The Times History
of
The War in South Africa
1899–1900

Edited by L. S. Amery
Fellow of All Souls

With many Photogravure and other Portraits, Maps, and Battle Plans

Vol. I.

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The Times History

of

The War in South Africa
The Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P.
Secretary of State for the Colonies, July, 1895.
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PREFACE

In the present volume I have endeavoured to set before the reader a full account of the relations between the Imperial Government and the Dutch Republics in South Africa, of the causes that led up to the final crisis, and of the protracted negotiations which preceded the outbreak of the great South African War. No study of the military operations themselves can be complete without at least some slight knowledge of the political situation of which the war was the outcome. The ultimatum, the invasion of Natal, the rebellion in Cape Colony, the part played in the war by the Uitlander corps, the stubbornness of the resistance offered by the Boers, the annexation of their territories, are all matters which can only be understood in the light of previous events. This, and the fact that no adequate connected account of all the circumstances leading up to the war, has as yet appeared, will, I venture to think, be sufficient justification for prefixing this introductory volume to the series of volumes which are to narrate the course of the military operations.

The subject has been treated, as far as possible, from the historical point of view, though at so short an interval of time from the events themselves it is impossible altogether, on some occasions, to avoid a controversial tone. Absolute impartiality in dealing with so momentous and so recent a conflict of political principles and political ambitions is
perhaps hardly attainable. The nearest approach to it might be found in a series of histories in which, as in Browning's 'Ring and the Book,' the subject would be treated from the point of view of each in turn of the principal actors in the great drama. The present volume has been written frankly from the point of view of one who is convinced that the essential right and justice of the controversy have been with his own country, and that the policy which has been pursued by the British Government has been, both politically and morally, justifiable. There is, no doubt, a Boer side to the controversy, a point of view based on the memory of old grievances, on peculiar social and political ideals, on a far-reaching national ambition. But it is not a side which it is easy for the ordinary reader to sympathize with, unless he can both appreciate and share the sentiments which have animated the burghers of the Republics in their hostility to the Imperial Government. To that side the present account, in so far as it endeavours to give a true description of the Boer policy and of Boer aspirations, can do no real injustice. There is, however, another view with which the account given in this volume is entirely incompatible. That is the "pseudo-Boer" or "pro-Boer" view—a view begotten mainly of ignorance as to the real character and aims of President Kruger's policy. Given the same set of facts, it is possible to sympathize either with the British Government or with the Transvaal. It is a mere question of political preconceptions and preferences. Those who believe in progress, in honest government, in political liberty and equality, must, upon a true statement of the facts, be on the side of England. Those to whom nationalism is all in all, who hold that the creation of a national state, with racial and linguistic characteristics of its own, is the one supreme object of political development—an object justifying every means taken for its
attainment—will naturally tend to be on the side of the Afrikander Republics. But for the former class to share the sympathies of the latter can only be due to a misconception of the real situation. It is upon this misconception that the "pseudo-Boer" or "pro-Boer" case has been based. It is a view that has been created by the journalists, politicians, and others who, from one motive or another, have from 1881 to the present day tried to plead the Boer cause to the British people by the arguments which they believed to be most acceptable to the latter. It is a fictitious case. Those who have studied the Boers' own views, as expressed in their conversation, their Press, and their political literature, cannot but feel a certain sympathy with the policy of the Republics, even when most convinced of the necessity of opposing that policy. Nor can the bitterest adversary of President Kruger, who has followed with care the career of that wonderful rugged old man, the Hannibal of the Afrikander race, withhold from him a strong sense of admiration and of pity for the measure both of his success and of his failure. But no one who has studied the history of the relations between Great Britain and the Republics, or the lifelong policy of the old President, can have convinced himself that the Transvaal was a peaceful, unaggressive, unambitious, well-managed State, or that President Kruger's only object was to preserve unaltered the independent status guaranteed him by the Convention of London.

