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South Africa. The South African sky, in a political sense, is by no means cloudless. Trouble in connection with the Transvaal is seriously threatened, and there are at least some who regard the conditions in that quarter of the globe as more ominous for the peace of the British Empire than are the European troubles which at present centre in Crete. Mr. Chamberlain, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, appears to be speaking in a changed tone in reference to South African affairs. His recent utterances are by no means conciliatory, and indicate a belief on his part that the republic over which President Kruger presides is a centre of forces hostile to British interests. Mr. Chamberlain evidently desires that the Emperor of Germany, as well as President Kruger and whoever else it may concern, shall understand definitely that British supremacy in South Africa is an essential feature of British policy, and that if "Oom Paul" and Kaiser William intend to dispute Great Britain's claims in this respect, they must be prepared to do so against the most conclusive arguments that the strength of the British Empire can furnish. At a farewell dinner given in London to Sir Alexander Milne, the newly appointed Governor of Cape Colony, at which a number of distinguished guests were present, including Mr. Balfour, Lord Rosebery, Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Asquith, Mr. Chamberlain made an address, in the course of which he said that, though the situation in South Africa was not free from danger, he believed the problem was not insoluble. The common interests of the two races in South Africa, he said, were immeasurably greater than any difference between them, the British were always willing to concede to their Dutch fellow-subjects all privileges of law they themselves enjoyed, and surely it might be hoped that the Transvaal would realize its duty and fulfil the obligations it had voluntarily assumed in the London Convention. But Mr. Chamberlain declared that the British nation was determined to uphold its rights under the convention and its dominance in South Africa. If, as had been suggested, certain eminent men in South Africa, aspiring to an independent federation of States in which Dutch influence would be dominant, were seeking the support of Continental Europe rather than of Great Britain, he viewed such a course as incompatible with British interests, even with the possession of Cape Colony, which was the most important strategic point of the Empire, and which was absolutely necessary to Great Britain as a great eastern power. Until such aspiration was frankly abandoned there could not be a final and satisfactory settlement of the question.

The Man From Rome. Mgr. Merry del Val, the papal ablegate to Canada, reached Montreal by way of New York on Tuesday, March 30. While he waited for a little at the Grand Trunk station before taking the train

to Quebec, he was taken in hand by the newspaper men, and the man from Rome seems to have made quite a grand impression upon the men of the quill. A Witness reporter describes the Monseigneur as a young man dressed in black, straight and tense, tall and thin and dark; his face keen and eager; his eyes large, black and lustrous; his eye-brows arched in exquisite lines, and his lifted hat showed a brow broad and thoughtful. And besides all this "a great calm sat on him." He was not discomposed by the strangeness of his surroundings—not in the least. Even the interviewers could not ruffle his tranquillity—"When he spoke it was in soft musical accents," and he "smiled upon the little group of clerics from the palace with rare sweetness."

"Mgr. Merry del Val is thoroughly matured by experience. He speaks with easy grace; his attitude is that of a man who has been accustomed to a complex society; his voice has the indefinable but unmistakable accent of culture; he speaks English as it is spoken by cultivated Englishmen."

Mgr. del Val was interrogated in reference to his reported utterance in London, respecting the passing of the bill by the Manitoba Legislature, endorsing the Laurier-Greenway settlement, and admitted that he had expressed regret at the action of the Legislature. When informed that "the school question is settled, and may now be said to be removed from the political arena," and that, with the Legislature and the vast majority of the people in favor of the terms of settlement agreed upon, no amendment could be adopted, the Monseigneur replied:

"Well, all I said, and all I thought, was, that the Manitoba Legislature might have waited my arrival, before proceeding to deal with the matter finally. Understand, that I express no opinion as to the question itself."

Being questioned as to the exact scope of his mission to the country, he said:

"My mission is one of peace. I come to bring peace, I hope. As to the character of my work, how I shall go about it, what sort of evidence shall be adduced, and what will be the outcome—it is too early to speak of these matters. I will see all parties; I will hear all sides; all will have easy access."

