

## CHAPTER XII. PANDA'S PRAYER

About six weeks later, in the month of November, 1856, I chanced to be at Nodwengu when the quarrel between the princes came to a head. Although none of the regiments was actually allowed to enter the town--that is, as a regiment--the place was full of people, all of them in a state of great excitement, who came in during the daytime and went to sleep in the neighbouring military kraals at night. One evening, as some of these soldiers--about a thousand of them, if I remember right--were returning to the Ukubaza kraal, a fight occurred between them, which led to the final outbreak.

As it happened, at that time there were two separate regiments stationed at this kraal. I think that they were the Imkulutshana and the Hlaba, one of which favoured Cetewayo and the other Umbelazi. As certain companies of each of these regiments marched along together in parallel lines, two of their captains got into dispute on the eternal subject of the succession to the throne. From words they came to blows, and the end of it was that he who favoured Umbelazi killed him who favoured Cetewayo with his kerry. Thereon the comrades of the slain man, raising a shout of "Usutu," which became the war-cry of Cetewayo's party, fell upon the others, and a dreadful combat ensued. Fortunately the soldiers were only armed with sticks, or the slaughter would have been very great; but as it was, after an indecisive engagement, about fifty men were killed and many more injured.

Now, with my usual bad luck, I, who had gone out to shoot a few birds for the pot--pauw, or bustard, I think they were--was returning across this very plain to my old encampment in the kloof where Masapo had been executed, and so ran into the fight just as it was beginning. I saw the captain killed and the subsequent engagement. Indeed, as it happened, I did more. Not knowing where to go or what to do, for I was quite alone, I pulled up my horse behind a tree and waited till I could escape the horrors about me; for I can assure anyone who may ever read these words that it is a very horrible sight to see a thousand men engaged in fierce and deadly combat. In truth, the fact that they had no spears, and could only batter each other to death with their heavy kerries, made it worse, since the duels were more desperate and prolonged.

Everywhere men were rolling on the ground, hitting at each other's heads, until at last some blow went home and one of them threw out his arms and lay still, either dead or senseless. Well, there I sat watching all this shocking business from the saddle of my trained shooting pony, which stood like a stone, till presently I became aware of two great fellows rushing at me with their eyes starting out of their heads and shouting as they came:

"Kill Umbelazi's white man! Kill! Kill!"

Then, seeing that the matter was urgent and that it was a question of my life or theirs, I came into action.

In my hand I held a double-barrelled shotgun loaded with what we used to call "loopers," or B.B. shot, of which but a few went to each charge, for I had hoped to meet with a small buck on my way to camp. So, as these soldiers came, I lifted the gun and fired, the right barrel at one of them and the left barrel at the other, aiming in each case at the centre of the small dancing shields, which from force of habit they held stretched out to protect their throats and breasts. At that distance, of course, the loopers sank through the soft hide of the shields and deep into the bodies of those who carried them, so that both of them dropped dead, the left-hand man being so close that he fell against my pony, his uplifted kerry striking me upon the thigh and bruising me.

When I saw what I had done, and that my danger was over for the moment, without waiting to reload I dug the spurs into my horse's sides and galloped off to Nodwengu, passing between the groups of struggling men. On arriving unharmed at the town, I went instantly to the royal huts and demanded to see the King, who sent word that I was to be admitted. On coming before him I told him exactly what had happened--that I had killed two of Cetewayo's men in order to save my own life, and on that account submitted myself to his justice.

"O Macumazana," said Panda in great distress, "I know well that you are not to blame, and already I have sent out a regiment to stop this fighting, with command that those who caused it should be brought before me to-morrow for judgment. I am glad indeed, Macumazahn, that you have

escaped without harm, but I must tell you that I fear henceforth your life will be in danger, since all the Usutu party will hold it forfeit if they can catch you. While you are in my town I can protect you, for I will set a strong guard about your camp; but here you will have to stay until these troubles are done with, since if you leave you may be murdered on the road."

"I thank you for your kindness, King," I answered; "but all this is very awkward for me, who hoped to trek for Natal to-morrow."

"Well, there it is, Macumazahn, you will have to stay here unless you wish to be killed. He who walks into a storm must put up with the hailstones."

So it came about that once again Fate dragged me into the Zulu maelstrom.

