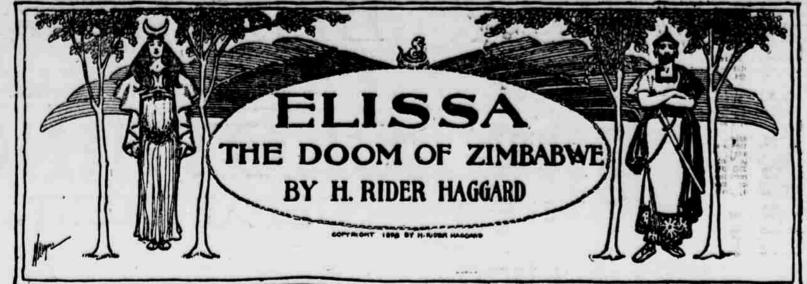
THE OMAHA DAILY BEER SUNDAY, MARCH 20, 1898.



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10

GREETING TO THE BAALTIS! When Metem accepted bribes from Issacha and from Ithobal in consideration of his finding means to make the union of Aziel and Elissa impossible, he had already thought out a schere which, if successful, would at tain that end and, as he considered, promote the true welfare of the lovers who were to be separated.

It will be remembered that Elissa had already explained to the prince how, on the death of the Lady Baaltis, another woman was elected by the colleges of the priests and priestesses to fill her place. This lady could marry, indeed, she was expected to do so, but her husband must take the title of Shadid, and for her lifetime act as high priest of El. Therefore, thought Metem, it was obvious, if it could be brought about that Elissa should be chosen as the new Lady Basiltis, there would be an end of the Lady Baaltis, there would be an end of the possibility of her marriage to Aziel, since in order to wed her he must renounce his own religion, a thing which no Jew would do, and pose as the earthly incarnation of one whom he considered a false divinity or a devil. Indeed, not only marriage but any further intimacy between the pair would be rendered impracticable, for upon this point the religious law, lax enough in many par ticulars, was very strict. In fact, so strict was it that the Lady Baaltis of the day to her dark eyes. the found alone with any man meant death to her and to him; the reason of its severity being that she was supposed to represent the goddess and her husband, the Shadid, a god, wherefore any questionable behavior on her part was an insult to the most powerful divinities of heaven, which could only be atomed by the death of their unworthy in-

carnations. That these laws were actual and not formal only was proved by the fact that within the last hundred years, before the birth of Elissa, a Lady Bealtis had been executed for some such offense, having been hurled from the topmost pinnacle of th fortress above the temple to the foot of the precipice beneath. All these sacerdotal customs were familia

to Metem, who argued from them that to procure the nomination of Elissa as the Lady Baaltis would be to build an impassable wall between her and the Prince Aziei. Also, by way of compensation, the office would confer upon her the highest dignity and honor that could be attained by gony woman in the city; moreover, her election would beyond the reach of the persecu tions of Ithobal, since, as Lady Baaltis, she was entitled to choose her own husband without hindrance or appeal, provided only that he was of pure white blood, while Ithe bal was not.

