

# THE LIFE OF JAMESON

## CHAPTER I

### BIRTH AND BOYHOOD

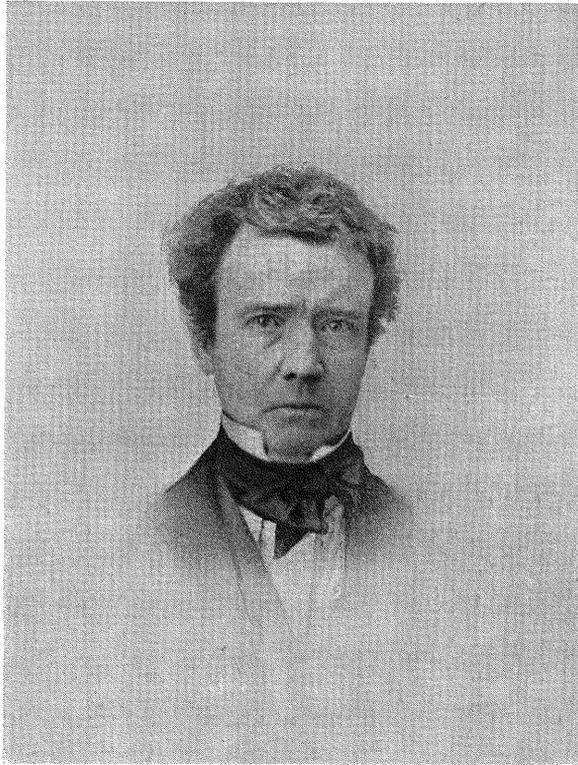
'O' kent and cantie folk he came.'

LEANDER STARR JAMESON, whose strange adventurous story is the subject of this book, was born in Edinburgh on February 9, 1853. The middle of the nineteenth century was an expansive age for the British people; they were then developing the world heritage left to them by their forefathers, and Jameson was one of a family of no less than eleven children.

These Jamesons came, so the tradition goes, from the Shetland Islands; and both their origin and their crest, a ship in full sail, with '*Sine motu*' for motto, suggest that they once followed a seafaring life. But they had been long settled in Leith and Edinburgh. Thomas Jameson, Leander's great-grandfather, and Thomas's son, also Thomas, the grandfather, were shipowners and merchants of the port and burgesses of the city, and it is said that the grandfather made a fortune in whale-oil and soap-boiling during the French wars, and lost part of it by reason of the peace. Nevertheless, he must have been a well-to-do citizen, for he established his son, Leander's father, as a Writer to the Signet, a member, that is to say, of a close corpora-

tion of lawyers enjoying certain privileges and monopolies before the Court of Session. Entrance to this corporation costs £500, and if Robert William Jameson had been of the normal type of that staid race of lawyers who live and practise in those stately streets and terraces of smooth freestone upon the north side of Edinburgh, he would have become a wealthy and prosperous citizen. But the seeds of revolt, both in politics and literature, then being sown over Europe, found a lodgment even between the granite setts and cobbles of Edinburgh, somehow surviving the snell east winds that sweep bare the very bones of the city. The young Writer to the Signet probably belonged in his student days to the roystering Court of Christopher North, to which the Ettrick Shepherd was Poet Laureate. The novels of Scott, the poems of Shelley, and the oratory of Brougham were more to his liking than Erskine's *Principles* or Mackenzie's *Institutions*. It was perhaps his misfortune—or at any rate the misfortune of his family—that Jeffrey should have praised his poetry and the Lord Chancellor his oratory.<sup>1</sup> His dramatic poem *Nimrod* made a mild sensation when it was published in 1848, but the present writer had to cut its long-neglected leaves when he looked it up at the British Museum. Yet reading it the attentive critic may clearly perceive that Robert Jameson just fell short of genius. It is in the fashion of its time. Byron's *Cain* and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* are its more obvious inspirations. *Nimrod*, hunter and philanthropist, courageously fights his way through a terrifying world peopled by archangels and primeval

<sup>1</sup> 'Sir John Campbell, afterwards Lord Chancellor, said that he (Jameson) was the best hustings speaker he ever heard.'—*Dictionary of National Biography*.



**ROBERT JAMESON HIS FATHER**

monsters. He converses familiarly with Abdiel and Abadonna and has spiritual conflicts with Satan and the priests of Baal. The Deluge and the Tower of Babel furnish the dreadful stage—

‘ Clouds swept around  
While a cold dead man’s hand grasped thine ; its joints  
Oozed with black poison as it dragged thee down  
Through echoing vaults peopled with human wails.’

Only the very great—a Virgil, a Dante, or a Milton—can venture to such heights and depths with impunity. But the reader of this poem must admit that although Jameson was not one of these, he had eloquence, energy, and the gift—dangerous in verse—of rhetoric. And there are touches here and there of pure poetry, as for example—

‘ The airy music lessening,  
Floating away on gentlest wing,  
Till all with drowsy silence close  
(The blest beginning of repose),  
Like the last, faint, blushing sunbeam leaving the sleeping  
rose.’

*Timoleon*, a tragedy in five acts, was performed at the Adelphi Theatre in Edinburgh in 1852, and ran to a second edition. The tale of the patriot, touched by ‘ a shade of blame . . . in consequence of the murder of his elder brother Timophanes,’ is overloaded with anti-slavery propaganda. The nap of these philanthropies is now worn threadbare by time, and the sentiments of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in the mouth of an ancient Athenian hardly satisfies the historical sense. We must both laugh and grieve a little over these swelling orations and that generous enthusiasm. But they tempted Jameson farther and farther from the dull and safe paths of

his legal profession. He threw himself into every liberal cause. The Reform, Anti-Slavery, and Anti-Corn Law movements enlisted his eloquence and absorbed his energy; but suited ill, as the reader may suppose, with the practice of a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh. He was plainly a Radical, suspect also of Free Thought. Worse still, he was an innovator in Municipal politics. What the public gained his clients suffered, and his practice fell into decay with the growth of his fame and his family.

That family was calculated rather on the comfortable perquisites of the law than on the little oatmeal of literature. In the year 1835 he had married one of the Pringles of Symington, and those who compare the portrait of the son with that of the mother will gather whence the air of breeding, and in particular the delicately-curved, kestrel-like nose, was derived.

The Pringles had owned the hilly pastures of Symington for five hundred years; Charles the Second had granted a younger son lands in South Carolina, near Charleston, where a branch of the family long remained; they had their town house in one of the closes of the High Street, and they once owned the estate of Coates Hall but unluckily sold it before it was covered, as it is now, by the massive and stately streets and terraces of Western Edinburgh. They were related besides to the Pringles of the Haining, of Terquhan, and of Tersants, and other such 'braw, braw lads of Gala Water.'

Robert Jameson's father-in-law, Major-General Pringle, is still remembered in family and local tradition, a soldier like a steel sword in temper and bearing. His wife was Christian Watson, also of 'kent folk,' as we gather from the fact that Chris-



**CHRISTIAN PRINGLE HIS MOTHER**

tian's sister married a Haig of Bemersyde. Their daughter Christian, whom Robert Jameson married, was, as we should expect of her ancestry, a lady of character. A strong sense of duty was the best part of her inheritance, and corrected, as far as was possible, the effects of her husband's rashness.

Leander—'Lanner'—as his brothers called him—was the youngest of eleven, all boys save one. Some little time before his birth the Jamesons left their house in Warriston Crescent for the flat (5 Charlotte Street) where Leander was born. The names of his christening, Leander Starr, were his father's homage to an American who had done him a service in some business affair. When the boy was only eighteen months old his father resolved to put Edinburgh and law behind him.

Robert Jameson had not prospered as a Writer to the Signet—whether because he disliked the formal walks of law or because his clients disliked his Radicalism and his free expression of Free Thought. A Whig friend and patron, the Earl of Stair, came to the rescue; Robert Jameson was made editor of the *Wigtownshire Free Press*, controlled by that nobleman in his party's interest, and the Jameson family thereupon moved to the headquarters of the newspaper, the little border town of Stranraer, where the family remained until 1860, that is to say, until little Lanner had reached the age of seven. He was by all accounts an alert and sprightly child. It may be fanciful to suggest that he inherited a precocious interest in the phenomena of nature from his grand-uncle, Robert Jameson, famous in his day as Professor of Geology at the University of Edinburgh, but certain it is that at the age of two—so the old ladies of his family relate—he was seen holding a

piece of ice before the fire to warm it, as he said, before eating it, and about the same time he was extremely concerned at the changing phases of the moon. When at last he saw it again in the full, he cried in delight, 'The moon is mended!' His confidence in himself we may trace back to the age of six, when it is recorded that he drank a glass of sherry and exclaimed, 'Now I feel as if I could go and do everything.'

