

SOUTH AFRICAN MEMORIES



Photo: Brooke Hughes

SIR PERCY FITZPATRICK

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BY

SIR J. PERCY FITZPATRICK

AUTHOR OF "THE TRANSVAAL FROM WITHIN,"
"JOCK OF THE BUSHVELD," ETC.

Prepared for the Press from the Manuscript
of the Author by
G. H. WILSON

WITH FOUR HALF-TONE PLATES



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FOREWORD

SIR PERCY FITZPATRICK died on January 24, 1931. About a year earlier he wrote to me from Amanzi to ask whether, in view of his failing health, I would undertake the task of seeing through the press the recollections (Scraps of History, he used to call them) which he had been writing, out of his rich and varied experience in South Africa. A glance at the contents of this volume will show that it covers a very wide field of action, throwing much new light on the chequered history of the Transvaal in the period immediately before the South African War and thus supplementing Sir Percy's brilliant volume, *The Transvaal from Within*, which, in 1899, had so profound an effect on British public opinion in relation to South African affairs. Political questions, however, for the most part, been excluded from the present volume, which is mainly episodal in character.

Most of these recollections were dictated by Sir Percy to his secretary, Miss Beryl Richardson, at his home at Amanzi, Uitenhage. Her sympathy and assistance were of the greatest value to him. I am personally deeply indebted also to Miss M. A. Tredgold, his secretary at the time of his death, whose assistance in the preparation of the manuscripts for publication has been invaluable. To Mrs. Mackie Niven, Sir Percy's daughter, I have also to make acknowledgments for information placed at my disposal and for her constant and patient interest in the progress of the book.

The reader may find that, here and there, there are certain duplications in the narratives. This arises from the fact that the chapters were dictated by Sir Percy often at long intervals of time, and that the same incident or the same group of circumstances was an essential in the development of a particular course of events, and equally so in some quite different relation. In the circumstances, at the risk of a few duplications it has been thought better to allow them to remain, as they are necessary in the special context in which they appear.

When Sir Percy was dictating his recollections time for him ceased to exist—he was living again in the stirring days of the past. His house was full of old treasures, trophies of his hunting days and souvenirs of anxious and difficult years in

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the Transvaal. As he sat in his library and wrote or dictated, he always had beside him the handcuffs, and the tin plate and mug, inscribed 'Fitz,' which were his prison properties in the days of his political incarceration at Pretoria after the Jameson Raid.

The task of writing this book was continually interrupted by breakdowns in health, culminating at the end of 1928 in the tragic loss of his two remaining sons. The eldest fell in the Great War. Somewhere he has spoken of Rhodes in the words of Virgil:

Tu ne cede malis sed contra audentior ito.

His gallant fight against sorrow and illness in the last years of his life suggests that they might well apply to himself.

G. H. WILSON.

CAPE TOWN,
December, 1931.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

LORD BUXTON, in his South African recollections, has spoken of the series of remarkable men who, in the past forty years, were brought into prominence in South Africa, some by their innate gifts and natural genius, others by the force of compelling circumstance. "Some are born great; some achieve greatness; and some have greatness thrust upon them." Paul Kruger, Cecil Rhodes, Sir Starr Jameson, John X. Merriman, J. W. Sauer, J. H. Hofmeyr, General Botha, and, still among us, General Smuts—these are some of the men who have contributed in the past forty years to building up South Africa in its political relationships. With all of them Sir Percy FitzPatrick, the author of the posthumous papers which are collected in this volume, was in close and frequent contact, sometimes as an antagonist in the South African drama, more often in the case of those we have mentioned, as a co-operator—at all times as a personal friend. For though political differences during his lifetime were often deep-seated, all these men were above the petty jealousies which, originating in political antagonism, too often disfigure our public life. And indeed few could quarrel permanently with Sir Percy FitzPatrick. His disarming candour, his quick wit, his joy of life and his abounding sense of humour, revealed not only in these pages but in his remarkable volume, *The Transvaal from Within*, which played so vital a part in shaping public opinion in Britain on the eve of the South African War—all these qualities, added to a peculiar power of arousing sympathy in his personality, contributed to the spell which he threw over his companions, whether at some great public meeting or in the intimate conversations of the *stoep* or the smoking-room.

For more than forty years before his death he had been a vital force in South African affairs. A *voortrekker* in territories in South Africa and Rhodesia then unknown, the author of *Jock of the Bushveld* (South Africa's *Puck of Pook's Hill*), one of the leaders of the gold industry on the Rand in its early days, the secretary of the famous Reform Committee at Johannesburg at the time of the Jameson Raid, the man who defeated General Botha in the historic poll at Pretoria in the

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first Union elections, perhaps the most silver-tongued orator in the First Parliament of the Union, and an author who, if he had entered the sphere of journalism, might have been one of the greatest journalists in history, in later years a pioneer in the development of the citrus industry in South Africa—such was the man who, as told in the pages which follow, found himself by the force of sheer, natural genius, in the very heart of the innumerable dramas and romances of modern South Africa. In his lifetime he, a son of South Africa, had seen the old patriarchal system of the Republican régime in the Transvaal flourish, wither and die. He had seen a vast gold industry with an output of more than £40,000,000 a year, spring into being along the White Water's Ridge. He had seen the South African States, torn and jangling among themselves, gradually succumbing to the centripetal forces which for half a century had been driving towards Union, and he had taken no small part in the direction of those forces. This brief memoir may serve as an introduction to the remarkable chapters in which he throws light upon some of the stranger episodes in South African history. Those chapters are, incidentally, autobiographical in some measure, for they record Sir Percy's own experiences acquired for the most part in first-hand contact with the personalities and the events that he describes.

Born at King William's Town, a little place on the Eastern frontiers of the old Cape Colony, James Percy FitzPatrick was the son of the Hon. J. C. FitzPatrick, in those days a judge of the Supreme Court of the Cape. His father was Irish-born, and in his younger days had espoused the cause of the men of 'Forty-Eight,' and more particularly had allied himself to the political fortunes of Daniel O'Connell. The wit and brilliance of the Judge are still spoken of at the Cape Bar, and Percy, perhaps more than any of the children, inherited that temperament which, on many a circuit court through the scattered judicial districts of the old Cape Colony, used to charm his companions.

Percy was one of a family which, like his own, was destined to sacrifice much blood for the building up of Southern Africa. His brother Tom had actually started with Alan Wilson on the fatal patrol which ended in the desperate fight with the Matabele on the Shangani River, when every member of the gallant Thirty-nine was slaughtered. Tom FitzPatrick was sent back by Wilson, suffering from dysentery, just before the ambush, but was overwhelmed and killed in an action with the Matabele a month later. Sir Percy's son, Alan, was born just before this action, and Alan Wilson was to have been

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his godfather. Then there was George FitzPatrick, another brother of Sir Percy's, who fell at Willow Grange during the Boer War while helping his wounded comrades out of the line.

As a child Sir Percy was sent by his parents to England, and was educated at Downside School, Bath. He was only sixteen when his father's death recalled him to South Africa, and he entered the Standard Bank as a clerk. Those four years were to be useful to him in after life, but they made little appeal at the time to one of his sanguine and romantic temperament, and in 1884 his ways took him into the wild country which was then Barberton, as a storekeeper's assistant and afterwards as a transport-rider. From Barberton and Komati Poort he wandered much in the Bushveld, and at Pilgrim's Rest and in the Sabi he gained that intimate knowledge of every form of veld life which is so wonderfully reflected in his *Jock of the Bushveld*.

Even in those days he had great imaginative gifts and unusual powers of observation. He learned to know the habits of every animal on the veld, from the lion to the meerkat, and around the camp fire of those remote districts he acquired that lore of the wild which made him, one might almost say, one of the first of the Boy Scouts, gifted with the ability to transmit his knowledge to his family and to his friends. He was a wonderful story-teller, and his stories were drawn from a rich experience of things done and thoughts conceived under the magic stars of the Southern Heaven. Years after, with twenty adoring children around him, he would tell them in an old barn the tales of those days. So was born *Jock of the Bushveld*, and in other spheres of adventure by flood and field and in the spheres of mining, finance and politics, he might well be classed as one of the great raconteurs of any time.

At Barberton, where the Sheba mine was generally held to be the last word in gold production, FitzPatrick dabbled a little in journalism, editing a local weekly, but Barberton and the Sheba were soon to be left in the cold as a result of the sudden discovery and rapid development of the gold areas of the Witwatersrand. He was on the new fields as early as 1889, but the wanderlust was still in his soul, and in 1891, when Lord Randolph Churchill paid his visit to South Africa, Sir Percy organised the expedition through Rhodesia, and, about the same time, prepared the way for Alfred Beit's journey into Lo Bengula's land. Some narrative of the latter adventure with its extraordinary sequel is told in his chapters on the Diamond Trail.

He was back on the Rand a year later, and there was

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placed in charge of the Intelligence Department of Hermann Eckstein & Co., a branch of Wernher Beit & Co., the firm which afterwards became famous as the Corner House. Those were the days when the Uitlander (foreign) community on the Rand was becoming increasingly restive under the burden of taxation without representation and a thoroughly illiberal Government which regarded the interlopers from England and elsewhere, not always unjustly, as foreign adventurers, anxious only to make their fortunes and to quit the country. A movement for demanding the reform of the Government was in the air, and it gained strength as the years went by. FitzPatrick, in his famous volume, *The Transvaal from Within*, has told the story of those days more vividly perhaps than it has ever been told since, even with the added knowledge of such recent revelations as those of *The Milner Papers*.

FitzPatrick's strength in the strange struggle between an archaic oligarchy and the inevitable march of progress lay in his South African birth, and his thorough understanding of the country and its problems. He had grown up among the Boers, and he had for them a real sympathy and appreciation which is evident in all his writings. None the less, there was in his blood the spirit of freedom and a deep intolerance of injustice. To him President Kruger was almost a prehistoric figure, driven by circumstances into modern conditions, and gallantly endeavouring to preserve the old conservative and reactionary life of the Boer people amid the onrush of railways, telegraphs and all the vast changes which had been called into being by the development of the gold industry.

