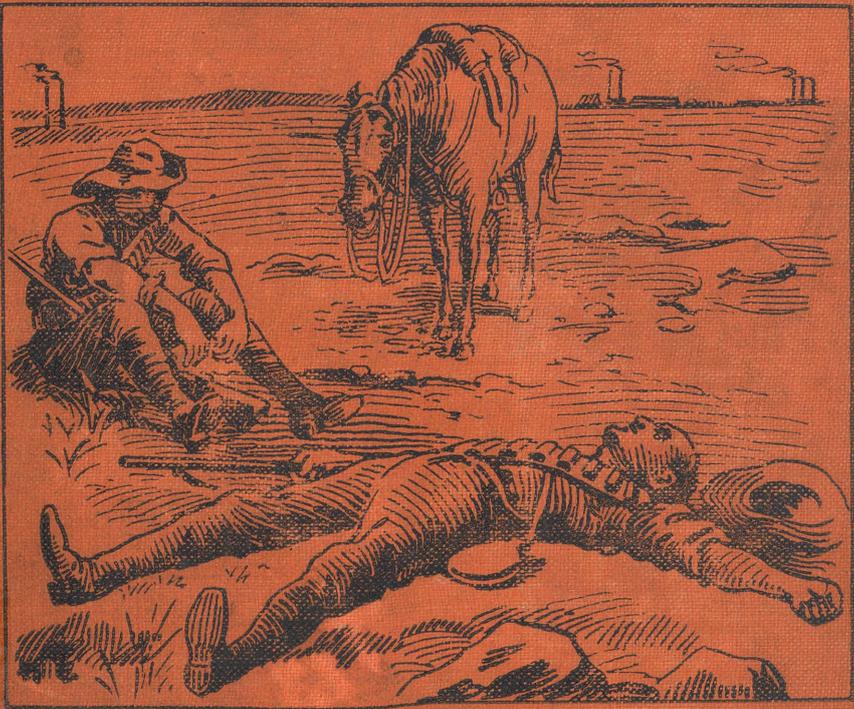


The Story of an  
African Crisis



F. E. Garrett

**THE STORY OF AN  
AFRICAN CRISIS**

# THE STORY OF AN AFRICAN CRISIS

BEING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE JAMESON RAID  
AND JOHANNESBURG REVOLT OF 1896  
TOLD WITH THE ASSISTANCE  
OF THE LEADING ACTORS  
IN THE DRAMA



BY

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APPENDICES AND INTRODUCTION**

# Preface to the Present Edition

## STORY OF AN AFRICAN CRISIS

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THE part of this little book which deals with the House of Commons Inquiry is new. The part which tells the Story of the Raid and Revolt is also new to the English public, and has been in the hands of the South African public not many weeks.

“The Story of a Crisis,” published as the 1896 Christmas Number of the *Cape Times*, was intended for both these audiences; but the whole edition was exhausted by Cape Town, or at least by Cape Colony, eleven thousand copies being bought on the day of publication. Thus England was left practically unsupplied, though the reviewers have written very kind things already on the strength of the few copies that were accessible. By permission of the proprietors of the *Cape Times*, I have therefore arranged with Messrs. Archibald Constable & Co. that they should issue the Story in its present form, adding, besides some documentary Appendices which I hope will be found useful for reference, an Introduction dealing with the immediate developments of the hour.

As to the division of authorship, I am indebted to my friend and colleague, Mr. E. J. Edwards, for the most part of Chapters ix., xii., xiv., xv., the idea throughout being to make the narrative as far as possible first-hand.

F. E. G.

**BUTLER & TANNER,  
THE SELWOOD PRINTING WORKS,  
FROME, AND LONDON.**

## Preface to the African Edition

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“**W**HAT an interesting story it would all make, if one could only get at the truth about it!” has been a common expression ever since the South African Crisis of last New Year first electrified the world.

For a long time the truth was difficult to get at, and on some points impossible to publish; but the psychological moment now seems to have come for telling the story.

The Jameson trial is over; the Reform trials are over; the Cape Select Committee has published its Report; the British Government has published Blue-books, and the Transvaal Government Green-books; the English Inquiry, by common consent, has little left to discover, and cannot well report till that little has become ancient history.

We are far enough removed now from these astonishing events for the story to be no longer *sub judice*; we are near enough to them still for memories to be fresh and first-hand evidence accessible.

The exact meaning of our phrase, “with the assistance of leading actors,” is simply that the narrator has talked over crucial points, or secured communication, with almost every single man who could be so described; and he believes that the result takes fairly into account all the conflicting versions, as between the Reformers and the Imperial Government, the Reformers and the Raiders, the Raiders and the Boers; as to the relations between Rhodes and Jameson, and the other vexed questions. Most of these have been winnowed through the columns of the *Cape Times* during this stirring year, and the truth about some of them was first published in those columns. But many interesting details appear here for the

## viii PREFACE TO THE AFRICAN EDITION

first time, especially as to that political and personal side of the Crisis, the scenes of which were Cape Town and Pretoria rather than Johannesburg or Doornkop.

