Shrewd, clever and intelligent
WITCHCRAFT AND MAGIC OF AFRICA

By

FREDERICK KAIGH

With a Foreword by

MONTAGUE SUMMERS
AUTHOR'S NOTE

Thanks are due to the Officers of the High Commissioners for South Africa and Rhodesia for their unfailing and courteous assistance, and for the loan of photographs.

Acknowledgment is made to the following authorities whose works have greatly assisted in the compilation:

Dorothea Fairbridge.
Paul Brunton.
R. Lydekker.
Lawrence Green.
R. Coupland.
E. P. Stebbing.
Stuart Cloete.
Frank Melland.
R. St. Barbe Baker.
Lewis Spence.
Montague Summers.

And all the magistrates, native commissioners, officers and men of the local police forces, and many others who have so patiently endured the onslaught of my interminable inquiries.

Loughton, March 1947

FREDERICK KAIGH
FOREWORD

“And now the chapel’s silver bell you hear,
That summons you to all the pride of prayer . . .
To rest, the cushion and soft Dean invite,
Who never mentions hell to ears polite.”


The famous author of *Westward Ho* (1855), and other immensely popular novels, Charles Kingsley, tutor to the Prince of Wales (Edward VII), Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, and Canon of Westminster, whose theological opinions—so far as they smacked of theology at all—it has been actually said, although “definitely Christo-centric, were moulded by German philosophical influence”, a man of the broadest views who utterly rejected, for example, the doctrine of eternal punishment, which he regarded with horror and disgust, an eminently sane man, a healthy mind, the impassioned and unfortunate opponent of Newman, whom he completely misunderstood, a typical Victorian, an out-of-doors man, a sportsman, Charles Kingsley, one Sunday morning, mounting his pulpit at Eversley Parish Church, without any stereotyped preliminary text, leaned over, and having surveyed his congregation for a full minute in silence, said in his most stern and solemn tones, “My dear friends, all of you here profess your belief in God but there is not one of you who believes in the devil. And yet, he exists, most really and truly exists.”

It is, in fact, impossible to deny the existence of evil in the world. There is health. There is also disease. And disease is evil in the physical order. So there is disease in the moral order. These are morbidities of the mind, pathological cases, psychological sickness, which often culminate in the most fearful results, murders and outrages, so wanton, seemingly so senseless and phrenetic, that we are at a loss to understand them. We are faced with we know not what.

“In his own state,” Mr. Frederick Kaigh tells us, and convinces us by a hundred truths, by a hundred examples—“in his own state, the African native lives his religion every minute of his life. His religion possesses him. . . . With one exception there are no heathen in Africa. Here, then is an enormous potential for good.”

But must there not be correspondingly an enormous potential for evil?

As I read *Witchcraft and Magic of Africa*, again and again there comes to my mind that adage which is as true today as when Vincent of Lerins penned it in his encyclopaedic *Commontorium* (ch. ii) fifteen hundred
years ago: *Quod semper, quod ubique, et quod ab omnibus.* "What has always been, what is to be found everywhere, what is practised in every corner of the world." I know that the good bishop did not intend his words quite in the sense I employ them, but this phrase enshrines a vital, an essential, an eternal truth.

In the records of witchcraft, or magic, or sorcery, as I have studied them throughout the continent of Europe, in Spain and Russia, in England and Italy, one finds oneself confronted, not once nor twice, but literally as a whole, systematically and homogeneously, with the same beliefs, the same facts, the same extraordinary happenings, unexplained and (so far as we know today) inexplicable.

The time has gone past when Science, so-called, can meet the phenomena by a blank denial, and the dogmatism of "Shameless Science" be accepted. "Shameless Science", so that wise old Pope Gregory XVI called it in his famous circular letter or encyclical, *Mirari vos*, more than one hundred years ago: in August, 1832, to be precise. "Shameless", because when met by these baffling and ever-recurring problems, the scientists of that day, instead of investigation and inquiry, dismissed anything that did not fall into line with their preconceived ideas. Theirs was the stolidity of negation. They pretended not to see. These things simply do not happen. To some minds a very comfortable, cosy, chimney-corner attitude of mind. But these phenomena, rare (no doubt) and unusual—yet none the less real for all that—did happen all the same.

I often think of the wisdom of stout old Dr. Johnson's answer to the lady who asked him how he came to explain in his *Dictionary* some technical words quite erroneously. "Ignorance, pure ignorance, madam," was the doctor's reply.

When I read Mr. Kaigh's *Witchcraft and Magic of Africa* I find myself continually paralleling what he relates with the pages of such writers as Heinrich Kramer (d. 1508) and James Sprenger (1436-1495); Jerome Cardan (1501-76); Johann Weyer (1515-88); Jean Bodin (1530-96); Pierre de Loyer (1550-1634); Martin Delrio S.J. (1551-1608); Joseph Glanvil (1636-80); Ludovici Maria Sinistrari (1622-1701); Johann Joseph von Gorres (1776-1848): and a score beside. All these tell of the same phenomena as Mr. Kaigh has known and witnessed today.

Now these men were not fools. They were neither deceivers nor deceived. Kramer and Sprenger were members of the Dominican Order—that Order distinguished for its scholarship and science—and they rose to the highest administrative positions.

When Kramer lectured at Venice, that seat of learning and research, his hearers flowed out of the hall, down the stairs, and it was difficult to find a seat for the Cardinal Archbishop of Venice himself. In June, 1480, James Sprenger was elected Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Cologne, whither students resorted from all Europe.
Dr. H. G. Lea of the University of Pennsylvania says that Jerome Cardan exemplified "the highest intellect and culture of his age. Possessed of all the science of the day, his inquiring and practical mind sought to find a reason for every fact presented to the eye or intelligible to the understanding, and not even Bacon could seek more diligently to discover by experiment the causes of everything in Nature, or to circumscribe the supernatural more rigidly."

Johann Weyer was for fifteen years physician to the Duke of Cleves and Juliers and Berg. After studying under the famous Cornelius Agrippa, he had travelled in Tunis and the East, and was accounted, even by those who were in disagreement with his views, one of the most learned and cautious scholars of his time.

Jean Bodin is called by Bayle the ablest writer in France in the sixteenth century. Montaigne acclaims him the highest literary genius of the period. His legal knowledge was acute and most profound, and he is unstintingly praised by such writers as Hallam and Douglas Stewart. He was a member of the Parlement of Paris. He was, however, so tolerant and broad-minded that during the reigns of Charles IX and Henri III, he found it best to withdraw from the capital, to which he did not return until the accession of Henri of Navarre.

Pierre de Loyer was a councillor of Angers, by which city he was entrusted with the most important commissions, and rewarded with civic dignities conferred upon only the leading and most responsible men of the district. He was regarded as a writer whose works covered many fields of culture.

Martin Delrio was not unjustly regarded by his contemporaries as a veritable prodigy of learning. At the age of nineteen he wrote a commentary on The Tragedies of Seneca, a vast exegesis in which he quotes 1,100 authorities. He was an accomplished and elegant Greek scholar, and was familiar with eight other languages, including Hebrew and Chaldee. He served as Counsellor and Auditor-General of the Supreme Court of Brabant. When about thirty-five, he entered the Society of Jesus, and was appointed Professor of Philosophy and Theology at the Universities of Salamanca, Douai, Liege, and Louvain, at which latter city he died in 1608.

Joseph Glanvil was an Oxonian—although he actually expressed a wish that he had gone to Cambridge, since he considered more liberal thought flourished there, and free discussion was encouraged. His first work, indeed, was entitled The Vanity of Dogmatising, 1661. His was a shrewd and questioning mind. A Fellow of the Royal Society, Chaplain-in-Ordinary to Charles II, a Prebend of Worcester, he died, while yet comparatively a young man, at Bath in November, 1680, and was buried in the Abbey Church there, of which he was rector. "The predominating characteristic of the mind of Glanvil," says the historian, W. E. H. Lecky
(Rationalism in Europe), "was an intense scepticism." Lecky adds: "I venture to think (that he) has been surpassed in genius by few of his successors."

It is interesting to note how in quite recent years investigators and others, when putting forward an explanation of what are known as "poltergeist phenomena", have, unconsciously perhaps, certainly without acknowledgment, done nothing more than reproduce in their own terms the suggestions made by Glanvil two hundred and fifty years ago.

Sinistrari occupied the Chair of Philosophy at Pavia. He was a profound classical scholar and a poet.

"Not only a theologian, but a universal genius," says Sainte Marthe. He was also a thorough man of the world, and a politician who was often called upon by the Roman Court to undertake missions demanding tact and delicacy of no mean order.

Johann Joseph von Görres, natural scientist, publicist, historian and theologian, is one of the great names of German literature. He was a prominent member of the Munich Academy, and for long editor of the Rhine Mercury.

I have mentioned in detail a few of these great men of the past to show that I refer to no mere ranting fanatics, such as Ludowick Muggleton, or eccentrics such as Wagstaffe, or romanticists such as the author of Le Comte de Gabalis, or highly suspect "mystics" such as L'abbé Constant, self-styled Eliphas Lévi, or the notorious abbé Boullan, but to authorities of sound worth and impeccable judgment, men of culture and sympathy, theologians, physicians, psychologists, professors at the most famous European universities, men whose standing, reputation, learning and good faith are beyond all cavil and criticism.

And it is in the works of these writers that I find described the same phenomena as Mr. Frederick Kaigh describes in Witchcraft and Magic of Africa. Surely this is very remarkable, very significant.

No doubt the explanations of these phenomena differ widely from those suggested by Mr. Kaigh. Probably; in some cases certainly; he would differ from me, too, as to the explanation and causes of the phenomena. But what does that matter? Just nothing at all. We are merely looking at the same thing from different angles. The important thing is that these phenomena do occur.

"Shameless science" denies (or denied) that they occur. There is the crux of the whole matter. That is the vital point. We do not quarrel with explanations. But we do quarrel with negations.

In reading Mr. Kaigh's sixth chapter, "Africa Dances", one cannot but be reminded of the important, it might almost be said essential, part which the dance played in the ritual of the European witches. Details are superfluous. They have been recorded again and again by the demonologists. The dance was the homage of the witches to their Master; to the dark
"How do you do?"—African style
Power. That is the emphatic word, Power. There was a Power. Mr. Kaigh speaks of "the tempo of the dance accelerating. More and more are leaping and stamping and flinging their limbs about. . . . The noise becomes deafening."

In 1590, at the great witch meeting at the haunted church of North Berwick, Barbara Napier and her coven (witch gang) "danced endlong the Kirk yard, and Gelie Duncan played on a trump, John Fian, wearing a mask, led the ring; Agnes Sampson and her daughters and all the rest following the said Barbara, to the number of seven score of persons".

The Capuchin, Jacques D'Autun, in his encyclopaedic treatise upon magic (The Folly of the Wise and the Wisdom of the Simple, 1671), speaks of sorceresses who gyrate hand in hand in a circle as if inspired with maniac frenzy. The dances of witches, he adds, far from being elegant and graceful, are uncouth and ugly, utterly extravagant.

Reginald Scot in his Discovery of Witchcraft, 1584, paraphrasing Jean Bodin, says how at these witch assemblies "the witches never fail to dance . . . Bodin saith that these night-walking, or rather night-dancing, witches, brought out of Italy into France that dance which is called La Volta".

La Volta is said to be the earliest form of the waltz. The "voluptuous waltz", as Byron has it, to give both Belial and his dance their due!

With regard to the "tempo of the dance accelerating", it is recorded how in Scotland, in Crichton, about six miles from Dalkeith, when in August, 1678, there was "a great meeting of witches in Lothian", a ritual dance was an important feature of the proceedings, and Mr. Gideon Penman, formerly minister of Crichton, a very active member of the magical coven, "was in the rear in all their dances, and beat up all those that were slow". (Lord Fountainhall, Decisions, Edinburgh, 1759, I, p. 14.)

The cases, and they are extraordinarily interesting, which Mr. Kaigh cites in Chapter VII, "Lycanthropy", can be paralleled again and again in the writings of the old demonologists.

How did the powerful young man and the splendid young girl, as Mr. Kaigh actually witnessed, turn into Jackals before his very eyes? It is useless, it is unscientific, it is untheological, it is untrue to deny the fact. We cannot deny, but we may discuss. St. Augustine has debated the whole question. Scholars throughout the ages, jurists, doctors, philosophers, have all probed deeply into the mystery. And yet, to quote the author, "there remain a hundred unanswerables".

As Mr. Kaigh writes: "One hears the remark 'These things don't happen.'" He resents the blind dogmatism of ignorance. I am heartily at one with him. These things do happen.

Not only in Africa are these things happening, but in Europe—in England too. Again and again some phase of the old witchcraft creeps into the newspapers via the law courts.
In the *Sunday Express*, 13th October, 1946, there are to be seen staring headlines (p. 3) "PARENTS THOUGHT NEIGHBOURS WERE TRYING TO ‘BEWITCH’ THEIR CHILD’. "A BOY CRIED IN THE NIGHT—and they put salt on the fire." That was at Trowbridge, Wilts. They felt they had to counteract an evil influence. The burning of salt is an age-old charm. St. Jerome and St. Hilary have some pertinent comments on the matter.

With regard to certain faery happenings in Connemara—I use "faery" strictly in the right and proper sense of the word—William Butler Yeats once remarked to me. "I do not know why they happened. I do not know how they happened. But I do know that they happened."

Horace spoke of the wind which sweeps from Africa as "praeceps" and "luctans". Such a wind sweeps from Africa today.

Magistrate Frank Melland, B.A., F.R.A.I., F.R.G.S., F.Z.S., an eminently sane and experienced authority, regards witchcraft as "a poisonous creeper that spreads over Africa, and impedes all progress."

Mr. Kaigh's masterly study shows us something of what the witchcraft and magic of Africa can do, and is doing in our midst.

For Africa is a great continent on the map of the world—great for good, great for evil.

Were the old Greeks so wrong after all when they regarded Africa as the Mother of Mystery?

They were right, and Mr. Kaigh tells us why. He has written clearly, and he has written well.

The truth he tells us we cannot dispute—explain it as we may.

He has increased the store of human knowledge. Please God, he has increased the store of human wisdom.

MONTAGUE SUMMERS

*Richmond, Surrey. 1947*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prologue: The Burden</td>
<td>XV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>&quot;Mise En Scene&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Scarless Wounding And Firewalking</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>Parlour Tricks</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>Backdrop Of The Magical Stage</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>Drums Of Africa</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>Africa Dances</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>Lycanthropy</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>Sic Transit</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.</td>
<td>Smelling Out</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.</td>
<td>More Things In Heaven And Earth</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI.</td>
<td>And The Dead Shall Rise Up</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII.</td>
<td>Propitiation</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII.</td>
<td>A Little More About Witchdoctors</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV.</td>
<td>&quot;Test The Spirits&quot;</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV.</td>
<td>The Magic Of Zimbabwe</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVI.</td>
<td>Divination</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVII.</td>
<td>Oblation</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVIII.</td>
<td>Magic Of The Flowers</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIX.</td>
<td>The Wandering Head</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XX.</td>
<td>Obeah</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXI.</td>
<td>Magic Of The Waters</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXII.</td>
<td>Permutations And Reflections</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXIII.</td>
<td>Ritual Killing</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXIV.</td>
<td>&quot;There Was One Door&quot;</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Shrewd, Clever And Intelligent</td>
<td>Frontispiece</td>
<td>Facing page x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. &quot;How Do You Do?&quot;—African Style</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. A Camp Fire Dance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Throwing The Bones</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Native War Dance</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Dressed In Full Regalia Of Jackal Skins</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. The Guilty One Is Dragged To His Feet</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Zulu Witchdoctor</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Lokanzi The Witchdoctor</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. One Second The Throne Is Empty And The Next He Is There</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. Zimbabwe</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII. Adderley Street, Cape Town</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII. Victoria Falls</td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV. Witchdoctor Surgery</td>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>142</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Drawings are elaborated from original sketches by the author*
PROLOGUE

THE BURDEN

In the following pages I shall make an uncompromising indictment of the absurd official attitude towards witchcraft and witchdoctors. In the light of these forthcoming strictures, it is only fair here and now, before we delve into some of the beliefs, habits, and customs of black Africa (known to the Zulus as Umafrika) which may appear bizarre, magical, and even sinister to us, to examine some of the problems we face in our attempt to govern this people, and to consider briefly the urgent question of their future.

Rightly or wrongly the various white races have accepted from time to time the burden of directing the fortunes of the black peoples. So it is that in Africa the British exercise their control over the vast majority of the indigenous races.

We are not immediately concerned with the methods employed by other European Colonial Offices, interesting and instructive though they are. A comparative survey would more than fill this book to very little purpose. The expression “the white man’s burden” has a sickly odour to it, suggesting as it does that the natives ride on the white man’s back like the Old Man of the Sea. _En passant_, the concept is locally ridiculed by a rather horrible postcard which is highly popular in certain districts of Cape Town.

A charge, or trust, can only be a burden in proportion to the spiritual and physical _unproductive_ fatigue which it causes. Therein lies the hub of the whole matter. We have been governing the natives for approximately half a century, and in doing so have assiduously laid upon our own backs a burden which we have ourselves fashioned by the sad lack of productivity. Our officials, stultified by the military and judicial mind, have striven to impose our insular ideas of law, order and discipline upon people who have a far stricter law than our own, with firm traditions of immense martial discipline _on their own lines_, and to whom the only known order is that made necessary by the seasonal effects on agricultural effort, and by respect for their own tribal authorities.

Pseudo-military prisons throughout Africa are crammed with bewildered men—and women, too—who, by obedience to their own laws, have contravened the white code.

Of course, punishment is necessary. The native understands punishment and to some extent respects it. His own laws have far more stringent penalties than ours. Our penal code has also its utility value. It provides penal battalions for the making and mending of roads and other public works; an economy much appreciated by the ratepayers!
All this neatness, and order, and discipline, and law are very comforting and very British, but, being white law imposed, without reason or understanding, on black minds and bodies, and often skins, while definitely repressive, is almost entirely unproductive. More often than not the one who is guilty in the eyes of the Court is quite innocent in his own, and has no idea of the nature or implications of his crime until he hears it coldly and concisely detailed in evidential terms.

While the “criminal” will cheerfully admit his act, the interpreter struggles in vain to explain to him why it is wrong. He takes his punishment imperturbably enough. But its sole effect is to confirm what he has so often been told—that the white man is quite, quite mad.

Is it any wonder that, by and large, our government of the natives is one long sad story of failure?

Our officials are as honest and upright as can be found. Native Commissioners are respected, and even loved by their charges. With certain exceptions, notably in the large cities, the police rule is comparatively benign.

We place natives in “reserves” and, having segregated them, piously congratulate ourselves on doing our duty by them.

Our laws are extremely fair according to our lights. We do not tolerate employers’ dictatorship—any native has the right to lay any complaint if he thinks he is unfairly treated, and, if he does so, he gets very careful and impartial judgment.

For these blessings he has to pay what is called “hut-tax”. As there are no remunerative jobs in his reserve or village, he has to work for the white man to earn the wherewithal to pay it. Therefore, the aforesaid white man gets his services. It is a neatly rounded economy.

Then why have we failed?

In the first place, while we govern the comparative few who come in contact with the whites, we entirely ignore the mass.

And in the second, at no point whatever does our governance touch the native mind, tradition and understanding, save in the matter of punishment. There is not the slightest endeavour to teach him to avoid the penalty. Nor to explain to him the code under which he is penalised.

As a result you have two opposite camps. There, in his native village, Umafrika comes under a legal code which he certainly understands, while here, in contact with the whites, he comes under, and suffers under, an entirely different code about which he knows nothing whatever. If one fails one must have aimed at something. It is not easy to understand what the governing authorities in Africa have heretofore been aiming at. But to take the lowest estimate of their objective—conformity to the white legal code—the crowded native prisons amply prove that even this horribly unimaginative target has been hopelessly missed.

Surely we must aim at something higher than this.
Let us examine the situation for a moment.

Our governance of what are called "the backward and uninstructed peoples of Africa" was officially described as long ago as 1919 as "a sacred trust". It is so described in the Treaty of Versailles. We must ask ourselves why. If we agree, as indeed we should, that it is a sacred trust, we cannot escape the conclusion that it is a trust to perform something. Surely, surely that "something" should be the coaching of the backward and the teaching of the uninstructed.

Up to the outbreak of war in 1939 our acceptance of that trust had performed nothing whatever in either of these directions.

The instructors of the native races were not the Government, which made very little effort in that direction, but the missionaries, and even they left the mass of the muntu (native people) entirely alone.

Hitting out at missionaries is a popular pastime with some authors. It is very easy. There can be made out a case which reads interestingly and well.

Van Loon, in his *Story of the Pacific*, very effectively spews the missionaries out of his mouth over many absorbing pages. The only missionaries he has the slightest use for are the medical ones.

However this may, since I am a medico myself, flatter my professional ego, I am afraid I must in fairness admit that his strictures are undeserved. Though I have never been a missionary, even a medical one, and assure you I am far too "of the earth earthy" to have the slightest leanings in that direction, I have performed all the medical and surgical work for all the missions over a very large area in Africa—as an incidental, as it were. I have thought it necessary to explain this as a solid basis for the forthcoming remarks.

While it is certainly correct to assert that in many aspects missionaries in general are grievously at fault, it is equally true to say, without the slightest cavil, that their ideals are excellent, and that they are more often than not less wrong than the lay officials by whom they are often described—let's face it—as a "pain in the neck".

Even against one's will they have to be brought into any disposition, however ephemeral, of native affairs, for the reason that they exercise a powerful, vital, and inescapable sway over these.

Their immense power for good lies in their unrelenting efforts to instruct the natives in the arts, crafts, and the rudiments of academic education. Up to recent years, the sole educational establishments for native Africa were mission-sponsored and run. And yet they, too, have hopelessly failed. Ask any employer of native labour. Times without number, I have seen these refuse to sign on "mission boys". I admit that, after some horrible experiences, I was one of the "refusers". The mission boy, far from being a Christian, is, with the exception of one solitary tribe, the only heathen in Africa. Why?
Because of one thing, and one thing only—competition.

Every mission is in open competition with every other mission to proselytise every available native into the narrow confines of sectarianism.

Though God is indivisible, Western religious progress has so diversified the approaches, into so many watertight compartments, that even the enlightened seeker plods about as in a honeycomb with his feet stickily enmeshed in the poisoned honey of rubric, dogma, hypocritical schism, cant and sectarianism.

Far from being introduced to the eternal verities, the native neophyte is invited to dabble in the inconsequent minutæ of Wesleyans, Baptists, Presbyterians, Latter-day-saints, Swedenborgians, Methodists, Peculiar People, Anglicans, Romans and who knows what other hide-bound schisms and sects.

As a result he sheds his own ardent religious beliefs and, thinly veneered with sectarianism—which he does not understand anyway—emerges a complete heathen.

I am not afraid to repeat this, as I originally had the honour of saying it at a large missionary convocation at Driefontein in 1930—and the missionaries themselves agreed that it was so. In his own state, the native lives his religion every minute of his life. His religion possesses him.

It is in very truth a religion of a God who is “the Creator and Preserver of all mankind”.

It is therefore simply not true to claim that any missionary in the African field “converts the heathen”. With one exception there are no heathens in Africa to convert!

Here then is an enormous potential for good—for instructing the uninstructed, and for helping the backward.

A vast coterie already to hand, amply financed, of honest, godfearing, self-sacrificing men and women.

If they will only do it in the right way they can by their own efforts achieve the ideal target.

All they must do is remember God and forget sect. Thus they become at once a united body with a united aim and a splendid ideal. I say without fear of contradiction that they are today absolutely ignorant of the tenets of native religion. As a prime essential they should “study to learn” this religion.

As acquaintance ripens into knowledge and understanding, they will be surprised to find how many tenets are closely akin to their own. Those parallel, and even contiguous lines of belief should make the scaffolding upon whose support the whole edifice of missionary endeavour—so far as its religious ideal is concerned—can be built.

To change the metaphor; by watering, pruning, tending, training and cultivating the firm and flourishing root, already there, a comely plant
will grow up whereon in due season there will bloom the rose of the humanities of the Nazarene.

This co-operative attitude is so important that it had to be stated first on the spiritual side, before discussing any plan of governance by the lay authorities, because what is true of the body spiritual is, a fortiori, true of the body temporal. This co-operation, as the direct outcome of adequate understanding of the native point of view, is the only solution to every difficulty.

As a first step let us consider progress.

This very mixed blessing is the lodestar of the white man. He must leap from his velocipede to his motor-cycle, from his ambling palfrey to his streamlined jet-plane, from his flint axe to his atomic bomb, and so, on and on, over steep places into seas of turmoil and destruction. It is this witch, Progress, hag-riding the mind of the white, which he must attempt to impose on a people static by religious conviction (as we shall see) for thousands of years. Progress to this people is blasphemy. To change immemorial custom is to deny God.

Though he loves the thrill of riding his "cicibicicolo", he must apostate himself to indulge in this advanced form of locomotion. To his headmen and chiefs and doctors, even to acquiesce in progress is tantamount to excommunication.

It follows naturally that, to the native, the man who tries to force progressive activities is the enemy of God. The only way to convert the native to striding forward is, not by forcing progress, as a physical thing, but by elevating the mind as a spiritual progression, from which physical progress will follow in the natural order as a corollary of mental emancipation.

The next problem is the traditional and rigid code of native jurisprudence. It is impossible to tack the Roman-Dutch legal code on to the native processes of law, nor can any improvement be looked for by the present method of legislating for only those natives who come in intimate contact with the white man and the white settlements.

It must not be forgotten that it is tribalism which keeps the native continent and law abiding. Tribal and guild associations are deterrents of evil and agents of morality.

It is also a fact that these natives have become apostate and detribalised by the very fact of their service to the white man, thereby losing their only incentive to remain within the law—that is to say their own law.

Therefore, the Government's first efforts should be directed not so much to these renegades, as to the law-abiding citizens in their own settings—as yet untouched.

To do this it is necessary to get into the native mind and heart: to take his own laws and, by a gradual and painless process, codify, prune,
amplify, and graft thereon a compatible legal code. But it must be a grafting, not a superimposition.

Moreover, it must be a gradual process, never forgetting the native's very real and spiritual horror of change.

You cannot achieve twenty centuries of evolution in a day.

Consider education. Apart from the missionary endeavours in this direction, except in circumscribed areas, as, for example, Basutoland, the only education—if you can call it that—which the native receives is the scraps which he picks up by his association with the governing race. The go-downs and dance hells and native restaurants and booze halls round the big mining centres speak more eloquently than words of the sort of education this association gives him.

Blacks always pick up the worst side of white "progress".

At the risk of prolixity it is again emphasised that the core of the problem does not lie here, but in the hinterland.

The sane essentials of true education—the word means "a leading out"—must be taken into the native villages and settlements. If approached in the right spirit, the chiefs will welcome this innovation. They are knowledgeable men, and clever. Once they realise that their tribal and guild associations will be strengthened thereby, they will be avid for the right kind of instruction—on their own doorstep as it were.

It is only de-tribalised natives who run amok.

We must not lose sight of the salient fact that we are dealing with clever, intelligent people with no limit to their potential usefulness.

How far primitives will advance, and how fast, under instruction, is simply amazing.

The primitives of Australia are the most backward people extant. So backward that Dampier, who discovered them in 1688, wrote, "They are the most miserable people in the world I have ever seen." Yet, under the wartime spur of necessity, even these so-called irreclaimables, performed skilled jobs, laid aside their boomerangs and learnt to fire rifles, and drill, and fight alongside our troops. One of them even attained to commissioned rank.

If martial necessity can produce so stupendous an advance in Australian aborigines what cannot be done with comparatively advanced African races? With the exception of the derelict and dying Bushman, the Hottentot, and possibly the Ituri pygmies, all these peoples are what is called in theatrical parlance "quick studies", and learn with speed and certainty.

Education must play a major part, but it must do so with the co-operation of the natives themselves, not by imposition and opposition.

The first step is to forget the comfortable doctrine that the native people exist solely for the convenience of the whites.
It dies hard, that early concept that all natives from Easter Island to Walvis Bay are black trash.

It started with the iniquitous slave trade, when men and women were graded solely on their physical capacity, and, despite the abolition of slavery, there has, in some aspects, been little improvement in their lot.

The massed hovels of Vrededorp, where the black cattle of the Rand mines swarm and cough their lives away, are not so very much advanced from the slave quarters of the old sugar plantations.

Natives must here carry signed passes every time they set foot beyond the confines of their place of work. African industrial centres are great centripetal cyclones sucking in more and more natives to die, and, unless something very drastic is done about it, so they will continue as long as the supply lasts.

At the lowest possible estimate it should be an urgent matter to ensure the supply by lowering infant mortality. Yet it still remains over the 70 per cent. mark, and nothing whatever has even been attempted to improve the tragic situation.

We are still grasping the wrong end of the Umafrika stick.

We are still working on the datum line of vaguely expurgated slavery—and it won’t do. A poor fulfilment of a sacred trust to say the least of it.

A world survey of the contemporary position of native peoples should give us food for serious thought.

The medieval idea is well typified by the condemnation of Balboa for leniency because all he could manage was the massacre of those natives in his immediate vicinity, for his soldiers were too few to slay the lot. The Conquistadores who followed him, sacked, raped, burnt and massacred as a deliberate policy. The female slaves on the old plantations were regularly raped by the excessively religious planters as a pastime, and their men were incontinently hanged or shot if they dared to show resentment.

The Panamoteans, their ancient settlements sunk beneath the waters of artificial lakes, apathetically await inevitable and merciful extinction.

The once proud natives of North America—the Red Men—decimated with syphilis, cannot stave off a like fate. The great seafaring pioneers of the Pacific have been reduced to side-show merchants, performing miserable simulacra of their traditional ritual for the amusement of conducted tourists.

Everywhere the old virility is prostituted to “progress”. Sad, sad, tragically sad.

While it is true that America, in a bloody, fratricidal war, emancipated the slaves, her muddled after-treatment of the freed was as though she had taken unto herself seven devils worse than the first!

And what of Africa?

So far we are but teaching “bloody instruction which turns to plague the inventor”.
grafting, not a superimposition. Moreover, it must be a gradual process, never forgetting the native’s very real and spiritual horror of change.

You cannot achieve twenty centuries of evolution in a day.

Consider education. Apart from the missionary endeavours in this direction, except in circumscribed areas, as, for example, Basutoland, the only education—if you can call it that—which the native receives is the scraps which he picks up by his association with the governing race. The go-downs and dance hells and native restaurants and booze halls round the big mining centres speak more eloquently than words of the sort of education this association gives him.

Blacks always pick up the worst side of white “progress”.

At the risk of prolixity it is again emphasised that the core of the problem does not lie here, but in the hinterland.

The sane essentials of true education—the word means “a leading out”—must be taken into the native villages and settlements. If approached in the right spirit, the chiefs will welcome this innovation. They are knowledgeable men, and clever. Once they realise that their tribal and guild associations will be strengthened thereby, they will be avid for the right kind of instruction—on their own doorstep as it were.

It is only de-tribalised natives who run amok.

We must not lose sight of the salient fact that we are dealing with clever, intelligent people with no limit to their potential usefulness.

How far primitives will advance, and how fast, under instruction, is simply amazing.

The primitives of Australia are the most backward people extant. So backward that Dampier, who discovered them in 1688, wrote, “They are the most miserable people in the world I have ever seen.” Yet, under the wartime spur of necessity, even these so-called irreclaimables, performed skilled jobs, laid aside their boomerangs and learnt to fire rifles, and drill, and fight alongside our troops. One of them even attained to commissioned rank.

If martial necessity can produce so stupendous an advance in Australian aborigines what cannot be done with comparatively advanced African races? With the exception of the derelict and dying Bushman, the Hottentot, and possibly the Ituri pygmies, all these peoples are what is called in theatrical parlance “quick studies”, and learn with speed and certainty.

Education must play a major part, but it must do so with the co-operation of the natives themselves, not by imposition and opposition.

The first step is to forget the comfortable doctrine that the native people exist solely for the convenience of the whites.
Walvis Bay are black trash.

It started with the iniquitous slave trade, when men and women were graded solely on their physical capacity, and, despite the abolition of slavery, there has, in some aspects, been little improvement in their lot.

The massed hovels of Vrededorp, where the black cattle of the Rand mines swarm and cough their lives away, are not so very much advanced from the slave quarters of the old sugar plantations.

Natives must here carry signed passes every time they set foot beyond the confines of their place of work. African industrial centres are great centripetal cyclones sucking in more and more natives to die, and, unless something very drastic is done about it, so they will continue as long as the supply lasts.

At the lowest possible estimate it should be an urgent matter to ensure the supply by lowering infant mortality. Yet it still remains over the 70 per cent. mark, and nothing whatever has even been attempted to improve the tragic situation.

We are still grasping the wrong end of the Umafrika stick.

We are still working on the datum line of vaguely expurgated slavery—and it won’t do. A poor fulfilment of a sacred trust to say the least of it.

A world survey of the contemporary position of native peoples should give us food for serious thought.

The medieval idea is well typified by the condemnation of Balboa for leniency because all he could manage was the massacre of those natives in his immediate vicinity, for his soldiers were too few to slay the lot. The Conquistadores who followed him, sacked, raped, burnt and massacred as a deliberate policy. The female slaves on the old plantations were regularly raped by the excessively religious planters as a pastime, and their men were incontinently hanged or shot if they dared to show resentment.

The Panamoteans, their ancient settlements sunk beneath the waters of artificial lakes, apathetically await inevitable and merciful extinction.

The once proud natives of North America—the Red Men—decimated with syphilis, cannot stave off a like fate. The great seafaring pioneers of the Pacific have been reduced to side-show merchants, performing miserable simulacra of their traditional ritual for the amusement of conducted tourists.

Everywhere the old virility is prostituted to “progress”. Sad, sad, tragically sad.

While it is true that America, in a bloody, fratricidal war, emancipated the slaves, her muddled after-treatment of the freed was as though she had taken unto herself seven devils worse than the first!

And what of Africa?

So far we are but teaching “bloody instruction which turns to plague the inventor”. 
Consider New Zealand. Our wars of aggression with the Maoris were bloodier than the Zulu and Matabele affairs. But here, with unusual foresight, clever legislation, and native co-operation, there has been produced a civic success far beyond the military strategy. Today the British and the Maoris enjoy equal legislative and administrative rights—*and it works*.

It would be foolish to assert that the African peoples are yet ready for equal rights—nor were the Maoris a hundred years ago. That, however, is the ideal for which we must strive, for only therein can Africa’s future be assured.

Let us consider whether the muntu deserve a bright future. Here, I think it will be agreed, loyalty is the keyword. Do the natives pass the test of loyalty?

There is a stone monolith on a hilltop near Umtali in Southern Rhodesia, where the morning sun gilds the granite, and the level rays of evening incaradine the inscription to the loyal natives who fought and died for the Home Country (in this case meaning both Africa and the British Isles) between 1914 and 1918. There are other memorials. And that is all the acknowledgment they got! I would like to give the figures, but they are amply inscribed elsewhere. Will it surprise you to learn that they total in many instances over seventy per cent. of the adult taxable males who worked or fought for us then? The figures can easily be checked.

Again in 1939 the call came. Again the response was unanimous. The men of these “subject races” learnt military discipline, drilled, and fought, and died with cheerfulness, fortitude, and unexampled bravery.

Is all they deserve, all that they have earned, a new mushroom growth of stone memorials? Or do they deserve a better future? Every elector in the Home Country must answer that question for himself—for it is his or her direct responsibility.

There was a time when it was the fashion to subjugate every consideration to the race for personal aggrandisement.

It won’t do any more.

Masses of instructed, trained and loyal native people are daily being demobilised back to African civilian life. They know too much to sink back into easy acquiescence in the old ways of the Government.

We must acknowledge with pride their loyalty, root out the bad old heritage of slave-mindedness, and set about a wise elevation from within.

By all means coalesce with mission effort, but it must be a united and unified effort, purged of the sectarian “closed shop” and divorced from political interference in native affairs.

There is the awful example of Japan to guide them. The first missionaries to Japan were well received—till they started interfering in matters outside their ambit. Then they were massacred to a man. If those followers
There must also be instituted outlets for native commercial enterprise on their own ground.

At present the native can only be gainfully employed by working for the white, and this is a wrong principle. He must be encouraged towards a social and economic independence. Historically they are people with a fierce pride in their achievements. Only this independence can restore their self respect. The chiefs would welcome fervently and foster ardently such a project.

This independence must be a real thing, which is the opposite of black and white social mingling: the devilish false god of the dangerous negrophilist. Social and sexual mingling can lead to nothing but disaster. The plight of the “coloureds”, “half-castes”, “café-au-laits” is everywhere pitiable; in Africa it is deplorable.

Let us clear the air about the sex question. In native affairs sex retains its perspective as no more nor less than a necessary, and fortunately not unpleasant, biological function. Prostitution was, as we shall see, grafted on by the white invaders.

Native women are not naturally promiscuous.
They do not want to have white lovers.

There is not one single recorded case of an African native woman making the slightest effort to seduce a white man.

Sexually we neither attract nor interest them.
The only time I ever saw an Umafrica woman deliberately insult a white was when he offered her money—three half-crowns—to sleep with him. She spat on the money.

They are seducible only because the African woman is by nature and tradition complaisant. It is also true that highly placed natives will on occasion offer daughters to white men as a graceful, time-honoured compliment.

To take advantage of the complaisance or the gesture is about the rottenest thing one can imagine.
Yet it is done, time and again.

More often than not the retribution is swift and violent. The woman becomes, in the eyes of her peers, a valueless thing. The man sinks lower and lower, while the progeny become hostages to a relentless misfortune which is no fault of their own.

In the process of elevating the native a tightening of the tribal bonds is the only cure for complaisance. For the white man such a union might well involve a stiff gaol sentence. It would be so but for those who know in their hearts that there, but for the grace of God, go they.

Nor does this projected independence entail segregation, on which subject, fired by the present unsatisfactory state of affairs, there has been a good deal of unpleasant local agitation of late. With the gradual evolution
The native work for the ..

Whatever home industries may be, he will still offer his services.

In the following pages I have dealt with witchcraft and sorcery, by no means fully, but in some detail, because, first and last, it is public enemy number one. Nothing heretofore mentioned is possible, no elevation, no education, no co-operation, no future, while witchcraft flourishes as it does today. This is the cancer actively rotting away all advancement and enterprise.

Witchcraft must be attacked first. Every government official knows this. Later we shall see how ludicrously they have attempted to deal with the menace.

Witchcraft can only be attacked through the mind. We in the West have not succeeded in killing it, but by rising above it, we have “scotched the snake” to the extent that it can only flourish unheralded and unsung in dark and secret corners. We have shamed the witchmasters to silence and the covens to desperate concealment. I doubt if ever man can entirely overcome the Lord of Evil, but, if we can, by spiritual elevation, relegate it in Africa, where today it stalks openly and unashamed, to a similar fearful secrecy, there will then be no bar to the future we are aiming to portray.

To attack this greatest problem of all, the first step is to cancel our official denials and admit its existence. There is not one single member of the Government, however humble and insignificant, who does not know how real and how powerful a thing it is. Then why deny its existence?

Admit its actuality then. Proclaim its demonic power, and ascribe that power to its evil origin. Inveigh against its stultifying wickedness. By doing so you at once enlist the sympathy of every native, for you range yourself alongside his god.

Cancel the proscriptions against the witchdoctors, whose clear cut anti-witchcraft position in the scheme of things we shall see anon, and enlist the co-operation of these men. As headmen, as many of them are, we have no hesitation in granting them the insignia of government authority, but as witchdoctors we proscribe them as felons—it does not make sense—it breeds intense opposition on the part of the muntu.

I have discussed this revolutionary idea with those most intimately concerned and I know that, once they are assured it would not harm their acute business capacity, nor their authority, and that the almighty Government really wants them to work in partnership, the more enlightened of the guild will seize the chance, and will draw in their less erudite brethren by their own efforts. Obviously the nyangas’ dark necromantic ritualia will need revision, and drastic revision, but that can well come later. In fact it will automatically evolve from their enhanced official position. With the institution of this co-operation, in place of the
present Honour and magnific appreciation of the door of witchcraft will be prised open, that this terrible evil will be forced into the open, and will be burnt into insignificance in the fierce sunlight of publicity.

There is no other way.

Once this is achieved there is no bar to advancement and enlightenment in every direction, leading to that proud citizenship which is a fitting reward for the loyal native soldiers of the Great White King.

It can be done. It is well worth while. Honour demands its achievement.

It is a bold and a tremendous concept, but it carries adequate recompense in its hand.

We stand today at the cross-roads. We have in trust a people with a splendid record of service: a loyalty which is ours to foster or fritter away.

Which is it to be?

Contemporary African Press is full of the problem. Excellent schemes on the lines I have adumbrated are being started everywhere throughout the continent.

Properly organised and supported they will bring to Africa, black and white, a future of prosperity and blessedness beyond computation. Now is the time.

If we fail now, the future will not bear thinking about.

But we cannot fail.

We must succeed, for thus the burden will become lighter and lighter till it becomes a support.

With this thought in mind we start on our travels. If I succeed in shedding some light upon the mind and—yes—the value of the native, I shall not have written in vain.
CHAPTER ONE

"MISE EN SCENE"

What is magic? There are an innumerable number of happenings, rites, tricks of behaviour, divinations, sorceries, which, though they sound like magic to us, are the veriest commonplace to their practitioners. That must be our keynote. These weird happenings are as commonplace to native Africans, as births, deaths, weddings, funerals, prayers, wishes, dances, "booze-ups", high court procedures: as unnote-worthy as our early morning cup of tea.

Again, no one could possibly give anything like a complete picture, because a lifetime is far too short to become intimate with the secrets, for the most part closely guarded, of the whole of Africa. Every little rite and ceremony has innumerable permutations and combinations, and each tribe, or even family, has its own traditions and methods.

In the huge area from five degrees north to the border of the Sahara, countless village communities live in complete isolation of speech, custom, and way of life from their neighbours. In this vast country, if you were to travel the equivalent of a journey from Loughton to Epping, Streatham to Croydon, you would encounter separate communities who would not understand a word of each other's conversation. The magic of Epping would in no point be comparable with that of Loughton, and so on. New Yorkers would be complete foreigners to Bostonians, who would consider it futile even to attempt to speak the same language.

From about five degrees south, the races, though not entirely from the same stock, have basic resemblances which, to a certain extent simplifies the understanding of them. Even then the problem is immense. The Sindebele, Matabele and Zulu are more or less of a family, as are the Makalanga (the Children-of-the-Sun), the Mashona, the Mashwena. But the Bantu of the Zambesi, the Alunda, the Kisungu, the Shangaans, the Balamba, the Kasempa, and countless others are vastly different. Even in this part of the country there are more than a hundred different languages. Nevertheless, it is possible, with a fair acquaintance of thirty or forty of these languages, to make oneself generally understood, and the majority of the muntu speak a curious hotch-potch of all the languages plus an admixture of Afrikaans, known as Kitchen Kaffir, which is a definite language, a sort of native esperanto, not to be confused with bush-palaver or coast pidgin. One instance of this will suffice to explain the meaning of such a statement. It is a native goodnight.

"Mangi lo langa panzili tina lala; incorna saba skat y'ga tina azi' lo anga n'a az' indaba na lo puma m'ngwana."
No one could possibly suggest that there is any plug-in that

Translated, it means “Now that the sun has gone to bed, we sleep
unafraid, because we know that the sun understands of himself the busi-
ness of rising tomorrow.”

And that is not such a bad thought to sleep on either.

In this area, too, there are vast village and tribal differ-
es. We have every grade of civilisation from the ancient Bushman, who is not far
removed from man’s estate when he first emerged from the primordial slime—right up the scale to the magnificent and highly civilised Zulu. In
the Transkaai there is even a dying race of white men—known as the
Woodmen—who are even more remote from us than some of the native
people. Their only craft is woodwork. They are a dour, taciturn, hairy,
uncomprehensible lot, carelessly included in the category of “poor
whites”, though they are definitely “set apart”. Their origin is unknown.
They are probably a mixture, though some say that they are survivors of
a wreck of 1766. They are reluctant to talk, and when they do say a few
words, God alone knows what they mean, it is not easy to find out
much about them. They probably do not know anything much about
themselves. They are dying out so fast that they must be wellnigh
extinct by now.

Between the north-eastern border of what used to be known as
German S.W. Africa and the depths of the Kalahari (which is not desert
as we know it, and, irrigated, might yet become one of the most fertile
spots on earth) there live a number of “lost tribes” about whom we
know next to nothing. The original yellow bushman is practically
extinct. When you do find an isolated specimen he either won’t or can’t
talk about himself, yet long before the hanging gardens of Babylon were
conceived, he was painting exquisite scenes on solid granite, in coloured
pigments as fresh today as when the forgotten artist produced them
thousands of years before the Cross of Calvary was a sapling. What those
pigments were, how compounded, and how employed, are mysteries
which have never been solved. Despite all the onward march of science,
there is nothing in the world of today to compare with them.

It is essential for us to remember that Africa’s civilisation is centuries
older than ours. It stretches away back into the immemorial past with the
inestimable advantage of changelessness. Such few rites, and customs,
and ways of thinking which we are able to glance at have come un-
changed down the years.

There is no uniformity anywhere in native Africa. Only the degraded
usages of modernity regimentalise men into robots for the mechanical
performance of the same meaningless functions world without end. Academical education started the de-naturalisation of man. The conquest
of space and time finished the sorry work of sublimating his soul to his
guts, his brain to his fingers. Even so, the fingers of the “un-emancipated”
of a curator of a garden—are the more adroit.

But it is their immense diversity which makes it impossible to collate myriad bizarre customs and seeming miracles: a merciful dispensation, for these things lose much of their romance in black and white. I must needs write therefore only of that infinitesimal part of the incalculable whole of which, from personal observation and the courtesy of native friends, I have knowledge. Nor can there be any apology for skipping from one subject to another, for by so doing, I am following African traditional habits. Your muntu rarely concentrate on any subject for long.

To the student of ethnology—and what an absorbing study it is—it will be inescapably apparent that there is a distinct relationship between African and European civilisations. The present status of African thought is largely parallel with that of medieval Europe.

Witchcraft, familiar spirits, communications with and from the dead, trials by ordeal: fire, water, and poison; the magic circle, demonic possession, observances of the quarters of the moon, are all present-day African commonplace.

That there should be a considerable Egyptian flavour to some customs is to be expected. The Arabs infiltrated far south in search of slaves, and trade and treasure. What is more obscure is the prevalence of certain Hebraic antique rites, such as purification, blood significance, circumcision and the like. There is ample evidence that the Jews did a considerable trade with Africa, but they mostly, or so we gather, employed others, as for example Hiram, King of Tyre, to do their actual travelling for them; nor is, or ever was, proselytising a strong point with the Jews. Be that as it may, there are Hebraic customs in at least one instance carried outside the Mosaic code; some tribes not only circumcising their young men, but their maidens as well. This procedure is extremely painful, and half kills its neophytes, but the girls seem to be avid for the ceremony and scorn any sister who attempts to avoid it.

Herein will be recorded many things seemingly inexplicable. It must be repeated that they are all commonplace in their setting.

What sort of people are the muntu?

The man who thinks they are stupid is a greater fool than they. They are shrewd, clever, intelligent fellows after their fashion. Their ways are not our ways, but who is to say which is the criterion.

They believe for the most part that white men are whoremongers and white women, prostitutes, because white men walk alongside their women, and no native would do that. He keeps his superior wife well in front of him so that he can see what she is up to. Lesser wives sometimes bring up the rear carrying burdens. He only walks beside prostitutes.

