

Political Awakening

By-elections and Opening of Parliament Give Promise of Lively Times.

Tarte Tries to Shift Blame of His Own Misdeeds on Conservatives.

Conservatives Ready to Put up a Strong Fight in Quebec.

Special to the Colonist.
 Montreal, Dec. 30.—Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Hon. Geo. E. Foster and Hon. Chas. Fitzpatrick were in the city today, and the prime minister had a conference with a number of leading local Liberals. The occasion of the by-elections was the chief topic under discussion. The calling of parliament for February 1, and the prospects of by-elections before the end of January will make things lively in political circles. In this district elections have to be held in Berthier, Chambly and Verchères and Sherbrooke. The Conservatives are determined upon putting up a big fight in all constituencies and are confident of success.
 Mr. Tarte has an article in his official organ, La Patrie, referring to the calling of parliament, which is of some interest at the present moment. The article is significant as showing that Mr. Tarte is now trying to lay the blame for the recent political situation on the Conservatives of Ontario for political capital in Quebec.

STEELE ON HERCHMER?

Conflicting Reports as to Command of Western Division of Mounted Infantry.

Ottawa, Dec. 29.—An Associated Press representative was informed this afternoon that the mounted rifles of the contingent will be divided into two regiments, the one drawn from points east of Manitoba to be under Col. Lessard, and the Northwest Mounted Police to be a separate regiment under Commissioner Herchmer, with Col. Steele second in command.
 The Commissioner will sail from Halifax five days later than the Laurentian and Montserrat, which carry the artillery and one regiment of mounted rifles, and are intended to leave on the 15th of January. She will take the balance of the mounted rifles, which are composed of smart, young unmarried men.

BOERS WAR ON KAFFIRS

Attack and Capture with Small Loss Position Strongly Fortified by Natives.

Pretoria, Tuesday, Dec. 29.—(Via Lorenzo Marques, Thursday, Dec. 28.)—Commandant Swart reports from the laager at Alouyn's Kop, near Zorust, that he had an engagement on Friday, December 22, with Kaffirs in the neighborhood of Deverpoort. The Kaffirs occupied a strongly fortified ridge, and were well prepared for emergencies. After heavy fighting the Kaffirs captured the Kaffir position, losing three killed and five wounded.
 London, Dec. 30.—The reported engagement with Kaffirs is very vague and cannot be explained pending the arrival of later despatches.

SCARED OF METHUEN'S MEN.

Boers Show Panic in Causeless Firing—Their Position Becoming Intolerable.

London, Dec. 30.—The Modder River correspondent of the Times, referring to the scare-firing of the Boers, says: "Their nervousness causes much amusement to the British. It is quite certain that half the Boer force is employed watching by day and the other half by night. Probably the consequent weariness, with the scarcity of water and the presence of fever, will render the Boer position intolerable. Their present action is due either to a scare, or to a wish to cover a retirement."

GREAT GUNS FOR AFRICA.

London, Dec. 30.—The Daily Mail asserts that several guns have been removed from the forts at Plymouth in England, and that these will be sent to Capetown.

TWO THOUSAND REBELS.

London, Dec. 30.—The Capetown correspondent of the Daily News says: "A leading resident of Yrburg, who was released by the Boers, says 2,000 colonialists from Oriskany West. He says colonialists are to be seen everywhere in the Boer ranks."

TORONTO MAYORALTY.

Clark's Friends Think it a Sure Thing Against the Penning Candidate.
 Toronto, Dec. 29.—The mayoralty campaign has proceeded briskly all week, and practically closed to-night with a meeting in Massey hall for Mr. P. Clark and two meetings in smaller halls for E. A. Macdonald. Clark's meeting was a failure in point of attendance, not more than 1,000 people being in the hall, holding 5,000. The election takes place on Monday.

CHURCHILL'S OBSERVATIONS.

The Escaped Correspondent Says That Boer Forces Are Greatly Weakened by Desertions.

