

Allan Quatermain

By H. RIDER HAGGARD.

ACTORS OF "KING SOLOMON'S MINES," "HIS MASTER'S VOICE," "THE WITCH'S HEAD," ETC.

For we got back to our quarters. There we heard from Alphonse, who was deeply aggrieved because our non-return had spoiled his dinner for he had turned cook again now, that God had come back from his hawking and gone on duty. As instructions had already been given to the officer of the outer guard to double the sentries at the gate, and as we had no reason to fear any immediate danger, we did not think it worth while to hunt him up and tell him anything of what had passed, which at best was, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, one of those tasks one prefers to postpone; so, after swallowing some food, we turned in to get some much needed rest. Before we did so, however, it occurred to Curtis to tell our Umslopogans to keep a lookout in the neighborhood of Nyleptha's private apartments. Umslopogans was now well known about the place, and by the queen's order allowed to pass whether he would by the guards; a permission of which he often availed himself by roaming about the palace during the quiet hours in a nocturnal fashion that he favored, and which is by no means uncommon among black men generally. His presence in the corridors would not, therefore, be likely to excite remark. Without any comment the Zulu took up his ax and departed, and we also departed to bed.

I seemed to have been asleep but a few minutes when I was awakened by a peculiar sensation of uneasiness. I felt that somebody was in the room and looking at me, and instantly sat up, to see to my surprise that it was already dawn, and that there, standing at the foot of my couch, and looking peculiarly grim and gant in the gray light, was Umslopogans himself.

"How long has that been there?" I asked, testily, for it is not pleasant to be aroused in such a fashion.

"Mayhap the half of an hour, Macumazahn. I have a word for thee."

"Speak on," I said, now wide awake.

"As I was laid, I went last night to the place of the White Queen, and hid myself behind a pillar in the second anteroom, beyond which is the sleeping place of the queen. Bougan (God) was in the first anteroom alone, and outside the curtain of that room was a sentry; but I had a mind to see if I could pass in unseen, and I did, gliding behind them both. There I waited for many hours, when suddenly I perceived a dark figure coming secretly toward me. It was the figure of a woman, and in her hand she held a dagger. Behind that figure crept another, unseen by the woman. It was Bougan following in her tracks. His shoes were off, and for so far a man he followed very well. The woman passed me, and the starlight shone upon her face."

"Who was it?" I asked, impatiently.

"The face was the face of the 'Lady of the Night,' and of a truth she is well named."

"I waited, and Bougan passed me also. Then I followed. So we went slowly and without a sound up the long chamber; first the woman, then Bougan, and then I; and the woman saw not Bougan, and Bougan saw not me. At last the 'Lady of the Night' came to the curtains that shut off the sleeping place of the White Queen, and put off her left hand to part them. She passed through, and so did Bougan, and so did I. At the far end of the room is the bed of the queen, and on it she lay very fast asleep. I could hear her breathe, and see one white arm lying on the coverlid like a streak of snow on the dry grass. The 'Lady of the Night' doubled herself thus, and with the long knife lifted creep towards the bed. So straight did she gaze thereat that she never thought to look behind her. When she was quite close Bougan touched her on the arm, and she caught her breath, and turned, and I saw the knife flash, and heard it strike. Well was it for Bougan that he had the skin of



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from on him, or he had been pierced. Then for the first time he saw who the woman was, and without a word he fell back astonished and unable to speak. She, too, was astonished, and spoke not; but suddenly she laid her finger on her lip, thus, and walked toward and through the curtain, and with her went Bougan. So close did she pass to me that her dress touched me, and I was nigh to slaying her as she went. In the first outer room she spoke to Bougan in a whisper, and clasping her hands thus she spoke to me, but what she said I know not. And so they passed on to the second outer room, she pleading, and he shaking his head, and saying, 'Nay, nay, nay.' And it seemed to me that he was about to call the guard, when she stopped talking and looked at him with great eyes, and I saw that he was bewitched by her beauty. Then she stretched out her hand, and he kissed it, whereon I gathered myself together to advance and take her, seeing that now had Bougan become a woman, and no longer knew the good from the evil, when behold she was gone."

