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A CRITIQUE

ON

BISHOP HARTZELL'S GREAT LECTURE

ON

"THE BRITON AND THE BOER"

BY THE REV. LEWIS GROUT

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IN CHICAGO, MAY 2, 1900

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BY THE REV. LEWIS GROUT

FOR FIFTEEN YEARS MISSIONARY OF THE A. B. C. F. M. IN NATAL,
AUTHOR OF “ZULU LAND” “THE BOER AND THE BRITON
IN SOUTH AFRICA” AND OTHER
AFRICAN WORKS

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ON RECENTLY receiving and reading the “Christian Advocate’s” report of a lecture on “The Briton and the Boer,” by Bishop Hartzell, of the Methodist Episcopal church, at the Auditorium in Chicago, May 2, 1900, the writer was amazed that the author of the lecture should have been drawn, of course unconsciously, into so much of error and misrepresentation as the report of it indicates.

In the following paper it is proposed to notice a few, only a few, of these errors and misrepresentations, and leave the reader to judge for himself how it may be with the rest. And as it will be easier for the writer and, perhaps, plainer for the reader, to have the paper written in the first person instead of the third, the first will be generally used.

I. According to the report of the Bishop’s lecture now before me, for one thing, he said: “In the treatment of the black races, there has been a clear antagonism between the Briton and the Boer from the very beginning,” meaning by this, according to the tenor of his lecture, that the former’s “treatment” of them was uniformly just, kind and right, while that of the latter was ever the very opposite.

In answer to this, I would say that in “the very beginning” there was no such “antagonism” as the Bishop here speaks of. Whatever may eventually have been the feeling of the Dutch, at times, toward the black races, in “the very beginning” it was

only kind and Christly. It is on record that, when the Dutch went, about the middle of the seventeenth century, to settle at the Cape, one great object and hope they had in mind was, that in this way the religious well being of the aborigines might be promoted—"that many souls of the natives might be brought to a knowledge of religion and saved to God." Their "treatment" of that people at that time was also honest, generous and Christlike, as indicated in the fact that, for the land they had of them, on which to build a fort and plant a garden, they paid them no less than 50,000 guilders—a big sum, as compared with the sixty guilders originally paid for Manhattan Island.

Nor were these early, incoming Dutch emigrants slow in beginning to carry out their desire and purpose to do the best of humane and Christian work for the ignorant and wretched among whom they had come to have their home. For, again it is on record that "the sick-comforter, Peter Van der Stael, the brother-in-law of the governor, J. A. Van Riebeeck, opened a school for the instruction of the newly imported slaves on the seventeenth of April, 1658. Not long afterward it was recorded that the sick-comforter had been zealous in trying to teach the Hottentots and slaves the Dutch language and the principles of Christianity. The lapsed and the degraded were sought out by him with a noble zeal, which has elicited the eulogies of all who have taken note of the work undertaken by him. Peter Van der Stael, exhorting the beach rangers among their wretched hovels under the Lion's Head, trying to make them comprehend the Christian faith, teaching naked and half-famished savages the A, B, C, was the forerunner of a band of men as earnest and selfsacrificing as any whose names adorn the pages of European history."*

* These words are taken from a supplement to the "South African News," of February 29, 1900, which contains a paper on "The Dutch Reformed Church and the Boers," signed by ten of the ministers of that church in South Africa, who occupy influential positions in that body, "as representing the Moderamen of the Church, the Foreign Mission Committee and the Senior Congregation of Cape Town; the object of which is to give public expression to their views regarding the present war in South Africa, and protest against the many misrepresentations which have tended to increase the bitterness now existing between the two white races in that country." For brief, in referring to that paper in this critique, it may be called "the testimony or manifesto of the ten." Among them is the name of that great and good man, the Rev. Andrew Murray, so well and favorably known in this country.

And when the Briton took possession of the Cape, and English missionaries of the London Society went there to establish a mission among the natives, the feelings and "the treatment" of the Dutch toward both the English and the natives were alike magnanimous, kind and Christly. But no right minded man of this day or any other day, having a true knowledge of the bottom facts of those early days, can fail to see that, eventually, the Dutch had great reason to be offended and justly indignant at the false and groundless charges which some of the English, even some of the English missionaries, frequently brought against them in respect to their "treatment" of the natives. As the most able, impartial, authentic historian, Dr. George McCall Theal, says:—

