

## WEAK KNEED AND CHICKEN-HEARTED.

There has already been evidence (says the *Natal Witness*) that many who shouted loudest for war and urged others to do their duty to Queen and country are entirely weak-kneed and chicken-hearted. To the honour and credit of the colony, these timid men and hysterical women, who are covering with apprehension or seeking safety in hasty flight now that danger threatens, belong not to us. They are for the most part, from the ranks of those who came from the enemy's country to this place for shelter and for whom, in a large measure, our brave lads at the front are pouring their life's blood. In one case half-a-dozen individuals of the malegender who, directly they heard that the Boers were south of Ladysmith, immediately took train away. Many faces, familiar in Maritzburg a few days ago, would be sought for in vain now—faces of men who, in their airy pride and effervescent valour, presumed to tell us how the conquered territory was to be divided. When events did not go altogether in our favour, they violently attacked the Home Government, the War Office, our officers, and our heroes at the front. They dared do this, and to refer to us who gave them shelter and gave our money to their destitute as 'you British.' Now, when they have emptied their wrath-vials, when their flabbiness has become an unpleasant spectacle, they have fled, afraid. Let them go; we are well quit of them.

## WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY ON THE BATTLE FIELD.

A Cape paper states that Sir Redvers Buller is awaiting Captain Kennedy's arrival with the Marconi wireless telegraphy apparatus. Captain Kennedy is to establish communications between the various camps with the least possible delay. 'We do not expect the slightest difficulty,' said he. 'The system has been so improved upon, and brought to such a state of perfection that we expect to have our apparatus in working order four days after landing at Cape Town. We do not know at present what point we shall be sent to, but I am informed that we shall be directly under the command of General Sir Redvers Buller. The apparatus will enable us to establish communications over 250 miles in extent, and we can defy any attempt to "tap" the messages. Our stations can be so rapidly removed from place to place that we can entirely disappear from human vision in half an hour, taking our apparatus with us.'

## THE DUTCH ELEMENT AT THE CAPE.

Mr A. B. Paterson ('Banjo'), writing from Capetown to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, says:—'After landing was finished I went up the town and met my first Boer. I heard that a Boer prisoner on parole was at one of the hotels, and a mutual friend introduced us. He was not long and wild and hairy. He was a refined and educated man, a doctor of medicine, and had seen several battles. He at once offered to play me billiards, and said he had occasionally made breaks of over 50. I thought it wise to decline. He says that the Boers are having a long way the best of it as regards the fighting. They lose positions but they save men. They shoot till the last moment and then run. All the talk about the Boers being savages is nonsense. They treat the wounded well. I saw a man to-day who had four bullet wounds, and he had nothing but good to say of the Boers. They assisted him in every way they could. Here the ultimate success of England is looked upon as assured, but there is a deep political question underlying it all. The Cape Ministry is looked upon as pro-Boer, and the British organs call them all sorts of names. But the fact remains that they hold office by a vote of the majority of the local House. There are more locals against the war than for it, and the extremist papers on the English side here are urging that after the war the franchise should be taken from the pro-Boer party. This seems strange in view of the fact that the war itself is undertaken solely to get franchise for the Outlanders. The fact is that the Cape is very Dutch, and it cannot be expected that these people will look kindly on a war in which their own kinsfolk are engaged. After England has beaten these Boers she will still have a sullen and discontented population to deal with, not only across the Vaal but in the parent colony. All classes of the community are impregnated with the Dutch element, not that they profess any preference for Dutch over English, but their sympathies naturally are with their kinsmen in the Boer Republic. One never knows, even in a club or hotel, who may be a Boer sympathiser. Very little feeling is openly expressed. People are frightened to make any open declaration of hostility to England or of opposition to the war, lest they or their relatives should incur punishment when the day of reckoning comes. That the Boers will have to pay the reckoning is looked upon as beyond a doubt. Boer money is already advancing in price in the expectation that there will be no more Boer coinage after the war.'

## PRISONERS OF WAR.

In view of the fact that large numbers of men have been taken prisoners by both sides, the question has been asked—How are prisoners treated by their captors? International law recognises the right of the belligerent so to deal with its prisoners as to prevent their escape, but no greater severity is to be exercised towards them than is necessary to effect this object. Imprisonment in the full sense of the word (says one writer) is only permissible under exceptional circumstances, as after an attempt to escape, or if there is reason that an attempt to escape will be made. If prisoner endeavours to escape, he may be killed during his flight, but if re-captured he cannot be punished except by confinement sufficiently severe to prevent the chance of escape, because the fact of surrender as prisoner of war is not understood to imply any promise to remain in captivity. Prisoners of war are maintained at the expense of the Government in whose power they are, and sometimes a money allowance is made to them, although it is hardly likely that on the present occasion the Boers will carry generosity to this extent. Prisoners may be put to work suitable to their condition, but not to such as has direct relation to the war.

