

TWO WARS OF INDEPENDENCE.

America, 1775—1782.

Africa, 1899.

The words "Neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" were applied to men obstinately bent upon a suicidal course of action; and very applicable will they be to Great Britain should we persist in the policy of fighting the present war "to a finish," especially if, by the latter phrase, is also implied an ultimate attempt to annex the two South African Republics and rule them as Crown Colonies.

For surely, from the pages of every historian of England, there call to us the shades of those slaughtered combatants in our vain struggle with our North American Colonies, now the *United States*, and most solemnly do they warn us how futile it will be for England to endeavour to hold in subjection a sturdy and unwilling white population in South Africa—a second Ireland, ever ripe for rebellion, and requiring thousands of troops to keep it in thrall—and this at 7000 miles from our shores instead of only 70.

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It is deeply interesting at the present crisis to note the various analogies between the former war and the present one. Indeed, with the substitution of a few words and names here and there, the old occurrences in North America are almost identically repeating themselves to-day.

Great Britain then possessed a group of rapidly-growing, prosperous, and peaceable American Colonies, which were perfectly contented to remain under dutiful allegiance to the Mother Country so long as their right to manage their own affairs was left unassailed. But we were then ruled by a king whose ambition was to be uncontrolled by his Parliament. He successfully attained this end at home by direct bribery of constituencies and of members of Parliament, while, through the instrumentality of his creatures, George Grenville, Charles Towns- end, and Lord North, he was enabled to get a series of measures passed into law which interfered with the external commerce and the internal taxation of the American Colonies; and, when the colonists retaliated by refusing to buy or use British goods, the king proceeded, by means of the "Stamp" and other Acts, to compel them to pay taxes to Great Britain upon merchandise which they themselves produced for their own consumption. In the same way, one of the objects of the present war is that of dictating to the Boers the tax which they shall, or shall not, impose upon their own dynamite.

Then followed the disastrous eight years' struggle between the trained forces of Great Britain and the undrilled and poorly-equipped "burghers" of North America, which dragged on from 1775 to 1782, and consequent upon which we became involved in further wars with France, Spain and Holland. In 1777, Burgoyne was surrounded and captured with 5800 men on the Heights of Saratoga; and five years later Cornwallis, with 7000 men, in his turn capitulated to the Colonists at Yorktown. Enteric fever has been a melancholy alternative to capitulation!

At length, after all that vast and useless expenditure of blood and treasure, and a heaping-up of distrust and rancour between the two related countries, which even now, after 130 years, is scarcely allayed, Great Britain was finally compelled to swallow her obstinate Imperialist pride and formally to declare the Colonists independent of her rule.

"Good God, Mr. Speaker," cried Burke in November, 1781, when more supplies were demanded for the prosecution of the war, "Are we *yet* to be told of the rights for which we went to war? Oh! excellent rights! Oh! valuable rights! valuable rights you should be, for we have paid dear at parting with you! Oh! valuable rights that have cost England thirteen provinces, four islands, a hundred thousand men, and more than seventy millions of money! Oh! inestimable rights, that have taken from us our rank among nations, our importance abroad, and our happiness at home. . . . Oh! wonderful rights that are likely to take from us all that yet remains! 'We had a right to tax America,' says the noble Lord, 'and as we had a right we must do it.' . . . Oh! miserable and infatuated men! miserable and undone country!"

Substitute for the word "rights" the more modern word "prestige," and it is very possible that, should the present war be persisted in, a speech identical with that of Burke may yet be heard in the House of Commons.

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It will be seen that the similarities in the main features of the two wars extend also to many minor incidents.

There was a Governor of Massachusetts, Thomas Hutchinson by name, who had made himself extremely unpopular in America, and who, with Sir F. Bernard and others, were prototypes of the "prancing pro-consuls" of more recent times. A packet of his letters to an Under Secretary of State (Whateley) advocating more rigorous measures and a further abridgment of Colonial liberties, fell into Benjamin Franklin's hands, and were published, to the great anger of the Ministerialists—just as the recent "Hawksley dossier" has proved the close connexion between the Colonial Office and the Johannesburg conspirators (see also E. Fairfield's letter to Mr. Chamberlain of 4th Nov., 1895, as to "this ugly row now pending with the Transvaal").

