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Note and Comment.

There is a famine in the Province of Shensi, China, and it is said that 3,000,000 people are facing starvation.

It is reported that the members of Sherbourne street Methodist church, Toronto, have contributed \$108,300 toward the Century Fund.

There is, perhaps, no Royal Family in the world the members of which are so charitable, so genuine and discriminating in their charity as the members of the Royal Family of Britain.

An attempt to establish a Chinese laundry in London has failed, and an application has had to be made to a magistrate on behalf of forty of the celestial "washermen" who were left destitute.

Mr. Edward Carswell, the veteran temperance lecturer and author, who has been lying seriously ill with inflammation for the past four or five weeks at his home in Oshawa, is rapidly recovering.

The Gothenburg Public-house Company in Stockholm has closed its financial year with a surplus of £111,000. Eighty per cent of this sum will be handed over for the relief of local taxation.

The death is announced of the Rev. James Fleming, of St. John's United Free Church, Whitthorn, Wigtownshire, in his 85th year, and 50th of his ministry. He was Moderator of the U.P. Assembly in 1890.

Another good funeral example is set in the obsequies of the late P. D. Armour. There was no funeral sermon. Dr. Gonsaulus simply read a bible selection. Singing by the choir followed. The audience then united in the Lord's Prayer.

Not only is education free in New Zealand, but, where necessary, children are conveyed to and from school gratuitously on the Government Railways. At sixty-five every man and woman who needs it, white or native, receives an old age pension.

In a practical scheme for the lessening of the drink evils the members of the Presbytery of Moryborough, Victoria, maintain that "it is incumbent on all ministers and other church office-bearers that they should take the first step and be total abstainers."

Rev. Dr. Moore, Ottawa, has received word from his son, Lieut. William Moore, of the Royal Artillery, that he will be stationed at St. Elmo, Malta, until further orders. Lieut. Moore spent the summer at Shrewsbury and in November visited his friends in Scotland.

It is announced that by the dredging of the Mersey river (commenced nine years ago) 60,000,000 tons of sand—equal to 12 Egyptian pyramids—have been removed. This has given Liverpool a pre-eminence in the facility for large vessels exceeded only by few ports in the world.

It is stated that Mr. Hugh Guthrie, M. P., for South Wellington, Ont., will move the adoption of the address at the coming session of Parliament. Mr. Guthrie is a son of Mr. D. Guthrie, O. C. Guelph; and a nephew of Rev. Principal MacVicar, of the Montreal Presbyterian College.

Henrik Ibsen has been living for half a year in great seclusion in Sandjord, Norway, preparing the material for a new work. Asked if he intended to remain in Norway he said, "Yes, in all probability. My correspondence is so extensive that this alone would make it inconvenient to change my address."

The Australian Federal Ministry has been completed, with Mr. Barton as Prime Minister, Mr. Deakin, Minister of Justice; Sir W. J. Lyne, Minister for Home Affairs; Sir J. Turner, Treasurer; Mr. Kingston, Minister for Trade and Customs; Mr. Dickson, Minister for Defence; and Sir John Forrest, Postmaster-General.

The Dominion revenue for last year was \$51,029,994, of which \$28,376,147 came from Customs and \$9,868,073 from Excise, the remainder being collected from public works and railways, post-offices, etc. The expenditure was \$42,975,279, and the surplus of \$8,054,719 is the largest on record since Confederation.

The Winnipeg Free Press comes out with some strong letters alleging infamous treatment of insane patients at Brandon; which, if true, would prove very serious for the officials of the asylum. Superintendent McFadden denies the charges and threatens the papers with a libel suit, but the Free Press won't back down and wants an investigation.

In the British Colonies and on the Continent of Europe there are now 1,184 Congregational churches and mission stations including 143 in Canada, 285 in Australasia, and 288 in South Africa. There are 473 ministers in the colonies and on the Continent of Europe, and 273 missionaries in connection with the London Missionary Society, in addition to 890 native ordained ministers.

Recent cablegrams purporting to give the British Government's intentions regarding reinforcements in South Africa have been somewhat conflicting. It now appears that the Government has no intention of abandoning the Baden-Powell Police Force, but in addition thereto is to send out to the Cape five thousand men to strengthen the Imperial Yeomanry, which has been seriously weakened. Horses, too, are now being sent to South Africa at the rate of eight thousand a month.