But FitzPatrick, like most who own Irish descent, was a born politician, and as the demand for franchise rights on the part of the Uitlander Community grew, he identified himself wholeheartedly with the movement, and in 1895 came prominently, and dangerously, into the limelight as secretary of the Reform Committee, of which Charles Leonard was the rather vacillating President. In close association with him was John Hays Hammond, the great American mining engineer, who, in later years, has been mentioned on more than one occasion as candidate for Presidential honours in the United States. FitzPatrick's energy and brilliant pen are to be discerned in all the activities of the Reform Committee, and in due course he was to pay a heavy penalty for his vigour.

Here it is unnecessary to trace the history of those days. As the great conspiracy took shape FitzPatrick was often the intermediary between the Reformers on the Rand and Rhodes and Jameson at Groote Schuur, Cape Town. He has told the writer of those dramatic meetings with Cecil Rhodes;

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how he, a young and untried man, came down shyly to visit the great man at Groote Schuur, to discuss with him the details of co-operation, and, more particularly, to settle the difficult question of the flag which was to fly on the Rand in the event of a successful Revolution. As a matter of fact, neither he nor Rhodes nor any of the conspirators ever contemplated failure. But there was great divergence on the flag issue, and perhaps that particular mystery has never yet been completely cleared up.¹

FitzPatrick was back from Cape Town and in Johannesburg when Jameson crossed the Transvaal border on his famous Raid. He has made it clear that Jameson's precipitate action was absolutely against the wishes of the Reform Committee. Its leading members, indeed, endeavoured by all means in their power to turn the raiders back. Here it is unnecessary to discuss the vexed question whether the Reform Committee failed in giving support to Jameson, or whether Jameson 'crabbed' the whole movement by his reckless ride. On the whole the balance seems to be in favour of the Reform Committee on that particular issue.

The immediate consequence, so far as FitzPatrick was concerned, was that when the movement failed, with the disaster at Doornkop and the sudden collapse on the Rand, he was arrested with the other members of the Reform Committee and tried for high treason before Judge Gregorowski. Bail was refused, and ultimately Colonel Frank Rhodes, Lionel Phillips, George Farrar and John Hays Hammond were condemned to death (a sentence afterwards commuted). FitzPatrick was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of £2,000. He was released in May, 1896, after binding himself for the term of three years "neither directly nor indirectly to meddle in the internal or external politics of the South African Republic, and to conduct himself as a law-abiding citizen of the same."

And so, for the three desperately critical years that followed, Percy FitzPatrick was debarred from taking any part in the political controversies of the period. He threw himself with all the more vigour into the development of the gold industry, and about this time became a partner in the firm of Eckstein & Co., on whose intelligence staff he had been the leading spirit since 1891. It was in these non-political days that he had a startling experience in his office. Von Veltheim, a desperado of charming manners and dubious purposes, was a striking figure on the Rand at the time, and was a frequent

¹ See *The Transvaal from Within*, by J. Percy FitzPatrick, p. 127 *et seq.*

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visitor at the Corner House. On at least one occasion he saw FitzPatrick alone in his office, made certain political overtures to him—the story cannot yet be told in all its details—and, when they were rejected, toyed for a moment with a revolver in a sinister way before withdrawing.

A day or two later Johannesburg was startled by the news that Woolf Joel had been shot dead in his office by Von Veltheim who was arraigned on a charge of murder, but was acquitted after an extraordinary trial, successfully maintaining the position that he had acted in self-defence. Von Veltheim's many adventures since those days, among them his recent return to South Africa on some mysterious mission, may provide a biographer of the future with rich material for the history of a remarkable man. Sir Percy has himself left manuscripts which deal with Von Veltheim's career.

In these days FitzPatrick was devoting all his energies to the service of his firm and the gold industry. In his spare time he was writing, not for immediate publication, his private and personal record of public affairs in the Transvaal, *The Transvaal from Within*, of which Lord Rosebery said that it seemed to bear on every page and in every sentence the mark of truth. It was naturally a strong indictment of the Kruger régime, but at the same time it recognised frankly the blunders of successive British Governments in South Africa, and it showed a real appreciation of, if not sympathy for, the Kruger point of view. Kruger he likened to Father Abraham suddenly thrust into the Stock Exchange, and the whole volume reveals Sir Percy as a generous, but none the less a determined foe of the Kruger-Hollander reactionaries of the day.

Strictly observing the terms of his undertaking not to participate in the politics of the Republic, FitzPatrick delayed the publication of his book until September, 1899. The ban expired on May 30 of the same year, when the clouds were darkening over South Africa, but he used his strong influence behind the scenes, as soon as he was free from the obligations of his oath, to promote a settlement, and he had much to do with the discussions that led to the famous Bloemfontein Conference where Milner and Kruger were to meet for the last time. In the course of these pages Sir Percy tells the circumstances in which his book came to be published. He himself had regarded it as of no particular significance, and had written it largely for his own satisfaction without an eye to publication. But one of four copies came into Milner's hands through the medium of Osmund Walrond, and Sir Alfred instantly realised the enormous significance of the work in guiding the British public to a complete understanding of

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the situation in South Africa. FitzPatrick was in England when the final decision to publish was reached. The book, which appeared in September, 1899, was an immediate and overwhelming success. It ran through seven large editions before the year closed, and Alfred Harmsworth (Lord Northcliffe), meeting FitzPatrick in those stirring months, offered him the editorship of the *Daily Mail* "on your own terms." FitzPatrick declined the offer, but for some months did much editorial work for Harmsworth.

On the outbreak of the South African War (October, 1899) Sir Percy was still in England and thence was directing the establishment of the Imperial Light Horse, a regiment which was to cover itself with glory in the long campaigns of the next three years. There was a commission awaiting him in the I.L.H. and he had already made arrangements to leave England to join his regiment, when Lord Salisbury intervened through Mr. Balfour. FitzPatrick had seen much of Arthur Balfour in those critical months, and at his urgent personal request remained in London for some months as an extra Official Adviser on South African affairs to the British Government. Also he was frequently consulted by the War Office, for his knowledge of topography throughout South Africa was, as we have seen, almost unique. Frequent ill-health prevented the possibility of actual active service with his regiment when he returned to South Africa, but he was continuously at work on its behalf, and in the political sphere was a source of strength to Lord Milner in the great tasks that confronted him.

When at last the war was over and the time had come for consolidation, he bent all his energies to assisting Lord Milner in the work of reconstruction in the new Colonies of the Transvaal and Orange River, and, with many of the leading statesmen in various parts of South Africa, began to turn his attention to the problem of South African unification. He was an unofficial member of the Legislative Council of the Transvaal in those days, and also served on the Inter-Colonial Council which was responsible for the control of the Central South African Railways. It was for his services in these relations that he was knighted in 1902, and about the same time he became President of the Chamber of Mines.

In that capacity he was chief among the advocates of the introduction of Chinese labour for the goldfields, not because he wished to see Chinese labour established as a permanent principle in the economic life of South Africa, but because he was convinced that, in the state of disorganisation then prevailing, the only means of re-establishing the gold industry

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on a permanent basis was to give it the assurance of a stable supply of labour. The rights and wrongs of that point of view have been fiercely contested, and they need not be discussed here. But it led to events which were to shape the destinies of South Africa. The controversy spread to England. It is not too much to say that the fiction of 'Chinese slavery' was put to most discreditable uses on the hustings, and brought about the downfall of the strongest Conservative Government that Britain had known. Indirectly, it led, through Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, to the early grant of full responsible government to the two old Republics. Those were the days when Sir Percy was preaching in South Africa the franchise of "one man, one vote," and he would tell delightedly the story of the two miners, one of whom asked the other what all this talk of "one man, one vote" might mean. "Don't you see," was the reply, "one bloody man, one bloody vote," and both were completely satisfied that they understood all about the question.

With the grant of responsible Government in the Transvaal a general election became necessary, and Sir Percy FitzPatrick found himself confronted in one of the Pretoria constituencies by no less a person than Sir Richard Solomon, who had been his colleague in Crown Colony days, and whose defection to the party of General Botha and General Smuts was regarded by Sir Percy as little less than a heinous crime and treachery to the policy of Lord Milner. That was the first of two most memorable elections in the same constituency. The fight between Sir Percy and Sir Richard was desperate on both sides. Pretoria thrilled with excitement, and Sir Percy's meetings, at which he displayed all that golden eloquence and keen biting sarcasm which were among his political gifts, were thronged day after day and night after night. All the odds seemed to be on Solomon, but FitzPatrick's prospects improved daily, and, when the result was at last announced, he led the poll by many votes.

And now came the formative days of Union. With full responsible institutions in all the South African Colonies it was possible to work definitely for unification. In the preliminary movements to that end FitzPatrick played a great part with voice and pen. When at last the National Convention came into being he was necessarily one of the Transvaal delegates, and he brought to his task a genuine enthusiasm for Union which was as infective as it was inspiring. Although nominally in opposition to the Government of the day in which General Botha was Prime Minister, he soon saw that if the National Convention was to be a success, there must be

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some kind of concerted action among the delegates from the Transvaal. He approached General Smuts and General Botha with this end in view, and as a result of the discussions the Transvaal delegation was able to come down to the Convention with a clear-cut plan of its own which was to prove of the utmost value in the subsequent negotiations. While the Convention was in session, Sir Percy, as the protagonist of what might then be called the British point of view, was assigned the delicate task of discussing the question of the dual languages with General Hertzog, now Prime Minister of the Union, and it was between these two, shut up in a committee-room by themselves, that agreement on full language equality was eventually reached and afterwards confirmed by the Convention and the various Parliaments of the unifying Colonies.

After the Convention had completed its task and drafted the South African Act, the question in South Africa was whether old party divisions in the unifying States were to be continued in the new Union, or whether there was to be 'a fresh start.' FitzPatrick was all for a fresh start and for a best-man Government. He believed with all his heart that God had given a rich opportunity to South Africa to break away from the old racial feuds and to inaugurate the Union with a clean, political sheet. Most eloquently he pleaded, travelling throughout the country for the purpose, but his plea was unavailing, though in the Cape it had the support of Dr. Jameson, and, generally, of the English-speaking community. But the first Government of the Union was formed under General Botha in general accord with old party divisions, and the first general election was fought, more or less, on all party lines.