Having thought the matter out, and con vinced himself that such a course would not only benefit his own pocket, but prove to the lasting advantage of all concerned, Metem set about his task with the promptitude and cutaning of his race and filled with a glow of righteous zeal. It was not an easy cie, for, daughter of the dead Lady Baaltis, the mame, was considered to be certain of elec-tion at the poll of the pricests and priesteeses, which took place within two days. Nothing discouraged, however, without her knowledge or that of her father, Metem began his canvass on Elissa's behalf. First with a great sum of gold he bought over the ex-shadid, the busband of the late Lady Baaltis, who had quarrelled with his daughter, and would prefer to see some stranger chosen in her place, on the chance that, nothwithstanding his years, by choos-ing him in marriage she might confirm him his position of spouse to the goddess. All Metem's negotiations need not be followed ney played a part in most of them, jealousy and dislike in some. A few there were also whom he won over by urging the beauty and wisdom of Elissa, and her extraordinary there. fitness for the post. He found his most powerful allies, however, among the members of the council of the city. To these grandees he pointed out that Elissa was a woman of great strength of character, who would cer-tainly never consent to be forced into a marriage with Ithobal, although her refusal upon her. Therefore the only way out of the difficulty was her election as Baaltis, which would prove a perfect answer to the suit of the savage king, since the goddess could not be compelled and even lithobal would shrink from offering her violence. Their support gained the role of the gole " the gole " the role is the role of the gole " the role is the role of the gole " the role is the role of the gole " the role is the role of the gole " the role of the Their support gained, having first sworn him to secrecy, he attacked Sakon himself, using similar arguments with him, and point-ing out, in addition, that if he hoped to see his daughter married to Prince Aziel, how ever dazzling might be the prospects of such a match, it would certainly bring upon him the present wrath of Ithobal, and, in all probability, future trouble with the courts of Egypt, of Israel, and, through them, of Tyre. Thus working in many ways, Metem labored incessantly to attain his end, so that when the hour of election came he awaited its issue fairly confident of success. It was on the same afternoon that for the first time since she had received the arrow that was meant for his heart Aziel was admitted to see Elissa, whose recovery was now certain, although she had not yet shaken off dignitaries. her weakness, and her right hand and wrist still stiff and swollen. Except for two or three of her women, who were seated at their work behind a screen near the far end of the great chamber, she was alone, lying upon a couch in the recess of the window place. Advancing to her, he bent down to kiss her wounded hand.

came to Jerusalem she refused to be married to my uncle, to whom she was betrothed --" oddess, which was to be her residence. and he hesitated

"Nay, be not timid, prince," said Elissa, exception of Aziel, and with him Metem and sharply; "continue the tale, I pray you. I have heard that the lady added somewhat to Issachar, who, drawn by the sound of sing-ing, had entered unnoticed, all the rest of the company, including the waiting women, having joined the procession. her refusal." That is so, Elissa. She declared before

"Take comfort, prince," said the Phoeni-cian in a half bantering tone; "if you and the Lady Baaltis are truly fond of each other the king that she would wed no man except myself only, whereon my uncle was very angry, and accused me of playing him false, she may still be yours, for you have but to bow the knee to El, and she will name you which, indeed, I had not done

'Although the lady was so fair, Aziel? But

"He said the great king?" "He said that, never having seen him to whom she was affianced, he would not suffer that she should be forced into marriage with him against her will, but that her will might "Blaspheme not," said Issachar sternly. "Shall a worshipper of the God of Israel do sacrifice to a demon to win a woman's amile?' be uninfluenced he commanded that I should be sent upon a long journey. That was his

have any such thoughts abandon them, I pray of you, for on this matter the law may not be broken, and the man spoke truth when he told you that should you be found with the Lady Baaltis, not being her husif when I returned from it she had not changed her mind, and chose—to marry me— that it would be well also, and though he band, you would cause her death." Aziel took no notice of his words, but turning to the Levite he asked in a quiet was little pleased at it, with this saying my voice: uncle must be satisfied." "Did you plot this to separate us, Ima-

"It satisfies not me, Prince Azlel, seeing that I know full well that the lady will not change her mind and take a man who is in years and whom she hates in place of one If so, you shall live to mourn the char? deed.

