

CHAPTER X. THE SMELLING-OUT

After these events matters went on quietly for some time. I visited Saduko's huts--very fine huts--about the doors of which sat quite a number of his tribesmen, who seemed glad to see me again. Here I learned from the Lady Nandie that her babe, whom she loved dearly, was none the worse for its little accident. Also I learned from Saduko himself, who came in before I left, attended like a prince by several notable men, that he had made up his quarrel with Masapo, and, indeed, apologised to him, as he found that he had not really meant to insult the princess, his wife, having only thrust her over by accident. Saduko added indeed that now they were good friends, which was well for Masapo, a man whom the King had no cause to like. I said that I was glad to hear it, and went on to call upon Masapo, who received me with enthusiasm, as also did Mameena.

Here I noted with pleasure that this pair seemed to be on much better terms than I understood had been the case in the past, for Mameena even addressed her husband on two separate occasions in very affectionate language, and fetched something that he wanted without waiting to be asked. Masapo, too, was in excellent spirits, because, as he told me, the old quarrel between him and Saduko was thoroughly made up, their reconciliation having been sealed by an interchange of gifts. He added that he was very glad that this was the case, since Saduko was now one of the most powerful men in the country, who could harm him much if he

chose, especially as some secret enemy had put it about of late that he, Masapo, was an enemy of the King's House, and an evil-doer who practised witchcraft. In proof of his new friendship, however, Saduko had promised that these slanders should be looked into and their originator punished, if he or she could be found.

Well, I congratulated him and took my departure, "thinking furiously," as the Frenchman says. That there was a tragedy pending I was sure; this weather was too calm to last; the water ran so still because it was preparing to leap down some hidden precipice.

Yet what could I do? Tell Masapo I had seen his wife being embraced by another man? Surely that was not my business; it was Masapo's business to attend to her conduct. Also they would both deny it, and I had no witness. Tell him that Saduko's reconciliation with him was not sincere, and that he had better look to himself? How did I know it was not sincere? It might suit Saduko's book to make friends with Masapo, and if I interfered I should only make enemies and be called a liar who was working for some secret end.

Go to Panda and confide my suspicions to him? He was far too anxious and busy about great matters to listen to me, and if he did, would only laugh at this tale of a petty flirtation. No, there was nothing to be done except sit still and wait. Very possibly I was mistaken, after all, and things would smooth themselves out, as they generally do.

Meanwhile the "reviewing," or whatever it may have been, was in progress, and I was busy with my own affairs, making hay while the sun shone. So great were the crowds of people who came up to Nodwengu that in a week I had sold everything I had to sell in the two wagons, that were mostly laden with cloth, beads, knives and so forth. Moreover, the prices I got were splendid, since the buyers bid against each other, and before I was cleared out I had collected quite a herd of cattle, also a quantity of ivory. These I sent on to Natal with one of the wagons, remaining behind myself with the other, partly because Panda asked me to do so--for now and again he would seek my advice on sundry questions--and partly from curiosity.

There was plenty to be curious about up at Nodwengu just then, since no one was sure that civil war would not break out between the princes Cetewayo and Umbelazi, whose factions were present in force.

It was averted for the time, however, by Umbelazi keeping away from the great gathering under pretext of being sick, and leaving Saduko and some others to watch his interests. Also the rival regiments were not allowed to approach the town at the same time. So that public cloud passed over, to the enormous relief of everyone, especially of Panda the King. As to the private cloud whereof this history tells, it was otherwise.

As the tribes came up to the Great Place they were reviewed and sent away, since it was impossible to feed so vast a multitude as would have collected had they all remained. Thus the Amasomi, a small people who

were amongst the first to arrive, soon left. Only, for some reason which I never quite understood, Masapo, Mameena and a few of Masapo's children and headmen were detained there; though perhaps, if she had chosen, Mameena could have given an explanation.

Well, things began to happen. Sundry personages were taken ill, and some of them died suddenly; and soon it was noted that all these people either lived near to where Masapo's family was lodged or had at some time or other been on bad terms with him. Thus Saduko himself was taken ill, or said he was; at any rate, he vanished from public gaze for three days, and reappeared looking very sorry for himself, though I could not observe that he had lost strength or weight. These catastrophes I pass over, however, in order to come to the greatest of them, which is one of the turning points of this chronicle.

