

Messenger and Visitor.

THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER,
VOLUME LXII.

{ THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR,
VOLUME LI.

Vol. XVI.

ST. JOHN, N. B., WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1900.

No. 6.

Opening of the Imperial Parliament.

The session of the Imperial Parliament which opened on Tuesday last is the seventh of the fourteenth Parliament of the present reign. There was a large attendance of the members of the House of Commons. The speech from the Throne, which was read by the Lord High Chancellor, Earl Halsbury, opened with a reference to the war in South Africa. It praises the devotion and enthusiasm with which the people have responded to the call of the Queen, the heroism of the soldiers and marines, which "has not fallen short of the noblest traditions of our military history." While expressing sorrow at the sacrifice of so many brave lives, the speech expresses pride in the eagerness and spontaneous loyalty with which the Queen's subjects in all parts of her dominions have come forward to share in the common defence of their imperial interests and expresses the confidence that their efforts will be sustained and renewed "until they have brought this struggle for the maintenance of the empire and the assertion of its supremacy in South Africa to a victorious conclusion." The speech declares that, apart from the war in South Africa, the Queen's relations with other powers are friendly. There is also reference to the treaty concluded with the German Emperor in reference to Samoa. The colonies occupy a prominent place in the speech. There is reference to a bill to give effect to the scheme of federation adopted by the Australian colonies. "I have watched with cordial satisfaction," the speech proceeds, "the gradual development of my greater colonies in self-governing communities. I feel confident that the establishment of the great federation of Australia will prove advantageous not only to the colonies immediately concerned, but also the Empire at large." Mention is made of "the brilliant courage and soldierly qualities" of the Colonial forces engaged in South Africa and the patriotic offers of assistance which have come from many other colonies with populations of various races. "I have received from the ruling chiefs of native states of India numerous offers to place their troops and the resources of their states at my disposal for services in South Africa. These proofs of their loyalty to myself and their devotion to the cause of my empire have afforded me much gratification." There is reference to the famine prevailing in Western and Central India, for the relief of which timely measures have been taken by the British Government and the rulers of the native states. The speech foreshadows a call for large military expenditure, both on account of the present war and in order to strengthen the naval and coast defences of the country, in view of the responsibilities of the Empire and the increasing expenditure of other nations for military purposes.

Since the opening of Parliament Lord Rosebery, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and other leaders in the ranks of the Opposition have turned the fire of their criticism upon the Government, and while some of their censure is probably well deserved, it is at least doubtful whether it has had much effect to discredit the administration in the eyes of the nation. An amendment, supported by the Liberals in the House of Commons, to the address in reply to the speech from the throne, expresses "regret at the want of foresight and judgment displayed by Her Majesty's advisers as shown alike in their conduct of African affairs since 1895, and in their preparation for the war now proceeding." No doubt the British people will wish to have careful inquiry made into the Government's South African policy when the proper time for enquiry comes. But at present they are more anxious to see the war brought to a successful conclusion than to pass resolutions that may give aid and comfort to the enemies of the nation. In the sitting of Parliament there is at least this advantage for the Government, that it is able, through its ministers, to reply

effectively to some of the criticism to which it is subjected. The speech of Mr. Wyndham in the House of Commons, in which he defended the Government in reference to its conduct of the war, shows that the British regulars now in South Africa, with those on the way, number 180,000, and the Colonial troops bring up the number to 213,000. The fact that the mobilization of so great a force and its transportation over so great a distance, with immense quantities of arms, ammunition and supplies, has been successfully accomplished in so short a time, is generally felt to be a strong defence for the war department against the charges of neglect and inefficiency.

