RHODESIANA

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Account of a Journey in Central Africa

(Zambesi Mission)

by Father Francis Berghegge, S.J.

Dearest Parents,

After an absence of four months we have at last returned to Pandema Tenga; somewhat weakened and emaciated, but still alive and in good health.

On October 7th, 1881, in the morning, still early enough to enable us to say Holy Mass, the waggon drew up in front of the presbytery of Pandema Tenga. This waggon which had come to Lischuma to fetch us, had brought a treasure for me, viz. your letters and quite a parcel of copies of "de Tijd". There were two letters from Mother, January 10th and March 10th; two letters from John, January 10th and March 9th; and one letter from Mary and Ferdinand, May 29th. Maybe I shall receive more letters shortly, for there are three waggons due from Mr. Westbeach for Pandema Tenga, which may be here within a month. Besides your letters there were also letters from R. P. du Toit and at Pandema Tenga I also found other letters from several Fathers in Holland.

You could not believe with what joy a letter from the dear Fatherland is greeted, above all here at the Zambesi where an opportunity for the receiving and sending of letters so seldom occurs.

In my last letter I promised you a faithful account of our expedition to the Barotses. Do not expect to hear many particulars about the morals, habits, laws and institutions of that tribe. According to my opinion, a stay of four months among a people whose language one cannot speak nor understand, is insufficient to form a precise and true notion of such things; neither can I bring myself to copy others who, equally unfamiliar with the language, have only spent some six weeks in the place. Later, if alive and in good health, I hope to be better able to judge about these things.

In the afternoon of June 6th, 1881, we left Pandema Tenga with our waggon. Before reaching the Matetse river, we passed the spot where the previous Friday a dreadful incident had taken place. Stuurman, a boy belonging to Wankie's people, had served his time with a coloured man and was on his way home carrying a rifle, the wages for his work. On the road he was met by Jacob, a Zambesi boy, whom we had just hired and that morning sent ahead in order to announce our arrival to the people who were to bring us to the other side of the Zambesi. The rifle which poor Stuurman carried excited his cupidity. Pretending that he was afraid to go so far alone, he turned back and accompanied Stuurman on his way to Pandema Tenga. They were already quite close to Pandema Tenga when Jacob at last saw his opportunity to execute his evil design. With his assagai he inflicted on Stuurman three wounds, one of which was most frightful. The deadly weapon had been driven with such force into the abdomen that it passed right through the bowels and pierced also

the left side. Having caught hold of the rifle Jacob now fled. Though so badly wounded the poor victim gathered enough strength to drag himself to the proximity of the houses where he collapsed and shouted for help. People soon came to him and R. P. Depelchin, Br. de Vijlder and myself also ran to the spot whence we had heard the cries for help. First we tried, but in vain, to put the protruding bowels in their place. Soon we saw there was no hope of saving the boy's life and naturally we were intent on saving his soul. We declared that we would take care of him; we sent for a blanket on which he was laid and had him carried to one of our huts. With the aid of Peter, the driver, who understood and spoke Stuurman's language, we instructed him as much as was possible and then R. P. Depelchin baptised him conditionally and gave him the name of Joseph. To bandage the wound as well as possible was all that we could do any further that night. The next morning we found on closer inspection that the bowels also had been torn and lacerated by the assagai. Nothing could therefore be done. That morning I went to see him a number of times, and since he understood a little of Cape Dutch, I made some ejaculations for him to repeat after me and spoke to him of Heaven which now would soon be his place of abode.

When about noon I went to the hut in company of R. P. Depelchin to give him the last Holy Absolution, we found him dead. That same evening we buried him with the usual ceremonies of the Church.

It is my firm conviction that his soul went to Heaven. He seemed well disposed and listened willingly to all we said to him. As we heard later, the murderer who had returned to his tribe was delivered to Wankie and put to death.

After having crossed the Matetse River, we outspanned to await the darkness of night. Don't think that we were planning mischief; the darkness was to protect our oxen against the tsetse-fly which, according to report, dwell in the sandhills ahead of us. Seeing that the tsetse-fly is quite common also in some districts on the other side of the Zambesi, I must give you a brief description of this tiny insect which is deadly to domestic animals. The tsetse is a little bigger than the common house-fly but more slender in form. The abdomen has yellow and dark-red stripes which run horizontally and lose in deepness of colour as they approach nearer to the back. Underneath, its body is whitish, the eyes are brown, and the wings which are coloured dark-brown, fold together as the blades of a pair of scissors. The latter is an infallible sign whereby to recognise the tsetse-fly. For the rest it is enough to have once been in a tsetse-infested district not to be easily mistaken afterwards. After piercing the skin the insect pours a fluid into the wound which in most cases is fatal to all domestic animals with the exception of goats. For man, the sting of the tsetse is more painful than that of a bee, but with no danger to life. An ox, stung during the winter, will usually continue unharmed until the rains begin, but then the usual phenomena appear and the poor beast is a certain victim of death. A sure antidote is so far unknown. Since, however, the tsetse keeps within a limited area, one can push pretty far ahead with the help of a good guide, and, if the district inhabited by the tsetse is not too extensive, one can cross it with the oxen in the night.

It is advisable that a guide should have visited the district quite recently, for the fly does not stay in the same place but moves with the game. We did not therefore, inspan the oxen until after sunset and at midnight we reached a place called Kuruma where we outspanned. On June 8th we arrived at Lischuma. We could not take the waggon further, because from here to the Zambesi there is no track and the place is so thick with the tsetse that the same night we had to send back the oxen and waggon. This was our first night in the open, but not the last.

June 9th. After Holy Mass, R. P. Depelchin, April, our interpreter and myself took the road to the Zambesi. We were accompanied by some boys who carried our belongings. I reckon the distance can be covered in four hours. Arrived at the river we fired a shot to inform the ferry-man of our arrival. After a long delay he came across in his hollowed-out tree-trunk in order to take the necessary information. He wants to know who we are and what is the object of our visit, so as to inform the induna of Mambova. The latter decides whether the white-man may be put across. He himself must meanwhile send word to Sescheke to inform the indunas there; at the same time a messenger leaves for the King in order to hear whether he will receive the stranger.

What formalities. In the afternoon we sent the boys back to Lischuma in order to fetch Br. de Vijlder, Peter the driver and some goods that had remained behind. At the point where we reached the river, the Chobi joins the Zambesi so that we had there a wide expanse of water before us. That night we slept under a tree called masongona, remarkable for its rare fruit, which has the shape of a bologna sausage, and is suspended from the branches by means of a long stalk. Oh, that it had been real sausage, for we had not a crumb of meat left.

June 10th. In the very early morning before the wind gathers strength, we say Holy Mass. At about 1 o'clock Brother de Vijlder arrived, and Peter and the boys with the rest of our belongings. A waterbird with a wingspread of some six feet was brought down by Br. de Vijlder's shotgun and appeared for dinner. It was tough and oily, but quite welcome food for hungry stomachs.

June 11th. After a wearisome day in the wilderness, we and our belongings are at last ferried across after sunset in a couple of so-called boats. The Barotse have wretched boats. A tree-trunk, cut to a point at both ends, hollowed out inside and flat-bottomed, sums up their shipping. There is no lack of cracks so that the water oozes in from all sides, and if the wind happens to be a little strong, a wave comes from time to time to wash your feet. When you consider that a small hatchet is their only tool, you will agree that the result is quite good; but comfortable it cannot be said to be. Such a boat has from one to five oarsmen, who operate their oars standing up. One is at the front and his task is heaviest, for it requires a sharp eye and a strong arm to see and avoid in time all obstacles, such as rocks, tree-trunks and hippopotami (here called sea-cows). Just behind him the passenger takes his seat, not on a bench or a stool, but squatting on the floor which he covers as a safety-measure with mats and skins. The goods which are piled up in the middle of the boat, afford him a support for the back, whilst the back part is occupied by the rest of the

oarsmen. If you happen to have good oarsmen, progress is fairly satisfactory and if the boat is not too small you can pack in quite a lot of goods. But unless you wish to see all your goods spoiled someone must be continually busy bailing out the inflowing water.

June 12th. Having passed the night under a tree we say Holy Mass. The baggage is put in a couple of boats and Peter also embarks to keep a watchful eye on things. The rest of us continue on foot to Mambova where we arrive at midday. Makomba, the induna of Mambova receives us very kindly; beer is not wanting and at night you could notice, in a number of the blacks, that there had been a drinking-bout that day. If you happen to feel a desire for Kaffir-beer, use the following recipe: keep the kaffir-corn soaked in water until it begins to shoot, then dry it and pound it to flour. This flour is kept boiling for a considerable time in a sufficient quantity of water, and then the drink is ready for use. It has the colour of ditch water and the taste of sourish milk, at least when it is good.

As you may perceive, it is a very nourishing drink. When the weather is hot and one is on trek, I appreciate one or two cups full, but not more. The blacks prefer a pot to a cup; it is unbelievable what quantities of this liquor their stomachs can hold.

At Mambova we are to await tidings from Sescheke. Two huts surrounded by one reed fence are put at our disposal. We store the baggage in the huts but we ourselves prefer to sleep in the open within the fence. Not without reason are we loath to sleep in a hut which just before was inhabited by Kaffirs whose principal virtue is not cleanliness.

June 13th. In the morning Holy Mass. Makomba's brother goes in a boat to Sescheke to inform them of our arrival. At 10 a.m. he returns accompanied by about 20 boats, all manned with people from Sescheke. Seeing that the indunas of Sescheke were also in those boats, it was useless for the messenger to proceed further. The indunas of Sescheke were commissioned by the King to inspect all the ferries or places where people are put across the river, and to render the crossing more difficult by destroying a great number of boats. These indunas told us that their work would be finished in three or four days and that we could then go with them to Sescheke. It was the first of a series of lies which we were still to hear.

June 14th. Holy Mass. The women are busy to-day making beer, for it would never do to let the guests from Sescheke depart without a drink. In the afternoon we receive a visit from all these fellows. When they had departed towards evening Makomba arrived with a dish of porridge and fish. I tasted it and I can assure you that porridge dipped in fish-sauce together with a piece of fish is quite tasty.

June 15th- June 27th. As you may judge from the dates, the absence of the Sescheke boats was a little longer than three or four days. For us it was a tedious time; no books and to make matters worse the company of the blacks the livelong day. Br. de Vijlder and April passed their time hunting; they brought home a few roan-buck and birds, so that there was no lack of fresh meat. All that time nothing of importance occurred. On the 16th a child was

born to Makomba's brother; in our honour it was called Moruti (teacher). The 18th he himself leaves in order to inform the King of our arrival and myself had the cold shivers one night, but it was of no importance. Mambova, which together with the surrounding small kraals counts from 500 to 600 souls, lies at about 150 yards from the river; the soil is particularly fertile and the gardens produce a rich harvest of kaffir-corn. After a couple of hours marching, one finds game in abundance, while the Zambesi contains much tasty fish, so that Mambova must be a terrestrial paradise for the kaffir whose greatest happiness consists in abundant food and pots full of kaffir beer. For the rest I must say that the people of Mambova have made a favourable impression on us and I believe that if we could establish ourselves there, our work would not be without fruit. For the present, however, this cannot be thought of for the King will not permit us to go anywhere else before we have established ourselves in his neighbourhood.

June 27th. The people from Sescheke at last return. Their glorious enterprise, the destruction of a number of boats, is finished, and they now bring some confiscated goats, sheep and hens.

June 28th. Day of rest after so much fatigue.

June 29th. At about 11 a.m. we leave for Sescheke. The boats are just as I have described them; moreover the sun is hot and nowhere do the banks of the Zambesi, which here are parched and barren or covered with long rushes, afford refreshment to the eye. Towards sunset we reach an island where we are to spend the night. All the boats, those of the Sescheke people as well as ours, arrive, one after another; only of the boat which Br. de Vijlder occupies, no trace can be found. We remain waiting until it is pitch dark, but in vain, so that at last we retired to rest, having commended him to the good God and his angel guardian.

