

for candidates for Woolwich, Sandhurst or the militia. Fifty commissions, it is proposed, shall be granted yearly for students from the colonies, and a hundred for University candidates.

The Stock Protection Board in the West is urging, in view of the universal drought in New South Wales and Queensland, of unparalleled severity, that the Federal Parliament should temporarily suspend the grain and fodder duties. The Board understands that New Zealand has a larger amount of produce on hand than for many years, and with the pound a ton duty removed pastoralists would no doubt purchase largely in order to save their stock.

Mr Chamberlain, in his speech at Birmingham, said the Empire was attacked on all sides, and it was imperative to cultivate closer internal relations. If through adherence to economic pedantry and old shibboleths we lose the opportunity of closer union with the colonies and do not seize every chance of keeping trade in British hands we deserve disasters which must infallibly follow. Mr Chamberlain, speaking at Birmingham, referring to the foreign commercial policy of competition, and the new conditions arising from the creation of trusts, strongly urged the duty of seizing the opportunities of closer union offered by the colonies.

A German firm at Shanghai has offered China 50,000,000 taels annually for the monopoly of the preparation of opium. China is favourable if international obstacles are removable. It is considered difficult to enforce a monopoly on all.

Yuanshikal's opposition will probably secure the rejection of the German firm's offer of 15 (not 50 millions, as previously stated) taels for the opium monopoly, though Prince Ching advocates its acceptance.

On the tribunal asking Balschanett, the assassin of M. Siplagaine, Minister for the Interior, whether he had accomplices, he replied: "My accomplices are the Ministers and high officials who have deceived the Tsar and exasperated the people by their arbitrariness and tyranny. They are the real anarchists."

The death penalty for civilians not existing, Balschanett was sentenced to imprisonment for life.

The troops suppressed a revolutionary demonstration at Saratoff, in south-east Russia.

## GENERAL CABLES.

### THE SHIPPING COMBINE.

It is affirmed at Belfast that as the result of interviews between the Right Hon. W. J. Pirrie, chairman of the Harland-Woolfe Company, and Mr Chamberlain and Mr Balfour that the White Star line will not cease to exist, and that merely a transference of shares takes place. Morgan's syndicate will nominate seven British members. If the combination register the White Star vessels and their names under the English Companies Act the present and future ships will be at the disposal of the British Government, and the vessels will retain the British flag. A meeting of White Star Company shareholders almost unanimously approved of the sale. It is understood the price is ten million pounds. It is reported that Mrs T. H. Iamay, of Ismay, Imrie and Co., strongly opposed the sale on patriotic grounds.

The "Times" Berlin correspondent states that German shippers are disappointed at being unable to join Pierpont Morgan's combine on the same terms as the British. They pretend to commiserate with the British over the terrible blow to their shipping, hoping to score them into reprisals estranging the Americans from the British.

The "Times" commenting on the subject, says the commercial and political warfare with America and Americans will only benefit their rivals. The shipping combination is substituted for community of interest, and is operating powerfully for friendship, as war rates and subsidies would operate against it.

The German press asserts that Herr Ballin, manager of the Ham-

burg-American steamship line, has declined Mr Pierpont Morgan's offer of the management of the Navigation Syndicate at a salary of 1,000,000 dollars.

### THE FEDERAL TARIFF.

The Federal Senate voting on the reduction of the duty on hams and bacon was equal. Under the Standing Orders, it was resolved in the negative. A motion to reduce the duty to 2d was carried by 17 to 13. Mr Symons moved to reduce butter to twopenny, and cheese to one penny. He said it was a tax on food, and the duty should be brought to the lowest possible level. Cheese was largely imported from New Zealand, and this should be encouraged. It was not right to unduly impose heavy taxation on New Zealand cheese, which was distinctly superior to Australian. The reduction of the butter duty was carried by 16 to 12, but a reduction of the cheese duty was rejected by 15 to 13. Mr O'Keefe moved that the cheese duty be reduced to 2d. This was carried by 16 to 11.

Sir Charles Tupper, ex-Canadian High Commissioner, on being interviewed in London, said he anticipated colonial produce would be exempted from the corn and flour taxes. If so, there would be an influx of thousands of agricultural settlers to Manitoba and the north-west territories which would soon supply Britain with all the breadstuffs she required.

