

were therefore placed under the leadership of the bigger boys, who had been goatherds for some time. They were told to obey these leaders and to learn from them.

Tau had been leader all his little life and was not used to obeying older boys. He found it very irksome to do what he was told, instead of telling others what they were to do. The older boys stood no nonsense, however, and Tau found himself thrashed into obedience. He knew that it was futile appealing to the men at home, because they had placed these boys in charge and were bound to uphold their authority. Tau had therefore to submit, which he did most unwillingly.

As soon as the older boys saw that Tau had *kgang* (cheek, obstinacy, perversity, everything in one), they invariably put him in charge of the herd while they went out hunting. If one of the animals was missing after the hunt the older boys found it and then Tau was thrashed. He complained to his father, but his father said to him:

"Listen, my child, one day some animals will be lost, and then you will see what will happen."

The prophecy came true. One evening the herd-boys came in a very subdued frame of mind. Three goats had strayed. They had looked for them all afternoon but could not find them. At night the bigger boys sent home the herd with the younger boys and stayed out looking for the lost animals. Meanwhile some of the men returning from the veld had come across the lost goats, and recognising them as belonging to their village, they drove them home. They reported the matter to Phatla at the *kgoro* fire.

The younger goatherds helped with the milking. Their duty was still to keep off the calves while the cattleherds milked. Very often the cattle herds allowed them to milk the very tame cows and if they had done

their task well the milker allowed them the "after-milk." The calf was allowed to drink again for a little while until the cow yielded all the milk "it had kept back." The goatherd refastened the legs of the cow, and milked into his own mouth. In this way the little boys learned to milk.

To-night the big boys finished milking and with the help of the younger boys they penned the calves. Then they all left the kraal in single file and stood in a line before the chieftain who was sitting in the kgoro with his men. They dropped to their knees, put down their sticks and clapped their hands murmuring "Morena."

One of the younger men stood up and went into the kraal. He examined the door of the calf kraal. Then he went out and securely closed the gate of the cattle kraal and that of the sheep kraal. He went back to the fire sat down and said:

"All is well, Morena."

Phatla looked at the cattle herds first, then he looked at the goat herds.

"Where are the others?" he asked.

"They are still coming, Morena," the goatherds replied trembling.

"What are they doing?"

"Three goats strayed and we could not find them. They have gone out to look for them."

"Which are the goats that strayed?"

"It was the black-and-white one of Rakgadi, the white one of Mashilo's and the dark brown he-goat of Khuinini's."

"Alright we shall call you when the others come in."

The boys trooped silently to their own quarters. As soon as a boy became a goatherd he no longer

slept in the lapa with his parents, but he joined the other boys in the quarters set aside for the herdboys. The girls had huts assigned to them too, and they had to keep the boys' quarters clean and cook the food for them.

The boys kindled a fire and sat round it. The cattle herds began to cross-question the goatherds as to how many goats had been lost.

Herdboys never told one another lies, because they knew that no herdboy would give another herdboy away. They therefore told the whole story from beginning to end:

"Aoa," they said, "we were at the mimosa grove and the goats were eating the mimosa pods. Suddenly we heard the honey bird calling. The big boys said to us: "You stay here and look after the goats, we shall bring you some of the honey." Then they went off after the honey bird. Nxse, these goats. When they see mimosa pods they run all the time from the one tree to the next. One goes this way, another that until one cannot find them again. When those boys came back, they found us with the herd, but three goats had run away. The antbears' sons, they did not bring us any honey. They said that there was only a little honey in the hive, just enough for them and for the honey bird. Then they looked through the herd.

"You lazy polecats," they said, and hit us. Then "Haai banna; where are the three goats?" "They were here just now," we said.

They went back to look for the lost ones. They are still gone."

The older boys went on roasting birds they had killed in the veld. One of them got up and took a hare the boys had killed during the day to the kgoro for the men. When he came back he said:

"They are coming back. I heard them talking out-

side. They might as well bring their own sticks with them."

The boys had not long to wait. A young man came in and called the goatherds to the kgoro. "Come," he ordered briefly.

The news had spread throughout the kraal, and women and girls slunk up as near as they could to the kgoro to hear what was being said. If the men had seen them there, they would have chased them away, because women must not see what men do in the men's kgoro.

The boys followed the man with fear and trembling. They found the bigger boys sitting in the kgoro silently waiting for their impending punishment.

As soon as the younger boys had joined the older ones, Phatla took them all in hand.

"Why are you so late?" he asked.

"Aoa, Morena, we have been looking for the goats that are lost."

"Have you found them?"

"No, Morena."

"And now?"

"We do not know," the boys replied.

"Hmmm," Phatla went on, "but what were you doing to lose these goats?"

"Nothing," the boys replied. They knew perfectly well that the younger boys would not give them away, and that the men would not ask the younger boys what had happened.

"Listen to these boys," Phatla went on, "they did nothing, and yet they lost the goats. Nxse. Now tell me the truth boys."

The men shook their heads and murmured: "Nxse, these fools." The boys were silent. Phatla tried a new way.

"Where did you herd to-day?"

"We took the herd to the mimosa thicket so that they could feed on mimosa pods."

"I have heard you. And what did you find at the mimosas?"

"Nothing," the boys replied.

"How did you lose the goats then?"

The boys were prepared for this question. They answered:

"Morena, the goats run from tree to tree looking for pods. In this way they get scattered far and wide. Three of them slipped away without our seeing them."

Phatla shook his head. "There are so many of you. Even if the animals run this way and that, there are enough of you to watch them all. Speak."

This was a very strong argument, but the boys were not beaten yet: "We are many, Morena. But the goats scattered so badly to-day that we could not cope with them."

The boys all breathed more freely now. One of the men suddenly said:

"Morena Phatla, yesterday I heard the honeybird when I went past the mimosas. It was calling."

"Ah, hah!" Phatla said, and the boys trembled when they heard that "Ah."

Phatla turned to them and said:

"Now boys, you have heard. Speak the truth or else I shall ask the little ones."

The boys knew that the game was up. The whole story was told haltingly and stumblingly.

Phatla merely said:

"The goats are here. The men found them and brought them back. Go and fetch some sticks, long ones, mind. You little ones can go back to your fire."

The younger boys murmured: "Thobela Morena," and scuttled off as fast as they could. Phatla had dismissed them because he knew perfectly well that they had had their thrashing from the older boys in the veld.

Phatla administered the thrashing very calmly and deliberately. There was no malice in his action. He was merely the agent of the kgoro showing the boys that they had transgressed one of the rules of the village. Each boy was ordered to lie down flat on the ground. Then Phatla took the stick and administered the punishment. Each boy received a number of strokes according to his age. Between strokes the men repeated the law so that it should sink in deeply into the mind of the boy.

When Phatla considered that the boy had had enough, he asked him "O lahlile?" (have you had enough). The boy yelled at the top of his voice that he had had more than enough.

He was then allowed to stand up and run away into the kraal, which he did, yelling at the top of his voice.

Phatla knew how to hit. Although he appeared not to put any force into his blows, he knew how to flick the stick so that in many cases it cut open the boy, and drew blood.

The women were very quiet. A little while later all the herdboys had assembled round their own fire. The cattle herds jeered at the goat herds and said: "You see, you little boys, you should never allow goats to stray. To-day the men gave you what for."

The little boys had kept very quiet. They knew that they were safe now, because if the older boys had vindictively thrashed them now, the cattle herds would have beaten them in turn.

THE DEATH OF PHATLA.

During this period Tau lost his grandfather. Phatla was an old man. He suddenly became very ill. The boys felt that something was wrong. The village was very quiet and hushed. Even the women were quiet. As the days passed the gloom grew deeper and deeper. Embassies went everywhere and returned with a new man every time. . . he was the kaffir doctor called in to cure the sick man. Nobody saw what he did, because he was a wise man and his deeds were his own. They all knew that he was the doctor, because he wore a necklet round his neck, to which bones, claws and different kinds of herbs and roots were fastened. Round his middle was a belt to which little bags of monkey skin were attached, and also little calabashes with stoppers tightly fixed into them. All the doctors failed, and the general verdict was "o loiloe" (he is bewitched.)

