

CHAPTER XVIII. THE TREATY

Our journey to Umgungundhlovu was prosperous and without incident. When we were within half a day's march from the Great Kraal we overtook the herd of cattle that we had recaptured from Sikonyela, for these beasts had been driven very slowly and well rested that they might arrive in good condition. Also the commandant was anxious that we should present them ourselves to the king.

Driving this multitude of animals before us--there were over five thousand head of them--we reached the Great Place on Saturday the 3rd of February about midday, and forced them through its gates into the cattle kraals. Then we off-saddled and ate our dinner under those two milk trees near the gate of the kraal where I had bid good-bye to Dingaan.

After dinner messengers came to ask us to visit the king, and with them the youth, Thomas Halstead, who told the commandant that all weapons must be left behind, since it was the Zulu law that no man might appear before the king armed. To this Retief demurred, whereon the messengers appealed to me, whom they had recognised, asking if that were not the custom of their country.

I answered that I had not been in it long enough to know. Then there was a pause while they sent for someone to bear evidence; at the time I

did not know whom, as I was not near enough to Thomas Halstead to make inquiries. Presently this someone appeared, and turned out to be none other than Hernan Pereira.

He advanced towards us attended by Zulus, as though he were a chief, looking fat and well and handsomer than ever. Seeing Retief, he lifted his hat with a flourish and held out his hand, which, I noted, the commandant did not take.

"So you are still here, Mynheer Pereira!" he said coldly. "Now be good enough to tell me, what is this matter about the abandoning of our arms?"

"The king charges me to say--" began Hernan.

"Charges you to say, Mynheer Pereira! Are you then this black man's servant? But continue."

"That none must come into his private enclosure armed."

"Well, then, mynheer, be pleased to go tell this king that we do not wish to come to his private enclosure. I have brought the cattle that he desired me to fetch, and I am willing to deliver them to him wherever he wishes, but we will not unarm in order to do so."

Now there was talk, and messengers were despatched, who returned at full

speed presently to say that Dingaan would receive the Boers in the great dancing place in the midst of the kraal, and that they might bring their guns, as he wished to see how they fired them.

So we rode in, making as fine a show as we could, to find that the dancing place, which measured a good many acres in extent, was lined round with thousands of plumed but unarmed warriors arranged in regiments.

"You see," I heard Pereira say to Retief, "these have no spears."

"No," answered the commandant, "but they have sticks, which when they are a hundred to one would serve as well."

Meanwhile the vast mob of cattle were being driven in a double stream past a knot of men at the head of the space, and then away through gates behind. When the beasts had all gone we approached these men, among whom I recognised the fat form of Dingaan draped in a bead mantle. We ranged ourselves in a semicircle before him, and stood while he searched us with his sharp eyes. Presently he saw me, and sent a councillor to say that I must come and interpret for him.

So, dismounting, I went with Retief, Thomas Halstead, and a few of the leading Boers.

"Sakubona [Good day], Macumazahn," said Dingaan. "I am glad that you

have come, as I know that you will speak my words truly, being one of the People of George whom I love, for Tho-maas here I do not trust, although he is also a Son of George."

I told Retief what he said.

"Oh!" he exclaimed with a grunt, "it seems that you English are a step in front of us Boers, even here."

Then he went forward and shook hands with the king, whom, it will be remembered, he had visited before.

After that the "indaba" or talk began, which I do not propose to set out at length, for it is a matter of history. It is enough to say that Dingaan, after thanking Retief for recovering the cattle, asked where was Sikonyela, the chief who had stolen them, as he wished to kill him. When he learned that Sikonyela remained in his own country, he became, or affected to become, angry. Then he asked where were the sixty horses which he heard we had captured from Sikonyela, as they must be given up to him.

Retief, by way of reply, touched his grey hairs, and inquired whether Dingaan thought that he was a child that he, Dingaan, should demand horses which did not belong to him. He added that these horses had been restored to the Boers, from whom Sikonyela had stolen them.