It is characteristic, too, that although he left Stranraer at the age of seven, and never as far as we know returned to the town, he remembered with a certain humorous appreciation the natives of the place. Thirty years afterwards (in a letter he wrote to his brother Sam from Fort Salisbury at the end of 1890) he retails with his usual gusto some gossip he had gathered from a Stranraer man who happened to be there—

'My old flame of eight years old or less, Jeannie Ellison, is still in Stranraer and unmarried . . . old David Guthrie still to the fore, as lively as ever, etc. etc.'

In 1860 Robert Jameson inherited a legacy, and invested the money in the purchase of two small provincial newspapers, the *Suffolk and Essex Free Press* and the *Essex and Suffolk News*, both published in the town of Sudbury. For eighteen months Robert Jameson laboured to strike sparks from the unresponsive East Anglian marl, during which time Leander learned his rudiments at Sudbury Grammar School; but the place was judged not to be suitable to the health of Mrs. Jameson, and presently the family removed to London. By this time it had become clear that the venture could only end in the total loss of the capital invested, and soon after

Robert Jameson sold both papers for about half of what he had given for them.

Thenceforth the family lived in Chelsea and Kensington. Robert Jameson continued to write for the reviews, and, serene in failure, illuminated the family circle with his brilliant talk or consoled his tedium with the novels of Sir Walter Scott. When at last he died, in 1868, the love and true appreciation of these novels, an indomitable spirit, a native eloquence, a beautiful voice, a sprightly wit, and a conquering charm composed the inheritance he left to the youngest of his children.

Mrs. Jameson continued the battle of life with the unflinching courage of her race, supported as she was until he died by her father, the old General. The family were all carefully educated. Kate, the only daughter, and two of the brothers had been sent to school in Germany. The eldest son, Tom, the mainstay of the family, became a naval doctor at Plymouth, repressing higher ambitions in order to support his mother and educate his younger brothers. 'I see,' he said, 'a dark tunnel with £200 a year at the end of it.' Leander went to the Godolphin School in Hammersmith, an excellent school in its time but now no longer existing. There he did well both in lessons and in games. Short though he was of stature, and slight of build, he nevertheless excelled in running and jumping—an early promise of the indomitable spirit which was afterwards to support him in his arduous marches of war and exploration.

We get a clear glimpse of the boy from a bundle of letters written to his family while he was on a visit to Edinburgh, at the end of 1868; they bubble with the joy and gusto of fifteen, undamped by a

poverty which is part of the fun. There were Glasgow as well as Edinburgh cousins to be seen, and his thrifty mother had ordered it that the Glasgow visit should be made on the return journey. Part of one letter to his mother is devoted to a laborious explanation of how he divagated from this programme because 'Bobbie came in just five minutes before the time, and said that the return ticket was only 4s. 6d. and the single 3s. and besides if I had gone at the end by myself I would have had to take a cab for my portmanteau, so it was cheaper I went.' The exiguous contents of the said portmanteau troubled him a little, as he writes to his sister: 'I was an awful ass not to bring my dress boots. At Glasgow Bobbie and Alan never wore anything else, and then going out to those swell dinners I felt very clumsy without them; also it needed a great deal of management to make my single shirt do; of course I had to wear fronts; but I had to be very careful in my movements, as they would have come out, because my dress waistcoat is so open. It was well I brought the waistcoat or I would have had to stay at home altogether. Those were my only troubles, and they were very small.'

How much joy overtopped troubles appears in all the letters, especially when he writes to his beloved artist brother, Midge: 'Edinburgh looks splendid—quite different from any other town I ever saw. It is all so irregular, and the hills all round about it, and then when you are in Princes Street Gardens to see the rock which the Castle stands on rising up above you! But the people are better than the place. I am sure if you were here you would be quite converted as to sights being better than people.'

People were, indeed, always the most interesting part of life to Jameson. These boyish letters are already full of that delight in human nature which remained to the day of his death the staple of his entertainment and conversation. These Pringle and Jameson aunts and uncles and cousins are vastly more interesting to him than Holyrood and the Castle or the view from Corstorphine Hill.

In the year 1870 Lanner entered at University College, Gower Street, for the study of medicine. Tom, at that time a naval staff surgeon at Plymouth, lent him £100 to pay his fees. On January 25, 1870, he writes with some glee to Tom that he has passed his entrance, and that he rather favours University College because natural history is one of the subjects, whereas at King's he would have to 'grind' German and Divinity. We hear of him 'grinding' Xenophon's *Hellenics* for the entrance and finding Huxley's *Classification of the Animal Kingdom* 'not at all inviting.' He passes nevertheless, but fails for the Fellowship. 'I have been cursing the examiners and examination ever since,' he writes to Tom, 'so am rather tired of talking any more about it.' Yet in due course he distinguished himself as a medical student. He was Gold Medallist in *Materia Medica*, and after qualifying as a doctor was made Resident Medical Officer at University College Hospital.

The testimony of his contemporaries is that if he had remained in London he must have become a famous surgeon. His courage, his eager and alert mind, his habit of swift decision—these qualities, native to his character, would have made—and were making him—a reputation. In the great institution to which he was now attached there were at that time three Resident Surgeons, three Resident Physi-

cians, and a Resident Medical Officer in charge of the Hospital. Jameson—who was now both a Doctor of Medicine and a Bachelor of Science of the London University, and a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons and L.S.A. London—occupied all three positions successively.

The first two he obtained by examination, the last by election. As Resident Surgeon his chief was Marshall, President of the Royal College of Surgeons; as Resident Physician he served under Russell Reynolds; as Resident Medical Officer he was under Sir William Jenner. For a time he was Surgical Registrar, a post which included all the microscopic work of the hospital as well as the reporting of its surgical work. Again he was Ophthalmic Assistant to Stretfield, the Professor of Ophthalmology, and was himself for a time Demonstrator of Anatomy in the College. He also assisted Dr. Tilbury Fox, Professor of Skin Diseases. Such a list suggests what in fact he was, a brilliant young doctor with a great career before him. He was the friend and intimate of the great men he served. He had already made a reputation as a surgeon. Those who watched him at work say that never was touch more light, hand more confident, or eye more sure. Why then did he choose to exile himself in a Mining Camp in a South African wilderness?

Possibly there was an overpowering restlessness in his Northern blood. The London-Scottish family of whom he was one were already blowing like thistledown over the world. Of the brothers, Edward and Ross died in infancy; John was drowned at sea when he was eighteen; Tom, after serving as dresser in the Crimea, was settled as staff surgeon at Plymouth; Bob had gone to sea when

he was eleven, had been shipwrecked on an Australian coast, and had wandered for years in the Bush, serenely enduring all manner of incredible adventures; Julius was already in South Africa, the partner of one Irvine, a Scottish storekeeper in King William's Town; Sam was shortly to follow him as bookkeeper, and later as manager of the Johannesburg branch of the business; Middleton was drifting tranquilly into his artist life in Paris; and Kate, the eldest, and the only sister, had married her cousin Robert Pringle, and was happily settled in Edinburgh.

Leander began to wander too: first a short flight to Paris with Midge, where he saw the brief terrors of the Commune and the Prussian troops outside Paris;<sup>1</sup> then a longer flight to America 'with an opium-eater anxious to be cured of the same.'<sup>2</sup>

About this time a remarkable thing happened. Julius, as we gather from the letters, sent home a diamond. 'Julius's diamond,' Leander writes to Tom, 'is much larger than we expected, and appears to be nearly quite fine; but it is not cut, so, as he advises, I am going to keep it in its present condition till I can afford to make a swell affair of it.'

The diamond may have flashed in his mind as well as in his cravat when he chanced upon an application to the authorities of University College

<sup>1</sup> The two boys, as Middleton told the present writer long afterwards, were partly amused, partly horrified, to see a Prussian officer pull one of his men out of the ranks, shake him, box both of his ears, and throw him staggering back again.

<sup>2</sup> 'Really not at all a bad fellow,' he writes to Tom, 'except for the infernal opium. He takes about  $\frac{5}{8}$  of Batley's solution per day. I intend gradually to reduce him as much as possible—then, when that has gone as far as possible, cut him off entirely, and treat him like a lunatic for a week or two.'

