The Sun.

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Let the National Banks Go!

The debt refunding scheme, which the Senate Finance Committee has attached to the House Currency bill, is avowedly intended for the benefit of the national banks. It proposes to create $850,000,000 of 2 per cent. thirty-year Government bonds, in order that the banks may take out circulating notes against them to their par value, paying on the notes a tax of only ⅙ per cent. per annum, and clearing on them a profit of 1⅙ per cent. per annum.

By the provisions of the National Bank act, the Government not only guarantees indirectly through its bonds the redemption of national bank currency, but undertakes, directly, should any national bank fail, to redeem its notes at once, selling the bonds afterward to reimburse itself. If the bonds should fail to produce enough to repay what has thus been paid out, the Government gets back the deficiency only after the bank's assets, on which it has a prior lien for it, are liquidated.

Furthermore, when any national bank, for any reason, surrenders its circulation, it pays the Government an equal amount of lawful money, and the Government thereupon assumes payment of the circulation. The notes thus surrendered become, therefore, the direct debt of the Government. They amounted, in the aggregate, at the beginning of this month, to more than $36,000,000.

The Government also carries on the work of engraving and printing the national bank notes, and of redeeming them out of a 5 per cent. fund of lawful money furnished by the banks for the purpose. It also maintains at an annual expense of over $200,000, the department of the Comptroller of the Currency at Washington, with nearly one hundred clerks, besides a number of special examiners paid by the banks, to supervise the affairs of 3,700 national banks and to protect the public against loss by their mismanagement.

The sole justification for all this expense and labor is the furnishing to the people of a safe and sound paper currency. It is not pretended that State supervision would not, in other respects, as amply suffice to ensure the solvency of banking corporations, as that of the Federal Government. It is only because the national banks issue circulating notes to serve as money that the Federal Government takes charge of them.

Of the two currency bills before Congress, both provide for the maintenance of a paper currency issued directly by the Government, and for its redemption in gold on demand by a sufficient gold redemption fund. One or the other of these two bills is pretty sure to become a law. Then, the Government notes will be as nearly a perfect form of paper money as human wit can devise. The Government, if all else fails, can, to redeem its notes, always levy and collect taxes or sell bonds, whereas banks must wait upon their debtors, and, possibly, fail to collect the whole of what these debtors owe them.

These things being so, the perpetuation of the national bank system becomes not only unnecessary, but a source of useless expense to the nation. In the course of the next two years, the charters of most of the national banks expire and need not be extended. If their stockholders desire to continue in business they can reincorporate under State laws, losing only the privilege of issuing circulating notes, which never should have been given them. In place of the circulation which will thus be retired, the Government can issue an equal amount of its own notes in redemption of an equal amount of bonds, and thus both prevent a contraction of the currency and save considerable interest.

To make the perpetuation of national bank currency a part of the Republican programme, is to raise, deliberately and unnecessarily, an issue which the party of Bryanism will be only too happy to take up. The question for the Republican party is: Shall we, by entering the next Presidential campaign as the champions of national bank money, give to the cause of Bryanism a strength it could not otherwise hope for, or shall we let the banks go?

Common sense is in favor of answering the question against the banks. Let the national banks go!

A New Issue for the Colonel.

Glimmering along the banks of the Mississippi is an issue which is worthy to illuminate the Democratic tabernacle. Last week the Clayton Twentieth Century Club was formed in St. Louis county, Mo. Its purpose is to instil into the public mind the conviction that the twentieth century began on Jan. 1, and that an anxious world need not wait another year for it. Among the members are the Secretary, Dr. CASTER, whose rolling name suggests the majestic motion of the centuries; the Hon. JAMES ALEXANDER JONES, Judge PETER KERTH, Circuit Clerk HOLLOCHER and the Hon. JAMES TONG. The President, a lawyer named STEVENS, thus unfolds the creed of the club:

"We firmly believe that this is the twentieth century, and that 1,900 full years have elapsed since the birth of CHRIST. It is all very well to talk about there being no year 0, but the fact remains that at the beginning of the year 1 twelve full months had elapsed since the birth of CHRIST, and on the same theory 1,900 years had elapsed last New Year's Day. I do not see how any one at all versed in mathematics can figure otherwise."

President STEVENS and his brethren of the Twentieth Century Club are gratifying mathematicians. They hold that as twelve months make a year, ninety-nine years make a century. Their equation is 1899 = 1900. We are glad to learn from the news columns of the *St. Louis Republic* that the club is growing. "Up to a week ago there were but few people in Clayton who believed that the dawn of the century was upon them." Now the number of the believers waxes and the number of the unbelievers wanes. To be sure, Deputy Sheriff JOHN OSBORNE, State Senator MATTHEWS, and FRED and JOHN AUTENRIETH, still cling desperately to the nineteenth century, but what can all their eloquence and all their ingenuity do against that fascinating equation, 1899 = 1900?

The struggle between the nineteenth century and the twentieth has hidden all meaner subjects out of sight in Clayton, "the Blessing franchise, the extension of the city's water system, the building of the Meramec bridge and similar local issues having been relegated to the rear." From Clayton the one great issue will spread over Missouri and over the rest of the country. We are much mistaken if the Democrats do not begin to see a great light. Col. BRYAN has been so busy with his sporting and his spouting that he has hardly had time to study the century issue, but it will appeal to him at once. It is genuine Chicago platform stuff. As a mathematical proposition, it is an inevitable corollary or addendum to Sixteen to One. Here are the two sublime truths, born for each other:

"50 cents = $1."
"1899 = 1900."

Since time is money, the propositions may be regarded as, in a sense, identical. The second completes the first.

