
From Naboth's Vineyard

of that preference. A conflict between police and a small body of natives about taxes is followed by martial law, executions by courts martial, burning of kraals, devastation of country, cattle captures, and the rest of it. It would probably be within the truth to say that the poll-tax will cost Natal twenty pounds for every pound that she collects.

But a still deeper question lies in all this trouble. Moving through it, or alongside it, as a shadow, signs have appeared which cannot be ignored. I have alluded in these letters to certain side currents in the labour question. "Constructive coercion," "the necessity of making the black men industrious fellow-citizens," such things have taken the place of homilies upon the dignity of labour, about which a great deal used to be said. What if, aiming at the object of obliging the native to seek the mines, there has been a policy quietly set on foot of eventually removing him from the land, making him by the force of his necessities a labourer below the surface? I have heard the ruling powers in Johannesburg described as "men whose mental horizon covered only

From Naboth's Vineyard

the limits of their pockets," but that pocket resembles a fixed beam. It reaches a long way in one direction, although the remainder of the horizon is all dark night to it. Zululand is said to be exceptionally rich in minerals of many kinds, and gold has been already found there in rich deposits. In the autumn of 1878 I remember a staff officer of high position in South Africa coming to see me in London. "How are they getting on out there?" I asked him. "When I left," he replied, "the difficulty was to poke Cetewayo up to fighting." Four or five months later came the news of Isandula.

I will close this letter with two short utterances of some note which lately came to my notice. Tengo Jabavu, the editor of a Kaffir newspaper, recently told a meeting of his countrymen to "remember that their votes were now their guns." Could the wise policy which the Cape Colony has followed have been better put? Disarmament by franchise. Now for the other view, this time a white man's. The speaker was a Colonial Militia officer, the scene a railway

From Naboth's Vineyard

station platform in Natal. "Hullo, old man," called out a friend from the window of a passing train, "what are you doing in that get-up?" "I've been mobilized, and I'm out after the natives," answered the man in uniform. Then in a confidential tone he added, "It's a deal better than farming, I can tell you." With the black man in the Cape Colony the vote supersedes the gun. With the white man in Natal the sword supplants the spade, and meanwhile the yellow man from Asia is edging in upon this strange chessboard of Black and White.

CAPE COLONY,
May, 1906.

XIII

I LANDED at St. Helena a fortnight ago—and have been dwelling in a world of ninety years ago ever since. All the existing travail of the sub-continent appears temporary beside the memory of the eternal tragedy which this lonely rock witnessed these long years past.

‘Art thou still alive, old Earth?’ asked Shelley when the news of May 5th, 1821, reached Europe, and the old Earth might have answered: “I live, and while I live, *he* does not die.”

Longwood—the Tomb—the grey mists drifting in from the enormous outspread ocean—the gloomy lava-chasms which imprison the inner prison, as the ocean imprisons all, the moan of the winds through ragged pine-tops, the sense of a solitude which can be felt, and of a distance which can be seen, all combine to give to St. Helena a physical character and a mental

From Naboth's Vineyard

meaning which no other spot in the world can equal. Geographically, the island belongs to Africa—but all the earth's circle lays claim to it with reason. While everything seems impossibly strange here, nobody can possibly be a stranger here.

A bust of Napoleon stands on a pedestal at the spot in the little room at Longwood where he expired. "When the Boer prisoners were on the island," said the custodian to me, "they never tired of coming to look at that bust." And the world never tires of hearing told and retold the life-story of the man—the cast of whose face was taken as he lay dead in this narrow room at Longwood, eighty-five years ago—not three generations back—and yet his best haters are now his tribute bearers. "The greatest of all great men," the first of our living soldiers calls him. I open an old Annual Register of a year in the middle of the captivity, and I read that "Buonaparte is already forgotten." I turn over a page in the long misery, and I come upon some sententious sentence in which Lieut.-General Sir Hudson Lowe, K.C.B., tells his

From Naboth's Vineyard

subordinate that it is specially his function, at the desire of the English Ministers, that "General Bonaparte" is not to have any intercourse with the outside world. I turn again to what the English Ministers did say, and this is what I find Prime Minister Liverpool writing on the 21st July, 1815—

"I wish that Louis (the Eighteenth) would shoot or hang Bonaparte, but as that cannot (now) be done, he must be sent to St. Helena, where he will very soon be forgotten." Seventy or eighty years pass, and another English Prime Minister cannot better employ his time than in studying the last chapters of that extraordinary life, and adding his mite to the world's knowledge of the captivity in St. Helena. But we must go back to our South Africa. This rock in the Atlantic is not a bad point from which to get that most unfortunate land into our focus.

During the war in South Africa the Prince and Princess of Wales made a tour round the Colonial Empire, visiting the Cape in that journey. His Royal Highness brought back a remarkable message to the people

From Naboth's Vineyard

of the United Kingdom. It was conveyed in two words, "Wake up." "England must wake up," he said. Well, the nation accepted, I think, that *réveille* call. It woke up out of the sleep into which it had been cast under the spell of certain persons, and the general election of this year marked the disappearance of the last of the "forty winks" into which about the same suggestive number of agile-tongued hypnotizers had cast her.

