

INTRODUCTION.

I find myself to-night in a position which calls for some explanation. The platform is not my sphere, nor have I any inclination for it; much less do I presume to be here by reason of any weight which my opinions may carry. I stand before you, against my own wish, from a profound sense of duty, and I beg your indulgence in the performance of a task which I would gladly leave in abler hands.

Ever since hostilities broke out in South Africa I have been impressed with the great importance of a proper understanding of the subject by the people of Canada, and particularly on this border, where, naturally, we are more or less influenced by the views entertained by our neighbors across the river, and they in turn to some extent draw conclusions from what they see and hear on this side. As it became more and more manifest that misconception existed in both communities, I made an effort to induce Dr. Parkin, (Principal of Upper Canada College, and perhaps second to none as an authority upon Imperial subjects), whose eloquent voice not long ago was heard in this hall, to pay us another visit. I used every argument I could command to persuade him to come; but he replied that it was absolutely impossible for him to get away.

For months I have been studying the subject for my own satisfaction, and among other things I have obtained the British Blue Books thereon. These, as many of you know, are the official record, containing the despatches on both sides. They are absolutely non-partisan, because the statements and arguments of the Transvaal are printed with the same fullness and accuracy as those of England. They are consequently free from that bias which is apt to appear, however little intended, in any other narrative.

In the course of conversation a number of my friends became aware that I possessed and had diligently read these books. Many of them found therein information entirely new to them; several confessed themselves much strengthened thereby in their previous views; and others that serious doubts formerly entertained were entirely removed, to their great peace of mind.

A number of these acquaintances represented to me that it was in my power to perform a public service by making known in a more general way what I had communicated to them privately. If that be true, as I hope it is, I should be lacking in patriotism if I hesitated to assume the task because it would be more agreeable to my feelings to sit in the audience than to stand where I now am.

It may be thought by some of you unnecessary that anything more should be said upon a subject which has already been so much