

Dr. W. J. LEYDS
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NEW REFORM CLUB,
ST. ERMIN'S,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.,
September 25th, 1900.

To Electors of the County of Caithness.

GENTLEMEN,

Parliament has been dissolved, and for the fifth time I offer myself as a candidate to represent the county.

I opposed the South African War because I believe it to have been immoral and unjust, and I am equally opposed to the policy of Annexation. The war has been a bloody and costly one, and has brought us no honour, while the destruction of the political rights of two self-governing peoples of our own faith, and allied to us in race, leaves even a greater stain on our national reputation. Nor will this policy finally settle the South African problem. It will intensify the hostility of the Dutch, and can only be maintained by the imposition of serious permanent burdens at home.

In domestic affairs I shall, if elected, continue the same policy, in the interests of Labour and Land Reform, which I have followed for the last fifteen years, and will support all measures tending to lessen the injurious effects of the existing monopolies of Land and Capital, and to secure equal rights and opportunities for all.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

G. B. CLARK.

DEAR SIR,

I beg to send you my election address and to request your vote and support at the approaching election.

As you are no doubt aware, I had arranged a series of meetings all over the county at which various political questions could have been discussed and an opportunity afforded to me for explaining the reasons which have caused me to oppose the war in

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South Africa, and to hear and answer such objections as you might have to offer on the course which I have taken. You are well aware of the conditions under which I attempted to carry out these arrangements, and of the senseless spite and hatred, amounting almost to madness, which even went so far as to wreak its vengeance on the carriage which had brought me to the meeting and on the windows of the school-house at which it was to have taken place. After an interview with the Fiscal, Mr. Leith, and the police authorities, I gave up these meetings in deference to their advice, since they seemed unable to cope with the situation. As the tactics of my opponents have therefore made it impossible for me to address you publicly, I adopt this method of bringing my views before you, while the ballot will afford you that opportunity of expressing yours in a constitutional manner. Whatever your opinion may be on the political situation, or on the part I have played in it, I cannot believe that the drunken roughs and rowdy boys, who assailed the meeting at Halkirk, represent the average Scottish elector, who, whatever his own opinions may be, has hitherto been desirous and willing to see that fair play and justice shall govern all contests, political or otherwise. Apart from its influence at the present political crisis, I believe that serious people must consider that the denial of the right of Free Speech, which has prevented the holding of so many public meetings during the last year, constitutes a very grave danger to our political liberties. It is true that it is not the Government but the people who are chiefly to blame, and whose action, however excusable it might have been in the days of the voteless democracy which preceded the Reform Acts, cannot be condoned in these days of a more extended suffrage. We cannot forget that now, as formerly, the governing classes have been as ready to exploit the ignorance, as they have the labour, of the people. We cannot forget that progress has been based on Free Discussion, the right to which was dearly bought and should not be carelessly thrown away.

The present Government have dissolved Parliament and desire to obtain the sanction of the Electorate for the policy which they have pursued in South Africa—a policy which has resulted in a humiliating and inglorious war, in which we have lost thousands of valuable lives, spent millions of money, and caused terrible misery and suffering in both countries; while, after twelve

months' conflict, we have scarcely succeeded in subduing a population smaller in numbers than a third-rate British town. The policy of war has been followed by that of annexation—a policy you are now asked to endorse, and, by so doing, to give the present Government a continued lease of power. The *London Standard*, which has been for a generation the recognised organ of the Conservative party, thus states the issue before the country:—

“A great war has been waged, immense sacrifices have been required from the nation and the Colonies, a gigantic financial obligation has been incurred, hazards greater than any we have had to face since the Crimea have been encountered, and have, happily, been surmounted, though not without moments of deep anxiety and grave peril. Was all this demanded by the interests, the honour, the dignity, and the safety of the Empire, or was the tremendous enterprise undertaken without that high and solemn necessity by which alone the terrible arbitrament of war is sanctified?”