Opening of the Dominion Parliament

The fifth session of Canada's eighth Parliament was opened at 3 o'clock on Thursday p. m., Feb. 1st, by His Excellency, the Governor General, with the usual imposing ceremonies. The speech from the Throne opens by congratulating Parliament on the continued prosperity of the country and the remarkable increase in the general volume of trade and revenue. It then proceeds to the war in South Africa and alludes to the sending of two Canadian contingents of Canadian volunteers to the seat of war as a practical demonstration of the Dominion's devotion to the sovereign institutions of the British Empire. Reference is also made to the force being organized and sent at the personal expense of Lord Strathcona, as a matter of pride and gratification to the people of the Dominion. In this connection it is stated that a Bill will be submitted to Parliament making provision for the cost of equipment and placing of the Canadian contingents. The speech proceeds to make reference to the large increase in exportation of several important articles of produce, and intimates the need of providing for a more careful inspection of such exports in order to insure that high excellence in the quality of articles exported, which is essential to the interests of a large and profitable trade with other countries. In reference to the Post Office department, it is stated that the returns afford good grounds for believing that the temporary loss of revenue caused by the great reduction recently made in letter postage will speedily be made good by the resulting increase in correspondence. There is reference to the prospect of increasing trade with the British West Indies and (possibly) with parts of South America, also to regulations to be adopted securing sanitary protection and medical care to working men, and to the establishment of Boards of conciliation, with the object of settling disputes which occasionally arise between workmen and their employers. Success has attended the efforts to promote immigration in the Northwest and the number of new settlers for the past year is greater than that for any preceding year. Reference is also made to a Railway Commission, in connection with which the Government has collected much information which will be submitted to Parliament. The Government announces the completion of the Canal system of the country, connecting the great lakes with the Atlantic seaboard and permitting vessels of 14 feet draught to pass from the head of Lake Superior to the sea. Measures are to be introduced to renew and amend the existing banking laws, to regulate the rate of interest payable upon judgments recovered in courts of law, to provide for the taking of the next decennial census, for the better arrangement of the electorate districts, to amend the criminal code, and laws relating to other important subjects.

Strathcona's Contingent.

The body of mounted troops which Lord Strathcona, Canadian High Commissioner at London, is having organized in this country and sent to South Africa at his own personal expense, is expected to be ready to embark about the 20th of the month. It will comprise three squadrons recruited in Manitoba, the Northwest and British Columbia, and will be made up of 25 officers, 36 non-commissioned officers, and 470 men, or 531 of all ranks.

There will be 536 horses, and five per cent. added for possible casualties, or 560 in all. To the foregoing will be added three machine guns and the requisite complement of wagons. The majority of the men, it is said, will be irregular scouts, rough riders, and the rest will be chosen from among this class of men in the West. The three Maxims which are to be taken with the Strathcona corps will be of the Colts type, made in the United States, and spoken of by Captain "Gat" Howard as the galloping gun. They are the same as supplied to the Canadian Mounted Rifles, and will be much lighter and more easily handled than the regular Maxim gun.

The War.

During the past week many reports and rumors of a more or less probable character have come from South Africa, but very little that has been published has the authority of the War Office, and the situation is therefore one that affords greater room for conjecture than for the reporting of facts. So far as the country north of the Modder river is concerned, there seems to be little change in the situation. The report that Mafeking was relieved January 23, turns out to be premature, but the latest news from that bravely defended garrison shows that it was more than holding its own. Kimberly holds out, though subject to a heavier bombardment. Lord Methuen remains upon the defensive, but it is reported that a position has been taken up by British troops on the Modder river some distance west of Magersfontein. In the central part of northern Cape Colony, Generals Kelly-Kenny French and Gatacre are operating, and it is believed that plans are being matured under the direction of General Roberts for an advance into the Orange Free State, from which important results may be expected; but these plans, whatever they are, are prudently kept secret. In reference to the situation at Natal it appears to be the design of the censorship to let just enough news through to mystify the public as to what is taking place there. The statement of General Buller, made to his soldiers about a week ago, to the effect that the key to the road to Ladysmith had been gained and that he expected to be there within a week, has created surprise and caused the more sanguine to expect some bold movement on the part of the British General. A despatch dated Sunday evening from Durban to the Central News agency states that General Buller had crossed the Tugela and was marching on to Ladysmith. This despatch intimates that the crossing is supposed to have been effected at a point above Trichardt's Drift. There is no official confirmation of this report, and, as it seems to conflict with other despatches which represent Buller as still at Spearman's Camp on Sunday, it receives little credence. It does not seem probable that General Buller has withdrawn the forces with which he is more immediately connected, consisting mainly of General Lyttleton's brigade, from the north side of the Tugela near Potgieter's Drift, but it is possible that General Warren's brigade, reinforced by fresh arrivals, has re-crossed the Tugela at a point considerably farther to the west, and that a turning movement of the Boer position is again being attempted, and, it may be, with better prospect of success. This supposition is supported by despatches from Ladysmith, which report heavy firing by the British artillery on Friday and Saturday, and also say, "A report has reached us that one brigade has crossed the Tugela." It is also stated that the health of the garrison was improving and that the enemy had caused little annoyance. With the information at hand at present writing, it is impossible to do more than to guess whether General Buller is now operating with a direct purpose to relieve Ladysmith, or whether he is simply keeping the Boers in a state of keen apprehension, in order that General Roberts may be able, with the forces being organized under Generals Kelly-Kenny, French and Gatacre, to make an effective movement northward into the Orange Free State.