History is silent as to the result, but one would be willing to wager—if there were any chance of a settlement—that Jameson cured him.

by a Dr. Prince, of Kimberley, in search of a partner. Certain it is that he offered himself, was accepted, arranged terms of partnership and succession to the practice, and sailed for South Africa in the *Drummond Castle* in the year 1878.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DIAMOND DIGGINGS

' But now it is high time for us to weigh our anores, to hoise up our sailes, to get cleare of these boisterous, frosty and misty seas, and with all speed to direct our course for the milde lightsome temperate and warme Atlantick Ocean over which the Spaniards and Portugales have made so many pleasant prosperous and golden voyages.'

WE gather from early portraits and the stories of old friends what sort of young man it was that gazed at the grey precipices of Table Mountain—those mighty gates of stone to a strange unknown land—from the taffrail of the *Drummond Castle* in the year 1878. Jameson was then twenty-five years of age, small of stature, very light and slim of body, boyish, keen and confident in look and bearing. And his confidence was already justified by achievement. Youngster as he was, he had directed a great hospital; he had been the idol of its students and of its nurses; his skill of hand and sureness of eye, as well as the swiftness and precision of his diagnosis, had already made him famous, at least in Gower Street. And Gower Street was a world in itself: to be Resident Medical Officer at University College Hospital was to be master of a very efficient, a very precise, and a very important organisation. It was to prove yourself a man as well as a physician. And this is the impression we get of Jameson at that time, the beau-ideal of a young Staff Surgeon, efficient, treating men and women with a masterly and humorous benevolence, learned already in that

greatest of all schools of humanity, the school of healing, and from this knowledge sympathetic with its weakness, tolerant of its frailties, accustomed already to command in the gravest possible emergencies, and to cut upon the instant with a keen swift knife into issues of life and death. With these qualities of manhood there were qualities peculiar to the man: an inherent charm, a brusque yet winning manner, chiefly compounded of mirth and sympathy, that none, or few, could resist, and a joyous almost reckless zest in life and carelessness of self and selfish interest. He was already a man in whom a man who knew men would repose his trust.

The young surgeon could hardly have had the time or the knowledge to dive very deep into the secrets of the fair capital through which he strolled for a day or two before starting upon his long journey to the north. A white city, half of the East and half of the West, partly Dutch, partly British, both African and Asiatic, more in the past than in the present—her broad sun-stricken streets, her old and stately Colonial houses, jealously green-shuttered, with romantic glimpse of pomegranate and vine in mouldering courtyard. As she lay under her hemisphere of mountain, beside her Bay, her appearance of profound slumber might have deceived even so keen an eye as Jameson's. Yet great issues were ripening at that time in Cape Town; a great struggle was going on between masters both of statecraft and politics. The Cape had then been governed for some half-dozen years by its own responsible Ministers; but the diverse forces of Crown and popular Government, of British Imperialism and Dutch Nationalism, were already almost come to a deadlock. Sir Bartle Frere, among the greatest of Colonial Governors,

was attempting the impossible task, to which he had been committed before his arrival, which was to break him in the end, of federating South Africa over the heads of its people. It had been attempted too late for the old dispensation and too early for the new. The Transvaal had been allowed to become a Republic: it was now—1878—annexed; the Orange Free State between it and Cape Colony was still independent; Natal to the east was a loyal Crown Colony; but the Cape was a State with Responsible Government in which the British of the towns were rapidly losing their old power before the newly united national sentiment of the Dutch farmers, nominally commanded by the Prime Minister, Molteno, but really directed by that sagacious National leader, Jan Hofmeyr.

When Jameson arrived the talk was all of federation: to the new-comer it might have seemed an easy task; Sir Bartle Frere must have already known better. First to let loose turbulent and contrary forces, to give them liberty, to give them head, and then to unite them by a mixture of force, persuasion, and *coup d'état*, was to be proved an impossible and disastrous experiment.

Kimberley lay six hundred miles to the north of Cape Town, and at that time the railway had penetrated only as far as Wellington in the midst of a pleasant region of mountain and valley, the valleys sparkling with swift rushing rivers, and clad with vine and orchard and oak coppice, the mountains scarred, precipitous, naked rock. Thence the coach climbed up through wild ravines into the wilderness of the Karoo. Strange indeed and desolate it must have seemed to the young London doctor—this high, vast, empty, interior region, its earth baked hard by

an almost perpetual sun, scantily clad with a sort of sage-brush, the 'Karoo' from which it took its name, its barren covering of sandstone and shale pierced with scarred and naked diorite, precipitous of side and often level as a wall, gaunt and sheer above the plain. Under the changeless sun of noonday it had a look of utter desolation, as of an earth long dead, as if it were the surface of the moon, yet it was touched at dawn and sunrise with the richest colours—rose, violet, amber—as with an unspeakable rapture. . . .

Through this desolate yet spell-weaving country, passing nothing but an occasional herd of goats or goat-like sheep, or a white-washed hut of sun-baked brick inhabited by the pastoral Boer, Jameson's coach laboured for five or six days until at last it reached the great Orange River, running in its deep rocky channel under a fringe of African willows and mimosas; and so on over roads growing worse, deep in parching sand, and large, round, and quite unbindable pebbles, until a cloud of fine, almost impalpable dust, a variety of unspeakable stench, the carcasses of oxen and horses, heaps of refuse, shanties made of gunny bags and old biscuit tins, companies of almost naked Kafirs, singing as they marched, with knobkerry on shoulder, tilted wagons with long spans of oxen, miners in jackboots, corduroy trousers, and blue shirts, hills of grey-blue spoil, and then streets lined with shanties of matchwood and corrugated iron, full of Gentiles and Jews from all parts of the earth, bore in upon him the appalling truth that here was his destination.

When the young Doctor had time to examine his new home more at leisure he found that the centre or rather the centres of activity were four enormous

pits, all within a mile or two of one another, the Kimberley, De Beers, Bultfontein, and Dutoitspan mines. A diamond field, as Mr. Gardner Williams truly says, bears no sort of resemblance to a jeweller's show tray, and these pits bore no resemblance to anything in the world that Jameson or anybody else ever saw before. They were already so deep that to look down into them required nerve and youth in a stranger. They were oval or roughly circular in shape, each of them covering some acres in area, surrounded by a huge framework of rough timber, from which numberless iron hawsers attached to windlasses descended into the depths. These wires, intricate and numerous as the threads of a spider's web, were constantly on the move upwards and downwards, bearing bags of raw hide, empty on their downward course but on their upward full of fragments of a rocklike blue-coloured clay of which these deep craters appeared to be full. And as Jameson's eyes grew accustomed to the dust and the depth he could discern that the bottom and sides of the pits were like the crumbling interior of an old Stilton cheese, gouged and hacked out without any sort of system, at all levels and at all angles. On the various steps and stairs, wells, ramps, terraces, and parapets so formed were gangs of naked Kafirs, their barbaric songs and shouts making a faint hum in the upper air. These with hoes and pickaxes were breaking up the clay and loading it into the leathern bags to be hauled up as they were filled by the white engineers working their donkey-engines on the scaffolding above. And behind the scaffolding the claim-holders themselves, or their servants, worked beside the crumbling heaps of diamond-bearing clay, spreading it out over the veld to be

decomposed by the weather or pounding it with hammers in their eagerness to release the diamonds it contained. And the clay, broken and sieved into a loose sand, was tumbled on to tables over which the sorters pored with unwinking eyes, picking out the greasy white crystals as they caught the rays of the sun.

Such, in rough outline, was the industry which supported the mixed population of thirty or forty thousand people who clustered and swarmed round mines and diamond market: the claim-holders themselves, chiefly British, honest and generous in the main, usually pressed for ready money to pay their Kafir gangs, and selling their diamonds as they found them to dealers, mainly Jewish, who lurked in their tin shanties in the centre of the growing town, or picked their way through the dust and the spoil-heaps to chaffer for stones round the sorting tables and tents of the diggers. Then there were the store-keepers and the merchants who supplied the camp with victuals and mining tools; the dealers in Kafir-truck, who sold blankets, mealie-meal, and even Tower muskets at great profits to the 'boys,' who hardly knew what to do with their wages; and beneath and around these the disreputable trades, labour-touts, liquor-sellers, illicit diamond-buyers, Jews and Levantines, a plausible, voluble, accommodating sub-community, so skilful in their intrigues, and so powerful in the interests which united them, as sometimes to threaten the very existence of the industry on which they battered.

We may suppose that Jameson, with his eager inquiring turn of mind, very soon mastered the brief history of this extraordinary place. Only eight years before, as the first chance acquaintance might have

told him, the swarming camp was a bare stretch of veld, like almost any other piece of country for hundreds of miles in any direction. It had only one feature to distinguish it—a pan, as it is called in South Africa, or depression in the ground, made water-tight by natural deposits of lime, so as to contain the waters of occasional thunderstorms, the only rainfall of those regions, as in a reservoir. This served to water the flocks of a neighbouring Boer, Abraham Pauls Du Toit, and was therefore called Du Toit's Pan.

