

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydow
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Schlegel
Weber Freiligrath Friedrich II. von Preußen
Kant Ernst Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Hölderlin Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliot Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Zweig Vergil
Ewald London
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Dostojewski Ganghofer
Lichtenberg Rathenau Doyle Gjellerup
Trackl Stevenson Tolstoi Hambruch
Mommssen Thoma Lenz Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Verne von Arnim Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Hebbel Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Melville Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Claudius Schiller Bellamy Kralik
Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschechow
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Vulpis
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Gleim Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Mörike Musil
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Nietzsche Nansen Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Ringelnatz
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Leibniz Irving
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A Century of Wrong

F. W. Reitz

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PREFACE.

"In this awful turning point of the history of South Africa, on the eve of the conflict which threatens to exterminate our people, it behoves us to speak the truth in what may be, perchance, our last message to the world."

Such is the *raison d'être* of this book. It is issued by State Secretary Reitz as the official exposition of the case of the Boer against the Briton. I regard it as not merely a duty but an honour to be permitted to bring it before the attention of my countrymen.

Rightly or wrongly the British Government has sat in judgment upon the South African Republic, rightly or wrongly it has condemned it to death. And now, before the executioner can carry out the sentence, the accused is entitled to claim the right to speak freely—it may be for the last time—to say why, in his opinion, the sentence should not be executed. A liberty which the English law accords as an unquestioned right to the foulest murderer cannot be denied to the South African Republic. It is on that ground that I have felt bound to afford the spokesman of our Dutch brethren in South Africa the opportunity of stating their case in his own way in the hearing of the Empire.

Despite the diligently propagated legend of a Reptile press fed by Dr. Leyds for the purpose of perverting public opinion, it is indisputable that so far as this country is concerned Mr. Reitz is quite correct in saying that the case of the Transvaal "has been lost by default before the tribunal of public opinion."

It is idle to point, in reply to this, to the statements that have appeared in the press of the Continent. These pleadings were not addressed to the tribunal that was trying the case. In the British press the case of the Transvaal was never presented by any accredited counsel for the defence. Those of us who have in these late months been compelled by the instinct of justice to protest against the campaign of misrepresentation organised for the purpose of destroying the South African Republic were in many cases so far from authorised exponents of the South African Dutch that some of them—among whom I may be reckoned for one—were regarded with such suspicion that it was most difficult for us to obtain even the most

necessary information from the representatives of the Government at Pretoria. Nor was this suspicion without cause—so far at least as I was concerned.

For nearly a quarter of a century it might almost have been contended that I was one of the leading counsel for the prosecution. First as the friend and advocate of the Rev. John Mackenzie, then as the friend and supporter of Mr. Cecil Rhodes, and latterly as the former colleague and upholder of Sir Alfred Milner, it had been my lot constantly, in season and out of season, to defend the cause of the progressive Briton against the Conservative Boer, and especially to advocate the Cause of the Reformers and Uitlanders against the old Tory Administration of President Kruger. By agitation, by pressure, and even, if need be, in the last resort by legitimate insurrection, I had always been ready to seek the establishment of a progressive Liberal Administration in Pretoria. And I have at least the small consolation of knowing that if any of the movements which I defended had succeeded, the present crisis would never have arisen, and the independence of the South African Republic would have been established on an unassailable basis. But with such a record it is obvious that I was almost the last man in the Empire who could be regarded as an authorised exponent of the case of the Boers.

