

# The Prelude to a Crisis

AS TOLD BY MR. CHAMBERLAIN

(Extract from the Dispatch of Feb. 4, 1896)

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**F**OR a proper apprehension of the events which have led up to the Crisis, I must go back to the period immediately succeeding the conclusion of the Convention of Pretoria in 1881.

At that period, and for some time afterwards, the population of the South African Republic was comparatively small, and composed almost entirely of burghers and their families. The British element in it was made up of traders, a handful of farmers or landowners, and a small, and not very thriving, body of gold-miners, living chiefly in the neighbourhood of Lydenburg. The revenue was meagre, and hardly sufficient for the barest needs of Government.

About ten years ago the discovery of gold deposits at the De Kaap Fields gave indications of a new state of things, and a little later came the discoveries of gold at the Witwatersrand, which worked a complete revolution in the situation of the Republic, both financial and political. The discovery of the Reefs at the Rand gave rise to the inevitable gold fever, followed by the usual reaction. From such reaction the industry was saved by the foresight and financial courage of certain of the capitalists most interested, and since 1890 the progress has been uninterrupted and rapid.

Owing to peculiarities of temperament and circumstance, participation in the new industry had no attraction for the

burgher population. It remained almost entirely in the hands of new-comers, commonly known as "Uitlanders," and a sharp line of cleavage was thus created within the Republic—the Uitlanders being chiefly resident in the industrial and mining centres, whilst the burgher population remained absorbed in its pastoral avocations and dispersed widely through the country districts. It is very difficult to arrive at any exact idea of the numbers of these two classes of inhabitants. But I conceive that I am well within the mark in estimating the white population along the Rand at something like 110,000, and it may safely be said that the aliens (the large majority of whom are British subjects) at the present time outnumber the citizens of the Republic.

The political situation resulting from these conditions is an anomalous one. The new-comers are men who were accustomed to the fullest exercise of political rights. In other communities, where immigration has played an important part in building up the population, it has been the policy of the Legislatures to make liberal provision for admitting all new-comers who are desirous of naturalization, after a comparatively brief period of probation, to the rights and duties of citizenship—a policy which, so far as national interests were concerned, has been fully justified by the event, for experience shows that the naturalized alien soon vies with—if he does not outstrip—the natural-born citizen in the fervour of his patriotism.

In the South African Republic, however, different counsels have prevailed with those who were the depositories of power. More than one law has been enacted, rendering more difficult the requirements imposed on those desiring naturalization, the effect being, so far as I can find, that whereas in 1882 an Uitlander could obtain full rights of citizenship after a residence of five years, he can now never hope to attain those rights *in full*; and their partial enjoyment is only conceded after a term of probation so prolonged as to amount, for most men, to a practical denial of the claim.

If he omits to obtain any kind of naturalization for himself, his children, though born on the soil, remain aliens like himself.

By this course of legislation the whole political direction of affairs and the whole right of taxation are made the monopoly of what is becoming a decreasing minority of the population, composed almost entirely of men engaged in pastoral and agricultural pursuits; whilst the great majority of all those engaged in the other avocations of civilization—the men, in fact, who have by their exertions in a few years raised the revenues of the country from some £75,000 to an amount which cannot now be less than £2,000,000, and who find eighteen or nineteen twentieths of the total revenue—are denied any voice in the conduct of the most important class of affairs, and have not succeeded in obtaining any redress for what seems a formidable array of grievances which, it is alleged, hamper and injure them at every step of their lives. The feelings of intense irritation which have been aroused by this state of things have not been lessened by the manner in which remonstrances have been met.

Whatever may be the truth as to the occurrences of the first few weeks of 1896, the Uitlander leaders had previously kept within the limits of constitutional agitation, but their success in this direction was not encouraging. It is true that hopes have been held out to them by persons of high position and influence in the South African Republic, and they have at times obtained what they regarded as promises, but these have not been practically fulfilled, and when they have remonstrated they have occasionally been met with jeers and insult—none the less irritating to strangers because, as I hope is a fact, they emanated only from a minority of the ruling class. Thus, in May, 1894, a petition for the extension of the franchise, signed by 13,000 inhabitants, is credibly reported to have been rejected by the Volksraad amid scornful laughter, and in April, 1895, a similar petition, signed by upwards of 32,500 inhabitants, is stated to have met a similar fate—one member

of the Volksraad so far forgetting himself as to challenge the Uitlanders to take up arms and fight.

At a meeting of the National Union at Johannesburg in 1894, the grievances and the demands of the Uitlanders were set forth in a formal and elaborate manner, and it was then emphatically stated that no resort to violence was contemplated; although one of the principal speakers warned the Government that, if their policy were persisted in, blood would be shed in the streets of Johannesburg, and that the responsibility would lie at the doors of the Volksraad. At that time much was hoped from the coming elections, as it was anticipated that a "progressive" majority would be returned to the Raad, and that a more liberal policy would be pursued.

But those hopes were doomed to disappointment. The elections to the Raad did, indeed, result in the return of a majority of members who were commonly reckoned as "progressives," and the National Union, in view of the suggestion that reforms were hindered by the making of inflammatory speeches at Johannesburg, discontinued their agitation. Nothing, however, came of this change of policy.

On the 20th November, 1895, a speech was delivered by Mr. Lionel Phillips, the Chairman of the Chamber of Mines, which marks a reversion to the policy of active agitation. I note that on that occasion Mr. Phillips stated that the position had been endured, and it was likely to be endured still longer, and that he added that "nothing was further from his heart than a desire to see an upheaval, which would be disastrous from every point of view, and which would probably end in the most horrible of all possible endings—bloodshed." Finally came the manifesto issued by the National Union on the 27th December, in which their objects were stated to be the maintenance of the independence of the Republic, the securing of equal rights, and the redress of grievances. In that manifesto, although the complaints of the Uitlanders were set out in detail, and very plain language was used concerning the administration, no hint was given of an intention to resort to force.

I mention these matters because they seem to me to prove that, whatever may have been the secret schemes of individuals, the agitation, as the great majority of the Uitlanders understood it, and to which they gave their sympathy, was one proceeding on the only lines on which an agitation against an organized Government of military strength can proceed with any hope of success—that is to say, it was an open and above-board agitation, prosecuted without violence and within the lines of the Constitution.

It is needless to say that Her Majesty's Government had watched the progress of these events with careful attention. Apart from their legitimate concern for the interests of so large a body of British subjects, they could not but feel a keen anxiety lest the agitation should degenerate into a contest with the constituted authorities ; but there was no ground for their active intervention. The Uitlanders and their organs had always deprecated the introduction into the dispute of what is called in South Africa the "Imperial factor." To have intervened uninvited seemed impracticable, and calculated only to be injurious to the prospects of a peaceful and satisfactory settlement.

There were, indeed, rumours from time to time that violent measures were in contemplation, but these rumours were continually falsified by the event, so that, in the long run, the opinion gained ground that the Uitlanders did not mean to risk a collision with the Government ; and in the light of later occurrences it would seem evident that, so far as the Rand itself is concerned, that view was the correct one. Nor was it confined to Her Majesty's Government, for the Consul-General in London of the South African Republic, the Government at Pretoria, and the Press of South Africa as a whole, appear to have been of much the same way of thinking.

Such was the position of affairs when, on the 30th December, I learned the grave fact that Dr. Jameson had invaded the territory of the South African Republic at the head of a force of armed police.

# The Story of an African Crisis

## Chapter I

### “ON THE MOST FRIENDLY FOOTING”

**D**R. JAMESON entered the South African Republic at the head of over 500 mounted men and a strong force of Artillery . . . at a time when the relations between the Government of the South African Republic and those of the other States and Colonies of South Africa were on the most friendly footing.” So the Select Committee of the Cape House of Assembly declares in the first section of its report on the Raid.

In the language of diplomacy all Powers not actually belligerent at the moment are supposed to be on “the most friendly footing,” but to any one who remembers the extraordinary state of feeling at the close of 1895, the tension in the Transvaal and in South Africa at large, the words quoted must carry a more than diplomatic flavour.

Mr. Chamberlain’s despatch which has served us as Introduction, gives a lucid sketch of the stages by which this tension of feeling had been brought about within the Transvaal itself. He does not say anything as to the Republic’s external relations. It may be well to glance back over a few years, taking both together. Perfect peace and serenity cannot be said to have prevailed in the Transvaal at the time of the Raid, but perfect peace and serenity had not prevailed much in the Transvaal in any year since its foundation. Mr. Chamberlain’s Raad member who “so far forgot himself as to challenge the

Uitlanders to fight for their rights," perhaps did not so much forget himself as he remembered the history of his country. A reader's first impression from that history might lead him to say that when the Transvaal Boers were not being raided themselves they were generally raiding other people, north, south, east or west, and that before the Uitlanders' revolutionary movement came to birth the burghers supplied the deficiency by civil war amongst themselves, covert or overt.

