Mitford Bertram

A Frontier Mystery

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Chapter One.
“Where I come in.”

“White dogs!”

“Ha! Calves of Matyana, the least of the Great One’s cattle.”

“Pups of Tyingoza, the white man’s dog! *Au*!”

“Sweepings of the Abe Sutu!”

“Amakafula!” (Kafirs.)

Such were but few of the opprobrious phrases, rolled forth alternately, in the clear sonorous Zulu, from alternate sides of the river, which flowed laughing and bubbling on in the sunlight, between its high banks of tree-shaded rocks. Yet in spite of the imputation of “whiteness” made by the one, they of the other party were in no shade of bronze duskiness removed from those who made it. Each party numbered about a dozen: young men all, with the same lithe straight forms destitute of all clothing but a skin *mútya*; armed with the same two or three assegais and a knobstick apiece, eke small hide shields. There was no outward visible difference between them, as how indeed, should there be, since both were sprung from absolutely the same stock? But

the difference was essential for all that, for whereas one party dwelt upon the Natal side of the river, the other was composed of warriors of the king, the limits of whose territory they dared not overstep.

"Come over and fight!" challenged the latter, waving their shields.

"Ha! Come over to us," was the answer.

Here was an *impasse*. Brimming over with fight as they were, the first hesitated to embark on what would amount to nothing less than a raid upon English territory; for did the news of it reach the ears of the King – as it almost certainly would – why death to the whole lot of them was the least they could expect. On the other hand if the Natal party could be induced to cross why they would make such an example of these Amakafula – as they contemptuously called them – that the latter, for very shame's sake, would be only too careful to say nothing at all of the affair.

"We leave not our land," came the answer to this after a hesitating pause. "Cross ye hither, cowards. Ye are more than us by two."

"Ah – ah! But we shall be less by more than two when we reach the bank. You will strike us in the water."

"We will not," called out the spokesman on the Zulu side. "You shall even have time to recover breath. Is it not so, brothers?"

"*Eh-hé*!" chorussed his followers in loud assent.

"Swear it."

"U' Tshaka!"

The awful name rolled forth sonorously from every throat. An oath ratified on the name of the greatest king their world had ever known was ratified indeed. Hardly had it sounded than a joyful whoop rent the air. A dozen bronze bodies flashed in the sunlight and amid a mighty splash a dozen dark heads bobbed up above the surface of the long deeply flowing reach. A moment later, and their owners had ploughed their way to the other side, and emerged streaming from the river, their shields and weapons still held aloft in the left hand, as they had been during the crossing in order to keep them dry.

"We will drop our weapons, and fight only with sticks, brothers," proposed the Zulu leader. "Is that to be?"

"As you will," returned the Natal party, and immediately all assegais were cast to the ground.

The place was an open glade which sloped down to the water, between high, tree-fringed rocks. Both sides stood looking at each other, every chest panting somewhat with suppressed excitement. Then a quick, shrill whistle from the Zulu leader, and they met in full shock.

It was something of a Homeric strife, as these young heroes came together. There was no sound but the slap of shield meeting shield; the clash and quiver of hard wood; the quick, throaty panting of the combatants. Then the heavy crunch of skull or joint, and half a dozen are down quivering or motionless, while their conquerors continue to batter them without mercy.

Leaping, whirling – gradually drawing away from the rest, two of the combatants are striving; each devoting every nerve, every energy, to the overthrow of the other. But each feint is met by counter feint, each terrible swinging stroke by the crash of equally hard wood or the dull slap of tough hide shield opposed in parry. Already more are down, still about even numbers on each side, and still these two combatants strive on. Both are tall, supple youths, perfect models of proportion and sinewy grace and strength. Then a sudden crunching sound, and the blood is pouring from the head of one of them.

"One to thee, son of Tyingoza!" cries the wielder of the successful stroke, nimbly swerving to avoid the return one.

"It was 'white dog' but now," snarls the other, savagely, and with a deft underswing of his knobstick delivering a numbing blow on the side of his adversary's leg. It is a good blow, yet he is beginning to stagger, half stunned, and blinded with his own blood.

"Ha! Give up, and run to the river, while there is time," jeers his opponent, who is the leader of the Zulu party.

For answer, he who is apostrophised as the son of Tyingoza, rushes upon the speaker with such a sudden access of apparently resistless ferocity, that the latter is forced backward somewhat by the very fury of the onslaught; but – such are the fortunes of war. Already the bulk of those who have crossed from the Natal side are down, two of them stone dead – and the rest, demoralised already, are plunging into the river and striking out for their own

shore. They cannot get to the aid of their leader because of the foes who are pressing them hard, and barring their way. The said foes, now victors, thus freed, turn to spring to the aid of their own leader, and the whole group, uttering a loud bloodthirsty shout hurls itself upon the son of Tyingoza. He, though he has given up all hope, still battles valorously, when a stick, deftly hurled, strikes him hard and full upon one shin, snapping the bone, and vanquished he sinks to the earth, still instinctively holding up his shield to avert the rain of blows showered upon him, and which, in a moment or so will batter his skull to a pulp; for they see red now, those blood-frenzied combatants, and no considerations of mercy will avail to stay their murderous arms.

But that moment or so is destined to bring forth weighty results. There has been a spectator of the whole affray unseen by the combatants, and now he steps forth.

"Stand back!" he shouts, coming right between the slayers and their prey. "Back, I say! He is down and ye are many. Let him live."

"No, he shall die. Out of our way, white man!"

None but a white man – or their own chief – could have restrained these hot bloods at such a moment, yet this one was determined to do it, although the process was not much safer than that of attempting to snatch a bone from a hungry mastiff.

"You are boys, therefore foolish," he cried. "If you slay the son of a chief how long will it be before the English carry the word to the Great Great One's ears? Then – good-night!"

This told – as no other argument would have told. They held their hands, though some muttered that both should be slain to make things all the safer. And the white man so far had displayed no weapon. In fact he had none.

"Get up, son of Tyingoza," he said, "and get back to thine own side of the river, which it was foolish to leave."

The wounded youth managed to stagger to his feet, the white man aiding him. Several of those who had fallen did likewise, the conquerors sullenly drawing off, to help their own stricken comrades. And what a scene the place presented. Broken knobkerries and broken heads, battered shields and twisted limbs, and red, nauseous, sticky pools glittering among the grass. Three of those fallen would never rise again. And what was it all about? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

"*Au*! it is Iqalaqala," muttered the young Zulus, as the white man assisted the chief's son to cross the river. "Fare thee well, Iqalaqala. We have but played at a fight. *Au*! It was only play."

And that is how I come into the story.

Chapter Two.
Godfrey Glanton – Trader

It was hot. Away on the skyline the jagged peaks of Kahlamba rose in a shimmer of haze. In front and below, the same shimmer was upon the great sweep of green and gold bush. The far winding of the Tugela shone here and there through the billowy undulations of the same, and above, a gleam of silver where Umzinyati's waters babbled on to join it. So, too, over the far expanse of warrior Zululand – peaceful enough now to outward aspect in all conscience – the slumbrous yet far from enervating heat of mid-afternoon still brooded.

Yes, it was hot, decidedly hot, and I remarked thereupon to Tyingoza, who agreed with me of course. Every well-bred native agrees with you – that is to say pretty well every native – and Tyingoza was a well-bred native, being of Umtetwa breed – the royal clan what time Tshaka the Usurper, Tshaka the Great, Tshaka the Genius, Tshaka the Terrible, shook up the dry bones and made the nation of Zulu to live. Incidentally Tyingoza was the chief of a very large native location situated right on the border – and in this connection I have often wondered how it is that with the fear of that awful and bloodthirsty tyrant Cetywayo (see the Blue Books) before their eyes, such a congested native population could have been found to plant itself, of its own

free will, right bang within assegai throw of his "manslaying machine" (see again the Blue Books), that is to say, with only the division afforded by an easily fordable river between it and them. Tyingoza's father had migrated from Zululand what time the Dutch and Mpande fought Dingane, and Dingane fought both; for, like a wise man, he held that he could not *konza* to three kings, and now Tyingoza would have returned to his fatherland, with which all his sympathies – sentimental – lay, but for the material fact that he – and incidentally, his followers – were exceedingly comfortable where they were.

"M-m!" hummed Tyingoza. "In truth it is hot here, but – not over there, Iqalaqala."

There was a quizzical twinkle in Tyingoza's eyes, as he pointed down into the valley beneath – and I understood him. The above, by the way, was my native name, meaning one who is wide awake at a deal; bestowed presumably because when I had bought out the former owner of the trading store at Isipanga the guileless native had discovered rather a more difficult subject to get round than that worthy dealer; who was all too frequently in his cups, and easy to "best" while in that halcyonic condition. I did not resent the use of the sobriquet on this or any other occasion: in the first place because it was not an unflattering one; in the next because I liked Tyingoza, who was a gentleman every inch of him, and – shrug not in horror, oh ye noble white brethren – in my heart of hearts I could not but recognise that this aristocratic scion of a splendid race was, taking him all round,

every whit as good a man, albeit dusky, as a certain happy-go-lucky inconsequent and knockabout trader in the Zulu.

I understood his meaning. "Over there" —*la pa*– referred to the abode of my nearest neighbour, a retired British officer, who had lived to no better experience than to imagine himself expressly cut out for a second and farming career, entered on late in life – and, I suspected, on little beyond a commuted pension, here on the Natal border. He owned a comfortable homestead, and a grown-up family, including a brace of exceedingly good-looking daughters. Here then was a bright and wholesome British home circle to which I, a lonely, knockabout sort of semi-barbarian, had found a welcome; and indeed, while not outwearing this, I believe I did not underrate it; for the bush path between my trading store and Major Sewin's farm had become far more worn and easier to be found by the unskilled stranger since its former occupant, a bankrupt and stertorous Dutchman, had been obliged to evacuate it in favour of its present owner.

Now, as Tyingoza spoke, I looked longingly down into the valley on the other side. Away, where it wound beneath a towering cone, I could make out a film of smoke, and was wondering whether it was too soon after my last visit to send my horse down along the ten miles of rugged bush path between it and where we sat – in something over the hour. I could get back at midnight, or soon after, and time was no object to me in those days. I had spent enough of it among savages to have acquired something of their indifference to it. It mattered nothing what

time I slept or woke. If I felt sleepy I slept, if I felt hungry I ate – if I felt neither I did neither – and that about summed up my rule of life, as, in those days, it did that of many another circumstanced like myself. But of making a point of turning in or turning out at a given time – no. I had long parted with anything of the kind; indeed the fact that there was such a thing as a watch or a clock on the place was the merest accident.

Tyingoza produced his snuff-box – his Zulu conservatism had restrained him from learning to smoke – and handed it to me. Then he helped himself.

"They will not be here long," he said presently.

"No? Why not?" I answered, knowing to whom he referred.

"Their feet are planted on strange ground. They have built a house where it cannot stand. *Au*! They are even as children these Amangisi."

I did not resent the mild suggestion – "Amangisi" meaning English – because I knew that the speaker did not include myself, practically a son of the land, using the word as applicable to the newly imported emigrant.

"They do not understand the people," he went on, "nor do they try to. They treat the people as though they were soldiers under them. Now, Iqalaqala, will that do?"

