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Lord Rosebery on the Education Bill. There is no doubt, of course, that the Education Bill which has now passed the Commons will be endorsed by the House of Lords. The Lords may indeed not only be depended upon to support the Bill as it now stands but probably to offer some amendments by way of rendering the measure still more acceptable to the High Church party. However the Bill will not escape some vigorous criticism in the Lords. Lord Rosebery has already taken a hand in the debate and has vigorously denounced the principle of the measure. He demanded a two-thirds popular control for the schools and declared that the supporters of the voluntary schools reminded him of the Gibeonites who imposed upon Joshua and the children of Israel with their rags and mouldy bread. The Government scheme, he contended, was not a national scheme of education, it was nothing but an ecclesiastical substitute.

The Cold Snap. In view of the condition of the coal market the unusually mild weather which had generally prevailed in this part of the country up to the first week of December was highly appreciated. But with the beginning of the second week there came a sudden and remarkable change in the atmosphere. On Monday night of last week, the mercury descended far below zero, with the fiercest kind of a northwest gale blowing, and Tuesday was one of the coldest and roughest days we have had for years. The mercury marked 14 below zero at the St. John Observatory at an early hour Tuesday morning, and thermometers in other parts of the city gave still lower readings. The cold wave appears to have been quite general throughout the Maritime Provinces and the temperature as reported from many other places was lower than in St. John. According to a tabulated statement published by the *Globe*, that of Tuesday was the coldest December weather experienced here for sixteen years, and indeed there appears to be no record of so low a temperature so early in the month. During most of the week the mercury has remained in the neighborhood of zero. Such weather makes heavy demands on the coal-bins, plays havoc with the water pipes and involves much discomfort and suffering for those whose means of defence from the cold are but slender.

Dominion Parliament. It is stated in an Ottawa despatch that Parliament will probably meet on February 19. Some legislation of an important character is expected, chief of which probably will be the Redistribution Bill. Some changes in the boundaries of constituencies become necessary as a result of the census. But it is expected that the measure which the Government will bring in will do more than effect the adjustments made necessary by that cause. The party now in power contend that the boundaries of many constituencies in Ontario were arranged in the interests of the Conservatives when that party was in power, and it is expected that the Redistribution Bill will be drawn in accordance with that view of the matter. With such a matter to settle the session is not likely to be noted for either placidity or brevity. The Bill introduced last session providing for consolidating of the Railway Acts and the appointment of a Railway Commission, will be re-introduced, it is said, and probably also the Act providing for the compulsory arbitration of disputes between Railway Companies and their employees. There are also rumors of tariff changes, but nothing definite is foreshadowed on that point. Sir Wilfrid Laurier is reported to have derived much benefit from his visit to Hot Springs, Va., and there is a report that he is to be home before Christmas.

The Canadian Northern. Mr. D. D. Mann, Vice-President of the Canadian Northern Railroad, is reported in a Winnipeg despatch as saying that his company had no intention of selling out or amalgamating with the Grand Trunk. This is a contradiction of a report which had obtained considerable credence. Mr. Mann further says that his company intends to extend its main line to Edmonton as rapidly as possible, and is taking out large quantities of ties for construction purposes. He expects the main line to reach Edmonton by August, 1903, by way of the Grand View extension and also by Prince Albert, the two lines meeting at a common point about half way between Edmonton and Winnipeg. The rapidity of construction however will depend upon the amount of aid secured from the Dominion Government during the coming session. Mr. Mann thinks that the fact that the Grand Trunk is going to extend its system into the Northwest goes to show that the promoters of the Canadian Northern were far-sighted in the work they have undertaken. It is of course to be taken for granted that neither the Grand Trunk nor the Canadian Northern nor any other company which may be projecting a trans-continental line will neglect to secure any Government subsidy which may be available, but it seems more than probable that, without any Government subsidy, one such line at least would be constructed in the near future, and in that case the people may well feel inclined to ask whether there is any sufficient reason why demands should be made on the public treasury for this purpose.

