

Dr. W. J. LEVDS
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MATABELELAND:

The Future Gold Fields of the World.

ITS PEOPLE AND RESOURCES.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED IN

JOHANNESBURG

BY

FRANK MANDY.

CAPE TOWN:
ARGUS PRINTING AND PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED.

1889.

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PREPARED BY

JOHANNESBURG

FRANK MANDY

NEW YORK

AND PRINTING AND PUBLISHING COMPANY

1895

PREFACE.

IN this Lecture I have endeavoured to give a slight historical sketch of the history of the Matabele nation, and their progress through the country, until they found a resting-place in what is now known as Matabeleland.

There are many points in their social and military systems that the limited space of a lecture has not allowed me to touch upon. But I have tried conscientiously to give the public a true and impartial account of this savage people, and their relations with the peaceful tribes that surround them.

I entered Matabeleland for the first time nineteen years ago, about four months after Lo Bengulu had been proclaimed king, and lived and travelled in the country during a period of six years.

It is from conversations with the natives, the missionaries, and others, during this stay, aided by reference to the works of the Rev. R. Moffat, and to "Seven Years in South Africa," by Capt. Cornwallis Harris, that I have compiled the short historical account of the Matabele, from the departure of Moselekatse from Zululand to the accession of Lo Bengulu.

For the rest I have depended upon my own experience, and observations made during my six years' residence in the country freshened and strengthened during my late visit to Matabeleland last year. Where I have made use of the experience of others I have mentioned my authorities in the body of the lecture.

PREFACE.

In this Preface I have endeavored to give a general view of the history of the Malabar nation, and their progress through the country, until they found a resting-place in what is now known as Malabarland.

There are many points in their social and religious systems that the limited space of a volume has not allowed me to touch upon. But I have tried conscientiously to give the public a true and impartial account of the savage people, and their relations with the powerful nations that surrounded them.

I entered Malabarland for the first time thirteen years ago, about four months after its conquest had been proclaimed, and have since and travelled in the country during a period of six years.

It is from conversations with the natives, the inscriptions, and other sources, that I have derived the materials for the work of the "History and Geographical Description of the Malabar Coast," by JOHN GOSWAMI, Esq. I have compiled the short historical account of the Malabar, from the fragments of Malabar history from Kollam to the westward of the Province.

For the rest I have depended upon my own experience and observations, made during my six years residence in the country, and the information and intelligence derived from the Malabar natives. Where I have made use of the experience of others I have mentioned my authorities in the body of the text.

MATABELELAND:

The Future Gold Fields of the World.

ITS PEOPLE AND RESOURCES.

SOMEWHERE about the year 1827 when Chaka the "Bloody" ruled Zululand, and when he was in the zenith of his power, there served in his army a young man called Umsiligaas. Matchobane, the father of Umsiligaas had been the independent chief of a separate tribe of Zulus, until events had forced him to seek the protection of Chaka, and he and his tribe were for a time absorbed into the kingdom of that great Zulu.

Umsiligaas, or Moselekatse as he is better known, rose high in the esteem of the warlike Chaka, who placed a section of the Zulu army under his command.

Just at this time Moselekatse was sent at the head of a large "impi," mainly comprised of his own tribal regiments, on a raiding expedition against a neighbouring people to the Northward. The raid was a great success, and large troops of cattle were taken. Instead of delivering all the spoils to his suzerain; Moselekatse reserved what he considered a fair portion for himself and his followers.

Chaka enraged at this insult to his majesty, sent an impi to destroy the daring chief and his people. A desperate encounter ensued in which Moselekatse was worsted, but escaped by flight with the main body of his army; leaving his towns and villages to be sacked and burned by the conquerors.

The defeated chieftain determined now to carve out for himself an empire of his own, and fled with his followers to the North, slaughtering and pillaging every tribe he met with; and halted not until he arrived in the beautiful country in the neighbourhood of the Great Marico River.

The peaceful Bahurutsi and Abahatla tribes fell an easy prey to his trained and warlike troops, and in a short time he found himself undisputed master of a beautiful and fruitful land, rich in all that constitutes wealth in the eyes of a Kafir chief.

Here the Matabele tribe settled down for a time having their principal towns in the district of Marico, somewhere in the Bushveld to the North of Zeerust. And now Moselekatse organised a system by which he was enabled, after a time, to strengthen his army, sadly diminished in numbers by the losses he had sustained in his many desperate encounters with the tribes through which he had carved his road. He had all the male children captured in his raiding expeditions trained in the warlike habits of his own people, and incorporated them, when old enough to fight, into his various regiments. Discipline completely changed the peaceful Basuto or Bahatla into the fierce and death-scorning Matabele.

Here then, the Matabele began their career as an independent nation ; and a prosperous and pleasant career it was—for a time. The land was fruitful, game of every description abundant, and the flocks and herds captured from the original owners of the country, increased and multiplied. Moselekatse, however, did not allow the warlike ardour of his followers to cool, but always had his armies out—extending his dominion, swelling his flocks and herds, and firing the ferocity of his soldiers, by pillaging the neighbouring tribes, and ruthlessly slaughtering the entire adult population; making prisoners, only the children and young girls.

For nearly ten years, they revelled in this almost ideal state of existence, undisputed masters of the magnificent territory they had conquered ; and the terror and scourge of all the surrounding tribes.

About the year 1836 however, there arrived within their territory, a small band of strangers who carried with them the fate of the newly-formed nation. These were Colonial Boers, who dissatisfied with British rule in the Colony, had left their homes ; and with their wives and families, their flocks and herds, were seeking new homes and a new country where they might dwell free from the interference of a Government they so much disliked. When Moselekatse heard of the advent of these strangers, and saw that their intention was to settle in his land, he ordered them to quit. But the Boers gave him to understand they were tired of

wandering ; the country pleased them ; and they were going to stay. Determined to expel these insolent intruders, Moselekatse despatched an "impi" numbering five thousand of his best and bravest warriors, to annihilate the Boers, and take possession of their wagons and oxen. On their march this army massacred a few isolated Boer families ; and with a new appetite created in their savage breasts ; a wild delirious lust to wet their assegais in the blood of the far-famed white man ; they suddenly attacked a small encampment of Boers. But a terrible lesson was in store for them. Hastily drawing their wagons together and forming a laager, these hardy pioneers rode forth to meet the enemy ; and after a short though deadly conflict, suddenly retreated within the shelter of their temporary fort. Exulting, and confident that their foes were now at their mercy, the fierce Matabele with triumphant yells charged down upon the little laager. But instead of finding a panic-stricken crowd into whose unresisting bosoms they could thrust their thirsty spears, they were met by a deadly hail of bullets from all sides of the enclosure.

Again and again they charged, frenzied and frantic with rage ; but cool, determined and fearless, the little band of white men shot them down in heaps, all round the wagons. The women played their part nobly in this heroic encounter ; calmly but rapidly, they loaded the clumsy flint-lock "roers," and enabled their husbands and brothers to keep up a continuous fire on their ruthless foes. At length the savage horde lost heart, and defeated and humiliated, retreated leaving their dead and dying piled in ghastly mounds about the little fort. They had secured, however, all the cattle, sheep and goats of the Boers ; and these they carried off as some slight salve to their wounded pride and broken prestige. The Boers were not ones to sit still and submit to such a ruinous loss. They retired to the neighbourhood of the Vaal River and made arrangements for the safety of their wives and families. Then, securing the services of a Matabele renegade, and aided by a few friendly Barolongs and Griquas, they rapidly followed up the retreating army ; and guided by their black allies swooped suddenly down upon Mosega, one of the principal military towns of Moselekatse. Out poured the soldiers from their town, but only to be shot down as fast as they appeared, by the terrible white man. After tremendous slaughter the Matabele gave up the unequal contest and fled. The Boers burnt the town,

recovered all their captured stock, and carried off large herds of the enemy's cattle. These terrible defeats, and an attack made upon him by Dingaan about the same time, brought home to Moselekatse a conviction that the country was becoming too hot to hold him; and he soon after gathered his tribe together, and again started for the North.

After many hardships and much fighting, he eventually made his way to what is now known as Matabeleland; where for fifty years the Matabele nation has pursued a prosperous and successful career; and has succeeded in depopulating some of the most thickly inhabited districts south of the Zambezi, and almost blotting out the most intelligent and industrious native race in South Africa.

Moselekatse ruled his people with an iron hand, ever keeping his armies employed, and whetting and increasing their appetites for blood and conquest.

