CHAPTER VI. THE AMBUSH

We had reached the bush after six hours' downhill trek over a pretty bad track made by cattle--of course, there were no roads in Zululand at this date. I remember the place well. It was a kind of spreading woodland on a flat bottom, where trees of no great size grew sparsely. Some were mimosa thorns, others had deep green leaves and bore a kind of plum with an acid taste and a huge stone, and others silver-coloured leaves in their season. A river, too, low at this time of the year, wound through it, and in the scrub upon its banks were many guinea-fowl and other birds. It was a pleasing, lonely place, with lots of game in it, that came here in the winter to eat the grass, which was lacking on the higher veld. Also it gave the idea of vastness, since wherever one looked there was nothing to be seen except a sea of trees.

Well, we outspanned by the river, of which I forget the name, at a spot that Saduko showed us, and set to work to cook our food, that consisted of venison from a blue wildebeest, one of a herd of these wild-looking animals which I had been fortunate enough to shoot as they whisked past us, gambolling in and out between the trees.

While we were eating I observed that armed Zulus arrived continually in parties of from six to a score of men, and as they arrived lifted their spears, though whether in salutation to Saduko or to myself I did not know, and sat themselves down on an open space between us and the

river-bank. Although it was difficult to say whence they came, for they appeared like ghosts out of the bush, I thought it well to take no notice of them, since I guessed that their coming was prearranged.

"Who are they?" I whispered to Scowl, as he brought me my tot of "squareface."

"Saduko's wild men," he answered in the same low voice, "outlaws of his tribe who live among the rocks."

Now I scanned them sideways, while pretending to light my pipe and so forth, and certainly they seemed a remarkably savage set of people. Great, gaunt fellows with tangled hair, who wore tattered skins upon their shoulders and seemed to have no possessions save some snuff, a few sleeping-mats, and an ample supply of large fighting shields, hardwood kerries or knob-sticks, and broad ixwas, or stabbing assegais. Such was the look of them as they sat round us in silent semicircles, like aas-võgels--as the Dutch call vultures--sit round a dying ox.

Still I smoked on and took no notice.

At length, as I expected, Saduko grew weary of my silence and spoke. "These are men of the Amangwane tribe, Macumazahn; three hundred of them, all that Bangu left alive, for when their fathers were killed, the women escaped with some of the children, especially those of the outlying kraals. I have gathered them to be revenged upon Bangu, I who

am their chief by right of blood."

"Quite so," I answered. "I see that you have gathered them; but do they wish to be revenged on Bangu at the risk of their own lives?"

"We do, white Inkoosi," came the deep-throated answer from the three hundred.

"And do they acknowledge you, Saduko, to be their chief?"

"We do," again came the answer. Then a spokesman stepped forward, one of the few grey-haired men among them, for most of these Amangwane were of the age of Saduko, or even younger.

"O Watcher-by-Night," he said, "I am Tshoza, the brother of Matiwane, Saduko's father, the only one of his brothers that escaped the slaughter on the night of the Great Killing. Is it not so?"

"It is so," exclaimed the serried ranks behind him.

"I acknowledge Saduko as my chief, and so do we all," went on Tshoza.

"So do we all," echoed the ranks.

"Since Matiwane died we have lived as we could, O Macumazana; like baboons among the rocks, without cattle, often without a hut to shelter

us; here one, there one. Still, we have lived, awaiting the hour of vengeance upon Bangu, that hour which Zikali the Wise, who is of our blood, has promised to us. Now we believe that it has come, and one and all, from here, from there, from everywhere, we have gathered at the summons of Saduko to be led against Bangu and to conquer him or to die. Is it not so, Amangwane?"

"It is, it is so!" came the deep, unanimous answer, that caused the stirless leaves to shake in the still air.

"I understand, O Tshoza, brother of Matiwane and uncle of Saduko the chief," I replied. "But Bangu is a strong man, living, I am told, in a strong place. Still, let that go; for have you not said that you come out to conquer or to die, you who have nothing to lose; and if you conquer, you conquer; and if you die, you die and the tale is told. But supposing that you conquer. What will Panda, King of the Zulus, say to you, and to me also, who stir up war in his country?"

Now the Amangwane looked behind them, and Saduko cried out:

"Appear, messenger from Panda the King!"

Before his words had ceased to echo I saw a little, withered man threading his way between the tall, gaunt forms of the Amangwane. He came and stood before me, saying:

"Hail, Macumazahn. Do you remember me?"

