

CHAPTER XXIII

THE KRAAL JAZI

Now I shall pass over all the Zulu record of the next four years, since after all it has nothing to do with my tale and I do not pretend to be writing a history.

Sir Garnet Wolseley set up his Kilkenny cat Government in Zululand, or the Home Government did it for him, I do not know which. In place of one king, thirteen chiefs were erected who got to work to cut the throats of each other and of the people.

As I expected would be the case, Zikali informed the military authorities of the secret hiding-place in the Ingome Forest where he suggested to Cetewayo that he should refuge. The ex-king was duly captured there and taken first to the Cape and then to England, where, after the disgrace of poor Sir Bartle Frere, an

agitation had been set on foot on his behalf. Here he saw the Queen and her ministers, once more conquering, as it had been prophesied that he would by her who wore the shape of Mameena at the memorable scene in the Valley of Bones when I was present. Often I have thought of him dressed in a black coat and seated in that villa in Melbury Road in the suburb of London which I understand is populated by artists. A strange contrast truly to the savage prince receiving the salute of triumph after the Battle of the Tugela in which he won the kingship, or to the royal monarch to whose presence I had been summoned at Ulundi. However, he was brought back to Zululand again by a British man-of-war, re-installed to a limited chieftainship by Sir Theophilus Shepstone, and freed from the strangling embrace of the black coat.

Then of course there was more fighting, as every one knew would happen, except the British Colonial Office; indeed all Zululand ran with blood. For in England Cetewayo and his rights, or wrongs, had, like the Boers and their rights, or wrongs, become a matter of Party politics to which everything else must give way. Often I wonder whether Party politics will not in the end prove the ruin of the British Empire. Well, thank Heaven, I shall not live to learn.

So Cetewayo came back and fought and was defeated by those who once had been his subjects. Now for the last scene, that is all

with which I need concern myself.

At the beginning of February, 1884, business took me to Zululand; it had to do with a deal in cattle and blankets. As I was returning towards the Tugela who should I meet but friend Goza, he who had escorted me from the Black Kloof to Ulundi before the outbreak of war, and who afterwards escorted me and that unutterable nuisance, Kaatje, out of the country. At first I thought that we came together by accident, or perhaps that he had journeyed a little way to thank me for the blankets which I had sent to him, remembering my ancient promise, but afterwards I changed my opinion on this point.

Well, we talked over many matters, the war, the disasters that had befallen Zululand, and so forth. Especially did we talk of that night in the Valley of Bones and the things we had seen there side by side. I asked him if the people still believed in the Inkosazana-y-Zulu who then appeared in the moonlight on the rock. He answered that some did and some did not. For his part, he added, looking at me fixedly, he did not, since it was rumoured that Zikali had dressed up a white woman to play the part of the Spirit. Yet he could not be sure of the matter, since it was also said that when some of Cetewayo's people went to kill this white woman in the Black Kloof, Nomkubulwana, the Princess of Heaven herself, rose before them and frightened them away.

I remarked that this was very strange, and then quite casually asked him whom Zikali had dressed up to play the part of the dead Mameena upon that same occasion, since this was a point upon which I always thirsted for definite intelligence. He stared at me and replied that I ought to be able to answer my own question, since I had been much nearer to her who looked like Mameena than any one else, so near indeed that all present distinctly saw her kiss me, as it was well known she had liked to do while still alive. I replied indignantly that they saw wrong and repeated my question. Then he answered straight out--

"O Macumazahn, we Zulus believe that what we saw on that night was not Nombe or another dressed up, but the spirit of the witch Mameena itself. We believe it because we could see the light of Zikali's fire through her, not always, but sometimes; also because all that she said has come true, though everything is not yet finished."

I could get no more out of him about the matter, for when I tried to speak of it again, he turned the subject, telling me of his wonderful escapes during the war. Presently he rose to go and said casually--

"Surely I grow old in these times of trouble, Macumazahn, for thoughts slip through my head like water through the fingers.