The early history of the Transvaal in the fifties resolves itself into a struggle on the part of Pretorius, the Boer leader, whose "South African Republic" only covered a small part of the Transvaal, to swallow up the independent republics of Lydenburg (originally the centre of Government), Zoutpansberg, and the Free State.

As far as the two former republics were concerned, the party of Pretorius eventually succeeded, but not without a long series of military and semi-military movements in which the Pope of Rome and the Pope of Avignon liberally excommunicated each other, each side proclaiming the other as "rebels."

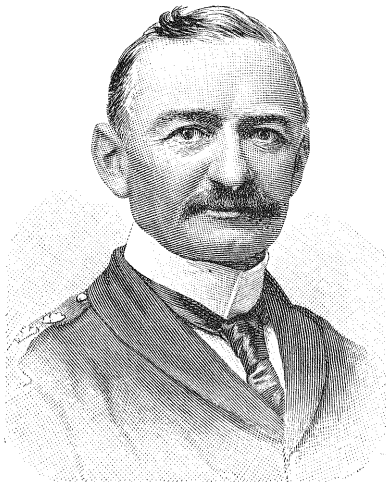
These struggles actually reached the point of civil bloodshed, though more often one party of farmers carrying fire-arms would retire when another party appeared in greater force.

In the course of these obscure civil brawls, S. J. P. Kruger flits across the scene generally as a stormy petrel. We find him on the side of certain Boer revolutionaries or reformers, upholding them in their action and protesting against their being saddled with fines when the action failed. On two separate occasions we find him marching on Pretoria to drive out the head of a rival party. We even find him joining in a kind of raid across the border of the friendly Free State and issuing a twenty-four hours' ultimatum to its Government, and by an odd coincidence actually figuring as the man who carried the flag of truce which averted actual fighting when the rival commandoes were drawn up facing each other.

During these transformation scenes young Kruger is some-

times on the side of Pretorius and sometimes against him, but he is always exceedingly ready to take up arms, and exhibits all the traditional contempt of the South African Boer for what is called constitutional agitation.

In one of his speeches or conversations after the Jameson Raid President Kruger spoke, rather in sorrow than in anger, in that tone which he so well knows how to assume, of the perfidy involved in taking up arms against a peaceful neighbour, a



COLONEL FRANCIS RHODES.

*From a Photograph by Messrs. ELLIOTT & FRY.*

perfidy, the darkest side of which was the story then current that the assistance of native chiefs had actually been invoked by the raiders, thus setting black against white, in South Africa the unforgivable sin.

President Kruger has a keen memory, but it may be described as rather selective than retentive. Paul Kruger the President has undoubtedly forgotten how Paul Kruger the Raider once gave the Government of the Free State twenty-four hours in which to set free its imprisoned reformer rebels.



Even the stirring up of natives, a story now thoroughly discredited, and indeed at no time supported by a shred of proof, might recall to his memory the advances made by Pretorius to the military Moshesh against the Free State, advances which President Boshof, in his opening speech to the next Session of the Free State Raad, gave Moshesh credit for declining.

But, it may be said, all this is ancient history ; like the Boer raids into British Bechuanaland in the eighties which we spare recalling. In the presence of the stranger it may be thought burghers of the Transvaal have sunk all differences. On the contrary, within two years the Transvaal burghers of to-day have twice come close to civil war among themselves. A civil war with which the Uitlander had nothing to do except in so far as his presence exercised a deterrent effect. So that in each case the crisis blew over. In 1892-3 the last Presidential election contest was fought between S. J. P. Kruger and Piet Joubert, the present Commandant-General. It was a close fight. Joubert was supposed to represent the progressives, that is to say, burghers who were inclined to conciliate the Uitlander population by the extension of some modest instalment of rights. Kruger, of course, represented what he represents to-day—the opposite. He won, but not by much. Joubert's supporters alleged that corrupt practices, impersonation, and dual voting had flourished rankly on the Kruger side. They demanded a scrutiny, at which the supporters of each candidate should be represented. The Executive Council, being a Krugerite body, refused this, and undertook the scrutiny itself. Three times the votes were counted, and three times different results were announced, the final version giving Kruger 7,854 against Joubert's 7,009. Although the Joubert party finally accepted this finding there was intensely bitter feeling for some months, and persons in a position to judge believe that there was more than mere threatening in the talk indulged in among the Joubert adherents of resorting to the traditional Transvaal method of redressing what they considered their wrongs : that is, by a

demonstration in arms. The General himself, in a conversation which the writer once had with him, though of course talking like a book about the impropriety of resorting to arms against countrymen under any provocation, distinctly took credit to himself for having resisted the temptation.

More recently the most dangerous feeling was aroused in an unintelligible squabble between the Hervormde and the Gereformeerde branches of the Dutch Reformed Church, one of which, again, is allied with the narrower "dopper" sect of Oom Paul himself. Theologically, it would take a Scotsman to distinguish between them; and for that reason, need it be said, the schism is excessively sharp and keen. Matters came to a head over a decision of the Court transferring *en bloc* a quantity of Church property from one sect to the other. It is not quite settled yet what the upshot will be, the religious division being complicated by political and family cross-divisions and feuds impossible for an outsider to trace; but here, again, persons on the spot and closely acquainted with the character and drift of the people, believe that an acute crisis over the Church dispute has only been averted by the Uitlander and Jameson crisis, which swamped all else.

Turning to the Uitlander issue in itself, there have been three or four distinct occasions, before any Jameson complication was heard of, in which a street scuffle or a random shot might have precipitated bloodshed.

Once, in 1891, on his way to confer with the High Commissioner on various questions, President Kruger passed through Johannesburg and was besieged in the Landdrost's house by a mob, which uproariously demanded a speech, groaned, broke in the railings, and actually hauled down the Transvaal flag and trampled it under foot to the strains of "Rule Britannia." There was a similar scene in 1894 at the time of the Commandeering Incident, when men who were denied with contempt every other right of citizenship were favoured with a requisition to go to the front and fight for the Republic in one of its native wars. Let Lord Loch (then Sir

Henry and High Commissioner) tell the story in his own words :—

“ On my arrival at Pretoria I was met at the station by President Kruger, accompanied by many of his Executive. There was a great crowd at the station, and it was with the greatest difficulty that President Kruger was enabled to have the way cleared for himself and myself going to his carriage. The crowd was a very excited crowd. They removed the President’s coachman from the box and took out his horses. Two men clambered on the box with Union Jacks, and in this way we were conducted to Pretoria, a distance of from a quarter to half a mile. On our arrival at the hotel where rooms had been prepared for me, there was a great crowd assembled in the streets wishing to present addresses. I reminded those who were anxious to present addresses to me that I was the guest of a friendly Power, and I refused to receive any address unless proper consideration was paid to the President, to his Government, and to the people of the South African Republic. There was much excitement at Johannesburg at this period.”

There was indeed. So much that Mr. Kruger personally wrote to Sir Henry begging him not to visit Johannesburg, “lest a collision should arise.” “It would be very agreeable to me, personally, and would be regarded by my Government as an act of international friendship, if you would give up your intended journey to Johannesburg.” Accordingly Sir Henry received a deputation at Pretoria instead, and the conversation took place in which the possibility of Johannesburg being driven to defend itself by arms was mooted. According to a recent sensational statement in the *Temps*, the High Commissioner incited the deputation to this course. That, of course, is from the home of *canards*. But on his own showing he found the prospect so likely that he found it necessary to dissuade them from it. To quote again his House of Lords statement :

“To strengthen my position to the deputation I asked them what amount of arms they had at the time in Johannesburg. They told me they had a thousand rifles, and at the outside ten rounds of ammunition per rifle. I then pointed out to them, not as an encouragement to resist, but to show them what a futile measure it would be, if any action on their part brought about disturbances, and as a consequence an attack upon Johannesburg. I



MR CECIL J. RHODES

*From a Photograph by Messrs. BASSANO, Old Bond Street*

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also pointed out to them that, if I went there, and they would admit it, there would be a danger of disturbance arising, and if disturbance arose the Government of the Transvaal would be justified, under all the circumstances, in putting it down with very stringent hands. . . . They saw the force of my reasons."

Sir Henry was quite prepared, by the way, for a kind of authorized raid from Bechuanaland, as well as a revolution in Johannesburg, on this occasion ; but of that, more anon.

