CHAPTER III

THE ANNEXATION

Anxiety of Lord Carnarvon--Despatch of Sir T. Shepstone as Special Commissioner to the Transvaal--Sir T. Shepstone, his great experience and ability--His progress to Pretoria and reception there--Feelings excited by the arrival of the mission--The annexation not a foregone conclusion--Charge brought against Sir T. Shepstone of having called up the Zulu army to sweep the Transvaal--Its complete falsehood--Cetywayo's message to Sir T. Shepstone--Evidence on the matter summed up--General desire of the natives for English rule--Habitual disregard of their interests--Assembly of the Volksraad--Rejection of Lord Carnarvon's Confederation Bill and of President Burgers' new constitution--President Burgers' speeches to the Raad--His posthumous statement --Communication to the Raad of Sir T. Shepstone's intention to annex the country--Despatch of Commission to inquire into the alleged peace with Secocoeni--Its fraudulent character discovered--Progress of affairs in the Transvaal--Paul Kruger and his party--Restlessness of natives--Arrangements for the annexation--The annexation proclamation.

The state of affairs described in the previous chapter was one that filled the Secretary of State for the Colonies with alarm. During his tenure of office, Lord Carnarvon evidently had the permanent welfare of South Africa much at heart, and he saw with apprehension that the troubles that were brewing in the Transvaal were of a nature likely to

involve the Cape and Natal in a native war. Though there is a broad line of demarcation between Dutch and English, it is not so broad but that a victorious nation like the Zulus might cross it, and beginning by fighting the Boer, might end by fighting the white man irrespective of race. When the reader reflects how terrible would be the consequences of a combination of native tribes against the Whites, and how easily such a combination might at that time have been brought about in the first flush of native successes, he will understand the anxiety with which all thinking men watched the course of events in the Transvaal in 1876.

At last they took such a serious turn that the Home Government saw that some action must be taken if the catastrophe was to be averted, and determined to despatch Sir Theophilus Shepstone as Special Commissioner to the Transvaal, with powers, should it be necessary, to annex the country to Her Majesty's dominions, "in order to secure the peace and safety of Our said colonies and of Our subjects elsewhere."

The terms of his Commission were unusually large, leaving a great deal to his discretionary power. In choosing that officer for the execution of a most difficult and delicate mission, the Government, doubtless, made a very wise selection. Sir Theophilus Shepstone is a man of remarkable tact and ability, combined with great openness and simplicity of mind, and one whose name will always have a leading place in South African history. During a long official lifetime he has had to do with most of the native races in South Africa, and certainly knows them and their ways better than any living man; whilst he is by them all regarded

with a peculiar and affectionate reverence. He is par excellence their great white chief and "father," and a word from him, even now that he has retired from active life, still carries more weight than the formal remonstrances of any governor in South Africa.

With the Boers he is almost equally well acquainted, having known many of them personally for years. He possesses, moreover, the rare power of winning the regard and affection, as well as the respect, of those about him in such a marked degree that those who have served him once would go far to serve him again. Sir T. Shepstone, however, has enemies like other people, and is commonly reported among them to be a disciple of Machiavelli, and to have his mind steeped in all the darker wiles of Kafir policy. The Annexation of the Transvaal is by them attributed to a successful and vigorous use of those arts that distinguished the diplomacy of two centuries ago. Falsehood and bribery are supposed to have been the great levers used to effect the change, together with threats of extinction at the hands of a savage and unfriendly nation.

That the Annexation was a triumph of mind over matter is quite true, but whether or not that triumph was unworthily obtained, I will leave those who read this short chronicle of the events connected with it to judge. I saw it somewhat darkly remarked in a newspaper the other day that the history of the Annexation had evidently yet to be written; and I fear that the remark represents the feeling of most people about the event; implying as it did, that it was carried out, by means certainly mysterious, and presumably doubtful. I am afraid that those who think

thus will be disappointed in what I have to say about the matter, since I know that the means employed to bring the Boers--

"Fracti bello, fatisque repulsi"--

under her Majesty's authority were throughout as fair and honest as the Annexation itself was, in my opinion, right and necessary.

To return to Sir T. Shepstone. He undoubtedly had faults as a ruler, one of the most prominent of which was that his natural mildness of character would never allow him to act with severity even when severity was necessary. The very criminals condemned to death ran a good chance of reprieve when he had to sign their death-warrants. He had also that worst of faults (so called), in one fitted by nature to become great--want of ambition, a failing that in such a man marks him the possessor of an even and a philosophic mind. It was no seeking of his own that raised him out of obscurity, and when his work was done to comparative obscurity he elected to return, though whether a man of his ability and experience in South African affairs should, at the present crisis, be allowed to remain there, is another question.

On the 20th December 1876, Sir T. Shepstone wrote to President Burgers, informing him of his approaching visit to the Transvaal, to secure, if possible, the adjustment of the existing troubles, and the adoption of such measures as might be best calculated to prevent their recurrence in the future.

On his road to Pretoria, Sir Theophilus received a hearty welcome from the Boer as well as the English inhabitants of the country. One of these addresses to him says: "Be assured, high honourable Sir, that we burghers, now assembled together, entertain the most friendly feeling towards your Government, and that we shall agree with anything you may do in conjunction with our Government for the progress of our State, the strengthening against our native enemies, and for the general welfare of all the inhabitants of the whole of South Africa. Welcome in Heidelberg, and welcome in the Transvaal."

At Pretoria the reception of the Special Commissioner was positively enthusiastic; the whole town came out to meet him, and the horses having been taken out of the carriage, he was dragged in triumph through the streets. In his reply to the address presented to him, Sir Theophilus shadowed forth the objects of his mission in these words: "Recent events in this country have shown to all thinking men the absolute necessity for closer union and more oneness of purpose among the Christian Governments of the southern portion of this Continent: the best interests of the native races, no less than the peace and prosperity of the white, imperatively demand it, and I rely upon you and upon your Government to co-operate with me in endeavouring to achieve the great and glorious end of inscribing on a general South African banner the appropriate motto--'Eendragt maakt magt' (Unity makes strength)."

