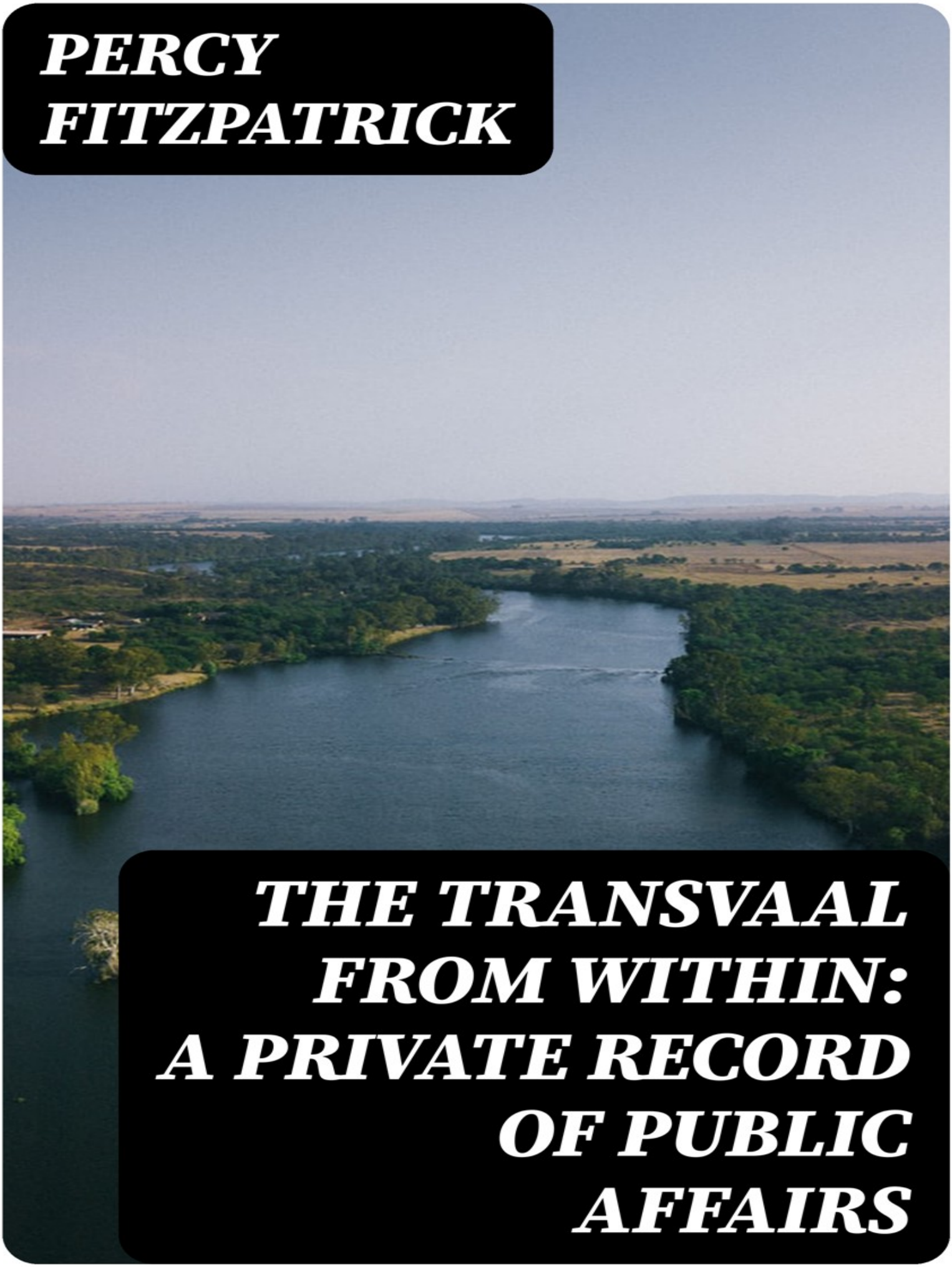
PERCY FITZPATRICK



THE TRANSVAAL FROM WITHIN: A PRIVATE RECORD OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Percy Fitzpatrick

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PREFACE

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It was originally designed to compile a statement of the occurrences of 1895–6 in the Transvaal and of the conditions which led up to them, in the hope of removing the very grave misunderstandings which existed. Everybody else had been heard and judged, the Uitlander had only been judged. It therefore seemed proper that somebody should attempt to present the case for the Uitlander. The writer, as a South African by birth, as a resident in the Transvaal since 1884, and lastly as Secretary of the Reform Committee, felt impelled to do this, but suffered under the disability of President Kruger's three years' ban; and although it might possibly have been urged that a plain statement of facts and explanations of past actions could not be fairly regarded as a deliberate interference in politics, the facts themselves when set out appeared to constitute an indictment so strong as to make it worth while considering whether the Government of the Transvaal would not regard it as sufficient excuse to put in force the sentence of banishment. The postponement of publication which was then decided upon for a period of three years appeared to be tantamount to the abandonment of the original purpose, and the work was continued with the intention of making it a private record to be printed at the expiry of the term of silence, and to be privately circulated among those who were personally concerned or interested; a record which might perhaps be of service some day in filling in a page of South African history.

The private circulation of that work during June of the present year led to suggestions from many quarters that it

should be supplemented by a chapter or two dealing with later events and published; and the present volume is the outcome of these suggestions.

It is realized that much of what might properly appear in a private record will be considered rather superfluous in a book designed for wider circulation. For instance, a good deal of space is given to details of the trial and the prison life of the Reformers, which are of no interest whatever to the public, although they form a record which the men themselves may like to preserve. These might have been omitted but that the writer desired to make no alterations in the original text except in the nature of literary revision.

