
From Naboth's Vineyard

although his father had not cut heads, he himself—the present El Bookera—was prepared now to begin cutting heads, and to go on cutting heads, and governing the country in the way all their Excellencies wished should be done.”

We marched next morning.

LONDON,
July, 1906.

XVII

I HAVE been asked by some persons who were good enough to read the letters I have written upon South African affairs why I have not been an advocate of a closer and more continued interference on the part of the Imperial Government in the internal affairs of the sub-continent. I will endeavour to explain my reasons at greater length.

The secret of our success with all the other Colonies of the Empire has been non-interference. The cause of our trouble in South Africa has been interference. Canada doctored from Downing-street fifty years ago was precisely what South Africa is to-day, a perpetual trouble, a prolonged failure. There is not a Colony of ours on the globe in which stories of the errors which are inevitable when government is attempted by the man "off the spot" are

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not as plentiful as blackberries on briers. The story of the War Office order which directed the military chaplain who read morning prayers at Fort Napier, in Natal, to give service at some place near King Williamstown (five hundred miles away in Cape Colony) in the evening, is still as fresh, and seemingly as refreshing, to the South African mind, as I found it a generation ago.

Nor, when we turn from the field of geography to that of history, is the prospect more promising.

“Every day that I am here,” wrote Talleyrand to Louis XVIII. from the Congress of Vienna, “I grow more and more astonished at all that the English don't know.” Paul Kruger made a profound mistake in importing Hollanders into the Transvaal. We have made a similar error in filling the country with our people. Kruger could have got better men from the Dutch people in the old Colony. We could have done the same among our people here. Our youthful University importations have not been a success. That young administrative

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aspirant, who is said to have declared to some old-time English settler, "Haw—haw. We are going to run this country with gentlemen and by proclamations," is not exactly the type of Government official best suited to "run" anything, except, perhaps, a cricket-ball. You will have to visit South Africa many times ere its roads become familiar to you. Better still, you should be born there if you are to have business or administrative dealings with it. Even Sir George Grey could sometimes make mistakes in South Africa. Travelling up country, he stopped one morning for an early cup of tea at a wayside inn. The bill for half a dozen boiled eggs and the same number of cups of tea was two pounds ten shillings. As the party were taking their seats in the Cape cart again, Sir George observed to mine host that "eggs must be scarce on that line." "Your Excellency," observed the innkeeper, "eggs is plentiful. It is Governors that is scarce on this road."

If South Africa is to be ruled from England, let our young statesmen at least

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be sent there after they leave college—not to “do it” as Mr. Phineas Fogg did the world, but to do it as our grandfathers “coached” Europe one hundred and fifty years ago. We know what a short visit to the “Illimitable” did for a celebrated old statesman. What dreams of foreign Empire it shattered, what nightmares of home policy it conjured up! Would it not be better to put our statesmen into this extraordinary Veld-School in their receptive days rather than in the deceptive stages of later life?

When the preliminary arrangements for the recent war in South Africa were being made in England in the early 'nineties, the first step taken by the “builders” was to lay the foundation-stone of the edifice. It was very appropriately laid in paper—scrip—shares—bonds. All England rushed hungrily at this paper. It could not be taken fast enough. People fought to get it. Still, after all, it was only paper—promises to pay. Then came the next move. It was first whispered, then spoken, and finally shouted that if old Kruger could

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be got out of the way all this mass of paper-promise would become gold—real live gold. It was thus that the road to ruin in South Africa was paved. When everybody had surrendered their purses to the various Turpins of the times, and had got in return these little bits of paper with Rand, Rhodesian, and Transvaal names written upon them, they were told: "Clear out old Kruger, and your bits of paper will turn into bags of gold."

It was thought at first that "the Raid," as it was called, would suffice for the expulsion of the man and the transmutation of the metal; but the Raid failed, the slump followed, and the abortive inquiry closed the first act. The great central conception, however—that of wealth out of war—was not abandoned. War was only postponed—it was to be brought about "constitutionally" this time.

A select band of "constitutional" provokers was imported into South Africa. "We have failed this time," one of them is reported to have said to a Dutch lady as they parted at the door of the

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committee-room where the inquiry had been held; "but never mind, we will still *goad* you into war."

I was reminded of all this and a good deal more when I read a few days ago a manifesto issued by the latest body of the pro-aggressive party in Johannesburg, warning England in the old solemn tones of the abysses of trouble and misfortune before her if she ventured upon the policy of being fair to all. It is the old story over again. The tone to-day is slightly changed, but the tale is the same. Persuade England by bogey, and govern the Transvaal by the stick. "The key of English supremacy in South Africa is to gerrymander the constituencies in the Transvaal"—that is what you are told. "You must keep the stick over the Dutchman," one of the most noted of the pro-aggressives remarked to me a few months ago: "The industry must be maintained at all costs." "Concessions are only signs of weakness." "A strong majority for the Liberals in England will be ominous for South Africa." This and much more of the same. I listened in silence. There is

