

THE INWARD ENGLISH MAILS.

The Queen and Lord... Precentor Venables, writing to The Times from Lincoln, relates some interesting reminiscences of his intercourse with Tennyson when visiting Faringford... One such visit stands out as eminently noteworthy. It was in the latter part of 1862, the year after the death of the Prince Consort. I was conversing with Mrs. Tennyson on the sudden death of a much valued common friend, and the loneliness of his widow, when Tennyson, who had been stalking up and down the end of the bow-windowed drawing-room with his usual long strides, suddenly broke in with—"I saw another widow, three days ago." "Indeed," I replied, "and who was that?" "The Queen," he replied, in his deepest tones. "She sent for me to Osborne. I said that I supposed her Majesty wished to thank him for his noble tribute to the memory of the Prince Consort, and, with perhaps pardonable curiosity, went on to ask what the Queen had to say to him. 'I can't remember,' he answered. 'I lost my head. I only remember what I said to the Queen—big fool that I was. 'What was that?' 'Why, what an excellent King Prince Albert would have made. As soon as it was out of my mouth I felt what a blunder I had made. But, happily, it proved to be the very right thing to have said. The Queen replied that that had been the constant sorrow of her life—that she was called to govern, while he who was so worthy of the first place was obliged to take a secondary position.' Tennyson had little more to say of his reception, except that, notwithstanding the perfect calmness and self-restraint of the Queen, and the sweet consideration she manifested for him, the interview was a peculiarly trying one, and he was glad when it was over. To stand so long in a respectful attitude was unnatural to one accustomed to perfect freedom of movement. 'The Queen is accustomed to it, and does well; I did it awkwardly.' But, however trying at the time, the occasion was one on which he dwelt afterwards with honest pride as one of the great rewards of his life.

Fourteen New Torpedo-Boats.

The Imperial Government has ordered the immediate construction of 14 torpedo craft, some (if not all) of which promise to be worthy of the maritime position of the country and of the skill of British builders. These craft are of two classes, viz., a class of ten torpedo-boats, larger and faster than any we at present possess; and a class of four vessels which, while larger and more seaworthy than any of our torpedo-boats, are considerably smaller, yet much faster, than any of our torpedo gun-vessels. The building of the ten torpedo-boats was foreshadowed in the last Naval estimates; the building of the larger vessels has been more lately determined on. Of the torpedo-boats three have been entrusted to Messrs. Yarrow & Co., of Poplar; three to Messrs Thornycroft & Co., of Chiswick; three to Mr. Samuel White, of Cowes; and one to Messrs. Laird Brothers, of Birkenhead. Two of the larger vessels are being undertaken by Messrs. Yarrow and two by Messrs. Thornycroft.

The ten torpedo-boats each measure 140 feet in length by 14 ft. 6 in. in breadth; and they are therefore 10 ft. longer and 1 ft. broader than the six boats of the class which were added to the Navy in 1889, and which at present constitutes the only modern class we possess. The boats of 1889 had, if we recollect rightly, a guaranteed speed of 22.5 knots, and, with a load of 20 tons on board, did a little more than that during a continuous run of three hours. The new boats are to have a guaranteed speed, with a load of about 25 tons, of 23 knots; and some of the builders are pretty confident that they will have an actual speed, in smooth water, of 23.5 knots, or just over 27 statute miles an hour.

The four remaining craft, which may be provisionally described as "division boats," are vessels which, when completed, will have their equals in few navies and their superiors in none. They are to measure 180 feet in length and 18 feet 6 in. in breadth, and the speed expected of them is not less than 27 knots, or just over 31 statute miles an hour. Though very little larger than some torpedo-boats, and offering, therefore, a scarcely more conspicuous target to projectiles or torpedoes, they will possess an advantage that none of our existing "catchers" enjoy, in that they should be able to outstrip all catchers and to overhaul all, or nearly all torpedo-boats.

Bells for the Imperial Institute.

The firm of Messrs. John Taylor & Co., of Loughborough, have received a commission from Sir Somers Vane, acting on behalf of an aged Australian lady, to provide and place in the central or "Queen's" tower of the Imperial Institute, as an appropriate commemoration of Her Majesty's Jubilee, a complete peal of bells, which will be excelled in the metropolis only by the great peal of St. Paul's Cathedral. The bells are to be ten in number and will be known, by permission of the Princess of Wales, as the "Alexandria" peal. The tenor will be two tons in weight and will bear the following inscription: "Victoria, R.L., 1837-1887"; the other bells are to be named after the Prince and Princess of Wales, the total weight of the ten bells being over eight tons.

