

CECIL JOHN RHODES

1853-1902

CHAPTER I

HOW RHODES' WENT TO SOUTH AFRICA

CECIL JOHN RHODES, as he said himself, came of farming stock. His ancestors were substantial people, of St. Pancras Parish in the north of London, the founder of the family being a certain William Rhodes, a Staffordshire man, who bought lands in that neighbourhood about 1720. Rhodes's Farm has long since been swallowed up; but by the piety of their great descendant the names of no less than thirty-three of his race are now inscribed in durable granite in Old St. Pancras churchyard. They were yeomen, graziers, cowkeepers, brickmakers, churchwardens of the parish, and, growing in wealth with the growth of London, some of them hived off into the country. Thus Cecil's grandfather, William Rhodes, was a landowner of Leyton Grange in Essex, and his father, Francis William Rhodes, a country clergyman, first, from 1834 to 1849 at Brentwood in Essex, and then from 1849 to 1876 at Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire. If we may judge from the tradition of two countrysides, the vicar was a fine type of the Christian gentleman, simple, generous, careful of the poor. His portrait may be seen in

the vestry of Bishop's Stortford Church, a faded little photograph, showing a man tall of stature, with a face powerful and marked with thought, a lofty brow, long nose, and jowl a little heavy. His first wife died in childbirth, leaving him one daughter; the second, Louisa Peacock, a lady of good Lincolnshire family, was Cecil's mother. Cecil was the fourth son in a family of eleven, nine of whom survived infancy, and he was born at Bishop's Stortford on 5th July 1853, not in the vicarage, as Sir Lewis Michell supposes, but in a large square house called Thorley Bourne, on the London Road, half a mile or so from Bishop's Stortford railway station.

Bishop's Stortford is a little market town some thirty miles from London. It is the centre of a pleasant country district of leafy Hertfordshire; its streets run up and down and along the steeply rising sides of the little valley of the Stort. At the bottom, on either side the river, is a ruckle of old red-tiled malting houses, the malt finding its way by barge to London; above, a fine flint-work church (*circa* 1400), with a high stone tower and leaden spire, and generously adorned with gargoyles and other carvings, inside and out. The verger showed me with some pride a memorial window to the "good vicar, Mr. Rhodes," and the fine old carved stalls of the choir, some of which were used in Rhodes's time to seat "the seven angels of the seven churches," as the vicar called his sons. I was even shown Cecil's own seat, in a corner, with a swan finely carved on the under-side. Round the church cluster the vicarage, a pleasant house in a pleasant garden; the old grammar-school, superseded in Rhodes's time by the new; a picturesque old inn called "The Boar's Head"; and other houses built upon the generous lines

of the Georgian and earlier styles. Altogether it is a town in the character of the Home counties—to the eye of the visitor, a restful, even a sleepy place, with old houses backed or enfolded by old gardens, and old brick walls bearing old pear-trees, roses, and wistaria, looking down upon its little river and all round upon rich farmlands and substantial homesteads, with here and there a country house in its timbered park. Here Rhodes spent his boyhood, as we may be sure, very pleasantly, taking the normal share both in work and play. He was in the school first eleven at thirteen, and took a classical scholarship; tradition speaks of him as a golden-haired, delicate-looking little fellow, in nature somewhat shy and retiring, and with “an agreeable way of speaking which runs in the family.” The vicar wanted his sons to enter the Church; but they had their own views, and most of them chose the Army.

Herbert, the eldest, a rover by nature, set out for Natal, then a struggling little colony, whose settlers lived under the menace of the Zulu power. Herbert experimented as a cotton planter, and when Cecil was seventeen, and refused both Church and Army, he was sent out to bear his brother company. Natal is a colony cut off from the rest of South Africa by high ranges of mountains, and, as it enjoys the warm currents and soft breezes of the Indian Ocean, it has a semi-tropical climate. The settlers were at that time experimenting with various crops, and agricultural experiment is proverbially a costly and laborious business; for settlers without capital it is apt to be disastrous. The brothers worked hard at their jungle land in the Umkomaas valley, and soon had one hundred acres under cotton. They committed the mistakes inevitable to beginners, and

were much harassed by the aphids, the boreworm, and the caterpillar. The elder brother, always a wanderer, made frequent expeditions into the interior, and Cecil was often left in sole charge of the cotton fields and the Zulu labourers. He had succeeded, however, in growing a fair crop of cotton, when he received a message from his brother, the effect of which was not only to send the cotton field back into jungle, but to change the face of South Africa. Herbert had been one of a party, mainly of officers of the 20th Regiment, under the leadership of Captain Rolleston, which went prospecting for diamonds, on the banks of the Vaal River. In January 1870, they found them, and the message from Herbert to his brother was—Come.

CHAPTER II

THE DIAMOND DIGGINGS

WE are told that Rhodes started for the diamond fields "in a Scotch cart drawn by a team of oxen, carrying with him a bucket and a spade, several volumes of the classics and a Greek lexicon."¹ This is no doubt true, although by that time there was between Durban and the diggings a post-cart service which did the journey in five days, travelling day and night. All the world was going that way. The wash, remember, had been discovered not quite two years before, in January 1870, by the prospecting party to which Herbert Rhodes belonged. But from the beginning it had made a great sensation. Sailors deserted from their ships, soldiers from their

¹ Michell.

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regiments, settlers left their farms, workmen broke their contracts, tradesmen sold their stores. The Dean of Grahamstown, writing to the *Times* in 1870, tells how he had lost his organist and the tenor voices of his choir, and the bricklayer who had been working at his cathedral. He had indeed lost a large part of his diocese, for the people of the town were organising themselves into little companies of from four to sixteen persons, and going up-country in ox wagons, in Cape carts, in any sort of vehicle. And diggers came from oversea, from Australia, from California, from English countryside and English Universities, from Whitechapel, from Berlin. In three great streams they flowed perpetually to the diamond fields. As early as 1870 we hear of thirty wagons arriving in one day, and a train of a hundred wagons being hourly expected from Natal. It was the beginning of a revolution that changed the face and the politics of South Africa in two years.

Never had more new wine been poured into an older bottle. Let us remember that at that time the whole interior of the country was a wilderness known only to the pastoral Boer and the big game hunter. The railway from the Cape had only got as far as Wellington, fifty miles from the coast; there was the new and well-built road up Bain's Kloof; and thence, through the Karoo, only a track of wagon wheels from farm to farm, and the skeletons of oxen by the roadside and at the drifts. The farms were thinly starred over a desolate country, each farm on the site of some rare spring or vlei, or dam, where there was water—good to brackish. The Dutch farmer was primitive, ignorant, hospitable. He lived on his sheep and cattle; his breeches were of leather, his shoes of untanned hide; his

vrouw made soap and candles from mutton fat ; his fire was made of trampled dung from the fold. This race of farmers divided the country between them in farms of from fifteen thousand to forty thousand acres, save in those parts which were thought to be useless, or where the natives were too strong to be driven out.