The Prince of Wales has recently returned from an extensive tour in India, and he has brought back a message of similar significance and importance. This time it is contained in a single word. It is "Sympathy." I will take these two messages. We have wakened up. We have realized the profound mistake of the war, but that awakening is not enough. The keynote of the future lies in the second message. We must have the courage of our convictions, and tell the truth. We must not allow the Devil to have all the good music, as the bishop said in the Church Council when it was proposed to

From Naboth's Vineyard

abolish Church choirs. Surely the people whose convictions are those of conscience should have as good courage as they whose convictions are of the police-constable kind. Doth conscience in the first sense really "make cowards of us all"? If the Liberal Party had only half as much courage in office as they have conscience when they are out of office, the world would be ever so much better and happier to-day. Are we afraid to show sympathy with the Dutch in South Africa? They want no preference. They only seek for even-handed justice—the justice that Sir George Grey gave them, that Mr. Froude advocated, and that all the wise men who had the good of South Africa at heart always laboured for.

No man knew South Africa better than Mr. Froude. When he first went there he imagined, as many others imagined before and after him, that the problem of South Africa was to be solved by a *coup de main*. Confederation, he thought, could be forced upon the various Colonies. The complete failure of his missions in 1874–75 opened his eyes. He saw that South Africa was not

From Naboth's Vineyard

to be carried by assault, or by siege, or by hostile measures of any kind. It was to be won by justice, by patience, by wise policy. He had two examples before him—Ireland and Canada: the how not to do—and the how to do. “The history of Ireland is repeating itself here,” he wrote in 1885. “As if Ireland was not enough.” Even ten years earlier he had foreseen, with extraordinary power of prescience, what was likely to happen, and this is the manner in which he then forecast the future of that unhappy land. Speaking at that time in Port Elizabeth, he said: “There are three courses possible to us by which you may proceed—

“First, there is open force.

“Second, there is the policy of fastening upon the soil of the Free States, involving yourselves with them in small and irritating disputes, advancing one claim here and another there—continuing a series of provocations until you irritate them into violent language, or some precipitate action that would be a pretext for attacking them, and proceed upon the plea that they had

From Naboth's Vineyard

themselves begun the quarrel. But remember," he went on in deeply impressive language, "that all this will come back upon you, and that you will have to meet to the last cent, with interest, and with compound interest, the price and the punishment of such a policy.

"And the third course is conciliation, and that is the course which you should follow."

Ten years later he wrote again in *Oceana*: "South Africa can only be ruled constitutionally, by conciliating the Dutch people there; and we have persisted from the beginning, and are still persisting, in affronting them and irritating them. The Boers have been so systematically abused and misrepresented that the English scarcely regarded them as human beings to whom they owed any moral consideration."

Reading words such as these one begins to think that the world would have gone just as well, or as ill, if never a book had been written or a thought of truth expressed.

Let us hear how Mr. Froude describes the views of that veteran Colonial Governor and

From Naboth's Vineyard

great administrator, Sir George Grey. Grey is speaking: "He had gone to the Cape with the prejudice against them (the Boers) generally entertained in England, and he had found the Boer of the English newspapers and platform speeches a creature of the imagination, which had no existence in 'space or time.' . . . They were a quiet, orderly, industrious, hard-working people, hurting no one if let alone, but resentful of injuries, and especially of calumnies against their character. Our interference alone had created all the troubles in South Africa. But for us the Dutch and English inhabitants could live peaceably and happily together without a word of difference. All that we had to do was to leave them the same liberties which we do not think of refusing to the Australians and Canadians. They were a people who could never be driven, but if treated frankly and generously they would be found among the very best Colonists in all the British dominions."

"Sir George," continues Mr. Froude, "spoke sadly and wistfully. Were he to return as Governor to Cape Town and

From Naboth's Vineyard

allowed to act on his own judgment, he knew well that there would be no more trouble there. He knew, also, that it was impossible for him to go in that capacity ; but though seventy-three years old, and with failing health, he was still thinking of going there as a private individual and of trying what he could do out of pure love for his own country, and disgust at the follies in which some fatality compelled us to persist." I know of nothing sadder in our recent history than what this conversation reveals.

At the moment when these two men—the one the most brilliant historical writer of his day, the other the highest type of the Colonial Governor and man of action our modern Empire has known—were thus tracing in clearest characters upon the chart of our Colonial system 'the true course of Imperial Government, a sinister figure was already emerging out of the mists of the financial intrigues, sordid emulations, and mean rivalries of South African commercialism. 1885-95: ten short years saw all the wise counsels flouted, the sound

From Naboth's Vineyard

precepts violated, the gloomy prophetic instincts realized. "The series of provocations" were in full swing. The pretexts for attacking the Boers were readily found—"one claim was advanced here, another there." The whole sequence ran as easily as though it had been contrived and calculated from the very words which Mr. Froude had used in warning and reprehension—and then destruction, desolation, murder, famine, rapine, and ruin were carried wholesale into South Africa. And now another decade has passed; the day of retribution has already dawned; the first price has been partly paid, but the last cent and the compound interest have still to be extracted. The punishment of the fatal policy is not yet begun.

