

ice-machine (for the firm of Rudd and Rhodes is making ice in Kimberley); and then—‘My dons and I have had some tremendous skirmishes. I was nearly caught going to Epsom; but still I do not think that I shall be sent down. The change at first was rather odd.’ And lastly:—

‘I would in conclusion say, do not plunge for much more at the Fields. We have a sufficient block at De Beers to make a fortune if diamonds last and have enough property in Kimberley. If we make more money I would sooner say lend it or go in for a nest-egg at home, and by all means try and spare me for two years and you will find I shall be twice as good a speculator with a profession at my back.

‘I will be reading hard all the summer. If you want more pumps say so, but I have gone over in my mind all the pumps and, barring a stronger pump to drive with wire in gorges, I cannot think where it is needed. They are expensive things; the tenders for 5000 gallons to 250 feet with gear, etc., have been £115 and £140, which means about £230 up at Fields.’¹

A queer letter—it will be allowed! But Cecil was, as he sometimes described himself, a ‘queer fellow.’

Rhodes, we know, was back in Kimberley on a short visit during the Long Vacation of 1876; in 1877 he kept all his terms; and it was at the beginning of 1877—according to Mr. W. T. Stead—that he wrote a curious ‘draft of some of my ideas.’²

‘It often strikes a man,’ says this youth of twenty-

¹ This letter is dated June 1, 1876.

² See *The Last Will and Testament of Cecil John Rhodes*. The ‘draft’ was said by Rhodes to have been written when he was twenty-two years of age; but Stead dated it as at the beginning of 1877 from a reference to the Russo-Turkish War, which began in that year.

four, 'to inquire what is the chief good in life: to one the thought comes that it is a happy marriage; to another great wealth; and as each seizes on the idea, for that he more or less works for the rest of his existence. To myself, thinking over the same question, the wish came to me to be useful to my country.'

Then he goes on: 'I contend that we are the first race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race. I contend that every acre added to our territory means the birth of more of the English race who otherwise would not be brought into existence. Added to this, the absorption of the greater portion of the world under our rule simply means the end of all wars.'

What, then, he asks himself, are the objects for which he should work? And he replies to his own question: 'The furtherance of the British Empire for the bringing of the whole uncivilised world under British rule, for the recovery of the United States, for the making of the Anglo-Saxon race but one Empire.'

'What a dream!' he adds, 'but yet it is possible.'

Cecil went to Kimberley for the Long Vacation, and Sir Charles Warren gives a quaint glimpse of him:—

'It was on the Kimberley coach on August 3, 1877. Rhodes, who sat opposite to me, was engaged in getting something up by heart, so I offered to hear him. It was the Thirty-Nine Articles of our Christian faith. We got on very well until we arrived at the article on Predestination, and there we stuck. He had his views and I had mine, and our fellow-passengers were greatly amused at the topic

of our conversation—for several hours being on this one subject.’¹

On September 19 of this same year—1877—at Kimberley he drew up another will, leaving all his worldly wealth ‘to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and to Sidney Godolphin Alexander Shippard’ (then Attorney-General of Griqualand West), giving them full authority to use the same for the purpose of extending British rule throughout the world, and other kindred purposes. And a friend of those early days, Joseph Orpen, told the present writer that about this time young Rhodes asked him and some other friends to dinner, and at dessert in a curiously shy and solemn manner made a little speech. He thought it right, he said, for every man, at the beginning of his life, to put an aim before him, and for his part he meant to work for the British Empire.

Such was the undergraduate Rhodes. ‘I went with him,’ says a friend in 1877, ‘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.’

This double life, to which no career of which the writer has knowledge furnishes any parallel, lasted until 1881, when Rhodes took his degree. On November 26 of that year he wrote to Rudd from Oxford, and the letter is all about the diamond companies then being floated in London. They are, he says, ‘wrong from first. Wrong men started them here, wrong ground has been

¹ *On the Veldt in the 'Seventies*, by Sir Charles Warren.

put in, and wrong results have been the consequence.' It is evident that Rhodes's mind was then busily at work upon the first great campaign of his life, the Amalgamation of the Diamond Mines.

CHAPTER V

THE CONSOLIDATION

'Some people have a fancy for this thing and some for that.'

BARNBY BARNATO.

IN one of his letters to his mother Rhodes compared a diamond mine to a Stilton cheese, and we have elaborated that comparison by imagining our cheese divided in chequer-board fashion among owners who must eat their squares without encroaching upon the squares of their neighbours. The thing looks simple at first, but as they go down into the cheese it becomes more difficult, until in the end it becomes impossible. For the squares of varying depths crumble down upon one another, and the rind, becoming rotten, falls down into the middle. The point of impossibility is reached when the owners, despairing of working their claims from above, tunnel down below and bring ruin upon their neighbours in a dark chaos of underground working.

So indeed it fell out, or fell in, with these four diamond mines. As the diggers went down, it was forced upon their sturdily obstinate minds that willy-nilly they must combine. Governor Southey had seen it from the beginning, but public opinion lagged behind. Originally 1 claim 30 feet square was the limit of ownership; 3 claims were allowed a little later; by Ordnance 10 of 1874 the ownership of 10 claims was permitted to 1 person or joint-stock company, and by the end of 1876 (Ordnance 12

of November 20) this restriction was swept away and the mines were thrown open to any combination of ownership.

These changes in the system of ownership were not due to the machinations of wicked capitalists, as some people suppose, but to the hard lessons of necessity. By 1872 the famous roads of the Kimberley Mine had crumbled into the pit and it had become an open quarry 1000 feet in length and 60 feet in width, surrounded by timber staging and covered by a monstrous cobweb of iron ropes. By 1874 the falls and slides of reef and the flooding of claims had forced the diggers to organise a Mining Board; but this Board—an elected and democratic body—had neither the power nor the means to cope with the outraged law of gravity. They attempted both to drain the water and clear away the falls; but ruin worked faster than repair. By 1878 more than a quarter of the surface of Kimberley Mine was covered by fallen reef. By 1881 the expenditure of the Mining Board had risen to over £2,000,000. By March 1883 it had a debit balance of £250,000, and the local bank refused to extend its overdraft. The Board in fact was bankrupt. The pit was now over 400 feet deep, the sides fell in almost continuously, and in 1883 $1\frac{1}{2}$ million loads of reef were brought to the surface against only 350,000 loads of blue ground. In November of that year an enormous fall piled a mass of shale half across the chasm. Only about 50 claims could be regularly worked; they paid handsomely, but the mine taken as a whole was ruined. Then a mining engineer, Edward Jones, sank a shaft of timber frame through the rubble, and reached blue ground. About the same time shafts were sunk by the Central Company

and the French Company through the rock outside the mine so as to approach the diamond-bearing soil from the flank. The era of subterranean mining had begun.

The other mines followed a similar course. The Mining Board of De Beers, which, by the way, did not go into debt, attempted to cut the rock back in terraces, and, for a time, stopped serious falls; but in 1885 nearly five million cubic feet of rubbish fell upon the claims and stopped work for six months, and by 1887 open pit working was abandoned. In March 1886 a great fall in Dutoitspan killed eight white men and ten Kafirs, and by 1887 the bottom of Bultfontein Mine was covered with fallen reef.

Such a history points to the conclusion that diamond mining could only be carried on by strong combinations of capital holding large blocks of claims. And this was exactly what happened. The original claims in the four mines numbered in all 3600; by 1885 there were 98 separate holdings. The Kimberley Mine had shrunk from 470 to 11 companies and 8 private holdings; the De Beers from 622 to 7 companies and 3 private holdings; Dutoitspan from 1441 to 16 companies and 21 private holdings, and Bultfontein from 1067 claims to 8 companies and 24 private holdings.

Obviously it could not end there; a hundred separate organisations quarrying, burrowing, and tunnelling hundreds of feet under a superficial area of less than 70 acres was a hopeless proposition. And there was another factor which made equally for consolidation—the diamond market. As the consolidation proceeded and the underground workings increased production, the supply of diamonds was in constant danger of exceeding the demand.

One mine alone could produce sufficient stones to supply the markets, and if every mine were consolidated as a separate unit and all sold their finds in competition the diamond market would be glutted and the industry faced by periodic spells of ruination.

