

JEQE THE BODYSERVANT OF KING TSHAKA

CHAPTER I.

Between the Umvoti and Nonoti rivers, with the Madundube Hills to the west and the Indian Ocean to the east, Tshaka built his royal Dukuza Kraal. It was here that the Zulu nation came together in the presence of its king. While still at a great distance a traveller would notice that he was approaching the royal kraal. He would pass on his road large numbers of young men fully armed and ready to do battle with any possible enemy.

The kraal was built on a lofty hill, a prominent landmark for all the country-side. A great fence surrounded the circle of the kraal which was divided into several sections. In the lower part were the huts of the indunas and the king's friends, marked off by a low boundary fence. To the right, as you made your way up the slope, were the huts of the food-carriers, and further on was the calves' enclosure that supplied the sour milk for the King and his women-folk.

At the top of the kraal, opposite the main entrance, was the *Isigodlo* where the Court ladies and the young girls dwelt. Into this section only the King's personal servants might enter, and then only when in attendance on the Court ladies. No common man might dare to approach.

Facing the calves' enclosure were the huts of the chief diviners and the medicine men. All these huts had their separate entrances facing downwards towards the main gate. There was no approach from this gate to the *Isigodlo* which had its own private entrance.

The King's dwelling was built in the *Isigodlo*, surrounded by the huts of the women folk. Close by was the hut of the King's mother and those of the other wives of the late King. Whenever a woman of the King's household gave birth to a girl, the mother and child were tended by the King's mother, but if it was a boy it was hurried away before the King should see it. Sons were not wanted in the royal household. They might grow up and by winning the affections of the people undermine the royal authority.

All the Court ladies had their own servants who fetched water and cooked their food, and waited upon them when they went down to bathe in the river, they spread their mats when it was time for sleep, they kindled the fire with the twirling fire-stick.

Firewood was brought in from a distance by the common folk and placed near the entrance to the women's quarters. The wood-carriers sang a special song when approaching this entrance, to avoid the danger of meeting one of the Court ladies on the path, for no common man might look upon them. When the fire-wood had been put down, the Court attendants took it in and lit the cooking fires. No female cooked for the King, but specially selected young men prepared the King's food. When cattle were slaughtered, the King's beast was skinned and the meat cooked by a chosen servant.

The King's children grew up with the Queen-mother, and "The Child" was the title of their nobility till the day of their death. They dined alone and never with commoners.

Every day the King spoke with his indunas on military affairs. Before attacking, he would discuss the situation in Council. If they objected, the King gave way, especially if that were the opinion of the chief induna. He was far from ruling autocratically as an absolute monarch, especially in foreign affairs. If he persisted, in spite of the opposition of the indunas, the members of the royal house and other ruling chiefs would be summoned to discuss the question exhaustively.

In all the royal household no one was more respected than the Chief Diviner, whose daily task it was to peer into the future and inform the King as to whether his expeditions would result in success or failure. It was his duty, too, to smell out wrong doers and deliver them for execution. The King's government was firmly established on the Diviner's skill, that enabled him to foresee and avert the coming danger.

When it seemed necessary to sacrifice to the ancestral spirits, the Diviner would address the people in the following terms :—
"Whereas for this cause the ancestral spirits are wrathful, now therefore we must offer sacrifice that they bring not disaster upon us." And when sickness came to the King's kraal, he would divine the cause of the sickness. The matter was then put in the charge of the health doctor who attended to sickness

chiefly in the Women's quarters ; but on occasion, at the King's command, he would treat the high officials. But the medicines he used were first examined by the chief diviner.

Then there was one who by means of charms gained power over other tribes ; he possessed medicines to destroy and bewitch and other medicines to make the King beloved of his people, respected by all and full of courage. It was he who knew with what medicine the army must be sprinkled to avoid defeat and insure victory. When the King was about to attack a formidable foe, an aged woman was summoned, whose duty it was to doctor the army with medicine from an ancient pot. She first doctored the regiment of the same age-group as the King, and thereafter the whole army. The medicine had been mixed in a great pot and was composed of the heart and liver of a lion and tiger, of an elephant and rhinoceros ; to this was added the fat of the cunning weasel.

In olden days the Zulu kings were wont to have an attendant with whom they were on more friendly terms than with their other servants and even the women of the royal household. He was the King's favourite and called his body-servant. He would wash the King's back when he went to bathe. He had charge of the young boys and girls who attended the Court ladies, both in the Women's apartments and when they went out to bathe in the river. He had charge of those who prepared the King's food. If trouble arose between the Court ladies, it was he who first examined the case. He dressed the King's hair and saw to the filling of the King's pipe. In a word the King's body-servant held the place of honour among all the royal attendants. He was summoned to the royal presence in special terms. "The King calls," cried the Captain of the guard : and he would answer, "I come, Oh Black One," for he knew that in these words the King was calling for him.

CHAPTER II.

The praise songs of Tshaka that refer to his capture of herd upon herd of enemy cattle—show that he never rested from his attacks upon the surrounding tribes who, after their defeat, were incorporated into the Zulu nation. He honoured brave men and presented them with gifts of cattle. Our story begins with one of these expeditions, in which we see the bravery of our young hero, Jeqe.

Jeqe was the son of Sikunyana, of the Butelezi clan. He was the King's body-servant and owed his position to the bravery he had shown in battle when, as a young boy, he acted as bearer to his father, Sikunyana. He carried his father's sleeping mat and pouch and ground mealies. There were special attendants to carry the King's sleeping mat, his pillow, his pipe, his shield, his spears, his calabash for water and beer, and his stone for grinding snuff. The King himself carried a long staff and when the enemy was close at hand he summoned his chief induna to marshal the ranks: then the King posted the regiments and armed himself with spear and shield. The bearers who carried the King's equipment were posted, if possible, on rising ground with a good view of the battle field. Their duty was to watch every movement of the King and to come to his aid when necessary. In the case of other Zulu kings, this was not customary, for they stayed at home and the army was commanded by indunas. But from the very beginning of his conquests, Tshaka commanded the army himself, and his indunas received their orders from the King in person.

Now one day while discussing military affairs, Tshaka said to his officers, "Our knees are growing weak with sloth. We need more cattle. Let us attack." One induna replied, "Oh, Sire, we have but lately returned from battle and have had no rest." But Tshaka answered, "We have rested long enough," and the other indunas agreed. Messengers were now sent to the most powerful chiefs who were ordered to come to the royal kraal with all their men.

After six days the approach to Dukuza resounded with the tramp of marching men. The royal kraal reeked with the smell

of meat, as whole herds of cattle were slaughtered. On the tenth day the King ordered the leader of the army to marshal the regiments for review in the spacious cattle kraal. The warriors formed up, singing their war songs. They danced till the dust rose high, while the men praised the prowess of their leaders.

Then appeared *"The axe, the devourer of axes," at the far end of the kraal, fully armed and with all his tassels flying. Wild excitement possessed the young warriors while the captains raced hither and thither, beating the young men into position and the whole army was filled with the lust of battle.

As the war songs echoed over the hills, the King's body-servant took his position at his master's side. The war medicine had already been prepared and the army was doctored for battle. The regiments marched out one by one and that night the army slept far from the royal kraal. Every warrior was accompanied by his bearer. The King was surrounded by a strong body-guard while attendants carried his beer, his meat-tray, his mats and wooden head-rest and other personal belongings.

On the third day after leaving Dukuza, they crossed the border-land into the enemy's country. They found the land deserted. The cattle, the women and children, the corn and everything they possessed had been hastily carried inland by the fleeing inhabitants. The chief of the country had called up all his warriors and marshalled them regiment by regiment. The following morning the advance guards of the two armies were in contact. The Zulu army was commanded by the King in person. The bearers were in the rear and among them was Jeqe.

It was on that day when the army of the son of Ndaba* battled with the enemy in the low thorn country of the men of Tayi that Jeqe first fought his way to fame. The advance guard of the Dlenevu regiment was shouting its war cries as it rushed ahead to meet the enemy, while the Ndlondlos some distance behind cried out, "We will soon be with you." The dust rose high as warrior exulted over fallen foe. The spear flashed and the enemy bit the dust. The young boys who were serving as

*a praise name of Tshaka.

bearers were watching from a distance. There was "The Axe, the devourer of axes" thrusting and parrying, his plumes flying in the thick of the fray.

Shield drummed against shield as victory swayed from side to side, and now the enemy were pushing forward down the hillside, and Tshaka's army was forced to give way for the weight of the attack was heavy upon them. Now when Jeqe saw that his King was in great danger he seized his boy's spear and shield and shouted, "Look to my equipment, I am for the fight!"

Then he raced to the battle-field swifter than the wind. When he arrived upon the scene, breathless from running, the warrior who had been fighting at the King's side was at that moment slain by an enemy of enormous stature. Without a moment's hesitation Jeqe hurled himself upon the giant. He parried the first thrust with his little shield, the spear grazing his shoulder. Quick as thought, Jeqe dropped on one knee and lunged upwards. His spear passed clean through his opponent's body, who measured his length upon the ground.

Jeqe then saw two young warriors swooping down on Tshaka. The boy leaped in front of the King and stabbed one of them to the heart; the other, Tshaka transfixed with his huge war spear and cried aloud so that all might hear, "Who now can think of flight?" Jeqe, who had spoiled his last victim of his two spears, was raging with the lust of battle, but as he stood in front of Tshaka an enemy stabbed him in the thigh. As he was endeavouring to wrench his spear out of the boy's leg, 'The Axe, the devourer of axes' laid him low. Jeqe sank exhausted on the ground.

Now when the Dlenevu regiment heard the voice of their King, they rallied and turned upon the foe. The Ndlondlos rushed to their assistance and together they rushed forward in a victorious charge. The enemy fell like chaff before them and blood streamed in torrents.

The enemy was now in headlong flight and even Tshaka, too tired to pursue, was resting in the shade of a thorn tree. Suddenly he cried out to one of his men "go and see to that wounded boy." Jeqe was found and carried to the King.

"Who is your father?" asked Tshaka.

"I am the son of Sikunyana, of the Butelezi clan," replied the boy.

“ I shall remember you,” said the King. “ Wash his wounds and tend them with healing herbs.”

After the victory the army made for home, enriched with herds of cattle and captured boys and girls. The King returned to the royal kraal at Dukuza, but Sikunyana remained with Jeqe in the country of the Qwabe clan, tending his son's wound. After two weeks Jeqe could walk with a stick, and after a month, supported by his father, he was able to totter home.

Here they heard that a messenger had come from the King's kraal to inquire about the boy's health. The King had been informed that Jeqe was out of danger but had not yet returned home.

After a week, another messenger came to summon Sikunyana to the royal kraal. On his arrival the King asked how his son was named. He replied, “ Sire, my son is called Jeqe.” Then Tshaka said, “ Here are five heifers and a young bull. I present them to Jeqe.”

All who were present applauded and the King said “ Take these cattle home and tell your son I would have him come to me.”

So Sikunyana took the cattle and when he drove them to his home the whole family rushed out to meet them. The women cried aloud with joy as they welcomed the cattle, and with a loud voice Sikunyana addressed his family : “ These cattle,” said he, “ have been presented to Jeqe by the King.”

