CHAPTER XII

BROTHER JOHN'S STORY

Although I went to bed late I was up before sunrise. Chiefly because I wished to have some private conversation with Brother John, whom I knew to be a very early riser. Indeed, he slept less than any man I ever met.

As I expected, I found him astir in his hut; he was engaged in pressing flowers by candlelight.

"John," I said, "I have brought you some property which I think you have lost," and I handed him the morocco-bound Christian Year and the water-colour drawing which we had found in the sacked mission house at Kilwa.

He looked first at the picture and then at the book; at least, I suppose he did, for I went outside the hut for a while--to observe the sunrise. In a few minutes he called me, and when the door was shut, said in an unsteady voice:

"How did you come by these relics, Allan?"

I told him the story from beginning to end. He listened without a word, and when I had finished said:

"I may as well tell what perhaps you have guessed, that the picture is that of my wife, and the book is her book."

"Is!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, Allan. I say is because I do not believe that she is dead. I cannot explain why, any more than I could explain last night how that great Zulu savage was able to prophesy my coming. But sometimes we can wring secrets from the Unknown, and I believe that I have won this truth in answer to my prayers, that my wife still lives."

"After twenty years, John?"

"Yes, after twenty years. Why do you suppose," he asked almost fiercely, "that for two-thirds of a generation I have wandered about among African savages, pretending to be crazy because these wild people revere the mad and always let them pass unharmed?"

"I thought it was to collect butterflies and botanical specimens."

"Butterflies and botanical specimens! These were the pretext. I have been and am searching for my wife. You may think it a folly, especially considering what was her condition when we separated--she was expecting a child, Allan--but I do not. I believe that she is hidden away among some of these wild peoples."

"Then perhaps it would be as well not to find her," I answered, bethinking me of the fate which had overtaken sundry white women in the old days, who had escaped from shipwrecks on the coast and become the wives of Kaffirs.

"Not so, Allan. On that point I fear nothing. If God has preserved my wife, He has also protected her from every harm. And now," he went on, "you will understand why I wish to visit these Pongo--the Pongo who worship a white goddess!"

"I understand," I said and left him, for having learned all there was to know, I thought it best not to prolong a painful conversation. To me it seemed incredible that this lady should still live, and I feared the effect upon him of the discovery that she was no more. How full of romance is this poor little world of ours! Think of Brother John (Eversley was his real name as I discovered afterwards), and what his life had been. A high-minded educated man trying to serve his Faith in the dark places of the earth, and taking his young wife with him, which for my part I have never considered a right thing to do. Neither tradition nor Holy Writ record that the Apostles dragged their wives and families into the heathen lands where they went to preach, although I believe that some of them were married. But this is by the way.

Then falls the blow; the mission house is sacked, the husband escapes by a miracle and the poor young lady is torn away to be the prey of a vile slave-trader. Lastly, according to the quite unreliable evidence of

some savage already in the shadow of death, she is seen in the charge of other unknown savages. On the strength of this the husband, playing the part of a mad botanist, hunts for her for a score of years, enduring incredible hardships and yet buoyed up by a high and holy trust. To my mind it was a beautiful and pathetic story. Still, for reasons which I have suggested, I confess that I hoped that long ago she had returned into the hands of the Power which made her, for what would be the state of a young white lady who for two decades had been at the mercy of these black brutes?

And yet, and yet, after my experience of Mavovo and his Snake, I did not feel inclined to dogmatise about anything. Who and what was I, that I should venture not only to form opinions, but to thrust them down the throats of others? After all, how narrow are the limits of the knowledge upon which we base our judgments. Perhaps the great sea of intuition that surrounds us is safer to float on than are these little islets of individual experience, whereon we are so wont to take our stand.

Meanwhile my duty was not to speculate on the dreams and mental attitudes of others, but like a practical hunter and trader, to carry to a successful issue an expedition that I was well paid to manage, and to dig up a certain rare flower root, if I could find it, in the marketable value of which I had an interest. I have always prided myself upon my entire lack of imagination and all such mental phantasies, and upon an aptitude for hard business and an appreciation of the facts of life, that after all are the things with which we have to do. This is the

truth; at least, I hope it is. For if I were to be quite honest, which no one ever has been, except a gentleman named Mr. Pepys, who, I think, lived in the reign of Charles II, and who, to judge from his memoirs, which I have read lately, did not write for publication, I should have to admit that there is another side to my nature. I sternly suppress it, however, at any rate for the present.