June 30th. In the early morning, before sunrise, the Sescheke people and April go off for a buffalo hunt. The night before, they had, from the island, discovered a great number of these animals and they now wanted to see whether they could bag a few. Soon after the hunters' departure we heard shots and we saw a troop of perhaps more than 100 buffalo come to the river. They went into the water but half-way they made a right-about turn and went to land again. It was a pleasure to see the animals gallop through the high grass; whilst we did our best to watch the movements of the hunters and of the game, we suddenly noticed one boat making for the island; it had but two oarsmen and April was seated in it. This foreboded little good. And indeed April had been wounded. A furious buffalo had wounded him on the innerside of his right thigh; the wound seemed fairly serious, because the horn had penetrated three or four inches into the flesh. I had to act the doctor. Yes, do not be surprised! Formerly I could not see a drop of blood without fainting and now the sight and treatment of wounds no longer makes any impression on me. It is the African air, or rather, necessity which has effected this change. The first thing to be done was to wash the wound carefully; then, for want of something better I put some olive-oil on the wound and applied a poultice of kaffir-corn flour. According to April's report, the accident had happened as follows. In his hunt he happened to come on a

wounded buffalo which lay hidden in the high grass. As soon as the animal perceived the hunter it threw itself on him. Flight was out of the question, there was not even time to shoot. All April could do was throw himself on the ground and to keep a tight hold of the grass, in order to prevent the buffalo from throwing him up into the air. This succeeded in part; the buffalo was only able to lift his legs and lower trunk from the ground. Having thus lifted him twice, he caused the wound in a third thrust and perhaps the enraged beast would have killed him had there not arrived at that moment a couple of kaffirs at whose appearance the buffalo took to flight. April may thank his lucky stars; had the thrust been a couple of inches higher the horn would have penetrated the abdomen, whilst now it was but a serious flesh-wound.

A little later Br. de Vijlder also turned up and told us his experiences. His boat had not been able to keep up with the others. In the hope of still reaching the island, his men continued to row in the dark, but they missed the way and landed in a creek which appeared to be a favourite haunt of hippopotami. In a wink the boat was surrounded by four of these monsters which made for them with terrifying roars.

The boys fled at once with the boat into the high rushes, whilst Br. de Vijlder gave a few shots from his revolver which the hippos seemed to respect somewhat; at least they stopped the pursuit. It was now useless to try to get on. Fortunately they noticed a light in the distance; up to their waist in the water and through the reeds they made their way to the bank and guided by the light they reached the hut of a Bushman who received them hospitably; at once he kindled a big fire where they could dry themselves, and he gave them food and drink. Having passed the night there, they left early next morning and reached our island still in the forenoon. About midday the hunters returned, twelve buffalos were the reward of the dangers and the fatigue they had endured.

. **July 1st.** Early in the morning every one takes up his place again in the boats, and without mishap we reach Sescheke at 2 p.m. A fairly large hut is offered us as our abode. In the evening the head-induna sends us a calabash of honey. He is truly a good man and well-disposed to the white man, but too young (24 to 25 years of age) and, though head-induna, without influence. It is Ratau who possesses all power at Sescheke and he, unfortunately, is a greedy, avaricious fellow, who barefacedly tells the most palpable lies and who loves only the belongings of the white man. And yet we are to respect him, for he is appointed to lead the visitors to the royal abode in case an approving answer is given. If therefore he is against you, you may expect much trouble on the way.

July 2nd. We say Holy Mass in our new abode; no doubt it was the first which was ever offered in Sescheke. May that Holy Sacrifice bring down God's grace; it is there badly needed. To-day again a calabash of honey from the induna.

July 3rd. Holy Mass. April's wound improves daily, especially after I set three leeches on a few spots around the wound which were swollen. That black man was as frightened as a child by the leeches. Just as at Mambova we have visitors here all day. Amongst other things the kaffirs ask us why we hold no religious services. They had asked us the same at Mambova. We give them to understand

that first of all we do not know the language and secondly that we cannot teach before the King has appointed us a place of abode.

I believe, it is not quite a desire to learn, but rather curiosity which makes them ask for a religious service. Coillard (a French missionary) who spent a month here and was complete master of the language, taught them to sing some psalms; probably the kaffirs would have been pleased to hear our voices as well. That singing of psalms has not done much good; when the induna has drunk too much beer, the religious sentiment usually comes to the surface and expresses itself in bellowing a few sounds which are supposed to be an imitation of what Coillard has sung.

July 4th-August 17th. Instead of going through the events day by day, I would rather tell you briefly whatever of importance I saw and heard during our prolonged stay at Sescheke. I need not tell you that they were days of extreme tediousness. No books, nothing that could give diversion.

Naturally we had time enough to walk through Sescheke at our leisure. Formerly when Sepopa had his residence there it must have been quite clean. But that came to an end with Sepopa; now it is simply filthy. It is difficult for me to gauge the number of inhabitants of the town; a large number were just then absent and were engaged in the fields and gardens which had to be prepared for the approaching rainy season. I have heard, however, that the inhabitants number about 800. The town occupies a large area, for it consists of seven different kraals, each of which has its own induna and is separated from the others by a field. The huts are the neatest I have seen so far in Africa. But of all these things I shall tell you in later letters; the present letter is already getting too long and possibly there is not much more time left for writing, since R. P. Depelchin's departure for Tati may take place very soon and he is to take the letter. Br. de Vijlder and April provided us with fresh meat; especially Br. de Vijlder who shot 12 antelope besides several birds. The rest of our food we bought from the kaffirs: kaffir-corn, maize, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, beans and from time to time milk. There was no lack of food and yet we felt the want of bread. A greater want however was that we had not enough wine to allow us to say daily Mass; at first we said Mass only on Sundays and Feastdays and on August 7th our last Holy Mass was celebrated. Thus we were also deprived of this consolation. Since, at my departure, I promised to write to you everything, the good as well as the bad, I must tell you that at Sescheke all of us were ill in a greater or lesser degree: fever and bilious attacks. I was laid up for some five days in which I could keep down neither solid nor liquid food; I did nothing but vomit; once all the bile was out, the illness was also at an end. The bile is the big thing one should watch in this country; people who have lived here for years declare without hesitation that all diseases proceed from irregularity of the bile. On August 12th the messenger from the King at last returned. He brought the message that the King wished to see us and that we should go up without delay. But it was August 17th before Ratau was ready to go.

August 17th. In the forenoon we leave Sescheke. We have only two boats at our disposal; rather too little. Towards evening we disembark; a shelter of branches is soon prepared and after we have taken our supper, each of us

to his grass-bed to seek a refreshing sleep. If sleep does not come so readily, one can occupy oneself with counting the stars twinkling overhead.

August 18th. The same story to-day as yesterday; the whole day on the river. This evening we halt near a kraal called Katongo. On Petermann's map this place is mentioned by the name of Sekhose. We shall often meet with different names for the same place, so I take this opportunity to ask you not to attach too much importance to the names I give. I mention them as I hear them from the mouths of the natives, without judging any other name as incorrect.

If you consider that the kingdom of the Barotse is inhabited by different tribes each of which has its own language, it is easily explained how one and the same place receives different names.

August 19th. To-day we lie-to. Ratau himself now understands that we cannot get ahead without a third boat. And so he goes to the kraal to ask for a boat which is promised and also brought towards evening. The Zambesi here is teeming with crocodiles; in the afternoon when the sun was nice and warm, we counted eight of them together on a sandbank opposite us. April and Br. de Vijlder go hunting. April shoots a buffalo. Br. de Vijlder comes quite close to a troop of buffalo, but mindful of April's accident and seeing no tree in the neighbourhood where he might flee for safety in case of need, he saves his shot and thinks it wiser to return home empty-handed.

August 20th. Yesterday we received indeed a boat but no oarsmen. But no fear; Ratau will easily see to that. Early, before sunrise, he rows with his men to the other side. There they surround a kraal, steal all the meat they can find and take five boys and two women prisoner. The women are soon set at liberty; but the boys are forced to come in order to row the new boat, which they have done quite willingly all the way there and back. I expressed my surprise to Peter about such strange way of acting. Oh, he answered, "Ratau is in Government Service".

At about 7 o'clock the whole expedition was finished and we were enabled to continue our course. Towards evening we reached the first rapids (Katima Melelo). This name is given to places where throughout the width of the river there is a dam of rocks and boulders. Some just out above the water, others lie hidden underneath, which depends, of course, a great deal on the height of the water. And since there is also a slight fall, the water flows more rapidly; hence the name. It is admirable to see how these black boys know how to find everywhere the suitable spot for crossing.

Is there anywhere in the opening between two rocks and the flow of water not too strong, or is there enough water above the boulders, they will stay quietly in the boat and work their passage across by means of their long oars, laughing and talking all the whole. But it does not always go so easily. Sometimes all the rocks are at the level of the water leaving no opening anywhere, or the opening is long and narrow so that the current is too strong. Then it requires skill and labour. One, two, three—in a second the boys skip out of the boat, their simple dress saves them the trouble of taking off socks and trousers. One pulls at the front, the others push alongside and at the back, and shouting "Come on, come on", they push until the boat is over the obstacles. We passed the first rapids without any accident.

August 21st. To-day is a hard day. We are to cross the Nambive Rapids. The live-long day rapids and sand-banks. At one of these rapids my boat becomes full of water, at another R. P. Depelchin's boat nearly capsizes. In such an accident there is indeed no danger of life, for the boys are excellent swimmers and they will risk their own life to save yours, but one can hurt oneself badly on the rocks, and no one is keen on taking a bath fully dressed. In the afternoon things get too bad altogether. They are obliged to unload the boats and to carry the baggage a good distance over land. We, too, take the safer route over land and leave the boys to push and carry the empty boats across the rocks. When this job was finished we put up camp. The rest was well deserved.

August 22nd. In the forenoon we pass again over some rocks. If I remember well, they are the Hombive Rapids. In the afternoon we reach a district infested by the tsetse-fly. They soon find their way to the boats and inflict on us many a painful sting. I pity the poor boys; practically without clothes they have to suffer the flies.

August 23rd. Rapids and tsetse-fly. April to-day shoots a buck, called puku. This kind is very numerous here, but, I have been told there are only two specimens of them in Europe. The skin is mine for on that condition did I lend April my Snider rifle. The boys have prepared it nicely, hair and all. It serves now as a mat beside my bed. It is a pity Holland is so far, otherwise I should sent it to you.

August 24th. To-day the last rapids, called Kale. Again we are obliged to travel some distance overland. Ratau does not wish us to stay in the boat, and he is right, it is a dangerous crossing. And yet it came off without the least mishap. Towards evening we approached the Gonje cataract, which is also mentioned on Petermann's map. Here everything must be put ashore, boats included. They have to be carried across country for nearly an hour, in order to side-track the fall.

August 25th. In the morning we make our way to a kraal called Sjomma, which is situated on the other side of the fall. There are a few good-sized trees on the bank; and so it is the most suitable place to pitch camp. Our belongings are to be brought across by our own boys, but they won't stir a finger for the boats. This is the work of the inhabitants of the kraal, whose duty it is to carry by land, free of charge, all the boats that arrive here. After a couple of hours' rest, R. P. Depelchin and I walk back in order to inspect the waterfall. The induna of the kraal has given us a man as guide; we are moreover accompanied by a whole crowd of inquisitive natives. In order to come close to the fall we had to wade a fair distance through the water. We take off our boots and stockings and pull up our trousers; that should have been enough to keep dry and still I got wet through. The river bed consisted entirely of slippery stones, not always close enough together so that there were holes here and there. Just near such a hole I slipped and went under. All the people rushed forward, but before they reached me I was on my feet again. In order further to prevent such falls, two of the people held me by the arms, one went ahead to give warning of dangerous places, whilst a fourth walked just behind me in order to give me support in the back in case of need. Thus we came quite close up to the fall.

Along the Southern bank the water drops perpendicularly, along the Northern side it finds its way through a steep channel. In the rainy season the height of the water is about 10 meters. The sight of that waterfall did not repay us for the trouble we had taken to go so far; when you have seen the Victoria Falls, you will think little of the Gonje. We started therefore quickly on our return journey and before we reached our shelter, the African sun had dried my clothes.