"Listen, prince," broke in Metem, "it was not Issachar who plotted that the Lady Elissa should be chosen Baaltis, but I, or at least I helped the plot. Shall I tell you why also. You could not wed this woman who is

who is young and whom she loves, and that, herefore, when you return hence to Jerusaher," Elissa answered, the tears starting to and, if possible, to prevent a great war, not of your race or rank or religion, and if you could it would bring about a struggle that must cost thousands their lives and this city its wealth. Nor could you make of her her there there there the to be set the to answer; "I desire him only whom I have "Nay, Elissa. If I am already wed that unnot be." he raid. If you could it would bring about a struggle "In Judges, prince, I am told that men take more wives than one, also they divorce them," she replied; then added, "Oh, return take more wives than one, also they divorce them," she replied; then added, "Oh, return the stat must cest thousands their lives and this city its wealth. Nor could you make of her less than a wife, seeing that she is well born to ans

chamber to enthrone her in the palace of the pain, and her brain, crushed beneath the menace of its misery, could grasp nothing with clearness, save the completeness of her Presently the chamber was empty, with the with clearness, save the completences of her loss. Loss? Yes, she was lost indeed. One short hour ago and she was rejolcing in the presence of the man she loved, and who, she knew, loved her, while in her mind rose visions of some happy life with film far away from this city and the dark rites of the worshippers of Baal. And now she Gerself was the chief priestess of that wor-ship, which already she had learned to fear

ship, which already she had learned to fear and hate, and as its priestess, till death should come to comfort her, cut off forever from the man whom she adored, and from the hope of that new spiritual light which had begun to dawn upon her soul. She looked upon the beautiful women who leaped

"That time will prove," answered Metem, shrugging his shoulders; "but at least it is certain that he will win h in no other way. Prince," he added, changing his tone, "if you and song about her litter and listened to the janglings of their ornaments of gold, and as she looked her eyes seemed to gain power to behold the spirits within them, dark and hideous things, with shifting countenances, terrifying to see, and themselves wearing in their eyes of flame a stamp of eternal terror, while the music of their golden necklaces was changed to the clank of fetters and of instruments of torment. Yes, and there before them in the red cloud of dust that rose from their beating feet floated the shape of the demon of whom she

had been chosen the high priestess. Look at her mocking, ichuman counte

nance and her bent brow of power. Look at her spread and flaming hair and her hun-dred hands outstretched to grasp the souls of more. The souls of the soul of the souls of the soul of th of men. The clash of the cymbels and the cry of the music blended together and be-came her voice, a dreadful voice that gave greeting to her priestess, promising her

have made it impossible that the Prince Aziel should wed the daughter of Sakon." "Yes, rogue, I know M, by causing her to be consecrated Baaltis and thus building a barrier which even I shall find it too hard to climb, since she will scarcely choose me of her own will. and to offer violence to the of her own will, and to offer violence to the Basilts is a sacrilege from which any man may shrink, for the curse of heaven follows it. Know that for this deed I am minded to settle my account with you in a fashion you have not thought of. Have you heard. Phoenician, that the chiefs of certain of my tribes love to decorate their spear hafts with the bills of white more their spear hafts with the hide of white men and to bray their flesh into medicine which gives courage to the eater?" and he looked toward the door of the tent as though he were about to call the guard. Now Metem's blood ran cold, for he knew

Now Metern's blood ran cold, for he knew that this royal savage was not one who ut-tered idle threats, but the coolness and cun-ning which had so often served him well did not fail him.

did not fail him, "I have heard that your people have strange customs," he answered with a laugh, "but I think that even a spear shaft would scarcely gain beauty from my wrinkled hide, and if anything the eating of my flesh would make tradesmen and not warriors of your chiefs. Well, let the jest pass, and listen, king. In all my schemings one thought never orossed my mind, namely, that you were a man to suffer scruples to stond be-tween you and the woman you would win. You think that now she is a goddess! Well, if that be so-and it is not for me to say-who could be a fitter mate for the greatest king upon the earth than a goddess from the heavens? Take her, King Ithobal, take her, and this I will promise you: that when Your at miles are command.

her, and this I will promise you: that when your armies are encamped without the walls, the priests of El will absolve you of the crime of aspiring to the fair lips of Baaltis." "The lips of Baaltis," broke in Ithobal "think you that I shall find them sweet when another man has rifled them? There are secret chambers yonder in the palace of the

gods, and doubtless the Jew will find his "Nay, king, for between these two I have built a wall which he cannot climb; the wor-

shipper of the Lord of Israel may not traffic with the high priestess of Ashtoreth; moreover, I shall bring it about that ere long his face is set seaward." "Do that and I will believe you, merchant,

