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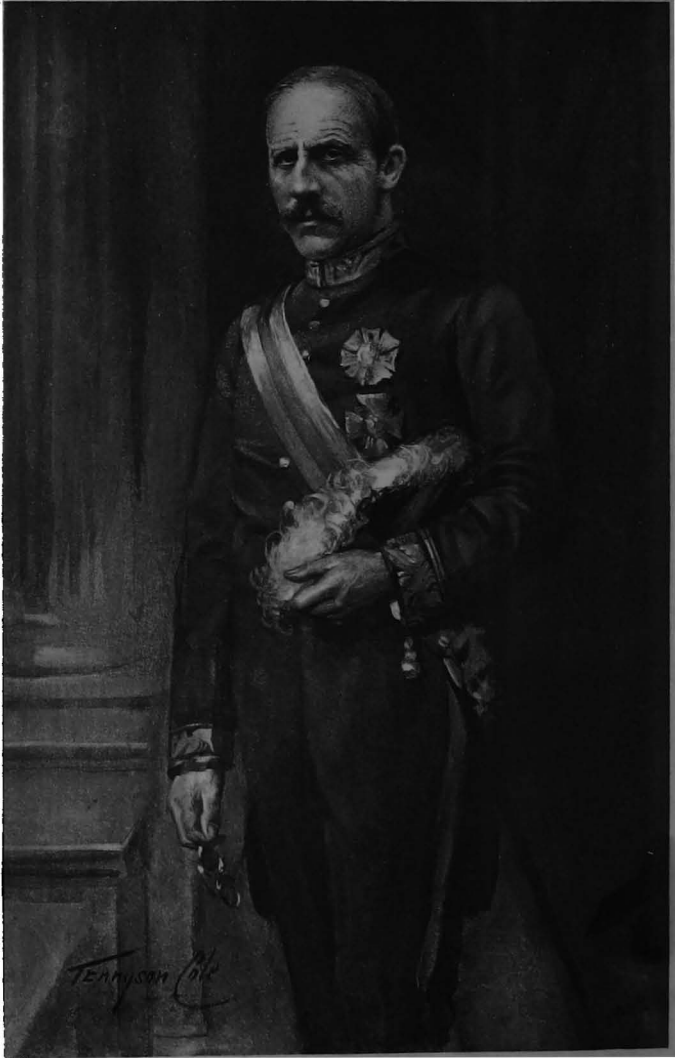
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Milner

LORD MILNER AND SOUTH AFRICA

BY

E. B. IWAN-MÜLER

With two Portraits



LONDON
WILLIAM HEINN

1902

TO
SIR EDWARD LAWSON, BART.,
IN INADEQUATE RECOGNITION OF AN
UNBROKEN SERIES OF ACTS OF KINDNESS AND OF THOUGHTFUL
CONSIDERATION AND IN MEMORY OF A
MOST AGREEABLE ASSOCIATION IN JOURNALISM,
THIS BOOK, WITH GRATEFUL AFFECTION
IS DEDICATED BY THE
AUTHOR.

April, 1902.

‘When, at the cost of much blood and money, we have been subdued, the fire will then only be damped and pent up, to break out into all the greater fury in the day of vengeance.’—*Despatch of President of Republic of Natal to Sir George Napier, Governor of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, February 21, 1842.*

‘As late as November, 1874, the year before Mr. Froude paid his first visit to the Cape, President Burgers had made a strong appeal before the Volksraad to the sentiment of unity amongst all Afrikanders from Table Mountain to Magaliesberg. . . . He assured the Raad that at the foot of Table Mountain hearts were throbbing more warmly for the Republic than perhaps even in the Free State itself.’—*Gresswell, ‘Our South African Empire,’* vol. i., p. 235.

‘I hope that the course of events will enable Her Majesty’s Government to take such steps as will terminate this wanton and useless bloodshed, and prevent the recurrence of the scenes of injustice, cruelty, and rapine which abundant evidence is every day forthcoming to prove have rarely ceased to disgrace the Republics beyond the Vaal ever since they first sprang into existence.’—*Sir Henry Barkly to Lord Carnarvon, December 18, 1876.*

‘With confidence we lay our case before the whole world, be it that we conquer or that we die; liberty shall rise in South Africa like the sun from the morning clouds, like liberty rose in the United States of North America. Then it will be, from the Zambesi to Simons Bay, Africa for the Afrikanders!’—*Boer Petition of Rights, signed ‘S. P. J. Kruger, W. E. Bok, C. N. Hoolboom,’ Heidelberg, February 7, 1881.*

‘As in 1880, we now submit our cause with perfect confidence to the whole world. Whether the result be victory or death, liberty will assuredly rise in South Africa, like the sun from out the mists of the morning, just as freedom dawned over the United States of America a little more than a century ago. Then from the Zambesi to Simons Bay it will be,

AFRICA FOR THE AFRIKANDERS !’

—*Ex-State-Secretary Reitz, ‘A Century of Wrong,’* circa October 1, 1899.

