

CHAPTER XXIV. THE SLAYING OF THE BOERS

On the morrow I led Umslopogaas apart, and spoke to him thus:--

"My son, yesterday, when you did not know me except as the Mouth of Dingaan, you charged me with a certain message for Dingaan the king, that, had it been delivered into the ears of the king, had surely brought death upon you and all your people. The tree that stands by itself on a plain, Umslopogaas, thinks itself tall and that there is no shade to equal its shade. Yet are there other and bigger trees. You are such a solitary tree, Umslopogaas, but the topmost branches of him whom I serve are thicker than your trunk, and beneath his shadow live many woodcutters, who go out to lop those that would grow too high. You are no match for Dingaan, though, dwelling here alone in an empty land, you have grown great in your own eyes and in the eyes of those about you. Moreover, Umslopogaas, know this: Dingaan already hates you because of the words which in bygone years you sent by Masilo the fool to the Black One who is dead, for he heard those words, and it is his will to eat you up. He has sent me hither for one reason only, to be rid of me awhile, and, whatever the words I bring back to him, the end will be the same--that night shall come when you will find an impi at your gates."

"Then what need to talk more of the matter, my father?" asked

Umslopogaas. "That will come which must come. Let me wait here for the impi of Dingaan, and fight till I die."

"Not so, Umslopogaas, my son; there are more ways of killing a man than by the assegai, and a crooked stick can still be bent straight in the stream. It is my desire, Umslopogaas, that instead of hate Dingaan should give you love; instead of death, advancement; and that you shall grow great in his shadow. Listen! Dingaan is not what Chaka was, though, like Chaka, he is cruel. This Dingaan is a fool, and it may well come about that a man can be found who, growing up in his shadow, in the end shall overshadow him. I might do it--I myself; but I am old, and, being worn with sorrow, have no longing to rule. But you are young, Umslopogaas, and there is no man like you in the land. Moreover, there are other matters of which it is not well to speak, that shall serve you as a raft whereon to swim to power."

Now Umslopogaas glanced up sharply, for in those days he was ambitious, and desired to be first among the people. Indeed, having the blood of Chaka in his veins, how could it be otherwise?

"What is your plan, my father?" he asked. "Say how can this be brought about?"

"This and thus, Umslopogaas. Among the tribe of the Halakazi in Swaziland there dwells a maid who is named the Lily. She is a girl of the most wonderful beauty, and Dingaan is afire with longing to have her to wife. Now, awhile since Dingaan dispatched an embassy to the chief of the Halakazi asking the Lily in marriage, and the chief of the Halakazi sent back insolent words, saying that the Beauty of the Earth should

be given to no Zulu dog as a wife. Then Dingaan was angry, and he would have gathered his impis and sent them against the Halakazi to destroy them, and bring him the maid, but I held him back from it, saying that now was no time to begin a new war; and it is for this cause that Dingaan hates me, he is so set upon the plucking of the Swazi Lily. Do you understand now, Umslopogaas?"

"Something," he answered. "But speak clearly."

"Wow, Umslopogaas! Half words are better than whole ones in this land of ours. Listen, then! This is my plan: that you should fall upon the Halakazi tribe, destroy it, and bring back the maid as a peace-offering to Dingaan."

"That is a good plan, my father," he answered. "At the least, maid or no maid, there will be fighting in it, and cattle to divide when the fighting is done."

"First conquer, then reckon up the spoils, Umslopogaas."

Now he thought awhile, then said, "Suffer that I summon Galazi the Wolf, my captain. Do not fear, he is trusty and a man of few words."

Presently Galazi came and sat down before us. Then I put the matter to him thus: that Umslopogaas would fall upon the Halakazi and bring to Dingaan the maid he longed for as a peace-offering, but that I wished

to hold him back from the venture because the Halakazi people were great and strong. I spoke in this sense so that I might have a door to creep out should Galazi betray the plot; and Umslopogaas read my purpose, though my craft was needless, for Galazi was a true man.

