

## A FRENCH VIEW OF THE WAR.

## England Not Engaged in Work Exclusively Her Own.

Sigismund Lacroix writes in the Radical:

"Ah! if Gladstone were still living! He found himself 20 years ago in an analogous situation; he had allowed the war to begin, a war, it is true, less serious than the present one; but, when the English troops had had three reverses, he began to think the matter over, and, on reflection, resolved to stop."

Well, if Gladstone were alive today he would talk differently; that must be recognized. The responsibility for actual events must be placed upon Gladstone's incoherent policy in the Transvaal.

In 1876, the Transvaal was threatened by Kaffirs and Zulus at the same time; it was bankrupt and in a state of utter anarchy. England feared that it might become a nest of agitation, where the native element might become predominant. Theophilus Shepstone, the English high commissioner, annexed the Transvaal, without protest from the Boers, and without firing a shot. The English freed the Boers from all fear of Kaffirs and Zulus. Relieved from apprehension on this side, a Boer party rose against the English in December, 1880, and Gladstone signed the convention of 1881, after the defeat of Majuba on February 28. From a military point of view the defeat was insignificant, for there had been only 92 killed, 134 wounded and 59 prisoners; from a moral point of view, the effect was disastrous inasmuch as England had owned herself defeated.

Those who have not studied the facts form an *a priori* conception of the Boers which is very curious. They look upon the Boer as an inoffensive agriculturist, the peace of whose home has been deliberately troubled by the English. But the Boer is not an agriculturist; he is a herdsman, which is something entirely different. The Boer is not a man who is resigned and devoted to peace; he is a marauder and a grim destroyer. His most ardent advocates have been obliged to admit that he has been hard and cruel to the natives.

Even the Boers themselves, in their manifesto of 1881, acknowledged that the "great trek" was a consequence of the abolition of slavery in English colonies. The 115,000 square miles of the Transvaal, representing about the area of Italy, and about three-fifths that of France, do not give enough room for the ambition of the 30,000 or 40,000 Boer burghers. In 1881, they adopted as their platform: Africa for the Afrikanders, from the Zambesi to Simon's bay!

Mr. Kruger went to Europe in 1884,

and succeeded in substituting the convention of 1884 for the convention of 1881. Put aside, if you like, the question of suzerainty. But the convention of 1884, created two binding engagements between the Boers and the English. By art. 4, the Boers can conclude no foreign treaties without the ratification of England; by art. 14, foreigners are to be secured in the possession of their property and allowed to work without hindrance.

England has assumed the responsibility toward all foreign nations of seeing that the Boers respect this last clause. The Boers themselves have constantly violated it, and the curious thing is that the present conflict has been brought about because the Uitlanders themselves have loudly demanded that it shall be respected. As a matter of fact England is acting for every nation that has citizens and interests in the Transvaal. She is not engaged on a work exclusively English; it is international work. She intervenes because, by art. 14, she is responsible for the security and freedom to work of the Uitlanders.

I received, last October, a letter from an English Liberal, who had been a supporter of Gladstone's policy in 1881 and 1884. "We believed," he wrote me, "in the loyalty of the Boers. We supposed that they would loyally carry out this convention. We were mistaken."

If the ambition of the Boers was great, it was limited by their reforms. These gold fields had, it is true, been worked to some extent, but from 1878 to 1884 the value of output had not been more than \$200,000; in 1886 it came to nearly \$700,000; in 1888 it was over \$4,800,000; in 1889 more than \$7,400,000, and in 1890 it reached \$9,348,000.

Just as fast as the wealth of the country increased through the work of the Uitlanders their rights were curtailed by the Boers, who have shown great ingenuity in keeping for themselves a good part of this new wealth by taxation, while they have refused to allow the Uitlanders any voice in appropriating the revenue so raised. In violation of art. 14 of the convention of 1884, they have established monopolies.

Now, in 1890, the working of the deep levels had given greater stability to gold mining enterprises. The Uitlander settlers in the Transvaal, growing in numbers all the time and increasing their permanent investments, became more keenly conscious of the importance of the rights which were denied to them. In 1894 a petition with 38,000 of their signatures was addressed to the Volksraad, but it was received with mockery and sneers. "They ask for rights," answered Kruger; "they will get them only over my corpse."

In presence of this refusal, toward the close of 1895, the "reform committee" appointed by the Uitlanders lent itself to a conspiracy which was rather short

sighted, since the Uitlanders were without arms. Then came the Jameson raid. Cecil Rhodes had been subsidizing Jameson, but it has been proved that none of the directors of the Rhodesian Chartered Company were in the secret. The raid was not an English expedition; it was a stupid gamble. But if it profoundly affected public opinion, it showed the truth of a remark made by M. Vigonroux, in his article on colonization companies, published in the Journal des Economistes.

"In spite of its reluctance, the British government has found it necessary, during the 19th century, to annex in succession most of its African and Oceanic dependencies. The energy of their fellow countrymen has almost always forced their hand."

On the other hand, this is how history is written by the Bulletin des Halles:

"When the English saw that great mineral wealth lay buried under this soil they first tried to take possession of it through Jameson. This attempt having failed, they wished to arrogate to themselves rights which the Boers would not recognize. They sought war, and they have war. They are also seeking for victory, but that they have not gained, and the Boers are today washing British cupidity and greed in British blood—unfortunately, also in their own."

The Duke of Devonshire was not wrong when he said on the 14th of December: "It seems to me that 99 per cent of our foreign critics believe that if we win we shall proceed to divide up the Transvaal gold fields between the English Treasury and the ravenous capitalists by whom they fancy the policy of this government has been dictated. This only proves how ignorant they are of our institutions and of our colonial policy. Otherwise they would know that a misdirected care for the interests of capitalists has but a slight influence on our constituencies of working men, or on the government which they support. If they were familiar with our colonial methods they would know that, if the Transvaal becomes an English possession or colony, not a penny from these gold mines will go into the treasury of Great Britain, but that, after meeting the expenses of the colony itself, the output of these gold mines will belong to the enterprising and industrious of the whole civilized world—to Germans, to Frenchmen, to Americans, just as to Englishmen."

The policy of the English is that of the open door; they do not try to exclude foreigners from their colonies, and this is where they are superior to other nations. In this Transvaal business they are defending international interests. It is evident that this is known and understood in France and Germany by clear-sighted men; but few dare to say it.

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