While we were at breakfast Hans who, still suffering from headache and remorse, was lurking outside the gateway far from the madding crowd of critics, crept in like a beaten dog and announced that Babemba was approaching followed by a number of laden soldiers. I was about to advance to receive him. Then I remembered that, owing to a queer native custom, such as that which caused Sir Theophilus Shepstone, whom I used to know very well, to be recognised as the holder of the spirit of the great Chaka and therefore as the equal of the Zulu monarchs, Brother John was the really important man in our company. So I gave way and asked him to be good enough to take my place and to live up to that station in savage life to which it had pleased God to call him.

I am bound to say he rose to the occasion very well, being by nature and appearance a dignified old man. Swallowing his coffee in a hurry, he took his place at a little distance from us, and stood there in a statuesque pose. To him entered Babemba crawling on his hands and knees, and other native gentlemen likewise crawling, also the burdened soldiers in as obsequious an attitude as their loads would allow.

"O King Dogeetah," said Babemba, "your brother king, Bausi, returns the guns and fire-goods of the white men, your children, and sends certain gifts."

"Glad to hear it, General Babemba," said Brother John, "although it would be better if he had never taken them away. Put them down and get on to your feet. I do not like to see men wriggling on their stomachs like monkeys."

The order was obeyed, and we checked the guns and ammunition; also our revolvers and the other articles that had been taken away from us. Nothing was missing or damaged; and in addition there were four fine elephant's tusks, an offering to Stephen and myself, which, as a business man, I promptly accepted; some karosses and Mazitu weapons, presents to Mavovo and the hunters, a beautiful native bedstead with ivory legs and mats of finely-woven grass, a gift to Hans in testimony to his powers of sleep under trying circumstances (the Zulus roared when they heard this, and Hans vanished cursing behind the huts), and for Sammy a weird musical instrument with a request that in future he would use it in public instead of his voice.

Sammy, I may add, did not see the joke any more than Hans had done, but the rest of us appreciated the Mazitu sense of humour very much.

"It is very well, Mr. Quatermain," he said, "for these black babes and sucklings to sit in the seat of the scornful. On such an occasion silent

prayers would have been of little use, but I am certain that my loud crying to Heaven delivered you all from the bites of the heathen arrows."

"O Dogeetah and white lords," said Babemba, "the king invites your presence that he may ask your forgiveness for what has happened, and this time there will be no need for you to bring arms, since henceforward no hurt can come to you from the Mazitu people."

So presently we set out once more, taking with us the gifts that had been refused. Our march to the royal quarters was a veritable triumphal progress. The people prostrated themselves and clapped their hands slowly in salutation as we passed, while the girls and children pelted us with flowers as though we were brides going to be married. Our road ran by the place of execution where the stakes, at which I confess I looked with a shiver, were still standing, though the graves had been filled in.

On our arrival Bausi and his councillors rose and bowed to us. Indeed, the king did more, for coming forward he seized Brother John by the hand, and insisted upon rubbing his ugly black nose against that of this revered guest. This, it appeared, was the Mazitu method of embracing, an honour which Brother John did not seem at all to appreciate. Then followed long speeches, washed down with draughts of thick native beer. Bausi explained that his evil proceedings were entirely due to the wickedness of the deceased Imbozwi and his disciples, under whose

tyranny the land had groaned for long, since the people believed them to speak "with the voice of 'Heaven Above.'"

Brother John, on our behalf, accepted the apology, and then read a lecture, or rather preached a sermon, that took exactly twenty-five minutes to deliver (he is rather long in the wind), in which he demonstrated the evils of superstition and pointed to a higher and a better path. Bausi replied that he would like to hear more of that path another time which, as he presumed that we were going to spend the rest of our lives in his company, could easily be found--say during the next spring when the crops had been sown and the people had leisure on their hands.

After this we presented our gifts, which now were eagerly accepted. Then I took up my parable and explained to Bausi that so far from stopping in Beza Town for the rest of our lives, we were anxious to press forward at once to Pongo-land. The king's face fell, as did those of his councillors.

"Listen, O lord Macumazana, and all of you," he said. "These Pongo are horrible wizards, a great and powerful people who live by themselves amidst the swamps and mix with none. If the Pongo catch Mazitu or folk of any other tribe, either they kill them or take them as prisoners to their own land where they enslave them, or sometimes sacrifice them to the devils they worship."

"That is so," broke in Babemba, "for when I was a lad I was a slave to the Pongo and doomed to be sacrificed to the White Devil. It was in escaping from them that I lost this eye."