His people looked up to him as the greatest and mightiest monarch on earth; and regarded themselves as the rulers of the universe. They almost worshipped their king; for all that they possessed, country, cattle and slaves, they owed to him. Moselekatse himself waxed enormously rich from the spoils of war; and was enabled to feast his people and enrich them by gifts of cattle, sheep and goats.

He continued the military system introduced by Chaka, and his towns were in reality only barracks for his soldiers. The older regiments only, were allowed to marry; as soon as the boys were big enough to carry arms, they were formed into regiments, and removed to military towns built for them. Their lives were spent in warlike exercises; and in order to get their hands in, for the sterner duties of life, they were frequently sent on short marauding expeditions armed only with sticks, against some defenceless Makalaka town. Thus these young soldiers, many of them originally prisoners taken in war grew up to be fierce, bloodthirsty and brave; regarding themselves as the absolute property of the king, and ready to lay down their lives at any time at his bidding.

In a short time the Matabele name, was known and feared from Kuruman to the Zambezi and from the country of Umzila to Lake N'gami. The haziest rumour of their approach, was sufficient to spread terror and confusion, amongst tribes hundreds of miles outside the limits of their territory.

In the meantime Moselekatse rested from his labours, and began to cultivate the softer domestic virtues.

He rapidly got married, and the more he married, the more he appreciated the blissful state. Before he died his wives numbered quite five hundred.

The ease and comfort of this stage of his existence, did not suit his constitution ; as during the latter years of his life he suffered much from gout. Before his death, he broke down completely, and became a doting imbecile old man. His former prestige, however, was so great, and he had educated his people so thoroughly in fear and respect for his person, that neither during the period of decrepitude that preceded his end, nor even in death itself, did the nation lose its veneration and awe for the king. His death was concealed for days, and when at length, it could be hidden no longer, and his body was buried, few in the nation dared openly declare Moselekatse was dead.

And now arose a difficulty ; where was the heir to the throne ? There was none. There were many sons of the king in the country ; but Kurumane, the son of the royal wife, the heir to the throne, had disappeared when a lad. Ummubate, the hereditary king-maker, and whose office included that of regent, in difficulties like the present, came forward, and with the aid of three other indunas formed a council to govern the country, and to take steps to find the missing heir.

Umbigo, induna of the powerful military town of Zwangendaba, declared that years ago when Kuruman was a boy, Moselekatse had secretly sent him out of the country. Nothing had been heard of him since ; but he must be living somewhere ; and immediate search must be made. Parties were accordingly despatched and made search for the missing heir, but without success. Several years passed by ; nothing could be heard of Kuruman ; and the rule of Ummubate, and his council, was not strong enough for such a stiff necked, and naturally lawless people as the Matabele. Troubles arose, and anarchy began to assert itself throughout the nation, especially among some of the most powerful regiments. The law abiding and more peaceful section of the people, begged Ummubate to put an end to this state of things ; and as it was impossible to find Kuruman, to exercise his prerogative, and appoint a king to rule the nation.

Ummubate then approached Lo Bengulu, Moselekatse's

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son by an inferior wife, but who had been favoured by his father beyond all his other children ; and requested him to allow himself to be nominated king. Lo Bengulu said : " Make one more effort to find Kuruman. Send messengers down to Natal ; have letters written to Shepstone, and get him to make enquiries ; and if this mission fails I will consent to be king." The effort was made ; the mission returned without success ; and Lo Bengulu was proclaimed King of the Matabele. But Umbigo the induna of Zwangendaba, declared he would have no king but Kuruman ; and several of the most powerful regiments in the country decided similarly. Lo Bengulu saw that to save himself, he must strike at once, and effectively. If the disaffected regiments could succeed in uniting, he would have no chance at all against them. So he determined to give them no time ; and gathering hastily as large an army as possible, he marched against the Zwangendaba, the most redoubtable regiment in the country. Attacking their town, a desperate hand-to-hand fight took place, and several hundred were killed ; but the king's troops were victorious, the town destroyed and Umbigo slain. This decisive victory crushed the rebellion in the bud ; the remaining disaffected regiments submitted, and the whole nation saluted Lo Bengulu king.

Lo Bengulu was the people's king ; and as an elected sovereign dared not act, as he might have done had the throne been his by hereditary right. He had to begin very cautiously ; and gradually strengthened his position. One by one, and at long intervals, the old indunas of his father were made away with : Accused of witchcraft—killed ; and then creatures of his own, men devoted to him appointed in their places. And so as time went on he gradually consolidated his power, and secured himself on the throne. But he never had, nor as long as he remains in the Matabele country, will he ever have the despotic power of his great father.

Matabeleland extends from the Macloutsi river on the South to within sixty miles or so of the Zambesi on the North, and from Umzila's country (or the Sabia river) in the East, to the Nata river and the Makari Kari lake in the West. The Zambesi forms its North West boundary from the Falls to Zumbo. The area within the sphere of influence of Lo Bengulu would be rather more than 160,000 square miles.

The distances approximately would be as follows From Johannesburg to Zeerust, 155 miles ; from Zeerust to

Mangwato, 165 miles; from Mangwato to Macloutsi, 134 miles; from Macloutsi river to Bulawayo, the capital, 146 miles. In all about 600 miles from Johannesburg to Bulawayo in a N. by E. direction.

Travelling by bullock wagon and making our final start from Zeerust, a trek of about twelve days, through the Bushveldt, over the Dwarsberg hills, along the Great Marico to its junction with the Crocodile, following the course of that stream until the road leaves it, and then crossing a sandy waterless stretch of about sixty miles, brings us to Mangwato.

Everyone has heard a great deal about Khama and his town, so I will not take up your time with a lengthy description. Mangwato is one of the largest native towns in South Africa, and is built at the foot of a precipitous range of mountains running almost due east and west. The town spreads out on each side of a narrow gorge cutting right through the range. Khama, the chief, is a thoroughly good man, with all the instincts and the manners of a gentleman. I have had dealings with him on various occasions, and this is how he impressed me. I cannot say I have the same high opinion of his people; though thanks to the strict laws of their chief there is no other native town where travellers are safer from petty thefts and annoyances. The surroundings of such a large kafir town are not of the sweetest as you can imagine; the splendid sanitary system of Johannesburg being unknown there! About two years ago Khama leased the mineral rights of all the territory under his dominion to Messrs. Johnson Heaney & Co. The arrangement was that the concessionaires were to have the sole right of prospecting for a period of two years, after which they were to mark out four hundred square miles of country in which, for a consideration named, they were to have the sole mining rights in perpetuity. The prospecting term has been lengthened. The Bechuanaland Exploration Company now hold these rights; and their prospects are exceedingly good, as payable gold has been found in several places between the Gokwe and Macloutsi rivers.

The distance from Mangwato to the Macloutsi river is covered by six days steady trekking. The intervening country although picturesque in its variety of hills, rolling plains and splendid forests, is on the whole sandy and waterless. The Macloutsi river is the dividing line between the Mangwato and Matabele country in the south, and crossing that river

we are within the dominions of Lo Bengulu. From here, a trek of twenty-six miles through a rather broken country brings us to Tati; after leaving which place we cross successively the Ramaqueban and Impakwe rivers and after a further trek of fifteen miles arrive at the Inkwesi river, commonly called Makobi's.

We have now entered the wonderful granite tract which forms what may be called the Makalaka country. These Makalaka are the original inhabitants of this part, the remnants of whose tribe are permitted to occupy and cultivate it, by their Matabele conquerors. The scenery of the country is of the grandest type; but mingled with it are the loveliest and most fairy-like scenes that can be conceived. At first the hills are scattered; but the landscape becomes more broken as you proceed to the north. At last after passing the Mangwi river we enter a very world of mountains. Colossal granite boulders are pitched in every direction, boulder piled upon boulder; and crowning these cyclopean piles is often an immense rounded block seemingly poised upon an apex of rock; and apparently balanced so perfectly, that the slightest push would be deemed sufficient to displace the enormous mass. In every valley is a rippling stream of pale blue water, from whose bed the ground gently rises, covered with most luxuriant grass, to where these wonderful granite structures rear their time-worn sides. Then grand trees rise up, and from out the spaces between these titanic rocks, hang forth their graceful and brilliant foliage, toning down their otherwise desolate grandeur to an aspect of almost enchanting loveliness. And so it goes on, in almost endless variety; the scene ever changing; each succeeding view more beautiful than the one just passed. For three days the road winds through this rugged though most picturesque country; up and down, but ever mounting higher. This immense granite range running here almost east and west, is the birth-place of some of the most important tributaries of the Limpopo.