‘Vehementer a te, Brute, dissentio nec clementiæ tuæ concedo; sed salutaris severitas vincit inanem speciem clementiæ. Quod si clementes esse volumus, numquam deerunt bella civilia.’—*Cicero to Brutus, B.C. 43.*

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INTRODUCTION

A WORD of introduction is due from me with regard to the scope of this work and its relation to the title it bears. When this volume was first announced to the public the provisional title I adopted was 'Lord Milner and His Work.' Though there has been no departure from the original plan which I designed, it has seemed better for several reasons to modify the description. In the first place, I found that there was a widespread expectation amongst Lord Milner's friends and my own that I proposed to write a biography of the High Commissioner. A remonstrance soon reached me from a very distinguished friend of Lord Milner's with whom I have the honour of some slight acquaintance, in which the writer expressed his astonishment that I, 'with my old-fashioned Tory principles,' should contemplate such a latter-day vulgarity as that of writing the biography of a man still living whose work was still unaccomplished, or, even worse, that I should meditate the grosser offence of pen-and-inking a laboured appreciation or character-sketch of a friend. I was able to reassure my correspondent by the sincere avowal that he could not detest more than myself the new-fangled fashion of contemporary eulogy or censure. In this connection I may be allowed to say that there will be found in these pages no panegyric of my own which exceeds the limits of approbation one man may express to another in his presence without shuddering himself or causing his unhappy victim to shudder; nor has the object of my labours been

to vindicate Lord Milner against the many truculent and, in most cases, unwarrantable attacks to which the rancour of partisanship has exposed him. In a sense, of course, any record of the prosecution of a policy with which the writer thoroughly agrees is a vindication of that policy, but in no other sense have I sought to frame an apology for Lord Milner. The second consideration which caused me to abandon the original title was the unexpected prolongation of the war in South Africa. I must honestly confess that, though I was never amongst the optimists—a class from which Lord Milner himself must be excluded—I did anticipate at the beginning of 1901, when I took this work in hand, that the storm which has desolated South Africa would have passed away before the close of the year. It had been my intention to devote the latter part of my book to an exposition of the schemes of reconstruction which Lord Milner would have to undertake as soon as the sword was exchanged for the sceptre. To the gods, however, it has seemed otherwise. The storm, as Lord Milner recently said, is behind us, and not in front of us, but the ground is not yet in a condition even for the function of laying the foundation stone of the new fabric which is to be raised on the ruins of the old. It would, therefore, have been worse than idle for me to attempt to sketch even in rude outline the plan of the new building as I believed it to be conceived in Lord Milner's mind. Such being the case, I have closed this volume with a record of events up to the despatch of the ultimatum by Messrs. Kruger and Steyn. The original title would therefore have been misleading, since it would have covered only a half-told story. Except upon grounds of patriotism and humanity, I cannot regret that circumstances have imposed limitations upon my original scheme. They have enabled me to expand more fully than otherwise would have been possible that part of my work which from the outset I have regarded as the more essential.

The idea of writing the book occurred to me during a six months' sojourn in South Africa as special commissioner for the *Daily Telegraph*. My commission was a purely political one, and in the course of the letters which I addressed to the *Daily Telegraph* the war itself was only incidentally mentioned. I allude to this fact principally to show that my whole attention was devoted to the political situation, influenced as it was, of course, by the existence of hostilities, but not to the course of the military campaign. I found, not altogether to my astonishment, that the British public was woefully ignorant of the history of our relations with South Africa. It swam, so to speak, into their sphere of vision with the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877 and with the subsequent revolt, appeased rather than concluded, by the 'Peace of Majuba.' South Africa has hitherto been to the inhabitants of this island somewhat of the nature of a variable star. After its acquisition, it appeared for the best part of a century as a 'faint telescopic object,' studied mainly through the glasses of the missionary and the philanthropist. Between 1877 and 1881 it blazed forth as a star of the second or third magnitude, only to sink again into comparative invisibility, till the discovery of the gold mines of the Witwatersrand and the consequences attendant thereon raised it gradually in the scale, until in 1899 it figured in the political heavens as conspicuous and as ruddy as the planet Mars. Yet there had been nothing very abnormal in the development of events which culminated in the struggle for supremacy in South Africa between the Dutch and the British. The intermittent displays of exceptional brilliancy were but the temporary manifestations of a process which was really continuous. Ignorance of this indisputable fact has been the cause of all the misapprehensions, not perversely voluntary, which found expression in Great Britain. Lord Milner's work in South Africa could not be understood by those who had not probed a little below the surface. I found even amongst persons