When Dingaan had expressed himself satisfied with this answer, Retief opened the question of the treaty. The king replied however, that the white men had but just arrived, and he wished to see them dance after their own fashion. As for the business, it might "sit still" till another day.

So in the end the Boers "danced" for his amusement. That is, they divided into two parties, and charged each other at full gallop, firing their guns into the air, an exhibition which seemed to fill all present with admiration and awe. When they paused, the king wished them to go on firing "a hundred shots apiece," but the commandant declined, saying he had no more powder to waste.

"What do you want powder for in a peaceful country?" asked Dingaan suspiciously.

Retief answered through me:

"To kill food for ourselves, or to protect ourselves if any evil-minded men should attack us."

"Then it will not be wanted here," said Dingaan, "since I will give you food, and as I, the king, am your friend, no man in Zululand dare be your enemy."

Retief said he was glad to hear it, and asked leave to retire with the

Boers to his camp outside the gate, as they were all tired with riding. This Dingaan granted, and we said good-bye and went away. Before I reached the gate, however, a messenger, I remember it was my old friend Kambula, overtook me, and said that the king wished to speak with me alone. I answered him that I could not speak with the king alone without the permission of the commandant. Thereon Kambula said:

"Come with me, I pray you, O Macumazahn, since otherwise you will be taken by force."

Now, I told Hans to gallop on to Retief, and tell him of my predicament, for already I saw that at some sign from Kambula I was being surrounded by Zulus. He did so, and presently Retief came back himself accompanied only by one man, and asked me what was the matter now. I informed him, translating Kambula's words, which he repeated in his presence.

"Does the fellow mean that you will be seized if you do not go, or I refuse to allow you to do so?"

To this question Kambula's answer was:

"That is so, Inkoos, since the king has private words for the ear of Macumazahn. Therefore we must obey orders, and take him before the king, living or dead."

"Allemachte!" exclaimed Retief, "this is serious," and, as though to

summon them to my help, he looked behind him towards the main body of the Boers, who by this time were nearly all of them through the gate, which was guarded by a great number of Zulus. "Allan," he went on, "if you are not afraid, I think that you must go. Perhaps it is only that Dingaan has some message about the treaty to send to me through you."

"I am not afraid," I answered. "What is the use of being afraid in a place like this?"

"Ask that Kaffir if the king gives you safe conduct," said Retief.

I did so, and Kambula answered:

"Yes, for this visit. Who am I that I can speak the king's unspoken words?" [which meant, guarantee his will in the future.]

"A dark saying," commented Retief. "But go, Allan, since you must, and God bring you back safe again. It is clear that Dingaan did not ask that you should come with me for nothing. Now I wish I had left you at home with that pretty wife of yours."

So we parted, I going to the king's private enclosure on foot and without my rifle, since I was not allowed to appear before him armed, and the commandant towards the gate of the kraal accompanied by Hans, who led my horse. Ten minutes later I stood before Dingaan, who greeted me kindly enough, and began to ask a number of questions about the

Boers, especially if they were not people who had rebelled against their own king and run away from him.

I answered, Yes, they had run away, as they wanted more room to live; but I had told him all about that when I saw him before. He said he knew I had, but he wished to hear "whether the same words came out of the same mouth, or different words," so that he might know if I were a true man or not. Then, after pausing a while, he looked at me in his piercing fashion and asked:

"Have you brought me a present of that tall white girl with eyes like two stars, Macumazahn? I mean the girl whom you refused to me, and whom I could not take because you had won your bet, which gave all the white people to you; she for whose sake you make brothers of these Boers, who are traitors to their king?"

"No, O Dingaan," I answered; "there are no women among us. Moreover, this maid is now my wife."

"Your wife!" he exclaimed angrily. "By the Head of the Black One, have you dared to make a wife of her whom I desired? Now say, boy, you clever Watcher by Night; you little white ant, who work in the dark and only peep out at the end of your tunnel when it is finished; you wizard, who by your magic can snatch his prey out of the hand of the greatest king in all the world--for it was magic that killed those vultures on Hloma Amabutu, not your bullets, Macumazahn--say, why should I not make an end

of you at once for this trick?"

