A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

OF

DR. GEORGE McCALL THEAL

The University of Cape Town

M.A. Thesis.
University of Cape Town.
(1962)

by

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The University of Cape Town



GEORGE McCALL THEAL
(1837 - 1919)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

I would like to thank the members of the History Department, especially my Supervisor, Dr. van der Poel, for useful discussions. Also Professor Danziger, Professor Burgess, Col. Graham Botha; Mrs. Adams, who typed this, for her patience and advice, and my parents for help and consideration.

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CHAPTER 1

THEAL: HIS INFLUENCE AND IMPORTANCE; CONFLICTING OPINIONS OF HIM.

It would surely be unnecessary to justify this study, and attempted assessment, of South Africa's most prolific, influential and controversial historian. It would probably be useful, however, to remember just how prolific, influential and controversial Dr. George McCall T heal has been.

Although he had no university education or special training as an historian, Theal had other useful qualifications for his work. He had travelled widely: Canada (land of his birth), the United States of America, parts of Africa, and most of the capitals of Europe. After his arrival in South Africa, at the age of twenty-five in 1861, he travelled extensively, and knew and lived amongst a wide variety of people: English and Afrikaans, Africans on the old Eastern frontier, rough diamond-diggers in Kimberley (in the 1870's), government officials and anthropologists in Cape Town, President Reitz, J.W. Sauer and other leading politicians of his day.

He knew, or learnt, most of the languages necessary for research into the history of Southern Africa: English, Dutch, Afrikaans, Bantu languages, Portuguese and French. He read practically all the relevant published sources and did original research in the Archives, covering a very wide area. I doubt whether anyone has yet read and written over a wider period than Theal: from before the first voyages of discovery until his own time. He was a dedicated and exceptionally industrious worker. Who could

surpass his performance (while in England) of twelve hours a day, seven days a week ? He was, too, fortunate in having a job in which he was given scope and facilities for his historical researches, time to write, and aid in publishing many of his books.

Theal received a favourable reception, and widespread recognition for his first book (1), The Compendium of South African History and Geography, published in 1874. By 1877, it had reached a 3rd edition, and was widely regarded as the best general history of South Africa yet written. The histories he published from 1886 onwards were immediately accepted as standard works, and ran into many editions. In 1891, Theal received the title of "Historiographer of the Cape Colony". In fact, he was, by then, the Historiographer of South Africa.

A whole generation of South African historians - F. Reginald Statham, Cory, van Oordt, Johnstone, Leyds, Eybers, Preller, Brookes, Fouche, some still well-known famous, others forgotten, paid tribute to and acknowledged their heavy debt to Dr. Theal. Sir Harry Johnstone called him "the celebrated" and "the impartial historian of South Africa (2)". Cory praised the "judicial impartiality and veracity (3)" of "that indefatigible worker (4)". In 1924, Edgar Brookes declared that: "No book on any aspect or period of South African history can fitly close without a tribute of thanks to that master of research, ... Dr. Theal. It is due to his extraordinarily indefatigible

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(1) Not counting an earlier little pamphlet: South Africa as it is. (1871).

(2) Britain across the Seas, p. 82.

(3) Cory Vol. IV. Preface.

(4) Op cit Vol. I. Preface.

and discriminating labours that it is possible today to prosecute historical research under conditions, which, if not perfect, are at least infinitely better than when he undertook his great life-work. All honour to his name"[1], and he prefaced a disagreement with Theal with the remark that "even from the severely impartial pages of Theal ...."[2]

Amongst the chorus of praise, however, a few dissident voices were heard at the turn of the century. Both I.D. Bosman[3] and F.A. van Jaarsveld[4], who have written on South African historiography, explain these entirely in terms of the political and ideological strife engendered by the Anglo-Boer War. Charges of "extreme unworthiness" and of accounts "at variance both with these records and a common-sense analysis of facts"[5], by historians such as Iwan-Müller and Cappon, are accounted for by their opposition to Theal's championship of the Boers.

Perhaps this was true of some criticism. However, not all the historians were obligingly manufacturing ammunition for the politicians. Some were browsing quietly around the Archives; and from them, soto voce, and largely unheard[6], a different kind of criticism began to come: what and where was Theal's evidence ? The Rev. H.C.V. Leibbrandt,

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(1) The History of Native Policy in South Africa 1830 to the present day, p. 11.

(2) Op cit p.16.

(3) Theal as die Geskiedskrywer van Suid-Afrika, p. 104.

(4) Ou en Nuwe Weë in die Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedskrywing, p. 13 - 14.

(5) By Iwan-Müller. Ibid p. 14.

(6) By among others Bosman and van Jaarsveld.

Archivist of the Cape Colony, asserted that Theal's accounts of Slagters Nek and of Governor William Adriaan van der Stel were inaccurate; and, to prove his point, he published the documents[1], and challenged Theal to produce his evidence. He had read all the documents on William Adriaan, complained Professor Edgar, and could find nothing in them to support Theal's "sweeping assertions". Theal could not expect others to take his "mere personal assurance on an important matter of this kind" but must give his sources[2]. "Will Dr. Theal undertake to produce proof of his charges"[3] challenged Colvin. Where were the documents on Slagters Nek to which he referred? "they do not appear to exist" nor is there any trace of the "trial" of William Adriaan in The Hague Archives[4]. Why ?

This criticism caused a brief flutter among the small circle of academic and amateur historians[5] in Cape Town, but was soon forgotten. For half a century from the 1880's till about 1930 - Theal was not only read, and accepted, by laymen, schoolchildren, politicians and teachers, but was consulted, relied on, cited and praised by professional historians. „Vir jare het niemand meer as die bronne gegaan nie; Theal was 'n voldoende bron"[6].

When he received a Doctorate of Letters from the University of the Cape of Good Hope in 1899, the Cape Argus declared, "The Cape is but endorsing a worldwide

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(1) The Defence of William Adriaan van der Stel (1897) and The Rebellion of 1815. Generally known as Slagters Nek. (1902).

(2) Cape Times 20/8/1909. Letter from Professor Edgar.

(3) Cape Times 30th September, 1909. Letter from Colvin.

(4) Op cit 1st November, 1909. Letter from Colvin.

(5) Who seemed to flourish in South Africa at the turn of the century.

(6) Boeman. p. 146.

Judgment of Dr. Theal's merits"[1]. At a meeting of the Senate of the University of South Africa, Cory and Fouche proposed a motion of tribute to Theal: "both for his achievements and for the spirit in which they have been won ... they look forward with confidence to a South African school of historians who must always regard him as their founder"[2]. Even South Africa, a journal critical of Theal's point of view called him a "student of great thoroughness"[3] and described his History of South Africa as a "lasting monument" to a life "concerned with the truth of things"[4].

His writings were very widely read; and they covered an immensely wide area: the whole field of South African history from before the voyages of discovery to the present. His eleven volume History of South Africa "the only detailed history of South Africa, based upon the Archives of the country, that is in existence"[5], saw many editions during his own life-time. In 1907-10, for instance, the 3rd edition in eight volumes was issued. His numerous shorter works sold even better. In 1916, South Africa (Story of the Nations' Series), ran into its 8th edition. By 1910, Geschiedenis van Zuid-Afrika had reached a 4th, and Kaffir Folklore a 2nd, edition; and there were many others.

Theal wrote at least half a dozen school books, in both English and Dutch. These - the only history that most South Africans ever read - were used every year by thousands of schoolchildren throughout South Africa. In the

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(1) Quoted Bosman p. 61. From Cape Argus 2nd June, 1899.

(2) Quoted op cit p. 154.

(3) South Africa 31st May, 1919. p. 388.

(4) Ibid.

(5) Catalogue p. 301.

Orange Free State and the Cape, they were sponsored by the governments concerned, and were the official text-books. Other school books and general histories were invariably based on him.

For half a century, despite some criticism, Theal was undoubtedly the unquestioned authority, and the most widely-read and popular historian South Africa has yet produced. The most popular history of the next decade, Eric Walker's History of South Africa (1), relied very heavily, in truth, was largely based, on him.

Genuinely revolutionary works, which seriously and effectively challenge the established tradition, are rare landmarks in any field. W.M. MacMillan's The Cape Colour Question (2) and Bantu, Boer and Briton (3) published in the late twenties, were two such works; they were a direct challenge and threat to the tradition established by, or at least, most clearly contained in, Theal. In South Africa, "tradition, warped by sentiment, has been too strong for the spirit of History" (4). There was the "necessity for a radically new interpretation of known and generally undisputed facts" (5).

Others followed hot on MacMillan's heels - Edgar Brookes, P.J. van der Merwe, Agar-Hamilton, J.S. Marais. From van Jaarsveld, one again gets the impression that the real issues were political: the historians who "debunk" Theal are in the category marked "English" and "Liberal" (6).

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(1) 1st edition, 1928.

(2) Published 1927.

(3) Published 1929.

(4) Cape Colour Question . Preface.

(5) Bantu, Boer and Briton. Preface.

(6) Ou en Nuwe Weë p. 33 f.f.

In fact, the prototype for the most effective, direct and systematic criticism of Theal was established by P.J. van der Merwe in Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie[1].

„As ek met die grootste beskeidenheid van so 'n groot kenner van ons geskiedenis mag verskil ....[2]" And, on page after page, the differences are recorded: on p. 263, „Dit is dus enigsins eiesoortig dat dr. Theal hierdie punt in sy standaardwerk oor die geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika geheel en al nie noem nie". On page 265, „Aangesien nerens in die bronne van die tyd steun vir dr. Theal se standpunt te vind is nie, en aangesien hy nie op die gebruiklike wyse in voetnote van sy bewerings rekenskap gee nie, kan ek my voorlopig nie met sy voorstelling van sake met betrekking tot hierdie punt verenig nie". On pages 313-15, „Dr. Theal wek die indruk .... (maar) Uit die dokumente van die tyd ...." „ ... verder wek dr. Theal die indruk ... en hy stel foutief .... In hierdie verband begaan dr. Theal verder 'n chronologiese fout". „Ten slotte vertel dr. Theal .... (maar) Ons het nie daarin geslaag om in die dokumente van die tyd die berigte te vind ..." On page after page, we are told that: „Dr. Theal stel die gebeurtenisse as volg voor:[3] " „Dr. Theal gee die volgende voorstelling van sake:[4] " „Dr. Theal gee die vraag as volg weer:[5] " In each case followed by van der Merwe's systematic criticism and documented refutation[6]. This, it is hardly necessary to add, was not politics.

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(1) Published 1938.

(2) P. 265.

(3) P. 296.

(4) P. 298.

(5) P. 302.

(6) Dr. van der Merwe also gives Dr. Gie's version, to show how he has closely followed and repeated all Theal's errors.

A gar-Hamilton complained frequently: Dr. Theal was "obstinate", "unscholarly", he indulged in "violent personal prejudices", and "unmeasured abuse".[1] Moreover, he suffered from an "inability to recognise evidence that does not square with ... (his) preconceived notions".[2] In a mellower mood, he would refer to him as "that somewhat impulsive historian".[3]

"As an Afrikaner nurtured in the traditions of a Western Cape farm and Theal's and Cory's interpretation of South African history, I could not but be painfully shocked on my first acquaintance with MacMillan's 'heresies'. But as my studies progressed, I became convinced that he had on many points made good his contentions and seriously undermined the authority of his predecessors".[4] J.S. Marais has, since he wrote these words, become the sternest, most systematic and relentless of Theal's critics. He has also been the first to raise the general question of the implications of all these mounting "errors of fact and interpretation".

In Maynier and the First Boer Republic[5], Marais subjected Theal's account to a close and detailed scrutiny: not only the interpretation, but Theal's "competence as a finder of the facts", was being tested. The verdict? "Maynier has been perhaps the most misunderstood figure in South African history. The man responsible for the misunderstanding is Theal. He plays the part of the Public Prosecutor. He is concerned to obtain a conviction, and denies to the jury the opportunity of hearing the defence".

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(1) The Road to the North (1937) p. 84.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Op cit p. 60.

(4) J.S. Marais. The Cape Coloured People (1939). Preface.

(5) Published 1944.

The reason for this "unprofessional conduct"? "the defence was so unpalatable that it turned the stomach of the white settlers' apologist". Conclusion: Theal's "inability to find the facts is largely due to prejudice" and "If a man's prejudices have spoilt his work on the period 1778-1802, might they not have done the same in respect of other periods (1) ".

The severity of Theal's critics was, and is, equalled by the warmth and ardour of his many admirers. Among these are Preller, Gie, van der Heever, Böeseken, van Jaarsveld, Nienaber, Bosman, Hintrager (2).

Theal did take sides, admits Bosman, but he never twisted the facts (3). These were arrived at by objective research (4). Moreover, he taught the Afrikaners not to be "ashamed" of themselves (5). „wat hy geskryf het, het die bronne hom geleer " declared Nienaber (6). He was, „'n groot geskiedskrywer' (7) who had his task, „so skitterend gekwyt " (8), while his „monumentale" History had deservedly „bekendheid en erkenning verwerf soos dié van niemand anders voor of na hom nie " (9). Dr. Böeseken, however, cannot agree that Theal got his due: „Tydens sy lewe en na sy heengaan het Theal dus skaars die erkenning en die erkentlikheid gekry wat sy werk gedien (10) ". He is „die vader" of our history (11).

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(1) Maynier Preface.
(2) A German historian who has written a book on South African history: Geschichte van Zuid-Afrika. (1952).
(3) Bosman p. 118.
(4) Op cit p. 122.
(5) Op cit p. 157.
(6) Manne van Betekennis (1950) p. 162.
(7) Op cit p. 154.
(8) Op cit p. 155.
(9) Op cit p. 60.
(10) Dr. Böeseken in The South African Archives Journal 1959 Vol. 1. No. 1. p. 42.
(11) Op cit p. 40.

Dr. Theal is still a controversial figure. This was illustrated recently, when a reviewer in the Cape Times severely criticised Theal referring to his "egregious prejudices" and "unreliable sources"(1). Indignant letters soon appeared, defending his integrity and impartiality.

I am sure there will be times, in this essay, when the reader will ask why we should spend so much time on a History of such quality. I frequently pondered the question myself. The reason for this is Theal's continuing power and influence.

His importance and influence are not only illustrated by the fact that school text-books (the only history that most people read), are still based largely on him, and that there are still historians who rely on and consult him; Theal's influence ranges wider and is underscored by the use which even his severest critics continue to make of him. He is not only listed in their bibliographies, but is cited as source and authority in their footnotes.

Moreover, even historians who reject Theal's interpretation and facts, usually continue to work largely within the framework erected by him - his selection and choice of themes, events, incidents. His work, even where it is rejected, is the starting-point of our enquiries; the main props of the structure of our history, are still those erected and established by Theal. We may agree or disagree, but our thoughts tend to centre round his interpretation; it determines our selection of what is important and relevant.

We pay lip-service to the dictum that the historian must be regarded as a witness who has to prove his case; we know that we must guard against the prestige of great names; but, we forget the power, the tyranny, of the

written word. The mere fact that someone has organised the material, has phrased the questions, and answers, in a particular way, predisposes us to do the same. Theal is still used as a text-book at the universities. He is recommended to students, whose previous education, background and feelings predispose them to accept him. When they leave, what will most of them be likely to remember: the detailed scholarship of Marais and Reyburn, or the generalities of Theal, which they have heard since they were children ?

The power of tradition is not only strong, but subtle. Familiarity blunts the sharpness of our observation, and lulls our critical faculties: compare our reactions to Theal with those to Mnguni (1). If we were to measure them against a scale of prejudice, I do not think there would be ~~all that~~ much difference between the two. ~~So,~~ there is a marked disproportion between our comparatively favourable and trusting attitude towards Theal, and our horrified reaction to Mnguni (2).

Many South African historians would probably be surprised to know how much of what is in their books, comes from Theal. They probably did not get it directly from him, nor do they cite him as the source. But, it comes from him, and, is often in his very phraseology. They might, for instance, have imagined that de Kock's text-book of economic history (3) was the source. But de Kock is almost entirely based on Theal; and he repeats all Theal's errors and fallacies (4). I do not think it is sufficiently recognised, how great a part of that area of "generally accepted" and "known" facts in South African history, derive from the books of Dr. George McCall Theal.

(1) Three Hundred Years (1952).
(2) I am referring, of course, to our vigilance towards the distorting effect of their prejudices.
(3) Economic History of South Africa. (1924)
(4) I am referring to de Kock's work on my period: 1652-1836. All my comments throughout this thesis, will refer only to work on this period.

CHAPTER 11.

THE COMPENDIUM; THE VOLTE FACE; AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE TRADITIONAL VERSION OF SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY.

One of Theal's earliest and lesser-known works, is a volume entitled, The Compendium of South African History and Geography (1). Theal, with a rare display of humility, condemned, and virtually disowned this book: "Since it was prepared, I have been almost constantly engaged in researches in the manuscript archives of South Africa at Cape Town, The Hague, and London, and in consequence of the additional knowledge gained am now obliged to pronounce my own former work defective and incorrect in many respects (2)".

He does not encourage one to read it: it is "now obsolete and out of print (3)". And, few historians have bothered to read it. Indeed, why should they ? Those who have read the books for which he makes such extravagant claims of "impartiality", "objectivity" and containing "The indisputable truths of South African history (4)" are hardly likely to read the one book which he himself condemns. Besides, our two leading historiographers, Bosman (5) and van Jaarsveld (6), who have read it, endorse Theal's view.

There is a marked and profound change in interpretation, in details, in tone, outlook and values between the Compendium and Theal's later works. We shall illustrate the nature and extent of this change, by three detailed comparisons drawn from his accounts of the Hottentots.

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(1) 1st published 1874; 3rd revised edition 1877. It is the latter that we shall be using.
(2) Catalogue of South African Books and Pamphlets. p. 295.
(3) Progress. Preface.
(4) Progress. Preface and the prefaces of practically all his other books.
(5) Bosman p. 103.
(6) Ou en Nuwe Weë p. 8, 13.

Theal's account of the first contacts between Whites and Hottentots; and of the nature and causes of conflict between them:

A. In the Compendium:

Theal stresses the importance of the loss of their land to the Hottentots. The rapid deprivation of their pasturage led to fear, jealousy and resentment, and was the cause of the War of 1659 - an attempt by the Hottentots to recover their land (1). At the conference after the war, they "dwelt long" upon their loss of land and cattle, and insisted on their right of property. This was their country; the Dutch were foreign invaders (2). So-called "purchases" of Hottentot land were dubious. Re the 1672 purchase e.g., Theal says, "That the Dutch acquired a good title by this procedure cannot in strict justice be maintained. The Natives neither then nor at any subsequent period have admitted the right of their chiefs to alienate the land which is held for the common good of all. Even among the Kaffir and Bechuana tribes ... this power is not recognised"(3). "The claim of the Dutch to South Africa must be based simply upon the rights acquired by forcible occupation"(4).

A second cause of conflict between the colonists and the Hottentots, was the behavior of the former and their treatment of the latter. At the 1659 conference, the Hottentots complained about their ill-treatment; and, though they lost their land, they were promised that those ill-treating them would be punished. The early settlers of South Africa, wrote Theal, were not that class of men "of which a prosperous and independent community is formed" (5). It was exceedingly difficult for the Company to recruit enough men to service her ships and colonies. They practically had to "ensnare" victims, and took whoever they could get. The result was "a motley crew of spendthrifts, vagabonds and simpletons, the very scum of Europe". The severest discipline was needed to keep them in order, and it is not surprising that they made "very unruly and improvident citizens". There was continual trouble, "great discontent and little order in the settlement" (6). Unfortunately, the system was established, "that, in the course of time, left no native an inch of land in the country of his ancestors, for he (Van Riebeeck) gave the free burghers leave to depasture their cattle wherever they chose ... this liberty begat a spirit of aggression on the one hand and a feeling of hatred on the other"(7). The Government sometimes tried to ensure justice, but, it was "powerless to prevent oppression"(8). There were always people "whom the law could not reach, capable of committing violent acts for the purpose of acquiring stock" (9). There were complaints in Governor's

(1) Compendium p. 76.
(2) Op cit p. 77.
(3) Op cit p. 82.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Op cit p. 75.
(6) Ibid.
(7) Op cit p. 79.
(8) Op cit p. 109.
(9) Op cit p. 109.

despatches about raids against native kraals, but so many were involved, that they were unable to punish the offenders.

Another cause of conflict was the destruction of the Hottentots' game. Licences were issued "in utter disregard of native rights"(1), and many burghers became hunters. This was a cause of the 2nd Hottentot war with Gonomoa. In this war, and in others, there were murders and thefts on both sides. "Stealing cattle always was a common offence in South Africa, and at that time was not confined to the natives"(2). "That these (aborigenes) should rob the graziers of their stock was only what might have been expected, and that those who were thus plundered should feel exasperated was quite natural. But a bitterness of feeling towards the unhappy aborigines ... was created by the system of defence .... (the Commando system). To the persons aggrieved was thus left the punishment of the offenders, which was often executed without mercy or moderation"(3).

The effect of European occupation of the Cape upon the Hottentots? They either withdrew, or, were "sunk in poverty and misery. The tribes that Van Riebeeck had found so wealthy in cattle had disappeared, and in their place was a mere remnant, a large portion of which was in a state of servitude"(4).

Theal's conclusions: "The conquest of one people by another more highly civilized may prove to be a blessing, if the conquerors inter-mingle with the vanquished, and give them in exchange for their independence a better religion, better laws, and a more comfortable mode of existence. The early colonists in South Africa did nothing of the kind. As a people, they never bestowed a thought upon the welfare of those whose lands they had seized"(5).

B. Theal's account in his LATER works of the causes and nature of conflict between Europeans and Hottentots:

The loss of their land by the Hottentots, is not given as a cause of conflict. Land, it is true, was allotted to colonists without consulting the Hottentots, "which will be considered just or unjust according as one regards the right of property of the soil by a race of nomads unacquainted with agriculture. As yet there was plenty of land left for them and their cattle"(6). In most of his histories, Theal does not even raise this question. What, then, was the cause of the first Hottentot war? Although the Hottentots had "ample pasture" of their own, they were resentful at the loss of their land. "So they commenced to drive off the burghers' cows and murdered a white herdsman"(7). This was the cause of the first war.

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(1) Op cit p. 83.
(2) Op cit p. 85.
(3) Op cit p. 108.
(4) Idem.
(5) Idem.
(6) Theal (a) p. 169.
(7) South Africa p. 37.

The behavior of the colonists, and ill-treatment of the Hottentots is not given as a cause of conflict. There were instances of "harsh and unjust treatment"(1), by colonists on the remote borders; however, there were exceptions, and, "the courts of law were open for their protection"(2). Later, "an honest effort" was made to prevent ill-treatment, and "instances of injuries that came to light were always attended to, and redress was made as public as possible"(3). Moreover, he adds, "It had already been noticed ...that nearly every case of cruelty by colonists was committed by men who either had coloured blood in their veins or who had mixed with the uncivilized coloured people on terms of equality"(4).

It is now, the behavior of the Hottentots, that is the cause of conflict. "The first difficulty with the natives for instance, occurred while the people were at church "listening to a sermon"(5). Harry the Hottentot murdered a white herdsboy, and stole much cattle. "This occurrence naturally produced an ill-feeling towards the Hottentots"(6). Murder and theft by the Hottentots has now become the most important feature of their relations with the colonists, and the root cause of conflict between them. Describing one of the incidents in which Hottentots had murdered a herdsman and stolen cattle, Theal writes, "Since 1653 this scene has been repeated a thousand times in South Africa"(7(. There is scant reference to thefts, murders and misdemeanours on the colonists' side. The former "scum of Europe", have been transformed - like Cinderella at the ball - and are almost unrecognizable in their new role as the "pioneers of civilization"(8), in South Africa.

The hunting, and destruction, of Hottentot game, however, is still regarded as a probable cause of Gonnema's War, in 1673. Theal makes a very strange statement with reference to this war: it is "the only war that has ever taken place between white people and natives in South Africa of which we have not the versions of both parties to form a judgment from"(9). Where are all those Bushmen, Hottentot and Kaffir versions of their wars with the whites?

The effect of the arrival of the European on the Hottentots? Before the arrival of the whites, the beachrangers had lived in "wretched conditions". Now, they could get jobs and food, "Thus they were certainly gainers by the presence of the white people". Some Hottentots had possessed cattle and "To them the seizure of grazing ground by strangers was a loss"(10).

Conclusions: "In this early stage of the colony's existence, the policy to be pursued towards the wild inhabitants was already regarded differently in the mother country and in South Africa"(11). The Company said they were to be treated with kindness; while van Riebeeck

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(1) Theal (a) p. 169.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Theal (b) p. 104.
(4) Theal (a) p. 169.
(5) South Africa p. 29.
(6) Ibid.
(7) History and Ethnography of Africa South of the Zambesi Vol. II. (1909) p. 39.
(8) South Africa p. 46.
(9) Op cit p. 45.
(10) Maskew Miller's History of South Africa p. 35.
(11) History and Ethnography Vol. II. p. 46.

recommended they be reduced to servitude. This would relieve the settlement "of a horde of idle and useless robbers", and give the colonists the double advantage of obtaining slaves and their cattle, and he maintained that the "provocation received was ample to justify" this. (1).

We might take note of the following small points: In the Compendium, discussing the effects of the arrival of the Europeans, Theal said that there was no means of ascertaining exactly what these were; but, from what we know of later occurrences, we could be "tolerably certain that considerable commotion was caused by it"; and that it led to stresses, tensions and chain-reaction inter-tribal wars (2). In his later works, he does not mention this, but stresses throughout the feuds, hostility and bickering of the aborigines (3), who were continually at war with one another: all men like an exciting life, and wars provided "just that excitement which was needed to prevent the minds of the people from sinking into complete stagnation" (4). So fierce were their wars, of extermination, in fact, that the intervention of the Europeans practically saved them from themselves (5).

Theal's account of the condition and treatment of the Hottentots at the end of the 18th Century:

A. In the Compendium

The Hottentots were in "a most abject state"(6). They had no land, and so most were compelled to take service with the whites (7). In the past, cruel measures had been employed to force them into service: Bushmen and Hottentots had been hunted down by commandos "in a manner which must ever leave a stigma upon the memory of the frontier colonists". We have evidence of this not only from travellers reports, but from the reports of landdrosts, for, "they themselves made no attempt to conceal or gloss over what had been done, for most of them really believed that they were doing God a service by (as they expressed it) extirpating the heathen root and branch"(8).

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(1) Ibid.
(2) Compendium p. 83.
(3) See e.g. South Africa p. 6-7 and Theal (b) p. 126, an example of his emphasis on the losses suffered by Hottentots from Bushmen.
(4) South Africa p. 7.
(5) Theal (a) p. 3-6 Progress 183.
(6) Compendium p. 164.
(7) Op cit p. 116.
(8) Op cit p. 116.

The conditions of those compelled to take service were bad. There was even less interest in their welfare than in that of the slaves, who were property(1). "Those natives who were in the employment of the settlers were in a position, as regards comfort and happiness, inferior even to that of their ancestors. Their life was one of toil, and the colonist seemed to think that if he supplied them with tobacco and an occasional glass of brandy he was acting generously towards them"(2).

"Accounts of the condition of these people reached Europe from time to time, and created among the benevolent a hearty desire to aid them"(3). This led to the arrival of the missionaries in South Africa. Those Hottentots so fortunate as to be at the mission stations were much better off, and were taught habits of industry and Christianity(4).

B. Theal's Account of the condition and treatment of the Hottentots at the end of the 18th Century in his LATER works.

"There were reserves set aside for their benefit in the long-settled parts of the country, and they could use ground not occupied by farmers anywhere. But many of them preferred to live as dependents of a white man .... To obtain brandy and tobacco they were willing to perform light labour occasionally, but nothing could induce them to adopt a life of regular industry. In short they had become rovers and vagrants"(5). In England it was believed that they were unjustly treated. " In reality it was not so, though there were certainly instances of ill-usage, just as there are outrages in all countries of the world"(6). Moreover if they were ill-treated, "the courts of law (7) were open for their protection". Unfortunately, some people believed these stories, and there was later considerable agitation by missionaries of "extreme views", who even claimed that the position of the Hottentots was worse than that of slaves(8).

Theal's account of the conditions under which Hottentots could lodge complaints (1809 - 1828).

A. In the Compendium

If a Hottentot managed to reach the magistrate "in safety" he was detained in prison "until the magistrate chose to investigate his case". If he was unable to prove his case, he was "flogged severely" for lodging "frivolous charges". The prisons, especially in the country districts were "sinks of misery": small, unlit, unventilated dungeons, into which slaves and Hottentots of both sexes and for all crimes were crowded. Thus the Hottentot who lodged a charge "did so in peril of being incarcerated with thieves or murderers for a week or a month and of being flogged in addition" (9).

(1) Op cit p. 117.
(2) Op cit p. 109.
(3) Idem.
(4) Op cit p. 164.
(5) South Africa p. 141.
(6) South Africa p. 178.
(7) Theal (a) p. 169.
(8) Theal (d) p. 337.
(9) Compendium p. 205.

B. In his later works.

One of the complaints of the missionaries was that when a Hottentot lodged a charge against a colonist with the courts, he was kept in jail till the case was heard. "This seems to be a hardship, but so volatile were these people that there was no other way to secure their appearance" at court. If they couldn't prove their charge, or, if the injury complained of was not sufficiently serious, they were punished "for making frivolous charges". The prisons in the country districts were small and unventilated; and into them were "sometimes crowded slaves and Hottentots guilty of all degrees of crime. So, the Hottentot who lodged a charge did so "on peril of being incarcerated with the worst of characters, and of being flogged in addition .... At the same time it must be remembered that, wretched as the prisons were, they were superior in comfort to the ordinary dwellings of the Hottentots". "The majority of the Hottentots indeed rather enjoyed prison life than dreaded it"(1).

Finally, a closer break-down of the Case of David Stuurman.

A. In the Compendium:

David Stuurman was the successor to his brother Klaas, who after the 1799 war, was established on a location by General Janssens. This settlement was viewed with disapproval by the colonists, among whom there was "a general belief" that Stuurman was in league with Cungwa (some of whose followers he had permitted to take up residence on his grounds), and that they were planning a raid upon the Colony(2).

B. In his later works.

The locations assigned by General Janssens to the Hottentots "had in no instance served their purpose". The Hottentots' "love of change and of a wandering life", was such that they could never settle down; "After 1806, therefore, the ground was not spoken of or regarded as reserves for their use". The location of David Stuurman, was "from the first" "a public nuisance". "Stuurman whose disposition was violent, harboured Kosas there,and made his kraal a place of refuge for idlers and bad characters. He entered into an agreement with Cungwa, which was to all intents and purposes an offensive and defensive treaty against the Colony(3)".

A. Compendium

In 1810, Stuurman refused the demand of neighbouring farmers that he give up two men alleged to be runaway servants. When the farmers approached the kraal with an armed party Stuurman, "knowing that the claim was unjust" prepared to defend himself by force. The Boers withdrew, and reported the matter to the landdrost. Stuurman ignored the landdrost's summons, but was arrested, and sent to be tried in Cape Town (4).

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(1) Theal (d) p. 342.
(2) Compendium p. 176.
(3) Theal (d) p. 148.
(4) Compendium p. 176.

B. Later works.

In 1810, Stuurman "proceeded so far as to set the European authorities at defiance. Having given shelter to two runaways from contracts of service, whom he refused to surrender and prepared to protect by force, he was summoned to appear before the court of the landdrost, but did not obey". He was captured by an armed party, and tried by the Court of Justice(1).

A. Compendium

In Cape Town, Stuurman was charged with resisting the authorities, and sentenced to penal servitude in chains for life. The location was broken up, the families were distributed among the farmers as servants, and the ground converted into a farm. Stuurman subsequently escaped but was recaptured, and in 1819 deported to New South Wales(2).

B. Later Works

"He was tried by the high court of Justice and sentenced to imprisonment for life, when the location was broken up"(3).

A. Compendium

"Many years later", the circumstances of his arrest and trial were brought to the attention of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, "who ordered his immediate release". However, it was too late; for Stuurman had died in Australia in 1830. This incident creased "a large amount of sympathy in England as well as in this colony for Stuurman and his people"(4).

B. Later works

There is no reference to this in his later books.

These examples illustrate how radical and significant a difference there is between the Compendium and Theal's later histories (which are remarkably uniform). There is not a broadening or deepening of his sympathies, but rather a complete switch of them. The change is not a modification, alteration or development of his earlier version, but a volte face.

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(1) Theal (d) p. 148.

(2) Compendium p. 176.

(3) Theal (d) p. 149.

(4) Compendium p. 176.

This change is reflected throughout the rest of his work. In the Compendium, "The justice and expediency" of Ordinance 50 was undeniable (1); later, it was a disaster, particularly for the Hottentots who needed "strict guardianship" and were now "falling back in the scale of civilisation" (2). The Black Circuit had been part of the process of extending the rule of law. The real reason behind the outcry was annoyance that the accusations of the missionaries "should have been even noticed" (3). Later Theal wrote only of "flimsy" charges and pretexts, "the irritation", "the indignity" to the colonists dragged before the Court, and missionaries who had proved themselves the "dupes of storytellers". This case clearly exonerated the colonists of the accusations of ill-treating the Hottentots, and justifiably led to "unfriendly feeling" towards the London Missionary Society (4). Locations for the Hottentots were once regarded with approval by Theal. At Kat River, in particular, progress considering the difficulties was "almost marvellous" (5). Despite later developments (6) there was no reason in the 1830's to doubt the wisdom of this establishment. Later we are told that locations "had in no instance answered their purpose" and had "repeatedly failed". Kat River had at first "appeared to flourish"; but already in December 1834, there was "good ground" for fearing that the Hottentots were plotting to join the Kaffirs (7).

Theal, in his later works, is a consistent advocate of the use of force on the frontier. Re the Spoor Law, for example, he explains, denies, excuses, justifies even the blundering commandos of Somerset in the tense and crucial period before the 1834-5 War.

(1) Compendium p. 208
(2) South Africa p. 178; Progress p.159, 166.
(3) Compendium p. 177
(4) Masker Miller's History p. 97; Theal (d) p. 165.
(5) Compendium p. 209
(6) The Rebellion in 1851.
(7) South Africa p. 179; Theal (e) p. 12.

After consistently denying that there were injustices to the Kaffirs, he concludes: "if real wrongs were perpetrated upon Kaffir clans ... they were not regarded by the Kaffirs themselves as sufficiently serious to leave a lasting impression[1]". In the Compendium, Theal was a critic of the Commando System. Although he did not object to the principle of the Spoor Law, he criticized the manner in which it was applied[2].

There is a similar change over the whole field of South African history - Slavery, the Boers, the Trek, Slagters Nek, the Bushmen, the missionaries, and the British Government[3].

Well-known figures ~~and heroes~~ of South African history emerge from the pages of Theal's later volumes with ~~their~~ new and now familiar personalities: Maynier, previously an official who tried to do his duty, is now a negrophilist, a man who watches his own pocket and harbours revolutionary views; Philip to whom "all honour" was once due, is now the villain of the piece: quarrelsome, unscrupulous, dishonest. Stockenstrom, once so highly regarded, is now "a disappointed retired official" his mind "warped" by jealousy[4]; and of Dr. van der Kemp once "the most celebrated, on account of his extensive learning, his great zeal and the extraordinary sacrifices he made"[5], Theal now writes that "a domestic bereavement ... seems to have disturbed the balance of his mind"[6].

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(1) Theal (d) p. 354.

(2) Compendium p. 231, 224.

(3) Which may give pause to those who have never doubted that Theal is "reasonably equitable" as between British and Boer. e.g. L.M. Thompson, Afrikaner Nationalist Historiography.

(4) On Maynier, Philip and Stockenstrom, see below. Ch. IV.

(5) Compendium p. 164

(6) Theal (c) p. 60-61.