"Aye," I answered, "I remember you as Maputa, one of Panda's indunas."

"Quite so, Macumazahn; I am Maputa, one of his indunas, a member of his Council, a captain of his impis [that is, armies], as I was to his brothers who are gone, whose names it is not lawful that I should name. Well, Panda the King has sent me to you, at the request of Saduko there, with a message."

"How do I know that you are a true messenger?" I asked. "Have you brought me any token?"

"Aye," he answered, and, fumbling under his cloak, he produced something wrapped in dried leaves, which he undid and handed to me, saying:

"This is the token that Panda sends to you, Macumazahn, bidding me to tell you that you will certainly know it again; also that you are welcome to it, since the two little bullets which he swallowed as you directed made him very ill, and he needs no more of them."

I took the token, and, examining it in the moonlight, recognised it at once.

It was a cardboard box of strong calomel pills, on the top of which was written: "Allan Quatermain, Esq.: One only to be taken as directed."

Without entering into explanations, I may state that I had taken "one as directed," and subsequently presented the rest of the box to King Panda, who was very anxious to "taste the white man's medicine."

"Do you recognise the token, Macumazahn?" asked the induna.

"Yes," I replied gravely; "and let the King return thanks to the spirits of his ancestors that he did not swallow three of the balls, for if he had done so, by now there would have been another Head in Zululand. Well, speak on, Messenger."

But to myself I reflected, not for the first time, how strangely these natives could mix up the sublime with the ridiculous. Here was a matter that must involve the death of many men, and the token sent to me by the autocrat who stood at the back of it all, to prove the good faith of his messenger, was a box of calomel pills! However, it served the purpose as well as anything else.

Maputa and I drew aside, for I saw that he wished to speak with me alone.

"O Macumazana," he said, when we were out of hearing of the others, "these are the words of Panda to you: 'I understand that you, Macumazahn, have promised to accompany Saduko, son of Matiwane, on an expedition of his against Bangu, chief of the Amakoba. Now, were anyone else concerned, I should forbid this expedition, and especially should I

forbid you, a white man in my country, to share therein. But this dog of a Bangu is an evil-doer. Many years ago he worked on the Black One who went before me to send him to destroy Matiwane, my friend, filling the Black One's ears with false accusations; and thereafter he did treacherously destroy him and all his tribe save Saduko, his son, and some of the people and children who escaped. Moreover, of late he has been working against me, the King, striving to stir up rebellion against me, because he knows that I hate him for his crimes. Now I, Panda, unlike those who went before me, am a man of peace who do not wish to light the fire of civil war in the land, for who knows where such fires will stop, or whose kraals they will consume? Yet I do wish to see Bangu punished for his wickedness, and his pride abated. Therefore I give Saduko leave, and those people of the Amangwane who remain to him, to avenge their private wrongs upon Bangu if they can; and I give you leave, Macumazahn, to be of his party. Moreover, if any cattle are taken, I shall ask no account of them; you and Saduko may divide them as you wish. But understand, O Macumazana, that if you or your people are killed or wounded, or robbed of your goods, I know nothing of the matter, and am not responsible to you or to the white House of Natal; it is your own matter. These are my words. I have spoken.'"

"I see," I answered. "I am to pull Panda's hot iron out of the fire and to extinguish the fire. If I succeed I may keep a piece of the iron when it gets cool, and if I burn my fingers it is my own fault, and I or my House must not come crying to Panda."

"O Watcher-by-Night, you have speared the bull in the heart," replied Maputa, the messenger, nodding his shrewd old head. "Well, will you go up with Saduko?"

"Say to the King, O Messenger, that I will go up with Saduko because I promised him that I would, being moved by the tale of his wrongs, and not for the sake of the cattle, although it is true that if I hear any of them lowing in my camp I may keep them. Say to Panda also that if aught of ill befalls me he shall hear nothing of it, nor will I bring his high name into this business; but that he, on his part, must not blame me for anything that may happen afterwards. Have you the message?"

"I have it word for word; and may your Spirit be with you, Macumazahn, when you attack the strong mountain of Bangu, which, were I you," Maputa added reflectively, "I think I should do just at the dawn, since the Amakoba drink much beer and are heavy sleepers."

Then we took a pinch of snuff together, and he departed at once for Nodwengu, Panda's Great Place.

Fourteen days had gone by, and Saduko and I, with our ragged band of Amangwane, sat one morning, after a long night march, in the hilly country looking across a broad vale, which was sprinkled with trees like an English park, at that mountain on the side of which Bangu, chief of

the Amakoba, had his kraal.