A Great Work. The opening—if "opening" is the proper word—of the Assouan Dam on the Upper Nile by the Duke of Connaught, on December 8, is a notable event, as marking the completion of a great and expensive work which is expected to increase in almost incalculable measure the agricultural resources of Egypt. The Assouan dam and the Assiout barrage have cost, it is said, from £20,000,000 to £25,000,000. They will stand as monuments of British engineering skill and progressive policy, they will vastly enlarge the area of Egypt's productive territory, and, by making it possible to store the water of the Nile and use it when it is most needed, will diminish the uncertainties of the harvests. The annual flood, with its fertilizing silt, has for the present year already passed, and the sluices of the Assouan dam are now closed for the storage of the water until the first of March. The sluices will then be opened gradually, and for four months there will be a steady flow of water for irrigating purposes. The scarcity of water caused by a low Nile will thus be avoided and a great increase in the agricultural resources and products of Egypt will doubtless result. The "barrage" is at Assiout, a long way down the Nile from Assouan. It will make possible the distribution of the water, received from the reservoir, over a wide area. Whatever jealous nations may say of Britain's lust for territory, it must be admitted that her administration of public affairs in the countries she has occupied has not been for her own advantage merely, but for the advantage of the subject peoples. Nowhere probably has this fact been better illustrated than in Egypt.

The Sentence Com-muted. The decision reached by the Department of Justice to commute the sentence in the Higgins case to imprisonment for life probably meets with pretty general approbation. If the story of the boy, Goodspeed, is accepted as true—and evidently it was so accepted by the jury upon whom rested the responsibility of pronouncing upon the guilt or innocence of Higgins—the crime was particularly

heinous, and could not in itself call for the exercise of clemency. But the youth of the condemned, the unfortunate conditions of his upbringing, the circumstantial character of the evidence apart from that given by Goodspeed, and the element of doubt in regard to the truth of the latter's story might all be fairly taken into consideration in determining the question of commutation. Then there is the opposition of many to the principle of capital punishment and the general disinclination to have the brightness of the Christmas season overshadowed by an execution. This last consideration one can appreciate, but hardly as a reason why a capital sentence otherwise justifiable should be commuted. The idea advanced in some quarters that capital punishment is not a greater deterrent from crime than life imprisonment, is in our view, fallacious. A great deal of course depends upon the promptness and the certainty of the administration of justice, and life imprisonment where it is a certainty may doubtless do more to discourage crime than capital punishment if there is great uncertainty about its being inflicted. But we believe there is nothing that will so effectually discourage a murderous purpose in a vicious mind as the certainty that the hand of justice will be prompt and firm, and that if convicted the murderer will go to the gallows. And yet one would hope that the time may come, if it has not already come, when it will be both safe and wise and merciful to do away with capital punishment, at least in the case of those who have not reached adult age. As things are now one hardly knows whether it is really mercy to send a youth to the penitentiary for life in comparison with sending him to the gallows. Are the probabilities in favor of his going out of the world after say fifty years of prison life, a better man than if he went now? And yet is it too much to believe that with all the light and power of Christianity and all the moral and intellectual forces of our advanced civilization, it is possible to bring to bear upon the vicious and criminal youth of our time such reformatory influences as shall not only save them from perdition hereafter, but even fit them for useful citizenship in the present life?

Venezuela Called to Account. Great Britain and Germany are calling Venezuela sharply to account for the failure of the latter to meet its financial responsibilities. If, as is probable, the Venezuelan Government has been trusting in the disposition of the United States to oppose any interference by European nations in South African affairs, it has discovered that President Roosevelt does not interpret the duty of his Government toward American republics as involving any dispensation to encourage them in a failure to pay their just debts. Britain and Germany have united in an ultimatum to Venezuela which will be followed by a seizure of its customs unless a satisfactory settlement is made within a comparatively brief period. The programme of Great Britain and Germany is understood to include also a blockade of Venezuelan ports. On Saturday British and German warships bombarded and silenced the Venezuelan fortress of Puerto Cabello. This action resulted from the seizure by a Venezuelan mob of the British merchant ship *Topaze*. The captain made known the seizure to the commander of the British Cruiser *Charybdis*, who took charge of the *Topaze* and sent a message to the authorities at Puerto Cabello demanding satisfaction for the action of the mob within two hours, or the fortress and customs house would be bombarded. It is said that a reply came from President Castro authorizing the chief official at Puerto Cabello to give the British commander full satisfaction, but that it did not arrive in time, and the bombardment accordingly took place, with the result that the Venezuelan guns were silenced and the fort pretty well demolished. If the facts are as stated in the dispatches, the commander of the *Charybdis* would seem to have acted with unnecessary haste. The occurrence appears to be an unfortunate one, as it may tend to create sympathy with Venezuela and lead to complications. A number of Venezuelan vessels have been seized by the British and German ships, and one vessel is reported to have been sunk. British and German residents at Caracas were imprisoned by the Venezuelan authorities, but were liberated through the intervention of United States consul Bowen.