

THE MAFEKING MAIL

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Mafeking, November 14th, 1899.

The Mafeking Mail.

MAFEKING, 14TH NOVEMBER, 1899.

THE SILENT BOER.

The quietness of the Boers during the past few days does not suggest increasing pugnacity on their part. They are certainly weakening. The supposition that they are awaiting reinforcements before they again attack, hardly seems feasible. We question the possibility of assistance being spared from any quarter to help the Boers, now outside this town. The commandos which were first told off to "walk into Mafeking" was supplemented by the Free State Boers. One of the refugees who had previously lived in the Orange Free State recognised, and was recognised by, several of them who were at Louw's farm the week hostilities broke out, and the events of the past four weeks have given quite enough occupation for every man the two States can find. If the enemy did take steps to bring forward assistance from South so much the better for us. It would weaken the opposition between Kimberley and this place and give them enough courage to try another attack, which would be repulsed

with such damage as to entirely dispirit them. It would have to be a very large accession to their numbers before these "sprinters" could be stimulated to make another attempt to take the town, and the quantity of "Dop" required would be enormous, and such large numbers they have not got. We are not inclined to under-estimate the total numbers against us, but even at the fullest calculation the Boers cannot now recover their position or even gain points. We are of opinion that the total force the Boers could muster was no less than 70,000. We know that we may be in the smallest possible minority in this opinion but we are prepared to uphold it. In 1890 the Free State had over 17,000 between the ages of 16 and 60, liable to be called upon to bear arms. A new country, in the ordinary course of nature, doubles itself in twenty-five years. This we may safely take as a fair estimate for the natural increase of both the Republics. If it be urged that the natural increase depends upon food supply, which is deficient in parts of both States, instances may be quoted to prove that the natural increase of white races is not so affected. On the contrary, in some continental countries where the food supply is abundant, the natural increase is slower than in parts of Germany where the labouring classes scarcely get enough to keep flesh on

their bones. Taking the natural increase at the average for new countries, we must add between 6,000 and 7,000 to the 17,000 in 1890, giving 23,000 available for fighting from the Free State. In the Transvaal the number of men available, that is to say between the ages of 16 and 60, in 1890 was 37,378. The population of the Transvaal increased from 119,128 in 1890 to 160,000 in 1896, say thirty three per cent. We may conclude the same rate would be maintained till the present year, but will set off against the past three years' increase, which would be 20,000, those who have left the country, and keep as a basis of calculation the ascertained figures in 1896. As the population increased by a third from 1890 to 1896 the available fighters would have increased pro rata. We must therefore assume that the 37,378 men in 1898 had grown to 49,834 adding those of the Free State, a total force of, say 70,000, which were disposed of thus:—

Natal Border, northernmost point,	12,000
Harrismith	8,000
Utrecht and Vryheid	5,000
Hiedelberg, Standerton & Ermelo	6,000
Rouxville, Bethulie	5,000
Modder River and Kimberley district Border	8,000
Mafeking	4,000
Fourteen Streams to Taungs	2,000
Orange River	2,000
Pretoria	1,000
Johannesburg	500
Bloemfontein	500
Vereeniging	2,000
Small parties stationed at all the drifts, and Reserve	14,000

If they withdraw any portion of their troops to help besiege Mafeking they must leave the other points weaker, so much the better for us as there is no force they are likely to bring to attack here which we could not keep off. But they cannot expect to get any help, and as they are apparently afraid to make an organised attack, without it they will have to sit

down and watch. In the meantime, instead of increasing their numbers, they have already sent some away. Two guns and some twelve to twenty wagons left on Sunday evening, and if, as is most likely, they will be defeated, the effect will be further demoralization of those remaining, whose courage is already nearly at vanishing point. There is one thing the Boers may be assured of, that Mafeking to a man, will be here ready for them whenever they attempt to come, and till then we can sit tight, as we have done from the commencement, and are prepared to do till the end. Our sentiments on the whole question we can express later when the settling up comes, but for the present we will unite in firm defiance of the wretched herd now surrounding us.

A DIALOGUE OF "TO-DAY,"

[CONTRIBUTED.]

The woman smiled sadly as the man who sat beside her continued speaking. "You know," said she, "love covers a multitude of sins." "Sins of omission," asked he with an air which marks a casual commonplace. "Such love as ours is a false combination," began the woman with pretty hesitancy. "False, dear lady; fanciful, not false." "The term upsets you," she enquired. "It is an inversion of the picturesque," said he. "A bad man would have found consolation in the epithet," she replied. "Let us leave to the world the consolation of conjecture," enjoined the man. "The intimacy cannot continue." "Is it too commonplace?" enquired her companion. "Is not all love common?" she asked. "But the world pays homage to you, dear lady," said the man. "There is no safety in numbers," said she didactically. "No safety, can there

