
KING SOLOMON'S MINES

By
H. Rider Haggard

125TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION
1885 - 2010

Revised and Edited
By
Michael J. McHugh



GREAT LIGHT PUBLICATIONS

King Solomon's Mines—**125th Anniversary Edition**

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Revised and edited by Michael J. McHugh

Text reviewed by Miss Kelsey McHugh and Mrs. Karla McHugh

Cover and text drawings by Miss Hannah McHugh

Design and layout by Bob Fine

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A publication of

Great Light Publications

422 S. Williams Ave.

Palatine, Illinois 60074

www.greatlightpublications.com**GLP**

ISBN 978-0-9822848-3-4

Printed in the United States of America

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sir Henry Rider Haggard was born in England on June 22, 1856. He was the eighth of ten children, and received most of his primary and elementary education at home through private tutors and occasionally at a local grammar school. His parents took him on frequent trips to mainland Europe during his childhood days.

In 1875, when Haggard was nineteen, he traveled to South Africa to work as a secretary for the newly appointed governor of Natal. Three years later, the young Englishman resigned his post at the high court of Pretoria to take up ostrich farming in Natal.

Haggard visited England in 1880 and was married on August 11 to Mariana L. Margitson. The newlyweds soon returned to their farm in Natal to resume the business of farming. In his spare time, Haggard began to work on his first book project, and also began to take up the study of law. In 1882, the Haggard family sold their farm in Natal and returned to England.

Henry Haggard completed his law studies in 1884 and accepted a call to the bar of attorneys in London where he worked as an assistant to a chief judge. It was during this time that he made use of what he describes as his “somewhat ample leisure time in chambers” to write his first successful novel, *King Solomon's Mines*. This book, as he put it, “finally settled the question of whether to pursue a legal or literary career.” Henry Haggard went on to write over sixty-six novels, as well as numerous papers, producing nearly one book for each year of his life.

Haggard traveled extensively throughout the world during much of his married life. His knowledge of the culture, customs, and terrain of many parts of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East enabled him to construct a host of adventure novels set in various locations around the globe. The recognition of his contributions as a writer were crowned in the year 1912 when Henry Rider Haggard was knighted.

Sir Haggard died in London on May 14, 1925, at the age of sixty-eight.

PREFACE

This novel, by Sir H. Rider Haggard, is a genuine classic that provides readers with a rich balance of drama, humor, and high-stakes adventure. No wonder that his work has inspired and captivated so many millions of would-be adventurers since it was first written in 1885.

Long before there was an “Indiana Jones” or a “Crocodile Dundee”, the name of Allan Quatermain had already become synonymous with the quintessential action hero. *King Solomon's Mines* was the first adventure tale by Haggard featuring Allan Quatermain, and is set in the remote African interior during the last portion of the nineteenth century. As a seasoned hunter and trader, Mr. Quatermain ends up being hired on as a guide by a wealthy Englishman who is in search of a long lost brother. Before his journey is over, however, our hero ends up playing the role of both treasure hunter (King Solomon's Mines) and soldier-of-fortune. In these roles, both he and his companions face more than their share of hardships as they end up getting themselves in the middle of a tribal war and loads of dangerous situations.

It is important for every reader to understand that all of the essential aspects of the original version of *King Solomon's Mines* were left intact during the process of revising/updating the manuscript. For those readers who wonder why it is even necessary to revise or update a literary gem, I simply submit that even the finest of gemstones need a bit of careful cutting and polishing to enhance their original luster.

One century ago, Henry Haggard was regarded as one of the world's premier writers of adventure novels and historical fiction. Many of his works are now rightly regarded as classics. The book that follows, *King Solomon's Mines*, deserves to be counted among the best of Sir Haggard's adventure novels. It is the sincere belief of the publishers of the Anniversary Edition of this stirring novel, that it is now in a state to be enjoyed to the fullest by readers today who want to explore good literature.

Michael J. McHugh
2010

INTRODUCTION

Now that this book is printed, and about to be given to the world, a sense of its shortcomings both in style and contents, weighs very heavily upon me. As regards the latter, I can only say that it does not pretend to be a full account of everything we did and saw. There are many things connected with our journey into Kukuaneland that I should have liked to dwell upon at length, which, as it is, have been scarcely mentioned. Amongst these are the curious legends which I collected about the chain armor that saved us from destruction in the great battle of Loo, and also about the "Silent Ones", or Colossi, at the mouth of the stalactite cave. Again, if I had given way to my own impulses, I should have wished to go into the differences, some of which are to my mind very suggestive, between the Zulu and Kukuana dialects. Also a few pages might have been given up profitably to the consideration of the indigenous flora and fauna of Kukuaneland. Then there remains the most interesting subject—that of the magnificent system of military organization in force in that country, which, in my opinion, is much superior to that inaugurated by Chaka in Zululand, inasmuch as it permits of even more rapid mobilization. Lastly, I have scarcely spoken of the domestic and family customs of the Kukuanas, many of which are exceedingly quaint, or of their proficiency in the art of smelting and welding metals. This science they carry to considerable perfection, of which a good example is to be seen in their "tollas," or heavy throwing knives, the backs of these weapons being made of hammered iron, and the edges of beautiful steel welded with great skill to the iron frames.

