

Ministers' Conference would consider how we could put the enthusiasm which had brought the colonies into the field with us on a permanent basis. The war would give freedom to and establish a great empire in South Africa.

A number of Boers assembled in the market square in Pretoria on Saturday, expecting a declaration of peace. The "Daily Mail" declares that nothing stands in the way of peace, and that it is expected the Government will make in the House of Commons on Tuesday an announcement showing that they have satisfactorily and inflexibly maintained the British position. The Vienna newspaper, "Neue Freie Presse," rejoicing at the prospects of peace, admits that the world must thank England for leading the way for three centuries in all great achievements in politics, economics, and culture. The tone of the German newspapers is more friendly generally towards England.

THE FIGHTING.

Nine thousand troops participated in General Ian Hamilton's drive, from the 7th to the 11th instant. Vanzy's commando of rebels and Zapp's commando were practically wiped out.

Lord Lovat's force surprised Fouches's laager at Stapleford, killing and wounding several, and capturing eighty-four horses and sixty full bandoliers.

The "Times" states that McKinney, Jack Hindon's subordinate in his train-wrecking exploits, has surrendered.

The following cablegram has been received by the Government from Colonel Davies, who is in command of the New Zealand Eighth Contingent, which took part in General Hamilton's recent successful "drive":

"The following has been received from General Ian Hamilton: 'Result of recent operations—Killed, 1; prisoners, 354; rifles, 262; horses, 326; mules, 95; donkeys, 20; waggon, 175; Cape carts, 61; cattle, 3500; sheep, 1300; ammunition, 63,640; trek oxen, 106.' Amongst the prisoners is Jan De la Rey, elder brother of the general. Since telegraphing this to Pretoria General Hamilton has received the following from Lord Kitchener: 'Capital result. Tell troops I highly appreciate their exertions, and consider the result very satisfactory.' We have now, since Lord Methuen's capture, taken 860 of De la Rey's force. As there are a considerable number of new troops under his command, the G.O.C. mobile columns in West Transvaal think column commanders would do well to explain to them that the G.O.C.-in-Chief is not in the habit of bestowing indiscriminate praise, and that, on the contrary, the compliment which has been paid this force is a very rare occurrence."

THE PREMIER IN AFRICA.

Mr Seddon received a cordial reception at Maritzburg.

Mr Seddon addressed the Seventh New Zealand Contingent, mustering 360, at Newcastle, on the eve of their departure for the colony. Accompanied by Generals Ian Hamilton, Wilson and Baden-Powell, he inspected the Eighth Contingent at Klerkadorp. They had just returned from a successful drive. Colonel Davies commands the complete column.

Mr Seddon received an enthusiastic welcome at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. In the course of an address he said that New Zealand was prepared to treble her efforts for the Empire. He was confident that Imperial representation would be granted when demanded.

Sir J. Ward has received the following cablegram from Mr Seddon, dated Pretoria, May 22:—"I have visited the hospitals at Johannesburg, Potchefstroom, and Klerkadorp. The New Zealand patients are all doing well. I went along the front for 60 miles, and visited the Eighth Contingent, who are just in from General Hamilton's drive. Generals Hamilton, Baden-Powell, Wilson, and Colonel Thorneycroft accompanied me. Colonel Davies and the officers and men are first-rate, and desire me to convey their best wishes to New Zealand. General Hamilton addressed the column, and praised highly the services of the New Zealanders. He did not want better men under him. He also praised their capacity for digging trenches. By these marks the New Zealanders will be known,

I visited the scene of the railway disaster to the Eighth. It is marvellous so few were killed."

The Acting-Premier has received a cable message from Mr Seddon, who is at Johannesburg, to the effect that no more contingents will be required from New Zealand. This is interpreted to mean that the termination of the war is in sight, Mr Seddon being privy to what is passing behind the scenes.

Mr Seddon, speaking at a banquet at Pretoria, expressed the hope that the blockhouses would soon be turned into creameries and butter factories.

Mr Seddon, cabling to Sir J. G. Ward, says: "Passed a pleasant time at Pretoria as the guest of the Administrator. Had tea with Lord Milner, and dinner with Lord Kitchener. Had a long interview with both yesterday. Very satisfactory. Right men in the right place. To-day visited Elandsfontein Hospital. Forty-nine New Zealanders are patients. No serious cases, chiefly dysentery, rheumatism, and enteric. Lord Kitchener has sent Colonel Birdwood with us. General Baden-Powell also accompanies. Feeling for New Zealand cordial. The Administrator practically admits our land settlement conditions are the best suited for South Africa. Am now proceeding to Vereeniging to inspect the Ninth Contingent. Time permitting, I will see the Boer delegates. Had a most cordial send-off at Pretoria and Johannesburg."

