

Mr. Morley on the War

Arbroath, Scotland, Nov. 1. The Right Hon. Jol. Morley, M. P., addressed the first two meetings of his constituents in the Town Hall, Arbroath, to-night. Provost Grant presided, and there was a crowded attendance.

LOOK AT SOUTH AFRICA ITSELF.

Two years ago we saw there a flourishing, self-governing colony of our own — the whole colony of the Cape with two races — the Dutch and the British — living side by side with constantly strengthening ties of amity.

ONE WAR HAS GROWN INTO TWO WARS.

A war against the enemy outside our borders has added to itself a civil war within our own borders in the Cape Colony (hear, hear).

A FESTERING WOUND EATING INTO THE FLESH

in Cape Colony and in South Africa, and it is eating into ourelves also (cheers). Well, that is an image, gentlemen, that I much recommend to your consideration.

A PERILOUS QUESTION—

whether there is any candid man in Scotland this day who will say of the present condition of the ga that if the present conduct of things could have been foreseen two

years ago, when I stood on this platform, whether that war would have been permitted, whether the opinion of this country would not have said: "Let us move slowly, let us be quite sure as to all the conditions of the struggle on which you invite us to embark," and if they had seen such a horrible, hideous transformation as I have sketched for you in bare outline, is there an honest, a candid man in Scotland who would let us go on with the war? (Cheers). Gentlemen I freely admit the patriotic motives and intentions of His Majesty's Government, and I wish they would be a little more generous and fair in admitting that we, who disapprove and dislike and see the mischief of the course that has been followed — that we in all are animated by motives as loyal and patriotic as their own (cheers).

A SERIES OF INVOLUNTARY DECEPTIONS,

which were imposed first of all upon the Government themselves, and then, alas which were imposed upon the people of this country. (A Voice—"Are they involuntary?") Well, then I give them the benefit of the doubt (laughter). We were told the other day — and let me say at this point I have never sought — on the contrary, I have carefully avoided making this great controversy and discussion, so pregnant with enormous issues, not only to this island, but to the whole Empire — I have always endeavored to avoid making that in any sense a personal, or even party issue.

THE GOVERNMENT ADMIT

indeed, frankly admit, that they did not foresee the length of the war. They did not profess, as we are told, to foresee the future. They admit their want of knowledge — and what an admission it is — they admit their want of knowledge into the real condition of things in South Africa. What an admission it is! They drifted along to the edge of the black, unfathomable abyss of war, in ignorance of where it was they were drifting to (cheers). Whose fault was it? As I have said, in so far as I have interposed in this controversy I have been careful to avoid any reference to particular persons; but I am bound to say that whenever it is foreseen what a task it was which they were asking this country with a light heart to undertake,

I AM BOUND TO NAME LORD MILNER.

Is not this admission by the Government made the other day, is not this admission that they were ignorant, this admission of their unpreparedness, is it not a condemnation not only of them, but of their agent on the spot whom now we are hidden implicitly to trust? (Laughter.) And I am sorry to say, there is in our own ranks a number of men of great eminence who constituted themselves a kind of volunteer bodyguard to Lord Milner. (A voice—"Office-seekers!") Five or six years ago there was an agent on the spot, Lord Rosemead, who knew South Africa, who knew

it well, who knew all the forces at work, who knew all the perils that surrounded any South Africa question. Well, when Lord Rosemead received from the Colonial Office a despatch of a menacing character to President Kruger, and when he was instructed to convey the language of the despatch to President Kruger, Lord Rosemead, who knew Africa well, begged to be excused (cheers). He steadily declined to be the instrument of either of the two racial parties in South Africa, and he declined to be the voice of the prejudices, the passions and the antipathies of one of those two parties (hear, hear). There is my test of an agent on the spot. Well, I am told you must regard the man on the spot. Well, if the man on the spot has shown himself always right, I will assuredly bow to him with the utmost deference; but if he has

LANDED US IN THE CATASTROPHE

— for I call it nothing else, and I will give you some reasons by and by for using that high word—when he has landed us in a catastrophe, bodyguard or no bodyguard, I, for one, will not consent to see the South African situation through the eyes of Lord Milner, and those eyes alone (loud cheers). Contrast the firm impartiality of Lord Rosemead with the despatches in which Sir Alfred Milner exhorted and besought his Government, above all things, not to neglect the opinion of others who were not for shrinking from extreme measures, and who warned the Government on no account, if they valued that opinion, to let the proceedings drag. Gentlemen, there is a singular circumstance about all these things which interests all of us who are observers of human nature. It is this — it is the assumption that those who have made the most mistakes and the most miscalculations in the past are the people who are most confident that they must be right as to the future (laughter and cheers). I suppose it is some new theory, or it is an old theory, of human character, and human life, that everybody is bound to be right some time in his life, and that if you are wrong long enough that is a very good preliminary for a claim to infallibility (laughter). The Government are in that position. It is true, they say, that wherever our foresight and our knowledge could be tested, we have shown blindness—short-sightedness, at all events, and ignorance. It follows from this, they say, that where we cannot be tested in the future, you are bound to trust us implicitly, and without asking any questions (laughter). Well, this is