Once more Sir Percy was to fight a memorable contest at Pretoria. He undoubtedly believed that his old seat would not be contested, and he was amazed when the news reached him that no less a man than General Botha, Prime Minister designate, was to endeavour to wrest from him the constituency. Once again all eyes in South Africa were turned on Pretoria. The odds were more heavily against FitzPatrick than in his first contest with Sir Richard Solomon, for Botha brought with him the prestige of a great name, a great record and a great character. The night when the poll was declared will never be forgotten by Pretoria citizens. Against all expectations Sir Percy had won the day, and General Botha was compelled to find a safe seat vacated for him at Losberg. The fight had been bitter, and it was some months before the two statesmen could meet again on a friendly footing, for General Botha

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took his defeat very hard. Still, in the freemasonry of Parliament, the bitterness gradually subsided, for indeed it would have been difficult for men of such generous and sunny temperaments as Sir Percy and General Botha to maintain a personal feud for any length of time.

In the Union Parliament FitzPatrick sat with Dr. Jameson and Sir Thomas Smartt on the front Opposition bench, confronting on the Government bench General Botha, General Smuts and General Hertzog. The defeat of their efforts to secure 'best-man government' (in the phrase of the day) had compelled them to adopt the tactics of a critical and determined Opposition, and Sir Percy was not the least vigorous of the three in his attacks on the new Government. He was a brilliant debater, speaking very rapidly with an Irish wit and eloquence, and thrusting home his points at times with a remorseless vigour. 'Scenes' in the House were frequent, and Sir Percy was generally in the thick of the fray, thoroughly enjoying the cut and thrust of debate, and generally keeping his temper at times when tempers were, on occasion, sorely tried on both sides.

The political crisis of 1912, resulting in the extrusion of General Hertzog from the Botha Cabinet, had a natural effect in reducing the gap between the Government party under Botha and Smuts and the official Opposition under Jameson's leadership. With the outbreak of the Great War political divergences between the two sections practically ceased to exist. To Sir Percy the War was, for a man of his whole-hearted devotion to British institutions, the supreme crisis of his life. He offered his services in any capacity, and was deeply disappointed when he was informed that he would be more valuable with his voice and his pen than with the sword and the rifle. But his sons, then at school, were prompt to respond to the call, and Nugent enlisted at once in the South African Horse Artillery. Sir Percy once told the writer of a remarkable psychic experience in connection with Nugent's death. On December 14, 1917, he dreamed that he saw Nugent at the end of a foreign railway station, and that on going up to him, the boy shook his hand and then twice touched the back of his head. The dream was intensely vivid, and Sir Percy, although completely sceptical in such matters, was convinced that something had happened to Nugent. Twelve days later he received the news that his son had been struck on the head and killed by a chance shell at the railway station at Beaumetz. At the same date and hour, ten years later, Sir Percy's son, Oliver, died in Mexico, and a few days later (January 2, 1928) came the tidings of the tragic death

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at Johannesburg of his only remaining son, Alan. Lady FitzPatrick had passed away in August, 1923.

After the War, and before these crushing family bereavements occurred, Sir Percy travelled far and wide. He visited California to study American methods of citrus growing and packing, for, as a citrus-farmer himself, both in the Orange Free State and on the Sunday's River, he was always to the forefront in promoting the interests of the citrus industry. While in America it seemed almost inevitable that he should find himself in the midst of a revolution. Revolutions, he used to say, seemed to bubble up wherever he went, and certainly he had his full share of them. He was sitting at dinner with his son Oliver in Mexico City when a wandering bullet came through a window. He asked one of the waiters what this might betoken, and was told that a revolution was in progress, the waiter speaking of it with rather a bored air as if it were quite a usual concomitant of the evening meal. Sir Percy and Oliver sallied off at once by motor to see the fun, and soon found themselves in a particularly hot corner. In the interests of their own safety they were placed under arrest, and were detained until the "revolution" had been suppressed.

Returning to South Africa after a considerable interval, Sir Percy FitzPatrick devoted himself to the erection of a suitable South African War Memorial. All South Africa—indeed all the world—had been thrilled by the heroic deeds of the South African Brigade at Delville Wood and elsewhere on the Western Front, and to FitzPatrick there came the inspired thought that the scene of the epic battle at Delville Wood should be acquired, in perpetuity, for South Africa. He visited France, and there carried through the negotiations by which he secured ownership of the area of the fight, and this he presented as a free gift to the people of South Africa. That was the first step. Then with the aid of a Committee he set to work to establish a great national memorial which would perpetuate the deeds of all South Africans who fell in the War, whether on the Western Front, or in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine, East Africa or South-West Africa. It was a Memorial to them all, and there their names are inscribed in a Roll of Honour.

The Memorial was unveiled in October, 1926. Clearly it was fitting that such a national monument should be inaugurated by the Prime Minister of the Union. To many at that time it was difficult to imagine General Hertzog, whose attitude during the War had not been conspicuously friendly to the British cause, presiding at such a ceremony. But Sir Percy thrust aside all the prejudices and political

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antagonisms of the past. Personally he approached the Union Prime Minister with the request that he would perform the ceremony. General Hertzog's response was such as to remove any doubts as to the wisdom of FitzPatrick's action. "They are our dead," said the Prime Minister, and in that spirit he paid beautiful tribute to the South Africans who had done their duty during the War. Sir Percy was able to be present at the ceremony, but it was almost the last occasion on which his failing health permitted him to make public appearance. But when Lord Milner, himself a dying man, visited South Africa a little later, Sir Percy, though gravely ill at his home on the Sunday's River, left his bed, took the mail steamer to Cape Town, and there wrote steadily for thirty-six hours the splendid tribute to Milner's life-work which will be published, it is hoped, in a volume of Sir Percy's political memories at no distant date.

Allusion has been made to Sir Percy FitzPatrick's keen interest in the development of a South African citrus industry. For many years he had meditated over the idea of some great closer settlement scheme in pursuance of Rhodes's thoughts in the same direction. As early as 1895 he had heard from Mr. H. E. V. Pickstone of the prospects of developing a South African fruit industry, and in the years that followed, amid many political preoccupations, he kept constant touch with that remarkable pioneer of scientific fruit-farming in South Africa. Shortly before the Great War Sir Percy and a group of his friends who believed in South Africa and saw the urgent need of development and of an increased white population on the land, decided to make an attempt at a practical demonstration. He had thought of many places all over the Union from time to time as offering possibilities for a land-settlement scheme on a considerable scale, but it was on the Sunday's River Valley, in the Uitenhage district, that his imagination finally centred.

The development of that valley by flood-water irrigation had been begun by the late James Kirkwood some thirty years before. Mr. Kirkwood's achievement in the face of the greatest difficulties and vicissitudes had been notable. His commercial failure and premature death delayed but could not stop development. His successors, the Strathsomers Estate Company, took up the work, and in 1906 the Addo Land Company established a settlement now known as Selborne, lower down the valley, where a large acreage has been cultivated and numerous homes have been built. In 1911 came the Cleveland Syndicate, which built the great weir and some miles of canals. Sir Percy and his friends

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came on the scene a little later, taking over the Cleveland Syndicate and establishing the Cape Sunday's River Settlements. The new organization purchased at cost price the block of farms which Sir Percy had purchased at his own personal risk—some 5,800 acres of irrigable and 11,780 acres of grazing land. But within a month of the formation of the Company the Great War had broken out, and FitzPatrick was faced with the choice of abandoning all, or of tackling an enterprise vastly greater than had been projected; and this he had to decide upon without working capital.

Thanks to the generosity and public spirit of personal friends and supporters who, among them, put up and spent in all about £450,000; Sir Percy carried on and ultimately completed his reclamation work. In the strenuous years of development which followed he redeemed from the Addo Bush, cleared, stumped and ploughed 5,000 acres, about one-half of which is now cultivated and irrigated, and settled with over seventy families. The conservation works and Lake Mentz were begun in 1918 and completed in 1923 at a total cost of £560,000. They now serve about 38,000 acres in the Valley. To-day the principal industry of the Valley is citrus-growing. Over 150,000 citrus-trees have been planted, and more than half have reached maturity, while in the present year 160,000 boxes of citrus have been exported and in addition large quantities of fruit have been sold in South Africa.

Sir Percy's personal work in all this development was characteristic of the energy, the enthusiasm and the imagination which he put into all his activities, literary, political or horticultural. In the years of development he had to face many tragic disappointments. "I remember", writes Mr. Pickstone, "when I myself visited the Valley during the worst period—no drinking water at the homesteads, clouds of dust everywhere, very little development yet done; but to me, a fellow developer, the scheme was magnificent in its boldness, and with its exceptional depth of soil, given more water, I could clearly see the beautiful, healthy orange groves extending for miles, and lovely, bright green stretches of lucerne—which to-day are a delight to the eye of every visiting South African."

From the outset FitzPatrick had visualized citrus-growing as the main crop of the Valley, and on this account he undertook several trips to California, where he made a brief but remarkably complete survey of Californian methods. There he acquired his extraordinary knowledge of citrus-growing from the propagation of young trees to the packing plant. He may be said to have been entirely responsible for the spread of the gospel of bud-selection as it is known to South

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African growers—in brief, the prepotent properties carried by buds borne in different types of trees. The heads of the Californian industry were so deeply impressed by the way in which he had grasped all the factors of consequence that FitzPatrick's writings on citrus culture in this country were quoted and reprinted in California itself as embodying the last word in expert authority.