It was a very formidable mountain, and, as we had already observed, the paths leading up to the kraal were amply protected with stone walls in which the openings were quite narrow, only just big enough to allow one ox to pass through them at a time. Moreover, all these walls had been strengthened recently, perhaps because Bangu was aware that Panda looked upon him, a northern chief dwelling on the confines of his dominions, with suspicion and even active enmity, as he was also no doubt aware Panda had good cause to do.

Here in a dense patch of bush that grew in a kloof of the hills we held a council of war.

So far as we knew our advance had been unobserved, for I had left my wagons in the low veld thirty miles away, giving it out among the local natives that I was hunting game there, and bringing on with me only Scowl and four of my best hunters, all well-armed natives who could shoot. The three hundred Amangwane also had advanced in small parties, separated from each other, pretending to be Kafirs marching towards Delagoa Bay. Now, however, we had all met in this bush. Among our number were three Amangwane who, on the slaughter of their tribe, had fled with their mothers to this district and been brought up among the people of Bangu, but who at his summons had come back to Saduko. It was on these men that we relied at this juncture, for they alone knew the country.

Long and anxiously did we consult with them. First they explained, and, so far as the moonlight would allow, for as yet the dawn had not broken, pointed out to us the various paths that led to Bangu's kraal.

"How many men are there in the town?" I asked.

"About seven hundred who carry spears," they answered, "together with others in outlying kraals. Moreover, watchmen are always set at the gateways in the walls."

"And where are the cattle?" I asked again.

"Here, in the valley beneath, Macumazahn," answered the spokesman. "If you listen you will hear them lowing. Fifty men, not less, watch them at night--two thousand head of them, or more."

"Then it would not be difficult to get round these cattle and drive them off, leaving Bangu to breed up a new herd?"

"It might not be difficult," interrupted Saduko, "but I came here to kill Bangu, as well as to seize his cattle, since with him I have a blood feud."

"Very good," I answered; "but that mountain cannot be stormed with three hundred men, fortified as it is with walls and schanzes. Our band would be destroyed before ever we came to the kraal, since, owing to the

sentries who are set everywhere, it would be impossible to surprise the place. Also you have forgotten the dogs, Saduko. Moreover, even if it were possible, I will have nothing to do with the massacre of women and children, which must happen in an assault. Now, listen to me, O Saduko. I say let us leave the kraal of Bangu alone, and this coming night send fifty of our men, under the leadership of the guides, down to yonder bush, where they will lie hid. Then, after moonrise, when all are asleep, these fifty must rush the cattle kraal, killing any who may oppose them, should they be seen, and driving the herd out through yonder great pass by which we have entered the land. Bangu and his people, thinking that those who have taken the cattle are but common thieves of some wild tribe, will gather and follow the beasts to recapture them. But we, with the rest of the Amangwane, can set an ambush in the narrowest part of the pass among the rocks, where the grass is high and the euphorbia trees grow thick, and there, when they have passed the Nek, which I and my hunters will hold with our guns, we will give them battle. What say you?"

Now, Saduko answered that he would rather attack the kraal, which he wished to burn. But the old Amangwane, Tshoza, brother of the dead Matiwane, said:

"No, Macumazahn, Watcher-by-Night, is wise. Why should we waste our strength on stone walls, of which none know the number or can find the gates in the darkness, and thereby leave our skulls to be set up as

ornaments on the fences of the accursed Amakoba? Let us draw the Amakoba
out into the pass of the mountains, where they have no walls to protect them, and there fall on them when they are bewildered and settle the matter with them man to man. As for the women and children, with Macumazahn I say let them go; afterwards, perhaps, they will become our women and children."

"Aye," answered the Amangwane, "the plan of the white Inkoosi is good; he is clever as a weasel; we will have his plan and no other."

So Saduko was overruled and my counsel adopted.

All that day we rested, lighting no fires and remaining still as the dead in the dense bush. It was a very anxious day, for although the place was so wild and lonely, there was always the fear lest we should be discovered. It was true that we had travelled mostly by night in small parties, to avoid leaving a spoor, and avoided all kraals; still, some rumour of our approach might have reached the Amakoba, or a party of hunters might stumble on us, or those who sought for lost cattle.

