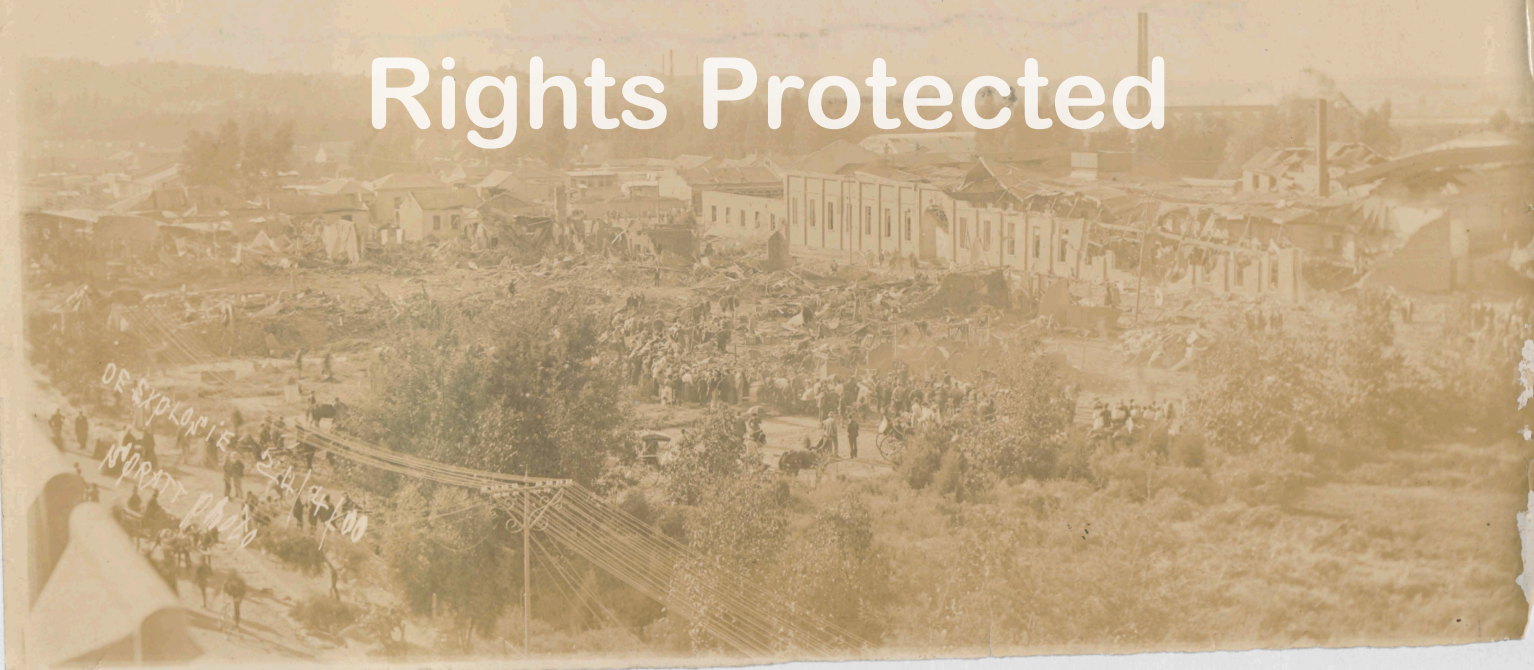


The smoke cloud which arose after the explosion was caused
 by dynamite whereas there was not an ounce of dynamite
 about the place - that is to say, legitimately so. Having
 witnessed this one and the greater explosion of Feb. 1896,
 I can bear personally testimony to the fact that the two
 smoke clouds which arose were certainly alike in colour,
 formation and density, although not, of course, in
 magnitude. Another fact pointing to the conclusion that
 the explosive force was dynamite was the enormous
 excavation made, an effect so typical of the downward
 action of dynamite in explosion. **Rights Protected**
 The disaster occurred at the very moment that the electric light was switched
 on in the evening from the municipal electric light
 supply; pointing to the conclusion that a connection had
 been made during the day ^{between} ~~and~~ the electric light system
 and the mine to be exploded under the factory. Indeed, such
 a connection was declared to have been actually found
 as were also indications of a tunnel leading from an
 adjacent cottage and under the wall of the factory.
 [The very general opinion that the explosion was deliberately
 caused was greatly confirmed by the remarkable fact
]