Add to all this pioneer work that he was a chief promoter of co-operation among the citrus growers and was chiefly responsible for the creation of the Fruit Exchange, and it will be seen that Sir Percy was, as his work in other spheres had shown, a man of far-sighted and constructive imagination. He lived long enough to see some reward of his labours. Here are a few words in which he described the change that had been wrought in the Valley during ten years of strenuous effort:

“Anyone who stood on the Outlook Hill in 1914 (as we did) would have seen miles and miles of Addo Bush—so dense and impenetrable that the trails of elephants and buffaloes were the only roads. If they will stand there now they may see a hundred homesteads and buildings; the main canals winding their way along the contours of the hills on both sides, looping and coiling for forty miles from the weir, and the silver ribbons of the branch canals and furrows leading to each farm. They may look upon a Valley, which, acre for acre and all factors considered, has no superior in the whole world, where Europeans can live in comfort and bring up their families.”

That indeed was the spirit in which FitzPatrick had interpreted the thought in Rhodes's mind when, in far Rhodesia, he had looked with a wave of the hand over vast distances, and said in his curious jerky way, “More homes! More homes!”

In these pages an attempt has been made to indicate the larger activities in which Sir Percy FitzPatrick was engaged during a long term of years, and to provide an introduction to the chapters of his own writing which follow. Many of these chapters will reveal him as a writer of real poetic fancy. Of course, to those who have read *Jock of the Bushveld* he needs no introduction. Jock and Jess and Jim will always live in the memories of the Little People whom he was addressing and whom, in every fresh generation of young South Africans, he will continue to address. The Little People have always loved Jock and his companions because they knew that what was being told them was true, and that it was all about their

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own wonderful country. Sir Percy's vivid and vital personality appeared in everything that he touched or said or wrote. He infected his audience and his readers with his own enthusiasms. His platform gifts were exceptional. He would hold his hearers spellbound by his Irish eloquence, informed by an ever-sparkling wit. But he was at his best perhaps in the conversations of the *stoep* or round the camp fire, when he would relate his adventures in politics, in mining, in finance, in the open veld, and every figure in his narrative would spring to life before the listener's eyes.

The sorrows and the struggles of his later years hastened that prolonged illness from which he suffered and to which, after a gallant fight, he succumbed. Two years ago he visited England in search of special advice, but returned to the Cape and to the homestead of Amanzi, Uitenhage, where he died. He passed away on January 24, 1931, and was buried on the Outlook Hill, a spot from which development in the Sunday's River Settlements can be viewed. It was the choice of Lady FitzPatrick. There she lies with her sons, Alan and Oliver, and there too rests Sir Percy, "to watch over it all as the Valley progresses."

CHAPTER I

RHODES AND ALFRED BEIT

EVERYONE knows that during the last sixty years or so the discovery of diamonds and the development of Kimberley; the finding of gold at Moodie's and in Barberton; and the quite unparalleled development of the Witwatersrand gold-fields; have been factors which changed the face and the history of South Africa. They created and set in motion certain forces which seem to have brought us inevitably to where we are to-day. These factors entered into a field already old and riddled with complications. Thus, in the later development you might say that both the old factors and these, the more recent ones, accentuated and entangled the complication which has so often been called the South African problem.

The writer knows of no serious, certainly no successful, attempt to present a survey of this period which would appeal to a South African as a comprehensive, impartial and convincing view. Perhaps we are too near the events for anyone to achieve this; certainly the writer would not be guilty of attempting it. Personal experience and intimate knowledge of many of the facts and factors and of many of the important persons seem to unfit anyone for such a task. It is a superhuman task. There are countless individual points of view to be considered and, necessarily, as many different opinions. But if, of necessity, the broad canvas of real history cannot be completed by a participant while events are fresh and actors still alive, it remains desirable that details should be on record.

The writer does not aspire to supply these important details for the use of the future historian, but rather to throw some light on matters which are of interest to most of us. In this particular section the interpretation of the word 'History' is comprehensive and free, and though the details given concerning individuals, their projects and aims and characters, may be dismissed by some as little better than gossip, and even second-hand gossip, to the writer they have a certain significance and interest. In any case, such as they are, these notes will speak for themselves.

It should be added that the writer was among the pioneers

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of Barberton in 1884; worked on the Witwatersrand from 1887; and was familiar with Rhodesia from the Pioneer days of the Occupation in 1891, but he was never a resident of Kimberley. Hence, the references to the story of the Diamond Fields, which is of such enthralling interest, are founded not on first-hand knowledge, but upon what was learnt during years of intimate friendship and close association with many of their leading spirits.

Immediately following the events described in *Jock of the Bushveld*, and owing to the disasters which left me nothing but what I stood up in, I had to make a fresh start in life. At the same time the opening up of the Barberton goldfields offered opportunities which were not to be ignored, and within a few days I found myself in the employment of the largest syndicate on the fields, engaged in taking up and developing mining properties. I had no knowledge of gold mining; no technical education of any kind, and such schooling as a none too diligent lad could pick up before sixteen, but I had worked on the alluvial diggings and had done some prospecting. Moreover, a few years of the more adventurous life of transport riding and hunting had given an experience and equipment which counted for something in a country where no one knew anything of gold mining. The syndicate consisted in the main of men from Kimberley, and included some of those who afterwards played a notable part by applying their business knowledge, their courage, and their wealth to the development of other parts of South Africa; firstly Barberton, and then the Witwatersrand and Rhodesia. The head and the driving force of this syndicate was Alfred Beit, of the firm of Wernher, Beit & Co.; and I think it is safe to say that throughout his life, and even to this day, Alfred Beit has been very generally regarded as the ablest business man South Africa has ever known. He was very much more than just a financier.

The association with him as my business chief, and our personal friendship, constituted the happiest relations one could wish for in business, and lasted until his death. His representative in Barberton was my lifelong friend and fellow pioneer, J. B. Taylor, who was afterwards also a partner in H. Eckstein & Co. (Wernher Beit).

When Beit ceased to take an active interest in the Barberton fields and turned his attention to the Witwatersrand he offered me employment there and a minor share in that business, just started under the name of H. Eckstein; but, tied by agreement, I was not free to accept, and the opportunity went to others. It was a disastrous development for me. However, Beit's

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good feeling was not impaired, and some two or three years later, shortly after the pioneer expedition to Rhodesia, he sent for me again.

In June, 1891, I received a telegram asking me if I would go with him to Rhodesia and take charge of his expedition and that of Lord Randolph Churchill, and leave it to him to arrange the terms. I made no mistake the second time of asking, and was off within a few days.

It is not my intention to describe this trip or write of personal experiences of considerable interest. An account of that visit was published at the time under the title of *Through Mashonaland with Pick and Pen*.

The foregoing references will give an idea of the atmosphere and the circumstances in which I happened to learn from Beit many things which are not on record anywhere and which he, who knew them at first hand and played a large part in them, was too self-effacing to talk about. Like many who become prominent in business or through great wealth and are forced into the limelight by sensational occurrences, his personality was not known. To the general public he was merely a name, or an ogre, a financier, multimillionaire and business man, who sacrificed everything to money-making. As a matter of fact Alfred Beit was none of these things. He was the most kindly, most generous and absolutely just of men. So far from being self-assertive he was modest, unassuming and almost nervously shy. He was generous not only in material gifts but even more in those of the spirit, forbearance, forgiveness, and all that we arrogantly term the great Christian spirit of kindness and consideration for others.

Shortly before his death he had cabled for me to go to England to arrange a matter of public importance in which Rhodes also was concerned, and which was of great importance to me since it would have involved the devotion of all my time to this work alone. I never saw him. He died on the morning of my arrival in England. I was in time only for the funeral. When we left the little church at Tewin Water the procession of friends dropped into line to walk to the cemetery, and I found myself walking beside an old man with a full white beard. We had gone some ten or fifteen paces when he addressed me by name, and I found that it was the late W. T. Stead, whom I had known well since the days of the Jameson Raid. He said: "FitzPatrick, you knew him well. There was something Christ-like about Alfred Beit!" I replied that I had often thought it but flinched from saying it for fear of exciting the derision of those who didn't know him; and I thanked him for having said it. Stead answered

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shortly but characteristically: "Why be afraid to say it; *you* knew him, *they* did not."

That is a glimpse of the man and of the atmosphere in which there came to me the little things which I am here recording to the best of my ability. Travelling through Rhodesia—practically roadless veld; sleeping and feeding anyhow and anywhere, as I had been thoroughly accustomed to do, for I was still under thirty, but he had never experienced; jogging along slowly in a spider or travelling wagon; always in the open; talking freely and intimately on all subjects with no audience or gallery to consider—it was in such circumstances that we were thrown together. None could be more favourable to unreserved candour.

We were jogging along one day, reading; I have forgotten his book, mine was Carlyle's *French Revolution*; and some reference in it prompted me to ask a question about a well-known orator. To my utter amazement Beit's answer was: "The best speaker I have ever heard is Cecil Rhodes." At that time I had hardly met Rhodes, but had read all his speeches, and whilst being a believer in him and his ideas I had regarded him as anything but a good speaker; in fact I confessed at once that I was extremely bored by certain characteristics, his dogmatism and unbearable repetitions. Beit was greatly amused by the warmth of my criticism, and simply bubbled with laughter, saying: "Wait till you know him, then you will understand." But that was not good enough, and I pressed him until at last I got the explanation that he was not talking about oratory or style, but what he meant was that Rhodes was the most convincing speaker he had ever listened to; and suddenly he dropped into reminiscences illustrating his view. "Time after time I have known him talk his audience round and convince them; but I think the most wonderful example was at the time when the consolidation of the diamond mines was completed and De Beers was formed." The incident started a train of thought and talk which extended over the whole trip, and it is not possible to recall the wealth of detail with which Beit could illustrate or corroborate his narrative.

To the general public the uniting of the diamond mines in the De Beers Consolidated was an event of the greatest importance in the business world, and of great and growing importance in the political world; but to those closely concerned it was also a romantic adventure packed full of dramatic incidents and developments of which the outer world knew nothing. It is generally believed that the amalgamation was completed by negotiations between Rhodes and Barnato,

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and there is enough truth in this to warrant the acceptance by the public of that sketchy description. But few have any conception of what occurred during the years before final agreement was reached.