The writer may be charged by the "peace" party with deliberately selecting a critical and anxious time as opportune to contribute a new factor to those already militating against a peaceful settlement. Two replies could be made to this: one an excuse and one an answer. It would be an excuse that the writer did not deliberately select the time of publication, but that the Transvaal Government in its wisdom chose to impose silence for three years, and that the project with which their action had interfered was resumed at the earliest possible moment. The coincidence of another crisis with the date of emancipation may be an unlucky coincidence, or it may be a result. But there is neither necessity nor intention to offer excuses. The responsibility is accepted and the answer is that a case so sound needs only to be understood, that a recital of the facts must help to dispel the mists of race prejudice and misunderstanding which are obscuring the judgment of many; and that a firm but strictly just and dignified handling of the question by the Imperial Government is the only possible way to avert a catastrophe in South Africa. It is essential therefore that first of all the conditions as they are should be understood; and this record is offered as a

contribution to that end. Let the measure of its truth be the measure of its usefulness!

The reader is not invited to believe that the case is presented in such form as it might have been presented by an impartial historian. It is the Transvaal *from within*, by one who feels all the injustice and indignity of the position. With the knowledge, however, that a good case is spoiled by overstatement and with the desire to avoid injustice to others an earnest attempt has been made to state the facts fairly. In how far that attempt has been successful the reader must decide for himself.

J.P.F.
July, 1899.

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It has been impossible to avoid in this volume more or less pointed reference to certain nationalities in certain connections; for instance such expressions as "the Boers," "the Cape Dutch," "the Hollanders," "the Germans," are used. The writer desires to say once and for all that unless the contrary is obviously and deliberately indicated, the distinctions between nationalities are intended in the political sense only and not in the racial sense, and if by mischance there should be found something in these pages which seems offensive, he begs the more indulgent interpretation on the ground of a very earnest desire to remove and not to accentuate race distinctions.

General references are also made to classes—"the civil service," "the officials," &c. There are officials in the Transvaal service who would earn the confidence and esteem of the public in any administration in the world. It is hardly necessary to say that there is no intention to disparage them.

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CHAPTER I.

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IN EARLIER DAYS.

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When, before resorting to extreme measures to obtain what the Uitlanders deemed to be their bare rights, the final appeal or declaration was made on Boxing Day, 1895, in the form of the manifesto published by the Chairman of the National Union, President Kruger, after an attentive consideration of the document as translated to him, remarked grimly: 'Their rights. Yes, they'll get them—over my dead body!' And volumes of explanation could not better illustrate the Boer attitude and policy towards the English-speaking immigrants.

'L'État c'est moi' is almost as true of the old Dopper President as it was of its originator; for in matters of external policy and in matters which concern the Boer as a party the President has his way as surely and as completely as any anointed autocrat. To anyone who has studied the Boers and their ways and policy—who has given more than passing consideration to the incidents and negotiations of the present year{01}—it must be clear that President Kruger does something more than represent the opinion of the people and execute their policy: he moulds them in the form he wills. By the force of his own strong convictions and prejudices, and of his indomitable will, he has made the Boers a people whom he regards as the germ of the Africander nation; a people chastened, selected, welded, and strong enough to attract and assimilate all their kindred in South Africa, and then to realize the dream of a Dutch Republic from the Zambesi to Capetown.

In the history of South Africa the figure of the grim old President will loom large and striking—picturesque, as the figure of one who by his character and will made and held his people; magnificent, as one who in the face of the blackest fortune never wavered from his aim or faltered in his effort; who, with a courage that seemed, and still seems, fatuous, but which may well be called heroic, stood up against the might of the greatest empire in the world. And, it may be, pathetic, too, as one whose limitations were great, one whose training and associations—whose very successes—had narrowed, and embittered and hardened him; as one who, when the greatness of success was his to take and to hold, turned his back on the supreme opportunity, and used his strength and qualities to fight against the spirit of progress, and all that the enlightenment of the age pronounces to be fitting and necessary to good government and a healthy State.

To an English nobleman, who, in the course of an interview, remarked, 'My father was a Minister of England, and twice Viceroy of Ireland,' the old Dutchman answered, 'And my father was a shepherd!' It was not pride rebuking pride; it was the ever-present fact which would not have been worth mentioning but for the suggestion of the antithesis. He too was a shepherd, and is—a peasant. It may be that he knows what would be right and good for his people, and it may be not; but it is sure that he realizes that to educate would be to emancipate, to broaden their views would be to break down the defences of their prejudices, to let in the new leaven would be to spoil the old bread, to give unto all men the rights of men would be to swamp for ever the party which is to him greater than the State. When one thinks on the one-century history of the people, much is seen that accounts for their extraordinary love of isolation, and their ingrained and passionate aversion to control; much too that draws to them a world of sympathy. And when one realizes the old Dopper President hemmed in once more by the hurrying tide of civilization, from which his people have fled for generations—trying to fight both fate and Nature—standing up to stem a tide as resistless as the eternal sea—one sees the pathos of the picture. But this is as another generation may see it.

To-day we are too close—so close that the meaner details, the blots and flaws, are all most plainly visible; the corruption, the insincerity, the injustice, the barbarity—all the unlovely touches that will by-and-by be forgotten—sponged away by the gentle hand of time, when only the picturesque will remain.