Now what are the non-producing classes, after ruining the hopes of humanity by demonetizing silver, trying to do? They are trying to set back the world, to rob the producing classes of a year, to persuade them that they are living in the nineteenth century, when, as the Clayton Twentieth Century Club and other notable chronological and mathematical authorities delight to show, they are living in the twentieth century. Even if Col. BRYAN could resist that true Democratic equation 1899 = 1900, he could not resist the wail of suffering humanity, whimpering for a new century of which it has been robbed by the Money Power. There can be no doubt about the matter. The same nefarious hands that uphold the gold standard are now forcing the nineteenth century upon the country and the world. The Crime of 1873 was chicken stealing compared with this enormous Crime of 1900.

Col. BRYAN is not the man and mathematician he is supposed to be, if he doesn't enrol himself among the Twentieth Century-ites, add 1899 = 1900 to Sixteen to One, and proclaim everywhere an issue of much more living force than anti-imperialism or anti-Trusts.

Neutral Rights and American Food Producers.

As a neutral power, the United States unquestionably owe certain duties to both the belligerents in the present war, and, thus far, we have fulfilled them scrupulously. It behooves us, however, to remember that there are other duties, no less binding, imposed upon us by our neutral status. By a common interest and by the common duty to promote the progress of civilization, we are bound to stand forth with other neutral powers, some of which, like Holland and Portugal, are feeble, and to uphold the rights of neutrals, rights upon which England herself may one day rely for her national existence. It is not our business, however, to point out to the British Government how seriously England's future welfare may be compromised by the assertion of the principle that food is contraband of war. We may leave that function to Lord ROSEBERY, who has shown himself ready to discharge it. We shall have quite enough to do if we show ourselves properly alive to a paramount and urgent obligation, the duty, namely, of safeguarding the actual and prospective interests of American food producers.

We do but state a patent fact when we say that the United States export more breadstuffs than all the other countries on the globe combined. It is also undeniable that of food staples other than breadstuffs we are the principal purveyors. We are thus vitally concerned in the maintenance of those rules of international law which have been framed in the interests of neutrals. Those rules are: First: a free ship makes free goods, that is to say, even an enemy's goods, if conveyed under a neutral flag, are exempt from capture. Secondly: neutral goods are exempt from capture, even when found on board an enemy's vessel. Thirdly: food is not contraband of war, unless it can be specifically shown to be bound for an enemy's port, which is blockaded at the time.

Now, unless our export of food staples is to be interrupted for months, which interruption would inevitably cause industrial and financial calamity, it is obvious that the rules above cited must operate as preventives. They must avert seizures of American food staples under the conditions specified. We cannot tolerate repeated violations of those rules on the plea that, if infringements of them can be shown hereafter to the satisfaction of a prize court, due compensation will be made to the injured parties. Our breadstuffs would soon ceased to be shipped if the sole remedy for seizures was to be sought by the slow and costly process of litigation. It must be remembered that an appeal lies in England from the Admiralty Division of the High Court of Justice, first, to the Court of Appeal, and thence to the House of Lords, while, from the Vice-Admiralty Courts abroad an appeal lies to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. Sooner than expose themselves to the risk of becoming involved in expensive lawsuits that would last for many months, if not for years, shippers would decline to invest money in the purchase of American grain and flour, and our breadstuffs would, accordingly, be left lying in the hands of their producers.

What would be the economical and financial consequences of a sudden stoppage of our food export trade? We know what happened at the time of JEFFERSON'S Embargo: Bankruptcy and ruin were the outcome of that obstruction to the free outflow of our surplus products. Nor would it be only the American farmer who would suffer because his surplus grain was rendered valueless; the railways would cease to pay dividends, being unable to find freight to carry from the interior to the seaboard; ships that now throng our harbors would disappear because outward-bound cargoes would be no longer obtainable; our factories would languish, because the demand for their commodities from the domestic market would dwindle almost to the vanishing point. The truth is that our export of food staples is the vital nerve of our whole economical system. Touch *that*, and the whole organism shivers.

It is the fundamental duty of our Government to protect with the utmost vigilance the actual and prospective interests of our food producers. To do this we must uphold, in the fullest sense and with the utmost rigor, the rights of neutral States in time of war. We must do it now, and not wait for a tremendous crisis, when, amid the shock and agony of a world-embracing contest, proofs of our own remissness and lack of foresight may be urged against us.

England in War.

That England should feel a sense of humiliation because of the defeats of its armies in South Africa by a relatively puny foe, is explainable. Those armies are made up of its best regular troops, yet they have all and almost uniformly been beaten by the Boer farmer volunteers and a great part of them are now prisoners in the hands of their numerically feeble enemy. When, however, we read in London newspapers of the splendid example of heroic self-control afforded by the English people in this emergency and under this demonstration so painful to them, we cannot see the ground for such self-celebration.

What else is there for England to do except submit to its punishment? Who has expected that the English people would cry out like whipped children and in their rage kick vainly against accomplished facts; lie down in the dust and go into hysterics because they were not able to do what they had no reason to expect they could accomplish? Other nations have been defeated in their military undertakings. What example does history afford of any great people failing in self-control in the face of far heavier disasters? As compared with France at the hands of Germany, Russia at the hands of the allies, this country in the terrible four years of the Civil War, and Spain in its late war with us, England has only begun to feel the smart of war. All told, it has not lost in killed and wounded in South Africa as many as have fallen in many a single engagement in battles of the last half century, even where they were of third-rate consequence only, for no action approaching the measure of a great battle has yet been fought in South Africa. Relatively, the casualties have been few; there has not been a regular stand-up fight, persisted in to the end of possible endurance, throughout the three months' South African campaign. The sorrows and sufferings of war so far inflicted on England have been trifling as compared with those borne by all other nations of first-class position in the modern world. The engagements in South Africa have been skirmishes rather than battles.

