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## THE SITUATION.

Apparently at the instance of Mr. Wiman, the New York Board of Trade has invoked the ghost of reciprocity with Canada. The board objects to granting any measure of free trade by which Canada might benefit, unless she agrees to give an equivalent. And it instructs its delegates who are to go to the National Board of Trade, at Washington, on January 23, to take steps towards securing such reciprocity. If the United States were to wait on reciprocity with all the world, she would not get far on the road to Free Trade. The advice of the New York Board of Trade can only embarrass the advocates of Free Trade at Washington, if it has any effect at all. The Canadian Government promises some legislative reciprocity, in an indefinite sort of way. The United States will make their own tariff to suit themselves, and Canadians will probably do the same. To the opponents of tariff reform, at Washington, all sorts of embarrassments offered to the advocates of the Wilson bill are welcome, and they will of course rejoice to see this red-herring reciprocity drawn across the scent. Reciprocity in any form is not much in favor with the ruling majority in the Republic, and it is not probable that the New York incident will have any material effect on the course of legislation now in progress at Washington.

In times like these some reductions of civic salaries would not be out of place; but any reform of this kind should have some regard to merit: an indiscriminate reduction as to individuals, such as the city council of Toronto proposes, is at once unjust and unwise: unjust in treating alike the meritorious and the undeserving; unwise, since it risks the loss of valuable men like Engineer Keating and Dr. Sheard. An engineer, if capable and honest, may save his salary an hundred fold. The medical health officer is admittedly efficient

and economical, and that would seem to be a reason with the council for reducing his salary. At all times every successive city engineer has been a mark for the malignity of aldermen whose schemes he baulks. For this reason we want in that office a man of backbone, and such Mr. Keating has shown himself to be. The council simply runs riot when it pretends to undertake to reduce the salaries of men over whom it has no control, such as the school teachers. When the school teachers, the police and others were placed beyond the power of the council, any abuse of the power of reduction was guarded against by deliberate design. The council's scheme is too crude for application without careful and discriminating revision. The best reform would be to make the heads of departments responsible for their staff, with power to prevent scheming aldermen increasing the number of employees beyond the actual needs of the service.

France proposes to convert her 4½ per cent. government securities into 3½ per cents. A bill for this purpose has been presented in the Chamber of Deputies. By this measure, the government estimate is, the country will save 68,000,000 francs in interest. Four and a-half per cent. is a high rate of interest for the government of France to pay, and no doubt the figure can be reduced, though France always pays a higher rate of interest on her public debt than England. There is little doubt that the conversion can be effected. The operation, not calling for additional capital, will make no strain on the money market; but as it will enable France to increase her debt without increasing her interest charges, new loans are sure to follow.

Secretary Carlisle has issued a circular inviting subscriptions to a loan of \$50,000,000 on ten years bonds. No bid worse than 3 per cent. par to be considered. As the bonds are to be of denominations of \$50, it is evidently expected that the millions will contribute. The loan was no sooner offered than bids enough to cover it are said to have been made.

Arrangements for bringing out emigrants which existed between the Canadian Government and two distinct companies, have been cancelled by the immigration authorities. What is to follow in their place? Immigration to the North-West cannot be neglected or ignored by the Government. We may get some immigrants from the United States, and these, when of the right sort, must be welcomed as they would be if they come from Europe. The great need of the North-West is settlers capable of taking their part in the tilling of the soil. They will come in time. Land in the United States will soon cease to be available, at prices which immigrants can afford to pay; the stream which went there will be diverted to the North-West, and with it will mingle rills from the Republic. No time should be lost in determining what the new immigration policy is to be. It cannot be one of absolute inaction.

In some parts of the country, the Patrons of Industry are drawing striking

pictures of the condition of the farmers, Mr. Braithwaite, president of the Order at Brandon, telegraphs Mr. Van Horne that, with wheat at 40 cents a bushel, "the condition of the farmer is deplorable." He adds that the farmers are "desperate," and that immediate relief is necessary. The language is slightly rhetorical, and it is not quite clear what sort of relief is referred to. But it can scarcely be relief in the form of food. He states, as the cause of the trouble, that "class legislation has placed a weapon in the hands of the favored ones that has caused and is causing much suffering." Mr. Van Horne replies that there is nothing the company can do that would help prices. Mr. Braithwaite, in appealing to Mr. Van Horne, probably desired some abatement of freight rates; but, if so, that part of the message has not been made public. Our attention having been called to a paragraph in the *Iron Age* of 4th inst., stating that "tidings from the Canadian North-West speak of acute distress among the farmers in that region, where the crops were a partial failure," we communicated with Winnipeg to ascertain what foundation there was for it. Reply comes that "in a few scattered districts throughout the Province and Territories, where the crops were partial failure, there is more or less want, but the matter has been greatly exaggerated, and the farmers of Manitoba are in far better condition to-day than those to the south of us in the adjoining States." It is to be remembered that in Manitoba and the North-West, as in Dakota, Minnesota and other States of purely agricultural resources, there is bound to be more or less distress when the crops in any district are light and prices low.

At a meeting held in London, England, presided over by Lord Knutsford, Lord Lorne is reported as having stated "that something might be done to improve the news transmitted from and to the colonies by any arrangement securing direct transmission." This, no doubt, has reference to such cases as that of Canada, where the news is filtered through United States channels, and often receives a high coloring from the medium through which it passes. But whether anything will be done, at present, and if so, what, is another matter. The fact that the need of a change is felt, is the first step towards bringing it about.

The reduction of coal, with other cheaper ingredients, to gas, is likely before long to have an important effect on the development of manufactures. By the use of coal, water, and petroleum, two American cities, Philadelphia and Boston, now enjoy the use of gas at \$1 per 1,000 feet. But this is twice as much as some enthusiasts expect the ruling price for gas will become, both for fuel and for light; and when this happens an industrial revolution is looked for. Some great factories in Philadelphia already find their account in reducing fuel to gas. The waste of fuel in private houses is enormous, and if a remedy could be applied by the substitution of gas for coal, the gain to consumers would be great. But a loss in the distribution would have