

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DWARF FOLK

It was dawn at last. All night it had rained as it can rain in West Africa, falling on the wide river with a hissing splash, sullen and continuous. Now, towards morning, the rain had ceased and everywhere rose a soft and pearly mist that clung to the face of the waters and seemed to entangle itself like strands of wool among the branches of the bordering trees. On the bank of the river at a spot that had been cleared of bush, stood a tent, and out of this tent emerged a white man wearing a sun helmet and grey flannel shirt and trousers. It was Alan Vernon, who in these surroundings looked larger and more commanding than he had done at the London office, or even in his own house of Yarleys. Perhaps the moustache and short brown beard which he had grown, or his skin, already altered and tanned by the tropics, had changed his appearance for the better. At any rate it was changed. So were his manner and bearing, whereof all the diffidence had gone. Now they were those of a man accustomed to command who found himself in his right place.

"Jeekie," he called, "wake up those fellows and come and light the oil-stove. I want my coffee."

Thereon a deep voice was heard speaking in some native tongue and saying:

"Cease your snoring, you black dogs, and arouse yourselves, for your lord calls you," an invocation that was followed by the sound of kicks, thumps, and muttered curses.

A minute or two later Jeekie himself appeared, and he also was much changed in appearance, for now instead of his smart, European clothes, he wore a white robe and sandals that gave him an air at once dignified and patriarchal.

"Good-morning, Major," he said cheerfully. "I hope you sleep well, Major, in this low-lying and accursed situation, which is more than we do in boat that half full of water, to say nothing of smell of black man and prevalent mosquito. But the rain it over and gone, and presently the sun shine out, so might be much worse, no cause at all complain."

"I don't know," answered Alan, with a shiver. "I believe that I am fever proof, but otherwise I should have caught it last night, and--just give me the quinine, I will take five grains for luck."

"Yes, yes, for luck," answered Jeekie as he opened the medicine chest and found the quinine, at the same time glancing anxiously out of the corner of his eye at his master's face, for he knew that the spot where they had slept was deadly to white men at this season of the year. "You not catch fever, Little Bonsa," here he dropped his voice and looked down at the box which had served Alan for a pillow, "see to that. But

quinine give you appetite for breakfast. Very good chop this morning. Which you like best? Cold ven'son, or fish, or one of them ducks you shoot yesterday?"

"Oh! some of the cold meat, I think. Give the ducks to the boatmen, I don't fancy them in this hot place. By the way, Jeekie, we leave the Qua River here, don't we?"

"Yes, yes, Major, just here. I 'member spot well, for your uncle he pray on it one whole hour; I pretend pray too, but in heart give thanks to Little Bansa, for heathen in those days, quite different now. This morning we begin walk through forest where it rather dark and cool and comfortable, that is if we no see dwarf people from whom good Lord deliver us," and he bowed towards the box containing Little Bansa.

"Will those four porters come with us through the forest, Jeekie, as they promised?"

"Yes, yes, they come. Last night they say they not come, too much afraid of dwarf. But I settle their hash. I tell them I save up bits of their hair and toe nails when they no thinking, and I mix it with medicine, and if they not come, they die every one before they get home. They think me great doctor and they believe. Perhaps they die if they go on. If so, I tell them that because they want show white feather, and they think me greater doctor still. Oh! they come, they come, no fear, or else Jeekie know reason why. Now, here coffee, Major. Drink him hot

before you go take tub, but keep in shallow water, because crocodile he very early riser."

Alan laughed, and departed to "take tub." Notwithstanding the mosquitoes that buzzed round him in clouds, the water was cool and pleasant by comparison with the hot, sticky air, and the feel of it seemed to rid him of the languor resulting from his disturbed night.

A month had passed since he had left Old Calabar, and owing to the incessant rains the journeying had been hard. Indeed the white men there thought that he was mad to attempt to go up the river at this season. Of course he had said nothing to them of the objects of his expedition, hinting only that he wished to explore and shoot, and perhaps prospect for mines. But knowing as they did, that he was an Engineer officer with a good record and much African experience, they soon made up their minds that he had been sent by Government upon some secret mission that for reasons of his own he preferred to keep to himself. This conclusion, which Jeekie zealously fostered behind his back, in fact did Alan a good turn, since owing to it he obtained boatmen and servants at a season when, had he been supposed to be but a private person, these would scarcely have been forthcoming at any price. Hitherto his journey had been one long record of mud, mosquitoes, and misery, but otherwise devoid of incident, except the eating of one of his boatmen by a crocodile which was a particularly "early riser," for it had pulled the poor fellow out of the canoe in which he lay asleep at night. Now, however, the real dangers were about to begin, since at this spot he

left the great river and started forward through the forest on foot with Jeekie and the four bearers whom he had paid highly to accompany him.

