

# The MORNING GUARDIAN

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1904.

## WAR WITH FRANCE ?

Our news from London this morning is of a most alarming nature. It means anything it means that there is serious danger of war between Britain and France growing out of French interference in the war now joined between Russia and Japan. It is clear that if France permits the use of her ports, whether on the Red Sea or elsewhere to Russian ships of war such action is a plain breach of neutrality and a hostile act against Japan.

Britain is bound by her treaty of alliance with Japan to one of two principal lines of action in the Russo-Japanese war. First, if Japan is attacked by a single power, Britain is to remain neutral. Second, if Japan is attacked by more than a single power then Britain is bound to intervene on Japan's behalf by force of arms and assist till the close of the war.

The question arises, would the violation of neutrality by France in the manner stated constitute such an attack upon Japan as will force Britain to draw the sword? Perhaps not, but it certainly raises a diplomatic crisis of the utmost gravity. When Lloyds calls for war rates of insurance on British ships it shows how serious is the situation.

France and Britain have been at peace for nearly ninety years, and never were more friendly than within a few months past. The King has been a potent force for the creation and preservation of this spirit of concord. Besides there are immense commercial and social interests that have grown up which tend powerfully to perpetuate peace. Most fervently must we all hope that our own dear country shall not be now again embroiled in war. Many a serious crisis passes harmlessly, but we live in most critical times and know not what a day may bring forth.

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### JAPAN'S COAL SUPPLY.

It is noted that Japan's principal sources of coal supply, and upon which her fleets depend are situated at Mororan, on Volcano Bay, on the southern side of the island of Yezo, which is the northern island of Japan proper. Mororan lies almost due east of Vladivostok, the Russian stronghold and naval station, which is also the Pacific terminal of the Siberian Railway. The distance

from Vladivostok to Mororan is but five hundred miles, or two day's sail. The output of these mines is over a million tons a year.

If Russia had command of the sea she would doubtless make it one of her first objects to seize these mines and so at once cripple her enemy and obtain the much needed addition to her own coal supply. The immense strategic and material advantage of capturing such a prize is apparent to the non military reader. Should the war go on we shall doubtless learn that a supreme effort will be made by Russia, when her Baltic fleet arrives in eastern waters, to first overcome the Japanese naval forces and then seize upon the Mororan coal mines.

The situation of Japan's coal mines lends additional interest to the battle for naval supremacy in eastern waters which is now in progress. Had Russia improved the past six months by transferring her Baltic fleet to the east before the war began she would apparently have been mistress of the situation when the war opened, or might have prevented the war by such a show of naval force as the Japanese would not have cared to attack. It is clear now that Russia has blundered, and it remains to be seen whether it is yet too late to regain her lost ground.

### CAR FERRIES IN ICY WATERS.

As all bright school boys know, the Straits of Mackinac connect the waters of Lake Michigan with those of Lake Huron. These straits are eight miles wide—almost the width of the Straits of Northumberland between Cape Traverse and Cape Tormentine. Here a railway ferry connects the railway lines and systems on opposite sides of the strait. Be it observed that the latitude of the Straits of Mackinac is practically the same as that of our Capes Route, about 46, but being far inland the cold of winter is greater and the fresh water of the lakes freezes to a greater depth than the salt sea under similar conditions. There is a considerable current also in the Mackinac Straits, but not usually so great as in Northumberland Straits when the tide is running.

A writer in the Marine Review, published in Cleveland, tells how the ice-breaking ferry steamers carrying cars across the straits do their work in winter and the accompanying illustrations are quite as suggestive of arctic navigation as one of our own cuts showing the Stanley or the Minto stuck in the ice. They show the ice piled above the tops of the funnels of the ferry steamers. And yet the writer of the article tells that "Since these vessels went into service no winter has been severe enough to check them, nor have any conditions of ice been met which they could not work their way through. . . . The ferry has proved a great success in every way. These car ferries have a bow and a stern wheel. The bow wheel is used only in winter to displace the ice from the bows of the boats, especially in heavy, windrowed ice-fields which often extend 25 or 30 feet below the surface of the water."

There are better and more powerful ice breakers than our Minto and Stanley, and we ought to have one at least. And if a car ferry is now in daily working at Mackinac, why could not such a ferry be operated at the Capes ?

The St. John Telegraph on Saturday last quite fully defined its position. It had supported Mr. Blair in his opposition to the Grand Trunk Pacific scheme. It believes that had he followed his speech in Parliament by appealing to his constituents and the Province "he would have swept New Brunswick like a whirlwind in opposition to that measure." But Mr. Blair did not attempt a campaign. The Telegraph could not swallow the measure, and decided to take an independent course, which of necessity involved the alienation of some old friends and the

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loss of all the patronage the paper received from the Government. "In view of all this," The Telegraph proceeds, "it is worth while to note that instead of losing friends, The Telegraph has steadily gained in circulation." It quotes remarkable figures from its subscription department in confirmation of this statement. Evidently the people of New Brunswick, like those of Prince Edward Island prefer an independent newspaper to one that is a mere embodiment of party views.

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