Needless to say, I made a note of this remark, though I did not think the moment opportune to follow the matter up. If Babemba has once been to Pongo-land, I reflected to myself, Babemba can go again or show us the way there.

"And if we catch any of the Pongo," went on Bausi, "as sometimes we do when they come to hunt for slaves, we kill them. Ever since the Mazitu have been in this place there has been hate and war between them and the Pongo, and if I could wipe out those evil ones, then I should die happily."

"That you will never do, O King, while the White Devil lives," said Babemba. "Have you not heard the Pongo prophecy, that while the White Devil lives and the Holy Flower blooms, they will live. But when the White Devil dies and the Holy Flower ceases to bloom, then their women will become barren and their end will be upon them."

"Well, I suppose that this White Devil will die some day," I said.

"Not so, Macumazana. It will never die of itself. Like its wicked Priest, it has been there from the beginning and will always be there unless it is killed. But who is there that can kill the White Devil?"

I thought to myself that I would not mind trying, but again I did not pursue the point.

"My brother Dogeetah and lords," exclaimed Bausi, "it is not possible that you should visit these wizards except at the head of an army. But how can I send an army with you, seeing that the Mazitu are a land people and have no canoes in which to cross the great lake, and no trees whereof to make them?"

We answered that we did not know but would think the matter over, as we had come from our own place for this purpose and meant to carry it out.

Then the audience came to an end, and we returned to our huts, leaving Dogeetah to converse with his "brother Bausi" on matters connected with the latter's health. As I passed Babemba I told him that I should like to see him alone, and he said that he would visit me that evening after supper. The rest of the day passed quietly, for we had asked that people might be kept away from our encampment.

We found Hans, who had not accompanied us, being a little shy of appearing in public just then, engaged in cleaning the rifles, and this reminded me of something. Taking the double-barrelled gun of which I have spoken, I called Mavovo and handed it to him, saying:

"It is yours, O true prophet."

"Yes, my father," he answered, "it is mine for a little while, then perhaps it will be yours again."

The words struck me, but I did not care to ask their meaning. Somehow I wanted to hear no more of Mavovo's prophecies.

Then we dined, and for the rest of that afternoon slept, for all of us, including Brother John, needed rest badly. In the evening Babemba came, and we three white men saw him alone.

"Tell us about the Pongo and this white devil they worship," I said.

"Macumazana," he answered, "fifty years have gone by since I was in that land and I see things that happened to me there as through a mist. I went to fish amongst the reeds when I was a boy of twelve, and tall men robed in white came in a canoe and seized me. They led me to a town where there were many other such men, and treated me very well, giving me sweet things to eat till I grew fat and my skin shone. Then in the evening I was taken away, and we marched all night to the mouth of a great cave. In this cave sat a horrible old man about whom danced robed people, performing the rites of the White Devil.

"The old man told me that on the following morning I was to be cooked and eaten, for which reason I had been made so fat. There was a canoe at the mouth of the cave, beyond which lay water. While all were asleep I

crept to the canoe. As I loosed the rope one of the priests woke up and ran at me. But I hit him on the head with the paddle, for though only a boy I was bold and strong, and he fell into the water. He came up again and gripped the edge of the canoe, but I struck his fingers with the paddle till he let go. A great wind was blowing that night, tearing off boughs from the trees which grew upon the other shore of the water. It whirled the canoe round and round and one of the boughs struck me in the eye. I scarcely felt it at the time, but afterwards the eye withered.
Or perhaps it was a spear or a knife that struck me in the eye, I do not know. I paddled till I lost my senses and always that wind blew. The last thing that I remember was the sound of the canoe being driven by the gale through reeds. When I woke up again I found myself near a shore, to which I waded through the mud, scaring great crocodiles. But this must have been some days later, for now I was quite thin. I fell down upon the shore, and there some of our people found me and nursed me till I recovered. That is all."

"And quite enough too," I said. "Now answer me. How far was the town from the place where you were captured in Mazitu-land?"

"A whole day's journey in the canoe, Macumazana. I was captured in the morning early and we reached the harbour in the evening at a place where many canoes were tied up, perhaps fifty of them, some of which would hold forty men."

"And how far was the town from this harbour?"

"Quite close, Macumazana."

Now Brother John asked a question.

"Did you hear anything about the land beyond the water by the cave?"

"Yes, Dogeetah. I heard then, or afterwards--for from time to time rumours reach us concerning these Pongo--that it is an island where grows the Holy Flower, of which you know, for when last you were here you had one of its blooms. I heard, too, that this Holy Flower was tended by a priestess named Mother of the Flower, and her servants, all of whom were virgins."