The 'farm' of Du Toit was situated in the western angle formed by the junction of the Orange and the Vaal, and was about twenty-five miles distant from the 'river-diggings' of the Vaal. For it must here be explained that before the dry diggings of Du Toit's Pan were discovered, diamonds had been found in the bed and on the banks of this tributary of the Orange. In 1867 the little son of a pastoral Boer, watching his father's sheep and goats on the bank of the Orange River, thirty miles above its junction with the Vaal, gathered some shining pebbles, which lay in heaps and drifts in the river-bed. 'Here,' says Mr. Gardner Williams, 'were garnets with their rich carmine flush, the fainter rose of cornelian, the bronze of jasper, the thick cream of chalcedony, heaps of agates of motley hue, and many shining rock-crystals'<sup>1</sup>—wonderful treasures in the eyes of a child. He brought some of them home, and played with them on the earthen floor of pounded ant-heap, glazed with a weekly wash of liquid cow-dung. In the dusky light one of these stones so shone and sparkled that it attracted the notice of the farmer's

<sup>1</sup> *The Diamond Mines of South Africa*, by Gardner F. Williams. (1906.) Vol. I.

wife, who gave it to a neighbour, Schalk Van Niekerk, who passed it on to a travelling packman, John O'Reilly, who showed it to Mr. Lorenzo Boyes the local Magistrate, who sent it to Dr. Guybone Atherstone, a geologist of Grahamstown, who found after 'spoiling all the jewellers' files in the town,' that it was a 'veritable diamond weighing  $21\frac{1}{2}$  carats and worth £500.'

Then the search began, and in March 1869, a Griqua shepherd found the famous Star of South Africa, which he bartered with Van Niekerk for a span of oxen, who sold it to some Hope Town Jews for £11,200, who sent it to their fraternity in London, who sold it to Lord Dudley for £25,000.

The search grew hot, and a band of Natal pioneers, led by Captain Rolleston, of whom Herbert Rhodes, brother of Cecil Rhodes, was one, washed for and at last found diamonds in the gravel of the Vaal River, at a point about twenty-five miles to the north-east of Dutoitspan. This was at the beginning of 1870, and all through that year a growing stream of 'river-diggers' poured across the wilderness to work with pick and shovel under the mimosas and willows that made a pleasant shade along the banks of the Vaal. These diggers used to outspan before the last stage of their journey beside Dutoitspan, and in September 1870 it became noised about that a diamond had been picked up on a kopje or ridge near the house of Du Toit. Soon this stony ridge was covered with eager prospectors, who found first of all a thin layer of hard limestone, a mere incrustation on the surface; beneath, a sort of decomposed yellow ground, with streaks of greenish shale, and beneath this again the same yellow ground grown a little harder, like soft yellow cement, which could easily be broken

up by the pick and crumbled to dust in the sun. In this stuff they found diamonds, some on the surface, thrown up perhaps by a meerkat or an antbear, but not only on the surface, for they were scattered thinly, but with a certain rough approach to uniformity, through the 'stuff' below.

The diggers had no suspicion of anything more than a surface deposit of diamondiferous soil, but they found working on the ridge more profitable than working on the river. It was less pleasant, but it was also less laborious. It was very much easier to break up the clay and knock it to pieces at the side of the claim than to prise up the boulders of the river-bed in order to reach the gravel. And above all there were more diamonds. The invasions increased until there was no ground left unpegged on the ridge. The prospectors spread farther afield. Early in 1871 diamonds were found near the neighbouring farmhouse of Bultfontein, and in May they were discovered in the farm of Vooruitzicht. This farm, about two miles from Dutoitspan, had at one time been a portion of the farm of Bultfontein, but had been sold to D. A. and J. N. De Beer on April 18, 1860. It is a name that we must note particularly, for in due time De Beers' farm became De Beers Mine, the mine which Cecil Rhodes made the basis of his plans. Rush succeeded rush with find after find, and two months after De Beers was discovered came the famous 'New Rush' to Colesberg Kopje, a gently sloping hill one mile from De Beers, so called by a party of diggers from the Colonial town of Colesberg who discovered it, which developed later into the Kimberley Mine, no less famous than De Beers.

The first digger to cut down through the soft

yellow ground on the Dutoitspan kopje to the hard blue clay beneath carefully covered it up again, sprinkled some yellow ground over the blue, sold his claim, and left hurriedly, and it was generally believed that with the blue clay the miners had come to the bottom of the mine. But one miner, more enterprising than the rest, broke up the 'blue,' brought it to the surface, pounded it down with a mallet, and found diamonds. Moreover, the first diamond at New Rush was found seventy-six feet down. Its finders were sinking a well, and when they had got to that depth they discovered the stone, a magnificent diamond of 80 carats, sticking in the side of the shaft. There was no longer room for doubt. These were not surface deposits, they were diamond mines.

Now, before these mines were discovered, the 'farms' on which they were situated were so nearly worthless that their market price might be three-pence or sixpence an acre when a buyer could be found. The territory itself was of so little value and so little known that the question even of sovereignty was undecided. Some claimed it for the Orange Free State, others, with an equal show of reason, for one Waterboer, a 'bastard' chief, who said he was under the protection of the British Government. The river-diggers on the Vaal had pegged out their gravel in 'claims' of thirty-foot square, an arbitrary but convenient convention. These claims belonged to the prospectors who pegged them out; but were theirs only for as long as they worked them. The owner of the land asked for a small ground rent, and considered himself lucky if the diggers paid it. This custom of the river-diggings was transferred to the 'dry diggings' of Dutoitspan.

Let the reader suppose a round Stilton cheese, the common possession of a hungry boarding-house of twenty people. They agree to divide it into twenty squares, which are marked out on the top of the cheese, and registered. The boarders cut down into their own claims as their needs prompt them, but must eat some cheese at least once a week and are not allowed to encroach upon the claims of their neighbours. Boarders who leave can sell their claims to others, or subdivide their claims among several new-comers, or let their claims ; but they cannot take over more than one. Each digs down according to his taste or appetite, and as they go down, the encircling wall of the cheese and the growing inequalities of its surface crumble and fall in. It is easy to see in what difficulties, disputes, and uncertainties such a system would involve the boarders.

Truly, a curious example of evolution in the law of property. In 1869 the land is almost valueless, unsurveyed and sometimes unbeaconed, to be bought at sixpence an acre in great tracts whose owner lives unchronicled days in uncontrolled idleness. In 1870, with the discovery of a new value, ownership—or shall we call it effective occupation?—shrinks from thousands of morgen to thirty feet square per man, and depends on the almost unremitting toil of the individual digger. Then in 1871 a new dimension in values is discovered, and the new law of property is stretched to apply not only to superficial areas but to cover a value in cubic feet of soil. Here gradually the second law breaks down, and no doubt Jameson was told, as he gazed down into the mine, that one owner one claim was no longer possible, that the claims were being amalga-

mated into larger and larger blocks, which were now being owned and worked no longer by individuals but by syndicates and companies of diggers. The second convention was passing away, evolving into a new convention of monopoly, and the leader in this new movement was a young English claimholder who had been there almost from the beginning, a queer, dreamy, brooding young fellow—Cecil Rhodes.

## CHAPTER III

### THE EPIDEMIC

'He that is valiant, and dares fight,  
Though drubb'd can lose no honour by 't.'

BUTLER.

JAMESON was soon to discover that this camp of apparently insane activities in which he was landed was the seat of great affairs. But in the meantime, we may suppose, his chief interest was his immediate business, to make good as a doctor. His partner, Prince, an elderly man with a large practice, proposed to retire in favour of his junior at the end of 1881. That retirement was hastened by an unfortunate case, which gives us our first distinct glimpse of Jameson's qualities as a man. One of Dr. Prince's patients, a hysterical young woman, made a ridiculous charge against her doctor, which was hotly taken up by her husband. The husband, indeed, sought out Dr. Prince in his club, struck him in the face, and then sent two friends to challenge him to a duel. The old man, overwhelmed by this whirlwind attack, proposed to offer a conditional apology. If the lady felt herself insulted by his medical treatment he was willing to express his regret. Dr. Jameson took a very different line: 'You be d——d,' he said to the Seconds; 'you go and bring Mr. W—— here, and we'll speak to him and tell him the truth.'