Such, then, was the natural pressure towards Consolidation. Let us now see how it was brought about. All the separate little interests clung desperately to their own holdings and their own prejudices, jealousies, and rivalries. It was necessary both to persuade and to enforce, and both in force and in persuasion Rhodes was the appointed instrument.

He began, as we have seen, working his brother's claim on the Kimberley Mine. Why did he go over to De Beers? Probably because ground was cheaper. In Colesberg Kopje, which is to say the New Rush, or the Kimberley Mine, prices soared from day to day. A narrow strip of ground—a mere slice of a claim—would be £50 to-day, £100 to-morrow, and unobtainable at any price the day after. Rhodes was a man of small resources, and he meant to lay them out for the great end he had in view. Now the De Beers Mine was larger by 150 claims than the Kimberley Mine; but it was greatly obstructed by a bank of floating reef, which sloped down through the blue ground at an angle of 45 degrees. One part of the mine this reef overhung, another part rested upon it. The ground which the reef overhung was called Baxter's Gully; it was rich but was perpetually threatened by the reef above it; on the other side lay Poor Man's Gully, so called because it was both cheap and easy to work. No reef overhung it; but it was of a depth limited by the sloping reef underneath.

There were other regions in the mine, some poor and some rich; all in all, it was close on 14 acres originally covered by 622 claims.

Such was De Beers which Rhodes set out to amalgamate as the first part of his great plan. In 1873 we find him uniting his claims with those of C. D. Rudd, and in 1874 these two were joined by Robert Graham. They held claims in Baxter's Gully where Stow and English were also digging. In the meantime Compton had been working a piece of ground which lay in Poor Man's Gully just over the floating reef. Compton reached the reef, and his neighbours confidently predicted his ruin; but he cut his way through its 30 feet of thickness, and at last reached the rich ground on the Baxter's Gully side. Stow and English thereupon took him into partnership, and the firm continued as Stow, English, and Compton. Rudd, Rhodes, and Graham joined forces with Stow, English, and Compton, and formed together a band of brothers with a common purpose—to consolidate De Beers.

The De Beers Mining Company, as it became on April 1, 1880, had a capital of £200,000 and consisted in the main of these six men, led upon a common plan by Cecil Rhodes. They met in a little building not far from the mine to arrange operations and report progress. Each had his task on the mine or in the office; and each also was deputed to buy ground in a separate direction, their object being to get an interest in the various companies and private firms which now composed the mine, for by this time the individual digger was extinct—crushed flat by the difficulties of falling reef.

Thus, for example, if Rudd was buying an interest

in Schwabe's Gully, Stow would be doing nothing in Schwabe's but would be buying in the Elma Company, and English would be operating somewhere else. They bought at the open market price, and all brought their purchases to the pool at the price which they gave for them—never selling even for a profit. None but themselves ever knew the plan of campaign; and they could trust one another absolutely.

They had to work with strict economy, for time and again they were almost overwhelmed by floating reef. But working together they had this advantage, that when the reef fell they could concentrate upon it all their tackle, and all their boys, and clear the ground so as to have a good spell of the blue ground before another fall came down. They used well every penny they had; there was a time when Rudd and Rhodes could have bought the whole mine for £6000, but dared not risk the purchase. When the De Beers Company was formed, Rhodes drew a cheque for £5 'as an advance against his salary as secretary.'

By March 1885 this little band of Englishmen, thus working together, had secured the bulk of the mine.

The *Diamond Fields Advertiser* of May 7, 1885, points out that during the year the London and South African, the Independent, and the Baxter's Gully Company, as well as three other blocks of claims, had become incorporated with the De Beers Company, thus increasing the total number of their claims to 360.

In these growing financial deals Rhodes found counsel and support in the financial genius of Alfred Beit, who first came to the Fields in 1875, as diamond-

buyer for the firm of Lippert of Hamburg and Port Elizabeth; then started on his own account, and ultimately joined forces with Julius Wernher of the French firm of Jules Porges and Company. If Rhodes was the Bismarck, Beit was the Moltke of this extraordinary campaign.

By 1886 the community of Kimberley was thoroughly awake to the importance of amalgamation, or unification as it was now called, and was decidedly against it. It appears that Mr. John X. Merriman and a Mr. Moulle had come up to Kimberley to negotiate a unification on behalf of a European syndicate with ten millions sterling of capital, calling itself the Unified Mines Company.

On January 30 a great meeting was called to discuss the Unification Scheme, the Mayor of Kimberley presiding, and Mr. J. J. O'Leary tabled a series of very ponderous resolutions against the project. Were they, the speakers asked, to turn the Diggings into a second Namaqualand, and make of Kimberley a deserted village, and hand the control of their industry over to a body of men 6000 miles away? Never!

They wanted the good days of the digger back again. If every man could not have his own claim, let every man have his own ground. Let the Government buy the mine, work the mine, and sell the ground to the individual digger, who would sort the stuff and find the stones. Then the good old days would come again.

Mr. Merriman wrote eloquently, but in vain, on the benefits of unification and the ruinous waste of the competitive system. Press and public were against him. 'People only wish,' said the local paper, 'to see such a scheme wrecked.' Neverthe

less it marked the alarming tendency towards amalgamation. In the Kimberley Mine 1500 holdings at the top had decreased by more than half 100 feet down, and at the present depth of 400 feet there were not ten *bona fide* holders. The same thing had gone on at De Beers. It was useless to shut their eyes to the facts. Let them rather try by reasonable action to prevent anything more than the amalgamation of each mine into one, two, or three Companies.

And then, on February 10, Cecil Rhodes published his famous 'proposals' concerning amalgamation, addressed to the De Beers Mining Company. The document is not an argument for amalgamation, but a plan of campaign. As a basis of valuation he proposed the yield of the highest class of claims in each mine, and on this basis: 'I propose you should ask from your shareholders the power to issue scrip in exchange for that of some of the other principal Companies in the four mines.'

Here, then, was a practical scheme; it did not mean complete amalgamation, but it was sufficient to regulate output, and would, therefore, strengthen and steady the diamond market. Rhodes presented the scheme, not merely in principle, but in all its details, supported by a cogent citation of pertinent facts and figures.

The plan was discussed at a special general meeting of the Company on April 7, 1886. Rhodes himself was in the chair, and made a very skilful speech. There had been, he reminded the meeting, 'an attempt to carry the whole four mines home,' but here was a scheme by which the industry would be retained locally: 'If we acquire an influence on the basis proposed in Companies in the other mines

no sale of any mine can occur to an English Syndicate without our consent.'

The speech is of particular interest because Rhodes spoke openly of the great danger which he saw ahead. He had no great fear of Bultfontein or Dutoitspan, but 'supposing Kimberley Mine became one Corporation, and it was being worked as such, but not working with us, it would be a very serious danger to our Company.' Therefore, they must try to acquire a large holding in the Central Kimberley Mine. Thus it is clear that in Rhodes's mind the idea of amalgamating, not merely De Beers, but all the mines, had already taken shape.

The Rhodes plan was adopted, and Rhodes was put in command of £300,000 to carry out his scheme. And the meeting of May 6, 1887, shows the amalgamation of De Beers Mine practically complete. Rhodes gives a triumphant account of the last stages of the work. They had bought the Elma, in which Alfred Beit's firm was the chief interest, for £105,000, half in shares and half in blue ground. They had also bought the Gem and the Oriental Company, the latter to prevent its amalgamation with the Victoria Company, their strongest remaining rival, for if the Victoria had secured the Oriental 'it would have strengthened the Victoria to such an extent that perhaps we should not have agreed to any terms of amalgamation.'

At the same time they had been secretly buying Victoria shares. For they felt that 'the only way we could deal with them was by obtaining such a large interest in the Company that they must look upon us as one of themselves.' They had done it very cleverly through Alfred Beit. Beit and Porges had opened a joint account with them, and they

had quietly been buying shares in the Victoria Company in London: 'We felt that if they bought in the London market it would excite no remark, whereas if our Directors entered into competition it would become known at once that the De Beers Company were buying, and our object would be rendered impracticable.' On this joint account they had together bought 6000 shares at the best possible terms—at a little below £20 a share.

And then: 'In pursuance of our policy of amalgamation, we at last thought the time had arrived to inform the Victoria that we were their largest shareholders.'

