

Drayson Alfred Wilks

The White Chief of the Caffres



Alfred Drayson
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Drayson Alfred W. Alfred Wilks The White Chief of the Caffres

Chapter One

I was born in the city of Delhi, in Central India, where my father held a command as major in the old East India Company's service. I was an only son, and my mother died shortly after I was born. I resided at Delhi until I was ten years of age. Having been attended as a child by an ayah, and afterwards taught to ride by one of my father's syces, I learned to speak Hindostani before I could speak English, and felt quite at home amongst black people.

My father, Major Peterson, had a brother in England who was a bachelor, and an East Indian merchant, and supposed to be very rich. I was named Julius, after this uncle, who was my godfather, and who was much older than was my father, and who, although he had never seen me, yet took great interest in me, and mentioned me in all his letters.

It was just before my tenth birthday that my father received

a letter from my uncle, which caused a great change in my life, and led to those adventures which I relate in this tale. In this letter my uncle wrote, that from his experience of India he was certain that I could not be properly educated in that country; that at my age the climate was very trying; and that consequently he wished my father to send me home, in order that I might be placed at a good school in England, and eventually sent either to Addiscombe or Haileybury, according as I chose the military or civil service of India. The expenses of my education, my uncle stated, would be undertaken by him, so that money need not interfere with the question. Young as I was I saw the advantages of this proposition, and being by nature ambitious and fond of adventure, I was pleased at the prospect of seeing England. After a little hesitation my father consented to part with me, and I and my father commenced our long journey from Delhi to Calcutta. In those early days of my youth there were no railways in India; there was no Suez Canal, and there were no steamers in the world. To reach England we embarked at Calcutta in what was termed one of Green's ships – that is, a fine East Indiaman, a full-rigged ship of about 1,000 tons – and having sailed down the Hoogly river, commenced our four months' voyage, round the Cape, and from thence by Saint Helena to England.

I can remember Delhi as it was in those days – its fine old fort, the fortifications round the town, its long street, in which were the bazaars and jewellers' shops. Many of the little native children to whom I used to talk in my childhood were probably

among those who, during the Mutiny, were the murderers of my countrymen. Localities on which I have sat with my ayah, and took my first steps, have since then become famous as the places where our soldiers have fought and conquered against overwhelming numbers. Though I have passed through many strange scenes, I still remember Delhi, for it was my birthplace, and it has ever had a charm for me on that account only.

After a journey of nearly a month we reached Calcutta, and were received as guests by a friend who lived in Fort William. I was astonished at the sight of the ships that were anchored close to the fort, for I had no idea that any vessels could be so large. As the *Madagascar*— the ship in which I was to sail — was ready for sea, we stayed but a few days in Calcutta. I was placed in charge of the captain, bid my father good-bye, promised to be a good boy and to do everything my uncle wished me to do, and commenced my voyage to England.

On the second day after leaving Calcutta we entered the Bay of Bengal, and with a fair wind sailed merrily over the dancing waves. During a few days I was sea-sick; but I soon recovered, and was then much interested in watching the sailors when they went aloft to take reefs in the sails, or to take in a royal or studding-sail. There were several passengers, and of all ages, many of whom, knowing that I was alone, were very kind to me. There was one young lady about eighteen, who was my special favourite, and who used to tell me stories as we sat on deck in the evening. I called her Constance: I did not then know her by

any other name. Altogether, there were five ladies on board; for in those days more ladies went to India than ever came back. Then sanitary precautions were not as well-known as they are at present, and fever and cholera claimed their victims in the Land of the Sun. I will refer only to those with whom I was afterwards associated; and these were Mrs Apton, a widow, and her daughter, a girl about twelve years old.

Our voyage continued, without anything remarkable occurring, until three days after we had passed the Mauritius, when it became calm, and for three days we merely drifted helplessly on a calm sea. On the fourth day it became dark and gloomy; there were no actual clouds, but the sky was nearly black, the sun was invisible, and the captain and his officers looked anxious, whilst the passengers gathered together in groups, and talked in low tones.

I had noticed that the captain had gone several times into the cabin and looked at a long wooden instrument that seemed to interest him much, and which I have since learned was a barometer. By means of this instrument and the indications in the sky, he knew that a storm was coming. In the days of sailing-vessels a storm was a more serious matter than it is in the present days of steam. A lee shore is now not a matter of such extreme danger; for a steamer is not at the mercy of the winds, though she cannot escape the fury of the waves.

Darker and darker became the sky, whilst the ship was stripped of all her sails except one on the fore mast and one on

the mizen, and every one was watching anxiously for the first burst of the expected storm. It was about the hour of sunset when the gale began, and we ran before it for a few minutes, the sea as yet being calm. Suddenly the wind chopped round, and before the ship could obey her helm she was taken aback, the foresail flattened against the mast, and in another instant the mast snapped like a twig, and fell on deck. The passengers, at the commencement of the storm, had been ordered below so as to be out of the way of the sailors, and it was merely from the reports that the mates occasionally brought us, that we knew what was happening on deck. The sea soon rose, and the ship lifted and fell, just as though she had been a small boat. During two days the gale continued; but no fears were entertained for the vessel's safety until a tremendous sea, striking her astern, carried away her rudder and left her a helpless log on the water. The sky had been so completely overcast since the commencement of the gale, that neither the sun nor a star had been seen; consequently no observations could be taken to tell where the ship was; but the captain considered that she was west of the Natal bluff, and about fifty miles from the land. The currents in this part are, however, so variable and run sometimes with such force, that it is difficult, without observations, to ascertain a ship's position.

The night was pitch dark, and every one in a state of great anxiety. No one had undressed, all the passengers being huddled together in the principal saloon. It must have been shortly after midnight when we heard a great noise on deck, shouts and

running about, and then came a crash and a shock that made every sailor and passenger aware that a great catastrophe had occurred.

I was lying on one of the fixed sofas, and was sent flying across the cabin, and was considerably bruised; but the pain I experienced I scarcely thought of, as my alarm was so great to hear the terrific rush of water which struck the vessel, poured over her, and deluged the cabin. Two or three times the ship rose, and then, with a crash of smashing timbers, came down again, and was once more deluged with water. "We have struck on a rock!" was the cry (such was the fact), "and shall all be drowned."

As though satisfied with its victim, the storm ceased as suddenly as it had risen; but the sea continued to break over us all night, and every minute we expected the ship to break up. Had she not been a strong teak-built ship, she would probably have gone to pieces long before morning; but the sea gradually went down as the tide receded, and we at length saw that day was breaking. By this time some of the most daring among the male passengers removed the hatch that had been placed over the gangway to keep the water out, and ventured on deck, when the full extent of our disaster was visible. The ship's masts had all fallen, and of the captain and crew only five sailors remained; the others had been washed overboard, or had been killed by the falling masts. The ship had struck on a ledge of rocks about half a mile from the shore, and had then been carried over this into a sort of bay inside. As the tide fell, this ledge acted as a sort of

breakwater, and fully accounted for the sudden decrease in the force of the sea as the tide went down. Between the ship and the land there was comparatively calm water, spotted here and there with black-looking rocks just showing above water.

Knowing that when the tide again rose we might again be exposed to the heavy seas which were still running, the sailors at once called upon the passengers to help them to construct a raft; for every boat had been either smashed or carried away, and several small dark objects moving rapidly through the water showed that sharks were ready to seize on any human being, who ventured into their element.

A raft was soon constructed, and the females were first conveyed to the shore. I followed on the second journey, and then the raft went backwards and forwards, conveying to the shore some provisions, clothing, valuables, two or three guns and pistols, with ammunition, a large sail to serve as a tent, and other articles that might be deemed necessary.

The men worked till past mid-day, when the tide rose, and with it the wind, and it was no longer possible to make use of the raft. We were all, however, busy on shore, making a sort of "lean-to" out of the sail, cooking provisions, and searching for water; and we thus passed our first day, the wind again blowing a hurricane. We lay down to rest that night, thanking God for our escape; for although our future was uncertain, yet we were better off than were the poor fellows who had been washed overboard, and by this time had probably been eaten by sharks.

On the following morning there was no sign of the wreck, but the shore was strewn with her timbers and cargo: the latter, when not utterly spoiled by the sea-water, were collected and piled up near our tent.

During the morning the men had been talking together as to what was best to be done. It was hoped that some ship would pass the coast, and that by aid of a flag which we had saved from the wreck, we could signal to the ship, and thus be relieved from our position. One question which could not be decided was on what part of the coast we had been cast. Some of the sailors thought we were near Saint Lucia Bay, east of Natal, others that we were nearer the Great Fish River. Of inhabitants or houses we saw nothing, but at night we heard the cries of animals, some of which I recognised as made by jackals, for round Delhi there were hundreds of these animals which used to serenade us at night. We were fortunate in finding water: an excellent clear stream ran into the sea within a few yards of where we had landed. We also found oysters firmly fixed to the rocks, which were very good. Some fish-hooks and lines were among the articles saved from the wreck, and rough fishing-rods having been cut from the trees, several fish were caught, which we fried in our wood fire. Thus we had no fear of starving, and though our position was not pleasant, none of the party despaired. To me, I must own, the conditions were not unpleasant, I had read and heard of shipwrecks and adventures of different kinds, and being by nature gifted with a hopeful and fearless constitution, I

rather enjoyed the whole thing; for I was too young to think or feel deeply for the loss of the captain and crew, who had been drowned. In fact, like most children, I was thoughtless, and did not reflect enough for the disaster to impress me much. I had kept beside Constance all the time we were on the raft, and sat beside her in our tent. I felt very happy with her, and used to gather flowers for her, as many grew close beside where we were stopping. To me it seemed like a picnic, such as we used to have sometimes in the cool weather at Delhi, but it was of longer duration.

