

## CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS

### THE DISPOSSESSED NATIVES OF RHODESIA

SIR,

Miss, or Mrs. Aileen Millar, in her rather hysterical attack upon me, refrains from advancing any credentials entitling her to make such a vicious attack ; but possibly the fact that the spelling of this lady's name appears to be the same as that of the Secretary of the Chartered Company (The British South Africa Company), may be taken as some clue to the identity and motive of the writer !

Miss Millar, with a sort of *ex cathedra* authority, pontifically declares that my statements have been " proved inaccurate so often " that it has become impossible for reliable historians to accept them. This is charming, but, unfortunately, I cannot find this lady's name amongst historians—whether responsible or not—neither can I find her name in any works of reference.

Miss Millar is apparently so inexperienced in the accepted standards of public controversy that she very carefully avoids producing a tittle of evidence in support of her statements, beyond apparently a discursive letter of Mr. Marshall Hole, who, as a paid servant of the Chartered Company, can hardly be expected to denounce his employers in the Press.

Another touch of amusing *naïveté* is where I am taken to task for having included in the preface of my book *Chartered Millions* the ordinary recognition which authors are compelled—as well by courtesy as by coypright law—to observe, namely, suitable acknowledgments for having extracted from the writings and speeches of others. If Miss Millar or Sir Charles Coghlan, whom she quotes, will go even to the most insignificant of booksellers, the office-boy would quickly put them right upon this elemental fact of authorship.

It will, however, be more pleasant—as well as fruitful—to your readers, to leave Miss Millar to enjoy the literary oblivion from which she has temporarily emerged, and draw attention to the more serious facts connected with the dispossession of the natives of Rhodesia.

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The first cardinal fact to bear in mind is that, so far as we are aware, the natives of Rhodesia are the only natives in the territory of any Colonial Power who have ever been completely dispossessed of all their ownership rights in land. The Rhodesian expropriation went much further than that of King Leopold. In the Congo Free State, the basis of the expropriation was that all unoccupied lands belonged to the State, thus leaving to the natives at least the lands they were occupying. In Rhodesia there is no pretence that ownership has been left to the natives anywhere. Everything has gone; no native owns a foot of land in his own country; he does not own the ground on which his hut is built, his grazing lands, or gardens. This fact makes the natives of Rhodesia unique in the Colonial history of the world. It is no answer to say that half the population is adequately provided with occupation grants on Reserve lands; the other half of the population pays tribute to the white man for presuming to continue to live upon the lands of their forebears. Moreover, we have recently seen the difference between "ownership" and "a Reserve occupation right," for 35,000 natives are in the process of eviction, and the best estimates we can make are that this will involve the unfortunate natives in an equivalent loss of between £150,000 and £200,000.

(2) This dispossession, so complete, owes its origin to the intention of the leaders of the Chartered Company to carry out this expropriation. The *Memoirs* of Mr. de Waal, are crowded with references as to the *intention* of Mr. Rhodes and his colleagues to take the land from the natives, and this, be it remembered, before the Chartered Company occupied Matabeleland! Those who are interested in the process by which this expropriation was engineered, should read a copy of the infamous secret Agreement made by Sir Starr Jameson. This filibustering document was brought to light by Mr. Leslie Scott, K.C., during the proceedings before the Privy Council. It promised to everyone who would follow Jameson in his invasion of Matabeleland, the pick of the lands of the people whose country they proposed to invade. It further promised to divide "the loot" which they took from the natives,

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between them. The total value which this buccaneering instrument dangled before the eyes of the invaders was about £7,000,000, or if one wishes the equivalent, virtually that which Pizarro and his *conquistadores* gleaned from the invasion and exploitation of the Incas. But every British subject should read this secret Agreement and the *Memoirs* of de Waal, which disclose one of the most sordid incidents of Colonial exploitation.

(3) The third fact to bear in mind is the way in which the wars on the natives were carried out. The cause of the first attack upon the Matabele was in point of fact the Jameson Agreement. The cause of the 1896 war was partly Sir Starr Jameson's invasion of the Transvaal, and partly the infliction of forced labour and outrages upon the Matabele and Mashona natives. The highest legal authority in this country at the moment is, without question, the principal representative of the Crown, namely, Sir Gordon Hewart, K.C., the Attorney-General. Nothing has been written or spoken with regard to these attacks upon the natives so indignantly eloquent and conclusive as the description which Sir Gordon Hewart gave of these attacks before Lord Cave's Commission during the hearing in the House of Lords.

I am, Sir,

Yours, etc.,

JOHN H. HARRIS.

*To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS*

SIR,

In reply to Miss Millar :

(1) A reasoned historical judgment on such an event as the Matabele War of 1893 is not easily set out in few words, and I avoided it in my article for that reason. But if the challenge be made, it must be accepted. Miss Millar makes it. According to her, the war was the result of the philanthropic desire of the Chartered Company to protect a number of Mashona raided by Lobengula. In my opinion,

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while this was erected into a *casus belli*, the aim of Jameson and the Company was the conquest of the Matabele, and of the Mashona with them, and the annexation of all their territories.

I base my opinion on—

(a) The evidence that the Company was aiming at war long before November, 1893, e.g. the *Financial Times*' statement in 1892 that the Chartered Company were doing "all in their power to provoke Lobengula"; Lobengula's own remonstrance with them (July 27, 1893); Colenbrander's remonstrance (August 3); the expression of the opinion of the manager of the Tati Concession "that the object and aim of it all (i.e. declaration of war) is British aggrandisement"; the signing of the Victoria Agreement as early as August 14 without the knowledge of the Government; and the words of so eminent an authority as Mr. Dawson on September 9 to Mr. J. S. Moffat: "I am firmly convinced that Loben does not want to fight. . . . I cannot see where the probability of hostilities occurring becomes apparent unless . . . the Company . . . wish to see the thing out."