The strained relations of the Transvaal at the close of 1895 were external as well as internal. The Republic had become the one supreme obstacle to South African unity. The interstate politics of South Africa are, and will remain until it becomes united, largely Customs politics and Railway politics. Ever since the failure of Lord Carnarvon's attempt to rush Federation, and especially since the failure and reversal of the Transvaal annexation, it is to a loose union of the States and Colonies as regards their fiscal and railway systems that most statesmen have looked forward when they used the formula of an United South Africa. That it was possible to link together a republic and a colony for friendly co-operation by this means was shown by the Customs Union which has existed between the Cape and the Free State since 1889. That Union, being based on a protective system made to please the farmers, while the Natal system is dominated by the importers, Natal could not join ; but a still stronger reason was that the Transvaal would not join, and Natal lives on the Transvaal trade. Now, why would not the Transvaal join ? Certainly not because it considered the interests of the Uitlander consumer class more than those of its pastoral burghers. The continued preference of the Transvaal for "splendid isolation" is at bottom due to the fact that those who govern it have never really given up the hope which is enshrined in the title of South African Republic. British statesmanship has long realized that it is not practicable politics to try and turn the Republics into Colonies ; but Pretoria statesmanship has never quite given up the dream of turning the Colonies into Republics. At first the

developments which the Rand gold led to seemed likely to revive the former hope and to Anglicise the Transvaal ; but as President Kruger found by experience that he could hold the English-speaking population down, while the State was strengthened by their wealth, that development has tended in the opposite direction, and the hope of absorbing the Free State and eventually dominating all South Africa has once more inspired Transvaal policy. It has been assumed, and it cannot be denied that so far the assumption has worked, that the Englishman in Africa can be treated as a negligible quantity, save as a revenue producer. Accordingly, to unite upon such terms as are practicable—*i.e.*, upon Customs and Railways and the like—has become, in South Africa, a British formula ; while it has become the Transvaal formula, or at any rate guiding spirit, to decline union upon such half measures at all. Thus it comes about that Mr. Rhodes has consistently worked for a united South Africa of some kind, while “closer union with the Free State” is the nearest aspiration of the sort attributable to his great rival. Mr. Rhodes’ policy was for years directed to redressing the balance, to neutralizing the Transvaal superiority of wealth, to keeping open way to the North as against Transvaal raiders, to surrounding and embracing the Republic with territory which, like it, should contain great gold-fields and great populations, and should go into the British side of the balance when the hegemony of South Africa comes to waver between the two.

So far Mr. Rhodes as the opener of the North. Meanwhile, Mr. Rhodes, as the Premier of the Cape, was set upon these minor measures of union which have been described ; and it was after a stormy interview with President Kruger late in 1894 on the Cape-Transvaal relations that he finally made up his mind that it was hopeless ever to look for the conversion of the present rulers of the Transvaal to any such modest programme of South African co-operation.

They had often coquetted with the idea of joining a Customs Union, but had always treated it as a favour to the Imperial

Government, a favour which must be bargained for by giving Swaziland, or a way to the sea, or some other advantage. It is a striking proof, by the way, of the purely South African motives of Great Britain's policy in South Africa that a Customs Union, under which British trade would be handicapped by high tariffs, should be treated as a goal of British diplomacy. In this sense it was treated for in one abortive Convention about Swaziland, which, however, was rejected by the Raad. Eventually Swaziland was bargained away for another consideration, and then Oom Paul used the same bait, the idea of the Transvaal entering a Customs Union, in order to obtain the littoral beyond Swaziland, and there make his own Port. In the interval, however, a maladroit speech of his on the Kaiser's birthday had focussed attention on his policy (disapproved in every other South African country) of bartering trade advantages for political support from Germany, with the result that Great Britain in the course of 1895 declared a Protectorate, and blocked his right of way to the littoral in question. At an interview with which Oom Paul favoured the present writer in 1889 His Honour drew an idyllic picture of the general South African amity and Customs Union which would follow when he was given Swaziland. At another interview in 1895 he took the line that Swaziland in itself had never been of any importance; what he wanted was the littoral beyond, from which he had then just been headed off. To the interviewer it seemed only a following out of the previous British policy to take him at his word, and give him his territory, his Port, or rather the somewhat otiose permission to get a Port out of a spit of sand if he could, and to get in return Customs and Railway Union both for a substantial term of years, only insisting in this case on "cash down"—that is, immediate fulfilment of the bargain. The way in which this policy, as sketched, was received in 1895, first by Oom Paul, and secondly by Mr. Rhodes, is perhaps, in the light of after events, significant of the lines on which their minds were developing. Oom Paul lost his temper, and was for breaking off the interview when he was pressed

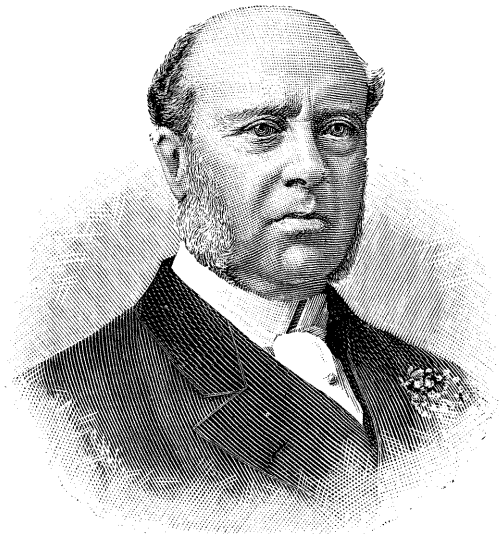
for a straightforward disavowal of any intention of bringing in the German factor in the way which has been described, while Mr. Rhodes abruptly treated the whole spirit of the bargain proposed as one out of date and impossible. It was universally assumed that the sudden blocking of the Transvaal's way to the sea was done upon Mr. Rhodes' prompting, and that it marked the end of the policy of sops to the Transvaal. It remains to add that the Transvaal is the only one of the States and Colonies which has persistently declined even to be represented at a Customs Conference, and that one of Oom Paul's worst blunders, from his own point of view, has been the illiberal treatment in this regard with which he has rewarded the support of Cape Afrikaner farmers in 1881, a support which had more than anything else to do with Great Britain's decision to restore the Republic's independence.

It was Railway politics, however, rather than Customs politics, which brought about the strained relations at the close of 1895, and led to the almost war measure, as it was considered, of the Closing of the Drifts.

The essence of the Railway Question is simple. Kimberley was once, Bulawayo may become some time, the magnet which attracts the iron rails, but at present, and for the last six years, the great loadstone is the Rand. The Transvaal Boer does not belong to the railway epoch. Left to himself he would not have had a yard of railway in his Republic to-day, but the Uitlander came in and developed the mines and created a community which could not be fed or served by ox-wagon. For some time the Government compelled it to make shift with the ox-wagon as best it could. A railway which should touch the sea at Delagoa Bay, the natural port of the country, had been a dream of President Burgers. The fact that it need not touch British territory, though it must cross that of another European power, made it a dream dear to the heart of President Kruger, but the national prejudice against the iron horse, aided by incompetence and apathy, had prevented the dream coming much nearer to accomplishment till the time when Cape Colony



forced the Government's hand by thrusting up its own railway through the Free State to the very border of the Republic, only fifty miles from the mines. Mr. Rhodes was then Prime Minister. Despite having got the Free State as partner, thus securing Republican backing, the enterprising railway management of the Colony found itself blocked at the Vaal by Presi-



LORD ROSMEAD.

(FORMERLY SIR HERCULES ROBINSON.)

*From a Photograph by Messrs. ELLIOTT & FRY.*

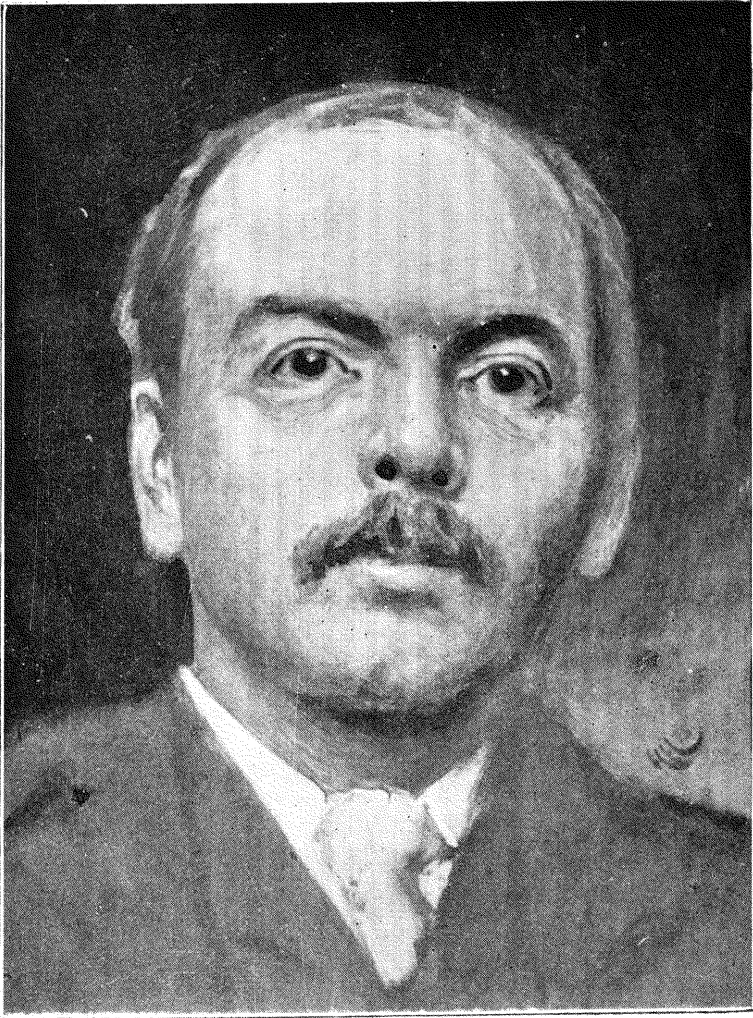
dent Kruger's declared determination to allow no other railway into the country until, in process of years, the Delagoa Bay line were completed to Pretoria. Drought, which struck at the transport by oxen, threatened famine in Johannesburg literally as well as industrially, and at a moment when revolution, or at any rate riot, seemed imminent, the hand of the Government was forced by the agitations from outside and inside, and the British Colony saw its enterprise rewarded by the completion of railway communication from Table Bay to Johannesburg.