The country was parched and barren, save when rain fell, and then there was a sudden and vivid blossoming of flowers. For most of the year there was nothing but the veld bush, low shrubs with succulent leaves, and round every bush several yards of hard, dry earth. On the wide horizons lay ranges of red dolorite rock, steep, scarred, and bare, the kops and kopjes of the veld.

The diamonds were found over a large tract of country hitherto thought utterly worthless, and of doubtful ownership, between the Orange and the Vaal. To the south was the Cape Colony ; to the east the Orange Free State, a republic of pastoral farmers, governed patriarchally by President Brand ; to the north-east the Transvaal, another republic of the same sort ; to the north was the land of the Griquas, Bechuanas ; to the west lay the land of the Namaquas and the Kalihari Desert. The country of the diamonds was thought by some to belong to Waterboer, a Griqua chief ; by others to the Orange Free State ; while the Transvaal made a still more shadowy claim to the territory. Before Rhodes arrived it had been taken over by the British Government. It was country, at the time of the discovery, thought to be worth a few shillings per thousand acres (with no buyers). A good deal of it had neither bush nor grass, and was " little frequented even by wild game."

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The Vaal River made a pleasant oasis in this vast desert. The Vaal River was here as broad as the Thames at Chelsea or Battersea, a pleasant stream, whose banks were umbrageous with yellow-wood, acacias, and willows. Here in the river gravel the first diamonds were found, the diggers leading a pleasant life under the acacia trees—"the number of tents and people something beyond conception," writes an early visitor. "All look well and jolly," and he describes how diggers, when they were asked, What luck? would sometimes take from ten to a score of diamonds out of their trouser pockets. It was a free and happy life, in the tent, round the camp fire, under the blue sky, knee deep in the rushing water. The diggers, "dressed in corduroy or shoddy, high-booted, bare as to arms and breast, with beard of any length, girt with a butcher's knife on a belt of leather." A writer in the *Grahamstown Journal* tells how a Mr. Waldeck was seen "jumping, dancing, and shouting." The diggers stopped work and crowded round him. He had found a diamond of seventeen and a half carats. The excitement is easy to understand, for single stones were often found worth from £1500 to £2000 apiece. In a few months one company of diggers, the Natal Company, sent home £12,000 worth of diamonds. Fortunes were made at a throw, and the diggers worked from dawn to dark, some picking and shovelling the gravel, others washing it in cradles in the river, others sorting the wet gravel on rough tables. "The men scoop out the wet gravel on a table with a piece of tin or wood, take one glance, and then another scrape turns it off. This goes on at a rate which novices cannot but consider most hazardous;

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but the diamond shines out like a star whensoever it appears.”

A merry life under the blue sky; with lots of hard work and lots of money. We hear of £650 on a single game of cards, and the two billiard tables at Klip Drift did a roaring trade. There is a rough romance, as of the Wild West, in the mere names of these diggings—Pneil, Gong-Gong, and Delport's Hope; Forlorn Hope, Blue Jacket, Waldeck's Plant, and Larkin's Flat. Yet there was no shooting, and little disorder. If a digger misbehaved himself, he was brought before "President Parker," the chairman of the Diggers' Committee, and condemned to be spread-eagled, or dragged through the river if his sin was great. President Brand was popular; but his authority was laughed at. When his field cornets rode in to vindicate the majesty of the law, the diggers chaffed them and stood them drinks, but paid them little or no respect. They did what was good in their own eyes. On Sunday they might listen to "the Rev. Mr. Clulee of Bloemfontein" preaching in a tent "the simple gospel of Christ from the parable of the pearl of great price." More often they gathered in Sanger's saloon in Klipdrift to play billiards and cards. Once a fortnight there was a joyous muster of diggers, who marched in line to the strains of Vos's Bloemfontein band, with the British ensign borne proudly aloft in the van.

CHAPTER III

RHODES AND BARNATO

As the months went on, and rush succeeded rush, the diggers drifted away from the pleasant river banks into the barren wilderness beyond. In the open veld, twenty-five miles from the river, lay the farm of Dutoit's Pan, standing by its pan or pond of brackish water. The farmer's children had found diamonds on the side of the hill that rose from the water, and the rumour of the discovery spread. Thousands of diggers crowded in upon the farmer, pegged out his land without as much as a by-your-leave, and soon the whole hillside was swarming with diggers. The diamonds lay not merely on the surface; but below in the red gravelly boulder-strewn sand. The whole place was like a great gravel pit, the miners throwing the debris anywhere in their eagerness to sift the greatest amount of gravel in the shortest possible time. Soon, the diggers said, we will get through this red sand, and then there will be no more diamonds. Below the red sand were chalk nodules, and then came a brittle yellowish white soft rock. Some of the diggers left in despair; but others pounded the rock to powder and found diamonds. Then came another find, at Old De Beers, a mile away, and then still another, "the New Rush," the greatest of all, on the neighbouring "Colesberg Kopje." The New Rush, or Kimberley, as it came to be called,¹ eclipsed all the other finds, and became

¹ After Lord Kimberley, the Secretary of State who presided over the annexation.

the centre of the busy rowdy feverish hive of workers.

Here, then, came Rhodes. He had crossed the great range of the Drakensberg, then unknown to fame; he had passed the little Boer capital of Bloemfontein, where Jan Brand kept his republic in order; he had dipped down to the Vaal and seen the river diggers at work under the willows; and had reached New Rush only a week or two after the territory came under the British flag. His cart threaded its way through the barbarous debris of the outskirts, Kafir huts, skeletons of oxen and horses—and not skeletons merely but evil-smelling carcasses—Boer wagons, and the rising mountains of gravel and white sand. Thus he stumbled upon a city of some forty thousand people—a city but a few months old, a city without one tree or spire or tall building, a city built of tent cloth and corrugated iron. The place was growing like Jack's beanstalk—stores, canteens, little houses of wooden framework and canvas, with window frames bound with ribbon—a business street where the diamond dealers bid against one another for the finds of the diggers. But the centre of interest was the mine itself—the wonderful mine which was to transform Rhodes from a penniless boy to a great power in the world, and was already transforming South Africa from an almost penniless and bankrupt country to a centre of wealth, speculation, and business and political activity.