That in these last months I have been forced to protest against the attempt to stifle their independence is due to a very simple cause. To seek to reform the Transvaal, even by the rough and ready means of a legitimate revolution, is one thing. To conspire to stifle the Republic in order to add its territory to the Empire is a very different thing. The difference may be illustrated by an instance in our own history. Several years ago I wrote a popular history of the House of Lords, in which I showed, at least to my own satisfaction, that for fifty years our "pig-headed oligarchs"—to borrow a phrase much in favour with the War Party—had inflicted infinite mischief upon the United Kingdom by the way in which they had abused their power to thwart the will of the elected representatives of the people. I am firmly of opinion that our hereditary Chamber has done a thousand times more injury to the subjects of the Queen than President Kruger has ever inflicted upon the aggrieved Uitlanders. I look forward with a certain grim satisfaction to assisting, in the near future, in a semi-revolutionary agitation against the Peers, in which

some of our most potent arguments will be those which the War Party has employed to inflame public sentiment against the Boers. But, notwithstanding all this, if a conspiracy of Invincibles were to be formed for the purpose of ending the House of Lords by assassinating its members, or by blowing up the Gilded Chamber and all its occupants with dynamite, I should protest against such an outrage as vehemently as I have protested against the more heinous crime that is now in course of perpetration in South Africa. And the very vehemence with which I had in times past pleaded the cause of the People against the Peers would intensify the earnestness with which I would endeavour to avert the exploitation of a legitimate desire to end the Second Chamber by the unscrupulous conspirators of assassination and of dynamite. Hence it is that I seize every opportunity afforded me of enabling the doomed Dutch to plead their case before the tribunal which has condemned them, virtually unheard.

In introducing *A Century of Wrong* to the British public, I carefully disassociate myself from assuming any responsibility for all or any of the statements which it contains. My *imprimatur* was not sought, nor is it extended to the history contained in *A Century of Wrong*, excepting in so far as relates to its authenticity as an exposition of what our brothers the Boers think of the way in which we have dealt with them for the last hundred years.

That is much more important than the endorsement by any Englishman as to the historical accuracy of the statements which it contains. For what every judicial tribunal desires, first of all, is to hear witnesses at first hand. Hitherto the British public has chiefly been condemned to second-hand testimony. In the pages of *A Century of Wrong* it will, at least, have an opportunity of hearing the Dutch of South Africa speak for themselves.

There is no question as to the qualifications of Mr. F.W. Reitz to speak on behalf of the Dutch Africander. Although at this moment State Secretary for President Kruger, he was for nearly ten years Chief Justice and then President of the Orange Free State, and he began his life in the Cape Colony. The family is of German origin, but his ancestors migrated to Holland in the seventeenth century and became Dutch. His grandfather emigrated from Holland to the

Cape, and founded one of the Africander families. His father was a sheep farmer; one of his uncles was a lieutenant in the British Navy.

Mr. Reitz is now in his fifty-sixth year, and received a good English education. After graduating at the South African College he came to the United Kingdom, and finished his studies at Edinburgh University, and afterwards at the Inner Temple, where he was called to the Bar in 1868. He then returned to the Cape, and, after practising as a barrister in the Cape courts for six years, was appointed Chief Justice of the Orange Free State, a post which he held for fifteen years. He was then elected and re-elected as President of the Orange Free State. In 1893 he paid a lengthy visit to Europe and to the United Kingdom. After Dr. Leyds was appointed to his present post as foreign representative of the South African Republic, Mr. Reitz was appointed State Secretary, and all the negotiations between the Transvaal and Great Britain passed through his hands.

Mr. Reitz's narrative is not one calculated to minister to our national self-conceit, but it is none the worse on that account. Of those who minister to our vanity we have enough and to spare, with results not altogether desirable. In the long controversy between the Boers and the missionaries Mr. Reitz takes, as might be expected, the view of his own people.

