

A KAFFIR SHAM-FIGHT.



IN 1860, the Duke of Edinburgh — then Prince Alfred, a "middy," not long in his teens—took Natal in his circuit of South Africa. It was, of course, necessary that he should be entertained with something more unusual than a mayor's address, a foundation stone, a triumphal arch, and a ball. In the Cape Colony he had heard Sunday-schools sing, and had shot at springbok. In the Free State he had chased great herds

of antelope, gnu, and zebra, over plains as boundless as his own sea. So it was determined that in Natal he should see a mimic Aldershot day *à la* Zulu. The idea was an inspiration, and had descended upon Sir Theophilus Shepstone in a happy moment. At that time Sir Theophilus had not attained to the honours of a K.C.M.G., but he had long been Secretary for Native Affairs to the Natal Government, and knew exactly what his Zulus could do that would be a surprise to the Prince. They were perfectly at his command, and he had, as his lieutenant, Goza, whom most of the natives considered their chief. Orders were sent out to the tribes dwelling by the Umgeni, the Umvoti, the Tugela, and a score of minor streams, under the far-falling shadow of the Drakenbergen, and amidst the tumbled hills of Inanda, and preparations were speedily made for a splendid display.

The Zulus of Natal are a light-hearted race, fond of quick glancing movement, personal adornment, the music of their own voices, the dance, excitement, and display. It is a pleasure to them to run, to sing as they go, to flourish the club they call the *keevie*, and to hear behind them the rustle of a long string of patches and shreds, like the tail of a kite, which, flying from their girdle as they rush along, catches the wind. For them to be told to get ready for a sham-fight in the presence of the Queen's son was joyous news. Not all could go, but the best should—the braves who knew the old style, had the finest equipment, and were skilled to act in concert. Out of the 60,000 able-bodied men of the tribes about 3,000 were chosen, and of the women a few scores. Assegais were prohibited as possibly dangerous in the excitement of warlike exercises, and these were left to lie against the walls of the reed-built hut. But shields were taken down and dressed, clubs shaped and tattooed to the fashion,

feathers, furs, tails of cow and monkey, skins of leopard, jackal, and deer, were dusted and trimmed, and tigers' teeth and beads were polished and strung together in necklaces and armlets. It was like a taste of old times to the barbarians who, while somewhat tamed by the mild yoke of British rule and accustomed to peace, still remembered the days when war came with almost every year, and the call to arms might come at any cock-crow.

The place chosen for the review was on the south side of the river which sweeps with a swift current by the pretty town of Maritzburg, the capital of Natal. Just there the grass-lands of the mid-country, dotted with thorn-trees, roll in long curves to the river terraces. There are no fences, and the spaces are wide and far-reaching, with low levels for a spectacle, and gentle slopes for spectators. The view around has its own charms. Below, the stream with its border of willows, its broken waters as they whiten over the up-jutting reefs, and its quiet shining surfaces where a deep furrow has been ploughed by the current in the soft earth. Then the town, with its long lines of red roofs, its gardens hedged with rose-bushes, and its open square bordered with young growing trees. Beyond, the great grass hill, with its shadows folded in the hollows. To the right, the valley leading up to the Mission Station where Bishop Colenso learnt criticism from the intelligent Zulu; and, yet more to the right, Tafel Berg, a huge table-mountain, with coronet of rock and robes of green, glowing ever when the sun shines, like a gem. No better spot could have been selected.

The day came—blue above, without a cloud, and clear below, without dust, smoke, or vapour. The citizens of Maritzburg made a little crowd around the Prince, who took his stand beneath the Union Jack planted firmly on the hill-side. Below, at some distance, the 3,000 Zulus were drawn out in a semi-circular line, which had more the look of a continuous parti-coloured wall than of an array of men. A long red streak was followed by a long black streak, that by a long red-and-white streak, and that by a long black-and-white streak, each streak being four feet and a half high, and all the streaks being surmounted by a long dark band. This singular appearance was caused by the regimental shields, which, formed of ox-hides of varying colours, reached from the foot nearly to the chin, and were held by the men, closely dressed, so as to overlap each other. There was thus presented a wall of leather, and as the hairy sides of the hides were to the front, and the companies were arranged according to the colour of the hair, the wall seemed painted in different hues. The long black band or common coping surmounting the wall was formed of the 3,000 Zulu heads. The effect at a distance was peculiar, but monotonous. A British regiment, standing at ease at a distance of a few hundred yards, wearies even the patriotic eye with a sense of overmuch oneness; but the British soldier keeps his elbows free, and the back light glimmers

