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**The Merrimac Incident.** The sinking of the American steamer, "Merrimac," at the entrance of Santiago Harbor, which was at first reported to have been effected by Spanish torpedoes, was afterwards learned to be the outcome of a daring and bravely executed project of the Americans to block the entrance of the harbor in which the Spanish fleet, under Admiral Cervera, had taken up its quarters. The "Merrimac" was a collier and is said to have had six hundred tons of coal on board when she was sunk. The credit of conceiving and carrying out the exploit is due to Lieut. Richmond P. Hobson, of the flag-ship "New York." Beside the Lieutenant, the crew of the "Merrimac," composed of volunteers from the ships of Admiral Sampson's squadron, consisted of seven men. In order to carry out Lieut. Hobson's plan it was necessary to run the Merrimac in under the Spanish batteries, which lined either side of the entrance, and when the proper position was reached, turn the vessel across the channel, stop the engines, drop the anchors, open the sea connections, fire a number of torpedoes, placed below the vessel's water-line, and leave her wrecked in such a way as to completely block the entrance to Santiago. The Merrimac was accompanied as far as practicable by a steam launch, which it was hoped might be able to pick up her crew if they were able to make their escape in a boat from this vessel after sinking her. The plan was an exceedingly daring one and in the main it was successful. The time chosen was the early morning of June 3rd, just before daylight. Lieut. Hobson, with his seven intrepid men, succeeded in stealing in under the Spanish batteries until the desired position had been reached. There the Merrimac was sunk and her crew escaped from the vessel. They did not, however, succeed in reaching the American steam launch as they had hoped, but were picked up and made prisoners by the Spaniards. There is some doubt whether the Merrimac was sunk in such a position as to effectually block the entrance to the harbor, but at all events Lieut. Hobson's hazardous project was bravely carried out. The Spanish Admiral, it is stated, was so impressed with the courage of the Merrimac's crew that he sent a boat under a flag of truce to inform Admiral Sampson that the men had not lost their lives, but were prisoners of war and could be exchanged.

**Temperance Reform in South Carolina.** Among the attempts made in recent years to deal with the liquor problem by National or State Legislation, the "Dispensary Law" of South Carolina has attracted a good deal of attention. Under this law the liquor business of the State was taken entirely out of the hands of private individuals or corporations and made a monopoly of the State under the control of a Board composed of a governor and two other State officials. This Board purchases all liquors, guarantees them to be pure and free from adulteration, and distributes them among persons throughout the State called "dispensars," who sell the liquors under certain restrictions. There is, however, a local option clause by which the law can be made absolutely prohibitory in sections where the people so desire. The law was not generally satisfactory to the prohibitionists of the State who are on principle opposed to any complicity of the government and the people in the evil business. On the other hand it was fiercely opposed by the liquor trade. The law was fought by means constitutional and otherwise, resulting in rioting and bloodshed on the one hand, and on the other in the law being pronounced unconstitutional in some of its features.

The friends of the Dispensary system succeeded, however, in having a new law enacted on similar lines, and the law has been administered with a firmness on the part of the governor, which has discouraged violent opposition. Now the Supreme Court of the United States has declared the second law illegal in part. What the final result will be is not apparent, but it is said that there is a prospect now that the men who favor high license rather than prohibition may unite with the prohibitionists of the State to secure a prohibitory law. Prohibitionists, of course, condemn the Dispensary system because it involves the complicity of the State in the liquor business, but the system is also opposed on other grounds. It is said that under it drunkenness and crimes of violence have increased rather than diminished, that the system of inspection, designed to protect the public against adulterated liquors, has proved a farce and that system has tended to promote political corruption.

