

## THE TRANSVAAL TROUBLES

**T**HE gravity of the situation in the Transvaal is increased by the arrest by the Boer authorities at Johannesburg, last week, of eight Englishmen, said to be ex-British officers, on a charge of high treason. It is alleged by the detectives making the arrests that the accused were employed by the South African League to enlist men for purposes of rebellion, that the plot had been maturing for four months, and that 2,000 names had already been enrolled. The charge is received with incredulity in London, where no one believes that Mr. Cecil Rhodes, who was recently elected President of the South African League, would repeat the blunder of the Jameson raid, and where the statement that the accused were acting "under directions of the War department" is ridiculed. The consensus of opinion is that the arrests are the outcome of the recent urgency of Mr. Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary, for the settlement of Outlander grievances, President Kruger desiring to divert public attention from the difficulties in which he finds himself, and to strengthen his position in the approaching conference with Sir Alfred Milner, British High Commissioner for South Africa. Should the latter grow firm in his demand for definite and important reforms for the Outlanders, President Kruger can plausibly assert, in view of the alleged object of the arrested men, that the first use they would make of their new privileges would be to upset the government. If Sir Alfred is still insistent, he can repeat his course following the Jameson raid—have the prisoners sentenced to death, and then pardon them as the price of

immunity from immediate settlement of the just demands of the Outlanders. That, however, such a policy would work again may be doubted, a good deal of the sympathy for the Boers aroused by the Jameson raid of three years ago, having been withdrawn with the wider knowledge of the sort of bucholic oligarchy the Transvaal government really is. Moreover, such enormous quantities of Transvaal securities are now held in Paris and Berlin as to very materially diminish the political opposition of France and Germany to a more definite assertion by Great Britain of her protectorate over the Boer republic. What the holders of these securities want is order and good government in the Transvaal; and the fact that they do want it, and, should England remain inactive, may combine to make their own terms with Kruger to secure it, and so destroy the chance of federation in South Africa under the British flag, may be a strong factor in determining British action. It is probable that President Kruger, knowing that there is scant sympathy for him in Europe, will yield at the last moment, and allow the people who own seventy-five per cent., in value, of the landed property of the republic and contribute nine-tenths of its revenues, some share in its administration. But he is a very obstinate and, in many ways, an ignorant man, and the orders recently given the officers of the Boer militia on the western border to prepare to take the field, indicate that he may prefer to fight rather than lose his position. Of course, if the arrested men were really conspiring against the state, the Transvaal government is quite within its right in punishing them, but it is evident that unless it does something pretty soon to remove the provocation to conspiracy, the protests presented it will cease to be diplomatic and become military.