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ALLAN QUATERMAIN.

Continued from page six.

He all right again. I am a dying man, Curtis. I may die slow, but die I must. Do you know, I have been spitting blood all the morning. I tell you, there is something working away into my lung. I can feel it. There, don't look distressed; I have had my day, and am ready to go. Give me the mirror, will you? I want to look at myself."

He made some excuse but I saw through it and insisted, and at last he handed me one of the discs of polished silver set in a wooden frame like a hand-sieve, which served as looking-glasses in Zu-Vendis. I looked and put it down.

"Ah," I said quietly, "I thought so, and you talk of my getting all right!" I did not like to let them see how shocked I really was at my own appearance. My grizzled, stubby hair was turned snow-white, and my yellow face was shrunk like an aged woman's, and had two deep, purple rings painted beneath the eyes.

Sorels nuptial began to cry, and Sir Henry again turned the subject, telling me that the artists had taken a cast of the dead body of old Umslopogaga, and that a great statue in black marble was to be erected of him in the act of spitting the sacred stone, which was to be matched by another statue in white marble of myself and the horse Daylight as he appeared when, at the termination of that wild ride, he sank beneath me in the courtyard of the palace. I have since seen these statues, which at the time of writing this, six months after the battle, are nearly finished, and very beautiful they are, especially that of Umslopogaga, which is exactly like him. As for that of myself, it is good, but they have idealized my ugly face a little, which is, perhaps, as well, seeing that thousands of people will probably look at it in the centuries to come, and it is not pleasant to look at ugly things.

Then they told me that Umslopogaga's last wish had been carried out, and that, instead of being cremated, as I shall be after the usual custom here, he had been tied up, Zulu fashion, with his knees beneath his chin, and, having been wrapped in a thin sheet of beaten gold, entombed in a hole hollowed out of the masonry of the semi-circular space at the top of the stairs he defended so gallantly, which faces as far as we can judge, almost exactly toward Zululand. There he sits, and will sit forever, for they embalmed him with spices, and put him in an air-tight coffin, keeping his grim watch beneath the spot he held alone against a multitude; and the people say that at night his ghost rises and stands shaking the phantom of Inkosikazi at phantom foes. Certain it is that during the dark hours to pass the place was the hero's abode.

Oddly enough, too, a new legend or prophecy has been set in the land in that unaccountable way in which such things do arise among barbarous and semi-civilized people, blowing, like the wind, no man knows from whence. According to this, so long as the old Zulus sit there, looking down the stairway he defended when alive, so long will the new House of the Stairway, springing from the union of the Englishman and Nyleptha, endure and flourish; but when he is taken from thence, or when, ages after, his bones at last crumble into dust, the House shall fall, and the Stairway shall fall, and the nation of the Zu-Vendis shall cease to be a nation.

CHAPTER XXIII.—I HAVE SPOKEN.

It was a week after Nyleptha's visit, when I had begun to read a little in the middle of the day, that a message came to me from Sir Henry to say that Sorels would be brought before them in the Queen's first ante-chamber at midday, and requesting my attendance, if possible. Accordingly, greatly drawn by curiosity to see this unhappy woman once more, I made shift, with the help of that kind little fellow, Alphonse, who is a perfect treasure to me, and that of another waiting-man, to reach the ante-chamber. I got there, indeed, before anybody else, except a few of the great court officials who had been bidden to be present, but I had scarcely seated myself before Sorels was brought in by a party of guards, looking as beautiful and defiant as ever, but with a worn expression on her proud face. She was, as usual, dressed in her royal "kaf," em- blazoned with the emblem of the Sun, and in her right hand she still held the toy spear of silver. A man of admiration and pity went through me as I looked at her, and struggling to my feet, I bowed deeply, at the same time expressing my sorrow that I was not able, owing to my condition, to remain standing before her.

She colored a little, and then laughed bitterly. "Thou dost forget, Macumazahn," she said, "I am no more a queen, I am in blood; I am an outcast and a prisoner, one whom all men shun and scorn, and none should show deference to me." "At least," I replied, "thou art still a lady, and therefore one to whom deference is due. Also, thou art in an evil case, and therefore it is doubly due."

"Ah," she answered, with a little laugh, "thou dost forget that I would have wrapped thee in a sheet of gold and hung thee to the angel's trumpet at the topmost pinnacle of the temple."

"No," I answered, "I assure thee I forgot it not; indeed, I often thought of it when it seemed to me that the battle of the Pass was turning against us; but the trumpet is there, and I am still here, though perchance not for long, so why talk of it now?"