Almost I had forgotten what I wished to say to you. The other day I met Zikali, the Opener of Roads. He told me that you were in Zululand and that I should meet you--he did not say where, only that when I did meet you, I was to give you a message. This was the message--that when on your way to Natal you came to the kraal Jazi, you would find him there; also another whom you used to know, and must be sure not to go away without seeing him, since that was about to happen in which you must take your part."

"Zikali!" I exclaimed. "I have heard nothing of him since the war. I thought that by now he was certainly dead."

"Oh! no, Macumazahn, he is certainly not dead, but just the same as ever. Indeed it is believed that he and no other has kept all this broth of trouble on the boil, some say for Cetewayo's sake, and some say because he wishes to destroy Cetewayo. But what do I know of such matters who only desire to live in peace under whatever chief the English Queen sends to us, as she has a right to do having conquered us in war? When you meet the Opener of Roads at the kraal Jazi, ask him, Macumazahn."

"Where the devil is the kraal Jazi?" I inquired with irritation.

"I never heard of such a place."

"Nor did I, therefore I cannot tell you, Macumazahn. For aught I can say it may be down beneath where dead men go. But wherever

it is there certainly you will meet the Opener of Roads. Now farewell, Macumazahn. If it should chance that we never look into each other's eyes again, I am sure you will think of me sometimes, as I shall of you, and of all that we have seen together, especially on that night in the Vale of Bones when the ghost of the witch Mameena prophesied to us and kissed you before us all. She must have been very beautiful, Macumazahn, as indeed I have heard from those who remember her, and I don't wonder that you loved her so much. Still for my part I had rather be kissed by a living woman than by one who is dead, though doubtless it is best to be kissed by none at all. Again, farewell, and be sure to tell the Opener of Roads that I gave you his message, lest he should lay some evil charm upon me, who have seen enough evil of late."

Thus talking Goza departed. I never saw him again, and do not know if he is dead or alive. Well, he was a kindly old fellow, if no hero.

I had almost forgotten the incident of this meeting when a while later I found myself in the neighbourhood of the beautiful but semi-tropical place called Eshowe, which since those days has become the official home of the British Resident in Zululand. Indeed, although the house was not then finished, if it had been begun, Sir Melmoth Osborn already had an office there. I wished

to see him in order to give him some rather important information, but when I reached a kraal of about fifty huts some five hundred yards from the site of the present Residency, my wagon stuck fast in the boggy ground. While I was trying to get it out a quiet-faced Zulu, whose name, I remember, was Umnikwa, informed me that Malimati, that is Sir Melmoth Osborn's native name, was somewhere at a little distance from Eshowe, too far away for me to get to him that night. I answered, Very well, I would sleep where I was, and asked the name of the kraal.

He replied, Jazi, at which I started, but only said that it was a strange name, seeing that it meant "Finished," or "Finished with joy." Umnikwa answered, Yes, but that it had been so called because the chief Umfokaki, or The Stranger, who married a sister of the king, was killed at this kraal by his brother, Gundane, or the Bat. I remarked that it was an ill-omened kind of name, to which the man replied, Yes, and likely to become more so, since the King Cetewayo who had been sheltering there "beneath the armpit" of Malimati, the white lord, for some months, lay in it dying. I asked him of what he was dying, and he replied that he did not know, but that doubtless the father of the witch-doctors, named Zikali, the Opener of Roads, would be able to tell me, as he was attending on Cetewayo.

"He has sent me to bid you to come at once, O Macumazahn," he added casually, "having had news that you were arriving here."

Showing no surprise, I answered that I would come, although goodness knows I was surprised enough, and leaving my servants to get my wagon out of the bog, I walked into the kraal with the messenger. He took me to a large hut placed within a fence about the gate of which some women were gathered, who all looked very anxious and disturbed. Among them I saw Dabuko the king's brother, whom I knew slightly. He greeted me and told me that Cetewayo was at the point of death within the hut, but like Umnikwa, professed ignorance of the cause of his illness.

For a long while, over an hour I should think, I sat there outside the hut, or walked to and fro. Until darkness came I could occupy myself with contemplating the scenery of the encircling hills, which is among the most beautiful in Zululand with its swelling contours and rich colouring. But after it had set in only my thoughts remained, and these I found depressing.