Phatla lay in his hut. He knew nobody and talked incessantly. His chief wife, Ramoroa's mother, sat at his head and waved away the flies or moistened his lips with water. The village doctor and Touma, Phatla's younger brother, stood near the dying chieftain, mute and baffled. All the other men had assembled in the kgoro. They were a silent group, each entirely occupied with his own thoughts. The doctor went out to them. They all looked up, but the doctor shook his head. They knew what he meant and so silence fell on the group again.

Suddenly a piercing cry broke the silence of the village, and Ramoroa's mother rushed out of the hut beating her breast and crying at the top of her voice. The cry was taken up by all the women of the village. It was so terrible that all the men shuddered involuntarily. Phatla was dead.

Touma came out of the hut and signed to the men to come to him. They all allowed Ramoroa to pass and then followed in single file. As many of the near relatives as could, went into the hut, while the others waited outside. The women were ordered to keep quiet, and a long silence ensued while all the men looked down at the deceased. At last Touma broke the silence:

“Yo,” he said, “our father has gone and left us. He has undertaken a long journey from which he will never return. We his children are left behind fatherless orphans. We are weeping, for what shall we do? He led us, advised us, corrected us when we were wrong, and protected us when we were in danger.”

All men repeated this last sentence while the women raised the lament again. Silence was again called, and eventually restored. Touma again began to speak:

“But no, in our grief we have forgotten one thing. He has gone but he has not left us destitute. He left us his son, Ramoroa, who will lead us in his stead. Ramoroa, my child, take your father’s place. I shall be at your right hand and give you such counsel as your father would have given you.”

He bent down and took the necklace of chieftainship from the deceased’s neck and placed it round Ramoroa’s neck. All the men bent their heads and murmured assent. The men now left the hut and went to the kgoro, while the women again raised the lament. Far away over hill and vlei the sound travelled and men listened.

“Somebody is dead,” they said.

“Where?”

“Listen . . . what are they saying? . . . Oh yes . . . Phatla has gone.”

In this way the news travelled and within an hour the whole tribe knew that Phatla was dead.

Phatla died at midday. All that afternoon the lament was deafening, and no man took any food. A deep hole was dug next to the hedge of the cattle kraal, between the huts and the kraal. Some of the men chose an ox out of Phatla's herd. They killed it and skinned it very carefully so that no knife cut the skin. Then they took the wet skin and went into the hut where the deceased was lying. The body was sewn into the skin in a sitting posture and Phatla's spear, knobkierrie and some food was also placed in the skin. The doctor went around sprinkling medicine all around the grave, and around the hut. At dead of night the deceased was gently lowered into the grave and the hole was filled up. No mound was left and all the soil was smoothed down again so that nobody should know where the grave had been dug. The doctor came again and sprinkled medicine all over the burial place, and also sprinkled medicine over those who had taken part in the burial. Then he set about purifying the village. After that the meat of the ox which had been slaughtered to provide the burial clothes, was eaten.

Next day the kgoro met and Ramoroa was formally proclaimed chieftain of the village. Touma made a long speech in which he reminded Ramoroa of his duties. Other old men also spoke to Ramoroa and exhorted him in all things to hearken to the advice of the old and experienced grey heads. A week after the burial a great feast was held, to which all friends were invited. The doctor again purified the village and all his inhabitants, and drinking and dancing lasted the whole night.

On the morrow Ramoroa travelled with a few of the old men to the Great One in the mountains. They took many presents with them, and Ramoroa paid

reverence to the chief and asked for his patronage. The chief was very gracious to the new chieftain, and promised to pay him a visit at his kraal as soon as he could.

Meanwhile the kgoro had another task. Phatla had had six wives and these were left behind without anybody to protect them. There was a long deliberation about these wives in the kgoro.

Ramoroa put the matter to the old men through Touma, his uncle. "A great matter lies before us. My father had six wives. They are orphans. We must now decide in whose lapa these wives are to live henceforth. Who is to take care of them? Who is to help them?"

The oldest man in the kgoro cited law and custom on this point.

"I am speaking," he said.

"This is the law of the old and wise men. It is good and just. For does it not say that no woman may be left destitute? Aye it does. Let me tell you. Now Maramoroa, she who is our chieftain's mother, must live in the lapa of her son. The other wives may either become the wives of Ramoroa, and he shall be their husband, or they may become the wives of Touma, and live with him in his lapa. It is for Ramoroa to say. But it is Ramoroa who shall be the father of all Phatla's children. They shall look to him for all the help they need."

Every man in the kgoro agreed with the old man, but they one and all advised Ramoroa to hand over the women to Touma.

Ramoroa followed the advice of the old men. He said:

"Touma, my uncle, I have heard. These old men speak wisely. Let my mother stay with me in my lapa, but do you take all the other women into your home, and let them be wives unto you."

Tau was now the son of the chieftain and heir to the chieftainship. Yet that made no difference in his status in the kraal. He was a leshoboro (boy) and had to obey the rules like all other boys in the kraal. He would only obtain a status after he had passed the school, and that would only be after many years to come.

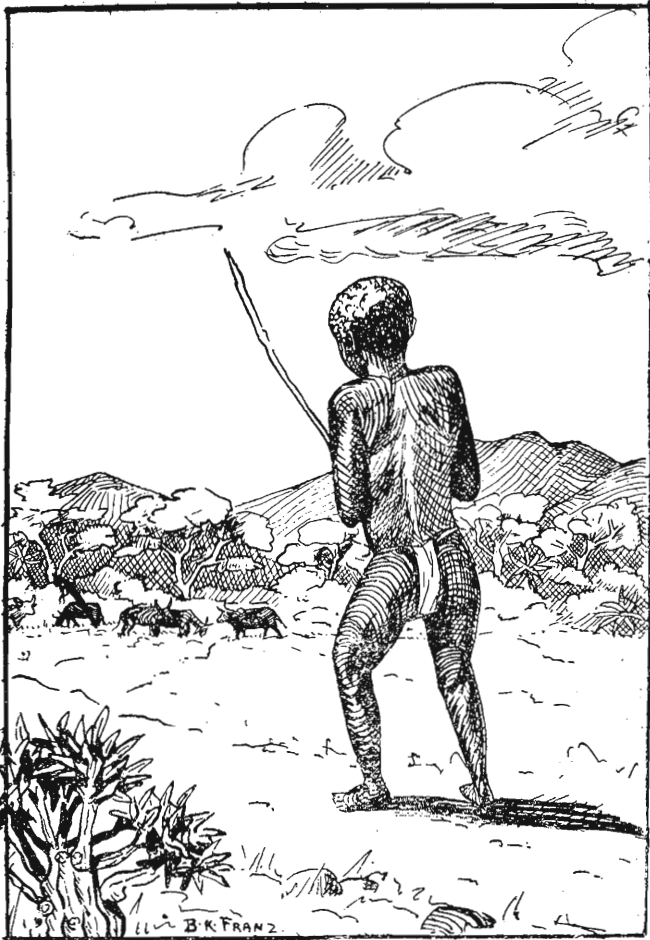
If he neglected his duties as herdboys he would be severely thrashed like any other boy. Native boys were not thrashed for any other offence. They were warned that some day they would have to atone for all the wrong they had done after they had reached the age of discretion. If they showed disrespect towards grown up men and women, if they refused grown up people a favour or if they lived an immoral life, they would have to answer for their ill deeds when the time came for them to be admitted to the ranks of men.

9

TAU AS CATTLE HERD.

For four years Tau was a goat herd. After two years of this office the bigger boys became cattle herds and so Tau again led a band of boys. He kept his band very strictly in hand, but very often they were all so led away by the excitement of the chase that some of the goats were lost. Tau and the bigger boys were on several occasions severely thrashed. Ramoroa seemed to feel that Tau, being his own son, should be specially careful, and so he thrashed him excessively. The other men in the kgoro noticed this. Touma spoke to his nephew and said:

“Ramoroa, child of my elder brother, let me tell you. Your son Tau had no greater blame than any of the others. Do not therefore hit him over much or else you will break his spirit.”



