

No. 5.

[Handwritten signature]
W. J. LEWIS
Frankenstein 337
GRAVENHAGE.

THE LAST APPEAL

BEFORE THE

OUTBREAK OF WAR

MADE IN THE CAPE PARLIAMENT

BY

MR. SCHREINER

(The Cape Prime Minister).

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

[Published in the Interests of Truth by some Friends of South Africa.]

PRO VERITATE, PRO UNITATE, PRO PACE.

PRINTED BY
THE NATIONAL PRESS AGENCY, LIMITED.
WHITEFRIARS HOUSE, CARMELITE STREET, LONDON, E.C

THE LAST APPEAL

OUTBREAK OF WAR

MR. SOHRINE

MR. SCHREINER ON THE WAR.

Mr. Speaker, the Session has now drawn to a close, and it is my duty to move the adjournment of the House, but in doing so I think it will not be out of place if I should address a few words to the House and to the country at the close of this memorable Session, and at such a specially crucial period in the history of South Africa. When I say this I do not mean to introduce anything that is in any way controversial, or anything that may be construed into a partisan attitude. I think it is right that the House and the country should, at such a time, learn something from the head of the Government in regard to the position which we, as a Government, take up at such a time. I can only say, Mr. Speaker, that so long as I hold the place that I do at present I shall continue, to the best of my ability, to do the duty imposed upon me without favour, fear, or flinching.

The Times Are Out of Joint.

The times are out of joint, and to me it may seem a cursed spite that I should be born to endeavour to set them right. But hon. members of this House and the country may rest satisfied that as I see my duty so I will do it, and I shall regard it as my most sacred obligation to perform the duties imposed upon me so long as I fill this office. I consider, Mr. Speaker, that I only utter what I believe will be the sentiments of every hon. member in this House when I say that it is the general duty of her Majesty's Ministers in this colony, and it is the duty of every hon. member of this House, no matter what side he may sit on, and of every person or agency of influence in the country, to strain for one great object, and that is, so far as lies within our power, to save our colony as much as possible from being involved in the vortex of war into which it is now apparently a certainty that South Africa has been drawn. The agencies that exist in this country are strong and powerful, if they will only work in that direction.

Appeal to Civil Administrators.

First of all we have our Civil administration, central and local. I need scarcely say that at the centre everything will be done that lies in our power to further the great object I have indicated. To the magistrates and to every field-cornet in the country I have personally addressed a message—which has already been published in the Press—directing them individually and urging upon conductors of the Press strongly their duty on all those who may influence others to maintain at this time a quiet attitude, however high feeling may run, and to induce in everyone a determination to evince that loyalty, that discharge of duty which is best exhibited in the most trying times. And the answers, of which I have already received many, give me reason to hope that we shall find good results following from the message I have addressed to those in districts and wards having the power to exercise an influence for good. Various local authorities, divisional councils, municipalities, village management boards, justices of the peace, everyone of them have the power to influence, which they can exercise if they will exercise it, in response to the appeal of the Government in the direction of preserving this colony in peace and good order.

Appeal to Political Organisations.

Besides this first great agency of civil power and organisation, there is a second great agency, and that is the political organisations. Here we are divided by party politics. But every man of us, I hope, is inspired with a true love for our country. I say to every man who is here to-day, and I am referring also to members of the other branch of the Legislature, in leaving their duties to-day to return to their constituents, to them I earnestly say exert your influence as much as possible in the same direction. Explain to them as far as lies in your power, to every man whom you can influence, that the primary duty which rests upon us all at this time is to possess our souls in patience, and however dark the day may be, however deeply stirred the feelings of the people may be, yield to no impulse to do anything that is rash or wrong, but abide the event in quiet and confidence, believing, as I hope we all believe, that over all there is a Higher Hand that guides the destinies.

Appeal to the Press.