The fact of the matter is, I thought, with Sir Henry Curtis and Captain Good, that the best plan would be to tell my story in a plain, straightforward manner, and to leave these matters

to be dealt with subsequently in whatever way ultimately may appear to be desirable. In the meanwhile I shall, of course, be delighted to give all information in my power to anybody interested in such things.

And now it only remains for me to offer apologies for my blunt way of writing. I can but say in excuse of it that I am more accustomed to handling a rifle than a pen, and cannot make any pretence to the grand literary flights and flourishes which I see in novels—for sometimes I like to read a novel. I suppose they—the flights and flourishes—are desirable, and I regret not being able to supply them; but at the same time I cannot help thinking that simple things are always the most impressive, and that books are easier to understand when they are written in plain language, though perhaps I have no right to set up an opinion on such a matter. “A sharp spear,” runs the Kukuana saying, “needs no polish”; and on the same principle I venture to hope that a true story, however strange it may be, does not require to be decked out in fancy words.

ALLAN QUATERMAIN.

CHAPTER I

I Meet Sir Henry Curtis

It is a curious thing that at my age—fifty-five last birthday—I should find myself taking up a pen to try to write a history. I wonder what sort of a history it will be when I have finished it, if ever I come to the end of the trip! I have done a good many things in my life, which seems a long one to me, owing to my having begun work so young, perhaps. At an age when other boys are at school, I was earning my living as a trader in the old Colony. I have been trading, hunting, fighting, or mining ever since. And yet it is only eight months ago that I made my fortune. It seems like an impressive mass of wealth now that I have got it—I don't yet know how big—but I do not think I would go through the last fifteen or sixteen months again for it. No, not if I knew that I should come out safe at the end, riches and all. But then I am a timid man, and dislike violence; moreover, I am almost sick of adventure. I wonder why I am going to write this book: it is not in my line. I am not a literary man, though very devoted to the Old Testament and also to the "Ingoldsby Legends." Let me try to set down my reasons, just to see if I have any that hold water.

First reason: Because Sir Henry Curtis and Captain John Good asked me.

Second reason: Because I am laid up here at Durban with a pain in my left leg, and I need something to do to take my mind off this malady. Ever since that confounded lion got hold of me I have been liable to this trouble, and being rather painful just now, it makes me limp more than ever. There must be some poison in a lion's teeth, otherwise how is it that when your wounds are healed they break out again; generally, mark

you, at the same time of year that you got your mauling? It is a hard thing when one has shot sixty-five lions or more, as I have in the course of my life, that the sixty-sixth should chew your leg like a quid of tobacco.

Third reason: Because I want my boy Harry, who is over there at the hospital in London studying to become a doctor, to have something to amuse him and keep him out of mischief for a week or so. Hospital work must sometimes grow rather dull, and as this history will not be dull, whatever else it may be, it will put a little life into things for a day or two while Harry is reading of our adventures.

Fourth reason and last: Because I feel personally obliged to tell people about one of the most fantastic and strangest stories ever experienced by men. It may seem like an odd thing to say, especially considering that there is no woman in it—except Foulata. Stop, come to think of it there was Gagool, if she was a woman, and not a fiend. But she was a hundred, at least, and therefore not a subject for romance, so I don't count her. At any rate, I can safely say that there is not a petticoat in the whole history.

Well, I guess that I had better make a beginning of my tale before I die of old age. My mind still feels stiff though, and the pen in my hand seems like it were bogged up to the axle. But, "sutjes, sutjes," as the Boers say—I am sure I don't know how they spell it—softly does it at the start.

At any rate, I, Allan Quatermain was born a gentleman, though I have been nothing but a poor travelling trader and hunter all my life. Whether I have remained so I know not, you must judge of that. Heaven knows I've tried. I have killed many men in my time, yet I have never slain wantonly or stained my hand in innocent blood, but only in self-defense. The Almighty gave us our lives, and I suppose He meant us to defend them, at least I have always acted on that principle, and I hope it will not be brought up against me when my clock strikes. Truly, truly, it is a cruel and a wicked world, and for a timid man I have been mixed up in a great deal of fighting. I cannot tell the rights of it, but at any rate I have never stolen, though once I cheated a herdsman out of a prize cow. But then

he had done me a dirty turn, and his deeds have caused me no shortage of grief over the years.