A few days after his arrival a commission was appointed, consisting of

Messrs. Henderson and Osborn, on behalf of the Special Commissioner, and Messrs. Kruger and Jorissen, on behalf of the Transvaal Government, to discuss the state of the country. This commission came to nothing, and was on both sides nothing more than a bit of by-play.

The arrival of the mission was necessarily regarded with mixed feelings by the inhabitants of the Transvaal. By one party it was eagerly greeted, viz., the English section of the population, who devoutly hoped that it had come to annex the country. With the exception of the Hollander element, the officials also were glad of its arrival, and secretly hoped that the country would be taken over, when there would be more chance of their getting their arrear pay. The better educated Boers also were for the most part satisfied that there was no hope for the country unless England helped it in some way, though they did not like having to accept the help. But the more bigoted and narrow-minded among them were undoubtedly opposed to English interference, and under their leader, Paul Kruger, who was at the time running for the President's chair, did their best to be rid of it. They found ready allies in the Hollander clientele, with which Mr. Burgers had surrounded himself, headed by the famous Dr. Jorissen, who was, like most of the rulers of this singular State, an ex-clergyman, but now an Attorney-general, not learned in the law. These men were for the most part entirely unfit for the positions they held, and feared that in the event of the country changing hands they might be ejected from them; and also, they did all Englishmen the favour to regard them, with that particularly virulent and general hatred which is a part of the secret creed of many

foreigners, more especially of such as are under our protection. As may easily be imagined, what between all these different parties and the presence of the Special Commissioner, there were certainly plenty of intrigues going on in Pretoria during the first few months of 1877, and the political excitement was very great. Nobody knew how far Sir T. Shepstone was prepared to go, and everybody was afraid of putting out his hand further than he could pull it back, and trying to make himself comfortable on two stools at once. Members of the Volksraad and other prominent individuals in the country who had during the day been denouncing the Commissioner in no measured terms, and even proposing that he and his staff should be shot as a warning to the English Government, might be seen arriving at his house under cover of the shades of evening, to have a little talk with him, and express the earnest hope that it was his intention to annex the country as soon as possible. It is necessary to assist at a peaceable annexation to learn the depth of meanness human nature is capable of.

In Pretoria, at any rate, the ladies were of great service to the cause of the mission, since they were nearly all in favour of a change of government, and, that being the case, they naturally soon brought their husbands, brothers, and lovers to look at things from the same point of view. It was a wise man who said that in any matter where it is necessary to obtain the goodwill of a population you should win over the women; that done, you need not trouble yourself about the men.

Though the country was thus overflowing with political intrigues,

nothing of the kind went on in the Commissioner's camp. It was not he

who made the plots to catch the Transvaalers; on the contrary, they made the plots to catch him. For several months all that he did was to sit still and let the rival passions work their way, fighting what the Zulus afterwards called the "fight of sit down." When anybody came to see him he was very glad to meet them, pointed out the desperate condition of the country, and asked them if they could suggest a remedy. And that was about all he did do, beyond informing himself very carefully as to all that was going on in the country, and the movements of the natives within and outside its borders. There was no money spent on bribery, as has been stated, though it is impossible to imagine a state of affairs in which it would have been more easy to bribe, or in which it could have been done with greater effect; unless indeed the promise that some pension should be paid to President Burgers can be called a bribe, which it was certainly never intended to be, but simply a guarantee that after having spent all his private means on behalf of the State he should not be left destitute. The statement that the Annexation was effected under a threat that if the Government did not give its consent Sir T. Shepstone would let loose the Zulus on the country is also a wicked and malicious invention, but with this I shall deal more at length further on.

It must not, however, be understood that the Annexation was a foregone conclusion, or that Sir T. Shepstone came up to the Transvaal with the fixed intention of annexing the country without reference to its

position, merely with a view of extending British influence, or, as has been absurdly stated, in order to benefit Natal. He had no fixed purpose, whether it were necessary or no, of exercising the full powers given to him by his commission; on the contrary, he was all along most anxious to find some internal resources within the State by means of which Annexation could be averted, and of this fact his various letters and despatches give full proof. Thus, in his letter to President Burgers, of the 9th April 1877, in which he announces his intention of annexing the country, he says: "I have more than once assured your Honour that if I could think of any plan by which the independence of the State could be maintained by its own internal resources I would most certainly not conceal that plan from you." It is also incidentally remarkably confirmed by a passage in Mr. Burgers' posthumous defence, in which he says: "Hence I met Shepstone alone in my house, and opened up the subject of his mission. With a candour that astonished me, he avowed that his purpose was to annex the country, as he had sufficient grounds for it, unless I could so alter as to satisfy his Government. My plan of a new constitution, modelled after that of America, of a standing police force of two hundred mounted men, was then proposed. He promised to give me time to call the Volksraad together, and to abandon his design if the Volksraad would adopt these measures, and the country be willing to submit to them, and to carry them out." Further on he says: "In justice to Shepstone I must say that I would not consider an officer of my Government to have acted faithfully if he had not done what Shepstone did."

