

# The New Zealand Graphic.

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# Topics of the Week.

## AN EXTRAORDINARY UTTERANCE.

When the history of the present campaign comes to be written, the chronicler will find few of its features more remarkable than the positive furor of excitement and enthusiasm with which the news of the relief of Kimberley, Ladysmith (and we will hope Mafeking) was received. Our ancient reputation as a calm, impassive, and unemotional race has been swept away as if it had never been, and the world has seen (one imagines with some surprise) that the stolid and phlegmatic Britisher can become as completely intoxicated with excitement as "the hysterical Gaul," as Disraeli once called the French, not foreseeing that his own countrymen would one day seem to rival them in excitability. We have all read of many ludicrous acts committed by usually staid and decorous individuals in their first frenzy of relief and delight. But one could scarcely have imagined that the judicial mind would have been so easily and extravagantly affected as that of our poor ordinary mortals. A judge, one had thought, would, so long as he was on the Bench, have been impervious to national excitement. But this was not the case, and Mr Justice Grantham, one of the best known criminal judges in England, must be credited with assuredly the most remarkable of all the remarkable actions attributable to the exuberant excitement roused by our martial successes. It appears that in a dispute over the evacuation of Spionkop a man had killed his brother-in-law with a poker. The trial took place immediately after the arrival of a telegram giving news of the relief of Kimberley. Said the judge: "Remembering that the dispute took place through the absorbing topic of the war, and as we have very satisfactory news, and considering the way you have behaved, I think that, under all the circumstances, justice would be met by my giving you the benefit of the very satisfactory news received to-day. It is a very fortunate thing for you that news has come in just now, telling us of the relief of Kimberley, so that, I think that, under the circumstances, and looking to your past good character, and remembering that this is your first offence, you may be discharged." Save that the judge's own words are given us (the quotation is verbatim), the story would scarcely be credible, and perhaps the most amazing thing is the casual allusion to manslaughter as a first offence, after the style of an inebriate, as if it had been quite conceivable that a man would have been several times brought up for killing a brother. The matter being set forth so circumstantially, one is forced to believe it; but had it been any other judge but Mr Justice Grantham one would have found it hard to do so. But this judge has on several occasions caused surprise by the eccentricity of his sentences, which have, and in really bad cases, erred so much on the side of leniency as to cause a positive feeling of consternation. Of course, it is conceivable that the prisoner deserved to get off in any case; the facts are not known to us, but to speak of "the ends of justice," and then to discharge a man because of a British victory, opens out infinite possibilities, both humorous and grim. If the precedent is followed, the man who wants to get rid of an inconvenient fellow creature, will add to his other possibilities of escaping the gallows that of his trial taking place simultaneously with a triumph of British arms.

## THE NEW ZEALAND CHAMBERLAIN.

I suppose the most prominent New Zealander who has visited South Africa recently with peaceful intent, is Mr George Hutchison, the member for Patea. It is just possible that mere curiosity, and nothing more prompted the trip, as it has prompted others to that distant shore, but the story goes that George went to South Africa not merely to see, but to be seen, and that he posed, not unsuccessfully, as the civilian representative of

New Zealand. As such he would certainly have had a great deal of attention shown him, as appears to have been the case. He was granted passports through the country, and if he had chosen might no doubt have been present at some of the battles. I understand he did not choose, and perhaps he was wise. It would have been a serious affair if by any mishap he had fallen into the hands of the enemy. That superficial resemblance to Mr Chamberlain, which he is said to cultivate, might have proved his ruin among the bloodthirsty Boers, to whom the very name of the Secretary for the Colonies is like a red rag to a bull. But even had his life been spared he might have been kept a prisoner in Pretoria for months. Now that he has escaped these perils he may turn his experiences to good account when Parliament meets. He will be an authority on South Africa as compared with his fellow members, and even Mr Seddon may have cause to envy his knowledge of the subject. Doubtless in future communications from the South African authorities to New Zealand "Your Mr Chamberlain" will be referred to as able to confirm or throw light on a matter. It was decidedly clever of George to think of making that trip. Mr Seddon had reaped nearly all the kudos for the contingents, and little could a mere member, and of the Opposition at that, hope to get of it here in New Zealand. His only chance was to go straight to South Africa and gather it fresh for himself. The folks there were not likely to make fine distinctions, and any member of the New Zealand Legislature going there at this time was sure of lavish attention. When it was announced the other day that Mr Seddon had been ordered complete rest and a change, some lively imaginations concluded that the Premier might take a trip to South Africa, run up to the front, say how'd'ye do to Roberts, congratulate the New Zealand boys on their achievements and be back in time for the work of the session. It was an alluring programme, and I have no doubt Mr Seddon himself would have vastly enjoyed carrying it out. But apparently the thing is not to be done. Mr Seddon is not going to South Africa, and the distinction of having actually walked the theatre of war, trod the streets of Ladysmith, and surveyed the country from the kopjes, rests solely, so far as I am aware, with Mr George Hutchison.

