

TALK OF LONDON

The Correspondents Discuss the War and Kindred Topics.

BULLER HAS 27,000 MEN

And An Anxious Public is Looking to Him to Achieve Something Important.

THE BRAVE BAND AT MAFEKING.

How Lord Roberts Heard the News of His Son's Death—
The Seizure of the German Steamer Bundesrath—
The War Office Defended—British Cabinet Rumors—
The Alleged Agreement Regarding Delagoa Bay.

London, Dec. 30.—Cabling to-day, the correspondent of the Sunday Tribune says:—This is moralists' day, and everything is under review from high finance and Boer hunting to drama, literature and horse racing. The moralists themselves are demoralized when they attempt to reconcile the most sanguinary and costly war in recent British annals with Lord Pauncefoot's championship of the principals of peace at The Hague Congress, and they have only the opening chapter of that war to summarize, with the record that England was unprepared and entrapped in an ambush, without a sequel of disasters retrieved, and the Empire delivered from deadly peril. The moralists have trouble enough in finding cause for cheerfulness in the tangled skein of the events of a single confusing and disagreeable year without facing the problem of mathematics and chronology, and attempting a perspective view of the receding ranges of the 19th century with their many historical landmarks. That is a task deferred by common consent for another 12 months. The economic writers are perhaps the loudest croakers, for they cannot close their eyes to the industrial and financial tendencies of a war of unexpected magnitude. The displacement of more than one hundred thousand workers involves a rise in wages and industrial disturbances and inevitable increase in the cost of living. For the first time in nine years there is a 6 per cent. bank rate, and the dearness of money paralyzes business and impoverishes industry. Money may be cheaper during the opening weeks of the New Year, with the release of dividends and the accommodation provided for the shipment of gold from New York, but the keenest observers are convinced that this relief will be temporary, and that the burdens upon capital and industry will be increased by official methods of financing the war, and by the continued pressure of the scarcity of gold. The Bank of England will be on trial during the next year. Although it has always been regarded as founded upon solid rock, it has shown its inability during recent years to retain possession of any portion of the immense stock of new gold which has been added to the world's working resources; and now that the Transvaal supply has been cut off, it is a question whether even a high rate of interest will prove strong enough to attract bullion from foreign markets. Two millions sterling have come from America during the last week, but ten more are needed for home use, and immense reserves are required for carrying out the Viceroy's gold standard policy in India. Treasury methods of war finance are still kept in the dark. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced a small issue of treasury bills early in the week, to replace maturing bills for war purposes, and there is some evidence that he intends to persevere in using ordinary revenue for meeting exceptional expenditures on a large scale. The war will soon cease to have what little popularity it has if the burdens are not carried forward and saddled upon a future generation by a large increase of the national debt.

BULLER NOW HAS 27,000 MEN.

It is calculated that Gen. Buller now has a force of about twenty-seven thousand men, with sixty-one guns, not counting the heavy naval weapons. Military experts here are inclined to think that Buller may be enabled to achieve something important, though he is still handicapped by want of cavalry. It is not believed, that his selection of a time for striking will be in any way affected by the approach of Lord Roberts.

HOW LORD ROBERTS HEARD OF HIS SON'S DEATH.

A story is told how General Lord Roberts heard of the death of his only son, whom he adored, and who was one of the most promising officers in the British army. It was the occasion when the British forces suffered the very severe defeat and loss on the Tugela. In the Senior Service Club, of which Lord Roberts is a member, a group was standing about the ticker reading the list of casualties, and had not observed the general, who was standing close behind. All at once he said, "God! 'Bobs' son is killed." An exclamation was heard from behind. Turning round, they made way for Roberts, who advanced and read the fatal news. He said not a word, but, turning sharply round, silently left the club to break the news as gently as possible to his wife and daughters, waiting anxiously at home. His greatest fear was lest it should be conveyed to them by some brutal, sudden manner, for instance, by the blatant cries which must have echoed terribly in their ears throughout the evening. "Poor 'Bobs'!" was all his fellow-club men could say. Most of them were retired officers, but their looks were full of pity, and every heart was hewing with sympathy toward the genial, kind-hearted, modest-minded "Bobs," whose greatest pride was just that very son.

THE BRAVE BAND AT MAFEKING.