When placed, the peal will be the highest in the country, as the bells are to swing in a chamber 200 feet above the level of the ground floor of the main building.

The gift is a personal one to the heir to the Throne, and the names of the various bells have been approved by the Queen and the Prince of Wales. The only condition specified by the donor is that the bells shall be rung on

the birthday and accession day of the Sovereign and on the birthdays of the Prince and Princess of Wales. They are to be fully completed and will be rung on the occasion of the dedication of the institute by the Queen next year.

British Woodlands.

It appears from a recent return that years ago the woodland surface of Great Britain was 2,458,000 acres. By 1888 the acreage thus occupied had risen to 2,561,000 acres, and the measurements taken in 1891 show a further advance to 2,695,000 acres. Of the 134,000 acres thus added to the approximate woodland area of Great Britain, 96,000 acres are assigned to England, 31,000 acres to Scotland, and 7,000 acres to Wales. The largest woodland area to be found in England is the county of Hampshire, with 122,574 acres; Sussex, with 122,073 acres comes second, while the four counties of Hants, Sussex, Surrey, and Kent possess between them nearly a fourth of the English woods and plantations. These four counties have upwards of 11 per cent. of their surface thus occupied. In Scotland, Inverness-shire has no less than 169,000 acres of woodland, this being the largest area of woodland in Great Britain.

Extraordinary Money-Lending.

The London School Board has just passed a resolution refusing to notice the claims of a man named "Alex. Louis," trading as "G. Talbot," upon the salaries of two teachers and a clerk. Some extraordinary facts were made known. One of the teachers furnished the following statement:—"In August, 1886, I borrowed £5 (only) of a Mr. Louis, of Finsbury-pavement, who advertised to lend money on 'note of hand.'" For this said £5 I signed a bill at a month for £6. Not meeting it at the end of the month, I paid him £1 for renewal of bill. This payment of £1 I repeated every month until January, 1889—28 months (with two exceptions), when he increased the bill to £8, but reduced the monthly interest to 15s., which I paid regularly until December, 1890. I then offered and begged him to accept payment of the £8 by equal monthly instalments. He refused to do so, and I was advised to decline further payments. Subsequently he pressed me for payment, offering to accept a new bill for amount above and interest which I was unable to meet. Hence his attachment of my salary." From the above statement it would appear that the teacher in question received £5 only, paid £4, and is still in debt for an amount, including interest and costs, of £18 10s. 2d.

Large Bequests to Charities.

Probate duty has been paid on £62,000 12s. 8d. as the value of the personal estate in the United Kingdom of the late Mr. George Fowler, of Rock Ferry, Cheshire, and of Liverpool, provision merchant (managing director of Geo. Fowler, Son, and Co., Limited), and formerly of Enniskillen and of Manchester.

The testator devises all his real estate in the United States of America, in England, Ireland, and elsewhere in trust for sale, and the proceeds are to be primarily responsible for his debts. He bequeaths his personal estate in trust to raise thereout the sum of £30,000, and to apply therefrom for the benefit of the Salvation Army and the promotion of its work in the amelioration of the condition of that class described by General Booth as "the submerged tenth" the sum of £5,000, and the receipt executed by General Booth or other proper officer succeeding him in his present office in said Salvation Army shall be sufficient discharge to the executors; Bishop William Taylor's African Mission, £5,000; the Bible Society of London, England, 5,000; Dr. Barnardo's Home for Destitute Children of London, England, 2,000; the Worn-out Wesleyan Ministers' Fund of England, 2,000; the Sailors' Orphanage, Liverpool, England, 2,000; Dr. T. B. Stevenson's Orphanage, London, England, 2,000; Liverpool Wesleyan Mission, Manchester, 1,000; Wesleyan Mission, London, General Wesleyan Mission, 1,000; Mrs. Birt's Orphanage, Dublin, Ireland, 1,000; Bird's Nest Orphanage, Dublin, Ireland, 1,000; Miss Persso's Orphanage, Augrim, Galway, 1,000; the Hospital for Incurables, Manchester, England, 1,000; and for the establishment in the city of Liverpool, England, of a hospital for incurables, the sum of 20,000.

The residuary estate is left to Mrs. Fowler. The testator leaves a further sum of 50,000, to be devoted to charitable purposes similar to those previously specified, the selection to be made by the executors and trustees.