Mr. Chamberlain, in his speech to the Electors of West Birmingham a few days ago, has also raised the question of the justice and morality of the war. He said, “Was the war just? Everything depends upon that. I can hardly restrain a feeling of contempt for the men who say that this war was unjust, and then, in order to catch votes, say they are willing to prosecute it to the bitter end. No, if any of you believe that this war was unjust, oppose it tooth and nail, endeavour to prevent your country from committing a crime, and, no matter what may be the fate of statesmen or of parties, you, at all events, will be justified to your own consciences. The first question we have to decide is this: Is the war just?”

The present war was largely brought about by Mr. Chamberlain's own action, and I shall be able to demonstrate that, by his own words, it was entirely unnecessary, unjustifiable, and contrary to true morality—or as he had himself previously phrased it, “as immoral as it was unwise.”

What, then, were the circumstances which led to the war?

Certain British subjects who had entered the Transvaal were desirous of giving up their British nationality and of becoming citizens of the South African Republic earlier than the end of the period which that Government required before granting letters of naturalisation; and because the changes desired by Mr.

Chamberlain in the naturalisation and franchise laws of the Republic were refused, he told the Boers that, if they did not grant these reforms voluntarily, he would compel them to do so by force. On August 12th, 1899, Mr. Greene, the British Agent, stated to the Transvaal Government that:

“The situation was most critical, and that Her Majesty’s Government, who had given pledges to the Uitlanders, would be bound to assert their demands, and, if necessary, to press them by force.”

This was the first official statement of the new policy of force, and the first ultimatum of the British Government.

To attempt to bring about reforms in the naturalisation and franchise laws of the Republic by moral suasion was a legitimate course for the British Government to pursue, but to do so by the force of arms was entirely unjustifiable.

What was the position of the Transvaal?

In Mr. Chamberlain’s despatch on the Raid in 1895, he defines it as “a foreign state which is in friendly treaty relations with Her Majesty;” while Sir Hercules Robinson, the High Commissioner, in his Proclamation of December 31st, 1895, describes it as “a friendly State in amity with Her Majesty’s Government.” The political relations between the British and Transvaal Governments were clearly stated by Mr. Chamberlain on February 13th, 1896, when he said:

“The rights of our action under the Convention are limited to the offering of friendly counsel, in the rejection of which, if it is not accepted, we must be quite willing to acquiesce.”

And a few months later he again refers to the same subject in the following words:

“We did not claim,” he said, “and never had claimed, the right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Transvaal, but we did claim, both as representing the interests of our fellow-subjects in the Transvaal and as the paramount power in South Africa responsible for the security of the whole country, to make friendly representations to him, and to give him friendly advice, as much in his interests as in our own.”

When it was pointed out that the growth of the new population, confined to one or two towns, might swamp the farming

population, and that the first use the Uitlanders would make of the franchise would be to turn out the Boer Government, Mr. Chamberlain, in reply, said :—

“I confess I thought there was some reason in that objection. It is rather difficult to attempt to persuade anyone so capable as President Kruger that it would be desirable that he should proceed to his own extinction, and accordingly I brought before him an alternative suggestion which, at all events, would relieve him from that difficulty. . . . The question is, whether President Kruger will consider that that proposal will endanger the security of the Transvaal Government. If he does, he will be perfectly justified in rejecting it.”

On the 12th of August, 1896, in replying to Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, who had urged the Government to bring about certain reforms by force in the internal affairs of the Transvaal, Mr. Chamberlain said :—

“What is the alternative? What is the policy which the honourable gentleman would put forward if he were standing in my place? What would be the policy of the honourable Member for Sheffield as Colonial Secretary? We know what it would be. He would send, in the first place, an ultimatum to President Kruger, that unless the reforms which he was specifying were granted by a particular date, the British Government would interfere by force. Then I suppose he would come here, and ask this House for a vote of £10,000,000 or £20,000,000—it does not matter particularly which—and would send an army of 10,000 men, at the very least, to force President Kruger to grant reforms in a State in regard to which not only this Government, but successive Secretaries of State, have pledged themselves repeatedly that they would have nothing to do with its internal affairs. That is the policy of the honourable gentleman. That is not my policy.”

