



T. C. Turnbull, photo.

"STRIKING CAMP" ON THE MANUKAU.



"EVENING."



J. M. Naira, photo.

SUSPENSION BRIDGE, PERIA RIVER, MONGONUL

### The Countess Tolstoi.

The Countess Tolstoi, in her way, is almost as wonderful as her famous husband, whose influence in Russia is said to be largely responsible for the present unrest there. Her individuality and her theories are as marked and distinct as are his. Nor does she always agree with him in his views. In fact she most strenuously opposed his tirade against the copyright system. Neither is she a blind admirer of the Count's style and stories, but often freely and somewhat warmly attacks both, the result being a rather heated argument. The Countess is a woman of broad training and ripe education. Strong in her character and great in her ability, she is the type of woman who would best understand a man of her husband's kind, one who would be able to further the best in his and both their lives.

Her position is not one without trials. The wife of a reformer who is as extreme as Tolstoi is apt to feel here and there a sting, for the world has not hesitated to say its opinion regarding him. The cool, deliberate intellect of the Countess Tolstoi holds her in good stead and keeps a nice balance in the Russian household. A great many people were surprised and somewhat startled when they read, just after the excommunication of Count Tolstoi by the Holy Synod, a letter of protest signed by the Countess. The letter was written with force, character, and style. It suggested a vigour of intellect and power of discrimination in its author which made people recognise for the first time what a really clever woman the wife of the famous novelist is.

### De Wet and His Book.

In the course of a stirring protest against the too-ready acceptance in some quarters of De Wet's stories to the detriment of British soldiers, Sir A. Conan Doyle gives, in the "Spectator," some striking instances of the "slim" way De Wet understates the truth in order to damage the reputation of our soldiers. Here are some quotations from De Wet's book and Sir A. Conan Doyle's comments:—"On the Orange River one Willem Pretorius and three men caused the surrender without loss of twenty British in a fort." As a bald fact this sounds depressing. But what is the truth? The whole Boer army was round the post, and the garrison knew it, having just received a letter from De Wet himself. Is it not a perversion to say that they surrendered to three men when they knew that 2,000 were round them and that escape was impossible? The original statement is literally true, and yet the inference of cowardice is absolutely false.

"Philip Botha with fifty burgher charged 150 of the Bodyguard and took them prisoners." The British losses—eight officers and thirty-eight men killed and wounded—point not only to a good resistance, but to a resistance against a considerable force. It is possible that the final rush of the Boers which compelled a surrender was carried out by fifty men, but all the letters which I have read from survivors of the action (and I have read several) talk of the fire as coming from several directions, and refer to flanking and covering parties of Boers. I believe, therefore, that even if the number given be literally true, it is none the less, as in the case of Nicholson's Nek, entirely misleading.

To show an instance in which he enormously exaggerates the force which was against him, take the battle of Bothaville, where Colonel Le Gallais captured his guns. To read his short narrative of the action one would imagine that it was a contest between eight hundred Boers on one side and twelve hundred British on the other. As a matter of fact, the fight was between about two hundred and fifty British Yeomanry and Mounted Infantry and the Boer force. Only at the end of the action, when De Lisle came up, did the numbers become as stated.