

NATIONAL REFORM UNION PAMPHLETS.

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THE  
TRUE CAUSES OF  
AND THE  
FALSE EXCUSES FOR  
THE WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA.

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BY

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*(Liberal Candidate for Warrington).*

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PRICE ONE PENNY.

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TRIP CALS OF

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FAIR EXHIBITION FOR

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To review the origin of the war that is already nearing the end of its second year, and to weigh the apologies that have been offered for a policy which a majority in the country has ratified, may seem at first sight to be labour wasted. But these questions are, after all, germane to the practical issue before us. Our views on the settlement must to some extent depend on our views about the diplomacy which preceded the war. If the war was just and inevitable, then undoubtedly the Boers are entitled to much less consideration than we ought to grant them if we come to the conclusion that the main burden of responsibility for this deplorable conflict rests upon the authors of the Jameson Raid. At present we are not fighting to bring about reforms, nor even to break the armed power of the Transvaal, but to beat the Boers to their knees, till, in fact, they are forced to accept whatever terms we impose. That is a hard fate to inflict upon a whole people. Whatever Mr. Kruger's faults may have been—and they were many—we must not forget that the men now at the head of the fighting Boers were in no way responsible for his foolish and reactionary attitude. General Botha has always been a progressive, and Christian De Wet bitterly opposed the war. If they are irreconcilable to-day, the fault lies with our Government, which sanctioned the policy of farm-burning, and determined to insist on unconditional surrender. Most of us had hoped that those Liberals who came to the conclusion that the war was necessary and justifiable would by now have been with us in insisting that terms should, even at the eleventh hour, be offered to the Boers which there is some chance of their accepting—against the grain it may be—as a condition of peace.

One can hardly believe that a Liberal like Mr. Asquith will tolerate a policy of fighting to the bitter end, unless it is first made clear that terms have been offered which the Boers might without dishonour accept. The views of men like Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey deserve a candid and dispassionate consideration. Liberals should differ as men who hope to be reunited at no distant day

—reunited to work out a programme as far-reaching in its influence on the general welfare of the nation as any programme of reform which has preceded it. At the same time it is not perhaps unfair to suggest that both Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey are very naturally biassed by their long-standing and intimate friendship with Lord Milner. He has been a chief actor in all this tragic drama, and that fact alone must make it difficult for his friends to maintain a really impartial attitude. This personal factor, however, should only encourage our hope that these differences between Liberals will be merely temporary. They are largely accidental, and flow from no fundamental divergence about political principles. If indeed there are a few who will find in this critical time an opportunity for changing their political creed, some few who, the moment they feel their feet planted on the social platform, set to work to kick down every one of the ladders by which they climbed there, we shall not be alarmed. They will not be the first in history or the last to play this little game, and we may pass them by in silence.

But for unworthy insinuations which have been made, it should be unnecessary to add that, if some of the methods involved in the Government's policy stand condemned in public opinion, no reflection whatever is thereby cast upon our soldiers. Very much the reverse; for they have helped to mitigate the severity of that policy, and letters which have appeared in the Press go to show that our men have carried out the work of farm-burning with disgust and reluctance. As for the "refugee" camps, the Boer women are only suffering from the same neglect which made our own military hospitals a scandal and a disgrace. As Mr. Rowntree has told us, our private soldiers have often stinted themselves to relieve the hunger of our women captives. That will redound to their lasting credit, but it does not exculpate the system or lessen the Government's responsibility for it.

I have no claim to write, nor will I pretend for one moment to write, from the standpoint of the "unco' guid"; but if there is one maxim which more than any other goes to the root of all Liberalism, it is John Locke's oft-quoted aphorism, "That the end of Government is the good of mankind." Will our South African policy square with this?

#### FULLER KNOWLEDGE.

We are, after all, in a better position to day to debate the question whether the war was justifiable than we were in October, 1899. We were then engaged in a dispute of long standing with the Boers. On some counts we had, as all parties agreed, a fairly strong case. It is a ludicrous fiction to say that the Outlanders,

on whose behalf we intervened, were oppressed in the ordinary sense of the word. It is doubtful whether many of them really wanted the franchise which became the bone of contention. But certainly Mr. Kruger's administration was a Tory Government of a decidedly reactionary type. The system of indirect taxation was primitive, and the Executive had probably in some of its branches succumbed to the bribes of the corrupt gold magnates. The real trouble, however, was the perpetual friction between the two races, fomented by a Press owned by the great capitalists, and by a variety of political leagues, whose avowed object was to bring all this irritation to a decisive issue. This was unquestionably an ugly situation, which called for a remedy. About that we are all agreed. But is the war any real remedy or the best remedy for such a case? The question at issue is (1) whether the war which we have been waging is likely to bring any improvement about, and (2) whether it has not in itself created evils which no conceivable political gain can ever outweigh. When Sir Alfred Milner called for "extreme measures," when Mr. Chamberlain made violent speeches that could only lead to war, when our Government called out the reserves, and announced that it was preparing an ultimatum, it was acting on a theory which events have falsified. It calculated that the war would be short, cheap and glorious. The official estimate of its cost during the autumn session of 1899 was ten millions. We began by sending first 20,000, then 35,000 troops to the front. Their Commander-in-Chief announced that he would eat his Christmas dinner in Pretoria. Finally, it was said that the Boers would welcome a change of flag, that they would respect us for beating them, that a conclusive demonstration of our power was all that was needed to reconcile the two races and inaugurate an era of happiness and peace. Now, if all these calculations had been accurate, the war would have been not a whit more just, indeed, but certainly it would not have caused such frightful mischief. We can now clear our minds of these miscalculations. Let us ask ourselves whether we should have gone to war in October, 1899, had we then possessed the knowledge which we have gained by August, 1901.

#### WHAT SHALL WE GAIN?

In the first place, what shall we gain? The goldfields? The goldfields belong to a small group of cosmopolitan financiers, for the most part German and French Jews. They indeed reckoned that the war would add two and a-half millions to their yearly profits. That would not have benefited us. The territory? We shall be lucky if we escape running the territory at a dead loss. Sir David Barbour has now made his official report on the

finances of the Republics. In the Free State he anticipates a more or less constant deficit. Any small surplus from the Transvaal will be more than swallowed up by the cost of General Baden-Powell's Constabulary, which, it is estimated, will reach £2,500,000 per annum. Add to this the cost of the large garrison which we shall have to keep in South Africa to coerce the Dutch. We have had to increase our Army, and over and above all this, we have still to pay off the cost of the war—at least £150,000,000. Clearly there is not much prospect of gain here. From the financial point of view it is very bad business. But will the political situation be better? We complained that Mr. Kruger's franchise was too narrow. Mr. Chamberlain's proposal is to govern the Republics as Crown Colonies. There will be no representative institutions at all. There will be no juries. The magistrates will be removable at the will of Lord Milner. That is the present programme, and this state of things will last, says Lord Salisbury, "for years or it may be for generations." The Transvaal, it was said, was an "oligarchy." We are setting up an autocracy in its place, under the very man whom the Dutch least respect and most dislike. The Free State was by general admission a model commonwealth. We have swept away its whole fabric of liberty and progress. There is little prospect of gain here. Will the mass of the Outlanders be better off? Already they are complaining bitterly that the new British bureaucracy in the Transvaal has been captured by the capitalists. Almost every office has so far been given to men who are or were in the pay of the great financial houses.