As he was still speaking, Jeqe entered the kraal by the side entrance. He leaped forward with joy and pride and his brothers praised him, saying “ Here comes the tamer of bulls ! Jeqe, the lion-hearted ! ”

All the women cried aloud with joy and Jeqe's elder brothers, for they too were warriors, danced around. Then Sikunyana leaped forward, beating his stick upon his shield, and cried “ Come forward, Jeqe, the lion-hearted ! ”

Jeqe again came dancing forth and all the women cried.

Five days afterwards Sikunyana gave a feast. When the beer was ready he sacrificed a red ox and offered up thanks to the ancestral spirits for having protected from the danger of battle himself and all his sons, and for the favour his youngest son Jeqe had found in the eyes of the King.

All the neighbours came to join in the feast. Sikunyana

announced that the King had summoned Jeqe to serve him in the royal kraal. Then he told Mapeyana and Jeqe's other brothers to be ready on the following day to accompany Jeqe to the King's Court at Dukuza. But Mapeyana, the eldest son and heir of Sikunyana, was filled with jealousy. He was grieved to think that though he had fought and suffered in the battle with the men of Tayi, he had received no honour, while a mere lad had been richly rewarded.

"No," cried he, "I will not go." So a feud arose and divided the household of Sikunyana. One party followed Mapeyana; another party followed Jeqe. The two sides armed themselves with sticks; but Sikunyana called up the neighbours and stopped the fray. The followers of Mapeyana left their old home and Sikunyana was now the father of two clans.

Jeqe was escorted by his three brothers. The first night after leaving home they slept on the banks of the Umvoti. The day they entered the royal kraal there was not a cloud in the sky; a gentle breeze was blowing on a fine summer's day. And in very truth, dressed in all their bravery, these young warriors of the Butelezi clan were not unworthy of that summer's day as they stepped so proudly into Tshaka's royal kraal.

The King, surrounded by his captains, was sitting at the top of the cattle kraal, with a great pot of beer in front of him. He spoke of war, while attendants held a shield above his head to shade him from the sun. Suddenly the eldest of Sikunyana's sons appeared and in clear ringing tones recited the praise-song of his King.

"Axe, the devourer of axes,
 The wild son of Ndaba
 Who ran wild in the great kraals,
 And when the day dawned his fame was great.
 Tshaka, the Invincible!
 The noble son of Menzi, famous from birth
 I fear to mention the name of Tshaka:
 Tshaka, Lord of the Matshoba folk;
 The great bull bellowed on the heights of Mtonjaneni.
 The nations heard and trembled.
 The great chief Dunjwa, of Luyengweni, trembled.
 The chief, Mangcengeza of Kali, trembled.
 But the women of Mongabi laughed,

Laughing in the shade of the umlovu tree.
'Tshaka,' they sneered, 'will never rule this land.'
But Tshaka came and conquered all the land,
The fiery son of Mjokwane,
Who burnt the false wizards of Dlebe.
Ndaba, Ndaba of the Zulus!"

When the praise-song was ended, the young warriors stepped forth and addressed the King.

"Noble Lion, we, the sons of Sikunyana, of the Butelezi clan, have been sent by our father to bring our young brother, Jeqe, hither, in accordance with your Majesty's command on the day you presented him with a gift of cattle. We, thy dogs, salute thee and say, 'Great be thy power, noble Lion, Lord of the mountains.'"

Tshaka asked where Jeqe was, and the boy stepped forth.

"I am here, Sire!"

"It is he indeed," said Tshaka. "I saw him rush forth from the company of the other boys and charge the enemy. We were in deadly peril when he brought us victory." Then turning to Jeqe he bade the boy approach.

Jeqe drew in his **beshu* and knelt before the King. Tshaka smiled upon the boy and said, "Yes, that reminds me of how you knelt upon the battle-field on the day we fought the men of Tayi."

As the boy was passing out through the gateway the King called him back and gave him a skin blanket and a mat and showed him his hut near the King's room and next to the Women's apartments. The King then called an attendant and said "Acquaint the boy with his duties and behaviour in the presence of the Court ladies. "

Nozitshela, the chief attendant, entered Jeqe's hut and said, "Son of Sikunyana, I have come to warn you. Think not that good fortune has brought you hither. You stand on the threshold of the gates of death. To be near the King, as you are, spells death. To approach the Court ladies or their handmaidens spells death. However tempted you may be, keep guard over your heart; otherwise, you stab yourself with your own spear. Be not too friendly with the ladies of the royal household and let them not invite you into their huts. All the

*skin tail piece

young boys and girls about the place are spies. Think not too much of food. You will see great quantities of meat. Give, but receive not—if you would avoid death. Milk and beer will flow in rivers; but unless asked to drink, keep away. A commoner eats not with princesses. If they offer you food, do not use their spoons. Eat with your hand. Do not eat on their mat, but always on your own. Be careful to cover the food of the young princesses. Do not remain in their company. Complete the business on which you were sent and return to your hut. If no one remembers to give you food, go and seek it in the warriors' quarters. The woman in charge will see to it. Always be respectful and when summoned by the Court ladies obey at once. But after sunset, even if they call you by name, hide yourself. They have hand-maidens to spread their mats for them and young boys to run errands for them after night-fall. Go in and out by the same gate. Do not enter or leave by the gate of the young girls. When you take the milk from the milkers, hold the vessel aloft. Always keep your hands clean and when you bring food to the young princesses, see that they have water for washing, fresh water for each one. Keep your feet clean. Wash your body and let it shine with fat."

Jeqe listened with fixed attention to this advice and then said, "You have told me how to behave with regard to the princesses as to my behaviour to the King himself, you have said nothing."

"The King," replied Nozitshele, "will speak for himself. He is the Child of Heaven. When you become his servant he will instruct you in your duties. As he has given you this hut, it would seem that he wishes you to be his body-servant. Do not sleep over much. If you hear a sound, however slight, seek for the cause. Stoop low in his presence and never cast your shadow over him. All that he is likely to need have ready at hand, that there may be no delay. Always keep your grass torch within reach. Air in the sun his skin dresses, his tassels, his plumes and feathers, that the moth destroy them not."

So Jeqe was given the hut close to the Women's apartments that had been chosen for him by the King. It was now his duty to bring water for washing, to see to the preparation of the King's food, and to keep count of the sleeping mats and wooden head-rests.

CHAPTER III.

Four months had now passed since Jeqe had taken up his new duties. One moonlight night as he was sitting in the shadow of his hut he saw a figure passing through the entrance to the women's apartments.

"That does not look like a woman," thought Jeqe, but he sat still and watched. Presently he was able to see that it was a man, lying flat on the top of the fence that marked off the women's quarters. Keeping in the shade, Jeqe crept forward and then suddenly sprang upon the intruder. Over and over they rolled and wrestled, in deadly conflict. But the intruder, an older man and stronger than Jeqe, threw him off at last and escaped into the night. Jeqe did not know what to do. Was he to confess that he had seen and been defeated by the intruder? For allowing him to escape, the punishment would be certain death. He held his peace.

And now the day of the great annual festival of the First Fruits was drawing nigh.

The procuring of the sacred gourd with which the King performed the preliminary Nyatela ceremony was the duty of special messengers, who went down to the coast to collect the fruit at the proper season. Among them was a man of the Tonga tribe who had come to serve Tshaka because he had been driven out of his own country on a charge of witchcraft. He had been allowed to live in the royal kraal because he was said to have a profound knowledge of the medicines of the north country and had saved the lives of many with his herbs. He became the messenger of the King's doctor and it was his duty to collect medicinal bark, roots and various herbs.

One day when the King was talking to these messengers this Tonga began to tell of the people of his home land. There was, he said, a very beautiful girl, who had refused all offers of marriage, even those coming from the sons of chiefs. He had travelled over most of Zululand but had never seen a girl of such peerless beauty.

But Tshaka exclaimed, "Do you dare to say that a Tonga girl could surpass our Zulu maidens in beauty!"

“ Oh, Sire,” he replied, “ the radiant beauty of that girl outshines all precious stones. She has a narrow waist ; her figure is superb ; the proportions of her body are perfect. Her neck is slender. She has lovely eyes beneath her dark eyebrows. She has but one fault : she will not choose a lover. Her fame has spread far and wide. She has had offers of marriage from wealthy chiefs, but she scorns them all. She proudly boasts that she will marry no one but the man she loves with all her heart, whether rich or poor, with or without cattle. ‘ Some girls,’ she says, ‘ are lured to enter the household of rich men with herds of cattle, but to me all that makes no appeal.’ ”

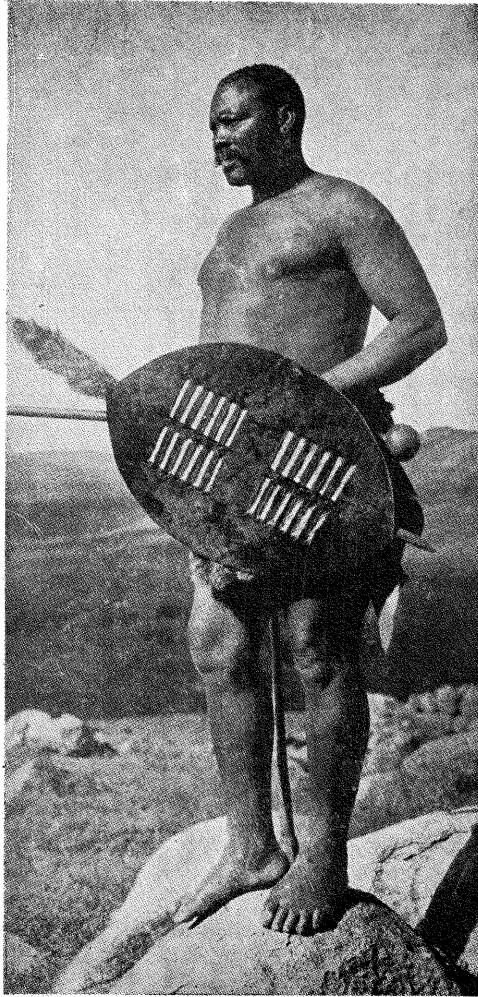
Jeqe, as he sat next the King, was inspired by the words of the Tonga stranger. But Tshaka retorted, “ You do not know our country, nor have you seen our girls. You spend all your time in the woods, looking for herbs ; stripping bark and digging up roots. But we who know the country and its people can tell you something about our Zulu maidens. No country in the world can show more lovely girls.”

While they were speaking, Jeqe’s heart was filled with a strong desire to see this proud and beautiful girl. He felt he already loved her, though he had never seen her ; but he resolved that he would one day meet her face to face. “ It is a misfortune ” thought Jeqe, “ to be the King’s body-servant. If I were a free man, I would travel far and wide to find her ; but now I must forever remain at the King’s side. Oh well ! as they say— ‘ Absence makes the heart grow fonder ! ’ Lucky are they who are free to go where they wish : but we are no better than slaves.”

Jeqe awaited his opportunity to speak with the stranger, and when it came, he went to his hut to hear the full story of the Tonga girl.

