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THE TRANSVAAL CRISIS.

A Brief History of the Republic.

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BEFORE we have drifted into a war which must have far-reaching and possibly disastrous consequences to our colonial empire, it is well that we should calmly consider how far it is necessary, and what it is all about. We shall be able to do this the more easily if we are acquainted with the history of our connection with the Transvaal.

We had harried the Dutch, who did not agree with or like our rule, out of the Cape Colony into Natal and the Orange River Territory, and out of the Orange River Territory into the Transvaal, where Pretorius established a republic. In 1852, English commissioners entered into the Sand River Treaty with him. The Transvaal had never been declared British territory, and the first article of this convention guaranteed "in the fullest manner, on the part of the British Government, to the emigrant farmers beyond the Vaal River, the right to manage their own affairs, and to govern themselves according to their own laws, without any interference on the part of the British Government; and that no encroachment shall be made by the said Government to the territory beyond, to the north of the Vaal River; with the further assurance that the warmest wish of the British Government is to promote peace, free trade, and friendly intercourse with the emigrant farmers now inhabiting, or who hereafter may inhabit, that country; it being understood that this system of non-interference is binding upon both parties." And thus the Transvaal Republic was formed by treaty with the English nation.

The Boers had before this formed a republic in the Orange River Free State. The Earl Grey of that day instructed Sir Harry Smith to induce the native chiefs "to establish a confederacy against the Boers." In 1848 we fought them, beat them, and annexed their territory. In 1854 we gave it back to them and guaranteed their independence. For thirteen years things went on quietly. Then, in 1867, the diamond fields were discovered in the west part of the Free State territory; the British Government forgot all about their treaty, and, in 1871, declared the diamond fields to be British territory. In 1874, an English resident told Mr. Froude that this transaction made him ashamed of his country.

In 1871 gold was discovered in the north of the Transvaal, and diggers rushed in to avail themselves of the discovery. Then we began to support the Zulus in long-standing contentions with the Boers. The English Government had already received a request from the handful of Englishmen who had been tempted to the country by gold, to annex the Transvaal. They sent Sir Theophilus Shepstone to investigate matters, and to advise the Dutch authorities. He entered Pretoria on the 22nd January, 1877, and on the 12th of April, in direct defiance of his commission, he issued a proclamation annexing the country.

He told our Government that this was in accordance with the wishes of the great majority of the people. But, though he used the most despotic and arbitrary means to intimidate



PAUL KRUGER, President of the South African Republic.

them, out of the 8,000 adult males in the Transvaal, 6,591 signed the memorial against, and only 587 for, the annexation. Then he said that the Boers had instituted slavery in their territory. It was true that they had introduced compulsory apprenticeship. This is a form of forced labour which is a most cruel form of slavery. But the Chartered Company and the Cape Government have both adopted it in recent years.

Then he said they ill-treated the natives. We should all of us hide our heads when treatment of the natives is mentioned. Our hands are as black, in this matter, as those of any of our neighbours.

Then he said that the natives had beaten them in war; but, at that very time, Secocooni was suing for peace. All the pretexts were untrue. We were told that annexation was necessary for the peace of South Africa, and all the foolish

notions about upholding British power and prestige by doing wrong, which are polished up to pass current now, were eagerly brought forward then. But we were not then so materialistically inclined as we are now. The worship of the golden calf was not so universal. We had no Chartered Company of South Africa, with its *alter ego*, the South African League, and thus no great body of wealthy and powerful shareholders to push pecuniary interests under the specious titles of national glory and honour. We were led by the greatest of leaders, Mr. Gladstone, and we did what was right, we gave back the Transvaal to the Boers. It was unfortunate that this restitution accidentally came after the defeat of Majuba Hill, but, if the annexation were wrong, we were also wrong in fighting the Boers at Majuba Hill.

