

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE WAR OF THE CLEAN SPEAR

When Sihamba arose next day, Suzanne asked her if the home of her people, the Umpondwana, was a great mountain faced round with slab-sided precipices and having ridges on its eastern face like to the thumb and fingers of a hand, with a stream of water gushing from between the thumb and first finger, upon the banks of which grew flat-topped trees with thick green leaves and white flowers.

Sihamba stared at her, saying:

"Such is the place indeed, and there are no trees like to those you speak of to be found anywhere else. The maidens use the flowers of them to adorn their hair, and from the leaves is made a salve that is very good for wounds. But, say, Swallow, who told you about the mountain Umpondwana that is so far away, since I never described it to you?"

"Nobody told me," she answered, and she repeated the vision to her, or as much of it as she wished.

Sihamba listened, and when the tale was done she nodded her little head, saying:

"So even you white people have something of the power which has been given to us Kaffir witch-doctors from the beginning. Without a doubt

your spirit spoke to the spirit of your husband last night and I am glad of it, for now, although you are apart from each other, the hearts of both of you will be rested. Now also I am sure that we must go to my people and live among them for so long as may be appointed, seeing that there and nowhere else you and the Baas Kenzie will come together again."

"I had sooner go back to the stead," sighed Suzanne.

"That cannot be, Swallow, for it is not fated, and for the rest, if you meet, what does it matter where you meet?"

That morning Suzanne, mounted upon the great schimmel, which by now had almost recovered from his weariness, although he was still somewhat stiff, and followed by Sihamba and Zinti riding the horse and the mule, passed up and down before Sigwe's regiments that saluted her as chieftainess. Then amongst much wailing of women and children, the impi started northward, Suzanne, preceded only by scouts and a guard to feel the way, riding in front of it that she might escape the dust raised by so many feet and the hoofs of the great herd of oxen that were driven along to serve as food for the soldiers.

For fourteen days' journey they travelled thus, and during that time nothing of note happened to them, except that twelve men and Sihamba's brown mule were lost in crossing a flooded river, whereof there were

many in their path. The country through which they passed was populated by Kaffirs, but these tribes were too small and scattered to attempt to oppose so large an army, nor did the men of Sigwe do them any mischief beyond taking such grain and meal as they required for food.

On the fourteenth day, however, they reached the boundary of the territories of a very powerful tribe of Pondo blood, and here they halted while messengers were sent forward to the Pondo chief, saying that with him Sigwe had no quarrel, and asking for a safe-conduct for the army while passing through his lands. On the third day these messengers returned, accompanied by an embassy from the Pondo chief, that after much talk, though to all appearance unwillingly, gave Sigwe the promise of safe-conduct upon condition that he made a present of ceremony of one ox to their ruler. Now Sihamba noticed that while the envoys were talking, their eyes wandered all about, taking note of every thing, and especially of the number of the soldiers and of Suzanne, who sat beside Sigwe during the indaba, or council.

"These are no true men," she thought to herself, and made a plan. In the evening she visited the camp of the envoys who had heard already that she was a famous doctress, and offered her services to them for payment should any of them chance to need the boon of her magic arts. They laughed, answering that they wanted neither charms nor divinations, but that she should see a certain young man, a servant in their train, who was very sick with love and had bought philtres from every doctor in their country without avail, wherewith to soften the heart of a girl who would have nothing to do with him. When Sihamba, without seeming to

she had spoken much of it, had drawn from them all that she wished to know of the story of this man and girl, and with it other information, though they won little enough from her, she took her leave, and so set her trap that at night when all were asleep the young man came to consult her in a place apart.

Now she looked at him and said at once, without suffering him to speak:

"Let me see. Your name is so-and-so, and you are in love with such a girl, who turns away from you;" and she went on to tell him things which he thought were known only to himself.

"Wonderful," he said, "wonderful! But say, lady doctress, can you help me, for my heart is water because of this girl?"

"It is difficult," she answered. "Do you know that when you come to consult a wise woman you should keep your mind fixed upon the matter about which you would take counsel with her from the first moment that you set out to visit her until you stand in her presence? Now this you have not done, for as you came you were thinking of other things; yes, you were thinking about the ambush which is to be set for these people in the pass yonder, and therefore I cannot see the girl's heart clear, and do not quite know what medicine I should give you to soften it."

"It is true, lady," answered the stupid fellow, "that I was thinking about the ambush of which I have heard some talk, though I do not know who told you of it."

"Who told me? Why to my sight your thoughts are written on your face, yes, they ran before you and reached me as I heard your footsteps. But now, think no more of that matter, which has nothing to do with you or me, think only of the girl, and go on thinking of her, and of her only, until you get back home, and give her the medicine--that is if you wish it to work."

"I am thinking, lady," he muttered, turning his stupid face up to the skies.

"Fool, be quiet. Do I not know that? Ah! now I see her heart, and I tell you that you are lucky, for when you have done as I bid you, she will love you more than if you were the greatest chief in all the land." Then Sihamba gave him a certain harmless powder to sprinkle in the hut where the girl slept, and bade him wait for her on six different days when she came up from bathing, giving her on each day a garland of fresh flowers, a new flower for every day.

The man thanked her and asked what he must pay her for a fee, to which she replied that she took no fee in matters of love, since her reward was to know that she had made two people happy; but she added:

"Remember what I tell you, or instead of earning love you will earn hate. Say nothing of your visit to me, and if you can avoid it, do not speak at all until you have sprinkled the powder in the hut; especially put all things which do not concern you and her out of your mind and

think only of her face and how happy you will be when you have married her, which, if you follow my instructions, you will shortly do."

