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**Vatican and Quirinal.** There appears to be but little grounds for the hopes entertained in some quarters and the fears expressed in others, that the death of King Humbert and the accession of his son, Victor Emmanuel III, would result in an increase of ecclesiastical power in Italy at the expense of the royal authority. If the young King is under clerical influence and lacks the strength of will necessary to oppose a strong front to the persistent endeavors of the Vatican to regain its lost temporal power in Italy, his public utterances give no indication of it. On the contrary he has quite clearly intimated that he means to walk in this respect in the steps of his father and grandfather. The Vatican also evidently understands that its relations to the civil government of Italy are not likely to suffer any changes through the accession of Victor Emmanuel III, as is seen in the fact that the Pope has addressed a circular letter to the Catholic Governments of Europe, protesting against the recognition of the new monarch as anything more than the King of Sardinia, and renewing the old claim of temporal authority on the part of the papacy over the territory formerly known as the States of the Church. There is no prospect of course that this protest will bear more fruit than others which have preceded it. The Catholic—as well as the other powers—of Europe acknowledged King Humbert as King of Italy, and they are not likely to refuse the same recognition to his son.

**The Demand for Coal.** According to a statement issued by the department of Agriculture and large manufacturers from Germany, Russia, Australia, Italy and other parts of Europe are daily making enquiries in relation to Canadian coal, at the Canadian Mineral exhibit connected with the Paris Exposition. These gentlemen are eager for knowledge concerning the coal deposits of this country, the conditions of mining, shipping, etc., and considering the extent of the Nova Scotia and Cape Breton coal fields, the excellence of the coal, the facilities for mining and shipment, and the comparative nearness of these coal fields to the European markets, they are said to express surprise that Canadian coal is not now being exported to Europe. The demand for coal during the last half century has been immense and constantly increasing, so that in Great Britain and on the continent the necessity for economy in the use of this most important source of heat, light and power is pressing itself upon the attention of Governments and of the people. At the same time the demand for coal is now greater than ever before. Extending trade, enlarging industries, new railways and present and prospective military and naval operations, have created indeed an almost unlimited demand. France is now importing large quantities of coal from England to be used, as is generally believed, for naval purposes. Considering that there are people in England who believe that the French are contemplating an invasion of the British Isles, and also the fact that the visible coal supply of England has been so seriously diminished that the problem of its possible exhaustion is seriously considered, it is not surprising that Great Britain should contemplate following the example of Germany in this matter by prohibiting the exportation of coal. Under present conditions it would seem inevitable that there must be in Europe an increasing demand for American coal. Already large shipments are going from the United States, and as the coal fields of Eastern Canada are much nearer than those of the United States to the European markets—and the quality of the coal not inferior—there would appear to be good reason to expect that the trans-Atlantic coal commerce may come to take an important place in the export trade of Canada.

**Postal Rates.** There is a movement in the United States looking toward the establishment of a one-cent postal rate on letters between all points within the Union. The loss which would result to the revenue from this reduction it is proposed to make up by increasing the tariff on a class of printed matter, consisting prin-

cipally of novels and advertising matter passing for periodicals and paying postage at the rate of only one cent per pound. The postage on books is eight cents a pound. The average rate of postage paid on letters is said to be eighty-five cents a pound, and on post cards one dollar and eighty-eight cents a pound. From this it would appear that the book trade and the commercial and other correspondence of the country are taxed in the interest of the cheap novel and advertising business, for the class of matter which is carried for one cent a pound, makes up the great bulk and weight of that which passes through the mail. There certainly seems to be no reason why there should be such a discrimination in favor of this class of matter, which as a whole is probably of much less value to the country than any other which passes through the mail, and what is true in this respect in the United States is true in Canada also.

**What Edison Promises.** It is wise to receive with a grain of salt the intimations that reach us from time to time through the press despatches, of some great world-revolutionizing invention of practical science about to be promulgated. This caution is applicable in reference to the declaration that the distinguished electrician, Edison, has perfected an invention for the generation of electricity directly from coal, without the intervention of engine or dynamo. Such a result has been regarded by scientific men, we believe, as not wholly beyond the range of possibility, and therefore the announcement of Mr. Edison's alleged invention is not altogether incredible. If the invention—the details of which, it is said, will be made known shortly—should prove to be at all what is claimed for it, its effect will be widely revolutionary in respect to motive power and its application. The machinery by which the generation and application of electricity are to be secured under the new method is declared to be simple and inexpensive, capable of being operated anywhere, in an automobile or an ocean liner. The throbbing triple-expansion engines of the great steamship are to be supplanted by a small oil stove, and the boiler of the ponderous locomotive by a light cylinder. Very wonderful results will certainly take place if only this fairy tale of science shall prove true. And Mr. Edison, it is said, will publish his secret to the world on the 15th inst.

