

# Messenger and Visitor.

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**China and the United States.** The agreement now arranged between Great Britain and Russia with respect to China is understood as an abandonment by the former of the open door policy, and the virtual acceptance of a policy which will divide the Chinese Empire into spheres of influence for the European powers. If Russia and Great Britain have come to an understanding as to each other's interests in this matter, Germany and France, it is pretty certain, will not be slow to assert their claims along similar lines, with the result that China will be divided up among the nations much as Africa has been. As to the interests of the United States in the "sphere of influence" policy in China, the London 'Chronicle' says: "America will apparently be left out in the cold, and she really deserves no sympathy, for, if her statesmen had been willing to join us at an earlier stage in keeping China open to the world, the present situation would never have arisen." Alluding to this remark of the 'Chronicle,' the New York 'Times' acknowledges that it was a blunder on the part of the United States not to join with Great Britain and Japan in support of the open door policy which sought to open all China to the trade of all nations on equal terms. How this huge blunder came to be perpetrated, says the 'Times,' "cannot be accurately known outside of official circles at Washington. Of course it would not have been perpetrated if the perpetrators had been able to look only a few months into the future and to foresee the time when we should have become a naval power with proprietary as well as commercial interests in the Pacific. Very possibly the very able representative of Russia at Washington was able to baffle minds that were never very clear upon this question. Very possibly also there was an apprehension in those minds of the incompatibility of McKinleyism and Dingleyism with commercial expansion. A demand for an open door anywhere abroad would have come with an ill grace from a nation engaged in hermetically sealing its doors at home. But even before the first gun was fired in Manila Bay it was plain that the irresistible forces of commercial expansion had doomed Dingleyism, and that the long-sacred tariff must go. It has become vividly plain since, inasmuch that we have been compelled to open the door in the Philippines and to revoke the monstrous order by which we undertook to extend our obsolete navigation laws to Puerto Rico. What we get in China is the permission to trade on equal terms with the British in the British sphere of influence, and the permission, under a most-favored-nation clause, to trade in the other spheres, on as advantageous terms as anybody but the proprietor of the "sphere." That we have not more than that is very clearly the fault of those whom the 'Chronicle' describes as our statesmen."

**Prohibition by Provinces.** The Dominion Temperance Alliance is applying its efforts to secure a Dominion Act which will bring prohibition into force in any province whose electors shall vote to adopt such a measure. By this means it is hoped to secure for provincial prohibition the strength which it would have under a Dominion statute, while by the proposed course of action the question of the rights of the provinces to enact prohibitory legislation would not be raised. The prohibition resolution which Mr. Flint, M. P., will introduce in the House of Commons within a few days will call for the passing of a general prohibitory law, to apply to any province or territory

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which by popular vote of the qualified electors may accept the same. It will be provided in the proposed bill that the vote shall be taken at the time of the general federal election, and the law, when carried, must remain in force at least four years before a vote for repeal can be put. The proceedings for repeal are to be similar to those for bringing the measure into force—that is, the repeal vote must be taken at the time of a general election. If the law should be carried in any province or territory, no liquor can legally be sold therein, imported, nor manufactured for sale therein. This would not prevent its manufacture for sale outside of the prohibition province or territory. The sale of intoxicating liquor for medical or sacramental purposes or for use in art is, to be carefully provided for under stringent regulations. The penalties for infraction of the proposed law are matters of detail, to be provided in an act based upon the resolution. It is the intention of the promoters to suggest that in cases wherein the proposed legislation would affect matters pertaining to the government of the Dominion, the federal officials are to enforce the law, while of course in other cases it would be the duty of local or municipal functionaries to see to the enforcement of the act.

