

FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

**FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR**



COLONEL FRANK RHODES

FROM WAR IMPRESSIONS  
BY MORTIMER MENPES  
PUBLISHED BY A. & C. BLACK

# FRANK RHODES

## A MEMOIR

*copy Rhodes*  
BY  
G. T. HUTCHINSON

*PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY*

1908

PRINTED BY  
WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,  
LONDON AND BECCLES.

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	ix
FRANK RHODES—A MEMORY . . . . .	xi
I. EARLY LIFE, 1850—1884 . . . . .	1
II. EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1884—1885 . . . . .	20
III. IRELAND, THE SUDAN, INDIA, 1886—1892 . . . . .	43
IV. THE UGANDA MISSION, 1893 . . . . .	50
V. RHODESIA, 1894—1895 . . . . .	65
VI. THE REFORM MOVEMENT IN JOHANNESBURG, 1895 . . . . .	72
VII. THE JAMESON RAID, 1895—1896 . . . . .	85
VIII. THE MATABELE REBELLION, 1896 . . . . .	104
IX. THE ATBARA AND OMDURMAN, 1898 . . . . .	116
X. LADYSMITH AND MAFEKING, 1899, 1900 . . . . .	129
XI. SOUTH AFRICA, 1901—1905 . . . . .	147
XII. DALHAM . . . . .	158
IN MEMORIAM—F. W. R. . . . .	165

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	TO FACE PAGE
COLONEL FRANK RHODES . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
TABLE MOUNTAIN—EARLY MORNING . . . . .	8
SKETCH MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE NILE CAMPAIGNS . . . . .	24
UGANDA . . . . .	56
A RHODESIAN TOWNSHIP . . . . .	66
THE MATOPPOS . . . . .	110
AFTER THE ATBARA . . . . .	121
LADYSMITH . . . . .	130
COLONEL FRANK RHODES IN LADYSMITH . . . . .	138
COLONEL DICK-CUNYNGHAM AND LORD AVA . . . . .	138
GROOTE SCHUUR . . . . .	148
DALHAM . . . . .	158
COLONEL FRANK RHODES AT VICTORIA FALLS . . . . .	162

## INTRODUCTION

**L**ITTLE introduction is needed for this short work, originally undertaken for the late Captain Ernest Rhodes, and completed after his death. It does not aspire to rank as biography, but is simply a plain tale of a man of action, the material for which has been collected from old diaries, letters, and the personal reminiscences of Miss Rhodes and Colonel Frank Rhodes' many friends. Any merit that the book may have is mainly due to their help: it may be that in putting this material into the form of a continuous story certain inaccuracies or mistaken expressions of opinion have crept in, but for these I must be held responsible. A certain amount of military and other history has been introduced as a necessary background, but it is hoped that this contains nothing of a controversial nature. The book is not for general circulation, but for those who knew "Colonel Frankie": it is written—in the words of the memorial tablet at Eton—"in grateful recollection of his loving kindness, which never wearied in helping others, and in admiration of his gallantry."

G. T. H.

*December, 1907.*



## FRANK RHODES

### A Memory

**T**O that fierce land of gloom and gleam  
Where we at least once lived our dream,  
From this remote and placid north,  
My longing and my love go forth  
To five good friends—and surely few  
Have linked their lives with friends like you  
Some bore brave scars, well won in fight,  
But not in battle's stern delight  
Was it their happier fate to fall ;  
An evil Siren lured them all ;  
And poison swamp and tropic sun  
Stayed their strong heart-beats, one by one,  
Till you, dear Frankie, you the last  
Have gone the way the rest have passed,  
And only I alone remain  
To dream the good time back again.

Young were we still, twelve years ago  
When we went southward, proud to know  
We were of those the sea queen sends  
For witness where her mandate ends.  
And still it seems but yesterday  
That eve we sighted far away  
The shadowy horn of Guardafui,  
When sudden night closed round a sea

That drowned the old familiar stars,  
And we beheld through dipping spars  
The Southern Cross climb up the sky,  
Raymond and Roddy, you and I.  
How all was welcome, morn and noon,  
And starry Eve and Afric moon.  
As yet we had no watch to keep,  
Light-hearted farers through the deep.

At last one dawn revealed our goal,  
The palm-fringed shore, the fretting shoal,  
The spice groves, sloping greenly down  
To the long white-walled Arab town,  
The anchored dhows, the teaming beach  
Where with a hand we thronged to reach  
Stood Gerald's self—a shade of care  
Across the brow once debonair,  
But in his eyes the joy and power  
Of him who feels his triumph's hour.  
And one was by his side whose name  
Was high on England's roll of fame,  
Had it not been his choice to shun  
The paths in which applause is won,  
A friend to love, a foe to fear,  
Sailor and soldier and vizir.

and see

Your dusky train had gone before  
A day's march from the mainland shore,  
For the sea queen's work brooked no delay,  
And four must go, and two must stay.  
First when the moment came to part  
That shadow fell to chill the heart,  
The half-formed thought, which would it be  
If Dame Adventure claimed her fee.  
So you four took the inland track,  
And we two lost you looking back.

Of those who met and parted so  
Good Raymond was the first to go.  
A thousand miles from that sea's strand  
That links the English to their land,  
Where none who cared will ever pass  
His hillock in the matted grass,  
Beyond the great dividing Rift  
He lies, the brave, the strong, the swift.\*

A year went by and Gerald came,  
Returning flushed with early fame ;  
And as the race is to the fleet,  
All ways seemed smooth before his feet ;  
His outstretched hand was on the goal  
Responsive to his ardent soul,  
But still the witch that knows no ruth  
Reached back to claim his conquering youth,  
And all our love and hope and pride  
Was spent in vain, when Gerry died.†

By ancient Nile a barren khor  
Hides yet another of the four,  
Where seven feet of desert sand  
Check eager Roddy's bridle-hand ;  
Where caravans who pay the toll  
To the sheikh who watches Ambigol,  
Inquire what means the granite scored  
With alien writings and a sword,  
What soldier holds the rock defile  
That leads them back to Father Nile.‡

And where the palms of Zanzibar  
Sway languid to the tropic star,  
Tired out at last and borne to rest  
By those dark folk who loved him best,

\* Captain Raymond Portal, died in Uganda, 1893.

† Sir Gerald Portal, died on his return from Uganda, 1894.

‡ Major Roderick Owen, died at Ambigol, 1896.

Lloyd Mathews lies, his wanderings done,  
His thirty years of toil and sun.  
True English heart, whom all too few  
Of those you served so greatly knew,  
Sleep, full of peace, in that far grave,—  
The all you gained for all you gave.\*

So you, dear Frank, were last of those  
To whom a tender thought outgoes,  
With dreams of days not lived in vain.  
For you while life and love remain  
Shall memory keep, undried by years,  
A green place near the source of tears.  
Well know we how, in evil days  
You bore the brunt of men's dispraise ;  
Well prized we then the stern control  
That sealed from speech your loyal soul ;  
And cared to feel your silence bear  
The blame it would not shift elsewhere.  
Oh, golden heart in time of stress,  
Of failing hope or ill success,  
Who met the scorn of fate with mirth,  
And loved your fellow-man on earth ;  
You that had seen your share of strife,  
And lived and cared so much for life,  
Why did you heed the siren hand  
That drew you back to Upas land ?

What wonder if I hear the call  
Of that far voice that lured them all !  
I cross the sandy wastes again,  
The great mimosa-tufted plain,  
I share the thirsty march, through clear  
Clean mornings, and with eve I hear  
The marsh things crying, see the fierce  
Short sunsets, the large stars that pierce  
The tangled tent of tropic green,  
And all the wonders we have seen

\* Sir Lloyd William Mathews, died in Zanzibar, 1901.

In that grim world of gloom and gleam :  
Where evermore, across my dream,  
Pervading all, I still behold  
The kind worn face, so young, so old,  
The lifted chin, the deep-set eyes  
At once so merry and so wise,  
The never-failing helpful smile  
That haunts all ways from Cape to Nile.

RENNELL RODD.

STOCKHOLM,

*October, 1905.*

# FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

## CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE, 1850—1884

ON the borders of Hertfordshire and Essex lies the little market town of Bishops Stortford—a long straggling street, and a grey fifteenth-century church, half hidden by clumps of sheltering trees. Unknown to history, and untroubled by the responsibilities of greatness, it is an ordinary quiet and peaceful English home.

It was here that Frank Rhodes was born, on the 9th of April, 1850. His people hailed from Cheshire—an old yeoman family, none of whose members had hitherto aspired to public life. His father was in holy orders, and at the time that he was born had been recently appointed Vicar of Bishops Stortford. His mother was a Miss Peacock, one of the Lincolnshire Peacocks, who had for long been connected with the little town of Sleaford, where Miss Sophia Peacock, the unmarried sister of Mrs. Rhodes, inherited the Manor House.

There was nothing, therefore, about the antecedents of the Rhodes to foretell the adventurous lives which some of them were destined to lead. Under another star they might well have followed the family tradition, passed their days in farmhouses, or country parsonages, and gratified any leanings towards a commercial career in

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

Sleaford or Bishops Stortford. Nor was there in their upbringing anything calculated to encourage a spirit of adventure. Mr. Rhodes sent his eldest son Herbert to Winchester, with the idea that he should in due time be ordained, and was fond of expressing the hope that his younger brothers would follow this example, so that his seven sons might be as the seven candlesticks of Scripture.

But there must be in the Anglo-Saxon race some in-born craving for "fresh fields and pastures new," which, though it may lie dormant for generations, is bound to assert itself in the end. Signs of this craving appeared even in the early days among the Rhodes. Herbert quickly developed a roving disposition, which was not to be satisfied by Bishops Stortford, and though Frank—the second son—obediently accepted the traditional career, he discovered a happy compromise in the prospect of becoming a missionary.

His mother and Miss Sophia Peacock were always the most devoted of sisters, so that the latter took the warmest interest in her godson Frankie. While quite young, he was almost adopted by his aunt, with whom he spent a great part of his childhood, partly at Sleaford Manor, and partly in long holidays in the Channel Islands. When the time came for him to go to school, his aunt supplemented the sum which his father was able to afford for his education, with the result that he entered Madame de Rosen's house at Eton. Here he spent five happy but uneventful years. He is generally recalled as a little boy with rather long hair, blest with remarkable cheeriness and good nature, who played a very plucky game at football. He soon became better known as a cricketer, and played at Lords in 1869, and again in 1870. He was a

## EARLY LIFE, 1850—1884

steady, but not a particularly attractive bat, his wonderful keenness being the feature of his game. He always seemed to be in form, while his activity and energy in the field made him an invaluable longstop.

Some record of his schooldays is preserved in the pages of a diary, which though marked by all the irregularities one might expect, gives an admirable impression of these days. For example :—

Friday 22nd. Up to James, and played racquets with Byas after twelve. Paid Grey £4. Walked about with Ricardo and Thornhill after four. Called up at five, and construed like a man.

Wednesday 3rd. Stayed out for a headache with Delmé, Cis Kaye, and Byas, Butler, Ramsey, Currey. Floods rising very fast indeed. Dame nailed us playing cards; not much the matter.

Monday 8th. Played racquets after twelve with Harris. Made my first speech in Pop after four on compulsory education.

The picture may be completed by some extracts from a letter to his aunt, Miss Peacock, written after the match at Lords, in which he played two useful innings, Eton winning by 21 runs.

“ . . . . I enjoyed the second day very much; they wanted me to play against M.C.C. in the second match, but I didn't quite see it. I was introduced to a lovely Miss — whom I liked very much; the amount of people who wanted me to dine that night was wonderful. I hope you saw the scene after the match, they nearly killed me hoisting me, I never was so uncomfortable in my life.”

Many of his greatest friendships dated from these early days. Lord Harris, who captained the School XI, Mr. Mackworth Praed, who was in the same house, and many



## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

others, can remember him as the most popular boy of his time—keen, amusing, and sympathetic, always full of that tremendous *joie de vivre* which marked his whole life. It was this that made his dame say to him when he was leaving, "Mr. Rhodes, are you never going to grow old?" And the same question might have been asked thirty years later, for there are some happy natures which may grow up, but can never grow old.

His holidays were spent with his aunt at Sleaford Manor, where he often found one of his brothers or sisters. Only two miles distant is Rauceby, the home of his cousins, the Willsons, of which the present owner is Sir Mildmay Willson. His friends the Finch Hattons lived at Haverholm in the neighbourhood; he was free of both houses, and drank deep of the joys of every branch of English country life. From these days dates that love of the country and field sports which he never lost. With the Belvoir he learnt to go straight and hard, a lesson of the hunting field which he was afterwards to apply to other and wider fields of action. He shot the Rauceby pheasants, and was here for the first time under fire, for his diary records successive days, when "A—— was accused of shooting a boy, and B—— shot another of the party in the hat." Every moment of his time was occupied: at Rauceby there was hunting, shooting, and cricket, or dances and theatricals; sometimes he was in London with his friend Mackworth Praed, or with Lord Harris at Belmont. The holidays generally ended with a flying visit to Bishops Stortford, where he was sure of a warm welcome from his brothers and sisters. The family tie was never in the least broken by the fact that the greater part of his boyhood was spent away from home, and there have been few firmer

## EARLY LIFE, 1850—1884

friendships than that which always existed between him and his eldest sister, Miss Louisa Rhodes.

When the time came for him to leave school, he was already the same Frank Rhodes that so many have since learnt to love ; gay and debonair, full of tact and humour, perfectly at home in any company ; a boy who loved his life, and was a friend of all the world. It has been said of him, in his later days, that he was one of the few men equally beloved by men and women alike, a characteristic which apparently dates from a time when his friends laughed at his supposed devotion to "my Dame's daughter," or the naïve entry in his diary, "Rode home with —— who was late for dinner and got chaffed."

It was not difficult for him to select his profession. The army was bound to appeal strongly to one of his tastes and temperament ; his relations approved of his choice, and he was one of the last three hundred who bought their commission under the old system. He was possibly helped to make his decision by a new influence that had made itself felt in the quiet vicarage. His elder brother Herbert was one of those restless natures that cannot bear the trammels of home life. The "call of the wild" was strong within him, and soon after leaving school he sailed for South Africa. He began by growing cotton in Natal, but thirst for adventure presently drew him northwards, where finds of diamonds and gold were reported upon the very outskirts of civilization. The traveller returned to his home with stirring accounts of the strange countries north of the Cape, and brought with him to the vicarage a wild uncouth prospector, known as Yankee Dan, who spoke in a hushed voice of "reefs" and "claims," and showed an astonishing appetite

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

for pickles, and other luxuries of civilization, to which he had long been a stranger.

The fourth brother, Cecil, was the next to seek his fortunes abroad. He was at this time a tall and rather delicate-looking boy, prevented by ill health from going to school, and threatened with serious lung trouble. His doctors advised him to try the effect of the South African climate, and at the age of sixteen he sailed to join Herbert in Natal. They spent a year together on their farm, amid the wild and picturesque scenery of the Umkomaas Hills, clearing ground and planting cotton. Herbert already owned a few claims at Kimberley, and it was now proposed that Frank, who was waiting for his commission, should join them, and make a trip to the famous diamond fields. The suggestion was followed, and early in 1872 he too sailed for Cape Town.

A close friendship had always existed between Frank and Cecil, despite the very great difference between them in disposition and character. Frank, the light-hearted, the friend of everybody, who was seldom or never serious, had a great respect for his silent and rather masterful younger brother. As he said in one of his letters, "Nobody believes that I am older than Cecil—I don't know whether to take it as a compliment or not." He was already beginning to feel the spell of a really great mind, that inspired him with a whole-hearted admiration in which no shadow of jealousy was to be found. On his arrival in South Africa he wrote the following letter to Mrs. Rhodes :—

" Cape Town, April 27, 1872.

" MY DEAR MOTHER,

" . . . I have just had a long talk with a Mr. Merriman, who has been living in the same tent with

EARLY LIFE, 1850—1884

Cecil. He has been praising Cecil up to the skies. He says he is such an EXCELLENT man of business, that he has managed all the business in Herbert's absence wonderfully well, and that they were all so very fond of him. He also says that he was quite strong again; now—they seem to have taken every care of him while he was ill.

“He says most young fellows when they get up there and do well get so very bumptious, but that Cecil was just the contrary. Cecil seems also to have done wonderfully well as regards the diamonds.

“Mr. Merriman would not believe that I was older than Cecil. He says that Herbert's claims are considered about the best up there, and that if he were to put them into the market he would get 4000*l.* for them. They are beginning to talk a lot about the gold-fields here, but I hope Herbert will stick to the diamonds.

“It was awfully nice hearing all this about Cecil. This will go by one of the private steamers. I have not repeated half the nice things he said about Cecil. Very best love to all,

“Yours ever affectionately,

“FRANCIS RHODES.”

This affection for his younger brother had always been reciprocated, as may be seen from a letter written by Cecil Rhodes to his aunt, at the age of fifteen, just after the Eton and Harrow match. In view of subsequent events, it may be said to have a certain special interest.

“Bishops Stortford, July 17th, 1869.

“MY DEAR AUNT SOPHY,

“. . . You may be sure that I was not at all displeased by your very kind letter, and I read it through

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

very carefully three or four times and still keep it. I cannot deny, for it would only be hypocrisy to say otherwise, that I still above everything would like to be a barrister; but I agree with you it is a very precarious profession. Next to that I think a clergyman's life is the nicest; and therefore I shall try most earnestly to go to College, because I have fully determined to be one of these two, and a college education is necessary for both. I think that as a barrister a man may be just as good a Christian as in any other profession.

"How proud you must have been of Frankie's success! I can assure you we were in the highest state of excitement all Friday and Saturday.

"Miss Hope who is now staying at Twyford, who was at the match, told us that she had met a gentleman there who had been a great cricketer in his younger days, and he said he preferred Frank's play to any on the field, because it was not the amount of runs he got, but he said he had never seen anything equal to his defence.

"I am afraid you will find this a very dull letter, but I am sure you have been told all the Stortford news.

"I am yours,  
"C. J. RHODES."

Many of his subsequent letters from South Africa contain allusions to Frank, and express the hope "that he will come out here before he gets his commission, as it will be very good for him, so much better than the do-nothing life that he is leading now."

The result of this correspondence was that Frank Rhodes landed at Cape Town in the spring of 1872, where he was laid up for a month with a form of fever which he had developed on the voyage. It is needless to say that



TABLE MOUNTAIN—EARLY MORNING

FROM WAR IMPRESSIONS  
BY MORTIMER MENPES  
PUBLISHED BY A. & C. BLACK

## EARLY LIFE, 1850—1884

he at once made many new friends, though he describes Cape Town as a place where "they do nothing but drink and smoke, and talk about diamonds." A brief convalescence was spent in the beautiful country round the capital, and in May he was able to go on to Natal, where he stayed with Herbert at the cotton plantation in the Unkomaas. His letters say that "the long-headed Cecil did not think much of cotton, and was already at Kimberley superintending the working of his claims." The brothers determined to join him, and made a quick trek across country, arriving before they were expected, and finding Cecil "down in the claim, measuring his ground with his lawyer, and in a tremendous rage with another man in the next claim to him who has encroached on his ground . . . but I know the Father will be horrified at the idea of Cecil going to law."

Herbert, who was a born pioneer, at once declared that Kimberley was becoming too civilized for him, and he must go further afield. Endless rumours were afloat of finds of gold at Marabastadt in the Transvaal, and some one had already gone home to float a company, armed with what Frank describes as "marvellous specimens—almost more gold than quartz." Fired by this example Herbert started on a long expedition through some good game country, to reach these new fields, taking Cecil with him, and leaving Frank in charge of his interests at Kimberley. The latter thoroughly enjoyed his new position, for he wrote, "I am alone in my glory, and in charge of claims and Kaffirs for the time being. I think the Kaffirs rather like it, as they impose on my ignorance, and ask for all sorts of things which I immediately give them; one has just been in here and explained, by pointing to his naked legs, that it was too

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

cold. I immediately gave him a pair of Cecil's trousers, which Cecil will be awfully pleased at, I should think."

Kimberley in its early days must have been a wonderful experience for the new-comer, and some very vivid impressions are to be found in his home letters. The huge craters which mark the present mines were divided into many small claims, so that the sides were covered with innumerable workers, black and white. The diamondiferous soil was taken from the crater to the surface by a complicated system of buckets running on sloping wires, from which it was transferred to the washing plant. As so many natives were employed, thefts of diamonds were of frequent occurrence, and from time to time some illicit diamond buyer would be discovered and attacked by the infuriated miners, when—if the police interfered—something like a general riot would ensue. Sometimes the post cart, in which the diamonds were sent to Cape Town, was robbed, and on one occasion the Rhodes family were only saved from a loss of 300 carats of diamonds by the fact that Frank had forgotten to dispatch them.

The "New Rush," as Kimberley was then called, naturally attracted the most cosmopolitan crowd imaginable. Almost every nationality in Europe was represented, though the predominating element was English. But Frank Rhodes, fresh from the atmosphere of Eton, and waiting for a commission in the Royals, had not the slightest difficulty in adapting himself to the situation. He threw himself heartily into all that was going on, played cricket on the almost virgin veld, and attended different dances, where he made the discovery that "it is quite a mistake to suppose that there are no nice girls out here."



## EARLY LIFE, 1850—1884

In the autumn his brothers returned, having convinced themselves that the so-called gold-fields were a myth, and Frank accompanied them on a shooting party to the Modder River. As a result of this trip he was laid up for nearly a month at Kimberley with fever, after which he and Cecil returned to England early in 1873, the former to take his commission, and the latter to matriculate at Oriel.

Thus the first visit to Africa produced no immediate results. Frank was soon afterwards gazetted to the Royal Dragoons, and his younger brother began reading steadily for his Oxford examinations, with a view to going to the Bar. But seed had been sown which was imperceptibly taking root in their respective characters. They had both seen something of the extent and variety of our possessions in South Africa. They had had an opportunity of gauging the chances offered in these distant countries, an opportunity which afterwards enabled Cecil to sketch the ground-work of his career, and gave his brother a clear understanding of his aims and ambitions, and a true conception of their greatness. For the present both were busied with affairs of less importance. Cecil was wrestling with "Smalls," while Frank joined his regiment at Edinburgh, whence he wrote—

"The Barracks, Edinburgh.

"MY DEAREST AUNT,

"I thought I would wait a day or two before I wrote as I should be better able to tell you how I like it. *I like it immensely.*

"They are a rare good lot of fellows, and are awfully good to me. I know you will be charmed to hear that I have got gold lace down my mess trousers and all over

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

my mess jacket—you can't think what a difference. We have got a cricket match to-day; all the fellows are awfully keen on cricket. I went down and bathed off the pier yesterday morning, very jolly. I will write again soon.

“Yours ever affectionately,

“FRANCIS RHODES.”

Such were his first impressions of soldiering, which at that time was a very different thing from what it is to-day. It may be noticed that he makes no mention of the many duties, which would now confront the freshly joined subaltern, but which were then very much in the background. Life in a cavalry regiment was a very pleasant business. On one day in the week, the regiment was turned out with immense ceremony, to take part in what was known as a “field-day”; during the rest of the week, except for a few comparatively trifling duties, the subaltern's time was his own. For the next ten years Frank Rhodes led the life of the ordinary cavalry subaltern, and enjoyed every moment of it. He was stationed for varying periods at Edinburgh, York, Norwich, Aldershot, and different places in Ireland. He was from the beginning a great favourite with his brother-officers, and formed new friendships which lasted until his death—notably with Colonel O'Shaughnessy, Colonel Maclaren, and General Burn Murdoch. The men, too, were devoted to one who was always ready with a kind word for every one of them, and whose good humour was proof against every annoyance of military routine. He found abundant scope for his energies on the cricket ground and in the hunting field, in both of which he won for himself a considerable reputation. Indeed, he was at this time considered one

## EARLY LIFE, 1850—1884

of the best bats in the British Army. Playing in 1882 at Dublin for the Cavalry against the Infantry he made 139 runs, only one short of the total score achieved by the other side. In one famous match against the Artillery, the Royals had lost 7 wickets for 39, and as Rhodes was at musketry, they asked to have the luncheon interval earlier than usual, in order that he might get his innings. After lunch he came straight from the range and joined Maclaren, when they scored 120 and 138 respectively, and just had time to dispose of their opponents and win the match. He was, perhaps, at his best during the season of 1882 in Dublin, when he scored five centuries, and had an average of 55 for 36 completed innings.

His winters were devoted as far as possible to hunting. Thanks to his early education with the Belvoir, he was a bold horseman, with exceptionally good hands, and inspired by a very genuine love for the best sport that our islands provide. He rode good horses, and often gratified his sense of humour by discovering the faults of fresh purchases at the expense of some friend whom he persuaded to ride them before he did himself. On one occasion he took a friend with him to Sleaford and mounted him on one of these. The horse jumped the first fence without a mistake, whereupon Frank Rhodes rode up to his friend and remarked, with evident amusement, "I saw him make a nice jump then." "But not quite as good that time," he added, as the horse crashed through a post and rails, and broke nearly every bar. At the end of the day he declared that he had enjoyed himself hugely, for the horse was blind in one eye, and it was always a doubtful question whether he would see a fence in time to rise at it.

But the same friend afterwards turned the tables on him during a great run with the Ward. Rhodes mounted

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

him on a raw four-year-old, whose youthful ardour carried him safely over an almost unjumpable place at the start, from which point he was never caught, while his owner on the best horse in his stable lost the run.

In the winter of 1882 he spent his leave in Ireland with three fellow subalterns, O'Shaughnessy of the Royals, Barry, R.H.A., and Wyndham Quinn of the 16th Lancers. They took Somerville, near Navan, from Lady Athlumney, who shortly after their doing so was horrified to receive a letter from a friend, declaring that there might easily be no house left at the end of the season. Here they settled down to hunt hard with the Meath and the Ward, sometimes doing six days a week, so that the "Somerville Captains" soon became a byword in the county. Nor were their adventures confined to the hunting field. Frank Rhodes was driving Wyndham Quinn back from dinner one night, and the pace, as usual, was pretty good, when they suddenly realized that the iron lodge gates were closed. To pull up was impossible; the pony's head and the shafts took the gates simultaneously, they flew open and closed again like a steel trap only a few inches behind the cart. By some miracle no damage was done, and Frank Rhodes spoke of the adventure, worthy of the Honourable Crasher with a sangfroid equal to his, merely declaring, "That was really a very narrow escape."

He rode in many of the regimental races, and was very nearly killed at Oakbridge, when the Royals were stationed at Edinburgh. At an awkward turn in the course, the crowd got in the way, his horse fell and rolled over him, and he was carried into the tent unconscious. However, he escaped with a very severe shaking and a broken collar-bone, which he bore with his usual cheeriness. Serious racing never attracted him, not even in his

## EARLY LIFE, 1850—1884

later days when he lived within ten miles of Newmarket, and though he generally accompanied his brother officers to the different race meetings, he always neglected the racing, and undertook the task of entertaining their guests. The success which he achieved in this department was the subject of a cartoon, wherein he is represented as hovering about a drawing-room, and of the following poem :—

I'd be a butterfly, born but to fly,  
Warranted harmless and never to die,  
Hov'ring all day 'mongst the flowers I'd be,  
Each one I love, for they're all sweet to me.

Poor silly insect, conceited and vain,  
Oft taking for flowers the weeds of the plain,  
Beware lest too rashly in gardens you stray,  
You'll find yourself netted some fine summer day.

In the regiment he was famous for his rapid grasp of a crisis, and was always ready with the right action or repartee. Once, when he was at out-quarters with his troop at Navan, his colonel happened to pass in the train, whence he saw an orderly riding along the road and setting the cavalry tradition at defiance by rising in his stirrups. He at once wrote a peremptory note to Rhodes asking the meaning of the outrage, to which the latter replied that he could not account for it at all, unless his commanding officer had been deceived by the jolting of the train, and the inferior quality of the glass in the carriage windows, so that the man only appeared to be rising in his stirrups. History does not relate whether this explanation was considered satisfactory. His coolness in emergency was useful in another difficult situation. An army order had been issued to the effect that subalterns were not to wear gold braid on their mess trousers, but the Royals had decided that this was an intolerable

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

indignity, and the order had been accordingly disregarded. One evening a carriage drove up to the mess before dinner, and the General commanding the district appeared—the night before he was expected. The Colonel escaped from the difficulty by turning hastily to Rhodes, and asked him why some of the subalterns were not looking after the General's carriage. Frank Rhodes and the other subalterns at once took the hint, and when they returned a few moments later there was not a trace of the offending gold braid to be seen.

