

be the most nervous moment for the little band of white men. Even if they relied implicitly on the promise of the indunas, what guarantee had they that the chiefs would be able to restrain the younger and more impetuous members of the tribe? The least sign of faltering would have meant instant death, however; so they moved briskly forward, and waited for the next act in the drama.

"They had not long to wait, for a hastily improvised white flag was hoisted by the rebels on the kopje, and at the same moment a long procession of indunas moved towards them in single file. These native chiefs, comprising all the leading men of the Matabele tribe, quickly formed a semicircle around Rhodes and his three companions, squatting down on the ground, and the indaba or palaver was begun.

"The scene was striking,—the four white men, to all appearance entirely unarmed, surrounded by the hordes of rebel Matabele, whose dark skins gleamed in the sunlight like so much polished ebony, and on whose hands the blood of so many cruelly butchered white men, women, and children was scarcely dry; while enclosing them on every side were the sheer walls of dark granite, and above the bright dazzling blue of the tropical sky. It was a study for a painter.

"The proceedings opened with elaborate greetings between Mr. Rhodes and the indunas; and Rhodes then, through Mr. Colenbrander, who throughout the meeting stood at his side and acted as interpreter,