

TRANSVAAL INDEPENDENCE COMMITTEE,
PALACE CHAMBERS,
9, BRIDGE STREET,
WESTMINSTER

ANNEXATION OF THE TRANSVAAL.

A REPLY

TO

SIR BARTLE FRERE'S LETTER TO "THE TIMES," 25 FEB.,
1881.

(Reprinted from "The Times," 8 March, 1881.)

AND

A LETTER

ON THE SUBJECT OF ALLEGED SLAVERY IN THE
TRANSVAAL.

(Reprinted from "The Daily News," 23 Feb. 1881.)

By GEO. P. MOODIE,

Late Member of the Transvaal Volksraad.

TRANSVAAL INDEPENDENCE COMMITTEE, 9, BRIDGE ST., WESTMINSTER.

LONDON:

WILLIAM RIDGWAY, 169, PICCADILLY, W.
1881.

ANNEXATION OF THE TRANSVAAL.

REPLY TO SIR BARTLE FRERE.

To the Editor of the "Times."

SIR,—I trust you will afford me space for a reply to Sir Bartle Frere's letter which appeared in the *Times* of the 25th ult.

I need not specially refer to the supposed massacre of the 94th Regiment, for, if any facts will stand forth clearly in the sad history of this war, these are that full knowledge of his danger had been previously conveyed to Col. Anstruther, that he had been implored not to proceed on his march, as the Boers were in force in front of him—and, further, that he was told by the Boer leader that his advance would be considered as a declaration of war on his part.

The question of the hostile invasion of Natal, as a primary point of offence, is certainly unworthy of comment, and I pass over equally lightly the statement that the insurgents represent

only a violent minority—for, by the latter we are asked to accept the wonderful inference that a large majority of the Boers are risking death and ruin in a cause they disapprove, and out of deference to the views of a mere minority.

Sir Bartle Frere states that he had no voice in the annexation at the time ; but this is a matter which carries no argument with it, for he gave his cordial approval to it afterwards, and he, more than any man, has thoroughly endorsed the policy which led up to it.

A point has been made also of Messrs. Kruger and Jorissen remaining in office and receiving salary from the "English Government." For Mr. Kruger I can answer that what he did was with the entire consent and approval of his compatriots. He was paid with Transvaal, and not with English money. As he did not recognize the incoming Government he did not resign, and only remained in office while the Protest remained unanswered. He declined to take the oath of allegiance to the Queen, and—if he received pay under such circumstances—England has no right to complain.

I believe most of the above remarks apply to Mr. Jorissen as well; but as he is not, and, as far as I am aware, has never claimed to be a Boer leader, his position is of little consequence.

Sir Bartle Frere next refers to the annexation itself, and says that that act "took place with the full knowledge of the Volksraad and Executive

“Council of what was in contemplation,” and “without a shadow of force”—and again, “that the act was acquiesced in as inevitable by the Volksraad and the great majority of the people.” If this were true, then indeed might it be said, not only that the annexation was lawful, but also that the present war of Independence deserves the name of rebellion.

But what proofs does he bring forward in support of these statements? The Volksraad were in session in February, and separated some time before the annexation. If they had acquiesced in the “inevitable” there would have been some record to prove it. But this was not the case, for, on the contrary, they passed a formal resolution on the 22nd of that month, directing the Government “to take measures for the maintenance of the independence of the Republic.”

So also with the Executive Council. I have before me the Resolution of that body of 11th April, 1877, which, so far from expressing acquiescence, contains a determined Protest against the destruction of Transvaal Independence. Bearing in mind, however, Sir T. Shepstone’s allusions as to the probable effect of his “withdrawing his hand” from Cetewayo, and to the “men of the sword” (which I shall have occasion to refer to later), they wisely resolved to take no hostile steps until the Government had “first employed all means to secure in a peaceful way, and by

“friendly mediation, the rights of the people.”
(See Blue Book C. 1883, p. 1.)

I now come to the alleged acquiescence of the great majority of the people. This is more than even Sir Theophilus Shepstone claimed, for the most he says is, that “*a large proportion* of the “inhabitants of the Transvaal desire the establishment of Her Majesty’s authority.”