It is perfectly clear, from these official statements of the Colonial Secretary, that we had no right to interfere, and that interference would result in war, yet he determined to compel the Transvaal by force to carry out his demands, although such a course had no legal or moral warrant. It is equally clear that in pursuing such a policy he was sinning against the light, for, in his speech, on May 8th, 1896, when replying to those who

wanted to go to war in the interest of the Uitlanders, he said :—

“In some quarters the idea is put forward that the Government ought to have issued an ultimatum to President Kruger—an ultimatum which would have certainly been rejected, and which must have led to war. Sir, I do not propose to discuss such a contingency as that. A war in South Africa would be one of the most serious wars that could possibly be waged. It would be in the nature of a civil war. It would be a long war, a bitter war, and a costly war. As I have pointed out, it would leave behind it the embers of a strife which I believe generations would hardly be long enough to extinguish. To go to war with President Kruger in order to force upon him reforms in the internal affairs of his State, with which successive Secretaries of State standing in this place have repudiated all right of interference, that would have been a course of action as immoral as it would have been unwise.”

In considering this question of the justice of the war and of Mr. Chamberlain's action, it must be remembered that the Transvaal question is not a new one. In 1877, a Tory Government annexed the Transvaal on the false pretence that the Boers desired our rule, and such rights as we have regarding that country are the result of that act. Mr. Chamberlain denounced the annexation, and characterised it as “an act of force, fraud and folly.” Here is an extract from his speech at Birmingham on November 16th, 1880 :—

“The great majority of the Boer inhabitants of the Transvaal are bitterly hostile to English rule. (Hear, hear.) And yet we are told that we ought to have persevered in wrong-doing after it was proved that the two grounds upon which the annexation was defended were fallacious, resting on no solid foundation, and that we should still force our rule on an unwilling people, whose independence we had solemnly engaged by Treaty to respect. (Cheers.) . . . I will not at this moment stop to discuss the morality of such a step as that, but I want you to think for a moment of the expediency of it, of the wisdom of those statesmen who recommend such a course to Her Majesty's Government. The Transvaal is a country as large as France—a wild and difficult country—and it is perfectly evident to everyone that if we are to

hold it down by force, we must permanently maintain, say, a number of troops at least equal to the number of our possible opponents. Well, we know also that the Orange Free State, which is a neighbouring territory, would make common cause with their co-religionists, and therefore I say that it is perfectly certain that no fewer than 15,000 to 20,000 English troops must be permanently stationed in the Transvaal if we are to hold that country by force against the will of its inhabitants. And to what end are we to do this? The Boers are not naturally a warlike race, they are a homely, industrious, and somewhat rude and uncivilised nation of farmers, living on the produce of the soil. They are animated by a deep and somewhat stern religious sentiment, and they inherit from their ancestors—the men who won the independence of Holland from the oppressive rule of Philip II. of Spain—their unconquerable love of freedom and liberty. Are not these qualities which commend themselves to men of English race? (Cheers.) Are they not virtues which we are proud to believe form the best characteristics of the English people? . . . I say, in these circumstances, is it possible we could maintain a forceable annexation of the country without incurring the accusation of having been guilty—I will not say of national folly, but of national crime?"

Again, in replying to Lord Salisbury at Birmingham, in 1883, Mr. Chamberlain said:—

"Lord Salisbury was in favour of the annexation of the Transvaal. He was in favour of maintaining the occupation of the country by force, even after it became apparent that the annexation itself had been made on false information. If the Orange Free State, as most probably would have been the case, had joined with the Transvaal Boers, no doubt Lord Salisbury would have declared war on it, too. And if then, what was not at all unlikely, the whole Dutch population of the Cape had risen, Lord Salisbury, with a light heart, would have led this country into a war, *more serious in its consequences, more certain to be fruitless of good results than any war in which we have been engaged since we tried to compel the allegiance of the American colonies.* (Cheers.)"