Let me describe this mine as it was in the early days. The kopje, with its gravel and boulders, had been cleared bodily away. Beneath was found the soft white rock I have already described. It had the form of a circular pipe some nine acres in extent, with a regularly defined edge of talcose shale all

round it like a rind, or outer wall. How far this pocket or pipe went down no one could tell—that was the gamble of the mine; but inside the encircling cliff the soft grey rock was all diamondiferous, the diamonds being scattered through it thinly, yet with some rough approach to evenness, although the outside claims were reckoned to be the most valuable. Each of the original diggers had been allowed to stake a single claim of 31 feet square, and the committee, profiting by its experience at Dutoitspan, had ordained that roads should be preserved across the mine, and that all the “stuff” should be taken out of the mine and sorted beyond its limit. As the miners went down the roads became gangways, and the waste became growing mountains of white sand, for the soft rock or hard clay which contained the diamonds disintegrated in the open air into a sand so fine and light that it floated like dust in the air, and when a wind blew drifted like snow. The gangways also crumbled and fell, sometimes burying the diggers below, and as the mine went down it became more and more difficult to cart the stuff out of the mine to the breakers and sorters who worked beside the growing mountains round the edge. Thus it came about that round the edge of the oval-shaped cauldron a framework of timberwork had to be built, tier below tier, and on the floors thus improvised winches were rigged up with ropes passing inward and down to the claims below. These claims were of various depths according to the energy and resources of their owners, and some had been divided into halves, fourths, or even sixteenths. The bottom of the mine was thus a rough uneven checker of squares like a piece of shepherd’s plaid, criss-crossed by innumerable ropes which formed a spider’s-web

above the diggers. Below, the gangs worked loading the buckets; above, they worked at the creaking winches. As the buckets appeared at the top they were passed on to the pounders and sorters who worked at their tables in the open air. The rough work was generally done by gangs of Kafirs, the owners supervising and sorting at the tables. The diamonds were sold either to the merchants in their offices or to the "kopje wallopers," diamond buyers in a smaller way of business who threaded their way from table to table, or from tent to tent, chaffing, chaffering, cheating the diggers when they could, and usually with an eye open for the Kafir boy who waited round some corner with a diamond he had concealed between his toes.

In all this there was ample room for speculation, both in the value of single stones and in the value of whole claims, for diggers drank and gambled, came and went. Some retired with fortunes, others "broke to the world." When the "hard blue" was reached fifty to sixty feet down, many thought that "the bottom was knocked out of the mine," and left in disgust; others were discouraged by a flooding of their claims or the fall of a gangway of crumbling tufa; still others were sickened by the glare and the dust. "The dust of the dry diggings," says one, "is to be classed with plague, pestilence, and famine, and if there is anything worse with that also." They left for their old haunts of the river diggings under the willows by the cool waters of the Vaal.

But there were two young men who meant to see the game out—one a digger, the other a "kopje walloper." They were both young, both shrewd and able above their fellows; but here the likeness ended. The digger was Cecil Rhodes, then a long, lanky

youth, in cricketing flannels many times washed and stained a brick red with the sand of the veld. He had come, as we know, at his brother's suggestion, his brother holding a claim in New Rush. His work was to superintend their gang of Kafirs, or sort diamonds on the edge of the mine. Not a few friends and acquaintances have recorded their impression of Rhodes at that time, and they all speak of him as abstracted, silent, plunged in thought. We have a picture of him sitting on an inverted bucket with his chin on his hand, gazing down into the depths of the great pit. "I have many times seen him," says another, "dressed in white flannels leaning moodily with his hand in his pockets against a street wall." Herbert one day trekked for the north, and never returned, but Cecil remained. From digging he took to dealing in claims, and the firms of Rhodes, Rudd, and Alderson were busy at work amalgamating in a small way as early as 1873. At first the business must have been wildly speculative; we hear of one Arie Smuts buying a claim for £50, and finding diamonds worth from £15,000 to £20,000 in two months. The claims went up in value until they were worth, about the time when Rhodes arrived, from £2000 to £4000 a piece. But there were wide fluctuations, due to flooding or over-buying, or nervousness in the money market. The firm missed great chances from mere want of cash, for the banks, according to Michell, treated them with scant respect. Yet Rhodes, by all accounts, handled this difficult business with boldness and skill. Even by 1875 he was "a man of some importance and authority." His partners and friends gave him good backing. Charles Dunell Rudd, a Harrow and Cambridge man, nine years his senior, was one of them; but the man

upon whom Rhodes came chiefly to rely was Alfred Beit, a young diamond buyer from Hamburg, a Jew with the best traditions of the best Jews behind him. He came, as Michell tells us, of "a wealthy and honourable family," and he himself was the soul of honour. Rhodes was the mind that conceived and rough-hewed the schemes; Beit helped him through all the delicate operations of finance. Thus the firm grew in strength until by 1880 the first De Beers Mining Company was registered, with a capital of £200,000.

And now as to Rhodes's rival. "The only man he feared in South Africa was a cunning little Jew called Barnato"—so, according to Barnato himself, Rhodes was heard to say about this time. Barney Barnato was a Whitechapel Jew, with the worst traditions of the worst Jews behind him. I do not know if that astonishing classic of the gutter, *Reminiscences of Kimberley*, may be taken anywhere as evidence. It is a book over which the judicious will grieve and the injudicious—of whom I count myself one—will laugh; a gross, merry-hearted book, written by an illiterate Scarron with a natural gift. If the book is anywhere true, it should be true of Barnato, with whom Cohen lived and worked, and slept, and revelled. "Barney loved me better than any man," says Cohen, "and would have done anything for me in the world—bar give me sixpence." Barnato told him of his youth—how he stood outside the Garrick Theatre in Lemn Street and begged pass-out checks from the theatre-goers, selling them for halfpence, and we get another picture of him—"a little, weakly, sorrowful child sitting crying on a doorstep in Middlesex Street." In such hard schools he learned resource and sharpness of wit, learned to use his fists as well as his

head and his tongue. We see him first impudent, ignorant, self-confident, "wearing a silver chain and watch that would not go 'as a mark of respect,'" beating the kopjes for stray diamonds with his partner Cohen. For a time their capital was only £30, and forty boxes of doubtful cigars. But they were full of resource, energy, high spirits. At one time the firm were being badly beaten by a buyer who rode a pony in and out among the tents and wagons where the Boer diggers lived and sold their findings. The firm tried to follow him, and find out who his customers were, but without success. But one day the rival sold his pony and Barney bought it. He had noted that his rival rode with a loose rein, and sure enough when Barney rode it through the camp the pony stopped at every wagon where business was to be done. The beast served for introduction, and the firm took over its goodwill.

Such stories as we have of Barnato indicate a man shrewd, cunning, ruled by the love of money, learning to handle men with the false bonhomie of the street corner. Like Rhodes he believed in amalgamation, and he raced neck and neck with his rival, till by 1880 he floated the Barnato Mining Company, comprising some of the richest claims in the Kimberley mine. Thus in the same year the young Englishman and the young Jew marshalled their forces and stood out above the ruck of claims and interests, the giants of the clever, busy, speculative, little financial world of Kimberley. For the next eight years they were to struggle for the mastery, until in the end the best man won, and Rhodes consolidated the Diamond Fields upon his own terms.

