

# Messenger and Visitor.

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**Quebec Province.** The Province of Quebec is heavily in debt, and more than a million and a half of dollars are required to make the necessary provisions for interest and sinking fund. This makes a very large hole in a total revenue of less than four millions and a quarter, and adequate provision for the various departments of the public service in so large a Province becomes for the Government a difficult problem. It is gratifying to observe, however, that the present administration appears to be endeavoring to make the best of a situation made difficult by the extravagance of the past. The reports of revenue and expenditures submitted to the Legislature now in session seem to show that the Government has lived within its income. The margin is of course not a large one, but the statement published shows a balance of \$22,556 over the expenditure. Next to the Dominion subsidies, amounting to \$1,320,137, Quebec's largest source of revenue comes from its Lands, Forests and Fisheries Department, amounting in all to \$1,043,245. Of this nearly \$900,000 consists of various taxes upon the products of the forest. According to an incomplete statement as to the municipal statistics, which does not include the cities and towns, the number of taxpayers in 68 counties is 233,458; number of acres appraised, 19,670,836; estimated value of taxable real estate, \$259,234,557; estimated value of non-taxable real estate, \$35,471,133. The non-taxable property is presumably largely in the hands of the Roman Catholic church, and as will be seen amounts to about twelve per cent. of the whole. The report of the Commissioner of Agriculture shows, among other things, that the farmers' clubs in the province now numbers 516, with nearly 41,000 members, and that there are, further, 68 agricultural societies, with an aggregate of 14,510 members. It notes a marked improvement in dairy products, and a higher price obtained for butter this year in the English market, than was obtained for Danish butter. Taking into account the figures of the export and the higher prices realized, it calculates that in butter and cheese the farmers made over \$5,000,000 more profit than during the preceding year. It also deals with some very interesting and successful experiments made by the Government to ascertain the best kinds of fruit suited to growth in the province. The Government is promoting efforts for the improvement of the roads throughout the Province with the result that machines for road-making in earth and stone are being introduced. Six county councils now possess stone-crushers, with their accessories, for the stoning of roads, and the results, in the improvement of the highways, appear to be substantial if not rapid. It is said that the Government will recommend the imposition of an export tax on pulp wood, which it is expected will have the effect of causing the establishment of a large number of mills to manufacture pulp in the Province.

**Aggressive Roman Catholicism in Canada,** or at least in the Province of Quebec, is evidently becoming more aggressive in its teaching. Generally speaking, the preachers of the Roman Catholic faith have made little effort to impress their doctrines upon Protestant people, or if such efforts were made, they did not often take the form of public preaching especially addressed to Protestants. Some Roman Catholic newspapers, too, have been accustomed to find much fault with Protestants for establishing missions with the purpose of converting Roman Catholics, while there are so many millions of people in the world who know nothing of Christianity in any form. But Archbishop Bruchesi, of Montreal, encourages his clergy to assume in their preaching a more aggressive attitude toward Protestantism, and accordingly a "mission" to Protestants has

recently been held in Montreal. At some of the services large numbers of Protestants have been present, and all the influence that eloquent preachers of Roman Catholic doctrine could command has been brought to bear upon these congregations to persuade them to accept the claims of the Church of Rome. It is quite probable that these efforts have not been without visible fruits. But Protestants have no reason to deprecate this more open and aggressive attitude on the part of Roman Catholics. It will cause Protestants to examine the grounds of their own faith, with the result, it may be hoped, that they will become more firmly established in the truths of the New Testament, it will make them zealous in the promulgation of what they regard as a purer gospel than that which Rome preaches, and indirectly it is likely to make it possible for many Catholics to hear the gospel from the lips of Protestant preachers, for the Roman Catholic clergy having entered upon an active propaganda of their religion among Protestants, cannot consistently forbid their own people listening to preachers who invite Roman Catholics to consider the truth as presented from a Protestant point of view. At the Diocesan Synod to the Anglican church, lately held in Montreal, reference was made to the attitude of the Roman Catholics in this matter, and a resolution, moved by Rev. Dr. Lariviere, was adopted, providing for the holding of a mission in one of the larger Anglican churches in Montreal, in which sermons setting forth the position and teaching of the Church of England should be addressed to Roman Catholics by some person to be appointed by the Bishop.