"Do that and I will believe you, merchant, though it would be better if you could bring it about that his face was set earthward, as I will if I can. Well this time I spare you, though be sure that if aught miscarry you though be sure that if aught miscarry you shall pay the price, how, I have told you. Now I go to have speech with these traders of Zimboe. Why do you wait? You are dis-missed and alive." Metem looked steadily at the tablets which

he still held in his hend. "I have heard," he said humbly, "that the King Ithobal, the great king, always pays his debte, and as I shall be leaving Zimboe shortly under his safe conduct, I desire to close this small account."

Ithobal went to the door of his tent and ommanded that his treasurer should attend him, bringing money. Presently he came, and at his bidding weighed out 100 ounces of gold.

'You are right, Phoenician," he said; "I always pay my debts, sometimes in gold and sometimes in iron. Be careful that I owe you no more, lest you who today are paid in gold, tomorrow may receive the tron weighed out in the fashion of which I have spoken. Now, begone."

Metem gathered up his 100 ounces of treasure and, hiding them in his robe, bowed himself from the royal presence and out of the thorn-hedged camp. "Without doubt I have been in danger,"

he said to himself, wiping his brow, "since at one time that black brute, disregarding the sanctity of an envoy, had it in his mind to torture and to kill me. So, so, King Ithobal, Metem, the Phoenician, is also an ithooal, Metern, the Phoenicial, is also an honest merchant who always pays his debts, as you may learn in the market places of Jerusalem, of Sidon, and of Zimboe, and I owe you a heavy one for the fright you have given me today. Little of Elissa's company shall you have if I can help it; she is too good for a mere savage, and if before I go from these barbarian londs I can set a drop of medicine in your wine, or an arrow in your gizzard, upon the word of Metem the Phoenician it shall be done. King Ithobal." (To be Continued.)

The Business of 1897.

The growth of The Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York is becoming monoton-ous. Other institutions have occasional eras

of prosperity, but the yearly reports made by The Mutual Life Insurance Company of

or prosperity, but the yearly reports made by The Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York show advances that are always regarded and described as "phenomenal." This is a mistake. A year in which the company did not show corresponding ad-vances would indeed be phenomenal. And

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"Nay," she said, hiding it beneath the folds of her robe, "it is still black and unsightly with the poison."

fore reason that I should kiss it, seeing how the stain came there," he an-

Her eyes met his, and she whispered, "Not my hand, but my brow, prince, for so shall crowned.' He pressed his lips upon her forehead and

'QI sen of my heart you are already, and

"Queen of my heart you are already, and though the throne be humble, it is sure. The life you saved is yours, and no other's." "I did but repay a debt," she answered; "but speak no more of it. Gladly would I have died to save you; should such choice srise, would you do so for me, I wonder?" "There is little need to ask such a ques-tion, lady; for your sake would I not only ifs. I would you do wen endure abauantic is

sie, I would even endure shame-that is worse than death." Sweet words, Aziel," she answered, smil-

"of which we shall learn the value when the hour of trial comes, as come, I think, It will. You told me but now that you were mine and no other's, but is it so? I have heard a story of a certain princess of Khom with whom your name was mingled. Tell me, if you will, what was it that set you

with whom your name was mingled. Tell me, if you will, what was it that set you fourneying to this far city of ours?" "The desire to find you," he answered, milling. Then, seeing that she still looked at hin, with questioning eyes, he added: "Nay, this is the truth, if you seek it. In-theed, it is best that I should tell you, sine a disciplination of the story. A while ago I was sent thing of the story. A while ago I was sent to the court of the Pharach of Egypt, by the was affanced by treaty to an uncle of mine, a great prime of israel. This I did, show-the end of the matter was that when we

