CHAPTER XXXV

THE SCHIMMEL'S LAST RACE

Ralph cleared the mountain slope, but before he had covered a mile of way the darkness began to fall, till presently the night was black. Now he must ride slowly, steering his path by the stars, and searching the dim outline of the mountains with his eyes.

But search as he would Ralph could not see the saw-edged rock. He reached the range indeed, and for hour after hour roamed up and down it, his heart torn with helpless haste and fears, but it was of no use, so at last he dismounted, and holding the schimmel by the bridle allowed him to eat a little grass while he waited for the moon to rise. Oh! never was the moon so long in coming, but at length it came, and with it clear, soft light. He looked, and there, not half a mile away, just showing in the shadows, was the saw-edged rock he sought.

"There is little time to lose," Ralph muttered to himself as the stallion swept across the plain towards the rock. "In three hours it will be dawn, and these mountains are sheer and wide."

Now he was in the pass and galloping up its rocky steeps as fast as the horse dare travel and not fall. Up he went through the moonlit silence that was broken only by the distant roaring of lions; up for one hour and for two. Now he was at the crest of the mountains, and beneath him, miles away, lay the dim veldt, and there--yes, there in the far

distance--the moonbeams sparkled upon a white-topped koppie and the waters of a river that washed its base. Miles and miles away, and but one hour left to cover them. One short hour, and if it was not enough then death by the Zulu assegai would be the portion of Suzanne and of those among whom she sheltered. For a moment Ralph breathed the horse, then he shook the reins, and with a snort of pride the schimmel started upon his last gallop.

Ah! what a ride was that. Had ever man the like of it? Rushing down an untrodden mountain way swifter than others dare travel on a plain, bounding from rock to rock like a buck, dashing through streams, and leaping dim gullies at a stride. On, on went the schimmel, with never a slip and never a stumble. On, swifter than a sassaby and surer-footed than a fox; now the worst of the road was passed, and a long, smooth slope, almost free from stones, led them to the grassy plain beneath. The schimmel swept down it at a fearful pace and reached the level land in safety, but the strain of that mad gallop told its tale upon him, for he was drenched with sweat, his eye was red with blood, and the breath whistled in his throat.

Ralph raised himself in his stirrups and scanned the sky, which began to brighten with the coming dawn.

"There is time," he muttered, "for the koppie is near, and the Zulus will not attack till they can see the white moons upon their finger nails."

Now he was speeding up a long rise, for here the land lies in waves like a frozen sea. He topped it, and in an instant--almost before he saw them--he had swept through a Zulu impi marching stealthily in a triple line with companies thrown forward to the right and left. They shouted in astonishment, but before they could harm him or the horse he was out of reach of their spears and galloping forward with a glad heart, for now he thought the danger done with.

Down the slope he thundered, and the sound of his horse's hoofs came to the ears of Suzanne, who, frozen with terror, crouched in the grass near the spring at the foot of it. Turning her eyes from the ridge where she had seen the Zulus, she looked behind her. At first she could see nothing except a great horse with a man upon its back, but as she stared, presently she recognised the horse--it was the schimmel, and none other.

And the man. Whose shape was that? No, this one had a golden beard. Ah! He lifted his head, from which the hat had fallen, and--did she dream? Nay, by Heaven, it was her husband, grown older and bearded, but still her husband. In the piercing agony of that happiness she sank back half-fainting, nor was it till he was almost upon her that she could gain her feet. He saw her, and in the dim light, mistaking her for a Zulu soldier who way-laid him, lifted the gun in his hand to fire. Already he was pressing the trigger when--when she found her voice and cried out:

"Ralph, Ralph, I am Suzanne, your wife."

As the words left her lips it seemed to her as though some giant had thrown the big horse back upon its haunches, for he slipped past her, his flanks almost touching the ground, which he ploughed with outstretched hoofs. Then he stopped dead.

"Have I found you at last, wife?" cried Ralph, in a voice of joy so strange that it sounded scarcely human. "Mount swiftly, for the Zulus are behind."