I folded my arms and looked at him. A strange contrast we must have made, this huge, black tyrant with the royal air, for to do him justice he had that, at whose nod hundreds went the way of death, and I, a mere insignificant white boy, for in appearance, at any rate, I was nothing more.

"O Dingaan," I said coolly, knowing that coolness was my only chance, "I answer you in the words of the Commandant Retief, the great chief. Do you take me for a child that I should give up my own wife to you who already have so many? Moreover, you cannot kill me because I have the word of your captain, Kambula, that I am safe with you."

This reply seemed to amuse him. At any rate, with one of those almost infantile changes of mood which are common to savages of every degree, he passed from wrath to laughter.

"You are quick as a lizard," he said. "Why should I, who have so many wives, want one more, who would certainly hate me? Just because she is white, and would make the others, who are black, jealous, I suppose. Indeed, they would poison her, or pinch her to death in a month, and then come to tell me she had died of fretting. Also, you are right; you have my safe conduct, and must go hence unharmed this time. But look you, little lizard, although you escape me between the stones, I will pull off your tail. I have said that I want to pluck this tall white

flower of yours, and I will pluck her. I know where she dwells. Yes, just where the wagon she sleeps in stands in the line, for my spies have told me, and I will give orders that whoever is killed, she is to be spared and brought to me living. So perhaps you will meet this wife of yours here, Macumazahn."

Now, at these ominous words, that might mean so much or so little, the sweat started to my brow, and a shiver went down my back.

"Perhaps I shall and perhaps I shall not, O king," I answered. "The world is as full of chances to-day as it was not long ago when I shot at the sacred vultures on Hloma Amabutu. Still, I think that my wife will never be yours, O king."

"Ow!" said Dingaan; "this little white ant is making another tunnel, thinking that he will come up at my back. But what if I put down my heel and crush you, little white ant? Do you know," he added confidentially, "that the Boer who mends my guns and whom here we call 'Two-faces,' because he looks towards you Whites with one eye and towards us Blacks with the other, is still very anxious that I should kill you? Indeed, when I told him that my spies said that you were to ride with the Boers, as I had requested that you should be their Tongue, he answered that unless I promised to give you to the vultures, he would warn them against coming. So, since I wanted them to come as I had arranged with him, I promised."

"Is it so, O king?" I asked. "And pray why does this Two-faces, whom we name Pereira, desire that I should be killed?"

"Ow!" chuckled the obese old ruffian; "cannot you with all your cleverness guess that, O Macumazahn? Perhaps it is he who needs the tall white maiden, and not I. Perhaps if he does certain things for me, I have promised her to him in payment. And perhaps," he added, laughing quite loud, "I shall trick him after all, keeping her for myself, and paying him in another way, for can a cheat grumble if he is out-cheated?"

I answered that I was an honest man, and knew nothing about cheats, or at what they could or could not grumble.

"Yes, Macumazahn," replied Dingaan quite genially. "That is where you and I are alike. We are both honest, quite honest, and therefore friends, which I can never be with these Amaboona, who, as you and others have told me, are traitors. We play our game in the light, like men, and who wins, wins, and who loses, loses. Now hear me, Macumazahn, and remember what I say. Whatever happens to others, whatever you may see, you are safe while I live. Dingaan has spoken. Whether I get the tall white girl, or do not get her, still you are safe; it is on my head," and he touched the gum-ring in his hair.

"And why should I be safe if others are unsafe, O king?" I asked.

"Oh! if you would know that, ask a certain ancient prophet named Zikali, who was in this land in the days of Senzangacona, my father, and before then--that is, if you can find him. Also, I like you, who are not a flat-faced fool like these Amaboona, but have a brain that turns in and out through difficulties, as a snake does through reeds; and it would be a pity to kill one who can shoot birds wheeling high above him in the air, which no one else can do. So whatever you see and whatever you hear, remember that you are safe, and shall go safely from this land, or stay safely in it if you will, to be my voice to speak with the Sons of George.

