

## THE BOERS—A HUNTED PEOPLE.

(Read before the Auckland Catholic Literary and Debating Society  
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THE attention to-day of the civilised world is rivetted upon the extraordinary proceedings which are being enacted in the Transvaal Republic in South Africa. There is nothing new about them, for we find them of periodical occurrence during the last three-quarters of a century. In fact the trials and vicissitudes of these Dutch men and women since their departure from the sluggish waters of the Scheldt have been considerable. Driven from post to pillar has been their quantity. Though comparatively new in the collection of Governments, yet their heroic and praiseworthy efforts to avert effacement and absorption have made them prematurely old. In large numbers the Hollanders settled in the Cape, the majority of whom pursued farming occupations with them they brought all their national characteristics which were out of harmony with those of the Britons. Disputes and quarrels naturally arose. The Boers began to "trek" northward. In 1814 Cape Colony fell into the hands of the British Government. To the Boers the new system of government was foreign and obnoxious. Above all they vehemently protested against the advances and superiority airs patronisingly bestowed upon them by those seemingly necessary auxiliaries to British conquest—the missionaries. These gentlemen not only vilified the Dutch throughout the colony, but they spread over Europe the most degrading statements concerning them. The policy of the new Government tended in this direction, and the Boer pioneer colonists were treated as inferior subjects, and levelled to the savage hordes around them. To this they were determined not to submit, and in the winter of 1836 the midland and eastern districts of the colony were all astir. Upon all sides the Boers were vacating their homesteads to such an extent that the Government took alarm. Strenuous efforts were made to stem the exodus, but it went on. To the Orange River the immigrants wended their way fondly imagining that when beyond the confines of British territory they would owe no allegiance to the Crown, and would be free to govern themselves. This hallucination received many and subsequent rude shocks. The wanderers suffered various disappointments and hardships. The Matabele, under their savage chief, Moselekate, were united to worry and rob them. Natal was determined upon as their new capital. Their first act was to obtain a cession of the territory from Dingaan, the powerful Zulu chief. A Government was shortly after formed. There was a Volksraad or Parliament, a military commandant, also a district magistracy, and all the requisites of a republic. This news perturbed very much the Cape authorities. It was more than they could stand to have the Boers establish themselves thus, and especially were they angered at finding the port of Natal used by their quondam subjects as an outlet for their produce, etc. Forthwith the Cape Government sent an armed force to take possession of Natal, with the declared object of stifling all trade by the Boers, who were distinctly informed that no vessel of any description would be allowed to enter the port. After a while the Cape force was withdrawn, and for a time the Boers were left in quietness. At this juncture a man of ability and energy forced his way to the front amongst the Boers, Andries Pretorius, destined, subsequently in their struggles, to become famous. He sought to open negotiations with the British authorities, requesting a recognition of the rights of the republic on the basis of a close alliance. The answer was the despatch of an armed force with orders to prevent the establishment of a separate Government by the Boers, and commanding them to return to Cape Colony. The Boers stoutly resisted, and the invaders were besieged, and for a time were in danger of immolation, and were only saved by the forced marches of the relieving force. In the end the Boers were reluctantly compelled to submit, but in so doing they refused absolutely to barter their freedom. The whole body once more wearily moved over the mountains across the Vaal river and settled down in the country now known to fame as the Transvaal. Is there not some big chivalrous in a people who dared and risked so much to preserve intact their nationality? Would it not have been becoming in a great power who evinced so warm an interest in the alleged freedom of the Neapolitans under King Bomba, and who spent fortunes in stamping out the slave trade, to have allowed this plodding, ponderous handful of Hollanders to work out their own destiny in their own way? But no, with a persistent malignity they worried and tortured the home seekers. All this time there had been a gradual settlement of Dutch farmers going on between the Orange and Vaal rivers, of which Bloemfontein had become the recognised capital. In 1847 General Sir Harry Smith was appointed Governor of the Cape Colony and High Commissioner, with authority, if he saw fit, to proclaim the sovereignty of the Queen over the territory south of the Vaal. He, of course, "saw fit," and speedily proclaimed the "Orange sovereignty" the effect of which was to bring under British rule the whole of the country between the Orange and Vaal rivers. The intrepid Pretorius resolved that his people should fight notwithstanding the unequal chances of the combatants. The British resident magistrate had barely time to escape from Winburg.

