

after considerable service abroad, Sir William mentions accepting an invitation to join Mr. Parnell in grouse shooting at the Irish leader's home at Aughavanagh. 'I accepted with delight,' he says. 'I looked upon Parnell as one of the most remarkable men then living in the Empire. To-day (22 years later) I regard him as the greatest leader of his time. Parnell was quite unlike any other man I had ever met. Tall, and strikingly handsome, there was in him something beyond definition or description. It was power utterly careless of its possession, seemingly unconscious of its own strength, unaggressive in its mastery, unstudied, impassive, without one touch of haughtiness. He was usually silent, but saying what he wanted to say in the straightest words; never offensive, always fair; always thinking, but never absorbed in his thoughts; thoughtful to others; alive to everything around him; entirely without pose or pretence; even in temper showing breeding to his finger tips. . . . You might say fifty other things about him, and yet you are conscious that you have said nothing; and the reason is this—that you might just as well attempt to describe the passage or flight of a Marconi telegram through space as to set down in words the secrets of this man's pre-eminence.'

The Boer War.

Upon returning from his command at Alexandria, in the autumn of 1893, Sir William took command of a brigade of infantry at Aldershot. 'At this time,' he remarks, 'and for many years before, Aldershot was preparing the British Army for the disasters of the South African War. . . . It was the fault of the system and not of the man. Aldershot was the child of the Crimean War; that war of the massed divisions, shoulder-to-shoulder tactics, parades, plumes, drums beating and colors flying. . . . Never was the child more absolutely father to the man than was the Aldershot school of tactics the parent of Magersfontein, Stormberg, Nicholson's Nek, and Spion Kop. The Basingstoke Canal was the true source of the Tugela River, and batteries were lost in the Long Valley years before Long's guns fell an easy prey to the Boers at Colenso.' The most controversial parts of the book, as already indicated, date from the time when, in October, 1898, a little more than a year before the war, he accepted the military command in South Africa. On the 7th November, immediately prior to his departure, Sir William had an interview with Mr. Chamberlain, then Colonial Secretary. At that interview, after passing in review many South African subjects, Mr. Chamberlain, alluding to the Dutch Republics, said:—'If they should force us to attack them, then the blow would have to be a crushing one.' Sir William goes on to say that the interview was barren of any expression of plan or policy, and negative of any indication or warning of possible trouble. He proceeds:—'I was sent upon that momentous errand at the shortest notice, without any warning, without any orders, without even the most casual indication of the possibility of my having to deal with unexpected events, still less with the development of plans and purposes which I know now to have been matured and arranged. . . . Not even was the traditional finger of warning held up in any of the offices which I visited in the short interval previous to my departure from England. . . . Although I felt very keenly the attitude adopted towards me in the end of 1899 and all through 1900 by my superior officers, civil and military, in relation to the charges so freely made against me in the press and in other places—charges that I had acted contrary to my orders, that I had neglected warnings, and that I was, in fact, the cause of the very mishaps and evils I had myself foretold—although, I say, I felt the conduct of those superiors to have been eminently time-serving and even cowardly, I can now make fuller allowance for their silence, their evasions, and even for their false statements. Time has brought me some measure of atonement. . . . I went out blind-folded to South Africa in 1898; the bandages soon fell off.' The autobiographer relates in considerable detail what he found to be happening on his arrival in South Africa. He declares:—

'There was an acerbity in political and journalistic life; a girding and goading at the Dutch. . . . I found the newspapers in Cape Town wholly under the influence of Mr. Rhodes, the English journals in the Transvaal outrageous in their language of insult and annoyance. Threats and menaces were being used every day against the Government of the Republic and the people of the Dutch race. The visit of Sir Alfred Milner to England was spoken of as having for its chief object the preparation and pickling of rods for the Republic.'