There were none such before the advent of the white man. In most villages adultery was then very rare, and, in its few instances, was for
politicall rather than sexual ends. Though the native's word for love, tonda, means to cohabit, he had to coin a word for whoring.

He pays heavily for his wife. She is his most expensive article of furniture, and his wealth can be roughly gauged by the number of wives he has managed to purchase. The mother-in-law joke is far more than a quip in Africa, for she has immense power, and is the titular tyrant of every family. If a man's wife fails, after treatment by the witchdoctor, to conceive, or is incorrigibly naughty, he must consult this worthy dame, who, if the case is proved, must see to it that the lobolo (marriage fee, formerly in cattle, now in cattle and cash) is returned, or provide a sister or cousin in the place of the unsatisfactory one.

Being a shrewd old bird, she does not, you may be sure, give in without a struggle, and the complainant must make out a prima facie case.

This lobolo business is irrefragably binding. Once an irate father brought his daughter to me. Flinging her ungently on the floor of the office, he complained that she refused to go to the man who had paid the lobolo for her. Her excuse was that he was a doddering old grandfather beyond the age of usefulness to her. But the lobolo had been paid, and there was no reprieve. Certainly the sheriff could do nothing about it. The girl succeeded in running away. She found sanctuary in a mission with a large native teaching staff. Later the father, in a terrific stew, brought the girl again. The "lawful husband" had refused her as she was far gone in pregnancy, and demanded the return of the lobolo—£5 and seven cows. When I asked her how it had happened, she said, "Zonki lo abafundisi". Please don't get this wrong. I am not tilting at any missionary windmills, but the answer, being translated, meant "All the missionaries". I like the unqualified "all", don't you? The old "husband" was in this instance placated because of an interesting and useful native law to the effect that, unless a man actually sees adultery, in flagrante as it were, there is no offence, even if he has incontrovertible evidence to that effect. When she eventually produced her black baby of doubtful origin, he joyfully proclaimed to all and sundry—including me!—that he was still potent. Making the best of a bad job with a vengeance, he repeated the assurance so often that he quite convinced himself. And that is an important thing to remember. Repetition is custom, and custom repetition. By that token the native comes to the state of grace wherein he has complete faith in the factuality of custom. It is necessary not to forget that.

To continue with his character, he has a primitive but very definite sense of justice. Convince him that he is in the wrong, and he will accept any punishment. Punishment for offences, spiritual and physical, is natural to the native, in fact he has no respect for anyone incapable of inflicting punitive retribution. On the other hand, unless he "sees the error of his ways" clearly, he will make the most elaborate complaints,
which he considers unmerited.

Humour plays a considerable part in his life, for the munt has a
great sense of fun. It is not our fun. What convulses him leaves us cold,
and vice versa. For a man to find himself in one of those ridiculous
embarrassments which never fail to make us laugh, does not raise a dark
smile, but if the same man were to fall off his horse and smash himself up
thoroughly, that would raise hysterical laughter from the native on-
lookers.

An incident, not very funny in itself, points the entirely different style
of humour. I caught an infection of the mouth from a native while
pulling his teeth, as the result of which I had to suffer a removal of all my
own, and a prolonged and severe illness. The first day the "plates" were
in I coughed them out in Manica Road, Salisbury. A neighbour who was
standing by, started holding his sides with laughter. In my fury I knocked
him down.

When he picked himself up, the man said, "I wasn't laughing at you old
man. I was laughing at a joke I've just heard in Meikle's bar."

We thought a return to that famous bar was called for, and on the way
I noticed a native sitting in the gutter helpless with laughter. On asking
him the cause of the mirth he said, "With no teeth the Inkoos cannot
eat."

All natives without exception are agriculturists of a primitive order.
All the jobs in the field are divided between the man and his wife or
wives; and a very strict division it is. In addition to this, they are in-
genious wood carvers. Show them a thing once and they can make a
very good copy in wood. I was in Africa when the first aeroplane passed
down the continent. Within a few days, hundreds of wooden aeroplanes
appeared. The detail, considering the height at which the plane passed,
was excellent. They practised iron smelting long before the art spread
northwards. Iron smelting is traditional and hereditary, and the native
bitterly resents any attempt to improve the primitive clay ovens and
crazy bellows for fear of offending the spirits of the past smelters in the
family by altering their methods. The final results are very good, and
the steel, taking it by and large, is of good quality.

Though to our nostrils the native smells unpleasant, he is meticulous
at washing and cleaning his teeth, rather spoiling the effect by polishing
himself with crude castor oil which stinks a mile off. On the other hand
he says we smell horrible!

He is industrious so long as industry is requisite. As soon as he has
produced what he considers is sufficient for his needs, he cannot under-
stand the sense of continuing to work. A sequence of logic which many
of us almost too heartily accept.

His needs are few, and, as soon as he has earned his tally for his chief,
his hut tax, and (if he feels the need) the necessary for a lobolo, and a little for limbo (cloth), and gwaii (tobacco), and a few bits of trash from the Kaffir store, he really cannot see why he should tire himself with any more sebenza (work). So off he goes home to attend to his personal affairs. It seems a very proper outlook.

Alas, much of the old order is changing, and the innovations are not coming easily, nor can one honestly say always for the better. Though most natives understand at least enough English to get on with, they have contempt for the white man who cannot speak their lingo—or at least Kitchen Kaffir—or who allows them to speak to him in English.

I cannot resist repeating an amusing example of this which occurred one Christmas morning. M'shambok, an old vegetable-garden boy, invariably looked utterly blank if anyone used a single word of English in addressing him. "Icorna as' Inkoos" (I don't understand) was his invariable reply.

Now M'shambok had only one eye, and as we were throwing "sikispenses" to the boys as "Kissimas bosesa" (gifts), he was missing all the coins, so I named him, "Baas op M'shambok, congela iwi".

"Look out" (pure Afrikaans taal in Kitchen Kaffir) "M'shambok, watch out you."

He managed to get his foot on the sixpence when another boy dived on his blind side and tried to grab it.

Entirely carried away by this assault, M'shambok said in perfect English. "Pardon me, you bloody swine. You heard the Inkoos say that was my special sixpence. Come on, hand it over, you bastard." It quite finished the party!

The following morning I deliberately replaced the customary "Moro iwi", with "good morning, M'shambok". "Icorna as' Inkoos," he said with a perfectly blank face. Nor did I ever discover where he learnt English.

Later this same boy caught another of the boys seducing his wife, tied them together inside his hut, and set it and them and himself on fire—not at all pretty.

They have a strong sense of what the Japs call "face". Once a woman came to me with the story that she had deliberately murdered her husband, who was very cruel to her, and insisted that she must hang. At the post-mortem I discovered that the man had died from natural causes. There was no trace of the poison she swore she had administered, and a verdict was entered accordingly. She became such a damn nuisance with her demands to be hanged that she had to be kicked out. The next morning I found her hanging from a tree in my garden.

The explanation is that she had sworn to murder her husband, and doubtless would have done so had he not inconveniently died on his own. She hanged herself to uphold her prestige as a sworn murderess.
The muntu have strong affinities among themselves, and can be embarrassingly loyal to the right kind of white man—that is to say, the white man who will take the trouble to understand them. Taking them all in all, the more you come to know them, the more you understand their mind, and their curiously tortuous ratiocinations, the more you realise they are pretty good fellows in their way.

This does not in any way suggest negrophily.

The native does not want to be pampered and made a pet of. The only time he becomes dangerous is when he has been negrophilised. It is a truly appalling curse which filches all sense of proportion from the white, and gives nothing but truculence, laziness, discontent and a dangerous sex attitude to the black. It makes him quite useless. The happily rare cases of rape of whites are all committed by negrophilised natives.

I knew a silly woman negrophilist who went so far as to have her houseboy wash her back in the bath. Before she could be bundled out of the country she became pregnant by this boy. She called it rape, and howled for condign punishment. The bewildered boy was heavily punished—of necessity—but if ever a woman asked for it, that one did.

As I have said before, you cannot achieve the evolution of ten thousand years in a day, which is what the negrophilists try to do.

Someone remarked to me, "They are all such appalling liars, how can you see any good in them?"

Superficially that is true. But wait. Here is where understanding comes into the business. The native is a practised liar. He is taught to lie as soon as he can lisp his first words. But he does not lie for base purposes. He will not lie to evade an issue. He lies virtuously and of necessity, not to deceive any living person, but because adverse spirits are always on the alert. "Taisez vous, méfiez vous. Les oreilles ennemies spirituelles vous écoutent", is his eternal watchword, taught to every child for countless centuries. So he lies virtuously because if he did not, the listening spirits would do him a mischief.

He has his own code, and his own dignity. In his own status it is admirable. Try to make of him a black-white and you produce naught but a useless and dangerous menace.
CHAPTER TWO

SCARLESS WOUNDING AND FIREWALKING

Let us take magic in its widest sense. There is magic undeniable in the setting of Africa; in the glowing colours of the chiaroscuro; in the beasts and the foaming waters; in the flowers and the trees. Everywhere; in the wide valleys, the incredible, tawny mountains, the vast ocean lakes, the illimitable plains, there is ample pabulum for far, far richer pens than mine. It is right, therefore, as we recall the more recondite magics of the spirit, to turn our thoughts to the intransient yet ever changing wonders of the scenes wherein those other magics have their proper setting. We shall glance at them as we travel along.

I choose scarless wounding and firewalking first for consideration because they are very common, entirely without suspicion of chicanery, and anyone may witness them. They are generally practised, in fact they can be most often witnessed, not in the mysterious hinterland, but cheek by jowl with the centres of European civilisation. Durban, for example.

Nor are these ceremonies, for ceremonies of high religious significance they are, by any means confined to Africa. India, Melanesia, and the old civilisations of the New World, all indulge in them. In Africa they are mostly performed by Hindu settlers.

Once a practitioner of these arts was brought to England by a theatrical syndicate. He was perfectly willing to perform on public stages. Before making up his mind whether to license the act or not, the then Lord Chamberlain called for a panel of medical men to decide for him. Thus we first witnessed the phenomena of scarless wounding (not of the firewalk) on the empty stage of a London theatre.

The honest meat of the act was spoilt by extraneous tricks of showmanship, obviously bogus.

The man, who was a tall, lean, well-built fellow, was incongruously decked out in pseudo-Oriental garb. After the introductory farrago, he commenced by performing the well-known burial act. He lay in a large stone coffin, face upwards, with a linen ceremental handkerchief over his face. The coffin was then filled with sand, and he remained buried for fifteen minutes, the time being filled in by an assistant who performed elementary conjuring tricks. He was then exhumed, apparently none the worse. Even without trickery this feat is not at all impossible, and is more or less frequently performed in North Africa. It is, however, wide open to all sorts of faking. Therefore, it is not of the slightest interest except, in the genuine cases, as a demonstration of extreme voluntary breath control. In certain catalepsies and deep trances the same sort of thing occurs involuntarily.
After this exhibition, the man offered his arms and legs to volunteers who would come up on the stage and skewer his limbs with thin bayonets. One can hardly imagine the general public being very keen on the job, but we trussed him well and truly. When the bayonets were removed there was no sign of bleeding nor any scar. We did not consider it the sort of thing to license for music hall purposes.

This was a perfectly genuine performance.

It is only in its natural (or should one say supernatural) state that the thing assumes a religious significance, and it commonly takes place in connection with certain feasts. The protagonists put their heart into the business, and can be seen in considerable numbers, walking about the streets in a state of great spiritual exaltation, festooned with knives and large fish-hooks, to which are fastened pomegranates, flowers, and a variety of tinsel ornaments. A more dangerous type is performed on the tongue. In this, the tongue is violently extruded and completely transfixed with three silver skewers at angles of forty-five degrees. Before the actual feast commences, the knives, and fish-hooks, and skewers are removed, leaving no visible signs. I have seen tongues badly swollen and blackened, and am informed that the reason for these partial failures is lack of faith.

The firewalk is a vastly different story, and its significance differs in various parts of the world from deep religious ecstasy to sheer bravado. The bravado cases, over hot stones, are mostly fakes.

The walks I have witnessed were all religious, a sort of neophytic initiation. The aspirants have to undergo a prolonged novitiate of prayer and fasting and severe religious exercises.

At the time of the ceremony, all except the priests, who have done the thing again and again, are in a state of spiritual exaltation bordering on trance.

There is not the slightest suspicion of fake about the performance at all.

A long, deep pit is dug and filled with white hot charcoal, which burns with so intense a heat that mere spectators must keep well back. I once thoroughly singed a silk suit, to say nothing of a pair of eyebrows, through over-curiosity.

The accustomed priests stroll chanting through the fire, entirely unconcerned. After them the initiates follow.

It is a very moving sight. All manage to undergo the ordeal, but one can clearly discern the degree with which spiritual ecstasy manages to cover a very natural fear. Some emulate the priests quite creditably. Others teeter on the brink. Some rush it, while others slow down as their initial fears subside.

Now let us clear up some of the commoner misapprehensions.

Using the analogy that one can plunge a finger into boiling water, and even molten lead, and, if one is quick enough, take no hurt, the suggestion
has been made that tough skin, adequately prepared, can protect against the fire, and that no heat is communicated through it. This is absolutely incorrect. It could not be true for more than a split second, and the priests at any rate, and most of the others for that matter, stroll about in the intense fire for quite a time. At the far end of the pit there is a tank of water, or milk, let into the ground, and I have seen that fluid hiss and boil as the initiates leap into it.

The proof of more than physical protection lies in the fact that, as I have personally witnessed, certain priests have carried fresh flowers through that really terrific heat without their wilting. I also once saw a woman carry a baby through the fire, and an actual photograph of that feat was reproduced in the local Press and, if I am not mistaken, in the Geographical Magazine.

Obviously this is a complete negation of natural laws. How is it done? And how does scarless wounding come about?

We hear of the prophets of Baal cutting themselves with knives till the blood gushed out upon them, but I can find no ancient record of such procedures without haemorrhage, except in some old records of witchcraft. Which is interesting, as the present-day ceremony has no such sinister connection.

Nevertheless, this act of faith has the authentic cachet of antiquity, as indeed, if we believe the tale of Shadrach, Mesach and Abednego, has the fireplace.

It must be remembered that these things are not done for money, nor for conscious exhibitionism. They entail no reward on the physical plane. The sole result is a triumphant vindication of the sort of faith which will move mountains.

To explain the otherwise inexplicable we must make a postulation. And the postulate is that the ultimate potential of man in a state of faith transcends the physical. Again and again, as we wander the by-paths of Africa, we are forced to acknowledge that postulate is the inescapable answer to the otherwise insoluble riddle.

The things we shall see are actualities. It may be that some appear to happen during a temporary aberration of the mind, or the physical senses produced by hypnotic induction—like Macbeth’s dagger—though I take leave seriously to doubt it. No such escape can be applied to the two ceremonies we have now witnessed.

Therefore we must accept it as a fact that the spirit, psyche, soul, recondite entity, or whatever you care to call it, has of itself illimitable powers, normally “cribbed, cabined, and confined” by the transitory physical, and the more the psychic sublimate the physical the more we emancipate the psychic: whose powers are immeasurable by any physical yardstick.

If we accept this; all so-called “psychic phenomena” fall into line. If we remain agnostic on this simple and amply proven point, all that is left
is for us to admit that these phenomena are beyond our powers of explanation, and leave them there.

A poor and unsatisfying counsel of defeat.

No science progresses without axiomata and postulates. Without them the science of measurement—geometry—is foolishness. With no postulate of gravity, physics is chaotic. With no atomic postulate, or molecular axiom, chemistry is mere alchemy. So it must be with every facet of what we are pleased to call the supernormal. Either it is inexplicable chaos, or it is capable of a reasoned order.

Accept the axiom that the power of the spirit is ocean wide and God, religion, spirituality, diabolism, and the vast collection of supernormalities become at once capable of syllogistic reason and logical sequence.

To say the least, it is a working hypothesis.

CHAPTER THREE

PARLOUR TRICKS

Penetrating farther into Africa, meet the witchdoctor, the dark equivalent of Matthew Hopkins. We shall get to know him better as we proceed. Do not imagine that it is easy to meet him. Do not conceive the idea that he wears distinguishing marks, or travels about Africa as Sequah did in his gilded coach with its white horses, seeking advertisement and publicity. He wears no distinguishing flash, nor chevrons, nor does he tout his trade. You may live your whole life in Africa yet never spot him. His business is "secret, black, and midnight", but he is the most powerful man in the native community. I shall have a great deal to say about witchdoctors as we travel. Suffice it at the moment that, of all the muntu, he is the most knowledgeable—and that includes the chiefs, clever fellows in their way—whom we hope to meet.

He wages an eternal, subversive fight with the new civilisation: the magistrates: the British South Africa Police: and he neither wins nor loses. Though his prestige remains remarkably high, as indeed in the present state of native Africa it should, he must needs clandestinise his work because he well knows the penalties if he is caught. No native would ever think of giving him away. Nevertheless, there is much wisdom among the authorities who cast the Nelsonic eye upon his activities, except when they cause death or grievous bodily harm (as they frequently do).

In proving witchdoctor deaths the authorities have a difficult task, for it is not easy to reduce to evidential terms deaths caused by faith alone, and faith is the chief ingredient of the witchdoctor's pharmacopoeia.

That he can produce declination and death is undoubted, as is the fact
that he can produce either without personal contact, and solely by spiritual means. There are many methods, apart from the decoction of poisons, in which art he is a veritable Borgia, which are extremely difficult to pin on him in any court of law.

Notwithstanding, I shall, as this account progresses, make a very sincere plea on his behalf, and I hope it will be conceded that he is not only a very necessary, but in his setting, a beneficent evil; if one may be allowed such an apparent paradox.

He is known by many names with many spellings. If we call him the nyanga throughout, it is the nearest we can get to his multiple appellations. He is not only a doctor of magic and sorcery essential to the mystic phenomena he produces, but also a soothsayer, a prophet, a doctor of herbal medicines, a high priest, a philosopher and expounder of religion, a brilliant “medium”, a “guide, philosopher and friend” in all native procedure and custom, an expert conjurer, a sleight-of-hand expert, a specialist of convention, an expertly astute business man, and a superb showman. I count a number of witchdoctors as my friends, and be it said without any quibble, I admire them for their showmanship and their forensic skill, and marvel at the catholicity of their knowledge.

As witness their medical shrewdness, they paid enormous attention to my (so-called enlightened) medical methods, astutely watched results of drug treatment, then went out into the shateen (bush) and concocted similar drugs and, we hope, advanced their prestige by the use of them. That is another interesting point: their knowledge of medicinal herbs is not to be sneezed at. Crude castor oil as a polishing agent had been known for ages. Seeing my application of this drug for the familiar native disease of “nyoka lapa m’tumbe” (=snake in the stomach=constipation), they were quick to note the difference between the crude and medicinal preparations, and stoked up their little fires, and were not slow in distilling a very fair copy, which they soon turned to financial ends.

Apart from his major powers and more serious psychic efforts, the witchdoctor keeps a number of minor demonstrations up his sleeve, which though sufficiently mysterious—to say the least of them—to call for serious thought, are to him, more or less parlour tricks. I do not propose to enumerate them. As we go on you will make your own distinction. As for me, I do not now dare to discriminate. There was a time—but since then I have learnt to give due weight to Hamlet’s famous remark: “There are more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio . . .” Perhaps the most amusing and entertaining of all these “parlour tricks”—if they are nothing more—which I take leave to doubt—is commonly known as yeka m’tambo (throwing the bones). It is not universal, and I know of no witchdoctors north of the Zambesi who can be induced to produce this “trick”. Maybe they do it in their villages: frankly I don’t know.

Though I cannot explain it in other than metaphysical terms, all the
witchdoctors I have talked to—and they are many—decry this business, and it is very difficult to make them do it.

It is uncanny, and it is forbidden by the white man's law; which may, in part, explain the experts' reluctance. I say "in part" because the witchdoctor is supremely contemptuous of white law: he knows his strength. It is done in many ways. We can only give a typical example.

After a long indaba the witchdoctor sighed resignedly. "Funani Inkoos?" (What do you wish, Chief?) he asked as he stood before me at his distance, his withdrawn, red-rimmed, brown-shot eyes looking straight through me as though into my inmost soul.

"You tell me," I said.

"The Inkoos is taking a far journey into Portuguese territory," he said positively. (Note the pier fortune-teller and her invariable journey.) "He desires to know whether it is propitious."

He was almost right. I was rather worried about that particular trip.

"Maybe the spirits will tell me, maybe not" (cf. seances). "I will inquire."

As this is a veracious report of an actual occurrence, I must recount it as it actually happened.

Lokanzi, the witchdoctor, who will become quite an old friend before we leave Africa, stood with that deathlike stillness they can so easily assume, staring through me to who can tell what distances for a while. Then he squatted on his haunches, and with immense concentration smoothed a circle in the earth. It was not to his liking, and he produced a bag of sand with which he levelled the area of the circle. Later I tested the level of this circle with a spirit level and it was exact.

While at this he did not utter a sound, he was so silent that one could hear his joints creak. This is not general. Some incant loudly at this stage. Others rumble a sort of chesty chant.

When the circle was completed to his satisfaction, he stared at it for a while with intense concentration. Then he walked away, and I thought he was going to refuse to perform. But he came back, and asked me to make water in a certain place. He took some of the earth which I had impregnated and "made medicine" with it. He still was not satisfied. He asked for a drink. I promised him a good swig afterwards. He shuffled about five paces back from the circle and apparently went to sleep. His eyes filmed, and his breathing became imperceptible. At length he sighed deeply, "Aiyee Ahaaahr (a long expiration), Aiyee, Aiyee." He moved slightly. From a little bag he produced twelve goat's fibulae, dry and polished, carved on their flat ends with the crude heads of a lion, a goat, a leopard, a crocodile, a snake, a tortoise, a bird, a familiar spirit, and other cabalistic signs I could not understand. Each bone had its significance for him. I only know a few. Lion for triumph, snake for enemies, tortoise for delay, crocodile for death, and so on.
He held the bones in his hand, spread them out like a fist of cards, then bundled them together again.

With a flick of his wrist, he flung them neatly into the sandy circle where they lay flat and dead. In any order, just as they happened to be thrown.

Then he “went to sleep” again.

“Can these dry bones live?”

Consider the fibula of a goat. Its shape is familiar enough. It is like that bone used in restaurants for serving French mustard. It is a long, narrow bone with a flared end, a slender shank, and the other extremity smooth, hollowed and rounded. If we are to grasp the “impossibility” of what is to happen, we must get a clear idea of the shape in our minds. Recall the small “other extremity”. Consider the balance of such a bone. On a flat surface no purely physical agency could make it stand on either end, certainly not on its smaller extremity.

Lokanzi’s flung bones lie flat and lifeless where they fall. The pitiless sun climbs the cloudless, azure Heaven. Lokanzi continues to “sleep”; a statue carved in ebony.

A little wind lightly shakes the hanging leaves. With it there is a stirring, a faint precursor of movement among the bones. A movement which increases and grows till one rises on its flattened and engraved end. It stands for a moment, then sinks again. The bones begin to mill around in a sort of dance macabre which makes one think of the famous music of Saint-Saëns. One starts to rise, only to fall back. A third rises and stands vertically. The crocodile bone starts to follow—oh, my God!—but it falls. Two bones now stand vibrant on their narrow ends: the rest are still and lifeless.

The nyanga wakes, and instantly the bones are dead again. He picks them up and bestows them about his person.

“Pelele,” he says (“It is finished”), and shambles off.

“But look here?”

“Azigo indaba” (“I have nothing to say”).

We walk silently towards the house. I get him a drink. I beg him to interpret what the bones told him. It is uphill work. Finally he gives in.

“He will take you in his arms,” he says. “But you will avoid his embrace, and I will see you here again. Have you a little smoking for your servant?” I produce some tobacco. He fills a “fishwayo” pipe and inhales contentedly. I know well what he wants—some more drink——He gets it.

A week or so later my car, with me in it, fell down a mountainside. It was the narrowest escape from death. All I got was a fractured jaw.

So there is yeka m’tambo—a parlour trick! Elaborate comment is uncalled for. Is there something profound in the business, or is it after all just a trick? You shall be the judge. I have nothing to say except to
Throwing the bones
protest the unvarnished veracity of this account. Others of similar significance might be quoted. That does not mean that the witchdoctor will throw the bones for you; and, even if he did, he would not be able to give you the winner of the Derby.

Among his many polite tricks is the transference of disease. A native falls sick. He has a real, or fancied enemy, who has ill-wished him. He consults his doctor: his nyanga.

The doctor then consults the spirits without whose advice he is powerless. Not, it should be clearly understood, the familiar and evil spirits, but the family and ancestral tribal spirits. If these inform him that the patient has made out a true bill, he tells him that he is right. So-and-so is his enemy. Now he will give varied instructions depending on his skill, individual preference, and tribe. Here is one method. The patient must obtain a portion of intimate garment from the enemy, and a similar portion of his own. These he must bring to the nyanga who “makes medicine”. He invariably “makes medicine” to suit each individual case. He binds the medicine in the scraps of cloth and instructs the patient to plant them secretly in the place where two paths intersect, over which the enemy will pass. When he crosses the spot, the disease will transfer.

So what? It’s all a lot of hooey isn’t it? Mumbo-jumbo and the like? It is up to you to call it what you like. I can only say I have seen it work again and again.

To students of the subject this sounds so dangerously like witchcraft that the distinction must be made. In witchcraft it is the practitioner who personally performs the mischief, or sets on his or her familiar to do the job out of demonically inspired malignance. The witchdoctor is not malignant, nor does he personally perform the mischief. He is merely the manufacturing and dispensing chemist. By African standards he is held as blameless as the directors of Boots, or John Bell & Croyden, or A. & H., or B. & W., or any other manufacturing concern, of the murder of any who may succumb to poisons made by them, whether deliberately or accidentally administered. So the doctor’s activities are actually in a different category altogether.

According to our lights there is only one trick in his armoury which may fairly be called downright silly. He knows perfectly well that it is practically worthless. He is in the position of the “charm” manufacturer who says, “the fools pay me so what the hell”. This is a travellers’ safety device. As the spirits walk abroad at night, no traveller likes to be out after dark. If there is any question of this eventuality, he consults his nyanga who gives him a triangular stone, and orders that it be placed in the fork of a tree on the line of march, at right angles to the path of the setting sun. If it is correctly placed, it will hold the sun up till the traveller returns. The doctor covers himself by saying that the sun may not notice the stone, in which case it will still protect the traveller because the spirits
will have noticed what he has done, and will be frightened to harm him.
You can see plenty of these stones in the low forks of trees almost throughout Africa. It should be added that in some tribes, the travellers themselves place the stones, and the nyanga is not concerned.

Many others of the nyanga’s multifarious activities we shall see as we continue our journey.

There are no rubs against the bias on the bowling green of African life for which the witchdoctor cannot produce an appropriate remedy—at a price. He is a clever and a cunning fellow.

CHAPTER FOUR

BACKDROP OF THE MAGICAL STAGE

To produce a magic in Berkeley Square requires at least a nightingale and soft moonlight on the lambent green of the trees. On Times Square it requires a sympathetic cop, a reformable reprobate, and the fey pen of O. Henry. Even a “small hotel” requires a wishing-well, a room with a view, and you.

The magic of Africa, of a very different order, would be highly incongruous in Piccadilly Circus, or even Central Park. Though there may be magic in the Bronx, and around Wapping Old Stairs, it is to the magic of Africa as the Dorchester to Conway Castle, the Algonquin to the Aztec temples.

The whole African scene is a natural setting for the bizarre, the occult and the incomprehensible.

Sunbaked rock, tawny burnt grass, and feathery tree etched against cloudless sky with the fine clarity of lino-cut. Mysterious dongas leading to arid watercourses which become raging torrents overnight. Dusty, featureless, parched deserts changed to fertile rainbowland, as we shall see, in a twinkling. Four hundred foot chasms swallowing vast rivers. High savannah, where men and beasts pass and re-pass, invisible till some event shall call them forth. Sudden forests, tight and compact, hiding teeming life in their twilight avenues. Elephants roaming their same predestined itineraries year after year till their last call comes, then passing on to their undiscoverable burial ground. Pterodactyl firmly alleged to haunt the fastness of undrainable marshes. The crocodile immemorially old in wickedness and sin. Gauzy silver water falling from incredible heights, painting moonbows in the brilliance of the argent night.

Vast slashed cliffs in the highlands, like gigantic portals of hell, giving to the country, thousands of feet below, a panoramic illimitability.
Impenetrable ways beneath the matted trees where the deeps of twilight are eternal.
Lost cities still standing as they have stood for no man knows how many centuries, eerie, haunted, silent and sad.
Unexplored vastnesses. Mountains of the moon, silver and purple.
The spirit-ridden, Celliniesque mountains-of-the-little-people.
The red chaos of the giant upheaval of the Drakensberg. The stately, ethereal silence of the Kilimanjaro and her volcanic sisters, on whose remote heads nothing stirs but the dry flurry of snow driven by the thin wind, too fine to support life.
The deep purple midnight of the winding caves with their ancient murals, fresh and undisturbed down the centuries. The flaming splendour of the kaffirboom, the vast expanses of the baobab, the pink featheriness of the msasa trees.
The lords of the jungle, the incredible giraffes, the zebra hiding in the sun- and shade-striped shadows. The immensity of vista. Over all, the bright African moon of magic, softening the hard outlines, drawing her silver mantle over the cruel face of the naked rock; her shafts, filled with fairy, dancing motes, spearing through the trees, waking the spirits of the deep forests. Moon so bright as to pale the diamond brilliance of the pendent Southern Cross. What a backdrop for magic!
The Chimanimani Mountains, flanking the plain of Melsetter in Southern Rhodesia, near the Portuguese border, deserve a special mention on their own merits. The name means “Mister Little Tiny”, the mountains-of-the-little-people.
It is a range like no other on earth in its changing hues and surpassing beauty. From the plain, where masses of primulinus gladioli and cosmo daisies spangle the grass, they appear as a huge carven mass of silver by day, changing through palest rose, and lavender to deep rosy and finally midnight purple as the sun declines. Then, as the moon rises, silver shines out again with royal blue in the shadows. The colour kaleidoscope at the sun’s uprising is simply beyond the powers of this poor pen to paint.
There is some confusion as to the significance of the name. African familiar spirits are all dwarfs and are sometimes called “little people”. Some tell you the little people of the silver mountains, are spirits which they describe in comparable terms to the leprechauns of Ireland, the tales of whose more or less innocent, mischievous fun are legion. A local witchdoctor told me a very different story. There are, and always were little people throughout Africa, in scattered places; in the Ituri Forest for example. He told me that a similar race once inhabited the mountains who were very fierce and unfriendly, and who waged constant warfare with their neighbours, by whom they were gradually hedged in till they dared not set foot beyond their mountain fastnesses, and so they all perished.
with hunger. This being so, their spirits are unhappy and earthbound, and they still make sorties through the surrounding country foraging for food. Sometimes, if they have been successful, they hold a sort of dance on the Pork-pie hill across from the Melsetter Hotel. They have been pointed out to me by natives who have marvelled at my blindness. Much as I should have liked to do so, I cannot say that I ever did manage to see them.

Spending a day and a night in the bare mountains, I fancied that they were all round, just beyond the limit of vision, but that was as far as it got, and that might have been sheer imagination anyway.

It would not at all surprise me if they were actually there in psychic fact and spiritual truth. There are weirder phenomena than that abounding for the seeker who is unafraid of the shadow world just beyond the narrow circumscription of our paltry physical senses. My dog and yours see them many times when we cannot. We shall witness stranger things than the sad spirits of the mountains.

CHAPTER FIVE

DRUMS OF AFRICA

The drums of Africa have been a gift of God to every novel writer of the continent of the great question mark, and more rubbish has been penned about them than about everything else therein.

They have been invested with supermagical powers, and have been accredited with the informative value of the daily Press. Actually they have no such significance.

War drums, beloved friends of the dramatists, undoubtedly exist, just as sirens exist in England today, both are almost equally obsolete—thank God! Their function was that of our bugles; to call the assembly and imbue a martial spirit. They are certainly not a purely African instrument. The war drums of the Indians of the New World had a far greater significance.

The sole difference between war, and other drums, was in their tonal qualities. I doubt if many muntu would recognise them if they ever heard them—which is extremely unlikely.

Regrettfully one must deny that drums are used as a sort of shorthand transmitter, except within very narrow limits, such as sending greetings to V.I.P.s, sounding alarms, and calling assemblies on special occasions. There are also drums which have a special significance in certain very secret dances, but more because of their rhythm than their special tone.

For the rest, with certain exceptions, the ubiquitous drums of Africa
are the whole orchestra; necessary corollaries to every feature of their village lives. Their rhythm is legion. They are used to eroticise, to inflame, to madden dancers to superhuman feats, to produce a nightly musical (?) performance which continues with maddening insistence through the dark hours. Their insistence takes a hell of a lot of getting used to. They are of hollowed wood and stretched hide and weigh from a few pounds up to a ton. These whoppers are only sounded on royal occasions. The average drum is played by the bare hands of the drummers who squat on the ground and hold the instrument between their knees. Fingers and palms are employed, and the players' rhythm, speed and dexterity are amazing. I do not know whether there is an African course of drummery, but the same players always perform, and they certainly are experts. Every Indaba (talk), or ceremony, or feast, or dance must have its drum accompaniment, and the experienced ear can distinguish what is afoot by the beat and rhythm of the drums alone.

Despite the fact that bandleaders and jazz drummers all deny it, it is nevertheless true that no one but the native drummers can accurately produce their myriad rhythms. There is an extraordinarily exciting "something" about them which is completely lost by their would-be imitators. Anyone who has listened, as I have, to the insistent beating of the drums, on all and every occasion for years, instantly detects and rebels against the falsity of imitators. It is quite impossible to set down the extraordinary rhythms into any known musical score. Many have tried it. Some even consider that they have succeeded—don't believe it. It is just as impossible to score native songs, as they have cadences and between notes which do not exist on the international stave.

In some of the more erotic dances the frenzied rhythm of the sweating drummers is incredible. It does things to you, whether you will or no. It gets inside of you and tears you apart. Its lure is so powerful that it takes a definite act of will to withstand its terrific pull. Once one has felt that tugging impulse, it becomes easy to understand the excesses of the willing co-operators.

In European seances, the participants need hand-holding, the magic circle, dim lights and hymn singing to induce the rapport with the shy and retiring spirits. The drums need only one adjuvant—beer—and plenty of it. Every dance, and every ceremony, in this land of wildly dancing feet, requires and demands an almighty drink-feast to get it going.

The muntu do not drink for pleasure, nor do they noticeably savour the bouquet and flavour of the liquid they are so assiduous in pouring into their suffering insides. They do not give themselves time for such non-essentials. They drink for the sole purpose of becoming intoxicated with the smallest possible waste of time. The four gallon tins of doro (beer) pass round as rapidly as Johnny Munt can swallow. And he goes on swallowing till he cannot hold another drop. He drinks till his eye teeth
are awash. He drinks till he cannot find the way to his mouth. After such an heroic effort anything can, and usually does, happen.

Then it is that the persuasive music of the drums, battering upon his inflamed senses, blots out normality and claims him utterly. He is then strong as a lion, fearless as a buffalo, supple as a snake.

It is a real and tangible thing, this seduction of the drums, especially when aided by alcoholic exaltation. I have seen not only natives, but staid onlooking white men do some mighty queer things when they listen to the drums with more whisky inside them than is strictly necessary. Though the drums are almost always the whole orchestra, it does not mean that the ingenious native has no other musical instruments, but only that he does not use them on "occasions". The drums alone point the movement of the stamping feet, and one other sound. This "other sound" is quite incomprehensible to us. It is a sort of dull, clacking, rapid buzzing as of muffled castanets. It is produced by women with a certain type of figure. They stand up among the male dancers and do a short of shimmy so rapidly that their long, thin breasts with their peculiarly upturned nipples, beat out this curiously loud thrumming against their torsos. It is not a particularly edifying sight, but it certainly is extraordinary. I cannot imagine how they get up the speed to do it.

There is a thread of humour in everything the native does: even in his drumming. He makes a very peculiar drum which he uses as a sort of parlour trick. With it he can imitate the roar of a lion. It is an extremely good imitation, and can be heard over long distances. It can be most disconcerting!

This drum has also a sinister significance in a certain dance called the Ingwe, or Shumba, or Nyama, or Simba, or Bokwe, or Nnambo Njau = lion dance. (I have used seven out of some hundred odd names for a lion for a reason which will appear later.) Its significance will be understood better after we have discussed lycanthropy, as we shall in the next chapter but one.

The most common indigenous musical instrument, apart from the everlasting and ever-present drum, is curiously enough, the piano. These pianos can be anything from a small portable affair carried in one hand and played with the other, to an instrument of considerable complexity and proportions. It has a hard-wood base with a squared projection running along one of its long edges, into which are firmly fixed tangs of spring steel of varying thicknesses, producing notes on a rough sort of scale.

Sometimes whole batches of natives swing along the road, all carrying pianos, and all playing them differently. Curious as it may seem, the result is not unpleasant, rather like a mass of wind-harps all going together.

They also play a sort of primitive one-stringed fiddle, sometimes holding the end of the string in their mouths, as we used to do with strings of elastic at school.
Then there is a stringed instrument which they play by scraping with a primitive bow. The sound this contraption makes is like nothing else on earth, and is very horrible.

There are large and small xylophones played apparently at random to add to the cacophony.

I think that these are mostly not original instruments, but are violins, pianos, etc., which the natives have seen and attempted to copy, but I cannot swear to that.

Reverting to the alleged message transmission by drums, why should a people who can throw their human voices for upwards of eight miles (as I have often seen them do), and project their thoughts at will (as I have also seen and recorded elsewhere), resort to mechanical means to the same end? Of course, they don’t.

If you switch on your wireless it is ten to one you will hear a dance band; open your African windows, and it is a hundred to one you will hear the drums which are the local equivalent.

CHAPTER SIX

AFRICA DANCES

Dancing is among the earliest forms of man’s self-expression. The extraordinary photographic scoop which caught that common little fellow, the late unlamented Adolph Schickelgruber, improvising a pas seul before his staff after the temporary fall of France, demonstrated more clearly than any amount of words the atavism of the man.

His abandoned gesture: the uncontrolled risus sardonicus of sensuous ecstasy: his foot lifted and poised for the stamping motif of all primitive, savage dances: clearly exposed in all their crudity, the naked ferocity of primordial passion.

This was probably one of the most revealing photographs of all time.

The dances of Africa were traditional before ever David danced before the Ark of the Covenant.

The children of Africa were doing the charleston before Julius Caesar had so much as heard of Britain—and they are doing it still.

Let us visit one of their simplest dances: the zonki indaba njau, which means the all-in hop.

By the way, the word njau = dance, really means “leg”: so when you say that your favourite boy or girl friend “shakes a nimble leg”, you are merely employing the native idiom.

Quite a number of African words find their way into our everyday speech, particularly slang.
For example, to “boss up” a job comes straight from the Afrikaans “baas op”, meaning to watch out for or to supervise. “Sakabona” is a favourite schoolboy expression in many schools: it is Zulu for “good morning”.

All the godowns on the breakwater of Cape Town have the words “Niet Roken” painted on their doors. Many’s the time people have exclaimed “That fellow Niet Roken must be making a fortune; he has the monopoly here.” Actually the words mean “No Smoking”! Anyone can join in the zonki indaba njau. It is a simple affair and the only magic about it is the setting: a moonlit clearing, creamy silver overlay on the hard ground, with the leaves of the encircling trees shimmering in the soft light.

Among the less desirable importations of the white missionaries is whoring. Not intentionally, of course. It is amazing how much evil results from good, albeit misguided intentions.

It came about in this fashion.

The native collects wives largely as outward signs of affluence. Along come the missionaries and tell him that polygamy is a deadly sin. He must put away all his wives save one, and he must marry her in a church with all the mumbo jumbo of the blessing of a God he knows nothing about.

The Christianised (! save the mark) native promptly puts away all the wives who have given him any trouble, i.e., the majority. Surrupetitiously he keeps, as unacknowledged concubines, those he particularly likes, and duly marries one of them in divinely blessed monogamy, thus neatly shedding encumbrances and making sure of an almost free bus ride to Heaven. By so doing hordes of unwanted women are turned loose.

Now there is an almost universal native law that she-who-has-been-put-away is nobody’s woman.

It worked splendidly before the advent of the missionaries when divorces were extremely rare, and other methods of “putting away” were unheard of.

But now, with a plentiful supply, nobody’s women very quickly became anybody’s women, and pimping flourished throughout the land. Nowadays whoring is an absolute feature of all zonki indaba dances. It is a curious business to which the wives are quite apathetic. The pimps, getting their information by the extensive native grape-vine methods, invariably arrive before the dance commences with their quota of black filles de joie, and prepare their salons particulières by the simple expedient of ramming posies tightly into jam jars, and placing them on forms in the selected huts. How such posies became implanted firmly in the native mind as necessary concomitants of carnality is more than I can say. To hazard a guess, I think its origin is quaint and somewhat amusing. They believe, as we have already seen, that all whites are whoremongers and prostitutes. The whites have the ludicrous habit of putting flowers in
Native war dance
their houses. Therefore flowers must be the trade mark of the business.

After this scanty preparation, the hardworking ladies of uneasy virtue, fat for preference, parade about, in floppy hats and brilliant skin-tight dresses, exhibiting their charms. It is yet another curious twist that until very recently these were the only ladies of Africa who adorned themselves for professional purposes in European dresses. I leave it to you to make what you like out of that!

In due course the muntu squat around in a large oval, men on one side, women on the other. The prostitutes do not dance, but, when things begin to get merry, unobtrusively retire. The pimps, having shouted the odds—generally 2s. 6d.—take up their places at the doors.

The large cans of rapoko beer go rapidly round: everyone in the time-honoured way striving to get as drunk as possible as quickly as possible. When this laudable and economic ideal has been reached, the drums begin. Once they have started they never cease till everyone is more or less incapable.

As the alcohol sufficiently inflames them, one or more will leap into the cleared space, shouting and yelling his head off, and will do an impromptu dance till exhausted, applauded with more or less enthusiasm by the spectators in accordance with their appreciation of the prowess of the dancer, or the potency of the beer—or both.

Meanwhile, the ladies in the flower-decked huts are doing a brisk business: and "business" is the operative word, for a more soulless, cut-and-dried procedure would be difficult to imagine. The intenders line up in the only African equivalent of the modern food queues, pay their half-crowns, and file through the huts like charabanc parties through the chamber of horrors.

There seems to be no reason for the bizarre parade: no lustful anticipation: no lingering sexuality: no sign of carnal satisfaction or repletion: no lightening of set alcoholic grins.

The thing is as crowded, as continually moving, as dispassionate as the turnstile parade at a football match.

Yet it is the inescapable corollary of the dance, and the pimps wax fat on the proceeds. How the ladies are financed I do not know. They all seem healthy, well fed and fat, so I suppose they make a good thing out of the nauseating business.

The tempo of the dance is meanwhile accelerating. More and more are leaping and stamping and flinging their limbs about in mad fandangoes. The noise becomes deafening: the dancers are lathered with sweat and foam. Where the women join in, they dance apart from the men. There is an occasional sex orgasm, but it is not as common as it used to be before the prostitutes took over. Then sex was the be-all and end-all, the raison d'être, of the dance. Now it has been sublimated to the half-crown queue. You may think that is an improvement to open promiscuity: it is certainly
more discreet. By the way, it is interesting to note that the native laws on adultery appear to be in abeyance by tacit consent for the period of the dance. Normally, women of Africa seem to have very little penchant towards carnal indiscretion, the penalty for which in some tribes is still death.

It is only, with rare exceptions, during dances that they become eroticised.

Before the dance concludes, every participator becomes almost too fuddled and exhausted to crawl away.

Such is the native African counterpart of the "shilling hop". One cannot escape the comment that there are some discernible points of similarity!

Of all the black dances of Africa, and they are legion, the most thrilling, from a spectacular point of view, is easily the Matebele or Zulu war dance. In the old days of Tchaka, down to *M'Selikatzi's* time, this dance was a martial incentive and, witnessing it, one is not surprised.

The warriors, painted to the eyebrows, are lined up like soldiers on parade, with their indunas in front.

Their legs, arms and chests, festooned with ostrich feather bands, are barred and slashed with whitewash. Their faces are painted to fearsome masks. Leopard, lion and fox skins hang from their waists, the tails dangling almost to the ground.

In front, like the armament of the Roman phalanges, their bright, ox-hide shields are stiffly held in the left hands, while in their right they hold their long assegais and short stabbing spears. Each head is lavishly and brightly plumed.

The indunas, exhorting, boasting, loudly recalling doughty deeds and tales of prowess; shouting war cries, enthuse the warriors to a pitch of frenzy.

Suddenly, with a terrific yell, the whole line springs to violent activity. Feet are stamped on the ground till their reverberations roll like thunder.

The line moves forward with the yelling, screaming, heart-stopping madness of an incredible, concerted charge. Plumes wave frantically as the warriors surge forward. The noise of them is terrifying. Now their shields are held aloft at full arm stretch. Flung assegais stick quivering in the ground. It is not difficult to imagine how of old they cowed or transfixed their enemies. Now the strong right arms are flung up and back holding the stabbing spears at the "ready". So they rush headlong, with the dust of their passing rising like a cloud behind their flying feet, their mounting clamour blotting out every other sound, right up to the beholder, before whom they halt with the disconcerting suddenness of a

*The spelling is phonetic.*
blinding flash, their spears arrested within an inch of the wincing thrapples of those in whose honour the dance is performed. Nowadays it is a tremendous compliment to have this dance performed. In grim earnest this “dance” mowed down all opposition.

It is impossible to reproduce in words the forceful majesty of the dance, nor the horrid constringtion it brings to the throat. Should you show fear, or turn away, or step back even so much as a single pace, the warriors are filled with contempt at your cowardice. They also realise quite well the pluck it takes to stand up to the charge and award the fearless with the old royal salute: “Bayete: Bayete.”

It is a thrilling, magnificent and terrifying spectacle.

Alas for the valour of the warriors: on one very special occasion it went sadly awry.

During the tour of the Duke of Windsor, when Prince of Wales, the Native Commissioners of Southern Rhodesia, led by Felix Posselt, whose rare and understanding qualities endeared him to all native people from the Mashwena to the Matabele, staged a tremendous war dance of greeting.

The warriors in their thousands, drawn up across the level plain, being harangued by their Indunas, made a brave, impressive show. Never was war paint so bright, never were plumes so gay and glowing. They were all ready to charge as soon as the Son of the Great King Over The Water To Whom All Men Held Allegiance should descend from the royal train.

Excitement grew to scarcely leashed intensity as the thin scream of the whistle from the engine drawing the Prince’s train floated through the clear, sunlit air.

Warriors began to paw the ground like restive, mettlesome horses. At last the train, small in the distance but rapidly growing in stature, came hurrying round the great bend of the track, sparkling white in the sunlight.

The superstitious warriors, never having seen a white train before, took it to be a ghostly apparition of terrible malignancy.

As the train rapidly approached, the swelling murmur in the ranks grew to a concerted scream as the lines wavered and broke. The warriors, every man-jack of them, fled into the bush, leaving only Felix standing his ground.

And that was very definitely the end of that.

To break off our rambling narrative for a moment, one never fails to be impressed with the immense and charming punctilio of Royalty. It has been my fortune on several occasions to address Royalty in respect of certain episodes which I have requested permission to publish, including the above. Invariably the permission has been granted by gracious letter with just that personal touch which is so endearing. In this, as in so many
other aspects of life, they set a fine example. Courtesy costs nothing. It is a pity that the grace is sick of the palsy in these latter days.

