

# THE LEYDS MEMOIRS

KEES VAN HOEK

*Dr. Leyds, whom General Smuts has called "the greatest figure in Transvaal history since President Kruger", now nearing eighty, has for the first time authorised the publication of his unique life story. For the first time he narrates the gigantic efforts of the Boers' Diplomatic Mission with the Chancelleries of Europe, fought as tenaciously as the campaign on the veldt.*

**A** GIANT with only slightly stooping shoulders, a square healthily tanned face, with rosy cheeks and an abundance of silver hair, immaculately parted; Dr. W. J. Leyds, the *éminence grise* of South Africa! More than half a century ago he started his career as Attorney-General of the Transvaal; for more than a decade he was her Secretary-of-State; during the eventful years of 1898-1902, he was Envoy-at-Large of the South African Republic in Europe, ever since to spend the odd thirty-five years of his retirement in "auditing" the Boer leaders' "accounts" for posterity.

About the time of his promotion at Amsterdam, President Kruger had arrived there. He wanted to consult that redoubtable Law Faculty of Amsterdam University for an Attorney-General. Leyds was recommended to him, and offered the post. He spoke about his Transvaal and its great calling, in that manner which was so entirely his own: without flowery words, but simply and deeply earnest. Leyds agreed to a contract.

"It was a funny experience when I arrived at Cape Town, a queer journey, away back in 1884," thus Dr. Leyds begins to recount. "Near Kimberley, not yet connected by rail, we had to take the old mail coach in which three persons could sit on a bench on each side. Drawn by twelve horses it took us two day-journeys, of eighteen hours at a stretch, to reach Potchefstroom, and from there it was one more day to Pretoria."

"A nice place, of about 10,000 inhabitants, not at all primitive as I had anticipated, though not dreaming yet that it would one day become the capital of the Union and the seat of government of the whole of South Africa.

"As Attorney-General I was both head of the Bar and Public Prosecutor. There was, however, little crime in the Transvaal, not even later at Johannesburg with its mixed population. One incident remains in my recollection. During one of my official

journeys a deputation waited at a wayside station to urge me to grow a beard. I looked too young, in their eyes, to get the respect which, so they said, my position deserved!

“Shortly before I relinquished my position of Attorney-General the British Government offered me a knighthood, Commander in the Order of St. Michael and St. George, which of course I declined respectfully, although I appreciated it as a tribute to the way in which justice was administered in the Transvaal.

*Secretary of State.*

“In 1888 I was elected Secretary of State. Those years I passed mostly at my desk in Pretoria and in the Council Chamber. For within a very short span of time the Transvaal had changed from a pastoral country into something quite different. The administrative and legislative task to keep abreast of this astonishing development almost called for superhuman powers.”

(To quote General Smuts: “Dr. Leyds did the work, and he was the only one who could do it. On his shoulders he carried the whole burden of administration. A giant’s task had to be completed in the Transvaal at very short notice, and the man to do it was Dr. Leyds.”)

“I must say”, continues Dr. Leyds, “that I had much support from the Boer Parliament. They were born law-makers, and by no means clumsy people. On the contrary, even after all these years in which I saw so many parliaments, I still give them the plum for parliamentary decorum. With their imposing beards, and dressed completely in black as they were, only broken by a white tie, and under a Chairman whose ruling was unchallenged law, they knew how to preserve not just order but dignity itself.

“In search of a throat specialist, I went on leave to Europe. Naturally I had also a number of political contacts. In Berlin I met Prince Hohenlohe, the Chancellor. When after the Great War the Diplomatic Correspondence of the Pre-War Cabinets was published in Germany, a report came to light which Hohenlohe had sent to the Kaiser relating to our conversations. ‘Dr. Leyds’, it runs, ‘is a suspicious man, he detests the idea of a German protectorate on the Boer Republics as much as a British one!—’

“More interesting to me was the invitation of Bismarck to visit him at his estate Friedrichsruhe. One could hardly describe

it as a conversation; Bismarck was the solo speaker and, incidentally, his voice was amazing, nobody would have expected such a high pitched small tenor voice to come forth from so immense a bulk. One of the first things he said to me was: 'Be careful with the English'. I interposed, 'Indeed, Durchlaucht, I know the English'... 'No, you don't,' came the instant correction, 'you are far too young to know. And let me assure you from my experience', and he thumped his chest with his big pipe from which he was puffing like a locomotive, 'I grant you that the Englishman in his private life is a decent chap, but when he becomes a politician, he leaves his conscience outside with his overcoat.

