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## THE SITUATION.

To Mr. Nordheimer is added the Commercial Loan Company as defendants in the suit brought by the liquidators of the Federal Bank. The total amount claimed from all the defendants is \$680,000. This figure is presumably the assumed measure of the loss suffered by the bank from dealing in its own stock. The members of the Commercial Loan Company were also officers of the bank. In any event this suit will be productive of good results. It will bring out in a strong light the danger of resorting to doubtful expedients to evade the salutary law which enacts that a bank shall not make loans upon its own shares. The revelations of the Central Bank showed the danger and the inconvenience of creating trusts in the inner circles of a bank, for dealing with the stock. When serious responsibility arises out of such transactions everyone concerned tries to evade responsibility. In this particular the Central Bank was not entitled to the merit of prior discovery. In the past there have been too many irregularities of this kind. Some rude shock was necessary to produce an awakening to the folly and the impropriety of these divergences from the path marked out by prudence and duty, not less than by law.

If the right to tax private butchers' stalls now affirmed by the Court of Appeals at Montreal were generally enforced in Canadian towns and cities, the disposition to desert the public market for private stalls, to the disfigurement of the streets, would be a good deal less than it is. Pidgeon, the owner of a private stall in Montreal, was subjected to a tax of \$200 by the corporation, and was condemned by the Recorder's Court to pay the amount. The defendant applied to the Superior Court for a writ of prohibition, which was refused. The Court decides that the city had a right to impose the tax, and that in doing so it was acting within the undoubted limits of its powers. It is easy to see that this power of taxation could be made a weapon by which to drive all butchers to the public market. Presumably there is no reason why the tax should not discriminate against all who refuse to use the public market prepared for

them, and set up private stalls as a means of evading the tax they would otherwise have to pay.

Unanimously the Court of Appeal decides, in the case of Godson against the City of Toronto, that the enquiry held by the county judge upon a reference to him by the corporation of Toronto is not the subject of a writ of prohibition. The judgment of Mr. Justice Robertson is reversed. The ground of the decision is that the county judge acting as commissioner can pronounce no judgment, and impose no obligation upon anybody beyond that of appearing to give evidence. Mr. Justice Robertson relied upon a case which the Court of Appeal holds to be inapplicable. Godson was not originally confronted with a specific charge; but the City Council had amended the reference, under which, however, the commissioner did not think proper to proceed till his jurisdiction had been defined by the Court of Appeal. It is proper to observe that from the first the commissioner, according to this decision, has been right in his contention as to the scope of the enquiry, and that he did not seek unduly to enlarge it. Mr. Godson has intimated his intention to appeal to the Supreme Court.

A difficulty between Great Britain and Portugal has arisen out of a railway concession held by British subjects on Delagoa Bay, South Africa. The concession was originally made by Portugal to an American, who transferred it with its rights and obligations to British subjects. The concession has been cancelled, in spite of the protest of the British Government. The merits of the dispute are somewhat obscure, but are somehow connected with the time within which the railway was to be built. The Government of Portugal has been informed that Great Britain will hold it responsible for any resulting loss that may be sustained by British subjects. Three British war vessels have been ordered to Delagoa Bay to look after British interests. There are among those interested in the disputed concession some who wish the railway to be purchased and the sum owing by Portugal to England set off in payment. Probably this incident has helped to raise the cry set up by two German newspapers that Great Britain wishes to reduce the South American Republic to a British dependency, for which pretence there does not seem to be any sufficient warrant. The difficulty is to be settled by arbitration.

Dominion Day is, year by year, celebrated with increased enthusiasm in Ontario and the other British provinces. In Quebec St. Jean the Baptiste's celebration goes for more than the birth of the Dominion. At present there are fewer questions which tend to weaken the federal tie than formerly. The race question in Quebec, on the other hand, acquires additional intensity, and the end of it may be far off. On former occasions there has been discontent in nearly all the provinces, in Manitoba, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, where all serious sources of difficulty have, for the time, been removed.

Coming to external relations, there are two fishery questions to be settled. That on the Atlantic is giving no immediate serious trouble, while the Behring Sea difficulty is more a matter of delay than anything else. On this question undoubtedly the maritime nations have a right to make themselves heard.

No sooner has the Panama canal come to a stand than a rival project, the Nicaragua canal, is giving trouble to Costa Rica and Nicaragua. The San Juan River, which it is proposed to utilize for a distance of sixty miles for the canal, forms the boundary between these two countries. The war party in Costa Rica, now uppermost it would seem, wants plunder or war, and if a heavy indemnity for the use of right of way which by treaty has once been declared to belong to Nicaragua cannot be obtained, war is threatened. Costa Rica having a larger army than its rival, probably thinks the game a sure one. But Costa Rica herself granted the concession a few months ago, and it seems incredible that now, when a different party has got control of the Government, the grant should be repudiated and war declared. Yet the ways of the Governments of Central America are peculiar, and their future action can scarcely be predicted on ordinary principles that obtain elsewhere.

Does the Northern Pacific Railway Company seriously propose to build a line of road in Canada parallel to the Canadian Pacific? This question is answered affirmatively by the St. Paul correspondent of the New York Times. The story is that this company is to purchase the North-West Central, and intends to utilize it in connection with the footing which it has already got in Manitoba. Details about the alleged route are given, the allegation being that the line will pass up the Saskatchewan Valley, enter the mountains above Edmonton, and terminate at Skeena Bay on the Pacific. Mr. Oakes, President of the Northern Pacific, is said to admit that negotiations for the purchase of the North-West Central are in progress. A good many have nibbled at that bait, but all stopped short of swallowing it. The Northern Pacific may be nibbling too; but it would be unsafe to say at present what else it may do.

Rumors of war are still rife. At a consistory held the other day, Pope Leo XIII. is said to have informed the cardinals that the papal nuncio at Vienna had forwarded to the Vatican an assurance that war is imminent. On what authority the prediction is made does not appear. The nuncio is not likely to be better informed than other people in high position, and he is liable to be misinformed or to draw a wrong inference from what he has been told. The European situation is uneasy, but the immediate prospect of war cannot be said to be certain.

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