It is noteworthy that while this speech of 1887 deals with the amalgamation of De Beers it ends with the larger idea: 'The High Court,' he said, 'has limited our ambition, and will not allow us to wander into other mines. But we preserve the hope that by union and co-operation with other mines in times when the market becomes depressed and diamonds become unsaleable, by promoting such friendly and harmonious co-operation as is possible, we shall place the diamond industry in a position in which it shall not be at the mercy of the buyers, but the buyers shall be under the control of the producers.'

By 1887 the work was practically done; De Beers Mine was under one control; its capital closely represented the actual value of the properties at the time when they were taken over, but the result of the consolidation was to add enormously to these values. It was a position of great strength, and it was commanded by one man.

And now Rhodes, drawing a long breath, turned his gaze upon the Kimberley Mine. It was the common boast of the men and Companies who

owned that mine that the Kimberley was worth three of De Beers, and its leading spirit, Barney Barnato, was determined to beat his rival out of the market.

Barney Barnato, like Cecil Rhodes, had come to Kimberley young and in the wake of a brother. But whereas Rhodes had come as a digger, Barney had come as a diamond-dealer of the genus known as kopje-walloper. It is unfortunate for Barney's memory that an early partner in these activities, one Louis Cohen, has written a book mainly about him. The book, it must be said, is more amusing than truthful. I do not know if it is safe even to quote from it, for one enraged millionaire, Sir J. B. Robinson, has obtained an injunction against it. Dr. Jameson, whom the book even more grossly libelled, listened to it being read aloud with joyous chuckles, particularly the part which referred to himself. It may be just worth remarking that Robinson, as Chairman of the Diamond Protection Association, and Member for Griqualand West, had a main hand in passing the I.D.B. Act.

Barney was not the illiterate that Cohen made him out to be. He must have had a fair education at the Hebrew Free School in Spitalfields, then under a celebrated pedagogue, Moses Angel, and although he left at the age of fourteen, he continued his education in the London theatres, and knew every part that Henry Irving played by heart. We have only to read Barnato's financial speeches to see that he was a man of more than a natural talent. The turn of his sentences shows that he had been accustomed to hear if not to read or speak good English.

Barney Barnato's true name was Barnett Isaacs, and he was the son of a Jewish dealer in Aldgate. His elder brother, Henry Isaacs, the first to leave

the nest, was in Kimberley as early as 1871—leading a highly-variegated life as bar-tender, chucker-out, boxer, and conjurer. Now it is a foible of public entertainers to take names which have both an Italian and an alliterative sound, and it was for this reason, and not because a pseudonym was considered an advantage in the diamond dealing business, that Harry took the name of Barnato. And what more natural than that his brother Barnett, when he entered the camp in his brother's footsteps, should be dubbed with his brother's name?

Thus Barney came to be called Barnato. He arrived in the fields in the latter part of 1873, and Louis Cohen asserts that the joint capital of the firm of Cohen and Barnato amounted to £30 and forty boxes of doubtful cigars. Their business at first was to thread their way over the kopjes, among the tables and the tents in search of diggers ready to sell their finds on the spot. At night they slept together in a small hut on a single bed, struggling on cold nights for the lion's share of the blankets. 'Barney knew me better than any man,' says Cohen, 'and would have done anything for me in the world bar give me a sixpence.'

Barnato had pluck and shrewd business instinct. 'There is nothing,' he once said, 'this country produces that I have not traded in, from diamonds and gold right away through feathers, wool, and mealies to garden vegetables.' He was soon in partnership with his brother, and from 1874 to 1880 the brothers worked day and night to gather money for future operations—all day keenly at work in the office or among the claims, all the evening and greater part of the night passing from one place of resort to

another, from one bar to another, joining in every conversation and every drink, keeping thoroughly abreast of everything that was going on.¹

Poor Barney! He was successful in his great end of money-getting, and yet, as appears from his life, he was not altogether happy. He had money but he had not reputation—and there, perhaps, lay his sorrow. Why Kimberley refused to entertain a high opinion of him we can only guess. Upon the evidence, as already hinted, we must acquit him of any share in the ‘common crime,’ for a man is innocent until he is proved guilty. But it came near to him—near enough for the censorious.²

Such, then, was Rhodes’s rival—an Oriental, cunning, quick, emotional, mercurial, unabashed, and yet by all accounts good-hearted, with an art to turn all things to gold—and yet with a scruple to turn all gold to dross—for in the end poor Barney drowned himself.

By 1876 he had contrived to save £3000, which he invested in a block of four claims in the Kimberley Mine. These claims paid beyond expectation, bringing in a steady income of £1800 a week. In 1880 he went to England and established the firm of Barnato Brothers, diamond dealers and financiers, and, at the end of the year, floated his claims as the Barnato Diamond Mining Company for £115,000. This Company at first paid 36 per cent. per annum, but became involved in heavy falls of reef. Barnato met this by amalgamation. He joined with the Standard Company, bought Stewart’s claims and joined forces with the Kimberley Central. At the stage when Rhodes’s amalgamation of De Beers

¹ *Barnato*. A Memoir by Harry Raymond, 1897, p. 19.

² See the *Argus* libel case tried in Cape Town on May 4 and 5, 1885.

was completed Barnato controlled the greater part of the Kimberley Mine.

But there were several important exceptions. The French Company in particular held a line of claims running across the mine from north to south and dividing the holdings of the Central Company. It also held some claims from which this central line was separated by the intervening claims of the Central Company. When Rhodes appeared on the scene these two companies were engaged in a sort of subterranean war. 'Neither,' says Mr. Gardner Williams, 'would allow the divided blocks of claims to be worked by means of tunnels driven through the diamond-bearing ground of the opposing Company. The Central Company worked its claims by two separate shafts sunk in the blue ground at the bottom of the open mine, and the ground hoisted in the shafts was sent to the surface by means of aerial trams, while the French Company was compelled to drive tunnels into the walls of the mine adjoining the claims and connect them by a cross tunnel, as they were working through one shaft only.'

While the Kimberley Mine was deep in this internecine quarrel, Rhodes opened operations. His first approaches were friendly. Rhodes always preferred to deal with men rather than fight them. And indeed he saw clearly that a fight between Kimberley and De Beers might ruin both. For the new era of underground workings and the economies in working, which were the result of consolidation, had enormously increased the power of production. Falls of reef were no longer to be feared, mechanical haulage through the shafts had become as simple a problem as the haulage of coal up the shaft of a coal-mine. The force of gravitation was being

applied with increasing success to the recovery of diamonds, which became more and more mechanical. 'Our engineers,' said Rhodes, 'stated that they could give us 8000, 10,000, 12,000, even 15,000 loads a day, and we felt we were only just beginning diamond mining again.'¹

They reported also that Kimberley Mine could be made to yield the same result. In the past the outraged law of gravitation had intervened to limit output. Now it was merely a question of sinking shafts, and constructing tiers of galleries one under the other. 'It is possible,' as Rhodes said after the battle, 'for the Kimberley Mine alone to produce twice the diamonds that the world will take under any ill-regulated management that would or might have occurred.'² Yet, as Rhodes calculated, the potential yield of De Beers was double the potential yield of the Kimberley Mine.

Such was the position when Rhodes approached Barnato. It was a case, as Rhodes said afterwards, of 'either an arrangement with Kimberley Mine or the control of Kimberley Mine,' and Rhodes tried first for an arrangement. 'We approached,' he afterwards said, 'the controlling powers in Kimberley Mine in every possible way that you could conceive. I valued De Beers Mine at a great deal higher figure than they valued it; but I was willing to give way in everything in order that we might obtain amalgamation which meant control, which meant the saving of our industry. Gentlemen, I was met simply with smiles and the most obdurate statements, I was met by the judgment of the gentlemen at the street corner, who would never reason with me, never discuss details as to the

¹ *Speeches*, p. 748.

² *Ibid.* p. 751.

value of the Kimberley Mine, but contented themselves by reiterating, "Kimberley Mine! Why, it is worth three times what De Beers is worth."'

Rhodes, then, was met by this 'solid, obdurate wall,' and there was now only the other alternative left—to secure the control of the Kimberley Mine. Either that or 'sell my shares and go home,' as Rhodes said afterwards.