Hundreds of streams are born here; fountains are everywhere; and the curious pale blue water peculiar to granite formations can be seen gliding along the bottom of every valley; the tiny rivulets mingle their waters one with another, until later on they form imposing streams, which go to add importance to other and larger rivers, and so on to the Limpopo and the Ocean. Crossing the Shashani and climbing a steep and very difficult ascent we emerge on the

summit of the "great divide" between the Zambesi and Limpopo watersheds. From here the view to the East West and South is indescribably beautiful. At sunrise, with the delicate purplish haze of the early morning mists mantling the distant peaks; the wondrous combination of peaceful glades, rich with yellow waving grasses; the more sombre hues of the scattered clumps of forest trees; and the grandeur of the granite piles, their sides and tops shining and polished by the hand of ages; this mingling of the beautiful with the sublime, softened by distance and the iridescent tints of the mist-charged air, forms a scene of glorious beauty; and Fairy-land seems spread out before one. After this we have a gradual and easy descent through a lovely and luxuriant grass country, well wooded; until after traversing about thirty miles we come to the river Gwai or Cumalo. This is the first stream of any importance on the Zambesi watershed. Travelling for about twenty miles over a gently undulating country, with rich loamy bottoms well watered, we, at length, arrive at Bulawayo the chief town of Lo Bengulu. This town is similar to all the large military kraals in the country.

An immense circular space, about three quarters of a mile in circumference, is enclosed by a high and substantial palisade; parallel with this, and about twenty yards from it, runs another high and similar palisade; and between these two stockades the huts of the town are built. At four points, North, South, East and West, there are public entrances. Inside this double line of palisades is an immense open space quite a quarter of a mile in diameter, used as a drill ground for the regiment occupying the town; and in the centre, surrounded by another strong and well constructed stockade, are the Royal quarters; including the kraal for national cattle, and the sacred goat kraal. Passing through the entrance gate, you come into a large enclosed court round the walls of which, numbers of courtiers and soldiers are always sitting, when the king is at home; immense heaps of bullocks horns testify to the meat carnivals which have from time to time been held. In front is a neat wattled fence running right across the enclosure; passing through a gateway in this, you enter into the "sanctum sanctorum," the private quarters of his majesty. This description would suit all the military towns; except that at Bulawayo, there are in the inner circle, two square built houses—one a wagon shed,

and the other intended for a royal residence. These inner enclosures are kept sacred to majesty, and are never entered, except by members of the king's household during his absence.

Lo Bengulu of whom so much has been heard of late, is now about fifty years old. Tall, very black and very fat, he has nevertheless a nameless air of dignity about him. Clad in all his native simplicity with a narrow apron of monkey skin hanging in front, and a similar one behind, he dispenses entirely with European clothing. And in his royal nakedness, looks every inch a king; and there are a good many inches of him, measuring length or breadthways. His features are aquiline, but very coarse and sensual, and in repose exhibit great craft and cruelty. But his smile quite changes the character of his face, so child-like and sweet is its general expression. His natural disposition is not cruel; but the continued exercise of almost unlimited power over the lives of others, has grafted a love of bloodshed on to an otherwise mild nature. No one can ever accuse him of erring on the side of mercy. The annals of his domestic policy are written in as bloody lines, as are those of his foreign conquests. Brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, friends, have all fallen before his ruthless hand. At the same time it must be understood, that he deems it absolutely necessary to rule his people by means of blood and fire. The king is one of the most intelligent men in his nation; his memory is prodigious; and when he chooses to exert it, has great tact and natural politeness. He has many social qualities and is very fond of a good informal chat; but his position places him at a great disadvantage. Although he often unbends and chats familiarly with his courtiers, they are ever on the "*qui vive*," to say only what they know will please the king, and are careful never to contradict him. At the least witticism falling from majesty's lips, they laugh immoderately; and as they listen to his graver speeches, they keep up an accompaniment of admiring exclamations, apparently amazed at the almost superhuman wisdom of the royal speaker.

Lo Bengulu is the clerk of the weather and rain-maker general of the country. He is an intelligent observer of atmospheric changes, and is really a fair prophet of the weather. His knowledge of the moon's phases, also is as correct as an almanac. As the dry season approaches its close, the king takes advantage of the first signs of a change, and ostentatiously busies himself with the charms and potions

necessary for bringing about a downpour. At these times no one is allowed to approach him, but his doctors and their subordinates. From out of his medicine wagon is hauled an old crocodile skin, bundles of roots and grasses, and pots and tiny calabashes filled with ugly messes of liquid abomination. With these he busies himself, cutting up his roots and grasses, and mixing his various medicines. But during these ceremonies he is so unapproachable that it is difficult to discover what he really does.

Lo Bengula has a keen sense of humour, and can see and appreciate a joke as well as any man, even though it be aimed at himself. On one occasion, whilst busy making rain, he sent two indunas to a lady resident in the country, requesting her to sell him some goods on credit. This lady, who was in charge of her husband's affairs (he being absent), had sold the king some things on credit a short time before; and she now told the indunas, that if the king wanted any more goods, he must send the ivory, not only for what he required now, but to pay for what he owed. They told her the king was busy making rain, and had no time to be bothering about ivory. She said, "go back to the king and tell him he shall have nothing from me without payment; and if he does not at once pay me what he owes, I will stop the rain." The two indunas retired and delivered the message, returning soon afterwards with an order from the king to bring the lady before him. Not without a slight tremor she accompanied the messengers; and found the royal rain doctor seated behind his medicine wagon, with all his magic paraphernalia spread out before him. "Why did you not send me the things I wanted," said the king? "Because you sent no ivory, and because you have not paid me for the other things you had." "But why did you threaten to stop the rain; are you a king that you can stop the rain?" "No" said the lady, "I am not a king, but my father was; and just as well as you are able to make the rain I am able to stop it." Highly amused at this sly hit at his pseudo powers as a rain-maker, he laughingly told her to pay herself from a heap of ivory piled against one of the huts. Lo Bengulu has most admirable command over his temper and very seldom loses his self-control. Once only, have I seen him carried away by passion; and I think if I relate here the circumstances which led up to the outburst, you

will gain some idea of the amenities of life at the king's court.

One morning, about the middle of August last year, whilst the king was stopping at the town of the Imbiso; I walked up with two Jesuit Fathers to pay him a morning call. On arriving we found a large party of married women tricked out in all their finery of beads and handkerchiefs and feathers, and everything that goes to make up a fashionable ball-dress in this country, dancing in the royal enclosure. The king was busy with his doctors having himself smeared with some black abomination, and drinking "Hell broth." When the doctoring was over, and we went and bade him good morning, he gave us a shoulder of mutton roasted on a spit, which we ate with the aid of knives and fingers. A can of beer was then brought, with which we washed down the roast mutton. The king, who during breakfast had been discussing the Grobelaar affair, was in a very gay humour; and laughed and joked about Khama having to send out a whole regiment to deal with seven Boers. He cut many jokes at the expense of the Mangwatos to the great delight of the attendant courtiers. Whilst still joking a man was brought before him, charged with bad behaviour, and with having run away from his town. He was an Imbiso soldier, and the crown prosecutor (Umlegela the king's brother) conducted the case against him. All this time the women were dancing and singing only a few yards away from the king,—every now and then coming from the outer enclosure and dancing immediately in front of him and striving to attract his notice. He, however, paid no heed to them; but calmly listened to the evidence in the case before him, and things looked black for the prisoner who seemed frightened. But an incident occurred which drew the attention of all away. The women after dancing for some time in front of the king, withdrew to the outer enclosure where they kept up their song and dance. They then did what was very commonly done; sent in two dancers to tell the king they were hungry and wanted beer. The two danced in, chanting their song and flourishing their dancing spoons. They halted only about a yard from the king who was busy hearing the law case. One of them said "we are hungry give us beer;" and stood for a while stooping in front of him. In a little while she moved away; but while going out muttered to herself, unluckily loud enough for the king to hear what she

