

# **THE TRANSVAAL CRISIS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649226030

The Transvaal Crisis by Sir Henry Meysey-Thompson

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**SIR HENRY MEYSEY-THOMPSON**

**THE TRANSVAAL  
CRISIS**



THE  
TRANSVAAL CRISIS.

BY  
*Sir*  
SIR HENRY MEYSEY-THOMPSON,  
BART., M.P.

---

REMARKS ON THE  
PRESENT CONDITION OF AFFAIRS.

---

TOGETHER WITH A REPRINT OF AN ARTICLE BY HIM IN THE  
"NINETEENTH CENTURY" REVIEW ON THE

"REAL GRIEVANCES OF THE UITLANDERS."

LONDON:  
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & COMPANY  
(LIMITED),  
St. Dunstan's House,  
FETTER LANE, FLEET STREET, E.C.  
1899.

## INTRODUCTION

I AM offering this reprint of the real grievances of the Uitlanders to the public because, though the grievances remain substantially the same as they were eighteen months ago, the public interest in them has enormously increased, and I find that very many people who did not care to read an article on them in February 1898 are now extremely anxious to study the question and find out 'what it is all about.'

For those who have not carefully considered the subject it may be useful to bear the following facts in mind.

The portion of South Africa comprised in the British sphere of influence—that is to say, the territory in which England would not tolerate the interference of any foreign Power, and would fight to the death before any such interference could take place—is divided into five great provinces :

1. Natal.
2. The Transvaal.
3. The Orange Free State.
4. The Cape Colony.
5. Rhodesia.

These five divisions comprise within their boundaries 1,159,297 square miles, or an area equal to the total extent of France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Austria, and Hungary, and this vast territory has at present an extremely scanty population. The latest census returns are for 1891 and 1892, but reliable information shows that the whole population, black and white, men, women, and children, of these five

provinces does not, including towns, seaports, and all the population of the diamond fields and gold mines, exceed 4,100,000 persons. Scotland, with its great expanse of moors and mountains, is not a densely-populated country; but, while the British sphere of influence in South Africa is 38½ times the size of Scotland, the total population is less than that of Scotland (about 4,186,849).

To put it in another way, if London were emptied of its inhabitants, and all the inhabitants, black and white, of these five great provinces were brought in to fill their places, they would not suffice to do so: there would still be houses empty and room for more people.

The number of the white inhabitants, men, women, and children, of Cape Colony—viz. 376,987—is much less than the present population of Leeds (416,618).

The white population of the Orange Free State—between 80,000 and 90,000—is less than the population of Halifax (95,747).

The white population of the Transvaal, as given in the 'Staats Almanak' of 1899, is 288,750, very much less than the population of Sheffield (324,243).

At a very liberal estimate the total number of Dutch inhabitants (including Boers) of the whole of South Africa does not exceed 370,000 or 380,000 persons, or slightly above the population of Dublin (361,800).

To insure that this vast territory shall be open to English trade, and available as a home for the surplus millions of our population in future years, England has during the last hundred years made enormous sacrifices. We have expended vast sums of money, and many of our bravest soldiers have given their lives for their country in battle against the Kaffirs, Zulus, and other native tribes, or have fallen victims to the climate. Naturally, and rightly, England, having made the sacrifices necessary to bring the country into a condition of civilisation fit for the occupation of her subjects, now says to other countries: 'We are the paramount power in South Africa, and intend to remain so. You are most welcome to

come and settle or trade, but you must not interfere politically with this part of the country.'

But this position of paramount power entails certain great and evident responsibilities.

There are in the Transvaal many subjects of the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, and other countries; they have invested vast sums of money in gold mining, and they are suffering equally with the English from the intolerable misgovernment of the Transvaal. We say to them, 'You shall not appeal to your own governments for redress of your grievances, this is our business; any foreign country who wishes to interfere in our spheres of influence in South Africa must first fight and conquer England.' But if England maintains this attitude (and no British Government which proposed to abandon our paramount position in South Africa could remain in office a week), then the responsibility of insuring decent government in the Transvaal becomes an absolute duty for England.

We say plainly to the Great Powers of the world, 'Hand off; however much your subjects in the Transvaal are robbed or misgoverned, if their hard-won profits are handed over wholesale to monopolists, if their lives are not safe, and their taxation is excessive, you shall not interfere; it is our business.' Very well, then; let us attend to our business, and see that justice is done, and that decent government prevails wherever the responsibility of England extends.

The eyes of all the world are on us to see whether we are equal to our responsibilities. The eyes of all the inhabitants of our other colonies are on us also. They are all asking themselves the question, Is it worth while being a British citizen? Is England capable, and is England determined, to secure justice for her subject wherever it is her duty to do so?