“ I must be mad,” thought Jeqe, when he returned to his own hut, “ to fall in love with a girl I have never seen ! ”

At this time Tshaka was beginning to lose the respect of the chiefs and the common people. In spite of his gallantry and prowess in war, the people were growing tired of the endless campaigning. Even the warriors began to grumble. “ We are old men now,” they complained, “ and are not yet married. We know nothing of the comforts of home life. Our days are spent on the bleak mountain side ; we sleep in the open and die of starvation. Tshaka will be the death of us. After every



NOZITSELA, THE WISE COUNSELLOR

campaign we return with herds of cattle that cover the hills and the dales. Our blood has flowed like water in foreign lands. After hardly a day's rest we are called from our homes for renewed hostilities."

And thus the people murmured against him. But of all this Tshaka knew nothing, for no one dared to tell him.

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To prepare for the great festival of the First Fruits, the chief Medicine Man had come to "docter" the King, who must first perform the preliminary "Nyatela" ceremony. The people were crowding in from all parts and warriors were busy erecting temporary huts.

The King might not now leave the great hut at the back of the kraal in which was kept the staff of office that had been held by his father, Senzangakona. Here were stored the medicines and charms of ancient kings, preserved in well-sealed pots. Here were brass and iron rings and heavy stone weights with power to quell the King's enemies by magic.

Jeqe was now summoned by the King, who said, "Enter here: I must be treated with your blood." This was "the secret chamber," which only the King, or the King's mother might enter, and only when accompanied by the chief medicine man. Here too was kept the sacred coil; the war tails, the plumes and feather head-dress of the King.

For a whole week the medicine man, the King and Jeqe were closeted therein, and every day the medicine man doctored them with cuts and incisions. The King was purged by the most powerful black and white *Intelexi* medicine. At the first sign of dawn Nozitshele was at the door to receive whatever was brought out and hand in what was needed. The King was cleansed of all evil and the burden laid upon Jeqe: he too was given strong medicine through incisions made on his chest, so that he might prove a pillar of strength to the King.

A black goat was then brought in and stabbed to the heart. Its blood was mixed with the fat of a lion, a leopard and a python. Into this the King dipped and Jeqe licked the pot. The whole body of the King was now anointed and rubbed with medicine. He was forbidden to drink beer that had been prepared by female hands, but meat was brought in and thick milk prepared

by Nozitshela himself. A gourd of fresh water was always close at hand.

Every morning at dawn the King, facing the east, "spirted" at his foes through a hollow reed, and at sundown, facing the west, he again defied his enemies. The goat from which the blood had been taken was not eaten. The chief attendant kindled a great fire near the entrance of the hut and the flesh of the goat was put in the flames and reduced to ashes. During all this time the women folk were not permitted to sit or eat in the courtyard. They had to remain in their huts except when they went down to bathe in the river.

Meanwhile, one of the regiments had been hunting leopards; others had gone to the sea-shore to look for the fruit of the sacred gourd that the King would use in the coming ceremony. Inside the cattle-fold were kept two black bulls with pointed horns, lately weaned but unmated. When the time came, they would be caught by unarmed warriors and pounded to death with their bare fists. The beasts were then skinned and the meat hung up on the kraal fences, but not eaten till doctored by the King's medicine man.

On the day before the great festival of the First Fruits, the King came out from the secret chamber, preceded by the chief doctor carrying a pot of *Intelezi* medicine with which he sprinkled the ground on the way to the river. Jeqe followed the King, carrying other medicines to be poured into the river in which the King would bathe. There in the river-bed from sunset till midnight, when all the world slept, the King and the Doctor danced their magic dance. This rite duly performed, they returned to the royal kraal. More *Intelezi* medicine was sprinkled on the door of the King's hut which he now entered for the first time after the period spent in the Secret Chamber of the ancestral spirits.

On the following morning, long before sunrise all was astir in the huts of the warriors. They sang the praise-songs of their chiefs and smoked the hempen reed. Backwards and forwards in the cattle-kraal marched the Court-praiser, chanting the royal praise-songs. At sunrise the warriors went to bathe in the river, while numbers of boys and girls brought in their food. The whole countryside was black with people, and the food was ready by mid-day, when the men returned from bathing.

And now it was time to dress for the King. The young warriors tied ox-tails on their arms and legs. The King's age-group was adorned with the plumes of the *sakabuli* bird. Each warrior had his distinctive finery, made by his own hands, a crown or garland for head or neck. It was in truth a brave show.

Each regiment was then marshalled separately, shouting its own war-cry. And when every regiment, armed to the teeth, was in position they sang their war songs, while the captains, streaming with sweat, raced through the ranks endeavouring to reduce to order the unruly companies of excited warriors.

At the back of the kraal, dressed in all his finery, stood Jeqe. He had set the pot on the fire in which the King was to boil the fruit of the sacred gourd.

The chief doctor had ground his most potent medicines into fine powder. The flesh of the skinned leopard and the black bull, slain the day before, was cut into strips. At the side near the entrance to the calves' kraal a huge fire had been kindled, on which the meat was to be roasted. Before roasting, the strips of meat were sprinkled with dry kraal manure and various medicines.

When the fruit of the gourd had boiled for some time, the King pierced it with his spear to make sure that it had been duly softened. The fruit was then taken off the fire, sprinkled with medicine, cut into small pieces and mixed with the meat.

And now the regiments began to march into the cattle-kraal. To ensure the due performance of the ceremony, the captains were careful to measure the distance between the regiments as they marched in, for if one regiment clashed with another at the gate, a fight would follow, confusion would prevail, and the King himself would be powerless to separate the warring factions.

Troop by troop they enter; the dust rises high. Up and down, from side to side passes the Court-praiser, chanting the great deeds of the kings of bygone days. Then the Court ladies assembled, standing alone at the back of the kraal to watch the spectacle, their bodies gleaming beneath their glittering bead-work.

The appearance of the King was greeted by a deafening cry as the royal salute "*Bayede! Bayede!*" rang out from a thousand throats. Of the King's person, hidden by the full glory of his royal apparel, nothing could be seen. War-fails, plumes and

feathers of bright-coloured birds hung from head and shoulders. Of his face, only two gleaming eyes were visible. Plumes of the green lorry bird were fastened in his hair. Draped in a leopard skin, he wore a *beshu*, made from the skin of the honey-eater. From his elbows and knees fluttered white ox-tails. As he paced hither and thither, grasping his shield and brandishing his spear, his warriors cried aloud, “ *Yizulu ! Yizulu* The child of Heaven ! ”

The chief doctor then took the first of the strips of meat and gave it to the King to eat. The other strips were thrown aloft to be caught in the mouths of leaping warriors. Each man bit into the meat and passed it on : if it fell to the ground it was not picked up. Behind the doctor stood Jeqe, ready to hand him anything he might require. The meat was not swallowed, but chewed and spat out.

When the King had finished eating he returned to the back of the kraal, where the royal throne was placed. It was draped with the skins of leopard, cheetah, lion and tiger-cat. When the sun shone his attendants shaded him with their shields that he might not suffer from its rays. Jeqe squatted on the ground at the right of the King, while the warriors danced the hunting dance and sang their praises as the dust rose high.

Then the King arose and summoned the Commander of the army who thus addressed the people : “ The King proclaims that he has eaten of the fruit of the gourd and all the people may now enjoy the fruits of the season.” Again the people cried aloud, “ *Yizulu ! Yizulu !*—the Child of Heaven ! ” and danced till sunset. The King and Court ladies now returned to their quarters and the ceremony was complete. All that night the warriors feasted on slaughtered cattle, and when the dawn came they dispersed to their homes. But while Tshaka reigned, his warriors had little opportunity for remaining at home, the call to battle was never long delayed.

CHAPTER IV.

A few days after the great annual festival, Jeqe caught a young man who had entered the Women's quarters by night. As he was leaving the King's hut, about to retire to rest, he saw a man passing through the side entrance to the Women's quarters. Remembering how the other intruder had escaped him, he ran into his hut to get his knobkerrie, and then crept back. But the intruder saw him and rushed back to the entrance gate. Here the two men met. As the intruder was endeavouring to rush past him, Jeqe struck with all his might and struck him on the knee. He fell down. Jeqe called for help and the young man was caught and bound. Next morning he was brought before the King. He proved to be one of the attendants. Jeqe was ordered to execute him.

Now Jeqe had a warrior's heart : he took delight in battle ; but to kill a man in cold blood was unbearable. That day he would have given his soul never to have entered the King's kraal. But to him the word of his King was law. However difficult it might be, he had to obey. So Jeqe led out the condemned man. Moreover, he was an intimate friend, and the poor fellow kept beseeching him, " Oh child of Sikunyana, let us disappear behind that ridge. Release me there and I shall never be seen again."

Jeqe's heart was filled with pity. What was he to do ? He thought of the vengeance of Tshaka when he should hear of his disobedience. Then he felt that death was a small thing compared to killing a friend in cold blood. And yet he was the King's body-servant ! To disobey was surely wrong. And now they were close to the donga that was white with the bones of slaughtered men.

The poor wretch cried out, " Must I really be killed by you, my old friend ! " and burst into tears. Then Jeqe's warrior heart was filled with compassion and he too wept. For some time they sat there in silence. Then the condemned man said, " Never mind, Jeqe. Obey the King's command. I see now that I must die. My passions bewitched me. What carried me away I know not."

Jeqe stood up and struck him on the head ; another blow on the nape of the neck—and all was over. He laid the body on the heap of bones. High in the heavens the vultures hovered, watching for their prey. Jeqe turned his back upon the dreadful scene and hurried back. He could not eat that day. His heart was too heavy with grief.

Early one morning Tshaka looked hard at Jeqe and said, " You have been lying idle too long ; your knees will weaken. Go over to the warriors' quarters and choose twenty stout fellows ; march them into the Calves' kraal and come back and report."

Jeqe obeyed, chose his men and returned to tell Tshaka that the men were in the kraal.

" I have heard," said Tshaka, " that there are many cattle in the country of the Abatembu. Go with these young men and lift twenty fat oxen, that I may see that you are men ! "

Jeqe was dumbfounded, for he had no love of cattle-stealing. But when Tshaka spoke, he spoke, and there was no other way. So Jeqe went back to his men and said, " The King's orders are that we seize twenty head of cattle in the Tembu country, no matter how we get them. Prepare provisions for the journey. We leave the day after to-morrow."

Jeqe asked an old dame to supply him with kafir-corn ; when it was roasted, ground and cooked he put it in his goat-skin sack. He sharpened his three spears, put them in a grass bag, and slung them over his shoulder ; then he straightened out his ox-hide shield and all was ready.

The day came for their departure. He stood in front of the King's hut, saluted and said, " Sire, I am now ready to depart, according to your instructions."

" Where are the men," asked the King, " who are to accompany you ? "

" They are in the cattle-kraal," replied Jeqe.

" Let them wait," said the King. " I will give you food for the road and you will start to-morrow."

He gave Jeqe a black and white calf which was forthwith slaughtered. The meat they would take with them on the road.

The next morning Jeqe went up to the King's hut. " Sire," said he, " we are ready to depart."

“ Away with you, Jeqe of the lion-heart ! ” replied the King. “ I know you will not return empty-handed.”

Jeqe saluted, gathered up his weapons and provisions and departed. He called together his men and away they went. They travelled quickly and spent the first night at Jeqe’s home. He met his father at the entrance gate and whispered in his ear, “ Oh, Father, I can’t tell you what has happened to me. I kill men now, and to-day I have been ordered to take charge of these warriors and seize twenty head of cattle from the Tembu country.”