The change in Theal's feelings is perhaps most clearly illustrated by his handling of the Bushmen. In the Compendium, he wrote that though they lived in a "most degraded condition" and were fierce fighters (1), yet "it would appear that their ferocity was a result of their mode of life rather than an inherent quality, for some of those who have been domesticated for a time in Christian households have shown themselves humane and tenderhearted, especially towards children and animals (2)". Later they are described as "hideously ugly (3)" "dwarfs of a dirty yellow colour, with only little peppercorns of wool on their heads, with flat noses, fox-like faces and crooked ill-formed bodies (4)". They were "positively incapable" of adopting civilized habits or of living peacably with other people. "Cruel and vindictive to the last degree (5)" "the hand of these savages was against every man and every man's hand was against them (6)". They had in some instances shown themselves capable of feeling gratitude towards people who were kind to them, "In this respect they were like those wild animals that in a state of restraint show attachment to their keepers (7)". In the Compendium, the Bushman despite his degraded condition, "was an artist"; of his paintings: "their capacity of withstanding the wear and tear of time is wonderful (8)". Later, they had "some small degree of artistic taste and skill (9)"; "In point of artistic merit, however, the paintings were seldom superior to the drawings on slates of European children eight or nine years of age (10)". In the Compendium, Theal quotes at length from the researches of the eminent anthropologist Dr. Bleek which show that even the lowest

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(1) Compendium p. 58.
(2) Compendium p. 56.
(3) Progress p. 10.
(4) Notes on Canada and South Africa p. 8.
(5) Op Cit p. 10.
(6) Progress p. 12.
(7) History and Ethnography Vol. 1. p. 18.
(8) Compendium p. 58.
(9) Progress p. 11.
(10) History and Ethnography 1. p. 23.

races were "more elevated" than hitherto believed, and must cause "a modification of opinion" in regard to the Bushmen and other savage races. Unfortunately, there was never any real attempt in South Africa to conciliate or civilize them (1). In his later books, however, Theal quotes instead the opinion of "the most enlightened black chief in South Africa". This man was reluctant to give missionaries permission to instruct Bushmen in his country. "He argued that one might as well attempt to instruct the jackals". At last, however, he consented; "the attempt was made by one of the most zealous and patient teachers in the mission field, but like all preceding efforts of the kind it was unsuccessful (2)".

In these examples, the version that emerges in Theal's later books is one with which we are familiar. It is the "traditional" version of South African history, of which he is the founder, the „die Vader", and the main source.

Does Theal offer any explanation of this remarkable change? In the preface to "The History of the Boers in South Africa (3)", he wrote that the emigration of the Boers and the establishment of the Republics had never before been recorded in detail; the most complete account being that contained in his Compendium. Recently, he had been instructed by the Cape Government to collect, arrange and publish "all the authentic records" on the Basutos (4).

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(1) Compendium p. 61-2; p. 116.
(2) Progress p. 12. Note that this attempt was made by the most zealous and the most patient missionary. Thus the measure of the Bushmen's failure is strengthened, made even greater.
(3) Published in 1887.
(4) These are contained in the Basutoland Records (1883).

"While engaged in this work, a very large amount of correspondence relating to the Emigrant Farmers passed through my hands. I found that the most important of these documents, those which were of the greatest historical value, had never appeared in bluebooks. In these papers the motives of the various actors could be clearly traced (1)".

Theal claims that it was this new evidence re the emigrant farmers that led him to realise the defects of the Compendium and resulted in the changes in his History. The Basutoland Records, however, do not contain any new evidence on the early contacts between colonists and Hottentots, slavery, the Bushmen, on Maynier or on David Stuurman, i.e. on other subjects in which there also had been a change. True, Theal's later books contain many more details on these subjects, so he had obviously done some research. But most of this (for the first edition of his History (2)), had been done while he was working in the Cape Town Archives from March, 1879 until January, 1881, and in his subsequent visit to The Hague (3), and did not then cause his views to undergo a drastic change. It was only after he had returned from The Hague in 1882, and was working on the Basutoland Records that this happened.

If it was not new information on the early years of the Cape from the documents that caused this change, was it perhaps the new insight, understanding of South African history gained from a study of the Basutoland Records which caused this reinterpretation?

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(1) History of the Boers. Preface.
(2) Published from 1888 onwards.
(3) Op cit: Preface.

But this is not what he says. He stresses that the cause was new and relevant documentary evidence. "Since it (the Compendium) was prepared, I have been almost constantly engaged in researches in the manuscript archives ... , and in consequence of the additional knowledge gained.[1]". He repeats this apropos the missionaries: "Regarding the acts of various missionaries, there is certainly a difference in the tone of this volume and of my Compendium of South African History written sixteen years ago[2] . I had not then read the mass of missionary correspondence in the Colonial records, nor the comments upon their complaints and the refutations of many of their statements made by officers of the Colonial Government[3] ".

As neither the "mass" of missionary evidence (to which, unfortunately, he never again refers), nor the "most important documents" which had "never appeared in blue-books", relate to the subjects of our comparison, we might perhaps justifiably assume that a change of attitude, feelings, view-point was responsible for the initial reinterpretation of this period. And Theal does say this: "But something more than bare knowledge is needed in writing history. Determination to be strictly impartial, freedom from prejudices which might involuntarily affect that determination, are equally requisite. I believe that I possess these qualifications,"[4]

This "freedom from prejudices" at least, is an important advance on the Compendium. In the Preface and Appendix to the Compendium, Theal's tone had been modest;

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(1) Catalogue p. 295.
(2) A Revised edition had been published ten years ago, i.e. in 1877.
(3) History of the Boers. Preface.
(4) Idem.

he referred to himself as "the compiler", and expressed his indebtedness to other writers. In his later books, he is more sure of himself. He no longer thinks much of other writers - most of their books are "worthless"[1], while he insistently preses his own claims as an impartial, objective, reliable historian. Theal's repeated claims to these qualifications, in fact, date from the publication of this history, with his new interpretation, and are contained in the Prefaces of practically every one of his subsequent books.

"I have no interests to serve with any party, and I am on equally friendly terms with all .... (I am a Canadian) Thus no ties of blood, no prejudices acquired in youth, stand as barriers to my forming an impartial judgment of occurrences in South Africa in bygone times"[2]. In another Preface, "I can venture to assert that, although it will be easy for any author of the future greatly to enlarge upon what I have written, the general tenor of events as recorded in this volume must remain undisturbed"[3]. A final example "I can therefore, without laying myself open to the charge of vanity, place my ~~worth~~ work confidently before the public as ... a true and absolutely unbiassed narative"[4].

What has been the reaction of other historians to this volte face? The histories written before Theal, says Bosman[5], were very superficial. In his Compendium, Theal himself continued the false traditions, and repeated the old lies. After he had examined the archives, and

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(1) History of South Africa (1652-1795) Vol I. Preface.
(2) Idem.
(3) Theal (a)
(4) Theal (c) (1908) Preface.
(5) P. 145.

done original research, however, a great improvement took place in his work. Thus Theal's change was caused by the new evidence which he discovered, and this is the best possible reason for changing (1).

In the 19th Century, writes van Jaarsveld, the traditional and prejudiced view of the Boers as „onkunde", „ongeletterdheid" and oppressors of the natives, prevailed (2). „Hierdie oordele en veroordelings is in die laaste kwart van die 19e eeu reggestel deur George McCall Theal (3)". In his Compendium, Theal „het die sienswyses van sy voorgangers onderskryf veral ten opsigte van die Hollands-Afrikaanse kolonis. Maar nadat hy argivaliese bronne-studie gedoen het, het hy in dié verband begin om radikaal van hulle te verskil, en in sy latere werk as hulle korrigeerder op te tree (4)". He then defended the Dutch colonists and „verklaar hulle karakter (5)".

There is certainly nothing wrong with a change in one's views, per se. Historians have to be prepared to make continual alterations and reassessments as they accumulate new evidence. A radical change could be a sign of flexibility, of the courage to admit one's mistakes and alter one's preconceptions. Theal's 'change' has to pass only one test to qualify for the approval given it by Bosman and van Jaarsveld. It has to be submitted to, and borne out by a comparison with the evidence.

Referring to some criticisms that had been made of him, Theal complained that although the historian in question, Odō, had been provided with "a liberal salary"

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(1) P. 103.
(2) Ou en Nuwe Weë p. 7.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Op cit p. 8.
(5) Op cit p. 9.

l.c. and "travelling expenses" for his work, "Not a single fact narrated by me was disputed" by him[1]. This is fair enough. We shall try not to be guilty of this fault, and will give our closest attention to Theal's facts.

From the material we have collected over the period 1652-1836, we have selected a few themes for detailed examination and comparison, mainly from the crucial and comparatively well-documented period 1795-1835. Our aim throughout will be to illuminate, to throw new light, not on the Hottentots, the slaves, Philip or William Adriaan, but on Theal and on his handling of these themes. His books are my primary sources and most important documents.

Over so wide an area, and for a one-year degree, it has, of course, been impossible for me to consult all the documents myself. The basis for my comparison has been, mainly, the work of subsequent historians who have been over the documents - Leibbrandt, Cory, van der Merwe, MacMillan, Marais, Reyburn, Pitman, Edwards, Walker and others. Although they have served me well, there have been occasions on which it has been frustrating and unsatisfactory to rely on others ; and sometimes I had to go to the documents. I continually had to avoid the temptation and danger of getting too bogged down over, for example, the Black Circuit. To succumb to this, would have made it impossible to do a wider survey, on the basis of which I could make a general assessment of and draw general conclusions about Theal. The section on Theal's life is mainly based on my own researches.

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(1) Theal (c). Preface. Odē was commissioned by Kruger's government to write a history of South Africa more favourable to the Republics than Theal's.

The next chapters will contain an examination of a few sections of Theal's work. We will not be concerned with the Compendium till later (in the biographical section), although we will usually indicate briefly, what the Compendium version is.

CHAPTER III

AN EXAMINATION OF THEAL'S ACCOUNT OF THE HOTTENTOTS (a) AT THE END OF THE 18TH CENTURY (b) UNDER BRITISH RULE. OTHER EXAMPLES FROM THIS PERIOD.

In the Compendium, Theal described the condition of the Hottentots at the end of the 18th Century as "abject". They had lost their land and were compelled to work on very bad terms. In his later works, there are reserves "set aside for their benefit" and they could use land not occupied by colonists "anywhere". Many of them, however, "preferred" to work for the whites. Missionaries "of extreme views" claimed they were ill-treated "but in reality it was not so"(1).

What is known about the condition and treatment of the Hottentots at this time ? By 1795, "the Hottentots had sunk into the position of a landless proletariat"(2). They were "pitifully, almost abjectly, backward and weak"(3), and had been reduced to absolute economic dependence on the whites(4). Not only had they no land, but legal ownership of land was denied(5). This has been disputed, but one of the provisions of Ordinance 50 was to legalize the ownership of land by Hottentots(6). By 1795 at any rate, the question whether they could own land was an academic one; they had none(7). Even the bastard (half-coloured) children of Boers were not able to own land;

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(1) See above Chapter II.
(2) Marais p. 109.
(3) Marais p. 112.
(4) Cape Colour Question p. 146.
(5) Op cit p. 147-8
(6) Op cit p. 212-2
(7) With the exception of a few groups of 'kreals' of Hottentots which were still independent. Some later became mission stations. Marais p. 109.

if they did improve and cultivate some unoccupied land, they were 'always liable to be dispossessed by some Boer obtaining a grant for it from the Government'[1] for the colonists did not hesitate to make use of their "right of the strongest"[2].

To dispose of the fact and the problem of Hottentot landlessness by saying, "As far as land was concerned, there were reserves set aside for their benefit in the long-settled parts of the country, and they could use ground not occupied by farmers anywhere"[3], is to give an impression which is simply untrue. In the Compendium Theal showed a full awareness of this essential reality of the Cape Colonial scene. What documents could he have found in Basutoland or anywhere else to change his mind about this ? It is one thing to recognize this fact and justify it, as Cory tends to do, and another to deny it, as Theal does.

Most of the Hottentots "preferred to live as dependents of a white man"[4]. They did "all kinds of light labour ... in return for which they received protection and maintenance"[5]. In England it was believed they were harshly and unjustly treated, "In reality it was not so, though there certainly were instances of ill-usage, just as there are outrages in all countries of the world"[6], these, however, were always exceptions[7].

The earliest report on the condition of the Hottentots was made by field-cornet van Ryneveld at the

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(1) George Thompson. quoted Marais p. 12.
(2) Marais p. 12.
(3) South Africa p. 141; in Progress p. 99 he says "numerous reserves".
(4) South Africa p. 141.
(5) Progress p. 17.
(6) South Africa p. 178.
(7) Theal (a) p. 169.

request of General Dundas in 1801[1]. The Hottentots he said were actively discontented and even "thinking of revenge". The administration of the law, such as it was, by farmer field-cornets, was unsatisfactory and partial; they should be replaced by paid officials, and closely supervised. Among the many contemporaries who commented disapprovingly on their treatment was General Janssens. Shocked by what he observed in Graaff-Reinet, he objected in the strongest terms[2]. Collins, who toured the country in 1809, reported that Hottentot servants in the North were kindly treated, but those in Graaff-Reinet 'are badly fed and are ill-treated'; a servant 'can now seldom get away' at the expiration of ~~their~~ his term of service as he was 'not allowed to take his children' or 'detained under some frivolous pretence'. He recommended that Hottentots everywhere be protected against the common abuses of withholding wages and forced labour[3].

So great was the discontent of the Hottentots, that in 1799, they took the unprecedented step of joining their traditional enemies, the Xosa, in a raid on the Colony. This and the very real threat to the security[4] of the Colony focused attention on their condition. To conciliate them, a few locations were established (including Stuurman's and Bethelsdorp); Maynier (landdrost of Graaff-Reinet) was instructed to protect them and enforce the provisions of the labour contracts introduced by Dundas.

This first and mild attempt at intervention on behalf of the Hottentots was one of the causes of the

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(1) R.C.C. Vol. IV. p. 88 ff. van Ryneveld's Report.
(2) B.H.D. deel III p. 216 ff; see below Ch. IV, Section on Maynier.
(3) Maynier p. 75; Cory I p. 199. Collins Report in R.C.C. Vol. VI p. 340 ff, Vol. VII p. 20 ff.
(4) Marais p. 114.

revolt and expulsion of Maynier from Graaff-Reinet[1]. "The men of Graaff-Reinet had several reasons for revolting ... but the protection which Landdrost Maynier tried to give to the Hottentots was undoubtedly one of them[2]".

This action and the demands and complaints of the rebels, are an indication of the prevailing conditions and of the attitude of the Boers towards their coloured servants. They demanded, inter alia, that all captured Bushmen be held in perpetual slavery; that all Hottentot children born on farms, be retained up to the age of twenty-five[3]. They complained (in 1801) that by allowing Hottentots to worship in the church, by teaching them reading and writing they were being 'thereby put upon an equal footing with Christians'[4].

A selection from the documents of the period, provides an even clearer indication of the conditions to which the Hottentots were subjected, and of ideas and customs prevailing amongst the colonists. The first is a letter from a farmer to Maynier, explaining why he had a Hottentot girl in his possession:

'Please do not take it amiss of me. I did not think that I should get into trouble about it because it has always been so when one shoots the kraal people dead and what one catches one could take'(5).

Reyburn also quotes a casual note from a farmer informing the field-cornet that his son has shot a Hottentot[6]. Thirdly, from the Report of the Appeal Court to the Governor in 1814 (by which time the administration of justice had been considerably tightened up) a recommendation of mercy for

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(1) Maynier p. 70.
(2) Marais p. 112.
(3) Marais p. 113.
(4) Martin p. 104. This is a reference to the activities of Dr. van der Kemp.
(5) Quoted by Reyburn, The Critic (Oct. 1934) p. 45.
(6) Ibid.

a farmer who had shot a bound, disarmed Hottentot, because the man

'laboured under the erroneous but general notion that has prevailed amongst the Boers throughout the Colony from time immemorial, respecting the power of commandos over the lives of unfortunate vagabond Hottentots, who have hitherto been considered beings excluded from the Protection of the Laws'.(1).

This picture of the general backwardness, helplessness and fairly frequent abusive treatment of the Hottentots, especially in Graaff-Reinet (2), is confirmed by a mass of documents in the Archives, reports of officials, records of court cases, by documents in Theal's own Records of the Cape Colony and Belangrijke Historische Dokumenten. It is corroborated by the evidence of contemporary observers - among whom are Barrow, Percival, Lichtenstein, Maynier, Sparrman, Janssens, Dundas and van der Kemp (3).

It is confirmed by the conclusions of historians who have worked on the documents of the period. There were "on the whole" amicable relations in the West, records Cory but in the Eastern Province "distressing and unhappy conditions" for which "neither was wholly to blame". The life of the Hottentots was "unenviable" (4), "a kind of slavery" (5). Even after the introduction of contracts by Dundas, "the Hottentot (was often) condemned to become a slave, or prisoner, for an indefinite time to the farmer who once secured his services" (6). "The sense

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(1) Ibid.
(2) The area where Hottentot labour was most heavily relied on. In the Western Cape, slaves were used.
(3) Who encouraged the Hottentots at Bethelsdorp to take service with nearby farmers, until he saw how they were treated. Reyburn op cit p. 50.
(4) Cory I p. 89.
(5) Op cit p. 90. Cory justifies or rather excuses much of this harshness on the grounds that it was necessary - the Hottentots were indolent etc. He does not, however, deny that this was the case.
(6) Op cit p. 199.

of oppression and the fear of resisting it kept the Hottentots in a kind of slavery from which they were at any time prepared to endeavour to free themselves "[1]. In the opinion of Marais, the conditions, and the protection afforded, were "thoroughly unsatisfactory "[2]; especially in Graaff-Reinet "the temptation to deal harshly and unjustly by their servants, whose position was one of abject dependence was often too strong to be resisted "[3]. MacMillan writes that though they may have lived peacefully on most farms, if they were ill-treated, forcibly detained or their wages withheld, they were "almost wholly without remedy "[4]. This picture is confirmed by among others Pitman[5], Reyburn[6] and Walker[7]. Perhaps Barrow and other of the colonists' severer critics exaggerated and generalized, but "the volume of evidence that there were flagrant abuses was too great to be ignored "[8]. Yet Theal ignores it. The truth is not necessarily the exact opposite of what he says (i.e. that all Hottentots were beaten, starved and ill-treated); but it is radically different. By omitting all reference to their backwardness, poor conditions, poverty and defencelessness in the face of ill-treatment (not rare) his account is rendered inadequate and misleading.

Next, we shall examine Theal's statement that on those few occasions when there were instances of ill-treatment "the courts were open for their protection "[9].

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(1) Op cit p. 89-90
(2) Marais p. 111.
(3) Op cit p. 112.
(4) C.H.B.E. p. 277.
(5) Pitman p. 15.
(6) In The Critic op cit.
(7) Walker (1962) p. 149.
(8) Cape Colour Question p. 90.
(9) Theal (a) p. 169.

MacMillan considers that the Company never really defined the status of the Hottentots; they were "outside the law"[1]. If they were ill-treated or abused, their "extra-legal position ... left them almost wholly without remedy"[2]. Marais thinks this view "is not entirely correct". The Hottentots had the legal right to "be protected in their persons, property and possessions"[3]. Though the Hottentots may on occasion have been protected in their persons, when were they ever protected in their property ? Land is property; Marais himself reports how land was parcelled out to the whites without even bothering to enquire if there were any Hottentots living on it[4]. If they had this right it was a highly theoretical one.

Marais cites as his source and authority for this view, Theal. But Theal's evidence on this question is inconsistent. In contrast to his statement above and to the one cited by Marais, that even in matters affecting their relationship to each other they were 'to some extent amenable to Colonial law'[5], he says elsewhere, that before 1809, "they were regarded as an independent people, entitled to govern themselves"[6]. "These people had always in theory been regarded as independent of the European government, and subject to chiefs of their own race"[7]. Of the 1809 legislation, they were now, "brought into legal subjection to the government"[8].

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(1) Cape Colour Question p. 35.
(2) C.H.B.E. p. 277.
(3) Marais p. 111.
(4) Op cit p. 109.
(5) Op cit p. 111.
(6) Progress p. 99.
(7) South Africa p. 140.
(8) Progress p. 99.

The theoretical and legal position was probably ambiguous and confused; but there is less disagreement about what usually happened in practice. Marais agrees with MacMillan that the position was "thoroughly unsatisfactory". van Ryneveld reported that local officials were not disposed to administer the few protective provisions introduced by Dundas[1] at the end of the 18th Century. In 1803, General Janssens found it necessary to order that 'no private person must dare to put them (the Hottentots) in chains or chastise them', this being a function of magistrates, and then only 'after regular trial'[2]. We know what happened to Maynier when he tried to enforce similar instructions of the government.

As we shall see, it was difficult enough for the Hottentots to get redress from the law after 1809, when administration had been tightened up, the system of law-courts extended and with the help of missionary champions. Previously, if the few courts of law were indeed open, "the ignorant and depressed Hottentots could hardly have been aware of their existence" and "there was no law regulating the relations between master and servant"[3].

To dispose of the prdlem of the "exceptional" cases of ill-treatment by saying "they had always the remedy of removal"[4] and "the Courts of law were open for their protection", is dishonest, unless one is ignorant. But Theal was not ignorant. He had shown an awareness of such facts in the Compendium.

Referring to the period up to 1809, Theal states that the Hottentots "were neither taxed nor called upon to perform public services except when of their own

(1) And these only came at the end of the 18th Century.
(2) G.H.B.E. p. 278. Janssens letter to Landdrost of Swellendam.
(3) Marais p. 111-112. The first such law was in 1801.
(4) Progress p. 17.

accord they enlisted as pandours [1]. Discussing the bastard migration to the North, Marais says one of the main reasons for this, was the "compulsory service on commandos". In 1778 Field-Sergeant van Zyl reported that 'all the Hottentots and Bastards fit for commandos are going away to the Namaqua country to evade serving on commandos' [2]. Re taxes: from 1787, there was "a separate list" of Bastard graziers in Graaff-Reinet who "paid the same taxes as the Boers" [3]. Presumably, when they were in a position to pay taxes, they were taxed [4].

An examination of Theal's account of the condition of the Hottentots under British rule.

In the Compendium, Theal wrote that their position was still wretched. They now had the advantage of access to the Courts, but beyond this, British rule was "Rather ... the means of riveting their fetters more firmly than before"(5). They had to have a fixed place of abode(6), from which they could not move without a pass; as they had no land this "virtually placed the whole race in a condition of serfdom". The real object of the law was to force them to work, at wages fixed by the employers. If the landdrost was humane their position was "tolerable"; otherwise they were oppressed without relief"(7). He concluded that the stronger government of the British bore hard on the Hottentots; it more effectively "crush(ed) out their freedom and humanity"(8).

In his later works, Theal maintains(9) that "no measures could be devised of greater benefit to the people effected", that it "rescued" them "from utter ruin, if not from extinction"(10). Re the protective provisions of the law: "Ample provision was made in the proclamation for the enforcement of punctual payment of wages, for the release of the Hottentot upon expiration of the term of service, and for his protection from ill-treatment"(11).

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(1) South Africa p. 140.
(2) Marais p. 12.
(3) Idem.
(4) Theal nowhere indicates how little they had to tax. There is no reference in his account of this period to their poverty.
(5) Compendium p. 204.
(6) He is referring to the 1809 legislation, the Hottentot Code of Caledon.
(7) Idem.
(8) Op cit p. 205.
(9) Referring to the 1809/12 legislation, the Hottentot Code and Apprenticeship Proclamation.
(10) South Africa [illegible]. (11) Theal (d) p. 148.

After this proclamation, several clans withdrew to Namaqualand, while some missionaries complained that the law was oppressive. "But the benefit from the substitution of government for practical anarchy should outweigh the discontent of a few hundred individuals"(1).

The 1809 Code has been interpreted both as a Magna Carta and an instrument of oppression; although recently, the views of historians have been more qualified. The object of the law was to provide labour for the farmers and better conditions for the Hottentots. However, Walker considers that it failed to achieve the latter because of the pass sections, which reduced Hottentots "to the level of serfs at the disposal of the local officials"(2). de Kiewiet agrees that little was done to improve the condition of the Hottentots, who were thrust even more firmly under their master's control. However, "it meant much that the Hottentots were brought inside the law, however heartless that law might still be "(3). MacMillan goes further: the law reduced the Hottentots to a state of "virtual slavery". They had to have a fixed place of abode; as they had no land they had "no practical alternative to serfdom "(4). Marais: The 1809 Code was part of a process of extending the rule of law and tightening up the control of the central administration. Though it had disadvantages it "marked a distinct advance in the status of the Hottentots "(5).

Before enquiring into the administration of these laws to test Theal's statement that "ample provision" was made for the enforcement of the protective clauses, we

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(1) Op cit p. 342.
(2) Walker (1940) p. 155 and 176.
(3) de Kiewiet p. 46.
(4) Cape Colour Question p. 146, 154.
(5) Marais p. 121.

must keep in mind their limitations. Despite some differences, all the historians quoted are agreed on this: if they constituted an advance it was "only just". They did not establish legal equality, Hottentots could not own land, they were subject to stringent pass provisions, the law provided for domestic discipline in cases of laziness or impertinence sine trial. Moreover, Hottentots would obviously be discouraged from lodging charges as they were to be kept in jail till the hearing, flogged if the complaint was considered trivial or not proven in Court. Though one would not think so from Theal's account, it is about the "advantages" and "advances" of such a law that we are arguing. Whether or not it constituted a small or a great degree of advance, it is a clear indication of the conditions that prevailed that this question should even arise. To say that this law was a considerable advance and "saved them from utter ruin" is an inexplicable comment from one who represented their previous condition as being satisfactory; as Theal did. If such a law could "save them" and be to their "benefit" their conditions must surely have been appalling ?

The benefits of a law which ensured control over their labour/upply had obvious advantages for the colonists. Of these Theal, however, does not speak. He emphasises the advantages to the Hottentots. What were these ?

The mere fact that they and their relationship with were/their masters, ~~was~~ brought under the scrutiny, and in some aspects under the control of the law, was of advantage. This in itself was a rise in status, a <u>potential</u> weapon for defence and improvement, especially (perhaps entirely) owing to the presence of an increasing number of articulate champions (the missionaries), and aided by the extension

and improvement of the administration[1] of justice. The officials and judges were, in addition, urged and exhorted to enforce the protective provisions and make them known to the Hottentots[2].

What practical advantage the law offered to the Hottentots lay entirely in the protective clauses. How effective were they ? The intention of the labour contract was to ensure that Hottentots would not be kept in service indefinitely, and that they would be paid. Most historians agree about the ineffectiveness of this provision. MacMillan: the labour contracts provided no protection. Some pretext could always be found for refusing to discharge them. If they were discharged, they might encounter difficulty in getting a pass to look for work elsewhere[3]. As they had to have a fixed place of abode, they were usually forced to stay in the same area and probably to work for the same employer. Thus, the tyrannical application of the pass laws nullified the protective intentions of the labour contracts; they were used to tie down and immobilise Hottentot labour; and they also depressed wages[4].

The Commission of Inquiry[5] (1823-7) described how, if Hottentots did manage to get a discharge, they had first to apply to the field-cornet for a pass before they could look for work (which they had to have) elsewhere. This pass was only valid in the field-cornetcy. If they wished to go further afield, they had to apply for a pass from

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(1) The creation of additional landdrosts, the establishment of the Circuit Court by the British.
(2) See for example R.C.C. XXIV p. 462. Instructions to the Circuit Court Judges.
(3) They could not move from their area without a pass.
(4) Cape Colour Question p. 166.
(5) R.C.C. XXXV p. 316-17.

the landdrost. The issue of these was subject to the discretion of the officers. "In the exercise of this discretion neither the landdrost nor the veld cornet are subject to any control". From the evidence it seemed they were usually allowed passes for about a week. Though the records contained cases where they were told to find work "immediately", considering distances and communications, even a week was not very long. The Commission considered that the primary concern of the officials was the labour supply of their own districts (1).

Marais agrees that if they obtained a discharge, their opportunities of looking for work elsewhere were "severely circumscribed" (2), and that the administration of the pass laws immobilised the labour force (3). This is confirmed by Cory: The Boers took advantage of the provisions of 1809 and 1812 to keep the Hottentots in service: "Thus the condition of service of this, an admittedly free people, was somewhat of the nature of slavery" (4).

This control over and immobilisation of Hottentot labour was effected by the administration of the pass laws, which lay in the hands of the local officials. The system of farmer ~~veld~~-field-cornets, with farmer interests and farmer friends had already been criticised by van Ryneveld (5), by Collins, by the Circuit Court Judges in their report of 1812 (6) and by the Commission of Inquiry (7), who mentioned two cases in which field-cornets themselves

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(1) Ibid.
(2) Marais p. 126.
(3) Op cit p. 127.
(4) Cory II p. 368.
(5) R.C.C. IV p. 88-96.
(6) R.C.C. VIII p. 288.
(7) R.C.C. XXXV p. 316-7.

were fined for illegal detention of servants. The evidence seems to bear out the conclusion of the Commission of Inquiry that though local officials readily enforced the provisions which were in the interests of the maters, they were markedly less disposed to enforce those in the interests of the Hottentots (1).

The pass provisions, were "stringently enforced" (2). In terms of the law, all Hottentots had to have a pass. "All persons were empowered to demand a pass from any Hottentot who appeared on their farms, and in case of his not being provided with one, to deliver him up..." (3) Probably, not only those who appeared on their farms: by the 1820's it had become 'a received opinion' that a Hottentot found anywhere without a pass could be stopped, apprehended and lodged in jail. There he would stay until his master claimed him or if he had none, till one was found. "In either case the expenses of his keep would be debited against his future wages" (4).

Theal's own account of the conditions under which complaints were lodged (5) make it clear that Hottentots would be discouraged from going to court even when they had very serious grievances. The operation of the pass system made it difficult for them to get to court (6). If they had the courage, knowledge and good fortune to get there, they could not bank on a fair hearing. Not only had they to face the handicaps of atmosphere, language difficulties and ignorance (7), but they often had to contend with partial and always with white, judges.

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(1) Marais p. 125.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Theal (d) p. 148.
(4) Marais p. 125-6.
(5) See above Chapter II p. 18.
(6) Marais p. 119 (ft.nt). R.C.C. VIII p. 309.
(7) Cape Colour Question p. 158.

Even the High Court of Justice in Cape Town most impartial of all the Courts, leaned towards the colonists. Governor Cradock, on occasion, felt constrained to comment on inadequate sentences. Drawing the attention of the Chief Justice to five cases of a "peculiar character" from the records of the High Court of Justice, the Governor described the sentence of banishment in one murder case as "a mockery of justice"; while of another he wrote,

"In my opinion ... a more deliberate cold-blooded scene of persecution and cruelty even unto death, was never exhibited.
The sentence: Three months imprisonment !!!"(1)

The bias of the Courts and the disproportionate sentences imposed on whites and Hottentots is vividly illustrated by a case from the files of the Black Circuit(2). The case is that of Theunis Botha who was charged with ill-treating a slave, Dina and her daughter, who subsequently died(3). Cuyler himself acknowledged that the family were notorious for their ill-treatment of servants and had been warned by him in the past. The Court found that the death of the child was caused by the beating(4). The judgment: the landdrost was ordered to watch Botha. Cory, who read the evidence said "It seems strange that Botha did not receive, as he seems to have deserved more severe punishment than this"(5).

The judges, however, compensated for their leniency towards Botha by their severity towards a Hottentot, Jan

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(1) R.C.C. Vol. X p. 2.
(2) The conduct of the Judges of the Black Circuit is, I think, an indictment of the administration of Justice. We shall deal with this if we have time.
(3) This was one of the "flimsy" charges brought forward by the missionaries.
(4) Cory I p. 214
(5) Ibid.

Tamager. Tamager had given evidence against Botha, which the Court had accepted. He was, however, in connection with this case, "found guilty of premeditated falsehood and condemned to hard labour in irons for four months"[1]. Perhaps it was the leniency with which the Courts treated white offenders (in cases against Hottentots) that led the Commission of Inquiry to advise, in 1827[2], with reference to the common crime "of maliciously shooting and wounding others" that penalties be made more severe, regardless of colour[3].

In terms of the 1809 legislation, the Hottentots were "subject to summary procedure, to imprisonment for making any complaint at all, and, to punishment almost by 'request' of their masters; in point of detail, involving the interpretation and application of the proclamations, they stood to suffer from the antipathetic administration of farmer field-cornets". Even if they managed to lodge serious charges, they were unlikely to receive a sympathetic and impartial trial. Yet Theal described these laws as containing "ample provision" for the enforcement of the protective provisions, and left it entirely at that.

Were the "benefits" to which Theal referred perhaps economic ? Janssens, Collins, Colonel Bird (1811), the Crown Commissioners - all contended that the Hottentots were "most inadequately remunerated"[4]. Nearly 50 per cent of the Hottentots in the interior "ended a year with no more to show for their work than when they began it"[5]. MacMillan has argued that by immobilising labour, the pass laws actually had an adverse effect on

(1) Ibid.
(2) By which time the administration of justice had improved considerably.
(3) R.C.C. XXXIII p. 93.
(4) The Cape Coloured Question p. 169.
(5) Reyburn. The Critic (October 1934). p. 47.

the economic condition of the Hottentots[1]. Heyburn's researches on Hottentot wages in selected areas from 1805 - 1815 and in 1823, show that there was no improvement in the economic status of the Hottentots after 1809[2]. Just how low wages were, is indicated by the report of the missionary Helm at Zuurbraak. The wages of Hottentots in his area were so low he said, (not more than 4/6 per month) that many Hottentots lived in freedom (i.e. vagrancy), not because they were averse to work, but because they could support their families better[3]. From this evidence it would seem that the operation of the 1809 laws was to the economic disadvantage of the Hottentots.

Marais does not entirely agree with this. He agrees that wages were "very low"[4] and that the pass laws immobilised labour[5]. However, because of the poverty of the Boers and the backwardness and laziness of the Hottentots, it was perhaps unlikely that there would have been a rise anyway[6]. I cannot agree with this argument. It is not merely that the immobilisation of labour in a time of scarcity - and Hottentot labour always seemed to be scarce - would tend to keep wages down. But also that however poor the Colony still was, she was less poor in about 1814-15 than at the beginning of the British occupation. "The second British occupation actively stimulated the economic life of the Colony"[7]. Between 1806 and 1820 there was a sixfold increase in imports and

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(1) The Cape Colour Qestion p. 166.
(2) The Critic (October 1934) p. 46.
(3) The Cape Colour Question p. 238.
(4) Marais p. 129.
(5) Op cit p. 127.
(6) Op cit p. 130.
(7) de Kiewiet p. 36.

exports. True, Cape Town gained most, but "Even the far-off frontier felt the influence of prosperity". During 1806-24, for example, the number of cattle, trebled[1]. This was, of course, a period of the ups and downs so characteristic of South African economic life. South Africa was in the 1820's hit by the post-Napoleonic War depression. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that there was an improvement in the economy of the country, while there does not seem to have been even a slightly comparable improvement in the wages or living conditions of the Hottentots. So our conclusion is that the 1809 legislation certainly did not assist, and probably retarded the improvement of the economic position of the Hottentots.

Referring to the Apprenticeship regulations of 1812, Theal wrote in the Compendium that they ignored the rights of Hottentot parents[2], and that "No regulation of the government of the East India Company exceeded this in cruelty". In his later works, he wrote: it "ignored the right of Hottentots to control their children .... But it is equally true that it had more effect in raising these people towards civilization than any other regulation ever made concerning them[3]".

The Apprenticeship Proclamation of 1812, provided that the landdrost could bind children born on a farm to the farmer, or some other humane person, from their 8th to their 18th year without any remuneration save food and clothing. In 1819, it was extended by Somerset to orphans.

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(1) Ibid.
(2) Compendium p. 205.
(3) Theal (d) p. 340.
(4) Marais p. 118.

This law has been widely and severely criticised. It was "a device for securing long-term indentured servants"[1], was subject to "grave abuses". Collins reported that "a child can scarcely crawl before it is turned to some purpose"[2]. Ages were often difficult to determine, and this led to retention of the children beyond the legal period[3]. Landdrost Stockenstrom, who supported the 1809 Code, strongly opposed these measures. Parents were loth to leave their apprenticed children, so the system would lead to the perpetual bondage of a family to the farmer and thus further immobilise Hottentot labour[4].

What of the advantages of which Theal speaks ? Masters were supposed to instruct their apprentices in agriculture, useful work and religion[5]. In fact, as the Commission of Inquiry pointed out, they were "averse" to instructing them in religion[6]; nor did field-cornets or local officials exert themselves to enforce these or the protective clauses. There was "considerable laxity" on the part of local officials in ensuring that children were not detained beyond the prescribed period[7]. Furthermore, the landdrost 'frequently ... supported the master's pretensions to the services of Hottentot children on very slight grounds[8].