"Thefts never enrich;" "Murder will speak out of stone walls;" "Treat men as pawns and ninepins and you shall suffer as well as they;" "Crime and punishment grow out of one stem;" "If you put a chain around the neck of a slave, the other end fastens itself around your own." Was it not all foretold to us and written down for

From Naboth's Vineyard

us in a thousand sentences long before Froude wrote or Grey laboured?

Emerson might just as well have flicked bread-crumbs at the wall of his study as have written these things. What he called "the slaughter-house style of thinking" was to have its little day. "Pooh-pooh!" and Cocksure were to force their old chargers to the front again—the new "Chassepot" must be let off, and the new "Long Toms" and the rest of them. And lo! "Pooh-pooh!" and dear old Cocksure go off their horses too; and all the stocks and shares, the bonds and bills that were to run up so high, are down lower than they have ever been.

And one great contriver is dead, and another "Empire-builder" is retired, and a third has become, like the globe, "flattened at the poles;" and so on and so on, while the old earth rolls its course, smoothing out the graves on the veld, levelling the block-houses, and gradually undoing the action of the "slaughter-house school of thought," and all the wreck and ruin it occasioned in South Africa.

Even this ocean rock which had its share

From Naboth's Vineyard

in the great gold shower which the war cast upon South Africa is now on the brink of financial ruin, and dreading that the withdrawal of the last remaining hundred soldiers of the garrison will be the final straw in the balance of its misfortune.

During the war there were five or six thousand Boer prisoners on the island, and from every person one hears the same story: "No quieter or more easily managed men were ever here." "There were some fifty or sixty 'uitlanders' among them, and they gave all the trouble." How often has the truth to be repeated before people at home will listen to it? When I was in Pretoria recently the police officers told me that the Dutch people of the town gave only a seventh of the police prisoners; the remaining population gave six-sevenths. Yet the Dutch inhabitants were half of the whole. In the country districts there is no crime whatever. In the four years which have followed the termination of the war there has not been one case of outrage by the Dutch in the annexed Republics after a war of two and a half years' duration, which saw every

From Naboth's Vineyard

Boer homestead destroyed, all stock killed or stolen, and even the Boer Bibles carried off. No stealings of cattle or horses have been reported; no "rapparrees," no "tories," have appeared. As the war was entirely phenomenal in its character, in the nature of the resistance made, and in the vast disparity between the forces engaged upon either side, so has the peace which followed it been wholly unprecedented in the manner in which the conquered people have behaved since the cessation of hostilities.

ST. HELENA,
June, 1906.

XIV

WELL! What is to be done now? Is not this tranquillity a proof that the Boers are contented? I hear some people ask. No greater fallacy could be imagined. To believe that will be to repeat the old errors, to build again upon the old rotten foundations, to prepare the road of the future for interminable troubles. We must take advantage of this season of calm to recast our policy, and to undo some of the worst aspects of recent conflict. There are many ways in which reparation can be made. The old Bibles taken from the farmhouses can be restored—the books which had the records of the births and deaths of the forefathers of these farmers and of the births and deaths of their children could be collected and returned to their original owners or their relatives. Surely Bible-loving Britain might fittingly begin the work of reparation in that manner.

From Naboth's Vineyard

In all the falsehood which is still sent from South Africa for home consumption you may be sure of one fact : It is that in this seeming peace Dutch South Africa has still a bleeding heart. She does not weep with her eyes, but her heart bleeds. If the skies above her could only weep as her heart bleeds, her arid soil and stony kopjes would be deep in grass and flowers to-day. But for all her sorrow her eyes are dry as her hilltops, and they will remain dry. If she could weep she might forget. She can never forget. She may forgive. You do not know in England the tenth part of what she knows.

You will never know it—she will always know it. It was the womb of the nation that was struck. The victims were the mother and the child, sister, wife, widow. Never in any modern war did the womb of a people so suffer. If it be true that the hand which rocks the cradle rules the world, think how impossible it will be for South Africa to tear out *that* page from her memory. Nevertheless if the wounds were cruel the glory was great. If the leaf cannot

From Naboth's Vineyard

be torn out it can be pasted over, and the paste will be the glory which you and your sons must accord to her. Give her the entire truth of that glory. Write it large in your own history, too, for it is also necessary to you. You cannot deny it, and explain the war. Anything from 40 to 400 millions of people against 250,000 men, women, and children all told! Two and a half years' war; 250 millions of money; 500,000 horses and mules dead; 480,000 soldiers—all these against the population whose numbers were those of a city of the second or third rank in England. If this handful was not heroic, what, then, was the gigantic other side? Her own glory and your sympathy. These are the gateways through which you can move into better days in South Africa. Every little act will tell. Many of them, like the Bibles, will cost you very little, and you will have another satisfaction in doing acts of sympathetic reparation, inasmuch as they need not open the door to dishonest dealings among your own servants. For instance, the old Boer officials might be given employment

From Naboth's Vineyard

or pensions under Government. They would work for half the salaries, and bring double knowledge of their duties to the labour of their departments. Many of these old servants of the late Governments are not far removed from destitution. Fortunately they can live on little, and their brethren who have been less unfortunate are generous in the extreme.

