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Old Fogies. Old fogies may not believe science is advancing but if there are such things as "new fogies" they are numerous as many testimonials have been received from persons who have been cured of Chills and Fever with Certain Chill Cure after all remedies failed.

Allan Quatermain

By H. RIDER HAGGARD. AUTHOR OF "KING SOLOMON'S MINES," "HERO," "MISSE," "THE WITCH'S HEART," ETC.

His words gave me fresh energy. Catching him by the arm, I staggered, followed by Umslopogass, who reeled after us like a drunken man, through the courtyard, up the great hall, with its steeple as the grave, to the queen's sleeping place.

We reached the stateroom—no guards; the second, still no guards. Oh, surely the thing was done! We were too late after all, too late! The silence and solitude of these great chambers was dreadful and weighed me down like an evil dream.

Nyleptha's chamber we rushed and staggered, sick at heart, finding the very worst; we saw there a light in it, and a figure bearing the light. Oh, thank God, it is the White Queen herself, the queen unharmed!

There she stands in her night gear, roused by the clatter of our coming from her bed, the heaviness of sleep yet in her eyes and a red blush of fear and shame mantling her lovely breast as I speak.

"What means this? Oh, Macumazahn, is it thou? Why lookest thou so wildly? Thy countenance is one bearing evil tidings—and my lord—oh, tell me not my lord is dead—not dead?" she wailed, wringing her white hands.

"I left Incuba wounded, but leading the advance against Sorais last night at sundown; therefore let thy heart have rest. Sorais is beaten back all along her lines and thy arms prevail."

"I knew it," she cried in triumph. "I knew that he would win; and they called him an outlander and took their wise heads when I gave him the command! Last night at sundown, sayest thou, and it is not yet dawn! Surely—"

"Throw a cloak around thee, Nyleptha," I broke in, "and give us wine to drink; ay, and call thy maidens quick if thou wouldst save thyself alive. Nay, say not."

"This adjured, she ran and called through the curtains towards some room beyond, and then hastily put on her sandals and a thick cloak, by which time a dozen or so of half-dressed women were pouring into the room.

"Follow us and be silent," I said to them as they gazed with wondering eyes, clinging one to another. So we went into the first anteroom.

"Now," I said, "give us wine to drink and food, if ye have it, for we are near to death." The room was used as a mess room for officers of the guards, and from a cupboard some lagons of wine and some cold flesh were brought forth, and Umslopogass and I drank and felt life flow back into our veins as the good real wine went down.

among these thy waiting ladies any two of discretion?"

"Ay," she said, "surely." "Then bid them go out by the side entrance to any citizens whom thou canst befriend these of us men loyal to thee, and pray them come around, with all honest folk they can gather, to rescue thee from death. Nay, question not as I say, and quickly. Kara here will let out the maid."

"She turned, and selecting two of the crowd of damsels, repeated the words I had uttered, giving them besides a list of the names of the men to whom each should run.

"Go swiftly and secretly go for your very lives," I called.

In another moment they had left with Kara, whom I had told to rejoin us at the door leading from the great courtyard on to the stairway as soon as he had made fast behind the girls. Thither too, Umslopogass and I made our way, followed by the queen and her women. As we went we tore off mouthfuls of food, and between them I told her what I knew of the danger which even on passed her, and how we had found Kara, and how all the guards and men servants were gone, and she was alone with her women in that great place, and she told me, too, that a rumour had spread through the town that our army had been utterly destroyed, and that Sorais was marching in triumph on Milosa, and how, in consequence thereof, all men had fallen away from her.

"Though all this takes some time to tell, we had not been but six or seven minutes in the palace, and notwithstanding that the golden roof of the temple, being very lofty, was alight with the rays of the rising sun, it was not yet dawn, nor would be for another ten minutes. We were in the courtyard now, and here my wound pained me so that I had to take Nyleptha's arm, while Umslopogass rolled along after us, eating as he went.

Now we were across it, and had reached the narrow doorway through the palace wall that opened on to the mighty stair.

I looked through and stood aghast, as well I might. The door was gone, and so were the outer gates of bronze—entirely gone. They had been taken from their hinges, and, as we afterwards found, hurled from the stairway to the ground, two hundred feet beneath.

There in front of us was the semicircular standing space, about twice the size of a large oval dining table, and the ten curved black marble steps leading on to the main stair—and that was all.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW UMSLOPOGASS HELD THE STAIR. We look at one another.