New York, Dec. 29.—Winston Churchill, cabling to the World, says that although the Boer army is confident, they want to return to their farms, and complain bitterly of hardships. The Boer army is now only 2,000 men, and the only burghers remaining on the farms are those who are unfit or have bribed the officials.
 The food supplies are not large and latterly the crops have suffered terribly from locusts. The tight British grip on Delagoa Bay is felt also.
 Reviewing the general situation he says it is foolish not to recognize that the British are fighting a formidable and a terrible adversary of high qualities. The burghers increase their efficiency and their government, although vitally corrupt, devotes its whole energy to military operations. Time is, however, on the British side, and must eventually weaken the Boers.
 London, Dec. 29.—A despatch from Lorenzo Marques dated December 23 says a curious story is current, according to which the Boers are in the Orange Free State, and 800 Free Staters, have definitely refused to continue the war.

VOLUNTEERS FOR AFRICA.

Hundreds of Canadians in the United States Make Offers to Dominion Government.

From Our Own Correspondent.
 Ottawa, Dec. 29.—Col. Hutcheson of Nashville, Tenn., sends an offer to the government to furnish 200 trained soldiers to serve with the Canadians in South Africa. The offer of 500 men has also been received from Chicago.
 It is not improbable that the Canadian contingent for South Africa will be provided with rougher hats instead of helmets, owing to some difficulty in getting the latter.

VOLUNTEER COMMANDS.

London, Dec. 29.—Sir Charles Howard Vincent has been appointed to command the infantry division of the city of London Imperial Regiment.
 William Waldorf Astor has subscribed £1,000 to the Buckinghamshire fund to equip the Yeomanry.

Mines Paying Boers' War Bill.

Transvaal Makes New Levy of From Thirty to Fifty Per Cent. of Output.

Capetown despatches complain of the inadequacy of the hospital arrangements. It is now estimated that the war will cost at least eighty million pounds and it is suggested that the sinking fund of the national debt should be suspended for five or six years in order to defray the cost.
 "It is satisfactory," says the Times editorially this morning, "to hear that the Transvaal government is acting with regard to the American cargoes seized in Delagoa Bay as we should have wished and expected. It is a matter of course that we shall make full reparation, if reparation is proved to be due. In the meantime it may be noted, as the Americans themselves admit, that the facts are in considerable doubt and that some of them seem to be rather compromising to the vessels seized. There will be time enough to talk law and the policy of the step when the facts have been authoritatively ascertained."
 The number of members of the House of Commons who have offered to go to the front threatens to seriously affect the government side. The Rothschilds have donated £2,000 to the Buckinghamshire Volunteer fund. It is estimated that £200,000 will be contributed privately to Volunteer funds throughout the country. Already the fund for the relief of the families of soldiers exceeds £500,000.

AT LADYSMITH.

Pietermaritzburg, Dec. 28.—A despatch from Ladysmith dated December 28 says: "The Boers have mounted another howitzer replacing the one which was captured in the sortie of the Rifle Brigade. They show no signs of assaulting the town. The total number of dead are 70 killed and 236 wounded."
 Pretoria, Dec. 25.—Gen. Schalkburg reports on December 23 that trains are not running to Colenso, indicating that the Boer have built a connection around Ladysmith.

MODDER RIVER.

Capetown, Dec. 25.—Gen. Crenje reports from the Modder River on December 24 that the Boers captured two British forts at Kuruman on December 17. It is rumored that Gen. Methuen's 17th naval gun has exploded.

STALE NEWS.

London, Dec. 29.—A war office despatch from Col. Baden-Powell dated December 22 announces the safe arrival of Lady Sarah Wilson, and reports the health and spirits of the garrison very satisfactory.

GEN. ROBERTS' POPULARITY.

London, Dec. 28.—Despatches from all parts of South Africa emphasize the great enthusiasm occasioned by the appointment of Gen. Roberts and Gen. Buller. The soldiers anticipate from the presence of "Bobs" everything from success in battle to cheaper beer.

BLIZZARD IN PENNSYLVANIA.