"Now return to the commandant, and say to him that my heart is his heart, and that I am very pleased to see him here. To-morrow, and perhaps the next day, I will show him some of the dances of my people, and after that I will sign the writing, giving him all the land he asks and everything else he may desire, more than he can wish, indeed. Hamba gachlé, Macumazahn," and, rising with surprising quickness from his chair, which was cut out of a single block of wood, he turned and vanished through the little opening in the reed fence behind him that led to his private huts.

As I was being conducted back to the Boer camp by Kambula, who was waiting for me outside the gate of the labyrinth which is called isiklohlo, I met Thomas Halstead, who was lounging about, I think in order to speak with me. Halting, I asked him straight out what the king's intentions were towards the Boers.

"Don't know," he answered, shrugging his shoulders, "but he seems so sweet on them that I think he must be up to mischief. He is wonderfully fond of you, too, for I heard him give orders that the word was to be passed through all the regiments that if anyone so much as hurt you, he should be killed at once. Also, you were pointed out to the soldiers when you rode in with the rest, that they might all of them know you."

"That's good for me as far as it goes," I replied. "But I don't know why I should need special protection above others, unless there is someone who wants to harm me."

"There is that, Allan Quatermain. The indunas tell me that the good-looking Portugee, whom they call 'Two-faces,' asks the king to kill you every time he sees him. Indeed, I've heard him myself."

"That's kind of him," I answered, "but, then, Hernan Pereira and I never got on. Tell me what is he talking about to the king when he isn't asking him to kill me."

"Don't know," he said again. "Something dirty, I'll be bound. One may be sure of that by the native name they have given him. I think, however," he added in a whisper, "that he has had a lot to do with the Boers being allowed to come here at all in order to get their treaty signed. At least, one day when I was interpreting and Dingaan swore that he would not give them more land than was enough to bury them in, Pereira told

him that it didn't matter what he signed, as 'what was written with the pen could be scratched out with the spear.'"

"Indeed! And what did the king say to that?"

"Oh! he laughed and said it was true, and that he would give the Boer commission all their people wanted and something over for themselves. But don't you repeat that, Quatermain, for if you do, and it gets to the ear of Dingaan, I shall certainly be killed. And, I say, you're a good fellow, and I won a big bet on you over that vulture shooting, so I will give you a bit of advice, which you will be wise to take. You get out of this country as soon as you can, and go to look after that pretty Miss Marais, whom you are sweet on. Dingaan wants her, and what Dingaan wants he gets in this part of the world."

Then, without waiting to be thanked, he turned and disappeared among a crowd of Zulus, who were following us from curiosity, leaving me wondering whether or no Dingaan was right when he called this young man a liar. His story seemed to tally so well with that told by the king himself, that on the whole I thought he was not.

Just after I had passed the main gateway of the great town, where, his office done, Kambula saluted and left me, I saw two white men engaged in earnest conversation beneath one of the milk trees which, as I think I have already mentioned, grow, or grew, there. They were Henri Marais and his nephew. Catching sight of me, Marais walked off, but Pereira

advanced and spoke to me, although, warned perhaps by what had happened to him in the case of Retief, I am glad to say he did not offer me his hand.

"Good day to you, Allan," he said effusively. "I have just heard from my uncle that I have to congratulate you, about Marie I mean, and, believe me, I do so with all my heart."

Now, as he spoke these words, remembering what I had just heard, my blood boiled in me, but I thought it wise to control myself, and therefore only answered:

"Thank you."

"Of course," he went on, "we have both striven for this prize, but as it has pleased God that you should win it, why, I am not one to bear malice."

"I am glad to hear it," I replied. "I thought that perhaps you might be. Now tell me, to change the subject, how long will Dingaan keep us here?"

"Oh! two or three days at most. You see, Allan, luckily I have been able to persuade him to sign the treaty about the land without further trouble. So as soon as that is done, you can all go home."