"Bismarck never minced his words. He fulminated copiously against the Empress Augusta and the Court ladies who surrounded her. Only seldom could I jump into a slight pause to put in questions. I had asked him for his views on the colonial aspirations of Germany. He was very outspokenly against that 'fashion' as he styled it contemptuously. 'What is left in the world is not worth the bones of one Prussian soldier, and will only weaken Germany internationally.' He was nothing if not a *Realpolitiker*: 'Can you see much value in those crumbs disdained by the powers who have banquetted so well from the colonial table?', he asked me, and before I could utter a considered opinion he had settled the question himself: 'I can't'".

"In London", thus my host switches over the scene, "I naturally went to pay a courtesy call on Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. Exactly the man of his picture, complete with eyeglass and orchid. He did strike me as a very able man, above all as very clever and as a dangerously astute debater. Socially the Chamberlains made quite a fuss of my wife and myself.

"It was in the days of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The English authorities had put splendid seats at our disposal to view the State Procession. But when Chamberlain invited me to watch the Naval Review at Spithead as his guest, I told my secretary to find out who else would be there, and it just happened to be all the Colonial Prime Ministers. I had no desire to be classified amongst Colonial Premiers, but on the other hand I could not abruptly refuse his invitation, having accepted others. So I hurriedly went to Holland and called on Pierson, the Dutch Prime Minister, and my old Professor from Amsterdam University. He saw my predicament at once, telephoned the Admiral of the Dutch fleet to come over, and brushing aside the latter's remonstrances, ordered that a Dutch

warship should be put in readiness at once, to give me an opportunity of viewing the British Naval Review from neutral territory!"

As my host's mind travelled back through the aisles of the years, I had asked him for his earliest recollections of other famous contemporaries. "Rhodes", he complied, "I met in '85, and although there was no great sympathy lost between us, we could collaborate excellently because he was a man of his word. Another man whom I met in those days was young Gandhi, who lived in Pretoria and who travelled through the country to protect the rights of his countrymen. He was right from his point of view, and a very decent fellow, only we did not want to give them the same rights as the white population. One can't, for though the culture of a Brahmin is on a totally different plane, the Kaffirs would not understand that difference. For them it is an easy division: black and white.

"When I resigned as Secretary of State for reasons of health, the Government desired me to become Transvaal Envoy in Europe. It was essential that we should explore public opinion and official sentiment in the principal European countries, and attempt to sway sympathies towards our cause. Thus I was accredited as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Courts of Germany, Russia, Holland, Belgium and Portugal, and to the Government of France.

#### *Envoy in Europe.*

"The English showed themselves irritated from the start. Although there was the 1884 declaration from Lord Derby, then Foreign Secretary, recognising the full diplomatic status of the Transvaal, the British Government now gave instructions to its diplomatic representatives abroad not to recognise me. When I wanted to pay the usual courtesy call to the British Ambassador in Paris, London forbade him to receive me. In Berlin, Sir Frank Lascelles managed to find a compromise between his personal sympathies and the official antipathies which he was 'forced to feign'.

"Foreign Courts and Governments did not pay attention to England's touchiness in the matter. At the wedding of the Czar's sister Olga to the Duke of Oldenburg, Larsdorff, the Russian Foreign Minister, under threat of the British Embassy, had omitted to invite the South African Chargé d' Affaires at St. Petersburg, van der Hoeven. When the Czar got to hear of this, he invited the Transvaal diplomat personally, whereupon

the whole British Embassy stayed away from the ceremonies and festivities.

"I have been called the 'stormy petrel' of the Boers, but instead of urging the Boers on, of stiffening their back with impressions that they could expect support from Europe, it was my sad task, practically right from the start, to make them realise that no such help could be expected. My correspondence with Reitz, my successor as Secretary of State, found by the English on the capture of Pretoria, proves that abundantly. I did not of course urge submission, but I did urge moderation.