**The Presidential Campaign.** It is probable that the Republican leaders in the United States still confidently expect that the approaching presidential election will result in victory for their party. And that probably is also the expectation in what may be regarded as the best informed quarters outside the United States. But it seems to be quite true that a Republican victory is considered to be much less a matter of certainty now than it was six months ago. There is a considerable section of the Republican party which is not in sympathy with the expansionist policy of the McKinley Government. There is also a large element in the country which responds much more heartily to Mr. Bryan's pro-Boer pronouncement, than to the pro-British policy of the present administration at Washington. To the great majority of the people, too, the attitude of Bryan toward trusts and combines, is probably much more acceptable than is that of the ruling party. The least popular plank in the Democratic platform has been the currency plank, and while the attitude of the party on that subject has not changed, and Mr. Bryan still preaches the gospel of 16 to 1, free silver is probably much less of a bugbear now than it was four years ago, because there is a less general belief that the Bryan policy on the currency question would materialize in legislation in case the Democrats obtained the reins of government. There appears to be a good deal of dissatisfaction with Mr. McKinley and his administration on the subject of temperance, which dissatisfaction may be expected to find expression partly in a considerably increased vote for the prohibition candidate, and still more effectively in increasing the vote for Bryan. It seems undeniable that the Democratic candidate has developed a good deal of personal strength and influ-

ence. Four years ago Mr. Bryan was comparatively an unknown man. A talent for speech-making and a marvellous capacity for work he evidently had, but that he had the strength and consistency of character required to keep him to the front as the acknowledged leader of a great political party remained to be proved. But Mr. Bryan has demonstrated that he is one of the strongest personal forces which has appeared in recent years in the field of United States politics.

**China.** The diplomatic difficulties in which the Powers are involved in respect to the Chinese question have found no solution as yet, and little progress appears to have been made in that direction. Russia is understood to adhere to her policy of withdrawing the foreign troops from Peking, and is supported in this by France. Great Britain opposes such action until some guarantee is secured from China that the satisfactory compensation will be made for the wrongs inflicted on foreigners and for the protection of foreign interests in the future. Germany takes a similar position, and is supported by Austria and probably by Italy. The United States approves the same line of policy, but seems unwilling to act upon it unless it has the support also of Russia and France. To which line of policy Japan adheres seems uncertain. Another difficulty is the absence of any person or body of men with authority to represent China authoritatively in conference with the Powers. Li Hung Chang is being put forward, either by himself or by others, as such a person, but there appears to be no satisfactory assurance that he has any real authority to speak or act for the Chinese Government in the matter. When the international jealousies involved are considered, especially the mistrust of Russian promises and designs, and the difficulty of harmonious military operations on the part of the foreign powers in China, it is evident that the Chinese question constitutes at present a muddle of no small proportions.

**South Africa.** The annexation of the Transvaal as a part of the British possessions in South Africa, proclamation of which was made by Lord Roberts on September first, indicates the belief on the part of the British Government and the military leaders in South Africa that the war is practically over. One effect of the proclamation is to place the combatant Boers in the position of rebels to British authority. It will also deprive them of belligerent rights and probably prevent them receiving aid in the same measure as heretofore through Portuguese territory. But if the end of the war has been reached, it must be said that the Boers do not yet seem to be aware of the fact, for they still keep on fighting. They have a considerable force, with heavy artillery, in the Lydenburg country, where the natural features of the country give them a great advantage in resisting the British forces operating against them. Detached Boer forces in other parts of the country are able still to cause a good deal of annoyance. A post on the railway near Wonderfontein held by 125 of the Canadian Mounted Infantry, was attacked on Friday morning by a force of Boers, with two guns and one pom-pom. Lord Roberts sent a body of troops to their relief, but when the latter arrived they found that the Canadians had beaten off their assailants, a fact to which Lord Roberts refers as a very creditable performance. It is understood that, in the course of a few weeks, Lord Roberts will return to England, and that he will probably be appointed to the position of Commander-in-Chief of the British army, which Lord Wolseley is about to resign. It is supposed that General Buller will then become chief in command of the British forces in South Africa, where, without doubt, a considerable military force will be required for some time to come.