His father was grieved, for he did not think a body-servant should be sent on such an expedition.

Jeqe could not help whispering to his mother the reason of his coming, and she said, “ My child, why not flee to Pondoland, or Swaziland, since you have no love for this killing of men and stealing of cattle ? ”

But Jeqe answered, “ Oh mother, I love my country and I love my King. On my way here from the royal kraal, when I saw the hills and valleys and rivers of the land where I was born, when I saw the fields I roamed over as a herd-boy, there arose in my heart an overpowering love and I felt I would rather be a killer of men than a stranger in a strange land, serving a foreign chief. Even though our King loves to see the red blood flow, I am overcome with admiration for his peerless courage on the battle-field. I shall endure with patience till the day comes on which the spirits of my ancestors call me to their home.”

“ You must not stay here too long, ” his father warned him, “ or enemies will accuse you of neglecting your duty. Here is a young wether. Kill and eat it, and depart to-morrow.”

They ate the meat that night and the following morning started off on the road for the Tembu country. They crossed the Tugela and passed the night beneath the heights of Qudeni. Next day in a thick mist they came upon a great herd of cattle that belonged to a number of kraals in the vicinity.

“ There they are ! ” shouted Jeqe. “ Choose the fattest ones ! ”

They chose twenty-two—the two extra ones they would eat on the road. The mist helped them greatly. They had gone a considerable distance along the homeward road before it lifted and by that time they were hidden by thick bush. At mid-day

they crossed the Tugela and rested on its southern bank. But away to the north, when the hour for milking came, the herd-boys saw that a number of cattle were missing. They followed the spoor and could see that they had been driven away. They ran home and raised the alarm. Thirty young men seized their arms and followed the spoor. That afternoon at the "hour when men look their best" they could see in the distance some cattle ascending a steep hill. They made enquiries in a neighbouring village and were told that a small company of men had been seen driving cattle to the south. They had hastened onward without visiting the kraals along the road.

That night the young men slept in a friendly village. A wedding party had just arrived. They ate and drank to their hearts' content and slept with well-filled stomachs.

As soon as Jeqe and his men had ascended the hill where they had been seen by their pursuers, the sun set and they encamped on the veldt. Some slept; others kept guard on the cattle that gave them considerable trouble, for they wanted to turn back. Fortunately, it was a moonlight night, otherwise the cattle would have strayed. As soon as the morning star had risen, Jeqe set forth with his party. They did not know that they were being pursued, but they suspected that the cattle would be followed up. They made all possible speed, hoping to reach home before trouble arose.

The pursuing party rose early. They drank two pots of beer and were off. That day there was no mist. When they reached the top of the hill they saw the cattle far below. Being in their own country, they knew of a short cut which ran along the top of the ridge and brought them out in front of the cattle. When the Zulus ascended the far side of the valley the two parties met. The pursuers now cried out to the Zulus, "Halt! we would speak with you." As they approached, Jeqe's men cried out, "Speak from there and come no nearer!"

"Where are you driving our cattle?" demanded the pursuers.

"We are driving them home," answered Jeqe. "Turn them back if you can."

The young men formed a line and tried to surround the Zulus. But Jeqe cried out, "Extend, and prevent them from surrounding us!"

The tall young leader of the pursuing party, supported by some others, tried to turn the cattle back. That ended the palaver. In a moment both sides rushed at one another. Armed with spear and shield, the clash was terrific. A great joy arose in Jeqe's heart as he faced his enemy.

"My father's spear has laid him low," he cried, as his opponent crashed to the ground in a pool of blood.

As if endowed with wings, Jeqe flew to wherever the battle raged most fiercely. And now two strong men bore down upon him. The spear of one of them pierced his shield and grazed his arm. The other hurled his spear but Jeqe parried. His shield was now red with blood from the wound in his arm. The first man now struck again, but our hero took the blow upon his shield. But now Mtwazi, one of Jeqe's men, rushed to the rescue and drove his spear right through his opponent's body.

"That's one for me!" cried Mtwazi, in triumph.

Jeqe struck again and the young man breathed his last.

In another part of the battle a young Ndwandwe warrior had fallen, one of Jeqe's men. The Zulus had now lost one man and their opponents two. The pursuers far outnumbered the raiding party, but in training and experience they could not be compared with those who spent their lives in the seething turmoil of war. And so all their efforts to surround the Zulus were foiled. Jeqe, however, was exhausted from loss of blood, and tortured by thirst. He had water in the calabash at his back but had never a chance to drink. Determined to make another effort, Jeqe cried out, "How will 'The axe, the Devourer of Axes' greet us if we return empty-handed?"

Fresh strength now flowed through Jeqe's veins. His men rushed forward and drove the enemy back. An opponent dropped dead. Jeqe was in the midst of the enemy, striking right and left. At last they gave way and fled in panic down the hill. The Zulus sank to the ground exhausted but victory was theirs. They cut some mimosa branches, peeled the bark and bound the wounds of Jeqe and two others. They collected the cattle and pushed on. They left behind on the battle-field the brave young son of Sokulu, after laying him to rest on a bed of grass. Before the sun set they had travelled far.

Meanwhile away back in the homeland of the pursuing party a large number of older men had armed and were following on

the trail. They met their younger comrades in the village where they had passed the night after the battle. Some were so disabled by wounds that they could only walk with assistance. They told the story of the battle. When the second party left the village they exclaimed, "We are following the thieves and will avenge our fallen comrades." But when they came to the scene of the conflict they found three of their friends lying dead and no sign of the Zulus. So they picked up the dead bodies and carried them home for burial.

All through the night Jeqe's men could not sleep for the pain of their wounds. Next morning they were back in their homeland among the kraals of the Butelezi. Here they told the story of the expedition. How that they had been sent by the King to seize cattle in the Qudeni country, and had fought and beaten the enemy and were now stiff from wounds. They let the cattle run, but they too were exhausted with fatigue, and after grazing for a short time lay down and slept.

The head-man of the kraal wondered what the King would do with more cattle, when he had so many, and why he risked the lives of his own men to capture the cattle of others.

Here they bathed and bandaged their wounds, were given food, and slept. They asked for herd-boys to watch the cattle. All that day they rested, for they were now in their home country and feared nothing. The next day they came to the village of Mtwazi and slept there. Next morning they took a short cut which brought them to the Madundube hills and the following day they arrived with the cattle at the royal Dukuza kraal.

As Jeqe was declaiming the royal praise-songs, the King appeared and examined the cattle. There were just twenty, for two had been left behind on the road. He then inspected the men and saw their wounds. To each man he gave a calf. Two oxen were killed and a feast was prepared. All the adventures of the expedition were again narrated.

A few days after Jeqe had returned from the expedition to Qudeni, five men came from Nonoti to the royal kraal. They sat in council with the King in the cattle fold and Jeqe was present.

"We have come, Sire," said they, "to report a serious matter. The King's subjects have been destroyed in our village, be-

witched by Mbali, the son of Ntulo, of the Mkwanzazi clan. All our doctors have smelt him out."

The King replied, "Return to your homes. I will deal with him."

When they had gone, the King said to Jeqe, "Go to the soldiers' quarters. Pick out fifteen men and go and kill Mbali. Destroy every living thing. Spare neither women nor children. Set the huts on fire. Seize the cattle and bring them back to me."

So Jeqe went to get the men and reported with them to the King. "You will rise early to-morrow," he commanded. "At nightfall surround his kraal, without a whisper from your men. At dawn close in upon the homestead."

The King's commands were obeyed. Jeqe and his men rose early and went to Nonoti. At sunset they came to the village of Magqumeni, one of the men who had brought the charge against Mbali, and sat there drinking till it was quite dark and time to unroll the sleeping mats. Then they quietly made their way to the kraal of Mbali and took position just above the huts. They were close enough to hear the people talking inside. The dogs smelt them and began to bark, so it was necessary to shift their position from the windward side. Before cockcrow Jeqe roused his men and sent them in.

They rushed into the huts and stabbed the inmates, asleep on their mats. You could hear them crying out, "Oh *Maye—Babo*, child of my Father I die upon my mat!"

Jeqe was not inside the kraal, but till on guard on the high ground above it. He could not bear to kill a man asleep on the ground. As he stood there waiting for the slaughter to end, one of Mbali's wives, accompanied by a young son and a full-grown daughter, and carrying an infant on her back, while attempting to escape, ran straight up to him.

"Oh soldier of the King," they cried, "Oh spare our lives!"

Jeqe's heart was filled with compassion and he allowed the helpless fugitives to pass. Close by, Jeqe saw a young girl lying dead in the little yard of one of the huts. He ran up and plunged his spear into her body, that no one should say he had taken no part in the killing.

When the slaughter ceased, Jeqe told his men to drag all the bodies into the huts and set them on fire. He told off two men

to take the cattle and goats out of the cattle-fold. When the sun was high they came to a river where they bathed and washed from their bodies the stains of their dreadful work.

They kindled a fire with fire-sticks, killed two goats, roasted the meat and feasted. That evening they were back at the royal kraal with sixty head of cattle and twelve goats. Jeqe went forward and recited the King's praises, but Tshaka did not come out to view the cattle. He sent an induna to say that the cattle were to be sent off at once to a military kraal and this was done.

Jeqe now stood outside the royal hut and gave an account of the expedition, to which the King replied, "We'll have no more trouble from that old blackguard."

CHAPTER V.

Now the common people and some indunas began to bring their complaints to Dingane, the King's brother, and told him how their children had died in battle.

At that time the younger regiments were not in the country, for they had gone up north to attack King Soshangane. Others had fled the country and were serving the chiefs of foreign tribes.

"We are tired of Tshaka," they cried. "He sheds our blood in endless warfare in distant lands. Dingane now summoned his brother, Mhlangana, and the King's servant, Mbopa, and some other nobles who were disgusted with the government of Tshaka. They determined to send a messenger to the royal kraal who was to win Jeqe over to their side and persuade him to put poison in the King's food. This messenger, who happened to be a friend of Jeqe, went to Dukuza and soon found an opportunity to speak with Jeqe alone.

"Butelezi," said he, "you know there is a conspiracy among the Zulu people to slay Tshaka and put Dingane on the throne in his stead, that the people at last may have rest from war."

"Of this," replied Jeqe, "I know nothing."

"It is because you never leave the royal kraal and do not know what the people are saying in the outlying districts. The hearts of our people are with Dingane : they see in him their only hope of rest from endless war. All our youth has gone to fight Soshangane. Others are away in distant Pondoland. It is clear that Tshaka will destroy our people in endless warfare. What say you, Butelezi ?"

"I know," replied Jeqe, "that our King is ambitious ; he will never rest as long as there is another King in the land."

"How can we rid ourselves of the burden ?" inquired Dingane's messenger.

"I know not," replied Jeqe, "but I am deeply grieved to see our people murdered in their homes or perishing on distant battle-fields to satisfy the ambition of one man only. But I am bound to my King because of the promise I made to serve him truly, and if need be, to die at his side."

"Well, Bu elezi, the people must not perish for the sake of

one man. It would be a great joy to be allowed to stay at home in peace, and no country would dare to make an unprovoked attack upon us. I think you could be a great help to us, for no one has readier access to the King than you."

