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Messenger and Visitor

THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER
VOLUME LXVII.

THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR
VOLUME LVI.

Vol. XXI.

ST. JOHN, N. B., Wednesday, February 1, 1905.

No. 5

The annual report of the Indian Department of the Dominion has just appeared. It shows that the aboriginal population of the country stands at about 108,000 and that it is neither increasing nor diminishing in any marked degree. The deputy superintendent general, in his report to the minister, says that the country has no little reason to congratulate itself upon a policy which has transferred its aboriginal population into a law respecting, prosperous and contested section of the community, which, so far as being a menace to or burden upon the commonwealth, contributes in many ways to its welfare. The report points out that it is a fallacy to suppose that the Indians are a dying race, doomed to extinction before the advance of civilization. Facts and statistics fail to support this view. In every Province excepting British Columbia the birth exceeds the death rate. Of the 109 deaths in excess of births in the excepted Province 84 occurred in the West Coast Agency, and the majority are directly attributable to the determined obstinacy with which these particular Indians cling to their potlashes, and in connection therewith, congregate and crowd together in a manner which produces the most insanitary conditions. In regard to the marriage bond and other sexual relations, while the report says that the law, with the laudable desire for the enforcement of nuptial obligations, recognizes the validity of marriages contracted in accordance with tribal customs, in furtherance of the same object it refuses to recognize kindred divorces among them; but as the Indians, are unable to appreciate such distinctions, it comes to pass that men and women are not infrequently to be found living on the reserve in relations which are condemned as illegal and immoral, although regarded by those immediately concerned as quite correct, and would in other communities be remediable by recourse to the divorce courts. Over and above this, it cannot be denied that considerable looseness exists in the relations between the sexes, which is by no means confined to the younger Provinces or outlying bands in the older Provinces, but on the whole the morality of the Indians up to their light is as good as that of their neighbors, and improvement is going on in this as in other directions. The distribution of the Indian population of the Dominion is as follows: Ontario, 21,191, an increase of 98 over the preceding year; Quebec, 11,149, an increase of 83; Nova Scotia, 1,998 an increase of 68; New Brunswick 1,694, a decrease of 5; Prince Edward Island, 292, a decrease of 9; British Columbia, 25,234 a decrease of 348; Manitoba, 6,775, a decrease of 54; North-West Territories, 17,561, a decrease of 88, and outside treaty limits, 22,084. The large apparent decrease in British Columbia is caused by the fact that the new agent for the north-west coast has deducted 231 from the population of his agency as a result of more accurate census than was taken by his predecessor for some time past.

The Outbreak

In Russia.

The trouble which for some time past had been brewing in St. Petersburg came to a head on Sunday, January 22nd, when in order to suppress a great popular demonstration, the Imperial troops fired upon the people massed in the city streets and squares killing nearly a hundred and wounding hundreds of others. The popular agitation began in the form of a strike in which the workmen of many factories were represented, aggregating, it is said, some 50,000 men. As the employers refused compliance with the demands of the strikers, the latter became more bitter in their insistence upon justice, and revolutionary elements mingled in the agitation. The agitators were led by a priest, Father Gopon, who persuaded the people that if they would present their grievances before the Emperor he would give them sympathetic consideration. A petition was accordingly drawn up by Father Gopon, formulating the grievances of the workmen and their demands, along with other demands, it is said, of a political character. A great meeting was called for Sunday, on Palace Square, in order to submit the petition to the Emperor. But the Czar, acting no doubt on the counsel of his advisors, had determined not to receive the petition of the workmen, and accordingly no audience was granted. On the contrary the assembling workmen found the Nevsky bridges and other strategic points in the city occupied by the military. The agitators, incensed by the

Emperor's refusal to listen to their grievances and still more by the presence of the troops, continued to crowd the streets and squares in an angry humor, refusing to disperse when ordered and at points assaulting the police and the soldiery. This led up to the tragedy of the day, when the soldiers of the Czar fired on the crowds, first with blank cartridges and then with bullets, wounding and killing men, women and children. There are conflicting reports as to the number of killed and wounded, some of them no doubt greatly exaggerated. One report says that at one point where the mob and the troops came into conflict there were a thousand killed and fifteen hundred wounded. Another report, which purports to be exact, gives the total number of the killed at less than a hundred. As a result of the action of the military the streets of the city were cleared and external quiet was restored. But it is known that the feeling of the people against the ruling classes is intensely bitter. The revolutionary fires have for the moment been smothered but not put out, and for days the people of St. Petersburg have lived in a state of suspense bordering on terror.

The Ontario Elections.

In the general Provincial election in Ontario on Wednesday last, the Ross Government suffered a decisive defeat. In the new House the Conservative party, led by Mr. J. P. Whitney, will have a majority of more than forty. The result not only disappoints the hopes of Mr. Ross and his followers, who apparently believed that the Government would be sustained, but it probably more than fulfils the most sanguine expectations of the Opposition. Among the defeated Liberals are four members of the Government—Messrs. Latchford, Dryden, Graham and Evanturel, while Mr. Ross and his other colleagues in the administration were returned by comparatively small majorities. It is quite evident that popular opinion in the Province has turned strongly against the Government. The reasons for the change are various. It was not because of its failures in administrations that the Ross Government became unpopular. Few Governments probably have done better in that respect. Mr. Whitney will have the advantage of entering upon his administration with a full treasury and with the affairs of the Province generally in a very satisfactory condition. But the Liberal party had been in power in Ontario for thirty-two years, and the cry that it was time for a change doubtless had some effect. But there were more substantial reasons. The party's long lease of power had attached to its fortunes a corrupt element which was ready to employ the most unscrupulous means in order to hold on to power. Hence many charges—some of them proven of corrupt procedures in connection with elections. The Government, if not guilty of collusion with this corrupt element, was at any rate discredited because of its connection therewith. Then the Government's attitude on the temperance question was without doubt a cause of weakness. Its failure to take the advanced position which prohibitionist demanded forfeited the good-will and support of a considerable temperance element throughout the Province, while the comparatively advanced ground actually taken by Mr. Ross and his colleagues on this subject won for them the hostility of the liquor interest. The attempt to avoid both Scylla and Charybdis by a moderate middle course was not successful.