Well, it is eighteen months or so ago since first I met Sir Henry Curtis and Captain Good. Our meeting took place in this way. I had been up elephant hunting beyond Bamangwato, and had met with bad luck. Everything went wrong that trip, and to top it off I got the fever badly. So soon as I was well enough I trekked down to the diamond fields, sold such ivory as I had, together with my wagon and oxen, discharged my hunters, and traveled to the Cape. After spending a week in Cape Town, finding that they overcharged me at the hotel, and having seen everything there was to see, including the botanical gardens, which seem to me likely to confer a great benefit on the country, and the new Houses of Parliament, which I expect will do nothing of the sort, I determined to go back to Natal. To this end, I purchased a passage on the *Dunkeld*, which was then lying at the docks waiting for the *Edinburgh Castle* to arrive from England. I went aboard the *Dunkeld* and took my berth, and later that afternoon passengers from the *Edinburgh Castle* transferred to our vessel, and we put out to sea.



Among these passengers who came on board were two who excited my curiosity. One, a gentleman of about thirty, was perhaps the most muscular and longest-armed man I ever saw.

He had yellow hair, a thick yellow beard, clear-cut features, and large gray eyes set deep in his head. I never saw a finer-looking man, and somehow he reminded me of an ancient Dane. Not that I know much of ancient Danes, though I knew a modern Dane who did me out of ten pounds. I do, however, remember once seeing a picture of some of those gentry, who, I take it, were a kind of white Zulus. They were drinking out of big horns, and their long hair hung down their backs. As I looked at my friend standing there by the companion-ladder, I thought that if he only let his hair grow a little, put one of those chain shirts over his great shoulders, and took hold of a battle-axe and a horn mug, he might have sat as a model for that picture. And by the way it is a curious thing, and just shows how strong blood lines flow, that afterwards I discovered that Sir Henry Curtis, for that was the big man's name, is of Danish blood. He also reminded me strongly of somebody else, but at the time I could not remember who it was.

The other man, who stood talking to Sir Henry, was stout and dark, and of quite a different cut. I suspected at once that he was a naval officer; I don't know why, but it is difficult to mistake a navy man. I have gone on shooting trips with several of them in the course of my life, and they have always proved themselves the best and bravest and nicest fellows I ever met, though sadly given, some of them, to the use of profane language. A Royal Naval officer is, generally speaking, the very epitome of upright manhood, though of course there undoubtedly is a black sheep among them here and there. I fancy it is just the wide seas and the breath of God's winds that wash their hearts and blow the foolishness out of their minds and make them what men ought to be.

Well, to return, my hunch proved right again. I ascertained that the dark man was a naval officer, a lieutenant of thirty-one, who, after seventeen years' service, had been turned out of her Majesty's employ with the barren honor of a commander's rank, because his services were no longer needed. This is what people who serve the Queen have to expect: to be shot out into the cold world to find a living just when they are beginning to really understand their work, and to reach the prime of life. I suppose they don't mind it, but for my own part I had rather

earn my bread as a hunter. One's rewards are as scarce perhaps, but you do not get so many kicks.

The officer's name I found out--by referring to the passengers' list--was Good--Captain John Good. He was broad, of medium height, dark, stout, and rather a curious man to look upon. He was very neat and clean-shaved, and he always wore an eye-glass in his right eye. It seemed to grow there, for it had no string, and he never took it out except to wipe it. At first I thought he used to sleep in it, but afterwards I found that this was a mistake. He put it in his trouser's pocket when he went to bed, together with his false teeth, of which he had two beautiful sets. I well remember those teeth for, my own being unsound at best, I began to desire them to the point where I broke the tenth commandment. But I am getting ahead of myself.

Soon after we had got under way evening closed in, and brought with it very rough weather. A keen breeze sprung up off land, and a kind of aggravated Scottish mist soon drove everybody from the deck. As for the *Dunkeld*, she is a flat-bottomed vessel, and going up light as she was, she rolled very heavily. It almost seemed as though she would go right over, but she never did. It was quite impossible to walk about, so I stood near the engines where it was warm, and amused myself with watching the pendulum, which was fixed opposite to me, swinging slowly backwards and forwards as the vessel rolled, and marking the angle she touched at each lurch.

"That pendulum's wrong; it is not properly weighted," said a somewhat testy voice over my shoulder. Looking round I saw the naval officer whom I had noticed when the passengers came aboard.

"Indeed, now what makes you think so?" I asked.

"Think so. I don't think at all. Why there"--as she righted herself after a roll--"if the ship had really rolled to the degree that thing pointed to, then she would never have rolled again, that's all. But it is just like these merchant skippers, they are always so confoundedly careless."

Just then the dinner-bell rang, and I was not sorry, for it is a dreadful thing to have to listen to an officer of the Royal Navy when he is in the mood to criticize another seaman. I

only know one worse thing, and that is to hear a merchant skipper express his candid opinion regarding officers of the Royal Navy.

