

H. RIDER HAGGARD

Copyright © 2009 Great Light Publications



QUEEN SHEBA'S  
RING



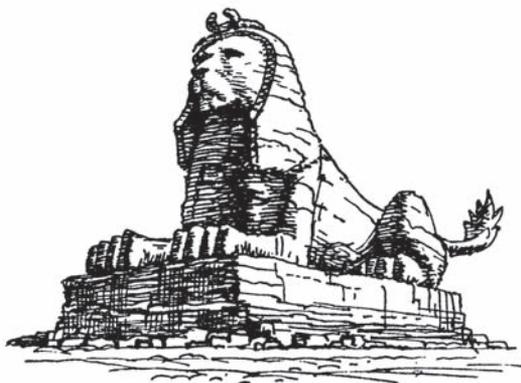
---

# QUEEN SHEBA'S RING

*By*  
H. Rider Haggard

CENTENNIAL EDITION  
1909-2009

*Revised and Edited*  
*By*  
*Michael J. McHugh*



GREAT LIGHT PUBLICATIONS  
PALATINE, ILLINOIS

---

---

*Queen Sheba's Ring* was originally published in 1909, and has received relatively little recognition over the years compared to Haggard's more celebrated works; among them, *King Solomon's Mines*. Now, through this new Centennial Edition, the publisher hopes to introduce this little known classic to a whole new generation of readers.

---

## Queen Sheba's Ring Centennial Edition

Copyright © 2009 – Michael J. McHugh

Originally published by: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers, N.Y. (1909)

All rights reserved. Copies of this book may be made by the purchaser for personal or immediate family use only. Reproduction or transmission of this product—in any form or by any means—for use outside of the immediate family is not allowed without prior permission from the publisher. Brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews are permitted.

Revised and edited by Michael J. McHugh

Text reviewed by Miss Janelle McHugh and Mrs. Karla McHugh

Cover by Timothy Kou—Cover painting copyright 2009,

Imagineering Studios

Original book illustrations by Sigurd Schou and Geoffrey Whittam

Copyright © 2009 Great Light Publications



A publication of  
**Great Light Publications**  
 422 S. Williams Ave.  
 Palatine, Illinois 60074  
[www.greatlightpublications.com](http://www.greatlightpublications.com)

**GLP**

ISBN 978-0-9822848-0-2 (print)

978-0-9852077-1-7 (eBook PDF)

Printed in the United States of America

---

---

# CONTENTS

About the Author .....	iv
Preface .....	v

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE COMING OF THE RING .....	1
II. THE ADVICE OF SERGEANT QUICK .....	19
III. THE PROFESSOR GOES OUT SHOOTING .....	27
IV. THE DEATH WIND .....	41
V. PHARAOH MAKES TROUBLE .....	57
VI. HOW WE ESCAPED FROM HARMAC.....	71
VII. BARUNG .....	87
VIII. THE SHADOW OF FATE.....	101
IX. THE SWEARING OF THE OATH .....	115
X. QUICK LIGHTS A MATCH.....	133
XI. THE RESCUE FAILS.....	145
XII. THE DEN OF LIONS.....	165
XIII. THE ADVENTURES OF HIGGS.....	177
XIV. HOW PHARAOH MET SHADRACH.....	191
XV. SERGEANT QUICK HAS A PRESENTIMENT .....	207
XVI. HARMAC COMES TO MUR.....	219
XVII. I FIND MY SON .....	235
XVIII. THE BURNING OF THE PALACE.....	251
XIX. STARVATION.....	263
XX. THE TRIAL AND AFTER .....	277
MESSAGE FROM MAQUEDA .....	292

---

## 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

The novel you are about to read is a fictional tale of four English explorers, or should I say treasure hunters, who travel to a remote mountainous region in North Africa during the late 1800's to be of service to an embattled monarch who claims to be a descendant of the Queen of Sheba. Not surprisingly, these men eventually confront more danger, hardships, and disappointments than they bargained for during their extended journey into the wilderness of the African interior.

The author, H. Rider Haggard, does a masterful job of portraying the trials and triumphs of men and women facing difficult circumstances. He enables readers to actually feel as though they are part of the action and drama that surrounds each of the colorful characters that grace the pages of his novels. For this reason, readers are drawn into the story and kept on the edge of their seats even during the most implausible turn of events.

It is important for every reader to understand that all of the essential aspects of the original version of *Queen Sheba's Ring* 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, *Queen Sheba's Ring*, deserves to be counted among the best of Sir Haggard's adventure novels. It is the sincere belief of the publishers of the Centennial Edition of this stirring novel, that it is now in a state to be enjoyed to the fullest for yet another century by all those who love good literature.