It has also been frequently alleged in England, and always seems to be taken as the groundwork of argument in the matter of the Annexation, that the Special Commissioner represented that the majority of the inhabitants wished for the Annexation, and that it was sanctioned on that ground. This statement shows the great ignorance that exists in this country of South African affairs, an ignorance which in this case has been carefully fostered by Mr. Gladstone's Government for party purposes, they having found it necessary to assume, in order to make their position in the matter tenable, that Sir T. Shepstone and other Officials had been guilty of misrepresentation. Unfortunately, the Government and its supporters have been more intent upon making out their case than upon ascertaining the truth of their statements. If they had taken the trouble to refer to Sir T. Shepstone's despatches, they would have found that the ground on which the Transvaal was annexed was,

not because the majority of the inhabitants wished for it, but because the State was drifting into anarchy, was bankrupt, and was about to be destroyed by native tribes. They would further have found that Sir T. Shepstone never represented that the majority of the Boers were in favour of Annexation. What he did say was that most thinking men in the country saw no other way out of the difficulty; but what proportion of the Boers can be called "thinking men?" He also said, in the fifteenth paragraph of his despatch to Lord Carnarvon of 6th March 1877, that petitions signed by 2500 people, representing every class of the community, out of a total adult population of 8000, had been presented to the Government of the Republic, setting forth its difficulties and

dangers, and praying it "to treat with me for their amelioration or removal." He also stated, and with perfect truth, that many more would have signed had it not been for the terrorism that was exercised, and that all the towns and villages in the country desired the change, which was a patent fact.

This is the foundation on which the charge of misrepresentation is built--a charge which has been manipulated so skilfully, and with such a charming disregard for the truth, that the British public has been duped into believing it. When it is examined into, it vanishes into thin air.

But a darker charge has been brought against the Special Commissioner--a charge affecting his honour as a gentleman and his character as a Christian; and, strange to say, has gained a considerable credence, especially amongst a certain party in England. I allude to the statement that he called up the Zulu army with the intention of sweeping the Transvaal if the Annexation was objected to. I may state, from my own personal knowledge, that the report is a complete falsehood, and that no such threat was ever made, either by Sir T. Shepstone or by anybody connected with him, and I will briefly prove what I say.

When the mission first arrived at Pretoria, a message came from Cetywayo to the effect that he had heard that the Boers had fired at "Sompseu" (Sir T. Shepstone), and announcing his intention of attacking the Transvaal if "his father" was touched. About the middle of March alarming rumours began to spread as to the intended action of Cetywayo

with reference to the Transvaal; but as Sir T. Shepstone did not think that the king would be likely to make any hostile movement whilst he was in the country, he took no steps in the matter. Neither did the Transvaal Government ask his advice and assistance. Indeed, a remarkable trait in the Boers is their supreme self-conceit, which makes them believe that they are capable of subduing all the natives in Africa, and of thrashing the whole British army if necessary. Unfortunately, the recent course of events has tended to confirm them in their opinion as regards their white enemies. To return: towards the second week in April, or the week before the proclamation of annexation was issued, things began to look very serious; indeed, rumours that could hardly be discredited reached the Special Commissioner that the whole of the Zulu army was collected in a chain of Impis or battalions, with the intention of bursting into the Transvaal and sweeping the country. Knowing how terrible would be the catastrophe if this were to happen, Sir T. Shepstone was much alarmed about the matter, and at a meeting with the Executive Council of the Transvaal Government he pointed out to them the great danger in which the country was placed. This was done in the presence of several officers of his Staff, and it was on this friendly exposition of the state of affairs that the charge that he had threatened the country with invasion by the Zulus was based. On the 11th of April, or the day before the Annexation, a message was despatched to Cetywayo, telling him of the reports that had reached Pretoria, and stating that if they were true he must forthwith give up all such intentions, as the Transvaal would at once be placed under the sovereignty of Her Majesty, and that if he had assembled any armies

for purposes of aggression they must be disbanded at once. Sir T. Shepstone's message reached Zululand not a day too soon. Had the Annexation of the Transvaal been delayed by a few weeks even--and this is a point which I earnestly beg Englishmen to remember in connection with that act--Cetywayo's armies would have entered the Transvaal, carrying death before them, and leaving a wilderness behind them.

Cetywayo's answer to the Special Commissioner's message will sufficiently show, to use Sir Theophilus' own words in his despatch on the subject, "the pinnacle of peril which the Republic and South Africa generally had reached at the moment when the Annexation took place." He says, "I thank my Father Sompseu (Sir T. Shepstone) for his message. I am glad that he has sent it, because the Dutch have tired me out, and I intended to fight them once and once only, and to drive them over the Vaal. Kabana (name of messenger), you see my Impis (armies) are gathered. It was to fight the Dutch I called them together; now I will send them back to their homes. Is it well that two men ('amadoda-amabili') should be made 'iziula' (fools)? In the reign of my father Umpanda the Boers were constantly moving their boundary further into my country. Since his death the same thing has been done. I had therefore determined to end it once for all!" The message then goes on to other matters, and ends with a request to be allowed to fight the Amaswazi, because "they fight together and kill one another. This," says Cetywayo naively, "is wrong, and I want to chastise them for it."

This quotation will suffice to convince all reasonable men, putting

aside all other matters, from what imminent danger the Transvaal was delivered by the much-abused Annexation.

Some months after that event, however, it occurred to the ingenious mind of some malicious individual in Natal that, properly used, much political capital might be made out of this Zulu incident, and the story that Cetywayo's army had been called up by Sir Theophilus himself to overawe, and, if necessary, subdue the Transvaal, was accordingly invented and industriously circulated. Although Sir T. Shepstone at once caused it to be authoritatively contradicted, such an astonishing slander naturally took firm root, and on the 12th April 1879 we have Mr. M. W. Pretorius, one of the Boer leaders, publicly stating at a meeting of the farmers that "previous to the Annexation Sir T. Shepstone had threatened the Transvaal with an attack from the Zulus as an argument for advancing the Annexation." Under such an imputation the Government could no longer keep silence, and accordingly Sir Owen Lanyon, who was then Administrator of the Transvaal, caused the matter to be officially investigated, with these results, which are summed up by him in a letter to Mr. Pretorius, dated 1st May 1879:--

1. The records of the Republican Executive Council contained no allusion to any such statement.

2. Two members of that Council filed statements in which they unreservedly denied that Sir T. Shepstone used the words or threats imputed to him.