The story, dictated in the intervals of other work, makes no literary pretensions. The teller had to consider two classes of reader: those in South Africa, and those in England. As "The Princess" has it,—

"And I, betwixt them both, to please them both,  
And yet to give the Story as it rose,  
I moved as in a strange diagonal,  
And maybe neither pleased myself nor them."

The attempt has been to make the story readable and intelligible. If that much has been attained, the defects incident to haste, a late change of plan, and the unresting wheel of a daily paper, may perhaps be overlooked.

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# Introduction

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## WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS INQUIRY

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**S**INCE the Story set out in the following pages was written, a distinct change has come, not over the facts themselves, of course, nor even over the facts so far as known to the writer and here set out, but over the face and public colour of the Inquiry which is now beginning. In this Introduction I propose to deal with the history of this change, and with the true inwardness of the new issues which it raises.

The Situation of the Moment. The centre of gravity has changed from Cape Town to London, and it has come to seem, for the moment, as if the man who must stand or fall by the Committee were not Mr. Cecil Rhodes any longer, but rather Mr. Joseph Chamberlain.

Mr. Rhodes' Position. Around Mr. Rhodes' figure the air has cleared. In spite of the obstinate, year-long silence that he has kept, it is beginning to be fairly understood what his relationship to Dr. Jameson's venture was, and also what it was not. The whole episode is seen more in relation to the rest of Mr. Rhodes' extraordinary career, and to the permanent factors in South African politics. In South Africa men have already made up their minds about Mr. Rhodes' action, and, sensibly or insensibly, taken sides upon it. I do not think this Inquiry is likely to touch his position there, either for good or evil, except transiently.

Very different is the case with Mr. Chamberlain. If the rumour now revived were made good, and the strongest of Colonial Secretaries, equally with the strongest of Colonial Premiers, proved to be "in it up to his neck," he would be "in" a deep slough indeed. What matters more, what matters incalculably, he would have carried England "in" with him.

Mr. Chamberlain's Position.

In the game of cards that is playing between Mr. Kruger and Mr. Chamberlain, there are two trumps yet unplayed.

The Chamberlain trump card would be the conviction of the President of complicity in the Berlin intrigue begun by his State Secretary and rashly signaled by the Kaiser's telegram.

The Kruger trump card would be the conviction of the Colonial Secretary of complicity in the Jameson Raid.

And this, if we are to believe the gossip which has now circulated to every corner of the world, is the card which is about to be put into Mr. Kruger's hand by a Select Committee of the British House of Commons!

After Mr. Chamberlain's despatches, if not before, it is quite impossible to conceive anything more crushing to his personal reputation, or more damaging to *perfidie Albion* on the Continent, to "the Imperial Factor" in South Africa.

The history of this gossip so far is as follows.

The first emergence of the rumour at the time of the Crisis is duly chronicled in the Story. Up to December, 1895, there

The Biography of a Rumour. was no idea abroad in South Africa at large of any change in the traditionally "correct" attitude of the Colonial Office to the *Uitlander* agitation in the Transvaal. The action taken on the Drifts Question<sup>1</sup> seemed to be strictly within the four corners of the London Convention, and was not taken as promising any interference with the Transvaal internally.

At the time of the Crisis, however, there was undoubtedly a

<sup>1</sup> Chap. i., pp. 22, 23.

firm impression among those who were "in the secret," or even on the outer fringes of the secret, alike at Cape Town and at Johannesburg, that Chamberlain was behind Rhodes, just as Rhodes was behind Jameson; in short, that "Chamberlain," as it was commonly put, was "in it up to his neck." It was but a whisper that had been passed round, till the "prompt and vigorous action," so much applauded by Mr. Chamberlain's colleagues and countrymen, provoked the less discreet confederates to babble.<sup>1</sup>

In those first days the public mind was not familiarized with the distinction between what Dr. Jameson actually did and what Mr. Rhodes had been ready to sanction his doing. The first murmurs at Johannesburg seemed to blame Mr. Chamberlain for "deserting" a blunder which even Mr. Rhodes had to disavow.

By the Transvaal Boers it was assumed, as a matter of course, with or without any rumours to fan the ever-ready suspicion, that Jameson's policemen embodied a <sup>Boer</sup> British official plot. Krugersdorp was to them another Laing's Nek, and Doornkop the second Majuba. Hence the cry that Oom Paul should tear up the Convention; and there was a juncture at which a very ugly situation might easily have arisen, but for the credit which Sir Hercules Robinson commanded with Afrikaner leaders. That one fact entitles Lord Rosmead to our gratitude.<sup>2</sup> Has it ever struck the reader what the position would have been if (for instance) Mr. Hofmeyr and the Acting President of the Free State had suddenly joined President Kruger in an appeal from the perfidy of the British Government to the united moral sense of Europe? When Englishmen are facing a world in arms, they do like to be able to think they are in the right.