*Michael J. McHugh*  
2009

---

## CHAPTER I

# The Coming of the Ring

---

---

It is very unlikely that any of my readers has read the monograph, I believe that is the right word, of my dear friend, Professor Higgs—Ptolemy Higgs to give him his full name. His scholarly paper, penned one year ago, described his adventures in the ancient land of Mur in North Central Africa, as well as the mysterious underground city in the mountains which surrounded it. It also recorded valuable information regarding the strange tribe of Abyssinian Jews, or rather their mixed descendants, by whom it is, or was, inhabited.

Professor Higgs's rivals, of whom either the extent of his achievements or his somewhat confrontational methods of dealing with controversy seem to have made him a great many, have lately risen up and publicly accused him of being an individual who stretches the truth. Indeed, only this morning one of his critics, in a letter to the press, alluded to some of the disparaging remarks that had been made by a renowned explorer concerning Higg's memoirs. This gentleman, who, I am told, lectured to the British Association several years ago, was so skeptical of Professor Higg's claims that he questioned whether he rode across the desert to Mur, not upon a camel, as he alleged, but upon a land tortoise of extraordinary size.

The innuendo contained in this epistle has made the Professor, who, as I have already hinted is not by nature meek, extremely angry. Indeed, notwithstanding all that I could do, he left his London house under an hour ago with a whip of hippopotamus hide, purposing to avenge himself upon the

person of his defamer. In order to prevent a public scandal, however, I have taken the liberty of telephoning that gentleman, who, bold and vicious as he may be in print, is really rather small and timid, to encourage him to hide himself at once. Judging from the abrupt fashion in which our conversation came to an end, I can only assume that my hint was taken. At any rate, I hope for the best, and, as an extra precaution, have communicated my concerns with the lawyers of my justly indignant friend.

The reader will now probably understand that I am writing this book, not to bring myself or others before the public, or to make money, of which I have no present need, or for any purpose whatsoever, except to set down the bare and actual truth. In fact, so many rumors are flying concerning where we have been and what befell us during our recent travels to the African interior that this has become quite necessary. As soon as I laid down that cruel column of uncomplimentary gibes and considered the other insinuations to which I have alluded—yes, this very morning, before breakfast, I knew I must begin to write. In fact, this conviction took hold of me so strongly that I sent a cable to Oliver, Captain Oliver Orme, the hero of my history, if it has any particular hero, who is at present engaged upon what must be an extremely agreeable journey round the world—asking his consent. Several hours later, his answer arrived from Tokyo. Here it is:

“Do what you think necessary, but please consider altering all names as I propose returning via America, and fear interviewers. Japan jolly place.”

Then followed some private matters, which are not worthy of our consideration. Oliver, you might as well know, is prone to extravagance where cablegrams are concerned.

I suppose that before entering on this narration, for the reader's benefit, I had better give some short description of myself.

My name is Richard Adams. I am the son of a Cumberland yeoman, who married a woman from Welsh background. For this reason, I have Celtic blood in my veins, which perhaps

accounts for my love of roving and other things. I am now an old man, near the end of my course, I suppose; at any rate, I was sixty-one on my last birthday. This is my appearance as I see it in the glass before me: tall and spare. I don't weigh more than a hundred and forty pounds—the desert has any superfluous flesh that I ever owned. My eyes are brown, my face is long, and I wear a pointed white beard, which matches the white hair above.

Truth compels me to add that my general appearance, as seen in that mirrored glass that does not lie, reminds me of a rather aged goat. Indeed, to be frank, by the natives among whom I have sojourned, and especially among the Khalifa's people when I was a prisoner there, I have often been called the White Goat.

Of my very commonplace outward self let this suffice, except to add that I have always enjoyed exceptionally good eyesight, which has helped to get me out of more than a few tight scrapes over the years. As for my background, I am a doctor of the old school. Think of it! When I was a student at Bart's Medical School, even a simple antiseptic treatment was quite a new thing. I can still remember the crude method for administering it was with the help of a kind of engine on wheels, out of which disinfectants were dispensed with a pump, much as the advanced gardener sprays a greenhouse today.

I was an above average student, and my early training as a doctor proceeded quite well. But in every man's life there happen things which, whatever excuses may be found for them, would not look particularly well in cold print (nobody's record, when examined by the penetrating light of God's law, could really stand without a thick coat of varnish). For various reasons, some good and some bad, I could never stay in one place very long in my youth. Something in my soul made me long to be a wanderer. In short, having no strict ties at home, and desiring to see the world, I wandered far and wide for many years, earning my living from place to place. Seldom in my experience as an itinerate doctor, however, did I have a difficult time making a living, for there are, after all, no shortage

of sick people in the world.