Thus, then, these two met again, not on the Mountain of the Man's Hand indeed, as the vision had foretold, but very near to it.

"Nay," Suzanne answered, as she sprang on to the saddle before him, "they are in front, for I saw them."

Ralph looked. Yes, there they were in front and to the side and behind. All round them the Zulu impi gathered and thickened, crying, "Bulala umlungu" (Kill the white man) as they closed in upon them at a run.

"Oh! Ralph, what can we do?" murmured Suzanne.

"Charge them and trust to God," he answered.

"So be it, husband," and, turning herself upon the pommel of the

saddle, she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him on the lips, whispering, "At least we have met again, and if we die it shall be together."

"Hold fast," said Ralph, and calling aloud to the horse he set his teeth and charged.

By now the Zulus in front were running down the opposing slope in clusters not much more than a hundred yards away; indeed, the space between them was so narrow that the schimmel, galloping up hill under his double load, could scarcely gather speed before they were among them. When they were within ten yards Ralph held out the gun in one hand and fired it, killing a man. Then he cast it away as useless, and placing his right arm about the waist of Suzanne, he bent his body over her to protect her if he might, urging on the horse with feet and voice.

Now they were in them and ploughing through their ever-thickening ranks, throwing their black bodies to this side and to that as a ship throws the water from its bows. Here, there, everywhere spears flashed and stabbed, but as yet they were unhurt, for the very press saved them, although an assegai was quivering in the flank of the schimmel. Ah! a pang as of the touch of red-hot iron and a spear had pierced Ralph's left shoulder, remaining fast in the wound. Still lower he bent his body till his head was almost hidden in the flowing mane of the schimmel, but now black clutching hands caught feet and bridle rein, and slowly the great horse lost way and stopped. A tall Zulu stabbed it in the chest, and Ralph gasped, "It is over!"

But it was not over, for, feeling the pain of this new wound, of a sudden the stallion went mad. He shrieked aloud as only a horse can shriek, and laying back his ears till his face was like the face of a wolf, he reared up on his hind legs and struck out with his hoofs, crushing the skulls and bodies of his tormentors. Down he came again, and with another scream rushed open-mouthed at the man who had stabbed him; his long white teeth gripped him across the body where the ribs end, and then the awful sight was seen of a horse holding in his mouth a man who yelled in agony, and plunging forward with great bounds while he shook him to and fro, as a dog will shake a rat.[*]

[*] The reader may think this incident scarcely credible, but for an authenticated instance of such behaviour on the part of a horse he may be referred to the "Memoirs of General Marbot."

Yes, he shook and shook till the flesh gave, and the man fell dying on the veldt. Again the furious beast opened his jaws from which gore dripped and rushed upon another, but this one did not wait for him--none waited. To the Zulus in those days a horse was a terrible wild beast, and this was a beast indeed, that brave as they were they dared not face.

"It is a devil! and wizards ride it!" they cried, as they opened a path before its rush.

They were through, and behind them like the voice of hounds that hunt swelled the cry of the war-dogs of Dingaan. They were through and living yet, though one broad bangwan was fast in Ralph's shoulder, and another stood in the schimmel's chest.

Not two miles away rose the koppie. "The horse will die," thought Ralph as he drew Suzanne closer to him, and gripped the saddle with his knees. Indeed, he was dying; yet never since he was a colt did the schimmel cover two miles of plain so fast as those that lay between the impi and the camp. Slowly and surely the spear worked its way into his vitals, but stretching out his head, and heedless of his burden, he rushed on with the speed of a racer.

The Boers in the laager were awake at last, the sound of the gun and the war-cry of the Zulus had reached them faintly. Half-clad, men and women together, they stood upon their waggon-boxes looking towards the west. Behind them the pencils of daylight were creeping across the sky, and presently in their low rays they saw such a sight as they would never see again. Fast, fast towards them thundered a great roan horse, blood dripping from his chest, and jaws, and flank, and on its back a yellow-bearded man, in whose shoulder stood a spear, and who held in front of him a fainting woman.

