

CHAPTER XIV.

MEANTIME.

The night that Harry Lovejoy had set out in pursuit of the kidnappers, Silas Loffden, who had been informed of what had happened by his villainous and treacherous servant, Jante, had also set out upon the same mission; but with a very different motive at heart in regard, at least, to the unfortunate girl.

Riding furiously back to the Kafir village where he had left his two treacherous associates, he came suddenly upon the old Zulu who, after Harry had left him, set out on his return to the home of the old hermit; and was, at the time when Loffden met him, scarcely a mile from the hermitage.

Dashing up to the old man, Loffden, uttering a horrible oath, cried out:

"Darn you, you yellow-livered snake eater! What are you doing here? Didn't I tell you if I caught you up to any tricks, that I would put a bullet through that dried-up old carcass of yours? Out upon you, you sneaking devil! What's up to-night that you go sneaking off to the old hermit's? Take that!" he hissed between his clenched teeth, and quick as flash he drew a pistol and fired; and then, without stopping, or even a parting glance to ascertain the effect of his shot,—for what need was there, he that could clip a pigeon in his swift flight with that self-same pistol, why need he look? He had aimed well, and hadn't the old man, almost be-

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THE OLD HERMIT SPRANG LIKE A TIGER UPON THE COWERING ZULU, AND SEIZED HIM BY THE THROAT.

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fore the red fire had touched his bared head and shrunken chest, and with a cry of agony fell, even beneath the feet of that coal-black horse? No need for him to look; nor did he, but dashed away and was gone.

"Yah, yah, we shall see, we shall see! Some day, Boss Silas, I will pay it all back." And the old Zulu, who had so miraculously escaped death at the hand of his bitterest foe, sped on swiftly toward the lonely home of old Henry Lovell, the hermit.

"Ah, Zulu," said the old hermit as he admitted him, "something has happened—speak man, speak! How is it with young Harry and the girl—where are they?"

Breathlessly, he listened to the story which the old Zulu told.

"Ah, yah, we shall see, Boss Silas, we shall see!" cried the Zulu, livid with rage. "Yah, some day, Boss Silas, some day!"

"Ah, Zulu," declared the hermit, the day for action has, at last, arrived and vengeance is mine.

"Yah, yah, Boss Silas, we shall see, we shall see!" And the old Zulu's one snakey eye gleamed vindictively. "Yah, yah; some day Boss Silas, some day old Zulu will pay it all back—some day he will have courage to tell. Some day, some day, Boss Silas. Ah, yah, so you thought to rid yourself of old Zulu as you did of the others, because they knew and I know—ah, we shall see, we shall see. But he has come back—ah, he's a big, strong man now, Boss Silas, is little Harry. Ha, ha, we shall see, we shall—"

With a voice quivering with the most awful passion, with face as pale as death, while his eyes gleamed with that terrible fire, the old hermit sprang like a tiger upon

the cowering Zulu, and seizing him by the throat, cried:

"Imp of satan! O I have had a suspicion of this! Oh God!" he groaned, and releasing his hold of the old Zulu's throat, he sunk back into his chair exhausted and helpless.

"Ah, yah, we shall see, Boss Silas, we shall see!" muttered the old Zulu. Yah, Boss Henry, it was eighteen years ago—yah, yah, kill me if you will, as Boss Silas says you will, yah, yah, shoot me, shoot me, for I stole little Harry the same day that his mother died, and I gave him to old Silas Loffden. But he dared not to kill him. No, no, he hired an old woman to carry him away to America; for he thought that he would never come back, but he has—ah, yah, he's a big, strong man now—yah, yah, we shall see, Boss Silas, we shall see!" muttered the old Zulu. and his one eye gleamed viciously.

Two weeks had passed since the day that Tom and Harry set out on their visit to the mountains. Two long, dreary weeks—weeks of suffering, weeks of mourning, weeks of uncertainty, weeks of the most diligent and unremitting search, weeks of disappointment; for, search as they would, search as they did, no trace of the missing girl and her lover could be found. A feeling of gloom, a feeling of the most despairing sorrow had settled down upon the home of Aunt Jane. At last, the search was given up and, in utter despair, for no trace beyond the Kafir village could be found, though they had searched the country for a hundred miles around

and had sent descriptions to all the coast towns, they return home.

"Where was the old, white-haired hermit? Where was the bent and shriveled old Zulu? Surely they could tell something," was asked by many.

Ah, yes, and where was Silas Loffden?

"I told you so! I told you that it would end in blood!"

"But where are they?" were some of the many questions asked and conjectures made by the neighbors of Aunt Jane's.

Here was a mystery which the good people of Perth were unable to solve. Discouraged, heartless and in despair, the father and his friends had given up the search and returned home, fully convinced that some awful tragedy had been enacted.

It was about this time that the old hermit and the Zulu returned from the Cape where they had been to make the final arrangements for the attaching of Loffden's stolen property, stopped at Perth.

The old hermit, as we have already heard, was no friend of James Winterstine, in fact, was his most bitter foe. But, since his meeting with little Tom, the very image of her mother, who, in days gone by, had found a place in his heart, that no other woman could fill, I say, since his meeting her, his heart had gone out to the sweet-faced girl and he had vowed, now, that her mother was dead, to bury his bitter enmity towards her father.

"Yes, yes," he mused, "I will go to James Winterstine and tell him all. My son—my long-lost boy—and his daughter—*her* daughter—God deliver them

from their enemies!—have come together to bridge the dark chasm of bitterest hate between us.”

“Yah, yah,” chimed in old Zulu, “we shall see, Boss Silas, we shall see!”

Two hours later, James Winterstine, sitting before the fire, with bowed head and aching heart, was aroused from his despairing reverie by a loud knock at the door.

“Lucy, child, bid them enter,” said the father sadly; and sadly and silently, without even raising his head, the old man sat, staring into the fire, as the visitor entered and stood beside him.

“Father,” said Lucy, “it is some one to see you.”

Slowly the old man’s head raised, and his eyes sought the face of his visitor. Instantly, a pallor as of death overspread his face and, staggering to his feet, he grasped the mantle for support.

James,” said the old hermit, for it was he, “God has given me to see the error of my ways, and now, that *she* is dead, I have come in the hope of making amends for the wrong I have done *her* and you, by aiding *her* child.”

Here the old man told the story of his meeting with Harry and little Tom; of her abduction and the attempt upon Harry’s life. And then he told of the old Zulu’s confession.

“God,” he said, “has brought our children together to bridge the dark abyss between us. Let us pray God to deliver our children to us again.”

And the two old men bowed their heads in silent, solemn prayer.

A ray of hope entered the aching heart of the almost distracted father at the reassuring words of the old hermit, who firmly believed that their children lived and that Harry would yet bring little Tom, in triumph, to her father.

“If any one can bring her back, Harry Lovejoy—Harry Lovell—is the man,” declared the old hermit.

Long and earnestly these two old men sat and talked. For seventeen years they had been the most unrelenting foes and had, at one time, sworn, that if ever they met, one or the other must die. But now, the cause of this bitter enmity, the young and beautiful wife of James Winterstine, the mother of little Tom, was dead; the two old men clasped hands over the dark abyss, and vowed to forget the past.

“For her sake,” said the old hermit, “I will forget and forgive, for she is *her* child and she loves my boy.”

“Yah, yah, we shall see, we shall see!” muttered the old Zulu, who had been a silent spectator until now. “Ah, some day, Boss Silas, some day!”

And his one eye gleamed vindictively.

