

**RHODESIA OF TO-DAY; A
DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENT
CONDITION AND THE PROSPECTS
OF MATABELELAND &
MASHONALAND**

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Rhodesia of To-Day; A Description of the Present Condition and the Prospects of Matabeleland & Mashonaland by E. F. Knight

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E. F. KNIGHT

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MATABELELAND & MASHONALAND

revised by
E. F. KNIGHT

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PREFACE

FOR the first seven months of this year, that is, for nearly the whole of the rainy season and for a considerable portion of the dry, I was travelling in Matabeleland and Mashonaland. I entered the country by way of Tati and Bulawayo, and, after having wandered some twelve hundred miles throughout its length and breadth, went out by Manica and Beira. I was thus enabled to gain a fair knowledge of this the first occupied and first to be developed portion of the vast territories which are within the sphere of the British South Africa Company's operations. It is my intention to summarise my experiences in this little work, and to present a general survey of the country as I found it. On my return to the Cape Colony and to England I met

numbers of people who were anxious to learn from me all they could concerning the region I had left ; among these were miners from California and Australia, traders, farmers, artisans, men of all degrees and conditions, who were being attracted to South Africa by the Matabeleland boom. They said with justice that, hearing so many contradictory reports, it was a most difficult matter for them to arrive at the truth. Was Mashonaland, they asked in their perplexity, the healthiest country in the world, or was it as pestilential as the West Coast ; were the Matabele goldfields to surpass all others, or was there but a delusive sprinkling of surface gold ; was the Beira route into the country the most advantageous one, or had the railway proved a complete fiasco ; and did the majority of travellers perish when wading through the malarious swamps of the tsetse fly belt which lie between the High Veldt and the present terminus of the Beira railway ? I found that even among generally well-informed

people in South Africa there existed a remarkable misapprehension of the facts, and a very natural distrust of all the conflicting rumours that came down-country.

In another work I purpose to give the history of the Chartered Company's vast enterprise; but in this little book I will merely endeavour, while bearing in mind the numerous questions that were put to me by intending emigrants and others interested in Matabeleland and Mashonaland, to briefly set forth the conditions that will be met with in both territories, to give such results of my information as may be of service to some of those sanguine adventurers who are at present flocking into what once was the kingdom of Lobengula.

My thanks are due to the Editor of 'The Times' for the permission he has kindly given me to reproduce in this book portions of articles which I wrote for that paper.

E. F. K.

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SKETCH MAP OF MATABELELAND AND MASHONALAND *to face p. 1*

RHODESIA OF TO-DAY

I

NATIVE LABOUR

23
I WILL commence this work by describing the present condition and the attitude of the natives in Mashonaland and Matabeleland; for that we should secure their friendliness and obtain their labour at a moderate cost are matters of the first importance to the white settlers.

Up to this year the progress of Mashonaland has been kept back by the perpetual menace of the Matabele raids. Capitalists hesitated to invest in so dangerous a land; it appeared a reckless venture to send valuable mining plant to the rich reefs on the ever-disturbed border. In cases where men attempted to develop their properties and put up batteries, repeated Mata-

bele scares would interrupt all work for weeks or months at a time, the native labourers deserting *en masse* to take refuge in their mountain strongholds.

But these harassing conditions exist no longer, and there are already many signs to show that the Matabele war has produced an excellent effect in Mashonaland. While I was at Fort Salisbury several deputations of headmen came in from all parts of the country to thank Captain Duncan, as Acting Administrator, for all the blessings which the Chartered Company's victories had brought to their people. The Mashonas, I found, were everywhere acting up to their faith in our power and will to protect them for the future against all marauders, whether Kaffir or Portuguese. There is no longer any difficulty in obtaining native labour for the mines, or any risk of the work being interrupted by the panic caused by a threatening foray. I observed in several districts that these timid creatures, who hitherto had dwelt in their almost impregnable villages on the summits of the granite *kopjies*, and who, knowing that a