Sir Joseph Ward received the following cable from Mr Seddon, dated Orange River, 1.25 p.m., 24th May:—

"I inspected the Ninth Contingent at Verreiking yesterday. Officers, men and horses are all well. The Contingent is disappointed at not yet having had a brush with the enemy. The officer commanding the column spoke highly of them. I gave a short address, and the latest New Zealand news. All along the line I have been well received. At Bloemfontein an illuminated address was presented by the borough, expressing great satisfaction at New Zealand's action in South Africa, and re Imperial Federation. I was also entertained by a large number of New Zealanders, who are doing well. Made a short stay at De Aar, and was met by the Midland Railway Commissioner. The Director-General of Railways accompanied us right through. Have nothing to learn on railway questions. Peace negotiations satisfactory. My opinion that no further contingents would be required is confirmed.—Seddon."

RETURN OF THE SIXTH CONTINGENT.

On Tuesday of last week the Auckland section of the Sixth Contingent returned home. At Onehunga the troopers were welcomed by Major Reid, officer commanding the Auckland district, and left by the eleven o'clock train for Auckland, arriving shortly before noon. At the railway station they were met by His Worship the Mayor (Mr Alfred Kidd), the town clerk (Mr H. Wilson), Councillors, and a large number of relatives and friends of the men. The contingent formed up and proceeded to Government House grounds, where they were welcomed by His Excellency the Governor, Lord Ranfurly, Lady Ranfurly, Captain Boscawen, A.D.C., General Babington, Captain Alexander, Major Moore, R.A., and Captain Campbell.

Addressing the returned troopers, His Excellency said:—Lieut.-Colonel Banks, Non-commissioned Officers and Men.—It gives me great pleasure to welcome you back to Auckland, and congratulate you on a safe return from South Africa. After inspecting the men and making a few enquiries the latter were dismissed and joined their friends.

Mr Runciman, member for Constantia, has issued a manifesto on behalf of forty-six colonial Imperial Progressive members. It declares that the suspension of the Constitution is imperative, and that the Dutch themselves are anxious for it. The colony should have rest for two or three years in order to avoid the acrimony incidental to elections. Sir J. G. Sprigg's majority of eight implies that three or four men rule and are compelled to make compromises with the consequent weakening of any measures submitted. The loyalists were entitled to demand a redistribution of seats on a numerical basis. Such,

however, would never pass the present Parliament. Redistribution alone would maintain the supremacy of Sir J. G. Sprigg. Federation must begin from within. That, however, would consume years and other colonies meanwhile would unite to boycott the Cape commercially and politically.

The "Standard" states Mr Runciman's not an important accession, and that only two Progressives now support Sir J. G. Sprigg.

Mr. Runciman, addressing his Simonstown constituents, said five members of the Government majority were ready to vote to maintain the Bond, and that the prospect of the Afrikaner party's return to power would be an unthinkable calamity. The Imperial Government ought, on restoration of the constitution, to introduce a more equitable system of redistribution.

GENERAL NEWS.

At Mangaweka on Saturday a young man named Sid. Cole was out with his brother shooting, when he slipped and his gun went off, blowing the fleshy part of the calf of one leg completely away. It is feared he will not recover the use of his leg.

Two men living at Mamaku, near Roturua, went into the bush last week and got lost. They were very lightly clad, and without food. A search party went out next day and found them completely exhausted from cold and the want of food.

The silver wedding of Mr and Mrs Wait, of Devonport, was celebrated on Thursday evening last in the Ponsonby Hall, about 50 couples being present. During the evening several presents were handed to Mr and Mrs Wait, and a number of congratulatory speeches made, all wishing that the couple might live to see their golden wedding.

At a restaurant situate not a hundred miles from Hastings, and which is extensively patronised by natives (says a Napier paper), the bill of fare on a recent date contained the item "fried warrior." Some of the dusky patrons, whether from curiosity or a more reminiscent feeling, ordered the dish, and appeared to be not unpleasantly surprised to find "fried wharehou" (an East Coast dish) brought in response to the order instead of the anticipated left wing of a Boer commandant.