#### THE TWO RACES.

And finally how will the relation of the two races stand? The Colonial English are not more charitable or more kindly because of the life-and-death struggle that has been waged. The Dutch do not respect us because we may eventually succeed in beating to their knees the 15,000 farmers still in arms against us. They will not love us for attempting to enforce "unconditional surrender" and rob them of "every shred of their independence." The Dutch, after all, are men of like passions with ourselves. They are apt to resent an injury, and to cherish the memory of a wrong. And what memory will they retain of this war when it does come to an end? Some of them have perhaps received kindnesses from individual officers and soldiers—for our soldiers have been more merciful than our politicians, more generous than our newspapers. But this cannot alter the things that have been done in our name. We have devastated with fire and sword two countries that once were prosperous and happy. As the recent return of farm-burning shows, whole districts

have been "laid waste." We have blown up their mills, destroyed their farm implements, swept up their sheep and their cattle, and burned their crops. Those whom we captured we have kept in dismal confinement in the hottest stations of the Tropics—Bombay, Ceylon, St. Helena. When they return, they will find that their homes have been ruined and their household goods have vanished, while their cattle, their chief wealth, have been confiscated whenever the owner (after September, 1900) was still on commando. Ruin will stare them in the face. Old men will have to begin life anew, and young men who had prospects will find themselves paupers in a beggared land. But worst of all are those Concentration Camps. When we burned the farms and "denuded" the country, we also "concentrated" the women and children in prison camps. The facts about these have been described for us by Miss Hobhouse and Mr. Rowntree. I will recall a few of them. For some months the women whose husbands or sons were still fighting against us were kept on half rations. We held them all close prisoners of war within barbed wire fences, while sentries with fixed bayonets mounted guard. It often happened that mothers separated from their little children attempted to escape. They were recaptured and punished. For the children we provided—perhaps we could provide—no suitable food. Young babies had to make shift with bully beef and mealies. The water provided was frequently a mere solution of typhoid germs. In the summer delicate women sickened in the heat of an over-crowded tent. In the winter mothers expecting their confinement lay on the wet ground without so much as a mattress. New-born babies saw the world under thin canvas, through which the rain soaked and poured. The result has been a mortality which the mediæval plague could hardly have rivalled. The children have died like flies on the first frosty day in autumn. In our towns at home the death-rate per thousand per annum averages 22. In the Johannesburg Camp it was, during May, 435. In the Bloemfontein Camp it was 383. These figures are more eloquent than any description. This is the tale—a tale of woe—the Boer prisoners will hear when they return from Ceylon and Bombay. Fathers will learn that the war has killed their children, brothers will miss their sisters, husbands vow to avenge their wives. A burnt farm and a dead child are not the best foundation on which to build an era of peace and reconciliation. It has been said that the tiny bowl of man's happiness is easily broken. If that is true in time of peace, what of war, when the whole fabric of a nation's hopes and well-being comes crashing to the ground? War at the best is bad; at the worst—and amongst the worst phases of the war is the attempt not merely

to beat a Government, but to hack out the fibres of nationality from the heart of the people—at the worst it is hell upon earth. We are told, of course, that war is war, and misery an inevitable consequence. If so, all the more reason for not embarking on it till every alternative has been exhausted.

#### WAS IT NECESSARY ?

We are constantly told that the war was just and necessary. That is the question we set out to consider as a preliminary to the second, and now still more important, question ahead of us—which it is the Government's duty to answer—namely, what terms we are prepared to offer in order to make peace.

On the first question Liberals are not all of one mind ; but that is in the past. On the second we undoubtedly ought to close up our ranks. But there are other subsidiary questions in between, on which the party should also be united to a man. Even if the war had been inevitable, was it necessary that our men should be put on wet ground at Bloemfontein in crowded tents, suffering from typhoid, without milk, without medicines, without nurses ? Was not this evidence of the utter mismanagement and lack of forethought which has characterised the conduct of the war from the commencement ? Again, was it necessary to put the wives of fighting Burghers during confinement in our camps on half rations—one of those points on which Mr. Asquith has spoken as strongly as anyone on the Liberal side ? Was it necessary to refuse the women permission to join their friends in Cape Colony ? Was the failure to provide nurses and mattresses and suitable food for the children necessary ? To all these questions there is the best possible and most conclusive answer. For Mr. Brodrick has now promised to alter the system in all these particulars. If that decision had been taken six months ago, the greater part of this misery might have been avoided.

But, after all, the real source of all this aggravated suffering has been—What ? Surely an insistence on unconditional surrender. Sir Redvers Buller would have offered terms to the Boers twelve months ago. Lord Kitchener would have granted them representative government in April. The soldiers have always been more generous than the politicians. It is the Government which has prolonged the war, and the Government which dictated a policy which has carried so many horrors in its train. And it is indeed a grim and ghastly mockery to tell the poor women in these camps that they can escape all their troubles if they will tell their husbands to surrender. All this talk of unconditional surrender by the Boers is (to say no more) as impolitic as it is sheer nonsense to pretend that the Liberal



party, or any responsible man in it, advocates surrender to the Boers. What we say is that as annexation and the incorporation of the two Republics in the Empire have been adopted as the country's policy, then, having regard as much to the future as to the present, and to dictates of expediency as to those of justice and humanity, we ought at least to build a bridge over which the Boers as brave men may climb down without dishonour.

This question of terms I shall allude to presently. I have now dealt with others, and among them I have touched in outline on the consequences of this war to the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal as well as to ourselves. What has it done for us? It has brought us no military glory. We have lost thousands upon thousands of the flower of our manhood. Our finances are embarrassed. We have damaged our name and weakened our influence for good throughout the civilised world. This war has inaugurated an era of repression and coercion in South Africa. It has taught the Dutch—a formidable race with a long memory—to hate us with a personal and an individual hatred. It has loaded innocent women and young children with degradation, wretchedness and pitiful physical suffering.

If these are the consequences of the war, surely some very stern necessity, some very plain and inexorable logic of facts, is needed to justify it. The onus of proof rests with those who, if they did not sigh for war (and only too many did), at least took no precaution to avoid it; above all with those whose provocative speeches and diplomacy invited it.

Nor will it be sufficient to refer to the loyalty of the colonies, the patriotism of our own people, the courage and chivalry of our soldiers, and the stamina of the race of which this war has given proof. Who doubted them? As Mr. Carnegie in effect observed (in his memorable article in the "Nineteenth Century"), no limits can be placed to the patriotism, loyalty, and invincible courage which will be shown by British people if ever the Empire is imperilled. We did not need an evil and disastrous war to prove this.

Then what are the reasons given for this policy? I will endeavour to summarise and examine them as fairly and dispassionately as may be possible for a mere party man. It should be possible even for him to discuss with some impartiality a question, the national and imperial importance of which so completely outweighs any temporary effect it may have on the interests of any party, Whig or Tory.

May I say a word to Liberal friends who do not agree with me about this war? However we may differ on the conclusions drawn from them, we shall agree on the importance of getting at

the true facts concerning it. Whether they point to the war as having its origin in the relief of oppressed Outlanders, the defence of English and Imperial interests, and the resistance to a Pan-African conspiracy; or whether the inference is that originally it was engineered by the influence and machinations of a few powerful and unscrupulous men in South Africa, let us be clear about our evidence. We shall gain nothing by living in a fool's paradise, or playing the ostrich and hiding our heads in the sands of Africa.

"My country right or wrong!" is a sound patriotic doctrine if the question is one of support, sympathy, and unlimited backing to an Army in the field; and what man or party of any account has withheld either? But when it is broadly hinted that this doctrine covers a Government's policy as well, and should stifle discussion, then Liberals say "No." Bad as things are, they would have been worse if the Government's policy had not been checked by Liberal criticism. That checked, if it did not put an end to, a system of farm-burning, which was admittedly a mistake; it stopped the practice of giving half rations to the wives of fighting burghers; and in these and other particulars it has mended the Government's methods of carrying on the war.

In this matter history is repeating itself. During the Crimean war John Bright was hustled in the streets of Manchester because he condemned the war policy, and I know—for my father was present when he made the remark—that Bright said he felt it was almost hopeless to address meetings in time of war. It took fifty years before a Conservative Premier told us that we "put our money on the wrong horse" in that war. It will not take five years to convince us that we have this time backed a worse policy—a policy soiled with the trail of finance.

In the American war—which bears, I won't say an ominous, but in some respects a striking and significant parallel, to the present conflict—Fox, Burke and Chatham, who had the courage of their opinions, condemned the Tory policy of Lord North's Government. Everybody knows that up to a late period of the war a settlement might have been made, and would have been made, had Lord Chatham been in power. But the majority of the nation, biassed in their judgment by the same appeals to the instincts of "man, the fighting animal," of which we have had so much of late, and misled by the war fever, were against him. Lord North had his way, and by insisting on a policy of blind force, drove the Americans to extremes, and dealt the Empire the heaviest blow it has ever received. I commend this fact to the attention of those who seem to be under the impression that a

man cannot be a thoroughly sound Imperialist unless he approves the Government's policy in South Africa. The historical fact I have just quoted may help them to get rid of that illusion. Everyone admits that same fact now, but, unfortunately, we are rather apt to be wise after the event in these cases. Jingoism in the eighteenth century accused our wisest and most far-sighted statesmen of encouraging the enemy, and tried to stifle discussion just as they are trying to do now. Only recently a fresh cry was raised in the Press in London that the Liberal Party—or some recent demonstrations of the more extreme section of it—were responsible for the Boers' demand for independence. The fact that the message from Botha was sent, not in June, but as far back as February 28th, has cut the ground from under those who would fain start this cry afresh.

