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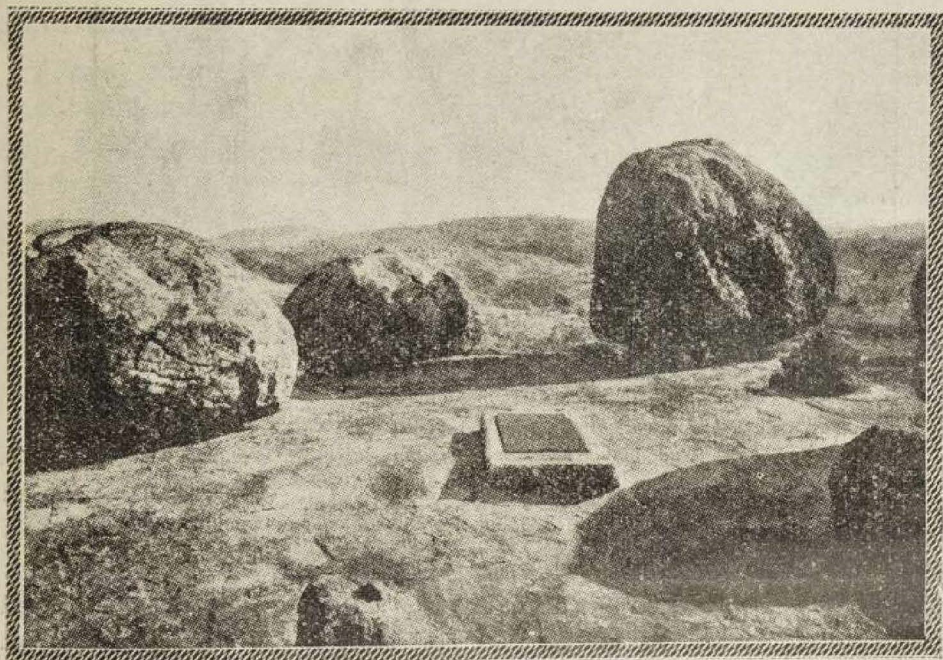
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A GREAT EMPIRE-BUILDER—CECIL RHODES.

In tropical Africa, one hot August day in the year 1896, several horsemen were slowly making their way along a winding path among scattered rocks and small stunted bushes. Their path led in the direction of a bold line of hills, which reared their rocky summits against the blue



The Lonely Grave of Cecil Rhodes on the Matoppo Hills.

sky of the horizon. Here and there along their route were to be seen small pieces of white cloth tied to bushes. To the party of travellers the white cloth was the symbol of peace, the sign that they could proceed to the fortress of hills without fear of attack.

The leader of this party was Cecil Rhodes, and behind the granite boulders of these Matoppo Hills was concealed a horde of rebellious Matabele natives, who had taken up their position in the rocky fastnesses from which no cannon could dislodge them. It was the mission of Rhodes to establish peace between the British Army and these natives, and for this purpose he had sent word to the rebel chief, Babyan, stating that he wished to hold an "indaba," or council of war.

Scarcely had Rhodes dismounted, when, from the neighbouring boulders, there sprang a host of armed warriors, who rushed at him with spears raised. "Go back, I tell you!" he shouted to them. "I trusted your word. Is this how you keep it?" The spears were lowered, and Rhodes, seating himself on a nearby rock, went on: "I come to hear your complaints, and if you have suffered any injustice, I shall have the wrong put right."



"Groote Schuur."

The savage mind works slowly. It took two months of talking to convince them. One of his companions described him sitting "day after day in the blazing sun, talking to the chiefs and cracking jokes with them until we were all tired to death." At length the chiefs declared for peace, and in this way he saved Rhodesia from a devastating war.

Cecil Rhodes was born on the 5th July, 1853, at Bishop Stortford, England, where his father was vicar. He went to the local Grammar School, and had hoped to go to Oxford, but sickness compelled him to go on a long sea voyage. That is why he was sent at the age of seventeen to the

colony of Natal to join an elder brother, who was experimenting with cotton.

In Natal, Rhodes lived in a tiny hut in the bush, working out of doors most of the day. Three years of this life transformed the delicate lad into a robust and vigorous young man.

It was during the years 1873 and 1881 that the lecturers at Oriel College, in the University of Oxford, were sometimes annoyed by a tall, fair-haired youth, who diverted the attention of the students by passing among them handfuls of uncut diamonds. The culprit was none other than Cecil Rhodes, who had returned from South Africa at the age of twenty to enter the University. He had brought the diamonds from the newly-opened field in the Orange River country.

Like many others, Rhodes and his brother had been attracted to the diggings in the rush of 1871. Cecil Rhodes had made the journey from Natal in a lumbering ox-waggon, taking with him a bucket and spade, several books, and a Greek lexicon. At Kimberley he gave himself up to the rough work of the mining camp, and by 1873 had made enough money to realise his long-cherished dream—to go to Oxford.

It took Rhodes eight years to qualify for his degree, for sickness constantly drove him back to Africa. During those years he built up a huge diamond business at Kimberley, and also became prominent in South African affairs. In 1881, he became a member of the Cape Parliament, a position which he held until the day of his death.

Rhodes had two great aims. First of all he wanted to extend British power right through the centre of Africa, so that there would be a pathway of British territory from



Cecil Rhodes.

Cairo to the Cape. Secondly, he wished to see the states of South Africa joined together in a union or federation as the states of Australia are to-day.

In 1888 he made an agreement with Lo Bengula, the King of the Matabeles, who agreed to allow prospecting in his kingdom, and later to permit an expedition to be sent far to the north. Having secured from the English Government a charter for a great company to open up the northern territory, Rhodes hastily fitted out an expedition before Lo Bengula should change his mind. In 1890 a party of pioneers set out on their perilous journey to Matabele Land. Three months later they reached their destination, and hoisted the British flag over what is now Salisbury. This was Rhodes's first step in linking Cairo with the Cape.

About this time, also, Rhodes rose to be Prime Minister of Cape Colony, a position he held for five years.

During the Boer War, he was among the first to go to Kimberley, where he remained through the four months' siege by the Boers. There he rendered invaluable service. The war itself was a bitter blow to him, for he had always striven to be friends with the Dutch.

Rhodes did not live to see the end of the war. He died at Capetown, on the 26th March, 1902. He had only reached his forty-ninth year, and at the end he was heard to say, "So little done—so much to do."

According to his own expressed wish, he was buried on a barren mountain top in the heart of the Matoppo Hills, near the spot where his courage had quelled the Matabele rebellion.

Few men have done so much good in so short a life as Cecil Rhodes, and few men have accomplished so much for their country. He was a great Empire-builder, filled with an over-ruling passion to extend the Empire wherever possible. For this purpose he gave unsparingly of his wealth and his ability. Then, when he died, he left the greater part of his wealth of six millions for public purposes. His Dutch home, "Groote Schuur," he bequeathed to the future Prime Ministers of South Africa, knowing that in time his dream of a united South Africa would come true. Two million pounds were devoted to the establishment of scholarships at Oxford for men from the Dominions and the United States. In these young men, and in a hundred other ways, the work of Cecil Rhodes still goes on.