said. Word was sent for the woman to come back, and orders given to drag her if she were unwilling to come. The poor woman returned, but this time in a frightened condition. She tried to put a bold face on, and laughed as she knelt before the king. It was no laughing matter, as she soon found out. She was told to repeat what she said when leaving the king's presence, and explain the meaning of her words. The woman stuttered and stammered with fright; but the king mocked her, and said she should not leave his presence, until she had explained her words. The poor creature was terribly badgered, and was too frightened to repeat her muttered speech. At last the king gave an order in a low voice; and in a twinkling, a crowd of boys with sjamboks and sticks appeared and began thrashing the woman. She fled from the enclosure pursued by the boys and all the king's dogs. After a little while his majesty ordered the woman to be brought back so that he might see if she had been well beaten, but without waiting to be obeyed, she walked out to see for himself. In a few minutes an attendant came in and took a double barreled gun and two cartridges from the royal wagon. Then he went out, and we knew the king was going to shoot the woman. The dancing women fled screaming from the outer court; and now there was an awful silence. Every second we expected to hear the report of the gun. All the courtiers and great men sat still, quite scared. Glancing at the fathers, I thought I saw their lips moving in prayer, but none dared interfere. The king's brother (the crown prosecutor) however could bear the strain no longer. Springing up he went out, and with his hands lifted in the attitude of prayer, he begged the king in loud sobbing tones not to shoot the woman. The king was slowly advancing with the gun at full cock, to where the unfortunate creature was lying in a senseless heap in the corner of the outer enclosure. Umlegela followed interceding, until he came right up to him. Now was the critical moment. The king paid no attention to the prayers for mercy, but raised the gun. At this Umlegela redoubled his supplications and catching hold of the king's blanket said: "Father do not kill the woman with your own hand, if she must be killed, let others kill her." Turning, the king looked fixedly at him for a little while; and then putting down the gun walked back to his chair. He was much agitated, and his whole frame trembled with emotion. The court shouted his praises, and thanked him. The poor woman was carried away by

her friends, with her thigh and leg broken, and no chance of survival. The lawsuit against the offending Imbiso soldier was forgotten, and a few hours later he was pardoned.

The duties of the king are no sinecure, and he is the most hard-worked man in the nation. From morning till night he is hearing reports from all parts of his dominions ; settling or arranging the settlement of difficult law cases ; judging criminals ; sifting evidence, and transacting farm business. He is a farmer on a gigantic scale, for he has the control and management of all the nation's cattle ; the indunas of his various towns being his sub-managers. Personally the king is not very rich, and this fact hampers him not a little ; for his household numbers a great many, and he is obliged daily to feed numerous guests and courtiers. To white men Lo Bengulu has always dispensed a lavish hospitality and seldom neglects to provide them with the most deliciously cooked beef, and as much beer as they can conveniently drink, whenever they visit his court. This Matabele beer is a very palatable and enticing beverage, and will intoxicate rather sooner than an unsuspecting stranger would believe. The king is a very temperate man ; for though he consumes immense quantities of beer, and has a fine capacity for absorbing champagne, he seldom or never oversteps the bounds of "moderation."

Like his father Lo Bengulu is very much married, though not in the same degree. His wives number about sixty. He has two royal wives, daughters of Umzila formerly king of the Gazi tribe. These two queens being both barren, their royal husband cares very little for them. He is an affectionate father, and is fond of dandling his little children on his knees, when they are not too frightened of him.

Not being at all particular about the truth, Lo Bengulu is a clever diplomatist. His word is not to be depended on when it suits him to ignore a promise. He has of late been playing a double game between the British and Boer governments. He has made treaties with both powers ; denying the existence of a Boer treaty to the British agent, and repudiating any treaty with the English to the Boers.

Hitherto he has not been quite sure, as to which is the more powerful nation. The Transvaal war staggered his belief in the might of Great Britain. My own opinion is he really believes the English to be the paramount power in Africa, but he has a deadly fear of the Boers. The late

visit of two of his indunas to England will completely open his eyes to the real strength of that country. He knows that England generally tries to effect her object by fair means, and with consideration for the rights of others; whilst the Transvaal goes straight to the point, with no shilly-shally milk and watery scruples, but does what she deems expedient for her own aggrandisement and the prosperity of her people. And so Lo Bengula trusts the English, and hates, but fears the Boers. His people hate all white skins, and have an insane idea, that the might of their army if loosed by the king, is capable of sweeping the white race from off the face of the earth. Luckily the king is more intelligent and far seeing than his army; and has already many times, curbed, though with difficulty, his people's lust for the white man's blood. In his dealings with white men, the king tries on the whole to act justly, although in many instances he has been obliged to bend to public opinion, and allow them to be robbed without redress. To a great extent he is in the hands of his army, and is not the all-powerful monarch, that the outside world imagines.

He is the people's king, and has not the "divine" right of heredity as I have explained before. He has nursed and reared one regiment, up to a most perfect pitch of ferocity. This "Imbiso" regiment, his own body guard, is the terror of the whole country; and the king himself fears it. There are many occasions when Lo Bengula dare not act in the way he wishes, but is obliged to yield to the demands of his army. Both king and people are always glad to see traders in the country; but of late years, consequent on the great diminution in the ivory revenue through the war of extermination that has been waged against the elephant, trade has been almost solely confined to the purchase of cattle, sheep and goats. Lung-sickness has played sad havoc amongst the nation's cattle, and the people individually are poor. There is great danger at present, that a trade in slaves might be fostered. The people poor in cattle and the wherewithal to buy the white man's goods, require only the barest encouragement to sell their slaves. Twenty years ago, no native dared part with a slave to a white man; it was contrary to the people's customs, and the orders of the king. But now such transactions are openly attempted, with the royal sanction. On my last visit to the country in 1888, two indunas of high standing, brought a slave to me to sell for

powder and lead. They gave me to understand that the sale was to be an absolute one, and if concluded, the human merchandise was at my disposal to do what I pleased with ; even to kill if I thought proper. Upon suggesting that the king might not approve of the transaction, they offered to go with me to the royal quarters and complete the bargain before his majesty. I decided however to have nothing to do with a traffic in human flesh, much as I desired to redeem the unfortunate boy from bondage. The precedent would have been bad, as the people know that our laws forbid the sale and purchase of human beings. Boers never hesitate to buy slaves, and never allow a chance of purchasing one to slip by ; but the English traders have always upheld the prestige of their country in their rooted aversion to anything approaching slavery. The actual condition of slaves amongst themselves, is not one of very great hardship, except in cases of sickness and old age. Then, indeed, do the unfortunate creatures realise their sad and doleful fates. When through old age or disease, a slave is unable to work, his master says, "no work, no food ;" and if he is about to die, the case is indeed desperate. A death in any house renders the tenement unclean, and it would be necessary to pull the old hut down and rebuilt it afresh with new materials. This is too much trouble to take for a slave, and so the miserable wretch is taken and cast away to die of starvation and exposure in the yeldt, or to be devoured alive by wolves. On one occasion I was a witness to this fiendish custom.

One bitter cold morning at the town of old Bulawayo, whilst standing talking to a friend, I saw two stalwart soldiers advancing from the town at a rapid walk. We could see they were dragging a body after them. "O," said my friend, "they are about to throw away a dead slave." As they drew nearer we heard the most heartrending cries, "my mamo, my mamo," the invariable phrase of affliction and terror. Pressing forward we saw with horror that it was not a dead body, but a living slave that was being dragged along. A poor shrivelled up emaciated grey-headed old Mashona woman. Round her chest and under her armpits a bark rope was fastened, and with the two ends passed over their shoulders, these two heartless ruffians were, regardless of her pitiful cries for mercy, dragging her out to die. It was a heartbreaking sight to witness the poor shrivelled body bumping and tearing over the sharp jagged stones of the mountain on which stood the old capital.

It was with difficulty that I restrained my inclination to release the victim by force. My friend, an old resident in the country, begged of me to be careful, as it might be the execution of a witch. I followed the doleful procession, those distressing cries ringing in my ears, and a sickening blood spoor on the ground. At last when a short distance from the town, the men stopped and fastening the poor slave to a tree, went off about a hundred yards and squatted; evidently to watch my actions. Learning from them that this was no case of witchcraft, but only a "commonplace" "throwing away" of a slave, and that she was to be left for the wolves, I hastened back to the town. Seeking out the Induna I told him of the circumstance, and offered him a present if he would negotiate with the owners of the old woman to sell her to me. Laughing at the utter absurdity of my request, and wondering how even a white man could be such a fool as to spend money on a helpless useless slave, he sent for the owners and a price was agreed upon. The poor old dame was thus rescued, and installed in a comfortable straw hut to be a pensioner on the bounty of the white men. Next morning we found her dead; there were ugly suspicions that her former owners had come in the dead of night and strangled the poor wretch. Neither for love nor money would our servants, nor any native bury the body; so assisted by two kind-hearted white men who volunteered to help me out of my difficulty I buried the poor creature after dark; all of us running the risk of being exiled from the king's presence for a month or six weeks, and until we had been purified from the uncleanness resulting from having touched a dead body.