In order to understand the deep, ineradicable aversion to English rule which is in the heart and the blood and the bones of every Boer, and of a great many of their kindred who are themselves British subjects, one must recall the

conditions under which the Dutch came under British rule. When, in 1814, the Cape was finally ceded to England, it had been twice acquired and held by conquest. The colonists were practically all Dutch, or Huguenots who had adopted Dutch as their language, and South Africa as their home. In any case they were people who, by tradition, teaching and experience, must have regarded the English as their enemies; people in whom there must have been roused bitter resentment against being handed over with the land to their traditional enemies. Were they serfs or subjects? has been asked on their behalf. Had Holland the right, the power, over freemen born, to say to them, 'You are our subjects, on our soil, and we have transferred the soil and with it your allegiance to England, whose sovereignty you will not be free to repudiate.' The Dutch colonist said 'No.' The English Government and the laws of the day said 'Yes.'

Early in the century the Boers began to trek away from the sphere of British rule. They were trekkers before that, indeed. Even in the days of Van Riebeck (1650) they had trekked away from the crowded parts, and opened up with the rifle and the plough new reaches of country; pioneering in a rough but most effective way, driving back the savage races, and clearing the way for civilization. There is, however, a great difference to be noted between the early treks of the emigrants and the treks 'from British rule.' In the former (with few exceptions) they went, knowing that their Government would follow them, and even anxious to have its support and its representatives; and the people who formed their migrating parties were those who had no or insufficient land in the settled parts, those who were starting life on their own account, or those whose families could not be located and provided for in the cramped circumstances of the more occupied parts. In the other case, rich and poor, old and young, went off as in the days and in

the fashion of Moses or Abraham. They went without leave or help of the Government; secretly or openly they went, and they asked nothing but to be left alone. They left their homes, their people, the protection of an established Government and a rough civilization, and went out into the unknown. And they had, as it appeared to them, and as it will appear to many others, good reasons for taking so grave a step. For, although the colonists of South Africa enjoyed better government, and infinitely more liberty, under British rule, than they had under the tyrannical *régime* of the Dutch East India Company twenty years before (against which the Boers had twice risen in rebellion) there were many things which were not as they should have been. A generation had grown up which knew nothing of the arbitrary and oppressive rule of the old Dutch Company. Simple folks have long memories, and all the world over injuries make a deeper and more lasting impression than benefits; and the older generation of Boers, which could recall a condition of things contrasting unpleasantly with British rule, also remembered the executions of Slagters Nek —a vindication of the law which, when all allowance has been made for disturbed times, and the need of strong measures to stop rebellion in a newly-acquired country, seems to us to-day to have been harsh, unnecessary, and unwise in policy, and truly terrible in the manner of fulfilment.

The Boers have produced from their own ranks no literary champion to plead or defend their cause, and their earlier history is therefore little known, and often misunderstood; but to their aid has come Mr. George McCall Theal, the South African historian, whose years of laborious research have rescued for South Africa much that would otherwise have been lost. In his 'History of the Boers' Mr. Theal records the causes of the great emigration, and shows how the Boers stood up for fair treatment, and fought the cause, not

of Boers alone, but of all colonists. Boers and British were alike harshly and ignorantly treated by high-handed Governors, and an ill-informed and prejudiced Colonial Office, who made no distinction on the grounds of nationality between the two; for we read that Englishmen had been expelled the country, thrown in gaol, had their property confiscated, and their newspapers suppressed for asserting their independence, and for trifling breaches of harsh laws. The following extract gives the best possible synopsis of the causes, and should whet an appetite which can be gratified by the purchase of Mr. Theal's book:

Why, then, did these men abandon their homes, sacrifice whatever property could not be carried away, and flee from English rule as from the most hateful tyranny? The causes are stated in a great mass of correspondence addressed by them to the Colonial Government, and now preserved, with other colonial records, in declarations published by some of them before leaving, in letters to their relatives and to newspapers, and in hundreds of pages of printed matter, prepared by friendly and hostile hands. The declaration of one of the ablest men among them assigns the following as the motives of himself and the party that went with him:

'GRAHAM'S TOWN,
'*January 22, 1837*

'1. We despair of saving the colony from those evils which threaten it by the turbulent and dishonest conduct of vagrants who are allowed to infest the country in every part; nor do we see any prospect of peace or happiness for our children in a country thus distracted by internal commotions.

'2. We complain of the severe losses which we have been forced to sustain by the emancipation of our slaves, and the vexatious laws which have been enacted respecting them.

'3. We complain of the continual system of plunder which we have for years endured from the Kaffirs and other coloured classes, and particularly by the last invasion of the colony, which has desolated the frontier districts, and ruined most of the inhabitants.

'4. We complain of the unjustifiable odium which has been cast upon us by interested and dishonest persons, under the name of religion, whose testimony is believed in England, to the exclusion of all evidence in our favour; and we can foresee, as the result of this prejudice, nothing but the total ruin of the country.

'5. We are resolved, wherever we go, that we will uphold the just principles of liberty; but, whilst we will take care that no one is brought by us into a condition of slavery, we will establish such regulations as may suppress crime, and preserve proper relations between master and servant.

'6. We solemnly declare that we leave this colony with a desire to enjoy a quieter life than we have hitherto had. We will not molest any people, nor deprive them of the smallest property; but, if attacked, we shall consider ourselves fully justified in defending our persons and effects, to the utmost of our ability, against every enemy.

'7. We make known that when we shall have framed a code of laws for our guidance, copies shall be forwarded to this colony for general information; but we take the opportunity of stating that it is our firm resolve to make provision for the summary punishment, even with death, of all traitors, without exception, who may be found amongst us.

'8. We purpose, in the course of our journey, and on arrival at the country in which we shall permanently reside, to make known to the native tribes our intentions, and our desire to live in peace and friendly intercourse with them.