Over many pages of the interesting volume, Sir William lays stress upon what he regarded as the deliberate misleading of the British public as to what was passing in South Africa, in order to incense them against the Dutch, and he bitterly complains that whilst the work of making up a diplomatic case against the Transvaal had the apparent support of some powerful men, not a word of preparation or warning, or even a query, reached him from the War Office. He further avers that parts of his despatches giving the real position of affairs were suppressed. He believed war was avoidable, and in a despatch to the War Office in June, before the commencement of hostilities, said:—'If the Jews were out of the question, it would be easy enough to come to an agreement, but they are apparently intent upon plunging the country into civil strife.' Sir William points out how he told the authorities of the inadequacy of the British forces in South Africa for effectively

dealing with the Boers, and how suggestions were made from home for the disposition of troops which he told them at the time would have been absolutely futile. He also states that well into June Sir Alfred Milner and Governor Hely-Hutchinson were settling between them the whole campaign, and the general officer commanding altogether ignored. Subsequently he received a telegraphed despatch from the War Office asking for particulars as to transport facilities and for 'his observations.' In his reply he wrote:—'I believe that a war between the white races, coming as a sequel to the Jameson Raid, and the subsequent events of the last three years, would be the greatest calamity that ever occurred in South Africa.'

A Cipher Message.

Three days later he received a cipher telegram from Mr. Chamberlain, which read:—

'You were invited to offer observations as to the suitability of War Office proposals for securing object in view, viz., increased efficiency in existing forces, not as to the general merits of the policy adopted by H.M. Government. You cannot understand too clearly that, whatever your private opinions, it is your duty to be guided in all questions of policy by those who are fully aware of our views and whom you will, of course, loyally support.'

Later, Sir William was informed by Sir Alfred Milner that he had been a hindrance to him in the prosecution of his designs, and in consequence he sent home an explanation, and offered to resign his command. In accepting it, Mr. Chamberlain cabled:—

'Her Majesty's Government has come to the conclusion that Imperial interests would suffer if situation described by you were to be prolonged. Your resignation is therefore accepted, and you should come home as soon as possible. You will hand over provisionally command in the Cape of Good Hope to Colonel Morris, R.E., and command in South Africa to Major-General Symons, who will remain in Natal. Commander-in-Chief has recommended you for appointment as general officer commanding Western district.'

At first Sir William declined the offer, but afterwards accepted. He got two or three telegrams from the War Office hastening his departure, and advising him 'to avoid any demonstration by those hostile to English views.' 'How little,' he observes, 'they knew the principle upon which I had guided my conduct of affairs through all these months. They could not understand that there had not been a "gallery" all the time to which I was playing, and that now my audience would not descend "en masse" to escort me to the ship with bands and banners. The pity and the poverty of it all!'

In an 'after-word,' his daughter Eileen says:—'On his return from South Africa my father found that, as a friend at the War Office informed him, he was "the best abused man in England," and the persistent attacks that were made by a section of the press on his character as an officer and servant of the Crown increased in violence after the opening of hostilities in October. The repeated reverses to our arms at the beginning of the war were attributed to his neglect of warning the Government during his late command; and in consequence of the assertion that he was thus responsible for the surrender of the Gloucester Regiment at Ladysmith at the end of October, he, the general in command of the Western district, was requested not to be present during the Queen's visit to Bristol in November, for fear that the violence and insult threatened against him might cause inconvenience to her Majesty. In the course of an unofficial visit paid by my father to South Africa afterwards, one of the Boer Generals, who had given us the greatest trouble during the war, greeted him with the blunt compliment—"It was lucky for us, General, that you were not against us in the field."'

THE FINANCIAL ASPECT OF HOME RULE

An interesting debate took place at a meeting held in the Imperial Hotel under the auspices of the Dublin and Counties Liberal Association. The subject of the debate was—"Could a Home Rule Government pay its way?" Mr. T. W. Russell presided. There was a good attendance, the audience including some Unionists.

Mr. Dudley Edwards opened the debate, and in the course of his remarks he contended that very substantial reductions in the cost of government could be effected under an Irish Legislature, and also that Ireland would so increase in numbers and in prosperity as to increase her taxable capacity and her revenue. He believed John Bull had sufficient sense to see that if he could only get a contented and loyal people in Ireland and the long-wished-for understanding between England and the United States it would be worth to him the price of many Dreadnoughts.

The chairman said the Budget, hated so cordially, set aside a sum called the Development Grant amounting to something like £700,000 for nothing else but the promotion and development of agriculture. He had been sitting that day with the Agricultural Board approximating a great part of that money for Ireland for the purpose of the reforestation of Ireland, for increasing and developing and improving their system of horse-breeding, and for establishing a great system of scientific research into the diseases of animals, the diseases of plants, and how to meet them and

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