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little use in speaking to people who will talk thus, at this time of day. No use in quoting history, or in pointing to Ireland, Canada, Dutch traditions or English precedents. The late Lord Salisbury defined England's policy in the Far East by a happy phrase: It was "the policy of the open door." The pro-aggressive programme in South Africa is equally easy of definition. It is "the policy of the open sore." The Healing Art is tabooed. Continue the blister. "In order to be strong you must be unjust. If you find yourself entering upon quicksands and quagmires, do not turn back." Of course the men who speak or write in this fashion are not fools—they are very far removed from that catalogue. They are only gamblers—players of bridge. The thing that used to be called statesmanship is with them a game. You must not lose the "trick." It is a happy expression—the card that is on the table at the moment must be beaten, no matter how terrible may be the cost the day after to-morrow. Another cigar, and the next generation may look out for itself. Posterity has not dealt us

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any cards. No! but it may possibly have an interest in our games. A "bridge" is sometimes a short cut. The absent-minded beggar was supposed to have played an important part in the late war. He has put on some of his clothes and got back a little of his mind since, but he is still largely on horseback both in England and in South Africa, and this "bridge" business may take him to his time-honoured destination sooner than he supposes.

Six or seven months ago, when I reached South Africa, the situation was a very interesting one. The pro-aggressive party was preparing to move into the strongly entrenched position which had been prepared months before, in anticipation of the defeat of their friends at the coming general election in England. All the administrative blockhouses in the land, from Table Mountain to the Limpopo, were already occupied. The most aggressive stalwarts held the chief strategic points on the map of Government. The shelter-trenches of racial animosity had already been dug, and it only remained for the field army to move in and take possession

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of the position, from which the coming Liberal Government was to find itself attacked—checkmated, confused, and confounded in its new-born efforts at liberty and conciliation. At first no quarter was to be given. The extreme mood did not last. Signs of blandishment appeared—Het Volk was approached. He was taken up to the top of the Corner House and shown the wonderful mountains of the magnates and the golden vales that lie among them. It was thought that he would fall down and worship the great calf. But he didn't. In spite of the predictions of the most trusted leader of the pro-aggressive party, Het Volk was not to be caught. "Het Volk," had said this great leader, "will not save you from mammon." That was only a few months ago, and Het Volk is still at large.

Then the mode of the aggressives changed again. It was decided to send this deputation to England. I have read its prospectus or programme with some of the interest of old times. The light of other days still shines through it, but a note more of sorrow than of anger also pervades it. Were

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the oceans of blood and the mints of money to be spilt and spent in vain? it asked. I glanced through the list of names in an appendix to the document. The birthplaces and professions of these gentlemen were given in separate columns. "Auctioneer," "Barrister-at-law," "Financier," "Mining Engineer," "Agent," "Baker," "Contractor," "Medico," and at last "Speculator." What! only two "speculators" among twenty-seven candidates for parliamentary fame on the Rand!

It was quite like old times. One remembered the tale of the laughter which used to shake the festive board in the mansion near Cape Town—in these months in early '99—when the telegrams were being prepared at these pleasant Sunday evening reunions for transmission to the London newspapers. This document was for home consumption too. It used to be said of the Egyptian Delta that if you tickled it with a hoe it would laugh into a harvest; but on the Rand we do better. There you tickle with a telegram and you laugh into unlimited liabilities. If the crash comes—and

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I can see no prospect of avoiding it—"the South Sea Bubble will have every chance of being repeated here"—that was one of the last observations made to me in Johannesburg. Whatever the present Government may do or not do, they will be blamed. They have had no more to say to the existing conditions of economic depression on the Rand or to the general chaos of life there than the man in the moon, but they will be blamed by the lunatics all the same.

Give South Africa the most favourable mind of your ruling, but after you have secured the safety of the fundamental facts upon which the Empire stands to-day. When you have made safe those principles of Free Labour, Equal Justice, and Equal Rights—which have done more, and are doing more, for the acceptance of our sovereignty than all the armies and fleets at our command—then leave her alone. "Men," wrote Burke, one hundred and fifty years ago, "do not live upon blotted paper: the favourable or the unfavourable mind of the ruling is of more consequence to a nation than the black letter of any statute."

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But the ruling must be wholly and entirely true. No gerrymandering; no tongue in cheek; no old raiders in command or in Council; above all—no “stick.” And as for the painter, you may make your minds quite easy. An old Boer recently gave a friend of mine the following message: “Tell them in England,” he said, “that if those chaps up in Jo’burg want to cut the painter, we’ll not ask England to send us out any rifles. Send us a shipload of shamboks, and we’ll answer for the painter.”

These are some of the reasons why, I think, South Africa wants little legislation from us. She has been in the seething-pot a long while. Her imported “statesmen” would never let her out of it—if they could. That is one of the many methods by which they flourish. If the financial barometer only rose they would have a poor time of it. When it falls they rake in the harvest all the faster. They can make it rise when it suits them.

And there are other reasons. The longer I watch the world the more convinced I am that the Devil gets the first of everything.