THERE APPEARED IN THE DOORWAY THE SHADID, FOLLOWED BY PRIESTS AND PRIESTESSES.

not there, where I shall lose you. If, in- | and that you are her father's guest. There- | and that you are her father's guest. There-fore, for your own sake it is best that she should be placed beyond your reach. For her sake also it is best, since she is ambi-tious and born to rule, and now will be clothed with power all her days. More-over, had it been otherwise, in the end she must have passed to the savage Ithobal, whom she hates, whereas now this is not possible, for the Lady Baaitis can wed no man who is not of pure white blood, and d, you love me, I pray you return not Before he could answer a sound of singing and of all sorts of music caught Aziel's ear, and, looking through the casement, he saw a great procession of the priests and priestesses of El and Baaltis, in their festal robes, accompanied by many dignitaries of the city, a multitude of people and bands of musi-cians, advancing across the square toward man who is not of pure white blood, and that is a decree which may not be broken. So revile me not, but thank me, even if for

"My heart is sore, indeed," answered Azlel, "and though you think your words wise, their medicine does not soothe, Phoenician. You may have labored for my welfare and for that of the Lady Elissa, or, like the huck-

their hands, entered and present their medicine does not not not appreciate their sector and after their sector an

for it and you. I love this woman and she loves me, because such is our destiny, and no barriers that man may build can serve

messengers come to speak." "Then I cannot receive them," she said, sinking back in apprehension. "I am still ill and weak, and I pray to be excused."

to separate us. Also of this I am assured, that by your plots you draw the evils you "Nay, lady," answered the herald, "that would ward away from the heads of all of us, for from them shall spring war, and deaths, and misery. For the rest, think not, which they have to tell will cure your sickness."

Metem and Isserbar, but it is real, think not, be trayed, and the woman you have ruined by the greatness she did not seek are clay to be moulded at your will. It is another hand than yours that fashioned the yessel of our Again Elissa protested, but before the words had left her lips there appeared in the doorway he who had been husband of the dead Lady Baaltis, followed by priests and pricetesses, by Sakon her father, with whom fate; nor can you stay our lips from drinking of the pure wine of love that fills it. Fare-well," and with a grave inclination of the was Metem, and many other nobles and

"All hail, lady!" they cried, prostrating themselves before her; "all hail, lady, chosen of the gods!" head, he left the room. Metem watched him go, then he turned to Iseachar and said:

Elissa looked at them bewildered. "Your pardon," she said. "You do not understand."

"Your pardon," she said. "You do not understand." Then, rising from his knees, he who had been the Shadid addressed her as spokesman.

nad been the Shadid addressed her as spokesman. "Listen and learn, lady." he said. "the great thing that has befallen you. Know, O Divine One, that by inspiration of El and Baaltis, rulers of the heavens, the colleges of the priests and priestesses of the city have set you in that high place which death has emptied. Greeting to you, holder of the spirit of the goddess! Greeting to the Baaltis!" and bowing till, their foreheads touched the floor, all present there repeated, "Greeting to the Baaltis!" "I did not seek this honor," she mur-mured in the alience that followed, "and I refuse it. The throne of the goddess is Wesa's right; let her take it, or if she will not, then some other who is more "Lady." said the Shadid, "these words

vances would indeed be phenomenal. And so we almost grow tired of annually writing that The Mutual Life thas no equal in the world. It has come to be an accepted fact. It is the treasury of the people. The money is placed in it by the people with perfect confidence that it is held as a sacred trust for them. This fund on December 31, 1897, amounted to \$253.786.437, showing on increase for the years of the Adv Sen 24. The ceep in for the year of \$19,042,289.24. The cash in "Is it so?" replied the voice. "Then blo him burn incense upon the altar of El and take him to yourself. Have I not given come for the twelve months aggregated \$54. 162,698.23, and the disbursements for death cloims, matured endowments dividends and you enough beauty to snare a soul from other accounts to \$36,124,060.99. When we among the servants of the God of the Jews?" reach figures of this magnitude they become mere symbols. Still, we must dwell upon them; we must apply them. Here are some "Nay, nay!" her heart cried; "I will not do this thing." "Yea, yea!" mocked the phantom voice;

