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Still Another Reverse.

Following closely the news of the Klerksdorp disaster in which the Boer General, Delarey, succeeded in putting more than 600 British officers and men out of the conflict, besides capturing two guns, comes the report of another and perhaps more serious disaster inflicted by the same commander upon a force of 1200 British troops under the command of General Methuen. Lord Kitchener's despatches show that General Methuen was moving with 900 mounted men, under Major Paris, and 300 infantry, four guns, and pom-poms, from Wynburg to Lichtenburg, and was to meet Grenfell with 1,300 mounted men, at Rovirainfontein. Early in the morning he was attacked by Delarey's force between Twebosch and Palmietknill. The Boers charged on three sides. The column was moving in two parts. One with the ox-wagons left Twebosch at 3 a. m. The other with the mule-wagons, started an hour later. Just before daylight the Boers attacked. Before reinforcements could reach them the rear guard was engaged. In the meantime a large company of Boers galloped up on both flanks. These at first were checked by the flank parties, but the panic and stampede of the mules had begun, and all the mule wagons, with a terrible mixture of mounted men, rushed past the ox-wagons. All efforts to check them were unavailing. Major Paris collected 40 men and occupied a position a mile in front of the wagons, which were then halted. After a gallant but unsuccessful defence, the enemy rushed into the ox-wagons, and Methuen was wounded in the thigh. Paris, being surrounded, surrendered. The British losses were three officers and 38 men killed; five officers and 72 men wounded. The Boers captured the four guns. The successes which the Boers have gained will doubtless have a moral effect in encouraging them to resist to the utmost, and thus prolong the war. So far however as the relative strength of the forces in the field are concerned, the situation will not be materially changed, and as fresh forces will be immediately sent to Lord Kitchener the British forces in point of numbers will be stronger than before. Such reverses at this stage of the war are felt to be a bitter disappointment, and while there is general sympathy for General Methuen in his misfortune, there is no lack of disposition to criticise the management which makes such disasters possible. Lord Rosebery has however doubtless expressed a pretty general feeling of the nation in saying in a speech before the Glasgow students: "It will not dishearten us. We have got to see this thing through. We must take the blows which fortune deals us with equanimity, showing ourselves worthy of better fortune."

The Colonial Confer- ence.

Correspondence respecting the Coronation and the proposed Colonial Conference, laid upon the table of the Dominion House of Commons last week by the Premier, indicates that it is proposed by the Imperial Government to take advantage of the presence of the Premiers of the self-governing Colonies in London at the time of the Coronation in June to discuss with them the question of political relations between the Mother Country and the Colonies, Imperial defence, Commercial relations of the Empire and other matters of general interest. The Colonial Secretary invites on the part of the Colonial Governments the submission for the consideration of the Imperial Government, of definite proposals or resolutions on any of the subjects mentioned or any suggestions as to other subjects which in the opinion of the Colonies it may be desirable to consider. In Lord Minto's reply to the Colonial Secretary's despatch, it is intimated that the only one of the questions above mentioned which in the opinion of the Canadian Government

gives promise of useful discussion is that of the Commercial relations between the various sections of the Empire. The political relations now existing between the Mother Country and the great self-governing Colonies, and particularly Canada, are regarded as extremely satisfactory with the exception of a few minor details, and it is not anticipated that in the varying conditions of the Colonies there can be any scheme of defence applicable to all.

Marconi in Canada.

According to an interview with Mr. Marconi, published by a Montreal paper when he was in that city a few days ago, the inventor professes the utmost confidence in the success of his invention and his scheme of trans-oceanic telegraphy. Since Mr. Marconi was in this country before he has been engaged in a series of experiments to demonstrate the value of his invention for long distance communication. The experiments in connection with the voyage of the 'Philadelphia' has now, it is claimed, demonstrated that messages can be received at a distance of 2,000 miles. As to the question of intercepting messages, Mr. Marconi claims that by virtue of a secret known only to himself interception is impossible. As to whether the wireless system will entirely supersede the cable service, Mr. Marconi says that is a question which only time can decide, but he is quite sure that the rates for sending messages will be greatly reduced. His special business in Canada is first to interview the Government in reference to the measure of support which it is prepared to lend to his scheme for trans-Atlantic telegraphy, and then to superintend the erection of his stations in Cape Breton. The inventor, it is reported, does not find Canadian capitalists eager to invest in his scheme. But this, we are told, does not trouble him, because capitalists in Great Britain, Europe and the United States have the utmost confidence in his scheme, and all necessary capital is easily available.

Trade Relations Within the Empire.