"Thou seest," I said, "they have taken away the door. Is there aught with which we may fill the place? Speak quickly, for they will be on us ere the daylight." I spoke thus, because I knew that we must hold this place or none, as there were no inner doors in the palace, the rooms being separated one from another by curtains. I also knew that if we could by any means defend this doorway the murderers could get in nowhere else; for the palace is absolutely impregnable, that is, since the secret door by which Sorais had entered on that memorable night of attempted murder had, by Nyleptha's order, been closed up with masonry.

"I have it," said Nyleptha, who, as usual with her, rose to the emergency in a wonderful way. "On the farther side of the courtyard are blocks of cut marble—the workmen brought them there for the bed of the new statue of Incuba, my lord, let us block the door with them."

I jumped at the idea; and having dispatched one of the remaining maidens down the great stair to see if she could obtain assistance from the docks below, where her father, who was a great merchant employing many men, had his dwelling place, and set another to watch through the doorway, we made our way back across the courtyard to where the heavy marble lay, and here we met Kara returning from dispatching the first two messengers.

There were the marble blocks, sure enough, broad, massive lumps, some six inches thick, and weighing about eighty pounds each, and there, too, were a couple of implements like small stretchers that the workmen used to carry them on. Without delay we got some of the blocks on to the stretchers, and four of the girls carried them to the doorway.

"Listen, Macumazahn," said Umslopogass, "if these low fellows come, it is I who will hold the stair against them till the door is built up. Nay, may it be a man's death, possibly my own, old friend. It has been a good day, let it now be good night. See, I throw myself down to rest on the marble here, when their footsteps are nigh, wake them, not before, for I need my strength," and without a word he went outside and flung himself down on the marble and was instantly asleep.

At this time I, too, was overcome and was forced to sit down by the doorway and content myself with directing operations. The girls brought the blocks while Kara and Nyleptha built them across the six foot wide doorway, a triple row of them, for less would be useless. But the marble had to be brought forty yards and there were forty yards to run back, and though the girls labored gloriously, even staggering along alone, each with a block in her arms, it was slow work, dreadfully slow.

The light was growing now, and presently in the silence we heard a commotion at the far end of the stair and the faint clanking of armed men. As yet the wall was only two feet high, and we had been eight minutes at the building of it. So they had come. Alphonse had heard aright.

The clanking sound came nearer and in the ghosly gray of the dawn we could make out long files of men, some fifty or so in all, slowly creeping up the stair. They were now at the half way standing place that rested on the great flying arch, and here perceiving that something was going on above, they, to our great gain, halted for three or four minutes and consulted, then slowly and cautiously advanced again.

We had been nearly a quarter of an hour at the work now, and it was almost three feet high.

Then I woke Umslopogass. The great man rose, stretched himself and swung his legs, and he said, "I feel as a young man, ay, even as a lamp flares up before it dies. Fear not, I shall fight a good fight; the wine and the sleep have put a new heart into me."

"Macumazahn, I have dreamed a dream. I dreamed that thou and I stood together on a star and looked down on the world, and thou wast as a spirit, Macumazahn, for light flamed through thy flesh, but I could not see what was the fashion of my own face. The hour has come for me, old hunter. So be it; we have had our time, but I would that in it I had seen some more such fights as yesterday's."

"Let them bury me after the fashion of my people, Macumazahn, and set my eyes toward Zululand," and he took my hand and shook it, and then turned to face the advancing foe.

Just then, to my astonishment, the Zululand officer Kara clambered over our improvised wall in his quiet, determined sort of way, and took his stand by the Zulu, unsheathing his sword as he did so.

"What, comest thou too?" laughed out the old warrior.

"Welcome—a welcome to thee, brave heart!

Owl for the man who can die like a man own for the death grips and the ringing of steel. Owl! We are ready. We wait our beaks like eagles, our spears flash in the sun we shake our assegais, and are hungry to fight. Who comes to give greeting to the chieftains? (Inkosi-kaas!) "Who would taste her kiss, were she the fruit of death?"

The Woodpecker, I, the Slaughterer, I, the Swift footed! Umslopogass, of the tribe of the Maquilliani, of the people of Amazulu, a captain of the regiment of the Nkomazi, the son of Arpi the son of Moutikantze, I, of the royal blood of T'Chaka, I, of the King's House, I, the Ringed Man, I, the Induna I await them. Owl! It is thou, it is thou!"