The men had been talking about the possibility of travelling down the coast to find either Natal, where there were a few traders, or if we were west of Natal, to reach the Cape Colony, and then get some vessel to come up the coast and rescue the females and the remainder of the men. But the difficulties of the journey were unknown: they had no idea of what rivers or other obstacles might be in the way; and so four days passed without any move being made; and although a sharp look-out was kept, no vessel was seen.

Chapter Two

It was on the fifth night after we had landed from the wreck, that one of the sailors who was out with his gun, trying to shoot some monkeys that he had seen in the trees, reported that he had seen some black men in the distance, but did not think they had seen him. He did not like to show himself to these men, for he did not know who, or what they might be. None of the party knew much about the natives on this coast; there was some kind of belief that they were Caffres or Hottentots, but whether these people were inoffensive and friendly, or the reverse, no one really knew. When I think of what happened, and now that I know the character and habits of the tribes in South Africa, I am surprised at the reckless indifference that was shown by the sailors and male passengers of our party, in not taking such precautions as should always be taken in a strange country.

I had slept under the canvas each night near the ladies of the party, whilst the men had selected various places near, on which they had made a bed of grass; and by sticking a few branches of trees in the ground, they had made a covering so as to keep off the dew, which fell very heavily each night. Thus the men were separated, whilst I and the females were all together.

It was towards the morning, although no signs of daylight appeared, that I awoke suddenly, with the feeling of some danger being near. I could not tell what it was, but it seemed like a

dream in which I had escaped some danger. I could not get to sleep again, but lay listening and afraid to move. I must have remained in this watchful state about a quarter of an hour, when there was a noise as of men moving through the grass and bushes, the sound of blows, two or three groans, and then all was quiet again. I crawled along the ground to where Constance was lying, and found her awake and trembling. I whispered to her, "What is it?" She said, "I don't know, but keep quiet." We were afraid to move, but I could hear my heart beating, and it was as much as I could do to prevent crying out. We seemed to be hours in this state before the first signs of daylight appeared, and the objects round us could be seen. Day breaks quickly in those latitudes, and we were soon able to see what to us was a most astonishing and alarming sight. Seated on the ground and looking like stone figures, there were about forty black men. They had been sitting in a circle round the tent in which I and the females had been sleeping. They were each armed with some short spears, a large knobbed stick, and each had a black and white shield, which he held in front of him. My surprise was great on first seeing these men, and I called to Constance, who was asleep, to look at them. I could see none of the sailors or male passengers, and wondered how it was they were not showing themselves anywhere. As soon as Constance and the other ladies sat up to look at the black men, they became alarmed, and asked each other what it all meant. But they were not left long in doubt as to what to do, for a very tall black man rose and made a speech in a language none of us

could understand; and then, signing to the females to follow him, he strode off towards the north, and away from the sea. By this time we were all much frightened: we did not know what had happened, but we supposed the men had been taken inland, as we could see no signs of them. We did not hesitate about following the man who had spoken, for the other men closed round us and shook their sticks at us if we hesitated about moving.

It was not till I had been many months in this country and had learned the language that I heard all that had taken place on that eventful night; and it may aid the reader to better understand our position if I now describe those details which were afterwards so graphically described to me.

Our ship had been wrecked on the coast of South Africa, about midway between Natal and Algoa Bay, and not far from a river termed the Umzimvubu, Imvubu being the native name of the hippopotamus, several of which animals are inhabitants of this river. The natives in this part were a branch of the great Zulu nation, but independent of the Zulus. They were sometimes called the Amapondas, but they were more pleased to be called Amazimvubu. This tribe was ruled over by a chief called Inyati, or the Buffalo, and was strong enough to be feared by the Amakosa tribes to the west, and respected by the Zulus to the east. In their habits they resemble the Zulus, and were given to use the short stabbing assagy in preference to the light assagy used for throwing by the Amakosa. They lived in huts similar to those of the other South African Caffres, and were great

cultivators of the soil, growing mealies or Indian corn, a smaller grain called m'beli, pumpkins, and sugar-cane. They were lovers of cattle, and a man's riches consisted of herds of cattle and of wives.

I learned that the second day after we had been wrecked we had been discovered by these people, who had then set a watch on us; and it having been discovered that the men possessed firearms, and that there were women belonging to the party, it was decided that an attack should be made on the men during the night, and by surprise. Every detail of our camp was known to these people. By concealing themselves in the bush they had noted where each man lay down to sleep. Two Caffres had then been told off to assage each individual, and to do it so quietly that no alarm should be given. Every plan was so well arranged that, at a given signal, each man had been stabbed dead at once, and his body carried away and thrown in the water. The females, it was known, slept under the canvas, and they were not to be touched. I, being always with them and having long curly hair, was supposed to be a little girl, and so was spared; and when it was known that I was not a girl, I was allowed to live as I was so young. All these details were described to me by a young Caffre who had been present at the massacre, and whose first adventure had been at this affair.

We had walked for some hours along narrow paths that sometimes led through bushes, at others over hills and down valleys, and at length reached a collection of huts, which I

afterwards learned was named *must*, or, as the Dutch and English call it, a kraal. At this kraal several men, women, and children came out to look at us, all seeming much amused at our appearance, and especially astonished at the long hair of the ladies, for the Caffres have only short and woolly hair.

We were given some milk at this kraal, and I observed that the Caffre who had spoken to us when I first awoke seemed to be giving orders to all the men, and when they replied to him they often said "*Inkose*." I tried to make these people understand me by saying a few words in Hindostani, but they could not understand me and shook their heads. On my repeating to them the first word I learned, viz., *Inkose*, they nodded, and pointing to the large Caffre, said "*Yena Inkose*" This, I afterwards learnt, meant "He is the chief."

We continued our journey during three days, resting at night in the kraals; and we saw thousands of Caffres, who were all alike, and who all seemed equally surprised at our appearance. At length we reached a kraal that was far larger than any we had hitherto seen, and on nearing which the Caffres came out in crowds and shouted "*Inkose*" and shook hands with all the men whom we had first seen. I and the three ladies were shown a hut, into which we had to crawl on our hands and knees: we then laid down, for we were all very tired and footsore. We were given some milk and some Indian corn boiled, but we saw no meat, these people apparently living entirely on corn and milk.

Mrs Apton and her daughter sat crying in the hut, and

exclaiming that we should all be killed and probably eaten; but Constance seemed very brave and said that, considering how we had escaped from the wreck, we ought not to despair now. We all talked over our probable future, and tried to guess what had become of the men of the party. The Caffres had managed their slaughter so quietly that it was not till I could speak the language that we discovered what had happened to them. On the first night at this kraal the moon was full, and all the men belonging to this village and also those from several near it assembled, and, lighting a large fire, sat in a circle round it, and sang songs the whole night. We could not sleep in consequence of the noise, and we did not feel certain that we were not going to be killed and roasted at the fire, for we knew so little of the Caffres that we believed them to be cannibals.

It was just at daybreak when a Caffre came to the kraal and beckoned me to come out, saying "*E-zapa*" which meant "Come here." Thinking I was to be taken out and roasted, I clung to Constance and cried; but the Caffre dragged me away, and led me to where there were some dozen men sitting apart and talking. When I was dragged to where they were sitting, I was made to sit down, and a long conversation took place, two men seeming to be arguing with each other: one was the Inkose who had captured us, the other I had never seen before.

Had I then known the subject that was being discussed between them, I should have been more frightened than I was, but luckily all was settled without my knowledge. When the men of

our party had been assagied, the orders were to spare the females; and I was supposed to be a little girl, as I was always with the ladies. The Caffres, however, soon found out that I was a boy, and the question now was whether I should be assagied or allowed to live. The chief was in favour of my being allowed to live, and determined to take me as his adopted son; whilst another chief recommended that I should be put to death. It took some hours for the council to talk over the matter, but at length it was decided that I was to be allowed to live, and was at once to be brought up as a Caffre.