There is no doubt that during these years he gave little attention to the more serious side of a soldier's life. His friends recall the insuperable difficulties which the different qualifying examinations had for him, and he himself often laughingly declared that he could not take the regiment out of the barrack square. He was comparatively old when he joined, and was an unusually long time getting his troop, partly through ill-luck, and partly because the routine part of soldiering was thoroughly distasteful to him. It was not until he found the stimulus of active service that he became really enthusiastic about his profession.

From time to time he saw his brother Cecil, who, in the intervals of diamond mining, was reading for his degree and keeping terms at Oriel. A friend of Colonel Rhodes tells a characteristic story of the two. Cecil was staying with Frank at Aldershot and wanted to borrow some shirts. Frank chaffingly refused, but his younger brother waited until he left the room, hastily took his coat off, put on two shirts, one over the other, and walked off with them.

Frank Rhodes was stationed in Ireland at the time that Cecil made his much criticized donation of £10,000 to

## EARLY LIFE, 1850—1884

Parnell, and naturally was never allowed to hear the last of the Home Rule sympathies of his brother. It was at Dublin too that he became a friend of Mr. Clifford Lloyd, whose strong character at once attracted him. He had been put in charge of the police there, and made responsible for maintaining law and order during the critical period that preceded the Phoenix Park murders. Mr. Gladstone's Government decided that the severity with which he discharged his duties might cause some outbreak, and he was accordingly appointed head of the Egyptian Constabulary. Just before he left Ireland he lunched with Frank Rhodes, who asked him, without being very serious about it, whether he had a job for him. A few weeks later he received a cable offering him the post of second in command of the Constabulary in Cairo, and he decided to accept the offer. He was now in his thirty-third year, and though he had entered heartily into every detail of the congenial life that he had been leading, he was beginning to want something more. The old roving spirit that he and his brother shared was making itself felt. It is true that the Egyptian Constabulary offered no immediate prospect of active service, but already signs of trouble had appeared on the horizon of the desert. The cry of "El Mahdi" had rung out over the head-waters of the Nile, and was soon to make itself heard throughout the length and breadth of the Sudan.

He sailed for Egypt at the beginning of 1884 by the same boat which was taking out General Gordon and his friend, Colonel Stewart, on their way to Khartum. When in South Africa, Gordon had been much impressed by Cecil Rhodes, then just entering public life, and had actually offered to take him with him to the Sudan at the time that he was Governor-General. This was the occasion of

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

the well-known story of the two great characters ; Gordon mentioned that he had once declined an offer of some fabulous sum of money from the Emperor of China, to which Cecil Rhodes replied, "I should have taken it, and as much more as was offered. It is no good having big ideas if you have not the means to carry them out."

On finding that Frank Rhodes was Cecil's elder brother, General Gordon saw a great deal of him, and inquired eagerly for any fresh news from the Cape. Frank himself was at once filled with an almost superstitious reverence for Gordon. His imagination was fascinated by everything about him—by his marvellous personality and force of character, no less than by the varied incidents of his picturesque career—Sebastopol, Peking, South Africa, Mauritius, and Khartoum. Here was a man after his own heart, leading such a life as he would have chosen for himself, starting on a mission which surpassed even his previous ones in daring. Colonel Rhodes always spoke of him with admiration, and continued to write long letters to Khartoum, with news from Egypt and South Africa, until the town was cut off from communication with the outside world.

His own position at Cairo was an extremely pleasant one. He sampled all the pleasures of the "season," and wrote that "the weather is too lovely ; I played cricket on cocoanut matting on asphalt and got 44 runs ; bands playing, and lovely women all over the place. Lloyd is much better again and I dine there whenever I like ; they have got a curiously nice girl staying with them who has just got over typhoid. I am hard at work at French—four hours a day—and if I stay out here I shall have to learn Arabic."

During these months he was brought in contact with



## EARLY LIFE, 1850—1884

many whose names were afterwards to become better known in connection with Egypt. Sir Evelyn Baring had just assumed the reins of Government, and among his attachés was Gerald Portal—already regarded as a rising young man. Among the soldiers, Stuart-Wortley of the 60th, who had been A.D.C. to Sir Evelyn Wood, was a personal friend of Frank Rhodes, and he now met for the first time a certain Major Kitchener, who had been on special service in Syria, and was attached to the Intelligence Department in Egypt.

## CHAPTER II

### EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1884—1885

**T**HE present narrative is mainly concerned with a single personality. But just as the history of a country cannot be studied to any advantage without some preliminary knowledge of its geography, so in order to properly appreciate the work of a soldier on a military expedition, it is essential to realize the political situation that rendered the campaign necessary, and the objects that it was proposed to achieve. In this particular case there is some further excuse, for there is a picturesque completeness about the rise and fall of Mahdism in the Sudan, and the building up of our power in Egypt. The history of the period falls naturally into three chapters, of which the first ends with the fall of Khartum in 1885, the second with the re-occupation of Dongola in 1896, and the third at Omdurman; and in each of these three chapters Colonel Rhodes' name is to be found.

For some time before he reached Cairo chaos had reigned in Egypt. The country was bankrupt, its credit was gone, and its finances were in the hands of its creditors. The last Khedive had been deposed, and his successor was incapable, even if opportunity had been granted him, of exercising any effective control of affairs. The internal administration of his kingdom was almost non-existent. The Sudan was ready to throw off its

## EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1884—1885

allegiance, and the insurrection of the army under Arabi had only just been crushed by British troops. Under these circumstances Egypt's only hope lay in the assistance of those Powers whose interests were most closely involved—Turkey, France, and England. Of these the first could not and the second would not undertake the task, with the result that the responsibility was slowly devolving upon the British Government.

When Egypt went into liquidation we had been forced to share with France the dual control of her finance. The importance of the route to India made us view with the greatest apprehension any disturbance in the neighbourhood of the Suez Canal. The riot at Alexandria, when British subjects were murdered almost within gunshot of a British warship, caused an outburst of popular feeling at home; the town was bombarded, troops were landed, and Arabi was crushed at Tel-el-Kebir. But the Ministry of this time, with Mr. Gladstone at its head, refused to recognize the trend of events. The Cabinet found themselves—sorely against their will—in charge of the country; their army of occupation was the only stable force and ultimate court of appeal in it, but their one desire was to withdraw it as soon as possible and to escape from their false position.

Few more striking instances could be found to illustrate the workings of that special Providence that seems to have safe-guarded British interests in the past. Now that Africa looms so large in the public eye it is very easy to realize the full import of another European power established on our lines of communication with India, cutting us off from our East African possessions, and free to strike in any direction towards the heart of the continent. But twenty years ago the Government was

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

blind to the great issues at stake. Its policy in Egypt, as in South Africa, was animated by that doctrinaire spirit that has so often resulted in disaster. The tendency of such a spirit is to ignore practical considerations, to neglect the lessons of experience, to override the opinion of the man on the spot, and to approach every problem from an unyielding and *à priori* point of view. Some definite principle is laid down, and once that is done its exponents are only concerned to get events to fit in with it. In the fact that events sometimes fail to fit, lies the explanation of many of our past failures. In this case the principle which the Government laid down was that our occupation must end at the earliest possible moment. All other considerations—the welfare of Egypt, and our interests in the country—were subordinated to this end. Every measure—however necessary—that might prolong our occupation was vehemently opposed. The result was that our policy degenerated into a series of hesitating and ineffective movements, each one only undertaken when the occasion for it had passed. We despatched an army of occupation to the country, and at once hastened to withdraw it. We ordered the Khedive to evacuate the Sudan, and declined to help him to carry out our orders. We sent General Gordon to Khartum, and deserted him at his post. When we were at last compelled to attempt to rescue him we tied the hands of the generals to whom the task was entrusted.

The weakness of this policy was soon exposed. While the disturbances were in progress at the capital an insurrection had broken out in the remoter districts. A Mahdi, or prophet, appeared in the desert tracts of the Upper Nile, and collected a fanatical following round him. Religion served to kindle a kind of patriotism against the

## EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1884—1885

petty despots and worthless soldiery who upheld the Khedive's authority in the Sudan, and the unstable tyranny at once collapsed like a house of cards. The followers of the Mahdi easily defeated the small expeditions which the Khedive was able to despatch against them. Success swelled their ranks and victory gave them weapons. In 1882 Colonel Hicks marched from Khartum at the head of some 10,000 men. He was surrounded near El Obeid, and the rest is a matter of history—the butchery of his panic-stricken force, and the heroic struggle of the small band that stood firm round their general. Mahdism became at once a formidable and aggressive power, thirsting to restore the faith of Islam and drive the Egyptian oppressor and his infidel allies into the sea—eager to raid his fertile country and pillage the prosperous towns of the Nile valley.

Still the British Government refused to face the crisis. At the moment when the Madhi was preaching an invasion of Egypt, Lord Dufferin, our envoy, was making arrangements for our troops to leave the country. It was decided that our responsibilities did not extend beyond Wady Halfa, and intimation was accordingly given to the Khedive that he must withdraw his garrisons and evacuate the Sudan.

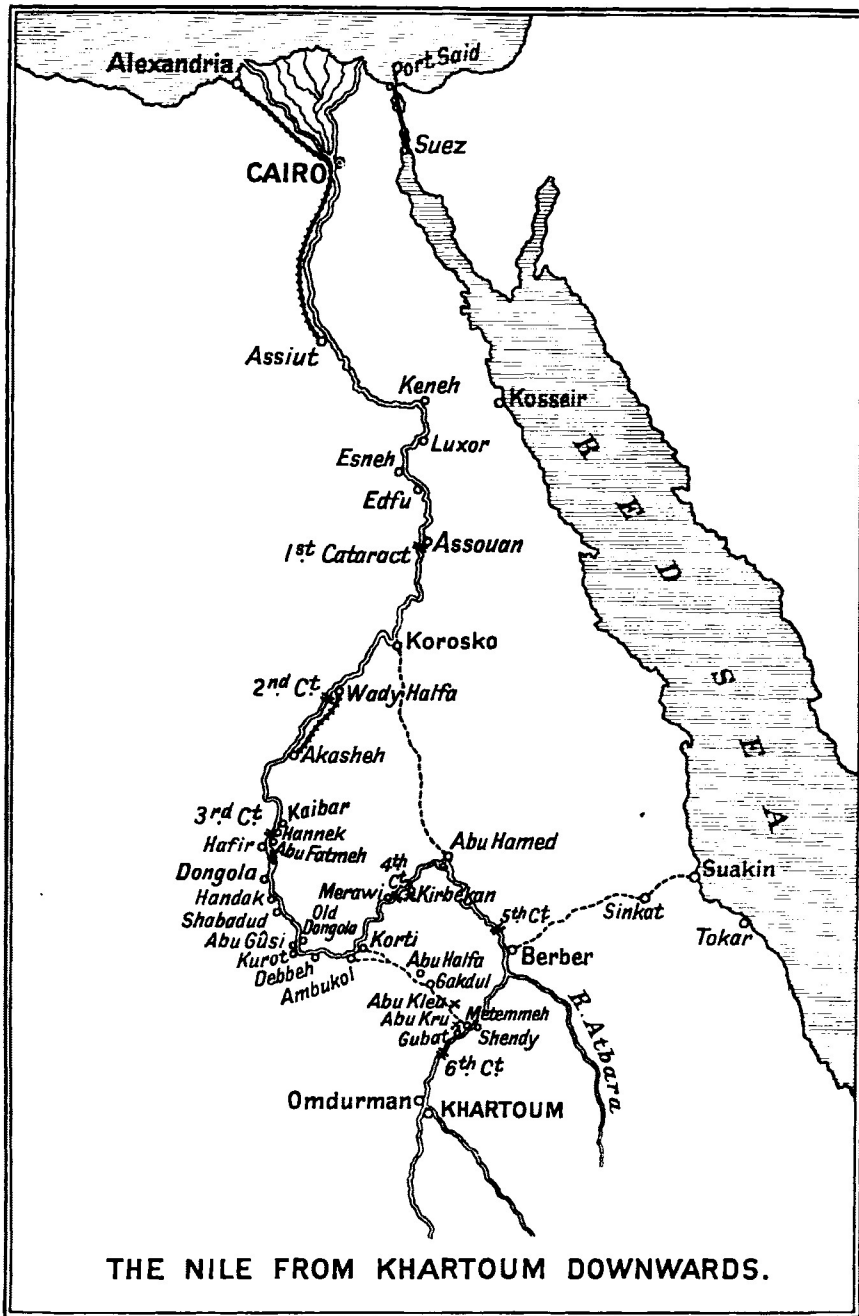
Subsequent events have shown the futility of such a course. It has been found impossible to draw an arbitrary line between Egypt and the Sudan. Theoretically the Mahdi's followers should have been content to watch the retreating garrisons, and should have settled down peacefully in their own country: in point of fact they had no idea of allowing them to retreat, and were determined to follow up any that might escape them as far as Cairo. This intractable attitude forced the

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

Government to take some steps to help the garrisons. General Gordon was accordingly despatched up the Nile, while an Egyptian force under Sir Valentine Baker marched to cover the retreat of the garrisons from Tokar and Sinkat in the Eastern Sudan. Baker's force was cut to pieces in the first engagement, and Gordon was soon afterwards besieged in Khartum.

It was now decided that something must be done. Troops were collected in Cairo, the 10th Hussars were diverted on their way home from India, and a punitive expedition, some 4000 strong, with six machine guns and eight seven-pounders, sailed under Major-General Sir G. Graham for Suakim. Sir Herbert Stewart commanded the cavalry and took Frank Rhodes—now one of the oldest subalterns in the army—as his A.D.C. to get his first experience of active service.

Sinkat had fallen, but the force marched at the end of February to relieve Tokar, the way being marked by the rotting corpses of Baker's men, who had in nearly every instance been stabbed in the back. On February 29th, 1884, they found the enemy entrenched at El Teb, strengthened by the Krupp guns which they had captured from Baker. The Arabs and Sudanese charged home with fanatical bravery. In the words of Frank Rhodes "they are the very pluckiest fellows in the world and only an eye-witness would believe the things they did. It was truly magnificent to see them advancing against gatlings and incessant volleys of musketry. A lot of the fellows here fought in Zululand, and they all agree that these fellows came on much better even than the Zulus. At one time they were all round us very thick—in perfect hordes—my general was as cool as possible and never lost his head in the least, though I can tell you there was a moment when



SKETCH MAP TO ILLUSTRATE THE NILE CAMPAIGNS.

## EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1884—1885

I didn't like the look of things a bit. When it was over, as no one came forward to take his horse, I said, 'Where are the general's orderlies?' and the brief reply was, 'One killed, sir, and the other two dangerously wounded.'" Frank Rhodes had also been with the cavalry in several desperate charges, before which the Arabs eventually retreated, leaving some 2000 dead on the field. Our own casualties were 34 killed and 155 wounded.

After the battle the march was continued to Tokar, where the victors received a wild welcome from the garrison—men, women, and children streaming out to meet them with every barbaric expression of delight. But in spite of their defeat the Arabs were not dispersed, and as they refused all terms they were again attacked a fortnight later. General Graham marched into the desert and bivouacked near Tamai, being subjected to a dropping fire throughout the night. On the morning of March 13th he moved his troops forward, the two brigades forming two large squares. The enemy again delivered one of those mad charges that were the feature of successive Sudan campaigns. A dense phalanx of blacks seemed to spring suddenly into existence, and in another moment had broken the square of the Second Brigade. At a distance they were a fair mark for every rifle, but at close quarters the conditions were completely changed in their favour. A savage from the desert, armed only with sword or stabbing spear, ready and eager to die for Mahomet and his Mahdi, had an immediate advantage over the luckless soldier, toiling through the sand, hampered by his kit and accoutrements, and wholly unaccustomed to such a hand-to-hand struggle. The guns were left unprotected, and some were actually in the hands of the enemy for a few moments; but the men



## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

kept steady, the cavalry attacked at the right moment, and presently another hard-fought victory had been won. We lost 5 officers and 104 men killed, and 8 officers and 104 men wounded, but the Arab camp was burnt, and their forces scattered, so that the way was clear from Suakin to Berber, at which point a relieving force would be in touch with Gordon's steamers. Gordon himself had advocated an advance by this line, General Graham was in favour of it, and Sir Herbert Stewart actually prepared a plan for dashing through with a mobile force to the Nile. The Home Government, however, was unconvinced. It still clung to the hope that Gordon might after all evacuate Khartum. It had sanctioned the hostilities round Suakin, which could not fail to further inflame the fighting spirit of the Arabs against Gordon, and now refused to hear of any further advance to his relief. Precious months were lost: in March Khartum was isolated, in May Berber fell—a march from Suakin was now impossible, and the tide of rebellion flowed on to Dongola.

But at home there rose a murmur of discontent. It was first voiced in Parliament by Lord Randolph Churchill; it was eagerly adopted by the Opposition, spread abroad by the Press, and culminated in a fierce outburst of indignation throughout the country. At the end of the session Mr. Gladstone's Government narrowly escaped a vote of censure, and was at last induced to take some decisive step, though it still seemed to catch at every pretext that might delay the expedition, apparently in the vain hope that after all it might not be necessary.

In this pitiful way began the famous Gordon Relief Expedition. Considered in the light of subsequent campaigns in Egypt and South Africa, it reads like some

## EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1884—1885

strange chapter of fiction rather than a record of events which took place within our own memory. Lord Wolseley, who was appointed to command, was committed to advance on a falling Nile—the only road available—in a campaign where speed was everything. Whale-boats were sent from Southampton, voyageurs from Canada to navigate them, camels were collected at Wady Halfa, and troops were pushed forward to Dongola. Sir Herbert Stewart reached Dongola early in October, accompanied, of course, by his A.D.C., who shortly afterwards was gazetted Captain Rhodes, with a medal, a mention in despatches, and the Khedive's Star as a result of his experiences in the Eastern Sudan. In common with the other officers of the expedition they had, as several letters written during the two following months go to prove, the very vaguest idea of the task before them. The policy of the Government had made it doubtful whether the expedition would start at all, or how it would eventually proceed. After the victories of Teb and Tamai all were disposed to under-estimate the resistance that might be offered. Sir Herbert told his officers to order their dinners in London for the first of April, and his A.D.C. declared that the difficulty would not be in reaching Khartum, but in getting the 6000 odd fugitives out of the town. "But," he writes, "even if there is no fighting, it will be great fun and an interesting experience."

The long wait passed pleasantly enough for Captain Rhodes. He shot sand grouse with his General, and was entertained at a dinner of eighteen courses by the Mudir of Dongola, of whom in an account of the feast he rather ungratefully says, "I don't despair of seeing him hung some day—for the old thief richly deserves it." He also purchased a camel, a mount that must have been thoroughly

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

distasteful to an officer of the Royals, and frankly avowed that "he never meant to get across it if he could possibly help it."

But the serious position of affairs at Khartum was soon brought home to him by the arrival of Gordon's last letters, the substance of which it was thought wise to conceal from the troops. "What a position it is," he wrote, on November 20th, "Gordon alone in Khartum, all Europeans killed, surrounded by those black devils thirsting for his blood, knowing that he can't hold out beyond a certain time, and not knowing when we shall get to him. If we are not in time, I really think every member of the Government ought to be hanged."

At Dongola every effort was made to hurry on preparations. Lord Wolseley had arrived, and is described as "getting up before daybreak and going for a ride as soon as it is light—comes back, and works hard all day—he always seems cheery and full of life." In December he was able to move forward by Handak and Debbeh on to Korti, from which point it was decided that Sir Herbert Stewart should lead the Camel Corps across the Bayuda desert to Metemmeh, and establish himself firmly there until the main column, which was to advance more slowly, following the course of the river, should join him. The united force would then march on Khartum. Sir Herbert Stewart's command consisted of one squadron 19th Hussars, mounted on Arab ponies, the three camel regiments known as the Heavies, the Guards, and Mounted Infantry, about 100 men of the Sussex regiment, a half battery of the Royal Artillery with three seven-pound screw guns, a division of the Naval Brigade with one Gardner gun, Engineers, Medical and Commissariat Staff,

## EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1884—1885

and about 120 native drivers. The whole formed a picked force of some 1500 men, 90 horses, and 2200 camels.

The dilatory methods of the Government, and the hurried nature of the start, made it inevitable that all preparations should be more or less incomplete. There were not enough camels to carry a proper supply of grain; saddles, water-bottles, and other essentials were defective, and there was only a very limited amount of ammunition for the guns. Each man carried with him on his camel, blanket, great coat, spare boots, and shirt, besides the water-skin, mussak or long water-bottle, and 15 lbs. of grain. The task that confronted the expedition was one of some difficulty. They expected no very serious resistance, but had to march 176 miles through an unknown and almost waterless district, though the position of the various wells, and the quantity of water that they were likely to contain, had been previously ascertained. The country through which their route lay was by no means the typical desert. The ground was generally hard sand or gravel, with occasional tussocks of coarse yellow grass, and sometimes strewn with sharp stones, or even rocky boulders, which made progress very slow. From time to time they reached a khor or dry water-course, now an expanse of hard sand a mile or two in extent, where the going was better for the camels. The distance was always broken by low black hills, sometimes isolated, sometimes forming a miniature mountain range, rising from a waste of rough grass and mimosa scrub. Thus it was a country where cover was always to be found, so that large numbers of the enemy might at any moment be concealed within a short distance of the column.

On the 30th of December part of the force started,

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

accompanied by Sir Herbert Stewart and his A.D.C., and pushed on to the wells at Gakdul, a distance of about 100 miles, which was reached on the 2nd of January. This had been chosen as the best point of concentration, owing to its abundant supply of water; the position was accordingly fortified, and left in charge of the Engineers and the Guards Camel Corps, while the remainder of the force returned to Korti for more stores and reinforcements. Captain Rhodes accompanied the returning column, which reached Korti on the 5th of January. It had accomplished a very fine performance, having covered 200 miles in six days; the men had been on the march for 75 hours out of the 144, and the actual sleeping hours had only been 27. Assuredly no time was being lost.

A week later the whole column was again at Gakdul, ready to enter upon the second stage of the march, and a start was made upon the following day. The exertions soon began to tell upon the camels, and numerous delays resulted. Every two camels were practically doing the work of three, and as a quantity of stores was being taken on to Metemmeh very little grain could be carried. The average rate of progress was not much over two miles an hour. From time to time a camel would drop down sick, when—if it could not be beaten on again—its load was transferred to others, and it was left to shift for itself, to get a scanty meal from the mimosa scrub until it could find water. Sometimes a load would slip off, and a couple of men would at once be needed to repack it. The baggage camels all marched in strings of three, under a native driver, so that any mishap to one of them meant the delay of two others. At difficult places on the road several camels might be seen on their backs, with their legs in the air, the picture of infuriating helplessness; when

## EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1884—1885

extricated one would perhaps move on slowly, then give a mighty shiver and drop dead. The troops were sorely tried by these mishaps, which doubled and trebled the difficulties of the march. But its monotony was soon to be rudely broken. On the 16th of January the column had reached a point a few miles short of the wells of Abu Klea. It was halted at the end of a long plain, whence the track led up a rough ascent into a winding pass, commanded on either side by the usual black rock-strewn hills, until it opened into the sandy valley wherein the wells were situated. The 19th Hussars, who had gone forward to water their horses, returned hastily with the news that the enemy were in force on the hills above the pass.

The column at once left the track and advanced over the broken ground on the hillsides, where it was decided to bivouac for the night. A rough zeriba was built of loose stones, and two guns were brought into action against a hilltop some 1200 yards distant, which the enemy's sharpshooters had occupied. The zeriba was manned in expectation of a night attack, and the troops got what rest they could, though the weird sound of the tom-toms resounded through the darkness, and any light that was struck was the signal for a straggling volley from the surrounding hills.

When morning came a scanty breakfast was made of bully beef and biscuits, while preparations for advance proceeded. The Arabs had got the range by this time, and three officers were quickly wounded. Major Dickson of the Royals was talking to Captain Rhodes when he was shot through the knee, while Major Gough—commanding the Mounted Infantry—and Lieutenant Lyall, R.A., were also hit. Sir Herbert Stewart determined to leave a garrison with the stores and baggage in the zeriba, and

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

to push on with the rest of his force to seize the wells of Abu Klea at all costs. A square was formed, within which were some thirty camels for the wounded, and the advance was begun. The force moved slowly forward, keeping its formation with the greatest difficulty, now making a *dtour* to avoid broken ground, now stopping to disentangle guns and camels from the rear rank, or to get them past some cleft in the rocks. On the hills above, every rock and ridge showed a white-robed figure, gesticulating wildly, or firing down on the troops. Men fell fast, but skirmishers were thrown out on either side, who did much to keep down the fire. Suddenly the more level ground on the left front of the column became alive with black figures that seemed to rise out of it; the square moved on to a little knoll, where the skirmishers hastily rejoined it, and in a moment a dense horde of Arabs wheeled into line and made one of those desperate charges that only fanaticism can achieve. As soon as the skirmishers were in, a withering volley was poured into the advancing wave, but nothing could stem its course: it swept relentlessly over the intervening ground, leaving scores of dead and wounded in its track, and broke in one last mad rush against the bayonets of the square. The shock fell upon the left rear corner, the "Heavies," picked men from the best of our cavalry regiments, the Sussex, and the Naval Brigade: these were pushed back among the camels, the wounded, and the Staff, in the middle of the square, and the whole mass pressed against the Guards on the opposite side. The scene as recorded by those present was almost indescribable. Amid the deafening uproar and dense clouds of smoke there appeared scores of diabolical black figures, shrieking, stabbing, and cutting at the broken square. The dead

## EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1884—1885

and wounded lay literally in heaps, the dirty white robes smouldering from the closeness of the discharge. On the right the mounted infantry poured volley after volley into the black mass, and the rear rank of the Guards faced about and followed their example. The Gardner gun had jammed, the wounded inside the square were inextricably mixed up with the fighters, and the doctors were struggling desperately for their lives. Captain Rhodes, riding by his general in the centre, had his pony shot under him, and was at once in the heat of the *mêlée*; in his own words he "had had the devils all round him, and there is no fun in it at all, as they are much better at close quarters than we are."

For some moments it seemed as though the square must be cut in two, but the Guards stood firm; the general, gallantly supported by his officers, rallied the centre, and the survivors of the charge sullenly withdrew towards the hills, mown down in scores by repeated volleys as they went. Cheer after cheer was raised by the weary troops, and from time to time a fanatic would turn and charge the square single-handed, or expose himself to the British fire until he was shot down, still facing the enemies of the Prophet.

The losses during these few eventful minutes had been very heavy. Eleven officers and 77 men were killed, nine officers and 106 men were wounded, while the desert was strewn with the corpses of hundreds of the followers of the Mahdi. At five o'clock the square moved on again towards the wells. The men had been short of water for two days, and were parched and fainting from thirst: they had been under fire during most of the time since the previous evening and were nearly exhausted; the Guards, who had suffered least, were called upon to act as



## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

stretcher-bearers to the wounded. After a long search the wells were found—shallow holes in the ground each holding a little muddy water—and here the column halted for the night, while 300 volunteers went back to bring up the baggage from the last zeriba.