It was a formidable task; in appearance the Kimberley group were far stronger than De Beers. They were generally supposed to have a richer mine; they were better known in finance; they had a greater command of wealth. But Rhodes saw that there was one line of weakness through Barnato's position—the holdings of the French Company. These holdings he determined to secure.

Now it was known at that time that the House of Rothschild had its exceedingly keen eyes upon the diamond diggings. It had already sent Mr. E. G. de Crano to report, and it had no doubt been tempted more than once to take a hand in the amalgamation. Rhodes, then, in his search for the means to buy the French Company, turned to London and opened negotiations with Lord Rothschild.

Mr. Gardner Williams gives us an excellent account of these negotiations, in which he took an active part. They were first indirect and by letter, but Rhodes, well knowing the urgency of time, did not wait for a reply. On July 6, 1887, he set out for London, taking his manager with him, and when they arrived they went at once to Lord Rothschild's office.

Lord Rothschild afterwards confessed that he liked Rhodes; 'he knew what he wanted and came

to the point.' Rhodes left the office with the assurance that if he could buy the French Company Rothschild would find a million sterling to pay for it.

The same night Rhodes left for Paris with a bevy of his own and Rothschild's experts in his train. 'You know the story,' said Rhodes gleefully, 'of my getting on board the steamer at Cape Town, going home, and buying the French Company within twenty-four hours, and the excitement caused thereby.'¹

It was not exactly in twenty-four hours, but it was speedily done. The French Company valued their property at £1,400,000; Rhodes closed with them, arranged for an advance of £750,000 from Lord Rothschild, and returned in triumph.²

Now it is true that this deal caused excitement, and well it might. For Barnato and his friends were faced with the prospect of an enemy reinforced a hundredfold in the very heart of their position. They had hoped to buy in the French Company. They could not hope to buy up De Beers.

The first action of Barnato was to try to upset the sale by persuading the shareholders of the French Company not to confirm the transaction. To this end they proposed a higher price. And here Rhodes met Barnato in a very interesting way. 'You can offer them,' he said, '£300,000 more, and we will offer another £300,000 on that; you can go on and bid for the benefit of the French shareholders *ad infinitum*, but we shall have it in the end. Why then fight?'

¹ *Speeches*, p. 750.

² The money was paid by an issue of De Beers shares, so well conceived that the De Beers Company made £100,000 profit by the transactions. *Gardner Williams*, p. 288.

And here Rhodes made his offer. Let him complete the purchase without interference and he would sell the claims of the French Company to the Kimberley Central for Kimberley shares. This seemed to Barnato to be just what he wanted. He closed with the offer, amalgamated the French claims in his own Company and paid De Beers in scrip. Now this scrip amounted to a fifth share in the control of the Kimberley Mine.

Barnato still meant war ; he still thought he could undersell De Beers because he had a richer mine, and he proposed to take the Kimberley Mine home, make an English Company of it, and ' run Kimberley against De Beers.'

It was clear to Rhodes, from his engineers' reports, that such a struggle could only end in overloading the market and ruining the industry. He made one more effort to settle. He offered Barnato the market rates of five to four. This would have given £2,500,000 to Kimberley and £2,000,000 to De Beers, but, as De Beers held the fifth interest in the Kimberley Company, it would have really meant a balance of £500,000 on the side of De Beers. Barnato refused the offer, and again there was nothing left for it but war.

As we have already seen, Alfred Beit had long been associated with Rhodes, owing to his interests in the De Beers Mine, and owing also to the natural friendship and mutual esteem, which kept these two together through life. Besides this interest in De Beers, Alfred Beit was an important pivot in the Kimberley negotiations. His firm had founded the Griqualand West Diamond Mining Company, afterwards reformed as the French Company, and therefore Alfred Beit, although inside the Kimberley

Mine, was the opponent of Barnato and the ally of Rhodes.

'All we possessed,' as Rhodes told the story, 'was a fifth, but a fifth is a beginning; and after a good deal of consideration, in which I must say Mr. Beit, one of the firm of Messrs. Porges and Company, was of the most material assistance, we decided one morning that we would buy a sufficient number of Kimberley Centrals to give us control. That was a big undertaking, and meant two or three millions of money. But we said, "If we only have the pluck to undertake it we must succeed. Don't let us go to the shareholders. If we fail they can only make us personally liable." I said at first, "Where's the money to come from?" But Mr. Beit only said, "Oh! we will get the money if we can only buy the shares."' ¹

And now began in earnest the final stage of this great battle. Rhodes and his friends bought with the single purpose of securing control; Barnato bought 'because he was infiltrated with this notion that the Kimberley Mine was worth two of De Beers.' Wherever and whenever Rhodes bought Barnato bought also; but there was this difference, Rhodes was attacking; Barnato was defending. There was no thought of buying or of selling De Beers shares, and every share in the Kimberley Mine bought in the De Beers interest was held. But Barnato bought shares which his own friends were selling. As the prices soared upwards, Barnato's friends could not resist so divine a chance of making a profit. Barnato was buying from his principal shareholders.

In the heat of the contest Rhodes happened to

¹ *Speeches*, p. 752.

meet Barnato. 'Well,' said Rhodes, 'how are we getting on now?'

'Why,' replied Barnato, 'you've bought a million pounds' worth of Central.'

'Yes,' retorted Rhodes, 'and we'll buy another million pounds' worth. And now,' Rhodes continued, 'I'll tell you what you'll find out presently, and that is you'll be left alone in the Central Company.'

Rhodes added that he would make him one last offer—'Market rates for Centrals *versus* De Beers.'

'And,' Barnato asked, 'if I don't take it what will happen?'

For answer Rhodes reminded him of the position: 'Here you have your leading shareholders patting you on the back and backing you up, but selling out round the corner all the time.'

It was the truth, and Barnato knew it. And he knew also that in another battle he was being worsted also—the battle of production. Kimberley Mine had been producing a little over a carat per load. Rhodes spurred on his management to beat it. We must have diamonds, he would say. Instead of leaving the blue ground on the floors to disintegrate under sun and rain, the ground as it was recovered was thrown straight into the crushing and pulsating machines, and sorted at once. It was pointed out to Rhodes that many diamonds which remained concealed in the still integrated modules were being lost among the waste. Never mind, he said, we can recover them later; in the meantime we must increase our yield. De Beers mine blue was mixed with shale, yet its yield now stood at a carat and a quarter per load, almost a quarter of a carat higher than the average yield of the Kimberley Mine.

And at the same time that Rhodes convinced Barnato that he was beating him in buying, he convinced him that he was beating him in yield. After some days of heavy rain, when the diamonds, washed clean of their envelope of clay, shone and glistened on the floors of disintegrating ground, Rhodes marshalled the whole staff, and set them to gather diamonds like mushrooms in a field. The result was a haul of diamonds weighing 12,000 carats. Rhodes took them to Barnato's office, and poured them out before his rival's glistening eyes. 'See,' he said, 'what De Beers can do in one day!'

It is said that other arguments were used. Barnato had social ambitions. It was one of his desires to be a member of the Kimberley Club, it was another to be a Member of Parliament. And Rhodes both knew Barnato's heart and used his knowledge. 'This,' he said to Barnato, 'is no mere money transaction. I propose to make a gentleman of you—and a useful member of society,' and he threw into the scales both the Kimberley Club and the Kimberley seat.

Barnato hesitated, dazzled and bewildered by these temptations. But he had one difficulty left. 'You know, Rhodes, old man,' he said, 'your crowd will never leave me on the Directorate. They will turn me out in a year or two.'

Rhodes saw the point and went away thoughtfully pulling his nose. Next day he returned. 'I have got it,' he said; 'we shall make you a Life Governor.' 'A what?' said Barnato, for the term was new to company promotion in those days. 'A Life Governor,' Rhodes repeated. And he unfolded the plan by which Barnato was secured in his position.

Such was the origin of the Life Governorships of De Beers.