For example, when Beit spoke of Rhodes's achievement in securing the adoption by shareholders of this agreement, and thus the official confirmation of amalgamation, I suggested that the negotiations had been completed with the principal parties beforehand and the confirmation by shareholders, although a formal necessity, was not seriously in doubt. Thus Rhodes, at that meeting, was only preaching to the converted. But Beit would have none of this and gave me numberless details to show how vitally important it was that the shareholders themselves should be thoroughly convinced and should carry the amalgamation by an overwhelming majority.

In any large company whose shares have been on the market for some years and are widely distributed it is quite impossible to get a full representation of shareholders, no matter how important the meeting may be, and it is extraordinarily difficult to ensure the presence of even that percentage which is legally necessary to adopt certain radical resolutions. Hence there was no certainty that what you may call outside or unattached shareholders, who belonged to no known group and were quite independent in their views and actions, would turn up at the meeting; and, if so, how they would vote. It was Rhodes's aim, and it was considered most necessary, that he should succeed in convincing those shareholders of the soundness and even necessity of the course proposed; also that the vote should be carried by so striking a majority as to inspire complete confidence in the future of the industry among the general public as well as the shareholders of the company. Beit described the effect of Rhodes's speech upon himself, he knowing everything as well as anybody, and in some respects better than anyone. He was as fascinated by the story as a child absorbed in a fairy tale. Step by step Rhodes swept him along as though he had never heard the story before, and when he reached his conclusion the enthusiasm was tremendous, and even those whose views had been gravely in doubt, and who had definitely refused to commit themselves, became as demonstrative and enthusiastic as any.

The vote was passed in a tumult of applause and Rhodes himself was mobbed and overwhelmed by enthusiastic shareholders.

"You know, he does not like scenes like this," said Beit. "He does not show his feelings much. People often misunderstand him because he seems so casual and indifferent, even

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gruff and rude, but I knew quite well that he was feeling that occasion far more than many of those who gave way to demonstration. He shook hands with enthusiasts when obliged to do so, but tried to dodge it and shoulder his way through the crowd; he was not at all uncivil, but clearly wished to avoid demonstration or be looked upon as a hero. Within a few minutes he turned round; you know he was a big man; and he looked over the heads of others and catching my eye, he said: 'Come along, Beit, I want you.' So I pushed after him until he got out of the door, and was then surprised to see him walk towards the Dutoitspan Road without once looking back or saying a word to me. However, I followed as best I could. You see, I am very much shorter than he and had to hurry up to keep pace with his long strides; in fact at times I had to run a bit to catch up to him; but he just walked on without a word, straight down the road towards De Beers' compound. He never stopped; never spoke; never looked up once until we got to the gate. Of course he was recognized at once and admitted, and the moment we were inside some of the natives saw him and gave a shout of welcome and greeting to the Great Inkosi, for they all knew him, he was a frequent visitor to the compound, and they loved and trusted him. Then for the first time he turned to me and said: 'Got any money on you?'

"Now, I had thought that the day would wind up with a little celebration and probably a game of poker, so I had brought from the office a little chamois-leather bag containing fifty sovereigns, and instead of taking the loose change from my pocket I produced this and began to untie the bag, but he just reached out with his left hand and took the bag from me.

"By this time word of his arrival had been shouted through the compound and hundreds of natives were flocking up to greet him. I will never forget the look on his face; the indulgent, kindly smile, as a parent regarding his children. He tipped the bag over and poured a few sovereigns into his right hand and scattered them widely amongst the crowd. Of course there was tumultuous enthusiasm and laughter at what they regarded as the indulgent fancy of their great father, and when the lucky ones found that the coins were sovereigns there was the wildest excitement. He repeated the action a number of times until, shaking the bag by one corner, he found that it was empty. Then his interest seemed to die out. He lowered his left hand and unconsciously dropped the empty leather bag at my feet; then turned round and walked out without another word."

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"Did he ever remember to refund it?" I asked.

Beit laughed affectionately. "Never thought of it again. I am quite certain it passed completely from his mind—a trumpery detail. But that was nothing; it was worth that and much more to witness the incident."

The walk back to the Kimberley Club was of the same character—Rhodes forgetful of everything, striding along, and Beit, with great difficulty, keeping up to him; not a word exchanged, not a look, not a pause, until half the distance had been covered. Then Rhodes turned round to face Beit and said; "And to-night they will talk it all over with their wives and to-morrow they will sell like hell!" And he turned on his heel and resumed his walk to the Club without another word or pause.

"And they did, I believe?" I suggested.

Beit laughed heartily and confirmed this, saying: "Things happened exactly as Rhodes had foreseen; but his judgment of men, even of women, in these matters was amazing."

Anxious to understand the whole affair I pressed matters a little further and reminded Beit that at the meeting Rhodes had foretold the immense business success of the amalgamation, the certainty of greatly increased profits, and the prospect that De Beers' shares would rise to double their value; whereas as a matter of fact there was heavy selling the next day and the shares actually dropped. Beit seemed highly amused, answering only, "Yes, yes, quite right."

I bore in mind the origin of this talk and Beit's claim that this speech was an absolute triumph and revelation and I could not resist suggesting that as Rhodes's forecast in that speech had so far not been justified, I could not see that this speech was such a wonderful triumph. Beit, more amused than ever, shook with laughter and said: "Yes, yes, but it carried the meeting and we secured the amalgamation." This was not a cynical but an intensely practical judgment. For fear of misunderstanding I ought to add Beit's defence that this slump was only a market reaction and that it was a reasoned certainty that once the diamond interests got to work as one great concern Rhodes's most optimistic forecasts would be more than justified, and everyone knows that in a short time Rhodes's forecast was completely justified by the facts.

"You must have found him difficult at times?" was the almost too obvious fly that I cast.

Beit snapped at it instantly. "Not at all; never! It is true," he added, "that you have to know him, but when you know him he is perfectly splendid. Some people take offence

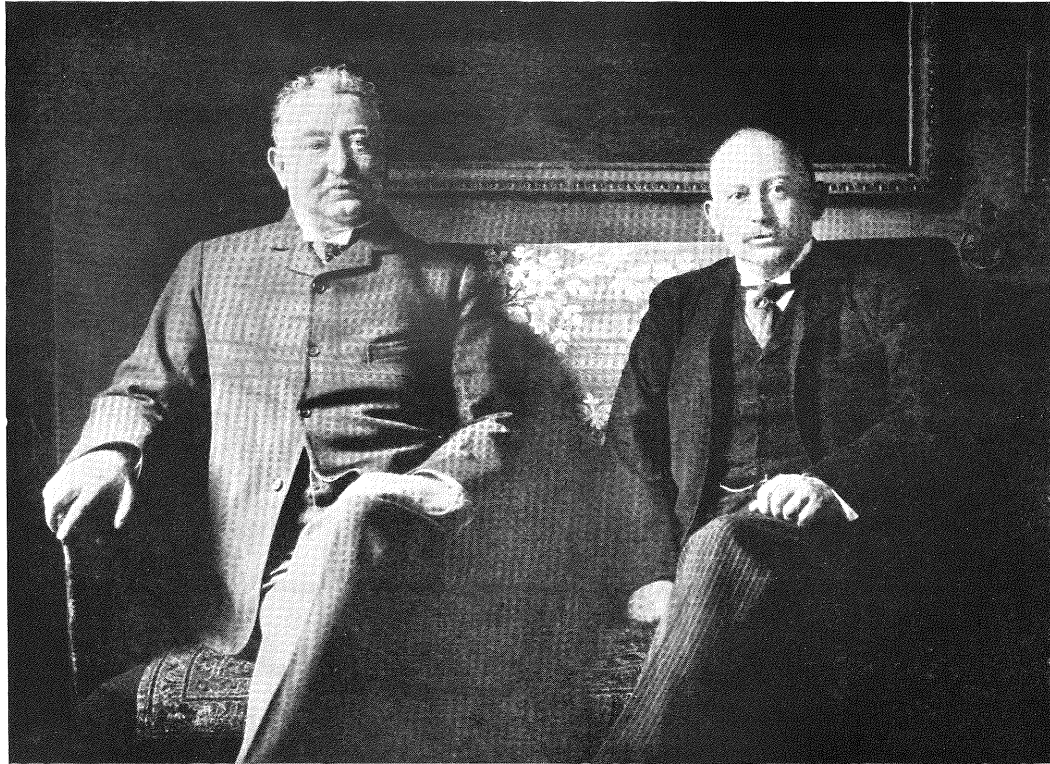


Photo: Ernest H. Mills

THE RIGHT HON. CECIL J. RHODES WITH ALFRED BEIT, IN 1901

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at his manner. Sometimes he is rude and sounds dictatorial, but that only means he is very much in earnest and convinced and hates to waste time. He does not suffer fools gladly; but then one cannot do that and do the enormous amount of work that he's got on hand. But in all the big things he is wonderful, and he is one of the most generous and kind-hearted of men. I have found him the best in the world to work with, and I think he is satisfied too. We get along splendidly."

There can be no doubt whatever that Beit was Rhodes's financial genius, and without him the great creations which are credited to Rhodes would not have been accomplished. But there was more than that; there was a strong personal affection and almost passionate devotion on Beit's part that enabled these two very different characters to act as one.

Beit had come to South Africa in the employment of cousins, the Lippert Brothers, and after two years of work had decided to strike out as a diamond broker. He told me of his first year's experience; his balance sheet showed a yield of about £2,000. He then joined the late Sir Julius Wernher, and together they represented Mr. Jules Porges, of Paris, a very wealthy diamond merchant. In the middle 'eighties Porges was getting on in years and disinclined for much extension of business. By nature he was cautious, perhaps a little timid of the enterprise and courage of his very able juniors, and shortly after this he withdrew, and the firm of Wernher, Beit & Co. took over the entire business. Possibly it was the development on the diamond fields that hastened this decision. The firm of Wernher, Beit & Co. soon became the most prominent and powerful one on the diamond fields. But, wealthy as they were, it was not possible for them, on their own resources, to carry the immense load of the consolidation of the fields and the creation of De Beers Company. A large portion of the capital required was financed, as was commonly the case, through European houses, and one world-famous house had become a very large backer of the projected enterprise, and indicated continued confidence and support. However, at one of the serious junctures in the development of the business this particular house notified that it would be unable to continue its support. This appeared to be a smashing blow and it gave the impression that this world-famous firm had planned to cause the failure of the negotiations with the object of itself obtaining complete control of the industry, as it had previously done in another great mining industry. The position appeared to be desperate. Eventually means were found to overcome the difficulties, but not all the details of this were given to me nor were they intended for publication.