"Soon he will fall suddenly, and we shall be crushed," thought Ralph, and had the horse died while travelling at that speed it must have been

so. But he did not. When within fifty yards of the laager suddenly he began to lurch and roll in his stride; then with three bounds he stopped, and standing still, looked round with piteous blood-shot eyes, and whinnied faintly as though he heard some voice that he knew and loved.

Ralph slipped from his back, dragging Suzanne after him, and watched.

For a moment the schimmel stood, his head touching the ground, till presently a bloody foam came upon his mouth, and blood poured from his eyes and ears. Now for the last time he arched his neck and shook his mane, then roaring straight up on his hind legs as he had done when he beat down the Zulus, he pawed the air with his fore feet and fell over upon his back to move no more.

Suzanne had fainted, and Ralph carried her to the camp. There they drew out the spear from his shoulder and tended them both, though beyond gasping the words "Prepare, for the Zulus are upon you," it was long before either of them could speak.

Yes, yes, they beat off the impi with the loss of only one man, but Ralph took no part in that fight. Indeed, when we joined them four days later, for after burying Sihamba Jan and I trekked round through the waggon pass, by the mercy of Heaven escaping the Zulus, they still lay prostrate on a cartel, clasping each other's hands and smiling, but

speaking little. The Boers, being warned and awake, beat off the Zulus with great loss to Dingaan, for they had the waggons in front, the koppie behind, and the river to one side.

But there were many on that dreadful night whom no schimmel galloped to warn. Ah! God, six hundred of them, men and women, maids and children, and little babies at the breast, went down beneath the Zulu assegai in that red dawn. Six hundred of them slaughtered!

Is not the name of the land Weenen--"The Land of Weeping"--to this day?

We avenged them at the battle of the Blood River indeed; but could vengeance give us back their lives which it had pleased the Lord to take thus fearfully?

So, so, that is the end of my story of the forgotten bygone years. As I, old Suzanne Botmar, tell it the shadow of that white-topped koppie falls upon this house and beneath my feet is the very spot where the brave schimmel died. Ralph and Jan would not leave it--no, not even when the British hoisted their flag in Natal, making us English again after all that we had undergone to escape their usurping rule. We suffered much at that event, Jan and I, but though he said nothing, for indeed he did not dare to in my presence, I believe that Ralph did not suffer at all. Well, he was of English blood and it was natural that he should like his own flag best, though to this day I am very angry with my daughter Suzanne, who, for some reason or other, would never say a hard word of the accursed British Government--or listen to one if she could help it.

Yet, to be just, that same Government has ruled us well and fairly, though I never could agree with their manner of dealing with the natives, and our family has grown rich under its shadow. Yes, we were rich from the beginning, for Ralph and some Boers fetched back the cattle of Suzanne and Sihamba which Swart Piet's thieves had stolen, and they were a very great herd.

For many long and happy years after all these events that I have told of did Ralph and Suzanne live together, till at last God took my child Suzanne as she began to grow old. From that day life had no joys for Ralph, or indeed for any of us, and he fought with the English against Cetywayo at Isandlhwana, and fell there bravely, he and his son together, for his son's wife, an English-woman of good blood was dead also in childbirth.

Then all the world grew dark for Jan and me, but now in my extreme age once more it lightens like the dawn.

O God, who am I that I should complain? Nay, nay, to Thee, Almighty God, be praise and thanks and glory. Quite soon I must fall asleep, and how rich and plentiful is that store which awaits me beyond my sleep; that store of friends and kindred who have passed me in the race and won the immortal crown of peace, which even now their dear hands prepare for me. Therefore to Thee, Maker of the world, be praise and thanks and glory. Yes, let all things praise Thee as do my aged lips.

NOTE BY THE BARONESS GLENTHIRSK, FORMERLY KNOWN AS SUZANNE KENZIE.