"Gone!" I ejaculated.

"Ay, gone; and there stood Bougan staring at the wall like one asleep, and presently he went too, and I waited a while and came away also."

"Art thou sure, Umslopogans," said I, "that thou hast not been a dreamer this night?"

In reply he opened his left hand, and produced about three inches of the blade of a dagger of the finest steel. "If I be, Macumazahn, behold what the dream left with me. The knife broke upon Bougan's bosom, and as I passed I picked this up in the sleeping place of the White Queen."

CHAPTER XVIII.

WAR! WAR!

Telling Umslopogans to wait, I tumbled into my clothes and went off with him to Sir Henry's room, where the Zulu repeated his story word for word. It was a sight to watch Curtis' face as he heard it.

"Great heavens!" he said; "here have I been snoring away while Nyleptha was nearly murdered—and all through me, too. What a dand that Sorais must be! It would have

served her well if Umslopogans had cut her down in the act."

"Ay," said the Zulu. "Fear not; I should have slain her ere she struck; I was but waiting the moment."

I said nothing; but I could not help thinking that many a thousand doomed lives would have been saved if he had meted out to Sorais the fate she meant for her sister. And, as the issue proved, I was right.

After he had told his tale Umslopogans went off unconcernedly to get his morning meal, and Sir Henry and I fell to talking. At first he was very bitter against Good, who, he said, was no longer to be trusted, having designedly allowed Sorais to escape by some secret stair when it was his duty to have handed her over to justice. Indeed he spoke in the most unmeasured terms on the matter. I let him run on a while, reflecting to myself how easy we find it to be hard on the weaknesses of others, and how tender we are to our own.

"Really, my dear fellow," I said at length, "one would never think, if you talk to me, that you were the man who had in interview with this same lady yesterday and found it rather difficult to resist her fascinations, notwithstanding your ties to one of the loveliest and most loving women in the whole world. Umslopogans was now well known about the place, and by the queen's order allowed to pass whether he would by the guards; a permission of which he often availed himself by roaming about the palace during the quiet hours in a nocturnal fashion that he favored, and which is by no means uncommon among black men generally. His presence in the corridors would not, therefore, be likely to excite remark. Without any comment the Zulu took up his ax and departed, and we also departed to bed."

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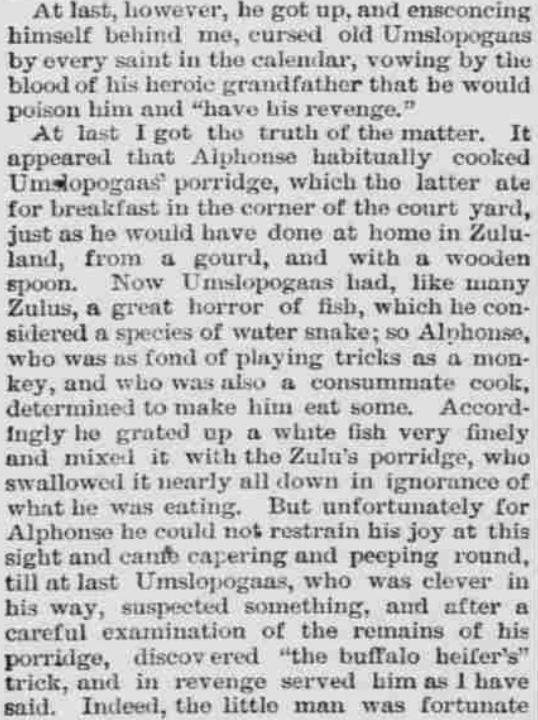
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my father, Macumazahn the fox, though I be but a broken down Zulu wardog—a chief for whom there is no room in his own kraal, an outcast and a wanderer in strange places; ay, I love thee, Macumazahn, for you have grown gray together, and there is that between us that cannot be seen, and yet is too strong for breaking; and he took his snuff-box, which was made of an old brass cartridge, from the slit in his ear, where he always carried it, and handed it to me for me to help myself.