There were many old diggers in Kimberley, and speculators also, who never reconciled themselves to the amalgamation, and some who considered that they had been ruined by it. These, and others, formed a band of the aggrieved who pursued Rhodes through life with curses and threats of vengeance. Whatever view they take of it, all must admit that it was a battle. And in a battle there are always the vanquished as well as the victors. Rhodes was the victor. He took joy in the battle. At the annual meeting on March 31, 1888, when the shareholders offered him a bonus of £10,000 he waved the gift aside. 'We have beaten them all round,' he said. 'Every man has his own pleasure. My pleasure has been in beating them all round, and I want no sums of money.'

Rhodes brought not only Barnato to terms, but he partly persuaded, partly forced the then poorer mines of Bultfontein and Dutoitspan to give leases to De Beers by which control of the mines was exchanged for a fixed annual dividend. As for such mines as Koffyfontein and Klipfontein, Rhodes forced them to terms by a clear demonstration of the hard facts. 'If you have two rich mines working together in co-operation and not in antagonism the fate of the poorer mine lies in their hands.' The rich mine could produce collectively four times what the public could take and could be made to pay at a price at which the poor mines could not work. Therefore 'the poor land on the margin of cultivation has to do one of two things—to fight us for a short period or to take our terms.'

Thus the Diamond Mines of Griqualand West

were amalgamated in one Company with Rhodes in practical control. But there was still a difficulty. Rhodes's object, as we have seen, was not wealth but power, and in the wealth he now commanded he saw the power with which he could open the North. He proposed, in fact, to use the profits of the De Beers Company to build the railway through Bechuanaland and finance the Chartered Company. But for that a change in the Trust Deed of the De Beers Company was necessary, and it was necessary also to have the consent of Barnato.

Barnato was obstinate. Whoever heard of using the profits of a Company to extend an Empire? It was a crazy idea and it was bad business. Barnato, Beit, and Rhodes fought the matter out for a whole night. Beit supported Rhodes, but Barnato was obstinate. Rhodes, according to his wont, used every argument which he thought might appeal to his opponent. Barnato remained unconvinced; but at last, as night drew into morning, he surrendered. 'Some people,' he said, 'have a fancy for this thing and some for that; you have a fancy for making an Empire. Well, I suppose I must give it to you.'

One obstacle remained. Certain shareholders of the Central Company opposed the Consolidation on the ground that De Beers was not a 'similar company.' The case came before the Supreme Court, and the judges were amazed as the Trust Deed was read to them and they heard the powers set forth.

'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.'

The Court took the view of the plaintiffs. The Consolidation was stopped; but Rhodes was again too much for the Opposition. He placed the Central Company in liquidation, and bought up the property. And so by January 1889 the work was complete. Rhodes had consolidated the diamond mines, and he held in his hands the means to carry out his great idea.

CHAPTER VI

A CONVERSATION, NOT ALTOGETHER IMAGINARY

' . . . no receipt openeth the heart but a true friend, to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it, in a kind of civil shrift or confession.'—BACON.

IN 1881 Cecil Rhodes was returned for the Cape Parliament as one of the two members for Barkly West, the rural division of Griqualand West. 'I went down,' he afterwards confessed, 'saying in my practical way, "I will go and take the North."' His first act was to overturn the Sprigg Government which he had been returned to support. He went back to Kimberley and converted a hostile community to his point of view in a single speech.

He obtained from the new Government a Commission to consider the boundaries of Griqualand West, and, with the support of Sir Hercules Robinson, then High Commissioner, took a main hand in the struggle for the country to the north of Kimberley, the vast territory of Bechuanaland, then a lawless and debatable land, upon which the Transvaal Boers were fast encroaching.

By a series of skilful negotiations with the Boer freebooters of Stellaland, he induced them to come under the British flag; though he was baffled for a while by the sister Republic of Goshen.

He accompanied the Warren Expedition of 1885 which brought Kruger and Joubert to terms; and

in the end he secured his first step—‘the road to the North,’ ‘the neck of the bottle,’ ‘the Suez Canal of the trade of the Interior,’ as he called Bechuanaland, which became by his exertions, not indeed a British Colony, but at least a British protectorate.

He then set about to secure the North itself; and to that end he sent various agents, including his partner Rudd, to obtain a concession for gold-mining from Lobengula, King of the Matabele, which concession Rudd, after wild and extravagant perils and adventures, secured and brought back.

Now this concession was in jeopardy, because Rhodes had no man whom he could trust with the courage and resolution to see it through.

At this point—leaving very much still to be explained—we return to Jameson.

There is no sure knowledge of how these two first came together; but beyond question they were already friends in the 'eighties, and in the latter part of 1886 something occurred which made the friendship a ‘marriage of twin minds.’ Before that date the bosom friend of Cecil Rhodes and confidant of all his dreams had been a frank, sunny-tempered young Englishman, Neville Pickering, who was at the time Secretary of De Beers. They shared the same office and the same dwelling-house, worked together, played together, rode together, shot together. And Rhodes wrote one of his dream-of-Empire wills, leaving to Neville his entire fortune to be used as he thought wise for the ends of which Rhodes had told him. In 1884 Pickering was thrown by his horse and so much injured that he never rightly recovered. The mischief settled on his lungs, and by the end of 1886 it became clear that he was

dying. Jameson, as the doctor, and Rhodes, as the friend, did all for the young man that skill and friendship could do, but in vain. One gathers from a lingering tradition that Neville's sick-bed clinched the intimacy of the eight preceding years in which Rhodes and Jameson had certainly known each other in a school of fierce conflicts and unreserved intimacies.

The end came when Rhodes was away in the Transvaal helping to peg out the main reef of the Witwatersrand, at that time being prospected by eager pioneers from Barberton, Natal, and Kimberley. Dr. Hans Sauer, who was with him at the time, had secured options which might have made Rhodes on the Witwatersrand what he had become at Kimberley, as, for example, an option of ten days for £500 on the farm of Hans Duplessis, where afterwards more than twenty million pounds' worth of gold was mined; as well as on the farm of Doornfontein for £250 which would have given Rhodes a great tract of country alongside the township of Johannesburg, then unbuilt. Within two years, by municipal valuation, the farm of Doornfontein was worth £3,000,000.

Rhodes was staying at the little homestead of Klein Paardekraal, four or five miles from where Johannesburg now stands: round him then, in a country now covered with tall head-works and high heaps of tailings, townships, and factories, was nothing but the wind-swept downs of the high veld. The negotiations were complete, the transfers were ready; all that remained was the signing of Rhodes's name. At that moment a message arrived from Kimberley that Neville Pickering could not live much longer. When Rhodes received this word,

which had in all likelihood been sent by Jameson, he simply said to Sauer, 'I'm off,' and rode down to Kimberley, sitting on the top of the mail-bags which were roped over the mail-cart.

He remained at Pickering's bedside, careless of anything but the wants and comforts of his friend. Sauer telegraphed and telegraphed again, but got no answer, and the options lapsed which might, in Rhodes's hands, have made him master of the world's chief source of gold. At about one o'clock on the morning of October 16, 1886, he asked William Pickering to fetch the Doctor. Jameson came, but could do nothing. Pickering whispered to Rhodes, 'You have been father, mother, brother, and sister to me,' and died in his arms.

Neville Pickering was buried in the Kimberley Cemetery. A great concourse of the miners and diamond-buyers of the Fields gathered round the grave. Barney Barnato, most soft-hearted of men when his heart was touched, sniffed and blubbered. And Rhodes, alternating hysterically between laughter and tears, said in his high falsetto, 'Ah, Barney, he will never sell you another parcel of diamonds!'

From that day Cecil Rhodes never lived in the house he had shared with Neville Pickering, but took up his quarters with Jameson in the little one-storey, corrugated-iron-roofed and verandahed bungalow aforementioned, on the street over against the Kimberley Club.

Thus after eight years of testing acquaintance began that more than friendship which was to change Jameson's career and to bind him until his death to immense and inconceivable labours wherein self was not, and to move the First Doctor in Kimberley

to ride out into the heart of Africa upon perilous adventures, to become diplomatist, soldier, explorer, leader in forlorn hopes, prisoner, and Prime Minister. How was this miracle wrought? None can say for certain; but we can guess at it from the circumstances, and from our knowledge of the two men.

The recorded sayings of Jameson are few and laconic. No man ever expressed himself in words less self-revealing or more casual. A humorously violent exclamation, generally of abuse or disbelief, the raising of an eyebrow, an outward jerk of the hand, clinched the main part of his communications with his fellow-men. Yet once kindled, his mind leaped forward with extraordinary swiftness, anticipating by intuition swift as a woman's the reasoning processes of other men.

