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SIR ALFRED MILNER

ON THE

REAL OBJECT OF THE WAR.

*Being an Interview between the High Commissioner
of South Africa and Mr. James Molteno, the
Representative of the Ministerialists in the Cape
Parliament, five days before the outbreak of War.*

(REPRINTED BY PERMISSION FROM THE "DAILY CHRONICLE.")

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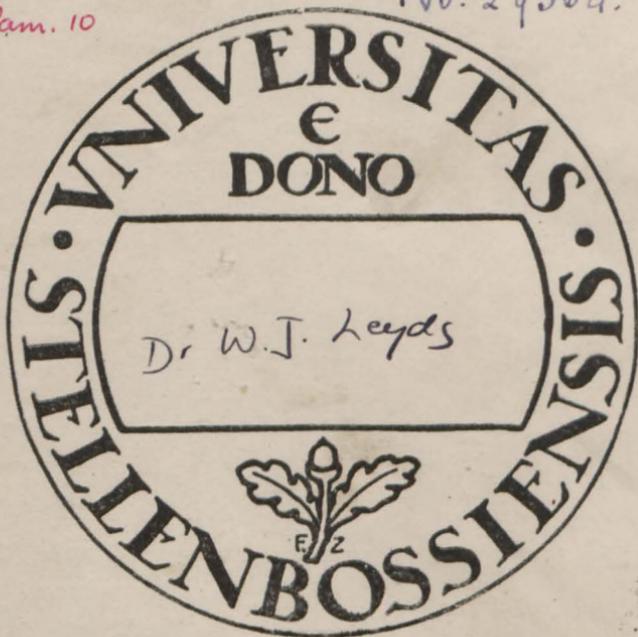
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PREFATORY NOTE.

Those who read Mr. Molteno's account of his interview with Sir Alfred Milner will, no doubt, remember that fifty-seven members of the ministerial (or Afrikaner Bond) party in the Cape Legislative Assembly had, through the Governor of Cape Colony, Sir Alfred Milner, forwarded to the Queen a petition, in which, while expressing their deep feelings of loyalty, they had earnestly prayed that everything possible might be done even at the last moment to avert from South Africa the horrors of war. Mr. Molteno, himself one of the petitioners, was deputed to ascertain from the Governor what answer, if any, had been returned to the petition.

Particular attention is drawn to Sir Alfred Milner's declaration that he was "determined to break the dominion of Afrikanerdom."

In order to appreciate the full significance of this declaration it is necessary to bear in mind the following facts:—

1. Cape Colony is, so far as its own affairs are concerned, an autonomous colony with a parliamentary government of its own. Ministers are appointed by the Governor, who is the representative of the Queen, in precisely the same way as at home the Queen chooses her ministers from the party which has a majority in the House of Commons.
2. The white population of Cape Colony amounts to about 500,000, some 300,000 of these, roughly speaking, being Dutch against about 200,000 English.
3. The Political Parties in Cape Colony are: (a) The "Afrikaner Bond," representing mainly the Dutch element; (b) The "Progressives," representing mainly the English.
4. As a result of the Cape general election of 1898 the Bond party had a majority of two votes in the Legislative Assembly, which consisted of seventy-nine members. The Progressive Ministry of Sir Gordon Sprigg was defeated in the Legislative Assembly, and a Bond Ministry took its place with Mr. Schreiner as Prime Minister.
5. A Redistribution of Seats Bill was passed through the Legislative Assembly by agreement between the two parties.
6. Another election for the newly created seats was held at the Cape in the spring of this year, under the provisions of the new Redistribution Act, the result being that the Afrikaner Bond party returned to power with a majority increased to ten or twelve.
7. In 1898 Mr. Schreiner, the Prime Minister, introduced a Bill authorising the payment of £30,000 annually (a sum which

would represent the interest on a capital sum sunk in the purchase of a first-class battleship) to the Admiralty "as a contribution towards the annual expenditure by the Imperial Government in connection with her Majesty's Naval Service." This Bill passed by a unanimous vote, every Dutch-speaking member of the Assembly voting in its favour.

8. The Afrikaner Bond party have, therefore, not been satisfied with *declaring* their loyalty. They have proved it in the most substantial way by setting aside in perpetuity a capital sum of about £1,000,000 towards the expenses of the British Navy.

When Sir Alfred Milner, speaking in a constitutionally governed Colony, announces his determination to break the dominion of Afrikanerdom, *i.e.*, of the party which has been constitutionally returned to power in accordance with the will of the electorate constitutionally expressed he shows an entire disregard of the powers and position of a Constitutional Governor. His language can be best understood by making the impossible supposition that the Queen should declare to a Conservative member of Parliament in England her determination "to break down the dominion of Conservatism."

SIR ALFRED MILNER AND AFRIKANDER
MEMBERS.

Memo. of Interview with Governor,

Wednesday, Oct. 4.

