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NOTES OF THE MONTH.

THE condition of affairs in South Africa concerns us more nearly than it would have done a year or two ago. The recent strong tide of emigration toward that distant colony has carried many from other British dependencies; and there are few among us who, by reason of relative or friend, have not a personal interest in the outcome of the present disturbance.

To those who have watched the trend of events, the existing crisis is not a surprise. Hon. J. H. Hafmeyr, one of the delegates from Cape Colony to the Ottawa Colonial Conference of 1894, a clever politician, and one possessing strong influence among the Dutch, in the course of private conversations at that time, foreshadowed the present difficulties, and spoke gravely of the many existing irritants and the unconciliatory attitude of the Boers and English residents toward each other.

The former required but a pretext to take issue with Britain, and that has been afforded by the Matabele rising. To deal with these savages were comparatively easy, if the South African Republic remained neutral; it is the uncertain attitude of the Boers which complicates the question.

And these Boers know how to fight, with the skill of civilisation and the cruelty of barbarism combined.

Thus far, the Governor of Cape Colony seems equal to the emergency. Sir Hercules Robinson appears to have acted with discretion, yet with all needful promptness and determination.

He is a fine-looking man, if his portraits bespeak him true; brainy, of keen perceptions, strong will and good judgment.

England has certainly had no time to grow drowsy since the opening of the year. Whatever of neglect has been hers concerning Armenia, she shall surely repay at some point of her own vast empire, and it looks as though the payment may be demanded speedily. Blood for blood: the cry of the helpless unheeded—the answering avenger of God. It is the divine law that governs the nations—a law that is immutable and above all the craft of statesmanship.

UNDER the circumstances, and with the present activity in the War Department, it is well that the British Treasury is in such a splendid repletion, and that we—speaking as an empire—have at command the largest surplus ever known. If we must go to war, especially in such far-off and expensive places as South Africa and the Soudan, it is comfortable to feel that there is a surplus of over £4,000,000 in the Treasury.

England's enormous estimate for the fiscal

year, of nearly £98,000,000, is outreached only by her magnificent revenue of nearly £102,000,000.

The sums are too vast to realise. The wonder is that the little isle 'ringed with grey seas' does not sink beneath the weight of it.

A curious detail in the estimates is that the increased revenue from tea implies an added consumption of ten million pounds of that commodity. The English are becoming a nation of tea drinkers, while coffee is being driven out of the market.

To CURE disease by 'radiant ethereal energy' is the latest possibility revealed by these wonderful X rays. Whatever the phrase may mean, it conjures up a pleasanter vision than that of medicine bottles and pills.

Apparently 'radiant energy' is the essence of sunlight, or sunshine concentrated in these mysterious Roentgen rays.

The latest phrase of the discovery is that of questioning the ability of these rays to sterilise or kill bacilli. Many experiments have been made in this direction, but no sure conclusion has yet been reached.

If, in addition to penetrating solids, it should be proved that they have sterilising effect upon all deadly germs, the present generation may begin to search the exact number of years of the patriarchal Methuselahs.

VERILY, the suffering Armenians—the small remnant that remain—should be content.

We listened with stolid, if not indifferent, ear to the cries that rang over the water from their poor tortured bodies during the fair months of summer and autumn; we gave them complacent regrets in those bitter days of early winter, when starvation and anguish unutterable were theirs; we sat in our comfortable churches and sang our godly hymns, while the moans of their dying agonies rose skyward; our pulpits were dumb; our press uttered but faint protest. We, a mighty people—a civilised, a Christian people, whose roused voice could compel governments to instant action, sat singing hymns, while the carnival of murder, the most outrageous murder that the century has known, continued.

Then, when moans died away; when ten thousand tortured bodies lay rigid, and eyes stared blindly upward to the divine blue, we bethought of our pennies, and lulled our conscience with the tinkle of the collection plate; presently, being yet a trifle uncomfortable, we organised a Week of Prayer.

Pennies and prayer, even if twelve months late, should surely be sufficient response to the heartrending appeals, and compensate for the unnamable tortures of a helpless people.

Pray! with the thought of those outreaching hands ungrasped; those wild appeals

unanswered? Pray! with the vision of mutilated bodies in awful heaps before our eyes? Pray! with the knowledge of our criminal inaction upon us? How dare we thus mock the Deity?

PROFESSOR GOLDWIN SMITH's fiat concerning Mr. Chamberlain's idea of forming a Zollverein of the British colonies is not complimentary to the colonies themselves.

"It can never and will never be done. Mr. Chamberlain desires merely to flatter the colonies with the idea of Imperial Federation," he says.

The clever professor is not a wet blanket. In fact, he acts rather as a stimulus; since whenever he cries 'can not' and 'will not,' we are immediately moved to respond 'can' and 'will.' The desire for Imperial Federation in some form has grown stronger every month since the inception of the scheme.

There is no question of its acceptance by the colonies at large. The desire for it, the impulse toward it, the sentiment from which it has sprung, are all too genuine and deep-rooted to be discouraged by one who—whatever else he may be—is certainly not an Imperialist.

There is one advantage in having the learned professor to voice his pessimistic ideas: we know at once what we do not believe.

THE Pacific Cable Conference, which takes place in London early in May, will be an epoch in the history of this important project, which was the chief matter of consideration at the Ottawa Colonial Conference.

The history of this scheme since its inception by Mr. Sandford Fleming in 1887, as told in the correspondence published in the blue book report of the Ottawa conference by the Earl of Jersey, forms a most interesting chapter in official records.

The growth of favourable opinion regarding it, both in the Australian colonies and England, indicated by their largely expressed willingness to share in the cost and maintenance of the cable; the steady persistence of the originator, Mr. Fleming, supported by the Canadian Government; the interest expressed through their delegates by Good Hope and other British colonies; the unanimity of opinion and favourable resolutions adopted by the Ottawa conference,—have led by sure successive steps toward this immediate and possibly final conference in London.

Consummation of the project may be looked upon as assured. It is the first and elementary factor in imperial federation; the chief strand in the cord of many strands that, flexible yet enduring, shall bind the British Empire into a living unity.

And to Canada will be first honours when achievement comes.