

THE TRANSVAAL CRISIS.

Speech of Dr. G. B. CLARK, M.P., at a Public Meeting in St. Martin's Town Hall, on Monday, July 10th, 1899.

I beg to move—

“That this meeting, while desirous of obtaining for the Outlanders redress of their grievances by all legitimate means, condemns the reckless and mischievous attempts of a section of the Press and certain members of the British Government to force this country into war with the Transvaal.”

I may say, in the first place, that I have no doubt that the Outlanders in the Transvaal have grievances. I do not know any country in the world where you will not find people with grievances—even in *this* highly-favoured land there are grievances. Some grievances, however, are more serious than others, and I should like to ask whether the Outlanders have any serious grievances which require the British Government to go to war for the purpose of redressing them. I do not think they have, and I know something about gold-mining in various parts of the world. I saw something of gold-mining in Australia in the year 1863. I know something of gold-mining in California, and I know something of gold-mining in the Transvaal. I have watched Johannesburg, more or less, from the day when I went down from Pretoria with the Minister of Education to lay the foundation-stone of its first house until now, and I say, without fear of contradiction, that the gold law of the Transvaal is more liberal, and the conditions under which either citizens or foreigners can mine gold in that country are more generous than anywhere else in the world. They are much more so than in the neighbouring British Colony of Rhodesia or in the Welsh mines at home, where, as Mr. Pritchard Morgan asserts, by the excessive taxation of the Government, the gold industry has been entirely crushed. There were tenfold greater grievances in

Australia and in America than there are in the Transvaal, and there were greater grievances in the earlier days of the diamond-mining industry of Kimberley. The statement of the grievances will be found in the petition promoted by the South African League, the association of which Mr. Cecil Rhodes is President, and we had them stated by Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Leonard to the Select Committee of the House of Commons. Mr. Rhodes complained that the indirect taxation was too high, and prevented the gold-fields from being worked profitably, but he had to admit that the indirect taxation of the Cape Colony, of which he was Prime Minister, was higher than in the Transvaal. The taxation of the gold machinery was about 50 per cent. higher in the Cape Colony than it was in the Transvaal. As for making the gold-mines pay, why there was a company formed to work the gold-mines in South Africa, of which Mr. Rhodes and his friend Mr. Ridd were the managing directors. A certain percentage of the profits accrued to the managing directors as commission, and their share of the profits was not hundreds of pounds, but hundreds of thousands of pounds, and the company afterwards bought out the rights of these managing directors for stock worth more than a million of money. As for Mr. Leonard, he admitted that he was making £10,000 a year as a solicitor in Johannesburg, and that his direct taxes, including his license fee as a solicitor, were only about £100 a year. In this country his income-tax alone would have been over £300 a year.

The next grievance was the question of the franchise. Under the Transvaal law any foreigner coming into that country could have a vote for the Second Chamber in two years, and was eligible to be elected a member of that chamber in two years more. In this country no foreigner can vote for our Second Chamber until he has been at least five years in our country, so, as far as the Second Chamber is concerned, that cannot be called a grievance. But the First Chamber in the Transvaal has more power than the Second Chamber, and can veto the acts of the Second Chamber, and, under the law as it now stands, no foreigner is eligible to vote for the First Chamber until he has been fourteen years in the country.

In this country we have no vote at all for the First Chamber, as it is hereditary. In several of our most important colonies, such as New Zealand and New South Wales, no one can vote for the First Chamber, because it is appointed by the Crown. Before we go to war with a foreign country, in order to force its Government to give aliens in that country a vote for the First Chamber, let us take the beam out of our own eyes and see to it that our people at home and in our colonies have the same rights which the South African League wishes to secure for the Outlanders in the Transvaal. Mr. Chamberlain, in his speech at

Birmingham the other day, thus defined the grievances of the Outlanders :—

“ They pay five-sixths of the revenue. They have no voice whatever in the government of the country. They are not even allowed municipal rights. They cannot control the drainage of their own city or the education of their own children. Their lives and property are at the mercy of corrupt, inefficient officials—officials appointed without reference to them by the Government, which treats the English citizens in South Africa—in which we are the paramount power—as if they belonged to an inferior race.