CHAPTER IV

RHODES KEEPS HIS TERMS

BUT I would give a false idea of Rhodes's life if I told the story of these seventeen years as if diamonds and the making of wealth were his only or even his chief interest. It is strange, it is almost miraculous, that in the first half of that time Rhodes should be living the life of the Oxford undergraduate, and in the second half, of the South African statesman. Rhodes never cared for money either for itself or for the pleasure it is fabled to give. He sought for money to accomplish his ends, and these ends were not selfish, but nothing less than the good of his country. There is warrant for saying that in the early seventies he had already determined to devote his life to the service of the Empire, and to the end this remained his single aim. And with this devotion to the cause of England, he loved her soil and her people, and he loved the honour and learning of Oxford. I do not know how he came to fall in love with Oxford, for Bishop's Stortford is on the way to Cambridge and his father was a Trinity College man. But Rhodes loved beauty, he loved caste, he loved tradition, he loved the poetry, or, as might be said, the soul of Old England. And all this is to be found, as some think, in richest measure under the royal towers of Oxford. Cambridge holds a more austere and Puritan tradition, and Rhodes was a humanist. He belonged to the age not of Cromwell, but Elizabeth. He had the chivalry, the poetry, the vast and human

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conceptions of our English Renaissance. So I think in spirit he was drawn to Oxford.

Oriel was his college. He matriculated on 13th October 1873, and kept the Michaelmas term. He was there through three terms in 1876, spending the long vacation at Kimberley; in 1877 he kept all four terms, but again went to Kimberley for the long vacation. In 1878 he kept three terms before returning to South Africa, and in 1881, a marvellous year, he took his seat in the Cape Parliament in April, and graduated at Oxford in December. He was not a worker at Oxford; perhaps he looked upon it as a delightful holiday. He was taken for "a good, quiet fellow, with the instincts of an Englishman," and attained a modest degree of eminence as Master of the Drag Hunt in 1876. One college friend quoted by Michell says: "I remember he was keen on polo, which was not so common in those days. I went with him to a wine, and was amused to notice how much older in manner the other undergraduates were than Cecil. They were full of that spurious wisdom assumed by many young men as a defensive armour, an armour he did not require." It is, indeed, amusing to think of him discussing life and politics with the undergraduate upon equal terms, and then returning to Africa to hold his own against some of the ablest financial and political minds of his generation. "We used to chaff him," says another, "about his long vacation trips to South Africa, when he always cheerily replied that we would be surprised one day at developments there." It was a double life, but, as we shall see, it had a single purpose.

CHAPTER V

SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICS

I MIGHT almost say it was a treble life, for his career in Oxford and his career in politics overlapped. Thus he took his seat in the Cape Parliament on 7th April 1881, and he kept his Michaelmas term and took his degree that same year. It is worth while at this point to attempt a broad view of the politics of South Africa as they were then. There are three main factors in the problem—the racial factor, the geographical factor, and the imperial factor. As to the first, there are again three main divisions, English, Dutch, and Native. The English were chiefly concentrated in the coast towns—Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, and Durban; but they also occupied most of the colony of Natal and most of the Eastern Province of Cape Colony. They worked the diamond industry of Kimberley, and they formed a trading population even in up-country towns like Bloemfontein and Pretoria. In the Cape Colony the professional men and the Civil Service were largely English. They were besides the engineers, the railway builders, the prospectors, the schoolmasters, of South Africa, the banking, the shipping, and the export trade were mainly in their hand. Thus they formed a fringe along the coast and islands in the interior, and were the brains and progressive force of South Africa. But politically they were divided, for Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Durban were rivals for the trade of the back country. They all com-

manded roads to Kimberley and to the interior republics. They fought a continuous war of trade rivalry. Kimberley, again, had nothing in common with the coast ports except race, for the coast ports were traders and Kimberley was a producer. When the railway came, it divided rather than united, for the coast towns strove to maintain high railway rates so as to make Kimberley and the interior pay the Government revenues. Natal, of course, was a separate colony; but Durban was none the less a trade rival. The English, therefore, were politically weak, for they had no common interest except the interest of race to bind them together.

The Dutch, on the other hand, were mainly farmers with a sprinkling of rich and professional men—attorneys, predikants, civil servants. They were the farmers and pastoralists of South Africa, and formed a continuous and related population over the larger part of Cape Colony, and the two republics, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. In the republics they ruled in name and in fact. In the Orange Free State, President Brand, a wise and moderate Dutchman, maintained an attitude of friendliness to the British Government. In the Transvaal President Kruger was already supreme. His burghers had just ended a successful war against England with the victory of Majuba on 27th February 1881. They had defeated the British power in South Africa, and had regained an independence which they had lost through their own inability to rule their own territories. From that time Kruger pursued a policy of growing ambition. He made constant attempts to extend his territory by raids upon the surrounding natives. He used all the means in his power to reach the sea, so as to have an inde-

pendent port; he intrigued both with the Radicals in England and with Germany to weaken the Imperial power, and, as time went on and the gold fields developed, he tried by economic pressure to bring the coast colonies under his influence and domination. But this policy developed, as we shall see, from year to year. In the Cape Colony, while the British were nominally in power, Mr. Hofmeyr, a wary and able Dutch politician, handled his block of Dutch votes with such skill and address that he usually had much his own way. Each English Prime Minister in turn made his compact with Hofmeyr; Sprigg was the Mikado, Hofmeyr was the Shogun of Cape Colony. Thus, in political influence we find the Dutch supreme in the two republics, and with much power, sometimes dominating power, in the Cape Colony. As to the natives, they were already broken up into islands. Zululand had been completely subjected by the Imperial troops; the Cape Colony was gradually extending her rule eastward towards Natal, but had failed to break the strong Basuto nation embattled in its Switzerland round the head-waters of the Orange. The Transvaal, freed from the Zulu menace, raided the natives round its borders—the Zulus and Swazis on the east, the Bechuanas on the west. These native races looked to the missionaries and to the Imperial power behind the missionaries for protection. All these native powers lay at the white man's mercy, even although the white man might occasionally suffer defeat. They were divided or surrounded, or had their backs against sea or mountain range or desert. They could only put up a defence which in the end was bound to be overborne. But away in the north, beyond the Transvaal, lay the great power of the Matabele, a

power comparable to the power of the Zulus under Chaka. They were Zulus by race; they occupied a country whose size and limits were unknown—an enormous country, high and healthy. On the east lay the Mashona people, whom they held in subjection, and on either side—in Angola, in Mozambique, the feeble white power of the Portuguese. Behind them stretched illimitably the great plateau of Central Africa towards the Congo, the great lakes, the Soudan. The Matabele, warlike, numerous, disciplined, unconquered, held the gates of the North.