An English lady in South Africa writing to the *British Weekly* of December 21st, in reply to the statement of the Rev. Dr. Stewart, makes some observations on this feud between the Boers and the missionaries, which it may be well to bear in mind in discussing this question. The lady ("I.M.") says:—

Dr. Stewart naturally starts from the mission question. I speak as the daughter of one of the greatest mission supporters that South Africa has ever known when I say that the earliest missionaries who came to this country were to a very large extent themselves the cause of all the Boer opposition which they may have had to encounter. When they arrived, they found the Boers at about the same stage of enlightenment with regard to missions as the English themselves had been in the time of Carey. And yet, in spite of prejudice and ignorance, every Boer of any standing was practically doing mission work himself, for when, according to unfailing custom, the "Books" were brought out morning and evening for family worship,

the slaves were never allowed to be absent, but had to come and receive instruction with the rest of the family. But the tone and methods which the missionaries adopted were such as could not fail to arouse the aversion of the farmers, their great idea being that the coloured races, utter savages as yet, should be placed upon complete equality with their superiors. At Earl's Court we have recently seen something of how easily the natives are spoilt, and they were certainly not better in those days. When, however, the Boers showed that they disapproved of all this, the natives were immediately taught to regard them as their oppressors, and were encouraged to insubordination to their masters, and the ill-effects of this policy on the part of the missionaries has reached further than can be told. May I ask was this the tone that St. Paul adopted in his mission work among the oppressed slaves of his day?... It is not those who do *not* know the Boers, like Dr. Stewart, but those who know them best, like Dr. Andrew Murray, who are not only enamoured of their simple lives, but who know also that with all their disadvantages and their positive faults they are still a people whose rule of life is the Bible, whose God is the God of Israel, and who as a nation have never swerved from the covenant with that God entered into by their fathers, the Huguenots of France and the heroes of the Netherlands.

Upon this phase of the controversy there is no necessity to dwell at present, beyond remarking that those who are at present most disposed to take up what may be regarded as the missionary side should not forget that they are preparing a rod for their own backs. The Aborigines Protection Society has long had a quarrel with the Boers, but if our Imperialists are going to adopt the platform of Exeter Hall they will very soon find themselves in serious disagreement with Mr. Cecil Rhodes and other Imperialist heroes of the hour. That the Dutch in South Africa have treated the blacks as the English in other colonies have treated the aborigines is probably true, despite all that Mr. Reitz can say on their behalf. But, whereas in Tasmania and the Australian Colonies the black fellows are exterminated by the advancing Briton, the immediate result of the advent of the Dutch into the Transvaal has been to increase the number of natives from 70,000 to 700,000, without including those who were attracted by the gold mines. In dealing with native races

all white men have the pride of their colour and the arrogance of power. The Boers, no doubt, have many sins lying at their door, but it does not do for the pot to call the kettle black, and so far as South Africa is concerned, the difference between the Dutch and British attitudes toward the native races is more due to the influence of Exeter Hall and the sentiment which it represents than to any practical difference between English and Dutch Colonists as to the status of the coloured man. The English under Exeter Hall have undoubtedly a higher ideal as to the theoretical equality of men of all races; but on the spot the arrogance of colour is often asserted as offensively by the Briton as by the Boer. The difference between the two is, in short, that the Boer has adjusted his practice to his belief, whereas we believe what we do not practice. That the black population of the Transvaal is conscious of being treated with exceeding brutality by the Boers is disproved by the fact that for months past all the women and children of the two Republics have been left at the absolute mercy of the natives in the midst of whom they live.

The English reader will naturally turn with more interest to Mr. Reitz's narrative of recent negotiations than to his observations upon the hundred years of history which he says have taught the Dutch that there is no justice to be looked for at the hands of a British Government. The advocates of the war will be delighted to find that Mr. Reitz asserts in the most uncompromising terms the right of the Transvaal to be regarded as an Independent Sovereign International State. However unpleasant this may be to Downing Street, the war has compelled the Government to recognise the fact. When it began we were haughtily told that there would be no declaration of war, nor would the Republics be recognised as belligerents. The war had not lasted a month before this vainglorious boast was falsified, and we were compelled to recognise the Transvaal as a belligerent State. It is almost incredible that even Sir William Harcourt should have fallen into the snare set for him by Mr. Chamberlain in this matter. The contention that the Transvaal cannot be an Independent Sovereign State because Article 4 of the Convention of 1884 required that all treaties with foreign Powers should be submitted for assent to England may afford a technical plea for assuming that it was not an Independent Sovereign International State. But, as Mr. Reitz points out, no one questions the fact that Belgium is an Inter-