qualified to style themselves well informed a prevailing belief that the South African difficulty began with the Jameson Raid or with the Majuba policy of Mr. Gladstone, or most remotely at the date of the annexation of the Transvaal by Sir Theophilus Shepstone. One might as well attempt to understand the history of Europe on the assumption that the existing relations of the Powers cannot be traced further back than, say, the outbreak of the French Revolution. A situation such as that which Lord Milner was called upon to face was not like an ordinary chess problem. The position of the pieces on the board in one of those interesting puzzles which the chess player sets himself to solve constitutes the only factor which he has to take into account. The distribution of the pieces may indeed represent the situation of a game which had been actually played up to the point at which the problem is set, or the pieces may be arbitrarily placed without reference to earlier stages of a game. All that the student has to take into consideration is how, with the pieces being what they are and where they are, he can win the game. It is not so in any political problem, least of all in the final stages of the great contest that was to be played to a finish in South Africa. It was not enough just to realize the exact position and relative strength of the pieces remaining upon the board. It was essential to know how they came to be where they were and to understand the circumstances which had determined all the previous moves made by both sides in the prolonged combat. If the original annexation of the Transvaal, the revolt and subsequent restoration of independence, and the Jameson Raid, had been mere accidents of South African history, they might have been dismissed from consideration when they had been dealt with on their own merits. They were, however, but links in a very long chain. It was because the connection of these links with one another was either forgotten or had never been understood by the people of Great Britain, and because a proper under-

standing of it was essential to the formation of an independent judgment upon Lord Milner's policy, that I undertook this task. Perhaps this will be the most convenient place to state that, though the idea of the book received the sanction and warm approval of Lord Milner, without which I should never have attempted it, he has never seen a line or a word of its contents, and the views expressed in it are absolutely my own and not his. In point of fact, I have little doubt that with some of the judgments I have formed and expressed he will not, if he reads them, concur. There were many subjects upon which I would gladly have had his opinion and advice, but I felt that any trace of collaboration or even acquaintance on his part with the drift of my opinions would lead to misconstruction, innocent or malignant, alike by his friends and by his critics. As a matter of personal judgment, I do not think that my estimate of the situation as it presented itself to Lord Milner would differ materially from his own, otherwise this book would never have been written. I must, however, reiterate without a shadow of mental reservation that I and no other am solely responsible for all the opinions expressed in the following pages.

Of Lord Milner himself I shall say very little. I have known him and been honoured by his friendship for a period twice as long as that which Tacitus described as no mean cantle out of a man's life, and my mature judgment of his moral and intellectual character I have never disguised from his friends or mine. There let it rest. When I first met him he was a young student at King's College and I was a senior boy at King's College School. When I last set eyes upon him he was His Majesty's High Commissioner of South Africa, and, by favour of the King, a peer of the realm and a Grand Commander of the Bath. Between these two dates a great deal of water has flowed under the bridges, but for my own part I have never observed any change save such as the all-absorbing years and varied experience have effected

between the Alfred Milner of King's College and of Balliol and the Alfred Milner who is now the civil Governor of the possessions in South Africa with all their most vitalities.

It was an amusing discovery for one who had spent so long a time in the columns of a pro-Boer organ that the further blood in his veins. Indeed, I was gravely hurt. A lady suffering from what has come to be known as that at the age at which I first knew Lord Milner he was unable to speak English. Fortunately it is not the habit of public schoolboys or men at the Universities to probe very deeply the pedigrees of their contemporaries, and so perhaps it was astonishing that the twentieth century had dawned before I discovered that a strain of foreign blood ran through the veins of my friend.¹

As I have already premised, I have no intention of dwelling upon the personal side of Lord Milner's career. It is not known to repeat the story of how he swept the way to the great University prizes at Oxford, and if I had rash or so vain as to lay claim to distinction based upon the fact that Lord Milner's name stood side by side (in alphabetical order, of course) in the class list of December, 1876. He was not a frequent speaker at the Union Debating Society, of which he was subsequently

¹ In the modest seclusion of a footnote I may perhaps be allowed to indulge in a personal reference, with the sole object of protecting my future critics from a pitfall into which some of their predecessors have fallen. These exclusive Britons who rejoice in the substantial patronage of Mundellas, Brunners, Schwanns and Lehmanns, have arrived at the conclusion that as I bear a hybrid foreign name, I must necessarily be an 'undesirable alien.' I will therefore present them with so much of my pedigree as concerns them. My paternal grandfather expatriated himself from Russia, for reasons which seemed adequate to himself and his family alike before the nineteenth century was in its teens. With much good sense he naturalized himself an Englishman, and with still better sense married an English woman. My father, born an English subject, followed my grandfather's example and took to wife an Englishwoman of the sturdiest Anglo-Saxon stock. One would have thought that my pedigree mattered to no one but myself. To the Anglo-Boers it seemed otherwise. This is my answer to them.

President. In these boyish parliaments eloquence carries more weight than it does in the assembly of which it this task. I am. Lord Milner was not, or, at least, never state that, though, gifted with eloquence, yet, though, as I and warm apperceptions in debate were rare, his speeches never have as much weight as those of any other man of his time. of its content with the greater impartiality because he and I my own and opposite sides in politics, and I even had the that with- oppose him as candidate for office at the Union, an heroic effort on my part which resulted in deserved discomfiture. Yet it is still a pleasure to me to reflect, as I turn over the records of the Oxford Union Society, that we voted more frequently together than in opposite lobbies, and on all questions of what is now called Imperialism, more popular to-day than it was in the seventies, we were always found on the same side. The one debate which invoked all our youthful enthusiasm was the one to which Milner referred in the memorable farewell dinner given must, however, the eve of his departure for South Africa. Over tion that, by a curious coincidence, Mr. Asquith presided opinions were given over the debate at the Union on the occasion of the dinner.