Thanks to Sir Hercules' private influence and the uncompromising correctness of Mr. Chamberlain's public action

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xii., p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> Chap. xiii., p. 182.

The Rumour against, not the Raiders only, but Mr. Rhodes and killed in the Chartered Company, all this gossip soon died South Africa. a natural death in South Africa, despite some efforts of the Pretoria Government's Reptile Press to keep it alive. A Colonial Minister (Sir James Sivewright), in the course of the debate on the Charter in the Cape Assembly, made a rather mischievous reference to what has been called the clairvoyance of Mr. Fairfield ;<sup>1</sup> but nobody took much notice. The very complete telegraphic finds of the Transvaal Government compromised no Imperial official, save one Bechuanaland magistrate, and the anxiety of some members of the Cape Select Committee to drag in the Imperial Secretary (Sir Graham Bower) ended in disappointment. Meanwhile, the rumour which died a natural death in South Africa was being galvanized into artificial life in England.

For the numerous political enemies of Mr. Chamberlain there were obvious temptations, and equally for the friends of Mr. Rhodes ; but those who first succumbed fall strictly under neither of these designations. It Revived in England by the Raiders. was reserved for those who commanded (so far as anybody did command) in the Raid itself—those British officers, or ex-officers, at whom already "all the world wondered," not quite in the Balaclavan sense—it was reserved for these strategists to show what kind of a hand they could make in *la haute politique*, by first giving body to the nine days' gossip of Johannesburg.

The impression which had got round among the plotters before the Crisis as to Imperial backing prevailed among the confederates at Pitsani, as well as at Johannesburg and Cape Town.

It was in the mind of Major "Bobby" White, no doubt, as he pulled on his riding gloves and called out to Inspector Fuller of the Cape Police, "It's all right, old chap ; you can do what you like : the wires are cut !" It was the idea

<sup>1</sup> For probable explanation see chap. vi., p. 62.

which Dr. Jameson and Sir John Willoughby, in perfect good faith, conveyed to officers and men alike, as they "ga'ed o'er the border"; and it is just conceivable that it survived even the delivery to each several officer of a several note, from the High Commissioner, bidding him to stop, "on pain of rendering yourself liable to severe penalties."<sup>1</sup> It is just conceivable, I say, that Sir John Willoughby and his officers dismissed this explicit warning at all parts of the game. It is quite possible to admire them for deciding, since they had got so far, that they must now go through with it, and trust to success to cover up a splendid indiscipline. That one can understand. What puzzles is why, if all this was to be part of the game, it should not be equally part of the game to pay the forfeit of failure smiling. "Victory or Westminster Abbey" was Nelson's word; Jameson's men might, at least, have accepted the alternative, "Johannesburg or Holloway!" But that was not the view of all of them.

"Cast off by everybody, on they went, a fair mark for every Boer rifle. Careers and commissions they threw to the winds." So I remember writing of them in their darkest hour,—a little rhetorically, no doubt, for we were all a good deal moved. But, lo! it turns out that to throw careers and commissions to the wind was the last thing that some of these gentlemen, or their friends, and advisers, and spokesmen, contemplated.

In the Pretoria gaol, the first cell occupied by the four Johannesburg leaders was one just vacated by the Raid officers; and they found scribbled on the vermin-haunted wall the Essex-Elizabeth couplet:

"I fain would climb, but I fear to fall;  
If thy heart fail thee, climb not at all."

The controversy between Raiders and Reformers—idle, indeed, where there were so many mistakes on both sides—has

<sup>1</sup> Bluebook, c. 7933, Nos. 5, 7, 8, 10, and 220 § 16-18. See also Story, p. 91.

happily ended without any public laundry of soiled linen. But that mural taunt does suggest one odious comparison. In the matter of the alleged Imperial complicity, as in others, the "cowards" held their tongues and took their beating: it was the "heroes" who peached!

No doubt, to plead that they *thought* certain things is not exactly the same as pleading that certain things were so; but for all practical purposes it was impossible for the Raiders to shelter themselves or each other in any way under the *magni nominis umbra* of Mr. Chamberlain, without embarrassing their country in exact proportion as the plea availed to save themselves.

Yet it was actually proposed by some of their advisers that they should make the plea at their trial under the Foreign Enlistment Act. Dr. Jameson put his foot down on this, but the line of thought betrayed itself more than once during the proceedings, and no doubt accounted for the indeterminate muddle which the defence, with all its galaxy of legal talent, somehow gave the effect of. It is said, by the way, and I believe truly, that on the evidence Major Raleigh Grey and one of the others ought to have got clear off. That, however, is common fortune of law. They being convicted with the rest, the War Office could but retire them with the rest.