Shall England then be credited with supreme patience in braving the pain of terrible war, when it has as yet received a few scratches only? Is a people dominating a quarter of the population of the globe deserving of the reputation of notably heroic fortitude because it has been able to maintain some degree of its composure in a war of three months' reverses against two numerically petty republics? Is the self-control which restrains it from despair unexampled?

How, too, about the fortitude and the self-control of the Boers in their desperate struggle against the British Empire, supposedly the most powerful and the most indomitable since Rome ruled the world?

What to Do in the Roberts Case.

A despatch printed in THE SUN yesterday brought the wholesome news that a majority of the House committee engaged in investigating the right of ROBERTS, the Mormon, to his seat as a Representative realize that a blunder has been committed in endeavoring to prevent ROBERTS from taking his seat. If this accurately describes the committee's state of mind their proper course is one of extreme simplicity and ease.

Assuming that ROBERTS is eligible so far as it concerns his citizenship, let him be seated, in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Constitution. What the House should do then is not now a subject for consideration. What disappointment or mortification the committee may feel at not finding justification for excluding ROBERTS as they had evidently set out to exclude him, is of no importance.

For several years past the Democrats have been handing over to the Republicans the responsibility and the reputation for understanding the Federal law and defending it. It would be inconceivable folly for a Republican House of Representatives wantonly to begin a reversal of this process. That it would do assuredly if it should bar ROBERTS from the House of Representatives on the grounds first advocated by the Tayler committee.

Senator TELLER of Colorado says that his State is having good times and is going to have better. She is the great gold State in spite of her lamentations about silver. She has "more coal and better coal than Pennsylvania." Yet Mr. TELLER still cries for silver. As with so many other of the silver men this year, he seems to speak from habit.

It was supposed that eloquence had made its highest leap when Governor LON STEPHENS of Missouri saluted the members of the St. Louis Anti-Trust Conference as "sapient sons of sainted sires," but a new record has been made in Pike county, Ind. Judge DILLON, who wants to represent the First Congress district in the House of Representatives, agrees with the Hon. DAVE DE ARMOND that the capital should be removed from Washington to St. Louis. He believes that Washington is bedevilled by the Money Devil, whereas St. Louis is as sweet as clover and as innocent as a Populist convention. Hear him:

"All hail St. Louis! We salute thee, capital of the mightiest Republic, the mightiest Nation the world has ever seen; to thee we shall flee from the pestilential vapors of the East and cling to the horns of the altars of the South, North and West, and take refuge from the poisonous upas tree that has so nearly proven fatal to the rights of the plain people."

A place so remarkably well furnished with altar horns as St. Louis seems to be ought to be patronized by all fugitives from the pestilential vapors of the East.

Entering upon his second term the Socialist Mayor of Haverhill, Mass., says that "the eyes of the toilers of the world are fixed upon Haverhill." The world is tolerably full of events and interests, but to this worthy man he and Haverhill are all there is worth looking at. Thus his sublime labors are liable to be hampered a little by his swelling self-consciousness.

The Hon. JOHN PARDON ALTGELD seems to have undergone what the mediums call "change of control." He no longer speaks under the influence of Sixteen to One. He predicts that gold and silver will go out of use and be succeeded by "a philosophic or rational circulating medium and measure." A philosophical circulating medium is, we suppose, one the value of which is philosophical, consisting entirely of thought, with a trifling expense for paper, engraving and printing. Like some of the Brooklyn Bryanites Mr. ALTGELD seems to regard silver as merely provisional. He wants the worst money that can be made.

The Hon. DAVID ABSALOM DE ARMOND, M. C., of Missouri, was not chosen to lead the House Democrats, but he continues to be full of leadership and proclamations. He "calls on all Democrats and all lovers of liberty to unite and vote solidly against the revolutionary policies of the McKinley Administration." He insists that "the trend of political thought in the Republican party is from a republic to an empire," a remark so conspicuous for wisdom that even the Hon. CHAMP CLARK might be proud of it. When a word like "trend" gets hold of the Hon. DAVE DE ARMOND it shakes him up tremendously and strange things come out of his verstiginous intellectuals. When we see DAVID ABSALOM spinning and shouting about the "lust of power" and "the glory of despotism," we are reminded of that wooden spoon, dressed as a doll, which Mr. DARWIN saw in Keeling Island; that gifted spoon which went mad and danced at the full of the moon.

It is sad to read that Attorney-General CROW of Missouri is going to apply for a Federal injunction to prevent the waters of the Mississippi from being contaminated by associating with those of Lake Michigan and the Chicago Drainage Canal. Even if the somewhat excessive fears of the St. Louis people were justified, is it not better to run a little risk than to consent to government by injunction? Besides, real fish, uncooked, have been caught in the Chicago River, whose rich, brilliant and fiery genius must be only a memory henceforth. St. Louis should be more neighborly.

The Hon. RICHARD F. PETTIGREW is telling how he would fight if he were a Filipino.—*Baltimore American.*

Why "if?" What is the ever-pettigrewing PETTIGREW but a specimen, and a mighty poor one, of the proclaiming and declaiming cheap Tagal demagogue?

The Hon. GOLDEN RULE JONES of Toledo, "non-partisan Socialist" and Jonesite, says it cost him about $88,000 to run for Governor of Ohio last year. This seems a little luxurious, but Mr. JONES is able to enjoy himself, and we hope he got his money's worth. He omitted to say whether the Hon. JOHN ROLL MCLEAN contributed anything toward paying the expenses of the entertainment.