The Bishop of Chester's License Bill. A conference was held at Shrewsbury recently by the Church of England Temperance Society, the Bishop of London presiding. The Bishop of Chester explained the nature of the Bill he proposes to introduce dealing with the licensing question on the Gothenburg system.

A philanthropic company would be formed to manage the business, the directorate having small fixed salaries, and the surplus profits on sales going to objects of a philanthropic character, but not to reduce the rates. Licenseholders would have, say, five years' notice that their houses would be taken over by the company, with such stock as might be needed, and trustworthy servants would be taken over under improved conditions.

Landlords who wished to part with their houses at once might be allowed two years' profits on their business. As to the licensing authority he would leave it as at present, and he did not propose to introduce into his Bill anything as to the option of prohibiting. No resolution was adopted, the proposals being left for the consideration of the Council.

For the "News from England's colonies" and "Glorious deeds of our ancestors," we are indebted to our able contemporary, the ANGLO-SAXON of Ottawa Ont.—Albion, Chicago.

IMPERIAL MAIL BAG.

South Australia.

Sir John Downer, Premier of South Australia. By a majority of four the Legislative Assembly passed a vote of want of confidence in the Holder Ministry, the main point of attack being the financial proposals of the government. It was at first thought that Mr. Holder would force a dissolution, but Sir John Downer was able to form an administration at once, and an appeal to the constituencies was avoided.

In the Assembly Sir John Downer, the new Premier, stated that he calculated the revenue for the current year at £2,676,000, whilst the outlay for the same period would be £2,630,000. The government will proceed with the stock-tax, will give the projected bonuses on the export of butter, and impose an income-tax and additional death duties. By authorizing South Australia to send more representatives to the Federal Council of Australasia it was hoped that the colony would be educated up to the ultimate acceptance of federation.

New South Wales.

The report of the Commission on the defences of New South Wales, presided over by General Tulloch, of Victoria, has now been made public. It recommends as a necessity that a fresh commandant and assistant adjutant of the military forces, and also the naval commanders, should be appointed every five years, and should be selected from the Imperial service. The Commissioners also recommend that for the next three years the officer commanding the Colonial artillery should be selected by the War Office; that the permanent artillery should be reduced 370 men, and the partially-paid artillery increased to 900; that the field artillery should consist of three 12-pounder batteries; that the infantry should consist of 5,000 men, including a trained reserve of 2,000.

With regard to the naval forces, the principal recommendations are that the Wolverine, a wooden steam corvette, which was presented to the colony by the Imperial Government in 1882, shall be sold, and that in its stead a modern ship shall be hired from the Admiralty. The present annual cost of the defensive forces of the colony is £22,000, and the Commissioners suggest a reduction of 50,000, along with greater efficiency. In conclusion, the Commissioners recommend an inter-colonial conference to discuss the practicability of common action to place the defences of the different colonies on a more homogeneous basis.

The total debt of New South Wales, Sir Geo. Dibbs states, is about 50 millions, and of this sum about 28 millions could be consolidated by a single operation. As against this debt it may be useful to recall that the public wealth of the colony was estimated at the last census (1891) to amount to £170,295,000. Of this sum £44,958,000 are set down as the value of railways, tramways, waterworks, sewerage and other revenue-yielding works; £20,313,000 as the value of works and buildings not directly revenue bearing; £13,224,000 as the amount due to lands purchased from the State; £94,400,000 as the value of public lands leased but not sold; and £6,400,000, as the value of municipal property.

Victoria.

In the Victorian Legislative Council Mr. Steinfield has moved that the Australian colonies should ask the Imperial Government to purchase New Caledonia, and all French interests in the New Hebrides. The motion excited a good deal of sympathy but was withdrawn, as an interference in a matter of Imperial policy.

There is a deadlock in Victoria regarding the budget, owing to the antagonism between the two Houses over the question of the new stamp duties. The Legislative Assembly will not agree to the amendments of the Upper House, the majority claiming that the measure is a money Bill and denying the right of the Council to alter it.

West Australia.

The Western Australian revenue returns for the past quarter show a balance to the credit of current account of 124,604, while cash in hand amounts to 337,290. Only 297,927 has as yet been expended out of the authorized loan of 1,330,000. There seems every prospect that the estimated revenue for the year will be fully realized, and that the actual expenditure will not come up to the estimate. During this year gold to the value of 160,000, has been exported.

Tasmania.

The yield of Tasmanian gold for the past 12 months shows an increase over the previous year of 28,000 ounces. Two thousand tons of silver and 5,000 tons of tin have been exported during the past year.

New Zealand.