He could not conceal from himself that the undertaking seemed somewhat desperate. But of this he said nothing in the long letter he had written to Barbara on the previous night, sighing as he sealed it, at the thought that it might well be the last which would ever reach her from him, even if the boatmen got safely back to Calabar and remembered to put it in the post. The enterprise had been begun and must be carried through, until it ended in success--or death.

An hour later they started. First walked Alan as leader of the expedition, carrying a double-barrelled gun that could be used either for ball or shot, about fifty cartridges with brass cases to protect them from the damp, a revolver, a hunting-knife, a cloth mackintosh, and lastly, strapped upon his back like a knapsack, a tin box containing the fetish, Little Bonsa, which was too precious to be trusted to anyone else. It was quite a sufficient load for any white man in that climate, but being very wiry, Alan did not feel its weight, at any rate at first.

After him in single file came the four porters, laden with a small tent, some tinned provisions and brandy, ammunition, a box containing beads, watches, etc. for presents, blankets, spare clothing and so forth. These were stalwart fellows enough, who knew the forest, but their dejected air showed that now they had come face to face with its dangers, they heartily wished themselves anywhere else. Indeed, notwithstanding their

terror of Jeekie's medicine, at the last moment they threw down their loads intending to make a wild rush for the departing boat, only to be met by Jeekie himself who, anticipating some such move, was waiting for them on the bank with a shotgun. Here he remained until the canoe was too far out in the stream for them to reach it by swimming. Then he asked them if they wished to sit and starve there with the devils he would leave them for company, or if they would carry out their bargain like honest men?

The end of it was they took up their loads again and marched, while behind them walked the terrible and gigantic Jeekie, the barrels of the shotgun which he carried at full cock and occasionally used to prod them, pointing directly at their backs. A strange object he looked truly, for in addition to the weapons with which he bristled, several cooking-pots were slung about him, to say nothing of a cork mattress and a mackintosh sheet tied in a flat bundle to his shoulders, a box containing medicines and food which he carried on his head, and fastened to the top of it with string like a helmet on a coffin, an enormous solar-tape stuffed full of mosquito netting, of which the ends fell about him like a green veil. When Alan remonstrated with him as to the cork mattress, suggesting that it should be thrown away as too hot to wear, Jeekie replied that he had been cold for thirty years, and wished to get warm again. Guessing that his real reason for declining to part with the article, was that his master should have something to lie on, other than the damp ground, Alan said no more at the time, which, as will be seen, was fortunate enough for Jeekie.

For a mile or more their road ran through fantastic-looking mangrove trees rooted in the mud, that in the mist resembled, Alan thought, many-legged arboreal octopi feeling for their food, and tall reeds on the tops of which sat crowds of chattering finches. Then just as the sun broke out, strongly, cheering them with its warmth and sucking up the vapours, they entered sparse bush with palms and great cotton trees growing here and there, and so at length came to the borders of the mighty forest.

Oh! dark, dark was that forest; he who entered it from the cheerful sunshine felt as though suddenly and without preparation he had wandered out of the light we know into some dim Hades such as the old Greek fancy painted, where strengthless ghosts flit aimlessly, mourning the lost light. Everywhere the giant boles of trees shooting the height of a church tower into the air without a branch; great rib-rooted trees, and beneath them a fierce and hungry growth of creepers. Where a tree had fallen within the last century or so, these creepers ramped upwards in luxuriance, their stems thick as the body of a man, drinking the shaft of light that pierced downwards, drinking it with eagerness ere the boughs above met again and starved them. Where no tree had fallen the creepers were thin and weak; from year to year they lived on feebly, biding their time, but still they lived, knowing that some day it would come. And always it was coming to those expectant parasites, since from minute to minute, somewhere in the vast depths, miles and miles away perhaps, a great crash echoed in the stillness, the crash of a tree

that, sown when the Saxons ruled in England, or perhaps before Cleopatra bewitched Anthony, came to its end at last.