"for your sake shall he burn incense upon my altar." of the deductions: With the growth of income it will be ob by those who hold the company's contracts. A brief presentation of the results of the year's business is the best tribute to the

The phantasy passed, and now the golden gates of the palace of Baaltis rolled open before her, and now they bore her to the golden throne shaped like the crescent moon, and threw over her a black veil spangled with stars, the symbol of night, and having

of this great company. shut out the uninitiated, worshipped her after their secret fashion till she sank down upon the throne with weariness, and they carried her to that wonder of workmanship , and allegorical art, the ivory bed of Baultis,

and there laid her down to sleep. At dawn on the following day an embassy, headed by Sakon, governor of the city, in whose train were Metem and Aziel, went to the camp of Ithobal to give him answer to his suit. At some disbance from the camp to his suit. At some disbance from the camp held over. One of the most striking and satisfactory features of the report is found forward inviting the king to a conference on the plain, for it seemed scarcely safe to in the fact that while the company vastly trust themselves within the stout thorn extended its operations, increased its income fence which had been built about it. Metem, who said that he had no fear of and its payment to policy-holders, it succeeded by careful economy in every depart-Ithobal, went with these men, and on reach-ing the zeriba was at once bidden to the tent of Ithobal. He found the great man ment in curtailing the expenses for the year more than \$146,000, when compared with the cost of conducting the business in 1896. pacing its length sullenly.

The Mutual Life is 55 years old and since its organization for paid to living members \$271.000.000 and to the beneficiaries of de-ceased members over \$191.000,000, a total of "What neek you here, Phoenician?" he asked, glancing at him over his shoulder. "My fee, king. The king was pleased to promise me a hundred ounces of gold if I saved the life of the Lady Elissa. I come, therefore, to assure him that my skill has nearly \$463,000,000. It has paid to and has invested for its members nearly \$717,000,000 since organization. It has made greater gain of paid-for insurance in force in Iowa than preveiled against the poisoned aritow of that treacherous dog of the desert, which pierced her band as she apoke with the Prince Aziel any other company in the last five years. Apply to Fleming Bros., in this city for the other night, and to claim my reward-here is a note of the amount," and he proan agency, or any information as to its contracts. duced his tablets.

"If half of what I hear is true," answered Ithobal, savagely, "the tormenton and the headsman alone could eatisfy all my debt to Among the many other orders from abroad that are received at the Provo ((Utah) woolco mills is one from a Seattle firm for 2,000 pairs of extra heavy woolen blackets for the Say, merchant, what return have you made to me for that camel load of gold you bore hence some few days gone?" "The best of all returns, king," answered is operated till 10 p. m. daily.

Metem cheerfully, although in truth be be-gan to feel afraid. "I have kept my word and fulfilled the command of the king. I state are generally busy. The knitting mills throughout New York

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and Army will have Bo

worthy." "Lady," said the Shadid, "these words become you well, but it has pleased the gods to choose you and not my daughter, the Lady Mesa, or any other woman, and the choice of the gods may not be set aside. are the Lady Baaltis whom we obey." "Must I then be made divine against my will?" she pleaded, and turned to Aziel as though for counsel. "You say so, Issachar, but I have seen men "You say so, Issachar, but I have seen men climb high to pluck such fruit. Yes, I have seen them climb even when they knew that they must fall before they reached it." Then he went also, leaving Issachar alone and oppressed with a dread which he could not define. CHAPTER X. THE EMBASSY. "You say so, Issachar, but I have seen men climb high to pluck such fruit. Yes, I have

"I have earned my hire well, and you must