It is something over three years since my great-grandmother, the Vrouw Suzanne Botmar, finished dictating to me this history of her early days and of my grandparents, Ralph Kenzie, the English castaway, and Suzanne Botmar, her daughter. Now, if it be only as an instance of the wonderful workings of fate, or, as I prefer to call it, of Providence, I add this note to her narrative. As I write there stretches before me, not the bushy veldt of Weenen in Natal cut by the silver line of the Tugela, but a vast prospect of heather-clad mountains, about whose feet brawls a salmon river. For this is Scotland, and I sit in the castle of Glenthirsk, while on the terrace beneath my window passes my little son, who, if he lives, will one day be lord of it. But I will tell the story, which is indeed a strange one.

As I think my great-grandmother has said, I was educated at a school in Durban, for, although she was in many ways so prejudiced and narrow, she wished that I should be able to hold my own with other girls in learning as in all things. Also she knew well that this would have been the desire of my dear father, who was killed in the Zulu war with his father, the Ralph Kenzie of the story, whom, by the way, I can remember as a handsome grey-headed man. For my father was a thorough Englishman, with nothing of the Boer about him, moreover he married an English lady, the daughter of a Natal colonist, and for these reasons he and his

grandmother did not get on very well.

After I had finished my schooling I used to stay with friends in Durban, the parents of one of my schoolfellows, and it was at their house that I met my husband, Mr. Ralph Mackenzie, who then was called Lord Glenthirsk, his father having died about six months previous to our acquaintance.

Ralph, my husband, was then quite young, only three-and-twenty indeed, and a subaltern in a Scotch regiment which was quartered at Durban, whither it had come from India. As the term of this regiment's foreign service was shortly to expire, and as at the time there was a prospect of further troubles in South Africa, my husband did not resign his commission on succeeding to the peerage, as his mother wished him to do, for he said that this was a step which he could consider when the regiment returned home, as it would do shortly.

Well, we met, and since we are now quite old married people I may as well admit at once that we fell in love with each other, though to me it seemed a marvellous thing that this handsome and brilliant young lord, with his great wealth and all the world before him, should come to care for a simple Dutch girl who had little to recommend her except her looks (of which my great-grandmother thought, or pretended to think, so little) and some small inheritance of South African farms and cattle. Indeed, when at last he proposed to me, begging me to be his wife, as though I were the most precious thing on the whole earth, I told him so plainly, having inherited some sense with my strain of Huguenot and

Dutch blood, and though I trembled at the risk I ran, when everything lay in my own hand, I refused to become engaged to him until he had obtained the consent of his mother and relations, or, at the least, until he had taken a year to think the matter over.

The truth is that, although I was still so young I had seen and heard enough of the misfortunes of unsuitable marriages, nor could I bear that it should ever be said of me that I had taken advantage of some passing fancy to entangle a man so far above me in wealth and station. Therefore I would permit him to say nothing of our engagement, nor did I speak a single word of it to my great-grandmother or my friends. Still Ralph and I saw a great deal of each other during the month which I remained in Durban, for it is a gay town, and almost every day there were parties, and when there were none we rode out together.

It was during one of these rides on the Berea that I told him what I knew of the strange history of my grandfather and grandmother, not all of it indeed, for it was not until the book was dictated to me that I learned the exact facts, the matter being one of which our family spoke little. Ralph listened very attentively, and when I had done asked if I had the ring and locket of which I spoke.

"Here they are," I answered, for since my father's death I had always made a practice of wearing both of them.

He examined the ring with its worn device and proud motto of "Honour first," and as he deciphered it I saw him start, but when he came to

look at the miniatures in the locket he turned quite pale.

"Do you know, Suzanne," he said presently, "I believe that we must be distant cousins; at the least I am sure that I have seen the picture from which one of these miniatures was originally copied, and the crest and motto are those of my family."