GRAVE SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The Boer assaults on Saturday on the British positions at Cæsar's Camp and Wagon Hill, a westerly spur of Bester's Hill, on which the former is situated, appear according to Gen. White's report to have been delivered with great determination and only finally repulsed by equal determination on the British side. At some parts of the line the conflict surged back and forth with uncertain issue, the British intrenchments being three times carried by the Boers and as often retaken by the British; and one part of the British position was held the whole day by the Boers until recaptured by the British at dusk. By the official accounts the fighting seems to have been the hardest of the war; and judging by the important strategical position occupied by the two points mentioned in relation both to the defence and attack of Ladysmith, it may be renewed at any moment, for evidently Gen. Joubert considers their possession essential to the success of some object he has in view. The two hills, Bester's and Wagon, stand in a loop of the Klip River to the southeast of Ladysmith with the railway from Colenso passing between the eastern foot of Bester's Hill and the river. About two miles to the westward of Wagon Hill the main road from Colenso to Ladysmith on that side circles round from Onderbrook on the spruit or creek of the same name. Could they have retained possession of the two hills and had time to mount guns on them, the Boers would have been in a position not only to enfilade the British camp in Ladysmith from a distance of about thirty-five hundred yards, but would have had full command of the roads from Colenso to the west and east of the hills as well, that on the east side being doubly commanded by the guns on Isambulwana Hill. That both sides should stubbornly contest the possession of those positions is easy to understand under the circumstances, and it will be very interesting to see whether Gen. Joubert has renounced his desire to obtain hold of them.

The demonstration by Gen. Clery's division toward Colenso and Inhlawe Hill seems to have had no effect on the issue of the fighting at Ladysmith, and has been ridiculed by that portion of the London press hostile to Gen. Buller. The satisfaction in London over the defeat of the Boer assaults is naturally great, for it is the first ray of light in a decidedly sombre outlook.

The serious accident to the column that attempted the seizure of a position near Colesberg held by the Boers, reported by Gen. French, and the surrender of Kuruman are in a measure an offset to the success at Ladysmith, the latter more particularly on account of its effect on the natives. The force that captured Kuruman is now free to aid in the reduction of Mafeking or reenforce Gen. Cronje's command between Kimberley and the Modder River. On this front the Boers are reported to be throwing up new intrenchments and mounting guns at only three miles from the British position on the bank of the river, across which Gen. Methuen reports that a third pontoon bridge has just been completed by his engineers within the limits of his camp.

A despatch from London states that the British War Office, considering the possibility of a disaster to the British arms in Natal, has ordered the strengthening of the defences at Durban, and the road from Pietermaritzburg to the coast is receiving particular attention. What the meaning of this may be is not very clear, unless it is to be connected with the recent rumors that a large section of the Basutos, whose country flanks the British advance in Natal are ready to make common cause with the Boers against the British. It is not more than a fortnight ago that some of the Basutos, friendly to the Boers, went up to Pretoria with the Free State Government interpreter to verify the presence of a large body of British prisoners there, the reports of their capture having been denied by the British in Basutoland. The condition of things in Cape Colony itself also seems critical, precautions only compatible with a state of actual war being taken in Cape Town itself. Neither from Colesberg nor Sterkstroom is there any news of importance, things at both points appearing to be at a standstill.

Short History of the Democratic Vote.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* The figures below are being presented to us common people, the rank and file of the Democratic party, as facts:

Year.	Vote cast in U. S.	Candidate.	Dem. vote.	Pr. ct. of vote cast, Pop'r vote.	Elec'l vote.	New vote.
1828	1,156,328	Jackson,	647,231	56	68	61
1852	3,138,201	Pierce,	1,601,474	51	86	100
1876	8,354,800	Tilden,	4,260,599	51	50	74
1896	13,925,122	Bryan,	6,636,073	47	39	4

If these are facts, we would like to inquire: Why have the press and leaders of our party been misleading us? Are they presuming upon our ignorance in an effort to control our votes? Upon what grounds do they base the popularity of the Chicago platform or Mr. Bryan?

We think these questions, and the answers thereto, worthy of consideration and publicity.

LAKE CITY, Fla., Jan. 5. F. H. CLIFFORD.

His Second Silver Wedding.

From the Boston Herald.

FITCHBURG, Jan. 4.—Dr. and Mrs. A. W. Sidney celebrated their silver wedding anniversary in the Highland Baptist Church this evening. In the case of the doctor it was his second silver wedding, a very unusual thing. His first wife was the sharer in the first silver wedding in January, 1870. Dr. Sidney married Miss Esther Whitaker of West Boylston April 15, 1845. She died not long after their silver wedding. On Jan. 6, 1875, he married Miss Mandana M. Walker of Clinton.

WAR LETTERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA.

What British Officers and Soldiers Are Writing Home—Boer Kindness to Prisoners—Fighting on Empty Stomachs—How It Feels to Be Trapped—Woman Hears a Shell.

From the London Daily Chronicle.