Tau as cattle herd.

The herdboys' best friend is the honeybird, and when the bird begins to call, it is very difficult for any boy to resist him. They all follow the call of the bird. Sometimes the bird will lead them for miles and miles away from the herd.

Tau learned that he must never leave the bees' nest without scattering some of the larva for the bird. The bird is very kind, but can be most treacherous if he finds himself robbed of his reward for bringing people to a hive full of honey. He will call the boys and lead them to some dangerous animal and so entice them to their death. Sometimes he is unjust. He seems to forget who the culprit was and leads innocent people astray. Therefore a law was made to punish any man severely who had been found to have neglected the honey bird.

Tau and his companions had a terrible experience. One midday the bird suddenly began to call. He called and chirped flying from one tree to another. Tau immediately detailed off some of the younger boys to remain behind with the goats, then the herdboys set off in single file following the bird. The bird flew from tree to tree chirping all the time. At last he came to the edge of a deep donga. Tau stopped and said:

"I am afraid to go into this place. It looks dangerous."

There was a boy Tlakudi, amongst the herdboys who did not like Tau. He envied Tau his position as leader of the boys. He went to the edge of the donga and said:

"If you are afraid to go into this place, I will lead you."

Tau replied:

"No Tlakudi, don't go in. There may be a lion



“If you are afraid to go into this place, I will lead you!”

or leopard in there. Let us throw stones into the donga first and see what comes out."

All the boys agreed with Tau and a hail of stones was rained into the donga. All that came out was a duiker.

The boys then decided to go into the donga. The bird which had been frightened away by the stones came back again and settled on a tree on the far side of the donga. The boys made for this tree, but they could not hear the buzzing of the bees by which they usually located the hive. Now they scattered and began to search in every direction. Suddenly they heard a terrible scream and saw Tlakudi in the folds of a huge python. They quickly ran to the nearest village and called for help. When the men came back the unfortunate boy was dead.

The boys had to answer many searching questions in the kgoro that night.

The men could not blame anybody in particular and so they warned the boys again not to follow the honeybird into any place that might harbour dangerous beasts. They advised the boys to come home and tell them to what place the bird had led them.

When Tau joined the cattle herds he was again placed under older boys. He was accustomed to it now and did not receive so many thrashings as on the previous occasion. The fun was greater here because the boys went still further afield. They had dogs with them, and spent their days hunting hares and small game. When they had killed anything, they made a fire in the veld and roasted meat. The men had told them not to do it. There was no risk in lighting the fire, because they were usually so far away from home that nobody could see them. The risk of fetching a glowing ember from the village no longer existed, because the boys knew how to make fire by rubbing together two sticks.

They looked around for a dry stick of some soft wood like the mooka, or moumo. Then they found a thinner but harder stick. They cut a little groove into the soft wood and whittled the harder stick to a point. Then the hard point was twirled very quickly in the groove until the shavings thus caused caught fire.

The boys usually remembered to put out the fire by throwing sand or soil on the embers. One day however they forgot to do this. Before the fire had completely died out, a strong wind arose and scattered the glowing embers far and wide. The result was that the grass caught fire. The men and all the women of the villages in the neighbourhood had to turn out to fight the veld fire. It was with great difficulty that the fire was put out. Ramoroa as leading chieftain, asked all the villages to enquire into the cause of the fire. They were to find out what herdboys had driven their cattle to the place that day. He himself and his kgoro called their herdboys and crossquestioned them very closely. He found out that they were guilty.

Then he sent some of the young men to the surrounding villages to invite the chieftains and their men to come to his kraal. When all the men had assembled, he told them very briefly who had caused the veld fire and he gave each of the chieftains a stick so that they could thrash the boys. This act on the part of his boys had inconvenienced all the villages, and so the chastisement had to be carried out by all the parties that had suffered through the herdboys' disobedience.

After the chieftains had thrashed the boys they thanked Ramoroa, and praised him for his act of justice.

During the time while Tau was herding cattle, black quarter evil broke out amongst the young stock. Ramoroa sent for the doctor and he carefully examined

all the cattle. Then he threw the "bones," and went away for the whole afternoon. Next morning he turned up with a gourd of medicine and seven moretloa sticks. He carefully washed the sticks with the medicine he had brought, and handed them to Ramoroa.

The chieftain stood in the gate of the kraal and the cattle were driven past him one by one. As each animal passed Ramoroa brushed it with six of the sticks which he held in his left hand, and hit it a hard whack with the seventh stick which he held in his right hand.

After all the cattle had been treated, the doctor purified the kraal and said: "If God wills it, no more cattle will die."

No more cattle died and so the doctor received a handsome reward from every man in the village.

The best time for the boys was in the evenings after the cows had been milked and while the calves were still frisking about after their evening meal. Each boy had his riding calf called lekaba. The boy chose a sturdy calf from amongst the older calves that were already weaned, and while the others held the animal, he pierced a hole through its nose with a sharp stick. Then a strong string was passed through this hole and knotted behind the horns.

All the riding calves were taken out of the kraal down the road to the mounting place some two hundred yards away. Then their faces were pointed towards the kraal. The boys leaped on their backs and the calves galloped home as fast as they could. Races like these were run every night.

After four years Tau ceased to be a herdboy because he was called out to attend the initiation school.

THE INITIATION SCHOOL — PREPARATION.

It was just after the feast of the first fruits, when men bring the slice of the first pumpkin to the gods, and the gods and men "bite the pumpkin." The chief called all his councillors to him.

When the councillors were assembled the chief reviewed the work of the year. He addressed his chamberlain:

"Ramapulana, hearest thou?"

"My ears are open, Oh Lion."

"We are here to-day. But yesterday we bit the pumpkin, after the gods had received our thanks. The season has been very good. Why? Let me tell you. See we and our tribe have done that which the men of old and the men of wisdom have bidden us do. When the "Naka" arose in the South East, all our doctors washed their "bones" in the river. Now their "bones" are very powerful. They told us of many evils that were to come. We knew and our medicine kept these evils away. Then the doctors came to this our village. They consulted with one another and made the medicine for rain. We called the young and pure little girls of our tribe. It was they who fetched the water from the river in the sacred vessels so that we could mix our medicines. After them the little boys, such as have no evil thoughts within them, carried this medicine to all our boundaries and poured it along the line. Thus were all manner of evils warded off. Then we called the little boys again and they took the rain medicine to all the fields, whilst our doctors played on the pipes of Tladi, the lightning bird, and called the rain. Then the rain came, and men brought gifts to this our village, and we gave them the seed. This seed they have sown and it has grown. To-day

the little girls are in the fields pouring medicine to keep away the birds and blights from the crops.

Aye, the year has been propitious and the gods have supplied us with plenty. No famine threatens us. Plague has kept far from us. Disease has not touched us. Furthermore, one of our sons is old. He is a young bull now. The time has come when he can be initiated into the mysteries of our tribe. Therefore do we desire to hold an initiation school as soon as the harvest has been reaped."

The chamberlain punctuated all these statements with ejaculations like "Tau" (Lion), "Tlou" (elephant), "Selo" (thing), "Selomela" (monster) which are all marks of respect. Then he handed on to the man sitting on his left what the chief had said. In this manner the message went the round of the council. Each man added to the words of the chief, and each praised the chief because it was he who had made the year so propitious. There was no blatant flattery. After each councillor had had his say, the chamberlain spoke to the chief:

"Thobela," he addressed the chief, "the old men have heard. The year has been very propitious. There are many boys who are ripe for the school. Some fruit are even rotting on the trees. Therefore let messengers go out to all the chieftains and announce thy decree."

After each sentence the chief murmured the words "Papa," "Ntago" to show that he respected the advice of the council.

The batseta (royal messengers) were then called and sent out to announce the royal decree.

At Ramoroa's village all the elders were sitting round the kgoro fire in the evening. Suddenly a "Koko" interrupted all discussions. Ramoroa called out "We are here." A man entered the ring of firelight.