After recovering from his alleged sickness Saduko gave a kind of thanksgiving feast, at which several oxen were killed. I was present at this feast, or rather at the last part of it, for I only put in what may be called a complimentary appearance, having no taste for such native gorgings. As it drew near its close Saduko sent for Nandie, who at first refused to come as there were no women present--I think because he wished to show his friends that he had a princess of the royal blood for his wife, who had borne him a son that one day would be great in the land. For Saduko, as I have said, had become a "self-eater," and this day his pride was inflamed by the adulation of the company and by the beer that he had drunk.

At length Nandie did come, carrying her babe, from which she never would be parted. In her dignified, ladylike fashion (although it seems an odd term to apply to a savage, I know none that describes her better) she greeted first me and then sundry of the other guests, saying a few words to each of them. At length she came opposite to Masapo, who had dined not wisely but too well, and to him, out of her natural courtesy, spoke rather longer than to the others, inquiring after his wife, Mameena, and others. At the moment it occurred to me that she did this in order to assure him that she bore no malice because of the accident of a while before, and was a party to her husband's reconciliation with him.

Masapo, in a hazy way, tried to reciprocate these kind intentions. Rising to his feet, his fat, coarse body swaying to and fro because of the beer that he had drunk, he expressed satisfaction at the feast that had been prepared in her house. Then, his eyes falling on the child, he began to declaim about its size and beauty, until he was stopped by the murmured protests of others, since among natives it is held to be not fortunate to praise a young child. Indeed, the person who does so is apt to be called an "umtakati", or bewitcher, who will bring evil upon its head, a word that I heard murmured by several near to me. Not satisfied with this serious breach of etiquette, the intoxicated Masapo snatched the infant from its mother's arms under pretext of looking for the hurt that had been caused to its brow when it fell to the ground at my camp, and finding none, proceeded to kiss it with his thick lips.

Nandie dragged it from him, saying:

"Would you bring death upon my son, O Chief of the Amasomi?"

Then, turning, she walked away from the feasters, upon whom there fell a certain hush.

Fearing lest something unpleasant should ensue, for I saw Saduko biting his lips with rage not unmixed with fear, and remembering Masapo's reputation as a wizard, I took advantage of this pause to bid a general good night to the company and retire to my camp.

What happened immediately after I left I do not know, but just before dawn on the following morning I was awakened from sleep in my wagon by my servant Scowl, who said that a messenger had come from the huts of Saduko, begging that I would proceed there at once and bring the white man's medicines, as his child was very ill. Of course I got up and went, taking with me some ipecacuanha and a few other remedies that I thought might be suitable for infantile ailments.

Outside the huts, which I reached just as the sun began to rise, I was met by Saduko himself, who was coming to seek me, as I saw at once, in a state of terrible grief.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"O Macumazana," he answered, "that dog Masapo has bewitched my boy, and unless you can save him he dies."

"Nonsense," I said, "why do you utter wind? If the babe is sick, it is from some natural cause."

"Wait till you see it," he replied.

Well, I went into the big hut, and there found Nandie and some other women, also a native doctor or two. Nandie was seated on the floor looking like a stone image of grief, for she made no sound, only pointed with her finger to the infant that lay upon a mat in front of her.

A single glance showed me that it was dying of some disease of which I had no knowledge, for its dusky little body was covered with red blotches and its tiny face twisted all awry. I told the women to heat water, thinking that possibly this might be a case of convulsions, which a hot bath would mitigate; but before it was ready the poor babe uttered a thin wail and died.

Then, when she saw that her child was gone, Nandie spoke for the first time.

"The wizard has done his work well," she said, and flung herself face downwards on the floor of the hut.

As I did not know what to answer, I went out, followed by Saduko.

"What has killed my son, Macumazahh?" he asked in a hollow voice, the tears running down his handsome face, for he had loved his firstborn.

"I cannot tell," I replied; "but had he been older I should have thought he had eaten something poisonous, which seems impossible."

"Yes, Macumazahh, and the poison that he has eaten came from the breath of a wizard whom you may chance to have seen kiss him last night. Well, his life shall be avenged."

"Saduko," I exclaimed, "do not be unjust. There are many sicknesses that may have killed your son of which I have no knowledge, who am not a trained doctor."

"I will not be unjust, Macumazahh. The babe has died by witchcraft, like others in this town of late, but the evil-doer may not be he whom I suspect. That is for the smellers-out to decide," and without more words he turned and left me.

