

PROMINENT TOPICS.

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.—A more hopeful stage has been reached in the negotiations between Russia and Japan, if reliance is to be placed on the very positive statements of some leading United States journal. It is certainly a ground for hoping that the negotiations are trending towards peace for the conference to be still in session. It is hardly credible that all the time spent so far by the plenipotentiaries at Portsmouth, N.H., has been occupied over minor questions. Such a course of proceeding would not be in accordance with usage, nor would it be as reasonable and businesslike as promptly taking up some point of a pivotal character, for if on reaching such a point, insuperable obstacles are encountered, then the whole of the previous proceedings have been a waste of time and both sides have shown their hands without any substantial, any permanent result.

This was not the course followed at the Berlin Congress. The most serious questions at issue between the several powers were discussed at once, after the order of the proceedings was arranged, and England's ultimatum was made known to Prince Bismarck immediately after the arrival of Lord Beaconsfield, who, at the initial stage of the Congress, made arrangements for retiring therefrom, and told his Secretary, Lord Rowton, that this step would probably lead to war with Russia.

When England scored by gaining this point, then matters of less moment were discussed and the Congress closed with the result of, "Peace with Honour."

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THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATIVE INSURANCE COMMITTEE is preparing to enter upon the work assigned it by the legislature. It has sent a letter this week to each of the life insurance companies doing business in the State of New York, announcing its intention to request specific information regarding the affairs of that and every other company. The circular also invites the several companies to make suggestions which may tend to expedite the committee's work. This circular looks very like a fishing expedition. The companies have had reflections thrown upon them which the legislative committee is instructed to investigate, yet that committee wishes the companies to say what questions they would like to have asked. The situation is very peculiar. Is it not high time the life insurance companies were relieved from any such very costly, very irritating enquiries by officials outside those of the State Insurance Department? Surely the periodic examinations made by the State Superintendents of Insurance are effective and thorough enough to protect the policy-holders; if this is not the case the proper course would be to so alter the system as to make it effective.

THE EARL OF MINTO NOW GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA.—For the third time one who has served the office of Governor-General of Canada, has been given the highest honour at the disposal of the Crown. It is universally recognized that the retiring Governor-General of India, Lord Curzon, was an official of brilliant talents, an administrator, indeed, who has had few peers. Between him and Lord Kitchener a dispute arose in regard to the control of the military forces in India. Briefly stated the question on which they differed was, as to whether the commander-in-chief of the army in India should be supreme in authority, or, whether his authority should be shared by and with an official attached to the personal staff of the Governor-General? The question is one on which the opinions of statesmen and soldiers vary. The former generally stand by Lord Curzon in upholding the plan of military administration on which he differed with Lord Kitchener, while some military authorities endorse Lord Kitchener's idea.

There is a very strong impression that Lord Curzon should have been upheld. He is considered to be the ablest and best informed administrator and most statesmanlike ruler who ever filled such an important position. As a soldier probably Lord Kitchener may have few peers, but as a statesman and diplomat, he is practically without experience. One thing is certain, England requires the best statesman and diplomat which she possesses to act in the capacity of Viceroy of India. She also requires the ablest soldier as a commander of her forces in India. There is ample room for each to exercise the highest qualities in their respective spheres.

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LORD MINTO'S RECORD IN CANADA, happily for himself and this country, was made in a time of exceptional prosperity. No difficult question arose while he was at Ottawa, his functions were almost wholly confined to those of routine and society. He was assiduous in the discharge of whatever duties fell to his lot. As a soldier and a sportsman he was highly popular, but he never had any opportunity of showing the administrative gifts which are essential to a Governor-General of India. He has Canada's best wishes for a successful career. Great responsibilities often develop latent powers.

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NORWAY'S DECISION.—To ascertain the feeling of the people of Norway in regard to the continuance of the union of that country with Sweden, a referendum was held which resulted in 292,300 votes being given for separation and only 136 for union. There is every probability of the Norwegians deciding to invite a scion of the royal family of Denmark to fill the throne of their country, which would practically restore conditions that existed before Sweden and Norway were united under one Crown.