At length I made up my mind that I would go away, for after all what had I to do with this business of the death of Cetewayo, if in truth he was dying? I wished to see no more of Cetewayo of whom all my recollections were terrific or sorrowful. I rose to depart, when suddenly a woman emerged from the hut. I could not see who she was or even what she was like, because of the gloom; also for the reason that she had the corner of her blanket thrown over her face as though she wished to keep it hidden. For a

moment she stopped opposite to me and said--

"The king who is sick desires to see you, Macumazahn." Then she pointed to the door-hole of the hut and vanished, shutting the gate of the fence behind her. Curiosity overcame me and I crawled into the hut, pushing aside the door-board in order to do so and setting it up again when I was through.

Inside burned a single candle fixed in the neck of a bottle, faintly illuminating that big and gloomy place. By its feeble light I saw a low bedstead on the left of the entrance and lying on it a man half covered by a blanket in whom I recognized Cetewayo. His face was shrunken and distorted with pain, and his great bulk seemed less, but still without doubt it was Cetewayo.

"Greeting, Macumazahn," he said feebly, "you find me in evil case, but I heard that you were here and thought that I should like to see you before I die, because I know that you are honest and will report my words faithfully. I wish you to tell the white men that my heart never really was against them; they have always been the friends of my heart, but others forced me down a road I did not wish to travel, of which now I have come to the end."

"What is the matter with you, King?" I asked.

"I do not know, Macumazahn, but I have been sick for some days. The Opener of Roads who came to doctor me, because my wives believed those white medicine-men wished me dead, says that I have been poisoned and must die. If you had been here at first you might perhaps have given me some medicine. But now it is too late," he added with a groan.

"Who then poisoned you, King?"

"I cannot tell you, Macumazahn. Perhaps my enemies, perhaps my brothers, perhaps my wives. All wish to have done with me, and the Great One, who is no longer wanted, is soon dead. Be thankful, Macumazahn, that you never were a king, for sad is the lot of kings."

"Where, then, is the Opener of Roads?" I asked.

"He was here a little while ago. Perhaps he has gone out to take the King's head" (i.e., to announce his death) "to Malimati and the white men," he answered in a faint voice.

Just then I heard a shuffling noise proceeding from that part of the hut where the shadow was deepest, and looking, saw an emaciated arm projected into the circle of the light. It was followed by another arm, then by a vast head covered with long white hair that trailed upon the ground, then by a big, misshapen

body, so wasted that it looked like a skeleton covered with corrugated black skin. Slowly, like a chameleon climbing a bough, the thing crept forward, and I knew it for Zikali. He reached the side of the bed and squatted down in his toad-like fashion, then, again like a chameleon, without moving his head turned his deep and glowing eyes towards me.

"Hail, O Macumazahn," he said in his low voice. "Did I not promise you long ago that you should be with me at the last, and are you not with me and another?"

"It seems so, Zikali," I answered. "But why do you not send for the white doctors to cure the king?"

"All the doctors, white and black, in the whole world cannot cure him, Macumazahn. The Spirits call him and he dies. At his call I came fast and far, but even I cannot cure him--although because of him I myself must die."

"Why?" I asked.

"Look at me, Macumazahn, and say if I am one who should travel. Well, all come to their end at last, even the 'Thing-that-should-never-have-been-born.'"

Cetewayo lifted his head and looked at him, then said heavily--

"Perchance it would have been better for our House if that end had been sooner. Now that I lie dying many sayings concerning you come into my mind that I had forgotten. Moreover, Opener of Roads, I never sent for you, whoever may have done so, and it was not until after you came here that the great pain seized me. How did it happen," he went on with gathering force, "that the white men caught me in the secret place where you told me I should hide? Who pointed out that hidden hole to the white men? But what does it matter now?"