There does not seem to be any support for Theal's contentions that apprentices were adequately protected against abuse or that apprenticeship had "more effect in raising these people towards civilisation than any other regulation ever made concerning them".

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(1) C.H.B.E. p. 282.
(2) R.C.C. VII p. 111.
(3) R.C.C. XXXV p. 323-5.
(4) Marais p. 129.
(5) R.C.C. XXXV p. 321.
(6) R.C.C. p. 322.
(7) Marais p. 128.
(8) quoted Idem.

Theal's account of the Hottentots during this period is consistently inadequate and misleading, many of his contentions conflict with the evidence, while for others there is no support. But the most striking feature is his consistent omission of a whole body of facts: there is little or nothing in the pages of his history to indicate the most essential features of Hottentot life at this time - landlessness, poverty, low wages, ill-treatment, inadequacy of the law, partiality of officials, abuses of apprenticeship. It is one thing to say that these conditions were justifiable or inevitable, as Cory tends to do; but is is another to deny or ignore them. There is room for disagreement, for differences in interpretation and opinion re the conditions of the Hottentots and the effects of the laws upon them; but the existence of certain outstanding features of their lives is indisputable and inescapable.

It is conceivable that Theal's later researches could have made him aware of other realities of the Colonial situation which he had previously neglected. It is not conceivable that on the basis of the new documents he could now be led to deny the facts which he had previously recognised. On the contrary, the new evidence which he accumulated gives more details of and support to these truths. He wrote his account in full - nay in fuller- knowledge of the facts. Before establishing this, we might note that the effect of these distortions, misrepresentations, omissions, is invariably, as Professor Marais pointed out (1), to tilt the balance in favour of the European colonists and against the non-Europeans and those who championed their interests.

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(1) Maynier Preface.

How do we know that he wrote in full possession of the facts ? In his bibliographies Theal lists and in his documentary collections he includes most of the evidence which has here been compared with his history. Amongst the relevant documents contained in the Records of the Cape Colony, for example, are the reports of field-cornet van Ryneveld (1801)[1], Collins (1809)[2], the Circuit Commission of 1812[3] and the full report of the Commission of Inquiry (1823-7)[4]. The Belangrijke Historische Dokumenten contains many relevant documents including the Reports of General Janssens[5]. Amongst relevant bluebooks which Theal lists in his bibliography are The Report of The Select Committee on Aborigines (1836, 7) and Papers relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Races (Parts I and II. 1835)[6].

In addition, the Archives contain many documents - court cases, labour contracts, landdrosts reports some of which - he claimed a great many - Theal must have seen. Historians who have used them, whatever their qualifications and differences, generally agree that although some of the colonists' critics may have exaggerated or generalised "the volume of evidence that there were flagrant abuses was too great to be ignored"[7].

There is, too, the corroboratory evidence of observers - Not only Barrow, Philip, Fairbairn and Pringle; but Janssens, Dundas, Thompson, Burchell, Latrobe and

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(1) Vol. IV p. 88 ff.
(2) Vol. VI p. 340 ff; Vol. VII p. 20 ff.
(3) Vol. VIII p. 288 ff.
(4) Vol. XXXV
(5) deel III.
(6) Theal (d) p. 446.
(7) The Cape Colour Question p. 90.

Stockenstrom. Theal was familiar with the writings of all these men. He lists them in his bibliographies and assesses and criticises their work.

Theal's work throughout this period - on vagrancy, the Black Circuit, Slagters Nek, Kat River, the British take-overs, the missions, his comparison of the L.M.S. and Moravians, the frontier - was marked and rendered unreliable and inadequate by the distortion, misrepresentation, suppression which characterised his account of the Hottentots. Lack of time and space has forced me to cut out most of my work on this period; but we shall give a selection of brief examples.

Theal's account of the Kat River Settlement is unsatisfactory. Amongst other things, he claims that there is "good ground" for believing that the Hottentots were ready to join the Kaffirs when they invaded the Colony in December 1834. The Kaffirs did not attack the settlement; later it "became known to a certainty that most of the Hottentots at the Kat River had actually been wavering (1)". The Hottentot soldiers at Fort Willshire too, arranged to betray the post, but lost courage (2). How does he account for the fact that they did not join the invaders ? The presence of a military post, Fort Beaufort, not far down the Kat River, "acted as a check upon insurrection (3)". The Rev. Read was sent away from the settlement, while Capt. Armstrong kept an eye on the Hottentots, "By these means" an insurrection was prevented (4).

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(1) Theal (e) p. 12.
(2) Op cit p. 13.
(3) Progress p. 168.
(4) Theal (e) p. 13.

However, he also says, that the congregation of Mr. Thompson (the government missionary and supporter) remained "thoroughly loyal"[1] and at once took up arms. Mr. Thompson's congregation comprised a large section of the Kat River inhabitants, so if they were all loyal, his previous statement that "most" were guilty of collusion is inaccurate.

MacMillan and Marais who have been over the documents on Kat River agree that the whole of Theal's accusation of collusion rests on "utterly inadequate evidence"[2]. In fact, during the war, the Africans attacked the settlement (which had previously belonged to them) "furiously"[3] while the Hottentots "protected their part of the frontier much better than the more scattered European settlers" and "contributed more than their fair share of men to reinforce the army in the field". They were kept on duty long after the European burghers had been released. In 1836 Stockenstrom found 'numbers of them' still guarding military posts[4]. Theal, who always sings the praises of the burghers who went out on commando duty, nowhere recognises the important contribution of the Hottentots to the defence of the Colony[5]. On the contrary he continually sneers at and criticises the existence of the Hottentot regiment, erroneously attributes the cause of the rebellions (by the colonists) in 1799 and 1815 to their presence[6]. Re their

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(1) Ibid.
(2) The Cape Colour Question p. 240-1; Marais p. 227 (ft.nt).
(3) Marais p. 227.
(4) Ibid.
(5) On this see Marais p. 131 ff. on their excellent service and important role in the defence of the Colony. Also Maynier p. 53. And this only refers to their service on the Eastern Frontier, and not on commandos against the Bushmen in the North.
(6) On 1799 rebellion see Progress p. 77; Theal (c) p. 553. On 1815, see below Ch. III.

compulsory labour on the public works, incidentally, Theal claims that "in this respect they were no worse off than white people"[1]. This is untrue. Not only is the evidence decidedly to the contrary[2] but in Ordinance 50, it was specifically stated that Hottentots were no longer to be subject to special obligations of forced labour.

Theal's account of the Black Circuit is unsatisfactory. The real refutation lies in a presentation of the full facts; the details of the "flimsy" charges[3]. Even historians who have recognised that the traditional version evades the real issue - the question of the rule of law - have not, I think, fully recognised the actual strength and seriousness of the charges[4] presented to the Court[5]. Walker, for example, refers apologetically to the "inconvenience" to the colonists. It is always inconvenient to go to Court. Moreover, the extent of the inconvenience caused on this occasion has been "greatly exaggerated"[6].

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(1) Theal (d) p. 343. He is referring specifically to the period up to 1828.

(2) Cory II p. 413. referring to Philip's complaints of forced labour (of Hottentots) in 1821: "There can be no doubt but that the cases of forced labour mentioned in these charges were only a very few of a large number of demands which were made upon Bethelsdorp and Theopolis by the landdrosts of Uitenhage and Albany"; Cape Colour Question p. 162. Mission Hottentots were especially subject to the Corvee, which constituted a heavy drain on the comparatively small proportion of able-bodied men at the missions; on this latter point see Philip, The Researches Vol II p. 405.

(3) See example above p. 44. The case of Botha.

(4) Cory, who read the evidence and who could never be accused of sentimentality towards the Hottentots, said much of the evidence was "heart-rending". Vol I p. 218.

(5) Walker (1940) p. 156.

(6) Reyburn The Critic (October 1934) p. 54.

We shall restrict ourselves to examining only one of Theal's statements. The missionaries, he said, were very well-prepared, "every possible effort" was made to put facilities in their way and in the way of the Hottentots. True, Dr. van der Kemp had died, but Mr. Read was "aided" by others and was "on his mettle"[1]. Thus the best and strongest possible case was put forward. He also states that as a special prosecutor was put on duty a most "thorough investigation"[2], an impartial and fair hearing was assured and given.

The missionaries were faced with the greatest difficulties. Many of the events had occurred years before[3], and it was extremely difficult to collect evidence and witnesses for their cases. The case of one Nel, for example, was dropped because both the accused and the principal witness were absent. Cory describes this case as "typical"[4]. The death of van der Kemp in 1811, was a severe blow; Read was incompetent[5], whether "on his mettle" or not. In Court, he had to rely on the evidence of "ignorant and easily confused Hottentots and slaves". All this was so greatly to their disadvantage that "The result was inevitable"[6].

The conduct of both the prosecution and the judges was open to severe censure. The prosecution was not rigorously carried out. In one case (B.J. van Rensburg) the prosecution virtually defended the accused[7]; in another (J. Scheepers), discrepancies in the evidence were not brought out, absurd statements went unchallenged[8]; while

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(1) Theal (d) p. 163-4.
(2) Op cit p. 164.
(3) They brought forward some cases that had been on their files for years.
(4) Cory I p. 214.
(5) C.H.B.E. p. 285.
(6) Ibid.
(7) Reyburn The Critic (October 1934) p. 55.
(8) Ibid.

in the case of Nel and Nel, the prosecutor (Cuyler) suggested a line of defence to the accused by the questions he put[1]. The report of the judges with its claim that many of the complaints were "devoid of truth" and "existed "in imagination only"[2] is "hardly adequate"[3]. Some of the sentences were absurdly light, and elicited criticism from Governor Cradock himself[4] while even some of those found guilty were not sentenced[5]. I do not understand how Theal could have arrived at his conclusion that in the presentation of their case, the missionaries had every advantage on their side and every facility at their disposal.

Theal's account of Slagters Nek is unsatisfactory. We shall not dwell on, but might note in passing his habit, in some of his books, of describing the attempt of the rebels to form an alliance with Gaika and precipitate an invasion of the Colony, as "an attempt to induce <u>others</u> to join them"[6].

Theal claims that it was the use of the Hottentot troops in the arrest of Frederick Bezuidenhout that led to the rebellion. "If the Hottentot regiment had been disbanded ... it would not have taken place". At the graveside, Jan Bezuidenhout (brother of the dead man, Frederick) declared that "he would never rest until the Hottentot corps was driven from the frontier"[7]. But according to the evidence Jan Bezuidenhout did not even mention the Hottentots at the graveside. Instead, he

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(1) <u>Ibid</u>.
(2) <u>R.C.C</u>. Vol. IX p. 68-9.
(3) Reyburn <u>op cit</u> p. 54.
(4) <u>Op cit</u> p. 55
(5) e.g. <u>Botha</u> above p. 44. He was found guilty of causing the murder of a child by beating. The landdrost was ordered to keep an eye on him.
(6) <u>South Africa</u> p. 149. (underlining mine).
(7) <u>Progress</u> p. 114.

spoke of his desire for revenge against field-cornet Opperman and lieutenant Rousseau, who had been responsible for the arrest[1] of Frederick.

Theal claims that as the pandours called on Jan Bezuidenhout[2] to surrender he resisted and was killed.

"The pandours approached the waggon, and called to him to surrender .... His (Bezuidenhout's) code of honour ... contained at least one principle common to the noblest minds in all sections of the race to which he belonged: to die rather than do that which is degrading. And for him it would have been unutterably degrading to have surrendered to the pandours. Instead of doing so he fired at them"(3).

Bezuidenhout was not asked to surrender to, or by, the pandours. Lieutenant Mac Innes called on him to surrender,[4] while Commandant Nel and Piet Erasmus "shouted out to him to the same effect. Bezuidenhout, however, took not notice but continued to fire "[5].

Theal claims

"It was generally supposed that the governor would use his power of mitigation to prevent the penalty of death being inflicted ... But Lord Charles Somerset would show very little mercy". This execution "caused the most intense animosity towards the British government .... a proof of the merciless nature of English authority"(6).

There is no evidence that it was "generally supposed" the rebels would be pardoned, nor that the populace was horrified; nor was it an instance of "English" mercilessness. The judges who passed sentence were Dutch, the whole procedure was conducted in accordance with

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(1) See the sworn evidence of Bothma (p. 236) Faber (p. 585) Labuscagne (p. 643), who were present at and gave evidence on the funeral. The Rebellion of 1815 (compilation of evidence by Leibbrandt).
(2) When he was fleeing to Kaffirland after the rebellion. Pandours were Hottentot troops.
(3) Progress p. 118.
(4) Who had been one of Bezuidenhout's co-rebels at Slagters Nek. Cory I p. 356.
(5) Cory I p. 359 (based on Liebbrandts documents).
(6) Progress p. 119 - 20.

Roman-Dutch law. Somerset, in fact, was rather anxious about the death sentences: in a letter to Cuyler, he said,

'However misteken or misguided our people may be, the natural object of a good government is to reclaim, rather than to punish'(1).

Cuyler, however, was adamant. He interceded on behalf of W.F. Kruger (whose sentence Somerset considerably commuted)(2); but for the others, he insisted,

'This calls for example, as in the first affair they were all pardoned .... Something severe must be done and that without much delay to ensure the trenquillity of the borders'.(3).

Chief-Justice Truter supported this view. In 1816 he wrote to Somerset that the punishment had been 'well-merited', ' a most impressive and deterring example '(4). Many of the sentences of the Dutch judges were, in fact, "considerably modified in favour of the condemned" by Somerset(5). There is no evidence in any document re Slagters Nek to show that the executions were regarded by the burghers as a breach of faith; while all the documents show that "in extending mercy as well as in confirming sentence, the Governor acted on the advice of his Dutch officials "(6).

Theal always claimed his work was based on Archives, not on secondary sources. He made this usual claim for his account of Slagters Nek(7). This was disputed by the archivist, Leibbrandt - not on the grounds that Theal's version was in conflict with the evidence, but because the documents on Slagters Nek were not in the

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(1) Quoted in a letter by Colvin Cape Times 30/9/1909.
(2) Cory I p. 362.
(3) Quoted in The Romance of Empire p. 225.
(4) Letter from Colvin. Cape Times 30/9/1909.
(5) Cory I p. 362.
(6) Letter from Colvin Cape Times 30/9/1909. Stockenstrom was another Dutch official who testified to the beneficial effect of the "severity" of these measures: "from that moment the power of law has been paramount in the colony". Autobiography Vol. 1. p. 92.
(7) Letter to the Cape Times 17/8/1909.

Archives at the time Theal claimed he had used them there[1]. They had been lost and were only later discovered by Leibbrandt, who published them in 1902. This did not, however, lead to any alteration in Theal's later editions. In 1909, he was confronted with the documents and publicly challenged by Leibbrandt and Colvin[2] to produce the evidence for his version of Slagters Nek. His response was to accuse them of "blackening the character of the Dutch colonists"; and to claim that there was no difference between Colvin's account and his own

> "except that he is sweeping in his denunciations of the Dutch colonists, and I discriminate between the peaceable and the hostile"(3).

We have recorded above some of the significant factual differences between Theal's version and those (including Colvin's) based on Leibbrandt's documents[4].

Although Theal does "of course" disapprove of slavery,

"it should not be judged solely by what civilised men and women would suffer if reduced to that condition, for even in its worst form it was in all European colonies an improvement upon the ordinary existence of millions of the children of Africa. Compare with it ... the condition of the wretched survivors of Tshaka's butcheries ... and it

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(1) Cape Times 31/8/1909

(2) See below chapter on William Adriaan.

(3) Cape Times 17/8/1909.

(4) The Rebellion of 1815. Generally known as Slagters Nek.

will seem a system of benevolence and mercy(1) .... The African ... felt no degradation in serving the white man, whom he instinctively recognised as his superior"(2).

"Still that does not justify" slavery. What is the basis of Theal's objection to it - moral, religious, economic?

"If progress is a law of God, - and who can doubt that it is ? - what a crime was committed when the African was transported to lands where the Caucasian could live and thrive ! It was a crime that nature punishes with the most terrible severity. Look at the idle, clamorous, unthrifty, unstable lazzaroni of Southern Italy or Southern Portugal today: how very different those fair countries would be if no negro had ever mixed his blood with the once energetic and lordly races that held the land"(3).

A selection from Theal's errors(4) : he claims that during the British occupation 1795-1803 more slaves were "imported yearly" than ever "before or since "(5). This is incorrect. In fact, for the first two years (1795-7), slave importations "ceased altogether". In 1797, in view of the labour shortage Craig "was constrained to

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(1) Theal frequently makes use of such astonishing comparisons. The condition of slaves is not compared with the conditions of those Africans who were leading average lives farming, or as nomads; but with the conditions of the "wretched survivors" of Tshaka, the most exceptional and cruel military tyrant of whom we have record in Southern Africa.

(2) Progress p. 182-3.

(3) Progress p. 183.

(4) See particularly Ch. XVI in Progress. Nearly all the examples from Theal on slavery have been drawn from Progress. The reason for this was that I intended (in the longer chapter on slavery, from which these examples have, I am afraid, been rather clumsily extracted) to limit myself to his account in one book (instead of selecting from among many books), to give an idea of the total effect on the reader of his presentation of a particular theme. This chapter was chosen partly because it is of manageable length; partly because it is so revealing.

(5) Op cit p. 182; Theal (d) p. 407 (underlining mine). This is the origin of the charge that slaves in South Africa were "chiefly imported in English ships and sold to us by Englishmen". Thompson. Afrikaner Nationalist Historiography.

sanction the landing of 350 negroes". The following year (1798) Macartney, after considering "total prohibition" tightened restrictions, the importation of slaves without licence became punishable by a heavy fine[1].

Theal makes much of (or perhaps invents) what he rather grandly terms the "South African plan of emancipation"[2]. It is used to prove that the colonists had themselves wanted emancipation all along:

> "The deliberate falsehood was spread abroad ... that they were opposed to emancipation of the negroes.... the truth was suppressed that they too were ready and willing to extinguish slavery, and that without the cost of a cent to the British treasury, provided it was done in such a way as not to bring ruin upon themselves and their children".(3).

What was "the South African plan of emancipation"? Theal builds this out of the Graaff-Reinet resolutions and the existence of a Philanthropic Society[4] which purchased the freedom of a few slaves. Explaining the undoubted failure of the latter, Theal suggests that the reason was that it did not receive assistance "from the British treasury and from benevolent persons in England"[5]. But, he had stated that the "plan" was to emancipate slaves "without the cost of a cent to the British treasury"[6]. (Re this suggestion we might note too his complaints about the inadequacy of the £1 million compensation paid. He considers "confiscation as a more appropriate term than Emancipation"[7].) Moreover, his claim that the funds of the society were raised "almost entirely by means of local subscriptions"[8]

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(1) C.H.B.E. p. 265. (underlining mine).
(2) Progress p. 186.
(3) Progress p. 190. (underlining mine).
(4) Established in 1828.
(5) Progress p. 184-5.
(6) Op cit p. 190.
(7) Progress p. 189.
(8) Op cit p. 185.

is incorrect. Most of the contributors were "well-wishers in England"[1]. Furthermore, even the limited funds which the Society had were not always fully used because of the reluctance of owners to sell, even at their own price[2].

As for the Graaff-Reinet Resolutions: They were not, as Theal suggests "generally adopted throughout the colony"[3]. The most important proviso and concern of the resolutions passed elsewhere was that the 19th Ordinance[4] should be repealed and a plan adopted for gradual emancipation 'with as little prejudice to the masters and with as little inconvenience and danger to the public as was possible'[5]. It was a rearguard movement by owners to delay emancipation as long as possible. Edwards reports that interest in such schemes soon died down; the committee that had been established in Cape Town "confined its activities" entirely to petitioning for the repeal of the 19th Ordinance. Even in Graaff-Reinet (Stockenstrom's landdrostdy) which passed the most liberal and exceptional resolutions, interest died out, the committee did nothing. Referring to them, Governor Bourke wrote a year later, 'that measures tending to the ultimate extinction of slavery cannot as yet be expected to originate with the colonists'[6]. Theal's suggestion that the colonists throughout South Africa had a "plan" which they were of their own accord, willing to put into action, is, I think, stretching the facts rather far beyond the bounds of much reality.

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(1) C.H.B.E. p. 270.
(2) Edwards p. 158.
(3) Progress p. 186.
(4) The 19th Ordinance provided for compulsory manumission of slaves who could pay the price: though subject to strict provisos.
(5) Edwards p. 156.
(6) Edwards p. 157.

What documents could he have discovered in Basutoland that caused his volte face on this question. For in the Compendium he had written that on the question of emancipation, the slave-owners, often liberal in other respects were "conservative to a man"[1], and that the Philanthropic Society and other schemes could not have destroyed slavery "within a reasonable time"[2]. It is not the alteration in his position that matters, but the alteration in his facts. It would be different if he frankly changed his mind about the necessity or justice of emancipation; but he does not. He implies that it was unnecessary as the colonists would have done it themselves and concentrates exclusively on the grievous "manner" in which it was done[3].

Theal's claim that slaves at the Cape were much better treated than those elsewhere, accompanied by the well-worn comparison with slaves in the West Indies, has been repeated by practically all South African historians. It is not a proper comparison. The proper comparison is not between domestic and agricultural slavery here and gang-labour slavery elsewhere; but between domestic and agricultural slavery here and domestic and agricultural slavery elsewhere; in some of the Southern States of America, for example. I do not know what the result of such a comparison would be. I can, however, pass on the comment of an observant and well-informed Southerner who recently examined the slave lodge at Groot Constantia - presumably better than average. He was horrified; and assured me that the average slave dwellings in the Southern States were far superior. Moreover, many of the Southern

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(1) Compendium p. 227.
(2) Op cit p. 229.
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States already had by the beginning of the 19th Century, detailed legislation regulating the conditions, treatment & food of slaves. When the British government abolished some of the more terrible forms of torture (such as breaking on the wheel) in the Cape Colony at the same time, they encountered opposition[1]; and later regulations reforming and controlling the conditions of slavery here were, and still are, spoken of as "grievances", "inconvenient"[2]

Theal's claims about the delights of being a slave in South Africa[3] have, however, to compete with the claims of other colonial historians for their respective areas. In an article on the Portuguese historian Welch, Boxer discusses a similar (and similarly unsubstantiated) claim that slaves in Portuguese territories were better treated than those anywhere else. Even the comparison with the West Indies is the same. Boxer's comment is that this (i.e. superiority to the West Indies) is nothing to be proud of[4].

Few South African historians bother their readers with a discussion of the principles of slavery. Although we are burdened with details re the great inconvenience of the reforming slave measures of the early 19th Century, we are saved the unpleasant details of slave codes, punishments, brutality etc. Theal, as usual establishes

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(1) Walker (1962) p. 126.
(2) This is an odd objection to make to a law. Traffic laws are often "inconvenient". The real test of a law is surely whether it is just and necessary, and not whether it is convenient?
(3) Gory best expresses the feelings of our historians when he writes: it was a "most fortunate fate" for a slave to be sent to South Africa. Vol. III p. 14.
(4) Journal of African History Vol. I No. I. Article by Boxer.

the pattern. In his 11½ page chapter on slavery in Progress, for example, 8½ pages deal with the inconvenience caused by the reforming measures and with the disastrous effects of emancipation upon the Colony, the colonists and the slaves themselves(1). There is a total of about one page on the evils and abuses of slavery, accompanied by the usual assurances that it was better here than elsewhere, better than being butchered by Tshaka and even better than being an "agricultural labourer in Great Britain"(2). Although the slaves in South Africa were so well off, their owners, however, were not: "it was a common observation that it was worse for the white man, who had all the care and anxiety, than for the negro, who had only manual labour to perform"(3).

Selection of material and apportionment of space are obviously significant and telling factors in the construction of a history and we must be aware of them.

Finally, a quotation from Theal on the reforms effected by the Charter of Justice of 1827.

"The creation of an independent supreme court was admitted by every one to be an advantage, but whether trial of criminal cases by jury tended to promote justice was a question upon which two opinions could be held. In the eye of the law the life of a Kaffir or a Bushman was as sacred as that of the Chief Justice himself, but could it

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(1) "And what is the result as seen today? The majority of their descendants are neither better fed, clothed or housed than they were as slaves, they are neither so cleanly in their apparel nor so becoming in their conduct. Every old resident in the colony deplores the deterioration that has been gradually going on among them in these respects". Progress p. 191.

(2) Progress p. 184.

(3) Theal (d) p. 409 . For examples of how closely the metric version follows Theal, see Fowler & Smit p. 116-7, 235, 236-7.

a widely-used matriculation text-book

be expected that nine men would always agree to subject a European to sentence of death for shooting a Kaffir or a Bushman thief, no matter how clear the evidence might be, or how the judge might sum it up. They might bring in a verdict of guilty if the value of the lives of different classes of men was appraised as in early days in England, but that was impossible in the nineteenth century. To the present day this question is not answered alike by every one, nor can it ever be in a country inhabited by men of the highest and of the lowest races, all absolutely equal before the law"(1).

So much for what Theal thought of legal equality - but we might note a few neat, characteristic, psychological tricks. "In the eye of the law the life of a Kaffir or a Bushman was as sacred as that of the Chief Justice himself". Why compare the poor Kaffir or Bushman with the Chief Justice himself ? Compare the life of a Kaffir with the life of a colonist - any old colonist. "but could it be expected ... (they) would always agree to subject a European to sentence of death for shooting a Kaffir or a Bushman <u>thief</u>". A European would never be on trial for his life for shooting a Kaffir or Bushman <u>thief</u>. Europeans on trial for their lives were the kind of men who had, for example, shot bound, disarmed Hottentots, or beaten children to death (2). The question is, would a jury of nine men agree to subject them to the death penalty "no matter how clear the evidence might be, or how the judge might sum it up". This is the question that Dr. Theal [illegible] evades. This is a characteristic and serious misrepresentation of the issue by him.

This chapter has, I am afraid, suffered badly from being cut to half of its former length. Extracts and selections do not make it possible to show with force how consistently one-sided, distorted and erroneous

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(1) <u>Progress</u> p. 152.
(2) See above p. 34, 44.

Theal's closely-integrated history is. However, the essential point which I wish to make is this: Theal claimed that his change from the Compendium was caused by the discovery of new evidence and not by a change in his views and sympathies. He is insistent about this. The prefaces of most of his books contain assurances that he is not partial, that he has no ties with any group or party (1). I reject this claim. The change in Theal's interpretation and account must have been caused by a change in his views; for the whole tendency of the change is contrary to the evidence - evidence which he was reading, collecting and publishing.

In the earlier Compendium, imperfect and less detailed though it may have been, Theal recognised certain basic truths about the South African situation which he later denied and ignored. He did this despite the added support which his later researches gave to them. This is more dramatically and easily illustrated by the blatant errors of Slagters Nek. It is, with more difficulty, though more typically and significantly illustrated by the more complex suppression and misrepresentation over, for example, the Hottentots. It is useful to compare Theal with Cory. Although their conclusions may be the same, their methods and manner of handling evidence is different. Cory criticises and condemns the missionaries and officials who championed the cause of the Hottentots; however, he recognises the facts of the case. He does not deny that the Hottentots were landless, ill-treated and without adequate protection. He still says quite frankly that the missionaries should not have interfered. This is a

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(1) See above p. 26.

position compatible with historical truth. Theal, however, denies or ignores the facts of Hottentot landlessness, poverty, ill-treatment. He actually claims that there was no land problem, that they "preferred" to work, that "ample provision" was made for the enforcement of laws protecting them, that apprenticeship was not abused. These are not mere questions of opinion and point of view. They are not the only facts of the case, but they comprise a formidable, well-documented body of facts. It is not compatible with historical truth to ignore or deny them.

What was Theal's attitude towards this mass of evidence ? How did he account for it ? Theal assessed, selected, used evidence according to how it fitted in with his preconceived notions. Evidence that did not fit in he rejected or ignored. He approvingly quotes the opinion of Colling that most colonists treated their Hottentot servants kindly. He does not, however, mention that Collins was referring to those in the North; nor does he repeat or apparently take note of Collins' severe comments on the treatment of Hottentots in Graaff-Reinet (1). He frequently quotes General Janssens' letter to Baird commending the colonists to the sympathetic care of the British (2). He does not however quote or take account of Janssens outreged remarks on the treatment of the Hottentots and the behaviour of the Boers in Graaff-Reinet (3). He often uses a [illegible] comparison (without acknowledgment) from George Thompson to the effect that the Boers of

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(1) See above p. 32; contained in R.C.C. Vol. VI p. 340 ff, Vol. VII p. 20 ff.
(2) Janssens letter to Baird. quoted in many of Theal's books, e.g. Theal (d) p. 126.
(3) See below chapter IV. Janssens report contained in B.H.D. deel III.

South Africa were better than frontiersmen elsewhere. He does not, however, take note of Thompson's immediately preceding qualifications, "that the back-country boors of former times were many of them as savage, indolent and unprincipled as Mr. Barrow has described, cannot be questioned; and the facts I have stated, and those I shall yet state, will prove that to this day some of them are in no respect improved (1)". Theal admires Collins' report and Thompson's book (2); but he only uses those sections which support his case.

Though usually uncritical in his handling of bluebooks and official documents, he singles out for disapproval two significant exceptions: the Report of the Aborigenes Committee and the Report of the Commission of Inquiry. Theal continually sneers at the Commission of Inquiry (1823-7) which was sent out to the Cape during Somerset's time. I was puzzled by this, until I read their report. They compiled good reports on financial matters, he wrote

"but upon other subjects they gave no satisfaction to any class of colonists(3). Some questions, believed in South Africa to be of paramount importance, were ignored altogether; and some(4) were very inaccurately represented. The Commissioners, indeed, carried on their investigations of official documents through the governor .... They were the governor's guests ... in Cape Town. And the mouths of the civil servants were effectually stopped, for it was well understood that anyone who should venture to make disclosures ...."(5) "The Commissioners did not trouble to learn the Dutch language .... and were too ready to adopt statements made by others",(6)

All of which presumably explains away their documented, detailed evidence on, for example, the abuses of

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(1) Travels and Adventures in South Africa Part III p.313-14.
(2) For his opinion on Thompson see Catalogue p. 303.
(3) This is not the object of a fact-finding commission.
(4) What ?
(5) Evidence ?
(6) Theal (d) p. 243 (underlining mine).

apprenticeship, the administration of Justice, the partiality of local officials. Marais has made very extensive and good use of the evidence contained in their report in his Cape Coloured People.

Theal frequently attacks the Report of the Aborigenes Committee (1836,7) "it is based upon that portion of the evidence ... which is now known not to have been in accordance with facts". "A particular statement in the report was then discovered ... to be very incorrect (1)". No need, therefore, to bother about the evidence (much of it detailed and valuable) contained in this report either (2).

Theal disposes with as much ease of those secondary sources with which he does not agree. His judgment of other historians is largely determined by their political views. He praises Chase (3), Cloete (4), Noble (5) and Godlonton (6) all of whom were pro-colonist, anti-missionary and anti-black. Boyce's Notes on South Africa 1834-8 (1838) is "one of the very best volumes of its time with reference to South Africa (7)". Boyce was the Wesleyan missionary who was a most vocal supporter of D'Urban's during and after the 1834-5 War. Other Wesleyans, for example, Shaw (8), also receive praise. Missionaries of the opposite camp, however, are treated in a different vein. The "only value" of Philip's Researches (1838) "is the exposition of the views of its author (9)". Stephen Kay's Travels and Researches (1833) must be read

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(1) Op cit p. 447 (underlining mine).
(2) I am not, of course, suggesting that historians should not treat bluebooks critically: They should - but all bluebooks.
(3) Catalogue p. 68 (Cape of Good Hope (1843)).
(4) Op cit p. 70 (Emigration of the Dutch Farmers (1843))
(5) Op cit p. 217. (S.A. Past and Present (1877)).
(6) Op cit p. 117 (Inruption of the Kaffir Hordes 1834 (1836
(7) Op cit p. 41. On Boyce see Chapter IV below. Section on Philip.
(8) Op cit p. 271 (Story of my Mission (1860))
(9) Theal (d) p. 439.

"with great caution". e.g. "Two portraits termed those of Kaffirs are given, which are of the gentlest Europeans with their skins darkened [1]". Livingstone's Travels and Researches (1861) are marred by "extreme prejudice" and "Some of his statements have over and over again been proved to be incorrect [2]".

Theal concedes re both these latter books, that they do contain muchfactual information, but this does not seem as important to him as the views of the authors. For example, he says of the Memorials of South Africa by the Rev. Barnabas Shaw, "It contains a few historical errors, but they are of little importance" for "Its spirit is fair and kindly [3]".

Other authors of whom Theal approves: Campagne [4] who was a partisan of the opponents of Maynier; Bogaert, a partisan of the colonists against William Adriaan [5]; Lichtenstein [6] - the critic of Barrow and defender of the colonists. Theal gives Barrow [7] a rough time. Barrow, he admits, is reliable and does contain a great deal of "statistics", and much information, but his book is "deeply tinged by prejudice [8]" against the colonists.

"There are reasons for this without implying that Barrow was intentionally guilty of misrepresentation. He was bound to Lord Macartney by the strong tie of gratitude .... The one was a munificent patron, the other a grateful receiver of favours. This position must insensibly have coloured Barrow's pages"(9).

Theal does not, apparently think it necessary to deliver this warning re Moodie's pamphlets against Philip; although

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(1) Op cit p. 440.
(2) Catalogue p. 178.
(3) Theal (d) p. 442.
(4) Catalogue p. 56. See Chapter IV section on Maynier and criticism of Campagne.
(5) Op cit p. 35. See Chapter V below. a criticism of Bogaert.
(6) Catalogue p. 176.
(7) Travels (1801-4)
(8) Theal (d) p. 431.
(9) Theal (d) p. 22.

Moodie was employed by D'Urban for the specific purpose of refuting the Researches. Nor does he think that his own employment by the Cape Government, or his officially commissioned Histories for the schools might have been "insensibly coloured" by the favours which he received, for he assures us that he is non-political and impartial.

Theal's attitude towards Watermeyer and Lauts respectively is interesting and revealing. Watermeyer's Three Lectures on the Cape of Good Hope under the D.E.I.C. (1857) was one of the best histories on the Cape in the 19th Century. Theal used him extensively in the Compendium, describing his book as "admirable"(1). After Theal changed his views on South African history he was, however, less enthusiastic about Watermeyer(2). Now his favourite book and most relied-on source became Lauts' Geschiedenis van de Kaap de Goede Hoop. Nederlandsche Volksplanting 1652-1806. (published 1854), which he described as "superior to anything previously produced on the Colony"(3) - a surprising view ! What was the reason for this switch? The theme of Watermeyer's history is that D.E.I.C. rule was an oppressive, selfish, crushing monopoly, which held back progress, while British rule was comparatively beneficial and progressive. Lauts (a Hollander who regretted the severance of the Cape from the Netherlands) held the opposite view: Company rule was not so oppressive, the colonists were very attached to Holland; the 'golden' rule of the Batavians etc. It is from Lauts that Theal draws his dubious accounts of the British take-overs in 1795 and 1806, with the strange suggestions of a stab-in-the-back legend - the burghers were willing to fight, but Sluysken

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(1) Appendix p. 207.
(2) Catalogue p. 328.
(3) Catalogue 171.

and Gordon sold out - and of illegal and dubious purchases. The Lauts version obviously fits in better with the "traditional" version of South African history, and Theal follows it in his later works. Here again, his assessment and use of his sources is not made according to their merits or reliability, but according to the support they give to his point of view.

This is even more obvious in Theal's assessment of his contemporaries. He criticises the prejudices of Casalis (1), Orpen (2), Colvin (3) and Cappon (4). There is not, however, any mention of prejudice in F. Lion Cachet (5), Statham (6), Leyds (7), van Oordt (8) or Preller whose Piet Retief (1909) (9) "can be implicitly depended upon".

