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# Messenger and Visitor

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## Two New Provinces

The Bill creating two Provinces in the Northwest was introduced in the Dominion House of Commons on Tuesday of last week by Premier Laurier in a speech which is spoken of as one of the greatest efforts of his life. The two new Provinces are to be known as Saskatchewan and Alberta, and their provisional capitals are respectively Regina and Edmonton, but the Provinces when organized will have the right to select their own capitals. The territory embraced in these Provinces extends from the United States boundary northward to near the northern limits of Athabaska, or to the 60th degree of latitude. They will have an area of about 275,000 square miles each. The population of the territory covered by the two Provinces is estimated to-day at 500,000, but as the last census gave this territory only 160,000, the estimate would seem to be somewhat extravagant. The bill provides that the Legislative Assemblies of Saskatchewan and Alberta shall be composed of 25 members each, but their representation in the Dominion House of Commons will continue as at present until another general election. One of the points much canvassed between the representative of the Territories and the Government was whether or not the new Provinces should have the ownership and control of the public lands within their boundaries. The Government has upheld the negative, and the bill accordingly provides that the public lands shall remain as at present in the hands of the Dominion Government. This the Government holds is necessary to the successful prosecution of its immigration policy. As the crown lands are to remain the property of the dominion a sum will be paid to the new Provinces based upon the estimated value of the lands in question, viz., \$37,500,000, the same being estimated to be of an area of 25,000,000 acres and a value of \$1.50 per acre. With their present population of 250,000 souls and until this has reached 400,000, each province will be paid one per cent on the estimated value of the lands, that is \$375,000 per year. Thereafter, until the population reaches 800,000 souls interest will be paid at the rate of one and a half per cent, which will give them each \$562,500. Thereafter, until the population reaches 1,200,000 souls interest will be allowed at two per cent, yielding the provinces \$750,000. Thereafter, payment is to be made at the rate of three per cent. In addition to the foregoing and as an additional compensation for the lands there will be paid to Saskatchewan and Alberta annually for five years an interest payment of one and a half per cent to provide for the erection of the necessary public buildings. This will yield \$62,500. The grant for the support of legislation and government in each province will be \$50,000, which is equal to what is paid to New Brunswick to-day. The provincial subsidy will be paid to the new provinces at the same rate as to the older members of the confederation, viz., eighty cents per head of population. This will be allowed on a population of 200,000 in each province to begin with. The census of each province will be taken every five years and the grant will be increased in proportion until the population shall have reached 800,000. Thus the amount to be paid to each of the new Provinces at the outset from the federal purse will amount to \$1,030,375 which will increase to \$1,125,000 by the time the population reaches 1,200,000 souls.

## The School Question

In the matter of education the bill creating the Provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta provides for the continuance of the Separate School system established by the Act constituting the Northwest Territory in 1875. Sir Wilfrid Laurier seems to take the ground that the action then taken by Parliament makes it constitutionally necessary that the separate school system shall be perpetuated in the new Provinces. If the matter is so decided on constitutional grounds, that of course settles it, and the people of the Northwest, however unwilling they may be, will have to accept it. We are however very slow to believe that there is any constitutional necessity in the case. It is difficult for a layman at least to see why that part of the Act of 1875, by which provision was made for separate or minority schools, was any more fixed and unrepeatable than other parts of the Act, an Act which in its nature was provisional and intended to answer a temporary purpose. If the action taken by the Dominion Parliament in 1875 must be con-

strued as imposing for all time to come a separate school system on a country of 550,000 square miles in extent, a country which in the near future is to be the home of millions, then it is certain that action was a monstrous perversion of authority. And if the legislation of 1875 did not (as we believe it did not) necessarily impose a separate school system on that great country, then certainly for the Parliament of 1905 to enact such legislation would be still more monstrous and inexcusable. The people of the Northwest are not children. If they are fitted to be entrusted with autonomy in other respects they are in this. By the provisions of the B. N. A. Act, the Provinces are entrusted with the administration of their educational affairs, and it is congruous with these provisions that the people of Saskatchewan and Alberta should have the power of determining the system upon which their school systems are to be established. If the people of these new Provinces prefer to continue the present system of separate schools, imposed upon them without their consent, that is their undoubted right. But if they prefer to do away with the separate school system, that also is as clearly their right, and as a matter of justice the Federal Parliament has no right what ever to interfere. The bill now before Parliament will doubtless be debated at length, and the part of it providing for separate schools will certainly be keenly canvassed. Unless the Government is prepared to show clearly that for constitutional reasons, the provisions of the bill in respect to schools are imperative, it will in our opinion be a matter of prudence as well as of justice so to amend the bill as to leave the determination of the educational systems of the new Provinces entirely in their own hands where by right and equity it certainly belongs.

