

The History of Dingaan's Day.

Dingaan, one of the bravest Kings who ever sat on the Native throne.

(BY ELIZABETH MCQWETTO).

The well-known and talented Poetess.

Piet Retief coveted the fair land of Natal over which Dingaan's power extended. Piet Retief learned that the English had obtained a grant of land from Tshaka, so Retief determined to try and get a similar concession from Dingaan. Therefore Retief and seventy other Burghers visited the King's kraal, and were received with much hospitality. Whereas they had helped Dingaan to recover some cattle which

had been stolen from his kraal, and he in return signed a document granting the whole country from the Tugela to the Umzimvubu River, to Piet Retief and his country men, they stayed three days with the great Zulu King enjoying his hospitality. But just as they were about to depart, he invited them to drink with him. As this parting ceremony was to take place actually inside the large circular kraal of the King, they had to leave their guns outside. They sat down and beer was brought to quench their thirst (Piet Retief was also a comrade of Kaffir Beer eh?). Suddenly in the midst of this friendly gathering Dingaan rose up to speak, but instead of kindly words of farewell, he shouted: "Seize the wizards." Immediately he himself disappeared, but within a few seconds hundreds of Zulu warriors were upon them. The guns of Piet Retief and his party were too far away to be of any service, and they could do nothing to defend themselves. They were seized bound and dragged to the place of slaughter, outside the kraal where they were clubbed to death and not a single man escaped to tell the tale. But this was not the end of the tragedy. As soon as Retief and his companions were dead a great Zulu army set off for the Boer encampments in order to "eat up" the remaining white people. After a march of eleven days they reached the nearest camp.

Nobody was prepared for them and the scene that followed was one of butchery rather than of fighting, men, women and children three hundred of them and two hundred and fifty coloured servants besides were slain. One young man only sleeping at a kraal away from the camp and roused by the shrieks and yells of the victims had time to make his escape. On the ground where all this savage bloodshed took place, there now stands the village of Weenen—The place of weeping. But Dingaan's power must be broken or no white man would ever be safe in Natal.

The news of Dingaan's treachery and of the murder of Retief and his followers was quickly made known. It was necessary to act without delay and the Burghers decided to attack the Zulus without hesitation and early on a summer Sunday morning December, 16th, 1838, began the great fight which was to break forever the power of Dingaan. The Boers were then ready for the enemy. Dingaan burned his Royal Kraal and fled to the mountains where the horsemen could not pursue him and two years later he was killed in a quarrel in Swaziland and was succeeded in rank but not in power by his brother Mpande.

The Anniversary of the battle, Dingaan's Day (16th December) has become a Public Holiday in the Transvaal and stands to-day as a lasting memorial of the Boer victory.