I have been able to show from Mr. Chamberlain's utterances in 1895 and 1896 that the South African Republic was a Foreign State, in whose internal affairs we had frequently confessed that

we had no right to interfere. Had, then, the conditions changed for the worse in 1899? And, in this case, did the new conditions justify our interference on other than legal grounds?

On the contrary, during the three years which had elapsed, many of the grievances of the Uitlanders had been considerably redressed, and several important reforms effected. Special schools had been established at which the children of foreigners could be educated in their own language. The taxes on food, and the indirect taxes generally, had been reduced until they were considerably less than in the neighbouring British colonies of the Cape and Natal. By the Franchise Law of July, 1899, the period of residence required of aliens before they could obtain the full franchise, and acquire a vote for the First Chamber, was reduced from fourteen years to seven years. Therefore, as the law then stood, a foreigner could obtain the vote for the Second Chamber in two years, in five years more he could vote for the First Chamber, thus obtaining full Burgher rights at the end of seven years. The progressive party in the Volksraad was becoming more numerous every year. About two years ago, General Louis Botha, the present Commander-in-Chief of the Boer forces, moved a motion in the First Volksraad in favour of granting aliens the full franchise after five years' residence, and it was only lost by a majority of three. Even President Kruger, keen Conservative as he is, was being converted to a more progressive policy. At a meeting which he addressed at Heidelberg, in March, 1899, two months before the Bloemfontein Conference, he said:—

“In European States, strangers became full franchised burghers in five years. This, however, could be done there, as there were millions of burghers, but in our Republic this could not be done, for this would open the door to all sorts of foreigners, who would thereby have a chance in less than one year to outvote us, because we were weak, although he would not be against it at a later period. When this law was established, our country only numbered 12,000 burghers, which number had now increased to about 40,000. We are now so strong that the few foreigners who enter our land cannot outvote us, and now that we are so strong we can safely give to the foreigners streaming in a shorter period in which to obtain full franchise. The Volksraad could not do otherwise than refer the question to the people, for which reason another year would elapse before the measure would come into

force, so that, then, the number of burghers would again be increased by more than 10,000. Later on we can reduce this term further, so that, finally, we shall be in conformity with the European Powers to-day. As long as we were not strong, we had to take care that the strangers did not outvote us. We must act honourably and justly, but so that we do not injure ourselves."

Everything was tending in the direction of reform and progress. A large number of well-educated Boers from the neighbouring colonies and from the Orange Free State had settled in the country and were increasing in influence. Nearly all the younger and abler men were on the Progressive side. President Kruger was over seventy years of age, and had little chance of being again elected. At least two members of the Government had been educated and had taken their degrees in this country, while the English language was becoming more and more into use. Frequent intermarriages were taking place, and it was only the ill-considered interference of Mr. Chamberlain and the High Commissioner which arrested the natural process of development by which the two peoples were becoming welded together and all necessary reforms secured.

Mr. Chamberlain has told us that "the negotiations were conducted on our part in a spirit of the greatest moderation." Is this an accurate statement?

In face of the assertion which he had so frequently made to the effect that this country could claim no legal right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Transvaal, we find him issuing a peremptory message to the effect that he was prepared to support the demands of the Uitlanders, if need be, by force of arms—a message which, as I have already stated, was virtually of the character of an ultimatum. When the law amending the franchise was passed, he demanded that a Joint British and Transvaal Commission should be appointed by the two Governments to report on the effect of the law—an unprecedented interference in the internal affairs of the Republic. The Transvaal Government hesitated to agree to this encroachment on their independence; but when, on the urgent advice of their friends in South Africa and in this country, they agreed to permit the Commission and to take part in it, the Colonial Secretary then refused to carry out his own proposal, and made an insolent demand for certain changes. On these being refused, on

September 22nd, he broke off the correspondence by curtly informing the Transvaal Government that it was :

“Useless to further pursue a discussion on the lines hitherto followed, and Her Majesty’s Government are now compelled to consider the situation afresh, and to formulate their own proposals for a final settlement of the issues which have been created in South Africa by the policy constantly followed for many years by the Government of the South African Republic. They will communicate to you the result of their deliberations in a later despatch.”

