

**Bewildering
Bulletins.**

General Buller may exercise the most rigid censorship over all communications from the Cape to the British and foreign press, but he is powerless to deprive a waiting world of the bewildering bulletins announcing the progress of the campaign in South Africa. Of course, these startling stories from Natal are not *bulletins* in the sense of being brief statements of *facts* respecting passing events. Yet we do not regret that it is as it is. These public announcements of news recently received from "reliable natives" and "Kaffir runners," may lack the essential element of truth. At the same time we must say that, even if the subject matter displayed on our bulletin boards consists mainly of what Mrs. Cronwright Schreiner calls "mendacious lies," we would not like to be hastily deprived of our daily dish of wild absurdities and pleasant fiction. They encourage speculation and arouse the passers-by.

During the last week the deadly bulletin has put the Boer commander-in-chief out of action. It is useless for the British War Office to say nothing is known regarding his destruction. He has been done to death by "reliable natives" and an enterprising press. But, lest we should exhibit unseemly satisfaction at General Joubert's taking-off, another bulletin, issued simultaneously with that recording the death of the distinguished Boer, informed a duly surprised and terrified public that 50,000 Russians and Italians had been found in Johannesburg ready to face the soldiers of the Queen. We dislike to recall the nasty comments upon the numerical strength of the foreign population in the place named made by those who stopped to read this thrilling bit of news. Why these cynical sticklers for the truth should take delight in shattering the belief of the street in bulletins, and express a preference for the concise and soldierly messages from Generals Buller and White is hard to comprehend.

With regard to the story of the foreign legion found in Johannesburg, we admit there may be some mistake; seeing that the following day a despatch from Lorenzo Marques, printed in an obscure corner of our newspaper, reported that *fifty* Russians and Italians in Johannesburg have volunteered for service at the front. At the same time, we must say that we revel in these bewildering bulletins, even if they occasionally slay a General with a brush and some red ink, and increase the population of Johannesburg by creating out of hot or cold type an army of fifty thousand Russians and Italians.

Yet it opens a confusing train of thought if the information brought by "reliable natives" to the press may be the means of destroying belief in the dictionary definition of a bulletin:—"a brief statement of facts respecting some passing event." There's the rub. And our very enterprising papers cannot surely complain if their readers venture to think something is due in the way of explanation of the charming confusion created by these fairy tales from South Africa. Perhaps it would be better if some efforts were put

forth to distinguish the real bulletins by separating them from the productions of modern Munchausens.

The War and When Lord Methuen, now serving Life Insurance his country in the Transvaal, wrote to **Companies.** the London "Times," regarding the extra premium of five guineas per cent. on his life insurance during the campaigning in South Africa, we ventured to say on behalf of the companies concerned that they were quite justified in taking a common-sense view of the matter, and that the result of previous fighting against the Boers fully warranted an extra charge to cover the actual cost of war-risk insurance. We are sorry to find the data collected from the mortality statements of troops engaged, killed or wounded during October in the disturbed territory places the companies beyond criticism in their business-like action.

In the battle of Dundee, October 20 last, out of 4,593 men exposed on the British side 215 were killed and wounded. Percentage of officers killed to 193 engaged was 5.18; percentage of officers wounded to those engaged was 11.92. Altogether 17.10 per cent. of the officers engaged were either killed or wounded. In the battle of Elandsplaagte, the next day, 257 were killed or wounded out of 3,605 engaged. Of these 35 were officers. At Reitfontein, on October 24, with a total strength of 4,356, 108 men were killed and wounded.

As regards the three battles, with 387 officers and 13,000 men about the fighting line, 75 casualties (19.37 per cent.) were reported among the officers. Among the men 505 casualties (3.87 per cent.) were reported, 79 proving fatal. Total killed and wounded 580, or 4.33 per cent. Subsequent conflicts have resulted more disastrously, it is believed, for the companies.

When the complaint of Lord Methuen was being made the subject of considerable discussion in insurance journals, the "Review," of London, expressed the opinion that the rate upon war-risks was rather high, and that if one officer in fifty were hit it would be good cause for astonishment. The cause for astonishment is now given in excellent tabulated shape by the same journal which also makes the following excellent observations upon a question about which there has been a great deal of nonsense talked and written on both sides of the Atlantic:

"Patriotism sounds very well, but unless shipowners let their ships go for less money than they would in time of peace, contractors charge less for war material, and mules are purchased for less than peace prices, and unless in every respect goods become cheaper, it is absurd to expect joint-stock life insurance companies, as regards their shareholders and their civilian policy-holders, or mutual life offices, as regards the vast bulk of their policy-holders alone, to present army officers substantially with a large bonus. But it is a fact that life insurance companies have never made any profit on the extra premiums on officers' policies, and that they do not care about taking new ones at all except at prohibitory rates. On the 5 per