I took the pinch of snuff with some emotion. It was quite true I was much attached to the bloodthirsty old ruffian. I don't know what was the charm of his character, but it had a charm, perhaps it was his honesty and directness; perhaps one admired his almost superhuman skill and strength, or it may have been simply that he was so absolutely unique. Frankly, with all my experience of savages, I never knew a man quite like him, he was so wise, and yet such a child with it; and though it seems laughable to say so, like the hero of the Yankee parody, he had a tender heart. Anyway, I was very fond of him, though I should never have thought of telling him so.

"Ay, old wolf," I said, "thine is a strange love. Thou wouldst spit me to the chin if I stood in thy path to-morrow."

"Thou speakest truth, Macumazahn; that would I if it came in the way of duty, but I should love thee all the same when the blow had gone fairly home. Is there any chance of some fighting here, Macumazahn?" he went on, in an insinuating voice. "Methought that what I saw last night did show that the two great queens were vexed one with another, else had the 'Lady of the Night' not brought that dagger with her."

I agreed with him that it showed that more or less intrigue and irritation existed between the ladies, and told him how things stood, and that they were quarrelling over Ineuha.

"Ah, is it so?" he exclaimed, springing up in delight; "then will there be war as surely as the rivers rise in the rains—war to the end. Women love the last blow as well as the last word, and when they fight for love they are as hot as a woman's husband. See you, Macumazahn, a woman will swim through blood to her desire, and think naught of it. With these eyes have I seen it once, and twice also. Ah, Macumazahn, we shall see this fine place of houses burning yet, and hear the battle cries come ringing up the street. After all, I have never cared for nothing. Can this folk fight, think ye?"

Just then Sir Henry joined us, and Good arrived, too, from another direction, looking very pale and hollow eyed. The moment Umslopogans saw the latter he stopped his bloodthirsty talk and greeted him.

"Ah, Bougan," he cried, "greeting to thee, Inkoos, thou art surely weary. Didst thou hunt too much yesterday?" Then, without waiting for an answer, he went on: "Listen, Bougan, and I will tell thee a story; it is about a woman, therefore wilt thou hear it; is it not so?"

"There was a man, and he had a brother, and there was a woman who loved the man's brother, and was beloved of the man. The man's brother had a favorite wife, and loved the woman, and he made a man of her. Then the woman, being very cunning and fierce hearted for revenge, took counsel with herself, and said to the man, I love thee, and if thou wilt make war upon thy brother I will marry thee. And he knew it was a lie, yet because of his great love of the woman, he was weary fair, and he gave her a sword and made war on him, and when many people had been killed his brother sent to him, saying, 'Why slayest thou me? What hurt have I done unto thee? For my youth up have I not loved thee; when thou wast little did I not nurture thee, and have we not gone down to war together and divided the cattle, girl by girl, ox by ox, and cow by cow? Why slayest thou me, my brother, son of my own mother?'"

"Then the man's heart was heavy, and he knew that his path was evil; and he put aside the tempting woman, and ceased to make war on his brother, and lived at peace in the same kraal with him. And after a time the woman came to him, and said, 'I have loved thee long, and I have loved thee with my heart; I knew that it was a lie, and that she thought the evil thing, yet because of his love did he take her to wife. And the very night that they were wed, when the man was plunged into a deep sleep, did the woman arise and take his ax from his hand, and creep into the hut of his brother and slay him. Then did she sink the ax back like a gorged lioness, and place the thong of the red ax back upon his wrist and go her ways."

"And at the dawning the people came shouting, 'Lousta is slain in the night!' and they came unto the hut of the man, and there he lay asleep, and by him was the red ax. Then the man arose, and he saw the ax, and his heart he knew that it was a lie, and that she thought the evil thing, yet because of his love did he take her to wife. And the very night that they were wed, when the man was plunged into a deep sleep, did the woman arise and take his ax from his hand, and creep into the hut of his brother and slay him. Then did she sink the ax back like a gorged lioness, and place the thong of the red ax back upon his wrist and go her ways."

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heart to say that even to marry her I could not desert my friends. And now you do what you like; I deserve it all. All I have to say is that I hope you may never love a woman with all your heart and then be so sorely tempted of her," and he turned to go.