The point is not that Theal's assessments and opinions might sometimes have been right; but that they were made primarily according to the political sympathies of the writers. He comments only on the prejudices of those to whom he is opposed. He reserves the exclusive use of his critical faculties for those documents, authors whose views, evidence conflict with his own. As we shall see this determined not only his view but his use of material. He used material even when it was unreliable or conflicted with the official documents (10), if it gave support to his point of view, and in handling such evidence he displayed a complete and convenient lack of critical judgment. This was how Theal who had access to all the documents wrote a history which is largely in conflict with them. His

(1) Catalogue p. 63 (The Basutos (1861))
(2) Op cit p. 223 (History of the Basutos (1858))
(3) Op cit p. 75. (The Romance of Empire - 1909)
(4) Two pages of severe criticism p. 59-61. (Britain's Title in South Africa - 1901)
(5) Op cit p. 54. (Die Worstelstrijd der Transvalers -1883)
(6) Op cit p. 281 (Blacks, Boers and British - 1881)
(7) Op cit p. 175 (The First Annexation of the Transvaal - 1906)
(8) Op cit p. 221-2 (Slagters Nek 1897 Paul Kruger - 1898)
(9) Op cit p. 240
(10) See below, sections on Maynier and William Adriaan.

history was not determined by the evidence. His selection, use of evidence, was in the first place almost entirely determined by whether or not it gave support to his point of view.

CHAPTER IV

HONARATIUS MAYNIER, DR. JOHN PHILIP AND GOVERNOR WILLIAM ADRIAAN VAN DER STEL. BEING THREE EXAMPLES OF THE MANNER IN WHICH DR. THEAL HANDLED THE OPPONENTS AND CRITICS OF THE COLONISTS.

In the Compendium, the condition of the Hottentots is described as "abject". They were oppressed, backward, helpless; at the mercy of those colonists who would ill-treat and abuse them. Those who fought for their rights, tried to protect them and improve their position, were the champions of a just cause. "Accounts of the condition of these people reached Europe from time to time and created amongst the benevolent a hearty desire to aid them"[1]. Amongst the benevolent were Maynier, Fairbairn, Stockenstrom, the missionaries of the L.M.S., and, especially Dr. John Philip to whom "honour is principally due"[2].

In his later works, Theal represents the position of the Hottentots as being satisfactory. Abuses and ill-treatment were rare, while reforms were not only a threat to the security of the colonists, but to the well-being of the Hottentots themselves. Those who persisted in working for unnecessary and dangerous reforms, are now cast in a different role and in a different mould: The heroes of the piece become the villians (for it seems that Theal must always have his heroes and villains) May I remind the reader, that my intention is not, nor could it be, to throw new light on Maynier, Philip, van der Kemp or William Adriaan van der Stel. My intention is to throw new light on Theal: his scholarship, methods, integrity and value as an historian.

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(1) Compendium p. 109.
(2) Op cit p. 207.

In the Compendium, Honaratius Maynier (spelt Meinier) is briefly described as an official who tried to protect the Hottentots against injustice, and was consequently regarded by the Boers as "a public enemy"(1). In his later works, Theal deals with Maynier at much greater length and in a different vein. This version has been subjected to a thorough and scholarly examination by J.S. Marais(2). How has it stood up to the test ?

As a prelude to his account, Theal discusses or suggests the character and views of Maynier.

The appointment of Maynier, "was one of the most injudicious appointments ever made in South Africa, for no-one could have been more out of sympathy with the colonists than Maynier was. A historian needs to be very careful in describing the character of one who is dead, especially if he has left no descendants or partisans to vindicate his acts, ... but apart from the accusations of his contemporaries and the hatred with which this man's memory is still regarded on the frontier, he can be judged by his correspondence with the government. He possessed ... ability which enabled him to ascertain exactly what his superiors desired and to win their favour and confidence. The motive of all his acts was self-interest, and he did not scruple to pervert truth to gain his ends"(3).

Mr. Maynier "on all occasions studied his own pocket more than anything else"(4). He was "especially careful to keep in the good graces of his superiors"(5), and "professed whatever principles his superiors for the time being held"(6). This man, was "deservedly detested by the frontier colonists"(7).

No evidence is offered to substantiate these charges. We are, however, told of an incident which illuminates his base character:

When Faure, landdrost of Swellendam, was expelled, he was accused of having accepted a gift of cattle during the war. His friends later stated that he was given this gift at the instigation of Maynier, "whose object was to have it in his power to get his fellow landdrost into trouble whenever he chose; and this is very likely"(8).

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(1) p. 139.
(2) Maynier and the First Boer Republic (1944)
(3) Theal (a) p. 313.
(4) Theal (a) p. 278.
(5) Theal (b) p. 179.
(6) Theal (a) p. 278. (underlining mine).
(7) Op cit p. 410.
(8) Op cit p. 335. (underlining mine).

Cory, who agreed that the appointment of Maynier was injudicious[1], nevertheless maintained that an examination of his administration of Graaff-Reinet, under very trying conditions, "shows him to have been actuated by the highest and most unselfish motives, and, without the stimulus of either fear or favour, to have steered a course indicated by the dictates of justice and humanity"[2]. "There can be no doubt but that Mr. Maynier conscientiously exerted himself to the utmost in carrying out all the measures which seemed to him likely to bring about happier conditions of life"[3]. In criticising his conciliatory policy in the 1799 war, he writes "All this notwithstanding Mr Maynier showed great courage ..."[4] in the performance of his mission and in his behaviour.

The considerable quantity of evidence accumulated by Marais supports this view of Maynier's character and is a testimony to his integrity and dedication. After the 1799 war, when Maynier was farming and suffering from ill-health, he was persuaded by Dundas to return to the troublesome frontier to negotiate with the Kaffirs and Hottentots, among whom he had influence. Thereafter, though reluctant, he was persuaded to remain on the frontier. What "advantage" had he to gain from remaining in a trouble-spot like Graaff-Reinet, from undertaking so arduous and thankless a task when in ill-health? In fact, he was expelled, serious personal charges were levelled against him and a Commission was appointed by the Governor to investigate his conduct and administration. He was completely

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(1) Cory Vol I p. 40.
(2) Op cit p. 103.
(3) Op cit p. 102.
(4) Op cit p. 96.

exonerated of all these charges. Theal offers no evidence for his account of Maynier's character. It is based upon hearsay, gossip, the accusations of his enemies; and upon examination, it is shown to bear no relation to the available facts.

All South African school-children know on Theal's authority about the naïve and dangerous beliefs of Maynier. He was "deeply read in the works of the French philosophers" he "professed" to believe in the "simplicity and innocence" of the noble savage.(1)

Although Maynier's humanity "owes something to the intellectual climate of his age", he was "neither a sentimentalist nor a visionary"(2) nor is there any reason to believe that he was "deeply read" in the works of the French philosophers. Theal does not apparently care to comment in the same vein on others who if not "deeply read", were in fact loudly proclaiming(3) their belief in the slogans of the French Revolution i.e. the Graaff-Reinet rebels, who were Maynier's opponents.

Maynier arrived in Graaff-Reinet in April 1793, to take over the office of landdrost. At the <u>first meeting</u> under him, reports Theal, "the majority" of the district officers expressed dissatisfaction with his appointment because of their objections to his native policy(4). But, according to the minutes of the meeting(5), six of those present expressed gratitude for Maynier's appointment, while four strode out. Of these, one said he had heard that Maynier was 'a rogue, cattle-thief and adulterer'; another that he had 'nothing of a personal nature against Maynier....

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(1) <u>Theal (b)</u> p. 178-9
(2) <u>Maynier</u> p. 36.
(3) <u>Op cit</u> p. 34, 88.
(4) <u>Theal</u> (a) p. 313.
(5) <u>Maynier</u> p. 37. From the minutes of the meeting 6/5/1793. (G.R. 1/1. p. 217-22).

in fact he had nothing to say against him'. No reference was made to Maynier's native policy[1]. So, Maynier's appointment was not opposed by the majority, nor was there any criticism of his native policy at this meeting.

As evidence of Maynier's negrophilism, refusal to admit that the colonists had grievances and tendency consistently to take the side of the "noble savages" against them, Theal cites Maynier's Report on the Kaffir War of 1793. The aim of this, says Theal, was to exonerate the Kaffirs and blame the colonists[2]. However, this particular report was in response to a request by the government that he explain the causes of the war on the Kaffir side. Maynier knew the Boers had suffered; he had said so in previous reports and he repeated it now[3]. In discussing the reasons that drove 'that otherwise so peaceable nation', the Kaffirs, to war, Maynier mentioned the hunting expeditions into Xhosa territory, trading methods of the colonists, and the treatment of Xhosa servants, especially the withholding of wages[4]. The report does, in the opinion of Marais, constitute an indictment of the behaviour of certain Boers, who are made responsible for the outbreak[5]. But, far from being sentimental and unrealistic, it is "an able, hard-hitting matter-of-fact document"[6] and in a similar inquiry made into the causes of Kaffir restlessness in 1780, an answer had been given "in much the same terms as Maynier's answer in 1794"[7]. Professor

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(1) Op cit p. 37-8. on p. 151-3, Marais points out that the source of this and of other errors, is Campagne, whom Theal frequently used even when his account conflicted with the official documents.
(2) Theal (a) p. 322.
(3) Maynier p. 56.
(4) Robertson p. 406.
(5) Marais p. 56.
(6) Op cit p. 57.
(7) Op cit p. 56.

Robertson agrees that Maynier's "analysis of the situation must be accepted"(1).

Maynier "knew what crimes brown and black men were capable of"(2); he was not naive and sentimental and his policy has been misrepresented by Theal. Marais quotes the following letter which gives "a clear indication of the policy consistently followed"(3) by him:

'I have always ... encouraged the Boors to pursue and fire upon such Vagabond Hottentots and Caffres as they should find Stealing their Cattle .... but ... they wished for Great Commandos, they desired to destroy the craal where their inoffensive women and children dwelt. This I always resolutely opposed with all my means'(4).

This letter was approved by a meeting of the Heemraden and Militia of Graaff-Reinet, including the Tregard brothers and van Jaarsveld who said "that there was absolutely nothing to reply but what the landdrost had written"(5). At the same meeting, Maynier noted 'that the violence of the Kaffirs was increasing'.

The report on the Kaffir War of 1793, had constituted an indictment of the behaviour of "certain Boers". These certain Boers were to become the leading opponents of Maynier, and the heroes of Theal's History. Maynier blamed these "ill-intentioned" persons for much of the trouble and opposition he encountered, and attributed the anarchic conditions in Graaff-Reinet to their activities(6).

Theal accounts for the conditions in Graaff-Reinet differently. Anarchy it seems was due to the conduct of the local officials. Woeke was an alcoholic, and he and Manier quarrelled continually,

for the latter "being a favourite with the government did not scruple to irritate his superior officer. The condition

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(1) Robertson p. 406.
(2) Maynier p. 36.
(3) Op cit p. 55.
(4) From R.C.C. IV, p. 327. quoted ft.nt. Ibid. letter from Maynier to van Rensburg.
(5) From the minutes of the meeting 3/2/1794 (G.R. 1/1 p. 243-4) Quoted op cit p. 55-6.
(6) R.C.C. Vol. IV p. 320-21. Maynier's Provisional

of the district was thus little removed from anarchy"(1). As for the behaviour of the Boers, "Any impartial person ... will be surprised at the small amount of crime that existed, considering the circumstances under which the people lived".(2) "Acts of violence were very rare considering the condition in which the people were living"(3). Re their attitude towards Maynier, "the frank, outspoken, generous although rough colonists of the frontier were no match in argument for one so full of subtlety and meanness as he was; they felt helplessness against his misrepresentations, and detested him accordingly"(4).

Some facts about conditions in the district of Graaff-Reinet and the opponents of Maynier: Graaff-Reinet had long been a troublesome area. In the 1780's, Adriaan van Jaarsveld (now a member of the band who opposed Maynier) had himself frequently complained about the Bruintjies Hoogte crowd - Botma, the Prinsloos, Klopper, du Buis, whom he described as "rebellious", a "band of rebels". He requested that they be removed from the frontier, mainly because their provactive behaviour had been largely responsible for the first conflicts with the Xhosa (5). Landdrost Woeke, Maynier's predecessor, complained about their behaviour and lawlessness (6). The Kaffir chiefs complained bitterly, especially about du Buis (7). In Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie, P.J. van der Merwe provides documentary evidence of the lawless, aggressive and provocative behaviour of these men towards the Kaffirs (8). Moreover, he says, „Dit is deur tydegenote vry algemeen geglo dat die eerste openlike vyandelikhede, wat teen die einde van 1779 agter Bruintjieshoogte tussen die grens boere en die Kaffers plaasgevind het, veroorsaak is deur die berispare gedrag van 'n paar verantwoordelike grensboere (9)".

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(1) Theal (a) p. 282. (underlining mine).
(2) Op cit p. 322.
(3) Op cit p. 312.
(4) Op cit p. 313.
(5) Maynier p. 10-13.
(6) Op cit p. 14.
(7) Op cit p. 31.
Chief Langa said his role in the hostilities was due entirely to the behaviour of du Buis. "who had taken forcible possession of his wife and used her as his concubine". This story was confirmed by other sources
(8) p. 274 ff.
(9) Op cit p. 277

The atmosphere in Graaff-Reinet during these years, was one of continual 'contentiousness' and 'bickering'.(1) The minutes of the landdrost and heemraden meetings contain evidence of this.(2) Lichtenstein reported that the officials of Graaff-Reinet had 'very little respect shown them' by the 'bigoted and lawless' farmers.(3) He and Janssens commented on 'the bitterness and irreconcilable animosity with which they carry on their differences among each other'.(4) Janssens described du Buis as 'a dangerous man' and in 1805 deprived van Rensburg (who led the insurrection against Maynier in 1801) of his offices of Heemraad and Commandant, and ordered him to leave the district.(5) This action was taken on the recommendation of Landdrost Alberti of Uitenhage, who wrote of him

l.c./ 'van Rensburg .... Seems to me to belong to the restless type of person that cannot live without intriguing, never acts in a straight forward manner, and does evil as readily as good' (6).

Of van Rensburg, Theal wrote: "even such a man as the able and law-abiding Commandant Hendrik van Rensburg" was drawn into the rebellion against Maynier.(7)

In fact, Theal was not really ignorant of the true character of the "frank, outspoken generous although rough colonists", who were overwhelmed with "helplessness" when faced with the "subtlety and meanness" of Maynier's "misrepresentations".(8) In different contexts, he was wont to refer to them in a different vein. There was in the Cape Colony, he wrote elsewhere, a small irresponsible party who held "wild views" and were ever "ready to plunge into anarchy".(9) The burghers of Graaff-Reinet were "exceedingly

(1) Macrone quoted Maynier p. 69.
(2) Op cit p. 70.
(3) Marais (C.C.P.) p. 15.
(4) Marais p. 69. From Lichtenstein's Travels, V.R.S.10,11; Janssens in B.H.D. Vol III
(5) Op cit p. 133.
(6) Alberti to Janssens. quoted op cit p. 134.
(7) Theal (d) p. 63.
(8) Theal (a) p. 313.
(9) Theal (d) p. 231

averse to restraint". Some of them were engaged in lawless and provocative behaviour towards the Kaffirs (1). du Buis was "a villain of despicable character (2)". He admitted that some of their charges against Maynier, e.g. that he incited the Kaffirs to murder and robbery, were "preposterous (3)", that they blamed Maynier for all their misery and "certainly laid much more to his charge than they should (4)". But Theal does not allow these facts to affect his account or his conclusions.

One of the main reasons for the expulsion of Maynier from Graaff-Reinet, was his attempt, on the instructions of the Government, to protect the Hottentots against excessive ill-treatment. His exertions in this direction, are cited as evidence of his sentimental "noble savage" beliefs. It is never conceded that they may have required such protections. Conditions were satisfactory and cases of ill-treatment "considering the circumstances" were rare. What then was the reason for his actions ? The reason for his interference, was that he "preferred" the Hottentots to the Christians. Indeed, it was the latter who were worst off in Graaff-Reinet.

"It was of no use for them (the colonists) to bring charges against Coloured people before the Commissioner Maynier, for no matter how good their case might be, he would not give a decision in their favour". "To the farmers it seemed as if justice, as well as order, had fled from the land"(5). "At length", "finding the Commissioner Maynier invariably taking the part of the barbarians", they were "goaded into utter desperation, and again rose in revolt"(6).

To test the validity of this presentation and reading of the facts, it is relevant to consider the condition of the Hottentots in Graaff-Reinet and Maynier's policy towards them (7). The unprecedented and dangerous

(1) Op cit p. 278, 313.
(2) Theal (c) p. 45.
(3) Theal (c) p. 80 (re allegations contained in the petition against Maynier).
(4) Op cit p. 76.
(5) Theal (d) p. 61.
(6) Progress -. 81.
(7) Merais (C.C.P.) p. 114. If the rising had spread it could have shaken the white man's hold on the

combination of the Hottentots of Graaff-Reinet with their traditional enemies, the Xosa, in 1799, focused attention on their condition and discontent. "The documents compel the assertion that harsh and unjust treatment of Hottentots was fairly widespread in Graaff-Reinet (1)". Theal frequently and approvingly quotes Collins' opinion that most of the Boers treated their Hottentot servants kindly. He does not, however, mention that Collins said this of those in the North. Of the Hottentots in Graaff-Reinet, he said they 'are badly fed and are ill-treated', 'can now seldom get away' at the expiration of (his) term of service, being either 'in debt to his master', or 'not allowed to take his children' or 'detained under some frivolous pretence (2)'.

On occasions Theal quotes approvingly from Governor Janssens' report: e.g. Janssens letter to Baird, commending the Boers to his care and sympathy (3). He does not, however, quote or take account of what Janssens said about the Hottentots of Graaff-Reinet:

'many Hottentots presented themselves with bitter complaints, not about threshings or nakedness - such things seem no longer worth complaining about - but about the withholding of children or cattle and even about the murder of relatives .... The cruelties practised against the Hottentots surpass not only everything that is said about them in Cape Town, but even everything that can be imagined .... Complaints about the withholding of children, cattle, wages, and (about) other such matters are so numerous that a volume would be needed to record them'.(4). 'If during the course of my journey (in the interior) I were to lose my popularity, the reason will be that I most strongly condemn (the cruelties practised against the Hottentots) ..., and declare that if they continue, the executioner will avenge the unfortunates in the name of the law'.(5).

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(1) Maynier p. 74.
(2) Collins Report. R.C.C. Vols. VI and VII. quoted Maynier p. 75.
(3) Janssens letter to Baird. quoted in many of Theal's books e.g. Theal (d) p. 126.
(4) Janssens report in B.H.D. quoted Maynier p. 75.
(5) Op cit p. 77.

Landdrost Bresseler had complained that many Boers behaved towards the Hottentots in a 'despotic and barbarous manner'.(1) So had Resident-Commissioner Major Sherlock, De Grandpré, Barrow, Sparrman, Thunberg and Maynier.

The existence of such conditions places Maynier's actions in a different light. He was not only humane but realistic. "From a terror-stricken servant class it was idle to expect fidelity".(2) Maynier had warned that if the Hottentots were not better treated they would not remain "faithful". In 1799 his warning came true, the Eastern frontier was faced with a serious invasion.

'.... the true way to render the Hottentots faithful and prevent them from going away is to treat them well: and although they are your servants it is best to treat them as we would wish to be treated, if in their place'.(3).

This was Maynier's policy towards the Hottentots.(4) How did he apply it ?

He opened his court to the Hottentots and tried to protect them but the charge that he "preferred" them "cannot be substantiated".(5) The records in the drostdy of Graaff-Reinet show that Maynier was patient about the attendance of Boers at court on charges of ill-treatment, withholding of wages or illegal detention. It was not even the Boers 'correction' i.e. beating of their servants that he objected to, but "excessive chastisement".(6) However, he became annoyed when they repeatedly ignored summonses, as

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(1) Op cit p. 74.
(2) Idem.
(3) From Moodie's Afschriften quoted op cit p. IV.
(4) Maynier's policy towards the Bushmen and Kaffirs was outlined in Cape Town in 1792. The Bushmen towards whom he was unsympathetic, were the principal enemy. It was necessary to strengthen the commandos against the 'wicked ... enterprizes' of this 'ever plundering' people. Therefore, for the meantime, peace should be kept with the Kaffirs. Maynier p. 36.
(5) Op cit p. 71.
(6) Op cit p. 73.

they frequently did. Even then, "the worst he seemed able to do was to threaten to take active steps against the delinquent at the latter's expense and to have him handed over to the Council of Justice."[1] What the Boers really objected to, in fact, was being 'hindered in their arbitrary manner of dealing with the poor Hottentots'.[2]

Theal had access to and read a great many of the reports, eye-witness accounts and documents on conditions in Graaff-Reinet and on Maynier's policy. Much of the evidence is contained in his own collections of documents. e.g. Collins' Report in R.C.C. Vol. VI and VII; Janssens' reports and letters in B.H.D. Vol. III; reports by Maynier and other relevant evidence on events in Graaff-Reinet in R.C.C. Vols III and IV. He lists Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the native inhabitants of South Africa (1835) as among his sources[3]. Robertson made good use of this document; it seems to be the basis for his conclusion that Maynier's account of the causes of the 1793 war must be accepted[4]. Theal read numerous eye-witness accounts - Lichtenstein, Barrow, Sparrman, Thunberg, De Grandpré ; masses of documents; court cases, official reports etc. all containing relevant evidence. Yet, in his account and conclusions, he ignores and passes in silence over much of the confirmatory evidence contained in them.

Presumably, he relies on "the accusations of his contemporaries and the hatred with which this man's memory is still regarded on the frontier"[5] and he certainly relies

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(1) Op cit p. 72.
(2) Maynier to Slysken. Op cit p. 70.
(3) In Theal (d) p. 446.
(4) 150 Years of Contact between Black and White p. 406.
(5) Theal (a) p. 313.

on Campagne's Berigt, as Marais has pointed out, "sometimes preferring his versions to that of the official documents"(1). Campagne was a personal enemy of Maynier's. In 1796, he was deported from the Colony, and believed that Maynier was responsible. It was after this that he wrote his book. Marais adds that Theal "nowhere admits" that he has relied on Campagne. In fact, he does. He describes it as a "very graphic and complete account of events from June to September 1795, by an eye-witness", who was sympathetic to the democratic party. The appendix, he says, contains "a well-written account" of the Kaffir war of 1793 in which he fought(2). Although Theal includes Campagne's book in a list of which he says "I carefully examined the following books, and compared the information contained in them with that extracted from the manuscript official records of the colony"(3); although Theal prefaces his approval by such remarks, one can generally take it that if Theal describes a book as "reliable" or "containing a complete account", it is his source, and he has based himself upon it; documents to the contrary notwithstanding.

Theal gives the following account of the expulsion of Maynier after the 1799 rising,

"The colonists, subject to incessant depredations and outrages from the Xosas and Hottentots and finding the commissioner Maynier invariably taking the part of the barbarians, were at length goaded into utter desperation, and again rose in revolt".(4). To the colonists, "it seemed as if justice as well as order, had fled from the land"(5). Maynier was indifferent to their complaints and distress, and seemed to them the cause of their misery. Annoyance was caused by the use of the church as barracks for the Hottentot pandours: This "poluted" their church and "mocked" their religion. In July, 1801, the men of

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(1) Maynier p. 151.
(2) Catalogue p. 56.
(3) Theal (a) Appendix p. 363.
(4) Progress p. 81.
(5) Theal (c) p. 76.

the Zuurveld, Bruintjies Hoogte and Zwartkops appeared at the drostdy in arms. However, the quarrel was patched up. But when in October, 1801, a number of Hottentot servants "some charged with crimes and all had plunder" took refuge at the drostdy and were protected by Maynier, this led to another insurrection.(1).

The evidence does not support Theal's contention, that the situation in Graaff-Reinet was deteriorating so badly in the face of Maynier's indifference, that the frontiersmen were "goaded" into revolt. Cory reports that many Hottentots were induced to return to work (this was after the 1799 rising), that the registration of servants and Maynier's arbitration in cases of dispute "worked satisfactorily"(2). Marais confirms that at first, things went 'extremely well'(3) and there were few thefts by the Kaffirs. Later these increased, but even so conditions were scarcely bad enough to warrant the subsequent agitation against Maynier. Maynier himself was pleased at the improvement(4) and wrote to the Governor privately suggesting he free the Graaff-Reinet rebels imprisoned in Cape Town(5). Unfortunately, Maynier's "good intentions" were of no avail because of "the malign influence of the all-powerful Buys and his associates in Kaffirland". They spread alarming rumours, intimidated the law-abiding Boers, and even conspired to kidnap Maynier(6). Marais agrees that the real cause of the subsequent agitation was the activity of du Buys and company(7) and this was Maynier's view too.

In May 1801, alarm was caused by a rumour that the government in the person of Maynier intended to seize all the male colonists and press them into service in the

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(1) Theal (c) p. 76-7.
(2) Cory Vol. I, p. 103.
(3) Maynier p. 121.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Cory Vol. I p. 103.
(6) Op cit p. 104.
(7) Maynier p. 123.

army and navy[1]. An armed gathering marched on Graaff-Reinet in July. Maynier reassured them that this was untrue, but some continued to nurse "their supposed grievance and seemed disappointed in finding no real excuse for venting their feelings against the hated Maynier"[2]. Amongst the complaints they lodged were objections to the presence of a large number of Hottentots in Graaff-Reinet, whom Maynier had been unable to persuade to return to the Boers[3], and dislike of the fact that van der Kemp was teaching the Hottentots 'reading, writing and religion and thereby (they were) put upon an equal footing with the Christians; especially that they were admitted in the church of Graaff-Reinet'[4].

Maynier prepared to resist this armed band by force, and they temporarily retired[5]. In October, they again advanced on the drostdy under van Rensburg. van der Walt, of whose support Theal makes so much[6] had now left the rebels[7]. The Boers demanded that certain Hottentots suspected of being implicated in a murder, be handed over to them. Maynier refused[8]. By now, the Hottentots were in a state of great alarm. Rumours were circulating amongst them that the Boers intended to kill them, and they were fleeing to the drostdy for protection. This, wrote Maynier, was

'a natural consequence of the inconsiderate conduct of the Boors, and prudence induced me not to refuse protection to these Creatures lest they might form a Band ...'(9).

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(1) Op cit 125, Cory Vol. I. p. 105.
(2) Cory Vol. I p. 106.
(3) Maynier p. 126.
(4) Op cit p. 127. Theal's claim that annoyance had been caused by the use of the church for Hottentot pandours (Theal (c))(p. 76-7) is also untrue. The soldiers quartered in the church were a detachment of the 91st Light Infantry under Major Sherlock. Marais (C.C.P) p. 113. This is, nevertheless, still repeated in the Matric text-book Fowler & Smit, p. 138.
(5) Cory I p. 107.
(6) Theal (d) p. 63.
(7) Maynier p. 128.
(8) Op cit p. 128-9.
(9) Op cit p. 130.

Re the charge that some were criminals and all had plunder; Marais considers it very unlikely that any were serious criminals, nor is there any evidence that they had plundered (1).

This armed action on the part of the Boers, led to alarm and panic in the district of Graaff-Reinet, and aggravated relations with both Kaffirs and Hottentots. It also resulted in the recall of Maynier and the appointment of a Commission to enquire into his conduct and administration.

The Commission judged Maynier

'entirely innocent of all and everyone of the charges preferred against him, and that some of the Evidences (made) are such as to merit the most serious reprehension'(2).

Theal suggests that the charges were "drawn up by a friendly hand (3). Marais maintains there is no evidence for this. The Commission "seems to have been given the opportunity to ascertain the truth" and the witnesses included men hostile to Maynier (4).

Cory thought some of the charges were so ridiculous and malicious it was surprising they were even considered (5). And Theal himself admits that some of them were "preposterous (6). This, however, does not lead him to question the motives and reliability of the accusers. To Maynier, Theal gives no quarter. Instead, he explains that "the real points at issue between him and the farmers did not appear" (7) in the list of charges. This being the case, Theal obligingly makes out the real indictment against Maynier, which du Buis,

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(1) Op cit p. 130 - 1.
(2) Maynier p. 135.
(3) Theal (c) p. 79.
(4) Maynier p. 134-5.
(5) Cory Vol. 1 p. 109.
(6) Theal (a) p. 64.
(7) Theal (c) p. 79.

van Rensburg and company were too shy to mention: the Hottentots and Kaffirs in Graaff-Reinet were "plundering the farmers in every direction", and Maynier would not even allow them to defend themselves. "Nothing whatever appeared of this in the list of accusations, although it was the real substance of the farmers complaints"[1]. This is untrue. One of the charges made was that Maynier prevented the Boers 'from taking any steps to recover their cattle that had been carried off by plundering parties of Hottentots and Caffres'[2].

Theal continues: "Altogether he (Maynier) was much too able intellectually for uneducated farmers to contend with"[3]. On the contrary, Maynier was no match for/the "uneducated farmers" who beat him, and defeated what he stood for. Neither has the refutation of their charges by Maynier nor the scholarship of Marais, been any match for the persuasiveness of the unspoken or perhaps unspeakable, "real" charges of these inarticulate, simple and good-hearted men, and their loyal defender, Dr. Theal. For, every year, thousands of South African school-children are still taught that the "negrophiliet" French revolutionary Maynier, drove the Boers to rebellion by taking the side of the barbarians and using their church "as barracks for the Hottentot troops"[4].

Historians frequently make mistakes. They overlook or neglect important evidence, make uncritical use of unreliable sources, misinterpret documents and misunderstand

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(1) Op cit p. 79-80.
(2) Maynier p.134.
(3) Theal (d) p. 64.
(4) Fowler & Smit p. 126, 136, 138.

issues. And this affects our assessment of their scholarship and ability. Theal does all these things. He also presents facts contrary to the evidence which he had, distorts his material, misrepresents the issues and repeatedly ignores a massive quantity of relevant documents with which he was familiar. The effect of these malpractices is, in each instance, to present Maynier in the worst and his opponents in the best possible light. Theal's handling of the Commissioner Maynier, therefore affects not only our assessment of his ability and scholarship, but of his motives and integrity as well (1).

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(1) I have in this section on Maynier given a selection, and not an exhaustive account of the exposed errors and misrepresentation of Theal.

"Regarding the acts of various missionaries, there is certainly a difference in the tone of this volume and of my 'Compendium of South African History' written sixteen years ago. I had not then read the mass of missionary evidence in the colonial records nor the comments upon their complaints and refutations of many of their statements made by officers of the Colonial Government. But no one will find a word in this volume condemnatory of missionary work properly so called, for no one can be more favourably disposed towards it than I am". "In the most important matters in dispute ... when the evidence is not overwhelmingly on one side or the other, I have given the leading points of the case for both, and left the reader to judge for himself".(1)

Dr. John Philip, " was a man of great natural ability" and "of good appearance". "The hereditary energy of his ancestors was developed in him to such an extent that action was a necessity of his existence,... his obstinacy was so intense that when once he entered upon a course, no matter whether good or evil, no argument or remonstrance would turn him back. Great as his intellect undoubtedly was, it was not of so high an order as to make him admit an error and try to rectify it"(2) "he had neither studied any subject deeply, nor was he particularly scrupulous as to the means by which he gained his ends"(3).

"At a later date, after he had enjoyed almost unlimited political influence, and had seen the schemes which he devised result in bloodshed and confusion, he became a comparatively gentle old man"(4). But while in South Africa, "He placed himself in antagonism to every one who did not hold his particular views, and denounced them all as heartless oppressors. Even men of the most exemplary Christian character ... such as the Reverend Andrew Murray, of Graeff-Reinet ..., were forced into a contention with him, and on one occasion ... Mr. Murray roundly accused him of making false statements to the Commissioners of Inquiry. He lived thus in an atmosphere of constant strife"(5). "This gentleman both before and after his arrival in South Africa lived in an atmosphere of strife, and controversy seemed to be necessary to his existence"(6). He and other L.M.S. agents put themselves in the position of advocates for the coloured people, "and brought innumerable complaints before the directors of the Society in England instead of before the government in Cape Town, thus drawing upon themselves the hostility of the local authorities"(7).

This pointed sketch is preceded by the information that Philip has been "lauded" by a small section and

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(1) History of the Boers. preface.
(2) Theal (d) p. 345.
(3) Progress p. 165.
(4) Theal (d) p. 345.
(5) Op cit p. 346.
(6) Progress p. 165.
(7) Progress p. 162 (underlining mine).

"decried" by the majority. Between these two views, lies - no, not the truth, but "the difference between a saint and a promoter of mischief" which was Dr. Philip ?[1] With this happy choice before him, Dr. Theal weighs up the evidence. On the one hand, he quotes from a memorial tablet, in which the virtues of Philip are extolled[2]. On the other side, he quotes the views of Governor Cole, in whose opinion Philip was 'more of a politician than a missionary', and of Governor Somerset, who referred to 'the insidiousness of this dangerous man's character', of his 'disgusting evasion and perversion of facts', of his 'mingling himself in everything that could give him political importance'[3]. On this occasion Theal, most unusually, gives references.

After this exhaustive examination of Philip's credentials, he concludes that it is still too soon to assess Philip's effect upon South Africa "the difficulty with the Pondos, for instance, which is largely due to him, being still unsettled"[4]. Here, unfortunately, there are no references.

It is most unusual for Dr. Theal to give references. The references are to Despatches of the Governors concerned to the Colonial Secretary and are obviously intended to give his case additional force. Theal omits to mention, however, that because of personal animosity between Philip and Somerset, and the fact that he was engaged in battle with both Governors, their views, though of interest, are not those of impartial witnesses.

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(1) Theal (d) p. 343.
(2) Theal (d) p. 344.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid.

Nor does he mention the circumstances relating to the Somerset despatches. They are not concerned with the interfering activities of a negrophilist missionary, but were made at the time of, and refer to quarrels over the affairs of white colonists - Grieg and the printing press dispute, and the 1820 settlers. Philip was chairman of the Distressed Settlers Fund, and it was in this capacity that he came into conflict with Somerset. Of the documents referred to by Theal, only one (1) is about missionary affairs, and in this there is no attack on Philip. The others are concerned with white settler affairs, in which Philip championed the settlers against Somerset, and it is from these that the 'mingling himself ...' accusations come (2).

What does Theal say of Philip's role as champion of the 1820 settlers and later of the freedom of the press against the 'autocratic' Somerset ? He does not refer to it. But Philip's role was too prominent to be missed. He was chairman of the Settlers Fund (3) and in the forefront of a struggle which was one of the most burning and well-documented issues of the time. The documents from which Theal quoted above, to Philip's discredit, for instance, relate to these events and contain lengthy, detailed enclosures. I have only found one reference to Philip in Theal's section on these events. Dr. Philip (he writes) claimed that the press of Mr. Greig was the property of the L.M.S. which had lent it

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(1) Despatch of Somerset to Bathurst 10/12/1825; R.C.C. Vol. XXIV p. 113-114.

(2) Despatch Somerset to Bathurst 11/10/1824; R.C.C. Vol. XVIII p. 345 ff. and Ibid 20/7/1825; R.C.C. Vol. XXII p. 251 ff. The 4th Somerset despatch I have not been able to trace.

(3) And, incidentally, on close and cordial terms with his later critics Moodie, Chase and Campell. Cape Colour Question p. 113.

f.n. xxx Theal x (a) xxx p. xxx 273.

to him. Dr. Philip's claim "was repudiated by him (Grieg), as he asserted that the press was purchased, not borrowed"[1]. An illustration which presumably throws doubt on Philip's honesty and is another example of his contentiousness.

It was not for want of space that Theal excluded all mention of Philip's role. He seemed to have had plenty of this ; for in the long chapter on the rule of Somerset from 1821 - 1826[2], he found room for two pages on the library and museum, five and a half pages on church affairs; and for such matters as a Mr. Vos "who retired on account of old age", "three students who were preparing for ordination"[3], the salary of clergymen[4] and a M. Lalande who came to South Africa from France, and made "a very large collection" of animals and insects[5].

Cory devotes much of Vol. II of his Rise of South Africa, and MacMillan two chapters of the Cape Colour Question[6] to these events and Philip's role in them. Of Philip's role, Cory writes "whatever there may be against Dr. Philip in other matters, his interference in this case was frought with great good" and was "a blessing"[7]. But all this - like any mention of Trotsky's role in the moulding and leading of the Red army in the histories of Stalinist Russia - is expunged from Dr. Theal's History of South Africa. And like the versions Stalin put out, it is not history, but propaganda.

Professor MacMillan, who had access to the Philip papers, maintains there is no evidence for the view that

(1) Theal (d) p. 273.
(2) In Theel (d) p. 226-281.
(3) Op cit p. 258.
(4) Op cit p. 262.
(5) Op cit p. 263.
(6) Chapters 9 and 14.
(7) Cory Vol. II p. 415.