The Matabele people are the most unruly, bloodthirsty, and unmitigated savages in Africa, south of the Zambesi. They are essentially a bastard people. The system initiated by Moselekatse, and continued by Lo Bengulu, for strengthening the nation, by admitting the prisoners taken in war to all the privileges of citizenship answered fairly well, as long as confined to prisoners of Basuto blood; but the influx of Makalakas and Mashonas, has had a most deteriorating influence on them, both as a nation and as an army. The Basuto or Bahatla, naturally brave, only required the stern warlike discipline of their captors to raise them almost to the fighting level of the Zulu. But the Makalaka and Mashona element, was not capable of being moulded into the military form of the Matabele, right off the reel. Their army to-day

is not the formidable engine it was in the time of Moselekatse, or during the first years of Lo Bengulu's rule. Both physically and morally the people have degenerated. There are three classes in the Matabele nation, namely, the Abezansi, the Ab-enhla, and the A-maholi. The first, who at present are very few, are the pure-blooded descendants of those who followed Moselekatse from Zululand. These are the aristocracy, and are *sans peur* if not *sans réproche* on the battlefield. The Ab-enhla are those Basuto and Abahurutsi prisoners incorporated into the tribe during the stay of Moselekatse in the Transvaal and their descendants; they form the middle class and make fair soldiers. Thirdly, the A-maholi, who are Makalaka and Mashona slaves, trained in the military school of their masters. These may be said to form the lower classes; and the effect of their training has been to engraft an intense degree of ferocity and impudence on to an essentially timid nature.

Every male Matabele capable of bearing arms is a soldier. The army is divided into regiments more or less according to age, which are stationed at various parts of the country in military kraals or barracks. These regiments are not allowed to marry except by permission of the king, and the permission is sometimes withheld until the soldiers are well on to middle age. The Imbiso regiment is still unmarried, the average age of the men being about 34 years. The married regiments are distinguished from the others by a small oval head ring made of a species of gum, which is worked in with the head wool immediately underlying it. The space enclosed is then shaved, leaving the ring standing out bold and distinct. Only during periods of sickness, grief, or disgrace is the hair allowed to grow. The wearers of head rings are dignified by the title of Amadorda (men), whilst the others are simply Amajocha (soldiers). Very few of the regiments number more than 800 men, and some of the older ones are not so strong. There are 23 or 24 regiments, and the entire fighting force of the Matabele nation is not more than 15,000 men. In order to raise this army it would be necessary to call out every available man, and leave the towns defenceless. The present military force of the Matabele has never been pitted against a foe, either equal in numbers to themselves, or with any fight at all in them; consequently, with the exception of the disastrous expedition to Lake N'Gama four years ago, they have been invariably successful. Filled with vain glory they

fancy themselves unconquerable, and really believe they can "whip creation." They are in their element when assegaing shrieking fugitives on the Zambesi or in Mashonaland. Stabbing defenceless women and braining helpless infants, forms their highest ideal of military glory. One thing alone remains, and their cup of glory will be full; the delirious happiness of massacring the few scattered white men in their country. For years they have been living on the reputation made by Moselekatse and his fearless band of Zulus. The Ab-Ezansi and Ab-Enhla would still fight, and fight well, but the army would be demoralized by the cowardice of the Amaholi who form the majority. Should it be necessary at any time for England to send a military force to Matabeleland, two thousand well armed and determined men experienced in native warfare, would suffice to take and hold the country. If defeated in one pitched battle, they would be broken as a nation, and would I believe desert the country "en masse." Knowing nothing of defensive tactics, the magnificent facilities of the country for defence would be useless to them. Lo Bengulu himself has had for some years an uneasy suspicion that his days in Matabeleland are numbered; and the leaders of several of his later distant expeditions, have had orders to report on the countries that they might pass through. The "impi" which last year crossed the Zambesi and devastated the country beyond, brought back glowing accounts of a land they discovered some days to the north of that river. A well wooded, well watered country (it was described to me by several men and by the king himself) splendidly adapted for cattle; with a rich soil, and filled with game. In fact quite a beautiful country from a Matabele point of view, with numbers of flourishing but weak tribes close at hand, on whom they could prey. Tributary tribes on the South bank of the Zambesi, have for some time past been engaged in making canoes for the king; and I have heard on good authority that a sufficient number are completed to transport the whole nation over the river in a very short time. Should the Matabele be attacked and beaten, the tribe would at once migrate and Lo Bengulu would have a chance of emulating the renowned career of his great father. A Matabele warrior in his war-dress presents a most imposing and martial figure. The uniform consists of a short cape of black ostrich feathers, a kilt of tiger, jackal, or cat-tails; white ox

tails bound round the arms and legs, and a stuffed coronet of otter skin on the head, crowned by a long graceful crane feather. In the right hand he carries the short sharp bright-bladed stabbing assegai and in the left the great oval hide war-shield, varying in colour according to regiments. A review of eight or ten thousand of these soldiers is a magnificent sight, and one that I have witnessed many times. As they sing their war-songs, they sway their bodies and stamp their feet in unison, and thunder forth their harmonious and stirring melodies in perfect tune and time. Before going to war the troops are doctored by the army doctor, who by his incantations and charms is supposed to render them invincible and invulnerable. In order to be efficacious these charms must be supplemented by certain ceremonies to be carried out individually by the soldiers; and by acts of individual self-denial. Should anyone be killed in battle, it is not the fault of the doctor; his medicine is infallible. The unfortunate man could not have performed his part of the programme.

The higher and middle classes of the Matabele are gracefully and strongly built; their features are good and many are eminently handsome. Their colour varies from a rich chocolate to a yellowish red. The Amaholi are not so well built, more like the negro in feature, and very black. The young women are as a rule pleasant looking and beautifully formed. Grown up maidens expose the "human form divine" in all its naked loveliness; their sole article of dress consisting of a fringe about four inches deep across the front of the hips. After marriage they clothe themselves more fully. A wise measure, as they soon lose their beautiful symmetry of form; and age very quickly. The people are cleanly in their persons and habits, and are very fond of bathing. Their laws regarding uncleanness and the necessary purifications, closely resemble those in the Jewish code. Any person who is unclean is not allowed to go into the presence of the king. Amongst other things the touching of a dead body, or contact with another who has touched a dead body, renders a person unclean. Many years ago, whilst I was on a visit to the Rev. J. B. Thompson at Liopefontain, a Boer hunter died of fever. All the necessary work attending the burial was done by Mr. Thompson helped by me. When the funeral was over I trekked to Bulawayo, some three miles distant. Whilst

sitting on the disselboom of my waggon, watching the water carriers passing to and fro between the river and the town, I saw the huge form of Ni Ni the king's sister, waddling down to the wagon. On arriving she seated herself alongside me on the disselboom; and throwing her arm round my neck with a sort of elephantine caress, she coaxingly asked me for a shawl. Not wishing to be coaxed out of a shawl; I quietly said, "if you knew how I was occupied this morning, you wouldn't be sitting quite so close to me!" "What were you doing," she asked. "Handling the dead body of Hendrick van der Berg, I answered." Uttering a scream, she sprang from my side, and, retiring some yards, poured out the vials of her wrath in the choicest Matabele Billingsgate she could think of. She had to report the matter, and I was exiled from the king's presence for six weeks, and so was she.

The standard of Matabele morals is very low; breach of promise cases are very common. As a people the Matabele are almost pure materialists; of a God they have the haziest notion; and witchcraft seems to be the only well-defined superstition they enjoy. Indeed this belief in witches, is one of the most powerful engines by means of which the king rules his people. Any one who by his riches or popularity acquires a dangerous degree of influence, can always be safely removed by the witch doctor "smelling" him out. No one dare defend a witch. The belief of the people in the power of witches is very strong. Often I have argued with them, laughing at their folly, and assuring them they were frightening themselves at shadows. Gravely and solemnly they have told me that I laughed because I was ignorant; they admitted the superiority of the white man in everything else, but declared that in the matter of witchcraft the white man was a child compared to the black. No white man has ever been accused of witchcraft; the general opinion being that he is too big a fool to be a witch.

