

News of the Week.

FRIDAY.

At the present time (says the *Wellington Post*) 85 members of the Armed Constabulary force are receiving instruction in artillery work at the Mount Cook barracks. The course of drill is somewhat severe, and every man is earning every penny he receives from Government. The daily drills occupy seven and a half hours. The first commences at 6.30 a.m., and is of an hour and a half's duration; the second extends from 9 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.; the third is from 2 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.; and the fourth is from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. There are four instructors. All of them are thoroughly qualified men, and the force to whom they are imparting instruction is making very satisfactory progress. Fifty-five out of 85 are learning to work big guns, the remainder being instructed in the use of the gin, a contrivance employed to move cannon about. By means of the gin in use at the barracks one man finds no difficulty in lifting a piece of artillery weighing nearly a ton and a half. Major Goring and Captains Coleman and Gudgeon take part in every drill, occupying positions in the ranks. Another detachment of men is expected from the North shortly, the intention being to have over 100 members of the force capable of working the big guns which are being erected for the protection of the four chief ports of the Colony.

The mounting of a seven-ton gun, was successfully accomplished at St. Clair, near Dunedin, yesterday. The tramway to the battery-site at Lawyer's Head is completed. The gun will be fixed in position about Wednesday next.

The ceremony of turning the first sod of the North Island Trunk railway, at the Te Awamutu end of line, was performed on Wednesday afternoon, and witnessed by a large assemblage of Natives and Europeans. The preliminary operations are begun on the south branch of the Tenui River, three miles from Te Awamutu, and immediately within the boundary of what is known as the King Country. Around the spot selected for the ceremony, Europeans and Natives to the number of 600 sat or stood in apparent anxious expectancy. The importance of the event appeared to be fully realised by all.

Sir Thomas Brassey, First Secretary of the Admiralty, states that the names of vessels belonging to the Colonial navies, when such have been organised, will appear in the official navy lists.

Prince Bismarck has issued an order forbidding German manufacturers to supply torpedoes to any foreign Power.

The French Government have demanded that the French paper *Bosphore Egyptien*, which has been suppressed by the Egyptian Government for animadverting on the Government policy in reference to the Soudan, shall be re-licensed. Nubar Pasha states, in reply, that his Government were quite justified in stopping the paper.

Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales were received with enthusiasm on their public appearance in Cork, and demonstrations of disloyalty were confined to occasional hisses among the bystanders. The hostile demonstration made on their arrival led to a riot, during which revolvers were used, and the troops charged with fixed bayonets. Several persons were wounded.

Subject to General Komaroff not advancing, the basis of the Afghan frontier delimitation will be agreed upon. The town of Penj-deh will be ceded to Russia, the Ameer of Afghanistan consenting.

Barl Dufferin, who is now returning from Rawal Pindi to Calcutta, was presented at Lahore to-day with an address from the local Municipal Board. In replying to it his Excellency took occasion to say that the dominions of the Ameer of Afghanistan had been the scene of an unprovoked attack on the part of the Russian forces, and he rejoiced to find that the princes and people of India were rallying to the British standard. It was impossible, his Excellency added, to foresee the end of the present crisis, but if war resulted it would be in despite of the efforts of moderation on the part of England.

The offer made by the Canadian Government in March last, to send 3000 men to the Soudan, has been renewed, but this time the offer is for service in Afghanistan. In the event of an outbreak of hostilities the Shah of Persia offers England the assistance of 40,000 troops.

SATURDAY.

The Westport Coal Company intend recommencing work in their mine on Monday next. Sixty new miners have been engaged in other parts of the Colony to take the place of the men who struck work in December last. The first instalment of new hands arrived to-day.

A large meeting is to be held in London to take into consideration the condition of the British navy.

The Scots Greys, with a detachment of artillery and two guns, as well as a squadron of lancers, advanced on Thursday without opposition as far as Otao Wells, a point about 20 miles from Suakim on the road to Berber, and formed a zareeba there. The new Mahdi has captured the town of El Obeid from the followers of the Mahdi.

A dispatch has been received from General Komaroff, dated 6th April, in which he states that after the hostilities on the 30th ult, the remnant of the Afghan force fled to Herat. A detachment of Russian troops remain at the Pulkilista fort, two miles north of Penj-deh. General Komaroff concludes his dispatch by stating that an advance is at present needless.

Persistent rumours are current that a peaceful settlement has been effected of the Russo-Afghan difficulty, but nothing tangible has transpired. The *Daily Telegraph's* Vienna correspondent states that the Russian reply to England says that the Czar considers war would be deplorable, and hopes that prompt arrangements may be arranged for a pacific solution of the difficulty. It is stated that in considering the dispatch the British Cabinet gladly accept the terms of the communication. Stocks are rising.

In the House of Commons on Thursday Mr. Gladstone took occasion to deny the statement circulated to the effect that Penj-deh has been ceded to Russia.

The *Journal de St. Petersburg* contains a report that the Afghans intend to revolt in favour of Russia.

MONDAY.

