

MOSHESH, THE SCOURGE OF SOUTH AFRICA

A Master of Strategy, He Humbled the British and Routed the Boers



"Those who did not fall by those weapons were hurled to death on the awful stages below."

The story of Moshesh is one of the most dramatic and interesting of the "Great Negroes" series now being contributed by Mr. Rogers. The career of this black genius is a large part of the history of the great continent of Africa. Moshesh defied the most powerful dynasties of Europe to save his people from cruel and inhuman domination by unscrupulous tyrants. The story is too amazingly alive to escape the attention of Illustrated Feature Section readers.

By J. A. ROGERS

THE BASUTOS of South Africa enjoy the reputation of being the only dark-skinned people in the world to defeat a British army and remain unbeaten. The credit is due to Moshesh, their king, one of the ablest generals and shrewdest statesmen of all time.

After defeating one of England's best generals on the field, he turned, and almost in the same breath outwitted him in intelligence in an instance that has since become famous.

Whether in war or in diplomacy Moshesh was more than a match for any combination of his opponents, white or black. He played his white opponents one against the other and defeated them. As to the black allies of the white men, he ate them up as a tiger would a cat.

No member of the darker races in their struggle for survival against the white has covered himself with greater glory.

above sea-level, Moshesh established his capital there, and fortified and contented people. Not even the Zulus excelled the Basutos in physique, skill, and warlike daring. As to horsemanship they would gallop down steep inclines on their sure-footed ponies or pick their way through the rocks and mountain-passes without saddle or bridle. What the Indian was to North America, that is the Basuto to South Africa.

Attacked by the Boers

But Moshesh was not to enjoy his splendid isolation for long. The Boers of Cape Colony, pressed by the British, began their great trek of 1836, and coming into territory that belonged to him or his subject tribes, founded the Orange Free State now Orange River Colony.

As to the real ownership, the Boers gave little or no thought to that. Were they not Christians and white men, while the Basutos were only black men and heathen? Besides had they not rifles and artillery while the Negroes had only spears?

Nevertheless, the Boers were soon to feel the might of Moshesh for sending his impetuous horsemen into the plains he would raid their farms and drive off their cattle to increase his own herds. For six years he kept this up with success, for the Boers simply could not reach him. Even artillery proved useless against the rocks he would send thundering down on their heads. Lucky it was for him he had built his home on that dizzy height.

In 1843 the British found it to their interests to make a treaty with him, and the Boers, coming soon after under the protection of England

also had the governor of Cape Colony, Sir Harry Smith, to arrange a treaty of peace with him for them.

To this treaty, Moshesh readily placed his mark. But in doing so he had decided that he was going to keep his word only so far as his own interests could be served. The wily black monarch saw that it was to be a three-cornered battle of wits. Boers and British were fighting each other for supremacy, but at bottom both being white men, were opposed to him, and when it served their purpose would unite against him.

In fact, at the signing of the treaty, Moshesh had seemed more amused than anything else at the antics of Sir Harry Smith, who snored one minute and wept the next. This was the governor's way of illustrating to the Basutos what would happen if the treaty was made or not made. The snoring signified the sleep of peace; the weeping, the loss of loved ones in war.

Brought Religion

Contact with the white man had also taught Moshesh a very valuable lesson. He learnt the important part that religion played in the white man's politics. To beat an enemy it is sometimes necessary to use his own tactics. Moshesh decided to have religion, too, the white man's religion, and sent a white friend of his 6000 head of cattle to bring him a missionary. Besides, he reasoned, that once his people had become Christians the Boers and British could not so easily justify their conduct against him.

The missionaries came, and he gave them a settlement at the foot of his fortress. He ordered his people to follow their teachings, and seeing the ravages that alcohol had wrought among the other natives, gave strict orders that none of it was to be brought into his country.

Of course, after their warm welcome, the missionaries published the most glowing reports about him and his people, considerably strengthening his prestige and good name in Europe. This naturally made the Boers angry against the missionaries, and later led to their destroying one or two of their missions. This, of course, made the missionaries all the more partial to Moshesh and his people.

Moshesh, a Pagan

But as to religion, Moshesh, himself, although he used to quote Bible texts as frequently as any of those who were hungering for his land, remained a pagan. Indeed, towards the end of his life, his veneer of Christianity quite left him. His aim through all was to preserve the integrity of his kingdom and he felt that the means justified the end.

To strengthen his position the crafty black king did not select missionaries from one white nation but from three, English, French and Swiss.

Knowing that the white men, treaty or no treaty, meant to oust him sooner or later as they had done other tribes, he meant to beat them at their game. Soon after Sir Harry Smith had left, Moshesh began his hostilities against the Boers, taking care first to keep the British engaged in their own region by intriguing with tribes near them. One Zulu chief was planning a raid into British territory and he sent him aid.

In the raids that followed, Moshesh took 10,000 cattle and 2,500 horses from the Boers. The British and Boers uniting, sent an expedition against him, headed by Major Warden. Attacking one of the Basuto chiefs, named Moltsane at Jervock, the allies were signally defeated. The battle was fought on an extensive flat-topped mountain, edged with perpendicular rocks. The Basutos, having killed a great number of their foes, drove the rest near the brink of the precipice. There a desperate

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