On the morrow I was summoned to the trial, half as a witness and half as one of the offenders. Going to the head of the Nodwengu kraal, where Panda was sitting in state with his Council, I found the whole great space in front of him crowded with a dense concourse of fierce-faced partisans, those who favoured Cetewayo--the Usutu--sitting on the right, and those who favoured Umbelazi--the Isigqosa--sitting on the left. At the head of the right-hand section sat Cetewayo, his brethren and chief men. At the head of the left-hand section sat Umbelazi, his brethren and

his chief men, amongst whom I saw Saduko take a place immediately behind

the Prince, so that he could whisper into his ear.

To myself and my little band of eight hunters, who by Panda's express permission, came armed with their guns, as I did also, for I was determined that if the necessity arose we would sell our lives as dearly as we could, was appointed a place almost in front of the King and between the two factions. When everyone was seated the trial began, Panda demanding to know who had caused the tumult of the previous night.

I cannot set out what followed in all its details, for it would be too long; also I have forgotten many of them. I remember, however, that Cetewayo's people said that Umbelazi's men were the aggressors, and that Umbelazi's people said that Cetewayo's men were the aggressors, and that each of their parties backed up these statements, which were given at great length, with loud shouts.

"How am I to know the truth?" exclaimed Panda at last. "Macumazahn, you were there; step forward and tell it to me."

So I stood out and told the King what I had seen, namely that the captain who favoured Cetewayo had begun the quarrel by striking the captain who favoured Umbelazi, but that in the end Umbelazi's man had killed Cetewayo's man, after which the fighting commenced.

"Then it would seem that the Usutu are to blame," said Panda.

"Upon what grounds do you say so, my father?" asked Cetewayo, springing up. "Upon the testimony of this white man, who is well known to be the friend of Umbelazi and of his henchman Saduko, and who himself killed two of those who called me chief in the course of the fight?"

"Yes, Cetewayo," I broke in, "because I thought it better that I should kill them than that they should kill me, whom they attacked quite unprovoked."

"At any rate, you killed them, little White Man," shouted Cetewayo, "for which cause your blood is forfeit. Say, did Umbelazi give you leave to appear before the King accompanied by men armed with guns, when we who are his sons must come with sticks only? If so, let him protect you!"

"That I will do if there is need!" exclaimed Umbelazi.

"Thank you, Prince," I said; "but if there is need I will protect myself as I did yesterday," and, cocking my double-barrelled rifle, I looked full at Cetewayo.

"When you leave here, then at least I will come even with you, Macumazahn!" threatened Cetewayo, spitting through his teeth, as was his way when mad with passion.

For he was beside himself, and wished to vent his temper on someone, although in truth he and I were always good friends.

"If so I shall stop where I am," I answered coolly, "in the shadow of the King, your father. Moreover, are you so lost in folly, Cetewayo, that you should wish to bring the English about your ears? Know that if I am killed you will be asked to give account of my blood."

"Aye," interrupted Panda, "and know that if anyone lays a finger on Macumazana, who is my guest, he shall die, whether he be a common man or a prince and my son. Also, Cetewayo, I fine you twenty head of cattle, to be paid to Macumazana because of the unprovoked attack which your men made upon him when he rightly slew them."

"The fine shall be paid, my father," said Cetewayo more quietly, for he saw that in threatening me he had pushed matters too far.

Then, after some more talk, Panda gave judgment in the cause, which judgment really amounted to nothing. As it was impossible to decide which party was most to blame, he fined both an equal number of cattle, accompanying the fine with a lecture on their ill-behaviour, which was listened to indifferently.

After this matter was disposed of the real business of the meeting began.

Rising to his feet, Cetewayo addressed Panda.

"My father," he said, "the land wanders and wanders in darkness, and you alone can give light for its feet. I and my brother, Umbelazi, are at variance, and the quarrel is a great one, namely, as to which of us is to sit in your place when you are 'gone down,' when we call and you do not answer. Some of the nation favour one of us and some favour the other, but you, O King, and you alone, have the voice of judgment. Still, before you speak, I and those who stand with me would bring this to your mind. My mother, Umqumbazi, is your Inkosikazi, your head-wife, and therefore, according to our law, I, her eldest son, should be your heir. Moreover, when you fled to the Boers before the fall of him who sat in your place before you [Dingaan], did not they, the white Amabunu, ask you which amongst your sons was your heir, and did you not point me out to the white men? And thereon did not the Amabunu clothe me in a dress of honour because I was the King to be? But now of late the mother of Umbelazi has been whispering in your ear, as have others"--and he looked at Saduko and some of Umbelazi's brethren--"and your face has grown cold towards me, so cold that many say that you will point out Umbelazi to be King after you and stamp on my name. If this is so, my father, tell me at once, that I may know what to do."