I agreed that it would not; in fact I had more than once ventured to hint as much to Major Sewin – but that veteran, though a dear old man, was likewise a stiff-necked one, and had not taken my well-meant advice in good part.

"A nigger, sir," he had answered with heat, "is created to work. If he won't work he must be made to – and, damme, sir, I'm the man to make him."

I had ventured to remind him that there were about four hundred thousand of the said "niggers" in the colony of Natal, and that we stood in a precious deal more need of them than they did of us. But, as the last thing in the world I wished was to quarrel with him, I fear I did so half-heartedly.

"So," now continued Tyingoza, "they will have to herd their own sheep and milk their own cows themselves, for none will do it for them. Will they not soon become tired of this, and go elsewhere?"

This I thought more than likely, but I did not wish it. The chief's words had pretty well summed up the situation. The Natal native, especially there on the Zulu border, is a difficult animal to lead and nearly impossible to drive, and the hot-headed old soldier was of the sort which prefers driving.

"All you say is true," I answered. "Yet – We are friends, Tyingoza, wherefore for my sake, use your influence with your people not to join in driving out these. I do not want them to leave. See, I am lonely here, and if I had no neighbours I might leave too."

"*Au*! it is difficult," was the answer. "They are like children. Still for your sake, I will do what I can."

We were interrupted by the appearance of two young men. Their bronze figures, straight and tall, moved with easy, supple

grace as they advanced to where we were seated, and, having saluted the chief with infinite respect, they squatted down at a becoming distance; for they would not interrupt our conversation. However I wanted to get rid of them, so allowing sufficient time for the requirements of etiquette, I asked them what they had come for.

They answered that they were in need of a few articles such as I kept in the store, and so I took them within. I reached down from the shelves the things they required, a matter of trifles whose aggregate value hardly amounted to a shilling, and I thought as I moved thus, clad in an old shirt, and ditto pair of trousers, among green blankets and pots and kettles, and sheepskins and goatskins, with strings of beads and brass buttons festooned from the beams, and the shelves loaded with roll Boer tobacco and sugar pockets and coffee canisters and butcher knives, and all sorts of minor "notions" in demand for native trade – I wondered, I say, what sort of figure I should cut in the eyes of Major Sewin's highbred looking daughters should they happen suddenly to ride up and thus discover me; then I wondered why the deuce I should have thought about it at all.

The boys were soon satisfied, and I gave them a bit of tobacco apiece by way of clenching the deal, for it is bad policy to earn a name for stinginess among natives. But instead of going away they squatted themselves down outside. I did not immediately follow them.

"What was I saying, Iqalaqala?" began Tyingoza, as soon as

I did. “The Ingisi down there is clearly anxious to herd his own sheep himself. These children he has sent away, saying they were of no use. But, you may hear from themselves. Speak.”

Thus ordered, the two, squatting there, told their tale over again, and it did not take long in telling. They had been employed to herd sheep, and that morning the Major’s “son” – as they described him – had ridden up to them in the veldt, and had become very angry about something; what it was they had no notion for they could not understand one word he said, which seemed to anger him still more, for he had cuffed one of them over the head and kicked him. One thing he was able to make them understand and this was that they should clear off the place. They had done so, but neither of them were pleased, as was natural; indeed there was that in the face of the cuffed and kicked one, which savoured of vindictiveness, and was a clear indication that sooner or later, and in some shape or form, the ill-advised settler would have to pay somewhat dearly for that act of violence.

I smoothed matters down as far as I was able: pointing out, I hoped with some tact, that they were young, and a little roughness now and then must be expected to come their way – it was not as if they had attained the dignity of head-ringed men – and so forth. They appeared to accept it, but I’m afraid they did not.

“What is thy name?” I said to the aggrieved youth.

“Atyisayo.”

“Ha! Atyisayo! Meaning hot. Hot water,” I rejoined. “Well

you have got into hot water, as the proverb runs among us whites – as we all do sooner or later especially when we are young. But we get out of it again, and so have you, and you must think no more about it," I concluded.

"M-m! But he has not paid us anything. The Ingisi has sent us away without our hire."

"He will give it you. He is hot tempered but not a cheat. You will have it. I myself will see to that. *Hambani gahle*."

"Iqalaqala is our father," they murmured, rising to leave. "*Amakosi*! *Hlalani gahle*!"

I watched their receding forms, and shook my head. Then I looked at Tyingoza.

"It is a pity," I said. "Yes, a great pity. These people down there are good people – yes, even of the best of the land. It is only that they lack understanding, yet even that will come – with experience. I will go and talk again with them – yes – this very evening. Come with me, Tyingoza. Your words as a chief will carry much weight, and these people will treat you with consideration."

He answered something about having to go home and see about some new cattle that were being sent in to him. Then with a waggish expression of countenance he said:

"*Au*! Iqalaqala. When are you going to build a new hut?"

The joke was obvious. I did not live in the trading store but in a large, well-built native hut adjoining; as being cooler, and free from the mingled odours of the varying commodities in which I

dealt. When a native sends *lobola* for a new wife he has a new and additional hut built for her accommodation. Tyingoza was chaffing me.

I called out an order to my native boy, whose quarters were at the back of the store. Presently he came trotting up, bearing a steaming kettle, and cups, and sugar. Tyingoza's face lit up at the sight. He had a weakness for strong black coffee, abundantly sweetened, and when he came to see me always got it, and plenty of it. So for another half-hour he sat imbibing the stuff, completely happy. Then he got up to go.

I bade him farewell, reminding him again of our conversation and his influence with his people; the while, he smiled quizzically, and I knew that his mind was still running upon his joke as to the new hut. Then I went into the old one, and carefully, and for me, somewhat elaborately, changed my attire, what time my boy was saddling up my best horse. I went to no pains in locking up, for was not Tyingoza my friend, and his people dusky savages, who wore no trousers – only *mútyas*; in short the very people to whom we are most anxious to send missionaries.

Chapter Three.
Of an Evening Visit

As I rode down the rugged bush path I began to undergo a very unwonted and withal uneasy frame of mind. For instance what on earth had possessed me to take such an interest in the well-being or ill-being of Major Sewin and his family? They would never get on as they were. The best thing they could do was to throw it up and clear, and, for themselves, the sooner the better. And for me? Well, exactly. It was there that the uneasiness came in.

The sun was dipping to the great bush-clad ridge up the side of the Tugela valley, and the wide sweep of forest beneath was alight with a golden glow from the still ardent horizontal shafts. Innumerable doves fluttered and cooed around, balancing themselves on mimosa sprays, or the spiky heads of the plumed euphorbia; or dashing off to wing an arrow-like flight somewhere else, alarmed by the tread of horse-hoofs or the snort and champ at a jingling bit. Here and there a spiral of blue smoke, where a native kraal in its neat circle stood pinnacled upon the jut of some mighty spur, and the faint far voices of its inhabitants raised in musical cattle calls, came, softened by distance, a pleasing and not unmelodious harmony with the evening calm. Downward and downward wound the path, and lo, as the sun kissed the far ridge, ere diving beyond it, a final and parting beam shot full upon the

face of a great krantz, causing it to flush in red flame beneath the gold and green glow of its forest fringed crest. All those evenings! I think it must be something in their sensuous and magic calm that permeates the soul of those whose lot has once been cast in these lands, riveting it in an unconscious bondage from which it can never quite free itself; binding it for all time to the land of its birth or adoption. I, for one, Godfrey Glanton, rough and ready prosaic trader in the Zulu, with no claim to sentiment or poetry in my composition, can fully recognise that the bond is there. And yet, and yet – is there a man living, with twenty years' experience of a wandering life, now in this, now in that, section of this wonderful half continent, who can honestly say he has no poetry in him? I doubt it.

The wild guinea fowl were cackling away to their roosts and the shrill crow of francolins miauw-ed forth from the surrounding brake as I dismounted to open a gate in the bush fence which surrounded what the Major called his "compound." As I led my horse on – it was not worth while remounting – a sound of voices – something of a tumult of voices, rather – caught my ear.

"Good Heavens! Another row!" I said to myself. "What impossible people these are!"

For I had recognised an altercation, and I had recognised the voices. One was that of the Major's nephew, and it was raised in fine old British imprecation. The other was that of a native, and was volubly expostulative – in its own tongue. Then I came in

view of their owners, and heard at the same time another sound – that of a hard smack, followed by another. For background to the scene the fence and gate of a sheep-kraal.

The native was a youth, similar to those who had called at my store that afternoon. Unarmed he was no sort of match for the powerful and scientific onslaught of his chastiser. He had nimbly skipped out of harm's way and was volubly pouring forth abuse and threats of vengeance.

"What on earth – Are you at it again, Sewin?" I sung out. "Great Scott, man, you'll never keep a boy on the place at this rate! What's the row this time?"

"Hallo Glanton! That you? Row? Only that when I tell this cheeky silly idiot to do anything he stands and grins and doesn't do it. So I went for him."

The tailing off of the remark was not quite suitable for publication, so I omit it.

"That all he did?" I said, rather shortly, for I was out of patience with this young fool.

"All? Isn't that enough? Damn his cheek! What business has he to grin at me?"

"Well you wouldn't have had him scowl, would you?"

"I'd have hammered him to pulp if he had."

"Just so. You may as well give up all idea of farming here at this rate, Sewin, if you intend to keep on on that tack. The fellow didn't do it, because in all probability he hadn't the ghost of a notion what you were telling him to do. Here. I'll put it to him."

I did so. It was even as I had expected. The boy didn't understand a word of English, and young Sewin couldn't speak a word of Zulu – or at any rate a sentence. I talked to him, but it was not much use. He would leave, he declared. He was not going to stand being punched. If he had had an assegai or a stick perhaps the other would not have had things all his own way, he added meaningly.

In secret I sympathised with him, but did not choose to say so. What I did say was:

"And you would spend some years – in chains – mending the roads and quarrying stones for the Government? That would be a poor sort of satisfaction, would it not?"

"*Au*! I am not a dog," he answered sullenly. "Tyingoza is my chief. But if the Government says I am to stand being beaten I shall cross Umzinyati this very night, and go and *konza* to Cetywayo. Now, this very night."

I advised him to do nothing in a hurry, because anything done in a hurry was sure to be badly done. I even talked him over to the extent of making him promise that he would not leave at all, at any rate until he had some fresh grievance – which I hoped to be able to ensure against.

"Come on in, Glanton," sung out young Sewin, impatiently. "Or are you going to spend the whole evening jawing with that infernal young sweep. I suppose you're taking his part."

This was pretty rough considering the pains I had been at to smooth the way for these people in the teeth of their own pig-

headed obstinacy. But I was not going to quarrel with this cub.

"On the contrary," I said, "I was taking yours, in that I persuaded the boy not to clear out, as he was on the point of doing."

"Did you? Well then, Glanton, you won't mind my saying that it's a pity you did. D'you think we're going to keep any blasted nigger here as a favour on his part?"

"Answer me this," I said. "Are you prepared to herd your own sheep —*slaag* them, too – milk your own cows, and, in short, do every darn thing there is to be done on the farm yourselves?"

"Of course not. But I don't see your point. The country is just swarming with niggers. If we kick one off the place, we can easily get another. Just as good fish in the sea, eh?"

