

## GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA

a lasting peace, even though it be on a basis other than that of the retention of our independence.

It was as a Transvaaler that Botha had begun the war; as a South African he signed the Peace Treaty. For many days and many nights he had reflected on the causes of the division that had punished his country so severely, jeopardizing the whole of its future. At last he knew where his duty, his vocation, pointed. His task it would be to confer on the whole of Southern Africa lasting peace.

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**T**HROUGHOUT the career of the South African Republic British propinquity had a paralyzing influence on the country's sound and safe development. The protective factors, ensuring the age-long existence of small States elsewhere, were absent. In name a sovereign power, the Republic actually was far less free than the Union of South Africa now is as partner in a world empire. It is, in view of this, a curious reflection that no sooner had the 'paramount power,' in 1902, succeeded in overwhelming the Transvaal, converting it into a Crown colony by force, than Great Britain's undisputed supremacy in South Africa began to wane. Dominion status, universally accepted to-day, managed to level England's constitutional position within the Empire to an equality with that of the other States in the space of twenty-five years.

Shortly after the events of 1902 the new colony north of the Vaal attained great prominence, not in South Africa only, but in London as well. The interesting period 1902-7 shows how Botha was first instrumental in helping to defeat the Government that had caused the fall of the Republics. Afterward he helped to bring about the unification of an autonomous sub-continent. Is it not a remarkable fact that it should have been the Transvaal that became the lesion as a result of which Joseph Chamberlain's brand of imperialism bled to death? And that an ex-general of the Boers should have played a principal part in the victory at the polls of the Liberal Party, leading to Campbell-Bannerman's premiership and all it eventually meant to South Africa? The Transvaal and the Free State shortly afterward obtained self-government, and in consequence

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the four colonies now forming the Union combined. Once they had entered John Bull's family circle, the former Boer States made themselves felt, thanks to most peaceable tactics, in a wonderfully effective manner. Theirs was a prominent share in the birth of the 'third' British Empire, the modernized "British Commonwealth of Nations."

On the eve of peace, something had happened that was typical of the subsequent evolution of South African affairs. Negotiations between the Boer delegates and Lords Kitchener and Milner were proceeding anything but smoothly, owing to the latter's unbending attitude. For a moment it seemed as if it would prove impossible to end the war by agreement. Late in the evening Lord Kitchener took General Smuts aside, predicting that a Liberal landslide was a probability of the near future in England, as a result of which the prospects of early autonomy for the ex-Republics would improve. This hint to the effect that Milnerism was not destined to permanence made the Boers look upon the British pro-consul's *intransigence* in a fresh light. Henceforth they were able to bear with his demands in more hopeful mood.

*Lord Milner Takes Over.*—The leaders did not tarry. Within three weeks of the conclusion of peace all arms had been surrendered. On June 21, 1902, Lord Milner was able to come (from Johannesburg) to Pretoria in order formally to take over the civil administration, the chief officials having taken the oath of allegiance. A lunch at which Generals Botha and de la Rey were present was given. The Governor-General afterward had a long interview with them, continued the next day, on urgent repatriation measures. An oath of fealty was demanded before prisoners-of-war could be sent back to their country as British subjects. Many of them, in the Bermudas and India, resented the peace, charging their leaders with treason. They refused to take any oath. Some of them resolutely persisted in refusing to sign even an act of submission to the Treaty. This necessitated a journey by General de la Rey to Ceylon in order to explain matters to

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them. The disposal of the concentration camps, too, required a great deal of discussion. Botha's proposal to entrust Boer experts with the control of economic reconstruction in the country districts was not entertained.

In connexion with this matter Botha had already suggested at Vereeniging that money should be collected overseas. At its conclusion, the Conference appointed him, with de la Rey and de Wet, to carry out the idea. Botha hastily attended to family and private affairs prior to leaving. For that purpose he paid a visit, in July, to Natal, where he openly proclaimed his faith in South Africa's future as part of the Empire. At Capetown the Dutch community gave the trio a warm welcome. They were a tragic little company! How different in temperament, character, talents! How widely their vision of the fortunes in store for their country and people varied! All they had in common was their pure, indestructible patriotism. De Wet was irrepressible, de la Rey impressionable, Botha, above all, matter-of-fact.

In order to make the object of their journey perfectly plain they deemed it advisable to publish at Capetown a farewell message to their compatriots. In it they mentioned the desire to collect funds, while discouraging emigration of any sort and counselling patient endurance. *Nil desperandum!* Late in July the three were on their way to the great world outside, where they had never before set foot. How little did they anticipate the disillusionment, annoyance, and disappointment that were awaiting them in Europe, excited as it still was over the Boer war. Four months of anxiety and fatigue made the enterprise an unforgettable nightmare to Botha during the rest of his life.

*King Edward and his 'Wife.'*—On August 17 (the day after their arrival at Southampton) Botha and de la Rey, introduced by Lord Kitchener, waited upon the late King Edward, who happened to be on his yacht at Cowes. The generals were invited—it was not very tactful—to a naval review to take place at once, but begged to be excused. The King, though the reverse of pro-Boer, received his

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former enemies with sincere cordiality, introducing them to the Queen as to "my wife," in order to mark the informal character his Majesty wished to confer on the occasion. Better than anyone, the King realized the harm to England's prestige arising from the restive enthusiasm thrilling all humanity on behalf of the handful of heroic champions of freedom, out in the wilds of South Africa, who had taken up arms against a powerful world empire. Any universal foreign sentiment or opinion is a force that no nation, however powerful, can afford to ignore. It did not avail to ride the high horse, and tell foreigners that John Bull's affairs were none of their business. It was with a feeling of relief that the King welcomed these chivalrous, new subjects of his who were being honoured everywhere.

Without further ceremony the three left for Holland on the very next day. They wanted to consult President Kruger, together with the other high officials of the ex-Republics, before they eventually returned to England to deal with the Colonial Office. Botha's arrival in Holland was all the more moving, because it gave him the joy of reunion with his wife, who had spent the last year of the war there in voluntary retirement. Shortly after her historic meeting with her husband at Botha's Berg she had gone to Holland. To Kruger she had conveyed the message that the Boers would be able to hold out another year, but that there would be more running than fighting! The aged President, instead of rejoicing at the news that resistance would last as long as that, brusquely replied: "Nonsense! All that is merely women's chatter." And yet Botha had gauged the situation aright, as proved by the date of the Peace Treaty.

At Rotterdam and The Hague, as in London and Southampton, the generals perforce accepted the loudest of welcomes. At The Hague Botha replied: "We have not come in order to take part in any festivities. We represent an extremely unhappy people. We are unhappy, because we fought for our freedom and independence, as in duty bound."



Mrs. Botha in 1902

From a portrait by Art van Welle in the collection of  
Dr C. J. R. van Aalst.

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*Determined Resignation.*—The Boer officials at Brussels and in Holland had not been in sufficiently regular contact with South Africa to be completely posted as to the actual state of affairs that had come about. Consequently, it was but natural that the real peace atmosphere, born as a result of the Vereeniging Treaty, had not penetrated to them, and that they could not quite see eye to eye with Botha on all matters of high policy. Pro-Boer excitement on the Continent, in Ireland, and in America had led to anti-British demonstrations, as it was bound to do. There was yet no time to make it plain to the public that what had been a quite natural attitude, while the war was still being waged, no longer met the situation that had since arisen. The Transvaal Embassy at Brussels had carried on an efficient agitation, organizing many committees, even in far-off Russia. It was now unable, within a few weeks, to get the whole world to realize the tremendous change that had occurred in the position of the Boer people. Botha himself, sixteen years later, stated in the South African Parliament that the annexation of the Republics was an act that no one would ever be able to condone. At the same time, while talking to the Free State and Transvaal officials in Europe during their visit, the three generals did their best to induce those men to share their own determination to abide by the settlement that had been reached.

Others, who had likewise arrived in Europe from the scene of war, loudly vented their irreconcilable feelings. Almost simultaneously, President Steyn—physically ill, but with a clear mind—made a momentary appearance in England. On arrival at Southampton, on August 1, he had himself carried to a Dutch steamer, without showing the least desire to get into touch with London. An invincible aversion to accepting the understanding, created by the Peace Treaty, was shown by the passionate and inflexible attitude of President Reitz, ex-State Secretary of the Transvaal, who landed at Naples. His was an irreconcilable personality, interpreting the feelings of a section of the Bitter-enders. The vote of the fifty-four who had favoured

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the Treaty at Vereeniging did not mean that the whole of the nation immediately adjusted itself to the new situation. It took years before the bulk of the generation of 1900 had accepted the consequences of what had been decided upon. In 1919 a deputation, led by General Hertzog, attempted to re-establish South Africa's position of twenty years previously.

Before starting on their begging campaign the generals wished to meet the Colonial Secretary, in order to find out whether his Government would be prepared to exceed the three million, destined to alleviate the plight of the Boers. On August 31, 1902, Botha and the two who shared his mission returned to the Metropolis. In a modest hostelry, away from the centre of things, they quietly awaited the date appointed for their interview with Chamberlain. The leaders of the Liberal Party were not able to lend a great deal of support. They formed but a weak Opposition, the Boer war having seriously affected the unity and strength of the party.

