

# WHERE LOBENGULA RULED

ALL ABOUT MATABELELAND  
AND ITS PEOPLE IN 1908.

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**B**ULAWAYO.—Stand with me in the public square of Bulawayo in front of the bronze statue of Cecil Rhodes, and take a look at the changes that are going on in Rhodesia. We are in sight of the hill upon which the notorious African tyrant Lobengula had his kraal, and within an hour's walk of the crocodile pool into which he threw, tied hand and foot, any of his subjects who had offended him. The pool was full of man-eating reptiles and the criminals thus executed needed no burial.

**BULAWAYO IN 1908.**  
All around us lies the Bulawayo of 1908, the chief city of Rhodesia, and the biggest South African settlement above the Transvaal. The ground is flat, and the wide streets extend out on every side. The place was planned by Jameson, the explorer, and he made every roadway broad enough so that a bullock cart of 16 span could turn around in it.

The buildings are comparatively low, and the width of the streets makes them look lower. The most of the stores are of one and two stories. They are built of stone and brick. A few are of granite, but the chief building material is a red sandstone from quarries nearby. On one side of us is the Grand hotel, which covers half an acre. It is lighted by electricity generated by a light plant operated by water falls nearby, and it has all the modern improvements. A little farther over is the Bulawayo club, a big building with a structure of one story with wide verandas about it. We have friends in the city and they have put us up there for one day free of cost, and as the charge for three days will be \$2.50, and that all we drink will be at club rates.

Bulawayo is a town of clubs. It has several social organizations, a cricket club, a tennis club and a race track which is two miles around. The town has now 5,000 people, and its citizens need other exercise than being chased by a native black with a spear in his hand.

Over there at the right is a public library which has more than 5,000 volumes, and down the main street is an excellent museum showing the mineral and agricultural resources of the territory, with its wild beasts and birds and all sorts of things concerning the natives. There are four Masonic lodges, seven churches, a musical and dramatic society, a chamber of mines, drill halls and markets. The stores are large and the windows well dressed. There are three large banking corporations, a chamber of commerce, several newspapers and all the accompaniments of a thriving community.

The assessed value of the town runs up into the millions, and with the development of Rhodesia it will eventually be a considerable city. In planning its abundant room has been allowed for growth; all the land within four miles of the boundaries has been reserved as a commonage, upon which the town cows can pasture free of charge, but which cannot be sold as farms. It is upon this ground that the cricket, bicycle and football parks lie, and there are held the races and other amusements.

## RHODESIA'S WONDERFUL PROGRESS

This gives one some idea of how Rhodesia is progressing. It is charged that the development has been comparatively slow. It is not so when one remembers that this whole territory is only two decades from absolute savagery. Twenty years ago, neither life nor property was anywhere safe, and the country was owned by negro tribes which were warring with one another. Today order is everywhere kept, and the natives have been reduced to peaceful subjects. The country has now something like 2,500 miles of railroads,

and in southern Rhodesia alone there are more than 3,000 miles of wagon roads. In Matabeland and Mashonaland something like 21,000,000 acres have been surveyed by the government, and in addition there is a large amount of land which has been surveyed by private owners. All along the railroad towns have sprung up in which are government offices, banks, churches, hotels, schools and public libraries. There is a fine hospital here at Bulawayo and others at Salisbury, Umtali, Victoria and Gwelo. There are cottage hospitals in other towns. The postal service has been extended until it now reaches every part of the country, mails being sent by runners to the borders of Lake Tanganyika. In southern Rhodesia there are 17 money order offices, and during the past year something like 1,500,000 letters and post cards were sent to other parts of South Africa, while \$50,000 went over the seas. The post office revenues last year were in the neighborhood of \$100,000. Moreover, southern Rhodesia has now post office savings banks, and her deposits in them already exceed \$300,000.

As to telegraphs, the rates are cheaper here than in the United States, and one can send messages to all the chief parts of the country. There are about 50 telegraph offices opened, and the telegraph wire in use is almost long enough to reach through the earth to the equator. Last year about 200,000 telegrams were received and dispatched, and the revenue from the telegrams and telephones approximated \$100,000. As to the railroad service, I will speak about that in the future. It is excellent for a new country, and one can travel here almost as comfortably as at home.