He was a tall man and a goat skin hung over his right shoulder. As soon as they saw him all the men recognised the messenger of the Great One. They gave the royal salute "Ntago." Then room was made for him on Ramoroa's right hand. The chieftain offered the newcomer some snuff. Everybody was silent. At last Ramoroa addressed his uncle Touma:

"Touma, my father's younger brother," he said, "we see the Great One's messenger here. Our ears are open to hear what our father has to say to us, his children."

Touma passed the words on to his neighbour on the left and so the words were handed around the circle of men. Each man had some praise for the chief.

The messenger replied:

"Hear and learn the will of the Great One. Thus speaks our Father. 'Tell my children our decree and that of the council of old men. When the summer ends and the crops have been gathered, then shall all men leave their villages and come to the initiation. Only such men shall remain behind as are necessary to guard the village, and to look after the cattle. When this moon has been full and has passed, then shall four more moons wax and wane, and at the next full moon shall all men "fall in," and bring with them all the boys who have been prepared for the school, and are of age (15—18 years).

Now mark and learn the law of old which has been instituted by our ancestors and hallowed by ages.

Firstly: When the initiation school is held, and during those months in which the men are away, shall no woman sound the grinding stone or sing during her work. But every man and woman shall be allowed to sing only such songs as uphold the solemnity of the greatest of all our institutions. Let no other song be heard lest the singer find himself open to a

serious charge which can only be expiated by the payment of a goat or a sheep.

Secondly: Let there be no quarrel in your midst, lest the wrath of the Great One descend upon you.

Thirdly: Let no man bring any crime or fault to court. Such matters can rest until the school is over.

Fourthly: Let no man bewail or raise lament for anyone who has departed for ever. The gods and the Great One love it not.

Fifthly: If perchance there be any that have sent their children to another tribe to be initiated, let them tell the Great One at once, and let them bring with them an oxlet to soften the heart of the old men, lest they be angry with them.

Sixthly: Every man shall send food to the initiation school, whether he has a child there or not, so that all men may be fed and not suffer want.'

So speaks the Great One, our Father."

All the men clapped their hands and murmured: "Solomela, Kuanyama, Seloana, Ntago has spoken."

The message was transmitted back to Ramoroa, and he replied:

"Touma, my uncle, we have heard. Tell the Great One Our Father, that his word has been spoken and heard. Everything will be as has been announced through the mouth of his messenger."

The messenger refused the invitation of Ramoroa to rest awhile in the village, because there were other villages he had to visit that evening.

There was a tremendous amount of preparation to be made. First of all the candidates were chosen for the school. Tau was one of them. Then it was decided who was to remain at home and who was to go with the boys to the school. As all the cattle herds were candidates, a number of young men were appointed

to look after the cattle. During this period they were treated as boys, and would be thrashed very severely if they allowed any of the cattle to stray. Finally the women were called and told what rules had to be obeyed during the period of the school. Every household was asked to set aside a special hut in which the porridge for the school would be cooked. Two girls were also selected from each lapa to cook the food.

Tau and his companions were relieved of their duties because they had to undergo a period of preparation. Most of them would have preferred to go back to cattle herding, because this preparation for the school was a very painful process.

The village doctor took them in hand. He was the teacher. The first thing he did was to tattoo each of them with the tribal badge. Two vertical parallel lines about an inch long were tattooed on every cheek. Then the boys had to learn and rehearse the different formulae connected with all the religious rites during offerings to the gods. They also had to learn the songs which would be sung at the initiation ceremony.

The formulae were all cryptic sayings, which nobody but the doctors, who were the priests of the tribe, understood. They had their own interpretations.

The teacher's methods were very drastic. He was armed with a moretloa stick. The boy had to sit down in front of him on the ground, and had to double his right leg under his left. The teacher seized his pupil's left ankle with his left hand, and the lesson began. The master said the lesson word for word and the boy had to repeat it. If he missed a single word, which he often did because he was excited, the master gave him a sound whack over the left leg with the stick. The blows became more frequent as the lesson advanced, and as the words were totally unintelligible to the boy, his memory had to be taxed to its utmost.

After each lesson the boy was warned to say nothing to anybody. He was not allowed to speak to the other candidates about it. If his own mother got to hear any word spoken during the lesson, she would either be put to death or her tongue would be cut out, so that she could not repeat what she had heard.

Some of the boys complained to their fathers about the treatment they suffered at the hands of the doctor. The father was very unsympathetic and gave his son a thrashing for daring to complain to him.

When Tau and his companions had learned all their texts, they had to rehearse them. The rehearsals were even more terrible than the original lessons, because the teacher thrashed them mercilessly if they missed a single word. Meanwhile the long months crawled by and by the time the initiation was due all the boys knew their lessons perfectly.

During this period of preparation the boys had to sleep in a hut set aside for them, and the men guarded all approaches because the boys spoke in their sleep.

When everything was ready and the appointed day had dawned, the elders took the boys to the chief's kraal, where the school assembled.

As soon as all the villages had brought their candidates, the chief gave the signal and the school marched away to the initiation locality, some five miles from the chief's village.

It was a gloomy place indeed, lonely and forlorn. It was a deep valley in the mountains. Perpetual shadow seemed to reign here. In the hollow there was thick bush, which looked like a waving sea of foliage from the kranses above. The paths through the valley were covered arches of thorns. Bare wrinkled rocks frowned down from above and looked as if they were worried by the continual close guard they kept on the place. Only two paths led into the valley,

and both of them were narrow defiles cut into solid rock by water. These paths were guarded by special guards, appointed by the chief. If anybody approached, these guards gave one shrill whistle to warn those within the valley. They themselves clambered down from the rocks and barred the way. If the person approaching had no right there, they told the unsuspecting traveller that the place was not to be entered.

At the far end of the valley the sides seemed to recede and the kranes formed overhanging ledges. The place presented one huge cavern with little terraces. A little stream bubbled out from underneath one of these terraces and formed rocky pools till it finally plunged into the valley below. In front of this cavern a patch had been cleared by the men for the initiation kraal.

The first person the boys met was the chief kaffir doctor. He was in full gala. He wore a cloak made of pieces of skin from every kind of animal. His hair was tied into little tufts, and each tuft was capped with a rabbit's tail. These decorations hung over his face and almost hid it. Round his neck he had a string of knuckle bones, claws, berries and other odds and ends. He had a belt round his waist, from which were suspended gourds, calabashes and little bags of monkey skin. This was his stock of medicines. Round his calves he had bands made of skin with the hair hanging down. This was the terrifying apparition which approached the boys and began the work of purification. After purifying the boys he did the same to all the men.

When the doctor was ready, he waited for the signal from the chief. As soon as that was given the men began to sing, louder and louder their voices grew until they drowned every sound. During the song the doctor performed the first of the initiatory rites upon

each of the boys in turn, beginning with the chief's son, the others following in turn according to birth and nobility.

The men then set to work building the initiation kraal. For months past a special gang appointed by the chief, had been cutting the necessary poles and piling them in the right places under the supervision of the doctor. The kraal was built according to a special plan, with quarters for each of the three groups participating in the initiation.

First there were the boys just initiated. They were called "Bodikana", secondly there were the young men who had already been initiated. They were called "Masogana", and lastly there were the "Banna" or men, young and old who were married and had children.

The kraal was built with three gates. The gate on the West was for the men, the one facing the rising sun was for the Young men, and the one in the middle was known as the "Tsela ea Baloi", the gate of the wizards, and this gate was set aside for the Bodikana.

A row of huts stretched from East to West. They were small huts built for the Bodikana as sleeping apartments. In front of these huts, and a little distance from them, a long row of fires was kept burning. The occupants of each hut had to keep the fire alight in front of their own hut. Between the fires and the huts there was a huge stone. It was an iron stone, jet black, and had been purified by the doctor. The stone was called "Sethokgola" and marked the limit to which the boys were allowed to approach the fire. The stone had been placed directly in front of the centre hut, which was allotted to the chief's son and to those of royal descent. The chief's son sat immediately behind the stone near his fire and places were allotted to the other boys to right and left of him according to rank. Each boy had to keep the place allotted to him, and

for the first month he was told to keep his face turned towards the setting sun, when he sat down near the fire.