## A Remarkable Meeting

A great meeting of the professors, students and directors of St. Petersburg University assembled at noon on February 20 to discuss the question of joining in the general strike inaugurated by similar institutions in Russia, and decided to close the University until the autumn. The meeting was held in the auditorium of the university, Neva Hall being comparatively small and incapable of holding one-fifth of the 4,000 students assembled. The auditorium was packed to suffocation with earnest looking young men and women, and the doorways and windows were banked with students who held others on their shoulders. It was a strange gathering. Most of the students were poorly clad and all were in a state of intense excitement. A small rostrum in a corner was occupied by the speakers. A bell with which the student who presided tried to stop the thunders of applause with which the orators were greeted was completely unavailing. From the outset student orators set the imagination of their auditors aflame with the spirit of liberty, unsparingly denouncing the course of the government, declaring that promises could no longer avail and that the only satisfaction would be freedom of speech, conscience and the press and the convocation of a national assembly. The majority coupled this with a demand for ending the war. Almost every orator went back to the French revolution for parallels. Again and again was Russia declared to be on the eve of revolution. With the burning words one of the students described the affair of Jan. 22 which he said had at last solidified the interest of the liberals and those of workmen. Amid a storm of cheers he announced that a continuation of study was impossible while such a struggle was in progress and said it was the duty of the young men there assembled and others like them to return to their homes in the provinces and spread the agitation. The fact that such a meeting could take place at high noon, and, as would appear, without any interference on the part of the police would appear plainly to indicate that revolutionists are able openly and with impunity to make demonstrations in St. Petersburg, which a little while ago would have sent them to Siberia, and that, at least so far as freedom of speech is concerned, the cause of reform in Russia is making progress.

The Czar has issued a manifesto in reference to the tragic death of the Grand Duke Sergius. "He was stricken down," the manifesto says, "by the ruthless hand of an assassin who aimed at his life so dear to us. Mourning in him an uncle and a friend whose whole life of activity and care was always devoted to the service of our house

and fatherland, we have firm confidence that all our subjects will share and sympathize in our sorrow and will unite their heartfelt prayers with our own for the repose of the soul of the departed." There appears to be no doubt that the assassination of the Grand Duke was the work of the fighting organization of the Socialistic Revolutionary party, which condemned and executed Count Bobrikoff, Governor-General of Finland and M. Sipiague and M. Pleboe, Ministers of the Interior. It is regarded as a direct challenge from the terrorists to the autocracy and a revival of the famous duel between the Nihilists and the Government twenty-five years ago. The murder of the Grand Duke Sergius just at the time when the forces of Liberalism were again in the ascendancy and when the summoning of the Zemsky Zabor was actually assured is said to meet with universal reprobation even by the extreme social Democrats who denounce the crime as strongly as do the Liberals and Conservatives. It is said that Sergius himself finding the tide against him had been won over to the plan of summoning the Zemsky Zabor, that he had sent a messenger to the Emperor outlining his views as to the composition of the body and that the messenger arrived in St. Petersburg almost at the moment when the fatal bomb was thrown in Moscow. There have been persistent rumors of peace for the last week or more, and some newspaper correspondents have even indicated the terms which Russia is said to be willing to consider, but entire disbelief in these rumors is expressed in quarters which should be well-informed. The peace rumors have however had some effect upon the money market, and that probably accounts for their persistent circulation. It is evident that the outlook in the internal affairs of Russia continues dark and forboding. The situation at Warsaw causes grave anxiety and the Government is reported to be at a loss to know what to do. Cossacks and infantry are guarding the lines of the Warsaw-St. Petersburg railroad fearing that the strikers will cut off communication between the two cities.

## The Snow

If any of our older friends have longed to see one of those "good-old-fashioned winters" like they used to have they must be having their desires gratified to the full. Last winter was of a character to tax the ability of the oldest inhabitants to remember another more liberally furnished with frost and snow. But the present winter, while it has not perhaps so far more than equaled its immediate predecessor in the matter of frost, has certainly broken all recent records in regard to snow. We do not know whether anyone can tell how many years it would be necessary to go back to find a winter when the snow lay so deep o'er all the landscape. No doubt there have been other winters, where in parts of these Provinces the depth of snow was as great or greater, but to have so much snow over all the country is almost unprecedented. A remarkable feature of the present winter has been its steadiness. Generally in these Provinces, especially the eastern portions of them, there are more or less frequent rains and soft spells through the winter. But this year there has been scarcely anything that could be called a thaw, and the snow has gone on accumulating without hindrance. During the past month the snowfall in most parts of Nova Scotia appears to have been considerably heavier than in New Brunswick, and as the storms have been accompanied with high winds the difficulty of keeping the railway lines open has been correspondingly greater. Conditions between Moncton and Halifax and on the eastern extension of the I. C. R. have been particularly difficult, and on the D. A. R. for the past ten days or more traffic and travel have been almost at a stand still. Volunteer shovelers, including students from Acadia College and Horton Academy, have been aiding the railway men in the hope of getting the road open, but heavy drifting storms of last week filled up the cuttings again making the time of the raising of the snow blockade still uncertain. The branch lines for the most part throughout the two Provinces are tied up indefinitely. The mail service in the most favored places is irregular enough, and in many parts of the country it has been entirely suspended. In some places there is a very inconvenient shortage of coal and provisions, and in some lumber camps, it is reported, horses have had to be killed because hay could not be obtained for them. It is much to be hoped that more favorable weather will come soon as the blockade has caused almost a paralysis in the business of the country, and if present conditions continue there is likely to be actual suffering in many places.