

# Messenger and Visitor

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## Great Britain and Russia.

If the Associated Press is rightly informed, the recent visit to St. Petersburg of Count Benckendorff, Russian Ambassador to Great Britain, has resulted in softening the feelings of apprehension and hostility which the Russian people have been entertaining toward Great Britain. The ostensible purpose of Count Benckendorff's visit to St. Petersburg was to see his son who was about setting out to take part in the war, but it is believed that a more important purpose of his visit was to assure his Government personally that the suspicions harbored against Great Britain respecting her attitude as to the war were unfounded, and that although she would stand by the terms of her treaty with Japan, Great Britain would not move unless compelled to do so by some third power coming to the assistance of Russia. Count Benckendorff had a long interview with the Czar, as well as with the Foreign Minister at St. Petersburg and, if the information of the Associated Press is correct, succeeded in convincing the Russian authorities that Great Britain was acting in good faith. He conveyed also Great Britain's assurance that the Anglo-Japanese treaty contained no secret clauses, and that it was not directed especially against Russia, its sole purpose being, according to the British authorities, to preserve the balance of power in the Far East, which might be threatened by another coalition such as followed the Chino-Japanese war, and which resulted in the exclusion of Great Britain from further international settlement of Far Eastern questions. The more moderate tone of the Russian as well as of the British press of late is also supposed to indicate a better understanding between the two Governments. Sir Charles Scott whose term of office as British Ambassador to St. Petersburg expires in April is to be succeeded by Mr. Charles Hardinge. The retiring ambassador has been popular at St. Petersburg and it is believed his successor will be equally welcome. Mr. Hardinge is a comparatively young man—about forty-five years of age—and his promotion, like that of the late Sir Michael Herbert to be ambassador at Washington, is favorably commented upon as another break in the tradition of promoting by seniority. Mr. Hardinge has been trained to diplomacy, and it is believed that he has special fitness for the post to which he has been appointed owing to his knowledge of Persia, which touches Anglo-Russian relations closely.

## The Winter in the Northwest.

According to statements for which Mr. T. O. Davis, M. P. for Saskatchewan, is quoted as authority, reports which have been cabled to the old Country as to the suffering of the settlers in Manitoba and the Northwest because of the severity of the winter are without any substantial foundation. In the Saskatchewan district the winter has been fine and not marked by any exceptionally severe weather. Cattle were not taken in from the prairie until well on in January, and for the remainder of the winter the farmers have had an abundance of hay for their stock. The new settlers, including those of the Barr Colony, according to Mr. Davis, have had no complaints to make in respect to the severity of the winter. Many of the Barr colonists are working in Prince Albert, and seem to be well satisfied with their lot and with the country generally. The rapidity with which the country is being occupied by new settlers is shown from the fact that the total homestead entries for the year ending Dec. 31 last were 32,362, covering 5,229, 120 acres, compared with 22,215 entries for the year 1902, an increase of 11,467. The Department of the Interior estimates that 130,726 persons have gone into Manitoba and the Northwest during 1903. This estimate is based on the fact that 32,682 homestead entries were made with an average of four persons to each homestead.

## An Important Letter.

The Outlook calls attention to a letter of Mr. Gladstone's, lately published, which was written in May, 1889, to Mr. Henry Clews of New York City, and to its bearing upon a question in connection with the history of the Civil War. It has been frequently stated, and has been widely believed, as The Outlook says, that at different times before the midsummer of 1863, which marked the turning-point of the war, the

British Government was on the point of recognizing the independence of the Confederate States and possibly of intervening on their behalf. Mr. Gladstone's letter, however, disposes effectually of this statement, and makes it clear that the question of recognizing the Confederacy was never seriously considered by the British Government, save on one occasion, and then the proposal was rejected unanimously and without serious debate. The following is from Mr. Gladstone's letter:

I think it would be less than ingenious if I did not, after reading what relates to the Cabinet of Lord Palmerston, make some reference to it. Allow me to assure you that, so far as the Cabinet is concerned, you have been entirely misled in regard to matters of fact. As a member of it, and now nearly its sole surviving member, I can state that it never at any time dealt with the subject of recognizing the Southern States in your great Civil War, excepting when it learned the proposition of the Emperor Napoleon III and declined to entertain that proposition without qualification, hesitation, delay or dissent. In the debate which took place on Mr. Roebuck's proposal for negotiation Lord Russell took no part, and could take none, as he was a member of the House of Lords. You will, I am sure, be glad to learn that there is no foundation for a charge which, had it been true, might have aided in keeping alive angry sentiments, happily gone by.