The night, as is generally the case at this time of year, was bitterly cold, and the men had no covering except a shirt and thin serge tunic, and no food until the baggage arrived early on the following morning. It was essential to wait for one day in order to rest them and to allow some water to trickle into the wells, which were by this time nearly dry, but in the afternoon the column fell in to resume the tedious march. Speed was everything, and the men forgot their own plight in their anxiety to reach the Nile—the high-road to Gordon and Khartum. Sir Herbert Stewart, with characteristic determination, decided to march right on to the river, hoping to strike it at a point south of Metemmeh, a distance of some 26 miles. As darkness came on, progress became very difficult. The guides were unreliable, and at times the column was almost marching in a circle; the weary camels could not be kept together, but were continually coming to grief and adding to the existing confusion. At one time the column blundered into some thick mimosa scrub, which scattered it in every direction. The men slept as they walked and slept as they rode, and a few stragglers never reappeared, but the main body plodded gamely on.

When the day broke they found themselves on a wide sandy slope, covered with long coarse grass and scrub; the river was still invisible, but presently a broad green belt of cultivation appeared in the distance which seemed to mark its course. The grass and scrub were reported by

## EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1884—1885

the scouts to be full of the enemy. The column was accordingly halted near Abu Kru and a zeriba built of camel saddles, packages, and stores, in expectation of an attack. The Arabs advanced under cover and opened a brisk fire, but refused to be tempted into the open. The men were too thirsty to eat, and could only rest behind the zeriba, firing at the occasional black figures to be seen in the scrub. There was a terrible slaughter of the defenceless camels knee-haltered in the middle of the zeriba, and a steadily increasing number of casualties among the troops.

At this moment occurred the final disaster. Sir Herbert Stewart, while superintending the building of a small out-work, was severely wounded in the side. The column was thus deprived of its head in a most critical situation, and so great was the force of the general's personality that it was thought wise to conceal the loss as long as possible from the men.

The morning dragged wearily on, the enemy's fire becoming hotter every hour, and our men being unable to make any effective reply. Colonel Rhodes used to tell a pathetic story connected with this engagement. Mr. Cameron, the special correspondent of the *Standard*, had been a good deal chaffed at the beginning of the desert march for his alleged nervousness. At Abu Klea, when the other correspondents were debating whether to go on further with the column, he astonished them by announcing that he at any rate meant to go on, with the result that the others felt bound to do the same. Soon after Sir Herbert Stewart was wounded, Frank Rhodes passed Mr. Cameron in the zeriba, where he was taking cover behind a camel, and stopped a moment to say, "Well, Cameron, you're all right there at any rate." On

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

repassing the spot a few minutes later he found the correspondent dead, with a bullet through his head.

In the afternoon Sir Charles Wilson, upon whom the command had devolved, decided that the only course was to leave a garrison to hold the zeriba, and then to fight his way through to the river with the rest of the force. A square was again formed and advanced very slowly, carefully avoiding any hollows or broken ground that might conceal a large body of the enemy. Presently a dense mass of the latter appeared in front, and a sigh of relief went up as it was realized that at last they were going to charge. The square was halted, and as the Arabs approached they were mown down by a well-directed fire; the most reckless valour was useless against such a rain of bullets, and not one of the enemy got within eighty yards of the square; the river was won at last. Perfect discipline prevailed until the very end; the exhausted troops took a long drink, and at once dropped into a well-earned sleep by the river bank.

Meantime their comrades in the zeriba at Abu Kru had had an even more trying experience. Captain Rhodes remained there with his wounded general. He saw the square march slowly off, followed by hordes of Arabs who appeared in all directions from their concealment in the scrub. It seemed indeed a doubtful question whether they would ever see the main column again; presently the roar of musketry was heard, followed by a long silence. The period of suspense was terrible, but when at length no attack was made on the zeriba they concluded that the Arabs had been beaten off.

On the following day the main body returned, after making a reconnaissance towards Metemmeh, and finding it too strong a position to attack. The column was

## EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1884—1885

reunited and reached the river on the same evening, camels and horses being nearly dead for want of water.

The troops might well be proud of their achievement. Despite the difficulties created by the hurried start and the false economy of the Government, they had stuck to their arduous task and carried out their orders. They had lost some 30 officers and 300 men killed or wounded in the two fierce actions of Abu Klea and Abu Kru, and had triumphed over a worse and more relentless foe than the Mahdi's forces—the dreary waterless desert. There had always been the haunting fear that the enemy might poison the wells, and all had had enough experience of the horrors of thirst to realize the full significance of such a danger. But they had always moved on towards their goal at the utmost possible speed, taking risks which only dire necessity would justify, and each one of them, from general to private, thinking not of themselves, but of Khartum. It now remained to be seen whether they had arrived in time.

On the day after their arrival at the river, Gordon's four steamers appeared with a welcome reinforcement of 200 Sudanese troops. Sir Charles Wilson started as soon as possible with two of them to reach the besieged town, taking with him a small force drawn from the Sussex and Gordon's Sudanese. The remainder of the force occupied a strong position at Gubat, a village a mile and a half south of Metemmeh, and were engaged in daily skirmishes with the Arabs, while convoys went back to Gakdul for fresh supplies. Sir Herbert Stewart was moved on board one of the steamers, where he was nursed with the utmost care and patience by Captain Rhodes.

On the first of February the most crushing news came from Khartum. Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley, who had

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

accompanied Sir Charles Wilson, returned on a native boat to say that the town had fallen, that Gordon had been murdered—as afterwards transpired—only two days before the arrival of the steamers, that the latter had been wrecked in the Shabluka cataract, and that the troops were entrenched on the river bank until assistance could be sent.

It is easy to recall the blaze of indignation which those heartrending tidings caused in England, but their full force could only be realized by those who had done all that mortal man could do to avert the disaster, only to find that through no fault of their own they were too late. Their own position was critical in the extreme. The hands of the Mahdi were now free to strike at them, and it was said that his army was already on its way to avenge the losses of Abu Klea. The position at Gubat was accordingly strengthened, Sir Charles Wilson was rescued by one of the remaining steamers under Captain Lord Charles Beresford, and presently General Buller arrived with reinforcements to effect the withdrawal of the column. The sick and wounded were first sent back by Abu Klea to Gakdul, among them Sir Herbert Stewart and his devoted A.D.C. On the march they were again attacked by the Arabs, but were saved by the timely arrival of the Light Camel Corps. For Frank Rhodes this weary march was a very trying experience. The convoy covered on an average fifteen miles a day, and now there was no definite goal to urge it forward. Gordon was dead, and his beloved General Sir Herbert Stewart was growing steadily worse; he lingered for a few days longer, but the journey was too much for him, and he died almost within sight of Gakdul. "We had a very rough time of it," Frank Rhodes wrote, "and I have lost one of the nicest and best friends

## EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1884—1885

that man could possibly have. I think he was the nicest man I ever met in my life, and in my opinion was the soldier of the future."

Sir Herbert Stewart was one of those personalities whose charm is felt by all with whom they come in contact. His tall, athletic figure was the picture of a soldier, and during the desert campaign he had shown soldier-like qualities that endeared him to all who served under him. Always dashing and energetic, he had wished to lead a mounted force to Khartum by the Suakin-Berber route immediately after the victory of Tamai in February, 1884; this same high courage enabled him to rise superior to the difficulties of the Bayuda desert, and inspired his troops with a determination equal to his own.

After the arrival of General Buller at Gubat the column was gradually withdrawn—many of the stores that had been transported with such immense difficulty over the desert being now thrown into the Nile. It is generally admitted that Lord Wolseley had good reason to congratulate himself when the survivors were safely back at Korti. Their position at Gubat had been one of great peril, and the original Camel Corps was hardly to be recognized in the weary soldiers that returned, their uniforms in rags, their toes sticking out of their boots, with only one camel left for every five men.

They were now drafted into summer quarters along the Nile, in the expectation of an autumn campaign, while an expedition had already gone to Suakin with the object of completing a railway to Berber before hostilities should begin again. But the Government steadily declined to adopt a forward policy. As soon as the strong feeling aroused by the fall of Khartum had subsided, more troops were withdrawn, and the Suakin expedition was allowed

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

to achieve little beyond an ineffective demonstration in the Eastern Sudan.

So ended the first and darkest chapter of the history of our occupation of Egypt. It seems indeed incredible that a country which can be stirred from end to end by the whisper of "slavery" in South Africa, should have deliberately consented to hand over a tract equal in area to the British possessions in South Africa to the blackest tyranny that our generation has known. For the next thirteen years fire and sword ruled in the Sudan. Little was known of its inner history during that period. From time to time there came lurid stories of the prison at Omdurman and the monstrous excesses of the Khalifa; but for all practical purposes it was hidden in the black cloud of barbarism that had swept over it, just as a deserted palace in India is wrapped up by the jungle.

Nor was it only the Sudan that was affected. Lord Wolseley wrote in his despatch, after the return of the Nile expedition, "You cannot get out of Egypt for many years to come. If the present policy of retreat be persisted in, the Mahdi will become stronger and stronger, and you will have to increase your garrison and submit to the indignity of being threatened by him. Eventually you will have to fight him to keep your position in Egypt, which you will then do with the population round you ready, on any reverse, to rise against you. No frontier force can keep Mahdism out of Egypt, and the Mahdi must sooner or later be smashed, or he will smash you." Every word of this was justified by the sequel. The threatened invasion of Egypt was delayed by the sudden death of the Mahdi, at the very height of his power, but it was not averted. Assuan is now filled by crowds of visitors inspecting the great work which British capital

## EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1884—1885

and enterprise has given to Egypt—the mainstay of its agriculture and the backbone of its prosperity. But at Assuan twenty years ago anxious eyes were turned daily towards the southern horizon, watching for the green banners that carried savagery and destruction in their train.

After the death of Sir Herbert Stewart, Frank Rhodes was attached as A.D.C. to General Dormer. He spent some time in the camp at Tani, and afterwards at Debbeh, which he found “a dirty, dusty place without a redeeming feature.” Summer in the Nile valley was a severe trial, coming after the vicissitudes of the Camel Corps, and he was devoutly thankful to receive orders to return to England in August.

His two years in Egypt may perhaps be said to mark the beginning of his career. Hitherto he had been well content with his pleasant but uneventful life at Aldershot or the Curragh, but this was no longer to be so. He had now had his first taste of active service—in this case a real baptism of fire—and henceforth took every possible opportunity of seeing more of it. He began the Nile campaign as a subaltern, but before the end of the year he was a brevet lieutenant-colonel. He had again been mentioned in despatches, and was subsequently awarded the D.S.O. Above all, he had won for himself a reputation which was to last throughout his life, and which has enabled more than one distinguished soldier who had served with him to declare, “that no campaign was complete without him.” This reputation was not based on any particular exploit, or upon any signs of great military genius, for no special opportunity had been offered to him. But he had always been ready to do anything useful, and to do it to the very best of his



## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

ability. Sir Herbert Stewart had found him a man after his own heart, and had written to his brother officers of the Royals to say that he was "the best A.D.C. that he had ever known."

In action he had always shown a certain gay gallantry that was an essential part of his character. The greater the difficulties or dangers to be encountered, the more buoyant became his spirits; such cheeriness was bound to be infectious, and for this reason alone it was invaluable. He combined with it a tact and a sympathy with others which won him new friends on every long march or hard-fought action.

At the end of the campaign Gerald Portal, no bad judge of such sterling qualities, wrote from Cairo, "The only good point about this evacuation is that it will bring Frankie down here again soon, and hence I suppose to England. . . . The praise I hear of dear old Frankie is universal. Every one says he did a lot of good work, and so much good besides by always being cheery and hopeful, and always playing up and keeping the other fellows going."

From this time onwards he was recognized as "a good man to be with in a tight place," perhaps the highest tribute which one man of action can pay to another. This reputation he never belied. In after life he had his full share of "tight places," but faced them all with the same intrepid spirit that had served him so well in the Bayuda desert.

## CHAPTER III

IRELAND, THE SUDAN, INDIA, 1886—1892

**A**T home a warm welcome awaited Colonel Rhodes. He found his friends ready to greet him in London, and was duly given a complimentary dinner at Sleaford, with his cousin, Colonel Mildmay Willson, who had also been with the desert column. As he had had a slight touch of the sun in the Nile campaign, he was advised by the doctors to go to Kissingen, where he arranged to join Colonel O'Shaughnessy and two other friends. He started in the same spirit that a schoolboy welcomes a holiday. On his arrival he was dismayed to find a cab waiting for him at the station with a German cornet player on the box, who dutifully carried out the orders which the colonel's thoughtful friends had given, and regaled the invalid with triumphal airs during the drive to the hotel. There he was at once presented with what purported to be a draught of the famous waters—composed of every noxious ingredient imaginable—which he disposed of with some difficulty, and was supremely delighted when, on sampling the real waters, he discovered that he had been the victim of an elaborate practical joke. When his leave expired he went on with General Dormer to Ireland, where he subsequently rejoined his regiment. He spent the greater part of the three following years there, hunting and playing cricket with undiminished energy.

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

But though the time passed pleasantly enough, there is no doubt that he was always longing for the more eventful life that he had tasted in Egypt.

There the second chapter in the history of Mahdism had begun. The Sudan had been finally abandoned, and the garrisons at Suakin and Wady Halfa marked the limits of the Khedive's authority. The Mahdi himself had died, and had been succeeded by the Khalifa, who maintained for the twelve following years a brutal despotism, based on the supremacy of the Baggara Arabs. Under his rule the population was reduced—according to the official figures—from over eight millions to less than two, by a long course of battle, murder, and famine. Fertile provinces became a desert, for it was no time for sowing and reaping when men only lived from day to day. The accounts of those who, like Slatin Pasha, were eye-witnesses of these atrocities, read more like some tale of the Middle Ages than a true chronicle of events that have taken place within our own memory. The British Government could not be roused to action, and unkind critics might observe that with typical inconsistency we are now sending out every year the best men that we produce to repair the destruction to which twenty years ago we gave a willing assent.

But despite the apathy of the Government the men on the spot were busy. Egypt was in the hands of Lord Cromer, and the work of reconstruction was in progress. The Khalifa's forces might advance to Halfa, but they got no further. The series of battles and frontier skirmishes, though unimportant in themselves, were not without their value, for by them the Egyptian army of the future was created. Many of Colonel Rhodes' comrades in arms were with it, and he himself was burning to join them. At last

## IRELAND, THE SUDAN, INDIA, 1886—1892

his opportunity came, and in the autumn of 1888 he was again at Suakin, attached to Sir Francis Grenfell's staff.

By the month of December, 1888, the position there had become impossible. The Dervishes, encouraged by our inaction of the past three years, had advanced boldly on the town, thrown up trenches on the western side, and proceeded to subject it to something in the nature of a bombardment. The garrison was too small to attack them, and was forced to sit down and acquiesce in a state of siege; officers and men accepted the situation with true British philosophy, and passed the time as best they might with polo and cricket, though casualties on the ground were a matter of almost daily occurrence.

At last reinforcements were landed, and Sir Francis Grenfell was able to take the offensive at the head of a force composed of some 750 British troops, 2000 Egyptians, and the same number of friendly Sudanese. The enemy's position was a strong one, and a frontal attack must have resulted in considerable loss. Accordingly, on the morning of the 20th of December, the troops were paraded in the usual way, to disarm suspicion; but just as the Dervishes were settling down for the day they became aware of the fact that the British had slipped out of the town in force, and were attacking their left. In the ensuing action of Gemaizeh the surprise was complete and effective. Our advantage was pressed home by a cavalry charge on the Dervish flank, where some hand-to-hand fighting took place; they were driven from their trenches, and by the end of the day were in full retreat, leaving 500 of their number on the field.

An amusing anecdote, which serves to illustrate Colonel Rhodes' good nature and sense of humour, is told by a friend of his who was acting as special correspondent for

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

the *Morning Post*. They met after the battle, and the correspondent asked for some details of the infantry attack, as he himself had been with the cavalry on the right. Colonel Rhodes at once handed him the notes that had been taken for the official despatch, with strict injunctions to alter the wording.

The correspondent was duly grateful, but failed to alter one or two passages sufficiently—possibly feeling secure in the knowledge that Colonel Rhodes himself was Press censor, and could satisfy himself on the subject. But as ill luck would have it, when he came to the censor's quarters, he found the staff there, and the general with good-natured curiosity asked to look at his account of the battle. Suddenly he was horrified to find that he was reading the words of his own despatch, and turned for an explanation to Colonel Rhodes, who was standing behind his chair, with a half-guilty, half-humorous expression on his face, shaking his fist at the imprudent correspondent. Explanations ensued, and the culprits were forgiven, on condition that the account should be altered there and then, Colonel Rhodes atoning for his former remissness by standing over his friend and insisting that every detail should be changed—even the number of the enemy's casualties being doubled, for the benefit of the *Morning Post*.

After the battle of Gemaizeh, Colonel Rhodes was once more mentioned in despatches, and received the Order of the Third Class of the Medjidieh. He subsequently paid a flying visit to South Africa, and in 1890 found a fresh opportunity of foreign service awaiting him. His friend Lord Harris had been appointed Governor-General of Bombay, and offered him the post of Military Secretary. Needless to say the offer was accepted, and he spent the

## IRELAND, THE SUDAN, INDIA, 1886—1892

two following years in India. He thoroughly enjoyed his time at Government House, where he benefited largely from the new experience, and the different people with whom he was brought in contact. The work of a military secretary is not of a very arduous kind, being limited to a certain amount of organization connected with State and social functions, and the miscellaneous duties that arise from time to time on the staff of a Governor-General. Colonel Rhodes had all the essential qualities—tact and good humour combined with energy and common sense. It is true that his brother Cecil declared with characteristic directness that "Frank might just as well be somebody's butler"; but though his responsibilities were not heavy, he made a very efficient secretary, and saved his chief a great deal of trouble, both by what he did himself, and more particularly—according to his friends—by what he got other people to do.

Lord Harris recalls his great popularity in the place, and was especially impressed by the kindly way in which the most unlikely people spoke of him after he had gone—due, no doubt, to the universal character of his good nature. As an admiring brother officer once said, "he would take on any one, from an actress to a bishop." He achieved further triumphs on the cricket field: at the Poona Gymkhana he headed the averages, winning a presentation bat with an average of 50, and playing for Lady Harris's XI. in a mixed match at Mahableshtar he accomplished the sensational feat of taking 9 wickets for 14 runs—all of the five ladies on the opposite side falling victims to his slows. Besides this he rode in a few races, followed the Poona hounds, and spent some weary nights waiting for a tiger.

But after a time the old wandering spirit reasserted

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

itself, and could not be satisfied by the pleasant routine of Government House. It is a truism that the greatest gifts of fortune generally come to us in the most unexpected fashion, while we are too often cheated of the reward at which we have been patiently aiming for many years. This now happened in the case of Colonel Rhodes. Mention has already been made of his friendship with Sir Gerald Portal, who was making a name for himself in the Diplomatic Service, and after carrying out successfully a long and difficult mission to Abyssinia, had been appointed Her Majesty's Agent and Consul-General at Zanzibar. He was now entrusted with an important mission to Uganda, and at once wrote and asked Colonel Rhodes to join him as Chief of the Staff. The latter was naturally eager to do so, but felt some reluctance at leaving Bombay. He liked India, and was especially sorry to desert Lord Harris, while the latter was somewhat opposed to his going to Uganda. Apart from the personal tie between them, he considered that Colonel Rhodes would not further his military prospects by the step he contemplated. He was already one of the youngest lieutenant-colonels in the service, and if he completed his three years as Military Secretary, he might expect to be made a substantive colonel at the end of it.

But it must be clear—from the description already given of him—that his decision was never really in doubt. The mission to Uganda offered irresistible attractions, and it was to be shared by the very comrades that he himself would have chosen. Besides Sir Gerald's brother, Captain Raymond Portal, there was Major "Roddy" Owen, who had in the previous year set the seal on his racing career by winning the Grand National, and since

## IRELAND, THE SUDAN, INDIA, 1886—1892

then had served with distinction on the West Coast of Africa.

At the end of 1892 Colonel Rhodes sailed from Bombay, and joined his friends at Aden, whence he wrote, "It was a great wrench saying good-bye to them in India, and I felt it very much—I was very fond of several and have made them promise to write to me. There are a dull lot on board, but we are full of Blue Books about Uganda, and fall peacefully asleep over them after lunch."



## CHAPTER IV

### THE UGANDA MISSION, 1893

ON December 30th, 1892, Major Owen, Captain Raymond Portal, and Colonel Rhodes arrived at Zanzibar, together with Sir Rennell Rodd, who was to take Sir Gerald Portal's place as Her Majesty's Agent and Consul-General. The leader of the mission was already there, busied with final arrangements, preparations having been expedited by the able co-operation of General Lloyd Mathews. His help was invaluable, for though his work may have obtained scant recognition at home, in this remote kingdom he was all powerful. He had begun life in the Navy, been transferred to the Sultan of Zanzibar's service, drilled troops, created an army and led it to victory in person, and was at this time the first minister in the Protectorate.

In Zanzibar occurred the meeting and parting alluded to in Sir Rennell Rodd's poem, which has won such warm admiration from all who knew Colonel Rhodes, and which is reprinted, by the kind permission of the author, at the beginning of this volume.

Colonel Rhodes often spoke of the Uganda expedition, and the various incidents connected with it, but always in the lightest possible way. It is very easy to recall his picturesque descriptions of the vast herds of game, of the wild Masai warriors, of the impenetrable scrub, and

## THE UGANDA MISSION, 1893

impassable swamps. But most of his reminiscences were marked by some humorous incident, and gave no real impression of the great feat achieved by himself and his friends. A truer picture can be found in Sir Gerald Portal's book, and the best and saddest commentary of all is supplied by the brief poem of Sir Rennell Rodd.

The Imperial British East African Company had discovered after eighteen months' experience of Uganda that their resources were unequal to the task of administering a country so far from the coast. As their evacuation would certainly imperil the lives of the missionaries there, money was subscribed through the agency of the Church Missionary Society to defray the cost of administration for another year. This breathing space was broken by a fierce civil war, and at the end of the time peace had scarcely been re-established by the company's officials. At this point the Imperial Government consented to pay the administrative expenses of the company for a further three months, until March 31st, 1893, and meantime to send Sir Gerald Portal and his staff to Uganda to report, and suggest, if possible, "the best means of dealing with the country." The difficulties which he had to face were enormous. He had in one short month to organize and equip an expedition which should be capable of accomplishing the 750-mile march from the coast in 90 days, with the certainty that if it did not reach Uganda within that time the country would be in a state of utter anarchy.

The expedition entailed considerable preparations; it must carry all its own supplies, food, tents, clothing, arms and ammunition, cloth for barter, all the innumerable articles that would be indispensable in Central Africa—so that it should be in a position to depend entirely upon

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

itself for nine months in a savage, and possibly hostile, country. Some indication of the nature of the mission, and the difficulties with which it must contend, may be gathered from a letter from Cecil Rhodes in answer to a cable from Sir Gerald Portal asking for his advice. "As far as communication goes," he said, "you must look to your supplies by the lake system. Without a railway you have 710 miles of portorage, which simply kills any transport, whereas by the Chinde, *viâ* Nyasa and Tanganyika, you have only a short piece from the Lower to the Upper Shiré, and then the piece from the north end of Nyasa to the south end of Tanganyika, and finally about 200 miles from the north end of Tanganyika to the headquarters of M'wanga (King of Uganda). . . ."

Besides the officers already mentioned, the expedition was accompanied by Lieutenant Arthur of the Rifle Brigade, in command of an escort of 200 Zanzibar troops, Mr. Ernest Berkeley, a consul in Her Majesty's service, Dr. Moffat, and Mr. Foaker, who had already made one journey to Uganda in the British East Africa Company's service; and it was also joined by Lieutenant C. Villiers, Royal Horse Guards, who had come out to shoot big game. No less than 400 porters were needed to carry the equipment, supplies, articles of barter, and other necessaries, and to allow a prudent margin for possible losses. The country through which the long march was to be made was one of infinite variety. First there is the narrow coastal strip, comparatively thickly populated; much of this is under cultivation, and everywhere palm trees and the other rich vegetation of the tropics thrive in a damp hot-house climate. Beyond it the slow ascent to the great central plateau begins—a dry unfertile tract covered with dense scrub, the stunted mimosa and acacia so familiar to the

## THE UGANDA MISSION, 1893

African traveller. About 250 miles from the coast there comes a complete change. The climate—at a point some 5000 feet above sea-level—is comparatively cool and bracing, the nights are cold, with heavy dews, and the average annual rainfall is something between 50 and 60 inches. This is the district which is now attracting large numbers of settlers to East Africa, a land of rolling plains, covered with herds of game, and watered by clear mountain streams—a white man's country.

Last comes the great rift or trough which cleaves this part of Africa—beginning at Lake Rudolph in the north and running south to Lake Naivasha—a barren volcanic region, at this time almost uninhabited. At the western limit of the rift the way lies over the Mau mountains, a steep ascent, followed by a gradual drop to the plains of Kavirondo, on the northern shores of Lake Victoria Nyanza. Uganda itself consists mainly of innumerable round or flat-topped hills, their sides clad with banana plantations, or a thick impervious tangle of elephant grass 12 or 16 feet high, while the dividing valleys generally conceal a dank unwholesome swamp, where a sluggish stream runs through a jungle of rushes and papyrus.

Such is the country through which the expedition had to pass. Roads take the form of the ordinary native path, ten inches wide, leading from kraal to kraal. Their principal characteristic is that they are never straight, for the native—to whom time is of no object—never removes an obstacle which it is possible to go round; thus every fallen tree or ridge of stones necessitates a considerable *détour*. In the dry season the going is tolerably good, but during the rains the path becomes a slippery channel, more especially on the hillsides, while the tall grass that overhangs it drenches the walker from head to foot. It is

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

easy to understand how monotonous and aggravating walking can become under such conditions. The leader is unable to see more than a few yards ahead, and is constantly confronted by some fresh turn in the winding path, so that he seems to be making little or no progress. But an even more unhappy fate is that of the man in charge of the rear guard, with nothing to encourage him save an occasional glimpse—in some clear space—of the long procession dragging along in single file, and apparently in every direction.

A full account of this weary journey has already been given in Sir Gerald Portal's book, and the rough notes made by Colonel Rhodes would not perhaps be of any general interest. The day's work generally began at 4.30 when the *réveille* was sounded; the camp was broken up and all baggage packed, while the Europeans made a hasty breakfast. At 5.30 the march began, and was continued at an average rate of less than three miles per hour. The officers took the unwelcome post of rear-guard in turn, and by this means succeeded in urging on stragglers and malingers, and prevented desertion. At about eleven the next camp would be reached, and a meal prepared. In the afternoon some of the party would generally go out shooting, to return at sundown, worn out, and ready for dinner and bed at nine. But for the dangers of sore feet and fever the life was a healthy one. After the first few days the Europeans got into remarkably good condition. Nothing was drunk but cocoa and coffee, wine and spirits being kept for emergencies.

The journey was not without its dramatic incidents—many of them of a too startling kind. On the fifth day after leaving the coast the travellers were confronted by the Taro plain, a wide strip of desert, beyond which the

## THE UGANDA MISSION, 1893

only water to be found was at the summit of the Maunga mountain, some 37 miles distant. The march was begun at 11.30 a.m., so that the worst part of the journey might be made during the cool of the evening. At noon a steady downpour of rain increased the difficulties of travelling and added to the weight of the baggage. It was, however, hoped that this would serve to fill some so-called wells in the plain which were generally dry. These wells were reached in the afternoon, mere depressions in the ground, protected by a covering of thatch, and were found to be the only really dry spot within a radius of ten miles. The march was continued, with brief halts to allow the porters to come up, until the leaders reached the camping ground on the far-off mountain side at nine in the morning, to discover that the pools were on the summit, one thousand feet above them. It was two hours later before the precious water could be brought down, and relief parties despatched to bring in the caravan, by this time hopelessly broken up, and straggling over miles of country. The last of the stragglers did not reach camp until three in the afternoon, but though the entire expedition was at its last gasp there were no fatalities.

The ordinary day's march—though never again so painful as the one just described—was seldom wholly uneventful. On one occasion a wandering rhinoceros charged, or rather blundered, into the midst of the caravan, and threw it into utter confusion; the officers hurried to the front and opened a brisk fire on the enemy, but failed to stop it. With the extraordinary vitality peculiar to African game it came within ten yards of the intruders before it fell, with no less than fourteen bullets in its body. An even more determined attack was afterwards made by vast swarms of bees which the caravan had disturbed.