**The Anglo-Russian Agreement.** One of the most important recent events in the sphere of international politics is the signing of an agreement between Great Britain and Russia with respect to China. This agreement, which is intended to put an end to railway concessions and other causes of dispute, has been alluded to by Lord Salisbury in a speech delivered on the occasion of the annual banquet of the Royal Academy as a matter of congratulation on account of the influence it would have in preventing collision between the interests and objects of the two governments in the future. According to the published statements respecting the agreement, Great Britain has undertaken not to press for railway or other concessions in North China, while Russia agrees to the British demand that no part of the basin of the Yang-tse-Kiang shall be alienated. Russia also recognizes explicitly that British commercial enterprises are supreme in the Yang-tse-Kiang basin, which is understood to extend a considerable distance north and south of the river, though no attempt has been made to define the region. Whether or not Russia is ready to make sacrifices for the sake of promoting international peace and good-will, it is well understood that her situation at the present time is such as to make peace with Great Britain desirable. Not to speak of famine, sedition, and other influences which are disturbing the internal peace of the Czar's empire, it is of great importance to Russia to complete her great trans-Siberian railway, and for this and for other purposes she needs access to the British money market. It is said that the most influential Russian statesmen recently submitted a report to the Czar declaring that British capital and British purchasers are absolutely essential to Russia's prosperity, and adding that these will not be forthcoming unless British opinion be reassured upon Russia's policy and good-will.

**The Canadian Budget.** One can imagine that a Finance Minister does not always find the preparation of his budget speech a particularly cheerful task. There are years when, on account of conditions which no financier however able and far-seeing can control, the minister finds his forecasts disappointed and the balance

of the account very distinctly on the debit side. At such times the Finance Minister has need of all his ingenuity and hopefulness, in order to keep up the hearts of his colleagues and to meet the scoffing arguments of the opposition. But this year, still more than last year, fortune has smiled upon the Hon. Mr. Fielding. He must have gone about the preparation of his budget speech with a light heart. The revenues for the year closing with June, 1898, yielded him a surplus of \$1,700,000, and for the current year he anticipates a surplus of \$4,600,000. The year has been marked by a large degree of prosperity in the industrial and commercial life of the country. The expansion of Canadian trade during the past two years amounts to \$60,000,000. This is a very remarkable increase, and for the immediate future the prospect is good. In a country like Canada, prosperity depends principally upon the crops, the products of the fisheries, the mines and the forests, and the prices which these products command in the world's markets. These matters, as everyone can see, are not very largely under the control of any Government, and Mr. Fielding is much too astute and too honest a man to contend that the prosperity which the country is now enjoying is due wholly or principally to the fact that a Liberal instead of a Conservative government is in power. We can hardly accuse the Finance Minister of arrogance in holding that the Government's management of affairs is entitled to some consideration as a contributory cause of the improved conditions. At all events, we have to acknowledge that it is not impossible for the country to enjoy a very fair measure of prosperity under a Liberal Government. The Conservatives however contend that so far as the Government has done anything to promote the prosperity of the country it has been by stealing the thunder of their opponents and pursuing a course entirely inconsistent with their own former professions and pledges. The Liberals out of power, it is said, denounced the protective system as ruinous to the country, but in power they are boasting of prosperity achieved by virtue of a financial system almost identical with the condemned "National Policy." Certainly we hear much less of the great Liberal doctrine of free trade than we did a few years ago. But the Liberals say—True, free trade, or at least a tariff for revenue only, is the ideal, but many Canadian industries had become established on a basis of protection. To introduce free trade at once would have meant a revolution in the industrial life of the country, which would have sacrificed many vested interests and caused great loss to many persons and corporations. They contend that they are making progress in the direction of freer trade; that they have already lowered the tariff appreciably, and will do more by and by, but for the present they will not make any changes. The Conservatives say that when the Liberals were in opposition they cried out against excessive expenditure and Sir Wilfrid Laurier is quoted as saying that a Liberal Government would be able to save the country \$5,000,000 a year, but now, say the Conservatives, instead of reduction, the annual expenditure and the public debt are still increasing. The Government leaders reply that a rapidly developing country demands an increase of expenditure and that, at all events, the increase in the debt is less under present conditions than it was under the Conservative regime. So the argument goes on endlessly. Meanwhile it should be gratifying to men of all parties that, wherever the credit for it may or may not lie, the country is enjoying a good degree of prosperity.