

RHODES AT PORT ELIZABETH
January, 1897.

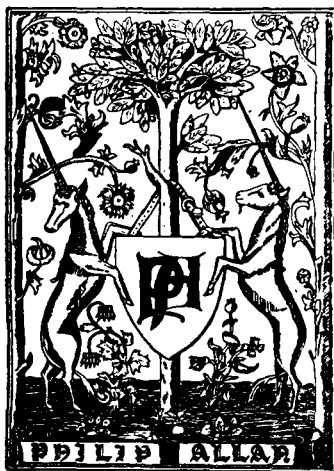
Frontispiece.

RHODES

A Life

BY

J. G. McDONALD



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FOREWORD

THOSE continents which cradled the oldest civilisations hold the deepest mysteries ; and the story of Africa, where nations, creeds and peoples have come and gone, adventuring from the long-ago days of Biblical lore down to our own busy times, remains one of the greatest romances of our world, with much still to be unfolded.

Africa has been called cruel, perhaps rightly. She sets a high standard and has no use for weaklings. Those men who made names for themselves in Africa—there have been very few ; indeed it has been the grave of many reputations—were all immensely above the average in intellect, in breadth of view and character. Towering above all others of this, our Western, civilisation, comes Rhodes, the greatest Empire builder we have known ; one worthy to be ranked with Alexander and Caesar.

In common with every strong man, Rhodes had enemies in plenty ; but the bitterest of them all would have echoed the words of the ex-German Kaiser who, after a conversation with Rhodes, said, ' There goes a man.'

Civilisation in South Africa, where Rhodes's Imperial work was accomplished—though his dreams had vaster boundaries—had insignificant beginnings, but it is now advancing from all points of the compass towards a future that no man can foresee.

The Cape of Storms was at first considered as a mere annoyance to mariners, a point of land against which seas were always beating, which must be rounded on the voyage to India. Later, when re-christened the Cape of Good Hope, it was recognised as a useful place whereat to grow vegetables for the supply of the Dutch East Indiamen. The success of

this industry sent the Dutch settlers seeking and finding still more valuable land up-country. The English came; gold and diamonds were discovered in remarkable abundance; in many cases it was found that the former had been worked centuries before. These and other mineral discoveries brought numbers of adventurers to the country from overseas, especially from Great Britain, and thus the foundation of our Imperial expansion in Africa was laid.

Just as one cannot walk even a few steps along those age-old footpaths which, beginning at the sea coast, twist and turn right through the heart of Africa, without remembering the Phoenicians and the merchants of Ophir; so I feel that in the opening pages of this volume reference must be made to the glamour and the inspiration of the country where Rhodes lived and dreamed, became inspired and worked.

No adequate 'Life' of Rhodes will be possible for another fifty years. Many of his ideas and schemes were aimed at objects so far ahead that time must pass before it can be seen whether all the results he sought were attained. It is for the benefit of those future historians that I have been emboldened to write this short account of his astonishing career. In doing this, I do not ignore the admirable biographies by Sir Lewis Michell and Mr. Basil Williams, and Mr. Ian Colvin's *Life of Jameson*. These authors had first access to many letters written to and by Rhodes, and to other documents bearing on his intimate life, and have made use of them with absolute discretion. For an understanding of the early incidents of Rhodes's career such authorities are indispensable, and I have made bold to quote liberally from them in order to illustrate a period antecedent to my own friendship with Rhodes.

I desire also to make acknowledgments to the following authors: Howard Hensman, *Cecil Rhodes*; 'Vindex,' *Cecil Rhodes: his Political Life and Speeches*; H. Marshall Hole, *The Making of Rhodesia*; Gordon Le Sueur, *Cecil Rhodes*; Philip Jourdan, *Cecil Rhodes: his Private Life*; Sir Thomas Fuller, K.C.M.G., *Cecil Rhodes: a Monograph and a*

Reminiscence; "Imperialist" and Dr. Jameson, *Cecil Rhodes*.

As far as possible the sources of quotation have been acknowledged in footnotes to the pages where they appear. If this has been omitted in occasional instances I desire to express regret.

I became associated with Rhodes about twelve years before his death, and in the course of the last six of these saw a great deal of him in Rhodesia and elsewhere, and during my connection with him I kept an intermittent journal in which I set out briefly many of the incidents described and such of his sayings as appealed to me. I may therefore claim a fair knowledge of my subject, but many of his friends, if they could only be induced to do so, could tell the story much better, and it is with considerable diffidence that I set my narrative forward. I do so, however, in the hope that some continuous record of Rhodes's epic career and amazing work for South Africa will be of interest to the many who desire a 'Life' of this sort and because I am sure the world will want to know for countless years more and still more of the man whose last will and testament continues to excite both hemispheres.

J. G. McDONALD.

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