As he spoke, or rather chanted, his wild war song, the armed men, among whom in the growing light I recognized both Nasta and Agon, came streaming up the stair with a rush, and one big fellow, armed with a heavy spear, dashed up the semicircular steps ahead of his comrades, and struck at the great Zulu with the spear. Umslopogass moved his body but not his legs, so that the blow missed him, and next instant Inkosha crashed through head, piece, hair and skull, and the man's corpse was rattling down the steps. As he dropped his round hippopotamus hide shield fell from his hand on to the marble, and the Zulu stooped down and seized it, still clanking as he did so.

On, six in hand, he staggered, that dreadful looking, splendid savage, and the ladies forgot to turn faint at the sight of blood, and cheered him, as well they might, but he never stayed or heeded. With outstretched arms and tottering gait he pursued his way, followed by us all along the broad shell stairs walk that ran through the court yard, past the spot where the blocks of marble lay through the round arched doorway and the thick curtains that hung within it, down the short passage and into the great hall, which was now filling with hastily armed men, who poured through the side entrance. Straight up the hall he went, leaving behind him a track of blood on the marble pavement, till at last he reached the sacred stone, which stood in the center of it, and here his strength seemed to fall him, for he stopped and leaned upon his ax. Then suddenly he lifted up his voice and cried aloud:

"I die, I die—but it was a kindly fray where are they who came up the great stair? I see them not. Art thou there, Macumazahn, or art thou gone before to wait for me in the dark whither I go? The blood blinds me—the place turns round—I hear the voice of waters."

Next, as though a new thought had struck him, he lifted the red ax and kissed the blade "Farewell, Inkosi-kaas!" he cried. "Nay, nay, we will go together, we cannot part, thou and I. We have lived too long one with another, thou and I. One more stroke, only one! A good stroke! a straight stroke! a strong stroke!" and, drawing himself to his full height, with a wild hair shaking shout, he with both hands began to whirl the ax round his head till it looked like a circle of flaming steel. Then suddenly with awful force he brought it down straight on to the crown of the mass of sacred stone. A shower of sparks flew up, and such was the almost superhuman strength of the blow that the massive marble split with a rending sound into a score of pieces, while of Inkosi-kaas there remained but some fragments of steel and a fibrous rope of shattered horn that had been the handle. Down with a crash on to the pavement fell the fragments of the holy stone, and down with a crash on them, still grasping the knob of Inkosi-kaas, fell the brave old Zulu—dead. And thus the hero died.

A gasp of wonder and astonishment rose from all those who witnessed the extraordinary sight, and then somebody cried, "The prophecy! the prophecy! He has shattered the sacred stone!" and at once a murmuring arose.

They backed and hewed at him with swords and spears, wounding him in a dozen places till he streamed red with blood, but the shield protected his head and the chain shirt his vital, and for minutes after minutes aided by the gaint Zulu Vendi, he still held the stair.

At last Kara's sword broke, and he grappled with a foe, and they rolled down together, as he was cut to pieces, dying like the brave man that he was.

Umslopogass was alone now, but he never blenched or turned. Shouting out some wild Zulu battle cry, he beat down a foe, ay, and another and another, till at last they drew back from the slippery, blood stained steps, and stared at him in amazement, thinking that he was no mortal man.

The wall of marble block was four feet six high now, and hope rose in my heart as I leaned there against it, a miserable, helpless log, and ground my teeth, and watched that glorious struggle. I could do no more, for I had lost my revolver in battle.

And old Umslopogass, he leaned, too, on his good axe, and, faint as he was with wounds, he mocked them, he called them "swans"—the grand old warrior, standing there, one against so many! And for a breathing space none would come against him, notwithstanding Nasta's exhortations, till at last old Agon, who, to do him justice, was a brave man, mad with baffled rage, and seeing that the wall would be on built and his plans defeated, shook the great spear he held, and rushed up the dripping steps.

"Ah, ah!" shouted the Zulu, as he recognized the priest's flowing white beard, "it is thou, old 'witch finder'! Come out I await thee, white 'medicine man'! come out! come out! I have sworn to slay thee, and I ever keep my faith."