Captain Good and I went down to dinner together, and there we found Sir Henry Curtis already seated. He and Captain Good were placed together, and I sat opposite to them. The captain and I soon fell into talk about shooting and what not; he asking me many questions, for he was very inquisitive about all sorts of things, and I answering them as well as I could. After several minutes, he began to ask me about elephants.

"Ah, sir," called out somebody who was sitting near me, "you've reached the right man for that; Hunter Quatermain should be able to tell you about elephants if anybody can."

Sir Henry, who had been sitting rather quietly listening to our talk, suddenly began to be visibly startled.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, leaning forward across the table, and speaking in a low deep voice, a very suitable voice, it seemed to me, to come out of those great lungs. "Excuse me, sir, but is your name Allan Quatermain?"

I said that it was.

The big man made no further remark, but I heard him mutter "fortunate" into his beard.

Presently dinner came to an end, and as we were leaving the dining area Sir Henry strolled up and asked me if I would join him in his cabin for a cordial. I accepted, and he led the way to his deck cabin, and a very good cabin it was. According to my host, it had been two cabins, but during a previous voyage one of those big swells knocked away the partition and the owners had never bothered to put it up again. There was a sofa in the cabin, and a little table in front of it. Sir Henry sent the steward for a bottle of whisky, and the three of us sat down and lit our pipes.

"Mr. Quatermain," said Sir Henry Curtis, when the man had brought the whisky and lit the lamp, "the year before last about this time, you were, I believe, at a place called Bamangwato, to the north of the Transvaal."

"I was," I answered, rather surprised that this gentleman should be so well acquainted with my movements, which were not, so far as I was aware, considered of general interest.

"You were trading there, were you not?" put in Captain Good, in his quick way.

"I was. I took up a wagon-load of goods, made a camp outside the settlement, and stopped till I had sold them."

Sir Henry was sitting opposite to me in a Madeira chair, his arms leaning on the table. He now looked up, fixing his large gray eyes full upon my face. There was a curious anxiety in them, I thought.

"Did you happen to meet a man called Neville there?"

"Oh, yes; he camped alongside of me for a fortnight to rest his oxen before going on to the interior. I had a letter from a lawyer a few months back, asking me if I knew what had become of him, which I answered to the best of my ability at the time."

"Yes," said Sir Henry, "your letter was forwarded to me. You said in it that the gentleman called Neville left Bamangwato at the beginning of May in a wagon with a driver, a voorlooper, and a black hunter called Jim. Your letter stated that he told you of his intention of trekking if possible as far as Inyati, the extreme trading post in the Matabele country, where he would sell his wagon and proceed on foot. You also said that he did sell his wagon, for six months afterwards you saw the wagon in the possession of a Portuguese trader, who told you that he had bought it at Inyati from a white man whose name he had forgotten, and that he believed the white man with the native servant had started off for the interior on a shooting trip."

"Yes, you have the details correct," I responded.

Then came a pause.

"Mr. Quatermain," said Sir Henry suddenly, "I don't suppose you know any of the reasons of my—of Mr. Neville's journey to the north country, or as to what point that journey was directed?"

"I heard something," I answered, and stopped. The subject was one which I did not care to discuss.

Sir Henry and Captain Good looked at each other, then Captain Good nodded.

"Mr. Quatermain," went on the former, "I am going to tell you a story, and ask your advice, and perhaps your assistance. The agent who forwarded your letter told me that I might trust you implicitly, as you were," he said, "well known and universally respected in Natal, and especially noted for your discretion."

I bowed and drank some whisky and water to hide my embarrassment, for I am a modest man by nature. Moments later, Sir Henry went on.

"Mr. Neville was my brother."

"Oh," I said, starting, for now I knew of whom Sir Henry had reminded me when first I saw him. His brother was a much smaller man and had a dark beard, but now that I thought of it, he possessed eyes of the same shade of gray and with the same keen look in them: the features too were similar.

"He was," continued Sir Henry, "my only and younger brother, and till five years ago I do not suppose that there were two better friends in all the world. But just about five years ago a misfortune befell us, as sometimes does happen in families. We quarreled bitterly, and I behaved unjustly to my brother in my anger."

At this point, Captain Good nodded his head vigorously to himself, while the ship began to heave and roll more violently.

"As I daresay you know," went on Sir Henry as he struggled to keep his drink from spilling, "if a man dies intestate, and has no property but land, real property it is called in England, it all descends to his eldest son. It so happened that just at the time when we quarreled our father died intestate. He had put off making his will until it was too late. The result was that my brother, who had not been brought up to any profession, was left without a penny. Of course it would have been my duty to provide for him, but at the time the quarrel between us was so bitter that I did not—to my shame I say it (and he sighed deeply)—offer to do anything. It was not that I grudged him justice, but I waited for him to make advances, and he made

none. I am sorry to trouble you with all this, Mr. Quatermain, but I must to make things clear."

"Quite so, quite so," said the captain. "Mr. Quatermain will, I am sure, keep this history to himself."