'On that occasion' (said Lord Milner), 'you, Mr. Asquith, as now, were in the chair, and the subject of debate was the possibility of strengthening the ties which unite to this great country our great colonies and the great colonies with one another. The subject excited less interest than most which we debated in those days—less, I am glad to think, than it would excite at the present moment. But there were some half-dozen of us who hammered away—I dare say we bored our audience—on these ideas: That the growth of the colonies into self-governing communities was no reason why they should drop away from the mother-country or from one another; that the complete political separation of the two greatest sections of the English-speaking race was a dire disaster, not only in the manner in which it had come about, but for coming about at all; that there was no political object comparable with that of preventing a repetition of such a disaster, the severance of another link in the great Imperial chain.'

Again I rejoice to remember that I too was an humble member of the half dozen who used to hammer away on this

important subject at the expense, as Lord Milner says, of boring our audience. This may seem trivial and unimportant enough to-day, but it must be remembered that the ideas of these young Imperialists were expressed within a dozen years of the date when Sir F. Rogers (afterwards Lord Blachford), the Permanent Secretary of the Colonial Office, wrote to Sir Henry Taylor, one of the most prominent officials of the same office: 'I go very far with you in the desire to shake off all responsibly governed colonies; and as to North America, I think if we abandon one we had better abandon all.' And Sir Henry at the same period confided to the Duke of Newcastle, then Colonial Secretary: 'As to our American possessions, I have long held and found expressed the opinion that they are a sort of *damnum hereditas*.'

Of Lord Milner's career after leaving Oxford it is not my present purpose to speak. He made, as is well known, a slight incursion into journalism, and occupied for a time the Chair of Assistant-Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which years later I too for an almost equally brief period was destined to fill; but of journalism he has more than once said that it neither suited him nor he it. It was Lord Goschen who gave him his first opening in political life, and it was while he was Lord Goschen's private secretary that he made his single effort to enter the House of Commons for the Harrow division of Middlesex. Fortunately for his country and himself the electors of Harrow rejected his overtures; for it may be said, so far as Lord Milner is concerned, of a career in the House of Commons, as he had said of journalism, that it would neither have suited him nor he it. I remember very well meeting Lord Goschen soon after Lord Milner, at his instance, had been transferred to the financial post in Egypt, in which he was destined to earn his first non-academic laurels. Lord Goschen, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, observed that 'in parting with

Alfred Milner I felt as if I had lost my right hand.' There could be no higher praise from a distinguished public man, who would not deny that he was an exacting chief. The rest of his career before he assumed the great task of his life was tersely condensed into a few lines in Mr. Asquith's speech, which I give more fully elsewhere.

'The rest' (he said) 'of Sir Alfred Milner's career has become a matter of history. His financial and administrative genius has found itself equally at home in wrestling with the inextricable complexities of an Indian Budget, and in exploring new sources of revenue for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is a remarkable retrospect for a man who can hardly yet claim to enjoy the somewhat qualified privileges of middle age to have studied scholarship and metaphysics under Jowett and Green, and writing under Mr. John Morley; to have been introduced to official life by Mr. Goschen; to have learned the practice of administration under Lord Cromer, and the discharge of the delicate and responsible duties which fall to the permanent head of a great department of a State under Mr. Balfour and Sir William Harcourt is as unique, as it is a fortunate experience. It is indeed an experience eminently qualified to equip a man for the discharge of the most arduous task which the State can call upon any of its citizens to perform. To such a task he has been summoned by what I will venture to describe as the wise and happy discrimination of Mr. Chamberlain.'

With this tribute from an old and tried friend, to whom Lord Milner's political opinions do not entirely commend themselves, I leave the personal side of this introduction.

I must now say a word or two as to the plan and execution of this volume. I can sincerely affirm that I did not undertake the task with a light heart, nor was my sense of its magnitude and gravity diminished by the formidable mass of chaotic and disconnected materials with which I had to deal. To have attempted a continuous narrative of the conflict between the two systems which have struggled for ascendancy through just a century would have been tantamount to an endeavour to write a history of British South Africa. Such a labour was beyond my strength, and would have been impossible within the limits of the time which circumstances and the object of this book imposed upon me.