"Are there? This colony contains about four hundred thousand natives – rather more than less – and if you go on as you're doing, Sewin, you'll mighty soon find that not one of those four hundred thousand will stay on your place for love or money. Not only that, but those around here'll start in to make things most unpleasantly lively for you. They'll *slaag* your sheep and steal your cattle – and you'll find it too hot altogether to stay. Now you take my advice and go on a new tack altogether."

"Mr Glanton's quite right, Falkner," said a clear voice from the verandah above us – for we had reached the house now, only in the earnestness of our discussion we had not noticed the presence of anybody. "He has told us the same thing before, and I hope he will go on doing so until it makes some impression."

"Oh, as to that, Miss Sewin," I said, idiotically deprecatory, as the Major's eldest daughter came forward to welcome me, "I am only trying to make my experience of service to you."

"I don't know what we should have done without it," she answered, in that sweet and gracious way of hers that always made me feel more or less a fool. In outward aspect she was rather tall, with an exceeding gracefulness of carriage. Her face, if it lacked colour perhaps, was very regular and refined; and would light up in the sweetest possible of smiles. She had grey eyes, large and well-lashed, and her abundant hair was arranged in some wonderful manner, which, while free from plaits and coils, always looked far more becoming than any amount of dressing by a fashionable hairdresser could have rendered it. But there you are. What do I, a prosaic trader in the Zulu, for all my experience of border and up-country matters, know about such things? So you must take my plain impressions as I give them.

It seemed to me that Falkner Sewin's face had taken on an unpleasant, not to say scowling expression, at his cousin's remarks, and he had turned away to hide it. He was a personable young fellow enough, tall and well set-up, and muscular; handsome too, with a square, determined chin. He had been a few years in the Army, where he had much better have remained, for he seemed to have qualified for civil life by a superlative arrogance, and an overweening sense of his own importance; both doubtless valuable to the accompaniment of jingling spurs and the clank of scabbards, but worse than useless for farming

purposes on the Natal border. Towards myself he had begun by adopting a patronising attitude, which, however, he had soon dropped.

The house was a single storied one, surrounded on three sides by a verandah. A large and newly made garden reached round two sides of it, and away, at the further end of this, I could see the residue of the family, occupied with watering-pots, and other implements of the kind. It was a bright and pleasant spot was this garden, and its colour and sweet odours always conveyed a soothing effect, to my mind, at any rate; for little time or inclination had I for the cultivation of mere flowers. A patch or two of mealies or *amabele*, in a roughly schoffeled-up "land" was about the extent of any "gardening" I allowed myself; wherefore this amazing blend of colour and scent appealed to me all the more.

"Take that chair, Mr Glanton," Miss Sewin went on, pointing to a large cane chair on the verandah. "You must have had a hot ride. Falkner, you might see that Mr Glanton's horse is looked after. Call one of the boys and have him taken round and fed. The others are somewhere down in the garden, Mr Glanton. You know, my father is just wild on getting up a garden here. It occupies his time nearly the whole day long."

"And very well he has done with it hitherto, Miss Sewin," I answered heartily. "It is a pleasure to see it. You know, we rough knockabouts haven't much time for that sort of thing. But we appreciate it, or its results, all the more when we see them."

"But don't you ever feel inclined to make things bright and pretty about your place?" she went on. "I should have thought you could have managed to find an hour or two a day. Or are you always so very busy up there?"

I felt guilty, as I remembered how I was prevented, not by lack of time but inclination: my spare time being occupied mainly by taking it easy, and smoking pipes and chatting with any chance natives who happened along; or it might be, sneaking about in the thick bushy kloofs to get a shot at a buck. But I answered, somewhat lamely:

"Oh, as to that, it isn't exactly a matter of time. The fact is, Miss Sewin, we get into certain habits of life, and can't get out of them in a hurry. I suppose a knockabout like myself gets all the taste for the fine arts knocked out of him. And the art of laying out gardens is one of the fine arts."

She looked at me, I thought, with something of interest in her wide eyes. Then she said:

"Ah, but, you knockabouts – your own word remember, Mr Glanton – " she interjected, with a smile, "are, or ought to be, among the most useful men a country like this can produce. You are constantly in touch with the savages by whom we are surrounded. You know their ways and their thoughts and all about them, and your knowledge cannot but be invaluable to your fellow-countrymen."

I felt pleased. She had a way of what I will call for want of a better expression – smoothing you down the right way. I said:

"But these savages, Miss Sewin. Believe me, they are not half bad fellows at bottom if you take them the right way. You haven't got to go very far down to find them so, either."

"And we take them the wrong way, isn't that what you mean?" she answered, with another of her somewhat disturbing smiles. "I believe you are quite right – in fact I know you are – and I am always saying so. But, here are the others. I hope you will keep on telling them the same thing, over and over again until they see it themselves, if it isn't too late."

"I will. But you? You yourself. Don't you find this rough country and rough life a sadly different thing to what you had expected?" I said.

"Not 'sadly' different. On the contrary, it is full of interest. To begin with, these same savages interest me immensely. I should like to learn their language. Is it easy?"

"To tell the truth I don't know whether it is or not. I didn't *learn* it, myself. I sort of absorbed it. But I can tell you it makes all the difference in the world if you can talk with them and understand them or not. If you can I can't imagine any people more easy to get on with."

"Then I will begin to learn it at once. You will help me, won't you, Mr Glanton?"

Great Heavens! What was this? I began to see all over the world, as if my head was screwed on all ways at once. Would I help her? Oh, wouldn't I! Here was a bond of union set up between us – one that would afford me ample pretext for riding

over here very often: that would bring us together often and constantly. It seemed as if a new and very bright world had opened in front of me – and yet and yet – what an utter fool I was – I, Godfrey Glanton, prosaic knockabout trader in the Zulu, and not a particularly young one at that!

Chapter Four. My Neighbour's Household

"Ha, Glanton! Glad to see you!" cried the Major, shaking me heartily by the hand. "Why, I was beginning to wonder when we should see you again. Was afraid you had started again on some up-country trip, and by Jove, there are one or two things I want your opinion about. We'll talk of them bye and bye."

"All right, Major. Only too glad to be of use."

He was a fine specimen of the best type of old soldier – tall, straight, handsome, hearty and straightforward in manner – in short a gentleman every inch of him. I had a great liking for him, and for his own sake alone would have gone far towards smoothing his difficulties and straightening things out for him no matter how crooked they might be, thanks to his own wrongheadedness. His wife was a good counterpart of him – without his wrongheadedness – and quite free from the fads and fussiness apparently inseparable from most elderly ladies, which render their presence and company a matter for resigned toleration rather than any sort of pleasure or advantage. To such Mrs Sewin was a rare and remarkable exception. The youngest daughter, Edith, was outwardly a complete contrast to her stately sister, being shorter, and plump and fair-haired, but very pretty – and sunny-natured to a degree. In fact I believe that to most men

she would have proved the more attractive of the two.

"Have a glass of grog, Glanton, after your ride," said the Major. "Well, and how's trade?"

"So so. Much as usual. I'm thinking of a couple of months' trip to the north of Zululand soon. I might pick up some good cattle in Hamu's and Majendwa's part, and Zulu oxen always find a good sale."

"Into Zululand?" repeated Falkner, who had just entered. "By Jove, Glanton, I'd like to go with you. Wouldn't I just."

I hope I didn't show that I wouldn't like anything of the sort. I may have, for I was never a good actor, except in dealing with savages.

"That wouldn't be impossible," I answered. "But what about the farm?"

I read "Hang the farm!" as plain as possible in his face, though he hadn't said it. What he did say was:

"Oh well. We might think out some plan so as to work it."

"You must have had some very exciting adventures among the savages in your time, Mr Glanton," said Mrs Sewin.

"The liveliest adventures I have ever had were among white men, and not among savages at all," I answered. "But there, you must excuse me filling the rôle of the up-country yarner."

"Mr Glanton is most provokingly and proverbially impossible to 'draw,' you know, mother," said Miss Sewin, with a laugh and a shake of the head.

"That's more than most fellows in his line are," guffawed

Falkner, in a way that was rather unpleasant, and, I thought, intentionally so, as he helped himself to a glass of grog.

"Come and have a look round the garden, Glanton," said the Major. "We sha'n't get dinner for nearly an hour, and it'll help fill up the time. You girls coming?"

"Aïda, you go," said the youngest. "Mother and I will see about getting dinner ready."

Dusk was already beginning to fall, and there isn't much dusk in that latitude. The scents of evening were in the air, the myriad distilling perfumes from the surrounding bush no less fragrant to my nostrils than those of the sweet-scented flowers which represented the Major's favourite hobby; but this, you may be sure, I did not tell him. But to me it was an enchanted hour and an enchanted scene, as I furtively watched the tall graceful figure at my side, noting each changing attitude, from the poise of the well-set-on head to the delicate tapering fingers put forth to handle, or here and there pluck some blossom. The while I was listening to the old man's enthusiastic dissertations, trying not to agree in the wrong place; trying, in short, to look as if I knew something about it all, yet not altogether succeeding, I fear, as I became aware when I caught the glance of Miss Sewin's eyes, and the smile upon her sweet, half-averted face. Then the stars came out with a rush, and the jackals began to bay along the hillside in the gloom of the bush.

"Confound it!" grumbled the Major, looking upward. "It's dark already; pitch dark, by Jove! and Glanton hasn't seen half

what I've been doing yet, since he was here last. You get no twilight at all in this infernal country. Well, I suppose we must go in."

Nothing could be more pleasant and home-like than that cheerful, lighted room, as we sat at table. We talked about the country and surroundings, the life and its drawbacks, and the Major waxed reminiscent on byegone sport in India, and his anecdotes thereon interested me though I fear the others had heard them more than once before. Falkner was inclined to be extra friendly and had discarded his usual offhand and supercilious manner, which I own was wont to try my patience sorely, and questioned me repeatedly as to my projected trip into Zululand, to which I had incidentally referred. Afterwards the two girls played and sang – uncommonly well. Falkner too, sang a very good song or two, and altogether I found I was thoroughly enjoying myself, the said enjoyment being doubtless enhanced by an obtruding recollection of my lonely hut, away up the mountain, and evenings spent in my own company until such time as I should smoke myself to sleep.

"Mr Glanton, we would so much like to see your trading store," said Edith, the youngest girl, when the music was ended.

I answered that there was little on earth to see there, that it was a greasy, dusty place, hardly fit for ladies, and so on, but that such as it was they would be more than welcome.

"And you will show us some Zulus for the occasion?" added her sister, with one of those glances which made me resolve to

assemble half Tyingoza's location if she set her heart upon it.

"Well, yes," I said. "Only you mustn't take me by surprise. It's a rough and tumble place, and I might be taken just at the very moment when I couldn't offer you a decent lunch."

But they declared that this was just what they wanted – to take me by surprise, and see exactly how I lived, and so on. The while a desperate idea had come into my head, but, would it bear carrying out?

"Look here," I said. "If you would really like to ride up there, it occurs to me I might show you something that would interest you – nothing to do with the store particularly. But I could collect a lot of Tyingoza's people and scare up a regular native dance. They do it well, and it's worth seeing, I can tell you."

"Why that would be charming," cried the youngest girl. "Aïda, we must go. Do you hear? Father, what do you think? Let's all go, and make a day of it."