No man thought more deliberately than Rhodes. He laboured in travail of great yet simple ideas, ruminated on first principles for weeks, months, years, until they were resolved into all their consequences and followed into their remotest ramifications, and never tired of repeating a truth he had proved, a principle on which he founded himself. His vocabulary was inadequate to his thoughts; he rolled and heaved in mental parturition; he fidgeted 'as if he had a flea between his shoulders'; he was uncouth to eccentricity. And through some shamefaced avoidance of any show of altruism he disguised his ideas in crude appeals to his own interest and the interest of those whom he sought to yoke to his remorseless ideals. Herein at least the two men were alike, both instinctively at pains to disguise the sentiments that moved, the dreams that urged them, and the light they followed. They hid

their virtues with more shame than other men hide their vices.

Conceive, then, these two most firm and unceremonious of friends, in the intervals of business and of practice, late at night in their little sitting-room, or early in the morning—Rhodes shouting elemental truths at Jameson from his bath tub ; or in morning rides—Rhodes sitting with a loose rein, neglectful of his horse, brooding over or reiterating his ideas, as a cave-man strikes a flint ; Jameson sparing of speech, humorous, cynical, but a flint full of fire.

Conceive, next, the sitting-room of the bungalow, the table after dinner, Jameson smoking his endless chain of cigarettes, Rhodes rolling in his chair like a whale in deep seas, reiterating brief statements a hundred times, not only feeling for the word he seemed to need, but for his hearer's assent—like an elephant laboriously testing with foot and trunk the bridge on which he would trust his reasoning bulk.

The talk was of the North—the North—the North—Rhodes as he used the word always thrusting an arm upwards and outwards in a northerly direction to convey his idea of the vastness of the unknown—that unclaimed Interior. Did Jameson realise that to the north the great plateau of the African Continent continued—up to the Equatorial Lakes, up to the Soudan—cool under the Equator—a country for white men ? Could Jameson imagine it, settled, like America, with homesteads, and cities, and railways between them—as big as the United States, as populous, and British from Cape to Cairo ? Had Jameson ever thought of the independence of the Thirteen Colonies which became the United States ?

Beyond an occasional mine-manager or two, Jameson had not considered America.

Well, in the North was something to make up to England for these thirteen lost Colonies.

Still Jameson was unmoved, possibly ribald, so Rhodes fought his way on.

No, it was not nonsense, but a practical idea. One had worked at it; one had gone some way already. Jameson knew what one had done. It was no laughing matter! It was more important than his pills and pregnancies!

Let Jameson fairly consider the case in all its bearings and then admit himself cornered. Let him consider it for example *qua* the federation of South Africa. The one question governed the other.

Jameson could see as far as that? Obvious! He who held the North held 'the balance of the map'—the balance of the map—and here Rhodes kept on repeating for a minute or two, the balance of the map, as one conscious of making a great point.

Did Jameson follow him? The federation of South Africa was the same as the Amalgamation of the Diamond Mines! Exactly. And to be approached in the same way. Carnarvon had tried to federate South Africa from outside, just as Merri-man had tried to amalgamate the mines from outside. They had both failed. For it was a thing to be done from inside—step by step, a work of years. One must appeal to the interests of men, and one must hold the balance of what men wanted. One must hold the balance of the map.

There was the secret. The North was the balance, the coveted balance. Kruger wanted it—Kruger was *qua* the Transvaal like Barnato *qua* the Kimberley Mine—Jameson realised that? Kruger had his hobby. Every one had his hobby. Kruger wanted a Republic of South Africa under its own

flag—a Boer Republic, from the Cape to the Zambesi. But he was landlocked—the Transvaal was landlocked. He had tried to get Bechuanaland. One had beaten him there, simply enough, by offering his freebooters British titles which made land more valuable than Transvaal titles. One appealed to men's interests. Yes, the land of Goshen had been more difficult: there one had had to get up Warren to settle the point, and soldiers were always a nuisance. But in one way or another one had saved Bechuanaland.

Jameson knew that of course; but *here* was the important point. Bechuanaland was the road to the North. Did Jameson follow?—the road to the North, the neck of the bottle, the Suez Canal—Jameson must see that point.

Of course he saw it—a duffer if he didn't. Well, then, it was not merely the road to the North, but the North itself that Kruger wanted. Why? Because the North was the balance of the map.

The North was the trump card, the key position, the bulk of the shares. If Kruger got the North, he held a solid block of claims from the Orange River to the Zambesi. He had what the British wanted, which was trade, what the Dutch wanted, which was land—a very strong position. If Kruger had the North, the amalgamation would be on Kruger's terms: he could force all South Africa into his Republic. *Now* was Jameson convinced?

Here Jameson, who never missed a point in any argument, would probably observe that the seaports and the railways were still to be in British hands, so that the Republic would be helpless without an outlet to the sea.

Yes, Rhodes would reply, a good point, an excel-

lent point; but Kruger had seen to that. Now that he had the gold of the Witwatersrand at his command he could build his Delagoa Bay railway, which would make him independent of the British system. It would beat the British system, for it was the shortest route from the gold-mines to the sea. It would govern the trade of South Africa. One had tried to stop it: one had tried to push the Cape railway through the Transvaal to Delagoa Bay; but one could not get the Cape Government to see things in time. If Kruger had the Delagoa Bay line, and if he had the North, he had all the cards, he had all the claims, all the shares, he could force his federation. *Now* did Jameson see the importance of the North? *Now* would he admit himself cornered?

Here Rhodes's voice went up into his shrill falsetto cock-crow of triumph.

And Jameson, on his side, considering the matter with half-sheathed eyes, would grudgingly concede that there might be something in it.

Very good! There were two key positions—the North and Delagoa Bay. One had one's agents in Portugal trying to buy Delagoa Bay; but the Portuguese were obstinate—poor but proud—and the British Government was slack in the matter. No, *there* Kruger looked like winning. But the North remained. For the hundredth time, did Jameson see the importance of the North? . . .

There was gold in the North. Yes, Jameson had a perfect right to ask what one could possibly want with more gold. A fair point: *qua* gold one had enough; but *qua* power, one must deal with men as one found them. There must be a magnet.

Gold had taken one's people into the Transvaal. Gold might take them to the North. . . .

One had been working at the problem for years—'Rhodes's hobby,' one's friends called it. Every man had his hobby—just like Kruger. One had tried the Imperial Government; but one could not count on the Imperial factor. It had failed in the Orange Free State; it had failed in the Transvaal. Let Jameson consider Majuba. Jameson *had* considered it. The Imperial factor feared expense, feared responsibility. True, the High Commissioner was one's friend: one had induced him to make a Protectorate of Bechuanaland, and to negotiate the Moffat Treaty with Lobengula. Jameson understood the Moffat Treaty? No? Well, the Moffat Treaty was a sort of option. Lobengula agreed not to let any other power into Matabeleland without the consent of the British Power. An option! But if the Boers were once to break in one could not trust the Imperial factor to put them out again. Jameson saw that? Of course he did. One could not trust them to keep *even* the Bechuanaland Protectorate. No, not after Majuba. One must eliminate the Imperial factor.

One had tried the Cape Government . . . lawyers, politicians, merchants . . . the Rosebank Party . . . seaports and their rivalries. One had told them 'the mists of Table Mountain covered all.' *They* could not see the importance of the North.

Did not Hofmeyr see it? Yes, Jameson was right. Hofmeyr *did* see it; but Hofmeyr actually wanted Kruger to have it. Imagine it—with Kruger shutting out Cape wine and tobacco. . . . No, the Cape would not help one at all.

What was there left? One had one's friends and

one's money. Did Jameson remember what the East India Company had done? If in India, why not in Africa? In India there had been trade to draw men on, in Africa there was gold. Just suppose, for the sake of argument, the North occupied by a British Company. It must then become a British Colony. The North would be in British hands, and with the balance of the North in British hands one might federate South Africa on British lines. It put a trump card in one's hands. Now, Jameson had seen that; he had admitted every point as one went along, so he must accept the conclusion. If one held the balance of the North, the Transvaal was almost surrounded. And the Boers wanted land.

