

Messenger and Visitor.

THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER,
VOLUME LXII.

THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR,
VOLUME LI.

Vol. XVI.

ST JOHN, N. B., WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3 1900.

No. 1.

Italy. The financial position of Italy is said to be improving. The statement of her Finance Minister for the past year is the most encouraging that has been presented for a decade. That statement shows that the revenue for the year has exceeded the estimates by more than \$8,000,000, and though there has been an excess in expenditure over estimates of \$5,400,000, yet the balance shows a surplus of nearly \$3,000,000. This improved condition of the revenue is due not to increase in taxation but to an expanding trade, and it is hoped that the growing revenue will keep pace with the needs of government and enable Italy to maintain her place among the great Powers of Europe. The struggle in the past to maintain the military and naval armaments consistent with her position as a member of the Triple Alliance has involved a degree of taxation well nigh intolerable to the people. No people have suffered more keenly from the pressure of militarism than the Italians. And so long as it is considered essential that the nation shall hold a position among the great military powers of the world there seems but small hope for any important amelioration of the condition of the people.

The Klondike. The latest news we have seen from the Klondike is contained in the Toronto Globe's letter from its correspondent, 'Faith Fenton,' at Dawson City, bearing date of November 24. The question at that time most immediately interesting to the people of Dawson was the possibility of keeping the water system of the town in operation during the winter. Until last summer the water for the use of the town had to be carried or hauled from the river. This involved much labor, and in the spring the water became impure. Accordingly an effort was made, which proved quite successful, to supply the town with pure water by sinking wells a short distance from the town and bringing the water in through wooden pipes. Through the summer the service was very satisfactory, and efforts were being made to maintain it through the winter season. The means relied upon were to warm the well and the reservoir by means of steam pipes, protect the water pipes with sawdust, keeping a stream of water constantly running through them and cover the hydrants with small houses, kept warm by means of a stove in each. The opening of the first public school in Dawson is announced, and it is a matter of surprise that it is opened under the auspices of the Roman Catholic church. It is stated that the teaching will be non-sectarian. But the school house has been erected by R. C. church authorities on Church ground, and will be taught by one of the Church sisterhood. There are said to be about 50 children in Dawson of school age. Of course they are not all Roman Catholics, and a "non-sectarian school" under such conditions is not likely to satisfy the community for very long. Reference is made to the wrecking of two river steamers, the 'Stratton' and the 'Willie Irving,' by a breaking ice jam about 130 miles from Dawson. There was no loss of life, but the 'Stratton' with her cargo, including an inbound mail, was a total loss. The Globe correspondent notes as credible a report that a rich quartz ledge had been located some seven or nine miles up the Yukon. The business of mining appears to be settling into more regular methods. There is no mention of a scarcity of food, and the natural inference is that Dawson is well provisioned for the winter.

Winston Churchill's Escape. Lieut. Winston Churchill, a son of the late Lord Randolph Churchill, who went to South Africa as a newspaper correspondent, and who, it will be remembered, was taken prisoner by the Boers at Estcourt in Natal and sent to Pretoria, has succeeded in making his escape from the Transvaal capital and is now heard from at the British camp, Chieveley. It is an interesting story that Mr.

Churchill tells of his escape from prison, how he managed to elude the watchful Boers and finally to reach Lourenzo Marques, concealed in a railway truck under a great pile of sacks. The Boers had searched among the sacks, but had not searched deep enough. On the afternoon of December 12, Mr. Churchill says, he was informed by the Transvaal Secretary of War that there was little chance of his release. The same night he escaped from his prison by climbing the walls when the sentries backs were turned for a moment. He walked through the streets of the town without disguise, meeting many burghers but was not challenged by the crowd. He then managed to get through the pickets of the town guard and struck the Delagoa Bay railroad. "I walked along it," he writes, "evading the watchers at the bridges and culverts, and waited for a train beyond the first station. The 11.30 goods train from Pretoria had arrived before I reached the place and was moving at full speed. I boarded it with great difficulty and hid under coal sacks. I jumped from the train before dawn and was sheltered during the day in a small wood in company with a huge vulture which displayed a lively interest in me. I walked on at dusk. There were no trains that night. The danger of meeting the guards of the line continued, but I was obliged to follow it, as I had no compass or map. I had to make wide detours to avoid bridges, stations and huts, and my progress was very slow. Chocolate is not a satisfying food. The outlook was gloomy, but I persevered with God's help. For five days my food supply was very precarious. I was lying up by daylight and walking by night. Meanwhile my escape had been discovered and my description telegraphed everywhere. All trains were searched and everyone was on the watch for me. Four times the wrong people were arrested. The sixth day I managed to board a train beyond Middleburg, from whence there was direct service to Delagoa." Arrived at Delagoa Bay, his fears of being retaken by the Boers were of course at an end. He appears, however, to have lost no time in getting to Durban and thence to Chieveley. Mr. Churchill describes the position of the Boers at Tugela River as one of extraordinary strength. The enemy have all the ranges marked, and many powerful guns dominate the various points of the river, while the drifts are commanded by converging musketry fire from the probably 12,000 Boers. There are sixteen miles of wild, broken country before reaching Ladysmith, which demands early relief. But the British troops, he says, have complete confidence in their commander, Sir Redvers Buller. A painful impression was caused by the announcement of the change of Commander-in-Chief. The soldiers are resolved to vindicate their trusted leader and are determined to succeed next time at all costs.