Chapter Three

Immediately the council broke up I was taken by the chief Inyati to a kraal about ten miles distant from that in which Mrs Apton and her daughter and Constance were stopping. I took a fancy to Inyati, and tried by signs and a few words which were a mixture of English and Hindostani, to ask him where I was being taken to. He seemed to understand my meaning, for he smiled, gave me a pat on the head, and gave me a knob-kerrie and an assagy to carry. Upon arriving at the kraal Inyati called out "Inyoni," "Tembile," and two Caffre boys about my own size came running towards him. Inyati spoke to them for some time, evidently about me, as he pointed to me often; the boys listened with great attention, and when he had finished, one of the boys repeated, apparently word for word, what he had been told. The chief nodded, and then walked away to one of the huts, whilst the boys put out each a hand and shook hands with me and beckoned me to follow them. They took me out about a mile from the kraal and towards a herd of cattle that were grazing on a hillside; we then sat down under the shade of a tree, and the boys commenced talking to me. I shook my head to show them I could not understand, and said, "Caffre humko malum ney," which is the Hindostani for "I don't know Caffre." Somehow I thought that, as the boys were black, they would understand Hindostani better than they would English. They talked together for some

time, and appeared very earnest in some argument. They then sat down beside me, and, pointing to the assagy that I still carried, said, "Umkonto." I at once understood that they were going to teach me to speak Caffre, and being anxious to learn, I was much pleased at their intention. I repeated the word "umkonto," which I now knew meant an assagy, until I said it just as they did. They then pointed to the cattle and said, "Incomo," spreading out their hands so as to indicate all the herd. They then pointed at a chestnut-looking cow and said, "Imazi-e-bomvu," then at a white cow and said, "Imazi-e-molope." I learnt these words very quickly, and then, seeing a bird, I pointed at it, and looked inquiringly at my companions. They at once said, "Inyoni," which I knew meant a bird, and one of the boys, pointing to himself, said, "Igama's am Inyoni," which I knew meant, "My name is Inyoni." The boy then said, "Igama's arko," and pointed to me. I knew he was asking what my name was, so I said "Julius." They both tried to repeat the word after me, but it seemed more difficult for them to say "Julius" than it was for me to repeat Caffre words after them. Being anxious to learn useful words, I made signs of eating, and then of drinking. The boys were wonderfully quick at understanding; and, pretending to eat, they said "ejla," and then, pretending to drink, said "posa." The sun was shining, so I pointed to it, and was at once told that it was "Ilanga." The boys then patted their stomachs and drew them in as if they were empty, and said "Lambili, funa ejla"; this I understood meant, "Hungry, I want to eat."

Note: A Caffre chief who rebelled against us some years ago was called by the English, Langerbelali. The name really was Ilanga-liba-leli, which means, "The Shining Sun."

During this first day I learnt about forty words in Caffre, and as I afterwards found that about five hundred words enables me to speak in most languages, I was able in a fortnight to understand nearly all that was spoken, and also to make known what I wanted to say.

When the sun was near the horizon, the two Caffre boys collected the cattle, and drove them home. I aided them in this work, and tried to whistle as they did, but this I could not accomplish for some days; the cattle, however, seemed to be more afraid of me than of the Caffres, so I was a great help to them in driving the animals home.

On our reaching the kraal, the cattle were driven into the centre, where there was a circular space fenced round with tall upright poles. The men belonging to the kraal then milked the cows; for this I found was the men's work, no woman being allowed to milk them. I was taken into a hut where there were two little girls about my own size, who laughed at me, but would not speak. These girls were the sisters of Inyoni and Tembile, and one of them, although black, was very pretty. I was given a bowl of milk and some boiled Indian corn; and being very tired I soon fell asleep, and slept until disturbed shortly before sunrise by the two boys, who made signs to me to go with them and drive the cattle out to their grazing-ground.

During the next day I learned the Caffre for the numbers from one to ten. One they called *munye*, two was *mabili*, and ten *ishumi*. I also learned that some of the fruit in the bush was good and some bad. One fruit that these boys were fond of and was very good, they called Martingula; it grew on a tree something like the English holly and was about the size of a plum. It was red in colour, and varied very much in flavour: we found plenty of these trees, and ate a good deal of the fruit. The boys explained to me that whatever a monkey ate a man might eat, as monkeys knew quite well what was fit and what poisonous for food. Each day I became more apt in speaking Caffre, and as I heard nothing else spoken, I used to think in Caffre, and thought it a very pretty language. My young companions were light-hearted, and very kind, and quite unlike English boys, who too often chaff or bully a strange boy, especially if this boy belongs to a strange nation. But the young Caffres amused themselves for hours each day in throwing an assagy at a mark. The mark was a large hard fruit, in shape and size like an orange. It was placed on the top of a stick, and the boys threw at it from a distance of forty paces. I was very awkward at first, but having learned how to hold and throw the assagy, I became at the end of a week as expert as they were, and being stouter and stronger, I could throw the assagy to a greater distance. I also practised throwing the knob-kerrie, which did not require so much skill, but which I soon found was a very useful weapon, as quails in hundreds soon visited the country, and I and my companions used to knock down twenty or thirty quails a day

with these sticks, and we used to make a fire and cook them, and found them excellent eating.

My first great sporting achievement was in killing a duiker, a small antelope that was found in bushy or stony country. This animal, which the Caffres termed *Impenze*, was very cunning, and could conceal itself in long grass in a wonderful way. I possessed very good sight, and rarely missed seeing anything that was to be seen, though I had yet to learn how to properly use this sight. We were sitting watching the cattle one morning, when I obtained a glimpse of an object moving in some long grass about a hundred yards from where we were. I did not say anything to my companions, but got up, and making a circular course, went quietly up to a rock which overlooked the grass in which I fancied I had seen the moving object. As I peeped over the stone I saw the impenze, standing broadside to, and about twenty yards from me. I had my assagy all ready to throw, and sent it with all my strength at the buck. The blade of the assagy went right through the buck's neck, and though it did not kill him, it prevented him from moving quickly through the grass and bushes, as it remained fast in his neck. I jumped down quickly and struck him with my knob-kerrie, and killed him with two or three blows on the head. The two Caffre boys had now joined me, as they saw I was attacking some animal. They jumped about in a state of great excitement when they saw the dead antelope; and then taking a good look all round, they told me to keep quiet, and not to tell any one about this buck having been killed. Inyoni at once skinned

the buck and laid out the skin on the ground, pegging it down with mimosa thorns. The two boys then procured two sticks about a foot long, and of dry wood; these sticks they selected with great care. Placing one of these on the ground, Inyoni held down the ends with his feet, and then holding the other stick upright, he worked it round and round between the palms of his hands, and pressed it on to the second stick. Tembile relieved Inyoni when the latter was tired, and so they went on, turn and turn about, until the sawdust produced by this friction began to smoke and then to catch fire. A wisp of dry grass was then gathered, the sparks put into this, and the wisp swung round at arm's-length, when it very soon began to blaze, and in a few minutes we had a capital wood fire. With our assagies we now cut up the buck and fried it over the fire, and had a great feast, eating about half the animal. The remainder we concealed on the branches of a tree, for we knew that if we left it on the ground, a jackal or leopard would find it, and we should get nothing on the following day. I was told by my companions that if the men knew we had killed this buck and had not carried it to the kraal, we should all be beaten; so I must keep the secret, for my own sake as well as theirs.

Our life was very simple and quiet; and I have often thought in later years, that the life led by these Caffres was perfect freedom and luxury, compared with the slavery endured by business men in cities. A Caffre who possessed a hundred head of cattle might have acquired these by his father giving him a cow and a calf when he was a boy. Cattle increase in almost geometrical rates.

Thus a cow and a calf would probably become in ten years fifty head of cattle, and the young Caffre would be a man of independent fortune. As soon as a Caffre possesses cattle, he purchases a wife, and the limit to the number of his wives is only drawn by the amount of cattle he possesses. A young good-looking girl is purchased for from eight to ten cows. These are not always paid at once, three or four being given at the time of marriage, and the remainder paid in a year or two afterwards. A wife among these people is not a matter of expense only, as it is with civilised nations; but is a profitable investment, as the wives work in the mealie gardens, do the digging and the sowing, and at the time of harvest gather in the crops. If then a man possess three or four wives, he cultivates a large piece of ground and has plenty of corn, pumpkins, and other grain, and also has cows from which he obtains milk. The men never drank fresh milk, which they call *ubisi*: this they consider only fit for women and boys. They placed the fresh milk in large gourds made from dried pumpkins, and which contained about two quarts of milk, which was kept for some hours exposed to the sun; the gourd was then shaken, and again allowed to rest; in about three days the milk turned and became lumpy, and had a tart taste about it, and was really meat and drink. When in this state it was called *amasi*. This *amasi* and boiled mealies were food enough for the Caffres, meat being eaten only about once a month, when some wedding took place, or a hunting expedition was successful. The Caffre men did very little except milk the cows, which they never allowed the

women to do, go out hunting, and have dances, and long talks in their kraals. I should like to know what more pleasant life could be passed by any man in a civilised country than this. Had I been older or more experienced when I was living among these people, I should have been more surprised than I was at the absence of all those wishes, and anxieties, which form the principal desires of men and women in civilised countries. These Caffres had no desire for more than they possessed, except as regards cattle, and thus afforded an excellent example of the proverbs that "He who curtails his wants increases his income," and "He whose requirements are less than his means of supply, is the only rich man."

I was so fully occupied with the work that was drawn out for me by the Caffres, that I had not thought with much anxiety about my late fellow-passengers. I wished, however, to see Constance, and now that I could speak a little in the Caffre language, I asked where she was, and when I could see her. My inquiry and wish seemed to puzzle Inyoni, who told me she was well, but that I must not see her yet, as the chief had so ordered it. So, during six months I never saw a white person, and by that time I was to all purposes a regular Caffre boy. I could speak the language well, I could click out the proper clicks at right words, could throw an assagy better than any Caffre boy of my size. I could run faster than other Caffre boys, though I could not keep it up so well, but for a quarter of a mile I was very fast. I knew nearly every cow's name, and could whistle and drive a herd of cattle like a Caffre.