"I was going to venture yet further, Major," I said. "I was going to suggest that you make a night of it. There's my hut – it's very cool and comfortable – and I have a capital tent waggon. If the ladies could make shift with such by way of sleeping quarters, why we could turn in under a blanket in the store. It isn't a luxurious bedroom, but I daresay, for one night, a couple of soldiers like yourselves could manage."

"Rather," cried Falkner enthusiastically. "That's a ripping idea of yours, Glanton. What d'you think, uncle? Shall we fix up a day? No time like the present."

"Well, I think the idea isn't a bad one, if we are not putting you out, Glanton. But – what about the farm? We can't leave it entirely to itself."

This certainly was a difficulty. I thought for a moment; then I said:

"I might be able to straighten that for you, Major. I will send you down a man – a native, one of Tyingoza's people, but as trustworthy as steel. You know, most of them are that way if put in a position of trust. Well you needn't be afraid of anything going wrong – stocklifting and that – while he's in charge. How's that?"

"Capital!" went up from the girls.

"You seem to 'straighten' everything for us, Mr Glanton," said the eldest, gratefully.

"Well this is a very small thing after all," I protested. "I'm only afraid you will find the quarters a bit rough."

But this they declared was nothing. It only remained to fix the day. They would enjoy it above all things, they repeated.

"You'll have the same room as last time, Mr Glanton," said Mrs Sewin, as she bade me good-night.

"Why, I was just thinking of going home," I protested.

But this was over-ruled, and that unanimously. The Major wanted to have a talk with me, and couldn't do it comfortably if I was in a hurry to be off all the time. Besides – what did it matter? Nobody would be wanting to do a deal during the night, so I might just as well remain where I was, and so on. Well, I didn't want much pressing, and it was obvious my welcome hadn't

worn thin just yet.

"Let's take the grog out on to the stoep, uncle," said Falkner. "It's cooler there."

"What d'you think, Glanton?" said the Major, when we were comfortably seated outside, each with a glass of grog before him and a pipe of good Magaliesberg – than which there is no better tobacco in the world – in full blast. "Why is it I can't do anything with these damned fellows of yours? Now in India I could make any sort of native do anything I wanted, and no bother about it. He had to, don't you know."

"Exactly, Major, he had to and these haven't. Wherein lies all the difference."

"I believe I was a damned fool to come and squat here at all," he growled.

"I don't agree with you, Major," I said. "You've only got to try and understand them, and they're all right. I don't mean to say they're perfect, no one is, but make the best of them. To begin with, learn the language."

"Good Lord, I'm too old to begin learning languages."

"Not a bit of it," I said. "I knew a man once – he must have been about your age, Major, an old Indian, too, only he had been a civilian – who had gone stone blind late in life. But he had a hobby for languages, and I'm blest if he hadn't taken up this one among others. He had got hold of the Bible in Zulu, done up by missionaries of course, and began putting all sorts of grammar cases to me. I own he fairly stumped me. I told him I didn't know

anything of Biblical Zulu – had always found that in use at the kraals good enough. Then he had the crow over me. But you ought to have a try at it, certainly your nephew ought."

"By Jove, I believe I will," growled Falkner. "Only it'd be an infernal grind."

"Not much more grind than punching a boy's head because he can't understand you," I said, "especially when the weather's hot; and far more profitable. Still I can rather enter into your feelings. The feeling of helplessness when we can't make out what the other fellow is talking about is prone to engender irritability. I was not guiltless myself in that line when I first went up-country. You set to work. Miss Sewin was saying this evening that she intended to."

"Oh was she?" growled Falkner again, with renewed interest, and the glance he gave me was not at all friendly, I thought.

"Well, you take my tip, Major, and then I don't think you'll at all regret coming here. No, by Jove, I don't."

"You don't, eh? Well I'm getting up a first-rate garden certainly. And the shooting around here isn't bad of its kind."

I hugged myself, metaphorically. Less than ever, by the experiences of a few hours, did I wish these people to give up in disgust.

Chapter Five.
A Disappearance and a Revel

"What is this about Nyakami?"

"U' Nyakami? Is he dead?" answered Tyingoza, pausing with his snuff-spoon in mid air.

"That is what some would like to know," I went on. "But they have not found him yet."

I had named, by his native name, a neighbour of mine, who farmed some way down the river. Though in actual fact he was rather too far off to be termed exactly a neighbour. His real and British name was Hensley, and he had disappeared.

Sounds strange, doesn't it, and it certainly was. People don't disappear in Natal like they do in London, or any other large and civilised city, least of all highly respectable and fairly substantial colonists, of which Hensley was one. But this man had, and the strangest part of it was that he had not only disappeared but had done so leaving no trace. Not only that, but no one could be found who could swear to having been the last to see him.

He lived alone, and was an ordinary type of the frontier stock farmer. He was fairly prosperous and there was no reason on earth why he should have taken himself out of the way. No reason on earth was there either why he should have been put out of the way. He was on good terms with the natives, could always

get plenty of servants, and so on. No, there was no reason in the world for his disappearance, yet he had disappeared – how and when nobody seemed to have the faintest idea.

The news had reached me through native sources, as a large portion of my news did. Indeed it is hardly credible the quantity I used to learn about my neighbours in this way; some of whom would have been mightily disconcerted could they have guessed that I, or anybody else, had an inkling of anything of the sort. The Natal Mounted Police had been investigating, but neither they nor their native detectives had been able to lay hand on the slightest clue. The man might have been caught up to heaven at midnight for all there was to show what had become of him.

"Not found him yet?" echoed Tyingoza, when he had absorbed his snuff. "*Au*! he will find himself. Men are strange, Iqalaqala, especially white men. And this one – if he wants to disappear why should he not?"

"Wants to disappear? But this one has no reason to want anything of the kind. Some men might, but this one not. You know him, Tyingoza, as well as I. What do you think?"

There was a comical twinkle in the chief's eyes. He merely answered:

"Who can think in such a case?"

Obviously there was nothing to be got out of Tyingoza – as yet – so I left the subject. In fact I had a far more interesting subject on my mind just then, for this was the day the Sewins had fixed upon for their visit to me, and so I fell to discussing with the chief

the arrangements which were to be made for their entertainment. He had promised that a goodly number of his people should muster, and I had promised them cattle to kill in proportion to the number that would require feasting. This ought to ensure a very good roll up indeed. The disappearance of Hensley was to me a very secondary matter to-day.

By the way, I was in a state of fidget absolutely unwonted with me; and my "boy" Tom simply gaped with astonishment at the thorough turn-out I made him give my hut; and when I fetched a roll of Salampore cloth to hang around the walls so as to conceal the grass thatching I could see that he was entertaining considerable doubts as to his master's sanity.

He would have entertained even graver doubts could he have witnessed a still further stage of imbecility into which I lapsed. I found myself looking in the glass – not for ordinary purposes of toilet, be it noted, and I have set out upon this narrative determined to spare none of my own weaknesses, but because I was anxious to see what sort of fellow I looked – and I don't know that I felt particularly flattered by the result; for, confound it, I was no longer in my first youth, and a face bronzed and roughened by twenty years of knocking about, struck me as nothing particularly attractive to the other sex. Yet it was only the roughness of weather and more or less hard times that had told upon it, for I had always been rather abstemious and had set my face like a flint against the wild roaring sprees that some of my friends in the same line were prone to indulge in. If I had

not the "clean run" look of Falkner Sewin, my eye was every whit as clear and I had a trifle the advantage of him in height, and held myself quite as straight. No, it was absurd to try and start comparisons with Sewin, who was quite ten years younger, and had never known any hardening experiences, so I turned from the looking-glass imprecating one Godfrey Glanton as a silly ass, who had much better trek away right up-country and stay there altogether. And this idea was the first intimation that I had returned to sanity again.

My guests arrived earlier than I had expected, somewhere in the middle of the afternoon to wit, and the first thing they did was to reproach me for having put myself out for them so as they called it.

"I warned you there was nothing particular to see, didn't I?" I said, as I showed them the inside of the store.

"But I think there is," declared Miss Sewin, gazing around at the various "notions" disposed along the shelves or hanging about from the beams. "And how tidy you keep it all. Ah – " as an idea struck her, "I believe you have had it all put ship-shape for the occasion. Confess now, Mr Glanton, haven't you?"

"Well, you know, it's a sort of general holiday, so of course things are a little more ship-shape than usual," I answered.

"Ah, but the fun would have been to have taken you by surprise, when you were in the thick of it. How is it there are no natives here to-day?"

"They'll roll up directly for the fun this evening. I expect quite

a lot of them."

"Are they hard at a deal?" she went on, still gazing with interest at the trade goods. "Do they haggle much?"

"Haggle? Rather! Haggle like any Italian. Only they're much more difficult to bring down. But, won't you come round now and have tea? I've had a waggon sail rigged up for shade because I thought you'd prefer it outside."

The ladies were delighted, and I will own in candour that there didn't seem to be anything wanting, if about four kinds of biscuits; and rolls, white and fresh, done on a gridiron; some very excellent tinned jam; butter and potted meats; tea and coffee, and for us men a decanter of first-rate Boer brandy – contributed a sufficient afternoon tea.

"So this is the 'roughing it' you warned us against, Mr Glanton?" laughed Mrs Sewin, who was pouring out. "Why, it is luxury, positive luxury."

"But it's a great occasion," I answered. "Major, have a glass of grog after your ride."

"Well, that's no bad idea. Capital stuff this," holding up his glass.

"So it is," pronounced Falkner, tossing off his. "Here's luck, Glanton. By Jove, you've got an uncommonly snug crib up here. Hanged if it don't feel like turning Zulu trader myself."

"And if Tyingoza came here rather often, and stuck here a little longer than you wanted, how long would it be before you started to kick him off the place?"

"Oh, not long, I expect," answered Falkner equably, amid the general laugh at his expense.

"Quite so. Then from that, moment you might as well shut up shop."

"Isn't this Tyingoza the chief of the location?" asked Miss Sewin.

"Yes. He was here this morning."

"Oh, I should like to see him."

"You shall," I answered. "He's sure to be here to-night. If not I'll send over for him the first thing in the morning. He's a great friend of mine."

Falkner guffawed. "Friend of yours! Oh, I say now, Glanton. A nigger!"

"All serene, Sewin. I've known quite as fine fellows in their way among 'niggers' as you call them – as among white men. Strange, isn't it? But, fact, for all that."

"Now I come to think of it," said the Major, "I've noticed that the men I've met over here, who have large experience of natives, invariably speak well of them."

I rejoiced that the old man was coming to his senses on that point, because there was less likelihood of him getting disgusted with and leaving the neighbourhood.

"You have a perfectly lovely view from here, at any rate," said Miss Sewin, when he had debated the oft-threshed-out question a little further. "How black and jagged the Drakensberg peaks look over there. And so that is Zululand?" turning to the expanse

beyond the Tugela.

"By Jove!" said the Major. "It strikes me we are pretty much at Cetywayo's mercy, right on the border as we are."

"If you're never at the mercy of anybody worse, you won't have cause for uneasiness, Major," I said. "As long as he's let alone he'll let us alone. There isn't a native chief in the whole of Africa who is less likely to molest us in any way."

"And are these people round you Zulus, Mr Glanton?" went on Miss Sewin, her beautiful eyes wide open as she gazed forth upon the country that had awakened her interest.