August 26th and 27th. During these two days the boats are carried across; between 30 and 40 men dragged one boat after the other to the appointed spot where they are launched again. During the night of the 25th a thunderstorm came up, accompanied by heavy rain which kept on until about 10 a.m. Such a storm is not pleasant; sleep is out of the question. First, you roll up your bedding, then yourself in order to find some shelter at any rate under your umbrella.

August 28th. We leave Sjomma. There are now no more rapids or waterfalls ahead, but you see from the foregoing that navigation on the Zambesi is not to be thought of.

August 29th, 30th, 31st. were ordinary days. Only, during the night of the 30th a thunderstorm and rain came to vary the monotony, although not in the way we should have wished. Further on we are out of the wooded country; there is only reed to kindle a fire. Both banks of the river, which from Katonga to Sjomma presented at times a magnificent spectacle, are now again most monotonous.

September 1st. In the afternoon we arrive at a kraal called Nalolo, where Matanka, the eldest sister of the King resides. She is an important personage, in power the King's equal. We send a man to inform her of our arrival. He returns with the message that we may betake ourselves to the kraal towards evening. At the appointed time we are there and take our places in the Kotla where we are made welcome by dance and song. The induna of the kraal and other authorities, amongst whom is also Matanka's man, come one after another to greet us, but her majesty remains invisible. At last she sends the message that it has become too late to receive us, moreover that her child is ill, and consequently she wishes us to return the next morning. In that case you could have left us at our shelter, I thought and so I returned to our landing-place, not too kindly disposed towards Matanka.

September 2nd. To-day's reception has completely removed yesterday's bad impression. We had hardly arrived in the Kotla, when Matanka, who is addressed as Morena, the same title as the King, came outside the fence which surrounds her house and sat down over against us. She was bare-headed and bare-footed, but for the rest dressed in a European skirt. Her husband, in his Portuguese dinner-jacket, looked like a dressed-up monkey. Having saluted her we offered her a coloured blanket which was readily accepted. We then had to follow her within the enclosure, where she lay down on a mat and we sat down beside her. Here she ordered a great pot of kaffir-beer to be set before us; but since none of us are topers, we soon passed the pot on to the attending people who knew better how to make away with it. We could act thus without transgressing in

the least the rules of good manners; once you have been given something, you can dispose of it according to your own pleasure. She gave us also an ox for meat. When it began to be hot, she invited us into her house, where it was delightfully cool. Nobody was allowed to follow us here; so that we and our interpreter April were alone with her. We now got into an intimate conversation She appears to be a good woman and animated with human sentiments. She impressed it upon us to educate the people well that the king would no longer be obliged to have so many of them put to death. She has therefore, an aversion for that shedding of blood in which the Barotse's according to report, yield nothing to the Matabele. At last we returned to our camp and arrived just in time to prevent a frightful accident. The people of a neighbouring kraal had set fire to the grass and driven on by a strong wind the flames made straight for our camp. With blankets and wet grass we extinguished the flames. Though all worked as hard as they could, we managed to check the fire only with the greatest difficulty. If the fire had reached our baggage, which included some gunpowder, everything would have been irretrievably lost. In the evening we went back to the kraal to say farewell to Matanka.

September 3rd. In the morning we leave Nalolo and call a halt about mid-day, because the river is not navigable any further, the water being low. We walk an hour overland, pitch our camp and send two boys ahead to the kraal to inform the people of our proximity.

September 4th. At noon the boys return with the news that we may come.

September 5th. Early in the morning we leave the camp. It was a long and difficult journey. Only in the afternoon did we reach the kraal which is called Narruwen. On Petermann's map I do not find it indicated, but it must be between Katongo and Sibonta, which are both given on the map. They had built a new house for us, of which we took possession, after first having sat outside for a couple of hours to satisfy the curiosity of the crowd that had gathered to see us.

September 6th. To-day is a day of rest. One of the indunas sends us a pot of beer. The king sends us an ox to kill; he further sends us mansja, a whitish root, which, to my opinion, is nothing else than arrowroot. In any case it greatly resembles it.

September 7th. In the morning we are invited to an audience with the king. We.find his majesty in the kotla, surrounded by his indunas and the majority of the inhabitants of the kraal. In front of his armchair was planted, in the ground, a stick with a bunch of white feathers on top; probably to protect him from all magic. The reception was brilliant. Having saluted the king we took place at his left side, and after having expressed his joy at our arrival, the sign was given for the music. Three drums and. the silimba were lustily beaten (the description of their musical instruments I keep till later on; this letter is becoming too long), neither were songs wanting. One of the men went in amongst the musicians and sang a song of which we, of course, understood not a word. His voice was not unpleasant, but his song was monotonous. When the enthusiasm was at its height an old fellow left the ranks and began to make

grimaces and other movements which were meant to represent a dance. You see, it was quite festive; music, song and dance. Naturally it was not the time to speak of our business and so, when it had lasted long enough and the sun began to be hot, we took leave of the king and returned to our house.

September 8th. In the morning and in the evening we pay a visit to the king. His majesty asks for various things, amongst others for a plough, which we also promise to give him.

September 9th. The king sends someone to ask for beads and a piece of white limbo. On his part he sends a fat sheep, and Seiomba, the head-induna offers us a calabash of honey.

September 10th. In the morning the king arrives, accompanied by all the authorities of the kraal. The house is full to overflowing. I cannot tell how many pots of beer were emptied that day. It was a great honour but a troublesome one which the king did us. In the afternoon all these distinguished guests took leave and in the evening the king sent us honey, mansja, fish and beans.

September 11th. The king sends us some sugar cane. In the afternoon we go to visit him; we have a private interview during which our establishment in his country is discussed. All that we ask for is granted. Time must tell whether all those beautiful promises will be fulfilled.

September 12th. In the afternoon the indunas come to inspect the present which we have destined for the king; two rifles, two fancy blankets, ten lbs. of gunpowder, percussion caps, coloured beads, etc. It meets with their approval and in the evening a few boys come to fetch the articles.

September 13th. In the morning we are invited to come to the kotla. There we find the king surrounded by his chief indunas and a vast concourse of people. Each of the indunas make a speech wherein they said how pleased they were with us and they advised the king to allow the baruti (teachers) to settle in his country, but they also expressed their fear lest we should not return. The same fear animated the king. We assured them, that, were no unforeseen circumstances to prevent us, we should undoubtedly come to settle for good in his country. When the meeting was finished we expressed the desire to return to Pandema Tenga, which the king at once granted. The next day was fixed for the departure.

September 14th-October 7th. Nothing much of interest occurred on our return journey. Seeing that Ratau was now much more in a hurry than in going up to the king's place, there was no great opportunity for shooting game, with the result that we were without meat for six days running. Our only food then was kaffir-corn flour boiled in water to make a porridge. I believe that not even a Trappist could have soiled his conscience at our table. However we got successfully through everything and we arrived whole and alive in Pandema Tenga.

You see that the result of our expedition may be considered most favourable. The king earnestly desires that we shall settle among his people. He has promised us a place in the neighbourhood of his kraal and given permission at the same time to open a second station later on at Sescheke. He has moreover promised us every support. But I am not going to indulge in illusions; I have been in Africa only for a brief period, but long enough not to believe before I have seen things.

In any case it will cost much trouble to make good Christians of these people; lying, excessive immorality, drunkenness and laziness are their capital virtues; but God's grace is powerful, only pray for us that we whom He has chosen as His instruments, may respond as faithfully as possible to our vocation.

I hope that you will be content with this incomplete account of our journey. As I said at the beginning of my letter, I purposely write nothing about customs and habits; I have also omitted the description of many things, for I believe that I shall be better able for that later on.

R. P. Depelchin, who on October 11th left for Moemba together with Br. de Vijlder, Mr. Walsch and a couple of drivers, returned on October 11th. Of P. Terorde's (R.I.P.) belongings nothing much remained. The worst of all is that the thieves have also carried off the chapel. Moemba received them very kindly and gave back what was left. From all we have heard, we need not ascribe P. Terorde's death to poison; his death can be explained very well without poisoning. Moemba also expressed his willingness to receive new teachers.

It is a nice spot for us; only ten days from Gubulawayo, and, it is said, no more than five days from Bonga on the East-coast, where there are also Priests at present. But at the moment we cannot think of it; we are not even numerous enough to occupy properly the stations that have already been accepted.

You will notice that I have written this letter in such a way that you can give it to anybody to read.

I have done so purposely, because they wrote to me from Holland that many take an interest in our mission and are anxious to read our letters. Before we depart for the Barotses I shall again have occasion to write to you.

Farewell!

Your loving son,

(Signed) F. Berghegge, S J.

Pandema Tenga, November 21st, 1881.

Norton District in the Mashona Rebellion

by Colonel A. S. Hickman, M.B.E.

An address given to the Rhodesia Africana Society on March 14th, 1958.

The main substance of this paper was given in an address sponsored by the Norton Farmers' Association at the Norton Country Club on the evening of the 26th February last.

There was of course no Norton District until recently and in the days of the Mashona Rebellion there was no settled farm except that of Joseph Norton Norton. The scope of my research has extended south and east to Hartley Hill on the Umfuli River and to Matshayangombi's country, which lay to the east of it.

I must go back to the year 1896 when the Matabele Rebellion broke out in March. The European residents of Mashonaland had so little fear that the craven Mashona would rise that the Rhodesia Horse, 200 of them, volunteered in a body, and no less then 150 were allowed to go to the relief of Matabeleland under the command of Lt.-Col. Robert Beal, formerly of the Pioneer Corps. Cecil Rhodes went with them and they left Salisbury on the 6th of April, less than two weeks after they had received the call for help.

During May, however, the witchdoctors and agents of the Matabele rebels had been stirring up trouble, and had persuaded many of the chiefs to take up arms against the Europeans. They spread the rumour that they had wiped out Beal's Column, and that all Europeans in Bulawayo had been massacred. Their strongest supporters were Chief Makoni of the Rusapi area and Chief Matshayangombi, whose main kraal was near the left bank of the Umfuli River, about 36 miles south-west of Norton. Matshayangombi was closely associated with a powerful witchdoctor, Kagubi, known as the Mondoro or "lion-god", who lived in his area. There was also a notorious witch named Nyanda, who lived in the hills near what is now Concession in the Mazoe district.

The first murders were committed at Matshayangombi's kraal on the 15th of June. The Native Commissioner of the Hartley District, David Enraght Moony, had heard that three natives who were trading at this kraal, had been killed the day before, and went to make enquiries accompanied by an African detective called January. When he saw the hostile attitude on his arrival he decided to clear for his life, but unfortunately delayed to feed his horse, and whilst he was saddling up was attacked, and after a stiff resistance, killed. January escaped and fled to a cave. From this hiding place he saw Messrs. John Stunt and A. Shell, who were prospectors, arrive at the kraal the same afternoon. They were.well received, but when least expecting it, were seized by the rebels, bound hand and foot, and whether alive or dead, were thrown into the Umfuli River. Certainly their bodies were never recovered.

The following day, the 16th, more murders were committed, notably at the Beatrice Mine and on the Hartley road.

In those days Hartley was sited in the vicinity of Hartley Hill, about 20 miles to the east of the present Hartley. It was linked to Salisbury by a very rough wagon track which ran south-west through Van Rooyen's Poort, and crossed the Hunyani River near what is now the dam wall of Lake McIlwaine, but was then part of Norton's farm, Porta. Traces of it still remain running through the Norton area, and I made an appeal to those through whose land it lies to do their best to preserve it.

The people of Hartley, being the nearest outpost to Matabeleland, had already taken precautions and had established a laager on Hartley Hill, which they occupied as early as April the 24th, when they heard of the murder of a prospector not far from the Matabele border. They were therefore not caught by surprise when the rebellion began, but on the contrary had already assured Judge Vintcent, the senior Company official in Salisbury, that they would maintain their position in spite of his advice to them to retire; but he sent them 12 Lee-Metford rifles and several thousand rounds of ammunition to supplement their private supplies. You will hear more about these Hartley people later in this narrative.