Mr. W—— refused to listen to reason, and proceeded to placard the town with denunciations of

the moral and medical character of Dr. Prince. Dr. Prince was a meek man ; but this was too much for his patience and he proceeded to law. The case was tried, and both Dr. Jameson and Cecil Rhodes were among the witnesses. Rhodes's testimony that the husband was 'an exceedingly excitable man' was obviously true. As for Dr. Jameson, he helped to save his partner from an awkward position by the incisive clearness with which he gave his evidence. He had made careful notes at the time, he demonstrated the discrepancies in the lady's story, he showed how the charges she brought could not possibly have been true ; and he ended with the remark, which may here be set down as a maxim of prudence for the benefit of the medical profession : 'The earliest lesson taught him by his professor of medical jurisprudence was not to make examinations of females unless in the presence of another female, if possible, on purpose to guard against charges made by hysterical or unprincipled parties.'<sup>1</sup> The judge accepted Dr. Jameson's testimony at every point—that the lady had not called for the protection of her servant, who was in the next room ; that she had accepted a prescription from the doctor at the end of the visit of which she complained : on these and other points both Dr. Jameson's evidence and his deductions were conclusive, and the Court found for Dr. Prince.

The case, however, had been clearly too much for Dr. Prince's nerves : he sold the remainder of his practice to his partner and retired, and as Dr. Prince's share in the receipts for that year had been £5000, Dr. Jameson was now in command of a very considerable income.

His fame grew. His surgical skill was considered

<sup>1</sup> See the Kimberley papers for February 24, 1881.

marvellous, not only by laymen, but by his fellow-practitioners; he was master of the latest methods and was far more highly trained than any other doctor in the camp, and he soon became by common consent the first doctor in Kimberley. His fame indeed went far beyond the town. In the capital of the Orange Free State President Brand was then suffering from Bright's disease, and his medical adviser, an old German missionary, was not markedly successful with his prescription of soup made from tortoises taken from the neighbouring sluits. The Executive Council, regarding the illness of their beloved President as an affair of State, held a meeting and decided to call in the brilliant young doctor from Kimberley. Dr. Jameson arrived, and tactfully persuaded the German to try a more suitable treatment, whereby the President's health was considerably improved.

The Doctor's popularity was in no way diminished by a kindly irony habitual to him, especially when called in by anxious ladies to treat the more or less imaginary ailments of their babies and themselves. His humorous prescription to a fanciful patient who complained of a pain in her back—'rub it with a brick'—became proverbial in the camp, and the tradition remains in Kimberley to this day of the Doctor—how he used to drive—in a billycock hat—a very smart victoria with two very fast black horses; how he performed miraculous operations, and effected marvellous cures; of his wonderful kindness to the poor, and indeed to everybody; of the famous dances he gave, and the boxing matches at which he was bottle-holder; and of his skill and daring in the game of poker. There is a tradition, which may be just worthy of mention in passing—with the warning that it is quite unsupported by

evidence—that he once staked his savings, his practice, his house, his cart, and his horses on a single game, and lost and won them all back again the same night. The legend—and many other such floating stories of the same sort—may be a distortion of the incident related in Dr. Hans Sauer's little book, *The Far East Rand*:—

‘When on this hunting-trek (in the winter of 1883) I crossed the Drakensberg, passing through the Pilgrim's Rest Gold-field, where my old friend, J. B. Taylor, showed me the first quartz reef I have ever seen. At the local alluvial gold-digging, in and about Mac Mac, I came across Sir Starr Jameson—Dr. Jim as he was known to us all—Percy Fitzpatrick, Stafford Parker (Ex-President of the Diamond Fields Republic), Ikey Sonnenberg, the most irresponsible wit of South Africa; Bob Jameson, and Captain Macintosh, the fiery Scotsman, who wanted to fight duels on every occasion. It was at a poker party there that a suggestion was made that we should go out and bag some lions that had been killing stock in the neighbourhood. When the proposal was made to Sonnenberg, Ikey said, “I ain't lost no lions and I ain't going to look for any.” Jameson and I played a rather famous game of poker here. He was the dealer and dealt me two kings, and I bought three cards, amongst which he gave me two more kings, so that I had four in hand. He also only kept two and bought three more. With the four kings in my hand I bragged up to £800, which represented all my cash resources at the time. Jameson kept raising me until I was forced to put in my wagon and oxen, guns and outfit, and finally a pair of top-boots, of which I was inordinately proud. Upon which he saw me and beat me with a straight flush. I rose from the table broke to the world. He kindly returned me the top-boots—to which he added my surgical instruments (for the good of the community).’

Some or most of these tales may be ill founded or

exaggerated; but Dr. Sauer, then a young South African fresh from a medical course at Edinburgh, at least is a veracious witness, and the general impression is no doubt true—of a quick, witty, mercurial, kindly, laughter-loving young doctor, confident in his powers, benevolent to the world, exhilarating and invigorating, full of the joyous, extravagant, courageous, irreverent, and democratic spirit of the Diamond Diggings.

His reputation as a doctor may have suffered, but his popularity was rather increased by his share in the once famous smallpox controversy which raged no less fiercely than the epidemic itself in South Africa during the early 'eighties. It appears that in May 1882 the disease broke out in the Cape Peninsula where no less than 4000 people, or so it is estimated, succumbed to its ravages. The diggers of Kimberley took all possible precautions, legal and illegal, to keep the epidemic at arm's length. It was not so much that they feared the disease, but the ruin of their town and their industry. For Kimberley depended for its fuel, its supplies, and its labour on a vast tract of country. The faggots necessary to keep its engines and its pumps at work were gathered over the length and breadth of Bechuanaland; its labour came from the unknown north, from the Central Highlands of Basutoland, and from the still more distant regions of the Transkei and Natal. Its cattle and sheep, fruit and vegetables were ridden and driven in by Boer transport riders and farmers from almost every point of the compass. If the inward flow of these necessary supplies were stopped, whether by quarantine or by panic, ruin would swiftly follow.

The farmers, the transport riders, and the natives

—so it was argued—would not dare to come near Kimberley if the camp were infected, or declared an infected area. And there was not only the disease to fear, but there were the savage ceremonies of disinfection also. A barbarous medical tradition prescribed a terrifying ordeal. The disinfecting chamber was a closed shed, filled with the fumes of burning sulphur, in which the hapless traveller was confined for the space of three asphyxiating minutes. As a great concession white men were allowed to put their heads through a hole in the wall, thus avoiding suffocation; but Kafirs were denied this privilege on the ground that ‘infection may lurk in their woolly locks,’ and were dragged out at the end of their three minutes of Hades often more dead than alive, choking with the sulphurous acid. Whether the process had any effect on the microbe was a matter of doubt, but it was nearly fatal to the man.

Now the community of Kimberley at that time was the Ishmael of South Africa—far in the desert, but surrounded at a distance by more or less suspicious and hostile States. The danger of these by no means sympathetic authorities establishing a cordon which would strangle Kimberley was felt to be more serious than the epidemic itself.

For a time the disease was kept at arm’s length by means of a quarantine station established without any legal authority by the diggers upon the Modder River, some thirty miles from the mines. There Dr. Hans Sauer intercepted all who came from the infected area to the south and put every one ‘through it.’ Many an outraged traveller—from Jews to Judges of Her Majesty’s Circuit—sputtering with rage and sulphur fumes—threatened him with legal proceedings. But an unseen hand—he afterwards

suspected that it was the hand of Cecil Rhodes—squared every case before it could come to Court. By such means smallpox was kept out of Kimberley from September 1882 to March 1883, when the epidemic was declared to be over.

But then came an alarm from an altogether unexpected quarter. In October 1883, at a special meeting of the Town Council, the Sanitary Inspector reported an 'alleged outbreak' of smallpox at Klerksdorp, near Potchefstroom, in the Transvaal away to the north-east. Four natives had died, and it was thought that the infection had come from Delagoa Bay.

Now the Transvaal authorities rose at once to the height of the occasion. Dr. Dyer, the Chief Medical Officer to the Transvaal Government, reported that the disease was not *variola* (smallpox) but an aggravated form of *varicella* (chicken-pox). Dr. Francis, sent to report by the Orange Free State, came to the same comfortable opinion, and Dr. Kan, fortified by these diagnoses, called the disease *Isi-meon-qu-mungwane* (Brandziekte or scab), 'called by the knob-nosed Kafirs eekwekwe.' Such medical reassurances, however, did not altogether console the municipal authorities of Kimberley, for they had private advices from a business friend at Klerksdorp that the 'disease is smallpox as we expected.' 'I gather from these letters,' said the Town Clerk dolefully, 'that it is pretty clear that the supply of labour will partially fail—at least for a time—which will be a great blow to the mining industry.'