3. Two officers of Sir T. Shepstone's staff, who were always present with him at interviews with the Executive Council, filed statements to the same effect.

"I have no doubt," adds Sir Owen Lanyon, "that the report has been originated and circulated by some evil-disposed persons."

In addition to this evidence we have a letter written to the Colonial Office by Sir T. Shepstone, dated London, August 12, 1879, in which he points out that Mr. Pretorius was not even present at any of the interviews with the Executive Council on which occasion he accuses him of having made use of the threats. He further shows that the use of such a threat on his part would have been the depth of folly, and "knowingly to court the instant and ignominious failure of my mission," because the Boers were so persuaded of their own prowess that they could not be convinced that they stood in any danger from native sources, and also because "such play with such keen-edged tools as the excited passions of savages are, and especially such savages as I knew the Zulus to be, is not what an experience of forty-two years in managing them inclined me to." And yet, in the face of all this accumulated evidence, this report continues to be believed, that is, by those who wished to believe it.

Such are the accusations that have been brought against the manner of the Annexation and the Officer who carried it out, and never were accusations more groundless. Indeed both for party purposes, and from

personal animus, every means, fair or foul, has been used to discredit it and all connected with it. To take a single instance, one author (Miss Colenso, p. 134, "History of the Zulu War") actually goes the length of putting a portion of a speech made by President Burgers into the mouth of Sir T. Shepstone, and then abusing him for his incredible profanity. Surely this exceeds the limits of fair criticism.

Before I go on to the actual history of the Annexation there is one point I wish to submit to my reader. In England the change of Government has always been talked of as though it only affected the forty thousand white inhabitants of the country, whilst everybody seems to forget that this same land had about a million human beings living on it, its original owners, and only, unfortunately for themselves, possessing a black skin, and therefore entitled to little consideration,--even at the hands of the most philanthropic Government in the world. It never seems to have occurred to those who have raised so much outcry on behalf of the forty thousand Boers, to inquire what was thought of the matter by the million natives. If they were to be allowed a voice in their own disposal, the country was certainly annexed by the wish of a very large majority of its inhabitants. It is true that Secocoeni, instigated thereto by the Boers, afterwards continued the war against us, but, with the exception of this one chief, the advent of our rule was hailed with joy by every native in the Transvaal, and even he was glad of it at the time. During our period of rule in the Transvaal the natives have had, as they foresaw, more peace than at any time since the white man set foot in the land. They have paid their taxes gladly, and there has been

no fighting among themselves; but since we have given up the country we hear a very different tale. It is this million of men, women, and children who, notwithstanding their black skins, live and feel, and have intelligence as much as ourselves, who are the principal, because the most numerous sufferers from Mr. Gladstone's conjuring tricks, that can turn a Sovereign into a Suzerain as airily as the professor of magic brings a litter of guinea-pigs out of a top hat. It is our falsehood and treachery to them whom we took over "for ever," as we told them, and whom we have now handed back to their natural enemies to be paid off for their loyalty to the Englishman, that is the blackest stain in all this black business, and that has destroyed our prestige, and caused us to be looked on amongst them, for they do not hide their opinion, as "cowards and liars."

But very little attention, however, seems to have been paid to native views or claims at any time in the Transvaal; indeed they have all along been treated as serfs of the soil, to be sold with it, if necessary, to a new master. It is true that the Government, acting under pressure from the Aborigines Protection Society, made, on the occasion of the Surrender, a feeble effort to secure the independence of some of the native tribes; but when the Boer leaders told them shortly that they would have nothing of the sort, and that, if they were not careful, they would reoccupy Laing's Nek, the proposal was at once dropped, with many assurances that no offence was intended. The worst of the matter is that this treatment of our native subjects and allies will assuredly recoil on the heads of future innocent Governments.

Shortly after the appointment of the Joint-Commission alluded to at the beginning of this chapter, President Burgers, who was now in possession of the Special Commissioner's intentions, should he be unable to carry out reforms sufficiently drastic to satisfy the English Government, thought it best to call together the Volksraad. In the meantime, it had been announced that the "rebel" Secocoeni had sued for peace and signed a treaty declaring himself a subject of the Republic. I shall have to enter into the question of this treaty a little further on, so I will at present only say that it was the first business laid before the Raad, and, after some discussion, ratified. Next in order to the Secocoeni peace came the question of Confederation, as laid down in Lord Carnarvon's Permissive Bill. This proposal was laid before them in an earnest and eloquent speech by their President, who entreated them to consider the dangerous position of the Republic, and to face their difficulties like men. The question was referred to a committee, and an adverse report being brought up, was rejected without further consideration. It is just possible that intimidation had something to do with the summary treatment of so important a matter, seeing that whilst it was being argued a large mob of Boers, looking very formidable with their sea-cow hide whips, watched every move of their representatives through the windows of the Volksraad Hall. It was Mr. Chamberlain's caucus system in practical and visible operation.

A few days after the rejection of the Confederation Bill, President Burgers, who had frequently alluded to the desperate condition of the

Republic, and stated that either some radical reform must be effected or the country must come under the British flag, laid before the Raad a brand new constitution of a very remarkable nature, asserting that they must either accept it or lose their independence.

The first part of this strange document dealt with the people and their rights, which remained much as they were before, with the exception that the secrecy of all letters entrusted to the post was to be inviolable. The recognition of this right is an amusing incident in the history of a free Republic. Under following articles the Volksraad was entrusted with the charge of the native inhabitants of the State, the provision for the administration of justice, the conduct of education, the regulation of money-bills, &c. It is in the fourth chapter, however, that we come to the real gist of the Bill, which was the endowment of the State President with the authority of a dictator. Mr. Burgers thought to save the State by making himself an absolute monarch. He was to be elected for a period of seven years instead of five years, and to be eligible for re-election. In him was vested the power of making all appointments without reference to the legislature. All laws were to be drawn up by him, and he was to have the right of veto on Volksraad resolutions, which body he could summon and dissolve at will. Finally, his Executive Council was to consist of heads of departments appointed by himself, and of one member of the Volksraad. The Volksraad treated this Bill in much the same way as they had dealt with the Permissive Confederation Bill, gave it a casual consideration, and threw it out.