On the second day of their march in the forest Alan chanced to see such a tree fall, and the sight was one that he never could forget. As it happened, owing to the vast spread of its branches which had killed out all rivals beneath, for in its day it had been a very successful tree embued with an excellent constitution by its parent, it stood somewhat alone, so that from several hundred yards away as these six human beings crept towards it like ants towards a sapling in a cornfield, its mighty girth and bulk set upon a little mound and the luxuriant greenness of its far-reaching boughs made a kind of landmark. Then in the hot noon when no breath of wind stirred, suddenly the end came. Suddenly that mighty bole seemed to crumble; suddenly those far-reaching arms were thrown together as their support failed, gripping at each other like living things, flogging the air, screaming in their last agony, and with an awful wailing groan sinking, a tumbled ruin, to the earth.

Silence again, and in the midst of the silence Jeekie's cheerful voice.

"Old tree go flop! Glad he no flop on us, thanks be to Little Bona. Get on, you lazy nigger dog. Who pay you stand there and snivel? Get on or I blow out your stupid skull," and he brought the muzzle of the full-cocked, double-barrelled gun into sharp contact with that part of the terrified porter's anatomy.



Such was the forest. Of their march through it for the first four days, there is nothing to tell. Its depths seemed to be devoid of life, although occasionally they heard the screaming of parrots in the treetops a couple of hundred feet above, or caught sight of the dim shapes of monkeys swinging themselves from bough to bough. That was in the daytime, when, although they could not see it, they knew that the sun was shining somewhere. But at night they heard nothing, since beasts of prey do not come where there is no food. What puzzled Alan was that all through these impenetrable recesses there ran a distinct road which they followed. To the right and left rose a wall of creepers, but between them ran this road, an ancient road, for nothing grew on it, and it only turned aside to avoid the biggest of the trees which must have stood there from time immemorial, such a tree as that which he had seen fall; indeed it was one of those round which the road ran.

He asked Jeekie who made the road.

"People who come out Noah's Ark," answered Jeekie, "I think they run up here to get out of way of water, and sent them two elephants ahead to make path. Or perhaps dwarf people make it. Or perhaps those who go up to Asiki-land to do sacrifice like old Jews."

"You mean you don't know," said Alan.

"No, of course don't know. Who know about forest path made before beginning of world. You ask question, Major, I answer. More lively

answer than to shake head and roll eyes like them silly fool porters."

It was on the fourth night that the trouble began. As usual they had lit a huge fire made of the fallen boughs and rotting tree trunks that lay about in plenty. There was no reason why the fire should be so large, since they had little to cook and the air was hot, but they made it so for the same reason that Jeekie answered questions, for the sake of cheerfulness. At least it gave light in the darkness, leaping up in red tongues of flame twenty or thirty feet high, and its roar and crackle were welcome in the primeval silence.

Alan lay upon the cork mattress in the open, for here there was no need to pitch the tent; if any rain fell above, the canopy of leaves absorbed it. He was amusing himself while he smoked his pipe with watching the reflection of the fire-light against a patch of darkness caused probably by some bush about twenty yards away, and by picturing in his own mind the face of Barbara, that strong, pleasant English face, as it might appear on such a background. Suddenly there, on the identical spot he did see a face, though one of a very different character. It was round and small and hideous, resembling in its general outline that of a bloated child. At this distance he could not distinguish the features, except the lips, which were large and pendulous, and between them the flash of white teeth.

"Look here," he whispered to Jeekie in English, and Jeekie looked, then without saying a word, lifted the shotgun that lay at his side and fired

straight at the bush. Instantly there arose a squeaking noise, such as might be made by a wounded animal, and the four porters sprang up in alarm.

"Sit down," said Jeekie to them in their own tongue, "a leopard was stalking us and I fired to frighten it away. Don't go near the place, as it may be wounded and angry, but drag up some boughs and make a fence round the fire, for fear of others."

The men who dreaded leopards, looking on these animals, indeed, with superstitious reverence, obeyed readily enough, and as there was plenty of wood lying within a few yards, soon constructed a boma fence that, rough as it was, would serve for protection.

"Jeekie," said Alan presently as they laboured at the fence, "that was not a leopard, it was a man."

"No, no, Major, not man, little dwarf devil, him that have poisoned arrow. I shoot at once to make him sit up. Think he no come back to-night, too much afraid of shot fetish. But to-morrow, can't say. Not tell those fellows anything," and he nodded towards the porters, "or perhaps they bolt."

"I think you would have done better to leave the dwarf alone," said Alan, "and they might have left us alone. Now they will have a blood feud against us."