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

Enormous numbers settled on the bodies and heads of the porters, making a particular mark of the eyes and mouth, and in a few minutes completely routed the 600 men. They flung down their loads and fled with wild screams into the long grass, rolling themselves about in it in an agony of pain and terror. Again the officers were equal to the situation. The porters were rallied and armed with torches of flaming grass, and a determined charge was led to recover the baggage. This object once achieved no time was lost in leaving so dangerous a neighbourhood.

Much of the country traversed was almost uninhabited, but from time to time the expedition was able to replenish its supply of grain at a native kraal. The natives were in every case well disposed, being generally ready to welcome any change from the raids of the savage Masai warriors. These had for long been the scourge of this part of Africa, though at this time their power was on the wane. The rinderpest had destroyed their herds of captured cattle, so that many of them were forced to abandon their traditional life, and cultivate the arts of peace to avoid starvation. The six-foot spear was losing its terrors with the introduction of the rifle, and the band of young warriors that met the expedition did not attempt hostilities. Their splendid physique—none were less than six feet in height—was set off by their head-dresses of feathers or horns, and fierce ornaments of polished wire or zebra skin; they were armed with sword and knobkerri, besides which they carried the famous stabbing assegai and four-foot shield. The warriors themselves were by no means impressed by this sudden appearance of civilization in their midst, but swaggered about the camp, and bullied the little Zanzibar soldiers with the utmost unconcern.



UGANDA.

STAFF OFFICER (*top.*): "CURIOSLY NICE WOMAN."



## THE UGANDA MISSION, 1893

On the 17th of March the expedition reached Kampala, the capital, and were welcomed by the representatives of the British East Africa Company, and M'wanga, the king of the country. Colonel Rhodes met the Englishmen who had come from Kampala to meet them with the astounding statement that "We have had such a delightful walk." The march of 820 miles had been made in seventy-five days—including an enforced halt of eight days, to collect supplies—so that the average progress made was about  $12\frac{1}{2}$  miles in the day. Many of the porters had carried between 70 and 80 lbs. of baggage, sometimes short of food and water, over a difficult country. They had passed through parched tracts of desert and fever-stricken swamps, forded rivers, and cut their way through belts of thick forest; they had experienced all the extremes of the African climate, blazing sunshine in the plains, and bitter cold on the Mau mountains, where four men died.

The work of the Europeans under such conditions had been even harder. They had all suffered more or less from fever and fatigue, "jiggers," and ulcerated feet—Major Owen was actually carried for 250 miles—but had stuck cheerfully to their task. They were now faced by the even harder one of establishing some permanent source of law and order among a strange and savage people.

Every day spent in the capital revealed more clearly the difficulties before them. The 15,000 square miles that constituted Uganda had at this time a population roughly estimated at half a million, and had been for long the home of a brutal despotism typical of the independent African kingdom. The nominal administration was in the hands of the reigning monarch M'wanga, a weak and insignificant man, supported by his council of local chiefs, court officials, and hangers-on. The sinews of government

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

were provided by the luckless peasantry, under a crushing system of taxation, whereby every official, from the king downwards, extracted what he could from the next official below him, and retained what he considered a suitable reward for his own services. Any attempt to evade the system was formerly met by the most barbarous punishments, though these had recently been moderated by the influence of the various missions.

These missions had made some progress, but unfortunately Protestants and Catholics were at daggers drawn with one another, and incapable of united action. The rule of the British East Africa Company had not been long enough to establish any permanent civilization, and it seemed that on its departure the country would quickly relapse to its former condition.

Sir Gerald Portal at once set about his arduous task. He himself and Colonel Rhodes remained in the capital to arrange with the company about taking over the administration, reconcile if possible the religious rivals, and establish some strong form of central government. The other officers, with some of the company's officials, made separate journeys to the outlying districts, to decide local questions. Major Owen and Captain Raymond Portal were entrusted with the task of taking over the control of the Sudanese troops, relics of Emin Pasha's forces, who were established with their wives and families in various forts. They had been for a year unpaid and uncontrolled, living a sort of "free company" life at the expense of the surrounding country.

For a time all went well. The necessary arrangements were made at the capital, and there seemed to be some prospect of a permanent settlement; the headquarters were moved from Kampala to a more healthy spot on the

## THE UGANDA MISSION, 1893

shores of the lake, which was named Port Alice. The first batch of Sudanese soldiers was collected, and started for Kampala under Captain Raymond Portal, Major Owen being left to deal with the remainder.

There had always been something of a dramatic nature about this expedition into the heart of Africa; but at this point the first note of tragedy was struck. Hitherto Sir Gerald Portal and his staff had risen superior to all difficulties and dangers. They had followed the path of the explorers far into the mysterious continent, and kept open a door by which the light of civilization might enter. And this door has never been closed. The solitude of the Kikuyu plains is now broken by the railway whistle, and the throb of the screw may be heard on the great lakes beyond. But Africa has never yielded to civilization without exacting her price—and here the price has been a heavy one to pay.

All the Europeans had suffered more or less from the exposure and fatigue of the journey, and were for that reason less able to resist the fever-stricken climate of the Uganda swamps. At the end of May, Major Owen, unable to put a foot to the ground, was riding painfully on to the second of the Sudanese forts; it seemed a question whether he would fall a victim to fever or starvation first. Captain Raymond Portal was being carried back to Kampala in a litter, almost unconscious from the combined effects of fever and sunstroke. In Kampala Colonel Rhodes was nursing Sir Gerald Portal, also down with fever, when the news came of Captain Portal's illness. Dr. Moffatt was unable to walk, but Lieutenant Villiers limped off to meet him with such medical comforts as were to be found. Captain Portal was brought into Kampala and nursed with the tenderest care by his

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

brother and Colonel Rhodes, but all to no purpose, and on May 27th this gallant officer died. No greater blow could have fallen on the expedition. Apart from his personal charm he had shown an energy and resource during the trying times since they left the coast that confirmed the high expectations held by his friends as to his future. Strong, active, and determined, he had more than risen to the occasion: as his brother wrote of him, he "only wanted an opportunity to show what he really was, and up here among a picked lot of officers he had already proved himself far and away the best of them all."

It was during such a period of gloom that the rare qualities of Colonel Rhodes appeared. The unfailing cheerfulness that, as his friends in Egypt used to say, "made no campaign complete without him," had been invaluable on the long march up from the coast and amid the innumerable difficulties and annoyances experienced in Uganda. His sympathetic nature and a certain tenderness of character, well known to all his friends, were now clearly revealed. Many instances of his tact and kindness with the sick or suffering, which were afterwards a byword in the hospitals of Ladysmith, are to be found recorded in the pages of Sir Gerald Portal's diary at this trying time. With his help final arrangements were made, Captain Macdonald, R.E.—who had come up with the Railway Survey Expedition—was left in charge of the capital, and on the 30th May Sir Gerald and Colonel Rhodes started on their return journey.

But their troubles were not yet at an end. The "great rains" had converted every stream into a swollen river, every valley into a dangerous marsh. By the time they reached Mumias, about 170 miles from the capital, the

## THE UGANDA MISSION, 1893

continual wetting, added to the effects of Uganda, were too much for Colonel Rhodes, and for a week he lay between life and death with repeated attacks of high fever. At this moment news came from Captain Macdonald that some of the Sudanese soldiers had mutinied, and were raising the Mohammedans against the Christians, while Major Owen was cut off from the capital. It was impossible for Sir Gerald Portal to leave Colonel Rhodes. Medical comforts were soon exhausted and provisions began to run short. At the end of a fortnight nothing was left except crushed beans, millet, and some goats. Under these conditions Sir Gerald nursed his friend as best he might, and had the satisfaction of seeing him gradually recover. Colonel Rhodes himself always dated his recovery from one terrible day when they broke their only thermometer. Presently reassuring reports came from the capital, announcing that the revolt had been crushed and order restored, so that they were able to march by slow stages to Kikuyu, and take a well-earned rest in the company's settlement there.

It might well be thought that after the experiences of the last three months both of them would have been content to return at once to the coast, and leave a country so full of gloomy recollections. But with characteristic pluck they decided to stick to their original plan of marching north, through new and unexplored country, until they reached the Tana river, and of following its course down to the sea, in the hope of finding a better caravan route to the interior. The incidents of the journey and many details of the country through which they passed, are all recorded by Colonel Rhodes in his diary. It naturally contains much that can be of no general interest, but the rough notes, hastily jotted down at the end of a

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

long and tiring day by the light of the camp fire, give a realistic picture of their adventures. They started on the 26th of August along a straight and well-cut road, which gave no indication of the troubles that lay before them. On the first night the camp was threatened by a grass fire, and all the men were turned out to extinguish it with branches. On the third day they were confronted by a belt of papyrus swamp, and spent five hours in waist deep water, cutting their way inch by inch through the dense papyrus stalks. During the next week they crossed no less than five rivers, making rough bridges by felling trees across the stream, or fording when it was practicable: one river in particular is mentioned with relief as being "only four feet deep." The river banks were covered with trees, but the rest of the country consisted of wide rolling plains, where hartebeeste, vildebeeste, and zebra were seen in herds of three or four hundred at a time, besides giraffe, water-buck, bush-buck, impallah, and other antelope. The rivers were full of hippo, and it was twice necessary to shoot rhinoceros to prevent them from blundering into the caravan.

On the 7th of September they crossed to the north bank of the Tana river, at a point where it divides into seven separate streams, or rather rapids. The last of these was a roaring cataract. A donkey and a cow both fell off the makeshift bridge, the latter being drowned. From this point they had to follow the course of the river, often a wearisome and difficult task. An entry in the diary speaks of "some really lovely bits of scenery, water rushing over hugh boulders, and islands thickly covered with palms, the rest of the country most God-forsaken looking with thick bush and not a sign of anything good about it." It was often necessary to cut a path through

## THE UGANDA MISSION, 1893

the scrub, and the day's march seldom exceeded 9 miles. Stragglers from the caravan were constantly being lost, and the diary notes that, "rockets would be invaluable for showing the direction of the camp." Sometimes more cultivated districts were reached, where it was possible to obtain supplies, but game was no longer plentiful. Every tributary of the Tana created a fresh obstacle, and the country on the whole was barren and inhospitable.

On the 1st of October they reached a point to which canoes had been sent by Mr. Rennell Rodd, but as the expedition was two months late the canoes had returned. Others were procured from the natives, but these were small and ill-adapted for the rather difficult navigation. Rocks, snags, and tree trunks provided fresh dangers, and several canoes were capsized; one boy was drowned and much indispensable baggage lost. The river was supposed to be full of crocodiles, and the swarms of mosquitoes on its banks added to the miseries of the travellers.

But the end of their troubles was approaching. When at last they reached the mouth of the river they found a welcome steamer waiting for them. This brought them to Zanzibar, whence they took the first boat homeward bound, and were safe in England before the end of November.

Such is the history of the mission to Uganda. It is of course impossible to include in this brief account all those details that best illustrate its difficulties and dangers. It was one of those exploits which pass almost unnoticed at the time, and are all too soon forgotten. In one or two families a vague tradition may survive, connected with an honoured name, or a stray traveller by the Uganda Railway may realize the true character of the long desert

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

march. But it brought no honours or rewards to those who took part in it, nor were they the men to seek them. They set out in a characteristic spirit of adventure, and when the crisis came they did not fail. In many ways they were typical of their country. Their early days had given no sign of future brilliance; they were mainly known among their contemporaries at Eton, at the 'Varsity, and in their regiments as good fellows and good sportsmen. Sir Gerald had hunted the Eton beagles, but had failed to matriculate at Balliol; his brother helped to bring his college boat to the head of the river, but had achieved nothing remarkable in the "Schools." Colonel Rhodes had divided his first ten years in the service between cricket and hunting; while Major Owen was known as the best gentleman rider of his day. But since that time they had all shown themselves ready to confront the graver issues of life, and one and all more than justified their selection for the arduous task in Uganda. They had faced sickness, weariness, and discomfort with indomitable pluck and good humour; they had adapted themselves to the most unexpected situations, eagerly accepted responsibility, and carried their work to a triumphant conclusion.

The cost had been a heavy one. Sir Gerald left his brother on the scene of his triumphs, and within three months of his return he himself succumbed to typhoid fever. Major Owen spent more adventurous months among the swamps of the Toru country, accompanied the Chitral campaign, and died of cholera the following year at Wady Halfa. Colonel Rhodes survived his friends by ten years, and made a further name for himself in other parts of Africa; but in the end he too paid the penalty which none of them sought to evade.



## CHAPTER V

RHODESIA, 1894—1895

THERE must come a point in men's lives when even the most restless spirit feels that it is time to think seriously of settling down. This applies more especially to the man of action. He returns, perhaps after years of exile, to England—his heritage which others are enjoying. He is tempted to contrast the vicissitudes of his own life with the well-ordered routine that his friends have chosen; their groove is, at any rate, a very smooth one. He finds a fresh delight in the London season, in the country house, and above all in the healthy, comfortable people that surround him. The first reckless energy of youth has gone, and he begins to wonder "if it is really good enough," and perhaps reflects that

" Rest after toil, port after stormy seas,  
Death after life, these things do greatly please."

There was every reason why Colonel Frank Rhodes should decide to settle down now. He had been soldiering for twenty years, and had seen more than his share of active service. On the death of his aunt, Miss Peacock, he had inherited her fortune and the Manor House at Sleaford. He was blest with innumerable friends and an almost infinite capacity for enjoyment, but Africa had claimed him for her own. It was the mysterious spell of that cruel continent, even more than the charm of the

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

active life with which he had grown so familiar, that would not let him rest, and within three months of his return he was again on board ship, bound for Rhodesia, where he was to act as administrator in the temporary absence of Doctor Jameson.

The post was one which was bound to attract him. Five years before Rhodesia was part of the great unknown Africa. The wide park-like plains, the wind-swept uplands, and the dark tracts of forest were all beyond the pale; the Matoppos and the Victoria Falls were known only to the explorer. Huge herds of game were in sole possession—sable and hartebeeste grazed in peace on the veld, lion roared by the river bank, and hippo basked in the pools. An occasional native kraal, or the camp of a wandering hunter from the Cape, was the only sign of man.

Such was the wilderness that Cecil Rhodes proposed to tame; it was a country rich in natural resources—a superb climate, a fertile soil, and latent mineral wealth, only waiting for the transforming hand of civilization. Englishmen at once responded to the call. The Chartered Company was formed to develop the new colony; its pioneers trekked up from Mafeking, and established themselves in Mashonaland. Presently a long line of telegraph stretched through the mapani scrub; railways crept slowly forward from north and south, and tiny farmhouses or prospectors' tents began to dot the veld. The buck were startled by the novel apparition of mining headgear and windlass, or by the deep boom of the crushing batteries. More white men followed—some in coaches and Cape-carts, some riding, some even walking—all attracted by the golden magnet. After them came the creaking transport waggons which littered the ground with corrugated iron, picks, candles and blasting charges,



*By permission of the Chartered Company.*

A RHODESIAN TOWNSHIP.

## RHODESIA, 1894—1895

stacks of tinned meat, grain, and stores; these were soon arranged round an open square, foundations were dug, wooden walls rose quickly, roofs were nailed on, and a little township had sprung into existence. The settlers still had to struggle hard; fever thinned their numbers lions carried off their cattle, the Matabele made war on them—but they rose superior to all their difficulties. The ensuing stages were rapid. A Government House was built on the site of Lobengula's royal kraal; churches schools, offices, and shops appeared; next came hotels and clubs, a cricket ground and a pack of hounds — and Rhodesia was a settled country.

It naturally attracted to it a population with a character of its own. There were old hunters and traders, the men who knew it in the days of Lobengula, farmers from Cape Colony, and Boers from the Transvaal, eager to settle on the good veld north of the Limpopo. Other wanderers followed them, prospectors from Queensland and California, whose careers might fill unpublished volumes, and many Englishmen of the "gentleman adventurer" type. These collected from every part of the world—soldiers, travellers, younger sons, and others—one and all the victims of that roaming spirit which has created Greater Britain, content to take with "a frolic welcome" the various hardships of a new country, so long as they might live a life that cannot be found at home. Their isolation produced a rare sense of irresponsibility and adventure: the lean, bronzed men in slouch hats, shirt, and breeches were, as they expressed it, "ready for anything"—a long prospecting expedition, or a campaign against the Matabele—and were once almost involved in a private war with Portuguese East Africa.

In such a place Colonel Rhodes was very much at home.

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

He settled down in a little cottage in Salisbury, the quaint collection of rectangular blocks so familiar to South African eyes, and was at once—like every one else—busy with his new quarters, training creepers over his porch and laying out his garden. He entered heartily into every branch of the everyday life, acquired a stake in the country by a purchase of "desirable building stands," and invested money in the last discovered gold mine. He was a familiar figure on the cricket-ground and at the rifle-range, in a short time he seemed to know everybody, and needless to say was a universal favourite. Wholly free from any form of class prejudice, he was able to appreciate every aspect of this strange life. He was always ready with a kindly greeting or some act of friendship for every one he met, and in this way his influence served to smooth over the difficulties that must arise in such a community, to bring people together, and to unite them for any useful purpose.

His greatest friend here was Colonel Harry White, a younger brother of the present Lord Annaly, who was in many ways typical of Rhodesia. He began life in the Grenadier Guards, acted as Military Secretary to Lord Londonderry in Dublin, and saw some active service in Egypt. At one time he was a well-known steeple-chase rider, and numbered the Guards' Cup among his trophies. He was pre-eminently an open-air man, strong, active, and devoted to field sports. Instinctively he found his way to Salisbury, and spent most of his latter days in Rhodesia. He soon obtained considerable influence in the place, and was enabled to do most useful work there. He took a prominent part in the ill-fated raid, and later in the relief of Mafeking, where he was severely wounded. He was also the first mayor of Buluwayo,

## RHODESIA, 1894—1895

and worked steadily in the interests of the country of his adoption until he died, two years before his friend Colonel Rhodes.

A close alliance grew up between the two at this time. Together they shared in all the ordinary pursuits, and made one long shooting expedition, starting from Salisbury and following the old "hunters' road" south, until they made their way to Buluwayo. Though this district was not what it had been in the old days, game was still abundant, and a goodly collection of heads and horns—sable, roan, hartebeeste, vildebeeste, and others—bears witness to their success. One day they were walking on ahead of their waggons, without their rifles, when they were suddenly confronted by no less than five lions, both sides were equally surprised by the *rencontre*, and beat an equally hasty retreat.

During the eighteen months that he spent at Salisbury, Colonel Rhodes was not called upon to do much in his official capacity. The real head of Rhodesia was his brother, and the work of the administrator was not to initiate, but to carry out a policy. His period of office covered a time of quiet progress; the country was still in its gay youth, every mine was richer than the last, settlers were pouring in, and every one was busy. But all the time there was ample scope for his energy and practical common sense—just the essential qualities for dealing with such a condition of things. He was always to be found—as might indeed be said of his whole life—doing something useful, and by innumerable small actions, encouragement to the successful, or timely help to the unfortunate, he deserves to rank among those who have made Rhodesia. As far as he himself was concerned the most important result of his period of office was that it brought him into

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

closer touch with his brother Cecil. During the past ten years they had seen little of one another; while Frank's duties had led him in turn to Egypt, India, and Uganda, his brother had been busied with his work at the Cape. He had advanced by rapid strides from the De Beers directorate to the Cabinet of Cape Colony, and was now a power in the councils of the Empire.

There must always be a certain conflict of opinion about what is—for want of a better name—generally called Imperialism. From one point of view it stands for as noble an ideal as could inspire a great nation. War is replaced by peace, violence by law and justice; a fertile land is opened to the worker, its resources are developed, and the seeds of Christianity, education, and commerce, planted among its peoples. The condition of the native is ameliorated, progress becomes possible, and soon a new country appears, rescued from the outer darkness of barbarism.

It is true that there is another side to the picture—a reckless extravagance abroad and a starving population at home, wild concession-hunting and company promoting, and the extermination of native races which fight to the death rather than accept the benefits that are thrust upon them. The question is made more difficult by the influence of party politics. One party in the State is tempted to claim the monopoly of imperial sentiment, so that members of the other are forced into an ungenerous opposition, and become the friends of every country but their own.

But whatever diversity of view may exist as to the merits of an Imperial policy, with regard to the workers there can be only one. The soldier who is ordered to march on a desert campaign, or the civilian who endures a voluntary exile in the tropics—these are

## RHODESIA, 1894—1895

doing more than their duty to their country, and perhaps to mankind. Among that number was Colonel Rhodes. In the different parts of Africa he had satisfied himself that the cause was good, and it was one for which he was especially suited. He was now associated with his brother, with whom Imperialism in South Africa was identified, and became a devoted supporter of his aims and policy. He himself was always the man of action ; he never aspired to lead, and was content to perform the task allotted to him to the best of his ability. But henceforth he had a set purpose before him, and a definite object in view, for he was working for the Imperial ideal that he had learnt from Cecil Rhodes.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE REFORM MOVEMENT IN JOHANNESBURG, 1895

**A**T this point, as has been indicated in the preceding chapter, Colonel Rhodes entered a new field. He was still, comparatively speaking, a young man. He was popular and successful. He had been spoken of during the past ten years in connection with prominent public men—Clifford Lloyd, Sir Herbert Stewart, General Dormer, Lord Harris, Sir Gerald Portal, and Cecil Rhodes. It seemed by no means improbable that he had a career in front of him. But to many people he is best known to-day as a rather tragic figure in the Jameson Raid. It was this ill-fated scheme that destroyed his prospects of military advancement, and in a sense changed his life. Though the subject has already been fully dealt with, a short sketch of the situation in South Africa is essential, in order to appreciate the part he played in this critical period.

The main outlines of the story are common property. Despite the prevailing idea that more remains to be told, there is no doubt that the historians have been inclined to supplement rather than to suppress its more picturesque details. The few points over which a veil of mystery still hangs, or which are of a controversial nature, are not material for the purpose of these chapters. All that is necessary here is to trace the growth of the revolutionary or "Reform Movement" in Johannesburg, the alliance of

## REFORM MOVEMENT IN JOHANNESBURG, 1895

the Reformers with Cecil Rhodes, and to allude briefly to the position of the Imperial Government.

The case for Johannesburg has been given to the world by Sir Percy Fitzpatrick in "The Transvaal from Within," which carries conviction with every page. The convention of 1881, modified three years later, secured to the inhabitants of the Transvaal, British or Boer, certain rights and privileges, and it was hoped that at last a permanent settlement had been effected. And so it might have proved—but for a mischievous fate which decreed the discovery of the Rand. At first the Transvaal Government did not attempt to exclude the new-comers who flocked to the gold-fields. The Boers would not develop their own resources. They were quite willing that the "Uitlanders" should do so for them, and had no objection to a mining industry which supplied more than four-fifths of their revenue. But they declined to recognize that equality of contribution demands equality of privilege; the industry was to be a milch cow and nothing more. Such conditions naturally produced the worst results. The maladministration and corruption of the governing oligarchy became a byword, and it only enforced its authority by a policy of insult and oppression. The Uitlanders made every effort to improve their position by constitutional means—appeals to the President, petitions, popular agitations. But all to no purpose. They then turned for assistance to England, the paramount power, and Lord Loch was despatched to Pretoria, but nothing was effected. Still they had no wish to resort to desperate measures. They were never a homogeneous body, and the bulk of them were there frankly to make money, not history. The decision really rested with the leaders of the industry, who had hitherto held aloof, and at

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

length they were forced to admit that under existing conditions it could not be carried on. As soon as they entered the field the movement became formidable—additional driving power being supplied by that section of the community which afterwards made its name in the ranks of the Imperial Light Horse—men who sacrificed all other considerations to a blind devotion to British interests and British prestige.

Every sign of resentment only served to provoke renewed oppression from the Boers. The Uitlanders were refused the franchise, subjected to increased taxation, commandeered for the native wars, and taunted with memories of Majuba. The Government began to utilize its ill-gotten gains to build up a power strong enough to make revolution impossible, and to carry out an aggressive anti-English policy, which was to culminate in a Dutch South Africa, dominated by the Transvaal. Pretoria was fortified, large orders were sent to Krupp, German officers were brought in, and a fort was planned to over-awe Johannesburg. It only remained for the Uitlanders to accept the challenge of a member of the Volksraad, "to come and fight for their rights," before it should be too late.

A second force now came into play. The Reformers found a powerful ally in the person of Cecil Rhodes. As one of the managing directors of the Consolidated Gold-fields his voice must be heard in any new movement in Johannesburg. Besides this, he was Prime Minister of Cape Colony, and managing director of the Chartered Company, so that he held a commanding position in South Africa, and carried great weight with the Imperial Government. It seems at first sight incredible that he should have staked such a position upon so hazardous a throw ;

## REFORM MOVEMENT IN JOHANNESBURG, 1895

but the explanation is to be found in his South African policy. The quarrel between him and the Dutch was never a personal one, for upon many points he was in sympathy with them. But his Imperialism embraced a wider creed than a mere extension of British territory, it meant a general policy of progress, in the widest sense of the word, and to this the Dutch character was fundamentally opposed. There was a further ground of difference which eventually made a breach inevitable. In one of his speeches he declared that "I have my 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." From this purpose he never swerved, but just as a bowler may vary his pace but bowl always at the wicket, so the means which he adopted to attain his end were not always the same. This is the explanation of his alliance before the Raid with the Dutch of Cape Colony, whereby he secured their neutrality, while he was extending the British territories northwards beyond the Zambesi. This, too, serves to explain the part he played in the Reform Movement of Johannesburg. He saw far ahead of his contemporaries; while they were concerned with the franchise and the mining industry, he was thinking of the future. He realized that his dream of a United South Africa might be nothing more than a dream, if an independent power, of an avowedly hostile and reactionary character, should strengthen itself sufficiently to thwart his life's work. Such a power would always be a rallying point for the Dutch, and in time might even attract that section of the English speaking community which is opposed to what is called "Downing Street interference."

He was conscious of a further danger. The Transvaal was becoming strong enough to cultivate friendly relations

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

with other European Governments, any of which might easily establish itself as her protector in South Africa. This was actually taking place at the time. Early in 1895, in his speech to the German Club, President Kruger said, "I always thought before that our Republic was regarded as a child among other countries, but the Kaiser received me as the representative of a grown-up Republic. I was courteously treated, and was able to enter into a treaty with Germany, our Republic being recognized as an important country." At the end of the same year, Doctor Leyds was at Berlin on a mission diplomatically described as "consulting German specialists about his throat." At the time of the Raid the German Foreign Office agreed to the landing of marines at Delagoa Bay, "for protection of German interests," and applied for leave to pass them through Portuguese territory, but the Portuguese Government refused. Finally, the famous telegram from the Emperor congratulated President Kruger on his success, "without appealing to the help of friendly Powers."

These are, of course, all matters of common knowledge, but there is no doubt that until the last incident public opinion did not attach the same significance to them as it would to-day. Our Government, with better information at its disposal, took a different view—as was indicated by the prompt commissioning of a special service squadron, and indirectly by the course which proceedings took before the Select Committee of the House of Commons.

These, then, were the wider issues which confronted Cecil Rhodes. This is neither the time nor the place to discuss the ethics of the question. In any case, we are too near to the actual events to see them in their true perspective. But mention may perhaps be made of a

## REFORM MOVEMENT IN JOHANNESBURG, 1895

memorable speech made by him in Oriel College after the University had conferred on him an honorary degree. There of all places the claims of political expediency would be subordinated to those of political morality.

Sometimes, he said, in pursuing his object, which was the enlargement of the British Empire, and with it the cause of peace, of industry and freedom, he had adopted means in removing opposition which were the rough and ready way, and not the highest way to attain that object.