Does anyone suppose that if the Liberals in this country were silenced to-morrow, it would have any appreciable effect on the Boers in the field? As likely as not, it might help to make them one degree more desperate. Because it must not be forgotten that, as we have in so many instances destroyed the family ties, the homes and the stake in the country of the burghers, they are now desperate men. It may be replied that, as they are bent on fighting "for their own independence," the chance of a settlement is hopeless. Are we not rather beating about the bush over this word "independence"? Canada calls herself practically independent, and is nevertheless a thoroughly and deeply loyal member of the Empire. From the very commencement of the war the Boers have insisted upon maintaining their independence. Yet Botha did not hesitate to discuss terms when Lord Kitchener made it quite clear, as a preliminary, that incorporation in the Empire was a *sine quâ non* to any settlement. What seems plain enough is that if any settlement is to be made, we shall need to guarantee the Boers—not in the dim and distant future, but in some specified time—a full measure of their own self-government under the English flag.

It is by no means certain that if one of our finest diplomats and statesmen, a man like Lord Dufferin, who would not be distrusted by the Dutch and the Boers, were empowered to offer just and reasonable terms, they would be refused. After all, the Boers know what the terrible alternative of "fighting to a finish" means to them. One sometimes wonders if the Tory papers, like the *Daily Mail*, that so vehemently advocate it, consider also what it will mean to us, and the desperate things which desperate men will do before "the finish" comes. If one points out to Conservatives that the Boers may prefer to go on fighting to the death rather than accept unconditional surrender, as often as not one is told in reply that the more we exterminate them the

better. To say nothing more, it is just as well to remember that the greater part of the Transvaal will either have to be populated by Dutch farmers or remain a famine-stricken desert. Settle and cultivate it English farmers will not—we know that from the best authorities on the spot. Surely, therefore, terms in place of force should be the final remedy and means of terminating the war.

I have already attempted to describe in rough outline what the war means, on the one hand, for those who pay for and criticise it at home; on the other, for those who suffer it on the spot. It will not improve the political conditions of South Africa. It has burdened our finances. It has cost us tens of thousands of lives. It has involved our own soldiers in our mismanaged hospitals, and the Boer families in the mismanaged camps, in a degree of misery that beggars description. It has been one long disaster for both races; it will remain in history a mere record of uncompensated suffering. This is now more and more widely recognised, and opinion has changed since the days when so many people at home wished for war, and so many in South Africa laid themselves out to provoke it, while Downing-street went lightly into the contest, as though to avoid it were not worth an effort. So recently as last October Mr. Chamberlain boasted that if he were its author, it would be "a feather in his cap." Even he would not say that to-day. A month before it began Sir Alfred Milner telegraphed that British South Africa was prepared for "extreme measures." The President of the South African League, the "loyalist" organisation, even boasted in a public speech at Capetown, that his body might "claim the credit of bringing the war about." For months before it came the English papers in South Africa advocated war as the only remedy. The *Times*, when negotiations began to take a fatal turn, actually congratulated itself upon our narrow escape from peace. The *Saturday Review*, I remember, took the same line, and no doubt if they were looked up, we should find a great number of Conservative papers saying much the same. All this is forgotten to-day. Even thick-and-thin supporters of the Government's policy prefer to throw the responsibility for the disastrous struggle on the Boers. Well,

#### WHO DID BEGIN IT?

In a sense no doubt the Boers are largely to blame. In the first place, if Mr. Kruger had been more tactful and less suspicious, he might have managed the cosmopolitan crowd on the Rand with greater success. Probably men like Joubert and Louis Botha would have done better. In the second place, he took the fatal step of declaring war. But even that impossible

ultimatum, which silenced the peace party in this country, does not make the Transvaal the real aggressor; if, that is, we consider the course of events that immediately preceded the war. The first thing to observe is that the popular notion, that we had the choice between fighting or "knuckling under to Kruger," is an entire mistake; because he had, in fact, yielded—as Mr. Chamberlain confessed—"nine-tenths" of our demands. About the other tenth there was a misunderstanding, and the negotiations came to a standstill; and here it was that, as Mr. Morley told the country at the time, Mr. Chamberlain made matters so much worse by raising his terms during the negotiations. Having set out by demanding the franchise, when this was on the point of settlement, he proceeded to drag in other matters. That was bad. Further negotiations followed, until on September 22nd Mr. Chamberlain announced that our Government would "formulate its own proposals for a final settlement." The proposals were actually formulated by the Cabinet. What they were we do not know, but clearly this despatch which was promised (but never sent) was of the nature of an ultimatum. Why was it not sent? Because our military preparations were incomplete. The Boers were kept waiting for almost three weeks in ignorance of our proposals. But troops were hurried out to the Cape and drafted from India to Natal. Our forces, which had been concentrated in Ladysmith, were moved north on September 25th to Dundee close to the Transvaal frontier. It was this march which, as the *Times* has admitted, in a letter from its special correspondent (published November 18th), induced Mr. Kruger to think about issuing an ultimatum. But even after this clear hint Mr. Kruger hesitated. He clearly did not wish to declare war without seeing what our final proposals really were. On October 2nd the Boer Government telegraphed to inquire whether the despatch promised on September 22nd was not yet ready. Everything hung upon this momentous document. The days went past and still it was delayed, and still our military preparations continued. What inference could the Boers arrive at, when Mr. Chamberlain merely telegraphed a curt reply to the effect that his despatch was not yet ready? On the following day another step was taken which still further showed Mr. Chamberlain's hand. A semi-official announcement was published on October 3rd in all our papers to the effect that Parliament would be summoned on October 17th. It was generally assumed that this extraordinary session was a prelude to the calling out of the Reserves, the voting of military supplies, and an eventual declaration of war. Meantime President Steyn was eagerly offering his mediation, and the leader of the Afrikander Bond, Mr. Jan Hofmeyr, strained every nerve to save the situation

even at the eleventh hour. A final provocation rendered their efforts futile. On October 7th our Government issued a proclamation definitely calling out the Reserves, and summoning the dreaded meeting of Parliament. Then—and not till then—the catastrophe happened. Two days later (October 9th) the Boers issued their ultimatum. It was a fatal step, a foolish step—but what could we expect? We had convinced the Boers that we intended war. Were they to wait inactive while we chose our own time for the conflict? Were they quietly to sit still while we assembled our troops at their doors? The wonder rather is that they delayed until we had fetched our regiments from India. It was our Government which really made the first appeal to arms by its menacing movements in Natal. As Bacon has said, “There is no question but a just fear of an imminent danger, though there be no blow given, is a lawful cause of war.”

#### THE NEGOTIATIONS.

But the war, it is constantly said, is due to the fact that President Kruger would not give way to our just demands. Our demand was, from the time of the Bloemfontein Conference onwards, that the way should be smoothed for those Outlanders who wished to divest themselves of their British citizenship, to do so by becoming burghers after having resided in the Transvaal for five years. And Mr. Kruger did give way—not very willingly perhaps, but still, gradually and not very slowly, he did give way. Our demands were formulated in May. By July he had offered a seven years’ retrospective franchise free from conditions. By August he had gone still further. On August 22nd he offered the five years’ retrospective franchise for which we had asked; eight new seats in the Volksraad for the Outlanders, giving the Rand ten members in a Chamber of thirty-six (more than we had demanded); equal rights in the election of the President; and as to details he welcomed friendly suggestions. His conditions in making these concessions were—1st, that the present intervention should not constitute a precedent for future interference in the internal affairs of the Republic; 2nd, that controversy regarding the suzerainty should be tacitly dropped; 3rd, that arbitration, from which foreigners were to be excluded, should be recognised in future disputes. Surely these were reasonable terms. The proposals were what we had demanded. The conditions were not novel. We had just come from the Hague Conference, after pledging ourselves to arbitrate with China, Servia, Turkey, and other nations. Why should we refuse to arbitrate in future with a civilised power like the Transvaal, especially as the proposed Court was to exclude

foreigners? As to non-interference, we had pledged ourselves to this in the Convention of 1881 and 1884.