"Of course," said I, for I rather pride myself on my discretion, for which, as Sir Henry had heard, I have some repute.

"Well," went on Sir Henry, "my brother had a few hundred pounds to his account at the time. Without saying anything to me he drew out this paltry sum, and, having adopted the name of Neville, started off for South Africa in the wild hope of making a fortune. This I learned afterwards. Some three years passed, and I heard nothing of my brother, though I wrote several times. Doubtless the letters never reached him. But as time went on I grew more and more troubled about him. I found out, Mr. Quatermain, that blood is thicker than water."

"Quite so," said I, thinking of my boy Harry.

"I found out, Mr. Quatermain, that I would have given my entire fortune to know that my brother George, the only relation I possess, was safe and well, and that I should see him again."

"But you were very slow to acknowledge your error, Curtis," interjected Captain Good, glancing at the big man's face.

"Well, Mr. Quatermain, as time went on I became more and more anxious to find out if my brother was alive or dead, and if alive to get him home again. I made various contacts, and your letter was one of the results. So far as this information went it was satisfactory, for it showed that till lately George was alive, but it did not go far enough. So, to cut a long story short, I made up my mind to come out and look for him myself, and Captain Good was so kind as to come with me."

"Yes," said the captain; "nothing else to do, you see. Turned out by my Lords of the Admiralty to starve on half pay. And now perhaps, sir, you will tell us what you know or have heard of the gentleman called Neville."

CHAPTER 2

The Legend of Solomon's Mines

“**W**hat was it that you heard about my brother's journey at Bamangwato?” asked Sir Henry, as I paused to fill my pipe before replying.

“I heard this,” I answered, “and I have never mentioned it to a soul till today. I heard that he was starting for Solomon's Mines.”

“Solomon's Mines?” remarked both of my hearers at once. “Where are they?”

“I don't know,” I said; “I know where they are said to be. Once I saw the peaks of the mountains that are supposed to border them, but there were a hundred and thirty miles of desert between me and them, so I had no opportunity to investigate the matter. It is said that no white man has ever gotten across this desert wasteland save one. But perhaps the best thing I can do is to tell you the legend of Solomon's Mines as I know it. First, however, I must ask you to give me your word not to reveal anything I tell you without my permission. Can you agree to this request? I have my reasons for asking.”

Sir Henry nodded, and Captain Good replied, “Certainly, certainly.”

“Well,” I began, “as you may guess, generally speaking, elephant hunters are a rough set of men, who do not trouble themselves with much beyond the facts of life and the ivory trade. But here and there you meet a man who takes the trouble to collect traditions from the natives, and tries to make

out a little piece of the history of this dark land. It was such a man as this who first told me the legend of Solomon's Mines, nearly thirty years ago. That was when I was on my first elephant hunt in the Matalebe country. His name was Evans, and he was killed the following year, poor fellow, by a wounded buffalo, and lies buried near the Zambezi Falls. I well remember the night that we spoke together, as I told him about some of the wonderful ancient artifacts I had found whilst hunting koodoo and eland in what is now the Lydenburg district of the Transvaal."

"'Ay,' said Evans as he sat patiently listening to my chatter, 'but I will spin you a stranger yarn than that'; and he went on to tell me how he had found in the far interior a ruined city, which he believed to be the Ophir of the Bible, and, by the way, other more learned men have said the same long since poor Evans's time. I was, I remember, listening open-eared to all these wonders, for I was young at the time, and this story of an ancient civilization and of the treasures which those old Jewish or Phoenician adventurers used to extract from a country long since lapsed into the darkest barbarism took a great hold upon my imagination. After he had spoken for some time, he suddenly paused and said to me, 'Lad, did you ever hear of the Suliman Mountains up to the north-west of the Mushakulumbwe country?' I told him I never had. 'Ah, well,' he said, 'that is where Solomon had his mines, his diamond mines, I mean.'

"'How do you know that?' I asked.

"'Know it! Why, what is "Suliman" but an arabic form of Solomon? Besides, an old Isanusi or witch doctress up in the Manica country told me all about it. She said that the people who lived across those mountains were a "branch" of the Zulus, speaking a dialect of Zulu, but finer and bigger men even; that there lived among them great wizards, who had learnt their art from white men when "all the world was dark," and who had the secret of a wonderful mine of "bright stones."