But they—his audience—must remember that out there in South Africa, where his work had lain, laws of right and equity were not so fixed and established as they were in this country, and if he had once or twice done things which savoured rather of violence than of protest or peaceful striving, yet they must look back to far-off times in English history for a parallel to the state of things in South Africa. He believed that his neighbour, the Regius Professor of History, could tell them that in those past times there had been not a few men who had done good service to the State, but some of whose actions had partaken of the violence of their age, and which were hard to justify in a more peaceful and law-abiding age. It was among these men that his own life and actions must be weighed and measured, and he trusted to the justice of his countrymen, of which he thought he read some forecast in the kind reception and appreciation awarded to him here in his old college.

His line once taken he pursued it with that fierce energy which characterized all he did. Others must become pawns in the great game. The Reformers in Johannesburg were by profession men of peace; they represented many different interests, and must be held

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

together. Colonel Frank Rhodes was selected for this task. He had already shown that he was a man for a crisis. His personal charm would smooth over the various differences that might occur in the town, and make united action possible. Nor was he to lack the necessary resources. Adequate funds were to be at his command, tried men were despatched to help him in his task, while rifles, maxims, and ammunition were smuggled in and concealed in the mines.

The Reformers were to have the additional support of a force stationed on the frontier, ready to march to Johannesburg on the first outbreak of revolution. This was composed of the Chartered Company's police, and a body of Bechuanaland police, who were about to enter the same service. The command was entrusted to Doctor Jameson, who had three years before achieved a brilliant success in his conduct of the Matabele Campaign, and who had proved himself more than equal to every emergency during the stormy times in Rhodesia. Cecil Rhodes himself was in close communication with both his lieutenants on the different scenes of action, and kept in touch with London by means of trusted agents. Negotiations were carried through with the Colonial Office for the transfer—nominally for purposes of railway extension—of the strip of territory on the Bechuanaland border, where Doctor Jameson's force was to be stationed. Steps were also taken to ensure that the *Times* should act as the mouth-piece of the revolution in England when the time came.

At this point we come to that mysterious part of the conspiracy which had raised it far above the ordinary level, and given to it all the glamour of *haute politique*—the question of the so-called Imperial complicity. It is needless to say that this subject has not suffered from

## REFORM MOVEMENT IN JOHANNESBURG, 1895

neglect. It has been generally assumed that in considering the conduct of the Imperial Government there were only two alternatives. Either it must suddenly have awakened one winter morning from the profound sleep of innocence to discover that affairs in the Transvaal had been critical for the past ten years, that a great movement was on foot, supported directly or indirectly by most of the leading men in South Africa, that the Uitlanders were prepared to make some substantial bid for their rights, and that such a person as Doctor Jameson existed. Or else it must have been privy to it from the first; it had employed five hundred filibusters to annex a friendly country, and had sacrificed the national honour for this purpose. In a word, the Government was culpably ignorant, or culpably guilty.

Subsequent investigation has cleared the Government from the charge of culpable ignorance on the subject of South African affairs. The policy of Cecil Rhodes had always been to carry out his own schemes, at the same time making it clear that he had the Imperial Government at his back. He acquired and administered Rhodesia by means of a commercial company, but England was always behind him to uphold the charter. He fought two native wars, mainly with colonial forces, but in the last resort he could always count upon British troops. In this way he secured for himself an independent position, but lost none of the advantages which the Imperial connection gave him. It was no part of his policy to keep the Imperial Government entirely in the dark. He had obtained from Lord Rosebery's Government an assurance that in the event of a spontaneous rising in Johannesburg, British troops would be used to protect our interests. Lord Loch, presumably with the sanction of the Colonial Office, had



## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

consented to a force of Bechuanaland police being posted on the frontier, to be ordered in by the High Commissioner should such necessity arise. When the question of the transfer of the strip of territory on the Bechuanaland border was under discussion in London, the agents of Cecil Rhodes were in constant communication with the Colonial Office. Nor was the Colonial Office content to be a passive spectator of what was going on. It possessed a tolerably accurate idea of the general political horizon in South Africa, though the details might be blurred by distance. It also availed itself of the unofficial information to be gleaned in South African circles in London. On the strength of such information the High Commissioner at Cape Town was warned by cable, on the same day that Doctor Jameson crossed the frontier, that an endeavour might be made to force matters at Johannesburg to a head by some one in the service of the Chartered Company advancing from Bechuanaland with police. Assuredly the Colonial Office was not asleep.

But when this has been said there is no more to say. In the hands of an opponent this material might be used to build up a case against the Government, supported by something like circumstantial evidence. For some months the prime movers in the conspiracy had been engaged in "sounding" the Colonial Office, and forming their own conclusions as to its attitude. There is a familiar round game which consists in passing a whispered message round a circle of players, and comparing the ultimate form it takes with the original. The result is often most instructive. On a similar principle it is clear that by the time an account of an interview in the Colonial Office had filtered through to the camp at Pitsani, or the offices of the goldfields at Johannesburg, it would need to be

## REFORM MOVEMENT IN JOHANNESBURG, 1895

accepted with some reservations. There is no doubt, too, that the idea of Imperial complicity was utilized by many of those engaged in the conspiracy to strengthen their hand; it served to give a sense of immunity, and a certain consciousness of strength.

The authorities at the Colonial Office had full knowledge of the general situation in South Africa, but not of the means by which it was proposed to change it. As soon as the conspirators showed their hand the Government at once dissociated itself from them, and its attitude throughout was scrupulously correct. The character of the Colonial Office has survived the trial of the Raiders, and the investigations of two select committees. It has come scathless out of the attacks of personal enemies, and it has been defended by the men who had most to gain by the proof of its complicity. Whatever individual reputations may have suffered by the Jameson Raid, the national honour is safe.

It is too often forgotten that the mere word "revolution" connotes nothing, good or bad. We have learned to regard the French Revolution as a blessing, and are at this moment suspending judgment on the great popular upheaval in Russia. In fact, there are no rules for revolution. Each must be considered on its own merits, and in connection with the particular circumstances. And considered on its own merits there can be no question that the Reform Movement in Johannesburg was justifiable. The Uitlanders suffered under intolerable grievances, and had tried in vain to get redress by constitutional means; it only remained for them to attempt the last resort of the desperate. This resort was not unknown in South Africa. The history of that country has always been somewhat sensational; the exigencies of Transvaal politics had twice

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

driven President Kruger to march on Pretoria, and on one famous occasion, he had actually raided the Free State and presented an ultimatum to its Government. Nor can it be urged that the fact that foreign help is called in by the revolutionists condemns the movement. William of Orange landed at Torquay with the moral support of Protestant Europe, and crushed the forces of the reigning dynasty at the head of his Dutch Guards. But we are accustomed to regard that incident as perhaps the greatest landmark in our constitutional history.

On the same analogy, the Reform movement and the Raid, regarded as one, cannot fairly be condemned—always provided that the initiative came from Johannesburg, and this was an essential point in the original plan. The Reformers would then have commanded the sympathy, the Raiders the admiration of their countrymen. But when the Raiders took the initiative everything was changed. What was meant to be revolution became mere filibustering; the whole movement was now, in the language of diplomacy, "incorrect," and the whips of criticism began to bite home. No distinctions were drawn, Raiders, Reformers, and all others who were suspected of complicity were pilloried together. The general opinion has been well expressed in the truly British sentiment that the only justification for the Raid would have been success, and this it failed to achieve.

Apart from the ethical aspect of the question, the scheme has been denounced on practical grounds as a piece of monumental folly. The dispassionate observer will accept such a criticism only with reservations. The names of those chiefly concerned in it—those of men who in almost every case have made their way entirely by their own efforts—are not usually associated with

## REFORM MOVEMENT IN JOHANNESBURG, 1895

monumental folly. The common argument advanced against them has all the merit of simplicity—if it took 200,000 men to conquer the Transvaal, how could Jameson hope to do it with 500? But this is not fair criticism. It is true that all were disposed to under-estimate the strength of the Boers, and to undertake far more than was proposed. What was meant to be a *coup d'état*, was magnified into warfare. The conquest of the Transvaal formed no part of the original plan. The Reformers were to take the initiative, to present an ultimatum to the Transvaal Government, and on its rejection to seize the arsenal at Pretoria, thus adding to the supply of arms that they already had, and then retreat on Johannesburg. There was all the material for such an enterprise in the town, but it was felt that it needed some impulse from without to set it in motion. This was to be provided by the knowledge that Doctor Jameson was on the frontier ready to ride through to the town as soon as the signal was given. At the same moment Cecil Rhodes was to throw all his weight into the scale to secure neutrality in Cape Colony, and sympathy in England. In this way a political situation would be created which would demand British intervention. The High Commissioner would proceed to Pretoria, and it only remained for the Imperial Government to adopt a firm and consistent policy to crown the venture with complete success.

When invasion was substituted for revolution the plan was doomed, for it was impossible for the Government to support or even to countenance it. But even as things transpired there were moments of panic at Pretoria when the issue was still doubtful, and when a very little might have changed the course of South African history.

In the light of subsequent events the Raid must be

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

considered as an attempt to make a short cut to an end that sooner or later was certain to be attained. The immediate effects were disastrous, but the judgment of posterity will not deal harshly with those concerned in it. Already individual reputations have recovered. Doctor Jameson is now the first man in Cape Colony. The leaders of the Reform Movement are the makers of the Transvaal. The British South Africa Company still administers Rhodesia. The name of Rhodes is revered in every corner of South Africa, and at the peace of Vereenigen we set the seal on the policy which he dictated, and by which the Raid was inspired. Ten years after those stormy days in Johannesburg we can get a better idea of his work, and are thereby enabled to see the full force of Schiller's dictum, that "all men without distinction are allured by immediate advantage; great minds alone are excited by distant good."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE JAMESON RAID, 1895—1896

HAVING thus sketched in the background, the canvas is ready for the leading figures—foremost among whom is Colonel Frank Rhodes. Many have wondered why, with his distinguished military record, and a career to lose, he should have consented to take any part in such an enterprise. It was not the type of work that appealed to him. His previous adventures had been of that straightforward kind which demands action and nothing more. The camp fire, the desert march, the crack of the rifle were what he loved. He had no experience of secret meetings, smuggled weapons, cipher telegrams, and the other stock-in-trade of the conspirator. Though pre-eminently a man of the world, and wholly free from prejudice in his friendships, his exploits had hitherto been shared by kindred spirits, men of his own ideas and principles. In the cosmopolitan society of Johannesburg this would no longer be the case. He would be allied with many whose motives were far from being as disinterested as his own, and of whose conduct he could never entirely approve. Indeed one of his best friends has declared, that "he hated the whole business from the very beginning."

But his conduct was never regulated by personal considerations. He had jeopardized his chance of commanding his regiment by joining the Uganda expedition,

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

out of which—as was said—“he got nothing but fever.” The question that weighed most with him now was loyalty to his brother. Cecil wanted him and that was enough. He had fallen completely under the spell of that man’s great ideas, and had gained additional confidence from the fact that everything that Cecil did seemed to be right. It is not likely that it ever occurred to him to consider whether he was justified in joining him. He knew that his brother had hitherto commanded the support of the Home Government. For himself he had devoted no time to studying points of international law, but had been accustomed to follow the lead of his commanding officer.

The task with which he was entrusted was one of no ordinary difficulty. The “Reformers” had to be in close touch with Doctor Jameson at Pitsani, the Chartered Company at Capetown, and indirectly with their agents in London. Thus every fresh move was accompanied by a mass of telegraphic correspondence, generally resulting in indecision and delay. Ultimate success could only be achieved with the support of the Imperial Government, and to gain this it was essential that there should be a spontaneous rising in Johannesburg.

But Johannesburg had never spoken with any certain voice. First, the capitalists would not join the movement because their vested interests would suffer; when they did so the miners held back on the ground that it was “a Capitalist move,” and any loss entailed would “come off their wages.” The German section would not attack the existing Government, and the South Africans were suspicious of “Downing Street interference.” Ultimately Colonel Rhodes found himself confronted by what one of those present describes as “a sort of debating

## THE JAMESON RAID, 1895—1896

society" whose members represented different—and possibly conflicting—interests, and held their own special theories on revolution. The point upon which they were most in agreement was the certainty of success, and a characteristic story is told of a discussion as to what should be done with Mrs. Kruger, and of the kindly gallantry with which Colonel Rhodes pleaded her cause.

The idea had been that his popularity and reputation, strengthened by the weight that he would derive from his brother, and above all his wonderful power of dealing with men, would serve to smooth over differences, break down petty rivalries, and rouse all to some concerted action. But—*capax imperii nisi imperasset*—he was really unsuited for the position. He was dealing in many cases with abler men, who possessed a more exact knowledge of the situation than he did himself. His sympathetic nature prevented him from attempting to force his own views upon them, but rather impelled him to listen to every one which they put forward. One typical incident is recorded. A busy conspirator entered the room, in which Colonel Rhodes was a silent spectator of the usual debate, and asked where certain bandoliers were. Here was a straightforward piece of work which at once appealed to him. "All right," he said, "I'll find them for you," and hurried off to do so—leaving the discussion, in which he might have been expected to take a leading part, to settle itself without him.

The history of the last three months of the year 1895 at Johannesburg consists of a succession of difficulties which he and the other Reformers had to face. The original date suggested for the rising was found to be impossible, because it clashed with the races—which



## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

would fill the town with holiday-makers of every description and create fresh embarrassments thereby. The next question that arose was whether, in the event of a rising the High Commissioner could be prevailed upon to come up and act as mediator: some of the Reformers declined to move unless satisfactory assurances could be given upon this point. Just before December 29th, the date finally decided on for action, a fresh difficulty occurred. A large section of the Reformers were thoroughly suspicious of the Imperial policy of Cecil Rhodes, and insisted upon two representatives being sent to Cape Town, to make it perfectly clear that any Revolution was to be carried out under the Transvaal vierkleur, and not under the Union Jack.

With these and innumerable smaller dissensions, Colonel Rhodes was quite unable to cope. His tact did much to smooth them over, but could not remove them. It has sometimes been suggested that he should have been entrusted with the relieving force on the frontier, while the masterful Doctor Jameson brought the Reformers into line. But it is doubtful whether any one could have succeeded. Contemporary evidence all points to the fact that Johannesburg, as a whole, would not have risen without some impulse from without. The leaders had done all that they could: they had smuggled in some 1500 rifles and a few maxims, and published an ultimatum—in the form of the National Union Manifesto—on December 26th; but when it came to the supreme moment they could not feel that they had the population at their back. The rank and file might talk for ever about grievances and remedies, but when the average townsman—perhaps a small shop-keeper or clerk, who had come to make his fortune—was asked in cold blood to take a rifle

## THE JAMESON RAID, 1895—1896

and find his remedy that way, it could hardly be expected that he would prove a very irreconcilable conspirator.

At this point, while the mass of the people was marking time, the flag question caused a further division at head-quarters. Things appeared hopeless, and two messengers were accordingly sent, by different routes, to explain to Doctor Jameson that the rising must be further postponed. Colonel Rhodes himself was in despair. Under the most trying circumstances he had, with unswerving loyalty, done his best to carry out his brother's scheme. It seemed to be now almost beyond the bounds of possibility. He assured a friend, who wished to leave the town for a few days, that there was no chance of any immediate development, and prepared to take up again the tangled skein that had been put into his hands. Then came the crash. On Monday, December 30th, the news reached Johannesburg that Doctor Jameson had crossed the frontier.

Here it is necessary to leave the town for a time and to follow the course of events in the Raiders' camps at Pitsani and Mafeking. A well-equipped force of some 500 men with three guns and eight maxims, had been established there for some time. It was natural that their leader, after his successes in the Matabele War, should have seen no insuperable difficulties in getting through to Johannesburg. An elaborate arrangement of stores and remounts along the route would ensure the rapidity of his march, and it was thought that he would easily brush aside any resistance which the surprised Boers might be able to offer. He brought with him—as did most of his officers and men—much of the adventurous spirit of Rhodesia. The pioneers of that country, with some hundred miles of broad veld between them and the trammels of civilization,

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

had little knowledge of, or regard for, the etiquette of diplomacy. They had been accustomed to rely on their own judgment, to accept responsibility readily, and to act for themselves. Any irregularity would have secured its own justification before the news of it could reach headquarters, and they had once before made short work of international red tape in a little "affair" with Portuguese East Africa. Perhaps these things are inseparable from the peculiar conditions—at any rate there is plenty of historical precedent for them. Such men were naturally fuming with impatience at every obstacle. Fresh delays added to the dangers of their position. At any moment suspicions might be aroused in the Transvaal, or the Imperial Government might take the alarm. The arrival of the messengers with news of the flag question decided them to act. The train was laid, and they were just the men to fire it—the means being ready to their hand in an undated letter of invitation which they had, signed by the leading Reformers, calling for their help in the most unmistakable terms. Their leaders, too, realized the true character of the whole movement and the wider issues involved; it was not a cause to be lightly abandoned. On the evening of Sunday, December 29th, they marched over the border.

The Reformers in Johannesburg were still in the throes of debate, their manifold anxieties forming a striking contrast to the spirits of the Raiders. With the latter the most cheerful optimism prevailed. An invalid officer, who was restoring his health at Mafeking, accompanied the force for some distance in his cart, "to see the fun." The trooper who was ordered to cut the telegraph line to Pretoria had fortified himself for the adventure to such

## THE JAMESON RAID, 1895—1896

purpose, that he cut a wire fence by mistake, and left the telegraph line intact, with the result that the first news of the advance that reached Johannesburg actually came from Pretoria. Colonel Rhodes and the Reformers had already found the situation sufficiently complicated when this bolt from the blue arrived, effectually destroying any plan of campaign that can be said to have existed. The colonel himself was divided between sympathy with the magnificent audacity of the Raiders, and dismay at the hopeless chaos which it created in the town. There it produced the most unexpected results. The leading men, whose caution had hitherto been one of the greatest difficulties of the Reformers, rose to the occasion at once, and now that the movement had become really dangerous they hastened to identify themselves with it. In this way the famous Reform Committee came into existence. But the mass of the people, who might naturally have been expected to be carried away by the news, were at first thoroughly suspicious of external interference, and by no means prepared to welcome Doctor Jameson as their deliverer.

The first impulse of the Committee was to disavow Doctor Jameson. Their hand had been forced by his precipitate action, and they were placed in a position of hopeless impotence until he could join them. It was never doubted that he would succeed in doing so, nor was the necessity of helping him ever considered; Johannesburg wanted all the help she could get. Meantime they had to consider how far it was possible to carry out their original plans. It was, of course, now impossible to surprise the arsenal at Pretoria, but revolution was still a possibility—even a probability. A situation might be created which should call for the

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

intervention of the High Commissioner, and if only the Imperial Government stood firm, the immediate object—a redress of grievances—might yet be obtained.

Colonel Rhodes knew little of making revolution, but at least he liked it better than talking about it. He worked with a will, and was well supported by Sir George Farrar and the other members of the Committee. Arms were brought in from the mines and distributed, volunteers were enrolled, and confidence restored in the town. The Transvaal police were withdrawn, and a form of provisional government was established, which took charge of affairs until the end. So well did it fulfil its task that there is no record of any of those outbreaks of crime and destruction of property generally associated with revolution. In this way every real danger was entirely averted. Such a bold spirit was infectious. The talk was soon all of fighting. The men who in the morning had denounced Jameson, in the evening were denouncing the Committee for repudiating him. When the news came from Cape Town that the High Commissioner, supported by the Imperial Government, had not only repudiated, but actually recalled him, there was a splendid illogical outburst of popular indignation. In a word, Johannesburg was in revolt.

The scene must indeed have been a stirring one. The wide streets, which running as they do at right angles to one another on the American model, and presenting a long vista of shop windows or brass plates of offices, are wholly suggestive of commerce, were now thronged by the usual motley crowd, no longer intent on the state of the market, but on getting arms. From time to time a string of horses passed by, or a waggon-load of rifles

## THE JAMESON RAID, 1895—1896

which had hastily been brought in from some place of concealment in the mines, while an occasional burst of cheering announced the approach of a company of mounted men, in khaki and slouch hat. Enthusiastic volunteers were being drilled in the market-place; the banks were besieged by anxious crowds, and forced to keep open far into the night; the station was packed with scores of panic-stricken fugitives, ready to scramble into the first train starting for the south.

The centre of the prevailing excitement was, of course, the seat of the provisional Government—the offices of the Consolidated Goldfields. In the eager crowd that collected round it every nationality and shade of opinion was represented. There were genuine revolutionists clamouring for arms and cheering every fresh sign of military preparation. There were also more cautious spirits demanding information, anxious to know more of this new enterprise before committing themselves. There were puzzled foreigners, looking for barricades and the other features of revolution; level-headed Americans, trying to reduce the venture to the more familiar terms of a business proposition; Jewish storekeepers, calculating famine prices; and patriotic Englishmen, declaring that “all the Dutch in South Africa would not stop the Doctor.” But, taken as a whole, the people had no grasp of the situation. Doctor Jameson had taken their breath away, and they took some days to recover it.

The appearance of the Goldfields offices was thoroughly in keeping with the scene. All the lower windows had been carefully boarded up. The imposing doorway was closed and barricaded, and on the roof the Transvaal vierkleur, the adopted flag of the revolution, proclaimed that this was the citadel. The only entrance was by a

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

narrow side door, leading into an inner yard, where the password of the day was instantly demanded by the guard. The place was garrisoned, supplied, and provisioned, ready if necessary to stand a siege.

Inside were many of the leading citizens, no longer discussing development and flotation, but face to face with the grim realities of warfare. Most of those present were destined to become better known in the future: Mr. Lionel Philips, cool and business-like, and Sir George Farrar, the man of action, in shirt and breeches, black and greasy to the elbows from unpacking rifles. With them were Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, full of energy and enthusiasm, Mr. Hammond the great American engineer, Mr. Wools Sampson, and Mr. "Karri" Davis, the big Australian, the two last-named afterwards the heroes of the Imperial Light Horse. And there, too, was Colonel Frank Rhodes, humorously serious, all anxiety but all encouragement—understanding his part little, liking it less, but fully determined to play it to the end.

This martial atmosphere was not without its effect upon the Transvaal Government. Johannesburg began to arm on Monday, and it was announced in Pretoria that there were 20,000 men under arms. On Tuesday President Kruger's envoys came to "offer the olive branch," and invited a deputation to come and discuss terms. On Wednesday a deputation went to the capital, where they met the representatives of the Government. An armistice was agreed upon, pending a favourable consideration of Uitlander grievances, though nothing was actually set down in black and white. The Transvaal Government announced that it had accepted the offer of the High Commissioner, to mediate "with a view to a peaceful settlement."

## THE JAMESON RAID, 1895—1896

It seemed that the Reformers had after all created the desired situation. But the Raiders had still to be considered. Their bold move had certainly brought the waverers into action, and thereby placed a united Johannesburg at the back of the Reform Committee. But it remained to be seen whether they could extricate themselves without further involving the position, or whether their conduct would so tie the hands of the Imperial Government, that it would be unable to support the Uitlanders' cause. The Reform Committee at once approached the problem. Some of its members had already offered themselves to the President as hostages for the peaceful departure of the Raiders, but their offer had been refused. The Committee assumed that if Doctor Jameson had to fight he would win, and they now despatched a representative to inform him of the armistice, and to explain the position in Johannesburg. They had just been expressly forbidden by the High Commissioner's proclamation to give him any assistance, but there never had been any idea of doing so. Indeed there never were 3000 armed men in the town.

But early on Thursday morning there came a fresh shock. Colonel Rhodes, sleeping on the floor of the Goldfields office, was awakened by one of Dr. Jameson's troopers with the news that "he would like some men sent out to meet him." His mind was at once made up, he roused Colonel Bettington, and despatched him with all the mounted men—numbering about 120—to the help of "the Doctor." This step was perhaps typical of his conduct of affairs: it might be imprudent, it might be wrong, but since "the Doctor wanted help" it seemed to him the only chivalrous thing to do. When the Committee met, wiser counsels prevailed. It was



## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

pointed out that so small a force could not do any good ; on the other hand, it would put Johannesburg hopelessly in the wrong with the Transvaal Government, in view of the so-called armistice, and with the High Commissioner. The force was therefore recalled.

A few hours later the news came that Doctor Jameson had surrendered. Again the temper of the mob in Johannesburg changed. Infuriated by the news of disaster it turned on the Committee. The men who had for weeks declined to take any part in the movement, and who had denounced Jameson when he crossed the frontier, now demanded to be led out with no better arms than picks in their hands to rescue him. Those whose interests had been so ably safeguarded by the Committee at the expense, as was subsequently revealed, of their own—were now only anxious to attack their protectors. The position of Colonel Rhodes was especially cruel. Most of the officers concerned in the Raid were close personal friends of his own. He now heard that they had been overwhelmed by superior numbers without his being able to strike a blow in their defence, and Johannesburg—in whose cause he had sacrificed everything—cast this in his teeth.

The Committee were in a desperate position. Throughout their negotiations with the Transvaal Government, they had declared that they would stand by Jameson. The fact that the Raiders had only surrendered on condition that their lives should be spared was suppressed by the wily President. The Reformers were given to understand that the safety of the Raiders depended upon Johannesburg laying down its arms. A similar line was taken by Lord Rosmead, the High Commissioner. His telegram declared that "if they do

## THE JAMESON RAID, 1895—1896

not comply with my request (to disarm) they will forfeit all claim to sympathy from Her Majesty's Government and from British subjects throughout the world, as the lives of Jameson and the prisoners are now practically in their hands." Thus the Committee were powerless. They could no longer stand out for terms; a disarmament was peacefully effected, and it only remained for them to entrust their cause to the Imperial Government, represented by the High Commissioner.

But he, too, was in a somewhat false position. He was bound to regard the Raid and Reform as one and the same movement. Within a few hours of the Reformers repudiating Jameson the letter of invitation was published in the *Times*. To his dismay he found that he himself had been allotted a part in the drama. Any support given to the Reformers by the Imperial Government or its representative in South Africa was at once taken to indicate complicity. Rightly or wrongly he decided—despite the protests of the Colonial Office—that this was no time to press the question of Uitlander grievances. President Kruger resumed the reins of Government, and Johannesburg was left to its fate.

So ended this most abortive conspiracy. The object had been good, but the means adopted had not been justified by success. Johannesburg—and with it Colonel Rhodes—had from the first been committed to a losing game. The Raiders had left Pitsani without the knowledge and against the wishes of their allies, and at a time when there had been a definite assurance from Cape Town that they would not do so. Despite his personal inclinations, Colonel Rhodes had never anticipated the possibility of helping them. The Raiders were at least a fighting force, whereas he was entrusted with

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

the care of a disturbed town, with a large mixed population, and numbers of women and children. Johannesburg seemed to be the post of danger, and his duty lay there.

He personally was unsuited for the position that had been given him, nor did he fill it with success, but at least he filled it without loss of honour. The Reformers played an ineffective part in the crisis, and were afterwards the victims of much adverse criticism. But a careful consideration of the actual facts, no less than the record of the Imperial Light Horse in the late war, shows that they were the victims of circumstances. There were plenty of brave men with Colonel Rhodes in Johannesburg, and there were some capable men, but their opportunity never came.

The moment of defeat brought him forward in a new light. Hitherto he had been somewhat in the background, unsettled, ill at ease, drifting with events rather than directing them. But just as with a beaten army the rearguard is the place of honour, so in Johannesburg when all was lost the colonel at once became prominent. The Boers called for vengeance on the Reformers, and when the arrests began there might easily have been something of a panic in a purely civilian population. It was suggested that the leaders should fly from the country, or take refuge in the mines. Colonel Rhodes declared that he would not be taken like a rabbit in a hole—"he would see the thing through." Meantime he was exactly as usual—full of good humour and encouragement, a rallying-point for all who needed it. On the night of his arrest he was the life and soul of a small dinner party, after which he made a few necessary arrangements about his house, and went quietly to bed.

## THE JAMESON RAID, 1895—1896

until he was aroused by the Transvaal police. He got up and brushed his hair with the utmost nonchalance, while he apologised to the officer for giving him the trouble of coming upstairs. After taking the precaution of packing several favourite books in his bag he started for Pretoria gaol.