through his legs. Not so with the Zulus. All that could be seen was leather—nothing but leather, excepting the black streak along the top. Unquestionably the idea of solidity was conveyed. The line was a fortification, and looked impenetrable. As the formation was kept up for some time, the quality of steadiness was also suggested. Another suggestion was that of mystery. What was there behind that motionless, creviceless wall? Curiosity was sharpened by the singular sounds which the half-moon of leather sent forth, now from one horn, then the other, anon from the centre, and now from the whole line. It was as the play of thunder with its echoes, at times sudden and startling, hoarse and threatening, and again muttering, low and distant. Regiment cried to regiment, and chorus followed solo, as passion beat time in the 3,000 hearts behind the leather. The general result was that of brooding sullenness, flashing now and then into eager anger and sharp desire for action—a fit prelude to the shoutings, groans, and shrieks of a real battle-field. What the actual words of the chant were I cannot say, but have no doubt that they were most bloodthirsty. Desire, akin to that which leads a traveller to the rim of Vesuvius when it is beginning to bellow, induced me to approach the mysterious line.

Nearness certainly gave new terrors to the eye. The shields remained as they had been at a distance—all leather, and no prunella—but the dark band above resolved itself into a hideous row of heads, half-hidden behind a fringe of hair-tufts. "Eyes straight" is no part of the Zulu drill, and the whole line was terrible "with fine frenzy rolling," while sharp fangs glittered from mouths chanting curses. A flank movement, successfully executed with the dash of a special correspondent, enabled me to take the 3,000 in the rear, and then I saw what I saw. I need not attempt the impossible task of describing the *tout ensemble*, but will pick out one of the rumbling braves, and turn him round to the view. I select this huge fellow with a cock's feather sticking out from between his front teeth, and take him from the ranks. His head-dress is a coronet of dusky ostrich-feathers towering to the height of a guardsman's bearskin; the plumes are fastened together by the quills only, so that they rustle freely at every movement of the body. Immediately beneath, circling the brow, is a roll of tiger-skin, from which descends over eye, ear, and mouth, almost to the shoulder, a fringe of long coarse hair, half hiding, half disclosing, fierce glances and the gnashing of teeth. A similar, but smaller, fringe of grizzly bristles is fastened over the upper lip. So much for head and face, plume, and mask. From his neck and shoulders downwards to his knees, his body is covered with the tails of monkeys and tigers, and strips of various hides, strung together in girdles. His waist is girt about with tufts of lion's mane and cow-hair; so are his arms above and below the elbow, and at the wrist. Circlets of some brute's hair are about his knees, and anklets of the same material finish his grim uniform. Within all this load of horrors is a lithe, muscular, sinewy, black, and well-

greased body, and within that are the passions of a savage. His shield is as hard as wood, and tough with good dressing. It is shaped into an oval, fastened to an upright of lance-wood, which is the handle, and pieced and stitched with patient skill. This he carries in his left hand, together with three or four assegai sticks without the heads, while in his right hand he grasps a club well knobbed.

This is one of the 3,000; the others are like unto him; and no beast prowling in jungle, or lurking in cave, by day or night, is half so horrible. By a piece of good fortune, I caught the great chief, Goza, at his toilette. I had seen him many a time in *mufti*, and was familiar with his white hat, crape band, and thick pilot coat, with big gaping pockets. At this heroic moment, however, Goza is the high-stepping leader and great captain, preparing for the field. His warriors are around him; his nostrils quiver and his eyes flash. Goza has no white and well-craped hat now, no pilot coat, no decent pantaloons. The hum-drum garments of civilisation are discarded, and he is, with the help of a dozen squires and pages, putting himself into a complicated garniture of feathers, hair fringes, tufts, tails, tusks, teeth, and skins, which few menageries or zoological gardens could furnish.

Goza struts, shakes his terrors, snorts like a war-horse, rolls his eyes, casts out far-reaching glances of command, brandishes his sword, and moves to the front of his army in great leaps and bounds, as though each movement were a conquest. Goza has his captains, who are all dressed in humble imitation of his finery, just as the 3,000 are like the private we took just now the liberty of inspecting.

After the Prince had ridden through the ranks, the evolutions began. Goza gave the sign, and one of the regiments marched rapidly, with a leaping movement, towards the spectators, sending forth at the same time a hurricane of shrieks and yells. Surging up to the very feet of the Prince, they retreated, still keeping their faces towards him; they advanced again, sprung aloft with great brute-like bounds, knelt, couched, hid themselves behind their shields, lay still as death, darted upwards into the air with startlingly sudden noise, brandished their spear-sticks, and drummed their shields with knee and foot. At last the time came for sighting the enemy, and the charge. Goza gave a sign which was equivalent to "Up, guards, and at 'em!" and away they went, still in line, but in passionate pulses of movement rather than in a march, raging, giving mouth, eager as panthers for blood. At another sign, the charge became a retreat. In almost perfect order the line changed face, the shields were swung round to the back, and a compact wall of hard-bound hide was presented to the pursuing foe.