Attended Caucus meeting eleven a.m. No Ministers present—Inter alia strong desire expressed that the petition to Queen should be published, and was asked any reply received.—determined to see Walrond as to whether petition been received and replied to—go to Government House before twelve noon—ask for Walrond—see Walrond—tells me answer been received and will communicate it to me within quarter of an hour—asks me to wait—Governor comes in—tells me that reply received, and unfavorable—that the Government consider time quite gone by to appoint Commission—asks me where I shall be to receive reply—I reply at the “House”—he says may expect it in ten minutes—I say, why is it too late, the Transvaal has accepted the Commission?—he says, yes but the Government cannot now revert to the position of August 2nd—I say why not, surely the counter proposals were never intended to supersede the Government dispatch?—they were made on the distinct understanding that the offer remained open. He replied, well I myself think that a bona-fide misunderstanding has occurred, but he said it is useless

to discuss it, the time for that has long ago gone by,—He asks me to sit down, and we sit down—Long conversation ensues,—I say the position is dreadful, can nothing be done—thousands of honest hearts will be broken?—he replies, British Government determined not to go back to the inquiry stage,—he says he fears immediate hostilities, that he is now wiring Steyn and Steyn replies putting blame on British Government, and charging them with responsibility if Boer attack.—I reply, is that unreasonable seeing what Government doing?—The red coat is where he has never been before in South Africa—he replies, that our men are thirty miles from the border at Glencoe and the Boers are on the boundary.—I say I am not referring to Natal but to the Western border,—and can you reasonably expect the Boer to wait until they are swallowed up,—I say, surely something can still be done, they have wise men and we have wise men,—I then said to his Excellency,—“but does your Excellency realise the awful horrors of war in this country?”—he says it will be all right after it is over,—I say, that’s the mistake, it is not the actual war I fear so much as the terrible after effects,—This country won’t be fit to live in, English and Dutch will never come together again,—he says, oh yes they will, it is the war I fear and loss of life,—I reply, the dead will feel no longer, it is the living after,—this country will be a hell. I say, surely all this could have been avoided,—patience and progress are all on our side, why force a hurried issue?—he says, we are determined to settle the question once and for all,—He says, why all this arming going on, this must be stopped,—I reply because a Guardsman and Officer, Colonel Robert White, told his superiors before the raid that they (the Boers) were an easy prey to the first comer along, and that is why, and

very foolish they would have been not to be so (armed), but I said, none of us like the forts, and Consuls and Ambassadors, and that would all go in time,—I further say that this is putting an awful strain on the loyalty of our Colonists,—he said he pitied men like Fraser and Brounger, the others were different—I said change places, and supposing the Transvaal an English republic and the conditions changed here, would you or could you prevent Englishmen from helping to defend their brothers and parents being shot? About now, Belgrave or some one came in hurriedly and left, after handing the Governor a slip of paper, I stood up and Governor moved to where I sat on sofa,—he did not let me go,—I said, I could never have dreamed of Africa coming to this,—Governor replied, well you are all saying it is the capitalists, he said, that is what I feel very much, it is untrue, I am not in favor of capitalists, I reply, why then has Rhodes and Co. captured all the leading English newspapers, “Times” included, and nearly all English Cape papers, and why are they spending all this money misleading England?—there is Rhodes the Raider, backed up by England, and regarded as the great empire builder of our Empire in Africa,—I said, the simple Boer he looks at plain facts, and does not regard political refinement,—It is these suspicions as to independence that renders him dogged,—if only he could be certain his independence were not assailed peace might be secured. He replies, that they are moving over forces and joining an issue, I say, what can you expect after the last dispatch telling them that if by Friday last they don't give in that they will hear something else,—they are bound to believe you,—I said, I cannot understand all this vague hinting that the Dutch are disloyal, I know them well and I have never

heard a word of disloyalty. I know their deep reverence for the Queen, and their love of the Constitution,—Three years ago it was all German intrigue, and now to poison English minds it is Dutch disloyalty, and a vague idea of republicanism working outwards from the Transvaal,—It is a new vague untrue assertion, He rising replies, well, Mr. Molteno, it is no use, I am determined to break the dominion of Africanderdom,—thereupon I left, feeling utterly hopeless,—Went to House but no reply before lunch and none up to 3.15, so wrote again to Walrond suggesting that perhaps he misunderstood where to send reply to, at 3.30 handed reply.

Since the foregoing was written, the following statement has been made by Sir Alfred Milner (See *Daily Chronicle* of November 22nd):

Sir Alfred Milner's secretary has written a letter to the *South African News*, in which he declares that Mr. Molteno's report is imperfect and inaccurate, and that positively misleading expressions are attributed to Sir Alfred which were never used; in fact, that the whole tenor of the observations was entirely distorted.

Thereupon Mr. Molteno has written a letter (See *Daily Chronicle* of Nov. 24th) to the *Cape Times*, in which he adheres in every particular to the account of his interview with Sir Alfred Milner on the 4th ult., given in his published memorandum.