Galazi the Wolf listened in silence till I had finished, then he answered quietly, but it seemed to me that a fire shone in his eyes as he spoke:--

"I am chief by right of the Halakazi, O Mouth of Dingaan, and know them well. They are a strong people, and can put two full regiments under arms, whereas Bulalio here can muster but one regiment, and that a small one. Moreover, they have watchmen out by night and day, and spies scattered through the land, so that it will be hard to take them unawares; also their stronghold is a vast cave open to the sky in the middle, and none have won that stronghold yet, nor could it be found except by those who know its secret. They are few, yet I am one of them, for my father showed it to me when I was a lad. Therefore, Mouth of Dingaan, you will know that this is no easy task which Bulalio would set himself and us--to conquer the Halakazi. That is the face of the matter so far as it concerns Bulalio, but for me, O Mouth, it has another face. Know that, long years ago, I swore to my father as he lay dying by the poison of a witch of this people that I would not rest till I had avenged him--ay, till I had stamped out the Halakazi, and slain their men, and brought their women to the houses of strangers, and their children to bonds! Year by year and month by month, and night by night,

as I have lain alone upon the Ghost Mountain yonder, I have wondered how I might bring my oath to pass, and found no way. Now it seems that there is a way, and I am glad. Yet this is a great adventure, and perhaps before it is done with the People of the Axe will be no more." And he ceased and took snuff, watching our faces over the spoon.

"Galazi the Wolf," said Umslopogaas, "for me also the matter has another face. You have lost your father at the hands of these Halakazi dogs, and, though till last night I did not know it, I have lost my mother by their spears, and with her one whom I loved above all in the world, my sister Nada, who loved me also. Both are dead and the Halakazi have killed them. This man, the mouth of Dingaan," and he pointed to me, Mopo, "this man says that if I can stamp out the Halakazi and make captive of the Lily maid, I shall win the heart of Dingaan. Little do I care for Dingaan, I who would go my way alone, and live while I may live, and die when I must, by the hands of Dingaan as by those of another--what does it matter? Yet, for this reason, because of the death of Macropha, my mother, and Nada, the sister who was dear to me, I will make war upon these Halakazi and conquer them, or be conquered by them. Perhaps, O Mouth of Dingaan, you will see me soon at the king's kraal on the Mahlabatine, and with me the Lily maid and the cattle of the Halakazi; or perhaps you shall not see me, and then you will know that I am dead, and the Warriors of the Axe are no more."

So Umslopogaas spoke to me before Galazi the Wolf, but afterwards he embraced me and bade me farewell, for he had no great hope that we

should meet again. And I also doubted it; for, as Galazi said, the adventure was great; yet, as I had seen many times, it is the bold thrower who oftenest wins. So we parted--I to return to Dingaan and tell him that Bulalio, Chief of the People of the Axe, had gone up against the Halakazi to win the Lily maid and bring her to him in atonement; while Umslopogaas remained to make ready his impi for war.

I went swiftly from the Ghost Mountain back to the kraal Umgugundhlovu, and presented myself before Dingaan, who at first looked on me coldly. But when I told him my message, and how that the Chief Bulalio the Slaughterer had taken the war-path to win him the Lily, his manner changed. He took me by the hand and said that I had done well, and he had been foolish to doubt me when I lifted up my voice to persuade him from sending an impi against the Halakazi. Now he saw that it was my purpose to rake this Halakazi fire with another hand than his, and to save his hand from the burning, and he thanked me.

Moreover, he said, that if this Chief of the People of the Axe brought him the maid his heart desired, not only would he forgive him the words he had spoken by the mouth of Masilo to the Black One who was dead, but also all the cattle of the Halakazi should be his, and he would make him great in the land. I answered that all this was as the king willed. I had but done my duty by the king and worked so that, whatever befell, a proud chief should be weakened and a foe should be attacked at no cost to the king, in such fashion also that perhaps it might come about that the king would shortly have the Lily at his side.

Then I sat down to wait what might befall.

Now it is, my father, that the white men come into my story, whom we named the Amaboona, but you call the Boers. Ou! I think ill of those Amaboona, though it was I who gave them the victory over Dingaan--I and Umslopogaas.

Before this time, indeed, a few white men had come to and fro to the kraals of Chaka and Dingaan, but these came to pray and not to fight. Now the Boers both fight and pray, also they steal, or used to steal, which I do not understand, for the prayers of you white men say that these things should not be done.

Well, when I had been back from the Ghost Mountain something less than a moon, the Boers came, sixty of them commanded by a captain named Retief, a big man, and armed with roers--the long guns they had in those days--or, perhaps they numbered a hundred in all, counting their servants and after-riders. This was their purpose: to get a grant of the land in Natal that lies between the Tugela and the Umzimoubu rivers. But, by my council and that of other indunas, Dingaan, bargained with the Boers that first they should attack a certain chief named Sigomyela, who had stolen some of the king's cattle, and who lived near the Quathlamba Mountains, and bring back those cattle. This the Boers agreed to, and went to attack the chief, and in a little while they came back again, having destroyed the people of Sigomyela, and driving his cattle

before them as well as those which had been stolen from the king.