The President, meanwhile, was doing his best to convince the Raad of the danger of the country; that the treasury was empty, whilst duns were pressing, that enemies were threatening on every side, and, finally, that Her Majesty's Special Commissioner was encamped within a thousand yards of them, watching their deliberations with some interest. He showed them that it was impossible at once to scorn reform and reject friendly offers, that it was doubtful if anything could save them, but that if they took no steps they were certainly lost as a nation. The "Fathers of the land," however, declined to dance to the President's piping. Then he took a bolder line. He told them that a guilty nation never can evade the judgment that follows its steps. He asked them "conscientiously to advise the people not obstinately to refuse a union with a powerful Government. He could not advise them to refuse such a union. . . . He did not believe that a new constitution would save them; for as little as the old constitution had brought them to ruin, so little would a new constitution bring salvation. . . . If the citizens of England had behaved towards the Crown as the burghers of this State had behaved to their Government, England would never have stood so long as she had." He pointed out to them their hopeless financial position. "To-day," he said, "a bill for 1100 pounds was laid before me for signature; but I would sooner have cut off my right hand than sign that paper--(cheers)--for I have not the slightest ground to expect that, when that bill becomes due, there will be a penny to pay it with." And finally, he exhorted them thus: "Let them make the best of the situation, and get the best terms they possibly could; let them agree to join their hands to those of their brethren in the south, and then from

the Cape to the Zambesi there would be one great people. Yes, there was something grand in that, grander even than their idea of a Republic, something which ministered to their national feeling--(cheers)--and would this be so miserable? Yes, this would be miserable for those who would not be under the law, for the rebel and the revolutionist, but welfare and prosperity for the men of law and order."

These powerful words form a strong indictment against the Republic, and from them there can be little doubt that President Burgers was thoroughly convinced of the necessity and wisdom of the Annexation. It is interesting to compare them, and many other utterances of his made at this period, with the opinions he expresses in the posthumous document recently published, in which he speaks somewhat jubilantly of the lessons taught us on Laing's Nek and Majuba by such "an inherently weak people as the Boers," and points to them as striking instances of retribution. In this document he attributes the Annexation to the desire to advance English supremacy in South Africa, and to lay hold of the way to Central South Africa. It is, however, noticeable that he does not in any way indicate how it could have been averted, and the State continue to exist; and he seems all along to feel that his case is a weak one, for in explaining, or attempting to explain, why he had never defended himself from the charges brought against him in connection with the Annexation, he says: "Had I not endured in silence, had I not borne patiently all the accusations, but out of selfishness or fear told the plain truth of the case, the Transvaal would never have had the consideration it has now received from Great Britain. However unjust the

Annexation was, my self-justification would have exposed the Boers to such an extent, and the state of the country in such a way, that it would have deprived them both of the sympathy of the world and the consideration of the English politicians." In other words, "If I had told the truth about things as I should have been obliged to do to justify myself, there would have been no more outcry about the Annexation, because the whole world, even the English Radicals, would have recognised how necessary it was, and what a fearful state the country was in."

But to let that pass, it is evident that President Burgers did not take the same view of the Annexation in 1877 as he did in 1881, and indeed his speeches to the Volksraad would read rather oddly printed in parallel columns with his posthumous statement. The reader would be forced to one of two conclusions, either on one of the two occasions he is saying what he does not mean, or he must have changed his mind. As I believe him to have been an honest man, I incline to the latter supposition; nor do I consider it so very hard to account for, taking into consideration his natural Dutch proclivities. In 1877 Burgers is the despairing head of a State driving rapidly to ruin, if not to actual extinction, when the strong hand of the English Government is held out to him. What wonder that he accepts it gladly on behalf of his country, which is by its help brought into a state of greater prosperity than it has ever before known? In 1881 the wheel has gone round, and great events have come about whilst he lies dying. The enemies of the Boers have been destroyed, the powers of the Zulus and Secocoeni are no more;

the country has prospered under a healthy rule, and its finances have been restored. More,--glad tidings have come from Mid-Lothian, to the "rebel and the revolutionist," whose hopes were flagging, and eloquent words have been spoken by the new English Dictator that have aroused a great rebellion. And, to crown all, English troops have suffered one massacre and three defeats, and England sues for peace from the South African peasant, heedless of honour or her broken word, so that the prayer be granted. With such events before him, that dying man may well have found cause to change his opinion. Doubtless the Annexation was wrong, since England disowns her acts; and may not that dream about the great South African Republic come true after all? Has not the pre-eminence of the Englishman received a blow from which it can never recover, and is not his control over Boers and natives irredeemably weakened? And must he,--Burgers,--go down to posterity as a Dutchman who
tried to forward the interests of the English party? No, doubtless the Annexation was wrong; but it has done good, for it has brought about the downfall of the English: and we will end the argument in the very words of his last public utterance, with which he ends his statement: "South Africa gained more from this, and has made a larger step forward in the march of freedom than most people can conceive."

Who shall say that he is wrong? the words of dying men are sometimes prophetic! South Africa has made a great advance towards the "freedom" of a Dutch Republic.

