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The ORIGIN Of The Transvaal Trouble

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The Transvaal question is properly a Dutch question of which the origin is a hundred years old and the scene the whole African region from the Cape to the Zambezi. The Dutch in South Africa first came to that region in 1653, in days when the Netherlands was a great naval and commercial power and when the Dutch East India Company ruled countries which constituted a colonial empire ranking with those of Britain and Spain. They settled upon the skirts of the vast interior and took whatever natives they could capture to work as slaves. They lived under the arbitrary rule of the Dutch East India Company—a government of pure despotism and one under which even the sense of liberal rule as distinct from racial independence seems to have been lost. Murmurs against the exactions of officials, or the assertion of what we should call political rights, entailed confiscation of property, separation from their families, and exile to the Mauritius or some other Dutch penal settlement. From these conditions many tried to *trek* into the interior, as they did later and for very different reasons under British rule. Then came the prolonged struggle which swept around the world at the end of the eighteenth century and found England face to face with a somewhat fluctuating alliance of France under the blood-stained tyranny of Robespierre and Murat or the despotic military power of Napoleon; of Spain, the still powerful champion of Catholicism in its political aspect and absolutism in its Governmental form; of the Dutch with their record of Protestant principles and patriotic love of freedom; and of the United States with its aggressive assertion of democratic and republican belief. The great and varied conflict ended, practically, with British troops in Paris, in Madrid and in Washington, and with the British flag flying over Hindostan, the West Indies, Canada and South Africa.

In 1815 British rule was thus finally proclaimed at the Cape and the oligarchy of Dutch merchants succeeded by what was for a time the military rule of English Governors. It was a strange and difficult population to manage. The peculiar and little understood amalgam of Dutch and French which constitutes the Boer of to-day was in a fair way to completion. The large immigration of French Huguenots in the seventeenth century and of Moravians in the eighteenth century had been mingled with, and merged in the population of Dutch farmers and had lost not only their national characteristics but even their language. It is difficult to imagine to-day that such typical Dutchmen as Sir Henry de Villiers at the Cape and General Joubert in the Transvaal are undoubted descendants of early French set-

NOTE—In an Address before the Toronto St. George's Society Mr. Hopkins embodied the principal portions of this article.

tlers. All around these conquered settlements of an alien people the English Colonists and Governors found the pressure of an immense and hostile native population—hating the Dutch as being aggressive enemies, the originators of slave raids and the oppressive rulers of their own slaves. Gradually British territory extended, colonization from England increased, the rule of the military Governor slackened and constitutional principles developed. But with these progressive changes came restrictions upon the Dutch farmers in their relation to the natives and, finally, the total abolition of slavery.

In this connection the Dutch had, and have always nursed, what might be termed a real historic grievance. A large sum of money had been voted by the Imperial Parliament as compensation to the slave-owners, but it was made payable in Treasury bonds which the ignorant farmers did not understand; which they deemed worthless and consequently sold to speculators for almost nothing. Added to this, in 1834, there was much suffering from one of the constant native wars which have so afflicted South Africa and burdened the Imperial authorities. The general result was that in 1839 there occurred the first great *trek* of Boers. They crossed a large expanse of native territory and poured into Natal, founded Pietermaritzburgh, and after some conflicts with the natives and differences with the British troops and an English representative, proclaimed the Republic of Natalia. England, however, retained and maintained her claims to the region; asserted the doctrine that once a British subject always a British subject; and sent a small expedition to reduce both Boers and natives to order. It was defeated by the Boers in much the fashion of the Majuba Hill of a later time. Then followed anarchy, a larger British expedition and, in 1845, the annexation of the country to Cape Colony by Sir Peregrine Mainland—who had previously served ten years in Upper Canada as our Lieutenant Governor. The second *trek* then took place into what became known as the Orange Free State and the Transvaal or South African Republic. During the next few years these two settlements were the centre and scene of continuous turbulence. The Dutch were without organized government and were first fighting the natives and involving them with the English and then resisting the slightest effort on the part of the latter to restore order or establish government. English settlers came in also and mixed amongst the Boers below the Vaal River and then, in 1854, came the act of Imperial folly which built upon a basis of racial rivalry and prejudice the beginning of constitutional issues making the nominal cause of strife to-day.

The Manchester school of thought had then become dominant in England and the prolific cause of weakness everywhere in British external interests and Imperial rule. To the believers in this principle or party Colonies represented responsibility without profit and extension of territory meant weakness instead of power. Lord John Russell, in 1850, as Prime Minister, told the House of Commons that he "looked forward to the day when the ties (of Colonial Union) would be sundered." Lord Ellenborough, Lord Brougham, Lord Ashburton (of pleasant Canadian memory) Lord St. Vincent, John Bright, Cornwall Lewis, Sir William Molesworth, Robert Lowe, Lord Monk, (afterwards Governor-General of Canada) Richard Cobden and