"Ah!" she went on, "the battle! the battle! Oh, would that I were once more a queen, if only for one little hour, and I would take such a vengeance on those accursed jackals who deserted me in my need, that it should only be spoken of in whispers among women, those pigeon-hearted half-breeds who suffered themselves to be overcome!" and she choked in her wrath.

"Ay, and that little coward beside thee," she went on, pointing at Alphonse with the little spear, whereat he looked very uncomfortable; "he escaped and betrayed my plans. I tried to make a general of him, telling the soldiers that he was Bowgwan, but it was of no avail. He hid beneath a banner in my tent, and thus overheard my plans. I would that I had slain him, but, alas! I held him hand."

"And thou, Macumazahn, I have heard of what thou didst; thou art a brave man, and hast a loyal heart. And the black one, too; ah, he was a man. I would fain have seen him hurl Nasta from the stairway."

"Thou art a strange woman, Sorels," I said. "I pray thee, now plead with the Queen Nyleptha, that perchance she may show mercy unto thee."

She laughed out loud. "I plead for mercy," she said, and at that moment the Queen entered, accompanied by Sir Henry and Good, and took her seat with an impassive face. As for poor Good, he looked intensely ill at ease.

"Greeting, Sorels!" said Nyleptha, after a short pause. "Thou hast rent the kingdom like a rag; thou hast put thousands of my people to the sword; thou hast twice basely plotted to destroy my life by murder, thou hast sworn to slay my lord and his companions, and to hurl me from the Stairway. What hast thou to say why thou shouldst not die? Speak, O Sorels!"

"I think my sister the Queen hath forgotten the chief count of the indictment," answered Sorels in her slow musical tones. It runs thus: "Thou didst strive to win the love of my lord Incubu. It is for this crime that my sister will slay me, not because I levied war. It is, perhaps, happy for thee, Nyleptha, that I fixed my mind upon his love too late."

"Listen," she went on, raising her voice. "I have naught to say save that I would I had won the love of lost. Do thou with me even as thou wilt, O Queen, and let my lord the King there, pointing to Sir Henry, 'for now will he be King, carry out the sentence, as it is meet he should, for as he is the beginning of the evil, let him also be the end.'" and she drew herself up

and shot one angry glance at him from her deep-fringed eyes, and then began to toy with her spear.

Sir Henry bent toward Nyleptha and whispered something that I could not catch, and then the Queen spoke to me. "Sorels, ever have I been a good sister to thee. When our father died, and there was much talk in the land as to whether thou shouldst sit upon the throne with me, I being the elder, I gave my voice for thee and said, 'Nay, let her sit. She is twin with me; we were born at a birth; wherefore should the one be preferred before the other?' And so has it ever been 'twixt thee and me, my sister. But now thou knowest in what sort thou hast repaid me, but I have prevailed, and thy life is forfeit, Sorels. And yet art thou my sister, born at a birth with me, and we played together when we were little and loved each other much, and at night we slept in the same cot with our arms each around the other's neck, and therefore even now does my heart go out to thee, Sorels."

"But not for that would I spare thy life, for thy offense has been too heavy; it doth drag down the wide wings of my mercy even to the ground. Also, whilst thou dost live the land will never be at peace, because 'Yet shalt thou not die, Sorels,' because my dear lord here hath begged thy life of me as a boon, therefore I will give it to thee as a gift, giving thee to go with me, and I will, knowing that, though thou dost love him, he loves thee not, Sorels, for all thy beauty. Nay, though thou art lovely as the night in all her stars, O Lady of the Night, yet is it me his wife whom he loves, and not thee, and therefore do I give thy life to him."

Sorels flushed up to her eyes and said nothing, and I do not think that I ever saw a man look more miserable than did Sir Henry at that moment. Somehow, Nyleptha, and therefore even now does my heart go out to thee, Sorels."

"I understand," stammered Curtis, looking at Good, "I understand that you were attached—attached to—the Queen Sorels. I am—am not aware what she is in short, the state of your feelings may be just now; but if they happened to me, that—way inclined, it has satisfied me, and to an extent, it might put a satisfactory end to an unpleasant business. The lady also has ample private estates, where I am sure she would be at liberty to live unmolested, so far as we are concerned, eh, Nyleptha? Of course, I only suggest."

"So far as I am concerned," said Good, coloring up, "I am quite willing to forget the past, and if the Lady of the Night thinks me worth having, I will marry her to-morrow, or when she likes, and try to make her a good husband."

