

State, the question of assessments has been much discussed during the past few months. For this awakening of public attention to this most important matter, Governor Blanchard deserves great credit. He was here recently, and in a group of leading citizens, who had called at the hotel, he spoke with great earnestness and intelligence, showing how much more sensible in every way is a proper assessment with lower rates than a ridiculously low assessment with high rates. During the conversation the interesting fact came out that the upper and poorer lands of the State, which are more subdivided, are assessed relatively much higher than the rich alluvial and valley lands which are held in large plantations. But this is an old story.

One is not long in Alexandria without hearing the name of General Sherman. He was, at the outbreak of the civil war, superintendent of the military academy, the ruins of which may still be seen some three miles out of Pineville. Mr. Jonas Rosenthal, an old inhabitant, and the present enthusiastic and efficient president of the school board, told me that Sherman often loafed in his store and told good stories. He says that Sherman declared he would never fight against the South, but afterwards wrote that the pressure was so great he had to go in.

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NEWS NARRATIVE

Week ending Thursday, July 27.

The British ministerial crisis.

The Speaker's ruling of the 18th in the British House of Commons adverse to the Ministry on its proposal regarding Irish representation (p. 248), was followed on the 21st by a defeat of the Ministry in the Commons on a question also affecting its Irish policy. Mr. Redmond, the leader of the Irish party in the House, had offered an amendment to the Irish land act (vol. vi, p. 282). It proposed a reduction of the land commission. This amendment, opposed by the Ministry and supported by the Opposition, was adopted by a vote of 199 to 196, a result which was followed by cries for the resignation of the Ministry.

After this defeat, the Prime Minister refused to declare his future action, and on the 22d only a short session was held, Mr. Bannerman, the Liberal leader, having moved an early adjournment

on the ground that it would be unseemly to proceed with business while the Ministry was considering its position. The Prime Minister insisted upon doing some business, but only enough to avoid Mr. Bannerman's implication. In the evening the Prime Minister had an audience with the King, and upon the reassembling of the Commons on the 24th he argued from the floor, in a speech citing precedents, that such defeats as that of the 21st had never been regarded as ground for resignation or dissolution, and announced that the Ministry did not purpose either to resign or to dissolve Parliament because of that day's occurrence. He declared that it would be a grave evil if the tenure of ministers was made dependent on such votes, and hoped the practice would never prevail of allowing a ministry united in itself and possessing the confidence of the majority of the House to abandon its post merely in consequence of such a vote. In all proceedings since, the Ministry has maintained a majority of about 60.

Norway and Sweden.

The special joint committee of the two houses of the Swedish Riksdag, to which had been referred the Ministerial bill for adjusting the details of separation of Norway from Sweden (p. 198) delivered its report on the 25th. The report declares it to be self-evident that the union was not dissolved by the action of the Norwegian Storting, since—

a contract cannot be broken by one party's parliament. Therefore the Storting's action can only be considered as Norway's declaration that she does not desire any longer to maintain it. It is for Sweden to decide what action is necessary. According to the laws she would be fully justified in using the necessary force to re-establish the union. This would seem to be the natural course in the first excitement, but reflection shows that it would be against the true interests of Sweden. There was great mutual advantage in the union, but its maintenance by force would make the union a source of weakness instead of strength. Sweden should not therefore employ force, but must insist that its permission is necessary to dissolution. Sweden must agree to the cancellation of the act of union on certain conditions, insisting as a preliminary on a satisfactory settlement of all af-

fairs mutually affecting the two countries.

Following are the conditions of separation outlined by the report as feasible:

1. The establishment of a zone on each side of the frontier separating the kingdoms, within which the existing fortifications shall be razed and new fortifications may not be erected.

2. The right of pasturing reindeer belonging to Swedish Laplanders in North Norway.

3. That the transit trade through both countries shall be secured against unjustifiable obstruction.

4. That the status of Sweden in respect to foreign powers as established by treaty shall be clearly defined so that Sweden shall be completely freed from responsibility for Norway to other states.

The report emphatically disapproves of any action by Sweden, either in the direction of a dissolution of the union or recognition of Norway's independence, until the Norwegians have had an opportunity through elections or a plebiscite of expressing their wishes. If the popular vote of Norway favors a dissolution, the Storting must then, in the view of the committee, legally approach Sweden to this end, and if a satisfactory agreement can be reached the committee recommends Sweden's assent. In conclusion, the committee's report refuses to recommend that the Riksdag authorize the cabinet to negotiate with Norway, as demanded by the Ministerial bill referred to it, but proposes instead that if Norway legally approaches Sweden, in accordance with the committee's proposal, negotiations be opened.

In consequence of the adverse report on their bill, the Swedish ministers resigned on the day of the delivery of the report, the 24th.

Action of the Russian Zemstvos congress.

No official force has been exerted to suppress the Zemstvos congress in session at Moscow (p. 247), and on the 20th, by a vote of 220 to 7, the congress ordered the first reading of a constitution for Russia, which had been proposed by its committee. The principal features of this draft are:

1. An elective bi-cameral parliament, representing the whole Empire regardless of creed or race, and composed of 840 members.