Now I became very curious, and plied him with questions, but he would say no more, only he led me on to talk of my grandfather, Ralph Kenzie, the castaway, and from time to time made a note in his pocket-book. Also afterwards I showed him the writing in the testament which was found on the body of the shipwrecked lady, my great-grandmother, and he asked me for an impression of the ring, and to allow the ivory miniatures and the writing to be photographed, which I did.

Within three days of that ride we separated for a while, not without heartache on both our parts and some tears on mine, for I feared that once he had lost sight of me he would put me from his mind, and as I loved him truly that thought was sore. But he, speaking very quietly, said that outside death only one thing should divide us from each other, namely, my own decree.

"Then, Ralph, we shall be one for ever," I answered, for at the moment I was too sad for any artifice of maiden coyness.

"You think so now, dear," he said, "but time will show. Supposing that I were not----" and he stopped, nor would he complete the sentence. Indeed

those words of his tormented me day and night for weeks, for I finished them in a hundred ways, each more fatal than the last.

Well, I returned to the farm, and immediately afterwards my great-grandmother took the fancy of dictating her history, the ending of which seemed to affect her much, for when it was done she told me sharply to put the typed sheets away and let her hear or see no more of them. Then she rose with difficulty, for the dropsy in her limbs made her inactive, and walked with the help of a stick to the stoep, where she sat down, looking across the plain at the solemn range of the Drakensberg and thinking without doubt, of that night of fear when my grandfather had rushed down its steeps upon the great schimmel to save her daughter and his wife from an awful death.

The stead where we lived in Natal was built under the lea of a projecting spur of the white-topped koppie, and over that spur runs a footpath leading to the township. Suddenly the old lady looked up and, not twenty yards away from her, saw standing on the ridge of it, as though in doubt which way to turn, a gentleman dressed in the kilted uniform of an officer of a Highland regiment the like of which she had never seen before.

"Dear Lord!" I heard her exclaim, "here is a white man wearing the moocha of a Kaffir. Suzanne! Suzanne! come and send away this half-clad fellow."

Putting down my papers I ran from the room and at a single glance saw

that "the half-clad fellow" was none other than Ralph himself. In my delight I lost my head, and forgetting everything except that my betrothed was there before me, I sprang from the stoep and, flying up the little slope, I fell into his open arms. For a few seconds there was silence, then from behind me rose a dreadful shriek followed by cries for help. Freeing myself from Ralph's embrace, I looked round to see my great-grandmother hobbling towards us with uplifted stick. Ralph put his eye-glass in his eye and looked at her.

"Who is this old lady, Suzanne?" he asked.

Before I could answer there came from her lips such a torrent of indignation as I had never heard before.

"What is she saying?" asked Ralph again, who could not understand one word of Dutch. "She seems put out."

"It is my great-grandmother, the Vrouw Botmar," I faltered, "and she does not understand--I have never told her."

"Ah! I see. Well, perhaps it would be as well to explain," he answered, which I accordingly began to do as best I could, feeling more foolish than ever I did before. As I stammered out my excuses I saw her face change, and guessed that she was no longer listening to me.

"Who does the man remind me of?" she said, speaking aloud, but to herself. "Allemachter! his face is the face of that English lord who

visited us with the lawyer more than fifty years ago. Yes, his face is the face of Ralph's cousin. Girl," she added, turning on me fiercely, "tell me that man's name."

"His name is Lord Glenthirsk"

"Lord Glenthirsk! The same face and the same name and you in his arms. Is God then making a sequel to the story which I finished this day? Come," and she hobbled back to the stoep. "Be seated," she said when we had reached it. "Now, speak; no, Suzanne, give me that kaross."

I handed her the rug, wondering what she meant to do with it, and disturbed as I was, nearly burst into hysterics when I saw her solemnly place it upon Ralph's knees saying, "The man has lost his garments and will catch a chill."

"Would you kindly explain," said Ralph blandly, "what the old lady is at now? Really I do not feel cold."

"Your kilt surprises her," I stammered; whereat he began to laugh.