While they were still speaking an attendant cried out, "The King calls!" And Jeqe answered, "I come, Oh Black One!" As he entered the *Isigodlo*, the King said, "Come with me, I want to stretch my legs."

Jeqe had been frequently sent out to kill both men and women, for it was the King's desire to purge his heart of all pity and to make him like himself—merciless and indifferent to human suffering. And indeed Jeqe had grown accustomed to the killing of men, for however base a deed may be, if you do it again and again, you will come to think but little of it.

But he had never yet been faced with such an ordeal as confronted him this day in the quarters of the married servants. The King just said, "Take that woman and rip her open with your spear. Let us see how the unborn child is lying in the womb."

Jeqe would rather have dropped down dead: but what could he do when the Child of Heaven spoke?

The woman screamed as the spear-head plunged into her vitals. Tshaka looked, laughed and passed on. It was a matter of no importance.

But Jeqe was filled with loathing and he said in his heart. "They are right who say that Tshaka must leave the light of day. I little knew when I devoted my life to the King's service that I should be forced to commit such crimes!"

When he returned to his quarters he found that Dingane's messenger had departed. He had intended to tell him of Tshaka's latest act of devilish cruelty.

Meanwhile, far away in Dingane's country, the conspirators were discussing how to get rid of Tshaka. Dingane's messenger told them how he had tried to persuade Jeqe to poison Tshaka. His body-servant realised how evilly the country was governed, but he was bound by loyalty to his King and would not do him harm.

Then Dingane and his friends sought out wizards and witch-doctors, hoping to bewitch the King with their spells. But it was all of no avail. The doctors excused themselves by saying



**THEY COULD SEE IN THE DISTANCE SOME CATTLE
ASCENDING A STEEP HILL**

that Tshaka was protected by even more powerful medicine and they could therefore do nothing.

At last they summoned the messenger whom they had previously sent to interview Jeqe. They told him he must make one more attempt to win him over, and say that Dingane would reward him handsomely ; he would give him a large kraal, and many cattle and wives, and would protect him on the day that Tshaka perished and would see to it that he would not be forced to die with his King

The messenger returned to the royal kraal and had a secret interview with Jeqe, who told him of the fiendish cruelty of Tshaka in stabbing a pregnant woman.

When this story was spread abroad, the hatred of Tshaka's tyranny increased enormously : but Dingane and his friends were pleased and some whispered, " Is it possible for a King to be victorious in war who has treated a woman so shamefully ? " And so the country was like a house divided against itself. Some remained faithful to Tshaka because of his great courage and prowess in war. Families were divided in loyalty and frequently came to blows. Those who spoke contemptuously of Tshaka were attacked by his supporters. Men were tried for disaffection in the royal kraal and executed. As they were led away to death they cried, " I did the King no harm ! " But the executioners replied, " Who are you, to murmur against the Child of Heaven ! You are a dog that bites his master's hand ! "

One day a bitter quarrel arose between two of the King's women. Said one, " I know why you are so saucy. You have given the King a love-charm : that's why he seeks your company. But you are not satisfied with that ; you cast your spells upon us all. " Said the other, " You have been getting poison from your lover in order to destroy our King. " Whereupon the two women came to blows and scratched and bit each other. As the women continued to fight and abuse one another the matter was reported to Tshaka who ordered Nozitshela, the chief induna, and Jeqe to make a searching enquiry into the cause of the trouble among the women-folk. It appeared on investigation that both the women were guilty and that one of them had used a love-charm to win the King's affections.

When the King heard that some of his women-folk were guilty of witchcraft he was furious and ordered Nozitshela and

Jeqe to throw everything upside down and inside out in the huts of the two women and search for poison. They did their work thoroughly. They told two servant-maids to enter the huts of the two women and throw everything they could find outside, in front of the Chief induna. Out came mats and wooden head-rests, dresses of well softened hide, beads and grass girdles, neck and head-bands, snuff-boxes, brass ornaments and anklets, perfume pots and plumes and all the finery of Court ladies.

But Jeqe was not satisfied. "Examine the walls of the hut," he cried, and sure enough, the tiny horn of a blue-buck was found concealed in the frame-work. The induna now came forward to examine, and a maid-servant was ordered to pick up each article, one by one. All the girls of the King's household were watching, those who had been chosen throughout the whole country for their beauty to delight the King, and those who had been presented to the Court by high-born chiefs in order to increase their favour with the King. Some of these had grown so fat that they could hardly stand and reclined all day upon their mats. For these women did no work; they ate meat and drank beer and were never short of dainty food. If they desired green herbs, mealie porridge, or a ripe pumpkin, or any other dainty, it was brought to them at once by their hand maidens.

Jeqe and the induna now began the examination. The blue-buck horn was put to one side. They also found a little bundle tied up in a piece of well-softened goat-skin. In it they discovered medicinal roots and powders: the blue-buck horn contained fat of some kind. In all the other things they found nothing suspicious.

The Induna now told the King what they had found.

"Go at once," ordered Tshaka, "and summon my Diviner and Court Doctor."

When they appeared they were shown what had been discovered and Tshaka said, "My own family are trying to murder me, as I sit at home in peace."

When the diviner saw the medicine, he threw himself upon the ground and his whole body shuddered; then he jumped to his feet and ran to another part of the little-courtyard: he groaned loudly, threw himself down and lay at full length upon the floor. After a short pause he sat up and said, "Those are deadly poisons. An attempt is being made on the King's life."

The doctor then examined the medicine and he discovered three different kinds : the first was a love charm, the second gave magic power over the victim, and the third was death.

Both women stoutly denied that the medicine was theirs, and each maintained with vehemence that it belonged to the other.

Love has a strange power, for instead of both the women being condemned to death, Tshaka only wanted to kill the one whom he did not love ; but he knew that the chief induna would not consent to this ; he would say that if one was to be killed, both should be killed. So the King sent out messengers to summon the fathers of the two women. The medicine was burnt. When the fathers of the two women arrived, Tshaka ordered the chief induna to tell them the whole story.

When they heard it they replied, "Sire, What can we say ? Let the Child of Heaven do unto his dogs as seems good to him."

Tshaka told the fathers to take their daughters home and punish them. However, a few days afterwards Tshaka's favourite was ordered to return. The other woman never appeared again at the royal kraal.

But fear had entered Tshaka's heart : he felt he was hated by his own people, and was terrified of witchcraft. Fear made him a prisoner in his own hut and he was startled by trifles. He had no desire to converse with his counsellors in the cattle-kraal. When the most powerful chiefs of the country came to do homage and to discuss military affairs, he refused to see them. "Is the King sick ?" they asked, "for he will not show his face to us."

The head-men now hit upon a plan to dispel the moodiness of the King. They sent for all the best musicians in the land ; those who played on reeds and flutes and all stringed instruments. Day after day they practised in the men's quarters till the harmony was perfect : then one day they assembled in the cattle-kraal and began to play within hearing of the King's apartments. It was their aim to entice the King to come out and enjoy the music.

When the sweet sound of music came to the King's ears he cried to Jeqe, "What do I hear ? What are they doing in the cattle-kraal ?"

"Your dogs, Sire," he replied, "have come to play to you. They hope you will come out and listen to their music."

And indeed the King left the gloom of his hut and listened and rejoiced in the music, and the cattle-kraal was filled to overflowing.

Then the King said, "Why did you delay so long to give me this great joy?" And the people answered, "Oh Black One, we do our best; we are always thinking how we may please you." All this time the Court ladies were impatient to come and listen, so the chief induna pleaded for them and the King consented. And now the music was over, but the King remained and spoke graciously with the people and their hearts were filled with joy.

The annual festival of the First Fruits was now approaching, and those who were to hunt for leopards in the forest and for the fruit of the sacred gourd on the sea shore had already departed. But the King had not yet entered the secret chamber.

However, the regiments had begun to muster for the festival and some were already building their huts. The maize was putting forth its filaments and would soon be firmly set.

By this time the conspiracy against Tshaka had infected the older regiments of the army. They longed for the death of the King. They had waited many years for permission to marry and now their strength was exhausted in endless wars and expeditions far from home. Thousands had perished by famine or the spear. But no one dared to come out into the open. The people murmured and Dingane, the King's treacherous brother, whispered with his accomplices, hoping for an opportunity to murder Tshaka.

One day in his Dukuza kraal, Tshaka was resting quietly, suspecting nothing: but Dingane and his fellow-conspirators had determined to slay him. The King did not know that he would never perform the ceremony for which he had already summoned the people. The chief doctor had been ordered to prepare the medicine for the preliminary Nyatela ceremony. Dingane had conspired with his brother, Mhlangana, and the induna, Mbopa, to make a sudden attack upon the King. So now, when he least expected it, they rushed in upon him and stabbed him in the back. Then that great warrior leapt to his feet and with his last breath exclaimed, "You may kill me now, but you will never rule in my stead. The white swallows are on the wing. They will come and possess the land." Thus did Tshaka foretell the coming of the white man before he died.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FLIGHT OF JEQE.

Now it was an ancient custom for the King's body-servant to be buried with the king. So when Jeqe heard that the King had been slain, he knew that he would die at the funeral ceremony. Many thoughts crowded into his mind. His first resolve was to die with his King, just as on the battlefield he was ever ready to sacrifice his life.

The King had been slain at sunset, and Jeqe, assisted by the women-folk and other attendants, raised the body and placed it in the royal hut. There the limbs were bound in the customary manner and the body covered with the royal cloak. They had now to wait for the grave to be dug.

During the night Jeqe slept fitfully, for sleep is all-powerful, even if a man be guarding a corpse. And while he slept he dreamed and in his dream there appeared to him in a vision his grandfather and all his ancestors, and they said to him, "The time has not yet come, Jeqe, for you to descend into the grave. You have still a great service that you owe your country and herein you will be serving your master Tshaka. Up and away before the coming of dawn."

Jeqe awoke and saw one of the attendants trimming a grass torch. He rubbed his eyes and thought, "Shall I obey or disregard the word of my fathers?" In a casual way he strolled out of the hut. But once outside, the desire to escape became irresistible. That his flight might not be noticed, he passed through the side entrance, carrying no arms, and made his way down to the river. He bathed in its waters to cleanse himself from all defilement and to ensure a prosperous journey, for he had been but lately in the presence of death. He leapt from the river and on the further bank plucked some tambooti grass, chewed the roots and spat them out, thus completing his cleansing from the pollution of death.

He crossed the ridge and ran on and on, with no clear thought of whither he was going. His first desire was to make for home, but was prevented by the fear that all his family would be surely

put to death if he were found among them. His next thought was to make his way to the coast ; they would never find or even look for him so far away.

Next morning, before daybreak, without having met anyone, he came upon a clump of trees and lay down and slept. He had been walking or running all through the night and he did not awake till mid-day. He stretched his legs, got up and left the trees, making for some cattle that were grazing in the distance. He knew that a kraal could not be far away : if he could see some lands he would help himself to food. An hour's walk brought him to the cattle that were being herded by young boys. He could see some kraals, too, and fields of maize. He lay down and rested. He entered the lands and found the maize in filament and the sweet reed almost ripe. "How lucky I am," he exclaimed, "to be here in the ripening corn!" He gathered an armful of mealies, wondering how he could roast them. He approached the kraal and saw some women cooking near the gate. He hid himself some distance away and waited till they had finished cooking and had entered the huts. Then he crept closer, but the dogs smelt him and began to bark. Jeqe turned back, wondering how he could steal a burning stick from the fire. He was now facing the wind and the dogs ran into the huts to beg for food. While the women were busy scolding and chasing the dogs away from the pots, Jeqe rushed up to the fire and seized a burning stick and ran back to a tree where he lit a fire, roasted his mealies and ate his fill. He then took a path down to the river and had a long drink.