My fortieth birthday found me practicing at Cairo, which I mention only because it was here that I first met Ptolemy Higgs, who, even then in his youth, was noted for his extraordinary antiquarian and linguistic abilities. I remember that in those days the joke about him was that he could argue in fifteen languages like a native, and in thirty-two with common proficiency. He was also known as one who could read hieroglyphics as easily as a bishop reads his Missal.

Well, I doctored him through a bad attack of typhoid, but as he had spent every farthing he owned on scarabs or something of the sort, I determined not to charge him. This little kindness I am bound to say he never forgot, for whatever his failings may be (personally I would not trust him alone with any object that was more than a thousand years old), Ptolemy is a good and faithful friend.

In Cairo, I met and eventually married a Copt women. She was a lady of high descent, the tradition in her family being that they were sprung from one of the Ptolemaic Pharaohs, which is possible and even probable enough. Also, she was raised as a Christian in the Coptic Church, and well educated in her way. But, of course, she remained an Oriental in her customs and mindset. As I have tried to explain to others, for a European to marry an Oriental is a very challenging thing, especially if he continues to live in the East, where it cuts him off from social recognition and intimacy with his own race. Still, although this step of mine forced me to leave Cairo and go to Assouan, then a little-known place, to practice chiefly among the natives, God knows we were happy enough together till the plague took her, and with it my joy in life.

I trust you will forgive me for not dwelling upon the details of that business, since there are some things too dreadful and too sacred for me to share in a narrative of this kind. She left me one child, a son, who I treasured. To fill up my cup of sorrow, however, when my son was twelve years of age, he was kidnapped by slave traders from the Mahdi tribe.

Now that you have this knowledge of my background, you

will perhaps be in a better position to understand the true story that I am now about to tell of the adventures that I experienced in the remote regions of the African interior. There is nobody else to write it; Oliver will not; Higgs cannot (outside of anything learned and antiquarian, he is hopeless), so I must. At any rate, if you find that the record of our adventures is not interesting, the fault will be mine, not that of the story, which is fascinating enough in its own right.

We are now in the middle of June, and it was a year ago last December that, on the evening of the day of my arrival in London after an absence of half a lifetime, I found myself knocking at the door of Professor Higgs's residence on Guildford Street. It was opened by his housekeeper, Mrs. Reid. She was a thin and saturnine old woman who reminded me of a reanimated mummy. After a brief introduction, she told me that the Professor was in, but had a gentleman to dinner, and suggested sourly that I should call again the next morning. With difficulty, I eventually persuaded her to inform her master that an old Egyptian friend had brought him something that he certainly would like to see.

Five minutes later I groped my way into Higgs's sitting-room, which Mrs. Reid escorted me to from a lower floor. It was a large room, running the whole width of the house, divided into two by an arch, where once, in the Georgian days, there had been folding doors. The place was in shadow, except for the firelight, which shone upon a table laid ready for dinner. An extraordinary collection of antiquities, including a couple of mummies with gold faces arranged in their coffins against the wall, could also be seen. At the far end of the room, however, an electric lamp was dimly glowing near a tiny window that sat next to another table that was covered with books; and by it I saw my host, whom I had not seen for twenty years. Higgs and his dinner guest sat contentedly in their stuffed chairs as I made my approach.

First, I will describe Higgs, who, I may state, is admitted, even by his enemies, to be one of the most learned antiquarians and greatest masters of dead languages in Europe. Although

few would guess it from his appearance, he was already almost forty-five years old. In build, he was short and stout, with a face that was round and often flushed. His hair and beard were fiery red, and his eyes, when they could be seen (for generally he wore a pair of large dark spectacles) were small and of an indefinite hue, but sharp as needles. The manner of his dress was commonly so untidy, peculiar, and worn that it is said the police invariably requested him to move on, fearing that he would be prone to loiter in the streets at night. Such was, and to a great extent still is, the best description I can give of my dearest friend, Professor Ptolemy Higgs. I only hope that he won't be offended when he sees my assessment of him set down in black and white.

The man who was seated next to Professor Higgs, with his chin resting on his hand, listening to some erudite discourse with a rather distracted air, was extraordinarily different, especially by contrast. He was a tall well-made young man, rather thin, but broad-shouldered. I reckoned him to be close to twenty-five years of age. His face was clean-cut—so much so, indeed, that his dark eyes alone relieved it from a suspicion of hardness. His hair was short and straight, with a brown tint that matched his eyes. As I was introduced to this gentleman, he impressed me as a man of thought and ability, and, when he smiled, singularly pleasant. Such was, and is, Captain Oliver Orme, who, by the way, I should explain, had only been a captain of some volunteer engineers. As I was to learn at a later date, however, he was in fact a very able soldier, as was proved in the South African War, from where he had then but lately returned.