Away from the rows of fires and to the South of them, was the station of the young men. Two men were chosen from amongst these, who were called "the father" and "the mother" of the boys. It was their duty to guard against any food being given to the boys contrary to regulation, and they had to look after the boys generally.

Between the black stone (sethokgolo) and the fires two poles of unequal length were placed. These were known as "leshilo phate". They served as wands for the tribal bard. Every evening he struck the shorter of the poles against the longer while he sang songs in honour of the chief and of the initiation. The boys joined in the chorus "tlou e ntse" which they sang in excellent harmony. While they were singing they pretended to throw a spear at the moon who was called "tlou", the elephant. As in the course of time the moon waxed and waned, they were told: "You have killed the moon." Every night for three months this song was sung to signify the approach of the time when they would be free to return home.

At night the boys slept in the huts. Each hut accommodated as many boys as it could comfortably hold. The floor was strewn with wood ash for the boys to lie on. No boy was allowed to cover himself with a blanket or kaross, but he had to weave a rush mat, and use it as covering.

There was no fixed time for going to bed. The head of the school or his adjutant had to give them leave to go to bed every night. The boys were very fond of the head because he was kind to them. After they had sung their songs a few times, he would allow them to go to sleep. When he was away, however,

they had a hard time, because the adjutant was a hardhearted man. He often kept the boys awake till the first cockcrow. Once the chief of the neighbouring tribe paid a visit to the initiation school, and the boys were told to sing in his honour. When dawn came they were still trying to sing, although most of them were so hoarse that they could not produce a single sound. Some nights they were called out after they had gone to bed. The "father" and "mother" came down the lines, and striking each hut with their sticks called out "patlang", (wake up). Some of the boys were absolutely overpowered by sleep. The guardians then took cow horns filled with water, and poured it over the sleepy boys. They were told to assemble round the two poles and to sing their choruses again.

Meanwhile Tau's sisters and half-sisters at home, and the sisters and half-sisters of the other boys had been told off to prepare the food for their unfortunate brothers who were undergoing initiation, and for the men who were looking after them. This was a very responsible position. Seeing that they were not allowed to use the grinding stone during the period of the school, great quantities of meal had been ground beforehand. This meal must above all things be spotlessly clean. If a hair or blade of grass was discovered either in the meal or in the porridge, the penalty of death was passed upon the whole family. The vessels had also to be kept spotlessly clean, and only the purest water could be used.

A special hut was set aside for the cooking of the food. A pole was planted in front of this hut, and only the two girls in each family detailed off to cook the food, were allowed to enter it. These measures were adopted to prevent any evil minded person mixing poison into the food.

The young men were the food carriers. They fetched the food every day from an appointed place.

Every girl was allowed to choose a cavalier. Ramoroa's was one of the most outlying kraals nearly five miles from the rendezvous. As the girls knew that the food must be at this place at sunrise they began their cooking shortly after midnight. They cooked the porridge and made it as stiff as they could. Then they carved out little cakes with a wooden spoon and piled these cakes pyramidically in the wooden dishes. The dishes were scrubbed with white sand until they were snowy white. After that they set off to the appointed place to meet their cavaliers.

As soon as the sun rose the young men could be heard approaching. They marched along in single file, the leader chanting a song, while the rest of the troop joined in the chorus. As they came nearer their sticks could be heard cutting the air with a whistle. The girls quickly brought forward the food and as quickly retired again otherwise they would be very badly teased.

As soon as every carrier had his dish the procession headed back to the kraal. On nearing the kraal the leader whistled shrilly and the following dialogue ensued between the leader of the young men and the Bodikana in the initiation kraal.

Leader: **Bodikana.**

Bodikana: Here we are.

Leader: The strong man is coming.

Bod. We arise to have a look at him.

Lea. If you don't see him?

Bod. We shall share with the vultures.

Lea. If the vultures refuse to eat?

Bod. We shall give it to the ants.

Lea. If the ants don't eat?

Bod. We shall bring it to the gods.

Lea. What do the gods do?

Bod. They eat it all.

Lea. That is right.

With these last words the food bearers entered the gate of the kraal.

Tau thought that he would be allowed to enjoy his meals in peace, but in this he was sadly disappointed. There was as much formality at mealtime as anywhere else. The boys were told to sit down in the places previously appointed by them. Each boy had one of the young men attending on him. At an appointed signal from the head the young men divested themselves of every stitch of clothing and took their stand in front of their charges. On the order "sit down" everybody sat down on the ground, and the boys each extended their right hand, holding it up at the wrist with their left hand. The young men carved out slices of porridge with a wooden knife and placed it on the extended hand. The boy crammed this slice into his mouth and swallowed it without chewing it. As soon as he had gulped it down he hit the palm of the left hand against the back of the right and the carver had to see that he was ready with a fresh piece. If the carver was slow all the men jeered at him. If on the other hand the boy did not swallow quickly enough he was thrashed. The boys gulped down the food as quickly as they could. If they choked they were thrashed.

Yet the boy did not need to swallow every morsel. If he could get rid of the porridge without being detected by either the "father" or "the mother", he escaped a thrashing. All he had to learn was to keep his head, and most of the boys soon became experts at throwing the porridge behind them without being detected, and so were able to chew what was in their mouths.

As soon as the "father" and "mother" saw that the boys could not eat any more, they called out the password for the day, and with a long "Hmmmmm" the

Bodikana seized all the porridge that was left and threw it into a little enclosure built for the purpose. If they had any food in their mouths they spat it out immediately.

When the Bodikana had had their meal, the young men sat down to theirs. They ate it in their own quarters but did not swallow the porridge dry. They always saw that they had some meat with it.

In the afternoon the food carriers again went to the appointed place to fetch the porridge. The boys had their meal just before sunset. They were not allowed to swallow a single morsel of food after the sun had gone down. If the sun went down during the meal, they had to stop and throw away all that was left.

Tau enjoyed the hunting as soon as that was commenced.

Under the leadership of the young men, some of whom also formed a rearguard, the boys were led out into the veld. They sang choral songs all the way. The singing warned everybody that the school was coming and unprivileged persons avoided meeting the school. Very often women happened to be directly in the path of the hunters. If they could escape, they did. If, on the other hand, escape was impossible, the woman fell down on the ground and completely covered herself with her kaross or blanket.

Tau remembered one woman, who had been moved by curiosity and had uncovered just a little corner of her kaross. She was seized by the men and put to death on the spot. Her body was thrown to the vultures. A girl did the same thing. She was not killed, but her tongue was cut out so that she could not tell anybody what she had seen.

Arrived at the right place a drive was organised. The Bodikana were the drivers and had to enter the

bush without any arms. The young men stood in good positions and killed everything that came past. The drivers went in imitating the cries of baboons, and formed a circle so close that they could touch one another. Meanwhile some of the men stood on the kranses overlooking the drive and kept careful watch to see if anything broke through the cordon of boys. If anything did, the boys responsible were thrashed.

Many accidents occurred during these drives. Infuriated beasts of prey rushed at the circle and the boys had to grapple with them with bare hands, and pull them down until the young men came and killed them. Buck rushed back madly from the ring of spears in front and tried to break through the line of drivers. The most dangerous of these was the bushbuck, and Tau all his life bore the scar of a thrust which a bushbuck had made at him with its horns. The ram rushed madly at him. He saw it coming and stepped aside. Then he caught its front leg and the buck tore a nasty gash into his side. He hung on grimly while his companions rushed up and pulled the buck down by weight of numbers. The young men could hardly stab the buck without stabbing one of the boys. Tau was led to the back. One of the men lit a fire and seared the wound with a glowing ember. The boy was not allowed to yell.

