CHAPTER II

EVENTS PRECEDING THE ANNEXATION

Mr. Burgers elected president--His character and aspirations--His pension from the English Government--His visit to England--The railway loan--Relations of the republic with native tribes--The pass laws--Its quarrel with Cetywayo--Confiscation of native territory by the Keate award--Treaty with the Swazi king--The Secocoeni war--Capture of Johannes' stronghold by the Swazi allies--Attack on Secocoeni's mountain--Defeat and dispersion of the Boers--Elation of the natives--Von Schlickmann's volunteers--Cruelties perpetrated--Abel Erasmus--Treatment of natives by Boers--Public meeting at Potchefstroom in 1768--The slavery question--Some evidence on the subject--Pecuniary position of the Transvaal prior to the annexation--Internal troubles--Divisions amongst the Boers--Hopeless condition of the country.

In or about the year 1872, the burghers of the Republic elected Mr. Burgers their President. This remarkable man was a native of the Cape Colony, and passed the first sixteen or seventeen years of his life, he once informed me, on a farm herding sheep. He afterwards became a clergyman noted for the eloquence of his preaching, but his ideas proving too broad for his congregation, he resigned his cure, and in an evil moment for himself took to politics.

President Burgers was a man of striking presence and striking talents, especially as regards his oratory, which was really of a very high class, and would have commanded attention in our own House of Commons. He possessed, however, a mind of that peculiarly volatile order, that is sometimes met with in conjunction with great talents, and which seems to be entirely without ballast. His intellect was of a balloon-like nature, and as incapable of being steered. He was always soaring in the clouds, and, as is natural to one in that elevated position, taking a very different and more sanguine view of affairs to that which men of a more lowly, and perhaps a more practical, turn of mind would do.

But notwithstanding his fly-away ideas, President Burgers was undoubtedly a true patriot, labouring night and day for the welfare of the state of which he had to undertake the guidance: but his patriotism was too exalted for his surroundings. He wished to elevate to the rank of a nation a people who had not got the desire to be elevated; with this view he contracted railway loans, made wars, minted gold, &c., and then suddenly discovered that the country refused to support him. In short, he was made of a very different clay to that of the people he had to do with. He dreamt of a great Dutch Republic "with eight millions of inhabitants," doing a vast trade with the interior through the Delagoa Bay Railway. They, on the other hand, cared nothing about republics or railways, but fixed their affections on forced labour and getting rid of the necessity of paying taxes--and so between them the Republic came to grief. But it must be borne in mind that President Burgers was throughout actuated by good motives; he did his best by a stubborn and

stiff-necked people; and if he failed, as fail he did, it was more their fault than his. As regards the pension he received from the English Government, which has so often been brought up against him, it was after all no more than his due after five years of arduous work. If the Republic had continued to exist, it is to be presumed that they would have made some provision for their old President, more especially as he seems to have exhausted his private means in paying the debts of the country. Whatever may be said of some of the other officials of the Republic, its President was, I believe, an honest man.

In 1875, Mr. Burgers proceeded to Europe, having, he says in a posthumous document recently published, been empowered by the Volksraad

"to carry out my plans for the development of the country, by opening up a direct communication for it, free from the trammels of British ports and influence." According to this document, during his absence, two powerful parties, viz., "the faction of unprincipled fortune-hunters, rascals, and runaways on the one hand, and the faction of the extreme orthodox party in a certain branch of the Dutch Reform Church on the other, began to co-operate against the Government of the Republic and me personally. . . . . Ill as I was, and contrary to the advice of my medical men, I proceeded to Europe, in the beginning of 1875, to carry out my project, and no sooner was my back turned on the Transvaal, than the conspiring elements began to act. The new coat of arms and flag adopted in the Raad by an almost unanimous vote were abolished. The laws for a free and secular education were tampered with, and my resistance

to a reckless inspection and disposal of Government lands, still occupied by natives, was openly defied. The Raad, filled up to a large extent with men of ill repute, who, under the cloak of progress and favour to the Government view, obtained their seats, was too weak to cope with the skill of the conspirators, and granted leave to the acting President to carry out measures diametrically opposed to my policy. Native lands were inspected and given out to a few speculators, who held large numbers of claims to lands which were destined for citizens, and so a war was prepared for me, on my return from Europe, which I could not avert." This extract is interesting, as showing the state of feeling existing between the President and his officers previous to the outbreak of the Secocoeni war. It also shows how entirely he was out of sympathy with the citizens, seeing that as soon as his back was turned, they, with Mr. Joubert and Paul Kruger at their head, at once undid all the little good he had done.