'9. We quit this colony under the full assurance that the English Government has nothing more to require of us, and will allow us to govern ourselves without its interference in future.

'10. We are now leaving the fruitful land of our birth, in which we have suffered enormous losses and continual vexation, and are about to enter a strange and dangerous territory; but we go with a firm reliance on an all-seeing, just, and merciful God, whom we shall always fear, and humbly endeavour to obey.

'In the name of all who leave the colony with me,

'P. RETIEF.'

But formal declarations such as the above are not in all instances to be trusted. It is much safer to compare numerous documents written at different times, by different persons, and under different circumstances. For our subject this means of information is as complete as can be desired. The correspondence of the emigrants with the Cape Government was the work of many individuals, and extended over many years. The letters are usually of great length, badly constructed, and badly spelt—the productions, in short, of uneducated men; but so uniform is the vein of thought running through them all, that there is not the slightest difficulty in condensing them into a dozen pages. When analyzed, the statements contained in them are found to consist of two charges, one against the Imperial Government, the other against the agents in South Africa of the London Missionary Society.

The Imperial Government was charged with exposing the white inhabitants of the colony, without protection, to robbery and murder by the blacks; with giving

credence in every dispute to statements made by interested persons in favour of savages, while refusing to credit the testimony, no matter how reliable, of colonists of European extraction; with liberating the slaves in an unjust manner; and generally with such undue partiality for persons with black skins and savage habits, as to make it preferable to seek a new home in the wilderness than remain under the English flag.

The missionaries of the London Society were charged with usurping authority that should properly belong to the civil magistrate; with misrepresenting facts; and with advocating schemes directly hostile to the progress of civilization, and to the observance of order. And it was asserted that the influence of these missionaries was all powerful at the Colonial Office in London, by which the colony, without a voice in the management of its affairs, was then ruled absolutely.

In support of the charges against the Imperial Government, the emigrants dwelt largely upon the devastation of the eastern districts by the Kaffirs' inroad of December, 1834, which was certainly unprovoked by the colonists. Yet Lord Glenelg, who was then Secretary of State for the Colonies, justified the Kaffirs, and not only refused to punish them, but actually gave them a large slip of land, including the dense jungles along the Fish River, that had long been part of the colony; and made no other provision against the recurrence of a destructive invasion than a series of treaties with a number of barbarous chiefs, who had no regard for their engagements. This event is the most prominent feature in the correspondence of the emigrants; it is fairly recorded, and the language used is in general much more moderate than that employed by the English frontier colonists when relating the same circumstance.

Next stands the removal of all restraint from the coloured population of the colony, without the protection to the whites of even a Vagrant Act. Several of the colonial divisions had been for ten or twelve years overrun by fugitives from the Basuto and Betshuana countries, who had been driven from their own homes by the troubles already recorded. These people were usually termed Mantatees or Makatees, from the supposition that they were all subjects of Ma Ntatisi. Towards the eastern frontiers Kaffirs, and after the war Fingos, wandered about practically wherever they chose. In the remainder of the colony Hottentots, free blacks, and mixed breeds came and went as they pleased. How is it possible, said the farmers, for us to cultivate the ground, or breed cattle, with all these savages and semi-savages constantly watching for opportunities to plunder us—with no police, and no law under which suspicious characters can be arrested and made to account for their manner of living?

Much is said of the reproofs of Sir Benjamin D'Urban by the Secretary of State, and, after 1838, of the dismissal of that Governor, (1) The emigrants asserted that he was the best Governor the colony had had since it became subject to England; they dwelt upon his benevolence, his ability, his strict justice, his impartiality to white and black, his efforts to promote civilization; and then they complained, in words more bitter than are to be found when they referred to any

other subject, that the good Governor had been reproved, and finally deprived of his office, because he had told the plain truth, regardless of the London Missionary Society; and had endeavoured to mete out to black criminals the same justice that he would have meted out had they been white. There is now no one in South Africa who does not agree with the emigrants in this matter. Nearly half a century has passed away since Sir Benjamin D'Urban was forced into retirement by Lord Glenelg; and during that period the principal measures which he proposed have been approved of and adopted, while the successors of those missionaries who were his bitter opponents are at present among the strongest advocates of his system of dealing with the natives.

Sir Benjamin D'Urban remained in South Africa, after being deprived of office, until the reversal of his policy towards the natives was admitted by most people even in England to have been a mistake. He did not leave the Cape until April, 1846, just after the commencement of the War of the Axe.

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 favour 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 Volksraad at Natal to Sir George Napier: 'A long and sad experience has sufficiently convinced us of the injury, loss, and dearness of slave labour, so that neither slavery nor the slave trade will ever be permitted among us.'

[The allusions to the emancipation of slaves, and to slavery as an institution, will be considered by many to need some modification or explanation. The Dutch even to-day speak of the emancipation as the real cause of the great exodus; and the system of indenture, and the treatment of natives generally by the Boers, cannot fairly be regarded as warranting the view expressed by Mr. Theal in connection with this letter to Sir George Napier.]

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 ruined that island; that the English Government had recently and suddenly changed its policy, and required them to conform to the change with equal alacrity, whereas they were convinced that gradual emancipation, with securities against vagrancy, was the only safe course. The

emancipation had been sudden, and the slaves had been placed upon a perfect political equality with their former proprietors. The missionaries applauded this as a noble and generous act of the Imperial Government, and they were told that by everyone in England it was so regarded. But at whose expense was this noble and generous act carried out? Agents of the Imperial Government had appraised the slaves, generally at less than their market value. Two-fifths of this appraisement, 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 the utter deprivation of all property.