To list the occasions when Africa dances would be almost as difficult as to discover occasions when she refrains. Even the beggars along the railway sidings dance for their threepenny pieces. Near De Aar station there was a man whose hands and feet had been lopped off with unspeakable cruelty by the early Congo rubber commissioners. Even he had learnt to dance on his knees, or upside down on his elbows, on the hot steel of the line. He was said to make a good thing out of his unique virtuosity: if so, by God, he deserved to do so.

Shoot big game and Africa dances. Give your boys their weekly ration of mealies and salt, or a piece of meat, or their pay, and they dance.

I once produced a son and heir for a paramount chief by Caesarean section, and the whole village danced for three days and nights!

They dance for any reason, real or imagined, or for no reason at all. They dance to encourage good spirits, and they dance to ward off evil ones. They dance, and dance, and dance.

It is their sole expression of individual or communal feeling.

It is the major ceremony of their religion. Oh, yes, they have religion. It is a serious affair, and a good and useful one. Their faith is as the faith of little children.

Dancing is their music hall, their legitimate drama, and their highest ecstasy.

Their day dances are descriptive (cf. ballet).

I have seen uncannily vivid descriptive dances of past deeds of valour; of big game hunts, wherein, mirabile dictu, the chief or headman is generally the quarry: it is his prerogative; and a very realistic show he gives.

Dances of domestic oddities make their "straight" comedies and tragedies.

They dance after any event, white or black, which takes their fancy.

I have seen danced imitations of myself and party too veracious to be flattering, or even comfortable.

After I had lost a steeplechase by being thrown from the horse, my boys danced the accident so faithfully that I came away a sadder, if not a wiser clown.

On that sad occasion I had left my riding breeks up a tree. The boy who took the part of me was most embarrassingly accurate as to detail. The boys considered that effort extremely funny, but the boss boy kept discreetly out of the way for a while—just in case. Obviously good humour and an unquenchable sense of fun inspires this type of theatrical dancing.
But there are others. Dances with familiar spirits, reminiscent of witches’ sabbats. Macabre dances. Dances of such magical significance as to warrant a chapter to a description of one example which I saw and will never forget.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LYCANTHROPY

Lycanthropy means the transmutation of humans into animals, either at certain times in the manner of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, or more or less permanently, as in the case of werewolves. Vampirism differs in that the animal in this case is the materialisation of the earthbound spirit of a corpse. Literature teems with cases, apparently well authenticated, of both lycanthropy and vampirism. Definite rituals were evolved by witches to induce lycanthropy, and by the priests of certain orders for exorcising the familiar, in animal shape, which had so taken control as to impose its shape in fleshly form upon its willing and covenanted human host.

You can still see in England the desecrated corpses of witches with stakes driven through the place where their heart used to beat and rude crosses on their breasts. There was, and maybe still is, one at Brightlingsea in Essex.

By a curious legal transposition, the blame for transmutation was imposed on sundry animals, obviously normal. These animals, alleged to be witches, were solemnly tried in the courts of law in this country right up to the eighteenth century. And solemnly condemned with all the panoply of medieval processes of the law, for the crime of being lycanthropic witches.

Today we, for the most part, laugh at such quaint fancies, but there is an underlying principle which it will be as well to keep in mind during the following chapter. It is, that the farther we retrace man’s existence to his primal state, the closer we find is the association between him and the so-called “lower animals”.

To any student of evolution with an elementary knowledge of biology and comparative anatomy it is perfectly logical that this should be the case, in fact he would be surprised if it were not.

Where over-literal religionists stumble is over the words in Genesis “... God created man in His own image: in the image of God created He him”.

The indisputable fact that man evolved extremely slowly from syntheses of single cells through a whole host of evolving animals in no way detracts from the possible truth of the statement quoted. After all, to evolve from single cells through countless ages to even the lowest form
of thinking animal calls for a power beyond the confines of the physical world, despite all the Frankensteins of fiction or fact.

It is quite useless to argue that it did not happen thus: it happens in the womb of every viviparous animal at every conception.

It required a POWER higher than the physical to produce every step of evolution culminating so far in homo sapiens. Eliding the anthropomorphic concept implied in the text, there can be no doubt that evolution, far from denying the creative potential known as God, proves the contention of the passage—all the way.

There is something of this idea subconsciously underlying the conception still extant that certain animals are sacred. In ancient times these sacred beasts were held to be actual temporary fleshly houses for the gods, exactly as Christians, and professors of most other religions for that matter, believe the human body to be "the temple of the Holy Ghost", or the transient dwelling of the eternal spirit.

Lycanthropy implies that another spirit—a spirit of evil—can turn out the soul and take possession of the envelope in the form of the invading spirit.

There is nothing startling in any of this, except for the physical transformation. Migration of spirits within the fleshly envelope is stated again and again in the Bible. There is the parable of the man who turned out one spirit and got seven worse ones. A literal translation states that God breathed into Adam the "spirit" of life. Time and time again the theory of a spirit dwelling within man is repeated. Either Christians believe their text book or they do not. If they don’t, then their religion is a farce. And if they believe the bright side, they must equally believe the dark side, as there is equal, if not more, emphasis in the teaching about evil spirits as there is on the Heavenly Host.

This argument is not intended to be a sermon, nor yet a theological thesis. It is intended to be a piece of simple logic.

Indeed, and indeed, it is set down here for a very, very definite reason.

So many people think that witchcraft is a bogey: that the things of the spirit are a lot of hooey: that these things are the product of pipe-dreams, fevered imaginations, neurosis or alcoholic befuddlement. And those who protest this disbelief the loudest are the most blatant and noisy professing Christians. Either you must be religious believers and spirit-believers—"God is a spirit"—or non-spirit-believers and agnostics.

I have not the slightest interest in which you are, I have only tried to prove that you cannot be both.

All this prologue is strictly necessary, for we simply dare not approach the supernormal until we are perfectly clear in our own minds where we stand.

In these matters an open mind is useless. We must have a clear-headed mind.
Everyone has heard of the dread "Society of the Leopard", and most people have a fair idea of its workings.

Our efforts to exterminate the maleficent fraternity have been so concentrated and ruthless that its manifestations are rare nowadays. It is not dead. Occasionally one comes across horrid evidence of its activities.

It is the African equivalent of the Black Hand, the Mafia, and other societies of that kidney, all of which owe their existence to the common trait throughout mankind of perversion towards murder, cruelty, sadism and the like.

This temptation, sad as it is, is quite ineradicable. It is a legacy from the primal law of the jungle, and no progress, no education, no legal or penal code can cure it.

Nor is it the prerogative of any class or race. Some of our cruellest and most violent murderers are of the intelligentsia, others insignificant members of the trades and professions, while others again come from the dregs of the "submerged tenth": The mass sadism of Rome reached its peak at the very height of Roman culture. Kultur has ever been the fore-runner of outbreaks of national German cruelty. Lucretia Borgia was immensely erudite, so was the infamous Marquis de Sade. Even religion is no antidote, for the annals of the professing religionists are richly stained with records of perversion, bestiality, and perverted cruelty. Marcel Pétion, so recently and so deservedly guillotined, was a learned man, and he was typical of a host of others.

Nowadays, if we can catch such in time, we shut them up in institutions as homicidal maniacs—and rightly. But are they? Or are they merely atavistic?

Frequently to normal men and women comes the urge, horribly, cruelly, to slay or maim. The only difference between those who follow the urge and those who refrain is the potence of their spiritual resistance.

An odd reflection, but a true one.

When the leopard men were flourishing they deliberately wooed the recondite urge by bestial ritual and excitant dancing. They assiduously trained, and by exercises and drugs, fostered the faculty of abnormal endurance. On their abhorrent sorties they dressed themselves in leopard skins, riveted leopard claws to their fingers, and walked, and stalked, and raped, and mutilated, and killed in the manner of leopards. They drank warm human blood to eroticise themselves. (Note the universality of human blood as an excitant—and its antiquity—and its mild "transmogrification" into religion.)

They put on their bodies the skins of leopards, and they laid upon their perverted souls the nature and habits of leopards—but they did not BECOME leopards. To that extent they were never lycanthropic.

In the sequestered fastnesses of the African jungle there are performed secret dances which take the name of certain animals: The Lion Dance,
we have already heard of a special drum used in this dance: the Leopard Dance and others, where actual lycanthropy is said to take place.

Is there any truth in it? Is this transmutation an actuality? The idea is so horrible that it would be unpleasant to make a definite affirmative. On the other hand, after what I have seen I have not the courage to say no. It is an equivocal position admittedly.

One night I saw the Jackal Dance.

It is possible for Europeans to see these secret dances. They have done so again and again, but always the proceedings are vitally expurgated. The native, partly in fear of the law, and partly because he is a great believer in "tempering the wind to the shorn lamb", is adept in producing a good "act", and at the same time purging it of all significance for the edification of the uninitiated observer.

For this reason, extreme precautions, which would otherwise have been melodramatic, were taken on this occasion.

It happened this way.

My personal boy, a sergeant in the B.S.A.P., and a very enlightened fellow to boot, warned me that there was likely to be trouble in the area because a Jackal Dance had been arranged for that night. He was horrified when I told him I was determined to see it.

It took a lot of cajolery, bribery and corruption to induce him to smuggle me along. Also I agreed to become a native for the occasion. As everything which is afoot is, in the ordinary way, instantly known to the boys, we took the most extraordinary precautions. If I had been spotted nothing would have happened—except that nothing would have happened!

First it was given out to the boys that I had a bad go of fever. As I could take no one—not even my own boys—into the secret, I had to repair to bed and go through all the usual symptoms and treatment of malaria, including large doses of whisky which, in the circumstances, did not come amiss. I called one house-boy after another for this or that so that all might see I was far too ill to move.

Later, when we set out—with otherwise laughable secrecy—I was completely naked except for a leather loincloth tied with a raw-hide thong round my thighs. Every inch of my skin was thoroughly blackened, and my hair was cut to a short thatch. For footwear I had short lengths of motor tyre bound round the ankles with more of those beastly thongs. I felt that my boy and I might have been twins, except that he was the better looking of the two. Even my nostrils had been flared with blackened cotton wool. Should these extreme preparations sound redundant, it is suggested that anyone of your acquaintance who knows native affairs be consulted. He will understand the amazing way in which information travels, and how the whole project would have been nullified if the slightest suspicion was aroused.
Dressed in full regalia of jackal skins
Imagine the boy and I (for my part feeling the damnedest of fools), sneaking out under cover of darkness and starting on the long trek to the place appointed for the dance. Trouble soon beset me. How natives walk in apparent comfort in motor tyre shoes is beyond me. They were sheer agony. Every few paces I had to stop and rest my tortured feet!

Eventually, after a slow and agonising journey, we reached the place long before the dance was scheduled to take place.

This was as arranged. The spot was on the Rhodesian-Congo border near the north-eastern border of the Jiundu Swamp, a foetid, eerie place in which the pterodactyl is locally supposed to survive with spiritual powers of great evil. There was a natural clearing in the jungle which, spare and parklike throughout the neighbourhood, became tight and thick hereabouts, probably through underground watering from an outflow of the marsh. It was a fit setting.

My boy had marked a useful-looking tree and led me to it. It afforded excellent concealment. As trees were used as a sort of grandstand by other natives, it seemed the safest thing to do to climb into one oneself.

It was safe enough as long as I did not have to speak. Though able to get by in the usual tongue, there are special secret languages spoken on these occasions which no one but the natives understand.

There was an interminable wait, during which I was so tortured with cramp that I very nearly gave up the project, before natives began, by ones and twos, stealthily and noiselessly to approach. No one spoke. Save for the quiet drone of the night insects—most of which, by the way, bit me—and the occasional chortling grunt of the frogs, there was absolute silence. I was most surprised to see little knots of young women present. Later the horrible purpose of their presence became all too plain.

Till the nyanga arrived all was silence. Then he began a long incantation in the form of an antiphonal chant. First the witchdoctor; then the responses by the assembled throng, irresistibly reminiscent of a debased form of the Anglican service. All this while vast quantities of beer were being rapidly poured down thirsty and insatiable throats, and the drums were thrumming on a note and rhythm I had not heard before. A rhythm which beat inside one and tingled down the spine; a rhythm which seemed gradually to take on itself a bestial quality. It is not possible to be more explicit: but that is definitely the effect it had.

The chant rose to a shrill scream; then stopped. The silence was now absolute. Even the insects and the frogs were quiet. Beer drinking was frantic. I noticed the witchdoctor making medicine in a little fire which burned with queer light as he threw his concoctions on the flames. He was drinking some potion of his own from a small wooden bowl with beads patterned round the edge, their colours faintly luminescent in the lambent rays of the moon. Out of the silence a faint jackal cry seemed to float gently in from the night. Immediately the nyanga stood up. He was
dressed in full regalia of jackal skins with their tails dangling round his knees. He was horribly painted and striped. A white line showed clearly along his backbone, with five horizontal lines etched on either side of it, while his alternate ribs were also outlined in white. A jackal's head was firmly fixed to his own skull. He seemed very apprehensive and went padding about, soft-footed, peering here and there. Once he stared straight at me and, so worked up was I by that time that my bones turned to water while a cold sweat drenched over my naked body. Every hair moved with separate life.

He sprang on to the fire and scattered it over the clearing with his feet. He opened his mouth and, sudden as a gunshot, he howled the shrill, piercing scream of the jackal. Other jackal screams answered him out of the night.

Then he danced.

As a test of physical endurance, and he was by no means a young man, the exhibition was by no stretch of imagination possible to any normal human being. What he dosed himself with I do not know. There are various drugs which are used for the purpose, but no drugs alone could enable so stupendous an effort.

The dance was brilliant, amazing, transcendental, depraved and bestial. It was the cleverest imitation of a crazy jackal I have ever thought to see. Nor do I want to see it ever again.

The drums and the dance became faster and faster. As the sweat, catching the moonlight, could be seen pouring out on the frenzied drummers, so sweat and saliva and blood poured from the whirling nyanga.

At the very zenith of his incredible gyrations he fell to earth like a log.

Where he fell, there he lay, obviously deeply entranced.

Now from the distance, out of the bush, came jackal cries, nearer and nearer. The deep growl of the male being answered by the shriller cries of the female.

Suddenly a powerful young man and a splendid young girl, completely naked, leapt over the heads of the onlookers and fell sprawling in the clearing.

They sprang up again instantly and started to dance. My God, how they danced! If the dance of the nyanga was horrible, this was revolting. They danced the dance of the rutting jackals. As the dance progressed, their imitations became more and more animal, till the horror of it brought the acrid of vomit to the throat. Then, in a twinkling, with loathing unbounded, and incredulous amazement, I saw these two turn into jackals before my eyes. The rest of their "act" must be rather imagined than described. Suffice it to say, and I say it with all the authority of long practice of my profession, no human beings, despite any extensive and potent preparation, could have sustained the continued and repeated sexuality of that horrid mating.
After it was at last completed, the male jackal trotted over to the body of the witchdoctor and sniffed at him, growling deep in its throat, while the female crawled miserably into the bush. Suddenly the male seemed to sense the absence of its mate, and leapt after her howling dismally.

Their departure was the signal for the onlookers to start growling and milling around, fighting for the willing females.

Though these did not actually change their shape, they imitated the lycanthropic pair with devilish accuracy till all, even the drummers, were too exhausted to continue. Their superhuman endurance at the loathsome business was clearly the result of drugging plus a powerful spiritual exaltation.

What particular drug they used I cannot tell, but I know there is a drug called bulandu, or bilandi, or bwlandi, or something like that (it is difficult to catch the exact pronunciation) which is specially infused for these secret dances.

That is what I saw with the same disillusioned eyes now glued to my very ordinary Oliver typewriter in a very ordinary study in Essex, once the home of many witches and, now that murder from the sky has gone, so very safe and sophisticated: such a contrast from the scenes we are reviving again.

Did it really happen?

As for the Dance of the Jackal, the nyanga's part, and the bestial common climax, every magistrate and native commissioner knows perfectly well that it is a fact, along with many others of the same kidney. But that awful lycanthropic thing: did that take place?

Is mass hypnotism possible? Could the trance of the nyanga have induced so real an image of a thing which did not actually occur? All my experience rebels against so convenient and specious an "explanation".

There remain a hundred unanswerables.

Perhaps this is significant. The following day a girl was brought to me on a stretcher, desperately ill. Her flanks were deeply scarred by jackal claws: there was abundant evidence that she had been brutally assaulted and, in the polite language of the journalists, "interfered with".

She told the very usual story that she had been carried off by baboons and raped by the whole baboon village. They were NOT baboon scratches.

How far does that take us?

There are the bare bones, clothe them with what flesh you will.

There was an amusing aftermath. I had the deuce of a job getting the black off my skin. In a foolish moment I tried to wash it off in the bath. With monkey nut oil I got the beastly stuff off me, but the bath was quite ruined. It had to be replaced!
CHAPTER EIGHT

SIC TRANSIT

We have now seen some sides of the witchdoctor’s character and performances. Playing parlour tricks and entranced in a lycanthropic exhibition. We have also noted that he, with all his followers on his side, wages an eternal war with the local government.

Colonial governments frown in a very practical way upon his efforts, and every good little Christian applauds their actions to the echo. “Hooray. Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is to persecute the chief upholder of the blindness of the heathen. Hallelujah!” So it is that violent efforts are being made to strike from the chain of history the last romantic link with the astrologers and the soothsayers and the magi, whose erudition and whose unusual powers have descended upon the nyangas from who can tell how far back in the human story.

Never again will a Moses arise to pit his wits against the wizards of the Royal Court.

The witchdoctor is the correlation of them all, the wise men, the soothsayers, the astrologers, the medicos, the lawgivers, the arbiters of fate, and the kings’ counsellors.

To see such men tried and condemned as common felons is catastrophically sad. I am heretically glad that their followers are so loyal that they are extremely hard to catch.

Mercenary and cruel, according to our ideas, they certainly are: so were the saintly prelates of the Inquisition. Nor were the inquisitors one whit more avid in the extirpation of witchcraft and spiritual evil than are the nyangas.

Crude and archaic and smacking of sculduggery as their justice may be, it is no worse than much of our own, in its setting. At least if, with mother-in-law’s agreement, they judged a divorce was requisite, there was an end. How much cleaner than the loathsome period of idiotic probation between the decrees nisi and absolute, spied on disgustedly by the King’s Proctor, which still stands for the acme of the law’s progress in this country (England: Scotland has more sense). Also, if they decreed death, it was immediate, and not preceded by indefinite periods of the refined torture of awful waiting in the horror of the condemned cell.

At least their judgments, harsh, rough-and-ready, arbitrary as they may be, studied the general weal and not private caprice. The latter judgments were always made by chiefs and never, unless for grave expediency, by the witchdoctors.

Their delegated governance (the chief or headman is the nominal
ruler and the nyangas “advisory bodies”) is more tolerant than dictatorship, nor is their genuine skill with drugs and healing unguents by any means negligible.

I have counted many witchdoctors as my friends, and I have found them all intelligent above their fellows, rapacious, clever, avaricious, comparatively honest, with a fine sense of fun, ready to discuss any subject, once they know you are sincerely interested and unbiased, with a modest declaimance of their powers.

I once had a long and intense argument with a witchdoctor on the ethics of suicide. “Suicide,” he said, “is wicked, because, when the spirits want him, they will take a man anyway, and a man has no right to dictate to his guarding spirits. When a man does so the good spirits reject him and he cannot live with them. So he wanders about with no house to rest in, even more unhappy than he was when he took his life. In the end he becomes an evil spirit, doing mischief and waiting for the chance to become a familiar. To kill the spirit and save the living from its malignance, the body of a suicide should be burned to ashes with fire. Then,” he added naively, “I can make powerful medicine with his bones.”

Apart from his unselfconscious addendum, do you not think that the underlying idea in that argument is an excellent one, moreover, does it not fairly accord with religious thought? “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” I seem to remember ordinances de comburendo.

The Government is, as we have said, severely hampered by the intense loyalty of the natives to their nyangas. It is a little hard to believe that men commanding such fidelity can be wholly bad.

We can safely go further and assert without quibble that the witchdoctor is an absolute essential in the African cosmogony as it is today.

That appears to be a sweeping assertion at first sight; careful examination cannot fail to prove that it is nothing less than the truth.

The belief in witchcraft is not only common throughout native Africa, it is the greater part of the native’s religion, which is intensely spiritual. Every breath which the native draws is tempered and controlled by the spirits, every word he utters, every observance, or the lack of it, every step, every action, every single phase of his life.

There is eternal warfare between good and bad spirits, and the good spirits prevail only as he propitiates and pleases them. Should he neglect his family spirits, or traduce them, or introduce any new custom or thing without their express order and approval through their only interpreter, the nyanga, then ill-fortune will dog his steps. Every illness or death or misfortune is therefore his own fault for neglecting the good spirits, or it is the action of an enemy or evil-minded person who is a witch and (probably) keeps familiar spirits to do his evil will.

With such a religion it is not surprising that the natives fear and loathe and abominate witchcraft. Their only protector is the nyanga, the
selector of evil spirits, the killer of them, and the only one capable of finding witches."

The man who practises actively the divine law as stated in Leviticus: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." A law which was incorporated in the laws of England till very modern times. A law of the God of Christianity, or the Old Testament is a worthless fake.

Contemporary African witchcraft and its European and Celtic counterparts (see Montague Summers's *Witchcraft and Black Magic*, and Lewis Spence's *The Magic Arts in Celtic Britain*) are so similar as to force the student to the belief that they originated from the same archaic source.

One is impelled to the conclusion that witchcraft was the precursor of religion which came into its own as the only sure means of combat against the spirits of evil. Therefore, the nyanga stands in the position of high and only priest of African religion. Twist that statement as you will, it remains a fact. The suppressors of the witchdoctors are, to the native way of thinking enemies of Unkulunkulu or Lesa = God. They have told me so many times, not in a spirit of anger so much as sorrow and want of understanding. They cannot understand why the servants of the Great King Over The Water should war against God.

There is no blasphemy in saying that wine is a refinement of blood, and bread of flesh when used in a spiritual sense, as it was so stated at the Last Supper by the Supreme Authority.

The hub of the Reformation argument, apart from the unscrupulous politics of the lustful Henry, was disagreement on the mystical actuality of flesh for bread, blood for wine. Therefore in Christianity, the most modern of all religions of any consequence except Mohammedanism, transubstantiation is still believed to be a divine factual miracle. A divinely inspired form of inverse lycanthropy.

Blood and generally wine, and flesh have been essentials of all religions, divine or debased, ever since they were handed down as prime symbolic requisites of the older witchcraft.

Hence the time-honoured sacrificial rite, first of human, then of animal flesh and blood. "And the High Priest shall take the blood and sprinkle it——" "And ye shall take of the blood and sprinkle it upon the lintel——"

In modern witchcraft, the difficulty of getting blood just when you want it is recognised, and many other things, some too disgusting to enumerate, are used in its stead. But blood is still the most powerful symbol, and there is no doubt that it is still used and drunk hot, neat, or mixed with wine or rum, in sabbats, black, yellow or white.

The position of the native today is that of one believing and hating witchcraft as the work of devils, or demons. Not THE devil, they have

*If this phrase appears difficult, the explanation is that the nyanga can "select" or pick out which evil spirit is causing this or that mischief.*
not met the Prince of the Powers of the Air, in person—as yet, but they recognise his henchmen as the implacable, avowed enemies of God and His good spirits. Some of their demons, curiously enough, have horns, hoofs and inconvenient tails, and others, like the tempter of Adam, are in the form of a serpent.

This belief differs very little from that of Shintoism, Brahminism, Hindooism, Confucianism, Mohammedanism, Christianity, and the rest.

Now, though he performs acts which come apparently very close to it, the witchdoctor is NOT a witch. He is the whole hierarchy, sacerdotal, and legal, the magistrates and the exorcists, who have ever fought against the power of "evil spirits in high (and low) places".

So long therefore as spiritism, and the fear of demonology, sorcery and witchcraft make up so great a part of the African religion, so long are Nyangas, Ngangas, Chiyombokas, Katepas; there are many names for them: in short, witchdoctors, essential.

I hope the case is proved.

It is surely obvious that our "enlightened" attitude is the sheerest nonsense. We prosecute and persecute the high priests, the diviners of witches and sorceries, the protectors from the machinations of evil spirits, instead of the witches themselves—thereby giving mortal offence and getting ourselves the name of "friends of the demons". To crown our imbecility we issue an edict that there is no such thing as witchcraft, which stamps us in the thoughts of every native who can think, as contemptible fools.

Agreed there is much in witchdoctor practices which is, to our way of thinking, wholly reprehensible. It is pertinent to quote "who made thee a ruler and a judge?" The concept that everything which fails to conform to the "British Way and Purpose" must be wrong, is unmitigated arrogance, and silly withal.

Our attitude is the most transparent compromise, as who should say I can't deal with this awful incubus of witchcraft, therefore I will tell the people it does not exist; at the same time I will prosecute those who can. Which, like so many modern enactments, is a blatant governmental reductio ad absurdum.

We can no longer put off the vexed question, is there such a thing as a witch, and, if so, what is a witch.

It is a beast of a question, for whatever answer is given will be dis-approved of by many. It is a question to be carefully elided by the wise and prudent. Away with prudence: let us go bald-headed at it.

As Joad would say, it all depends what you mean by a witch.

If by the term is visioned a bedevilled old hag, with long, tangled, unwashed locks, a black cloak, a Welsh hat, and a jet-propelled broomstick, the answer is that there is ample evidence that such did exist, but, like halberdiers, and flaming martyrs, they are out of fashion.
Again we must repair to the Old Testament. There the definition is quite plain. A witch or wizard is, we are told therein, one who possesses or consults with a familiar spirit. We are at once in a difficulty. In the New Testament there is an ordinance which states "Test the spirits". How can we "test the spirits" unless we "consult" with them. And if we do consult with them we are, according to the fourth book of the Bible, witches, and therefore, according to the same inspired authority, we should be put to death.

There is another difficulty. According to this definition, every medium with a "spirit control" is a witch.

The answer lies in a further provision which is often hinted at, but, so far as my researches go (and I may be wrong) not stated in so many words, and it is this. I think the word "consult" should be "consort", which immediately solves the difficulty. To consort with an evil or familiar spirit, there must be a bond. Such spirits, as Goethe had it in his Faust, do nothing for nothing. "The Devil nothing does for love of God."

This bond, or selling one's soul to the Devil, or a demon, is implicit in all witchcraft everywhere, including Africa.

Up to the time of the Immaculate Conception there was no remedy; no redress. The Carpenter of Nazareth ushered in a New Dispensation in that He taught that it was possible to oust the demons of hell, which come not forth "but by prayer and fasting", by consciously affording shelter to the "powers" of righteousness.

The first pentecost was a spirit invocational ceremony. Christians at every service perpetuate that invocation for the "indwelling of the Holy Spirit".

Therefore, if religion means anything at all, it means that its believers have to accept: (1) the existence of spirits good and bad; (2) the reality of spirit powers; (3) the existence of the Prince of Evil; (4) the reality of his powers of evil; (5) the resurrection of the dead, i.e., Spirit existence after death; (6) Spirit "possession" of the living.

Once these six points fall into line, the proper definition of a witch is easy.

A witch is one who also believes these six points: believes them completely. The witch then deliberately chooses to worship evil and bond him- or herself to Evil throughout corporal existence and beyond the grave.

The reason for such is innate malignancy and avarice, because the rewards of evil are more tangible than the rewards of good.

This is universal, and works throughout Africa exactly as it works everywhere else, from the beginning of man to the present day. To say airily that witches do not exist and do not work evil, is to fly in the face of real, tangible and documented evidence of such quality and quantity as to admit of no denial. Read the police-court proceedings of the West
The guilty one is dragged to his feet
Indies if you want to see impartial cut-and-dried evidential witness to the existence and mortal maleficence of witches.

Through the deliberate bond with evil, the witch becomes the possessor of something, call it what you will—a demon, a familiar, an evil potential. It does not matter what name it goes by so long as it is recognised that it is there, and it is terribly powerful.

If we accept the possibility, or actuality of “spirit controls”, this does not mean that a medium is a witch, unless the “control” is a demon, and the medium has deliberately bonded with evil for the use of it.

In witchcraft, the process is apparently reversed, because, so long as the witch is bonded to work evil, it is the human who controls the spirit, who must be cosseted, and seduced (or he allowed to seduce), and slept with, and fed from the body of the possessor—spiritually fed.

All this, as clearly laid down in grimoires and other treatises, is exactly similar in African witchcraft.

Another striking similarity is that all African witches deny their dealings with familiar spirits until they are caught and condemned. Then they invariably admit the charge, and willingly give the fullest details of their activities. This is precisely what we find in practically all European cases, and West Indian cases as well.

When the finest brains of all ages, men of undoubted erudition and integrity, and all the authors of the Old Testament and the Gospels, add their positive testimony to the willing confessions of many thousands of witches as to the reality of the horrid cult, who are we to say that all this vast “cloud of witnesses” are deluded and credulous fools?

Whether we, in our conscious superiority, believe the overwhelming witness or not, the African certainly does. His whole life is an endeavour to invoke the protection of spiritual good, and an eternal fight against psychic evil.

He keeps evil familiars to give him unnatural power, and his chiefs entertain stronger familiars to protect themselves against the lesser ones. The knowledge, offices, and rituals of the witchdoctor are the only hope of them all.

Is it any wonder that these are held in the highest possible esteem? A position which they, the witchdoctors with true African philosophy, make the most out of commercially: and who wouldn’t?

Highly reprehensible as are many of their activities, we make a grave error in prosecuting these men, who are servitors of a more ancient priesthood than our own.
CHAPTER NINE

SMELLING OUT

Rider Haggard, and other African novelists, have described in some detail witch-smelling ceremonies of magnitude and splendour among the Zulu and Matabele tribes. It may be that in their day such vast ceremonies did take place. If so, they are relics of the past. These affairs are far less spectacular nowadays.

Though the methods vary greatly according to circumstance and locality, the whole thing rests primarily on the fact that witches (throughout the term is used to denote both witches and wizards) give off a horrible odour, specially to nyangas.

There are many mentions of the odour of witches in early European accounts. The term “smelling out” is of course based on this peculiarity. In some cases the doctor actually holds his nose and pretends to be sick when he approaches the witch.

It would be neither interesting, nor even possible to catalogue every method of witch divining. There would be endless repetition with small alteration of detail.

It is therefore more profitable to delineate the general idea, and spend a little time on some of the more interesting sidelights. As has been so often repeated, the witchdoctor is the only person competent to deal with witches, and is therefore the chief actor in all these ceremonies.

When he catches the witch, he does so in the presence of the entire village community including the headman or chief.

Though he is the actual witch-finder, and judgment follows his discoveries, he is neither judge nor executioner. The whole village are the jury and the headman the judge. Executioners, should the verdict be death, are selected by him and not by the nyanga.

It is important to recognise that, in these ceremonies, the nyanga plays the part of the chief operative of the local Scotland Yard. In medieval witch trials, the guilty were “put to the question”, i.e., tortured, to extract confessions and the names of co-adjutors. When the African witch is discovered, he or she is carefully and very thoroughly questioned, but no physical duress is employed to obtain information. The witches at first protest their innocence, but, once a “true bill” has been made out, and condemnation is certain, invariably make the fullest possible confession. Indeed, they seem positively to revel in self-accusation. Often they implicate others and the whole thing has to be repeated with the other witches or accomplices.

After condemnation they are immediately dispatched either by beating, spearing, or burning to death. The body is then burned and the calcined
bones retained by the nyanga for the concocting of powerful medicine.

As to the means of smelling out, they are legion. A variation of the old
"yeka m’tambo" is one method. Only one bone is used, and it is laid,
with the inescapable "medicine", in a box, or basket, or other receptacle.
Sometimes it is floated in a vessel filled with oil. The nyanga, after the
usual incantations of the "versicles and responses" type, names each
person separately. If the person is innocent the bone lies quiet: if guilty,
the bone stands up. It is uncanny to see this long bone, often a human
one, suddenly take life to itself.

Sometimes the receptacle is dispensed with, and the bone, usually a
fibula, is simply thrown on the ground. I have never known it fail to rise
if a witch is named.

Another method, of great variation, is "trial by ordeal", but this is not
solely used for witch-finding, being occasionally employed for lesser
crimes. It is employed through three elements, fire, water and poison.
In this procedure the only part the witchdoctor plays is in supplying
"medicine" to apply to the fire or the water, or in decocting the poison.

This trial by ordeal almost exactly follows the lines of similar historical
trials in England and other European countries, and is not of any other
particular interest.

Its usefulness lies in the fact that it makes the guilty condemn himself,
which relieves anyone else of the burden of proving guilt.

The poison trial is particularly neat, as the guilty one not only con-
demns but also dispatches himself in one conclusive action. Before this
trial is applied, extensive "dummy runs" are tried out on animals includ-
ing the hound of the accused, which is hard luck on the obviously
innocent beast.

The most curious aspect of these poison trials is that the accused never
seems to show any more fear or reluctance than Socrates for his hemlock.
To do so would at once proclaim guilt beyond cavil. Since the nyanga
prepares the poison in every case, there is no guarantee that there is not a
considerable element of "fiddling" in this particular procedure.

In other forms of smelling out ritual the witch is also self-condemned.
In this case material weapons of divination are changed for psychic

By the way, though witchcraft, as I have seen it in Africa, is pre-
dominantly male, it is by no means entirely so, nor is it confined to any
particular age group.

The witch I saw smelled out by the following procedure was quite a
young girl. Because of my presence, nothing was done to her at the time,
and it was tacitly suggested that the whole thing was a bit of fun, got up
specially for my benefit. An obvious lie, as I had been forewarned that
the smelling out was scheduled to take place. Anyhow the girl's death
was very shortly afterwards reported, "from snake bite".

It is this group which inspires the novelists. It is extremely difficult to
discover any trickery. For my part I do not believe there is any. On the other hand, a favourite trick of schooldays may shed some light on the way it works.

A boy of dominant personality would claim hypnotic powers, select another boy, tell him to clasp his hands tightly together, and concentrate.

He would then say, "Now, you have got to believe when I tell you that your hands are stuck together, that you can't get them apart." Both would then concentrate and, after a bit, the would-be hypnotist would say, "You can't undo them. They're stuck together. You can't undo them. Go on, try."

And to everyone's immense joy, except that of the miserable brat, his struggles to undo his hands would fail.

Then the hypnotiser would say, "I will now take the influence off. Hey presto, now they're unstuck." And the boy's hands would come apart normally, much to his bewilderment.

It is a simple trick with a self-evident rationale. If you can induce belief—that is the operative clause—the trick invariably works.

In considering the following witch-finding set-up, it is as well to bear that schoolboy trick in mind. It does not detract from the value of the performance, but may explain the phenomenon.

The community sit round in their usual oval formation. Rarely do an African crowd sit in a circle.

The chief, or headman, is there on his throne, which can be anything from an elaborately carved chair to an old three-legged stool.

The witchdoctor is in full regalia for the occasion. Plumed or furry headdress; whitewash lines on his face, and sometimes his body as well, but not often these days; genet skins round his middle, mooite bags, duiker horns and all. His dress is apparently entirely at his own discretion. He may wear a kaross, or an old army shirt, a sort of toga of limbo (store cloth), or a bit of leather apron. But he nearly always seems very partial to his headdress as a sort of mitre of office. Of other garments there is, beside those mentioned, a very wide choice. I once saw a witchdoctor performing in the Sabi Native Reserve, clad in a leather apron down his front and back, and a lavatory chain with the handle reposing on his navel. This one wore, and proudly, an old Boer War hat with feathers in it bound round by an "old school tie". Amazing as it may seem, these odd garbs do not appear the least incongruous in their setting.

The nyanga, who usually has some sort of stool surrounded with his impedimenta, rises and strides round the company. He starts almost conversationally, but soon works up to the usual loud incantations, whose responses are vociferously rendered by the whole company, accompanied as always by the drums.

Walking slowly round and round the throng, he sings his chant in a
high nasal twang reminiscent of some of our parsons who cover a chronic tone-deafness by blowing the versicles through their noses. As he passes, he stops before each one present and stares fixedly at him or her.

The whole thing works up to the sort of climax as would lead one to expect a chorus of vivats at any moment. Then everything stops as the nyanga walks to his little stool and picks therefrom a vessel into which he pours medicine. This he does in dead silence. The vessel varies in different localities. It may be the lower half of a large flattened gourd, brown with age and fading ornamentation, or a leather, head-encrusted sort of washpot, or even a closely woven basket.

Now the drums alter their rhythm, becoming staccato and intermittent, as the witchfinder makes yet another complete round of the squatting onlookers, waving his medicine-charged vessel, and chanting in some archaic or secret tongue of which I have never been able to understand a word, nor will any witchdoctor translate for me. Mark you, he does not refuse; he is far too polite: he just fails to understand what I want to know.

What is important is that all the onlookers seem to understand what he is gabbling.

After this last slow circuit, a wave of excitement surges through the community, and one can feel it being communicated as a tingling sensation, as though one were being stimulated by a faradic current. The wave of spiritual exaltation which pervades all these affairs is very infecting. It seems that a powerful aura emanates from the nyanga.

Now the climax of the smelling out begins.

The nyanga stops before each of the community in turn, names him or her, and places the vessel upon the head of the named one, saying: “If this basket (or whatever it is) has caught a witch, may it stick to his or her head.” After a while he takes the vessel away and proceeds to the next one over whom the same rigmarole is repeated.

Unless he finds a witch that is all there is to it.

But if he does find one, it is a very different story. In this case the vessel becomes firmly welded to the head of the witch.

Then he puts on an act of terrific showmanship. Remember he is generally a thin, spare old fellow, seemingly rather feeblener than most.

Up to now he has been the star of a drama; now he becomes the magician extraordinary, exhibiting his amazing powers before an awed, excited and intensely gnostic audience.

Slowly he elevates the vessel and the guilty one—or the victim if you will have it thus—is dragged to his or her feet. Then he backs into the centre of the oval, and the guilty one has to follow, looking extremely foolish and discomforted, trying hard to break the firm attachment. If at any time during the performance the nyanga, or the accused, can dislodge the vessel, no jury of onlookers will convict. As the guilty one knows
well that his life is at stake, there is no lack of effort. It really does appear as though the doctor, on his part, tries his damnedest to the same end.

He puts on what is known in music hall parlance as a "strong act". He pulls and twists, and shoves, and heaves, and throws the unfortunate witch all over the place. Should, as is usually the case, the accused stick firmly to the vessel despite all the frantic efforts to dislodge it, it is tantamount to evidence, trial, and verdict of guilty, all in one.

As soon as the headman, instructed by the unanimity of the onlooking jury, indicates that he is satisfied, all efforts cease, and the vessel comes away quite naturally. The nyanga, taking the instrument of divination with him, retires for a large refresher. On one occasion at my expense!

No one offers any violence to the condemned, who squats in the centre of the "stage", the miserable object of accusing eyes. On being questioned by the headman, with the nyanga apparently uninterested, she freely admits her guilt. She took a familiar from So-and-so—there it goes again!—to win her a man. The familiar "stole the breath" of So-and-so to get a pal. She kept them in her hut and they both slept with her at night. She did not want to work evil but the familiars were too strong for her. Their names were Katembe and Mulosi, and they would not obey her.

Later the nyanga said to me.
"She will be all right. They will do nothing to her." (I knew better than that, but it was impolitic to say so.)

"It is foolish of people to take familiars, I am always very tired—and thirsty"—(he always was thirsty!)—"after visiting the spirits to catch a witch."

Then he added an amazing thing. I could hardly believe my ears.
"It is not I," he said, "who catches the witches, but a good spirit from God who comes into me and catches them for me. The good spirit will come only into me because I am a friend of the spirits and I have seen Lesa (God)."

As our magnificent civil servants say of all our most vital and urgent documents, "passed to you without comment".

Now how is it done? It seems fantastic that this welding of the vessel could survive the really tremendous efforts to dislodge it. Is it an extreme instance of the schoolboy trick? Given the absolute faith on the part of everyone present, including the guilty one, that the vessel will stick to the head of the guilty one, and the absolute belief of the accused that he or she is a witch, and that therefore the vessel must stick, it does stick. Is that enough? Add this: as civilisation overlays simplicity, the quality of faith deteriorates. If you had a grain of absolute faith you could throw mountains about. If that is denied then the Carpenter of Nazareth is denied, for He definitely said it was so.
Absolute faith is today, alas, the prerogative of the sort of primitives who enact these dramas. Now is it enough?

Or do you believe the nyanga who said, and I believe sincerely, a good spirit comes into him and catches the witches?

One of these explanations is true, perhaps both, there cannot be a third possibility.

CHAPTER TEN

MORE THINGS IN HEAVEN AND EARTH

The magic of Africa is fuller, and larger, and wider, than the products and agencies of man.

Here is a land of magic.

The soil, the trees and flowers, the forest deeps and the towering heights are all magic.

It is necessary only to listen to the Afrikaans talking about his beloved land to learn that quickly enough.

As for the muntu, when they really do get talking, they weave unconscious entrancement.

When we come to the flowers and trees there is even the firm, but wellnigh incredible, legend of the tree which is said to eat human beings. It behoves us here to tread more delicately than Agag.

I first heard of the man-eating tree from a famous Sammy (Indian Trader) in Mombasa. He is a great character in that extraordinary polyglot town where he is regarded as of high integrity, even though he is extremely rich. That was in 1927. Sammy promised to take me to Madagascar and show me the tree. He was very positive about it.

In Madagascar I heard a lot more about the fabulous tree. I was even given minute instructions as to how to find it, but offers to accompany me were conspicuous by their absence. They told me the tree gave off so powerful a smell that it drugged men and dragged them into its clutches. If there were any truth in this, I thought it was most kind of those who appeared so eager to direct me to it!

It is not proposed here to be in the least dogmatic as to whether such a tree actually exists or not. It would not surprise me if it did.

Botanically there is nothing whatever against the possibility of such a tree, or plant.

There are known flesh-eating plants, catalogued and classified. Some of them are common enough, and many of us have grown specimens in our hothouses, others are known to swallow small rodents. There is no absolute bar to a growth so bloated and enlarged as to be capable of engulfing larger animals.
I once saw a tree swallow a four-seater Chrysler car, driver and all: but that is a story of a different colour.

One night, at Lupani hotel on the road to the Victoria Falls, we were discussing the old route to the Falls with a very boastful commercial traveller.

On the way to Wankie, the coal mining town of Southern Rhodesia, there is a very steep gradient called the Mica Hill. It descends for eleven miles, and is very winding and treacherous in parts. The dazzling white mica surface is soapy and slippery, and it is necessary to use considerable precaution.

I was saying that I always went down the worst parts in bottom gear. "You poor twerp," exclaimed the cocky traveller. "Don't deserve to have a car. I do the damned hill regularly enough, and I always go down in top. Dangerous my foot!"

We had a few more drinks, and turned into our various comfortable, grass-roofed rondavels for the night.

Next morning the traveller was away bright and early.

We took it more leisurely; stopped to talk to a lonely road-maker en route, wandered quietly through the Dett valley, and started crawling carefully down the Mica Hill. Rounding one of the worst of the bends, I was startled to hear a series of wild yells coming from below me, but could see nothing to account for them. As they continued frantically, I got out of the car and crawled cautiously to the unguarded edge of the precipice. Away below I saw the traveller, torn and tattered, with blood streaming down his face, standing on the top of an enormous baobab tree from which odd pieces of car were sticking out at all angles.

With cupped hands I shouted, "Where's the rest of the car?"

He pointed down the vast crater which was the hollow bole of the tree.

We brought the necessary tackle from Wankie and managed to haul up the battered traveller, who ignominiously proceeded to Wankie in my car; in bottom gear! So far as his car and samples are concerned, they are, as far as I know, still in the belly of the tree.

The baobab; Adansonia is its botanical name; vast ugly giant that it is, can be a life saver on occasion. Its hollow trunk generally contains a good quantity of water which is quite drinkable. Thirsty natives, if they can find one, dig a hole in the soft wood and drink their fill. It is preserved in and around the Kano and other districts for the value of its leaves. There is one huge specimen to the left of the falls, looking up the Zambesi, which was described by Livingstone, who mentioned that each of its arms would make a big tree—it has about twelve of these. Its base is spoilt by the carving of many hundreds of names on the bark—such a pity!

To return to our man-eating tree.

After the Madagascan interlude, where I did not see the tree, I set about
gathering all the information available. The result was disappointing. All I could learn was:

1. An English novelist invented the story.
2. French sailors in Madagascar invented the story as a joke.
3. It’s all a lot of nonsense.
4. It’s there all right. One of the native tribes in the impenetrable hinterland worship it and offer human sacrifices to it each new moon.
5. It was invented by natives to frighten children (“The bogey-tree will get you if you don’t watch out” sort of thing).
6. A Portuguese told me he had actually seen the tree, but his evidence had very little weight.

That was the state of my knowledge till my agent sent me, in 1936, a book, Secret Africa, by Lawrence Green, published by Stanley Paul. It is a gem of a book and I ate up every word of it. In chapter eight I found a lot more about the man-eating tree.

On Lawrence Green’s advice, I repaired to the London Missionary Society’s headquarters near St. James’s Park Tube Station, and through their kind offices, with incredible difficulty, obtained a long, eye-witness account by one Carl Liche, published in the Antananarivo annual of 1881.

As Lawrence Green has already quoted this report in his book, I will not do so. It is worth reading, and is hair-raising enough.

Liche’s evidence agrees with No. 4 of the details I collected. He claims to have witnessed one of these sacrifices, which he describes in minute detail.

So, for what it is worth, there it is in print.

What is it worth?

Du Chaillu was laughed at as a second Munchausen when he claimed that there were such animals as gorillas, and that he had seen them.

The first scientist to claim that he could prove the world was round was considered mad.

Jenner was stoned and threatened when he claimed to prevent smallpox.

All these things turned out to be true.

Liche described in a modest local publication a thing which, if it were true, would be the most amazing botanical discovery of all time.

The article excited little comment at the time.

Either he ranks with the world’s greatest liars, or he did see, or believed he saw, what he so minutely described.

Parts of inaccessible Madagascar have been undisturbed since the dawn of time. No one knows what marvels lie hidden in the giant forests and foetid swamps, guarded by tough and tangled undergrowth. Orchids never seen by man? A whole new encyclopaedia botanica? Prehistoric
animals? Man-eating plants? We don’t know. This land is so impossible to penetrate that we may never know. Tribes may well live their sequestered lives there along with the last remaining specimens of the dodo whose skeleton was found in Madagascar. We don’t know. What a lot we don’t know!

Natives in some parts of Africa will intimately describe prehistoric animals, and tell positively of the places where they live. Can this be true, or is it one more example of the changelessness of Africa: a tradition handed down the long ages since these animals did actually inhabit the swamps and primaeval forests; a tradition unchanged since the paleolithic age?

Be that as it may, Africa has its share of loathsome beasts today. The Mamba snake whose bite can slay a horse in thirty seconds: the only snake which will attack unprovoked. The mud-turtle who eats your fishing tackle, stinks like carrion, and goes on living for quite a while after his head has been cut off. The soldier ant who, advancing in millions in strict military formation, will eat everything in its path—including you, if he gets the chance. The locust. The Army worm. The screw worm. The disgusting hyaena, the contemptible enemy of man and beast.

And here we note yet another of those striking similarities between African and ancient and European witchcraft.

Early manuscripts and drawings of witches’ familiars depict them as dwarfs and misshapen animals of the type most people dislike.

Not only are African familiar spirits dwarfs, but they believe that these same types of animals are either manifestations in fleshly form of evil spirits, or are products of evil forces, sent by them to wreak devilishly inspired mischief.