"In the month of March, 1799, the first agents of this (London) Society, Dr. J. T. Vanderkemp, Mr. J. J. Kichener, Mr. James Edmunds and Mr. William Edwards landed at Cape Town from the *Hillsborough*, a convict ship bound to Botany Bay, in which they had taken passage from England. The Moravian Society was already working in South Africa, but on a small scale, and was then, as it has been ever since, on the most friendly terms with the colonists. The four missionaries of the London Society, who announced that they would speedily be followed by others, were received with enthusiasm. Fifty-seven years earlier the Established Church had driven from the colony a foreign teacher who had ventured to administer the sacraments to his converts; but now the ministers of that church were among the foremost to welcome the agents of the London Society. Two of these were laymen, and within a few weeks after their arrival they were ordained in the Dutch Reformed church at Tulbagh. The South African Missionary Society, which is yet in existence, was formed at this time with a view of coöperating in the work of converting the heathen. Nothing could surpass the kindly welcome which the missionaries received from the colonists, nor the expectations of cordial assistance which they were induced thereby to entertain. But in a few years all this was changed, and the agents of the London Society and the colonists had no other feeling toward each other than that of direct antagonism. Among the missionaries who in large numbers followed close on the pioneer party, were many men of ability and undoubted piety, but there were also many so illiterate that they were unable to write their mother tongue correctly, and so bigoted that they denounced as unchristian all views but their own. These assumed an air of sanctity and superiority, were continually speaking of 'their high and holy calling,' and when they met with opposition they termed it persecution.

. . . The views and interests of the colonists and these men were so different that concord was hardly possible.*

These different views had respect chiefly to two different methods of mission work or kinds of mission policy among such people as the Bushmen, Hottentots and Kafirs in those days. The missionaries, now referred to, went strong for book learning, while the Dutch went for giving them an industrial education—a policy which, with modifications according to circumstances, has had its advocates unto this day, as in our own devoted Dr. Kirk and others, for our Freedmen in the South. Indeed, eventually, Dr. Livingstone himself seems to have thought highly of the “industrial,” as when he represents that the missionary in “Central Africa” must be “something more than a man going about with a Bible under his arm,” and speaks of himself as “a Jack-of-all-trades,” and of his wife as “a maid-of-all-work.”

And so it was, as Dr. Theal goes on to say:—

“There was thus a broad line of demarkation between the colonists and such of the missionaries as held these views; and the tendency on each side was to make it still broader. It was deepened into positive antipathy toward these missionaries who, following Dr. Vanderkemp’s example, united themselves in marriage with black women and proclaimed themselves the champions of the black population against the white. Every one acquainted with South African natives knows how ready they are to please their friends by bringing forward charges against anyone whom those friends dislike. Unfortunately the missionaries, Vanderkemp and Read, were deceived into believing a great number of charges of cruelty made against various colonists, which a little observation would have shown in most instances to be groundless; and thereupon they lodged accusations before the High Court of Justice. In 1811 between seventy and eighty such cases came before the circuit court for trial. There was hardly a family on the frontier of which some relative was not brought as a criminal before the judges to answer to a charge of murder or violent assault. Several months were occupied in the trials, and more than a thousand witnesses were examined; but in every instance the most serious charges were proved to be without foundation. Only a few

* “History of the Emigrant Boers in South Africa,” by Dr. George McCall Theal, of the Cape Colonial Civil Service, author of “A Compendium of South African History,” and of other such works; pages 63, 66.

convictions, and those of no very outrageous crimes, resulted from these prosecutions, which kept the entire colony in a ferment until long after the court was closed.

"Thus far every one will approve of the sentiments of one party or the other, according to his sympathy, but in what follows no unprejudiced person who will take the trouble to study the matter thoroughly can acquit the anti-colonial missionaries of something more faulty than mere error of judgment. For years their writings teemed with charges against the colonists similar to those they had brought before the High Court of Justice. These writings were circulated widely in Europe where the voice of the colonists was never heard,* and they created impressions there which no refutation made in South Africa could ever counteract. The acts, the language, even the written petitions of the colonists, were so distorted in accounts sent home that these accounts cannot now be read by those who have made themselves acquainted with the truth without the liveliest feelings of indignation being excited." †

II. Again, we are told by the Bishop, according to the report before us, that "The first trek of the Boers in 1833 was because the English abolished slavery"; and again he says: "The Boer believes that the natives are the children of Ham and are intended by Providence for slavery." And here, too, in all this, the Bishop follows, doubtless unconsciously, the beaten path of error, misrepresentation and aspersion, and unwittingly brings charges which have been once and again and again proven to be false and slanderous.