The result was, of course, tremendous traffic, the industrial salvation of Johannesburg, and the filling of the Cape Treasury and that of the Free State, its partner, out of the carrying trade to the largest goldfields in the world. Three years later the Delagoa Bay line was completed ; and later that of Natal. The Johannesburg importer had thus the choice of three lines offering various advantages. On the first glance at the map it would seem impossible for the others to compete with the Delagoa line, which is much the shortest.

Natal is handicapped by steep gradients ; Delagoa Bay by malarial fever, necessitating double staffs, and by the Portuguese ; while the Cape Ports, though further from Johannesburg by land, are some days nearer England by sea. The adjustment of the shares which each line should eventually carry would, no doubt, have been settled by simple competition at cutting rates if the rival companies had been simply companies and not States. In the case of Natal and the Cape, however, the railways are a Government concern, and the aid which they at present give to the Treasury, thus lightening taxation, represents the chief way in which the colonies are able to share in nature's bounty to the inland Republic. The Free State was then in the position of a sleeping partner, the Cape Colony providing the capital, taking the risks and working the line, but it, too, is now taking over its railway to work on its own account. The Transvaal railway is a State railway with a difference. The Republic is essentially the home of concessions, and of course it gave a concession for the railway. The entire railway communication of the State is in the hands of a company domiciled in Amsterdam, and working upon such terms that its interest is to swell its profits by all possible means, looking only to the present in order to get bought out by the State at a fancy price when its yoke has become intolerable. The railway is one of the chief fortresses of Hollander officialdom in the Transvaal, and thus again it falls in with President Kruger's idea of filling all those offices in the State household which Transvaal burghers are not competent to take

with Continental Dutch speakers instead of with English-speaking Afrikaners. This Hollanderism of the Netherlands South Africa Railway Company adds an embittering factor to the situation, as it makes it a most powerful engine of Dr. Leyds' policy of setting the Transvaal and the neighbouring States by the ears while looking for support to Continental Europe. It was found, when all the railways began working together, that the Cape line still held its own, and that the devolution of traffic was extraordinarily slow. For the first few months the Cape carried 83 per cent. It was undoubtedly a disgrace to the Portuguese and the Netherlanders alike that their geographical advantages should have been so slow in making themselves felt. Failing fair competition, they proposed to bring the Colony to a suitable mind for Convention purposes by throttling the Colonial line by means of the clutch upon its throat afforded by their position. The Cape-Free State line to the Vaal is carried to Johannesburg by a Netherlands line only fifty miles long. The first act of the Netherlands Company was to pile up the rates for this short length so high as to frighten away traffic to the Natal and Delagoa lines; it increased its rates over this piece of line from 1s. to 1s. 8d. per hundred pounds. Experience, economy in working, the slowness of trade in transferring itself, and the urgent need for quick delivery in the stage of industrial development in which Johannesburg was, enabled the Cape to lower its rates and keep the traffic, while still retaining a margin of profit; but to such a pitch did the Netherlands handicap attain that it actually paid to unload goods at the Vaal River and send them the rest of the way by the old, traditional ox-wagon. The strip of veld between the terminus of the Cape-Free State line and the consuming centres of the Rand became the only spot on the surface of the earth, probably, which witnessed an actual competition between the ox and the steam locomotive. Such was the state of affairs when the Transvaal summoned a Railway Conference at Pretoria for October, 1895, and if the Cape was to be brought to its knees some more extreme expedient must be thought of.

It was actually determined to invoke the power of the Republic to close the two drifts by which the wagons crossed the Vaal against the importation of goods which the Cape Government Railway dumped down on the further bank. In August the Transvaal published a proclamation in the *Staats Courant* notifying that these drifts would be closed against over-sea traffic on the first of October. The distinction between over-sea traffic and other was meant to square the Free State farmer, who would have used very strong language against the neighbour Republic if he had found his produce shut out of the Johannesburg market. It was supposed that he would not so much object to the remoter injury of bleeding the Free State Railway returns. The proclamation made a sensation throughout South Africa, for, when it was issued, the incompetence of the Netherlands Railway to cope with the traffic they already had, to say nothing of monopolising the rest, was causing a tremendous railway block on the border, and something like a paralysis of trade was threatened. As the day for closing the drifts drew near, agitation grew more and more intense, the Rand Chamber of Commerce used strong language to the Government from the consumer's and importer's point of view, while the indignation of the Cape Colony from the point of view of the railway carrier and forwarding agent was echoed from Bloemfontein. A deputation of the Chamber of Commerce of the Free State capital waited on President Reitz to protest against the neighbour Republic's action, and President Reitz, though he shrugged his shoulders and asked what he could do, publicly stated that he shared the views of the deputation. The Free State had telegraphed to the Transvaal Government expressing regret, and remarking that they had not been consulted or recognised at all, and had not even got a reply. But President Kruger and his advisers stopped their ears. "You fellows have had enough of the Johannesburg trade," the President had declared to Dr. Smuts, an Afrikaner member of the Cape House of Assembly, who told the story to the *Cape Times*. "I have made up my mind that the Delagoa



DR. L. S. JAMESON.  
*From a Portrait by PROFESSOR HERKOMER, 1895.*

Bay line shall have the lion's share, and what there is to spare I shall give to Natal. You Cape Colonists must be content with the crumbs which fall from the Natal table."

The drifts were closed, and the block was piled up worse than ever. Firms at Johannesburg were in despair. Truck-loads of goods accumulated undistributed. There was only one hope, since the commercial and industrial community had no say in the Government of the Transvaal, while the burghers were about the only class of people in South Africa unaffected. The one hope was the London Convention. In giving back the independence of the Transvaal, while the Republic was allowed the fullest liberty internally, one or two small guarantees were kept against extremes of action prejudicial to the rest of South Africa. Those guarantees of the Convention of Pretoria were reduced in 1884 in the Convention of London, but Article 13 of the latter instrument did give a certain security against preferential measures taken to handicap British or Colonial trade. The relevant part of Article 13 runs as follows: "Nor will any prohibition be maintained or imposed on the importation into the South African Republic of any article coming from any part of Her Majesty's dominions which shall not equally extend to like articles from any other country or place." The closing of the drifts was dead against the spirit of the Convention; the question was, did it luckily happen to be provided against by the letter of this Article? Thanks to the word "over-sea" it did. The Cape Attorney-General, Mr. Schreiner, then Mr. Rhodes' right-hand man, but an Afrikaner whose prejudices were all against anything like unnecessary Imperial interference in South African affairs, decided that it did, and Sir Hercules Robinson, at the request of the Cape Government, drew the attention of the Transvaal Government to the Article. The question was referred to the Law Officers of the Crown at Home. Meantime, the date appointed for the Railway Conference at Pretoria drew near, and the Transvaal Government having shown that it could put on the screw, announced the re-opening of the drifts as a temporary measure

on the 30th of October. To facilitate friendly discussion at the Conference, they were to be opened on the 5th of November and to be closed on the 15th. It was clear that the Government saw it had gone too far, and hoped to make the Cape accept the Netherlands terms at the Conference by simply holding the drifts *in terrorem*. But the issue was to be taken out of its hands. On the very day of the meeting of the Conference, as it happened, a sensation was caused throughout South Africa by the announcement that Her Majesty's Government had informed that of the South African Republic that the Proclamation closing the drifts violated the Convention, and that it was not competent for them, after the 15th of November, to close the drifts again, which must be allowed to remain open for all time. The interventions of the Imperial Government are so rare as regards the actions of the Transvaal, and the tone of them usually so different from that of this peremptory insistence on a Treaty obligation, that President Kruger and his advisers were dumbfounded. Speculation turned eagerly on what answer they would make, but it was soon announced that they had accepted the situation with a wry face, and undertaken "never to close the drifts in future without first consulting Her Majesty's Government."