As regards the missionaries, a crusade was organized by some of these worthies, who had themselves married Kaffir women, and who spared no effort and showed no scruple in blackening the name of colonist.

The views and interests of the colonists and of these men were so different that concord was hardly possible. The missionaries desired that the blacks should be collected together in villages: the colonists were unwilling that they should be thus withdrawn from service. 'Teach them the first step in civilization, to labour honestly for their maintenance, and add to that oral instruction in the doctrines of Christianity,' said the colonists. 'Why should they be debarred from learning to read and write? And as there can only be schools if they are brought together in villages, why should they not be collected together?' replied the missionaries.

Then came another and a larger question. By whom should the waste places of the land, the vast areas which were without other occupants than a few roving Bushmen, be peopled? 'By the white man,' said the colonists; 'it is to the advantage of the world in all time to come that the higher race should expand and be dominant here; it would be treason to humanity to prevent its growth where it can grow without wrong to others, or to plant an inferior stock where the superior can take root and flourish.' 'By Africans,' said the missionaries; 'this is African soil; and if mission stations are established on its desolate tracts, people will be drawn to them from the far interior, the community will grow rapidly, those enlightened by Christianity here will desire in their turn to enlighten their friends beyond, and thus the Gospel teaching will spread until all Africa stretches out its hands to God.' Coupled with such arguments, which were constantly used by missionaries in the early part of this century, before their enthusiasm was cooled by experience, were calculations that appealed strongly to the commercial instincts of people in England. A dozen colonial farmers required something like a hundred square miles of land for their cattle runs; on this same ground, under missionary supervision, three or four hundred families of blacks could exist; these blacks would shortly need large quantities of

manufactured goods; and thus it would be to the interest of trade to encourage them rather than the colonists. 'Already,' said they, 'after only a few years' training, many blacks can read as well or better than the ordinary colonists, and are exhibiting a decided taste for civilization.'

There was thus a broad line of demarcation 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 towards those 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. Everyone 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 convictions, and those of no very outrageous crimes, resulted from these prosecutions, which kept the entire colony in a ferment until long after the circuit was closed.

Thus far everyone 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.

The colonists learned that in England they were regarded as cruel barbarians because they refused to permit Hottentot herds, swarming with vermin, to be seated in their front rooms at the time of family prayer. They found themselves pictured as the harshest of taskmasters, as unfeeling violators of native rights. And of late years it had become plain to them that the views of their opponents were being acted upon at the Colonial Office, while their complaints were wholly disregarded.

Several causes of dissatisfaction, besides those above mentioned, contributed to the impulse of emigration, but all in a very slight degree. Judge Cloete, in his 'Five Lectures,' mentions the severe punishment inflicted upon the frontier insurgents of 1815 as one of them; and there is no doubt that it was so with some families, though no trace of it can be found in the correspondence of the emigrants. The substitution in 1827 of the English for the Dutch language in the colonial courts of law was certainly generally felt as a grievance. The alteration in 1813 of the system of land tenure, the redemption in 1825 of the paper currency at only thirty-six hundredths of its nominal value, and the abolition in 1827 of the courts of landdrost and heemraden, unquestionably caused much dissatisfaction, though all of these measures are now admitted by everyone to have been beneficial. The long delay in issuing titles to farms, the cost of which has been paid to Government years before, is mentioned as a grievance in some of the declarations.

Two parties—men, women, and children—numbering ninety-eight in all, pioneered the great trek; of these twenty-six survived fever and fighting, loss of provisions, waggons, and cattle, and a long weary tramp from Zoutpansberg to Delagoa Bay, and were rescued and taken thence to Natal, and two children were carried off by the natives. The survivors were three women with their twelve children—seven orphan children and four youths. Not a single grown man escaped.

During the winter of 1836 preparations for emigration were being made over the eastern and midland districts. The Governor was perfectly helpless in the matter. The Attorney-General, Mr. A. Oliphant, was consulted by the Governor, and gave his opinion that 'it seemed next to an impossibility to prevent persons passing out of the colony by laws in force, or by any which could be framed.' On August 19 Sir Benjamin D'Urban wrote to the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Andries Stockenstrom, that 'he could see no means of stopping the emigration, except by persuasion, and attention to the wants and necessities of the farmers.' In that direction the Governor had done all that was in his power, but he could not act in opposition to the instructions of the Secretary of State. Sir Andries Stockenstrom himself, in replying to an address from the inhabitants of Uitenhage, stated that 'he was not aware of any law which prevented any of his Majesty's subjects from leaving his dominions and settling in another country; and such a law, if it did exist, would be tyrannical and oppressive.'

The story of the trekkers is one of surpassing interest, and must enlist for them the sympathy and unbounded admiration of all.

By the middle of the year 1837 there were over one thousand waggons between the Caledon and Vaal rivers—truly a notable and alarming exodus; and the Boers then began the work of carving out new countries for themselves. Their history surpasses all fiction in its vicissitudes, successes, and tragedies. They fought and worked and trekked, onward, always onward—never returning—on beyond the furthermost outposts of civilization.