Of the present volume, Chapters V. and VI., dealing with the grievances of the Uitlanders and the struggle for political supremacy within the Transvaal before the Jameson Raid, are, in the main, the work of Miss Flora Shaw. The greater part of Chapter VIII., dealing with the relations of the Imperial Government with the Transvaal in the years following the Raid, is from a contributor who has preferred
to remain anonymous. For Chapter IX., which describes the movement in Johannesburg which immediately led to Imperial intervention, I am indebted to Mr. W. F. Monypenny, who was at the time in Johannesburg as editor of the Star and correspondent of The Times. For the rest of the present volume, which has been written by myself, I have to thank many kind friends for their help and advice. For the earlier part of the history my chief sources of information have been Mr. Theal's writings, and more especially the admirable series of Lectures on the History of the Great Boer Trek, delivered at Pietermaritzburg in 1852–5 by the Hon. Henry Cloete, High Commissioner for Natal in 1843–4, and recently republished, and Mr. John Mackenzie's 'Austral Africa.' For the period of the annexation I have more especially availed myself of Mr. T. F. Carter's 'Narrative of the Boer War,' Mr. Rider Haggard's various writings, the Staatscourant published at Heidelberg by the Triumvirate during the war of 1881, and Dr. Jorissen's Memoirs, the last a work of exceptional interest as coming from the pen of one who, as Secretary of the Boer Triumvirate, played a leading part in the insurrection. For the view I have taken of President Kruger's policy, and of the character of the aspirations of the Afrikander nationalist party, I have gone entirely to their own writings, to which, owing to the kindness of the Librarian of the Cape Town Library, I had abundant access. The works I would specially refer to, besides Dr. Jorissen's Memoirs, are Mr. Reitz's 'Afrikander Poems' and the important work of Mr. J. F. van Oordt, entitled 'Paul Kruger, and the Rise of the South African Republic.' * Mr. van Oordt's book does not only contain many valuable details for the period from 1881–1897 gathered from Transvaal official sources, which have not

* Jacques Dusseau & Co., Amsterdam and Cape Town, 1898.
appeared elsewhere, but he gives by far the clearest and most convincing exposition of the Kruger-Leyds policy from the point of view of a fanatical partizan, in whose eyes all moderate Afrikanders, like Mr. Hofmeyr, are nothing but traitors to the cause. The book, which unfortunately has not yet been translated into English, contains ample refutation of what I have called the “pseudo-Boer” case. For the account of the relations between President Kruger and the Free State in the period between 1881 and 1899 I am largely indebted to Mr. J. G. Fraser, of Bloemfontein, by whose kindness I was enabled to study the minutes of the secret conferences held in 1887. For the Uitlander period of Transvaal history and for the Raid and its sequels, I must acknowledge my obligations to Mr. FitzPatrick’s ‘Transvaal from Within,’ a work which is a perfect mine of information. My thanks are also due to Mr. FitzPatrick personally, to Colonel Frank Rhodes, and to Mr. J. W. Wessels for their kindness in reading through my proof-sheets dealing with this period, and for many valuable suggestions. For the final period, for the Bloemfontein Conference, and for the negotiations which followed, I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to let the principal actors speak in their own language, making use of the abundant material to hand in the Bluebooks, and of the many letters and telegrams that passed between Cape Town, Bloemfontein, and Pretoria during the summer of 1899, many of which have not hitherto been published, and of which I have been enabled to make use. Special prominence has been given to the views of the Cape Afrikanders as showing how the attitude of the Transvaal impressed those who in many respects were bound to it by the strongest sympathies, but who, being fully in touch with the actual circumstances, could not in private defend the “pseudo-Boer” theses that were at the time so actively put forward.
by a certain section of politicians and of the Press in England. For the events of the last three weeks preceding the outbreak of the war, I have relied mainly on my own experience, having had the good fortune to be in Pretoria or with General Joubert’s force at Sandspruit from September 24 to October 13.

L. S. AMERY

London, November 9.
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