For a right and proper understanding of this question of slavery among the Dutch in South Africa, it should be known and remembered that it was introduced and repeatedly, persistently urged and pressed upon the Dutch by the English. And when it came to emancipation in 1833 and later, the Dutch had no objection to that *per se*, and would have been satisfied with it had the measure been carried out and accomplished in a proper, just and righteous manner. As the able, impartial historian, Dr. Theal, having gone through and analyzed the vast

* Indeed, there was a time when the writer himself, not having the means of knowing the other side, was led into taking these errors and false representations to be true.

† Theal, pages 67, 68.

amount of correspondence of the Dutch with the Cape Government—the letters of many individuals for many years—says:—

“Concerning the liberation of the slaves, there is less in this correspondence than one might reasonably expect to find. Many scores of pages can be examined without any allusion whatever to it. Nowhere is there a single word to be found in favor of slavery as an institution, the view of the emigrants, with hardly an exception, being fairly represented in the following sentence taken from a letter of the Volkraad at Natal to Sir George Napier: ‘A long and sad experience has sufficiently convinced us of the injury, loss and dearness of slave labor, so that neither slavery nor the slave trade will ever be permitted among us.’ It is alleged, however, that the emancipation, as it was carried out, was an act of confiscation. It is stated that most of the slaves were brought to the colony in English ships and sold by English subjects; that when in 1795 the colony was invited by English officers of high rank to place itself under the protection of England, one of the inducements held out was security in slave property, at the same time those officers warning the colonists that if France obtained possession she would liberate the slaves as she had done in Martinique, thereby ruining this colony as she had done in Martinique.”*

Sir Benjamin D’Urban, the governor of the Cape at the time the Boers emigrated from that colony, says the causes of that movement were the “insecurity of life and property, occasioned by recent measures, inadequate compensation for the loss of the slaves, and despair of obtaining recompense for the ruinous losses by the Kafir invasion.”

To the same effect is the testimony of the Honorable F. W. Rietz,† state secretary of the South African Republic, where, having referred to the feeling of injustice the Boers had, in view of another matter, he says: “A livelier sense of wrong was quickened by the way in which the emancipation of the slaves—in itself an excellent measure—was carried out in the case of the Boers.”‡

* Theal, page 64.

† “A Century of Wrong,” page 8.

‡ “Agents of the Imperial Government had appraised the slaves, generally at less than their market value. Two-fifths of this appraisal being the share apportioned to the Cape out of the twenty million pounds sterling voted by the Imperial Parliament, had then been offered to the proprietors as compensation, if they chose to go to London for it, otherwise they could only dispose of their claims at a heavy discount. Thus, in point of fact, only about one-third of the appraised amount had been received. To all slave holders this had meant a great reduction of wealth, while to many of those who were in debt, it was equivalent to utter deprivation of all property.” Theal, page 65.

III. The Bishop has much to say about what he calls the "brutality" of the Boers, especially Boer "officials," toward the natives. Were it necessary, the writer could give the name of a man of undoubted veracity, for many years a resident in a British South African colony, who says: "That many of the Boers were cruel to the natives cannot be denied, but I have never yet heard of a case of Boer brutality which I could not duplicate by something as bad or worse which I have known among the English." For myself I will say what I have to say on this point in as few words as possible. During my fifteen years' residence in South Africa, I had the three races, English, Dutch and natives, with and around me on every side. I was sometimes with them as a guest at their homes, and they sometimes with me at my home. I took all the local papers, one from the capital, one or two from the seaport, Durban, and aimed to keep myself thoroughly posted on all the events and affairs of the colony, and especially on all the mutual relations and interests of the several races; nor can I now give the sum or result of all these observations and studies on the question before us, in any language better than that of the famous South African hunter and traveler, Mr. F. C. Selous, after he had had some twenty-eight years of experience and observation among all these races, when he puts the sum of it in these words: "I will only say that, in my opinion, the average Dutch Boer treats the natives in South Africa quite as well as the average Englishman."*

In 1896, Sir George Grey, for some years the famous governor of Cape Colony, being asked, "Do you believe, Sir George, in the rumors of cruelty on the part of the Boers?" replied, "Emphatically no. They are now a very humane and merciful race."

In 1881 Mr. Chamberlain, speaking of the prominent, leading traits of the Boers, went on to say: "Are not these the qualities which commend themselves to men of English race? Are they not virtues which we are proud to believe form the best characteristics of the English people?"

*"Travel and Adventure in South East Africa," page 10.

