

Messenger and Visitor.

THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER,
VOLUME LX.

THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR,
VOLUME XLIX.

Vol. XIII.

ST. JOHN, N. B., WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1897.

No. 5.

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Palmer's Pond.

A very serious railway disaster, resulting in much destruction of property and some loss of life, occurred on Tuesday of last week, at Palmer's Pond near Dorchester, in connection with the fast express from Halifax. The curves and grades which occur at that point have long been regarded by some as constituting an element of danger, but, so far as we are aware, this is the first instance of an accident at the place. On Tuesday the train was running at about 35 miles an hour, it is stated, a rate of speed not greater than was customary. It does not appear that there was any breakage or defect in the track or the engine to cause the accident. But in rounding the curve the baggage car left the rails, and, followed by the five other cars which composed the train, ran several hundred feet and down a high embankment on to the ice of the pond, before they stopped. All the cars were turned over, some of them more than once, in their descent. There were of course quite a large number of passengers, and it is certainly marvellous that most of them escaped with comparatively slight injuries. It is sad to relate that two persons, Mr. A. C. Edgcombe, of the postal department, who was a resident of St. John, and Miss Patriquin of Bloomfield, N. B., were killed. Many were more or less seriously injured, among them Hon. Dr. Borden, Minister of Militia, who was seriously, though not dangerously hurt. Considering all the circumstances, the public must experience a sense of thankfulness that the disaster was not attended by much greater loss of life. If it had occurred at a time when the ice was not thick upon the pond, a large number must have been drowned. As to the immediate cause of the accident, the theory that it was due to the weight of several tons of cents in one end of the baggage car, appears quite probable. It seems evident too that, whether this was the cause or not, the interests of the travelling public require that if practicable, the road shall be straightened.

The Dutcher Murder.

The trial at Dorchester of John Sullivan for the murder of Mrs. Dutcher and her young son at Meadow Brook in September last, was concluded on Wednesday of last week, and resulted in the accused being found guilty by the jury, and his being sentenced by Judge Hamington to be hanged on Friday, the twelfth of March proximo. By those who have followed the progress of the trial, as reported in the daily papers, this result, we suppose, would be very generally anticipated. Sullivan had the benefit of a fair and thorough trial, and of able counsel. But it was evident that the attempt on the part of the defence to prove an alibi, had quite broken down, owing to the untrustworthy character of the witnesses put forward, whose evidence in some important particulars was shown to be untrue. On the other hand there was the direct testimony of Maggie Dutcher, and strong circumstantial evidence against the accused. The evidence against Sullivan, which to many, we should suppose, would seem

most conclusive as to his guilt—that is evidence as to the utterances of Maggie Dutcher in delirium—the judge had decided not to admit. There was of course the possibility that, as the counsel for the defence contended was most probable, the child had been coached as to what she should say on the witness stand. But this could not be said respecting her utterances while in delirium, and if it could be shown, as had been stated at the coroner's inquest, that the child, while lying in a delirious condition after having been rescued from the burning house, uttered such words as "Go away, John Sullivan," "Don't hit me, John Sullivan," &c., it could not but have had great weight with the jury, and probably as a matter of fact did have great weight in determining their verdict. The diabolical nature of the crime and the apparently hardened character of the murderer plead against any mitigation of the full penalty of the law. At the same time it will be well for thoughtful men and women to consider how far society in general may be responsible for a condition of things in this country, which makes such a character as that of John E. Sullivan possible. Is there not a large class of persons—some of whom are now perhaps loudest in their denunciation of the murderer—who are, nevertheless, helping to perpetuate conditions out of which such crimes are born? If there had been no liquor traffic in the land—and Westmorland county has a law prohibiting it—there would have been no Meadow Brook tragedy.

The Powers and the Turk.