Next in sequence of events was the murder of the Norton family, and it is very fitting that the township and district surrounding it should be named in their memory.

Joseph Norton Norton was a Yorkshire landowner, who came from Pledwick Hall near Wakefield. He was born about 1867, had been a student at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester and had been to America. By his own account he had visited Mashonaland on behalf of the Chartered Company before the Pioneer expedition of 1890, had come up by wagon from the south, and left the country by the east coast route, travelling by sea from Beira to Cape Town. Apparently he had then followed the Pioneer Column, and on account of these trips had been granted 6,000 acres of land for each of them, and then bought another 5,000 acres. The total of 17,000 acres comprised the Porta Estate. He began to farm this land at the end of 1890. It is not clear when he met his future wife, but they did meet during a sea voyage, and were married at Pretoria. Mrs. Norton's maiden name was Carol Driffield, and she also hailed from Yorkshire, from the small town of Huntington, near York. It is thought that she had come to South Africa as a governess. She preceded her husband to England, where their daughter, Dorothy, was born in 1895. She had three sisters who were alive in 1950, and a brother Lt. William Driffield, R.N., who was drowned about 1896, when rescuing an M.P. (why we do not know!).

Norton himself returned to England late in 1895. Here he engaged Harry Gravenor as a farm assistant; this man had been a cowboy in Texas, but was also highly skilled as a bee-keeper, and it was Norton's intention to develop apiaries. He also got in touch with George Reginald Talbot, aged 22, who was then a student at the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester, and who agreed to come out with Norton as a pupil, with a view to subsequent partnership. He also belonged to Yorkshire, from Leeds, and it was Norton's land agent, McCracken, who had recommended him from the Agricultural College.

A nurse-companion was engaged. She was Miss L. M. Fairweather, from the York Nurses' Home, who has been described as a comfortable middle-aged body.

Norton, his wife and child, and their retainers, left England early in February, 1896, and voyaged to Beira. They travelled up the Pungwe River by shallow-draught steamer to Fontesvilla, then over the railway construction line to Chimoio, where they bought a wagon and span of oxen, by which they completed their journey to Salisbury. They took on two Mozambique natives as servants; one was cook and one was voorlooper. They were accompanied by three magnificent Irish Wolfhounds (two bitches and a dog), and had left in Beira furniture and ready-made bee-hives to be sent on later.

On arrival in Salisbury, Norton engaged another European farm assistant, James M. Alexander, particularly to construct fencing in an attempt to keep out the rinderpest which was then killing nearly all the cattle in the country; he had about 1,000 head of scrub cattle.

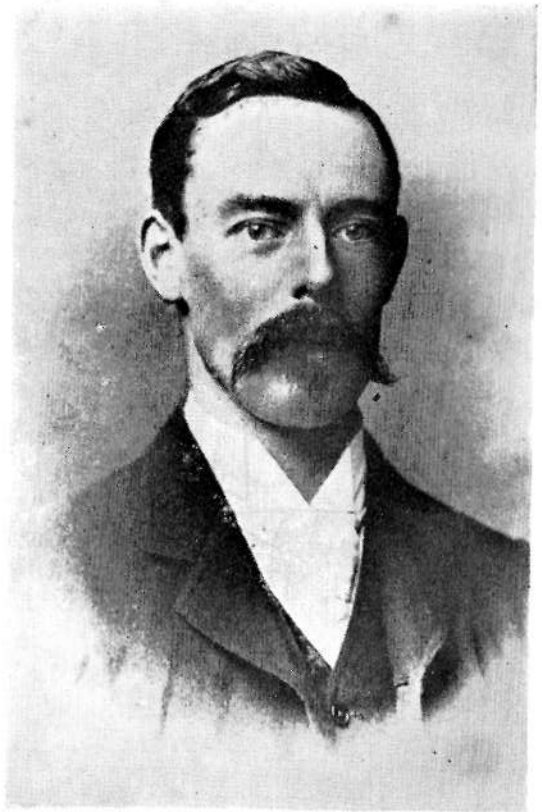
The Nortons bought some provisions and went out to Porta, where they set up their establishment at a beautiful place just north of the Hunyani Poort. The homestead was in a fenced enclosure; the main building had a dining room, the Norton's bedroom was adjacent, and there was a double row of rondavels for the rest of the staff.

There was no suspicion of any danger. In fact the Nortons had invited Hugh Marshall Hole, then an official of the Chartered Company, and his family, to spend the week-end beginning on 13th June at their farm for some bird shooting. Norton, even in those days protected his game, and in fact F. C. Selous of Pioneer fame, had suggested to him that the area should be developed as a Game Sanctuary. Hole, who afterwards wrote "The Making of Rhodesia" and other books about the early days, was unable to drive out as one of his horses was sick, and so sent a note by native runner that he would come the following week.

On the 16th June, after the evening meal, the cook-boy came in to say that all the labourers had gone away. Norton checked on this report, but was not alarmed, as in his experience they had cleared off previously in a body to beer drinks. But he instructed Talbot to cycle to Salisbury the following day, 20-21 miles, see the Native Commissioner, and ask for a native policeman to be sent to get the labourers back on the fencing. He decided himself to go and see the local headman.

So next morning, the 17th, Talbot set out for Salisbury on his cycle; he had also been commissioned by Mrs. Norton to buy her some stamps; he carried his revolver, because the road was only a lonely wagon track.

There was one horse on the farm, and this Norton himself rode to the neighbouring kraals of Nyamwenda, the chief, where most of his labourers had been engaged. He was never again seen alive. At the time of his death Norton was 29 years of age, a most popular and respected member of the European community. Though he was a man of wealth, he was a hard-working farmer, and most efficient. He never spared himself, and expected the same quality of work from his subordinates. For this reason the Mashona may have looked on him as a hard task master, though in fact he was fair and just. It is said that in



Joseph Norton Norton.

Carol Norton.

(From photographs in possession of the Headmaster, Norton School).

ghastly revenge they cut off his hands, before or after he was killed, but I can find no confirmation of this. His body was thrust down an ant-bear hole, but was brought to the surface by wild animals, and was found some months later by C. H. Howell, who had been charged by the Chartered Company in 1897 with the task of settling the Mashona in open country, and preventing them from re-occupying their kopje strongholds. In fact when patrolling around deserted kraals he found some tobacco seedlings and planted them on about an acre of Norton's cleared land. He had a Shangaan native who knew how to cure the crop, and made pipe tobacco and some crude cigars. He was visited by Earl Grey, the Administrator, who took the cigars and arranged for the tobacco to be sent to Salisbury for the troops. Howell claims that he grew the first tobacco in Mashonaland, but quotes Earl Grey as saying "Howell, your tobacco proved a bit too strong for the white troops, but it was issued to the Native Contingent who appreciated it. The cigars I tried out on some of my friends and I hope you never meet any of them!"

To return to Norton's murder, Howell found beside the bones the skeleton of a horse, and some saddlery. He took the bones back to the homestead, and with Inspector Colin Harding of the British South Africa Police, buried them beside those of the family.

There are two versions of the murders at the homestead, but one fact is clear; the Mashona planned to make their attack after Norton had left his home. Marshall Hole, who I am afraid was not always accurate, related that Alexander and Gravenor were put on to herd the cattle on the morning of the 17th, and were thus murdered in the lands. But the Mashona version is that many of the cattle were kraaled near Nyamwenda's, and that the chief was responsible for their herding. They had not been turned out to graze in order to induce Norton to come over and check the position. Talbot's story, as will appear later, puts a different complexion on the affair; he relates that Alexander's morning work was to brand some calves not far from the homestead, and, as will appear, Gravenor was killed with the ladies.

In the meantime Talbot duly reached Salisbury, but found that the Native Commissioner was out for the morning and would not be back in his office until after lunch. He bought the stamps, and made his report at 2 p.m. Then he met a friend, Stewart Williams, the auctioneer, who told him of a rumour that two transport riders had been murdered by natives on the Hartley Hills road, and offered to lend Talbot some horses with which to bring in the Norton family to safety, but Talbot decided that to lead horses would take him much longer than to ride his bicycle, on which he set off as soon as he had heard the news.

Undoubtedly these rumoured murders referred to Benjamin John Fourie and Robert William Alexander van Rooyen, who were both killed on the Hartley road about the 16th of July, the day before Talbot came to Salisbury. Apparently when Marshall Hole heard of these and the Beatrice murders he arranged with the Native Department to send a messenger to warn the Nortons to come in to safety: this man, a native detective, was never seen or heard of again, but there is a story that a native policeman arrived on the scene whilst the murders were taking place, and fled terrified.

Talbot arrived at the homestead about 6 o'clock in the evening, entered the house and put down the stamps on a table, calling to Mrs. Norton, "I've brought you your stamps". He noticed that in the dining room were the uncleared remains of the mid-day meal, but there was an uncanny silence. He came out and then saw that the windows of the Norton's bedroom were broken, and when he went in with drawn revolver found signs of blood, and cartridge cases of two sizes lying about on the floor. As he went out he saw tracks in the dust, where something evidently had been dragged. Following these tracks he came on the bodies of Mrs. Norton, Dorothy, Nurse Fairweather and Gravenor. They had been drawn by bark ropes some distance from the homestead, and left there by the rebels, but had not been mutilated. There was no trace of Norton or Alexander.

The terrible shock of this discovery may well be imagined. Talbot, without making a close inspection of the bodies, lost no time in mounting his bicycle and making for Salisbury. It was just getting dark when he set out, and after going for a mile or so, he saw two natives at the edge of the bush beside the road. He jumped from his bicycle and fired at them, but did not know if he had scored a hit. About six or seven miles on he came upon Tpr. A. L. Swemmer of the Mashonaland Mounted Police, who was riding alone to investigate the reported murders of the transport riders. He turned about and accompanied Talbot, and later they met two more members of the mounted Police, who had been sent out to overtake Swemmer, with orders that all three were to go to Porta to bring back the Nortons to Salisbury. The whole party returned to Salisbury, and Talbot reported first to the Police and then to Judge Vintcent, who was then in bed.

Talbot had had no food since breakfast, and had cycled 60 miles that day. He was in dire need of refreshment, and entered the Albion bar to stand the police a drink and to help himself. The barman was horrified to find him carrying a revolver, so he took off the belt with his gun, and laid it on the counter. The barman picked it up, and in fiddling with it loosed off a shot which broke some bottles!

That same night Inspector R. C. Nesbitt (who was to win the Victoria Cross at Mazoe in the same month) rode with a patrol of seven members of the Mashonaland Mounted Police to Norton's homestead. Here they found the bodies of those who had been murdered at the homestead and buried them. The official Chartered Company's Report on the Native Disturbances states that the bodies had been "hacked to pieces in the most atrocious manner", but this is in conflict with Talbot's evidence, though it is just possible that the rebels had returned to the scene of their crime for this purpose. The police patrol also found the bodies of the two Mozambique servants; these had been mutilated by having their ears cut off.

In the Rhodesia Herald of 1st July, 1896, a denial is published to the rumour that the American (Gravenor) had shot Mrs. Norton, her companion, and the child, but Talbot thinks that this indeed might have happened, after their brave but hopeless defence, and that the denial was put out to spare the feelings of relatives. It appears that Gravenor was with the ladies when they met their death because the bedroom was strewn with empty cartridge

cases from his Colt, as well as smaller ones from Mrs. Norton's pearl-handled pistol.

Nothing is known definitely of the murder of Alexander, though the rebels say they attacked him near the stables. I have no evidence that his remains were ever found, though if he had been killed near the stables—not far from the house—Inspector Nesbitt's men should have found him. In January, 1945, Messrs. Swart and Burger found a five-chambered revolver about 600 yards from the site of the Norton homestead. It was on the left bank of the Hunyani River on the Dam side of the Poort, and was about six inches below the surface. It is very badly rusted but appears to be a Smith & Wesson .38. It is definitely not Gravenor's Colt nor Mrs. Norton's small pistol, and might therefore have belonged to Alexander, though proof is lacking.

