

little while they will clasp hands upon the doctrine that rich men must rule.

At the request of friends in Australia we publish the following letter on the subject of the South African war, with the assurance to begin with that our attitude toward this war is not only not inspired by anti-British feeling, but that we are as intolerant of that species of back-action patriotism as we are of the other kind. Our correspondent, Wesley Spragg, writing from Auckland says:

Your opinions upon the Boer war are, I have reason to believe, the result of imperfect information. None of us here who know you suppose that you are allowing unworthy anti-British feelings to dictate your words. We think you are in this, as in other matters, actuated by your love of right. That is, right as you see it. I do not want to thrust opinions upon you against your will, but it may be well for you to know that reformers here are in favor of the prosecution of the present war by British arms. With a desire to give you our opinion I enclose herewith an extract from a letter by Mrs. Lewis, sister of Schreiner, the Cape Colony premier, and a member of an ultra pro-Boer family. This letter expresses what is believed by us, with some knowledge and evidence to justify our opinions, to be a fair statement of the issues concerned in this war. Some of our fellows, single taxers and ardent reformers, have lived in the Transvaal and in Cape Colony, and these men confirm the charges contained in Mrs. Lewis's letter. Indeed the insolence, oppression and inhumanities of the Boers, of which they are personally aware, have positively scorched their memories. That there are no unworthy persons, with unworthy motives, upon the British side none of us here are so foolish as to suppose. We lament that the spending of British treasure and good British blood should be taken advantage of, as it inevitably will be, by grabbers of the various kinds, who will doubtless seek for and obtain privileges and will set up injustices. This wresting of a thing, righteous in itself, and in the main making for righteousness, is apparently incidental to even the best civilization of the century. While this is a matter for the keenest regret and one calling for the most strenuous efforts of reformers to correct wrong conditions, there is in our minds no question that the present war is one for the destruction of more brutal

oppression and a preparation for the advance of right, and consequently for the good of the human race. Your war with the Philippines, I agree with you, is quite inexcusable; and your Cuban war, as some of us saw it, was only feebly justifiable as compared with Britain's present position. Even your war of independence (which no one has more cause to be thankful for than we British colonists) was a hasty needless revolt by comparison. Your civil war, which resulted in the abolition of chattel slavery, is the nearest parallel to the present just war which Britain is waging in the interests of humanity in South Africa. The quotation attached is the important part of this communication.

Mr. Spragg's reference to the American civil war is not an apt comparison. The coercion of the southern states by the general government, whether right or wrong, was in no possible sense a conquest. Those states were voluntary partners with the other states in a federal compact. They insisted that the compact was not perpetual; the other states insisted that it was. There was no place to try that question except upon the battle field, and as a result the south was coerced to remain in the partnership. The slavery question, though the cause of the war, was not the issue. It was conceded on all hands that the north would have had no right to make war for the abolition of slavery; and Lincoln very cautiously defined his emancipation proclamation as a military act applying only to rebellious territory.

Aside from his comparison of the American civil war with the British war in South Africa, there is nothing whatever in Mr. Spragg's letter to challenge our position toward the latter. He appears, indeed, to rest his whole conclusion upon the extract from Mrs. Lewis's letter which he incloses, and of which he says that it expresses what is believed by him and his friends, "with some knowledge and evidence to justify" their opinions, to be a fair statement of the issues. We shall therefore print so much of the extract as can possibly, from any point of view, be

regarded as stating those issues. Mrs. Lewis says:

If ever there was a war for the Lord of Hosts, if ever there was a war for truth and right, for putting down of oppression and wrong, for the deliverance of a people powerless to deliver themselves, whose wrongs have cried up to heaven, until the Lord has come down to deliver them, this is that war. It is not the grievances of the Uitlanders, though they have been very real, and have called for justice; it is not what British subjects have had to suffer of indignities and wrongs, though they have been numerous under recent Transvaal administration; it is not the insult to England's power and prestige shown by the refusal to concede her moderate demands for justice to be done to her subjects, followed by the unparalleled act of defiance contained in the Transvaal war ultimatum—it is not these things, however they may justly stir the national heart, which call upon us as Christians to bring the united force of God's people, by the power of believing in prayer, to bear upon this war question. British soldiers are dying on African soil to-day to put an end to atrocious wrong. For over 200 years the progenitors of the Transvaal republic and their descendants have crushed, maltreated, and, as far as they have had power to do so, robbed of all rights belonging to them as fellow human beings the colored peoples of this land. On every side individual brutalities were being committed on defenseless victims, and that not by Arab slave drivers, or Moslem oppressors, but by a professedly Christian and highly religious people, who, with the Bible in their hands, and loud profession of faith and prayers, were practicing barbarities, in peace as well as war, which put to shame the records of what the savages of this land have inflicted, even in war time, upon white races.