"The commandant will be very grateful to you," I said. "But what are you

going to do?"

"I do not know, Allan. You see, I am not a lucky fellow like yourself with a wife waiting for me. I think that perhaps I shall stop here a while. I see a way of making a great deal of money out of these Zulus; and having lost everything upon that Delagoa Bay trek, I want money."

"We all do," I answered, "especially if we are starting in life. So when it is convenient to you to settle your debts I shall be glad."

"Oh! have no fear," he exclaimed with a sudden lighting up of his dark face, "I will pay you what I owe you, every farthing, with good interest thrown in."

"The king has just told me that is your intention," I remarked quietly, looking him full in the eyes. Then I walked on, leaving him staring after me, apparently without a word to say.

I went straight to the hut that was allotted to Retief in the little outlying guard-kraal, which had been given to us for a camp. Here I found the commandant seated on a Kaffir stool engaged in painfully writing a letter, using a bit of board placed on his knees as a desk.

He looked up, and asked me how I had got on with Dingaan, not being sorry, as I think, of an excuse to pause in his clerical labours.

"Listen, commandant," I said, and, speaking in a low voice, so as not to be overheard, I told him every word that had passed in the interviews I had just had with Dingaan, with Thomas Halstead, and with Pereira.

He heard me out in silence, then said:

"This is a strange and ugly story, Allan, and if it is true, Pereira must be an even bigger scoundrel than I thought him. But I can't believe that it is true. I think that Dingaan has been lying to you for his own purposes; I mean about the plot to kill you."

"Perhaps, commandant. I don't know, and I don't much care. But I am sure that he was not lying when he said he meant to steal away my wife either for himself or for Pereira."

"What, then, do you intend to do, Allan?"

"I intend, commandant, with your permission to send Hans, my after-rider, back to the camp with a letter for Marie, telling her to remove herself quietly to the farm I have chosen down on the river, of which I told you, and there to lie hid till I come back."

"I think it needless, Allan. Still, if it will ease your mind, do so, since I cannot spare you to go yourself. Only you must not send this Hottentot, who would talk and frighten the people. I am despatching a messenger to the camp to tell them of our safe arrival and good

reception by Dingaan. He can take your letter, in which I order you to say to your wife that if she and the Prinsloos and the Meyers go to this farm of yours, they are to go without talking, just as though they wanted a change, that is all. Have the letter ready by dawn to-morrow morning, as I trust mine may be," he added with a groan.

"It shall be ready, commandant; but what about Hernan Pereira and his tricks?"

"This about the accursed Hernan Pereira," exclaimed Retief, striking the writing-board with his fist. "On the first opportunity I will myself take the evidence of Dingaan and of the English lad, Halstead. If I find they tell me the same story they have told you, I will put Pereira on his trial, as I threatened to do before; and should he be found guilty, by God! I will have him shot. But for the present it is best to do nothing, except keep an eye on him, lest we should cause fear and scandal in the camp, and, after all, not prove the case. Now go and write your letter, and leave me to write mine."

So I went and wrote, telling Marie something, but by no means all of that I have set down. I bade her, and the Prinsloos and the Meyers, if they would accompany her, as I was sure they would, move themselves off at once to the farm I had beaconed out thirty miles away from the Bushman's River, under pretence of seeing how the houses that were being built there were getting on. Or if they would not go, I bade her go alone with a few Hottentot servants, or any other companions she could

find.

This letter I took to Retief, and read it to him. At my request, also, he scrawled at the foot of it:

"I have seen the above and approve it, knowing all the story, which may be true or false. Do as your husband bids you, but do not talk of it in the camp except to those whom he mentions.--PIETER RETIEF."

So the messenger departed at dawn, and in due course delivered my letter to Marie.