(b) The evidence that in making war the Company sought far more than was necessary for the protection of these Mashona. The Victoria Agreement, with its promise of 4,000,000 acres to the troopers, a half share of "loot" [*sic*] to the men and half to the Company, and its allotment to each man of fifteen claims on reef and five alluvial claims, reads to me remote from philanthropic protection of Mashona. Add to this the fact that the more one examines the story, the more plainly appears the iron determination of Jameson to carry it through to its bitter end, for the Matabele impi, estimated at 8000, drops on investigation to 800; it is in retreat and the white men open fire upon it; the Matabele offer practically no resistance (as was officially admitted); and both on October 18, 1893, and January 12, 1894, Lobengula's peace envoys were (to put it mildly) refused a hearing. No attempt was made to obtain the protection of the Mashona other than by this complete smashing of the Matabele, which cost £120,000,

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and which resulted, moreover, in the Mashonas being also completely dispossessed of their lands.

Thirdly, (c) the historian must take into consideration the character of the principals. Jameson and his friends, at the bar of history, are the men who were capable of plotting and carrying out the Jameson Raid. Jameson was the man who, because a white trader alleged robbery against a chief Ngomo, sent Capt. Lendy on an expedition which resulted in the deaths of twenty-one natives and the looting of forty-seven head of cattle without a single white man being injured. Thus Jameson does not seem to me to be much of a philanthropist, and when I consider that his protection of the Mashona has resulted in the entire annexation of the whole of their lands, I am still more doubtful of the disinterested character of the proceedings. One is reminded of other historic philanthropic acts. The proto-philanthropists of the Jameson type are our friends Hengist and Horsa, who came to protect the men of Kent. The Mashona and the Kentish men had, in the end, much the same opinion of the value of protection.

Lastly, on this point, Miss Millar quotes the statement "6000 acres . . . £9000" as if I were responsible for it. It is simply the statement of the certified copy of Jameson's agreement with his troopers, *and the reward they expected to get*. Her admission that (in certain cases) this promise of the Chartered Company ultimately turned out to be as brittle as pie-crust does not astonish me. One can only wish it had been the last of that nature.

(2) Miss Millar's statement is incorrect. The tribes are not confused. They both rose within a few months of one another, in fact the Mashona first. Their losses were frightful. In one case Mashona were burned to death by the avenging white force in the caves to which they had fled for protection.

(3) Thus the natives are admitted to pay tax without representation for a government which has been imposed upon them. And the list of its charitable organizations reads beautifully. If, however, the Company were to cease to be a remunerative commercial affair, what of all this would remain? The Mission schools and works of

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charity, yes. But I say frankly that I, personally, do not believe the Company pays a single policeman, etc., in the territories for any other reason than that such institutions are necessary for the production of dividends and the comfort of its white immigrants.

(4) As this paragraph is wholly directed against the A.P.S., I leave the matter to Mr. Harris, together with the allegations in the introduction of Miss Millar's letter.

(5) I fear I fail to see the point of this elaborate balance-sheet. The reserves were cut down by 6,673,055 acres and compensatory areas given totalling 5,610,595. Loss to the natives, 1,062,460. I said 1,000,000; I stand corrected and apologize. At this moment some 7000 families are being turned out neck and crop, and in Parliament (on November 3, 1920) Lt.-Col. Amery had the audacity to say that it was no hardship to them, and that as there was no expense involved there would be no compensation. Sir, I wish I could claim your space to say what friends of the natives must feel about this. It is the philanthropy of Hengist and Horsa over again.

(6) The last statement of your correspondent moves me a great deal. It is exactly the kind of thing that goes down at a shareholders' meeting with laughter and applause. But the natives have done well. When the philanthropists had finished with them in 1893 their 280,000 head of cattle were reduced to less than 50,000, and if these are by now 652,776 I am very glad to hear it. But all this wealth does not *average* much among 770,000 natives. As to the granite soil, I am inclined to believe my friend Mr. A. S. Cripps' verdict since he lives on the spot, but if the Company has given the natives the better land, or anything that it itself does not want, it will be for the first time in the history of white men in Africa. The promise of the inalienability of the Reserves, too, would read better if the Company had kept its promises in days gone by. And does anyone believe that should valuable minerals be found to-morrow on these Reserves, or science discover some new element of great value so placed that the Reserves were wanted for railways, that then these areas would not go the way of

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the Matibi, the Gwaai, and the Shangani, and the promise become yet another "scrap of paper"?

Lastly—I cannot help it—I instanced Rhodesia as a case in which capitalist European companies and governments take native land, and I am told that a Matabele chief comes to the funeral of Sir Starr Jameson in a motor-car! Now, of course, we can smile and close the case. But what has the incident got to do with the matter? If a thousand Matabele had come in motor-cars, how does that touch the fact that the Matabele have been dispossessed of their own lands? Have serfs never been wealthy in history, and do they therefore cease to be serfs? And if the incident is offered as an example of average native wealth, then all I can say is that it is entirely misleading. The natives of Rhodesia to-day live by sufferance on the least valuable portions of the lands that once were theirs, and they will remain a servile people for so long a time as their white conquerors can keep them so.

ROBERT KEABLE.

This Correspondence is now closed.

EDITOR.