The Transvaal authorities had succeeded in passing the trouble—whatever it was—over their border to Kimberley. Twenty-five boys had arrived at the mines from Pretoria through Klerksdorp.

The Kimberley Board of Health acted with decision. They sent the boys back to a farm called Felstead's, on their border, of which they made a quarantine station. Dr. Smith, who was put in charge of the station, reported what he took to be a case of chicken-pox among his prisoners, but was 'unable to pronounce definitely.'

Every native from the north was now being stopped at Felstead's. Mr. Denis Doyle, the Sanitary Inspector, reported that he had lymph sufficient for 2000 cases if the worst came to the worst; Dr. Smith had 132 cases in quarantine, and reported one man to be dying. In the meantime Dr. Otto reported a case of smallpox at the De Beers Mine itself. If he was right, the enemy had leapt the ramparts.

Now began a sharp conflict of medical opinion that divided the doctors of Kimberley into two hostile camps. Dr. Matthews and Dr. Jameson paid a visit to Felstead's, and Dr. Matthews reported to the Mining Board: 'After minute examination I have no hesitation in saying that there is no case of smallpox existing at the station at the present time. With this opinion Dr. Jameson concurs.'

Some of the doctors agreed, some of them disagreed. One of them, Dr. Murphy, justified his patronymic by the ingenious compromise that the disease—whatever it was—was 'infectious and contagious to Kafirs but not to white men.' It was called by all manner of names from 'Kafir-pox pure and simple' to 'a disease allied to smallpox.' Dr. Jameson's diagnosis was given with rather less than his usual confidence—'a bullous disease allied to pemphigus.'

Having come to this decision, whether it was

right or wrong, wise or unwise, Jameson never wavered. The epidemic increased; in the two years during which it raged there were 2300 cases and 700 deaths; among Europeans there were 400 cases and 51 deaths; but Dr. Jameson adhered to his original diagnosis throughout, and 'a bullous disease allied to pemphigus' became a proverb in the camp. The diagnosis itself might be thought difficult to sustain, since pemphigus is a rare and sporadic malady, and here was a raging epidemic, yet in a general way Dr. Jameson's opinion was the opinion of half the doctors and the whole community. On December 6, 1883, a great public meeting was held at the Dutoitspan Club 'for the purpose of considering the consequences of the smallpox scare.' These consequences were forcibly expressed by Mr. Lionel Phillips. 'Ruin,' he said, amid the sympathetic murmurs of his brother claim-holders, 'stared us in the face.' He read a report from Dr. Crook that the patients were suffering from chicken-pox, lichen, syphilis, and other skin diseases, but 'not a single case of smallpox, and this I state most emphatically.' Dr. Jameson, he went on, amid renewed cheers, had added the words, 'I concur.' 'Here,' the speaker continued with more force than logic, 'was wood at £40 a load and likely to be £100. On Saturday we might have a starving population to support, which was a fact more dangerous even than smallpox.'

Whether such non-medical but cogent arguments influenced the mind of Dr. Jameson and his wing of the medical profession who shall say? They may have thought that, supposing it were smallpox, little was to be gained and a great deal was to be risked by calling it so. 'Varicella hemorrhagica'

or 'pleuro-pneumonia' would serve as well and would not bring down upon the camp the awful consequences of quarantine. The camp, let us remember, was in a horridly vulnerable situation. It lived from day to day upon the activities of the poor Dutch and coloured transport drivers who brought in the twisted logs of mimosa or camel-doorn necessary to its existence. If they were stopped, the mining and pumping machinery would be brought to a stand, the mines must shut down and the place be ruined. An industry precariously financed on a speculative basis by doubting and timorous bankers might never recover from the blow.

Whatever his reasons, medical or non-medical, Jameson never budged. Dr. Hans Sauer, the leader of the other camp, fought him with spirit. There were cases both in the civil and criminal courts. There was, for example, the action against Dr. Wolff, the Acting Resident Surgeon of the Kimberley Hospital (of which Dr. Jameson was chief) for 'wrongfully and unlawfully failing and neglecting to report' an alleged case of smallpox. The Magistrate's verdict was against Dr. Wolff, in spite of Dr. Jameson's evidence, which was emphatic, but on appeal the judgment was reversed, upon technical grounds.<sup>1</sup> There was an action for libel by Sauer against Jameson and a cross-action for libel by Jameson against Sauer, the Court finding in the one case for Dr. Sauer and in the other for Dr. Jameson, and awarding each the same damages against the other. These cases were fought with a spirit and humour upon both sides which suggest the background of a mining camp enormously interested and

<sup>1</sup> *Kimberley Advertiser*, May 24, 1884; High Court of Griqualand Law Reports, vol. September to December 1884. p. 512.

intensely amused, with a sporting interest in the victory of its champion, 'Dr. Jim.' Then there was a charge of culpable homicide against Dr. Wolff (which was withdrawn), and a charge of assault against Dr. Sauer by the Secretary of the Divisional Council, an enthusiast for the no-smallpox theory. Further, there were debates in the Cape Parliament, Mr. Upington, then Prime Minister and Attorney-General, suggesting on the one side that the doctors had 'declared the disease was not smallpox lest the result should be injurious to the mining interest,' and Cecil Rhodes, then one of the two Members for Griqualand West, on the other side, protesting 'against these attacks on the character of medical men of the highest standing, who had suffered pecuniary loss through adherence to their convictions, whether these convictions were mistaken or not.'<sup>1</sup>

In all this storm of controversy we may admire at least Dr. Jameson's courage and the joy he manifestly took in the conflict. 'Why,' he asked the Court scornfully, in one of the many actions at law, 'does the Board of Health not fumigate me? I have been rubbing my hands over a smallpox patient and sitting on him.'

Disaster, at all events, was averted. The public were vaccinated as 'a precaution' against this disease of many aliases and divided adherents. The Cape Government in the end declared Kimberley to be an 'infected area'; but this sentence of medical ex-communication had not the effects which had been feared. The Kafirs, in particular, showed but little dread of the disease. They had recourse, indeed, to a native practice of direct inoculation which suggests

<sup>1</sup> *Cape Hansard*, July 4, 1884.

that the epidemic, whatever it was, had long been known to them. What the disease really was the author does not presume to say, although he might venture a layman's opinion from the mass of evidence adduced that whatever it was, it was not 'a bullous disease allied to pemphigus.'<sup>1</sup>

Yet to the biographer of Dr. Jameson, the medical side of the controversy is of less interest than the evidence of character it affords. Whatever may be thought of the Doctor's judgment in this matter, there is already no doubt of that gift of leadership, that sureness of himself, that power of swift courageous decision, which was later to lead to the triumph of Buluwayo and the disaster of Doornkop.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. W. M. Wanklyn, an eminent authority, says on this subject: 'For long smallpox has been known to present more difficulties in its detection than most diseases. That is partly because it is the most protean of all diseases, assuming a great variety of disguises, yet all the time remaining smallpox.'—*Morning Post*, April 6, 1922.

## CHAPTER IV

### HOW RHODES CAME TO KIMBERLEY

'Thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.'

#### I

MR. SEYMOUR FORT tells us that Jameson went to Kimberley in order to procure the means to pay for a course of study in the medical schools of Vienna. If this was his object it soon faded from his mind. He was caught and bound up in the high-pitched exhilarating life of the Mining Camp, of which he became not the leading doctor only, but the favourite companion, the popular hero. Everybody loved Jameson, the rough miners with whom he joked and whom he scolded like children ; the ladies who never could get behind his defence of mocking irony ; even the Jewish financiers liked him because he snapped his fingers in their faces and paid no reverence to their wealth. His devil-may-care manner suited this young and lawless community, the more, as it came to know him, because it covered a highly-trained, swiftly-appraising mind, and what was rarer in Kimberley—or anywhere else for that matter—a heart without any taint of self-seeking.

From the few family letters we possess of this period we gather that Jameson was still care-free and heart-whole, deeply absorbed in his medical work, with a kindly thought and a ready cheque-book for his family at home. On September 15,

1883, he writes to his brother Tom upon the death of their mother, and the letter makes mention of his 'very large practice,' and the financial help he is arranging for his artist brother, 'Midge.'

His mother, evidently, had a mother's dear thought for her son, for Jameson writes—and it is the nearest thing to tenderness to be found in any of his letters: 'Please keep for me the brooch mother mentions, as it is the only souvenir I have, though I don't suppose it will be put to the use she intended as far as I can see—never having felt the least inclined that way.'