Next day Masapo was put upon his trial before a Court of Councillors, over which the King himself presided, a very unusual thing for him to do, and one which showed the great interest he took in the case.

At this court I was summoned to give evidence, and, of course, confined myself to answering such questions as were put to me. Practically these were but two. What had passed at my wagons when Masapo had knocked over

Nandie and her child, and Saduko had struck him, and what had I seen at Saduko's feast when Masapo had kissed the infant? I told them in as few words as I could, and after some slight cross-examination by Masapo, made with a view to prove that the upsetting of Nandie was an accident and that he was drunk at Saduko's feast, to both of which suggestions I assented, I rose to go. Panda, however, stopped me and bade me describe the aspect of the child when I was called in to give it medicine.

I did so as accurately as possible, and could see that my account made a deep impression on the mind of the court. Then Panda asked me if I had ever seen any similar case, to which I was obliged to reply:

"No, I have not."

After this the Councillors consulted privately, and when we were called back the King gave his judgment, which was very brief. It was evident, he said, that there had been events which might have caused enmity to arise in the mind of Masapo against Saduko, by whom Masapo had been struck with a stick. Therefore, although a reconciliation had taken place, there seemed to be a possible motive for revenge. But if Masapo killed the child, there was no evidence to show how he had done so. Moreover, that infant, his own grandson, had not died of any known

disease. He had, however, died of a similar disease to that which had carried off certain others with whom Masapo had been mixed up, whereas more, including Saduko himself, had been sick and recovered, all of which seemed to make a strong case against Masapo.

Still, he and his Councillors wished not to condemn without full proof. That being so, they had determined to call in the services of some great witch-doctor, one who lived at a distance and knew nothing of the circumstances. Who that doctor should be was not yet settled. When it was and he had arrived, the case would be re-opened, and meanwhile Masapo would be kept a close prisoner. Finally, he prayed that the white man, Macumazahn, would remain at his town until the matter was settled.

So Masapo was led off, looking very dejected, and, having saluted the King, we all went away.

I should add that, except for the remission of the case to the court of the witch-doctor, which, of course, was an instance of pure Kafir superstition, this judgment of the King's seemed to me well reasoned and just, very different indeed from what would have been given by Dingaan or Chaka, who were wont, on less evidence, to make a clean sweep not only of the accused, but of all his family and dependents.

About eight days later, during which time I had heard nothing of the matter and seen no one connected with it, for the whole thing seemed to have become Zila--that is, not to be talked about--I received a summons

to attend the "smelling-out," and went, wondering what witch-doctor had been chosen for that bloody and barbarous ceremony. Indeed, I had not far to go, since the place selected for the occasion was outside the fence of the town of Nodwengu, on that great open stretch of ground which lay at the mouth of the valley where I was camped. Here, as I approached, I saw a vast multitude of people crowded together, fifty deep or more, round a little oval space not much larger than the pit of a theatre. On the inmost edge of this ring were seated many notable people, male and female, and as I was conducted to the side of it which was nearest to the gate of the town, I observed among them Saduko, Masapo, Mameena and others, and mixed up with them a number of soldiers, who were evidently on duty.

Scarcely had I seated myself on a camp-stool, carried by my servant Scowl, when through the gate of the kraal issued Panda and certain of his Council, whose appearance the multitude greeted with the royal salute of "Bayéte", that came from them in a deep and simultaneous roar of sound. When its echoes died away, in the midst of a deep silence Panda spoke, saying:

"Bring forth the Nyanga [doctor]. Let the umhlahlo [that is, the witch-trial] begin!"

There was a long pause, and then in the open gateway appeared a solitary figure that at first sight seemed to be scarcely human, the figure of

a dwarf with a gigantic head, from which hung long, white hair, plaited into locks. It was Zikali, no other!

Quite unattended, and naked save for his moocha, for he had on him none of the ordinary paraphernalia of the witch-doctor, he waddled forward with a curious toad-like gait till he had passed through the Councillors and stood in the open space of the ring. Halting there, he looked about him slowly with his deep-set eyes, turning as he looked, till at length his glance fell upon the King.

"What would you have of me, Son of Senzangakona?" he asked. "Many years have passed since last we met. Why do you drag me from my hut, I who have visited the kraal of the King of the Zulus but twice since the 'Black One' [Chaka] sat upon the throne--once when the Boers were killed by him who went before you, and once when I was brought forth to see all who were left of my race, shoots of the royal Dwandwe stock, slain before my eyes. Do you bear me hither that I may follow them into the darkness, O Child of Senzangakona? If so I am ready; only then I have words to say that it may not please you to hear."