Tau's best friend was killed by an infuriated leopard mother with cubs. When the boys saw their companion mauled, they fell upon the beast and literally tore it to pieces, while others caught the cubs by their hind legs and smashed their heads against the rocks. Then the command "kgore, kgore phutelang (surround surround, enclose all) was given and the hunt went on, while men carried the mangled corpse to the rear. Only the doctor knew what happened. Outside the initiation school nobody knew that the boy was dead.

At midday a halt was called. This was no time of rest for the boys. Everyone of them caught a lizard or some small animal, failing which he took a stone, and wove grass or bark round it till it was completely hidden. When the hunt was resumed, he took the packet with him.

After the afternoon drive, the home journey began. All the hunters picked up a log of wood each and carried it home for firewood. Very often the men decided that one of the boys had behaved in a cowardly manner, and searched about until they found a log of wood full of red ants. This log was placed on the shoulders of the culprit and so he had to return home under the burning stings of the angry ants.

When the kraal was reached, the boys threw down their loads and cleaned the ashes from the fireplaces. They did this with their hands since no broom was permitted.

At the commencement of the evening meal each of the boys threw the little packet he had brought home from the drive, to one of the men. While the man was trying to unpick the weaving the owner of the packet was allowed to eat in peace. But if the man succeeded in removing all the grass or bark before the boy was finished, then the owner was severely thrashed. The boys therefore tried to make their packets as big as they could. The game killed during the day was eaten by the men; the boys did not receive any of it.

All the officials received titles. The head of the school was called "Kgoache," the next in rank was called "Mosoara Tau" the keeper of the fire. His chief function was to carry the fire brand to the hunting ground. Once a fire had been lit it could not be extinguished again. It had to die out of its own accord.

(In all the initiation ceremonies, both of the girls

and of the boys, "Tau" (lion) means fire. In the initiation of the girls it signifies the sacred fire which is never allowed to go out and is kept by the chief's first wife, who usually has the title Matau, mother or keeper of the fire. "Tau" is also used to signify the sun. "Tlou" (the elephant) is the name given to the moon. The moon is also very important because she stands for so much in Native lore and custom.)

The next in rank was the "Mosoara Pudi", the keeper of the "Pudi", an instrument of torture. He was the public executioner both in the kraal and during the hunt. His instrument of torture was in the nature of a thumb screw. It consisted of five short sticks each of which had a hole at each end. A strong string passed through all these holes. The four fingers of the hand were jammed between the sticks and the strings were pulled very tight. Very often a stick was passed through the loop of the string and twisted to obtain a greater tension.

The public prosecutor took this instrument to the hunt and if any boy committed a crime the punishment was carried out on the spot. The greatest crimes which a boy could commit were to drink water outside regulation period, and to go to sleep during the hunt.

After the evening meal the boys were regularly asked to sing. After that the programme varied.

During the first month the men watched the boys very closely for any outstanding characteristics they might show. Tau received the name of "poho" (bull) because he had shown such courage in tackling the bushbuck ram. Every one of his companions received a name, praiseworthy or the reverse, according to the qualities he had exhibited. The name clung to him in after life, but it was his military name and determined the regiment into which he would be placed after the initiation.

Trials were held every evening. The warning which parents had given to their sons when they were children proved only too sound. The old men fixed the time for the trials and asked the young men to communicate their decisions to the boys. These trials were called "borabodisha", and every boy trembled with fear when he heard that a trial was to be held. A huge circle was formed by the men and young men, and the boys were placed in it. Each boy's name was called out and every man in that circle could stand forth and launch an accusation against the boy whose name had just been called out. The boy's life was reviewed from the day on which he had received his first warning. All his good acts were praised. Then the bad acts were enumerated. Every boy knew that he had been naughty at some time or other. He had not obeyed when some old man, perhaps a stranger, had asked him to do something. He had shown disrespect towards his grandmother. In short he had transgressed many of the rules and regulations which the community had imposed upon him. The person who had suffered never forgot, and was either there in person to lay the charge against him or had deputed somebody else to do it. Women usually asked their husbands to report the boy.

The time and place were clearly given and the whole matter was described in such minute detail that the boy could not but remember it. The boy now had the chance to defend himself. He usually remained silent, but a sounding whack with the stick soon opened his lips. Then he made an excuse, he had been young, he had been thoughtless. . . . "Were you not warned?" the head of the school asked him. "I was warned," the boy replied. No more was said but the boy was thrashed until he bled. "Blood must wipe out the sins of youth before the gates of manhood can be entered," the head announced.

In this way Tau and his companions "killed the first moon", and with a sigh, half of relief and half of dread, entered upon the second moon.

11

THE INITIATION SCHOOL — SECOND MONTH.

It was new moon and the men came round to all the huts and whispered mysteriously "Makgolo a dinoga (grandfather of the snakes) is coming to-night. When you hear shouts, you must run into your huts and hide yourselves under your mats, so that you may not be bitten."

The racket began and the boys scuttled into their huts. The men were singing and striking the huts as though they were keeping off the snakes. The boys did not know that the men were doing this to hide what was going on. A long pole was planted in the ground. On this pole a rabbit's tail and a feather were fastened. This was the idol of the initiation, makgolo a dinoga. The boys were then called out of their huts and were told to form a ring round the pole and sing "rea locha makgolo a dinoga" (all hail grandfather of the snakes.) This song was substituted for the other songs sung regularly every evening.

Next day the food carriers went round to all the villages and ordered that the food should be brought at dawn instead of at sunrise. The boys were told that a long excursion would be undertaken. After breakfast the whole school headed in a long procession over the mountains to a pool of water in the plains. The banks of the pool were covered with bullrushes. When they arrived at the pool, they all sat down and each one picked a huge bunch of bullrushes. These rushes were beaten between two stones and woven into kilts. While they worked they sang to drown the sound of the beating of the rushes. By evening the

kilts were completed, and the whole school returned to the initiation kraal.

The transition into the second month was not complete yet. When the troop arrived at the kraal, one of the men called out: "moshato banna, koma re shatoshe" (a change men, let us change the proceedings). The song ceased and with a long "hmmmmm", the boys all turned their faces to the East, so that the fire could warm their other side.

The diet was changed too. A huge bowl of milk was placed in the centre of the kraal, and the boys had to hop to it on their haunches. A mimosa twig had been placed over the mouth of the pot. The boys had to remove the thorny twig with their mouth and then drink the milk. All the time the men were thrashing them. The boys were taught in this way that during war time they must seize what they could even under the most trying conditions.

Seeing that the boys were not running about naked any longer, the girls were told to bring the food right up to the kraal. A number of poles were planted into the ground a little distance from the kraal, and these poles marked the place to which the food was to be brought. The girls carried the food on their heads, but underneath the vessels they usually placed crowns woven of grass so that the pot should not weigh too heavily on the crowns of their heads. After placing the vessels on the ground near the poles, each girl slipped her crown over the end of the pole and made a new one for the next day. The crowns were called "dikgare" and the poles were called "dikgareng" or the place of crowns. As soon as the girls had placed the vessels on the ground, and the crowns on the poles, they retired a little distance and watched what would happen next.

The people in the kraal knew that the girls were



Now a remarkable procession issued from the kraal.

waiting because the guards at the entrance to the kraal had warned them of their coming. Now a remarkable procession issued from the kraal. Each food carrier was preceded by a dancer, dressed up in a cloak of rushes and feathers which completely hid his figure and face. He had smeared his whole body with wood ash. His two thumbs were pressed to his nose and a thin stick was held in the palms of his hands. He could not clearly see where he was going and so the food carrier behind him directed his footsteps. Very often the dancers danced past the poles right up to the girls, who ran away shrieking. The food carrier then took the vessels containing the porridge and the procession returned to the kraal in the same way as it had come.

After the ceremonial entry into the second month the boys were allowed to enjoy their meals in peace. They no longer ate the porridge dry, but were allowed to have milk with it or pumpkin, and sometimes half of the meat killed in the hunt was given to them. This meat they roasted on the coals and ate with their porridge. Sometimes an ox was killed in the neighbourhood to celebrate the initiation, and the hindquarters were sent to the boys.