I was informed by a gentleman who has been, and is, anti-Dutch in his sympathies, that he knew of Boer families who are living in Kaffir kraals, working for Kaffirs, and who were being wholly supported by what they earned from Kaffirs. He had been himself a witness of this state of things on his own farms. The destitution is extreme in the northern part of the Transvaal. When I visited Middleburg, a party of Boers—about a hundred men, women, and children—had gone into the bush country to the north of that place to find food and gather the wild peaches which are there plentiful. Fever suddenly broke out among them, and some fifty or sixty perished in a few weeks—one entire family had died.

From Naboth's Vineyard

At the same station I met with an old Boer who was employed by our Engineer Department in planting trees. He had fought in the war. His father had been a "Voor-trekker." The well-known passage over the Vaal River known as "Viljoen's Drift" had been named after him. Toil, heat, age, hardship were written in every line of this man's head and face. He would have made a splendid study for a Rembrandt—"Head of an Old Peasant." The deep furrows in his neck and face, the tangled grey hair, the sun-bronzed features, the look of tired labour in his deep-set eyes, all were there. I asked him about his life. "If I thought," he said, "that my children were to go through what I have gone through, and be in their old age as I am now in mine, I would pray the Almighty this night that when He takes me He will take them." In this old Boer's mind the lot of the twenty odd thousand women and children dead in the concentration camps had not been the worst one.

I once remember, when the news of the mortality among the women and children in these death camps first reached England,

From Naboth's Vineyard

the war journals had been eloquent in praising the wisdom and humanity of this new method of modern warfare, which permitted a country to be "cleared" while at the same time it took steps to prevent the full ravages of war from falling upon the more helpless members of the enemy's community. I think they pointed out, too, that these camps could be utilized for the purposes of education—infant-school teaching and other meritorious works of benevolence and instruction. We know what happened. It was among these unfortunate helpless ones that Death reaped his largest harvest. We have heard a good deal about "methods of barbarism" in the last few years. It seems to me that we have got a little bit mixed over our metaphors, and that it might do us a lot of good if we were to study barbarism more closely. I find a barbarian of the fourteenth century—who was called in his day "the thunderbolt of war"—telling his soldiers and captains "that they were never to forget, no matter in what country they might be making war" (the italics are not in the original), "that Churchmen, women,

From Naboth's Vineyard

children, and the poor were not their enemies." Then six or seven hundred years earlier, I find it recorded of one "Clovis" by name, that he hanged one of his soldiers because the man had stolen a bundle of hay from the cottage of a peasant somewhere on the Loire. A war captain of the name of Genseric, who is supposed to have known something of the methods of Vandalism, is reported by Gibbon to have preserved Rome from fire, and to have left untouched in the churches of the city the sacred vessels of gold and silver. Clearly these eminent barbarian soldiers were a long way behind the ages in which they lived—their education in methods of barbarism had manifestly been neglected.

But when all of the past has been said, the question of what has now to be done still remains. I will come to it later. First let us bear in mind that we have had to sail this sea of conciliation before, and that we have some excellent charts of it existing. Lord Durham went to Canada in 1838 when that country had been a prey to dissension and civil war or rebellion during many preceding

From Naboth's Vineyard

years. Lord Durham's first dispatch is dated "Castle of St. Louis, May 31st, 1838," his last dispatch bears date October 31st of the same year. In those six months he had done more in the making of Canada—in laying the foundation of her present state of prosperity and happiness—than had been achieved by all the Governors and Governments of seventy years before him. "Justice, mildness, and vigour" were his watchwords of policy.

He would "merge the odious animosities of origin in the feelings of a nobler and more comprehensive nationality." "It is proposed," he writes, "either to place the legislative authority in a Governor with a council formed of the heads of the British party, or to contrive some scheme of representation by which a minority, with the forms of representation, is to deprive a majority of all voice in the management of its own affairs." "It is not in North America," he continues, "that men can be cheated by an unreal semblance of representative Government, or persuaded that they are out-voted when in fact they are disfranchised." As

From Naboth's Vineyard

usual, these words fell upon dull or unwilling ears, and another decade had to pass before the light of common sense was to break upon "this unhappy country," as Durham in despair calls Canada. When the descendant of Robert Bruce came out as Governor-General a few years later, the bad boys of "Our Lady of the Snows" greeted him with missiles harder than snowballs, and finally they burnt the Houses of Parliament almost over his head. They would have killed him if they could. He repaid his cowardly assailants by making them the freest and most happily governed people in the world.

Fifty-six years later a similar condition of affairs had to be treated in another continent, the rival parties this time being British and Dutch—but there was neither a Durham nor an Elgin at hand, and with that strange impishness of irony which fate seems sometimes to love, the chair of Bruce was filled by a disciple of Balliol. All the world knows what followed. The flood gates of war were opened, and a torrent of destruction let loose upon the unfortunate land. Never had any country presented a more

From Naboth's Vineyard

favourable social soil, or more promising political and religious conditions for the growth of the principle of what has recently been called "peaceful penetration." We had only to sit still, to turn a deaf but seemingly attentive ear to our own bad boys—to keep the true "Imperial" powers well above the toil and moil and mercenary clamour of the syndicator, the speculator, and all the varied assortment of beings so aptly described by the great American as "not men, but hungers, thirsts, fevers, and appetites walking."