Easily topping the lot, without redeeming features, is the ubiquitous and ancient crocodile, who is responsible for more deaths among natives than all other animals put together. He lies in the rivers and streams and ponds and lakes, lurking under the surface, close to the banks, to attack any living thing which comes along. The lightning sweep of his scimitar tail will knock a full-grown man into the water, breaking his legs on the way. Once that has happened there is no hope for the victim. Alternatively, the beast makes a sudden, heaving rush at his prey, and pulls it into the water by any part of it he can grab, generally the snout. He will attack any animal from a small dog to a half-grown elephant. He has the lordly lion beaten every time. Only one animal and one bird is safe from him. He won’t touch waterbuck, and the dainty little crocodile bird, which is rather like a white “tumbler” or plover; in fact I think it is a species of plover. The bird acts as a sort of toothbrush for the croc., and one can often see the ridiculous sight of the huge, pot-bellied, disgusting beast positively wooing the bird to come into his mouth and attend to his dental hygiene.
The death struggle of some noble game beast with a saurian is a horrible sight as it gradually loses the fight to remain on terra firma against the irresistible pull of the loathsome aggressor. I have often ended it with a merciful bullet.

Putting that same bullet into the crocodile is a very different story. Unless you have steel-jacketed, supercharged, express ammunition it is a waste of time and lead. Even then the area which is vulnerable is very small, and I have seen steel bullets merely ploughing a furrow along the hide with very little effect on the beast.

The natives regard the crocodile with very mixed feelings. They are completely apathetic towards the potential danger. They make use of him as judge and executioner in “trial by water”. They use his fat for ointment. Some will eat him. Others won’t touch him for fear of the spirits of his victims. To some he is a skellum (rogue), to others he is sacred.

One of the African crocodiles at least is almost world famous. He must be hundreds of years old, but he was still fat and vigorous when I last saw him, in 1930.

He is called Nlutemba, or Malutembe, or Lutembe, and he lives in Lake Victoria. There is some vagueness as to his earlier use. Some say that he was sacred and fed on human sacrifices—nice fat village maidens, others that he was the official executioner and dispatcher of witches and criminals and prisoners. Whatever may be the truth of it, he is still a pet of the locals. He is quite tame and comes to be fed whenever his name is called. They threw him a dead dog while I was there, but I am told the bulk of his food is now fish. When I say “tame”, it does not signify that one can play tricks with him, but he certainly swims gently to the shore and opens his mouth for food rather like the bears on our own Mappin Terraces.

We are told that he was a neat and expeditious executioner and never made a botch of the business like Charles-Henri Sanson at the execution of De Lally, who had to call in his paralysed father to do the job for him. There is no record of Nlutemba making errors at his job!

Now, in his old age, he is sacred and seemingly content; the only executioner to be canonised: especially in his lifetime.
AND THE DEAD SHALL RISE UP

When Chief 'Nkatosi died, he was reported and buried with such extraordinary speed that Marefu,* the magistrate, became very suspicious, and requested me to go to the place of burial and order an exhumation—as the sheriff; perform an autopsy—as the Government doctor; and return a verdict as to the manner of his demise—as the coroner; then bury him again quickly—as an essential precaution.

'Nkatosi's kraal was tucked well away in a native reserve, and an advance party was sent out immediately to inform the headman, acting as chief till a successor should be appointed, and to make preparations, including turning all hands to build a road to the nearest available spot.

"To build a road" is a euphemism. What actually happens is that every available man sets out with machetes to chop a track through the bush, using the tree trunks to fill in any waterholes or bogs which cannot be circumvented. What the average American car has to stand up to in that sort of work has to be experienced to be believed.

The country round was dry, dusty and desolate. Here and there a few poor patches of tenuous and sad mealies or rapoko were half-heartedly tended. Around the chief's hut, the tops of the muzumbani bushes were brown and lifeless. It is not usual for natives to cultivate muzumbani (monkey nut), but 'Nkatosi had discovered their trade value at local Kaffir stores, and had succeeded in raising a fair crop. In this I think he was unique.

The tussocks of calcined grass stood out upon the baked, dirty brown earth like black woolly pates. The mombe (native cattle) stood silent and still, exhausted by drought and semi-starvation; even the mangy dogs were too apathetic to scratch their fleas as they lay panting in what odd spots of shade they could find.

The air was hot, heavy and syrupy. Heat mirages distorted the skyline.

Behind the kraal there was a hill studded with huge, naked granite outcrops, flanked by riven monolithic blocks as though some giant had been quarrying and had cloven great boulders. The far side of this hill was the burial ground of the chiefs. Natives do not bury as we do. First they twist the body, almost as we truss a chicken—only more so. They get it into a sort of bolus of the smallest possible dimensions. It is then tied tightly into that position. In the hot season the body is buried before rigor mortis, which is long delayed, and sometimes absent, has time to set in. It is, however, necessary to tie the body if it is not to be immediately buried, in case. If rigor mortis did set in, it might otherwise stretch out.

*Marefu = The tall one.
again, and it would be impossible to bundle it up till the rigor had passed. A suitable stone having been located, a hole is dug right down one face of it. Then the hole turns at right angles under the base of the stone and is hollowed out into a little cave.

The ball of flesh and bone is then lowered down the vertical shaft and pushed to the far extremity of the cave, with its lifetime weapons and a selection of personal belongings: at one time there was added a wife or two to help the soul on its way. This charming consideration is now falling into obsolescence—I use obsolescence deliberately because, though strictly forbidden, there is no doubt it does occasionally occur. Also the appurtenances of a long journey are laid along with the weapons and various implements to "lungiza lo umgogwe" (ease the road). Having seen that all is snug, the grave is immediately filled in. This practice is invariable, and it is essential to bear it in mind.

When I arrived, the headman, receiving me with the usual courtesy, was obviously nervous and troubled. One sensed that there was something very fishy going on. He tried, in the curiously circumlocutory manner of his kind, to keep me from going to the grave: It was a poor day—It was too hot for me—The wind was in the wrong direction—"By this time he stinketh" (you're telling me!) All sorts of excuses were made. I told him he need not accompany me if he didn't want to, and that seemed to buck him up no end.

When I arrived at the scene I was surprised to find my boys standing around in helpless uncertainty, while a posse of the locals, in threatening attitudes, held their ground between the boys and the grave.

Obviously there was bad trouble afoot. I called my sergeant, 'Mbanga, for an explanation. 'Mbanga served in the late war with distinction. He was a most intelligent fellow and absolutely trustworthy. We understood each other. A most superior native—a Shangaan, I think. He was the boy who took me to the Jackal Dance. He knew I was interested in native customs and the occult, and quite a lot of information came from him. He it was who used to win the confidence of the nyangas so that they would talk with me. He was so well up in the arcana that I often suspected he had some connection with the nyanga guild himself. Therefore, his explanation was worth attention.

He told me that the propitiation ceremony was for that night. I was invited to attend. Until that happened the spirit of the chief was bound to his body and would be very badly hurt if the body were handled till after the ceremony, when he would finally leave it and I could have it if I wanted it. Till then the nyanga would guard the grave and no one must approach. The nyanga had told them the spirit of 'Nkatosi would surely slay them and their children and all their brothers (a word of very wide significance beyond ordinary blood brotherhood) if they touched his body till he had finished with it.
"The spirit of Nkatosi, who was my friend, will not harm you if the Government protects you. He has spoken," I said loudly for everyone's benefit. "Anyway the Government is stronger than the spirits: even nyangas must obey the Government." This was a dig, and a veiled threat to old Lokanzi the witchdoctor, who was well within earshot. Lokanzi appears many times in these pages, either by name or otherwise. I knew him very well indeed, and he knew just how well I knew him, and what a bundle I had on him if I wanted to split on him. He was one of the cleverest and most loquacious and informative of all the nyangas I knew. He had always been most friendly, and he knew exactly how much I admired his shrewd wit and his cleverness.

"Inkoos," said Mbanga. "I know the power of the Government, but these poor Makalanga are but dung. They do not understand their own mothers (A serious insult!). They are too much afraid."

"Of what are they afraid: that miserable piece of dried sowskin?" Pointing to Lokanzi. (A really fearful insult.) Then I got going. What I said about the nyanga would not sound so horrible to us, but in his own language the things I said would sting the most craven to violence and murder. If only he would show any human feeling the battle was won. I lost.

Squatting motionless before the grave, withdrawn, aloof, miles removed from earthly considerations, only the reddened corneas of his upturned eyes showing, while a thin drool of spittle slowly dripped down his wiry, tufted beard, he made no sign that I had heard.

I strode across and stood over him:

"I see you, Lokanzi," I said loudly. "I see you worker of spells and medicines of death, maker of machilas of death. One word to Marefu and your spirit will become a tuyuwera (an evil familiar: the fate of those deservedly hanged)."

The nyanga's eyes slowly came round from the back of his head. He stared malevolently. He knew perfectly well that what I had said was true. The penalty for making machilas of death is severe, even to hanging if the victim dies.

He was not the slightest bit put out or frightened or even annoyed by the threats.

He rose to his feet from the squatting position, without using his hands, in one smooth motion like that of a snake rearing to strike.

"Inkoos," he said.

Only one word but it held a wealth of meaning. That one word, in that particular tone meant, "I do not work iniquity. I am politely calling you chief, but I don't give a damn for you really. You are entitled to go for me because we are at cross-purposes. You don't mean a word of it, and you know damn well you won't tell Marefu. I don't give a hoot if you do. You are the Government and I will have to submit. Placate me
a little, and let me save my face, and we will get on splendidly, damn your eyes.” Every word of that and a lot more in the single word, Inkoos. Moreover, he knew that I knew exactly what he meant.

The Government: and I was in the circumstances the Government: L’état, c’est moi: also had its “face”. Deadlock with a witchdoctor would never do.

“Send your men away; I will send mine, and we will talk,” I said.
Again he said one word, and the men fled.
I told 'Mbang to take the boys and rustle up some skoff. So we three were left alone.

Lokanzi and I, with the uneasy body of 'Nkatosi below us, away from the glare of the sun burning in the unbroken blue of the shining vault of Heaven. The fierce sun drawing the last moisture from the cracked earth in a shimmering movement of air which threw every object out of focus. Around us the great, bald, granite outcrops burned with visible heat. Two aasvogel,* black specks high in the brilliant air, wheeled slowly round. On the ground not a blade of bleached grass moved: not a leaf stirred in the trees. Over all and through all the unutterable silence of full day.

Ninety miles away was the nearest village of twelve white families; the magistrate, the postmaster, the hotel proprietor, the garage owner, the bank staff of one, the mine manager, the police sergeant, the magistrate’s clerk, four store-keepers.

Thirty miles away, Harry Schmuiden, of doubtful nationality, lived entirely alone in his Kaffir store.

If your desire is to feel really alone in an empty world, step into my mosquito boots at that moment.

Two men; a white doctor from a modern university; a black doctor trained and educated in a guild far older than any bricks and mortar house of learning, a fresh grave, and nothing but the rim of the world vibrating in the heat.

I think the penalty for giving a native white man’s drink was at that time three years’ hard labour. I did the usual: drank half the flask and handed the rest to Lokanzi.

Lokanzi had no difficulty with the flask. He drained it at a gulp, leaving a little drop (a very little one) to pour on the ground in the usual libation of politeness. He smacked his withered lips and shook his head solemnly, meaning, “I know you didn’t oughter a done it, but that’s the stuff to give ‘em.”

I explained the situation to him. He repeated what M’banga had told me.

“It’s no good,” I said. “I must do the orders of the Government.”

Already the smell was overpowering, and I began vaguely to wonder why—through all that earth—not usual.

*Aasvogel = death birds = Vultures.
On the boys' return I ordered immediate exhumation, and no nonsense about it.

Lokanzi, with that fatality so typical of the native, resumed his squatting without further protest.

"What I do, I must do," I said as a sort of apology. He paid no attention. He was deeply entranced again. As the natives have it, his soul was walking with the akishi (spirits).

The boys reluctantly picked up their mattocks and spades, and slowly and fearfully approached the grave, under a battery of goading insults from me.

One of them at last, with a sort of despairing vicious thrust, dug his spade in the newly-turned earth. A few stones rattled down the hollow shaft. With grunts of real terror they all flung down their implements and fled.

I remembered wondering vaguely how the smell of death could have penetrated through all that earth. How the thin covering had been suspended over the mouth of the grave—obviously to deceive me, I do not know. The sorcery of it very effectively unmanned the boys.

After a considerable amount of frightened chatter, many orders, and insults, and some loss of temper they were induced to return. Then they were so frightened and nervous that even the menace of a shambok would not induce them to descend the grave.

Finally I took the ropes myself and went down, not very happily either. The stench was too awful to describe.

Now the second curious thing happened. Instead of being tightly rolled into a ball and pushed right under the stone base, the body lay, in two blankets, stretched straight out at the foot of the vertical shaft—an unheard-of thing. I very narrowly escaped treading on it in my surprise. I saw no spears nor any impedimenta of travel nor yet any "medicine" in the grave. As quickly as possible I passed the ropes under the body, which I could feel quite definitely as I did so—remember that—and had the corpse hauled to the surface.

Lokanzi took no notice whatever of these manoeuvres, he was still apparently dead on his haunches.

No sooner was the body laid on the ground than the boys fled again. 'Mbanga would not suffer himself the indignity of running, but he walked away to the car as though he had some urgent business there.

By this time, it is admitted, I was disgracing myself, much to my disgust, by being uncontrollably sick. Surely no body ever smelt like that one. 'Nkatosi's spirit was welcome to it so far as I was concerned. 'Mbanga called me from the distance. He stopped about twenty paces away. In his hand was a bottle of whisky which he had got from the car—stout fellow—"The best medicine when the Inkoos is a little sick," he said. I liked the qualifying adjective. "A little sick"; whew!

So once more we three were alone. This time the body, clearly outlined
Lokanzi the witchdoctor
in its blanket, lay between us and Lokanzi remained in his confounded trance. I don’t think I ever wished for the near presence of a conscious human being so much in my life.

What happened next is quite incredible. I give you my most solemn assurance that it did occur exactly as it will be related. When I discussed it with a large and very learned gathering of the Psychic Research Society, I was told of similar cases in history and modern research. Be that as it may, I do not want to have anything to do with another case of that kind.

I laid out my post-mortem instruments, and flicked back the covering blanket. There was nothing there. Even though I could see the outline and feel the comparatively cold flesh as I grasped the blanket, there was nothing there. The top blanket was still grasped in my hand—it seemed as though I couldn’t let go of it. The lower blanket, neatly folded lengthways, lay on the ground. At the top end, where the head had been, there was a stain of stuff which looked like dried brains and blood.

Now it was my turn to be afraid. I was sweating with an uncanny sort of fear when I shook the old bag of bones violently out of his trance. Finally I had to kick him hard. He came round slowly as though he had been chloroformed.

What I said to him when he did eventually come round was nobody’s business. The unshakable feeling of psychic, oppressing fear lent added venom to my tongue.

"Inkoos," the old man said calmly, tenderly feeling the place where I had kicked him. "His spirit will not return till tonight. Can I travel among the dead for his spirit?"

"Damn his bloody spirit," I shouted. "It’s not his spirit, but his body I want. See that tree over there. I will hang you on that tree when the sun goes down if you don’t produce his body."

Lokanzi stood up and came very near to me—a thing he had never dared to do—nor did he ever do it again in all our long acquaintance. Normally it is a thing no native would ever dream of doing. I honestly believe that he was still entranced and spirit-impelled. Those who understand the native customs will understand why. Toe to toe, he stared right into my eyes, all the naïveté of age-old sin in his veiled regard.

"The spirit of ‘Nkatosi tells me," he said slowly and distinctly, with no expression: as if he were repeating a lesson. "That no mortal hands will touch his body till he has finished with it tonight. He has been slain, and his spirit is very powerful and very angry. If mortal hands touch his body, he will not be revenged."

There was no rancour in the tones, no nothing. He recited them in his own tongue in a dull monotone.

"I don’t want to touch his damned body," I said. "Tell his spirit I won’t lay a finger on his body, but I must see it. Tell his spirit that the
Government will not permit his heir to be chief till I give true words about how he died. Tell his spirit I am his friend. If he has been brought to death, I will revenge him. I will smell out his enemy and kill him. Tell his spirit that."

The nyanga, still standing close to me, did not move. Only his eyes moved. They turned right round into his head. Slowly they came back. "Nkatosi's spirit says, I see your heart. It is well. You may see my body, but I must take it away if you touch it."

"It is well," I said. "Now you old sinner, where is the damned body?" Lokanzi pointed. "Nazi," he said (over there).

When I had first attacked the witchdoctor, I had flung the top blanket away on the ground. Now, as I turned quickly, it was back again in its original position, outlining the corpse. "Oh, no you don't," I said, or its native equivalent. "You don't catch me again. You open the blanket this time."

Lokanzi walked slowly over to the corpse.

I stood on one side and he the other. I watched him with all possible concentration.

He leant over slightly and talked. He appeared to be talking to his dead chief. I don't know. He was using that confounded secret language again, and I couldn't understand a word.

HE DID NOT TOUCH THE BLANKET, nor did his hands go anywhere near it. I did not take my eyes off him for one second.

He straightened himself. I involuntarily glanced down. The top blanket was rolled aside and there was the stinking corpse of 'Nkatosi. No doubt about it. I knew him well and instantly recognised him. I did not see the blanket open. I did not see it move.

I would not have touched that body at that moment for all the diamonds on the Rand. Keeping very carefully from any possible contact I looked it over. The base of the skull, turned to one side—I could have sworn it was not in that position at first—had been battered in. On the lower blanket, directly beneath the horrid hole in the skull, was a mess of dried brains and blood.

That night 'Nkatosi came to his propitiation ceremony. I was there. Shall we go on?

There are the facts: and facts they are. There are some similar manifestations mentioned in early accounts of major witchcraft. Beyond that I must leave them to you.

They are far beyond my meagre powers of explanation. Personally I was there and know I was not hoodwinked. It was all so unspectacular, so almost one might say matter-of-fact. I accept it as a psychic manifestation of the first order, exactly as it occurred. There it was. Why go outside it and complicate what is really a very simple issue?

I know this, and so will you after we have been to the propitiation. 'Nkatosi's earthbound spirit was soon freed, and he was revenged.
CHAPTER TWELVE

PROPITIATION

The essence of most African religions is the propitiation by the individual of the sanctified spirits of his immediate ancestors; of his father, mother, generic brothers and, in lessening degree, the preceding generation, sometimes reaching back into the dim past.

There is a basic resemblance here to our prayers to the saints. It follows logically that propitiation by all his subjects is called for when a reigning chief passes on.

Whereas the ancestral spirits of “the common man” can easily communicate their desires to their immediate living relatives (or relicts), it follows naturally that a chief could not condescend, or even find the time, to make known his desires to each of his subjects individually; so, therefore, the dead chief calls, through his favourite nyanga, a general convocation of his people, and makes known his will to them collectively. It is all so simple and logical. The propitiation boils down to a jolly and friendly evening, and is such a commonplace that jokes are made about it. There is the story, for instance, of the Bantu chief who was very fond of the bottle in life. There were many jokes and a great argument as to how much beer his spirit could manage to swallow. To solve the problem there was held a competition among the best boozers in the tribe to discover how much could be drunk going all out. They discovered that colossal figure and laid TEN TIMES the amount before the chief at the ceremony. It is said that he drank the lot, after which magnificent effort he was, not surprisingly, unable to find his way to the shades and fell into the Zambesi. A crocodile grabbed him and piloted him on his way: since when that particular tribe will not harm any crocodile. That is a true story whether you believe it or not.

This instance, and there are others, is set down to show that the propitiation ceremony is a natural, joyful business without any sinister significance.

The paucity of written authority for the return of the august dead to make their will known to the living is surprising. There are certain early medieval Irish and Celtic references, if you have a mind to look them up, but they are anything but concise. There is also, of course, the witch-produced spirit of Samuel, expressing his will to Saul, to be remembered; but, on the whole, literature is strangely silent on what must be a fairly common phenomenon. As to 'Nkatosi’s propitiation, to which you will remember we were invited, there was no suggestion of the unusual. It was taken for granted that we would understand that it was a perfectly normal procedure. There was no stealth: no precaution: no suggestion of "under cover" preparation.
So far as I could gather the whole business, except for poor old Lokanzi’s part, for he became painfully exhausted, was a particularly convivial and happy occasion.

There was considerable business afoot. All the pother and activity of preparation of a feast for everyone. Unlike the Melanesians, the African natives, south of the equator, are not noted for their ceremonial feasts. If some white man kills an elephant or other big game, there is an occasional stew-up: almost a rarity nowadays: otherwise there are few particular occasions for feasting, except at such ceremonies as the one in which we were about to take part, more or less as guests.

The native larders are never well stocked and, as far as comestibles went, it was a poor effort. On the other hand the universal beer was flowing freely as usual.

Large petrol cans of it had been lying around in batches for the sun to ferment it. Though “green” it is potent stuff. It is made with rapoko—a kind of millet—a fermenting agent, a sort of natural yeast, and recently if they can get it at the Kaffir store, “oppos” (hops). It is sour and fairly full-flavoured. Not particularly palatable, but not markedly unpleasant. From a doctor’s point of view it had one very good feature: it reacted violently on the kidneys. I used gallons of it by every possible means in cases of blackwater fever—where the kidneys fail to work. It acted like a charm. All that is by the way.

All the petrol supplies in South Africa come in large petrol tins, and these tins are everywhere in evidence. Every little farmstead has them, painted red, in lines on the stoep, instead of flower pots, filled with pink climbing begonias and other plants. Every native woman uses them for carrying water on her head; they fill them right up to the brim and never spill a drop. They have a trick of placing a layer of leaves over the water which they say, keeps it in place: it is a little difficult to see how. It is a case more of faith than mechanics.

They are put to every conceivable use except one. So far the natives, in distinction from the dwellers in the American bad lands and great river swamps, have not yet learned to flatten them out and make huts with them. Here and there one sees signs that even that ultimate horror may not be far off. Only the worship of ancestral custom holds it off. If and when it does come, and I am afraid it is only a matter of time, there will be an end of the last vestige of romance in native habitation.

With a sorrowful, but alas, I fear, prophetic eye, I see chiefs’ prefabricated houses in imitation stucco of “Brummagem” origin. I see the disgraceful rabbit hutches which, in these days of glorious victory, are the “homes fit for heroes”, carted in due course to Africa and dumped on the mine compounds for the native workmen. It is only a short step from that to native “unions” and shop-stewards and then—good-bye to all the charm of Africa.
'Nkatosi's kraal is more busily active than it has been for many moons. Every fire from every hut is put out and thoroughly cleaned of ashes which are taken out from the village and dumped. The witchdoctor, Lokanzi, is supplying medicine to hang from every roof-tree. The whole place undergoes a ceremonial and actual purification. The cattle are herded and kraaled. The clearing before the huts is tidied and swept and meticulously examined for anything which might be unpropitious, especially any vestige of ash or burnt wood.

The chief's throne is placed with its back to the moon. There must be some significance in this, for the moon's position is most carefully worked out: that is to say, what its position will be at the time set for the ceremony. Though the people and the nyanga faced the moon, the chief's face was in shadow throughout, right to the end of the business. Only after his farewell did he face the moon. All the dead chief's personal belonging are placed round the throne. As darkness claps down with the suddenness and finality of a giant's hand snuffing the candle of day, bow ls of food begin to make their appearance. Mealie meal with bits of meat, probably tortoise, in it, swimming in a gravy of boiled ants. Other local delicacies such as ox flesh which has been salted and buried in the ground for a week, and a sort of porridge of plantains—wild bananas—add an unpalatable variety.

Food is brought to us and a native stool for me to sit on. Fortunately, though I did not notice the natives eating any, there was a variety of fruit, plantains, grenadillas, oranges from a citrus estate. We will keep strictly to fruit!

To native nostrils that awful meat stew may be very savoury, but the stench of it is with me as I write.

We were also given a large gourd of native beer. This was not the general brew but was a royal vintage, red in colour, suspiciously mild in flavour, with the kick of a mule. It is bitter but quite palatable.

Before giving it to us an old crone is made to drink some and carefully observed. As she survives, it is considered safe. It is a great honour to be given this beer. It is the same potent brew which the chief will presently drink.

We are told with extreme politeness that we can drink as much as we like, but it will greatly help 'Nkatosi's spirit if we do not eat till the ceremony is well on its way. All the natives have fasted since dawn.

We try a small glass of the plebeian beer. As that particular beer goes it was not at all bad. Fortunately there was plenty of "oppos" from Harry Schumuiden's store in it, which succeeded in masking the rank bitterness and sour taste of the rapoko. It reminded one of bitter beer gone sour. It would have been very sour indeed but the makers had used wild honey as the fermenting agent.

Large bowls of food with tins of beer were now brought and set before
the chief's throne beneath which was a little platform made from a length of tree trunk supported on crossed stakes, underlying which, and supporting the throne, skins were laid as a sort of carpet, while a really magnificent lion skin was draped over the throne. This "throne" was of native manufacture and was a fair copy of an ordinary, armed office chair.

Lokanzi told me later that the reason for the carpet and platform was that the chief's spirit must not touch the ground till he was ready for the final journey. If any part of the throne or footrest touched the ground the chief would not be able to make use of his body or make his presence known to the people.

The people squatted in an irregular half-oval in front of, but well back from the throne, leaving a large empty space before it. Some headmen sat on karosses before the people.

In deference to them my boys kept well out of the way in the shadows. They too were supplied with beer and food. It seemed that unless everyone ate at the proper time it weakened the "fluence".

I saw no women present; not even the chief's widows; which I thought was rather surprising; nor were the ubiquitous piccanins, so adept at poking their inquisitive noses where they were not wanted, in evidence anywhere. They had evidently been very safely packed off.

I was told that, at such an important affair of State, women and children were strictly barred: most unusual.

Somewhere drums began to beat. Not being able to see the drummers I could not locate them. These drums have an eerie ventriloquial beat and, unless you can actually spot them, it is impossible to place them. They seemed to come from all over the area.

Lokanzi, the witchdoctor, was a headman. On the Government files he appears as such. Naturally his other, and far more lucrative occupation, was neither registered nor officially hinted. He sat before the throne drinking some concoction of his own, doubtless a very potent drug, silent, aloof, alone, conversing inwardly with the spirits.

'Mbanga, who squatted unobtrusively behind me in the shade of a tree, whispered in his own tongue, "It is a good night. The Chief will surely come. Before that the nyanga must 'die a little'." As he said the words Lokanzi stood up and talked. I could not understand his words in that extraordinary secret language of theirs which they employ on these occasions. As the Roman liturgy is in Latin, so their native liturgies seem to be in some archaic tongue.

'Mbanga, in a sort of whispered running commentary, told me he was telling the life story of the dead chief, recounting his many excellencies in extravagant phrases—to please his spirit and make him want to come to them—telling them that 'Nkatsi's spirit had signified that he would come to the ceremony gladly, and would tell the people what his will was for them, and that he would tell them who was his rightful heir.
Before this harangue he had lighted a little fire before the throne, of new wood, which had been specially cut, and whereon no fire or any burning had been. This sounds simple but it is not so. Every year most of the trees are burnt or singed in the fires of the dry seasons, and the wood has to be selected with great care.

By the end of his talk its small flames were burning brightly. Lokanzi approached this fire now and threw medicine in it making the flames burn with acrid smoke and curious colours. The scent of the smoke, which appeared to circulate with a motion of its own, entirely disregarding the direction of the wind, was pungent and had a slightly stupefying effect—after smelling it one felt a little drunk and lightheaded.

He was quite a while doing things before the throne. As I am trying to make an accurate report of an actual occurrence, I resist the temptation to draw on the imagination, and confess I could neither see clearly, in the thick smoke, nor understand what he was about. At a guess I should say he was strongly urging 'Nkatosi not to disappoint his people, and giving him ocular inducements to return. Admittedly that is a sheer guess. He told me afterwards that he was inducing all the tribal spirits to give the chief the power to return. I am not prepared to say whether that is true or not.

One of the things I did see Lokanzi do was the planting of a curiously carved stick, with what looked like a shrivelled human head upon it, at the side of the throne. Examining this stick at my leisure, I found it to have a very fair representation of a human head made of skin—presumably human—on to which was sewn a tonsure of human hair. In this particular part of the country this is said to be a very powerful invocatory spirit. In others parts I have seen somewhat similar gruesome objects used for other and more sinister purposes.

Suddenly Lokanzi howls. It is the most extraordinary sound. A shrill, penetrating ululation, inhuman, uncanny, ineffably sad. As the sound of it rings round the assembly a great silence falls. There is silence for a full minute. Then the drums begin softly and Lokanzi dances. The soft drums become louder and louder, and more and more fierce in their rhythm as the dance progresses.

Though the dance is the usual frenzied working of all the limbs, the same, lunatic, dervish whirling insanity, it is not like any dance I have ever seen before or after. Froth and blood and sweat positively cascade from the body of the dancer.

And now another unusual thing happens. As Lokanzi dances everyone, without volition, stands up. Pleasure, approbation, royal salutes all necessitate sitting down. It was most peculiar to see the people dragged to their feet. I can hear 'Mbanga grunting against the impulse before he rises and, so powerful is the influence, I also find myself on my feet.

The trance hits Lokanzi with great suddenness. At one moment he is
dancing madly, then, in a flash, he is lying on the ground as dead as a corpse.

For a while nothing happens. There is absolute silence, the people stand like graven images. 'Mbanga whispers hoarsely, "Now he will come."

The silence is shattered with a great shout. All the people as one man squat on the ground clapping their hands. I find myself unwittingly sitting again. It is the royal salute.

'Nkatosi, the chief with whose corpse I had but a few hours since encountered so much trouble, is sitting quite unconcernedly on his throne. I did not see him come, but I saw him there as plainly as I can this sunny afternoon see the policeman on his beat outside my window.

Everyone present sees him as clearly as I do. He did not move or walk to the throne. One second it is empty—and the next—he is there. We rub our eyes and look away and blink to erase the vision, but he is still there.

"I see you, people," he says in a perfectly natural voice and in the precise accents I know so well.

"We see you, chief," the people answer him.

"I see you, Lokanzi, my brother," he says.

There is no answer. Lokanzi is still "dead".

Three times the chief repeats his greeting without reply.

Then I saw the carved, human-headed stick move across the intervening space and enter the body of the apparently dead man. Now this stick is a material thing of carved wood and skin and hair and God knows what else. I saw it and handled it afterwards. Believe soberly that, though these are deep and dangerous waters, there is no fancy about the things we are seeing. All my training and mode of life is a complete negation of the fanciful and imaginative, nor do I give a hoot for what may be said of this incredible business. All I can do is repeat soberly and as carefully as I can, what I saw.

As soon as the stick entered Lokanzi he sat up, then wearily got to his feet. Where he had lain there was a distinct black shadow on the ground.

"I see you, my brother," 'Nkatosi says again.

This time the witchdoctor replies in a weak and quavering voice, and he invites the chief to partake of the food and drink.

The dead chief raises the dipper of beer and drinks. He puts his fingers into the mess of food and eats.

With all too vivid memories of the recently seen, vile and stinking corpse, I feel none too well at this demonstration.

I want desperately to go from that place, yet such is the psychic pull of the events, when all the others begin to stuff themselves, I find myself, without volition, eating fruit and drinking beer. I cannot recollect any taste whatever.
One second the throne is empty and the next he is there
This is no mirage: no conjured up ectoplasmic simulacrum. I saw him as clearly as in the noonday sun. I can still see him so clearly as I write that he might be sitting opposite me. I seem to hear him say, "I see you, my brother." Sometimes I wonder if he and others—that is a dangerous by-path.

Let's have a look at him again. He is clad in a rusty brown skull cap of what looks like coarse linen. I could swear it was stained with fresh blood. Circling his forehead is a band with white ornaments on it, plaques of what look like pearl matrix. Over an amorphous shirt with tails almost down to his knees, he wears an old army jacket with dull brass buttons. There is a brass, crescent-shaped ornament hanging from a chain and lying on his chest. There is a decorated sort of belt round his waist and he wears a leopard skin across his left shoulder.

While eating and drinking he keeps up a soft desultory conversation with Lokanzi.

Afterwards he speaks to all the people. His diction and language are clear and intelligent.

He tells them who his proper successor is, and he names the man who murdered him and describes the method of his “taking off”.

"Go get that man," I whisper to 'Mbang. "Haul him in. Get him to the car and post every man to guard him. Don’t let him get away.”

'Mbang silently glides away.

Now for a confession. Until I had witnessed this scene, I knew, of course, all about alleged propitiation ceremonies, but I had not the slightest belief in their genuineness. I believed that they were entirely nyanga trickery. The sole reason that I stayed was because I knew that somehow the murderer would be named—and we “wanted” that man badly.

I therefore approached the ceremony in completely cynical disbelief. Possibly that attitude of mind is important. It is not difficult to imagine imposition on a crowd of intensely believing and faithful natives: but, if you think such an imposition can be put over on so hard-boiled an agnostic as I was at that time, then I must take leave to disagree.

We cannot get away with it as easily. These propitiations are without the slightest doubt, genuine materialisations of the dead. How they come about: what power can call them into actuality, I am not prepared to hazard a guess, but that they do happen admits of no equivocation whatever.

While we argue 'Nkatosi is still there. The rest of his most interesting speech is like any other after-dinner oration. He finishes it leisurely, takes a last swig of beer and—no, he does NOT vanish into thin air.

For the first time he rises, and for the first time, his feet actually touch the earth. After that he makes no more sound, and from that moment he gradually begins to look less material as it were. He turns away from the
people to face the moon, and it is then that, for the first time, we see the
dim outline of the horrid bashed-in wound in the back of the skull.

He walks slowly and majestically down the lane of the moon, and thus,
naturally and simply, sets out on his last long journey.

The people talk a little in subdued tones. Lokanzi says, “It is finished.”
The people, who are all pretty drunk, silently slink away.

Lokanzi walks very slowly and wearily over to where we are sitting
deep in thoughts we never thought to have.

We look at each other for a long time. I am trying to gauge exactly how
far the nyanga was responsible for what appeared, and he is fathoming my
thoughts. He hands me the stick which I saw entering his body. He says
no word. I look at it and hand it back. “It is very powerful,” he says.

“I think it is you who are the strong one,” I say politely, knowing how
the remark will please him. His ravaged face does not change. “Inkoos,”
he says wearily, “I am very tired.”

“Sleep in peace; we will talk tomorrow,” we wish him.

He drags himself off.

I go to my car, whose seats let down like a bed. I sleep there on the
veld in the reserve.

All night I dream I am walking with ’Nkatosi on a long, upward-
sweeping moonlit road away from the troubles and perplexities of the
world, into a land of peace shining brighter as we progress. Excited
shouting brings me back to mundane things.

My boys have found the murderer. He is quite dead. He has been dead
for hours. Nor could I, nor the pathologists, discover any cause of death.
To tell the truth, I did not expect to do so. I was ready to believe anything
then. I believed that ’Nkatosi’s spirit killed him by means beyond physical
investigation.

Heigh ho, that was upwards of fifteen years ago.

I still believe the same thing. How else can you explain a hundred per
cent fit young man, suddenly dying at such a precise juncture?

If ’Nkatosi did do so, he is far beyond our puny retribution.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A LITTLE MORE ABOUT WITCHDOCTORS

No good purpose would be served by long and didactic arguments on
the phenomena of the propitiation, but a few passing thoughts may
not come amiss.

The question as to whether, in extreme circumstances, the dead can,
with permission of the Lord of the Dead, return or not is one which has
absorbed the greatest brains of every century. The more unchanged man's estate through the years, the easier he finds it to accept the possibility. As we have said before, they regularly return in friendly conclave with their relations and progeny in some parts of the world. Bali is a notable example. There they have their own special seats and nightly join the family circle to discuss current affairs. You and I my friend, hardened, over-civilised cynics that we are, and believe me, despite all we have seen and shall yet see, I am the more cynical of the two of us: you and I say, "That's all very well, but do they really return?" I know so well that attitude. However we deplore our agnosticism, we find it awfully difficult to believe these things. The answer here, and it is an evasion, is that it were the most damnable heresy, unthinkable to any Balinese, to doubt the actuality for a moment; they are naturally and completely certain.

If we profess Christianity, or the Jewish faith, and believe our religion, we cannot possibly doubt that the dead do return, not only the corporal dead, but also spirits can put on flesh and manifest themselves to us.

It will be recalled that the Patriarch fought all night with a spirit (angel = spirit) and, according to the account, it was a prolonged and exhausting fight in which he was wounded. Now you cannot fight with a spirit on the physical plane unless the spirit has taken on a physical entity. Fleshly manifestations abound throughout the Bible, both of spirits and of the dead. Saul actually had a conversation with Samuel after he was dead, and recognised his fleshly form. God, we are told, is a spirit, and we read again and again of physical manifestations of Jehovah. Almost the entire difference between Judaism and Christianity is whether the Son of God could, and did, take a fleshly body, without any human impregnation of the ovum, and dwell with men. And in this case we have an even more striking instance of the dead returning. The actual dead body of Jesus was, we are explicitly told, taken away and reanimated by His spirit—in fleshly form as before death. And then returned in its fleshly state to its spiritual home.

To draw any parallel with 'Nkatosi would be blasphemy, from which may God protect us. But one cannot help noting the similarity of procedure both of the moving corpse and the propitiation. Also one cannot escape being reminded of the meal by the Judean lakeside partaken of by the Risen One and His disciples.

No apology is tendered for the very frequent references herein to Biblical authority. It is suggested that they are so obvious and interesting, to say nothing of instructive, that they really are called for. There is a further strong impulse towards their inclusion. It is this. Whenever these subjects are discussed it is those who make loud and public professions of belief in the Bible, who are so agnostic as to pretend to be shocked at the very idea of the existence of spirits: the powers of spirits good and evil: the actuality of witchcraft: the possibility of psychic phenomena of any
order, and go straight away and offer prayers to a spirit, and in many cases to the saints which to be anything but a hollow useless sham, MUST predicate that there are potent living spirits existing within psychic earshot of us all.

Nearly all missionaries, who should, of all professing religionists, know better, come, alas, within this category of the illogical.

It is to confound their unbelief that these frequent references are made. It is to drive home John Wesley’s point that no one who professes Christianity can possibly doubt the powers of the spirits of good and evil, and the availability of the latter to those who voluntarily bond themselves to the devil. (See John Wesley’s protest against disbelief in witchcraft.)

I am no theologian, nor am I by any means “religious”, I am making these analyses purely from the standpoint of logic.

There is, therefore, no religious bar to the actuality of the feat of 'Nkatosi’s spirit. On the other hand, it is not easy to account for the removal and return of the physical corpse. Even though it happened before me, I am not sufficiently in a state of grace so far as that phenomenon is concerned, to accept the thing without reserve. Yet there is no explanation other than actual transvection, of which there is some considerable body of evidence, to fill the bill.

Alas, it has to be left in that unsatisfactory state, purely for the lack of sufficient occult erudition on my part to take it further. There is just one thought. Do you think that one so near to the spirits as Lokanzi, and so psychically powerful could induce the appearance of a thing so contrary to the natural laws, in glaring sunlight, with no faith and no co-operation on my part—or not? If not, one is left with the actuality of physical transvection as the sole alternative.

I find no difficulty in the phenomenon of the return of 'Nkatosi, nor, given the intense faith of his people, in his ability to address them, nor yet in his power of slaying his murderer by spiritual means. The thing I boggle at is the intensely physical acts of eating and drinking.

Nothing would have convinced me of that if I had not seen it myself. You cannot reverse the katalytic chemistry of decay, far advanced in this case, unless you accept the case of Lazarus, a case I find (as a doctor) extremely difficult to believe without predicking an entirely new body.... If this is true, the “body” of 'Nkatosi would have only the appearance of corporality, not the actuality. And if only the appearance, how could such a phantom swallow and digest? If, on the other hand, we accept the possibility of the reanimation, with chemical re-synthesis of the actual body, then the imbition and deglutition are eminently possible. It is all very difficult.

I must leave the facts as they are and the explanation to cleverer brains than mine. Mr. Montague Summers, than whom there is no more erudite
observer, very kindly, as you have read, has written a foreword for me, and I particularly asked him to give his immensely authoritative views on this. I refer you back to them.

* * *

To return to the witchdoctor and look a little more closely into his functions and activities, one must remember that, though there are no nyanga universities, he is not "just anyone". It is not possible by taking thought to become a witchdoctor. The fraternity are a very close ring, and though I do not know anything of the initiation ceremony, I can say that the office seems to be predestined from birth, and necessitates membership of a guild extremely old and not admitting new members, i.e., members from outside the hereditary guild. The preparatory period is very long and very secret. It is quite impossible to get any sort of information, but as there are no practising witchdoctors under middle age; at least I have never seen or heard of one; the induction must be long and arduous.

It has been said already that the average native is no fool, and right here, before we go any farther into the study of our bizarre witchdoctors, let us debunk a little more of the popular conceptions, nay more: some of the learned conceptions as we shall see.

The main difference between the African native and the pride of the civilised democracies is that, whereas the latter is the synthetic product of plebeian artificialities, the former is a genuine child of Nature, therefore his arts, industries and crafts, his ratiocination and his psyche, conform the more with the natural order of things.

We have, more's the pity, travelled so far from our primal destiny that it is difficult for us to comprehend the natural order of anything: especially man.

Our religions are so overlaid with the myriad obscurations of "progress", that they have become polysected into innumerable watertight cells calling themselves all sorts of names from Cymru Methodistiadd to Seventh-day Adventists: our medicines so terrifically complicated products of inorganic and organic and biological chemistries that no one can even begin to pronounce the scientific names: our governmental systems so complex that no one government can agree with the supposed ideologies of any other: our diet so artificialised that most of our food values are lost before we eat, and feeding us seems today to be a problem beyond the power of man to solve: our conversation degenerated into a cloak for our thoughts: our whole physical and psychic make-up of a complexity in the mazes of which have been lost almost all our pristine endowments.

Now for the contrast.

The religion of the native is the simple faith of the genus of men with whom "God walked in the garden in the cool of the day": their medicines
unaltered herbs in their raw state: their government a straightforward allegiance and faith and obedience in and to patriarchal constituted authority and traditional law: their diet the fruits of the earth as they come to hand: their conversation, apart from its ever-present guard against listening spirits, bald statements of their thoughts in terms of garnered tradition and present observation: their whole physical and psychic make-up in direct accord with their primordial state. Is it any wonder that, in our "advancement" we find it so difficult to understand their naturalness?

They are not heathen.

They have a far greater natural education than we, who have lost so much of Nature in turning wheels and pursuing elusive shekels. They are so far removed from our complexity that our most erudite are occasionally led to ludicrous deductions. Perhaps the most glaring examples are the categoric statements by two of our acknowledged authorities, both of whom have asserted, for no reason at all, that these primitives "cannot distinguish between humans and animals". With immense regard for the learning and wisdom of these professors, such statements from such sources are, in their sheer futility, surprising, to say the least.

It is instructive to discover the genesis of such fatuity. Natives believe in the possibility of lycanthropy: so do many learned men, and our own British arcana is crammed with instances. They believe in the possibility of animals understanding human speech and, in certain circumstances vice versa. Apart from the very common belief, amply proved, in part at least: "My dog understands everything I say to it", and the enormous number of show animals which understand their verbal orders, the same comment equally applies. Have we not recently heard of an actual case of a talking dog?

Whether these early beliefs are mere superstition, or we, losing them in our progress into more and more complexity, are in error, is beside the point.

To deduce from such beliefs that those who hold them do so because they cannot distinguish between a monkey and a man, seems to be an example of erudition gone mad.

These primitives can distinguish without the slightest difficulty. The only meat in the whole carcass of this error is that they have a greater and closer affinity to the "beasts that perish" than we.

Witchdoctors are often, like Lokanzi, headmen in their own right; that is to say, men who are chosen by their paramount chiefs to administer the law by reason of their mental superiority, or those who hold the office by hereditary accession.

They require, in the pursuit of their profession, certain facets of knowledge which are most interesting and instructive to the inquirer.

These are: a comprehensive code of ethics, of tables of affinity (far and
away more complicated than ours, including totem affinities, and brothers away beyond generic relationship), and of the law; a pharmacopoeia both medicinal and spiritual; an encyclopaedic knowledge of the persons and families (both alive and dead) of every member of the tribe, and often neighbouring tribes as well; a complete knowledge of religion; a working knowledge of the creation of the world, constellations, and every living thing; a crude but often effective surgery; an ethnographic and geographical knowledge of the habits, powers, and dwelling places of all the spirits, good and bad; an interpretation of the mind of God. All this and more in addition to the vast world of spiritualistic potentials, sorceries, and the like.

It is not surprising that the witchdoctor fraternity is a closed ring; that their induction is long; and that, in short, they are knowledgeable and interesting fellows, particularly when it is recalled that the whole sum of their knowledge must be acquired without one single textbook, or any written word.

And we are told they cannot even distinguish between men and animals! It were almost as egregiously foolish to rate the nyanga as a saint. He is, to our way of thinking most certainly, in the physical sense, a devil in many ways. That does not detract from his essential usefulness.

Now as to his religion. It is simple and primal, but it cannot be gainsaid that it is of a fairly high order. He recognises God as the creator, as the essence of what is good, as the universal provider. Mostly, in his theology, evil spirits are not, as in ours, those who rebelled against God, but those whose essential evil on earth was such that God refused to accept them in the fields of the blessed, because the character of man does not change after his demise.

Surely this is a simplified version of the theory of Heaven and Hell. Unfortunately for him there is no "great gulf fixed" so that they who would come back from the safe prison of hell cannot do so. As a result, evil spirits are as omnipresent as good ones, and just as active in the affairs of men.

Curiously enough, despite his very definite idea of God, he does not importune God to intervene in mundane affairs, except on very rare occasions. On the other hand he will take oath by God just as we do.

Nor does God intervene in the eternal warring of the spirits. I am told the explanation is this. When God created the world He used to tell men His will by means of a flying messenger; a sort of spiritual bird (in some tribes this was a physical bird).

Men were always warned when the messages were on their way. One day the messenger stopped on the way in amorous dalliance and lost the message. Men were so busy with their little affairs, and so careless about God's will, that they did not bother to tell Him that the message had gone astray.
This made God very angry, and He said, “Men have gone back from My standard. I will still give them food and rain but they will have to make it themselves (hence rainmaking). I will retire to My home and, apart from looking after them generally, I will let them get on with it without doing any more work Myself.”

Ingenious is it not?

Another belief, which may to some extent account for the professors’ theory, is that God made all animals good and friendly with man. It was the wicked spirits of men, tampering with those of the animals, which lost the animal spirits and let evil spirits come in which gave his bite to the snake, and the enmity and fear of man to the great beasts of the forest.

The thunder is God grumbling when man succeeds in making rain before He is ready to send it. The lightning is the angry spirit which is sent from God to run about the earth and seek out His enemies.

This belief varies with different tribes, but that is about the essence of it. But there are far more aspects of the witchdoctors’ activities than that of theologian.

Here we are treading on delicate ground.

Though we have made a distinction between nyangas and witches, it must be admitted that, on occasion, the difference is in esse not in posse.

The African aspirant to witchcraft invariably knows to whom to resort for his demonic induction—and it is NOT the witchdoctor, who would immediately smell out the devilish hierophant, if he could catch him.

And here we are in a dilemma. The more we delve into African witchcraft, the more we become convinced that there exists a shadowy legion of witchmasters on the same lines as the masters of the European covens, and that their identity is an extremely well-kept secret. It has been suggested that the doctors probably know at least some of these men, but fail to smell them out in order to foster witchcraft, and thus enhance their reputations and maintain their practises. It is a nice ingenious theory, but all my knowledge of witchdoctors, such as it is, rebels against the idea. The kudos which would accrue to the smellers out of a witchmaster is so enormous that I cannot see any nyanga turning down the splendid chance.