A new feature during the second month was the choral dances held every night. The boys were taught to dance, and very often troops of dancers from neighbouring tribes came as visitors to enter for competitions in choral dancing. Troops of dancers were drawn up in two lines facing one another. The dancer did not move from his place, but stamped his foot on the ground and jumped up into the air twirling his kilt until it flew right above his head. Veteran dancers were decorated with feathers and pieces of skin. The dance was a test of endurance and the side which had most competitors left when the competition closed

was proclaimed victor ludorum. The competitors stamped so hard with their feet into the ground, that deep holes were made. If any competitor gave in, he was egged on by his own side and jeered at by his opponents. As the dance proceeded the ranks were thinned because men fainted and had to be carried away.

When the boys knew how to dance, competitions were arranged for them too. They were divided into troops according to villages and village had to compete against village. Great quantities of beer were supplied for these dances so that those who grew tired could be refreshed and be spurred on to fresh endeavours. They stamped their feet, jumped into the air and whirled about until kilts flew over heads. If anyone grew giddy he was ordered to root up a tree with his nails.

12

THE LAST MOON.

The boys had killed another moon and now entered upon their last month. The procedure during the period was the same as during the second month. Courts of law sat frequently, only this time they were conducted by the young men. This was worse for the culprits, because old age is more tolerant and never vindictively cruel, while men in their prime are apt to be cruel. The old men were satisfied with giving the boys a severe thrashing, but the young men resorted to torture. Some of the punishments were terrible. One boy was ordered to carry a glowing coal to a distant goal and to bring it back again. He dropped it several times and was thrashed mercilessly. Another was told to stare into a huge log fire without blinking. His eyeballs were nearly burned out of their sockets. A third was ordered to fall backwards on his hands and

walk to a stone some distance away. Here he was told to extract with his teeth a peg which had been driven into the ground. Every day the young men devised some new form of torture, and the boys had to undergo these tortures under jeers and laughter from the men.

Half way through the month the fathers of the boys went home to prepare for the end of the initiation school. They went to the kraal and chose a one-year-old lamb. This they brought back to the initiation kraal. The men fell upon the animals and killed them with their knobkerries. They ate the meat, but gave back the skins to the fathers. The skins were made into new loin cloths for the boys.

During the last fortnight an event took place which proved a sinister warning to the boys. Our friend Nako had always been a coward, and had therefore had a hard time during the school. When these tortures were devised by the young men, he could not endure it any more, and one dark night he managed to escape out of the kraal. No one knew how he had evaded the guards. Next morning he was missed. A band of young men was sent out to look for him. They tracked him to a cave in the mountain. The trial was very brief. Even his own father denounced him and so the sentence of death was passed upon him. The young men took him out of the valley and a few hard knocks with the knobkerries cut short Nako's life. His body was thrown to the vultures.

The boys were driven to the river once or twice during the month to bathe themselves. After their bath they were smeared all over with ash of the iron tree. When they came home they looked like white ghosts.

The last month passed and the end of the school came. Early in the morning, before the rise of the morning star, the boys were driven to the river. The

water was icy cold, but they were told to clean themselves. One plunge in and then out again, would have been pleasant but washing took a long time because the ash had caked hard on their skin and was very difficult to remove. Underneath this cake of ash their skin had bleached to a dirty grey. This was soon remedied. Each boy was smeared all over with "rooi klip" (red ochre) mixed with fat. Then the new loin cloth which his father had prepared for him, was given to him, and he put it on. Each boy also received a little stick about two inches long, on which was carved the emblem of the initiation. The bearers of the sticks carried them cupped in their hands.

The men from each village now chose their own boys and formed a ring round them to escort them home. When they left the valley the men told the boys not to look round or else they would be blinded. The truth was that the initiation kraal was being burned down behind them so that no trace should be left of what had taken place.

Great preparations were made at Ramoroa's kraal to receive back Tau and his companions. The kgoro was swept very clean and mats were put down to welcome the new members. When the procession arrived, the boys knelt down on the mats and bent down their heads. Then their mothers came out dressed in all their finery. They wore their best beads. The maidens of the village were also dressed in gala. The mothers alone entered the kgoro and walked up and down the line of boys looking for their sons. As they could not see their faces, it was a difficult problem to find their sons. The boys had changed during the initiation. Each mother had a chain of beads in her hand. As soon as she found her son, she put this chain round his neck.

Two mothers could not find their sons. Their

husbands had known that their sons were dead but had not spoken a word about it.

Ramoroa now approached the two women carrying an earthenware pot in each hand. These pots he threw down on the ground in front of the women. The vessels broke and out of each there came a new loin-cloth. He added the words "the initiation has eaten them." The two mothers shrieked and the other women joined them in raising the lament for the dead.

Tau and his companions were not free yet. They were told to sleep in a hut set aside for them, and the men kept guard so that no one should come near to the hut. Their experiences during the initiation had been so terrible that they still spoke about them in their dreams. The women might therefore come to hear of them.

During the day the boys were sent out to herd the cattle and were ordered not to speak to any woman or girl. When a certain time had elapsed everybody was summoned to the chief's kraal. The whole initiation school was assembled there and the chief called each boy by the name he had received at the initiation. At the same time he called out the regiment to which the boy had been drafted. The appointment did not depend on rank. Each boy had won his place in a certain regiment by the qualities he had shown during the initiation. If he had shown that he was brave, he was placed in the regiment of leopards. If he was clever or cunning, he joined the finches or scouts, if small but plucky he entered the regiment of tiger cats. If on the other hand he had been a coward he was placed under jeers and laughter from the spectators in the regiment of antbears, who are only fit to come out at night and eat ants. Only a courageous act during war could release him from this stigma.

After this ceremony the boys burned their sticks and returned home.

TAU A MEMBER OF THE KGORO.

Tau was no longer a boy now, he was a young man, and as such he counted as a full member of the tribe. The initiation had brought him all the rights and prerogatives of a full grown man. He was allowed to sit at the kgoro fire in the evenings. Here he could listen to the discussions of the elders, and he could even venture to express opinions of his own. If his ideas were sound, the elders praised him. If he spoke foolishly, they criticised him very severely.

The kgoro fire is the school of enlightenment for the young men. Here they learn the law and custom of their tribe. For the first few years Tau did little talking. He listened and learned. The old men of the village often asked the young men for advice because they said:

“Black head often gives white head sound counsel.”

All the news of the tribe was discussed in the kgoro. If a man heard anything during the day he was expected to tell the kgoro. Some things may have seemed trivial to a young man, but the council of elders would have been offended if the young man had not told them.

All the young men were encouraged to travel, and for this purpose they were relieved of all duties as herd boys. As long as he travelled within the limits of the tribal domain, he was free to go wherever he wanted. If he left his own country to pay a visit to some neighbouring tribe, he was expected to go and see the Great One, and bid him farewell. The chief might want him for service in the army or for regimental duties.

After Tau had been home from the initiation school for two years, his father spoke to him one evening

after the evening meal. Father and son could share the meal now, because the two were theoretically on the same footing. . . . they were both men. Yet Tau had to show the deference which age demanded.

"My son," Ramoroa said, "I have communed with mine heart. No man can grow wise if he lives at home. You must therefore go away and see and hear. Thus do men listen and learn. But first of all you ought to go to my old father Rachochi in the country of Halaka. He is a man grown wise in the ways and thoughts of men. Your grandfather learned many things from him."

Tau replied:

"I have heard Morena. You have spoken wisely. Many things have been told of Rachochi and his wisdom. I shall therefore depart to-morrow."

Ramoroa said:

"It is well, my son. But take presents from me to Rachochi and say to him: "My father Ramoroa greets Rachochi, the wise. He learned wisdom from him, such as man can learn from no other. Therefore has Ramoroa sent his son, that he may drink more wisdom from the well that never runs dry."

Next day Tau set out for the land of Halaka to the South West. He took with him many presents from his father. He had to travel a whole month before he arrived at the chief kraal of Halaka. Whenever he came to a village, he was hospitably received, and a place was given to him at the kgoro fire. The visitor's hut was always open to him.