The one thing from which I suffered was the tenderness of my feet. My boots had been worn out long since, and my feet, from having worn shoes all my life, were very tender; but each day they became harder, though I often had to stop and sit down when I had trodden on a sharp stone. My only suit of clothes was worn out, but I had made a set of what the Caffres considered clothes, but were merely strips of goat's-skin about a foot long, fastened to a leather strap round my waist. This absence of dress I found caused me to be too hot in the warm weather and too cold in the early mornings and in the cold weather; but I hardened under the conditions, and soon did not mind it.

There was an amusement that I and my two companions carried on which I afterwards found very useful. This was to procure two or three straight canes about five feet long: one end of these we used to cover with clay, we then stood opposite each other, and danced and jumped about, and then suddenly threw these at, each other, using them like an assagy. At first the Caffres used to hit me at nearly every shot, and I never touched them; but after considerable practice I became as expert as they were, and could spring on one side so as just to avoid the blow, or throw myself down, or turn the spear aside with my shield, which was an oval-shaped piece of ox-hide. At about thirty paces from each other we could never hit one another, and then we closed in till one of us was hit. We used to keep a score on a stick of the number of hits against each of us, a notch in the stick being the mark. In after years, when it was a matter of life and death, the

training and practice I had gained in my boyhood was of vital importance to me in avoiding an assagy, when one was thrown at me, and my dexterity in throwing one soon became known among the tribe with which I lived. The things I could accomplish with the assagy were the following. I could throw an assagy sixty paces, which, for a boy, was very good, but two or three of the men could throw the same assagy ninety paces. At forty paces I could hit a mark as big as a man's head about every other shot. I could throw the assagy either overhand or underhand, quivering it at the same time. If thrown overhand, the hand was held above the shoulder, and the arm from the hand to the elbow was vertical when the assagy left the hand. When thrown underhand, the back of the hand was down, and the arm from the hand to the elbow was horizontal when the spear left the hand. This underhand throwing was very effective in taking your adversary by surprise; for if you jumped about quickly and made feints, pretending to throw overhand, then suddenly throwing underhand, he very often could not dodge quickly enough to escape the weapon.

I never left my hut without one or two assagies and a knobkerrie in my hand; for close to our kraal there were leopards, hyaenas, and other animals that were very dangerous.

There was one accomplishment that I had acquired from my companions that I had thought about night and day, and which I found very fascinating. This was "spooring," as the English and Dutch in South Africa call it; that is, telling by the footprints what animals have passed over the ground, when they passed,

and at what pace. This study is quite an art, and I occupied many months in arriving at even a superficial knowledge of the subject. Although I of course had no opportunity of learning arithmetic or any of those things that boys learn in English schools, yet I had my brain exercised by such studies as spooring and the observation necessary to enable me to practise the art. To spoor well it is necessary to know many things that appear at first sight to have nothing to do with the question. One of the things to learn was to break off branches of various sizes from different trees, to place these in the sunshine and in the shade, and then to notice how long it took for these leaves and branches to look withered or otherwise. The smaller the branch the sooner it withered, and in the sun it withered sooner than in the shade. Then some trees, the wood of which was hard, would look fresh for a long time, whereas soft wood would soon show signs of withering. If the day was moist or wet, the branch that would dry on a sunny day would look fresh after the same interval of time. I used to take great pleasure in finding out these things, and Inyoni and Tembile used to break branches in the bush one day, and then take me to see them afterwards, and get me to guess how long a time had elapsed since they broke them. Of course we knew nothing about hours, but we used to point in the sky and say, "The sun was there yesterday, or to-day, when you broke this off the tree."

In this part of Africa the dew falls very heavily, and I found that the dew fell most just after the sun had set. This was a great aid in telling the time that had elapsed since an animal

had passed over the ground, for we could tell whether it was after the dew, or before the dew had fallen. The footprints of the various animals I learnt after some time, for it was not very easy to tell the difference between a large black bush-buck's footprint and that of a wild pig. Also it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between a wild buffalo's footprint and that of one of our cattle; that is, if the buffalo was a young one. After a few months, however, I had gained much experience, and could tell the footprints of the following animals, all of which were to be seen near our kraal: – The hippopotamus, called *imvubu* by the Caffres, the buffalo, the large black bush-buck, the red bush-buck, and small blue bush-buck, the reit-buck, duiker, leopard, hyaena, the ratal, and many smaller animals. I acquired the habit of watching the ground as I walked along, and noting what spoor there was on it, and could thus discover what animals were in the neighbourhood; and I soon thought myself very clever as a spoor-finder. But I had yet much to learn, and soon found that, compared with my Caffre companions, I was blind and unobservant.

The principal event that proved to me how dull I was, led to my rising at once to a first place among the Caffres. It was during a warm day that we had entered the bush near the ground where we watched the cattle, and were sitting in the shade talking, when Inyoni, who was looking anxiously at a tree near, got up and walked to the tree and examined the trunk. He then called us and pointed to some marks on the tree; and at length, stooping on the

ground, picked up two or three small hairs. Both the Caffre boys examined these and then said a leopard had been here during the night and had climbed the tree. The marks on the tree were from his claws, which he used just as does a cat in climbing. We did not like to follow the spoor, as leopards are very savage; but we went away from this place and sat down under the shade of some rocks at a short distance, and the boys told me stories about the leopard.

During that night I thought a great deal about leopards; and I remembered, in a book that my father had given me soon after I learned to read, that there was a picture of a trap that some one had made to catch cats. Now, the leopard is only a large cat, and is very like one in its habits, and the idea occurred to me that we might make a trap to catch the leopard. I thought over this scheme, and the next day talked to the boys about it. They were quite willing to try, so we set to work at once. The method we adopted was this. We cut down a great number of straight branches, about ten feet long and about two inches thick; these we stuck firmly in the ground in a circle, just as we used to construct a kraal. Peeling off the bark from some mimosa trees, we made a sort of rope, and bending the tops of these branches together, we fastened them firmly, so as to make a circular hut. After many days, we had so bound these together that, with all our united force, we could not separate them in the slightest degree. We then cut a small opening in this hut as a doorway, and we had a part of our trap complete. The most difficult part to make was the door

itself. This we made by constructing a door the same as you make a hurdle, and we made two of these doors, and then fastened them together to make them strong. This door we made inside the hut, because we wanted the door to be bigger than the doorway. Having completed this door, we made out of buckskin a longish string, and fastened this to a stick in the centre of the hut; this string held the door up, but when the string was loosened the door slid down between two stout posts, and it was necessary to lift the door in order to get out of the doorway. All this being arranged in about a week's time, we next had to procure some bait, and were lucky in getting a guinea-fowl, which was a bird common in the bushes round our kraal. This bird we knocked over with our knob-kerries, and dragged it along the ground to the trap, and then fastened it to the string inside the trap. The Caffres told me that the leopard was so strong that he would force himself out of the hut if he had time to do so. We therefore agreed to keep watch in a tree near on the first night, and if the leopard came, to run to the kraal and give notice to the men. We did not tell any one at the kraal what we had done; for, to speak the truth, we had not much confidence in the success of our trap, and we did not like to incur the risk of being laughed at. Our success therefore was as unexpected as it was complete.

Having driven the cattle home to the kraal, we ate some corn and drank some milk, and then ran back to where our trap had been constructed, and climbed into a large tree, from which we could obtain a good view all round. It had not even become

dark when, as we sat silent and motionless in the tree, we saw the leopard come through some long grass and creep towards our trap. It crouched for some time near the trap and seemed to be listening, and then slowly crept in. In half a minute the door dropped, and the leopard was trapped. In an instant Inyoni descended the tree and ran off to the kraal, whilst I and Tembile remained up the tree. We could hear the leopard moving about inside the hut, but whenever he did so we called out, and he was at once silent, and appeared as if he were afraid of making any noise.

In what appeared to be a very short time Inyoni came back, and with him about twenty men, among whom was the chief. They were all armed with five assagies each, and one of the men carried a piece of wood that was on fire. The Caffres came up very quietly, and then surrounded the hut, remaining about ten yards from it. In a few minutes dry wood had been collected, and seven or eight fires were made round the trap in which the leopard was a prisoner. Sometimes the leopard would roar and tear at the side of his cage, but on hearing the Caffres outside he would become quiet again, and so the night passed. Soon after daybreak many more Caffres came to us, for the news had spread to the villages round, and when the sun rose there were more than a hundred Caffres round the trap. The chief now gave his orders, and the men obeyed him just as soldiers obey an officer. He directed one Caffre to go to the door of the trap, and with a long pole push up the door; all the other Caffres stood in a semicircle

round the doorway and about fifty yards from it, each with an assagy in his hand ready to throw. No sooner was the door raised a few inches than the leopard rushed at the stick, scratching and biting at it furiously. The Caffre then retreated, and the leopard struggled at the small opening and succeeded in getting half out. The chief then shouted "*Bulala!*" and about forty assagies were thrown at the leopard, nearly a dozen of which entered its body. In spite of these wounds the animal struggled out of the doorway and sprang at the Caffres in front of him. A shower of assagies were again hurled at him, but he succeeded in reaching one man, whom he seized by the leg with his claws. In an instant, however, the other men closed in: there was a struggling mass of men, and then a shout of "*Yena gofile*" ("he is dead.") I rushed up to the crowd, and there was the leopard covered with blood, his lips drawn back showing his teeth, and his limbs extended as they had been in his last spring. I jumped about with delight and excitement, for this was the first leopard I had ever seen killed, and it was by the aid of my trap that he had been secured.