I ought to also say that he gave me the impression of a man not in love with himself or the world, or rather of one with whom the world was not in love; indeed, his young face seemed distinctly sad. Perhaps it was this that attracted me to him so much from the first moment that my eyes fell on him, for I was one with whom kind providence had also been out of touch for some time. At any rate, I found it easy to like men who had seen their share of sorrow, for such men seemed

somehow to be the better for having faced tribulation.

While I stood contemplating this pair, Higgs looking up from the papyrus that he was reading (I gathered later that he had spent the afternoon in unrolling a mummy, and was studying its features), and caught sight of me standing in the shadow.

“Who do you claim to be?” exclaimed the Professor in a shrill and strident voice, for it acquires that quality when he is angry or alarmed. “And what, I might add, are you doing in my drawing room?”

“Steady,” said his companion; “your housekeeper told you that some friend of yours had come to call.”

“Oh, yes, so she did, only I can’t remember any friend with a face and beard like a goat. Advance, my mysterious and long-lost friend, so I can see you in a better light.”

So I stepped into the shining circle of the electric light and halted again.

“Well I’ll be,” muttered Higgs. “The face is somewhat familiar, the face of—of—I have it—of old Adams. Yet he’s been dead these ten years. The Khalifa got him, they said. By heavens, if you don’t appear to be an antique version of the long-lost Adams. Please be so good as to tell me your name, for we waste time over a useless mystery.”

“There is no need telling you a third time, Higgs, since it is in your mouth already.”

“Well, I should have known you anywhere,” said the astonished host, “but then ...your hair was not nearly so white when we last met.”

“I must admit, the years have taken their toll. But don’t be fooled, for there is still a great deal of youthful vigor left in me; one of the many benefits of a sanguine disposition.”

“Well, Adams, I am really delighted to see you, especially as you never answered the questions I sent you in my last letter as to where you got those First Dynasty scarabs, of which the genuineness, I may tell you, has been disputed by certain envious scholars. Adams, my dear old fellow, welcome a thousand times.”

He seized my hands and wrung them, adding, as his eye fell upon a ring I wore, "Why, what's that? Something quite unusual it would seem. But never mind; you shall tell me after dinner. Let me introduce you to my friend, Captain Orme, a very decent scholar of Arabic, with a quite elementary knowledge of Egyptology."

"The name's Mr. Orme," interjected the younger man, bowing to me.

"Oh, yes, yes," interrupted Higgs, "you beat me to the explanation of this Mr. or Captain business. Please call him whichever you like. My friend is not in the regular army, although he has been all through the Boer War, and wounded three times, once straight through the lungs. Well, it appears that the soup has finally arrived. Mrs. Reid, lay another place. I am dreadfully hungry; nothing gives me such an appetite as unrolling mummies; it involves so much intellectual wear and tear, in addition to the physical labor. We will talk afterwards."

So we ate, Higgs largely, for his appetite was always excellent (perhaps because he was then practically a teetotaler) while, Mr. Orme and I, indulged rather moderately. During my wilderness wanderings in the desert countries of Africa, I had become accustomed to living for months at a time on dates and assorted vegetables, which, with fruits, formed my principal diet. If, in a pinch, these foods were not available, then I discovered that I could exist on almost anything.

When the meal was finished and our glasses had been filled with port, Higgs helped himself to water. He then lit the large meerschaum pipe that was his constant companion, and pushed round a tobacco jar that had once served as a sepulchral urn for the heart of an old Egyptian, and motioned for us to partake.

"Now, Adams," he said when we also had filled our pipes, "tell us what has brought you back from the Shades. In short, your story, man, your story."

I drew the ring he had noticed off my hand, a thick band of rather light-colored gold of a size such as an ordinary woman might wear upon her first or second finger, in which was set

a splendid slab of sapphire engraved with curious and archaic characters. Pointing to these characters, I asked Higgs if he could read them.

"Read them? Of course," he answered, producing a magnifying glass. "Can't you? No, I remember; you never were good at anything more than fifty years old. Well, well! This appears to be early Hebrew. Ah! I've got it," and he read:

"The gift of Solomon the ruler—no, the Great One—of Israel, Beloved of Jah, to Maqueda of Sheba-land, Queen, Daughter of Kings, Child of Wisdom, Beautiful."