"Not agree, Major, only chance for us put him in blue funk. If I not shoot, presently he shoot," and he made a sound that resembled the whistling of an arrow, then added, "Now you go sleep. I not tired, I watch, my eyes see in dark better than yours. Only two more days of this damn forest, then open land with tree here and there, where dwarf no come because he afraid of lion and cannibal man, who like eat him."

As there was nothing else to be done Alan took Jeekie's advice and in time fell fast asleep, nor did he wake again till the faint light which for the want of a better name they called dawn, was filtering down to them through the canopy of boughs.

"Been to look," said Jeekie as he handed him his coffee. "Hit that dwarf man, see his blood, but think others carry him away. Jeekie very good shot, stone, spear, arrow, or gun, all same to him. Now get off as quick as we can before porters smell a rat. You eat chop, Major, I pack."

Presently they started on their trudge through those endless trees, with Fear for a companion. Even the porters, who had been told nothing, seemed more afraid than usual, though whether this was because they "smell rat," as Jeekie called it, or owing to the progressive breakdown of their nervous systems, Alan did not know. About midday they stopped to eat because the men were too tired to walk further without rest. For an hour or more they had been looking for a comparatively open place, but as it chanced could find none, so were obliged to halt in dense

forest. Just as they had finished their meal and were preparing to proceed, that which they had feared, happened, since from somewhere behind the tree boles came a volley of reed arrows. One struck a porter in the neck, one fixed itself in Alan's helmet without touching him, and no less than three hit Jeekie on the back and stuck there, providentially enough in the substance of the cork mattress that he still carried on his shoulders, which the feeble shafts had not the strength to pierce.

Everybody sprang up and with a curious fascination instead of attempting to do anything, watched the porter who had been hit in the neck somewhere in the region of the jugular vein. The poor man rose to his feet with great deliberation, reminding Alan in some grotesque way of a speaker who has suddenly been called on to address a meeting and seeks to gain time for the gathering of his thoughts. Then he turned towards that vast audience of the trees, stretched out his hand with a declamatory gesture, said something in a composed voice, and fell upon his face stone dead! The swift poison had reached his heart and done its work.

His three companions looked at him for a moment and the next with a yell of terror, rushed off into the forest, hurling down their loads as they ran. What became of them Alan never learned, for he saw them no more, and the dwarf people keep their secrets. At the time indeed he scarcely noticed their departure, for he was otherwise engaged.

One of their hideous little assailants, made bold by success, ventured to run across an open space between two trees, showing himself for a moment. Alan had a gun in his hand, and mad with rage at what had happened, he raised it and swung on him as he would upon a rabbit. He was a quick and practised shot and his skill did not fail him now, for just as the dwarf was vanishing behind a tree, the bullet caught him and next instant he was seen rolling over and over upon its further side.

"That very nice," said Jeekie reflectively, "very nice indeed, but I think we best move out of this."

"Aren't you hurt?" gasped Alan. "Your back is full of arrows."

"Don't feel nothing, Major," he answered, "best cork mattress, 25/3 at Stores, very good for poisoned arrow, but leave him behind now, because perhaps points work through as I run, one scratch do trick," and as he spoke Jeekie untied a string or several strings, letting the little mattress fall to the ground.

"Great pity leave all those goods," said Jeekie, surveying the loads that the porters had cast away, "but what says Book? Life more than raiment. Also take no thought for morrow. Dwarf people do that for us. Come, Major, make tracks," and dashing at a bag of cartridges which he cast about his neck, a trifling addition to his other impedimenta, and a small case of potted meats that he hitched under his arm, he poked his master in the back with the muzzle of his full-cocked gun as a signal

that it was time to start.

"Keep that cursed thing off me," said Alan furiously. "How often have I told you never to carry firearms at full cock?"

"About one thousand times, Major," answered Jeekie imperturbably, "but on such occasion forget discreetness. My ma just same, it run in family, but story too long tell you now. Cut, Major, cut like hell. Them dwarfs be back soon, but," he puffed, "I think, I think Little Bonsa come square with them one day."

So Alan "cut" and the huge Jeekie blundered along after him, the paraphernalia with which he was hung about rattling like the hoofs of a galloping giraffe. Nor for all his load did he ever turn a hair. Whether it were fear within or a desire to save his master, or a belief in the virtues of Little Bonsa, or that his foot was, as it were, once more upon his native heath, the fact remained that notwithstanding the fifty years, almost, that had whitened his wool, Jeekie was absolutely inexhaustible. At least at the end of that fearful chase, which lasted all the day, and through the night also, for they dared not camp, he appeared to be nearly as fresh as when he started from Old Calabar, nor did his spirits fail him for one moment.