When Mr. Burgers got to England, he found that city capitalists would have nothing whatever to say to his railway scheme. In Holland, however, he succeeded in getting 90,000 pounds of the 300,000 pounds he wished to borrow at a high rate of interest, and by passing a bond on five hundred government farms. This money was immediately invested in a railway plant, which, when it arrived at Delagoa Bay, had to be mortgaged to pay the freight on it, and that was the end of the Delagoa Bay railway scheme, except that the 90,000 pounds is, I believe, still owing to the confiding shareholders in Holland.

On his return to the Transvaal the President was well received, and for a month or so all went smoothly. But the relations of the Republic with the surrounding native tribes had by this time become so bad that an explosion was imminent somewhere. In the year 1874 the Volksraad raised the price of passes under the iniquitous pass law, by which every native travelling through the territory was made to pay from 1 pound to five pounds. In case of non-payment the native was made subject to a fine of from 1 pound to 10 pounds, and to a beating of from "ten to twenty-five lashes." He was also to go into service for three months, and have a certificate thereof, for which he must pay five shillings; the avowed object of the law being to obtain a supply of Kafir labour. This was done in spite of the earnest protest of the President, who gave the Raad distinctly to understand that by accepting this law they would, in point of fact, annul treaties concluded with the chiefs on the south-western borders. It was not clear, however, if this amended pass law ever came into force. It is to be hoped it did not, for even under the old law natives were shamefully treated by the Boers, who would pretend that they were authorised by the Government to collect the tax; the result being that the unfortunate Kafir was frequently obliged to pay twice over. Natives had such a horror of the pass laws of the country, that when travelling to the Diamond Fields to work they would frequently go round some hundreds of miles rather than pass through the Transvaal.

That the Volksraad should have thought it necessary to enact such a law in order that the farmers should obtain a supply of Kafir labour in a territory that had nearly a million of native inhabitants, who, unlike

the Zulus, are willing to work if only they meet with decent treatment, is in itself an instructive commentary on the feelings existing between the Boer master and Kafir servant.

But besides the general quarrel with the Kafir race in its entirety, which the Boers always have on hand, they had just then several individual differences, in each of which there lurked the possibilities of disturbance.

To begin with, their relations with Cetywayo were by no means amicable. During Mr. Burgers' absence the Boer Government, then under the leadership of P. J. Joubert, sent Cetywayo a very stern message--a message that gives the reader the idea that Mr. Joubert was ready to enforce it with ten thousand men. After making various statements and demands with reference to the Amaswazi tribe, the disputed boundary line, &c., it ends thus:--

"Although the Government of the South African Republic has never wished, and does not now desire, that serious disaffection and animosities should exist between you and them, yet it is not the less of the greatest consequence and importance for you earnestly to weigh these matters and risks, and to satisfy them; the more so, if you on your side also wish that peace and friendship shall be maintained between you and us."

The Secretary for Native Affairs for Natal comments on this message in

these words: "The tone of this message to Cetywayo is not very friendly, it has the look of an ultimatum, and if the Government of the Transvaal were in circumstances different to what it is, the message would suggest an intention to coerce if the demands it conveys are not at once complied with; but I am inclined to the opinion that no such intention exists, and that the transmission of a copy of the message to the Natal Government is intended as a notification that the Transvaal Government has proclaimed the territory hitherto in dispute between it and the Zulus to be Republican territory, and that the Republic intends to occupy it."

In the territories marked out by a decision known as the Keate Award, in which Lieutenant-Governor Keate of Natal, at the request of both parties, laid down the boundary line between the Boers and certain native tribes, the Boer Government carried it with a yet higher hand, insomuch as the natives of those districts, being comparatively unwarlike, were less likely to resist.

On the 18th August 1875, Acting President Joubert issued a proclamation by which a line was laid down far to the southward of that marked out by Mr. Keate, and consequently included more territory within the elastic boundaries of the Republic. A Government notice of the same date invites all claiming lands now declared to belong to the Republic, to send in their claims to be settled by a land commission.

On the 6th March 1876, another chief in the same neighbourhood

(Montsoia) writes to the Lieutenant-Governor of Griqualand West in these terms:--

"My Friend,--I wish to acquaint you with the doings of some people connected with the Boers. A man-servant of mine has been severely injured in the head by one of the Boers' servants, which has proved fatal. Another of my people has been cruelly treated by a Boer tying a rein about his neck, and then mounting his horse and dragging him about the place. My brother Molema, who is the bearer of this, will give you full particulars."