There is a sort of national god, who lives in a cave, in the wildest part of the mountains to the south of old Bulawayo. He is an old Makalaka; but although offerings are sent to him from all parts of the country, to obtain his good graces, yet their belief in him is very slight. I recollect one year at Inyati the Rev. Mr. Sykes prevailing on the people of the Engnobo regiment not to send their customary yearly offerings to the mountain god. He told them

they were wasting their gifts ; that the God of the white men alone could grant or withhold rain. The people who had no great faith in the old Makalaka god, were easily persuaded ; and the "Engnobo" sent no propitiatory gifts that year. The season advanced, and strange to say, all the country around was rained upon ; Inyati and its neighbourhood alone was dry. All the other towns had "picked" their gardens and their meales were up ; but it was too dry even to pick round the Engnobo town. The people came to Mr. Sykes and said, "see the results of your advice ; you prevailed on us to send no gifts to the god in the mountains ; all the country has rain, we alone are dry. As you hindered us from asking our god for rain, you must now ask your God to help us." Mr. Sykes appointed a day when solemn intercession would be made for rain. All the "Engnobo" people attended, and again strange to say, before the service concluded a perfect torrent of rain was falling. For three weeks it rained almost without ceasing, and the country was flooded. Once more the people approached Mr. Sykes, saying, "truly the white men's God is very powerful, when he is asked for rain he gives it with no niggard hand. But one can have too much of a good thing ; please ask him to leave off now and let us pick and plant."

Mission work has hitherto been utterly without beneficial results. There are difficulties in the way which render the work of missionaries useless ; a waste of money and good material. As I said before, the people are as near as possible pure materialists, and witchcraft is almost their sole superstition. If they had a religion of their own, no matter how false, it would be a foothold to work upon ; and it would be possible to guide an errant faith into the true channel. But infidelity, pure and simple, is an adamant barrier against which it is almost impossible to contend. If the missionaries could get free play amongst the children, and train them from infancy to manhood, some good might be done. But the greatest obstacle to Christian missions is the attitude of the king. Both he and the great dance-doctors have plainly made it known that learning from the missionaries will result in death. The king will not only not allow his own people to learn, but will not permit of missionaries settling amongst the Mashonas or Makalakas. I was present last year when two Jesuit missionaries asked permission to go and found a station in Mashonaland. The king made answer, "When a father forbids

his children to learn, it is useless to try and teach them. I will not allow my Mashona child to learn; so it would be labour thrown away for you to go there." The London Missions have always been represented by earnest and zealous men, living lives of great self-denial, but all to no purpose. For some years also, the Jesuits, those living martyrs to duty, the most successful missionaries in the world, whose lives exhibit the nearest approach to the zeal of Christ's immediate apostles, that the world can produce, have tried, but tried in vain, to break down the barriers of unbelief and apathy which surround this barbarous people.

Though the Matabele are thoroughbred thieves and high-class liars, and no man amongst them trusts his fellow, an Englishman's word is readily taken and implicitly relied upon. The traders, hunters, and other white men, who have lived in and passed through their land, have been of such a class that their estimate of the Englishman's honesty, truthfulness, and fearlessness is very high.

The land inhabited by the Matabele proper is a bold, undulating, and broken tableland, gently sloping from the ridge of the Zambesi watershed to the north, east, and west. The scenery is very picturesque, but of a more subdued beauty than the Makalaka country to the south. It is splendidly wooded, and the forests are filled with a great variety of noble trees. Between the various belts of forest stretch undulating grassy plains or lovely vales dotted with little clumps of trees. Rivers and streams of beautiful clear water intersect the country in every direction, running during all seasons of the year. The soil, both here and in the Makalaka country is very rich, and this advantage, combined with the regularity of the seasons, ensures for the people abundant yearly crops of the finest Kafir corn to be seen in South Africa, mealies, ground-nuts, beans of several varieties, pogo, sweet-reed pumpkins, sweet potatoes, and makomanes (a most delicious species of squash). Of late years large crops of the common potato have been grown by the Makalakas, who are the agriculturists *par excellence* of this country. Their system is an advance upon that followed by most native tribes; and their fenced-in gardens, with their neat ridges and furrows, have quite the appearance of high-class farming. The condition of the people is a convincing proof of the fertility of the land, so smoothly sleek and fat are they from the highest to the lowest.

There is no country in South Africa that offers such splendid facilities to the agriculturist as Matabeleland, from the Inkwesi river in the south to its northern limit beyond Ganyane. Above all it is magnificently adapted for irrigation and small holdings, and would carry an immense population. All European cereals thrive, and most European and tropical fruits and vegetables flourish and yield abundantly. The climate of the greater part is quite as healthy as the Transvaal or Free State, and those children of European parents, who have been born there, have thriven and grown up hearty and strong. The range of temperature on the Highlands is much about the same as is found about Johannesburg, though somewhat hotter during summer, and not so cold in winter. The summer is the wet, the winter the dry season; consequently the summer heats are tempered when at their worst, by almost daily thunderstorms. Diarrhœa and dysentery are the most troublesome complaints that afflict strangers. I have not quite made up my mind, whether beer or water-drinking causes this. The pasturage of the country is good, and cattle thrive and do well; but parts are very much overstocked, and lung-sickness is rife throughout the land. The high open table lands are not suited for milch cows during the winter months. Cape sheep and Boer goats do well all over the country.

But the crowning feature, the one which casts a refulgent glow over this favoured land, the magnet which will draw the restless white races to its bosom, is its undoubted mineral wealth. Throughout its greatest extent the country is one vast and very rich gold-field. At the very entrance on the south, you step into the tract granted by Lo Bengulu to Messrs. Wood, Chapman, and Francis. The concession includes all the ground lying between the Macloutsi and Shashi rivers from their sources to their junctions with the Crocodile, and covers an area of more than three thousand square miles. Though unprospected in a thorough and workmanlike manner, enough is known to prove that rich reefs exist containing both copper and gold. Both to right and left of the road old workings are found on several of the reefs, and wherever prospecting has been tried, most promising results have been obtained. The country is principally a granite formation, intersected by slate beds. Between the Shashi and Ramequeban rivers lies the Tati concession. This is in the hands of a diamond-field syndicate, and contains many

quartz reefs of proved richness and great extent. A concession of the Tati Gold-fields was first granted to Sir John Swinburne about the year 1870, and about the same time a small rush took place to that locality. A party of some thirty Australians and several other parties from Natal, King William's Town, and Pretoria made their way thither. Want of proper supplies and want of machinery greatly hampered their efforts, and although some exceedingly rich reefs were discovered and most astonishing results obtained by means of the rudest appliances in home-made hand-worked batteries, the miners lost heart, and attracted by accounts of the marvellous richness of the Diamond-fields, then in their infancy, they abandoned Tati and started for the "New Rush." Sir John Swinburne's agents struggled on for a few years, endeavouring to develop the new gold-field; but the work was done in a half-hearted way, the outside public decried the scheme, and at length work was stopped and the concession abandoned. About 1880 the present company obtained a grant of the abandoned concession through the influence of Mr. Sam Edwards. This gentleman still manages its affairs, and by his tact, judgment, and knowledge of native character, has piloted his company through the most serious dangers, until now the Tati concession stands on a firm and secure basis with Sam Edwards, the manager, by royal appointment induna of the conceded territory. No alluvial deposits have yet been found at Tati; the quartz reefs, however, are very rich. Besides the New Zealand, Blue Jacket, and several other smaller reefs, all of which would compare favourably with the rich south leader of the main reef at Johannesburg, there is that mammoth reef, the mighty "Monarch." This grand quartz river flows in a diagonal line through the Tati concession, in a N. direction. It varies in width from fifteen to twenty-eight feet, and has been traced for a length of nine miles. The Monarch has received a most thorough testing at the hands of Mr. de Maffey; shafts have been sunk on the reef at various points, and at various depths drives have been made to test the thickness and quality of the stone. The yield has been proved throughout by this most satisfactory test, to be a steady average of one ounce to the ton. I doubt if anywhere in the world such another reef of a like vastness, and yielding such a magnificent result has ever been discovered. The natural facilities also are such, that the mine can be cheaply

worked. Comparatively little prospecting has been done at Tati; the Monarch was discovered by accident although the outcroppings are frequent. Many ancient workings exist, both upon gold and copper lodes. The greater part of the area included in this concession is of slate formation and literally seamed with quartz reefs and leaders.

