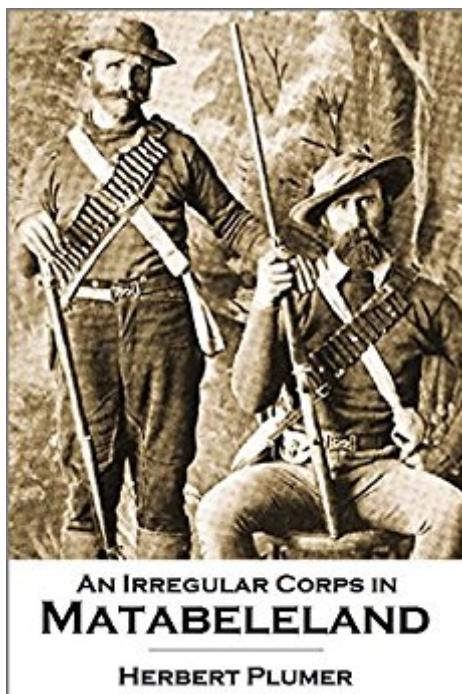


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An Irregular Corps In Matabeleland (1897)



Synopsis

Herbert Charles Onslow Plumer, 1st Viscount Plumer, (1857 – 1932) was a British Army officer. He went to Southern Rhodesia in 1896 to disarm the local police force following the Jameson Raid and then later that year returned there to command the Matabele Relief Force during the Second Matabele War. Matabeleland is a region in Zimbabwe in Southern Africa. In March 1896, the Ndebele revolted against the authority of the British South Africa Company in what is now celebrated in Zimbabwe as the First Chimurenga, i.e., First War of Independence. Mlimo, the Ndebele spiritual/religious leader, is credited with fomenting much of the anger that led to this confrontation. He convinced the Ndebele that the white settlers (almost 4,000 strong by then) were responsible for the drought, locust plagues and the cattle disease rinderpest ravaging the country at the time. "Mlimo's call to battle was well-timed. Only a few months earlier, the British South Africa Company's Administrator General for Matabeleland, Leander Starr Jameson, had sent most of his troops and armaments to fight the Transvaal Republic in the ill-fated Jameson Raid. This left the country's security in disarray. In June 1896, the Shona too joined the war, but they stayed mostly on the defensive. The British would immediately send troops to battle the Ndebele and the Shona ..." 'An Irregular Corps in Matabeleland' is the title of a book by Colonel Plumer. In the form of reminiscences, the work is practically a history of the Matabele campaign. Plumer writes: "THE news which was flashed down from Bulawayo at the latter part of March, 1896, that the Matabele had risen in revolt against the authority of the British South Africa Company, and had expressed their determination to exterminate all the white settlers in the country, caused the utmost consternation, not only throughout South Africa, but in England; and, indeed, it was hardly possible to exaggerate the gravity of the situation. The picture of the small population in that country, among whom were many women and children, exposed to the fanatical fury of a tribe, famed for their ferocities and cruelties, with the long stretch of over 500 miles between them and the nearest place from which reinforcements could be sent, was horrible to contemplate; and the anxiety as to whether, with their limited resources of men and arms, they would be able to hold out until those reinforcements arrived was proportionally intense...." CONTENTS I. Introductory II. Organization Of The Corps III. The Route. Transport And Supplies; Preparations For The March IV. The March To Bulawayo V. The Situation In Bulawayo, And Operations Up To The End Of May VI. The Column Down The Gwai River, And Events In June VII. The Capture Of Tabasi-mhamba VIII. The Operations In The Matoppo Hills In July IX. Actions In The Matoppos In August X. Concluding Operations Up To The Disbandment Of The Corps XI. Concluding Remarks XII. An Account Of The Operations In Which The Mashonaland Detachment Of The M.R.F. Were Engaged

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