The work of laying the cable that was recently imported for connecting East Island with the mainland at the East Cape will be begun shortly by the Tutanekai. The distance between the island and the main coast is only about a mile, but in order to enable the cable to rest on a sandy bottom and in comparatively still water it has been found necessary to adopt a route five miles longer, which was surveyed last year by Captain Boliars, of the Hinemoa. The island is surrounded with rocks, and it is only in the calmest weather that a landing can be made.

On Sunday, as the ten minutes past six boat from Devonport was berthing at the Devonport Ferry Company's tea a young lady named Miss Collis endeavoured to step from the steamer to the wharf, but had the misfortune to miss her footing and fall into the harbour. She was rescued from her perilous position by two young men named W. Stack, of Wellington, and Foster, of Farnell.

The coaches on the country roads are now running according to their winter time-table, which was commenced the beginning of the present month, and continues in force until the end of October. There are several important alterations from the ordinary service, and persons who intend travelling in the country to Kawhia or overland to Wanganui will save themselves considerable inconvenience by making enquiry at the Government Tourist Department office in Queen-street.

On Saturday evening last the cyclists of the Birkdale district met in the schoolroom for the purpose of appointing a deputation to wait on the Birkenhead Borough Council with reference to a cycle track from Chelsea Hill to the lower end of Birkdale Road. There was a large attendance, and Mr Brooke, the

head teacher of the district, presided. The matter having been thoroughly discussed, a deputation was appointed to wait on the Council, and those present subscribed a good round sum to assist in the construction should the request be granted.

The retailers' section of the Employers' Union has decided to observe June 3, the Prince of Wales' Birthday, as a holiday in connection with the probable declaration of peace in South Africa. It was decided to close immediately on the day the announcement of peace is made, but not to observe any further additional holiday.

We have been asked to intimate that the lecturer of modern languages at the Auckland University College is arranging a course of special preparatory lectures at times suited to teachers and others who are desirous of studying French and German. Further particulars may be obtained on application at the College.

At a meeting of the Crown Lands Board last week the summary of lands disposed of from April 19 to May 22 showed that 16,763 acres had been disposed of between 86 selectors as follows: Leases in perpetuity, 11,011 acres; occupation with right of purchase, 4,071 acres; cash purchases, 558 acres; miscellaneous leases, 1123 acres. For the same period the sale of kauri timber amounted to 1,243,310, which was valued at £735.

The Crown Lands Board recently forwarded a communication to the Bay of Islands County Council re the kauri gum reserves in that district, and the latter have replied that there was practically no portion of the kauri gum reserves in the county that could be called "non-kauri bearing." The Council thought it advisable for the Department, while retaining the reserves, not to let it interfere with settlement. There was no reason, they said, why a restriction should be placed on the opening up of lands for settlement, because lands in question formed part of a reserve.

The decision of the Federal Senate to reduce the duty on butter and cheese to one penny per lb will be an advantage to the dairying industry in this colony. Large quantities of butter were sent over to Australia this season, but probably the bulk of it did not pay duty, being transhipped to South Africa. Australia is a good customer for New Zealand cheese at all seasons, but the reductions in duty should have the effect of increasing the demand by allowing the article to be sold one penny per lb. cheaper in the Commonwealth States. As Western Australia retains its own tariff for five years, the reduction does not affect that market, which takes large quantities of butter from this colony.

A very sad shooting fatality is reported from Paerata, near Pukekohe, resulting in the death of Miss Theo Connell, youngest daughter of Mrs Connell, a widowed lady living at the former place. Very few particulars have as yet reached town, but it is gathered that the unfortunate young lady went out on Saturday for some purpose, and took with her a gun for the purpose of shooting rabbits. On her not returning that evening a search was made, and eventually her body was found with a gun-shot wound in the region of the heart. An inquest was held yesterday. The greatest sympathy will be felt for the family of the deceased young lady in their sad bereavement. Only two years ago the elder brother, Trooper J. Connell, was killed in South Africa, he being one of the first New Zealanders to fall.

The tablet which is to be placed in the Christchurch Cathedral by the War Fund Committee, in honour of the Canterbury members of the Rough Riders who died in South Africa, has been received from England. It is a very handsome piece of work. It will probably be unveiled at the Coronation services. The inscription is as follows:—"In memory of the officers and men of the Canterbury troops, Third New Zealand Rough Riders, who were killed in action, or died whilst on active service, in South Africa, 1900-1901." After this come the names, as follows:—Lieut. H. H. Bradburne, A. D. Ross, and F. Ryan; Sergeant F. M. Russell; Corporals C. Parkinson, E. K.