China Defends her Neutrality.

Probably the world in general has not credited the Russian Government with a large measure of sincerity in making formal charges against China of the violation of her neutrality in connection with the present war, since it is pretty well understood that Russia has been at least as ready as Japan to take advantage of China's inability to enforce under all circumstances her professed neutrality. However such charges were formulated and the United States Government was requested to call China's attention to these alleged violations of her duties as a neutral power. This was accordingly done, and the United States Government has now received China's answer. It is understood that the following gives a correct summary of China's reply to Russia's allegations:—Regarding the charge that the Chinese bandits were enlisted in the Japanese army, the Chinese government says that they were enlisted first by the Russians, as frontier guards, and fought against the Japanese. Besides

the subjects of a neutral power have the right as private citizens to enlist in a foreign war. No Japanese officers are in China's northern army at all. Russian and other foreigners are in educational institutions throughout the empire, and in the maritime houses, but this is a matter of internal administration. Regarding the iron ore said to have been furnished the Japanese army, the answer says this ore is from mines owned by Chinese merchants, separate from the government mines at Hanyang. International law does not include this article under the head of contraband of war. The Matao Islands are said to have been used by the Japanese as a base for their navy. This is denied. Regarding the articles of contraband alleged to have been sent to Dalny, ships have run the blockade, that is the belligerents' lookout. China is doing all she can to maintain it. Regarding the Ryeshitelni incident, it is stated that the seizure was as unexpected by the Chinese as by the Russians. The Chinese government did everything it could against such a seizure. The Chinese government considers that Russia has violated neutrality in a number of instances. Bridges have been built by the Russians over the Liao river, and Russian troops have encamped on the west side of the river, which is supposed to mark the boundary line of the neutral zone. The captain of the Ryeshitelni, while going to Shanghai under military escort, made his escape from the authorities in whose charge he was. The answer, in conclusion, says the Chinese government has not swayed one iota from her neutrality, and the general attitude of her people is peaceful, and has been appreciated as such by the powers.

Stoessel Criticised.

After all, it appears that there are those who strenuously deny the right of General Stoessel to be regarded as a hero for his stubborn defence of Port Arthur. Before the surrender of Port Arthur, Balfour was blamed for needlessly sacrificing human lives in prolonging to the utmost a siege which could possibly have but one issue. Now he is being criticised severely for having failed to make the most of his resources and having capitulated long before the limit of his powers of resistance had been reached. The Pekin correspondent of the London Times who has just returned from a visit to Port Arthur describes the impressions received there, and says: Without witnessing them, nobody could form any idea of the stupendous strength of the fort or the incredible heroism displayed in their capture. No foreign officer is able to find the reason for the surrender of Port Arthur. Those who have seen the condition of the fortress believe that no more discreditable surrender is recorded in history. There were 25,000 able bodied men capable of making a sortie, hundreds of officers, all well nourished, and plenty of ammunition, the largest magazine being untouched and full to the roof with all kinds of ammunition for naval guns. There was further ample food for three months, even if no fresh supplies could be received, besides the waters are teeming with fish. There was abundance of wine and medical comforts, and large quantities of fuel of all kinds. The stories that the red cross buildings were wrecked by the Japanese fire are admitted by reputable residents to have been pure fabrications to excite sympathy. All accounts agree in commending the majority of the officers, who feared the failure of comforts more than of ammunition and agree that no man ever held a responsible command who less deserved the title of hero than General Stoessel.

Famine in Ireland.

In parts of Ireland there is much suffering resulting from a cause which has given rise repeatedly to similar conditions in the past—the failure of the potato crop. It is in the western part of the Island that the scarcity prevails and in some districts the sufferings of the people are reported to be extreme. Mr. Jeremiah O'Donohue, a merchant of Dublin, who passed through Montreal the other day on his way west, was interrogated in reference to the subject, and is reported to have said: "Potato blight has once more ruined crops in the west, and death and disease are now stalking among the famished natives. I have seen whole families on the verge of starvation, not knowing where their next meal is to come from, and scarcely remembering what their last one tasted like. People of this country have never been troubled by famine, I understand, so they may scarcely credit the stories that are coming across the Atlantic from Ireland concerning the absolute want which the people of the greater portion of the western coast are facing. I've seen fathers of families walk between twenty and thirty miles in search of food, and many an Irish mother has denied herself a bite and sup for days at a time in order that her little hoard of meal or potatoes might last longer and so stave off for a little longer the starvation which was staring herself and her children. We Irish are a proud people, as we have every right to be, thank God, and you can depend on it that want is real otherwise these people would never have knocked at the door of the Government begging for relief. The Government has at last listened to the situation, and public works, which will afford a measure of relief, are soon to be started, if they have not already begun."