When the Transvaal was given back to the Boers, the suzerainty of the British sovereign was retained. What suzerainty exactly is authorities differ about, but the actual position is thus stated in *The Statesman's Year Book* for 1898, where the Transvaal (the South African Republic) is placed amongst "Foreign Countries." According to the convention ratified by the Volksraad, October 26th, 1881, self-government was restored to the Transvaal so far as regards internal affairs, the control and management of external affairs being reserved to Her Majesty as suzerain. Another convention with the Government of Great Britain was signed in London, February 27th, 1884, ratified by the Volksraad August 8th, by which the State is to be known as the South African Republic, and the British suzerainty restricted to control of foreign relations.

Unfortunately for the peace and quietness of the Transvaal, which was a pastoral country inhabited by agriculturists, the gold-fields which it contains are perhaps the richest in the world, and there are also coal mines. Hence great numbers of foreigners (the much-talked-of Uitlanders) have rushed into the country. Many of these foreigners (who are chiefly English) have taken up their abode permanently in the land; but the greater part are mere birds of passage, attracted by the gold, and meaning to make their pile and leave the country as soon as that is accomplished.

Now this is always an awkward element to deal with, and one which must give the Government of the Transvaal constant anxiety. They cannot, and they ought not, to consent to put the future of their land at the mercy of a horde of rapacious foreigners. They ought to give men, who show that they are really desirous to become citizens with the intention of being loyal and law abiding, the full rights of citizenship. But how and when this is to be done is a matter for them, and for them alone. We may advise, we may suggest, we have no right to compel. All countries differ in this alien matter. With us an alien can obtain the right to vote by being naturalized. He must have lived five years in the country, taken the oath of allegiance, pay £6, satisfy the Secretary of State, who can reject without giving a reason, and then may be unable to get on to the register for nearly twelve months, or

to vote for six months more—that is 6½ years in all. In the United States it is nearly as long. President Kruger has offered 7 years in the Transvaal.

But, say Sir Alfred Milner and his friends, that is no use; we want to get a great number on the registers at once, and there is a talk of the next President being a foreigner. That is unreasonable and unfair. Oh, says the *Daily News*, but the franchise is only a stepping-stone to the abolishing of grievances. Now it is time that the truth were told about these grievances. What are they? To hear some men talk you would imagine they were personal torture at the least. We should know them well. The worst of them are not nearly so bad as the injustices inflicted by the Tories upon Ireland only ten years ago. Just as the great majority of those who shriek out for ever because the Transvaal authorities are more prudent than they think proper are the men who 15 years ago denied the franchise to their fellow-citizens, so the great majority of those who denounce the prohibition of public meetings in the Transvaal applauded their prohibition in Ireland less than ten years ago.

The grievances have been stated thus:—(1) The compulsory learning of Dutch in the National schools: but the learning of English is compulsory in Welsh, Scotch and Irish national schools, and Celtic and Gaelic are strictly forbidden. (2) The defective police and sanitary regulations: our own have many imperfections. (3) The monopolies and various taxes or necessities: there is something of a land monopoly in our own country, and we are far from a free breakfast table, and tax salt and sugar in India.

Those of us who believe in the widest freedom for those who speak and write, who have long fought for universal suffrage not confined by creed, colour, or sex, are most earnest in urging upon President Kruger and the Boers that the wisest policy is the most generous one. But it is too clear that franchise, grievances, and all the rest are with too many of the war-thirsty sections of our countrymen, mere pretexts. It is gold they want; land they want; the Transvaal they want. The iniquity of war is never mentioned; its unwisdom is sneered at. Two of the present men in authority have taken steps which have gone far to make peace impossible. But the great mass of the English people has remained silent. The wild outcry for war has been confined to a few, for the most part interested people. Parliament will soon be dissolved, and then the greatest danger begins. If only the people, who have all to lose by war, who abhor injustice even to the unjust, who hold our country's honour higher than its land or gold, will speak out and let our rulers know that it is at their peril that they embark upon a war which, whatever its issue, would make our country's name live in history's curse, we shall be spared this national sin and shame.