The two following months proved a most trying period. Bail was refused to Colonel Rhodes, Mr. Hammond, Mr. Philips, Sir George Farrar, and Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, and four of them were imprisoned for three nights in one cell, twelve feet square, and without windows, at a time of year when the temperature varied from 90 to 105 degrees in the shade. They were subsequently moved to better quarters, but were exposed to endless petty annoyances at the hands of the blustering young Boer in command of their guard. The dreary days were spent in long discussions with their counsel, and in the utter boredom of the preliminary trial, where they listened wearily while the various accusations of the Transvaal officials were translated into English. As the day of the trial approached it was decided that the best course for the prisoners was to plead guilty to the charge of high treason. A great variety of evidence against them had been collected; and Judge Gregorowski—a hanging judge—had been imported from the Free State. The story goes that the first thing he did on his arrival at Pretoria was to borrow a black cap. The intense racial hatred which had been rekindled by the Raid had been kept aflame by the subsequent negotiations with the British Government. The beam on which the five Boer rebels of Slachter's Nek in Cape Colony had been hanged in 1816 had been unearthed and brought up to Pretoria, the purpose for which it might be used being only too

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

obvious. There was imminent danger of an attempt at lynching being made by the excited burghers. It was also feared that the English section might attempt a rescue, when the guards would at once retaliate upon their prisoners; indeed it was necessary, after the death sentence was passed, for the prisoners' friends to send a telegram to Johannesburg urging that no reckless step should be taken.

The final scene has become historic. The Market Hall at Pretoria, a large, bare building, with vaulted roof, was packed with vengeful-looking burghers, Englishmen in a condition of savage impotence, and anxious friends of the prisoners. The incidents of the trial had reduced all alike to a state of nervous tension. They had seen the grim smile of the judge, and had listened to the diatribes of the State Attorney, who strode to and fro, waving his arms like a madman, as he repeated with ferocious insistence the words, "Hang them by the neck." There was a half incredulous feeling that worse was to come. Some sort of a dock was brought forward, and the prisoners placed under the judge's eye. Gregorowski then put on his black cap and gave the death sentence. The interpreter repeated it in English and burst into tears. Women fainted, and one man in the back of the court had a fit. The bearing of the four leading Reformers left nothing to be desired, but a friend near them was impelled to shout some word of anxious encouragement. Colonel Rhodes, turning an impassive face towards him, slowly and deliberately winked. It was not with any idea of treating such a situation lightly, but simply a means of showing that he could not bear that any one should be distressed on his behalf.

His position was pitiful in the extreme. It is best

## THE JAMESON RAID, 1895—1896

described in the words of Sir Frank Younghusband, who was in South Africa at that time. He speaks of "one pathetic figure for whom no one can be so hard as not to feel some sympathy. It is that of the man, who as a boy gained his cricketing colours on the playing fields of Eton, who for years served in one of the finest regiments of the British Army, who gained the Distinguished Service Order for his gallantry on Herbert Stewart's hard desert march to the relief of Gordon at Khartum, who is the solitary survivor of Sir Gerald Portal's arduous mission to Uganda, and who, through loyalty to his younger brother, had engaged in an ill-fated scheme, in which he had absolutely no personal interest, and which had now brought him, a colonel in the British Army, to the prisoner's dock, to be sentenced to death in a foreign country. Even his enemies, with all their roughness, were able to speak with admiration of the dignity with which he carried himself on this awful occasion, and to say that they understood now what was meant by the term, 'An English Gentleman.'"

After the sentence the four prisoners were marched out, past Doctor Leyds—who came forward and grinned at them with savage triumph—to the condemned cell. It was a bare, whitewashed place, furnished with four canvas stretchers and a pail of water, with armed police at the door. The last occupant had been a native murderer. Here they spent the night. But the strong feeling which the sentence had aroused in every corner of South Africa had extended to Europe, and on the following morning it was commuted for fifteen years' imprisonment. Six weeks of this were endured under the most trying conditions. The prison was insanitary and unhealthy, utterly unfit for white men. The prisoners were dependent for their food

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

upon what their friends could manage to smuggle in to them, and every possible excuse for any petty oppression was at once utilized by the guard.

At the end of that time they were released on payment of a fine of £25,000 each, and were banished from the Transvaal. The news was brought to the prisoners by a Krugerian officer, resplendent in gold lace, clattering sword, and jingling spurs, and armed also with a formidable blue document. Three of the prisoners expressed their thanks with what was, perhaps, natural emotion, but Colonel Rhodes remained calmly reading on his bed. Finally, noticing that the messenger stood, evidently expecting some acknowledgment of Presidential clemency, he turned his head, and quietly remarked, "All right, thanks. Good morning." The sentence of banishment could be avoided by signing a pledge not to take part in the internal affairs of the Transvaal. It was impossible for Colonel Rhodes, being a British officer, to sign such an agreement, and he was accordingly conducted to the frontier. He travelled south as far as De Aar with his sister, who had come to Pretoria at this critical period, and had been of the utmost service to her brother during his imprisonment. But at Cape Town a Select Committee of Inquiry was sitting, and he hastily turned northwards. The Matabele rebellion had broken out in Rhodesia, and in a few days he was far beyond the reach of courts and committees, a good horse underneath him, and the open veld on every side.

Safe in Rhodesia, that land of pleasant breezes and perpetual sunshine, and amid the stirring scenes of war, the dark days in Johannesburg became part of a bad dream. And a bad dream they remained until the end of his life. He would seldom speak of them, but he

## THE JAMESON RAID, 1895—1896

could never forget them. He had taken part in a difficult and distasteful scheme, and on its failure he became the chief victim. But his unflinching loyalty lasted until the end: he made no explanations, and never attempted to shelter or excuse himself at the expense of others. It has sometimes been said that this episode spoilt his life, but the answer is that his life was not one that could be spoilt; his was one of those rare natures that can defy the buffets of Fate, because they possess certain inherent qualities, which misfortune cannot destroy.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MATABELE REBELLION, 1896

WHILE the eyes of Europe had been focussed on Johannesburg, startling events had been taking place in another part of the sub-continent. It had been generally assumed that on the termination of the Matabele War, and the death of Lobengula in 1893, Rhodesia was completely pacified. But this was not strictly true. The Matabele are a fighting race, an offshoot of the great Zulu nation, who held their country by the power of the sword. In their first conflict with the white men, they were hustled into submission by Doctor Jameson's dashing generalship, as a young horse can be hustled over a fence while he is making up his mind to refuse. Many of their impis had taken no part in the fighting, so that they never regarded themselves as a beaten force, but were content to take the advice attributed to their dying king: "Be patient, and be watchful—wait your opportunity." The three following years only served to fan the flame of their resentment. Numerous disputes arose in connection with land and cattle, the native police were a perpetual grievance, and familiarity with white men—more especially with the less reputable characters to be found in a mining camp—bred in the native mind the proverbial contempt for what had formerly been regarded as a superior race.

## THE MATABELE REBELLION, 1896

In the absence of Cecil Rhodes, there was no controlling power in the country—no one lord and master such as the Zulu is accustomed to obey. To crown all, the dreaded Jameson had gone south with the bulk of the Chartered Company's police, and had suffered defeat there. The witch doctors preached war, and it was felt that at last the opportunity had arrived.

The blow fell with the mysterious suddenness common to most native risings. One day all was peace and prosperity, railways were being laid, townships springing up, and the settlers were scattered over the veld busied with their various farms and mines. On the next, prospectors were assegaied in their tents, or were flying for their lives; farms were burnt, cattle slaughtered, and men, women, and children indiscriminately butchered. All who had been warned in time, or survived the first surprise, were fighting their way back to Bulawayo, or holding some make-shift laager until relief should come. In the capital itself all was confusion. The women and children were taken to the club, which was hastily barricaded and fortified, rifles were being distributed at the Government Store, and every hour brought fresh fugitives with news of massacre and destruction. Some thirty thousand Matabele warriors were again in possession of their own.

But the Rhodesians were just the men for the emergency. Order was soon restored, and the place was put in a state of defence. The women were moved to the Market Hall, which was surrounded by a laager of waggons; machine-guns were placed at the four corners, and wire entanglements outside. Several of the approaches were mined with dynamite. The gaol was strongly fortified, and garrisoned by fifty men with

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

a seven-pounder. A large block of buildings, destined in more peaceful days to be the offices of different mining companies, was also transformed into a fort; a Gardner gun was mounted on the first floor, and a heliograph winked and flickered on the roof. A Bulawayo Field Force, 850 strong, was enrolled—Boer farmers and British miners falling in side by side—and patrols were sent out to bring in the fugitives. Several sharp engagements took place within rifle-shot of the town.

Meantime the Chartered Company was not inactive. A column was soon hurrying south from Salisbury, accompanied by Cecil Rhodes. At Mafeking a relief force under Colonel Plumer was raised, and pushed northwards with all possible speed. A body of Cape Boys from Johannesburg actually marched the whole distance with fixed bayonets because there was no time to equip them properly with pouches. Behind these came Sir Frederick Carrington, who was to command the operations, with Colonel Baden-Powell and the rest of his staff, followed by Colonel Rhodes as soon as he was released from Pretoria. Thus, in a very short time, most of the men whose names are household words in connection with any trouble in South Africa were assembled at the front. A few well-known figures were absent, as a result of the Raid, but many of the prisoners who had been taken to England got back to Mafeking in time to march north with Colonel Plumer.

The heterogeneous force that concentrated at Bulawayo contained the best possible fighting material, as was shown in the ensuing campaign, and later in the Boer War. These were "Cecil Rhodes' young men," all the wanderers who had fallen under the spell of Rhodesia, most of whom had already seen service elsewhere.

## THE MATABELE REBELLION, 1896

Besides these there were the South Africans, who had been born and bred on the veld, and knew it as the natives themselves. It was, of course, not always an easy task to handle such a force, for its members were wholly intolerant of what they considered the useless rules and formalities of military discipline. A story is told of a trooper of the Bulawayo Field Force who, on being reprimanded by his superior officer for some gross breach of duty, was heard to explain in tolerant protest, "Now look here, A——, don't you be a d——d little fool."

In dealing with such men Colonel Rhodes was invaluable. Many of them had known him in the old Salisbury days, and the others were quick to appreciate the charm of his personality. Many can recall instances of his tact and consideration for one who was "only a trooper" for the time being, and rasping under the restraint that it involved. It was said that he treated every one of them like a friend, for in his different experiences in South Africa he had learnt to regard and to value them as such.

By the time that he reached Bulawayo the surrounding country had already been cleared of the enemy. As reinforcements arrived patrols were despatched into the different districts, and inflicted successive blows on the Matabele. The men were natural fighters, and were burning to avenge the massacres that had marked the first stage of the rebellion. In one action on the Unguzu River 250 of them actually charged some 1200 rebels, though there was not a single lance or sword in the column. The Matabele did not wait for their attack, but scattered in all directions, some hiding in the scrub, others running blindly on until they were caught by the avenging horsemen. The Rhodesians kept them on the run, dismounting

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

to shoot, or galloping to close quarters and using their revolvers, and taught them a lesson which would not easily be forgotten.

In the beginning of July it was reported that large numbers of the rebels were assembled on the hills of Thabas Amamba, about forty miles distant from Bulawayo, and Colonel Rhodes arrived with his brother just in time to accompany the column, 1200 strong, which Colonel Plumer was leading against them. Colonel Weston Jarvis tells a curious story of the two brothers on this occasion. As they were talking together in camp the day before the attack, Cecil Rhodes remarked that he thought that the following day was his birthday, which he regarded as a good omen. The colonel maintained that his birthday was not July 5th but June 5th, and as Cecil Rhodes was by no means certain of the date a long discussion ensued, culminating in a bet of £10. Every possible argument was brought forward, and the question seemed to give Cecil Rhodes the greatest concern: at lunch he increased the bet to £25, at tea to £50, and the silence of a long night march was broken by a hoarse whisper, "I say, Frank, will you make it £100?" History relates that Cecil Rhodes was right, but that the bet was never paid—the colonel urging "Of course he would never have paid me."

The position held by the Matabele was a ridge of rocky kopjes about five miles in length, cut up by various defiles and valleys, while near the eastern end was the precipitous hill, covered with rocks and scrub, which formed their stronghold. The column made a night march and attacked at dawn, well supported by the fire of the mountain batteries, which did great execution. The natives were steadily driven back, and the

## THE MATABELE REBELLION, 1896

position was carried by a fine charge of the Cape Boys from Johannesburg, ending in a fierce hand-to-hand fight—bayonet against assegai—on the summit. The Matabele were completely broken up, the survivors finding refuge in the dense scrub, or in the network of caves on the mountain side.

Colonel Rhodes, who was in the forefront of the fighting himself, often spoke of the conduct of his brother Cecil under fire. At the time that he was being represented at home as safe in Bulawayo, he was riding over the battle-field, armed only with a switch, while natives were springing from their hiding-places all round him, to the great alarm of his friends. His entire carelessness for his personal safety added to the almost superstitious awe with which he was already regarded in the country.

The backbone of the rebellion was now broken, but the hardest task was still to be accomplished—the subjugation of the Matabele in the Matoppos, where large numbers had gathered to make their last stand. The place was exactly suited to their style of warfare. The Matoppo Hills cover a tract of country, not far from Bulawayo, about 120 miles in length, and some 25 miles wide. Within this area the spectacle is curiously wild and impressive. As far as the eye can see there stretches an unending vista of rocky hills—sometimes in straggling groups, sometimes in long irregular ranges—varying from miniature kopje to others that might almost be dignified by the name of mountain. There is no sign of man—nothing but bare granite faces gleaming in the sunlight, or dark hillsides, strewn with gigantic boulders, and clothed with rich tropical vegetation—palm, and cactus, and dense waving grass. The hills are cut up by a thousand winding valleys, and here the air is close

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

and still, and the tangled scrub becomes thicker, watered by the overflow of some sluggish stream. All sense of direction disappears, for the narrow Kaffir path seems to drag aimlessly along, now working round a sheer cliffside, now turning sharply between five-foot walls of grass, or leading suddenly up to some deserted kraal. It is easy to understand the many native legends connected with the district: in the heart of it lie the bones of Mosilikatze, who led the Matabele up from Zululand, and it was appropriate that his followers should make their last fight round his burial-place.

But the Rhodesians can recall a time when the crack of the rifle re-echoed through the hills, when a Matabele might lurk behind every boulder, and a whole impi lie concealed in every wooded valley. Fortunately there were "veld-men" with the column, whose experience of sport and war in South Africa now stood them in good stead. They could fight the natives in their own way, creeping in among the hills at night, locating the enemy's position, and guiding the attacking force to the spot on the following day. The campaign resolved itself into a series of fights among the maze of kopjes, operations often being carried on over a very wide area. The force was necessarily divided into several columns, which kept in touch with one another, as far as possible, by means of flag signalling and heliograph, and steadily hunted out any large body of rebels that their scouts might discover. Some very hard fighting took place in these engagements, small bodies of men being frequently cut off, and forced to hold their own against superior numbers until help arrived. On one of these occasions a detachment which Colonel Rhodes accompanied was practically surrounded in one of the passes between



THE MATOPPOS.

*By permission of the Chartered Company.*



## THE MATABELE REBELLION, 1896

the kopjes. Many horses—including the colonel's—were shot, and several casualties occurred. In the heat of the fighting Colonel Rhodes and Mr. Harold Lowther were engaged in getting a wounded trooper on to an improvised stretcher, when they heard close behind them the click of a gun that had missed fire. A native had crawled in among the rocks, armed with an elephant gun of antique pattern, to get a shot at close quarters. Neither of the officers moved a muscle, and were still attending to the trooper, when a second click was heard. At this point the colonel was delighted to hear his friend remark in the dryest way: "I hope the beggar hasn't got another cap." He was still laughing when the gun went off—and missed them both.

The Matabele had learnt the lesson of the previous war, and no longer charged home against maxim and rifle fire, but took full advantage of the excellent cover that the hills afforded. Most of them carried firearms—from the police martini to the old elephant-gun loaded with "pot legs," and at a short range were often able to do considerable damage. They would not face the troops in the open, but in the Matoppos, with all the conditions in their favour, they fought stubbornly, and though driven out of many of their strongest positions they were apparently always ready to fight again.

It might have proved to be an impossible task to clear them out of this district, for with the advent of the rainy season Sir Frederick Carrington's difficulties would be enormously increased. Supplies were very scanty, and could not be supplemented, as the Beira railway was only half finished, and in the south the nearest railway communication was over 300 miles away. Meantime rinderpest had broken out, and soon

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

attacked the oxen of the transport riders, so that when the rains should add to the terrors of the road, there seemed to be every prospect of a famine. Thus it was in every way a most opportune moment for coming to terms with the rebels. They were thoroughly disheartened by their successive defeats, but fought on with the feeling that they had got their backs to the wall, for the massacres that heralded the outbreak of the rebellion had violated even their own ideas of warfare.

Peace was made possible by the presence of Cecil Rhodes, who saw clearly that it was all-important for the welfare of the country, and that it was folly to delay it for the sake of exacting any further vengeance on the natives. Negotiations were opened with some difficulty, and he was invited to come and discuss terms with the different "indunas," or headmen. With characteristic daring he started, with only three companions, to take part in the historic "indaba" that virtually ended the war. The approach lay through a narrow defile, whose rugged sides and densely wooded slopes made it a certain death-trap in case treachery were intended. This was by no means improbable, for there must have been many desperate men among the rebels who felt that they fought with a halter round their necks, and could well appreciate the value of such a hostage as Cecil Rhodes. Gradually the pass opened out into a wide valley, forming a natural amphitheatre, where the four white men took up their position on a little mound, and confronted the representatives of the Matabele. The indunas sat round them, grave and silent, while the black dots that covered the kopjes in the background, and the occasional glint of assegai or rifle-barrel, revealed the presence of their tribesmen. The discussion that ensued was dramatic and

## THE MATABELE REBELLION, 1896

complete. Cecil Rhodes greeted them in their own language, listened to the story of their grievances, reproached them with their cruelties, and asked if it was to be peace or war. If it was peace, he would stay in their country and see that justice was done. His diplomacy was entirely successful, and before he returned he had earned the title of "Umlamalaumkunzi," "the bull that separates the two fighting bulls," and the last battle was won.

At the end of the year Colonel Rhodes sailed for England, by the same boat which carried his brother Cecil, Sir Frederick Carrington, Colonel Baden-Powell, and others who had taken a prominent part in the war. Except for a flying visit in the winter of 1893, he had spent the past six years abroad. His experiences during this period had been such as rarely fall to the lot of one man, but they culminated in utter disaster, for on his arrival in London he was met by the news that in consequence of his share in the Raid he must resign his commission. No more crushing blow could have fallen on him. A blight was at once cast over an honourable military career, and the recollection of previous successes was overcast by a sense of disgrace. He was suddenly cut off from that adventurous life that had become part and parcel of himself, and in which he might have hoped to gain fresh distinctions, and condemned to the hardest of all punishments—a period of enforced idleness. Worst of all, he was bound to feel—though this was a subject upon which his lips were always sealed—that he had sacrificed himself for a quarrel in which he had no real part. Loyalty to his brother had induced him to fill a position which was not one for a soldier, and for which he himself was quite unsuited.

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

He was detained for some time in London in connection with the proceedings before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, appointed to inquire into the Raid and the administration of the Chartered Company. The course of the inquiry was long and tiresome. The Raid formed only a small part—though this was but dimly realized at the time—of a far wider policy, and as such opened up many further questions. Important interests were involved, and various prominent people must necessarily appear—directly or indirectly—in connection with South African affairs. All this served to invest the proceedings with a mysterious character, which was perhaps scarcely justified by the actual facts. As might have been predicted, no tangible result was achieved. The inquiry was in essence a political attack on the Government and the Colonial Office, pressed home in some instances with peculiar animosity, but which effected nothing. At the end of it the hand of the Transvaal Government was immensely strengthened, subsequent negotiations were more difficult than ever, and the final appeal to arms became inevitable.

Colonel Rhodes escaped from this uncongenial atmosphere to the deer forest of Craiganour in Perthshire, where he spent the summer and early autumn of 1897. In the quiet shooting-lodge on the shores of Loch Rannoch the vicissitudes of the past two years were for the time forgotten, while the long days on the hill gave him a fresh outlet for his energies. In the winter he shared a shooting in Wales with his brother, Captain Ernest Rhodes, but he never intended to remain at home. After the first force of the blow that had befallen him had passed, his mind was made up: he was determined to retrieve his position at all costs, and naturally looked

## THE MATABELE REBELLION, 1896

towards that life of action in which his early successes had been won. In this resolve he was helped by the loyalty of his friends. They applauded his decision, and showed him where an opening might be found. Preparations were being made in Egypt for a final campaign against the forces of Mahdism: with the help of Major Younghusband he obtained the post of special correspondent to the *Times*, and early in the following year he was once more bound on active service.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE ATBARA AND OMDURMAN, 1898

**I**N the spring of 1898 Colonel Rhodes arrived in Egypt— but not the Egypt that he had got to know so well ten years before. Under the guiding hand of Lord Cromer a complete transformation had been effected. The country had struggled from the administrative and financial chaos of the eighties to the firm ground of economic solvency, and thence it had made rapid strides in the direction of national prosperity. The annual expenditure was now more than balanced by the revenue, credit had been restored, and another field was opened to British capital and enterprise.

Administrative reform had gone hand in hand with economic improvement. The Government was no longer at the mercy of an impotent court and the conflicting counsels of the Powers, but was controlled by one master, and inspired by a consistent policy. The old *régime* has been described as “alternate doses of backsheesh and the korbash,” but this had been replaced by the system which has been tried and proved in other parts of the East. After fifteen years of such a system, the lot of every inhabitant of the Nile Valley had been bettered, and, above all, that of the industrious fellaheen, who only needed the shelter of a stable Government to enable them to utilize the resources of their fertile country.

## THE ATBARA AND OMDURMAN, 1898

This time the lean kine had been devoured by the fat ones, Egypt was again prosperous, and her prosperity was shown in every department of the State. It was now possible to decide the whole future of the Nile Valley, and to adopt a forward policy in the south. The fiction of a dividing line between Egypt and the Sudan could no longer be maintained.

The necessary weapon was ready to hand. The years that followed the evacuation had provided a hard school for the Egyptian army, and by this time it had learnt its lesson. Ginnis, Gemaizeh, Toski, and Afafit marked the different stages of its education. The wretched fellaheen whom Osman's Arabs stabbed in the back at the first action of El Teb, or whom the Mahdi had cut up like sheep at El Obeid, were now different men. In the old days they were driven into action, but they now advanced side by side with British regiments. With them were the Sudanese troops, natural fighters, drawn from one of the best recruiting grounds in the world, many of whom had worn the white gibba of the Mahdi and fought under his banner. Their officers were picked men from a service that provides the best regimental officers in the world, all vigorous, and all young, as befitted a force, of which the Commander-in-Chief was only forty-eight.

Fourteen years had now passed since Major Kitchener had applied for a post with the Egyptian army: he had been with it ever since, and was at last to test the results of those intervening years. He had been with Colonel Rhodes at Abu Klea, and profited by the lessons of the Bayuda desert. He had seen the slow whale-boats, the thirsty troops, and the starving camels, the complete breakdown of transport, and the desperate fights against

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

overwhelming odds—all “magnificent, but not war.” Now everything was changed. Civilization was to use its own weapons in the contest with barbarism. Every detail was carefully thought out beforehand, and entrusted to tried subordinates, so that the expedition moved like some gigantic machine, unfaltering and irresistible. A Sudan military railway was pushed forward from Halfa across the desert towards Abu Hamed, though the proposed terminus was still in the hands of the enemy. First went surveyors and engineers, then workmen and material, and presently train-loads of troops and stores were poured out at the point of concentration at the front. There was no flaw in the 1300 miles long chain of communications: the strength of every link had been carefully calculated and tested beforehand, and was able to stand the strain. In front of all were the ever active gunboats, which patrolled the Nile far into the Khalifa's country, and showed the way for every fresh step.

Colonel Rhodes left Cairo on the 5th of March, reached Assouan the following day, and went on in the packed steamer to Halfa. Here he got into touch with events, for he found Major-General Rundle, Captain Girouard, the creator of the railway, and Slatin Pasha, fresh from his fifteen years' captivity in the Sudan. He at once started to collect information, and several pages of his diary were soon filled with details about the railway—including the exact number of rails and sleepers used,—lists of officers, locality of water-holes, and the two latest stories about the Sirdar.

On the 13th he reached Berber—the mass of mud walls and low mud houses, that only a year before was in the hands of the Khalifa. Now all was stir and confusion. There were five regiments in garrison and more outside.



## THE ATBARA AND OMDURMAN, 1898

The streets were filled with soldiers, lounging in the cafés, or bargaining with the Levantine trader, who had come in with his wares from Suakin. But there was fresh news from the front, and there was to be no waiting at Berber. The Khalifa's army was advancing down the Nile towards Fort Atbara, and it was time to move forward. The machine was accordingly started, and with it went Colonel Rhodes, constantly meeting some comrade of his earlier campaigns.

While the Sirdar was concentrating at Kenur the Dervish forces reached the Atbara river, and entrenched themselves on its banks, some fifty miles above the point where it joins the Nile. Mahmoud, the Khalifa's nephew, had come from Omdurman under orders to fight, but finding that the Sirdar was no less willing than himself, he had decided to await his attack behind the shelter of his zeriba. Meantime the Sirdar was master of the situation. His advanced position at Kenur enabled him to control the natural highway between the Sudan and Egypt. It was impossible for the Dervishes to advance further without attacking him, or to attempt a raid in the Nile Valley while he was there. In the event of defeat they had thirty miles of waterless desert between themselves and the Nile, by which they must retreat on Omdurman.

The Sirdar's command consisted of three brigades of the Egyptian army, and a British brigade, under Major-General Gatacre, composed of the 1st Battalions Lincolnshire and Warwickshire Regiments, the Seaforth and the Cameron Highlanders, the whole amounting to some 13,000 men, with 52 guns. On March 20th it left Kenur, and felt its way slowly up the Atbara. The enemy's position was thoroughly reconnoitred, and on April 7th all

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

was ready for the attack. At six o'clock in the evening the troops left camp, marched steadily for an hour, and lay down to pass a chilly night on the sand. They moved forward again before daybreak, and sunrise found them within a mile and a half of Mahmoud's zeriba. The artillery unlimbered, and for an hour and twenty minutes kept up a hot fire, to which little reply was made: then the order came for the infantry to advance.

The battle was typical of the change which had come over the desert warfare. Our men used to defend themselves in squares against the wild rush of the spearmen; now they attacked in line, and the enemy had to a great extent discarded his old weapon for the rifle. The army was a machine to the end. The three brigades moved forward in perfect formation, Maxwell on the right, Macdonald in the centre, Gatacre and the British on the left, the Egyptian cavalry working round the enemy's flank, while Lewis' brigade was in reserve. Their bands played them into battle, the artillery accompanied the advance, and in the middle of the line the Union Jack blazed in the bright sunlight.

The ground sloped gently down, an open gravelly incline, towards the river Atbara—a few stagnant pools in the sand between deep banks, which were clothed with trees and scrub. On the near side of it could be seen the low thorn fence of the zeriba. At 300 yards range the troops reached a slight ridge and began volley firing by sections, while over their heads they could hear the bullets of the still invisible enemy. The long line of khaki steadily advanced, without the slightest hurry or confusion, right up to the fence; the camel thorn was pushed and pulled aside, and the hand-to-hand fight began.



AFTER THE ATTRA.

## THE ATBARA AND OMDURMAN, 1898

Inside the thorns was a rough stockade and triple trench, full of Arabs, while the entire space between it and the river bank was a rabbit warren of rifle-pits and shelter-trenches, in which camels, donkeys, guns, and Dervishes were mixed in inextricable confusion. The troops still pressed on, maintaining their formation as best they could, clearing out the pits with the bayonet, and always keeping up their annihilating fire. Through the smoke countless black forms seemed to spring from the earth and charge forward, or ran back towards the river, turning as they ran to fire. But the line swept onwards, unchecked by any obstacle, until the cease-fire sounded on the river bank, forty minutes after the advance had begun.