## A COOL GUNNER.

In a private letter from Ladysmith there is an account of a Boer who was sucking his pipe whilst firing a big gun. He was seen through a glass to fall down, presumably from the explosion of a shell. After a moment he rose up, found his pipe, and continued firing. Yet a second time he was knocked down, and to the surprise of the beholder, he again got up and went on firing and smoking at the same time. He was not wounded.

## 'SHALL I SLAY MY BROTHER BOER?'

In a hamper of literature sent out to the British soldiers in South Africa, there was discovered a bundle of Mr. Stead's pamphlet, 'Shall I slay my brother Boer?' Tommy Atkins has many faults, but he cannot be accused of being a philosopher, and his present business is to slay, otherwise his brother Boer is likely to slay him, consequently Mr. Stead's appeal is not likely to affect the accuracy of his aim. Newspaper editors may be very philosophic, or very warlike, as the case may be, but then they have no Mauser bullets nor murderous shells dropping close at hand to disturb their equanimity.

## LET THE DONKEY HAVE A CHANCE

The first German officers who came to drill the Transvaal troops had a hard time of it. They found no discipline anywhere, and the men knew only the rudiments of drill. Major Albrechts, at present the chief in command of the O.F.S. Artillery, found it an irksome task to drill his contingent. One legend says he lost his temper, and was guilty of an amusing slip of the tongue. He had been putting a squad of country recruits through the approved evolutions, but several of the men could not keep step. The Major roared himself hoarse, and the 'donnerwetters' he uttered had become traditional. At last, losing all patience, he said, aside, 'You men are not worth drilling by an officer. You'd better get a donkey to drill you; Field-cornet Smit, will you take my place for the present?'

## A NEWSPAPER PROPRIETOR IN TROUBLE.

A Queenstown despatch of December 7 states that on the Sunday previous a patrol of four men and a corporal of Brabant's Horse from Penhoek came across a few Boers about 10 miles from Symon's store on the Dordrecht side. The Boers were on a kopje and seemed to be in large numbers. The patrol succeeded in reaching the camp in safety. Mr. O'Brien, the proprietor of the *Dordrecht Guardian*, has been arrested and is now on his way to Bloemfontein. Mr. O'Brien, of the *Frontier Guardian*, who has just arrived here, reports that his father has been arrested by 10 armed burghers, and taken to Aliwal North, via Jamestown. There is much anxiety, as his paper was always strongly anti-Bond, and his son is secretary of the local Uitlander League.

## A STRANGE STORY.

The death of Captain Weldon, one of the ill-fated Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was an overwhelming shock to his mother. She had felt anxious about her son for several days, and had refused in consequence to go to a dance given by her daughter. During the night of her son's death she heard someone say: 'Mother! Mother!' She arose and went into another son's room, but found him asleep. The message came to her the next day that her soldier boy was dead.

## NOT AS BAD AS THEY ARE PAINTED.

Lieutenant C. E. Kinahan, of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, gives an interesting account of his experiences as a prisoner of war. Regarding his treatment by the Boers, he says: 'All you read about the Boers in England is absolutely untrue. They are most kind to the wounded and prisoners, looking after them as well as their own wounded, and anything they've got they will give you if you ask them, even if they deprive themselves. We came up to Pretoria in first-class sleeping carriages, and the way they treated us was most considerate, feeding us and giving us coffee every time we stopped. The day we arrived we took up quarters on the racecourse, but we have been moved into a fine brick building, with baths, electric light etc. They provide us with everything, from clothes down to toothbrushes. They also feed us, and we are constantly getting presents of vegetables and cigars from private people. In fact, we have everything we like except our liberty; for some reason or other they won't at present give us parole, and we are surrounded by sentries. There are close upon fifty officers in this building, and they have got any amount of wounded ones in different places. They say they won't exchange the officers at any price.'

## A STRIKING INCIDENT.

The steamer *Orient* reached Southampton on December 21, with a number of men who had been wounded in the Boer War. A London *Daily Chronicle* who boarded the vessel had interviews with a number of soldiers. He says:

One of the most striking figures on the deck of the *Orient* was Corporal Kelly, of the 5th (Irish) Lancers. Wrapped in a huge greatcoat, he hobbled along with the aid of a stick, but if he suffered pain he showed no sign of it in his cheery smile. Kelly is the hero of one of the most striking incidents in the battle of Elands-laagte. He told me his story more modestly than it may appear in print in the first person.

'I struck two Boers,' he said, 'right through with my lance. They were mounted on one horse, one having had his horse shot under him. After pinning them I could not disengage my lance, and, finding myself surrounded by Boers, I had to use my sword to cut my way through them. Fortunately, I got away all right, but I was wounded in the spine in a little affair two days afterwards.'

'You are disabled from active service now,' I ventured to suggest.

'Oh, dear, no,' was the instant reply, 'I expect to be all right in a fortnight, and hope to get back to the front again.'