"Look here, old fellow," said Sir Henry, "just stop a minute; I have a little tale to tell you, too." And he proceeded to narrate what had taken place the previous day between Sorais and himself.

This was a finishing stroke to poor Good. It is not pleasant to any man to be made a tool of, but when the circumstances are as peculiarly atrocious as in the present case it is about as bitter a pill as anybody can be called upon to swallow.

"Do you know," he said, "I think that between you and your fellows have about worked a cure, and he turned and walked away, and I for one felt very sorry for him. Ah, if the motto would always carefully avoid the candle, how few burnt wings there would be!"

"This day was a court day, when the queens sat in the great hall, and received petitions, discussed laws, etc., and thither we adjourned shortly afterwards. On our way we were joined by Good, who was looking exceedingly depressed, and no wonder.

When we got into the hall Nyleptha was already on her throne, and proceeding with business as usual, surrounded by counsellors, courtiers, lawyers, priests, and an unusually strong guard. It was, however, easy to see from the air of excitement and expectation on the faces of everybody present that nobody was paying much attention to ordinary affairs, the fact being that the knowledge that civil war was imminent had now got abroad. We saluted Nyleptha and took our accustomed places, and for a little while things went on as usual, when suddenly the trumpets began to call outside the palace, and from the great crowd that was gathered there rose a roar of 'Sorais! Sorais!'"

Then came the roll of many chariot wheels, and presently the great curtains at the end of the hall were drawn wide and through them entered the 'Lady of the Night' herself. Nor did she come alone. Preceding her was Agon, the high priest, arrayed in his most gorgeous vestments, and on either side were other priests. The reason for their presence was obvious—coming with them it would have been sacrilege to attempt to detain her. Sorais was a member of the great klan, and behind them a small body of picked guards. A glance at Sorais herself was enough to show that her mission was of no peaceful kind, for in place of her gold embroidered 'kaf' she wore a shining tunic formed of golden scales, and on her head a little golden helmet. In her hand, too, she bore a toy spear, beautifully made and fashioned of silver. Up she came to the court, looking like a lioness in her conscious pride and beauty, and as she approached the spectators fell back bowing and made a path for her. By the sacred stone she halted, and laying her hand on it, she cried out with a loud voice to Nyleptha on the throne, 'Hail, O queen!'"

"All hail, my sister!" answered Nyleptha. "Draw thou near. Fear not, I give thee safe conduct."

Sorais answered with a haughty look, and swept on up the hall till she stood right before the throne.

"A boon, O queen?" she cried again.

"Speak on, my sister; what is it that I can give thee who art half our king's daughter?"

"Thou canst tell me a true word—me and the people of Zu-Vendi. Art thou, or art thou not, about to take this foreign wife?" and she pointed to Sir Henry with her toy spear, "to be a husband to thee and share thy bed and throne?"

Curtis winced at this, and turning towards Sorais, said to her in a low voice, "Methinks that yesterday thou didst other names than that wolf to call me by, O queen! and I saw her bite her lips as, like a danger flag, the blood flamed red upon her face. As for Nyleptha, who is nothing if not original, she, seeing that the thing was out, and that there was nothing further to be gained by concealment, answered the question in a novel and effectual manner, instead thereof, as I firmly believe, by coquetry and a desire to triumph over her rival.

Up she rose, and descending from the throne swept in all the glory of her royal grace on to where her lover stood. There she stopped and untwined the golden snake that was wound around her arm. Then she laid him kneeled, and he dropped on one knee on the marble before her; and next, taking the golden snake with both hands, she bent the pure metal round his neck, and when it was fast delicately kissed him on the brow and called him her 'dear lord.'

"Thou seest," she said, when the excited murmur of the spectators had subsided, addressing her sister as Sir Henry rose to his feet, "I have put my collar round the wolf's neck, and behold! he shall be my watch dog, and that is my answer to thee, Sorais, my sister, and to those with thee. Fear not," she went on, smiling sweetly on her lover, and pointing to the golden snake she had twined round his neck, "if my yoke be heavy, yet is it of pure gold, and it will not gall thee."