Molema explains the assaults thus: "The assaulted man is not dead; his skull was fractured. The assault was committed by a Boer named Wessels Badenhorst, who shamefully ill-treated the man, beat him till he fainted, and, on his revival, fastened a rim around his neck, and made him run to the homestead by the side of his (Badenhorst's) horse cantering. At the homestead he tied him to the waggon-wheel, and flogged him again till Mrs. Badenhorst stopped her husband."

Though it will be seen that the Boers were on good terms neither with the Zulus nor the Keate Award natives, they still had one Kafir ally, namely, Umbandeni, the Amaswazi king. This alliance was concluded under circumstances so peculiar that they are worthy of a brief recapitulation. It appears that in the winter of the year 1875 Mr. Rudolph, the Landdrost of Utrecht, went to Swazieland, and, imitating the example of the Natal Government with Cetywayo, crowned Umbandeni

king, on behalf of the Boer Government. He further made a treaty of alliance with him, and promised him a commando to help him in case of his being attacked by the Zulus. Now comes the curious part of the story. On the 18th May 1876, a message came from this same Umbandeni to

Sir H. Bulwer, of which the following is an extract:--"We are sent by our king to thank the Government of Natal for the information sent to him last winter by that Government, and conveyed by Mr. Rudolph, of the intended attack on his people by the Zulus. We are further instructed by the king to thank the Natal Government for the influence it used to stop the intended raid, and for instructing a Boer commando to go to his country to render him assistance in case of need; and further for appointing Mr. Randolph at the head of the commando to place him (Umbandeni) as king over the Amaswazi, and to make a treaty with him and his people on behalf of the Natal Government. . . . . The Transvaal Government has asked Umbandeni to acknowledge himself a subject of the Republic, but he has distinctly refused to do so." In a minute written on this subject, the Secretary for Native Affairs for Natal says, "No explanation or assurance was sufficient to convince them (Umbandeni's messengers) that they had on that occasion made themselves subjects of the South African Republic; they declared it was not their wish or intention to do so, and that they would refuse to acknowledge a position into which they had been unwittingly betrayed." I must conclude this episode by quoting the last paragraph of Sir H. Bulwer's covering despatch, because it concerns larger issues than the supposed treaty: "It will not be necessary that I should at present add any remarks to

those contained in the minute for the Secretary for Native Affairs, but I would observe that the situation arising out of the relations of the Government of the South African Republic with the neighbouring states is so complicated, and presents so many elements of confusion and of danger to the peace of this portion of South Africa, that I trust some way may be found to an early settlement of questions that ought not, in my opinion, to be left alone, as so many have been left, to take the chance of the future."

And now I come to the last and most imminent native difficulty that at the time faced the Republic. On the borders of Lydenburg district there lived a powerful chief named Secocoeni. Between this chief and the Transvaal Government difficulties arose in the beginning of 1876 on the usual subject--land. The Boers declared that they had bought the land from the Swazies, who had conquered portions of the country, and that the Swazies offered to make it "clean from brambles," i.e., kill everybody living on it; but that they (the Boers) said that they were to let them be, that they might be their servants. The Basutus, on the other hand, said that no such sale ever took place, and, even if it did take place, it was invalid, because the Swazies were not in occupation of the land, and therefore could not sell it. It was a Christian Kafir called Johannes, a brother of Secocoeni, who was the immediate cause of the war. This Johannes used to live at a place called Botsobelo, the mission-station of Mr. Merensky, but moved to a stronghold on the Spekboom river, in the disputed territory. The Boers sent to him to come back, but he refused, and warned the Boers off his land. Secocoeni was

then appealed to, but declared that the land belonged to his tribe, and would be occupied by Johannes. He also told the Boers "that he did not wish to fight, but that he was quite ready to do so if they preferred it." Thereupon the Transvaal Government declared war, although it does not appear that the natives committed any outrage or acts of hostility before the declaration. As regards the Boers' right to Secocoeni's country, Sir H. Barkly sums up the question thus, in a despatch addressed to President Burgers, dated 28th Nov. 1876:--"On the whole, it seems perfectly clear, and I feel bound to repeat it, that Sikukuni was neither de jure or de facto a subject of the Republic when your Honour declared war against him in June last." As soon as war had been declared, the clumsy commando system was set working, and about 2500 white men collected; the Swazies also were applied to to send a contingent, which they did, being only too glad of the opportunity of slaughter.