"In Berlin, for instance, I found von Bulow, the Chancellor, outspokenly friendly towards us; his Foreign Office, however, feared England's supremacy at sea and considered it impossible for Germany to render any effective assistance. The Kaiser himself, never consistent for long, had already far retreated from his historic Jameson Raid telegram to Kruger. He was annoyed that we had ordered guns of Creusot, the French armament manufacturers: 'We are the gun merchants of the world', he told us. He worked the bogey of the English Navy overtime, as an excuse for not being able to render any help. But in fact he never wanted to. He urged me to get France and Russia to take action against England, but I felt that he was simply double-crossing us.

"When I was received by Czar Nicolas at St. Petersburg, his first question, almost his first words, were: 'Can you explain to me what none of my ministers and ambassadors can fathom—why has the German Emperor changed front so abruptly on the Boer question?' My own opinion was that the Kaiser, with his highly erratic temperament, had been cleverly flattered by the English, and was out for their friendship and favours. Another important factor which I knew to influence him was the strongly pro-English attitude of international finance; Frankfort and Paris saw eye-to-eye with the Rothschilds in London.

"I had chosen Brussels as the seat of our European Legation because it was so centrally situated for my many journeys to the other European capitals. We had only a restricted budget: £15,000 was the sum total of expenditure allotted by the Transvaal for the whole of our diplomatic and consular service. One of the many fables which I must never get tired of slaying is the story that fabulous consignments of gold and diamonds were sent to me in Europe. No money, gold or precious stones came at any time abroad from South Africa during the war. On the contrary, the Government drew on its European accounts.

We were in a very tight corner when, after Roberts's entrance into Johannesburg, Mr. Chamberlain tried to intimidate our Dutch bankers not to honour my signature any more! Eminent counsel's advice was necessary to call his bluff, but to be on the safe side the Pretoria Government passed a resolution placing all our funds under my own name as sole trustee. In the meantime I had paid Creusot's bill with South African railway shares, of which Chamberlain also disputed our rights to dispose, but as he could not afford to quarrel with the biggest French ammunition manufacturers, he had to allow them to be turned into cash.

"Our greatest difficulty, after war had broken out, was that of communication with the Government at home. For the English refused to transmit cablegrams; only those for the Red Cross were let through. Before, we used to cable in code. It was a lengthy business to cypher and decypher them. We had various methods, one of our most popular was a certain edition of a certain Dutch dictionary, and 1547 for instance would mean the 15th word on page 47.

"We had all sorts of jobs to do at the Legation. One of the nastiest was to demask 'Boers' who toured Europe, crashing in everywhere on Boer popularity, but understanding no Dutch, English or Afrikaans; grown up men of whom it was openly advertised that they were born at Johannesburg—which was not founded until 1887!

"Help reached us from every quarter, but the majority came in the francs, marks and guilders of the masses. In France the Protestants did not dare to help, because their missions counted on English financial support, but the Catholics gave lavishly, although Catholicism was at that time still a negligible factor in the Transvaal. John Redmond—just to give you another idea of the strange variety of our task—asked repeatedly for material to rebut the assertion that the Boer Republics discriminated against Roman Catholics. The Irish were wholeheartedly on our side.

"A great part of my correspondence was taken up in preventing any violation of the neutrality of other powers. Whenever I heard of any English order, be it in America, in Spain or in Greece, I protested immediately and strongly. Often these protests had success. Horses and mules, which England was buying up everywhere, were unfortunately not recognized as contraband, and those protests consequently remained useless. But I got the German Government to forbid German shipping companies to transport officers of the English army. Many an

English order, be it for guns or foodstuff, was, however, executed by Germany, notwithstanding the protests of an indignant *Reichstag* where von Richthofen, the Foreign Under Secretary, proclaimed the sacred theory of 'business is business'.

—"How did the Boer Delegation to Europe fare?" I had enquired.