On he came, taking him at his word, and drove the big spear with such force as Umslopogass that it sunk right through the tough shield and pierced him in the neck. The Zulu cast down the transfixed shield, and that moment was Agon's last, for before he could free his spear and strike again, with a shout of "Thee, thou, thou, thou, thou!" Umslopogass gripped Inkosi-kaas with both hands, and whirled her on high, and drove her right on to his venerable head, so that Agon rolled down dead among the corpses of his fellow murderers, and there was an end of him and his plots together. And even as he fell a great cry rose from the foot of the stair, and looking out through the portion of the doorway that was yet unclused we saw armed men rushing up to the rescue, and called an answer to their shouts. Then the would be murderers who yet remained on the stairway, and among whom I saw several priests, turned to fly, but, having nowhere to go, were butchered as they fled. Only one man stayed, and he was the great lord Nasta, Nyleptha's suitor, and the father of the plot. For a moment the black bearded Nasta stood with bowed face leaning on his long sword as though in despair, and then, with a dreadful shout, he too rushed up at the Zulu, and, swinging the glittering sword around his head, dealt him such a mighty blow beneath his guard that the keen steel of the heavy blade bit right through the chain armor and deep into Umslopogass's side, for a moment paralyzing him and causing him to drop his ax.

Raising the sword again, Nasta sprang forward to make an end of him, but little he knew his foe. With a shake and a yell of fury, the Zulu gathered himself together and sprang straight at Nasta's throat, as I have sometimes seen a wounded lion spring. He struck him full as his foot was on the topmost stair, and his long arms closing round him like iron bands, down they rolled together struggling furiously. Nasta was a strong man and a desperate, but he could not match the strongest man in Zululand, nor was the strength of a bull. In a minute the end came. I saw old Umslopogass stagger to a feet—ay, and saw him, by a single gigantic effort, swing up the struggling Nasta, and, with a shout of triumph, hurl him straight over the parapet of the bridge, to be

crushed to powder on the rocks 200 feet below.

The noise which had been summoned by the girl who had passed down the stair before the assassins passed up at hand, and the loud shouts which reached us from the outer gate told us that the town was also aroused, and the men awakened by the women were calling to be admitted. Some of Nyleptha's brave ladies, who, in their night shifts and with their long hair streaming down their backs, just as they had been aroused from rest, had worked so gallantly at blocking the passage through the wall, went off to admit them at the side entrance, while others, assisted by the rescuing party outside, pushed and pulled down the marble blocks they had placed there with so much labor.

Soon the wall was down again, and through the doorway, followed by a crowd of rescuers, staggered old Umslopogass, an awful, and, in a way, a glorious figure. The man was a mass of wounds, and a glance at his wild eye told me that he was dying. The "koshis" gun ring upon his head was severed in two places by sword cuts, one just over the curious nose and the other just over the forehead, and his face from the gashes. Also, on the right side of his neck was a stab from a spear, inflicted by Agon; there was a deep cut on his left arm just below where the mail shirt sleeve stopped, and on the right side of his body the armor was severed by a gash six inches long, where Nasta's mighty sword had bitten through it and deep into its wearer's vital.

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"Ah, ah!" shouted the Zulu, as he recognized the priest's flowing white beard, "it is thou, old 'witch finder'! Come out I await thee, white 'medicine man'! come out! come out! I have sworn to slay thee, and I ever keep my faith."

On he came, taking him at his word, and drove the big spear with such force as Umslopogass that it sunk right through the tough shield and pierced him in the neck. The Zulu cast down the transfixed shield, and that moment was Agon's last, for before he could free his spear and strike again, with a shout of "Thee, thou, thou, thou, thou!" Umslopogass gripped Inkosi-kaas with both hands, and whirled her on high, and drove her right on to his venerable head, so that Agon rolled down dead among the corpses of his fellow murderers, and there was an end of him and his plots together. And even as he fell a great cry rose from the foot of the stair, and looking out through the portion of the doorway that was yet unclused we saw armed men rushing up to the rescue, and called an answer to their shouts. Then the would be murderers who yet remained on the stairway, and among whom I saw several priests, turned to fly, but, having nowhere to go, were butchered as they fled. Only one man stayed, and he was the great lord Nasta, Nyleptha's suitor, and the father of the plot. For a moment the black bearded Nasta stood with bowed face leaning on his long sword as though in despair, and then, with a dreadful shout, he too rushed up at the Zulu, and, swinging the glittering sword around his head, dealt him such a mighty blow beneath his guard that the keen steel of the heavy blade bit right through the chain armor and deep into Umslopogass's side, for a moment paralyzing him and causing him to drop his ax.