### THE KING OF SPAIN.

On May 19th, King Alfonso took the oath before the members of the Cortes. The Te Deum was sung in the Francisco Church, where a magnificent mediaeval procession was arranged. The newspapers which published Don Carlo's manifesto, emphasising the loss of the colonies have been suppressed. Gabriel Lopez, an insurance company's messenger, has been arrested in Madrid with nine dynamite cartridges in his possession. He has confessed that they were given to him to throw at King Alfonso. Other fellow conspirators who have been arrested include a student, a printer, a joiner and a mason.

Suarez, one of the anarchists arrested in Madrid with dynamite cartridges, intended for King Alfonso, served seven years for an attempt on the life of the late Senor Canovas.

### THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE.

The "Standard" recognises the diversity of aims and opinions of the colonial Premiers, and says the discussion at the forthcoming conference will prove valuable and interesting, even if it produces no draft scheme. It is hoped that a noble and inspiring ideal of closer and more organic unity will be nearer realisation after the deliberations.

Lord Onslow, Under-Secretary for the Colonies, at Kendal, expressed the hope that the forthcoming Imperial and Colonial conference would facilitate the means of communication between the Motherland and the colonies.

### THE FRENCH PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO RUSSIA.

At a gala dinner, at which 150 guests were present, the Tsar and M. Loubet exchanged the usual Alliance toasts. The "Daily Express" says a plot against President Loubet was discovered. Hence it was officially announced that he would land at Reval or Riga. Eighty arrests have been made, including parents of condemned students.

### CHINA.

It has been unanimously decided that Sheng's argument that the indemnity should be payable on a silver basis is untenable. The insurgents have burnt a bridge on the Pekin-Hankow line, and the Belgian engineers have withdrawn from Chengtingfu.

### THE INDEPENDENCE OF CUBA.

President Loubet has congratulated President Roosevelt on the establishment of the Cuban Republic.

President Roosevelt, in a letter to President Palma, of Cuba, expressed friendship and good wishes for the

stability and success of the Cuban Republic. The Cuban colours were hoisted amid great rejoicing, and the American cavalry and warships have been withdrawn. Mr Hay, U.S. Secretary of State, has notified the Powers of the independence of Cuba. The American House of Representatives passed a unanimous resolution welcoming the birth of the Republic.

### THE WEST INDIAN CATAS-TROPHEE.

Mount Pelee on Tuesday ejected a column of volcanic matter and rained red-hot boulders on the ruins of St. Pierre and neighbourhood. The rays of the sun lit up the volcanic clouds at Fort de France till they resembled molten metal, forming an appalling and sublime sight. Stones and ashes fell in the town. A tidal wave entered the bay and broke the ships' moorings. Many people fled to the hills. Others later on took refuge on the warships in the harbour. The sea, disturbed by submarine volcanic action, invaded and partly destroyed Le Carbet, a town on the coast between St. Pierre and Fort de France. A cyclone of fire simultaneously descended on the town. Two hundred and forty people were conveyed from St. Pierre and the neighbouring villages to Fort de France. Fire and smoke have appeared on a peak on the islet Diamond Rock, south-west of Martinique. The volcanic activity there still continues. Sharp shocks of earthquake were felt in Florida, United States, on Tuesday. French papers report that strange rumblings have been heard proceeding from an extinct crater in South Antut.

The American warship Potomac landed a party at St. Pierre, who recovered the American Consul's body. While they were engaged in the task Mount Pelee suddenly poured a mass of lava into the sea, accompanied by terrific detonations and thunder, and the vessel had to hurriedly escape. The British cruiser Indefatigable likewise put to sea.

A new township has been established in St. Vincent. Fifty thousand pounds sterling is required to support the sufferers for half a year and re-house them in fresh localities. The Lord Mayor of London has cabled a further £15,000. The sufferings of the wounded from burns are of a terrible nature. Sixty deaths have occurred in the hospital. Heavy rain has caused the Busepoint River in Martinique to overflow, and 20 houses were demolished and 50 damaged. A cinder cloud from Mt. Pelee swept with terrible velocity over Fort de France, dropping stones the size of hazel nuts. Many residents took refuge on the ships till the excitement gradually subsided.