VERY SINGULAR LOGIC

(laughter). It was said a day or two ago in Edinburgh, and I call your attention to this because you and I are involved. It was said that the war would have been over after Lord Roberts got into Pretoria, but for what? The action of certain misguided persons (laughter), that is to say the electors of Arbroath and the member for Arbroath, who led the Boers to believe that if they held on we should grow tired of the struggle. Well, now if that proposition isn't a mere platform jibe — and from the position of the speaker I won't suppose that for a moment — it is not an empty platform gibe, it only shows this assertion that the prolongation of the war is due to people like us. I say that that shows, if it is more than a gibe, ignorance of the position of the problem we have to solve as deep as anything that has been said in the course of this affair (cheers). I would like to read you a few lines from an interesting letter that appeared in The Times newspaper the other day describing the condition of the Boer prisoners in Abhednugar: "At any hour of the day you may walk into the camp at Abhednugar and see hundreds of men (or Boer prisoners) sitting or lying vacantly upon their beds, men in the prime of life, loyal farmers, shopkeepers, merchants, condemned to helpless inactivity by stubborn fellows, their compatriots in the field. The severity" — this is the point I call your attention to — of our measures is said to have made surrender impossible. It is generally argued that if after General Prinsloo's surrender the prisoners had been sent to their homes the war would have ended. The severer measures then adopted marked the turning point in this struggle (hear, hear), and

THAT POLICY INAUGURATED BY FARM BURNING

and culminating in the proclamation the other day has alienated the survivors beyond all hope of settlement by peace." It isn't, then you here, it isn't men like me who are responsible, as they were told the other day in Edinburgh, it isn't we who are responsible for the prolongation of the war, and all evidence from elsewhere confirms this. It is our own measures, it is our own severity (hear, hear), our ill-timed, ill-calculated, short-sighted severity — it is that that has prolonged the war, not any feeble words of mine, applauded by you (cheers). Ladies and gentlemen, upon that point, the point of severity, I pass most unwillingly. There is no man in England or Scotland to whom it could be more distasteful to dwell upon these

things than it is to me — but I pass most unwillingly to notice by way of illustration of what I think has prolonged this deadly mischief one or two of the incidents that have marred this struggle. It will be a very happy day when we can blot out of sight and blot out of memory these incidents to which I am going to draw your attention for a single moment. I am not going to dwell upon this miserable — I am not going to dwell upon this extraordinary —

THE UNUTTERABLE MEANNESS OF SUCH MEASURES,

as putting upon half-rations the wives and the children of the men who were still fighting in the field (hear, hear). I am not going to dwell upon the putting upon the enemies of military trains civilians who had done no wrong and committed no offence, but whose presence here it was thought might prevent the fighting Boers outside from wrecking those trains. Well, this is justified because it is said the fighting Boers are brigands and ruffians and bandits. Well, but I would like to ask you now in Arbroath here to consider whether because somebody else is a bandit and brigand and ruffian it is a very just thing to put me, who am not a bandit, brigand or ruffian, upon the engine of a train and jeopardise my life. But then suppose the train wrecker is a brigand and a bandit, I do not believe he will much care if a respectable man like myself is put upon an engine and driven through those dangerous spots (laughter). But who are the men who are put on the trains — I am not sure whether it is abandoned or not, but suppose it is not abandoned — who are the men who are put on the trains? They are the men who would not fight on command. Therefore the fighting Boers will not care a straw for those men come to grief by the wrecking of trains ("Quite true.") Take these three points, gentlemen, into your mind and if anybody here is inclined to violence for its own sake, for any exhibition of force, putting a peaceable and neutral citizen on a train in danger, keep these three points in your minds and say whether you do not think they are rather futile. There was the ignoble practice of flogging lads. "They put respectable men on to the engines. They dealt with various people in various ways. This is an heroic exploit. I cannot dwell on such trumpery as that; but now I come to another set of incidents — I mean the compulsion upon the neighbors, friends, kinsfolk of men condemned rightly or wrongly to capital punishment — the compulsion of these men to hear the sentence upon their friends kinsmen, and neighbors' read, and then afterwards to go and

SEE THE GHASTLY SENTENCE CARRIED OUT.

I confess I do not believe such a proceeding as that has been adopted by any civilized community or Government for many a long generation. Think what it is that men are called upon — some fellow-prisoners from their cells, others from their homes in the town — they are called upon to go out in the morning and actually to behold as a deterrent what I think must be one of the most dreadful spectacles which can wring the heart of a man — to see his friend and his neighbor and his kinsmen launched with violence and ignominy into the hangman's pit. Gentlemen, when we read of these things, and in the papers that report them it is said: "From all that can be gathered there is no doubt that the execution impressed the beholders to an extent which will never be forgotten." It will never be forgotten (cheers). The things that were done in

THE NEW IRELAND THAT YOU ARE BUILDING UP

in South Africa are more like what was done in the old Ireland in the repression of the Rebellion of 1798. Some of you ask me if the Government abhor all this. I don't doubt they abhor it for a moment. Why, even some of our Liberal friends, who don't see these transactions quite as we do, even they admit that such proceedings are not so dignified as they ought to be (hear, hear). Gentlemen, I will not argue about the dignity of it. I

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