

Regina

ZULULAND UNDER DINGAAN.
ACCOUNT OF THE REV. OWEN'S VISIT TO ZULULAND IN THE
YEAR 1837, AS RELATED BY MR R. B. HULLEY

(The Rev. Mr. Kirby, a neighbour of Mr Hulley, the interpreter to the Rev. Mr. Owen, Missionary at Dingaan's Kraal when Retief and his party were massacred, has taken down from Mr. Hulley's dictation the following narrative. We feel sure that this plain unvarnished tale will be read with great interest, and we hope that others may have similar opportunities of preserving accounts given by eye-witnesses of the stirring events in the earlier periods of our history, will be induced to commit them to writing before it is too late.)

I the month of June 1837, I was engaged by the Rev. Mr. Owen to accompany him to Zululand in the capacity of interpreter and artisan. We started in the same month from Butterworth, a Wesleyan Mission Station, in Gcalekaland, with three wagons, two for the conveyance of the Mission party, which consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Owen and myself and family, the third wagon containing provisions for the journey. The bulk of our goods were sent round by ship from Algoa Bay to wait our arrival at the Natal Port. Usarili (Kreli) then a young man was about this time acknowledged as paramount chief of his tribe - The Gcaleka.

On the third day after our departure from Butterworth, we crossed the Bashee River, about twelve miles below Clarkbury Mission Station. On the banks of the river near Clarkbury lived Ufadana, the Regent in Tambuki country during the minority of Umtikaka, son of the deceased Chief, Umguba Ucuka. With great difficulty we crossed the Umtata at the lower wagon drift. Three days after we reached the Mission Station near the Little Umgazi River in Pondoland. The station is about seven miles from the Chief's Great Kraal. Faku at that time was Chief of the Pondo's only. Sometime after he became an ally of our Government, and was made Paramount Chief over all the tribes in the territory, lying between the Umzimkulu and the Umtata. The Pondo's were then living for the most part between the rivers Umtata and Umzimkulu, a few only residing on the northern side of the last mentioned river, and on neither side of the river were they residing more than twenty miles inland. The Amapondomise at this time were under their own Chief, Umeki, the grandfather of the present Umlondhlo, acknowledged Faku as paramount chief. This tribe, then very small, was living near the Umtata, between the present wagon drift and the abovementioned at which we had crossed. The Pondo people were in a state of great poverty, their country having been clean swept by the Zulus and but for the productiveness of the soil the people must have been scattered. The Rev. Mr. Boyce was then missionary with Faku. On our arrival he called the Chief, and in order to secure permission for our journey through the country, stated the object of our journey. Our trek

from Buntingville to the Umzimvubu was over exceedingly broken and hilly country.

The Umzimvubu we crossed at the ebb and flow drift, so entering the country occupied by the Amabaca. These people were living mostly between the Gosa Bush and the Tabankulu Mountain. Uncapai was the Chief. His headman told me that the tribe had purchased the country in which they lived from Faku for one hundred oxen. The chief thus became an ally of Faku's; the late Dama's sister was given into marriage to Uncapai to confirm their alliance of friendship. It was in this country, as I learned from the Bacas, near the junction of the rivers Umzimhlava and Umzimvuba, that copper ore was plentiful, the people living on the spot sold to the parts of the tribes living at a distance from this ore which they called Mqabu, (green paint.) The side of the Bacas also informed me that the Xesibes, then a small tribe, were living in this country, and that the two tribes formed an alliance for mutual protection against their enemies. Leaving these tribes, we traveled on for about one hundred and twenty miles through entirely uninhabited country.

Nearing the Umzinto we found a few kraals belonging to the Fynns who had formerly resided in Kafirland. Passing on we crossed the Umzinto and Umkomasi, we neared the Jelovu, where were residing a few more Kafirs under John Cane and Ogle, we met with no natives. From this we trekked through heavy deep sand on to the Umlaas, where in the bush above the road, Dr. Adams, of the American Mission Board, had formed a station. On reaching what is now Durban, we made our way to "Berea House" which had been built by Captain Gardiner for the Church of England Mission. From this house the Berea took its name. At the Mangela we found a small cottage built of reeds called "Kangela House," belonging to John Cane. Besides the two erections already mentioned we saw but one other, a stone building at the point.