Indeed, something of this sort did happen, for about midday we heard a footfall, and perceived the figure of a man, whom by his head-dress we knew for an Amakoba, threading his way through the bush. Before he saw us he was in our midst. For a moment he hesitated ere he turned to fly, and that moment was his last, for three of the Amangwane leapt on him

silently as leopards leap upon a buck, and where he stood there he died. Poor fellow! Evidently he had been on a visit to some witch-doctor, for in his blanket we found medicine and love charms. This doctor cannot have been one of the stamp of Zikali the Dwarf, I thought to myself; at least, he had not warned him that he would never live to dose his beloved with that foolish medicine.

Meanwhile a few of us who had the quickest eyes climbed trees, and thence watched the town of Bangu and the valley that lay between us and it. Soon we saw that so far, at any rate, Fortune was playing into our hands, since herd after herd of kine were driven into the valley during the afternoon and enclosed in the stock-kraals. Doubtless Bangu intended on the morrow to make his half-yearly inspection of all the cattle of the tribe, many of which were herded at a distance from his town.

At length the long day drew to its close and the shadows of the evening thickened. Then we made ready for our dreadful game, of which the stake was the lives of all of us, since, should we fail, we could expect no mercy. The fifty picked men were gathered and ate food in silence. These men were placed under the command of Tshoza, for he was the most experienced of the Amangwane, and led by the three guides who had dwelt among the Amakoba, and who "knew every ant-heap in the land," or so they swore. Their duty, it will be remembered, was to cross the valley, separate themselves into small parties, unbar the various cattle kraals, kill or hunt off the herdsmen, and drive the beasts back across the valley into the pass. A second fifty men, under the command of Saduko,

were to be left just at the end of this pass where it opened out into the valley, in order to help and reinforce the cattle-lifters, or, if need be, to check the following Amakoba while the great herds of beasts were got away, and then fall back on the rest of us in our ambush nearly two miles distant. The management of this ambush was to be my charge--a heavy one indeed.

Now, the moon would not be up till midnight. But two hours before that time we began our moves, since the cattle must be driven out of the kraals as soon as she appeared and gave the needful light. Otherwise the fight in the pass would in all probability be delayed till after sunrise, when the Amakoba would see how small was the number of their foes. Terror, doubt, darkness--these must be our allies if our desperate venture was to succeed.

All was arranged at last and the time had come. We, the three captains of our divided force, bade each other farewell, and passed the word down the ranks that, should we be separated by the accidents of war, my wagons were the meeting-place of any who survived.

Tshoza and his fifty glided away into the shadow silently as ghosts and were gone. Presently the fierce-faced Saduko departed also with his fifty. He carried the double-barrelled gun I had given him, and was accompanied by one of my best hunters, a Natal native, who was also armed with a heavy smooth-bore loaded with slugs. Our hope was that the sound of these guns might terrify the foe, should there be occasion to

use them before our forces joined up again, and make them think they had to do with a body of raiding Dutch white men, of whose roers--as the heavy elephant guns of that day were called--all natives were much afraid.

So Saduko went with his fifty, leaving me wondering whether I should ever see his face again. Then I, my bearer Scowl, the two remaining hunters, and the ten score Amangwane who were left turned and soon were following the road by which we had come down the rugged pass. I call it a road, but, in fact, it was nothing but a water-washed gully strewn with boulders, through which we must pick our way as best we could in the darkness, having first removed the percussion cap from the nipple of every gun, for fear lest the accidental discharge of one of them should warn the Amakoba, confuse our other parties, and bring all our deep-laid plans to nothing.

Well, we accomplished that march somehow, walking in three long lines, so that each man might keep touch with him in front, and just as the moon began to rise reached the spot that I had chosen for the ambush.

Certainly it was well suited to that purpose. Here the track or gully bed narrowed to a width of not more than a hundred feet, while the steep slopes of the kloof on either side were clothed with scattered bushes and finger-like euphorbias which grew among stones. Behind these stones and bushes we hid ourselves, a hundred men on one side and a hundred on the other, whilst I and my three hunters, who were armed with guns, took

up a position under shelter of a great boulder nearly five feet thick that lay but a little to the right of the gully itself, up which we expected the cattle would come. This place I chose for two reasons: first, that I might keep touch with both wings of my force, and, secondly, that we might be able to fire straight down the path on the pursuing Amakoba.

These were the orders that I gave to the Amangwane, warning them that he who disobeyed would be punished with death. They were not to stir until I, or, if I should be killed, one of my hunters, fired a shot; for my fear was lest, growing excited, they might leap out before the time and kill some of our own people, who very likely would be mixed up with the first of the pursuing Amakoba. Secondly, when the cattle had passed and the signal had been given, they were to rush on the Amakoba, throwing themselves across the gully, so that the enemy would have to fight upwards on a steep slope.