It must not be forgotten, in this connection that, though in their heyday the horrid Covenmasters of Europe were rabidly sought after by Church and State alike without let-up or mercy, with all the powers of contemporaneous inquisition and enablement of the law, it was comparatively seldom that they were tracked down and caught.

Believe it or not, there is a great body of practising witches in the civilised world today who, instructed by their witchmasters, still indulge in their demonic and disgusting rites, and yet, except in the West Indies, apathy and agnosticism are such that they are not only practically free to carry out their blasphemous maleficence, but are by the majority not even believed to exist.
Is it any wonder that, with only primitive means of detection, these malignants flourish in Africa? The amazing thing is that Mr. Everyman, aspiring to the craft, can always find them, their antagonists never.

It would seem that there is a very real intelligence service among the legions of hell, avid to instruct seekers where they may find. Be that as it may, witch sabbats and ritualia, private and general, are the most desperate menace of Africa. Every single observer who has put his observations on paper, or even discussed them, is completely unanimous on that score.

One of my working boys, a self-declared witch, who thought himself safe while working for me, told me that he went to a man who knew all the secrets of the devils and who made him a witch against his will. Of course he added that, as soon as he managed to escape the clutches of this fiend, he gave up witchcraft and became a model citizen. Nothing I could do, and it can be guessed I tried hard, would induce him to identify the man.

It is somewhat naïve for a man to declare his innocence of witchcraft, and his abhorrence of it, and at the same time to refuse to betray his instructor. His excuse was that the man was so powerful that he would immediately slay him if he gave away so much as one little thing.

It availed him nothing. He was caught, even in the safety of my compound. One night I was called to see a fire. Maleka’s hut was burning merrily. Inside was the unhappy Maleka, and his two wives, and everything that was his.

The whole thing was a regrettable accident. Maleka must have made up the hut fire too high and it must have caught his roof on fire. If so, it was most queer that neither he nor either of his wives managed to escape. This trussing a fellow up and setting fire to his hut is a not uncommon form of retribution, and is almost impossible to trace.

So passed Maleka, the only self-declared witch, before his condemnation, I ever heard of. So unusual was the occurrence that I have grave doubts as to whether he was a witch at all, either then or ever. The doubts are enhanced by the equally unheard-of repentance of a witch. In medieval trials certain witches protested their recantation, and there is even a record of one becoming a saint. For all that, witches invariably become so ensnared and evilly fascinated by their increasing powers that their habit is to venture farther and farther till they work some mischief which betrays them, rather than give up their nefarious trade.

The natives believed that Maleka was a witch, and I have no doubt that he was clandestinely smelled out, and “accidentally” destroyed for expediency. All the same, the whole thing is very fishy. Personally I am pretty sure he was a fake, and also that he was known, at least to the nyanga, as a fake. If so he was destroyed by those in the know pour encourager les autres.
I have already denied more than once that witchdoctors are witches, and have made an attempt to delineate the reason for such a statement. To be fair, it is a distinction which too often has very little difference.

They are prepared to give seekers horrific talismans known to be used for witchcraft, but by the twisted logic of Africa, they are never held responsible. You remember the akishi (spirit) stick we saw performing such an incredible antic at the propitiation. In some parts of Africa this is exclusively used in witch cult. Not all nyangas can make these disgusting things, but those who can do not hesitate to manufacture them and sell them—at a price. The analogy is that if Mr. Selfridge manufactures and sells conjuring sets, he is not thereby a conjurer. To carry the analogy as far as witch talismans seems to be stretching innocence a long way, but that is how it goes.

They are prepared, if the spirits give them leave, to dispense moonies or wangas (medicines) which are undoubtedly poisonous potions, knowing perfectly well the use to which they will be put; again no one would dream of impugning any but the most immaculate intentions to what is openly and blatantly accessory to murder. In civilised countries, if a chemist sells you arsenical weed killer without suspicion that you will use it to murderous ends, he is innocent, but if he had no more than a reasonable suspicion he might find himself in the dock and, if the fact of his reasonable suspicion were proved beyond doubt, he might well find himself taking the short dawn promenade to eternity. If you definitely told him you intended to use his poison for committing murder and he still sold it to you, there is little doubt that he would dance on air.

The successful plea of the nyanga is that he alone could assess whether the taking off was merited and therefore a righteous act, or not. He would not, so he tells me, think of dispensing lethal means indiscriminately. Before doing so he must stringently consult the beneficial spirits, who could not be in error. If they tell him So-and-so must be removed, then he sells the means whereby the wishes of the spirits can be fulfilled. As pecuniary gain comes into the transaction the argument sounds specious and highly suspect.

Other means of inflicting death are many, but they all rely on one thing: absolute faith on the part of both the would-be murderer and the victim.

One of the less efficient methods is the “machila (stretcher) of death”. It will be recalled that I accused Lokanzi of making these machilas, and I suppose he did, as most of them have little hesitation, but I have no proof. He always strenuously denied the practice to me. These nyangas, once they trust you, do not whitewash themselves much, and quite cheerfully agree that they perform some pretty foul tricks, nor do they mind expatiating on some of their less savoury habits. But there is always considerable reserve. Also it behoves one to take everything they say with a
considerable proportion of salt because of a charming, albeit disingenuous trait. Along with the ordinary muntu and the chiefs, they have an overwhelming desire to please whatever the circumstance. Whenever you ask them for information, they would not think for a moment of disappointing your wishes. What is convenient they will tell you in full. What is inconvenient they will garble as interestingly as they can. What they don’t know they will cleverly make up on the spot. Not often will they admit ignorance, and they are adepts at lying. One tries to sift the grain from the chaff but it is not easy. If these words be read by any of the many who know far more than I of these affairs, it will at any rate give them a laugh if they detect the medicums of chaff unwittingly mixed with the genuine grain. Even then they will admit that they have probably been “taken for a ride” at least as often as I!

The machilas of death—and here, having seen and handled them, and taken part in the trials of the parties concerned, and heard all the evidence at first-hand, I am on firm ground—work in this manner.

“A” has an enemy, sufficiently malignant in actuality, or his imagination, to warrant disposing of. He must go the whole hog without any blunders or it will be the worse for him. He must also go secretly for fear of reprisals on his relatives, or himself, by the family of the soon, if he is lucky, to be deceased. He, therefore, goes to the nyanga and pours out the whole sad story into his sympathetic ears. Having found out what it is all about, the doctor then goes into a trance and visits the land of the tribal spirits to find the truth of it and get his orders. Note how invariably he carries out spirit instructions and never instigates any action himself. It is his invariable getaway.

If the spirits agree, he will instruct the aspirant to call again later when the sun is going to sleep, and bring the agreed price with him. There are certain other things he has to bring, often earth upon which the victim-to-be has made water, wherewith to make medicine. This charmingly impregnated earth is a favourite and allegedly potent ingredient of medicine to another’s harm. I have never heard of it used beneficently, though frequently, as in yeka ‘mtambo, for divination purposes.

Also he must bring pliable saplings of a certain tree. It is useless to name this tree as it has a hundred names. One tribe calls it the mupulam-paka tree (I cannot remember which, but the curious name sticks!).

With these the witchdoctor fashions a small machila. The actual size is of no consequence, I have seen them from very small models to about three-foot-six in length.

This machila, with medicine, is then given to the man who is instructed to wait till the person concerned is safely inside his hut and asleep, then he is to strew the medicine on the path in front of the hut and place the machila on its long axis with the top end leaning against the door of the hut. When the sleeper awakes and opens the door of the hut, the machila
will fall down, and, as the machila falls so will he, and be carried to the burial ground on a similar stretcher.

When this comes off it is certain death. Obviously this is a faith killing. The victim, absolutely certain of his own demise, never thinks there is the slightest hope for him. He has complete faith in the power of the machila: so has the aggressor: so has every member of the tribe. Against such a weight of faith, it is useless to fight. I once took a victim of the machila spell into my hospital and used every means, persuasive, threatening, medicinal, dietetic, everything I could think of, even hypnotism and trance therapy, to stave off the inevitable in a perfectly fit and healthy man who was not without intelligence; all to no purpose. He just died and that was all there was to it. Postmortem revealed no disease in any shape or form, let alone any conceivable cause of death.

The machila is, however, far from infallible, as the essence of the spell is opening the door of the hut and knocking the thing down. If a friend of the victim sees the machila in time, he calls through the back of the hut a warning to the incumbent, telling him to break his way carefully through that part of the building furthest from the door. If he succeeds in doing this without knocking the machila down, a simple feat, he not only escapes, but it is most illogically believed that the spirits were deceived by evil spirits belonging to the would-be murderer, and it goes very hard with the fellow.

If in his demolition he knocks over the machila, or it falls down by any agency: say a sudden gust of wind, very common in those parts: then it is taken that, though guilty, there were extenuating circumstances unknown to the spirits, and he must be brought to trial to state his case before the chief. Sometimes, if his tale is good enough, he gets off, sometimes his partial escape only puts off the evil day.

Note how completely the nyanga is exonerated—as always. It is not possible for him to have misinterpreted the spirits; rather than that, these believers in the infallibility of the spirits will reverse their belief for the occasion.

Death as worked by the machila is very easy to understand. It presents no difficult feature whatever to anyone who knows the muntu. There is, however, another faith killing, having nothing to do with the nyanga at all. It is a killing wherein the victim is neither of an age nor sensibility to understand anything, for he or she is a new-born baby.

In some parts of Africa, though by no means universally, thank goodness, it is believed that multiple births predicate infidelity. The father at once recognises his own child. Thereupon the “bastard” or “bastards” very properly and conveniently die.

At one time they were physically murdered. The alleged bastard* was

* Not to be confused with Bastaard, the proudly borne name of a mixed tribe of various nations of renegade half-whites in Griqualand,
placed head downwards in a large earthenware pot, specially made for the business, on the base of which was placed a thick layer of white-hot charcoal. This process effectually burned the adulterous spirit out of the poor little thing, reducing the affair to the status quo fornicatio, and automatically purifying the adulterous mfasi (wife). After this salutary immolation of the spirit was complete, the wide mouth of the pot was sealed with a fairly hard-drying paste of wild beeswax and animal fat, and the wife was forced to carry the whole thing secretly to the edge of a convenient river after nightfall. Then all the spirits were abroad and would duly note her actions. . . . The efficacy of her purification and subsequent good behaviour depended on whether she looked back (cf. Lot's wife) after she had placed the pot by the river's edge. Should she look back, an evil spirit got her into his power and tormented her till she took him to sleep with her, and thus became a witch who could look for nothing but the inevitable end of all witches. So great is the combined belief and fear that one hears of no instance of looking back.

When the hot sun rose on the morrow, it melted the paste and the ever-convenient crocodile cleaned up the last of the sorry business.

All this is nominally done away with nowadays and, though it probably goes on in remote parts, no whisper of the practice gets through. But the unclaimed child still dies.

The only time I seriously fell out with 'Mbanga in six years, was over this business. He asked me to come to his hut and help his wife who could not pouma (pour out) her baby. I found her very nearly dead, having been in labour for two days with what we call "locked twins". After a great struggle both the babies were born alive and apparently well. I had a long talk with 'Mbanga, and naturally told him the current belief about twins was nonsense. I even went into details as to how multiple births happen. Having praised his intelligence for being superior to this rubbish, I ended up by swearing to hang him if he harmed either child. As his greatest pride was his superior intelligence—and with reason—it seemed the battle was won.

We entered the hut. 'Mbanga took one look at the babies and said, "That one is mine."

I sighed, and immediately took the other child away. It was taken to hospital and every possible precaution was most carefully carried out to ensure that no native whatever, of either sex, so much as entered the ward where the baby was. For a few days it did splendidly—you know the rest. It, too, just died. It, too, was carefully examined postmortem. It, too, showed no possible cause of death.

After waiting a whole month I said to 'Mbanga, "Your baby is very fit. Will you look after it now."

"I know, Inkoos," he said. "It is with my wife in the hut."

"I mean the other baby," I said.
"I have no other baby, Inkoos," he replied quite seriously.

That is a thing beyond my powers to explain. I cannot even begin to understand how it is done. Obviously it is worked. A healthy child does not just die for no reason at all.

One could not punish anyone. Had there been any slight suggestion of foul play 'Mbanga would have been tried and condemned, however good and useful he might be. There was exactly nothing to account for the death.

'Mbanga was under surreptitious and careful observation all the time from birth to death of the infant. I don't believe witchcraft, nor even the sorcery of the doctor was involved. The only possible explanation is that the absolute blotting out of the child's existence in the minds of the parents and relations may, with the communal desire for its non-existence, and complete faith in the fact of its certain demise, have had something to do with it. By what unexplored and recondite path such influence could travel we do not know. Somebody once said "Thoughts are things".

Does not this otherwise inexplicable death open up the whole field of the "ill-wishing" section of witchcraft?

Ill-wishing postulates the ability of witches, with demonic aid, to injure and even kill by a process of concentrated ill-will, aided in some cases, as is common in obeah, and was once common throughout most of the world, with maltreated images and fetishes. Certainly demonic aid was always a requisite, and multiple evidence seems to prove the contention.

This case which, make no mistake, was not an accident, would appear to suggest that concentrated ill-wishing can have a physical effect. We see minor effects every day in doctors' surgeries of health decline and various neuroses, "because So-and-so hates me so".

Is it not feasible that, with so frail a thing as a new-born infant, sufficiency of this sort of malignancy might even go so far as to kill it?

If so it would also be evident that we have a great responsibility to others in "the words of our mouth and the meditation of our heart".

I do not know. I put it forward as the only possible explanation within the ambit of my experience.

Some witchdoctors can perform a sorcery which, for want of a better term, I will call "The Magic Wand Trick"—though it is far from being a trick.

It must be said at the outset that this has a very ancient cachet. The wand has been from long before that one which Moses made such good use of a sine quâ non of sorcerers. Minute instructions as to how to make such a psychically potent weapon are contained in many grimoires and other witch manuals, even to the exact characters to be inscribed thereon. In sheer potence this trick seems to beat them all.
After the story, and the usual spirit instruction, the nyanga gives the inquirer, call him Mandimene, a carved stick very like the one we have twice met. It undergoes certain horrid treatment and contains a tightly bound receptacle of powerful medicine. Mandimene then takes it home and cossets it most carefully. If he is attentive enough and carries out all the instruction of the doctor, the head of the stick gradually becomes the exact likeness of its owner. Its next antic is to become Mandimene’s alter ego. So there are now two Mandimenes; Dr. Jekyll Mandimene, and Mr. Hyde Mandimene.

As in R.L.S.’s famous tale, Mr. Hyde soon becomes an infernal nuisance. His host puts up with all sorts of difficulties, including that of keeping the truculent Mr. Hyde well out of sight, because his raison d’être is so important to him. Until required, he must be utterly placated and made much of.

When all is propitious Mandimene alibis himself by retiring ostentatiously to his hut, generally drunk. He then sets Mr. Hyde free to do whatever horrid deed (any ill deed of magnitude up to and including murder) he has been instructed in.

After the commission of the act, Mr. Hyde returns to Dr. Jekyll and sticks closer than a brother. Now Mandimene has no further use of his other self, and is considerably embarrassed by the demands of the akishi. At length he is forced to consult the witchdoctor again. The doctor says the equivalent of “you asked for it and now you’ve got it. Such are very difficult to remove—and very, very costly.” Mandimene, poor distracted fellow, will give almost all he has to achieve freedom from the beastly thing; and it is so.

Whatever we may think of all these phenomena, it is unwise ever to forget, even for a moment, that they work. They do do the things they are created for. That being so, it is the height of asininity to attempt to sneer or laugh them out of court. To the native, illness seldom, and death never, are the result of natural causes. Illness is the result of ill-wishing, transference by sorcery, probably by the same doctor who is now consulted in order to pass it on once again, or by the agency of a familiar spirit.

Apart from physical murder, death is always due to spirit causes. Curiously enough the nyanga is not always called in when death occurs. If the relations can, or think they can fix the blame, they take appropriate reprisals into their own hands, thus starting blood feuds which ramify all through the village and tribe.

The witchdoctor is the sole dispenser of countless charms against almost every eventuality. Every native wears at least one, and most never set out on any journey or expedition without being festooned with them on arm, thigh, forehead, chest and neck.

Apart from that he is the sole medico. His pharmacopoeia is extensive.
Though for one reason or another it is quite impossible for him to divorce physical medicine from psychic magic, he gets some very good results from his herbal salves and unguents and potions.

I cannot say that, professionally, I exactly approve his habit of mincing up his raw drugs with his teeth by the simple expedient of chewing them, but his patients don’t seem to mind. To point the terrific contrast let us transfer him to No. 1000 Harley Street and consult him.

We find him in the garden practically naked (perhaps not in this weather—we will have to import African sunshine for this consultation).

He is carrying most of his dispensary about his waist in little leather bags which are far from sterile. Before him there is a bowl or two, a primitive pestle and mortar, and what looks like a small pile of spent hops on the ground, except that it is green in colour. He is industriously chewing leaves and spitting them on the pile: producing stock medicines. Presently he adds some castor oil, and one or two other unmentionable ingredients. Then he scoops the lot up with his hands and dumps it in the bowl. This concoction he stirs with his fingers for a while, then divides into boluses which he ties separately into pieces of incredibly dirty cloth. All this time he pays not the slightest attention to us. We might not be there at all.

In an embarrassed way we fiddle about till we find a suitable present. This we tender to the specialist deprecating it as we do so. He heartily agrees with our deprecation; so heartily that it invokes no reaction at all. He still ignores us.

At last we blurt out our ailment. He asks us a few desultory questions about it. Of course, he knows all about us before we open our mouths. That is what we believe, which is half the battle.

He then goes to sleep while we wait with what patience we can.

At last he returns from the spirits. This time no one has bewitched us. We have been careless in our observance of the spirit of the second cousin of our mother’s half-brother. We should take a hen and sacrifice it, placing the head under the airborne root of the big tree half a mile outside our kraal. (Oh yes, he knows exactly where it is even though, so far as we know, he has never been there.) Now for treatment. We lie in the sun on a blanket while he makes medicine on a little fire and incants: this is the magical side. Then he makes a horrible-smelling salve, largely composed of cow dung paste, which he rubs into the sore place. He does not give us a prescription, nor does he supply us with any of the medicine. After we have made our sacrifice, he will visit us and repeat the dose till we are well. And that will be one pound and two goats. He knows he will be paid.

Well, after all, perhaps our methods are a bit better!
Still—he gets his results.

Of his many surgical cases—apart from the one reported in another
book* of a large bone-graft by a nyanga who had once been a student in one of the universities and who just failed his final—one case stands out in my memory. This was the case of what the Afrikaans call a vorlooper, and in kitchen kaffir, a cokela boy: the lad who leads the span of oxen.

An ox had gored him from behind and neatly ripped out his kidney. This is almost bound to be a fatal accident anyway. If the renal vessels had been severed the boy would have been dead in a few moments. As it was the vessels held and a nyanga was hurriedly called in.

He replaced the kidney inside the gash made by the horn of the ox, and held it in place with a sort of plaster made on the spot. Though when he was brought to me the plaster stunk to Heaven, there was no evidence of sepsis in the wound itself, and I put him to bed and waited to see what would happen. The wound healed from the base—a thing we always hope for—pushing the plaster out as it did so, and he cleared up uneventfully. Not being able to meet the nyanga in question, I could not obtain any idea of the composition of the nauseous plaster, but it certainly did the trick. A no mean feat of surgery.

At one time a certain old man was very assiduous in helping me with minor surgery. He proved a clever and apt pupil. The one thing he abhorred was sterilisation. He was sure it was a form of witchcraft. I allowed him to sew up wounds under my eye on a number of occasions, and a very neat job he made of it. It needs some dexterity, and the newcomer generally manages to get his fingers, the needle, the holder and the cat-gut inextricably mixed. He scorned the use of a holder, pushing the needles through the tough skin with apparent ease. It was not easy to prevent him from chewing the gut, but in the end we managed to inculcate a primitive form of aseptic procedure.

I suggested training him, as we train many, as a dispenser, but he would have none of it.

Some time later the disappearance of needles, forceps and gut was explained when a boy was brought in with a long gash neatly sutured.

It was only then that I realised that the old man was an ambitious witchdoctor. He is, for all I know, still sewing his people at, you may be sure, exorbitant prices.

These sidelights on the nyangas, if they prove anything, demonstrate that they are far and away above their fellows in general knowledge and intelligence.

Properly approached, they will converse interestingly on any subject within their ambit, and they can be an inexhaustible mine of local information.

Most, if not all, of the little I know about African magic came from them direct.

They are quite ready and willing to differentiate between the genuine

*Ninety-Nine and All That: Frederick Kaigh (Richard Lesley & Co. Ltd.).
and the spurious, and will joke about those parts of their armoury which are, in their opinion, sheer trickery.

Make no mistake, discounting mumbo-jumbo, sleight of hand, and all the other tricks, they have a very real and genuine power, whose depths I would not venture to plumb.

One last tiny glimpse. In the course of conversation I once asked a witchdoctor where a certain young white man had got to. I knew he had gone south many hundreds of miles from any possible source of direct information. Where he was I had not the slightest idea. The question was quite hypothetical. I did not expect an answer. The old man took it seriously. After a few minutes' silence he said. "His father has sent him money, and he has crossed the great water to his father's kraal in a ship."

Fifteen years passed. I did not pay much attention to the nyanga's information at the time, and certainly forgot all about it.

Then, last night as it happens, Thursday, the 6th of June, 1946, I met the man by chance in a Brighton restaurant. "So your old man recalled you to England after all," I said, "That's right," he replied.

Only now have I recalled where the information came from. Curious coincidence; but a true one for all that.

Though as we have said before, the guild of nyangas is far from immaculate, in fact they are masters of cunning, so long as witchcraft tortures and twists the soul of Africa, so long will the doctors be quite, quite essential.

Alas nothing, however carefully applied and assiduously tried, will stamp out that curse; the devil's hold is too strong, and so, good luck to the black Matthew Hopkins nyangas, witchfinders extraordinary to the court of every ruler and chief in the great land of the eternal question mark.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"TEST THE SPIRITS"

What a wonderful boon civilisation is to be sure.

Nearly two thousand years ago they murdered Jesus with all the outward appearance of judicial condemnation, after a trial of historic farcicality, for the mortal crime of teaching the advantages of brotherly love.

Two thousand years of civilisation, wherein more and more who have professed to follow the teaching of the tragic Nazarene, have rolled their appointed way to the eternal discard. The blessings of science, art, drama, medicine, locomotion, trade unions, nationalisation—God help us all!—
learning, books, religion have been amply showered on us in our sublime advancement.

And now, at the peak of civilisation, when the invocatory bells of the worship of Jesus ring out from every hamlet, and town, and city, and village; when the thunders or sweet whisperings of His teaching resound from the small audiences of pulpits to the vast congregation of radio listeners, not only week by week, but day by day, we enjoy to the full the glorious emancipation of Christian-inspired civilisation, on a higher plane than has ever been man’s lot in the world’s sad history.

These blessings: let us count them.

Weapons of destruction a million times more terrible than dreamed of by the lake of Gennesaret.

Murder, both mass and individual, multiplied a thousand times. International distrust so frenetic as to amaze simple folk like you and me.

The magna carta of our liberties spat upon and trodden in the dust.

Enslavement of the proletariat till they can scarce draw their breath without permission from a pettifogging bureaucratic tyranny. The religion of Jesus subdivided into heretical reactionary “cells” each eaten up with internecine strife and rabid jealousy of their neighbours.

The mass driven in ox-like stupidity by their self-imposed leaders. Every country dependent on its neighbours for the means of subsistence.

Mistrust, unrest, semi-starvation, envy, malice, hatred, heresy and schism.

Truly civilisation is a glorious thing!

This is the emancipation from our pristine naturalness which enables us to look down from the lofty peak of our progress on the children of Nature and call them “savages”, “primitives”, “heathens”.

It is refreshment of body and regeneration to soul to ascend to their arcane level from the muddy depths of our metropolitan advancement.

In our complexity the spirits, which do not progress, are remarkably dumb. It requires special individuals, special atmosphere, dim lights, hand-holding, hymn-singing and a whole mass of jiggery-pokery to make them break the silence, and even then, all they can do is rap tables, blow trumpets, juggle about with ectoplasm. If they speak at all, which is doubtful, they have to use the material throats of carefully selected mediums, which at once lays any professed performance open to the gravest objections.

It is vastly otherwise with the so-called primitives as we have seen. In Africa the trouble is not to get them to “communicate”, but to curb their loquacity: they are positively verbose. They talk to their living descendants without any ceremony or entranced agents on the most friendly terms. Not only so but they order the entire lives of their descendants with a magnificent partiality!

The main types of spirits operating on the African stage are eight:
Friendly, inimical, good, bad, domestically and politically useful, mischievous (poltergeist type), teaching and constructive, and malignantly destructive.

Above them all, so far as the individual is concerned, and immediately next to his somewhat nebulous God, is the guardian spirit of his next-of-kin. This spirit sees all, hears all, and ordains every step of the common round and daily task. It is always immaculately good, and so powerful that it is difficult to understand how it can possibly be overthrown by familiars and evil spirits. However, there it is. It is, alas, very frequently overpowered. The munt, never very strong in syllogistic continuity, explains away this incongruity by blaming himself. To his mind it is not the spirit who is overcome, but his frailty, and his carelessness in his tribute and observances which either weaken the beneficent power, or anger the good spirit so that he turns away from his guardianship, by so doing allowing evil powers to take over.

How exactly does this parallel Old Testament teaching.

There is another phase of this similarity which is most instructive, not to say extraordinary.

By the interpolation of the word spirit for the word God, the native gives to his guardian spirit exactly these attributes, “for I, the lord thy spirit, am a jealous spirit and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children—” He believes this so exactly and implicitly that there is no need to enlarge upon it.

Furthermore, he believes that constant placating and animal sacrifices are the essence of his process of honouring his spirit guardian in the literal Levitic code.

In the African religion any benefice which is bestowed or calamity which is suffered is the work of spirits. But the “man in the street”, being unable to differentiate between the spirits, must call in the expert: the witchdoctor: in order to discover who is responsible so that he may further placate, or rid himself as the case may be. To obtain the relevant information, the doctor must, in genuine or spurious trance (it is for you to differentiate), visit the land of spirits and there seek for the elucidation. On obtaining the requisite information, he will then prescribe the cure. “You have forsaken this or that spirit and you must sacrifice a cock, or a hen, an ox, or whatever it may be, and swear to be assiduous in your observances in the future.” Surely a form of auricular confession and penance. Alternatively, “This or that evil spirit is causing the mischief. I will exorcise him by the prescribed ritual.” The similarity here is too obvious to call for further emphasis.

The African spirits have a further pretty little trick. A man is accused of a crime before the chief. It is quite obvious that he has done the thing of which he is accused, but he is convinced of his personal blamelessness. He therefore pleads, and successfully if he can prove his case, that he was
"enticed" to the act in all innocence by a lying report by so-and-so. So-and-so then gives evidence in which he states very positively that it was true that he gave the report; but that he also is innocent because a spirit which lied like truth informed him, and he only repeated what the spirit had told him and made him believe.

This plea also, all things being equal, will be accepted.

It is a plea frequently entered in African British magistrates' courts, the non-acceptance of which often puzzles the pleader. Be that as it may, your African firmly believes in the actuality of enticement by lying spirits, irresistibly reminding us of the passage in 11 Chronicles 18, verse 20 and on. "Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him. (Ahab.) And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit. . . ."

The actuality of this is implicitly believed all over Africa.

It will be recalled, after the dramatic spiritual phenomenon of divine fire consuming the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the water, that Elijah told Ahab to get under cover because the drought, spiritually caused by Israel's forsaking Jehovah, was over and there was the "sound of abundance of rain", at a time when "there was nothing" in the shape of a cloud in the sky.

The prophet then ascended Mount Carmel and prostrated himself with his head between his knees till a small cloud arose "about the size of a man's hand", which in due course produced a deluge.

Though this is not the earliest record of the psychic power of rain-making, it points at least to the antiquity of the belief. One which still is widespread throughout Africa. This power is mostly, but not exclusively, confined to the nyangas, who have a definite ritual including, in many cases, the retiring to the top of a high place. In some cases the power also belongs to the paramount chiefs and royalty. Even in these cases, the witchdoctor has to be called in if they fail, implying a surprising belief in the fallibility of physical powers, even of kings, and the infallibility of the spiritual powers of the nyangas.

In Swaziland, for example, the chief Queen, charmingly known as the Cow Elephant, has the power of making light rain, while the king produces thunderstorms and heavy downpours.

To the student of arcane knowledge it is interesting to note that the instrument of this royal rainmaking is a magic stone. To such a student this will at once recall the magic stones of the Druids, the medieval and modern witches, and the obeah men.

In this case the stone, or stones, have no evil significance but is, or are, purely a rainmaking charm without any power in other directions. I am told the stone, or stones, are very old and very carefully guarded and handed down from one sovereign to the next. And that the process consists of severe fasting on the part of the rainmakers, placing the stones
in a special bowl of water, and continuous prayer. Not having actually seen the process, I cannot swear to it.

For my part, the date on which rain can be expected after the dry season being of paramount importance, I have often asked the doctors for their forecast and have found them uncannily accurate. We who know Africa can often smell rain three, or even four days off. But the nyangas can go far beyond that.

There is not necessarily any magic in this. It can quite well be due to an uncanny local knowledge. But they also do frequently go through the ritual of rainmaking, and are said to be successful. Whether they can actually affect the atmospheric conditions or not is quite another matter. Their “flock” certainly believe they can. Their forecasts are at least as accurate as those of the metereological office—and often more so!

The withholding of rain is, as we would expect, due to the displeasure of this or that spirit, and again, only the nyangas can discover which one is angry and why, and take appropriate measures to appease him, and thus bring rain. It is all so simple.

It has been said that all deaths are psychic. Except for obvious murders, physical death is never brought about by physical means. One type of these spirit killings is worth a little investigation. It is killings by familiar spirits.

There is ample evidence that familiars were bequeathed, or sold, or even given by European witches to each other. At one time there was quite a traffic in them, and it would not be very surprising to discover that the horrid trade still continues. It is rise in Africa. The reasons for acquiring them are the same all over the world: avarice, lust for power, hatred, malignant curiosity.

There is little evidence that it is necessary to repair to a witchmaster to acquire a familiar which, in the African way of thought, is a spirit of minor powers. Nevertheless, the proven possession of a familiar is a capital offence. There are many names for this type of evil spirit; the one which comes to mind is tuyuwa, nor can I recall to which of the hundred odd languages, this particular name belongs. It matters not.

Throughout this wandering book I have used the name which comes first to mind from Makalanga, Sindebele, Mashona, Mashwena, Balamba, Kasempa, Alunda, Shangaan, Kitchen Kaffir, Swazi, Ngami, Ndorobo, Baila, Masai, Kindorobo, and goodness knows how many others. It jumps to the eye that to do otherwise would entail long lists of synonyms detailed to no purpose whatever save to demonstrate the author’s erudition: an erudition by the way which I certainly do not possess. Just to succumb to temptation, one example will be given to explain what is meant. Let us take the ordinary lion—*felis leo*—I have not the slightest idea how many names he goes by in Africa but here are just a few from a very imperfect memory, Ngama, Ndoro, Ambassa, Ibulubesi, Bokwe,
Ingonyama, Lenja, Mkango, Zaki, Ol Gnatuin, Nkalamo, Ngetunda, Tau, Shumba, Lugwaru, Simba, Nyama, Ingwe (also means a leopard), Imbube, Karamo, Imbusi and, of course, there is the old Cape Taal, Leeuw.* There are others I can think of, but surely that is enough to point the moral! If one did the same sort of thing for every native word, unavoidably used herein, we would not get very far. To save long lists, tuyuwera will serve to identify familiar spirits.

The trouble, as we shall see, with these familiaris is that they are incurably gregarious.

In the first place a man, or woman, will envy the “luck” of a friend. This friend prospers above the average—in a strictly material sense: crops flourishing, beer turning out well, domestic circumstances going smoothly and so on.

Naturally the lucky one must be very pleasing to the spirits—or something of that sort. So the envious one has a heart to heart talk in the course of which the lucky one will confide, in the strictest secrecy, that he or she has a tuyuwera who is a most excellent servant, and who steals and brews and influences circumstance in his or her favour. “He is quite a harmless little chap: you should have one.”

The envious one then asks where one can be obtained. “As it happens,” says the friend, “I have more than one, and I can give you one if you swear never to give me away.”

The transfer is made and the envious one becomes the proud possessor of a personal tuyuwera.

Trouble soon starts. The tuyuwera is very exacting. He or she must be slept with, or be allowed unlimited opportunity for seduction, as the case may be. It must be fed spiritually. There are various ways of doing this. Blood, or milk from the breast (cf. “the devil’s stigmata,” especially teats in medieval witches), being the most common. It becomes truculent and disobedient, carrying out minor mischiefs without permission; running away on wicked errands of its own, and similar misdemeanours. It rapidly becomes more trouble than it is worth.

Then it starts the inevitable loneliness and, so far as my own investigations have gone, this seems to be quite universal. (That is open to correction as I am a very minor authority.)

It begins to whimper and sulk and importune for a pal. This importunity becomes intolerable. It seems that, at first, the tuyuwera cannot get a friend without the host’s permission. If, however, the host persists in refusal, the very reiteration of that refusal builds up the power in the spirit to act for itself. There comes a day when the host, waking from sleep, sees two familiaris disporting in the hut.

At the same time someone in the village dies suddenly.

This is how it happens. Tuyuwera goes out at night and lies on the

* Beautifully onomatopoeic: Leeuw—just like a lion’s roar.
sleeping form of the person chosen. It then steals away the breath which
it seals up in a receptacle; a small gourd, or a straw stalk, or a piece of
hollow wood: there are many different means spoken of. Lokanzi told
me the tuyuwera sewed leaves of the mpulu tree together, made them
invisible and, when it had the breath, tied the ends.

In due course Chikenenge (Mr. So-and-so) is buried. Tuyuwera then
enters the grave, straightens out his corpse, blows the breath back.
Though this has not the power to re-animate the corpse, it does turn poor
Chikenenge's spirit into a tuyuwera.

Unfortunately it does not end there. The process is progressive till at
last the host is caught. Then there is the usual smelling out, the inevitable
confession, and the nyanga is very busy indeed. He has not only to divinate
in the case of the original donor, but also in any to whom the host, now
burnt and done away with, has in his, or her turn given tuyuweras. Then
he has to catch and dispose of the tuyuweras themselves. This entails
much medicine and ceremonial purification, and also animal sacrifices.
The animals are burnt and the ashes and the medicines are placed against
exposed roots of certain trees, or under them in some cases, with the
heads of the sacrifices. The hut of the witch is also burnt, and the ashes
very carefully collected and placed in a barren spot well outside the kraal.

The essence of all witchcraft is a voluntary compact with the devil.
That this compact must be made there is not the slightest doubt. Even
though there is no evidence that it must necessarily be a written compact,
there are extant enough of such compacts, written and signed with the
novice's blood (in most cases), to put it beyond all dispute that such
horrid compacts have been made in their thousands—and are still being
made today. Every serious student of the occult will confirm this.

The munt has never heard of the devil. That is to say he has not met
the Prince of Darkness, Monseigneur Lucifer, himself in person as it were.

In his place he acknowledges an anti-pantheism of indigenous demons,
and the only difference in the witchcraft compact is that the munt makes
his with one of these rather than their infernal king.

I am told that before any tuyuwera will work for its host this compact
must be made but, alas, cannot confirm this. Those whom I have ques-
tonied have been extremely elusive, even the obligingly loquacious
Lokanzi, for the very good reason that to show too much knowledge
leads to a very damaging suspicion, to say the least.

However that may be, it is certain that every other form of witchcraft
requires a definite compact on the part of the witch, to serve his demon
and deny the power of God. In this it follows the universal course.

So far as the tuyuwera is concerned, and it does seem to be the most
common form of witchcraft, the practice of giving, or bartering, or be-
queathing familiar spirits, has the time honoured cachet of universality.
There are ample examples in European arcane writings. Also the belief in
the power of spirits to "steal the breath" is of very great antiquity. Also the reverse. The power of the magi, and also of the great men of God, to reanimate.

An exact reverse process is recorded of Elijah and the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings, chapter 17, verses 21, 22).

"And he stretched himself upon the child three times," and prayed, "and the soul (=spirit) of the child came into him again, and he revived."

Other men of God, including St. Patrick and St. Columba were said to have this power, so, in the opposing camp, had the Druids and other contemporary magicians.

So there is nothing new in the belief.

It has been said that the munt loathes and abominates witchcraft far more actively than his persistently agnostic white counterpart, and this is very true.

For this reason every munt is on the look out for witchcraft, and will immediately report his suspicions to his chief unless he is caught by the witch in advance and so terrified that he dare not open his mouth or, more frequently, murdered.

One of their less endearing tricks is to get into service with the white man and shelter in the fancied security of his compound. I had two such cases proven beyond doubt. No one knows how many go undiscovered. They make extremely bad servants, in fact it is not uncommon for the white man to suspect witchcraft merely because the boy is so incorrigible. There is only one sensible thing to do and that is to get rid of the suspect as soon as possible.

The second witch mentioned above will later have a chapter to himself. The first was, of all things, a cook! His name is unspellable, but as far as one can get it phonetically, it was Mtaowal. He was a tall, thin but powerful old devil, a very fair cook, and the worst boy I ever came across.

His connection with witchcraft, while being unequivocal was never, so far as I know, established. He got a sentence of five years' imprisonment for attempting to murder me, so I did not get the chance of finding out what his own tribe did to him.

As for me, I would never have discovered he was a witch but for the fact that he lost his temper.

My usual boy being sick, I asked Mtaowal to milk a certain cow.

He told me he was a cook and not a cow-milker. I agreed, but insisted that, in the circumstances, it was up to him to do the milking, and milk he would—or else. He went out to the shed, cut off all the cow's teats, and split her udder in half with a kitchen knife. The cow, as might be expected, very rapidly died.

On hearing of this disgusting maltreatment, I went out in a towering rage and thoroughly shamboked Mtaowal. Now the normal native of
those parts is so completely cowed by the shambok that it very rarely has
to be actually used—the threat is more than sufficient. It therefore sur-
prised me more than a little to have Mtaowal stand up to the instrument
without the slightest sign that he felt it, however hard the lambasting.
After a few savage cuts, his amazing attitude quite paralysed the avenging
arm. Mtaowal walked unconcernedly to his hut while I hurriedly sum-
moned the police. I was quite alone in the house at the time, and took
pains to point out that the sooner the police arrived the more pleased I
would be.

Before their arrival Mtaowal walked into the room stark naked, dripp-
ing and stinking with crude castor oil. When this happens it is a case of
“watch out”. The natives only do this when intent on battle, murder, and
sudden death. The castor oil makes them so slippery that it is impossible
to grab them.

In his hand Mtaowal held the same cook-knife with which he had just
killed the cow so horribly. What he said sounds long-winded in English,
but it took very little time to say in his own tongue. In effect he said that
he was bigger and stronger than I. In hitting him I had mortally offended
his spirits. They had therefore ordered him to kill me.

He then rushed. To lessen the target I remained seated, and with great
good fortune managed to throw the heavy chair (of the type known in the
colonies as a “club easy”) violently backwards. As I slid away on my
back, Mtaowal crashed into the chair and fell sprawling. I managed to
kick him hard in the kidneys and, before he could straighten out, smashed
the loaded handle of the shambok on his head. At this moment—and did
I thank God for the intervention—the native police arrived. Even then,
after such punishment as would put a normal man out cold for an hour or
so, he made a terrific fight of it, and had to be literally beaten into insen-
sibility. The boys were taking no chances with the fellow. They trussed
him up with rawhide thongs till he could hardly breathe. Then
they hoisted him on their heads and carried him off like a bale of
cloth.

The sergeant brought me an amazing collection from his hut.

I cannot remember them all, but most of the appurtenances of witch-
craft were there. Feathers, lions’ and crocodiles’ teeth, magic stones,
dried cocks’ combs, human bones (finger bones), akishi sticks, and a
weird assortment of articles best left uninvestigated. The sergeant had no
hesitation. “Inkoos,” he said. “No wonder we had trouble: this man is a
witch.”

After he had served his time, he walked straight back to my cookhouse,
kicked out the terrified cook, and calmly started to cook the next meal.
He was most surprised and annoyed when I refused to take him on again.
I never learnt what eventually happened to him. It is not a very difficult
guess. Though the sentencing of witches is strictly forbidden by the
Government, it is surprising how many of them succumb to "snake bite" when they get to their native villages.

As may be expected, it is not easy to learn about witches and their craft. Fortunately the natives love to boast, and once you have won their confidence, many witchdoctors will boast of their prowess in uncovering the cult, though they have never admitted to me the nature of the punishment meted out—naturally not. Headmen and chiefs on the other hand, for this very reason of boastfulness, will not tell. They all protest that their rule is so excellent that they have stamped witchcraft out in their domains. Occasionally they can be induced to tell of witches in other places ruled by less immaculate chiefs, but it is hard going, and I at any rate have not managed to get much of interest out of these worthies.

This, from a Makalanga chief, is pretty good:

"Life is nothing but a divine breath which originally comes from God. When a man dies this breath goes into his nearest living relative. (What that relative does before being bequeathed this 'life' is obscure. Apparently the father passes on a little bit during his lifetime but only parts with the whole after death.) The spirit of the dead man then becomes the guardian of that breath in the next-of-kin so long as he shall live, and during that time, must stay earthbound. Therefore the spirit cannot in its turn, 'enter into its reward' till the successor dies and in his turn becomes the guardian.

"This is why everyone must be very kind and thoughtful of the family, as opposed to the familiar, spirits, who have the right to take away the 'breath' of the unworthy. The 'breath' is very much sought after in the spirit world, and evil spirits are always on the look out to steal it, for its acquisition gives them equal rights with the good spirits, and then there is literally 'the devil to pay'.

"If on the physical plane you deliberately entertain evil spirits, your good spirits can no longer hold your 'breath'."

This is pure religion and not a bad concept either. "But," added the chief, "if the good spirits lose your 'breath' through your evil ways, you become the devil's man. Even then your good spirits make efforts to save you, but then only the witchdoctor can work the oracle on this side and prevent you from becoming a witch."

As this almost exactly coincides with the accepted prologue to witchcraft wherever practised, it is most instructive to hear it from the native source whence it came.

The evil eye, overlooking as it is called, is a very present fear throughout Africa from Cape Province to the Egyptian littoral, and in most parts its application is a capital offence.

The genesis of evil spirits is rather startling.

The unity of African and European cultures having preceded the Christian era by many centuries, the native has never heard of the revolt
in Heaven and consequent banishment of the rebels. He is, nevertheless, very clear on the eternal war on the spiritual plane between good and evil. He attributes quite definitely the beneficence of good spirits to God, and the malevolence of the others to a paramount evil power, but he is rarely anthropometric in his concept of either. Rather he is zoological (in respect of minor spirits) likening the spirits to various birds and beasts.

But he differs from the ancient Celts in that he does not consider these birds and beasts as the actual spirits but only as their temporary dwellings, taken over by the spirits to perform this or that particular job. In this it can fairly be said his present belief is an advance upon the Celtic arcana.

Originally, he believes, all spirits, on their spiritual plane, were good. But these spirits could not but notice how much evil there was on earth, and they felt the bad influence remaining in the spirits of evil men. Thus, to save themselves from contamination, they forced spirits to remain earthbound in a sort of primitive purgatory till they should be purified. Here the evil gradually predominated till it was powerful enough to create evil on its own plane. Thus were evil spirits created.

These are both murderers and resurrectionists. By "stealing their breath" they kill men, then, when they are dead, they visit their tombs and, by giving them back just enough breath they succeed in making the corpses—not living men—but one of themselves. The stealing and transvection of corpses is not unknown. Perhaps the particular propitiation, and what happened before it, which we have seen, was of this order.

Herein is a strange and apparently contradictory train of thought. The SPIRIT of the dead man is already released and is busy at its immutable duty of looking after the "breath" of the next-of-kin. It is a good spirit, almost an angel as it were. It has nothing to do with witchcraft and evil.

It is only the finished and discarded body upon which the evil spirits can work and transmute into one of themselves.

Deeper thought discloses that there is really no contradiction, rather the reverse. Surely it proves that the native concept of the essence of man is good: that is to say the immortal soul. Only the transient and mortal shell is capable of being turned into an evil spirit by evil power—after the good has already flown.

It seems a comforting syllogism: let us hope it is a right one!
CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE MAGIC OF ZIMBABWE

In a previous book* I said about Zimbabwe, “I think the place is well over three thousand years old. Somewhere, some day, we may argue the case.” Here is where we redeem the half promise. Any book about the magic of Africa which did not include a word about The Great Zimbabwe, as it is called, would be unthinkable.

In every other country in the world, regardless of age and state of repair, scientists and archaeologists, so great is their erudition, have been able to date and place, and know the architects and purposes of ancient buildings from the Aztec temples to the Somerset barrows and the Druidical memorials. Only in Africa are they completely stumped.

To within thousands of years they cannot agree to place the date of the Bushman paintings. To within thousands of years they violently disagree about Zimbabwe.

For a brief moment let us glance at a few things we do know.

There is positive evidence that Africa was inhabited almost throughout from the very earliest times.

The skull of the so-called *homo Rhodesiensis*, which was found in a cave, and which I have had the honour of examining, belonged to a type, so far back in the march of time as to be almost sub-human, as near as we have got to what is popularly known, for no reason at all, as the missing link.†

The owner of this skull certainly existed in Africa in an era before human men and women as we know their shape today had evolved. His brain-case was flat antero-posteriorly, and in place of our frontal lobes, where most of our thinking originates, he had massive bony bosses. There was not much of him above the eyebrows, rather less if anything than is found in the skull of a gorilla today. He had immensely powerful prognathous jaws. Though it is not possible to say with absolute certainty, he most probably had long arms and short legs, walked with a semi-crouch, and was arboreal in his dwelling, his body was covered with hair, and, though of small stature, was extremely akin to the gorilla himself.

Though we cannot conjecture very much of his mode of life, we know that he was not buried as he was found in 1920 in a cave at Broken Hill which was not a tomb: presumably, therefore, he came to a violent and

* Ninety-Nine and All That* by the same author.

† After this was written and printed, an even older skull was found at Sterkfontein, claimed actually to be this so-called “Missing Link”, which as it proved that men did not, after all the argument, descend from monkeys, justifies the contention that it was so called “for no reason at all”.

lonely death all those many thousands of years ago and, as there was no sign of any other bones, the rest of the tragic fellow was almost certainly eaten—perhaps by some savage, sabre-toothed cat whose race is long extinct.

If ever we find any of his pals in whole skeleton we will know much which is hidden from us now.

Another skull found at Boskop is almost as ancient. Instruments of flint of great age are fairly abundant throughout Africa; I had the luck to find a number of them in a cave at Sinoia.

We know that there are a number of very ancient open face gold workings scattered through the land where the operations were carried out, or at any rate supervised, by other than indigenous natives. Some of our present mines are downward extensions of these ancient beginnings. No Bushman, or Hottentot, or subject of the ancestors of Monomatapa ever worked those mines immortalised by Rider Haggard, who took Zimbabwe as the background for his greatest romances.

We know that at one time there was a vast export trade in this gold which was not valued or used locally.