"Who was the priestess?"

"I do not know, but I heave heard that she was one of those people who, although their parents are black, are born white, and that if any females among the Pongo are born white, or with pink eyes, or deaf and dumb, they are set apart to be the servants of the priestess. But this priestess must now be dead, seeing that when I was a boy she was already old, very, very old, and the Pongo were much concerned because there was no one of white skin who could be appointed to succeed her. Indeed she is dead, since many years ago there was a great feast in Pongo-land and numbers of slaves were eaten, because the priests had found a beautiful new princess who was white with yellow hair and had

finger-nails of the right shape."

Now I bethought me that this finding of the priestess named "Mother of the Flower," who must be distinguished by certain personal peculiarities, resembled not a little that of the finding of the Apis bull-god, which also must have certain prescribed and holy markings, by the old Egyptians, as narrated by Herodotus. However, I said nothing about it at the time, because Brother John asked sharply:

"And is this priestess also dead?"

"I do not know, Dogeetah, but I think not. If she were dead I think that we should have heard some rumour of the Feast of the eating of the dead Mother."

"Eating the dead mother!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, Macumazana. It is the law among the Pongo that, for a certain sacred reason, the body of the Mother of the Flower, when she dies, must be partaken of by those who are privileged to the holy food."

"But the White Devil neither dies nor is eaten?" I said.

"No, as I have told you, he never dies. It is he who causes others to die, as if you go to Pongo-land doubtless you will find out," Babemba added grimly.

Upon my word, thought I to myself, as the meeting broke up because Babemba had nothing more to say, if I had my way I would leave Pongo-land and its white devil alone. Then I remembered how Brother John stood in reference to this matter, and with a sigh resigned myself to fate. As it proved it, I mean Fate, was quite equal to the occasion. The very next morning, early, Babemba turned up again.

"Lords, lords," he said, "a wonderful thing has happened! Last night we spoke of the Pongo and now behold! an embassy from the Pongo is here; it arrived at sunrise."

"What for?" I asked.

"To propose peace between their people and the Mazitu. Yes, they ask that Bausi should send envoys to their town to arrange a lasting peace. As if anyone would go!" he added.

"Perhaps some might dare to," I answered, for an idea occurred to me, "but let us go to see Bausi."

Half an hour later we were seated in the king's enclosure, that is, Stephen and I were, for Brother John was already in the royal hut, talking to Bausi. As we went a few words had passed between us.

"Has it occurred to you, John," I asked, "that if you really wish to

visit Pongo-land here is perhaps what you would call a providential opportunity. Certainly none of these Mazitu will go, since they fear lest they should find a permanent peace--inside of the Pongo. Well, you are a blood-brother to Bausi and can offer to play the part of Envoy Extraordinary, with us as the members of your staff."

"I have already thought of it, Allan," he replied, stroking his long beard.

We sat down among a few of the leading councillors, and presently Bausi came out of his hut accompanied by Brother John, and having greeted us, ordered the Pongo envoys to be admitted. They were led in at once, tall, light-coloured men with regular and Semitic features, who were clothed in white linen like Arabs, and wore circles of gold or copper upon their necks and wrists.

In short, they were imposing persons, quite different from ordinary Central African natives, though there was something about their appearance which chilled and repelled me. I should add that their spears had been left outside, and that they saluted the king by folding their arms upon their breasts and bowing in a dignified fashion.

"Who are you?" asked Bausi, "and what do you want?"

"I am Komba," answered their spokesman, quite a young man with flashing eyes, "the Accepted-of-the-Gods, who, in a day to come that perhaps is

near, will be the Kalubi of the Pongo people, and these are my servants. I have come here bearing gifts of friendship which are without, by the desire of the holy Motombo, the High Priest of the gods----"

"I thought that the Kalubi was the priest of your gods," interrupted Bausi.

"Not so. The Kalubi is the King of the Pongo as you are the King of the Mazitu. The Motombo, who is seldom seen, is King of the spirits and the Mouth of the gods."

Bausi nodded in the African fashion, that is by raising the chin, not depressing it, and Komba went on:

"I have placed myself in your power, trusting to your honour. You can kill me if you wish, though that will avail nothing, since there are others waiting to become Kalubi in my place."

"Am I a Pongo that I should wish to kill messengers and eat them?" asked Bausi, with sarcasm, a speech at which I noticed the Pongo envoys winced a little.