The legs of the leopard were tied together, and a long pole was then inserted between them, and he was carried to the kraal, the men singing songs as they accompanied his body. Two men immediately set to work to skin him, they then extracted his teeth and claws. Of the use they were going to make of these latter I at the time was ignorant, but in a few days I learned their value. All the principal men from the neighbouring kraals were invited to come to our village in the evening, for the Caffres intended to

eat the leopard, the flesh being supposed to give a man courage and endurance. A very small piece of meat could be spared for each man, as there were more than a hundred men assembled. They all sat in a circle on a piece of level ground outside our village, a fire being lighted in the centre, at which the leopard, cut up into pieces, was being toasted. Many songs were sung by the men, the chorus being shouted by all. This chorus was very little more than "*Ingwe gofile, Tina shiele, Yena shingarner, Yena gofile:*" which meant, "The leopard is dead, We have struck him, He is a rascal, He is dead."

We sat several hours singing songs that were extemporised by the best singers, and occasionally drinking *Itchuala*, a sort of beer made out of corn, and then we all retired to our huts and slept. Three days after this the same men assembled at our kraal in the evening, and I was told by the chief to come to the meeting. I did not know what it was for, but I found all the Caffres looking at me, and the young girls seemed to regard me most attentively. I thought perhaps they intended to eat me, though I had seen nothing since my capture that frightened me. When the men were seated in a circle, the chief stood up, and, going into the centre of the circle, made a long speech, which was to this effect: "This white boy I prevented from being assagied; some of you wished to kill him, but I said, 'No – he shall be as my son, let him live.' You agreed, and he lives. Though his skin is white, his heart is the heart of an Umzimvubu. He can throw an assagy well. He thinks, and it is he who made the trap that caught the leopard.

I ask you, men, does he not deserve the necklace of leopard's claws? Shall he not be a young chief? Say, men, what you think."

There was immediately a shout of consent, and the chief, calling me to him, gave me a necklace made out of the claws of the leopard, which he fastened round my neck, and immediately the men shouted, "*Inkosana!*"

"He is a young chief!"

I have, since those days, heard of men who by deeds of valour have gained the Victoria Cross, or by good service have received honours from their sovereign; but I doubt if any of these felt more pride and gratification than I did when I received this necklace of leopard's claws from the hands of the chief. I immediately felt a craving for opportunities of distinguishing myself, and wished for another chance at a leopard or at some other savage animal, in order that I might prove my courage, as ably as I had shown my skill in designing and constructing the leopard-trap.

Chapter Four

There was a great change in the behaviour – of the Caffres towards me now that I had been made an Inkosana. Before this dignity had been conferred on me, there was a kind of watch kept on me; but now every Caffre, man, woman, and child, seemed to regard me as one of themselves. I was now always given *amasi* to drink instead of *ubisi*, the former being considered suitable for men, the latter for women and children. Finding myself a person of greater importance, I one day asked Inyati if I might go and see my white friends. He hesitated for some time, and at length said: “To-morrow at sunrise you may go. Inyoni will show you the way; you will reach their kraal when the sun goes down. Stay one day, then return.”

I told Inyati I would do as he told me, and on the following morning I started with Inyoni on the journey. I had never asked what had become of the men and sailors who had been saved from the wreck. At first *I did not ask* because I did not know a word of Caffre, but afterwards I did not do so because I saw that the Caffres seemed disinclined to make any answers to my questions. Now, however, I was alone with Inyoni, he told me all the details of the massacre. He told me how we had been watched for two days, and it was found that the men had firearms; so they were all killed. On my inquiring why they were killed, Inyoni told me that many moons ago some white men had come on the coast,

and had landed and had carried off some men and women from a kraal; that when the Caffres had assembled to get back their friends, the white men had fired their guns at them and had killed several Caffres, and then escaped in their boats. So that the chiefs had agreed that, if ever white people came again on the coast, they were to be watched, surprised, and the men assagied. From what I afterwards learned, I believe the men who thus visited the coast were slave-hunters.

We passed several kraals on our journey, at most of which the people came out and spoke to us, and every one who saw my necklace at once addressed me as "Inkosana." At least a dozen times Inyoni gave an account of my leopard-trap, and how we had killed this leopard, and I found myself looked at with envy by the boys and admiration by the girls, whilst both were very friendly, and usually walked with me for some distance on the journey.

The sun was several times its own diameter above the horizon when we reached a kraal in which, so Inyoni told me, one white woman was living. I entered this kraal, and Inyoni telling the head man that the chief had allowed me to come to visit the white woman, I was shown a hut and told I might go in. On entering this hut I saw Constance, who at once caught me in her arms and kissed me, expressing great delight at seeing me, as she feared I had been killed. I soon told her all that had happened to me, and that I was well-treated and not very unhappy. She listened to all I had to say, and told me she was very glad to hear so good an

account, but that she was utterly miserable and wished she were dead. I tried to cheer her by giving her hopes of a better future, but she assured me it was impossible that we should ever see our friends again, and that if she did not marry one of the chief's sons they intended to kill her. We sat talking the greater part of the night, and the next morning went for a walk, the Caffres appearing to take no notice of us, though I could see one or two boys go on the hill-tops and sit down, evidently to watch us. We sat down under the shade of some euphorbia trees and talked over our prospects. Constance could tell me nothing of Mrs Apton or her daughter; they had been taken away to some distant kraal, and for a long time I heard nothing of them. I passed the whole of my time with Constance, and promised to come and see her again; then, bidding her good-bye, I started at daybreak on my return to my own kraal.

Although I was living among a race of black people who would be deemed savages, and who had slaughtered my companions who had been shipwrecked on the coast, still I felt a sort of home-feeling on rejoining my kraal and on meeting Inyati again after only three days' absence. Now that I knew about the male passengers and sailors having been assagied, I talked to several of the young Caffres about it; and their remarks were so sensible, and seemed to me so reasonable, that I must here repeat them.

They said that only twice had white men come on their coast. The first men who came made signs of friendship, and were well received. They stayed two days on shore, and then enticed several

young men and maidens to go with them to the shore, where they captured them and carried them to their ship. Resistance was of course offered by the men, and several were shot, also two females were shot. On hearing of this treachery, all the chiefs along the coast met in council, and agreed that, if any more white men came to the coast, the people were to retreat, and a watch was to be set on the white men, and they were to be surprised and assagied before they could shoot anybody. Seeing our shipwrecked men on the coast, the Caffres concluded that we had come on an expedition similar to that of the former visitors, and so they had attacked us. They admitted that when they found there were women among the party they hesitated, but having received the chief's orders to attack us, they had no choice but to obey. "Now," they said, "we must keep you always, for if you went back among white people, you would tell them we had killed your companions, and then an army of white men would come and attack us."

There was no doubt it was by a mistake that my fellow-voyagers had been killed, but when I heard the Caffres' explanation I could not think them very wrong. We, in fact, had suffered for the sins of some slave-hunters, who might or might not have been English.

I explained to the Caffres how we had been shipwrecked and had escaped on rafts, and how they would have received presents had they been kind to us, and had they forwarded us to the nearest English or Dutch town. They admitted that such might have been

the case, but now, having killed the white men, they said they must keep the thing quiet. I told them, that even now, if they forwarded me and the three ladies to the Cape Colony, they would be rewarded; but they shook their heads and said, “When you go among your own people you could not help telling them we had assagied your people, then an army come here and kill us. No, we keep quiet.” It was useless my assuring them that I would not tell any of my people that the men had been assagied. The Caffres smiled and replied, “You don’t know yourself. Now you believe you not tell, but when with your own people you could not help telling. Don’t think of going away – that never be. You will by-and-by be Caffre Chief here.”

All these conversations were of course carried on in the Caffre language, and I have endeavoured to give as nearly as possible the meaning in English of the various words. In consequence of hearing nothing but Caffre spoken, and also having to express all my meaning in the same language, I could now speak it as well as the Caffres themselves, and so was able to learn all the views that the Caffres had on various matters. In thinking over in after-life these days of my early experiences, I have come to the conclusion that these people were a strange mixture of common sense, very acute perceptions, and also very childish in many things. As regards what we term science they were of course completely ignorant, so much so, that, child as I was, I knew more than they did. For example, a great argument had been going on in our village once during several evenings. I had heard in

my hut some of the words, and distinguished the word *inyanga* used very often, this word being used to signify the moon, and also a month. A Caffre counts his age as so many moons. Thus a Caffre boy who was one hundred and twenty moons old would be nearly twelve years of age, and if he lived to be nine hundred and thirty moons old, he would be about seventy years. I have since wondered whether this was the way that the people in the East formerly counted their ages, and were therefore said to live to nine hundred years of age. For if, as it has been suggested by some modern explainers, this great age was given to the ancients in order that they might people the world, it seems that they sadly neglected their duty. For Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years before he devoted himself to this duty, and Lamech lived also one hundred and eighty-two years before he had a son. A Caffre who was one hundred and eighty-two moons old would be about fourteen years old, and as these people come to maturity very quickly he would be quite a young man.