A London despatch to the New York Evening Post, represents as one of the most significant recent developments of British politics Mr. Chamberlain's pledge to re-open the discussion of the trade relations of the empire with the colonial premiers at the coronation conference in June. The discussion closed four years ago, when Mr. Chamberlain told the colonies that Great Britain would only consider a preference for colonial over foreign imports on the basis of free trade within the empire, securing the colonial markets to British manufactures. The colonies replied that free trade was unattainable. The presumption is that Mr. Chamberlain is prepared to modify the conditions, or at least to give the preferentialists a chance of proving their case. It is significant also that the British Ministry has consented so far to depart from free trade as to coerce the sugar convention into an agreement for the abolition of bounties by the threat to impose countervailing duties, a threat which, under abolition, becomes a pledge not to grant preferential duties to colonial sugars. Naturally, the British protectionists, acting under the name of the United Empire Trade League, with considerable Parliamentary support, is renewing the agitation to complete the reversal of the fiscal system, arguing from the alleged British decadence under free trade. Unfortunately for this contention, Lord Avebury has shown this week that in every decade between 1860 and 1890 the value of British exports and imports increased by ten million dollars. The rate of increase was less in the latest decade, but still exceeds the preceding rate by five millions. In forty years the value has increased from 1,890 to 4,385 million dollars, while, on the basis of weight instead of value, foreign trade has practically doubled in the last twenty years. Great Britain is hardly at her last gasp.

The N. W. Mounted Police.

The report of Superintendent Perry of the Northwest Mounted Police for the past year indicates a generally satisfactory condition of things. The past season has been an exceptionally good one for the farmers and ranchers. Crops have been abundant, cattle have thriven, and business has been better than ever before known in the history of the Territories. There has been a large influx of very desirable settlers, and land has risen very rapidly in value, consequent upon the current of immigration which has set steadily that way. The rapid increase of population has caused an expansion of the duties of the police, which, with their fixed strength, they find great difficulty in meeting. The population of the Territories has doubled in ten years, and the strength of the force has been reduced by one-half. Taking the organized portion of the Territories only, there is an average of one constable to every 500 square miles and to 350 of the population. The good influence of the police among the immigrants, especially those of foreign birth who have been accustomed to police surveillance in the old countries, Superintendent Perry says cannot be exaggerated. The constables take a large view of their duties, and their tact and discretion have led these people not only to regard the laws but to look upon the police as their friends, willing to aid and assist them in every way. Owing to the increase of strength in the Yukon to 300 men, the authorized strength of the force will in future stand at 800. The yearly waste amounts to at least 10 per cent., so that 80 men have to be trained annually at the depot for Northwest and Yukon service. In order that only trained men should be drafted from the depot, 50 above strength should be under training. The course of training to which the new members of the police force are subjected is regarded as a matter of great importance. To draft men into active service who have not completed this preparatory work necessarily impairs the efficiency of the body as a whole, for the time cannot afterwards be spared nor are the instructors at hand to carry on the training. The Superintendent says that the behaviour of the Indians has been generally excellent, but regrets that drunkenness is too prevalent especially among the Blackfeet, Piegiens and Bloods. "There were," Superintendent Perry says, "184 convictions under the Indian act, 80 for drunkenness and 53 for selling intoxicants to Indians. Most of these cases have been tried by police officers in their magisterial capacity. As a rule the offenders have been punished by imprisonment. Some of the Indians have, on appeal, had their sentences reduced to a fine. The Indians are wards of the Government, and I would strongly recommend that no right to appeal should lie, except with the consent of the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs. No one doubts that Indians should not be allowed the use of intoxicants. A fine in isolated cases of intoxication may be sufficiently deterring, but where the cases become alarmingly frequent, as in MacLeod recently, severe punishment is necessary. Those who engage in the nefarious traffic of supplying liquor to the Indians cannot be too severely dealt with."

He Drew the Sword.

During the German Prince Henry's recent visit to the Capitol at Washington a somewhat peculiar incident occurred, and one which persons with any pronounced trace of superstition in their make-up may be inclined to regard as ominous. At the time of the Prince's visit to the Capitol the sword which Frederick the Great presented to George Washington had been taken from the State Library where it is usually kept and had been placed on the table of the Executive Chamber. It seems that, according to the will of Washington, this sword and four others bequeathed to his nephews were not to be drawn from their scabbards unless in defence of the country. This proviso is said to have been religiously observed in respect to the sword presented by Frederick the Great. But Prince Henry had not been made acquainted with the fact, and when the sword was handed to him for inspection, he quite innocently drew it from its scabbard. The Prince was however permitted to go away in happy unconsciousness of the fact that he had unwittingly done violence to a national tradition.