"They were sound men, but not diplomats. For one thing, they needed interpreters everywhere, which does not leave a great chance to success. I met them shortly after their arrival, in April, 1900, in Milan. At our conference there I found it difficult to persuade the Boer Delegation of my views. I therefore took Fischer—the head—in secrecy to Paris. There he met Prince Ourousoff, the Russian Ambassador, who supported my advice, as that very fine Englishman W. T. Stead did. After they had gone to Holland, which with its exposed colonial empire could not afford, of course, to side against England, the Delegation went to Berlin. Berlin was a fiasco, and so was St. Petersburg, where the Czar refused to receive them. As His Majesty said to me, 'Why are these gentlemen here? You are the Minister properly accredited to my Court, you can always see me. Besides, do you think it is pleasant for the Czar of all the Russias to have to say 'no' twice, against his own heart and inclinations?' The populace in St. Petersburg had received the Deputation with ovations; they broke the police cordons. But the papers were not allowed to mention the Deputation, and only permitted to speak of me.

"One of the many amazing facets of my time as Envoy has been the alternate periods of the bitterest abuse and consistent attempts to bribe me", recalls Dr. Leyds. "Some papers even managed to hint darkly that the murder of King Humbert of Italy had some sinister ramifications traced down to me! It sounds incredible, but those papers got away with it. On the other hand, in June, 1900, Botha, de la Rey and De Wet were each offered a pension of £10,000 per year if they gave in—a year later they tried to bribe me with a lump sum of £400,000 offered on a group of international bankers! We never entertained these approaches any further than was sufficient to ascertain the genuineness of the offers, which we considered more amusing than serious, though somewhat flattering...

*The Old Queen and the Young.*

—"But weren't there any attempts at mediation?"

"Indeed there were. I may say that I myself had suggested the appeal of Queen Wilhelmina to Queen Victoria. The Young

Girl, on the threshold of her reign, pleading for her kinsmen with the Old Lady at the close of hers—the chance seemed to me felicitous. But I had only suggested an appeal for arbitration and for humane conduct of warfare. However, it came to nothing—Victoria felt affronted by the eager tone of Wilhelmina. The Dutch Queen was so insistent on helping the Boer cause that she wrote later to Kaiser Wilhelm, suggesting a combined mediation. When the Kaiser refused, she became very nervous, but her desire to do her utmost for the Boers was so real that only her Foreign Minister could dissuade her, on constitutional grounds, from appealing to the Czar.

“Another mediation, not based on might but on right, was sought with the Holy See. In his Allocution at the anniversary of his ascent to the Papal Throne, in 1900, the Pope had referred to the South African conflict in terms of unmistakable sympathy for the Boers. Fischer went to Rome to see Cardinal Rampolla, the Secretary of State, whose sympathy was enlisted. But Leo XIII was already exceedingly old, and the Sacred College would not risk an *echec*. “England is haughty”, they said, “and we must wait for a favourable chance.” Cardinal Vaughan, the Archbishop of Westminster, was something of an imperialist, and he was not altogether unsuccessful in nullifying the prospective Papal support.

“Another country to which we had turned an expectant eye was the United States. The American Dutch, German and Irish were almost en-bloc on our side. But also people like Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish born multi-millionaire. Hay, the U. S. Secretary of State, was pro-English, and President MacKinley, trembling in his boots as the presidential elections drew nearer, made a feeble attempt for arbitration which the London Cabinet promptly rebuffed, knowing it to be a mere election stunt. Carnegie analysed the difficult position very outspokenly when he wondered how the U. S. A. could do much, as long as they themselves were playing an equally shameful part in coercing the Philippines, destroying their independence. Incidentally, to show you how even a slight change of wind could affect a course: when the terms of the Rhodes Will were published, America was highly flattered! It is amazing how public opinion can be suddenly swayed: when General Cronje was taken prisoner and sent to St. Helena, a wave of anti-English fury flooded France, for any man, however brave, to be deemed worthy of the retreat of the incomparable Napoleon was sacrilege.