Yes, Jameson knew all that: he had heard it before; he was sick of hearing it. . . . But there it was: Jameson could not get away from it.

One, of course, had done something *qua* the North; one was, in fact, rather deeply committed. One had sent one's agents—traders, big-game hunters; one had to use the material to hand. One used failures and one failed. . . . There was Fry, for example. At last one had sent Rudd. Now Rudd had done very well . . . an astonishing fellow Rudd.

But there were complications; there were difficulties. Jameson might help. . . . No sense in being hasty. Obviously one had to use one's friends for one's ideas.

Let Jameson listen to what one had to say. Nature abhorred a vacuum, and when Rudd left the savage monarch, Lobengula, there *was* a vacuum. One had tried to fill it. There was Rochfort Maguire . . . there was Thompson . . . Jameson knew all

that. He wanted to go to bed. . . . He must listen, the thing was serious—really serious.

There were the rival concession-hunters, Maund in particular—a clever fellow. Maund had created a party, and had got the army and a lot of the indunas on his side. The King was getting nervous. One's agents were very anxious. . . .

As for Rochfort Maguire, he was bored. One could not expect a Fellow of All Souls to remain indefinitely eating raw meat in a savage kraal. Then Thompson was getting jumpy. He had had a bad experience with natives. When one has seen a ramrod thrust down one's father's throat, it left an impression. One had to allow for that in Thompson.

There were still the rifles and ammunition to be delivered to Lobengula, as per contract; the savage monarch must be kept sweet while the Company was being organised. Now if Jameson undertook it. . . .

No sense in laughing! The thing must be faced. Jameson wanted a holiday. Everybody said so. Jameson wanted some shooting—excellent shooting in Matabeleland. Jameson did not care a pin for shooting? Well, one knew that. But there were other things to be considered. Jameson liked a gamble. Here was a chance, a great chance. Suppose Jameson took some shares in the Company at the price of issue. One could get him an allotment. They were bound to go up—no doubt about the gold in Mashonaland.

One admitted that Jameson's practice was a certainty—an excellent practice; but there was no future for Kimberley since the amalgamation—only a humdrum, steady-going, dull sort of diamond-

factory. And then, of course, Jameson could always come back to his practice. . . .

Then *qua* duty. Here was something worth doing—to make sure of the North. All very well to swear; but there *was* the duty business. It existed in life, Jameson *must* admit that side of it. Jameson would admit nothing. . . .

Well, the situation really was desperate, and how could one carry through one's ideas if one's friends did not back one? Rudd was ill. Maguire was bored. Thompson was nervous. Obviously, there was no one but Jameson, it was the thing for Jameson to do.

No, Jameson would not make an ass of himself. There were other arguments, many others. Now *qua* fun, *qua* excitement, *qua* seeing life, *qua* the really big thing, *qua* all that duty business too! But they could go over it again to-morrow morning.

And so on and on and on, until by continual hammering the steel in Jameson took the magnetism which turned him to the North until his life's end. Grumbling a little, blaspheming a little, laughing a good deal, the First Doctor in Kimberley, *the* Doctor in Kimberley, resigned his practice to the care of a partner, and undertook to accompany George Musson, a trader of Shoshong, who had contracted to carry 500 rifles and 50,000 rounds of ammunition—one half, that is to say, of the agreed total—to Lobengula, King of the Matabele, at his chief place or royal kraal, then known among white men as Gubuluwayo.

CHAPTER VII

JAMESON GOES NORTH

*'Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven,
It was my hint to speak.'*

WE can date the departure of Jameson to a day from a letter which he wrote to his brother Tom, then a family doctor in the London suburb of Tulse Hill. It is written from Kimberley on February 2, 1889. 'I leave to-morrow morning for Matabeleland,' he writes, 'drive up about 250 miles to catch my wagons which started a fortnight ago. Then about a month's trek to the King's kraal, after that doubtful; but hope to go into Mashonaland, and possibly up the Zambesi. Shooting and see the country is the ostensible object of the trip; but possibilities of gold in the future also enter into it.'

Then comes a discreet reference to his friend: 'Rhodes was to have come with me, but has to go to England on business and may join me later on.' And he proceeds: 'My turn-out is fairly perfect in the way of food, servants, horses, dogs, armoury, etc., and I have a very nice companion named Dr. Harris, an enthusiastic sportsman. The duration of the trip is doubtful, as there may be some finessing to be done with the Chief to get through into the interior; but I expect to manage it all right. After I return, supposing things here look well, I may take a trip home.' He ends with references to his

brother Sam on the Rand, whom Jameson had been to see a couple of months before—altogether a letter which shows that Jameson had already the habit of keeping his secrets—and the secrets of others.

Bechuanaland, to the casual eye, is an abomination of desolation—interminable wilderness of grassy and shrubby sand-flats—camel-thorn and acacia-trees in the hollows, and, above, rocky kopjes, covered with stones and yellow grass—patches of old mealie-gardens and deserted kraals—nothing of life to be seen save a troop of trotting ostriches racing the wind, a meerkat on his haunches beside his burrow, or a korhaan soaring like a huge black lark into the blue sky, with, at rare intervals, a swarming native *stad* of straw and reed huts, built round the *kotla* of some local chief.

Such was the country—the vast and empty corridor to the North—through which Jameson now travelled. Yet, empty as it seemed, it had a history no less wild and lawless than that Borderland of the Gala Water whence Jameson drew some of his fighting and adventurous blood. First, on Jameson's left as he took his way North by Geering's post-cart, lay Taungs, the capital town of the Batlapin Chief, Mankaroane, formerly held for the Chief against the Stellalanders by that redoubtable freebooter, 'Scotty Smith,' with his little army of thirty white men and sixty Zulus. Scotty, who boasted that he had stolen 750 horses, the terror alike of Boer, diamond-merchant, and I.D.B., ex-Guardsman, ex-policeman, stock thief, and highwayman, who had broken every gaol in Griqualand West, was still a power in those regions when Jameson went North.

A stage farther, on his right, was Vryburg, capital town of Stellaland, which Rhodes had turned from

a freebooting Republic into a frontier district of the Colony. Jameson had reason to be discreet as he passed through Vryburg, whose citizens hankered to take part in the game in which Jameson was now a player. Four years before, the town had decided to support a Matabele pretender, one Kimmia, an illegitimate son of the great Matabele Chief, Mosilikatsi, father of Lobengula, and had offered to the Chief Khama the services of 2000 frontiersmen, Dutch and British, for war against Lobengula, 'subject to certain conditions.' The pretender was then under the protection of Paul Kruger, President of the Transvaal, at Rustenburg, and was to be backed by 500 of Kruger's men, acting in conjunction with the Vryburgers. That particular intrigue had been nipped in the bud by Sir Sidney Shippard, who arrived with his Chief Police Officer in the town of Vryburg, rather suddenly, on October 23, 1885, and bound over its chief citizens for breach of the Foreign Enlistment Act, sedition, and contempt of court, to keep the peace for twelve months. The *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, addressing these wild men from the 'placid, pathetic contentment' of Kimberley, was well justified in its comment: 'It will be a long time before the restless, roving, filibustering spirit will die out in Stellaland.'

Another day's travelling, and Jameson reached Mafeking, which he was to know better in later years. It was, even then, thriving as a frontier settlement under British protection. Yet only a few years before it had been the centre of a pitiless and unequal war between the Boer freebooters of Rooigrond and the Baralong Chief, Montsioa, waged for the hunting veld and grazing land of the tribe.

The travellers must have heard the story, for it

was only five years old when they stopped at the town. Montsioa had been supported in his defence by Christopher Bethell, an English officer, and Walker, a Lowland Scot. The Boers had built a laager of wagons and stone walls over against the town, and were pounding it with a long Krupp gun; but they could not draw the garrison, till at last they drove the tribe's captured cattle past the town in full view of their starving owners. Then the garrison made a sortie, and were caught in ambush by a strong force of freebooters.

A hundred Baralong fell to the Boer rifles. Israel Molemmow, a son of the Chief, who was fighting next to Bethell, was shot through the right shoulder, and soon afterwards Bethell was hit by a bullet which carried away his eye and part of his cheek. He gave his rifle to Israel, saying, 'Fight for me, I am wounded.' 'I cannot,' Israel replied, 'for I too am wounded.'