The Imperial factor we have already seen defeating the Zulu power, but defeated by the Dutch at Majuba. It held the sea, its Lieutenant-Governor ruled Natal, its Governor and High Commissioner occupied a position of constitutional supremacy in the Cape Colony, and watched over the welfare and independence of the interior natives. It was a factor uncertain and incalculable, great in potential but weak in actual force. It was unwilling to rule except with one foot in the sea. It gave the Orange Free State its independence against the wishes of the inhabitants; it gave the Cape Colony responsible government against the wishes of a majority of its inhabitants; it annexed the Transvaal unwillingly and relinquished it eagerly; it abandoned its own subjects in Bloemfontein and Pretoria; and to the natives it afforded a reluctant and uncertain protection. It was generally well served by its soldiers and civilians on the spot; but, having no policy, its influence was weak, treacherous, and, as I have said, incalculable.

And lastly the geographical factor. The great plateau of Africa is approached from the low land of the coast line by a series of mountain steps. That is

the general configuration. In the south the coast land and the mountain valleys are healthy and valuable; to the east and west they are unhealthy, and therefore uncoveted. For that reason, a feeble power like Portugal has been allowed to occupy Angola and Mozambique for centuries. South of Angola, the Germans were about to occupy Damara-land, a more southerly, and therefore more healthy country, but waterless and harbourless. Thence to Portuguese territory at Delagoa Bay was either British or under British influence. The interior republics were forced to do their trade through British ports—forced, that is, until the Delagoa Bay Railway should be opened, for the road through that territory was so unhealthy as to be uneconomical. The road from Natal was difficult and mountainous. The Cape had thus a practical monopoly. It followed that the Cape could impose its own transport and customs rates upon the republics. If it exercised this power wisely and moderately, it might hope to retain the republican trade; if unwisely, it might force the Transvaal to develop the Delagoa Bay route. As to the great regions of the interior, the road lay north from Kimberley through Bechuana-land, a strip of territory bounded on one side by the Transvaal, and on the other shading away into the Kalihari Desert. He who held that territory held the key to the North.

These, in broadest outline, were the conditions—some permanent, others transitory—which ruled South Africa when Rhodes entered Parliament in 1881.

CHAPTER VI

THE ROAD TO THE NORTH

Now it is a matter of great interest, as bearing on the life and character of Rhodes, to know why he entered the Cape Parliament in 1881. He did not enter politics with a mere vague notion of coming to the front, of gaining power, of securing something for Kimberley, of protecting the diamond industry. He had something bigger in view. He had hammered it all out beforehand, sitting on the upturned bucket looking into the depths of the mine. He had his policy, and his policy was nothing less than this—the union of South Africa under the British flag.

I have already mentioned that long before Rhodes went into Parliament at all he had expressed his intention to devote his life to the British Empire. And he had determined not merely on this end ; but on the means to the end. He had to use not the Imperial factor—that was a broken reed—but the Dutch themselves ; he had to make the Cape Colony the dominant power in South Africa, controlling the railway system, controlling the interior, hemming in the republics, commanding the trade, so that when the union came to be made, the republics would adhere to the Colony, and not the Colony to the republics.

He made his declaration of faith early—only two years after he entered Parliament. Speaking in the Cape House on July 18, 1883, he said : “ I have my

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own views as to the future of South Africa, and I believe in a United States of South Africa, but as a portion of the British Empire. I believe that confederated states, in a colony under responsible government, would each be practically an independent republic, but I think we should also have all the privileges of the tie with the Empire." That was in reply to a speech made by Jan Hofmeyr at a Bond Congress, where he had spoken of a "United States of South Africa under its own flag." It is proof sufficient of the end in view, and now as to the means. In 1898 he said to his constituents: "I will give you the history of a thought. I have been seventeen years your member. . . . When I was elected I went down to the Cape Parliament, thinking, in my practical way, I will go and take the North."

This was no empty boast, for, going back over his speeches, we find that he had publicly declared himself in the House, at least as early as August 16, 1883, when he said: "I look upon this Bechuanaland territory as the Suez Canal of the trade of this country, the key of its road to the interior. The House will have to wake up to what will be its future policy. The question before us really is this, whether this Colony is to be confined to its present borders, or whether it is to become the dominant state in South Africa—whether, in fact, it is to spread its civilisation over the interior." Probably this declaration was made two years earlier, for we know that Rhodes spoke on June 15, 1881, on this same question, although, most unfortunately, no record of that speech remains. But I have said enough to show that both the end and the means were in Rhodes's mind in those early political days. He was a man who laid

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down his plans at the beginning, and followed them year after year.

We have the whole idea not only clearly expressed, but beautifully illuminated in a speech made on June 23, 1887 : " I am not going to say that you could make a united South Africa to the Zambesi to-morrow, but I do say that this thing could be done gradually by promoting the means to the end. . . . I have the satisfaction of knowing that in the disorganised state of this House, I can come down session after session with an object and an idea. To express it a little more clearly, it is as if I were a little sailing-boat on Table Bay, and knew exactly what port I am aiming for. The honourable member for Stellenbosch (Mr. Hofmeyr) has no bait that can tempt me. I know exactly what I am after. I have got my interest in this country, I have my mining speculation, I have my interest in its future, and, coupled with all this, I am a member of the House. Every year I can come down here and work at my problem. It took me fifteen years to get a mine, but I got it. Though my boat may be slow in the race, I know exactly what I am starting for. There are honourable members opposite who have racing boats, but I dare to challenge them, and to say that they do not know what ports they are sailing for ; and though they may be manned with a smarter crew, what with their backing and filling, I am not sure they will not scuttle and go to the bottom. I have an object, and I can wait to carry it out."

When Rhodes went to Cape Town he found politics unstable and uncertain. Gordon Sprigg was in office ; but he was supported only by a majority of two, and he already depended on the Dutch vote as organised by Jan Hofmeyr, the " mole," as Merriman

called him—the “Captain who never appears on deck,” as he was more respectfully described by Mackenzie. Hofmeyr could not take office because his Dutch following had no experience of affairs, so he ruled a nominated Ministry from the back benches. Sprigg was content with the position ; he had been a reporter in the House of Commons, and knew all the technical tricks of the Parliamentary trade ; he was a dry and arid man who managed Ministerial affairs with the narrow efficiency of a good clerk ; but remained in ignorance of the springs of human nature and of his own political power. He was a Shagpat complacently ignorant of the fact that his power lay in a hair of Jan Hofmeyr’s head. He had got the Colony into a bad mess by an attempt to disarm the Basutos—in the obvious interest of Hofmeyr’s good friends of the Orange Free State. The Basutos had resisted, and, being brave men, strongly entrenched in their mountain country, they had defeated the Colonial troops. Rhodes found his Colony beaten by a native power in a war in which, as he believed, the native was in the right. For the rest, Sprigg was refusing to build the railway to Kimberley, a project both profitable and necessary, and was preparing instead an enormous programme of railways, which would have been of benefit to the Dutch farmer, at a cost of twelve millions to the Colony. With the Colonial finances as they were, such a policy meant bankruptcy. Rhodes acted with decision. He had been returned to support the Sprigg Ministry. He refused to support them ; he carried his colleague with him. The majority of two was thus turned into a minority of two, and Sprigg was forced to resign. Rhodes returned to a hostile Kimberley, and in a single speech con-

verted his critics. Thus in his first session, the young politician of twenty-eight had proved his power by turning out a Ministry he had been sent to support and carrying his constituency with him.