After several long arguments the men at length appealed to me, and the question was this: – “Is it the same moon that comes each month, gradually grows larger, and then gets small again? or is it a fresh moon that is born each month, gets full-grown, and then dies?”

I told them it was the same moon, and they then asked me for proof, which I was quite unable to give; and so, although my statement was considered of some value, yet it did not convince the opponents of the theory about a different moon. They

argued the subject during several evenings, and at the end of the discussion the result was not very dissimilar to that which occurs among a certain type of scientific men: each party remained of the same opinion with which he commenced the inquiry. From what I could learn, I found that those who asserted that it was a fresh moon born every month, had the best of the argument, and seemed to be most reasonable. There was, however, a peculiarity about these arguments which I always thought of in after years when I could compare them with the discussions and arguments in the civilised world on various questions. The Caffres always seemed to desire truth, and to argue for the purpose of eliciting it. They would admit the soundness of an opponent's reasons, and sometimes allow that these could not be answered. They never indicated that their object was to prove themselves right and their opponents wrong, no matter what was the result.

Inyati, talking to me afterwards about the moon, said, "Your white people believe it always the same moon."

"Yes," I replied, "they know it is the same." Inyati said, "I have often found that what is true cannot be made by words to appear to be as true as something else that is false. Talking is no good."

Finding that Inyati now talked to me on many occasions, I took the opportunity of asking him one day what had become of the things that they had taken from the men; for I knew there were some guns and other things which might be of use. He told me that most of them were buried in a hole near a kraal some miles away; and that the people were afraid of these things, thinking

that they might blow up and kill them. I told Inyati there was one thing I knew of amongst these which would be of great use if we could find it, and I could show him what to do with it. I described this to him, and he then told me that this and a few other things were at his kraal, and he would show them to me. That evening he took me to his kraal, and lifting up a wicker door, he showed me several articles in a hole below. I there saw what I wanted, and took from the hole a pair of opera-glasses in a leather case. I then went with Inyati to a little hill near, and seeing about two miles off some Caffres, I asked him who they were.

He said they were too far off to recognise.

I then adjusted the glasses for my focus and told him the names of the Caffres, whom I knew, and then handing him the glasses showed him how to use them.

I never saw greater astonishment than that of Inyati when he looked through the glasses and perceived distant objects as plainly as though they were near. He never seemed tired of looking, first at distant then at nearer objects. He asked me what I called them, and I said in English, "opera-glasses." He shook his head at this, and then said in Caffre, "I shall call them 'bring near.'" He went back to his kraal and seemed deep in thought, and every now and then looked at the glasses, which he preserved with the greatest care.

On the following morning he assembled all the men, and had a council. He told them that I had shown him the use of a thing that was like "*tagata*" (witchcraft); and that this thing, though

quite harmless, was wonderful. He said that people and things at a distance were instantly brought close to you, and you could almost touch them with your hand. At first the older men seemed inclined to disbelieve, but Inyati said, "What I tell you, that I can show." There was one old man who had the reputation of being a rain-maker, and was called Amanzinina, who would not believe what Inyati told him. This old man had always disliked me, and was one of those who had expressed the wish that I should be assagied. He said that I might practise witchcraft, and that this thing which made people come near was and could be only due to witchcraft; as it was impossible to be anything else. He suggested that the glasses should be burned, and that if I were burned too it would be all the better for the tribe.

Inyati answered him; but a great many of the men who were afraid of Amanzinina, agreed with him as to burning the glasses, though they said that I might be spared. At first I felt disposed to laugh at the nonsense spoken by this old man, but when I found how important his remarks were considered by the men, I was somewhat alarmed. Inyati, however, answered Amanzinina well, and said that I had nothing to do with this "bring near"; that it was made by white men, just as Caffres made assagies; that it was a thing which white men used everywhere; and that I, having seen men use it, knew what it was for, and that witchcraft had nothing to do with it. After a time the chief convinced all the men except Amanzinina, who would have nothing to do with the glasses, and would not even look through them.

The astonishment shown by the men when they looked through the glasses was quite equal to that which had been displayed by Inyati: they thought it wonderful, and several of them, seeing people at a distance, put their mouth to the glasses and shouted, believing that this would make their voices heard. They could not understand why it was, that if they could see people close, by aid of the glass, they could not also make them hear. At length, however, these glasses were looked on as a valuable treasure, and Inyati never went out without them. People came from great distances to see them, and every one was equally surprised at their use.

It was now the time when the crops of mealies and other corn were coming up, and a circumstance now happened which enabled me to judge of the manner in which these people, among whom I had cast my lot, would fight against an enemy. From a village about ten miles from us, news was brought that two bull-buffaloes, very savage and cunning, had taken up their quarters in some thickly wooded ravines near the corn-ground of the village. Each night these buffaloes used to come from the bush, break through the fences, and eat the young corn. This meant a famine for this kraal, for the people depend on mealies for their food during the year. Aid was wanted from our kraal and from others in order to hunt these buffaloes and to kill them. In two days the hunting party had been assembled, and consisted of about five hundred men, armed with assagies, for the knob-kerrie was no use against a buffalo. I obtained permission to join this party, and

we had assembled in the evening at the distant kraal, and were to hunt on the following day.

It was decided that there should be a great dance performed by the warriors before we attacked the buffaloes. There were two kinds of dances practised by these Caffres, one before a war was undertaken, the other before a hunt. The dance was performed by the men, who formed in a circle, and stood three deep. The dance consisted merely of stamping on the ground, first with one foot then with the other, keeping time to a song. The effect of about five hundred heavy feet striking the ground at the same instant was grand, and the shouts of the men became louder and louder, as their excitement increased. In the centre of the ring one or two men would occasionally dash about, quivering their assagies, and pretending to throw them; then, almost falling on the ground, they would suddenly spring in the air, dart from side to side, and rush forward making movements of stabbing an enemy. The proceedings of these men were carefully watched, for they were known as the quickest movers and fastest runners in the tribe, and their skill in dodging an assagy was such that no man ever had a chance of hitting them in the games they played with blunted assagies. The dance lasted about two hours, and we then lay down to sleep, some in the huts and others on the ground.

At daybreak we all got up, and having employed a short time in sharpening our assagies, we assembled in groups to receive our orders.

The buffaloes were known to be concealed in a dense ravine

about two miles from the kraal. There were two parts of this ravine whence the animals could escape, and it was decided that they should be driven towards that end nearest the kraal. About one hundred men were told off to go round the top of this ravine and to enter at the far end, so as to drive the buffaloes before them. About twenty boys were placed round the top of the ravine, whose duty it was to watch the buffaloes and to give notice where they were in the bush. I was told to go with these boys, but I begged Inyati to let me go with him and to join the party who were to attack the animals when they were driven out into the open country. With a smile Inyati consented, and asked me if my assagies were sharp. I showed them to him, and having felt them he nodded his approval, and then assembling his men we marched off to our station.

When we had reached the top of the ravine, we were placed in a semicircle and then concealed ourselves. A party of about a hundred men then took up their position near the top of the ravine, and their duty was to run between the buffaloes and the ravine immediately they broke cover, so as to cut off their retreat, and thus to prevent them from breaking back, and dashing through the beaters. Everything was done in silence; a wave of the arm by Inyati was sufficient for an order, his hand held upright halted the whole party. Since then I have seen English soldiers at drill, but I never saw better discipline than I saw among these Caffres. When we were all placed in the positions allotted to us, a shrill whistle was the signal that all was ready, and the men at

the far end of the bush advanced, beating the bushes and making a noise so as to frighten the buffaloes, and make them retreat from the ravine in the required direction. The boys on the top of the ravine soon saw the animals moving through the bush, and signalled to us, imitating their movements. It was amusing to see how well these boys acted. Two of them pretended to be buffaloes, and when the buffaloes moved on they moved; when the buffaloes stopped and listened, the boys stopped and imitated every movement, twisting round and round, just as these animals do when alarmed.

Nearer and nearer came the buffaloes, but there was not a movement among the men who were waiting for them. When the animals came near the edge of the bush they seemed to become suspicious, and we could hear them sniffing the air and snorting, though they did not move for some time. The boys did just as they saw the buffaloes do, and we thus knew all about them. Suddenly we saw the boys rush forward in our direction, and almost at the same time the buffaloes charged out of the bush. Inyati whistled shrilly, and in an instant a hundred men dashed in between the buffaloes and the ravine, and cut off their retreat, whilst the other men who had hitherto lain down sprang to their feet, in front of the animals. No time was given to the buffaloes: the men closed all round and assagies were hurled at the animals, and in a few seconds they were covered with assagies, just as a porcupine is with quills. The buffalo, however, is a powerful animal and dies hard; so, although badly wounded, they turned, one towards the

ravine, and charged at the men there, the other came towards where I was. The buffalo that went towards the ravine was met by a shower of assagies, but he dashed straight on, and knocked over three or four men, and escaped into the ravine. The other, putting its head down, came at me, I suppose, because my white skin attracted his attention. The Caffres jumped right and left as he came close, and left me standing alone. The men called to me to jump, but I waited till the buffalo was within a few yards of me; I then held my heavy assagy by the wooden end, and sprang on one side so quickly that the buffalo missed me; when swinging my assagy round, I struck the animal on the hind leg just above the hock, and hamstrung it, so that it could only move on three legs. Before it could turn and charge again, the Caffres had closed round it, and had stabbed it in so many places that it slowly sank to the ground, giving a loud moan as it did so.

