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Notes on Matabeli-Land

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people rather preferred eggs that had been kept. Notwithstanding that the people had suffered as frightful, if not a more frightful, famine than any that had happened in India of late years, that they had gone through two or three most terrible insurrections that had swept like a simoon or an earthquake over whole provinces and devastated them, yet there was such an astounding power of vitality in this industrious race that they had sprung up again, and in a few years covered the ground with fertility and produce of every kind. He believed that China, which had endured so much and yet had prospered for certainly some 2000 years, had still a great future before it. It was true that it had not adapted itself very readily to the innovations which modern civilisation would introduce, but Galileo's words might nevertheless be applied to them—"E pur si muove"—it did move, and was moving. Although the people did work their coal mines in a very miserable and insufficient way, digging out the veins in what was technically called adits by horizontal levels, the country possessed what would no doubt be a source of future power and wealth—ironstone and coal lying in close proximity over large fields. That had been the element of England's national development and power; but it was possessed in quadruple extent by China, where there were coalfields extending over thousands of square miles, and ironstone everywhere. He thought the time was coming when China would, with the help of European machinery, and with all the resources that European civilisation could give it, develop her coal and iron industry. The Chinese Government was not at all unaware of the resources which the country possessed.

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*Notes on Matabeli-land.* By (the late) Captain R. R. PATTERSON.\*

I ARRIVED at Gubuluwayo, the capital of the Matabeli, on the 27th August, 1878.

Matabeli-land is at present governed by the king Lobengule. It is bounded on the north by the Zambesi, on the south by the Sasha, on the east by the Sabia, and on the west by the Zonga rivers; forming an irregular square, of which each side measures about 400 miles. The country is rich in natural resources. The soil is good; it is well watered, has a fine climate, and trees of great variety and size. The mapene, mimosa, and baobab are of great size. The breadfruit-tree, palms, cotton, olive and all kinds of wild fruit-trees also flourish, and there are immense forests of large trees. The Mashona and Tati districts are reported to contain gold in considerable quantities; iron also is plentiful.

A range of mountain flats commences in the Mashona country, runs south-west, breaks up and ends in thousands of kopjes formed of huge blocks of granite piled up most fantastically, and is well watered. In this part of the country are fastnesses from which it would be difficult to dislodge fairly armed and determined occupants. The two days by

\* Being the rough draft of a report, in Captain Patterson's handwriting, found among his papers on the return of his waggon to Pretoria, after his death, and communicated by the Colonial Office. An account of his death is given by Sir Henry Barkly, *ante*, p. 243.

waggon, occupied in crossing this belt, gave an ever-changing panorama, with magnificent scenery.

The population is estimated at 200,000, composed of three classes:—  
 1. The Abazanzi, who are the aristocracy, descended from the original Zulus who invaded the country under Masilikatzé; these amount, say, to one-fourth. 2. The Abentla, who are of Bechuana race, taken prisoners by Masilikatzé on his way from the south-east, but who are now incorporated in the nation; say one-fourth. 3. The Amacholi, composed of various tribes, the original inhabitants, now the servants of the Abazanzi; say one-half. The number of fighting men is 15,000.

The people are spread evenly over the country, in small towns created from time to time by the king, who assembles near him the young men, forms them into regiments, drills them for four years, and then gives each regiment a location where to settle.

The people own cattle, sheep, and goats in limited numbers. The women till the land, and with little labour produce splendid and sure crops. The men labour but little, their occupation being eminently warlike; regiment after regiment is periodically launched at their neighbours, and they make war in the most savage and ruthless manner, sparing only the children, whom they carry off as slaves, burn the towns, and drive away the cattle. One hears tale after tale of torture and cruelty. As I make this note, a string of prisoners is being brought to the king, and I see the children tied neck to neck in file; one woman and her baby, for some unusual reason, are of the party, babies being generally dashed to pieces for amusement, and as being too young for any useful purpose.

But this is nothing more than what could be expected from a people belonging to the fierce Zulu race, brought hither by the late king Masilikatzé, and who now occupy a country rudely wrested from others. Nothing from childhood upwards but a life of bloodshed and blows, and religious rites of the most cruel kind.

Death is inflicted for the slightest offence, and a cruel people being governed with a rod of iron, they become more and more cruel. The king, in telling me of his difficulties in securing the friendship of white people, said: "You know we have only one punishment, and you white people object to that."

To become Christians, to amass property, indeed to improve in any way, is highly dangerous in Matabeli-land.