Writing of the New York Stock Exchange last week, Henry Clews & Co., say: "Money is easy; good investments are scarce; the speculative fever is not abating, and big deals and rumors of such are in the air, so that stocks are firmly held and the large manipulators apparently have little difficulty in raising the market at will. Present conditions are so unusual that ordinary judgment cannot be applied. A wave of optimism is sweeping the whole country, and this has an effect upon values which is real but cannot be measured. We counsel a policy of prudence."

Again, says the Montreal Witness, we have our jail full of Chinamen who are there because they cannot pay a tax which the noble city of Montreal has laid upon them just because they are Chinamen. If Canadians in China were required to pay special taxes, which they could not pay, and failing payment, were sent to jail the world would ring with our indignation and so long as a single one of us was in jail we would be vociferous in our demands for ships to threaten the Chinese ports. The slightest delay, if there was any, would make us all, loyal as we are, angry with Great Britain.

The service in the City Temple, London, on Christmas day was conducted by Dr. Parker. The peroration of the sermon took the form of an anecdote of personal interest. On a Sunday morning, when his wife was in Scotland, she went to the piano. She never knew what fear was, either as girl or woman. Great, magnanimous, generous, she went to the piano and played a hymn tune—on a Sunday. Her mother came in and said: "Emma, shut up the piano; what will the neighbors say? Then the doctor was good enough to add that the condition of things which that statement implied was dying out, even in Scotland.

In the face of the hostility of the trades and labor council, the Toronto public school board, without a dissenting voice, agreed to the introduction of manual training into the public schools under the terms of Sir William MacDonald's trust. Prof. Robertson, who has charge of the expenditure of the monies provided by Sir William attended a special meeting of the board and said he would like to have two classes in wood-work in operation at an early date, as he wished the members of the Ontario legislature to see the system in actual operation soon after the house meets. The principal and two assistants will be provided free of charge to the board.

The Duke and Duchess of York, during their trip to Australia will pay a visit to the capital of every Australian Colony. At New Zealand the royal party will call at both Auckland and Wellington. On the outward journey the squadron will stop at several ports, including Colombo and Singapore. The Ophir, in which the Duke and Duchess will travel, is under orders to be in readiness by March 1st. The actual date of her departure is, however, not yet fixed. During the trip the steamer will be known as H.M.S. Ophir, and, except for her engine complement, will be manned from the Royal Navy. The escort, consisting of the St. George and Juno, will be under the command of Commodore Winslow. Commander Godfrey Fausset will be the Duke's naval aide-de-camp. The royal suite will probably consist of four ladies and ten or twelve gentlemen. To provide music during the tour there will be embarked on the Ophir the band of the Chatham Division of the Royal Marines. For the use of the Duke and Duchess on arrival one of the Queen's semi-State carriages will be taken to Australia.

The London Spectator makes the following encouraging statement: "The French shore question in Newfoundland, in other words, the interpretation of the rights of the French fishermen for whom a separate reserve was created on the coast of Newfoundland by the various treaties and agreements beginning with that of Utrecht, is being discussed on both sides with a moderation that augurs well for the satisfactory conclusion of one of the outlying points of dispute between France and England. The Temps, The Figaro, and the Debats, while maintaining that the French rights are incontestable and uncontested, are unanimous in expressing their opinion that an understanding is necessary, and that France is ready to accept any reasonable compensation for the material value of her rights and the moral value of so friendly a concession. The Figaro points out that if England desires change it is for her to make an offer, and suggests the cession of British Gambia as a fair quid pro quo. The English press, on the other hand, seems disposed to allow a respectful hearing to the French case. When newspaper diplomatists are so moderate, governments are not likely to fall out."

A religious service was held in the Town Hall, Inverness, under Corporation auspices, to welcome in the new century. It was conducted by Rev. Dr. Norman Macleod, who in concluding a short address, said in Scotland the closing century had been marked by one most important union of Churches, and they wished it God-speed. In many hearts there was strong yearning and desire for what was called a larger union of the Scottish Churches. Whether that was practicable meantime in the sense of incorporation, or even of federation, was a point on which he did not wish to express any opinion, but he was very sure of one thing—that if all sections of the Churches represented in their country were to resolve to begin the century with an honest determination to follow the old maxim of live and let live, not assailing each others position, thinking less of ecclesiasticism and more of religion, joining hand in hand and heart to heart for the doing of the real work for which the Church of God existed, he saw no reason, for his own part why there should not be in the near future such co-operation, brotherly love, and sympathy, as would amount to a practical union, such as they had not seen in Scotland for many a day. May God grant it.