Philip was thirsting for battle with the authorities[1]. He was "something of a Whig in politics, abhorrent of radicalism, a thorough believer in middle-class respectability". When he arrived in South Africa he disapproved of the continual quarrels of Read and van der Kemp with the officials and government. He preferred to achieve his ends by reconciliation and persuasion. He was, too, " susceptible to friendly attention from those in high places, and deferential to constituted authority - at all times eager to co-operate with the ruling powers if they showed any readiness to help, and turning against them only when convinced that he had no alternative[2] ".

Philip's record at the Cape seems to bear out this view. Initially he was on good terms with the colonists, the Governor and Cuyler (landdrost of Uitenhage)[3]. He was, moreover, critical of the state of the missions[4], of the conduct of Read, whom he suspended[5] and of the Kaffirs in the 1819 War[6].

The first rift - and it was not with the colonists (whose leading champion he became against Somerset), but with the officials - occurred over the question of the oppressive conduct of Cuyler towards the Hottentots at Bethelsdorp. Read made complaints to Philip (about forced labour on public service) who passed them on to Acting-Governor Donkin. After investigating the complaints, Donkin found the evidence unsatisfactory and exonerated Cuyler[7]. Philip was embarrassed and most annoyed with Read, until he visited Bethelsdorp where he found letters

(1) C.H.B.E. p. 245.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Cory II p. 411.
(4) Cape Colour Question p. 176-7.
(5) Cory II p. 410.
(6) Bantu, Boer and Briton p. 61.
(7) Cape Colour Question p. 35 ff.

in Cuyler's handwriting 'containing the proofs of all the allegations except one'[1]. These documents were later published in the Appendix to his Researches[2]. Cory, a stern critic of Philip's, wrote of them

"whatever doubt may be entertained as to the statements contained in the body of that book - or as to the motives ... , the actual letters which passed between the missionaries and local authorities are free from 'effect' and undoubtedly give the true state of the case"(3). "notwithstanding Sir Rufane Donkin's statements to the contrery, the charges mentioned above were in all probability true .... There can be no doubt but that the cases of forced labour mentioned in these charges were only a very few of a large number .."(4)

Cory adds, somewhat naïvely, that by doing these things, the officials laid themselves open to charges "which men like Mr. Read would seize upon with avidity"[5]. This is putting the question somewhat differently, and more honestly: it is no longer whether they were subjected to ill-treatment or forced labour, but whether the missionaries should have complained at all. Underlying Cory's frank statement that while the charges were true the missionaries should not have complained, is an exclusive concern with the interests of the whites. This support for the supremacy of white interests is obviously at the root of Theal's interpretation too, and again it is interesting to compare them. Cory is, on the whole, honest about his position ; nor does he deny that the system bore hard on the non-whites. He reports what the evidence tells him is true, and does not distort and suppress facts. He may disapprove of Philip's Maynier's policy, but he neither distorts the facts about that policy nor resorts to slanderous and untrue statements about the man's

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(1) Op cit p. 138.
(2) "Correspondence of Theopolis and Bethelsdorp" Appendix Vol. II.
(3) Cory II p. 415.
(4) Op cit p. 413.
(5) Op Cit p. 414.

character[1]. Theal, on the contrary, will never admit that this is his position. He denies that he is partial; so he distorts, twists and suppresses facts in order to avoid their implications. Why was Theal unable to face the facts which a study of the documents of the period irresistibly led to i.e. that the condition of the coloured people was, whatever minor qualifications one might make, bad; that the laws, framed and administered almost exclusively in the interests of the whites, were oppressive (and q.e.d. that the missionaries had a case)? Why was Theal unable to face these facts ? We shall return to the question later. It is an important one, for it is this version with its denial of facts and self-righteous tone, and not Cory's (despite their similar conclusions), which is characteristic of, and perhaps crucial to, the "traditional" South African outlook.

To return to Philip and Cuyler: I have not been able to find any reference to this important well-documented incident in Theal. Yet he undoubtedly saw the documents. They are contained in Philip's Researches, which Theal dismissed as valueless except as an indication of the views of the author[2].

This incident marked Philip's first breach with the authorities. He did not prejudge the issues; nor rush eagerly into battle[3]. But he was now convinced of the need

(1) Sometimes Cory even includes evidence which seems to contradict his conclusions. See, E.G. his confucing and contradictory conclusions on the Black Circuit. (Cory I p. 218). This does not make for a unified, integrated History; perhaps Cory had a scientist's respect for evidence, and put it in regardless. Theal was more selective.

(2) Theal (d) p. 439.

(3) Another indication of his initial attitudes: when he arrived at the Cape, he admitted the faults of the institutions, and acknowledged the need fof reform. When they had been reformed, he wrote (in 1822) the whites are 'now alarmed and indignant at the improvements .... what the colonists want is an excuse to disperse the Hottentots among the farmers as servants'. Cape Colour Question p. 177.

for reform, and for reform of the whole system. In this he may or may not have been right, but why distort or suppress the circumstances and deny the importance of the real issues at stake, by contending that it was all due to his natural quarrelsomeness and obstinacy ?

Philip did not appeal overseas immediately, "instead of before the government in Cape Town" first. He tried to get redress here. In 1822, three years after his arrival, he wrote that only if the Colonial Government was unwilling to grant reasonable requests would he appeal to the home government (1). In 1826 he went to England to rally support, and it was with the publication of the Researches, in 1828, that he became unpopular with the colonists. Was it possible that Theal, who had no access to Philip's private papers did not realise this ? No, he knew. In the Compendium (2) he wrote that only after Philip failed to get local redress, did he appeal to England for aid.

As an instance of Philip's quarrelsomeness, Theal frequently mentions his "contention" with Andrew Murray. MacMillan has revealed the facts about this [illegible] incident. After a discussion with Andrew Murray (of Graaff-Reinet) on the Hottentots, Philip mentioned to the Commissioners of Inquiry that they might ask Murray and Stockenstrom, for evidence. Somerset, with whom Philip was engaged in a fracas, hearing of this, recalled Murray (who had left Cape Town) all the way back from Brak River, questioned and instructed him to write a detailed account of his conversation with Philip. Annoyed by all this, Murray sent Philip "a curt and crushing note, unearthed long after out of its real context, for the sole purpose of

(1) Cape Colour Question p. 139.
(2) Compendium p.193 p207)

throwing discredit on Dr. Philip"[1]. Stockenstrom "who was supposed to have been calumniated, apparently did not think himself so". Some time later when he visited Graaff-Reinet as a guest of Stockenstrom's, Philip and Murray "effected a lasting reconciliation"[2]. The cause of this minor quarrel was Somerset's arbitrary and high-handed behaviour.

A criticism repeatedly made of Philip by Theal, is that he was 'more a politician than a missionary', and he persistently refers to Philip, and other L.M.S. missionaries as "agents"[3]. He does not, however, criticise the pro-government political activities of Mr. Thompson at Kat River; nor the action of the Wesleyans in supporting D'Urban's policy after the 1835 War[4]. On the contrary, they are held up as examples, while Theal singles out for praise the most active and vocal of these, William Boyce; of whom Sir Harry Smith was moved to say, he is

'more full of dragooning our new subjects that a hundred soldiers.' 'The Man of the Gospel is, after all, a worldly fellow'(5).

By singling out for disapproval only those missionaries whose policy he dislikes, while praising the activities of the others, Theal lays himself open to the charge of disingenuousness in objecting to Philip's political activities, per se. Philip himself said of such accusers: 'Nothing is politics with them but the advocacy of the civil rights of the oppressed'[6].

To secure support in England, Philip

"said, wrote and did much that all who are regardful of truth must pronounce decidedly wrong"(7). Of the Researches:

(1) Cape Colour Question p. 201-2.
(2) Ibid.
(3) e.g. in Progress p. 2, South Africa p. 126 and Theal (d) p. 50.
(4) Progress p. 203. Theal (e) p. 34.
(5) Bantu, Boer & Briton p. 128. referring to the annexatio of Queen Adelaide.
(6) Cape Colour Question p. 96.

"For historical purposes, its only value is the exposition of the views of its author .... Time has passed a decisive judgment against the correctness of those views"(1) and "its most important statements were proved to be incorrect by the searching examination instituted by the government"(2)

In the Compendium, Theal wrote that in the Researches the position was "clearly shown". There was a great outcry by the colonists, "but he had taken such pains to prove his statements that his position was unassailable"(3). When he wrote this, Theal had already seen the "searching examination instituted by the government", i.e. the investigations of Moodie, for he lists Moodie amongst his sources(4). What evidence does he now produce to substantiate his changed view ?

In one volume alone (History of South Africa 1795-1834)(5), Theal singles out Philip's views and particularly the Researches, for attack on no less than five separate occasions, adding up to a total of about five pages. Theal was familiar with all the relevant evidence, so one naturally expects a formidable attack. What the charges add up to, is as follows:

on page 346

(1) That Philip puts forth as facts, "mere theories" re the Bushmen "which are now known to be incorrect"; and that the account "of a great commando against the Bushmen in 1774 was proved to be imaginative".

(2) That "others" of Philip's statements were pronounced libellous.

on page 439

(1) Criticism of Philip's description of the Bushmen "whom the writer constantly confused with the Hottentots".

(2) That Philip mistakenly represents the Betshuana refugees as having been driven into the colony by the Bergenaars.

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(1) Op cit p. 439.
(2) Progress p. 165.
(3) Compendium p. 193.
(4) Compendium Appendix p. 203.
(5) Theal (d)

(3) That "the accuracy of its statements was generally denied by both English and Dutch in South Africa".

on page 445

(1) That there had been a "thorough refutation" of Philip's account of the 1774 commando against the Bushmen.

on page 446-7

(1) Criticism of Philip's views and claims re the Bushmen.

(2) "a particular statement" from the Researches was proved "to be very incorrect".

on page 341

(1) Criticism of the account in the Researches which makes it appear "as if land had actually been taken from Theolopis for the benefit of the Europeans".

The Researches is not, as one might imagine from this, a pamphlet about the Bushmen. It is a book of two volumes, a large section of which deals with the Hottentots and the missions, and it contains a copious appendix, which includes documents on the Read-Cuyler affair and on David Stuurman. Where is the refutation of its "most important statements" that were "proved to be incorrect". Theal does not even attempt to come to terms with Philip's main arguments[1], which were not about Bergenaars chasing Betshuanas into the colony.

Even were these criticisms all correct, they would be insufficient to substantiate the charge that the Researches are valueless. But most of the charges are

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(1) Theal's specific arguments are all from the publications of Moodie, (who was employed by the Cape Government to refute the Researches of Philip.) These include Some Reasons for our opposing the author of the South African Researches (1836).

questionable. First, the charges re the Bushmen: Philip's views (i.e. that education, training and environment are the main factors making for differences) have not been "proved wrong", and today would probably be regarded as less "fantastic" than Theal's blood theories. If Philip did confuse Hottentots and Bushmen, we might remember that Theal once said that

"Notwithstanding these differences (between the aborigines), it would have required a practiced eye to distinguish at a short distance a group of any of these people from the others. (1).

I am not quite sure what Theal means when he says "the account of a great commando against the Bushmen in 1774 was proved to be imaginative by Lieutenant Moodie ... (2)". There was certainly a commando in 1774, and in a different volume, Theal gives a description of it which is not dissimilar from Philip's. Both describe how the commando was divided into three sections, both mention the names of 2 of the same commanders (3) and Theal's figures for the numbers shot and captured are higher than (4) Philip's (5). Finally, conceding that Philip was in error when he wrote that "in the year 1774 the whole race of Bushmen or Hottentots who had not submitted to servitude was ordered to be seized or extirpated (6)", conceding this, we might note that what Theal found in the documents led him to record that in 1774

"the country ... was scoured, and all the Bushmen found who would not surrender were shot". (7).

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(1) Notes on Canada and South Africa p. 8.
(2) Theal (d) p. 346.
(3) i.e. van der Merve and van Wyk. re the 3rd group, Philip refers to and quotes from the report of one Marais, whom he assumed was the leader. (Researches I p. 43) Theal gives the leader of the third group as being Commandant Oppermen. (Theal (a) p. 242).
(4) Theal (a) p. 242. Researches I p. 42-3.
(5) I have not checked this.
(6) Researches I p. 42.
(7) Theal (a) p. 242. (underlining mine).

If Philip's account of "a great commando" in 1774 was "imaginative", then Theal's is too (1). On the other hand, if there was such a commando, then Moodie presumably was wrong; and Theal, who had already written of it (2), knew this when he penned these criticisms against Philip (3).

Theal gives the impression that Philip was clearly caught lying over the Theopolis land question (4). This is another of the rare occasions on which Theal gives references; but only to the evidence of Philip's opponents. MacMillan, who has seen the documents on both sides, considers that the dispute was hazy and confused, but concludes that Philip definitely had a case against the colonists concerned and that he was slandered (5).

About the Betshuana refugees being driven into the colony by Bergenaars; Theal is conveniently vague; so it is difficult to know precisely what his complaint is, or to what incident he is referring. However, there were, during Philip's time, reports by Moffat of attacks on Betshuana by Bergenaars (6), and by Stockenstrom, who said that plundering by Bergenaars drove Betshuana into the colony to plunder in turn (7). So there was nothing strange in Philip's "representing" this to be the case.

This is an exceptionally poor performance by Theal, who nowhere even comes to terms with Philip's real arguments. Philip was not infallible. It is not impossible to make out a case against him - especially for

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(1) Marais p. 17, also writes of a great commando in 1774.
(2) In Theal (a) published 1888.
(3) In Theal (d) published 1891.
(4) Op cit p. 341.
(5) Cape Colour Question p. 226-9.
(6) Pitman p. 81.
(7) Op cit p. 84.

someone as well-informed as Theal, and with the advantage of writing years after the events. But his vague generalities - "generally agreed", "a particular statement" - and his few careless, unscholarly specific charges (1) hardly justify his vehemence against the Researches and insistence on their proven unreliability.

If Theal had been more honest, he might perhaps have been moved to say what Cory said of Philip's arguments. Commenting on a speech made by Philip in England, which he had obviously been trying to contradict, he exclaimed in exasperation that it contained

"that mixture of truth and falsehood ... or perhaps instead of falsehood ... that association and dovetailing together of statements which taken by themselves were perfectly true, but from the arrangement he gave them he conveyed entirely erroneous and unjust impressions". (2).

Theal does, in fact, once say something similar; he refers to a speech of Philip's in which "sublime truths were mixed with fantastic theories" (3) - whatever that may mean. Theal did concede that Philip was clever, very clever. So was Maynier. He was, in fact, "much too able intellectually" for uneducated South African farmers. En ook toe vir ons Kanadiese-gebore, Edele Doktor en koloniale historiographer who is not beyond taking refuge behind goodhearted, honest unsophistication when the arguments become too powerful.

Theal invariably and indiscriminately accuses critics of the colony's colour policy of wanting immediate social equality, regardless of what they actually did want. Dr. Philip "claimed for people of all colours and conditions exactly the same treatment" (4). In his view "it was oppression to make a distinction in any way between coloured people and Europeans, and through their publications

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(1) which are drawn entirely from a secon-hand source, a not based on his own wider reading.
(2) Cory III p. 297.
(3) Theal (e) p. 53.
(4) South Africa p. 178.

(the L.M.S.) caused the colonists to be regarded abroad as unjust and cruel because Hottentot and negro servants were not treated as equals socially". "Several of the most prominent among them ... put their principles into practice by marrying coloured women"(1). "It was thus not a question of religion, but a question of whether a barbarian could at one bound attain the top rung of the ladder to which Europeans have climbed slowly and painfully through countless generations, that divided the colonists from the London Missionary Society"(2).

Philip's views have been "seriously misrepresented"(3) by Theal. He did not demand absolute or social equality. On the contrary, he believed in guidance.

'We must be masters but rule as we do in India, making the interests of the natives the grand policy of our conduct'.(4). And it was precisely this concern for the interests of the native races that was the real point at issue, not social mixing or bounding to the top of ladders overnight(5). As his writings clearly show, Philip's main concern was with social, economic and legal problems(6) - the evils of subsistence farming, over-expansion, the potential of Hottentots as consumers, the unsatisfactory legal position, the moral and economic effects of the prevailing system on the whole community(7). The reforms he pressed for were economic and legal: in reply to Huskisson's enquiry as to what he wanted, he said: 'I require nothing for them but the power of bringing their labour to a fair market'(8).

Once again, Theal misrepresents Philip's case and completely ignores his main arguments and criticisms. His reaction is not that of the historian, considering both sides of the case years after the events, but of an ignorant, prejudiced, conservative frontiersman, living in insecure

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(1) Progress p. 162.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Cape Colour Question p. 171.
(4) Bantu, Boer and Briton p. 116.
(5) There are those who would not think that it was necessary to bound up to the top rung of the ladder in order to catch up with the heroes of Theal's History.
(6) Op cit p. 48.
(7) Cape Colour Question p. 171.
(8) C.H.B.E. p. 289.

conditions, who understandably feels his interests threatened by the advanced even if far-sighted and enlightened policies advocated by men like Philip and Maynier.

I would suggest that the real reason for Theal's reaction to Philip lies in the power and force of the latter's case. Whatever its faults and flaws, the essentials of Philip's arguments are "irresistible". His criticisms strike right to the core of the matter. He lays bare many of the essentials of the South African problem - landlessness, poverty, prejudice, fear, biased officials, the failure of the law. One can oppose his case, but not on the unctous grounds of "the true interests of the Hottentots" as Theal wished to do. One can, in the final analysis, only oppose his case effectively on the grounds of the naked self-interest and right to exploit of the whites. This Theal was not prepared to do. Consequently he could not afford to concede any validity to Philip's case (as this would destroy his own). To deny validity to Philip's case, is to deny and ignore facts, evidence and documents, which Theal does. In the absence of a powerful counter-attack, Theal takes refuge in distortion, sneers, insinuations and personal attacks. Though this may make good propaganda, it does not make good history.

More briefly, a few of the points from Theal's very unsatisfactory account of the events of 1835-6. In Theal, and in the traditional South African history for which he is the source, Philip is represented as being responsible for the reversal of Sir Benjamin D'Urban's frontier policy in 1836.

The evidence before the Aborigines Committee of Theal, of "a disappointed retired official"[1], and the campaign which Philip organised in England, led to the reversal of the September Treaty and the retro-cession of Queen Adelaide[2], after which there was only "one course open" to the Dutch colonists - to flee British rule.[3]

Theal's statement to the contrary, Philip supported the annexation of Queen Adelaide[4], not only in letters to Buxton, but before the Aborigines Committee he said, "it will be a matter to be regretted if the new province shall be again dissevered from the Colony"(5). There it is, in black and white, on p. 625 of the Report, yet Theal allows us to think that Philip in his evidence advocated, and was consequently responsible for the retrocession. Not only did Theal see this report, he wrote a 1-2 page criticism of it and of Philip's evidence before it[6].

The evidence of the missionary was easily dismissed, but how does Theal deal with Stockenstrom? By examining and criticising his evidence perhaps ? Theal writes that "a shadow" rests upon Stockenstrom because of his evidence[7] to the Aborigines Committee. He confesses he is puzzled by this. What can the reason be ? The reader is given a number of possible reasons to choose from: could it be ambition; could it be revenge, jealousy of Colonel Somerset? "His mind was warped by intense jealousy" of Colonel Somerset[8] ; or could it be self-delusion ? Note the wide range we are given. It is not, of course, possible

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(1) i.e. Stockenstrom. South Africa p. 192.
(2) Theal (e) p. 53 f. and 59.
(3) South Africa p. 194.
(4) C.H.B.E. p. 312, Bantu, Boer and Briton p. 125.
(5) Aborigines Committee 1836 p. 625.
(6) Theal (d) p. 446-7.
(7) Theal (e) p. 54.
(8) Theal (e) p. 55.

that Stockenstrom might have said what he thought. Theal admits, confesses that he finds it difficult to say. However, on the next page (p. 56) he is ascribing Stockenstrom's controversial account of the Zeko incident to his jealousy of Colonel Somerset, so presumably his doubts have between p. 55 and 56 been set at rest. One year later in the Story of the Nations,(1) Theal no longer discusses any doubts, and Stockenstrom has become "a disappointed retired official" whose evidence was "gratifying" to Lord Glenelg. Thus Theal's methods of handling his 'opponents'.

"It was believed in South Africa that the power of the governor was less than his (Philip's) owing to the support he received from the great societies".(2).

No comment follows on whether or not this belief was true. It is just left - without discussion, substantiation or refutation - to sink in ? By 1916, at any rate, Theal believes it too, for he says Philip was

"virtually master of the position"(3), and "in later years, Dr. Philip possessed power to cause his theories to be put into practice, with the result that the country was involved in confusion and difficulties from some of which it is not even yet free"(4).

Even on the basis of his own version of Philip's activities - responsibility for Ordinance 50 and (erroneously) for the 1836 reversal - this is a surprising contention. Surely even Theal knew Philip well enough to know what policy would have been followed had he really been "master of the position"!

MacMillan says it is difficult to know how influential Philip was.(5) The Researches were not widely read all England was not roused by 'horrid tales'.

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(1) 1894 edition. p. 192.
(2) Progress p. 166.
(3) South Africa p. 177 (1916 ed.)
(4) Theal (d) p. 439.
(5) Cape Colour Question p. 60-3.

Philip even had difficulty with the cautious Directors of the L.M.S. who were alarmed by his political activities (1). MacMillan concludes that Philip had influence long enough to secure political freedom for the coloureds in the Cape Colony, and that "the missionary campaign of Philip and his companions has been given undue political importance (2)".

Theal casually makes a very surprising statement about the views of Philip and Fairbairn during these contentious and heated years. Such views, he says (on this occasion referring to the Commercial Advertiser), could be "legitimately held"; but the "manner" in which they were held and the "distorted charges" which were made, led to complaints and disapproval. This question of the "manners" of the opponents of the colonists has a familiar and disingenuous ring; but there is more significance behind this statement than at first appears to be the case. In view of what Theal has said about such views and the complete lack of justification for them, is it not surprising, to say the least, that he considers they could ever be "legitimately held"? He has said they were "proved to be incorrect", "untrue" etc. If they are, how could they ever be legitimately held ? And if there is some truth in them, why had he not, in accordance with the declaration we quoted at the beginning of this section, "given the leading points of the case for both sides and left the reader to judge for himself (3)". Instead he called Philip and Stockenstrom liars, and nowhere, not in any instance, conceded any validity to their case. This is a revealing slip. Does it perhaps reveal a certain

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(1) Cape Colour Question p. 60.
(2) Bantu, Boer and Briton p. 160.
(3) History of the Boers Preface.

cynicism towards the truth ?

In this statement Theal reveals what his function really is. He is, as Professor Marais has said, the champion, defender, apologist of the white settlers, and he will give no quarter to their opponents and to the case against them. But what if there is much truth in the case, what if it is overwhelmingly borne out by the evidence and the documents ? Theal nevertheless denies its validity. When the evidence did not square with his case, he disregarded it. It was perhaps Theal's bad luck that he became the apologist for, and created the historical basis of a national mythology which is profoundly unhistorical and demands/consistently a unhistorical interpretation of the past. Nevertheless, despite such difficulties, he persevered.

Theal makes a similarly revealing statement in his account of the Bushmen. Justifying the commandos against the Bushmen on the grounds of the "ruthless" warfare conducted by the latter (i.e. the Bushmen), he writes,

"The right of the aborigines to endeavour by every means in their power to retain possession of the territory that had been their ancestors' from remote times was utterly ignored (including by Theal) and indeed it was not possible that it could be respected. It was simply a question: shall the country remain in the occupation of savages in the paleolithic stage and without peaceful intercourse with other human beings, or shall it become the home of civilized men having a place in the brotherhood of nations ? In this view of the matter, the Bushmen were regarded as marauders, a and were constantly so termed.(1) From their point of view, if they could have given expression to their feelings, the Europeans would unquestionably have been considered the marauders and they as patriots defending their country"(2).

(1) But this is the farmers view, the view of the opponents of the Bushmen; not the view of the impartial historian who considers both sides.
(2) Theal (b) p. 126.

But is it not precisely the historians task to give all the points of view, especially that of a group who cannot give expression to their feelings ? And does not Theal continually claim that he does this, that he has no favourites, that he never takes sides -

"I have no prejudice against, or desire to favour, any one of these (groups) more than any other". (1).

Yet, except for this one concession Theal condemns and chastises the Bushmen and justifies the most extreme measures against them. From Theal's account of the Bushmen, one would never imagine that they could from any point of view be regarded as patriots defending their country - one imagines that they were naturally "cruel and vindictive", that there was no alternative but to exterminate them.

Theal concludes his account of Philip with a description of his tour of England. This is described as a "triumphal procession" dotted with speeches in which "sublime truths were mixed with fantastic theories". Apparently, people in England went beserk - Theal, referring to these years, actually writes somewhere of "philanthropy gone mad" (2) - for, on one occasion Stoffels and Tshatshu, the Hottentot and native Philip took overseas with him, were taken to the dinner table by "ladies of rank". However, order, justice and harmony reasserted themselves in the world; for the consequence of all this was that Andries Stoffels contracted Tuberculosis and died on the way home, while Jan Tshatshu "became so conceited and so fond of wine that he was utterly ruined" (3).

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(1) Progress preface.
(2) Progress p. 210.
(3) Theal (e) p. 53-4.

Lest we laugh too long at Dr. Theal's stories and wonder why we study a "History" of this quality, we might note that despite facts, refutations and evidence the version of Dr. Theal lives on. In an M.A. thesis[1], Mr. Shutte of Stellenbosch uses familiar phrases. He denies that eminent historians such as Dr. Theal and Professor Cory misrepresented Philip[2]:

"His baneful influence on the history of South Africa can hardly be overestimated. We classify him in the ranks of those who, for obvious reasons(3), were engaged in a slandering campaign against the South African colonists and colonial government. His writings abound with dishonest and malevolent misrepresentations, playing into the hands of his henchmen in England, and duping the British national mind"(4).

Likewise the Matric history book: "Philip sooner or later quarrelled with the persons with whom he had to do, from Somerset downwards" etc.[5] Dr. Theal would give Messrs. Fowler & Smit and Shutte full marks.

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(1) written in 1937 and published by the Archives Committee in 1940.
(2) Archives Yearbook 1940 Part I. p. 244.
(3) So obvious that Mr. Shutte need not mention them.
(4) Op cit p. 245.
(5) Fowler & Smit p. 234.

Unfortunately, I have not time to include my examination of Theal's account of Van der Kemp. His method of handling him is, however, the same: he discredits the man's character, misrepresents his policy and distorts the circumstances in which he acted. He actually says that Van der Kemp received a "warm welcome"(1) in South Africa which he abused. What Van der Kemp received was a hot welcome - from du Buis and his associates in Kaffirland and later from the rebels at Graaff-Reinet.

A sample from Theal's account of Dr. Van der Kemp - the man who in the Compendium had been described as "the most celebrated, on account of his extensive learning, his great zeal, and the extraordinary sacrifices he made in devoting himself to his work"(2).

"This man, who had moved in refined circles in Europe actually purchased a black slave girl, whom he married." "a great and sudden domestic bereavement seems to have disturbed the balance of his mind, for eccentricity is too mild a word to use with regard to some of his habits"(3). On one occasion, he was actually seen dressed in coat, trousers and sandals but "without shirt, neckcloth, socks or hat. In a burning sun he travelled about bareheaded and thus strangely attired .... Yet his conversation was rational and his memory perfectly sound"(4).

Theal's descriptions, while they build up very definite impressions, frequently, on analysis, yield very little substantial, relevant fact. Normally, this would not even be considered as historical evidence, but in South Africa his opinions have been widely accepted as historical facts.

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(1) Theal (c) p. 59.
(2) Compendium p. 154.
(3) Theal (c) p. 60-1.
(4) Op cit p.111. This description is based on an account by Lichtenstein. c/f V.R.S. Vol 10 p. 292-4 to compare the marked difference in tone between the versions of Theal and Lichtenstein.

Being a student of history and not an arbiter of fashion or a gossip columnist, I am at a loss to know whether Dr. Van der Kemp, when wandering around the South African bundu with his Hottentot congregants, should have worn "a neckcloth, socks and a hat", or whether this man from the "most refined circles" in Europe contracted an unsuitable match. I would have preferred to hear about that elusive "mass of missionary correspondence"(1) which caused Theal's volte face on him and on the other agents of the London Missionary Society.

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(1) In the Preface to History of the Boers.

CHAPTER V

THE CASE OF GOVERNOR WILLIAM ADRIAAN VAN DER STEL.

We shall not, in this chapter, be concerned with the truth or falsity of the immensely interesting and complicated case of William Adriaan van der Stel. This was the one instance in which Theal responded to a serious and scholarly challenge to an important section of his History. He was confronted with documents which conflicted with and contradicted his account of William Adriaan and challenged to produce evidence in support of his case. His response throws light on his attitude towards evidence and criticism, and on his methods.

I am assuming that the reader is familiar with the traditional version (as contained in Theal) of William Adriaan - the tyrannical, avaricious Governor whose corrupt practices threatened to ruin a poor colony. A group of brave colonists sent a petition to Holland as a result of which they were persecuted, imprisoned and banished. However, the petition reached Holland, the Company, after an inquiry, recalled and dismissed William Adriaan, confiscated the property he had illegally accumulated, while the liberty of the colonists was secured to them.

The following books and documents will be among those referred to in this chapter: the Klagteschrift, the list of grievances and complaints drawn up by Adam Tas and van der Heiden, signed by 63 colonists and sent to Holland; the Memorial, a petition in support of William Adriaan, signed by 240 colonists. The Korte Deductie -

a defence of his conduct and refutation of the charges against him, published by William Adriaan in 1707, after his ties with the Company had been severed. The Contra Deductie an attack on William Adriaan and refutation of the Korte Deductie written by the colonists, Adam Tas and Jacob van der Heiden, published in 1712. Although they are not all mentioned in the correspondence, the reader might like to know of these three crucial secondary sources: Bogaert's Historische Reizen, published in 1711. Bogaert, a traveller who visited the Cape a number of times during these years, was an active partisan of the colonists against the Governor. He was, in fact, the physician one reads of in the history books who smuggled the petition of the colonists to Holland. The Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum by Petrus Kolbe, published in 1719. Kolbe was a German who arrived at the Cape in 1705. His History was the standard work and basic source-book on the Cape for almost half a century, until the publication in 1763 of the Journal Historique du Voyage au Cap de Bonne Esperance of de la Caille, who exposed the errors and unreliability of Kolbe. Theal knows, and says, that Kolbe is unreliable. However, I have often suspected that he frequently relied on him. In this only examination of a section of Theal's early history, we shall see that he does. Finally, the Het Ontroerd Holland an anonymous work published in 1748, based on the Contra Deductie, Bogaert and Kolbe. We shall not be much concerned with the secondary sources, but might note that all of them are (or are based on testimony) antagonistic to William Adriaan.

Theal's version of William Adriaan (which was in turn based on Bogaert, Kolbe and Het Ontroed Holland - all of which completely accepted the validity of the Klagteschrift and the Contra Deductie, while rejecting the Memorial and Korte Deductie) was completely accepted until the Rev. H.C.V. Leibbrandt, first archivist of the Cape Colony, published volumes of documents which threw a different light on the whole question (1). The most important of these is The Defence of William Adriaan van der Stel published in 1897.

In the introduction to this, Leibbrandt wrote that for two centuries William Adriaan had been regarded in a most unfavourable light and blamed for acts for which the Directors of the East India Company should have been held responsible. He produced evidence which threw considerable doubt on the character and motives of the men who opposed the Governor and brought about his downfall. Henning Huising, for example, was smarting from the loss of a lucrative meat contract and stood to lose much from the Governor's attempts to regulate the cattle trade with the Hottentots. Van der Heiden, another leading signatory, was behind the cattle-stealing expeditions against the Hottentots, which the Governor was trying to stamp out (2). Leibbrandt was thus suggesting that one of the real issues was a conflict between lawless, disreputable frontiersmen and a Governor trying to enforce the rule of law.

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(1) The relevant vols. are:
Precis of the Journal (1699-1732) (1896)
Letters received (1695-1708) (1896)
Letters Despatched (1696-1708) (1898)
The Defence of William Adriaan van der Stel (1897)

(2) Defence Annexures NI -8.

Leibbrandt's evidence also threw doubt on the reliability of some of the accepted documents. Re the Klagteschrift (list of grievances and complaints): only 63 settlers had signed this and the names had been "collected ... by means of all culpable contrivances". "half ... belonged to the French or Waldensian settlers, not very well able to understand the Dutch language "[1]. Many of the signatories later admitted, in sworn evidence before the High Court of Justice, that they had not understood the charges, or had been forced to sign or had known that the charges were untrue (this group included Tas)[2], and Leibbrandt claimed that there was no evidence to show that they had been forced to make these declarations.

On the other hand, there was no reason to disregard the evidence in the Memorial signed in support of William Adriaan by 240 colonists. He had found no evidence to show that the signatories had been forced to sign. Nor was there reason to reject the Korte Deductie, which, in fact, proved the falsity of many of the charges made against William Adriaan.

The lengthy and detailed documentation of Leibbrandt, at least threw wide open the whole question of William Adriaan van der Stel. What was Theal's reaction to this ?

In the History of South Africa 1691-1795 published in 1888, although he accepted the evidence of the Klageschrift and the Contra Deductie and saw the issue only as one of the freedom of the colonists, Theal had conceded that some of the charges against William Adriaan were overdrawn[3], and

(1) Op cit Korte Deductie, paras 26, 27, 28.
(2) Op cit Annexures D. 1-14.
(3) Theal (a) p. 34. This did not apparently amount to much in Theal's view; he had made the same admission re the charges against Maynier.

that his leading opponents, van der Heiden and Huising, were unreliable and had vested interests at stake (1). However, in South Africa (Story of the Nations Series) published in 1894, there was no mention of these factors. The version was the classic one of the corrupt avaricious Governor opposed by freedom-loving colonists (2). There was no change in the revised 1899 edition, despite the publication of Leibbrandt's documents in 1896-7.

In the appendix to History and Ethnography (Vol. III) published 1909-10, Theal wrote that in the Korte Deductie, William Adriaan succeeded in showing that his accusers made many incorrect statements; but he did not succeed in refuting the charges that his administration was oppressive and that he had been farming illegally for his private benefit (3). Of the Contra Deductie he said that its charges were "fortified with depositions and documents" (4). He did not seem to have sorted out the evidence or his own thoughts on the matter (5). Yet referring to Leibbrandt's publications he wrote,

"Having carefully examined the original documents and extracted my information from them, I have not done more than glance through these volumes to satisfy myself that nothing of importance has escaped my notice". (6).

This was the position at the time of The Van der Stel controversy.

In The Romance of Empire (published in 1909), Ian Colvin expressed disappointment in Theal's History and rejected his version of William Adriaan as contrary to the

(1) Op cit p. 33.
(2) South Africa p. 64-71.
(3) Theal (b) p. 384.
(4) Op cit p. 385.
(5) i.e. which was right, the Korte or the Contra ? or neither - or sections of either? If so, which and why.
(6) op cit p. 406.

documentary evidence of Leibbrandt[1]. The charges against the Governor contained in the Klagteschrift and Contra had been proved "entirely and absolutely false"[2]. The real issue at stake had been the illegal cattle-trade, not liberty or corruption. The defeat of the Governor had been a victory for a lawless element, who were Theal's heroes. Colvin's account though interesting and based on documents, was written in rather emotional, highly-charged terms. But perhaps this was the language that Dr. Theal understood, for he responded to this challenge.

Soon after the appearance of Colvin's book, Theal wrote a letter to the Cape Times:

"I am so accustomed to abuse and misrepresentation by the fanatics on the outer fringes of both the great political parties in this country, that it has long ceased to trouble me. These people look into my volumes in the hope of finding something to favour their own extreme views, and, on discovering nothing of the kind, not unnaturally vent their spleen upon me. But the railings from one side counteract those from the other, and so do me no harm"(3).

It was with the 'political' implications of the whole question that Theal seemed most concerned: If William Adriaan was right and the colonists wrong, "the truth ought to be told, regardless of the feelings of the people of the present day". Obviously ! Why did Theal even make this point ? It has nothing to do with anybody's feelings, but with documents. But later in his letter, Theal returns to this question: he accuses Colvin of "blackening the character of the Dutch colonists" who opposed William Adriaan and says his book is untimely because of the prejudice against "those South African colonists (i.e. of the Republics) who are now fellow-citizens with ourselves".