It seems as if the facts of the attack on the homestead are that a party of about 20 Mashona, led by a Matabele, advanced on the house and attempted to break in, though why they should have waited until after mid-day is a mystery.

At this time Gravenor was with the ladies, and they put up a desperate resistance with their revolvers, shooting dead some of their assailants. But they were attacked both from the front and rear, and the rebels broke in, killing them all, and after they had dragged the bodies outside, looted the place.

In 1897, through the efforts of C. H. Howell, who got his information from a youth of 14, who had lived at Nyamwenda's kraal, the man who killed Norton, Chaneta, was arrested, near the Zambesi, where he had bolted, and was brought to trial at the High Court, Salisbury. The story then told by the accused and native witnesses was that after the killing of Norton about 25 of them advanced to the homestead. Here they saw Mrs. Norton with the baby in her arms walking up and down in front of the house, and Alexander was by the stables. So they divided into two groups, one went up to Mrs. Norton and asked for food, and one to Alexander and asked for work; then they hit their victims on the head with knobkerries. Miss Fairweather was in the house and fired a revolver from the window. The gallant rebels thereupon fled towards the Poort. Here they rallied and decided to kill Miss Fairweather, as she was the only white person left alive. No mention is made of Gravenor. When they got to the house Miss Fairweather had the bodies of Mrs. Norton and her baby on a bed and was washing their wounds. So they thrust a gun through the window and shot her. This story does not tie up with the fact that Talbot found cartridge cases of two kinds in the bedroom, unless Miss Fairweather used several weapons. Nevertheless Chaneta was sentenced to death. Whilst in the gaol with other convicted murderers they pulled away some of the brick wall and escaped. Chaneta was recaptured, but for some reason was not hanged; possibly this had something to do with Queen Victoria's Jubilee, as I know of the case of Chief Maduna, a notorious Matabele rebel and murderer, who was reprieved for that reason.

Talbot joined the Salisbury Field Force and was a member of White's patrol for the relief of Hartley Hill in July, 1896; between times he was employed in Harbord's Chartered Company office, where he sold stamps and dealt with Revenue. On the 17th September, 1896, he went as guide to Lieut. Pilson's patrol of mounted infantry to operate in the Porta area. Inspector Colin Harding

of the B.S.A. Police also accompanied this patrol by special permission as he was a personal friend of Major C. E. C. Norton of the 7th Hussars, a brother of the murdered farmer. In "Far Bugles" he has given an account of what he saw. The farm was a scene of utter desolation with discarded loot strewn all about the place. He found the burial mounds of the murdered people, disturbed by jackals, and in the evening exhumed the bodies of his friends, and placed them in improvised coffins which he had made with the aid of the soldiers. He then read a burial service over their new grave, and whilst doing so was interrupted by the appearance of two of the wolf-hounds, fearfully emaciated. Talbot says it was possible to identify the body of Gravenor because he wore trousers and Texan riding boots with pointed toes, and his head was bald, whereas Norton had a full head of hair and wore riding breeches. When Norton's remains were found at last they were identified by a gold tooth. The grave is beneath a large umbrella tree in the grounds of what is now the Morton Jaffray Waterworks, and I am happy to note that it is well tended; above it is a Latin cross in granite on which are inscribed the following words:— "In memory of J. N. Norton and Family. Also Nurse Fielding, H. Gravenor and J. Alexander. Died 17th June, 1896."

Somebody was careless about the lettering; Fielding should have read Fairweather.

There is also a large brass memorial tablet to the Nortons and their retainers in the Farmers' Porch of the Anglican Cathedral of St. Mary and All Saints, Salisbury. It is curious to note that the name of Alexander is not included on this memorial.

According to Talbot, who is happily with us today at the age of 84, the Norton homestead was only a short distance up the sloping ground from where the grave is sited. It is probable that the bodies were buried near the place where they were dragged by the natives, and they would not have taken them far. There are no traces of the homestead at the present time, and this is not surprising, seeing that they were constructed mainly of destructible material. Furthermore, in about 1917 when Mr. P. Wilson's father acquired the farm he ploughed up most of this area, seeing that it was cleared land. Nevertheless, on the lower slope of the hill on Mr. Gibb's land, is a considerable terrace which has been levelled, and it is thought it was to have been the site for Norton's permanent homestead; some stone foundations had already been laid.

Two splendid photographs of Joseph and Carol Norton have been presented to Norton School by one of Mrs. Norton's sisters, due to the persistent efforts of Mr. Hall, the headmaster.

When the news of the Norton murders became known in Salisbury on the 18th there was a wave of indignation and alarm, which led to a public meeting. Confidence was restored by the formation of a defence committee, a promise to issue arms and establish a laager and the proclamation of martial law. So the Mashona Rebellion was on.

In view of these developments, and the fact that the Matabele rebels were confined mainly to the fastnesses and caves of the Matopo Hills, Beal's Column was ordered to return to its home base, and Grey's Scouts, raised in Bulawayo and then commanded by Capt. the Hon. Charles White, formerly Chief Commissioner of Police, was sent to Mashonaland.

White's force left Bulawayo two days after Beal's, and reached Salisbury by forced marches on the 16th of July, beating their rivals by a short head.

It was not long before White's men were sent on an important mission, to the relief of Hartley Hill. I have already mentioned that the people there had gone into laager. There were 12 of them all told, of whom the senior was Dr. Newnham, the Company's medical officer, Mr. Edward Thomas Carrick who was acting as Mining Commissioner, Mr. Carlisle, who ran the local hotel and store (for Meikle's, I think), and the remainder were mostly prospectors and miners.

January, the detective who escaped when Moony was murdered, reached Hartley Hill with the news, and with his report most of the native servants deserted; they were mainly Matshayangombi's people. The garrison felt great anxiety for other Europeans who were known to be in the district trading or prospecting, and in particular for Harry Thurgood, who had been Native Commissioner, and was then farming north of Hartley Hill. In the event most of those named in the official report were murdered by the rebels. At this time no attack had been made on the laager, and Carrick resolved to make his way to Salisbury to acquaint the administration of developments and to call at Thurgood's farm to ascertain what had happened to him. Accordingly, at 6.30 p.m. on the 18th of June he set out with A. L. Turner, the assistant store-keeper, who had volunteered to accompany him, and the faithful January. They could not have chosen a worse moment, for by now the Mashona had committed themselves to a general revolt. They reached Thurgood's farm safely, but found the buildings sacked, and no trace of the owner. They sent back a note to Hartley Hill to this effect, and if they had then returned all might have been well; but they were determined to do what they had set out to do. They travelled on for another 20 miles, and near the Hunyani River on 19th June were attacked and murdered by the rebels. On the 21st of July their bodies were found by White's patrol, with the letters they were carrying.

To return to the Hartley Hill garrison. About two hours after Carrick had left the rebels opened fire on the laager from a range of about 200 yards, in fact from the adjacent kopje, which was known as Johnson's because Frank Johnson, the Pioneer Corps leader, had established a mining camp there. Next day the huts were burned by the garrison as they afforded cover for the enemy. The rebels made no direct assault on Hartley Hill, which was a very strong position, and well fortified, but they remained in the vicinity, and harassed the water parties which had to run a gauntlet of fire when they sallied forth daily to a spruit less than half a mile from their laager. Between June 20th and July 5th there was an almost daily exchange of shots between the rebels and the besieged Europeans, and on July 2nd quite a bombardment throughout the night. No casualties were inflicted at this or any other time, largely because the fort was so well planned and built. I have been there, and am amazed that so extensive an area could have been defended by not more than ten men, but they must have become very weary with continual guard duties. There was also a feeling of anxiety because no news had been received from Salisbury. On the 5th two natives who had been sent from Salisbury with despatches the previous day, were pursued and murdered by the rebels in sight of the fort. The garrison

then decided that if no assistance came within the next week or so they would evacuate their position and attempt to reach Salisbury. Fortunately they did not put their plan into operation and on July the 22nd were relieved, and found to be in good health though exhausted.

Charles White was in command of the patrol which relieved them, leaving Salisbury on July the 19th with 65 of Grey's Scouts, and a Maxim, 42 Natal Troop, 60 dismounted men and 19 artillery of the Salisbury Field Force, with a Maxim, a seven-pounder and a gun detachment from Beal's Column, together with 40 Zulus of the Native Contingent.

The Natal Troop was a group of mounted volunteers who had travelled by sea from Durban to Beira, and was originally intended for service in the Matabele Rebellion. Their arrival in Mashonaland at the start of the rebellion was most timely.

This patrol's first encounter with the rebels was about three miles on the Salisbury side of Norton's farm, where they had lined a kopje and fired on the scouts. They were immediately attacked and in the ensuing fight Tpr. W. H. Gwillim of the Salisbury Field Force, who was a watchmaker, and a Zulu, were killed and three Europeans, including Sgt. S. N. Arnott of the Salisbury Field Force (an 1890 Pioneer) and a Zulu wounded.

The Column then moved on and "laagered opposite the fort at Norton's farm". This I quote from the official report, and would be interested to know whether this fort has since been seen or heard of; it is not known to Talbot.

At 2 p.m. the column moved on, having some difficulty in crossing the Hunyani; they laagered for the night 23 miles from Salisbury. Next day, the 21st, they moved on to find the skeletons of Carrick and his companions. They laagered at the Serui River at 11 a.m. and at 3 p.m. moved on. At about 4.30 p.m. the scouts came on about 50 rebels whom they routed with heavy loss, but the remainder came back to their positions to await the main column. They had built rough stone walls overlooking the road, and had had them well stocked with food and ammunition. They also had a bark rope stretched across the road, attached to an empty bully beef tin with a stone inside, "which thus formed a warning bell" as the Rhodesia Herald report puts it. When they fired they were at once attacked and routed with no casualties to the relief column except that a horse and two mules were slightly wounded. The local kraal was burned and in it were found five guns and some assegais, and also property looted from a Mr. J. D. Acland—a bible, prayer book and barometer.

That night the column laagered 12 miles from Hartley Hill.

On the 22nd July they set out at 5.30 a.m. and relieved the Hartley Hill garrison at 9.45 a.m. In 1956 I had the privilege of visiting this fort in the company of the late R. Carruthers-Smith, who had been one of Grey's Scouts on that momentous occasion and had not been to the exact place for just on 60 years. He told me how the troops had galloped up the slope to the fort cheering and shouting. White's patrol remained at Hartley Hill for the rest of the day, and began the return journey next morning, the 23rd of July, accompanied by the Hartley garrison. They had intended to return by way of the Beatrice Mine, and to this end crossed the Umfuli River with great difficulty. On the 24th they pushed on, but instead of finding an open road as they had been led to believe,

they faced broken country with kopjes overlooking the road, the perfect setting for an ambush. Capt. White most prudently decided to cut his loss and return by the way he had come, so on the evening of the 24th his patrol re-occupied their camp of the previous night, and on the 25th recrossed the Umfuli, and pushed on nine miles beyond Hartley on the Salisbury road. Until recently I had thought that the patrol returned to Salisbury by exactly the same road it travelled on the forward journey, but now, through the kindness of Sir Robert Tredgold, I have examined some maps of the operation. They are contained in a scrap album which White himself compiled and show that the march to Hartley Hill was by the "Middle Road", past Norton's, whilst the return was by the "South Road", which later joined the main Pioneer road from Fort Victoria and crossed the Hunyani River 12 miles from Salisbury.