The old men were dying out, the new ones were coming to us. The "dopper" was disappearing. Education, railways, intermarriage, community of interests, space for all, these things must tell in the long run on the growth of a united South Africa. But what were these in the catalogue of the moment, in the view of the man who was in a hurry—of the men who had mercenary objects to gain—of others who cherished schemes of national aggrandizement, and of some who had more questionable ambitions to realize or ends to serve?

From Naboth's Vineyard

"In South Africa," wrote Mr. Froude, "there is always a pretext for interference from home, and thus the unlucky country has been the prey of well-intentioned philanthropists, of Colonial Secretaries ambitious of distinguishing themselves, and of internal factions fed by the hope of English support."

In an earlier letter I have alluded to the influence which a mosquito is supposed to exercise upon the selection of the human species in South Africa. Is it possible that there is also there another insect which has some similar effect upon the moral or mental nature of the new-comer into the sub-continent? They keep in the museum at Cape Town a spider whose record as an accelerator of time is probably without parallel. The twelve o'clock mid-day gun is there fired by electricity when the sun reaches the meridian. The gun fired as usual one day, but all the inhabitants who possessed watches found that their time was about five and twenty minutes slow. The people who had no watches went home to find their mid-day meal still cooking. It was discovered later that people had been too

From Naboth's Vineyard

previous. The cause of it all was that spider which is now in the bottle in the museum. He had managed, in the course of web-making operations, to drop himself exactly upon the extremely fine instrument which set free the electric current. The gun had fired about half an hour before its proper time. Cape Town had put the hands of its clocks forward, only to put them back again. Meanwhile, the spider was put into the bottle. Was he only one, or did he belong to a species which inoculates newcomers with the virus of that "hunger, thirst, and fever," making of them what the philosopher called "appetites walking"?

ST. HELENA,
June, 1906.

XV

BEFORE any lasting basis of future contentment is possible in South Africa much will have to be done.

1. Our just debts and obligations acknowledged over the signatures of our own officers will have to be paid.

2. The seat of Imperial Government and authority should be moved back to Cape Town.

3. The raiders should be removed from positions of high place and prominent Imperial administrative power in South Africa. In a great empire it should always be possible to find lucrative positions and fields of harmless activity for persons whose excellent intentions—"when carried into places where it is not due"—have proved hurtful to the national interests.

4. When these obvious and fundamental initial necessities have been carried out, the

From Naboth's Vineyard

work of reconstructing the ruined fabric of confidence and belief in the honesty of our intentions will have become possible, but it will inevitably be a slow and lengthy labour.

The ruin done in a week may take years to rebuild. As I have said, the Dutch know more about the war and the manner in which it was engineered against them than the people of England know ; for the people of England—the real people—have never been allowed to hear one-tenth of the truth of that time. The great sin committed against England and South Africa lay in the purchase of the Press in order to calumniate and vilify the Dutch people in South Africa. To buy the sword is nothing—that has always been possible ; but to seduce the scribe, to induce the preacher to prostitute his pulpit—that has been, and is, a crime of the first magnitude.

5. Responsible government based upon a full, free, just, and equitable franchise system may be trusted to deal with the many internal abuses—the patent nepotisms and corruptions which grew so rapidly under the

From Naboth's Vineyard

system of irregular civil government which succeeded martial law in the conquered Colonies.

The time-honoured custom of "blooding the noses of their own hounds" had, of course, to be followed. The pack was an unusually large one, and swarms of officials soon settled upon the cities of the Republics, more destructive even than the locust-swarms which have since devastated the country districts. To-day the unfortunate Transvaal is compelled to pay for a Civil List out of all proportion to its needs or revenue. It pays £108,000 in salaries and travelling expenses to the officers engaged in public works. Its Health Bill in salaries is £50,000 a year, native affairs personnel cost £104,000, Customs ditto £44,000, agriculture figures at £56,000, patents appear for the modest sum of £6000. Fifty-four officials draw salaries of £1000 a year or over that sum. It has been publicly stated that there are more officials in receipt of £1000 a year salaries than in any other Colony in the Empire.

In the department of agriculture we find

From Naboth's Vineyard

“Directors,” “Assistant Directors,” “Horticulturists,” “Entomologists,” “Botanists,” “Foresters,” “Bacteriologists,” “Serumists,” “Seed and Plant Introducers,” “Stock Inspectors,” “Veterinary Surgeons,” “Conservators,” “Publicationists,” etc., etc. The majority of this formidable list might have been truthfully designated under the single heading “Locusts.” But had any sense of humour existed in the minds of the governing powers at the moment they instituted this colossal suction-scheme, they could not have persisted in it. One can imagine the feelings of some Boer who had come back from the war to find even his peach-trees cut down and his homestead a shapeless ruin, when he was being lectured upon the theory of tree-planting by an Assistant Forester, or was the recipient of a leaflet from the Bacteriological Department dealing with the methods by which “schizomycetes” might be successfully eliminated from his farm, where some bleaching bones of once numerous flocks alone testified to the pre-existence of animal life upon the wind-swept waste which his forefathers had reclaimed

From Naboth's Vineyard

from the wilderness a few generations earlier.