“Among the more persistent mediators was Sir Hiram Maxim, the inventor of the Maxim gun and a confidant of King



Edward VII. He had first approached me with a scheme for wholesale Boer emigration to Mexico, which of course was too fantastic altogether to be entertained. But early in 1902 he came again, and this time the King knew of it, with the suggestion that the Boers should appeal to Edward VII—about whose sympathies for the Boers he tried to convince me—accepting him as their arbiter. Well-meant, the scheme of course could never have worked. For the King to go against the wishes of his ministers, about to see a ripe fruit fall in their lap, was unthinkable—as unthinkable as the Boers accepting unconditionally the English Sovereign's arbitration, he the head of the invading nation.

“Lord Rosebery in his historic speech at Chesterfield had spoken of the casual meeting of two travellers in a neutral inn. We knew that he was not unsympathetic. Being no friend of Milner, he was willing to intercede for us with Lord Salisbury. In the meantime, however, a very pessimistic letter of Reitz had fallen into Kitchener's hands, from which London adjudged the Boers' case hopeless in their own estimation. The Chesterfield speech rekindled old hopes; Lloyd George was of the opinion that if the Boers could stick out for another year, their independence would be secure. On the strength of it a meeting with an emissary was arranged at Brussels. The Prime Minister of Holland took the situation a step further, and through the Netherlands Minister in London suggested to the Foreign Secretary that in view of the isolation of the Boer emissaries in Europe, they should be given free conduct to consult their Government. But Lord Lansdowne refused any form of foreign intervention, and the faint spark of mediation died out.

“Until the last moment, however, there were Russian possibilities. The Czar had assured me that if the Kaiser would promise not to side with England, Russia would be willing to intervene and to prevent a complete annihilation of the Boer Republics. Not only to me did the Czar testify his willingness; he even instructed his Ambassador in Berlin, Count von Osten-Sacken, to win over von Bulow, the German Chancellor. Even later Russia suggested a mutual action with France, again provided Germany would promise to remain neutral, as they did not, of course, want a European war to flare up. The Transvaal wasn't worth that! But Germany did not want to commit herself.

“I will not say, in the unlikely event of Germany having pledged her neutrality, that the Russian attempt would have

succeeded", weighs Dr. Leyds. "For Delcassé was very lukewarm, though he did take a great interest in the distribution of our pamphlet "A Century of Wrong", a brilliant accusation which young Smuts had written, but as he was yet unknown it had been "issued", for better effect, by Reitz. It was eagerly used by our friends in England to wake up the conscience of their compatriots."

*Paul Kruger.*

Amidst the bibelots and art treasures of Dr. Leyds's rooms stands in a place of honour the replica of Van Wouw's statue of President Kruger. It shows him in exile, sitting back in his chair, a plaid over his legs, one arm spread over the big Bible open on his lap, in which he is reading.

Dr. Leyds stands in front of it, as he must have done countless times through the years. He squares his shoulders as if to shake off that mist before his eyes. For this is his president, no man has known him so intimately as he did. No one either knows better how little the world could measure the great proportions of his hero's heart and head.

"Paul Kruger's name and fame were his own making. His personal courage in expeditions against the Kaffirs made him renowned as "the bravest among the brave." He gradually became known too for his sound advice, in the councils of war as well as in the councils of the Church and the People. He did not speak well, he was far from a born orator, but he was always deeply sincere, so obviously honest that his words could persuade multitudes.

"It has been rumoured that he was illiterate, which is of course absurd nonsense. He read and wrote little, because of his constant affliction: his eyelashes grew inward, and irritated the eye; he had to be treated for that regularly. In later years Dr. Heymans, now the South African minister at Rome, had to be in daily attendance so as to make life bearable at all. He was certainly not a scholar, but he knew a great deal nevertheless. He used to listen with closed eyes to drafts and memorandums being read out to him; years later he would still remember the slightest detail or alteration, for his memory was astonishing.

"His enemies granted him a certain peasant slyness. But as a matter of fact he was one of the shrewdest men alive. Nor was he narrow-minded. By inclination he was a liberal, an enlightened man, both politically and religiously. He knew

no discrimination against Catholics or Jews; when inevitable he approved even of work on the Sabbath. And that for a man who in private life was a Dopper, the most Calvinistic of Calvinists, means something!