On our arrival at Port Natal we found that the goods, which had been sent by ship, were already there. After a short stay at "Berea Height" leaving our wagons and families, we Mr. Owen and myself, accompanied by Captain Gardiner (at whose request Mr. Owen had been sent to establish a mission among the Zulus) went on to Zululand on horseback, in order the missionary might be introduced to Dingaan, the Zulu Chief. Accompanying us we had a number of natives on foot, carrying luggage and a few presents for the King, a circumstance that compelled us to travel slowly. On reaching the Great Place we met with friendly reception. An ox was killed for the missionary, and two houses placed at our disposal, one for the use of the Europeans of the party, the other for that of the native servants. The day after reaching the Great Place, we had an interview with the Chief, who expressed himself as quite willing that we should settle in his country. An arrangement was entered into by which we were to return at once for our wagons and building material, he then in the meantime was to build two huts, about half a mile from the Great Place, as temporary places of residence for us.

In the month of August we started on our return journey to Zululand, with three wagons containing our families, building materials, provisions, etc. Mr. Richard King

accompanied us as guide, there being no beaten track beyond the Tugela River, and only a faint track between that river and the Natal Bay. The raining season not having set in, we found no difficulty in traveling, beyond that we met in passing through deep sand. In five days from our starting from the bay, we reached the Tugela, and forded it with some difficulty. About ten miles beyond the river we came to an American Mission Station, occupied by the Rev. Mr. Champion and family, by whom we were received with great kindness. Here we also found Mr. Brownlee, then a youth. We rested at this station four days, then after more than a week's trek, we reached in safety Dingaan's Kraal, which contained at least a thousand huts. As the wagon came up to the King's Kraal, we were told to halt, in order that the white men, women and children might be brought into the chief's presence and introduced to him. This sudden summons was excusable, as he had never before seen an English woman. On looking at our wives he expressed his surprise that they should wear such a weight of clothes. One of the children of our party, on going up to shake hands with him, picked up a stone and threw it in his direction, at which the chief broke into a laugh, and said, "What, does he think I am only an ordinary Kafir?" After chatting with us and asking a few questions he sent a man to show the way to the hut, which he had built for us. He told us that our oxen should be taken care of by his men, and that when we wanted them we were to let him know, and they should be sent to us.

For several days the King would send for us early in the morning, and until nine o'clock of each day would keep us to answer any questions that he might put, and also that we might observe in which manner he conducted his affairs with the people. During this time Mr. Owen made several requests that he might be allowed to speak to his people and pray with the. He made excuses of various kinds, but at length appointed a day - the Christian Sabbath - when the missionary was to conduct a religious service at the Great Place, that the King might hear for himself and see what it was like, but it was only to take place once; he did not wish to be troubled again. On the appointed morning the minister went to the Great place, and found nearly a thousand men gathered to hear the message he had to deliver. There was not a woman within sight or hearing. The congregation sat on the ground, inside the great enclosure, forming a half circle several rows deep. Before the service commenced, about a hundred large pots filled with kafir beers were brought and placed in front of the first row of men, and a large number of beer baskets given the men out of which they were to drink. The Chief then said, "Now, my men, there is something to quench your thirst with while the white man is talking," and then told the missionary to commence his address, which he did, through me, as interpreter. The missionary, after speaking for about half an hour, and putting as much gospel truth as he could into his message, was told by the King to stop, he had heard enough.

Dingaan then said, "I have a few questions to ask you that I may not misunderstand."

First: - "Do you say there is a God, and but one God?" the minister replied, "Yes"

Second - "Do you say there is a heaven for good people, and only one?" Reply "Yes".

Third: - "Do you say there is a devil?" Reply "Yes".

Fourth: - "Do you say there is a hell for the wicked people?" The minister replied, "Yes".

Said the King: "if that is your belief you are of no use to my people; we knew all before you came to preach to us. My people and I believe there is only one God - I am that God. We believe there is one place to which all good people go; the is Zululand. We believe that there is one place all bad people go. There he said, pointing to a rocky hill in the distance; there is hell where all my wicked people go. The Chief who lives there is Umatwane, the head of the Amangwane. I put him to death and made him the devil chief of all wicked people who die. You see that there are but two Chief's in this country - Umatiwani and myself; I am the great Chief - the God of the living; Umatiwane is the Great Chief of the wicked. I have now told you my belief; O do not want you to trouble me again with the fiction of you English people. You can remain in my country as long as you conduct yourselves properly.