The next step was to try the effect on the War Office of the plea which had almost come into open court. Sir John Willoughby made the plea confidentially, on behalf of the others. For himself, he said, he did not greatly care whether he was retired or not. He had large financial interests to attend to, but he felt bound to declare as Commanding Officer that he had given certain assurances to those under his orders. He believed at the time that he had Imperial warrant for his proceedings, and he told the others so. The chain of communication suggested is Chamberlain—Rhodes—Jameson—Willoughby.

This statement of Sir John Willoughby was backed by

Dr. Jameson in so far as it referred to himself. Rightly or wrongly, he *had* believed himself able to give the assurances which Sir John Willoughby passed on to the officers.

Confronted by a plea of this kind, what ought the War Office to have done? What Lord Lansdowne did was simple and obvious. To Mr. Chamberlain the whole story traced back: to Mr. Chamberlain he referred it. The Colonial Secretary was absent from England at the time. Lord Lansdowne communicated with him, told him the story, and asked plainly whether there was anything in it. Mr. Chamberlain replied by telegram, with equal plainness, that there was absolutely nothing in it whatever.

The officers were retired accordingly, and forthwith friends and relatives and admirers and solicitors began to buzz it about that they had been monstrously hardly dealt with.

Hardship there was, undoubtedly. The gaol was a horribly dull experience. Enforced farewell to the army was still more serious. Few of these gentlemen, probably, are well equipped for making a living in any other profession. But if it was bad for them, it was, at least, as bad for Colonel Rhodes, who shared the same fate for the part he played at Johannesburg, to say nothing of a £25,000 fine, and twenty-four hours passed under sentence of hanging. Colonel Rhodes has seen service, and won the D.S.O. He had some sort of a military career to lose. And he said nothing.

“A monstrous hardship!” My mind goes back to one dismal day when the Colony realised that these gentlemen, who had ridden across the Border, had surrendered to President Kruger, that they were at the mercy of his burghers. We admired their pluck—the first accounts, indeed, were heroic. We respected their motives. We felt that in deciding their fate their Boer captors were deciding whether the Englishman in South Africa should or should not feel a quiet life worth living on the morrow. And we made haste to frame petitions and send up one united voice from British South Africa to the

Queen's representative that he should put the lives of these men before any franchises or diplomacies in the world. It was not Holloway that we thought of then. It was hanging, rather. What a bathos, if we had been asked to commiserate the probable loss of their commissions!

Apparently, the contention of the officers' friends and spokesmen was that the War Office ought to have held a sort of full-dress rehearsal of the present Inquiry—to decide the question, one might say, whether the Raiders should have to retire from the army, or the Colonial Secretary should have to retire from public life.

One zealous lawyer carried on a correspondence with Mr. Chamberlain which almost took on a tone of threatening. Mr. Chamberlain is a bad man to bully, and he broke the correspondence off after what he indignantly described as "a blackmailing letter."

Meanwhile, the air was thick with hint and innuendo. Never was more done in the way of "pronouncing of some doubtful phrase, as, *Well, well, we know*; or, *We could, an if we would*; or, *If we list to speak*; or, *There be, an if they might*." At last, we in South Africa were astonished to learn by cable of an actual newspaper discussion on the question whether the War Office had not done a flagrant injustice to British officers by dismissing, without full inquiry, an allegation that they thought they had Imperial warrant for raiding the Transvaal.

During most of this time the officers themselves were in Holloway, where two of them are still completing their sentences. It would be pleasant to be assured that they had no kind of responsibility for all this. I, for my part, am most willing and anxious to believe that, after the first indiscretion of the leading Raiders in presenting the plea, the exploitation of it has lain at other doors. And I wish to make it clear beyond possibility of misconception that I am not charging these gentlemen with misstatement. The whole point of my commentary is precisely

If there really  
were a Secret.

the opposite. What they say about their own belief at the time is true past a doubt. I shall discuss, in a moment, what there was to lend colour to the belief. But assume, for the argument, that it was in fact a true belief, justified up to the hilt. Assume that all apparent veto upon the Raid was neutralised by a nod or a wink, so to speak, from Downing Street. Assume that these officers were the secret agents of a Machiavellian British policy, playing a sinister game such as Russian officers have played in the Balkans, or such as intriguing kings and cardinals in Dumas are always sending adventurers to play. Then I say if that was the game, if they took that to be the game, why not play it according to the rules? On those Dumas adventures, he who succeeded was enriched and decorated, indeed; but he who was unlucky enough to fail was always cheerfully disowned. And he was expected not to render up his secret though torn to pieces by wild horses before the Queen-Mother with a Duchess of Guise, dressed as a page boy, among the sightseers, laying her finger on her lip. Perhaps Sir John Willoughby found himself torn to pieces by wild asses, and the strain became insupportable. At any rate, it seems to me that the best and only defence of soldiers who disclose a State secret is the one which I set up—to wit, that there was not really any State secret to disclose. And now, what *was* the allegation?