Having finished this speech, which certainly did not lack force and dignity, Cetewayo sat down again, awaiting the answer in sullen silence. But, making none, Panda looked at Umbelazi, who, on rising, was greeted



with a great cheer, for although Cetewayo had the larger following in the land, especially among the distant chiefs, the Zulus individually loved Umbelazi more, perhaps because of his stature, beauty and kindly disposition--physical and moral qualities that naturally appeal to a savage nation.

"My father," he said, "like my brother, Cetewayo, I await your word. Whatever you may have said to the Amabunu in haste or fear, I do not admit that Cetewayo was ever proclaimed your heir in the hearing of the Zulu people. I say that my right to the succession is as good as his, and that it lies with you, and you alone, to declare which of us shall put on the royal kaross in days that my heart prays may be distant. Still, to save bloodshed, I am willing to divide the land with Cetewayo" (here both Panda and Cetewayo shook their heads and the audience roared "Nay"), "or, if that does not please him, I am willing to meet Cetewayo man to man and spear to spear and fight till one of us be slain."

"A safe offer!" sneered Cetewayo, "for is not my brother named 'Elephant,' and the strongest warrior among the Zulus? No, I will not set the fortunes of those who cling to me on the chance of a single stab, or on the might of a man's muscles. Decide, O father; say which of the two of us is to sit at the head of your kraal after you have gone over to the Spirits and are but an ancestor to be worshipped."

Now, Panda looked much disturbed, as was not wonderful, since, rushing out from the fence behind which they had been listening, Umqumbazi,

Cetewayo's mother, whispered into one of his ears, while Umbelazi's mother whispered into the other. What advice each of them gave I do not know, although obviously it was not the same advice, since the poor man rolled his eyes first at one and then at the other, and finally put his hands over his ears that he might hear no more.

"Choose, choose, O King!" shouted the audience. "Who is to succeed you, Cetewayo or Umbelazi?"

Watching Panda, I saw that he fell into a kind of agony; his fat sides heaved, and, although the day was cold, sweat ran from his brow.

"What would the white men do in such a case?" he said to me in a hoarse, low voice, whereon I answered, looking at the ground and speaking so that few could hear me:

"I think, O King, that a white man would do nothing. He would say that others might settle the matter after he was dead."

"Would that I could say so, too," muttered Panda; "but it is not possible."

Then followed a long pause, during which all were silent, for every man there felt that the hour was big with doom. At length Panda rose with difficulty, because of his unwieldy weight, and uttered these fateful words, that were none the less ominous because of the homely idiom in

which they were couched:

"When two young bulls quarrel they must fight it out."

Instantly in one tremendous roar volleyed forth the royal salute of "Bayéte", a signal of the acceptance of the King's word--the word that meant civil war and the death of many thousands.

Then Panda turned and, so feebly that I thought he would fall, walked through the gateway behind him, followed by the rival queens. Each of these ladies struggled to be first after him in the gate, thinking that it would be an omen of success for her son. Finally, however, to the disappointment of the multitude, they only succeeded in passing it side by side.

When they had gone the great audience began to break up, the men of each party marching away together as though by common consent, without offering any insult or molestation to their adversaries. I think that this peaceable attitude arose, however, from the knowledge that matters had now passed from the stage of private quarrel into that of public war. It was felt that their dispute awaited decision, not with sticks outside the Nodwengu kraal, but with spears upon some great battlefield, for which they went to prepare.

Within two days, except for those regiments which Panda kept to guard his person, scarcely a soldier was to be seen in the neighbourhood of

Nodwengu. The princes also departed to muster their adherents, Cetewayo establishing himself among the Mandhlakazi that he commanded, and Umbelazi returning to the kraal of Umbezi, which happened to stand almost in the centre of that part of the nation which adhered to him.

Whether he took Mameena with him there I am not certain. I believe, however, that, fearing lest her welcome at her birthplace should be warmer than she wished, she settled herself at some retired and outlying kraal in the neighbourhood, and there awaited the crisis of her fortune. At any rate, I saw nothing of her, for she was careful to keep out of my way.