Then, turning to the audience, she continued, in a clear proud tone: "Ay, Lady of the Night, lords, priests, and people here gathered together, by this sign do I take the foreigner to husband, even here in the face of you all. With me I mean, and you that free to choose the man whom I will love. The should I be lower than the meanest girl in all my provinces. Nay, be hath won my heart, and with it goes my hand and throne and all I have—ay, had he been a beggar instead of a great lord, fairer and stronger than any here, and having more wisdom and knowledge of strange things, I had given him all; and much more so, then, being what he is! And she took his hand and gazed proudly on him, and holding it, stood there boldly facing the people. And such was her sweetness, and the power and dignity of her person, and so beautiful she looked standing hand in hand there at her lover's side, so sure of him and of herself, and so ready to risk all things and endure all things for him, that most of those who saw the sight, which I am sure no one of them will ever forget, caught the fire from her eyes and the happy color from her blushing face, and cheered her like wild things. It was a bold stroke for her to make, and it appealed to the imagination; but human nature in Zu-Vendi, as everywhere, loves that which is bold and not afraid to break a rule, and is moreover peculiarly susceptible to appeals to its poetical side.

And so the people cheered till the roof rang; but 'Sorais of the Night' stood there with downcast eyes, for she could not bear to see her sister's triumph, which robbed her of the man whom she had hoped to win; and in the fulness of her jealous anger she trembled and turned white like an aspen in the wind. I think I have said somewhere of her that she reminded me of the sea on a calm day, having the same aspect of sleeping power about her. Well, it was all awake now, and like the face of the furious ocean, it awed and yet fascinated me. A really handsome woman in a royal rage is always a beautiful sight, but such beauty and such a rage! never saw combined before; and I can only say that the effect produced was well worthy of the two.

She lifted her white face, the teeth were set, and there were purple rings beneath her glowing eyes. Thrice she tried to speak, and thrice she failed, but at last her voice came.

"The Difference." Omaha teacher—"Yes, my children, remember there is no human love equal to a mother's love." Little girl—"Womens love their children better than their husbands, don't they?" "Very often." "Yes indeed. When we gets the hic-coughs mamma gets sorry and tries to cure 'em, but when papa gets the hic-coughs she gets mad."

"Couldn't Fool the Little Girl." [Omaha World.] Omaha Mamma—Now, dear, you must invite one of your little friends in to share your candy. Little Dot—'I guess I'll invite Lucy. 'Well, that'll be nice.' "Yes, candy makes her tooth ache and she never eats much."

The Japanese Government has engaged a young San Francisco woman to organize a school of domestic service at Tokio to familiarize Japanese girls with our customs.

Don't. Let that cold of yours run on. You think it is a light thing. But it may run into catarrh. Or into pneumonia. Or consumption. Catarrh is disgusting. Pneumonia is dangerous. Consumption is death itself. The breathing apparatus must be kept healthy and clear of all obstructions and offensive matter. Otherwise there is trouble ahead. All the diseases of these parts, head, nose, throat, bronchial tubes and lungs, can be delightfully and entirely cured by the use of Boschee's German Syrup. If you don't know this already, thousands and thousands of people can tell you. They have been cured by it, and "know how it is, themselves." Bottle only 75 cents. Ask any druggist, 1

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Raising her silver spear, she shook it, and the light glanced from it and from the golden scales of her cuirass. "And thinkest thou, Nyleptha," she said, in notes which pealed through the great hall like a clarion—"thinkest thou that I, a queen of the Zu-Vendi, will brook that this base and rear up half breeds to fill the place of the great house of the Stairway? Never! never! while there is life in my bosom and a man to follow me and a spear to strike with. Who is on my side—who?"

The Difference. Omaha teacher—"Yes, my children, remember there is no human love equal to a mother's love." Little girl—"Womens love their children better than their husbands, don't they?" "Very often." "Yes indeed. When we gets the hic-coughs mamma gets sorry and tries to cure 'em, but when papa gets the hic-coughs she gets mad."

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