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"I was conceived in iniquity," says David. The Devil got away with a good start when gold and diamonds were discovered in South Africa, and another long lead when the cable was laid. For quite twenty years he has had the course almost to himself. The wheels of God grind more slowly in South Africa than elsewhere. But I think I can discern signs that the term of this long possession is nearing its end. The underpillars of the great Temple of Mammon are being taken away one by one. You cannot continue the "oxygen process" for ever. You will have to come back to the normal and healthy respirations of free and honest labour. Servile labour, forced labour, cruel treatment of natives—these moral cancers can be cured by the Rontgen rays of a free Press and by the strength of the honest vote that is in South Africa.

For twenty years you have been cultivating the weeds; let the flowers have a chance at last. The natural strength of the patient's constitution is superb. How she has stood the successive waves of boulderism which have been flung upon her is the greatest

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wonder I have ever known. There must be a future in store for a people who have been able to maintain their moral equilibrium amid such a social deluge, and please bear in mind that there are many unobtrusive ways and kindly methods by means of which you may get into the hearts of these people again. A gracious and courageous English lady is at this moment doing more in Johannesburg to undo some of the most terrible effects of the recent war than all the huge machinery of the bacteriologist and the serumist can ever compass.*

To get into the hearts of the people of South Africa—the real people—you will have to face many things—the abuse of the privileged, the hatred of the unlawful possessor, the calumny of the monopolist, the envy of the unjust, even the ridicule of the hired songster. Never mind—the recompense will be worth it all. It will be the one bit of legitimate and lasting Empire-building which you will have achieved since the creation of Canada.

IRELAND,
2nd August, 1906.

* Miss Hobhouse.

XVIII

TO summarize conclusions arrived at during a recent survey of South African affairs is not an easy task. Like the Ægean Sea, where every island is said to have its own particular wind, so in South Africa every Colony has its own separate and particular difficulty, political, territorial, and economic. The Black difficulty is alone common to all, but even it varies in intensity, according to locality.

I shall in this letter attempt to tie into one bundle the most pressing among these incongruous troubles.

Chinese labour should never have been introduced into the Transvaal. Of all places on the globe, South Africa is the very last spot upon which experiments should be tried. "It is a moral volcano," said an old and very experienced Consul-General to me. "England should keep a political seismograph on the top of Table Mountain, and

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she should send out her best seismographic statesman to take charge of it."

I have said that the Chinese coolie in the Rand mines was "as oxygen to a sick man. Stop it and he sinks." This is true of the moment. We administer oxygen only as a temporary stimulant pending the application of lasting relief. You cannot go on with this temporary artificial gas-bag for ever attached to your head. What permanent remedy, then, is to be tried? In order to propound the cure we must understand the disease. The disease is over-capitalization, over-speculation, over-gambling, over everything; and Chinese labour is the direct result of this plethora of insensate Eiffel-towerism. Before you will get the machine into running order you will have to reduce the top hamper. You must, in fact, uninflate. In this Chinese experiment you are only flinging good money after bad. The bag of oxygen will burst in the end, and you will be worse off than you were before. In fact, it has burst already if the truth about it were allowed to be told. The whole of the mobile portion of the Transvaal and Orange

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River Colony Constabulary engaged in watching the Chinese coolies on the Rand, and the whole of the inhabitants in the surrounding districts lying down in terror of their lives every night—that is a high price to pay even for oxygen.

Let me describe one experience. While motoring in March last from Johannesburg to Pretoria night fell upon us about ten miles out from the former place. The track was lost ; at last we saw a farmhouse, and stopped to inquire the road. There was much rumbling of the inmates inside, and it was some time before a door was opened—preparations were being made against the dreaded Celestial marauders. An hour later we were compelled to halt for the night in the open veld. “You might leave the lamps burning,” I said to the chauffeur. “I will read the newspapers.” “I dare not,” he replied ; “the lights will show our whereabouts to the Chinamen.” People get tired of living under conditions such as these.

Nor has this Chinese experiment been even an economic success. The yellow labour is admittedly more expensive than

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the black. Of course, with the addition of forty or fifty thousand more hands, the output of gold is greater than it used to be; but it is produced at a relatively higher cost. "There is more labour, less profit"—as the depth increases, so naturally does the cost of working. All that I have explained in a previous letter. But there is a point which I have not touched upon. The effort of the mine manager must naturally be to show profits; that of the director must equally be to pay dividends. These things can only be done by getting the gold out of the rock, and delivering it in England at the lowest cost. Hence with this increasing depth you will have increasing curtailments of the more expensive forms of labour, and you will also have increasing efforts on the part of the mine management to get back by means of shops, within and without the compounds, and by other means, as much of their men's wages as possible.

Now, the interest of commercial Johannesburg is the opposite of this. Roughly speaking, the wage-bill of the mines cannot be less than from £10,000 to £15,000 a day. That

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is part of the harvest of which South Africa expects to get its share. Hence will come the tug-of-war between town and magnate, and between white and yellow. If the town is not to have its share, then, so far as the shopkeeper is concerned, the mines might just as well be in Peru, and so, too, as far as South Africa is concerned.