With Umbelazi and Saduko, however, I did have an interview. Before they left Nodwengu they called on me together, apparently on the best of terms, and said in effect that they hoped for my support in the coming war.

I answered that, however well I might like them personally, a Zulu civil war was no affair of mine, and that, indeed, for every reason, including the supreme one of my own safety, I had better get out of the way at once.

They argued with me for a long while, making great offers and promises of reward, till at length, when he saw that my determination could not be shaken, Umbelazi said:

"Come, Saduko, let us humble ourselves no more before this white man. After all, he is right; the business is none of his, and why should we ask him to risk his life in our quarrel, knowing as we do that white men are not like us; they think a great deal of their lives. Farewell, Macumazahn. If I conquer and grow great you will always be welcome in Zululand, whereas if I fail perhaps you will be best over the Tugela river."

Now, I felt the hidden taunt in this speech very keenly. Still, being determined that for once I would be wise and not allow my natural curiosity and love of adventure to drag me into more risks and trouble, I replied:

"The Prince says that I am not brave and love my life, and what he says is true. I fear fighting, who by nature am a trader with the heart of a trader, not a warrior with the heart of a warrior, like the great Indhlovu-ene-Sihlonti"--words at which I saw the grave Saduko smile faintly. "So farewell to you, Prince, and may good fortune attend you."

Of course, to call the Prince to his face by this nickname, which referred to a defect in his person, was something of an insult; but I had been insulted, and meant to give him "a Roland for his Oliver." However, he took it in good part.

"What is good fortune, Macumazahn?" Umbelazi replied as he grasped my hand. "Sometimes I think that to live and prosper is good fortune, and

sometimes I think that to die and sleep is good fortune, for in sleep there is neither hunger nor thirst of body or of spirit. In sleep there come no cares; in sleep ambitions are at rest; nor do those who look no more upon the sun smart beneath the treacheries of false women or false friends. Should the battle turn against me, Macumazahn, at least that good fortune will be mine, for never will I live to be crushed beneath Cetewayo's heel."

Then he went. Saduko accompanied him for a little way, but, making some excuse to the Prince, came back and said to me:

"Macumazahn, my friend, I dare say that we part for the last time, and therefore I make a request to you. It is as to one who is dead to me. Macumazahn, I believe that Umbelazi the thief"--these words broke from his lips with a hiss--"has given her many cattle and hidden her away either in the kloof of Zikali the Wise, or near to it, under his care. Now, if the war should go against Umbelazi and I should be killed in it, I think evil will fall upon that woman's head, I who have grown sure that it was she who was the wizard and not Masapo the Boar. Also, as one connected with Umbelazi, who has helped him in his plots, she will be killed if she is caught. Macumazahn, hearken to me. I will tell you the truth. My heart is still on fire for that woman. She has bewitched me; her eyes haunt my sleep and I hear her voice in the wind. She is more to me than all the earth and all the sky, and although she has wronged me I do not wish that harm should come to her. Macumazahn, I pray you if I die, do your best to befriend her, even though it be only as a servant

in your house, for I think that she cares more for you than for anyone, who only ran away with him"--and he pointed in the direction that Umbelazi had taken--"because he is a prince, who, in her folly, she believes will be a king. At least take her to Natal, Macumazahn, where, if you wish to be free of her, she can marry whom she will and will live safe until night comes. Panda loves you much, and, whoever conquers in the war, will give you her life if you ask it of him."

Then this strange man drew the back of his hand across his eyes, from which I saw the tears were running, and, muttering, "If you would have good fortune remember my prayer," turned and left me before I could answer a single word.

As for me, I sat down upon an ant-heap and whistled a whole hymn tune that my mother had taught me before I could think at all. To be left the guardian of Mameena! Talk of a "damnosa hereditas," a terrible and mischievous inheritance--why, this was the worst that ever I heard of. A servant in my house indeed, knowing what I did about her! Why, I had sooner share the "good fortune" which Umbelazi anticipated beneath the sod. However, that was not in the question, and without it the alternative of acting as her guardian was bad enough, though I comforted myself with the reflection that the circumstances in which this would become necessary might never arise. For, alas! I was sure that if they did arise I should have to live up to them. True, I had made no promise to Saduko with my lips, but I felt, as I knew he felt, that this promise had passed from my heart to his.