This has been a digression, but I hope not an uninteresting one. To return--on the 1st March, Sir T. Shepstone met the Executive Council, and told them that in his opinion there was now but one remedy to be adopted, and that was that the Transvaal should be united with English Colonies of South Africa under one head, namely the Queen, saying at the same time that the only thing now left to the Republic was to make the best arrangements it could for the future benefit of its inhabitants, and to submit to that which he saw to be, and every thinking man saw to be, inevitable. So soon as this information was officially communicated to the Raad, for a good proportion of its members were already acquainted with it unofficially, it flew from a state of listless indifference into vigorous and hasty action. The President was censured, and a Committee was appointed to consider and report upon the situation, which reported in favour of the adoption of Burgers' new constitution. Accordingly, the greatest part of this measure, which had been contemptuously rejected a few days before, was adopted almost without question, and Mr. Paul Kruger was appointed Vice-President. On the following day, a very drastic treason law was passed, borrowed from the Statute book of the Orange Free State, which made all public expression of opinion, if adverse to the Government, or in any way supporting the Annexation party, high treason. This done, the Assembly prorogued itself until--October 1881.

During and after the sitting of the Raad, rumours arose that the Chief Secocoeni's signature to the treaty of peace, ratified by that body, had been obtained by misrepresentation. As ratified, this treaty consisted

of three articles, according to which Secocoeni consented, first to become a subject of the Republic, and obey the laws of the country; secondly, to agree to a certain restricted boundary line and, thirdly, to pay 2000 head of cattle; which, considering he had captured quite 5000 head, was not exorbitant.

Towards the end of February a written message was received from Secocoeni by Sir T. Shepstone, dated after the signing of the supposed treaty. The original, which was written in Sisutu, was a great curiosity. The following is a correct translation:--

"For Myn Heer Sheepstone,--I beg you, Chief, come help me, the Boers are killing me, and I don't know the reasons why they should be angry with me; Chief, I beg you come with Myn Heer Merensky.--I am Sikukuni."

This message was accompanied by a letter from Mr. Merensky, a well-known and successful missionary, who had been for many years resident in Secocoeni's country, in which he stated that he heard on very good authority that Secocoeni had distinctly refused to agree to that article of the treaty by which he became a subject of the State. He adds that he cannot remain "silent while such tricks are played."

Upon this information, Sir T. Shepstone wrote to President Burgers, stating that "if the officer in whom you have placed confidence has

withheld any portion of the truth from you, especially so serious a portion of it, he is guilty of a wrong towards you personally, as well as towards the Government, because he has caused you to assume an untenable position," and suggesting that a joint commission should be despatched to Secocoeni, to thoroughly sift the question in the interest of all concerned. This suggestion was after some delay agreed to, and a commission was appointed, consisting of Mr. Van Gorkom, a Hollander, and Mr. Holtshausen, a member of the Executive Council, on behalf of the Transvaal Government, and Mr. Osborn, R.M., and Captain Clarke, R.A., on behalf of the Commissioner, whom I accompanied as Secretary.

At Middelburg the native Gideon who acted as interpreter between Commandant Ferreira, C.M.G. (the officer who negotiated the treaty on behalf of the Boer Government), and Secocoeni was examined, and also two natives, Petros and Jeremiah, who were with him, but did not actually interpret. All these men persisted that Secocoeni had positively refused to become a subject of the Republic, and only consented to sign the treaty on the representations of Commandant Ferreira that it would only be binding, as regards to the two articles about the cattle and the boundary line.

The Commission then proceeded to Secocoeni's town, accompanied by a fresh set of interpreters, and had a long interview with Secocoeni. The chief's Prime Minister or "mouth," Makurupiji, speaking in his presence, and on his behalf and making use of the pronoun "I" before all the assembled headmen of the tribe, gave an account of the interview between

Commandant Ferreira in the presence of that gentleman, who accompanied the commission and Secocoeni, in almost the same words as had been used by the interpreters at Middelburg. He distinctly denied having consented to become a subject of the Republic or to stand under the law, and added that he feared he "had touched the feather to" (signed) things that he did not know of in the treaty. Commandant Ferreira then put some questions, but entirely failed to shake the evidence; on the contrary, he admitted by his questions that Secocoeni had not consented to become a subject of the Republic. Secocoeni had evidently signed the piece of paper under the impression that he was acknowledging his liability to pay 2000 head of cattle, and fixing a certain portion of his boundary line, and on the distinct understanding that he was not to become a subject of the State.

Now it was the Secocoeni war that had brought the English Mission into the country, and if it could be shown that the Secocoeni war had come to a successful termination, it would go far towards helping the Mission out again. To this end, it was necessary that the Chief should declare himself a subject of the State, and thereby, by implication acknowledge himself to have been a rebel, and admit his defeat. All that was required was a signature, and that once obtained the treaty was published and submitted to the Raad for confirmation, without a whisper being heard of the conditions under which this ignorant Basutu was induced to sign. Had no Commission visited Secocoeni, this treaty would afterwards have been produced against him in its entirety. Altogether, the history of the Secocoeni Peace Treaty does not reassure one as

to the genuineness of the treaties which the Boers are continually producing, purporting to have been signed by native chiefs, and as a general rule presenting the State with great tracts of country in exchange for a horse or a few oxen. However fond the natives may be of their Boer neighbours, such liberality can scarcely be genuine. On the other hand, it is so easy to induce a savage to sign a paper, or even, if he is reticent, to make a cross for him, and once made, as we all know, litera scripa manet, and becomes title to the lands.

During the Secocoeni investigation, affairs in the Transvaal were steadily drifting towards anarchy. The air was filled with rumours; now it was reported that an outbreak was imminent amongst the English population at the Gold Fields, who had never forgotten Von Schlickmann's kind suggestion that they should be "subdued;" now it was said that Cetywayo had crossed the border, and might shortly be expected at Pretoria; now that a large body of Boers were on their road to shoot the Special Commissioner, his twenty-five policemen and Englishmen generally, and so on.

Meanwhile, Paul Kruger and his party were not letting the grass grow under their feet, but worked public feeling with great vigour, with the double object of getting Paul made President and ridding themselves of the English. Articles in his support were printed in the well-known Dutch paper "Die Patriot," published in the Cape Colony, which are so typical of the Boers and of the only literature that has the slightest influence over them, that I will quote a few extracts from one of them.