Corry, Pa., Dec. 29.—A terrific blizzard, the worst in years, has been raging for the past 24 hours and will continue. About eighteen inches of snow has fallen and with that already on the ground makes the depth on the level four feet. All the railways are suffering. On all roads huge snow ploughs are working but fail to keep the track clear.
 If you are tired taking the large old-fashioned pills, try Carter's Little Liver Pills and take some comfort. A man can't stand everything. One pill a day. Try them.

Horsemen In Demand.

Yeomanry Invited to Increase Their Offering to Ten Thousand Men.

London, Dec. 29.—The Imperial Yeomanry committee has issued a statement to the effect that the government considers the formation and despatch of Yeomanry as one of the most pressing needs of the situation and has intimated that it is now prepared to accept from 8,000 to 10,000 Yeomanry, instead of 3,000 as originally asked for. It is expected that the first contingent of 1,000 will sail about the middle of January. Lady Chesham and Lady George Curzon have issued an appeal for public funds to establish a field hospital for the Yeomanry.
 The government has announced that it will accept the service of a battery from the Honorable Artillery Company. It will be attached to the city Imperial corps.
 During the continued lull in the military operations in South Africa, the papers are filled with letters and articles criticizing the government and the campaign and suggesting remedies, improvements, alterations in the plans and the like.
 The Times complains of needless censorship and nonconformity. It cites the fact that nothing has yet transpired to show how Gen. Gatacre came to lose 600 men at Stormberg.
 The Boers are in a nervous condition and constant dread of the British is felt, but this is probably an exaggeration.
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Honorable Artillery Company Also Called Upon—Scheme of Finance.

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British Will Stop Suspicious Cargoes at Risk of Compensation for Mistakes.

London, Dec. 29.—A despatch from the Daily Mail from Pietermaritzburg, dated Saturday, December 28, says: "The fact that the Boers are now fact regarding the strength of the Boers' position at Colenso. Thanks to the services of the Continental officers, the character of the camp again has changed. We are no longer fighting a foe who relies upon guerrilla tactics, but we have to deal with what is rapidly becoming a disciplined army enjoying the advantages of knowledge of the country and of selecting the scene of contest without the burdens of a cumbersome commissariat."
 "The Boers have converted the hills near Colenso into a fortress of immense strength. Everywhere they have splendid trenches, many of them being built by the Boers. The Boers are now equipped with guns with astonishing rapidity. The main positions are connected with the only railway in the town at that time, and the forts proper bristle with machine guns, that command the approaches. Probably mines are laid in the Boer lines, and the Boers are not bursting. Observers of the Colenso fight say the Boers were very effective. This is due largely to the fact that the distances are marked off with white paint.
 "The enemy's discipline is improving. The Boers present great manual labor, for which the Boers have a keen dislike, and the way in which they trained their fire when our troops were advancing is another proof of improved soldiering."
 The correspondent of the Daily News at Frere Camp announces that a tramway is being constructed from the railway to a hill commanding the Boer position and that along this the British will convey heavy guns.
 A special from Ladysmith dated Wednesday, December 28, says: "The Boers are in a nervous condition and constant dread of the British is felt, but this is probably an exaggeration. Capetown despatches complain of the inadequacy of the hospital arrangements. It is now estimated that the war will cost at least eighty million pounds and it is suggested that the sinking fund of the national debt should be suspended for five or six years in order to defray the cost.
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THE BRITISH VOLUNTEERS.

Generous Contributions in Aid of Their Movement—Hint from the War Office.

London, Dec. 30.—The Earl of Mount Edgumbe, brother-in-law of Lord Lansdowne, says the war office would entertain a scheme to enroll volunteers in a sort of preparatory stage in order to learn drills and the like.
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TO CATCH FILIBUSTERS.