"That thief Umbelazi!" Strange words to be uttered by a great vassal of his lord, and both of them about to enter upon a desperate enterprise. "A prince whom in her folly she believes will be a king." Stranger words still. Then Saduko did not believe that he would be a king! And yet he was about to share the fortunes of his fight for the throne, he who said that his heart was still on fire for the woman whom "Umbelazi the thief" had stolen. Well, if I were Umbelazi, thought I to myself, I would rather that Saduko were not my chief councillor and general. But, thank Heaven! I was not Umbelazi, or Saduko, or any of them! And, thank Heaven still more, I was going to begin my trek from Zululand on the morrow!

Man proposes but God disposes. I did not trek from Zululand for many a long day. When I got back to my wagons it was to find that my oxen had mysteriously disappeared from the veld on which they were accustomed to graze. They were lost; or perhaps they had felt the urgent need of trekking from Zululand back to a more peaceful country. I sent all the hunters I had with me to look for them, only Scowl and I remaining at the wagons, which in those disturbed times I did not like to leave unguarded.

Four days went by, a week went by, and no sign of either hunters or oxen. Then at last a message, which reached me in some roundabout fashion, to the effect that the hunters had found the oxen a long way off, but on trying to return to Nodwengu had been driven by some of the Usutu--that is, by Cetewayo's party--across the Tugela into Natal,



whence they dared not attempt to return.

For once in my life I went into a rage and cursed that nondescript kind of messenger, sent by I know not whom, in language that I think he will not forget. Then, realising the futility of swearing at a mere tool, I went up to the Great House and demanded an audience with Panda himself. Presently the inceku, or household servant, to whom I gave my message, returned, saying that I was to be admitted at once, and on entering the enclosure I found the King sitting at the head of the kraal quite alone, except for a man who was holding a large shield over him in order to keep off the sun.

He greeted me warmly, and I told him my trouble about the oxen, whereon he sent away the shield-holder, leaving us two together.

"Watcher-by-Night," he said, "why do you blame me for these events, when you know that I am nobody in my own House? I say that I am a dead man, whose sons fight for his inheritance. I cannot tell you for certain who it was that drove away your oxen. Still, I am glad that they are gone, since I believe that if you had attempted to trek to Natal just now you would have been killed on the road by the Usutu, who believe you to be a councillor of Umbelazi."

"I understand, O King," I answered, "and I dare say that the accident of the loss of my oxen is fortunate for me. But tell me now, what am I to do? I wish to follow the example of John Dunn [another white man in the

country who was much mixed up with Zulu politics] and leave the land.  
Will you give me more oxen to draw my wagons?"

"I have none that are broken in, Macumazahn, for, as you know, we Zulus possess few wagons; and if I had I would not lend them to you, who do not desire that your blood should be upon my head."

"You are hiding something from me, O King," I said bluntly. "What is it that you want me to do? Stay here at Nodwengu?"

"No, Macumazahn. When the trouble begins I want you to go with a regiment of my own that I shall send to the assistance of my son, Umbelazi, so that he may have the benefit of your wisdom. O Macumazana, I will tell you the truth. My heart loves Umbelazi, and I fear me that he is overmatched by Cetewayo. If I could I would save his life, but I know not how to do so, since I must not seem to take sides too openly. But I can send down a regiment as your escort, if you choose to go to view the battle as my agent and make report to me. Say, will you not go?"

"Why should I go?" I answered, "seeing that whoever wins I may be killed, and that if Cetewayo wins I shall certainly be killed, and all for no reward."

"Nay, Macumazahn; I will give orders that whoever conquers, the man that dares to lift a spear against you shall die. In this matter, at least, I

shall not be disobeyed. Oh! I pray you, do not desert me in my trouble. Go down with the regiment that I shall send and breathe your wisdom into the ear of my son, Umbelazi. As for your reward, I swear to you by the head of the Black One [Chaka] that it shall be great. I will see to it that you do not leave Zululand empty-handed, Macumazahn."

Still I hesitated, for I mistrusted me of this business.

"O Watcher-by-Night," exclaimed Panda, "you will not desert me, will you? I am afraid for the son of my heart, Umbelazi, whom I love above all my children; I am much afraid for Umbelazi," and he burst into tears before me.

It was foolish, no doubt, but the sight of the old King weeping for his best-beloved child, whom he believed to be doomed, moved me so much that I forgot my caution.

"If you wish it, O Panda," I said, "I will go down to the battle with your regiment and stand there by the side of the Prince Umbelazi."