The *Coptic* has been chartered by the Imperial Government as a fast cruiser for the New Zealand coasts. Arrangements are now being made to avoid sending her on a homeward voyage. She will tow the ship *Northumberland* to Napier to take the cargo of frozen meat which is now ready at that port, and the cargo which was to have followed in the *Northumberland* will be put aboard the ship *Lyttelton* and steamship *Arawa*. The *Coptic* will go from here to Wellington with her original cargo, and will then be at once fitted up for her new service. She may for this purpose have to go to Australia.

The Government have cabled to the agent-general to procure and at once forward 2000 stand of the latest military rifles (*Martini-Henry*) to the Colony, together with all the necessary appointments. The Defence Minister having agreed to accept the services of the *Timaru Rifle Volunteer Company*, the roll is being rapidly filled up. Over 60 names were given last night.

A messenger has arrived with a letter to General Graham from the chiefs of the Amara tribe offering a force of 5000 men to join the British against Osman Digma.

The stock market is improving, as apprehensions of war between England and Russia are subsiding. Consols have advanced by 1 $\frac{1}{2}$, and are now quoted at 97. The market rate of discount has declined to 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, and is now 1 per cent, below the bank rate.

It has transpired that in his late dispatch to the Government General Komaroff announced that when Penj-deh and the posts in the neighbourhood were evacuated by the Afghans and the latter fled to Herat, he deemed it expedient to place Penj-deh under temporary Russian administration.

Sir Julius Vogel on Saturday afternoon received a cable message from the Agent-general stating that the prospects of peace are less gloomy.

If the colonies pay the necessary cost, the Admiralty are willing to supply men and maintain the men-of-war belonging to the colonial navies. The N.Z. Shipping Company's steamer *Kajkoura* has been selected by the Admiralty for equipment as a cruiser.

Rumours of a peaceful settlement of the existing difficulty between England and Russia continue to be rife, but so far nothing of a definite nature has transpired in regard to the situation. The *Standard* states that the Ameer of Afghanistan is indisposed to press his claim to Penj-deh, and expresses the belief that everything demanded by Russia has been conceded except Zuluika, which remains Afghan territory.

The *Newcastle Herald* of 11 has a paragraph as follows:—"The American schooner *Quickstep* arrived here yesterday morning from Melbourne. Captain Jacobsen reports that on the 6th, when 25 miles from Cape Howe, he passed a Russian sloop-of-war steering W.S.W., coming from the eastward, but had no communication with her. She had fore-and-aft canvas set, and was steaming."

TUESDAY.

The carpenters at Blenheim have given three months' notice to their employers that the working hours will be reduced from 48 to 46 hours per week.

Telegrams from Waikato state that considerable astonishment is felt there at the Government insisting in the Punni railway contract in putting new clauses in the contract providing that work shall be stopped in the event of war with Russia. The contractor for the Turango section, Mr. Isaac Coates, expresses his willingness to accept such clauses, provided the Government would compensate for the plant and material in use at the time of the stoppage, and pay for work done. This the Public Works Department would not agree to, and a remonstrance has been forwarded to Wellington. The *New Zealand Herald* says: "We understand from the Minister for Public Works that the clauses which have been inserted in the Turango contract is to the effect that in the event of the loan not being raised the Government shall have power to stop the work without being liable to any excessive claim for compensation or for loss. There is nothing about a declaration of war in the contract, but of course that event may form an element in not being able to raise the loan."

The Most Rev. Herbert Vaughan, Catholic Bishop of Salford, is a passenger by the *Orient* steamer *Austral* for Sydney.

It is rumoured that Germany is preparing a fresh surprise in connection with her colonial annexation policy.

Owing to recent telegrams indicating a probable peaceful settlement of the Russo-Afghan question, the New South Wales Government consider it at present unnecessary to close the western channel of Port Jackson as proclaimed in the Government Gazette of the 15th inst.

The French ultimatum in reference to the suppression of the *Bosphore Egyptien* has been presented to the Egyptian Government. It is reported that the latter have refused to accede to the relicensing of that paper as demanded.

Admiral Tryon has been directed to visit the several ports in the Australian Colonies to confer with the authorities on the subject of their defence.

A number of torpedoes have been procured in Germany. The Admiralty have engaged the *Orient* Company's *Lusitania* as a cruiser, and the *Coptic* has been engaged for New Zealand.

A telegraphic dispatch has been received at the War Office from Sir Gerald Graham, in which he states that the Colonial troops marched on Saturday last a distance of 14 miles through a pass consisting of most difficult country in nine hours, Colonel Richardson, commandant of the Australian contingent, conducting the retirement of the force in excellent style.

Mr. Gladstone states that an honourable settlement of the Afghan difficulty is probable. General Komaroff, meantime, admits having received the news of the agreement between England and Russia before March 23, while it is officially asserted that the Ameer of Afghanistan would rather abandon Penj-deh to Russia than permit the British army to occupy Herat. And yet the Ameer stated on Friday last that he would never surrender an inch. General