The stipulation about suzerainty was the stumbling-block; but as we possessed the reality, why fight for the name, especially as we abandoned our claim to it in 1884? As Lord Salisbury said (*October 17th, 1899*) in the House of Lords, "In order to get that hateful word out of his Convention, he (Mr. Kruger) made considerable territorial and other sacrifices." As recently as December 31st, 1895, Mr. Chamberlain himself, in a despatch to the Chartered Company, referred to the Transvaal as a "*foreign State* with which her Majesty is at peace and in treaty relations." It was not until 1897 that he revived our claim to the suzerainty. The question is really a legal one, a question susceptible of documentary proof, and it is perhaps worth while to quote the opinion of Sir Edward Clarke—as we all know, a great lawyer and a staunch Conservative—on the matter. He said: "For any British Minister, since 1884, to assert that this country had a suzerainty over the Transvaal, was not only a statement made in defiance of fact, but also a breach of national faith." (*October 19th, 1899. House of Commons.*)

#### THE REAL CONSPIRACY.

Why, then, did not Mr. Kruger's offer of 22nd August put an end to the dispute? He gave us all we professed to want, and in return asked only for a confirmation of the status which we had granted in 1884 to the Transvaal by a Convention which made it a Sovereign State, subject only to our right to veto its treaties with foreign Powers. What answer did Mr. Chamberlain give? Immediately on receiving this despatch (26th August) he stood on the front steps of his villa at Highbury, and made the most violent speech he had yet delivered. He complained that Mr. Kruger "procrastinated in his replies," "dribbled out reforms like water from a squeezed sponge," and "accompanied his offers with conditions which he knew to be impossible." He then announced that the "sands were running down in the glass," and concluded by threatening that if Mr. Kruger did not yield very quickly, we should not be content "with what we had already offered." These amiable phrases were telegraphed out to Pretoria. What impression could they possibly produce upon the suspicious old President, who had once before seen his Republic annexed by an English High Commissioner? That speech meant that Mr. Chamberlain would threaten and bully, that he would not hear of compromise, that there could be no give-and-take, that there was no finality in our demands, that it was useless for the Boers to make concessions. The despatch which followed the speech was more carefully worded, but it was utterly ambiguous. Mr.

Chamberlain says he meant it as a "partial acceptance." Mr. Kruger took it as a refusal. No doubt he interpreted the obscure wording of the despatch by the plain language of the speech. At all events, Mr. Chamberlain refused Mr. Kruger's conditions. That was the last real attempt at negotiation. Two weeks later Mr. Chamberlain announced that we were preparing an ultimatum—an ultimatum which was delayed by the backwardness of our military preparations.

No! the real question at issue was not the grievances of the Outlanders, nor the five years' franchise. The "Loyalist" party in South Africa was determined to overthrow the Republic. On the 29th August, 1899, the Johannesburg *Leader*, a paper founded to foment this agitation by Messrs. Beit and Eckstein, wrote in its leading article, under the very eyes of the Pretoria Government: "The abolition of the Republic is not the end which we anticipated and hoped for; yet we fully recognise the necessity for the step in view of the hopeless attitude of this Government." That was what Mr. Rhodes was really driving at. As in 1895, at the time of the Jameson Raid, so in 1899, the capitalists and their dupes had determined to make an end of the independence of the Transvaal. No concessions would have availed, and the Boers at last made up their mind to face the facts. Sir Alfred Milner had heartily entered into the spirit of this little game. He has admitted it frankly. At a farewell banquet at Cape Town on May 7th, 1901, he said: "Flinching from no sacrifice, and turning a deaf ear to people whose endeavour was ever tending to confuse and smother the one cardinal point in a mass of side issues, the British people had gone straight upon the way on which they had set out from the first, to make an end of the business, once and for all; to make South Africa one country under one flag, and with one system of law and government." That, then, is the blunt truth at last. The franchise was a mere "side issue," the "cardinal point," the real aim of the "loyalist" policy, was to destroy the Republics for ever. And yet we pretend that the Transvaal was the aggressor!

#### THE CULPABLE HURRY.

Looking back over the course of these negotiations, it is indeed impossible to resist the impression that Mr. Chamberlain went to work hastily, angrily and hotly. It is clear enough now that misunderstanding after misunderstanding helped to wreck them, when a little patience and tact would have smoothed them over. We know from the letters of Messrs. Fischer and Merriman, and Chief Justice de Villiers, that the Dutch of Cape Colony and the Free State were all the while urging Mr. Kruger to show a



tractable disposition. But Sir Alfred Milner made no attempt to use their good offices. He was throughout on the worst terms with his own Cabinet; he suppressed their memorials against war, while he quoted and emphasised the violent leading articles in the papers controlled by Mr. Rhodes and his financial associates. Of Mr. Chamberlain's negotiations Sir Edward Grey has said they were "not diplomacy at all." Surely that admission carries with it a severe condemnation. If the Jameson Raiders had been punished as they deserved, if the Colonial Office had cared to clear itself from the suspicion of complicity in that criminal adventure, if the negotiations had been carried out with temper and tact, who can say that the war would have come about? There was no need for haste. The Outlanders were making money unmolested when the negotiations began. Life and property were perfectly safe. They could well have waited another three or six or even twelve months for their votes. That was the view which we all took when the question was first raised in the spring of 1899. On March 20th, in the House of Commons, Mr. Chamberlain himself ridiculed the incitements of Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, and laughingly inquired whether that hot-headed patriot "expected us to go to war with the Transvaal." He reviewed all the stock grievances—the Edgar case, the dynamite monopoly, the demand for the franchise, the general unrest—and yet his conclusion was that interference would be neither "dignified" nor "expedient," and he wound up with the announcement that he "did not intend to take any very strong action." His own party took the same view. The *Times*, for example, said next morning: "Interference is inadvisable . . . Such a policy would not carry public opinion in this country with it . . . The Boers must be allowed still to go their own way. Time is not on their side." If interference was inexpedient in March, what made war necessary in October? If time was on our side in the spring, what compelled us to force the pace in the autumn? The answer is that the clique of financiers who controlled the South African Press had resolved on war. They obtained the ear of the High Commissioner; it was in their name that he called for "extreme measures." Six months of heated telegrams, violent speeches and manufactured outrages served to mislead opinion in this country, and stirred up the black cauldron of hatred and misery in South Africa.

I have dealt with two of the main excuses for this war, namely, the arguments (1) that because Mr. Kruger issued the ultimatum which began it, he must bear the responsibility, and (2) that he refused to meet us half way by granting reasonable reforms. I have attempted to show (1) that the Boer ultimatum

was preceded on our side by provocations to which it was a natural, though a foolish, reply, and (2) that the Boer Government did in point of fact offer to yield what we had demanded. It was, I have argued, the needless haste and the reckless diplomacy, or lack of diplomacy, of the Colonial Secretary, working on the fears and suspicions of the Boers, which brought the war about. But an opponent of the war who reasons on these lines from the dates and the Blue Books is always met by another set of excuses. "There was," we are told, "a great Boer conspiracy to drive the British into the sea. The Dutch had been arming for years, and were only waiting for a favourable opportunity to expel us from South Africa. This is, therefore, a war to repel aggression, to defend the Empire and repair the mistakes of Mr. Gladstone, who restored to the Transvaal after the battle of Majuba an independence which it has only abused." This argument sank into the mind of the country during the days when every week brought news of some fresh disaster to our arms—Stormberg, Magersfontein, Colenso. It flattered our vanity to believe that the Boers were a formidable military power. We, for the moment, overlooked the fact that they were never able to put more than 50,000 untrained men into the field against our force of 250,000, and that if their guns were of the latest pattern (while our own were more or less obsolete), that only went to show how recent their armaments were. But alarm is an emotion that is fatal to logic and destructive to a nation's sense of humour. We fell a victim to this grotesque myth of a plot in which two little pastoral communities were leagued against the greatest Empire in the world, much as the French gave way during the Dreyfus case to the legend of a great cosmopolitan conspiracy against France. Men are usually just until their fears are awakened. The French Jingoës used the story of a plot in which Jews and Protestants were banded together with England and Germany to destroy the Republic as an argument for refusing a fair trial to one unlucky Jewish citizen. The same appeal to panic has been employed in this country to induce us to crush the two Boer commonwealths. But let us examine the evidence.

