

WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA.

Interesting Particulars of the Struggle Between Great Britain and the Boers.

SIR A. MILNER AND THE AFRIKANDER BOND.

We give below the text of the main portion of the speech, published in the London Times, delivered by Sir Alfred Milner, at Graaff-Reinet, Cape Colony, on March 5, 1898, and long before war was widely thought about. It was made in response to an address by the local branch of the Afrikaner Bond, of which address the following was the principal passage:

"It is with deep sorrow that we have heard repeatedly during the last years our loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen openly doubted by certain parties, and that we have been held up to our fellow-subjects as disloyal. Therefore we may not remain silent. On behalf of the Afrikaner inhabitants of this country we wish, with the greatest indignation and contempt, to repudiate the insulting and mendacious accusations brought against us by mischief-makers. We wish at the same time to request Your Excellency respectfully, but very urgently, to clear us with Her Majesty of the unfounded slander with which we have been slurred. It cannot be justified, is based altogether on ignorance and misunderstanding. The grand object at which we aim is to raise that portion of the citizens of the colony to which we belong in the social, political, and moral sphere, and to make better and more worthy subjects of them of Her Majesty, and to secure to our kinsmen in South Africa those rights which were kindly promised by Her Majesty, our respected Queen, in the past."

Sir Alfred Milner, in the course of his reply said:—Of course I am glad to be assured that any portion of Her Majesty's subjects are loyal, but I should be much more glad to be allowed to take that for granted. Why should I not? What reason could there be for disloyalty? You have thriven wonderfully well under that government. This country, despite its great extent and its fine climate, has some tremendous natural disadvantages to contend against; and, yet, let any one compare its position to-day with what it was at the commencement of Her Majesty's reign, or even thirty years ago. The progress in material wealth is enormous, and the prospects of future progress are greater still; and you have other blessings which by no means always accompany material wealth. You live under an absolutely free system of government, protecting the rights and encouraging the spirit of independence of every citizen. You have courts of law manned by men of the highest ability and integrity, and secure in the discharge of their high functions from all danger of external interference. You have, at least as regards the white races, perfect equality of citizenship, and these things have not been won from a reluctant Sovereign. They have been freely and gladly bestowed upon you because freedom and self-government, justice and equality, are the first principles of British policy (loud and prolonged cheering), and they are secured to you by the strength of the power that gave them, and whose navy protects your shores from attack, without your being asked to contribute one pound to that protection unless you yourselves desire it. Well, gentlemen, of course you are loyal. It would be monstrous if you were not. (Cheers.) And, now, if I have one wish, it is that I may never again have to deal at length with this topic. But in order that I may put it aside with a good conscience, I wish, having been more or less compelled to deal with it, to do so honestly, and not to shut my eyes to unpleasant facts. (Cheer.) The great bulk of the population of the colony, Dutch as well as English, are, I firmly believe, thoroughly loyal in the sense that they know they live under a good constitution, and have no wish to change it, and regard with feelings of reverence and pride that august Lady at the head of it. If we had only domestic questions to consider, if political controversy were confined in this colony, to the internal affairs of the country, there would no doubt be a great deal of hard language used by conflicting parties, and very likely among the usual amenities of party warfare somebody would call somebody else disloyal, but the thing would be so absurd, so obviously absurd, that nobody would take it seriously, and the charge would be forgotten almost as soon as uttered. What gives the sting to the charge of disloyalty in

this case, what makes it stick, and what makes people wince under it is the fact that the political controversies of this country at present, unfortunately, turn largely upon another question I mean the relations of Her Majesty's government to the South African Republic, and that whenever there was any prospect of any difference between them a number of people in the colony at once vehemently, and without even the semblance of impartiality, espouse the side of the Republic. (Hear, hear.) Personally, I do not think that they are disloyal. I am familiar at home with the figure of the politician, often the best of men, though singularly injudicious, who whenever any dispute arise with another country, starts with the assumption that his own country must be in the wrong. He is not disloyal, but really he cannot be very much surprised if he appears so to those of his fellow citizens whose inclination is to start with exactly the opposite assumption, and so I do not take it that in this case people are necessarily disloyal because they carry their sympathy with the government of the Transvaal, which, seeing the close tie of relationship which unites a great portion of the population here with the dominant section of that country, is perfectly natural, to a point which gave some ground for the assertion that they seem to care much more for the independence of the Transvaal than for the honor and the interests of the country to which they themselves belong. For my own part, I believe the whole object of those people for espousing the cause of the Transvaal is to prevent an open rupture between that country and the British Government. (Cheers.) They loathe, very naturally and rightly, the idea of war, and they think that if they can only impress upon the British Government that in case of war with the Transvaal it would have a great number of its own subjects, at least in sympathy, against it, that is a way to prevent such a calamity. But in this they are totally wrong, for this policy rests on the assumption that Great Britain has some occult design on the independence of the Transvaal that independence which it has itself given—and that it is seeking causes of quarrel in order to take that independence away. But the assumption is the exact opposite of the truth. (Cheers.) So far from seeking causes of quarrel it is the constant desire of the British Government to avoid causes of quarrel, and not to take up lightly the complaints—and they are numerous—which reach it from British subjects within the Transvaal, for the very reason that it wishes to avoid even the semblance of interference in the internal affairs of that country, and as regards its external relations to insist only on that minimum of control which it has always distinctly reserved, and has reserved, I may add, solely in the interests of the future tranquility of South Africa. That is Great Britain's moderate attitude, and she cannot be frightened out of it. (Prolonged cheers.) It is not any aggressiveness on the part of Her Majesty's government which now keeps up the spirit of unrest in South Africa. Not at all. It is that unprogressiveness, I will not say retrogressiveness, of the government of the Transvaal, and its deep suspicion of the intention of Great Britain, which makes it devote its attention to imaginary external dangers, when every impartial observer

can see perfectly well that the real dangers which threaten it are internal. Now I wish to be perfectly fair. Therefore let me say that this suspicion, though absolutely groundless, is not after all that has happened, altogether unnatural. I accept the situation that at the present moment any advice that I could tender, or that any of your British fellow-citizens could tender in that quarter, though it was the best advice in the world, would be instantly rejected because it was British. But the same does not apply to the Dutch citizens of this colony, and especially to those who have gone so far in the expression of their sympathy the Transvaal as to expose themselves to these charges of disloyalty to their own flag. Their good will at least cannot be suspected across the border, and if their desire—and I believe it is what they desire—is to preserve the South African Republic and to promote good relations between it and the British colonies and government, then let them use all their influence, which is bound to be great, not in confirming the Transvaal in unjustified suspicions, not in encouraging its government in obstinate resistance to all reform, but in inducing it gradually to assimilate its institutions, and, what is even more important than institutions, the temper and spirit of its administration, to those of the free communities of South Africa, such as this colony or the Orange Free State. That is the direction in which a peaceful way out of these inveterate troubles, which have now plagued this country for more than thirty years, is to be found. (Cheers.)

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