Second Lieut. C. E. Kinahan of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, writing to his father, Mr. G. P. Kinahan, Bagshott, from Staatsmodel Schule, Pretoria, says:

"We were all taken prisoners, together with the Gloucester Regiment and a battery of mountain artillery, which accounts for us being in Pretoria so soon. We went out at night to occupy a hill right in the midst of the enemy in order to protect White's flank for an intended attack next day. Everybody knew that to be able to relieve us he would have to be entirely successful, and from what we hear he was not. As we were going up the hill in the dark a small party of Boers dashed through our ammunition mules, causing them to stampede. By this move we lost all our mules (200), and with them all our ammunition and artillery. We started fighting at 5 A. M., and in a few hours' time the Boers were firing on us from all four sides, until by 2 o'clock they were firing at about 200 yards' range and doing fearful execution. You don't know what it means shooting at a Boer; he is behind a rock and all you can ever see is his rifle sticking out. For the last hour of the fight I had a rifle and ammunition which I took from a dead man, and blazed away for all I was worth. Then we fixed bayonets and prepared for a rush when the cease fire sounded. We were all then taken prisoners, except two officers killed and eight wounded, and marched to the Boer laager, and sent off that night to a station twenty miles distant in wagons. While we were in their laager they treated us extremely well and gave us food and tobacco. All you read about the Boers in England is absolutely untrue; they are most kind to the wounded and prisoners, looking after them as well as their own wounded, and anything they've got they will give you if you ask them, even if they deprive themselves. We came up to Pretoria in first-class sleeping carriages, and the way they treated us was most considerate, feeding us and giving us coffee every time we stopped. The day we arrived we took up quarters on the racecourse, but we have been moved into a fine brick building, with baths, electric light, &c. They provide us with everything, from clothes down to tooth brushes. They also feed us, and we are constantly getting presents of vegetables and cigars from private people. In fact, we can have everything we like except our liberty; for some reason or other they won't at present give us parole, and we are surrounded by sentries. There are close upon fifty officers in this building, and they have got any number of wounded ones in different places. They say they won't exchange the officers at any price."

A letter, dated Nov. 29, received from Alexander and Robert Carlyle, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, addressed to their father in Dumfries regarding the battle of Modder River, says:

"Bullets and shells were falling among us and going over our heads in hundreds. It began at 7 A. M., and it was between 8 and 9 P. M. before it finished, and it never slackened one moment. The Boers had a splendid position and trenches, and if our troops had been in them an enemy would never have got within a thousand yards. The Boers lost heavily and we are burying their horses, lying in the river and on its banks, in hundreds. We have been over two days without food and on foot all the time. We are lying in a farm and have nothing for it but to steal whatever we can lay hands upon. I caught a hen and Bob got potatoes in a field, and these are being cooked in an old can. The rest are killing pigs, goats or anything."

The writers have been missing since the Magersfontein battle.

From Reynolds's Newspaper.

A letter has been received from Gunner Alfred Beadnall of Scarborough of the Sixty-second B. R. F. A., dated from Orange River, Nov. 12, in which he says:

"How I often wish I never had enlisted, what with the hardships, such as half-starved, and we have not had over five hours' sleep at a time. Perhaps we have just got our topcoats on the ground and tried to catch a few minutes' wink when those d—— Boers have come dodging about, when we have had to stand to our guns as far as eight and ten hours at a stretch, without anything to eat. I am just about sick of this life. I often wish I was back at Mr ——.

"You could hardly realize what an awful scene a battlefield is, some poor fellow asking you for a drink as you pass him. Perhaps some will never ask for water any more. The most painful thing to see was a Dutch spy who was caught, and he was tried and sentenced to be shot, and the poor fellow was marched to dig his own grave, and when he had finished it he was stood over it and then twelve soldiers marched out and had to pick up a rifle out of a group of twelve. There were six of these loaded and six unloaded, so none of them knew who shot him and the poor chap never said a word; it was all over in a few minutes.

"We were just about to eat our humble tea (which is a hard biscuit and a drop of water) when the alarm sounded and we went into action, and we had not been out about twenty minutes when there was one officer out of the Northumberland Fusiliers shot through the heart and another got shot and died in the saddle and three more wounded. That was on Friday night, and we buried them on Saturday night with military honors. Things are so dear out here. We pay 4½d. a pint for beer, and we can only get two pints a day; so you can rest contented that we don't get drunk. We had a very bad time of it at sea. We lost nearly forty horses and we have had ten die out here; so we did not do so well. I shall be thankful when we get into barracks, if ever we do so, as we shall have a bed to sleep on. It will be quite a change from sleeping on the hard, bare ground and only your topcoat to cover you from the wind and rain. I suppose you have been scanning the papers every night to see if you could see any news about me, but we are in a country where all communication is cut off and they can only take letters every fortnight, and it takes it over a month to come, so it will be close on Christmas when you get this and I shall have to wish you all 'A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year when it comes.' I think myself this will be the last letter that I ever shall be able to write, because we are in a terrible position, completely surrounded by Boers, and we are going to try to get out, so let us hope for the best.

"I am writing this on my water bottle, so you must excuse the writing. We start fighting again in the morning."

We have received the following letter from a private in the Royal Field Artillery at present on duty in South Africa:

"I think it is my duty to inform you of the way our British soldiers are treated at present in South Africa. We rise at 4 A. M.—sometimes earlier—and are out in the burning sun all the day. At night we are bullied about like dogs, and fed by chance on dry bread and coffee. I am a driver in the Fourteenth Battery R. F. A., and I am bound to tell you that I never saw such treatment of our men—cleaning harness, grooming horses, driving drill, riding drill, gun drill, besides seven hours' stables. We are like slaves more than British soldiers. All our boys of the battery hope that you will publish this letter as we are fighting for our Queen and country."

