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Coming Home. During the coming week the steamship 'Idaho' is expected to arrive at Halifax with some 400 of our soldiers returning from South Africa. It is now almost a year since they left our shores for the scene of conflict. Much enthusiasm attended their going, and they are sure of receiving an enthusiastic welcome on their return. Not all are coming back now, for some are remaining for a longer term of service, and some will come back no more. More than a hundred brave fellows who went forth at the nation's call have found graves in South Africa, and amid the gladness and enthusiasm of the home-coming these will not be forgotten. This South African experience will form a strange chapter in the memory of these men in coming years, for most of them probably will settle quietly down again to the peaceful vocations from which they were so unexpectedly called to fields of martial strife. Probably few of them, as they said good-bye to their friends in Canada a year ago, had any adequate idea of what awaited them. They had seen no active service and had no experience of war. No one then supposed that the war would prove so serious a business. Many thought it might all be over before the Canadian contingent would reach South Africa. Our boys half feared that only something in the way of police duty would be appointed them and that they would get no taste of actual warfare. They little knew what awaited them in the way of long forced marches, in strenuous fighting, in experience of the hunger and all the hardships of active service under difficult and unsanitary conditions. It was a stern school of discipline to put boys into fresh from the farm, the shop or the office. The result has given Canada reason to be proud of her sons. They have nobly shown their mettle, demonstrating that this Canadian soil breeds men of brave hearts and sturdy limb, who on the march and on the battle-field are worthy to have place among the best soldiers of the Empire. The men of Paardeburg will live in history. But as we welcome our brave lads home again, and pay loving tribute to those who have laid down their lives in the nation's cause, let us hope and pray that it will be long before there shall be another call to bloody strife. The tasks of peace call for a not less sturdy and heroic manhood than those of war, and the young Canadians who serve their country faithfully in promoting its material, moral and religious interests will need to be as brave and will be worthy of no less honor than those who uphold their country's cause on the field of battle.

The Value of Home Mission Work. Noting the approaching seventy-fifth anniversary of the Congregational Home Mission Society, the New York Outlook is led to remark that the stability of American institutions, notwithstanding the spread of a population largely composed of foreign elements from the Alleghanies to the Pacific in less than a century, is due more to home missionary work than to any other single cause. This remark is significant not only for the United States, but also for Canada with its wide and fertile western lands, which offer the most favorable conditions for agricultural settlement now to be found on the continent, and which, it can scarcely be doubted, will, during the coming half century, attract some millions of immigrants from foreign countries. The people who will come to Canada are not likely to need the ministry of the home missionary less than those who have been coming to the United States, and accordingly, as has been frequently pointed out, much will depend for the future, not only as concerns the religious and moral interests of the people, but also as concerns the political destiny of the country, upon whether or

not the most shall be made of the opportunity now presented to evangelize this incoming population through home missionary work. The great progress which the United States have made, not only in increase of population and material wealth, but also in the establishment of Christian churches and the development of Christian influence, is seen in the statement that when the Home Missionary Society which is about to celebrate its diamond jubilee was established, there were in that country only eleven millions of people and only two miles of railway, and that operated by horses. As a fruit of the work of the Society 5,500 churches have been called into existence and the Society has expended in its work twenty-two million dollars in cash and supplies, besides large sums expended by affiliated societies upon local work of the same kind. Schools, colleges, theological seminaries, and other Christianizing and civilizing agencies have followed on the track of the home mission work. What has been noted is the work of one denomination and that by no means the largest in the country. No State church, as the Outlook truly says, ever accomplished so vast, so costly and so momentous a work as was done by the voluntarism of the American churches in planting Christian institutions throughout two million square miles of territory in the midst of the poverty and hardship incident to the first settlement of a wilderness.