The matter-of-fact bearing of the three, who did not care in the least to see themselves lionized, combined with the unceasing, defiant anti-British gestures of numerous Continental pro-Boers, considerably chilled the atmosphere in which, on September 5, the interview with Chamberlain took place. On account of allegations that had appeared in Continental newspapers (to the effect that the Peace Treaty would have to be revised) the Minister made it a condition that no revision could be discussed. The generals, on their part, expressed a desire that conversations should be principally concerned with more liberal compensation for their needy fellow-burghers and complete amnesty for rebels. The obstinate opposition against the annexation, voiced by well-meaning persons in both the Old World and the New, was hampering the three generals; their task it was to carry out the dirty work of, hat in hand, getting people to contribute (especially in England), if necessary in the form of a loan.

*At the Colonial Office.*—The Colonial Office interview—  
an extremely formal business—was attended by Chamber-  
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lain, Lord Kitchener, two high officials of the department, and an interpreter. A shorthand note was taken, and afterward published. Botha, the mouthpiece and intellectual leader of the trio, regretted the absence of any amnesty for rebels, which was to have been proclaimed at King Edward's coronation. Amnesty, he said, was indispensable to a real peace in South Africa. The Colonial Secretary and Lord Kitchener denied that there had been any such promise. Botha had to be satisfied with their assurance that, if the Cape and Natal Governments were prepared to show leniency, no objection would be raised by the Colonial Office. It should be placed on record that, during the late Sir Starr Jameson's premiership of Cape Colony, complete amnesty, involving the restoration of all political and civil rights, was granted in 1906. Natal, too, treated its rebels leniently.

The return of the Boers then in Europe was the second item on the agenda. Chamberlain drew attention to President Reitz's demeanour. Botha replied that he and his compatriots deserved to be trusted, and should not be allowed to suffer on account of one individual. The Minister admitted being convinced of their *bona fides*; he promised to retain his faith in it, unless he was given occasion for doubt. The remaining points at issue were: return of prisoners; the oath or declaration to be taken by them; security of title to ground held by burghers, and the return to them of farms confiscated by virtue of drastic proclamations. It looked as if the conqueror had some scheme of freezing-out Boer owners (who found it impossible on the conclusion of peace to pay their debts) so as to make their holdings available for the occupation of favoured immigrants.

Last came the greatest question of all, in spite of its formal exclusion from the agenda. Botha, in a few words, accentuated the inadequacy of the three million pounds, contrasting the sum with the vastness of the assets contained in the incorporated territories. Chamberlain, however, refused to discuss the subject. He closed the interview

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with the assurance that, if the Boers would only meet himself and his nation half-way, the British would prove to be as valuable friends as they had been honest enemies.

The Minister's refusal, coupled with the chilly atmosphere that weighed upon the interview from first to last, was to Botha proof of the hopelessness of any further attempt to obtain funds in Great Britain. The psychological moment had either been neglected or had not yet arrived.

*Europe's Boer Worship.*—And so the generals left the United Kingdom. On September 10 they met Dr Kuyper, the Netherlands Premier, whose initiative had led to the end of the war. The day after, there was a festive reception at Amsterdam, prepared by public committees, which had seen to it that the honoured trio should be greeted with cordial ovations. Antwerp was the next place; here enthusiasm was so terrific that General de Wet was obliged, in the course of a speech, to declare that the object of his visit was eleemosynary—not personal applause.

Back to Holland, where on September 25 the well-known "Appeal to the Civilized World" had appeared, in which Botha, de Wet, and de la Rey asked for financial support. In England people (unjustly perhaps) took great offence at this pamphlet. The progress of the begging campaign in Holland made the generals optimistic. Dr Leyds did what he could in order, by protective measures, to maintain an atmosphere favourable to their mission. In a small provincial town they collected £2000.

In Brussels, Paris, and finally in Berlin the three were overwhelmed with ovations, demonstrating undeniable and progressive Boer worship on the Continent. Material contributions, however, did not show any tendency to corresponding liberality. Before the publication of their Appeal they had received from Mr Henry Phipps, of the Carnegie Steel Trust, a gift of £20,000, to be spent in consultation with the British Colonial Office. Donations of this magnitude did not recur. The great financiers of the Continent regarded the Boer problem as settled; their

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standpoint was that the generals had better pin their faith to the British Government. It was principally the man in the street, hardly able to afford more than acclamations, whose mite helped to make up the total collected.

The contrast between the transports of sympathetic excitement among the people and the immaculate neutrality of governing circles filled the unsophisticated travellers from elementary South Africa with painful astonishment. At Berlin a tragi-comic complication aggravated their spleen. The question arose: were they to wait upon the Kaiser? The world had yet to learn of the fact that William II had presented the British High Command with an ideal anti-Boer plan of campaign. The monarch had no particular reputation as a generous philanthropist. Were the three to crave an audience, or should they await an invitation from the imperial palace? Could any visit take place, except under the auspices of the British Ambassador? A profound Press polemic developed, just as if an incorrect gesture could have precipitated an international crisis! In the end, there was no audience, and the three were officially ignored. As regards wild enthusiasm, however, their reception in the German capital beat that in the other great cities, if possible. No less a person than Count Herbert Bismarck piloted the distinguished visitors through the Reichstag building, where they were the objects of the most flattering attention.

On October 22 the generals, laden with European glory and popularity—at the same time with suspicion on the part of Britain—returned to London. The total collected fell short of £125,000. On November 1 General de Wet started on his way back to the Free State, supported by the pleasant consciousness that he, at any rate, had succeeded in effecting a considerable improvement in his private finances. He had sold, at an eminently satisfactory figure, the copyright of his war reminiscences, set down by him with unflagging zeal during the first stage of his journey.

*A Sensational Article.*—*The Contemporary Review* of November 1 contained an article by Botha that attracted

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widespread attention. Under the title "The Boers and the Empire" it argued candidly and cogently that England's interest would be served by a generous policy in regard to the economic reconstruction of the ex-Republics. It pointed out that it would not pay to lavish vast sums on the maintenance of a South African garrison, amounting to some hundred thousand men, while the Boers were being systematically pushed out of their estates, and were refused the means of re-establishing themselves. Instead, the writer said, they should be honoured with British confidence, to which they had a right. Calmly and logically Botha adduced that the Boers' new status of British subjects entitled them to bring home to the British Government its duty of assisting them to find a way out of the misery caused by material wants. No British colony, Botha said, can be governed against the wishes of the population.

During their visit to the Continent, he added, the three generals had abstained from anything to which British sentiment could legitimately object on political grounds. Once more he urged complete amnesty to rebels as well as permission for the ex-Boer officials in Europe to return. He concluded by advising Britain to help the Boers, not simply as an act of humanity, but as a matter of high policy.

The British public appreciated his sober language. Five days later, the man who had published this straightforward and courageous statement sat in the gallery of the Commons, where members debated a grant of eight millions to cover the cost of the liquidation of the Boer War. Chamberlain, who had introduced the necessary measure, announced that he intended visiting South Africa in order to ascertain whether the appropriation would suffice; if not, he would ask for more. The money was voted unanimously. Botha's final appeal, made this time to the British people, had not been in vain.

Indisposition delayed his return to the Transvaal. This gave him an opportunity of getting to know prominent men who were taking an interest in South African affairs. The day after Botha's unsatisfactory Chamberlain interview



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From a portrait drawn in 1902 for *De Week* by Antoon van Welie,  
in the collection of Dr C. J. K. van Aalst

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he had written to Lord Courtney (who was taking the waters at a German spa) requesting advice as to the best way of collecting funds in England; he asked for the names of other friends, who might be sounded for their opinions. Botha also communicated with a few journalists, and accepted invitations for private dinners. He met the Opposition leader, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, at a party that included a member of the Cabinet. Everything, as Sir Henry was careful to point out, was therefore quite in order. Lord Shaw, in his *Memoirs*, mentions a little dinner attended by Mr Lloyd George and the late Mr Massingham; Botha expressed his deep gratitude for what the Liberals had been able to do for the benefit of South Africa.

*Two Successes.*—Lord Courtney recorded in writing the impression of strength and moderation created by the Boer generals. In the course of a personal meeting with him, they renewed their plea for rebel amnesty and financial support for their ruined people. On the day before their return to South Africa Botha and de la Rey paid a farewell visit to the Colonial Secretary. Chamberlain was still upset by the fuss that had been made of them on the Continent. He had to listen while Botha requested him to delay the unification of British South Africa, until such time as each of the four colonies should have become autonomous. Botha also criticized Lord Milner's refusal to give the Dutch language a place in the curriculum of elementary schools for Boer children.

At last, on December 13, 1902, Botha was able to board a steamer on the way back. It was high time: the Colonial Secretary himself was on the point of leaving. Hurriedly a gathering of as many Afrikander leaders as possible had to be organized. Although private contributions to the Boer fund had proved a failure, Botha had two successes to book, viz., the eight millions for the relief of distress and Chamberlain's own visit to the ravaged sub-continent. No colonial secretary of any European power had ever undertaken an official journey in order to study a remote possession on the spot. No wonder, then, that

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the voyage made a universal sensation, especially among those who saw, and applauded, in it the glorious realization of his Imperialist aspirations.