At first all went well, and the President, who accompanied the commando in person, succeeded in reducing a mountain stronghold, which, in his high-flown way, he called a "glorious victory" over a "Kafir Gibraltar."

On the 14th July another engagement took place, when the Boers and Swazies attacked Johannes' stronghold. The place was taken with circumstances of great barbarity by the Swazies, for when the signal was given to advance the Boers did not move. Nearly all the women were killed, and the brains of the children were dashed out against the stones; in one instance, before the captive mother's face. Johannes was

badly wounded, and died two days afterwards. When he was dying he said to his brother, "I am going to die. I am thankful I do not die by the hands of these cowardly Boers, but by the hand of a black and courageous nation like myself . . ." He then took leave of his people, told his brother to read the Bible, and expired. The Swazies were so infuriated at the cowardice displayed by the Boers on this occasion that they returned home in great dudgeon.

On the 2nd of August Secocoeni's mountain, which is a very strong fortification, was attacked in two columns, or rather an attempt was made to attack it, for when it came to the pinch only about forty men, mostly English and Germans, would advance. Thereupon the whole commando
retreated with great haste, the greater part of it going straight home. In vain the President entreated them to shoot him rather than desert him; they had had enough of Secocoeni and his stronghold, and home they went. The President then retreated with what few men he had left to Steelport, where he built a fort, and from thence returned to Pretoria. The news of the collapse of the commando was received throughout the Transvaal, and indeed the whole of South Africa, with the greatest dismay. For the first time in the history of that country the white man had been completely worsted by a native tribe, and that tribe wretched Basutus, people whom the Zulus call their "dogs." It was glad tidings to every native from the Zambesi to the Cape, who learnt thereby that the white man was not so invincible as he used to be. Meanwhile the inhabitants of Lydenburg were filled with alarm, and again and again

petitioned the Governors of the Cape and Natal for assistance. Their fears were, however, to a great extent groundless, for, with the exception of occasional cattle-lifting, Secocoeni did not follow up his victory.

On the 4th September the President opened the special sitting of the Volksraad, and presented to that body a scheme for the establishment of a border force to take the place of the commando system, announcing that he had appointed a certain Captain Von Schlickmann to command it. He also requested the Raad to make some provision for the expenses of the expedition, which they had omitted to do in their former sitting.

Captain Von Schlickmann determined to carry on the war upon a different system. He got together a band of very rough characters on the Diamond Fields, and occupied the fort built by the President, from whence he would sally out from time to time and destroy kraals. He seems, if we may believe the reports in the blue books and the stories of eye-witnesses, to have carried on his proceedings in a somewhat savage way. The following is an extract from a private letter written by one of his volunteers:--

"About daylight we came across four Kafirs. Saw them first, and charged in front of them to cut off their retreat. Saw they were women, and called out not to fire. In spite of that, one of the poor things got her head blown off (a d----d shame). . . . Afterwards two women and a baby were brought to the camp prisoners. The same night they were taken out

by our Kafirs and murdered in cold blood by the order of ----. Mr. ---- and myself strongly protested against it, but without avail. I never heard such a cowardly piece of business in my life. No good will come of it, you may depend. . . . ---- says he would cut all the women and children's throats he catches. Told him distinctly he was a d----d coward."

Schlickmann was, however, a mild-mannered man when compared to a certain
Abel Erasmus, afterwards denounced at a public dinner by Sir Garnet Wolseley as a "fiend in human form." This gentleman, in the month of October, attacked a friendly kraal of Kafirs. The incident is described thus in a correspondent's letter:--

"The people of the kraals, taken quite by surprise, fled when they saw their foes, and most of them took shelter in the neighbouring bush. Two or three men were distinctly seen in their flight from the kraal, and one of them is known to have been wounded. According to my informant the remainder were women and children, who were pursued into the bush, and there, all shivering and shrieking, were put to death by the Boers' Kafirs, some being shot, but the majority stabbed with assegais. After the massacre he counted thirteen women and three children, but he says he did not see the body of a single man. Another Kafir said, pointing to a place in the road where the stones were thickly strewn, 'the bodies of the women and children lay like these stones.' The Boer before mentioned, who has been stationed outside, has told one of his own

friends, whom he thought would not mention it, that the shrieks were fearful to hear."