**Mr. McCrum Comes Home.** There is considerable speculation as to the reasons which have led to the return to the United States of Mr. McCrum, lately United States Consul at Pretoria. It is distinctly stated that Mr. McCrum was not recalled, but by particular request secured permission from his Government to return. As Mr. McCrum's sympathies are said to be with the Boers, it is supposed that he is the bearer of some communication, regarded as important, from President Kruger to the United States Government. On his way home Mr. McCrum appears to be spending some time in Europe. He has been reported at Paris and other places, but to press correspondents who attempted to draw him out he would say nothing as to the reasons of his return. Whether the ex-Consul has any motive in visiting European capitals other than his personal pleasure can only be conjectured. According to the statement of the Washington correspondent of the Toronto Globe, it is considered in the State Department at Washington that when Mr. McCrum left Pretoria on December 18, he ceased to hold any official relation to the United States Government. He may be bringing some important communication from the Transvaal Government or its President, but, if so, he is acting merely as the personal messenger of the latter and has no official status whatever in that capacity in the eyes of the Government. The son of Secretary Hay has been appointed to the post vacated by Mr. McCrum, and there is no probability, it is said, of the latter being re-appointed even if he should desire to return to Pretoria. It may be noted in this connection that the Washington correspondent referred to above states in another despatch to his paper that in an interview last week between Secretary Hay and Mr. Montagu White, former diplomatic representative of the Transvaal Government in London, Mr. Hay stated in the plainest terms that, under any circumstances which are likely to arise, the United States Government will decline absolutely to act as mediator between Great Britain and the Transvaal.

**The Roberts Case.** The United States House of representatives on Thursday last, took final action in the Roberts case by adopting the following resolution, by a vote of 273 to 50:

"That under the facts and circumstances of the case, Brigham H. Roberts, representative elect from the state of Utah, ought not to have or hold a seat in the House of Representatives, and that the seat to which he was elected is hereby declared vacant."

This action was taken in accordance with the majority report of the special committee of the House in the case. A minority report recog-

nized the election of Mr. Roberts as valid under the law, and his constitutional right to take the oath of office as a member-elect, but called for his expulsion on the ground of being a polygamist. The motion to adopt the minority report was defeated by a vote of 81 to 244. The matter was debated at very considerable length. Those who favored the minority rather than the majority report of the committee, did so chiefly on the ground, that the constitution defined the conditions upon which a person might take his seat as a Representative in Congress and that the House had no power to change those conditions, and that to assume such power was to create a dangerous precedent, making it possible for a majority of the members to exclude anyone whom they should decide to consider ineligible.

**The War.** During the past week attention has been absorbed almost exclusively by the situation in Natal and the efforts of the British forces under General Buller and his coadjutors to move forward to the relief of Ladysmith. There has been some intimation of an intended movement in connection with General Methuen's command at Modder River, but nothing in the way of results is reported. Saturday's despatches also brought a report that Mafeking had been relieved on the 23rd, but this lacks confirmation. Up to Thursday of last week, General Warren in his operations north of the Tugela, by hard fighting had made progress against the enemy, which General Buller hoped was substantial, but being upon ground less elevated than that held by the Boers, the British forces were still operating at a disadvantage. Accordingly, General Warren, with the approval of General Buller, decided upon a night attack upon Spion Kop, the highest point of an elevated ridge upon which the Boers were entrenched. The attempt to take the Kop was made before dawn on Wednesday morning, the top of the hill being at the time enveloped in a thick mist, and was entirely successful, the Boers being completely taken by surprise and easily driven from their position. But to hold the ground gained was a much more difficult matter. The position was exposed to the artillery and rifle fire of the enemy from other parts of the ridge and other kopjes. The Boers made a most determined attack upon the place, and though the British, fighting with their accustomed gallantry, held the Kop through the day, yet, being without heavy artillery and greatly embarrassed by want of water, they found it necessary to abandon the position, which was done before dawn on Thursday. Then General Buller having considered the situation, decided that it was impracticable with the forces at his command to carry out his plan of an advance toward Ladysmith along the line attempted, and accordingly it was decided to withdraw General Warren's brigade to the south bank of the Tugela. This had been successfully accomplished by Saturday at 8 a. m. without any loss either of men or supplies. It is assumed that General Lytton's brigade still remains on the north side of the Tugela, and the crossing at Potgieter's Drift is securely held by the British. Such in brief is the situation. It is bad and gloomy enough, but not so bad as it might be. There has been failure, but not disaster. General Warren's loss has been considerable, but probably not much greater than that which he has inflicted on the enemy. What line of operation will now be adopted is not apparent, but evidently the failure of General Buller's plan materially lessens the hope that Ladysmith will be relieved.

The latest despatches at hand as we go to press afford little more information as to the general situation than that given above, and do not in any way relieve its seriousness. General Buller's recent operation, so far as the list of casualties is officially reported, has involved a loss of 912 men, and it is estimated that this number will be augmented by 500 when the list is complete. What the next move will be can only be conjectured. Whether Lord Roberts will permit General Buller to make another attempt to relieve Ladysmith, a London despatch says, is quite outside the knowledge of those closely connected with the war office. With the troops due to arrive next month, he may think himself strong enough to undertake two large operations, combining the forces under Generals Methuen, French and Gatacre and adding to them the arriving troops. Thus Lord Roberts would have 70,000 men for the invasion of the Free State, with 40,000 or 50,000 garrisons, and 40,000 trying to relieve Ladysmith.