There is a third great agency in this country which can at this time do an immense deal. I don't want to say whether it has done

in the past, whether it has used that vast power committed to it, a power scarcely less than the powers of the Legislature. I refer to the agency of the Press, and when I say that I refer to the Press on both sides, I do not wish to speak to-day as a party man. I say to that great organisation, let this be a time at which party considerations, small considerations, vanish from your thoughts as far as possible. Do not seek petty triumphs for the day. Let your course be impartial criticism, not hostile attack. Try and follow the idea of preserving peace and good order in this country, and let the utterances of the Press be animated rather by the inspiration of human instinct, and moved by those eternal sentiments of pity, sympathy, charity, generosity, all of which through the daily preaching of our daily Press may be spread around. And do good in this country; work for the future welfare of our colony and of South Africa. It may seem impossible to hope that partisanship and violence may stop. I don't think it can altogether. But I think that any man who wields that which is mightier than the sword, the pen, will pause before he dips his pen in ink other than the ink of human kindness, and if so, it will be a great thing achieved towards saving this colony from being embroiled at this time, and it will save for the future a position which otherwise may speedily become almost intolerable to the inhabitants of this colony. These great agencies are only three.

Agency of the Church.

I wish to refer to the fourth, which is an agency which should be more powerful than all the others. That is the agency of the Church. When I say the Church, I refer to the clergy of all denominations and of all creeds, and to their lay fellow-workers. With them I say there rests a grave responsibility. Let them endeavour to eliminate and eradicate as far as possible race antagonisms, race feelings. Let them endeavour, if the Press cannot see its way to abandon passion and prejudice—let them at any rate see that all passion and all prejudice is foreign to the doctrines they preach, and in so doing they may perhaps attain those great results which no other agency in the country is so potent to achieve.

And I would say to every one in this country, to every man and woman, and even to every child, whose soul is not embittered by party views, work in the same direction. Strive to live and let live with your fellow-men. If your differences are intense, try to look always at the other side of the shield. Try to realise the way

in which the other person looks at it, and work always to the same goal to preserve the colony from those possible future evils and that impending ruin which is almost worse than death, which arises from a people divided against itself by antagonism and hatred, and in sections and classes on racial or on party lines. Every person has a responsibility in this country, and I hope that every person will take it up and bear his share of that burden.

Words for the Natives.

These words I address not merely to people of European race in this country. I address them also to the natives. It is commonly said that we must expect that the natives at such a time as this will necessarily make trouble. I say no. As Minister for the natives, many of whom I know, I hope and believe that all the better sentiment among them will also be enlisted, so that they may simply hold quietly their souls, and thus they too may do good, so that they shall not be regarded as in any other than a potential sense hostile to the interests of this country.

In conclusion, I wish to say this—that I do not intend to say any words now indicating the part I have played in striving to establish peace in South Africa. All of us are architects of fate as we stand here. But the day is not yet when a true verdict can be given with regard to the work of anyone here. History alone will tell what each of us has done. To-day neither friend nor foe can impartially or judicially apportion either praise or blame to those who have been engaged in this colony in efforts in the direction of peace or, if it be so, in efforts in a contrary direction.

“Let us Save what we can from the Storm.”

Let us leave that verdict to history, and let us be assured—let us part now with the assurance that we are all going to endeavour to do what we can to save from the storm that is impending over South Africa some portion of this colony at any rate, that this colony at any rate, when perhaps the happy day of re-established peace arrives, may be a kind of haven to which people may look as having been, though swept by the storm, not absolutely storm-broken.

I say no more now, Mr. Speaker. Let me assure my hon. friends. My feelings are intensely deep. My hon. friends have stood by me in this Session as perhaps a man has never in the history of Parliament been supported before. They have my

earnest thanks, my devoted appreciation of the action they have taken throughout this Session which will never be forgotten, and I hope I shall prove myself not unworthy of the trust they have confided in me. I would say to many hon. Members who sit opposite—I wish I could say to all—that there are those I would thank for the consideration, for abstinence from attack, for unwillingness to look always at the black side, for the determination not always to grasp at every insinuation and innuendo of wrong conduct. And for that I thank them, and I feel that to-day—I look to hon. Members opposite as well as to my hon. friends who sit on this side of the House—the word as we go away should be to seek peace and to ensue it. Seek peace within our own borders, even if we have not been able to secure it in South Africa, and pave the way for a re-establishment of peace and an honourable peace throughout the whole country.

Dominated by one idea—Peace
 So anxious to be fair that
 he leans from his own view
 towards the view of his
 opponents: A good man,
 with passive but with no
 active strength. If life
 could be lived by doing
 nothing he would succeed.