After drawing a very vivid picture of the wretched condition of the country as compared to what it was when the Kafirs had "a proper respect" for the Boers, before Burgers came into power, the article proceeds to give the cause of this state of affairs. "God's word," it says, "gives us the solution. Look at Israel, while the people have a godly king, everything is prosperous, but under a godless prince the land retrogrades, and the whole of the people must suffer. Read Leviticus, chapter 26, with attention, &c. In the day of the Voortrekkers (pioneers), a handful of men chased a thousand Kafirs and made them run; so also in the Free State War (Deut. xxxii. 30; Jos. xxiii. 10; Lev. xxvi. 8). But mark, now when Burgers became President, he knows no Sabbath, he rides through the land in and out of town on Sunday, he knows not the church and God's service (Lev. xxvi. 2-3) to the scandal of pious people. And he formerly was a priest too. And what is the consequence? No harvest (Lev. xxvi. 16), an army of 6,000 men runs because one man falls (Lev. xxvi. 17, &c.) What is now the remedy?" The remedy proves to be Paul Kruger, "because there is no other candidate. Because our Lord clearly points him out to be the man, for why is there no other candidate? Who arranged it this way?" Then follows a rather odd argument in favour of Paul's election, "Because he himself (P. Kruger) acknowledges in his own reply that he is incompetent, but that all his ability is from our Lord. Because he is a warrior. Because he is a Boer." Then Paul Kruger, the warrior and the Boer, is compared to Joan of Arc, "a simple Boer girl who came from behind the sheep." The Burghers of Transvaal are exhorted to acknowledge the hand of the Lord,

and elect Paul Kruger, or look for still heavier punishment. (Lev. xxvi. 18 et seq.) Next the "Patriot" proceeds to give a bit of advice to "our candidate, Paul Kruger." He is to deliver the land from the Kafirs. "The Lord has given you the heart of a warrior, arise and drive them," a bit of advice quite suited to his well-known character. But this chosen vessel was not to get all the loaves and fishes; on the contrary, as soon as he had fulfilled his mission of "driving" the Kafirs, he was to hand over his office to a "good" president. The article ends thus: "If the Lord wills to use you now to deliver this land from its enemies, and a day of peace and prosperity arises again, and you see that you are not exactly the statesman to further govern the Republic, then it will be your greatest honour to say, 'Citizens, I have delivered you from the enemy, I am no statesman, but now you have peace and time to choose and elect a good President.'"

An article such as the above is instructive reading as showing the low calibre of the minds that are influenced by it. Yet such writings and sermons have more power among the Boers than any other arguments, appealing as they do to the fanaticism and vanity of their nature, which causes them to believe that the Divinity is continually interfering on their behalf at the cost of other people. It will be noticed that the references given are all to the Old Testament, and nearly all refer to acts of blood.

These doctrines were not, however, at all acceptable to Burgers' party, or the more enlightened members of the community, and so bitter did the

struggle of rival opinions become that there is very little doubt that had the country not been annexed, civil war would have been added to its other calamities. Meanwhile the natives were from day to day becoming more restless, and messengers were constantly arriving at the Special Commissioner's camp, begging that their tribe might be put under the Queen, and stating that they would fight rather than submit any longer to the Boers.

At length on the 9th April, Sir T. Shepstone informed the Government of the Republic that he was about to declare the Transvaal British territory. He told them that he had considered and reconsidered his determination, but that he could see no possible means within the State by which it could free itself from the burdens that were sinking it to destruction, adding that if he could have found such means he would certainly not have hidden them from the Government. This intimation was received in silence, though all the later proceedings with reference to the Annexation were in reality carried out in concert with the Authorities of the Republic. Thus on the 13th March the Government submitted a paper of ten questions to Sir T. Shepstone as regards the future condition of the Transvaal under English rule, whether the debts of the State would be guaranteed, &c. To these questions replies were given which were on the whole satisfactory to the Government. As these replies formed the basis of the proclamation guarantees, it is not necessary to enter into them.

It was further arranged by the Republican Government that a formal

protest should be entered against the Annexation, which was accordingly prepared and privately shown to the Special Commissioner. The annexation proclamation was also shown to President Burgers, and a paragraph eliminated at his suggestion. In fact, the Special Commissioner and the President, together with most of his Executive, were quite at one as regards the necessity of the proclamation being issued, their joint endeavours being directed to the prevention of any disturbance, and to secure a good reception for the change.

At length, after three months of inquiry and negotiation, the proclamation of annexation was on the 12th of April 1877 read by Mr. Osborn, accompanied by some other gentlemen of Sir T. Shepstone's staff. It was an anxious moment for all concerned. To use the words of the Special Commissioner in his despatch home on the subject, "Every effort had been made during the previous fortnight by, it is said, educated Hollanders, and who had but lately arrived in the country to rouse the fanaticism of the Boers and induce them to offer 'bloody' resistance to what it was known I intended to do. The Boers were appealed to in the most inflammatory language by printed manifestoes and memorials; . . . it was urged that I had but a small escort which could easily be overpowered." In a country so full of desperadoes and fanatical haters of anything English, it was more than possible than though such an act would have been condemned by the general sense of the country, a number of men could easily be found who would think they were doing a righteous act in greeting the "annexationists" with an ovation of bullets. I do not mean that the anxiety was personal, because I do not think the

members of that small party set any higher value on their lives than other people, but it was absolutely necessary for the success of the act itself, and for the safety of the country, that not a single shot should be fired. Had that happened it is probable that the whole country would have been involved in confusion and bloodshed, the Zulus would have broken in, and the Kafirs would have risen; in fact, to use Cetywayo's words, "the land would have burned with fire."