What does the suggested chain of communication—Chamberlain, Rhodes, Jameson, Willoughby—amount to? The question brings us to the next step in this Biography of a Rumour: Mr. Stead's "History of the Mystery," which, in the form in which it finally met the public eye of England, might rather have been called, "The Mystery of a History," but which has probably made the most that ever will be made of "the skeleton in Blastus's cupboard."

As to the mischievousness of that publication there seems to have been an almost universal consensus. Unfortunately, a similar consensus sometimes has greeted audacities of Mr.

Stead's that were in their essence brave, useful, and patriotic. Nobody who has once worked under that Dr. Stockmann of English journalists—an experience which is a liberal education in itself—can ever again feel quite happy on finding himself in a majority. Personally, nothing would be more to my liking than to stand beside Mr. Stead in a minority of two. But an offence is not necessarily Socratic because the whole city prescribes hemlock for it ; a bad argument is not made good even by crucifixion ; and in this case I must repeat, even though everybody agrees with me, the opinion that Mr. Stead's "History" of "the Skeleton in Blastus's Cupboard," as heralded and projected, was from every point of view (save, perhaps, Dr. Leyds') a most mistaken and unfortunate effort.

One thing, and one thing only, can turn the tables on Mr. Stead's critics. He started from certain postulates about the Inquiry and its coming disclosures. If he was right about the disclosures, he was unquestionably right also in thinking that there was not a day to lose for any apologist who meant to try putting a good face on them. Well, the Select Committee is sitting. Its composition is a guarantee that there will be no mawkish anxiety to suppress any disclosures. Its proceedings will decide, perhaps almost as soon as this is in the reader's hands, whether it is Mr. Stead or *nous autres* who must look foolish.

The serious thing about all this "Blastus" business was the inference naturally drawn as to the attitude and intentions of Mr. Cecil Rhodes. Anything which rests on Mr. Rhodes' word is apt to be found true and to become rather important. Mr. Stead was known to be a great friend of his ; Mr. Hawksley, who was evidently behind, was the Chartered Company's solicitor ; it was whispered, among those who were likely to know, that we had here another outcome of the headstrong inspiration of "Dr. Jim" himself. In reality, Mr. Rhodes was away on the veld or in the Matoppos, living in the saddle, sleeping in the air, discoursing to rebel indunas, declining (in his own way and Mr. Parnell's) to open a letter ; and none but a clair-

voyant could say what his attitude and intentions might be. Mr. Hawksley is a very clever lawyer, but he was hopelessly wrong. Dr. Jameson is a man who, throughout the great country which he helped to add to the Empire, is beloved with a kind of fond extravagance ; but here he was ending 1896 with a blunder only second to the one with which he began it.

As for Dr. Harris, the other putative father of the rumour, he it was, it seems, whose protests compelled Mr. Stead to the extraordinary course by which, at the last moment, he made his "Mystery" literally blacker still, and so attained—in perfect good faith—the maximum of suggestion with the minimum of plain statement. The "blotting out" of "State secrets" was at that stage the only alternative to complete suppression ; but I can recall nothing in the unexpurgated text, as I saw it, that was as bad as the blots.

Happily, however, in the meantime the cat was out of the bag, and proved to be only a cat after all. Mr. Stead had been corresponding with me about the plan and plot of his Story, and had borne with exemplary good humour my continued protests against it. On the eve of publication he favoured me with advance proofs, humorously remarking that I now knew the worst, and could proceed to "slate" him. I did proceed to slate him. On the day when the History was published in London, the *Cape Times* quoted what seemed to be the gist of it in Cape Town, reviewing it with a judicious mixture of sorrow and anger. And, by a misunderstanding the blame of which (if any) was wholly mine (but how could one have guessed that incredible "blacking-out" expedient?) the very chapter quoted in Cape Town was the one "blacked out" on the machine in London !

South Africa—and later London—was thus apprised that what the whole Mystery amounted to was simply that Mr.

What it all  
came to. Rhodes, and through him others, had been led to form an exaggerated view of the extent of Mr.

Chamberlain's cognisance and approval of their plans, owing to the terms in which friends or agents in London

reported the tenour of conversations at the Colonial Office, mainly or partly in connection with the negotiations for transfer of the Protectorate, and of the duty of policing the Protectorate, to the Chartered Company.

I think that will be accepted as a fair summary: a fair prose translation of Mr. Stead's ingenious and poetical fantasy about the Cable-Serpent, which drags its slow length through the Atlantic ooze, and tempts the denizens of a political Eden by repeating broken whispers and condensed perversions of each other's thoughts.

"Is *that* all?" was the universal remark of the Cape Town reader. For Mr. Stead's oceanic "Serpent" had been carrying us a great many echoes of the trumpets preliminary.