"Silence," she exclaimed in so vigorous a voice that he stopped at once. "Now tell your story; no, I forgot, the man is not educated, do you interpret for him, Suzanne."

"First I have something to say for myself, grandmother," I answered, and in a few words I told that Ralph and I were affianced, though I had said

nothing of it, because I wished to give him opportunity to change his mind if he should desire to do so.

"Change his mind!" said the old lady, with a glare of indignation, "I should like to see him dare to change his mind, this Englishman whom you seem to have honoured thus, opsitting with him without my leave. A lord indeed? What do I care for lords? The question is whether I should not order the English creature off the place; yes, and I would do it were not his face the face of Ralph's cousin, and his name the name Glenthirsk."

When I had interpreted as much of this speech as I thought necessary, there was a little silence, after which Ralph began to speak very solemnly.

"Listen, Suzanne," he said, "and repeat my words to your great-grandmother. She says that my name is Lord Glenthirsk, but within the last few days I have come to believe that it is nothing of the sort, but only plain Ralph Mackenzie."

"What do you mean?" I asked, astonished.

"I mean, Suzanne, that if your legitimate descent from that Ralph Mackenzie who was cast away about sixty years ago on the coast of the Transkei can be proved--as I believe it can, for I have made inquiries, and find that his marriage to your grandmother to which her mother who still lives can bear witness, was duly registered--then you are the

Baroness Glenthirsk of Glenthirsk, and I, the descendant of a younger son, am only Lieutenant Ralph Mackenzie of Her Majesty's--Highlanders."

"Oh! Ralph, how can this be?" I gasped. "I thought that in England men took rank, not the women."

"So they do generally," he answered; "but as it happens in our family the title descends in the female line, and with it the entailed estates, so that you would succeed to your father's rights although he never enjoyed them. Suzanne, I am not speaking lightly; all this while that I have kept away from you I have been inquiring in Scotland and the Cape, for I sent home photographs of those miniatures and a statement of the facts, and upon my word I believe it to be true that you and no other are the heiress of our house."

Almost mechanically, for I was lost in amazement, I translated his words. My great-grandmother thought a while and said:

"Wonderful are the ways of the Lord who thus in my old age answers my prayers and rolls from my back the load of my sin. Suzanne, ask that Scotchman if he still means to marry you," and seeing me hesitate, as well I might, she struck her stick upon the floor and added, "Obey, girl, and ask."

So with great shame I asked, explaining that I was forced to it.

"Do I still mean to marry you, Suzanne?" he said, astonished. "Why

surely you must understand that the question is, do you still intend to marry me? When I begged you to take me some months ago I had much to offer; to-day if things be as I am sure they are, I am but a penniless Scottish gentleman, while you are one of the richest and most noble ladies in Great Britain."

By way of answer I looked at him in a fashion which I trust he understood, but before I could speak, Vrouw Botmar broke in, for, as usual, I had translated.

"Tell the man to stop talking about money and rank after his godless English manner. I wish to inquire of his character and religion." And so she did clearly and at length, but I do not think that I need set down her questions or his answers.

At last, when we were both overwhelmed and gasping for breath, I refused flatly to ask anything more, whereon she ceased her examinations, saying:

"Well, if he speaks the truth, which is doubtful, he does not seem to be any worse than other men, though that is saying little enough. Is he sound in wind and limb, and what illnesses has he had?"

"You must ask him yourself," I replied, losing patience, whereon she called me a "mealy-mouthed little fool" and laughed. Then of a sudden she said, "Kneel, both of you," and, strange as it may seem, we obeyed her, for we, and especially Ralph, were afraid of the old lady. Yes,

there we knelt on the stoep before her, while a Kaffir girl stood outside and stared with her mouth open.

"Ralph Kenzie," she said, "whatever else you may be, at least you are an honest man like your grandfather before you, for were it not so you would never have come to tell this child that your fortune is her fortune, and your title her title, though whether this be the case or not, I neither know nor care, since at least you are of the blood of my long-dead adopted son, and that is more to me than any wealth or rank.