What did Theal say in defence of his version ? He made three points: one, every Dutch historian and

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(1) Preface and p. 140 ff.
(2) Colvin p. 142.
(3) Cape Times 17/8/1909.

Advocate de Wet had supported his (i.e. Theal's) conclusions; two, Colvin had ignored the evidence of the Contra Deductie "brimful as it is of official documents and sworn declarations"; three, Colvin had instead relied on William Adriaan's defence the Deductie which was "proved utterly useless" when investigated by the Assembly of Seventeen (1).

Professor Edgar replied to Theal's letter. He asked him to show why: one, he still accepted and relied on the evidence and charges contained in the Contra Deductie, in view of the damaging evidence produced by Leibbrandt (which he cited) about the character of the signatories, their means of obtaining signatures, their later confessions. Two, why he rejected the pro - William Adriaan evidence. How did he explain the wide support for the Governor - 240 vs. 63 ? What evidence was there to show he had forced people to sign the Memorial ? Three, would he produce this new evidence (never before mentioned) that the Deductie had been investigated by the Seventeen, and "proved utterly worthless " (2).

He had read all the documents on William Adriaan in the Archives continued Professor Edgar, but could find nothing in them to support Theal's "sweeping assertions" about his wickedness and corruption. He did not seem to be more corrupt than the usual Company official. It was the system that was bad, not the man. This had not even been the issue. The real issue was the illegal barter-trade, the thefts and cattle-raids against Hottentots which the Governor was trying to control. As for the Governor's harsh handling of his opponents: this was a serious

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(1) Idem. Will the reader take note of points 2 and 3, to which we will return.
(2) Cape Times 20/8/1909.

rebellion, and the Government of the Company was "frankly despotic". He had acted as all other Governors would have done in the circumstances. Edgar made a number of specific points; among these was a denial that William Adriaan was engaged in irregular farming activities at Vergelegen. On the contrary, the grant of Vergelegen was regular and legal. William Adriaan may have used his position to profiteer and enrich himself, but where was the evidence ? Much as he admired Theal he could not take his "mere personal assurance on an important matter of this kind", but must ask for his evidence (1).

In his reply, Theal stated that as his conclusions were the same as those

"of all previous historians, I think those who differ from me should now prove their notes, rather than call upon me to look up evidences for them"(2).

For the answers to his questions, he referred Edgar to his (Theal's) History.

Re the character and reliability of the opponents of William Adriaan: Theal said there was no evidence that Adem Tas was behind the robberies. Of van der Heiden and Huising he said nothing.

He made a number of specific points, among these was a denial that Vergelegen had been legally acquired. The grant of Constantia (Simon's farm) was perfectly legal, for it had been given to Simon by a commissioner "of very high rank" and there was no secrecy surrounding the grant. Vergelegen had been given to William Adriaan by a commissioner "of much lower rank" and the Directors were never notified. He continued,

"To one statement of Professor Edgar I must emphatically object. He says: 'Dr. Theal contends' etc. Now, I never

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(1) Idem.
(2) Cape Times 24/8/1909.

contended one way or the other, I was never an advocate for or against; I merely summed up the evidence as fairly as I could".

Theal concluded with the assurance that

"As far as Mr. Colvin's book is concerned, I should not have noticed it had I not wished to protest against the colonists being misrepresented".(1).

Edgar expressed himself disappointed in Theal's reply. He was not trying to be controversial, he was genuinely interested to know the truth about William Adriaan. It was not good enough for Theal to refer him to his History - he was challenging it.(2)

Theal replied at length,(3) and he advised Edgar where he could "easily" find the information he was so interested to have. One, avoid all other authors, especially Kolbe "for they are only compilations from the Deductie and Contra Deductie". Two, "If the Contra Deductie is rejected as evidence, reject the Deductie also, for they are of equal weight". Theal has now changed his ground. In both his previous letters, he had based his case on, one - the support given it by "all previous historians" and Advocate de Wet.(4) Two, - he had claimed that the Contra was "brimful ... of official documents" while the Deductie had been "proved utterly worthless ".(5) Now he advises Edgar to discount the views of all previous historians; and to regard the Contra and the Deductie as being "of equal weight".

What then is the source of his work and evidence for his version ?

One, "consult the Journals, letter-books, Proceedings of the Council of Policy, and other manuscript volumes in the Cape Archives"(6).

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(1) Idem.
(2) Cape Times 25/8/1909.
(3) Op cit 31/8/1909.
(4) Letters of 17/8/1909 and 24/8/1909 - see above p. 120f. and 122 ; Advocate de Wet was a friend of Theal's who was interested in South African history.
(5) Letter of 17/8/1909. See above p. 121
(6) Cape Times 31/8/1909. (underlining mine).

These bear out his case - and Theal repeats his case against William Adriaan ; that he, for example, obtained land irregularly, plus the usual charges about his conduct and farming transactions, of which he now, however, says: "of which (charges) it is now impossible to decide exactly what proportion was correct".

(Then why does Theal repeat them and without qualification ? And what did he mean when he said above in the same letter that the manuscripts in the Archives would prove his case. This was his case.) Two - the second source and support cited by Theal was the report of a Commission in Holland appointed to enquire into the affair when the colonists complaints were received. This Commission

"took all the evidence possible" from the banished colonists, officers of the fleet etc. "A copy of this evidence itself given before this Commission is not in the Cape Archives, or at least was not when I had charge of them, but the decision upon it is".

As a result of this inquiry the colonists were declared innocent and William Adriaan dismissed.

Three, when William Adriaan arrived in Holland,

"a proper trial or examination into his conduct took place, as a result of which he was dismissed from the Company, "owing largely to his having overstepped the law and practised tyranny and outrage towards freemen"(1).

The "documents relating to this closing scene in the occurrences are not in the Cape Archives .... They, or at least the principal of them (I am not sure about all) are, however, easily accessible at the Hague".

where Theal saw them while he was copying documents for 10 months. However, he had no time to copy "either these or many documents of much greater importance "(2). These are the documents on which Theal's case rests.

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(1) We might note, incidentally, the grounds of dismissal given. This charge refers to van der Stel's conduct after the petition against him had been drawn up and sent to Holland (i.e. his treatment of the petitioners). It does not relate to the validity of the charges made against him (i.e. corruption, avarice) or to the rights and wrongs of the issues which led to the conflict.

(2) Idem.

Theal further says that the majority of the complainants were "the leading men in the settlement, the retired and acting heemraden elders deacons and militia officers"; and that the Contra Deductie does "completely expose" some of the errors of the Deductie. But has he already forgotten what he said earlier in the same letter: that the Contra and the Deductie were "of equal weight" and therefore should be disregarded. Is he now putting forward the Contra as additional support for his case ? He has not yet met any of the documented questions re the character of the organisers and signatories whom he now describes as "the leading men of the settlement" (1)

In his reply, Edgar accepted that some of the leading documents bearing on the case were not in the Cape Archives, (i.e. the evidence of the Commission and the trial). However, the evidence of these bodies would not necessarily be conclusive. The Commission had (according to Theal) heard the evidence of the expelled colonists i.e. of his opponents, but not of William Adriaan, who was still at the Cape. Nevertheless, Edgar regretted these documents were not in the Cape Archives, and withdrew from the correspondence.

At this stage, Leibbrandt (and later Colvin and one or two others) entered the correspondence. Leibbrandt had a formidable command of the documentary evidence. He was persistent, produced (in long letters) documented evidence against Theal's version. It was not good enough to tell him to consult "manuscript records in the Archives" - he had consulted them already. The questions came fast and furious, with detailed documentation and references to back them up. A few examples:

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(1) Idem.

Why had Theal produced no evidence to justify his rejection of the petition favouring William Adriaan, where was the proof that the signatories had been forced to sign ?(1) Leibbrandt admitted he had never heard of the Commission of Investigation on whose evidence the decision to recall William Adriaan was based. There was no mention of it in the Despatches of the time. The despatch of 30/10/1706 recalling the Governor merely said: to maintain the peace and for other valid reasons. Why had Theal not copied or obtained this evidence for the Cape Archives when he was sent by the Government to the Hague to look for documents ?(2) But, wrote Colvin how could the Commission which sat before William Adriaan's dismissal (1706) have pronounced the Deductie "utterly useless". The Deductie was only published in 1707, after his ties with the Company had been cut and the whole case was over.(3) The charges and defence in the Deductie had never been investigated. Leibbrandt had not, admittedly, seen the evidence of the trial; but how could there have been a "proper trial" after William Adriaan returned to Holland. He had already been declared guilty, dismissed and his property confiscated. Naturally, at a later trial the Directors would tend to confirm and justify their actions.(4)

On what grounds did Theal describe the opponents of William Adriaan as "the leading men of the settlement"? Leibbrandt repeated much of his evidence against them - including letters, despatches (re their behaviour and the problem of dealing with them) between landdrosts, the

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(1) Op cit letter from Colvin 30/9/1909.
(2) Op cit letter from Leibbrandt 10/9/1909.
(3) Cape Times letter from Colvin 30/9/1909.
(4) Op cit letter from Leibbrandt. 10/9/1909.

Council of Policy, the Governor and the Seventeen. One document, for example, was a letter from the Kerkraad of Drakenstein, complaining about the robberies and murders van der Heiden was committing against the Hottentots, which led to retaliation on innocent colonists and which led Landdrost Starrenberg to recommend he be removed from the frontier (1). This man and Adam Tas, the nephew of Henning Huising, were the authors of the Klagteschrift and the Contra. Surely corroborating evidence must be produced of their charges - especially in view of the methods (documented) they had used to collect signatures.

Regarding the charge that William Adriaan's possession of Vergelegen and farming activities were irregular and illegal: whether rightly or wrongly, the Company had decided that officials should be allowed to farm to supplement their low wages. Commissioner Rheede had left instructions to this effect at the Cape. Vergelegen was granted to William Adriaan by Valkenier, a Commissioner and Company representative "entrusted by them with full powers", the title deed was sealed with the great seal of the Company and registered among the official documents (2). Leibbrandt agreed: Valkenier had full powers to do this. Moreover, the Company knew of Vergelegen (3). Leibbrandt quoted from half-a-dozen letters and Instructions from the Company which showed by their references to William Adriaan's farming activities, that they did know (4).

"Will Dr. Theal undertake to produce proof that William Adriaan van der Stel was guilty of a single one of the

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(1) Idem. Leibbrandt mentioned a great many documents, and gave references to all of them.
(2) Op cit letter from "X"; 6/9/1909. Many specific point were mentioned - this is the only example we shall give.
(3) Theal had stated the Directors knew nothing of it, until they received the Klagteschrift.
(4) Op cit 10/9/1909.

many charges brought against him". Until he is proved guilty, he must be pronounced innocent".(1)

There was no reply from Dr. Theal. But some weeks later, an unexpected letter from Colvin. The services of a Dutch scholar had been enlisted to find and copy the documents in the Hague to which Theal had referred i.e. the evidence of the Commission which had made a thorough investigation of the charges against William Adriaan, "heard all the evidence", pronounced the Deductie "utterly useless" and recalled the Governor; and the "proper trial" which had resulted in his dismissal. This scholar had, with the help of officials, spent three days searching the Archives at the Hague up to the year 1714, but "had found nothing of any trial or examination of van der Stel". The opinion of the scholar was that

'Having recalled him ... it would be superfluous to try him, but as a matter of fact there was no trial".

re the Commission - of the report of this Commission there is no trace either.

Would Dr. Theal provide the date, official number or place of these documents ? (2)

There was no reply from Dr. Theal.

Some months later, however, a letter from Theal appeared in the Cape Argus under the heading: "The Coming Pageant: Important Historical Episode: Dr. Theal's Suggestion:" Apparently a pageant was being organised in the Cape Province and he wished to call the attention of the promoters to

"a very important event in the history of South Africa, which, I should think, the people of Stellenbosch and Drakenstein would take great interest in".

For two centuries the name of "a certain Governor", William

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(1) Op cit letter from Colvin 30/9/1909.
(2) Letter from Colvin Cape Times 1/11/1909.

Adriaan van der Stel,

"has passed down in history as representing all that is corrupt and tyrannical in human nature. No one has ever had a good word to say for him, except, I believe, myself, when I credited him with zeal for tree-planting".
"No one with any judgment or any desire to seek for truth alone", has failed to come to the conclusion that he was "the worst Governor this country ever had". "The evidence to that effect in the Cape Archives is direct and overwhelming".(1).

Theal repeated the charges against William Adriaan: he was avaricious, merciless, dishonest, unjust, unscrupulous etc. Theal repeated these charges despite his statement of the 31/8/1909

"of which (charges) it is now impossible to decide exactly what proportion was correct".(2)

Moreover, new charges were made:

"There were many other charges made against him, such as his polygamist tendencies, which made his wife the most unhappy woman in the settlement".

(Leibbrandt, in a reply with which we shall not be concerned(3), expressed amazement at this charge, of which he had never heard and asked for the source. Theal did not reply, but we shall see later what it was).

Theal made another new charge:

William Adriaan provoked the enmity of the Hottentots" by taking cattle and sheep from them by violence".

Theal himself had admitted in earlier books that the Governor's opponents were "strongly suspected" of being involved in such activities(4). This was one of the many charges flung by them at the Governor. Theal had admitted that William Adriaan had shown "that his accusers made many correct statements"(5) and had not previously cared to

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(1) Letter from Theal. The Cape Argus 4/7/1910.
(2) See above p. 124
(3) It contained no new points.
(4) Theal (a) p. 33 and in History of South Africa 1652-179- Vol. I (1897 ed.) he was more specific. On p. 441 he recorded the charge of employing violence (even murder) against the Hottentots - in order to get cattle - levelled at van der Heiden by the D.R.C. Consistory of Drakenstein.

(5) Theal (b) p. 384.

repeat this particular charge himself, and we might remember that even of those charges he accepted he had admitted "it was now impossible to decide exactly what proportion was correct (1)". Yet he now, without citing his added/ evidence, adds this serious new charge.

Theal's conclusion re William Adriaan: all the infamy attached to his name is "deserved", for these "six statements are surely sufficient evidence" against him and rest on the strongest evidence. "evidence quite as strong for instance, as that which goes to prove that Jan van Riebeeck landed on the shores of Table Bay in April, 1652 (2)". These "six statements"? i.e. the accusations, charges (avaricious, cruel, merciless, stealer of cattle from the Hottentots etc.) repeated above without references or support - except for the assertion that all other historians, including Lauts, Watermeyer and Advocate de Wet agree with him (Theal) (3). But Theal had shortly before advised Edgar to disregard the evidence of all other historians, "for they are all compilations from the Deductie and the Contra Deductie (4)".

To continue with Theal's letter and the pageant: here was this "unscrupulous and merciless man with a military force at his back (5)"; yet in the colony there were 64 men

who had "courage enough to brave the danger and to try to get the tyrant removed". "what would the people of this country have been but for the efforts of these 64 men". (6).

Although Cape Town was the seat of government it "never was nor is it now, the soul of the country". The

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(1) Cape Times 31/8/1909. See above p.124
(2) Cape Argus 4/7/1910.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Cape Times 31/8/1909. See above p.123
(5) Who was yet powerless to control the unlawful activities of a small group on the frontier - as was every government until after 1806.
(6) What indeed but for the efforts of the opponents of William Adriaan, of Maynier, of Van der Kemp, of the rebels of Slagters Nek, the accused of the Black Circuit

opponents of William Adriaan were "nearly all of them men of Stellenbosch and Drakenstein".

"The spirit that gave life to everything that tended to maintain love of liberty and justice, that made the Dutch-speaking people of the country what they are to day, came, not from Cape Town, but from Stellenbosch and Drakenstein. Even the dialect of the language that has such a strong hold on the affections of so many of our fellow-citizens is held by some people(1) to have had its origin there".

Only in the anti-convict agitation had Cape Town ever taken the lead in any great movement

"and even in that the country people maintained that the city acted unwisely by overdoing it".

Now let "the country people" in their pageant honour the 64 men to whom they owe a debt of gratitude. They were "the first in South Africa to make a stand against tyranny and corruption ... and many of them suffered for doing so such as few men in England or Holland ever suffered in a similar cause"(2).

"They may not all have been saints, but I do not suppose all the barons at Runnymead were either".(3)

This was the response of Dr. Theal to the serious, scholarly questions put to him. If he were confronted by Professor Marais' detailed, documented version of Maynier, what would he say ? After referring confidently but vaguely to some hitherto unknown, crucial documents locked in the vaults of the British Musuem, he would organise a pageant of the inhabitants of Graaff-Reinet in honour of Maynier's opponents(4). A fittingly irrational sequel to his History, the traditional history of South Africa.

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(1) Thus do myths begin.
(2) None were executed. We shall record later the financial gains that accrued to van der Heiden and Huising as a result of the Governor's dismissal.
(3) Letter from Theal.
(4) See p. 80 on them.

The correspondence ended at this point. Shortly afterwards Theal visited the Hague, where he had the opportunity to look up the documents in the case. In 1913, he published William Adriaan van der Stel and Other Historical Sketches. The essay on van der Stel is subtitled "A History of the Successful Struggle of a few Hollanders and Huguenots against Tyranny and Corruption".(1)

The reason for this 80 - page essay, which probably contains a greater quantity of footnotes and references than all his other works put together(2), is presumably the challenge issued by Leibbrandt, Colvin and Edgar. The footnotes and references were obviously intended for the conventional reason of backing up his arguments and facts. They do not, however, fulfil this function, and most of them are not even to the point. The issue was, what evidence or reasons could he produce for accepting the charges in the Klagteschrift and Contra Deductie (which in this essay, despite his previous qualifications he now accepts in toto) and for rejecting those in the Korte Deductie and the Memorial supporting William Adriaan. His footnotes are of three kinds: one, the kind on e.g. p. 182 giving information about how they got coffins in outlying areas; and on p. 199 a long footnote about a Reverend Engelbertus Franciscus le Boucq, a new clergyman. One is pleased to have any footnotes and to hear about the Reverend's background and "irrascible disposition", but these things have no bearing on William Adriaan. Two, the kind on for example p. 180, that powerfully backs up the statement that William Adriaan was appointed Governor. Resolutions of the Assembly of 17 and (on e.g. p. 185) long, terrifying quotations in Dutch are paraded in a dazzling

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(1) p. 169.
(2) Theal never usually gives references.

manner. No-one questioned that he was appointed Governor or that resolutions confirming this were passed. It is very nice to have these references too, but the drawback is that as he gives them so rarely, he, and some of his readers, might imagine that their mere presence establishes his case. Three, these came closer to the point, but invariably (with one or two exceptions) miss it. e.g. on p. 218 he makes a charge against the Governor citing as source the Contra Deductie. It was generally known that the Contra was the origin of this charge; the point is - why accept the Contra ? This was the point to be established. Nearly every charge that Theal levels is accompanied by a long reference to the Contra but there is never any reference, authority, source cited as to why this is acceptable, even when, as we shall see, he says of some of these charges that "they can be neither proved nor disproved by any document in the Archives "(1). In his letter of 31/8/1909 Theal had said that the Contra and the Deductie should be discounted as they were "of equal weight" and that his sources were (i) "the Journals, letter-books, Proceedings of the Council of Policy, and other manuscript volumes in the Cape Archives "(2). (ii) The evidence before the Commission in Holland (iii) the evidence at the "proper trial "(3). His references should have been to these - his real sources and the corroboratory evidence for the Contra. He handles the evidence contrary to his case in the same way: e.g. dealing with a denial, refutation or defence of his conduct by William Adriaan (on e.g. p. 212) Theal indicates that it comes from the Korte Deductie; but he does not indicate his reason or authority for subsequently rejecting it - or if he does, it is on the basis of the Contra.

(1) Sketches p. 221.
(2) See above p. 123f
(3) Ibid.

Now that Theal is openly citing the Contra (1) (without corroboratory evidence) as his source, what does he do to establish its validity and reliability. How does he account for or deal with Leibbrandt's evidence re the character, motives of the organisers and the manner in which they obtained signatures ? He does not account for or establish anything. In 80 pages there is nothing to suggest that they were anything but "the most god fearing" and "the leading men" of the settlement, despite his own evidence to the contrary in History of South Africa (2) 1691-1795. The character and unreliability of his opponents is a central fact in the defence of William Adriaan and must be taken account of. In his reply to Edgar, Theal had insisted:

"To one statement of Professor Edgar I must emphatically object. He says: 'Dr. Theal contends' etc. Now, I never contended one way or the other, I was never an advocate for or against; I merely summed up the evidence as fairly as I could".(3)

If there was one thing calculated to rouse the ire of Dr. Theal it was any suggestion that he was partial. Yet in his presentation of the evidence in this sketch, the longest section he ever wrote on van der Stel, he ignores and presents a case in conflict with an important section of the documented evidence that happens to weigh in van der Stel's favour.

How did he account for and deal with the pro-William Adriaan evidence i.e. the Korte and the Memorial ?

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(1) See his denial above p.123 that it was his source. (from letter to Cape Times 31/8/1909).

(2) Theal (a) p. 33 re Huising and van der Heiden and in History of South Africa 1652-1795 Vol. I (1897 ed.) p. 441. Theal had recorded: van der Heiden had (at his own request) been given permission to obtain cattle from the Hottentots. But this was withdrawn after the Drakenstein Consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church complained that violent methods, even murder, were being used against the Hottentots.

(3) Cape Times 24/8/1909.

The Governor, he said,

"attempted to explain away some of these charges, and he succeeded so far that several must be pronounced not proven, while in some (1) others he established his innocence, but in all that related to his extensive farming operations ... he failed completely in overthrowing the charges made against him".(2)

If this latter point is true then why did Theal earlier say, referring specifically to his farming transactions: "of which (charges) it is impossible now to decide exactly what proportion was correct".(3)

If he "failed completely" it must have been established. And if it has been established why does Theal, when referring at various places to William Adriaan's denial of these charges, either reject them out of hand or cite as source only the Contra (4). Why does he not confirm them by the "manuscript records in the archives" which provide evidence "quite as strong" as that re the arrival of van Riebeeck ? Or is there no such evidence ? Theal's evidence has by now become a confused and tangled web of conflicting and contradictory statements.

To return to Theal's handling of the pro- evidence: despite his statement on page 223 that van der Stel in the Korte succeeded in rebuting (5) some charges, he says on p. 248 (6) that in the Contra "there were such a number of depositions made under oath as utterly to destroy it" (i.e. the Korte). If these two statements appear to conflict, what are we to make of his judgment of 31/8/1909 that the two documents were "of equal weight" (7) ? Perhaps we are

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(1) which ?
(2) Sketches p. 223 (underlining mine).
(3) Letter to Cape Times 31/8/1909.
(4) Sketches e.g. p. 210, 212, 218.
(5) In Theal (a) p. 33 he had said "the official records (N.B. not the Korte, but the records, i.e. confirmatory evidence) ... prove that some of the most serious of the charges against him were without foundation".
(6) Sketches
(7) Cape Times

witnessing a rare instance of the application of the dialectic to reasoning - the 3rd statement being the stage of the synthesis of contradictory opposites.

Of the other pro- van der Stel documents, i.e. the Memorial, Theal writes: William Adriaan

"caused a certificate to be drawn up .... (people were invited to a party), and after making merry, allowed their names to be attached to the document, probably without knowing or caring what its contents were".(1)

Evidence ? Leibbrandt had specifically challenged Theal on this point. He said there was no support for it. Theal adds one of his footnotes, informing us that this document is in the Cape archives and that "It is in as good a state of preservation - excepting one leaf - as if it had been drawn up yesterday"(2). There is, however, no apposite footnote referring to the evidence for the claim that the Governor "caused" it to be drawn up after "making merry". Theal continues:

"The landdrost of Stellenbosch, Jan Starrenberg by name, a mere tool of the governor", tried to force people to sign. Evidence ? It is quite possible that William Adriaan and Starrenberg did this, but one cannot accept it until Theal produces the evidence. Surey this cannot have been impossible to find - against a disgraced, dismissed Governor with articulate enemies who even seven years after his dismissal, thought it necessary and were able to bring out a book rebutting his defence and attacking him(3) ? If it is impossible he should say so and why. But he has said the corroboratory evidence is "easily" available(4). At least, he has sometimes said so.

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(1) Sketches p. 224.
(2) Op cit p. 225.
(3) i.e. The Contra Deductie published 1712.
(4) Cape Times 31/8/1909. above p 124

How does Theal account for the rebels "culpable" manner of collecting signatures (documented and footnoted by Leibbrandt) and the later sworn retractions ? Re the latter, Leibbrandt had challenged him to produce evidence that these were forced. Theal does not refer to the first point. A propos the second he says the retractions were forced and "of no more value than the confessions of men on the rack". He produces no evidence to substantiate this.

An illustration of Theal's methods is more illuminating than a description of them. Here, briefly, are a few examples:
Under the heading "Faithless conduct of the Governor", he refers in detail on page 207 to various charges concluding "there may have been nothing actually criminal in dealings of this kind ..."
But was this not precisely the point at issue, that he was engaged in illegal activities ?

On page 218-9 referring to the charge that he used the Company's servants and slaves to work on his farm, Theal writes:(1) there is "positive proof" of his doing this; but he does not produce the positive proof. Theal continues; "but the charge of taking twenty-five (slaves) for himself and causing them to be written off in the Company's books as having died must be regarded as doubtful"(2) ! Why ?
He gives us no more reason for regarding this as doubtful, than for regarding the previous point as positively proved. And so on, endlessly.

After repeating all the old charges against William Adriaan(3), Theal concludes he had no sympathy with the colonists. As evidence of this he produces the following information:

(1) p. 219 footnote.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Without any evidence except the Contra.

"In all the official documents of the period during which he was at the head of affairs, and the quantity is great, there is not a single expression like 'our own Netherlanders' of his father". (1)

Theal makes and elaborates on some new charges against William Adriaan (2). Referring to a particularly bad marauding commando against the Hottentots in 1702,

"the perpetrators of these scandaloue acts were not brought to justice. In after years when the governor and the colonists were at variance and each party was endeavouring to blacken the reputation of the other, the governor stated that they were in league with the colonists and were too numerous to be punished without ruining half the settlement. This statement was however indignantly contradicted by the most respectable burghers, who asserted .... the real reason why they were not prosecuted (was because the Governor was implicated)". (3).

Theal's conclusion re these conflicting charges:

The accused colonists gave a list of the names of the robber band (4): "Forty of them are quite unknown in South Africa at the present day, and the remaining five are of that class that cannot be distinguished with certainty, so that they statements of the burghers are strongly borne out" (5). I do not see how this conclusion follows the preceding statements. Though we are not here concerned with the truth or falsity of the issues re van der Stel - one point that has clearly been firmly established by Leibbrandt is that relating to the cattle-stealing activities of some of his opponents (6). Theal himself had previously accepted this (7). Now on the authority of proven guilty parties like van der Heiden he levels this same charge, unsubstantiated, at van der Stel. And does not mention his own former evidence on van der Heiden's activites. The latter is now "one of the leading men of the Colony".

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(1) Sketches p. 205.
(2) Some were briefly referred to in his Cape Argus letter.
(3) Sketches p. 201.
(4) Why should we accept this list ?
(5) Ibid.
(6) Defence. Annexures MI - 8; letter from Leibbrandt. Cape Times 10/9/1904.
(7) History of South Africa 1652-1795 Vol. I p. 441. See above p. 134 ftnt.

Theal later repeats this charge against the Governor. On this occasion he says:

"This charge can neither be proved nor disproved by any documents in the Cape archives".

But he relates at length "one circumstance ... that throws suspicion upon the governor". The circumstance he cites does no such thing (1). His conclusion: "From his (William Adriaan's) general character, as delineated in the archives, one cannot say that he would scruple even at acts of robbery."(2) But of what is William Adriaan's general character "as delineated in the Archives" built up of ? Of charges that "can neither be proved or disproved by any document in the Archives", but which are in turn based upon his general character - no evidence enters the picture to mar the symmetry of this completely circular argument.

Another charge which is elaborated upon:

"In another way too the governor's conduct was believed to be such as to forfeit the respect of the burghers, who were godfearing men. In his domestic life he was said to follow closely the example of our Charles II, and it was asserted that he had given strict orders that the ten Commandments were not to be read in the church when he was present. There is no way of either proving or disproving these charges against him, but the fact that they were made shows in how little esteem he was held".(3)

In a footnote Theal adds that,

"Kolbe states that his wife attempted to commit suicide on account of his conduct, but I would be disinclined to accept the evidence of that author unless it was well supported".

Dr. Theal would be "disinclined" to accept the evidence of "that author" would he ? Why then does he repeat it ? Why did he also repeat it without qualification or source in his letter of 4/7/1910? (4) So Kolbe is Theal's source on

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(1) Sketches p. 221 footnote.

(2) Op cit p. 221 (and footnote).
(3) Sketches p. 219.
(4) In the Cape Argus. See above p. 129

this point. The unreliable Kolbe who Theal advised people to beware of (1) and whose evidence he is "disinclined" to accept. And he is repeating Kolbe at his most gossipy! Kolbe was, since the exposures of de la Caille, widely regarded as an unreliable source that required most critical handling. Theal always paid lip-service to this generally accepted view. I have often found that (despite his insistent claims that his History was based on the Archives) he relied frequently and heavily on secondary sources (2) including unreliable ones.

To return to Theal's account of William Adriaan and his unhappy wife. Repeating some gossip from the Journal of William Adriaan's opponent Tas (3), he continues:

"of Mrs. van der Stel so little is known that it would not be right to express an opinion as to whether her conduct towards her husband was or was not such as to provoke him to neglect her for other women".(4).

Is Dr. Theal now accepting that van der Stel did this ? (i.e. was guilty of the charges re his conduct towards his wife), for some lines above, on the same page, he had written "there is no way of either proving or disproving these charges".

He continues: "but this can be said with confidence, that the man who was utterly faithless towards his country(5)... (etc). may without hesitation be pronounced capable of being equally faithless towards the mother of his children, the most unhappy woman in the settlement".(6).

Is there any crime of which Theal would not find van der Stel guilty, regardless of lack of evidence ? Evidence, in fact, has ceased to count. Theal no longer seems to be concerned with it. Charges are hurled and we

(1) See letter to Edgar. 31/8/1909 and Appendix to Theal (b) p. 387.
(2) If there is time we will include a section of the historiography prior to and contemporary with Theal and his use of it . My general point will be that his history relies far more heavily on secondary sources than is realised.
(3) That the unhappy lady jumped into a fountain, but a Mrs. Bergh "sprang forward" and saved her.
(4) Sketches p. 219.
(5) Evidence ?
(6) Sketches p. 219 (foot-note).

are told in footnotes the incidental fact that they cannot "be proved or disproved by any document in the Archives". At the same time, any documents from the Archives that are produced by Leibbrandt are ignored. Theal did not allow documents, or the lack of them, to interfere with his version of South African history.

There is one completely new charge, which Theal deals with at some length: Briefly, William Adriaan had been entrusted with the care of the "frontier fortress" of India. This charge, this sacred duty he neglected (1). The reason:

"the eyes of William Adriaan van der Stel were closed to everything except the money that flowed into his coffers from an estate built upon and cultivated almost entirely at the Company's expense".(2)

What has led Theal to think that the Governor disregarded his sacred trust ? The fact that "he was frequently absent at his farm Vergelegen". Theal, however, encounters some difficulty in establishing how often he was absent (3). The reason for this difficulty: William Adriaan's "extreme precaution" in preventing his movements becoming known, which have made it "impossible to ascertain from any documents in the archives" how often he was absent (4).

Nevertheless, Theal concludes

"If there were no other charges against him than this one alone,(5) an honest historian, whose duty it is to expose and scorn the evil deeds of ignoble men as well as to hold up to admiration the good deeds of the upright, would be compelled to pronounce William Adriaan van der Stel one

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(1) Sketches p. 213. Theal had previously said he was a very capable and efficient Governor.
(2) Op cit p. 213. Evidence ?
(3) Although he has not yet established the fact that any absences affected the colony's defence adversely.
(4) Op cit p. 215 and foot-note; and why bother about Archives? There is a much more convenient selection of facts to choose from in the pages of Kolbe, Bogaert and Campagne. What, however, are we to make of Theal's insistent claims that his History is entirely based on Archives. Progress (Preface: "my sources of information are archives".) History of South Africa under the D.E.I.C. (1652-1795) p. 13. archives are "the only authentic sources" for the history of South Africa. Most of the secondary sources are "worthless" and he has not relied on them.
(5) A strange point !

of the most faithless and contemptible men of whom the records of any nation, ancient or modern, furnish an example. Many a governor has lost his head for crimes less glaring than his reckless neglect of duty for the sake of private interest(1)".

Later, Theal wonders at the lightness of the punishment inflicted on William Adriaan (2).

Admitting, or rather, noting casually that very little is actually known about van der Stel:

"what kind of man ... (he was) in person cannot be ascertained from any document in the archives of the Netherlands or of the Cape Colony", or from the printed books on him. "But one thing can be said of him with certainty: that before he became Governor of the Cape Colony he had borne a good character, and had not displayed those vices which at a later date made his name infamous."(3)

This does not give Theal any pause. The reason for it was that "the opportunity was wanting as long as he resided in Amsterdam (4)".

It is surprising that in this long footnoted essay Theal did not refer to two of the decisive documents which he had specifically mentioned before (5) i.e. the evidence taken by the Commission which enquired into his conduct when complaints reached Holland, and resulted in his recall, and the evidence of the trial which led to his dismissal from the Company. Theal had laid stress on these documents. As he had never seen them, Professor Edgar had, with some polite qualifications, withdrawn from the correspondence. (6) Later, Colvin claimed that they did not

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(1) Op cit p. 215-16. re this charge: Theal has passed sentence without establishing the following points:
  (1) How often William Adriaan absented himself from duty in Cape Town.
  (2) That the reason for this was the cultivation of his own private interests (and that this was illegal
  (3) That these activities and neglect endangered the existence of the colony.

(2) Op cit p. 248.

(3) Sketches p. 180.

(4) Op cit p. 181. William Adriaan had been an official for 10 years in Amsterdam.

(5) Letter to Cape Times 31/8/1909 See above p. 124

(6) Letter to the Cape Times 1/11/1909.

appear to exist and challenged Theal to indicate where they were. Theal had not replied to his letter.

On pages 235-241 of this Sketch Theal refers to the Commission. He gives many references to documents on it, which he had recently published in his B.H.D.(1) Elsewhere, he claimed that the publication of these documents, which he had copied at the Hague should refute Colvin's "strange ideas.(2) It is not clear to me why Theal made this claim. The documents indicate that a Commission (Committeren) was appointed to enquire into the "klachten van de invoonders off Coloniere aan de Caap de Bonne Esperance"(3), and the decisions and recommendations of this body are recorded. But the point of his original claim was that the evidence taken by this Commission gave support to his case. He had written:

"a copy of the evidence itself given before this Commission is not in the Cape archives, ... but the decision upon it is".

He had seen these documents at the Hague, where most of them were "easily accessible", but had not had time to copy them(4). All that Theal produces in the B.H.D. is the decision in the form of resolutions appointing a Commission, resolutions adopting their recommendations, e.g. dismissing the Governor. What of the evidence ? What of the Report ?

"the Committee of the Chamber of Amsterdam investigated the matter very thoroughly. Unfortunately the debates were not recorded, and only the resolutions were preserved".(5)

i.e. the documents containing the evidence before them and their report to which he had referred as sources and support did not exist. He does not here, or anywhere else

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(1) Deel III p. 7 ff.
(2) Catalogue p. 75.
(3) B.H.D. Deel III p. 7. ff.
(4) Letter to the Cape Times 31/8/1909 and see above p. 124
(5) Sketches p. 237.

refer to the trial. Presumably the documents on this did not exist either.

The point is clear and there is no need to dwell on it. But one cannot, of course, merely ignore the fact that an historian cites as source and support (1) for a dubious case documents which do not appear to exist. When I confronted a life-long admirer of Theal's with the refutation of his version of Maynier, she said, "Don't be too hard on poor old Dr. Theal. He had a bee in his bonnet about Maynier". One might, I suppose, shrug off the odd bee, but Dr. Theal had a whole hive of them under his bonnet - and none of them ever stung his conscience.

(1) We might remember e.g. that he used as an argument the claim that the Korte Deductie "proved utterly worthless" when investigated by the Commission. above p. 121

In his history of William Adriaan, Theal handled, in fact disregarded, evidence in a most arbitrary manner. We shall close this chapter (and the critical examination of Theal's work) with a few other examples of this arbitrary attitude towards and manner of handling evidence.