Raising the sword again, Nasta sprang forward to make an end of him, but little he knew his foe. With a shake and a yell of fury, the Zulu gathered himself together and sprang straight at Nasta's throat, as I have sometimes seen a wounded lion spring. He struck him full as his foot was on the topmost stair, and his long arms closing round him like iron bands, down they rolled together struggling furiously. Nasta was a strong man and a desperate, but he could not match the strongest man in Zululand, nor was the strength of a bull. In a minute the end came. I saw old Umslopogass stagger to a feet—ay, and saw him, by a single gigantic effort, swing up the struggling Nasta, and, with a shout of triumph, hurl him straight over the parapet of the bridge, to be

crushed to powder on the rocks 200 feet below.

The noise which had been summoned by the girl who had passed down the stair before the assassins passed up at hand, and the loud shouts which reached us from the outer gate told us that the town was also aroused, and the men awakened by the women were calling to be admitted. Some of Nyleptha's brave ladies, who, in their night shifts and with their long hair streaming down their backs, just as they had been aroused from rest, had worked so gallantly at blocking the passage through the wall, went off to admit them at the side entrance, while others, assisted by the rescuing party outside, pushed and pulled down the marble blocks they had placed there with so much labor.

Soon the wall was down again, and through the doorway, followed by a crowd of rescuers, staggered old Umslopogass, an awful, and, in a way, a glorious figure. The man was a mass of wounds, and a glance at his wild eye told me that he was dying. The "koshis" gun ring upon his head was severed in two places by sword cuts, one just over the curious nose and the other just over the forehead, and his face from the gashes. Also, on the right side of his neck was a stab from a spear, inflicted by Agon; there was a deep cut on his left arm just below where the mail shirt sleeve stopped, and on the right side of his body the armor was severed by a gash six inches long, where Nasta's mighty sword had bitten through it and deep into its wearer's vital.

On, six in hand, he staggered, that dreadful looking, splendid savage, and the ladies forgot to turn faint at the sight of blood, and cheered him, as well they might, but he never stayed or heeded. With outstretched arms and tottering gait he pursued his way, followed by us all along the broad shell stairs walk that ran through the court yard, past the spot where the blocks of marble lay through the round arched doorway and the thick curtains that hung within it, down the short passage and into the great hall, which was now filling with hastily armed men, who poured through the side entrance. Straight up the hall he went, leaving behind him a track of blood on the marble pavement, till at last he reached the sacred stone, which stood in the center of it, and here his strength seemed to fall him, for he stopped and leaned upon his ax. Then suddenly he lifted up his voice and cried aloud:

"I die, I die—but it was a kindly fray where are they who came up the great stair? I see them not. Art thou there, Macumazahn, or art thou gone before to wait for me in the dark whither I go? The blood blinds me—the place turns round—I hear the voice of waters."

Next, as though a new thought had struck him, he lifted the red ax and kissed the blade "Farewell, Inkosi-kaas!" he cried. "Nay, nay, we will go together, we cannot part, thou and I. We have lived too long one with another, thou and I. One more stroke, only one! A good stroke! a straight stroke! a strong stroke!" and, drawing himself to his full height, with a wild hair shaking shout, he with both hands began to whirl the ax round his head till it looked like a circle of flaming steel. Then suddenly with awful force he brought it down straight on to the crown of the mass of sacred stone. A shower of sparks flew up, and such was the almost superhuman strength of the blow that the massive marble split with a rending sound into a score of pieces, while of Inkosi-kaas there remained but some fragments of steel and a fibrous rope of shattered horn that had been the handle. Down with a crash on to the pavement fell the fragments of the holy stone, and down with a crash on them, still grasping the knob of Inkosi-kaas, fell the brave old Zulu—dead. And thus the hero died.

A gasp of wonder and astonishment rose from all those who witnessed the extraordinary sight, and then somebody cried, "The prophecy! the prophecy! He has shattered the sacred stone!" and at once a murmuring arose.

They backed and hewed at him with swords and spears, wounding him in a dozen places till he streamed red with blood, but the shield protected his head and the chain shirt his vital, and for minutes after minutes aided by the gaint Zulu Vendi, he still held the stair.

At last Kara's sword broke, and he grappled with a foe, and they rolled down together, as he was cut to pieces, dying like the brave man that he was.