Responsible government may also be trusted to put an end to the abortive but expensive schemes of land settlement, forced colonization, servant-girl introduction, etc., etc., nearly all of which have proved failures—very harmful to the unfortunate people who have embarked in them, and of benefit only to the personnel employed in their administration. For the rest, the best service we can do South Africa will be to leave her alone. All seem to be now agreed upon that point. Even the men who seven or eight years ago were said to be desirous of seeing some striking example of British power, are now in most instances ruefully regarding the result of the experiment. The devil is sick and sorry to-day in South Africa, but his sorrow is for himself. It does not extend to others. That would be expecting too much. When the devil can be sorry for others he will be what he once was—an angel. Nevertheless, the present would be a good time for the Christian bodies generally in England to

From Naboth's Vineyard

have another try at him. Some of them might perhaps find it difficult to answer if he were disposed to question them as to their attitude before and during the war, but he is so sick that it is improbable he would say many unpleasant things, and a few Colonial bishoprics, established, say, somewhere on the Zambesi, would soon silence him. You meet few persons in South Africa who will tell you that the country has seen the last of her troubles. Ninety-nine in a hundred think she has changed one set of misfortunes for another—even if she has done that.

For my own part I believe that we might end all our difficulties much more easily than people imagine. We have only to do what Sir George Grey, Mr. Froude, and many others advised us to do long ago—leave her alone. Let her hammer out her future, as Canada and Australia have done, upon a fair field and with no favour. No matter in what fashion Downing-street may attempt to make her bed, South Africa will lie on it only as she likes in the long run.

The war had scarcely ceased ere there

From Naboth's Vineyard

arose among our own people in Johannesburg a strong reaction against us. That feeling is gaining strength still. If nothing succeeds like success, so nothing fails like failure. Hundreds of our own people in the Transvaal will tell you to-day that they much preferred the old days under "Oom Paul" to the *régime* under which they are now living. Our rulers have imagined that, like Mercator and his "projection," they could square the circle of South Africa. One after the other they have failed in these academic labours, and they are astonished at finding themselves and their "projections" back in the inevitable globe circle again, their efforts having only resulted in making it a "vicious" one. In South Africa English and Dutch have already combined on one point. It is to laugh at our failures, and when once the dress circle and the pit are united upon that score, it is not far from having to quit the stage and let the curtain down.

I fully realize the importance of the native question. I think I understand something about the Labour problem and of the many

From Naboth's Vineyard

grave difficulties which South Africa has to face, now and in the future, but I firmly believe that the perpetual presence of the Imperial power is the strongest incentive to aggression upon the natives on the part of the whites, and that our interference, no matter how well-intentioned it may be, will result, as it has resulted in the past, in friction, failure, and misfortune.

The Cape Colony only learnt wisdom and justice in its dealings with the native races when it had to pay the cost of its own wars. It was precisely similar in the case of New Zealand forty years ago.

“Chinese Labour,” “One Vote One Value,” the pernicious influence of De Beers, the intrigues of the Rand magnates, the Labour question, the Rhodes Trust—all these things will have their day and run their several courses; but when once the people have been given a just, full, and free representative system, and when “the mind of the (Imperial) ruling” is “favourable” to all and fair to all, then we may look for a South Africa in which the name ‘Good Hope’ will have ceased to be an

From Naboth's Vineyard

absurdity. The path is easy to follow if we wish to follow it. It has been "blazed" for us by the warnings of our best—as well as by the windy wordings of our worst.

Opening "David Copperfield" on board the ship which carried me here, I came upon this sentence:—"If we fail to hold our own . . . every object in this world will slip from us. No; ride on, rough-shod if need be, smooth-shod if that will do; but ride on, ride on over all the obstacles and win the race." "Win what race?" said I. "The race that one has started on," said he. "Ride on!" We know the shipwreck in which that rough-shod ride ended. South Africa is a poor country about which to prophesy, and he must be a bold man who would venture to ply that trade there.

I met in a railway carriage in Natal a gentleman who kept a native store in Tembuland. He was proceeding there with his wife and child. The man had fought in the old Zulu War, two of his sons had fought for us in the Boer War; the third, now travelling with his parents, was a boy about twelve years old. Speaking of the

From Naboth's Vineyard

Boer War, the mother said that it was their family custom at home to pray every night for the safety of the two absent boys, and for the dead who had fallen in the war. One evening when the prayers were finished, the boy, then a child of six years, asked, "Have the dead Boers any one to pray for them, mother?" "I don't know," she answered; "but I don't think they have, because they don't pray for the dead." "Then I'll pray for them," said the boy. "And every night after we had prayed for our dead, he"—pointing to the boy (who was asleep on the carriage seat)—"said a prayer for the Boer dead, and we joined in the prayer."