We have been very patient. If the United States, if France, Germany, or Russia, had been in our position would they have as patiently allowed their subjects to be oppressed? It is well known that the Transvaal disposes every year of an



enormous sum of secret service money. It has often been asserted, and is widely believed, that this money is spent in stirring up animosity against England, not only in South Africa, but anywhere in the world where a journalist or a politician can be bribed to try to injure England. Would any of these countries have allowed even the suspicion of such a thing to continue without investigating it thoroughly, and taking the sternest steps to render it impossible in future if it were proved to be true ?

The unfortunate thing is, that by persons in the condition of civilisation and mental development of the Boers, our patience and forbearance are absolutely misunderstood.

Mr. Gladstone no doubt honestly believed that when, after our defeats at Laing's Nek, Ingogo, and Majuba Hill, we gave in, and yielded to the demands of the Boers to restore the government of the Transvaal to them, they would appreciate our magnanimity, and that their gratitude and love for us would be a sufficient reward and recompense for the intense humiliation inflicted on the English-speaking populations throughout the world. We gave them Home Rule on the condition that our own subjects and the Boers were to be treated exactly alike, and that the government was to be carried on in accordance with civilised ideas. But our magnanimity they regarded as cowardice, the gratitude we expected was never forthcoming, and from that moment to this they have occupied themselves in ingeniously contriving ever more and more devices by which, without appearing openly to violate the Convention or give us a decent pretext for interference, they could absolutely defeat the intention of the Convention that equal treatment and equal justice should be the right of the English as well as the Boer inhabitants of the Transvaal.

They have never made the slightest attempt to observe the spirit of the Convention ; they have shown us openly that they despise us as a poor mean-spirited race, and that they consider the way to treat us is to take their own way, regardless of our wishes or ideas, or of those of the majority of

their own population, and only to give way when they are obliged.

When we had conquered the Zulus who were threatening to sweep the Boers out of existence, they rushed a portion of Zulu territory called 'the New Republic' territory, to which they had no possible right. We protested, but eventually gave way, thereby, as many people think, sacrificing the rights of the native population of those districts in a most unjustifiable manner. The expedition under Sir Charles Warren, which cost the country 725,000*l.*, was necessitated by Boer disregard of the Convention, while the closing of the drifts was an attempt to disregard the rights of the Uitlanders so flagrant and so iniquitous that the British Government was absolutely forced to interfere, and brought us to the very verge of war with the Transvaal.

Events move so quickly that what happened may have escaped the memory of some of my readers, so I will briefly recall the facts. The charges of the Netherlands Railway Company were so exorbitant, and their system of management so oppressive, that the inhabitants of Johannesburg determined to get some of their supplies from Cape Colony by ox-wagon. The Boer retaliated by 'closing the drifts,' that is to say, by ordering their armed custom-house officers at the 'drifts' or fords to prevent any ox-wagons crossing the river, and so force the Uitlanders to submit to the exactions of the railway company. England interfered and President Kruger had to give way; the railway charges, however, as will be seen in the following papers, are still flagrantly extortionate. England in granting the Convention intended to give Home Rule, or self-government, to all inhabitants of the Transvaal, English, Dutch, or foreign, but the laws insuring self-government have been gradually altered, so that self-government exists no longer; at the time of the Convention all owners of land had a right to a vote, and no difficulties were placed in the way of the acquirement of a vote by any inhabitant who came up to some simple conditions of qualification; but by successive alterations in the laws these rights have been

gradually filched away from the majority of the population, until now all rights of government are monopolised by a small group of Dutchmen, and the self-government which England intended to give has become absolutely illusory and non-existent.

The result of all this is that our position as paramount power in South Africa is in the eyes of the inhabitants, both white and black, gradually being undermined. To all appearance the Boers are the strong and the English the weak; if wrong and injustice flourish under the ægis of England's suzerainty, the natural impression made on an uneducated mind is, either that England approves of injustice or that England is powerless to remedy it. No doubt we can assert ourselves if we wish, but matters are not getting better, but worse; already we are spending half a million a year on our military forces in South Africa more than we need do, if the Transvaal were not a centre of perpetual discontent on the part of the English population, and a centre of intrigue against England by Boer politicians.

President Kruger and the extremely astute group of politicians who surround him have acted very cleverly. They have proceeded so gradually that it has been very difficult to fix the moment when England ought to interfere. But they have now gone too far; our English fellow-countrymen in the Transvaal and the subjects of many foreign powers have formally appealed to England, and England has now deliberately to decide whether she is justified in continuing, as the paramount and suzerain power, to protect the Boers from all outside interference, and at the same time to allow the present state of injustice and oppression to continue.

The method of reform proposed is to give the inhabitants of the Transvaal a sufficient share in the government to enable them to get their own grievances redressed. The franchise is only a means to an end; unless it gives the Uitlanders sufficient political power to get their grievances redressed it is a sham, and worse than nothing.

If a 40-foot ladder is necessary to enable you to reach a certain platform, what is the use of offering you one of 80