"Nothing at all, O Son of Panda," answered Zikali, "even less than it matters how I escaped the spear-head hidden in your robe, yonder in my hut in the Black Kloof where, had it not been for a certain spirit that stood between you and me, you would have murdered me. Tell me, Son of Panda, during these last three days have you thought at all of your brother Umbelazi, and of certain other brethren of yours whom you killed at the battle of the Tugela, when the white man here led the charge of the Amawombe against your regiments and ate up three of them?"

Cetewayo groaned but said nothing. I think he had become too faint to speak.

"Listen, Son of Panda," went on Zikali in an intense and hissing voice. "Many, many years ago, before Senzangacona, your

grandfather, saw the light--who knows how long before--a man was born of high blood in the Dwandwe tribe, which man was a dwarf. Chaka the Black One conquered the Dwandwe, but this man of high blood was spared because he was a dwarf, an abortion, to whom Chaka gave the name of the

'Thing-that-never-should-have-been-born,' keeping him about him to be a mock in times of peace and safety, and because he was wise and learned in magic, to be a counsellor in times of trouble. Moreover, Chaka killed this man's wives and children for his sport, save one whom he kept to be his 'sister.'

"Therefore for the sake of his people and his butchered wives and children, this wizard swore an oath of vengeance against Chaka and all his House. Working beneath the ground like a rat, he undermined the throne of Chaka and brought him to his death by the spears of his brethren and of Mopo his servant, whom Chaka had wronged. Still working in the dark like a rat, he caused Dingaan, who stabbed Chaka, to murder the Boer Retief and his people, and thus called down upon his head the vengeance of the Whites, and afterwards brought Dingaan to his death. Then Panda, your father, arose, and his life this

'Thing-that-never-should-have-been-born' spared because once Panda had done him a kindness. Only through the witch Mameena he brought sorrow on him, causing war to arise between his children, one of whom was named Cetewayo.

"Then this Cetewayo ruled, first with his father Panda and afterwards in his place, and trouble arose between him and the English. Son of Panda, you will remember that this Cetewayo was in doubt whether to fight the English and demanded a sign of the Thing-that-never-should-have-been-born. He gave the sign, causing the Inkosazana-y-Zulu, the Princess of Heaven, to appear before him and thereby lifting the spear of War. Son of Panda, you know how that war went, how this Cetewayo was defeated and came to the 'Thing-that-never-should-have-been-born' like a hunted hyena, to learn of a hole where he might hide. You know, too, how he strove to murder the poor old doctor who showed him such a hole; how he was taken prisoner and sent across the water and afterwards set up again in the land that had learned to hate him, to bring its children to death by thousands. And you know how at last he took refuge beneath the wing of the white chief, here in the kraal Jazi, and lived, spat upon, an outcast, until at length he fell sick, as such men are apt to do, and the Thing-that-never-should-have-been-born was sent for to doctor him. And you know also how he lies dying, within him an agony as though he had swallowed a red hot spear, and before him a great blackness peopled by the ghosts of those whom he has slain, and of his forefathers whose House he has pulled down and burned."

Zikali ceased, and thrusting his hideous head to within an inch or two of that of the dying man, he glowered at him with his fierce and fiery eyes. Then he began to whisper into the king's

ear, who quivered at his words, as the victim quivers beneath the torturer's looks.

At that moment the end of the candle fell into the bottle which was of clear white glass, and there burned for a little while dully before it went out. Never shall I forget the scene illumined by its blue and ghastly light. The dying man lying on the low couch, rocking his head to and fro; the wizard bending over him like some grey vampire bat sucking the life-blood from his helpless throat. The terror in the eyes of the one, the insatiable hate in the eyes of the other. Oh! it was awful!

"Macumazahn," gasped Cetewayo in a rattling whisper, "help me, Macumazahn. I say that I am poisoned by this Zikali, who hates me. Oh! drive away the ghosts! Drive them away!"

I looked at him and at his tormentor squatted by him like a mocking fiend, and as I looked the candle went out.

Then my nerve broke, the cold sweat poured from my face and I fled from the hut as a man might from a scene in hell, followed by the low mocking laugh of Zikali.