The country beyond the Ramaqueban, and bounded on the north by the Inkvesi river is, where the wagon road cuts it, about twenty miles across. This again is highly auriferous, and some very rich leaders and reefs were found last year, when a prospector took the trouble to clean out some of the old workings.

A granite belt now cuts across the land, and in this strip I have not heard of gold being found. Quartz reefs however are abundant, but no prospecting has ever been allowed.

It is not until climbing out of the Limpopo basin, and surmounting the ridge and descending into the Zambesi watershed, that you enter Matabeleland proper. Here outstretched before one, is what will prove the largest and richest gold field that the world has ever seen; extending from this great granite back-bone in the south to within about sixty miles of the Zambesi in the north, and from the Sabia in the east to the Nata River in the west. This huge auriferous area ever improves and grows richer to the north, north-east, and east.

The Matabele have never allowed any search for gold in the land actually inhabited by them; but the signs which greet the traveller's notice—the immense waves of promising quartz which seam the country, cutting through the soft soapy slate in a north-easterly direction; the numberless old workings to be found in every direction, and the inability of some of the reefs to hide their gold from the prying though cautious gaze of the observant white man; all tend to prove the wonderful mineral wealth here locked up.

Right through the royal town of Bulawayo runs an immense reef carrying visible gold. Close alongside Umvootchwa the country residence of Lo Bengulu streams another great reef also unable to hide the gold imprisoned within its bosom. Two miles to the north-east of the old Capital is still another grand quartz reef with "visible." All three reefs have been traced for some miles. But so suspicious are the people, that one hardly dare be seen examining stones. In every direction you may chance to

ride the same indications greet your gaze ; soft slate on edge, with intersecting veins of quartz. Here and there a strip of granite may interrupt the prevailing formation, but the granite is soon lost again in the slate.

Further northward the same indications continue, but here we have to guide us the reports of painstaking and observant men, skilled geologists, and practical miners, such as Henry Hartley, Carl Mauch, Thomas Baines and C. J. Nelson. These men surveyed and prospected the Mashona country from Changani in the south to Ganyane in the north and from Emhlangen to Sabia in the east. Everywhere payable gold reefs were discovered, and their reports were made with no uncertain sound.

In speaking of the country between the Umfuli and Sarua Rivers, Mauch in his report enthusiastically writes :— “ There, the extent and beauty of the gold fields are such, that I stood as it were transfixed, and for a few minutes was unable to use the hammer.” And again, “ Thousands of persons might work on this extensive gold field without interfering with one another.”

Baines, also, that great and conscientious explorer, aided by Mr. Nelson, a practical Californian miner and expert mineralogist, examined and hastily prospected the country from Inyati to Ganyane. Nelson washed the sand and gravel in the bed of Changani, and found gold wherever he tried, his prospecting extending over a length of thirty miles along this river ; he also found alluvial in red ironstone gravel five hundred yards away from the river. Mr. Nelson felt certain that very rich alluvial deposits would be found in the head waters of Changani and its tributaries. He describes the formation to be generally composed of soft slaty shales, with numerous quartz ledges, in which good prospects were obtained, and here and there intersecting granite belts. Again, between the Sebaque and Bembise rivers, gold was found in several reefs, and silver also. And so on during this hasty trip, they found gold wherever they prospected, until, in the neighbourhood of the Sarua and the Hartley hills, they were so taken by the promising indications that they determined to secure the ground for working. Unknown to them, this was the locality so enthusiastically reported on by Carl Mauch.

Sir John Swinburne and his prospector, Mr. Greite, had also found some very rich reefs here, carrying visible freely.

In the neighbourhood are a great number of old workings, but all very shallow. At Lo Magondi, near the Umfuli, also, very rich old workings were found, and many of the unworked quartz reefs gave most encouraging prospects. Baines describes the whole country between Changani and Ganyane as generally of granite belts running through broad beds of schistose slate. About fifty miles to the south-east of Hartley Hills is "Thaba Insimbi" (iron mountain), an immense precipitous ridge from the western aspect, but surmounting which one finds a wide tableland, gently sloping away to the east. Many old gold workings are scattered over this. From the foot of the ridge virgin iron is dug out, that, without smelting, is hammered into assegai heads and hoes, &c.

But to the north of Ganyane lie what I believe will eventually prove to be the alluvial gold fields of the world. The neighbourhood of the Amazoe River and its tributary streams is a veritable Eldorado. I have seen ignorant natives, with the rudest appliances, and practically no knowledge of gold working, wash large quantities of gold from the surface soil. Over an area of several hundred square miles gold is to be found in every stream. The native women are the gold diggers, and their system is to scrape the mud from under the water and wash it in their shallow wooden dishes.

Mr. Edward Chapman, who visited this locality in 1887, informs me that at his invitation the women washed in numbers of places chosen haphazard in the streams, and everywhere their pannings not only never resulted in a single blank, but the average result was from eight to ten grains of coarse gold to each panning of about 3 lbs. weight of soil. Anyone who has had experience of alluvial diggings must know it is only on "bottom," that is, potclay or rock, that the best results are obtained. These inexperienced Mashonas work only till they reach water, on the immediate banks of the streams.

Even when away from the neighbourhood of a river their scrapings are seldom more than two feet deep; and then the gold is fairly heavy. What would be the result if intelligent work was done and the ground worked down to rock or clay? I have not the slightest doubt, and all those who have been there hold the same opinion, that very rich deposits of heavy alluvial would be found. The ridges in the neighbourhood of the Amazoe contain some enormous reefs

of splendid-looking greenish coloured quartz. In the neighbourhood of Ganyane I have seen the same rich-looking stone in numbers of reefs. The Mashonas offered to take Mr. Chapman's party to a large river about four days to the north-east in whose bed they declared nuggets of an ounce in weight were to be found. The fear of their Matabele attendants, that this was a trap to lead them into danger, prevented them from going thither. A few weeks ago, whilst comparing notes with my friend, Mr. F. C. Selous, on the subject of the Mashona gold fields, he informed me that when on his last visit to that country, he and others of his party had expressed their surprise to some of the Mashonas that no large nuggets were found by them, and that their gold was not coarser than what would easily pass into a quill. They were informed by the natives that in their gold washings larger nuggets were often found ; but these were invariably thrown back into the water, as there is a fixed belief among them that the removal of these nuggets by any of their people would bring great misfortunes upon them and their country.

Mr. Selous informed me he heard the story corroborated from other independent sources afterwards.

My friend also gave me an account of a very curious old working discovered by him on this trip, and I do not think I can do better than describe it in his own words.

" At Sinoia, near the river Angwa, there is a very wonderful place. It is an immense circular hole, about 100 feet or more in depth, and 20 yards or more in diameter, at the bottom of which there is a lake or pool of water extending for 60 yards or so in an immense cavern under the rock. The water in this pool is of a most wonderful colour, a deep cobalt blue, but very clear, as one can see pebbles at the bottom at a great depth. There is a slanting shaft or tunnel running at an angle of about 45 degrees from a point about 100 yards from the top of the hole, which strikes the bottom of the hole just at the edge of the water. We are inclined to think that all these excavations are the result of old gold workings, and that a vein of quartz has been worked out down the tunnel, and that eventually a spring was tapped, and that the water forming the subterranean lake has welled up from below. If the whole thing is artificial, and the work of man, a truly extraordinary amount of labour must have been expended in this place. The natives have now built a stockaded town round this old working, or whatever it is, and

go down the tunnel to draw water at the bottom. We went and bathed in it, swimming up the cavern to the other end of the pool. The water was quite warm. The rock on each side of the tunnel is covered with innumerable scores, which look as if they had been done with some kind of iron instrument. The natives have no traditions about this most curious place, but they have no traditions of any kind, not even about the large lemon and citron groves—the trees covered with fruit—which one finds in this part of the country.”

In order to give you some idea of the Mashona country I will read some extracts from a memorandum written by me some years ago for Mr. C. T. Jones, M.L.A. for Port Elizabeth, and submitted by him to the Governor, and by him sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The memo reads as follows :—

Mashonaland lies to the N.N.E. and E. of Matabeleland. A very large portion of this beautiful country has been depopulated by the fierce and constant raids of the Matabele. On the north-easterly route, the Umfuli river must be crossed before the country becomes inhabited, and not till entering the mountainous districts beyond Ganyane can the land be called populous. This north-eastern Mashonaland is without doubt the most fruitful land in South Africa, and well adapted for all farming pursuits whether pastoral or agricultural. The seasons are regular and water abundant everywhere.