The next day was Sunday. In the morning I went to call upon the Reverend Mr. Owen, the missionary, who was very glad to see me. He informed me that Dingaan was in good mind towards us, and had been asking him if he would write the treaty ceding the land which the Boers wanted. I stopped for service at the huts of Mr. Owen, and then returned to the camp. In the afternoon Dingaan celebrated a great war dance for us to witness, in which about twelve thousand soldiers took part.

It was a wonderful and awe-inspiring spectacle, and I remember that each of the regiments employed had a number of trained oxen which manoeuvred with them, apparently at given words of command. We did not see Dingaan that day, except at a distance, and after the dance was over returned to

our camp to eat the beef which he had provided for us in plenty.

On the third day--that was Monday, the 5th of February, there were more dancings and sham fights, so many more, indeed, that we began to weary of this savage show. Late in the afternoon, however, Dingaan sent for the commandant and his men to come to see him, saying that he wished to talk with him about the matter of the treaty. So we went; but only three or four, of whom I was one, were admitted to Dingaan's presence, the rest remaining at a little distance, where they could see us but were out of earshot.

Dingaan then produced a paper which had been written by the Reverend Mr. Owen. This document, which I believe still exists, for it was found afterwards, was drawn up in legal or semi-legal form, beginning like a proclamation, "Know all men."

It ceded "the place called Port Natal, together with all the land annexed--that is to say, from Tugela to the Umzimvubu River westward, and from the sea to the north"--to the Boers, "for their everlasting property." At the king's request, as the deed was written in English by Mr. Owen, I translated it to him, and afterwards the lad Halstead translated it also, being called in to do so when I had finished.

This was done that my rendering might be checked, and the fact impressed all the Boers very favourably. It showed them that the king desired to understand exactly what he was to sign, which would not have been the

case had he intended any trick or proposed to cheat them afterwards. From that moment forward Retief and his people had no further doubts as to Dingaan's good faith in this matter, and foolishly relaxed all precautions against treachery.

When the translating was finished, the commandant asked the king if he would sign the paper then and there. He answered, "No; he would sign it on the following morning, before the commission returned to Natal."

It was then that Retief inquired of Dingaan, through Thomas Halstead, whether it was a true story which he had heard, that the Boer called Pereira, who had been staying with him, and whom the Zulus knew by the name of "Two-faces," had again asked him, Dingaan, to have me, Allan Quatermain, whom they called Macumazahn, killed. Dingaan laughed and answered:

"Yes, that is true enough, for he hates this Macumazahn. But let the little white Son of George have no fear, since my heart is soft towards him, and I swear by the head of the Black One that he shall come to no harm in Zululand. Is he not my guest, as you are?"

He then went on to say that if the commandant wished it, he would have "Two-faces" seized and killed because he had dared to ask for my life. Retief answered that he would look into that matter himself, and after Thomas Halstead had confirmed the king's story as to Pereira's conduct, he rose and said good-bye to Dingaan.

Of this matter of Hernan Pereira, Retief said little as we went back to the camp outside the Kraal, though the little that he did say showed his deep anger. When we arrived at the camp, however, he sent for Pereira and Marais and several of the older Boers. I remember that among these were Gerrit Bothma, Senior, Hendrik Labuschagne and Matthys Pretorius, Senior, all of them persons of standing and judgment. I also was ordered to be present. When Pereira arrived, Retief charged him openly with having plotted my murder, and asked him what he had to say. Of course, his answer was a flat denial, and an accusation against me of having invented the tale because we had been at enmity over a maiden whom I had since married.

"Then, Mynheer Pereira," said Retief, "as Allan Quatermain here has won the maiden who is now his wife, it would seem that his cause of enmity must have ceased, whereas yours may well have remained. However, I have no time to try cases of the sort now. But I warn you that this one will be looked into later on when we get back to Natal, whither I shall take you with me, and that meanwhile an eye is kept on you and what you do. Also I warn you that I have evidence for all that I say. Now be so good as to go, and to keep out of my sight as much as possible, for I do not like a man whom these Kaffirs name 'Two-faces.' As for you, friend Henri Marais, I tell you that you would do well to associate yourself less with one whose name is under so dark a cloud, although he may be your own nephew, whom all know you love blindly."

