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## Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

### THE BOERS

THE proclamation issued by the Boers of the Transvaal in justification of their rising, states that they have never acknowledged themselves to be the subjects of Her Majesty; that Sir Bartle Frere tried to persuade them to desist from their resistance, but in vain, that he was forced to acknowledge their objections to be more general than had been represented, and that the leaders in the movement against annexation were the principal people of the country. He received from them a memorial to the Queen in which it was stated that the people would not be subject to her Majesty, and he said their representations were worthy of serious consideration by Her Majesty's Government. They believed they had found a defender in him; but, at the same time, in a private letter to H.M.'s Secretary for the colonies he had written that he "regretted not to have sufficient artillery to chase this camp home." Her Majesty's Government, misled by him, had returned no answer to the Boers' memorial. Sir Garnet Wolseley had declared the feeling of the English Government to be that as long "as the sun shines the Transvaal will remain British Territory." This the people answered with the resolution passed by a general meeting that as there was no hope of recovering independence by peaceful means, the Volkraad should be convened to proclaim: "That the people declares that with the help of God, it demands a strong form of the S. A. Republic, respect for the laws, the prosperity and progress of the country, and that it promises man for man to co-operate for that purpose, and to defend the Government until death. So truly help us, God Almighty." An official notice of this, given to Sir Garnet Wolseley, was answered by the accusation of high treason brought against Messrs. M. W. Pretorius and F. Bock; accusations, however, only intended to frighten. The attitude of the people has, meantime, been misrepresented; they had determined to pay taxes only when compelled, but it was officially reported in England that they contentedly paid them. Hence the English Parliament allowed the annexation to pass unchallenged. Like reports from Pretoria deceived Sir George Colley who declared last October at the opening of the Legislative Council in Natal, that order was supreme in the Transvaal, and that the taxes were universally paid there. The people were angered extremely at finding the enforced payment of taxes by them employed as a weapon against them, and on all sides declarations were signed that they would either refuse to pay, or only pay under protest. These declarations made the Government in Pretoria fear their untruths would be found out, and in consequence they prosecuted for the publication of sedition the editor who published them. Small collisions were caused by the people's unwillingness to pay, but the leaders of the people did everything to prevent a public disturbance of the peace. With the approval of the Colonial Secretary and Mr. Kruger it was decided to try if the people's meeting, which was near at hand, could bring about a peaceful solution of the difficulties. The Government of Pretoria, however, has thought good, two days before the meeting, to publish a proclamation leaving no choice between treatment as rebels or the exercise of the rights of a free people. "We declare before God, who knows the hearts, and before the world: Anyone speaking of us as rebels is a slanderer! The people of the South African Republic have never been subjects of Her Majesty, and never will be." The proclamation goes on to announce the appointment of Messrs. Kruger, Pretorius, and Joubert, as a triumvirate; and promises protection to all well behaved inhabitants of the country, and forgiveness to all burghers of the S. A. Republic who have for a time deserted the part of the people. It, nevertheless, precludes from pardon those who assume the position of open enemies to the people and continue to deceive the English Government by false representations. It reserves to the said Government the right to maintain a consul or diplomatic agent in the country to represent the interests of British subjects. Meantime, although there is reason to suppose the insurgents have been represented as guilty of greater barbarities than those really committed by them, there can be little doubt but that they have done some very

ugly things. Bishop Jolivet of Pietermaritzburg, who was detained by them for a fortnight at Potchefstroom, declares not only that he was himself well treated, but that the ill-treatment of the English inhabitants reported of was without foundation. No better behaviour he says, could be witnessed among an equally large body of armed men, without regular drill or discipline, of any nation. Still their attack upon the men of the 94th regiment, even if it were not a flagrant breach of the rules of civilised warfare, as there are some reasons to believe, must be regarded as extremely questionable. There are more versions than one of the affair, but whichever way it is represented, it cannot but be seen that the soldiers were taken unawares and mercilessly shot down before they were able to stir so much as a finger in their own defence. Again, nothing could be more savage than the manner in which Captains Lambart and Elliott, who were supposed to be travelling towards the Free State under the protection of the insurgents, and released upon parole, were forced by their escort to attempt to ford the Vaal river in the depth of a stormy night, and then, before they had gone more than ten or fifteen yards out into the current, fired upon, Captain Elliot being killed. Nor is it to the credit of the Dutch farmers generally that they refused to give Captain Lambart so much as the drink of water which he begged from them here and there as he passed by their houses. Again, the attack upon a hunting party of fifteen Englishmen by about 300 Boers, in which five of the hunters were killed, speaks very badly for the Dutchmen. More especially since one of the men killed was shot in a most cold-blooded manner—as he was standing unhorsed and having thrown down his gun—by a Boer who afterwards boasted of the feat. In the fight at Boomplaatz, moreover, a Boer who was closely pressed by an English officer, threw down his gun and begged for quarter, but the moment this was granted picked up his gun again and shot the officer in the back. Barbarous also was the treatment of a drummer boy, belonging to the 94th regiment, who was marched for a distance of thirty miles with his head bent down and fastened to a cord tied round his knees, in order that he might serve as an example to his comrades, and insure their obedience lest they should fare in like manner. On the whole, then, quite enough seems to have occurred to throw doubt at least on certain opinions expressed by some of the speakers at a meeting held at a place called Murraysburg, where it was affirmed that it did not greatly matter how many soldiers were killed—men paid to fight, and concerning whom no one knew or cared anything; but that it was quite otherwise with regard to Boers respectable men all of them, with families.—Nevertheless it would seem that soldiers also may have families, for we are told that the women and children of the 94th regiment arrived at Natal from England just in time to hear of the sad reverse suffered in the Transvaal by the regiment alluded to.

### BRUTALLY MURDERED.

A BRITISH subject has been brutally murdered, and in cold blood, by President Banjos, of Guatemala. Will England demand an explanation, or enforce any penalty because of it? It has been her habit to do so in such cases; we remember several instances in which she has done so. The Abyssinian war was undertaken in the cause of English subjects, who were missionaries, imprisoned by King Theodore. China and Greece have been made to pay heavy fines for the murder of English subjects committed there. Are President Banjos and the Republic of Guatemala to go scot free? We suspect they are, and yet a brutal murder has been committed by them on the person of a British subject. Why then shall the murder go unanswered for? Only because the murdered man had been a Jesuit priest. The Jesuits have been banished from Guatemala, but this priest, Father Gillett, went there expecting to be uninterfered with because he did not go for the purpose of performing any sacerdotal function, but merely to recruit his health, which had been impaired by his labours in British Honduras, where his piety, eloquence, and learning had gained him the respect and admiration of all classes belonging to the community, and of the members of all creeds. He had hardly arrived in the country, however, when he was laid violent hands on, loaded with irons, and thrown into a dungeon, from whence he was taken only to be marched almost naked and barefooted, between men riding on mules, over the mountains for a hundred miles to Guatemala city, where he was publicly shot on the