Jameson indeed was never to marry; but he was already making a friendship which was to become as strong as a marriage bond—his friendship with that Cecil Rhodes whom we have already had occasion to mention more than once in the course of this narrative. How these two came together we do not know—which is a pity, since their meeting is of the first importance to our story and to the story of South Africa. Did the two men realise when they met that Destiny stood at their elbow? Did they strike immediately together with an illuminating spark like the two currents of electricity? Did each see in the other the complement of himself? Or did they—it seems more likely—come together insensibly as men would in such a camp, recognising from the first a common breeding and a common tradition, and testing each other's qualities in the incidents of everyday life—at the club, at poker-parties, by the bedside of a friend, on a hospital committee, in a mining accident, at an inquest, at a political election, in the great trial of the smallpox epidemic—in all these and other incidents and commonplaces of the life of the camp gradually testing and coming

to know each other, as intimately and as unconsciously as two boys at school ?

However the first meeting came about, it was to ripen, as we shall see, into so intimate a friendship, with results so important, that it becomes necessary at this stage for the biographer of Jameson to digress into the life, character, and activities of Cecil Rhodes.

The two young men were much of an age, Jameson being the elder by five months. They both belonged to families of eleven, and were both of good British stock. But there the resemblance ended. Jameson, as we have seen, was a Scot ; Rhodes was an Englishman, the son of a Hertfordshire vicar, and true to English country type ; blue-eyed, fair-haired ; in his youth shy and dutiful, somewhat solemn, full of reverie, given to earnest talk, but breaking out now and then into bursts of high-pitched boyish laughter. As a boy of fifteen he had confided to his Aunt Sophy that he would like to be a barrister and ' next to that I think a clergyman's life is the nicest . . . and a college education is necessary for both,' adding the quaint reflection, ' I think that as a barrister a man may be just as good a Christian as in any other profession.' At seventeen he had rather ' overgrown his strength,' and as he obstinately refused to enter the Church, his family yielded to his desire to travel. Herbert, his eldest brother, a rover by nature, was at that time in the infant Colony of Natal, engaged in the hopeful experiment of cotton-growing, and there Cecil followed him in the middle of the year 1870, with for capital a sum of £2000, which this same Aunt Sophy had lent him.

When Cecil arrived in Natal he found that his brother Herbert was far in the interior, diamond

hunting; and at Dr. Sutherland's<sup>1</sup> hospitable table he met Rolleston,—‘the great man just returned from the Diamond-Fields, who found the big diamond and many others.’ ‘Everybody,’ he continued, in a letter home, ‘starts for the Fields in about three weeks. They have been waiting for the grass. To hear Rolleston talk and to see his diamonds makes one's mouth water.’ And Cecil goes on to tell of three ‘whoppers, one worth £8000, another £10,000 and another £9000. The man who found the £10,000 diamond offered his claim for 15s. the evening before, and no one would buy it.’

‘Everybody's head is turned by diamonds,’ said Cecil, and it was true; almost the whole Colony of Natal was trekking away through the mountains to the West, and it says much for Cecil's steadiness that for almost a whole year he refused to be drawn from the laborious business of cotton-growing—fighting the aphids, the bore worm and the aboriginal bush in the broiling Valley of the Umkomas. We get an engaging picture of the boy from these early letters, sometimes ‘very busy down at the river making bricks to build a cotton-house . . . in shirt and trousers, with more holes than patches’; or stubbing the cotton flats—‘awful work stumping . . . the bush is just as thick as Shorley Wood and every root and stump has to be taken out,’ or thatching the house; or exploring the mountain ravines—‘It was one immense natural fernery, and there, hundreds of feet below us, stretched out the whole valley with our huts looking like specks, and in the distance hills rising one above the other with a splendid blue tint on them.’

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Sutherland was Surveyor-General of Natal, and was a father to all the young colonists of Natal, but especially to his favourite, Cecil Rhodes.

He goes into every detail of cotton growing, cotton picking, cotton selling, the management of Zulus, the price of land, the seasons, the balance-sheet of the plantation with a thoroughness and competence amazing in a lad of seventeen. He has already, it is plain, a sense for the strategy of business. Thus he relates his plans for the buying of a 'small, three-cornered bit of land' which 'commands the river frontage and is the keystone of the whole farm'; or he lends Kafirs money to pay their hut-tax, because 'if you lend it them, they will come and work it out . . . and Kafirs are really safer than the Bank of England.' Cecil Rhodes the man, it is clear, is budding in Cecil Rhodes the boy.

We can see him, in these letters, struggling manfully against the temptation of the River Diggings:—

'Of course,' he writes, 'there is a chance of the diamonds turning out trumps; but I don't count much from them. You see it is all chance. Herbert may not find one or he may find one of a hundred carats: it is a toss up. But the cotton, the more you see of it, the more I am sure it is a reality. Not a fortune, and not attainable by every one; but still, to one who has a good bit of land, money to start it properly, a fair road, and above all, a good name amongst the Kafirs, a very handsome income.'

And yet ' . . . I heard of a fellow who offered his claim for 15s. the preceding night, the next morning went down and turned out a 70 carat in the first shovelful,' or ' . . . a Dutchman who trekked in, outspanned, found a diamond worth £14,000, inspanned and trekked out all in one day.'

He waits for the cotton harvest, bales his cotton and gins some of it, and then he goes; up and over

these hills 'with the splendid blue tint on them.' He would ride over the mountains with one Kafir on horseback; two white neighbours were going. 'We shall take a few biscuits, tea and sugar, and I think I shall put that wonderful box of lozenges in my pocket, which my father sent me. . . .'

This letter of July 16, 1871, last of the series, must have been written just before he started, and one can see the tall, lean, fair-haired English lad threading his way up through the forest-clad Drakensberg, a peaceable young Conquistador with treasure shining in his eyes, and emerging at last upon the boundless plains and rolling downs of the high veld. When he arrived in Griqualand West the 'dry diggings' of Dutoitspan had just been discovered, and his brother Herbert had pegged out a claim in Colesberg Kopje, which was to become the Kimberley Mine.

Herbert was a rover by nature; he left the claim very much to Cecil's management, and at last trekked far away into the interior, to the gold diggings of Pilgrim's Rest in the Northern Transvaal, and still farther on, until at last he found a hunter's grave on the banks of the Shire River in the depths of Central Africa.<sup>1</sup> But Cecil remained.

The energy and thought which we have seen in his cotton-growing he now devoted to this new and stranger business of diamond-mining. It was, certainly, a problem worth thinking over. 'By November 1871,' says Paton, 'from £40,000 to £50,000 worth of diamonds were taken from Colesberg Kopje alone, and the best claims were worth

<sup>1</sup> He was burnt to death (1879). Before he died he sent for Dr. Jane Waterston, then a medical missionary higher up the river. Unfortunately she arrived too late to be of assistance. See *Kimberley Daily Independent*, Feb. 27, 1880.

£4000 a-piece. The hole was rapidly becoming enormous—a deepening and ever more unmanageable chaos of separate workings. And although nearly everybody expected to reach the bottom very soon, no bottom had yet been found. Was there a bottom or did it perhaps go down into the centre of the earth—unfathomable, inexhaustible?

It was a thing to ponder over, and that Cecil Rhodes was already pondering one gathers from the impressions of friends at this time. 'As I search my memory,' says one, 'for the Rhodes of the early 'seventies, I seem to see a fair young man frequently sunk in deep thought, his hands buried in his trousers pockets, his legs crossed and possibly twisted together, quite oblivious of the talk around him.'<sup>1</sup> 'After dinner,' says Mr. Scully, 'it was his wont to lean forward with both elbows on the table and his mouth slightly open. He had a habit when thinking of rubbing his chin gently with his forefinger. Very often he would sit in the attitude described for a very long time, without joining in whatever conversation happened to be going on.'

We get other sketches of him, dressed in shrunken cricketing flannels, reddened by the red dust of the veld, a tall, slim, fair youth with aquiline features, blue eyes and wavy hair—'damnably like an Englishman'—as one Boer said of him; often leaning against a wall, his hands in his pockets, and often sitting on an inverted bucket for hours together, gazing down into the depths of the mine.

<sup>1</sup> See chapter v. of *Michell's Life*. The author of the admirable sketch there given is probably Mr. Norman Garstin.