The chief of the Bahalaka received him very graciously. He was asked to give all the news from his own country, and in exchange he heard what news there was at the court of the Bahalaka. After interviewing the chief, Tau respectfully took leave and paid old Rachochi a visit.

Rachochi was a very old man. In his younger days he had been the "praiser" at the chief's village. He knew how to chant wonderful deeds performed by the Great One of Halaka, and he knew how to compare him to the most terrible monsters. But Rachochi grew old, and one day he said to the chief: "Great Father, we grow old. Let our son, whom we have taught to sing thy praises, be our mouth."

The chief had given Rachochi leave to retire.

Rachochi was very old now. His hair was snow white, his body was shrunk and wizened. His legs were mere spindles and could only support the body with the help of a stout stick. It did not take Tau long to discover that the seer was almost blind. His eyes were dim and it seemed as though a thin film had spread itself over them. His voice was highly pitched and sounded far away and detached.

Tau found him sitting in front of the hut in his lapa sunning himself. After a formal "ko-ko," he entered and sat down opposite the old man, who appeared to be in deep meditation.

The old man spoke:

"Good-day son of my son."

Tau replied: "Greetings, grandfather."

There was a long silence, then Tau announced his mission:

"We have come, Morena", he said. "Ramoroa, the son of Phatla, our father, sends greetings. Thus he speaks: "We drank wisdom from the spring that never fails. Therefore do we send our son to Rachochi, that he too may become wise. Give unto Rachochi the greetings of his son, and may his heart be gladdened by these our little presents."

Tau now handed all the presents to the old seer.

The old man was silent, then he began to speak slowly and haltingly:



“We have come, Morena”, he said.

“Aye, it is long ago since I was a boy. First came Phatla, a young man and he learned from us. Then came Ramoroa, his son, and sat opposite us. Now comes Ramoroa’s son, and he would learn from us too. Thus do the ages pass, and thus do the gods show us how the times fly by, each leaving its landmark. Aye, Rachochi is old. Dynasties have passed before his eyes, men have come into power but others have overthrown them. But where are they now. Fool! (here the old man passed his right hand from right to left over his mouth and blew into it to produce the sound.) They are gone and have never returned.

What is life? Let me tell you. Life is merely a landmark to show that time is passing. It is well. For how could men otherwise know when things came to pass? Now they say: ‘In that and that year when so-and-so lived, that happened. Men are nothing. . . . nothing only the spirit is something.’”

There was a long silence. Tau did not know whether to speak or not. At last he ventured: “Man is nothing, Great Father.”

This seemed to bring back the old seer to consciousness of Tau’s presence.

“Men are curious,” he went on. “They want to know all things. They want to know who made the Earth, these mountains these trees. . . themselves. Aye who made them? Why it is the great Modimo (god). He has many names but he is one. He made man, but gave him no memory. Man was happy, because it is the memory, the mind, which gives to man all these dreams and visions. But Modimo had an enemy, the Evil One.

One day Modimo came down to this Earth, and he walked amongst men. They knew him not, and like all animals were hostile to a stranger. But there was one amongst the men, an outcast from them. He was

kind to Modimo, seeking companionship in him. Before Modimo returned to his own abode he said: "Thou hast been kind. Thou hast given us meat and drink. Choose therefore any two things thou wouldst like to possess and we shall grant thy wish. To-morrow we shall come back and hear what thou desirest."

But the evil spirit came to the man and said: "Choose, oh man, choose the power of thought and remembrance, then wilt thou be like thy god. For thy second wish choose a mate who shall be thy servant."

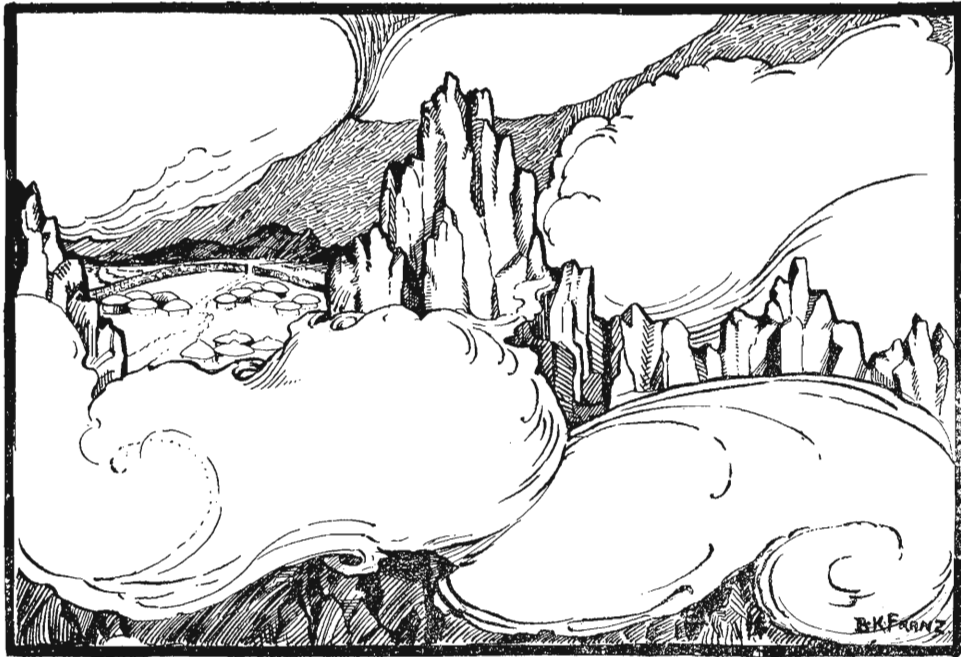
When Modimo came back on the next day, man said: "I choose the power of thought and remembrance and for my second wish I choose a mate who shall be my servant." Modimo looked sorrowfully upon man and said: "Thou knowest not what thou chooseth." Man replied: "Aye, I know, for I would be like thee." At that Modimo was very angry and said: "We rue the day when we made the promise, for now we must fulfil it. Knowest thou, oh man, that thou robbest thyself of all happiness? Thou wast happy and contented, but now thou shalt be thirsty but no drink will still thy thirst, for thou shalt always desire more. Withdraw thy wish." The man did not withdraw. Then Modimo said: "We must grant thy wish, but remember only after death shall man have power." Then he went away.

Next day man saw a creature walking towards him, which was like him and yet not like him. This was woman."

The seer was quiet again till Tau asked: "Where does this Modimo live?"

The old seer did not reply at once but seemed to be far away in mind.

"Where does he live?" he eventually asked. "Aye, that is a question asked by many. He lives here, he lives there, he lives everywhere. Yet he has his abode,



Yet he has his abode, known as the city of the gods.

known as the city of the gods. There he lives with all the spirits that have departed. There are only a few people who have seen the city of the gods. Once a man went on a journey and passed a high mountain with many peaks. A cloud rests beneath the top of the peaks and hides them from the eyes of men. The man climbed one of the peaks. When he had climbed above the cloud, he saw a wondrous city and a broad highway leading through it. He walked along wondering where he was, because he saw no men. Suddenly a voice whispered in his ear: "Son of man, go thy way but look not back." But he did look back and behold his head turned right round so that his face was where the back of his head should be. He was alarmed and cried out in fear. Then the voice spoke again and said: "Go to the chief, he will cure thee." The man went to the chief and he was healed. Men asked him where he had been, but he only remembered the kraal and the voice.

Modimo is kind, 'Tis man who is wicked. Let me tell you. When Modimo afflicts man with disease, then he also sends man to heal that disease. But when man sends a disease upon his fellow, then he is bewitched for ever, and after a long lingering illness, he finds peace in death."

The old seer was again silent, and Tau asked:

"What does Modimo look like when men see him?"

The old man answered: "Do men see a spirit? Can men see the lightning that strikes them? No Modimo is never seen. He is heard, he is felt, he is smelt. There are some who make pictures of their Modimo. Some say he is like an animal. Your people have an animal too. It is the crocodile. You have seen it. Yet that is not Modimo. Men do it merely that they may have a picture to reverence, a guidance to show that there is some Modimo."