On the other hand, the Volksraad had protested, the Executive Council had protested, and the President protested; this was followed, first by one deputation to England to protest, and then by another deputation,—the latter carrying with them a memorial signed by 6591 out of a possible 8000 electors,—and they repeated these protests to Sir Owen Lanyon, to Sir Garnet Wolseley, and to Sir Bartle Frere, besides sending a petition to the Queen, and another to Mr. Gladstone.

Regardless of these facts, Sir Bartle Frere still speaks of a large majority of the people acquiescing in the annexation.

But, it is asked, why did not the Boers put Sir T. Shepstone, with his twenty-five policemen, over the border? The official answer to this question has been that the great majority of the people favoured the annexation in their hearts, and that the Protest was a sham, put forward by the President and connived at by the Executive Council and the Volksraad.

I will endeavour to give the Transvaal reply. In the first instance it must be borne in mind that the time was most opportune for the annexation project. Sir T. Shepstone had postponed his visit till the very eve of the presidential election—an election which it was known would convulse the country to the core. This delay, and the uncertainty also as to the object and scope of his mission, increased the paralyzing influences at work—while rumours, emanating from Natal, of an intended Zulu inroad, wrought the tension to the highest pitch—and, with the other causes, conspired to reduce to a *minimum* the resisting power of the Republic.

Meantime, Mr. Burgers, on whom devolved the duty of conducting the impending negotiations with Her Majesty's Commissioner, had become thoroughly unpopular with all classes. His high-flown schemes of progress had met with no sympathy from the people; he had run the country into debt; he had mismanaged the Sikukuni expedition; his government was too personal. He therefore stood no chance of re-election. Finding himself in this strait, and with a view, no doubt, of forcing the country to renew his lease of power, he made an excited speech in the Volksraad, describing the country as in a state of utter poverty and helplessness, and the people as having "lost their faith in God and man." This speech, which was delivered in the last days

of the session, was made good use of by Sir T. Shepstone in his "Address to the People," and is still quoted to prove the incapacity of the Boers for self-government. But, if read by the light of the above and other facts, it will be seen that it was no more than the angry and passionate speech of a disappointed man, who wished to impress upon the Volksraad that it was only by a full trust and confidence in *himself* that the State could be saved. This unlimited confidence the Volksraad declined to repose in him, and they reaped their reward in the course which he afterwards adopted.

But though thus unpopular, and though his personal interest in supporting the Republic had well-nigh ceased, Mr. Burgers was still President, and as such, the conduct of affairs necessarily remained in his hands. The people could not, as Sir Bartle Frere assumes to be the case in his article in the *Nineteenth Century*, dismiss Mr. Burgers and elect another president at a moment's notice. His time had not yet quite expired, and to have done so would only have produced that anarchy which the annexationists desired.

Another reason for the quiet attitude of the people is to be found in the "threats" before alluded to. Simultaneously with Sir T. Shepstone's departure from Natal, the Zulu forces began to be mobilized. It had been said that it required the utmost exercise of influence on the

part of the Natal Government (represented of course by Sir T. Shepstone) to restrain Cetewayo from wreaking vengeance on the Transvaal. This was repeated at Sir T. Shepstone's interview with the Transvaal Executive in February, 1877, where he said: "Cetewayo rules in parts of this country." . . . "We have restrained him, and he will do nothing as long as I am here; but has the State the power to keep that man in check if I withdraw my hand from him?" . . . "I believe that some think it their duty to take up arms". . . "I wish to have nothing to do with violence. Should it become necessary, then I will consider whether it is not my duty and my choice to return; it would be painful to me towards men whom I respect, and whose fathers I have known hundreds upon hundreds, but I will then have to make room for the men of the sword."

The Republican Government had no fear of Cetewayo. It is false to assert that there had at any time before this been any fear of Zulu invasion. Fear there may have been, that, owing to the encouragements previously given to Zulu claims by Sir T. Shepstone, there might be border encroachment, but no more. But when it was seen that the influence he stated himself to possess over the Zulus was either a myth, or that their present attitude was the result of that influence,—when they were told from his own

lips that if he had to return he would but make room for men of the sword,—it was but natural that the Boers should pause before they offered indignity to one whose resentment could be so powerfully exercised.