This was the first and last times that Mr. Owen was allowed to preach the Gospel to the Zulus. During the delivery of the King's speech after each sentence the men shouted with a might shout, "Hail, Great Father; thou art as great as an elephant!"

Mr. Owen, greatly disappointed with this dictum of Dingaan's still unwilling to give up all attempts to reach the people, requested permission to teach some of the children to read.

"Yes," said the Chief. "Provided you begin with me." This the missionary agreed to, and said he would teach the King and as many more as he would wish." The Chief replied, "I won't trouble you as we can't understand each other." Pointing to me, he said, "I appoint your interpreter as my teacher." This command was obeyed. The Chief commenced with the alphabet under my teaching, and very soon could read words of two syllables. At the end of two or three months he gave up his task; he had more important work to do. A war had broken out between the Boers and his people, which took up all his time and thought.

During this time Pieter Retief, Commandant of the emigrant Boers, with five Dutchmen, and an English youth from Natal, as interpreter, paid Dingaan a visit to report to him that the Boers had trekked from the Cape Colony, and were seeking a country where they might live in peace and quietness. The King asked him, "Where is this place you would like to settle?" Retief answered, "If I might choose I should like a tract of country near the Natal Bay, as we white people need many things that come from over the sea." Dingaan thanked the party for coming to see him, and said he would grant their request on a certain condition. If it were fulfilled he would give them the country lying between the Tugela and the Umzimvuba rivers, and between the Drakensberg and the sea. The condition as this: "You return and capture a certain Basuto Chief Sikonyeal, who had made a raid on the upper part of Zululand with mounted men and guns, sweeping away a large herd of cattle. You must bring this Chief to me with his men. His horses and his guns; then you shall have what you request." Retief returned, accompanied with ten Zulus,

with the answer of Dingaan to the headman of his party, who were encamped in Sikonyela's country? The Boers seized Sitonyela, but promised to release him provide he would give up to them a certain number of cattle, horses and guns. These was complied with, and in a fortnight from the time that Retief left Dingaan's Kraal some of the Zulus were sent back to the Chief to tell him that the Boers were coming to see him having fulfilled the condition.

On receiving the message from the Boers, Dingaan called Mr. Owen, and requested him to write a letter to Captain Gardiner and John Cane, requesting them to be present at a meeting of the Boers, which was to be held at the Great Place. To this request Mr. Owen agreed, and I was sent with the letter. Twenty of the Chief's men went with me, ostensibly to carry anything I might have to bring, but really to watch my movements, and to learn anything of importance that might arise. I delivered the letter to Captain Gardner. He declined to be present at the meeting, telling me he did not think it would be safe.

I returned with the Zulu guard; reached the Tugela to find it impassable there. I was detained eight days. Some time after crossing the river, and ascending a hill, we came to a ridge over looking the Great Place. To the right of the Great Place, in the direction of the execution ground, I observed a large flock of vultures hovering over the place of the dead. At once I suspected there had been some evil work going on during my absence. Leading my horse I descended the hill. About half way down I saw laying by the side of the path the sleeve of a white shirt, which had been forcibly torn from the garment; it was partly covered with blood. This greatly alarmed me, and I feared lest the mission party and my family had been put to death. When I reached the King's Kraal I rode up to the principal entrance, and from there saw a number of saddles piled one upon another. I sent a message in to Dingaan to give notice of my return, but I was so anxious about the safety of my family that without waiting for the messenger to come out I mounted my horse and galloped off on the way to our huts. To see if they were all right. On coming to the hut occupied by my family I glanced hurriedly in. On the table I saw plates and cups with the remains of a meal, but not a person to be seen. This seemed a terrible confirmation of my worst fears. I turned from the hut and hastened on to the Owen's. When I came near to it, my little son came running out towards me, shouting "Father's come."