"As for you, Suzanne, you are pert and deceitful, for you have kept secret from me that which I had a right to learn; also you have too good an opinion of your own looks, which as I tell you now for the last time, are nothing compared to mine at your age, or even to those of my daughter Suzanne, your grandmother. But this I will say, you have a good heart and some of the spirit of your forbears, therefore"--and she laid one of her heavy hands on the head of each of us--"I, old Suzanne Botmar, bless you both. You shall be married next week, and may you be happy in your marriage, and have children that would be a credit to me and your great-grandfather, could we have lived to see them.

"There, there, Ralph and Suzanne--the first ones, my own lost Ralph and Suzanne--will be glad to hear of this when I come to tell them of it, as I shall do shortly. Yes, they will be glad to hear of it--" and she rose and hobbled back to the sit-kammer, turning at the open door to call out:

"Girl, where are your manners? Make that Scotchman some of your coffee."

So we were married, and within the week, for, all my protestations notwithstanding, the Vrouw Botmar would suffer no delay. Moreover, by means of some other interpreter, Ralph, playing traitor, secretly brought my arguments to nothing, and indeed there was a cause for hurry, for just then his regiment was ordered to return to England.

It was a strange sight, that marriage, for my great-grandmother attended it seated on the voor-kisse of her best waggon drawn by eighteen white oxen, the descendants of Dingaan's royal cattle that Swart Piet stole to bring destruction upon the Umpondwana. By her side was her husband, old Jan Botmar, whom she caused to be carried to the waggon and tied in it in his chair. He, poor old man, knew nothing of what was passing, but from some words he let fall we gathered that he believed that he was once more starting on the great trek from the Transkei. My Ralph, he thought, was his adopted child, perhaps because of some inherited similarity of voice, for he called him "son," but my own presence puzzled him, for he said once or twice, "So Suzanne has escaped from that hell-hound, Swart Piet. Have you killed the dog, Ralph? Ralph, have you killed the dog?"

Thus we went to the little church where the chaplain of the regiment was to wed us, the pipers going first, playing a wild marriage march on their bagpipes. Next came Ralph and I walking side by side, and after us

the waggon with my great-grandparents, while the rear was brought up by a guard of honour formed of every available soldier in the company. Outside the open door of the church the waggon was halted, and from it the Vrouw Botmar witnessed the ceremony, causing the register to be brought to her to sign. This she did, resting the book upon the head of the Kaffir driver, down whose back she managed to upset the ink.

"Never mind," she said, not the least disturbed, "it cannot make the poor creature any blacker than he is."

"Oh! how can I leave you, grandmother?" I said to her afterwards.

"Child," she answered, with a stern face, "in my youth, to keep one I loved near me, I committed a great sin. Now by way of penance I part from one I love; yes, being yet alive I say farewell for ever to the last of my race. Thus in our age do we pay for the sins of youth. Go, and God with you."

So I placed my hand in that of my husband and went. When we reached this country it was proved that the rank and estates were mine by law, for the evidence of my descent was too strong to be disputed. I did not wish to take either, but Ralph insisted on it and I was overruled. Indeed, had I not done so, it seems that confusion and endless law-suits might have resulted in the future, perhaps after I am dead.

Six months afterwards, in this castle of Glenthirsk, I received a letter, at the foot of which was faintly scrawled the signature of Suzanne Botmar. It was short and ran thus:

"Grand-daughter Suzanne,

"Last night your great-grandfather died. To-day I buried him, and to-morrow I shall die also, for after being together for so many years I miss his company and mean to seek it again. Till we meet in Heaven, if your pomp and riches will allow you to come there through the eye of whatever needle it has pleased God to choose for you, farewell to you and your husband, whom I love because Ralph Kenzie's blood is in his veins."

As I learnt by other letters on that morrow of which she spoke my great-grandmother, the Vrouw Botmar, did die, for even in this she would not be thwarted, and was buried on the evening of the same day by the side of her husband, Jan Botmar.