Of course, free labour would kill all these undergrowths and "trucks," which are the results of semi-slavery. Can free labour be achieved? I believe it to be perfectly possible. I believe that village colonies can be started for natives in the neighbourhood of the mines. These might be of two kinds—(a) villages wherein families would settle permanently; (b) locations into which men would come for certain stated periods, and to which their wives could also come. These settlements might be situated at points within ten miles of the mines—the men coming to and returning from their work by train—and the work might further be established on the day-on and day-off shift system, which would alone probably suffice to reduce the now terribly high death-rate by fifty per

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cent. That is an item of which little is said when this labour problem is written about. Yet from the workman's point of view it means a good deal.

The official records show that out of some 90,000 "boys," 33 died above ground, against 296 below ground, in a stated period, the mortality below being nine times larger than [that above. Is it any wonder, then, that the native should not be particularly keen to go down into these death caverns, or that he should desire to make the term of his labour contract as short as possible? I have consulted a great many persons upon this labour question, and I believe that South Africa can supply its own labour wants from its own people—but to do this the market must be cultivated in a different fashion from that which has hitherto been followed. Constructive coercion must cease. To get to the mines and to return from them must be made an easier and a safer process than it is at present. To reach the mines now the "boy" has many troubles to encounter, and he often arrives at his destination thin, tired, and broken. His return journey is subject

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to even harder conditions. He has his savings about him. The prey is richer; the harpy and the "friend" are more assiduous. And another point—the maimed of the mines must not be cast adrift without some compensation for their injuries.

I repeat, the introduction of Chinese labour is directly due to the over-capitalization of mines and to the dram-drinking of speculation. Not content with the present, Johannesburg has dealt prodigiously with the future. Unable to find employment for a considerable part of its present inhabitants, it has nevertheless bought and laid out prospective townships for miles and miles beyond its suburbs. It began early to discount and to forestall that population of two millions, which one of its most trusted prophets, at the conclusion of the war, assured the world it was to possess. As you travel now through "the illimitable" you are reminded of these great expectations by wooden boards—more or less decayed—(imaginary streets)—bearing upon them the names of some prophet much honoured in his own country, out of whose confident and

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colossal predictions not one solitary gleam of truth has yet been evolved.

To keep level with the intellectual condition produced by prophecy, speculations, booms, and flotations are resorted to. Hopes of dividends deferred have to be kept alive by endless experiments—you have to be eternally “looping the loop.” If you stop, the loop might perhaps loop you, but so long as the booms continue it is all easy going. Let me explain things a little.

The mines of the Witwatersrand are now under what is called the group system. A group consists of, say, eight mines. We will call them A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H—all these subsidiary or sectional mines are directed and controlled by one central body. They are nominally separate and distinct entities so far as the outside shareholder is concerned, but internally they are collectively directed. The central body gives the general law to all. It orders machinery for any mine it pleases. It can develop A, B, and C of the group, retard the development of D, E, and F, or hold in reserve G and H. It somewhat resembles that great army corps

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conception of which we heard so much a few years ago; or for the benefit of those who are less intellectually endowed, it might be compared to the old game of the pea under the thimble, played with millions in place of peas, and with the general public for audience, standing seven thousand miles away from the table. It needs but little expert knowledge to see, in some degree at least, the advantages which this group system confers upon the central or controlling body. Labour can be allotted here and withheld there; money spent or curtailed. The goods as it were may be withdrawn from three of the windows, and put into the other five. That is where duplication of directors has its advantages. As for the general public they are absent, and from time immemorial the absent have been in the wrong. They have always believed that they knew under what particular thimble the pea was, but that is precisely what they didn't know, even when they stood quite close to the table. At last—at long last—the general public “stand out,” as it is called, from this gigantic Johannesburg table—from pure satiety of

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disaster. Then begin the various experimental devices of which Chinese labour was the most notable.

What is to happen?

Perhaps the easiest, and certainly the quickest, solution would be to write off, let us say, one hundred millions of over capital, and come down to true values. That would put the vessel on a level keel at once; but even in that case the mischief would probably begin again, and the public would flock to the table with the old results. The most pressing requirement seems to me to be the establishment on the Witwatersrand of some absolutely trustworthy and entirely independent body of officials, who would, as it were, stamp these concerns with a sort of hall-mark of official approval. Proprietors of hidden treasure, no matter how patriotic may be their motives, should not be left to determine, unaided, the values of the various properties on the Rand which they are good enough to offer to share with British and other investors—of course, for a consideration.

Up to the present the British public have been content to pay the pipers and to forego

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their claim to the tune. The pipers have played some very lively airs, and the public danced some remarkable measures, which on the whole have left them, say, a hundred millions of pounds to the bad. And not the least curious thing about the matter is that the pipers are still unsatisfied.