I stated then, in reviewing this suggestion of compromising cables, and I repeat my belief now, that I have known for nearly a year the tenour of these much-talked-of cables, and that they are not really compromising enough to "hang a dog." By this I mean that they are susceptible on the face of them of a perfectly innocent and proper explanation; like so many other expressions or actions on the eve of the Transvaal Crisis, which, seen after the event, in the distorting search-light thrown by the event, got quite a sinister look. Any one who, like myself, has had to study the history of this affair at all closely, could mention some absurd illustrations of this phenomenon. The Transvaal Government put into a greenbook a telegram of my own, which to this day (in all probability) they firmly believe to implicate the Imperial Government. *They*, no doubt, will display all the inductive certainty of Sergeant Buzfuz if somebody should prove to have cabled "chops and tomato sauce."

What any body *did* cable we shall all know soon; for the Committee will order the Cable Company to produce the documents. The Company's rule, I believe, is to destroy copies of messages after one year; but Sir William Harcourt, like a sleuthhound on the promising scent, sent round a warning some time ago, and saved any "good copy" which may be going.

But for this certainty that the whole matter must needs come to light in a few days, and that the time of rumour and the poring dark is at an end, I should not have said so much unless I had leave to say all. I wish I had leave. But the few who know the exact truth are of two classes. There are those who hold their tongues for obvious and proper reasons; but there are also some who cry "Hush!" because they have already, in an indignant phrase of Mr. Chamberlain's own, "worked the thing for all it was worth." *Omne ignotum pro terribili.*

What I believe the inquiry will show to be the truth about the affair is set out partly in the Narrative, and shall now be stated explicitly.

What is the Truth?

Much has been conjectured as to the part played in the communications by Dr. Harris—the Dr. Cactus of Mr. Stead's pages—who was South African Secretary of the Chartered Company, and confidential secretary of Mr. Rhodes, and was in London during much of the territorial negotiations with the Colonial Office which went on between August and November, 1895. The reader will notice passages in the following narrative—especially in chapters iv. and vi.—written before the present discussion arose, which bear on this point. I have not been favoured by Dr. Harris with his version. But it seems to be forgotten, by those who expect tremendous cable finds, that Dr. Harris left England and returned to Cape Town in the middle of December, well before the crisis; so that if Mr. Chamberlain really had a mania for sending compromising messages through Dr. Harris at that time, he might just as well have sent them by word of mouth. The way in which the minor confederates in South Africa telegraphed about to each other has astonished the world; but a British Colonial Secretary, if he took to conspiracy, could hardly do it quite like that.

"Reference to possible developments, however discreet, was bound to be made during those prolonged negotiations about the Border territory," it is pointed out in chapter iv. I have

ascertained that the prospect at *Johannesburg* (not the *Jameson* part) was much better known beforehand by certain high officials of the Transvaal—by one high official, at any rate—than by sympathetic journalists, politicians, Cape folk, and well-informed South Africans generally. I think it will be found that the Colonial Office's Intelligence Bureau was in the same position as these high officials of the Transvaal. One sees at once, therefore, the temptation to an audacious and sanguine confederate in the Jameson part of the arrangements, who felt himself and his friends to be about to do so much better for England than she had ever done for herself, to stray tentatively at the Colonial Office off the legitimate ground into that where no Imperial official may tread.

It will be found, I think, that Dr. Harris did once begin to do so.

Mr. Chamberlain is a very unconventional official, and he was new to his work ; but he certainly is no fool.

He checked the indiscreet discussion, and Dr. Harris, who is also no fool, dared not return to it ; but he was not quite sure how far he had carried Mr. Chamberlain along with him.

Now, those who have once tested the matter know well that no two men ever have just the same identical memory of a conversation. So much, in all talk, depends on the ellipses. Thenceforward even a chance-dropped phrase in conversation where other parties were present—conversation, perhaps, on quite another subject—came to be scrutinized in this light. How much did the Colonial Secretary know? How much would he consent to? Would he give Mr. Rhodes and Dr. Jameson *carte blanche*?

Not Dr. Harris only—the Story casts him altogether too much for the villain, or if you like the hero, of the piece—not Dr. Harris only, but all kinds of insiders and outsiders who had an inkling : the harmful necessary journalist, the sympathetic irresponsible who really cannot compromise anybody but himself : became the means of conveying to Mr. Rhodes or to Johannesburg, or to some one or other of the revolutionary

sympathisers in South Africa, the impression that the Colonial Office really did know a great deal—as in fact it did, and was ready to allow all—as in fact it was not.

In short, it came to pass in this way that Mr. Cecil Rhodes became convinced that here was a new and “pushful”

What Mr. Rhodes Thought. Minister for the Empire, burning to let off fireworks and distinguish himself, and relying on Mr. Rhodes’ resource and ingenuity to enable him to

do so without compromising the Imperial factor.

This fitted in excellently with Mr. Rhodes’ own dreams, the Johannesburg temptation, and the course of events; and no doubt it contributed to the fine recklessness with which he took on himself other responsibilities that in his wildest moments he never supposed Mr. Chamberlain cognisant of—such as the arming beforehand of the very revolution which was to form the pretext of action.

Meanwhile, the impatient, in search of a bald, bold Aye or Nay, may be asking, “Why not say at once that Mr.