This was a notice of an ultimatum, but no proposals were ever sent. On the 30th of September, the Transvaal Government asked for these proposals, but they were never informed of their character. Time after time the President of the Orange Free State enquired what was the nature of these demands, but he received no information in reply to his urgent telegrams. But although the Colonial Secretary refused this information he continued to make preparations to enforce the conditions he required, and he now boasts, in his election address, that while the Liberal Government had only kept 3,000 troops in South Africa, he had constantly increased this force so that when the war began he had 22,000 soldiers there. The responsible Governments of both our Colonies warned the Colonial Secretary of the danger of his policy. In the Cape Colony, the majority are of Dutch descent and the Ministry represented their views, but in Natal the overwhelming majority are English, but even the Natal Ministry implored Mr. Chamberlain, in June last, to avoid “the terrible calamity” of a war between the two white races of South Africa.

Again, on September 6th, the Natal Ministry addressed the Government, asking them not to call out the Natal Volunteers, and pointing out that such a step would be regarded by the Boers as a declaration of war. They further implored the Government not to occupy the Northern borders of Natal with troops. But the Colonial Secretary disregarded their plea. The Volunteers were called out and the Natal Borders occupied, and, as a result, the burghers of the Transvaal were also called out and sent to the frontier. This was followed at home by the mobilising of an Army Corps, and by the calling out of the Reserves, and, finally, Parliament

was summoned to vote the money for the war. These warlike preparations and the refusal to give any information induced the Boers to send their ultimatum demanding the withdrawal of our troops from their borders, that we should send no further troops, and that all pending questions should be settled by Arbitration. Our refusal of these terms precipitated the conflict. I very much regret that the Transvaal Government should have adopted this course. Even at the eleventh hour, it is possible that Parliament might have refused to vote the money, and so that the war might have been averted; but the Conservative Party had an overwhelming majority, and I am afraid that on this, as on other occasions, their mechanical majority would have supported them in any course which they desired to take. The tone of Mr. Chamberlain's despatches, the irritating character of his speeches, with their metaphors of "squeezed sponges," and "hour glasses" in which the sands were running dry, the accumulation and increasing display of our forces, added to the refusal to arbitrate, caused the Boers to mistrust the Colonial Secretary and to take the initiative. For the policy which caused the war, and for its consequences, this Government is mainly responsible. None of the facts justify the position which they have taken, and, whatever may be the result of the approaching election, the future historian will know whom to hold responsible. It cannot be said that this war was demanded by the interests, the honour, the dignity, or the safety of the Empire, or that it possessed "that high and solemn necessity by which alone the terrible arbitrament of war is sanctified."

Fortunately for us, we know little of the terrible evils of war, several centuries having elapsed since an armed conflict took place in our own country. A great Frenchman has said:—

"We struggle against Nature, ignorance, all kinds of obstacles, in the effort to make our wretched lives more endurable. There are men—scientists and philanthropists—who devote their whole lives to benefit their fellow-men, seeking to improve their condition. They pursue their efforts tirelessly, adding discovery to discovery, expanding the human intelligence, enriching science, opening new fields of knowledge, day by day increasing the well-being, comfort and vigour of their country.

"Then war comes upon the scene, and in six months all the

results of twenty years of patient labour and of human genius are gone for ever, crushed by victorious generals."

I hope the country will not sanction the action of this Government, which has caused unnecessary bloodshed and cruel suffering to both Boer and Briton alike. It has turned against us the public opinion of every civilised country in the world: it has increased our anxieties and imposed new and permanent burdens on our people. It has infused a love of conquest and a passion of warlike excitement alien to our national genius. It has increased the political power of the landed aristocracy and the military classes. It has developed a violent intolerance, and a spirit of mob rule which threatens to be fatal to free citizenship. It will necessitate an unparalleled addition to our military resources, and will render much more difficult the passing of those measures so necessary for our domestic progress, while it has not conferred upon us one single compensating advantage which could not have been obtained easily by peaceable means.