If that "is a fair statement of the issues concerned in this war," as Mr. Spragg says it is, then the cause of the British is fully as bad as we had supposed. Observe that the whole indictment is not only vaguely general, but one which might be made against any people where slavery had prevailed and the enslaved class remained distinct after having been emancipated. If Mrs. Lewis were to read the story of American slavery for 200 years prior to 1864, and then hear an account or two from eyewitnesses of the horrible mutilation and burning of negroes at the stake in some parts of

this country within a year, she could make as strong an indictment against the United States, and one as true, as she does make against the Boers. But we doubt if Mr. Spragg and his fellow reformers in Australia would therefore favor the prosecution of a war against the United States by the British ministry, nor yet by our outraged Canadian neighbors, even though he had personal knowledge of the truth of the indictment. The question of the justice of the British war in South Africa turns not upon the goodness or badness of the Boers in their internal government. Great Britain has no more right to regulate that than she would have to make war upon Russia to abolish knouting. It depends entirely upon whether it was wantonly made by either party.

That question must be decided, and in history it will be decided, against the British. They seized the Transvaal in 1877, making an unwarranted though bloodless conquest. The Jameson raiders, officered by British army officers, manned by a British police force and carrying the British flag, with the connivance of Rhodes and in all probability of Chamberlain, tried in 1895-96 to seize and subjugate it a second time. And in September-October, 1899, the British ministry threatened its extinction as a government, by force of arms, at the same time placing their active troops in strategic positions and calling out their reserves to make the threat good. It was not until after this that the Boers issued what Mrs. Lewis calls their "unparalleled act of defiance"—the ultimatum. Unparalleled! A powerful nation would not have waited so long. And even that ultimatum, as Mrs. Lewis and all the apologists for the British ministry always conveniently omit to state, was accompanied with an offer to peaceably submit all differences to arbitration. This rejected offer would put Great Britain in the wrong even if she had been in the right before. Lest Mr.

Spragg and our other friends in Australia may still think we are writing under the influence of "imperfect information," let us add the assurance that every word we have here uttered can be verified by reference to British histories and British blue books.

A movement has been started in Chicago to abolish special assessments for street improvement and to put the cost of such improvement upon the general tax levy. The principle urged in support of this change is that street improvements confer benefits upon the whole public. This is true only in one sense, a sense that is moreover irrelevant. Street improvements benefit the whole public only by affording accommodations to the whole public. But they benefit adjacent lot owners in another and very direct and substantial way. They increase the value of their lots. A good sidewalk, for instance, is beneficial to a tenant who must use it in going to and from his residence daily. It accommodates him. But it benefits his landlord financially. His landlord's property is increased in value by it. And the tenant has to pay a higher rent in consequence. In other words, he pays the landlord for his sidewalk accommodation. And that is the rule. Such benefit as the public generally may get from street improvements, they have to pay for to their landlords in increased rents. To make them pay also for the improvements is therefore double taxation. Though special assessments have been much abused in their application, the principle is sound and should not be lightly relinquished.

It is no longer possible to conceal the fictitious character of the "prosperity" of which so much has been heard by the masses during the past two years, and so little seen. The whole flimsy fabric is flapping and fluttering, and a collapse is apparently not far off. That business did experience an improvement, no one disputes; but the activity was due to the

necessity for somewhat replenishing empty shelves. There had been such a long period of starvation that some revival of demand was inevitable. This temporary spurt, when it came, was mistaken for prosperity. But it is over now. We are on the down grade, and shall go on down until the shelves get so bare again that replenishment again becomes a necessity. It would be only human if the bi-metallists attributed the approaching depression to the new gold standard law. They would be reasoning as their adversaries have done. The truth is, however, that the new period of adversity we are entering is not a new one at all, but a fluctuation in the depression that has been with us since 1890. The gold standard law has neither lifted us out of it nor put us into it. It has had no more to do with it, one way or the other, than the color of the chips in a gambling game has to do with the fall of the cards.

Our usually phlegmatic British brethren must henceforth modestly refrain from poking fun at the hysterical French for their unbridled emotions. Irrationally excitable as Frenchmen are, they could hardly have experienced a more severe attack of hysterics if they had conquered Germany than that which overwhelmed the English when Mafeking was relieved. Yet how small the matter that occasioned that display of British weakness. It was but the relief of a British garrison at a point which it had long been conceded ought not to have been garrisoned, and this in a wantonly aggressive war for the subjugation of two little republics with a population less than that of St. Louis. The English will always have many reasons for pride in their traditions, but this outbreak of super-French hysterics over Mafeking will not be accounted among them.

There is now pending before congress a bill, introduced in the senate by McMillan and in the house by Lentz, which should be passed with-