He now began to feel the need of weapons, for he was in a dangerous country, full of wild beasts, without even a spear for protection. If he met a lion in the night, what could he do ! So he plucked up courage and determined to visit the people in the kraal and beg for a night's rest. "Even if there be one who knows me," he thought, "I shall not be recognised, for it is now quite dark."

As he approached the kraal, the dogs rushed out in a fury, but he drove them off. At the gate he greeted the inmates. They asked him who he was and whence he came. He gave a false name and said, "I have come from Matigulu. I am benighted and seek a place to sleep."

They told him to come in, and when he had entered, they asked of what clan he was. "I am of the Qwabe clan," he replied. "I am on my way to the sea. I am looking for medicine to cure bile-sickness, for all our people are down with fever."

They gave him a dish of boiled mealies, and when the time came for sleep he was given a place in the young men's hut. When the young serving boys were lighting the torches and spreading the mats, his eye latched on the rope against which the spears were leaning. "Aha," thought he, "that's where they keep their weapons."

They gave him matting to sleep on and he took a goat-skin that was used as a door-mat to throw over his shoulders. He lay quite still but did not sleep, and in the middle of the night when all were snoring around him, he arose and crept towards the spears. He took two, and also a heavy knobkerrie. Once outside the kraal, he quickened his pace and hastened forward with the confidence of a strong man well armed.

When the sleepers awoke they exclaimed, "Where is the fellow who was sleeping here? He has the manners of a Tonga, if he goes without troubling to say goodbye!" But they never noticed the disappearance of the spears.

Far away in the royal kraal there was great commotion and searching for the missing body-servant. Many regiments had arrived for the burial of the King and messengers were sent to Dingane to tell him that Jeqe could not be found. Dingane was furious and gave orders that he must be found, slain and buried with Tshaka; otherwise it would be a bad omen for his reign and sure to bring some terrible calamity upon himself. Search parties were sent out in all directions. Then an order came that the burial of Tshaka could not be delayed and that Jeqe was to be executed as soon as he was found.

The day of the burial of Tshaka was a great occasion. A mighty grave was dug. At the side a small chamber was scooped out, just large enough to hold the corpse in a sitting position. Warriors brought branches and poles sharpened at both ends and wattle to make a great fence all round. A hundred head of cattle were slaughtered and the whole kraal reeked of meat. Ten black oxen were chosen and doctored; their hides were to be buried with the King. All sound of lamentation was forbidden. Inside the cattle fold the warriors sang the famous

war songs of the Zulu nation, to the accompaniment of drumming shields. And there stood a band of unhappy maidens, chosen from the *Isigodlo*, to accompany the King on his journey to the underworld. All the King's personal belongings, his mats and head-rests, his skin dresses and every article of apparel, his pots and pans, his spoons, his spears and sticks, everything was taken from his hut, and placed beside the grave.

Nozitshela and the other attendants were now ordered to approach. The corpse of the dead King was carried from the hut, covered with the hide of one of the ten black oxen. Four of the carriers climbed down into the grave and received the King's body which they placed reverently in the side chamber. And now the doomed maidens approached with trembling knees and threw themselves upon the ground, bewailing their cruel fate. But all in vain, for no one listened to their cries. One after the other they were slaughtered and their bodies lowered into the grave. Then the four carriers who had lowered the King's body into the grave were slaughtered and their bodies thrown into the grave, and lastly, six young serving boys were stabbed on the edge of the grave and sent with the other victims to accompany their King to the under-world. Four ox-hides were thrown over their bodies.

The King's personal belongings were now placed in the grave and covered with hides. The huge pit was now filled up with earth. Stakes were driven into the ground all around, and a thick fence of wattle guarded the sacred spot. The warriors then went down to the river to bathe and wash from their bodies the taint of Death.

We left our hero as he was leaving the kraal from which he had stolen the spears. He continued his journey to the sea. At mid-day he passed a kraal in which he heard the people talking and drinking. As he was very thirsty, he thought he would leave the road and ask for a drink of beer. The people there had not yet heard that the King was dead. While sitting down under a tree where the men were drinking, his eye fell upon those who had been sent by the King to gather the fruit of the sacred gourd for the festival of the First Fruits.

Jeqe now greeted the party, by whom he was hospitably received. He complained of thirst and an old man handed him a pot of beer. Meanwhile, the King's messengers, who had

recognised Jeqe, were wracking their brains for an explanation of his presence. Presently Jeqe addressed them and said he had been sent by the King to discover their whereabouts, for Tshaka was furious at their long delay.

The men were thunderstruck. "We have been searching," they exclaimed, "every river-bank, but without success. The fruit is only setting now and much too small."

"Depart at once," replied Jeqe. "I shall follow you when I have finished drinking."

They sprang up in fear at the thought that a servant so high in the King's favour had been sent after them. On their return they might be put to death.

When the messengers had disappeared out of sight Jeqe took his departure, for he realised that when they heard of the King's death they would denounce him. He now changed his direction and turning back from the sea, made his way inland. That night he slept at Enyezane. Next day he rose before dawn and crossed the Ungoye range. He had taken the precaution to bind a band of grass across his face, so that if he met an acquaintance, he would not be recognised.

He was now between the Black and the White Imfolozi, walking through high grass and along game paths. Suddenly the path came to an end and he found himself facing a huge rhinoceros. The beast had scented him and was lying in wait to attack him with his great horn pointing u right. As soon as it caught sight of him in the long grass it gave a loud grunt and charged with lowered head and eyes shut. Jeqe jumped lightly to one side and as the great beast rushed past, he struck just behind the shoulder and struck home. The wounded animal disappeared in the bush.

Jeqe was now in dense thorn country, the haunt of elephant, lion and buffalo: he could hear the great beasts snorting all around. Not a trace of human habitation and he was starving with hunger. Late that evening he came upon a young bush buck asleep in the grass: he speared it and drank its warm blood. He cut off the two haunches, ate the raw liver and continued on his way. The sun was now setti g and he climbed up a tall, flat-topped tree with wide-spreading branches. He fixed the blades of his spears in the bark, tied his knobkerrie to a branch, straddled as comfortably as he could across a large bough, and

went to sleep. All through the night his rest was disturbed by the roaring of wild beasts, excited by the scent of a human being. However, nothing worse befell him and at long last the dawn appeared.

At sunrise he climbed down and searched the bush till he found a fire-stick which he sharpened with his spear. After some time a tiny spark was fostered into flame. He made a fire, roasted a haunch of the buck he had killed the day before, and continued on his journey. He crossed the Black Imfolozi, ascended the hill of Masibe and in the uplands of Masundo was again in inhabited country. He stopped at the kraal of Mkayi, of the Mkwanzazi clan and was most hospitably received. There was a pot of beer ready for drinking and that saved his life. Then they gave him some thin porridge of sour corn and after that he lay down and tried to sleep. His sleep, however, was disturbed by anxious thoughts, for while he was drinking with the men one of them said, "Three men passed by yesterday, bringing the news to Emdlétsheni, that Tshaka was dead, slain by Dingane." Alarmed by this news, Jeqe could not sleep but his weariness was enlivened by the young children playing their evening games by torch-light. little question and answer songs containing the germ from which all drama springs. One begins and another answers.

"Good morning, Sir. Whence come you now?"

"I come from Matshekane."

"And what did you have for dinner there?"

"I dined on mealie porridge."

"And what did you eat your porridge in?"

"They gave me a bowl for my porridge."

"And how are the people faring there?"

"The people are faring quite happily there."

"The butterfly flits on the mountain side;

"The old billy goat has a long white beard,

"And that is the end of my Story."

Another game they played was a test of memory, and a lesson in counting. A long double row of mealie grains was arranged on the floor. In front were two single grains. One child questions and another answers. The child who answers must keep the eyes closed. The first child points to the first of the two single mealie grains and sings:

Q. "Now can you tell me which is this?"

A. "Why, that's my dear old granny."

Then pointing to the second single mealie:—

Q. "Now can you tell me which is this?"

A. "Why, that's old Mr. Stay-at-home."

Then pointing to one of the mealies of the first pair:—

Q. "Now can you tell me which is this?"

A. "That's Mr. Take-and-Throw-away."

The first child then takes this mealie and throws it away.

There are now three single mealies heading the long line of mealie grains, arranged in pairs.

The first child now begins again:

The first two single mealies have their names "Old Granny" and "Mr. Stay-at-home." The next single mealie is called "Mr. Villager," and then comes "Mr. Take-and-throw-away." As the game proceeds, the number of single mealies before you come to the pairs of mealies increases by one every time. The point of the game is to be able to remember how many "Mr. Villagers" there are before you come to "Mr. Take-and-throw-away." As soon as a mistake is made, another child takes her place. Then more or less nonsensical question and answer recitations were tried—a difficult test of memory.

Then they sang the song of Ntunjambili. That great mountain crag that rises high out of the plain and looks across the Tugela river to the mountains of distant Zululand. In the rock is a deep cleft that from a distance looks like the entrance to a fairy castle and there is a legend that two homeless wanderers, a young boy and girl, found refuge when pursued by giants.

This is the song of Ntunjambili:—

"Ntunjambili, Ntunjambili,

Open that I may enter.

Ntunjambili, Ntunjambili,

Open and let me enter."

"No mortal man may enter here,

For this is the house of swallows.

No mortal man may enter here,

But only the flying swallows."

The rock, however, opened to let in the wanderers but closed again before the arrival of the giants.

Jeqe awoke early next morning and avoided the road past Emdletsheni but made for the uplands as if he were going to Nongoma. He shunned the well-trodden paths and preferred short-cuts. Though he felt there was not much danger of being recognised, he did not like to show himself in the open for fear of being seen by one of Tshaka's subjects. He avoided the treeless tableland that stretches towards the country of the Mandlakazi. He slept in one of the kraals near the road and next day continued his journey till he reached the Mkuzi bush at the foot of the Ubombo range.

This was the limit of human habitation. It was the haunt of savage beasts, leopards, wild boars, lions, elephants and wild dogs. At dusk he saw a tall fig tree, climbed up it and fell asleep. He started again before dawn and by mid-day he had crossed the Umkuzi river. He ascended the steep range of the Ubombo mountains and slept in a kraal of the Mangwazane clan. Here the people spoke a mixture of Swazi and Tonga. The summer crop was ripening and there was no lack of food. Nevertheless he thought it better to push on. Perhaps the messengers who had been sent to Emdletsheni with the news of the King's death had been ordered to search for him. So he descended the Ubombo range and slept at Otobotini, across the Pongola river.

Here he was struck down by an attack of fever. His head seemed to be splitting in two. He had not the strength to move. Some of the people in the village wanted to kill and bury him, believing that he had brought the sickness from his own country. The others agreed, but thought it best first to inform the headman, who, when informed of Jeqe's condition and the plan to get rid of him, advised caution, for they might be bringing trouble on themselves, if some of his countrymen were close behind, they would soon discover that he had been killed in their district.

