

# Messenger and Visitor.

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## The House of Commons Discusses the Fire.

The Government's proposal to vote \$100,000 for the relief of the fire sufferers of Ottawa and Hull was heartily concurred in by the opposition leaders and the appropriation was accordingly promptly made on Tuesday of last week. Resolutions were also adopted providing \$10,000 for a new Post Office in Hull and \$21,000 to restore the Chaudiere bridge which was partly destroyed. In the course of some discussion upon the fire and the voting of assistance from the public funds, Hon. Mr. Foster called attention to the very dangerous conditions existing in the two cities on account of the character of many of the buildings and the vast quantities of lumber piled along the river banks and within the city limits, and asked whether it was proposed to accompany the appropriation with any conditions, absolute or advisory. He said the Government had considerable control over the water power of the Chaudiere and suggested that, as the banks had been swept clean by the fire, the present was a favorable time for introducing necessary changes in the interest of the public safety without interfering too much with vested rights. Other members of the House discussed the subject along the same line, concurring in Mr. Foster's view that measures should be taken to avoid the great danger from conflagrations which present conditions involve. Sir Wilfrid Laurier recognized the great importance of removing the dangerous conditions existing in the city on account of the presence of so great quantities of lumber and the prevalence of wooden buildings. He fully agreed with what Mr. Foster had said in that connection, but he feared that the Government had little power to change conditions other than through advice and remonstrance with the municipal authorities and the mill owners. The Government would not fail, he said, to exercise its influence with the lumbermen, who certainly should be as deeply interested in the safety of the city as anyone, to induce them to remove their lumber piles to a distance from the city. If, from the calamity which had overtaken the cities there should be learned the necessity of protection, it would have at least one redeeming feature.

## The Methodist General Conference of the United States.

The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal church of the United States met in Chicago on May 1st and will continue in session during the month. There are about 650 delegates representing 124 annual conferences, 11 missionary conferences and 13 missions. It is said that there will be one hundred and one committees all sitting at the same time to consider the details of affairs before the Conference. Among the main points of interest to be discussed by the Conference are the following: 1. The removal of the time limit on pastoral appointments. 2. The removal of the law against card-playing, dancing and theatre-going. 3. Lay representation. 4. The necessity for more bishops. The conference has already acted upon number 3, ratifying the action of the annual conferences in extending representation to laymen in the General Conference equal with that of the ministers. This is an important step in the direction of making the Methodist Episcopal church a democratic body. On the remaining subjects, and especially the first two, it is probable that strongly diverse views will find expression. The proposal to remove the time limit will be strongly and perhaps successfully opposed, but it is said there are many who believe that the itinerant system stands in the way of successful work in the cities. Any proposal to relax the strictness of the church's discipline will

also meet with influential opposition. At the same time it is said that the laws of the church in reference to dancing, etc., are not enforced, and it is argued that if these prohibitions are not to be enforced, it would be better that they should not be retained in the book of discipline. Earnest Christians in the Methodist Episcopal church are keenly sensible that the spiritual life of the body is far from being as strong and aggressive as it formerly was. This is made painfully evident by the statistics of the church, which for the last four years show a much lower rate of increase than in former years, and the experience of the Methodist church is more or less that of the other evangelical bodies of the country. Certainly there is great need of a general and genuine revival of religion in America.

**The Witness and the Flint Resolution.** The editor of the Montreal Witness is one of the members of that Dominion Alliance Committee which is back of the resolution on Prohibition moved by Mr. Flint in the House of Commons, but which, as Mr. McClure of Colchester contends, does not represent the general sentiment of the temperance people of Canada. However that may be, the Witness is a long tried and influential supporter of the temperance reform in Canada and its deliverances on the subject are entitled to respect. Alluding to the discussion on Mr. Flint's resolution in the House, the Witness declares that it was unsatisfactory in the extreme, as it contained little else than party ranting and crimination. There is, however, the Witness says, this satisfaction to be derived from the debate, "that every Liberal that spoke, with the exception of the two machine men, Mr. Parmelee and Mr. Casey, said the Government ought to do something." If this is the sentiment of the rank and file of the independent temperance Liberals, and if they vote in accordance with it, the Flint resolution, the Witness says, will be gained. It doubts even the political wisdom of Mr. Parmelee's amendment which declares against any action, and says that "if the temperance Liberals stand to the view they have expressed they will necessarily vote it down, which would prove an invited rebuke to the Government. When that amendment is out of the way all prohibitionists who think it worth while to do so will vote for Mr. McClure's amendment, demanding national prohibition, pure and simple. That will be voted down, as the Government has already recorded itself as opposed to that, and it has probably the support of the country in this attitude in view of the adverse vote in Quebec. When that also is out of the way the crucial vote will come showing what members mean to vote for prohibition at all and what members do not."

