

ESTABLISHED 1866

The Monetary Times

TRADE REVIEW
AND INSURANCE CHRONICLE

With which has been incorporated the INTERCOLONIAL
JOURNAL OF COMMERCE, of Montreal (in 1869), the
TRADE REVIEW, of the same city (in 1870), and
the TORONTO JOURNAL OF COMMERCE.

Issued every Friday morning.

SUBSCRIPTION—POST PAID.

CANADIAN SUBSCRIBERS	-	\$2.00 PER YEAR.
BRITISH	-	10S. 6D. STER. PER YEAR.
AMERICAN	-	\$2.00 U.S. CURRENCY.
SINGLE COPIES,	-	10 CENTS.

BOOK & JOB PRINTING A SPECIALTY.

PUBLISHED BY THE

MONETARY TIMES PRINTING COMPANY OF CANADA,
LIMITED.

EDW. TROUT,	J. K. CAMERON,
President.	Secy.-Treas.

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TORONTO, CAN., FRIDAY, JAN. 8, 1892

THE SITUATION.

If the Washington correspondent of the New York Tribune may be believed, there is a halt in Behring Sea negotiations, Lord Salisbury having objected to something which had been concerted between the American Government and Sir Julian Pauncefote. Without pretending to know what the ground of objection is, the correspondent, like a good Jingo, proceeds to accuse Lord Salisbury of making "frivolous" and "insincere" objections, for the purpose of delay. The only thing certain is that the scribe is in an unamiable mood, a fact which cannot be taken necessarily to imply that the American Government is rash and unreasonable. Whatever the hitch may be, if any, it was not suffered to prevent Lord Salisbury sending Sir George Baden Powell to Washington on the Behring Sea business; and it is something to know that the envoy goes there in the full belief that a bone of contention between the two countries is about to be removed.

Accounts of the famine in Russia are taking the most appalling shape, and if half that is told be true, the country is threatened with a mortality such as has nowhere been seen since the days of the black death. The difficulty is to know how much to believe. Tolstoi, who would not consciously romance on such a subject, is reported to have advised the Government to purchase 150,000,000 bushels of grain from America, and if necessary as much more. But what would be the use of this if the greater part of this provision would be in danger of being stolen under the pretence of distribution? The statement, which does not come on the authority of Tolstoi, to the effect that "of the vast sum of \$75,000,000 already expended by the Government, the starving peasantry received little or nothing," is a manifest exaggeration, calculated to destroy all faith in similar statements. Russian officials are

corrupt, notoriously so, but it is simply impossible that their stealings can be on the scale here attributed to them. Many instances of self-denial, for the purpose of helping the suffering, have occurred in all ranks, from the nobility to the common soldier: when this happens, the ordinary Russian official cannot be the universal thief which he is painted in connection with the distribution of the famine relief fund. But if Tolstoi's estimate of the quantity of grain required to feed the starving be anything near the truth, Russia is about to undergo a scene of anguish such as has befallen no nation in modern times.

At the end of the last fiscal year, June 30, the total liabilities of the Province of Quebec were nearly thirty-five millions (\$34,888,207), with nominal assets of \$11,133,538. What is certain is that there was a net debt over assets of nearly twenty-four millions (\$23,748,654), but that the assets will cover the amount of the debt at which they stand is more than doubtful. In the last five years, the Mercier Government increased the debt nearly thirteen millions of dollars. In this respect it but followed in the line traced by its predecessors; and it is quite clear that unless a radical change of fiscal policy takes place, the ruin of the provincial finances is not far off. When deficits become chronic, and when interest must be paid out of borrowed money, the spectre of bankruptcy appears at no great distance. Every increase of debt ought to have been accompanied with a special provision for ways and means to meet the interest. The debt ought never to have been extended to anything like its present dimensions, while the resources of the province are what they are. The Government, instead of providing its own revenue, relied on successive raids upon the Dominion Treasury to make good the waste of extravagance. But in the end, this recourse was bound to fail, as fail it has, we hope for good.

That a second commission will be appointed to enquire into alleged irregularities by the Mercier Government is now accepted as a fact. The belief is that there will be on it a judge, a lawyer and an expert accountant. If it be true that the public documents for the most part furnish the proof to be relied upon, the evidence will be of the least disputable character. What is wanted is a fair, not a partisan enquiry, such as would ordinarily be best obtained from judges acting as commissioners; but where the evidence is chiefly documentary, it speaks for itself and is not capable of being discredited, since it is furnished by the accused themselves. If M. Mercier should win in the electoral battle, as he seems to have a fair chance of doing, the House would sustain him in all his past doings; in that case, how could any offence of which he had been guilty be punished? Would there be any means of punishment at all that could be put into force with the slightest chance of success?

Our Pacific coast fisheries have yet to be developed. A trial in halibut fishing there has been made by the steamer "Eliza Ed-

wards," which, after going as far as the Alaska line and visiting the borders of our Queen Charlotte's Island, has returned to Vancouver with three tons of halibut. This fish was found at three different points. One would think that the Americans, who own a larger extent of the coast, even where the interior belongs to Canada, would not need to poach on Canadian waters within the three mile limit, but the "Eliza Edwards" reports that they are doing so. These western fisheries, as well as those on the Atlantic coast, will require to be looked after by our own Government. The Canadian fisheries east and west, the richest in the world, are well worth preventative protection.

Label and trade-mark counterfeiting are common enough, and it is natural that the counterfeiter should try their hands on what they consider the best brands. In this way Hennessey's brandy has suffered to a great extent. Now the turn of Walker's whiskey has come, the alleged counterfeiter being Simon Ignatz and Samuel Hasterlik, of Chicago. A partial counterfeit of the Canadian inland revenue stamp accompanied the Walker trade mark; the signature of N. C. Green being substituted for the name of the proper officer of the Government, Mr. E. Miall, the object of the substitution evidently being to prevent successful prosecution for the offence. The counterfeiting of the trade mark is complete, and ought to lead to conviction, if the United States have the same means of punishment that we have and the same energy to apply it.

The British Board of Trade reports that the method pursued in Great Britain in stamping out pleuro-pneumonia has proved successful to the extent of reducing the area of the disease from thirty-four to two counties, since the Act conferring the necessary authority was passed. One dealer at Southampton had been the means of causing sixteen outbreaks of the disease, which would seem to show that the precautions taken at the ports of debarkment were by no means unnecessary. Sometimes the disease exists for months without any outward signs of its existence; and when cattle have to be slaughtered at random to confirm or disprove suspicions, a large number are found not to be affected; the proportion of "contract cattle" killed giving only 800 cases of disease out of 13,000.

English, Irish and Scotch emigration to the United States continues largely to exceed that to Canada. Last year these countries, in the order named, sent 89,591, 53,896 and 15,487 to the United States, and 17,981, 1,326 and 2,374 to Canada. The latter figures are about equal to those of the previous year. From the British and Irish hives there were sent out altogether last year 218,263, about the same number that was sent out in 1880. These relative figures are not consoling to Canada, but the greater country has, for the present, more attractions. This disparity may continue till the vacant lands of the United States of good quality are exhausted. The settlement of lands of inferior quality, or which require