I was greatly excited at this scene, and hurled my assagy at the animal, burying it deep in its side; and then danced about and shouted with delight as I saw it fall, the Caffres being equally pleased. From down the ravine we now heard shouts from the men, who announced that the other buffalo was down and dead. Two of the men whom the buffalo had knocked down were much hurt, but they were helped home, and in a week were quite well again; for these people recover very quickly from even most dangerous wounds.

The buffaloes were quickly skinned and cut up, the meat being carried to the kraal, where fires were lighted in every hut, and the

flesh roasted, and boiled in large earthen pots. The whole of the afternoon and evening was passed in feasting, whilst songs with choruses were sung. I was frequently mentioned as the young white chief, for my performance was thought highly of, the fact of hamstringing the buffalo having greatly contributed to the success of the affair, and my quickness in escaping from the buffalo's charge being also a performance much appreciated by the Caffres.

The opera-glasses which Inyati had brought with him caused the usual astonishment when shown to the people at this kraal, and a chief there offered to buy them for five cows, but Inyati was not willing to sell them, as he said there was nothing like them in the country.

We returned home the next day, and I once more resumed the usual daily routine at our kraal.

Chapter Five

It was nearly twelve moons after our fight with the buffaloes, that some strange Caffres came down to our village, and had several long conversations with Inyati. I soon heard what these talks were about, and I ascertained the following facts: —

Considerably to the north of our village, and about five days' journey from us, there were some high mountains called the Quathlamba Mountains; these mountains broke in spurs, and spread out like fingers of a hand till they came down to the plains. On these plains some of the tribe of our people had kraals and cattle. Within the past two moons some Bushmen had come down to the ravines and rocky precipices near these kraals, and had stolen the cattle. It was impossible to catch these Bushmen, as they could scamper up the rocks like baboons, and when they reached a position safe from the range of an assagy, they would sit and chatter at the Caffres who had followed them, hurl great stones down at them, and if near enough would discharge poisoned arrows, which were so deadly that if one hit a man he was sure to die. These Bushmen were so feared, and their attacks had become so daring, that the Caffres had come down the country to try and procure aid to drive these people away. The difficulty of punishing them was great, and Inyati pointed out that, if the Bushmen were so quick and active as to scamper up the rocks like baboons, he did not see what was to be done.

These conversations used to take place in the evenings, and I listened to all that was said, and began to think of some plan by which to outwit the Bushmen. Suddenly I thought of something which I was surprised had, never occurred to me before. So on the following morning I told Inyati that, if he could help me, I thought we could drive off these Bushmen. He called me into his hut, and I then carried on with him the following conversation. I said: —

“When the white men were assagied some of them had long iron instruments that we call ‘guns:’ where are they?”

“Hidden.”

“I know how to use them, and if you could get me two of these I would go with you and our people, and kill some of these Bushmen.”

Inyati said, “Do you know how to use these things? Because once we did have a gun, and it went all to pieces, and killed the man who held it.”

“He put in too much powder.”

“Perhaps, but we have feared to do anything with such things since.”

When in India I had often seen my father clean and load his guns, and I knew all about them. I knew too that the captain had a double-barrelled rifle, which had reached the shore on the raft. If I could procure this and some ammunition, I knew I should astonish the Bushmen if they gave me a chance. I explained to Inyati that if I could get one particular gun, I would be able to

kill the Bushmen.

Inyati said very little, but on the next evening he brought me the rifle and a large bag of ammunition. The rifle was rusty and dirty, so I set to work to clean it; the women being all afraid to come near the weapon, whilst the men were at first very cautious. Inyati now had faith in me, and sat down beside me whilst I explained to him the use of the weapon and how to pull the trigger. The powder was in a large flask, and was quite dry, as were also the caps; and I found forty bullets in the bag, so I had plenty of ammunition. I told Inyati that this gun would kill a man at a distance more than ten times as far as he could throw an assagy. He shook his head at this; but I asked him if I had not told him truth about the glasses, and he would find I was true about this gun.

I was very anxious to go against the Bushmen, for now that I had seen the buffaloes killed, I was like a tiger that had tasted human blood, and felt a longing for such exciting scenes as those I was likely to experience, if I went against the Bushmen.

Inyati sat thinking for a long time without speaking, and at length said, "We will go." He then walked to his hut, and shortly afterwards sent messengers to call his people together, informing them that on the morrow we would start for the Quathlamba Mountains.

About fifty men assembled at our kraal at daybreak on the following morning, each man armed with five assagies, and a knob-kerrie, and provided with a shield made of ox-hide. The

shields might be useful against a Bushman's arrows or against an assagy, but were useless against a bullet. We each carried a bag of Indian corn, and several boys who accompanied us also carried bags of corn. I afterwards found out that if Inyati succeeded in driving off the Bushmen, he was to receive a reward of cattle from the people he had assisted, and they were to be bound to help him in any expedition that he undertook against his enemies.

Our journey was over a beautiful country well watered with little streams, and with plenty of fine trees. We found that a buck, called by the Caffres "*Umseke*" (the riet-bok), was plentiful here, and we surrounded and assagied two or three of these every day, and so had plenty of meat during our journey. On the fifth day we reached the nearest kraal of the tribe who were being plundered by the Bushmen. These kraals were situated on an open plain near some wooded ravines, the mountains being about five miles from them. The people received us with shouts, and gave us *amasi* and plenty of corn, and we then held a council of war.

From the information given at this council, I learned all about the Bushmen. There was a perpendicular rock about a hundred times the height of a man, on the top of which the Bushmen would assemble and defy the Caffres; to ascend this rock there was a narrow ravine, like a cut in the mountains that only one man at a time could ascend. The Bushmen guarded this, and had large stones ready to drop on the men who came up, and their poisoned arrows to discharge from their bows, so that it was impossible to attack them there with any chance of success.

The Caffres saw no means by which they could kill the Bushmen, as the rock could not be climbed, and was too high for an assagy to be thrown to the top from the plains below. I, however, thought this just the place that would be suitable for my plan; so, after the council, I told Inyati I had heard all that had been said, and everything was just as I wanted it to be. The only thing I feared was, that the Bushmen might come down from their rock and attack me in the plain; but if I had a hundred Caffres with me they would not do this.

As is usual with Caffre expeditions, we started before daybreak, guided by a Caffre who knew the way; and by the time the sun had risen and the mist had cleared from off the plains, we were within sight of the Bushmen's rock. Inyati here took out his glasses, and after looking at the rock for some time, informed us that there were ten or more Bushmen on the top of the rock looking at us. We advanced quickly till within about four throws of an assagy from them; at which distance we were told, their arrows could not reach us. The Caffres then called to the Bushmen, and asked why they killed the cattle. The Bushmen danced and yelled, and fired two or three arrows at us, all of which fell short of us by many paces. Seeing a large ant-hill a little nearer the rock, I moved up to it; and, resting my rifle on the top, aimed at the group of Bushmen on the hill. Having taken a good aim I pulled the trigger, and when the smoke of my rifle cleared away I saw a Bushman tumbling down the rock, whilst another was lying on the ground kicking, evidently badly wounded. The

other Bushmen were so astonished that they gathered round the man who was on the ground, and looked at him, thus giving me another good shot. I fired again, and another man fell down the rock quite dead. The remainder of the Bushmen did not wait for anything more, but retreated at full speed, climbing up the rocks like baboons, and evidently frightened. We waited some time and then the Caffres rushed on to the two men who had fallen and stabbed them with their assagies. They were, however, quite dead, but Caffres like to make sure there is no shamming. The bows and arrows of these men were taken, and also some lion's teeth and claws that they wore; for these little Bushmen will kill lions with their poisoned arrows, and also elephants.

The Caffres then all came round me and looked at my rifle with evident signs of admiration. The distance at which I had killed the Bushmen was to them a subject of profound astonishment, and also to see that the bullet had gone completely through the men.

Our return to the village was a triumphant march, the men dancing, singing, and brandishing their assagies. Inyati walked beside me carrying the rifle, and asking me questions about the gun; how often it could be fired, how far off it would kill, and how it was made. I was the great hero of the day, child as I was, and these men now looked up to me as to a chief. Our reception at the village was most enthusiastic; men, women and children danced round us, shouting and singing. Unless one had been persecuted as had these people, it would be difficult to realise the importance

of such an event as killing two of their enemies. The people at this kraal assured us that the Bushmen would now desert the country. They were very superstitious, and wherever a Bushman died or was killed, that place was at once deserted, as it was considered unlucky; so they felt certain that the Bushmen would now leave that part of the country. Some of the Caffres who had been out with me described to the people at the village how I had fired, and how the Bushmen tumbled down the rock. They were capital actors, and imitated the Bushmen very well. A young ox was killed for a feast, and we had a great supper, many songs, and a large dance; and on the following day returned towards our kraal, which we reached in seven days – a longer time than we occupied on our journey from the kraal, because now we drove with us ten cows, the reward given to Inyati for his assistance.