national Independent Sovereign State, although the exercise of her sovereignty is limited by an international obligation to maintain neutrality. A still stronger instance as proving the fact that the status of a sovereign State is not affected by the limitation of the exercise of its sovereignty is afforded by the limitation imposed by the Treaty of Paris on the sovereign right of the Russian Empire to maintain a fleet in the Black Sea. To forbid the Tsar to put an iron-clad on the sea which washes his southern coast was a far more drastic limitation of the inalienable rights of an Independent International Sovereign State than the provision that treaties affecting the interests of another Power should be subject to the veto of that Power, but no one has protested that Russia has lost her international status on account of the limitation imposed by the Treaty of Paris. In like manner Mr. Reitz argues that the Transvaal, being free to conduct its diplomacy, and to make war, can fairly claim to be a Sovereign International State. The assertion of this fact serves as an Ithuriel's spear to bring into clear relief the significance of the revival by Mr. Chamberlain of the Suzerainty of 1881. Upon this point Mr. Reitz gives us a plain straightforward narrative, the justice and accuracy of which will not be denied by anyone who, like Sir Edward Clarke, takes the trouble to read the official dispatches.

I turn with more interest to Mr. Reitz's narrative of the precise differences of opinion which led to the breaking-off of negotiations between the two Governments. Mr. Chamberlain, it will be remembered, said in his dispatch he had accepted nine-tenths of the conditions laid down by the Boers if the five years' franchise was to be conceded. What the tenth was which was not accepted Mr. Chamberlain has never told us, excepting that it was "a matter of form" which was "not worth a war." Readers of Mr. Reitz's narrative will see that in the opinion of the Boers the sticking point was the question of suzerainty. If Mr. Chamberlain would have endorsed Sir Alfred Milner's declaration, and have said, as his High Commissioner did, that the question about suzerainty was etymological rather than political, and that he would say no more about it, following Lord Derby's policy and abstaining from using a word which was liable to be misunderstood, there would have been no war. So far as Mr. Reitz's authority goes we are justified in saying that the war was brought about by the persistence of Mr. Chamber-

lain in reviving the claim of suzerainty which had been expressly surrendered in 1884, and which from 1884 to 1897 had never been asserted by any British Government.

Another point of great importance is the reference which Mr. Reitz makes to the Raid. On this point he speaks with much greater moderation than many English critics of the Government. Lord Loch will be interested in reading Mr. Reitz's account of the way in which his visit to Pretoria was regarded by the Transvaal Government. It shows that it was his visit which first alarmed the Boers, and compelled them to contemplate the possibility of having to defend their independence with arms. But it was not until after the Jameson Raid that they began arming in earnest. As there is so much controversy upon this subject, it may be well to quote here the figures from the Budget of the Transvaal Government, showing the expenditure before and after the Raid.

Public Special Sundry Military. Works. Payments. Services.
Total. £ £ £ £ £ 1889 75,523 300,071 58,737 171,088 605,419
1890 42,999 507,579 58,160 133,701 742,439 1891 117,927
492,094 52,486 76,494 739,001 1892 29,739 361,670 40,276
93,410 528,095 1893 19,340 200,106 148,981 132,132 500,559
1894 [1] 28,158 260,962 75,859 163,547 521,526 1895 [2] 87,308
353,724 205,335 838,877 1,485,244 1896 495,618 701,022 682,008
128,724 2,007,372
1897 396,384 1,012,686 248,864 135,345 1,793,279
1898 [3] 163,451 383,033 157,519 100,874 804,877

Of the Raid itself Mr. Reitz speaks as follows:—

The secret conspiracy of the Capitalists and Jingoës to overthrow the South African Republic began now to gain ground with great rapidity, for just at this critical period Mr. Chamberlain became Secretary of State for the Colonies. In the secret correspondence of the conspirators, reference is continually made to the Colonial Office in a manner which, taken in connection with later revelations and with a successful suppression of the truth, has deepened the impression over the whole world that the Colonial Office was privy to, if not an accomplice in, the villainous attack on the South African Republic.

