

cooks with wedding-cakes; undertakers with coffins; fish-mongers with cod-fishes; and butchers with legs of mutton. There were surgeons with their instruments; lawyers with their papers and parchments; and clergymen with their books of devotion. Such a babel was never heard before in London. And to complete the business, who should drive up but the lord mayor in his state carriage; the governor of the Bank of England; the chairman of the East India Company; and even a scion of royalty itself, in the person of the Duke of Gloucester. Hook and his confederates were meantime enjoying the fun from a window in the neighborhood, but the consternation occasioned to the poor lady who had been made the victim of the jest, was nearly becoming too serious a matter. Hook never avowed himself as the originator of this trick, though there is no doubt of his being the prime actor in it. It was made the subject of a solemn investigation by many of the parties who had been duped, but so carefully had the precautions been taken to avoid detection that the inquiry proved entirely fruitless.

'CIVIS' of the *Otago Daily Times* has been 'drawing lines'—a useful and sometimes profitable occupation, by the way, when the lines are drawn judiciously and in the right

time and place. For instance, he has drawn the line against discussing with the N.Z. TABLET the needless cruelty of placing Boer women interned in British camps upon short rations. It would have been well for 'Civis's' credit as a journalist if, when the chalk was in his hand, he had also drawn the line at the literary crime of garbling quotations from the TABLET, and attributing to it directly and by implication statements which it never made or dreamed of making. A fact or an argument from 'Civis' upon the short-ration policy might have been interesting. But he had none to give. As for the spasms and jumps of his 'Note' of last Saturday, they would have been entertaining but for their disagreeable suggestiveness of epilepsy. 'Civis's' surrender is but the natural result of that weakness in fact and logic which quite unfitted him for a discussion upon which he presumed to enter. In scourging some of the 'Civises' of the *Globe* in 1836 Disraeli remarked: 'An anonymous writer should at least display power. When Jupiter hurls a thunderbolt, it may be mercy in the god to veil his glory with a cloud; but we can only view with contemptuous levity the mischievous varlet who pelts us with mud as we are riding along, and then hides behind a dust-bin.' Anonymity, such as that of 'Civis,' may have its advantages, but it has its dangers and responsibilities as well.

The question which aroused 'Civis's' personal attack upon us was a very simple one. We held that the treatment meted out to the Boer women referred to above was needlessly cruel, (1) because it meant such a reduction of rations as would cause at least some measure of distress or starvation to them and their children; (2) because women and girls forcibly detained in such a condition amidst the surroundings of even the best-conducted military camp were 'practically' placed between the alternatives of bearing with hunger or selling themselves to shame. And (3) we proved that the treatment of women and children as enemies, the burning and plundering of their homes, and the placing of the hapless and unoffending creatures in military camps upon short rations, were so many offences against the recognised usages of civilised warfare. Here were three clear-cut issues for discussion. (1) Against the first point 'Civis' could advance nothing beyond this: that in prisons 'a régime [regimen?] of "reduced rations" doesn't necessarily mean hunger.' Doesn't it? Well, it means sixteen ounces of dry bread and a little water in the twenty-four hours. It is, moreover, considered so severe a punishment that it is inflicted only for the most serious breaches of prison regulations. Visiting justices are not permitted, 'in any circumstances, to condemn a prisoner to more than three days of these reduced rations; and any term beyond that may be inflicted only by a sentence passed in open court. This is, presumably, the scale of dietary on which 'Civis' asks his readers to believe that 'men are actually known to grow fat.'

It is not necessary to suppose that the Boer women and their families who are interned in British camps in South Africa are placed upon this particular scale of dietary. But it emphasises the fact that even under one of the mildest civilian administrations in the world the penalty of short rations is not to be trifled with. The avowed purpose of the penalty as applied in South Africa constitutes in itself the strongest *prima facie* evidence that it was intended to produce a decidedly unpleasant degree of distress. English newspapers clearly stated that the motive of this harsh policy was to induce such a degree of discomfort that, in order to alleviate it, the Boers out on commando would feel themselves compelled to surrender with a view to sparing their wives and little ones the further pangs of hunger unappeased. The truth of this charge was evidently fully admitted by Mr. Brodrick, Secretary of State for War, in his reply to a question in the House Commons. Here is the substance of this part of his reply as

given in the unmutated cable message which appeared in the Melbourne *Argus* of March 1:—'Mr. Brodrick admitted that those women whose husbands were still actually on commando were all on reduced rations, while those whose husbands had given in their submission had full rations allowed them, the object being, of course, to induce the surrender of the men still under arms.' Points (2) and (3) referred to above were not discussed, nor denied, nor even questioned by 'Civis.' So far as the merits of the controversy went, he let his whole case go by default. But he made it abundantly clear that he did not 'draw the line' at advocating a departure from the usages of civilised warfare in the treatment of the gentler sex.