Nicholson's Nek. The story of how the men of the Gloucester regiment and the Irish Fusiliers fell into the hands of the Boers at Nicholson's Nek is told by a correspondent of the London Standard. It will be recalled that these regiments were sent out from Ladysmith by night to seize a position about six miles from the town, the object being to protect the British left flank during the assault of the Boer position, planned by General White for the next day. The force sent consisted of nine hundred men with a mountain battery. "In order to reach the Nek the men had to pass through a very difficult country. Their guides were trustworthy and knew every inch of the road. But the Boers were evidently acquainted with our plans, and were waiting on a kopje about two miles from Nicholson's. Moving as cautiously

and as noiselessly as the ground would allow, the doomed regiments were suddenly startled by a volley out of the darkness. The surprise was complete. Confusion seized the column. Terrified by the noise and the blackness of the night, the mules stampeded with the mountain battery. Dashing through the ranks with the guns trailing behind them, the maddened animals scattered the men in all directions, hurling some into the ditch and injuring others. The mules carrying the reserve of the small arms ammunition also caught fright, and, lashing out on all sides, ran amuck among the men. Before they could realize what had befallen, the two battalions were in a state of hopeless disorder, and their guns and reserve of ammunition were flying through the darkness across the veldt. Colonel Carlton and Major Adye did their utmost to rally the men, and succeeded so far that they were able to seize a small kopje on the left of the road. Here they were allowed to remain undisturbed during the night. The hours before dawn were spent in securing the position with intrenchments and breastworks of stone. When daylight came they found themselves upon a hill exposed to fire from three large kopjes on which the Boers had established themselves, and were waiting until they had finished their breakfast before making an attack. The trap was well laid, and, having once surrounded his prey, the Boer never hurries. He did not begin until the guns on our right flank at Lombard's Kop were heard. The fight was brief, but desperate. Our soldiers held out manfully until their ammunition was almost exhausted and surrendered only after forty-four had been killed and eighty-six wounded. The Boers took 870 prisoners.

The War. There has been no important engagement and comparatively little actual fighting, so far as the despatches inform us, in South Africa, during the past week. Ladysmith and Kimberley are holding out bravely, and a New Year's greeting sent by the Mayor of Kimberley to the Queen, would indicate a hopeful feeling there. Lord Methuen's position at Modder River appears to be practically unchanged. The force by which he is confronted is so great, and its position has been made so strong, as apparently to render any advance on his part impracticable until heavily reinforced. At the last accounts from Mafeking, the garrison was still holding out bravely, but the absence of recent news from that quarter creates anxiety. At Ladysmith the enemy's bombardment appears to be becoming more effective, and there is a good deal of typhoid among the troops. In spite of the fact that General White has reported sufficient supplies of food and ammunition to enable him to hold out for some time, it is generally felt that the relief of the place should be effected as soon as possible. All accounts agree as to the great strength of the Boers, as to numbers, artillery and position, between Colenso and Ladysmith. Despatches have indicated the intention of an immediate forward movement by General Buller, and, considering all the circumstances, it is natural that great anxiety should be felt as to the outcome. Accounts are somewhat conflicting as to the attitude of the Dutch colonists in Natal and Cape Colony. They appear to be more hostile in the Grigqualand district than elsewhere, and there is no doubt but that their attitude considered generally constitutes one of the gravest features of the whole South African situation. The unfriendly attitude of the German people to Great Britain has been thrown into strong relief by the newspaper criticism called forth by the seizure in Delagoa Bay of a German steamer having on board a number of officers and men evidently destined for the Transvaal to fight for the Boers, the criticism of the British policy in Germany as well as other parts of the continent, is bitterly unfriendly and predictions that the result of the war will be the loss to Great Britain of her South African possessions are freely indulged in. The most active operations during the week have been in Central Cape Colony where General Gatacre and General French's forces are at least keeping the Boers in check. General Gatacre's immediate object is said to be to gain control of the Indwe coal mines which are twenty-five miles east of Dordrecht.