"Yes. Those on the immediate border here, Tyingoza's people, and two or three more of the large locations along the river. Further in they are made up of all sorts of the tribes originally inhabiting what is now Natal. Ah! Do you hear that? Here come some of them at any rate."

"Yes. They are singing, and quite well too."

I looked at her as she stood listening; her beautiful face lit up with animation, and, I must admit, I was enjoying the position of host and entertainer to her.

"But now, if there was a war with Cetywayo," struck in the Major, "would these people go over to him or stand by us?"

"Well that would depend on how our forces behaved at first. Sentimentally their sympathies would be with him, but then a savage is pre-eminently a practical animal, Major, with a hard keen eye to the side on which his bread is buttered, and that would tell. Look now, here they come."

All eyes were turned with interest, as a body of natives emerged from the bush about a quarter of a mile from my store. They were a good bit got up, and wore feather adornments and tufts of cow-tails round leg and arm. They carried the *isihlangu*, or large war shield, instead of the small *irau*, or dancing shield, they usually moved about with, and the quiver of assegai hafts kept time with the tread of feet and the deep sonorous thunder of their marching song. In number they were about a hundred.

"That's all right," I said gleefully. "I told Tyingoza to turn them out in good form, and he has."

"Why, they're splendid," pronounced Miss Sewin, as they drew near, making a brave show with their multi-coloured shields, and the gleam of assegais in the afternoon sun, and I delighted to watch her animated face and kindling eyes, as the whole body marched up to where we stood, and halting suddenly with weapons lowered and right hand uplifted, chorussed forth one deep-voiced word of salute:

"*Amakosi*!" (Chiefs.)

I went forward and spoke to them. Most of them I knew personally or by sight. They were all young men and unringed, and in high glee at the prospect of an abundant beef feast. And it would be an abundant one, for were it to run to half my herd, I was determined to stint nothing to render the entertainment complete on this occasion.

Hardly had they withdrawn to the place I had pointed out and squatted themselves upon the ground than a sound of singing was

heard from another quarter and soon a second company came in sight likewise bravely got up, and then another, till I reckoned there must be something over three hundred of them. The ladies were delighted, and pronounced it well worth coming to see: so was I, because they were.

"I say though," said Falkner, "to be serious, isn't this rather – well, injudicious, Glanton? These fellows are all fully armed you know, and we – "

I laughed.

"Look here, Sewin," I said. "Supposing you were taken to a review, in France or Germany say – would you feel any misgivings because the troops were fully armed?"

"That's all very well, but these are savages you know. And the ladies – "

" – Have no misgiving at all, Falkner," struck in Miss Sewin serenely. "If all the savages in Zululand were here, I, for one, would feel perfectly safe with Mr Glanton."

"Hullo, Glanton. Bow your acknowledgments," cried Falkner, in a tone whose would-be geniality could not disguise a sneer. "Well, I was not speaking on my own account."

"Of course you weren't, Sewin," I answered, anxious to avert any unpleasant feeling. "And now, if the ladies will excuse me for a little I must go and look out some cows for these fellows to kill. For the next hour they will exchange their picturesqueness for the decidedly reverse of the slaughter yard. By the way you might like to come along, Sewin."

He jumped at the suggestion, but the Major preferred to remain where he was. Mrs Sewin said they would get through the time getting out their things and arranging their quarters for the night.

"I should think it'll make a hole in your cattle kraal," he said as we strolled over.

"Not a big one. I sha'n't give them the pick of the herd of course."

We strolled round to the kraal. My cattle herd was there and we proceeded to turn out the half dozen beasts I had selected for slaughter. A number of my guests had crowded up. They had discarded their shields, but were handling assegais in a manner that was highly anticipatory.

"Stand back," I cried noting a desire to crowd up. "A few will be sufficient."

But all were anxious to make one of that few, and by the time the doomed animals had reached the appointed place, chosen for being well out of sight – and scent – of the house, a rush was made upon them. Half the number were down at once, deftly assegaied; the remaining three however careered away, two wounded, and streaming with blood – the other untouched. Then ensued something akin to a buffalo hunt. With yells and whoops the excited savages bounded in pursuit, but even their speed and agility was not enough to turn the terrified and maddened animals, and had not a fresh crowd raced forward to head them they would have got away into the bush. Now two were

promptly transfixed with half a dozen deftly hurled assegais in each, but the last, hardly touched, charged like lightning through its encompassing destroyers, and came straight back to the kraal, and, incidentally, for Falkner Sewin, who had left me to follow on and see the racket.

"Look out!" I roared. "Look out, Sewin! Run, man, for your life!"

If he had taken my warning in time, all would have been well; but for some reason or other – I suspect cussedness – he did not. The cow, a red one, with sharp needle-like horns, now thoroughly maddened by the riot and the blood, and the sharp dig of more than one badly aimed spear, put down her head, and charged straight for Falkner. I snatched an assegai from a young Zulu who was standing by me watching the fun, and rushed forward, and none too soon, for now Falkner was in full flight; the savage animal, head lowered, and throwing the foam from her mouth, and "twilling" hideously, was gaining upon him at the rate of two steps to one. It was now or never. As she shot past me I let go the assegai. It was a tense moment that – between when the long shaft left my hand and half buried itself in the side of the cow. But the throw was a right true one. The keen, tapering blade had bitten right into the heart, and the maddened beast plunged heavily forward to lie in a moment, dead and still, and at the sight a great roar of applause went up from the excited savages, who while trooping back from their unsuccessful chase had been delightedly watching this its termination.

Chapter Six.
Further Festivity

"Near thing that," I said.

"Near thing? By Jove, I believe you!" echoed Falkner, who had halted, considerably out of wind and temper; the latter not improved by certain scarcely smothered and half-averted laughs which escaped some of the spectators. "Why I do believe the infernal sweeps are having the grin of me," he added, scowling at them.

"We'll enter into the joke yourself, just as you would have done if it had been some other fellow. That would have struck you as funny, eh? and this strikes them. They don't mean anything by it."

"Oh well, I suppose not," he growled, and I felt relieved, for he was quite capable of kicking up some silly row then and there, which would have been unpleasant, if not worse.

"Let's go back," I suggested. "The noble savage engaged in the most congenial occupation of his heart, that of butchery, is not seen at his best."

"I should think not. Look at those fellows over there. Why they're beginning on the stuff raw. Nasty beggars!"

"There are certain tit-bits they like that way, just as we do our snipe and woodcock and teal – or say we do."

In truth the groups engaged upon each carcase were not pleasant to the eye – although thoroughly enjoying themselves – and we left them.

"I say, Glanton, though," he went on, "I believe I came devilish near getting badly mauled by that beastly cow. The nigger who ripped in that assegai did so in the nick of time. I'd like to give him half-a-crown."

"Hand over then, Sewin. Here's the nigger."

"What? You?"

"Me."

"But the beast was going full bat."

"Well, a cow's a good big target even at twenty yards," I said.

He whistled. "By Jove! *I* couldn't have done it."

For once I was able to agree with him.

We had dinner in the open, under the waggon sail which I had rigged up as shelter from the sun, and which now did duty to give shelter from the dew.

"I'm afraid it's all game fare to-night, Mrs Sewin," I said. "This is roast bush-buck haunch, and that unsightly looking pot there beside the Major contains a regular up-country game stew. I rather pride myself on it, and it holds five different kinds of birds, besides bacon, and odd notions in the way of pepper, etc."

"And that's what you call roughing it," was the answer. "Why, it looks simply delicious."

"By Jove, Glanton, we must get the recipe from you," said the Major when he had sampled it. "I never ate anything so good in

my life."

Tom and another boy in the background, were deft when help was required, and I know that if anybody ever enjoyed their dinner my guests did on that occasion. And upon my word they might well have done so, for trust an old up-country man for knowing how to make the best of the products of the veldt; and the best is very good indeed. And as we partook of this, by the light of a couple of waggon lanterns, slung from the poles of our improvised tent, the surroundings were in keeping. On the open side lay a panorama rapidly growing more and more dim as the stars began to twinkle forth, a sweep of darkening country of something like fifty or sixty miles, reaching away in the far distance beyond the Blood River, on the left, and immediately in front, beyond the Tugela, the wooded river bank and open plains and rocky hills of Zululand. Then, suffusing the far horizon like the glow of some mighty grass fire, the great disc of a broad full moon soared redly upward, putting out the stars.

"Now this is what I call uncommonly jolly," pronounced the Major, leaning back in his chair, and blowing out the first puffs of his after dinner pipe.

"Hear – hear!" sung out Falkner. And then, warmed up into a glow of generosity by a good dinner and plenty of grog, I'm blest if the fellow didn't trot out quite a yarn about the cow chevying him and my timely assegai throw; whereupon there was a disposition to make a hero of me on the spot.

"Pooh! The thing was nothing at all," I objected. "An everyday

affair, if you're working with unbroken cattle."

Yet there was one face which expressed more than the others, expressed in fact unbounded approval, as it was turned full on me with that straight frank gaze, and I exulted inwardly, but then came a thought that dashed everything and was as a judgment upon my quite unwarrantable conceit. This was it. What if they are engaged, and that full, frank look of approval is one of gratitude that I should have saved – if not the life of the other – at any rate the certainty of him being badly injured? It is singular that no such idea had ever occurred to me before, but it did now, and seemed to lend significance to certain signs of resentment and ill-will which I had noticed on Falkner's part on occasions where his cousin was concerned. And the thought was a thoroughly disquieting one, I admit.

"Listen! Here they come," I said, holding up a hand. "The entertainment is about to begin."

The distant and deep-toned hum of conversation had reached us from where our dusky entertainers were enjoying their feast, and an occasional outburst of laughter. Now, instead, came the regular rhythm of a savage song, drawing nearer and nearer.

"I think we can't do better than let them perform just in front here," I went on. "The ground's open, and the moon almost as bright as day."

This was agreed to enthusiastically, and soon the singing grew louder and louder, and the whole body in their picturesque gear, came marching up, beating time upon their shields with sticks

and assegai hafts. They halted in half moon formation and one man stepping out from the rest, gave the sign for silence. Then having saluted us with much *sibongo*, he led off, in a sort of chant, loud and clear at first, then rising higher and higher. The others took it up at a given point in response, and although the song did not run to many notes, it was soon thundered aloud in a harmonious wave of sound. When it had attained its highest pitch, at a sign from the *choragus* it ceased – ceased with such suddenness as to impart an impression that was positively uneasy.

"Dashed effective, by Jove!" pronounced the Major, breaking the spell.

"Why, it is beautiful – positively beautiful," declared Miss Sewin. "The harmony and the rhythmic waves of sound are perfect. Tell me, Mr Glanton, what was it all about?"

"Oh, it was merely a song of welcome, improvised over yonder while they were scoffing my cows."

"Really? Do you mean to say it was all impromptu?"

"Of course. That's the way these people do things."

"Won't they go over it again?"

"Oh, there's plenty more to come. Rather too soon for an encore yet."

While I spoke they were forming up again. This time they broke up into a hunting song. When it seemed to have gained its height, it suddenly ceased, and all darted away across the veldt till nearly out of sight in the moonlight.

"What the deuce are they up to now?" said Falkner, filling his

pipe.

"You'll see. Listen. Now they are returning with the game."