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The main circumstances are mentioned merely to explain Beit's tribute to another side of Rhodes's character.

In those days it was a common practice amongst prominent business men in Kimberley, and afterwards in Johannesburg, to meet at the different Clubs at 11 o'clock for the morning drink or refresher. Rhodes and Beit, who did much of their business at the Club and in the streets, as well as in their own offices, met regularly at this hour to "split a small bottle" at the Kimberley Club. One day, when the crisis caused by the withdrawal of the big support was most acute, they were standing at the bar of the Club when Rhodes called to the steward: "Gosch, have you got any Promissory Note forms?" As though they were part of the equipment of the Club, Gosch asked how many were wanted and Rhodes answered: "Half a dozen."

They were half-way through their drink when Rhodes took the half-dozen forms, went over to a writing table, signed them in blank, folded them rather clumsily, and came back offering them to Beit. He said: "You've staked everything on the success of this in backing me. I do not know how it will end now that these people have gone back on us, but I want you to take these. They are signed in blank. Whatever I have got is yours to back you if you need it."

Beit instantly and hotly refused, but Rhodes was very much in earnest and ended by crumpling the notes up and stuffing them into Beit's coat pocket and walking off.

"That's the sort of man he is, and you can understand how satisfactory it is to deal with him." Beit added laughingly: "That must be four years ago. Of course I never used them and never needed them; he has never referred to it since, and when I came through Kimberley a few weeks ago I found them in an old despatch box and burnt them. I do not even know if he remembers the incident; but I shall never forget it."

As the work of the amalgamation progressed through the years the nature of that work and the conditions changed. Certain individuals, not very able and not very prominent, became relatively important, because they made their influence felt for their personal money-making ends. Having done nothing to help the industry and the cause of this amalgamation, they traded upon it and demanded for the property they controlled a price in excess of its real market value, really a special price to them for their support. This is quite a common practice and is not confined to business deals. Early in the Great War, a distinguished ambassador, endeavouring to defeat the German effort to bring in on their side the nations of the

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Near East, reported that all—Turkey, Roumania, Bulgaria and Greece, were willing to join the Allies in resistance to Germany, but unfortunately all insisted upon certain concessions which in the total made peace impossible. "In fact," he said, "their minimum demands amount to much more than there is in the entire pool."

It was this spirit which in many cases, at many times, made amalgamation appear unattainable. It was this difficulty that caused endless trouble to Rhodes and Beit and their immediate allies. It is commonly known that Barney Barnato, very wealthy, very resolute and resourceful, and extremely clever in his own line, was the outstanding example, and his election to Parliament and to the Kimberley Club has been described many a time as illustrating the questionable methods which characterized Rhodes. The latter never denied or discussed the matter; he simply did not regard it as a question of high morality, but as one of practical business. "Barney wants to be a member of Parliament and a member of the Kimberley Club; God knows why; but if he wants it let him have it. It is surely a small thing compared with the success of amalgamation." And it could be claimed for Rhodes that in this special recognition of Barnato in such cases, and in his appointment of him to the De Beers Board and other things, he showed a worldly wisdom greatly to the benefit of the shareholders whom he represented, as was made abundantly clear afterwards by their consistent and hearty co-operation after the amalgamation, when Barnato became one of his most enthusiastic and powerful colleagues.

Rhodes frequently incurred censure from that type of person who makes a parade of principles. Unlike many of these critics, he never allowed himself to be irritated into a parade of high morality, and looked upon such displays with mistrust and a good deal of contempt, which was not always silent. "I know the unctuous rectitude of my countrymen," he said on one memorable occasion, and by the way, the tactful journalist who reported the speech immediately referred the phrase to Rhodes, saying: "I am sure you meant anxious rectitude." "No, I did *not*," said Rhodes, "I said 'unctuous,' you put that down; it will do them good." And it certainly did.

But there were others, much smaller fry, without any of the striking qualities which characterized Barney. These men, personally insignificant and with no interest in anything but their own material gains, possessed sufficient means and resources to make them powerful factors at certain stages. For example, whilst utterly unimportant in proportion to the entire enterprise, they were sufficiently powerful in one of the

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companies which was to be incorporated to block the way to that one company's acceptance, and thus throw out one block in the great mosaic of the amalgamation. These people habitually demanded a price far in excess of market or intrinsic value. Their system was to wait as the negotiations progressed, and prices were forced up by the general buying, to refuse to give any options or to fix any price, but to wait for offers, and, when an offer was made, to demand 25 per cent or 50 per cent, or more even than the figure named. The contest between the amalgamators and these obstructors was often keen, whilst on the lower plane of the share market it was full of interest and sometimes of amusement.

One of the cleverest of the deals was one with Barney Barnato who, despite previous references, was by no means averse from getting a good pull for himself, and the bigger the better.

He was the recognized controller of a certain company A. whose shares Rhodes purchased from small holders in the open market and registered in his own name. As a result the price was run up considerably, but when Barney had acquired the majority of the holding it was evident that Rhodes's attempt to gain control was permanently defeated, and Rhodes frankly acknowledged this to Barney. In the meantime it became evident that a neighbouring property belonging to another company, B., would add very materially to the strength and position of A.; and Rhodes, who received the credit, though the whole scheme was Beit's, quietly picked up a very large holding in this company, but did not take transfer of the shares; hence the strength of his holding in the company remained unknown. Barney, not wishing to lay out further sums, had intended to effect an amalgamation with this Company B., and Rhodes, having a large but not sufficiently decisive holding in Barney's company A., had raised objections, so nothing was done. For some months Rhodes sat tight, but eventually he conveyed to Barnato the fact that he was 'fed up' with this useless expenditure and would no longer resist Barnato's desire to amalgamate with and secure control of the mine belonging to B.

After some sharp discussion of the terms the amalgamation was agreed to and when completed it was revealed that a very large proportion of the shares in B., which by amalgamation would become shares in the enlarged company A., were the property of Rhodes; so large a proportion that the control of the new combined company would pass into Rhodes's hands. Barney saw what it meant and struck his flag and made terms.

In a field which was seemingly purely materialistic and

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normally marked by irritations and methods of pettiness, selfishness and trickiness, this transaction was regarded as an amazing triumph. The ultimate aim was high. No pettiness, selfishness or injustice disfigured it, and within the limited sphere one could understand that those who knew it all recognized certain qualities which mark the successful general—long vision, careful preparation, patience and recognition of the key position before the attempt to seize it.

Other instances of the same kind came to mind, and it is possible that these may be regarded as something better than mere gossip, and serve the purpose of enabling others, as they enabled me, to realize some features of the struggle whose final result was the creation of a great factor in South Africa.

CHAPTER II

KIMBERLEY MEMORIES

AMONG the well-known and successful men in Kimberley, a wealthy leader in commercial circles, was E. W. Tarry; in business, and socially, a well-respected man; a leader in the Wesleyan community; kindly in his personal relations, a very strong temperance reformer; and, at the cost of constant personal efforts, helpful to those who needed help in this respect.

Without any large ideas or any conviction about the necessity for fusion and reorganization in the diamond mines, he had yet acquired a very considerable interest, especially in one important company—the Standard. He was shrewd and cautious, like many another good man, and, like many another who is prominent and strong in certain denominations, he was close and unimaginative where money was concerned.

The amalgamators had tried in every way to effect a deal with Tarry for his entire holding, but the more evident the importance of this deal became the more carefully and stubbornly did Tarry stand out against it. There was strong competition to obtain the control, and the shares were already run up to beyond their real value. This, it will be understood, was legitimate and quite a common practice when it became necessary to acquire control for the greater ultimate purpose. For, in the end, those who were promoting the amalgamation could calculate the cost of it, and therefore how they would come out ultimately, only on calculating the total outlay. It did not matter whether here and there an individual share cost 10s. or £10; everything went into the pool of total cost. The sellers, therefore, knowing this and desiring to get all they could, were not uneasy when on their own calculation they could see that the price offered was more than the intrinsic value. They still hung out to squeeze the last penny possible out of the buyers and founders of the amalgamation in the belief that the latter would not hesitate to buy at an actual loss to secure their ultimate object. Thus Tarry was among those who, when his Standard shares had risen from their original price to £100 a share, merely felt that things were going the right way and would not commit

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himself. The competition in the market continued and no matter whether it was bluff or conviction, the shares went to £200 and still the buyers were willing, and still Tarry was shy. And the game went on.

Other dealers in the market knew this position; knew that while Tarry held out, the market would rise; that when Tarry sold, the competition and support would cease and shares would probably drop. So there was fuel to feed the fire for some time.

At the time there was a diamond broker in Kimberley named Stransky. Afterwards I got to know him fairly well when he settled on the Rand. I do not think anybody living could have known him very intimately, but I always felt that in the difficult circumstances I 'got along' very well with him. More than that it would not be right to claim. The circumstances which seemed to isolate him largely from his fellows were various handicaps under which he suffered. It was not that he was a Jew, and a Russian or Polish Jew most obviously, but that that fact was thrust upon one by the evidence of his person. He really looked like some of those offensive caricatures intended to ridicule the entire race. He had very prominent Jewish features, and large, watery, expressionless eyes of a slatey colour. He had a shaven face but his complexion was almost dull blue, as one sees in dark-haired men when they are ill. He always seemed to have a stubby growth of a few days, I don't remember every seeing him freshly shaven. In manner he seemed to be the most gloomy and morose of creatures. He was unconventional, untidy and even dirty in his clothing, and to cap it all he was regarded as a heavy drinker and was most frequently drunk and always smelling of liquor.