I cannot admit that these assertions of Mr. Chamberlain are true. As the bulk of the revenue is paid by indirect taxation no one can tell what proportion is paid by the Outlander or by the Inlander. I have already pointed out that they have a voice in the government of the country, and, by the Bill which is now passing in the Volksraad, they will have a vote for both Chambers after seven years' residence. The statement that they are not allowed municipal rights and cannot control the drainage of their own city is the very reverse of the truth. For many years they have had a Sanitary Board, and over two years ago a Bill was passed giving them full municipal rights. The Municipality of Johannesburg has, in some respects, greater rights than the London County Council, because they appoint and pay their own police. Johannesburg has even more powers than Paris or Berlin, and Mr. Chamberlain knows that very well, as he reprinted the English translation of the Municipal Law in his Blue Book on the Grievances of the Outlanders. As for the assertion that they cannot control the education of their own children, it is simply not true. I see that Lord George Hamilton the other day went one step further than Mr. Chamberlain, and said they were not even allowed to teach their own children English. As a matter of fact, under the law of 1896, there are five schools at the Gold-fields where English is the medium of education. Ten of the teachers are English and five are Dutch. In the lower standards no Dutch book at all is used, and in the higher ones the maximum time required for teaching Dutch, in order to obtain the very highest grant, is only five hours per week. You will find no country in the world where the education of the children of foreigners is so much considered as it is in the Transvaal. As to the charge of corruption—it may or it may not be true—Mr. Chamberlain offers no evidence. I know that some of the Outlanders have done their best to corrupt some of the officials in the country; but I know also that Mr. Kruger, Mr. Reits, Dr. Leyds, and the leading men of the Transvaal Government are as far from corruption as Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, or any of Her Majesty's Ministers. I am afraid that Mr. Chamber-

lain, when he uttered that sentence about the corruption and inefficiency of the officials, was thinking of those appointed by the British Government when they took possession of the Transvaal in 1877, because it applied much more accurately to them than it does to the present officials there. Any one who reads the correspondence between the present Lord Welby, Chairman of our County Council, on behalf of the Treasury and the Secretary for the Colonies will see the kind of Government set up, as Mr. Chamberlain himself said, "by force, fraud and folly" in 1877. The miserable petty peculation it shows is something almost incredible. Regarding Sir Theophilus Shepstone's account, Sir Reginald Welby thus writes on April 17th, 1883:—

"The account is of a most unsatisfactory character, vouchers and details are produced for about one-third only of the payments, and the small portion that is capable of thorough examination contains evidence that the unvouched residue includes several duplicate charges. One item described as forage contained a concertina, a set of vases, a great coat, and some muslin.

"Your Lordship's direction for the abatement of £300 overdrawn salary from Sir T. Shepstone's pension has, doubtless, led him to recognize the gravity of the position in which he has placed himself by the disregard of the elementary rules which ordinarily govern men in their dealings with money other than their own."

The Secretary for the Colonies pointed out that Sir Theophilus Shepstone had served them for nearly fifty years, that he was a poor man, and that to surcharge him £13,000 would ruin him, and suggested that the money surcharged should be paid out of the pension by instalments over a number of years, and that some of the items ought to be allowed.

The following is an extract from the reply of Mr. Leonard Courtney, then Secretary to the Treasury, on 16th October, 1884:—

"A charge for forage which includes a concertina, a great coat, and a set of vases is simply an impertinence on the part of the accountant, and my Lords feel sure that the Secretary of State will not wish them to charge the Consolidated Fund with the cost of Sir Theophilus Shepstone's hat, Mr. H. C. Shepstone's hair brushes, Mr. Finney's cricket bat, or Mr. Thirsk's fishing-rod."

It is said that the Boers vote doles to themselves. Well, during the present Session of Parliament we have a Bill brought before us by means of which the Government proposes to buy back a charter which they gave for nothing, and to pay several

hundred thousand pounds for it. Mr. Chamberlain was a member of the Government who gave it for nothing, and is also a member of the Government that is buying it back at so high a price. He is also a shareholder in the Company. We have also a Bill before us to mitigate the evils of the monopoly in telephones given by a Postmaster-General for nothing, and we find the most unblushing lobbying done by honourable and right honourable members who are interested in this monopoly, including the Postmaster-General who gave this monopoly, and who is now one of the directors of the Company. Then we have a Bill before us to spend £80,000 or £90,000 in paying the half of the parsons' tithe-rates. A year ago we spent several hundreds of thousands of pounds in paying the Irish landlords' rates, and the year before we spent about a million and a-half in paying a portion of the rates of English agriculturists, which will all ultimately go into the pockets of the landlords. With all these facts before him, Mr. Chamberlain may think on the old proverb that those who live in glass-houses should not throw stones.

In his speech at Birmingham he also accused the Transvaal Government of having four times broken the Convention within the course of the last fifteen years. He says :—

“In the course of the past fifteen years we have been four times on the verge of war with the Transvaal. Once, in 1885, when the Warren expedition was carried through. Again in 1894, in the time of the last Government, when President Kruger attempted forcibly to enlist British subjects and to tax them and to take their goods in support of his battles with the native tribes, although at the same time he refused them all representation, all share in the government of the country. In 1895, when the Cape Government asked our assistance and promised their own co-operation in order to prevent the arbitrary action of the Government of the Transvaal in closing the roads to the passage of Cape merchandise ; and again in 1897, when the present Government had to protest against the Alien Immigration Law, which was declared to be a distinct breach of the Convention.”