I found the rest of my family with the whole party safe. They were all assembled in Mr. Owen's hut for family worship. I cannot tell you how thankful I was to find them all safe. I had only to congratulate Mr. Owen and my family on their safety, and drink a cup of coffee, when a messenger came in great haste from the Chief to call me to his presence. I at once hurried away, anxious to know what would come next. I was conducted into the inner enclosure, where there was the Royal House, in which the King received me in the most affable manner. He congratulated me on my return, saying, "You will have a great many things to tell me, and I shall have much to tell you. I suppose you will have been told by your people what has happened while you have been away?" I replied, "I have had

not time, as I hardly arrived when your messenger summoned me, but my eyes have seen a great deal." "I must tell you," said the King. "That during your absence the Boers arrived; I kept them waiting as long as I could, expecting you to return with Captain Gardner and John Cane, but when I could keep them no longer I had them put out of harm's way. I see that every white man is an enemy to the black, every black an enemy to the white, they do not love each other, and never will. I find fault with the Boers in that they disobeyed my instructions. The Chief that I told them to bring me, they let go." When he told me this, he turned around and said, "Don't you think I have done a good thing in getting rid of my enemies at one stroke?" I replied, "I cannot say whether you have done a good thing or not." He then asked, "What is it that Captain Gardiner and John Cane heard that led them to decline coming to the meeting?" I told him I could not inform him on the point. He replied, "I am sorry that they were not here, as they fully deserved what the Boers got. When I asked you to tell me if I had done a good thing you replied that you could not tell me. What was your reason for saying so?" I might have told you that yesterday my army was out, and part of it had gone today to attack the laager where the Boers were encamped, to kill all the men, women and children, and bring their property to me. Now I ask what you have heard in the way of news while you have been away?" I told him the news I had heard was that the Boers had camps reaching from that of Retief's party to the banks of the Orange River. I added, why I told him that I did not know if he had done a wrong thing or not was that I understood he had killed some of the men from one camp only, and that there were others behind. He had begun war which neither he nor I could tell where it would end. The Chief said, "If what you say is true, my men have deceived me. They told me there was only one camp - Retief's - and in that there were only about thirty old men and boys left to defend it." This concluded the conversation for the time. He said, "You had better go home and hear the end. There is a pot of beer to strengthen you, I will send you a beast to kill."

I learned that during my absence the Boers, numbering 60 armed men with the same number of after-riders had arrived, bringing the cattle etc. which they took from the Basuto Chief, that they had what they considered a most satisfactory meeting; that up to the last half hour of the time they intended to start they thought all was well. The horses had been brought up and they were preparing to start, when they requested by the Chief to enter the enclosure, to come to him in a body to say "Good-bye" and to drink his health, then go home to their wives and children in peace. With this request was another, they should leave outside all firearms. Not suspecting and treachery, they did what the King wished, stacked their guns, went to drink to the King's health, and to receive cattle as food for the journey.

When they reached near where the King stood, at a sign from him they were surrounded by a thousand Zulu's, who had come under cover of the night and filled the King's kraal; to prevent any resistance their necks were at once broken, then their bodies

were carried to the execution ground to be mutilated, then left to decay. On the following morning I had a conversation with Mr. Owen about removing my wife and family to Natal. He told me to do so if I thought it necessary, but I had better first ask permission from Digaan. He at first declined to leave the country, but after thinking the matter over he also decided not to remain. He told me we had better go to the King together, and request to be allowed to remove. Before we had done talking a messenger came from the Chief saying he wanted to see us. We accordingly went. In reply to our request he said, "I must take time to think about it. I don't yet understand you. I believe you are as much my enemies as the Boers whom I killed. My people tell me that when the Dutch were put to death you set up a loud cry. Would you cry for me if I were killed? No, I don't think you would! I was also told that you stood on the front of the wagon with your glass in your hand, and that when you saw what was happening you fell down in a dead faint, and were taken insensible. No, you cannot be my friends, you are my deadly enemies." Mr. Owen replied, "No, you are mistaken; I am no man's enemy, much less yours." "I want to hear no more of your lies," said the Chief. I have proof that you are my enemy, and I believe it, whatever you may say to the contrary." On this Mr. Owen turned to me and said, "I have nothing more to say. I see the Chief is in a great rage, and we may be prepared to die. If you have anything to say on your own behalf say it now." For some minutes after this there was a dead silence when it occurred to me to ask the Chief what had become of the young English interpreter who was the Dutch at the Great Place. He replied, "You do well to ask that. He is dead. In the confusion of the time he was killed with the rest. I am sorry, I did not intend to take his life, but why do you enquire after him?" I replied, "He was an Englishman, not a Dutchman, and I understand that you do not look upon an English subject in the same light as you look upon the Boer's, and as you say you killed him accidentally, would it not be well to report the matter to the British authorities?" He replied, "How is it to be done?" I replied, "The matter is easy. Here is Mr. Owen asking permission to leave this country, so why not get him to write down your statement, and through him send it to the Government." The Chief replied, "What you say is true. I see what you say is right" and turning to a boy standing near he said "Go to the missionary's house and fetch pen, ink and paper."