British Politics. The canvass in connection with the British elections for the new House of Commons has been marked by unusual bitterness. In fact the terms in which the opposing public men of the mother country have discussed each other during the campaign seem to have been scarcely more courteous than those we have grown too familiar with in the literature of politics in Canada. "The ordinary amenities of life," says Mr. I. N. Ford, "have been suspended, and it has been a low-toned canvass, with many breaches of good taste and fair play. Well-bred Englishmen shrug their shoulders and confess that standards of party politics have been lowered by offensive personalities and malignant assaults." The Colonial Secretary has been of course the object of much bitterly hostile criticism, and Mr. Chamberlain is not the kind of man to reply to savage attacks with meek phrases. His aggressive antagonism has not apparently improved his prospects for promotion. His political friends and admirers appear to be convinced that he lacks the serenity of temper and calmness of judgment which are necessary for the highest functions of leadership, and there seems to be a pretty general consent that the interests of the nation could not be secured by advancing Mr. Chamberlain to a position of greater influence in the Government than that which he holds as Colonial Secretary. For, though the ability of his administration of the Colonial Office is generally recognized, it is also felt that if—to borrow a phrase from his enemies—he is able "to mop up the mess he has made in South Africa," his accomplishment of that task will best serve the interests of the nation, as it will also most effectively promote his own popularity. The result of the elections is to give the Salisbury Government another lease of power, with about the same numerical support in the House of Commons as it had at the time of dissolution. So far the Ministerialists have elected 400 members out of a House of 670, while the combined forces of the Liberals Irish Nationalists and Radical number 269. One election—that in the Orkney Islands—is yet to be held. This is regarded as a safe Liberal constituency, so that the Government's majority over the combined forces of the opposition will be about 130. The bitterest attacks on the Government have been in connection with its policy in South Africa and its conduct of the war. But it is precisely on that issue

that the Government has been sustained. The sagacity of Mr. Chamberlain was manifest in having the elections brought on at a time when it was inevitable that the result should depend largely upon the popular approval or disapproval of the Government's South African policy. If questions of local politics had constituted the dominant issue the result of the election would doubtless have been quite different.

Bioxide of Sodium. Great interest has been created in scientific circles it is said by demonstrations recently made before the French Academy of Science in Paris of the properties of the bioxide of sodium. This substance is found to possess the property of renewing oxygen in air that has been breathed and in absorbing carbonic acid gas which has been given off, and is therefore capable of being applied to many important uses. Thus, as was demonstrated before the Academy of Science, with an apparatus containing bioxide of sodium, a diver can remain under water and can walk about without having the air renewed by the pumping apparatus at present employed. By means of such an apparatus too, it is asserted that miners will be able to penetrate into poisonous gases and foul air, and firemen into smoke without fear of asphyxiation. If the bioxide of sodium is capable of all this it is to be hoped that it is not too costly a substance, for it certainly would be an inestimable blessing for one to be able to provide himself with the means of breathing a pure atmosphere wherever he might go. Under such circumstances one might even go to church with impunity.

China: The Anglo-German Agreement. The latest reported movement among the Powers in respect to the Chinese question is important. It is officially published that Great Britain and Germany, for the purpose of maintaining their interests in China and their rights under existing treaties, have come to an agreement as to certain principles to be followed by them in their united policy toward that country. The agreement declares that it is a matter of joint international interest that the ports on the rivers and coasts of China should remain free and open to trade and to every other legitimate form of economic activity for the peoples of all countries without distinction, and the two governments accordingly agree on their part to uphold the same for all Chinese territory as far as they can exercise influence. The two governments further agree that they will not on their part make use of the present complications to obtain for themselves any territorial advantage in the Chinese domain, and that they will direct their policy toward maintaining undiminished the territorial condition of the Chinese Empire. In case, however, of any other power making use of the complications in China to acquire territory in that country in any form, the two contracting powers reserve for themselves the right to consider the eventual step to be taken for the protection of their own interests in China. It is also provided that the agreement be communicated to the other powers interested, especially Austria-Hungary, France, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States. This understanding between Great Britain and Germany, based upon the maintenance of an open door for trade in China and the integrity of the Empire, would seem to promise much for the straightening out of the present entanglement. The Anglo-German policy being in line with the declared policy of the United States will doubtless receive its endorsement. It is not likely that Japan will dissent. France would do so only on pressure from Russia, and it is not probable that Russia would openly oppose so powerful a combination for the sake of promoting her schemes of territorial enlargement. The policy proposed if adopted generally by the Powers will doubtless have a pacifying effect upon the Chinese as showing that the disruption of China is not the object of the foreign nations.