On the 26th before dawn the Scouts, supported by some Natal men and Zulus, surprised the kraals of Umfumula and killed 30-40 rebels. They also captured 500 head of cattle, 50 sheep and goats, and an assorted bag of mules, a horse and donkeys, together with arms and ammunition, a great quantity of limbo and blankets and some of Mrs. Norton's clothing. They had hit the rebels just where they deserved it most, for much of the property recovered was identified as having belonged to people murdered by the rebels. Most of the cattle belonged to Norton and to Henry James Grant, of Altona in the Charter District, who had been killed about June the 18th. The kraals were destroyed by fire. The patrol returned to its laager at 8.30 a.m. and at 12 noon went on again, to camp after a long trek at Girdleston's Farm. I hope it will be possible to identify this place: Girdleston was not one of those murdered. On July the 27th and 28th the return march was continued without further incident and the patrol reached Salisbury at 5 p.m. on the latter day. The Rhodesia Herald reporter must have served with the troops throughout this operation and finishes his report with words of high praise for White and his men. He ends, "Altogether, it was a good patrol". No doubt too the arrival in Salisbury of so many cattle on the hoof must have been a welcome sight.

Martial law was lifted from Salisbury shortly after Beal's and White's Columns had arrived there in July. The next strong body of reinforcements was a force of 380 regular troops under command of Lt.-Col. E. A. H. Alderson, which landed at Beira and pushed on towards Salisbury, defeating Chief Makoni, and having several other engagements on the way. They were specially trained mounted infantry, accompanied by engineer and artillery detachments, and various volunteer units, including Honey's Scouts. They reached Salisbury on the 9th of August, and were thereafter engaged in patrol actions throughout the district..

One patrol under Lieut. Pilson of the Mounted Infantry, together with Rhodesian volunteers, and Zulu contingent, operated in the area of Norton's Farm, from September the 17th to 24th. They had two skirmishes, and returned with a small number of livestock and 10 wagon loads of grain, according to the official report. They had a mounted infantryman wounded at William's kraal and one of the Zulu contingent killed; they burned several kraals.

An assault on Chief Matshayangombi had long been deferred due to a scarcity of food for the troops. An expedition was now organised under command

Fort Martin in 1897.

(From sketch by Lieut. John Norton Griffiths).

of Lt.-Col. Alderson, who left Salisbury with a force of 350, and a month's rations on the 5th October. The force included mounted infantry, Rhodesian volunteers, and Zulu contingent with seven pounder guns and Maxims, and was joined at Hartley on the 10th by a contingent which had been operating in the Charter District under Major Jenner. On that same day Matshayangombi's main kraal was attacked, and the rebels driven out of their position after stiff fighting in which four of Alderson's men were wounded. On the 11th the strongly fortified kraal of Chena was located on the Umfuli River, shelled by artillery and attacked, the rebels taking refuge in caves. In this action Tpr. Phillip Jacobus Botha of Honey's Scouts and Tpr. John Selby Coryndon of the Salisbury Rifles, were killed. Presumably they were buried where they fell, but their graves are now in the Salisbury Cemetery. Coryndon was a brother of Sir Robert Coryndon, of the Pioneer Corps, who became Administrator of North-west Rhodesia, and later Governor of Kenya. Capt. Sir Horace McMahon of the Royal Welch Fusiliers, two other Europeans and two members of the Native Contingent were severely wounded. The assault was renewed next day, when the kraal was destroyed and the caves blown up after very heavy fighting in which many of the rebels were killed. Alderson's force had four Europeans wounded, one fatally, and two of the Native Contingent. In these actions Zimba's kraal was also destroyed, and as the rebels appeared to have fled from the district Alderson moved on to Lomagundi. In three days he had lost three Europeans dead and ten wounded, and one Native Contingent killed and three wounded, and as it turned out had not broken the resistance of Matshayangombi permanently. His force was the strongest which up to that time had taken the field.

By the end of November, 1896, most of the Imperial troops had left Mashonaland: the Matabele Rebellion was at an end and a new policy was introduced by the formation of the British South Africa Police on the 1st October, and the Chartered Company undertaking to see the Mashona campaign to a conclusion with its own forces. However, the 7th Hussars, remained at first in Matabeleland. The new police organisation was under the supreme military command of Col. Sir Richard Martin, as Commandant-General. He had been appointed by the Imperial authorities as their watchdog, following the Jameson Raid. The Mashonaland Division of the Police had as its Commandant Lt.-Col. the Hon. F. R. W. Eveleigh de Moleyns, with Chief Inspector H. Hopper as his second-in-command, and was built up by strong contingents of recruits, of which the first 180 arrived in Salisbury early in December, 1896.

It was now the wet season when operations on any large scale were not practicable. On 16th December, therefore, Hopper was sent with a garrison of 80 police to Hartley Hill in order to contain the rebels until they could be dealt with. These men both here and throughout Mashonaland were called upon to endure extreme hardships on account of the bad weather; most of them suffered from malaria, and not a few died. The cemetery below the old fort at Hartley Hill contains eight graves, seven of which are of men who died in the early months of 1897.

In addition, a fort established within a short distance of Chief Matshayangombi's kraal, was named after Sir Richard Martin, and was manned

by European and Native Police under the command of Inspector R. C. Nesbitt, V.C. It is situated on the old road from Salisbury to Hartley Hill about 35 miles south-west of Norton and is still almost intact, with its fortifications amongst a group of precipitous rocks. It was attacked in the early morning of 17th March, 1897, by 300-400 of Matshayangombi's people, who were driven off after three hours' fighting in which three native police were killed and two wounded. One of Nesbitt's officers was Lieut. John Norton-Griffiths, who came up with Honey's Scouts, and who made an excellent sketch of the fort. I was given the original by Nesbitt and have since passed it on to Central African Archives, but this reproduction will show you what the fort looked like. Norton-Griffiths was later knighted, and became well-known as "Empire Jack". His exploits in the First World War would fill a book.

Fort Martin is of great interest and I hope it will be possible to have it declared as a National Monument.

In July, 1897, it was used as the base from which the final assault on Matshayangombi was launched. The attack was planned between Lt.-Col. de Moleyns and Inspector Nesbitt, the garrison commander, and the columns set out before dawn on the 24th, Sir Richard Martin himself remaining at the fort, keeping in touch with the operation by means of a signal station.

In the order of attack—the "Black Watch"—native police—led under Inspector Colin Harding followed by dismounted European police under Inspector Nesbitt, with the artillery and mounted unit under Capt. Roach and Sub-Inspector Ellett, moving to the right flank to cut off the rebels if they retired, and to prevent them from crossing the Umfuli River, and occupying some strong kopjes which were there. This action took place on the north or left bank of the Umfuli. On the south bank the 7th Hussars were co-operating and made an assault on Marlie's kraal which they occupied without loss, under the leadership of Capts. Carew and Poore.

Meanwhile the attack on Matshayangombi was progressing, the first stockade was rushed without loss, de Moleyns himself leading. He was supported by Chief Inspector A. V. Gosling, and H. Wilson Fox, a volunteer who later became a director of the B.S.A. Company. After two or three small stockades and kraals had been taken, the attackers came up against stiff oppostition at Matshayangombi's main stronghold. Here Tpr. J. C. Lalor-Hull of the Rhodesia Horse was killed and Tpr. A. Simmonds of the Police mortally wounded. Troopers D. Dennett and V. Downes were severely wounded and three other Europeans slightly wounded. They included Capt. J. Brabant, a pioneer police-man, who was with the Native Contingent, which lost three men killed and two wounded and earned high praise for its courage.

The rebels took refuge in a strong cave as soon as their kraal was rushed, and from it kept up an incessant fire; they all appeared to be armed with rifles. The position was therefore picketed for the rest of the day and through the night. In an attempt to stop the firing, small hand grenades of dynamite were thrown in the mouth of the cave, and in this work a Trooper Jones particularly distinguished himself.

Dr. Andrew Fleming, later Medical Director, had accompanied the column, and was kept busy; when one of the "Black Watch" was shot through the face, he extracted the bullet, and the man recovered.

At daybreak on the 25th a Maxim was brought up into the picket lines and soon after 215 women and children and six men came out and surrendered. At 9.30 a large charge of dynamite blew up the rocks surrounding the cave, thus depriving the rebels of their best cover; 38 men then surrendered, and by the 26th there had been 278 surrenders. It later transpired that Chief Matshayangombi had tried to escape on the night of the 24th and was shot by one of the pickets; his body was identified by Brabant, who was an authority on the Mashona natives. This was the last major action of the Rebellion; with the death of his patron, Matshayangombi, Kagubi, the so-called "lion god" went on the run and on the 27th of October surrendered unconditionally; he had been the chief instigator of the Rebellion. He and the witch, Nyanda, were later executed after due trial. By the end of 1897 nearly 2,000 guns had been handed in by the Mashona.

To return to Fort Martin, there is a cemetery of five graves about 400 yards from it, near the old road to Hartley. The graves are those of Troopers Lalor-Hull and Simmonds who fell in action against Matshayangombi and of a Sgt. Major R. Tennant, who on the day after the fight, 26th July, fell down the rocks of the fort and fractured his skull. He was a member of the Police Ambulance detachment, and it is not surprising that he met his death in this way for the rocks on which the fort are built are very precipitous.

The fourth grave is that of the Native Commissioner, Moony, who, it will be remembered, was murdered by Matshayangombi's people at the outbreak of the Rebellion, whilst the fifth is that of Sgt. S. H. Maurice, of the B.S.A. Police, who died at Fort Martin of malaria on 10th May, 1898.

I have not yet been able to find out when the garrisons at Hartley Hill and Fort Martin were withdrawn.

I hope you will have found this glimpse into our pioneer past has been worth while; for my part I have found the necessary research most fascinating, but I realise that much more remains to be done, and that I have only touched on the fringe of our Rhodesian history.

Three Rhodesian Poets

by N. H. Brettell

THRENODY IN SPRING

In memoriam: A. S. Cripps
August 1st, 1952

"That time of year thou may'st in me behold—"
Shakespeare: Sonnet 73

I

You chose the time well to die:
Our air still tingles with the latest frost;
Now, where the dead leaf falls the new blade shoots
With furtive fingering to the hidden springs
To bring life bravely up.

The kaffirboom bursts open with a cry
And spreads its ancient fingers tipped with gems;
Among the gaunt stones of your lonely home
See, the first frail umsasa shakes its fronds
In shreds of tender hope.

Our southern Spring is stirring cautiously
Feeling its way through calyx, tendril, tuft;
The daring flowers that come before the leaves,
The shy sand-apple flowers open their pink mouths,
The cassia's golden cup
Lifts its shrill monstrance to the brooding sky.

II

Now in that Kentish boyhood you forsook
(Carrying its seed through half a continent)
The boughs hang heavy with the luscious pippin,
The wasps are drunken in the hearts of plums,
And childrens' happy choirs

Salvage the drifting windfalls from the brook
Where orchard canopies droop over glutted pools;
The scent of hops upholsters the rich air,
Along the idle banks, loosestrife and meadowsweet
Lift up their drowsy spires.

Hear all the lazy tunes from summer's book,
From the far field the slur of hone on scythe,
The sated bees fumbling the snapdragons,
The distant clack and whirr of tedder and rake,
The munching in the byres.

Work waits on growing: idle hangs the hook;
Only the whirling potato lifter's iron fingers
Toss the fat tubers like a juggler's balls,
The pented ferrets snuffle in their straw
September's dark desires.

The cuckoo's voice is cracked. On rick and stook
The long beam wavers, and returns to us.
Across the latitudes the Spring goes ranging.
Now, in the pause before his opulent ripening
The green year of the shires
Leans for a moment on the spade to look.

III

Spring and high Summer going hand in hand
Meet in us now. The young leaf and the sere,
Blossom and fruit hung on the selfsame spray,
Learn, as our dark m'hashas scorn the drought,
To garner up the past

And fill the future of our patient land.
O gentle season of Saint Francis, bless
Your bitter compassion for all poverty,
Cover the jutting ribs with drift of leaves,
The acorn and the mast

Muffle your footfall in the aching sand.
The husk is split, the kernels scattered wide,
The lonely germens of your scrupulous songs
Perfect as seed, as quick with secret life,
On the scarred furrows cast.

The shrill lament dies down. The silent band,
The white, the black, with fallow footsteps now
Rustles the silence of the wayside grass;
Through broken doorway to the broken apse
Carries you silently.