Again the voices broke forth, now returning as I had said, and swelling higher and higher, in a long recitative uttered by some dozen, and replied to in rolling chorus by the whole body.

"They are recounting their exploits now – what game they have got, and how they got it," I explained, as the singing ceased.

"By Jove, are they?" cried Falkner. "Look here, Glanton, I've got an idea. How would it be to scare up a hunt to-morrow, and get a lot of these chaps to help? I'd like to see how they go to work in their own way. That would be worth seeing."

"Well, it might be managed. What d'you think, Major?"

"A capital idea. But – hang it, we haven't got our guns."

"Oh, as to that," I said, "you could use mine. There's a shot gun and a rifle, and a rifle and smooth-bore combined. That'll arm all hands."

"Well done, Glanton. You're a jewel of a chap!" cried Falkner, boisterously. "The very thing. But, I say. How about arranging it with them now. No time like the present, eh?"

The idea appealed to me exceedingly, not for its own sake, I fear, but because it would afford an opportunity of detaining my guests – or shall we say one of them – yet longer, perhaps even another night, for it would be hard if I could not manage to prolong the hunt until too late for them to return. Really Falkner Sewin was not without his uses in the world.

"I think it would be simply delightful!" interjected that "one

of them." "We will be able to see some of it too, won't we, Mr Glanton?"

"Why of course, Miss Sewin. I'll send the boys up to some convenient spot with lunch and we'll make a regular picnic of it."

The idea was received with enthusiasm. Only Mrs Sewin somewhat faintly objected that they had a long way to go to get home afterwards. But this I over-ruled by hoping they would not find my poor accommodation so very trying that the prospect of another night of it – if the worst came to the worst – should prove entirely out of the question.

Just then a group of men detached themselves from the rest, and came over to us, to salute and ask how we liked the performance.

"This is Wabisa, the next biggest chief under Tyingoza," I said, introducing the foremost, a tall, dignified head-ringed man. "Now, Miss Sewin, here is a real chief. Tyingoza could not come to-night, but will to-morrow morning."

"I'm so glad," she answered, looking at Wabisa with interest.

I gave them some roll tobacco which I had ready for them, and told my boys to make them some coffee. The while I arranged for to-morrow's bush-buck hunt. There was no difficulty about it at all, even as I had expected. I could have as many boys as I wanted.

"They must hunt too, Wabisa," I said. "The white *amakosi* want to see if the assegai is a better weapon than the gun."

"*Ou*! That they shall see," laughed the chief.

“Is there going to be any more dancing, Mr Glanton?” said the youngest girl.

“Yes. The best part. They’re going to give us the war dance now,” and I suggested to Wabisa that it was getting late, and the white ladies might be growing tired.

Of all native dances a war dance is the most catching, and this had not long started before even the old Major found himself beating time with his feet, while as for Falkner, it was all I could do to prevent him from rushing in among them to take his part. The chant now rose quickly to a ferocious roar, and as the dancers swayed and crouched, turning half round, then leaping erect, while going through the pantomime of striking an enemy, to the accompaniment of a strident death hiss, the whole scene was vivid and realistic enough to have rendered some people decidedly nervous. Then the thunderous stamping of six hundred feet, the beating of sticks on shields, and the shrilling rattle of assegai hafts – a sound not quite like any other I ever heard, and I’ve heard it often – add to this the rolling of fierce eyeballs, and the waving of tufted shields in the moonlight and you have a picture unrivalled for thrilling and at the same time exhilarating terror. A gasp as of involuntary relief went up from my guests as the thunder and racket ceased with a suddenness of silence that was almost appalling in contrast Miss Sewin was the first to speak.

“It is perfectly magnificent,” she declared. “I for one don’t know how to thank you, Mr Glanton, for giving us such a splendid

entertainment."

I was rarely pleased at this, and mumbled something – probably idiotic.

"I suppose it isn't much to you," she went on. "You must have seen it often, and the real thing too."

"Well yes. I have, and done by more thousands than there are hundreds here. By the way, I'm giving them a little more beef for to-morrow morning so they'll be in high trim and good humour for our hunt."

"Oh, I'm afraid you are going to a great deal of trouble on our account," she said.

"Isn't it worth it – at least – I mean – er – it isn't often one can afford anyone a new kind of pleasure in this worn-out world," I added lamely. But I believe she read my original meaning for I could see a soft look come into the beautiful clear eyes in the moonlight, and there was a half smile curving her lips. We were talking a little apart from the others who had embarked on a voluble discussion of their own. And then it was voted time for bed, and the natives having dispersed, after a sonorously uttered farewell salute, the Major and Falkner and I had a final glass of grog, or so, and adjourned to our quarters in the store.

Chapter Seven.
Tyingoza's Head-Ring

There was no sign of life on the part of my guests, as I rolled out at early dawn and went down to the waterhole in the kloof for a splash. When I returned the Major and his nephew were sitting up on their blankets rubbing their eyes.

"Any chance of a tub, Glanton?" said the latter.

"There's a waterhole down in the kloof, if it's not too cold for you. Take the path that leads by Tom's hut. You can't miss it."

"Right, I'll chance the cold. Got a towel? Ah, thanks."

"That fellow's a great subject of anxiety to me, Glanton," said the Major, after Falkner had gone out. "I feel in a sort of way responsible for him. He was in the Service for a few years, then chucked it suddenly, for no other reason than to go tea-planting in Ceylon with some infernal swindler who persuaded him to invest what he'd got, in a partnership, and then skinned him of the whole lot. His father was simply frantic with him."

"I can imagine he would be."

"So can I, after the expense and trouble he had been put to in getting this young fool into the Service at all, then to have him chuck it all up! He wouldn't do anything more for him; shut the door in his face and told him to go to the devil. He didn't go to the devil; he came to me."

"I'm sure he chose the right alternative, Major," I said, when I had recovered from the roar into which this way of putting it had sent me.

"Well, you see it's a grave responsibility, and if he throws up this I don't know what'll become of him. He's got nothing in the world but what he has invested in a little stock on my place, and as for getting him a bunk, why I haven't influence enough to get him one as boot-black to a club."

"Well, he mustn't throw it up, that's all," I said.

"That's what I tell him. But he's so restless, swears the life's slow here. Bad-tempered too, and always kicking up rows with the niggers. Yes, he's a great anxiety to me."

As to the last I thought as coming from Major Sewin it was a good deal of the pot calling the kettle black. For the rest his revelations as to Falkner's prospects, or the lack of them, were not unpleasing to me, if only that the uncomfortable thought which had beset me last night could have had no foundation. This was mean but I suppose it was natural, and, as a set off, may be accepted the fact that I would willingly have done the youngster any good turn within my power. I felt flattered too that the old gentleman should discuss with me what was, after all, a family matter.

"I can readily imagine it," I answered. "But he'll have too much sense, I should think, to do anything so foolish. And then, too, Major, I should think the ladies' influence would – "

"Ah, now, it's just that which – "

But what "that" was I was not fated to know, for I heard my name called in Mrs Sewin's voice, and had to hurry away, to find out what was wanted. Also, I thought the speaker had checked himself as though about to say too much.

"We never slept more comfortably in our lives than in that waggon of yours, Mr Glanton," said the youngest girl, as we all met for an early breakfast. "Did we, Aïda?"

"No, indeed. The kartel – isn't that what you call it – has all the elasticity of a spring mattress. Really, I shall never believe again in you up-country men's stories of roughing it."

"They're true, all the same," I answered, with a laugh. "For that reason we make ourselves comfortable when we can."

"By Jove, Glanton, that waterhole of yours is dashed cold," said Falkner, who came up, looking a fresh and healthy specimen of young England after his bath.

"Yes, but go and get dressed, Falkner," said his aunt. "We're just going to breakfast."

The table was laid as before, under the waggon sail, upon which the not long risen sun was fast drying up the heavy dew. Away below, over the Zulu country, a thick white mist, in billowy masses of cloud, was rolling back, revealing distant rock and dark forest belt shimmering in sheeny patches of dew beneath the unbroken blue. All were in high spirits, especially Falkner, who had soon joined us, over the prospect of the coming hunt. With his faults, such as they were, he had the redeeming virtue in my eyes of being a keen sportsman.

We had done breakfast, and I was pointing out to Miss Sewin various points of interest in the landscape near and far, when we descried a tall figure coming towards us.

"Who is this?" she said, as the newcomer saluted. He was a fine, straight, warrior-like young fellow, and carried a small shield and a bundle of hunting assegais which he deposited on the ground.

"Ivuzamanzi, the son of Tyingoza – Ah, I'm afraid you'll be disappointed Miss Sewin," after a few words with him. "The chief sends word that he will not be able to come this morning, but his son will direct the hunting party instead. He will come up this evening if he can."

"Well, I suppose I ought to be more anxious than ever to see him," she said, "as he is so unapproachable."

"Well, don't prepare for any display of royalty," I warned. "Tyingoza is just like any other highbred Zulu, in fact you wouldn't know him from another unless you were told."

Soon groups of natives began to straggle up, not in regular formation this time. They had discarded their adornments and carried only small shields, knobsticks and light, casting assegais. At their heels trotted a number of dogs, from the slinking mongrel, to the well-bred tawny or brindled greyhound; and indeed the snarling and fighting that presently arose among these, soon took up enough of their owners' time to keep them apart. The process was simple by the way. If two or more dogs got fighting their owners simply whacked them with kerries until

they desisted.

"Ah – ah, Ivuzamanzi," I went on, chaffing him. "I had thought of fixing our mid-day resting place on the river bank below where Umzinyati flows in. Or, are the horns of Matyana's calves long enough to reach across? What thinkest thou, son of Tyingoza?"

"*Ou*!" laughed the youth, bringing his hand to his mouth. "You are my father, Iqalaqala. But that day is yet to be paid for."

His broken leg was very completely mended, and he showed no trace of a limp, even. I explained the joke to my companion.

"I didn't know they fought like that among themselves," she said. "Tell me, Mr Glanton. They are not likely to do anything of that sort to-day, are they? I mean, they might get excited."

"No – no. Don't be in the least alarmed about that. By the way, how are you getting on in your studies? Say something to Ivuzamanzi now – even if only two or three words."

"No, I'm shy to. You'll only laugh at me, or he will."

"Not a bit of it. Now – go ahead."

"Hallo! What nigger's this?" bellowed Falkner, swaggering up. "He wasn't here last night, was he?"

"No," I answered rather shortly, disgusted at the interruption of this blundering ass upon our little understanding. "He's the chief's son, and he's going to boss up the arrangements, so don't be uncivil to him if you can help it, eh?"

"I'll try not. But I say, Glanton, come and arrange about these guns you were speaking of, there's a good fellow. It must be

nearly time to start."

Already, you see, he was beginning to take over the whole scheme. It was a little way he had – I have observed it too, in others of his kidney.

"Oh, there's time enough," I said, still shortly, for I don't like to be hustled, and just then, and by Falkner Sewin, I liked it still less. And something of this must have imparted itself to his understanding for he answered unpleasantly:

"Oh well of course, if you're so much better employed," and he moved off in dudgeon. My companion coloured slightly and looked displeased.

"Isn't your relative rather a queer tempered sort of fellow?" I asked, with a smile.

"Well yes, he is rather, but we are all so sorry for him that – I'm afraid he was rather rude to you, Mr Glanton, I must apologise for him."