"Take him," he said, "and leave him on the river-bank. Wild beasts will come and devour him in the night." So they carried him down to the river and laid him on the bank, with his weapons by his side. Thus they sought to shield themselves from blame, for the passer-by would surely conclude that he had been devoured by wild beasts when they saw his weapons lying with his bones.

Next morning Jeqe managed to crawl down to the water and drank his fill. He vomited gall and felt relieved. But there was no strength in his body as he lay helpless on the sand. But the heart of one of the women of the kraal from which he had been carried was filled with a deep, motherly compassion. "That poor boy," she thought, "who has been thrown to the wild beasts while yet alive is some mother's son."

Next morning she took some gruel in a small dish, placed it in her pot and went down to the river, as if to draw water. When she reached the bank Jeqe was awake and sitting up. "Stranger said she, "my heart bleeds for you left here to die in the wilderness." She told him the whole story, how that they would have killed him, but the headman in charge of the district would not allow it, but said he was to be left to die on the river bank. "I have brought you," she said, "some thin gruel, and some medicine to drive away the fever from which even we who were born in this district, are always suffering. You have sufficient strength to reach that big fig-tree. When the sun sets you must climb up and sleep in it. The wild animals all around are very fierce. You were fortunate that they did not devour you last night!"

Jeqe was deeply touched. His heart was full and he remembered his mother, whom he had left with never a word of farewell. And now he knew not if he would ever see her again. He felt he had not strength even to reach the fig tree. The woman saw it and said, "Come, my child, let me carry you." She stooped down, raised him in her arms and put him down in the shade of the fig tree. She took his weapons and placed them within his reach. Then she filled her pot with water and returned to her home.

Jeqe ate the food she had left with him and felt much better. He thought it would be well to climb up while he still possessed the strength to do so. He placed his weapons against the tree, took the herbs that the woman had given him in his mouth and climbed up till he found a place where he could sit in comfort. He rubbed the herbs between his hands, spitting upon them frequently and licking the sap that exuded therefrom. But the mosquitoes gave him no rest. He had to beat them off all through the night and could not sleep till daybreak. He did not wake till mid-day. He climbed down the tree and ground

some more medicine which he mixed with water and drank out of his hand. He vomited again and felt much relief. He was now hungry. He was lying close under the wild fig tree and was hidden by the undergrowth that grew at the roots. Towards evening he saw his friend of the day before. She put her pot down and took out of it a shallow bowl in which she had some more gruel.

She came forward and said, "How are you, my child?"

"Better than yesterday," he replied, "but I am still weak."

She handed him the gruel, which he drank. "I shall come again to-morrow," she said, "and see how you are!"

Jeqe climbed up into the tree to escape the mosquitoes; they seemed to be more troublesome down below. On the third day he felt much better. Though he still vomited, the bile was less. For seven days Jeqe lay on the bank of the Pongola, fed every day by that merciful woman. When she came on the eighth day Jeqe said, "Oh Mother, I do not know how to thank you. I lack words to show my gratitude, but God who has preserved my life will reward you for your goodness. You too have saved me and the spirits of your ancestors will not forget you. If ever we meet again I shall perhaps be able to show my gratitude for all your kindness to me."

The woman replied, "It is nothing, my child, for my heart was filled with pity when I saw them throwing you to the wild beasts while still alive. But perhaps if you had been devoured on that first day when you slept on the ground you would have felt nothing, just as you did not feel the mosquitoes on that day. Well, good luck to you on your journey, wherever you may be going."

Jeqe told her the whole story of how he left Dukuza and why he had done so. "I want," he said, "to cross over to Tongaland, beyond the Usutu river, where I shall be safe from my own people, and serve the King of the country."

The woman replied, "News travels quickly. Word came yesterday from Kwa Nyawo that Tshaka was dead. Make haste now and avoid your fellow-countrymen. Fortunately, they rarely come to this land; only the Amandlakazi come with brass beads and *sakabuli* feathers to exchange for wild-cat skins and the medicines of my country. You must take it easily at first or you will be attacked again by fever. A friend of mine, a

good Zulu, lives out yonder. The people will tell you where he lives. His name is Jiyane, of the Gumede clan. He too escaped to this country when his family was destroyed in Zululand. I am sure he will be glad to hear his native tongue again and have news of his country."

Then they shook hands and went their ways. Towards evening Jeqe came to the hut of Jiyane. When he heard his greeting the old Zulu smiled. "What has brought," he asked, "a Zulu to my home? It is three years since I last saw one of my own people."

Jeqe informed him that he was on his way to Tongaland in search of medicine. They sat down at the door of the hut and talked till dusk. "On the road," said Jeqe, "I heard that Tshaka was dead, slain by Dingane."

"Can it be true," replied Jiyane, "that that cruel tyrant is dead?—the man who destroyed my father's family; I only am alive. I escaped when our home was surrounded, and fled for refuge to the King of this land. No one knows that I am here. They thought that no living thing had escaped them. I had been sleeping in the calves' kraal, for the cattle had strayed into the lands and I was afraid I would be beaten by my elder brothers and that was the night our home was surrounded. While they were stabbing the people in the huts, I ran out of the calves' kraal and ran away in terror. I knew not whither I was going, and I cannot tell you all I suffered on the road. I had a way of catching wild-cats that the people of this country did not know, I also caught blue monkeys in a log trap and so I acquired sufficient wealth to found a family. I am the King's right-hand man and take precedence of all others in the land. It is dangerous to travel in this country during the summer. To one not born here the fever is fatal. Do not touch palm beer or you will die within a month. To-morrow before you go I shall give you a mixture of ash and earth which will keep off the fever."

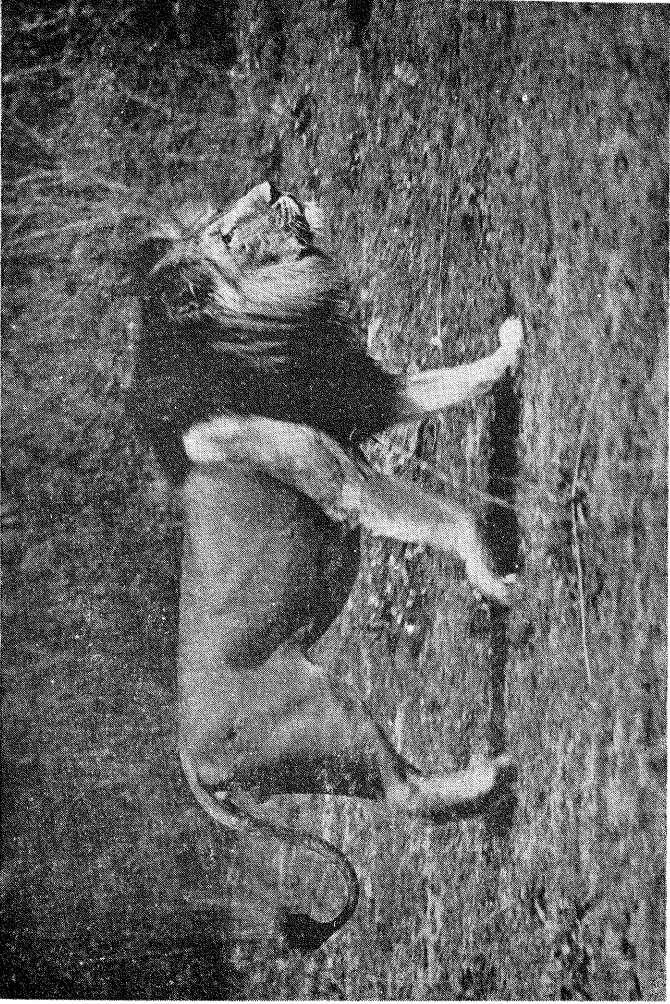
Jeqe rested for two days in that kraal, being treated by Jiyane. On the day of his departure his host killed a goat that he might have meat for the journey and he accompanied him along the road as far as the Usutu river north of Ingwavuma.

Jeqe was now in the thorn country. As he approached Ingwavuma, kraals became more frequent and he was well

treated by the inhabitants. On the following day he saw the Usutu river winding through the thick bush. He was standing on a high ridge and as he looked down upon the dense forest all the trees seemed to be of the same height. As he threaded his way through the forest he felt that from the day he was born he had never been in a country so infested with wild beasts. There was only a narrow path and it would take a whole day to cross the forest. Every now and then he would be startled out of his senses as herds of wild boars and other savage animals rushed past him. Wherever the forest opened out he could see herds of buck standing and looking at him, then with a snort they rushed back into the bush. Huge baboons barked at him from the branches and made his blood run cold. When the leopards got wind of him they snarled in fury. It was a terrifying experience and he walked warily, his spear couched and ready for any sudden attack.

Now his path led him down into a steep and narrow valley. What was that he could just see in the dim light of the setting sun! It was a solitary old "rogue" lion, sitting on his haunches on a high rock overlooking the path and stroking his mouth with his paw. For a moment Jeqe was paralysed with fear but recovering quickly he brandished his spear and gazing steadfastly into the eye of the lion he muttered, "If die I must, we shall die together." As he passed on without flinching, the lion too moved forward. Though he could not see it, he heard it rustling through the under growth quite close to the path. Every moment he expected an attack. The wind was from behind and the buck, scenting the lion, stampeded in front and crashed through the dense bush. All the time the great beast kept close to Jeqe till at last he came to open country. Here the lion roared loudly and went back into the bush. Jeqe never knew whether the lion was protecting him from the dangers of the forest or waiting to attack him. In any case it was an experience he would never forget till the day he died.

That night he slept in one of the kraals that drew water from the Usutu River. During the night he could hear hippos roaring in a great pool near the river. The people told him of the crocodiles and asked how he would be able to cross. Jeqe did not know what to do. The people on the banks have little boats scooped out of the trunks of trees in which they cross, but



EVERY MOMENT HE EXPECTED AN ATTACK

the ferryman demands a chicken in payment and Jeqe had nothing.

For two days he remained here, and on the third day the young men went out hunting. Jeqe accompanied them. As they were entering the forests the dogs put up a water-buck and brought the animal to bay not far from the hunters, who could hear their loud barking. The other hunters were afraid to advance, as they did not know what the dogs had started. But Jeqe went forward and saw that it was a water-buck. There it was, sweeping the ground with its horns, trying to drive off the dogs. Jeqe hurled his spear and the animal fell to the ground. The dogs rushed forward and seized the buck. When the hunters heard it bellowing on the ground they ran up and killed it. Jeqe was now held in great honour. The next day they rowed him across the river, for they said, "The meat he brought us is worth many chickens!"

Meanwhile, far away in Zululand, they were searching for Jeqe. At last they found his tracks and overtook the young men who had gone to look for the fruit of the gourd along the coast. They said that Jeqe had met them in a certain kraal while they were drinking; "he said he had been sent by the King to tell them to hasten back with the fruit. Though we doubted that such an important man could have been sent on such an errand, we thought little of it, for there might well be some further reason for his coming. Now we see that Jeqe was running away. Perhaps, if you hasten, you may find him in that kraal where we left him."