Lance-Corporal Enright, Third Battalion Grenadier Guards, writes under date, in camp, Jacobsdal, Nov. 26:

"I write to let you know I am alive and kicking, though, as you will have seen by the papers, we have been twice in action. The first time, at Belmont, on the 23d, was awful. We left camp at about 3 A. M. and marched about four miles in pitch darkness. Just as daylight was breaking we opened out for the attack, and just then the enemy caught sight of us and opened fire. We had then an open space of about 2,000 yards to cross, and as the Boers were behind tremendous rocks on a succession of hills about 1,000 feet high, while we had no cover at all, it was not pleasant. Well, we got across this all right, and went for their first position, which was among some hills shaped like a horseshoe. Here we lost our Adjutant and our Colonel and two officers wounded, while the men were falling right and left. As soon as we got to the top the Boers cleared out, as they hate cold steel. We then saw they had occupied a much stronger position on another very precipitous hill in the rear. We then formed line again and went for them. It was a tremendous struggle to get up this place, as the side was like a wall, partly made of loose boulders, and the bullets were falling round us like hail. You can imagine the strength of the position when Lord Methuen said he gave us three weeks to take it in. But the Guards rushed it in three hours of the hardest fighting ever seen. One of the war correspondents with us says he was at Dargai, and that was nothing to it. I had the luck to bring in two prisoners, and we captured all the enemy's ammunition and provisions. The fight yesterday was pretty good, but I did not see much of it, as we were in the reserves, and only a few cannon shot fell near us, doing us no damage."

An interesting letter has been received by the parents of Private J. H. Owen of the Third Grenadier Guards, serving under General Lord Methuen in South Africa. Under date November 26 he says:

"I cannot describe to you my feelings when I first went into action, but I am glad to be able to tell you that I have come through unharmed. We started at 2 o'clock in the morning in the direction of the position held by the enemy in great strength. We advanced to within some 800 yards, when the Boers opened fire. We were ordered to lay down, which we did for about half an hour, the bullets all the while whistling over our heads. Then Major Kinlock gave the order to advance and addressed the men thus: 'Now, my boys, all together as hard as you can go'; and with a silent prayer to Heaven and a thought of all at home, I dashed across the bullet-swept zone. The Boers, fighting from the right, drove us into another party of the enemy firing from the left; then we 'faced about' and received yet another terrific fire from the front. Thus, you see, we were exposed to a terrible onslaught from three sides and up to this we had not fired a shot. The Boers have a horror of the bayonet and, courageous as they have proved themselves to be, they cannot stand cold steel. So strongly fortified was the position of the enemy that they boasted of their power to hold it indefinitely. Yesterday we had another big battle (Graspan) and I am thankful to say I have come through safely again; but steel, 'best cold Sheffield,' again asserted its superior powers over the enemy. Just before starting yesterday (battle of Graspan) we had a biscuit divided between four of us and a drink of coffee and did not get another mouthful for twenty-six hours. I long for a good square meal. We shall be marching again to-morrow (Monday) towards Kimberley and we are expecting sharp work before we reach there."

From the Westminster Gazette.

An exciting bit of outpost work is described in a letter from Private Albert James, serving with the mounted infantry:

"Another of our fellows who was out scouting came across a nigger minding some sheep, or pretending to be, anyway, and he had an Express rifle with him. So our chap loads his own rifle in the saddle, gallops up to him, dismounts and covers him with it, makes him put his rifle down and then go back a step or two. Our chap then goes and picks it up, questions him on different things, and he tells him there are no Boers knocking about. He is going to take him prisoner, when all of a sudden he hears voices shouting 'Dick,' and 'Joe.' So he leaves his prisoner and goes up toward the rocks until he is in speaking distance of them. Then he sees he has been led into a trap, and he mounts again and rides for his life. You can tell what shots they are. There were, I'll swear, at least fifty shots fired after him at random, and not one hit the mark.

"That was the commencement of the firing and we had to gallop and go as hard as ever our horses could take us over ground you would scarcely believe a horse could walk on. It was full of holes—some like rabbit holes, and lumps of rocks and stones and one thing and another for at least ten or twelve miles. The Colonel who is in charge of us wouldn't let us dismount and fire, as he said we should all be cut up, and they were too strong for us, as we were only a small party—and he has got a fine breast of medals—but, d—— them, let's get it over. A month to-day and it will be a bit nearer I hope. We chaps were swearing like 1 o'clock when he wouldn't halt us and let us have a packet at 'em, but I expect we shall have another pop at 'em yet."

Private J. Maddison, Second Northampton Regiment, who holds a medal and three bars for Dargai, Somani and Tirah Valley, writes:

"We have had two battles—one at Belmont and one at Enslin. We are having it pretty stiff, I can tell you. The Boers have some good rifles of German make, but their shots all seem to go over our heads. At the battle of Belmont we captured some biscuits from the enemy; they were shared among the troops. In the last fight we captured a lot of horses, and I had one myself. I was about done up, same as the remainder, fighting about four hours on a drop of hot coffee. When we got in camp we had to wait for the train to come with our rations. Water is very short out here. The Guards are in the rear as usual."

Sergt. Stockwin of the Northamptonshire Regiment, writing to his brother from the battlefield of Enslin, says:

"If this is warfare we have had about enough. Three battles in one week, and we have not shaved for a fortnight or washed for a week through the scarcity of water. It's not the fighting we don't like; it's the hideous sights of mangled corpses afterward."

Private J. Argent of the Third Grenadiers, in a letter to his parents at Swansea, says:

"At the battle of Belmont we fought hand to hand. I was just behind David St. John when he was shot. He stuck his bayonet right through a Boer and could not get it out again. He tried to throw the man over his shoulder to get him off, and then another Boer came up and shot him through the head. Then another of our men put his bayonet through that Boer's heart."

Here is a grim picture from a private's letter:

"One of our fellows was talking to a parson who went over the battlefield of Elandslaagte a day after the fight. He says there were terrible sights, the most awful of which was a Boer sitting down quite naturally, with a bayonet clean through him and about six inches of the muzzle of the rifle as well, while the Tommy who had given the mighty thrust was lying down as if asleep, with a small bullet hole in his forehead. The Boer was grasping the barrel of the rifle with both hands, and his eyes were staring out straight in front of him with a horrified look in them, as if he had seen a ghost."