That history has yet to be written, and it must be written. The historian who undertakes it will not find his chief difficulty in the lack of material. I, who have only been able to sample, as it were, the vast accumulation of information which will be at the historian's disposal, can bear testimony to the industry and discrimination which such a labour will necessarily involve. I therefore have been compelled to content myself with a series of sketches illustrating the different phases of a story which through ever-changing incidents maintains its continuity by the one thread running through it from the beginning to the end. That thread is, as I have already pointed out, the prolonged struggle for ascendancy in South Africa between the sixteenth century and nineteenth century ideas of government. I am quite conscious that there are gaps and omissions which might well be filled up, but where such a hiatus is to be found it is due not to any 'fault,' as the geologists would say, but to the fact that less important incidents have had to make way for the more important. I am aware that this volume is more bulky than I originally intended it should be. It represents, however, only about two-thirds of what I had actually written. It has been condensed to bring it within a reasonable compass, but I do not think that in the excisions I have been compelled to make I have cut away anything absolutely essential to the proper understanding of the problem. Much that seemed to be of the greatest interest, and that ought to be known by those wishing to make a study of South Africa, has been left out, but enough, I hope, remains to demonstrate the accuracy of the judgment I here present. If I could compress the aim and object of these pages into a sentence, that sentence would be: 'This war is both just and necessary.' Necessary because it sprang from two antagonistic principles which have been at war ever since Great Britain made herself responsible for the administration of South Africa. These

principles had their roots deep in the history of the Middle Ages. Wherever they have been brought into contact they have invariably resulted in a life and death struggle. The nature of those principles I have set forth in many chapters of this book, but a necessary war is not always a just war, and I say that this war is just as well as necessary because of the very principles which are at issue and of the ideas which are in conflict. Those of the Anglo-Saxon system of government are in every respect infinitely superior to those which the Dutch in South Africa have upheld and defended with admirable tenacity since the date of their first occupation of the country. When De Tocqueville pointed out many years ago before the outbreak of civil war in America that such a conflict was inevitable unless one or two strongly-held principles were abandoned, his prophecy was received with incredulity. Sir Bartle Frere was not a philosopher or a historian, and yet in a few terse sentences in despatches he anticipated the struggle in South Africa as accurately as De Tocqueville had done in the case of the United States. The difference between the seer and the inductive philosopher is that while the former relies upon inspiration, or what he believes to be inspiration, the latter bases his anticipations upon a study of the phenomena at his disposal. As surely as the oak may be anticipated from the acorn, so certainly could this desolating war have been predicted from a close study of contemporary data at any time between the Great Trek and the ultimatum. The acorn, it is true, may never become an oak. It may be devoured by hogs or consumed in the fire, but if it is left to develop normally in a favourable soil it is bound in the course of time to become one of the kings of the forest. There have been periods in which the development of tendencies described by such men as Sir George Grey and Sir Bartle Frere might have been so treated as to have changed the course of South African history; but these tendencies unarrested, unchecked, and

uncontrolled, were as certain to culminate in a deadly struggle as the acorn in like circumstances is destined to become an oak. The time for adaptation and modification had long passed when Lord Milner was sent out to deal with the situation created by the mature development of these antagonistic systems. One or other had to be extirpated, for there was not room enough for both to continue growing side by side.

When I speak in this book of Lord Milner's work and Lord Milner's policy I am using the words in the same sense in which one speaks of Lord Wellesley's policy or Lord Canning's or Lord Mayo's in connection with India. Such phrases are never intended by those using them to ignore or belittle the influence and authority of the Minister or Ministers who conduct that policy from Downing Street. Such misapplication of a convenient phrase would be monstrously unjust in connection with the policy pursued by the Imperial Government in South Africa. It is no exaggeration to say that Mr. Chamberlain is not only the greatest and most capable statesman who has ever presided over the Colonial Office, but to all intents and purposes the only Colonial Minister in the true sense of the word that England has ever known. To him and to him almost alone belongs the credit of having materialized, as it were, the vague aspirations for Imperial unity which had long been vaguely entertained by patriots in every part of the Empire. It is well known that on the formation of Lord Salisbury's third administration almost any office in the Government was at Mr. Chamberlain's disposal. The fact that Mr. Chamberlain, to the surprise, it may be said, of his friends, deliberately chose the Colonial Office, was a guarantee that the instinctive desire for greater corporate unity between the members of the Empire would be brought within the sphere of practical politics. Hitherto the Colonial Office had been the round hole in which square pegs found a temporary resting-place

until a more appropriate function had been discovered for them. Mr. Chamberlain was one of the Trinity which controlled the fortunes and the policy of the Unionist party. That party had been called into existence by the attempt made to disintegrate the Empire, and with Mr. Chamberlain's familiar tactics of carrying the war into the enemy's camp, it was not extraordinary that he should have pushed to the front the alternative policy of consolidating the Empire. He had not been in office many months—certainly not long enough to acquaint himself with the details of its multifarious duties—before he learned that the South African branch of the firm of John Bull and Company was on the very verge of bankruptcy. There were only two courses to be pursued—either to dissolve the partnership with South Africa, or to put its affairs upon a solvent and permanent footing. The time for decision was short, and Mr. Chamberlain, without hesitation or delay, adopted the braver and the wiser course. To Mr. Chamberlain must be paid the lasting tribute of recognising for the first time in a practical form the necessity of welding together our colonies and dependencies into an integral part of the British Empire. To him, too, is due the credit of recognising that the ideal he had in view was incapable of realization so long as a great and important province of the Empire was allowed, as South Africa had been allowed, to drift into a state of disorganization and anarchy. To him this tribute above all others must be paid: that, having chosen the right man to accomplish the task of placing the Imperial supremacy in South Africa on a firm footing, he gave his subordinate a free hand, and backed him sometimes in unpromising situations with all the influence he deservedly commanded in the Imperial Government. But just as Lord Milner would be the first to admit that his labours would have been fruitless had he found his hands tied and bound as were those of his predecessors by former Colonial Secretaries, so

