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THE SITUATION.

The second Royal Commission to enquire into the alleged malfeasance of the Mercier Government has been appointed. Judge Mathieu, Mr. Donald McMaster, Q.C., and Mr. Damase Masson are the commissioners. Judges are supposed to leave politics behind them when they take a place on the judgment seat. Judge Mathieu was, when in politics, a Conservative, and the Mercier partisans assume that he is so still. The two other commissioners are of the same political faith. In this respect, the complexion of the second commission differs from that of the first, Chief Justice Jette having, when a politician, not been a Conservative, in the strict sense of the word. It is a pity that it is possible to say that the new commission may, as a whole, be suspected of party leanings, though Judge Mathieu's independence there is no good ground to suspect. How far is the use of commissions against a government, actual or defunct, to be carried? If we go on at this rate, we shall be in some danger of arriving at "Government by commission" in reality. The alternative would be to wait till a new House is elected and then let it pass upon the alleged delinquencies of the late Government: the election, in that case, would take place in the absence of some of the facts essential for the formation of a correct judgment on the conduct of politicians against whom grave charges of corruption have been made, and some of them proved. If objection to this second commission can fairly be made, the alternative would seem to be even worse. There is in question more than political faults, and there are transactions proved to have taken place which no political vote could sanctify or excuse.

Ernest Pacaud will have to answer in a civil suit, brought by the Attorney-General of Quebec, for his receipt of the \$100,000 which he received as a reward for the part he took in the Baie de Chaleurs conspiracy.

Where political feeling runs high, it will be difficult to get a verdict against a man who was the purse-bearer of a political party in Quebec. The jury will be very likely to disagree, in which case Pacaud will retain the plunder in triumph. The facts are against him, the law may be against him, but if party passion divide the jury, he will be safe. Whatever may be the result, it is proper that in so flagrant a case of corruption an attempt should be made to recover the amount of which the provincial treasury was robbed. It is a hopeful sign that, in a similar case, Bronskill—late superintendent of the Ottawa Government stationery department—should, when suit was brought, settle the claim by the payment of \$280. But Bronskill could raise no political passion in his favor to sway a jury, which, consequently, he was afraid to face. He had not the same ground of reliance that Pacaud can boast.

Count Tolstoi confirms the suspicion we expressed last week, that there was great exaggeration in the charges of foul play in the distribution of the famine fund of Russia. At the same time, he admits that there are well-to-do people who steal from this fund. He states that local famines occur every year. The count finds it necessary to use ambiguous language when he says that, in some districts which he names, the failure of the crops is not the cause of the famine, which has extended to from thirty to sixty per cent. of the population. But where the farmers have had no seed grain to sow, this remark will not be true of next year. If failure of crops is not responsible for the sufferings of the year, and they are referable to the exactions of a despotic government, things must go from bad to worse till a change of system comes. Even this famine is an adversary of the official corruption which eats the vitals of the Russian nation; it has turned the attention of the Czar to the necessity of a change for the better, which he is apparently anxious to bring about. The local authorities exaggerate the suffering to wring larger bounty from the Government, and the Government minimizes it, for motives of its own. Amid all the suffering the vice of drunkenness, for which Russia is famed, flourishes. Russian suffering does not attract practical sympathy from abroad; even the United States House of Representatives refused to permit a national vessel to be sent with food for hungry Russians. The strange thing about it is that the jealousy of the Government of the Czar would not permit voluntary organizations even for the relief of misery. The full effect of the Russian famine on the grain markets of the world cannot yet be foreseen, because it is not known to what extent, if any, Russia will require to draw upon the harvests of other countries.

What have not inaptly been called the two great spending departments of the Government, Railways and Canals, and Public Works, have been filled, one by an Ontario member, Mr. Haggart, the other by a Quebec representative, M. Ouimet. M. Chapleau has failed to get what he so

loudly demanded, he is not and does not pretend to be satisfied that his friend M. Ouimet has got what he desired for himself. On the whole, public opinion pronounces that it is better he did not get it. In refusing M. Chapleau's open demand for the office, enforced with considerable menace, the Premier has done a bold thing and one essential to the retention to his hold on public confidence. It looks as if M. Chapleau would find some means of taking his revenge. Mr. Haggart will be called upon, once more, to explain his connection with a certain railway contract some years ago. The defence that was partly rested on the ground that the charge was so old that the statute of limitations might be pleaded, was weak. But there was a half promise that the charge should be met on its merits, at a future time. No doubt the Opposition will see to it that the opportunity to do so is found. In consequence of the doubt which may have been created by this accusation, the appointment, at such a time as this, cannot be regarded as a strong one. M. Ouimet stands well in the public estimation. It will not escape notice that these two departments are given to the two great provinces; a geographical distribution which, whatever its vices, cannot in present state of the confederation be wholly avoided.

It begins to be tolerably plain that the death of the late Khedive of Egypt will not seriously affect the position of England in that country. The quiet succession of his son, Abbas Pasha, a young man nearing his majority, has removed occasions of intrigue; the Porte is not inclined to interfere, and the Drieubund is in favor of the English occupation being continued. It has worked miracles of financial, social and economic reforms, but the work is not yet done. France, almost alone, calls upon England to depart from the land of the Pharaohs, but Lord Salisbury turns a deaf ear, and even Mr. Gladstone, having felt the public pulse on the Egyptian question, does not clamor for the close of occupation.

A society has been formed in Paris, France, to prevent compulsory labor on Sunday. M. Jules Simon, who is honorary president, lays down the platform of the society. "We do not wish," he said, "to forbid people working on Sundays if they wish to do so, but we aim to prevent them forcing other people to work." This is quite in accordance with the views of the best French writers on natural law. They hold that a man has a right to work on Sunday if he chooses, and that it would be an act of tyranny to deprive him of that right. This explains the limitation of the Sunday observance proposed by the French movement, a limitation which is not recognized in Great Britain, the United States or Canada. The French movement deserves to succeed.

Col. Vincent continues to repeat to English audiences that Canada is in favor of his scheme of Fair Trade. There is no evidence of the alleged fact which Canadians can accept. The question has not been generally discussed, scarcely touched