Outside the women and others were gathered in the gloom. I told them to go to the king, who was dying, and blundered up the slope to search for some white man. No one was to be found, but a

Kaffir messenger by the office told me that Malimati was still away and had been sent for. So I returned to my wagon and lay down in it exhausted, for what more could I do?

It was a rough night. Thunder muttered and rain fell in driving gusts. I dozed off, only to be awakened by a sound of wailing. Then I knew that the king was dead, for this was the Isililo, the cry of mourning. I wondered whether the murderers--for that he was poisoned I had no doubt--were among those who wailed.

Towards dawn the storm rolled off and the night grew serene and clear, for a waning moon was shining in the sky. The heat of that stifling place oppressed me; my blood seemed to be afire. I knew that there was a stream in a gorge about half a mile away, for it had been pointed out to me. I longed for a swim in cool water, who, to tell truth, had found none for some days, and bethought me that I would bathe in this stream before I trekked from that hateful spot, for to me it had become hateful. Calling my driver, who was awake and talking with the voorloopers, for they knew what was passing at the kraal and were alarmed, I told them to get the oxen ready to start as I would be back presently. Then I set off for the stream and, after a longish walk, scrambled down a steep ravine to its banks, following a path made by Kaffir women going to draw water. Arrived there at last I found that it was in flood and rising rapidly, at least so I

judged from the sound, for in that deep, tree-hung place the light was too faint to allow me to see anything. So I sat down waiting for the dawn and wishing that I had not come because of the mosquitoes.

At length it broke and the mists lifted, showing that the spot was one of great beauty. Opposite to me was a waterfall twenty or thirty feet high, over which the torrent rushed into a black pool below. Everywhere grew tall ferns and beyond these graceful trees, from whose leaves hung raindrops. In the centre of the stream on the edge of the fall was a rock not a dozen feet away from me, round which the water foamed. Something was squatted on this rock, at first I could not see what because of the mist, but thought that it was a grey-headed baboon, or some other animal, and regretted that I had not brought a gun with me. Presently I became aware that it must be a man, for, in a chanting voice, it began to speak or pray in Zulu, and hidden behind a flowering bush, I could hear the words. They were to this effect--

"O my Spirit, here where thou foundest me when I was young, hundreds of years ago" (he said hundreds, but I suppose he meant tens), "I come back to thee. In this pool I dived and beneath the waters found thee, my Snake, and thou didst wind thyself about my body and about my heart" (here I understood that the speaker was alluding to his initiation as a witch-doctor which generally includes, or used to include, the finding of a snake in

a river that coils itself about the neophyte). "About my body and in my heart thou hast dwelt from that sun to this, giving me wisdom and good and evil counsel, and that which thou hast counselled, I have done. Now I return thee whence thou camest, there to await me in the new birth.

"O Spirits of my fathers, toiling through many years I have avenged you on the House of Senzangacona, and never again will there be a king of the Zulus, for the last of them lies dead by my hand. O my murdered wives and my children, I have offered up to you a mighty sacrifice, a sacrifice of thousands upon thousands.

"O Umkulu-kulu, Great One of the heavens, who sentest me to earth, I have done thy work upon the earth and bring back to thee thy harvest of the seed that thou hast sown, a blood-red harvest, O Umkulu-kulu. Be still, be still, my Snake, the sun arises, and soon, soon shalt thou rest in the water that wast thine from the beginning of the world!"

The voice ceased, and presently a spear of light piercing the mists, lit upon the speaker. It was Zikali and about him was wound a great yellow-bellied snake, of which the black head with flickering tongue waved above his head and seemed from time to time to lick him on the brow. (I suppose it had come to him from

the water, for its skin glittered as though with wet.) He stood up on tottering feet, staring at the red eye of the rising sun, then crying, "Finished, finished with joy!" with a loud and dreadful laughter, he plunged into the foaming pool beneath.

Such was the end of Zikali the Wizard, Opener of Roads, the "Thing-that-should-never-have-been-born," and such was the vengeance that he worked upon the great House of Senzangaona, bringing it to naught and with it the nation of the Zulus.