In this engagement we lost 81 killed, and 493 wounded, out of some 12,000 men engaged; the strength of the Dervishes was estimated at about 15,000, of whom at least 3,000 must have been killed. But that does not express the completeness of the victory. The flower of the Khalifa's army had ceased to exist; the fugitives were scattered in all directions, and cut off from their natural retreat up the Nile. Mahmoud himself, the invincible general of the Sudan, a tall young Arab less than thirty years old, was taken prisoner, and brought to the Sirdar. He strode boldly forward, and when asked "why he came to make war here," replied "I came because I was told—the same as you." The dramatic scene has been preserved in Giles' well-known picture, where Colonel Rhodes is shown, sitting on his horse, behind the Sirdar.

After the battle the army returned by slow stages to Berber where a barbaric welcome awaited the victors. The guns thundered a salute as the bronzed

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

Englishmen and their Egyptian comrades marched under triumphal arches and past poles gay with bunting. Berber had tried both rules and found it easy to choose between them.

Colonel Rhodes travelled quickly back to Cairo, and thence to England. He had had a warm welcome from every soldier who knew him; and as a correspondent he had achieved considerable success. Many of his friends will remember his extraordinary love of collecting information from every imaginable source, due partly to the fact that he had filled such posts as A.D.C. and Military Secretary in the past, and partly to the enormous interest he took in whatever was going on round him. A letter written on his last voyage to South Africa begins, "The ship's barber tells me . . ." and there follows a mass of miscellaneous details, such as only the head of a ship's barber could contain. He spent no time in discriminating, but gathered in everything that came in his way, and wrote it down, so that he always had a mass of material ready for any question that might arise. It is reported that his style was not always that which is generally associated with the *Times*. The task of reducing his miscellaneous notes to a connected history, under the difficult condition of camp life, was not an easy one, and many of his friends were delighted by his distress when they found him in the throes of composition. But his experience of Egypt, and his exceptional means of collecting news, enabled him to give really valuable help to the *Times*, besides which he had a great instinct for the essential points, and a very sound judgment as to the exact results of the campaign. On his way home he wrote, "I can see that there is a growing inclination to say that because

## THE ATBARA AND OMDURMAN, 1898

Mahmoud is completely broken up, the Sudan campaign is over. This is a most dangerous theory to encourage, and I cannot see on what grounds people say so. I look upon the Atbara as merely an incident in the campaign. There is no doubt that the Khalifa has a very large force in Khartum, and I think he is bound to make a big stand either at Shabluka or Omdurman. If he once leaves Omdurman he is done, and he knows that perfectly well."

It had been decided not to enter on the final stage of the campaign until the rising Nile should lessen the difficulties of transport. Meantime all preparations were pushed forward, and when the *Times* correspondent travelled up again in August they were nearly complete. Luxor, Shellal, and Halfa had all become huge forwarding stations, where the river bank was stacked with piles of ammunition and stores, beef and biscuits, sacks of grain, and loads of fodder. The railway had now reached the Atbara, and its completion changed the whole character of the river war. "But for this railway," wrote Colonel Rhodes, "the expedition could never have been where it is. The whole work has been done by an Egyptian railway battalion of 1000 men working under half a dozen R.E. subalterns. By means of it they have been pouring 300 tons a day into the Atbara camp, and—as an instance of what they have been able to do—every field gun at the front has 500 rounds at the Atbara fort or further on. Thanks to the railway, a large force is now living in comparative comfort 1200 miles from Cairo."

The Sirdar's command had been increased to two divisions of infantry, one British and one Egyptian, with a regiment of British, and 10 squadrons of Egyptian

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

cavalry. He had in addition to this 44 guns, 20 maxims, 8 companies of camel corps, medical service and transport corps, and six fighting gunboats, besides transport steamers and barges. It took some time for such a force to concentrate, but there was no unnecessary delay. Some of the Egyptian troops covered the 288 miles from Suakin in 15 days. One half battalion, at the end of a 30-mile march, found the wells dry; the men at once got up and marched 30 miles more on to the next water.

As August advanced the army began to work its way south. Colonel Rhodes started on board one of the steamers, from which he was able to see many familiar landmarks of the 1885 campaign. He passed Metemmeh, now empty and desolate, for in the previous year the Khalifa had wiped its inhabitants out of existence. Beyond it, at Gubat, he could see the remains of Sir Herbert Stewart's trenches, where he had spent so many anxious days with his wounded general, waiting for tidings from Khartum, and in the distance the heights above Abu Klea—the scene of their hardest fight. But now everything was different. He was with a flotilla of gunboats, with some 22,000 men on the river bank. Instead of the overladen and starving baggage camels there was a mighty convoy of camels, horses, donkeys, cattle, sheep, and goats: the old zeriba of packages and biscuit tins was replaced by a huge concentration camp, that covered a mile of ground at Wad Hamed, and contained stores for the entire force. The Sirdar's reinforcements left Cairo in August—at about the same time that Lord Wolseley's forces began to move in '84. But of the latter many never got beyond Korti, while the Camel Corps, after its grim experience of the Bayuda desert, only struck the Nile at

## THE ATBARA AND OMDURMAN, 1898

Metemmeh late in January; by the end of August the Sirdar's army was within 30 miles of Khartum.

It had at last been recognized that we had to deal with a far more formidable enemy than the Khalifa; before we could deal with the Dervishes we had to conquer the Sudan itself, and this time it had been conquered. The victory was the victory of civilization, of railway engine and steamer, but above all of the brain that organized them, and made each play its proper part.

On the first of September, while friends in England were getting on to the stubbles to discover whether it was a good partridge year, the cavalry reached the heights of Gebel Feired, and looked down on Omdurman—a collection of small mud-walled houses, with the white dome of the Mahdi's tomb towering above them. In front of it was the Khalifa's army, a long line of white-robed figures, three miles from end to end, and eight or ten men deep in parts, drawn up to strike the final blow for Mahdism. As the troopers watched, it moved forward to the deep boom of the war drums, 40,000 fanatics, in five huge brigades. The cavalry retired on its supports, and the whole force remained under arms through the night, within striking distance of the enemy.

The camp was protected by a rough zeriba, forming an obtuse angle of which both arms rested on the Nile, and were supported by the gunboats. In front of the position was a rolling plain—long folds of sand and yellow grass some five miles in extent—broken by the heights of Kerreri on the right, and the hill of Gebel Surgham on the left, behind which the Khalifa's army had spent the night. At daybreak our outposts came in, and it was clear that the Khalifa was going to attempt the one utterly impossible feat and attack in the open. *Quem*



## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

*Deus vult perdere*—he boasted that he had always broken our squares, and would do so again.

The Dervish army was true to its traditions. There was a distant roar of drums and savage war cries, flags appeared over the desert folds, and a solid mass of men—black faces, white gibbas, and glistening spears—swept forward on the zeriba. On it came, swiftly covering the long stretch of sand, until it met the full force of the rifle fire. Then it came no nearer. It did not stop, but advance was impossible. The front rank disappeared, another took its place, and was mown down in its turn. One old man with a flag came far ahead of the others, but was still 200 yards away when he too dropped. In a short time nothing remained of this part of the Khalifa's army, but scores and hundreds of black corpses scattered over the sand.

Though none of the Dervishes reached the zeriba their fire was not without effect. The stretcher bearers were busy behind the firing line, and just as the great charge was ended, Colonel Rhodes fell with a bullet through his shoulder. He was at once carried on board one of the gunboats, and missed the rest of the day. It was a bitter disappointment to him to see nothing of the Sirdar's advance on Omdurman, and the fierce attacks on the right, defeated by the masterly tactics of General Macdonald, or of the historic charge of the Lancers. Worst of all, he missed the arrival at Omdurman, which the troops reached late in the afternoon, and the final rush into the stronghold of the Khalifa.

But despite this ill luck the battle had for him a peculiar significance. He was one of the fortunate few who helped to achieve in '98 the task that they had been forced to abandon in '85, and to reach Khartum

## THE ATBARA AND OMDURMAN, 1898

at last. He had been present while every chapter in the history of Mahdism was written. He had met the spearmen of Teb and Abu Klea, and seen the Sudan handed over to their rule. At Gemaizah he had seen something of the slow work of reconstruction that first stemmed the tide, and now he had taken part in the final triumph of our arms. Mahdism died hard, and the great charge at Omdurman was a spectacle which would always live in his memory as a worthy conclusion to a work of fifteen years. As he lay wounded on board the steamer he could hear the roar of the guns that told that Gordon was avenged, and that the flags of England and Egypt once more floated over the steps where he fell.

So ended Colonel Rhodes' experience of warfare in the Sudan. His name lives in the memory of all who took part in it, and is permanently associated with the work, for on his return to England he edited Mr. Winston Churchill's "River War"—the best and most complete history of our military operations on the Nile. He assisted the author with all his customary energy, and Mr. Churchill attributes much of the success of the book, and the completeness of the information which it contains, to his untiring help. His name on the title page commended it to all who had served in Egypt, and helped to gain popularity for it in England.

In every way he had good reason to congratulate himself on the results of his last Nile campaign. When he lost his commission he had resolutely refused to own himself beaten. Most men in his position would have retired gracefully to a life of comfort and enjoyment. But with him such a course was impossible. His one aim was to repair the past; he made the best of things, and hastened to make himself useful in a

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

new capacity. There is no doubt he was thoroughly happy at his task. He was now a sort of free-lance—a position that enabled him to enjoy to the full that side of active service that especially appealed to him. What had formerly been his greatest pleasure was now his business; he was always in touch with the officers conducting the various operations, and thus had a unique opportunity for collecting news and observing the various picturesque incidents of the campaign. At one moment he was talking to a divisional commander, at another cross-examining an engine driver—always busy, and always supremely happy.

The greatest sympathy had been felt for him by all who were familiar with the actual facts attending the Raid. Few could criticize the chivalrous instincts which had led him to Johannesburg. All had admired his gallantry in the hour of failure, and his determination to recover what he lost. It was felt that in many ways he had been made the scapegoat. He had no lack of friends, and pressure had already been brought to bear on the authorities to induce them to reconsider his case. Omdurman clinched their arguments, and the most universal satisfaction was expressed at the announcement in the *Gazette* that his commission had been restored.

He returned to London in September with his friend Colonel Laurence Drummond, and was at once overwhelmed by messages of congratulation. It is easy to judge what his own feelings were from the trivial fact that every letter of congratulation—of which there were literally hundreds—was carefully preserved. At last he could feel that the cloud had lifted—and that this was mainly due to his own efforts.

## CHAPTER X

LADYSMITH AND MAFEKING, 1899, 1900

COLONEL RHODES recovered rapidly from the effects of his wound, and spent the greater part of the next twelve months among his friends in England. But it seemed that he was predestined for active service, for at the end of that time the situation in South Africa had again become critical. At home the excitement aroused by the Raid had gradually passed away, but in South Africa the main issue was still undecided: the question whether the future of that country should be entrusted to Dutch or British hands remained unanswered. At one time a middle course seemed possible. Sir Alfred Milner had gone out after the Raid, with the unanimous approval of all political parties in England, to try to effect a peaceful settlement. Many might have despaired of such a task at the outset, but he saw one chance of averting hostilities, and at once availed himself of it. He hoped to find in the Dutch population of Cape Colony the link that might in time unite the two races. For three years, in the face of insuperable difficulties, he laboured to strengthen this link, and in the end he failed. Racial rivalry had reached a pitch when it could be satisfied only by an appeal to arms.

This part of his work has since been overshadowed by the pomp and circumstance of war. Lord Milner

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

is more generally known as the statesman who at last broke the fatal tradition of our vacillating and pusillanimous policy in South Africa: he had the courage to face the situation, and count the cost, and he saw there was a point beyond which magnanimity could not go.

Colonel Rhodes had realized that war was inevitable, and it was never his habit to wait for things to happen. He embarked from Southampton in September, and reached Ladysmith about the time when the Republic delivered their ultimatum. He had not been given any definite appointment, but trusted to his old maxim of "being on the spot and ready to make himself useful." His opportunity came at once, for he was asked to go to Dundee with General Penn Symonds; he decided, however, to stay in Ladysmith for the present with his friend Colonel Ian Hamilton, so that he was in close touch with headquarters. When the siege became imminent he was urged to leave the town, on the ground that after the events of '95 he might fare badly if he fell into the hands of the Boers. His answer was, "I must be the very last to quit Ladysmith."

His diary provides some interesting evidence of the ideas prevalent in camp as to the fighting powers of our opponents. He had written soon after his arrival, "A man came through from the Boer camp to see me, who thinks they will occupy Laing's Nek against the wishes of Joubert and Kruger. But they won't do much more, though they may raid into Newcastle." This, of course, was in keeping with the general opinion, and there was a favourite story in camp of a Boer commando, which was marching to the front, when a



LADYSMITH

FROM WAR IMPRESSIONS  
BY MORKIMER MENPES  
PUBLISHED BY A. & C. BLACK

## LADYSMITH AND MAFEKING, 1899, 1900

band struck up; half the men, it was said, at once dropped their rifles, and ran off to listen to it. Even men of experience agreed that we had so often underrated the Boers in the past that there might be a danger of going to the other extreme this time.

To some extent Colonel Rhodes shared these views. As the Boer advance continued, he wrote—"I fancy headquarters think that the Boers will try and rush Ladysmith; I don't think they have got it in them. They hate losing men, and they don't like attacking." But though his knowledge of the Boer character led him to make this prediction, he was one of the first to realize that they were very much in earnest, and he told many incredulous friends that Ladysmith would have to stand a long siege. He had the further advantage of knowing the gravity of the political situation. On October 17th he wrote—"Not seizing Laing's Nek, the retirement from Newcastle, the loss of the armoured train, with the isolation of Kimberley and Mafeking, will have a great effect on the native mind. The native's great idea is Who is going to have the best of it? and he will imagine that so far we are unable to hold our own." Besides this the danger of a general rising of the Dutch in Cape Colony and Natal was always before his eyes, and after the siege he felt that, despite our reverses on the Tugela, we had cause to congratulate ourselves on the fact that we did not have to begin the war actually on the sea coast.

Talana Hill, Elandslaagte, Reitfontein, and Lombard's Kop followed one another in rapid succession, and Colonel Rhodes was present at the last three engagements. After Elandslaagte he wrote—"The wounded had a real bad night of it, some of them lying out through the night—pitch dark and raining. I spent most of the night

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

carrying wounded off the hill and looking after them. They must have suffered awfully, as we had to carry them in blankets off very steep hills in the dark. Old General Kock, the Boer general, was lying at the top of the hill shot through both legs—a fine old boy. I went and talked to him in the middle of the night, and we did what we could for him, but as he weighed about eighteen stone we did not attempt to carry him off. About 3 a.m. L— suggested that H— and myself should go and sleep in a Boer tent. He solemnly escorted us to one, and the only occupants were three dead Boers, so we prepared to lie down in the rain.”

Colonel Rhodes was quick to appreciate the strong points of our opponents and our own shortcomings. Years of shooting and fighting had made him more of a veld-man than most of our officers. He was emphatically a common-sense soldier—more after the type of the Boers themselves—and though these qualities do not suffice to make generals, they at least serve, as was shown in the case of the Boers, to avert great disasters. He had no faith, as he said, in some one “who had spent the last ten years on a high stool in Piccadilly,” or in “a man who had had glasses in his tent all through the siege and never used them.” He was inclined to be impatient of established rules and principles; he declared, for instance, that “the howitzers fire in pairs because it is written in the books, but as almost everything in the books has been proved to be wrong, there is every reason for believing that this is wrong too. The extraordinary thing to me,” he continued, “is how little those who have been quartered here for some time seem to know about the country a few miles round,” and adds some strong criticism on



## LADYSMITH AND MAFEKING, 1899, 1900

the absence of reliable maps. He was delighted by the different stories—most of them quite without foundation—against the Intelligence Department, one being that it advised that an outpost should be placed in a spot that had been held for the past month.

Such criticisms were too often justified in the course of the war. Colonel Rhodes was always alive to the necessity of taking cover, and in one engagement insisted that certain figures on a distant kopje "must be British, because they were all standing on the sky-line." Constant entries in his diary refer to inadequate entrenchments, notably on Cæsar's Camp and Waggon Hill, and he repeats the story of a company "which could not be given axes to build fortifications because they always cut themselves." It is now admitted that one of the greatest lessons of the war was the value of proper defensive works, and in this, as in other points—for example in his often stated conviction that Bulwana should have been held, and the cavalry sent out of the town, he has had the opinion of some of the best military critics on his side.

At the beginning of the siege he settled down in a large house near the hotel with Colonel Ian Hamilton, Captain Vallentin, Lord Ava, and Lieutenant Lannowe. The position attracted more than its fair share of the bombardment. No less than eighteen shells from the big Creusot gun—the famous "Long Tom"—fell within a hundred yards of the house, besides big shells that burst in the air, and smaller projectiles. A 94-lb. shell wrecked the bedroom which Colonel Rhodes occupied in the hotel, and another burst so close to him that the table at which he was sitting was thrown on the top of him. It was sometimes said that the Boer gunners paid him

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

particular attention on account of his part in the Raid—being guided as to his whereabouts by their spies in the town. One of them was reported to have said that if they could get him and Jameson they would abandon the siege—a story which, while it pleased the colonel immensely, caused him to observe with characteristic simplicity, “I am afraid that they make me of too much importance.”

Besides his four friends here he met several officers who had served with him on previous campaigns. There were also many South Africans to whom he was already well known—Colonel Dartnell, who knew Natal like his own country, and played so fine a part in the retreat from Dundee, “Karri” Davis who carried back the breech block of the “Long Tom” from Gun Hill, Doctor Jameson, fretting at the long inaction, and Wools Sampson of Johannesburg fame.

After the disastrous battle of Lombard's Kop—or “Mournful Monday”—Sir George White was definitely committed to defensive policy. The Boers proceeded with the investment at their leisure, and the Natal Field Force became a garrison. The monotony of the siege was only broken by the two brilliant sorties, in which the Boer guns on Gun Hill and Surprise Hill were destroyed. Amid many conflicting rumours the news of the reverses at Stormberg and Magersfontein was confirmed, and after the almost incredible message that accompanied the report of Colenso, the garrison realized that it could hope for no immediate relief. It had already been bombarded for two months when the Boers made their great effort of January the 6th—the most determined offensive operation that they undertook through the whole course of the war. Colonel Rhodes and Lord Ava

## LADYSMITH AND MAFEKING, 1899, 1900

slept on Cæsar's Camp on the night of the 5th, and by some curious coincidence discussed the prospect of a Boer attack. They were awakened at 3.30 a.m. by heavy firing, and soon heard that the enemy had gained a footing on Waggon Hill during the darkness. One of the naval guns was at one time practically in their hands, but the Manchesters and Imperial Light Horse stuck to the reverse slope of the hill with rare tenacity, and prevented any further advance. As day dawned every inch of ground was fiercely contested. Lord Ava went forward with a message, and was shot through the head while looking through his glasses over a ridge in the firing line of the Imperial Light Horse. Colonel Rhodes and other officers showed great gallantry under a hot fire, and by their efforts Lord Ava was got into a stretcher and carried back to hospital unconscious.

Along the ridge of Cæsar's Camp and Waggon Hill the stubborn fight continued to the end of the day. After this first attack the Boers could make no further progress, and although twice during the day our troops were momentarily driven down from Waggon Hill Point the enemy were unable to maintain their advantage for more than a few intensely critical moments, but they stoutly refused to leave the foothold they had won originally, and could not be dislodged until evening. The attack will always live in history by reason of the dramatic incidents connected with it, the surprise and confusion in the dim morning light, the dogged resistance of the Imperial Light Horse and the struggle round the gun, the annihilating short-range fire, and the wonderful charge of the Devons, which finally cleared the hill after sixteen hours' continuous fighting. The victory was dearly bought. The long list of casualties included

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

many who could ill be spared. Lord Ava lingered for a few days, anxiously watched by Colonel Rhodes, but he never recovered consciousness, and died quietly on the 11th. "I have been with him," his friend wrote, "since the first week in September, and have never heard him say an unkind word of any one. His death has cast a gloom over the whole camp. And what a fine death to die, in the fighting line of the Imperial Light Horse, while holding the hill against overwhelming numbers." He also had to mourn the loss of another friend in Colonel Dick Cunyngham, whom he described as "one of the best commanding officers in the service. I have seen so much of him in the last three months, and never met a greater gentleman."

A fortnight after the Boer attack the garrison was encouraged by the news that General Buller was making his second attempt to force the line of the Tugela. For some days the utmost excitement and anxiety prevailed. Men listened to the ceaseless roar of the heavy guns to the south, and gazed eagerly through their glasses at some specks on the skyline of Spion Kop. They marked all the signs of a critical engagement—laagers being broken up, waggons trekking northwards, and the red cross moving continually in the plain. At one moment it was rumoured that British cavalry were actually in sight. But presently the firing died away, the laagers returned, and they realized that Buller had failed again. Another period of the weary waiting began—worse now than before, as supplies were getting very scarce. Luxuries had long ago reached famine prices, many necessaries for the hospital were exhausted, and the daily ration was becoming sadly reduced. As the supply of fodder failed hundreds of starving horses

## LADYSMITH AND MAFEKING, 1899, 1900

were turned loose on to the veld, many of them coming straight back to the lines in the most pitiful way. Enteric broke out in camp and claimed its victims, while those who were still sound were but a shadow of their former selves. "One can understand," wrote Colonel Rhodes, "what General Gordon must have gone through, with no one to talk to, and hoping against hope day after day."

Though he himself had no definite duties to perform, he was always one of the busiest men in Ladysmith. There was ample opportunity there for him to make himself useful, and he made the most of it. Such periods of enforced inaction often deprive men of heart and energy alike, but on him it had quite the opposite effect. He set an example of splendid activity. Every morning found him walking or riding about the defences—watching the fire of the naval guns with Captain Hedworth Lambton, or with Colonel Ian Hamilton on Cæsar's Camp. Everything interested him and nothing escaped him. One day he was considering the question of entrenchments; on another he was concerned with the health of the different regiments, or visiting a wounded friend. He was familiar with all the latest news—true or untrue—to be gleaned in camp, some fresh rumour at headquarters about the relieving force, or the gossip which an Irish deserter had brought in from the Boer lines. In this way he created interest in every moment of a period of terrible monotony.

Many of his companions recall his invincible cheeriness, which, as they say, "kept them all going." An example of it is to be found in one of his letters, written to a lady about this time. "I met —," he said, "the other day, and we talked 'you.' He says



COLONEL FRANK RHODES IN LADYSMITH.



COLONEL DICK-CUNYNGHAM AND LORD AVA.

## LADYSMITH AND MAFEKING, 1899, 1900

task Buller has got, but I think he must get through whatever it costs. I should like him to get through with a very small loss, and show that we can beat the Boers without these frightfully heavy losses that we always have." He added later, "What struck one so much was the want of co-operation which seemed to exist between Sir Redvers Buller and Sir George White. In one of the few newspapers that reached us from the outside world we saw that the garrison was severely criticised for not endeavouring to assist the relieving forces when they made their attempt of December 15th. The answer to that is very simple. Sir Redvers Buller told Sir George White that he would make his effort on the 17th, and not a word was said about the 15th. At that time Ladysmith might have rendered valuable assistance, but when the actual relief came the garrison could do nothing. The men were played out, and the horses either eaten, or too weak to be of any service. On the actual day of relief we had the mortification of seeing miles and miles of Boer waggons blocked on the Elandslaagte road, and no force fit to send out to cut them off."

It is admitted to be a most unfortunate feature of the conditions of modern warfare that military men must be exposed to the criticism of civilians, and may thus be tempted into the arena of controversy, from which they can hardly hope to emerge with credit. With this tendency Colonel Rhodes had no sympathy. In a somewhat parallel case—after the Raid—he had set the example of silence. After the relief of Ladysmith he was greatly entertained by a well-known correspondent and politician, who clinched his arguments as to the merits or demerits of a general by the remark :

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

“ Anyhow, I'm writing a book and will pull him through.” He himself had seen enough service to know how easy it is to be wise after the event, and to agree with Wellington's dictum that “ The best general is the one that makes fewest mistakes.”

In the chequered history of the first year of the war the work of the defenders of Ladysmith has not always had proper recognition. Political considerations had placed them in a difficult position, and the uncertainty of the future prevented them from taking undue risks afterwards. Their duty was to keep the Boers out of Ladysmith, and in this they never faltered. For four months they endured all the extremes of the African summer—blazing sunshine and stifling heat mists, bitter cold nights, and wild thunderstorms, when their shelters were blown down, and they were flooded out of their trenches. They got accustomed to the unending bombardment, hunger, and disease, and worse than all, the dull horror of the unending suspense. It is only from those who saw the relieving force enter the town, and could contrast men in hard condition with the hollow-cheeked and hollow-eyed garrison, that one can gain a proper appreciation of what the latter came through. To have been a marked man in such company is surely one of the brightest pages in Colonel Rhodes' military record; and Sir George White himself has paid a high tribute to the value of his services during this memorable period.

Despite the rigours of the siege he only welcomed the relief as setting him free for more adventurous work. He had always been a man of most temperate habits, drinking and smoking little, taking constant exercise, and able to sleep whenever and wherever occasion



## LADYSMITH AND MAFEKING, 1899, 1900

offered: thus he had suffered less than most of the garrison. The instinct that had guided him in the past to the place where fighting was to be found, now led him to the western side. When passing through Cape Town he wrote: "I wonder if head-quarters realize what a terrible blow it would be for them, with 200,000 troops in the country, if Mafeking were to fall. Baden-Powell, of course, is sending out the best and most cheerful view of the situation. I wonder if sickness is increasing very much. Plumer has only 1000 men and a long line of railway to protect, while the Boers have 1700 in front of him. Of course I fancy Linchwe and other chiefs help in looking after the line. I never knew why Methuen did not go and relieve Mafeking after Kimberley; I always understood he was meant to. I fancy Plumer got a nasty one from the enemy the last time he attempted to get near Mafeking, but surely he did not mean to get right in."

The history of the heroic defence is so well known that there is no need to make more than a passing allusion to it here. At the time there were good grounds for the apprehension of Colonel Rhodes. Beyond Kimberley all was uncertainty, and only the most vague surmises could be made as to the true state of things in the north. But the Mafeking garrison had heard from Lord Roberts that they might expect to be relieved by the middle of May, and their confidence in his promises had already been justified by the dramatic change that had come over the war since his arrival. His plans were, as usual, sure and silent. Some whispered orders at Bloemfontein, picked men moving northwards—Colonel Rhodes among their number—a stir in the camp outside Kimberley, and the work was begun. A relieving force

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

had slipped quietly away, and was at once swallowed up by the rolling veld.

A few days later the stillness of the Bechuanaland border would be broken by the dull tramp of mounted men, the meerkats would scuttle to their holes, and the startled korhan flap off in alarm at the approach of this phantom force. There would be nothing to proclaim its advance. It used to appear suddenly, without warning, and pass silently on—first an advanced squadron of Imperial Light Horse, while far away to left and right their scouts searched the distant kopjes, then the main body, more Light Horse and the Kimberley Mounted Corps, with Colonel Mahon and his staff; behind them the guns—two sections of "M" battery, R.H.A., and a couple of pom-poms—and in the rear the long train of transport, waggons, stores, forage, and spare horses.