And so the story rolls on, gaining pathos, but losing no whit of interest from its eternal sameness. They fought, and worked, and starved, and died for their land of promise, where they might hope to be alone, like the simple people of their one Book; where they might never know the hated British rule; where they might never experience the forms and trammels, the restlessness and changes, the worries, the necessities or benefits, of progressing civilization. Their quarrel had been with the abuses and blunders of one Government; but a narrow experience moved them to mistrust all but their own pastoral patriarchal way, moulded on the records of the Bible, and to regard the evidences of progress as warnings of coming oppression and curtailment of liberty, and a departure from the simple and ideal way. The abuses from which they suffered are no more; the methods which were unjust have been abandoned; the ignorance of the ruler has been dispelled; in place of despotism there is autonomy; justice rules where ignorance and bias sat; liberty where there was interference; protection for oppression; progress and civilization have increased as in no other epoch; and the nation and Government from which they severed themselves have taken their place in the very forefront of all. But the Boer sees with the eyes of sixty years ago!

The ideal was impossible, the struggle hopeless, the end certain. They trekked, and trekked and trekked again; but

the flag of England—emblem of all they hated—was close by; behind, beside, in front, or over them; and the something which they could not fight—the ever-advancing tide of civilization—lapped at their feet, and slowly, silently, and for ever blotted out the line where they had written, 'Thus far and no further.'

The South African Republic had been in existence as an independent State for twelve years when it reached that condition of insolvency which appeared to invite, or at least justify, annexation, as the only alternative to complete ruin and chaos. And there are very few, even among the most uncompromising supporters of the Boers, who seriously attempt to show that the Transvaal had any prospect of prolonging its existence as an independent State for more than a few months when Sir Theophilus Shepstone annexed it in 1877. The following picture is from a book published by the late Alfred Aylward, the Fenian, more anti-British than the Boer himself, who was present at the time, and wrote his book in order to enlist sympathy for the movement then (1878) organized to obtain a cancellation of the annexation. The value of Aylward's testimony would not be fairly appreciated without some explanation.

Sir Bartle Frere describes him (and quotes Scotland Yard authorities who knew him well) as one of the party who murdered the policeman at Manchester, and one of the worst and most active of the dynamiting Irishmen—a professional agitator, who boasted of his purpose to promote the Transvaal rebellion. Major Le Caron, too, stated on oath before the Parnell Commission that money was sent by the Irish Rebel Societies, through Aylward, to stir up the Transvaal rebellion. This is what Aylward says:

All South Africa was for the moment at rest, with the exception of the district of Utrecht, where an old-standing grievance with Cetewayo was the cause of some little alarm and excitement (*i.e.*, Cetewayo's threatened invasion). Still, the

Transvaal was disturbed throughout its whole extent by the expectation of some pending change—a change coming from the outside, which had been invited by an active, discontented party, chiefly foreigners, dwellers in towns, non-producers, place-hunters, deserters, refugees, land-speculators, 'development-men,' and pests of Transvaal society generally, who openly preached resistance to the law, refusal to pay taxes, and contempt of the natural and guaranteed owners of the country in which they lived, in the distinctly expressed hope that foreign intervention would fill the country with British gold, and conduce to their own material prosperity. The Boers, spread over a country larger than France, were stunned into stupor by the demonstrative loudness of the party of discontent. In some districts they (the Boers) were poor, and could not readily pay the taxes imposed upon them by the wars and railway projects of the Government. Their Volksraad was in Session, but its every action was paralyzed by the gloom of impending dissolution.

The Republic owed £215,000, which it had no immediate means of paying. Its creditors were clamorous; whilst the Executive, turn to which side it would, found itself confronted by threats, reproaches, accusations of slavery and cruelty based upon hearsay, and which, like the annexation that steadily approached, could not be met, because neither of them had yet assumed the evidenced consistency of actual fact. There was no public opinion to support the Government or to save the Republic. The Boers lived far apart from each other, whilst the annexationists and the party of disorder dwelt, in compact communities, in towns and mining villages. Into the midst of this confusion—into the capital of this bewildered State—entered Sir Theophilus Shepstone and his staff. He had not come to seize the country—he had come as 'an adviser, as a helper, and as a friend'; but his advent was a blight—an incubus which rendered additionally powerless the unfortunate President and his Council. The coming of Sir Theophilus Shepstone was, to the minds of nearly all, but too clearly the forerunner of change. In the face of this additional whet to the anticipations of the party of disturbance, something that has been described as anarchy prevailed. Everyone waited; all fell into a state of expectation; no one attempted to save the State, or repel the danger. At the same time, there was no anarchy in the proper sense of the word. Justice sat on her seat; criminals were arrested and brought to trial; actions at law were heard and determined; and in no one place, save the goldfields, was authority, even for a moment, defied. There the law vindicated itself without having used violence or shed one drop of blood. Not one single public outrage, not one unpunished crime, marked this period of suspense, which is described by partizan writers as a time of chaos and anarchy.

Peace was granted to Secocoeni, and the quietness and gloom of the country became even more profound.

Now, had a commission, royal or joint, been opened in Pretoria to inquire into the truth of the allegations made against the Government, history might perhaps be able to record that judgment, followed by justice, had overtaken the Transvaal. No commission was opened. There was a banquet and a ball. The suspense increased in intensity. Understrappers, and agents of the discontented

faction, filled the country with rumours of impending annexation, and sometimes of impending conquest. The Boers, the inhabitants of the country, asked day after day what was the mission of the English Commissioner. They visited him in hundreds; but he knew the wonderful advantage to be gathered from the heightening of the mystery, and the intensifying of the excitement. He listened to everyone; but he maintained a gloomy and impassive silence, neither checking the aspirations of the annexationists, nor dissipating the forebodings of the farmers.

News arrived that troops were marching towards, and massing on, the border; rumours spread that annexation was inevitable. Sir Theophilus sought not to alleviate the anxieties of the Government, nor to quell the now rising alarm amongst the people; he simply sat still and listened, watching the writhings and stragglings of the doomed Volksraad, and awaiting a favourable moment to end its existence.