His deep, rumbling voice echoed into silence, while the great audience waited for the King's answer. I could see that they were all afraid of this man, yes, even Panda was afraid, for he shifted uneasily upon his stool. At length he spoke, saying:

"Not so, O Zikali. Who would wish to do hurt to the wisest and most

ancient man in all the land, to him who touches the far past with one hand and the present with the other, to him who was old before our grandfathers began to be? Nay, you are safe, you on whom not even the 'Black One' dared to lay a finger, although you were his enemy and he hated you. As for the reason why you have been brought here, tell it to us, O Zikali. Who are we that we should instruct you in the ways of wisdom?"

When the dwarf heard this he broke into one of his great laughs.

"So at last the House of Senzangakona acknowledges that I have wisdom. Then before all is done they will think me wise indeed."

He laughed again in his ill-omened fashion and went on hurriedly, as though he feared that he should be called upon to explain his words:

"Where is the fee? Where is the fee? Is the King so poor that he expects an old Dwandwe doctor to divine for nothing, just as though he were working for a private friend?"

Panda made a motion with his hand, and ten fine heifers were driven into the circle from some place where they had been kept in waiting.

"Sorry beasts!" said Zikali contemptuously, "compared to those we used to breed before the time of Senzangakona"--a remark which caused a loud "Wow!" of astonishment to be uttered by the multitude that heard it.

"Still, such as they are, let them be taken to my kraal, with a bull, for I have none."

The cattle were driven away, and the ancient dwarf squatted himself down and stared at the ground, looking like a great black toad. For a long while--quite ten minutes, I should think--he stared thus, till I, for one, watching him intently, began to feel as though I were mesmerised.

At length he looked up, tossing back his grey locks, and said:

"I see many things in the dust. Oh, yes, it is alive, it is alive, and tells me many things. Show that you are alive, O Dust. Look!"

As he spoke, throwing his hands upwards, there arose at his very feet one of those tiny and incomprehensible whirlwinds with which all who know South Africa will be familiar. It drove the dust together; it lifted it in a tall, spiral column that rose and rose to a height of fifty feet or more. Then it died away as suddenly as it had come, so that the dust fell down again over Zikali, over the King, and over three of his sons who sat behind him. Those three sons, I remember, were named Tshonkweni, Dabulesinye, and Mantantashiya. As it chanced, by a strange coincidence all of these were killed at the great battle of the Tugela of which I have to tell.

Now again an exclamation of fear and wonder rose from the audience, who set down this lifting of the dust at Zikali's very feet not to natural

causes, but to the power of his magic. Moreover, those on whom it had fallen, including the King, rose hurriedly and shook and brushed it from their persons with a zeal that was not, I think, inspired by a mere desire for cleanliness. But Zikali only laughed again in his terrible fashion and let it lie on his fresh-oiled body, which it turned to the dull, dead hue of a grey adder.

He rose and, stepping here and there, examined the new-fallen dust. Then he put his hand into a pouch he wore and produced from it a dried human finger, whereof the nail was so pink that I think it must have been coloured--a sight at which the circle shuddered.

"Be clever," he said, "O Finger of her I loved best; be clever and write in the dust as yonder Macumazana can write, and as some of the Dwandwe used to write before we became slaves and bowed ourselves down before the Great Heavens." (By this he meant the Zulus, whose name means the Heavens.) "Be clever, dear Finger which caressed me once, me, the 'Thing-that-should-not-have-been-born,' as more will think before I die, and write those matters that it pleases the House of Senzangakona to know this day."

Then he bent down, and with the dead finger at three separate spots made certain markings in the fallen dust, which to me seemed to consist of circles and dots; and a strange and horrid sight it was to see him do it.

"I thank you, dear Finger. Now sleep, sleep, your work is done," and slowly he wrapped the relic up in some soft material and restored it to his pouch.

Then he studied the first of the markings and asked: "What am I here for? What am I here for? Does he who sits upon the Throne desire to know how long he has to reign?"

Now, those of the inner circle of the spectators, who at these "smellings-out" act as a kind of chorus, looked at the King, and, seeing that he shook his head vigorously, stretched out their right hands, holding the thumb downwards, and said simultaneously in a cold, low voice:

"Izwa!" (That is, "We hear you.")