Mr. Chamberlain would acknowledge, as indeed he has acknowledged, that without Lord Milner's untiring and even passionate devotion to his duty the great work which Mr. Chamberlain contemplated would have been left unaccomplished. South Africa is indeed a nettle which must be gripped firmly and fearlessly or be let alone altogether. Even the opponents of the present South African policy of the Ministry will not assert that if a policy of 'thorough' were to be carried out it could have been entrusted to more capable hands than those of Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Milner.

One observation I have yet to make before closing this introduction. When the idea of this work originated in my mind I entertained the hope, long deferred, that it would have given me the opportunity of laying before the public a complete vindication of the conduct and policy of Lord Milner's greatest predecessor, the late Sir Bartle Frere. It is not altogether without a feeling of disappointment that I have renounced this part of my scheme. The family of the late Sir Bartle Frere most kindly gave me access to the private papers of that distinguished and shamefully-treated statesman. A very cursory study of the ample material contained in these records convinced me that it was impossible, in a work primarily devoted to another purpose, to do justice to Sir Bartle Frere's extraordinary insight into and understanding of the South African Problem long before it had revealed itself to other eyes. I hope, therefore, with an extension of the facilities so generously given me by Sir Bartle Frere's family to set forth in greater detail than was possible for his most able biographer, Mr. Martineau, the details of the Imperial policy which Sir Bartle Frere sought in vain to commend to his official chiefs. It is more than twenty years since Sir Bartle Frere was practically dismissed from his governorship for refusing to cry peace, peace when there was no peace, and to prophesy smooth

things when the rugged road of a true Imperial policy was bruising his feet. In truth, he requires no laboured vindication to-day. The wreck and desolation of South Africa, which, though transient, are complete, constitute at once a warning against neglecting the advice of the man on the spot and an enduring monument to the rare political foresight and sagacity of Sir Bartle Frere. All that he saw must happen has happened. Every peril and sacrifice of which he forewarned his chiefs, could have been avoided, as we see to-day, had attention been paid to his counsels. The remedy which he advocated twenty years ago and which was despised by all, is the panacea to-day even of the man in the street. When he anticipated the disastrous culmination of the policy of drift, and when he predicted to within a year the date at which the harvest of our folly would be reaped, he knew that he would not be alive to deplore the fulfilment of his prophecy. The history of British South Africa has been a faithful realization of the fable of the Sibylline books. We were offered by Sir George Grey a federated South Africa without money and without cost. We refused the gift; destiny a second time, through the medium of Sir Bartle Frere, proffered to us again a united British South Africa, but not without payment and sacrifice. We rejected the second offer as contemptuously as we had thrown aside the first, and when the third and last volume was forced, as it were, upon us as an alternative to the complete loss of South Africa, we have had to purchase it not only with money but with blood and with tears.

It fell to Lord Milner's lot to demonstrate to the people of Great Britain that if this final offer were rejected we should be bereft of South Africa. It was not, however, South Africa alone, with all its infinite possibilities and prospects for our children, that we should have thrown away: the loss of South Africa would have been the beginning of the end of the British Empire. The young and vigorous

detect more quickly than the sufferer the palsied hand and uncertain will which betokens the approach of senility. Had we allowed South Africa to be wrested from our nerveless hands the great self-governing colonies would have lost but little time in severing from a sense of sheer self-protection the link that bound them to a moribund Empire.

Three names will ever stand out conspicuously in South African history—the names of Sir George Grey, Sir Bartle Frere, and Lord Milner of Cape Town. The two former failed to render the immense services they felt it in their power to offer to the Empire, not through any faults or weakness of their own, but because the inert and torpid brain of Downing Street paralyzed the vigorous hands which were at the disposal of the Empire. Lord Milner was a prophet as they had been prophets, but it was vouchsafed to him to address his warning and his encouragement to a generation which had slowly learned the lesson that the fortunes and existence of Great Britain were bound up in the stability of the Empire she had called into existence. Lord Milner, however, would be the first to admit that he climbed to the summit of the South African citadel upon what seemed to be mere heaps of débris from bygone days, though they were, in truth, the accumulated experiences and warnings of men who had sought to serve their country, and had sought, apparently, in vain.