At length someone determined to ask: 'Was it not possible to avert this annexation which loomed before every mind, brooding like a shadow upon the country?' He went to Sir Theophilus; he asked his question; and at length the oracle spoke. Without moving a muscle of his wonderfully impassive countenance, without even raising his eyes to look at the interlocutor, Sir Theophilus calmly murmured: 'It is too late!—too late!' And so, without the authorization of the home Government, without the consent of her Majesty's High Commissioner, without the concurrence of the Volksraad, against the will of thirty-nine-fortieths of the people, and in defiance of the protest of their Executive, as Mr. Anthony Trollope puts it, Sir Theophilus said: 'Then and from thenceforth the Transvaal shall be British property!' So he put up the Queen's flag.

Now, it is impossible to conceive anything more admirable for its discretion, more wisely calculated as to the moment of its occurrence, or more suavely and yet firmly done than this act. There was not a blow struck, not a shot fired; and the first impulse of nearly every person in the country, whether in principle opposed to annexation or not, was to congratulate Sir Theophilus Shepstone on the skill, tact, and good fortune with which he had put an end to the excessive anxiety, the mental strain, the fears, hopes, and expectations by which the whole country was paralyzed. Whether the annexation be now held to be right or wrong, its execution, so far as regards the act itself, was an unparalleled triumph of tact, modesty, and firmness.

It was not discovered at the moment, and it never entered into any man's mind to consider, that it was the presence in Pretoria of Sir Theophilus himself that had created the anxiety, and caused the paralysis; and that it was his arts and presence that had tightened and strung up into quivering intensity the mind of the country. He had broken the spell; he had introduced certainty in place of uncertainty; and he was congratulated, and very properly so, for the manner in which he had brought to a conclusion his hazardous mission.

Sir Theophilus Shepstone's despatches record his negotiations with President Burgers, and the arrangement which allowed him to make a formal protest against the annexation, so as to satisfy his Irreconcilables, whilst he in reality not only assented to the measure, but even assisted the completion of it, and discussed the details with Shepstone, who in turn had revised President Burgers' 'protest.'

On April 3, 1877, Shepstone had written to Frere:

Mr. Burgers, who had been all along, as far as his conversation and professions to me went, in full accord with me, had suddenly taken alarm; he made impossible proposals, all of which involved infinite delay, and, of course, dangerous agitation. As far as I am concerned, it is impossible for me to retreat now, come what may. If I were to leave the country, civil war would at once take place, as the natives would consider it the sunshine in which they could make hay in the Transvaal; the goldfields are in a state of rebellion against the Transvaal Government, and they are kept from overt acts only by my warnings and entreaties.

And eight days later he wrote to Mr. Robert Herbert enclosing his letter under 'flying seal' to Frere:

There will be a protest against my act of annexation issued by the Government, but they will at the same time call upon the people to submit quietly, pending the issue; you need not be disquieted by such action, because it is taken merely to save appearances, and the members of the Government from the violence of a faction that seems for years to have held Pretoria in terror when any act of the Government displeased it.

You will better understand this when I tell you privately that the President has from the first fully acquiesced in the necessity for the change, and that most of the members of the Government have expressed themselves anxious for it; but none of them have had the courage openly to express their opinions, so I have had to act apparently against them; and this I have felt bound to do, knowing the state and danger of the country, and that three-fourths of the people will be thankful for the change when once it is made.

Yesterday morning Mr. Burgers came to me to arrange how the matter should be done. I read to him the draft of my Proclamation, and he proposed the alteration of two words only, to which I agreed. He brought to me a number of conditions which he wished me to insert, which I have accepted, and have embodied in my Proclamation. He told me that he could not help issuing a protest, to keep the noisy portion of the people quiet—and you will see grounds for this precaution when I tell you that there are only half a dozen native constables to represent the power of the State in Pretoria, and a considerable number of the Boers in the neighbourhood are of the lowest and most ignorant class. Mr. Burgers read me, too, the draft of his protest, and asked me if I saw any objection to it, or thought it too strong. I said that it appeared to me to pledge the people to resist by-and-by; to which he replied that it was to tide over the difficulty of the moment, seeing that my support, the troops, were a fortnight's march distant, and that by the time the answer to the protest came, all desire of opposition would have died out. I therefore did not persuade him from his protest.

You will see, when the proclamation reaches you, that I have taken high ground. Nothing but annexation will or can save the State, and nothing else can save

South Africa from the direst consequences. All the thinking and intelligent people know this, and will be thankful to be delivered from the thraldom of petty factions, by which they are perpetually kept in a state of excitement and unrest, because the Government, and everything connected with it, is a thorough sham.

This arrangement with President Burgers was a most improper compromise on both sides. Moreover, Shepstone received the protests of the Executive Council and of the Volksraad before he issued his proclamation. He had plenty of evidence to show that even if his action was approved by the majority, the Boers were sufficiently divided to demand some delay. He knew that the members of the Government and of the Raad would not face the responsibility of relinquishing the State's independence, although he received private assurances and entreaties encouraging him to act. He had representations and deputations from the Boers themselves, sufficient in weight and number to warrant his belief that a large proportion of the people desired annexation. He should not have allowed the 'hedging' that was practised at his expense. The Boer leaders were 'between the devil and the deep sea.' There can be no doubt whatever that they dearly loved and prized their independence, and would have fought even then for it had they been in a position to preserve and profit by it; but they were not. They dared neither ask for relief at the price of annexation, nor reject the proffered relief at the price of continuing the hopeless struggle. So they compromised. They took the relief, they accepted pay of the new Government, and entered a protest, so as to put themselves right with the records and stand well with untamed ones of the party.