When dusk fell the firing ceased. Then the Boers came up to the wounded men, and Israel, who shammed death, heard them say to Bethell, 'Do you wish to live or die?'

'I wish to die,' said Bethell.

Then the freebooters shot him. 'Now, Bethell,' they said, 'come and fight us.'¹

At Mafeking, the God-forsaken, Dr. Jameson and his fellow-traveller overtook his wagons, and thenceforward they had to accommodate their pace to the exasperating crawl of the oxen. Thus Northward they passed over country hallowed by memories of

¹ Blue Book, C. 4213, pp. 135-6. General Warren's obituary notice of Bethell is given in *The Times* of August 19, 1884. 'We withdrew our protection from Montsioa,' says Warren, 'but Mr. Bethell, like Gordon at Khartoum, would not desert his post at Schuba, and has died the death of an Englishman.'

David Livingstone, past the almost indistinguishable ruins of his mission-station burnt nearly thirty years before by 'the Boers of the Cashan Mountains, otherwise named Magaliesberg, who had fled from British law,' thence onward by fever-stricken Gaborones, Mochudi, and the headwaters of the Crocodile River—if dry sand-beds can be called headwaters—to Shoshong, capital town of Khama, Chief of the Bamangwato, the northernmost and strongest tribe of the Bechuana people.

Khama was something of a statesman, as was necessary for one who lived with the Transvaal Boers on the east and the Matabele to the north. When the Boers threatened him he relied on the support of Sir Sidney Shippard and the Bechuana-land Police, for he was under the protection of the Great Queen. When the Matabele raided them, Khama and his men would fall back into the sandy intricacies of his desert hinterland till the invading impi were broken by thirst and the cunning ambushes of his riflemen. As Khama's main defence was his superiority over Lobengula in the possession of guns, Jameson had reason to fear the opposition of this Chief to his further progress. But the arm of Rhodes was long, and his friend, Sir Sidney Shippard, had made the way smooth. Jameson and his caravan were allowed to pass unchallenged.

Jameson's road hereafter lay through territory now claimed by the Matabele, the gold concessions of Tati, where the party were hospitably entertained by Major Sam Edwards, and beyond it, through a country where the grass grew green in the valleys, and where the track climbed through rugged kloofs and under towering masses of grey granite—hun-

dreds of feet high—steep and precipitous, like gigantic ruined castles, their bases strewn with huge boulders, and other boulders, no less enormous, miraculously balanced on the summits.

A silent, eerie country—the gateway of Rhodes's desired North. In the distance stretched the granite wall of the Matoppos, a long blue line across the northern horizon. Over or through this wall they now must pass, for from Mangwe up to the plateau above the road rose 1400 feet. There, at last, at Manyami River, some 60 or 70 miles north of Tati, Jameson saw the frontier guards of the King, the first Matabele Regiment, warriors of the Zulu race, with ostrich-feather capes, ox-tail garters, long ox-hide shields, and heavy stabbing assegais. He must have looked at them curiously—little dreaming how one day they would enter into his destiny.

By aid of pink beads, brass buttons, and blue calico called *limbo*, they established friendly relations. Some 40 miles farther on, however, the convoy was stopped by the King's orders—rather general than particular—and Dr. Jameson rode by himself into 'Gubuluwayo' on horseback to ask the King to give the wagons 'the way.'

The town of Buluwayo stood in the centre of a great plain to the north of the blue, steep Matoppos. Twelve miles to the north-east lay the flat-topped mountain of Thabas Induna (the Mountain of the Chiefs) with a small pointed hill on either side, the 'Sheba's breasts' of Rider Haggard's romance, and, 6 miles due north, the solitary flat-topped hill, Umfasa Miti. The plain thus guarded was grassy and sparsely covered with mimosa scrub. Through the midst flowed a little stream, the Buluwayo River, a tributary of the Umguzu, and half a mile

to the north of this brook was a great oval of huts, the town of Buluwayo, around an inner circle—the buck kraal, or royal enclosure, of the great Chief, Lobengula.

Dr. Rutherford Harris gives a vivid description of this enceinte, where the King was to be seen sitting on an old condensed-milk packing-case, leaning against the posts of the stage on which four slaughtered oxen were placed daily. ‘Lobengula,’ says Dr. Harris, ‘is a man of about 5 feet 11 inches in height. His weight measurement must be about 300 pounds and his chest measurement is from 55 to 60 inches. His walk is most imposingly majestic; he treads the ground in a manner that shows that he is conscious of his absolute power.’ We have other accounts of him to a similar effect—a large man, very fat, his black and glossy skin usually naked except for the Kafir *moochee*, his head adorned with the Zulu ring, spending his days in his buck kraal surrounded by the huts of his sixty wives, making medicines out of roots in calabashes to bring rain or prevent witchcraft, or in counsel with his indunas, or reviewing his troops. He lived much, we are told, in a wagon which he had got from a trader, where he was accustomed to lie with his head and arms on the front box, and there ‘great masses of meat like the pieces they give to the lions in the Zoo, but as if thrown into a big fire,’ were brought him, to be ‘torn in pieces with a kind of stick’ and devoured, ‘altogether very much like a wild beast.’

Lobengula’s face was described by Mr. Rudd, who had ample opportunities for studying it, as ‘partly worried, partly good-natured, and partly cruel,’ but with ‘a very pleasant smile.’ The King had reasons

for worry—in the approach of the white man, the intrigues of his indunas, and the indiscipline of his army, ever clamouring to be allowed to wipe out the rash intruders. Lobengula's father, Mosilikatsi, had been at once the Moses and the Joshua of the tribe, the leader in the great flight from Zululand in which the Matabele nation began, in the long sojourn in the Transvaal, in the disastrous wars with the voor-trekking Boers which led to the second great flight, which never stopped till the guardian Matoppos had been placed between Matabele and Boer.

The tribe had been hammered into a nation of the Zulu mould by the iron hand of Mosilikatsi. Its army of at least fifteen thousand spearmen was organised in *impis* or regiments on the Zulu model, and lived in military villages, where they grazed their own and the King's cattle on the surrounding plains, and were mobilised occasionally for a raid on the Barotse to the north or the Bechuana to the south or on the Mashona to the east. The great regions thus occupied and desolated by the Matabele were bounded on the south by the Limpopo, on the west and north by the Zambesi, and on the east by Portuguese Mozambique—one vast raid-swept, terror-stricken country, as large as Germany and France together.

Lobengula maintained, partly by statesmanship, partly by terror, the power which his father had created. He was a believer in that pomp and ceremony which no wise ruler despises. Behind the King, says Dr. Harris, stood some twenty or thirty of his courtiers, who at every sentence he uttered interjected a chorus of flattering titles—'Stabber of the Sun,' 'Mountain of Zulus,' 'Eater of Men,' 'the

Man who Owns all the Cattle,' and above all the sacred word 'Kumalo.'¹ These courtiers were in fact the M'bongos or official praisers who play in the savage courts of an African chief very much the same part as the scientifically controlled Government Press of a Western democracy.

It is commonly said that Dr. Jameson was the first man, whether black or white, to approach the King without crawling, or to address him without squatting. Possibly he knew the strict letter of the law of Matabele etiquette, that a visitor must have his head at a lower elevation than the head of the King. Here his small stature and light physique gave him the means to vindicate Court etiquette without derogation from the dignity of his colour. But, etiquette aside, his courage, his frankness, and his infectious charm soon brought Jameson and the King upon the best of terms.

Dr. Jameson arrived at Buluwayo on April 2, 1889, and left on the 12th of the same month, taking Maguire with him but leaving Thompson to fill that 'vacuum' which Rhodes sagaciously feared as abhorred not by Nature only but by Kings. The embassy had been a success so far as it went: the first moiety of rifles and ammunition had been delivered with due ceremonial, and Jameson had been well received by the King. Yet the Ambassador must have seen and heard enough of Matabele politics to realise that the hopes of his friend were built upon little more than the capricious favour of a savage monarch assailed by the jealousies and suspicions of his warlike people, and besieged by the intrigues of rival concession-hunters.

¹ Dr. Rutherford Harris's account of this journey is to be found in the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* of June 28, 1889.