The policy of war has now to be followed by that of annexation. We are going to remove our neighbour's landmark, and to incorporate his territory with our own. Those who induced us to enter into the war tell us that, as a result of it, the two races will unite in peace and amity. It was the misfortune of this country to listen to these men in the past; but it will be our fault if we follow such misleading guides in the future. Well has Mr. Morley said in his Election Address to his constituents:—

"You are easily able to measure the foresight of the authors of the policy that has ended in this result. They assured us at the eleventh hour that when it came to the point there would be no war. When war came they said it would be over in three months. Four time three months have passed, and the war is hardly yet over. They said it might cost £10,000,000; it has cost seven or eight times £10,000,000. They said the Boers had in these days lost both heart and skill for war; the Boers have shown themselves as brave soldiers as our own.

"They said that after a short tussle the vanquished would embrace the victor, thank him for a beneficent beating, and settle down for good in peace and friendship. It is now avowed that for an indefinite time to come we must lock up forty thousand troops or more to keep our hold on the meek and grateful Boer.

“ Was there ever such a story of ILLUSION and DELUSION ? ”

Those who know South Africa know that, as a result of this war, the racial hatred will be terribly intensified. Mr. Rider Haggard, a Conservative candidate, who held office in the Transvaal during the former British occupation, thus wrote to the *Times* last October :—

“ Many of us think, of course, that after this war a reign of race-hatred must begin, infinitely more deep and bitter than any which we have experienced heretofore; indeed, it is difficult for those of us who know the Boer character to avoid that melancholy conclusion.”

This view is taken by those who know South Africa best.

The war has developed among the South African Dutch—especially among the inhabitants of the two Republics—a deep hostility to our rule, which will be transmitted from generation to generation, and which will compel us to maintain our ascendancy there by large military forces and costly armaments. All history shows that we cannot eradicate from the hearts of this race the love of country and their determination to be free, nor can you expect any people to settle down submissively, with a sense of wrong and injury rankling in their hearts. More than a century has passed since Poland was dismembered, but the Poles still hate the Russians and still conspire against them to regain their independence. A century of Spanish dominion did not reconcile Portugal to the rule of Spain, and she was able to regain her freedom. Austria was unable to crush out the national spirit of Hungary or of Italy, and both of these peoples have regained their national life. All the lessons of history point in the same direction. If we persist in this policy we shall have to pay the cost, and I am afraid that cost will be no less than the total loss of South Africa.

There are two other candidates before you. One of these represents the Unionist party, and is a supporter of the principles and policy of the present Government; the other, nominated by the new Liberal Association, represents what is called the party of Liberal Imperialism. The first of these candidates is identified with the party of Monopoly and Privilege, and it is not to be doubted that in the future, as in the past, they will cling to those unjust laws and institutions and oppose the policy of equal rights

