

Cost of the Boer War

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I.—TO THE BOERS

1. IN MEN

It is always difficult, in fact, impossible, to obtain absolutely correct statistics of the cost of war. There is so much damage wrought by it, both material and moral, which cannot be reckoned. The difficulty is all the greater in even estimating the losses of the enemy, for, unless furnished by themselves, the criteria are wanting.

A Reuter telegram from Pretoria says that, according to an estimate compiled by the Red Cross Identity Depot, which has fulfilled the functions of a casualty office for the Boer forces, the total losses of the latter during the war were:

Killed or died of wounds, 3,700.
Prisoners of war, 32,000 (of whom 700 died).

The total Boer force which has been in the field from first to last was about 75,000.—*Westminster Gazette*.

In addition to these, however, must be reckoned the deaths incurred in that unique method of modern warfare—the Concentration Camps. The Government returns presented to the House of Commons in June, 1902, the last month of the war, show that during the month of May there were, in these camps, in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Natal and Cape Colony, 116,572 men, women and children. In the following month, June, the last month of the war, the numbers stood as follows: Transvaal, 10,442 men, 15,220 women, 17,284 children, total, 42,946; Orange River Colony, 7,417 men, 13,683 women, 14,488 children, total, 35,588; Natal, 4,988 men, 9,835 women, 10,802 children, total, 25,625; and in Cape Colony, 936 men, 2,093 women, 2,418 children, total, 5,447. These totals were respectively 23,783 men, 40,831 women, 44,992 children, making altogether 109,606, of whom 160 (41 men, 46 women and 73 children) died during the month, and were added to the total of 18,897 who had perished in these camps previously; making the whole number of deaths in the Concentration Camps no less than 19,057.

2. IN MATERIAL

The money cost of the war to the Boers it is impossible to calculate. The upkeep of their small army in the field cost, of course, considerably less than that of the British, who, through the quantities of war material which fell into the hands of the Boers, contributed to it largely. An examination of the Transvaal balance-sheets, for as long as they were published, shows that from the time of the Jameson Raid, as was inevitable, considerable sums were spent in preparation for war.

Then, to the material cost must be added the value of the farms, residences, and other buildings burnt and destroyed; of which a Government return shows 634 had been destroyed before the end of January, 1902. There must be included the goldfields on the Rand, which were unquestionably the cause of the invasion, and finally the territories of the two republics, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The Boer Leaders in their appeal, declared, "We are convinced, from personal knowledge, that, during the war, at least 30,000 houses on the farms, besides a number of villages, have been burnt or destroyed by the British. Our dwellings, with the furniture, have been burnt or demolished, our orchards cut down, all agricultural implements broken,

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN DONE WITH THE MONEY

The South African War, it has been officially stated, has cost Great Britain alone no less a sum than £223,000,000. But, including all charges, on both sides, the total cost of the war cannot have been less than £250,000,000. These figures are easily written and pronounced, but how many of us have any adequate conception of what they represent. In order to aid us in forming some idea of this prodigious sum, let us see what we, as a nation, could have done with the money if it were laid out for constructive purposes instead of being spent on destructive warfare.

		£
100	"Garden Cities," or Model Towns, each town containing 1,000 houses, each of the average value of £1,000	100,000,000
2,000,000	Old Age Pensions for the needy and deserving, at £25 a year, or nearly 10s. a week each, 1 year	50,000,000
1,000	Public Parks, at £25,000 each park; 2,500 acres at £100 per acre	25,000,000
50,000	Model Houses, with from 5 to 8 rooms, bathroom and small garden, at £400 each	20,000,000
500,000	Free Allotments of Garden Ground, averaging an acre apiece, at £25 an acre	12,500,000
1,250	Places of Worship, available for philanthropic and instructive purposes during the week, at £10,000 each	12,500,000
100	Model Dwellings or Lodging Houses, for the poor men and women, with a garden to each, at £50,000 each	5,000,000
500	Cottage Hospitals, at £10,000 each	5,000,000
200	Polytechnics or Intermediate Schools, at £25,000 each	5,000,000
100	Public Libraries, at £20,000 each	2,000,000
100	Baths and Wash-houses, at £20,000 each	2,000,000
200	Sets of Almshouses, at £10,000 each	2,000,000
50	Orphan Asylums, at £50,000 each	2,500,000
20	Reformatory Schools, at £50,000 each	1,000,000
2,000	Life Boats, etc., or Fire Brigade Apparatus, at £750 each	1,500,000
100	Floating Hospitals for Sailors, at £10,000 each	1,000,000
10	Sea Bathing Infirmary or Sanatoria, at £100,000 each	1,000,000
1,000	Soup Kitchens, at £1,000 each	1,000,000
20	Asylums and Penitentiaries, at £50,000 each	1,000,000
Total		£250,000,000

Two Hundred and Fifty Millions

This enormous sum may be represented in other ways, which may help the mind to grasp it, e.g.:

A million bank notes packed solidly, like leaves in a book, make a pile over 200 feet high. This sum of 250 millions, if it were packed in £5 Bank of England notes, would make a pile nearly two miles high.