One of the ladies who went out to see the fighting at Ladysmith has described that experience in a lively letter. A shell landed not many hundred yards away, and she ran to get a piece of it:

"Off I scampered. Spoke to the first soldier I came to. He said: 'Come with me; I can warn you in time to clear before another comes.' So I went gayly on, talking away. Another soldier said: 'Here comes another,' and before we had time to think the awful booming and shrieking came—and I wish you could have seen your younger sister. I just shut my eyes tight and clung to a barbed-wire fence, and whispered: 'Good God!' It exploded about twenty feet away; perhaps not so much; the earth shook under me, and my legs felt shot all over."

A member of the Army Service Corps, writing from Orange River some weeks ago, said:

"We have 300 Zulus and Kaffirs here working as laborers for the Army Service Corps at 4s. per day. They are stacking hay, biscuits and peat. So when they brought the Boer prisoners to the railway station these Zulus and Kaffirs made a charge for the trucks, and if it were not for the sentries with bayonets facing them they would have torn the Boers to pieces. They were in a —— of a rage, shouting 'La Boer!'"

Four Amputations at Once.

From the Indianapolis Journal.

FORT WAYNE, Ind., Jan. 3.—A remarkable case of surgery and a remarkable exhibition of vitality is that of Munro Walters, who was struck by a train here Monday night. When picked up he was thought to be dead, but was nearly frozen, instead. Both legs and both arms were crushed, and Dr. C. B. Stemen decided that in the amputation of all four lay the only chance to save his life. This morning the patient showed such remarkable recuperative powers that it was decided to operate without further delay. The four operations were performed simultaneously, and in twenty minutes all was over. Two physicians operated on each limb at the same time. Normal saline solution was injected into the veins to keep the patient alive while the operation was going on.

The doctors who operated, with several others, and the members of the senior class of the Medical College waited for signs of returning animation. After a long time Walters partly regained consciousness. Since then his recovery from the shock has been surprising. There is nothing left of him but his head, trunk and a stump of one leg, ten inches long. He is 42 years of age, very strong physically, and the doctors say he may recover. If he does it will be the first case of the kind on record. Dr. Alfred Mullens of the United States Army and Dr. Beggs of Dundee, Scotland, performed similar operations, but both patients died under the knife, or almost immediately afterward. But in the cases noted the operations were performed separately, or two limbs at a time.

The State and Its Drunkards.

From the New Orleans Times-Democrat.

COLUMBIA, S. C., Jan. 1.—The question of the State, which has a monopoly of the liquor business, establishing an asylum for drunkards, where they will be treated for the disease on a system similar to that used in the Keeley institutes has been discussed for some weeks. The idea has taken some hold and it is probable that a bill will be introduced in the Legislature making some such provision.

There are two propositions that have advocates. One set propose to establish the asylum or institute as an annex to the State insane asylum, conducting it under the same management. They contend that the excessive use of liquor is in many cases a disease; that the imbiber is to effects and purposes insane, and entitled to treatment by the State—doubly so when the State is the sole dealer in liquor.

Others urge that the Legislature pass a law making drunkenness a crime and establish a reformatory for drunkards, where they can be given hard work in a cotton mill, machine shops and on a farm. As most of the drunkards are from cities and towns, it is contended the fear of being humiliated by being sent to a reformatory will do more to keep them sober than any other earthly power.

Chicago University Votes for Phonetics.

From the Chicago Record.

Following the lead of Superintendent Andrews, the Congregation of the University of Chicago has adopted the following resolution:

Resolved, That the adoption by the board of the University Press for use in the official publications and journals of the university of the list of words with changed spelling accepted by the National Educational Association be approved.";

The list of words thus "reformed" is as follows:

Program (programme).	Thruout (throughout).
Tho (though).	Catalog (catalogue).
Altho (although).	Prolog (prologue).
Thorofare (thoroughfare).	Decalog (decalogue).
Thru (through).	Demagog (demagogue).
	Pedagog (pedagogue).

The vote by which the university was thus aligned with the so-called word "reformers" was close, but the new spelling carried the day. It is said an effort will be made to induce the leading universities to join hands with Chicago and form a league—or perhaps we should say a leag.

GEN. BULLER'S TASK.

Its Terrible Difficulties Pointed Out by a General of Our Civil War.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Prophecy is always unsafe—prophecy in military matters as well as others. It is well to keep in mind the maxim "never prophesy until you're certain." It is quite possible that before this can reach you the question of Gen. Buller's plan of campaign and his success or failure may have become history. The problem before him is to relieve the garrison of Ladysmith. He is now, Jan. 6, at Chieveley, twelve miles south of Ladysmith, with the Tugela River—now said to be at flood—in his front.

The Boer position extends along the ridge or chain of hills parallel with the north bank of the river from Springfield, above the forks of Little Tugela on the west (left), to the wagon bridge on the Weenen road on the east (right), a distance of more than sixteen miles. The Boers have had more than two months in which to thoroughly intrench this position. They have it connected by rail—carried around Ladysmith—directly with the Transvaal, their base of supplies. That they are not without engineering ability the British have learned to their sorrow at Magersfontein and at Colenso. They are on ground with which they are thoroughly familiar. The bridges not already destroyed are doubtless mined, ready to be blown up by electric contact at the proper moment. The bridges must be counted out. The "drifts" or fords are few and far between and difficult at the best. It is alleged that they are obstructed with barbed-wire entanglements, which will make the passage under a heavy fire practically impossible. Besides, it may be counted on as morally certain that every ford is commanded by rapid-fire and machine guns and concentric rifle fire, which would approximately annihilate any column that might attempt to cross against such obstacles.