The government of the country is almost personal: over each town is appointed an Induna, who reports the most trifling occurrences direct to the king; sometimes light cases are tried by the Indunas, but all verdicts require his sanction. Anyone incurring his grave displeasure by change of habit of life, amassing property, or anything approaching rivalry, is murdered in the most simple and open manner by the body-guard acting under his orders. This is of constant occurrence; one

example may suffice. Umtagan, a great Induna of Kutwayo, whose only crime was supposed sympathy with Kuruman, obeying the king's summons, was, without warning, killed on the road by the messengers.

Gubuluwayo, the capital, is situated near the centre of the kingdom, on the crown of a circular hill. The king's residence near the centre is a house built on the model of the white people's; the huts are the usual circular Zulu hut. The houses of the white traders are spread about at considerable intervals outside the town.

Gubuluwayo is only occasionally occupied by Lobengule; he passes a great portion of the year in temporary towns, built where fancy may direct.

The king is a son of Masilikatzé, and is about thirty-eight years of age; he is a large heavy man, with a powerful though sensual face. Nearly naked, with his rifle in one hand and assegai in the other, he looks the impersonation of dignified savagedom; but when he likes, he can assume a pleasant, even fascinating manner. As a young man, and for some time after he became king, he associated much with white people and adopted their dress. He built for himself a house, welcomed them to the country, and ensured their safety. Of late a change has come over him. With the return to a garb of a few strips of monkey-skin, he appears to have resumed an analogous condition of mind, rejects all improvements, restricts trade, discountenances missionaries, and does not defend white men from attack and insult. Whether this change is one of real feeling, or is a political design, is difficult to say. Surrounded by men still greater haters of civilisation than himself, he is a man of whom we can have little hope. Prophet, priest, and king for evil, he is omnipotent; all property centres in him.

The relations of Lobengule with other tribes are most unsatisfactory. Before arriving in this country, Masilikatzé conquered the Bechuana. The Matabeli have ever since claimed the large tract of country on their western frontier extending even to Lake Ngami, disputing its possession with Khame; four years ago one of their armies overran it. They hold the Bamangwato in great contempt. Their eastern boundary is constantly pushed further by warlike inroads. The Mashona can offer no resistance; it is only the Banyaié, a south-eastern tribe, occupants of the Mashona Mountains, who have as yet been able to hold their own. Umzila and Olangapooma, Zulu chiefs, east of the River Sabi, alone would be able to oppose any attack, perhaps successfully. The Matabeli do not attempt to cross the Zambesi.

Trade is conducted on two systems, one by means of stores at Gubuluwayo, and the other by waggons travelling with the king as the chief customer, or visiting hunters in the veld and the various towns scattered over the country. Complaints made by traders and travellers, to the British Government, of the Matabeli attacks, robbery, and insults, I find are very general; but the residents at Gubuluwayo have not participated

in the movement to make them known; this, I think, arises not so much from better treatment as from fear of bad results to their trade; indeed it is asserted that the king has much restricted his trade operations in consequence of the recent complaints.

The law here is that no stranger can travel or hunt without the king's permission and the payment of a tax, variable at his discretion; still it is a fact that expeditions having complied with these rules, have been attacked and plundered. The king's version is that when he hears of people going into his veld without his permission, he sends out a regiment to bring them to him, and, in doing so, that they have occasionally exceeded their orders. They, on the other hand, have been known to say that although the king had given them written credentials to that effect, still they were obeying his last and real word. It is almost impossible to arrive at the truth, especially when one remembers that the property of the king himself does not escape. The instruments he employs are such arrant thieves and scoundrels, that they avail themselves of every excuse to rob and plunder. Such is their dislike to white people, that I do not consider either lives or goods secure.

The Mashona country is inhabited by a peaceful industrious people, skilful in the working of iron, makers of baskets of artistic shape, and growers of cotton which they weave into serviceable cloth. The country is said to be very fruitful, splendidly watered, and with large plateaux of open flats; similar, in fact, to the country of the Orange Free State.

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### GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

**Projected Journey of M. Soleillet in West Africa.**—M. Paul Soleillet, who recently returned to France from Senegal after a determined but unsuccessful attempt to penetrate, via Timbuktu, into Algeria, will start on a fresh expedition in December next. This second journey will be undertaken under the patronage of the Senegal Government, who recently voted a sum of 800*l.* to M. Soleillet to enable him to return home for the benefit of his health, and to procure the necessary outfit for his fresh expedition. On his last journey M. Soleillet reached Ségou, but was forced to return from that place. On the next occasion he intends to make another attempt to pass by way of Ségou, and if turned back, he proposes to try again and again until he succeeds. He is especially anxious to examine the little-known country between In-Çalah and Timbuktu, in connection, it is said, with the Trans-Sahara railway project.

**Belgian International Expedition to the Congo.**—Owing to the difficulties of transport from the east coast of Africa into the interior, the International African Association are about to make an attempt to forward supplies by way of the Congo. They have accordingly fitted