

Cetywayo and his White Neighbours

By

H. Rider Haggard

INTRODUCTION

The writer on Colonial Affairs is naturally, to some extent, discouraged by the knowledge that the subject is an unattractive one to a large proportion of the reading public. It is difficult to get up anything beyond a transient interest in the affairs of our Colonial dependencies; indeed, I believe that the mind of the British public was more profoundly moved by the exodus of Jumbo, than it would be were one of them to become the scene of some startling catastrophe. This is the more curious, inasmuch as, putting aside all sentimental considerations, which indeed seem to be out of harmony with the age we live in: the trade done, even with such comparatively insignificant colonies as our South African possessions, amounts to a value of many millions of pounds sterling per annum. Now, as the preachers of the new gospel that hails from Birmingham and Northampton have frequently told us, trade is the life-blood of England, and must be fostered at any price. It is therefore surprising that, looking on them in the light of a commercial speculation, in which aspect (saith the preacher) they are alone worthy of notice, a keener interest is not taken in the well-being and development of the Colonies. We have only to reflect to see how great are the advantages that the Mother Country derives from the possession of her Colonial Empire; including, as they do, a home for her surplus children, a vast and varied market for her productions, and a wealth of old-fashioned loyalty and deep attachment to the Old Country--"home," as it is always called--which, even if it is out of date, might prove

useful on emergency. It seems therefore, almost a pity that some Right Honourable Gentlemen and their followers should adopt the tone they do with reference to the Colonies. After all, there is an odd shuffling of the cards going on now in England; and great as she is, her future looks by no means sunny. Events in these latter days develop themselves very quickly; and though the idea may, at the present moment, seem absurd, surely it is possible that, what between the rapid spread of Radical ideas, the enmity of Ireland, the importation of foreign produce, and the competition of foreign trade, to say nothing of all the unforeseen accidents and risks of the future, the Englishmen of, say, two generations hence, may not find their country in her present proud position. Perhaps, and stranger things have happened in the history of the world, she may by that time be under the protection of those very Colonies for which their forefathers had such small affection.

The position of South Africa with reference to the Mother Country is somewhat different to that of her sister Colonies, in that she is regarded, not so much with apathy tinged with dislike, as with downright disgust. This feeling has its foundation in the many troubles and expenses in which this country has been recently involved, through local complications in the Cape, Zululand, and the Transvaal: and indeed is little to be wondered at. But, whilst a large portion of the press has united with a powerful party of politicians in directing a continuous stream of abuse on to the heads of the white inhabitants of South Africa, whom they do not scruple to accuse of having created the recent disturbances in order to reap a money profit from them: it does not

appear to have struck anybody that the real root of this crop of troubles might, after all, be growing nearer home. The truth of the matter is, that native and other problems in South Africa have, till quite lately, been left to take their chance, and solve themselves as best they might; except when they have, in a casual manner, been made the corpus vile of some political experiment. It was during this long period of inaction, when each difficulty--such as the native question in Natal--was staved off to be dealt with by the next Government, that the seed was sown of which we are at present reaping the fruit. In addition to this, matters have recently been complicated by the elevation of South African affairs to the dignity of an English party question. Thus, the Transvaal Annexation was made use of as a war-cry in the last general election, a Boer rebellion was thereby encouraged, which resulted in a complete reversal of our previous policy.

Now, if there is any country dependent on England that requires the application to the conduct of its affairs of a firm, considered, and consistent policy, that country is South Africa. Boers and Natives are quite incapable of realising the political necessities of any of our parties, or of understanding why their true interests should be sacrificed in order to minister to those necessities. It is our wavering and uncertain policy, as applied to peoples, who look upon every hesitating step as a sign of fear and failing dominion, that, in conjunction with previous postponement and neglect, has really caused our troubles in South Africa. For so long as the affairs of that country are influenced by amateurs and sentimentalists, who have no real

interest in it, and whose knowledge of its circumstances and conditions of life is gleaned from a few blue-books, superficially got up to enable the reader to indite theoretical articles to the "Nineteenth Century," or deliver inaccurate speeches in the House of Commons--for so long will those troubles continue.

