously depreciate, and, within limits of course, it may pay a manufacturer to sell his goods at the barest cost of production, or even below it, for a time, in order to avoid the greater loss which closing up would cause. A large number of the U. S. manufacturers have stocks on hand which are unsalable; they are in great need of ready cash; if then the markets of Canada were now altogether unprotected there would be such an influx of American goods as would drown out the industries of this country and bring the manufacturers of Canada into even a worse financial and industrial plight than that in which the Americans now are.

"The tariff, with all its faults, is at this time demonstrating more than it has ever done, the value and the necessity of guarding our industries from slaughtering operations. The contention that the time had come for leaving our industries without shelter, 'taking them out of the cradle,' as one speaker said—who often mistakes facetiousness for sense—proceeds on the assumption that trade goes on with the monotonous steadiness of the planetary system. Trade, however, is subject to tornadoes and cyclones, and a disastrous one would now be levelling our factories but for the wind-guard of our fiscal system." No doubt the Ministerial Commission will, in reporting on tariff matters, take into account conditions on the other side the line, for, as our contemporary well puts it, "trade is subject to tornadoes and cyclones," and it is one of these brought on, however, among other causes by undue protection that has led to the present condition of things. No doubt, from the experiences of our neighbors, profitable lessons will be derived.