“Although a staunch family man, he did not want any of his sons to enter the State services if they lacked, in his opinion, the necessary capabilities, for his honesty was Biblical. He once came back on horse-back in the middle of the night to my house to admit that he had wronged me. He refused to use against his adversaries what he knew from them to their detriment from the times of their friendship. He had a great loyalty to his officials.

“There are people who impress by their gifts of heart, others by their talents of brain—Kruger had both. Bismarck found his impression ‘terrific’, as he told me himself, and so entirely different a personality as John Redmond, the Irish leader, was struck by the nobility of his character.

“Far-sighted as he was, he realized the greatest fault of his countrymen to be their discord. He constantly tried to convince. How well does one remember his delightful informal stoep talks, where he received everyone who cared to consult him on the wide verandah of his hospitable house. But he was astute enough not to advance too rapidly. He kept sure of his following, and never over-reached his goal.

“Of his simple grandeur of heart”, says Dr. Leyds movingly, “I can recollect no more touching example than how, on my return from my first visit to Europe in '96, the President was at the station at Pretoria to welcome me, a signal honour which he had rigidly fixed so far for nobody else but Mrs. Kruger. He took me to his home in his carriage, and there he said to me, taking both my hands in his, ‘Doctor, I have missed you so much; and as long as you have been away, I have prayed for you every day.’ And thinking of differences and difficulties which we never hid from each other, but which we always had ‘out’ on the spot, he added naively: ‘You know, your blood is hot, and so is mine, and when they touch, then the sparks fly’ . . . Could one help being devoted to such a Chief?” asks Dr. Leyds.

“When I met him again, it was on his arrival in Europe. The President was too old to stand the wear of war on the veldt; besides, the risk of his falling into the hands of the English was too great. The Dutch Government sent a warship, the *Gelderland*, to bring him in safety to Europe.

“Turning a necessity into a virtue, we decided to make a last bid for the Boer cause with the President’s popularity. Roberts had proclaimed the annexation of the Boer Republics, but Europe received Kruger not only as the head of an independent state, but as a hero. The brave struggle of the Boers against impossible odds had set the imagination of a continent aflame. Napoleon could not have been welcomed with more *elan* than Kruger was on arrival at Marseilles. The whole of France seemed to have gathered there to cheer him. It was a marvellous welcome, all along the route to Paris. At Dyon where we stayed the night, the whole town had been illuminated in his honour. In Paris, where the *Introduceur des Ambassadeurs* was at the station, a guard of honour presented arms, the French standards dipped to the strain of the Transvaal National Anthem; curassiers accompanied him in an open state-carriage to the Elysee Palace, where the President of the Republic, Emile Loubet, awaited him at the top of the gala staircase.

“It was a day of rejoicing, the populace was delirious, but the anti-climax came that self-same day, in Delcassé’s room at the Quai d’Orsay. Kruger was already very tired. With his pained eyes he glanced through the vast and luxurious study of the French Foreign Ministers, with its soft carpets, its dim lights. It did not take him long to realize from the trend of the conversation that Delcassé had no intention of initiating a move, that the French nation’s undoubted enthusiasm was not going to be translated into any concrete form of assistance by that nation’s government. An infinite weariness spread over his honest old face, the sturdy hands fumbled feebly for the top hat which he had put down next to him, and slowly his bent figure rose to take leave....

“From Paris we went to Germany, but in Cologne a high Court dignitary arrived to beseech the President in the name of the Emperor to relinquish his intention of proceeding to Berlin. We didn’t of course dream for a moment of insisting, though the populace stood outside the hotel and called again and again for the President to appear on the balcony, right through the night. Fortunately Kruger was rather deaf in his declining years, and he slept undisturbed through the whole din.

“In the Reichstag Liebknecht, then Socialist deputy for Berlin, called the government’s machinations a dirty job. Hundreds of telegrams from all parts and quarters of Germany poured in, honouring the ideal which Kruger represented, but which the Kaiser, with a slavish government at his bidding, had shamelessly betrayed.

