CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

The accusations of slavery against the Transvaal and the part they played in the relations between Great Britain and the northern Boer Republic during the period from 1852 to 1868 are to form the central theme of the following pages. The question whether the Boers were slave-holders or not has been the subject of much controversy in the actual course of South African history as well as in its descriptions. The allegation has been made and contradicted that the emancipation of the slaves in the Cape Colony was the most important cause of the Great Trek. The prevalence of slavery in the Republic of Natal was one of the alleged reasons for its annexation by the British in 1842. Accusations of slavery also accompanied the annexation of the Orange River Territory and aimed at inducing the British government to extend its rule to the natives living to the north of the Vaal River.

With the recognition of the independence of the Transvaal Boers in 1852, the accusations of slavery entered a new phase. Including accusations with Native chiefs north of the Vaal and guaranteeing to the natives the full right to manage their own affairs without any interference on its part, the British government had abolished its traditional role of protector of the Natives. The Sand River Convention marks a reversal of British colonial policy in South Africa. The British government sacrificed its freedom of action and pledged itself to an attitude of neutrality in the contests between Boers and Natives. This neutrality, however, was not complete. By acknowledging the right of the Transvaal Boers to purchase ammunition in the British colonies, while withholding it from the Natives, the British government virtually recognised a certain community of interest with the Transvaal immigrants against the various tribes of the interior.

Grasping as it does the humanitarian and magisterial ideals may have been, their influence on British colonial policy after 1852 was by no means dead. The third clause of the Boers to prohibit slavery in their territory, represented a concession to the cause of humanity, of which missionaries and philanthropists, and at times the colonial governments, backed by powerful commercial interests, did not fail to avail themselves. The Natives, they asserted, and many of these believed, had been grievously wronged by the treaty. The non-observance of the slavery clauses by the Boers which meant the absence in their country of slavery from its treaty obligations. The sale of arms and ammunition to the native tribes should therefore be permitted, so as to enable them to defend themselves against the slave-raids of the Transvaal immigrants.

Besides the greater interpenetration of the white and the black population in the Transvaal area and the closer contact resulting from it, the absence of an embargo on the sale of gunpowder and firearms to Natives in the Bloemfontein Convention of 1854, probably accounts for the fact that the anti-slavery agitation against the Boers took little notice of the Orange Free State. It was only when the accusations against the immigrants were surrounded with a vicar to annexationist schemes affecting both republics, that the southern Boer state became involved. Such was the case with the federation scheme of Sir George Grey, proposing the inclusion of the two independent states within the sphere of British dominion. On the whole, however, the agitation was directed against the Transvaal. The discussion has therefore been confined to the northern Republic and its inhabitants.

The objection of the gunpowder clause in the Sand River Convention finally took place in 1858. In its consequences it implied the termination of the treaty itself by the British government which justified its conduct by asserting that the Boers had violated the clause against slavery and slave-trade. The policy of non-interference and non-expansion was definitely abandoned after 1858, the year which formed the end of a well-marshaled phase in the anti-slavery agitation against the Transvaal Republic and its people. The revival of the accusations preliminary to the annexation of the Diamond Fields and to Cetshwayo's successful attack on Transvaal independence must be regarded as immediate antecedents to these events which do not fall within the scope of this thesis. Their implications will be

1) The Sand River Convention prohibited the sale of arms and powder to Natives in the north and therefore both to the north and the south of the Vaal River. When therefore the Bloemfontein Convention was drawn up, it was not necessary to include an embargo on the sale of arms and powder in the Orange River Territory [see appendix II].

Comparison of C. 44/377, Grey to Lieutenant, Nov. 1, 1890: 'This question of permitting supplies of ammunition to reach the Native Tribes did not therefore require to be reconsidered when a convention was entered into with the Orange Free State.' It was apparently settled alike for the Native Tribes to the North and South of the Vaal River and has ever been regarded as being so settled.
shortly surveyed at its conclusion.

Apart from the political significance of the agitation, an attempt has been made to sketch the different social and cultural settings which determined the outlook of missionaries and philanthropists on the one side and the Boers on the other, on the relations between black and white in South Africa. Viewed from this angle, there existed a certain inevitability of conflict between the Boers and the protagonists of Native rights. True and genuine consideration of Native interests was not lacking on either side. The fact, however, that commercial interests - at this time almost exclusively in the hands of Englishmen 2) or foreigners - and at times the colonial governments of the Cape and Natal 3), adopted the cloak of philanthropy and religion for their own purposes, served to widen and perpetuate the gulf. Thus, in the course of time, the racial problem came to be associated with that of the relations between the English and the Africans - section of the white population of South Africa to the detriment of the European as well as the native.

The method in approaching and describing the anti-slavery agitation has been determined by the nature of the available material which in many cases makes it impossible to decide whether the individual accusations were true or not. Instead, an attempt at a general review of their trustworthiness has been made by analyzing the motives and the ideological background of the agitation and by describing its course and the general tenor of the charges against the Boers as well as the actual labour conditions in the Transvaal. In the first two chapters the background of the agitation has been sketched in so far as it depended on a difference of outlook on the racial relations between the Boers and their philanthropic accusers, including an account of the fundamental features of the Transvaal labour system as evolved from the traditional attitude of the Boers towards the Native. Chapter III comprises a discussion of the question of the impartiality of the accusers. It is followed by an account of the much decried apprenticeship system and a description of missionaries and philanthropists on the one side and the Boers on the other, on whose attempt at a permanent solution that the Colonial Office gave its support. To the last three chapters the course of the agitation and its political implications are discussed. Since the attitude of the Imperial government was found to have differed for a long time from that of the prominent British officials in South Africa, it has been treated separately in the final chapter up to the moment that the Colonial Office gave its full approval and support to the aggressive and expensive policy which was being championed in the Cape and in Natal.

Part of the subject matter that is to be discussed has already been described by historians, though mostly in different contexts and frequently not open or covered allusion to the beneficial or disastrous results deriving from the imperial factor in South Africa. For the research underlying this thesis extensive use has been made of the study of Prof. J.A.I. Alber-Helitzer on The Native policy of the English church and of the excellent work of Prof. C.M. de Rienet on British colonial policy and the South African Republic 1848 - 1872.

2) The words 'English' and 'England' are used throughout the thesis as synonyms of 'British' and 'Great Britain'.
3) The two British colonies in South Africa, Cape Colony and Natal, had separate governments. The head of the Natal government, the Lieutenant-Governor, was, however, subject in authority to the Cape Governor. The latter was at the same time High Commissioner of Great Britain for the whole of South Africa.