The Conference broke up without having arrived at any basis of agreement, but the key of the railway situation was no longer in the pocket of the Netherlands Company. The prestige of the President had suffered a severe shock, and although the ultra-republican Press muttered threats of resistance and gnashed its teeth over the vigorous resurrection of the Imperial factor, these mutterings were drowned in the Colonial and Uitlander jubilation, and South Africa as a whole hailed with relief and gratitude the termination of a dangerous deadlock.

It will thus be seen that it was the action of the Transvaal itself, under the direct incitation of its Hollander advisers, which first made acute the question both of inter-state relations and of Uitlander grievances in the closing months of 1895.

It is not suggested that there was any direct connection between the drifts incident of October and November and the conspiracy during the same months which was being promoted by certain movements of troops on the western border of the Republic. What the events just described did do was to foment the angry state of public disquietude, and to prepare insensibly for what followed. We find meetings of the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Mines, and the Mercantile Association, protesting in the most determined tone against the Government treating the Rand community with contempt, and thanking the Cape Government for its efforts. Such a meeting was presided over by one of the four Reformers on whom a death sentence was afterwards passed. The link is significant.

Throughout South Africa papers freely discussed the remedy of force as one certain to be resorted to in the long run by a community whose industry was being threatened.

When in the following month Johannesburg capitalists began openly to talk sedition, and when a manifesto of revolutionary tone was issued by the National Union, nobody was at all surprised. There was a feeling that matters were coming to a climax, and the only question was not how far the Rand was justified, but how far it was competent.

NOTE.—Since the above was written Mr. Stead has made known (under guise of fiction) a more striking illustration of the extent to which the Transvaal had alienated Afrikaner feeling at the time of the Drifts incident. It seems that Mr. Chamberlain made sure of the support of Cape Colony before issuing his ultimatum, and that Mr. Rhodes' Ministry secretly pledged itself not only to carry free over the colonial railway any troops with which the Imperial Government might have to follow the ultimatum up, but actually to share the expense of any such measures! I think the Ministry would have had a rather lively time with its Dutch supporters when the Colonial Parliament came to consider this item. Happily the drifts were opened peacefully. But the agreement, assented to by such a Republican sympathizer and "full-blooded Afrikaner" as Mr. W. P. Schreiner, is an eloquent fact.



## Chapter II

## "CLIVE WOULD HAVE DONE IT"

**A** NOVELIST would begin this Story of a Crisis from the following incident which, be it premised, is absolutely authentic, and comes from one who was present.

One day, long before the very earliest hint of a beginning of the "complot" as shown by any evidence which is before the world, a man sat on the stoep of Government House, Bulawayo, smoking cigarettes and reading a Life of Clive. A rather short man (the novelist would tell us) whose head, growing a little bald, was noticeably broad and rather too noticeably squat; what is called a bullet-headed man in short, with a firm jaw, firm chin, short nose and moustache, keen eyes, and a general air of good-natured, forcible abruptness.

This, of course, was Dr. Jim, officially known as His Honour Leander Starr Jameson, M.D., C.B., Administrator of Matabeleland.

It was about the time of one of those excitements which kept convulsing South Africa, as we saw in the last chapter, over some special display of autocratic insolence on the part of the Pretoria Government towards its Uitlanders and its neighbours. The papers were all loud with it, and a great deal of ineffectual froth was being poured out.

Suddenly Jameson looked up from his book and exclaimed, "I have a jolly good mind to march straight down off the plateau with the men I have here and settle the thing out of hand. The idea of South Africa going on being trodden upon by this Pretoria gang is absurd. I have a good mind to get the fellows together and start to-morrow, *viâ* 'Tati."

Now the men to whom Jameson referred were only about a couple of hundred M.M.P., and the time that it would take them to carry out this airy programme, marching down off the plateau, would be two or three weeks, during which the national and international situation would be rather peculiar, the disbanding of the forces by cable, not to say the cancelling of the Company's Charter, being probable incidents of the march.

Dr. Jim's interlocutor somewhat drily pointed this out, and a little argument ensued.

"Well," said Jameson at last, banging down the book on his knee, "you may say what you like, but Clive would have done it."

I remember in the early days after the raid talking to Mr. Hofmeyr one day, when he said, "Rhodes flattered himself he was going to be a kind of Clive and Warren Hastings rolled into one." What actually Rhodes did flatter himself is a difficult question, but the above incident shows that the Clive inspiration was actually working long before the raid in the mind of another chief actor.

Does the germ of the whole inscrutable business lie between the leaves of Jameson's "Life of Clive"?

\* \* \* \* \*

Dr. Jameson, like Mr. Rhodes, like two members of the present Cape Ministry, and many other prominent South Africans, went to South Africa for his health. He had been a brilliant London medical student. He reached the head of his profession in South Africa, having special repute as a surgeon. Settled at Kimberley, he was one of the most intimate personal friends of Cecil Rhodes, and the confidant of his large Imperial schemes at a time when the outside world only knew Mr. Rhodes as a young man speculating in diamonds, with a genius for finance and amalgamation, and a curious fad of sending himself to Oxford and going backwards and forwards between the hum of the washing gear at Kimberley and the silence of the courts of Oriel. Jameson knew more than

that, and, like so many doctors who have come to Africa, he determined to play a part as a man of action, and play it in his friend's schemes.

A trait in Jameson's character was shown in a half-forgotten incident of his life as a Kimberley doctor. A disease broke out among the natives working in the mines. Was it small-pox, or was it a comparatively harmless malady which on black skins was known to counterfeit small-pox? Other doctors diagnosed the former, Jameson the latter. Most men would have hesitated, and given the public safety the benefit of the doubt; but Jameson stuck to his own opinion in the teeth of everybody, declaring that where the thing was so perfectly clear it was absurd to dislocate the mining industry by a panic quarantine. This element in the affair—the fact that scepticism as to the small-pox suited the book of the great capitalists—embittered the controversy, for it made Jameson's obstinacy take on a flavour of too little scruple as well as too little caution. But to appreciate the doggedness of the thing, and its value as a present illustration, it need only be added that Jameson's opinion turned out to be absolutely wrong. After the risk of spreading the infection through the colony had been incurred it was proved beyond doubt that the disease was small-pox.

But such an incident as this was soon to be overlaid by a series of achievements in which boldness was so well mixed with foresight as to make the idea that Jameson could act recklessly, foolishly, and obstinately become incredible.

The chance of the medico to turn man of action came when Mr. Rhodes occupied the Transvaal hinterland in the name of British South Africa. Jameson turned out to be an Administrator with an extraordinary gift for dealing with men and attracting their enthusiastic loyalty. I remember, at the time of Jameson's sentence, a groom at a stable asking me eagerly for news. I said, "You seem interested in Dr. Jim." "Interested?" said he; "whatever 'quod' he gets I'd gladly do half of it for him. That I would." This groom had once broken his leg in a race at Kimberley, and the Doctor had

attended him in the hospital. That was all. But it is the same with all sorts and conditions of men whom "Dr. Jim" has come in contact with in other ways. This gift is as useful to an Administrator as to a doctor. At the time of the Matabele War Jameson was able to add yet a third *rôle*. The credit of the campaign rests with his military advisers; still Jameson had an intoxicating taste of the great war-game, and civilian as he was, it was he who galloped across country to effect a junction between the two columns so admirably timed to meet each other. It was he, too, who precipitated the war. The Company meant peace till the Matabele made development impossible, and gave the Mashonaland settlers "the jumps," in the Doctor's phrase, by raiding into their very streets; whereupon the Company, or rather the Doctor for them, determined that the golden occasion should be seized. An impi was driven headlong, war preparations hurried forward, and war became inevitable. The war itself, waged against the most formidable military tribe left unbroken, was the most rapid and brilliant in the history of South African native wars. The heroic death of Wilson's patrol, on a daring quest which was more due to Jameson's inspiration than to that of Major Forbes, might have taught a lesson. But then the daring was so nearly rewarded by success (and *what* success!)—that the lesson may well have missed its mark. Intimates declare that "Rhodes was really more cut up than Jameson."

It was Jameson, too, who met and stopped the "trek" of Boers who had the audacity to dispute the Company's title. He met them with a few police troopers, just as they were about to cross the Limpopo. He was authorized to try persuasion, failing that not to hesitate to shoot. They knew that he would not hesitate to shoot; and he persuaded so well that he turned them back peacefully.

Up to December, 1895, Jameson's career was one unbroken success. He had tasted the stern joy of extreme responsibility; had held in his hand the issues of peace and war; had found it easy to carry through dangerous decisions; to foresee and

even to command events almost equally with men ; to exact implicit confidence and to justify it. He was as one clothed in the strength of his own will. He had come to believe in his star, and his friend, the Managing Director, and all South Africa, and a good part of England, had come to believe in it also. Such was the man who had cast for himself, or for whom others had cast, the leading part in the strangest adventure of the century. However the plot originated, a matter which perhaps even the actors in it would find it hard to determine exactly, it became irrevocable when once it was committed into the hands of a man of this temper and these antecedents. Dogged inflexibility, reckless of life, moving with intense force in a narrow groove not broad enough to take in scruples, which to him would seem mere infirmity, unsparing of himself and having an irresistible grip on his confederates : such a man, thrust by fate into the right epoch at the right turn of affairs, might make a dint in the world's history, and go down to posterity as a Carlylean hero. Here were all the materials for a great achievement in action—or a greater failure.