“Kruger withdrew in retirement. He grew rapidly old, increasingly deaf and almost blind. The death of his wife in South Africa (she had been too old to be moved) was a terrible blow for him. He stayed mostly at Utrecht, looked after by his daughter and son-in-law and a few officials, almost always at home, reading his Bible and receiving visitors. Stead was one of the many who asked to be allowed to pay their homage to the President of the Republic ‘which we have so cruelly injured.’ Kruger stubbornly refused to change Holland for the milder climate of the Riviera, where his rheumatism would have plagued him much less, as long as war was still raging and so many of his countrymen exposed on the veldt to far greater hardships. After Peace was signed, he had refused to return to the Transvaal, he found the thought of ending his days under English rule unbearable.

“He died in 1904, at the age of 78, at Clarens on the Lake of Geneva. I arrived a few hours after he had passed away. His face was serene in the Eternal Peace into which he had entered. His body was embalmed and a special ship chartered to bring it back to South Africa. The Dutch Admiral MacLeod accompanied it with me on its tragic last journey home, and all the British warships which we met on our long route south dipped their flags in respectful salute. . . .

“More than 10,000 people awaited at Cape Town the arrival of his sarcophag, which from there was brought by rail to Pretoria, where the solemn interment, supervised by Botha, took place.

#### *Peace and Aftermath.*

“Immediately after the conclusion of Peace in 1902, all the leading Afrikaners came to Holland, the Generals Botha, De Wet, de la Rey, Hertzog, President Steyn, Reitz and Schalk Burger. Botha brought all his files with him: 15,000 war despatches were sent on to me, and also the files of all our Consulates abroad. I had to buy a house to file the Archives, and I needed a staff to help me in the sorting and editing of them. To this I have devoted all my time.

“I was to ‘audit’, so to speak, the Boers’ account for posterity. I wrote my two books, *The First Annexation* and *The Transvaal Surrounded*. I must admit that both books met with a far better reception in London, where they were published, than I had dared to hope. I also edited my correspondence during the years of my diplomatic mission, mainly to prove to

posterity that I had never dangled promises of help by the Great Powers before the eyes of my Home Government."

—Did you ever visit South Africa again?

"I went to Pretoria in 1909 and saw all my old friends—and former foes! Botha and Smuts arranged a dinner in my honour. The High Commissioner, Lord Selborne, entertained me at Johannesburg. He asked me what I thought of British-Dutch co-operation, and I think my reply still holds good to-day. I feel that this collaboration depends entirely on the British. If they try to make Britishers out of Afrikaners, then nothing can be done, for I had found a strong Afrikaans consciousness. But if the British were out to reach in collaboration the best for South Africa, then nothing, I felt, stood now between us."

—"You do not bear England any hatred then?" I had carefully ventured. Slowly Dr. Leyds, looking back, formulates his philosophy of life.

"I have never had great faith in any law or regulation, however solemnly entered into, once it does no longer suit the interest of a Great Power. War and humanity simply do not mix. As to the outbreak of the war itself: it was the result of the machinations of financiers, of Big Money and Big Business. The people had no grievances. The financiers wanted complete control of the goldfields, and Chamberlain and Milner saw in it a chance of serving their imperialistic ends.

"Recently people have compared Italy's action in Abyssinia, condemned by the whole world, with England's example in the Boer War. I must say that I do not agree with that comparison. For the war in South Africa was the war of an English clique, at which the conscience of the English nation often openly revolted. Members were suspended in Parliament for taking our side. When an English army captain posted notices in a certain place threatening—unless the men surrendered themselves—that their women and children would be turned out destitute and homeless, the *London Star* at once thundered its protest against such disgraceful inhumanity. The Liberal Party put many a check to 'methods of barbarism' as Campbell Bannerman openly branded them. People like Lloyd George, Massingham, Spender, Scott and Nash—papers like the *Manchester Guardian*, and the *Westminster Gazette*, have redeemed the conscience of England, which would otherwise have stood condemned before the tribunal of world opinion. In the Congregational Union, the Nonconformist churches pleaded for honourable terms of peace for a 'brave people.'