Ashes to grass; dust to the flowering tree;
Full-fed for harvest is the season planned.
When, certain of grain, the lofty clouds are massed,
Watch us, and understand.
Spring, surging in us, quicken the seed at last.

To ask, as some people do at intervals, "Where are the Rhodesian poets ?" is perhaps as irrational a question as "Where are the avocado pears?" The answer, if any, might quite well be the same: wait another seven years. But it can be approached in two other ways—first, to say that the intellectual and social weather of the first half-century of our articulate life has not been favourable to the making of poetry, and second, that in spite of this, we have produced a small body of poetry of quite exceptional quality.

Poetry—at least written and contemplative poetry rather than oral and popular ballad-making—does seem to require a more ancient and stable soil than that provided by a society of pioneers. Cecil Day Lewis, in a salutary essay to show that a poet is first and originally a man, has reminded us that "the amazing capacity of the poet for ordering speech is only a part of a more amazing capacity for ordering his existence". To organise and arrange his experience is much more difficult for a poet to do in a society that has to be hacked, ploughed and built out of a wilderness than in a society settled and ordained by the centuries of tradition. There has been so much more for a poet to do than to invent a landscape. This most finished and sophisticated of all the arts does demand the contemplation of an ancient and cultivated scene even when its terms might be revolutionary and disruptive. Wordsworth could only be Wordsworth in the Lake District, Shelley in Italy—not, as Aldous Huxley suggested a long time ago, in the Tropics. Prof. Guy Butler said in his B.B.C. lecture last year on the English Poet in South Africa that "civilised man can only commune with a nature that has been partially tamed". Moreover, as he adds very cogently, we have yet to invent a vocabulary for the things we love, that from their accumulated tradition, words like oak and olive and myrtle carry with them an aura and a savour that kaffirboom and isipingo have not yet got. The mere bodily facts of existence have not helped our poets, the thrilling air of the high veld, the early reveille and the early bed, the inevitable lure of the sunlight, the warm drowsiness of the evenings, the amateur joy of doing this and that. "All things can tempt me from this craft of verse". So might have said Kingsley Fairbridge building his pondoekies, Lewis Hastings curing tobacco, Arthur Shearly Cripps planning his strange churches.

It is of these three in particular that I want to write. That they are all three authentic poets is all the more extraordinary when we consider the preoccupied fullness of their personal lives. Fairbridge's Autobiography is surely one of the most astonishing records of an active and brooding adolescence. To have walked to the Zambesi, to have hunted and explored and dug his garden, worked in an office and won a Rhodes scholarship and a boxing Blue, and finally to have consumed his life with his work for his Farm Schools—in what odd interstices did he find time for his poetry? Those of us who knew Cripps knew also his incredible evangelical wanderings, and Hastings in his extremely diverting autobiography has given us a good trencher-full of big-game hunter, farmer, soldier, broadcaster, even M.P. The first fifty years of Rhodesia have demanded a lot of its poets.

Mr. John Snelling has done a great service to our young literature with his two Anthologies—collections of which such a fledgeless colony might well flatter itself. The Salisbury Poetry Society has brought out three interesting

little Annuals: enough to show that our insignificant population has its share of quite accomplished versifiers. You do not usually get a poet without a host of poetasters, and it is perhaps significant that Mr. Snelling in both his prefaces never uses the words "poet" or "poetry". Fairbridge, Hastings and Cripps remain our only three genuine poets; but they are considerable enough to go on with.

The genuine poet must be an original. Without being necessarily a prophet or a freak, he must have something to say that has not been said before: and the new experiences of a new country do not in themselves mean that. The idiosyncracy, the eccentricity even, of the man himself, must take the facts, even the crude exciting facts of a new land, and translate them with his own peculiar imagination. We have had plenty of writers ready enough not only *to* use "thee" instead of "you", find rhymes for umsasa and Vumba and fill up the fissures with veld and kopje and jacaranda. We have had a few isolated lyrics of real and compelling beauty: but these are the only three who convince us that they saw, and saw habitually, something new and strange.

I do not pretend that Fairbridge's verse is big poetry. He had neither the time nor the training to become a real craftsman. It is, though, the unmistakable poetry of the pioneer, which is not a common phenomenon: what is more, and almost unique, the poetry of a boy pioneer, looking at new things with a young eye and so preserving for us the freshness of the frontier days—still just within the memory of some of us, to some of us a nostalgia and a regret, to most of us now as remote a legend as Lobengula himself.

"Veld Verse" gives us the early days of Rhodesia seen through the sharp eyes of a very unusual boy: dusty travels on foot (how odd to such a car-borne folk as we have become)

> "The wind athwart us and the dust that rises,
> Sun in our eyes and all the veld before us,
> And in our hearts strange singing;
> And for chorus
> Tramp of our faring feet and in the grasses
> The ceaseless whisper of the wind that passes."

The first cultivators—

> " . . .the brown dust where the farmer tills,
> The dust that sinks to westward from the plough.
> The heat waves shake and break and disappear.
> On Odzi peak the high-winds roar and sough
> Through riven cliffs the thunder-songs of air."

The bridge masons and the railway builders, his father the surveyor, "Chikwina Makoma", the Climber of Hills—

> "great joyous heart,
> Lone lover of the unkempt hills,
> Frail singing harp through whom the swinging winds
> Of the burnt veld sweep—
> Sculptor whose hands have wrought
> Wind into wings and thunder into thought . . ."

Kingsley Fairbridge.

Above all, there is the veld, all but trackless and untouched, astir with strange beast and bird and bug; and perhaps in the long view most valuable of all, the Africans themselves, while they were still recognisably tribesmen, tillers and hunters and only incidentally the white man's labourers, the home-sick Nyasas, the greedy Shangaans, the singing Sennas. Fairbridge had an unforced boyish sympathy with the African, a touching comradeship, as between boy varlet and fox terrier that has been caught so beautifully in the bronze memorial on Christmas Pass. Indeed, his most successful poems, both technically and imaginatively, are his versions, in extraordinarily competent blank verse, of various native legends and folk tales. In his Autobiography, he tells of "a tall youth from across the river (who) settled down with his hands towards the fire and recited a piece of verse to us." It was about an encounter with a crocodile, and "it was the best example of extemporaneous verse I have ever heard. The man never faltered. He never gave false weight to a gesture, but paused and spoke, halted and continued, as if he had been learning the piece for weeks. Yet the whole occurrence had only taken place that morning." This native facility for poetic narrative, of which I cannot speak but which is attested by a good many men who can, is an unregarded field still waiting for some poet of ours to explore more fully and bring into the tradition; although, as the memories and the legends fade, it may even now be too late.

In a recent review, the critic made the point that the Nature with which Coleridge and Wordsworth held communion no longer exists, that men's hearts no longer leap up when they behold a rainbow in the sky, that, in fact, "great Pan is dead". That may be true of the older wearier countries, though I rather doubt that; but until suburbia crawls much further across our huge landscape, it is not true yet for all of us. Immature though he was, Fairbridge understood the "genius loci" of the veld. I fancy, especially as the century grows older and more exasperated, that there can be something deeper than just a picnic in our affection for the open veld. When plagued by sleeplessness, Fairbridge tells us, he would "take (his) blankets and wander away into the veld to lie down among the long grasses. There is no kinder ceiling than the sky; no finer philosopher that the darkling night". Trite, perhaps: but that such understanding may be now evaporating makes this tenuous poetry the more valuable.

Major Lewis Hastings has been an enterprising and picturesque adventurer. That, of course, is true of a good many South Africans, and is not particularly important (except to readers of his autobiographical "Dragons are Extra"). What is important is that some quarter of a century ago, he poured the overflow into a handful of poems, "The Painted Snipe", piquant, disturbing a bit frothy and flashy, and entirely individual. The tone and the manner, that of the inter-war disillusion and deflation, off-hand and cavalier, the loose and rattling idiom of Auden and MacNeice, has already become curiously "dated". But the magnificence of their prime occasion helps to keep Hastings' verse alive. He has most of the tricks of the tribe: the blowing up of balloons

for the wry pleasure of pricking them, the irreverent juxtapositions and inconsequencies—

"And the golden bowl is broken, broken,
And the bedford cords are loose"—

the almost contemptuous lapses of taste and technique, even the same occasional pre-occupation with classical myth, seen through the diminishing end of the glass—

". . . the divine Helen,
. . . not so young as she was."

Throughout, there is the distrust of the O altitudo, the sardonic contemplation of the comic stature of man that twisted the ecstacies of the thirties; but all this, in the verse of Hastings, is thrown against the towering backcloth of Africa—he also has heard the Pan-pipes, he has as he himself puts it, followed the Unicorn. So we get

"Tourists in the Game Park squalling
—all jammed together in the model Sports,
Fat white thighs in khaki shorts"—

set against the "Dark Sanyati river", and the lions—

"Great fierce heads and buttocks receding".

We get the exquisitely grotesque contrast between

"Jones,
Getting fattish, and his unlovely limbs
Sheathed in twin tubes",

and the steinbok,

"ah, the little steinbok,
When he leaps I think of waterfalls
And curved things out of the Bible;
I think of Pavlova when she was young and lovely,
On New Year's Eve at the Savoy,
And four gorgeous flunkeys
Pouring her out of a basket"—

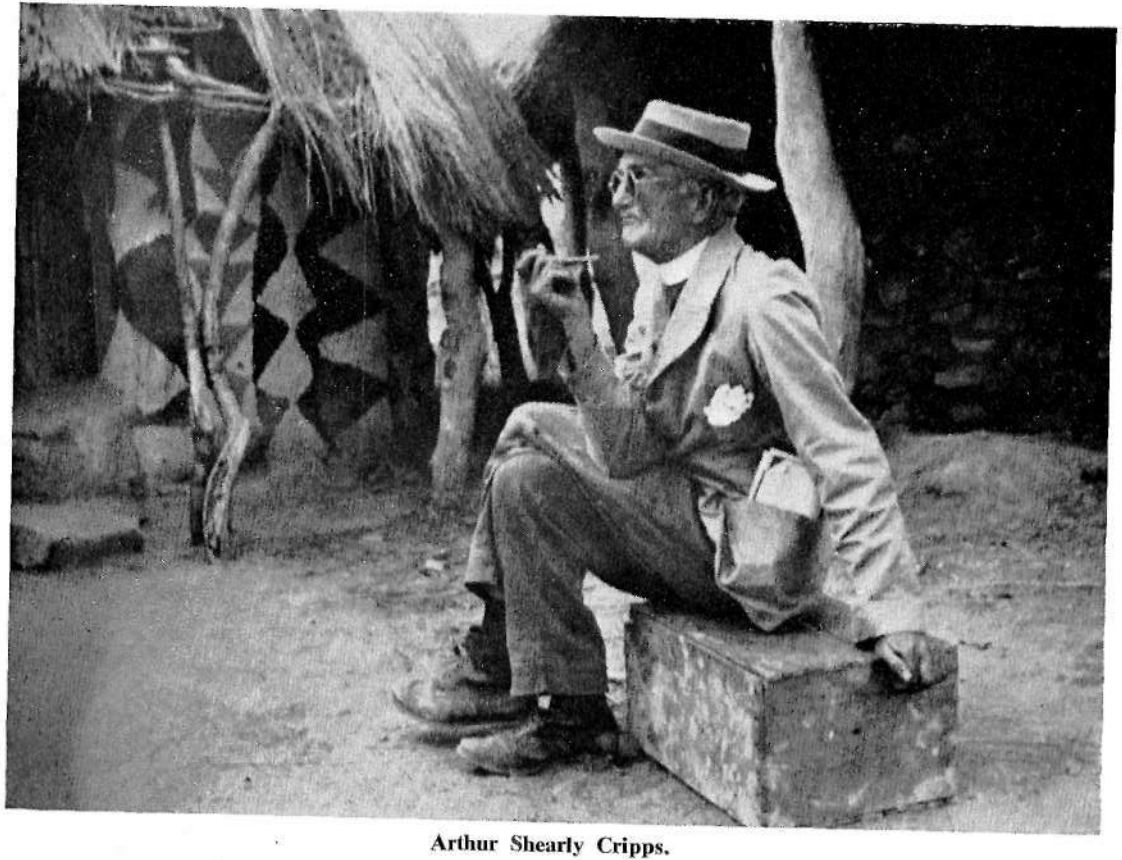
And finest of all, the saturnine nocturne "On Waterloo Bridge", when "dark London pierced with stars" and "the low sad hum of the million prisoners" is startled by wild duck flying seaward and bringing back the sudden lovely vision—

"Dawn on the river, the dark river, the dark shining river of
Africa,
When in a live silence
Flamingoes swing in rosy circles,
And in reedy pools
The crocodile, the everlasting,
Dreams marshy voluptuous dreams—
Of long-dead cities
That fell flaming amid the assegais—"

And—though this time with nothing of Africa in it—there is his most compelling lyric: "Sub Specie Aeternitatis". Love lyrics have not come easily from the last few decades, and there is very little good love poetry in all South African verse—its main currents have been too Kiplingesque for that; but this poem is an achievement, with its delicately negligent rhythms and its surprised sophistications like a man of the world suddenly arrested by a glimpse over his shoulder.