A small beginning, no doubt, but when a grave is being filled in the first handfuls are not large.

ST. HELENA,
June, 1906.

XVI

LOOKING back only seven years to those palatial days of early '99, when "our Mr. John" was being hurried to the depleting post amid a host of jocund patriots, sympathetic contractors, and cosmopolitan Empire-builders, all of whom were unwearied in their assurances of the easy and economic accomplishment of great architectural designs, one cannot help pausing a moment to reflect upon the physical machinery by which such colossal depletions were subsequently achieved. Unquestionably, the cable stands in the forefront of the engine-house; nothing in the political or social machinery of the time played such an effective part in the preparatory ceremonies of the sacrifice. Without the ocean cable it is difficult to see how it could have been done. It is only when one has watched the working of a great ocean telegraph at both its extremities that one can comprehend

From Naboth's Vineyard

how facile has become the accomplishment of great designs.

I forget who it was who said that ten minutes was a sufficient start for any mendacity. Think, then, what twenty days must mean. Besides, a message by cable is vastly more important than anything a penny stamp can carry. Life has not enough leisure now for a letter—"the wire's the thing by which you catch the conscience of King"—Demos. When all the causes of the late war have been weighed and analyzed, the cable cause stands as the driving wheel of the entire machine plant.

I have been watching the working of our Colonial systems for nearly half a century, and it has been borne in upon me more and more that we are seriously misusing our cables. If you write a dispatch for direction, or for popular consumption, at some point which is twenty days' distant from the seat of Empire, the cable gives you the inestimable advantage of having nineteen days and some hours, with as many nights thrown in, for thinking and sleeping over your office copy. The simple word "don't" cabled on

From Naboth's Vineyard

the morning of the twentieth day can save the situation. But when you reverse the process, and cable your orders for action, the apple-cart is liable to be upset without any chance of subsequent readjustment. I have been told that the outbreak of a general war would probably be signalized by a general cutting of all the ocean cables. Would it be an unmitigated misfortune if the advanced posts of Empire had to revert to old-time tactics—intent only upon looking outwards, and, what is of equal importance, hearing outwards? You cannot easily have one ear on the home telephone and the other on the other side of the enemy's hill. You may be sure Puck was full of mischief when he laid, in imagination, the first cable. Even now he gets into the wires occasionally. I think I am correct in saying that on the memorable occasion of the Jameson Raid both the African cables—that on the east coast as well as that on the west—were out of action at the supreme moment, and remained out of action with Puckish persistency for many hours.

I remember having heard another strange

From Naboth's Vineyard

electric story of that time. It had been suggested to the old Transvaal Government that they should instal an electric lighting plant in their new arsenal at Pretoria. It was safer and more easily managed, they were told. It would show, too, that they were up to date. Matters were soon arranged—a tender was accepted, the work was quickly completed, and the arsenal at Pretoria was duly “installed” some weeks prior to the date in December, 1895, which had been fixed for the raid from Mafeking and the rising in Johannesburg. “The installation was arranged,” said the narrator, so that by simply turning a button you could plunge the whole arsenal into darkness, and by an equally simple movement with another button the bare and open space which surrounded the building became flooded with light. It had been settled between the “risers” and the “raiders” that the arsenal at Pretoria was to be surprised and captured by the first-named body of “Reformers,” moving at night upon Pretoria from a base midway between that place and Johannesburg—and that when the seizure of the

From Naboth's Vineyard

arms and ammunition had been effected, the buttons would be worked in the simple manner described, so that while the risers (who had in anticipation possessed themselves of the arsenal) would be lying hidden in impenetrable darkness, the aroused Boers (who, by this time it was supposed, would have been advancing to the attack) would suddenly have found themselves in a blaze of electric light, as they crossed the open ground to attempt the recovery of their lost possession. Under such circumstances it was easy to foresee the result—every bullet fired from the darkened fortress must have found a Boer billet—not even the latest tap-room recruit from Johannesburg could have missed such an easy target. “Would you believe it?” went on the tale of disappointed ambition. “It was found at the last moment that the infernal buttons wouldn't work; the whole beastly apparatus had got out of order. Was there ever such luck?” By this time the bystanders had been wrought to a high pitch of excitement and expectation. The denouement of the story left them silent. At last one of them

From Naboth's Vineyard

asked—as will often happen on such occasions—a very foolish question: “Who paid for the job?” he inquired. For a moment the original narrator regarded the questioner with a look of surprise and almost of pity, natural to the simplicity of mind revealed by the query. “Of course, old Kruger paid,” he said gruffly. I have sometimes thought that had Paul Kruger lived a few years longer, he and the English taxpayer would have become true friends.