Two Fleet Vessels from Halifax Detached to Watch Suspected Craft.
 Halifax, Dec. 29.—A report is current that one or two vessels of the British North Atlantic fleet now at Bermuda are to be detached to watch for filibusters from the United States. A report called at the dockyard and was told that none of the officials could possibly impart any information for the public while Great Britain is at war with another power. Detection would meet with the prompt dismissal of any employee. It was learned that the fleet at Bermuda has been enabled instructions but nothing could be ascertained as to the nature of them beyond the fact that if the United States government failed to prevent any violation of neutrality laws, vessels will keep watch for any craft conveying contraband of war for the Boers. An official interviewed believed the United States government would enforce the neutrality laws but should America neglect to do so then two cruisers would in all probability be employed for patrol service.

AT A RIFE OLD AGE.

Parish Clerk of the Shakespeare Church Passes Away After Long Service.
 London, Dec. 30.—Thos. Kite, the old parish clerk of the Shakespeare church, has died. He was the custodian of Anne Hathaway's cottage to the grave. He was 83 years of age and succeeded his father and grandfather half a century ago, and was well known to all dramatic celebrities. Among those whom he conducted to Shakespeare's tomb were Sir Walter Scott, Washington Irving, Dickens, Emerson, Keane and Nathaniel Hawthorne.

THE KIPLINGS ILL.

London, Dec. 30.—Rudyard Kipling and family are confined to their rooms suffering from influenza, but there is no anxiety as to their condition.

Heavy Work At Colenso.

Buller Faces Position of Marvellous Strength and Plans Elaborate Assault.

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Rails Laid to Carry Great Guns to Hill Commanding Boer Position.

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Enemy Show Extraordinary Industry and Evidence of Skilled Direction.

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BOERS AND DELAGOA BAY.

Their Agent at Portuguese Post Well Placed to Manipulate Supplies from Abroad.

London, Dec. 29.—A correspondent of the Standard at Lorenzo Marques says: "Delagoa Bay is the residence of Herr Pott, a Hollander, who is consul-general for the Transvaal and consul for the Netherlands. Pott is the principal medium between Pretoria and Dr. Leyds in Europe. He controls the Netherlands railway through the Transvaal and is the head of the Transvaal customs. He is also head of the Dutch East Africa Co., and has the ear of the Portuguese government as well as the chief of each department.
 "It is openly asserted that Pott has a private wire to the frontier, and knows of the Boers before others what is happening. About him gather all the other consuls, the Portuguese officials, and the German forwarding agents.
 "If Delagoa Bay is closed the Boers will retaliate by raiding Portuguese territory."
 The Standard says that no credit should be given to the rumor from Berlin of a secret Anglo-German-Portuguese treaty for the partition of the colonies of Portugal.

CHIEF MASTERS.

Results of the Eighth Round in the Big Tournament at Vienna.
 Vienna, Dec. 30.—The results of the eighth round of a national chess championship, played in this city yesterday were: Wolf beat Schwartz; Popiel defeated Korte; Korte and Popiel, and Korte and Alapin drew.
 The adjourned games from previous rounds resulted as follows: Alapin beat Schwartz; Marozzy won; Albin, Narco defeated Popiel and Schlechter and Popiel, and Korte and Alapin drew.

LI HUNG CHANG ADVANCED.

Has Been Appointed Viceroy of Two of the Most Important Provinces.
 Washington, Dec. 30.—The Chinese minister, Mr. Wu Ting Faag, has received a despatch from China stating that Li Hung Chang has been appointed acting viceroy of two provinces in the south of China adjacent to Canton. The minister says that Li is reported as being the venerable Chinese statesman, and the provinces are among the most populous and commercially important in the empire.

COAL FAMINE THREATENED.

Unprecedented Demand for Fuel in Great Britain Causes a Shortage.
 London, Dec. 30.—The United Kingdom is threatened with a coal famine. Unless conditions improve many industrial concerns depending upon the coal supply may have to suspend before February as their margin of profit is gradually being wiped out. Wages have gone up and it is hard to find. The normal Christmas consumption of fuel is aggravated by the situation, while the government need of fuel for transport, war vessels, and the army is also a factor. Cape, has created unprecedented demand.

NEW YORK'S POPULATION.

New York, Dec. 30.—The annual report of the board of health estimates the population of Greater New York at 3,550,960, a gain of about 100,000 over last year.