The revenue of the colony of New Zealand for the past half-year amounted to 1,780,000, showing an increase of 43,000 as compared with the corresponding period of last year.

The 12 new members nominated by the New Zealand Government to the Legislative Council include four representatives of the labor party.

Winding up the business of the session there has been the usual slaughter of the innocents, involving the withdrawal of some of the most interesting of the ministry's legislative proposals.

The Woman's Suffrage Bill has gone; the curious proposal as to the use of voting-papers by women, to be filled up in their own homes, having apparently been an irreconcilable point of difference between the two houses of parliament.

Another of the victims is the Industrial Conciliation Bill, intended to make it compulsory to refer certain disputes between labor and capital to

a court of arbitration, presided over by a Judge of the supreme court. The legislative council in expunging the compulsory clause entirely altered the character of the measure, and the government, having withdrawn it altogether, in the hope, no doubt, that when next they meet parliament by the legislative council, reinforced by the addition of the 12 new members, over whose nomination a difference with the Governor arose, will be more likely to accord to government measures a favorable reception. The bill requiring foreign insurance companies to deposit security with the government has also been withdrawn, and the list of important measures, temporarily at least, abandoned is completed by the railway bill, which provided for the introduction of the zone system on the New Zealand lines.

India.

Lord Wenlock, who has begun a tour through Travancore, Cochin, and the southern districts, is now inspecting the Pereyur irrigation works, a great project, which is designed to divert, by means of a tunnel through the mountains, the Pereyur river from the moist western side of the Ghats to the dry eastern side.

Thirty-three thousand magazine rifles and 23 million cartridges have arrived at Simla. All the British infantry in the Punjab and Beloochistan will be rearmed in a few weeks. Sufficient batteries of 12-pounder guns have been received to insure all the artillery required, in case of war, taking the field with breechloading artillery.

The news of Lord Robert's successor is expected daily, and the appointment of Sir Evelyn Wood is thought likely at Simla.

Lord Robert will leave in April at the expiration of his seven years' command.

The female operatives of a cotton mill in Bombay struck work recently owing to the new Factory Act compelling owners to give four holidays in a month, the reduction of the working days leading to a reduction of wages.

The women were disorderly and turbulent, and the police had to quell the disturbance. In the afternoon one-half of the women resumed work.

Burma.

The situation among the rebellious Chins is regarded as serious, but reinforcements are on the way to Tiddim and have reached Fort White. No anxiety is felt for the garrisons. The telegraph wire between Tiddim and Fort White was recently destroyed by the enemy and has been converted by them into bullets.

All the negotiations for the re-delimitation of the Burmo-Chinese frontier have been broken off in consequence of the excessive demands of the Chinese.

The Siamese have formally accepted the Burmo-Siamese frontier line recommended by the Government of India.

Egypt.

The Khedive has opened the new Museum of Greco-Roman and early Christian antiquities and the Municipal Library. These institutions have been founded not only for scientific purposes, but also with the view to inducing tourists passing through Alexandria to make a short stay.

Much infiltration has occurred in the banks of the Nile in Lower Egypt, where the severe strain is expected to last another fortnight. No appreciable damage has happened to the standing cotton and maize crops, but the natives have suffered severely. In many cases their mud-built villages have been surrounded by the water or melted away.

Archibald Hunter Pasha has been appointed Governor of Suakim and the Red Sea littoral, replacing Holled Smith Pasha, resigned.

LATER.—In Upper Egypt the Nile flood has receded sufficiently to permit a partial sowing of cereals. In Lower Egypt the river continues falling, and the outlook is now fairly reassuring. Some considerable quantities of cotton and maize have been destroyed by infiltration through the river banks on the Damietta branch.

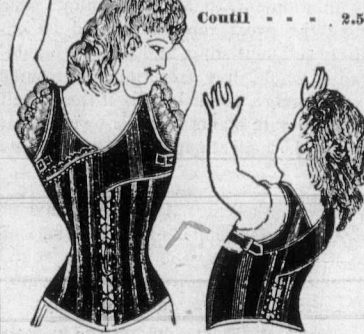
It has been only the incessant watchfulness on the part of the Government officials that has saved the country from a serious disaster from this year's abnormal flood. Over a hundred thousand men have been employed on forced labour in watching and repairing the banks.

South Africa.

The "manswa" Executive has replied to the Cape Government in a very friendly tone. The new tariff in practice will scarcely affect Cape wines, and as regards fruit and other produce the Executive will propose modifications in the next session of the Volksraad.

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