Now the young man went away as though he were walking upon air, and indeed so closely did he obey her that he was dismissed by his masters as a dumb fool before he reached home again. But whether or no Sihamba's medicine softened the heart of the maid I have not heard.

So soon as he was gone Sihamba sent Zinti to bring Sigwe and two of his generals to the place where she and Suzanne were encamped in a booth made of branches and long grass. When they were come, she told them of what she had learned from the love-stricken lad, adding that this plan of making sure of what already she had suspected, had been born in the brain of the Swallow, although she had carried it out. For when she deemed that she could serve her mistress or win her honour, Sihamba thought less of the truth than she should have done.

On learning this tidings Sigwe and his captains were full of wrath, and spoke of making war upon the Pondo chief at once, but Sihamba said:

"Listen; the Swallow has whispered a better way into my ear. It is this: the embassy of the Pondos leaves at dawn, and you must bid them farewell, telling them that you will follow and camp to-morrow night at the mouth of the pass, which you will enter at the next daybreak. Meanwhile now at once we will send out my servant, Zinti, dressed like a

Pondo lad, to search the country, and find if there is not another path by which the pass can be turned, for if such a way exists he will discover it and report to us to-morrow at nightfall, since he, who is stupid in many things, was born with the gift of seeking out roads and remembering them; also he knows how to be silent if questioned."

The chief and his captains thought this plan good, and thanked the Swallow for it, praising her wisdom, and within an hour, having been instructed what he must do and where he should meet them, Zinti was despatched upon his errand.

Next morning the envoys departed suspecting nothing, and taking with them gifts and the ox of ceremony; and that night the army of Sigwe encamped within a mile of the pass, to the right and left of which stretched tall and difficult cliffs.

About an hour after sunset Zinti crept into the camp and asked for food to eat, for he had travelled far and was hungry; moreover, he had been chased by some Pondo soldiers to whom, feigning the fool he was commonly supposed to be, he would make no answer when they questioned him. When he had eaten he made his report to Sigwe, Suzanne, and Sihamba, and the gist of it was that he had found a good road by which men might safely ascend the cliffs, though not so easily as they could travel through the gorge. Following this road, he added, they could pass round the Pondo town, avoiding its fortifications, and coming out at the cattle kraals at the back of the town, for he had climbed a high tree and mapped out the route with his eye. Then followed a council of war, and the upshot

of it was that, under the leadership of Zinti, the army marched off in silence an hour before midnight, leaving its cooking fires burning to deceive the Pondos.

They climbed the cliffs by the path he showed them, and, travelling all night, at dawn found themselves before the cattle kraals, which, as no enemy was expected, were unguarded except by the herds. These they cleared of the cattle, some thousands of them, and marched on at speed, sending a message back to the town by the herds that this was the luck which those must expect who attempted to trap the Swallow in a snare set for a rock-rabbit.

The Pondos were very angry at their loss, and, gathering their strength, followed them for some days, but before they could come up with them Sigwe and his army had reached country so difficult and so far away that the Pondo chief thought it wisest to leave them alone. So they marched on, taking the captured cattle with them, and after this bloodless victory Suzanne and Sihamba were greatly honoured by the soldiers, and even the lad Zinti was treated like a chief.

Now once more they reached wild lands, inhabited only by scattered tribes, and passed through them at their leisure, for they had plenty of food to eat, although from time to time they were obliged to encamp upon the banks of flooded rivers, or to hunt for a road over a mountain. It was on the thirty-first day of their journey that at length they entered the territories of the Endwandwe, against whom they had come to make war, where at once they were met by messengers sent by Sikonyana, the

chief of the Endwandwe, desiring to know why they came upon him with so great a force. To these men the case was set out by Sigwe, speaking in his own name and in that of the Swallow. As he had promised Suzanne, for this was a savage who kept his word, he offered to refrain from attack if the young Batwa was exchanged for her one-eyed sister and sent to him, together with the thousand head of cattle which he had paid, and two thousand more by way of fine. At first these terms were refused, but afterwards an embassy came of whom the captain was the brother of the king, who said that he was charged to discuss the matter with the white chieftainess named Swallow, herself, and with none other.

So Suzanne, accompanied only by Sihamba, and mounted upon the great schimmel that had come safe and well through all the journey, though the black horse had died of sickness, rode out a hundred paces in front of the army and met the man. There she spoke to him well and wisely, pointing out to him that without doubt a trick had been played upon Sigwe which he was mad to avenge. The captain answered that they were well able to fight. She replied that this might be so, that they might even conquer Sigwe and drive him back, but it could not be done without great loss to themselves, and that if his tribe were at all weakened the Zulus, who hated them, would hear of it, and take the opportunity to stamp them out.

Well, the end of it was that the Endwandwe yielded, and upon the promise of Suzanne--for they would take no other--that no spear should be lifted against them, they sent the true Batwa, a beautiful but sullen girl, to Sigwe, taking back the old Batwa, who departed cursing him and all his

race. With her they returned also the thousand head of cattle which he had paid and twelve hundred more by way of fine, for the balance was remitted by agreement.

And so came to an end the war of Sigwe with the Endwandwe, which among the Kaffirs is still spoken of as the "War of the White Swallow," or sometimes as "The War of the Clean Spear," because no blood at all was shed in it, and not a man was killed by violence, although when Sigwe passed through that country on his journey home, by means of a clever trick the Pondo chief re-captured most of the cattle that had been taken from him.