The face of Dingaan shone when he saw the cattle, and that night he called us, the council of the Amapakati, together, and asked us as to the granting of the country. I spoke the first, and said that it mattered little if he granted it, seeing that the Black One who was dead had already given it to the English, the People of George, and the end of the matter would be that the Amaboona and the People of George would fight for the land. Yet the words of the Black One were coming to pass, for already it seemed we could hear the sound of the running of a white folk who should eat up the kingdom.

Now when I had spoken thus the heart of Dingaan grew heavy and his face dark, for my words stuck in his breast like a barbed spear. Still, he made no answer, but dismissed the council.

On the morrow the king promised to sign the paper giving the lands they asked for to the Boers, and all was smooth as water when there is no wind. Before the paper was signed the king gave a great dance, for there were many regiments gathered at the kraal, and for three days this dance went on, but on the third day he dismissed the regiments, all except one, an impi of lads, who were commanded to stay. Now all this while I wondered what was in the mind of Dingaan and was afraid for the Amaboona. But he was secret, and told nothing except to the captains of the regiment alone--no, not even to one of his council. Yet I knew that he planned evil, and was half inclined to warn the Captain Retief, but

did not, fearing to make myself foolish. Ah! my father, if I had spoken, how many would have lived who were soon dead! But what does it matter? In any case most of them would have been dead by now.

On the fourth morning, early, Dingaan sent a messenger to the Boers, bidding them meet him in the cattle kraal, for there he would mark the paper. So they came, stacking their guns at the gate of the kraal, for it was death for any man, white or black, to come armed before the presence of the king. Now, my father, the kraal Umgugundhlovu was built in a great circle, after the fashion of royal kraals. First came the high outer fence, then the thousands of huts that ran three parts round between the great fence and the inner one. Within this inner fence was the large open space, big enough to hold five regiments, and at the top of it--opposite the entrance--stood the cattle kraal itself, that cut off a piece of the open space by another fence bent like a bow. Behind this again were the Emposeni, the place of the king's women, the guard-house, the labyrinth, and the Intunkulu, the house of the king. Dingaan came out on that day and sat on a stool in front of the cattle kraal, and by him stood a man holding a shield over his head to keep the sun from him. Also we of the Amapakati, the council, were there, and ranged round the fence of the space, armed with short sticks only--not with kerries, my father--was that regiment of young men which Dingaan had not sent away, the captain of the regiment being stationed near to the king, on the right.

Presently the Boers came in on foot and walked up to the king in a

body, and Dingaan greeted them kindly and shook hands with Retief, their captain. Then Retief drew the paper from a leather pouch, which set out the boundaries of the grant of land, and it was translated to the king by an interpreter. Dingaan said that it was good, and put his mark upon it, and Retief and all the Boers were pleased, and smiled across their faces. Now they would have said farewell, but Dingaan forbade them, saying that they must not go yet: first they must eat and see the soldiers dance a little, and he commanded dishes of boiled flesh which had been made ready and bowls of milk to be brought to them. The Boers said that they had already eaten; still, they drank the milk, passing the bowls from hand to hand.

Now the regiment began to dance, singing the Ingomo, that is the war chant of us Zulus, my father, and the Boers drew back towards the centre of the space to give the soldiers room to dance in. It was at this moment that I heard Dingaan give an order to a messenger to run swiftly to the white Doctor of Prayers, who was staying without the kraal, telling him not to be afraid, and I wondered what this might mean; for why should the Prayer Doctor fear a dance such as he had often seen before? Presently Dingaan rose, and, followed by all, walked through the press to where the Captain Retief stood, and bade him good-bye, shaking him by the hand and bidding him *hambla gachle*, to go in peace. Then he turned and walked back again towards the gateway which led to his royal house, and I saw that near this entrance stood the captain of the regiments, as one stands by who waits for orders.

Now, of a sudden, my father, Dingaan stopped and cried with a loud voice, "Bulalani Abatakati!" (slay the wizards), and having cried it, he covered his face with the corner of his blanket, and passed behind the fence.

We, the councillors, stood astounded, like men who had become stone; but before we could speak or act the captain of the regiment had also cried aloud, "Bulalani Abatakati!" and the signal was caught up from every side. Then, my father, came a yell and a rush of thousands of feet, and through the clouds of dust we saw the soldiers hurl themselves upon the Amaboona, and above the shouting we heard the sound of falling sticks. The Amaboona drew their knives and fought bravely, but before a man could count a hundred twice it was done, and they were being dragged, some few dead, but the most yet living, towards the gates of the kraal and out on to the Hill of Slaughter, and there, on the Hill of Slaughter, they were massacred, every one of them. How? Ah! I will not tell you--they were massacred and piled in a heap, and that was the end of their story, my father.