That was all I told them, since it is not wise to confuse natives by giving too many orders. One thing I added, however--that they must conquer or they must die. There was no mercy for them; it was a case of death or victory. Their spokesman--for these people always find a spokesman--answered that they thanked me for my advice; that they understood, and that they would do their best. Then they lifted their spears to me in salute. A wild lot of men they looked in the moonlight as they departed to take shelter behind the rocks and trees and wait.

That waiting was long, and I confess that before the end it got upon my nerves. I began to think of all sorts of things, such as whether I should live to see the sun rise again; also I reflected upon the legitimacy of this remarkable enterprise. What right had I to involve myself in a quarrel between these savages?

Why had I come here? To gain cattle as a trader? No, for I was not at all sure that I would take them if gained. Because Saduko had twitted me with faithlessness to my words? Yes, to a certain extent; but that was by no means the whole reason. I had been moved by the recital of the cruel wrongs inflicted upon Saduko and his tribe by this Bangu, and therefore had not been loath to associate myself with his attempted vengeance upon a wicked murderer. Well, that was sound enough so far as it went; but now a new consideration suggested itself to me. Those wrongs had been worked many years ago; probably most of the men who had aided and abetted them by now were dead or very aged, and it was their sons upon whom the vengeance would be wreaked.

What right had I to assist in visiting the sins of the fathers upon the sons? Frankly I could not say. The thing seemed to me to be a part of the problem of life, neither less nor more. So I shrugged my shoulders sadly and consoled myself by reflecting that very likely the issue would go against me, and that my own existence would pay the price of the venture and expound its moral. This consideration soothed my conscience somewhat, for when a man backs his actions with the risk of his life,

right or wrong, at any rate he plays no coward's part.

The time went by very slowly and nothing happened. The waning moon shone
brightly in a clear sky, and as there was no wind the silence seemed peculiarly intense. Save for the laugh of an occasional hyena and now and again for a sound which I took for the coughing of a distant lion, there was no stir between sleeping earth and moonlit heaven in which little clouds floated beneath the pale stars.

At length I thought that I heard a noise, a kind of murmur far away. It grew, it developed.

It sounded like a thousand sticks tapping upon something hard, very faintly. It continued to grow, and I knew the sound for that of the beating hoofs of animals galloping. Then there were isolated noises, very faint and thin; they might be shouts; then something that I could not mistake--shots fired at a distance. So the business was afoot; the cattle were moving, Saduko and my hunter were firing. There was nothing for it but to wait.

The excitement was very fierce; it seemed to consume me, to eat into my brain. The sound of the tapping upon the rocks grew louder until it merged into a kind of rumble, mixed with an echo as of that of very distant thunder, which presently I knew to be not thunder, but the bellowing of a thousand frightened beasts.

Nearer and nearer came the galloping hoofs and the rumble of bellowings; nearer and nearer the shouts of men, affronting the stillness of the solemn night. At length a single animal appeared, a koodoo buck that somehow had got mixed up with the cattle. It went past us like a flash, and was followed a minute or so later by a bull that, being young and light, had outrun its companions. That, too, went by, foam on its lips and its tongue hanging from its jaws.

Then the herd appeared--a countless herd it seemed to me--plunging up the incline--cows, heifers, calves, bulls, and oxen, all mixed together in one inextricable mass, and every one of them snorting, bellowing, or making some other kind of sound. The din was fearful, the sight bewildering, for the beasts were of all colours, and their long horns flashed like ivory in the moonlight. Indeed, the only thing in the least like it which I have ever seen was the rush of the buffaloes from the reed camp on that day when I got my injury.

They were streaming past us now, a mighty and moving mass so closely packed that a man might have walked upon their backs. In fact, some of the calves which had been thrust up by the pressure were being carried along in this fashion. Glad was I that none of us were in their path, for their advance seemed irresistible. No fence or wall could have saved us, and even stout trees that grew in the gully were snapped or thrust over.

At length the long line began to thin, for now it was composed of stragglers and weak or injured beasts, of which there were many. Other sounds, too, began to dominate the bellowings of the animals, those of the excited cries of men. The first of our companions, the cattle-lifters, appeared, weary and gasping, but waving their spears in triumph. Among them was old Tshoza. I stepped upon my rock, calling to him by name. He heard me, and presently was lying at my side panting.