Four months of hustle in Western Europe, the result of his own suggestion at Vereeniging, proved a precious schooling to the acute Transvaaler. The episode gave him a first-hand insight into overseas conditions, which stood him in excellent stead during the years that followed. His realization of what constituted sound policy for South Africa was clarified by his London-Berlin experiences—his self-reliance as a political leader strengthened by his brief contact with men and things in Europe.

## XI

### BOTHA AND LORD MILNER

WHEN early in 1900 the chances of war were turning against the Boers, Rhodes (after the relief of Kimberley) anxiously watched the course of events from Capetown. Lord Roberts, with childlike faith, had declared the war virtually over. Rhodes had the courage to address a strongly anti-Boer meeting at Capetown, more or less in the following terms:

You people imagine the Boers are beaten! Nothing of the sort. The Dutch have not been beaten. It is only Krugerism that has gone under. The Dutch to-day are just as virile, just as unconquered, as ever they were; the country is theirs just as much as it is yours. You will have to work together, and live together, exactly as in the past. Do not let there be any vaingloriousness, any vulgar triumph over your Dutch neighbours. Let them feel that bitterness is a thing of the past, and that more than ever it is necessary to co-operate.

Were not these sensible words altogether applicable to the Dutch of 1903?

Mr Chamberlain's arrival was the signal for a fresh outburst of jingoism on the part of the Imperialist section of the population, the reverse of suitable for the cultivation of better relations between Briton and Boer. Loud demonstrations greeted the Minister everywhere. The Dutch-speaking section looked on, mindful of the fact that the triumphal entry of the Colonial Secretary had been rendered possible by soldiers from overseas—not by those whose plaudits were filling the air.

In January 1903 Chamberlain appeared at Pretoria. Botha had seen to it that a numerous deputation was on the scene in order to voice Boer aspirations. The official



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Press had its doubts as to whether those gentlemen—Botha in particular—were entitled to act as representing the Boer section. The English in general, as well as those Boers who had fought on the British side, did not entertain any doubts whatsoever. Amid general and spontaneous approval the ex-Commandant-General became the figure round which his indigent compatriots grouped themselves, looking for light and leading.

In those days, following peace, everyone was doing his best to repair his damaged fortunes, either by hard work or by profiting from the inevitable, speculative conqueror's optimism. The revival of legitimate business and the liquidation of the military *régime*, which had lasted for three years, were accompanied by hectic anticipations of economic expansion in the new colonies. In the towns, as well as in the districts, land values rose enormously as the result of injudicious expectations of unprecedented prosperity. A numerous staff of highly paid officials was maintained for purposes of repatriation, compensation, and constabulary services. The new bureaucracy was extremely liberal; it knew of no economy. Imports assumed vast proportions, once communications and civil conditions were restored. Live-stock having been practically annihilated, and agriculture being disorganized, South Africa had to be satisfied with frozen beef from Australia and tinned foodstuffs from other countries. This undesirable state of affairs was intensified by a couple of years of serious drought, which delayed the return to normal of the country districts, and caused the scheme for wholesale settlement of immigrants to fail.

*The Transvaal Programme.*—The Transvaalers, as has been stated, were fortunate enough to possess energetic leaders. President Steyn could not return to the Free State until 1905. Willing enough, he was rendered unfit for the platform by physical weakness. General de Wet tells us concerning the post-war period: "I left politics severely alone. I quietly attended to my private business." That was until 1907, when responsible government came,

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and, with it, a portfolio for him. Political activity was not in the intrepid soldier's line. Other prominent Free Staters, too, remained inert for a long time. Botha, on the other hand, was backed by a small circle of sanguine, energetic supporters, among whom General Smuts soon became pre-eminent. Their programme was to save their people from the slough of material, moral, and national evils, aftermath of the war. They were advocating a *rapprochement* between Dutch and English, with a view to political and economic co-operation, and the unification of South Africa as an autonomous member of the Empire.

The war had taught Botha that the Boers, and even the entire population of South Africa, could hardly stand against a radical attempt by an overseas Power to take our country. He had felt the irresistible force of what General Sir Ian Hamilton had called the "gigantic system of fortifications, barriers, troops, and garrisons." He had sensed the native peril, too. He discovered the absolute necessity, for Boer and Briton, of unitedly ensuring their future existence. He also appreciated the invaluable advantage to a United South Africa of enjoying international safety as an autonomous part of the Empire. During the Great War, when the United States sent an expeditionary force of a million men to Europe, his conviction as to the vulnerability of his country was strengthened.

Originally his conciliation doctrine had the merely negative tendency to eliminate the old antipathy between Briton and Boer from our body politic. To-day no one can imagine how those two, before 1902, were facing one another. Such an unendurable tension could not last; it was bound to lead to the Kilkenny cat process; therefore both sections had to learn mutual understanding and toleration. It is not feasible to condense into a dozen words the meaning of 'conciliation,' as preached by Botha. Has anyone ever accurately limned General Hertzog's one-time 'two-stream' policy? Every thoughtful person has his own notion, which will probably be modified as

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years go on. An attempt to convey Botha's idea is made in the pages that follow. Instinctively the people felt the difference between the two policies. Gradually the urge for self-preservation conquered race feeling, that world-wide enigma. Botha's 'conciliation' came to be fully recognized in the practice of South African public life. The Union's status within the Empire, too, is being fairly generally appreciated nowadays.

*Complaints and Protests.*—The leaders who on January 8, 1903, officially met Chamberlain at Pretoria behaved correctly, but nevertheless ruffled the Colonial Secretary's temper. He had to listen to complaints about red tape, expense, and inefficiency of the repatriation department, and disappearance of the Dutch language from the schools. Protests were uttered against a further war loan of thirty million pounds for the Transvaal, which was to be taken up by the gold-mining companies. During the discussions, the Minister dropped a hint about "secret funds," supposed to have been in the hands of the Boer representatives in Europe, and considered suitable for the maintenance of widows and orphans. Botha just asked: "Is mention made in the peace terms of those funds?" Chamberlain had to admit, "Not in the least." That finished official interest in the matter once for all.

The Colonial Secretary did not show the slightest inclination to interfere with the administrative methods pursued by Lord Milner in his capacity as 'proconsul,' a word that was quite fashionable at the time. During his short stay at Johannesburg, Mr Chamberlain allowed himself to be persuaded that the supply of native labour for the gold-mines was inadequate; the mineowners were willing to underwrite a thirty million loan in exchange for the consent to the importation of Chinese labour. In these circumstances it became impossible for the Boer leaders to take any part in politics. Lord Milner, on behalf of Mr Chamberlain, politely invited Generals Botha, de la Rey, and Smuts early in February to join an advisory administrative Council. They declined, just as politely. The salary of £500

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per annum was a tempting one to them at the time, but verbally and in writing they stated their opinion to the effect that a nominated Council would produce more division and other evils than good results. Their letter said: "We are longing for a truce to political squabbling, and should like to see the establishment of a legislative council postponed." This advice found no echo at Johannesburg, where Lord Milner had chosen his domicile. A year later, on February 12, 1904, the body in question passed the ordinance for the importation of Asiatic labour, thus turning over a new leaf in the history of South Africa.

*Lord Milner Promotes Agriculture.*—The decision of the Boer leaders to refrain from entering politics unless they were elected by the public to do so fitted in with the concepts prevalent of old among that section of the people. The five persons who nominally represented the country districts in the Legislative Council had been appointed by Lord Milner. They neither enjoyed the confidence of their fellow-burghers nor any prestige with the Government. The fact that Botha and his friends were considered good enough to join an ornamental Council, but were excluded from a practical and economical administration of repatriation and compensation, speaks volumes for the inefficiency of Lord Milner's measures. He further stands condemned by his fiscal policy, which was based on the employment of the railways as a taxing machine. On one subject, however, Botha used to praise Lord Milner; that was because the latter did his best in order to grant State aid to agriculture on a large scale through experts, experimental farms, and agricultural colleges. Undoubtedly Lord Milner deserves recognition for all this, especially from the farming population.

Milner was the last of a long series of British colonial administrators belonging to a type that has now vanished. Of most of them not even the names are remembered in South Africa to-day. Those who have not been overtaken by oblivion owe the fact, with few exceptions, to their connexion with events that brought our sub-continent

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anything but joy. Botha was never able to forgive Lord Milner for having, by his intervention, drawn out the Boer war for more than a year over and above its inevitable length. The Boers, to Milner, remained an enigma till the last, but he lived long enough to see that the policy followed from 1907 onward suited all parties concerned, and that Botha had chosen the right road.

## XII

### BOTHA'S FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

ON his return from England, Botha not merely paid attention to matters political and to the private interests of numerous Transvaalers (he once gave an impoverished widow a hundred ewes, and on another occasion enabled a wounded burgher to go to a specialist in Europe), he also devoted himself energetically to repairing his own fortunes. The district of Vryheid, which saw him develop into a cattle farmer and a statesman, was taken from the Transvaal in 1902 in order to be added to Natal. Botha wished to remain identified with the Transvaal; he resolved to leave his ruined farm, Waterval (near Vryheid), unoccupied for the time being. Mrs Botha especially felt keenly the destruction of their homestead.

