

# BRITISH ASSOCIATION.

## THE NATIVE DANCE AT HENLEY.

Friday, 25th August, 1905.

The following is the programme of the Native Dance to be held at Henley on Friday, the 25th inst.:-

The following chiefs, with members of their tribes, will attend and take part:

1. Mhlola, (Prodigy), Hereditary Chief of the Inadi Tribe, with kraals in the following divisions, namely, Umgeni, Lion's River, Umvoti, Impendhle, New Hanover, Underberg and Camperdown, with 1,748 huts, and approximately 7,429 people.

2. Laduma (it thunders), chief of the Amampumuza Tribe, an off-shoot of the foregoing tribe, with kraals in the following divisions, namely, Umgeni, Lion's River, Impendhle, New Hanover, Umvoti and Estcourt, with 842 huts and approximately 3,500 people.

3. Umvoti (the appearer), Acting Chief of the Amafunze Tribe, an off-shoot of the great Ngoobo clan of native tribes in the Colony, with kraals in Umgeni, Lion's River, Umvoti, Upper Umkomanzi, Ixopo, Impendhle and Camperdown Divisions, with 1,833 huts and approximately 7,790 people.

### ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS.

Each chief and his people will approach within respectful distance of the visitors

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Opport. to be taken  
Mhlola's Chief →  
Chief Amvoti  
Chief Amvoti

and salute in accordance with the usage of their own respective tribes in giving the Royal Salute. The acting chief Umveli and his people will thereupon have a dance and sing songs peculiar to their own tribe. Laduma and his people will do the same in their turn.

These two chiefs and their tribespeople having performed their dances will salute and withdraw, thereupon becoming onlookers at what will be the most interesting event of the day—the marriage of the hereditary chief Mhlola, to a young woman who is to become the chief wife and mother of his principal heir. The marriage ceremony will be as follows:—

The father, or guardian, of the bride, with men related to them and belonging to the bride's party, will approach the place where the intended bridegroom has previously taken his seat, with his attendants, and will perform an introductory dance. They will, thereupon retire, and the bridesmaids and a number of girls accompanying the bride will come forward and perform a dance in the presence of the bridegroom. The bride herself will not be present.

Having completed their dance, the marriageable girls, who are to be known by their head-dress, and their peculiar skirts, will join the bridesmaids and other girls and take part in the continuation of the dance. Shortly thereafter the bride will join the party and after taking part in the dance for a short while, will emerge from them on the left, with one of the marriageable girls; two other girls will emerge from the party on the right, whereupon the four move forward towards the bridegroom and go through a small dance of their own, and then fall back into the ranks of their comrades, who then all retire in a body, escorting the bride to her position before she joined the dances.

Thereupon the agent of the bridegroom, who is usually a brother, or uncle, in arranging the marriage and the amount of marriage consideration, or *obolo*, to be given, steps forward and shows his pleas-

ure by performing a number of antics and evolutions. The bride, thereupon presents him and his companions, usually three or four, with an umbrella each. She may also present the bridegroom with one at the same time.

The official witness, who is the Government Marriage Officer, appointed under the code of Native Law, will then advance to the bride and put the usual questions to her, the principal one being, whether it is of her own free will and consent that she is about to be married to the man who proposes to become her husband. If she announces her consent, the marriage ceremony proceeds; if she declares dissent, the duty of the official witness is at once to prohibit the further proceeding of the ceremony.

### Bride's Presentations

If the bride announces her consent, she thereupon approaches the bridegroom, spreads a mat before him, asks him to take a seat on the mat; then decorates him around the neck and around the waist with bead ornaments made by herself for him; and she presents him with a washing basin and some soap, in token of her submission to him, and her preparedness to attend to his needs. The bride will then make presents to the bridegroom's mother, to other women of the bridegroom's household, and others. The presents are procured by the bride or her father, or guardian, for this purpose, and are brought with her to the wedding.

Whilst these presents are being made by the bride, the ox and other stock presented by the bride's father, or guardian, to the bridegroom, stand by in view of the assembly. Thereupon the bridegroom and his party rise from their position, move forward, and perform a short dance.

Upon completion of this preliminary dance, which is done without the usual adornments, the bridegroom's party retires to dress themselves in order to return shortly thereafter and perform the real marriage dance.

In the interval, the bride is to run away to be chased and captured by other

girls of the bridegroom's party and brought back. This is done in order to ensure the giving of more cattle on account of the bride, and also to elicit the fact as to whether she is cared for or not by the bridegroom's party; because, if she is not cared for, they will not pursue her, and she will be allowed to go home.

The bridegroom's party will thereafter come up in full dress and dance. This dance being completed, announcements will be made as to the position to be filled by the bride, and a stick, adorned at the head with cat-skin, will be handed to her as an emblem of her position, and the tribe will be told by some prominent native that the chief has now married the mother of the tribe.

These are, roughly and generally, the customs observed by the native tribes at these weddings. They are subject to many variations; in some cases they are more elaborate than in others, and they depend very much upon the particular clan, or tribe, to which the bridegroom belongs.

It may be interesting here to state that the mother of the bride, on no account whatever, may be present at the wedding; that if the bride is the eldest daughter of her father, he does not attend at the wedding; that the bride may not look at her husband's father; that in many tribes the mother-in-law may not look at her son-in-law, nor may the son-in-law look at her.

In some cases the mother-in-law and son-in-law may be in each other's company, but the former must always be specially covered, and has to wear a band round her head.

These usages also vary and are becoming more or less obsolete with the advance of civilization.