## Chapter III

## THE PERVERSION OF MR. RHODES

THE Johannesburg Capitalists, who were capitalists first and politicians afterwards, thought twice and thrice before they could bring themselves to call in the aid of that dangerous political Pict, Cecil Rhodes.

This, like some other things equally foreign to the Government's purpose, was well illustrated as the result of its raid on the private correspondence between Mr. Lionel Phillips and the heads in London of the great firm of Wernher, Beit & Co.

Even the excerpts picked and paraded by the Government show clearly that it was only the hopelessness of Reform which ever drove these rich Johannesburgers to coquette with Revolution. For years it was the reproach of the National Union against them that they, the natural leaders of the industry, would not come into line, preferring to take their chances under the system of autocracy tempered by corruption, rather than run the risks incidental to any political upheaval.

The Phillips letters of 1894 exhibit the transition from this attitude to that of being driven into politics, by the Government becoming a distinct menace to the industry, in which men and masters were alike concerned.

"The old man is in no case a friend to the industry," he writes in June to "my dear Beit." "He has the most perverted ideas of political economy, suspects that we are working in concert with his old opponent C.J.R., sees imaginary combinations looming in the distance and the country bought up by Rhodes." "I don't of course want to meddle in politics, and as to the franchise, do not think many people care a fig

about it." So an English capitalist and employer would have written about his men's aspirations during the Reform Agitation in England. However, Mr. Phillips was probably right in assuming that a yearning for citizenship would never enter the head of the Johannesburgers as a whole, if they could get the treatment they wanted from Government without voting, particularly without voting on the arduous terms on which alone there seemed any chance of the franchise being extended to them. "If events fulfil appearances," he writes in another letter :—

"It means ultimate frightful loss to the industry or revolution. Now of course our mission is to avoid both. The Gold-fields people urged me to go down to Cape Town and talk over matters with Rhodes. I felt inclined to do this, but two considerations deter me. 1stly: If it were for a moment conjectured that I had approached Rhodes, I should incur the most virulent revenge from the Government, and perhaps justly; and 2ndly, should I be wise to trust Rhodes' advice?"

"If you trust Rhodes, and cable 'see Rhodes,' I will run down." And again, later :—

"It seems that the British Government means to have a say here, and it is about time. What I fear is that they may put the brake on one thing, and we may be more oppressed by some devilmint of the Government in another direction. The Government is absolutely rotten, and we must have reform. The alternative is revolution or English interference. Kruger seems beyond himself, and imagines he is guided by Divine will."

In July, "My dear Beit . . . Politics. Just got your cable reading 'Don't see Rhodes,' etc., of which I am rather glad. Things are quieter, but I think a good many men are buying rifles in case of contingencies." The same letter contains a sigh of regret that the mining companies do not possess the Government advantage of a secret service fund. The letters also contain hints of corruption affecting both the legislature and the judiciary, but these are not to our present purpose. In August he writes :—

"I will also see whether it is not possible, without creating unnecessary alarm here, or active steps in Pretoria, to get the Companies to possess

themselves of a few rifles, etc. One thing is certain. The Boer prowess is much overrated since they licked our troops, and in the Malaboch campaign they distinguished themselves by making the Pretoria contingent do any of the risky business, and appear generally to have behaved badly. If they knew there were 3,000 or so well-armed men here, there would be less talk—anyhow less real danger—of wiping out Johannesburg upon occasions like the recent incident. In addition to that we can never tell when some complication with England may arise, and this place ought to be prepared to hold its own for a few days at least. If the spending of money does not bring reform, the only alternative is force, and that will come in time."

While Johannesburg leaders were thus screwing up their courage for the plunge from finance into politics, as understood at Groote Schuur, what was Mr. Rhodes' attitude towards them? Mr. Hofmeyr has put it on record that during all his intimacy with Mr. Rhodes he never heard him drop one word of sympathy with the rights of the Uitlanders. Certain it is that Mr. Rhodes is neither a radical nor a democrat. He accepts government by the people as he accepts any other part of the great British system spread over the world, but it was a well-known belief of his that all this is only an outer cloak for the inner reality of government by a few. There are only a certain number of people in the world who matter, and in any given part of the world one or two of these can pull the rest almost any way if they only pull together. That is his faith. He accepts the present phase of democracy just as he accepts the present phase of competitive capitalism, as being the latest arrangements evolved by humankind for so shaking up the great mass that these few who matter can conveniently come to the top. His sympathy for English miners held under at Johannesburg by a minority of Boers was certainly more for the Englishmen than for the miners. Even with friends much less intimate than Mr. Hofmeyr then was he would discuss, for years past, the impossibility of a majority of such men, whether or not they "cared a fig for the franchise" *per se*, being permanently governed by a Boer oligarchy. The whole thing presented itself to him as a matter of power,



of the fitness of things, of conformity to the working theory of the British Empire, rather than as a matter of abstract right-high sentiments, "liberty, equality, and fraternity."

In the muddle of South African politics, it has been a common saying that two men at least knew their own minds, Cecil Rhodes and Paul Kruger. Mr. Chamberlain remarked lately that had these two men agreed together they could have settled the immediate future of South Africa with the most happy results. And in those unifying measures, discussed in a previous chapter, Mr. Rhodes long hoped to get his great rival to work with him. A stormy interview towards the close of 1894 between the two men has been mentioned already as the turning-point. After that he gave up Paul Kruger as hopeless.

From that time he seems to have begun to make his account, not with the Government of to-day, but with the Revolutionary Government of to-morrow. Capitalist, and in a sense Johannesburg, as he was, many of his sympathies were rather with the old than with the new population. Conservative and protectionist by habit of mind, it was as a leader of the Old Colonists rather than the new that he had gained at the Cape the ascendancy which was to give him a leading voice, he hoped, in piecing together the fragments when the Transvaal crash should come. Perhaps it was distrust of the new population at Johannesburg, as much as sympathy with it, that led him eventually to venture all in their cause. If the power passed in a day from the hands of the old burghers into those of the Rand cosmopolites, how would it be used? What if the new *régime*, flushed with victory, and confident from the great wealth lying at its feet, chose to take up as domineering, as separatist, as anti-Cape and anti-British a policy as the old? The finger of Johannesburg might well prove thicker than Pretoria's loins. Had Mr. Rhodes' career been cast in the Transvaal instead of in the Colony he would have thrown himself into the cause, no doubt, trusting to keep the direction of the new order after throwing off the old. His plan would

have been to utilise the commanding position of the Transvaal to squeeze all the rest of South Africa into union. The task would have been comparatively easy if the future United States of South Africa were to be separated from the British Empire. As it happened his dream was the opposite, and the base he had to work from was the Cape. Of course if the Johannesburgers should make good their revolution with the Union Jack flying over it, and confront the rest of South Africa with the *fait accompli*, that might be one solution of the problem. But could Johannesburg? And, if it could, did it want to? No man could tell what the revolution would bring forth! If it succeeded too easily, it might go to extremes hardly less dangerous than its failure. In short, Kruger was forcing things not only out of his own control, but out of that of Cecil Rhodes, who had come to think himself indispensable to the destinies of South Africa. The conclusion was, in plain language, that, at all hazards, he must have a finger in the pie.

The Johannesburg leaders wanted mainly four things for their movement, two within the Transvaal and two outside. In Johannesburg they wanted arms and they wanted enthusiasm. Outside they wanted some colour at least of armed support should it come to a tussle, and they wanted an influence which would gain over, or at least neutralize, Afrikaner sympathies in Cape Colony. One of these things, the enthusiasm, Mr. Rhodes could not supply. He could tell the Johannesburg owners and managers that if they wanted their men to be as solid with them as his men were at Kimberley, they must take as much interest in them, their housing, and their well-being generally, as he had done. The white miners of Kimberley live in a model village. But apparently the idea in Johannesburg was that a revolution, like everything else, could be ordered for money. They tried to close the ranks too late. When Mr. Rhodes' brother, in November, proposed to the employés of one of the companies most under Mr. Rhodes' control a plan based something on the Kimberley model the men were quick to catch at motives behind. The plan fell

through owing to the frank opposition of the men. But while Mr. Rhodes could not supply this one prime necessity, the enthusiasm of the masses in Johannesburg, he could supply all the other three wants—the arms within, the armed support without, and the spiking of the Afrikander gun in Cape Colony, and some months before the end of 1895 he had pledged himself to do so.