"Seamen," said Swift, "have a custom when, they meet a whale, to fling out an empty tub by way of amusement to divert him from laying violent hands upon the ship." The past twenty years have seen a good many tubs thrown out by the navigators of South Sea finance for the amusement of whales and others in those parts. It is a practice which would seem to be worthy of some watching on the part of the others. It would be a wise precaution, I think, to establish on this ridge of the white waters an Inspectorship of Tubs, just to ascertain the soundness of the staves and the proper flotation strength of the completed vessels.

The sooner Johannesburg gets down to its natural labour level—to its true economic basis—the earlier will be its recrudescence to real prosperity. The subjoined little

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table of values and "booms" tells its own story—a very sad story when everything is remembered. The week before the war, the week after the war began, and to-day Exchange quotations for the five under-mentioned stocks stood and stand as follows:—

		3rd Oct., 1899.		20th Oct., 1899.		To-day.
Rand Mines	...	27½	...	38½	...	67½*
Goldfields	...	5½	...	7½	...	3½
Modders ...	...	7½	...	10½	...	5½
East Rand ...	...	4½	...	7½	...	4½
Chartered ...	...	2½	...	3½	...	1½

There are sermons in stocks as well as in stones.

The common law of life in the world has been that they who fail should fall back. No men have ever failed more conspicuously than they who essayed to steer England through "the white waters" of the Transvaal. Into what a sewer of mud and filth has she not been led! And they would still claim to hold the helm!

But these things are only details in that great native question which dominates all South Africa. I could write many letters on

* The original shares of this mine have been subdivided since 1899, so the price quoted to-day does not represent actual value.

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this question. Once for all, you may take it from me that the native in Natal and elsewhere has many and grievous causes and reasons for discontent, and that these causes are daily becoming more acute. You may also take it as certain that there is a considerable portion among the white population to whom a war with the natives would have many attractions. These persons would be quite ready to repeat the policy of the "goad," to which I have referred in an earlier letter as that which was pursued after the failure of the Raid towards the Dutch.

It seems as though South Africa must always have some particular form of crucifixion going on within its limits. "The English protect us only to eat us," was a saying common among the Kaffirs forty years ago.

A man and a magnate, but a man of perspicacity and a magnate of the widest experience, said to me in Pretoria the words which I give below—

"There is trouble ahead in South Africa with the natives, to which the Boer war was child's play. I have known the natives for

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nearly forty years. At the present moment I employ some three thousand of them directly, and perhaps thirty thousand indirectly. I have always got on well with the natives. Men whom I employed thirty years ago still send their children and grandchildren to work for me. The war has been a bad lesson to the natives. It put thoughts into their heads such as they never knew before. It was all thieving and cheating. Ten years at the outside will bring this crash."

I wrote down the words after the conversation took place, and I give them now as they were then written. "What should be done?" I asked. "You should send out a Commission," he replied, "of some four or five good men—not a Commission in a hurry, but one that would go through the land Colony by Colony—seeing for themselves the natives. Then, when they have done this, let them meet a couple of representatives from each Colony, and let them all decide upon the native policy which should be adopted for South Africa—a simple, just, and firm policy. Remember the blacks are moving rapidly. They are

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no longer children, and fast as they have been moving during the last ten years, they will go still faster in the coming decade."

It is sometimes strange to discover how very old in the world are the things which we imagine belong only to our own time. Take this question of Black and White labour, as I have spoken of it in Natal, in a recent letter. Here is an extract from a letter written by a Governor of St. Helena to his directors, under date May, 1717—

"Some blacks we have taught to lay stones, but joynery or carpentry we cannot have them taught, the Europeans will not show them; they talk among themselves that teaching a black is a hindrance to their trades, and that they shall be less depended on if they show the blacks their art."

Old Natal has been writing to me signifying its general approval of what I have been saying in these letters, but telling me at the same time that young Natal does not see eye to eye with me on many questions. I had not hoped for universal acquiescence. I remembered a little story related to me in Durban a few months ago. "Who is

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that old chap?" young Natal inquired of another youngster as they stood on the steps of the palatial edifice—the Town Hall of the city.

The venerable gentleman referred to was one of Natal's oldest and most respected Colonists—a member of the Upper House of Legislature, a municipal councillor of the first order, a man whose name had been, and is still, associated with philanthropy and progress in the land. "That," said young Natal, as his eyes followed the direction of his questioner's glance, "That old bloke is, I think, Charley Sanderson's father." And old Natal, who told me the story with something of that "tear and smile in the eye" which is supposed to be peculiar to the Celtic temperament, descended the remaining steps of the palace which had been the theatre of his life-labour, and went his way, doubting whether he would not have done more to hand his name down to futurity if he had devoted himself (like Charley) exclusively to football.

IRELAND,
August, 1907.