When the light came on the following morning, however, they perceived by many signs and tokens that the dwarf people were all about them. Some arrows were shot even, but these fell short.

"Pooh!" said Jeekie, "all right now, they much afraid. Still, no time for coffee, we best get on."

So they got on as they could, till towards midday the forest began to thin out. Now as the light grew stronger they could see the dwarfs, of whom there appeared to be several hundred, keeping a parallel course to their own on either side of them at what they thought to be a safe distance.

"Try one shot, I think," said Jeekie, kneeling down and letting fly at a clump of the little men, which scattered like a covey of partridges, leaving one of its number kicking on the ground. "Ah! my boy," shouted Jeekie in derision, "how you like bullet in tummy? You not know Paradox guaranteed flat trajectory 250 yard. You remember that next time, sonny." Then off they went again up a long rise.

"River other side of that rise," said Jeekie. "Think those tree-monkeys no follow us there."

But the "monkeys" appeared to be angry and determined. They would not come any more within the range of the Paradox, but they still marched on either side of the two fugitives, knowing well that at last their strength must fail and they would be able to creep up and murder them. So the chase went on till Alan began to wonder whether it would not be better to face the end at once.



"No, no, if say die, can't change mind to-morrow morning," gasped Jeekie in a hoarse voice. "Here top rise, much nearer than I thought. Oh, my aunt! who those?" and he pointed to a large number of big men armed with spears who were marching up the further side of the hill from the river that ran below.

At the same moment these savages, who were not more than two hundred yards away, caught sight of them and of their pursuers, who just then appeared on the ridge to the right and left. The dwarfs, on perceiving these strangers, uttered a shrill yell of terror, and wheeled about to fly to their fastnesses in the forest, which evidently they regretted ever having left. It was too late. With an answering shout the spearsmen, who were extended in a long line, apparently hunting for game, charged after them at full speed. They were fresh and their legs were long. Therefore very soon they overtook the dwarfs and even got in front of them, heading them off from the forest. The end may be guessed,--save a few whom they reserved alive, they killed them mercilessly, and almost without loss to themselves, since the little forest folk were too terrified and exhausted to shoot at them with their poisoned arrows, and they had no other weapons.

In fact, as Alan discovered afterwards, for generations there had been war between them, since all the other tribes hate the dwarfs, whom they look upon as dangerous human monkeys, and never before had the big men found such a chance of squaring their account.

When Jeekie saw this fearful-looking company, for the first time his spirits seemed to fail him.

"Ogula!" he exclaimed with a groan and sat himself upon a flat rock, pulling Alan down beside him. "Ogula! Know them by hair and spears," he repeated. "Up gum tree now, say good-night."

"Why? Who are they?" gasped Alan.

"Great cannibal, Major, eat man, eat us to-night, or perhaps to-morrow morning when we nice and cool. Say prayers, Major, quick no time waste."

"I think I will shoot an Ogula or two first," said Alan grimly, as he stood up and lifted his gun.

"No, not shoot, no good. Pretend not be afraid, best chance. Let Jeekie think, let Jeekie think," and he slapped his forehead with his large hand.

Apparently the action brought inspiration, for next instant he grabbed his master by the arm and dragged him back behind the shelter of a big boulder which they had just passed. Then with really marvellous swiftness he cut the straps of the tin box that Alan wore upon his back, and since there was no time to find the key and unlock it, seized the little padlock with which it was fastened between his finger and thumb,

and putting out his great strength, with a single wrench twisted it off.

"What are you----" began Alan.

"Hold tongue," he answered savagely, "make you god, I priest. Ogula know Little Bonsa. Quick, quick!"

In a minute it was done, the golden mask was clapped on to Alan's head, and the leather thongs were fastened. Moreover, Jeekie himself was arrayed in the solar-tope to which all this while he had clung, allowing streams of green mosquito netting to hang down over his white robe.

"Come out now, Major," he said, "and play god. You whistle, I do palaver."

Then hand in hand they walked from behind the rock. By this time the particular company of the cannibals that was opposite to them, which happened to include their chief, had climbed the steep slope of the hill and arrived within a distance of twenty yards. Having seen the two men and guessed that they had taken refuge behind the rock, their spears were lifted to kill them, since when he beholds anything strange, the first impulse of a savage is to bring it to its death. They looked; they saw. Of a sudden down went the raised spears.