Several accounts of, or allusion to, this atrocity can be found in the blue books, and I may add that it, in common with others of the same stamp, was the talk of the country at the time.

I do not relate these horrors out of any wish to rake up old stories to the prejudice of the Boers, but because I am describing the state of the country before the Annexation, in which they form an interesting and important item. Also, it is as well that people in England should know into what hands they have delivered over the native tribes who trusted in their protection. What happened in 1876 is probably happening again now, and will certainly happen again and again. The character of the Transvaal Boer and his sentiments towards the native races have not modified during the last five years, but, on the contrary, a large amount of energy, which has been accumulating during the period of British protection, will now be expended on their devoted heads.

As regards the truth of these atrocities, the majority of them are beyond the possibility of doubt; indeed, to the best of my knowledge, no serious attempt has ever been made to refute such of them as have come into public notice, except in a general way, for party purposes. As, however, they may be doubted, I will quote the following extract from a despatch written by Sir H. Barkly to Lord Carnarvon, dated 18th December 1876:--

"As Von Schlickmann has since fallen fighting bravely, it is not without reluctance that I join in affixing this dark stain on his memory, but truth compels me to add the following extract from a letter which I have since received from one whose name (which I communicate to your Lordship privately) forbids disbelief: 'There is no longer the slightest doubt as to the murder of the two women and the child at Steelport by the direct order of Schlickmann, and in the attack on the kraal near which these women were captured (or some attack about that period) he ordered his men to cut the throats of all the wounded! This is no mere report; it is positively true.'" He concludes by expressing a hope that the course of events will enable Her Majesty's Government to take such steps "as will terminate this wanton and useless bloodshed, and prevent the recurrence of the scenes of injustice, cruelty, and rapine which abundant evidence is every day forthcoming to prove have rarely ceased to disgrace the Republics beyond the Vaal ever since they first sprang into existence."[*]

[*] The italics are my own.--Author.

These are strong words, but none too strong for the facts of the case. Injustice, cruelty, and rapine have always been the watchwords of the Transvaal Boers. The stories of wholesale slaughter in the earlier days of the Republic are very numerous. One of the best known of those shocking occurrences took place in the Zoutpansberg war in 1865. On this occasion a large number of Kafirs took refuge in caves, where the Boers

smoked them to death. Some years afterwards Dr. Wangeman, whose account

is, I believe, thoroughly reliable, describes the scene of their

operations in these words:--

"The roof of the first cave was black with smoke; the remains of the logs which were burnt lay at the entrance. The floor was strewn with hundreds of skulls and skeletons. In confused heaps lay karosses, kerries, assegais, pots, spoons, snuff-boxes, and the bones of men, giving one the impression that this was the grave of a whole people. Some estimate the number of those who perished here from twenty to thirty thousand. This is, I believe, too high. In the one chamber there were from two hundred to three hundred skeletons; the other chambers I did not visit."

In 1868 a public meeting was held at Potchefstroom to consider the war then going on with the Zoutpansberg natives. According to the report of the proceedings, the Rev. Mr. Ludorf said that "on a particular occasion a number of native children, who were too young to be removed, had been collected in a heap, covered with long grass, and burned alive. Other atrocities had also been committed, but these were too horrible to relate." When called upon to produce his authority for this statement, Mr. Ludorf named his authority "in a solemn declaration to the State Attorney." At this same meeting Mr. J. G. Steyn, who had been Landdrost of Potchefstroom, said "there now was innocent blood on our hands which had not yet been avenged, and the curse of God rested on the land in

consequence." Mr. Rosalt remarked that "it was a singular circumstance that in the different colonial Kafir wars, as also in the Basutu wars, one did not hear of destitute children being found by the commandoes, and asked how it was that every petty commando that took the field in this Republic invariably found numbers of destitute children. He gave it as his opinion that the present system of apprenticeship was an essential cause of our frequent hostilities with the natives." Mr. Jan Talyard said, "Children were forcibly taken from their parents, and were then called destitute and apprenticed." Mr. Daniel Van Nooren was heard to say, "If they had to clear the country, and could not have the children they found, he would shoot them." Mr. Field-Cornet Furstenburg stated "that when he was at Zoutpansberg with his burghers, the chief Katse-Kats was told to come down from the mountains; that he sent one of his subordinates as a proof of amity; that whilst a delay of five days was guaranteed by Commandant Paul Kruger, who was then in command, orders were given at the same time to attack the natives at break of day, which was accordingly done, but which resulted in total failure." Truly, this must have been an interesting meeting.