The family went to live on the farm Varkenspruit, Standerton, which was afterward christened 'Rusthof.' The three-years war had dealt Botha's financial position a hard knock. His general compensation claim, sent in to the Department, amounted to nearly £20,000. They awarded him £900. He returned the cheque just as it had reached him. His war losses consisted chiefly of movables: his ground was unassailable. He therefore could command sufficient credit to reorganize his ranching business. In May 1903 he acquired the transfer of approximately 1500 acres, being part of the farm Zandfontein, next to Varkenspruit. In January 1905 he bought another 2000 acres of the same property, and in April that year an additional 600 acres. The money had been borrowed. In 1906 he purchased 250 acres of Koppie Alleen, in 1911 another 400 acres of the same farm, and in 1912, 3500 acres of Springbokkuil. All of this was in the Standerton

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district, so that he now had disposal of ten thousand acres of first-class ranching ground. He had obtained it at very reasonable prices; at his death it figured at over £31,000 in his estate. According to Boer custom he was married in community.

*Rusthof.*—To the development of these assets he gave all his attention as well as his energy which, at any rate shortly after the war, was still undivided. The war-scarred homestead was repaired. The British collected the barbed wire, used by them for military purposes, and auctioned it in certain centres. Botha bought a large quantity at Standerton, and without delay fenced his farms, which were divided into paddocks. He took the trouble to ensure that only first-class live-stock should occupy them. As a sheep expert he was equalled by very few farmers, and what he did not know about a horse was hardly worth knowing.

One day he and I visited The Hague together; I took him to the Mauritshuis Art Gallery, where the famous Bull (by Potter) hangs. Botha circumstantially explained why he could not work up any enthusiasm for the seventeenth century steer—the artistic merits of the picture left him unmoved—and why it was that the Hollander of to-day bred a very much superior class of stock. It was interesting to listen to him. He was forever improving his herds, and before long his farms were being run at a profit. His wool acquired a good reputation at Durban, where he sent it annually to be sold. Having a railway station on the property, he was able to despatch milk and other farm produce to Johannesburg day by day. He planted trees and built dams. He and his wife became so attached to the place that they had a comfortable, large sandstone dwelling erected. Thereupon they called the estate 'Rusthof' (Haven of Rest). At Botha's death there were over 500 head of cattle, more than 3100 sheep, and 150 horses and mules. These were put down at £10,000; market values probably ranged higher.

The first couple of years after peace were extremely dry, and therefore bad for farming. For a time, Botha had to

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try some other way of maintaining his financial standing. In those days of tribulation most looked for salvation in hard work so as to mend their fortunes, and to set aside some reserve for contingencies. In addition to his farming activities Botha managed to turn to account his talent for calculation and his business insight, indulging his speculative bent. Shortly after 1902 the ex-Republics witnessed a boom, during which numerous people felt impelled to buy and sell. This created a demand for those who could bring purchasers and sellers together. Botha knew many people, and had his connexions everywhere. Once, while a Rustenburg farm was being sold by auction at Pretoria, he walked past, nodding to the auctioneer. He was told afterward that the farm had been knocked down to him. The same day he was able to sell at a profit. He made £2000 on the purchase and sale of Rietkol, Pretoria district. Another time he made a *coup* in connexion with a property that afterward became famous as the Kaalfontein diamond proposition. He tried, as an intermediary, to induce the former owner of the land on which the Premier Diamond Mine is situated to part with an adjoining piece of ground at a high price. In this particular case his efforts remained fruitless and led to financial failure.

This period of Botha's commercial doings benefited not only him personally but, indirectly, South Africa as well. A man with business 'luck' shows himself to be possessed of the enviable capacity of correctly diagnosing, calculating, and gauging conditions surrounding him. In South Africa prominent politicians who are at the same time good business men may be considered fairly rare. Some politicians are even helpless when it comes to looking after their private concerns. Botha's experience of men and things commercial would undoubtedly have made him rich had he concentrated on making money. The love he bore his people, and the great interest he took in national affairs, predominated with him, but his *flair* for political and diplomatic advantage was sharpened by his business acumen. Thus he felt exactly when South Africa was ripe



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for unification, and he knew to a nicety how to tackle the job. Better than his contemporaries he understood the ways of high politics. He was taught during those awkward years, after 1902, when he acted as a commission agent.

*Bailey and Botha.*—Before long his task as the organizer of a political party, and the leader of his people, occupied more and more of his time and attention. During a great part of the year he had to live in Pretoria. In 1904 he bought a fine house there. Mr (afterward Sir) Abe Bailey, who tided many Boers over their pecuniary difficulties, lent him the necessary money. Botha was soon able to repay him. They had had transactions together before, but some people thought fit to insinuate that the chairman of 'Het Volk' had become an instrument in the hands of pro-Chinese Mr Bailey, who was regarded by many as the Premier-designate of the Transvaal. During the general election of 1907 Sir Abe stood for Krugersdorp as an anti-Botha man, but the Het Volk candidate defeated him. In later years he served for a time as a follower of Botha.

Botha could not freely dispose of his time for long. Gradually national affairs claimed him entirely. He had to give up active farming, leaving the care of his estates to managers. In spite of all the cares that beset him, he never neglected the Standerton farm, however. During his visit to Europe in 1919 he and Mrs Botha simultaneously had a serious attack of influenza in London. I visited them, and asked what I could do for the patients. After a short conversation I wanted to take leave, but Botha first asked me to cable his Rusthof manager concerning veld fires and the sale of superfluous sheep. He was never slow to let his friends and neighbours profit by his thorough knowledge of farming. One day he remarked to me: "They may call me a soldier or a statesman—in reality I am a farmer, and nothing else."

Unification of South Africa increased the intensity with which he had to look after national interests. That is the

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reason why, during the years that followed it, he only purchased additional ground near Rusthof twice, in 1911 and 1912. His spare cash was invested in a few mortgages and in Union certificates. He demonstrated to his countrymen how farming, provided of course you know all about it, can be made to pay excellently. Always he would proclaim that to be a farmer is the most enviable thing in the wide world; the farmer is "monarch of all he surveys."

### XIII

#### BOTHA ON THE PLATFORM

**S**UPERFICIALLY viewed it did not seem very objectionable to import Chinese coolies for the mines. The natives had done well out of the war, and no longer felt the same need as before of working for the white man. Mines and farms were inconvenienced by the shortness of labour. The Witwatersrand disposed of hardly 70,000 mine natives. This was far below normal, and it was felt as a reproach that under the British flag the production of gold, and wealth generally, amounted to less than it had done in those unspeakable Kruger days! Chinese labour would not only increase the efficiency of mineral development, but prove a boon to the countryside because it would release cheaper and more abundant native labour. Petitions were hawked round the country districts for signatures in favour of the importation of Orientals.

As for Botha, he began to reflect more deeply, and to form other impressions. There was the experience of Natal with its indentured Indians, the experiment of forty years since, which had turned out so disastrously for South Africa. The presence of tens of thousands of unmarried Chinamen—unfathomable, with their peculiar customs, their special food, herded together in semi-confinement, and inclined to send their wages, to the tune of millions of pounds, abroad—boded great peril. The problem as to whether the country's own labour resources had been adequately tapped remained unsolved. Botha never made the mistake of under-estimating the gold industry's economic importance. At the most critical juncture of the war, when anti-magnate feeling was bitterest and the destruction of the mines was being clamoured for, he had protected

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them. National interests, however, were always paramount with him. That was where he differed from Lord Milner and the then leaders of the Rand mining industry, who allowed their fear of the unpleasant effects of a depression, even a temporary one; to outweigh all else. Outside the circle of interested financiers Chinese importation found few friends, even after the closing of a few gold-mines owing to the scarcity of Kaffirs. On the face of it, the coolies were to be used solely for unskilled work, but the white miners had their doubts.

*The Heidelberg Meeting.*—Shortly after Mr Chamberlain's departure, and following the formal announcement made by the mineowners to the effect that there was an insufficiency of native labour, the Government appointed an inquiry commission. Lord Milner took no notice of an anti-Chinese protest, voiced by Botha's first great meeting. This was held at Heidelberg on July 2, 1903, *i.e.*, a week before the appointment of the Commission. The meeting found that no case had been made out for the allegation as to a serious shortage of natives, and it resolved to ask the authorities not to import labour until the introduction of self-government.

This gathering, of which Botha duly notified Lord Milner in advance, was the first sign after peace of the stirring of public life, given by the Transvaal population in general, and the Boers in particular. Five hundred special constables were concentrated near the meeting-place. In the course of his optimistic speech Botha said: "The people should work like ants in building up the country, and regard it as an ant-heap for all those who, adopting it as their home, truly care for its welfare."