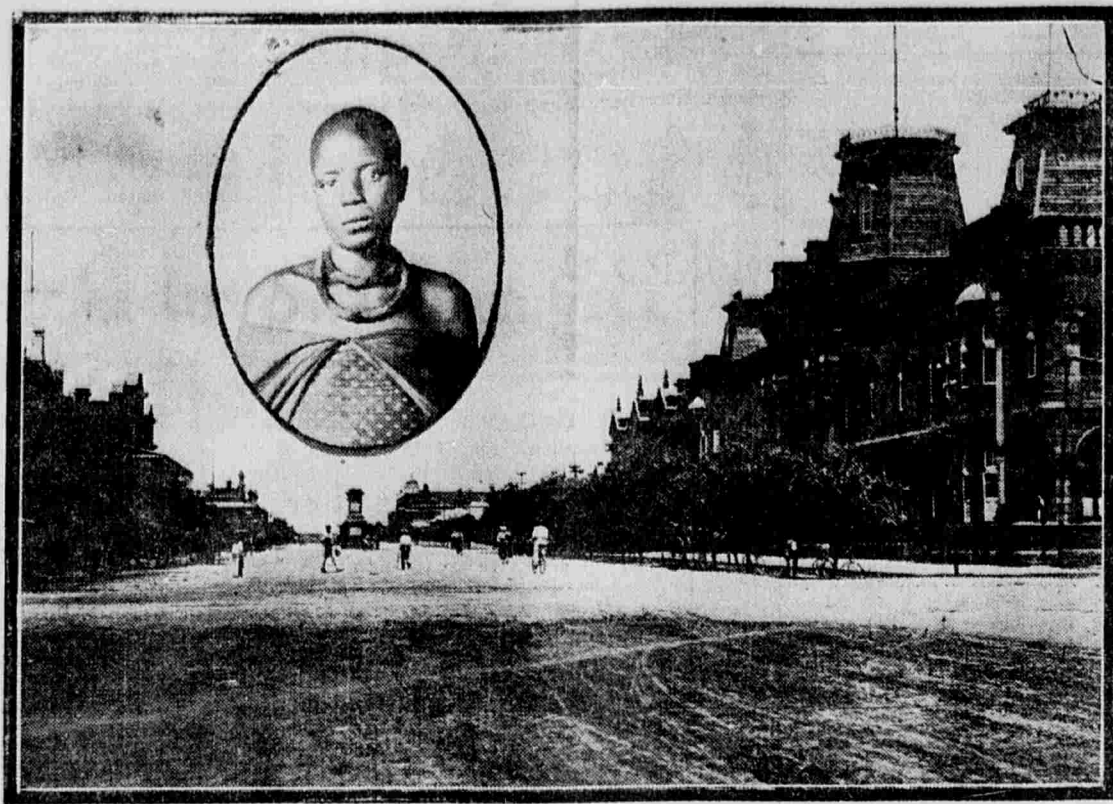
## HOW LOBENGULA RULED.

Indeed, it is hard to realize that it is now only 15 years since this was the capital of the Matabels. I rode out today to the government house, which stands on the very site of the great hut in which Lobengula lived and ruled. It is reached by a wide drive shaded by trees, which were planted at the direction of Cecil Rhodes. It is on a hill, and in the grounds is the very tree under which this savage African king sat upon his biscuit-box throne and gave forth his decrees of life and death. Some of his numerous family still live, and I have a photograph before me of his favorite daughter. She measures 5 feet 11 inches from her bare yellow heels to her shaved black crown, and is fully as lusty as the old tyrant was in his prime. There are many men here who knew Lobengula. He was enormous. He stood six feet tall and weighed about 300 pounds. He was so fat that when he squatted on his biscuit box his flesh hung down in folds over his hips, and when he walked his elephantine frame rolled from side to side. He had bulging blood-shot eyes, thick lips and was the personification of cruelty. Stanley describes him as one of the blood-thirstiest of African kings, and Frank Thompson of Natal, who negotiated the mining rights of Mashonaland of him for \$500 a month, gives an incident of how he treated a native warrior who had drunk some of his beer. It was at the time of a great dance and Lobengula's women were bringing the beer to him. This man snatched a gourd and took a sip. The offense was reported to the king and the criminal was dragged before him. As he stood there Lobengula looked at him and said:

"You drank the king's beer. That nose of yours is guilty. It smelt the beer. Let it be cut off." And with that the executioner cut off the man's nose. The king then said: "Those eyes of yours saw the beer. They are a temptation to you. They are guilty. They should be put out." And with that the executioner did the gouging.

"You have now heard with your ears that it is not allowed to drink the king's beer. Your ears are of no good

The City of Bulawayo and its Modern Improvements—The Progress of Rhodesia and its Future—Lobengula and His Crocodile Pool—How He Punished His Subjects—A Talk With a Native Commissioner—Queer Tests of Witchcraft and Terrible Punishments—Men Eaten by Ants—How the Natives Live—Marriage a Matter Of Bargain and Sale—Woman's Rights in South Africa and How the Native Wives are Protected by the Courts.



MAIN STREET OF BULAWAYO IN 1908, AND ONE OF LOBENGULA'S DAUGHTERS.

to you, and they shall be cut off." After this the man was beaten within an inch of his life and he dragged himself away and died.

## STORIES OF LOBENGULA.

I understand that Lobengula was fond of beer. He was accustomed to make his white visitors drink with him, and every one who called was expected to take three cans of beer and to eat three plates of grilled beef. The cans each held a gallon and they were served between the plates. The king would not drink champagne, and he gave all that was presented to him to his wives, of whom he had a large number.

Lobengula was supposed to own all the country. He had vast herds of cattle. He had control of the mines, and every one was subject to him. After his death the natives surrendered, and since then they have been comparatively quiet, except for the revolt of 1896, which was caused by the witch doctors. Lobengula himself claimed to be a witch doctor. He said he could make rain, and he did this by cooking a kind of devil's broth of crocodile livers, snake skins, frog toes and hippopotamus fat. As the steam of this compound went up he petitioned the

gods to open the clouds and the rain was supposed to fall.