"Well, I laughed at this story at the time, though it interested me, for the diamond fields in this region had not been

discovered yet, and then poor Evans went off and was killed. Twenty years passed and I never thought any more of the matter. However, some time later I heard something more definite about Suliman's Mountains and the country which lies beyond them. I was up beyond the Manica country, at a place called Sitanda's Kraal, and a miserable place it was, for a man could get nothing to eat, and there was but little game about. I had an attack of fever, and was in a bad way generally, when one day a Portuguese traveler arrived with a single companion—a servant. Now I know a low-class Portuguese slave trader when I see one. There is no greater devil on the face of the earth, profiting as he does upon human agony and flesh in the shape of slaves. But this was quite a different type of man to the mean fellows whom I had been accustomed to meet; indeed, in appearance he reminded me more of the polite doms I have read about. He was tall and thin, with large dark eyes and a curling gray mustache. We talked together for a while, for he could speak broken English, and I understood a little Portuguese, and he told me that his name was José Silvestre, and that he had a place near Delagoa Bay. When he left on the following day with his companion, he said 'Good-bye,' taking off his hat in the old manner.

"'Good-bye, Senör,' he said; 'if ever we meet again I shall be the richest man in the world, and I will remember you.' I laughed a little—I was too weak to laugh much—and watched him strike out for the great desert to the west, wondering if he was mad, or what he thought he was going to find there.

"Two weeks passed, and I slowly recovered from my fever. One evening, however, as I was sitting on the ground in front of the little tent I had with me, chewing the last leg of a miserable fowl I had bought from a native for a bit of cloth worth twenty fowls, I suddenly saw a figure in the distance stumbling across the hot desert. It was apparently that of a man on the slope of the rising ground opposite to me, about three hundred yards away. The figure crept along on its hands and knees, then it got up and staggered forward a few yards on its legs, only to fall and crawl again. Seeing that it must be somebody in distress, I sent one of my hunters to

help him. A few minutes later, he arrived, and who do you suppose it turned out to be?"

"José Silvestre, of course," said Captain Good.

"Yes, José Silvestre, or rather his skeleton and a little skin. His face was a bright yellow with bilious fever, and his large dark eyes stood nearly out of his head, for all the flesh had gone. There was nothing but yellow parchment-like skin, white hair, and the gaunt bones sticking up beneath.

"'Water! For mercy sake, water!'" he moaned and I saw that his lips were cracked, and his tongue, which protruded between them, was swollen and blackish.

"I gave him water with a little milk in it, and he drank it in great gulps, two quarts or so, without stopping. I would not let him have any more. Then the fever took him again, and he fell down and began to rave about Suliman's Mountains, and the diamonds, and the desert. I carried him into the tent and did what I could for him, which was little enough; but I saw how it must end. About eleven o'clock he grew quieter, and I lay down for a little rest and went to sleep. At dawn I woke again, and in the half light saw Silvestre sitting up, a strange, gaunt form, and gazing out towards the desert. Presently the first ray of the sun shot right across the wide plain before us till it reached the far-away crest of one of the tallest of the Suliman Mountains more than a hundred miles away.

"'There it is!' cried the dying man in Portuguese, and pointing with his long, thin arm, 'but I shall never reach it, never. No one will ever reach it!'

"Suddenly, he paused, and seemed to take a resolution. 'Friend,' he said, turning towards me, 'are you there? My eyes grow dark.'

"'Yes,' I said; 'yes, lie down now, and rest.'

"'Ay,' he answered, 'I shall rest soon, I will have time to rest—all eternity. Listen, I am dying! You have been good to me. I will give you the writing. Perhaps you will get there if you can live to pass the desert, which has killed my poor servant and me.'

"Then he groped in his shirt and brought out what I thought was a Boer tobacco pouch made from the skin of the sable antelope. It was fastened with a little strip of hide, what we call a rimpi, and this he tried to loose, but could not. He handed it to me. 'Untie it,' he said. I did so, and extracted a bit of torn yellow linen on which something was written in rusty letters. Inside this rag was a paper.

"Then he went on feebly, for he was growing weak: 'The paper has all that is on the linen. It took me years to read. Listen: my ancestor, a political refugee from Lisbon, and one of the first Portuguese who landed on these shores, wrote that when he was dying on those mountains which no white foot ever pressed before or since. His name was José da Silvestra, and he lived three hundred years ago. His slave, who waited for him on this side of the mountains, found him dead, and brought the writing home to Delagoa. It has been in the family ever since, but none have cared to read it, till at last I did. And I have lost my life over it, but another may succeed, and become the richest man in the world—the richest man in the world. Only give it to no one, Senör; go yourself!'