2. A ministry on the British model, formed by a kanzier (prime minister), who selects his associates after being himself selected by the Czar.

3. The Czar to retain command of the army and navy and to have a veto on legislation.

On the 21st a manifesto urging the people to discuss the political situation regardless of the opposition of the authorities, and to yield only to superior force, was adopted in principle, after a long and heated debate; but as the result almost caused a formal rupture between the moderates and the radicals, the drafting of the manifesto was postponed. A resolution adopted on the same day condemned the systematic violation of the rights of the zemstvoists and dumaists and declared for upholding the natural rights of man by pacific means. A noteworthy incident of this session was the receipt of a resolution of sympathy from union labor officials expressing the hope that the congress would secure freedom of the press and a responsible ministry. The congress adjourned on the 22d.

The term "dumaist," in addition to "zemstvoist," necessitates an explanation. The "zemstvos" of Russia are district and provincial assemblies, composed of representatives elected by the peasantry of the country districts by householders in the towns, and by landed proprietors. These are the local legislatures of the Empire, corresponding vaguely in function to our State legislatures and county boards. But the towns and cities of Russia have in addition municipal legislatures somewhat like our city councils, and these are called "dumas." They represent the householders of their respective municipalities. It is of delegates from those two classes of representative bodies, the "zemstvos" and the "dumas," that the Moscow congress is composed.

Russian censorship.

For publishing reports of the proceedings of the Moscow congress, referred to above, in defiance of the censorship (p. 248), the St. Petersburg Slavo was on the 21st suspended for a month. Another St. Petersburg newspaper, the Novosti, which had attempted

to organize the press in general for the purpose of ignoring this censorship by publishing reports of the proceedings of the congress, was on the same day suspended indefinitely.

China and the Russian-Japanese war.

Russia's negotiations with the Japanese for peace (p. 246), have drawn from China an intimation of her interest in the peace conditions and her possible intervention. It is made in the following note to the Powers, of which the President of the United States was diplomatically apprised on the 22d:

Having viewed with profound regret the unfortunate interruption of peaceful relations between Japan and Russia, the Imperial government now learns with sincere gratification that negotiations are about to commence for the restoration of peace and amity. But in the present conflict Chinese territory has been made the theater of military operations. Therefore, it is hereby expressly declared that no provision affecting China, without the approval of China being previously obtained, which the treaty of peace may contain, will be recognized as valid. The diplomatic representatives of China in Japan and Russia have been instructed by telegraph to communicate this declaration to the governments of Japan and Russia respectively.

Peace negotiations in the United States.

Baron Komura, the envoy charged with peace negotiations in behalf of Japan (p. 246), who arrived at Seattle with his suite on the 19th, left for Chicago on the 20th on the private car of James J. Hill, the American railway magnate. He passed through Chicago on the 25th and arrived in New York on the 26th. Mr. Witte, the Russian envoy, left Paris for New York on the 26th.

The Chicago traction question.

While A. B. du Pont, of Detroit, and Glenn E. Plum, of Chicago, are preparing specifications for municipal traction construction (p. 249) along the lines of Mayor Dunne's "contract plan," the litigation over the 99-year claims of the traction companies is making progress. On the 22d the Union Traction Company filed its answer in the quo warranto proceedings (pp. 138, 185) brought to require it to show by what right it claims oc-

cupancy of the public streets. The answer is a lengthy document of 266 printed pages. A similar answer was interposed by the Chicago City Railway Co. Both companies filed a motion to dismiss the proceedings as involving no public question.

Another phase of the traction controversy was presented on the 26th by the Chicago City Railway Co., which filed a bill in chancery in the Federal Court asking an injunction against all interference by the city. In this bill the traction company claims that—

1. The City Railway has lawfully acquired the right to operate its cars on 119 different lines until such time as the city may purchase the properties as provided by the ordinance of 1858.

2. The company has the right by statute to collect a five-cent fare from each passenger and cannot be compelled to divide that fare with any other line belonging to another company.

3. The company has the right to operate the present cable and electric lines by cable and electricity respectively until 1958, and thereafter until the city shall purchase and pay for the lines.

4. The company has the right to install the underground trolley on any of its 119 routes; if it so desires, and operate in this manner until 1958.

5. The several contentions of the city hostile to the rights of the company claimed under the 99-year act are all unfounded.

6. The city has no right to allow another company to operate street cars in Adams, Washington, Harrison, Desplaines and Twelfth streets, or in any other street in which, prior to November 16, 1863, it had authorized the complainant to construct a line.

7. The ordinance of March 20, 1905 [authorizing the chancery suit by the city, which has been discontinued], should be adjudged an attempt to take the property of the complainant without compensation.

8. Any attempt on the part of the city to bring about the construction of street car lines competing with the complainant should be adjudged an impairment of the contract obligations entered into by the State, city and City Railway company in various acts and ordinances.

9. In case the city should refuse to enact the proper legislation the Federal court should fix a reasonable compensation which the company shall pay for the continued use of the trolley rights which have expired. No proceedings in open court have yet taken place in this suit.