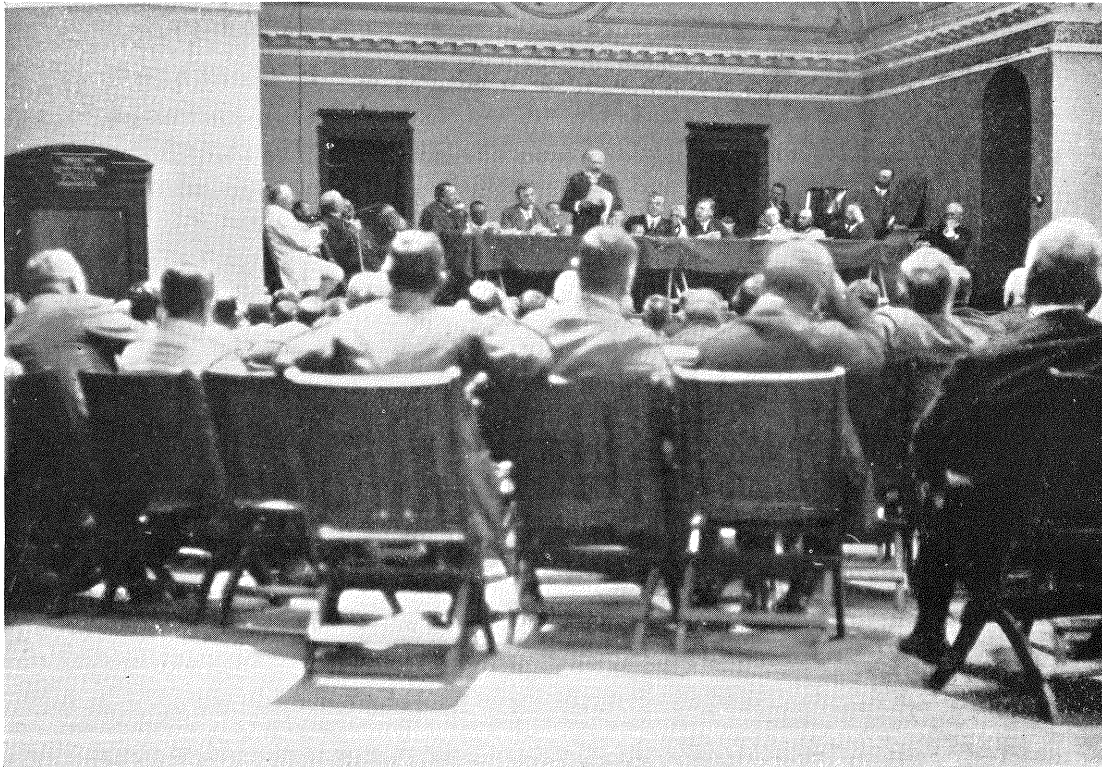
The principal Heidelberg resolutions asked for equal language rights, the postponement of Asiatic importation, and the putting off of any war loan until autonomy had been granted, at a period to be decided upon by the British Government. Lord Milner would have none of these things; this refers especially to the delay in importing Chinamen, for which the mineowners were so desperately

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anxious. The Commission proceeded with its labours, listening to Botha's statement on farm natives, but not allowing him to mention the word 'Chinese.' Within four months the report was ready—in favour of importation, but without unanimity among the members.

*A "Political Dodge."*—On February 12, 1904, the Legislative Council (of which Botha had a year previously refused membership) passed the Chinese Labour Ordinance. Two days earlier a protest had been cabled to the British Government by fifteen of the best-known Boer leaders; Lord Milner stigmatized the document as a "political dodge." It had been sent to the Rt. Hon. A. Lyttelton, Mr Chamberlain's successor at the Colonial Office, and took exception to the latter's pronouncement in the Commons as to the people of the Transvaal demanding Chinese workers; the public at large had never been asked for its views, and an overwhelming proportion of Boers were opposed to importation; the Commission was not an impartial body, nor did the Council represent the people; it would be a "fatal error" to import coolies, so the cable ran.

In June the first batch landed, and it was not long before 50,000 Chinamen were at work on the Rand. Except Botha and his fourteen 'backvelders' no one in South Africa had raised his voice at Westminster, where the arbiters of the Transvaal Crown Colony's fate in those days sat! Five days elapsed before South Africa received the answer to the protest; it proved a remarkably tactless one. It laid down that, in the absence of any stronger evidence than that contained in the cable, the Secretary of State was not in a position to recognize the claim of those who drafted it to be regarded as representing the bulk of the Boer population. Further, it was regretted that the protest had come too late. Lastly, the speeches and votes in favour on the part of the "Boer members" of the Council were quoted. In other words, Botha, de la Rey, Schalk Burger, and Smuts, together with the other authoritative signatories of the protest, were written down as insignificant interpreters of Boer opinion,



#### A PARTY CONGRESS

Party congresses are a regular feature of Transvaal politics. In this photograph General Botha is seen at the end of the table, to the right of the speaker.

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as against half a dozen obscure dummies with which Lord Milner had stuffed his Council! Since the ill-advised Kaiser telegram to Kruger during the Raid period, no such unfortunate message had reached Pretoria. The Lyttelton reply to the fifteen Boer leaders was an insult, inflicted not merely on themselves but on the 16,000 'Bitter-enders' and the even more numerous prisoners-of-war who had willy-nilly resigned themselves to the Vereeniging pact at the instance of those leaders.

Botha could not afford to swallow such a flagrant, and moreover incorrect, rejoinder. The moment had come for making it plain to Mr Lyttelton—as well as to Lord Milner—whose right, and whose duty, it was to act as the mouthpiece of Transvaal Boerdom. He resolved to exchange the private individual's status for that of the public man, and to organize without delay a political party, so that he might disseminate his views from the public platform. Toward the end of March 1904 he addressed a meeting at Krugersdorp. Early in April he told some sixty local leaders at Heidelberg that the moment had arrived for the people to become articulate.

The reports of several High Veld meetings, addressed by Botha, appeared in the newspapers. At the end of April there was a big gathering at Fordsburg, under the battlements of Lord Milner's Johannesburg fortress, where Botha did his best to dispel the fears of those who suspected him of wanting to foment revolution. He praised Natal for the "fine, manly" amnesty to rebels, and expressed the hope that Sir Starr Jameson, as Cape Premier, would likewise pardon those rebels who were still sheltering in the Transvaal. As had happened at the other meetings, delegates were elected at Fordsburg to a congress to be held shortly. This unexpected activity made English people nervous and noisy. They took fright at the thorough manner in which the Dutch were replying to the Government's careless challenge. Within three months an effective party organization had sprung from the soil. It was the first to arise in the ex-Republics.

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'*Het Volk*.'—So it came about that on May 23, 1904, in the *Volkstem* Buildings, Pretoria, a congress was presided over by Botha at which a couple of hundred delegates established 'Het Volk' (The People). This political body remained, for the space of some seven years, a wholesome, progressive factor in South Africa's affairs.

The Chairman's opening speech referred to the ravages of East Coast fever among cattle; it asked for the support of war widows; it opposed Chinese labour, demanded the postponement of amending gold and diamond legislation, condemned the proposed loan of thirty millions, criticized defective educational conditions, and demonstrated that the Boers at least were ripe for responsible government. The discussions lasted three days. Botha recommended his hearers to forgive the 'National Scouts,' while he offered his English-speaking countrymen the hand of fellowship—an act to which many a delegate present, as well as numerous people outside, felt unable to give spontaneous approval.

The congress over, members walked in solemn procession to the Governor's offices, in order to lay the resolutions adopted before his Excellency. Amazed, the townspeople looked on while the determined backwoodsmen marched to their destination. Four abreast, they followed their former Commandant-General, who had now become their recognized political chief. A demonstration of this kind was on the verge of impertinence! The pro-Milner press showed its impatience. How dared the conquered, who were subsisting on charity, talk so frankly, being (in the but recently pacified Crown Colony) the first to establish a political organization!

Before adjourning, the congress had cabled greetings to Switzerland, where Paul Kruger was spending his last days. An impressive reply, containing best wishes, was received from the aged national hero. Just a few weeks later, far from the land of his birth, he was gathered to his fathers.

Henceforth it was a matter of some difficulty to challenge



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Botha's position as a representative politician. When on July 15 a Botha letter to Lord Courtney appeared in the London *Times*, conveying the information that "Repatriation was a complete and melancholy failure," no one either in South Africa or England was able to ask: What does the fellow think of himself that he should be worrying us with his opinions!

## XIV

### BOTHA AS A PARTY LEADER

IN its short life Het Volk fully deserved the undisguised admiration of its opponents as "the best-organized party in the world." The whole of the rural population looked up to Botha as a guide, philosopher, and friend. His assistance and advice were in demand on all sides. Those in trouble—and their name was legion—simply informed Louis Botha. His authority was undisputed; his suggestions were promptly acted upon. He excelled by the moderation of his language as well as of his actions. Outside the Transvaal, too, people began to take notice of him. South Africa, bit by bit, discovered its new leader.

When Botha used the trains in order to reach a meeting-place, it so happened that there was often some hitch in the railway service—public means of communication were then, as now, under Government control. This made him resolve to utilize the motor-car—a vehicle that had become useful for long trips—in order to visit the districts, and personally help to organize the Het Volk party, inspire the people with courage, and urge them to co-operation.