## II

This moody and abstracted youth was in fact planning great schemes, enormous projects, more fantastic than anything that could be imagined—except the reality under his eyes. He saw incredible wealth opening out below him in the depth of the pit, wealth as marvellous as ever appeared to the bewildered eyes of Sinbad the Sailor when the roc dropped him down into the glittering valley. In the spring of 1872 the claims of Herbert Rhodes were considered to be worth £4000 if put up to auction. But such an estimate was nothing, a mere chance valuation of a surface claim; Cecil, pondering upon the problem till the eye of his imagination pierced its depths, drank in with increasing wonder all the consequences of his great speculation, his daring thought—what if there might be no bottom to the mine?

Therefore he was resolved: he would command these claims, he would become master of them all. Then he would be rich beyond the dreams of avarice. But what would he do with his wealth? Ah, there he had his ideas. What were they? We shall see.

We gather that he was influenced in these dreams by a remarkable journey undertaken by the two brothers, Herbert and Cecil, in 1872. At the beginning of that year—and even before—rumours were drifting down to Kimberley of discoveries of gold in the north. Some travellers, following in the footsteps of David Livingstone, had found great and ancient workings round Tati in Matabeleland; others, striking north from Pretoria, had washed out gold in the mountainous country round the headwaters of the Limpopo. The former gold-fields were

guarded, like the apples of the Hesperides, by a fearsome dragon, the Matabele; but the latter lay in a country that had been *schoonegemaakt*, which is to say, cleared, by the Boer pioneers. Edward Button went up there in 1869, with an Australian digger called Sutherland, and found gold at Marabastad to the eastward of Makapanpoort in the Northern Transvaal. Button sent some of his specimens to Cecil's friend Dr. Sutherland in Natal, and Thomas Baines, who visited Marabastad in December 1871, mentions that 'he was fortunate enough to see some very beautiful specimens of gold quartz' which were already packed (by Button) to be sent to the Diamond Fields.

Herbert Rhodes, always in love with adventure, probably saw this quartz when it arrived, and he persuaded Cecil to join him in an expedition to those realms of gold. Thus early the hand of Cecil's destiny already pointed to the north.

Cecil borrowed a wagon from their friend, Mr. W. C. Scully, and Herbert and Cecil set off together from the Diamond Diggings, leaving their brother Frank, the sunny-minded, the debonair, fresh from his triumphs on the playing-fields of Eton, who had come out from England to pay his brothers a visit, to look after their claims while they were away.<sup>1</sup>

This journey gave the boy of nineteen—for Cecil was no more—his first view of the gateways of that vast 'North' which he was afterwards to make his own. From Kimberley to Marabastad is a matter of four hundred miles. The first part of the road

<sup>1</sup> Mr. W. C. Scully, whom I saw on this point, was under the impression that Herbert went and Cecil stayed behind; but there he is wrong. Mr. Hutchinson, *Frank Rhodes: a Memoir* (privately printed), evidently quoting from family letters, is definite on the point (p. 9) and there is independent evidence. See also Mr. Scully's *Reminiscences*.

lay through Griqualand West, a territory recently annexed to the British Empire. But at Potchefstroom or thereabouts the wagon passed into the Transvaal Republic, and must have proceeded by way of Pretoria through the Magaliesbergen—the ‘Cashan Mountains’ of Livingstone’s *Travels*. They travelled slowly through vast regions of tawny grass, starred at wide intervals with the rude homesteads of the Boer voor-trekkers, and took their toilsome way up through the mountains by Potgieter’s Rust to Moordenaar’s Drift—where every stone spoke of a wild history, if they had only known it, of forays, reprisals, wars and massacres.

Cecil had abundant leisure to talk with these Boer pioneers—long-haired and long-bearded, riding their little ponies, with rifles slung over their shoulders—or over coffee and a pipe on their stoep of an evening. For a journey by ox-wagon is a dawdling way to travel. It goes a snail’s pace day by day—unhasting but not unresting, and all sense of time is lost in the dust of the slow feet of the oxen through these large wildernesses.

The ox-wagon, in which both Rhodes and Jameson were destined to spend a large part of their lives, is, if for that reason alone, worthy our passing consideration. It is itself the peculiar creation of the South African veld—strong, supple, durable, not merely a house upon wheels, as it is crudely called, but something more—a fortress and a hammock, a contrivance that can be slung down precipices and hoisted over mountains, and can take its lurching way with a minimum of jar and jolt over rocks and ant-heaps and through steep and stony drifts. ‘The principal and very important advantage of the Cape-built wagon,’ says Burchell, ‘consists in its sides, bottom,

and carriage not being joined together . . . thereby admitting each part to play freely. The *agter-stel* and *voor-stel* (that is to say, fore and after parts of the under-carriage) are in their movements independent of each other, being held together only by the *lang-wagen* (a strong wooden beam), which by its joint moves either way. The sides resting on the *skammels*, lean against the *rongs* and are united to the tilt only by the ribs, which are elastic and yield to every motion. . . . The bolt on which the fore axle turns is not riveted nor pinned through, by which means it is at liberty to draw out a little upwards to relieve the rocking of the wagon when any one of the wheels is much lifted up by a hillock or other unevenness of the ground.’<sup>1</sup> Thus cunningly built to avoid straining or cracking the Cape wagon takes its way over the open country.

So Cecil travelled for weeks and months on end. As they approached their destination they passed through ‘a beautiful and undulating country studded here and there with mimosa groves, and showing glimpses of white quartz through the verdant herbage.’ There in ‘a deep gully of rich brown soil,’ they saw the ‘small rill’ dammed up to contain water, the cradles and the ‘broad grassy valley,’ with the holes side by side like newly-made graves whence the two ounces of gold which made such a stir in Pretoria had been gotten.

There was already a small community of diggers at work among those wild ravines, a community as Ishmaelite and self-contained as the diamond-diggers of Griqualand West, and the seeds of trouble

<sup>1</sup> *Travels in the Interior of South Africa*, by William J. Burchell, 2 vols. (1822), vol. i. p. 148 *et seq.* Of all South African books of travel—and they are many and good—Burchell is the best.

between Boer and Briton were already being sown. For Baines tells us that a Committee of Diggers, with Mr. Button in the chair, was held as early as December 9, 1871, and its first resolution suggests the opening of a conflict of race—of which we shall hear much later—‘ That all business and correspondence be conducted in English.’<sup>1</sup>

But that great trouble was for the future: Marabastad when the two brothers reached it was already a ‘ wash-out,’ and the diggers were talking of another rush to Leydenburg farther to the south.

So Herbert and Cecil retraced their steps, and after a long pilgrimage of about four months found themselves back at Colesberg Kopje with a very much damaged wagon and a working knowledge of the North-Western Transvaal.

When Cecil made this journey he was nineteen—an impressionable age—and he spoke of it often, as if the thoughts burnt and baked in his mind in those sunny leisurely days of early travel had fixed the course of his after-life. ‘ For four months ’—so he told Miss Flora Shaw (now Lady Lugard) who told the present writer—‘ I walked between earth and sky, and when I looked down I said this earth should be English, and when I looked up I said that the English should rule this earth.’<sup>2</sup>

It is curious to think of the wagon with its train of oxen, toiling slowing over these endless plains, and the slim, blue-eyed, fair-haired, ‘ damnably English ’ youth in dusty flannels, walking alongside, brooding upon the growing purpose of his life.

It was here too that he drew up the first of those characteristic documents, his wills. This one was

<sup>1</sup> These quotations are from the *Travels* of Thomas Baines.

The words do not sound like Rhodes, but the sentiment is Rhodesian.

written on the side of a portmanteau, as he sat on the veld, and the crumpled piece of paper on which he wrote it was pierced by the buckles. He left the wealth of which he was to die possessed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in trust for the extension of the British Empire.

These precautions against death suggest the growing purpose of his life—a life already dedicated. But to that purpose he must educate himself: he must leave his business in good hands while he kept his terms in Oxford. A partner offered in C. D. Rudd, a young Englishman of his own class whom he had come to know in Natal. With Rudd he undertook contracts—to pump the water out of the diamond mine at De Beers was the most important—and in the spring of 1873 we find him leaving the affairs of the partnership in Rudd's hands when he set out for England. In October 1873 he entered at Oriel, and so began an amazing, an almost incredible, double life; at Kimberley in vacation fighting on equal terms with the keenest business intellects that the world could produce for the mastery of the diamond industry, and in term time reverting to the care-free life of the English undergraduate. His letters written from Oxford and London to his partner have been partly published by Mr. Basil Williams. They are the most extraordinary mixture of the ingenuous undergraduate and the precocious business man it is possible to imagine—largely taken up with details of the pumping machinery which he was buying and sending out; a discussion of the effect of a political crisis on the price of diamonds; then an account of an investment in Hampstead House property as a nest-egg if the diamond mines should fail; then a discussion of the best type of