IV. Bishop Hartzell says "The Transvaal has done nothing toward the education of the black people." "The Transvaal Dutch churches, after fifty years of opportunity, do practically nothing in missionary work among the natives." "The testimony of all preachers and missionaries outside of the Transvaal Reformed church is, that their work is interfered with and that the attitude, especially of the Boer officials, is frequently brutal toward the natives connected with mission stations."

Answer. "We deny most emphatically that the Boers resist the spread of the gospel among the heathen, or display any indiscriminate hostility toward the missionary as such. They have sometimes [and with good reason, L. G.] come into collision with individuals, but not with the cause they represent." "Full liberty to minister to the heathen is granted to both Free State and Transvaal."*

"In the Transvaal, Dutch Boer mission work is represented by several stations and outstations. There is one mission congregation with a European missionary at Pretoria, one at Middleburg, one at Potchefstroom, one at Wakkerstroom and one at Vryheid. At Standerton, Amersfont and Utrecht, there are congregations ministered to by native evangelists under the supervision of the missionary of Wakkerstroom. All these teachers and missionaries are honored and respected by the neighboring Dutch farmers, the Boers. At Zoutpansberg a mission was commenced in 1861, where the now veteran missionary, Rev. Stephanus Hofmeyer, did good service among the natives for many years. The work there has been richly blessed and greatly extended, being now carried on by a staff of Europeans and thirty native evangelists stationed at various places in the neighborhood. One of the leading features of this mission is a training school for the raising up of native evangelists." † There are other Dutch stations in the Transvaal where good mission work is carried on among the

* Testimony of the Ten.

† Extracts from "The Testimony of the Ten," and from an Address by the Rev. A. M. Hofmeyer, President of the Natal Missionary Conference, at Durban, in July, 1899—himself a Boer and a missionary to the natives on the farms of the Boers.

natives by missionaries and native evangelists; one at Waterberg, the center of an extensive mission enterprise, one at Saulsport in the Pilansbergen, and one at Mabics-Kraal, where several native evangelists are doing good gospel work in the Transvaal Republic.

“Quite recently the Transvaal branch of the church surrendered one of its ablest and most earnest ministers to the mission cause, his old congregation of Transvaal Boers offering to pay his salary as missionary to the heathen.” “In the Orange Free State, mission work has been fairly organized. In almost every village or township either the pastor of the Boer congregation or an ordained missionary with a number of native evangelists, labors among the blacks. Lately that church has gone further afield, and is now supporting two missionaries in Central Africa. Certain districts in the Transvaal are characterized by an increasing zeal for the spread of the gospel. Wakkerstroom and Utrecht are special centers of missionary activity, the Boers coöperating with their pastors to make the work a success.”*

V. Bishop Hartzell says: “President Kruger’s branch (of the Dutch Reformed church), which is the Dopper church, and claims to be the true Reformed body, not only does nothing, but beginning with Kruger himself, represents the most extreme anti-black sentiment.”

Answer. An English clergyman, Secretary Hooke, of the Colonial Missionary Society, of London, having made two trips to South Africa in his official capacity, one in 1896 and another in 1897, and having spent some six months in that locality, speaking recently of missionary work in the Transvaal, said: “Naturally we came in contact with President Kruger. I had a very pleasant interview with him, and it is my duty to speak of him just as I found him. He had rendered much assistance in the work of the missionaries and removed many difficulties in their pathway.”

In speaking of the Boers, especially of Boer officials, as hostile to mission work, and as “frequently brutal toward the natives

* Testimony of the Ten.

connected with mission stations," the Bishop goes on to say: "Recently Mrs. Applebee, wife of a Wesleyan Methodist missionary, was murdered on her way to church because of her criticisms of the government, and no arrests have yet been made." Referring to this case, the Rev. W. C. Wilcox, for sixteen years missionary of the A. B. C. F. M. in Natal, now on a visit to this country, says: "The official correspondence with regard to the murder of Mrs. Applebee showed that she was undoubtedly murdered by the illicit liquor dealers in revenge for her interference with their traffic; and there was never a hint that it was on account of her criticisms of the government. Moreover the government offered a reward of £500 (five hundred pounds) for the discovery of the offender, and at once increased the police force by two hundred men for the purpose of grappling more successfully with this terrible scandal."

VI. Bishop Hartzell says the relation between the Boers and the natives was "so fixed" by constitution and law that no equality of privilege could be permitted between them—such as no black man was permitted to walk on the sidewalk, own land, be a trader of any kind, or have any standing in the courts.