It represents one thousand million days' labor paid for at the rate of 5s. a day. It would allow over 4s. for every man, woman and child on the habitable globe. It would afford a present of £5 16s. 0d. to every person in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, or of £7 13s. 0d. to every person in England and Wales alone.

It would erect and furnish 200 such institutions as the Crystal Palace, near London, costing a million and a quarter each.

It would make 250 light railways, each 100 miles long, at a cost of £10,000 per mile.

It would purchase a new suit of clothes, costing nearly £6 apiece, for every man, woman and child in the United Kingdom (40 million persons).

It would pay the present total annual cost of paupers in the United Kingdom (13½ million pounds) for 18½ years.

mills destroyed, every living animal taken away or killed—nothing alas! remains. The land is a desert. Besides, the war has claimed many a victim, and the land resounds with the weeping of helpless women and orphans." These are the results of all war.

More difficult still to estimate, tho equally real and valuable, would be the "moral damage," notwithstanding the historical sneer of the House of Commons, including such things as nationality, autonomy, liberty, and all that these signify—things which from time immemorial have been the most valued and cherished among mankind. "The people of the two Republics," says the Appeal again, "have sacrificed everything for their independence, and now the struggle is over they stand wholly ruined."

II.—TO THE BRITISH

Here we are on surer ground, the statistics being derivable from the Government returns.

1. IN MEN

A short Parliamentary paper, presented in September, shows it

(a) Number Employed	
Garrison in South Africa on Aug 1, 1899	9,940
Home contingents	337,219
Indian Regiments	18,534
Colonial Troops	30,328
Raised in South Africa	52,414
	448,435

It is stated, however, that the number raised in South Africa is "uncertain."

(b) Actual Losses

The earlier official summary issued monthly by the War Office, which was of more than usual interest, in view of the conclusion of Peace, shows the losses in the Field-Force, South Africa, from the beginning of the campaign up to and including the month of May, to be as follows:

	N.C.O.'s Officers and Men	
Killed in action	518	5,256
Died of wounds	183	1,835
Prisoners who have died in captivity	5	97
Died of disease	339	12,911
Accidental deaths	27	771
Total deaths in South Africa	1,072	20,870
Missing and prisoners (excluding those who have been recovered or have died in captivity)		105
Sent home as invalids	3,116	72,314
Total, South African Field Force	4,188	93,289
		97,477

Hence a total of 97,477 as casualties of one kind or another.

Even without the Colonial and Indian help, Great Britain had provided 337,219 officers and men.

2. IN MONEY

Another Parliamentary Return issued since the close of the war, in one of its tables declares the total of war charges in South Africa to be £222,974,000, or in round numbers two hundred and twenty-three millions. That is, including all charges on both sides, the actual money cost cannot have been less than £250,000,000. Another table shows the proceeds of new taxation from 1900 to 1903 to amount to £76,025,000, the increase in the Income Tax alone supplying £39,377,000 of this amount.

A third table of this Parliamentary Return shows that the total amount borrowed for the war is £159,000,000, which, added to £635,040,965, the amount of the National Debt at the beginning of the period, all payments to the Sinking Fund being, of course, suspended, makes the present amount of the Debt £794,040,965, although a National Debt Return shows that the gross liabilities of the State on March 31, 1902, stood at £768,443,386.

These sums must be further increased by the amounts provided by Parliament "in view of the conclusion of Peace," the total of which is shown by another Return published by the War Office, November 6, 1902, to be £40,250,000.

3. IN "MORAL DAMAGE"

This is, of course, impossible to estimate, although equally real, tangible and appreciable as the money cost, the vast totals of which no imagination can grasp. It is, however, a curious paradox, carrying with it a kind of grim irony, that the moral cost of victory is usually greater for the victor than the vanquished. This is the testimony of history, and, not the least, of recent history.

The simplicity and vigor of the ancient Roman Republic were overcome by the luxury and effeminacy which the Romans brought home from their Eastern conquests; and the Empire itself in turn went down before the barbarians, because of the moral weaknesses which resulted from its own military condition and conquests. A notable illustration within living memory is that of the Franco-Prussian War. The milliards which were wrung from the vanquished nation called out all her strength and promoted rapid recuperation of national vigour, while they proved anything but a strength and blessing to the conquerors who had exacted them.

It is always so. Great as have been the gains in South Africa; the moral price which has been paid for them by the British nation has been unspeakably out of proportion; and some of its most priceless treasures—its prestige, progress and liberty, have been endangered to secure the result. And what result? Neither of the contending parties gained what it set out to win, and neither can claim absolute victory. For both, the war policy has proved a mistake. It is the most recent, and one of the most striking illustrations of the futility of all war.