

## CHAPTER V. MOPO BECOMES THE KING'S DOCTOR

These, then, my father, were the events that ended in the coming of me, Mopo, and of my sister Baleka to the kraal of Chaka, the Lion of the Zulu. Now you may ask why have I kept you so long with this tale, which is as are other tales of our people. But that shall be seen, for from these matters, as a tree from a seed, grew the birth of Umslopogaas Bulalio, Umslopogaas the Slaughterer, and Nada the Beautiful, of whose love my story has to tell. For Nada was my daughter, and Umslopogaas, though few knew it, was none other than the son of Chaka, born of my sister Baleka.

Now when Baleka recovered from the weariness of our flight, and had her beauty again, Chaka took her to wife, numbering her among his women, whom he named his "sisters." And me Chaka took to be one of his doctors, of his izinyanga of medicine, and he was so well pleased with my medicine that in the end I became his head doctor. Now this was a great post, in which, during the course of years, I grew fat in cattle and in wives; but also it was one of much danger. For when I rose strong and well in the morning, I could never know but that at night I should sleep stiff and red. Many were the doctors whom Chaka slew; doctored they never so well, they were killed at last. For a day would surely come when the king felt ill in his body or heavy in his mind, and then to the assegai or the torment with the wizard who had doctored him! Yet I escaped, because of the power of my medicine, and also because of that oath which Chaka had sworn to me as a child. So it came about that where

the king went there I went with him. I slept near his hut, I sat behind him at council, in the battle I was ever at his side.

Ah! the battle! the battle! In those days we knew how to fight, my father! In those days the vultures would follow our impi by thousands, the hyenas would steal along our path in packs, and none went empty away. Never may I forget the first fight I stood in at the side of Chaka. It was just after the king had built his great kraal on the south bank of the Umhlatuze. Then it was that the chief Zwide attacked his rival Chaka for the third time and Chaka moved out to meet him with ten full regiments, (1) now for the first time armed with the short stabbing-spear.

(1) About 30,000 men.--ED.

The ground lay thus: On a long, low hill in front of our impi were massed the regiments of Zwide; there were seventeen of them; the earth was black with their number; their plumes filled the air like snow. We, too, were on a hill, and between us lay a valley down which there ran a little stream. All night our fires shone out across the valley; all night the songs of soldiers echoed down the hills. Then the grey dawning came, the oxen lowed to the light, the regiments arose from their bed of spears; they sprang up and shook the dew from hair and shield--yes! they arose! the glad to die! The impi assumed its array regiment by regiment. There was the breast of spears, there were the horns of spears, they were numberless as the stars, and like the stars they shone. The morning

breeze came up and fanned them, their plumes bent in the breeze; like a plain of seeding grass they bent, the plumes of the soldiers ripe for the assegai. Up over the shoulder of the hill came the sun of Slaughter; it glowed red upon the red shields, red grew the place of killing; the white plumes of the chiefs were dipped in the blood of heaven. They knew it; they saw the omen of death, and, ah! they laughed in the joy of the waking of battle. What was death? Was it not well to die on the spear? What was death? Was it not well to die for the king? Death was the arms of Victory. Victory would be their bride that night, and oh! her breast is fair.

Hark! the war-song, the Ingomo, the music of which has the power to drive men mad, rose far away to the left, and was thrown along from regiment to regiment--a rolling ball of sound--

We are the king's kine, bred to be butchered, You, too, are one of us!  
We are the Zulu, children of the Lion, What! did you tremble?

Suddenly Chaka was seen stalking through the ranks, followed by his captains, his indunas, and by me. He walked along like a great buck; death was in his eyes, and like a buck he sniffed the air, scenting the air of slaughter. He lifted his assegai, and a silence fell; only the sound of chanting still rolled along the hills.

"Where are the children of Zwide?" he shouted, and his voice was like the voice of a bull.

"Yonder, father," answered the regiments. And every spear pointed across the valley.

"They do not come," he shouted again. "Shall we then sit here till we grow old?"

"No, father," they answered. "Begin! begin!"