Stransky in those days occupied an office within a few yards of E. W. Tarry's; also in the immediate neighbourhood there was a bar; in fact in those days no one was out of reach of a bar. Tarry got to know something of Stransky's habits and used to see him from time to time perhaps coming out of the bar, perhaps wiping his lips. His sympathy for those who were falling by the way; his religion and his human desire to help, prompted him without a moment's hesitation to get to know Stransky. It was a kindly, fine act, prompted by the best of motives; but, sad to say, there are two views of these things. Stransky was no weakling; he blamed no one but himself; he concealed nothing, and his first response to Tarry was: "What the Hell's it got to do with you. This is my job—mind your own business!" However, Tarry was not to be choked off in this way, but good humouredly and

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persistently, day after day, used to try all he could to persuade Stransky to give up drink, until at last Stransky got so accustomed to his efforts that he treated them as part of the day's experience—sometimes an amusing one and sometimes not, when he was very rude indeed. In his own gloomy, morose style he even appeared at times to chaff Tarry, who very often told him of the risks he ran as a broker dealing with large affairs, and said that some day when his brain was clouded by liquor he would make a mistake that would ruin him.

This went on for months. Neither of them seemed to tire of the eternal sparring, chaffing or squabbles; neither was deterred by the very obvious failure to make any progress; but in that big community there was another who knew Stransky better than anyone, another whose kindness of heart and generous spirit had prompted him to show his friendly feelings, not by preaching and reforming, but by putting in Stransky's way things which seemed to be more essential for life even if they did contribute means to indulge his failings. It was the old case of the unbeliever being more human and more understanding than the Christian, who aims higher and is content to preach and not always to set an example. The kindness of heart, the human feeling that understood his case, that flattered his manhood by enabling him to earn something, that never depressed or discouraged him by preaching, made a lifelong impression on Stransky. But I do not know the exact circumstances or causes of what occurred immediately afterwards.

One day as Tarry was crossing the street going to his office Stransky came out of the bar, and it was evident that that was not his first visit. Stransky had his broker's book in his hand and Tarry, seeing that he was indisputably drunk, became emphatic in his warning, and very sorry for the victim of what seemed to be a disease. As he reached his own door he insisted upon Stransky going in, and there spoke to him most earnestly and in the strongest terms, referring to the broker's book which he had seen open in Stransky's hands and telling him that he was not fit to do any business and had much better go home and sleep it off as he would be sure to muddle things up and spoil his business, whatever it was. Stransky, pulling himself together, answered sullenly and very rudely in the sense previously indicated. Who gave Tarry the right to interfere? What had it to do with him? He could look after himself and his own business and did not want any damn preaching or interference, and would not stand it! But Tarry was not to be put off by this. Stransky turned on him suddenly and said: "My brain's as clear as yours is and

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my business is as good as yours. You think you are talking to a loafer. I'll buy the whole of your Standards."

Tarry stopped suddenly and listened, and then, as he afterwards admitted, the thought occurred to him that he had so far failed to impress Stransky and would give him a good lesson now; knowing that Stransky's means would not enable him to buy a large block and that he was in such a condition that no one else would deal with him. So he answered at once that he would be glad to do business if it would do Stransky a good turn, provided it was done on business lines. Stransky asked what he meant and he said: "Well, first of all I want to know the price or the terms, and secondly I require a broker's note." That was agreed to as reasonable.

"Well, what do you want for them?" asked Stransky.

Tarry replied as before that he was not making an offer but would consider one. "What's the price to-day?" he added.

"£300," said Stransky.

Tarry, although not intending to hold Stransky to it, replied in the same style as before: "Yes, but I expect to see them go to £400."

Promptly the answer came from Stransky: "I'll give you £400." And Tarry, exasperated by this surprising, almost indecent, manifestation of drunkenness, said: "Make out the note"; which was done in due form on the spot; payment to be made next day.

Tarry retired, glowing with the consciousness of a good act promptly done, and anticipating a call early next morning from Stransky, with an appeal to him to forget the drunken freak.

At nine o'clock next morning Stransky did call. He looked the same as the day before, his sallow face, his morose and even hostile look unchanged, and without a word of explanation placed on Tarry's desk the cheque certified by the bank for the huge sum. Then came the collapse. Then came details, mainly from Tarry, that have been quoted herein. Then Tarry lost his head, as though he had been robbed of his property instead of being paid 33 per cent over the market price; and then were seen the satisfied smiles of those who rejoiced that another big obstacle to unification had been removed.

I heard the foregoing details only some little time after the event and did not get to know Stransky until some time later when he came to the Rand. He was a member and frequenter of the Rand Club and I had noted his presence and appearance many times; indeed, who could help observing that gloomy,

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unattractive figure? I even wondered who his friends and sponsors were, but never observed an indication of friendship or frequent association with anyone. I never saw him partake of a meal and do not recall him as sharing a drink with anyone at the Club bar. To the most friendly greeting he would often respond with a nod and a grunt and, more often, appeared to make no acknowledgment at all. He must have done business in broking with a sufficient number, and no doubt had some good clients to whom his expressionless face and complete silence offered a guarantee which they valued.

At that time, owing to my position in Wernher, Beit & Co.'s branch of Eckstein's, the leading house on the Rand, and to my own personal interest and activity in public life, I was in contact with many and various types and activities. Those were the days when politics were beginning to play a very important part, when the growing strength and activity of the new population justified and demanded a more up-to-date and liberal policy, and demanded some recognition of the rights of the civilized man. There were many cleavages. The mining or commercial interests had their own special viewpoints; the land owners also, the traders yet another. The white workers on the mines or in the towns, although not then organized as an industrial or political party, saw things from their own special angle; but cutting across these things which are common to every country there was the political issue. Thus, in every group in that heterogeneous mass, although the vast majority were British or pro-British, having come directly or indirectly from some portion of the British Empire, there were still a number who, for personal business reasons or because of their antecedents, held different views.

Whilst anxious and working for an improvement in conditions, those who came from or were connected with other European nations seemed to be moved less by any sympathy with the Boer than by an obdurate mistrust and dislike of the British due to the inherent jealousy of England which characterized continental Europe in those days. Generally speaking, but not by any means without strong exceptions, the Jews confined their interests to the business of money-making. They wanted no disturbance of any kind; political reforms seemed to offer no improvement in their business. To a very considerable extent the Stock Exchange, representing the share business, was also sufficiently occupied with its own affairs. Generalizations like this cannot describe the whole truth. At best perhaps they express only the general impressions prevailing at the time; and it was just here

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that I got to know something of Stransky and to think of him more often and more sympathetically than had seemed possible.

I entered the Club one day and had barely reached the hall when, owing to the crush, I stopped face to face with Stransky and greeted him as for some time I had done with a friendly nod and a word or two. He was standing with his face to the door, so to say blocking my way, but made no attempt to let me pass. As I looked into his eyes they seemed to me to have acquired a more human expression, almost interested, almost friendly. Perhaps that made me pause. Then he almost smiled, and in his deep guttural voice said: "That was fine; I'm glad you said it!"

I was entirely confounded, for I had not the remotest notion what he was alluding to, but in that morning's papers there was a report of a meeting held the previous day, at which I had spoken and made some allusion to Rhodes's work. I only understood his reference when he added: "Rhodes is the greatest man this country has ever known; the greatest man in the world perhaps; but I am sorry you did not tell them about Beit. Rhodes could never have done his work without Alfred Beit." Then, with a brief nod and a sort of grunt he turned round and disappeared into the crowd.

To me it was a staggering revelation. Stransky of all people hot on politics, devoted to Rhodes and Beit, and patiently, though silently, pro-British, a believer in England.

That was my real introduction to Stransky. After that we met many a time. Frequently, he was morose, moody or proof against even simple civility, at other times there was a softening in his expression, the equivalent of cordiality and expansiveness in others. The conversations were always of the briefest, and most often opened by the reference on his part to something in public affairs concerning which I had written or spoken or taken some part. The very essence of his soul seemed to be expressed, but with the severest restraint, in these few remarks. He revealed time and again the utmost devotion and the utmost admiration for Rhodes and Beit, and the warmest affection for the latter. On the rarest occasions he would recall most interesting incidents connected with Kimberley, but although I had for some time known from others the details of the Tarry transaction he never once referred to it. I would have liked to hear it all from him and would not have hesitated to ask but for what one could not help calling the dignity of the man, which protected him against attempts to break through the barrier of silence he himself regarded as an obligation of honour in his business.

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Each revelation of his feelings surprised me afresh, but I think the greatest of all was when he spoke with unexpected emphasis about the Union Jack. Something I had said and he had seen in the papers in defence of England and of British policy had roused him; and that day, as often, there was no prolonged or explanatory remark, he just broke out and said almost word for word what another most prominent compatriot of his, who was popularly regarded as thinking of nothing but money, said to me years afterwards:

“The Union Jack!” he exclaimed. “What do they know of it? *I* know. I was a boy and not as good as a dog in Russia, and I was smuggled across to London before I could speak a word of English—and there was the Union Jack. I had been lower than the beasts—more helpless; and there I saw it flying and I was a human being—a man! Do you think I ever forget it and what it means? The power; the justice; the wisdom! These people do not know it; the people from the Continent do not know it; and, what is more, they do not want it. I know it because I have felt it. Rhodes knows it because he is wise and loves the country, and if they would listen to him it would be better for all of us.” x

I began by telling of the difficulties in the way of the amalgamation; but by far the greater interest for me has always resided in the story of Stransky. The picture slowly and partly revealed of a man who, in the face of every physical and social handicap, lived an unknown life in which his spirit rose to levels undreamt of by others; whose greatest happiness and warmest remembrance was that he, born to the level of the beasts, had found shelter under the Union Jack, and had been enabled to become while life lasted a human being and a man.

Stransky's devotion to Rhodes, unsuspected, silent, secret, was by no means a rare manifestation of the influence of Rhodes's character, of his personality, and of what is often called magnetism. There were thousands of examples of this amongst those who knew him intimately, and those who had neither seen nor heard him. Perhaps the instances amongst those who knew him intimately were essentially more striking and convincing than others, for the simple reason that he passed unscathed the common risk that familiarity breeds contempt. On many occasions I heard Barney Barnato speak of him in the warmest terms of admiration and regard, and in his own colloquial, emphatic way pay convincing tribute to the trust which Rhodes inspired in those who might well have been expected, even by those best able to judge, least likely to be subject to his influence.