Although we should not ask too much of Fairbridge or deny that to readers in another country his verses could mean very little, and although Hastings himself would probably accept cheerfully the labels of dilettante and amateur, with Arthur Shearly Cripps we are on different ground. He is known and acknowledged beyond our boundaries, and paradoxically, in spite of his unique share in Rhodesian life, he never became a Rhodesian, preserving even in his sublime disregard for European amenities something of the prim dryness of the European Classicist. There was, of course, so much more in his life than got into his rather tongue-tied verses. He does challenge comparison with the other great African missionaries, with Moffat and Livingstone, with the White Fathers and Albert Schweitzer. There is, in fact, quite a kinship between Cripps and the great Alsatian, not only in their abnegation, but also in a somewhat awkward anachronism, the outworn idiom of the last century carried forward intransigently into this. No other missionary has more unflinchingly carried his evangelism to its logical conclusion. With the.generous background of the close of last century that now seems so patrician and remote, Cripps, scholar, athlete, priest, could not, inevitably, identify himself completely with the African: what is especially interesting in his poetry is that in his effort to do so, he went a long way towards solving, at least for himself, Prof. Butler's dilemma.

Strange though his life was, in the poetry with which he interpreted it there is no deliberate strangeness. In his foreword to "Africa: Verses", Lord Tweedsmuir says, in felicitous phrase, "He has a great tradition behind him, but he has cunningly adapted it to the needs of a new land, and for me the unique charm of his work is that he can sing the Songs of Zion and at the same time give them the charm and mystery of the waters of Babylon". To us Rhodesians, who have also taken the waters, however timidly, Cripps' world is not so exotic, although the mystery is still there; but it is the universal mystery of poetry and the inscrutable problem of a self-dedicated martyrdom, not the difficulty of a bizarre phrase or image. You will find a scrap of Latin here and there, perhaps a trifle pedantically, but no vernacular. There are none of the interpolations, the assegais and impis, the 'nkoos, with which too many South African poetasters have sprinkled their verses. To Cripps a hut is, throughout, a hut; he has no occasion to call a spade a spade, but he calls a hoe a hoe—not a badza. Always he interprets the alien world, to which he sought with so much agony to translate himself, in phrase and imagery uncompromisingly English. To picture the gaunt lines of stony hills over which so many of his wayfarings went, he uses the word "wold", Anglo-Saxon enough, yet at once convincing and mysterious. He uses the terms of a harvest field to describe the bundles of long grass for the thatch of a mission church—



Arthur Shearly Cripps.

(The hut on the left side is the Rectory; that on the right side the Church).

"So, when the sun is almost down,
Bright in the slanting light we come,
Bearing our rustling grass-sheaves high
Against the splendour of the sky
To thatch for Christ a home."

He is obsessed with the crying of cocks, the homely barn-yard sound becoming for him challenging and heraldic—

"Cock in yon thatched hut, do you hear
My joyful tidings as I come,
That 'Hail! Hail! Hail!' you cry so clear?
. . . He comes—for whom the dead moon smiled,
Whom the cock cried for through the thatch,
Dawn treading soft as tip-toe child."

Notice how the one exotic grain, the humble African term "veldsore", gives such a deepening of significance to his spiritual imagery—

"Now go, a veldsore in each lifted hand,
Go with two blistered feet your altar's way;
With pity's wound at heart, go praise and pray!
Go, wounds to Wounds; why you are glad today,
He, whose Five Wounds you wear, will understand."

With no extravagance of word or metaphor, he takes us completely into the warm dusty air, at once blessed and tormented, of his own peculiar landscape. To pretend that to a man like Cripps great Pan is dead, is patent blasphemy.

He is a very imperfect poet. Time and upbringing gave him an outworn style to write in. Very often his thoughts strive and jostle through an old-fashioned awkwardness of diction and rhythm, and often the violence of his emotions, his anger, his self-reproach, his almost savage charity split and warp his over-laden lines. But although his life itself could have been a solecism, his Franciscan-Theocritan pastoral a mistaken incongruity, his lonely poetry does stand out as our one unmistakeable utterance.

It is proposed to build a Memorial Mission at Maronda Mashanu, his Church of the Five Wounds where he is buried in the ruined sanctuary; and it is to be hoped that this will be done, to remember with adequate honour, this first of our authentic voices.

Notes on Poets

Kingsley Fairbridge was born in Grahamstown in 1885. His father was a surveyor and came to Rhodesia where Kingsley joined him at Umtali in 1896. He passed his youth in pioneer life in Manicaland, and was one of the first Rhodesians to win a Rhodes Scholarship. He devoted his life to the establishing of Farm Schools for under-privileged children from Great Britain. In 1927 he published his Autobiography. His book of verse is called "Veld Verse".

Lewis Hastings has been a diamond digger, prospector and big-game hunter. During the 1914 war he fought in the German South-West campaign

and then in France, where he gained the Military Cross. After the war he became a tobacco farmer and was elected Member of Parliament in the Southern Rhodesia Parliament for the constituency of Lomagundi. He resigned his seat to join the Forces in 1939 but started to give radio talks and became a Military Commentator. He has published a book of prose "Dragons are Extra" and a book of poems "The Painted Snipe".

Arthur Shearly Cripps was born in 1869. He went to Oxford where he obtained his degree, rowed in the College eight and boxed for the University. He came out to Mashonaland in 1901 and for twenty-five years worked as a missionary in the Enkeldoorn district. During the 1914 war he served as a naval and military chaplain. He returned to England in 1926 but after four years came back to his farm Maronda Mashanu (The Five Wounds) where he built a school and a church. From 1930 he devoted his life to work among the Africans. For the last eleven years of his life, he died in 1952, he was blind. He wrote his first book of poetry in 1890 and from that date until 1939 when his last book of verse "Africa: Verses" was published he produced many books of prose and several collections of verse.

Notes on Contributors

FRANCIS BERGHEGGE was born at Delft, in Holland, on 21st February, 1849. He was admitted into the Society of Jesus and left Holland on 1st February, 1880 for the interior of Africa. Father Depelchin met Berghegge with a small party of missionaries north of Shoshong and accompanied them to Tati and to Bulawayo which they reached on 26th January, 1881.

By March that year, the necessary arrangements having been made, Fathers Depelchin and Berghegge with Brother de Vijlder set off to explore the Barotse Valley. The party reached Panda-ma-Tenka on 22nd May and left there on the 6th June. A very brief account of what was done can be found in the Editor's notes in "Trois Ans dans L'Afrique Australe"; a fuller account appears in "The History of the Zambesi Mission" which is to be found in "The Zambesi Mission Record" published quarterly from November, 1898 onwards. The party returned to Panda-ma-Tenka on 6th October, 1881. Father Berghegge lived there with de Vijlder while Father Depelchin returned to stations further south, and to the investigation of the death of Father Terode at Chief Mwemba's village on the northern side of the Zambesi River.

On 14th March, 1883, Father Berghegge left Pand-ma-Tenka with Brothers Simonis and de Vijlder on the journey which is described in the letter now being published; this journey was taken to follow up the arrangements, if not promises, secured nearly two years before with the Barotse in regard to opening missionary work among them. De Vijlder was drowned in the Zambesi on 29th April and his body was not recovered. Berghegge and Simonis returned to Pand-ma-Tenka on 2nd October and went on to Tati, shortly afterwards. During their absence Panda-ma-Tenka had been visited by Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Williams and a short account may be found in Sir Ralph's (as he was later created) "How I became a Governor"; unfortunately no names are given of those who were there.

Berghegge remained at Tati until December, 1884; then he was shifted to Bulawayo where he stayed for two years until 1886 when his health broke down and he was ordered south to Grahamstown. He never came back to Central Africa, dying at Grahamstown on 21st August, 1916, in the esteem of all who had come into contact with him.

COLONEL A. S. HICKMAN, M.B.E., was for 31 years in the service of the British South Africa Police. He rose from the rank of Trooper to Commissioner retiring in November, 1955. He has been a constant contributor to the Police Force Magazines, the Outpost and Mapolisa. He has always shown a great interest in the tradition and history of the B.S.A.P. and probably no one in Southern Rhodesia has a greater knowledge of present and past personnel. At present Colonel Hickman is engaged on compilation of Register of those who served in the Britsh South Africa Company's Police. It is hoped that this work will be completed this year. His address is St. Keyne, 4 York Avenue, Highlands, and he will welcome any items of interest either on B.S.A.P. or Rhodesian history.

N. H. BRETTELL was born in 1908 at Lye, Worcestershire and educated at King Edward VI School, Stourbridge and the University of Birmingham. He came to Southern Rhodesia in 1930. He has been a schoolmaster since 1934 and for the last sixteen years Headmaster at Riversdale School in the Charter District. In 1950 Oxford University Press printed his book of poems, "Bronze Frieze: Poems mostly Rhodesian". "Threnody in Spring" is from his unpublished book of verse "A Rodesian Leave."

Correspondence

In Newsletter No. 6, issued in June 1957, information regarding visits of the Egyptians to the Ndola Region and the routes taken by them was sought by a member.

The following information has now been given by Mr. J. Blake-Thompson, B.Sc, F.R.A.I.

"In Bulawayo Museum, under the care of Mr. Summers (Keeper of Antiquities at the National Museum, Bulawayo) is an old article of mine on the tracks of Africa, not European, but African. These writings were the result of work collecting from 1904 onwards in France, in the Union of South Africa and in South West Africa, then in Southern Rhodesia and North East Bechuanaland Province, the Caprivi, Barotseland, etc.

I have shown the tracks from Egypt to Rhodesia—

(a) via El Fashr (Gimbali) to the Azande country and then through to the north east Congo to the west of Tanganyika and so on.

(b) down the east bank of the Nile from Meroe to Uganda and then across to west of Kivu, Tanganyika and Northern Rhodesia with infiltration into west Nyasa and to the Zambesi by the Shire with another track down the Kafue and Luangwa.

(c) coming by the east bank of the Nile near the Abyssinian border, on to Mount Elgon (Ngoni), then on to the east side of Lake Victoria and down to the east of Nyasa and the Shire across the Zambesi near Sena, along the Mazoe into Southern Rhodesia with a branch across Northern Rhodesia towards Ndola.

To me it is doubtful if true Egyptians arrived so far south but undoubtedly many Egyptian traits were shown in the migrants' culture. In Southern Rhodesia we have the Vambire, in other places known as Phiri, Mbiri, Viri, Bila, Vila, etc. They do not appear to have gone as far south as the middle group which reached Basutoland. The real difficulty in sorting out these movements is the criss-crossing of the Abyssinians and Arabs, etc., also Indians, Chinese, Ceylonese and Malays which make a proper jig-saw puzzle.

THE RHODESIANA SOCIETY

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H. A. CRIPWELL, ESQ.

HON. SECRETARY/TREASURER :

G. B. DA GRACA, ESQ.

All communications should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, P.O. Box 112, Salisbury.