The Act of Annexation is so generally condemned by the friends and sympathizers of the Boers, and is so persistently quoted by them as the cause of the Boer War, that it is only right to show clearly what the opinion was at that time; and if it be deemed that overmuch space is given to this matter,

the answer is, that it is quoted now as the crime which gave rise to the present hatred and mistrust of England, and it is all-important that the truth should be clear.

This is what Mr. J.F. Celliers, the patriotic editor of the Boer newspaper, *De Volksstem*, wrote in reviewing the work of the special session of the Volksraad, convened to deal with the questions of Lord Carnarvon's Federation Bill, and the rescuing of the country from ruin and chaos:—'During the session we have repeatedly had occasion to comment on the doings of the Raad. These comments have not been favourable, and we regret to say that we have found in the closing scenes of our Legislature no reason to alter our opinions.' Then follows a scathing account of the 'work done,' in which occur such references as:—'With the exception of a couple of members, no one had the sense or manliness to go into the question of confederation'; and 'The most surprising feature of the whole affair was this—that most of the speakers seemed not to have the faintest conception of the desperate condition in which the country stood.… ' And again, under date of March 28: 'About three months ago we said we would prefer confederation under the British flag if the state of anarchy then threatening were to continue. We know that a good and stable Government is better than anarchy any day.'

It is noteworthy that the writer of the above is the same Mr. Celliers who, two years later, was put in gaol by Colonel Lanyon on a charge of sedition, because he attacked the Administration for its failure to keep the promises made at the time of annexation.

Three thousand out of eight thousand voters actually signed petitions in favour of annexation. In the Raad, President Burgers openly reproached members for proclaiming in public, and for improper reasons, views diametrically

opposed to those privately expressed on the confederation and annexation questions; and refused to consult with three out of four members appointed as a deputation to confer with him on these subjects, because they had not paid their taxes, and had so helped by example, not less than by the actual offence, to cause the ruin of the country and the loss of independence. And on March 3 President Burgers read an address to the Raad, in which the following words occur:

'I would rather be a policeman under a strong Government than the President of such a State. It is you—you members of the Raad and the Boers—who have lost the country, who have sold your independence for a *soupe* (a drink). You have ill-treated the natives, you have shot them down, you have sold them into slavery, and now you have to pay the penalty.'

'We should delude ourselves by entertaining the hope that matters would mend by-and-by. It would only be self-deceit. I tell you openly, matters are as bad as they ever can be; they cannot be worse. These are bitter truths, and people may perhaps turn their backs on me; but then I shall have the consolation of having done my duty.'

'It is said here this or that man must be released from taxes, because the Kaffirs have driven them off their farms, and occupy the latter. By this you proclaim to the world that the strongest man is master here, that the right of the strongest obtains here.' [Mr. Mare: 'This is not true.'] 'Then it is not true what the honourable member, Mr. Breytenbach, has told us about the state of the Lydenburg district; then it is not true either what another member has said about the farms in Zoutpansberg, which are occupied by Kaffirs. Neither is it true, then, what I saw with my own eyes at Lydenburg, where the burghers had been driven off their farms by the Kaffirs, and where Johannes was ploughing and sowing on the land of a burgher. These are facts, and they show that the strongest man is the master here. The fourth point which we have to take into account affects our relations with our English neighbours. It is asked, What have they got to do with our position? I tell you, as much as we have to do with that of our Kaffir neighbours. As little as we can allow barbarities among the Kaffirs on our borders, as little can they allow that in a state on their borders anarchy and rebellion should prevail.'

'Do you know what has recently happened in Turkey? Because no civilized government was carried on there, the Great Powers interfered and said, "Thus far, and no further." And if this is done to an empire, will a little republic be excused when it misbehaves?

'Complain to other Powers, and seek justice there? Yes, thank God! justice is still to be found, even for the most insignificant; but it is precisely the justice which will convict us. If we want justice, we must be in a position to ask it with unsullied hands.'

'Whence has arisen that urgency to make an appeal for interference elsewhere? Has that appeal been made only by enemies of the State? Oh no, gentlemen; it has arisen from real grievances. Our people have degenerated from their former position; they have become demoralised; they are not what they ought to be.'

'To-day a bill for £1,100 was laid before me for signature; but I would sooner have cut off my right hand than sign that paper, for I have not the slightest ground to expect that when that bill becomes due there will be a penny to pay it with.'

The President added, and his statements remained uncontradicted:

The principal thing which had brought them to their present position was that to which they would not give attention. It was not this or that thing which impeded their way, but they themselves stopped the way; and if they asked him what prevented the people from remaining independent, he answered that the Republic was itself the obstruction, owing to the inherent incapacity and weakness of the people. But whence this weakness? Was it because they were deformed? because they were worse than other people? because they were too few and too insignificant to occupy the country? Those arguments did not weigh with him. They were not true; he did not consider them of any importance. The people were as good as any other people, but they were completely demoralized; they had lost faith in God, reliance upon themselves, or trust in each other. Hence he believed they were inherently weak.

He did not believe that a new constitution would save them; for as little as the old constitution had brought them to ruin, so little would a new constitution bring them salvation.

The Great Powers, with all their greatness, all their thousands of soldiers, would fall as quickly as this State had fallen, and even more quickly, if their citizens were to do what the citizens of this State had done; if the citizens of England had behaved towards the Crown as the burghers of this State had behaved to their Government, England would never have stood as long as she had, not even as long as this State had stood. This State owed obligations to other countries;