

**VENGEANCE AS A POLICY
IN AFRIKANDERLAND; A
PLEA FOR A NEW
DEPARTURE**

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Vengeance as a policy in Afrikanderland; a plea for a new departure by Francis J. Dormer

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A PLEA FOR A NEW DEPARTURE

BY

FRANCIS J. DORMER

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TO THE MANES
OF
THE UNNUMBERED AND HEROIC DEAD

THE HEARTS THAT ARE BROKEN
TIES THAT ARE SUNDERED
VICTIMS OF AN INGLORIOUS WAR THAT OUGHT
NEVER TO HAVE BEEN

P R E F A C E

"VENGEANCE is Mine; I will repay," saith the Lord. Saving the Decalogue itself, it is difficult to imagine an injunction that any form of words could render more emphatic or precise, and still more difficult, perhaps, to conceive of any rule of conduct so hard for nations or for individuals to observe. Not in the whole world are there two nations professing more respect for divine authority than the Dutch of South Africa and the people of this realm; but subject their relations during the past twenty years to anything like a critical analysis, and it will clearly appear that the prohibition which the apostolic language conveys, a prohibition which dates back from the teaching of the earliest exponents of our faith, has been honoured more in the breach than in the observance thereof; and here, perhaps, may be found some clue to the mystery—why English and Dutch have not succeeded in getting on together—by which the minds of so many of our countrymen have been exercised since the present troubles in South Africa began.

I do not propose to undertake that analysis on the present occasion, but merely to indicate the line of inquiry that may be advantageously pursued by those who wish to arrive at some definite conclusion as to the events which have led up to the present situation and

desire to find some guidance with respect to the problems that await solution in the time to come.

It is possible, of course, in any survey of cause and effect, to exaggerate the importance of the part played by this individual or by that upon a stage so wide as the sub-continent on which the conflicting elements are now so fiercely contending for supremacy; but it is no extravagance to say that the history of South Africa, for at least twenty years past, has been largely the history of Mr. Kruger and Mr. Cecil Rhodes. It was never in doubt that the latter of these distinguished men was one of those whom the stirring events of 1880-81 left in an attitude of violent antagonism towards a settlement which was based upon the undeniable defeat of British arms. In one of his earliest speeches in the Cape Parliament—made, indeed, while the Convention of Pretoria was still pending ratification—he frankly avowed that he still cherished the ideal of a United States of South Africa under the protection of the British flag and would recognise finality in no arrangement in which that cardinal condition was not fulfilled. To some extent, it must be confessed, this masterful irreconcilable *was* reconciled to a situation which in his heart he loathed by the failure of the Transvaal Government to respond to the challenge that was thrown out to them over Bechuanaland in 1884; his views as to the aggressive designs of the Dutch were largely modified, when the Afrikander Bond came under the influence of Mr. Hofmeyr, by the elimination from the constitution of that society of the features by which it was originally disfigured; but the aims he professed upon his first entrance into political life have never been abandoned or renounced.

For ten years, however, if we may put his case in

homely phrase, Mr. Rhodes "had other fish to fry," and hence his apparent acquiescence in a situation he was sworn to revolutionise if ever the chance should come within reach of his powers. That was a period that embraced the amalgamation of the diamond mines, the discovery of gold in the Kaap and on the Rand, the birth of the Chartered Company, his accession to office as Prime Minister of the Cape, the formation of a new State that bore his name, the extinction of the formidable power of the Matabele chief.

These varied pre-occupations being enough to engage even the phenomenal energies of a Titan amongst active-minded men, the ruling passion seemingly had ceased to rule. For a time, indeed, it appeared as though the quality of that passion had been happily transformed. It had never, to do Mr. Rhodes justice, been inspired by a desire for bloodshed for the mere sake of seeing blood flow; but it now took on the form of a frank recognition of the widely prevailing belief that time was upon the side of the English and wholly opposed to the further evolution of the incompatible ideal cherished by a small but aggressive section of the Dutch. It was his favourite gibe at this period that he had succeeded in winning away the Cape Afrikaners from Krugerism, and the founder of that cult had better beware (since his old burghers were being drawn away to Rhodesia, and a mutual repulsion was apparent between himself and the new burghers) or he would be left as its solitary representative in the Transvaal. It is a striking illustration of the innate simplicity of a people who are now supposed to be the embodiment of suspicious cunning that it never seemed to occur to the Afrikaners at the Cape, throughout these years of deceptive calm, that they were being quietly jockeyed with a