Right across this part of Africa, on what was without doubt, a busy old trade route, there are a large number of combined forts and entrepots of trade (my own definition—there are those who disagree) whose ruins stand in more or less repair today. There is a notable example, in a somewhat debased form at Khami, which is supposed to be a local native attempt to copy the architecture of these. Personally I do not believe this theory.

Zimbabwe itself stands a little back from the road which leads through Gwelo, Umvuma and Fort Victoria right down to the Sabi country and the Beit Bridge.

There is no village of clapboard and corrugated iron, or brick and breeze, nor yet any native kraal to disturb the timeless peace of the old place, only an hotel under the jacaranda trees, discreetly hidden.

The first thing which strikes one is the large expanse of ruined stone dwellings huddled together at a respectful distance from the great buildings of the temple and the fort, reminding one irresistibly of the silent City of the Dead sprawling in its solitary decrepitude under the serene gaze of the Sphinx. Though it would be an exaggeration to say there is no stone left upon another, all the dwellings are in a ruinous state so general and so uniform as to suggest a deliberate demolition. There is a Roman military manoeuvre described by the verb \textit{vastare}—to lay waste; a recent example of which is found in the policy of “scorched earth”. Though I have not seen such a suggestion ever in print, I am convinced that at some time in Zimbabwe's history it was struck by a holocaust wherein the soldiers, unable to reduce the fort, turned their destructive
energies on the town and deliberately destroyed it house by house. The
times being what they were, if this premise is true, doubtless putting the
entire populace to the sword.

As we walk through the ruined lanes and streets and passages of the
place we cannot escape the deduction that this was once an extremely
busy and flourishing town. In this florid but infertile location the prob-
lems of commissariat and transport must have been immense.

Now indigenous natives do not make their houses of stone, and there
is no evidence that they ever did. From arboreal dwellers they have
slowly evolved from a troglodytic existence to neat but primitive huts of
poles and earth and grass, dotted haphazard in kraals or villages. Only in
the last few years has the idea of more or less definite grouping begun to
sink in to their conscious thought.

This stone-built town was originally worked out to a definite plan. It
was laid out in blocks. It is certain that the architecture, the planning, and
the erection are entirely foreign and utterly un-African. Moreover, throug
throughout the whole place, town, fort, temple, there is one feature which
is inescapable: all the stones are carefully and correctly squared.

Let us turn to the description of the building of Solomon’s palace and
temple as described in the first book of the Kings, chapter 5 from verse 15.
“And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and
fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains. . . .” (There are no stones
nor stone formations anything like the stones of Zimbabwe in the
vicinity: “fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains. . . .” Well,
Zimbabwe would need them!)

“And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly
stones, and hewed stones . . . and Solomon’s builders and Hiram’s builders
did hew them, and the stone-squarers: so they prepared timber and stones
to build the house.”

And chapter 6 from verse 7: “And the house when it was in building,
was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither so that there was
neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it
was in building.” (Note that sentence very carefully.)

Further quotations have an apt significance.

“So Solomon overlaid the house with pure gold.”

Now there is no gold in Palestine, and all this and very much more
gold had to be brought from overseas. It is more than a mere guess to
suggest that it came through Zimbabwe: much of it, if not all?

“He was seven years building it.”

“Solomon was building his own house thirteen years.”

If, as I firmly suggest, the gold came from this place, he, with the slow
transport of the times, would need all that time. Moreover, with all the
labour he had at hand, it would not take nearly so long unless he had to
wait for supplies from far countries. “All these were of costly stones,
according to the measures of the hewed stones, sawed with saws within and without, from the foundation even to the coping."

"And the great court round about was with three rows of hewed stones."

When we examine Zimbabwe more closely we will see the importance of these quotations.

"And the Queen of Sheba came with a very great train ... and very much gold, and she said to the King, 'It was a true report that I heard in mine own land.'"

Now there was no telegraph nor wireless in those days, and Sheba is universally accepted as an African kingdom. It is hardly likely that she would have heard such a report unless there was a considerable coming and going down the trade routes of her own continent.

"And the navy also of Hiram (King of Tyre: a maritime province) ... brought gold from Ophir."

This would seem to clinch the argument.

One is not trying to fix a date to Zimbabwe by these quotations, nor is the argument that the place was built at the same time as Solomon's temple and palace, but the passages are immensely significant.

Zimbabwe, too, is made of squared stones sawed with saws within and without from the foundation to the coping, all of which were made ready before they were brought thither. Not only, as has been said, are there no comparable types of stone anywhere near the place, but, though the chippings of such stones would have made immense dumps, no such things have ever been found anywhere in the whole colony. We cannot even conjecture whence came these squared stones, but we do know that they came from a long way off. The labour of transporting all those thousands of tons of prepared stones over God knows how many weary miles is wellnigh incalculable.

It is the sort of labour which built Babylon and the pyramids. To those who suggest that this place and all its like were erected in the middle ages be it said that this is not the type of work essayed at any time in the Christian era before the invention of mechanical transport. The magnitude of the human haulage alone gives the lie to that. It is the labour of the epoch of enslaved nations long before Socrates had enunciated the pre-Christian concept of human values.

It is the labour of a time when threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains were easy to come by—and that is a very, very long time ago!

Glancing once more at this business of Solomon's gold from Ophir, there is no doubt that Solomon—or Salomoh—did collect vast quantities of gold, nor that not only were vast quantities of gold contemporaneously mined in and around the Zimbabwe area, but that this same area was the source of most of the world's gold—and it was considerable
—at that very time, more than two thousand years before the Arabs settled in Sofala and revived the gold trade.

Surely it seems pretty certain that Zimbabwe was not only in existence at that time, but was then an exceedingly thriving entrepot of the gold trade, situated as it is on the old trade route, to the ports whence the navy of Hiram shipped it.

There is nothing against this argument but the contrary-mindedness of certain scientists who, without any tangible evidence whatever, decide for no apparent reason to state contrary opinions.

We shall see that there is ample refuting evidence of their ideas of Zimbabwe's modernity.

To describe the building, alleged, with some acumen, to be a temple, you recall the quotation given above, "and the great court round about was with three rows of hewed stone".

Substitute two for three and you have an accurate description of the surrounding walls of this edifice, enclosing an elliptical amphitheatre. These walls are very high, and are built after the fashion of the face of a modern brick wall, but with squared stones fitted so perfectly that, without any mortar, or any other form of binding, they, withstanding all the ravages of time, the recurrent floods of the wet seasons, the droughts of the dry, storms and great heats, still stand for the most part as perfect today as they were the day the last stone was meticulously fitted into its appointed place. For considerable areas only the double row of flat, chevron-pattern stones which tops off the outer wall has suffered minor damage. Nor is there any sign of the wear and tear of the ages upon them, so hard and lasting is the nature of these stones. Where there is damage, it is through the destructive agency of human vandals, not the fault of the builders.

To enter the amphitheatre it is necessary to circle in a narrow passage between these high twin walls: there is no other adit. There must have been some vital reason for so difficult an entrance. Obviously none but the chosen might come therein, for the merest handful of temple servants were sufficient to guard against sacrilege. Within the temple are an auditorium, recesses for the priests, an altar of sacrifice—almost certainly human sacrifice—behind which there stands an enormous, solid, conical tower, built of the same squared stones, so smoothly and so accurately aligned as to present an unbroken, polished surface throughout. Immense care and accuracy were expended on this strange monument. For passing strange it is; being a huge phallic emblem: a very god-phallus. Many small models of this vast phallus are to be dug up in the surroundings. So many as to suggest a talismanic or totemic significance.

Now, though I do not know, nor can my researches tell me, when phallic worship died, I do know that this debased religion is among the extremely primitive rituals, nor can I find any reference to it in Africa in
historical times, nor any verbal survival.* Surely that alone is enough to prove the antiquity of the place. I am pretty sure that there was no phallic worship extant among any nation advanced enough in Solomon's time to undertake such great work as naval transport.

It would seem that Zimbabwe was old long before Solomon was conceived. Who were these priests of the long-forgotten worship of phallus, and what horrid orgies, what debased ritual, and what bloody sacrifices did they perform in the closely guarded temple?

The sad ghosts of the slain, haunting the gruesome precincts, whisper unrepeatable horrors into the ears of the spiritually attuned, but we shall never know. Perhaps it is as well. Sometimes, when the moon is softly veiled, its shadows trace across the floor, flitting over the altar, and dancing solemnly along the walls—transient forms, less substantial than the thin clouds which conjure them up—and we seem to see the worshippers, in bedevilled ecstasy, drinking the warm blood of the sacrificially slain, and wallowing in the horrible orgies which so base a worship would gestate.

We see the priests holding aloft as loathsome a monstrance as at any witches' sabbat—and we fly from that place to await, with pale, cold anxiety, the blessed sanity of the dawn.

Leaving the temple to its forgotten and mercifully shrouded arcane, we approach the fort.

There is no doubt about this. It is a fort all right, and a brilliantly planned stronghold withal.

Its outworks and its barracks and central high stronghold, take up the whole of a kopje, on the look-out side precipitous and unclimbable, and immensely fortified on its sloping aspects.

This kopje, in the startling way they have in Africa, up-rears suddenly from the plain, and commands an illimitable view over the surrounding high veld. Even the trees are so sparse that the Macduffian strategy at Birnham Wood could not be effective. Would-be attackers must needs cross miles of completely open country with hardly enough cover to hide a single soldier. Even if such a manoeuvre were successful, as I have no doubt, by some intrigue or trickery it must have been at one time, the garrison of the fort would have no call to make any kind of sortie, save

---

* In this connection it must be said that there is evidence that the original Bakuena (an important tribe, which came from the north and scattered over a vast area, including that of Zimbabwe), who were known as the people of the crocodile, and from whom many of the present tribes sprang, did actually make copper phallic charms, known as modulats, but there is no record or tradition that they ever indulged in ritualistic phallic worship, nor were they nor their descendants, as for example the Bamangwato, after Ngwato (one of the three sons of Malope, who was the son of Masilo I), their first chief, of short stature. Indeed modulats are not uncommon today, but they are charms, or even jokes, certainly not objects of veneration. Nor are they similar in shape to those found at Zimbabwe. I do not therefore agree with those authorities who laboriously seek to link the Zimbabwe emblems with these Bakuena charms.
in defence of the town: apart from that they would be absolutely safe. For that matter, so would any number of people gathered within the temple whose twin bastion walls were unscaleable, and far too strong to be damaged by anything less than heavy gunfire. The only possible way of gaining the fort is by a madly twisted narrow flight of stone steps which make use of every quirk of the natural outcrop of large boulders.

These vast rocks have narrow passages between them which lean this way and that at such angles that the climber cannot stand on the steps, but must make what ascent he may leaning against alternative faces of the lower rocks.

Fashioned thus, one single soldier could hold off a host, as only one attacker at a time could ascend, and then in a semi-prone position. Even General Wolfe, whose troops scaled the Heights of Abraham to take Quebec, would have been hard put to it to take the fort of Zimbabwe. We encounter here another of the bristling problems of the place. The height of each step is so slight—so unusually slight—as to give one the idea that the place was constructed for a people of short stature.

Here is a problem that so far none of the scientists, archaeologists, or ethnologists have tackled. It surely cannot be an accident that this ascent is by uniformly short steps. Where will you find a people sufficiently advanced to construct such a place who are a race of little people? We cannot think of any such nation. The bushmen, and their successors the Hottentots, were semi-dwarfs, but they were neither builders, nor traders, nor yet warlike. It is absolutely impossible that they had anything to do with the building or working of such a place. We conjecture that Hiram's emissaries visited Zimbabwe, we know Phoenicians were there (as we will see), we are pretty sure Arab traders from Sofala penetrated thus far, probably many others, but none of these were notably lacking in inches. Nor can we find any nation of dwarfs at any comparable stage of advancement in historical times.

If we accept that these short steps were deliberate; and it is difficult to do otherwise; then the place was built by a dwarf nation of great ingenuity and advancement, albeit with a debased religion and, if this is so, all trace of that nation, its culture, even its identity, is lost in the mists of ancient time. A bit of a facer is it not?

The fort itself is reinforced by the same squared stones which make up the entire buildings. There is no other building material anywhere in evidence.

Around the top of the kopje there is a very wide, low, encircling wall, with regularly spaced, short, solid conical towers, with the tops of the cones levelled off. Possibly these are extra look-outs. We do not know what their purpose was. But the wall is very clearly a sentry's beat. If you examine the upper layer of stone, you will find that the stones are eroded
into shallow, polished depressions, doubtless worn by the feet of the
sentries.

Having regard to the extreme hardness of the stone, how many
millions of marching feet, over how many thousands of years it must have
required to produce these depressions.

The riddle of the Sphinx is simple arithmetic in terms of the insolubly
abstruse mathematics of Zimbabwe.

They passed that way, and on their way, the old sentries, ever on the
alert to guard the treasures of Ophir en route for the ancient markets of
Tyre, Sheba, Babylon, Egypt, Chaldea, Phoenicia, or even more antique
markets, who knows?

There have been found in Zimbabwe golden vessels stated to be over
three thousand years old.

Astarte's vultures, carven in soapstone, of undoubted Phoenician
workmanship, have been found in considerable numbers. Yet there is no
record that the Phoenicians carved the equally plentiful phallic emblems
which have also been found.

But far more remarkable than this, China, and Chinese amulets of the
Ming dynasty have also been unearthed. What do you make of that? The
Ming dynasty is comparatively modern!

Frobenius's august opinion is that the place is immemorially ancient.

Miss Caton Thompson, a noteworthy authority, flatly disagrees.

Mr. R. N. Hall thinks the place very old and of Phoenician origin.

Professor McIver says it is not more than 300 years old and of Bantu
origin. With all respect for his integrity, I think he is egregiously wrong.
Bantu did not, so far as we know, at any time worship phallus, nor have
they ever heard of Astarte's vultures (let alone carved them in stone), nor
have they any connection with the Ming dynasty, nor have they ever
been clever stone workers, nor builders; lastly, they were never powerful
enough for the immensity of transport required, even if they could have
surmounted this difficulty (which they certainly could not), they would
not have had the slightest idea what to do with the stones if they got
them to the site!

It must not be forgotten that the building of this place is a feat so
beautifully exact that I doubt if we could copy it today with all our
erudition and science.

After all this argument, and although it is not of the slightest conse-
quence, it is hoped that I may be forgiven if I succumb to the very
powerful temptation to add my own opinion. It is only fair to me and,
if, as I trust (or this would not have been written), you are interested, it
is only fair to you.

I was very active there when a party of international archaeologists
were fossicking around—"there's a chiel amang ye takin' notes"—and I
listened to all their learned, and even heated arguments. Sometimes I was
the most heated of them all!! I am quite convinced that the place is of extremely ancient foundation, but that additions have been made from time to time, none later than two thousand years ago, and none by indigenous peoples of themselves. In spite of this, some of the actual labour might well have been carried out by indigenous slaves under the supervision, and merciless lashes of “task-masters” from the great trading nations, after the fashion of the enslaved Jewish labourers under the task-masters of Pharaoh in Moses’s time.

I think, moreover, that the place was a place of business, at one time so extremely famous as to have been visited by representatives from most of the then powerful nations—for business purposes—even, or so the Chinese relics would suggest, as far overseas as China itself. I believe that a forgotten nation of phallic worshippers were the originators. No one can even conjecture how polyglot were the additions.

Be that as it may, there it stands for all time: dark: sinister: stained with the spilt blood of fruitless sacrifice: wrapping its ancient secrets deeply within its impregnable walls.

It is said that once Monomatapa appropriated the place for his royal palace, but there is no real evidence as to that, and I think it is most unlikely. That is entirely by the way.

Sometimes in the quiet of the still African night you may see, or imagine you see, the ghostly forms of the old sentries, still patrolling, still, like the Pompeian guard, faithfully remaining at their posts, guarding the memory of long-vanished treasure. Listen: there it is again! Can you hear it? That thin scream from within the temple. Again its ghostly evanescence seems to pass away into the dim echoes.

Surely the pitiless priests are not at their butchery again. Or is it a bush pig rooting in the dust once richer with the stain of spilt blood? We shall never know.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

DIVINATION

Though our magical theme must in the nature of things deal largely with the occult, its unrelieved discussion can be wearying. We have (I hope!) felt that the change to the contemplation of the magic of the enigma of an ancient monument has been welcome. Later we will turn aside again and look for a while at the greatest of all Nature’s magics in the stupendous tumbling of the waters. For the present, a short study of African divination does nothing to detract from the postulate that all magic is one and indivisible both in origin and in manifestation.
Divination has always played a large part in the magic arcana both in
witchcraft and in the miscalled white sorcery.

Unfortunately, it can never be innocent. Even so mild a pastime as
divining by cards, tea-leaves and the like can have harmful effects on the
dupes who pin their faith, and often their actions, on such infantile
sorceries.

These at best are sheerest nonsense. From that they descend via un-
diluted trickery to affairs of more sinister import.

Of more ancient cachet are divinations by water and crystal, inextric-
cably associated with witchcraft. Instructions and the rituals of these may
be seen in most of the grimoires.

There is evidence that the Druidical magi used the crystal in the same
way that they carried magical stones, said without the slightest founda-
tion, to have been manufactured by adders from a concentration of their
spittle! I find no use of the crystal in Africa. On the other hand, divination
by water is common, while divination in general is an integral part of
village life. We have already seen one example in the divination by the
bones. It is interesting to note in passing that this same process by bones
or omen-sticks was common to Celtic, Indian, Egyptian, Tibetan,
Chinese and the Salem cultus.

In Africa the nyanga is by no means the only diviner, nevertheless his
ubiquity is in no way thus defeated. He alone can supply the medicine, or
instrument, or both, whereby the oracle can be worked. In his personal
divination he makes use of many simple implements such as the magic
stick, the bones, a duiker horn full of “medicine” suspended from a magic
wand, and so on. I think the duiker horn divination is all trickery, but it
is almost impossible to spot the fake. What an asset to the old Maskelynes
the average witchdoctor would have been!

Divination by water is common in witch law and in rural superstition.
It is still carried out in remote parts, especially of Scotland, for catching
minor thieves, etc. In its sinister witchcraft aspect it is one of the methods
employed in conjuring up demons. At the other end of the same scale
there are plenty of magic pools and wells in many countries still believed
to have the power of picturing lovers and girl-friends and the like.

In Africa this form of divination has various similar uses. It is used to
divine the appearance of the evil spirit or familiar which is causing this or
that mischief. Still pools, duly doctored, or wooden bowls, are used, and
some witchdoctors have a medicine which turns the water a deep,
shining black.

A curious twist to the divination of familiars by water is that the
familiar appears with features so similar to its host that the possessor is
easily recognised, such recognition being serious evidence against him or
her at the subsequent smelling-out ceremony. Two identical water divi-
nations with similar ritual for entirely different purposes are worth a
passing notice. They are a combination of magic stones and water. In Swaziland three magic stones are placed in a bowl of still water during the rainmaking ceremonies (vide supra): in some parts of Scotland in the middle ages, and possibly today, three magic stones, representing the head, the heart, and the bowels, are placed in hot ashes, and then dropped into a bowl of water to divine the seat of illness. I am told that the one which makes the most hissing is the offender.

In general, water divining is used in Africa for minor oracles: interpretation of dreams: visions of the lover to be (cf. magic wells, etc.) and the like.

An important aspect is trial by ordeal. This form of divination is very convenient as it forces the accused to self-condemnation. There are several forms which differ in various parts of the country, but in the main, they follow the trend of early British ordeal trials.

Water, fire, or poison are most commonly used. In the poison trials a number of animals including the accused's dog have to undergo the trial as well, which seems a little redundant.

In the prologue one animal at least has to die. Usually a cock is used and he, having been given some of the poison to be tried on the accused, is ordered to die if there is a witch in the village. If this unfortunate bird fails to die at the first dose, it is repeated again and again till he finally succumbs. It is a little difficult to see sense in this inevitable slaughter, but I have a shrewd suspicion that the reason for it is to make sure that the potion, mixed by the nyanga, is genuinely poisonous. If this is so, and I think it is, it is the only case I know of checking up on the infallible witchdoctor.

Some accused survive this ordeal while others, of course, do not. In the latter cases the witches are held to be self-confessed and self-destroyed in one neat operation. By the same token, the survivors are held to be innocent and are unharmed.

As the inevitable death of the cock has proclaimed that there is a witch in the village, the survivor produces an awkward situation, and sometimes the whole business has to be gone through again with another suspect. But your native has an extraordinarily elastic mind and is quite prepared to blame the affair on the bird used for the preliminary divination. "The bird," he says, "made a mistake." This he would not dream of admitting if the accused died. The demise in this case being unassailable _quod erat demonstrandum._

It has been hinted to me that at one time the survival or death of the bird after one dose was held to clinch the business, but so many birds survived that it was suspected that, if the evil familiar of the witch was powerful enough, it could preserve the bird's life. Thus the dosing of the cock was imperfect evidence, depending more on the power of the familiar than the divinatory potential of the ceremony. It is, therefore, to
cheat the familiar, and demonstrate its powerlessness against the poison, that the bird is dosed to inevitable death. This puts an entirely different complexion on the thing. It must be added that, as this ingenious explanation was given to me by a nyanga personally, it is possibly a little biased. For all that, it is admirably thought out. After the witch is poisoned, and from what I can gather he has odds of about six to four on, his body is very thoroughly burned, but some of his ashes are preserved by the nyanga to make divinatory medicine.

Ground human bones mixed with the ashes of dead witches are not only powerful assets to divination, they also can be made into infallible charms to ward off evil spirits—naturally as such they come very expensive.

The witchdoctor has solved the ultimate problem of trade: all that he sells at the highest prices he acquires without any expense whatever. Trade of so high an order of commercial ingenuity must have an immense appeal!

These charms are generally placed, by the witchdoctor of course, in small duiker horns, or sewn up in the skin of a small rodent, and worn on the person, or hung up in the hut.

Such a medicine (with, I am informed, certain other ingredients), hung up over the bed, will inform the sleeper of the approach of any witch or spirit intent on mischief, and will even assist its owner by flying through the air and stabbing the witch or chasing the spirit away (cf. levitation of astral trumpets and other inanimate objects at séances).

One of the more mechanical—to say the least of it—ordeals by water is to cast the suspect into a river known to be infested by crocodiles. In this case, the crocodiles are the diviners. If the suspect can swim across the river he is innocent: if not—well, what would you? There is a neat and successful end to the trial with the convenient croc. as jury, judge, and executioner all in one. One cannot escape observing that the native often shows a fine economy in his legal processes.

Somewhat illogically, in terms of their tenets anent guardian spirits, most natives believe implicitly in the theory of reincarnation.

In this connection the nyanga has to perform a very special type of divination at the birth of every child. No one but he can tell which particular spirit is reincarnated in the child, and it is quite essential to discover this because, if the child were not named after the right spirit there is no knowing what mischief might befall the whole family. He performs this divining feat in many ways, apparently depending on his personal choice.

He goes into a trance and travels to the land of family spirits wherein he makes definite and direct inquiries. Armed with the information, he comes out of the trance and, as it were, correctly christens the child.

On the other hand, he may use his divining horn suspended from his magic rod by a length of tambo (cord). He squats on the ground with
the horn just touching the earth in front of him. He then names various likely spirits, and when he hits on the right one, the horn suddenly comes to life and does a sort of "charleston" all on its own.

A more complicated procedure, rather akin to the bone-throwing business, is divination by a rod to the end of which is tied a wildebeeste (pronounced vilderbeest) tail which is rather like that of a horse. In this case the nyanga plants the sharp end of the stick firmly in the ground, incants over it and retires a few paces. He then talks to the stick, telling it what he wants to know. After informing the stick how to act, he names various spirits one by one. The stick remains a perfectly ordinary stick till the right spirit is named, then the tail flies straight up in the air with every hair quiveringly erect. I have seen this done more than once and it is uncannily convincing.

The witchdoctor explains it this way. Guardian spirits are able to transmit power through the earth, and when the right spirit is named, their power grips the base of the stick which causes the hair of the tail to stand upright. We used to do a similar trick with static electricity in the laboratory in early hospital days. That has no possible connection with this phenomenon unless you think, as some do, that electricity of the earth and animal bodies is under the control of spirits, and can be used by them to produce various unusual phenomena.

An axe is sometimes used for this purpose of divination of heredity. The native's axe is made of a semi-circular blade of steel with a long haft which is burnt through the knob of a fairly long handle—it is surprising what he can cut with it.

The nyanga takes the family axe and buries the blade deep in the ground. After incantation, he names various spirits, pulling the implement out of the ground after each name is pronounced. When he gets the right one, neither he, nor any member of the family can shift the axe until the child is duly named.

One of these axes appeared in a surprising defence put up by a native accused of murdering his wife.

It must be understood that the blade end of the axe sticks out from the handle a matter of about six inches, while the tail of the shaft projects only a very short way through the back of it.

In this case the tail projected a matter of a fraction less than an inch.

The native pleaded not guilty. His defence was that the death was accidental. He was only a little bit angry he pleaded. That is why he used the back of the axe on his wife, and everyone knows that the back of an axe would not kill anyone. He did not want to kill his wife; only to show his displeasure. If he had been a lot angry he would have used the front of the axe!

Strange as it may seem to the European way of thinking, he got away with that plea, and the indictment was amended to manslaughter. Anyone
who understands the native mentality will agree that it was a fair decision.

However that may be, I do not think the plea would carry much weight at the Old Bailey.

In some parts of Africa it is believed that a child will become a witch if it cuts its lower teeth before its upper ones. Fortunately this is curable. The witchdoctor prepares medicine which he rubs on the gums of the unfortunate infant. Whether there is any magic in this medicine or not I do not know, but it certainly seems to be a powerful anaesthetic for I have seen infants go through the operation without making a sound.

Next the nyanga takes a hardwood chisel and a mallet, and simply knocks the teeth out. After this there is mild rejoicing and an incantation ritual to complete the cure.

On several occasions I have offered to take the teeth out in, shall we say, a neater manner, but the parents very politely pointed out that it would not be the same thing. Come to think of it, I don't suppose it would!

All I can find out about the medicine is that it is made from the leaves of a certain tree which has no anaesthetic properties on the most careful analysis. So perhaps the nyanga does exert a magic influence over the infant. It is certainly uncanny to see him chiselling teeth out of an infant without the slightest protest on its part: I shouldn't care to try it on.

I once had the doubtful distinction of being created a sort of "honorary witchdoctor" by reason of a very high-grade sorcery on my part which astounded the adepts, and incidentally, got me into a spot of bother.

It was all very ludicrous, and it happened thus:

I had to amputate the leg of one of my best boys. While he lay in my hospital, I promised to make him a new leg, and the news of the impending magic flew far and wide.

Fortunately the amputation was well below the knee. The boy’s foot and ankle had been crushed by the iron-shod wheel of a fifteen-ton farm wagon. I had a nice tin leg made to fit him right up to the thigh, with a knee hinge and articulated foot complete. The artist who finished the job had done it so well that at a little distance it was almost indistinguishable from the genuine article.

On the appointed day a distinguished crowd gathered. The boy’s chief, who brought his chamberlain fearfully and wonderfully garbed in an old tail coat, a leather sporran and a Salvation Army hat, was well in evidence, and as usual had enjoyed a "quick one" with me before the show commenced. Several of his headmen had come along, and certain witchdoctors, who were entirely indistinguishable unless you happened to know them personally, were scattered through the crowd, which included all the boy’s family and friends and relations, and most of his village.

Alas that the temptation of showmanship should have overcome a
more modest and becoming discretion; I showed the boy to the assembled throng sans leg. They all had a good look at it to be quite certain that it was not there all the time, and handled the stump and chattered and grunted a great deal.

Then I took him inside, fitted the leg (with which we had had a number of rehearsals), and sent him out again. The excitement was immense—it was an instant succès fou.

In the midst of all this excitement and congratulation and hero-worship the boy very evidently lost his head. He started rushing madly about all over the place. As might be expected, he fell over a tussock of grass and smashed the leg. I straightened it out again, warned him to go very carefully, and my prestige soared higher than ever!

It was then that the chief, and his headmen, and the nyangas solemnly agreed that I was a very high and mighty nyanga indeed. I received this “honour” with decidedly mixed feelings. It was most useful in that thereafter my fellow witchdoctors (goodness, gracious me! !) were only too willing to talk about their trade. It was most embarrassing in that I was importuned to do more sorceries to provide arms, legs, fingers, toes, eyes, ears, and what-do-you-lack. It took considerable diplomacy to worm my way out of that impasse.

Another method of divining, which is of surpassing interest because of its exact parallel today in civilised countries, is that which is done by an instrument held in the hand which behaves exactly as the hazel twig of the water diviner. There is one small difference, however, and it is this. There is no medicine in the hazel stick whereas there always is medicine in the African counterpart.

No one in his right senses would associate witchcraft with water divining, but there is no gainsaying that there is an occult flavour to the art. Again and again folk have given sops to their puzzlement by trying to explain the phenomenon on purely physical lines: why? What is there against a simple acceptance of the feat as a psychic manifestation? You cannot get away from it; that is what it is. Despite all the arguments that the thing is physical, electrical, or biochemical, it is nothing of the sort. Exhaustive tests have proved beyond any shadow of doubt that the physical, biochemical, and electrical reactions are no different in the diviner than in the non-diviner: that is to say, you and me. It is not a physical but a psychological potential which produces the reaction. Moreover it is a potential entirely uncontrolled by the physical. The diviner can no more fail to divine than the non-diviner can divine. A clumsy sort of phrase, but it conveys the meaning.

Therefore water divining is in the literal meaning of the word a magic.

This type of divination, be it said at once, with a different object, is extremely common throughout Africa. Here, first, are the differences. The instrument is not a hazel stick but an antelope horn. I use the word
antelope in its generic sense because the actual genus varies with the location.

I do not know whether the fact that some of the more powerful African demons are traditionally alleged to bear horns has anything to do with it, but the horn is among the witchdoctors’ most powerful adjuncts. It is conveniently hollow for the reception of medicines. It is capable, as I have seen, of levitation. As we have also seen, it can turn itself into a weapon of offence and stab witches or chase spirits. It is conveniently portable.

Without claiming any magical properties thereto, I can say that I once possessed a magnificent pair of impala horns which used to hang over the fireplace in one of my African homes. Whilst one of these behaved itself as any self-respecting horn should, the other developed alarmingly poltergeist tendencies. However carefully we nailed it up, it always fell down, and was occasionally found in most unlooked-for places. Personally I suspected trickery on the part of one of the boys who coveted the thing, but the wanderings of this horn so disconcerted the houseboys, who to a man swore it was bewitched, that I had to get rid of the pair of them for the sake of peace.

Now let us get this straight. I did not then, nor do I now suspect anything whatever in this annoyingly recalcitrant horn, occult, or recondite, or even puzzling. I think the whole thing was a stupid, childish trick, and I KNOW that Lokanzi had no hand in the business. When I recounted the story of the horn to him, he took it very, very seriously. It was seldom that he entered my house even if invited. All our conversations and arguments were held in the open. This was the only time he ever asked to come in.

The horns, both of them, a perfect pair, were hanging in their accustomed place. Lokanzi looked at them for a while. Then he went smelling around the room with such concentration that I almost offered him a magnifying glass and a deerstalker cap!

Finally he pronounced, with great solemnity and absolute conviction, that he could smell witchcraft. He pointed to the correct horn and said “Apo” (that is the one)*. I told him to take it down, examine it, and do what he liked with it so long as he would take them both away with him.

He first took the well-behaved horn down and examined it with the greatest of care. He said it was a very nice horn, but would make no other comment. Before touching the other he did a bit of grunting and growling to himself in what I presume was some sort of incantation. Then he took down the other horn and immediately ran with it on to the stoep. He asked for a piece of cloth. After fiddling about for a bit he borrowed my clasp knife and, with the end used for extracting stones from horses’ hoofs, he hauled out a plug of limbo. After this he poured a

*Literally the word means “There”.
little heap of evil-smelling stuff on to the cloth which, after careful ex-
amination, he pronounced to be "mootie stelek" (powerful medicine).

In this case Lokanzi was not playing tricks. He was as eager for the
solution as I. I never saw him so intent. Certain is it that the "medicine"
was there. He would not, or could not, say what the medicine was, nor
its import. There, without making any sort of deduction whatever, we
leave the bare facts.

It should be said that tin trumpets and things flying around at séances
in Kensington and whereabouts leave me cold and cynical, but that un-
pleasant impala horn got under my skin a bit, and this is the first time I
have admitted it. It was quite a famous horn in its way, and the subject of
many jokes, but it wasn't so funny for all that.

This divination, so akin to the water diviner's twig, from which we
keep wandering away, is done with a horn full of medicine like the one
we have been discussing.

The final difference is that the actual diviners are picked at random and
are not, so far as we know, specially qualified in any way.

I have been told that it is used for smelling out witches, when it almost
twists the seekers' arms out of their sockets. I have seen the thing done
from the Sabi country right up to the north of the Congo, but have no
evidence of its use against witches.

My experience is that it is used to divine something under the ground
where familiar spirits often hide.

Here is an actual example with which I happened to be particularly
associated.

I had a boy called Mafouta, which is slang for fat, just as "busty" is in
the Army. When applied to a man it is a serious insult, but a compliment
to a woman!

Mafouta subsequently ran amok and was chased across the Portuguese
border, but that is another story.

He was a sickly bladder of lard—most unusual with natives who are
usually thin, except for certain chiefs of whom it is expected, since most
of their wisdom is said to reside in their bellies, and cases of elephantiasis
which is occasionally so gross that the poor sufferers have to endure parts
of themselves being pulled about on trolleys!

He consulted a very famous witchdoctor about his malady. This was
not our old friend Lokanzi but a bird of a very different feather. His
name was Topeka, which has a faint Arabic sound to it. I never could
make Topeka out, and strongly suspect a thrilling story somewhere. He
was completely reticent about himself, even to me; and he owed, and
acknowledged a very big debt to me as will be seen. I believe he was an
Arabic Shangaan half-caste. He was one of the cleverest and, even in the
European sense, most learned men I have ever met. The only native I
ever allowed, and in this case invited, to talk to me in English, which he
spoke with easy fluency. If he had told me that he had been to England, trained in our universities and held a degree, it would not in the least have surprised me. He was closer than an oyster about himself. For the rest, to Topeka, and in a lesser degree to Lokanzi, I owe most of what is written herein.

For Lokanzi I admit an affection. You could not have affection for the coldly learned Topeka, but he certainly commanded respect. This dilation on him is deliberate because he was (probably still is) so unique an enigma.

I came across him most prosaically. He turned up at my hospital in no way differently from the others, and I was immensely taken with his general mien, carriage, and striking look of intelligence.

He spoke in Kitchen Kaffir. I asked him where he came from and what was his own language. He said he came from the north and could speak any language. I could get no more out of him then, and not much more about himself ever. He was wearing a Kaffir-store singlet and khaki shorts—quite usual dress.

His request shook me to my mosquito boots. He asked if I could set him up with a pair of spectacles, an unheard-of request, for which he said he could pay. After much pressure, he confessed that he wanted the glasses to enable him to study certain Arabic books. Curiouser and curiouser—natives do not study books, not one in ten thousand of them can even read. They tear out pictures and stick them up in their huts with rude remarks scrawled on them by the few who can write: beyond that they do not go.

That was the start of it. He once told me he had been to school in Mombasa, and that may be true—but I feel it was only a part of the truth.

I got him the glasses as a gift, and he always considered he was under a great debt to me. I also got him some Arabic books which were useful sprats to catch mackerel.

It was some time before I found out by accident that he was a witch-doctor. What he was doing in that galère I really do not know. Apparently he was making a very good thing out of it. I should have thought he would have fitted much more cosily into the job of headmaster in a native school, but there it is. Africa is chock full of unusual surprises.

So Mafoota went to Topeka, who not only diagnosed an adverse spirit but offered to find and destroy it.

As Mafoota was my boy, Topeka did me the unusual courtesy of asking if I minded. He seemed not displeased when I offered to take part in the ceremony.

He appeared to be perfectly genuine about the whole thing, in fact his strongest tenet was that, however much we may deny or laugh at these occult things, they are real; a postulation with which I am in entire agreement.
He asked me to pick out any two boys I wished. Then he gave them a horn and told them whatever happened to hold on tightly to it and not to go anywhere except where the horn made them go.

Then he started talking to the horn and—this is most important—he gave no other instructions to the boys. He did not tell them what was afoot. The rest of his remarks were not addressed to them at all, but strictly and concentratedly to the horn which he ordered again and again to find the hiding place of the spirit which was troubling Mafoota. Immediately the horn, which the boys were holding, one with the right hand and the other with the left, straight downwards—and incidentally they were looking very sheepish about it—rose in the air, stretching the arms of the boys upward. There was no doubt about it: I could distinctly see the grimances of the boys as they held on while Topeka sternly commanded them not to let go. He told me afterwards that in cases where the boys have let go, the horn has flown right to the place, which warns the spirit who thus evades capture.

He told me if I liked I could try to pull the boys’ arms down, but I wasn’t having any because I knew I should fail. The boys’ arms were slowly being pulled forward, and they had to follow, or let go. Thus we were taken for a fairly long walk. However carefully I watched I could see no connection between the doctor and the boys with the horn, in fact, once they got under way, he strolled along beside me with the utmost unconcern, but preserved complete silence. Finally, we were led away from any track and behind a kraal, then round the base of a hill, through a poort, across a donga where we waded through a small river, into a flat arid patch studded with huge granite outcrops.

At the base of one of these the arms were suddenly jerked downwards with great force and the horn started twisting about so powerfully that it was clear the boys were in great difficulties to hold it. Topeka then spoke for the first time since we had started out on the uncanny journey. He spoke to the horn. Instantly it jerked itself out of the boys’ grasp and flung itself (there is no other word for it) violently on the ground, where it writhed about like an angry serpent.

Topeka spoke to it again, picked it up and handed it to me.

I confess I took it a bit gingerly, but it behaved exactly like any other horn while I had it—thank goodness. I should not have been surprised at anything it had done!

“Pelele,” said Topeka. Not another word, and we all went back.

Later he told me that Chikenenge was buried there, and it was his spirit which was afflicting Mafoota. He had, he said, killed the spirit and Mafoota would now be well.

“Will he lose weight?” I asked.

“Spiritually there is nothing now to keep his weight up, but he will have to eat less porridge,” Topeka said; very sensibly I thought. He
would not tell me how he managed to kill Chikenenge's spirit. In England we used to exhume them, drive a stake through the heart and place a cross over the corpse.

We can well imagine the grisly rites Topeka performed by the light of the moon. Probably he exhumed the body and burnt it: it is a sovereign remedy. I know he got all poor Mafoota's pay for a long while.

Whatever he did, and whether there was virtue in it or not, the effect on Mafoota was startling. He lost weight with extraordinary rapidity. On the other hand, he became so truculent and so barefaced a thief that I was forced to give him a good lambasting. Then he ran amok, stole everything he could lay his hands on, including most of my shirts, and legged it, chased by police boys, over the border, and we saw him no more.

He reminds one of the man in the Gospels who, having got rid of one devil, took seven more worse than the first. Fat and lazy he was tolerable, thin and truculent he was impossible. If it is of any interest, he was my laundry boy: that is how he managed to get away with a large proportion of my washable wardrobe!

Much later Topeka, knowing from our frequent talks how interested I was in the occult, actually presented me with a school exercise book full of beautifully written notes of what had come out in our conversations, mostly in precise English, but partly in Arabic, which was the language he preferred.

Much we read herein is an elaboration based on those notes, plus my own fortunate experiences.

There is nothing clever or abstruse in these things. They are as plain and unvarnished as I can make them.

I count myself most fortunate that abiding interest and chance have combined to let me see these glimpses—for mere glimpses they surely are—into some of the rituals of one of the oldest and least-changed hierarchies in the world. Gnostic or agnostic, we must have respect for their beliefs, in the same category as our respect for the faith of little children—for that is what it all boils down to in the ultimate analysis.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

OBLATION

The central concept of sacrifice is as old as history, probably older, and as widespread as the sins for which it is intended to be an oblation. In Testament history it is the one continuous theme from Adam's sons to Jesus. Throughout this book there are, as you know, a number of references to both the Old and New Testaments. Though
there is no call to apologise for this, perhaps an added reason will not come amiss. The Bible has been quoted to prove that the spiritual agnostic cannot claim allegiance to either the Jewish or Christian faith— as so many do. It has been quoted to vivify the extraordinary construction of Zimbabwe in its amazing likeness to the Temple and Palace of Salomoh. If, as it will be, it is quoted to point this or that parallel or odd sequence or similarity of ritual and so on, it is so quoted because I think, entirely disregarding (for the moment) any mystical or religious significance, it is, so far as we have been able to check up, a document of fairly accurate historical significance. As such, it is an illuminating codex of manners, customs, legal procedure, worship and ritual of the times. It is hoped that the idea that where these antiquities coincide with the Africa we are discussing, they are most interesting, is not a false one. If it is, then I greatly misjudge you.

The old story of Abraham and Isaac is almost the earliest record of the theme that animal substitutes for human sacrifices are acceptable, or more correctly were acceptable to Jehovah. Whether a God can change his likes and dislikes along with the progress of man, I do not know; nor would a theological discussion by one so completely ignorant of theology as I be anything but an impertinence. One may be permitted, however, to note that the same Jehovah who delighted in all sorts of sacrificial oblations in the time of Leviticus, appears today not to require any at all. That is an historical metamorphosis of a God which is entirely beyond my comprehension. It is easy to understand in the case of Christianity, as Christians believe that the one “Oblation, and Satisfaction for the sins of the whole world” has been made, but it would be extremely interesting if some Jewish divine would explain how Jehovah no longer requires animal sacrifices, and when (with all due reverence) He changed His mind, and why.

This little digression is germane to our context in that many of these animal sacrifices, which are démodé in the Jewish religion, are today still carried out in Africa, inextricably mixed with witchdoctoring and witchcraft itself. So unholy a mélange takes some considerable sorting out, and we cannot attempt it in in extenso.

In short then, anti-witch sorceries, as indeed we have seen, require the sacrifice of animals: certain witchdoctor performances also call for sacrifice, mostly of cocks or hens, with ritual sprinkling of the blood, sometimes of larger animals. In the witchcrafts in general, animals, and alas, often babies, are sacrificed: animal slaughter is an integral part of obeh and voodoo rites, while oblationary sacrifices for this or that sin are also common.

In the old story it will be recalled that “Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering
in the stead of his son”. Today, in Africa, when a lad is very sick, the witchdoctor will not infrequently order the sacrifice of a ram (or a goat or even an ox) by the father on behalf of the son. If, he adds, the spirits accept the sacrifice, the lad will be cured.

It is not suggested that this descended direct from the original patriarchal sacrifice quoted, but it is surely interesting that the continuity of the oblation theme should transcend time and retain its pristine implication right down the centuries to the present day, and be found, in its pure form, in native Africa.

Further in the ancient Jewish story we learn of the “scapegoat”, who, by being driven into the infertile desert places with its immense load of transmitted sin, was permitted to sacrifice itself by starvation and thirst. Today the nyangas lay the sin of this or that “patient” on to a goat and sacrifice it. An example of this procedure will be forthcoming in a moment.

Before describing the ritual, a curious but logical perversion of the sacrifice of the sin-bearing goat, as practised in witchcraft, is worth a moment’s thought. When the godly cast out the goat as a sin-bearer (poor fellow!), the witches took it back, because of its sin-bearing potential, and worshipped it as a god. Though they did not deliberately, or rather consciously, trace the tenet back to the scapegoat ceremony, it is implicit in their belief that the goat, being a receptacle for concentrated sin, was therefore the most convenient animal to house the Devil, and therefore, in their adoration of the Prince of Darkness, the obvious animal to worship either as a proxy, or as the actual Devil’s host on ritual occasions.

In their sabbats the goat was set on a demonic throne and worshipped physically, their devilish perversion of the ceremony of kissing the pontiff’s fisherman’s ring, being transformed in the ceremonial kissing of the private parts of the goat. This disgusting osculation actually took place at every sabbat where the goat was produced throughout the world, and preceded a complete orgiastic ecstasy among the entire throng.

To worshippers of the Devil the process is quite logical, as has been said, and is typical of even more disgusting religious reversals practised by the covens.

In considering the sacrifice of the goat by the witchdoctor we should be careful to remember that in Leviticus the one for whom the sacrifice is an oblation “shall lay his hand upon the head of it”. After the sacrifice, the priests (the sons of Aaron) are enjoined to “sprinkle the blood”, also that the fat and and the kidneys and the caul shall be taken away and burnt. . . . Finally, it is laid down that parts of the flesh shall be for the priests. Some say that these parts included the shoulder because even the Israelite priests, in common with those of other cults right up to our own times, used the blade bone for divinatory purposes. Of that use of this
bone, I find no evidence among the Hebrew priestly sect, though there is some evidence, as I am informed, of its use by the laity. One other point must be observed, and it is that there are instructions for the burning of sin offerings *outside the camp in a place of ashes*. The similarity of minute detail between these instructions and the oblation carried out from the Alunda to the Zulu, and even farther afield, is astounding.

It is a cure for sickness, individual or communal, by laying the causative sin upon the goat, and then sacrificing it to appease the avenging spirit, troubled by the necessity of avenging the sin by causing the sickness. The witchdoctor brings a specially selected goat to the sick person, or community, who lays his hand, or their hands, on the beast. The doctor then leads the goat outside the camp to a place of ashes—as we shall see—where prepared medicine is bubbling in a pot over a little fire. Here he performs a ritual incantation, ordering the goat to bear the sin and imploring the spirit to accept the sacrifice. He then orders the relatives to kill the goat which they do by slitting its throat, collecting the blood in a bowl.

To this blood, the medicine, with the admixture of certain leaves, is added. The doctor then takes the concoction and sprinkles the sick with it, and also the entrance to the hut, or huts.

While this ceremonial "sprinkling" of the (medicated) blood is proceeding the goat is being dissected.

The doctor then takes the kidneys and the fat and the caul and burns them utterly with fire. The head and what is left of the medicine he then takes to a special place which varies from a deformed tree with aerial roots to a sacrificial monolith. He sprinkles the treated blood on the ground, and upon it he places the head.

He names the avenging spirit and again implores it to see the head and the blood and accept the sacrifice.

After this, the hut or the whole village is ceremonially purified, especially of ashes or any wood which has been even partly burned. These are collected with scrupulous care and are carried outside the camp to the place of sacrifice and scattered there. Great precaution is taken that none of the ash returns, even to the extent of washing the bodies of the carriers in the swiftest flowing stream available. The flesh "which is the priests' portion" goes to the nyanga. The blade bone he uses for divinatory purposes.

Perhaps the whole thing, along with its Jewish counterpart is all, as many believe, or profess to believe, mumbo-jumbo: perhaps it is not.

The startling fact remains that *it works*. How often one is forced to repeat the phrase!

Complete similarity from Moses to Lokanzi and his brethren, from Jehovah to the African spirits. It gives one furiously to think. Is it all coincidence? If so, it is, to say the least, remarkable. Or was there in the
dim past an unrecorded spread of the ancient beliefs south of the African equator? History is silent.

When Candace was converted the Messianic era had got well under way. Besides, Candace was converted to Christianity, not Judaism, and founded the Coptic church in Abyssinia. These rites are far older than Candace’s time, so it cannot be thus.

Did Sheba take Jewish proselytisers from Solomon’s court back to Africa with her? That would be about right in point of time, but it is extremely unlikely.

Did Solomon’s own emissaries go with the navy of Hiram and settle down and, with memories of the temple fresh in their minds, attend to the repairing of the buildings of Zimbabwe, introducing their own sacrificial rites which have survived? Ingenious but hardly within the bounds of possibility. The contemporaneous Jews were neither venturesome, nor yet sea-minded, else they would not have employed Hiram and his navy.

