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FIAT JUSTITIA.

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CREATING A WAR-FEVER.



HUS speaks SIDONIA in *Coningsby*: 'I hear of peace and war in newspapers, but I am never alarmed except when I am informed that the sovereigns want treasure. Then I know that monarchs are in earnest.' Times have been altered and politics revolutionised since DISRAELI penned those words in 1844. Monarchs no longer really make war or peace. From the

Franco-German struggle in 1870 down to the Spanish-American powder-blazing of last year, wars have, in effect, been made by the daily papers that thrive on hatching crises, and sundry sets of howling white dervishes, who since the Turko-Russian war have been known by the name of Jingoos. In France jingoism is almost completely dominated by sentiment, in Great Britain chiefly by commercial considerations. British wars have been chiefly commercial in object, from the days of ELIZABETH'S and CROMWELL'S struggles with Spain to the present time. A similar feeling led to the recent war of America with Spain, and the inauguration of her new policy of colonial expansion. The chief manufacturers of the war-feeling are, now-a-days, the daily papers, for whom the excitement of a long bout of international blood-letting spells increased circulation and fatter dividends. A community of personal interests usually makes them willing mouth-pieces of the commercial Jingoos who wish to open fresh markets for their wares at the point of the bayonet. We had a discreditable instance of this unwritten compact last year in the shrieking columns of the hysterical 'yellow' journals of the United States. Just now a noisy section of the British Press is engaged in the bad business of working up the pulse of the country to war with the Transvaal. The colonial Press is fast following suit. The arbitrament of lead and steel has already been called for by a few nib-twisters who probably do not know a breech-block from a barrel-organ, and whose epidermis would be safe from Mauser bullets and lyddite shells in the event of hostilities. We can understand, if we cannot approve, the feeling which led Mr. LABOUCHERE to declare last year—in referring to the scandal of American 'yellow' journalism—that, when a crisis arises between two nations, the best course for both to adopt is to promptly poison their newspaper-men. Such a proposal savours too much of the days of SOCRATES. But we are free to confess that the scientific hanging of a few dozen journalistic firebrands in such an emergency would, to our mind, often bring about a solution of international difficulties that would otherwise lead to war and woful loss of lives that are really useful.

We have already explained that we are no admirer of the Transvaal Boers. But their sleepy and unprogressive ways and their ignorance of letters are their own affair. In themselves these things touch no Uitlander on the quick, and the Boers are entitled to live their own slow day in their own slow way. But as Catholics we cannot approve of their bigoted persecution of our fellow-Catholics—closing to them every avenue of State employment, and treating them almost as criminals and outcasts. Neither can we approve, whether in Ireland or in the Transvaal, of a system of taxation without representation, or of the shutting out of a vast percentage of the population from a due voice in the councils of the nation, nor of their being ruled by a little oligarchy that is alien to them in race and creed and language and commercial interests and political ideals. We have already expressed our sympathy with the Uitlanders' real grievance in the matter of naturalisation, franchise, monopolies, and—in the case of Jews and Catholics—religious disabilities. Whether the concessions offered by

Mr. KRUGER are or are not, in the circumstances of the Republic, sufficient as a final solution of the difficulty, it is not for us to say. Those who are 'on the premises' are naturally the best judges of this. And their counsels seem to be very much divided on the subject. Our feeling would be in favour of accepting the best that could be peaceably secured as at least an instalment of justice, and for the rest to act on O'CONNELL'S motto: 'Agitate, agitate, agitate.' This, however, is not the question before us. The point we desire to emphasise is this: that the securing of either the concessions offered by Mr. KRUGER, or of any further concessions, cannot be justifiably made the subject of a resort to Gatling guns and Lee-Metford rifles. We stated our reasons for this opinion four weeks ago. We are now glad to perceive that they coincide with the ideas almost simultaneously expressed by many prominent men who know South Africa best, and by some of the most staid and weighty organs of public opinion in Great Britain. The question of the Uitlanders' demands is one which can and ought to be settled by constitutional agitation, backed, at best or worst, by a reasonable amount of judicious diplomatic pressure, and not by that hectoring and bullying which is only calculated to irritate and rouse the fighting spirit of a people who, however ignorant, uncouth, and unprogressive, have proved themselves to be as obstinate and determined as they are fearless and patriotic.

Mr. SELOUS knows the Boer as few British South Africans do. And he and Mr. STANLEY and Mr. BRYDEN and a large party in Cape Colony and in Great Britain are strongly opposed to the mistaken policy which is apparently bent upon needlessly plunging South Africa into the horrors of a racial war. Mr. STANLEY writes:—

What, then, is to be done? Nothing, absolutely nothing, until the Johannesburgers themselves prove to us that they are serious, united, and firm, and make the first move. It will be said, however, that they have no arms. No arms are needed of any kind, but the will to suffer and the courage to endure. Their lives will be safe in any case, for even Boers do not shoot unarmed and unresisting men, but if they all say that the taxes are ruinous, that their property is confiscated by these legal exactions—why pay the taxes, why continue to pay bribes to those in authority for trifling relaxations, why assist in any way to perpetuate the 'corrupt and rotten' Government of which they complain so bitterly? It amounts to this. The Boers have a right to administer their country as they think best, but if their administration is unjust and oppressive, surely the oppressed have the right of passive resistance, for it is in human nature to resist injustice. The consequence of passive resistance will be imprisonment. But when a sparsely populated State is obliged to imprison some score of thousands of non-taxpayers, and to feed them, bankruptcy is not far off. If any die in prison from starvation, or blood is shed, or general confiscation of property takes place, we then shall have a legitimate cause for action.

Just so. In the Transvaal we are dealing with a free country whose independence has been guaranteed by the great English Liberal Party. We are sympathisers with the real grievances of the Uitlanders. But we are lovers of liberty too. And we do not believe in menacing demonstrations of massing troops and moving squadrons—loading rifles and clapping sword-blade against whirling grindstone—over matters which can and ought to be determined by the persistent, if slow and prosaic, process of constitutional agitation. Wise men do not kill their black beetles with NASMYTH steam-hammers. England herself in the present century, Ireland, Wales, all have furnished examples of what persistent effort within the law can do to stem injustice and defeat oppression. As recently as the eighties Irish Nationalists—Protestant and Catholic—of unblemished character endured in hundreds at a time the plank bed, felons' uniforms, and short allowances of 'skilly' or prison bread and water, for their advocacy of principles which no British statesman at the present hour would dream of denying to any white people under the flag. They endured—many unto death. But they won. The Johannesburgers might have been permitted an opportunity of doing likewise, if the situation demanded it. The resources of constitutional agitation were manifestly not nearly exhausted by them. Mr. CHAMBERLAIN seems to have wearied of it sooner than the Johannesburgers. And now he is rushing the country with indecent haste towards war.

The war party comprises in its ranks the political blunderers who have not learned the history of constitutional agitation; the military men and music-hall patriots who long to avenge the defeats of Laing's Neck and Majuba