Before leaving these unsavoury subjects, I must touch on the question of slavery. It has been again and again denied, on behalf of the Transvaal Boers, that slavery existed in the Republic. Now, this is, strictly speaking, true; slavery did not exist, but apprenticeship did--the rose was called by another name, that is all. The poor destitute children who were picked up by kindhearted Boers, after the extermination of their parents, were apprenticed to farmers till they came of age. It is a

remarkable fact that these children never attained their majority. You might meet oldish men in the Transvaal who were not, according to their masters' reckoning, twenty-one years of age. The assertion that slavery did not exist in the Transvaal is only made to hoodwink the English public. I have known men who have owned slaves, and who have seen whole waggon-loads of "black ivory," as they were called, sold for about 15 pounds a-piece. I have at this moment a tenant, Carolus by name, on some land I own in Natal, now a well-to-do man, who was for many years--about twenty, if I remember right--a Boer slave. During those years, he told me, he worked from morning till night, and the only reward he received was two calves. He finally escaped into Natal.

If other evidence is needed it is not difficult to find, so I will quote a little. On the 22d August 1876 we find Khama, king of the Bamangwato, one of the most worthy chiefs in South Africa, sending a message to "Victoria, the great Queen of the English people," in these words:--

"I write to you, Sir Henry, in order that your Queen may preserve for me my country, it being in her hands. The Boers are coming into it, and I do not like them. Their actions are cruel among us black people. We are like money, they sell us and our children. I ask Her Majesty to pity me, and to hear that which I write quickly. I wish to hear upon what conditions Her Majesty will receive me, and my country and my people, under her protection. I am weary with fighting. I do not like war, and I ask Her Majesty to give me peace. I am very much distressed that my people are being destroyed by war, and I wish them to obtain peace. I

ask Her Majesty to defend me, as she defends all her people. There are three things which distress me very much--war, selling people, and drink. All these things I shall find in the Boers, and it is these things which destroy people to make an end of them in the country. The custom of the Boers has always been to cause people to be sold, and to-day they are still selling people. Last year I saw them pass with two waggons full of people whom they had bought at the river at Tanane" (Lake Ngate).

The Special Correspondence of the "Cape Argus," a highly respectable journal, writes thus on the 28th November 1876:--"The Boer from whom this information was gleaned has furnished besides some facts which may not be uninteresting, as a commentary on the repeated denials by Mr. Burgers of the existence of slavery. During the last week slaves have been offered for sale on his farm. The captives have been taken from Secocoeni's country by Mapoch's people, and are being exchanged at the rate of a child for a heifer. He also assures us that the whole of the Highveld is bring replenished with Kafir children, whom the Boers have been lately purchasing from the Swazies at the rate of a horse for a child. I should like to see this man and his father as witnesses before an Imperial Commission. He let fall one or two incidents of the past which were brought to mind by the occurrences of the present. In 1864, he says, 'The Swazies accompanied the Boers against Males. The Boers did nothing but stand by and witness the fearful massacre. The men and women

were also murdered. One poor woman sat clutching her baby of eight days

old. The Swazies stabbed her through the body, and when she found that she could not live, she wrung the baby's neck with her own hands to save it from future misery. On the return of that Commando the children who became too weary to continue the journey were killed on the road. The survivors were sold as slaves to the farmers.'"

The same gentleman writes in the issue of the 12th December as follows:--"The whole world may know it, for it is true, and investigation will only bring out the horrible details, that through the whole course of this Republic's existence it has acted in contravention of the Sand River Treaty; and slavery has occurred not only here and there in isolated cases, but as an unbroken practice, and has been one of the peculiar institutions of the country, mixed up with all its social and political life. It has been at the root of most of its wars. It has been carried on regularly even in times of peace. It has been characterised by all those circumstances which have so often roused the British nation to an indignant protest, and to repeated efforts to banish the slave trade from the world. The Boers have not only fallen on unsuspecting kraals simply for the purpose of obtaining the women and children and cattle, but they have carried on a traffic through natives who have kidnapped the children of their weaker neighbours, and sold them to the white man. Again, the Boers have sold and exchanged their victims among themselves. Waggon-loads of slaves have been conveyed from one end of the country to the other for sale, and that with the cognisance of, and for the direct advantage of, the highest officials of the land. The writer has himself seen in a town, situated in the south