"Let the Umkandhlu regiment come forward!" he shouted a third time, and as he spoke the black shields of the Umkandhlu leaped from the ranks of the impi.

"Go, my children!" cried Chaka. "There is the foe. Go and return no more!"

"We hear you, father!" they answered with one voice, and moved down the slope like a countless herd of game with horns of steel.

Now they crossed the stream, and now Zwide awoke. A murmur went through his companies; lines of light played above his spears.

Ou! they are coming! Ou! they have met! Hearken to the thunder of the shields! Hearken to the song of battle!

To and fro they swing. The Umkandhlu gives way--it flies! They pour back

across the stream--half of them; the rest are dead. A howl of rage goes up from the host, only Chaka smiles.

"Open up! open up!" he cries. "Make room for the Umkandhlu GIRLS!" And with hanging heads they pass us.

Now he whispers a word to the indunas. The indunas run; they whisper to Menziwa the general and to the captains; then two regiments rush down the hill, two more run to the right, and yet another two to the left.

But Chaka stays on the hill with the three that are left. Again comes the roar of the meeting shields. Ah! these are men: they fight, they do not run. Regiment after regiment pours upon them, but still they stand. They fall by hundreds and by thousands, but no man shows his back, and on each man there lie two dead. Wow! my father, of those two regiments not one escaped. They were but boys, but they were the children of Chaka. Menziwa was buried beneath the heaps of his warriors. Now there are no such men.

They are all dead and quiet. Chaka still holds his hand! He looks to the north and to the south. See! spears are shining among the trees. Now the horns of our host close upon the flanks of the foe. They slay and are slain, but the men of Zwide are many and brave, and the battle turns against us.

Then again Chaka speaks a word. The captains hear, the soldiers stretch out their necks to listen.

It has come at last. "Charge! Children of the Zulu!"

There is a roar, a thunder of feet, a flashing of spears, a bending of plumes, and, like a river that has burnt its banks, like storm-clouds before the gale, we sweep down upon friend and foe. They form up to meet us; the stream is passed; our wounded rise upon their haunches and wave us on. We trample them down. What matter? They can fight no more. Then we meet Zwide rushing to greet us, as bull meets bull. Ou! my father, I know no more. Everything grows red. That fight! that fight! We swept them away. When it was done there was nothing to be seen, but the hillside was black and red. Few fled; few were left to fly. We passed over them like fire; we ate them up. Presently we paused, looking for the foe. All were dead. The host of Zwide was no more. Then we mustered. Ten regiments had looked upon the morning sun; three regiments saw the sun sink; the rest had gone where no suns shine.

Such were our battles in the days of Chaka!

You ask of the Umkandhlu regiment which fled. I will tell you. When we reached our kraal once more, Chaka summoned that regiment and mustered it. He spoke to them gently, gently. He thanked them for their service. He said it was natural that "girls" should faint at the sight of blood and turn to seek their kraals. Yet he had bid them come back no more and they had come back! What then was there now left for him to do? And he covered his face with his blanket. Then the soldiers killed them all,

nearly two thousand of them--killed them with taunts and jeers.

That is how we dealt with cowards in those days, my father. After that, one Zulu was a match for five of any other tribe. If ten came against him, still he did not turn his back. "Fight and fall, but fly not," that was our watchword. Never again while Chaka lived did a conquered force pass the gates of the king's kraal.

That fight was but one war out of many. With every moon a fresh impi started to wash its spears, and came back few and thin, but with victory and countless cattle. Tribe after tribe went down before us. Those of them who escaped the assegai were enrolled into fresh regiments, and thus, though men died by thousands every month, yet the army grew. Soon there were no other chiefs left. Umsuduka fell, and after him Mancengeza. Umzilikazi was driven north; Matiwane was stamped flat. Then we poured into this land of Natal. When we entered, its people could not be numbered. When we left, here and there a man might be found in a hole in the earth--that was all. Men, women, and children, we wiped them out; the land was clean of them. Next came the turn of U'Faku, chief of the Amapondos. Ah! where is U'Faku now?

And so it went on and on, till even the Zulus were weary of war and the sharpest assegais grew blunt.