The Scanlen Ministry succeeded, and Rhodes was given a hand in the settlement of the Basutoland question as Compensation Commissioner. His view was that the Colony had made such a mess of the affair that it could neither carry on the war nor administer Basutoland upon a peace. The only thing to be done was to hand the country over to a British Resident under the Colonial Office. Gordon, who had been asked by Scanlen to make a settlement, had come to the same conclusion, and after some delay this policy was carried out, and with complete success. In the course of these negotiations Rhodes and Gordon came to know each other well—knew, loved, and trusted each other. Two years later, when Gordon went to the Soudan, he telegraphed to Rhodes to join him; and when Rhodes heard of Gordon's death he exclaimed more than once, "I am sorry I was not with him."

Rhodes wanted Basutoland out of the way. He saw there was no advance in that direction. With its large and warlike native population, entrenched in their mountains, truculent with victory, it was likely to be a disastrous embarrassment for the Cape Government. He saw a better future for his Colony than in this deadly tangle of *waachte-en-beetje* thorn. He meant to have the North, "the Suez Canal of the trade of South Africa." That is, he meant to make the Cape Colony have it, so that the road to the interior should be kept open under the British flag. He knew that settlers from the Transvaal, the "freebooters," as they were called,

were already swarming into the country, and he shrewdly suspected that the Transvaal Government designed to take it over. He knew also that Germany was bent upon securing Damaraland; and he knew that if the Transvaal and Germany joined hands the road to the interior was lost. He set to work with his usual care and circumspection. He discovered that the Colonial boundaries in Griqualand West were incorrectly aligned; as a matter of fact they included seventy farms on the territory of Mankoroane, the Bechuana chief. In 1882 he moved for a Commission of Inquiry, was himself appointed a commissioner, and went up to Griqualand West with an official status. He found the Bechuanas extremely nervous at the incursion of the Boers. Mankoroane was willing to place himself under the protection of the Cape Colony so as to secure himself in the remainder of his land. As for the freebooters, they were already in "effective occupation" of their farms, and their chief anxiety was to secure their titles to the land. At the price of security, they were also willing to be annexed to the Colony. Thus Rhodes returned to Cape Town with petitions for annexation both from Mankoroane and the Stellaland freebooters. It was a splendid piece of work, when it is thought over. He was a young Englishman, unknown, with no power behind him, and by mere negotiation he secured the most important part of South Africa for his country. His method had the fine simplicity of genius. He pointed out to the freebooters that under a Cape title their land would be worth more per morgen than under a Transvaal title. And to the natives he pointed out that only the Cape Government would secure them in such land as they still possessed.

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He went back to the Cape exulting ; but he rejoiced too soon. The Parliament of the Colony was by this time under the control of men who saw the future of South Africa not British but Dutch, not Imperial but Republican. Their policy was to strengthen and extend the Transvaal so as to make it the dominant State of South Africa, trusting that when union came the whole would then take the colour of the dominant part. For that reason Jan Hofmeyr and his friends refused the option secured to the Colony by Rhodes. Rhodes, speaking in the House, put the subject forcibly, cogently, almost passionately, before Parliament : " You are dealing," he said, " with a question upon the proper treatment of which depends the whole future of this Colony. I look upon this Bechuanaland territory as the Suez Canal of the trade of this country, the key of its road to the interior. The question before us is this : whether the Colony is to be confined within its present borders, or whether it is to become the dominant State in South Africa, and spread its civilisation over the interior." It is a remarkable speech, this speech of 16th August 1883, for it contains, as it were in the germ, the future of South Africa. In reply to Hofmeyr, he pointed to the hostile policy of the Transvaal, which was already arranging with Delagoa Bay a tariff which would annihilate the Cape trade. If the Transvaal were to take over Stellaland the interior could be shut against them. The interior was a great country, almost empty, and suitable for settlement by the sons of Cape Colony. " I have," he said, " been favoured with reports from Tati, and I have learned how great are the prospects of the territory beyond the Transvaal," and he ended with a solemn warning :

“ I solemnly warn this House that if it departs from the control of the interior, we shall fall from the position of the paramount State in South Africa, which is our right in every scheme of federal union in the future, to that of a minor state.”

This appeal was made in vain, and Van Niekerk, the freebooter, proclaimed his republic of Stellaland, which everyone knew was a preliminary to annexation by the Transvaal. But Rhodes refused to be beaten. Through the High Commissioner, Sir Hercules Robinson, also a staunch and loyal servant of the Empire, he interested Lord Derby in the matter, and persuaded Sir Thomas Scanlen to take joint responsibility for the territory with the Imperial Government. But again Hofmeyr countered the move: the Cape Parliament repudiated the arrangement. But events were to force the Colonial Office further on the road, even if the Cape refused to follow. On the 1st of May 1883 the German flag was hoisted at Angra Pequena, a move that Rhodes had tried in vain to prevent. Sir Hercules warned the Home Government that Kruger and Bismarck would join hands across Africa. Lord Derby at last took decisive action. By the Convention of London the Transvaal boundary was definitely fixed on lines that left the road to the interior outside the republic. That was on February 27, 1884, and on the same day Bechuanaland was made a Protectorate. But Kruger was not yet beaten. He knew by experience that the Imperial factor was weak and vacillating. He therefore raided east and west, supporting his freebooters both in Zululand and Bechuanaland. Mr. Merriman described the President's policy at this time with perfect accuracy: “ From the time,” he said, “ the Convention was signed, the policy of the Transvaal

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was to push out bands of freebooters, and to get them involved in quarrels with the natives. They wished to push their border over the land westwards and realise the dream of President Pretorius, which was that the Transvaal should stretch from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic. The result was robbery, rapine, and murder."

The situation was complicated by the fact that the Colonial Office had entrusted the charge of the new Protectorate to John Mackenzie, the missionary. Now a good deal has been made of the difference between Mackenzie and Rhodes; but I have space only to state briefly my conclusions on a very bulky controversy.