of the Republic, the children who had been brought down from a remote northern district. One fine morning, in walking through the streets, he was struck with the number of little black strangers standing about certain houses, and wondered where they could have come from. He learnt a few hours later that they were part of loads which were disposed of on the outskirts of the town the day before. The circumstances connected with some of these kidnapping excursions are appalling, and the barbarities practised by cruel masters upon some of these defenceless creatures during the course of their servitude are scarcely less horrible than those reported from Turkey. It is no disgrace in this country for an official to ride a fine horse which was got for two Kafir children, to procure whom the father and mother were shot. No reproach is inherited by the mistress who, day after day, tied up her female servant in an agonising posture, and had her beaten until there was no sound part in her body, securing her in the stocks during the intervals of torture. That man did not lose caste who tied up another woman and had her thrashed until she brought forth at the whipping-post. These are merely examples of thousands of cases which could be proved were an Imperial Commission to sit, and could the wretched victims of a prolonged oppression recover sufficiently from the dread of their old tyrants to give a truthful report."

To come to some evidence more recently adduced. On the 9th May 1881, an affidavit was sworn to by the Rev. John Thorne, curate of St. John the Evangelist, Lydenburg, Transvaal, and presented to the Royal Commission appointed to settle Transvaal affairs, in which he states:--"That I

was appointed to the charge of a congregation in Potchefstroom, about thirteen years ago, when the Republic was under the presidency of Mr. Pretorius.[*] I remember noticing one morning, as I walked through the streets, a number of young natives, whom I knew to be strangers. I inquired where they came from. I was told that they had just been brought from Zoutpansberg. This was the locality from which slaves were chiefly brought at that time, and were traded for under the name of 'Black Ivory.' One of these natives belonged to Mr. Munich, the State Attorney. It was a matter of common remark at that time, that the President of the Republic was himself one of the greatest dealers in slaves." In the fourth paragraph of the same affidavit Mr. Thorne says, "That the Rev. Doctor Nachtigal, of the Berlin Missionary Society, was the interpreter for Shatane's people in the private office of Mr. Roth, and, at the close of the interview, told me what had occurred. On my expressing surprise, he went on to relate that he had information on native matters which would surprise me more. He then produced the copy of a register, kept in the landdrost's office, of men, women, and children, to the number of four hundred and eighty (480), who had been disposed of by one Boer to another for a consideration. In one case an ox was given in exchange, in another goats, in a third a blanket, and so forth. Many of these natives he (Mr. Nachtigal) knew personally. The copy was certified as true and correct by an official of the Republic, and I would mention his name now, only that I am persuaded that it would cost the man his life if his act became known to the Boers."

[*] One of the famous Triumvirate.

On the 16th May 1881, a native, named Frederick Molepo, was examined by the Royal Commission. The following are extracts from his examination:--

"(Sir E. Wood.) Are you a Christian?--Yes.

"(Sir H. de Villiers.) How long were you a slave?--Half a year.

"How do you know that you were a slave? Might you not have been an apprentice?--No, I was not apprenticed.

"How do you know?--They got me from my parents, and ill-treated me.

"(Sir E. Wood.) How many times did you get the stick?--Every day.

"(Sir H. de Villiers.) What did the Boers do with you when they caught you?--They sold me.

"How much did they sell you for?--One cow and a big pot."

On the 28th May 1881, amongst the other documents handed in for the consideration of the Royal Commission, is the statement of a headman, whose name it has been considered advisable to omit in the blue book for fear the Boers should take vengeance on him. He says, "I say, that if the English Government dies I shall die too; I would rather die than be under the Boer Government. I am the man who helped to make bricks for

the church you see now standing in the square here (Pretoria), as a slave without payment. As a representative of my people I am still obedient to the English Government, and willing to obey all commands from them, even to die for their cause in this country, rather than submit to the Boers.

"I was under Shambok, my chief, who fought the Boers formerly, but he left us, and we were put up to auction and sold among the Boers. I want to state this myself to the Royal Commission in Newcastle. I was bought by Fritz Botha and sold by Frederick Botha, who was then veld cornet (justice of the peace) of the Boers."[*]

> [*] I have taken the liberty to quote all these extracts exactly as they stand in the original, instead of weaving their substance into my narrative, in order that I may not be accused, as so often happens to authors who write upon this subject, of having presented a garbled version of the truth. The original of every extract is to be found in blue books presented to Parliament. I have thought it best to confine myself to these, and avoid repeating stories of cruelties and slavery, however well authenticated, that have come to my knowledge privately, such stories being always more or less open to suspicion.