All eyes were now turned to Sorels, who stood with that same slow smile upon her beautiful face that I had noticed the first time that I ever saw her. She paused a little while, and cleared her throat, and then thrice she curtsied low, once to Nyleptha, once to Curtis, and once to Good, and began to speak in measured tones.

"I thank thee, most gracious Queen, for the love and kindness thou hast shown me from my earliest youth, and especially in that thou hast been pleased to give my person of my fate as a gift to the Lord Incubu—the King that is to be. May prosperity, peace and plenty deck the life-path of one so merciful and so tender, even as flowers do. Long may'st thou reign, O great and glorious Queen, and hold thy husband's love in both thy hands, and many be the sons and the daughters of thy beauty. And I thank thee, my Lord Incubu—the King that is to be—for that thou hast been pleased to accept of my hand, and to pass it on to thy comrade in arms and in adventure, the Lord Bowgwan. Surely the act is worthy of thy greatness, my Lord Incubu. And now, lastly, I thank thee also, my Lord Bowgwan, who in thy turn has deigned to accept me and my poor beauty. I thank thee a thousand times, and I will add that thou art a good and honest man, and I put my hand upon my heart and swear that I would that I could render thanks to all in turn—and again she smiled—"I will add one short word."

"Little can ye understand of me, Nyleptha and my Lords, if ye know not that for me there is no middle path; that I scorn your pity and hate ye for it; that I cast off your forgiveness as though it were a serpent's sting, and that standing here, betrayed, deserted, insulted, and alone, I yet triumph over ye, mock ye, and defy ye, and all, and thus I answer ye; and then of a sudden, before anybody guessed what she intended to do, she drove the little silver spear she carried in her hand into her side with such a strong and steady aim that the keen point projected through her

back, and she fell prone upon the pavement. Nyleptha shrieked, and poor Good almost fainted at the sight, while the rest of us rushed towards her. But Sorels of the Night raised herself upon her hand, and for a moment fixed her glorious eyes intently on Curtis' face; as though there were some message in the glance, then she dropped her head and sighed, and with a sob her dark yet splendid spirit passed.

"Well, they gave her a royal funeral, and there was an end of her."

It was a month after the last act of the Sorels' tragedy that there was a great ceremony in the Flower Temple, and Curtis was formally declared King-consort of Zu-Vendis. I was too ill to go myself; and indeed, I hate all that sort of thing, with the crowds and the trumpet-blowing and banner-waving; but Good, who was there in his full-dress uniform, came back much impressed, and told me that Nyleptha had looked lovely, and Curtis had borne himself in a right royal fashion, and had been received with acclamations that left no doubt as to his popularity. Also he told me that when the horse Daylight was led along in the procession, the populace had shouted "Macumazahn! Macumazahn!" and told them I was too ill to be present.

Afterward, Sir Henry, or rather the King, came to see me, looking very tired, and vowing that he had never been so bored in his life; but I dare say that that was a slight exaggeration. It is not in human nature that a man should be altogether bored on such an extraordinary occasion; and, indeed, as I pointed out to him, it was a marvellous thing that a man who had entered a great country as an unknown looker-on, and told me that Nyleptha had looked lovely, and Curtis had borne himself in a right royal fashion, and had been received with acclamations that left no doubt as to his popularity. Also he told me that when the horse Daylight was led along in the procession, the populace had shouted "Macumazahn! Macumazahn!" and told them I was too ill to be present.

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my venture in comparing this history to our wanderings from my journal, and our joint memories. It is probable that it will never be read, but; at any rate it has served to while away many hours of suffering, for I have suffered a deal of pain lately. Thank God, however, there will not be much more of it.

It is a week since I wrote the above, and now I take up my pen for the last time, for I know that the end is at hand. My brain is still clear and I can manage to write, though with difficulty. The pain in my lung, which has been very bad during the last week has suddenly quite left me, and been succeeded by a feeling of numbness of which I cannot mistake the meaning. And just as the pain has gone, so with it all fear of that end has departed, and I feel only as though I were going to sink into the arms of an unutterable rest. Happily, contentedly, and with the same sense of security with which an infant lays itself to sleep in its mother's arms, do I lay myself down in the arms of the Angel Death. All the tremors of the heart-shaking fears which have haunted me through a life that seems long as I look back upon it, have left me now; the storms have passed, and the Star of our Eternal Hope shines clear and steady on the horizon that seems so far from man, and yet is so very near to me to-night.