Throughout the long but lively siege of Mafeking, Lord Salisbury's son, who has been Colonel Baden-Powell's right hand man; and who, according to a Boer report, was wounded in a sortie alleged to have been made from Mafeking last Monday, has hitherto escaped unhurt. Lord Edward Cecil represents the British Premier in the army, and, like his brothers, each in his own profession, has made his mark. He is an officer of the First Grenadier Guards, but has been detached for special service on several occasions, and wears the badge of the Distinguished Service Order. He accompanied the diplomatic mission to King Menelik, of Abyssinia. Last year he acted as aide-de-camp to Lord Kitchener, and carried the dispatches home after Omdurman. His wife, the

military advisers, and also Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who brings a small mind to bear upon the solution of large and complex questions. But there will be no immediate chances of promotion for younger men like Mr. George Wyndham unless the British arms are overwhelmed with disaster in Natal, and it becomes necessary to throw overboard one or more Jonas.

ANGLO - GERMAN AGREEMENT.

Sir Charles Dilke in to-day's Chronicle ventures upon a shrewd explanation of the Anglo-German agreement respecting the Portuguese possessions in East Africa. He contends that there has been an agreement in existence for two years, and that it relates to Delagoa Bay, but that it is what conveying lawyers describe as an escrow deed, which can have no binding force until it is executed. This is the view which is entertained in diplomatic circles. Great Britain and Germany have arranged the scheme of partition which will go into effect whenever Portugal is willing to sell out her possessions in that quarter. Portugal does not appear to be in any haste to do this, and consequently the contract for the extension of German East Africa to the Zambesi and the British occupation of Delagoa Bay is in a state of suspended animation. The Portuguese policy is intelligible; the sale of her dependencies in East Africa would be the sign that Portugal is going out of business as a colonial power, as Spain has been forced to do. The Portuguese Government is not ready to take this step. The fact that considerable possessions are retained in Africa and Asia when Spain has been forced to relinquish her colonies in the East and West Indies, is a source of satisfaction and pride in Lisbon. The cession of Delagoa Bay, when its importance has been vastly increased by the discovery of gold fields and the outbreak of a race conflict for supremacy in South Africa, would be an unpopular policy, which might provoke a revolution in Lisbon and overthrow the House of Braganza.

WAR OFFICE DEFENDED.

Conan Doyle, the novelist, publishes a letter defending the War Office personages from what he terms "unjust hysterical and essentially cowardly attacks upon men who are prevented by their official position from replying."

HIS LIFE THREATENED.

New York, Dec. 30.—Letters, threatening the life of Jas. R. Keene, the leading "bear" operator in Wall street, have been received from men who claim to have lost their money by the recent tremendous slump in prices. Mr. Keene is accused of being responsible for the operations which brought about the crisis in nearly all cases the letters are anonymous. Many of the writers told Mr. Keene that they had been caught in the bear raid and had been reduced to poverty as a result of the market's manipulation.

DAUGHTER OF ADMIRAL MAXSE.

Accompanied him to the Cape, and he remained at Cape Town while Lord Edward has been shut up in Mafeking. Lord Charles Cavendish Bentinck, of the Ninth Lancers, another of the gallant band of his father's heroes, Colonel Baden-Powell, was severely wounded in one of the first sorties. He is a half-brother of the Duke of Portland. Mafeking has now sustained a siege of twelve weeks. The Boer problem never been fewer than three to four thousand Boers investing the little town held by Colonel Baden-Powell with a handful of regular British army officers and about twelve hundred frontier irregular troops. Situated on the flat veldt, the town had but the smallest natural means of defence when Baden-Powell was sent up the mountain to secure it against the Boers, in whose side it has been a rankling thorn. Only a small fort offered protection, but by barricades and trenches it has been able so far to resist all assault.

THE BATTLE OF BELMONT.

How General Methuen Won His Victory.
MANY DEEDS OF HEROISM.
Magnificent Charge of the Grenadiers.
NAVAL BRIGADE AT GRASPAN
Did Splendid Work—The Engagement Described by a Correspondent.

London, Dec. 31.—The Daily Telegraph publishes the following description of the battle of Belmont, received by mail from its special correspondent, under date of Enslin, Sunday, Nov. 26:—

We left Orange River at three a. m. on Tuesday, Nov. 21, on our march to the relief of Kimberley. Our force comprised the Naval Brigade, Ninth Brigade under General Featherstonhaugh; Guards' Brigade under Gen. Colville, two batteries light artillery, Rimington's Guides and Ninth Lancers. We marched twelve miles to Fincham's Farm, where we breakfasted.

After a slight rest the cavalry—Ninth Lancers and Rimington's Guides—went off to reconnoitre, the enemy having been reported about six miles away. I accompanied the advance party of Ninth Lancers. We reached Kaffir's Kop, the farm where we had engaged the enemy on the previous Friday week, and saw about six hundred Boers going up to man the heights. They are extraordinarily quick in their movements. We saw them at the base of the kopje, which was covered with large bowlders, and in leisurely fashion went further in to survey their laager, thinking they must take some time to climb the kopje. We had reckoned without our hosts, however, and in an astonishing short time they opened up a smart fire on us from the top. We returned without loss, and turned westward to join the main body.