It would be easy to find more reports of the slave-trading practices of the Boers, but as the above are fair samples it will not be necessary

to do so. My readers will be able from them to form some opinion as to whether or not slavery or apprenticeship existed in the Transvaal. If they come to the conclusion that it did, it must be borne in mind that what existed in the past will certainly exist again in the future. Natives are not now any fonder of working for Boers than they were a few years back, and Boers must get labour somehow. If, on the other hand, it did not exist, then the Boers are a grossly slandered people, and all writers on the subject, from Livingstone down, have combined to take away their character.

Leaving native questions for the present, we must now return to the general affairs of the country. When President Burgers opened the special sitting of the Volksraad, on the 4th September, he appealed, it will be remembered, to that body for pecuniary aid to liquidate the expenses of the war. This appeal was responded to by the passing of a war tax, under which every owner of a farm was to pay 10 pounds, the owner of half a farm 5 pounds, and so on. The tax was not a very just one, since it fell with equal weight on the rich man, who held twenty farms, and the poor man, who held but one. Its justice or injustice was, however, to a great extent immaterial, since the free and independent burghers, including some of the members of the Volksraad who had imposed
it, promptly refused to pay it, or indeed, whilst they were about it, any other tax. As the Treasury was already empty, and creditors were pressing, this refusal was most ill-timed, and things began to look very black indeed. Meanwhile, in addition to the ordinary expenditure,

and the interest payable on debts, money had to be found to pay Von Schlickmann's volunteers. As there was no cash in the country, this was done by issuing Government promissory notes, known as "goodfors," or vulgarly as "good for nothings," and by promising them all booty, and to each man a farm of two thousand acres, lying east and north-east of the Loolu mountains; in other words, in Secocoeni's territory, which did not belong to the Government to give away. The officials were the next to suffer, and for six months before the Annexation these unfortunate individuals lived as best they could, for they certainly got no salary, except in the case of a postmaster, who was told to help himself to his pay in stamps. The Government issued large numbers of bills, but the banks refused to discount them, and in some cases the neighbouring Colonies had to advance money to the Transvaal post-cart contractors, who were carrying the mails, as a matter of charity. The Government even mortgaged the great salt-pan near Pretoria for the paltry sum of 400 pounds, whilst the leading officials of the Government were driven to pledging their own private credit in order to obtain the smallest article necessary to its continuance. In fact, to such a pass did things come that when the country was annexed a single threepenny bit (which had doubtless been overlooked) was found in the Treasury chest, together with acknowledgments of debts to the extent of nearly 300,000 pounds.

Nor was the refusal to pay taxes, which they were powerless to enforce, the only difficulty with which the Government had to contend. Want of money is as bad and painful a thing to a State as to an individual, but there are perhaps worse things than want of money, one of which is to be

deserted by your own friends and household. This was the position of the Government of the Republic; no sooner was it involved in overwhelming difficulties than its own subjects commenced to bait it, more especially the English portion of its subjects. They complained to the English authorities about the commandeering of members of their family or goods; they petitioned the British Government to interfere, and generally made themselves as unpleasant as possible to the local Authorities. Such a course of action was perhaps natural, but it can hardly be said to be either quite logical or just. The Transvaal Government had never asked them to come and live in the country, and if they did so, it must be remembered that many of the agitators had accumulated property, to leave which would mean ruin; and they saw that, unless something was done, its value would be destroyed.

Under the pressure of all these troubles the Boers themselves split up into factions, as they are always ready to do. The Dopper party declared that they had had enough progress, and proposed the extremely conservative Paul Kruger as President, Burgers' time having nearly expired. Paul Kruger accepted the candidature, although he had previously promised his support to Burgers, and distrust of each other was added to the other difficulties of the Executive, the Transvaal becoming a house very much divided against itself. Natives, Doppers, Progressionists, Officials, English, were all pulling different ways, and each striving for his own advantage. Anything more hopeless than the position of the country on the 1st January 1877 it is impossible to conceive. Enemies surrounded it; on every border there was the prospect

of a serious war. In the exchequer there was nothing but piles of overdue bills. The President was helpless, and mistrustful of his officers, and the officers were caballing against the President. All the ordinary functions of Government had ceased, and trade was paralysed. Now and then wild proposals were made to relieve the State of its burdens, some of which partook of the nature of repudiation, but these were the exception; the majority of the inhabitants, who would neither fight nor pay taxes, sat still and awaited the catastrophe, utterly careless of all consequences.