The messengers went to the kraal and were put on to the road by which Jeqe had disappeared. Soon afterwards the party separated, some made for the coast, others went inland and came to the kraal where Jeqe had slept the night before he entered the Imfolozi bush. The people told them that they did not know what road Jeqe had taken. They went a short distance through the forest and then stopped, for they said "No one would dare to go through this dense bush all alone. Let us follow the White Imfolozi up-stream. That is probably the way he went."

They continued in this direction till they came to the highlands where the Abaqulusi now dwell, but they found no trace of Jeqe.

CHAPTER VII.

JEQE IN TONGALAND.

We almost forgot to mention that on the banks of the Pongola where Jeqe had nearly died, a dog belonging to the kraal had become his faithful friend. It used to follow the woman who brought him food, and he always left a little over for the dog. When Jeqe left the Pongola the dog followed his tracks and at last came up with him. From now on he was Jeqe's inseparable companion.

At the crossing of the Usutu the dog swam at the side of the boat. Jeqe never had a friend more faithful than that dog. It followed him wherever he went and he loved it almost as a brother.

There were no kraals close to the Usutu ; but when he reached the high country above the river valley, villages began to appear and he could hear the lowing of cattle. He was now in the country of Ndhlebende, the Tonga king who ruled the land.

He entered a kraal, greeted the inmates and sat down under a tree. Some men came up and asked him where he came from. Jeqe answered that he had come from Zululand, in search of healing medicines, for he had heard from those who had visited the country that there were many wonderful herbs to be found there. He was given food and sleeping quarters, but the head-man at once sent two men to tell the King of his arrival. The reason for this haste was that they thought Jeqe was a spy sent on ahead of an invading army ; for they were not satisfied with his story and his reason for coming to their country.

The following day, after having eaten, Jeqe was ready to start off, but he was told to wait and drink beer quietly with the men of the kraal. That afternoon five young men came from the royal kraal with orders to bring Jeqe thither. They arrived at the royal kraal the following day and Jeqe was questioned with regard to the situation in Zululand. He replied that he had heard on the road that Tshaka had been assassinated by his brother Dingane. The King found no reason to suspect Jeqe and ordered him to be taken to the kraal of a head-man named

Ndlovu, who was to keep close watch on him. This Ndlovu was not a Tonga by birth : he had come in search of medicine from the Hlubi country. He liked the Tonga people, had settled down and was happily married there. He and Jeqe soon became good friends.

One day there appeared a bridegroom's party, driving the *lobola* cattle for a girl who lived close by. The young men of the kraal, including Jeqe and his faithful dog, joined the party and proceeded to the bride's home where they were hospitably entertained with beer and meat.

In this kraal there dwelt a very beautiful Tonga girl, as straight and lithe as a green willow tree. She wore a short native dress reaching from waist to thigh. As the girls danced before the young men, Jeqe was struck by her beauty, her skill and graceful movement. When her companions began to play upon their harps and reed pipes she came dancing up to where Jeqe was sitting with the other men, and as she danced she showed the graceful lines of her tall girlish figure. By her action she seemed to say, "Here is a stranger from a far country. Let us show him the beauty of our Tonga girls."

Jeqe was overwhelmed. "What has come over me!" he wondered. "For months I lived in the royal kraal, surrounded by the most beautiful maidens of Zululand, and by slave girls captured in war, but my heart was never touched till now."

When the girl had rejoined her companions Jeqe turned to Ndlovu : "Do tell me that girl's name."

"Why," he replied, "do you ask?—she is but one among many."

"I have fallen in love with her," said Jeqe.

"Don't," replied Ndlovu, "it would mean your death. She has been chosen by the King's son. At present she will not have him, but she may change her mind. She is still too young to take love seriously."

Once again the girl danced before Jeqe, who now sprang to his feet and danced the dance of the Zulus. All applauded and Zaki (he had discovered her name) among them.

While the dancing was still in full swing Jeqe sent one of Ndlovu's young boys to ask Zaki to come and talk to him. Zaki came at once and said "How did you, a stranger, come to know

my name? And why did you ask me, who know you not, to come and speak with you?"

As he listened to the girl's words, Jeqe was fascinated by her white teeth, her long eyelashes and her skin that glistened like gleaming bronze. "Oh," thought Jeqe, "what lovely girls they have in Tongaland!"

The girl stood before him as if to say, "Look to your heart's content," but her words were, "Tell me, Sir, why you sent for me?"

Then Jeqe, greatly daring, replied, "I sent for you to tell you that I love you."

The girl burst out laughing. "What are you saying! Who in the world are you? I don't even know your name—and at the first sight of me you tell me you love me! Take my advice and go back to Zululand!" She then turned her back on him and disappeared in the crowd.

Jeqe called his dog and walked back to his hut. All the way back he thought of Zaki and his unhappy position. He was in love with a beautiful girl but had not so much as a chicken for the bride-price. "Oh," he thought, "if I only had the cattle given me by Tshaka! for I'm sure, if I had a chance, I could win her heart. The trouble is that she is being courted by the King's son. But come what may, I shall never give her up. There is still hope: she has not given her promise." While deep in these thoughts, Ndlovu came up and said, "Well, Jeqe, what did you think of the dance?"

"The dance was all right," said Jeqe, "but the real joy was that lovely Zaki!"

"Forget her!" advised Ndlovu. "You will be killed if you say a word to her. Many have courted her, but when the King's son appeared in the picture they gave way."

"Well, I shall give way to no one. No, by Tshaka, not I. If she accepts me we shall run away together."

"Have you forgotten," said Ndlovu, "all the hardship you suffered on the road, and are you thinking of letting that poor girl spend the night in the forest, surrounded by roaring lions? Moreover, the King told me to watch you carefully, and shall I not get into trouble if you run away?"

"Even if I did run away, they could never hold you responsible. Besides, they would be only too glad to hear that I had

left their country. The Ubombo range is not far off. We could leave at night, sleep at the foot-hills, and next morning go up to Swaziland."

"You know nothing of this country," said Ndlovu, "if you think you can travel alone with a girl. Why, the forest is full of elephants, hyenas, rhino and wild dogs. Zaki knows this only too well. Even if she loved you, she would refuse to run away with you by night."

Next morning when Jeqe woke up he called one of Ndlovu's herd-boys and said, "Tell me where the girls of the kraal we were in yesterday draw their water. I shall go down to the river you go and tell Zaki that there is a girl from this kraal who would like to speak to her at the river."

Jeqe went down to the river bank and waited. The lad went to Zaki's home and played with the young boys till mid-day before he had a chance to speak to Zaki. At last when the girls were preparing to go down to the river, he was able to give his message. When the girls arrived and Zaki saw Jeqe, she burst out laughing. "So you are the young girl who wished to speak to me! You should be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Stranger, to come and teach our little boys to tell lies." Then changing her tone she added, "but even if he had said it was you who wanted me, I should have come, for I long to hear of the deeds of heroes. Courage I admire above all else, and the fame of your Zulu warriors has reached our ears. But this is a land of cowards. Come and tell me about your wars."

Zaki sat down and invited Jeqe to sit beside her on the grass. He obeyed, determined to do his best. And in the tales he told her, truth and fiction blended in his ardent imagination. He told of his battles with man and beast, and how all alone he had killed a rhinoceros. Zaki listened in wonder, while her heart filled with sympathy and admiration for the young Zulu.

"You must come," said she, "to my home to-morrow and explain to all of us the history and traditions of your great country." And so they parted for the day.

On the way home Jeqe thought, "I must not press too hard in my courting, for I have found the way to her heart."

The next day when Jeqe and the herd-boy were walking along the river bank, he said, "I can't go back just yet; go and ask Zaki to come down to the river." Soon afterwards the boy

returned, accompanied by Zaki. On this day she was dressed with beautiful simplicity. She wore a small bead apron in front, with a waist-belt hanging low at the back. Her shining skin glistened in the sunlight.

Jeqe was speechless with the wonder of her beauty and could hardly take his eyes from off her. Indeed he had won her heart the day before when she looked so shyly at him, but he did not forget that she had preserved her dignity and the pride of her girlish independence. He was now resolved more than ever to win her heart.

He acted before her delighted eyes a battle of young warriors. He leaped from the ground, brandishing his shield and weapons. He showed her the wounds he had received in the fight at Qude-ni, but did not say that they had gone to steal cattle!

Zaki's heart was moved to its depths, for what she loved above all else was a stout heart. Then Jeqe said, "if you were a man, Zaki, what a warrior you would be!"

"Do you really think so?" she replied, as she raised her arm and clenched her fist. "Oh what fun it would be to have a real battle and knock my enemy head-over-heels!"

"Shake hands on that," said Jeqe, and they shook hands. He looked straight into her eyes and said, "Tell me, Zaki, what do you think of me?"

Her heart was touched. He dropped his weapons. He took her in his arms and kissed her. Zaki burst into tears, but whether they were tears of love, or pity, or fear, she knew not. She only knew that her heart was strangely moved, and by one she scarcely knew. Overcome by shame, she said "Let me go home now. In a day or two let us meet here again, Jeqe."

The boy and the dog turned homewards, and as Zaki saw them disappear in the trees she knew that her love for Jeqe was unconquerable.

As the others were walking back the boy said, "That girl is in love with you. It is known all over the countryside that she won't let any man touch her with a finger-tip."

"What *do* you mean!" said Jeqe.

"It's the sober truth," replied the boy. "Look back now, and you will see her gazing after us."

"O never mind," said Jeqe, "we shall know in a day or two what her answer will be."

The appointed day came, as arranged by Zaki. Off they went, Jeqe, the boy, and the dog, down to the river bank. Jeqe had kept the secret from the young men of the kraal. Only Ndlovu himself knew of it. He was afraid that they might spoil his nest and that the bird would fly before she laid her eggs! He told the young boy again and again not to mention the subject. When they came to the meeting place, three girls were waiting, Zaki and two older sisters. But Zaki was a different girl. Her boldness had disappeared. It seemed that she wanted only to hide behind her sisters.

Zaki's eldest sister was the first to speak. "Well, Butelezi, we have come with our sister Zaki, who asked us to accompany her that she might give you her answer, and her answer is this: she loves you, Butelezi, but in accordance with our custom, she cannot give you her hand and promise to be yours before you gladden her sisters' hearts with a gift of beads or some other present. We give you and Zaki our blessing: but go, Butelezi, and bring us our beads, and when you have got them, send your boy to bring us word. We shall tell him where we may meet."

"Oh, my sisters, if I may call you so now, must I go without one word with Zaki?" "No, Brother, we must obey the customs of our country. Her heart is yours; do not be anxious on that account. But first you must do what we told you."

So back they went, Jeqe, the boy, and the dog. Jeqe, immersed in thought, was silent and the boy was the first to speak. "Oh, bother those girls!" he said; "what a nuisance they are! I hate the sight of them. And they call you 'Butelezi' too. Where did they get your name from?"

"Do you know where we shall find the ornaments they want? The kind that Zaki wore the day she appeared in all her finery?" "We shall have to walk all day, sleep in some kraal and return next day. I thought you had noticed them: the snail shells from the pools near the sea, quite small. Some are white, others varicoloured. They thread them carefully on a string to make a necklace. When they make a waist-belt they choose very small shells and thread them together on a string of soft buckskin to make the front apron. These are the ornaments most prized by our girls. I wonder have the girls of your country the same fashion?"