"King, you are mistaken. The Pongo only eat those whom the White God has chosen. It is a religious rite. Why should they who have cattle in plenty desire to devour men?"

"I don't know," grunted Bausi, "but there is one here who can tell a different story," and he looked at Babemba, who wriggled uncomfortably.

Komba also looked at him with his fierce eyes.

"It is not conceivable," he said, "that anybody should wish to eat one so old and bony, but let that pass. I thank you, King, for your promise of safety. I have come here to ask that you should send envoys to confer with the Kalubi and the Motombo, that a lasting peace may be arranged between our peoples."

"Why do not the Kalubi and the Motombo come here to confer?" asked Bausi.

"Because it is not lawful that they should leave their land, O King. Therefore they have sent me who am the Kalubi-to-come. Hearken. There has been war between us for generations. It began so long ago that only the Motombo knows of its beginning which he has from the gods. Once the Pongo people owned all this land and only had their sacred places beyond the water. Then your forefathers came and fell on them, killing many, enslaving many and taking their women to wife. Now, say the Motombo and the Kalubi, in the place of war let there be peace; where there is but barren sand, there let corn and flowers grow; let the darkness, wherein men lose their way and die, be changed to pleasant light in which they can sit in the sun holding each other's hands."

"Hear, hear!" I muttered, quite moved by this eloquence. But Bausi was not at all moved; indeed, he seemed to view these poetic proposals with the darkest suspicion.

"Give up killing our people or capturing them to be sacrificed to your White Devil, and then in a year or two we may listen to your words that are smeared with honey," he said. "As it is, we think that they are but a trap to catch flies. Still, if there are any of our councillors willing to visit your Motombo and your Kalubi and hear what they have to propose, taking the risk of whatever may happen to them there, I do not forbid it. Now, O my Councillors, speak, not altogether, but one by one, and be swift, since to the first that speaks shall be given this honour."

I think I never heard a denser silence than that which followed this invitation. Each of the indunas looked at his neighbour, but not one of them uttered a single word.

"What!" exclaimed Bausi, in affected surprise. "Do none speak? Well, well, you are lawyers and men of peace. What says the great general, Babemba?"

"I say, O King, that I went once to Pongo-land when I was young, taken by the hair of my head, to leave an eye there and that I do not wish to visit it again walking on the soles of my feet."

"It seems, O Komba, that since none of my people are willing to act as envoys, if there is to be talk of peace between us, the Motombo and the Kalubi must come here under safe conduct."

"I have said that cannot be, O King."

"If so, all is finished, O Komba. Rest, eat of our food and return to your own land."

Then Brother John rose and said:

"We are blood-brethren, Bausi, and therefore I can speak for you. If you and your councillors are willing, and these Pongos are willing, I and my friends do not fear to visit the Motombo and the Kalubi, to talk with them of peace on behalf of your people, since we love to see new lands and new races of mankind. Say, Komba, if the king allows, will you accept us as ambassadors?"

"It is for the king to name his own ambassadors," answered Komba. "Yet the Kalubi has heard of the presence of you white lords in Mazitu-land and bade me say that if it should be your pleasure to accompany the embassy and visit him, he would give you welcome. Only when the matter was laid before the Motombo, the oracle spoke thus:

"'Let the white men come if come they will, or let them stay away. But if they come, let them bring with them none of those iron tubes, great

or small, whereof the land has heard, that vomit smoke with a noise and cause death from afar. They will not need them to kill meat, for meat shall be given to them in plenty; moreover, among the Pongo they will be safe, unless they offer insult to the god.'"

These words Komba spoke very slowly and with much emphasis, his piercing eyes fixed upon my face as though to read the thoughts it hid. As I heard them my courage sank into my boots. Well, I knew that the Kalubi was asking us to Pongo-land that we might kill this Great White Devil that threatened his life, which, I took it, was a monstrous ape. And how could we face that or some other frightful brute without firearms? My mind was made up in a minute.

"O Komba," I said, "my gun is my father, my mother, my wife and all my other relatives. I do not stir from here without it."

"Then, white lord," answered Komba, "you will do well to stop in this place in the midst of your family, since, if you try to bring it with you to Pongo-land, you will be killed as you set foot upon the shore."

Before I could find an answer Brother John spoke, saying:

"It is natural that the great hunter, Macumazana, should not wish to be parted from what which to him is as a stick to a lame man. But with me it is different. For years I have used no gun, who kill nothing that God made, except a few bright-winged insects. I am ready to visit

your country with naught save this in my hand," and he pointed to the butterfly net that leaned against the fence behind him.