And yet—there it is.

It is not easy to conceive the similarity of detail—the laying on of hands: the incineration of the “inwards”: the site outside the camp in a place of ashes: the priest’s portion of the flesh: the oblation theme: the choice of animal: the purification—without some contact with the old practitioners of the Jewish ritual. Add circumcision: purification of women: the basic similarity between many of the traditional laws: the laws of hospitality: the adherence, against all opposition, to the Mosaic injunction, thou shalt not suffer a witch to live: and the difficulty increases.

But the greatest difficulty of all is this: if there was not contact how did the similarity arise? If there was, how and when did the contact take place?

The whole of Jewish history is against such a thing.

There it is. I can do no more than state the problem. I cannot give the solution. Perhaps you are more fortunate.

The land of the great question mark—that is Africa.

That problem alone is worthy of a book by a far cleverer pen than mine.

Even the native story of the Creation bears striking resemblances to that given in the first chapters of Genesis. Far more closely affiliated than that of, say, Brahma, which was two thousand years earlier, and more beautiful.

This story, in consonance with every other traditional fable, custom, rite, law, etc., varies with location and tribe, but it has the same basic principles throughout.

God created the first man and the first woman in order to keep Nature in proper order.

When they were created they were innocent of sex. ("Who told thee that thou wast naked?")
In every case, clumsiness, or carelessness, or disobedience of man brought about his own undoing. The actual sin varies greatly. Lokanzi told me that the first man, not wanting to do a certain command of God, deliberately killed the bird which flew with the order. Chilimanzi had a less ethereal explanation. He said that man was over curious and, seeing the other animals busily procreating, he raped the woman, who fell into great pain and distress and brought forth a litter of evil. God forgave the woman or else all men would be bad, but the man's action brought death into the world, in order to do away with the evil progeny of Adam's carnality.

Topeka, on the other hand, held a far more erudite view. The first man and woman, he averred, were sexless because they were immortal. Therefore there was no need for procreation. The effect of living on earth got into the man and he became lazy and good for nothing. Therefore his life was curtailed, and God started all over again to make a better substitute. Meanwhile, because man was made mortal, he learned sex and started procreating at a great rate. When God saw this He realised that there would never again be any room for immortals on earth. He, therefore, kept the two He had made in place of our first parents and made them Lords of the Spirits.

Whatever the story, there is always the same theory, namely the sin of the first man brought sex and evil into the world.

There is only one exception to this theme that I have heard and it is held by, I think, but at this distance may be wrong in the exact locality, the Alunda tribe. In their case it was the divine messenger who sinned. The first man's sin was in condoning the carnal dalliance of the messenger, which, incidentally, he hastened to try out for himself!

Be that as it may, only in Genesis does the cowardly man blame his woman for his downfall.

Although it has nothing to do with Africa, the story according to Brahma is so much nicer that I cannot resist paraphrasing it here.

Brahma put a man and a woman whom he named ADAMI and HEVA on the lovely island of Ceylon. They were fully sexual and he advised them to “be fruitful and multiply” and populate the place.

Taking them to the north end of the island, he pointed out a bridge of stepping stones linking it with the mainland. “On the island,” he said, “Is everything the soul of man could desire. I have not got as far as India yet. You may do anything you like, except cross that bridge. If you do that I shall curse you and you will surely die.”

The man’s curiosity got the better of him, but Heva would have none of it. She was, she said, perfectly content where Brahma had placed her, and saw no reason to disobey his command. Then Adami became angry and, picking her up, ran across to India.

Immediately the stones sank into the sea and a great wind arose which
made it impossible for them to return. They found the land they were on dry, and hard, and barren.

Then Brahma was very wroth and came down and said, “I will curse you both for your disobedience and you shall surely die.”

Adami then stood forth and said. “Curse me if you will, but let Heva go. She would not disobey you. I carried her across.”

Then Brahma said, “For your honesty you shall live for a space cursed by me to labour and misery till you die. I will let Heva go.”

Then Heva spoke up and said, “Oh, my Lord, if you must curse Adami, curse me too; for I love him and want to share whatever his lot may be.”

Then Brahma saw that he had not wrought so badly after all and relented.

“I will not curse either of you,” he said kindly. “But I cannot get you back to the paradise wherein I placed you. You will have to work hard to till this place, and I will help you all I can.”

Seems to me, that is a much prettier story than that of the miserable Adam with his stupid apples!

Admitting the native differences, the Genesis principle is there even as in the Old Book.

There is also a striking parallel in native oblations before his prayers. He does not often pray to his god direct, though there are occasions when he does. Mostly he addresses his petitions to either his guardian spirits or, on special occasions, to the Lords of the Spirits, whom, you will recall, are the direct work of the Creator. Before doing so he makes an offering of flour on his equivalent of the domestic altar. Repeatedly it is stated in Leviticus that the petitioner shall make an offering of “fine flour”.

Though the same book has frequent references to the ritual sprinkling of blood, there is no reference to the next procedure. Maybe it is synonymous.... After the native has completed his orisons he takes some of the oblatory flour and smears it on his face even as the Christian with his Holy Water.

Reverting to the old Mosaic code, the native, too, offers the first-fruits of his harvest to the Lord, translated in his case into guardian spirit.

Finally the rainbow in the sky is believed to be a manifestation of God.

Of all the comments which come bubbling up, what can one say?

One feels one’s hopeless inadequacy in the face of these things. The stupid hymn says, “the heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone”, and then this: this simple, uncontaminated theology of primitive peoples hits one in the face, a potent rebuke to the religious insularity, the doctrinal superiority in which we wallow. Fronting this fearlessly and honestly, are we not faced with the conclusion that, call Him what you
will, Jehovah, Unkulunkulu, Allah, Brahma, Lesa, Mupashi (the good spirit), Chimvule (= Pan), Mukishi (= family spirits), Shapanga (one word for the Creator), Mzambi (another word for the Creator), it does not matter by what name He goes, “THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE GOD”?

Agree or not, that is the lasting impression much delving into native religion has left.

If that great clarion call of the old Israelites is not true, we are the sorrier.

But—if the impression left is true: what an abiding hope for mankind: indeed, and indeed, a vision glorious.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

MAGIC OF THE FLOWERS

Let us descend from the heights of involved analogy, and come up for a breather from the depths of witchcraft and superstition, and for a brief moment “consider the lilies of the field”, magic of the burning sunlight and teeming rains, of sparkling air and spangled dew, of the morning colour riot of the East, and the darkling palette of the West, the splendour of cataclysmic rivers, the high oceans of the lakes, the soft tragedy in the glazing eye of the dying antelope—and the glory of the flowers. The flowers of Africa: therein is magic indescribable!

The national flower of South Africa is the protea (or protaea).

While it cannot be said to be the most beautiful, it is certainly unique. Where, in the wild and waste places, proteas bloom in masses they never fail to awe with their splendour. They grow on low bushes something like small rhododendrons. The leaf is tough and hard and dark green, giving welcome contrast to the tawny uniformity of the grass. The flower is enormous—but, in its setting, not clumsy. It is circular, and in size anything up to that of a soup plate. The centre is made up of countless honey-coloured filaments, which open in full bloom, and then close again over the large fruit as though protecting the tender ovary from the harshness of the sun—in point of fact this, with pollen catching, is exactly their function. Surrounding this filamentous mass is an aureole of thick waxy petals, like those of a sunflower but blunter and much thicker, in colour from pale cream to deep rose, and sometimes with a warm purple flush.

The flower is peculiar to South Africa and, as far as I know, is indigenous to no other place on earth.

If you want to see glowing flower colour such as you have never seen
before, nor will ever match elsewhere, walk down Adderley Street in Cape Town on a sunny morning. This should be easy for every morning is sunny for eight months in the year.

On each side of the street lines of baskets, presided over by the cheerful, fat, grinning type of “black mammy” beloved of the American lyric writers, display an orgy of rioting colour entirely unknown in our northern climes.

All these flowers, glowing in the sun, are wild and fresh-gathered from the slopes of Table Mountain: agapanthus, watsonias, aristeas, herveyas, ericas like no heaths we ever see elsewhere, tall, with each separate flower as big as a snowdrop, of every shade from white to deep crimson lake, anemones, ornithogallum, scabious, gladioli—one could go on listing them for ever!

I have ridden through miles of massed ornithogallum shinningly and dazzlingly reflecting the sun, through fields of unbroken blue of scabious, and hated to trample down the crowding gladioli. Everlasting flowers crackle like dry straw beneath the horse’s hoofs. Flowers hiding the grass; painting the landscape with the brush of Goya.

There is a gash in the side of Table Mountain, through the base of which runs a little rill of water, ice-cold in the hottest of weathers, which is a mass of orchids. No one may pick them: they are sacred. Some poet once likened the gash with its river of scarlet to the bleeding wound from the Roman soldier’s lance in the side of the Crucified Christ, and none has ever touched those orchids since.

Close to the scarlet orchids are fields of creamy chincherechees growing more tightly massed than the carpets of blue scillas in our English woods. These hyacinthine flowers are unique in that they will travel thousands of miles and emerge as fresh as when they were plucked. I have gathered great armfuls of them in bud in Cape Town and enjoyed their blooming in English vases, where, with a little care and attention, they will last for upwards of three months. No other flower on earth will do that.

There is a popular lie about African flowers that they do not smell. A vase of chincherechees scents as powerfully as tuberoses.

Bougainvillea twines ubiquitously from Cape Agulhas to the Egyptian coast, blanketing everything it gets a hold upon with its vivid purple rouge. The flower is named after de Bougainville, the French navigator who christened the group of islands discovered by de Torres in 1606, the Luisiade Archipelago in 1768, after Louis XV. He first described it in detail.

Jacaranda blossom, falling on the wide streets of Salisbury, strews a rich carpet of wistaria blue. Poinsettias flame by the wayside. Grenadillas, bearing in the heart of each passion-flower the purple sign of the cross, are everywhere rampant. Flamboyants spread their blinding brilliance, while dotting the grass-veld, Kaffir-boom trees fling their fiery scarlet
heads above the jetty blackness of their stems. Oh, the pen runs dry trying to cope with the flowers of Africa.

Trees, trees, trees, all bearing huge beans, loofahs, “German sausages”, pink, feathery foliage. Grass burnt dry today and vivid green tomorrow. Alas, that wattle, and pepper—that boring tree, and blue gum—that stranger in its alien setting, should, planted assiduously by the unimaginative, oust the native loveliness.

I saw seventeen million tiny gums planted over land lately wild and waste with native bush and aloes and golden grass and msasa and mopani trees. Three years later I saw them, with pinus insignis and other foreigners, already trees, lined up with the drab uniformity of soldiers on parade. In another four years they were fit for the timber trade, excellent perhaps, but as incongruous as utility furniture in some splendid Norman castle.

Looking from my window on to an Essex garden, new-planted this year, and tended for the first time since the beginning of the war, despite the laying down of arms, I see one little patch in the Alpine garden more brilliant, when the sun shines, than all the rest: a patch which flames with the sun and hides its glory in the shade, and am reminded of the greatest flower magic in all the world. For these flowers are mesembryanthemums, and they come from the Karoo, that high plain through which the train, tiny on its toy iron track in the vast distances, toils hour after dusty hour on its way to the north.

This Karoo, with its high, thin, health-giving air; hot in winter and cold in summer, and almost always parched, is semi-desert. During the long droughts, save for here and there glaucous shrivelled scrub and blackened sugar-bush, and thin dry tufts of what might be grass if it had a chance, there is nothing to cover the naked, iron-hard soil, except a covering of stones which give it a rusty pinkish hue. On this high, flat, illimitable plain, with nothing but sudden coppery-bronze, stark kopjes, where monkeys chatter, to break the monotonous skyline, the inhabitants—a mere handful—are tough and bronzed and fighting fit. In its rarefied air “chesty” subjects gain a new lease of vigorous life. Miles apart, out of sight of each other for the most part, the little farmsteads, sit upon the desert, each with its screen of blue gum trees, its windmill pumping water from its artesian well, without which the farmers would die of thirst.

Seen in the dry season, it is incredible that such country could support life, yet, in normal years it raises considerable numbers of cattle, even a tough kind of fat-tailed sheep. The ubiquitous goats, which can eat anything, draw moisture and sustenance from the unappetising scrub, and manage somehow to keep skin on their bones till the blessed rain, if and when it falls, shall provide them with cool and fattening pasture.

I have been on the Karoo when no rain has fallen for three years; when
all the sidings on the railway were blocked with trainloads of dead and
dying cattle in the rush to get them south to water. I have seen the cattle
wander slower and slower till they could go no more, and stop and die
where they stood, and become powder dry in a few hours.

Yet the people who live on the Karoo are in the main a happy people
who, once they have become acclimatised, would not change their lot for
any on earth. They come to love this almost featureless land with a
fiercely possessive affection. It is passing strange, as the train puffs
laboriously to a temporary halt, to see one lone woman gallop up to the
rail on her tough, rangy horse, the only moving thing in infinite
nothingness.

But—when the rains do fall—ah! what a magic is here! All the stones
burst overnight. Then the featureless, naked, iron-bound soil, in its
immense fertility, becomes, at a wave of Nature's magic wand, a carpet
of glowing richness beyond words to describe—for the stones become
flowers: the mesembryanthemums are out.

From my window I can see three square feet of brilliance: crimson,
red-purple, lilac, lavender, orange and white, but my mind sees that
track over which we drove for two whole days in the midst of an un-
broken carpet of these dazzling hues, a carpet which stretched beyond the
limit of vision.

On Thursday a desert, desolate and dead: on Friday a living, shining
carpet, in colours rich enough for the most exacting monarch's palace.
There is a magic no witch, be he first cousin to the prince of witchcraft
himself, can hope to equal. It is, should the rains not fail, the annual
miracle of the Karoo.

Then, through the colour, the grass grows so fast that you can see the
waving undulation of its upflinging leaf. The cattle revive and grow fat,
while all the little world rejoices.

When the sun, alas, too seldom here in England, shines strongly, and
my mesembryanthemums stretch their glowing petals wide to catch the
utmost of its rays, and folk say, "They are so brilliant they don't look
real." I cannot help replying, "You should see them on the Karoo."

And these same folk say, with a twisted smile, "There he goes
again."

The only answer is—go and see for yourselves: you, too, will find a
magic irreducible to mere words.
CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE WANDERING HEAD

From the magic of the Karoo to the really horrible witchcraft of the wandering head, is a pretty far cry.

It will be recalled that, earlier on, when we were discussing the witch who went to gaol for attempted murder: the one who had all the appurtenances of witchcraft hidden in his hut, it was decided to devote a chapter to the other one then mentioned. This is it. I approach the task, after long argument, with the utmost trepidation, because it will almost inevitably stretch credulity to the utmost limit.

Let this be frankly admitted: if I had read this occurrence as a fictional story I would at once conclude that the author was "stretching the long bow". But this is not fiction. It has been the subject of a discussion before the most learned society of experts in the occult, who were well enough versed in the illimitability of psychic phenomena, not only to accept the facts, for facts they are, but also to produce both classical and modern instances of the like.

It illustrates, so these professors tell me, an example of a form of lycanthropic possession by a demonic familiar, once far more common than it is nowadays. Most of the authorities, including Montague Summers, a most dispassionate observer, quote well-authenticated cases.

Once more, before we attempt to swim in this maelstrom of wickedness, I must protest that this account is an unadorned plain statement of the facts as accurate and unimaginative as I can make them.

This weird sequence of events occurred on a farm at a most prosaic moment, when a party of gay and happy people were having an all-night session. We had been riding throughout the afternoon. I was entering certain horses, which I proposed to ride myself, in the local races, and I and my friends were having a try-out. Short gallops, full stretches, timing, checking, and going through all the preliminaries which determine "form". All the party were hard and knowledgeable riders, and we had discussed the subject thoroughly before dinner. The programme was intended to be a long session at poker where the chips were to be fairly high, for we took our gambling very seriously in those days: 1929—how far off it seems!

There were present a doctor of science, and a doctor of pestology (a science I had not previously heard of) attached to an important Government research station, a hard-headed old mine owner from Bradford, who had gambled away the fortune his mine produced, and now obstinately went on digging through a heavy vein of iron pyrites in the hope of a new strike—which, incidentally, he never found though he died in his
boots, still trying, two farm managers, one of whom became very drunk and slept throughout, and the other so hopelessly in love with one of the ladies of the party that he was barely tolerable, a cattle inspector, the wives of two of the men, who had brought some lady acquaintances for the riding, and myself.

The whole party witnessed most of the incident, and each put his or her own interpretation upon it. In the official registers the dead man is entered as "murdered by a person or persons unknown".

To understand the affair we must go back a little.

Baboons, known in the curiously polyglot Kitchen Kaffir as "boba- johns", are the most destructive brutes imaginable.

Their is not the wanton careless ravaging of elephants wandering through cultivated plots. It is deliberate and planned.

When they descend, in military formation, upon the mealie lands, they first pick off the cobs and eat them till the grain pours from their over-filled stomachs out of their mouths, then they range over widening circles, tearing everything to pieces in an orgy of destructivity. Moreover their chief, squatting on a vantage point, directs them, and advance and lateral scouts give ample warning of impending retribution. So intelligent are they that there is a popular saying—which is a gross exaggeration by the way—that the bakvelder Boers employ them as farm labourers. It is firmly believed in some quarters that the Boers trained baboons to lead their wagon spans in the 1836 trek.

The natives will tell you that, when they capture men or women, as it is alleged that they often do, they do not kill them, but give the men to their women, and vice versa, who indulge in orgiastic orgies with them. I think this is romancing, but I have seen not a few girls who claim they have been raped by baboons. Shall we leave it at that.

When you get bush-pigs digging up the mealie roots, while bobajohns tear down the stalks, it behoves you to do something about it if you want to recover any crop at all.

The method is to station what are known as "bobajohn boys" at strategic points round your lands (we do not use the word fields) to scare the brutes and keep them off your crops.

All the boys I ever saw at this job, except one, built themselves platforms in the trees from whose branches they hung clappers, gongs, and any instruments with which they could make an infernal din. The exception wandered about carelessly and silently without implements or any tree shelter. Often he would be seen loping down from the mountain fastnesses wherein the baboons lived, but never a brute showed itself anywhere near his particular area.

After a while I began to think that the baboons might have left that part of the country, and accordingly shifted the boy. Instantly they returned in force, and he had to be recalled.
Let us have a look at him as he strolls nonchalantly around his beat.

He is old, as boys go, with sparse greying hair, and a few straggling untidy bristles sprouting from odd situations on his sunken cheeks and chin. He is mostly silent, truculent when he feels like it, unpleasant, and he stinks. He is so weird in his manner, and so excessively dirty that even his own kind shun him—and they are not exactly roses. He is festooned in the usual places: round the neck, on the thighs and biceps, and round the ankles: with amulets which are strangely unlike the usual ones so frequently worn as charms against sickness, snake bite, spirits and the devil knows what else.

Without giving the boy away I drew some of these amulets as well as I could and asked Lokanzi about them. He pronounced them evil and shut up like a clam.

Then something happened in the compound. I could never discover exactly what it was, but there was a terrific uproar. The boys threw him out, and used to gather round in angry little parties to discuss the boy, who now lived entirely by himself on his beat.

As the rumours grew till it was openly said that he had a familiar in the shape of a baboon and was a witch, I began to sit up and take notice.

Of course, I should have dismissed and sent him packing right away, but that infernal curiosity which has landed me in too many scrapes to think about, got the better of sane judgment, and I kept him on to watch events. I often wish I hadn't! Then this would never have happened, and I should not be setting it down.

There was a loathsome aura about this boy, whom I was now watching most carefully, which was uncannily repellent. He seemed to exude evil as a tree drips sap. Many who had no more than passed him by used to ask why I did not get rid of the horrible fellow.

The baboon menace became so serious that I used to give sixpence to every boy who destroyed a male, and a tickey for a female. The discrepancy is explained because females are easier to catch. They will stay behind to drive the youngsters along to safety, and can be picked off.

To prove that they had actually killed they used to bring me a severed hand. I would then inspect the body and pay out.

This precaution was necessary as otherwise every boy would immediately claim every baboon slain!

The boy we are discussing had never killed a baboon, and I taunted him with it. I gave him the ultimate insult by saying "boriaco m'titse", which means that his body was like his mother's, and that he was such a woman that he was afraid to kill anything but ticks. At such a devastating insult the average boy would foam at the mouth—however cowardly—and up sticks and immediately depart. I was by now so sick of this fellow I heartily hoped he would do the same.
All he did, without the slightest change in expression, was to say "Yah, Inkoos," which was tantamount to agreeing with me.

Then I lost my temper. I told him to get out in the morning and go as far away from me as he could OR I WOULD SHOOT HIM IN MISTAKE FOR THE BABOON HE RESEMBLED. I don't know why I said that. I suppose the infection was getting me as well as the other boys. It produced a startling result. The whole body seemed to swell and shrink and undulate with malice. He went rushing up the hill, running with bent knees and hands, brushing the ground, as a baboon runs. As he ran he screamed the shrill scream of a baboon.

This action did not make any great impression at the time. Boys are great imitators. Afterwards it gave me furiously to think. This was the morning of the day of the party.

After dinner we were settling down to some serious poker, in fact the appropriate boy was in the act of carrying in the drinks, when a baboon screamed right outside the open window. The boy, shaking with fear, hastily put down the tray of drinks and fled—he had never shown any form of emotion before—as he ran he shouted the name of the bobajohn boy.

I remember distinctly shouting in native language something to the effect of who the hell was that, when the head of an old man baboon came crashing through the wide French windows, and rolled on the floor. The men rushed to the stoep, and there in the moonlight stood the bobajohn boy.

Quite unperturbed by our concerted fury, he said, "You told me I could not kill a baboon. There is the head of the baboon which has killed me. Sikispence."

"What do you mean 'killed you' you old witch. Did you kill that brute, and if so . . .?"

"Icora (no) Inkoos," he repeated calmly. "It killed me. Sikispence."

"Damn your sikispence," I said. "Take the bloody head and get out of here." Someone pushed the head over the doorway with his foot. "If I am satisfied I will pay in the morning."

"It will be too late," said the boy. "I shall then be gone."

"Thank God for that!" And I meant it.

He did not move. Better to pay him and be done. "Where is the damned body?" I asked. "Apo," said the boy pointing to the ground. There lay the headless body of an enormous baboon.

Now I am not being fantastic, but when I tell you that four voices chorused "where the hell did that come from", and each one swore it was not there when they rushed out, you may possibly begin to realise the creeping unease which was settling over us.

That house stood on a kopje, and even Samson before Delilah got at him could not have carried that body up the side of the hill. It was a task beyond the powers of three of the skinny wreck of the bobajohn boy.
I know for an absolute fact that none of my boys would have raised a finger to help carry the burden.

“How did you get that up here,” I asked.

“We walked up together and it killed me here,” he said. Still that curious reversed statement. I made no comment. Perhaps it was his grammar which was at fault.

Someone said, “That’s a silly bloody lie.”

I am still wondering if it was a lie—OR THE TRUTH.

“Take the filthy thing away from here,” I ordered.

“Inloos, I cannot move it,” the boy said. That at least was true.

Harry Chapple, the doctor of science, said, “For Christ’s sake pay the basket and let’s get back to the cards.”

“Pay him yourself,” I retorted angrily.

“O.K.,” he replied equably. “I will.”

And he did.

As may be imagined, the ladies of the party were extremely upset by this horrid scene, and insisted that we threw a buckskin over the grisly relic. Harry, the most phlegmatic man alive, picked up the head which somehow had got back on the floor—probably someone kicked it there in the scramble—at least that is what we thought then—and placed it under the sail with the rest of the body.

We continued to play poker in a desultory fashion for some time. We had to get our own drinks: the boy had completely absented himself. The whole evening was spoilt.

Sometime later the cattle inspector showed where all our thoughts were by saying, “If that were my boy I’d crucify the So-and-so upside down.” Everyone said “Shut up!”

What had started as an all-night session, finished early. The ladies had headaches—and no wonder. With specious apologies the men retired after a final drink, soon after the ladies.

Only Harry and I were left in the large airy room, now deliciously cooled by the soft night air.

We each brought a bottle and siphon and discussed the incident for some time during which I recounted all that had gone before.

Harry said: “Let’s get that head. I’d like to have a good look at it.”

“O.K.,” I agreed. “We’ll try to guess the age of the beast.”

My many years of doctoring, and his of pathological research, had made us quite hardened to this sort of thing.

He opened the wire-netted mosquito doors and went out. After a while he crashed into them from the outside.

“What are you trying to do?” I asked.

“Sorry,” he replied. “Forgot they opened outwards.”

“Damned careless of you. Might have smashed them,” I grumbled.

“Where’s the head?”
"That's just it," he said. "There's something damned funny going on."
"What's funny?" I asked.
"I can't find the head," he said positively.
"Idiot," I cried. "It's under the sail. You put it there yourself."
"I know I did, but it's not there now."
"Here, let me look."
We hunted high and low for that beastly head. It was not to be found. Harry had smashed the hinge of the mosquito door, and I fell headlong over the doorway in consequence.
Then I saw the head.
It was grinning from under my chair, right way up.
"I'll murder that boy if I ever see him again," I said—and I meant it.
"Look, he's shoved the beastly thing under my chair."
"Don't be a damned ass," Harry shouted, loudly and impolitely—this was getting through even his tough hide—"How could he get in? The room hasn't been empty all evening."
"By Jove, that's queer; nor it has. Oh, well, it's some blasted trick. Let's have a squint at the beastly thing."
We hauled it out. My, but it was heavy, and examined it carefully. It was an unusually old fellow.
Four molars were missing, and the week before I had extracted four molars from the same position from the jaw of the bobajohn boy!
When I saw those gaping holes in the bobajohn's jaw, I began, for the first time, to feel very, very queer. Up to now I had put the whole thing down to the boy's native beastliness. Now I sat down rather suddenly.
"What's the matter, old chap?" asked Harry. "Here, drink this."
He poured out a very stiff drink.
"All right now," I said. "Got me between wind and water for a moment. It's only another trick of that damned boy. I took four of his molars out a week ago, and he has pulled the same teeth out of the baboon for spite. That's why he threw the head in here. Determined I should see it."
Harry examined the jaw very carefully indeed. I could see the most extraordinary expression creeping over his jolly face. He went a bit grey, and it was now his turn to have a stiff drink.
"How long do you think this brute has been dead?" he asked, and his tone was sombre.
I took the head, felt the flesh, smelt the severed neck, pulled various parts about, sedulously avoiding the jaw.
"A few hours at most," I replied.
"Look at those sockets," Harry said. "The alveolus is partly healed. I'll bet any money those teeth weren't pulled less than five days ago—and that's a minimum."
That did it. I took the head and flung it under the bucksail.
“Let’s have another drink,” I said, “and another and another. Let’s go
on drinking till we forget all about the beastly thing.”

Then Harry did an unheard-of thing. He shut the windows and the
door. As there was no lock, he pulled a heavy divan across. Then he
went out. Presently he came back carrying a crucifix which hung on the
wall of a spare room I kept exclusively for the use of a certain Roman
Catholic priest who was a great friend of mine, and who often slept there.
“Sorry about this, old man,” he said apologetically. “I’m not a bit
superstitious you know, but we are up against something evil here
beyond my experience.”

“And mine,” I agreed heartily.

“So you won’t mind,” he went on, “if we take precautions.”

And he placed the crucifix face outwards against the door, hanging it
on the handle.

“I’ve never done a thing like that in my life,” he added. “But, whatever
there is in it, I must say I feel safer now.”

We did some serious drinking, but we did not speak. Each was acutely
aware of something infinitely horrible just outside the guarded door.

Occasionally I started to doze, but that filthy head immediately chased
me wide awake again.

Dawn found us still there.

“Thank God for daylight,” Harry said with immense sincerity.

Small mountains of “C to C” cigarette ends lay by each hand on the
small table between us. The air in the sealed room was thick and stale and
heavy with alcohol and smoke fumes.

“Me, too,” I said. “Now we can clear up the mess.”

The boss houseboy came in with breakfast. He looked at the bottles
and the floor, then he went out again—sensible fellow! Soon he was back
with a more appropriate repast. Paw-paw and lemon, avocado pear with
salt, mustard, pepper and vinegar mixing, a jug of milk and a bottle of
whisky. The ideal breakfast after a thick night.

“Get the farm boss, ten boys and the Scotch cart here right away,” I
ordered.

If I had asked for a slice of the moon on toast his expression would not
have altered.

“Yah, Inkoos,” and he turned to do the job. “Shall I tell the houseboy
and serve the breakfast of the ladies, or shall I go myself?”

He had permission to send the other boy and get on with the breakfasts.
We were for once devoutly glad that the others had decided to have
thiers in bed.

The posse of boys and the cart came at the double. It was now broad
day, and the sun, as always, was shining brightly.

“Under that sail is a bobajohn with his head cut off by So-and-so the
bobajohn boy. Take the body and the head and bury or burn them—get
rid of them somewhere. Quick now before the others come."

Nothing loath the boys flung back the sail. The corpse of the bobajohn was not there! In its place was the headless body of the bobajohn boy! We did not find either of the heads. So far as I know they have not been found to this day.

Next week I applied for leave of absence for a rest putting "overstrain of work" as the excuse. I felt I had had enough.

Old Lokanzi, when I discussed the thing, which, of course, ran in a garbled version throughout the native population like wildfire, never at a loss, had the explanation easily and completely at his finger ends. The boy, he said, was obviously a powerful witch. The bobajohn was his tuyuwera which had become so strong that it could use his body at will either as a bobajohn or in his own shape. It was true that they walked up the hill together and that the tuyuwera had killed him. He said it often happened. . . . Then the tuyuwera had changed bodies, and it was the spirit I spoke to last night. But a tuyuwera without a host cannot live in a body, so it had gone into the head and run off with it to the land of spirits, where it must stay till some other witch called it forth again.

The nyanga then promised to travel to the land of spirits, find the head and kill the evil tuyuwera which would otherwise do me a mischief. I was prepared to believe almost any fantastic story at that moment: even that if I must.

It would be a long and arduous journey, but he would do it because I was his brother (thanks!). He added that it would be an exceedingly thirsty journey as well.

I sent all the houseboys to their compound. It would never do to let them see me commit a penal offence.

Just inside my door was a prize kaross of the lovely skins of the male cross-fox, and on it Lokanzi squatted drinking my whisky out of a tin—he could not understand a glass—and committing me, if I had been seen, to a three-year stretch of penal servitude. A fat lot he would have worried about that. Very powerful and sure of himself he looked as he squatted there, telling me more things than we guess at in earth or Heaven or hell. The feeling of affection still remains whenever I think of that shrewd and cunning old necromancer.

It was a full week before he would attempt his psychic journey, and every day the projected journey seemed to be a thirstier job than heretofore. There was no doubt about it he liked his whisky—or rather my whisky. I often wonder how many others committed the penal offence of filling him up in response to his persuasive tongue. He said none, but he was a congenital liar.

I hope there is an ample supply where he now roams with the shades of the illustrious brothers of his ancient guild.

There is the plain account of the wandering head. Do you believe
Lokanzi’s explanation—given in so matter-of-fact a tone—or not? As for me, I prefer Harry’s summing up of our many interminable arguments about the thing.

“There we are: where are we? What do we know, after all? Chuck us the bottle, old son. Che Sará Sará.”

CHAPTER TWENTY

OBEAH

There are many published eye-witness accounts extant of tigers in Africa, as indeed there are many describing obehah in all sorts of places where it simply does not exist.

Of course, there are no tigers in Africa.

There is, however, some excuse for the casual observer of tigers. A full-grown hunting leopard or cheetah: the fastest animal on earth: when on the move can look something like a small tiger, and the lion on the escutcheon of the royal house of Abyssinia looks far more like a tiger than a specimen of felis leo. Also the Boers call leopards tigers just as they call giraffes camels (cameels).

But there is no possible excuse for describing obehah practices where they do not exist.

There is no obehah in the whole of Africa except in the countries contiguous with the littoral of the Gold Coast, and not much of it there. Though it certainly originated, as we know it today, in the countries from which most of the slaves were exported, it seems that it went with those same slaves and left little of itself behind in the country of its birth.

I cannot explain this: merely state it and wait for this or that authority to disagree. Before you do so my friend, remember this. I am not denying that there is obehah in the countries mentioned, but I say it is not rife. It is in no way comparable to the ubiquitous scourge of more general witchcraft.

For obehah, derived from an old word meaning witch, is a very special form of witchcraft. The main difference between it and the general run of African witchcraft is in its inception.

Your African witch, at the start of his downward path to hell, or whatever you care to call the shadow land of demons, is inspired by the comparatively innocent temptations of avarice, love of power, desire for supernormal luck and the like and, by dabbling in matters which easily get beyond his control, evolves the classical maleficence of witchcraft through the continual pressure of his evil familiars, whom he first
acquired to steal and do odd jobs for him. The obeah man, and woman, is so personally malignant at the outset that, as did the Salem and other witches, he or she deliberately compacts with the devil, cum malicie prepense, for the sole purpose of implementing his or her own initial propensity towards maleficence.

The fundamental difference is at once apparent.

It has been said above, that obeah as we know it today originated in the countries which exported the slaves. The sentence is equivocal, and therefore requires elucidating.

Apart from the few in the countries I have mentioned, all the practitioners of obeah as we know it are in the countries at present occupied by the descendants of those slaves, and what I am trying to say is that their obeah originated in the African countries from which they were so savagely evacuated. That does not mean that obeah itself so originated, in fact I do not believe it did.

One finds traces of it so widespread throughout witch-lore that one cannot escape the notion that it is a relic of an extremely old cultus. In the vast bibliography of demonology there is ample evidence that most, if not all of the basic ritualia and evil principles of obeah were practised throughout a large part of the world from China, whence I have seen old prints of some of the rites, to Ireland where they made up certain of the Druidical arcana. They can also be traced in later British witchcraft, and it is instructive to note from a Press cutting, that a case was discovered in Ireland only a few years ago. In this case, if memory serves, a white cock was the obeah instrument—as it frequently is—and the practitioners were not caught.

It is also known that certain forms of obeah are found in Melanesia, having no possible connection with the West Indian cult.

This devilish witchcraft poisons native life throughout these West Indies and less frequent cases are reported among the black population of the U.S.A., where the useful reverence of ancestral spirits, which helps to prevent evil, and keeps their African brethren static for fear of offending the guardian shades, is dying out, allowing all the hateful obverse of the civilisational picture to take its place. They do not, however, easily lose their abhorrence and fear of witchcraft, which we lordly and superior people relegate to the stews of psychic sewage, and profess to disbelieve—wherein we are the greater fools.

Therefore, though outwardly changed by long and intimate contact with the whites, their inward ego still lives in a continual spiritual battle. It is in this fertile ground that obeah flourishes. The position of the obeah practitioner is perfectly unequivocal. He is a busy priest of the devil, the instigator of demon worship, the chief performer at sabbats, black in more ways than one, the willing consultant and coadjutor of all who would work iniquity, the protagonist of crime, murder, incest and sexual
bestiality, the maker and purveyor of charms to work evil, the instrument of blights of cattle and crops, disease and death.

This charming and gentle character has no redeeming features. He does not attempt cures of disease, as other witches are known to do. Though prepared to foretell the future, he will not prophecy anything but evil. He is all bad.

Wherever he is found, he should be rooted out and, as indeed he is by African native law, summarily dispatched without let or mercy as the deliberate and brutal murderer which he undoubtedly is.

There are, in the West Indies, and maybe on the mainland of the States, obeah women as well as men, and there is little to choose between them. Maybe there are female obeahs in the hinterland of the West Coast countries. I do not know.

On consulting a priest of great experience in these parts, he said, "It may be there are female obeahs. If so they are of minor importance and very well hidden. I have not come across one. The general position of women in the Cameroons and contiguous countries is such that one would not expect to find them indulging in any practice so important. On the other hand it is certain that there are many followers, and that they do actually worship evil; or the devil if you prefer it that way; else the regular sexual saturnalia could not take place. These follow the lines of the European sabbats very closely, and a plentiful supply of women is essential to them. I am convinced that many of these women practise a kind of private obeah on their own account out of jealousy or spite. I would not put it past them to produce the major effects either." Thus the expert and a theologian to boot. I find no difficulty in accepting his remarks in toto.

Apart from a lucrative trade in known and recondite poisons, the obeah works havoc and kills by means of perverted ritual with demonic assistance.

Make no mistake about this. It is not the slightest use shrugging superior shoulders and shaking the thing off with a contemptuous "it's all a lot of hooey" sort of remark, because it is nothing of the sort. His demonic murders are as definite as those of the bullet or the knife; nor are his victims any less physically dead, which is the ultimate test.

The more usual of his apparatus is too well known to warrant extensive description, but certain facets of some of them are worth looking into.

As Margaret Steen correctly observes and so dramatically makes use of in her great book, The Sun is my Undoing, the practices of obeah produce feverish wasting illness even unto death, accompanied with, and here is where her acute observation comes in, extraordinary mental variability.

If you have not read her book which I have mentioned, do so: the obeah chapters are so correct, to say nothing of her general excellence.
The outstanding witchcraft practice in obeah is the manufacture of clay, wax, or wood images of the candidate for affliction and, by maltreating the simulacra, or alleged simulacra—some of those which I have seen are not even caricatures—evil befalls the prototype.

Again and again herein, with what may be considered boring repetition, I have been impelled to push home the same warning, here, without apology, I do it again. The too generally accepted thesis that all this is nonsense—stuff to frighten children and the like—plays right into the hands of the devilish practitioners. If by some mischance, from which may God preserve you, you become the victim of obeah, and lie in feverish unrest becoming weaker and weaker day by day—the despair of medical skill—you would not then be contemptuous of the power of evil. I protest I am as hard-boiled and normal as the toughest, but I have seen too much; I have tried unavailingly to save too many cases to be sceptical. More’s the pity in a way. I would willingly have forgone some of my experiences.

It is true, and it is true, and it is true that these demonic practices WORK.

Now, as to these images. The point to be made here, as rebutting what has been said of the antiquity and origin of obeah, is that this form of witchcraft has been employed by the devil’s disciples for thousands of years.

We have documented evidence of such having been recovered along with written ritualia from current grimoires during excavations into ancient European buried cities. Their use is amply recorded through the ages. They are still in use today throughout the civilised world; I say nothing of the savage parts. That takes some digesting, but it is true as sufficient research will prove time and again. The ritual cursing of the images follows a set course of one kind or another depending on the type of evil to be worked. No one out of the craft can possibly know all of them, but the commoner methods are increased wounding with pins, charring of the wood images, slow melting of the waxen ones, rubbing with certain poisons and loathsome unguents including a mixture of faeces and blood, all with curses and incantations and prayers to demons: supplicatory prayers to make the evil work: as, we repeat, it most certainly does.

As the dire work progresses so the victim sickens and dies. In terms of such protracted loathsomeaess, straightforward murder by knife or cord or bullet is almost decent.

Of the efficacy of these methods, if the African official records are wanting, those of the police courts of the West Indies are conclusive without cavil or hope of disavowal. Police court evidence is notoriously calm and dispassionate. Some of this evidence should be read by the agnostic. This one sentenced for obeah whereby So-and-so was made seriously ill, another caused death, another blighting of crops, and yet
another sickness in cattle. Add thereto evidence of missionaries, priests and anglicans and nonconformists; all testifying to the horrific power of obeah, and the weight of evidence is overwhelming.

But this is only one part of obeah. The obeah sabbats are frequent, disgustingly perverted with, where they can manage it, human sacrifice, of young children or babies for preference—white if possible (as I am informed. I have no personal evidence to offer, and refuse to pretend a knowledge I do not possess. My informing authorities are, by all tests, unimpeachable.)

Cannibalism of raw flesh is a powerful obeah charm, and drinking of warm human blood mixed with rum has actually been indicted. There is considerable proof that the adepts also indulge in exhumation and eating of corpse flesh and usage of parts of the bodies for their perverted rites. In this connection extraordinary exhibitions of anti-semitic extravaganzas have from time to time accused the Jews of human sacrifices and cannibalistic rites. I think there is here a deliberate, or perhaps unconscious mixing of witchcraft of the obeah type with the Israelitish ceremonial. Again and again Jews have been accused of sacrificing Christian children, and such accusations have been made the excuse for repressive pogroms. Now here we have a very curious metathesis, for such sacrifices are implicit in obeah, and great is the devilish rejoicing if so disgusting a sacrifice can be achieved.

That there have been Jewish witches there is no gainsaying. We know of an early cultus which was largely semitically inspired. The witch of Endor was a Jewess. The Jews have at times been guilty of sanguinary crimes, and the merest glance at Palestine today proves them still capable of such excesses. But, on the whole, they are rather over inclined the other way, silent, peacable sufferers. There is not the slightest evidence that they have ever abrogated to themselves the horrid rituals of witchcraft (en masse), or that they have ever indulged in human sacrifices.

On the other hand, the blood of white children is powerful obeah, and the adepts will go a long way for the chance to obtain it.

The obeah practitioner works in filthy hovels in the dark, being one of those who loves darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil. The implements of his trade, such as cocks' feathers, teeth, bones, ordure, human flesh, images, magic pebbles, blood, offal, are not in themselves startling—merely filthy—it is not to the implements but to the implications we must look for the real horror of the cult.

The deliberate pact with the devil: the desperate evil-doing to please the demonic masters: the employment of the greatest evil to work the greatest malevolence: the implacable hatred of all that is decent, and the consuming desire which, with demonic aid, produces the dire results, these are the things which make obeah so real a menace and so terrible a scourge of native life.
I had not intended here to mention voodoo and its pale brother myalism but, having seen an article upon it in one of our English illustrated papers this morning, wherein, much to my surprise, it appears to be whitewashed, I cannot refrain from disagreeing with the writer. True, voodoo was started as a sort of anti-obeah with counter-ritual and counter-charms, but the position today is that it has become so inextricably mixed with superstition, diabolism and horrid symbolism, that there is little to choose between them. One of the cardinal principles of voodoo is a ritual dance, and this dance has produced such unpleasant results that it has been strictly forbidden by law. It is not the dance which was pictured, with the burning alive of a white cock, but to me that was horrible enough. Voodoo is witchcraft just as obeah is witchcraft.

As that last word was written the noise and rattle of appalling radio reception quietened down as the atomic bomb fell over the other side of the world. Unless, which God forbid, it is to be used offensively, it is a little difficult to justify the terrible risk to life or the gigantic experiment at all. One cannot help the reflection that it would have been worth it if its power could wipe out spiritual evil, for it is certain that devilish maleficence is the only thing which prevents this tired old world of ours from becoming a terrestrial paradise.

Alas, that is too much to hope for. The worship of the devil is as widespread today as ever it was. It is a sorry but true reflection.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

MAGIC OF THE WATERS

From the muddy deeps of necromantic horror it should be a refreshment to come up into the clean air and see the sparkling heights of the tumbling waters. Elsewhere I have essayed a short description of the famous Victoria Falls. Their unique splendour is the excuse for visiting them again.

While we find it so difficult to believe in the magic of the occult, we so easily believe the greater magics of the physical that we pass them by unnoticed. Not that we could ever take the Falls for granted, they are far too breath-taking for that. Nevertheless, they provide an example which is germane to our theme.

We have seen a wandering head, a little thing no larger than a football: a head that moved from place to place and finally disappeared, apparently of its own volition, and we hold up horrified pious hands and say it is incredible, impossible, the man’s a liar, it couldn’t happen. We would insist on remaining steadfastly agnostic even if the head should return
and testify on its own behalf. It was an occult phenomenon which Thomas the disciple refused to believe, and Thomas’s doubts were childish faith compared with ours.

A moving head—such a little elementary phenomenon. But here is a vast river, a mile and a quarter wide, falling over four hundred feet at a rate of millions of gallons a minute. Yet when I tell you that Nature has performed the magic of moving that incredible mass of water for upwards of FIVE MILES during the period of man’s local inhabitation: has twisted and altered the whole bed of the giant river: has produced forests where, not so long ago, the river was flowing: is still taking some of that river into its bosom and completely absorbing it, so that in an instant it is gone, never to be seen again, you are unmoved.

“Oh, yes,” you say. “That is a natural phenomenon. We can understand that. Therefore, of course, it is true. We cannot understand the other, therefore it cannot be true.”

There you have the general attitude. Actually it is an impertinent abrogation on our part, yours and mine, that our knowledge is infinite, ergo, anything without the acceptance of our knowledge simply cannot be.

It is admitted that of us both, you and I, I am the worse, for these weird things actually happened within my purview, and still agnosticism will not be driven out! Is it not extraordinary?

In the region of its falls the bed of the Zambesi is composed of volcanic basalt heaved up by some titanic convulsion in the childhood of the world. I do not know how deep this particular stratum is, but to give some idea of the immensity of the convulsion, a similar one, or perhaps the same upheaval, threw up a comparable mass of basalt in the Drakensberg Mountains which has been measured to thirty thousand feet!

Now the pillars of this basalt, even as they are in Fingal’s Cave, are, unshakably bonded in one direction, while they are loosely held together in another.

For five miles a twisted gorge, over four hundred feet deep, of the same basalt, now carries the river in a narrow, rushing torrent. Then, where the nature of the land alters, it burgeons out into a wide, placid river again.

In these twists and turns there are a number of faults which run parallel with the present Falls, and, should you examine these, you would find that the near edge of each is water-worn, showing that each was at one time the site of the actual Fall.

Now come to the present Fall. Having described it in a previous book,* I cannot repeat the description here. It is one of the most awe-inspiring sights in the world. It could swallow Niagara time and again and be none the fatter for it.

* *Ninety-Nine and All That: Frederick Kaigh (Richard Lesley & Co. Ltd.).
At the corner nearest to the Falls Hotel there is an almost discreet fall known as the Devil's Cataract. The top level of this is already well behind that of the rest of the straight line of the Falls' edge, while, level with this cataract, there is already a large gap appearing, though it is still under water.

There is no doubt that the retrogression is continuous, and where the millions of tons of water hurl themselves in their gigantic leap today, will tomorrow—as the days of evolution go—be dry land, the great chasm which reverberates and shakes with the immense percussion of the falling water will become a prolongation of the bed of the post-fall torrent, and the whole immensity will yet again move further upstream. And so the process will go on until the end of the stratum is reached—perhaps in ten million years or so—if the whole world has not been atomised before then.

The enormous scale of the thing: the terrific convulsion of the change, surely constitutes the greatest magic of all.

From the relics of the area; stone implements and so on; we gather that men have lived here since human evolution. Perhaps in the dim past some primitive tribe beheld, awestruck, the miracle of the actual wandering of the vast falls. “Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen.”

Dorothea Fairbridge in her delightful book, *The Pilgrim's Way in South Africa* (Oxford University Press), poetically sums up the Falls themselves. She says:

“Eternal motion. Eternal force. That is the spirit of the Falls. . . . Who can describe the indescribable? In the presence of perfect majesty, perfect loveliness, language sinks into humble silence. I believed not the words until I came and mine eyes had seen it, and behold the half was not told me.”

That is how this miracle—this transcendent magic—affects us all.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

PERMUTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

The difficulty of describing African customs and rites and beliefs because of their many permutations has already been stated in the first chapter.

Though an attempt has been made to strike a sort of mean, or average, in our descriptions, this has not always been possible.

Thus the experts, native commissioners, magistrates and the like, are perfectly entitled to say of anything we have written, “It is not quite like that with my little lot”, and we agree: it probably is not.
A typical example of these great differences is provided by the divergence of beliefs in the matter of children cutting the wrong teeth first.