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that so long ago as the previous January news reached the
Kraussaal from Delagoa Bay, and also from Durban, to
the effect that there was a report current in those places
that there had been an explosion by which the Boer arsenal
at Begbie's foundry at Johannesburg had been blown up.

This was not only published in the Colonial papers but appearing
also in some of the English papers, notably "Lloyd's News-
paper" which published the following circumstantial
account, accompanied with illustrations:—

[Destruction of a Boer arsenal]

[Durban, Jan 21, — A refugee who arrived today from
Johannesburg, reports that the Boers have sustained a
severe loss by the destruction of their shell factory at
Johannesburg. The disaster occurred on Jan 20.

[At the commencement of the war the Government com-
mandeered Begbie's ~~foundry~~ engineering works at
Johannesburg, the largest factory of the kind in South
Africa; the machinery alone having cost £80,000,
all driven by electric power.

[Mr Kruger placed Mr Perrin, an Englishman
and a well-known gunsmith, in charge of the

works with a view to casting shell for the Boer big guns,
 to replace the heavy drain upon those weapons at the front.

[The Belgic firm had cleared out of their works and closed
 them before hostilities commenced. Work was proceeding
 at the time the explosion occurred, and the disaster
 entirely wrecked the building. The loss of life is unknown
 but it is believed to have been great.

[An arsenal in Pretoria is still available."

[In the light of subsequent events this extraordinary
 report was understood as indicating that there had
 been arrangements to make for an explosion at that
 time and that the perpetrators had escaped to Delagoa
 Bay, where, not knowing that through some cause
 or other their plans had miscarried, and assuming
 that the explosion had duly taken place after they
 left, they had spread the report on their arrival that
 such an explosion had actually occurred. Another
 explanation is that the above report was circulated
 by someone with whom the wish was father to
 the thought and that it gave the idea to those who
 subsequently ^{converted} ~~wrote~~ the report into a prediction,

that is assuming that the disaster was deliberately caused and not the result of an accident.

[On the other hand it is an undoubted fact that the operations at the factory were conducted in an extremely careless - even reckless - manner. Incompetent workmen were employed, the place was insufficiently guarded, the workmen were allowed to smoke at their pleasure and did so. In a word, if the explosion was not an accident it was not due to the management of the factory that such an accident did not occur long before. In any case it was highly reprehensible on the part of the Government to have allowed the highly dangerous operation of charging shells to be performed in a part of the town which still contained a considerable population, the explosives notwithstanding. It came as a surprise to most people to learn that the shells were being filled there at all, the general impression being that they were only cast at Begbie's foundry and were sent to the dynamite factory at Chodderfontain to be charged. Had such an explosion occurred in

normal times and with the normal population living in the neighbourhood of the factory, the loss of life could not possibly have failed to be simply appalling.

If the explosion was deliberately caused, it missed its intended aim, for not only did the men most necessary for the prosecution and direction of the work at the factory - the contractors, manager, secretary &c - escape practically uninjured, although most of them were on the premises at the time, but the most essential of the machinery and moulds was so little damaged that they were repaired and again in operation within a week or ten days. A fortunate circumstance in connection with the explosion was the fact that at five o'clock, - less than half an hour before it occurred - five large wagon loads of shells, representing the number filled during the day had been sent to the railway station to be dispatched to the front. Had these been in the factory and exploded, as they probably would have done from the force of the concussion the havoc wrought would, of course, have been very much greater.

