

## NEWS

The British war in South Africa has assumed a new phase. Negotiations by the government of Holland with the British government have been set on foot with a view to making peace. The first known fact in this turn of affairs is a flying visit which it is now learned was made to London by Dr. von Kuyper, the prime minister of Holland, shortly before the opening of parliament on the 16th. His presence was not discovered at the time, but it now transpires that he spent most of the time with Mr. Chamberlain's secretary, and it is suspected that he had a conference with Mr. Chamberlain himself. The object of his visit was doubtless known to Lord Rosebery, who, on the opening day of parliament, formally asked Lord Salisbury, the British prime minister, if the Dutch prime minister had not been in London on an errand of peace. Lord Salisbury's reply was: "Not so far as I know." Eight days later, on the 24th, Mr. Labouchere brought the subject to the attention of the Commons by an interpellation of the ministry in that house. His question was answered by A. J. Balfour, the ministerial leader in the House, who denied that any peace overtures had been received, either directly or indirectly, from anyone having the authority of the Boer leaders to make them. Mr. Balfour's reply, as well as Lord Salisbury's, was generally regarded as an evasion, and so it now seems to have been. For on the 28th, in response to further questioning by Mr. Labouchere, Mr. Balfour said:

No overtures for peace have been received from anyone authorized to speak in behalf of the Boers. A communication was, however, received late Saturday last from the Dutch government, and it is now under consideration. I propose to lay on the table as soon as I can do so a copy of that communication and of our reply to it.

Mr. Labouchere being insistent upon knowing whether proposals or suggestions had been submitted prior to last Saturday, Mr. Balfour added:

If the communications did not come authorized by the Boers they are no proper subject of question and answer across the floor of the House. If they were merely part of private correspondence they consist of that with which all the ministers are more or less flooded.

The nature of the correspondence which Mr. Balfour promised to di-

vulge as soon as possible is not yet known.

Reports from the field of the war indicate the continued determination of the Boers to resist British conquest. The London Daily News publishes uncensored dispatches to the effect that their power in Cape Colony is increasing daily, the executions of Lotter and Scheepers having converted even loyalists and caused them to join the Boer forces. The dispatches tell also of 12 defeats suffered by the British, from September to November, of which no mention has been made in the official or the censored dispatches. On the 27th Lord Kitchener reported the capture of Gen. B. Viljoen; but it soon leaked out that Gen. Viljoen had been killed, not captured. The capture of a Boer camp near Vryburg is reported by Gen. Methuen, 25 prisoners having been taken, together with a large herd of cattle. Captures near Rustenburg were also reported. But near Frankfort, in the Orange Free State, after capturing 20 Boers, Col. Wilson was attacked by another force, and during a hot fight all but three of his prisoners escaped.

The effort of the British ministry to influence American sentiment regarding the Boer war by disclosing evidence of peculiar friendliness to the United States on the part of Great Britain at the time of the Spanish-American war, the details of which were reported last week, has drawn out the following official explanation, dated the 22d, from the Russian foreign office:

Russia has always been and now is extremely desirous of maintaining amicable relations with the United States. Russia never had any intention of participating in any collective step in the Spanish-American dispute, which did not directly concern her, nor did Russia receive any proposition having such action in view. Indeed, we received no information regarding Austria's alleged initiative or about an attempt on the part of any of the powers to interfere in the interest of Spain.

A suggestion of the London Times, apparently inspired by the British ministry, to the effect that Great Britain would welcome the publication of the papers relating to the negotiations of the European powers on this subject, caused the Associated Press to solicit responses from the foreign offices of the respective governments con-

cerned. The following replies were received:

France—"No suggestion has been received here from the British government to publish the Hispano-American papers, and none is expected. No importance is attached to the Times' statement, as England is aware that the several governments would not agree to their publication."

Austria—"The British government has made no inquiry. Should such an inquiry be made Austria's answer would probably be according to the answers of the other powers."

Germany—"We have nothing to add to what was said to you on Tuesday."

Russia—"Should a request for publication be made by Great Britain, Russia will willingly consider the matter. No such request has yet been received."

From the Philippines, where, as one of the results of the Spanish-American war, the American government is playing the part of the British in South Africa, there is no military news except reports of two or three small captures, vague indications of unsatisfactory developments in the island of Negros, and a suggestion of the terrible experiences of a party of American marines which attempted to penetrate the island of Samar, under Capt. David B. Porter. They had been given up as dead, but on the 28th they returned to camp delirious from privation. For several days the party was without food, and neither the captain nor any of his men is yet in condition to relate their experiences in detail.

A full investigation of the Philippine situation has been decided upon by the Senate committee on the Philippines; and it is understood that Gov. Taft, who has just returned from his gubernatorial post at Manila, on leave of absence, is to be the first witness. In newspaper interviews on his way to Washington, Gov. Taft is reported as saying, that—

Civil government in the islands is a distinct success. It has been firmly established in nearly 40 provinces. . . . Opposition to our rule exists in practically only three provinces, and that will soon be stamped out. At the end of this year I hope to see the military forces reduced to 15,000 men in the islands. That number of troops, together with the native constabulary, will be ample force with which to maintain order and peace. Just as soon as we can persuade all the natives that the war is over our task will be made easier.