#### THE BOER ARMAMENTS.

The only definite piece of evidence that has ever been brought in support of this theory of a Dutch conspiracy is the fact that, for some time before the war, the Transvaal had been arming on an extensive scale. That, of course, is perfectly true. But the real question is, the motive behind these armaments. Were they for attack or defence? The question answers itself, if we can only fix the date of these preparations. If they began more

or less after Majuba, then it might be fair to argue that the Boers, not satisfied with Mr. Gladstone's act of justice, were determined to assert themselves at our expense, and wrest South Africa from us. But this question of dates is linked to another crucial event in South African history—the Jameson Raid of 1895-6. The Boers had learned that a conspiracy existed between the gold industry in their midst, the diamond interest at Kimberley, and the Chartered Company in Rhodesia, with Mr. Rhodes, a Privy Councillor and the Premier of the Cape, at its head, to rob them of their independence. The exploits of the raiders were applauded in Capetown and London, and sung by the Poet Laureate. Mr. Rhodes was whitewashed in the House of Commons by the Colonial Secretary, and to this day the Boers—and not the Boers alone—believe that Mr. Chamberlain himself was implicated in this guilty business. That suspicion is not confined to the Transvaal, to the Continent, or even to some of his political opponents in this country; for even a Unionist writer like Dr. Conan Doyle hints at the same thing. When they saw that the Imperial authorities cared neither to punish Mr. Rhodes, nor to clear themselves of any shadow of complicity, what conclusion could the Boers possibly reach? They knew that all the wealth and the power of British South Africa was against them, and that powerful interests in England were linked with those of the South African magnates. They had, therefore, every reason to fear a renewal of the Raid on a larger and more menacing scale. The open partisanship of Sir Alfred Milner with the Rhodesian party at the Cape after 1897 only increased their fears, and Mr. Chamberlain's baseless reassertion of the claim to a suzerainty over the Transvaal, which we had dropped in the Convention of 1884, must have redoubled their suspicions. If under these circumstances they armed, the obvious presumption would be that they armed to defend the independence which Mr. Rhodes and his party had threatened.

#### THE DATES.

And this presumption is confirmed beyond question by the dates of these armaments, which can be fixed. It is true that the *Daily Mail* declared that the Boers have been arming for "nearly eighteen years to oust England from South Africa." But the facts are against it. In the first place we have before us the yearly military budget of the Transvaal. In 1893 it spent only £19,340 on armaments; in 1894, owing to a native war, the figure reached £28,158. In 1895, the year of the Raid, it stood at £87,308. In 1896 it leapt at one bound to a clear half million, and remained at that relatively high figure, or even exceeded it, in subsequent years. But we are not left to the

evidence of the Boers themselves. A few months before the Raid Major Robert White was sent by the Chartered Company to Pretoria to take stock of the situation. His inventory of the few obsolete guns which the Boers then possessed will be found in the Blue Books (*Cape Report on the Jameson Raid*, p. 169), as also his conclusion: "None of the guns I saw were fit for much work." More recently Dr. Jameson himself declared at Kimberley in a public speech, that at the time he made his Raid, the armaments of the Boers were "beneath contempt." He actually proposed to rush the Pretoria arsenal, which was guarded, he tells us, by no more than three men and a "broken-down corrugated iron fence." We know, moreover, exactly when and why the arming began. Captain Younghusband, a very competent authority, visited Pretoria early in 1896. He states in his book, "South Africa of To-day" (pp. 141-3) that "the Boers had very nearly been caught napping at the beginning of the year." They were then, however, ordering guns and rifles in great numbers, engaging European artillerymen, and constructing formidable forts near Pretoria. "One attempt," he remarks, "had been made to take their country from them; they were thoroughly convinced that the attempt would be renewed at some future date; so the Boers were determined to be on their guard the second time." Further comment on this point is unnecessary. If the primary aim of the Boers had been to conquer the Cape, they would not have spent vast sums in fortifying Pretoria. Forts are for defence.

Finally, all this evidence has been ratified in an official British publication. Some time before the war General Sir John Ardagh, the chief of the Intelligence Department of the War Office, prepared a very careful report on the military resources of the two Republics, portions of which have since found their way into print. It contains full particulars about the guns which the Boers had bought in Europe, and shows conclusively that every piece had been purchased since the date of the Jameson Raid. Before the Raid, says the report, the Transvaal had no more than 13,500 Martini rifles. Its vast store of Mauser magazine rifles had all been purchased since, while the artillery force, which then only numbered one hundred men, was at once increased to four hundred with large reserves. Is it necessary to labour this point further? The armaments of the Transvaal were purchased after the Raid, and were designed for *defence*; and this is so obvious that to argue it any more seems like flogging a dead horse. If I pursue the subject, it is because this alleged conspiracy of the Dutch and Boers has been more sedulously spread about, and done more duty among the constituencies, than any of the other after-thoughts and plausible fictions which have

helped to salve consciences and delude the public. The art of what in trade circles is sometimes called "gulling the public," and the corresponding art in politics of playing to the gallery, is very well understood in Birmingham. The cue given by the astute and unscrupulous wire-puller who rules the roost there has been taken readily enough by the rest of his party in the country, to an extent and in a manner which, as a Conservative remarked to me the other day, "has done more than anything else in our time to vulgarise the tone of political life in England." The methods I allude to consist in appeals not to reason, or any sense of fairness and English chivalry, but to ignorance, popular prejudice, and panic.

#### THE CAPE DUTCH AND THE CONSPIRACY.

And so it is further said in support of this theory—unless we should rather call it a wild canard—of a gigantic conspiracy, that the Cape Dutch were in sympathy with the Boers, and in some obscure way in league with them. It is not easy to treat such a suggestion with patience. It is true that the Cape Dutch regard this war as unjust and unnecessary. They have, in addition, a natural and proper sympathy with their kinsmen. But the best proof of their loyalty is the fact that during two invasions of the Cape, though they have seen their constitution set aside, though they profoundly distrust Sir Alfred Milner, though they believe the Republics to be in the right, they have not risen. The Afrikander Bond, which has been described as a disloyal body, has done its utmost to urge its members to remember their obligations as British subjects, and the few hundred Dutchmen who have joined the enemy have done so largely under compulsion, and against the advice of their political leaders. Yet it is hardly doubtful that, had the Dutch risen in any large numbers after the reverses of Stormberg, Magersfontein, and Colenso, our armies would everywhere have been forced to retreat to the coast, or to shut themselves up in towns and endure a siege. The story that the Transvaal had secretly armed the Dutch in the Cape and in Natal is clearly shown to be false, and the Bond has proved its loyalty. In fact, I believe the only evidence against it is a series of articles written twenty years ago by a Dutch pastor named Du Toit. He did indeed preach a racial conflict, and dreamed of an eventual union of South Africa under the Dutch flag. But his programme was disowned by the Bond as soon as it was formulated. He himself was expelled from the Dutch party, and is now a prominent adherent of Mr. Rhodes. If it is necessary to give any further proofs of the loyalty of the Cape Dutch, one need only refer to the eulogy which Sir Alfred Milner himself penned in an official despatch

so recently as August 23rd, 1897, after the Jubilee celebrations. Even the racial bitterness caused by the Raid had not, he then wrote, "affected the loyalty of any portion of the population to Her Majesty the Queen." Mr. Jan Hofmeyr, the leader of the Afrikaner Bond, was the warmest advocate in all the Empire of Imperial Federation. In 1898, with a Bond Ministry in power, the Dutch Cabinet carried without a dissentient vote the proposal to pay an annual tribute of £30,000 to the Imperial Navy. No other Colony has ever done that. Surely, then, it is clear that these people, so devoted to the Queen and the Empire, so mindful of their duty under unparalleled provocations, were not privy to any anti-British conspiracy. It is true that Sir Alfred Milner became unpopular, true that Mr. Chamberlain was distrusted, true that the Raid had sown discord between the two races all over South Africa. But these things do not constitute disloyalty.

#### THE CONSPIRATORS AT WORK.

But perhaps the most effective bit of evidence that can be found regarding this theory of a Pan-Afrikaner conspiracy is supplied by a private diary accidentally captured during the war. It belonged to Mr. Van Kretschmar, a Hollander, who was the managing director of the Netherlands Railway Company, which rendered the Transvaal such great services during the war. Mr. Van Kretschmar, though a frank and honest man, was clearly a bit of a Jingo. He seems to have come to the conclusion that war was inevitable very early in the summer of 1899, and his diary (published in the Blue Book of the Concessions Inquiry) records his impatience, and satirises the easy-going hesitations of Mr. Kruger and General Joubert. On July 21st he writes regarding the British preparations for war which were even then going busily forward in Natal:—

"It has surprised me that the Transvaal Government has up to the present paid so little attention to the preparations."