Mackenzie, then, held the Livingstone view, that the natives were the true owners of the soil, and that the Dutch were wrongful usurpers. The Dutch, let us remember, had attacked Livingstone's mission station, massacred his people, and carried away his four hundred mission children into slavery. It was Mackenzie's object to make Bechuanaland a native reserve under Imperial protection, and this involved the expulsion of the Dutch settlers. Now in justice Mackenzie had a strong case; but it was a case not only against the Dutch settlement in Bechuanaland, but the white settlement in South Africa. Rhodes, on the other hand, recognised the accomplished fact. The Dutch were there, and any attempt to drive them out must fail because it would enlist upon their side the whole white population of South Africa. The Imperial factor would give way; it had withdrawn from the Orange Free State; it had withdrawn from the Transvaal. It would withdraw from Bechuanaland. Moreover, Rhodes regarded the white settlement of South Africa as not only inevitable but

desirable. It was like the settlement of America which dispossessed the Red Indians. Rhodes was willing to compromise: the natives should have sufficient locations; they should be left the right to hunt and to farm on their own land as well as to work on the land of the white settler; but they must not bar the progress of the white man. In the speech I have summarised he put his point of view: "The republic of Stellaland," he said, "was offered as their territory. Some honourable members may say that this is immorality to deal with these men at all after what has occurred. 'The lands,' they may say, 'belong to the chief Mankoroane. How improper! How immoral! We must not do it.' Now I have not these scruples. I believe that the natives are bound gradually to come under the control of the Europeans. I feel that it is the duty of this Colony, when, as it were, her younger and more fiery sons go out and take land, to follow in their steps with civilised government."

Whatever may be said on the score of ethics, Rhodes's was the only practicable policy. But the matter had gone too far for settlement without force. Rhodes, who was sent up by Sir Hercules Robinson in supersession of Mackenzie, went straight to the Stellaland ringleaders, Van Niekerk and De la Rey, encamped with a commando on the Hartz River. He found them in a dangerous mood. "I shall never forget our meeting," said Rhodes long afterwards. "When I spoke to De la Rey, his answer was, 'Blood must flow,' to which I remember making the retort: 'No, give me my breakfast, and then we can talk about blood.' Well, I stayed with him a week. I became godfather to his grandchild, and we made a settlement. Those who were serving under De la

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Rey and Van Niekerk got their farms, and I secured the government of the country for Her Majesty the Queen, which I believe was the right policy, and so both sides were more or less satisfied."

Rhodes succeeded with Stellaland; but he failed with the other freebooting settlement of Goshen. Like Stellaland, Goshen lay across the road to the interior, and here Kruger made his stand. Rhodes arrived at Rooi Grond to find Kruger's commissioner, Joubert, hand in glove with the freebooters. They were in laager round the kraal of Montsoia, the Bechuana chief, at Mafeking, and the very night that Rhodes arrived they made a determined attack upon the hard-pressed garrison. Rhodes protested with vigour both to Joubert and Van Pittius, the leader of the freebooters. He pointed out to them that they were attacking a tribe under the protection of Her Majesty. But his warning went unheeded. He withdrew after receiving a despairing message from Montsoia that if he surrendered it was merely to save his women and children from massacre. A few days after Rhodes left, Montsoia did surrender, and Kruger, "in the interests of humanity," proclaimed the annexation of Montsoia's country to the Transvaal. This was too much for the Imperial Government. The Warren Expedition was the result.

Colonel Warren advanced into Bechuanaland with a fine fighting force of four thousand men. Kruger was in no position to resist. His treasury was bankrupt, and his forces inadequate. Colonel Warren besides was advancing on his soft side; there was no Drakensbergen to help the defence. Kruger therefore submitted with as good a grace as he could

summon. The two parties met at Fourteen Streams on 7th February 1885. Warren, against the advice of Rhodes, still Deputy Commissioner, was accompanied also by Mackenzie. Kruger had with him as secretary Dr. Leyds. Thus Rhodes came face to face with the man against whom he had hitherto worked in the dark. In this the first round of the fight, Kruger was beaten, and sought only to find the best way out. He pleaded that he had been powerless to check the raiders. Rhodes, remembering with indignation the treatment of Montsoia, replied hotly: "I blame only one man for the events that followed my arrival at Rooi Grond, and that is Joubert. Why is he not here to answer for himself?"

But here, as elsewhere, Rhodes was all for a line of policy that would reconcile the Boers to British rule. For that reason he had protested against the presence of Mackenzie, and for that reason he protested against the Warren-Mackenzie scheme of land settlement. The Colonial Office blue-books of the time give a full account of this difference. Warren, influenced by Mackenzie, desired to turn the Boers out of their farms, and he proposed to allow none but British settlers on the land. Such a scheme was fatal to any permanent settlement, and it amounted besides, as Rhodes and Sir Hercules Robinson both held, to a breach of faith with the Stellaland settlers. At the same time Warren arrested Van Niekerk on an unsupported charge of murder. His policy was, in fact, a policy of hostility to the Boers, and Rhodes knew that such a policy was bound to fail. He took a strong course: he resigned, and, being supported by the High Commissioner, in the end he carried the day. And in the end his whole policy was

adopted. The Imperial factor was eliminated,¹ Bechuanaland was taken over by the Colony, and the road to the interior was saved for the Empire.

Rhodes learned a great deal from Bechuanaland; but chiefly he learned that the Cape Colony could not be relied on to support a forward policy as against the Transvaal. This was the weakness of Bond policy as directed by Hofmeyr. It sacrificed the present good of the Cape for the sake of an ultimate end. Of that weakness, as we shall see, Rhodes was to take full advantage. His aim was to arouse the ambition of Cape Colony, to help it to become the dominant state in South Africa, to extend the British Colonial interest to the north, and surround the Transvaal with British Colonial territory, to make the railways and the ports to the interior British Colonial, so that when the time came to federate, the British Colony should be able to determine the character of the federation. Kruger's policy was the exact opposite. He wanted to secure the interior, to open out his own ports, to control the railway system of South Africa, and so, when the time came, to make Pretoria the political centre of South Africa.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONSOLIDATION

AND now having seen what Rhodes is trying to do, let us turn to Kimberley for a moment. Kimberley

¹ This phrase has been misunderstood. It is clear from the context, and from the whole course of the controversy, that Rhodes wanted Bechuanaland to be part of a British Colony, and not a Crown Colony, because he feared, if it were under the Imperial Government, it might be surrendered like the Transvaal and the Orange River Sovereignty.

was to be the base of operations, the source of supplies. The diamond mines were of value to Rhodes not for themselves or because they gave him personal wealth, but because they furnished him with the means to carry on his great campaign for a British Africa. We have seen how he gradually turned from digging to dealing in claims, with the general object of consolidating the diamond interest. He worked besides upon contracts, to empty the mine of water, to remove waste ground, and so forth. With immense energy and perseverance, he used such means to his end. There are stories of him scouring the country in a little cart to get wood for the wheezy old farm engine that he used to pump out the water. He met and surmounted a thousand difficulties, throwing them aside, as it were, with his own brawn and sinew, his mind constantly at work arranging detail, marshalling forces, conciliating or defeating opponents. At last, as we have seen, only two great interests were left—Rhodes and his friends in De Beers, and the Barnato Mining Company in the Kimberley Mine. Rhodes controlled his mine; but it could hardly be said that Barnato held the same position in the Kimberley, for the *Compagnie Française* held some important claims. But even in that company Barnato had an influential share, and Barnato was reckoned to be the more powerful since the Kimberley Mine was richer and bigger than the De Beers. Now it is plain that at this stage amalgamation was to the interests of both men, for not only would a single management lessen working costs, but it would eliminate competition in selling and control the supply. If there is one industry in which monopoly is justified, it is the diamond industry, for the value of diamonds depends on their

