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Dr. W. J. LEYDS
KANTOOR

THE TRANSVAAL CRISIS.

Speech of Dr. G. B. CLARK, M.P., at the Annual Meeting
of the International Arbitration and Peace Association.

I HAVE been asked by Mr. Bryn Roberts, who is unable to be present, to move the Resolution on the Transvaal Crisis, as he thinks we are drifting into another war with the South African Republic, and it is necessary that those who know the facts of the case should try and prevent the public from being biased or misled by the persistent misrepresentation which prevails at the present moment in so many quarters.

A Blue Book has just been published by Mr. Chamberlain as to the grievances which British subjects suffer in the Transvaal, and very strong language is used in some of the despatches by Sir Alfred Milner and the Colonial Secretary regarding these grievances, and the mode of redressing them. A petition to the Queen, purporting to be signed by 23,000 British subjects, has been received describing the disabilities of the outlanders. It has been promoted by the South African League, and is now being considered by the British Government.

President Kruger and Sir Alfred Milner have lately met at Bloemfontein to discuss some of the questions pending between the two Governments, and the President has expressed his desire to have all these questions settled by arbitration, but the British Government object to such a settlement, hence the desirability of your association taking up the matter in the interests of International Arbitration. The other subject on which the President and the High Commissioner could not agree was the franchise question. The law as to the franchise at present, is, that any uitlander or foreigner can acquire the right to vote for a member of the second Chamber in two years from the time he enters the country, in two years more he is entitled to be elected a member of that Chamber, and in ten years after that he can vote for the

first Chamber. Early this spring the President drafted a new Franchise Bill, reducing the ten years to five, and at the Bloemfontein Conference he agreed to reduce the five to three. The correspondence just published shows that Sir Alfred Milner, before going to the Conference, wired to Mr. Chamberlain that he would ask President Kruger to give all foreigners the vote for both Chambers in six years; the Bill that has passed the Volksraad gives foreigners an opportunity to vote for the first Chamber in seven years, and are we, who at home have an hereditary first Chamber and in Colonies like New Zealand and New South Wales a first Chamber appointed by the Crown, so that at home and in some of our important Colonies we have first Chambers that no one can vote for, are we, with these facts before us, prepared to go to war with the Transvaal about a first Chamber vote? Shall we fight, as Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman well puts it, in order that our subjects may cease to be our subjects a little earlier?

But there are other grievances: there is the Edgar case and there is this petition from the 23,000 British subjects.

The petition arose out of the Edgar case, and as this incident, like so many of the others, has been completely misrepresented in the telegrams we received regarding it, I will briefly state the facts of this case. There were four men named Shepherd, Silvester, Foster and Edgar. Edgar and Foster began quarrelling and Edgar struck Foster with a bar of metal or a loaded cane; the blow was a severe one and Shepherd and Silvester thought Foster was murdered, and they called for the police. Two or three policemen came up; they found Foster lying unconscious on the ground; Shepherd informed them that Edgar had committed the murder, and that he was in the next room. On Edgar refusing to open the door, Jones, the leading policeman, burst it open to apprehend the supposed murderer. On doing so, he was twice struck by Edgar with the loaded cane. After the second blow, he drew his revolver and shot Edgar. Here was a case of one British subject charging another British subject with murder, and the Boer policeman being attacked by the accused, using his arms for self-defence. Jones was tried for manslaughter; the jury brought in a verdict of justifiable homicide, and the Judge concurred with the jury. I venture to say that under similar circumstances you would have had the same verdict here, or in any other civilized country. Of course, our Jingo press

misrepresented the matter. It was a horrid murder of an unoffending Englishman by a Boer policeman, and Mr. Chamberlain has denounced this brutal crime, and asks compensation for Edgar's family. The South African League took up the case, and it brought about the uitlander petition. Is there any serious complaint in this petition—anything that would justify our going to war? I have no hesitation in asserting that there is not only no cause for war, even if all that is alleged were true, but there is not even sufficient for us, if it concerned a great Power, to make a friendly remonstrance.

These people complain that the State Schools teach the children in Dutch, the language of the country; four-sevenths of all the children in England are taught in Voluntary Schools; and if the English want their children taught in that language only they must do it themselves in Voluntary Schools, and get a grant as they do here. There are over two thousand Russians, and there are several thousands of Frenchmen and Germans in Johannesburg, and the State can't be expected to find schools where several foreign languages are to be used as a means of education, and learning Dutch surely can't do much harm to the children. The grievance of the Roman Catholics in this country is greater than that of the English in the Transvaal, because they believe our State education is dangerous to the faith and the morals of the children.

But one of the clauses of the petition is amusing, it runs as follows:—
“The hostile attitude of the Government towards your Majesty's subjects has been accentuated by the building of forts, not only around Pretoria, but also overlooking Johannesburg. The existence of these forts is a source of constant menace and irritation to British subjects, and does much to keep alive that race feeling which the Government of this State professes to deprecate,” and they then inform Her Majesty that it was the murder of Edgar that caused the petition to be prepared and signed. You know there was a plot and a raid that failed, and the Transvaal Government have built forts so that if another plot of the same kind is hatched they won't be caught napping. It is the old story of the wolf and the lamb. The other night we were told by Mr. Chamberlain that the Transvaal had increased its forces; there are now 300 men in the Transvaal army, so our forces have been increased from about 3,000 to nearly 10,000. Barracks that were given up a quarter of a century ago have now been bought back at a great

cost to the taxpayers, and a large force is now in South Africa ready to strike.

I don't think there is any legitimate cause for war, but you have the intemperate despatches of the High Commissioner, and the irritating and menacing speeches of the Colonial Secretary, you have the lying telegrams and the constant misrepresentations of the Jingo papers, both Liberal and Conservative—for the *Daily News* is now Jingo, and one of the ablest exponents of the policy of Rhodes & Co.; under such circumstances, there is danger that we may drift into war, and it is very necessary that Associations like this should have meetings to enlighten public opinion as to the real facts of the case, and so prevent the Government from entering into an unjust and iniquitous war.

The Transvaal Committee.

Chairman, G. W. E. RUSSELL.

Treasurer, DR. G. B. CLARK, M.P.

Secretary, P. W. CLAYDEN.

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