**Unhappy Spain.** The war now in progress between Spain and the United States is even to the latter country, with all its immense resources, a very serious business. To men who do all their fighting in the newspapers or on the floors of Congress, the business of taking Cuba from the Spaniards might seem to be of the nature of a mere holiday excursion, but the schoolmaster of experience is teaching a different lesson. Already, we are told, the war has involved an extra expenditure for the United States of \$300,000,000, and Senator Hale, of Maine, desires to put on record as estimating that, if the war shall continue a year, it will have cost the country not less than \$700,000,000. The United States can, no doubt, afford such an outlay in a good cause, though her reflecting citizens will be apt to think that a war which involves such expenditure of wealth, to say nothing of the loss of brave lives, can be justified only if it is clearly shown that it was involved in a stand for righteousness which the nation could not in honor avoid taking. But if the war is serious for the United States, what shall be said of it in relation to Spain? Before she entered upon this most unequal contest with the young Titan of the west, the state of her finances were supposed to indicate that the brink of ruin had been reached. In the nature of the case the war is a hopeless one for Spain. Her government appears to be utterly incompetent, and it is therefore not surprising to hear that her people have grown weary and discouraged under the ever increasing burdens which bootless wars and an incapable administration of public affairs are binding upon them. Genor Moret, formerly Spanish Secretary of the Colonies, is quoted by the Madrid correspondent of the London Morning Post as saying in the course of an interview: "The government does not know where it is going. Moreover, there is no person in Spain who can tell the outcome of the present situation, which is far more grave than is generally confessed. The government has no fixed plan. It allows matters to follow their own course, heedless of the consequences. The ship of state is drifting. Today the confusion is complete. This is concealed as well as possible, but if the truth ever becomes known the most serious complications may result. A campaign in favor of peace has begun in the press and is progressing among the populace. I am confident that if a plebiscite were held peace would be unanimously voted even by the soldiers." One can see little prospect of a clear sky for Spain. Even after the present conflict shall have come to an end, nothing seems more probable than that the country will be torn by internal dissension and devastated by civil war.

**Canada and the Mother Land.** A London correspondent of a leading New York paper writes that the most popular English novelist of the day has assured him that he would personally welcome Canada's annexation to the United States, since that would remove the only probable cause of serious trouble between the two nations. The said popular novelist averred that he dare not give expression to such a sentiment in public, since if he did so, his life would not be worth living in England. The people of this country will hardly thank this distinguished man of letters for uttering his profound observation even in the sacred privacy of a London correspondent's ear. Canada is quite willing to be a sister to her big neighbor, but her maiden heart is not yearning for more intimate relations. These colonies have always loved the old Mother Land across the sea, and though there have been times when it seemed that the mother was somewhat slow to recognize the rights of her growing daughters to think and act for themselves, yet they have never felt that it would be a right or wholesome thing for them to quarrel with British rule. And now that Canada may fairly say:

"Daughter am I in my mother's house  
But mistress in my own,"

she more than ever appreciates her position as daughter of the Empire. Nor is there any reason to suppose that Great Britain values the connection less highly than does her colony. Whether, therefore, the very cordial feeling toward Great Britain, now happily prevailing in the United States, shall, as we hope, continue, or whether it shall prove to be spasmodic, the bonds which unite this Dominion to the parent land are not likely to grow weaker but stronger.

**Australian Federation.** The despatches received do not make very plain the result of the plebiscite just taken in the Australian Colonies on the question of federation. The people of five colonies—New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania—voted upon the question of federation. Queensland, the large colony occupying the north-eastern part of the island continent, had not proposed for the present to enter the Confederation. Of the five colonies which voted, four appear to have accepted the terms of federation which had been arranged in convention after protracted discussion, but the vote of New South Wales, the wealthiest and most populous of the colonies, has been unfavorable. This colony had been the prime mover for confederation, but the terms demanded by the smaller colonies appeared likely to press heavily upon New South Wales, and her Legislature accordingly made the acceptance of the terms conditional not only upon a majority for confederation, but also upon at least eighty thousand votes being polled in the plebiscite. The result gives a majority for Confederation, but the required number of votes was not polled, and, therefore, if a federation shall be formed, New South Wales will, for the present at least, have to be counted out of it. The two colonies, New South Wales and Queensland, contain a somewhat larger population than the four colonies which have voted for Confederation. It remains to be seen what course the latter will pursue. It may be that they will organize a federal government, hoping that the other colonies will come into it after a time, or it may be that they will not think it wise to confederate independently of New South Wales. In any case, however, it would seem that an Australian federation is an event which can hardly be indefinitely postponed.