The peace party in George III's days were a small minority and ranked as "disloyal" (now "unpatriotic"). Then, there was a Prime Minister (Chatham) earnestly in favour of peace, but who, by reason of ill-health, was unable to control the Duke of Grafton's action in the

Cabinet that made for war. Now, we have Lord Salisbury, pre-eminently a peace minister, forced into war at the bidding of Mr. Chamberlain and the Rand capitalists, while his promise of "we seek no gold fields, we seek no territory" is derisively set aside by his own party in favour of a policy of mere territorial aggrandisement. It is interesting also to note that, as in the present crisis, the clergy, led by Markham, Archbishop of York, then preached in favour of the 'Imperialism' of that period; and that even John Wesley, in his address to the Colonies, deprecated their resistance to the British tax-gatherer.

"They" (the Americans) said General Gage, in an interview with George III in February, 1774, "will be lyons while we are lambs: but "if we take the resolute part, they will undoubtedly prove very meek." To a similar effect, no doubt, did our Intelligence Department, in 1899, assure our Conservative Statesmen that a few thousand British troops, encamped on the Transvaal frontier, would make the Boers equally "lamb-like." A year later (February, 1775), when war was imminent, George III wrote in a confidential letter to Lord North:—

"I owne I have not the smallest doubt that, when once vigorous "measures appear to be the only means left of bringing the Americans "to a due submission, that the Colonies will submit"—a sentiment painfully reminiscent of Sir R. Buller's alleged boast that he would eat his Christmas (1899) dinner in Pretoria.

Just as Gladstone, in 1881, from motives both of justice and policy, revoked the annexation of the Transvaal, which had been proclaimed by Sir T. Shepstone against the wish of the inhabitants, so, in 1766, did the elder Pitt (Lord Chatham) obtain the repeal of Grenville's obnoxious Stamp Act. And just as the half-sane king described this righteous concession as "that fatal compliance of 1766," so have the modern Jingo party never ceased to denounce Gladstone's equally just action, nor have they rested until they could compass the present war.

And here it may be remarked that whereas Benjamin Franklin, the American envoy to London in 1765, was outrageously treated by Wedderburn, the English Solicitor General of that day, so have Mr. Montagu White and Dr. Leyds, the representatives of the Transvaal, been slighted and ignored by the Colonial and Foreign Offices. The fact that we lost the American Colonies in a dispute over the Stamp Act and the Tea Duties, which were worth but a paltry sum per annum, is again paralleled by the absolute indifference of the South African League to Kruger's final concession of a five years' franchise. It was a part of Franklin's mission to offer a voluntary annual contribution by the Colonies to the Exchequer of the Mother Country, of greater amount than the hated Stamp Act would have produced, just as the Dutch majority at the Cape have voluntarily and cordially voted £30,000 per annum toward Imperial defence.

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Will Great Britain not profit even by *her own* past experience? Let our advancing forces stop short of Pretoria and we may, by treaty, secure absolutely satisfactory terms, and shall, besides avoiding international jealousies and complications, have honourably redeemed Lord

Salisbury's pledge to the world as to "goldfields and territory." In the former war peace might have been attained even five months after the first blood had been shed at Lexington; for in September, 1775, Richard Penn brought over and presented the "Olive Branch Petition," proposing an amicable arrangement, which document, however, the insensate British Government refused to receive. Let Pretoria once be occupied, and an annexation, both impolitic and immoral, would almost inevitably follow.

Truly prophetic now, as then, are the following words written by Robertson the historian on the 6th of October, 1775, he being at that time an advocate for pressing on hostilities.

"I agree with you in sentiment about the affairs of America. Incapacity, or want of information, has led the people employed there to deceive the ministry. Trusting to them, they have been trifling for two years and have rendered a very simple piece of business extremely perplexed. They have permitted colonies disjoined by nature and situation to consolidate into a regular systematic confederacy. . . . One cannot but regret that prosperous growing states should be checked in their career. As a lover of mankind I bewail it, but, as a subject of Great Britain, I must wish that their dependence on it should continue. *If the wisdom of Government can terminate the contest with honour instantly, that would be the most desirable issue.* . . . If the contest be protracted, the smallest interruption of the tranquillity that now reigns in Europe, or even the appearance of it, may be fatal."

And in the same year David Hume the philosopher and historian, when asked to draw up a war address to the King from the county of Renfrew replied, "I wish we would let them (the American Colonies) alone to govern or misgovern themselves as they think proper. The affair is of no consequence or little consequence to us. There are other objects more worthy of the respectable county of Renfrew than that of mauling the poor unfortunate Americans in the other hemisphere."
A.P.B.

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