*Commandant Jozua Joubert.*—The National Scouts soon lost their identity as a distinct social, ecclesiastical, and political element. It had been expected that the rift between Bitter-enders and others would become permanent among the Dutch, but within a few years the nation had closed its ranks. The case of Commandant Jozua Joubert had left a deep impression on the public mind. Originally a High Veld sheep farmer, he could point to a long and honourable military career. Wounded in the first War of Independence, he had served against Mapoch, Jameson, and Magato. During the Boer war he commanded his

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burghers at Dundee and Colenso. Here he was once more wounded, but toward the end of May 1900 he was able to resume his command. A year later, his arm was shot off by another Boer, near Amersfoort. His horse had suffered so severely that he did his best to proceed on foot. His A.D.C. helped him to reach a field hospital, where he was taken prisoner after the lapse of a month. His arm was then amputated.

After peace he returned to his district, where he visited the man who, in the enemy's service, had fired on him and his people. The disabled commandant indicated that he wanted to become reconciled to his late opponents, in order to live together as neighbours should.

When a man of extraordinary valour showed brotherliness and self-control in such exemplary manner, others could not possibly perpetuate hatred. Wherever he could, Botha publicly proved that he was not vindictive, even though, during the Middelburg interview with Lord Kitchener in 1901, he had launched out violently against those burghers who had proved unfaithful. Botha did not explain this systematic mildness on the grounds of high ideals or Christian ethics; his argument, and it proved irresistible, was that enduring division between Bitter-enders and others would seriously jeopardize the chances of both in looking for political and economic reconstruction.

When, at the foundation of Het Volk, he preached his doctrine of reconciliation, it was just as if he talked to deaf ears—so deep-rooted was the resentment felt toward the National Scouts. Botha's logic, however, was so convincing, and the other section welcomed it so readily, that the breach was healed within a couple of years. In the course of his peroration at the first Het Volk Congress he said:

“Let us put back the past so far that it no longer has any power to keep us apart. Less than a year ago we were in opposite camps—men of the same house passed each other without a handshake. To-night we are gathered in order to consider the fortunes of one and all. So mote it be!

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Let us do all we can to heal the breach, then we shall again become great. Let the names of 'Handsupper' and 'National Scout' be excised from our vocabulary. The honour of the people is a thing too great and delicate to be tarnished by such stains."

Once he remarked to a friend: "Treat National Scouts exactly like blind sheep." Sheep that are born blind are often cured by the application of a caustic fluid that removes the obstructing film, and so restores sight.

*National Education and "Secret Funds."*—There was another extremely important subject that claimed the careful attention of the Boers. All school buildings, even those which had belonged to school committees, were converted holus-bolus by Lord Milner into Crown property. The Dutch language was bundled out of the schools. The Boers, very much dissatisfied, resolved to have their own organization, which became known as "Christian National Education" (Dutch abbreviation: C.N.O.). In order to ensure its success the leaders called on pre-war teachers. The idea proved highly successful. Flourishing C.N.O. schools arose in all the country districts of the Transvaal. Local supporters were enthusiastically helpful. Cordial co-operation was lent by Dr Leyds, who had been for years State Secretary during the Kruger régime.

Until the peace of Vereeniging he had acted as the Republic's plenipotentiary at Brussels; his unchanging devotion to the Boer cause, coupled with his absolute dependability, gained him the high esteem of the Boer leaders. The administration of certain funds that had been the property of the South African Republic Government had been entrusted to him. It is wrong to refer to these funds as the "Kruger millions," which are supposed to have been sent to Europe after the outbreak of war or, alternatively, to have been taken away in Kruger's portmanteau. The President neither took any money with him nor received anything subsequently. What had happened was that, on the outbreak of hostilities, the Republic kept a banking-account in Europe, from which sundry expenditure



DESIGN FOR A STAINED-GLASS WINDOW

A cartoon by A. W. Lloyd in the Johannesburg  
*Sunday Times* (1907)

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was being defrayed. When in 1900 the two Presidents at Pretoria conferred on urgent matters, it was agreed that, if the oversea funds belonging to the Transvaal survived the war, any balance would be used on behalf of education as well as widows and orphans. At that time the Free State had received £800,000 (partly in gold, partly in notes) from the Transvaal Exchequer on account of its war expenditure.

During the war part of the money was sent back to South Africa by couriers. It is probable that some of the amounts thus forwarded did not reach their destination. Another part was used to keep the pro-Boer propaganda going, under Dr Leyds' energetic and able management. It served the purpose of instilling into the mind of Britain the necessity for a peace that would be an honourable one to the Boers, and thus help to recover for England its damaged prestige.

Yet another part of the money was spent on clothing and munitions, skilfully smuggled through to the commandos. Further, expenses for travelling and maintenance had to be met in connexion with several South Africans who came to Europe, such as President Kruger and staff, the delegates Fischer, C. Wessels, and A. D. W. Wolmarans, Mrs Botha, Mrs Reitz, and, afterward, President Steyn—not to mention hundreds of others. When peace came, the money was not exhausted, and there was also a special fund in aid of the Boers, to the credit of which Dr Leyds placed all contributions, sent him from every quarter of the globe in support of the Boer people. It is now a couple of years since this fund was finally wound up and liquidated. During peace negotiations the sums in question were never referred to. During Botha's first visit to Europe he at first contemplated having them shifted to Pretoria, for the new Government to administer. This scheme, inspired by a fleeting idea of 'doing the big thing,' was soon abandoned.

When Chamberlain alluded to the funds, Botha showed no interest in the matter; still less would he assume responsibility. He pointed out to Chamberlain that the Treaty did

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not mention the money, so that no obligation rested on him. Many people have been unable to shed their illusions regarding the "Kruger millions," preferring to adhere to an unjustifiable faith in their number and inexhaustibility. During the 1915 general election political passion rose very high among Afrikanders, and Botha was reluctantly compelled to take legal proceedings against an excitable politician who suggested that the Commandant-General had made some improper use of the "millions." It would be superfluous to emphasize that Dr Leyds, as trustee, has throughout administered the funds in the most punctilious manner. Steps have been taken in order to ensure that future historians shall have access to full information on the subject.

*Paul Kruger's Funeral.*—It was a matter of intense satisfaction to Botha that the solemn obsequies of President Kruger proved to be one of the most impressive national ceremonies ever witnessed by South Africa. On December 16, 1904, the funeral took place at Pretoria. Botha had accompanied the body on its train journey from Capetown. At all stations along the route of over a thousand miles people came in their numbers in order to render the last honours to the funeral cortège. Botha was the heart and soul of the committee in charge of the ceremonies. His tactfulness had led to fine co-operation with the authorities. The English section showed its sympathy and respect when the mortal remains of the great Afrikander were laid to rest in his native soil, amid demonstrations of deepest homage.

The majority of the principal Boer leaders came to Pretoria for the occasion. On the day after the funeral the most prominent among them took advantage of the opportunity to express to Lord Milner their desire that no change should be made in the government, until such time as full autonomy could be granted. All in vain! On March 31, 1905, Letters Patent, instituting a travesty of 'representative' government for the Transvaal, were issued in London. The Free State had to put up with a continuation of its Crown Colony *régime*.

## BOTH A AND CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

**D**URING the first six months of Chinese labour on the Rand the public had no cause for complaint. Early in 1905, however, deserters murdered a certain Mr Joubert. A series of crimes of a like nature followed. Protest meetings were held in the country districts, which were overrun by the Chinamen. Deputations were sent to the authorities—all in vain. The Cape enacted a law excluding the Chinese.

The situation developed in such a serious manner that English party politics became involved, the Imperial Government constituting itself the strenuous defender of the coolie system. On March 31, 1905 the Lyttelton Constitution, granting 'representative' government to the Transvaal, was promulgated. An elected council, without the right of financial initiative, could legislate subject to veto by Downing Street's 'royal pleasure.' In April Lord Milner left.

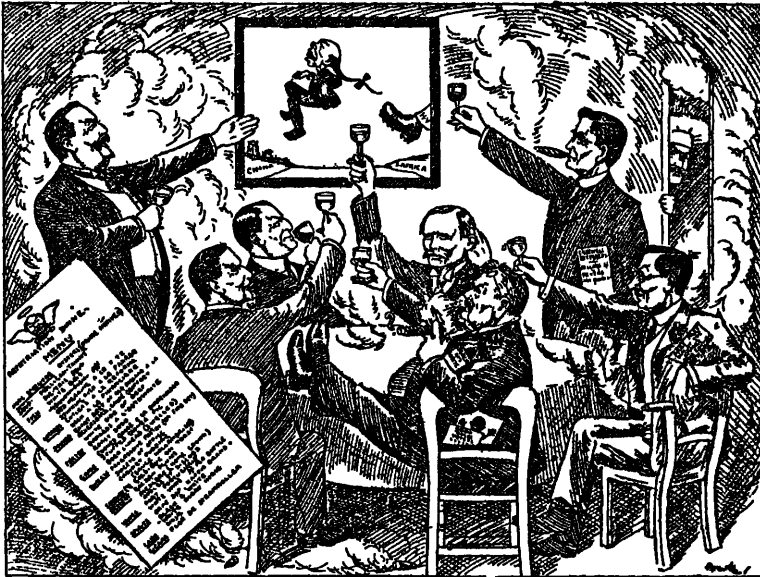
In May, Generals Botha, Smuts, and Beyers bearded the lion in its den. At the Wanderers, Johannesburg, they addressed a mass meeting in opposition to the Lyttelton Constitution. Their main argument was that constant friction would be unavoidable in an elected assembly supposed to control a nominated executive. Before the Boer War it would have been hopeless for one of their kind to try to hold such a meeting on the Rand, let alone expect to find sympathy, but times had changed; the mining magnates were put to it to defend their former popularity.