AFTER TIGRE REBELS.

Rome, Dec. 30.—A despatch from Mas-sarwah says an Abyssinian army of 10,000 men, sent north to subdue the Tigre rebels, has reached that province. The army, under the command of the governor of Tigre, has established his residence at Endamena.

Spies In a Consulate

Pretoria Kept Well Informed with Regard to British Military Movements.

London, Dec. 30.—The Times has the following, dated December 27, from Lorenzo Marques: "Cargoes for the Transvaal have been divided to one-fifth of the average, but large shipments are expected from Europe. In the meantime there are persistent rumors here and in Durban that guns and ammunition are smuggled through for the Boers.
 "A French liner now in the harbor is said to have brought two large guns from Madagascar. The head of the customs assures me that there is absolutely no ground, however, for such a rumor. All goods, he says, are daylight, examined and despatched by the local importers, except in small lots and under written guarantee. The same precautions are taken with reference to all contraband articles. Of course, much depends upon the competence and incorruptibility of subordinates.
 "The Times has a later despatch from Lorenzo Marques, dated December 28, which says: "The suspicion that the Boer intelligence department is in close touch with a foreign consulate at Pretoria is confirmed by the fact that news of the appointment of Lord Roberts as commander-in-chief in South Africa is generally known in Pretoria. It is confirmed by the fact that Delagoa Bay from the Transvaal ten days later. Suspicion rests upon a consular agent in Pretoria, whose name is not given. There is reason to believe that Pretoria is kept well informed with regard to British military movements.
 "With this reference to rumors of smuggling contraband, it is significant that Major Erasmus, of the Free State artillery, is believed to be in contact with that of the French liner. Considering the freedom with which the Transvaal military movements, and the considerable mischief may be done unless cargoes are inspected by British searchers who understand foreign bills of lading, it is believed that all military and other machinery should be stopped, owing to the possibility of hoodwinking the British."
 "The consul who represents the Transvaal and the Orange Free State in Lorenzo Marques is reported to act in the same capacity for Holland."

French Liner Under Suspicion of Bringing Two Guns From Madagascar.

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 "With this reference to rumors of smuggling contraband, it is significant that Major Erasmus, of the Free State artillery, is believed to be in contact with that of the French liner. Considering the freedom with which the Transvaal military movements, and the considerable mischief may be done unless cargoes are inspected by British searchers who understand foreign bills of lading, it is believed that all military and other machinery should be stopped, owing to the possibility of hoodwinking the British."
 "The consul who represents the Transvaal and the Orange Free State in Lorenzo Marques is reported to act in the same capacity for Holland."

Hint That Transvaal Secret Service Funds Corrupt Portuguese Officials.

London, Dec. 30.—The Times has the following, dated December 27, from Lorenzo Marques: "Cargoes for the Transvaal have been divided to one-fifth of the average, but large shipments are expected from Europe. In the meantime there are persistent rumors here and in Durban that guns and ammunition are smuggled through for the Boers.
 "A French liner now in the harbor is said to have brought two large guns from Madagascar. The head of the customs assures me that there is absolutely no ground, however, for such a rumor. All goods, he says, are daylight, examined and despatched by the local importers, except in small lots and under written guarantee. The same precautions are taken with reference to all contraband articles. Of course, much depends upon the competence and incorruptibility of subordinates.
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SILVER AND GOLD.

Large Increase in the Production in the United States.

Washington, Dec. 30.—The preliminary estimate of the production of gold and silver in the United States during 1899 made by the director of the mint shows a total gold production of \$70,794,194, an increase over the production of last year of \$1,235,070. The production of silver during the year is estimated at \$74,424,096, an increase during the year of \$4,040,211.

Negotiations Successful.

Powers Concur in Proposal Made For Open Door in China.

Washington, Dec. 30.—The negotiations opened by Secretary Hay with the great powers of Europe and with Japan towards securing a complete understanding for a continued open door policy throughout China, have met with the most gratifying results. The cabinet is