It was by the electric wire, too, that during these jocund days of early '99 the highest flights of realistic imagination were evolved out of—nothing. I recall the manner in which a small body of very independent citizens, acting in a remote part of the sub-continent, were able to impress the governing minds of the moment with a lively sense of what “the white man's burden” really means in Africa. The telegraph announced one morning that the shops, or stores, of two Indian traders had been wrecked, the persons of the obnoxious intruders seized, their property divided among the citizens, and themselves forcibly

From Naboth's Vineyard

conveyed over the border into Portuguese territory. A further telegram arrived later reporting that the members of the Volunteer corps of the town had possessed themselves of the arms in the arsenal, and that they had stoutly refused to deliver up the said arms when called upon to do so by properly constituted authority. But the crowning news came still later. It reported that the members of the Chamber of Commerce had passed a series of resolutions entirely endorsing the action taken by the other bodies in the town, and expressing complete sympathy with the aims of the reformers in their laudable and patriotic efforts to exclude the undesirable alien from that portion of the African continent.

Here was an array of reported facts from which some very pretty headlines could have been made up for the London morning papers. The commercial and trading interests in this flourishing Zambesian community had expressed opinions upon the fiscal and free trade questions in terms of unmistakable strength, the trained bands of the town had taken equally prompt measures

From Naboth's Vineyard

for safeguarding the citizen against "the return of the native," but still more serious, the greybeards of the municipality assembled in their Chamber of Commerce had placed on record their entire sympathy with the movement, and their complete concurrence in the aims and objects of the younger and more active sections of the community. The "Chamber of Commerce" touch was the work of genius. Doubtless the edifice had solemnity about it, steps, pillars, a portico. One could cope with the plunder part of the business. One could even fire into the mutineers if they refused after the fifth or sixth summons to lay down our rifles; but it was quite another matter when the slaughter of these grave and reverent seniors had to be contemplated.

The following day, however, the outlook brightened. It was found that the white raiders, the Volunteers, and the greybeards of the Chamber of Commerce—were all one and the same body of persons; that their collective numbers were about one dozen, and that the arsenal and the Chamber of Commerce were not separate buildings in

From Naboth's Vineyard

the city, nor had they any importance, architectural or otherwise, beyond what they might derive from being in direct connection with the "hotel"—forming parts, in fact, of that corrugated-iron establishment.

The essence of the error which we have been always making in Africa, an error which working by cable only intensifies, is our imagining that the Dark Continent will either receive our message or transmit its own in the same sense or meaning which we are wont to apply to words. The words may be the same, but their meanings are different. Her methods of thought are not ours. The great gold-mine which she discovered twenty years ago on the Witwatersrand is not a gold-mine in the sense that mines in America or Australia have been gold-mines. It has changed its nature, and become a bottomless pit, a gigantic suction-hole for the reception and detention of English and other gold pieces. When our ship arrived at Cape-town some six months ago, an old resident, returning to his native shores, was greeted affectionately by a compatriot with, "Well, old man, I suppose you have come out again

From Naboth's Vineyard

to float off some more of your —— paper upon these —— at home." "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots?" asked Jeremiah of old. To which I would reply, "That depends entirely upon circumstances." I see every prospect of the Ethiopian knocking the spots off the leopard in a not remote future if the cable continues to be the chief medium of communication between them.

I remember once on the Upper Nile, at the time the British force were being withdrawn from Dongola for the purpose, it was said, of going to war somewhere on the Amur Daria, a telegram arriving at the frontier stations of Merawi declaring the desire of his Majesty's Ministers that "settled government" should be established in the Sudan before the withdrawal of the troops. All the orders for evacuation had already been issued—we were to move in two or three days' time. There were about forty-eight hours in which "settled government" could be established. The order was a large one, but the area of its action was still more extensive. I sent at once for the

From Naboth's Vineyard

head man of the neighbouring Arab village. "Who was the last Shagghieh king of this country before the Turks came?" I asked an old man when he arrived at the military post. "It was the Malek el Bookera" (that was not the exact name, but it will suffice), he replied. "Are there any of his descendants now living?" was my next question. "Yes, Allah be praised! A descendant of El Bookera dwelt at a spot about six hours by camel from Merawi." "Send for him at once." The following day the lineal descendant of the last king of the Shagghieh Arabs appeared with a small following of camel retainers at the post. Conversation began. I put as succinctly as I could before this grandson of El Bookera (he was also, I think, a descendant of the Prophet) what I thought were the wishes of her Majesty's Government on this question of settled government in the Sudan. The varying expressions which crossed the Malek's face told me that the interpreter was certainly translating the mind of her Majesty's Ministers into some very striking word-pictures. Every now and then the Malek's eyes were

From Naboth's Vineyard

reverentially raised towards the roof of the mud hut in which the interview was being held. A single ejaculation of appeal or praise to Allah came occasionally from his lips.

There was a pause when the interpreter ceased speaking, during which the beads which the Malek held in his hand dropped down their little white thread.

Then he spoke at considerable length. When he had finished I asked the interpreter what had been said.

"He said," went on that functionary, "that he has quite understood all the matters that your Excellency has explained, and that he is ready to undertake the duties which your Excellency orders."

I felt surprised and relieved. "But he said a good deal more than that," I remarked—for the Malek had spoken for some minutes, while the interpreter's version had only occupied a few seconds.

"He said, your Excellency, that in the old days his grandfather had cut heads in this country, and that still further off his great-grandfather had cut heads, and that,