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The Plebiscite Act. The Prohibition Plebiscite Act, now before the Dominion Parliament, provides that there shall be submitted to the vote of the electors the following question:

Are you in favor of the passing of an Act prohibiting the importation, manufacture or sale of spirits, wines, ale, beer, cider and all other alcoholic liquors for use as a beverage?

The persons entitled to vote are all persons who would be entitled to vote at a Dominion election at the time at which the plebiscite shall be held. For the purpose of submitting the question to the electors and ascertaining the result of the vote, it is provided that the same proceedings, as nearly as may be, shall be had as in the case of a general Dominion election, and the Dominion Elections Act and the North West Territory Representation Act and their amendments, and the Franchise Act, 1898, shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, and of any regulations, orders or instructions, made or given by the Governor-in-Council thereunder, apply, 'mutatis mutandis,' to the conduct of such proceedings, and with respect to the powers to be exercised, and the duties to be performed by, and the rights, obligations, liabilities, qualifications and disqualifications of judges, officers, electors, and all other persons, and with respect to offences and the penalties which may be incurred.

It is provided that the ballot papers for the purpose of the plebiscite shall be in the following form:

	YES.	NO.
Are you in favor of the passing of an Act prohibiting the importation, manufacture or sale of spirits, wine, ale, beer, cider and all other alcoholic liquors for use as beverages?		

An affirmative vote on the question submitted shall be made by placing a cross (thus X) in the column headed 'Yes,' and a negative vote by placing a similar cross in the column headed 'No.'

The Montreal Witness thinks it might be better not to have a blank space above the question, and suggests that it should be used to tell the voters where to put their X, thus: 'If you wish for prohibition, put a cross (thus X) in the blank space under YES. If you oppose it put a cross in the blank space under NO.'

An Army for Cuba. President McKinley has called for 125,000 volunteers to make the army of the United States effective for the war in which the nation is now engaged. The Governors of all the States and Territories have been notified as to the number of men which each State and Territory is required to provide, and recruiting officers are at work all over the country. Preference is given to the members of the State militia, who possess the advantage of having had some militia training. It appears that members of the militia as individuals are permitted to enlist in the volunteer forces now called for, although the constitution does not permit the President to call out the States militia for the purpose of forming an army of invasion. When the recruits have been secured they will be assembled in the State encampments, organized into regiments, and, in cases where the number is sufficient, into brigades and divisions. Then they will be thoroughly drilled and equipped for the work of the campaign. It is reported to be the intention of the United States military authorities to send, as soon as possible, a force of about five

thousand regular troops to occupy some Cuban seaport and establish there under the protection of the fleet a base of operations through which the starving people of the island may be aided. However this may be, it is not probable that any very considerable army will be landed in Cuba for some months. To put raw recruits into Cuba now, at the beginning of the yellow fever season, to contend with the disciplined and seasoned troops of Spain, is hardly to be thought of. The policy of the United States will probably be to fight Spain upon the sea and to cut off supplies from the Spanish army in Cuba during the summer months. It seems inevitable that Spain shall find great difficulty in carrying on effective naval warfare in western waters for lack of coal. At the end of the summer the United States, with a large disciplined and well equipped army at command, will probably be able to undertake the invasion of Cuba under conditions that will make success comparatively easy.

The Philippines. As a result of the present war it is probable that Spain will lose the Philippine Islands as well as her West Indian possessions. The Philippines, the most northern group of the Indian Archipelago, are situated off the east coast of China, with the great Island of Formosa to the north. There are some twelve hundred islands in the group, most of them being merely bare rocks raised to the surface by volcanic action. Nine of the islands are of considerable size, ranging in area from 1,200 to 41,000 square miles. The largest and most populous island is Luzon, which has a larger population than the Dominion of Canada. The capital, Manila, is the chief city in the group. Next in population, but not in area, is Panay. The total area of the group is given as 120,000 square miles, with a population of 9,000,000. The islands possess great natural wealth. The soil is immensely fertile, the lakes and rivers abound in fish and the mineral and forest wealth of some of the islands is very great. The country has its drawbacks, however. It is of volcanic origin and subject to frequent and sometimes violent earthquakes. At certain seasons terrible hurricanes sweep over the islands, and the moisture and heat of the climate make it unhealthy for Europeans. As to the people of the Philippines and their conditions under Spanish rule, the Montreal Witness says:

"The Mohammedan inhabitants of the plains are an industrious, highly-skilled people. The negroes, or Papuans, of the mountain regions are little known savages. Tobacco is cultivated as a government monopoly by nearly a million impressed laborers, who are slaves in all but name. Besides these, every native in the settled districts is compelled to give forty days' labor every year on the public roads and bridges. Spanish officials sent out from Spain strive to acquire fortunes as rapidly as possible, and are quite unscrupulous in the methods they employ for that object. Hence the general disaffection and certainty of a furious uprising, as predicted, on the appearance of a fleet hostile to Spain. There are seven regiments of infantry and one of cavalry entirely composed of natives. The only Spanish troops are two brigades of artillery and a corps of engineers. The navy consists of a few old-fashioned ships and a number of feluccas employed as revenue cutters to prevent smuggling. A monopolistic and prohibitory trade policy has greatly retarded the development of the islands. In fact, the commerce is said to be little better now than it was in the sixteenth century, when the trade between China and the Spanish colonies of America was the richest in the world. A bad, greedy, fiscal system, restrictions on foreign shipping, discouragement of all enterprise, not under the patronage of a notoriously corrupt, incapable government, ecclesiastical control in temporal as well as spiritual affairs, the utter neglect of education, all combine to render these islands, prodigiously rich in all that should make a country great and prosperous, the most miserable and turbulent region on the face of the globe.

In spite of all, however, English and German and American merchants have established lucrative businesses, which, under happier auspices, would become of great importance. The best thing that could happen the islands would be to fall under the power of a nation that would know how to govern them and develop their wonderful resources."

The War. The war news during the greater part of the past week was not of a very important character. The Spanish fleet remained at the Cape Verde islands and the American fleet, in Cuban waters, occupied itself in maintaining a more or less effective blockade of Havana and Matanzas. About the middle of the week a report was published of an important engagement between three American warships and the Spanish fortifications at Matanzas, in which it was made to appear that the American vessels had succeeded, without the least loss to themselves, in practically destroying the forts, and probably inflicting serious loss of life upon the Spaniards. Later accounts, however, made it appear that the Matanzas battle was largely the creation of somebody's vivid imagination. A good deal of anxiety has been felt as to the destination of the Spanish fleet when it should leave Cape Verde Islands, and some alarm for the safety of American coast cities. It is known that the fleet left Cape Verde on Friday, but its destination is still a matter of conjecture. It is not probable, however, that the Spaniards will undertake the bombardment of American cities. What is, no doubt, by far the most important event of the war thus far, was a naval engagement which took place on Sunday in or near the harbor of Manila in the Philippines. At present writing it does not appear that any very definite intelligence has been received as to the character and results of the engagement. The telegraph lines from Manila are in the hands of the Spanish, and the American version of the battle is not yet at hand. From the accounts received, it is believed that the American Commander, Admiral Dewey, has won an important victory. Several Spanish vessels were disabled or destroyed. There appears to be no doubt therefore that the Spanish squadron has suffered a crushing defeat, but it is left uncertain to what extent the American ships are damaged or whether Admiral Dewey is in a position to continue the attack upon Manila, and, by cooperation with the insurgent troops, overcome the Spanish forces and obtain possession of the city. If this can be effected it will of course be a great victory for the United States and a correspondingly crushing blow to Spain. But if Admiral Dewey cannot take Manila, he is in rather an awkward position, since the lack of a base of supplies, and opportunities for refitting would in that case necessitate the return of his squadron to San Francisco.

Secretary Sherman Retires. After a year, during which he has been nominally at the head of the Foreign Office of the United States Government, Secretary Sherman has resigned. It is an open secret, however, that, owing to failing powers of mind, Mr. Sherman has not at any time been equal to the important duties of his office. The work of the office has been in the hands of the assistant secretary, Judge Day, of Ohio, who has now accepted appointment, as Mr. Sherman's successor. It seems unfortunate for Mr. Sherman, as well as for the country, that at the close of a long and honorable career he should have been placed in so important a position at so critical a time and when he was no longer able to render the services required. Mr. Sherman's successor came to the office without training in diplomatic service, but he has proved himself a prudent and painstaking under-secretary and it is believed that he will give a good account of himself as head of the department.