scarcity. To flood the market with diamonds would be an economic crime. But while both men saw all this clearly, each was determined only to amalgamate upon his own terms. Barnato was all for his own interests and the interests of his shareholders—he was for strict business: Rhodes was for something more; he wanted to use the wealth of the mines to develop the North, and he proposed that the Consolidated Company should be given the necessary powers. To Barnato this seemed mid-summer madness. “Barnato,” says Cohen, “often told me that Rhodes was dotty, and I’m sure he fully believed it. He used to gasp with mocking laughter as he spoke of Rhodes’s ‘crackpot’ schemes.” So there the negotiations split, and the great fight began. Barnato’s weak point, as we have seen, was the holding of the French Company. Rhodes went to Europe, obtained the necessary financial backing, and bought these claims from the directors for £1,400,000. But Barnato had enough influence with the shareholders to organise a successful opposition to this settlement. Rhodes pretended to be beaten. He offered Barnato the claims for their equivalent in Kimberley shares. Barnato eagerly agreed, and so gave Rhodes a great holding in the Kimberley Mine. Then Rhodes began to buy. Prices went up; but he still bought. Barnato’s supporters were tempted by the high prices. They fell one by one. Barnato found himself surrounded, overpowered, “bested,” as he described it. He had nothing to do but surrender. The final negotiations, as Mr. Raymond tells us,¹ lasted all one morning, afternoon, evening, and night, and at last at four in the morning a settlement was reached. Barnato was made a

¹ *B. I. Barnato. A Memoir.* By Harry Raymond (1897).

Life Governor, and in return Rhodes had his way as to the constitution of the company. "Some people," said Barnato, as he yielded the point, "have a fancy for one thing, some for another. You want the means to go north if possible, and I suppose we must give it you." Only one obstacle remained. Some of the shareholders in the Central Company objected that the Consolidation was illegal because De Beers was not a "similar Company." The case came before the Supreme Court, and the judges were amazed to hear of the powers of this diamond mining trust. "They can do anything and everything, my lord," said counsel for the shareholders; "I suppose since the time of the East India Company, no company has had such power as this. They are not confined to Africa, and they are even authorised to take steps for the good government of any territory; so that, if they obtain a charter in accordance with the trust deed from the Secretary of State, they would be empowered to annex a portion of territory in Central Africa, raise and maintain a standing army, and undertake warlike operations." It is not surprising that the Court decided that this was not merely a diamond company, and the Consolidation was stopped. But Rhodes took a short way with the objectors. He placed the Central Company in liquidation and bought up the property. Thus by January 1889 Rhodes had consolidated the diamond mines, and obtained the financial means for the northern expansion.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TAKING OF THE NORTH

IN the second quarter of last century, when the Boer voor-trekkers left the northern outposts of Cape Colony behind them, and passed over the great grassy plains of the country between the Orange and the Vaal, they were met by Umsilikatse and his warriors. The chief and his people were Zulus who had fled from the tyranny of Chaka, and established a new tyranny beyond his reach. Their regiments had slaughtered whole peoples, and driven the broken remnants towards the Kalahari Desert or into the mountain recesses of Basutoland. The Boers fought this horde in two great battles. In one the laager of wagons stood like a fortress against the onset of advancing spears. The Zulu impi reached the wagon wheels, and, seizing the spokes, swayed the wagons to and fro in a desperate attempt to break the chains that bound them together and force their way through. But the Boers kept up a ceaseless fire, the women and children loading their long guns behind them, and the regiments fell back broken and defeated. In the other battle the Boers on horseback attacked the Zulu army, galloping up to fire and galloping away when the regiments charged. The Zulus could neither reach their enemy nor get away from them. Thousands fell as the fight proceeded, and in a panic this great Zulu tribe, with its cattle and its women, never halted till not only the Vaal but the Limpopo were far behind, and they felt safe from their enemy, where the Zambesi winds through

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the heart of the high plateau which forms the interior of Africa. Here was a splendid country of grass and game, and unwarlike natives, greater in extent than Germany and France put together, with no white man nearer than the weak Portuguese upon the coast. In the centre of this magnificent country the Matabele nation took its place, depasturing its cattle on the wide plains under the granite mountains, and raiding the Mashonas to the east, and the Bechuanas to the west and south. The Mashonas indeed became their serfs, to be raided and robbed at will. Early travellers, Livingstone, Chapman, Baines, and others, have described the country and its people, and the strength and ferocity of the Matabele nation impressed them all. We have vivid pictures of Umsilikatse's great place, where an army many thousand strong did warlike homage to their king. They were magnificent warriors, marshalled in regiments each nearly a thousand strong, wearing towering head-dresses of the black body-plumes of the ostrich, capes of ostrich feathers upon their shoulders, bands of otter skin upon their foreheads, tails of white cattle hanging from arms and legs, and short kilts of black and white catskin. On their left arms they carried the long shields of ox-hide, black, white, red, or speckled, according to their regiments; and in their right hand the short heavy stabbing spear, as important a factor in Zulu power as the short stabbing sword was to the Romans.

Even in Umsilikatse's day, the Matabele were a good deal visited by gold seekers and concession hunters, and his son and successor, Lobengula, had given Thomas Baines a grant of mining rights as early as 9th April 1870. Even by that time prospectors had been at work, and had found gold over a

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large area ; companies had been organised ; machinery had even been brought to Tati, and the main roads and the lie of a large part of the country fairly well ascertained. But the formidable nature of the Matabele power, the great distances, the difficulty of the road, the tsetse fly, the discovery of diamonds and then of gold at Barberton—all these things kept back the development of the North. But Rhodes knew that the rush was about to begin, and he meant that the British should be first. "We are now," he said to his friend, Sir Hercules Robinson, "at latitude 22° ; and what a trouble it has been." Sir Hercules replied, "Where do you mean to stop ?" "I will stop," returned Rhodes, "where the country has not been claimed." They looked at the map together. Such a definition, they found, took them to Lake Tanganyika. Sir Hercules refused to go forward ; he had not the backing from England. But Rhodes knew that a German agent was trying to get to Lobengula, and that a Dutch expedition was being fitted out. He proposed one of those compromises of his which meant victory. Why not secure the option ? So much Sir Hercules would do. Mr. J. S. Moffat, the Assistant Commissioner in Bechuanaland, was sent to Lobengula and obtained a treaty in which the King promised to sell, alienate, or cede nothing, and to enter into no treaty or correspondence with any foreign power, without the sanction of the High Commissioner. This treaty was signed on 11th February 1888, and by the autumn of the same year, Rhodes's partner and agents, Rudd, Maguire, and Thompson, had obtained the concession of all mining rights in Lobengula's country in exchange for £100 a month, and a large stock of arms and ammunition.