"Good, you are welcome," said Komba, and I thought that I saw his eyes gleam with unholy joy. There followed a pause, during which I explained everything to Stephen, showing that the thing was madness. But here, to my horror, that young man's mulish obstinacy came in.

"I say, you know, Quatermain," he said, "we can't let the old boy go alone, or at least I can't. It's another matter for you who have a son dependent on you. But putting aside the fact that I mean to get----" he was about to add, "the orchid," when I nudged him. Of course, it was ridiculous, but an uneasy fear took me lest this Komba should in some mysterious way understand what he was saying. "What's up? Oh! I see, but the beggar can't understand English. Well, putting aside everything else, it isn't the game, and there you are, you know. If Mr. Brother John goes, I'll go too, and indeed if he doesn't go, I'll go alone."

"You unutterable young ass," I muttered in a stage aside.

"What is it the young white lord says he wishes in our country?" asked the cold Komba, who with diabolical acuteness had read some of Stephen's meaning in his face.

"He says that he is a harmless traveller who would like to study the scenery and to find out if you have any gold there," I answered.

"Indeed. Well, he shall study the scenery and we have gold," and he touched the bracelets on his arm, "of which he shall be given as much as he can carry away. But perchance, white lords, you would wish to talk this matter over alone. Have we your leave to withdraw a while, O King?"

Five minutes later we were seated in the king's "great house" with Bausi himself and Babemba. Here there was a mighty argument. Bausi implored Brother John not to go, and so did I. Babemba said that to go would be madness, as he smelt witchcraft and murder in the air, he who knew the Pongo.

Brother John replied sweetly that he certainly intended to avail himself of this heaven-sent opportunity to visit one of the few remaining districts in this part of Africa through which he had not yet wandered. Stephen yawned and fanned himself with a pocket-handkerchief, for the hut was hot, and remarked that having come so far after a certain rare flower he did not mean to return empty-handed.

"I perceive, Dogeetah," said Bausi at last, "that you have some reason for this journey which you are hiding from me. Still, I am minded to hold you here by force."

"If you do, it will break our brotherhood," answered Brother John. "Seek not to know what I would hide, Bausi, but wait till the future shall declare it."

Bausi groaned and gave in. Babemba said that Dogeetah and Wazela were bewitched, and that I, Macumazana, alone retained my senses.

"Then that's settled," exclaimed Stephen. "John and I are to go as envoys to the Pongo, and you, Quatermain, will stop here to look after the hunters and the stores."

"Young man," I replied, "do you wish to insult me? After your father put you in my charge, too! If you two are going, I shall come also, if I have to do so mother-naked. But let me tell you once and for all in the most emphatic language I can command, that I consider you a brace of confounded lunatics, and that if the Pongo don't eat you, it will be more than you deserve. To think that at my age I should be dragged among a lot of cannibal savages without even a pistol, to fight some unknown brute with my bare hands! Well, we can only die once--that is, so far as we know at present."

"How true," remarked Stephen; "how strangely and profoundly true!"

Oh! I could have boxed his ears.

We went into the courtyard again, whither Komba was summoned with his attendants. This time they came bearing gifts, or having them borne for them. These consisted, I remember, of two fine tusks of ivory which suggested to me that their country could not be entirely surrounded by

water, since elephants would scarcely live upon an island; gold dust in a gourd and copper bracelets, which showed that it was mineralized; white native linen, very well woven, and some really beautiful decorated pots, indicating that the people had artistic tastes. Where did they get them from, I wonder, and what was the origin of their race? I cannot answer the question, for I never found out with any certainty. Nor do I think they knew themselves.

The indaba was resumed. Bausi announced that we three white men with a servant apiece (I stipulated for this) would visit Pongo-land as his envoys, taking no firearms with us, there to discuss terms of peace between the two peoples, and especially the questions of trade and intermarriage. Komba was very insistent that this should be included; at the time I wondered why. He, Komba, on behalf of the Motombo and the Kalubi, the spiritual and temporal rulers of his land, guaranteed us safe conduct on the understanding that we attempted no insult or violence to the gods, a stipulation from which there was no escape, though I liked it little. He swore also that we should be delivered safe and sound in the Mazitu country within six days of our having left its shores.

Bausi said that it was good, adding that he would send five hundred armed men to escort us to the place where we were to embark, and to receive us on our return; also that if any hurt came to us he would wage war upon the Pongo people for ever until he found means to destroy them.

So we parted, it being agreed that we were to start upon our journey on the following morning.