Next day we started at three p. m., the whole division about eight thousand strong, the column being nearly five miles long. The advance party was shelled in approaching Thomas' Farm, so our guns went on and began a duel with the enemy, who moved very shortly silenced, inflicting so far as we could see, considerable loss. We bivouacked at Thomas' Farm that night, the enemy being about four thousand yards from us. We occupied a bunch of kopjes on the left of the railway. There was then open ground for three thousand yards, when you came to another lot of kopjes held by the enemy. The orders were that at three a. m. the two infantry brigades were to be concentrated at a house on the railway, from which they would move off, deploy and attack. The actual kopjes on the front of the position were allotted to specified regiments. The operation was so timed that the troops were to be over the open and at the base of the kopjes ready to storm before it was daylight.

At three o'clock the infantry were in their allotted place, but, as is usually the case with large operations conducted in the dark, there was some confusion in moving off. Companies lost their regiments, officers lost their companies; the result was there was some delay, and when day broke, to my dismay, I could see long lines of infantry deployed in three lines out in the open under the enemy's very formidable position.

As soon as the day broke the enemy opened a heavy fire all along the line on our men, fully exposed in the open. There was some delay in the artillery coming into action, so at first the Boers had it all their own way. Their fire, heavy though it was, had no material effect on our men. It is often said that British infantry are not now what they used to be, the finest in the world, but if their detractors could have seen the formation of the line and the despatch of so large a force to such a distance in so short a time. All foreign authorities agree that this was a remarkable achievement. See how division is in the foreground and despatched, and yet how often we have been told that these divisions of reserves were non-existent. Surely here also the War Office has scored, particularly of the Grenadiers. I am assured by expert officers that our field artillery is still the best in Europe. Certainly in this campaign it has silenced all field guns brought against it. In the exceptional circumstances of the country and used to outrange field artillery, the most we could fairly say is that our authorities should at once admit themselves to these royal conditions. This was very quickly done by the use of the naval guns on the spot, by the despatch of siege guns from home. As to mounted infantry, this whole campaign is now a thing destined, perhaps, to revolutionize warfare, and we can simply meet conditions as they arise. The very large mounted force now on its way is a sign of how adaptive and elastic we are. The real fact is we are fighting against a very tough lot of men, whom we shall certainly wear down in the long run, but who will give us many a narrow squeak. There must be much in many a silence, without any shrieks of nous sommes trahis. Let there be a reckoning at the end for whoever has done less than his best.

GRENADIERS GO THROUGH TERRIBLE HAIL.

Personally, from what I saw—and I saw every foot of the advance—I never expect to see a more splendid example of courage in absolute obedience to orders than I witnessed on the part of the whole line, but particularly of the Grenadiers. It is difficult to praise individually when every one was so good, but a special tribute is due to this magnificent battalion.

In the darkness they had deviated slightly from the course they were meant to pursue, with the result that they found themselves face to face, instead of on the flank of an almost perpendicular side of rocky bowlders, with the enemy's men in the world occupying it. They had to advance some three hundred yards across the open before gaining the base of the kopje. For one brief moment the deadly fire checked them, but, with a show of dogged British pluck which is beyond all praise, they went on, and, once having got to the base, they gained a certain amount of shelter, though they were subjected to a severe crossfire from kopjes to right and left.

In expatiating on the difficulty of the task which confronted the Guards I don't wish to minimize the severity of the fighting which fell to the rest. The position was an almost impregnable one, and wherever your allotted number might be you had a perfect hail of bullets. One legion took place mostly in the rush over the last three hundred yards in the open.

AGAIN THE WHITE FLAG TRICK.

In addition to casualties by fair play I am sorry to say there were several by that horrible trick of showing the white flag, and then shooting the men who show themselves in answer to it. A Boer exhibited a white flag, and Lieutenants C. Willoughby and Burton, of the Coldstreams, disclosed themselves, and advanced towards him. He shot the first named in the arm and the latter in the head, killing him. I am glad to say this assassin—for you can dub him nothing less—is a prisoner in our hands.

On the left part of the position, where the Northamptons were stationed, a white flag was hoisted. Our men showed themselves, among them of the moment happening to be Mr. Knight, of the Morning Post. No sooner did they show than a smart fire was turned on them, severely wounding Mr. Knight, the officer of the company and private. Such tricks need to be done, and I shall be sorry for the Boers whom our fellows get into with the

Continued on Seventh Page.

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REMNANTS is our subject to-day: the remnants are oddments left over from our two very busy weeks—remnants in all departments, many

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