be no exception?" he began. "None, now — unless —" "Unless?" said the man gently. "He loved sincerely," said she, her voice sinking to a whisper. "Is it possible nowadays?" said the man. "Sincerity is so very trying; mine goes only a very little way." The woman moved petulantly and sighed. "And the effort—is it not worth —?" she broke off. "Dear lady," said he, "there is little which survives being thought of." "There exists infinitely less of what is worthy," said she bitterly. "But these are only the issues of our philosophy," he expostulated. "But we lived after our own fashion," said she. "And loved—why not admit the merely beautiful?" said the man frankly. Frankness among some men being but another basis for deceit. "It was very wicked," said the woman contritely. "Wickedness, dear lady, is the one romantic element in life," said he. "We women love so much," said she reflectively. "I assure you it takes a very plain woman to be bad," he said with some affectation of thought. "No woman is quite so bad that she has not some redeeming virtue," said she. "Virtue is an anomaly. Your sex should be nothing if not tender." "And forgiving! Heavens, how much we women forgive," she cried. "How much we men forgive," he retorted. "The story is always the same," said she, "life began with a man and a woman in a garden." "And ends with the revelations," said he. "We must bury it," she murmured. "All that is buried is not dead," said the man; "memory is a whitened sepulchre." "It is killing me," she cried; "the petty subterfuges, the constant exactions it makes upon us. Can you not understand? Have you no tact at all?" "I understand," said he quietly, "but I am afraid I have very little tact." The woman remained silent. "We might — marry!" said he, with the air of one crucified. "Matrimony

is only a *mauvais quart d'heure*—with supreme moments." "We have already enjoyed our moments," said the woman. "Besides, what is the good of being a married woman among women who are already married?" asked the man. "Our hour is over," said she after some pause, "we must do nothing—only go away." "Leave you," said he, "is it possible?" But love is a woman's natural source of reflection, and this woman had, as some women can do, decided. Each had risen and they stood silently together, the man waiting for the woman to act. "The past is dead and — done with," said she presently. "But I believe," said he, "that the future is only the past entered over by another gate." The woman moved off crying gently. "It is a horrible belief; let it be your compensation," said she, and they went their ways.

[The contributor having forgotten what it is all about, we suppose.—Editor].

WONDERS.

We wonder when the next post will arrive.

We wonder why those twenty-eight police Mr. Schriener sent to save Mafeking from the Boers have not arrived yet to do so.

We wonder what use Mafeking would make of the same Mr. Schreiner if he were here.

We wonder whether the Boers know that song, the chorus of which runs:—

A white light's "all right,"

A green light's "caution."

When you see the red light there's danger on the line.

We wonder why a siege makes every body so inordinately dry; so indiscriminately dry.

We wonder whether the picturesque expressions used in the trenches are also used by the *artistes* when at home.

We wonder whether Cronje knows that his wretched old gun merely amuses him and doesn't hurt us.

We wonder whether, and when, he will commit suicide, as the only easy way out of his difficulty.

POETS CORNER.

A PROPHECY.

[CONTRIBUTED.]

When the last brave deed is told
Of the warriors gay and bold,
And the Vikings in Valhalla are safely
stowed away;
When the last "Mausèring" Dopper
Is carved in bronze or copper,
And Kitchener and Baden-Powell are blown
about in clay.

When the world is chiefly poodles,
With some scientific noodles
And bravery's a memory that scarcely brings
a thrill,
And the poet goes a rhyming
With an Academic timing,
And lashes up a frenzy on a monthly washing
bill.

When some ballad singer rises,
(In these ages of surprises)
And searches through the records for a sub-
ject fit to sing,
He will pass such stories by
Waterloo, El-Teb, Dargai,
While he braces up and tackles
"The Defence of Mafeking."

He will paint each doughty hero
From his courage point of Zero,
With the stout Civilians lying in the trenches
week by week
And the Critics will start trying
To find what he means by "lying,"
And the world will be disrupted in that aeon
of the meek.

Then a verse will deal with "Greitje,"
In a measure somewhat screechy
And Fitz-Clarence will be lauded in a verse
all on his own,
Although he and all the doughty
Heroes of that Thursday sortie
Will be ages past the stage, that we can
recognise as bone.

Let us cheer ourselves by thinking
In the intervals of drinking
Of the glory that will shroud us A.D. 3899,
Let us join in giving Cronje
And his fighting men their congé
And the glory that's to come will be all yours
my friend and—mine.

THE VANISHING BOER.

Has anyone seen the quick running Boer?
Oh where, Oh where can he be?
We thought to have from
Old Maria more bom,
But no more bang bom sends she.

The Boer can't be well. The Mafeking air
With his "tummy" doesn't agree,
He came for his "breakfast,"
Now dinner time's past,
Perhaps he's gone home for his tea.

Take advice dik kop farmers and run away
home,
On your farms we'll very soon be,
And when, with our "Krechies" we give
you salute
You shall see,—well, just what you'll see.

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