

CHAPTER I.

Origin and Outbreak of the War.

Origin of the South African Republics—The Orange Free State—Convention of Bloemfontein—The South African Republic—The Sand River Convention—Early History of Boers in Transvaal—Formation of State in 1864—Affairs under Presidents Pretorius and Burgers—Annexation of Transvaal by Great Britain in 1877—Kruger Comes to the Front—Boer Protests against Annexation—The Act Maintained by British Ministers—Mr. Gladstone's Accession to Power—Foundation of the Afrikaner Bond—Aims of the "Thorough Dutch" Party—General Joubert's Declaration—The Revolt in the Transvaal—Mr. Gladstone's Surrender after Majuba—His Real Motive—The Discovery of Gold in Transvaal (1885)—Its Effects on the Country—The Uitlanders—Their Anomalous Position in Political Affairs—The Policy of the Boer Oligarchy—The "Jameson Raid"—The Boer Plot against British Supremacy in South Africa—Mr. Kruger in the Franchise Negotiations—The Successive Stages of Progress towards War—Attitude of Orange Free State—March of Boer Troops to Frontier—Boer Seizure of Gold—The Boer Ultimatum—Arrival of Refugees from the Republics on British Territory—Their Treatment by Boers—The Outbreak of War—Feeling in British Isles—Colonial Loyalty Strikingly Displayed—Large Forces Mustered and Despatched to South Africa—The Boer Armies—Largely Composed of Foreigners—The Powerful Artillery of the Foe—Foreign Officers Aiding Boers—The Difficulties Confronting British Armies—The Deficiencies in our Force—First Hostile Acts of Boers—The Armoured Train at Kraaipan.

THE important dates concerning the origin of the struggle between Great Britain and the two Republics of South Africa are 1836, 1852, 1864, 1880, and 1881. These States had their rise in the great "trek," or migration, which began in 1836 from the northern and eastern districts of Cape Colony, and was spread over many subsequent years. British policy in colonial affairs has been in no part of the empire so conspicuous for lack of wisdom and foresight as in South Africa, and it is in the perversity and folly of British statesmen and politicians that we find the chief causes of the serious trouble in which we are now involved.

In February 1848, Sir Harry Smith, the British Governor of Cape Colony, issued a proclamation declaring the whole of the territory bounded on the south-west by the Orange River, on the north by the Vaal, and on the east by the Drakensberg Mountains, to be British territory, as "The Orange River Sovereignty." The Boer leader, Pretorius, induced his followers to make an armed resistance, but they were severely defeated by Sir Harry Smith, in August, at the Battle of Boomplaat, south-west of Bloemfontein, and the Boers fled beyond the Vaal, their places being taken

by British or by other settlers from Cape Colony well disposed to British sway. By degrees a desire for self rule among both British and Dutch settlers weakened the authority of the Cape Government, and the home Government, rarely able to do the right thing in colonial affairs, resolved on abandoning the territory, instead of retaining it with the concession of some form of self rule. It was thus that, in February 1854, "The Orange Free State" arose. The measure was greatly opposed to public feeling in Cape Colony, and to that of many inhabitants of the territory, including some of the Dutch settlers, but the Convention of Bloemfontein was signed in the face of all protests, and a fine region, nearly as large as England, was renounced within six years of its annexation.

The South African Republic, popularly known as "The Transvaal," dates its political existence from 1852. The Boer leader, Pretorius, after the Battle of Boomplaat, was living to the north of the Vaal, a proscribed man with a reward of two thousand pounds offered for his arrest. The danger to British authority arising from simultaneous wars with the Basutos and the Kaffirs, and from a threatened alliance between the Boers and the able