If I may venture to make a suggestion, the affairs of South Africa should be controlled by a Board or Council, like that which formerly governed India, composed of moderate members of both parties, with an admixture of men possessing practical knowledge of the country. I do not know if any such arrangement would be possible under our constitution, but the present system of government, by which the control of savage races fluctuates in obedience of every variation of English party politics, is most mischievous in its results.

The public, however, is somewhat tired of South Africa, and the reader may, perhaps, wonder why he should be troubled with more literature on the subject. I can assure him that these pages are not written in order to give me an opportunity of airing my individual experiences or ideas. Their object is shortly--(1.) To give a true history of the events attendant on the Annexation of the Transvaal, which act has so frequently been assigned to the most unworthy motives, and has never yet been fairly described by any one who was in a position to know the facts; (2.) To throw as much publicity as possible on the present disgraceful state of Zululand, resulting from our recent settlement in that country; (3.) To show all interested in the Kafir races what has

been the character of our recent surrender in the Transvaal, and what its effect will be on our abandoned native subjects living in that country.

It may, perhaps, seem an odd statement, considering that I have lived in various parts of South Africa for about six years, and have, perhaps, enjoyed exceptional advantage in forming my opinions, when I say that my chief fear in publishing the present volume, is lest my knowledge of my subject in all its bearings should not be really equal to the task. It is, I know, the fashion to treat South African difficulties as being simple of solution. Thus it only took Sir Garnet Wolseley a few weeks to understand the whole position of Zulu affairs, and to execute his memorable settlement of that country: whilst eminent writers appear to be able, in scampering from Durban via Kimberley to Cape Town in a post-cart, to form decided opinions upon every important question in South Africa. The power of thus rapidly assimilating intricate knowledge, and of seeing straight through a wall whilst ordinary individuals are still criticising the bricks, is no doubt one of the peculiar privileges of genius--which is, perhaps fortunately for South Africa--rare. To the common run of mind, however, the difficulty of forming a sound and accurate judgment on the interlacing problems that disclose themselves to the student of the politics of South-Eastern Africa, is exceedingly great and the work of years.

But although it is by no means perfect, I think that my knowledge of these problems and of their imminent issues is sufficiently intimate

to justify me in making a prophecy--namely, that unless the native and other questions of South-Eastern Africa are treated with more honest intelligence, and on a more settled plan than it has hitherto been thought necessary to apply to them, the British taxpayer will find that he has by no means heard the last of that country and its wars.

There is one more point to which, although it hardly comes within the scope of this volume, I have made some allusion, and which I venture to suggest deserves the consideration of thinking Englishmen. I refer to the question of the desirability of allowing the Dutch in South Africa, who are already numerically the strongest, to continue to advance with such rapid strides towards political supremacy. That the object of this party is to reduce Englishmen and English ideas to a subordinate position in the State, if not actually to rid itself of our rule and establish a republic, there is no manner of doubt. Indeed, there exists a powerful organisation, the Africander Bond, which has its headquarters in the Cape, and openly devotes its energies to forwarding these ends, by offering a sturdy opposition to the introduction of English emigrants and the use of the English language, whilst striving in every way to excite class prejudices and embitter the already strained relations between Englishman and Boer. In considering this question, it is as well not to lose sight of the fact that the Dutch are as a body, at heart hostile to our rule, chiefly because they cannot tolerate our lenient behaviour to the native races. Should they by any chance cease to be the subjects of England, they will, I believe, become her open enemies. This of itself would be comparatively unimportant, were it not for the fact

that, in the event of the blocking of the Suez Canal, it would be, to say the least, inconvenient that the Cape should be in the hands of a hostile population.

In conclusion, I wish to state that this book is not written for any party purpose. I have tried to describe a state of affairs which has for the most part come under my own observation, and events in which I have been interested, and at times engaged. That the naked truths of such a business as the Transvaal surrender, or of the present condition of Zululand, are unpleasant reading for an Englishman, there is no doubt; but, so far as these pages are concerned, they owe none of their ugliness to undue colouring or political bias.

Windham Club, St. James' Square, June 1882.