Chapter Six

A few days after our return from the expedition against the Bushmen, Inyati called me one morning to his hut, in which were two of his counsellors. He then told me that I was raised to the rank of a counsellor, and that he intended to give me three of the cows that he had received from the Caffres, for freeing them of the Bushmen. He said that Caffres, as young as I was, were never made counsellors or had the privileges of men; but the two things I had done, viz., trapping the leopard and shooting the Bushmen, were so extraordinary that the tribe had agreed that I was to be made a chief. The rank which a chief holds among these people is of more importance than any civilised men could understand. The rank gave me command and authority over all men who were not chiefs. I could order them about, make them do work for me, whilst I need do nothing. I thanked Inyati for what he had done, and said I hoped to again show him what my rifle would do, in case there was any occasion for it, and that I believed I could kill an elephant or a lion with it, as easily as I had killed the Bushmen. He replied that “we should see.”

On leaving Inyati I took my assagies and walked out to the hill where my late companions Inyoni and Tembile were watching the cattle, and sat down with them, telling them of my having been made a counsellor and chief. These boys were quite excited at the news and very pleased, and we sat talking some time, till we

noticed that the cattle were alarmed by something and seemed uneasy. We ran up to them, and then saw quite a small calf on the ground, and something shiny all round it. In an instant I saw it was an immense snake, as thick as my body. Seizing an assagy, I drove it into the snake's head, and then, withdrawing it, stabbed it again in the body. The snake uncoiled itself, and came at me; but Inyoni, coming behind it, threw an assagy at it and pinned it to the ground, whilst Tembile drove another spear into it. Seeing my chance, I went close to the monster and stabbed it in the head two or three times, and thus killed it. As soon as we saw it was dead we cut some sticks, sharpened the ends of these, and pegged the snake straight on the ground. It was then longer than the three of us, and was a giant among snakes. The Caffre boys told me there were several such snakes about, and that they would kill and swallow a calf. They knew no other name for it than "Inyoka m'culu" ("the big snake.") They said these snakes ate only about twice each moon, and after eating slept for many days, and were sometimes then killed by wild pigs and leopards. They said that, many months ago, a Caffre boy was sleeping near here, and whilst asleep one of these snakes came to him, coiled round him and killed him. Before the snake could swallow him, some men came to the place and killed the snake, but the boy had been dead some minutes before they arrived. They described how this snake attacked anything. It first crawled slowly along the ground till near its prey, or waited in long grass, or in bushes, till some animal or bird came near. When close to the animal it

wished to capture, the snake lunged rapidly at it, seized it with its teeth and dragged it to the ground, at the same time coiling round the animal and compressing it in its folds. Even a riet-bok could be thus killed by the snake. The reptile then slowly gorges its prey, and remains torpid many days.

Although this large snake was a terrible creature to look at, it was not as dangerous as several other snakes that were common near our village. The most dangerous of these was the puff-adder, which the Caffres called "*m'namba*." This snake I have seen about four feet long, and as thick as a stout arm. It is a sluggish, dull animal, very brilliantly coloured, its body being speckled yellow and black, which makes it look like dead leaves, so that you might tread on it without seeing it, unless you were always on the look-out. This snake has a practice of throwing itself backward and striking with its poisonous fangs anything that is following it. To be bitten by the *m'namba* is certain death, no case ever having occurred of a man or any cattle having been bitten and having lived after it. Our old rain-maker had some little bits of wood that he called *mutt*, some of which, he said, would prevent a man from dying when he had been bitten by a snake; but I never heard of a cure by this means. Some of his medicine was, however, wonderful in its effects, as I once experienced. I was very ill and had a bad fever; so old Amanzi came to me and gave me a small pill of wood, which I bit and ate. In a few minutes I broke out in a perspiration, and then went to sleep, and slept for nearly the whole of the sun's course round the

earth (a whole day), and when I woke I was quite well. Caffres are very seldom ill: they eat so little meat, are so much out of doors, and take so much exercise, that they rarely suffer from bad health. The climate also is very healthy, so that the people were strong and robust.

It was about two moons after our expedition against the Bushmen, that I was out one morning with Tembile and Inyoni, on some hills near, in search of riet-bok, when we saw two strange Caffres coming towards us. These Caffres, we knew by the "*esikoko*" (the ring on the top of their heads), came from the east, near the bay of Natal. Having given them the usual salutation, we said, "*Chela pela s'indaba*" ("tell us the news"), when they told us that a large herd of elephants was coming down the country, and had done much damage to the corn-gardens of the Caffres on the way, breaking down the fences, eating and treading down the corn. They said there were two bull-elephants, very savage, in the herd, who ran after any man they saw or scented; and that three Caffres, near the Umlass river, had been killed by these elephants.

A herd of elephants visiting a country where the inhabitants are as defenceless as were these Caffres, is a serious matter. Assagies were little or no use against elephants; and if a regular attack was organised against them, in the same manner as we had attacked the buffaloes, we should probably have ten or twenty men killed, and after all not kill the elephant. The corn-gardens, on which we depended for our store of food, might be destroyed;

and then there might be, if not starvation, at least great scarcity of grain. So that to prevent the elephants from coming our way was considered most important. There was a great council held the evening after the news was brought; and it was decided that we should send some men towards the east, to find out when the elephants came near us; and on their approach we were to light fires in their track and make noises, so as to try and make them travel in another direction. To turn them back would not have been a proceeding pleasant to the Caffres east of us, but yet we should have liked it, as it would rid us of the animals.

There was nothing talked about during the next week besides the elephants, and I learned much about these animals and their habits from the Caffres. These elephants, I was told, came down the country each year: they did so when the umbrella acacia had its young branches and shoots; for on this tree and several others the elephants fed. In its wild state the elephant lives almost entirely on the branches of trees. These it breaks off with its trunk, eats the smaller branches, and grinds the larger to pieces so as to extract the juice from them. It is at night that the elephant usually travels and feeds: by day, especially if it be very hot, he remains quiet in the bush – so quiet, that you might be within fifty yards of a herd of elephants and not know they were there. If, however, a man disturbs the herd when they are thus at rest, the animals will very likely charge at him, and hunt him through the bush just as a pack of hounds will hunt a fox. At this time of year the elephant bulls, cows, and calves, all keep together; but

later on the bulls separate and sometimes travel alone. When thus alone, the bulls are very savage; and if two bulls meet in the bush a terrible battle ensues. The Caffres consider that a bull-elephant is a match for 10 °Caffres, and even then the animal may get the best of the fight.

I was much interested in these accounts of the elephants, and began to think how I could manage to kill an elephant; for it was my ambition to do so.

The Caffre name for an elephant is *inglovu*, and the words *inglovu* and *ama inglovu* were frequently heard during the next few days; for the expected arrival of the elephants was a most serious incident in the daily life of these people; and forty moons ago the elephants had suddenly travelled into this country and had destroyed all the crops of the Caffres near this village. It was all done in one night, and on the morning the people discovered that their yearly crop of corn had vanished. The season was too far advanced to sow again; consequently they were compelled to buy corn and to purchase it with cattle. So that their loss had been very severe.

Taking the first opportunity of speaking to Inyati, I inquired what he intended to do in order to protect his fields and gardens. He replied that the only thing to do was to light fires round the gardens, and to assemble and shout. I inquired why he did not dig a great ditch round his gardens; but he replied that it would take too long, and that the elephants could manage to cross almost any ditch that could be dug.

He also told me that sometimes pits had been dug for elephants; and some years ago an elephant fell into one of these pits, and had been helped out by other elephants; so that it was no use attempting anything against them, as they were as clever as men. That night I thought over every plan by which I could kill an elephant, and at length an idea occurred to me; but I kept my thoughts to myself, as I intended to try by myself if I could not kill one of these enormous animals. Great preparations were made by the Caffres for the arrival of the elephants, quantities of dead wood were gathered in heaps in readiness for large fires to be made when the animals approached our gardens. Several pits were also dug and covered with a hurdle, on the top of which earth was thrown and grass carefully laid. These pits were placed in the old paths of the elephants, because it was known that these animals always followed in their old tracks whenever they revisited a country, and though these tracks were overgrown, or obliterated, yet the instinct, or knowledge of locality of the elephants was so great, that they would travel miles through the bush, and then come out into the open at exactly the same place at which they had come out of the bush some thirty or forty moons previously.

The Caffres told me that the elephants did not understand any man getting up into a tree; that if they were chased by an elephant they climbed a tree, and, although this tree was not big enough to place them beyond reach of an elephant, yet the animal never seemed to think of pulling the man out of it, or of pulling down

the tree. This information was of great value to me in carrying out a plan that I was forming in my head.

It was about half a moon's time after we first heard that elephants were coming our way, that we discovered their traces within five miles of our village. There was a marsh about five miles from us, formed by the overflow of one of the rivers, and in this marsh the elephants had rolled in the mud, and had then returned to the bush. In this bush there were several large trees, hung over by creeping plants and very easily climbed. Having followed the track of the elephants into the bush for a short distance, I noticed a tree that was covered with mud about the stem, and as high as I could reach with my assagy. This was caused by the elephants rubbing themselves against the tree after they had rolled in the mud.

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