In this war the character of the Boers is to be taken into the account. They are of the sturdiest stock that history records. They are the children of a heroic race. They are not easily stampeded. Their fathers fought the warlike Kaffirs and Zulus, sometimes fifty to one—even at greater odds—and behind their wagon kraals beat them off. They are a little nation of marksmen. They thoroughly appreciate the difference between accurately aimed and unaimed fire. They shoot to hit. They do not waste lead. They are all horsemen. Their hardy little horses, ready saddled, wait behind the hills back of the Tugela to carry the commandos in the least possible time to the threatened point. They move under cover, while their antagonists must come out into the open.

Thus far, the Boer artillery has shown itself equal to that of the British or superior to it in power, and nearly or quite equal in accuracy. According to all accounts, they are well equipped with Maxim machine guns and Maxim-Nordenfelt quick fires. The Maxim automatic gun (rifle calibre) is good for 600 shots per minute, while the 1½-inch Maxim (37 millimetre) is good for 250 shots per minute. The Boer sharpshooters—they are all sharpshooters—are armed with the breech-loading magazine Mauser or Martini, equal in all respects to the British arms. With these rifles the cool-headed Boers can send at least ten well-aimed shots into the enemy in a minute so long as the cartridge belt holds out.

Talk about the "British bayonet," "cold steel," &c.! Before the fire of such a line of sharpshooters and machine guns the bravest column of troops that ever marched would be piled in windrows, as were the dervishes of the Kalifa at Omdurman.

Mr. Julian Ralph declared that at Modder River the British line did not advance a yard after they came under the "hellish fire" of the Boer rifle pits. At Mafeking, on the day after Christmas, Col. Baden-Powell attempted to "rush" a little work at Game Tree, but nothing could stand before the deadly fire. The bloody repulse at Colenso hardly need be mentioned.

I beg to repeat what I have said in substance in a former communication, that charging intrenched positions manned by cool-headed and careful-aiming troops, supported by machine and rapid fire guns and modern breech-loading artillery, is obsolete—it is one of the lost arts. In the Civil War, with the muzzle-loading Springfield, we regarded three to four hundred yards as the maximum charging distance against an intrenched line. But with the Mauser and the Maxim the zone of fire is extended to 900 or 1,000 yards. Within that fiery zone valor does not count.

Unless Gen. Buller has longer range artillery than the Boers (which he does not seem to have), and has ample pontoon trains for laying bridges and sufficient wagon transportation to enable him to cut loose from the railroad, so that, by a wide-turning movement, he can compel the Boers to leave their intrenched position along the Tugela, the relief of Ladysmith will, in the words of Lord Methuen at Modder River, prove "the bloodiest battle of the century."

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., Jan. 6. B. M. C.

THE NEW BOTANICAL GARDEN.

Great Progress Made There During the Year Just Closed.

A comprehensive idea of the work done during the past year in the New York Botanical Garden was obtained yesterday when reports of the officers and committees in control were read at the annual meeting of the corporation. The members of the society who pay a yearly fee of $10 now number 715, 165 new members having qualified during 1899. Sixty-seven new life members qualified at $100, making sixty-nine in all. C. P. Huntington and Daniel B. Ivison contributed $1,000 each, and became fellows of the society, and Mrs. Antoinette Eno Wood, with a contribution of $5,000, became a patron.

Dr. N. L. Britton, Emeritus Professor of Botany at Columbia University, who is the secretary and director-in-chief of the garden, said that there are more than four thousand species and varieties of plants now under cultivation there.

The museum building is now practically complete, it only remaining to effect the adjustment of some details relative to the heating and ventilating apparatus. The entire herbarium of Columbia University has been moved to the herbarium room on the third floor of the museum. The Columbia botanical library has also been transferred to the same place. The herbarium now includes 115,600 mounted specimens.

The labelling, arranging and mounting specimens for the public halls in the museum has progressed satisfactorily and the work of installing them will be begun in the near future.

CITY'S EXHIBIT AT PARIS.

Big Map Soon to Be on Show—Street Cleaning Department Pictures.

The big topographical map of New York city and the surrounding territory which is to be exhibited at the Paris Exposition this year by the Board of Public Improvements is nearly finished. It is expected that the map will be put on exhibition on Wednesday or Thursday in Liederkranz Hall, Fifty-eighth street and Park avenue. It will remain on exhibition there the rest of the week. On Monday or Tuesday it will be packed up and shipped to Paris, where it will be set up as a part of the American exhibit. Chief Engineer Louis A. Risse, under whose direction the map is preparing, says that it is the most ambitious effort of the kind that has come under his notice. An effort has been made to show every street, alley and building within the city boundaries, and the general conformation of the land about it.

The Department of Street Cleaning has prepared an exhibit of twelve photographs which will be sent to the exposition. These photographs show the actual operations of the department, beginning with the sweepers at work in the streets, the collection wagons making their rounds, the dumps, the scows, with photographs of the self-dumping scow, and the stables of the department.

Mentioned As Usual.

From London Tit-Bits.

Clara—Did the newspapers notice your papa at the banquet?

Freddie—Yes.

Clara—Well, mamma said she could not see his name in the list.

Freddie—No; but the list ends up with "and others." That means papa. They always mention him that way.

Not Forgotten.

From the Baltimore News.

"Did your grandmother remember you in her will?"

"Yes, she had a clause in there instructing the executors to collect all the loans she had made me."