Another important factor is to be found in the action taken by the Bank—the only one then in the Transvaal. This institution had made advances for the war against Sikukuni, and, under the promise of the debt being transferred to the Imperial account, demanded immediate repayment, and put a stop to all further credit. This enabled the statement to be made that the Republican exchequer was empty, and gave a foundation for the often-told anecdote of the twelve-and-sixpenny balance which the Imperial treasurer is said to have inherited.

Such was the state of affairs at or prior to the annexation. A few days after Sir T. Shepstone's arrival in Pretoria, he appointed a Committee of his own followers to confer with the Transvaal Executive on matters concerning the object of his mission. After one or two meetings the Commissioner's Delegates, without giving any reason, ceased to attend, and in a few days more the annexation was declared.

The reading of the Proclamation took place on the 12th April, 1877, at about ten or twelve in the morning, in the presence of a few townspeople, when Mr. Burgers, without consulting his Volks-

raad (which, by the way, he was strongly warned by Sir T. Shepstone not to assemble), and, in defiance of their resolution, handed over the Government offices to the High Commissioner. Having issued the Protest, as well as a Proclamation calling on the inhabitants to maintain order, and await in peace the result of the Protest, the President of the Republic sold off the whole of his effects and left the Transvaal.

Some months afterwards, when the British war troubles in South Africa had reached a most critical point, and it was rumoured that he was returning to Pretoria, Mr. Burgers was hurriedly sent for to Cape Town and placed in receipt of a pension.

Though it was thought in Pretoria that the annexation would shortly be effected, when the event took place, even the townspeople, who are mostly English, were taken by surprise. The Boer inhabitants knew nothing of it till it was over, and when rumours got abroad that the mischief was done, some 300 or 400 from the adjoining farms hastily assembled, with the expressed intention of expelling the Commissioner. Great alarm was created at the seat of Government, and the European citizens were induced to arm and prepare for the defence of the Administrator. But the Boers retired in peace;—they were referred by the President to his Protest and Proclamation, and were told that any recourse

to violence might produce the anarchy their opponents desired, and would also have the effect of stultifying the Protest. If this reasoning did not satisfy, it at least silenced them. They could not, however, nor did they for some time, believe in the reality of what had occurred.

An impression, based on the wording of the "Address to the People," was abroad that the assumption of Government was to be only nominal, if not temporary, and that after the "friendly" offices had been performed, the country would return to a state of virtual independence.

What has happened since then is well known. One deputation, sent to England to support the Protest, was informed by Lord Carnarvon "that the information he possessed tended to show that the annexation had occurred by the great wish of the majority of the people of the country. That the opponents of British rule were an extremely small minority, and that since they (the delegates) had left the Transvaal for England, the enthusiasm with which the vast majority of the people, including the Dutch colonists, welcomed Sir T. Shepstone, as the representative of Her Majesty, had increased to the extent of apparently absorbing all other feelings!"

Appealing in vain for a Plebiscite, the delegates returned, when the next deputation was sent with a petition signed by more than 6000 electors. To

this petition the answer was, *inter alia*, that "the question of the maintenance or removal of the Queen's Sovereignty was not to be determined by the balance of opinion among the white inhabitants," and that "Her Majesty claimed the sole right of deciding whether or not the annexation was justifiable."

For two years since that date the Boers have maintained a peaceful though protesting attitude. They have avoided availing themselves of the opportunities offered by the wars in Zululand and Sikukuni's country, and have used every endeavour to give ocular proof of their majority by assembling in camp. The persistent misrepresentations that have been made regarding them from Pretoria drove them almost to despair and to arms. But at last one appeared who was superior to party feeling, and who conveyed to their minds the assurance of his belief in their being a preponderating party in the State. They did not weigh the exact meaning of words and were misled, and they little thought then that the same person who penned the despatch of the 17th April, 1879, which sent them "quietly to their homes," and which stated as "the result of his own observation," that it was "a very strong party," and that "the leaders were men of position in the country and respected, and their representations worthy of earnest consideration," would, after the lapse of only ten months, ask the

question in respect to the same people—"But
 "what title have they to say that they represent
 "the people or anything more than a violent
 "minority?"

It is to prove this title, and to disprove the
 persistent calumnies and misrepresentations that
 have been made regarding them by British
 Colonial officials, that the Boers of the Transvaal
 are now assembled in arms.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

GEO. P. MOODIE,

Late Member of the Transvaal Volksraad.