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The Articles of Association of the De Beers Co. have been described by the highest judicial authorities as unique; the most comprehensive constitution of any mining company in the world. When submitted for approval to the founders of De Beers Consolidated they were regarded by most of them as absurdly far-reaching and comprehensive. Of course, most of them did not know what was in Rhodes's mind. Opposition was expected from Barnato, who had concentrated on the practical issues of a mining company; but Barnato supported Rhodes, and I heard him give the reason: that Rhodes had done so much for them in the unification of the mines and was so big a factor both now and for the future, that one did not like to oppose him; and he added, with what looked like ludicrous flippancy: "After all, every man has got a fad. This is Rhodes's fad; it will please him. Let him have it!"

And so the Constitution of De Beers, which later enabled Rhodes to open up the North, came into being without opposition.

Barnato threw an interesting light on Rhodes's methods and influence when describing the negotiations for the acquisition of the great Wesselton mine. In conversation he was generally recklessly outspoken, but more than that, he not infrequently adorned his vivacious narratives with absurd exaggeration, both in statement and in manner, and this characteristic was revealed equally whether speaking critically or appreciatively; but, making fair allowance for this, one got some valuable light from his account of this negotiation. Substantially this is what he said:

"The Board consisted of twelve or fifteen Directors; Rhodes was Chairman. The Wesselton Mine had been the talk of Kimberley for a long time, and of course we had discussed it from our point of view lots of times. When Rhodes brought up the proposition that we should acquire this mine not a single one of the Directors agreed with him. He was looking far ahead to obtain control of the output. Whilst we all shared that aim, this particular undertaking seemed to be going too far and to be unjustified. However, Rhodes forced the issue and brought the matter up before the full Board. I do not believe anyone had a doubt about the result and only wondered that he should have invited a rebuff.

"There were at least a dozen present. He sat at the head of the table and said that he wanted our guidance. He knew that we were not in favour of his views but he would like to talk it over and submit it to our judgment after we had considered the facts.

"It was a very long meeting; he made a very good case;

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but, dash it all, there was not a man at the table who did not know more about mining than he did; and we were all practical men, and knew that in this matter we knew much more than he did. He did not try pressure or coercion, but was very reasonable and patient; and scores of times, until one was almost bored by it, he would say: 'Gentlemen, you know much more about this part of the business than I do and I want your advice and guidance for it is a very important decision to take.'

"That was about the position when we adjourned for luncheon to resume later on. Up to that time I give you my word there was not a single one who agreed with Rhodes and who had not spoken positively against the proposal; but he sat there patiently waiting for us to be converted or to give way. And, by Gosh, so we did! The proposal was accepted unanimously; and what a jolly good thing it was, too, as it turned out; he was quite right!"

Yet another incident which reveals and very largely explains the trust which Rhodes inspired, and the authority of his personality, was described to me by one who was a colleague and associate and intimate follower for many years; and I take the liberty, which I believe would be condoned, of repeating what was told to me—names and all.

Sir David Harris is, I think, the oldest living director of De Beers and associate of Rhodes in Kimberley. He was, and I believe still is, the representative of Barnato Brothers, and I believe is related to the family. He is a Jew by birth; I know nothing of his religion, nor would it matter except to explain a point in his very amusing story. Broad-minded, popular, public spirited, he is incapable of prejudice against people on the grounds of denomination or religion. He is one of the most entertaining of raconteurs; but the vivacity of expression, the gusts of laughter that created an atmosphere of kindness; the gesticulation and play of the hands that drove the point home, all these being absent from the cold print deprive his yarns of much of their individuality, and one is conscious of the presumptuous attempt to repeat one of them and to give a hint of explanation.¹ When a fellow-member of the House of Assembly, and on other occasions, I had many opportunities of talking over old times and old history with Dave Harris, and gladly availed myself of them. One evening, when we had been chatting on the same old subjects, he switched round suddenly on me and to my astonishment asked: "D'I ever tell you how the Christian

¹ Sir David Harris's reminiscences have recently been published by the Central News Ltd.

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beat the Jews?" Instead of waiting for a reply he roared with laughter and plunged straight into his narrative.

It was another instance of the farsightedness of Rhodes and of his determined and authoritative action when such was called for. Rhodes, and no doubt his immediate colleagues, had all along realized that to secure control of the mines for working purposes, with the efficiency and economy that would result, would not provide a solution of past troubles or assure success in the future. Two other conditions were required, namely: the control of the output or of the sale of the output so as to safeguard against over-production and the flooding of the diamond market. Secondly, and the necessary complement, would be the purchase of the output from the producers so as to be able to ration out the diamonds in such quantities and at such times as the world's diamond market could absorb them.

Eventually, after the consolidation of the mines, what was known as the Diamond Syndicate was formed as a sort of balancing reservoir which could receive and hold diamonds for a period if the demand and the supply did not mutually balance. All agreed that something of this sort was necessary, but no actual attempt had been made and there were frequent embarrassments and a constant dread that some sudden over-production might cause a disaster and discourage all attempts to co-operate and maintain stability in the diamond market. A serious and constant danger in all these co-operative movements is that unless the so-called co-operators or producers are bound together and subject to severe penalties, a condition by no means easy to devise, there will always be some to break away and to take what advantage they can for themselves. In Kimberley the difficulty was very great, because those who were prominent in the market were in Kimberley for the sole purpose of dealing in diamonds, and it was too much to expect that on the advice of anyone, even an authority, an individual dealer should withhold his diamonds from the market because it would be better for all not to offer so many at the same time, when that dealer knew, or believed, that his greatest safety would be to put his diamonds on the market at once; especially if there was the slightest doubt as to the steadiness of the market. Thus, the position was that all were interested in the mines as producers, all were also interested in the market and buyers or sellers of the product. There was therefore neither law nor authority, combination or individual, who could be looked upon as an impartial judge and authority.

Realizing this, Rhodes adopted the principle that his duty

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as chairman was to look after the shareholders; he himself would have nothing whatever to do, as a buyer, with dealing in the product of the mines, but would give his whole attention and effort to securing for the benefit of the shareholders the best returns obtainable. This assumption of the position of impartial arbiter might have been regarded as arrogant and arbitrary. His certain conviction that it would be accepted in the right spirit was not less marked, but the unquestioning acceptance of this position by all was surely the most striking of the three factors. His strongest opponents and his closest associates alike accepted his decisions without question.

In the course of the negotiations for amalgamation a company of considerable importance had been acquired, and among its assets was an accumulation of diamonds, the results of many months of working. At that period the diamond market was in a nervous condition and it was well realized that the releasing of a mass of stones would have a very serious effect upon prices; so well realized, in fact, that Rhodes and his friends, who were directing the amalgamation, were by no means anxious to acquire this mass of diamonds if any safe alternative could be discovered; but it was imperative that they should acquire them so as not to leave them for others to throw on a weak market and thus imperil the position of the whole industry, and of course seriously affect the completion of the great scheme. They were indeed between the devil and the deep sea. It was then that Rhodes devised the solution. Again he is credited with it all, but everyone knew that he took no steps of this character and magnitude without consultation and advice from Alfred Beit who, indeed, in many cases was, as we have seen, the originator of the ideas.

The preliminaries took some considerable time. The value of these diamonds was well over half a million, and as they included the entire output of the one mine there was an endless variety amongst the stones.

As a great many know, the quality and value of diamonds vary enormously and the grades or classes into which an output may be divided are very numerous, according to size, colour, shape, cleavages, flaws, estimates of how they will turn out when cut, etc., etc. Classification of this kind is a highly expert work and very few indeed are capable of doing it. Rhodes, as chairman, gave confidential instructions to their principal expert, acknowledged to be the best on the fields; and when the classification had been completed and each little parcel of identical quality and value done up in separate packages, he got together the principal dealers in diamonds. Of course these included nearly all the principal

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shareholders in De Beers, and therefore, you might say, all the principal movers in the amalgamation except Rhodes himself, who never dealt in the diamond. All the biggest were there, either personally or by acknowledged representatives, yet it was taken for granted that whatever might be the proposals which were submitted to them, his closest colleagues would have discussed them beforehand and would support them, so that there was a great deal of mystery and excitement about this negotiation.

They met in the Board Room of De Beers' offices and down the one side of the room there was a teak trough, the bottom of which was 12 inches wide and the sides about 2 inches high. Over the whole length of this trough of many feet there were laid sheets of white paper exactly fitting the floor of the trough, and slightly overlapping, as roofing does, from the top towards the bottom. On this paper were arranged methodically, and in what the diamond dealers would regard as logical sequence, the various little piles, collections or classes into which the diamonds had been sorted. Everything was arranged to give the best and easiest opportunities to potential buyers to inspect the stones and estimate their value.

It is impossible for me to convey the scene as Dave Harris described it. He knew everyone intimately just as he knew the diamond business intimately. He represented Barnato's, and from his description it was abundantly evident that he had no conception whatever, not the faintest apprehension, of Rhodes's final masterstroke. He described the scene vividly, in his own inimitable way—how differently it affected different individuals; many of them, experienced as they were, were obviously very nervous; the amount at stake was very large and the results of these negotiations might affect them most seriously. They were called upon to take a very grave decision. Rhodes explained to them very frankly, and in his usual practical way, what his proposal was, namely, that they should first of all have time to inspect; therefore he had had Arend Brink to grade and classify the stones so as to give them the best chance of estimating values. They were to have as much time as they required to inspect the stones and also to talk matters over among themselves. What he, Rhodes, required was a cash offer for the whole lot, made on behalf of all present, or of a sufficient number. They could agree amongst themselves as to the proportions they would take and as to how payment should be made, but he, acting for the shareholders alone, would decide whether an offer which they should make was adequate, and, if not adequate according to his judgment, he would decline it at once. In any case, what he required