## The Welland Canal Dynamiters.

The preliminary examination of the men, Walsh, Nolan and Dulman, charged with having attempted to destroy a lock of the Welland Canal with dynamite, was held before the police magistrate at Welland last week. Plenty of evidence was adduced to connect the men in the most direct and positive manner with the attempt to wreck the canal. The men had been closely watched by both the Canadian and United States police, being suspected by both of being smugglers. What the motive of the men was in destroying the lock or what their connections are in the crime is yet to be made clear. The attempt to destroy the canal naturally suggested connection with parties having an interest in the movement of freight by American rather than by Canadian routes, and led to the suspicion that the speculators or grain shovelers of Buffalo were concerned in the

crime. On the other hand it is suspected that it was a part of a Fenian plot, and this suspicion is strengthened by the alleged identification of Nolan as a Fenian of long standing, who was tried for murder ten years ago in the city of Dublin. It is not impossible that both an unscrupulous self interest and a blind anti-British hatred have been concerned in the villainous scheme. Whatever the purpose or connection of the dynamiters, it is evident that they have many sympathizers on the other side of the border. It has been found necessary to put the jail in which the men are confined under military guard. Spies disguised in women's clothes have been spotted by the detectives in the vicinity of the jail, and an attempt was made to kidnap a girl who is one of the principal witnesses against the dynamiters. Naturally there is a good deal of excitement over the matter in that part of Ontario, and at certain points the military have been notified to hold themselves in readiness to be called out at a moment's notice.

## Parliament and the Spion Kop Despatches.

The publication of the Spion Kop despatches was the subject of lively discussion, both in the Imperial House of Commons and the House of Lords, on Friday last. The matter was brought up in the House by Mr. Walter Runciman, Liberal member for Oldham, who strongly censured the Government and especially Lord Lansdowne, the Secretary for War. Mr. H. H. Asquith and other Liberals animadverted trenchantly upon the alleged untenable position of the Government, asserting that confidence in it had been seriously shaken by the publication of the despatches. Mr. Labouchere (Radical) and some of the Irish Nationalists took a hand in the discussion, denouncing the Government's action. In defence of the Government the chief speakers were Hon. Mr. Balfour and Mr. Wyndham, Under Secretary for War, the latter of whom quoted the Duke of Wellington as precedent for the publication of despatches. The only point at issue, it was contended, was why the criticisms upon General Buller had been published if the Government intended to leave him in command. Mr. Wyndham contended that it was impossible to isolate the Spion Kop despatches, and treat them as no other despatches had been treated in the last hundred years. He believed that General Buller, as well as General Roberts, had intended the despatches to be published, and contended that no injury had been done to General Buller in the matter, and that it would be unfair to leave the 40,000 or 50,000 men in doubt as to the causes which had made all their heroism unavailing. Mr. Balfour complained of what he regarded as unfair criticism of the Government, especially repudiating the accusations which had been made against the Secretary of State for War. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Liberal leader in the House, asserted that the Government had no precedent for its action, and held that its defence was utterly insufficient. In the House of Lords, Lord Lansdowne contended that the only way open to the Government was the publication of the despatches. Spion Kop had cost the army 1600 casualties, and if the papers had been withheld the reputation of the generals would have been damaged more than by their publication. As a matter of justice to Lord Roberts the despatches had not been published without consultation with him. Lord Kimberley, the Liberal leader, declared the publication of the despatches unjustifiable, and Lord Rosebery said that General Buller had been placed in a cruel position by the publication of censorious despatches on the ground of satisfying a public curiosity of which no outward sign existed.