As the men fled, they changed their cries to serpent-like hisses, as if to warn those who chased them that they were deadly if too closely pressed upon. Each regiment in its turn displayed its ability to be terrible. Then all united in a more complicated performance. The different bands charged each other, coiled themselves up in folds, slid through each other's ranks, undid

the tangle, and rushed into line, each man quivering as with suppressed passion, the whole 3,000 feeling as one. There they stood for a moment, eager, leaning forward as if held only by a leash. In an instant the leash was slipped, and, with redoubled yells, the regiments became a frantic mob, each man hurling himself forwards and upwards with a fury that seemed to turn each feather and hair into instruments of war. The braves were fiends; the passion was madness.

* Goza seemed to comprehend that the line of danger had been reached. At all events, he flew at some two or three of the most frantic and forward, and struck their shields with his sword, making the leather chips fly into the air. Probably it was all acting; if so, it was brilliantly clever. The last scene was as singular as any. After two hours of hard sham-fighting, and when the regiments had formed for the march off, and were chanting in low monotone, about a hundred women, clad only in a very scanty girdle of beads, came running, with prying looks and

bent forms, into the field. They were cruel in their aspect, and armed with short large-headed clubs. Every now and then they stooped, and aimed heavy blows, and as they did so they screamed with triumph. Their task was to kill the wounded.

It was evening before the spectacle was over, and I left late. As I passed along the lower terraces of the river-slope I was overtaken by a regiment, at the quick march, hastening to the camping fires. The men moaned and wailed as they went, and had a look of hunger in their eyes, as well as of excitement. By-and-by the fires came in view, with dark, fantastic, monstrous forms flitting about them in the smoke, great hunks of roasting flesh, and cauldrons of steaming maize-porridge. Here and there were groups of ravenous eaters, gnawing half-raw morsels of beef, and gulping down huge ladle-loads of scalding brose. The bivouac was as savage as the review. The revelry lasted far into the night; but by the morning the army had departed, leaving behind only the bones of many an ox.

ART NEEDLEWORK FOR LADIES.

PART THE SECOND.



O topic connected with art needlework is so difficult to deal with as that of design. People in general are absolutely ignorant of the rules regarding it. But in spite of this, I cannot remember to have heard any one decline to give their opinion, even when they were quite incapable of forming one. To the worker who is anxious to be her own designer, a knowledge of the rudiments is needful, and will prove a most interesting study. On the threshold even of her work she finds a difficulty, and asks the question, which I hear repeated so often, "How can I conventionalise natural flowers for my work?" The servile imitation of nature has been so long preached and practised, that it is only, I think, a thoroughly artistic temperament that asks the question, or feels the desire. Our walls have been hung with flowers, our floors covered with them, we have pillowed our heads on them, and sat on them, drawn and coloured so accurately, that if we were botanists we could neither mistake the genus nor even the species. We have even hung them in our windows, of such gigantic size and Brobdignag proportions that they have dwarfed everything about them. Ionic columns, immense peacocks, and Gothic architecture have indiscriminately graced our muslin curtains; and the artistic designer, like the much-quoted "schoolmaster," has been very much "abroad." Now it is almost a certainty that I shall be asked the question, "Why are we not to have these things? surely all art is an imitation of nature?" In the interest of my art embroideress I will try, in all humility, to explain the rules of correct design. All designs must be suitable to the material on which they are intended to be placed. This is a fundamental rule;

and bearing it continually in our minds, it will help us to a clear understanding of the propriety of all art decoration. For instance, the coarse texture of crash—the material on which crewel embroidery is done—is by no means suitable for floss-silks, or gold; the latter requiring a fine design of delicate tracery, while a free sketchy style is more suitable to the thickness of crewel. Guided by this rule, we shall also see the inapplicability of the designs we have mentioned to a thin transparent texture like muslin, where they are false as regards light and shade, in addition to the absurdity of their being transparent. The rule of considering the walls, curtains, and furniture of a room as the background merely of the occupants, and by no means to be allowed to draw attention from them by obtrusive colouring or form, is also a reliable guide.

From this we shall gather that rounded forms, crude colouring, and violent contrasts are all to be avoided in our work; and that flat forms and low tones of colour, used in several shades of one colour in preference to many colours, will produce a more satisfactory effect.

In one book on this subject I find so good a definition of conventionality that I prefer to copy it entire. "It is," the writer says, "a mode of representing natural objects, differing from the reality, but allowed to stand for it;" and continues—"Conventionality is always a confession of inability, or a concession to higher claims—*e.g.*, a painter cannot represent all the leaves of a tree without infinite labour. We agree, therefore, to receive as an equivalent so many leaves grouped in such a manner as to give the idea of foliage. Thus we make allowance for his inability. Even were he able to represent all the leaves, we should not require it, as such a representation would destroy what is called 'breadth of treat-