So far as I recollect neither of them made any answer to this direct

speech. They simply turned and went away. But on the next morning, that of the fatal 6th of February, when I chanced to meet the Commandant Retief as he was riding through the camp making arrangements for our departure to Natal, he pulled up his horse and said:

"Allan, Hernan Pereira has gone, and Henri Marais with him, and for my part I am not sorry, for doubtless we shall meet again, in this world or the next, and find out all the truth. Here, read this, and give it back to me afterwards"; and he threw me a paper and rode on.

I opened the folded sheet and read as follows:

"To the Commandant Retief, Governor of the Emigrant Boers,

"Mynheer Commandant,

"I will not stay here, where such foul accusations are laid on me by black Kaffirs and the Englishman, Allan Quatermain, who, like all his race, is an enemy of us Boers, and, although you do not know it, a traitor who is plotting great harm against you with the Zulus. Therefore I leave you, but am ready to meet every charge at the right time before a proper Court. My uncle, Henri Marais, comes with me, as he feels that his honour is also touched. Moreover, he has heard that his daughter, Marie, is in danger from the Zulus, and returns to protect her, which he who is called her husband neglects to do. Allan Quatermain, the

Englishman, who is the friend of Dingaan, can explain what I mean, for he knows more about the Zulu plans than I do, as you will find out before the end."

Then followed the signatures of Hernan Pereira and Henri Marais.

I put the letter in my pocket, wondering what might be its precise meaning, and in particular that of the absurd and undefined charge of treachery against myself. It seemed to me that Pereira had left us because he was afraid of something--either that he might be placed upon his trial or of some ultimate catastrophe in which he would be involved. Marais probably had gone with him for the same reason that a bit of iron follows a magnet, because he never could resist the attraction of this evil man, his relative by birth. Or perhaps he had learned from him the story of his daughter's danger, upon which I had already acted, and really was anxious about her safety. For it must always be remembered that Marais loved Marie passionately, however ill the reader of this history may think that he behaved to her. She was his darling, the apple of his eye, and her great offence in his sight was that she cared for me more than she did for him. That is one of the reasons why he hated me as much as he loved her.

Almost before I had finished reading this letter, the order came that we were to go in a body to bid farewell to Dingaan, leaving our arms piled beneath the two milk trees at the gate of the town. Most of our after-riders were commanded to accompany us--I think because Retief

wished to make as big a show as possible to impress the Zulus. A few of these Hottentots, however, were told to stay behind that they might collect the horses, that were knee-haltered and grazing at a distance, and saddle them up. Among these was Hans, for, as it chanced, I saw and sent him with the others, so that I might be sure that my own horses would be found and made ready for the journey.

Just as we were starting, I met the lad William Wood, who had come down from the Mission huts, where he lived with Mr. Owen, and was wandering about with an anxious face.

"How are you, William?" I asked.

"Not very well, Mr. Quatermain," he answered. "The fact is," he added with a burst of confidence, "I feel queerly about you all. The Kaffirs have told me that something is going to happen to you, and I think you ought to know it. I daren't say any more," and he vanished into the crowd.

At that moment I caught sight of Retief riding to and fro and shouting out orders. Going to him, I caught him by the sleeve, saying:

"Commandant, listen to me."

"Well, what is it now, nephew?" he asked absently.

I told him what Wood had said, adding that I also was uneasy; I did not know why.

"Oh!" he answered with impatience, "this is all hailstones and burnt grass" (meaning that the one would melt and the other blow away, or in our English idiom, stuff and rubbish). "Why are you always trying to scare me with your fancies, Allan? Dingaan is our friend, not our enemy. So let us take the gifts that fortune gives us and be thankful. Come, march."

This he said about eight o'clock in the morning.