Cardinal Manning says in one of his books: 'Anonymous writing is a dangerous trade. Few men can resist the temptation to write under a mask things which they would not say with open face.' It is painful to be compelled to say that 'Civis' has time and again fallen away from journalistic grace under the stress of this temptation. From behind the safe cover of his mask—or dust-bin—he has adopted modes of discussion which he would not dare to follow if his identity were commonly known and he could be made to bear in person the obloquy attendant upon violation of the usages of respectable and straightforward journalistic controversy. His favorite weapon against us now is the same as during the last election campaign: radical and persistent misrepresentation of the position taken up by us on the matter in dispute—attributing to us statements of the gravest nature which we never made, and insinuating against us contentions which we never put forward. The evident purpose of all this is to prejudice the case against us from the outset in the eyes of those for whom 'Civis's' leaden columns are apparently intended. For instance, (1) 'Civis' makes the N.Z. TABLET say that 'the motive' of the short-rationing of Boer women and girls was to starve them 'into submission to the lust of their captors and guardians!' This statement is a sheer invention of 'Civis's.' (a) We never stated or even hinted that this was 'the' motive of the short-ration policy. (b) We never stated or even hinted that it was even 'a' motive of the short-ration policy. The real motive of the infliction of this penalty has been stated and re-stated by us in language too plain for even 'Civis' to mistake—namely, to compel the surrender of the Boers who are still upon the veldt with Mausers in their hands. (c) We stated our conviction—a conviction which we still hold—that one result of this new mode of warfare against women would be to 'practically' place the Boer females affected by it between the alternatives of bearing hunger or sacrificing their virtue amidst the well-known temptations incident to camp or barrack life whether in peace or war. We nowhere stated that this result was foreseen, much less directly intended, by the authors of the reduced ration campaign. If it were not foreseen, so much the better. If it were, it may have been regarded merely as an incident—very possibly a regrettable incident—of the short-ration mode of fighting. For war, even at its best, is a cruel game—much more so when those responsible for its conduct set themselves to violate the recognised rules and customs with which international usage has endeavored to mitigate its severity towards unprotected women and children.

(2) With a similar disregard for sacred fact 'Civis' suggested to his readers (a) that our comment on the petticoat campaign was an attack on the personal courage of the officers and men of the army, and (b) that it was an exhibition of wild and unreasoning rage 'against all things British!' In the face of all this, it is a mere detail that (c) he puts into our mouth the foolish statement that we do not see the morning paper! Our real statement was to the effect that we do not read 'Civis.' Like many other readers of the *Otago Daily Times*, we long ago found the truth of Edmund Burke's words: 'A dull proser is more endurable than a dull joker.' We have neither time nor inclination to burrow in the back pages of the large Saturday's issue of our esteemed local contemporary to which 'Civis's' crude literary efforts are relegated. We have not read a line of them for over a year. It is only when the good man runs amok that we hear of him. And then we learn of his continued existence through some leisured person who is not particular about the quality of his reading matter.

We may, in conclusion, remind 'Civis'—in his own words—that he has neither 'recanted nor apologised' for his serious and persistent misrepresentation of our remarks both now and on a former occasion, nor for the unfounded charge of political corruption which, for the purposes of a political campaign, he levelled at the Catholic hierarchy of New Zealand. We, too, hold the chalk in our hand. And the score against 'Civis' is mounting up. For fair comment, however hostile, we have only fair and friendly reply. We are glad to acknowledge that 'Civis's' methods are wholly foreign to the almost uniformly respectable traditions of the *Otago Daily Times*. They are to honorable journalistic discussion what vitriol-throwing is to neighbors' quarrels and the poisoning of wells.