It had been originally my intention to have said something by way of criticism on the books which have been published here and abroad on the Boer side. I have abandoned that intention, not because there was nothing to be said about them, but because there was a great deal too much. The Boers have not been very fortunate in the matter of their English champions. The first detailed English work on Anglo-Boer relations from a Boer point of view was written by Aylward, an ex-Fenian who was supposed to have taken part in the murder of Sergeant Brett at Manchester, and was

wanted for homicide in Kimberley; the second was by Mr. F. Reginald Statham, the author of many books and articles on South Africa. I am spared the painful necessity of explaining what manner of man Mr. F. Reginald Statham is, for in an attenuated form he has disclosed some of the episodes of his career in a little extenuating autobiography called 'My Life's Record,' in which he describes himself as 'poet, musician, novelist, journalist, essayist, etc.' It is sufficient to remark that the 'etc.' is comprehensive. There are, however, in my possession three letters of Mr. Statham's, one of which, wherein he incited Mr. President Kruger some years before the war to arm himself to the teeth, I have published in the *Daily Telegraph*. The two which I am about to reproduce are important only as illustrating the kind of political food on which the British public was fed for many years. Both of these letters were found at Bloemfontein amongst the possessions of the late President Steyn. The first bears date February 2, 1898, and was written on the strength of a report, which proved true, that Mr. Borckenhagen, of whom much will be said in the body of this book, was dying. It runs as follows:

(Private and Confidential.)

I see a telegram this morning to the effect that Mr. Borckenhagen has had an attack of paralysis of the brain, and is believed to be dying.

One may hope that the state of things is not so bad as this. But, supposing it to be so, and quite apart from the grief felt at the loss of a personal friend, it seems to me that, from a political point of view, this is terribly bad news for those who are interested in the cause of political progress and *independence*¹ in South Africa. With the exception of the *Volksstem*, which does not carry very much weight, the *Express* (Mr. Borckenhagen's paper) has of late been the only paper in South Africa that has been able to hold its own against the Rhodesian flood. This was owing to Mr. Borckenhagen's intelligence and independence, and if anything should happen to remove him from the sphere of his work, the loss would be almost irreparable.

It seems to me that, under such circumstances, the *Volksraad* might consider it was justified in taking some special steps to preserve the usefulness and independence of a paper that has done much valuable service.

¹ The italics are mine.

What I am afraid of is that the paper *of itself*¹ will not be able to afford the price of replacing Mr. Borckenhagen as Editor by anyone really competent to carry on his work. His estate, in the event of the worst being realized, would have to be administered for the benefit of his family. A great deal of the value of the estate, I imagine, depended on his own energetic supervision, especially where the *Express* was concerned, and the withdrawal of his supervision would mean a considerable reduction in the value of the estate.

Now, I believe that the only person possessed of knowledge and independence enough (not to speak of journalistic experience) to carry on Mr. Borckenhagen's work is myself, and I should be willing to undertake it if *your Volksraad, possibly in conjunction with the Transvaal Government*, thought the matter of sufficient public importance to give it a certain amount of financial support, which, if the Transvaal joined in, might perhaps amount to £500 a year. In such a case, I venture to think, the paper would maintain its political value—all these Rhodesian fellows are afraid of me—and while Mr. Borckenhagen's estate would be relieved, its value would at the same time be maintained. Of course the thing would have to be cautiously and judiciously done; it is not necessary to let all the world know the secrets of your housekeeping.

It is quite possible, of course, that the report as to Mr. Borckenhagen's health may be exaggerated. If so, the only thing will be to treat this as if it had not been written. But, if the case is as bad as seems to be reported, the sooner action is taken the better.

I have written confidentially to Dr. Leyds on the subject. There are, I think, reasons why he would be inclined seriously to consider the matter.²

I have in hand just now a biographical sketch of President Kruger which I expect will be published in about two months' time. It is rather hard to get information on some points, but I think I shall have made a pretty good job of it.

With kind regards,

Yours very sincerely,

F. R. STATHAM.

HIS HONOUR

STATE PRESIDENT STEYN,
BLOEMFONTEIN.

Unfortunately, Mr. Steyn does not seem to have kept copies of his own replies; but the tenor of his response to this inviting appeal can be gathered from another letter from Mr. Statham, bearing date March 31, 1898.

¹ These and subsequent italics are those of Mr. Statham.

² In the light of subsequent events it is highly probable that these 'reasons' were the desirability of having a Boer paper published in English from which Dr. Leyds could quote whatever seemed conducive to his purpose of making mischief between Great Britain and foreign Powers.

It, too, is headed 'Private and Confidential,' and runs as follows :

MY DEAR PRESIDENT,

Very many thanks for your kind letter of February 28.

As you suggest, I am quite aware of the difficulties that would be met with in the Volksraad, in connection with any such proposal as I indicated. I wrote, you see, under the very strong apprehension that the Rhodesian party, who are buying up all the newspapers they can lay their hands on, might try to muzzle the *Express* by making some very advantageous offer of purchase. In such a case as this, both your Government and that at Pretoria would be vitally interested in thwarting such a design, and would be justified in voting public money to that end. So far, however, there seems to be no break in the continuity of the *Express* policy.