A terrible panic occurred at Fort de France. Twenty thousand of the inhabitants ran about distracted, some kneeling and praying in the streets. Many fled to Guadlope, an island owned by France, in the same group, to the northward of the British possession of Dominica. Lava from Mount Pelee is issuing in greater volume. The eruption on the 8th inst. overwhelmed Grand Riviere. The inhabitants are still in the greatest danger since all means of transportation have been destroyed.

Six thousand have quitted Martinique, and thousands have gone to the extreme south of the island.

News from Martinique states that lava streams imprisoned many women and children at Grand Riviere. They were seen, and pleaded for deliverance, but it was impossible to render aid. Starvation or overwhelming by the lava is their almost certain fate. A great glimmer of light was seen in the direction of Martinique on Thursday night, accompanied by gunlike explosions. A steamer fifty miles away was covered with ashes.

It is believed that a new crater has been formed on Mt. Pelee, with a cinder cone a hundred feet high, ejecting steam, boiling mud, ashes and gases.

A torrent of lava from Mount Pelee on Saturday destroyed the remainder of Basse Pointe. A fissure 1000 yards long splits Mount Pelee's peak to the base.

Three days after St. Pierre was overwhelmed a family of five were

discovered alive in the ruins of a house. They were horribly burnt, and have since died. It is feared that many others taking refuge in houses and buried beneath the ashes might have escaped if earlier help had been available.

The Czar has given £10,000 to the Martinique fund.

## THE BOER WAR

### PEACE PROSPECTS.

Reuter's Pretoria correspondent states that on Wednesday, in accordance with the April arrangements, six Boer delegates were chosen at the Vereeniging conference, consisting of the members of the two Governments, and with De Wet, De la Rey and eight secretaries they arrived at Pretoria on Sunday and were lodged at a house next to Lord Kitchener's.

The "Daily Mail" states that in response to Boer haggling at Pretoria practically an ultimatum on the vital points has been presented by Britain with the intimation that in the event of a refusal Lord Kitchener is ready to strike.

The chief points of the peace negotiations have been satisfactorily settled at Pretoria.

The Cabinet sat for two hours considering questions in detail.

The final vote on the entire scheme will be taken at the Vereeniging conference in a few days.

The Cabinet's decision has been cabled to Lord Milner and communicated to the delegates.

Mr. Chamberlain had an audience of the King after the Cabinet meeting.

Ministers have returned to the country.

The "Standard" states that the Boers have abandoned their demands for independence, and restricted themselves to raising the questions of amnesty of the rebels, expenses of rebuilding and restocking farms, the adjustment of debts, and the status of burghers prior to the initiation of representative government.

The Transvaalers, in sending representatives to the Vereeniging Conference, left matters entirely to them, but the Free State representatives did not obtain equally full powers.

Those representatives at Vereeniging favouring peace without independence were subjected to bitter taunts.

The "Standard's" Pretoria correspondent states that up to last Saturday the proceedings at the Vereeniging Conference were rather of the nature of Free State recrimination than a discussion on the lines tentatively agreed on by the Boer leaders and those laid down by Lord Kitchener in April.

Calm counsel, however, prevailed on Sunday, when the Free States suggested points, offering to agree on their part if these were formulated. The leaders then came to Pretoria, where a final agreement will be drafted, and it is hoped, signed.

The decision is a step to general submission.

The "Times" states that the Boers' desire for full explanations or further concessions forms a substantial ground for hope. It would be premature to assume an immediate agreement, but all the chief points are within sight.

Fouche's commando was attacked because it refused to send a representative to the Vereeniging conference, and was therefore outside the tacitly understood armistice.

Everything is in readiness for an unusually vigorous campaign should the negotiations fail.

Mr. Brodrick, Secretary for War, speaking at the Volunteer Service Companies' dinner, said everybody hoped that the communications now passing might be the prelude to the surrender of the Boers. All he could say was that the Government were as determined as ever not to purchase temporary immunity from trouble by sacrificing anything tending to the permanent security of peace. The war had shown the Empire that association, mutual support and confidence had made the dream of colonial federation a reality. The colonial