[It was characteristic of the unvarying doggedness and perseverance of the Boers that within forty-eight hours of the disaster the rebuilding of the foundry was started upon and the repairs to the machinery commenced, and long before the walls were roof high the work of manufacturing ammunition was proceeding within the unfinished building almost, if not quite as busily as before the explosion.

[Several persons were arrested on suspicion of being implicated in the explosion but all were speedily released with the exception of Mr W. Begbie, son of the head of the firm to which the foundry belonged. It appeared however, that the only suspicious action on Mr Begbie's part consisted in his having taken some photos of the buildings on the previous Sunday, and although he was at first charged with murder, after one or two remands he was committed for trial at the ensuing special court on the reduced charge of attempted murder and was released on bail of £500.

On being brought to trial he was ^{discharged} ~~released~~ without any evidence having been produced connecting him with the occurrence and the cause of the disaster remained one of Phannetburg's unsolved mysteries.

At any rate, the Britishers or their sympathisers were credited with the disaster and so bitter an outcry was raised against them and any of them being allowed to remain in Johannesburg or even in the country that the Government had, perforce, to order the expulsion of nearly every British Witlander remaining in Johannesburg. So that yet another clearance of British subjects resulted; those whose permits were again renewed numbering not more than two hundred all told - only fifty seven in Johannesburg itself. In order to guard these against the anti-British feeling then rampant - especially amongst the continental compatriots of those who had been killed or wounded in the explosion - the Government did not publish their names but simply intimated to them through the post that their permits were renewed; a notice having been inserted in the local papers to the effect that all who did not receive such an intimation had to leave the country. That the foundry was of the utmost utility to the Boers there can be no doubt. Not only were all kinds of shells and other ammunition made there, but incidental iron and brass work of every description also; one of the first.

ings to be manufactured there for use in the war
 ing some revolving platforms for the "long Tom" opera-
 ing around Ladysmith; ~~many~~ which were sent away
 early as November. The making of shells and other
 kinds of ammunition was started as soon as the necessary
 tools etc. ~~were~~ ^{could be} completed, and from the beginning of
 December up to the date of the explosion in April the
 works were kept going at utmost pressure day and night.
 a pretty, if somewhat satirical idea originating with the
 ways poetical and sentimental Frenchmen; some of whom
 were employed at the works - in anticipation
 the advent of Christmas and the New Year. Some ^{special} shells
 were made and instead of being charged in the usual way,
 were filled with plum-pudding, confections, sweets with
~~some~~ mottoes on them, and other Christmas fare, as well
 small Transvaal and Free State flags bearing the reasonable
 motto "A Merry Christmas"; while on the outside of the
 shell was cut with a chisel the sentiment "The Conqui-
 sors of the Season." It is highly probable that more than
 half of the inhabitants of the three besieged towns was like-
 ly to be killed with kindness when these extraordinary missiles were
 fired into their midst at Christmas and New Year's Day.

Chapter X.

The mines and how they fared - some restarted by Government - the output from mouth to mouth - the reported indication to close the mines - securities for circulating report - Dr Krause's action - the Hummitz affair - captured and ransomed - trial of his assailants - remarkable evidence - Government Declaration re destruction of mines.

An account of the Transvaal, and especially of Johannesburg, during the war without some reference, however brief, to the mines and how they fared would obviously be incomplete. Most of the mines having been closed down and the staffs laid off by the directors when war was seen to be inevitable the Government lost no time in taking possession of and re-starting operations at some half-dozen of the principal mines, including the Bonanza, Ferreira and Robinson; and, as opportunity offered and more men became available other well-known properties, including several of the deep levels were taken in hand and worked afresh. As most of the mines in immediate proximity to the town were amongst those first put into operation by the Government, there was soon very little difference to be seen on account of the war as far as the Reef was concerned. But the difference was very striking as soon as one passed beyond the boundary of the Reef in either direction, and equally striking was the different scene presented from what it was prior to the commencement of the war. Here the mines, erstwhile so busy and animated, now

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