XIX

THE life of man must always lie between two nights—the night of the past, which darkens slowly backwards from his yesterdays into complete oblivion, and that still more impenetrable darkness of the future, which has scarcely a moment's dawn to herald the sunrise of its to-morrows. The bit of daylight at which man can catch has a good deal of artificial light now mixed with its smoke and fog, but day by day the pace becomes more rapid—there is less time to note the signboards or watch the road-turns. The steering that used to be called statesmanship becomes more haphazard, forecast grows rarer, recollection has become well-nigh impossible. The moment is gone before its lesson can be laid to heart—right and wrong quickly lose their relative perspectives, and get mixed together in unresolvable proportions; long before the

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public can adjust their glasses the track-coverers have swept the course. The pieces are no longer in position. "It is all old history," you will be told; "it is no use looking back. See, there are other heads already coming up out of the East."

Nevertheless "old history" has disagreeable ways of repeating itself when its lessons have been ignored, or its dead too hastily interred. The heads coming up in the sunrise would sometimes seem to have tails that connect strangely with graves upon which the sun has set. Let us exhume a little.

In a phrase famous at the time of its utterance, but which has long been relegated to the convenient limbo in which it is hoped political falsities may be forgotten, the late Lord Salisbury declared that England wanted neither new goldfields nor additional territory. Everybody was struck with the profound truth of this statement. Men believed it not only because of the man who made it, or of the important occasion upon which it was uttered, but still more because of the inherent common sense and truth which appeared to be in it. England

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had already accumulated more gold than she seemed to be able to commercially digest and she possessed larger territories than she could conveniently administer. Her Government could get about a hundred and five golden sovereigns for a bit of paper upon which they had written a promise to pay at some future time one hundred pounds sterling. As to territory, her Press, pulpits, and platforms were constantly resounding with dissertations upon what was called "the white man's burden." "The load was more," they said, "than man could carry."

There is nothing strange in politics or diplomacy in the fact that statements, so deliberately made, and so widely believed, should, within a few months, have been falsified and discredited. The strangeness of the thing lay in the after-part—as usual the pith was in the postscript, the moral at the end of the fable. It is just seven years since this famous declaration was made. We will see how the gold side of the account stands to-day. The bit of paper then worth a hundred and five pieces of gold is now

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worth eighty-five ; yet that measure of depreciated value is far from representing the fall in other securities. I have recently heard it stated that the estate of the late Mr. Beit, now valued at £7,000,000, would have realized £13,000,000 sterling in October, 1899.

These are useful straws to pick out of the stream and lay by for future guidance, before the teaching of these seven disastrous years has been entirely washed from the national memory. A great student of history has told us that the tax-collector was the best schoolmaster, and as that functionary is likely to hold his chair of philosophy in the national university for some years to come, it is possible that the political charwoman and the track-coverer will find it difficult in the next septennial to entirely obliterate the lesson. Even make-believe must have limits.

Little by little England is learning something about the real motives and objects of the small knot of persons who pushed, or dragged her into war seven years ago. Commissions and Committees, sometimes in spite of themselves, have lifted some portion

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of the curtain upon the secret stage of that time. Many of the chief actors have disappeared. Others have been caught ere they could reach the slips; a few are still happily left before the footlights.

The important fact to note is that South Africa knows more about the secret history of her war than England knows or can ever know. South Africa has had a keen eye for noting both absences and presences. She noted, for instance, years ago, that neither of the two most potent of the human factors in the production of her war was called before the Royal Commission on that war. She will tell you, too, of some curious appearances or coincidences in connection with her Raid, which more distant spectators of that notorious incident possibly missed. She will tell you of the strange appearance of two additional battalions of infantry in her ports during the precise week of the Jameson Raid, one regiment coming from the Far East, the other from an almost equally remote West — strange birds of passage, whose fortuitous flights must have begun many weeks before.

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In England we dwell too near the mountains of administration to be able to see the summits. You have to get six or seven thousand miles away in order to realize the Himalayan altitudes to which the ambitions of some of the Babel-builders of recent years attained.

What annexations and partitions! what disappearances from the map of South-Eastern Africa were to follow upon the supposed facile conquest of the two small Dutch Republics! the general smashing of European furniture consequent upon the menace of manner-mending made about the time when the war was prematurely said to be "over."

These things are past, but it is well for us to bear in mind, not what our next generation will know, but rather what the present generation in South Africa already knows; for it is in that knowledge that the crux of our difficulty in the future government of the country will lie. There is, in fact, no equal plane of knowledge between the two peoples, and there never has been any such equality of knowledge between them. Good

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care was taken to prevent the attainment of that equal level.

I repeat that the possibility of making our Dutch fellow-subjects in South Africa forgive is altogether a matter of our own policy and statesmanship in the immediate future. Something will have to be done beyond a mere avowal of wrong. Such confessions are good so far as they go, but more will be necessary before the foundation of a true system of conciliation can be laid. Remember, you are not dealing with a cowed or broken race. The Boer of South Africa has made himself a name second to none, now or in the past. He has beaten or equalled the old records, and if he was conquered in the end, it was after two and a half years of incessant fighting, when it required half a million men and 300 millions of money to vanquish his forty or fifty thousand farmer-folk. And do not imagine that you are going to change the nature of such men by any new system of school-teaching which you may try to introduce among them. You might better strive to alter the iron features of this vast wilderness

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—uproot those million redstone kopjes, and overturn the colossal Table Mountains of the land.

