

Britain meant war, she had committed no overt act exceeding her clear right under international law, which could relieve of responsibility for war, a government which made a demand certain to be refused, and then set its own troops in motion. In any event, ordinary prudence would have suggested that in order to win the support of the Dutch of the Cape and Natal, and the sympathy of foreign powers, Great Britain be allowed to assume the aggressive and commit the first hostile act. On the other hand, it will be claimed that the Transvaal did only what any self-respecting state threatened in the same manner would have done, that the ultimatum is bellicose only in its peremptory tone, and that Britain's demand for a reply to her note of Sept. 25 was couched in almost as abrupt language. The Transvaal had waited more than two weeks for the final proposals which Great Britain was to formulate, during which time that power was expediting its military preparations, and to have waited until these were still further advanced, would have placed the Republic at a tremendous disadvantage. The danger of delay became more patent when in addition to the army corps prepared for service in England, the Queen's proclamation called out 25,000 reserves, the Anglo-Indian troops began to arrive in Natal, and the British forces were disposed with an evident view to the seizure of the strategic points on the Transvaal border. However great the moral advantage to be gained from allowing Great Britain to begin the actual hostilities, it would be as nothing compared with the possession by the Boers of these strategic positions, and no state expecting to make any defense, could afford to be forestalled in their occupation. But with whichever of these contentions the weight of argument may rest, there is no doubt that the effect of the Boer ultimatum in England has been to solidify all parties in support of the government, and to render impossible any return to the situation as it stood before the document was presented. The reply of the British government, "that the conditions demanded by the government of the South African Republic are such as her Majesty's government deems it impossible to discuss," is accepted by Liberals and Unionists alike as the only one to be returned if Great Britain is any longer to retain her supremacy in South Africa. The Transvaal ultimatum, whether forced from President Kruger by the more belligerent element among the Boers, or due to belief that forcible resistance to British demands is imperative unless freedom is to be abandoned, meant war, and unless all signs fail, a war which will be a demonstration of Britain's might will follow.

#### THE TRANSVAAL CRISIS

AS to the wisdom of this action there will, of course, be a wide difference of opinion. It will be contended that with a strong case, a growing sympathy throughout the world with its contention, and the possibility of peace, the Transvaal has by its bellicose ultimatum thrown all away, and made war inevitable. Assuming that both parties to the controversy were sincere in what they said, there was no reason to believe that, critical as the situation was, diplomacy had said its last word, for if reports may be credited, the final British demands would have been presented within a week, and have proven to be "extremely mild." Even if Great