"Hence, when during the Great War Germany approached

me with the offer to put unlimited funds at my disposal if I would be willing to engender strife again the British in South Africa, I flatly and indignantly refused. For, first of all, the promises made at the Peace of Vereeniging have been kept by the British, and the England of 1914 had long ceased to be the England of Milner, out to break the Afrikaanders' neck. And moreover, for Germany of all nations, just after its brutal invasion of Belgium, to play the rôle of deliverer in South Africa, was so preposterous a suggestion that to me it looked almost like a joke."

—I had asked South Africa's oldest living statesman for his opinion of his contemporaries.

"With Botha I differed most, because he was the most pro-English. He had an irresistible charm, but that was also his weak point, it was so easy to get at him with flattery. But I have always realised that what he did, even though I disagreed at the time, he did in the sincere conviction that it served the best interests of his country and of his people.

"Hertzog has always been more independent. Of all the statesmen I have learned to know, he is the most honest and sincere; he would not lie even if it would benefit him, and he keeps his given word scrupulously.

"Smuts is one of those rare people of whom a whole century produces only a few in the whole world. I remember that he followed as a boy the classes of Stellenbosch College, where Mansvelt, my later Director of Education in the Transvaal, taught him his superb Dutch. When Smuts was about sixteen, he had written an essay on Fruin's famous book on the Eighty Years War between Holland and Spain. It was so astonishingly mature, so absolutely brilliant that Mansvelt once showed it to me. As soon as Smuts had settled at Johannesburg as a lawyer, he drew attention to his great gifts. Still young, he was elected Attorney-General, the post which I had held myself fifteen years before. Our relations have always been very cordial, and we have corresponded regularly.

"He has such a unique range of gifts, there are a thousand facets to his brain and each of them is brilliant: he is as good a statesman as a general, as fine a philosopher as a scientist, he could be at the head of any ministry and be the greatest in the cabinet. I remember that Edward Bok, the publisher of the *Saturday Evening Post*, told me after he had observed Smuts at the Versailles Peace Conference, that if Smuts were Prime Minister of Britain, England would lead the world.

"When, at the signing of the Peace Treaty, Smuts was the

only one who registered his protest at a Peace which was no Peace, I congratulated him on his great moral courage. I felt that a deed like that could only confirm his fame for foresight." Dr. Leyds lays before me one of the letters which he treasures most. It is dated London July 9th, 1919, and written on Savoy Hotel notepaper, in Smuts's own hand: "Paris has been a bitter experience for me. I feel sure that my point of view is more universally shared than one would judge from the press." He then refers to his "close collaboration with the Dutch representatives", and he concludes: "I have been able to render some service to the old Mother Country. May God bless her in the troublesome days which lie ahead of Europe."

—I query my host as to the Union's present problems: "South Africa must remain white: it is the great task which should unite English and Dutch. That is the reason why, if you ask my opinion, I am against a return of former German South West to Germany. We cannot tolerate a herd of subversive elements of White against White on the very borders of the Union. I do not believe, however, that the Union is seriously thinking of ceding that territory. Certainly not the Boers, who are real democrats, each a king in his own right."

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In October two years ago the University of Pretoria—of which Dr. Leyds holds an Honorary Degree—celebrated the unveiling of a bust of the man, whom Smuts, as long ago as 1909, had called "the greatest figure in Transvaal history after President Krüger."

The most distinguished audience which South Africa could muster—headed by the Union Prime Minister General Hertzog—rose to the strains of the old Transvaal Volkslied: "to pay homage to the memory of a man who played a great rôle in the history of the Transvaal," as the Head of the University had put it.

General Smuts pronounced the eulogy, he traced the work of his great predecessor of whom he has always felt that he was not treated justly. "Thank God", thus Smuts concluded, "that he is still alive. His name must never perish."

Six thousand miles away, the man still lives to whom his old companions, mere youngsters in his time, now paid so generous a tribute. I had asked him how he looked at South Africa to-day, at the close of his life. And Dr. Leyds answered simply: "I consider it a supreme privilege that it has been given to me to be a witness of what I do not hesitate to call South Africa's final victory."

The Afrikaners had a word for it: *Alles sal reg kom!*