Of all this Rev. W. C. Wilcox says:—

"Whatever municipal regulation there may have been in the city of Johannesburg about the natives walking on the sidewalks cannot be laid to the Boers any more than to the English or Outlanders, inasmuch as, since September, 1897, such matters have been regulated by a municipal council which is elected by the property holders of the town who have had a three months' residence there."*

"Article first [of that document in the "Staats Courant,"] says: 'The management of the town of Johannesburg shall be carried on by a town council consisting of at most twenty-four members. The half of the members of this council shall be burghers of the South African Republic. The other half may be any of the Outlanders who are property holders and have been in the country three months.'

"Article 3. Members of the council are chosen by the male white inhabitants of the town of Johannesburg who are of age and who have settled there, with the intention of residing, at least three months before election.

* See English Blue Book C (9345), page 66, which contains a copy of the municipal laws translated from the "Staats Courant."

“Article 28. The town council shall have the right to make all regulations which are required in the interest of safety, public order, morality and health.’

“The regulation about natives walking in the streets, as I understand it,” continues Mr. Wilcox, “is a town regulation and applies chiefly to servants, and not to colored men of all classes. It is just about the same as is in force in Durban and Maritzburg. It is supposed to be in the interest of public order, keeping off from the crowded sidewalks those who are carrying heavy burdens and thus obstructing free passage.

“It is not true that a black man cannot be a trader of any kind in Johannesburg. One of the Natal Zulus had a restaurant and a store there, and I have known of several who have been doing business there in a small way, as all the natives do.

“The standing of the black man in the courts of Transvaal is about the same as in Natal. It is not what it ought to be in either place.”

VII. Bishop Hartzell has much to say about the “Franchise,” and declares that the Transvaal sealed its doom as a permanent government, when it threw aside a petition of the Outlanders, containing, he says, 35,000 names, asking for some slight modification of the franchise.

Answer. In respect to the Franchise and that petition, the Hon. George F. Hollis, “late United States consul at Cape Town and minister plenipotentiary for the Orange Free State,” says:—

“The ‘Outlanders’ would have received the franchise had not their earlier actions in ’88–89 showed that the only use they wished for it was to subvert the government. Self preservation called for its refusal. In those years, when the English were coming in in large force, the rabble of adventurers conducted themselves as if they had come to a British territory, and had brought British laws with them. The gaming houses, the English bars with courtezans enthroned, where nearly all the men, even the better class, congregated in their leisure hours, did not make the most favorable impression on the minds of the honest burghers of the country. Moreover, it was well understood that these people did not come to make their homes there, but only to ‘make their pile’ and return as speedily as possible. I venture to say that not one in a hundred, even of the actual signers of the petition cared a rap for the franchise, as it meant nothing to them, and they signed because they were asked to do so and knew that it would be for their interest not to go against the wish of the magnates of the gold mining industry.”

The writer has also before him a letter from the Rev. W. C. Wilcox, in which he says:—

“There have been several petitions gotten up by the different classes in Transvaal. One was the petition of 21,000 British subjects. Sir Alfred Milner had some doubt as to the genuineness of all the signatures of this petition, as the affidavits which he received did not cover all the papers, and he said that a large number were evidently colored men, and a large number of them women.* Immediately after this petition of the 21,000 British subjects there was another petition sent by 23,000 Outlanders, British, American, German, French, Dutch, and subjects of other nationalities, saying that ‘your petitioners wish to give your honor the fullest assurance that they are perfectly satisfied with the government of this state and with the administration thereof; and that we wish to have no other government. We do not say that this government is without its faults, but we know and trust that if any did exist, that the same could be removed between us and the government without the interference of any foreign power.’” †

“Another petition was sent about the same time by fifty-seven members of both houses of the Cape Parliament, being a majority of all voters, including five ministers of the cabinet. They say, ‘They are firmly convinced that recourse to measures of active interference by force or compulsion against the said Republic for the removal of the grievances or disabilities set forth in the aforesaid petition is not necessary and would be most disastrous to the true welfare and the best interests of your South African dominions, of which this colony is no inconsiderable part.’” ‡

Having now attempted to notice a few of the errors and misrepresentations in which the lecture referred to in the opening of this paper so sadly abounds, the writer leaves the reader to judge for himself how it may be with the rest.

LEWIS GROUT.

West Brattleboro, Vt., June, 1900.

* See Sir A. Milner's Dispatch, Blue Book C (9345), page 148.

† Blue Book as above, page 212.

‡ Blue Book C C (9530), page 39.