Discussing the causes of the 1779 frontier war, Theal wrote: "There was a story in circulation" that the Prinsloos had provoked the invasion by shooting a Kaffir. "Another story" that Prinsloo's son had in a quarrel shot one of Rarebes immediate retainers. "It was also stated" that Kobe had been driven across the Fish River with unnecessary violence. However, "It is impossible now to say whether these reports are true or not", "they were put in circulation by men who were certainly biassed in favour of the Kaffirs, and the explanations of the Prinsloos, if any were ever given are not to be found".(1)

P.J. van der Merve who went over the documents, concluded that „Hierdie argument is nie oortuigend nie".(2) The "story" was from a report by Landdrost de Wet to the government on the war. This report was based on the evidence of veldwagmeester Joubert, who led the first commando against the Kaffirs and was unlikely to be sympathetic towards them. Joubert's assertion that irresponsible farmers provoked the Kaffir rising is corroborated by the evidence of contemporaries on the frontier. There were complaints of the provocative behaviour of the Prinsloos in the reports of Commandant Adriaan van Jaarsveld.(3) In 1786 the Heemraden of Graaff-Reinet discussed the effects of their behaviour in provoking

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(1) Theal (a) p. 243.
(2) Die Trekboer in the Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie p. 274.
(3) Op cit p. 275.

hostilities.[1] In the same year Landdrost Woeke in a report on conditions on the frontier, expressed apprehension lest the behaviour of the Prinsloos precipitate more trouble.[2] Van der Merve's conclusion is that the 1779 conflict was caused by the behaviour of a few irresponsible frontiersmen and this, he says, was generally believed on the frontier at the time.[3]

Contrast Theal's reluctance and scrupulousness about drawing conclusions here in the face of this impressive body of corroboratory evidence, contrast this with the alacrity with which he drew conclusions on William Adriaan in the seeming absence of corroboratory evidence and even on occasions, on the sole authority of Kolbe.

Theal displays this same caution about drawing conclusions, even in the face of strong evidence, in his handling of the questionable activities of Louis Triegard in Kaffirland prior to the 1835 War. Despite his admission that there are incriminating circumstances (re the accusation that Triegard encouraged the Kaffirs to attack the colony and prolong hostilities) Theal finds it "difficult to believe that he would have tried to bring evil upon his own countrymen".[4] So presumably, as Theal finds it "difficult to believe" this, he does not believe it. Which raises puzzling questions about the nature of, or even the need for, historical evidence. Why have it ? One wonders why Theal spent so much time collecting documents, as he disregarded them and drew his conclusions nevertheless.

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(1) Op cit p. 276.
(2) Op cit p. 277.
(3) Idem. He also, in this section, denies the point that is so stressed by Theal: i.e. that cattle-thefts by the Africans was the cause of the war.
(4) Sketches 267.

I cannot really understand Theal's difficulty in this case. As he well knew, it was a time-hallowed custom among a certain group on the frontier to call on the Kaffirs to invade the colony. This had happened in 1799 and in 1815. On both occasions it led to tougher measures than usual being taken by the government of the day against the rebels. And in both instances Theal had violently objected to these measures. Re the 1799 affair, his comment was that it was unfair to let the Hottentot rebels go unpunished, while the whites who had rebelled were punished (1). He continued:

"that du Buis and several others of his stamp had endeavoured to obtain assistance from the Kaffirs against the troops was not admitted by them (i.e. colonists) as a counter-argument". (2)

But is it admitted by Theal as a counter-argument ? It was not, at any rate until this point, mentioned in his account of the events which led to their (the rebels) arrest (3).

Although reluctant to draw the obvious conclusions about Triegard and the Prinsloos, Theal showed signs of his old style when he said of Governor Yonge that there is "every reason to believe" the charges against him, even though there is not "absolute proof" (4). There is good reason to be as suspicious of Theal's handling of his heroes (including men like good "Father" Tulbagh) (5) as of his villains. Yonge is one of the most infamous of the latter. And Theal's account of him seems, at a cursory glance, to be puzzling and unsatisfactory.

Governor Yonge, Theal wrote, was the most unpopular, incompetent and corrupt Governor this colony has ever had (6).

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(1) Theal (c) p. 55.
(2) Op cit p. 56.
(3) On his account of the 1815 incident, Slagters Nek, see above Chapter III.
(4) Theal (c) p. 73.
(5) ~~What I would like to know is his source on Tulbagh.~~
(6) Progress p. 81 ; Theal (c) p. 62 and 69.

An enquiry into his administration revealed "a system of corruption without parallel even in the very worst days of the rule of the East India Company (1)". This is a serious charge (and has he forgotten about William Adriaan, the man "an honest historian" would have to pronounce one of the worst ever in the world-along with the Borgias, Nero and Alva presumably), and will naturally have to be well-substantiated. What did the Commission of Enquiry (2) into Yonge's short (1779-1801) administration reveal ? Yonge was personally exonerated of receiving bribes (3)

"but a scandalous state of things was disclosed .... He had violated the terms of the capitulation by imposing licences for killing game, by doubling the duty on brandy ...."(4)

I thought I might have misread this; but elsewhere, following the statement "scandals without parallel", he lists among Yonge's sins the fact that he closed the gardens to the public, ~~and~~ made "oppressive" regulations re timber-cutting, and imposed a £10 charge "upon every public billiard table". (5) (adding that the inhabitants did not really mind this).

One should, of course, keep in mind the case of Al Capone; though guilty of the most heinous crimes, he was eventually caught on a minor tax charge. Perhaps, Governor Yonge was an Al Capone who could only be caught on the charge of closing the public gardens. Is this the kind of thing Theal is asking us to believe, or does he literally mean that the actions he lists are to be regarded as "scandals without parallel"-in which case some interesting questions about him arise. Is this sort of stuff history? Yet it goes down as history and Theal's view of Yonge is a widely accepted one. He may have been the most corrupt

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(1) History of South Africa 1795-1834 (1891) p. 60.
(2) Which at the suggestion of corruption the British promptly appointed.
(3) Apparently the most serious charge.
(4) Op cit p. 59-60.
(5) Theal (c) p. 71.

and incompetent Governor this Colony has ever had, or there may have been some substence in one or other of these charges. On the other hand he may have been a severe critic of the Boers. But how do we know ? We certainly cannot accept Theal's authority. Re the charge of incompetence, we might note that during the two years he was here he created (on the advice of van Ryneveld) new magisterial districts, established the first circuit courts, the first "good" schools. During his term of office the first government gazette began to be published and he established an experimental agricultural station under Duckitt.(1) Theal sneers at this but praises the work of the Batavians in this field,(2) though their's was a continuatio of Duckitt's schemes.

To give an untrue or distorted picture of the past, wrote Macaulay, an historian does not necessarily have to tell actual lies. He might, for example, state all the circumstances on one side, while omitting all those on the other. He might exaggerate a little, suppress a little. He might accept the evidence on his side readily, and be very sceptical of that on the other side. He could give prominence to what suited his case, ignore or neglect what did not. Sometimes, he might even make a few concessions, which "insidious candour" would only increase the effectiveness of the "vast mass of sophistry" which would then go under the guise of History.(3)

It was fortunate for Theal that he wrote history in South Africa. While English historians usually seem to

(1) Theal (c) p. 65 ff.
(2) Op cit p. 118.
(3) Macaulay. In his celebrated essay on History in the Edinburgh Review.

be hurling insults at one another and delight in combing the books of their colleagues for errors, South African historians are usually tumbling all over each other with compliments and polite acknowledgments, and regard each other with the most surprising trust. If (while briefly at Oxford) I went to an English historian with criticism of a colleague, he was delighted, his face lit up with pleasure; here one fairly often meets with an apprehensive glance and a loyal defence. Though there may be some disadvantages to the suspicious and fiercely competitive spirit, it is healthier because based on a more realistic assessment of the habits, reliability and trustworthiness of most historians.

Even in the universities the proper spirit of irreverence and disrespect for authority is not sufficiently inculcated. It is not this or that "authority" that matters, but the habits of thought that desire and allow the establishment of any hallowed authorities. Our critical historians now reject Theal's version of Maynier; they revere Marais. It is these habits of thought that allowed the History of Theal to become established. The surprising thing about Maynier and the First Boer Republic is not that it was written, but that it was not written sooner. Theal's account is so obviously unsatisfactory, self-contradictory and partial. The quality of Theal's history, the extent of his distortions and bias is - to use one of his favourite words - scandalous. What of the historians who have used him over all these years ? He may not have had a university education, but they had one. There have for a long time been historians who knew and kept quiet ;

all the while paying Theal polite, correct even generous compliments.

We do not need more reason to doubt or reject, than we do to accept; in fact, we need less. The historian after all has to prove his case, the onus is on him. It is no longer good enough to accept the history of Theal until someone produces a refutation (which with alacrity we adopt). We must have a reason, and a very good one, for continuing to rely on the history of Dr. George McCall Theal.

CHAPTER VI

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THEAL: CONCLUSIONS:

George McCall Theal was born at St. John's, New Brunswick in Canada. His family, who originally came from Sussex in England, were amongst the Empire Loyalists who emigrated to Canada from the U.S.A. after the American War of Independence (1). It was here that Theal was born, on the 4th of April, 1837 - the year of the revolts in Canada and of the Durham Report.

Theal was the oldest of nine children, and had a happy childhood filled with the usual scrapes, pranks and hidings of small boys (2). At school he learnt mainly writing, arithmetic, Latin and Greek.

"The history taught was that of Greece, Rome and England, but we learnt little more than lists of events and names of rulers .... The great movements of our own times, the stirring events of modern Europe and America, even past occurrences in Canada, were utterly ignored".

The discipline was "severe", and everything was learnt by "dull rote" (3).

Theal's father, who was a doctor, intended him to enter the church after he left school. He, however, did not share this desire and when he was seventeen ran away from home and set out with some friends to find his fortune on the goldfields of Australia (4).

En/ On route he stopped at Sierra Leone (where he worked for a while in the store of an uncle) and at the Cape Colony. Here, in 1861, at the age of twenty-five he decided to stay.

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(1) C.O. 4218 T. No. 48. letter from Theal to the Prime Minister. 26/11/1881.
(2) Notes on Canada and South Africa p. 38.
(3) Op cit p. 38 f; C.O. 4218 T. No. 48 letter from Theal, 26/11/1881
(4) from an interview with Apthorp.

For the next sixteen years he lived a restless life, changing jobs and wandering around the country. He taught at Knysna and later at Dale College in Kingwilliamstown; in between working as a bookkeeper, editing a Dutch newspaper in Kaffraria and a paper of his own in East London. In 1870 he went to Kimberley to try his luck at the diamond diggings. He pegged out his claim and for a while lived the hard, tough life of the digger; but as he made no money he returned to the Eastern Province and became a teacher at the Lovedale Missionary Institution.(1)

Lovedale had its own printing department which issued school and educational books. In addition to his teaching duties Theal supervised the press(2), and it was here that he published, at the age of thirty-four, his first book South Africa as it is.(1871). In 1874, he published the Compendium of South African History and Geography. This was probably the best and most comprehensive book on South Africa yet written. It showed that in between his varied activities Theal had observed closely and read widely and systematically. He was familiar with many of the important secondary sources including contemporary accounts - Barrow, Lichtenstein, Burchell, Campbell, Kolbe, Philip, Sparrman; and had also read Bluebooks. He had learnt the languages of the people who lived around him - Dutch and Bantu, and was well-informed about the latest researches in anthropology - the work of Bleek, Stow and Lloyd.

He had not only learnt from books; he had questioned and spoken to Africans and Whites who lived on the old Eastern frontier, to the descendants of trekboers and to people who remembered Slagters Nek(3). He had travelled all

(1) Op cit.
(2) C.O. 4218 T. No. 48. letter from Theal 26/11/1881.
(3) Theal (c) Preface (1908);
Theal (d) p. 354; letter to the Cape Times 17/8/1909.

over the country, and probably knew South Africa in a way few contemporary historians do.

The picture that emerges of Theal during these years, is, I think, a rather unexpected one. The man who spent his life among documents in the Archives, wrote those self-righteous prefaces, those volumes of histories marked by dogmatism and rigidity, and compiled that formidable collection of documents, hardly seems like the restless, adventurous (1). unconventional, enterprising and bright young man that Theal had been. In fact, his later books were the products of a very different man. Theal was, at this point in his life, on the threshold of new opportunities and of a new career. During the next decade the circumstances and mode of his life changed greatly; so too did his outlook, his views and, I think, Theal himself.

The year 1877, was an important one in Theal's life. The publication of the 3rd edition of the Compendium marked it as a decided success and it was now being used as a text-book in some schools. 1877 was also the year in which Theal's association with the Cape Government started.

When the 9th War with the Xosa broke out, Theal was asked by the government to act as agent to Chief Oba (son of Tyali and grandson of Gaika). His job: to keep Oba's people out of the war (2). For five months Theal lived alone amongst them. He was on very good terms with them and later said "It was one of the best opportunities I have ever had to gather information upon the olden times

(1) Looking back on his life during these years, Theal later described himself as a "vagrant". Apthorp.
(2) A 22-06 p. 14 f; Theal (d) p. 354. ftnt.

from a Kaffir point of view "[1]. Theal kept them out of the war and was afterwards offered a civil service job by the government[2]. How difficult and dangerous a job this had been, I do not know. At the time he did not seem to take the successful performance of his mission all that seriously ; later he talked of it often[3] and attached more importance to it, describing it as "a diplomatic task requiring special knowledge of native character"[4], and said that the Prime Minister, Sir Gordon Sprigg, had "expressed great astonishment at what I had done"[5].

The government was, at any rate, pleased and Theal was given a job as a clerk in the civil service in Cape Town. In addition "I asked for and obtained the charge of the Colonial Archives preserved in Cape Town"[6]. From March 1879 until January, 1881, Theal worked at his clerical duties from nine till four, then worked at the Archives[7]. During this time, he was collecting information on the early years of European settlement at the Cape[8].

In 1880, the Government decided to create a new post, that of archivist combined with parliamentary librarian. Theal was very anxious to get this appointment. When the matter was discussed in parliament, J.H. Hofmeyr

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(1) Theal (d) p. 354 footnote.
(2) C.O. 4218 T. No. 1, letter from Theal. 7/1/1881; A 22-06 Appendix.
(3) In his books and prefaces, interview with Apthorp, and before the Select Committee in 1906. I mention this as a further indication of the change in him.
(4) History of the Boers. Preface.
(5) A 22-06. p. 15.
(6) History of the Boers. Preface.
(7) For this he was given an extra allowance of £100. p.a.
(8) Ibid.

recommended him as the best man for the job and as someone who had written a most impartial history of the colony[1], while the Zuid-Afrikaan, which Hofmeyr edited, supported Theal's candidature in an editorial[2]. It was apparently thought that Theal would get the job; he certainly expected it. When, as Preller somewhat dramatically puts it[3], "the bomb burst". "an indignant" Cape Argus and "a disillusioned" Zuid-Afrikaan reported that the Rev. H.C.V. Leibbrandt had been appointed instead. This account loses sight of the essential fact that these were opposition newspapers, in fact they used this as an opportunity to criticise the tottering Sprigg ministry[4], while the pro- government Cape Times supported the appointment. The appointment was similarly made into a political issue in Parliament. It was put to the vote, and the choice of Leibbrandt confirmed by a majority of one[5].

Theal was surprised and bitterly disappointed by his failure to get this job. He reacted very strongly and in a manner quite unlike that with which he had previously taken the ups and downs of life. He regarded it as a deliberate act of persecution and injustice by the Government, whom he deluged with aggrieved letters of complaint and recrimination:

"I think it is indisputable that the government has done me the honour of selecting me to be the victim of an act of injustice as stands alone in the records of this colony within the last half century". (6)

When he accepted a position with the civil service,

"I was occupying a good social position, superior in every respect to that of a subordinate in a Civil Commissioner's office .... Since March 1879 I have been occupying situations inferior to any that I had filled for very many years before, but I did not complain or object to them because I was at the same time Keeper of the Archives, an

(1) Preller (Article in the South African Archives Journal No. I, 1959) p. 29. Note Hofmeyr's assessment of the Compendium.
(2) Zuid-Afrikaan, 5/6/1880. quoted op cit p. 29-30.
(3) Op cit p. 30.
(4) Cape Argus and Zuid-Afrikaan editorials 11/1/1881.
(5) Preller p. 31-2.
(6) C.O. 4218 T. No. 2, letter from Theal to the Colonial Secretary, 10/1/1881.

honourable post, such as I could hold without loss of self respect. There is no employment in the public service that I would have thought of taking in exchange for this".(1).

What had he done to deserve such treatment:

"For I held the office of keeper of the Colonial Archives by no ordinary tenure.
It was mine by right of possession, unless cause for dismissal could be shown".
"It was mine by the wish of a great majority of members of the House of Assembly ... of the best men on both sides (of the House)".
"It has now been taken from me without notice or explanation and, if rumour speaks correctly given to a gentleman who cannot claim to have my qualifications for it. For aught I know, he may be my equal in such education as is given in schools and colleges, though he is certainly not my superior. But in the peculiar qualifications necessary for such work there must be an immeasurable distance between us .... I have had experience in deciphering old black letter manuscripts. He has probably never seen one ... and for a long time he has been living in places where he cannot have had access to such documents. In Graaff-Reinet, indeed, there are a few district papers of little value, ... If the few papers at that village disappeared tomorrow, not one link of the slightest value in colonial history would be lost. So that it was not possible to get any experience there.
The newly appointed keeper of the Archives may be a very estimable gentleman, but I can reasonably ask what are his qualifications that I should be turned out of office to make room for him".(2)

"If I have unwittingly committed any offence I can not justly object to fair punishment, but otherwise I respectfully submit that I have not deserved to be degraded in the eyes of those men of science in Europe and America who have taken an interest in the researches that I have been carrying on".(3)

Theal was not content to leave matters at that.

He wished for the publication of papers containing the

facts to clear his name:

The "mail steamer tomorrow will take to Europe intelligence of my dismissal from the post of keeper of the Colonial Archives, and it is to me all important that at the same time it should be made known that this was not owing to any want of ability, integrity or industry on my part. The Ministry has left me so little of what it could take from me that there would be no sacrifice in publishing my defence with or without its consent, but I am extremely loath ... and shall therefore only in the last extremity take the

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(1) C.O. 4218 T. No. 1 letter from Theal to the Colonial Secretary, 7/1/1881.
(2) C.O. 4218 T. No. 2, Theal to the Colonial Secretary. 10/1/1881.
(3) C.O. 4218 T. No. 1, letter from Theal to the Colonial Secretary, 7/1/1881.

step of making known the differences which have arisen between the government and myself and which must have been the cause of my dismissal".(1)

The government had left him
"nothing but my character to care for"
If he could be dismissed in this manner
"what public servant in the Colony is safe".(2)
"every consideration must now be subservient with me to the one great purpose of showing that my degredation has been unmerited".(3)

To serve this purpose he asked for permission
"to publish in the principal South African newspapers and in the leading English, Dutch, German and American scientific journals the enclosed paper".(4)

In this he claimed that his dismissal was due to differences of opinion with the Ministry over the question of Oba. He had been persuaded to stay out of the war in return for a grant of land. After the war the government had gone back on its promise. Theal had urged them to keep it. As a result of this he had, he claimed been persecuted:

In his job, work "most distasteful to me appears to have been purposely selected. It has ended in my dismissal from the post of Keeper of the Archives".(5)

What were the facts of the matter ? Theal had not been dismissed from his job; he was still in the civil service. But he had not been given the newly-created post of Archivist. This went to the other candidate, Leibbrandt, who had already done work for the government in the Archives. Leibbrandt was studious and scholarly. He had studied overseas at Utrecht, where he became a D.R.C. parson and had, before his appointment, done work collecting, collating and indexing documents at Graaff-Reinet (6). Theal and Leibbrandt were thus two good men to choose from. Whether the better won, I do not know.

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(1) C.O. 4218 T. No. 2. letter from Theal to the Colonial Secretary. 10/1/1881.
(2) He had not, of course, been dismissed. He still held his civil service post. He had not received the post newly created in 1880.
(3) Idem.
(4) C.O. 4218 T. No. 2. letter from Theal to Prime Minister Sprigg. 8/1/1881.
(5) Ibid.
(6) If these had "disappeared" (as Theal suggested they could well do), Merais would probably not have been able to write Maynier and the First Boer Republic.

Leibbrandt performed his task with excellence and dedication and his work has been widely praised. Theal, however, could never view the matter in this light (i.e. as a choice between two good candidates) and his was not a heat-of-the-moment reaction. In the Leibbrandt appointment he could see no justice and he continued to regard it as a grievance and to harp on it. Thirteen years later he was still aggrieved:

"I am sure that any competent impartial investigator would give me credit for having done at least ten times as much towards the collection, classification and indexing of the Archives during the twenty-two months that I was their custodian as the present keeper has done during the twelve years they have been in his charge".(1)

What was the attitude and the reaction of the Sprigg government (or rather the office clerks and under-secretaries who had to deal with it) to this emotional storm ? They seemed somewhat disconcerted. In Parliament Sprigg had stated that no insult or snub was intended to Theal. Leibbrandt had been appointed because of his excellent work at Graaff-Reinet and his academic qualifications. Theal, it was true, had at his own request been working in the Archives after-hours;(2) they were very pleased with what he had done but he had not officially held any office (in this capacity). He was not being "dismissed". A new post had been created.

In reply to his letters the Under-Colonial Secretary assured him that they had nothing against him. On the contrary, he expressed admiration for and satisfaction with his work. They were hoping to appoint him to a new post soon with higher pay and "duties

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(1) C.O. 4293 T. No. 11. letter from Theal to the Colonial Secretary. 15/5/1893.
(2) See above p.155

commensurate to your attainments and abilities"[1].

In the memorandum in which he gave an account of his differences with the government (which had, he claimed led to his dismissal) Theal had complained that he had been transferred from the Native Affairs Department. Perhaps the government thought he would like to return to Native Affairs, for, in April 1881, they appointed him magistrate at Tamache.

Theal, however, seemed to regard this as a further turn of the screw in the torture to which he was being subjected. The letters of complaint continued: he had received no instructions re his duties; he had no desire to be in the N.A.D.; the greater part of his life had been spent in study and he had no desire now "to undertake the management of natives"[2].

In the midst of this storm in a teacup, the Sprigg Ministry fell. Not as one might now imagine over the appointment of archivist, but over the question of native policy. The group who had championed Theal's appointment in 1880 were the first representatives of the Afrikander Bond in the Cape Parliament. Over the following years their power grew enormously, and although Hofmeyr did not hold office himself, no ministry could stay in power without his support. "It is in the light of the growing influence of the Afrikander party that the parliamentary history of the Cape Colony during this period can best be understood."[3]

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(1) C.O. 4218 No. 2. A4-81 p.3. letter of Under-Colonial Secretary to Theal. 11/1/1881.
(2) C.O. 4218 T. No. 2, A28-81. letter from Theal to the Secretary for Native Affairs, 5/4/1881.
(3) J.H. Hofmeyr (Junior) in C.H.B.E. p. 492 ff.

Soon after the fall of Sprigg and the accession of the new ministry, Theal's fortunes took a turn for the better. He only remained at Tamache for a few months and then was transferred to the N.A.D. in Cape Town. Theal had asked for and now obtained two years leave on full pay to enable him to continue his researches at the Archives in the Hague (1). The new ministry even advocated a motion in parliament to 'reinstate' him in the office of Keeper of the Archives (2). He was very grateful, from his letters seemed much happier and asked for a more congenial post. His desire was to "return to that seclusion among books to which I have all my life been accustomed (3)".

Theal was transferred to a more congenial post and given scope and facilities for his work. His main task in the N.A.D. (4) was to draw up reports on native affairs for the head of the Department (5). These, he said, assisted him with his work; and he started with his 1886-7 bluebooks, the first systematic historical and ethnological research into the native tribes in government departments (6). He was also detached for special research assignments. When the trouble with the Basutos broke out, Theal was, on his return from the Hague, asked by the Government to collect, arrange and publish "all the authentic records that could throw light upon the history of the Basuto tribe" (7).

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(1) C.O. 4218 letter from Theal to the Colonial Office: T. No. 17, 14/4/1881 and T. No. 27, 23/5/1881. I think he was there for 10 months.
(2) C.O. 4218 T. No. 48, letter from Theal 26/11/1881.
(3) Theal had, until recently, hardly led a life "secluded" among books !
C.O. 4218 T. No. 17. letter from Theal to the Colonial Office. 14/4/1881.
(4) In 1892 he was made chief clerk.
(5) Progress. Preface.
(6) Brookes p. 112.
(7) History of the Boers. Preface.

He was given the assistance of clerks to copy the documents, which the government published as the Basutoland Records in 1883.

Official support also made it possible for Theal to publish other volumes of documents: in 1881 Abstract of the Debates and Resolutions of the Council of Policy at the Cape (1651-81); in 1882 documents from the Hague were published as Chronicles of the Cape Commanders (1); in 1892-3 Geslacht-Register der Oude Kaapsche Familien; and later, the Records of the Cape Colony (1897-1905) and Records of Portuguese East Africa (1898-1903). Theal was too, commissioned to write school history books: in 1897, for example, the government published his Geschiedenis van Zuid Afrika.

Theal's job in the civil service did not, therefore stand in the way of his historical researches. On the contrary, he received every assistance and encouragement. He was given the opportunity to go overseas, access to records, ~~and~~ sometimes the assistance of clerks, and aid in publishing his researches.

There was no doubt in Theal's own mind about this:

"An opportunity to make the researches necessary for a larger and more accurate history than the one I had prepared was given to me by the different ministers of the Cape Colony that held office from the 9th of May 1881 to the 21st of February 1904 (2) who provided me with such employment that I had access to records of all kinds out of office hours while nearly every member of those ministries expressed a warm interest in the work I was doing". (3).

To one of these ministers, Sauer, he was particularly grateful

"To him I owe so much that I am well within the bounds of truth when I say that without his aid these volumes could not have been written". (4)

(1) 1882 also saw the publication of Kaffir Folklore - "collected by me while residing on the Kaffir frontier from 1861-1877" from Preface to History of the Boers.
(2) When Jameson came into office.
(3) History and Ethnography of Africa South of the Zambesi up to 1795 Vol 1 (1907) Preface.
(4) Ibid.

The Geslacht-Register and Basutoland Records had been published on his instructions. To Rhodes, he also owed a great deal[1]. But he was, he stressed, friendly with men of all views and parties: Bartle Frere had "assisted me in various ways, planned out sections for me, discussed various details"; Sir George Grey and Lord Loch had given help and information. President Brand "the peace-maker of South Africa" threw open the archives of the Free State "without reserve"[2].

The 1880's was the time of growing Afrikaner nationalism at the Cape, especially after the Transvaal war in 1881. This was the time when Liberals (and Theal had been one) were beginning to sympathise with the Republics. This was also the period in which the conquest of the Cape by Britain, Somerset's anglicising policy, and Slagters Nek were beginning to be spoken of as grievances. After 1868, Slagters Nek which had been almost forgotten acquired "a new lease of life"[3], while the history of the Afrikaners was seen as one long struggle for freedom, a battle against persecution and injustice. This was the time of historians like du Plessis, Leyds, van Oordt, Weilbach, and in the Cape, the father of them all - du Toit.

It was at this tumultous time in Theal's personal life - his imagined treatment at the hands of Sprigg, his association with the Bond governments in job, vocation, personal friendships - and in the political atmosphere in the Cape after the Transvaal War, it was then that there was the volte face in Theal's views re South Africa, and in his interpretation and account of South African history.

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(1) On Theal and Rhodes - later.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Van Jaarsveld, The Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism, p. 224.

In one of his first major interpretative works of this period[1], History of the Boers in South Africa (1887), Theal explained, in the preface, that the new information discovered during his researches (on the Basutoland Records 1882-3) led to the change in this and in other parts of his History. This explanation, although it has been accepted by Bosman and van Jaarsveld, is not sustained by a critical examination of his work. Van Jaarsveld claims that in his later work, based on Archives, Theal "reggestel'd" the errors and injustices of South African history. I hope I have established that whatever reggestelling Theal may have done for the psycho-political needs of Afrikaner nationalism, what were not "reggestel'd" were the facts of history; and that no satisfactory explanation of this change can be given in terms of the documents, to which violence was clearly done.

Theal was intense, emotional and idealistic. I do not doubt that he believed in his adopted creed with fervour. There are those unmistakable flashes of cynicism which occasionally illuminate his work; and we cannot [illegible] forget the abruptness and circumstances of his change, nor the extent of his distortion and suppression in the face of what he knew. Like all men his personality and character is more a maze of contraditions than a clear-cut pattern. The stress which I wish to place on his idealism is not the only possible reading of the facts. But it is, I think, a true reading of them and is borne out by most of what I have read by (and on) him. He believed; and with the added intensity of the convert: even when faced with documents which undermined or contradicted his case, he continued to believe.

The consideration of certain episodes in Theal's

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(1) Most of his works in the early 80's were documentary collections.

life is of relevance for an understanding of this significant quality, for, in his life, Theal often displayed the same attitudes and habits of thought that characterise his books. Mazzini said he would undertake to declare a man's views after reading twenty pages of his history. Not only a man's views, but his attitude to life and habits of thought are revealed in his writing: as you are, so shall you write. Theal's histories become more understandable if we consider him as a man; for as he was, so he wrote.

In the crisis in his life over the appointment of archivist in 1880-1, Theal displayed (perhaps developed, he had never acted in this manner before) attitudes and habits of thought which are present and puzzling in his books. Then, and on other occasions in his life, he thought, with complete sincerity, that he was being ill-treated and persecuted. It did not matter what the facts were, what explanations were given or recompense made, Theal continued to believe and say this. Some of the things he said were patently absurd: "an act of injustice as stands alone in the records of this colony within the last half-century"[1]; "the mail steamer tomorrow will take to Europe intelligence of my dismissal from the post of keeper of the Colonial Archives"[2]; that Leibbrandt had no qualifications; that the archives at Graaff-Reinet could "disappear" without loss.

All this was absurd and it revealed a disconcerting inability to take account of and face <u>facts</u>, to come to terms with <u>realities</u>. In considering Theal as a man, these qualities may, to the indulgent, seem rather endearing.

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(1) See above p. 156.

(2) See above p. 157.

He had, and has warm friends and admirers. I imagine that he could be very likeable and charming. He was a man who cared intensely and believed passionately, who strove to do something useful and important with his life. It is understandable that his idiosyncracies may seem tolerable to his friends. Unfortunately, a tendency to be carried away by one's imagination and to lose sight of facts, and an inability to come to terms with reality are not the best qualifications for an historian. An assessment of Theal, as an historian, will have to be more severe.

A final comment on the change in Theal: henceforth Theal completely adopted the 'South African' outlook and typical South African attitudes[1]. There is nothing puzzling about such views in a South African born and bred; nor even perhaps in a new colonist, who soon adapts himself to the social mores of those around him. It is, however, more complicated in a man who, as he had shown in the Compendium, knew as much and had felt as Theal had. After this change, Theal actually suppressed and denied much of what he had previously acknowledged and written. This, one imagines, must have placed considerable strains and tensions upon him. Does it account for his extraordinarily marked defensiveness, his sensitivity to criticism, to any suggestion that he was partial ? And perhaps for his almost compulsive insistences on his objectivity and impartiality, which dates from, in fact prefaced, the publication of the History of the Boers in South Africa ?

These were Theal's most prolific years[2] and he

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(1) i.e. those associated with the frontiersmen and their spiritual descendants. I hope there will be time to include a few examples on this - although it is fairly obvious from his books.

(2) i.e. for his interpretative works.

produced a large number of histories covering a very wide period and in more detail than hitherto. The first edition in 5 volumes of his 11-volume History of South Africa was published from 1888-93. In this a wider period of South African history was reinterpreted in terms of his new convictions. He was invited to write many school history books. President Reitz translated one of these - A Short History of South Africa for the use of Schools (1890) - into Dutch for O.F.S. schools: Korte Geschiedenis van Zuid-Afrika 1486-1835 (1891). One of his most successful school books was Primer of South African History (1896). These ran into many editions, sold very well and were widely read.

He continually worked on and added to his History; but usually lengthwise, so to speak. In History and Ethnography, for example, he went further back, while other books covered a later period. With a few exceptions, there were not many alterations in the body of reissued works. Often he reissued the same material under a different title, which makes it difficult to sort out his books and gives the impression that he wrote an even greater quantity of history than he actually did. Among his other histories from this period are: "A Fragment of Basuto History" (1886), "The Republic of Natal" (1886), "South Africa: Story of the Nations Series". (1894), "The Portuguese in South Africa" (1896).

He also compiled what was, I think, the first bibliography of South African history books: Notes upon Books referring to South Africa printed in the Cape Quarterly Review in 1882, later expanded and issued as Catalogue of South African Books and Pamphlets (1912).

Though one must not accept Theal's assessments of other historians, the existence of such a list and much of the information contained in it was very useful. It has now, of course, been superceded by the excellent Mendelssohn Catalogue[1]. Theal also continued to bring out his valuable collections of documents - in addition to those already mentioned, the first volumes of the Belangrijke Historische Dokumenten (1896).

Theal received recognition from the Government for his services. In 1891 he was made Colonial Historiographer (with an allowance of £50. p.a.)[2]. This was an unusual, if not unique, title in South Africa. In 1895 he received an honorary LL.D. from Queens University, Canada and in 1899 a Doctorate of Letters from the University of the Cape of Good Hope. Since 1882 (when he went to the Hague) he had become a member of various historical societies, and was exceptionally proud of this, often listing them after his name in books[3].

Theal was now very different from the adventurous and restless young man who had written the Compendium. He had settled down with his family in Wynberg, was respectable, conservative and very conscious of status, position, and membership of right societies.[4] He was a member and elder of the Nederduitse Gerefoormerde Kerk,[5] had an important civil service job, and was Historiographer of the Cape Colony; he knew most of the important men of his day, and was on friendly terms with some of them.[6]

(1) I compared the two. Mendelssohn often (too often, I think) relies on Theal's assessments.
(2) A22-06 Appendix.
(3) e.g. Theal (d).
(4) There will be some incidental information on this later. See above letters in 1881-2 the importance he attached to respect, position, prestige.
(5) Nienaber p. 165.
(6) See above p. 162-3

He was generally regarded as the country's greatest historian and his work „bekendheid en erkenning verwerf soos die van niemand anders voor of nā hom nie "[1].

Since the publication of the History of the Boers with his new line, Theal had been most insistent about his impartiality and objectivity. In almost all his books he laid claim to and stressed his possession of these qualities[2]. So far did his confidence go, that in The Portuguese in South Africa[3] he wrote,

"I need not give my authorities for what I have now written concerning these people, I think I can say with truth that no one else has ever made such a study of the subject as I have".

This attitude accounts for his failure to give references and footnotes. They are unnecessary, for him[4]. He does at the end of many volumes give a bibliography. These are useful for a general list of secondary sources on the period, but given his insistence that his work was based on Archives, his vague references to "manuscripts in the archives", is not very helpful.

For a long time Theal got away with this; his claims were accepted and his work widely praised. At the turn of the century the first criticisms of him began to be voiced./ To these he reacted vehemently. The critics were "fanatics" who "vented their spleen" on him, because he was impartial and would not become involved in politics. Bosman and van Jaarsveld accept Theal's claim that criticism of him was inspired by

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(1) Nienaber p. 160.
(2) See e.g. the Prefaces of Progress, Theal (a), South Africa, Theal (c).
(3) Foreward.
(4) Perhaps the higher cost was also a deterrent ? But this would apply to everybody. He gave evidence to the Select Committee on the high cost of producing books compared with the low return. He usually had to lay down £100. and shared any profits with the publisher. A22-06. p. 23, 12, 20

political motives. Perhaps some of it was, but whatever the motives, there was substance in some of the criticism[1], and, remembering how in the correspondence in the Cape Times Theal kept raising irrelevant political considerations, this is rather a case of the pot calling the kettle black. But this certainly does not account for the scholarly criticisms of Leibbrandt and Edgar, which were based on documentary and not on political differences. It was surprisingly against the latter - the scholars - that Theal reacted most violently.