"We have got them all!" he gasped. "Not a hoof is left save those that are trodden down. Saduko is not far behind with the rest of our brothers, except some that have been killed. All the Amakoba tribe are after us. He holds them back to give the cattle time to get away."

"Well done!" I answered. "It is very good. Now make your men hide among the others that they may find their breath before the fight."

So he stopped them as they came. Scarcely had the last of them vanished into the bushes when the gathering volume of shouts, amongst which I heard a gun go off, told us that Saduko and his band and the pursuing Amakoba were not far away. Presently they, too, appeared--that is the handful of Amangwane did--not fighting now, but running as hard as they could, for they knew they were approaching the ambush and wished to pass it so as not to be mixed up with the Amakoba. We let them go through us. Among the last of them came Saduko, who was wounded, for the blood ran down his side, supporting my hunter, who was also wounded, more severely as I feared.

I called to him.

"Saduko," I said, "halt at the crest of the path and rest there so that you may be able to help us presently."

He waved the gun in answer, for he was too breathless to speak, and went on with those who were left of his following--perhaps thirty men in all--in the track of the cattle. Before he was out of sight the Amakoba arrived, a mob of five or six hundred men mixed up together and advancing without order or discipline, for they seemed to have lost their heads as well as their cattle. Some of them had shields and some had none, some broad and some throwing assegais, while many were quite naked, not having stayed to put on their moochas and much less their war finery. Evidently they were mad with rage, for the sounds that issued from them seemed to concentrate into one mighty curse.

The moment had come, though to tell the truth I heartily wished that it had not. I wasn't exactly afraid, although I never set up for great courage, but I did not quite like the business. After all we were stealing these people's cattle, and now were going to kill as many of them as we could. I had to recall Saduko's dreadful story of the massacre of his tribe before I could make up my mind to give the signal. That hardened me, and so did the reflection that after all they outnumbered us enormously and very likely would prove victors in the end. Anyhow it was too late to repent. What a tricky and uncomfortable

thing is conscience, that nearly always begins to trouble us at the moment of, or after, the event, not before, when it might be of some use.

I raised myself upon the rock and fired both barrels of my gun into the advancing horde, though whether I killed anyone or no I cannot say. I have always hoped that I did not; but as the mark was large and I am a fair shot, I fear that is scarcely possible. Next moment, with a howl that sounded like that of wild beasts, from either side of the gorge the fierce Amangwane free-spears--for that is what they were--leapt out of their hiding-places and hurled themselves upon their hereditary foes. They were fighting for more than cattle; they were fighting for hate and for revenge since these Amakoba had slaughtered their fathers and their mothers, their sisters and their brothers, and they alone remained to pay them back blood for blood.

Great heaven! how they did fight, more like devils than human beings. After that first howl which shaped itself to the word "Saduko," they were silent as bulldogs. Though they were so few, at first their terrible rush drove back the Amakoba. Then, as these recovered from their surprise, the weight of numbers began to tell, for they, too, were brave men who did not give way to panic. Scores of them went down at once, but the remainder pushed the Amangwane before them up the hill. I took little share in the fight, but was thrust backward with the others, only firing when I was obliged to save my own life. Foot by foot we were pushed back till at length we drew near to the crest of the pass.

Then, while the issue hung in the balance, there was another shout of "Saduko!" and that chief himself, followed by his thirty, rushed upon the Amakoba.

This charge decided the battle, for not knowing how many more were coming, those who were left of the Amakoba turned and fled, nor did we pursue them far.

We mustered on the hill-top, not more than two hundred of us now, the rest were fallen or desperately wounded, my poor hunter, whom I had lent to Saduko, being among the dead. Although wounded, he died fighting to the last, then fell down, shouting to me:

"Chief, have I done well?" and expired.

I was breathless and spent, but as in a dream I saw some Amangwane drag up a gaunt old savage, crying:

"Here is Bangu, Bangu the Butcher, whom we have caught alive."

Saduko stepped up to him.

"Ah! Bangu," he said, "now say, why should I not kill you as you would have killed the little lad Saduko long ago, had not Zikali saved him? See, here is the mark of your spear."

"Kill," said Bangu. "Your Spirit is stronger than mine. Did not Zikali foretell it? Kill, Saduko."

"Nay," answered Saduko. "If you are weary I am weary, too, and wounded as well. Take a spear, Bangu, and we will fight."

So they fought there in the moonlight, man to man; fought fiercely while all watched, till presently I saw Bangu throw his arms wide and fall backwards.

Saduko was avenged. I have always been glad that he slew his enemy thus, and not as it might have been expected that he would do.