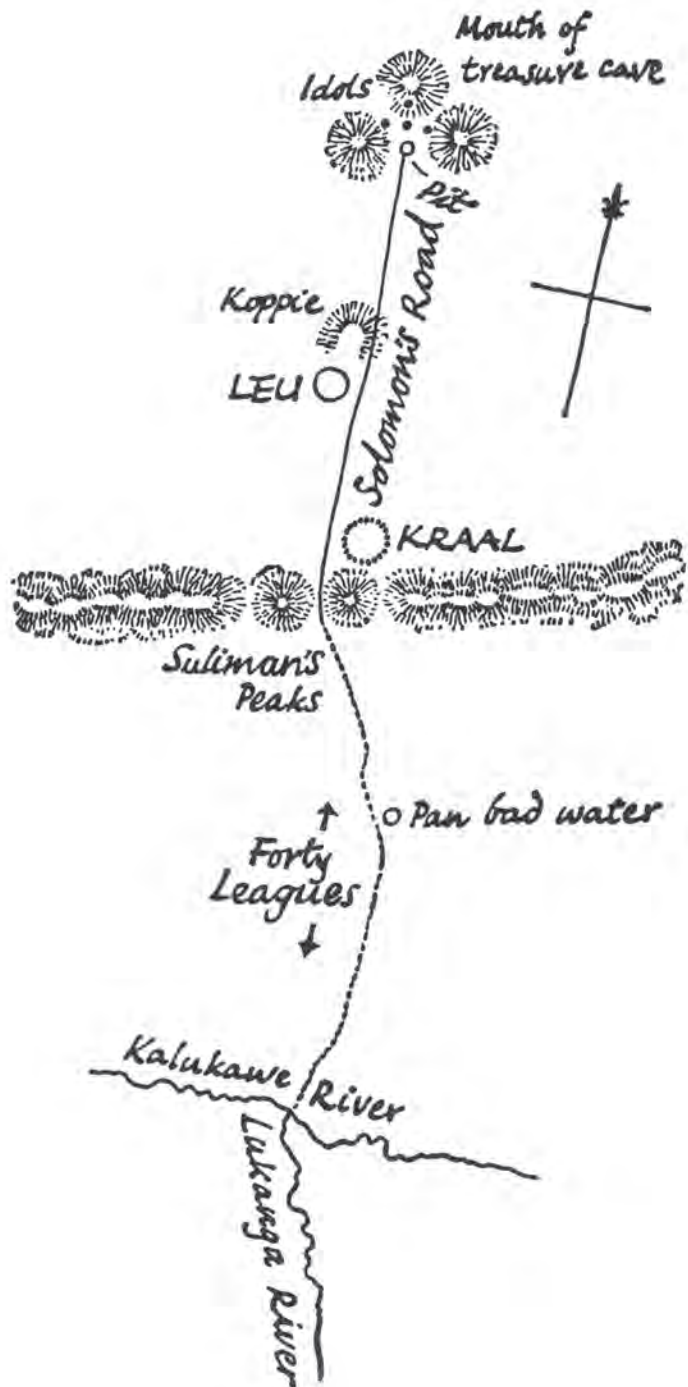
"Then his thoughts began to wander again, and in an hour it was all over.

"God rest him! He died very quietly, and I buried him deep, with big boulders on his breast in order that the jackals would not dig him up. And then I came away."

"And what happened to the document?" said Sir Henry, in a tone of deep interest.

"Yes, the document; what was in it?" added the captain.

"Well, gentlemen, if you like I will tell you. I have never showed it to anybody yet except to a drunken old Portuguese trader who translated it for me, and had forgotten all about it by the next morning. The original rag is at my home in Durban, together with poor Dom José's translation, but I have the English rendering in my pocket-book, and a facsimile of the map, if it can be called a map. Here it is."



"I, José da Silvestra, who am now dying of hunger and blood loss in a little cave near the north side of the southernmost region of the two mountains called Suliman, write this in the year 1590 with a cleft bone upon a remnant of my raiment, my blood being the ink. If my slave should find my message when he comes, and should bring it to Delagoa, let my friend (name illegible) bring the matter to the knowledge of the king, that he may send an army which, if they live through the desert and the mountains, can overcome the brave Kukuanes and their devilish arts. The monarch who succeeds in conquering this land will become the richest king since Solomon. With my own eyes I have seen the countless diamonds stored in Solomon's treasure chamber behind the white Death; but through the treachery of Gagool the witch I managed to carry nothing away, scarcely my life. Let him who comes follow the map, and climb the snow on the south side of the mountains till he reaches the north side where begins the great road Solomon made. Follow this path for three days until you come to the King's Palace. Whoever journeys to this place must not fail to kill Gagool. Pray for my soul. Farewell.

José da Silvestra."

When I had finished reading the above, and shown the copy of the map, drawn by the dying hand of the old Dom with his blood for ink, there followed a silence of astonishment.

"Well," said Captain Good, "I have been round the world twice, and put in at most ports, but may I be hung for a mutineer if ever I heard a yarn as wild as this save in a story book, or from a drunken sailor for that matter."

"It's an odd tale, Mr. Quatermain," said Sir Henry. "I suppose you are not hoaxing us? It is, I know, sometimes thought allowable to take in a greenhorn."

"If you think that, Sir Henry," I said, much put out, and pocketing my paper—for I do not like to be thought one of those silly fellows who consider it witty to tell lies, and who are for ever boasting to newcomers of extraordinary hunting adventures which never happened—"if you think that, why, this matter is at an end," and I rose to go.