The plot, concisely stated, was this : Johannesburg was to formulate an ultimatum. On its being treated with contempt the revolutionary party was to take possession of Johannesburg one fine night, declare itself the provisional Government of the country, and the same night pay a surprise visit to Pretoria, seize the State arsenal and the seat of Government, and issue an appeal to South Africa and the world proposing to submit its acts and grievances, and the future of the Transvaal, to a *plebiscite* of the entire white population of the country. It was calculated that with proper organization the *coup* could be accomplished almost without firing a shot, and the great point then would be to prevent the burghers rushing to arms all over the country. For this the conspirators relied partly on the breathless surprise of the *fait accompli*, the sympathies of a large part of the burghers, which would rather be attracted than alienated by the proof that these new-comers were really in earnest about their rights, and the moderation of the appeal which the provisional Government would make to Uitlander and Boer population alike, but most of all they relied on a diversion from the border.

For a year or two years past the Johannesburg leaders had been sounding the Colonial Office at home as to what it would do, in the event of this or that happening on the Rand, and for many reasons they had always got the same answer, which was a discouraging one. Alternately with intimations that no Downing Street interference was wanted by Johannesburgers, who could look after themselves, some at least of the leaders had given Downing Street to understand that not a finger could be raised or would be raised without the assurance of some back-

ing. Downing Street always shook its head, having learnt something in South Africa from past blunders. It always told the sounders that it could not interfere in the internal affairs of the Transvaal on their behalf, and that if they accordingly took



**MR. LIONEL PHILLIPS.**

*From a Photograph by DUFFUS BROS., Johannesburg.*

steps to win their rights for themselves, Great Britain could only interfere by way of keeping the peace in South Africa, and not at a time or in a way which could be construed as assisting them to break it. To the leaders thus repulsed, and

to Rhodes and Jameson, the machinery of the British South Africa Company, which had already served once to make short work of international red tape in the case of the Portuguese in East Africa, offered an excellent means of doing for Great Britain what Great Britain declined to do for herself. From nowhere could external support, moral or actual, be better rendered than from the Company's new territory touching the western border. The moment uproar began, and life and property were in danger, a plausible excuse would be created for the interposition of any organized British force which was within two days of striking distance. The pretext for its action would be the jeopardy of British lives, property and interests, the interregnum in the country, the necessity for the preservation of order, and an emergency of a kind to justify acting first and asking leave afterwards. The exact method and moment of such action were never clearly fixed, but the idea was that Jameson would be there, and that Jameson was Jameson, and that a diversion of some kind, with a vague background of support from the Company's other forces farther north, might at least serve to secure to the revolutionary *camarilla* a pause and a breathing space before the burghers closed in upon them. That breathing space meant everything. Civil war would be imminent, and for that very reason the hand of the British Government, it was calculated, would be forced. Intervene they must to part the combatants, and to avert chaos. The moment these events took place South Africa would be plunged from end to end into a maelstrom of conflicting sympathies, and much would turn on the attitude of the Cape Government. Here came in Mr. Rhodes' part. Sticking like glue to his Premiership he was to fling all his official and unofficial advantages into the scale. His personality was to make the Government weather the storm long enough for him to advise the High Commissioner, who is also the Governor of the Cape, to proceed at once to the Transvaal as mediator, accompanied by Mr. Rhodes himself. The rest of the programme is easily imagined. Thus the man who was at once

Premier of the Cape, and uncrowned king of John Bull's modern "John Company," besides being head of some great capitalist amalgamations, proposed to add the *rôles* of arming a revolution, of succouring it with troops from the border, of "facing the music" when the crash came, and governing the extraordinary situation which would ensue as the one man who could mediate between Dutch and English Cape Colony, and between England and the Transvaal. Upon this hazard he staked the most brilliant and promising career boasted by any contemporary politician in the British Empire.

On the obvious weaknesses of this amazing scheme, considered simply on a balance of probability, it is unnecessary to dilate here. Events have done that. The question which forces itself upon us is; how on earth could a man of the caution, the patience, and the foresight of Cecil Rhodes have made up his mind to shut his eyes to them? The answer of the present Premier is a simple one. All those months when the plot was brewing Mr. Rhodes was miserable with the well-known nervous *sequela* of influenza. "He was not himself," Sir Gordon Sprigg declares. "Whatever part he took in the thing was simply due to the influenza." A solution which has all the charm of simplicity.

## Chapter IV

## THE PLOT THICKENS

AS the Uitlander demands made themselves more and more vocal at the time of the Drifts incident, the Government made it clear that it was providing itself with the last argument of kings. For weeks it brought offensive arms to bear on Johannesburg. The Uitlander saw contracts entered into for building, with his money, forts on the latest pattern of scientific destructiveness, which could be aimed only at himself: a fort at Pretoria at £25,000, and site chosen for another openly commanding Johannesburg. A Mr. Van Zwieten, one of Oom Paul's Hollanders, was sent to Europe, as it was understood, with credentials to the military authorities of Germany, and instructions to engage expert tuition for the shooting of Uitlanders on the latest European methods. While the conspirators were smuggling up Maxims in oil tanks, the Government was laying in two for every one of theirs by Delagoa Bay. Orders for heavy artillery and quick-firing guns were placed with the German firm, Krupp, and a battery of quick-firers was established on the Hospital Hill, directly overlooking the streets of Johannesburg. Ever since the raid these aggressive military preparations have been spoken of as a painful necessity to be numbered among its consequences, but in strict chronology it was the Government which armed itself first, while the Uitlanders, as a body, were still on constitutional lines, and when the Government, by its own account, had not the slightest knowledge of the plot in which a few of them afterwards proved to have been engaged. It became clear to the leaders that if Pretoria was to be taken by surprise, it must be taken quickly.

At the same time events were forcing on that transfer of the Protectorate which was destined to put the British South Africa Company in charge of the western border. In its 1895 Session the Cape Parliament had closed a bargain with the Imperial Government for the southern part of Bechuanaland—the Crown Colony. The reversion of the northern part of Bechuanaland, the Protectorate, had long been promised to the great Company which to north of it already spread away across the Zambesi to Lake Tanganyika, and which was pushing on the railway which could alone make Bechuanaland productive. The claims of certain native chiefs, Khama and others, had at the same time to be safeguarded. Mr. Chamberlain settled with them in September and October, and on 7th November the rest of the Protectorate was transferred to the Company.<sup>1</sup> Already in October the Company had come to terms with the two smaller chiefs, Montsioa and Ikanning, and had accordingly got its administration of their territory proclaimed (18th October). These two petty chiefs owned a part of Bechuanaland, close to the railway extension on the one hand, and on the other in contact with the Transvaal border. It was here that the conspirators chose the swooping point for the raid; and everything fitted in so conveniently that, when the swoop came, and before the Imperial Government had spoken, no wonder that many jumped to the conclusion that the British Government was a party to the preparations. The truth about this appears to be quite simple. To understand it the first thing is to put out of one's mind what actually did happen and to imagine what observant people fully expected to see happen at the time of the events already described. In handing over the territory the Imperial Government disbanded the troops; but had it retained them, and if the High Commissioner had held them in readiness to intervene in case of a kind of Alexandria riot suddenly supervening in Johannesburg, he would only have been doing exactly what his predecessor did at the

<sup>1</sup> The transference was not completed when the crisis came, and has not been carried out now.



critical period in 1894. What that was let Lord Loch himself describe :—

“My lords, I may perhaps be permitted to add a few words to what I have already said. In consideration of the excited state of the city of Johannesburg at that time, with the probability—the near possibility at one time—of an insurrection arising in Johannesburg, I felt it to be my duty, in the position I filled as Her Majesty’s High Commissioner, to take steps, if necessary, to protect the lives of the British subjects and property of the British subjects in Johannesburg (cheers). The steps I adopted were in connection with an assembly at certain points of the British and Imperial Bechuanaland police. My intention was that, if disturbances had arisen in Johannesburg—disturbances resulting from the administration extended by the Republic towards the ‘Uitlanders’ in that city—it would have been my duty, I considered, to have informed President Kruger that he would be held responsible for the safety of the lives and property of British subjects in the country. I further conceived it to be my duty to inform President Kruger that, if he had failed to provide the necessary protection for the lives and property of British subjects, I should have felt myself at liberty to have taken such steps as I may have felt expedient to give that protection which he failed to give. I think it will be admitted that a statement of that kind, coming from me as High Commissioner representing Her Majesty’s Government, was a very different act from the unfortunate action which has recently taken place, and which has brought about so much sorrow and trouble on the whole of South Africa” (cheers).