It will therefore be easily understood what an anxious hour that was both for the Special Commissioner sitting up at Government House, and for his Staff down on the Market Square, and how thankful they were when the proclamation was received with hearty cheers by the crowd. Mr. Burgers' protest, which was read immediately afterwards, was received in respectful silence.

And thus the Transvaal Territory passed for a while into the great family of the English Colonies. I believe that the greatest political opponent of the act will bear tribute to the very remarkable ability with which it was carried out. When the variety and number of the various interests that had to be conciliated, the obstinate nature of the individuals who had to be convinced, as well as the innate hatred of the English name and ways which had to be overcome to carry out this act successfully, are taken into consideration: together with a thousand other matters, the neglect of any one of which would have sufficed to make failure certain, it will be seen what tact and skill, and knowledge of human nature were required to execute so difficult a task. It must be

remembered that no force was used, and that there never was any threat of force. The few troops that were to enter the Transvaal were four weeks' march from Pretoria at the time. There was nothing whatsoever to prevent the Boers putting a summary stop to the proceedings of the Commissioner if they had thought fit.

That Sir Theophilus played a bold and hazardous game nobody will deny, but, like most players who combine boldness with coolness of head and justice of cause, he won; and, without shedding a single drop of blood, or even confiscating an acre of land, and at no cost, annexed a great country, and averted a very serious war. That same country four years later cost us a million of money, the loss of nearly a thousand men killed and wounded, and the ruin of many more confiding thousands, to surrender. It is true, however, that nobody can accuse the retrocession of having been conducted with judgment or ability--very much the contrary.

There can be no more ample justification of the necessity of the issue of the annexation proclamation than the proclamation itself--

First, it touches on the Sand River Convention of 1852, by which independence was granted to the State, and shows that the "evident objects and inciting motives" in granting such guarantee were to promote peace, free-trade and friendly intercourse, in the hope and belief that the Republic "would become a flourishing and self-sustaining State, a source of strength and security to neighbouring European communities,

and a point from which Christianity and civilisation might rapidly spread toward Central Africa." It goes on to show how these hopes have been disappointed, and how that "increasing weakness in the State itself on the one side, and more than corresponding growth of real strength and confidence among the native tribes on the other have produced their natural and inevitable consequence . . . that after more or less of irritating conflict with aboriginal tribes to the north, there commenced about the year 1867 gradual abandonment to the natives in that direction of territory, settled by burghers of the Transvaal in well-built towns and villages and on granted farms."

It goes on to show that "this decay of power and ebb of authority in the north, is being followed by similar processes in the south under yet more dangerous circumstances. People of this State residing in that direction have been compelled within the last three months, at the bidding of native chiefs and at a moment's notice, to leave their farms and homes, their standing crops . . . all to be taken possession of by natives, but that the Government is more powerless than ever to vindicate its assumed rights or to resist the declension that is threatening its existence." It then recites how all the other colonies and communities of South Africa have lost confidence in the State, how it is in a condition of hopeless bankruptcy, and its commerce annihilated whilst the inhabitants are divided into factions, and the Government has fallen into "helpless paralysis." How also the prospect of the election of a new President, instead of being looked forward to with hope, would, in the opinion of all parties, be the signal for civil

war, anarchy, and bloodshed. How that this state of things affords the very strongest temptation to the great neighbouring native powers to attack the country, a temptation that they were only too ready and anxious to yield to, and that the State was in far too feeble a condition to repel such attacks, from which it had hitherto only been saved by the repeated representations of the Government of Natal. The next paragraphs I will quote as they stand, for they sum up the reasons for the Annexation.

"That the Secocoeni war, which would have produced but little effect on a healthy constitution, has not only proved suddenly fatal to the resources and reputation of the Republic, but has shown itself to be a culminating point in the history of South Africa, in that a Makatee or Basutu tribe, unwarlike and of no account in Zulu estimation, successfully withstood the strength of the State, and disclosed for the first time to the native powers outside the Republic, from the Zambesi to the Cape, the great change that had taken place in the relative strength of the white and black races, that this disclosure at once shook the prestige of the white man in South Africa, and placed every European community in peril, that this common danger has caused universal anxiety, has given to all concerned the right to investigate its cause, and to protect themselves from its consequences, and has imposed the duty upon those who have the power to shield enfeebled civilisation from the encroachments of barbarism and inhumanity." It proceeds to point out that the Transvaal will be the first to suffer from the results of its own policy, and that it is for every reason

perfectly impossible for Her Majesty's Government to stand by and see a friendly white State ravaged, knowing that its own possessions will be the next to suffer. That H. M. Government, being persuaded that the only means to prevent such a catastrophe would be by the annexation of the country, and, knowing that this was the wish of a large proportion of the inhabitants of the Transvaal, the step must be taken. Next follows the formal annexation.

Together with the proclamation, an address was issued by Sir T. Shepstone to the burghers of the State, laying the facts before them in a friendly manner, more suited to their mode of thought than it was possible to do in a formal proclamation. This document, the issue of which was one of those touches that ensured the success of the Annexation, was a powerful summing up in colloquial language of the arguments used in the proclamation strengthened by quotations from the speeches of the President. It ends with these words: "It remains only for me to beg of you to consider and weigh what I have said calmly and without undue prejudice. Let not mere feeling or sentiment prevail over your judgment. Accept what Her Majesty's Government intends shall be, and what you will soon find from experience, is a blessing not only to you and your children, but to the whole of South Africa through you, and I believe that I speak these words to you as a friend from my heart."

Two other proclamations were also issued, one notifying the assumption of the office of Administrator of the Government by Sir T. Shepstone, and the other repealing the war-tax, which was doubtless an unequal and

oppressive impost.

I have in the preceding pages stated all the principal grounds of the Annexation and briefly sketched the history of that event. In the next chapter I propose to follow the fortunes of the Transvaal under British Rule.