His alarm took him to General Joubert, with whom he had a formal consultation. He records his impression of Joubert's preparedness thus:—

"He had absolutely no plan of defence. . . . He lamented the unpleasantness of carrying on a war, and said that 'the Transvaal was not prepared for it.'"

Yet General Joubert was the Commander-in-Chief of the Transvaal. If there had been a great conspiracy to drive the British into the sea, surely he must have known of it, surely he must have thought out some way of effecting the design? So far from

this, he had not even a plan of attack. Nay, he had not even a plan of defence. We have been told that the Transvaal counted on the aid of the Cape Dutch, and had secretly supplied them with rifles. Well, Mr. Van Kretschmar, as his friend, as a good Hollander, Jingo, and chief of the railway on which so much would depend in case of war, knew nothing of it. Here is what General Joubert said to him on this subject in July :—

“The Transvaal had not taken sufficient care of the friendship with the Cape Colony. No assistance could be expected from their side because the Boers in the Cape Colony were not armed. All that was to be done now was to try and avoid war.”

This, let us remember, is a contemporary record in a private diary, a diary which contains the frankest confessions of Mr. Van Kretschmar's own breaches of neutrality in the course of the war. But the diary contains other records of no less interest. In July Joubert still thought war could be avoided. On August 16th he told Van Kretschmar that he had come to the conclusion that “England wants war.” Nevertheless a day later he still refused to begin to mobilise the Boer commandos. On August 19th, however, Mr. Kruger seems to have taken alarm. A meeting of the Cabinet was summoned, and Mr. Van Kretschmar, as the chief of the railway, was called in to give his advice. Here he was at last inside the inner ring of the conspirators. Yet still there was no talk of an aggressive war, no scheme for ousting the British from South Africa. The business on hand is thus recorded :—

“The President asked me what I intended to do if the English should attempt to enter the country by rail.”

The fact was, as Mr. Van Kretschmar explains at length, that Mr. Kruger had been thrown into consternation by the news that the British had got an armoured train in Natal. And these were the astute and daring men whom we charge, forsooth, with plotting against the British Empire! If they armed, it was only because they believed that we meant to take their country. If in the end they themselves declared war, it was because they were convinced that we were about to repeat the Jameson Raid on a larger scale. Were they altogether wrong?

#### MR. GLADSTONE'S SETTLEMENT OF 1881.

When driven from every other position, apologists of the war invariably fly to 1881, and blame Mr. Gladstone for giving back their independence to the Boers. It would, perhaps, be pertinent to the issue to inquire whether Mr. Disraeli had any right to

take away their independence in 1877. But without going too much into ancient history, does anyone suppose we should have heard a syllable about this settlement of 1881 in after years; that it would have been complained of any more than the independence of the Orange Free State but for one thing—the discovery of gold in 1886? That introduced new conditions and new problems by no means insoluble, but not to be solved either by Jameson Raids or the “new diplomacy.” As the Outlander population in the Transvaal increased, reforms in the Government became necessary, and, as we have seen, were on the point of being conceded, even in spite of Mr. Chamberlain’s overbearing and exasperating methods.

Tory as he no doubt is from temperament and experience, Mr. Kruger could not resist the united pressure of England, Cape Colony, the Free State, the wealthy, powerful and numerous Outlanders, and the Progressives in his own Parliament. Roughly speaking, there were, I think, eight Progressives against sixteen Tories in the Raad. One third of the Transvaal legislature backed us up; so did the Free State, so did Dutch influence in Cape Colony—as long as people believed we were bent on reforms. The revulsion of feeling and the loss of Dutch sympathy and support came when they saw that what financiers, backed up by our Jingoës, wanted was, not reforms, but the country itself.

True, every legitimate reform would not have been carried at once. Well, what then? What about our noble selves? Have we been so very expeditious in our reforms? Mr. Herbert Spencer may well remind us of the time it has taken to carry some of our own great measures.

#### CORRUPTION NO EXCUSE FOR THE WAR.

And he gives us another timely reminder of the corruption that existed in our own Government—the mother of Parliaments—up to less than a century ago. This is worth noting by those who hint—and it is one of the minor excuses regularly trotted out by our Conservative friends—that we were justified in going to war because there was used in Pretoria a good deal of that palm oil which circulates so freely in the commercial life of England, and in the commercial and political life of Europe and America alike. Are we going to war with the American Union because leading citizens of Chicago, as has been stated, have escaped by bribery as much as 88 per cent. of the rates justly due by them? Bribery and corruption are bad; but if politicians in Pretoria needed squaring as they are squared in Paris or Washington, infinitely better to get reforms that way than to plunge the country into the horrors of war and famine. A man who sees his house and workshop burnt to the ground,



and is left starving in the streets, does not thank you for offering him an up-to-date system for heating and cooking which saves some waste and perquisites. But we need to consider another alternative; for we have had Sir Alfred Milner's assurance that, instead of insisting on particular reforms, it would have been better to let the Outlanders, or those who would avail themselves of the chance, have the franchise and so work out their own salvation. Does anyone doubt they would have done it, with the Rand far ahead of the Boers in wealth and population, backed up by the influence of those other Imperial and South African forces to which I have just alluded?

#### FEDERATION.

And then we come to federation. Is it not probable that the same influences and forces and, in the long run, common interests would have brought this about? Not in Kruger's day; but the late President is an old man of seventy-six. If this is prophecy, it is nevertheless the opinion of some of the best judges on the spot, who ridicule the notion, founded on the remarks of a few hot-heads, that the Boers would ever have been so insane as to launch themselves in a hopeless and ruinous attack upon the Empire, when the first to resist them would have been the Dutch of Cape Colony and the Free States. We are apt to forget how the Free State stood by us as recently as the "Drifts" question. The alliance between them and the Transvaal formed at the time of the Raid was not offensive but defensive. The future does not admit of proof or demonstration; but are we justified in courting a war on mere hazy apprehension? If so, we had better at once tackle Russia or some other country nearer our size. But the proposition carries with it its own refutation, and I have already devoted more than enough space to what is said about a Pan-Afrikander conspiracy, now that another of those after-thoughts also alluded to, by which we seek to justify the war—the wrongs of the Outlander—has broken down. We all know to-day what a hollow farce this cry was—like the "Women and Children" cry manufactured by the same people and for the same purpose, which preceded it at the time of the Jameson Raid. Suffering Outlanders! The capitalists were coining money, and the Cornish miners, earning £1 a day, enjoyed a prosperity for which, alas! they now sigh in vain, and will have no chance of regaining when the war is over.

#### INTERESTS OF LABOUR.

Because, apart from certain questions of railway rates and dynamite, the main object of the financiers who have been at the bottom of this struggle is to substitute cheap labour by

blacks and Kaffirs for well-paid labour by Europeans. This is not surmise, for they have plainly told us so. A nice object truly for which to sacrifice all these lives, saddle ourselves with a mountain of debt and permanently increase the weight of taxation! To do evil that good may come is a doctrine at which the Anglo-Saxon has always flattered himself he looks askance; but even that doubtful object cannot be argued on behalf of any single section of the combatants on either side by way of extenuating this war.

#### CASE FOR THE WAR NON-PROVEN.

And now I think we have considered all the excuses that serve to explain away the simple facts of the case in South Africa. Most attention has been devoted to the Pan-Africaner conspiracy because so much electioneering capital has been made out of it, and to the diplomacy, because the original responsibility turns so much upon it. To say the very least, the case for the war on these grounds is—in the old Scotch phrase—“Non proven.” This is a heavy charge at all times, and grows heavier as the sciences are dragged in to make the instruments of destruction more and more deadly. And so those who have to make the best of a bad situation do so very largely by vilifying their critics. Well, if we have erred, it is in good company. Tories are fond in these matters of sneering at the lesser luminaries on the Liberal side. I notice they fight shy, though, of the names of some of our greatest living Englishmen opposed to them, men like Mr. Bryce, Mr. Morley, Mr. Herbert Spencer, pre-eminent in their knowledge of history, of politics and of science, whose great abilities and achievements have secured them a world-wide reputation. Such men as these have exercised enormous influence, and it is not diminished when an insolent political parvenu calls them traitors or pro-Boers. On the contrary, we shall be inclined to retort that he is the traitor and the worst enemy this country has had in all this shocking fiasco. Such *tu quoques* are not edifying, and it is better to give Englishmen credit for good intentions all round. But as for the insults levelled at Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman and others of our leaders, it is as well to remember that in the last great crisis of this kind, the American war of independence, they called Burke and Fox and Chatham “traitors,” “Friends of the Americans,” “Enemies to the King,” “Enemies of England” and “Emissaries of the enemy.” Are they any the worse for it now? Are there any names in the great roll of English statesmen which occupy a higher niche in the Temple of Fame? But what about the Tories who threw mud at them, and the Tory policy of that day? Where do they stand now?