Strong insinuations against the loyalty of anyone who ventured to shake hands politically with the Boers were made. Years were destined to pass before the seed of



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conciliation led to the harvest anticipated. Nevertheless, Botha found support among prominent Johannesburgers, who founded the Responsible Government Association. They co-operated with Het Volk against the Lyttelton scheme, disappointed as they were with the results of Milner administration. The pro-Chinese had established the



THE ANTI-CHINESE CELEBRATING

A cartoon by A. W. Lloyd in the *Johannesburg Sunday Times* (1907)

Progressive Party. With a degree of disgust that was by no means unintelligible they contended that it would be madness to enable the Boers to regain through the ballot-box what they had lost by the rifle, after England's sacrifice of 30,000 lives and £250,000,000.

Party strife waxed furious, but Botha knew how to preserve a well-advised calm. He saw to it that the skirmishing fell chiefly to the lot of the 'Responsibles.' The English-speaking section could easily be forgiven for suspecting his increasing influence, yet it was never his

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intention at the time that *Het Volk* should supply a Government immediately, the 'responsible' constitution headvocate came into being.

Toward the end of 1905 the Chinese furore dominated election platforms in Great Britain. The result was a smashing blow to the pro-Chinese—for the last time the United Kingdom actively intervened in South Africa's vital concerns. It was realized, as never before, that South Africa was a hornet's nest that should be left very much to itself! The man in the street was getting tired of his responsibility for the sphinx-like country of Kruger and Rhodes. It was a cold *douche* to him to notice that the complexion of the British Government had come to depend on the category of labour that was or was not held desirable for an uninteresting expanse of gold reef in the unsympathetic Transvaal.

After the Liberal victory Botha induced General Smuts to pay a 'private' visit to London. General Smuts soon got busy, without any particularly friendly reception in Fleet Street. The new Government had not yet had time to familiarize itself with details of administration. General Smuts interviewed prominent statesmen, and left a memorandum with the Colonial Office, embodying Botha's views. "Let it be clearly understood," it stated, "once for all that the Boers and their leaders do not wish to raise the question of the annexation of the new colonies or the British flag. They accept accomplished facts," and therefore wished to take part in responsible government.

For the Orange Free State, too, General Smuts demanded the "freest and best constitution," at a time when the Free Staters themselves somehow had not found occasion openly to register their wishes. In March 1906 General Smuts and General Botha visited the late President Steyn. London matters were discussed, and it was not long before political activity was organized in the Free State as well. The President in May made his first public appearance since 1902; the Orangia Unie was established at Bloemfontein two years after *Het Volk* was founded. Shortly

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afterward, Botha was blamed in the Free State because the Transvaal was a few months ahead in obtaining self-government.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the new British Premier, never hesitated for a moment in regard to his Transvaal policy, which had made the Liberals victorious. As far back as March 2, 1901 (just after the Kitchener-Botha meeting at Middelburg), he had made his Oxford speech against any halfway-house *régime*. On February 8, 1906, he strongly appealed to his Cabinet to entrust to Boer and Briton jointly the fate of their common country. Five days later it was formally resolved to abrogate the Lyttelton Constitution and to send out a Royal Commission of Inquiry. In May the Commission started its work at Pretoria.

Autonomy was to be granted the two annexed States within five years of Vereeniging! Kitchener's hint to General Smuts during the Vereeniging peace negotiations about Liberal potentialities proved to have been an honourable and correct one. Often I have heard Botha discuss Campbell-Bannerman; always he showed the sincerest esteem and appreciation of his unique and honest statesmanship. John Bull, it is true, had grown tired of South Africa. This, however, could not derogate from the merits of the statesman who had found—and dared to use—the key for a permanent understanding between the two countries.

At Campbell-Bannerman's death in 1908 Botha cabled: "Have learnt with deepest sorrow of the passing of C. B., in whom the Empire loses one of its wisest statesmen and the Transvaal one of the truest friends. In securing self-government for the new colonies, he not only raised an imperishable monument to himself, but through the policy of trust he inspired the people of South Africa with a new feeling of hopefulness and co-operation. In making it possible for the two races to live and work together harmoniously, he has laid the foundation of a united South Africa."

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Lord Morley, in his reminiscences, relates that Botha during his 1909 stay in London gave a banquet to Ministers. There were no speeches; toasts were confined to two: the King, and, in Botha's words, "To the memory of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman." On this note of simplicity, Morley observes, ended a long period of stress and storm, in which both Campbell-Bannerman and Botha had worthily taken their parts.

Botha was not very trustful toward the Royal Commission; he brought General Smuts as an interpreter to his meetings with its members. Smuts was not enthusiastic either. On May 15, 1906, he wrote to the late Mr Merriman, then leader of the Cape Opposition:

They are well meaning, but weak, and I at any rate expect very little from them. The unexpected sometimes happens, so I shall not despair. They do not take evidence, but have confidential conversations, so as to get at the inwardness of the situation. We are fighting a big fight, and must bring every bit of reserve into the field.

A few days later he wrote: "We do not wish for political power. But when I look at the dark prospect, I could almost wish to have despotic power." These were references to the Chinese imbroglio. On June 22 he complained to Merriman that the Commission contemplated excessive Witwatersrand representation.

President Steyn, too, was pessimistic. Early in May he wrote to Merriman: "I do not expect much from them. How they will be able to understand in three months' time our complex situation I do not know."

The "vote British" circles, of course, got busy. Sir Abe Bailey and Sir Percy Fitzpatrick went to England, looking for support for a scheme that was to assure them a Parliamentary majority. English experts advised adopting the Cape franchise for non-whites.

Yet the unexpected did happen—an acceptable constitution was produced. The only ground for criticism was the nomination by the Governor of members of the Upper House. The British Parliament confirmed the Letters

## BOTHA AND CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

Patent without a division, and in December 1906 they were promulgated.

The Free State obtained its constitution in June 1907. A lot of dust was raised, however, before matters were finally settled. Lord Milner made his maiden speech in the Lords, violently condemning the Government's proposals as mischievous. Mr Balfour made a rumpus in the Commons. "An audacious experiment," was his term. "There is nothing," he argued, "to prevent the Transvaal making every preparation, constitutionally, quietly, without external interference, for a new war."

On their part, the advocates of autonomy—*e.g.*, Mr Churchill, who had joined the Cabinet—strongly criticized Lord Milner's deeds in South Africa. Even the King took sides in an issue that moved the whole of the United Kingdom. From Marienbad, the Bohemian watering-place, King Edward wrote to Churchill:

It would be deplorable to run the risk of having another war in South Africa, or of losing the colony, where we have spent so much blood and money. . . . As long as you are careful to maintain British supremacy you may rest assured that any measure the Government may take for the welfare of South Africa will receive His Majesty's approval.

Naturally, the slightest *faux pas* by the Boer leaders would have intensified the difficulties in the way of the Liberal Government. At the same time, Botha and Smuts were hard put to it to induce the farmers not to take the law into their own hands against the Chinese marauders, who were terrorizing the countryside.

Ten years afterward General Smuts acted as a member of the War Cabinet in London. On April 2, 1917, he said in a speech:

The Boer war was supplemented, complemented, or compensated by one of the wisest political settlements ever made in the history of the English nation. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was an Empire builder. He was not either intellectually or politically a superman, but he was a wise man with profound political instinct.

## GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA

Lord Shaw mentions in his *Letters to Isabel* how Botha during the 1907 Imperial Conference described a recent meeting with Balfour.

BALFOUR : Well, Botha, you have done it; yet you have got your constitution. What will come of it?

BOTHA : I believe that in five years I shall return to this country to ask for the confederation of South Africa.

BALFOUR : No! This thing is impossible, incredible!

BOTHA : We shall see.

In considerably less than five years he was back. On this occasion Balfour said, "Well, General Botha, this is extraordinary. You have done it again; you have got confederation."

Botha answered, "Mr Balfour, will you wash your hands of that?"

"Not very likely," Mr Balfour replied.

Ten years later the two often met at the Paris Peace Conference. Repeatedly I was privileged to witness the pleasant behaviour of the aged British statesman toward the Union's Premier. South Africa had shown itself worthy of the "audacious experiment." Botha had made a great success of it—but at the expense of what personal sacrifice, distress, and exertion!

*The Parties in 1906.*—The Royal Commission of 1906 had to devote its attention chiefly to delimitation. Each of the four parties, Het Volk, the Responsibles, the Progressives, and Labour, was after its own advantage. The principal bone of contention was the proportion between the number of seats to be allotted to the Rand-cum-Pretoria on the one hand, and the country districts on the other. The complexion of many a constituency was in the highest degree problematical, and everyone wanted to guard against election disappointments.