Whereas many tribes hold that the "surgical operation" already noted, is a complete "cure", there are others which hold a very different theory. With these the child must be sacrificed. The oblation is carried out as follows.

As soon as it is established that the wrong teeth have actually appeared first: the whole family is in on it, so there is no possibility of hiding the terrible fact: the mother is forced to take the baby, wrapped as usual in a large cloth, on her back, and carry it to a certain river. She must walk backwards to the water's edge, loose the shawl so that the infant falls into the stream, and come away without a backward glance.

With others again there is one possible escape. With them the teeth must be extracted and carefully preserved till every offending tooth is erupted and removed. The mother must then take all the teeth and sacrifice them, in the same manner as the child.

Like almost every custom and belief, this directly links up with the occult.

It is firmly believed that nothing but an indwelling and evil spirit can produce such a false eruption, and moreover, this possessing demon is so malignant that for every tooth it manages to push through in wrong sequence someone in the village must die. On the theory that "it is expedient that one must die for the people", it is held that the child must be sacrificed.

The white Government considers this crime—the sacrifice of the child—to be murder, and is prepared to prosecute, and hang, the "guilty" mother.

Let us consider for a moment whether this act is really murder or not.

In the first place there is no callousness about it. The African mother is just as kind and loving towards her offspring as her white counterpart. It is just as terrible for her to sacrifice her child as it would be for any other mother. It is only fair to be quite clear on that point.

The mother is now in a truly tragic dilemma. There is no chance of her concealing the facts. The family see to that. She is given implicit orders. She knows, if she does not carry out the sentence "quietly", she will be forced to do so by physical compulsion.

On the other side of the picture, should she not sacrifice the child she will be guilty of constructive murder of an indefinite number of her friends and relatives. There is no escape anywhere.

She is not particularly concerned with the possibility of being hanged "for righteousness sake", in which event she goes down in village history as a martyr.

In my official capacity it has been my melancholy duty to see many
hangings, and I have seen natives take the “dawn walk” with complete and almost cheerful apathy.

Secure in their innocence, in terms of their own laws, they fall over the steep edge of their transitory physical life into the stability of the spiritual infinity almost in the frame of mind of the joyful Latimer who could cry to his fellow-martyr, “Be of good cheer, Master Ridley”, even while the fire consumed him.

I have always felt, after the many times I have witnessed such “takings-off”, that there is something essentially wrong here; that we can make no progress till we correlate our legal code much more nearly to native legislature.

Again there are very wide variations in the attitude towards adultery. It has already been said that there was very little adultery before the advent of the white man, and prostitution was previously unknown. The latter is an absolute truth, but the former is only partly correct. It holds for most tribes, but there are exceptions. Among certain tribes adultery is not at all a venial offence. As the physical attributes of the wife are considered to be the property of the husband, adultery with these peoples ranks as petty larceny, and quite small fines are held sufficient to meet the case.

I have been told by certain minor chiefs that, unless the husband chooses to be awkward and lay a claim, adultery is not worth bothering about!

There is, on the other hand, a certain tribe which goes to the other extreme. In a so-called circumcision, they remove that part of their women which produces sensation during coitus so that they will have no temptation towards adultery, as carnality cannot possibly mean anything to them.

Though one can conceive a possible excuse for this operation as a punishment, in the circumstances in which it is applied, it would seem to be a little drastic!

This same baffling variability governs the phenomenon of multiple births.

We have seen how 'Mbanga's tribe believed that such births predicated infidelity, and how the recognised “bastard” automatically died. This again is not universal. Some tribes hold that the happiness of the event increases in arithmetical proportion to the size of the litter, as it were. Thus such extreme cases as quintuplets would need very carefully to choose their venue. Whereas in one tribe such an event would mean wholesale promiscuity, with another it would bring about tremendous rejoicing. This diversity makes such a book as this extremely difficult. It is not that there is a paucity of material, rather that there is too much! Whereas the Alunda hold this tenet, the Xosa believe that, and the Kasempa have an entirely different idea. It is quite impossible to classify
without embarking on a work as voluminous as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

It jumps to the eye that this same diversity immensely increases the problem of government. There is no formula with which to regimentalise these variants.

Fortunately there are some universalities and basic resemblances. One of these is the post-parturient purification of women, somewhat after the Mosaic teaching.

There are definite periods during which cohabitation between husband and wife is absolutely taboo after childbirth. A taboo so strict that neither party would dream of breaking it.

It is both curious and interesting that this should be so among a people to the majority of whom sex makes up nine-tenths of their lives. Polygamy is a way out, but polygamy is not nearly as common as is generally believed. The vast majority have only one wife. Except for the chiefs, very few can afford more than two or three at most. There are, of course, different kinds of wives.

A very marked division, holding good in many tribes, is between free and slave wives.

Of the two, strange to relate, the slave wives are by far the more expensive.

The reason for this apparent contradiction is really quite logical. Whereas free marriage entails severe and lifelong duties on the part of the husband to the wife's relatives, especially the powerful mother-in-law, a slave wife is the absolute property of her husband, and her acquisition does not entail any duties whatever. Again, the children of a free marriage do not belong to either parent, but to the family. Though the immediate parents usually bring up their own, the family has the legal right to take them away and bring them up and own them. As children are valuable assets, this is quite a considera-

Conversely, the children of slave wives belong, not to the mother, but to the free wives and the father. It therefore becomes obvious that slave wives are far more valuable chattels, and, as such, their market price is correspondingly higher.

The idea of slave wives sounds absolutely horrible to Europeans. One can easily imagine our women fairly spluttering with fury at such a notion. Maturer consideration will bring to light a most extraordinary situation. Actually the slave wife approximates far more closely to civilised marriage than the free one!

Consider. European marriage does not entail absolute duties to the wife's relations; nor does slave marriage.

Our children do not legally belong to the wife's parents; nor do those of the slave wife.
Our wives cannot be divorced except for very circumscribed reasons nor can slave wives.

Free wives, on the other hand, can be divorced for almost anything. Curious reflection, is it not?

When the period of taboo is ended there is a family celebration, quite a minor affair, wherein everyone congratulates everyone else. The reason for the congratulations is not quite clear. In many tribes this is the time when the child is first presented to the family. The husband gives his infant a string of beads which the mother-in-law takes away and replaces with a better one. This little ceremony is a tacit acknowledgment of the family rights in the child.

The custom of giving the equivalent of "christening presents" is very prevalent. All the village join in this charming gesture, but most of the gifts, I regret to say, go to the father!

A very general and somewhat poignant custom is the ceremony of acknowledgment. It is an absolutely private one between husband and wife. Topeka in his little exercise book wrote: "This domestic ceremony is taught to us as being very old. It is told us that, unless we make the acknowledgment, the family spirit will be annoyed, and will withhold fertility."

After the first resumption of normal relations, the husband leaps out of bed, and, standing beside it, takes his wife's hand and says. "My wife, my wife; you are truly my wife."

The lady then raises herself in the bed and replies, "and you Chokwe (or whatever the name may be) are truly my husband".

Then there follows a little ceremony which, alas, I cannot repeat here. To us it sounds too crude for words, but for those concerned it has a deep spiritual and occult significance. One can say without undue impropriety that the basis of the ceremony is the binding together of certain hairs from each party, and the careful bestowal of them in a safe place. This is to assure the guardian spirits that they are "one flesh".

If the child is a girl, her sole future is matrimony. In some tribes she is "married" to a boy of the same age almost as soon as she can walk. Among other tribes she is not married till she becomes pubescent, after which event it is held that the sooner she takes up her life work, the acquisition of a husband who will be dutiful to the family, the better.

If the child is a boy, he remains in the hut with the women and plays around until, either he is circumcised, or is considered too old for such childish things. After this he would be "shamed" by sitting with women, and must carry on as a man.

I have not discovered any residual religious significance in the rite of circumcision, though there are many tales of its first inception. In every case, so far as my researches go, the first circumcision is believed to have been accidental!
It is a terrific business. Akishi men in weird and wonderful masks—the most elaborate I have seen in Africa—lead significant dances, and a sort of general jamboree, which sometimes goes on for months. These akishi (spirit) men are supposed to represent the spirits of famous ancestral circumcisers of the tribe, and the entire ceremony is a prolonged propitiation of these spirits, so that the affair may go off successfully.

There is, believe me, good cause to do all they can to that end, for the operation does not infrequently go wrong with untoward results of varying seriousness.

Women are strictly forbidden to be present, or even to watch. They would be seriously shamed if they did so.

The circumcisers—who are normally nyangas—are specialists. As one who has performed many such operations, I can say quite honestly, that they make a very good job of it. Unfortunately there is no inkling of asepsis. Infection is therefore clearly the cause for such failures as occur.

After the ceremony, the boys, who are fantastically whitewashed, must go right away and live by themselves, looking after themselves till the wound is entirely healed.

On the appointed day they stream back to their villages, in many of which there is then another of those little affairs which are somehow pathetic.

The mothers rush out of their villages to meet the boys, and try to recognise their sons. Remember that in the interim they are held to have changed from infants to men. They then make a terrific fuss of them, petting and handling them for the last time.

Once they cross their village threshold, they must put away childish things, including any sign of affection or boyish intimacy with their mothers.

So the mothers make a great show of joyfulness.

But they are very quiet as they straggle, a little wearily, back to their huts. Totemism is very widespread through the tribes, but it is now in a debased form.

One hears so much about it that one cannot resist the temptation to follow it up. Then comes disappointment. The further one researches the less one finds out.

Except in tables of affinity it seems to have very little significance. Apparently the natives' first ancestors took on, after death, the personality of various birds, beasts, trees, and even inanimate objects.

This belief exactly accords with Celtic, Druidic, Egyptian, Chinese, European and Melanesian arcane, as well as that of the primitives of the new world. One can fairly say it is, or was, of world-wide acceptance. There is this difference. Whereas in every other cultus the spirits are said to inhabit, in spiritual entity, this or that animal or object, to the African the object was merely adopted.
When one comes across a tenet, of world acceptation (at one time or another), locally held with a slight variation, then the variance becomes more interesting than the belief.

Why did the African ancestors merely adopt trees, flowers, animals, etc., while all the others inhabited them?

It is hoped this point will interest you as much as it did me. At any rate I investigated it as thoroughly as circumstances permitted. Though the reasoning of my conclusion sounds—admittedly—a little thin in black and white, I believe it to be correct. It is strongly fortified by intimate knowledge of the native mind.

Of all peoples extant, even including the Balinese, the Africans are nearest to the spirits. To them the spirit world is as palpable as, and far more important than the physical. There is eternal domestic intimacy.

How often do we say of our departed, “that was John’s favourite flower”, or “Mary always sat there; it was her favourite chair”?

On exactly the same analogy this or that totem was the ancestor’s “favourite”.

That line of thought sheds a bright light on the African attitude towards their spirits.

Richard St. Barbe Baker, in his charming, sincere and authoritative book, Africa Drums, speaks of a blood-brother initiation among the Kikuyu where spittle is used instead of blood. I had not heard of this particular variant, but it is another example of the differences between almost every ceremony. When I was made a blood brother of one of the chiefs, the ceremony was almost exactly like the Romanichal ritual. The chief gave me his forearm and I gave mine to him. He then cut me, and I him, and the cuts were held together by the nyanga.

Though I gave the chief a hefty gash, he was very gentle with me and scarcely cut me enough to draw blood!

I have studiously avoided the word “ju-ju” in this book for a very definite reason. Ju-ju has come to mean a catalogue of taboos and rather horrible procedures. In point of fact it is nothing of the sort. It is merely another name for certain religious festivals and rituals. True it is that some gory massacres took place under the name of ju-ju, but one must see these things in their proper perspective. The practitioners believed that human souls were requisite to carry gifts to the ancestral spirits. This portage was a great honour. For such a massacre to have sinister intentions, at least the victims must be forced. In the religious sacrifices of ju-ju, fanatical volunteers positively fought for the privilege of bearing gifts to the shades. Their executioners were doing them both an honour and a great service. Of course, that hard saying is not amenable to easy understanding—but it is the truth for all that!

However one may deplore the crudity of human sacrifice, one cannot in the case of ju-ju impute any but the loftiest—albeit harsh—motives.
Witchdoctor surgery
With all his interesting foibles, crudities, varying beliefs, ways that are not our ways and thoughts that are not our thoughts, I believe that young Africa today is not so much a problem as a guarantee for the future.

His simplicity of thought stands well beside the complexity which has bound Western civilisation.

His honest toil produces for us more and more of the world's needs. Once we can eradicate the witchcraft which makes them "cause their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, and use divination and enchantments, and sell themselves to do evil", I am convinced that it will be true of Africa that "out of the eater will come forth meat, and out of the strong come forth sweetness", and every observer who really knows young Africa will agree with me.

It is for us to make it so.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

RITUAL KILLING

When Umndeni, the mother of 'Tchaka, The Lion, died, her son slew seven thousand persons to appease her spirit and to minister to it on its journey through the Shades.

Dingaan, his brother, ritually murdered a Boer officer and impaled his heart and liver on the posts of the gate of the royal kraal in the belief that such an act would force the officer's spirit to turn back the whites.

But, though ritual killings were common enough in the days of Zulu greatness, they were so overshadowed by the immense slaughter which was considered, by the kings at any rate, necessary to uphold military discipline, that there is little record remaining. Curiously enough, no such ritual accompanied the deaths of the kings themselves, but there was a very good reason for the omission. As each was in turn murdered by his brother, who immediately seized the kingship, it was politic to say and do as little as possible about the predecessor.

Ritual killing has persisted from the dawn of the old civilisations right up to the present, indeed it was in March 1947, that, for the first time in history, the practice caused a considerable breeze in the House of Commons at Westminster. The efficacy of offering human sacrifices of hostages to the gods or great spirits is mentioned throughout the Greek, Roman, Assyrian, Egyptian, Chaldean, Phoenician and other arcane. It is implicit in the Celtic arcane of England, Wales and Ireland. There are distinct traces in the ancient Scottish tales. The same is true of all the European countries where ancient records are extant. The ritual formed a major part in the Aztec religious celebrations, while in India such killings were
the regular thing up to modern times. The old Egyptian kings, who were not otherwise murdered, were all ritually done to death. During their short reigns the utmost care was taken to ensure that no accident or sickness would curtail the ceremony. Each succeeding king was dispatched in the prime of life so that his spirit, in its full strength, might enter the body of the new king and imbue him with its supreme qualities. Thus the divine spirit of kingship, untarnished by decay in its successive hosts, was passed unaltered through a whole dynasty of “fleshy temples”.

The essence of all ritual killing is that THERE IS NO DEATH, or, as the Roman philosopher had it, mors janua vitae: death is but a gate through which one must pass to gain a fuller life.

In practice these summary forcings through the “gate” are sharply divided into two sections—sacrificial and spiritual. All the fierce old gods, including Baal and Moloch, required the sacrificial ritual to appease their wrath and placate their fury. Osiris accepted the sacrifice on a very high symbolic plane. Every aspirant was forced to pass through a stage of apparent death, during which the physical faculties were entirely suspended, induced upon him by the priestly adepts, before being admitted to the divine mysteries.

The Druids presided over a far more barbarous form of ritual killing. Their form was the burning, with suitable ceremony, of huge wicker images of men into which were crammed the live bodies of prisoners, agnostics, dissenters and the like. This in no “foreign country”, but in the very fields we till today. Even Jehovah, Great I Am, mystically transmuted into the Christian God, required such a sacrifice. To offend none let us disregard the religious aspect for a moment and stick to dogma, and fact, as written, recorded, and taught. These tell us, without equivocation, that the only way in which the jealous Jehovah—“for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God”—could be appeased, and thus prevented from wreaking His vengeance upon the guilty, was the offer of the “complete oblation, and satisfaction” by the sacrifice of an innocent. We are further very definitely told that it was the will of this God that such a sacrifice should be made.

The Immaculate Victim Himself, directly addressing God on the subject of the immediately impending sacrifice, said, “not My will but Thine be done”. And we are taught that Jehovah not only permitted, but actually desired the sacrifice, and that is why it was made.

Without the slightest irreverence, we cannot escape the fact that the death of Jesus was a ritual killing of the sacrificial order. That is to say, the offering up of a human sacrifice to appease a god. Idealised and glorified, the whole ritual and faith of Christianity, centres upon and pivots around that basic fact. Moreover this killing was carried out under the customary and traditional auspices—of the priestly sect, led, in this instance, by Caiaphas, the High Priest, himself.
It is curious, to say the least of it, that we Christians, deplore and
abominate so loudly the awful rite of human sacrifice while worshipping
and adoring such an act as the entire foundation of our religious edifice.

Such sacrificial ritual killings, once common in Africa, to appease the
gods, are now obsolete, as indeed they are elsewhere, save in witchcraft
and obeah, where they continue if and when opportunity offers. Since
Lo Bengula's time animals have taken the place of humans, and are
accepted symbolically.

On the other hand, it cannot be said that spiritual ritual killings are a
thing of the past; far from it.

There being no death, it follows logically to the native mind, which, it
is essential to remember, is very close to and familiar with the spirit world,
that the souls of the departed need companionship, and ministrations, and
gifts, and messages, both to help and comfort them on their way, and to
let them know that they are not neglected or forgotten.

On this belief the whole of spiritual ritual killing depends. There is,
however, at least one well authenticated inversion of this belief practised
by the Bushmen. Such of these as remain, being representatives of one of
the oldest, if not the oldest civilisations extant, are an immensely interest-
ing people. A race of comparative dwarfs, vitally differing from other
indigenous peoples, they have a debased and simplified spiritistic concept
which contains the glimmerings of primordial religion. They believe that
the sun was a mythological man who once slept on the earth, shedding a
local radiance from a spiritual lamp under his left armpit. Some children
caught him sleeping and threw him up into the sky, where he spun
round and round till the light spread all over him. Now he sleeps only at
night, and is thrown up again every day.

Another mythological being, a cross between a man and a mantis,
annoyed by the darkness, threw his shoe into the heavens and com-
manded it to give him enough light to see by whenever the sun went to
sleep.

In that childish and primitive stage of reasoning it is not surprising that
they ritually killed the infants of dead mothers in the belief that the spirit
of the child, guarded by the spirit of its own mother, had a better chance
than would the living orphan.

Having regard to the deplorable living conditions of the Bushman
perhaps they were right.

In a way this Bushman idea is the opposite to that usually held, which
is not that the departed shall look after the spirit of the victim, but vice
versa, the spirit of the victim, or victims, shall look after the departed.

In this belief, wives and slaves of their dead Lord and Master were
ritually killed and sent hurrying after his departing spirit to “ease his
road”. This was a universal custom at one time, and links very closely
with Indian suttee.
Ritual killing is most prevalent in those areas which are ju-ju ridden. I have heretofore tried to avoid ju-ju, and have made but the briefest mention of it. It is a definite religion, ruled by a priestly sect, riddled with sorcery, necromancy and magic. There is white ju-ju and black ju-ju, corresponding with white and black magic, and, though more loosely, with priests of god and priests of the devil. The opposing sects are both steeped in the practices of ritual killing. Only lack of material and fear of the law keep them in check.

To avoid prolixity, I use the name witchdoctor, in this particular chapter, to cover also ju-ju men, and ju-ju priests. The position of the witchdoctor in all these matters of ritual is unassailable. He does not kill the victims, nor has he any direct connection with the physical act of killing. In this he is unlike the old priests, who were also the executioners, as were the old witchmasters, and the past and present obeah men more often than not. No, the witchdoctor does not kill, but, as the intimate of spirits and friend of god, is the obvious authority to select the proper candidates for spiritual immolation. The relatives, or succeeding chiefs or kings, knowing that companion spirits are requisite and necessary, consult him, and, after the invariable trance inquiry, he names the acceptable ones, nor is he above combining expediency with his occult powers. If the souls of men can remember, there is many a one walking in the shades, who has cause to regret his quarrel with this or that witchdoctor. Though I have said a lot in his favour, I make no attempt to whitewash him. He is the priest and interpreter of the wishes of the august dead and, as such, claims that it is not he, but the spirit of the departed who chooses his companions-to-be by informing him personally of their identity.

After the killings some of the blood of the victims is collected. This, still in his priestly role, the witchdoctor accepts. He then performs ancient blood rites after the manner described in the Pentateuch. He also offers the blood to the Lord of the Spirits, for without acceptance by the Lord of the Spirits, the souls of the victims will not be able to fulfil their destiny.

In some tribes, part of the blood, duly medicated by the witchdoctor, is drunk by the successor and nearest relatives in order to imbue them with the nobler attributes of the dead.

This is a very old belief. We saw an instance of it ruthlessly carried out in the case of the ancient Egyptian dynasties. It is, moreover, a belief almost universal throughout Africa. It is the base of all spirit worship.

On this belief is grafted a cruder ritual, once not uncommon in England, of eating the heart of vanquished warriors, to ensure transference of their strength and prowess. This disgusting rite is now very rare in Africa, but there is a well authenticated instance recorded of one of the early ju-ju men. This sorcerer killed a missionary for the sole purpose of eating his heart. He did so because he coveted the missionary's valour and "magic".

In some parts, Benin, for example (see *Africa Drums* by Richard St. Barbe
RITUAL KILLING

Baker), when a king died, costly gifts were offered to his spirit. The problem then arose of transferring these highly physical gifts to the land of the shades. To accomplish this, somewhat massive orgies of ritual killing took place.

Two classes of persons were required. Ambassadors of the gifts, who would make presentation of them in the proper fashion, and then form a sort of eternal court in elysium, and porters to carry the loads and perform menial tasks for the chief and his entourage. While the ambassadors were all volunteers, the servitors were a mixed bunch. Criminals and prisoners of war had this greatness thrust upon them, but, to make up the tally, a certain number of slaves were permitted to offer themselves.

There was a sort of rough economy in the business. Old men, and slaves, tired of life, were avid for the signal honour. The others—well, the others were expeditiously and usefully wiped out.

After death, the ambassadors and the slaves and the others are planted in one communal grave along with the gifts, whence, and with which, they presumably set out on their last joyful journey elated with the honour of being chosen for the job. That, at any rate, is what all their fellows believe—some even with envy!

Sometimes occasion will arise when the witchdoctors decide that it is necessary to send messages direct to the royal spirits. It is believed that if the messages are willingly learned, and the prospective messengers wish to carry them, they are able to do so.

Volunteers are therefore called for, and these, having learned their messages, are ritually slain.

Whereas the criminals and prisoners are dispatched by means of axes or killing sticks wielded by minor officials, these volunteers enjoy a more ceremonial exit. They have the honour of being launched on their journey by a very potent official. The Lord High Executioner himself, in person, attends to their taking off. They sit comfortably and patiently awaiting his ministrations. He takes out his sacred needle, which is a spike, having a heavy, flattened end, and moving freely through a hollow tube. The executioner passes down the line and places the tube against the nape of each willing neck. Then, with one sure and expert blow, he drives the spike well and truly through the spine. One cannot escape noticing that this ritual instrument is very similar to our own, modern, humane killer.

Another reason for ritual killing is the belief that it is right and proper for the spirits of V.I.P.s to have companions on their walks abroad in the land of spirits. The witchdoctor again consults the departed spirit who tells him whom he particularly wants with him to share his bliss. The sons of the dead Important Person are generally deputed to perform the office of ritual executioner; which office, in the case when the intended victim is unaware of the honour about to be conferred upon him, comes perilously close to common murder.
After the deed, the usual blood rites are celebrated by the witchdoctor. It is this type of ritual killing which recently excited the politicians. Alas it is very true that this particular ritual is often loosely interpreted as a convenient excuse to do away with fancied or real or potential rivals.

At least one powerful chief used it as an excuse to slaughter all his sons, ostensibly that they might accompany this or that worthy to the fields of the blessed: actually because he feared that they might plot untimely to remove their father.

And so the circle comes right back to where it started: back to 'Tchaka again, for he, too, killed all his sons. First he slaughtered the concubine who had conceived—he never married—then he sent the son racing after the spirit of his mother. In a way it was a ritual killing, for he killed them by filling their mouths with earth so that they could not speak ill of him, either here or hereafter—not that he allowed them much time to speak well or ill while they were on earth—one thing he had nothing of was patience.

By this filling with earth he also, so he believed, effectively prevented their spirits from revealing their father's real purpose, which was to make absolutely certain that he never spawned a rival. It availed him nothing. Along with four thousand other women, among the many thousands he had slain, he murdered his brother Dingaan's wife. From that day his fate was sealed. Dingaan did not rest till, through the agency of a personal servant, he had revenged himself on 'Tchaka. Thus passed the cruellest, and in some ways, the cleverest man on earth, on September 23rd 1818, in the forty-first year of his life and the fourteenth of his reign. The man who in fourteen years had built from nothing the proudest, bravest, most ruthless and warlike black race the world has ever seen.

Despite his brilliance, there is no doubt that he was utterly brutal, completely contemptuous of human life, more murderous than Peter the Great, and thus we judge him. But what of these others who practise ritual killing? We cannot judge them fairly unless we can do so from their own standards, and in the light of their own faith and religious convictions.

Even if we could achieve that measure of understanding, and if there be such a thing as ultimate right or ultimate wrong, dare we abrogate to ourselves so divine an arbitration as to define it.
CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

"THERE WAS ONE DOOR"

So we come to the end of our journey.

As wise old Omar said, "There was one door through which I could not pass." Only the spirit can pass through that door when it leaves its temporary habitation for pastures new. All the sages of the centuries have tried to peep through that door and many have convinced themselves that they have done so.

Confucius said that life here was a journey through a long, mountain-flanked valley towards eternal brightness which became clearer as the traveller kept his eye steadfastly upon the shining dawn beyond.

Moses gave little promise of the life beyond the promised land, but there was a spiritual Hinnom, the place of punishment, "where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched", and a place of reward vaguely aloft beyond the clouds.

Jesus divided His Father's house of many mansions, which, after the Jewish inspiration was still vaguely aloft, from a place of punishment vaguely below by "a great gulf". We read of "fallen" angels: of Lucifer "falling" from Heaven, and the basic idea persists that the righteous go up in the air while the evil-doers descend beneath the earth (if one can imagine such a position in space).

This positional departure after death is rather curiously nullified by the statement that the dead shall rise out of their graves at some future date ("and the graves shall give up their dead").

Other religions present equally muddled ideas about the future state NOW, though many of them agree upon a jolly reunion with trumpets blaring, much pomp and circumstance at a sort of last victory parade of the glorious dead to be celebrated in the vague and distant future.

St. John in his revelation presented us with an enchanted city with golden thrones and flying cherubim and seas of jasper and faerfey. Though they do not help us much as to spiritual geography, they all agree with the concept of the actuality of spirits. That must be our starting point.

Maybe in this, our final discussion, reiteration will creep in. It is deliberate. It is only by revision that we can fix our conclusions.

We start then with the postulate that to deny the existence of spirits is to deny all religion.

From that we must try to clear our minds of the wavering between belief that these psychic entities have nothing to do with mundane affairs, or, on the other hand, have a great deal to do with them. If the former belief is right, it follows without possibility of error that every
man, woman or child who has ever prayed to any deity or saint, or ancestral spirit, that is to say nearly every person who has ever passed through this earth since the dawn of spiritual awareness, is a deluded fool.

You may hold that idea. I do not know. But it is a pretty sweeping assertion. One which cannot be avoided or elided. It is the only possible conclusion. Either the petitioned gods or saints or spirits can act through these appeals or they cannot. If you hold that they cannot, then every prayer is utter stupidity.

If that, in your opinion, is the case we can go no further. It is a pity we began this discussion at all.

If on the other hand we do not hold that view, then it must follow that the spirits of whatever grade can and do take an interest in our affairs.

Agreed? Then everything falls into line.

Having got so far we are confronted with the next problem.

Unless we believe that all psyche is ineffably good, and the souls of us all, be we immaculate saints or stained with the foulest iniquities, are equally cleansed by some miracle at the shedding of our material shell—an impossible thesis and hopelessly opposed to all theology and experience—we must agree that there are good spirits and bad ones. That good and evil persist beyond the grave. Surely this must be so.

We are getting on. We have now agreed that spirits can and do take an interest in our affairs, and that there are good and evil spirits. Now we have to examine the evil spirits and see if and how they act. We must make up our minds about witchcraft which is little more than the physical manifestation of psychic evil.

Here we begin to navigate dark and perilous waters. We have to make up our minds whether the manifestations of witchcraft emanate from the practitioner's own imprisoned psyche, or work with the deliberate incitement and assistance of discarnate entities.

I am at a disadvantage in dealing with some—no book could contain more than a moiety of it—of the witchcraft of Africa because here is a people who have no bibliography, no single written word to quote. But the difficulty is only apparent, because witchcraft is universal, and its manifestations are at least similar everywhere, as indeed are the evil attributes which conjure it up.

Denial of witchcraft also entails a denial of religion, especially the Jewish and Christian faiths, which positively teem with warnings and instances. Witches, manifestations of the dead, transvection of corporal bodies, levitation, demonic possession, migration of familiars, exorcism, re-animation ("can these dead bones live"), lying and misleading by evil spirits, the battle of the shades, sorcery, blighting of crops, and all the familiar and unfamiliar processes of witchcraft, are scattered through almost every book of the Bible and the Talmud.
There is no doubt that Moses, who was no mythological being, in his Egyptian adolescence—and there is some evidence which tends to show that he may well have been an Egyptian himself—was steeped in witchcraft, and knew intimately all the tricks and sorceries of the wizards of his day and generation.

That he eventually turned his knowledge to the service of Jehovah is entirely beside the point. So is the fact that he transmuted his astrologer’s staff, which once had the charming habit of turning itself into a serpent you may recall, into the magic wand wherewith he brought water from the dry rock and caused the defeat of the Amalekites at Rephidim.

That same symbol is still a powerful weapon of witchcraft.

The whole story of the tricks he performed before Pharaoh, is—whatever may be said—a story of witchcraft.

The battle between Moses and the wizards of his day started at any rate in a competition to discover which was the more powerful.

And very properly. In no other way could the conversion of Pharaoh’s obstinacy be procured than by demonstrating that here was a sorcerer greater than the greatest in the land.

The fact that Jehovah, according to the story, stepped in at the end and performed Himself the ultimate manifestations does not detract from the theme.

Moreover, the religious aspect makes or breaks on one thing. Did the devil actually take Jesus up the mountain and offer worldly power if He would become a witch (“fall down and worship me” being the sole adit to the witch fraternity), or is the whole thing a lie?

That you must decide for yourself.

If you decide that this passage is true, then, once and for all, compacts with the devil are true, the devil can manifest himself, and a fortiori the actuality of witchcraft is true.

Is the story of the transmigration of the familiars of the men of Gadara into the herd of swine a lie: or is it true?

Did the Carpenter of Nazareth cast our familiars which had the same power as that of the baboon boy in actual bodily possession, or did He not?

It is up to you. I am only putting the questions.

Are the adjurations of the Pauline and other apostolic epistles a mass of delusions, stupidities, false premises, or are they not?

St. John said “I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day.” Was he a liar, or did he really become entranced?

St. Paul saw a vision “in a trance.” Was he in a trance, or is this just another lie?

I know what I know, but it is not for me to say. I am no theologian. Again, the answer to all this lies with you.
If you do not believe your own textbook, then you must be agnostic. To enumerate all the instances in every religion would take many books, nor could I do so if I would, but this remains: Every God in every religion from mythological pantheism to Allah, the youngest of them all, IS A SPIRIT, with other spirit armies on his side battling with spirit armies of evil.

Whatever attitude we choose to take up, it is surely elementary that the battle with good and evil, on whatever plane, is urgent, instant and eternal.

The whole world acknowledges this. If we deny it, then we lay flattering unctio to the souls of us, which souls we deny, that we alone are clever enough to be correct, and apart from us, the entire world is a vast cosmogony of deluded imbeciles. We then should be super-gods. That syllogism does not get us anywhere, for we are not super-gods: we are extremely fallible, we are but fragile and transient motes borne on the wind of eternity.

It has been said that witchcraft, necromancy, sorcery and the like, are comparatively modern inventions educed to frighten us by the masters of this or that religion. Surely that is a stupid piece of Ingersollian propaganda.

The most superficial knowledge of the classics; the veriest rudiments of ethnology, at once disclose that the black arts preceded organised religion by thousands of years.

Indeed, one may go farther and reiterate the fact that religion was conceived and edified as a barrier against the inroads of evil. Study of the accumulated evidence of the actuality of witchcraft inevitably brings out the trenchant fact that the vast bulk of the authors of the innumerable treatises on the subject comprised the greatest brains, the most learned men, the men of noted weight in the contemporary annals of erudition, men of immaculate integrity. Theologians of eminence, professors of medicine, scientists, biologists, legal luminaries, not excluding a king of England, James the First—who was no one's fool—all testified to its existence and maleficence.

It was sheer fatuity to set up our ignorance against the accumulated wisdom of these savants whose personal investigations and personal experiences left them in no shadow of doubt as to its authenticity and actuality, both in their present and past, and in our own. The more learned they were the more they realised the direfulness of its power.

On the obverse, countless witches have themselves written instructional manuals, with their exact rituals, incantations, methods of contacting demons, devilish pacts, order of the sabbat, their pharmacopoeias, not only of herbal remedies but of compounds of death and disease. Not only has the British Museum its quota of these evil grimoires; all the greater libraries of this country, and Europe have such on their lists.
Instructional books by witches to witches abound. Again and again in obeah prosecutions we find that the practitioner had in possession instructional books. It is a bizarre sidelight on their evilly debauched mentality that such delight to sully these books with smears of blood and ordure.

There are even extant today written pacts with the devil signed in blood.

Finally, there is the vast weight of the evidence of thousands of witches themselves. The word is used to include wizards, warlocks, sorcerers, satanists, necromancers and all the horrid gang.

These, with an almost unanimous voice, not only confess their diabolism, but gloat in a positive orgy of confession from ancient time right up to the present decade.

Reading these confessions—one might almost say boastful confessions—of witches condemned by legal inquisition as coldly impartial as any contemporaneous suit, one cannot but be impressed with the unanimity of their protestations.

We now arrive at this situation.

Every religion postulates the actuality of spirits, good and evil, and condemns witchcraft.

Material evidence of Satan worship, common witchcraft, celebrations of the black mass, convening of sabbats by the coven masters, horrid concomitants, including human sacrifice, is overwhelming.

The finest brains of thousands of years have testified to its actuality. Witches have committed their efforts and their rituals, and the results to be expected therefrom to paper.

Legions of witches have declared themselves both in general and in detail.

In the face of this plethora of evidence disbelief in the actuality of witchcraft must be psychological: it cannot be logical. It is a sort of spiritual "wishful thinking". Alas, we cannot abolish such abominations by such evasive mental tricks.

However cynical an attitude may be taken about this curse in what we call the civilised countries: however witchcraft may be childishly decried as old wives' fables—despite all the evidence to the contrary: there is no gainsaying that it riddles the primitives, and particularly the African primitives and, in its immense power and malice, produces widespread horror and disease and blights and death and destruction.

As magistrate Frank Melland, B.A., F.R.A.I., F.R.G.S., F.Z.S., so pertinently puts it, "Witchcraft is a poisonous creeper that spreads over Africa and impedes all progress."

I can assure you that to Mr. Melland's words are due all possible consideration for they carry far more authority than mine. He is the type of man least likely to make such a statement without a wealth of evidence
to support it, for he takes nothing for granted and discards face value for rebutting research, and is essentially an unbiased inquirer of carefully methodical mind.

I can but heartily echo his statement.

There are of course many grades of witchcraft from simple parlour tricksters going through their perversions in the attempt—not be it said always unsuccessful—to blight crops, sour milk and the like, for malignant spite, down to the murderous dyed-in-the-wool demonologists.

That satanists, that is to say out and out worshippers of the devil, have existed from earliest times, and still exist and practise today is beyond question. Their blasphemous liturgies, the damned altars of their perverted worship with their ascriptions to the devil, their vestments bearing the embroidered sign of the broken cross, their black altar candles, the scarlet and black travesties of the Host, their black chalices, their mixtures of blood and faecated wine, have they not all been found and handled and impounded? I myself have actually seen and handled some of them. Sinclair Lewis describes something of the sort in his brilliant Elmer Gantry, and I have seen perverted vestments hanging in a cupboard less than a mile from Holland Park.

To round off this inadequate disquisition on the actuality of witchcraft, let us pick at random one or two of the thousands of writers on the subject and see what sort of men they are.

James Sprenger and Henry Kramer, joint authors of the excellent Malleus Maleficarum, were learned and disciplined theologians.

The author of Demonologie was a canny, cynical, erudite Scot, caustic of wit, rapier-like in repartee, too brilliant to be popular, a king to boot, James I.

Lord Francis Bacon, “My Lord Coke”, and John Wesley are too well known to call for comment.

Ebenezer Sibley was a doctor of medicine and a famous teacher.

Jean Bodin, a professor of civil law, was described as “the most learned man of all France”.

Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell (poltergeists, 1940), Mr. C. L'Estrange Ewen, Dr. G. B. Harrison, Mr. W. Branch Johnson, the Rev. Joseph Williams, Fr. Gregory Raupert, all of our own age and generation.

Finally, Mr. Lewis Spence, and Mr. Montague Summers, who very kindly helped by reading this book and appending his invaluable foreword, are both men who have given their lifetime, so far as it has sped, to the sole purpose of tracing the occult.

We could go on, and on, and on. All that we would find would be long repetition of names of men of the types and characters of those mentioned above. They are enough.

It will have been remarked that there has been a current herein which has always tended to connect African witchcraft with the universal
practices. It is because they do definitely link up; and that fact is the most salient in the thesis that witchcraft is so very ancient. To compare them with each craft in each country would be an almost impossible task. Perhaps therefore it might serve if we find some similarities with the British arcana, not only of witchcraft per se, but also of odd quirks of belief and tags of custom. We have seen the parallel drawn from time to time herein. We may now attempt a brief summary.

We have little information about the really pristine belief in Britain regarding reincarnation, but about the middle of the Druidical era, i.e. about the last B.C. century, we find that the belief is largely narrowed down to reincarnation of famous men, Kings, Chief Druids and the like. There is a mass of delicate imaginative lore, which today we would liken to fairy stuff, from the poesy of which it is difficult to extract the facts. It would seem that there was a cycle of reincarnation through all sorts of birds and beasts and even inanimate objects back to the body of the successive hosts of the reincarnating spirit. The entry into the foetus was via the mother, in most cases, and was a physical act, the spirit incarcerating itself in something or other which the mother swallowed—sometimes, for instance, a fly! On the other hand, love or fornication appeared to have the power to change spirits under enchantment back to most beautiful humans.

I should hate to suggest there was a moral in that weird metamorphosis. This belief is, as will be easily recalled, perpetuated in not a few present-day fairy stories.

This reincarnation belief followed closely the Egyptian tenets of the divine succession of the Pharaonic and Ptolemaic dynasties, wherein the god was successively reincarnated in each heir to the throne. It was rather hard on the poor kings who were cut down in their prime one after another in order to preserve the potency of the spirit. The same ruthless procedure appears to have been at one time practised in Ireland. There was no future in kingship in those days!

There is not a marked similarity between this belief and that current in Africa today, so we start our discussion with a blatant non sequitur. However, there is this to be said. The African also believes firmly in reincarnation of ancestral spirits in each successive generation, but he also believes that there is a wide choice between the spirits of blood, tribal, or even totem affinities. As has already been discovered, this is most convenient and lucrative for the nyangas.

It should be noted in passing that neither the British nor the African have at any time subscribed to the Pythagorean thesis that reincarnation is a series of expiations.

I am very pleased about this, having always held that the Pythagorean idea is nauseating. Fancy going through this, our little life, knowing that our soul was there because of its ancestral sins. It would tend to give us
a very hopeless outlook, to say nothing of a poor conceit of ourselves. Come to that, the last idea might be salutary for some of us!

Though small images of humans are extremely common in Africa, and I have possessed dozens of them—some of myself which are most unflattering—if that were possible—I have not personally traced their use in witchcraft except in the obeah countries. They may be so used, probably are, I do not know.

This image, or “picture”, as the old witches used to call it, form of witchcraft, which is almost a sine qua non of obeah, is, as we have said, very old indeed. It is abundantly found in Britain, and there are detailed and well-authenticated historical cases. The British images were mostly of wax or clay. There is one to be found in one of our museums which was discovered quite recently. I saw one in a south country farm which may have been unique. It was of a pig, and was hidden in a sty. The farmer told me that all his pigs were weak and sickly till he found it. He decided, with some acumen, that he dare not destroy it, but kept it in a tin box well away from the sties. This pig “picture” was not old and is extant today.

The use of corpse flesh, and particularly bones, is common in Africa, both for witchcraft and for witchdoctoring medicines, but, apart from some of the worst Leopard Man orgies, cannibalism is very rare if not extinct. On the other hand, it is one of the cardinal rites of obeah, and undoubtedly goes on in obeah countries.

It may surprise some to learn that it was once common in Britain. Not, be it said, as a sort of “long pig”, the principal joint at general feasts, but in ancient ritual with a pseudo-religious significance. It seems that it was held that eating the flesh of the dear departed would imbue the successor with the better qualities thereof. There was also a pre-battle practice of cannibalism, preferably of one of the opposing side.

There is some classical allusion to firewalking as a Druidical practice, but I find it difficult to reconcile it with religious exaltation. Certain Roman witnesses have given us written eye-witness accounts which I well remember laboriously translating in school days. With today, I sincerely hope, a somewhat maturer judgment, I feel some doubts as to the authors’ bona fides.

Trials by ordeal, fire, water, poison, are too well known in historical Britain to call for comment. They almost exactly parallel the African contemporary procedure, which has survived intact today. Now here is a little thing which is most interesting. As may be guessed, the writing of this book was preceded by an intensive study of all sorts of odd books and manuscripts, the oddest of which was Topeka's notes in the child's exercise book.

Therein I read of the intense cleansing of the huts and kraals after certain procedures which have been recorded, some of them at any rate.
A great point is made of the putting out of all fires removing all ashes outside the compound, and rekindling new fires. There has been recorded herein an Israelite precedent, but in my researches I came across a tag of information which amazed me. It was a description of certain festivals of antique Britain wherein all the people put out their fires, cleaned out all the ashes and rekindled them. Truly there is no new thing under the sun.

The Chimanimani Mountains, which have been described as the mountains of the little people herein, were, you will remember, alleged to be the home either of a race of dwarfs, or of spirits, which are known as "the little people". The exact same expression is used in the British arcana to describe the spirits. It is that ancient idea which persists in leprechauns, fairies, and the gremlins of today. Also, in this connection, familiar spirits are, equally in Britain as Africa, considered to be for the most part little people. The old prints represent demons as life-size, but they all draw familiars as little people. Similarly it will be remembered that in divining by water the nyanga recognises the host of a familiar spirit because that spirit, whose image appears in the water is exactly like its owner. Precisely the same belief existed in Britain, and still does in some parts.

We come across the expression, "His evil spirit was as like him as his own shadow", and the common expression "his spitting image" derives from the old description of a familiar as "his spirit image".

Your African believes that the astral bodies become earthbound for an indefinite period, so did the British. They went so far as to build special living places (if one can use such an expression for the spirits of the dead) where they might remain "till the graves shall give up their dead".

In summation of all this and very much more that might be said, if you could reincarnate a Druid unchanged and set him to work beside an African witchdoctor, you would find that there was very little difference in their aims, methods and rituals. Startling but true.

So it is through the ages that nothing changes. "The earthly hopes men set their hearts upon turn ashes; and anon, like snow upon the desert’s dusty face, biding their little time, are gone." He was very, very wise was old Khayyám. "Myself when young," he says, "did eagerly frequent prophet and sage, and heard great argument. But evermore came out by that same door wherein I went."

That, my friend, is exactly how I feel at this moment. We have travelled a long way together, you and I. We have seen this and that. We have dabbled in a dilettante manner with things which amaze, astound, horrify, and cheat us. Always it comes round to that. We are cheated. Whenever we deal with the things of the spirit—or spirits—there is always the linchpin missing. Lies the fault with us, or is it that the shades cling too closely to their mysteries?

Lest it be said that we have leaned too handsomely towards our friends,
the nyangas, let it be admitted at once that they are unscrupulous, avaricious, dangerous devils—of that there can be no gainsaying. But we must get them in perspective: we must see them in their settings. There, by pandering to superstition maybe, by playing on credulity maybe, they are supreme. Do not forget, they are also the binders up of broken faith, the shield against “the terror which fleeth by night”, the only infallible which stands between the native and the devastation both metaphysical and tangible which would otherwise engulf him. All these things must be taken into account. It is so easy to condemn. So easy to say, “These are felons and murderers; they should be cut down.” So difficult to get behind the scenes and look forward on to the stage where the inevitable drama of superstition is working out its predestined climax. But this is what we must do before we presume to pass judgment. And this is what I have tried to do. I have tried to draw a perspective. Now, in the eleventh hour, I feel how egregiously I have failed. “The attempt and not the deed confounds us.”

In the sincerity of the attempt forgive the failure of the deed.

But do not get the idea that Africa is a teeming pattern of magic. It is nothing of the sort. These things are not superficial. You may live your whole life in Africa without hearing a whisper of them, let alone seeing them. These things are desperately clandestine, they are hidden from the wise and prudent. It is a combination of luck and job, and the persistence of my eager curiosity which gave me the chance of witnessing these things.

One hears the remark, “These things do not happen to ordinary people.” It is an old tag. I resent it bitterly, protesting that I am more ordinary, less imaginative, and certainly more hard-boiled than the average. These things either come your way or they do not. It depends on your desire, your inquiring mind, and, in Africa at any rate, your ability to convince God’s other sheep that they have your sympathetic understanding. Without that essential no oyster closed so tight a shell. And so, if you see “a vessel of more ungainly shape” to your way of thinking, remember that the “hand of the potter” did not “shake”, for they too are partakers, equally with you of the common destiny of man—whatever it may be.

A man walked into my surgery tonight, the second of July, one thousand nine hundred and forty-six years, as we reckon, from the immolation of immaculate Charity, and said, “Do you know anything about witchcraft, doc?” The top of this page was then in my typewriter. I asked him why. “My son,” he said, “is a magistrate in Fiji. He has just tried and condemned two men for murdering by witchcraft. How is it done?” The father of that magistrate lives a few hundred yards from me. Coincidence? A very handy coincidence. But it’s God’s truth for all that. Make no mistake, the prince of darkness is still roaring as loudly as ever,
and many there be who prefer his blatant challenge—the eternal challenge of evil, to the still, small voice.

And so we come to an end. Chilimanzi, whose brother I was once made in a little stream of our mingled blood, is dead.

Lokanzi, that devilish, blessed old rascal of whom I was so fond, is walking in the shades with his guild brethren. Sometimes, while I have been working here, I have felt his spirit very near—I feel it now. If his spirit could speak to us, as perhaps it is speaking, it would say. "Judge how and what you will. If I ended in the nothingness all must end in, remember this, I served myself, and my generation in my fashion."

Topeka, where is he? I do not know. If that austere, learned, cold, admirably discreet necromancer were here, in flesh or in spirit, he would say, as in these or closely allied words he has so often said to me, "I care nothing for the judgment of the un-knowing. What I know, I know, and that knowledge was conceived, rightly or wrongly, in the womb of the world, before I or any of my kind began to crawl upon it."

It is getting late. The fiery ball of the setting sun empurples the burning kopjes on the western skyline. It is gone, and darkness falls fast and sure like the flight of a lance across the azure sky. Soon the moon will ascend, and her soft light will silver every crest and soften every hard outline. A little breeze, pregnant with the blessed cool of the evening will spring up.

And the hard sayings become easy, and simple faith springs from the quiet bosom of the earth.

Goodnight.