Speaking of rainmaking, shortly after the statue of Rhodes was erected in Bulawayo there was a drouth, and the natives believed that the lack of rain came because Rhodes' head was uncovered, saying that the spirits would not offend the great man in that way.

## THEY BELIEVE IN WITCHCRAFT.

All of these South African natives believe in witchcraft and every tribe has its witch doctors. In coming here I traveled for one day with the chief native commissioner of Rhodesia, a man who has charge of all the negroes of Mashonaland. He tells me that the Mashonas have trials by ordeal to detect witches. One of the tests is heating a stone red hot and making the accused lick it with his tongue. If he is guilty his tongue will blister. If not he is innocent. Another test is used especially for thieves, is to drop a stone in a pot of boiling water. The accused must take this out with his bare hand, and if the hand shows no sign of scalding the man is cleared. If his hand burns he is adjudged a

thief and punishment follows. The natives believe in the justice of these tests and submit to them. A white trader of the Zambesi told me that he missed a shirt not long ago and accused his native servant of stealing it. The boy said he was innocent, and the trader believed him. The next day the boy came in with his hand terribly scalded and confessed his guilt. In his cooking he had overturned a pot of hot water upon himself and he superstitiously thought that the burning occurred on account of his theft.

## EATEN BY ANTS.

One of the punishments decreed by the witch doctors in some regions is that the witch must be eaten by ants. This is done by taking the accused man out into the wilds, smearing him with honey, and tying him to a tree. The honey attracts the ants and they complete their work by biting the flesh from the bones.

Another punishment is laying red-hot stones on the bare stomachs of the guilty ones, and among some of the tribes instances are known in which the witches have been roasted over slow fires.

I understand that the witch doctors are by far the most important men of the tribes. They are supposed

to be divinely appointed and especially authorized to use magic for the good of the tribe. Every witch doctor has not undergone a course of training before he can practice, and he must exhibit certain idiosyncracies which prove him fitted for his job. He falls into trances and is supposed to have access to spirits. He has a special headdress of fur and feathers, and has charms of many kinds about his neck. He must be able to handle poisonous snakes. He must be a sleight-of-hand performer and able to make the people believe he has miraculous powers. As a rule he kills more than he cures, but this does not seem to affect his reputation.

## A TALK WITH A NATIVE COMMISSIONER.

The government has white officers who watch out for the interests of the natives. I talked with one of these, a Mr. Taberer, who has been managing the negroes for many years. He tells me that the whites are now respected and that the natives are better off than they were in the days of Lobengula. So far, comparatively little of the country has been taken up by white settlers, and they plant their corn and graze their cattle about where they please. They live in little kraals or villages ranging in size from 20 to 100 huts each, and their cornfields are scattered over the country outside the villages. They gather their crops at harvest time, and store them in little granaries made of mud, thatched with straw. Such a granary is about as big around as a hoghead and four or five feet in height. It is raised upon stones and is entered by a hole near the roof, the hole being stopped up when the corn is put in, and opened from time to time as the grain is needed. These granaries are often built on the tops of high rocks such as are found throughout Rhodesia. This aids in keeping out the damp and the vermin.

## WIVES SOLD FOR CATTLE.

The native commissioner tells me that marriage among these negroes is largely a matter of bargain and sale. The groom pays the bride's father a certain sum for his daughter. The usual price for a strong and good looking girl is four cows, or if she be the daughter of a chief, she may bring as much as five or six. It used to be that girls were often betrothed and bought when they were babies, the grooms paying a part of the purchase price at that time and the rest by installments. In such cases the fathers agreed to rear the girls. This practice has been stopped by the government, as it resulted in many an old man possessing several young wives, and also as the girls frequently fell in love with young men, and the strife between their old prospective husbands and the young lovers, whom they wanted as husbands, was great.

As it is now, a girl must be of a certain age before she can be sold. In some tribes she is married at 13, and in others she must be 15 before she is ready for wedding. I suppose that 14 or 15 might be put as the average age of marriage among the Matabels.

The native women are gradually acquiring more rights under the rule of the white men. In the past they had but few that their husbands were bound to respect, but today the government grants divorces on the ground of infidelity and cruelty and a woman may bring her husband into court. Among the various tribes of South Africa divorces are frequent. There are some in which a woman can be divorced if she takes milk out of the family supply without asking her husband, and some in which fidelity is punished by death. In such a case the husband can demand back the cattle he paid for his wife, or if he cannot get the cattle he can claim all the children as his possession. As a rule most of the natives think quite

as much of their cattle as they do of their wives.

**A POOR LABOR SUPPLY.**  
The natives are bad farmers. They do not form a good labor supply. In raising their own crops, they have no plowing. They merely hoe the ground over and drop the corn. The crop is weeded once or twice, then allowed to ripen. Nothing is known about fertilization, and as yet, the negroes are too ignorant to use it. There is a demand for them to work in the mines of Rhodesia, and there is a demand for them for the building of railroads. The natives have been increasing in number under the rule of the white men, and that they are better off ever before.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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