SLAVERY IN THE TRANSVAAL.

To the Editor of the "Daily News."

SIR,—Statements have been made by men in high authority that slavery in some of its most odious forms and cruelty of other kinds have been practised by the Boers during their occupation of the Transvaal. This charge is made, not merely in reference to individual cases, but it has assumed the form of an indictment against the Boers as a nation, and those who have framed the indictment insinuate, if they do not expressly assert, that slavery and cruelty has been and is now tolerated by their Government, and is left without a remedy by their laws. I appeal, Sir, to your sense of justice to allow one whose desire is to state nothing but the facts as he knows them, and who has had special opportunities for knowing them, to make this public reply.

In the year 1867 I first went to the Transvaal. I lived there up to the time of the annexation, and have served for several years as a member of the Volksraad. The agitation against slavery was

at its climax in 1868. I should be the first to admit that at that time it was needed, and did good work. I was myself an agitator, and laid before Mr. Pretorius a statement of facts connected with the capture of some children in a recent "commando," urging upon him the scandal that such proceedings brought upon his Government and his people. Mr. Pretorius listened to me with willing ears, and the Government were already prepared to deal decisively with the whole question. The commandant of the expedition (J. W. Henderson) was severely reprimanded, and the Landdrost of Wakkerstrom, within whose jurisdiction the children had been brought, was ordered to send them at once to Pretoria to be apprenticed in due legal form, or to be restored to their friends and families if reclaimed by them.

But the matter was not allowed to rest here. The Government was keenly alive to the necessity of once for all putting an end to the possibility of such scandals in the future. The illegal apprenticeship of native children was warmly taken up by the Volksraad in the session of 1868. An accurate report was drawn up, and measures were passed which from that day to this have prevented native children being forcibly removed from their families, and have put an end to the abuses which under the old "commando" system were far too prevalent.

In the year 1869 I myself was present on an occasion when a Boer appeared before the Landdrost of Wakkerstrom to compel a young Hottentot girl to return to his service, to which she was bound for a certain time under indentures of apprenticeship. It was proved that while in his service she had married, and the Landdrost held that the indentures were cancelled by the marriage, and that by the law then in force she was entitled to her freedom.

The whole system of illegal practices in warfare received its death-blow by the prosecution of Albasini and Vercueil, undertaken by the Boer Government in the year 1868. The defendants escaped punishment owing to technical defects in the form of the indictment, but the trial showed that a Government that had spent a tenth of its annual income upon the expenses of the prosecution was determined to stamp out the existence of such a national disgrace, and from that time till now illegal warfare has been unknown within the jurisdiction of the Boer's Volksraad. What a reform this is those only can estimate who take into account the temptations to retaliate upon tribes who are by no means always friendly, and to plunder from those who have perhaps been parties to many a previous raid upon cattle and property within the Dutch boundary.

This, then, is the reply which I make to Lord

Shaftesbury, Lord Brabourne, and other eminent men who have thought fit to frame the charge of slavery and cruelty against the Boers at this crisis in their national life :—

1. Since 1868 there has never been permitted by law or carried out in fact such a treatment of the natives by the Boers as would give a shadow of justification for English interference.

2. This reform and many others have been carried out entirely by the Volksraad without any pressure from without, and by means of the healthy growth of public opinion in the Transvaal.

3. I deny absolutely the truth of Lord Brabourne's statement that there has ever been "a public sale of slaves in Potchefstroom," and I challenge his lordship to produce the evidence on which he made it.

4. The statement made by his lordship* also that "the Boers had burned a lot of women and children alive" is also, to the best of my belief, entirely unfounded, and I challenge him to produce evidence to prove it.

And, in conclusion, Sir, I make this appeal to the justice of Englishmen and Englishwomen. Will they allow the sins and vices of past times—

* Since writing the above, my attention has been called to the fact that this latter statement is due to Sir John Lubbock, and not to Lord Brabourne.

which I for one in all candour and with shame admit—to blind them to that healthier national growth of which the last twelve years have given so many proofs, and which requires peace and liberty above all things for its further and complete development?

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

GEO. P. MOODIE,

Late Member of the Transvaal Volksraad.