

TRANSVAAL INDEPENDENCE  
COMMITTEE,  
6, DRAPERS GARDENS,  
THROGMORTON STREET, E.O.

*hijds*

LETTER

FROM

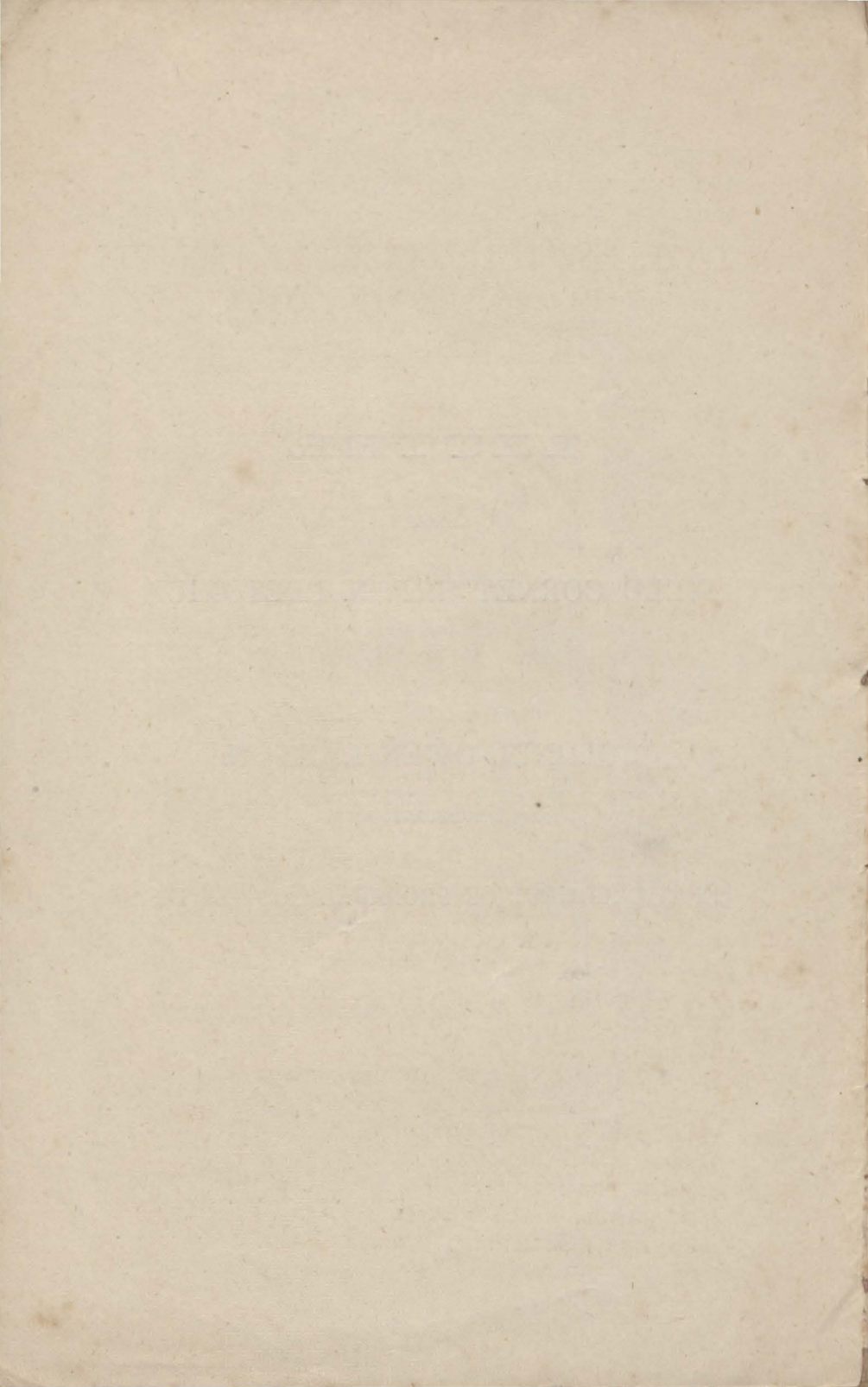
FIELD CORNET H. P. N. PRETORIUS

TO

COLONEL OWEN LANYON,

3rd DECEMBER, 1880,

ON THE SUBJECT OF PROBABLE HOSTILITIES.



LETTER FROM FIELD CORNET H. P. N. PRETORIUS  
TO COLONEL OWEN LANYON.

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THE following letter of Henning P. N. Pretorius to Colonel Lanyon, Administrator of the Transvaal, affords convincing proof that the war for independence had been long ago foreseen, and had been courted by the authorities. The writer is known as a man of courage, but he had at one time incurred the displeasure of the Boers by establishing a corps of Transvaal Volunteers in the service of the British Government.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE ADMINISTRATOR.

*Welgegund, 3rd December, 1880.*

SIR,

Your Excellency will, undoubtedly, be surprised, taking into consideration your position against mine, to receive such an uncalled-for letter.

But do not take it in evil part. I cannot act otherwise; I feel it my duty, aye, a great and weighty duty, which I have tried to avoid, but in vain, and I trust that, having done my duty, I shall get at peace with my conscience.