And so this is the end of it—a brief space of troubling, a few restless, fevered, anguished years, and then the arms of that great Angel Death to whom many a commander has been embraced even at my side, and now it is my turn at last, and it is well. Twenty-four hours more and the world will be gone from me, and with it all its hopes and all its fears. The air will close in over the space that my form filled and my place know me no more; for the dull breath of the world's forgetfulness will first dim the brightness of my memory, and then shut it out forever, and of a truth I shall be dead. So is it with us all. How many millions have lain as I lie, and thought these thoughts and been forgotten—thousands upon thousands of years ago they thought them, those dying men of the dim past; and thousands upon thousands of years hence will their descendants think them and be in their turn forgotten.

"As the breath of the oxen in winter, as the quick star that runs along the sky, as a little shadow that runs along the sky, as I once heard a Zulu called Igosul put it, such is the order of our life, the order that passeth away.

Well, it is not a good world—nobody can say that it is, save those who willfully blind themselves to facts. How can a world be good in which money is the moving power, and self-interest the guiding star? The wonder is not, that it is so bad, but that there should be any good left in it.

Still, now that my life is over, I am glad to have lived, glad to have known the dear breath of woman's love, and that true friendship that can even surpass the love of little children, to have seen the sun and the moon and the stars, to have felt the kiss of the salt sea on my face, and watched the wild game trek down to the water in the moonlight. But I should not wish to live again!

Everything is changing to me. The darkness draws near and the light departs. And yet it seems to me that through that darkness I can already see the shining welcome of many a long-lost face. Harry is there, and others; one above all, to my mind the sweetest and most perfect woman that ever gladdened this grey earth. But of her I have already written elsewhere, and at length, so why speak of her now? Why speak of her after this long silence, now that she is again so near to me?

The sinking sun is turning the golden roof of the great Temple to a fiery flame, and my fingers tingle.

So to all who have known me, or who can think one kindly thought of the old hunter, I stretch out my hand from the far-off shore and bid a long farewell.

And now into the hands of Almighty God, who sent it, do I commit my spirit.

"I have spoken," as the Zulus say.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Bumping Up Against Strangers. I consider myself a person of very patient and equable disposition, but I can't get used to being jostled. I can stand crying babies, a meddling stepmother, hot weather and earthquakes without a murmur. But when a stranger brushes up against me, and tilts my hat or shoves my arm around, and walks away without making any sign of regret, I always feel like kicking him or spitting on him. The reason I never do either is that I am not prepared to go through with twenty fist-cuffs a day. But while I am so vindictive against a jostler my anger is subdued the moment the offender makes the slightest acknowledgment. It matters not whether he says courteously "Beg pardon," or whether with less polish he ejaculates "Oh!" It is enough to know that he recognizes the undesirableness of bumping up against strangers. If he shows this spirit, he may collide with me violently enough to shake out of my false teeth, and my temper is unruffled. It is only your beastly impolite jostler that ever makes me lose my temper.—Cor. Chicago Journal.

Paying Soldiers Monthly. The monthly payments of soldiers in the army began on the first of the month. The new system has already become exceedingly popular with the enlisted men. The payments were only made at New York, San Francisco and a few other posts having large forces. Applications come in daily from remote army stations asking that the men on duty there be accorded the benefit of monthly payments; but, owing to the limited number of paymasters, such applications have been refused. It is thought, however, that within a few months the troops will be so concentrated that monthly payments can be made throughout the army and the old quarterly system abandoned altogether.—New York Times.

When Baby was sick, we gave her Castoria, When she was a Child, she cried for Castoria, When she became a Miss, she clung to Castoria, When she had Children, she gave them Castoria.

Advice to Mothers. Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup should always be used when children are cutting teeth. It relieves the little sufferer at once; it produces natural, quiet sleep by relieving the child from pain, and the little cherub awakes as "bright as a button." It is very pleasant to the taste. It soothes the child, softens the gums, allays all pain, relieves wind, regulates the bowels, and is the best known remedy for diarrhea, whether arising from teething or other causes. Twenty-five cents a bottle. Be sure and ask for Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup, and take no other kind.

Never Despair. "Never despair," is a good motto for all. If afflicted with any lingering disease, remember "while there is life there is hope." Never despair of relief until you have tried Burdock Blood Purifiers. It cures diseases of the stomach, liver and blood when all other medicines fail.

There are many forms of nervous debility in men that yield to the use of Carter's Iron Pills. Those who are troubled with nervous weakness, night sweats, etc., should try them.

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