Sir Henry laid his large hand upon my shoulder. "Sit down, Mr. Quatermain," he said, "I beg your pardon; I see very well you do not wish to deceive us, but the story sounded so strange that I could hardly believe it."

"You shall see the original map and writing when we reach Durban," I answered, somewhat mollified, for when I began to consider his side of things it was not surprising that he should doubt my good faith.

"But," I went on, "I have not told you about your brother. I knew the man Jim who was with him. He was a Bechuana by birth, a good hunter, and for a native a very clever man. The very morning on which Mr. Neville was starting, I saw Jim standing by my wagon. He was cutting up tobacco on the sideboard.

"Jim," said I, 'where are you off to this trip? Is it elephants you seek?'

"No, Baas," he answered, 'we are after something worth much more than ivory.'

"And what might that be?" I said, for I was curious. 'Is it gold?'

"No, Baas, something worth more than gold," and he grinned.

"I asked no more questions, for I did not like to lower my dignity by seeming inquisitive, but I was puzzled. I watched silently, therefore, as Jim finished cutting his tobacco.

"Baas," said he.

I took no notice.

"Baas," said the servant Jim again.

"Yes, what is it?" I asked.

"Baas, we are going after diamonds.'

"Diamonds! Why, then, you are steering in the wrong direction; you should head for the Fields.'

"Baas, have you ever heard of Suliman's Berg?'

"Yes, indeed, long ago I learned of Solomon's Mountains.'

"Have you ever heard of the diamonds there?'

"I have heard a foolish story, Jim.'

"It is no story, Baas. Once I knew a woman who came from there, and reached Natal with her child, she told me:—she is dead now.'

"Your master will feed the vultures Jim, if he tries to reach Suliman's peaks, and so will you if they can get any pickings off your worthless old carcass,' said I.

"He grinned. 'Perhaps, Baas. Man must die sometime; I'd rather like to try a new country myself; the elephants are getting scarce around here.'

"Ah! My boy,' I said, 'you wait till the "pale old man" gets a grip of your yellow throat, and then we shall hear what sort of a tune you sing.'

"Half an hour after that I saw Neville's wagon begin to move off. Jim came back running. 'Good-bye, Baas,' he said. 'I didn't like to start without bidding you good-bye, for I daresay you are right, and that we shall never trek south again.'

"Is your master really going to Suliman's Berg, Jim, or are you telling more of your tall tales?'

"I do not lie,' he answered, 'he is going. He told me he was bound to make his fortune somehow, or try to; so he might as well have a fling for the diamonds.'

"Oh!' I said; 'wait a bit, Jim; will you take a note to your master, and promise not to give it to him till you reach Inyati?' which was some hundred miles off.

"Yes, Baas.'

"So I took a scrap of paper, and wrote on it, 'Let him who comes climb the snow of Suliman's south peak, till he reaches the ridge on the north side where he will find Solomon's great road.'

"Now, Jim,' I said, 'when you give this to your master, tell him he had better follow the advice on it implicitly. You are not to give it to him now, because I don't want him back asking me questions which I won't answer. Now be off, you idle fellow, the wagon is nearly out of sight.'

"Jim took the note and went, and that is all I know about your brother, Sir Henry; but I am much afraid—"

"Mr. Quatermain," said Sir Henry, "I am going to look for my brother; I am going to track him to the twin peaks of the Suliman Mountains, and over them if necessary, till I find him, or until I know that he is dead. Will you come with me?"

I am, as I think I have said, a cautious man, indeed a timid one, and this suggestion frightened me. It seemed to me that to undertake such a journey would be to go to certain death, and putting other considerations aside, as I had a son to support, I could not afford to die just then.

"No, thank you, Sir Henry, I think I had rather not," I answered. "I am too old for wild-goose chases of this sort, besides, it is likely that we would only end up like my poor friend Silvestre. I have a son dependent on me, so I cannot afford to risk my life foolishly."

Both Sir Henry and Captain Good looked very disappointed.

"Mr. Quatermain," said the former, "I am well off, and I am bent upon this business. You may put the remuneration for your services at whatever figure you like in reason, and it shall be paid over to you before we start. Moreover, I will arrange in the event of anything untoward happening to us or to you, that your son shall be suitably provided for. You will see from this offer how necessary I think your presence. Also if by chance we should reach this place, and find diamonds, they shall belong to you and Good equally. I do not want them. But of course that promise is worth nothing at all, though the same thing would apply to any ivory we might get. You may pretty well make your own terms with me, Mr. Quatermain; and of course I shall pay all expenses."

"Sir Henry," said I, "this is the most liberal proposal I've ever received, and one not to be sneezed at by a poor hunter and trader. But the job is the biggest I have come across, and I must take time to think it over. I will give you my answer before we get to Durban."

"Very good," answered Sir Henry.

Then I said good-night and turned in, and dreamt about poor long-dead Silvestre—and the diamonds.