

# The Canadian Engineer

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## The Canadian Engineer.

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### SOUTH AFRICA, ITS PEOPLE AND TRADE.

#### CAUSES OF THE BOER WAR.

##### ARTICLE III.

To give an idea of all that has been suffered by the Uitlander population of the Transvaal would be impossible in so brief a sketch as this, but a few of the grievances may be stated. First stands the franchise. As already mentioned, when the internal independence of the country was granted in 1881, it was, of course, believed that all white races would be treated alike, and Kruger, in the most distinct manner, promised this. The franchise was at first to be given on a property qualification or upon one year's residence; but in order to cut off those who came in after the annexation, the Volksraad (Parliament) afterwards changed this to five years, and then when time passed by and the five years' citizens looked to the time of enfranchisement, the law was again amended so that a man had to be a constant resident in the country for fourteen years. When the conditions were looked into, it was seen that even when the fourteen years should have elapsed, the Uitlander would not get his vote, because the claim had to be based on the field cornet's records, and in nine cases out of ten, there were no records of the registration. In many cases the field cornet could not read or write, and in cases where he could, there was a temptation to neglect the duty. In a majority of cases he

collected the taxes without making any returns, so that the omission of the names gave no record of the fraud, thus serving the double purpose of concealing his stealings and depriving the Uitlander of his vote. But even if this were honestly carried out, the Uitlander was further discouraged by the provision that he should first have to renounce allegiance to his own country, remaining a political eunuch for these fourteen years, and then when this time expired, he would have to get the recommendation of a majority of the burghers of his district (whom he knows to be hostile), and still after that his application is liable to the veto of the President and Executive. We see the pitfalls so artfully prepared, in order that a man would certainly fall in one if he escaped another. Can it be wondered at that the High Commissioner and the British Government wanted to make sure of the details of the recent proposals made by Kruger at and since the Bloemfontein conference? As President Kruger is a great reader of the Bible, it would be curious to know what he would have to say to the franchise provisions laid down in the 47th chapter of Ezekiel, verses 21 to 23? The Montreal "Witness," in pointing out this principle of Old Testament law, remarks that "the most curious thing in Boer legislation is that they should by special enactment exclude from participation in the land and liberty they enjoy, the very people to whom they are indebted for the Scriptures they prize so highly, and who, even before the Babylonian captivity, extended to the stranger, who came among them, the benefit of the ancient ordinances. This instance, however, only goes to confirm the estimate made of the Boers by Dr. Livingstone, who described them as narrow, stupid and cruel."

The Boer Government not only excludes both Jews and Roman Catholics from the franchise, but even from working in the civil service. If it is found out that a railway, post office, or other civil servant is a Jew or Catholic, he is quietly but speedily dismissed, and a Boer, Hollander, or German appointed to take his place. The Germans and Hollanders would, however, not be called in if it were not that very few Boers are sufficiently educated to fill these places.

By the trickery and breach of faith before described, the voting-power was kept, as before, in the hands of the Dutch burghers. As not one out of a thousand of the Boers of the rural districts had enough education to fill civic offices of responsibility, many Englishmen held public posts for a time after 1881, but one by one these were dismissed and Hollanders and Germans imported to take their places, until British subjects were almost as completely shut out from all share in the civic life of the country, as they were from political influence. One of the first fruits of this oligarchic rule was the system of plunder by concession. Each session of the Volksraad brought a horde of speculators, who purchased by bribery the sole right to manufacture or sell this or that article in the Transvaal. These mono-