“Nature goes her own gait, and puts the wisest in the wrong,” wrote the great American. Assuredly the men who counselled or cajoled England into that miserable war were not the wise ones. These Boer leaders will hold a place in history when a thousand prominent persons of to-day will be only remembered for their failures, or forgotten in their follies.

“Remember Milo's end,
Wedged in that timber which he strove to rend.”

All that these eminent persons have been able to effect has been to strengthen and solidify the Boer character. He knows now what he can do. Previous to the war he did not dream of his own capacity. They who imagined themselves the architects of a great dominion of Mammon in South Africa have found they were merely the accoucheurs destined to bring forth from a hitherto barren womb soldiers, and statesmen, whose names the world cannot let die. In that half desert-land, where the fountains

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well at long intervals and the great rocks give far-apart shade to the traveller, the old world, long thirsty for the old heroisms, will during many an age refresh itself and grow young again in the sight or at the story of that resistance. It is England that may have to learn from the Boer—not the Boer from England. We had forgotten what he remembered. Half a dozen little ships sailed from Holland two or three hundred years ago, and they carried to these stony kopjes the seedlings of the stuff that was to put a new soul into our time. Is it that God sends the antidote ages before the Devil breeds the poison, and is that the way in which God wins in the end?

Here is a glimpse into a Boer interior which has been rebuilt in some shanty fashion after the war :—

“ Visitor : ‘ How are you faring ? ’—Boer : ‘ Wife dead, four children dead in the camps, old house burned down, cattle all taken, water-dam destroyed ; but things are well. God is here still. ’ ”

We had forgotten that last bit.

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You cannot destroy God in this wonderful land. What entire waste of time it is for our poor Babel-builders to try that game in a country where ten thousand Tafel Kops wear crowns of gold at every morning sunrise and evening sunset in the year! It was said by the wise ones during the war that when the Dutch farmers lost their independence they would also give up their God. But the wise ones were no nearer the truth in that than in a thousand other prophecies. The Dutch farmers often beat our troops in action, but they never beat their God in the darkest hour of their own defeat.

Yes. I would make friends with these people—if I could. I would also give back to the Cape Colony that £30,000 a year which a Bond Government voted as a contribution to the Imperial Navy in the end of 1898, or early in '99.

This act of reparation might be earmarked "For the exclusive benefit of the victims of the war." It might be called an act of restitution, because it was given at the time under a misapprehension, and it was received under simulated pretences. Such an act of

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reparation would bear us interest in the future out of all proportion to its market value to-day.

Who will have the temerity, looking at the past of this land, to say, What next? Only this much—whatever South Africa is to be, its men and women will love her still. Their mothers' travail will make her sons and daughters cling closer to her, and the sons and daughters are coming again into the land. Often when I stopped at the site of a once comfortable homestead in the Transvaal, and a Boer and his wife came to the low door of the barn or outhouse which was now their dwelling, two or three little heads looked out from between the knees of the man, and perhaps another nestled on the woman's breast; so, too, I saw the same round faces tumbled among the beds of some trekking waggon in Northern Zululand. That was one picture. Later on I saw another. I left South Africa in a steamer, which called at the islands, and I transhipped into a second boat *en route*; both vessels had their steerage and third-class decks filled with men of the

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artisan and miner class, many of whom were making their way to California, to help in rebuilding San Francisco. These were of the class who, in the old pre-war days, had been flocking into the Transvaal, who were then making from thirty to forty pounds a month, who, in the language of the reformers, "didn't care a fig for the franchise," but who, in spite of their contentment and prosperity, were, in the diplomatic and academic verbiage of the day, designated "helots." Of course they are all free men now, free to go where they like; but, nevertheless, in their own curt phraseology, they are "stone broke."

I met, too, in the islands, some outward-bound boats. The majority of the few passengers on their decks were Continental Jews, bound for the towns; while the English workman and artisan come away from South Africa, the Polish and Gallician Jews flock there. And as it is with the State, so it is with the Church. The new English cathedral in Cape Town, the foundation-stone of which was laid with great ceremony by Royalty six years ago, is still

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only a few feet above the ground, and work is entirely stopped upon it. A couple of hundred yards away a great double-towered synagogue, whose foundation-stone was laid only three years ago, lifts its finished building. In South Africa to-day the synagogue is everywhere a conspicuous edifice. The larger cities have two or more temples. That is well; but if in the future another Shylock should desire to arrange a meeting-place for his messenger, he will have to tell his Tubal the name of the street, as well as the synagogue.

This letter is the last I am likely to write about South Africa in this place. More than thirty years have passed since I first saw that land, and put pen to paper in its service. At that time the whole vast sub-continent lay in profound peace, a condition in which it had reposed for about twenty years before. Two battalions of Infantry sufficed for garrison—neither Cavalry nor Artillery were there. A few police preserved order; race animosities had almost entirely died out; Englishmen represented many if not most, of the Dutch constituencies;

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inter-marriages between the races were of constant occurrence.

