

## THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONSPIRACY AGAINST BRITISH RULE.

BY THE REV. A. THEODORE WIRGMAN,  
*Canon of Grahamstown Cathedral, South Africa.*

I do not think that it can fairly be laid to the charge of the English clergy in South Africa that they have intermeddled in political life. Our position in the dioceses of Pretoria and Bloemfontein during the last five or six years has been a difficult and delicate one. The Dutch Reformed ministers in the Colony, as well as in the Republics, have been, for the most part, ardent anti-English politicians. I desire to make every allowance for their sympathies and natural prejudices. But when a Dutch Reformed minister of some position, living under the British flag in the Cape Colony (where Dutch and English enjoy equal political rights, publicly exhorts his kinsmen in the Transvaal to resist the British demands, "because the threats of England are as the threats of a man with an unloaded gun," the limits of reasonable sympathy are overpassed. We English clergy have expressed our loyalty to our flag and country when we have been constrained by duty to do so. But we stand clear of any charge of inciting race feeling.

But the situation, as it daily develops, is so much more real to us in South Africa than it is to you in England. For instance, this morning, the 18th of November, Mr. Wilson, a young clergyman, turned up at my house with only the clothes he stood up in, having had to leave his church and rectory at Colesberg at the mercy of the Boers, and ride thirty-seven miles to Naauwpoort Junction at some considerable peril.

About four hundred Afrianders of the Colesberg district, incited apparently by a member of the Cape Parliament, Mr. Van der Walt, have forgotten their allegiance as born British subjects and joined the Boer forces.

When the Boers "annexed" Colesberg, and proclaimed it "Republican territory," the English had to go or else join the Boer army. The sexton of the English church, a harmless coloured man, was mercilessly beaten by the Boers. A coloured man, who owned two good horses, ventured to demur when the Boers "commandeered" them. They tied him up and beat him most savagely.

These Boer "annexations" comprise now hundreds of square miles of what was British territory before war was declared. The whole of northern Natal is "annexed," and the conquered territory parcelled out by the Boers, who have settled on the farms and taken active possession of it. The whole of British Bechuanaland has been formally "annexed" by the Transvaal, and is now administered by Transvaal officials. Mafeking is the solitary spot in Bechuanaland where the British flag still flies. Aliwal North and a vast slice of Cape territory has been also annexed by the Boers. They are administering the British territories they have annexed, and the sad plight of loyal British subjects in the districts which have passed into Boer hands can better be imagined than described. They are "commandeered" if they stay to guard their houses and property,