Nor has the world forgotten how, at the urgent instance of the Afriander party in the Cape Colony, an investigation into the causes of the conflict was held in Westminster; how that investigation degenerated into a low attack upon the Government of the deeply maligned and deeply injured South African Republic, and how at the last moment, when the truth was on the point of being revealed, and the conspiracy traced to its fountain head in the British Cabinet, the Commission decided all of a sudden not to make certain compromising documents public.

Here we see to what a depth the old great traditions of British Constitutionalism had sunk under the influence of the ever-increasing and all-absorbing lust of gold, and in the hands of a sharp-witted wholesale dealer, who, like Cleon of old, has constituted himself a statesman.

When Mr. Reitz wrote his book he did not know that immediately after the Raid the British Government began to accumulate information, and to prepare for the war with the Republic which is now in progress. The reason why Mr. Reitz did not refer to this in *A Century of Wrong* was because documents proving its existence had not fallen into the hands of the Transvaal Government until after the retreat from Glencoe. Major White and his brother officers who were concerned in the Raid were much chaffed for the incredible simplicity with which he allowed a private memorandum as to preparations for the Raid to fall into the hands of the Boers. His indiscretion has been thrown entirely into the shade by the simplicity which allowed War Office documents of the most secret and compromising nature to fall into the hands of the Boers, showing that preparations for the present war began immediately after the defeat of the Raid. The special correspondent of Reuter with the Boers telegraphed from Glencoe on October 28th as follows:—

The papers captured at Dundee Camp from the British unveil a thoroughly worked out scheme to attack the independence of both Republics as far back as 1896, notwithstanding constant assurances of amity towards the Free State.

Among these papers there are portfolios of military sketches of various routes of invasion from Natal into the Transvaal and Free

State, prepared by Major Grant, Captain Melvill, and Captain Gale immediately after the Jameson Raid.

A further portfolio marked secret styled "Reconnaissance Reports of Lines of Advance through the Free State" was prepared by Captain Wolley, on the Intelligence Division of the War Office, in 1897, and is accompanied by a special memorandum, signed by Sir Redvers Buller, to keep it secret.

Besides these there are specially executed maps of the Transvaal and Free State, showing all the natural features, also a further secret Report of Communications in Natal north of Ladysmith, including a memorandum of the road controlling Lang's Nek position.

Further, there is a short Military Report on the Transvaal, printed in India in August last, which was found most interesting. The white population is given at 288,000, of whom the Outlanders number 80,000, and of the Outlanders 30,000 are given as of British descent—which figures the authorities regard as much nearer the truth than Mr. Chamberlain's statements made in the House of Commons.

One report estimates that 4,000 Cape and Natal Colonists would side with the Republics in case of war, and that the small armament of the Transvaal consists of 62,950 rifles, and that the Boers would prove not so mobile or such good marksmen as in the War of Independence.

Further, the British did not think much of the Johannesburg and Pretoria forts.

A further secret Report styled "Military Notes on the Dutch Republics of South Africa," and numbers of other papers, not yet examined, were also found, and are to be forwarded to Pretoria.

The Free State burghers are now more than ever convinced that it was the right policy for them to fight along with the Transvaal, and they say, since they have seen the reports, that they will fight with, if possible, more determination than ever.

It may be contended, no doubt, upon our part that these private reports were none other than those which every Government receives from its military attachés, but it must be admitted that their

discovery at the present moment is most inopportune for those who wish to persuade the Free State that they can rely upon the assertions of Great Britain that no design was made upon their independence. If at this moment the portfolios of a German Staff Officer were to fall into the hands of an English correspondent, and detailed plans for invading England were to be published in all the newspapers as having been drawn up by German officers told off for that purpose, it would not altogether tend to reassure us as to the good intentions of our Imperial neighbour. How much more serious must be the publication of these documents seized at Dundee upon a people which is actually at war.