"No – no – no," I said. "Not a bit of it. Don't you think anything about that. I don't."

She changed the subject to something else, and I went on talking longer than I would otherwise have done. The interruption and its manner had annoyed me, and a good deal as a protest against being hurried I made up my mind not to hurry. Afterwards I had reason to regret my delay.

We strolled back to join the others, and the prospect of this companionship more or less throughout the day, to end in an evening similar to that of last night – with the native revels left

out – soon restored my accustomed good humour. The natives were squatting about round the store in groups, conversing in their deep-toned voices. Then suddenly they all sprang to their feet as one man, uttering respectful salutations; and there, to my surprise, advancing leisurely towards us, came Tyingoza himself.

"It is the chief," I explained for the benefit of my companion, "Tyingoza. He has changed his mind."

"Oh, I am so glad," she said, looking at him with interest. "I shall see him before we start I like the look of him. Why if we had started when Falkner wanted us to we should have missed him."

Afterwards, I repeat, I had good reason to wish we had.

I have omitted to describe Tyingoza's outward appearance. He was a man of between fifty and sixty, rather inclining to stoutness, which detracted somewhat from his stature, but his walk was straight and dignified, and he carried his shaven head, crowned by the shiny ring, well held back, as became a Zulu of birth and standing. His strong face, terminating in a short, crisp, grizzled beard, was a very pleasant one, and the expression of his eyes good-humoured and genial to a degree.

"Welcome, Tyingoza," I said, going forward to meet him. "Here are they who would see thy young men hunt."

The chief ran his eyes over the group.

"I see them, Iqalaqala," he said, in the native idiom. "*Whau*! the game is rather scarce, but I hope they will be pleased."

His eyes rested for a moment on Miss Sewin, and then on me, and I remembered his joke about the new hut. Then he sat

down in his accustomed place against the front of the store, while the others sank back into their former attitudes at a respectful distance.

"What rum things those head-rings are, Glanton," commented Falkner, who had been staring at Tyingoza as if he were some wild animal. "Looks for all the world like a thick stick of Spanish liquorice coiled round his head. What the deuce are they made of?"

"The dark gum of the mimosa, and other things," I said, going on, in the Major's interest, to translate all sorts of complimentary things which that fine old soldier had never dreamed of originating.

"Well, now we've seen him," grumbled Falkner, "can't you give him a gentle hint to move on, or, at any rate, that we want to. It's high time we started, and he's delaying us like blazes."

"Can't do anything of the sort," I flung back in a quick aside. "It wouldn't be etiquette to hurry him."

"Etiquette! With a nigger!" jeered Falkner, going into the store to light his pipe.

Now the place of Tyingoza's accustomed seat was right under a window, which was open. Seated as he was, with his back to the wall, his head came about a foot and a half below the sill of this. I talked with him a little longer and he was just expressing the opinion that it was high time for us to start, when I saw the head and shoulders of Falkner Sewin lounging through this window. He was puffing away at his pipe, looking somewhat intently down

upon the chief's head, and then, to my horror, and of course before I could prevent it, down went his hand. With an agility surprising in a man of his years and build Tyingoza sprang to his feet, and stood with head erect, gazing sternly and indignantly at Falkner, who, still half through the window, was examining minutely a piece which he had dug out of the chief's head-ring, and still held in his thumb nail, grinning like the stark, record idiot he was.

There was a second or two of tension, then the four score or so of natives who were squatting around, sprang to their feet as one man, and a deep gasp of horror and resentment escaped from every chest.

"Why what's the row?" cried the offending fool. "The old boy seems a bit cross."

"A bit cross," I repeated grimly. "Why you've insulted him about as completely as if you'd hit him in the face."

"Oh bosh! Here, I haven't hurt his old bit of stick liquorice. Tell him to stick his head down and I'll plaster the bit back in its place again, and give him a shilling into the bargain."

The expression of Tyingoza's face had undergone a complete change, and the indignant look had given way to one of the most withering contempt, as with a wave of the hand towards Falkner, in which there was a suggestion of pity, he said softly:

"*Hau! Sengaloku igcwane.*" ("It seems an idiot.") Then, turning, he walked away.

Chapter Eight.
The Spoiling of the Hunt

There was a tense, and, under the circumstances to anyone who knew, rather an awesome silence.

"This won't do," I said. "I must go after him and explain."

"Don't go. It doesn't look safe."

The protest came from Miss Sewin, for now an angry muttering had arisen among the young men, and the rattle of assegai hafts – this time in ominous earnest – mingled with the hoarse growl of deepening indignation. A very different face was upon things now to that of formerly. The head-ring of their father and chief had been insulted.

"It might not be for everybody, but it is for me," I answered, quickly, as I hurried after the chief.

It was no easy task to placate Tyingoza. I pointed out to him that what had been done was the silly childish act of a foolish boy who had no sort of idea of what he was doing, and how sorry I was that such a thing should have happened, especially on my place, where he, Tyingoza, had always been so thoroughly welcome, and so forth. And now, would not he return with me and receive a present from me, and an apology from the boy, to show his people that there was no remnant of a cloud between us?

But it was all of no use. He relaxed as far as I was concerned.

It was a pity that I had been obliged to have an idiot on my place, he said, but he could see that what had happened was no fault of mine. But he would not come back.

"There are my 'dogs,' Iqalaqala," pointing to the groups of young men, now some distance behind us. "I sent them to hunt with your friends – they will do so. I am going home."

I could not shake his determination, and he strode away. Our talk, as I said, had taken up some little time, and now as I neared the store I saw that I had returned none too soon.

For, seeing that their chief had not returned the angry mutterings of his incensed followers had risen to a threatening hubbub. All the savage was now aroused within them, and they crowded up to the store, clamouring for the man who had insulted their father's head-ring. Assegais were flourished, dogs were adding their howls and yaps to the general racket, and altogether matters were taking a decidedly serious turn.

"What is this, children of Tyingoza?" I said, as I came up behind them – incidentally kicking away a large cur which had come for me open-mouthed. "The last words of the chief as he left me were – 'I have sent them to hunt with your friends – they will do so.' But now I find you ready to spring upon them instead. What does it mean?"

"This, Iqalaqala. We want the 'idiot'."

The speaker was Ivuzamanzi. He had been out of the way during the incident, which was uncommonly lucky for Falkner Sewin. Now he was foremost in the agitation.

"But you cannot hold an 'idiot' responsible," I urged, catching at a straw.

"Ah – ah! But this is not a real one," answered the young warrior. "He must be beaten."

"Not so. The chief is satisfied. He bade me tell you to go on with the hunt. Who are ye to shut your ears to his 'word'?"

This told, for the clamour dropped into sullen mutterings as they consulted together. The while I walked through them and gained the store.

The Major was standing in the doorway, and I could see the faces of the two girls at the window light up with relief as I approached. They had thought I should be murdered in the midst of the excited and gesticulating group, but as a matter of fact I ran not the slightest danger, and this I hastened to assure them. I was glad to notice that Falkner had had the sense to keep himself out of sight, or, what was more likely, somebody else had had it for him.

"Ah, now we shall be all right," said Mrs Sewin, who was seated on a pile of goods for want of a chair. "I must say these savages are rather alarming."

"They'll go home directly, Mrs Sewin. I've talked them into a better frame of mind."

"Go home?" echoed Falkner. "But, confound it all – what about our hunt?"

"You won't get one of them to stir in that now," I said, "and if they did you wouldn't be well advised to go with them."

"Well, I think there's considerable overweight of fuss being made because a silly old nigger puts his back up and walks off in a huff," answered Falkner, sullenly.

"Look here, Sewin," I said, fast beginning to lose my temper. "That 'silly old nigger' is one of the most influential chiefs in Natal. Added to which he's a Zulu of high breeding, that is to say one of the proudest of men – and you've put upon him the biggest insult you could have thought out, and that in the presence of a number of his people – who moreover were sent up here by his orders to help your day's amusement I say nothing of it having been done on my place – but, incidentally, your monkeyish and schoolboy prank has been the means of frightening the ladies somewhat."

"Here, I say, Glanton. I don't take that sort of talk, you know," he answered, colouring up.

"Glanton's quite right," struck in the Major decisively, and with some sternness. "You've made an ass of yourself, and got us into a nice mess – which we don't seem out of yet," he added, as again the voices outside rose high.

I went out again. Ivuzamanzi came forward.

"We will not hunt with your friends, Iqalaqala. We are going home. As for the *igcwane*– let him look well on all sides of him."

"For the first I think you are right son of Tyingoza," I answered. "For the second —*gahle*! It is not wise to threaten men on the Queen's side of the river – for such might lead to visits from the *Amapolise*."

But he replied that he cared nothing for the police, and the others laughed sneeringly and agreed.

"See now," said Ivuzamanzi, shaking his stick. "Will he, the *igcwane*, come out and fight? He looks big enough, and strong enough, for all that he is a fool."

I found myself wishing the matter might be cleared up in this rough and ready manner; but for one thing the ladies were with us, for another I didn't see how the two could fight on anything like even terms. Falkner couldn't fight with native weapons, and Ivuzamanzi, like any other Zulu, of course had not the remotest idea how to use his fists. So it wouldn't do.

"How can that be?" I put it. "He does not understand fighting in your way, and you do not understand fighting in his. You would both be ridiculous. Go home, son of Tyingoza, and talk with your father. You will find he has forgotten all about the affair and so must you. A mistake has been made and we all regret it."

"*Ou*!" he grunted, and turned away. I thought enough had been said, to these young ones at any rate, so forbore to give them anything more in the way of entertainment lest they should think we were afraid of them. And soon, somewhat to my relief, and very much to the relief of my guests, they picked up their weapons, and with their curs at their heels moved away in groups as they had come.

"Well, we seem to have put you to no end of bother, Glanton, for which I can't tell you how sorry we are," said the Major. "And now we mustn't put you to any more – so, as there is to be no

hunt I propose that we saddle up, and go home."

"Not until after lunch at any rate, Major," I said. "I can't allow that for a moment. As for bother it has been nothing but a pleasure to me, except this last tiresome business."

I thought Miss Sewin's face expressed unmistakable approval as I caught her glance.

"How well you seem to manage these people, Mr Glanton," she said. "I – we – were beginning to feel rather nervous until you came up. Then we were sure it would all come right. And it has."

Inwardly I thought it had done anything but that, but under the circumstances my confounded conceit was considerably tickled by her approval, and I felt disposed to purr. However I answered that talking over natives was an everyday affair with me, in fact part of my trade, and by the time we sat down to lunch – which was not long, for the morning was well on by then – good humour seemed generally restored. Even Falkner had got over his sulks.

"I say, Sewin," I said to him as I passed him the bottle. "You were talking about going on a trading trip with me. It wouldn't do to get chipping bits out of the chiefs' head-rings on the other side of the river, you know. They take that sort of thing much more seriously over there."

"Oh hang it, Glanton, let a fellow alone, can't you," he answered, grinning rather foolishly.

"By the way, Major, has anything more been heard about Hensley?" I said.

"Hensley? Who's he? Ah, I remember. He's been over at our

place a couple of times. Why? Is he ill?"

"Nobody knows – or where he is. He has disappeared."

"Disappeared?"