Is this accurate? The Warren expedition was not sent against the Transvaal Government. Its scene of operation was outside the boundary of the Transvaal altogether. It was native territory, where two native chiefs had been fighting for paramourcy. One of them went down to Kimberley and hired British citizens to fight for him, the other went into the Transvaal and got the assistance of a number of Boers, and after the war was over the British and Boer volunteers of the rival chiefs took over the territory for themselves. As this blocked our way into the interior we annexed the territory by proclamation, and sent Sir

Charles Warren to take possession of it. The Boer Government were no more responsible for their citizens who took part in the war than the British Government were for those who had been recruited in Kimberley. The description of what took place in 1894 is also inaccurate. The right of commanding all the residents in the country has existed from time immemorial in South Africa. It exists in our own Cape Colony; it exists in the Island of Java, where British residents are bound to serve in the militia when required. The then Government never asserted that this action was a breach of the Convention. All they asked of President Kruger was a favour, which he granted, and Mr. Chamberlain's statement is a perversion of the facts of the case. The next alleged breach of the Convention was the closing of the Vaal drift in 1895? Every Government has a right to determine where its Custom Houses shall be and its port of entry, and the Transvaal Government were entirely within their rights in removing their Custom House from the Vaal drift in question. There is a general law in South Africa that when a bridge is built over a stream the drift is closed. The railway bridge was built over the Vaal, and there was a contention between the railway companies as to the proportion of the freights to be divided between them and the Cape Colony, of which Mr. Rhodes was at that time Prime Minister, and had under his control not only the Cape Railway, but also that of the Orange Free State. In order to get what they thought was a fairer arrangement, the Transvaal determined to close the drift where the new bridge was formed. The Custom House was one between the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, and all the roads and all the Custom Houses on the frontier between the Transvaal and Cape Colony and between the Transvaal and Natal were unaffected by it. It was a Custom House on the frontier between a foreign country and the Transvaal. It might have been called an unfriendly act to the Cape Government, but it was in no sense of the word an infraction of the Convention. The Alien Immigration Law of 1897 was similar in principle to the law passed in 1881 giving the Government power to prevent the entrance of some of the undesirable aliens, many of them criminals of the worst type from Europe, America, and Australia, who were then flocking into the country. Mr. Chamberlain states that one thing has in common fairness "to be set on the other side in drawing up the balance-sheet of our relations with the Transvaal, and that is the Jameson Raid. I have never said a word in defence—I could not of that most mischievous proceeding, but that one great fault has been, I think, sufficiently atoned for." Mr. Chamberlain thinks that one great fault had been sufficiently atoned for. Has it been atoned for? Men were killed in that raid who left widows and children, but not one penny of compensation has as yet been paid. The soldiers who took part in that raid were set at liberty by the Boers. The

officers came home to be tried, and everyone of those officers has been replaced in his position in the army. Dr. Jameson was imprisoned for a few months, and then became the lion of Society, and the man who found the money for the raid, though he admitted his crime, is still the Right Honourable Cecil Rhodes, a member of Her Majesty's Privy Council, and it seems to me that the way Mr. Chamberlain means to atone for the Jameson Raid is by a Chamberlain Raid.

A great many of the people who went to the Transvaal thought they would find there all the comforts and conveniences of Piccadilly, and all the conditions under which they lived at home, and this not being the case they were dissatisfied, but if they had gone to America, or to any other country of the same character they would have found things very similar. There was a complaint that the language of the Oath of Allegiance was very objectionable. But the Oath of Allegiance in the Transvaal was word for word similar to what had been the Oath of Allegiance in the United States or America for over a century, and was copied by the Boers from the American Constitution.

The facts of the case do not warrant the assertions that have been made by the two Cabinet Ministers, and I have been very much amused to see Lord George Hamilton agitating for the Outlanders, while he knows that there are hundreds of thousands of intelligent Europeans in India who have no voice in the Government of the country, and are ruled over as despotically in India as they would be by the Czar in Russia, that there are gold-fields in India as well as in Africa, but the miners there have no political or municipal rights. The iniquity of the case of the Natus brothers outrivals the conduct of the General Staff towards Dreyfus, because Dreyfus had a trial before he was banished, but the Natus have never been tried at all.

These are the men who plead for justice abroad, and deny it at home, and who are making these excuses, because the Transvaal is a rich country, and they mean to secure it for ourselves.

If this policy of misrepresentation and incitement of public feeling is successful, and we go to war with the Transvaal, it will be a very serious matter for this country. I do not know whether victory or defeat would be the greater evil. But there is no just cause for war. I trust the common sense of members on both sides of the House of Commons and the great bulk of the public in this country, will prevent this country from plunging into an unjust, a wanton, and wicked war. (Loud cheers.)

The Transvaal Committee,

Formed to Protest against War with the Transvaal.

Chairman, G. W. E. RUSSELL.

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

Secretary, P. W. CLAYDEN.

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