Zikali stamped upon this set of markings.

"It is well," he said. "He who sits upon the Throne does not desire to know how long he has to reign, and therefore the dust has forgotten and shows it not to me."

Then he walked to the next markings and studied them.

"Does the Child of Senzangakona desire to know which of his sons shall live and which shall die; aye, and which of them shall sleep in his hut

when he is gone?"

Now a great roar of "Izwa!" accompanied by the clapping of hands, rose from all the outer multitude who heard, for there was no information that the Zulu people desired so earnestly as this at the time of which I write.

But again Panda, who, I saw, was thoroughly alarmed at the turn things were taking, shook his head vigorously, whereon the obedient chorus negatived the question in the same fashion as before.

Zikali stamped upon the second set of markings, saying:

"The people desire to know, but the Great Ones are afraid to learn, and therefore the dust has forgotten who in the days to come shall sleep in the hut of the King and who shall sleep in the bellies of the jackals and the crops of the vultures after they have 'gone beyond' by the bridge of spears."

Now, at this awful speech (which, both because of all that it implied of bloodshed and civil war and of the wild, wailing voice in which it was spoken, that seemed quite different from Zikali's, caused everyone who heard it, including myself, I am afraid, to gasp and shiver) the King sprang from his stool as though to put a stop to such doctoring. Then, after his fashion, he changed his mind and sat down again. But Zikali, taking no heed, went to the third set of marks and studied them.

"It would seem," he said, "that I am awakened from sleep in my Black House yonder to tell of a very little matter, that might well have been dealt with by any common Nyanga born but yesterday. Well, I have taken my fee, and I will earn it, although I thought that I was brought here to speak of great matters, such as the death of princes and the fortunes of peoples. Is it desired that my Spirit should speak of wizardries in this town of Nodwengu?"

"Izwa!" said the chorus in a loud voice.

Zikali nodded his great head and seemed to talk with the dust, waiting now and again for an answer.

"Good," he said; "they are many, and the dust has told them all to me. Oh, they are very many"--and he glared around him--"so many that if I spoke them all the hyenas of the hills would be full to-night--"

Here the audience began to show signs of great apprehension.

"But," looking down at the dust and turning his head sideways, "what do you say, what do you say? Speak more plainly, Little Voices, for you know I grow deaf. Oh! now I understand. The matter is even smaller than I thought. Just of one wizard--"

"Izwa!" (loudly).

"--just of a few deaths and some sicknesses."

"Izwa!"

"Just of one death, one principal death."

"Izwa!" (very loudly).

"Ah! So we have it--one death. Now, was it a man?"

"Izwa!" (very coldly).

"A woman?"

"Izwa!" (still more coldly).

"Then a child? It must be a child, unless indeed it is the death of a spirit. But what do you people know of spirits? A child! A child! Ah! you hear me--a child. A male child, I think. Do you not say so, O Dust?"

"Izwa!" (emphatically).

"A common child? A bastard? The son of nobody?"

"Izwa!" (very low).

"A well-born child? One who would have been great? O Dust, I hear, I hear; a royal child, a child in whom ran the blood of the Father of the Zulus, he who was my friend? The blood of Senzangakona, the blood of the 'Black One,' the blood of Panda."

He stopped, while both from the chorus and from the thousands of the circle gathered around went up one roar of "Izwa!" emphasised by a mighty movement of outstretched arms and down-pointing thumbs.

Then silence, during which Zikali stamped upon all the remaining markings, saying:

"I thank you, O Dust, though I am sorry to have troubled you for so small a matter. So, so," he went on presently, "a royal boy-child is dead, and you think by witchcraft. Let us find out if he died by witchcraft or as others die, by command of the Heavens that need them. What! Here is one mark which I have left. Look! It grows red, it is full of spots! The child died with a twisted face."

"Izwa! Izwa! Izwa!" (crescendo).

"This death was not natural. Now, was it witchcraft or was it poison? Both, I think, both. And whose was the child? Not that of a son of the King, I think. Oh, yes, you hear me, People, you hear me; but be silent; I do not need your help. No, not of a son; of a daughter, then." He

turned and, looked about him till his eye fell upon a group of women, amongst whom sat Nandie, dressed like a common person. "Of a daughter, a daughter--" He walked to the group of women. "Why, none of these are royal; they are the children of low people. And yet--and yet I seem to smell the blood of Senzangakona."