A Case of Nuances. Chamberlain knew nothing, and that it’s all a disgraceful lie, and that people who ‘thought’ had no business to think, and so on, or else leave it alone?”

The answer is, that when you really go into this matter, you soon leave the region of bald, bold Aye or Nay behind. It is so with most questions where more than two or three human beings are concerned. It took Browning—how many thousand lines to “whitewash” Pompilia? Yet he did whitewash her. It is easy to say that to know anything at all was to know too much. Perhaps it was. Perhaps Mr. Chamberlain will be censured for not telling President Kruger all that his Intelligence Bureau had collected or surmised as to the state of mind of President Kruger’s own aggrieved subjects; just as Mr. Chamberlain once said<sup>1</sup> that the President’s Government “ought to have communicated their suspicions or information” (as to troops on the border) to the High Com-

<sup>1</sup> C. 7933, Dispatch 220.

missioner. I can only say that the situation was one in which to know just exactly the right amount was a feat like the schoolman's, of balancing so many angels on the point of a needle.

Downing Street stood to be blamed after the event in any case, either for culpable indiscretion or for culpable ignorance. I do not suppose for a moment that any one concerned will escape blame altogether. But to show how utterly inapplicable are crude generalisations in this matter, and how easy it must have been for misunderstandings to arise in perfect good faith, one has only to sit down and try to draw up definitions of the various attitudes. Here is *my* attempt, after a year's puzzling :—

1. *What Lord Ripon presumably sanctioned, and Lord Loch did, in 1894 :—*

Upon signs of a rising in the Transvaal, to assemble British Bechuanaland Police quietly on the border with a view to their being ordered in by the High Commissioner to protect life and property at Johannesburg.

2. *What Mr. Chamberlain was probably prepared to sanction in 1895 :—*

Upon report of a probable rising in the Transvaal at a definite time (the end of December) to allow the British South Africa Company's police (including the ex-B.B.P.)—a force subject, but not quite so directly subject, to the High Commissioner's orders—to be assembled in the same way and for the same purpose as above ; the possibility of such measures being called for being indirectly<sup>1</sup> recognised in territorial arrangements some time beforehand.

3. *What Mr. Rhodes was probably prepared to sanction :—*

Upon advices from Johannesburg leaders to Jameson (who should help to arm them, largely at Mr. Rhodes' expense) that the rising would be on a certain day ; and upon a distinct statement from these leaders that they called upon the Com-

<sup>1</sup> I believe that Mr. Chamberlain flatly denies that it was *directly* recognised,

pany's troops to come in and "protect life and property" at the moment of the upheaval; to allow the use of the police, assembled as above, almost simultaneously with the action within the Transvaal, Mr. Rhodes to secure High Commissioner's assent as best he could.

4. *What Jameson actually did* :—

To act on the concert just described, and about the time first fixed upon, although the concert had been broken off and the day countermanded, Mr. Rhodes accordingly joining with the Johannesburg leaders in forbidding the use of the police.

Now, it will be seen at once that between 3 and 4 there is a gulf. But between 1, 2 and 3 there is really only a sheet of paper, if we put aside one feature. That one feature is Mr. Rhodes' assistance to the Johannesburg revolution beforehand. Had Mr. Rhodes resigned his Premiership and Charter Directorship before, instead of after : the affair of the arms would have been hailed as exhibiting all those qualities which Johannesburg has been reproached for lacking. For this is covered by "the sacred rights of revolution" ; the question of raids, which have not yet established any "sacred rights," is quite apart from it. And, leaving aside this one point, as I say, it is possible to state the positions of Mr. Rhodes, Mr. Chamberlain, and Sir Henry Loch, so that there shall seem to be only a sheet of paper between them.

The difference between going in to help a revolution, and going in to "restore order," or "prevent a riot," or "protect life and property," is one which in practice it would have required superhuman ingenuity to maintain.

The question, just how much should happen before the border might decently be crossed, is another point which must always have been left to circumstances. When the Johannesburg leaders took the responsibility of the provisional appeal to Jameson, they took also the responsibility of a signal.

The High Commissioner's mediation, backed by material

support if necessary, was also a feature common to all four positions or policies. Though Sir Hercules Robinson never dreamed, of course, of the use which was made of the understanding in reassuring timid Reformers at Johannesburg, I have no doubt that he had fully arranged to go up and mediate, and that it was only the compromising of the situation by Jameson's act which made him so slow to offer his services when the time came.

Such action by the High Commissioner, upon any such long-expected crisis arising, had been a Downing Street South African axiom for years. Sir Hercules Robinson's appointment was defended in the Press on the ground of his special fitness for such a task. I remember a conversation with Lord Ripon at the Colonial Office at that time in which this was made clear; and if it had been a few months later, and I a confederate in the "complot," I might have rushed away and telegraphed that "Ripon is in it up to his neck." Yet (let me hasten to add) the late Colonial Secretary said no single word to which Dr. Leyds or Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, notebook in hand, could have taken exception.