Some of those who held them fell upon their faces, while others turned to fly, appalled by the vision of this strangely clad man with the head

of gold. Only their chief, a great yellow-toothed fellow who wore a necklace of baboon claws, remained erect, staring at them with open mouth.

Alan blew the whistle that was set between the lips of the mask, and they shivered. Then Jeekie spoke to them in some tongue which they understood, saying:

"Do you, O Ogula, dare to offer violence to Little Bonsa and her priests? Say now, why should we not strike you dead with the magic of the god which she has borrowed from the white man?" and he tapped the gun he held.

"This is witchcraft," answered the chief. "We saw two men running, hunted by the dwarfs, not three minutes ago, and now we see--what we see," and he put his hand before his eyes, then after a pause went on--"As for Little Bonsa, she left this country in my father's day. He gave her passage upon the head of a white man and the Asiki wizards have mourned her ever since, or so I hear."

"Fool," answered Jeekie, "as she went, so she returns, on the head of a white man. Yonder I see an elder with grey hair who doubtless knew of Little Bonsa in his youth. Let him come up and look and say whether or no this is the god."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed the chief, "go up, old man, go up," and he jabbed

at him with his spear until, unwillingly enough, he went.

The elder arrived, making obeisance, and when he was near, Alan blew the whistle in his face, whereon he fell to his knees.

"It is Little Bonsa," he said in a trembling voice, "Little Bonsa without a doubt. I should know, as my father and my elder brother were sacrificed to her, and I only escaped because she rejected me. Down on your face, Chief, and do honour to the Yellow God before she slay you."

Instantly every man within hearing prostrated himself and lay still.

Then Jeekie strode up and down among them shouting out:

"Little Bonsa has come back and brought to you, Man-eaters, a fat offering, an offering of the dwarf-people whom you hate, of the treacherous dwarf-people who when you walk the ancient forest path, murder you with their poisoned arrows. Praise Little Bonsa who delivers you from your foes, and hearken to her bidding. Send on messengers to the Asiki saying that Little Bonsa comes home again from across the Black Water bringing the White Preacher, whom she led away in the day of their fathers. Say to them that the Asiki must send out a company that Little Bonsa and the Magician with whom she ran away, may be escorted back to her house with the state which has been hers from the beginning of time. Say to them also that they must prepare a great offering of pure gold out of their store, as much gold as fifty strong men can carry, not one handful less, to be given to the White Magician who

brings back Small Swimming Head, for if they withhold such an offering, he and Little Bansa will vanish never to be seen again, and curses and desolation will fall upon their land. Rise and obey, Chief of the Ogula."

Then the man scrambled to his feet and answered:

"It shall be done, O Priest of the Yellow God. To-morrow at the dawn swift messengers will start for the Gold House of the Asiki. To-night they cannot leave, as we are all very hungry and must eat."

"What must you eat?" asked Jeekie suspiciously.

"O Priest," answered the chief with a deprecatory gesture, "when first we saw you we hoped that it would be the white man and yourself, for we have never tasted white man. But now we fear that you will not consent to this, and as you are holy and the guardian of the god, we cannot eat you without your own consent. Therefore fat dwarf must be our food, of which, however, there will be plenty for you as well as us."

"You dog!" exclaimed Jeekie in a voice of furious indignation. "Do you think that white men and their high-born companions, such as myself, were made to fill your vile stomachs? I tell you that a meal of the deadly Bean would agree better with you, for if you dare so much as to look on us, or on any of the white race with hunger, agony shall seize your vitals and you and all your tribe shall die as though by poison."

Moreover, we do not touch the flesh of men, nor will we see it eaten. It is our 'orunda,' it is consecrate to us, it must not pass our lips, nor may our eyes behold it. Therefore we will camp apart from you further up the stream and find our own food. But to-morrow at the dawn the messengers must leave as we have commanded. Also you shall provide strong men and a large canoe to bear Little Bonsa forward towards her own home until she finds her people coming out to greet her.

"It shall be done," answered the chief humbly, "Everything shall be done according to the will of Little Bonsa spoken by her priest, that she may leave a blessing and not a curse upon the heads of the tribe of the Ogula. Say where you wish to camp and men shall run to build a house of reeds for the god to dwell in."