"Yes. Nobody seems to have the slightest clue as to what has become of him. He went to bed as usual, and in the morning – well, he wasn't there. He couldn't have gone away anywhere, for his horses were all on the place, and his boys say they had never heard him express any intention of leaving home."

"Good gracious, no. We hadn't heard of it," said Mrs Sewin. "But – when was it?"

"About a fortnight ago. I didn't hear of it till the other day – and then through native sources."

"Oh, some nigger yarn I suppose," said Falkner in his superior manner, which always ruffled me.

"Would you be surprised to hear that I obtain a good deal of astonishingly accurate information through the same source, Sewin?" I answered. "In fact there is more than one person to whom it relates, who would be more than a little uncomfortable did they guess how much I knew about them."

"Oh, then you run a nigger gossip shop as well as a nigger trading shop," he retorted, nastily.

"But what a very unpleasant thing," hastily struck in his aunt, anxious to cover his rudeness. "Does that sort of thing happen here often?"

"I never heard of a case before."

"Probably the niggers murdered him and stowed him away

somewhere," pronounced the irrepressible Falkner.

"Even 'niggers' don't do that sort of thing without a motive, and here there was none. Less by a long way than had it been your case," I was tempted to add, but didn't. "No, I own it puzzles me. I shall take a ride over there in a day or two, and make a few enquiries on the spot, just as a matter of curiosity."

"All the same it looks dashed fishy," said the Major. "D'you know, Glanton, I'm inclined to think Falkner may have hit it."

"Nothing's absolutely impossible," I answered. "Still, I don't think that's the solution."

"But the police – what do they think of it?"

"So far they are stumped utterly and completely – nor can their native detectives rout out anything."

"How very dreadful," said Mrs Sewin. "Really it makes one feel quite uncomfortable."

"He lived alone, remember, Mrs Sewin, and there are plenty of you," I laughed, meaning to be reassuring. But I could see that a decidedly uncomfortable feeling had taken hold upon her mind, and tried to turn the conversation, blaming myself for a fool in having started such a subject at all on the top of the alarm the ladies had already been subjected to that morning. But they say there are compensations for everything, and mine came when just as they were preparing to start Mrs Sewin said to me:

"I have a very great favour to ask you, Mr Glanton, and I hardly like doing so after all your kindness to us since yesterday and what has come of it. But – would you mind riding home with us

this afternoon. After what has just happened we should feel so much safer if you would."

I tried to put all the sincerity I could into my reassurances that no one would interfere with them, but apart from my own inclinations a certain anxious look on Aïda Sewin's face as they waited for my answer decided me.

"Why of course I will if it will be any help to you, Mrs Sewin," I said, and then again a quick grateful look from the same quarter caused me to tread on air, as I went round to see to the saddling up of the horses – my own among them.

As we took our way down the well worn bush path I could see that the incident of the morning had not been entirely cleared off from the minds of the party. The ladies were inclined to be nervous, and if a horse started and shied at a tortoise or a white snail shell beside the path I believe they more than half expected a crowd of revengeful savages to rush out and massacre them on the spot. However, of course, nothing happened, and we got to the Major's farm by sundown.

Then I had my reward.

"Will you come and help me water some of the flowers, Mr Glanton?" said Miss Sewin, after we had offsaddled and generally settled ourselves. "No – don't say you are going back. Mother is very nervous to-night, and I know you are going to add to your kindness to us by sleeping here."

Again I trod on air – and yet – and yet – I felt that I was acting like a fool. What on earth could come of it – at any rate to my

advantage? Yet, again – why not?

"I want you to promise me something, Mr Glanton, will you?" Miss Sewin said, when dusk and the lateness of the hour had put an end to what was to me one of the most delightful half hours I ever remember spending, for we had spent it alone, she chatting in that free and natural manner of hers, I agreeing with everything, as the entrancement of listening to her voice and watching her grace of movement wound itself more and more around me.

"I think I may safely promise you anything, Miss Sewin," I answered. "Well? What is it?"

"I want you to promise me not to quarrel with my cousin – no matter how rude and provoking he may be."

"Is that all? Why of course I will."

"Ah but – you may not find it so easy," she went on, speaking earnestly, and her wide open glance full on my face. "I have been noticing his behaviour towards you of late, and admiring your forbearance. But as a personal favour to myself, don't quarrel with him."

"Oh, I still think that'll be an easy promise to keep," I said; and yet, the very fact that she was so anxious on the subject seemed to make the other way. Why was she?

She shook her head slightly and smiled, as though reading my thoughts.

"You see, we are all so friendly together, are we not?" she said. "And a man of your experience and good sense can afford to put

up with a good deal from a mere boy who hasn't much of either."

"Why of course," I answered easily, and reassured by her tactful explanation. Yet – was Falkner such "a mere boy" after all?

Chapter Nine.
Hensley's next-of-kin

It is a strange, and I suppose a wholesomely-humiliating thing that we are appointed to go through life learning how little we know ourselves. Here was I, a man no longer young, with considerable experience of the ways of the world, rough and smooth, and under the fixed impression that if there was one man in the said wide and wicked world whom I knew thoroughly, in and out, from the crown of his hat to the soles of his boots – or *velschoenen*, as the case might be – that man was Godfrey Glanton, trader in the Zulu. And yet I had lived to learn that I didn't know him at all.

For instance the happy-go-lucky, free-and-easy, semi-lonely life that had satisfied me for so many years seemed no longer satisfying; yet why not, seeing that all its conditions prevailed as before? I had enough for my needs, and if I didn't make a fortune out of my trade, whether stationary or from time to time peripatetic, I had always made a steady profit. Now, however, it came home to me that this was a state of things hardly the best for a man to live and die in.

Again why not? I had seen contemporaries of my own – men circumstanced like myself who had come to the same conclusion. They had left it – only to come to grief in unfamiliar

undertakings. Or they had married; only to find that they had better have elected to go through the rest of life with a chain and ball hung round their necks, than strapped to some nagging woman full of affectations and ailments – and raising a brood of progeny far more likely to prove a curse to them than anything else; thanks to the holy and gentle maternal influence aforesaid. All this I had seen, and yet, here I was, feeling restless and unsatisfied because for several days the recollection of a certain sweet and refined face, lit up by a pair of large, appealing eyes, had haunted my solitary hours.

It was that time since I had seen my neighbours. I had heard of them through my usual sources of information, and they seemed to me to be getting along all right; wherefore I had forborne to pay another visit lest it might have the appearance of "hanging around." And by way of combating an inclination to do so now, I made up my mind to carry out a deferred intention, viz., pay a visit to Hensley's place.

Tyingoza had been over to see me a couple of times, but made no allusion whatever to Falkner Sewin's act of boyish idiocy: presumably rating it at its proper standard. But, I noticed that he wore a new head-ring. However, I hoped that was an incident forgotten; and as I heard nothing to the contrary, and my trade ran on as usual, I made no further reference to it either to Tyingoza or anybody else.

I arrived at the scene of Hensley's disappearance about mid-day. The homestead stood in a long, narrow valley, thickly

bushed. Behind, and almost overhanging it, was a great krantz whose smooth ironstone wall glowed like a vast slab of red-hot metal. The place was wild and picturesque to a degree, but – oh so hot!

Two men in shirts and trousers were playing quoits as I came up. I didn't know either of them by sight.

"Good day," said one of them, knocking off his play, and coming up. "Off-saddle won't you? Dashed hot, isn't it?"

"Thanks. I'm Glanton, from Isipanga," I said in answer to his look of enquiry.

"Oh. Glad to know you, Glanton. I'm Kendrew, from nowhere in particular, at least not just now, price of transport being too *sleg* for anything."

"Oh, you ride transport then? How many waggons?"

"Three in good times – one in bad; none in worse – as in the present case. This is Sergeant Simcox, of the N.M.P.," introducing the other man, whom I noticed wore uniform trousers and boots. "He's been helping me to look for my poor old uncle, you know."

"Oh, Hensley was your uncle, was he?"

"Rather. But I'm next-of-kin – so if he's not found I take. See?" with a comprehensive wink and jerk of the head which took in the surroundings.

I couldn't help laughing at his coolness. He was a tall, rather good-looking young fellow, all wire and whipcord, with a chronically whimsical expression. The police sergeant was a hard

bitten looking customer, typical of his line in life.

"Now what do you think of the affair?" I said. "Did you know Hensley well?"

"Hanged if I did. He didn't like me. Did you?"

"Not very. I used to ride over and look him up now and again. But I can't imagine him doing anything mysterious. In fact I should say he'd be the last man in the world to do it."

"*Ja*. I don't know what to think of it. I've been running the place since I heard of the affair – luckily I wasn't on the road just then so was able to. You'll stop and have some scoff of course – you too, sergeant?"

"Wish I could," said the latter, "but it's against rules. Must get back to my camp."

"Hang rules. Who's to know? Glanton here won't split."

He was right, wherefore I forbear to say whether Sergeant Simcox made the third at that festive board or not.

We talked of trade and transport-riding and frontier matters generally, but surprisingly little of the matter that had brought me there. In fact Kendrew rather seemed to shirk the subject; not in any sort of suspicious manner let me explain, but rather as if he thought the whole thing a bore, and a very great one at that.

"You see, Glanton," he explained, presumably detecting a surprised look on my face, called there by the exceedingly light way in which he was taking things. "You see it isn't as if we had had a lot to do with each other. Of course I don't for a moment hope that the poor old boy has come to grief, in fact I can't help

feeling that he may turn up any moment and want to know what the devil I've taken up my quarters at his place for, in this free and easy way."

After a good dinner, washed down with a glass or so of grog, we went to look at the place where the missing man had slept. This didn't help towards any theory. If there had been foul play, whoever had been concerned in it had removed all traces long ago.

"A good hound, requisitioned at first, would have done something towards clearing up the mystery," I said.

"Yes, but you might as well have requisitioned a good elephant, for all you'd get either round here," laughed Kendrew. "Well, I shall just give it up as a bad job and leave it to Simcox. That's what he draws his pay for. I'll just sit tight and boss up things so long. That's my job."

"I'd like to have a word or two with the boy who saw him last," I said. "Alone I mean."

"Think you can get him to talk, eh? Well perhaps you may – I've heard of you, Glanton, and what a chap you are for managing Kafirs. All right, stop on till this evening, the boy's out herding now. Then you can *indaba* him to your heart's content after supper. You'll stay the night of course."

But I urged that such was not in my programme, and in fact I had some business to attend to next day irrespective of mere retail trade in the store. So we compromised by my consenting to remain till evening. There was sufficient moon for me to ride

home by even if it rose somewhat late. I suggested that we should ride out into the veldt in the afternoon and I could interview the boy there. He would talk more freely that way, and Kendrew agreed.

The boy was a quiet, decent looking youngster, and was herding his flock in most exemplary fashion. I asked him his name.

"Pecamane, 'Nkose!"

"Have I seen you before?"

"More than once, *Nkose*. At Isipanga, at the store. Then again, when we danced and ate beef."

"Ah. You were there then? Who is your chief?"

"Tyingoza, *Nkose*."

Kendrew had ridden on, leaving me alone with the boy.

"Well then," I said, "if Tyingoza is your chief you will be safe in telling *me* the story of your master's 'who is no longer here.'"

"*Ou*! *Nkose*. The only story I have to tell is what I told to the *Amapolise*

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