and opportunities for all. Your Liberal Imperialist candidate comes before you as a reformer, though we have not as yet heard his name mentioned in this capacity, or that he has done anything to forward the cause of Progress. I only know that Harmsworth Brothers run the *Daily Mail*, which is one of the organs of the Rhodesian party, which has done so much to bring about this war, and that they are interested in the Chartered Company, which engineered the Jameson Raid. I know also that the *Daily Mail* and its neighbour the *Daily Telegraph* were the first papers in London to be published every day in the week. I may be doing Mr. Harmsworth an injustice, and he may be conscientiously anxious to serve your interests, but I may be forgiven for mistrusting the enthusiasm for reform exhibited by political candidates—an enthusiasm, which my experience in Caithness has taught me, is frequently of very short duration. Mr. Niven, who opposed me in 1886, posed as a great land reformer, though he has never worked for this cause either before or after his candidature. Sir William Bell, who opposed me in 1896, also protested that he was anxious to assist our movement, but, like Mr. Niven, his assistance has never been forthcoming. There have been many men who have been anxious to obtain a seat in the House of Commons, who have asserted that they are in favour of our objects and who have the watchwords of the great Liberal party for ever on their lips, but when they are called upon to vote for the objects in which they profess to believe, they excuse themselves from doing so. These are the men who have been the greatest barrier to progress in the past. It would have been better for Liberalism if we had had open enemies like the Tories rather than pretended friends who have failed us in the hour of need. If, however, the majority of the Progressive electors of Caithness are convinced of Mr. Harmsworth's sincerity and suitability, and desire to have him as a representative, the fact of my standing again will not endanger the seat, since, at the last three elections, Land Reformers and Liberals constituted three-fourths of those who voted at the poll—only one in four of those who voted were in favour of the Unionist or Conservative candidate.

The campaign of calumny which began the war is being continued against those who have in any way supported the cause of the two Republics. With regard to myself, there are two

personal incidents which have been very much misrepresented in the county. The first of these is in reference to my connection with what is known as the Hawksley Correspondence. The real facts of the case were stated by me at the meeting at Spittal, and were briefly as follows :—

I was told by a London journalist that certain letters were in existence showing the complicity of the Colonial Office with the Jameson Raid. I replied that I should like to see them, and some time after a man called at the office of the Transvaal Committee, and showed me the copies of the correspondence. I asked to see the originals, but it transpired that he could only produce two of the least important of the letters. You will remember the unsatisfactory character of much of the evidence brought before the Parliamentary Committee which enquired into the Jameson Raid, and that suspicions have always rested on the Colonial Office for having been cognisant that an attempt was being prepared to invade the Transvaal. Whether or not this suspicion was well founded, it is certain that it was believed by the burghers of the two Republics, who then commenced to arm themselves to an extent hitherto unprecedented, and who have always mistrusted the present Government. Had I been sure that these letters were genuine, I should have considered that they ought to be published, since they certainly threw considerable light on a period of recent history, about which it has been very difficult to get at the truth, but I had no proof that they were authentic. The man was willing to leave the copies with me, and I showed them to several friends, including my colleague, Mr. Labouchere. They were shown to Mr. Hawksley, who admitted to me their genuineness, and urged me to prevent them from being published. I told him that Mr. Stead and others, over whom I had no control, had copies of the correspondence, and to suppress it was beyond my power. It is not true that I bought the letters, which were published during my absence from this country, but, if I had been at home, I should have been quite ready to endorse the action of those who, having assured themselves that the letters were genuine, considered that, in the interests of truth and justice, it was expedient that they should see the light.

Another and more serious misrepresentation was in regard to the two letters published by the Colonial Office, which I had sent last September to President Kruger and General Joubert, but

which were never delivered, as the war had broken out before they reached South Africa. I had some correspondence with these gentlemen during the three months that preceded the war. Though I held then, as I hold now, that we had no right to force reforms on the Boer Government, I recognised the serious character of a war in South Africa and the strength of the war party here, and I urged them to grant such reforms as would make this calamity impossible. As a Radical, I have always disapproved of Mr. Kruger's Conservative policy, but have remained on friendly terms with him. He had been my guest in London, and my host in Pretoria. Hence, when the troubles began, I wrote several letters and sent several telegrams urging him to make the concessions that the British Government demanded, in order that the prosperity of South Africa might not be destroyed by a war between the two white races. I was even able to induce Dr. Leyds, by telegram, to urge upon the President to pass a Five Years' Retrospective Franchise.