The ladies, who were anxiously waiting to see what had become of us, on seeing the messenger were much frightened, thinking he had come to summon them to the King's kraal, but learning his errand they were glad to know that no harm had come to us. When the messenger returned Mr. Owen wrote down at the King's dictation that the Boers had come into his country professing friendship, but he had no doubt they were his enemies. Treating them as such he had taken the opportunity to put them to death. He did not think that the Government would censure him for what had been done. However, he wished to report the accidental death of a young Englishman, who, in the confusion, was killed with the Ditch.

"Now I have done," said he. "Leave the country as soon as you like. I shall detain one of the wagons and a span of oxen; the oxen for the other you may have tomorrow. Mr. Owen thanked him for his permission to leave, and we returned to our homes. Next day we in spanned one wagon and trekked past the Great Place, but we were not allowed to leave until we had all been before Digaan.

I asked him if he thought it right for us to travel alone, as to use a native expression "the country is dead." He then gave instructions to two men who were standing by to go with us through the country, to see that we were not molested, and also that we were supplied with milk and meat until we reached the Tugela. These men conducted us safely to the border of Natal; there they left an ox with us to kill for food for the remainder of the journey.

They returned, bearing many greetings from Mr. Owen to the Chief, and thanks for the kindness he had shown us while in his country. We then proceed on our journey. As we passed the Mission Station of Mr. Champion, we found it deserted. The missionaries and families had left the night after the Boer massacre. The English having received a message from the American Missionaries of the intended attack on the Boer's laager, Richard King started with some natives on foot, walking night and day to reach the camp before the Zulu's should make the attack. He reached the first camp to find the Zulu's had surrounded it, he passed on to the main body of the Boers, reached them just in time to enter the laager before the Zulu's could cut him off. We trekked on from the Tugela, got safely to the port and shipped from there to Algoa Bay. Thus ended our mission in Zululand.

Whilst in Zululand I had many opportunities of seeing the summary way in which people were put to death on most trivial charges. One morning, when at the Great Place giving the King his reading lessons, I saw coming over the ridge in single file, sixty Zulu girls, each one with a pot of beer on her head. They came up singing, entered the enclosure and put down their burdens. As I passed them on my way home, I saw that a pot of beer had been given them to drink. About an hour afterwards, looking over towards the place of execution I saw a great commotion, but could not tell what it was, only supposed that someone or more victims were being put to death. On enquiring of a messenger, who had just come from the King's kraal, as to what it was, he asked me if I had seen the sixty young women sitting inside the kraal" I told him I had. He said, "They are all killed, and the vultures are now eating their bodies." I asked the reason, he told me that the kraal from which they had come had shown disrespect for the King, and that was the way he had shown his disapproval of their conduct. This was one of the many cases, though I did not witness any other execution on so large a scale as this; but so often were the people put to death that the vultures were accustomed to sit round the Great Place outside the enclosure, and also within, without any fear whatever, and so soon as a man or women was pinioned ready to be carried away the vultures would run and fly on before, in order to be ready

when the food which the King prepared so plentifully should be left for them.

On one occasion, when out with a gun, the game I was after ran up to the valley in the direction of the execution ground, and before I was aware I found myself in the midst of human skeletons. It was a valley full of bones – not all dry. A glance round showed armlets of brass and copper strewn the ground. Nothing here was ever touched by any human being; no one went to this spot as the King told me the next day, unless sent by him. I was in “Dingaan’s Hell.” Forgetting all about my game I hastened out of the place, and got home as soon as possible.

(Sgd). R.B. Hulley

The above statement was taken down by me.

(Sgd) Thos. Kirby

Dated: March 11h, 1880

Insegers District
Land Certificate

I the undersigned Adam Kok Chief
 of the Griqua Nation hereby grant
 a Farm in the above named district to

— Richard Hulley —

subject to bona fide occupation and
 to an annual Quit Rent —

GIVEN under my hand and seal on the
 the twenty second day of July 1866

Monnet Lurie

Govt. Secy

Adam Kok Kaptein
 Registrar & Secy for
 Land Book
 John L. Sackin
 Secy