Well, Sir, many of the annexation men have regarded me, aye, not only they, but even many of the Boers likewise, as limping on two thoughts as regards the question of annexation. Well, they had not been mistaken in every respect. I have had my reasons for that. My opinion had always been that the cry for independence was more pretence or incitement than opinion. But now, Sir, I tell your Excellency I have been mistaken, and I think that in a little while you will find the same thing; therefore I deem it my ear-



nest duty to inform you, and at the same time to warn you against dreadful and fatal consequences which will rest on my shoulders and yours. I say, again, I have deceived myself, and I hope further your Excellency to think that the burghers, the protesting people, do not mean, or take to heart, their cause, aye, their just cause. I can tell you that if the Government intends not otherwise than has been hitherto made known to me, that we then will have to bear heavy and sad consequences. Believe me, your Excellency, I see torrents of blood and tears. Blood from the veins of the men, and bitter tears from the eyes of the women and children. The women and children will lament the loss of their husbands and fathers; they will weep, the children for bread, the mothers because they cannot give the bread, and finally they will weep because they have become foreigners in their own land. My hope and wish is that God will say to England: Until here, and no farther! But, Sir, think and consider that one innocent drop of blood will cry vengeance over the leader. Aye, you excuse yourself, and you accuse me and others that we shall be the cause of sad consequences. I will accuse you of having shed blood unjustly, aye, I feel my case so just that I almost venture to say that the blood of the men, whether of the burghers or of the soldiers, will summon those that have brought about and maintained the annexation before the Throne of Judgment hereafter of the Judge of all. Or do we not dread the Day of Judgment! I say: I dread, for I believe in the Supreme Being. Sir, I am born under fire in Natal when my father fought the English along with the Boers; hence when I got my sense I was a free Republican. The whole history of this country is known to me, and therefore I venture to say that we have been wronged on the 12th April, 1877. England has been deceived by those who wrought the annexation, and we have been deceived and misled by our head and our headmen, because we have obeyed them to remain quiet. We have thought that England's people would withdraw the arbitrary annexation, and I be-

lieve that even now if only the English people become better acquainted with matters here before and after the annexation. But when will the truth be revealed? Not before more troops shall have been called out against us from England. Then will be asked for what have troops to be sent to the Transvaal? You will have to answer: to put down the rebels. You will be asked: how many troops have you got? You must, or probably will answer: from 500 to 1,000. In amazement you will get the answer: but how many rebels, then, are there? You must answer: about 4,000 or 5,000 under arms. What will then be believed of your reports, of those of Sir Garnet Wolseley, and of those of the Governor of Natal, regarding the growing discontent? Surely you will not make the people of England believe that the four or five thousand have afterwards seceded from the Government! No, you cannot do that, for already 6,000 signatures have been made against the annexation. Now, Sir, I want you to consider whether it would not be much better and more just for England to save blood than to care for the land speculator and adventurer who call themselves British subjects. If you read through the people's decrees—those of December, 1879—you will find that we, although betrayed, are yet Christians towards the British subjects. Perhaps, Sir, you think: Well, the man who writes this is faint-hearted; he is getting into trouble. Well, you may think so. I am afraid we shall be called to account. One comfort I have left, that the unanimity of the people has so far induced me to join them in the struggle. You will naturally save the trouble of answering this, so I shall not expect any reply. I write about the cry for bread; there will be none for the mothers to give. Whence, when you shall be here amongst the Boers, you will exclaim with me: Famine! You will see that most of the corn lies unharvested, spoiled by the heavy rains. Most of the Boers are away from home. Where to? To Mooi River. What for? Again, not in order to cry as wanton children



for the moon, as has been formerly written of them by some one in Pretoria. No, you hear amongst all one voice. Not meeting with right in England, we must confine ourselves to the day of 12th April, 1877, and see what ought to have been done that day. Now we brag, "Union is strength." Don't allow it any longer to be whispered into your ears that the Boers are too base to defend their right by force of arms. Bear in mind that we have a sense of honour like any other nation; that sentiment is one of our strongest incentives in times of danger. Our second incentive is that we cannot find another Transvaal for which we could look out, as in the days of Natal and Boomplaats. Then had we yet places of refuge, and yet were we not too cowardly to offer resistance of arms. Then had we not only the English to fight; no, but the Kafirs, the lions, and other beasts as well. Then were our fathers born British subjects, who, through injustice or despotism had left the country without permission, and then man with man concluded a convention at Sand River which gave us liberty. The British Commissioners signed their names. That convention Sir Theophilus Shepstone has ventured to destroy by many false representations, and he threatened to make us forcibly British subjects.

Well, Sir, I hope that you will have a much better and more just character than is expected. Wash not your hands in the innocent blood of Africans, as well as of the poor soldiers who are being led like sheep to the slaughter.

I hope (may it not get so far) that you will put up the gentlemen into companies, and God grant that I meet them with even power.

So I remain,

Your Excellency's still confiding  
obedient servant,

H. P. N. PRETORIUS.