Botha's tactics continued in the direction of giving great prominence to his English-speaking 'Responsible' allies. This was consistent, because he never dreamt of posing as the champion of a redivivus of the pre-war Boer *régime*. It

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was frankly agreed that an anti-Chinese victory at the polls would mean the Premiership of the late Sir Richard Solomon, then Lieut.-Governor. He was not a strong



### HISTORY DEFEATS ITSELF

SHADE OF PAUL KRÜGER: "What! Botha Premier? Well, these English *do* 'stagger humanity'!"

*Reproduced by permission of the Proprietors of "Punch"*

man. Originally he had been pro-Chinese, but he became one of the leaders of the 'Responsibles,' and had the merit of having been given gubernatorial dignity by the Conservatives!

## GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA

The Assembly elections of March 1907 provided a sensation. Het Volk won thirty-seven out of sixty-seven seats, and therefore had an absolute majority. The Pro-



THE TRANSVAAL ELECTION OF 1907

A cartoon by A. W. Lloyd in the *Johannesburg Sunday Times*

gressives managed to get twenty-one, the 'Responsibles' six, and Labour three.

The first 'Senate' was appointed by Lord Selborne, the Governor. He hastened to bestow the majority on the Progressives, who had not even been able to obtain one-third of the seats in the elective body!



## XVI

### BOTHA AS TRANSVAAL PREMIER

THE Het Volk victory showed that Botha's conciliation propaganda, and especially his denunciation of the importation of Chinamen as "a crime," had made a deep impression. This applies to a number of English-speaking electors as well, although these had been told by the Progressive Party that their duty was to "vote British." Often it was thrown in his face that he should have preached conciliation to the English, rather than worry his own people. Concrete results in 1907, however, proved that he and General Smuts had not pleaded, everywhere and at all times, in vain. Het Volk attracted to its banners several English-speaking candidates, and some of them were elected. Many English-speaking voters, on their part, gave their support to either 'Responsibles' or Het Volkers. Years had to pass before racialism was to vanish from South African party politics, but the success of the initial effort was encouraging.

Botha's ideals, in effect, began to take root. In order to give expression to the public gratitude for Botha's considerable share in the victory at the polls, *The Volkstem*, shortly after the elections, organized a collection for the purpose of making a presentation. General Smuts, for the occasion, wrote to the editor:

I agree that no one more than General Botha is entitled to gratitude and recognition. The victory of the people's party at the polls is chiefly due to his never-flagging endeavours, which began on the day when peace was proclaimed, in the cause of welding the inhabitants of the Transvaal into a compact, lasting organization; to his common sense and well-considered counsel; to his moderate policy and his work for cordial racial co-operation. These outstanding merits deserve worthy acknowledgment.

## GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA

Sir Richard Solomon, having been nominated as a candidate against the Progressives in a Pretoria constituency, resigned his appointment as Lieut.-Governor. Though regarded as a potential premier, he was not the man to call forth great enthusiasm. His official work had been very fruitful. In August 1906 General Smuts wrote of him to Mr Merriman: "As he is weak, wise and strong colleagues, if such there be, will mould him." And, in December: "We shall be prepared to work with Sir R. S., if he is sound on fundamentals, and recants the Chinese heresy; but his position will be difficult, anomalous and unhappy." A few weeks later, President Steyn wrote to Mr Merriman: "I do not understand Het Volk supporting a man like Sir R. S., a pro-Chinese, a Milnerite, a man who did not scruple to share in the spoils of a war which he condemned."

That even a man like President Steyn found difficulty in understanding conditions in the adjoining province is striking. Het Volk was concerned, first, with delivering South Africa from the political domination of the gold magnates, and with getting rid of the Chinese. In addition, it was in the interests of South Africa to have a Het Volk victory assisted by removing, in anticipation, any semblance of a defiant, anti-British triumph. In the absence of a more acceptable personage, the provisional choice of a prime minister had to fall on Sir R. Solomon—in spite of his assailable past as a politician—instead of on Botha or Smuts; mention of either of whom might perhaps have caused a stampede.

Botha never was ambitious enough to earmark the premiership as something he would be perfectly entitled to claim. Had circumstances permitted it, he would have been satisfied to leave the helm of State in the hands of General Smuts, Mr F. S. Malan, and other worthy leaders, contenting himself with a minor part. The work of a parliamentarian never appealed to him—rather was it the other way about.

Sir Richard Solomon had over-estimated his chances. He was defeated at the polls, and the question arose whether

## BOTHA AS TRANSVAAL PREMIER

Het Volk was called upon to give him a safe seat in the Assembly, as a preliminary to the premiership. The Het Volk victory, however, was so decisive in favour of Botha and Smuts that there was no longer any good reason why anyone else's premiership should have been considered. Without an opportunity of consulting leaders, *The Volkstem*, which was their party organ, on its own responsibility advised the defeated candidate to leave politics, and not to allow his friends to force him.

The hint was taken. On March 4, 1907, the Botha Cabinet was sworn by Lord Selborne, the Governor, as something unavoidable and a matter of course. It was scarcely five years since the death-knell of the Republics had sounded. Botha on that occasion had urged his distracted comrades to preserve their faith in the future, and to avoid national suicide. Now the ex-Commandant-General of the Republic was the responsible head of the Transvaal Government; the system that had made Lord Milner possible had finally gone.

*Smuts Stands Back.*—There was, however, a third person whose name had been mentioned in connexion with the premiership, viz., General Smuts, whose virtues as a platform speaker and unmistakable statecraft were much admired. Nevertheless, he was not a candidate. On the day when he was sworn as Colonial Secretary and Minister of Education, he wrote to Merriman:

I might have been Premier, but considered that it would be a mistake to take precedence over Botha, who is really one of the first men South Africa has ever produced. If he had culture, as he has chivalry and common sense, there would not be his equal in South Africa. The varsity boys in his team will help him most loyally, and I hope that events will justify the arrangement of the Cabinet. . . . None of us have any parliamentary experience, and we are horribly afraid.

Three years later, Merriman imagined that he himself was entitled to the reversion of the Union premiership, and he refused a portfolio in the Botha Cabinet.

*The 'Responsibles.'*—Although the 'Responsibles' numbered barely half a dozen in the Assembly, Botha took

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their leader into his ministry. They soon amalgamated with Het Volk. Immediately after the victory, General Smuts wrote to Merriman: "I am exceedingly anxious not to have a pure Het Volk ministry. On a policy of racial peace we carried many English constituencies with us, and I wish we should continue that policy night and day."

In spite of the suspicion with which Botha's policy of conciliation was regarded by a large section of the British, the Government's prestige was not long in finding a firm foundation, both in the Transvaal and abroad. Johannesburg prognostications of irretrievable ruin for the share market in case Het Volk gained the day turned out to be incorrect. The new rulers keenly realized that world economics depended very largely on Pretoria sympathy toward the Transvaal gold industry. Pretoria, for all its anti-Chinese proclivities, had common sense and forethought.

Before he had found time to familiarize himself with his official duties, Botha was summoned to London, where he had to attend an Imperial Conference. Before leaving he was only just able to attend the opening of Parliament at Pretoria by Lord Selborne, on March 21, 1907. In the Speech, Lord Selborne announced that "My Ministers have decided that the employment of Chinese labour by the Witwatersrand mines must cease at the earliest possible moment."

Lord Selborne was not among those who rejoiced at the turn of events. In those days of excitement—in England as well as in South Africa—he gave the following portrait of Botha in a private letter to King Edward:

A born leader of men, with plenty of moral courage, a man of natural dignity of manner and reserve, who does not wear his heart on his sleeve, and will not go enthusing with English Radicals, whom, being a great Tory by nature (as all Boers are), he will probably dislike.

The reference to Botha's relation to the situation of parties in Great Britain is characteristic, and proves the far-reaching influence he wielded, even in those days.

## XVII

### BOTHA AND THE 1907 IMPERIAL CONFERENCE

IT is no secret to-day that those who were called upon to take part in Imperial Conferences a quarter of a century ago did not attach quite the same importance to them as did the people in general, who were chiefly impressed by the pomp which surrounded them. The Colonial Office used to feel flattered at being, for a couple of weeks, say, the centre of attention of the British—and perhaps of a wider—world. The fact of the deliberations not being public whetted people's curiosity; and from a sentimental standpoint the Conferences were undoubtedly valuable. As the 1907 Conference immediately succeeded Botha's installation as Transvaal premier he might easily have excused himself. The Empire, one might think, would not have suffered merely because its latest baby was not represented at the discussions in the Metropolis. Botha, however, considered it advisable to go.

On his arrival in England he was at once made the hero of the hour; nor was he backward in showing his gratification at the turn events had taken. Less than five years ago he had come as a suppliant, and stayed at a small, out-of-the-way hotel; now he was the British Government's honoured guest as the peer of the most prominent statesmen in the Empire. The Liberal Government felt pleased at Botha's presence, because it made the ordinary citizen respect Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman's wise policy of trusting the Boers.

Immediately the ease with which Botha moved among the highest official and social circles drew attention. In this he was assisted by his remarkable memory for faces and names. During the Boer War he used to visit the