The concluding chapter of Mr. Reitz's eloquent impeachment of the conduct of Great Britain in South Africa is devoted to a delineation of what he calls Capitalistic Jingoism. It is probable that a great many who will read with scant sympathy his narrative of the grievances of his countrymen in the earlier part, of the century will revel in the invective which he hurls against Mr. Rhodes and the Capitalists of the Rand. If happier times return to South Africa, Mr. Reitz may yet find the mistake he has made in confounding Mr. Rhodes with the mere dividend-earning crew, who brought about this war in order to diminish the cost of crushing gold by five or six shillings a ton. In the realisation of the ideal of Africa for the Afrianders Mr. Rhodes might be more helpful to Mr. Reitz and the Dutch of South Africa than any other living man. Whether it is possible for them to forget and forgive the future alone will show. But at present it seems rather as if Mr. Reitz sees nothing between Afrianderism and Capitalistic Jingoism but war to the death.

Mr. Reitz breaks off his narrative at the point immediately before the Ultimatum. Those curious politicians who begin their survey of the war from the launching of that declaration will, therefore, find nothing in *A Century of Wrong* to interest them. But those who take a fresh and intelligent view of a long and complicated historical controversy will welcome the authoritative exposition of the causes which, in the opinion of the authors of the Ultimatum, justified, and, indeed, necessitated that decisive step. To what Mr. Reitz has said it is only necessary to add one fact.

The Ultimatum was dated October 9th. It was the natural response to the menace with which the British Government had favoured them three days previous, when on October 6th they issued the formal notice calling out the Reserves for the avowed object of making war upon the South African Republic.

Whether they were right or wrong, it is impossible to withhold a tribute of admiration and sympathy for the little States which confront the onslaughts of their Imperial foe with such heroic fortitude and serene courage. As Dr. Max Nordau remarks in the *North American Review* for December:—

The fact that a tiny people faces death without hesitation to defend its independence against an enemy fabulously superior in number, or to die in the attempt, presents an aspect of moral beauty which no soul, attuned to higher things, will disregard. Even friends and admirers of England—yea, even the English themselves—strongly sense the pathos in the situation of the Dutch Boers, who feel convinced that they are fighting for their national existence, and agree that it equals the pathos of Leonidas, William Tell, and Kosciusko.

Over and above all else the note in the State Secretary's appeal which will vibrate most loudly in the British heart is that in which he appeals to his countrymen to cling fast to the God of their forefathers, and to the righteousness which is sometimes slow in acting, but which never slumbers or forgets. "It proceeds according to eternal laws, unmoved by human pride and ambition. As the Greek poet of old said, it permits the tyrant, in his boundless self-esteem, to climb higher and higher, and to gain greater honour and might, until he arrives at the appointed height, and then falls down into the infinite depths."

Who is there who remembers the boastings of the British press at the outbreak of the war can read without awe the denunciations of the Hebrew seers against the nations and empires who in arrogance and pride forgot the Lord their God?

"Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord God of Hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee. And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up."

This, after all, is the great issue which underlies everything. Is there or is there not in the affairs of men a Providence which the ancients pictured as the slow-footed Nemesis, but which we moderns have somewhat learned to disregard? "If right and wrong, in this God's world of ours, are linked with higher Powers," is the great question which the devout soul, whether warrior or saint, has ever answered in one way. When in this country a leading exponent of popular Liberalism declares that "morally we can never win, but that physically we must and shall," we begin to realise how necessary is the chastisement which has fallen upon us for our sins. If this interpretation of the situation be even approximately correct, the further we go the worse we shall fare. It is vain for us to kick against the pricks.

W.T. STEAD.

January 1st, 1900.