From the Umfuli northwards the streams are very numerous, and although it was at the end of the dry season when I was there, these streamlets were running strong and flowing almost level with their banks. The woods are full of trees bearing most delicious wild fruits. On an immense rolling table-land to the north of Ganyane the forest belts cease, and the country is almost bare except for little clumps of beautiful wild fig trees laden, when I was there, with most luscious figs. Almost every little stone kopje (and the table-land is dotted with them) has three or four of these magnificent trees growing from between the blocks of stone which go to form these curious heaps.

In the year 1872 I formed one of a small party who had penetrated thus far, partly to hunt and partly to buy grain. After reaching the table-land, by a rather stiff climb up from the river Ganyane, we shaped our course to the north-west and travelled on until we arrived on the edge of a vast basin. The table-land suddenly falls away to the north and south,

and the huge basin in front is filled, as far as the eye can reach, with mountains ; peak rising behind peak.

From out these mountains the Mashonas poured in crowds, and as soon as they understood that we required grain mealies, corn, and rice were brought in abundance. In a very few days our wagons were loaded as heavily as it was prudent to load them with mealies, rice, and millet, all purchased with meat. The table-land swarmed with game principally Rhinosceros, Elands, and Tsesebe, and it was with the meat of these animals we bought our grain. The people are very timid and build their towns on the tops of the hills in spots as difficult of access as they can find, and live in daily dread of the Matabele. In person they are moderately tall, but thin and of poor development, and very black. Both men and women have very luxuriant heads of wool, which they dress in a variety of fantastic ways. Their dress consists of a piece of cloth fastened round the waist. Their language is quite different from the Zulu and Basuto races, but like Sesuto seems to possess a preponderance of Rs. They saluted us by squatting on the ground and clapping their hands. The Mashonas dig out and smelt iron ore, and work it into assegai heads, garden hoes, knives, walking sticks, and a variety of other articles, and their workmanship is very good. Some of the knife blades I saw were beautifully made and highly tempered. Their smith's apparatus is very rude and primitive. The iron is white, and though malleable to a remarkable degree is very tough to cut. Cotton is cultivated and spun and woven into very good blankets. From the inner bark of certain trees, strong and serviceable bags are made, and used for storing grain in. Some of these bags are of plain bark, but many are woven, and are quite as good and lasting as our ordinary muid sacks. Of all the nations south of the Zambesi, the Mashonas stand first in these industrial arts of a rudimentary civilization. The nation has no unity and consequently no power. Almost every little town has its own independent chief, and the relations between him and his next door neighbour perhaps barely ten miles distant, may be of a hostile nature.

The Eastern Mashonas down towards Sabia, add to their other accomplishments a well developed talent for poisoning, and possess a knowledge of several very virulent poisons.

The whole of Mashonaland is rich in mineral wealth. During the time spent by us on the edge of the mountain-filled basin

I described just now, we were visited by several thousand people, and almost all the men carried gold for sale. Alluvial gold in small rough irregular shaped nuggets, stored in quills. We were shown one working, not far from where our wagons stood ; and from here the red soil was scraped up and carried in calabashes to a stream some distance away and washed. Often when hunting I have come across abandoned quartz workings and smelting places. Mauch discovered some very extensive ruins about ten days' journey to the eastward of Inyati. Whilst in the neighbourhood of these ruins he was the guest of a white man named Adam Randor, who had been living for several years in the territories of a Mashona chief called Chillimanzi. Randor had also seen these wonderful ruins, which he described to an acquaintance of mine who penetrated thither some years afterwards. According to his, and Mauch's description these ruins are of massive proportions, and show evident signs of some former state of civilization. Whilst this acquaintance of mine was with him, Chillimanzi's people poisoned Randor and his child. It was with much difficulty that my friend escaped and returned in safety to Inyati, where I was living at the time. Gold has been brought to me for sale from Chillimanzi's, not in quills, but the full of a snuff-box at a time. North and north-eastern Mashonaland is very healthy, and there is not much danger from fever, if only, low-lying ground is avoided in summer. Eastern Mashonaland is not so healthy : but I believe the proper settlement of the country would have a great effect in reducing the danger from fevers ; that is, good houses, regular living and proper cultivation would have the effect of making the country more habitable.

The memorandum contained other matter which, however, would have no general interest at the present time.

With regard to the claims lately made by Portugal and the declaration that Mashonaland has for years been under her protection ; the bare statement I have here given of the Matabele relations with the unfortunate Mashonas ; the startling fact, that this most industrious and intelligent nation, harrassed by their savage conquerors for nigh fifty years has been nearly exterminated by them ; will alone show how unwarrantable are the claims put forward by the Portuguese.

In the month of October last year, Lo Bengulu granted a concession of the mineral rights of all the territories subject

to the Matabele, excepting only Tati, to Messrs. Rhodes Rudd & Co. There has been a great deal written and said about this huge concession, and many assertions made and insinuations throw out, that everything was not fair and above board, on the part of Rudd and Rhodes. It has been stated that Lo Bengulu himself has repudiated the concession; and the Rev. Mr. Helm who acted as Mr. Rudd's interpreter in this matter, has been accused of wilful misinterpretation. But there cannot be the slightest doubt that the king dazzled by the splendid offers made to him by Mr. Rudd, granted the concession with the consent of his privy council. He signed a document securing the said concession to Rudd knowing and understanding fully the terms he was agreeing to. Everyone who has been thrown into contact with Mr. Helm, cannot but admire the sterling uprightness of his character, and his utter inability to lend himself to anything underhand. I should be very sorry to stand in the shoes of any one who dared to ask Mr. Helm to aid him in a dishonest transaction. He is a master of the Matabele language, and was not only capable but I have no doubt, did make the king thoroughly understand the gist of the document to which he affixed his seal. The temporary troubles which have arisen about this concession, have been caused by pressure brought to bear upon the king by the Witch Doctors, who in their turn have been stirred up to action by the intrigues of a jealous and unscrupulous white man. The future of Matabeleland greatly depends upon the successful going through of this concession. It is in the hands of men, whose ideas are of the largest, and whose schemes have nothing of littleness in them. The magnificent plan for forming an immense African Company, with a Royal Charter, initiated by Mr. Cecil Rhodes, would at once open up the best and richest parts of Africa to the enterprising spirits of the world; and its gold laws would be based upon those of every British Colony.

No small concession holders would ever be able to work their possessions peaceably whilst the Matabele people rule the land. Even at Tati, which is outside the country actually inhabited by them, the miners are constantly disturbed at their work. "Impis" every now and again make their appearance at the mines, threaten the Zambezi boys employed with death, and order all work to be stopped. Deeper in the country these troubles would be intensified and miners would work at the risk of their lives.

The Matabele people have proved a curse to whatever country they have settled in or near. Their lust for blood and slaughter is ever on the increase. With no industrial arts of their own they prey on the weaker and less warlike tribes around, robbing them of the fruits of their industry and their flocks and herds. There is hardly a month in the year, but their impis are out harrying the timid Mashona and Zambezi tribes. They destroy the towns and with savage glee assegai the unresisting people. All are murdered, except girls and children whom they carry off for slaves. Sometimes when these fiends can put sufficient restraint on their passions, a certain number of adults are spared. These are employed to carry loot and drive the captured stock ; but when they arrive within easy distance of their own country, and carriers and herds are no longer required, they are stabbed to death in cold blood.

The time has arrived, when in the interests of humanity the paramount power in Africa should either take upon itself the government of this magnificent country, or grant the Charter, that is now being applied for by men able and willing to take upon themselves this vast responsibility. Then in place of the deadly reign of terror, established by the merciless Matabele, there would succeed the peaceful and benign rule of an enlightened people. The industrious and intelligent though timid Mashonas would emerge from their rocky fastnesses and dwell once more, secure in the open. Tens of thousands of busy pushing white men would pour into the land, repopling the territories laid desolate by the savages now devastating the country. And the problem, the solution of which has hitherto defied the great European powers, would be practically solved. The slave trade would be doomed. With its rivers spanned by bridges, and a railway from the Cape to the Zambezi, civilization would light up the land, and our continent no longer dark and silent would throb with ceaseless industries. The fruitful plains and valleys of Matabeleland and Mashonaland would teem with well-to-do agriculturalists, large towns and villages spring up at various centres, and Africa the birthplace of a new and sturdy nation would eventually take a prominent place in the councils of the world.