Given this general prearrangement for a crisis; given Sir Hercules Robinson's particular consent to it beforehand; given the foreknowledge of Mr. Chamberlain's Intelligence Bureau that a crisis was brewing for this particular time—the end of December—for that much I am sure he will boast with some departmental pride; given the precedent of Lord Loch's assembling of the police to lend moral or material support, and the provision of Mr. Chamberlain, when the police were passing out of direct Imperial control, to facilitate any similar assembling of them under altered conditions in the future: given all these things, it will be seen at once how easy it would be to *make Mr. Chamberlain seem to have been* "up to his neck," if Mr. Rhodes tried to shelter himself (as some of his friends would have him do) behind the Colonial Office. I am able to say that he will do nothing of the kind. "How can he," asks somebody, "if, as you say, there's nothing in it?"

He could very easily, as I have shown, if he set himself to emphasize and enlarge on all the ambiguous little things that went to form or bear out the impressions which I have described. It would be very unpatriotic, and very selfish; and no doubt exploring party men on the Select Committee can do a great deal of mischief yet by pressing such ambiguous points, which, when pressed at all, require pages of explanation to clear up their suspiciousness.

Mr. Rhodes has the gift of silence. But I believe I have rightly represented what his impression was in December, 1895. I am also in a position to affirm, from personal assurance, that Lord Rosmead was not responsible for that impression, and that Mr. Chamberlain was not responsible. I have here tried to account for the divergence, and though the enquiry drag on for months I believe this is the conclusion it will have to come to. Mr. Rhodes did not plan or foresee *the* Raid. But he was willing for Johannesburg to engage Jameson for a "raid" of a certain kind. Mr. Chamberlain was also willing to arrange for a "raid," something between Lord Loch's and Mr. Rhodes'. *The* raid he never dreamed of. The "sheet of paper" may not be thick enough to please some swashbuckling polemicists, to make Mr. Rhodes a criminal or Mr. Chamberlain a model of what I might call unctuous correctitude; but it suffices, unless one or both of two high servants of the Queen have lied as English gentlemen do not lie, to keep clear in a situation of unique difficulty the honour and good faith of England—never more indispensable as an element in the South Africa hurly-burly than they are to-day.

This Introduction is not concerned with the position of Mr. Rhodes. For that the reader is referred to the pages that follow. In them I have done his position, if anything, a little less than even justice. As an incurable English Radical, and in other capacities, I have had and shall have many occasions to differ from Mr. Rhodes, and to criticise him with, I hope, plenty of zest and vigour. But this is not the place or the moment for such

Cecil  
Rhodes.

criticism, and, I would add, England is not the country. Afrikanders of Republican sympathies have a good right to challenge him—those who have ever worked with him in the Colony—on the connection between the wild venture of 1895-6 and the British flag. His only answer to them is the *plébiscite*; <sup>1</sup> his “treachery to the Republic” consisted in bargaining that its future relation to a United South Africa under the British flag should be put to the vote of all its white inhabitants. But if it be true of Mr. Rhodes’ day-dreams that they turned upon something grander than merely “substituting President Barnato for President Kruger,” in his own phrase, at least it is not for Englishmen to make that a reproach. “What will you do if you have to go to prison?” I asked Mr. Rhodes on his way to England on the *Dunvegan Castle*. “If I have to go to prison? Well, I once read eight hours a day for my degree. I haven’t had much time to read since then: I think I’d take on a course of reading.” That is exactly what Wools Sampson has done in Pretoria *tronk*. I hope Mr. Rhodes’ answers to the Committee—they are likely to be frank even to brutality, for he never conceives that anything he has done can be wrong—will not lead to that “course of reading.” *Ruat cælum*, of course; but even the hungry exultation of Hollanders and Germans and Boers will hardly compensate us for the sullen feelings which we should have to rouse throughout British South Africa. At any rate, while Dutchmen denounce the raid as privateering for the Union Jack, it seems a little squalid that some Englishmen should be denouncing it as “a stock-jobbing speculation.” There are still many who believe that “Rhodes sent Jameson in”: there are not a few who hug the notion that what he sent him in for was to seize, in some unexplained and inexplicable way, the auriferous conglomerate of the Rand, or to merge with the Boer Republic the land which he has toiled for nearly twenty years to add to the Empire. Well! Shrewd judges estimate that the Raid

<sup>1</sup> Chap. iii., p. 34; see also chap. vii.

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and his friends' part in it cost Mr. Rhodes a quarter of a million, first to last ; and a good part of the rest of his fortune is locked up in Rhodesia, the future of which, as a factor in Africa, will be the romance or the tragedy of one man's life-work. I demur to that Continental sneer about "unctuous rectitude," but I do sometimes wish that my countrymen, and especially my fellow Liberals, had a little more *imagination*.

F. EDMUND GARRETT.

LONDON, *February*, 1897.