In the letter to President Kruger, I reported the result of the interview which I had had with Mr. Chamberlain, in which I tried to induce that gentleman to agree to the repeated requests made by the Government of the Transvaal that the various disputes, then existing between the two countries, should be referred to a permanent Arbitration Tribunal—a proposal which I regret the Colonial Secretary was not able to accept. General Joubert was a personal friend. We had hunted together in South Africa and travelled together both in Europe and America. He was a good Radical and a Land Law Reformer, and we had addressed meetings with Henry George in America in support of George's policy. In 1893, when candidate for the Presidency, General Joubert was in favour of giving full franchise rights to all newcomers after four years' residence, and he was, for many years, the leader of the Progressive Party in the Transvaal. I knew that General Joubert would use his influence to secure the reforms for which the British asked; but when the difficulties began and the burghers were called out, I wrote to him pointing out the danger of having the two forces so close to each other on the northern border that the indiscretion of a sentry or a few rash young men on either side might precipitate a conflict which would be fatal to the peace of South Africa for many years. I urged him on no account to allow the war party in the Transvaal—(for there are foolish

young men there as there are here)—to force his hand to take any step which might result in war, reminding him that the public opinion of the civilized world would be against those who struck the first blow, and that, no matter what the advantage might be for the moment, it would paralyse the action of their symathisers in this country, that the temporary advantage would not be worth the sacrifice of their permanent interests and that the moral loss would be greater than the physical gain. A week or so afterwards, in my letter to President Kruger, I pointed out to him also the danger of any offensive action. Here are the words I used :—

“ It might strengthen you in this struggle, which now seems inevitable, if you were to seize the passes in order to defend yourselves against attack, but if you were to do this I am afraid it would have a bad moral effect in this country, and will give rise to accusations that you have been all along intending to commence hostilities in order to have an anti-British South African Republic from the Cape to the Zambesi. However, it is not much matter what you do or do not do—you will be maligned and misrepresented in any case. Still, I think it desirable to say that, while it might strengthen you in your own country, it would, to a certain extent, weaken you before Europe.”

President Kruger did not get my letter, but my prognostications have been verified. The action of striking the first blow has had a bad moral effect on their supporters in this country, and has weakened their cause before Europe and the civilized world. The unscrupulous Jingo Press have misrepresented my warning to President Kruger as an incitement to occupy the passes. I knew, as everyone who was acquainted with South Africa knew also, that, from a military point of view, this was the obvious course for them to pursue. Hence my warning as to the effect of such an action. My enemies have deliberately misconstrued my words, and have asserted that I urged the Boers to adopt the very action from which I was dissuading them. Nothing further from the truth can be imagined. I solemnly assert that any letters which I wrote to anyone in the Transvaal during the period of the negotiations were written solely in the interests of peace.

Other misrepresentations and insinuations are being used, I have had my attention called to a statement of my connection

with a number of companies, of some of which I have never even heard. Mr. Harmsworth, in his reply to Mr. Miller, insinuates that I have been the promoter of bogus gold mines. I have never promoted a gold mine in my life, nor made a penny by the promotion of any gold mine, good, bad, or indifferent.

I remember that, in the campaign of 1885, I was accused by my opponents of having committed all the sins in the Decalogue, and of having been guilty of all the crimes in the Calendar, and they are evidently going to do so again. I may point out that the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act of 1895 makes false and slanderous statements an illegal practice, and may cause a candidate to lose his seat.

I am the last of the half-a-dozen candidates who, fifteen years ago, won seats as the nominees of The Land Law Reform Association. During these fifteen years, which I have served as your member, I have endeavoured to do my utmost to carry out our programme of Land and Labour Reform. We have attained many of the objects for which we organised ourselves eighteen years ago: others, of still greater importance, are yet to be secured. I am well aware that a proportion of my constituents do not agree with the course I have taken in connection with the South African War, but I am also aware that, among these, a large number are even more opposed to the war against oppression and injustice at home, with which our cause is associated. Were I defeated, the triumph of the landlord and reactionary party would not be exclusively on account of my opinions regarding a foreign war. They would equally exult in it as a check to those who, for the last eighteen years, have struggled for Right and Justice at home.

Hence, I confidently ask you for your vote and support.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

G. B. CLARK.

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