He sniffed at the air as a dog does, and as he sniffed drew ever nearer to Nandie, till at last he laughed and pointed to her.

"Your child, Princess, whose name I do not know. Your firstborn child, whom you loved more than your own heart."

She rose.

"Yes, yes, Nyanga," she cried. "I am the Princess Nandie, and he was my child, whom I loved more than my own heart."

"Haha!" said Zikali. "Dust, you did not lie to me. My Spirit, you did not lie to me. But now, tell me, Dust--and tell me, my Spirit--who killed this child?"

He began to waddle round the circle, an extraordinary sight, covered as he was with grey grime, varied with streaks of black skin where the perspiration had washed the dust away.

Presently he came opposite to me, and, to my dismay, paused, sniffing at

me as he had at Nandie.

"Ah! ah! O Macumazana," he said, "you have something to do with this matter," a saying at which all that audience pricked their ears.

Then I rose up in wrath and fear, knowing my position to be one of some danger.

"Wizard, or Smeller-out of Wizards, whichever you name yourself," I called in a loud voice, "if you mean that I killed Nandie's child, you lie!"

"No, no, Macumazahn," he answered, "but you tried to save it, and therefore you had something to do with the matter, had you not? Moreover, I think that you, who are wise like me, know who did kill it.

Won't you tell me, Macumazahn? No? Then I must find out for myself. Be at peace. Does not all the land know that your hands are white as your heart?"

Then, to my great relief, he passed on, amidst a murmur of approbation, for, as I have said, the Zulus liked me. Round and round he wandered, to my surprise passing both Mameena and Masapo without taking any particular note of them, although he scanned them both, and I thought that I saw a swift glance of recognition pass between him and Mameena. It was curious to watch his progress, for as he went those in front of

him swayed in their terror like corn before a puff of wind, and when he had passed they straightened themselves as the corn does when the wind has gone by.

At length he had finished his journey and returned to his starting-point, to all appearance completely puzzled.

"You keep so many wizards at your kraal, King," he said, addressing Panda, "that it is hard to say which of them wrought this deed. It would have been easier to tell you of greater matters. Yet I have taken your fee, and I must earn it--I must earn it. Dust, you are dumb. Now, my Idhlozi, my Spirit, do you speak?" and, holding his head sideways, he turned his left ear up towards the sky, then said presently, in a curious, matter-of-fact voice:

"Ah! I thank you, Spirit. Well, King, your grandchild was killed by the House of Masapo, your enemy, chief of the Amasomi."

Now a roar of approbation went up from the audience, among whom Masapo's guilt was a foregone conclusion.

When this had died down Panda spoke, saying:

"The House of Masapo is a large house; I believe that he has several wives and many children. It is not enough to smell out the House, since

I am not as those who went before me were, nor will I slay the innocent with the guilty. Tell us, O Opener-of-Roads, who among the House of Masapo has wrought this deed?"

"That's just the question," grumbled Zikali in a deep voice. "All that I know is that it was done by poisoning, and I smell the poison. It is here."

Then he walked to where Mameena sat and cried out:

"Seize that woman and search her hair."

Executioners who were in waiting sprang forward, but Mameena waved them away.

"Friends," she said, with a little laugh, "there is no need to touch me," and, rising, she stepped forward to the centre of the ring. Here, with a few swift motions of her hands, she flung off first the cloak she wore, then the moocha about her middle, and lastly the fillet that bound her long hair, and stood before that audience in all her naked beauty--a wondrous and a lovely sight.

"Now," she said, "let women come and search me and my garments, and see if there is any poison hid there."

Two old crones stepped forward--though I do not know who sent them--and carried out a very thorough examination, finally reporting that they had found nothing. Thereon Mameena, with a shrug of her shoulders, resumed such clothes as she wore, and returned to her place.

Zikali appeared to grow angry. He stamped upon the ground with his big feet; he shook his braided grey locks and cried out:

"Is my wisdom to be defeated in such a little matter? One of you tie a bandage over my eyes."

Now a man--it was Maputa, the messenger--came out and did so, and I noted that he tied it well and tight. Zikali whirled round upon his heels, first one way and then another, and, crying aloud: "Guide me, my Spirit!" marched forward in a zigzag fashion, as a blindfolded man does, with his arms stretched out in front of him. First he went to the right, then to the left, and then straight forward, till at length, to my astonishment, he came exactly opposite the spot where Masapo sat and, stretching out his great, groping hands, seized the kaross with which he was covered and, with a jerk, tore it from him.