Bloemfontein was soon captured. A decisive battle was fought at Bloomplaat a couple of marches beyond the Orange River. Sir Harry Smith soon found that the hunted farmers could fight. He came up with them posted on the first of three steep ridges covered with boulders, so that they could, if necessary, retreat from one ridge to another. In all his Indian experience the new Governor said that he never saw such hot and severe skirmishes as he did on this occasion. The Boers were defeated and pursued. The usual penalties followed. The possessions of all who took part in defending their liberty and homes were forfeited, and a reward of two thousand pounds was offered for the delivery of Pretorius. All would now seem to have been lost, but the sturdy Boers were not yet subdued. Resistance, active and passive, was kept up, culminating in punitive raids in which the insurgents north of the Vaal made common cause with their co-partners in trouble in the Orange sovereignty. By this time the British authorities recognised the inutility of further continuing the strife, and grew heartily sick of the contest. Commissioners were sent out with full power to make all necessary concessions. The offer of a reward for Pretorius was withdrawn, and he was invited to negotiate. The result was the Sand River Convention signed January 17th, 1852, the first article of which, "guaranteed in the fullest manner on the part of the British Government to the emigrant farmers beyond the Vaal River the right to manage their own affairs and to govern themselves according to their own laws, without any interference of the British Government, with the further assurance that the warmest wish of the British Government is to promote peace, free trade, and friendly intercourse with the emigrant farmers now inhabiting, or who may hereafter inhabit that country." This was an act of tardy justice, and there are few who will deny that the recipients were in every sense fully entitled to it. Within twenty eight years after that treaty of 1852 was set aside. Through long continued incursions by the Zulus, and the enormous drain which they entailed upon the struggling Republic, its at no time plenary exchequer was nearly exhausted. This was the opportune time, and Britain, from 1877 to 1880 had the Transvaal under her control. In the latter year, 1880, the Boers again took the field, and defeated Sir George Colley and the Imperial forces at Majuba Hill. In 1881 a convention once more decreed the independence of the Transvaal upon the same conditions as the Sand River Convention in 1852 with this important exception that it conceded to Great Britain a superintendency over the Republic, the terms of which provided that the Boers could not, without the sanction of the Queen, contract foreign alliances, or enter into foreign treaties, etc. It should here be recorded to the credit and honour of England that she performed in this treaty towards the Boers a generous and magnanimous part. On the other hand it should be borne in mind that there still existed the Sand River Convention upon the obligations of which England was in all honour bound to remain faithful. For a period of fifteen years the inhabitants of the Transvaal have pursued their primitive occupation of tilling the soil. With the exception of the fierce raids made upon them at intervals by the aboriginal hordes the Boers have had since 1881 a comparatively quiet time of it. But like the Romans of old who were constantly under arms and on the alert to stem the persistent onslaughts of the Goths on their frontier, these sturdy yeomen had once more to abandon the plough and the harrow, and shoulder the rifle to hurl back from their territory an invader whose primary object was, under the thin guise of redressing political and social grievances, simply plunder. Within the octave of that great and holy season when over the Christian world there echoes the cry of "peace on earth," a cohort in the employ of a land-grabbing syndicate inflated with a munificent purse, and elated at their recent murderous successes, by the aid of Maxims, over the surrounding negroes, and in violation of all honour and justice and equity, crossed the frontier of the Transvaal armed to the teeth. Owing to the prompt and decisive action of the Boer authorities this nefarious filibustering exploit was squelched before accomplishing its fell designs. It was indeed a fortunate thing that such prompt action was taken, otherwise, if Jameson had at the outset been even partially successful it has been asserted that there would have arisen throughout South Africa a racial war of extermination. The grievances of the Outlanders were advanced as a pretext for this outrageous invasion. For a time this statement dazzled and entrapped the unwary. The invitation (that is what these persons styled it) asking Jameson to cross the border was signed by five individuals nearly all of whom were connected with the land-grabbing syndicate. One of the signatories, Rhodes, was a brother to the Cecil of that name, the latter of whom is the head and mainspring of the British South African Chartered Company. Fourteen days prior to the invasion Jameson was cloaked with Cecil Rhodes at his residence in Cape Colony. From day to day there comes to hand evidence of the most damaging character concerning the complicity of Cecil Rhodes in Jameson's raid. In connection with this raid Mr Gladstone, writing on January 17th last to Mr W. H. Simmonds, of the *Cape Times* London office, 61 Cornhill, said:—"Dear Sir,—I have always thought the Transvaal had rather peculiar claims upon us, and I am much pleased with what I see thus far of Kruger's conduct. But

SMOKE "ROYAL COLORS" TOBACCO.

(IMPROVED AROMATIC.)