The secret of this success was a simple one—the land and its peoples had been let alone; our rulers had forgotten their old South African oar for more than a score of years. All at once this mood changed, the oar was got out from where it had lain in the bottom of the boat. Unfortunately, like that of the Picts and Scots of old, it was a “hostile oar,” and the sea of South African politics soon “foamed” beneath its stroke. Ever since that day it has been storm and boiling billow in these Southern waters, and fully half a dozen times in these thirty-odd years South Africa has been “wet with blood.” At long last they seem disposed to put that oar into the boat again.

LONDON,
October, 1906.

XX

DAWN at Glencoe junction. Cold and raw, for we are more than four thousand feet above sea-level, and April in South Africa is as October in England. The Indian (Madras) railway porters and pointsmen look a yellow-green. There is half an hour before the Dundee train starts; time to look around. Close against the junction to south, Indumeni in the Biggarsberg range is catching signals from the sunrise; through the range the line we have come disappears into hills, going south to Ladysmith twenty-five miles. Looking east to the sunrise, the houses of Dundee are visible seven miles away. In these seven miles lay the initial mistake in the war of 1899. Here at Glencoe junction was the true military position, an unequalled one; small rounded hills on both sides of the railway, flanks secure, direct communication by road and rail straight in rear through

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the Biggarsberg to Ladysmith. Going to the end of these seven miles to Dundee, instead of stopping here at Glencoe, probably cost England two hundred millions sterling. An initial error of the first magnitude made in the opening move in war can never be wholly recovered.

The sun begins to show over Talanna Hill, two miles beyond Dundee, and with the growing light the whole theatre of these opening moves in the late war is revealed. Talanna runs at right angles to the Biggarsberg, a "nek" connecting the two; then Talanna dips again on the north, only to rise into a bigger hill, Umpati by name; and then the Umpati circles round by the north-west until its western flank comes out upon the railway running northwards from Glencoe to Newcastle, the whole of the hills enclosing Dundee within a saucer-shaped depression commanded on every side.

Train starts for Dundee down slope all the way. Dundee usual little Natal town, two hotels, three churches. Breakfast. Old coloured man, Adam, ready with "spider" trap and four horses. Start for N'Gutu at

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nine, out over gap at south end of Talanna. Adam shows battlefield. Down from nek into great plain of Buffalo river and round eastern end of Biggarsberg to Vant's Drift twenty miles. Dine at small inn and Kaffir-store combined; civil people. Cross Buffalo and enter Zululand. Another two or three hours to N'Gutu. Hot; mostly uphill all the way. Begin thinking many thoughts, as Adam takes his team up the long slopes from Buffalo river. There, a few miles south, that dark ridge marks Rorke's Drift; there to left of dark ridge rises a curious abrupt cone Isandulwana by name. Every now and again Adam stops his horses and turns their heads round so that the cool breeze can blow into their panting nostrils.

It is at these times that he points out the land-marks and names them. It is all a vast panorama of old wars; wars between Zulus and Dutch, between English and Zulus, between Dutch and English. There in the valley of the Blood river was fought the great battle between the emigrant Dutch from the Cape Colony and the Impis of Dingaan, the Zulu king. There on the

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right is Isandulwana, where Lord Chelmsford's army of invasion was annihilated. There away to the left in the hot haze of the north lies Zlobane and Kambula and Vryheid Nek. Behind the Biggersberg is Ladysmith with its host of later memories—what a story it would all make! "From Isandulwana to Majuba, and round by Spion Kop to Colenso." The man who first named the land "Tormentoso" knew what he was doing.

We reach N'Gutu at 4.30 o'clock. The sun is blazing down on the little flat tableland where stands Mr. Barklies' store and inn. Same story all along the road from Durban to this spot. Natives wrongly treated; the promises made to them in the war broken. Blank colonel of horse nothing but a common cattle-raider. He makes ten or twenty thousand pounds by selling stolen cattle to the Commissariat. His white under-raiding-captains get two or three hundred each; the natives who did most of the looting get nothing. That is one cause of discontent; but there are many others. Petty lawyer-folk prey like vultures upon them. Trade is bad; everybody is

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poorer than before the war. The fortunes made then were nearly all put into Johannesburg mines—and lost. Jews have got everything; we looted the Boers, and the Jews looted us.

One is struck by the number of statesmen one meets everywhere in South Africa; statesmen in trains and on platforms, but particularly numerous in hotels. Warriors and military critics also abound. "If General —— had only done so and so, things would have been different in the war;" or, "I told Sir blank blank, 'If you will just go round by the Jingo-berg, and take old Joubert in the rear,'" etc., etc. Listening to all this, one begins to understand how it was that South America was so prolific in presidents forty years ago. This southern hemisphere grows tall human growths naturally. The ordinary agricultural man doesn't do so well. Strange country. I met a man in a train last week. He has two hundred thousand acres of land—he has splendid land—but his sheep die of fatty degeneration; lost sixty-seven the week before last. He has waggon-loads of fruit, but he