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TORONTO, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1895.

THE SITUATION.

Three items of news come from Newfoundland, one good and two bad. A new discovery of coal on the line of the railway under construction is announced. The glittering word "splendid," applied to the seams, gives no real information either as to their thickness or depth at which they are found. The discovery is said to have been made in "locating," but the word road does not follow, and we are left in the dark. They will be near the surface, and easily got at, if the discovery was made in "locating" the line, as seems probable. Of the quality, we are only told that the coal is "equal to anthracite," which most likely means a hard coal which is not anthracite, but whether lignite or cannel is left in doubt. In any case, the discovery is good news. As a coaling station, Newfoundland will always be important, and no discovery could add to the value of the island so much as the discovery of rich beds of coal. The second item, which is of the doleful order, tell us the Union Bank cannot pay the promised dividend. The excuse given by the trustees is that the Government is making claims which are not yet due. What is certain is that the bank's creditors and the Government take different views of the matter, and that the usual indignation meetings are to play a part in the discussion without doing much to reach a settlement of the conflicting claims. From the third item we learn that the Government has seized over \$4,000 worth of watches in the stores of the leading jewellers, on the ground that they were smuggled. The fact discovers a vicious condition of commercial life in the island.

In deciding to get the best expert evidence on the waterworks system, the municipal council of Toronto has taken a wise step. In a public work where millions have been expended, and it is conceivable that millions might be wasted, the best expert opinions are cheap at any price. If Mr. Mansergh's reputation enables him to command £3,000 for a couple of month's work, that price must be paid if his opinion is to be got. When he gets here, we presume he will take the bearings of the whole question, and consider the water supply of the city from every possible point of view. Meanwhile, there are plenty of people in the city, who having no knowledge of engineering whatever, are quite ready to tell us what ought and what ought not to be done. At present, we have but one engineer's

opinion to guide us, and that is in favor of a tunnel across the narrowest part of the bay. Mr. Mansergh may confirm that opinion, or may find some other solution of the problem. As a waterworks engineer, Mr. Mansergh occupies the foremost position and is probably without a peer. The question is essentially one for experts, and when an expert is employed it is essential to get the best.

For the first time, the fisheries of the North-West and British Columbia have been examined by an expert. The work was performed by Professor Prince, Commissioner of Fisheries. He thinks that it may be possible to utilize some kinds of fish not hitherto got there as an article of commerce, and that the treatment of anchovies may become a source of profit. Besides, the question is introduced to the west coast of cultivating the lobsters and oysters of the east. Except the river fisheries of British Columbia, which have become famous, the great fisheries of the west coast have not been developed beyond a fractional part of their capacity. The time is fast approaching when all this will be changed with profit to the operators. As between the rival attractions of fishing and agriculture, the rich soil of British Columbia is favorable to the latter and the poorer soil of Newfoundland to the former. The best policy is not to pay exclusive attention to either; exclusive attention to the fisheries, as the experience of Newfoundland shows, is liable to accidents which may attain the magnitude of disaster; while a total neglect of a rich fishery, if that were conceivable, would be improvident.

Some time ago the Ontario Government advertised for tenders to operate the binder twine plant at the Central Prison, Toronto, and for the prison labor necessary to do the work. It is now said that the contract is on the point of being let. The labor of prisoners must be employed in some way or other, and it cannot easily be moved far from the prison. Free laborers object to competition to which prison labor subjects them; but it is not generally conceded that prisoners should be supported in idleness at the public expense. Sometimes it is contended that all articles made by prison labor should be labelled as such; but it is not probable that this would make much difference in the sale, since buyers look to price and quality rather than to origin. The probable reason for the renting of the plant and the labor at the Central Prison is that in the hands of the Government there has been a loss. This is not surprising when we find that the National Cordage Company of the United States is virtually, if not actually, bankrupt. But their disaster was due to an attempt to corner the raw material and to buying up at extravagant prices rival concerns, the real object being to get rid of their competition. The Central Prison experiment in binder twine is decisive of nothing, and does not help to solve the question of mode in which prison labor can best be employed. It contributes only a very small item to the solution of a large question.

About two weeks ago, a number of Newfoundland fishing vessels, captured by a Canadian official on the charge of smuggling, were released by our Government. Now, the owners have filed notices against the official, claiming heavy damages. It does not follow that they will succeed. The question of the liability of the Government may come up. The plaintiffs in these actions would find it necessary to make their own innocence clear. On that point, it is proper to wait till the facts are clearly brought out. There is nothing antecedently improbable in the island fishermen engaging in smuggling goods into a foreign country, when leading jewellers in St. John's have their goods seized on a charge of defrauding their own Government in the same way.