Yes, indeed, Mr. Borckenhagen is a grievous loss in every way. But, do you know, I don't think he has, as a journalist, done more for South Africa than I have. Curiously enough, my connection with the *Natal Witness* began almost simultaneously with his taking over of the *Express*, and through the ten years that followed I fought the Afrikaner Cause through the *Witness* in the midst of an unsympathetic atmosphere, and in the presence of constant threats of dismissal. *While in England, too, for just a year in 1880 and 1881, I did all the South Africa articles in the then two leading Liberal papers, the 'Daily News' and the 'Pall Mall Gazette,' besides magazine articles and my little book, 'Blacks, Boers, and British.' I have kept on the same fight in various places from 1887 till I last came to England in 1895, and since I have been here I have never for a moment relaxed my efforts to inform public opinion,¹ which is very unwilling to be informed. Perhaps, too, you don't know that in 1893 and 1894, as well as up till August, 1895, I wrote most of the principal leading articles in the 'Express.'*²

Excuse my raging thus. At times, I must confess, I feel just a little human vexation that work into which I have put my whole powers, and in the carrying on of which I have suffered no small losses, should seem to pass without recognition.

I expect my life of President Kruger—'Paul Kruger and his Times'—to be out shortly after Easter. I hope it will come under your notice.

With kind regards,

Yours very truly,

F. REGINALD STATHAM.

HIS HONOUR

STATE PRESIDENT G. T. STEYN,

BLOEMFONTEIN.

¹ From a correspondence which appeared in the Manchester papers some months ago, it would appear that the *Manchester Guardian*, the most bitter, and at the same time the most able, pro-Boer paper in England, was the channel through which Mr. Statham chiefly 'informed public opinion.'

² The italics are mine.

There is no particular reason for accepting Mr. Statham's bare assertion as evidence of a fact. It is, however, notorious that Mr. Statham did supply a vast amount of 'information' to the Radical press during the years he mentioned, and it would be interesting to learn from Mr. John Morley whether it is true that '*all the South African articles*' which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* under his editorship were written, as Mr. Statham alleges, by the would-be successor of Carl Borckenhagen.

Had I attempted to examine and refute the innumerable inaccuracies contained in the works of other pro-Boer writers, I should have added very considerably to a volume which, as it is, is more than sufficiently bulky. I have therefore preferred to supply an antidote rather than to analyze the poison.

A book which, in the judgment of its author, requires an apology stands self-condemned. I have, then, no apology to offer for the following pages. Nevertheless, I feel myself bound to make certain admissions. I do not claim to have shown absolute impartiality in my judgments. On problems outside the sphere of abstract science I do not believe it is possible for anyone to be absolutely impartial. Historians who deal with contemporary events may be divided into three classes: (1) those who start with the assumption that their country is always in the right; (2) those who are pre-disposed to believe that their country is always in the wrong; and (3) those who, being conversant with the records of their own and of other countries, assume that their country in any given dispute is more likely to have been right than to have been wrong. I confess that I belong to the third category, and the researches which my task has involved have more than confirmed me in that agreeable conviction. One other admission I have to make. This book has been written, or, to be strictly accurate, has been dictated, in the fragments of meagre leisure snatched from the duties of an exacting

profession. I have therefore concerned myself with substance rather than with the form—*Davus sum, non Œdipus*: I am a builder, and not a house-decorator. My object has been to place at the disposal of the public a small cyclopædia of the certified facts of South African history. It will be found that here and there a reference has not been given to the authority quoted. The omissions, however, wherever they occur, have been due to accident, and not to intention. In a very small number of cases the transcript of the note did not bear the number of the page from which the extract was taken. It would have been easy to repair this defect, but it would have taken time, and as I have carefully verified more than ninety per cent. of the quotations with which this volume teems, and have found them all correctly transcribed, I have not thought fit to delay publication on account of this infinitesimal fraction. The same reason must be pleaded on behalf of certain disfigurements of these pages which are attributable to me, and not to the publisher. In revising the proofs, the fact escaped my eye that some few quotations were given in a different type from that used for other such extracts throughout the book. When my attention was drawn to this blemish, it was too late to remedy it without involving very considerable delay and not inconsiderable expense. It must therefore be understood that this apparent distinction has no significance.

It only remains for me now to record my gratitude to those who have helped me in my task. Let me say first that neither this nor any defence of British policy in South Africa could have been undertaken but for the existence of Mr. Martineau's invaluable 'Life of Sir Bartle Frere,' the republication of which in a popular form not only touched the consciences of the people, but opened their eyes to the perilous position of our supremacy in South Africa. The work thus admirably begun by Mr. Martineau was carried on with great energy and deserved

success by Mr. Basil Worsfold. There are other authors to whom I am indebted for information and enlightenment, and I have endeavoured to acknowledge their assistance in the text. My dear old friend Mr. Henley was good enough to lick into shape some of the chapters which follow. Ill-health on both sides interrupted this task of revision by the pen which, of all others now in active employment, is most capable of rendering such a service. To Mr. Charles Boyd, too, I am under great obligations for having, in the midst of other engrossing occupations, read the proofs as they were passing through the press. To my mother, whose nimble eyes—at seventy-seven keener than her son's—have been most helpful in the detection of errors, and to my sister, whose assistance has been invaluable, I need not tender my thanks.

E. B. IWAN-MÜLLER.

CHELSEA COURT,
April 25, 1902.

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