We strolled through the gates of the Great Kraal, most of the Boers, who, as usual, had piled their arms under the two milk trees, lounging along in knots of four or five, laughing and chatting as they went. I have often thought since, that although every one of them there, except myself, was doomed within an hour to have taken the dreadful step from time into eternity, it seems strange that advancing fate should have thrown no shadow on their hearts. On the contrary, they were quite gay, being extremely pleased at the successful issue of their mission and the prospect of an immediate return to their wives and children. Even Retief was gay, for I heard him joking with his companions about myself and my "white-bread-week," or honeymoon, which, he said, was drawing very near.

As we went, I noticed that most of the regiments who had performed the great military dances before us on the previous day were gone. Two,

however, remained--the Ischlangu Inhlope, that is the "White Shields," who were a corps of veterans wearing the ring on their heads, and the Ischlangu Umnyama, that is the "Black Shields," who were all of them young men without rings. The "White Shields" were ranged along the fence of the great open place to our left, and the "Black Shields" were similarly placed to our right, each regiment numbering about fifteen hundred men. Except for their kerries and dancing-sticks they were unarmed.

Presently we reached the head of the dancing ground, and found Dingaan seated in his chair with two of his great indunas, Umhlela and Tambusa, squatting on either side of him. Behind him, standing in and about the entrance to the labyrinth through which the king had come, were other indunas and captains. On arriving in front of Dingaan we saluted him, and he acknowledged the salutation with pleasant words and smiles. Then Retief, two or three of the other Boers, Thomas Halstead and I went forward, whereon the treaty was produced again and identified as the same document that we had seen on the previous day.

At the foot of it someone--I forget who--wrote in Dutch, "De merk van Koning Dingaan" [that is, The mark of King Dingaan.] In the space left between the words "merk" and "van" Dingaan made a cross with a pen that was given to him, Thomas Halstead holding his hand and showing him what to do.

After this, three of his indunas, or great councillors, who were named

Nwara, Yuliwana and Manondo, testified as witnesses for the Zulus, and M. Oosthuyzen, A. C. Greyling and B. J. Liebenberg, who were standing nearest to Retief, as witnesses for the Boers.

This done, Dingaan ordered one of his isibongos, or praisers, to run to and fro in front of the regiments and others there assembled, and proclaim that he had granted Natal to the Boers to be their property for ever, information which the Zulus received with shouts. Then Dingaan asked Retief if he would not eat, and large trenchers of boiled beef were brought out and handed round. This, however, the Boers refused, saying they had already breakfasted. Thereon the king said that at least they must drink, and pots of twala, or Kaffir beer, were handed round, of which all the Boers partook.

While they were drinking, Dingaan gave Retief a message to the Dutch farmers, to the effect that he hoped they would soon come and occupy Natal, which henceforth was their country. Also, black-hearted villain that he was, that they would have a pleasant journey home. Next he ordered the two regiments to dance and sing war songs, in order to amuse his guests.

This they began to do, drawing nearer as they danced.

It was at this moment that a Zulu appeared, pushing his way through the captains who were gathered at the gate of the labyrinth, and delivered some message to one of the indunas, who in turn passed it on to the

king.

"Ow! is it so?" said the king with a troubled look. Then his glance fell on me as though by accident, and he added: "Macumazahn, one of my wives is taken very ill suddenly, and says she must have some of the medicine of the white men before they go away. Now, you tell me that you are a new-married man, so I can trust you with my wives. I pray you to go and find out what medicine it is that she needs, for you can speak our tongue."

I hesitated, then translated what he had said to Retief.

"You had best go, nephew," said the commandant; "but come back quickly, for we ride at once."

Still I hesitated, not liking this business; whereon the king began to grow angry.

"What!" he said, "do you white men refuse me this little favour, when I have just given you so much--you who have wonderful medicines that can cure the sick?"

"Go, Allan, go," said Retief, when he understood his words, "or he will grow cross and everything may be undone."

So, having no choice, I went through the gateway into the labyrinth.

Next moment men pounced on me, and before I could utter a word a cloth was thrown over my mouth and tied tight behind my head.

I was a prisoner and gagged.