Now I and the other councillors turned away and walked silently towards the house of the king. We found him standing before his great hut, and, lifting our hands, we saluted him silently, saying no word. It was Dingaan who spoke, laughing a little as he spoke, like a man who is uneasy in his mind.

"Ah, my captains," he said, "when the vultures plumed themselves this

morning, and shrieked to the sky for blood, they did not look for such a feast as I have given them. And you, my captains, you little guessed how great a king the Heavens have set to rule over you, nor how deep is the mind of the king that watches ever over his people's welfare. Now the land is free from the White Wizards of whose footsteps the Black One croaked as he gave up his life, or soon shall be, for this is but a beginning. Ho! Messengers!" and he turned to some men who stood behind him, "away swiftly to the regiments that are gathered behind the mountains, away to them, bearing the king's words to the captains. This is the king's word: that the impi shall run to the land of Natal and slay the Boers there, wiping them out, man, woman, and child. Away!"

Now the messengers cried out the royal salute of Bayete, and, leaping forward like spears from the hand of the thrower, were gone at once. But we, the councillors, the members of the Amapakati, still stood silent.

Then Dingaan spoke again, addressing me:--

"Is thy heart at rest now, Mopo, son of Makedama? Ever hast thou bleated in my ear of this white people and of the deeds that they shall do, and lo! I have blown upon them with my breath and they are gone. Say, Mopo, are the Amaboona wizards yonder all dead? If any be left alive, I desire to speak with one of them."

Then I looked Dingaan in the face and spoke.

"They are all dead, and thou, O King, thou also art dead."

"It were well for thee, thou dog," said Dingaan, "that thou shouldst make thy meaning plain."

"Let the king pardon me," I answered; "this is my meaning. Thou canst not kill this white men, for they are not of one race, but of many races, and the sea is their home; they rise out of the black water. Destroy those that are here, and others shall come to avenge them, more and more and more! Now thou hast smitten in thy hour; in theirs they shall smite in turn. Now THEY lie low in blood at thy hand; in a day to come, O King, THOU shalt lie low in blood at theirs. Madness has taken hold of thee, O King, that thou hast done this thing, and the fruit of thy madness shall be thy death. I have spoken, I, who am the king's servant. Let the will of the king be done."

Then I stood still waiting to be killed, for, my father, in the fury of my heart at the wickedness which had been worked I could not hold back my words. Thrice Dingaan looked on me with a terrible face, and yet there was fear in his face striving with its rage, and I waited calmly to see which would conquer, the fear or the rage. When at last he spoke, it was one word, "Go!" not three words, "Take him away." So I went yet living, and with me the councillors, leaving the king alone.

I went with a heavy heart, my father, for of all the evil sights that I have seen it seemed to me that this was the most evil--that the Amaboona

should be slaughtered thus treacherously, and that the impis should be sent out treacherously to murder those who were left of them, together with their women and children. Ay, and they slew--six hundred of them did they slay--yonder in Weenen, the land of weeping.

Say, my father, why does the Umkulunkulu who sits in the Heavens above allow such things to be done on the earth beneath? I have heard the preaching of the white men, and they say that they know all about Him--that His names are Power and Mercy and Love. Why, then, does He suffer these things to be done--why does He suffer such men as Chaka and Dingaan to torment the people of the earth, and in the end pay them but one death for all the thousands that they have given to others? Because of the wickedness of the peoples, you say; but no, no, that cannot be, for do not the guiltless go with the guilty--ay, do not the innocent children perish by the hundred? Perchance there is another answer, though who am I, my father, that I, in my folly, should strive to search out the way of the Unsearchable? Perchance it is but a part of the great plan, a little piece of that pattern of which I spoke--the pattern on the cup that holds the waters of His wisdom. Wow! I do not understand, who am but a wild man, nor have I found more knowledge in the hearts of you tamed white people. You know many things, but of these you do not know: you cannot tell us what we were an hour before birth, nor what we shall be an hour after death, nor why we were born, nor why we die. You can only hope and believe--that is all, and perhaps, my father, before many days are sped I shall be wiser than all of you. For I am very aged, the fire of my life sinks low--it burns in my brain alone; there it is

still bright, but soon that will go out also, and then perhaps I shall understand.