"Search this!" he cried, throwing it on the ground, and a woman searched.

Presently she uttered an exclamation, and from among the fur of one of the tails of the kaross produced a tiny bag that appeared to be made out

of the bladder of a fish. This she handed to Zikali, whose eyes had now been unbandaged.

He looked at it, then gave it to Maputa, saying:

"There is the poison--there is the poison, but who gave it I do not say. I am weary. Let me go."

Then, none hindering him, he walked away through the gate of the kraal.

Soldiers seized upon Masapo, while the multitude roared: "Kill the wizard!"

Masapo sprang up, and, running to where the King sat, flung himself upon his knees, protesting his innocence and praying for mercy. I also, who had doubts as to all this business, ventured to rise and speak.

"O King," I said, "as one who has known this man in the past, I plead with you. How that powder came into his kaross I know not, but perchance it is not poison, only harmless dust."

"Yes, it is but wood dust which I use for the cleaning of my nails," cried Masapo, for he was so terrified I think he knew not what he said.

"So you own to knowledge of the medicine?" exclaimed Panda. "Therefore none hid it in your kaross through malice."

Masapo began to explain, but what he said was lost in a mighty roar of "Kill the wizard!"

Panda held up his hand and there was silence.

"Bring milk in a dish," commanded the King, and it, was brought, and, at a further word from him, dusted with the powder.

"Now, O Macumazana," said Panda to me, "if you still think that yonder man is innocent, will you drink this milk?"

"I do not like milk, O King," I answered, shaking my head, whereon all who heard me laughed.

"Will Mameena, his wife, drink it, then?" asked Panda.

She also shook her head, saying:

"O King, I drink no milk that is mixed with dust."

Just then a lean, white dog, one of those homeless, mangy beasts that stray about kraals and live upon carrion, wandered into the ring. Panda made a sign, and a servant, going to where the poor beast stood staring about it hungrily, set down the wooden dish of milk in front of it.

Instantly the dog lapped it up, for it was starving, and as it finished

the last drop the man slipped a leathern thong about its neck and held it fast.

Now all eyes were fixed upon the dog, mine among them. Presently the beast uttered a long and melancholy howl which thrilled me through, for I knew it to be Masapo's death warrant, then began to scratch the ground and foam at the mouth. Guessing what would follow, I rose, bowed to the King, and walked away to my camp, which, it will be remembered, was set up in a little kloof commanding this place, at a distance only of a few hundred yards. So intent was all the multitude upon watching the dog that I doubt whether anyone saw me go. As for that poor beast, Scowl, who stayed behind, told me that it did not die for about ten minutes, since before its end a red rash appeared upon it similar to that which I had seen upon Saduko's child, and it was seized with convulsions.

Well, I reached my tent unmolested, and, having lit my pipe, engaged myself in making business entries in my note-book, in order to divert my mind as much as I could, when suddenly I heard a most devilish clamour. Looking up, I saw Masapo running towards me with a speed that I should have thought impossible in so fat a man, while after him raced the fierce-faced executioners, and behind came the mob.

"Kill the evil-doer!" they shouted.

Masapo reached me. He flung himself on his knees before me, gasping:

"Save me, Macumazahn! I am innocent. Mameena, the witch! Mameena--"

He got no farther, for the slayers had leapt on him like hounds upon a buck and dragged him from me.

Then I turned and covered up my eyes.

Next morning I left Nodwengu without saying good-bye to anyone, for what had happened there made me desire a change. My servant, Scowl, and one of my hunters remained, however, to collect some cattle that were still due to me.

A month or more later, when they joined me in Natal, bringing the cattle, they told me that Mameena, the widow of Masapo, had entered the house of Saduko as his second wife. In answer to a question which I put to them, they added that it was said that the Princess Nandie did not approve of this choice of Saduko, which she thought would not be fortunate for him or bring him happiness. As her husband seemed to be much enamoured of Mameena, however, she had waived her objections, and when Panda asked if she gave her consent had told him that, although she would prefer that Saduko should choose some other woman who had not been mixed up with the wizard who killed her child, she was prepared to take Mameena as her sister, and would know how to keep her in her place.