## TERMS.

So much for the past. One word, before conclusion, on the vexed question of terms. It is argued every day in the week in the Conservative Press that terms are out of the question because the Boers insist on independence. Do they? What about Sir Redvers Buller's overtures—knocked on the head when he was told the only terms we could listen to were unconditional surrender? What about Lord Kitchener's still more recent proposals? They are best summarised by Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman in his speech at Pontypridd, full of the common sense and sound judgment which have characterised our leader's utterances on the war. I give the following *verbatim* from his speech in reference to the negotiations between Lord Kitchener and Botha:—

“The military guard was to be replaced by Crown Colony administration, consisting of an executive, with an elective assembly to advise the administration, to be followed by a period of representative government. He (Botha) would have liked representative government at once, but seemed satisfied with the conditions that the representative government was to be put off for a period, and in the meantime there was to be government by an Executive, advised by an Elective Assembly. This was the proposal of the Colonial Secretary—that there should be a nominated official element in place of this elected assembly in the first stage of the government, and for representative government a representative element to be substituted, thus introducing an additional probationary period. The privilege of self-government was to be conceded ultimately. ‘Ultimately’ must be read by Lord Salisbury’s words, that it would probably not take place for years, or even for generations. Therefore, in place of Lord Kitchener’s frank gift of a hostage to the principle of self-government, there was a grudging, tardy, conditional promise of a privilege. Which was the method of the statesman here? The soldier’s, or that of the Minister who described Lord Kitchener’s ideas as proposterous?”

Well, it is for our statesmen and diplomatists (if we have any left) to settle nice points in arranging terms. What strikes plain men is the all-important fact that Botha was fully prepared to negotiate, even though Lord Kitchener’s first condition was that the Boers should yield to the inevitable and accept the British flag. That sounds little to us perhaps, but it is a great deal to them, and would be to Englishmen if we stood in their shoes.

But a certain familiar maxim which says "Put yourself in his place," and a much older precept, "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you," are much out of fashion just now in fashionable circles.

The party of force, sheer unadulterated force, the party who believe that might is right, or if not, may be made so by a little manipulation, have done and are doing a great deal to make it difficult for the Boers to accept our common citizenship. Yet it is probable enough that even now, given the right men and the right means, a settlement might be achieved; and I for one do not believe that the majority of responsible householders and decent Englishmen prefer to go on for another six, twelve or eighteen months in this desperate endeavour to beat a small nation to its knees, piling up the agony and adding to the legacies of hate and fury, which will mean prolonged repression and costly government when all is over. We are told the British people will never listen to "unconditional surrender." No they will not; but the remark does not help us to get "any forrarder," for the simple reason that the demand for unconditional surrender has been just the other way. In the American war, the analogy which has been shown vividly in Mr. Methuen's valuable little book, the same demand for unconditional surrender was made by the Tories of that day. Burke called it "impious" then. It is as impious now, and only helps to make still worse a policy which, from its sordid inception, and from the days when the Boers were prodded into extremities—and the powers that be thanked Heaven for their escape from peace—has been one of those blunders which are worse than crimes. It is a primary object of Liberalism to lessen the mass of misery and suffering in the world. We cannot pretend to render practicable every impracticable scheme for improving humanity off the face of the globe, but we can and ought to protest against any policy which adds so gratuitously and so terribly to the wretchedness and despair of an unfortunate people.

I have already referred to and quoted from a recently-published book, Mr. Methuen's "Peace or War," which I venture to call the best shillingsworth published for many a day. In brief compass it gives us a statement of all the essential facts relating and leading up to the South African imbroglio, which is as masterly as (except only in some criticisms of military questions, which might have been left out) it is unanswered and unanswerable.

One of the most valuable chapters in this book is entitled "Government without Consent." It is from this I am about to quote to show the future burden of debt and taxation we have

piled up, and are still piling up for ourselves. Mr. Methuen shows that the expenditure of the two Republics was, at its highest, about £4,000,000, but under the more efficient and more costly rule which we shall inaugurate at the conclusion of the war, this figure will probably stand at £6,000,000—and that is without making by any means an extravagant estimate.

Then, when the submission of the Boers is enforced, and the war comes to an end, there will be the expense of the mounted police, a force of 10,000 men, at a salary of £200 a year per man, which, with the additional cost of extra allowances, rations, horses and equipment for the rank and file, and allowing for the high cost of all the necessaries of life out there, will amount, he calculates, to at least another £2 a week per man. The cost of this police force, therefore, in pay and keep, is put at £300,000 per annum. Then, of course, it will, as he says, be necessary for some years to maintain a large force of, say, at least, 4,000 men in the conquered territories, the cost of which he works out at £5,000,000 per annum. This gives us a total expenditure of £14,000,000.

That there is good reason for not calculating on the Transvaal and Orange River Colony raising more than a fourth of this amount will be gathered from the fact that, previous to the war, the revenue of the two countries was about £4,000,000. Of this the Transvaal Government received £250,000 per annum from the mines. In the following calculation that amount is doubled. There are a good many people who would not cry their eyes out if, in the near future, this contribution from the mines were trebled or quadrupled; but, as Mr. Methuen points out, Mr. J. B. Robinson and other mineowners have during the last few months vehemently protested against the placing of any heavier burdens on the mines, and the influence and the power of the mineowners, and the necessity of their co-operation with the English Government, will force us to yield to their wishes, and to spare the mines any burden much heavier than they bore under the Transvaal Government. In 1898 the aggregate amount of dividends paid by the gold mines was under £5,000,000, and making every allowance for an increased output of gold and lighter burdens, it will be impossible for the English Government to raise from the gold mines much more than £500,000 a year. In addition to the sources of revenue given above, there remain a few "concessions" or mining rights, which, having been the property of the Transvaal Republic, will pass into the hands of its successors. The value of these rights has been exaggerated, and they probably will not realise more than £2,000,000, which, at 4 per cent., will yield an income of £80,000 a year. This last figure may be under the mark; at any rate we are told that these concessions

will yield a good deal more. Well, Mr. Methuen's estimate, of which he says that "it must in the nature of things be rough, though it will probably be found that the aggregate amounts are not far distant from the truth," is as follows:—

## RECEIPTS.

	£
Taxation of gold-mines ... ..	500,000
Imports ... ..	1,000,000
Netherlands Railway ... ..	750,000
Dues and Licences ... ..	750,000
Income from sales of new concessions ...	80,000
Post Office ... ..	220,000
Other receipts ... ..	350,000
	£3,650,000

## EXPENDITURE.

	£
Civil administration of the two provinces...	6,000,000
Military occupation ... ..	5,000,000
Police Force of 10,000 men ... ..	3,000,000
	£14,000,000
Deduct Receipts ... ..	3,650,000
Deficit ... ..	£10,350,000

It is possible, Mr. Methuen continues, and probable, that this disastrous balance-sheet will be improved in the course of years, but no material improvement is possible while a military occupation of the two territories is necessary.

The capital expense of the war must be met by some sort of loan, either wholly by an addition to the National Debt of England, or partly by a loan to the new Colonies under British guarantee. But the result will be the same. The interest on the money will and can only be paid by the English taxpayer. If the war is continued for a further considerable period, its capital expense will amount at least to £225,000,000, which will be increased to £250,000,000, if we assume that a special loan of £25,000,000 will be necessary for the restoration of agriculture and the rebuilding of the burnt farms. The interest on this amount, allowing for a sinking fund at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., will be £8,750,000, and if we add this amount to

the deficit on the revenue accounts of the two States, viz., £10,350,000, we arrive at a total of over £19,000,000. Such is the annual burden which our new Colonies will lay upon us for some years, if we determine to secure the submission of the inhabitants by military methods, and to control their disaffection by the sword.

When Charles Booth produced his scheme for old-age pensions, by which everyone sixty-five years of age or more was to receive 5s. per week, apart from some difference of opinion as to the wisdom of putting everyone without discrimination on a level footing, the country was a bit staggered at the annual cost, which was put at about £17,000,000. We have now practically let ourselves in for additional taxation for that amount and more—which, be it sooner or later, has to be faced—and old-age pensions, on which the Government came into office in 1895—where are they? They served Mr. Chamberlain's purpose at the last general election but one, and now he has washed his hands of them.