"Even the politicians may hope for a hearing?" said the reporter.

"Yes, even the politicians," was the laughing reply.

"How long, Monseigneur, will your labors last, and when do you expect to return to Rome?"

"Ah, that I could not tell you. I shall stay some time in Quebec. I shall come up again to Montreal; I shall go on to Ottawa; no doubt I shall be busy for some time."

"Have you heard, Monseigneur, that Archbishop Begin has been disciplined at Rome?"

The papal ablegate looked steadfastly at the interviewer. "I suppose this is a modern journalism." The black eyes sparkled with a relish of the notion conveyed by the sensational story.

"How do you propose to proceed with the evidence? In what way are the facts on both sides to be laid before you?" asked the newspaper man. But the man from Rome had no information to give on that point. Either his plans in that connection were not yet formed, or he did not choose to make them public.

The Plebiscite Bill. The Committee of Legislation of the Dominion Temperance Alliance held a meeting at Ottawa on March 30th, to which members of the House favorable to prohibition were invited, and some twenty-five members were present. Some discussion took place as to the advisability of introducing in the House this year a resolution declaring for prohibition. It seems to have been generally agreed that, under the circumstances, it was not advisable to introduce such a resolution at the present session. The time of taking the plebiscite was also discussed. The larger

number appeared to have favored taking the vote at as early a date as practicable, while others thought that a much larger vote would no doubt be polled if the plebiscite were taken in connection with a general election, and that the taking of the vote at another time might result in so small a vote being polled that the Government would not regard it as a sufficient indication of popular sentiment to justify the passing of prohibitory law, even though the majority might be large. It was generally agreed that those only who were qualified to vote in Dominion elections could properly vote on the plebiscite. A resolution was adopted appointing Senator Vidal and Messrs. Flint, Craig, Ganong and Charlton, M. P.'s, a committee to examine the Plebiscite Bill when introduced into Parliament, and to call the committee together again to consider the bill, if it should be found to contain any provisions making such consideration desirable.

Affairs in Europe. In European affairs the situation does not appear to have changed materially during the past week.

The Greek forces continued in Crete under the command of Colonel Vassor, and the fleets of the powers are still blockading the ports of the island. There continue to be hostile encounters between the combined Greek and Cretan forces and the Moslems, with some bloodshed and destruction of property. Occasionally the guns of the allied fleet are turned against the insurgents to save the Moslems from destruction, and some vessels carrying provisions to the Cretans have been captured. Up to the present, however, the powers have not, it seems, been able to agree to blockade the ports of Greece or to proceed to any more extreme measures of coercion. Meanwhile Greek and Turkish forces are gathered on their common frontier watching each others movements. Bulgaria is not at present disposed to unite her interests with Greece against Turkey, and, under the circumstances, the Greek government will not force a war with Turkey unless compelled to such a step by a popular clamor too strong to be resisted. It is considered probable, however, that if the powers shall blockade the ports of Greece popular excitement would rise to such a pitch that the government would be compelled to take that step. It is believed, in some quarters at least, that it is to this end that Russia is working. It is evident, however, that a great deal of speculation is mixed with the facts transmitted in the despatches, and the public has small means of learning the truth. Latest despatches received at time of writing state that the representatives of the powers at Constantinople have telegraphed their respective governments the outline of a scheme on which they have agreed for the autonomy of Crete, but the terms of their proposal have not yet been made public.

—A Professor Dussaud, of Geneva, is said to have invented an instrument which he calls the microphonograph, the purpose of which is to enable the deaf to hear. The apparatus is described as a telephone connected electrically with a very sensitive phonograph. A battery of from one cell to sixty is used according to the degree of deafness. It is not claimed that a person absolutely deaf can be made to hear by means of the microphonograph, but a condition of absolute deafness is comparatively rare. Ninety-five per cent of so-called stone-deaf persons can, it is said, be made to hear by Dussaud's invention. It is stated that the professor is preparing for the Exhibition of 1900 an apparatus which will enable 10,000 persons, who may all be deaf, to follow a lecture.