In this connection there is a notable passage in Mr. Chamberlain’s speech on the Address when Parliament met after the raid :—

“My hon. friend opposite (Mr. Buxton) will bear me out that in July, 1894, there was a disturbance in Johannesburg, and an outbreak was expected at any moment. What happened? The British Bechuanaland police were collected and concentrated at Mafeking, and other forces were under orders to move. Was this wrong? Of course this was done by the High Commissioner; but was it wrong? Certainly not. In my opinion it was absolutely right and justified by the circumstances. When your neighbour’s house is on fire you are quite right to get out your apparatus in order to extinguish it, and nobody can accuse you, unless they can prove that you are bringing it out not with the object of stopping mischief, of preventing damage, of interfering with general consent, but with the deliberate intention of promoting the mischief that you profess a desire to prevent.”

In this sense, it would seem, Mr. Chamberlain spoke, not only in the House of Commons after the raid, but also to agents of Mr. Rhodes and of the British South Africa Company before the raid, when the negotiations were proceeding between the Company and chief Khama. These negotiations were made more difficult by what is called in South Africa an "Exeter Hall outcry" for specially generous terms to the chief. Khama was encouraged to hold out for high terms. There was long higgling at the Colonial Office; and agents as clever as those who represented Mr. Rhodes, urged on as they were by impatient cables from Cape Town to get the bargain struck quickly, were not likely to overlook so useful an argument towards expediting matters as was supplied by the disturbed situation just across the border. Troops and territory both changing hands, and a prolonged state of unsettled jurisdiction as between the British Government and the British Company were obviously undesirable at a time when it might at any moment become necessary to repeat the precautions taken a year before by Lord Loch. Reference of some sort to possible developments, however discreet, was bound to be made during these prolonged negotiations about the border territory; and it was only in conformity with the principle habitually acted on for years by the Colonial Office in dealing with the Transvaal and native neighbours, when the Company induced Mr. Chamberlain to make it "Warden of the Marches," and to arrange that, whatever territory Khama got, the Company should secure for its railway, and for the purposes of its ward upon the border, the strip of country fringing the Transvaal.

To the conspirators, however, these convenient arrangements for the fire-extinguishing apparatus, to adopt Mr. Chamberlain's metaphor, were pleasantly indistinguishable from their own plans of "promoting" (to quote him again) "the mischief that you profess a desire to prevent,"—or at least running the most reckless risk of promoting it. They were in high feather. The bargain was struck, and the "Wardens of the Marches"

proceeded to take advantage of it with all their energy: a legend gradually growing up among conspirators—who had a hint from So-and-so who had a wink from Such-and-such—that “Chamberlain was in it up to his neck.” There were painful surprises in store for these gentlemen.

To the High Commissioner the sole reason given for forming a police camp at Pitsani Pothlugo was the need for protecting the railway works. To him not a word was ventured about the Border Watch.

The High Commissioner found the arrangement a most natural one, and Sir Sidney Shippard, the Administrator under the Imperial Government, then about to be supplanted by the Company's Administrator, was enjoined to facilitate arrangements with Montsioa and Ikanning. Sir Sidney inspected a site “for a camp and a seat of Magistracy” in Colonel Rhodes' company, and wrote for Major “Bobby” White a letter of introduction to “Ikanning, Chief of the Bamalite.” The farm eventually taken was not this one, but another near Pitsani Pothlugo in Montsioa's territory, but here again Sir Sidney's aid was invoked. “Saw Silas Molema, nephew to the Chief Montsioa,” says “Bobby” White's day book, October 30th; “This man gives us the farm ‘Maliete’ near Pitsani, in exchange for two farms which will be given to him under promise from Sir S. Shippard.” It was just these official routine transactions which to Transvaal eyes after the raid seemed confirmation strong as Holy Writ of Imperial complicity.

The camp being fixed, then came the gradual and quiet moving down of the troops into it. From the 20th to the 29th the Company's force, the Mashonaland Mounted Police, were being drafted from Bulawayo to Pitsani, in all 250 men, 293 horses, 168 mules, 6 Maxims, and 2 field guns. On 15th November the Imperial Government in handing over the Protectorate to the Company, was to disband the Bechuanaland Border Police, a force of rather better stuff than the Company's and numbering a few hundred. It was indispensable that

these troopers should be got to re-enlist in the Company's force, and so swell it. On the day before the disbandment, Jameson had the satisfaction of hearing from Major White that "majority B.B.P. will be pleased to join."

From the middle of November, Mafeking was lively with the passing through of recruits, all *en route* to the Pitsani camp. Sir John Willoughby writes to Major White, November 18th, from Bulawayo, chafing that "he" (the Doctor) "will not let me move yet." "Mind you and Harry drill the men inside, outposts, and advanced guards, skirmishing, etc." On the 18th November Jameson arrived at Mafeking from Bulawayo, inspected the new camp, talked over matters, and hurried down to Cape Town. Thence he wired that he was sending up equipments and all that was needed, and estimated that "we shall have 600 men and 700 horses."

The Doctor not only sent up equipments, but also a certain number of picked men from the Colonial Volunteers (D.E.O.V.R.) at Cape Town.

From Cape Town he hurried up to Johannesburg to settle the details of the plot with the leaders there, and arrange a signal.

It was agreed that Jameson should move in response to a written appeal prepared beforehand as soon as the appeal was confirmed by telegram. As to the written appeal, Jameson's argument was that he must have something to read to the men when asking them to volunteer for so hazardous an expedition, while at the same time it was obvious that such a document would be his only possible answer to the astonished questions of the directors and shareholders whose troops he was to use, and to all and sundry who might suspect him of dashing into the Transvaal on a mere annexation project of his own. So one day, during his visit to Johannesburg, Jameson set Mr. Charles Leonard, President of the National Union, down at a table with pen, ink, and paper, and the result was the famous Letter of Invitation in which Johannesburg, on the eve of a mortal struggle, in which it was not made clear whether they

were the threateners or the threatened, sent forth a cry to the nearest British troops not to desert them in their extremity, and made use of the phrase about rescuing women and children which it is impossible to quote now without wincing. "We guarantee any expense," the letter concludes, "that may reasonably be incurred by you in helping us, and ask you to believe that nothing but the sternest necessity prompted this appeal." The letter put the basis of co-operation in black and white once and for all, and though Jameson probably had no very fixed plan in his own mind as to what use to make of it, he regarded it as a great stroke to have secured it.

The next afternoon Mr. Charles Leonard went round to the Doctor to ask for the letter back, as on second thoughts he had concluded that it was a mistake.

"Awfully sorry, old man," said the Doctor drily, "but it has gone down to Cape Town by the last train."

Mr. Leonard protested and hesitated, but the Doctor took him by the arm, gave vent to his usual interjection—an abbreviation of the word *balderdash*—and managed the Chairman of the National Union in his usual style.

The signatures to this letter give us the ringleaders in Johannesburg.

Mr. Charles Leonard, a successful and well-known solicitor, born a Cape Colonist, had succeeded his brother, Mr. Jim Leonard, Q.C., as President of the National Union, the body which for some years had carried on all the political work that had been done on behalf of the Uitlander cause, the holding of meetings, the printing of pamphlets, and working of petitions to the Raad. Mr. Leonard comes of a stock noted in South Africa for great abilities, great amenities, but not equal strength of character; he was, however, very sincerely liked and respected as a good fellow and an honest, clever, professional man. And as an *Afrikander* (a Cape Dutch word originally used to imply an African native, then a half caste, then a South African white of Dutch speech and sympathies, and now becoming enlarged to mean any South African-born

white) he was a suitable figure-head for the constitutional Uitlander movement. A less apt man to cast for the part of President by force of arms of an insurrectionary Republic, it would be hard to find.

Mr. Lionel Phillips is a financier born. He is of the great financial race. He has been through the mill, first at Kimberley and then at Johannesburg, and has come out of it with a large fortune. He is a prop of the great "Corner House" of Eckstein, Johannesburg, and of Wernher & Beit, London. A shrewd, clever, organizing man, full of go and of spirit, he admirably represents the better type of Johannesburg money maker. Politics came to him as a late ambition; revolutionary leadership as a still later one.

John Hays Hammond represents the American mining expert. It is a successful South African type, and he has been the most successful of them all. His retainer as Consulting Engineer of the Goldfields of South Africa (Limited) is alone a President's salary. A man of simple and attractive character, he also was a popular Johannesburger, and is trusted to an extent which, for an expert, is quite extraordinary. His health and his nerves were not made for stormy times, but there is a background of American grit.

George Farrar came of Yorkshire stock, and spent his youth in Cape Colony. As a youth he was a great athlete, he and his brother winning many triumphs on the running path. A wiry, sharp, determined-looking man, he is, as Managing Director of various large companies, the largest direct employer of labour on the Rand, and in far more direct touch than any of the others with the miners who were expected to play a part in the revolution. With them, despite the rooted local suspicion of capitalists, he is popular, being referred to commonly as "George." He has the temper and the tenacity for a tough fight.

Colonel Francis Rhodes, late 1st Dragoons, is the best known of Mr. Rhodes' brothers in the army. He has over twenty-three years' service, and has smelt plenty of powder. He was in the