

charter would be no guide for other municipalities. It is clear that such an objection cannot be decisive against special municipal charters adapted to the peculiar wants of a city. But the fact remains that neither Montreal nor Toronto has yet been able to get a special charter. It cannot be said that their attempts in that direction have always been happy. The present Montreal draft is a maze of startling novelties. For one thing, a local journal figures out that it would confiscate the capital of departmental stores every ten years by a species of destructive taxation, such as Henry George wished to apply to real estate. Destruction is not a legitimate weapon in the hands of the tax-gatherer. The special charter draft aims at a multiplicity of special taxes, most of them more or less arbitrary and based on no particular rule. All we can say of the draft is that it may be one remove better than Henry Georgeism; at the same time it is capricious and opens the door to almost any amount of arbitrary acts at the discretion of the council. The effect would be very much the same as if the council were vested with the original power of taxation in a sweeping form.

France is reported to have asked the assent of England to the acquisition by the Republic of the Belgian possessions on the Congo, South Africa. The country is dissatisfied, we fear it must be said is ill-governed, and is an expense to the present holder, of which he would perhaps be glad to get rid, on fair terms. If consent be given it would seem to be a favorable opportunity for asking that other nations lose none of their present trade facilities by the transfer. France ought to be asked to abolish her double tariff, in respect to her distant possessions; if this were done there would be less reason for other countries to grudge her the possession of them. The policy of extending her possessions in Africa did not begin with England; she refused the Cameroons, Zanzibar, and a large part of New Guinea, and only changed her policy to protect her trade, which was threatened by the territorial acquisitions of other countries. Even under Mr. Gladstone, the question of the acceptance of the Cameroons was reopened, but it was too late; while England was deliberating, Germany was acting, and this new possession Germany is resolutely determined to guard. It would not be necessary to annex countries for the sake of their trade, if the same door were left open to all. European trade is not all for the benefit of the natives of Africa; a distinct exception must be made of arms and spirits. There is already a question of trying prohibition for the natives; in their case, if practicable, it would certainly be justifiable. If we sell arms to the natives, there is always the danger that they may be used against ourselves. Last year the gun trade of Birmingham was ruined by a virtuous resolution of the Government to deny guns to the Africans; this year the manufacturer, who thinks only of present profit, has got the upper hand, and his trade is brisk.

Hope that a general settlement may be reached between England and France begins to glimmer. This settlement if agreed upon may afford relief for the present, but if France gets the Congo Free State and Morocco, their possession may lead to future trouble, especially if England is to build a railway from Cairo to the Cape. With long-range artillery, ships under the shadow of Gibraltar would not be secure from bombardment; and if the other side of the strait were in the hands of an enemy, what would happen? But attack by sea on Gibraltar can be made harmless by taking the artillery to so high a level as to be practically in a region of security. Caenta has been mentioned as a

place which, if fortified at a cost of some millions, might be made as useful to England as Gibraltar; but to carry on this work would make it necessary to annex a good slice of the mainland of Morocco. The Tangier peninsula, it seems, France it is not expected will be permitted to secure; otherwise she might appropriate an idea which had birth in some Englishmen's heads. If she got Morocco, even without Caenta, the next thing that would occur to her to ask might be the key of Gibraltar.

Both in Cuba and the Philippines the Americans have on their hands a burthen of cares for which they scarcely bargained when they undertook the control of these regions. The Cuban patriots are still under arms and are making unconscionable demands as the price of their submission. The Americans appear to be willing to give them \$8,000,000 as a peace offering, but the rebel chief asks \$60,000,000, and wholly disregards what the dead leader had agreed to. There is great want among large numbers, no less than 90,000 people being reported as in need of the relief of public charity. In the Philippines, Aguinaldo is still holding out for the recognition of the independence of his Republic, of which the States fails to take diplomatic notice. He is trying to get this recognition by the side-wind of getting a representative of the Philippine Republic, so called, on the Commission which the American Government is using to prepare the way for political organization in the islands. The Expansionists are, meanwhile, by no means having their own way, either at Washington or throughout the country. They will probably win, but the question will become a party question, on which it looks as if the Republicans may suffer shipwreck. It is perhaps more likely that the Expansionists will win, in the end, but at present their cause is none of the brightest.

The Province of Quebec last year reduced the deficit, but failed to rise to the equilibrium, the expenditure exceeding the revenue by \$284,281. A special effort should be made to bring the revenue up to the expenditure. There are two ways of doing this, either by reducing expenditure or increasing revenue, or a combination of both. A great effort is not required to ensure success. Will it be made with the energy that the occasion calls for?

#### MONTREAL HARBOR AND OTHER HARBORS

The report of the Montreal Board of Trade, submitted at the annual meeting of that body held this week, contains, we remark, a definite statement upon a point of much importance to our chief city, and to Canada, namely, the improvement of her harbor. The paragraph is as under: "Another year will undoubtedly see many improvements in the harbor, for during 1898 plans have been gradually maturing which now seem in a fair way of becoming accomplished, thus affording the much-needed facilities for the steamships of larger tonnage which will visit this port in the near future." The improvements will not come any too soon. Meanwhile we note with approval one or two things stated by Mayor Prefontaine as to the visits to American seaports of the harbor commissioners, himself included. His Worship says truly that "On this side of the Atlantic more importance must be placed upon facilities for export than import trade. . . . At most of the ports visited we found that providing facilities for the export trade is the first and paramount consideration." And again, having noted that the commission appointed by the State of New York a year or two ago to enquire into