There was, during the heated years at the turn of the century, some criticism of Theal in the Transvaal Republic. Dr. Voigt published Fifty Years of the History of the Republic in South Africa 1795-1854 in 1899. He did not dispute Theal's narrative but criticised some of his statements as insufficiently generous to the Trekboers. Theal's reaction: "I have no right to object to such criticism ... fairly done"[2]. Theal was generous to his Republican critics in a way he never was to the others, and with less reason. He would fall over backwards to favour the frontiersmen and trekkers, but rigidly refuse to concede even a proven point to anyone else. Criticism of Theal in the Republics, was, however, muted and only temporary. „Die boeke van George McCall Theal is in die Republieke verwelkom en vir skoolgebruik aanbeveel. Hulle het vertroue in sy ‚onpartydigheide' geskiedskrywing gehad en waardering is uitgespreek vir sy verdediging van die Boer karakter en sy regstelling van feite"[3]. The Republican

(1) One of Cappon's criticisms, for example, was that in the almost identical Dutch version (Geschiedenis van Zuid Afrika) of South Africa, Theal omitted a certain unflattering character sketch of the Dutch colonists. (see Quarterly Review 192. July - Oct 1900). Bosman's comment is that these are 'unfortunate flaws'. Bosman p. 110.

(2) Theal (c) (1903) Preface.

(3) Ou en Nuwe Weë p. 17.

historian Leyds defended Theal against his (British) critics. Leyds, writes van Jaarsveld, „het daarop gewys dat Theal nie ‚anti-Brits' of ‚pro-Boer' was nie, maar dat hy op grond van bronnestudie slegs ‚onpartydig' was". (1)

Amongst the Boer sympathisers in the Cape writes van Jaarsveld, Theal was "appreciated", "because the facts could be 'used' to prove that the character of the burghers was not as 'black' as was presented to the English world". (2)

In 1894, Cecil Rhodes was Prime Minister and Secretary for native affairs. One morning he called for Theal (who was chief clerk in the Native Affairs Department) and asked him if he knew anything of Francisco Barreto's expedition to Africa:

"I told him all that I knew of it .... After a few questions on other subjects, he said I could be much more usefully employed in collecting information upon the past than in doing mere routine work in the office, and at once issued instructions that I was to be detached for special duty. He asked me to go out to Groot Schuur that afternoon, when he would tell me what he wanted and would show me some books he had just received from England". (3)

Rhodes had promised some members of parliament that he would have a history of South Africa in Dutch brought out, and he asked Theal to do this first. Then he wished him to collect information on Barreto's expedition. He had, without success, already employed a man in Europe for two years to do this (4). Finally, he wanted him to find out what he could about the early movements of the Bantu tribes.

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(1) Ibid p. 14.
(2) The Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism. p. 193.
(3) Theal (b) p. 363.
(4) Ibid; A22-06 p. 2.

Theal told him that this information was in archives in Europe, perhaps even in Cairo, Goa and East Africa. Rhodes replied, "well, there are plenty of steamers". His only instructions were 'do the work, and do it as well as it can be done, that is all'.(1)

When Rhodes, shortly afterwards, lost office, Theal thought his trip was at an end. However, he drew up a memorandum for Sprigg who approved of the project and gave him permission to go ahead with his plans.(2) Sprigg's instructions: 'I wish you to execute the work in which you are engaged in a manner that will reflect credit upon yourself and upon the Government that has appointed you'.(3) On the eve of his trip Theal began to fear that he might not be able to find the necessary documents and information,: "as I began to be afraid that I might not find anything, in which case people might say I was doing nothing for my salary" (4) so he asked Sprigg to commission him to do some other work as well. Sprigg suggested that he make a search for records relating to the Cape in the Colonial Archives in London - "I jumped at the idea".(5) This would enable him to produce easily a large amount of work (i.e. documentary collections, in fact, the R.C.C.) and leave him time to pursue the ethnological and historical studies which were the real object of his visit.(6) It would also provide a 'cover', be a means of keeping secret the real object of his trip. If this became known, "I would have been inundated with correspondence the work would have been hindered and dozens

(1) Theal (b) p. 364.
(2) A22-06 p. 2.
(3) G. 38-05 p. 2.
(4) Theal (b) p. 364.
(5) A22-06 p. 3.
(6) A22-06 Appendix.

of people would have joined in the search - people who were, perhaps, not qualified for the work "[1].

Theal's salary as chief clerk in the Native Affairs Department was, at that time, £550. p.a. plus £50. honorarium as Colonial Historiographer. It was, he said, impossible to go to Europe on that salary, so Sprigg increased the honorarium to £150, making a total of £700. p.a.[2] Theal brought out the Dutch history he had promised Rhodes, then set off for London, where assisted by his wife, he "worked night and day" for the next nine years.[3] During this time he published and indexed 36 volumes of the Records of the Cape Colony 1793-1827 (1897-1905) and 9 volumes of the Records of South East Africa, collected in various archive departments and libraries in Europe and indexed "according to (the) Parisian method"[4]. These he not only copied, but translated himself - "I set at the feet of a Portuguese man and learnt the language"[5]. Colvin says the translation is "excellently done"[6]. These volumes were published by and at the expense of the Cape Government. Theal derived no additional income from them.

Theal was a most dedicated and industrious worker. Absorbed in his work, he gave readily of his time and energy to the heavy demands it made; and he always tells one this. In his letters prefaces to his books, evidence before the Select Committee, he readily volunteers the information about the number of hours he worked, and how hard and/little he received in return.

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(1) A22-06 p. 3 Theal made much of and often referred to this need for secrecy re the Portuguese and African documents.
(2) A22-06 p. 2-3 (This is of relevance later).
(3) Op cit p. 3.
(4) Op cit p. 6.
(5) Op cit p. 4.
(6) In his introduction to Mendelssohn's Bibliography p. XXVI.

In addition to these collections of documents, he saw through the press some new editions of his histories and published two new books Progress of South Africa in the Century (1902) and The Beginning of South African History (1902). He also found the time to edit G.W. Stow's Native Races of South Africa (1905). Stow's work, a large and valuable collection of documents, was sent to him by the anthropologist, Lucy Lloyd. Theal took them to the publishers who agreed to bring them out if he would do the editing. So he gave up his Sundays which he had previously devoted to correspondence, to edit Stow's manuscripts[1]. Theal's editing of this manuscript has been sharply and generally criticised[2]. Although it did involve a considerable sacrifice of his time to do it, Theal should perhaps (as in much else) have undertaken less and produced work of a better quality.

In a survey of historical work in the British Colonies and Dominions, H. Hall said in 1904, of Theal's documentary collections, that they were "an unequalled feat". His output was phenomenal, and "Certainly the present position of the Cape Government publications is more satisfactory than that of any similar undertaking now in progress"[3].

These were happy years for Theal. For nine years he travelled around Europe - London, Paris, Rome, the Hague[4] visiting libraries and archives. "My work was

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(1) A22-06 p. 22-3.
(2) Agar-Hamilton - "ruined by amateurish editing"; C.H.B.E. p. 922 "overrated ... badly edited by Theal".
(3) From "Notes on Publications by Colonial Governments in the British Museum". G38-05. p. 4.
(4) I though he had been to Lisbon too, Professor Axelson says not. I have not had time to check.

exceedingly pleasant, it could not have been more so ".(1) He enjoyed too the recognition and praise that came his way, especially from the "learned men of Europe", (about whom he had been so worried in 1880 and was to be again in 1905). He relates how he went to "the great National Library" in Paris without the reference from a French citizen which was usually required for admission.

"The Secretary then said to me 'Have you not published some books' and on my replying in the affirmative, he sent a concierge to see whether the books were in the library. On being told they were the Secretary bowed to me and said 'You may refer to any book in this Library as if you were a citizen of Paris'".(2)

In 1904, the Jameson Government came into power. As part of their policy of retrenchment after the Boer War, they retired on pension all civil servants over 60. During 1904 Theal, perhaps planning to go to Cairo for further researches (as he later stated), or perhaps planning to return to South Africa, was informed that he was to be retired on pension. At his request, he was allowed to stay on in London till the end of 1905 so that he could bring the R.C.C. up to 1828.

Shortly after his return to South Africa he presented a petition to Parliament and a Select Committee was appointed to enquire into his grievances and complaints about his treatment at the hands of the Jameson Government.(3)

It was not immediately clear exactly what the trouble was or what Theal wanted. The Committee (under the chairmanship of his friend Sauer) was polite, sympathetic

(1) G38-05 A report by Theal on his work.
(2) A22-06 p. 4.
(3) A22-06 Report of the Select Committee on the Petition of Dr. G. McCall Theal.

anxious to undo any injustices but initially rather puzzled as to what it was all about.

Since he had left for Europe in 1896, said Theal, he had been in personal contact with the Prime Minister of the day: "All my correspondence with the Government ... passed through the hands of the Prime Minister". He had on him letters "full of sympathy" and interest in his work. If he wanted authority for anything "I applied direct to the Prime Minister. When a book was printed I sent it to the Prime Minister "(1). Then Mr. Schreiner became Prime Minister. Theal did not know him "and I suppose he knew nothing about my work. At any rate I received a letter from the Colonial Secretary's Department containing instructions, which if followed, would have wrecked my work". However, after he had written and explained "Mr. Schreiner then wrote personally and said a mistake had been made" and Theal was to continue his work as before(2).

Early in 1904 Theal wanted leave of absence to come home on holiday for family reasons. He wrote to the Prime Minister asking for permission, saying there was still much material in London and thereafter he wanted to go to Cairo to work on the Arabian documents(3).

"The reply came, not from the Prime Minister himself, but from the Assistant Under-Colonial Secretary through the Agent-General. I recognised at once that something was wrong".(4)

To his surprise he was told that his work was to cease altogether. After he had pointed out what a waste of money it would be to the country if he stopped now, he

(1) Op cit p. 7.
(2) Op cit p. 8.
(3) Which he hoped would contain information on the early movements of African tribes.
(4) Op cit

was given permission to take the Records up to 1828[1].

However,

"I knew from the manner of the correspondence that I was not persona grata or that my work was (not) considered favourably."[2]

When he arrived in South Africa, Theal made "strenuous efforts" to see Dr. Jameson, but Parliament was in session and he could not see him. "I went time after time and at last his Private Secretary told me that an appointment would be made". His train was delayed, "I arrived there one or two minutes too late, and consequently missed him"[3]. Theal then went to the Colonial Secretary's department and asked why the letter had been sent to him from the Colonial Office instead of by the Prime Minister: "He (Janisch) said, 'You are connected with the Colonial Office'"[4].

It was only then, Theal claimed, that he discovered he had been transferred from his job as clerk in the Native Affairs Department to the post of Colonial Historiographer attached to the Colonial Office[5]. And consequently, it was from this post that he was being retired.

"I answered to the effect that if that was done I could not be put on pension as an Historiographer, as there is no precedent in the world for such a step; the Colony would be disgraced by it. The Government threw the blame upon Parliament ...."[6]

It was over this question of his pension and the basis on which it was to be paid that Theal presented

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(1) Op cit p. 10. He selected this year as it marked a "complete change" at the Cape - new legal system etc.
(2) Idem.
(3) Op cit p. 8.
(4) Idem. Janisch was the Under-Colonial Secretary.
(5) The pay for this was £700. p.a. i.e. original salary of £550. plus the £150. honorarium as historiographer.
(6) Op cit p. 10.

his petition to Parliament.

Question: "You say that your honorarium could not be calculated for pension purposes and that it would be a slur upon you to do so ?"
Answer: "Of course, it would be a slur upon me to accept the pension as Historiographer".

He belonged to some of the leading literary and scientific societies in Europe and America and

"The probabilities are that if I had accepted such a pension my name would have been struck off their rolls".(1)

If he went back to Paris, for example, he would not be regarded in the same light if he was on pension as an Historiographer(2). He did not want his services as historiographer (at £700 p.a.) to count for pension purposes. His pension should be calculated on the basis of his £550. p.a. salary(3).

Asked what he wanted Parliament to do, he replied,

"I want Parliament to spare me the indignity of being put upon a pension as Colonial Historiographer".(4)
"I do not think any civil service clerk has been treated as badly as I have been".(5)
Finally, he complained of "the attempt being made to force me to retire as Colonial Historiographer".(6)

Now it becomes clearer what he wanted. It was not really the pension that was at issue. What he wanted was to retain the title of Colonial Historiographer, that is why he objected to being paid a pension on the basis of this post, i.e. it would mean he was retired from it. Obviously, no one could have been expected to realise this. But he felt, as he had on occasions before, that what was happening was not the result of the normal, or at the most, clumsy functioning of government departments, but an unjust and unfair attempt to force him to resign.

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(1) A22-06 p. 11.
(2) Op cit p. 13.
(3) Idem.
(4) Idem.
(5) Op cit p. 11.
(6) Op cit p. 17.

Theal wanted to be paid his pension on the basis of his job as a clerk in the civil service (from which he had been absent in Europe for nine years), and to retain the position of Colonial Historiographer: the Honorarium "should be continued or discontinued as Parliament might deem proper"(1). The position of historiographer he now stressed was an honorary one and as such should be held for life. His real job had been that of a clerk(2). Was this really the case ? It seems that the nominal or "honorary" job was the clerkship and the actual and official one that of historiographer(3).

What seems to have happened is that the Government (and it was not the Jameson Government as this was done in 1897), recognising the nominal nature of the clerkship, transferred him to the Colonial Office as de facto Colonial Historiographer, and at a total salary of £700. p.a.

Theal claimed that he had not been informed of this transfer and would not have agreed to it; although, later, he hedged:

"I do not say that letter was not written to the Agent-General and I do not say that the Agent-General did not give me the information". "I say that I have no remembrance whatever of receiving it".(4).

If Theal had in fact been informed of this, why had he not objected at the time ? Because he did not mind being what amounted to official Historiographer. In his books during this period, in fact, he called himself "Historiographer to the Cape Government" not "Honorary Historiographer

(1) A22-06 Appendix.
(2) Idem.
(3) And vide Theal's complaints that while overseas "I had other work more properly connected with the duties of a civil servant to do during office hours". History and Ethnography of Africa South of the Zambesi. Vol.I Preface
(4) A22-06 p. 24. The Under-Colonial Secretary claimed that Theal had been told verbally, and that he would, at any rate, have realised this when from June 1897 he drew a combined salary for the first time. No enquiry or protest was received from him. Op cit p. 27.

It was only when he realised that he could be retired from this office (as from all official posts) that this became an issue (1).

This point was at the end of the Inquiry realised, and made by the Committee:

"You know of course that Dr. Theal feels very strongly the inclusion of his allowance as Colonial Historiographer in the amount upon which his pension is computed because he holds that if you pension him from that office he is retired from it, and which he thinks to be a slur upon him?" (2)

When it was suggested to him that, "as a rule" such positions are held for life, Mr. Janisch replied that as a rule such appointments were not made in the Colony. There were no precedents. The reason for Theal's retirement was retrenchment (because of the financial depression). He could not agree that an exception should be made of him. His work was not essential and could be taken up again at a later date (3).

When it was suggested to Theal that this (retrenchment) and not discrimination was the reason behind his retirement, he replied that the work would have to be done anyway (4), which was not the point. In later years he continued to say that he did not know what the reason for his dismissal was, but it could not have been pecuniary (5).

The government's version of the events leading to his retirement differs in some respects from his own. In 1904, related Mr. Janisch, it was decided to place all officials over the age of sixty on pension. As Theal's

(1) Personally, I think he was on poor ground. He should have accepted the position, and asked merely for a reaffirmation of his title of "Colonial Historiographer
(2) Op cit p. 29. Question put to Mr. Janisch, representative of the Colonial Office.
(3) Op cit p. 29, 32.
(4) Op cit p. 16.
(5) History of Africa South of the Zambesi Vol I Preface.

work was of importance, he wrote to him and asked him what would be the earliest convenient date at which he could break off[1]. Theal replied that after he reached 1828 there was no work which could not be done just as well in Cape Town[2]. He said nothing about researches elsewhere. Jansch produced the relevant letter from Theal to show this[3]. Theal did later mention something about researches elsewhere[4] but he hardly appears to have laid much stress on this. Yet Theal was later to say repeatedly that he had been forced to break off his researches and return to South Africa just as he was getting to the most important and interesting part[5]. Theal also said this to the Select Committee. Yet when they repeatedly asked him if he wished to return overseas and continue his researches, and were obviously prepared to assist, he refused[6]. On one occasion, he said he did not want the government to spend the money[7]. On another that it would take too long to regain his former position,

"Do you mean as regard the prestige or the work?"
"In everything; it will not only be a matter of prestige. Many people would know about the character of the work now, and it does not do to let people know about work of this kind"(8)

Elsewhere he said, "I am now an old man"[9]. He would rather stay at home and add to his existing histories especially on the early years.

This is quite understandable and perfectly justifiable. He had done [illegible] his fair share of searching for documents. But why continue to harbour and cite this as a grievance, and without mentioning the obvious willingness to send him back ? In 1913, he said,

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(1) A22-06 p. 25-6.
(2) As the records after 1828 were available there too.
(3) Op cit p. 30. letter from Theal, 22/11/1904.
(4) Op cit p. 31.
(5) See Theal (b) p. 365; History of Africa South of of the Zambesi Vol 1 Preface; Interview with Apthorp.
(6) A22-06 p. 12, 17, 19.
(7) Op cit p. 19.
(8) Idem.
(9) Op cit p. 13

"I was prevented from even attempting" further researches into the Portuguese and African documents (1).

"whenever (in my work) I have gained a point of advantage I have found myself speedily hurled from it. In a country like South Africa, where racial prejudice has always been passionate, one who would try, as I have done, to write impartially, must expect to meet with opposition from the extreme wings ... and unfortunately for me that opposition, or more properly speaking animosity, has frequently been sufficient to deprive me for a time of the power of making researches or continuing my work".(2)

Elsewhere he wrote,

"it was my intention to look for them (Arabic documents)... when in 1904 a ministry came into power in the Cape Colony antagonistic to research of this kind. Dr. (now Sir Starr) Jameson became Prime Minister, and transferred to the Colonial Secretary the correspondence with me, that had previously been considered of sufficient importance by the highest official in the Colony. At once its tone became hostile .... the work was ruthlessly suppressed".(3)

Another of Theal's complaints that was sympathetically received by the Commission, was that in calculating his pension, account had not been taken of his service with Oba (4) in 1877. The reason for this was because he had lost some vouchers. When he was questioned about this, Mr. Jansch said that when Theal's pension had been calculated there was some uncertainty as to the exact number of years he had served, as there was no record of his early service (5). The omission was afterwards corrected "and the full period which Dr. Theal had claimed was allowed by the Auditor-General". Despite the fact that in the absence of records he was given the benefit of the doubt (which government departments with their red tape habits do not always do), and the requested adjustment

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(1) Sketches p. 254.
(2) Sketches p. 253.
(3) Catalogue p. 299. This has been repeated by e.g. Bosman p. 53.
(4) A22-06 p. 14-15.
(5) Op cit p. 28.

made[1], and despite the fact that he already knew this[2], Theal registered this as a complaint and grievance with the Committee without even mentioning that he had been allowed the full amount.

Once again, regardless of facts and explanations, Theal continued to stick to the view that he was being persecuted and unjustly treated. Once he got such notions into his head, Theal did not take account of any facts which did not square with them. He simply refused to acknowledge them. He did not face facts. He did not come to terms with reality. This inability, or predelictions, is a serious handicap for an historian - especially for one writing about events in which his emotions and personal feelings are so involved - and it profoundly affected and obviously marks Theal's work.

Theal did not suddenly become a different man and develop different temperamental and mental traits when he sat down to write history. It was the same man, and he revealed this same tenacious ability to stick to his point of view regardless of evidence, <u>any</u> evidence. He had, as Agar-Hamilton incisively remarked, an <u>inability</u> to recognise facts that did not square with his preconceived notions. I think a close examination of Theal's work reveals that this is what was really (or [illegible]) at the root of his suppression and distortion. It was the growing

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(1) Why were the records missing ? In his account of how he entered the civil service, Theal said that it was only <u>after</u> his service with Oba that he was offered and accepted a civil service job (see above p. 155) Thus, in fact, technically he was perhaps not entitled to a pension on this. It was right and generous of the government to count it but why <u>blame</u> them for the original oversight ? There were no records because he had not been in the civil service then.

(2) Janisch had already told him.

(3) See above p. 8.

realisation and conviction that this was so, that led me to search for some explanation of his work, and of the change in him, in his personal life and character.(1)

I would suggest that one of the reasons why Theal did not face facts (in his work) was because he could not afford to. So great a number of errors and distortions do not merely add up to a quantity 'X' which can be easily corrected - they add up to a threat to his whole interpretation, and were thus a threat to his outlook, his beliefs, in fact to his Weltanschaung. There is nothing strange about this. Most people are reluctant to face facts which constitute a threat to their cherished beliefs. The facts of South African history do not usually bear out the traditional view of the past that bolsters up Afrikaner nationalism(2), which demands a view of the past that is profoundly unhistorical. This might not matter much to the average believer, or to the politician, but it is an acute, central and constant problem for the historian. Can he, in these circumstances, keep his Weltanschaung intact and maintain his professional integrity ? If he wishes to keep it intact, what is he going to do when faced with facts and evidence that conflict with and therefore threaten it, especially when these facts constitute a large and continual body of evidence ?

Before concluding this section (on the Select Committee), I wish to place on record one of Theal's statements to them. Discussing the value and importance

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(1) and also, of course, because no such explanation can be given in terms of the historical evidence, and documents.

(2) any more so than with most other political mythologies.

of research into the early movements of the African tribes and his interest in this[1], he said,

"The Fingo tribes, for instance, were dispersed in Natal by the warriors of Chaka and came down into the Colony, and their ancestors came down from the Zambesi only a little more than 300 years ago. What more right has the Fingo to privileges in South Africa than any member of the European family?"(2)

What precisely is the meaning and relevance of this conclusion ? Why was Theal, at the request of Rhodes, conducting researches into the early movements of the African tribes - to draw conclusions of this sort ? I consider this a highly improper and injudicious statement for an historian, in his position[3], to have made, and especially one who most insistently demanded respect for his integrity, and acknowledgment of the fact that he was impartial and above all non-political.

Any historian in Theal's position, who wished to be respected for his integrity and impartiality, would have to be extremely scrupulous and careful. I have tried not to place too much stress on Theal's political connections[4] lest I be unfair to him. But when he makes such statements, and uses his researches to draw these dubious conclusions (heavily laden with political implications), he lays the question of his motives and integrity wide open to attack and suspicion. South African historians have too long got away with conduct of this kind. It is one thing to have and to be partly influenced by political beliefs - this is, to some extent, inevitable. It is

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(1) A22-06 p. 17.
(2) A22-06 p. 18.
(3) i.e. an historian patronised by the Bond, paid by the government, and giving evidence on the value of his work before this Committee.
(4) and with this object in view cut down the section on that, and tried to stress the influence of unconscious factors on him.

another to use one's researches to justify political positions; and it is not a far step from this, to start conducting researches, in order to justify political positions. (I shall add, "even if unconsciously" - though how anyone can be quite so unconscious is beyond me). This is when the historian starts playing politics. Theal always claimed that he was non-political; yet he made statements of this kind. Vide his correspondence in the Cape Times: Colvin's book was "untimely", it would hurt the Afrikaners feelings; Leibbrandt was "blackening the character" of the Dutch colonists; the people of today should organise a pageant to honour the martyrs of the past. What concern is all this of the professional historian ? Theal never actually joined a political party. He always tells one this. There would have been nothing wrong with that.

To return to Theal and the Fingoes. He was particularly concerned about the movements of the African tribes. Reviewing Van Oordt's The Origin of the Bantu, he wrote,

"The Bantu are brought into Africa as comparatively recent immigrants, which is certainly correct, and can be shown in other ways than those Mr. van Oordt has brought forward".(1)

He was still working on this question when he died, and it was for this reason that he wanted, at the age of 82, to return to the Hague, where he hoped to find certain documents on the subject(2).

Professor Wilson has criticised Theal's dating of the arrival of the Africans in the South-East as being too late(3). The relevance of this, for the history of our period, is that on these theories of their movements, he

(1) Catalogue p. 222.
(2) Boeman p. 61.
(3) Article in African Studies 1959 Vol 18 No. 4.

pegs his dating of their presence in the Zuurveld. This affects the important dispute over prior rights and land claims.

Theal's requests were acceded to by the Jameson Government. He was paid his pension as a civil service clerk, plus a sum as honorarium for his office as Colonial Historiographer, and parliament passed a resolution placing on record their appreciation of his value to the country.

Theal continued to feel that he had been badly treated by Jameson. This does not appear to have been justified; although they probably did not accord him the exceptional treatment which he had received from the Bond. His complaint, that he (who had had, among other things, nine years leave of absence in England and various other trips to pursue the work of his choice) had been treated worse than any other Civil Service clerk[1] cannot be sustained. The most he could reasonably say of the Jameson Government, was that they were not prepared to accord him the exceptional treatment which he felt was his due. Even at that, it is not every day that a Select Committee is appointed, and resolutions of Parliament passed, to satisfy the personal demands of a civil servant.

On this whole question of his association with the Government, Theal should perhaps have remembered what he had said years before in the Compendium,

"Under ordinary circumstances the best encouragement that governments can give to literary labour is to let is alone, as freedom is crushed by patronage".(2)

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(1) See above p. 178
(2) Compendium p. 62.

There is a glowing portrait of Theal during his last years by Elsa Apthorp[1]. He appears to have left her quite breathless: he had a "tall, massive imposing figure, powerful features, and white hair". He was "full of energy and the joy of life". Had a "charming simplicity", and was "one of those old world courtiers so seldom met with nowadays". And apparently Dr. Theal enjoyed talking to the admiring lady, for he told her a great many stories (some, of course, rather inaccurate) about his life.

During the years after his return to South Africa, Theal brought out many new editions of his histories, e.g. 1907-10 the 3rd edition of his History of South Africa in 8 volumes. He made use of the material he had acquired on ethnography in The Yellow and Dark-skinned Peoples South of the Zambesi: (1910). In 1907-10 he brought out History and Ethnography of Africa South of the Zambesi: 1505-1795 in three volumes. From 1908 onwards, History of South Africa since 1795 was published in 5 volumes. In 1913, William Adriaan van der Stel and other Historical Sketches and Twelve Eventful Years, which brought his History up to 1884. I n 1919 he replaced The Yellow and Dark-skinned Peoples with Ethnography and Condition of South Africa before 1505.

Theal did not live to see the publication of this last work. Since 1917, he had been very ill, and had written, 'with my failing eyesight time is of the utmost importance to me'[2]. Despite the handicaps of

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(1) In the South African Bookman.
(2) Bosman p. 60.

illness and the loss of sight in one eye, he continued to work. At the age of eighty-two, he still expressed the hope that he would be able to go to the Hague Archives to look for documents[1]. Theal worked literally to the end, and died over the books to which he had devoted his life and energy.

For these books, the product of his life's labour, Theal had great and precious hopes and ambitions:

'There is no other work of its kind in existence; it is acknowledged by all but a few individuals of extreme views on both sides to be true and impartial and it should have a bright future'(2).

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(1) Op cit p. 61.
(2) Theal's letter to his publishers. Quoted Bosman p. 61.

There is, in history, a large area where there is room for the widest and most complete disagreement amongst historians. There is an area where there is room for certain more limited disagreement. And there is an area where there is practically no room for disagreement. There can be endless disagreement as to whether the policy of Maynier, or Philip, was right. There can be some, but probably less disagreement over what that policy was. Provided we have authentic and reasonably complete documents, there can be no room for disagreement as to whether at the first meeting of the local Committee at Graaff-Reinet, a majority of those present objected to Maynier's appointment by voting against it; or whether in his evidence to the Aborigenes Committee, Philip did, or did not, advocate the abandonment of Queen Adelaide. This last category is to a significant, though varying (1), extent the foundation, and the basic structure of the historian's work.

It is in this last and basic category that Theal's work has been most decisively and consistently hit. The foundations of his history - the traditional history of South Africa - have to a large extent been undermined, and destroyed. The super-structure is held aloft by reinforcements drawn from psycho-political, and not from historical, resources.

Paradoxically, on these very issues on which the fiercest and most publicised battles of South African

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(1) According to the availibility of documents; and in South Africa, on my period, they are available.

history have raged - the Black Circuit, Slagters Nek, Maynier, landlessness as a factor in frontier conflicts, was it the emancipation or the manner ? - on these issues, there is, as a result of the accumulated scholarship of the last half-century, no longer much room for disagreement along the old lines and among scholars.

South African historians have had to spend a disproportionate amount of time and energy in the work of demolition, in destroying the myths and fallacies of Theal (our basic history). Unfortunately, this has delayed the exploration of many more genuinely historical problems, and while doing this they have often continued to work within the frame-work cast in narrow and inadequate terms by him. Ironically, the discoveries of the importance of landlessness and poverty, of the real issues of the Black Circuit and Slagters Nek, of the role of Maynier as an official trying to do his duty - many of these discoveries have been like detours to the truths (inadequately explored though they were) of the early Compendium.

It is all very well for Van Jaarsveld, now that this has been done, to admit that the "others" have a "point of view". Here, he says, with an air of impartiality, is Marais' version and here is Theal's - take your pick, according to your point of view.

Many of the basic issues between Marais and Theal are not, however, merely questions of opinion and point of view; they are questions of fact. It is not Marais' view against Theal's; but Marais' documented facts against Theal's exposed errors. To take up a position mid-way

between truth and falsehood is not impartiality. Although van Jaarsveld is light years ahead of most of the traditional historians, he is still thirty years behind the times. Such a position was tenable in the 1920's, when the evidence had not been established; but now, over a substantially wide area, there is simply no room for disagreement along the old lines. These are not questions of political alignment. Any self-respecting historian is bound to reject the refuted sections of Theal's version of Maynier. Thereafter, he can disagree with Marais, but at his own level, i.e. the documentary level. The suggestion that it is only English and Liberal historians who have challenged Theal is untenable. It is, moreover, insulting to suggest that an Afrikaner, faced with the documents on Slagters Nek and on Maynier will inevitably underwrite Theal's version. Politics is a factor, an influence upon the historian; but there are other factors too - scholarship, ability, integrity.

Theal did not have a great intellect or exceptional talents. He could never have ranked among the great historians, as was his wish[1]. Even his pioneering role as a South African historian is generally overestimated.[2] There has not been time to include a section on the historiography prior to and contemporary with Theal, but

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(1) He even talks of himself and Gibbon in the same breath. If the volumes prepared by Gibbon "a man of means" and leisure, could contain errors, so could his History, which had been produced under almost "insurmountable" difficulties. Sketches p. 253. The main difference between Theal and Gibbon was hardly one of "means".

(2) I refer to his interpretative works, and those on my period 1652-1836.

my reading over this field has convinced me of this. Theal,and his admirers, give the impression that South African history before Theal was an unexplored, unchartered mass residing in unorganised archives scattered all over the country, out of which he, alone and unaided, carved his great history of South Africa and compiled his documentary collections. This view underrates the value and great number of the secondary sources available and his considerable reliance on them. He is ungenerous and arrogant towards other writers. His assessment of their books as "worthless"(1), and denial that he has made much use of them, is misleading, and untrue.

By the time Theal wrote, the main lines of the traditional version had been laid down: by Bogaert, Kolbe, Campagne, Lauts, Godlonton, du Toit, Chase, Noble, Cloete, Stuart, and others. Theal, not an original thinker, relied frequently and heavily on them(2); filling his account out with (often) undigested and indiscriminate chunks from documents: more details on commandos, musuems, clergymen, shipwrecks, regulations, proclamations.

Although Theal could never have ranked among the great, he could have written a history which would have been a reliable and creditable foundation on which to build. It is not. It is unreliable, untruthful, biased. The real reason for this is to be found, not in his inadequate education and training(3), but in his character. His physical (or external) discipline was impressive; but he did not discipline himself internally.

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(1) History of South Africa 1652-1795. Preface.
(2) and on selections from historians of other views: Thompson, Burchell, Campbell, Barrow, Lichtenstein.
(3) which with diligence and intelligence he largely overcame.

He indulged his prejudices and feelings, refused to face facts and come to terms with reality, and permitted himself to indulge in self-delusion, self-pity and sentimentality.

Art and Science demand a constant effort of self-discipline, ruthless honesty and self-awareness. Those who do not meet these terms, inevitably pay the price of failure. Personal and psychological explanations may be mitigating factors in our consideration of Theal as a man ; they are irrelevant in our assessment of him as an historian.

Those exclusively concerned with the political implications of history, should attend to what Hillaire Belloc wrote, in his introduction to Carlyle's French Revolution:

"History is the object-lesson of politics, and unless history is presented to us truly it had best not be presented to us at all .... because upon a just presentation of the facts (of the past) depends all our concrete judgments of the present".

I prefer to believe that the historian's commitment is to truth. That he will never completely achieve this does not diminish his responsibility; rather it increases it. The facts will not speak for themselves; it depends on him. An historian's judgments and views inevitably affect and permeate his work. How could it be otherwise when he is dealing with precisely those subjects - human beings and society - that most engage his sympathies ? He should "neither completely repress nor cheerfully unleash his bias; he should above all,

become aware of it, and judge whether it is compatible with historical truth. For the rest he will have to rely on his sense of truth and must remember that even if the existence of truth be problematical, truthfulness remains the measure of his intellectual and moral achievement (1)".

Nothing surpasses or more fittingly crowns Theal's work, than the terrible callousness and irony of his conclusions on the Bushmen. After Theal, who had seen the records and knew the facts, permitted himself to imply that the Bushmen were exterminated by the Griquas,

who " pursued and shot (them) down until they were all but exterminated". (2)

After saying this, he wrote of the Bushmen (at the time when they had been finally beaten; dispossessed of land and livelihood, virtually exterminated by white settlers, and the few missions established among them forcibly closed down):

The Bushmen "attached themselves in a kind of vasselage to individual white men". "They called the white man master, and he termed them his people. He was in fact a chief, under whose rule they were secure from molestation, guarded against the last extreme of want, and if not absolutely free, as nearly so as is compatible with protection. This condition of life seems to be the nearest approach to civilization of which the Bushman is capable". Most of them, however, could not submit "even to the small amount of restraint which such vasselage implies".

So they wandered off, leaving their women and children with the farmers "to be taken care of". In 1817, a proclamation was issued, authorising landdrosts to bind

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(1) Stern, Varieties of History Introduction.
(2) Progress p. 164. adding with supreme hypocricy "some of the particulars as told afterwards by evening fires are harrowing to a European mind".
Compare Theal on the Bushmen with Marais, Cape Coloured People.

Note to the Examiner:

The 3rd edition (1877) of the Compendium appears to be an irregular one. The copy in the U.C.T. Library, for instance, is incomplete. Kindly check references against the copy in the S.A.P.L., either 575e. 120 or (in the Africana Room) No. A. 968, the copy presented by Mrs. Nightingale (the others are different).

For list of abbreviations see below, p. 196, 200.

such children, "every precaution" being taken to protect them and prevent their being detained under false pretences.

Commenting on the unexpected emergence of hundreds of starving Bushmen from the Kalahari during a bad year to feed on the putrid carcasses of thousands of animals destroyed by horse sickness, he wrote

"At any time during the last twenty years easy employment with high wages could have been obtained and they would have been warmly welcomed at the mission stations, but they preferred the life they were leading".(1)

There are passages in Theal that one cannot suitably subject to historical, and tires of subjecting to psychological analysis. One can only reflect despairingly on their terrible moral implications.

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(1) Theal (d) p. 338-9 and footnote p. 339.

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Theal (a)	History of South Africa 1691-1795. (London) (1888)
Theal (d)	History of South Africa 1795-1834. (London) (1891)
Theal (e)	History of South Africa 1834-1854. (London) (1893)
	Notes on Canada and South Africa. (Cape Town) (1895)
South Africa	South Africa (Story of the Nations Series) (London) (1896)
B.H.D.	Belangrijke Historische Dokumenten (1896-1911)
R.C.C.	Records of the Cape Colony. 36 vols. (1897-1905)
Progress	Progress of South Africa in the Century. (London) (1902)
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ABBREVIATIONS:	FULL TITLE:
Maynier:	Maynier and the First Boer Republic. (Marais)
Marais:	The Cape Coloured People.
C.H.B.E.	Cambridge History of the British Empire.
Ou en Nuwe Weë:	Ou en Nuwe Weë in die Suid Afrikaanse Geskiedskrywing (Van Jaarsveld)