## Cruelties in the Congo Free State.

During the past few years there have frequently appeared statements in reference to affairs in the Congo Free State, alleging a tyrannous administration and incredible cruelty toward the natives. But the matter embodied in a blue book recently published by the British Government constitutes the severest arraignment of the Government of that State before the bar of public opinion that has yet been made. The Congo Free State is said to cover some 800,000 square miles of territory consisting for the most part of African jungle. Some years ago the native population was estimated at 14,000,000, or 15,000,000, and there are about 2,000 whites, of whom 70 per cent are Government officials. The principal industry of the country is the collecting and exporting of crude rubber obtained from the trees of the great Congo forest. Over this country King Leopold, of Belgium, exercises sovereign rights and his financial interests in the country are very large. Within the last few years the native population of the country has been steadily decreasing and there have been persistent reports, some of them from sources that could not well be discredited, that the administration of affairs in the Congo Free State was tyrannous in the extreme and that horrible cruelties were practised on the natives by the whites with the knowledge and connivance of the Congo Government. The British Government has felt it to be a duty to investigate these reports, and accordingly Mr. Roger Casement, British Consul at Boma, capital of the Free State, has reported the result of a journey of investigation undertaken by him at the request of his Government. This report is embodied in the blue book mentioned above. It appears from Mr. Casement's report that in many instances at least, the rubber is obtained by terrorizing the natives into furnishing a certain quantity. If for any reason a village fails to supply the quantity demanded a force of soldiers is sent against it and some of the people are killed. It was explained to Mr. Casement that mutilation of the dead was necessary, because the soldiers had to account for every cartridge supplied to them with a life. As evidence that they had fulfilled their orders they had to take back a hand for each cartridge and if the shooting was bad or they used the cartridge for other purposes, they would supply the number of hands necessary by maiming living persons and then turning them loose. It is said that the report contains much evidence in support of these statements. Mr. Casement saw a number of men who had lost their right hands, and one both of whose hands were gone as the result of most fiendishly cruel treatment. One young boy was found whose hand had been chopped off not long before. Another way in which the whites force the natives to furnish the rubber demanded is to seize their wives and hold them prisoners until the rubber is brought in. It appears from the blue book that Mr. Casement's report is being sent by Lord Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary, to the British representatives at Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Rome, Madrid, Brussels, The Hague, Copenhagen, Stockholm and Lisbon, with the request that the report be laid before the Governments to which they are accredited, with an enquiry as to when an answer may be expected to the British note of last August.

That is Great Britain asks the powers which created the Congo Free State and still maintain it whether these things shall cease or continue.

## Temperance Legislation in Ontario.

The Ontario Government's promised bill, dealing with the liquor traffic either by way of prohibition or regulation, has not been presented to the Legislature. It is learned, however, attention has been given to the subject in a caucus of the Government party held on Tuesday last week. Premier Ross is said to have outlined to his followers a radical temperance measure, providing for the abolition of the bar throughout the Province on May 1, 1905, and for Government control of the retail sale of liquor in packages. Mr. Ross's supporters were not however willing as a body to endorse the proposed measure, and the Premier suggested as an alternative that the bringing into effect of a law such as he had suggested should be left to a vote in each of the municipalities at the next municipal election. This would mean the abolition of the bar in hotels as well as saloons, with Government control of the retail traffic, conditioned upon local option. In connection with this it is proposed to make the license law more stringent. The second proposal was discussed, but no decision was reached, and the matter was laid over for further consideration. Following the caucus meeting, Premier Ross said, in reply to a question of the leader of the opposition in the Legislative Assembly, that he was unable to state with any certainty at what date the proposed temperance legislation would be introduced. What course the Government will take in the matter is uncertain, but it can hardly afford to outrage the strong temperance sentiment of the Province by doing nothing or by failing to introduce a thoroughgoing measure of reform. The *Globe*, the principal Government organ in Ontario, advocates the policy of Government control.

## Opening of Par- liament.

The fourth session of the Dominion of Canada's ninth Parliament was opened on Thursday last. The principal business of the day was the election of a speaker in succession to Mr. Brodeur who has accepted appointment to a seat in the Cabinet. The Prime Minister nominated as speaker Mr. N. A. Balcourt, member for Ottawa, and the nomination was seconded by Sir Richard Cartwright. Mr. Borden, leader of the Opposition, concurred in the nomination, and the motion to elect was carried unanimously. The formal opening by the Governor-General came on Friday and was accompanied by the pomp and circumstance customary on such occasions. The speech from the throne opened with an expression of thankfulness to a beneficent Providence for the abundant harvest of the past year and the prosperity which prevails in all parts of the Dominion. It notes with satisfaction that the trade of Canada is still increasing, while the number of settlers seeking homes in Manitoba and the Territories is without a parallel in the history of the country. This leads to a reference to the proposed trans-continental railway as necessary for the conveying of the increasing products of the West to our eastern seaports. Proceeding, the speech refers to the amendments in the contract between the Government and the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company, which have been approved by the Government and the management of the Grand Trunk Railway Company, and which will be submitted for the ratification of Parliament. The speech foreshadows a Militia Bill containing several important amendments to the present law. Authority will be asked to increase the force of the Northwest Mounted Police. A copy of the award defining the boundary between the Dominion and Alaska, with other papers relating to the controversy, will be laid before Parliament. The expectation is expressed that the present session will be a short one. Apart from the prospective discussion of the trans-continental railway scheme, there would appear to be no reason why this expectation should not be realized. But that discussion is not unlikely to occupy several weeks. The amendments which have been agreed to are probably not of a character to make the scheme more popular, and it may be taken for granted that all its features, old and new, will be closely criticised by the opposition.