The London correspondent of a New York paper, in a cable letter of recent date, announces that the great Turkish secret is out at last, and intimates that the representatives at Constantinople of the European Powers have united in a demand upon the Turkish Government for reforms, which demand will, if necessary, be backed by coercion. This does not appear to add greatly to our information on the subject, since we are not told what the reforms demanded are, or in what way the powers will proceed to administer the policy of coercion, supposing that the Sultan will not or cannot bring the reforms to pass. However the present situation is considered to be a triumph of diplomacy for Lord Salisbury, since, in some way which as yet is a matter of conjecture, Russia was induced to agree to a policy of coercion. On November 18th, M. Shishkin, the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople, refused to agree to a policy of coercion, fearing that the fanaticism of whole the Mohammedan world would be aroused, yet a week later he assented to Lord Salisbury's proposals, and a policy of reform, including coercion if necessary was adopted. It is conjectured that the personal influence of the Czar had much to do in determining the result. Russia having come to the support of Great Britain in promoting an effective policy, there was nothing for the other Powers to do but to fall into line, and France appears to have done so without any stipulation as to England's withdrawal from Egypt. Now that the Powers have agreed to do something, the question of chief interest is, what will be done with the Sultan and his empire. It would appear from some recent utterance of Lord Salisbury that it is not his opinion that the Sultan will long continue in the position of an independent ruler.

The Famine Fund.

Steps have now been taken to provide adequate relief agencies throughout Canada, in aid of the famine sufferers of India. Something has been done in the way of receiving and forwarding funds by

missionary boards, newspapers, such as the Witness and the Star, of Montreal, and other local or private agencies. Now the Government has also taken the matter in hand. The Governor General has communicated with the Lieut. Governors of the several provinces, and the banks throughout the country, it is said, have promptly responded to a request to receive and transmit, free of charge, funds contributed in aid of the sufferers. It is hoped that there will be a general and generous response by the people of the Dominion to the appeal for help. There can be no doubt that the need is very great and urgent. The area of scarcity is of great extent, and of course densely populated. Millions of these people are in a starving condition. Thousands of them have perished of hunger already, and unless relief is sent promptly and in most generous measure, the loss of life by the famine will be terrible. From all the great colonies of the British Empire help is being gathered, and the people of Great Britain will do generously. Other countries will render some assistance. Russia especially has been prompt to aid, and is now sending warships laden with grain to India.

Wiser but Sadder.

Some months ago quite a large number of people in the province of Quebec were persuaded by the glowing representations of agents to emigrate to Brazil. They were assured that in that southern clime the opportunities for people of limited means were far superior to those offered in their own rugged country. The emigration scheme appears to have been worked largely in the interest of steamship companies. When the simple people reached Brazil they found the conditions vastly different from what they had expected. The promises made to them were in part unfulfilled. The climate had features, they found, far more objectionable than those of their northern home. The food was bad, their surroundings unwholesome, and the wages they received, though they might have been large in Quebec, were insufficient to support them in a country where wholesome food was so expensive as it is in Brazil. Some of these unfortunate people were in some way able to obtain the means of returning to the north, and they have arrived in their old homes, wiser and sadder for their experience. Some fell victims to fever and laid their bones in the foreign land, and most, if not all, of those who are permitted to return are in a wholly destitute condition, but thankful at least to get back again among their own people and upon their native soil.

—Among the centennial celebrations that of the high silk-hat claims its turn in the present year of grace. It appears that the hat which has come to be so indispensable a part of masculine attire in fashionable circles, did not, on its first appearance in the British metropolis, meet with a gracious reception. It is said that the police records of London for January 16, 1797, record that on the preceding day, John Hetherington, haberdasher, of the Strand, was arraigned before the Lord Mayor on a charge of breach of the peace, etc., and was required to give bonds in the sum of £500, all because of having appeared on the streets attired in a high silk hat. It was stated in evidence that the gentleman in question had appeared on the public highway, wearing on his head a tall structure, having a shiny lustre and calculated to frighten timid people. It was testified that several women had fainted at the unusual sight, while children screamed, dogs yelped, and a young person was thrown down by the crowd which had gathered and had his arm broken.