Colonel Rhodes acted as Intelligence Officer, and was able to render valuable service in that capacity. He knew the country and the people in it, and his name helped him to gain information. It was the kind of warfare that appealed to him above all others. He revelled in the wild solitude of his surroundings, and the adventurous nature of his errand. There is always an indefinable, and perhaps inexplicable charm to be found "on trek." After a time one is reconciled to the monotony of the veld, unending folds of grey and brown, stunted kopjes that get no nearer, or belts of parched scrub, a waste of dead-looking trees and thorny underwood. Then there is the occasional water-course, perhaps only a dry bed—where the waggon wheels crunch slowly through the sand, and the teams strain at the crack of the long whip; or perhaps there is running water, and here the horses wade in girth deep, and graze on the

## LADYSMITH AND MAFEKING, 1899, 1900

lush grass on the banks. Also there are the long night marches, when the air is cold and still, the dust hangs like morning mist, the mimosa and mapani loom large in the moonlight, and the veld becomes a great English park.

But there was little time to consider the scenery as the column pressed forward. Sometimes the outposts reached the farm of a rebel, and commandeered eggs and forage, or unearthed Mauser rifles from their hiding-place. Or, perhaps, they came to the home of a loyalist, and received a welcome that served to urge them all to fresh efforts. From time to time the scouts reported the presence of Boers in the distance, but never in any force, and no serious resistance was offered until the column was within striking distance of Mafeking. On the ninth day of the march a messenger came in from Colonel Plumer, asking the number of their men, guns, and supplies. Some sort of cipher reply had to be concocted in case it should fall into the hands of the enemy. There was no common cipher, but Colonel Rhodes wrote the ingenious answer that "Our men are the Naval and Military multiplied by 10, our guns are the Ward family, and our supplies the O.C., 9th Lancers." The best of Boer intelligence officers would hardly be familiar with 94 Piccadilly, the six Ward brothers, or Colonel Little.

On the following day came the first fight. A small force of Boers was concealed in dense bush—just the position from which they might have annoyed or even checked the column. But Colonel Mahon did not mean to be delayed. The column changed its direction and marched westwards, while the scouts of the Light Horse threatened the enemy in the rear, beat them at their

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

own game, and drove them from their cover. The new route necessitated a halt without water, but the men lay down and slept where they dismounted, got a short and muddy drink in the morning, and after a thirsty march of 23 miles reached the Malopo River, where they found Colonel Plumer. His gallant little force had stuck to its task with fine determination: its long line of communications made its position practically that of a besieged force, and officers and men alike had had a very hard time. But they were emphatically the men for the work. The Queenslanders and the Canadians were quite at home under the new conditions, while the Rhodesians had served an arduous apprenticeship in the Matabele wars. There were many meetings of former friends when the two forces joined, and the long list of Raiders, Reformers, and Pioneers, all with old scores to settle with the Transvaal Government, was a sufficient guarantee that the Boers would have to fight hard.

On May 16th they advanced together, and early in the afternoon the last fight began. The Boers, though inferior in artillery, outnumbered the relieving force; they had chosen their ground well, but could not concentrate in time to meet the lightning attacks of Colonel Mahon. After a sharp action, in which we lost sixty men killed or wounded, they were brushed aside. The force outspanned in the darkness, was on the march again before midnight, and at daybreak Mafeking was relieved.

Colonel Rhodes always declared that the proudest moment of his life was when he rode into the town, and the feeling must have been shared by many with him. The column had achieved a brilliant exploit,

## LADYSMITH AND MAFEKING, 1899, 1900

obscured at the time by the greater operations in progress in the main theatre of warfare, but recognized by those who really knew, and above all by the Boers themselves. They declared afterwards that they knew about the movements of the column from the first, and had express orders from Pretoria to stop it at all costs, but were outwitted and out-generalled by Mahon.

In his despatch the commander gave Colonel Rhodes the very highest credit, saying that the success was more owing to him than any one else, an opinion to which he still adheres. The value of his services was subsequently recognized by the authorities, and he was awarded a C.B. The last time that he had passed through Mafeking—only four years before—he seemed to be a ruined man. His commission was in danger, he had heard the death sentence passed on him in Pretoria, and he did not know what kind of reception might await him at home. Now everything was different. At Omdurman, Ladysmith, and Mafeking he had regained all that he had lost. It has sometimes been said that he was always extraordinarily lucky, but it must be remembered that men generally deserve their good or bad luck. The greatest gift that Fortune can offer is opportunity, and he had never failed to accept it. It is true that he was never a great soldier, and probably the possibility of becoming one never entered his head. He devoted himself wholly to the one side of the life that appealed to him, hated routine work of any kind, and owing to his keen sense of humour he often treated serious subjects with most unprofessional levity. But he was always a good soldier—one whom men were glad to follow. He enjoyed a well-deserved reputation for personal courage, would never own himself beaten,

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

and had the best substitute for genius—a store of sound common sense. He was quick to act, or to form his opinion—delivered with the well-known phrase “that’s my judgment,” and “his judgment” was generally right.

As it happened, this was to be his last campaign. He had performed two difficult duties with success, and might have hoped for some further command; but it was decided at headquarters that there were strong political reasons against employing him in the Transvaal. The relief of Mafeking was to be an appropriate conclusion to an eventful and distinguished military career.

## CHAPTER XI

SOUTH AFRICA, 1901—1905

**T**H**ERE** is often something rather tragic about the final home-coming of those whose work has lain abroad. Many of them leave a high position—perhaps an important military command or the control of a district as large as several English counties—to drop into the comparative insignificance that must await them in a place where Africa or India are mere geographical expressions. They have dropped out of the old life, and lost their friends; they are seldom prepared to adapt themselves to the changed conditions, and so find little sunshine, literally or metaphorically, in their remaining years.

But to such a rule Colonel Rhodes was a notable exception. He had the advantage of a vigorous constitution, ample means, and an undiminished store of vitality: on his return to England he was prepared to pick up the threads of the past where he had laid them down twenty years before. Soldiering had only served to give him a still keener appreciation of the pleasures of home, and he was able to spend long days at Lords or in the hunting-field with the same delight that he had experienced as a subaltern in the Royals. He had never lost touch with his friends during his absence, and found them ready to welcome him in every part

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

of the country. Every one was glad to see him, for a day in his company at once became a holiday. Thus time never hung on his hands, and his last five years were in some ways the busiest of his life. In England he was either hunting or shooting at different country houses, or engaged in business in London, and he found time for visits to India to see the Durbar, to Egypt, and to South Africa, where his last three summers were spent.

In 1901 Cecil Rhodes took the shooting of Rannoch Lodge, and here the two brothers were again brought together—for the last time. The long restful months among the Perthshire moors seemed in some ways a not inappropriate ending to the stormy scenes through which they both had passed. Recollections of veld and desert, of raid and war, faded amid the rich Highland scenery—bracken and birchwood, the long blue loch, and the silent purple hill. But for one of them the change came too late, for Cecil Rhodes was failing fast in health. In the autumn he rallied, and was considered well enough to make the voyage to Cape Town, where his presence was urgently required, but it proved to be his last effort. It was afterwards remembered that when he said good-bye to Frank in London, he called him back and said—as though contradicting some unspoken thought, “I’m not going to die this time.” A month later he was lying dangerously ill in his cottage near Cape Town, and though Colonel Rhodes hurried out by the first available boat, he only arrived in time to accompany the funeral train northwards to the Matoppos. Guerilla warfare was still being carried on in the Transvaal, and the utmost precautions were necessary to get the train safely through. At every





GROOTE SCHUUR.

## SOUTH AFRICA, 1901—1905

station South Africans paid some last honour to the dead, and in the Matoppos a vast concourse from all Rhodesia was assembled. Colonel Rhodes might well feel, as he stood beside the rock-hewn tomb, and looked out over a country as large as France and Spain, that any sacrifice that he himself had made in such a cause must carry its own reward.

Meantime he was almost broken by his loss. To him Cecil had been more than a brother, he had stood as a sort of guiding power, the removal of which left him for the moment lost and helpless. He had cheerfully accepted a second place since the days when he wrote from Kimberley, "No one will believe that I am older than Cecil," and had been incapable of the slightest feeling of jealousy. Though their paths had often lain far apart, he always appreciated and understood his brother's aims, and when his help was demanded he gave it freely and without reserve.

The vicissitudes of South African life had rendered Cecil far less human in character than Frank, but it seems that he never lost his boyish affection for him. There is a story that at the time of one of the Sudan campaigns a cable came to Groote Schuur from a famous general, with no news of startling developments, but merely to announce that he "was looking after Frankie." Cecil Rhodes' commanding position, and a certain intolerance of "Service" of any kind, made him think lightly of his soldier brother as a man of affairs, but this never destroyed or diminished the regard he had for him as a brother and as a friend.

Henceforth Colonel Rhodes occupied a very different position. He was now the owner of Dalham, a large property in the neighbourhood of Newmarket, which

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

brought with it fresh duties and responsibilities. But it was in South Africa that he was most needed. Cecil had died before his work was completed—"so little done, so much to do," as he himself said—and Colonel Rhodes felt bound to do all in his power to help it on. He was unable to occupy any official position there, partly because his life had not fitted him for it, and partly on account of his connection with the Raid, but this did not prevent him from devoting himself to the country. He entered on his task with his usual indiscriminate energy, and any conceivable subject that was connected with his brother was certain of his interest and support. In the three summers that he spent in South Africa he visited all the different colonies, and when he was in England he was always in close touch with South African affairs. He was naturally identified with what may best be described as "the party of the Country," for it is independent of racial and political distinctions, and contains men who differ from one another in all but one essential point. They are working for one common end—the good of the country and its people. They believe in the possibility of another Australia, or another Canada, which will live in future ages as the best possible memorial of their handiwork.

At the end of the great war this seemed to be an impossible ideal. The whole country was still divided into two hostile camps. In the old colonies racial feeling was even more bitter than in the conquered territory. The Bond was boycotting the loyalists, and they in turn were calling for vengeance on the rebels, both sides being equally indignant at the policy of the Imperial authorities. Crown Colony Government in the Transvaal was a necessary anomaly which proved a

## SOUTH AFRICA, 1901—1905

fruitful source of discord. United action of any kind seemed to be out of the question, and the great native problem was always in the background—a dark cloud that might at any moment overshadow the unlucky country.

The economic position was equally gloomy. Every colony was suffering from a period of depression, directly caused or aggravated by the war. Rhodesia was just descending to the bed-rock of hard facts from the pleasant flights of fancy that had marked its childhood. In Cape Colony the reaction that succeeded the "war boom" was beginning to take effect. The fertile Orange River Colony had become a tract of deserted plain, and blackened farmhouses, while in the Transvaal the mining industry had received a blow from which it must still take years to recover. In South Africa recovery must always be a slow business. Its inhabitants have grown up on a tradition of "booms," and are impatient of a period of retrenchment or steady progress, contrasting it with the artificial standard of prosperity created by the past.

Colonel Rhodes was accustomed to an uphill fight. He applied the principles of campaigning to the new conditions, and always appeared in South Africa when he was most wanted. He brought sympathy and encouragement to the struggling officials, solid help to the settlers, and well-considered reports for the authorities at home. It was second nature with him to "do some one a good turn," or to get some grievance removed, so that his annual visits were eagerly looked forward to by all who knew him. He himself never despaired. He felt that, given a fair chance, the country would work out its own salvation, and had the utmost

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

confidence in its leaders, in the men on the spot, the Farrars or Fitzpatricks, with whom he had worked before, and, above all, in Lord Milner and the "Milner policy" in the Transvaal.

The principle upon which this policy was based has been summed up by its author as "marking time in politics, but full steam ahead with economic development." Once the prosperity of the country was restored, its many political problems would adjust themselves, so that the hope of the future lay in the progress and enterprise of a British population. Such a population must be a permanent one—not a mere procession of money-makers—but men who were prepared to take advantage of a healthy climate and a fertile soil, and to make their home there.

After the war, the centre of gravity for the British in South Africa was shifted from Cape Town to Johannesburg. Colonel Rhodes had recognized the change, and welcomed certain signs of permanence about the new centre. He encouraged his many friends there to build houses, and lay out gardens, and was delighted by the appearance of estates, more or less on the English model, in the country districts. He saw, too, that for a time everything must depend on the gold-mines of the Rand. It takes time to settle men on the land, but the long gold-reef was ready for the workers, and should provide them with a fixed industry. He agreed that it was of vital importance to support such an industry, if necessary, by the dangerous experiment of introducing indentured labour from China. Before the experiment was made he was consulted on the subject; he foresaw the obstacles in the way, and the prejudice that would be aroused at home, but decided that under existing circumstances it was the only possible

## SOUTH AFRICA, 1901—1905

remedy. The British population must be secured at all costs.

He was equally alive to the fact that any mining industry must be of a more or less temporary character, but that it might serve—as has actually happened in Australia—to create an agricultural population, the true backbone of a country. Under favourable conditions, farmers could not fail to be attracted by such a market. He at once interested himself in the different schemes of land settlement, which would enable the settler to gain some practical experience of the new country, without risking his capital in the process, and to make a fair start. He was associated with the Duke of Westminster, Lord Lovat, and others, whose patriotic efforts supplemented the work of the Government, and both his experience and his services were always at their disposal. He also took a special interest in the Rhodes fruit farms, which his brother had started in Cape Colony; he was a frequent and welcome visitor at the old Dutch farmhouses, and in many other ways he contrived to give valuable help to the industry. Despite inevitable failures, he found encouragement for further efforts in the steady progress achieved by land settlement as a whole. The time has not yet come to deliver final judgment on the rebuilders of South Africa. Their work is for posterity, and by posterity it must be judged. Their mines may be exhausted and their trees may die, but these are all subordinate to the end that is aimed at—a white man's country with a British population.

During these latter years of his life Colonel Rhodes was again closely connected with Rhodesia. This was not only due to the fact that it was his brother's legacy to the Empire, but also to the special magnetism which

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

the country itself exercised over him. The past had made him sufficiently familiar with it to realize its charm, and as he renewed his acquaintance the spell became more powerful than before.

His brother had asked him to act as a Director of the Chartered Trust, a trust company formed largely with the idea of supplementing the work of the Chartered Company in providing capital for the development of the country. He was also a Director of the Trans-Continental Telegraph Company. He worked hard in his new capacity, though he could not be described as a "business man," and was often somewhat mystified by the new conditions. On one occasion, after reading through the chairman's speech, at a meeting of a certain company whose financial stability was more than doubtful, he thoughtfully observed, "Well, all I can say is that poor old — is either a very stupid man or a very dishonest man." At another time, when the prospects of the same company were under discussion, he remarked, "Of course you know every one of them has a better room than the Prime Minister." These two remarks serve to indicate his strongest characteristic, a sort of man-of-the-world shrewdness, which was seldom wide of the mark. His letters—often undated—express his eminently practical ideas in a manner wholly foreign to the ordinary custom of the City, but they have frequently proved to be right.

At the time that he joined the Board the country was passing through a critical stage in its existence. People had awakened from dreams of an El Dorado to the stern realities of the case. Lack of experience, over-capitalization, and mismanagement had achieved a long list of failures in the mining and farming industries.

## SOUTH AFRICA, 1901—1905

This was further increased by cattle plagues, the native rising, and the war. Shareholders were disappointed, and the Rhodesians discontented. By the death of Cecil Rhodes the army had lost its general at the moment that he was most needed, and there was no one to replace him.

Colonel Rhodes realized that there was trouble ahead, and approached the question in his usual practical way. The problem of Rhodesia was the problem of South Africa on a smaller scale. In company with Sir George Farrar he visited nearly every mine of importance in the country, and was one of the first to appreciate the fact that it is "a low-grade proposition." Its quartz reefs have none of the constancy of the Rand; so far their greatest characteristic has been uncertainty and disappointment. They will not warrant the floatation of large companies, but are adapted for the small miner, with a five- or ten-stamp battery, who can, by careful management and judicious economy, cut down his working expenses to the lowest possible limit. And it is on these lines that the mining industry has made such marked improvement during the past three years.

In the improvement of this industry Colonel Rhodes saw the best chance for the farmers, for it put an end to the chief difficulty that faced them—the absence of a local market. At the same time he was concerned with many different schemes for helping them, by means of well-organized land settlement, temporary loans, co-operative societies, better means of communication and reduced railway rates, and other similar plans.

But, above all, he was the apostle of management as opposed to money. The Chartered Company had inherited from Cecil Rhodes the tradition of a wise



## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

liberality, but there was always the danger of this degenerating into a useless extravagance. Cecil Rhodes had been impatient of detail, but he himself had seen something of the Kitchener school, where no detail was neglected. He always protested against pouring capital indiscriminately into the country, and was often horrified by what struck him as hosts of unnecessary officials, and the spendthrift policy of some of the different land and mining companies. He would take endless trouble to call attention to small abuses and to advocate trifling reforms—one letter urges "that — is so fat that it is very expensive to get him about the country at all." Many of these points had been neglected because in themselves they were of no special importance, and it is a noteworthy fact that the present improvement in the financial position of Rhodesia has been brought about by that careful management which he always advocated.

It is true that his name is not associated with any great achievement in the work of reconstruction in South Africa, nor is any wide scheme of reform attributed to his influence. But it may well be that in years to come he will be remembered, when others who have attained a certain momentary fame are forgotten, as an honest English gentleman who worked well for the country that he loved. There is an Africa behind and apart from the irreconcilables of the Bond, or the busy money-makers in Johannesburg; an Africa that is not concerned with racial strivings or the accumulation of endless wealth, but takes its character from the climate and the soil, from the perpetual sunshine and the wide mysterious veld. This is the Africa in which the hope of the future is to be found, and this it is that has always

## SOUTH AFRICA, 1901—1905

appealed most strongly to the imagination of such as Colonel Rhodes. The sentiment may not be easy to express, but it explains the curious spell, potent as the Nile water of the Arab tradition, with which the country had from time immemorial inspired those who have learnt its secret.

The vicissitudes of its recent history have served to drown its true voice in the cries of the financier and the politician, or the louder roar of the battle. We have never been able to consider South Africa as a whole, but have been forced to focus our eyes upon isolated parts. Few have been able to penetrate the cloud that still hangs over it—our judgments have been based on a record of failure, and on a long list of fortunes thrown away, and lives and reputations lost. We do not see beyond the prices of the Stock Exchange, and the letters of the unlucky settler when his cattle die or his reef “pinches out.” But those who have been privileged to get a glimpse of this inner and deeper Africa can appreciate the aims and ideals of those to whom it is all the world.

Colonel Rhodes had learnt its secret, for he knew the country as few others have known it. He had learnt it at Groote Schuur, in the long days on Cæsar's Camp, or when he followed the Matabele among the granite cliffs of the Matoppos. His friends have often wondered why he refused to stand for Parliament, and deserted the Highlands year after year, nor were they satisfied by his vague reply, “I think I can do more out there.” It was because Africa was always calling to him, as it has called to others before, with a siren voice that none may resist.

## CHAPTER XII

### DALHAM

**D**ALHAM. A wide expanse of park land, acres of level greensward and open glades, flanked by dark silent woodlands, and dotted with sturdy hawthorn and spreading oak ; in the midst of it an old garden, lawn and terrace, trim parterre and herbaceous border, surrounding a big upstanding red house, prim and formal—as was the fashion in the days of good Queen Anne ; beyond again some noble timber, a tiny square-towered church, and a peep of distant cornfields—typical English country, and one of the best of English homes. In the park a few yearlings switch their tails idly at the flies, a peacock sits and suns himself on the churchyard wall, and the air is full of the soothing murmur of bees—all combine to create that “calm and deep peace” that must tempt the wayfarer to rest.

The old law of the Brahmins recommends that a man should be for twenty years a youth, twenty years a fighter, and for twenty years head of a household. In the case of Colonel Rhodes the fighting period had been extended beyond its allotted time, for he had reached the age of fifty when he settled down at Dalham. Here he was able to devote himself to a valuable, if unambitious, branch of English life. There is a tendency to-day to decry the country gentleman, to speak of him as an



DALHAM.

R. K. Wilson  
1900

## DALHAM

obsolete institution that should have perished with the corn laws that kept him alive. But a wider experience suggests that there still remains much for him to do, and the verdict of history supports the belief expressed by Cecil Rhodes in his will, "that one of the secrets of England's strength has been the existence of a class termed country landlords, who devote their efforts to the maintenance of those on their property."

Colonel Rhodes was in many respects a natural country gentleman. He no doubt inherited that love of the land and the people on it which is essential to success; he had been brought up in the country, and his fondness for field sports had prevented him from losing touch with it. He was soon engrossed with his house and his garden, where he was often to be found before breakfast armed with knife or saw, and busy among his trees. A certain sum of money was available from the Rhodes trust to add to the house, and this he utilized for the rebuilding of his farms and cottages. In a short time a village club appeared, and preparations were made to restore the church. He seemed to know every one about the place personally before he had been there six months; his farms and coverts were a source of unending interest—for the Dalham shooting is famous—and he was fond of explaining that "if you only have a motor you can take on all your farmers in one morning."

It is true that he never surrendered himself entirely to the attraction of the country. He declined to stand as member for the Newmarket division on the grounds that his connection with South Africa prevented him from giving up the necessary time to an English constituency. Nor were his methods those of the stay-at-home squire,

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

for he could not free himself from the restless energy that he had acquired abroad. At the end of a day's shooting he would travel to London to attend a meeting, or would appear suddenly at Dalham after a long absence, with new plans to be put into immediate execution. His house became the resort of the most varied house-parties, and on one occasion the villagers were startled by the appearance of King Lewanika of Barotseland in their midst. There were, in fact, always two Frank Rhodes, for his character never changed. The one best known was the owner of Dalham—the man who shot and hunted, filled his house with friends, and took an almost boyish pleasure in every branch of English life. The other was the wanderer, the victim of a thirst for adventure which England could never satisfy. Every year he was urged by his friends to stay at home, but though he listened gravely to their warnings, it was only to disregard them. Never did he seem so happy as when he was leaving civilization behind.

His last journey took him back to well-remembered scenes — Cape Town, Mafeking, Bulawayo, and the Victoria Falls. Here he left the railway and made a long expedition on foot, following the course of the river, which proved too much for his much-trying constitution. He returned to Johannesburg in bad health, and though he reached Cape Town, he was unable to sail for home. The end was mercifully swift—he lingered for a fortnight and died at Groote Schuur on September 21, 1905. He was buried at Dalham, close to the home that he had learnt to love so well, and of which he constantly spoke during his final illness.

It is of course impossible to give a living sketch of such a personality. We can still in imagination see the

## DALHAM

shrewd kindly eye, the ever ready smile, and hear the cheery voice—but on paper these are meaningless expressions, and no account of what he said or did can give a true impression of what he was. Perhaps the characteristic that was most widely recognized was his humour—always spontaneous and original—the outcome of a very unusual turn of mind. With him the unexpected was the rule; his ideas must have flowed from a peculiar inspiration, and were generally expressed by some grotesque turn of speech—as, for instance, when speaking of his friend, the Rector of Dalham, who happened to be an enthusiastic golfer, he declared that “Sunday is a bitter, bitter day for the parson.” On another occasion a number of representative South Africans, who were sailing from Cape Town to attend an important political conference, were startled to find among the telegrams wishing them farewell and a pleasant voyage, one which said, “I hope the ship won’t go down; you are a pretty hot lot.” His good spirits never failed him, and were always most in evidence when they were especially welcome, at the end of a long trek, or in the course of an uphill fight; indeed it seemed that Destiny purposely placed him in positions that called for such qualities as he possessed. Their value has been admirably described by Stevenson in his short poem which begins,

“If I have faltered more or less  
In my great task of happiness,”—

in this task he never faltered, and he must live in many memories as one who served to make a happier world for his fellow-men.

This inherent gaiety concealed his more serious side.

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

Throughout his life he had been constantly brought in touch with men of first-rate ability—statesmen, soldiers, financiers, journalists, and others, and such an intimacy was bound to have its effect. Combined with his natural common sense, and his wide experience of the world, it gave him that soundness of judgment which is sometimes more effective than genius. This was backed by the most surprising mental and physical activity—mind and body were never at rest unless he was asleep. His movements were quick and sudden, and as he talked his thoughts ran rapidly from one subject to another. "I like a man who does things at once," he used to say, and on this principle he himself always acted.

A curious trait in one who had led so essentially active a life was a certain æsthetic sense which made him appreciate all that was beautiful. It may be that this instinct was hereditary, for his brother Cecil shared it in a marked degree, and never lost his love for romantic scenery, choice books and pictures, or the academic charm of Oxford. Colonel Rhodes' devotion to the Victoria Falls amounted almost to worship. He made three separate pilgrimages to the spot, and would spend hours at a time wandering about the gorge. He protested most strongly against the desecration that must come with railways and hotels, and was horrified to hear that the choice of the site for the new bridge was ascribed to Cecil Rhodes. As he pointed out, his brother had never seen the Falls, and had he done so, his great respect for Nature and her works would never have allowed him to consent to the bridge being built there. At one time a book was in existence wherein were recorded the opinions of different visitors on this thorny subject—





COLONEL FRANK RHODES AT VICTORIA FALLS.

## DALHAM

and among them a characteristic one from Colonel Rhodes. "I was once told," he wrote, "by Lord Cromer, that some one had applied for leave to put a lift up the Great Pyramid: judging by what I have seen here he would make his fortune in Rhodesia."

But the true secret of his charm lay deeper than mere humour and originality. It consisted in a kindness of heart such as is rarely found. It appeared in a thousand ways, and notably in his love for children, who all adored him. One of his friends remembers her first meeting with him as a little girl: she was playing with a scythe in the garden, when she turned to meet that smile that always won children's hearts, and heard him say, "Now, my dear little girl, do put down that scythe, or you will be cutting your dear little leg off." No matter how busy he was, he always found time to collect presents for his nephews and nieces and other small friends, and it is likely that in the distant future, long after those who knew him best have gone, he will live in the memory of some whose earliest recollections are associated with glorious parties at Dalham, or with a certain famous Christmas Day in Ladysmith.

The feature of his kindness was its universality; he seldom seemed to speak about himself, but as has been said, "always of you—you in capital letters and italics, as though you were the one person in the world of whom it was important to talk," and this was no mere mannerism, but simply the true expression of his sympathetic nature. All who knew him must think of him in connection with some friendly act or word—nor is there any need to multiply such examples. Even in his last illness he thought not of himself but of

## FRANK RHODES—A MEMOIR

others. One who was with him to the end speaks of "his cheery way of enduring discomfort as a matter of course, and always making the most of any small alleviation, his soldierly obedience to orders, his unselfish consideration for other people, and his unshrinking acceptance of whatever the future might have in store." He fought his last battle with the same indomitable spirit that marked his whole life, but at the end his thoughts returned to the quiet vicarage at Bishops Stortford, and he loved to repeat the line of a favourite hymn, "Singing to welcome the pilgrims of the night."

Such is the story of Colonel Frank Rhodes—the story of the man of action of the last generation. Much of it is a twice-told tale, a mere repetition of what abler pens have already given to the world. But the justification for this volume must be that it should show, not so much what he did, but what he was, and that it should serve as some slight memorial for those who knew and loved him. It may be that others, too, will find pleasure in reading of an English gentleman, of the best kind, who lived a useful life upon the fringe of great events, and served his country well. He lies in the peaceful Suffolk churchyard, sheltered by the whispering beeches and the old Queen Anne house, but his spirit still lives among those who shared his adventures in far-off Africa, for it is part of that character which is the heritage of every Englishman, and which has made our country what it is to-day.

## DALHAM

### IN MEMORIAM F. W. R.

DALHAM CHURCHYARD, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27TH

“So here the long adventure ends.  
Gay, gallant life, so oft at stake,  
Danger and you seemed such old friends  
We had learned to mock it for your sake.  
When the great die, like yours who sleeps  
Among the granite hills, there seems  
Some fitness: Death's dark pageant keeps  
The heroic stature of their dreams.  
But you, compact of happier dust,  
You were so bright, so boyish-brave,  
So kind, sane, wholesome—needs we must  
Grudge aught so life-warm to the grave!  
So light a touch, so true a grip;  
A “frolic welcome” for mischance;  
A Heart of perfect comradeship,  
Knightly as ever couched a lance.  
Long travel in this churchyard ends . . .  
A Gentleman who knew not fear,  
A Soldier, Sportsman, Prince of Friends,  
A man men could but love, lies here.”

F. E. G.