If to all this some reply that a war, in the first instance just and necessary, does not become the reverse because it costs a lot of money, no one will differ with them. There has been no "waving," that I know of, about supplying the men and means for all this vast expenditure of blood and treasure. What is condemned is the policy by which it was started and has been continued.

But then, all the evidence goes to show that this premiss has no foundation in fact; that the war was, in the first place, entirely unnecessary, and, in the second, might have been stopped in the early stages had we given the Boers a fair chance to climb down. It was the Government's insistence for so long on "unconditional surrender" which aggravated the mischief to such a frightful extent.

In the above figures no allowance is made for the possible dangers ahead of us in Cape Colony, and we may devoutly hope there is need for none. But we have to reckon with and recognise the fact that to some extent the loyalty of the Cape Dutch has been undermined. Their sympathy with the Boers of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony is not political but racial. "The same blood," writes Mr. Methuen, "flows in their veins, they are related by ties of marriage and kinship, and the sympathy which they feel for two peoples of the same blood is the sympathy which Englishmen would feel under the same condition for men of their blood threatened with annihilation by a great Power." . . . "The Dutch colonists had not shown before the Jameson Raid any violent sympathy with the Transvaal; on the other hand, they had displayed considerable

hostility towards the political defects of the Boer Government. They recognised too well the advantages of their position as an English Colony to wish to join their political fortunes with those of the Transvaal" (p. 179). Further on, speaking of the Cape Dutch, he continues: "With the exception of the inhabitants of Capetown, they are under martial law, which is, in fact, the negation of all law. They are liable to punishment if they stir out of their houses after the time of curfew, or if they make a jesting remark to an English soldier. Their horses are taken from them, their cattle, their forage, and even their boots. Their papers are suppressed, their editors are imprisoned, their Parliament is indefinitely prorogued, and all their representative rights are in abeyance. Can we wonder if their loyalty to the English throne has in this chilling atmosphere grown cold?"

Protest enough there was against the policy that in the end drove the Orange River Colony into making common cause with the Transvaal against us. Common sense, let alone statesmanship, might have taught us this was the very thing to avoid. Is it possible that we may make matters worse by uniting a large number of the Cape Dutch against us? Fortunately the Colony has thriven so well under imperial government that this dire calamity has not yet darkened political skies that are sombre enough without it. But we are taking great risks; and the harsh, overbearing, uncompromising spirit which Mr. Chamberlain displays in his speeches heals no wounds and pours no oil on the waters of those troubled Southern Seas. Browbeating, and the tactics of the American boss, may have answered pretty well in Birmingham politics, and it may have paid to put the screw on there. But these things are a sorry sort of training for a man who has to deal with international problems demanding breadth of mind and high impartiality, not to mention that dignity of character which commands respect and confidence, and is incapable of sacrificing in any degree national interest for the sake of scoring off some individual or some party, be he or they who they may.

Energy, courage, capacity, we all know that Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Milner possess, and these are qualities which command admiration and respect; but something more was needed to settle this question. Of the wisdom which, says Dr. Johnson, "comprehends at once the end and the means, estimates easiness or difficulty, and is cautious and confident in due proportion," they have shown none; no far-sighted, broad-minded tolerance, nor even the homely faculty of what is called "putting yourself in his place." Is not this same faculty badly needed now on all hands? In high places at least there must be a woeful lack of



imagination, or they would realise better the sort of legacy this evil work will leave behind it.

Do they ever stop to think what would be the consequence in England if some invading foe, not content with beating the Army and the Government, set to work to crush the nation; and in order to do this, on one pretext or another, burnt farms and stores, looted and destroyed property of all descriptions, and, as a consequence, decimated women and children by the unsanitary wretchedness of concentration camps with a mortality in some of them equal to that of Bombay during the plague? Assuming this suffering were mitigated as far as ever circumstance allowed by the chivalry and kindheartedness of the invading forces, would that reconcile Englishmen to all the mental and physical anguish and despair for the very young as for those who are old or frail, which "sweeping," *i.e.*, devastating, a country in this way involves? Mr. Chamberlain hinted that the complaint that children faded and died "like withered flowers" under this system was "irrelevant." Would the mothers think it so in England? and would they beg the men fighting in defence of their country to accept an abject and disgraceful unconditional surrender? No more than the women have done in South Africa; and this renegade Radical's attempt to drive them to it is brute force and tyranny of the worst description.

The policy Burke condemned in the American war as "impious" is impious now, and we know very well it was not what Lord Kitchener wanted. Mr. Chamberlain's arguments that the Boers would listen to nothing short of absolute independence is so thin and so transparently shallow that everyone sees through it. The simple fact remains that Botha did show his willingness to discuss with Kitchener terms of which the latter made incorporation of the Republics in the Empire the starting-point and a *sine quâ non*.

If some Liberals object that we have no moral right to take these countries, I respectfully submit that in the first place there are two sides to that proposition, though I for one would not particularly care to argue its converse; and in the second place, even if our title deeds be difficult to prove on grounds of strict morality, in politics we have to work not for an ideal ethical abstraction, but for what is practical and possible. Apart from any valid reasons in favour of annexation, it is perfectly plain that in the present temper of the nation no settlement, unless based on annexation, would be listened to in England.

I have said very little of the Government's actual conduct of affairs, though from a mere party point of view the subject is tempting enough in all conscience. The Cabinet's sheer ignorance; the mutual contradictions by its members on the subject of Boer

armaments; the telegram to the Colonies—"Unmounted troops preferred;" Mr. Balfour's statement that we had as little expected to be at war with the Orange Free State as with Switzerland; and the rest—these were summed up aptly enough by Lord Rosebery in his exclamation: "Oh, my heavens! Is the Ananias yet born who will defend them?"

My object, however, has not been mainly to criticise administration. What I have tried to do is to investigate the excuses offered in extenuation of this war, and to compare them with the causes that really led up to it and the policy which has kept it going.

To recapitulate a few of the most important:—I have shown that it is nonsense to shift the responsibility on to Mr. Gladstone's shoulders. We should have heard nothing more against his settlement of 1881—which, by the way, Mr. Chamberlain was the first to insist on with his characteristic energy and, which also had the support of more moderate men like the Duke of Devonshire and the late Lord Derby—but for the discovery of gold in 1885. Not that this and the influx of Outlanders was the slightest excuse or occasion for the war. The Jameson Raid was the first step towards it.

But time was repairing the consequences of that piece of brigandage, bad as it was, and made worse by the way in which the conspiracy was condoned and hushed up, and its moving spirit afterwards honoured and complimented in England. Even that in no way made war inevitable. But it was then the few very rich, very powerful, wholly unscrupulous and un-English men who engineered the Raid first showed the Dutch the cloven hoof. Subsequently they worked up and worked upon race prejudices through their Press, sought to set the British against the Dutch, and with the same object "nobbled" Lord Milner, and made him a thorough-paced partisan. How far he influenced or was influenced by Mr. Chamberlain is a personal issue which, however interesting, we are not in a position to decide. What we do know is that he played the game of the men who, not content with the Raid, were still plotting the overthrow of the Transvaal, and that the organs in the English Press which, unfortunately, most accurately represent the views of this unprincipled gang, publicly thanked heaven that as late as August and September, 1899, we had so narrowly escaped a peaceful settlement.

Some of our Tory friends brush aside the tale of mismanagement as past history. Why waste time over it? they say. Let bygones be bygones. Of course. So does every sinner. But if a Minister or a Cabinet trading on the fighting spirit that fortunately exists in England, ready to defend the Empire in any real *bonâ fide* emergency that may arise, are to feel that he

and they can land us in any war with impunity on the principle of standing to win everything if it is just and popular, and to lose nothing if it is proved to be the reverse, we are in a somewhat precarious situation. In that case we should fully need the friendly advice and warning from Mr. Carnegie, in the *Nineteenth Century*. But we must have no more of such reckless and ruinous work ; and the best way to check it is to take care that the responsibility for it is settled on the right shoulders. Finally, if we take our friends at their word and turn from the past to the present, what is it that first strikes us? Surely it is the lesson which John Bright taught years ago in that famous aphorism of his, and which is to-day brought home to us. Applicable in all cases it may not be ; but never did history prove more clearly than recent events in South Africa have proved it, that of itself and by itself "force is no remedy."

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