## THE HOUGHENIMS AT THE WAR.

Some weeks ago I reminded my readers that the horse had not got anything like his fair share of credit for the part he is playing in the war. The deeds of the soldiers are an everyone's lips. They are belauded in heroic prose and frequently in verse that is very much the reverse. But the dumb heroism of the poor creature has but an occasional chronicler. Our sympathy and our gold have been solicited, and very properly, on behalf of the valiant Tommy, but hardly a voice has pleaded the claims of Tommy's noble four-footed comrade in the war. I would enlist the sympathy of my readers in one appeal that came to me from England last week, and which I think is well worthy of attention. Mr Lawrence Pike, of Wareham, writes: "Sir, - Will you kindly permit me to make known to your readers that the statement made recently at a meeting at Scarborough to the effect that 'horses, after being wounded in battle, are not abandoned to lingering suffering and a slow death,' is incorrect and misleading. It is a matter of fact that badly wounded horses are abandoned, in time of war, to lingering suffering and a slow death, whenever their masters have not the time nor the opportunity to shoot them; that is, whenever such action would involve risk to human life. The appended letter from the Under-Secretary of State for War shows that the authorities of the War Office recognise what happens on the battlefields and recommend that efforts be made to obtain the extension of the terms of the Geneva Convention to those who may go out after an engagement to relieve the sufferings of wounded animals. Among letters received from officers of cavalry regiments, now at the front, is the following: 'I think that wherever possible

badly wounded horses are destroyed on the battlefield. Personally I have shot, or have had shot, several, and have given orders that all badly wounded horses should be destroyed by the men, and I think that this is generally done throughout the service. Of course, there are many cases when it is impossible to carry this out, when, for instance, cavalry have to retire under heavy musketry fire, which, I am sorry to say, is often the case.' What is said by an officer of a cavalry regiment is confirmed by officers of artillery and transport corps. Indeed, there is no doubt that very often in existing circumstances animals wounded on the battlefield are not and cannot be attended to. All this would be altered if the terms of the Geneva Convention were extended. Persons who go out to attend to wounded men are protected. Why should not those who go out to care for wounded animals, to whom we owe so much, be protected also? It has been said that man is god of the horse; does not the cry come to us from the battlefield: 'My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?'"

## COMPLETE REST.

Some of us are inclined to believe that that amazing person, our Premier, can do anything and everything to which he sets his mind, a belief probably shared by the hon. gentleman himself. Yet somehow I suspect that in a few days the hitherto indomitable Dick Seddon, practical dictator of New Zealand, will ruefully realise that a task has been set him which is greater than he can perform. He has been told to enjoy complete rest, and is no doubt manfully endeavouring to do so. The term "complete rest" is of course a false one literally, "complete" being merely comparative, since the only real "complete rest" is not to be secured by mortals this side eternity. But I am now taking the words as they are usually understood, and I very much doubt if Mr Seddon is finding it easy to take, far less to enjoy, even that qualified and comparative amount of "complete rest." That Mr Seddon has a capacity for work equalled even by men who have occupied similar positions is of course notorious. We all know that he can do the work of three, and as the pugilists say come up smiling. We are all now aware that he has almost single handed "run the colony" for several years, carrying a load of responsibility and anxiety that would have crushed a score of strong men. But all this is no reason why he should be able to rest well. On the contrary, it gravely discounts his chance of being able to do so. To work strenuously and to play successfully, is a combination of gifts Nature is chary of bestowing. Best men should imagine themselves Gods. Best, the best sort of rest as we know it, is of course sleep, the next being change of employment. Gladstone, whose capacity for work excelled even that of our Premier, was a past master in both these invaluable forms of relaxation. Or sleep he himself confessed he never seemed able to enjoy enough, and was always conscious of a delightful difficulty in leaving his bed. How many millions of brain workers must have sighed enviously to find that overwork is not always the slaughterer of sleep, and that a man who so matchlessly surpassed them in intellect and over-work was yet able to enjoy their sleep denied them by that petty labourer, in ability to change thought and labour Gladstone was also incomparable, turning a war, tantamount to affairs of State, a translation of Homer, or critical consideration of the books of the day. What can Mr Seddon do in this war, one wonders, will he find out his limitations in the warm aims of the Pacific on the awized deck of the Tritonank. Sleep, we believe, the Premier can, but he has accustomed himself to manage with such a modicum that it may be doubted if he can make the most of the full and generous opportunities for sleep now offered him. And in his waking hours has he any hobby or taste to which he can turn to banish the usual trains of thought to which he is accustomed? If not found one has never heard of them. Mr Seddon will as surely not attain even comparatively "complete rest" though he will certainly escape such an amount of worry as will restore him completely to health. Probably his mind will be busy with new projects, fresh schemes, and multitudinous improvements. He will be ever planning, and

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