"That's the writing on your ring, Adams--a really magnificent thing. 'Queen of Sheba—Bath-Melachim, Daughter of Kings,' with our old friend Solomon chucked in. Splendid, quite splendid!"—and he touched the gold with his tongue, and tested it with his teeth. "Hum—where did you get this intelligent fraud from, Adams?"

"Oh!" I answered, laughing, "the usual thing, of course. I bought it from a donkey-boy in Cairo for about thirty shillings."

"Indeed," he replied suspiciously. "I should have thought the stone in it was worth more than that, although, of course, it may be nothing but glass. The engraving, too, is first-rate. Adams," he added with severity, "you are trying to hoax us, but let me tell you what I thought you knew by this time—that you can't take in Ptolemy Higgs. This ring is a shameless swindle; but who did the Hebrew on it? He's a good scholar, anyway."

"Don't know," I answered; "wasn't aware till now that it was Hebrew. To tell you the truth, I thought it was ancient Egyptian. All I do know is that it was given, or rather lent, to me by a lady whose title is Walda Nagasta, and who is supposed to be a descendant of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba."

Higgs took up the ring and looked at it again; then, as though in a fit of abstraction, slipped it into his waistcoat pocket.

"I don't want to be rude, therefore I will not contradict you," he answered with a kind of groan, "or, indeed, say any-

thing except that if any one else had spun me that yarn I should have told him he was a common liar. But, of course, as every schoolboy knows, Walda Nagasta—that is, Child of Kings in Ethiopic—is much the same as Bath-Melachim—that is, Daughter of Kings in Hebrew.”

A moment later Captain Orme burst out laughing, and remarked, “It is easy to see why you are not altogether popular in the antiquarian world, Higgs. Your methods of discourse and investigation are those of a savage with a stone axe.”

“If you only open your mouth to show your ignorance, Oliver, you had better keep it shut. The men who carried stone axes had advanced far beyond the state of savagery. But I suggest that we had better give Doctor Adams a chance of telling his full story, after which you may criticize my methods if you like.”

“Perhaps Captain Orme does not wish to be bored with it,” I said, whereon he answered at once:

“On the contrary, I should like to hear it very much—that is, if you are willing to confide in me as well as in Higgs.”

I reflected a moment, since, to tell the truth, for various reasons, my intention had been to trust no one except the Professor, whom I knew to be as faithful as he is rough. Yet some instinct prompted me to make an exception in favor of this Captain Orme. I liked the man; there was something about the way that he carried himself that appealed to me. Also it struck me as odd that he should happen to be present on this occasion, for I have always held that there is nothing casual or accidental in the world; that even the most trivial circumstances are ordained by the unseen hand of an omniscient creator God.

“Certainly I am willing,” I answered; “your face and your friendship with the Professor are passport enough for me. Only I must ask you to give me your word of honor that without my leave you will repeat nothing of what I am about to tell you.”

“Of course,” he answered, whereon Higgs broke in:

“There, that will do; you don’t want us both to kiss the Book, do you? Who sold you that ring, and where have you

been for the last dozen years? Tell us, also, why do you come now?"

"I have been a prisoner of the Khalifas among other things. I had five years of that entertainment of which my back would give some evidence if I were to strip. I think I am one of the few men who never embraced Islam whom they allowed to live; and that was because I am a doctor, and, therefore, a useful person. The rest of the time I have spent wandering about the North African deserts looking for my son, Roderick. You remember the boy, or should, for you are his godfather. I used to send you photographs of him as a little chap."

"Of course, of course," said the Professor in a new tone; "I came across a Christmas letter from him the other day. But, my dear Adams, what happened to him? I never heard."

"When my son was nearly twelve years old, he went up the river to shoot crocodiles against my orders, not very long after his mother's death. It was during this trip that some wandering Mahdi tribesmen kidnapped him and sold him as a slave. I have been looking for him ever since, for the poor boy was passed on from tribe to tribe, among which his skill as a musician enabled me to follow him. The Arabs call him the Singer of Egypt, because of his wonderful voice, and it seems that he has learned to play their native instruments."

"And now where is he?" asked Higgs, as one who feared the answer.

"He is, or was, a favorite slave among a barbarous, half-negroid people called the Fung, who dwell in the far interior of North Central Africa. After the fall of the Khalifa I followed him there; although it took me years to track down his precise whereabouts. Some Bedouin tribesmen were making an expedition to trade with these Fung, and I disguised myself as one of them.

"On a certain night we camped at the foot of a valley outside a great wall which encloses the holy place where their idol is. I rode up to this wall and, through the open gateway, heard some one with a beautiful tenor voice singing in English. What he sang was a hymn that I had taught my son. It begins:

*'Abide with me, fast falls the eventide;  
the darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!'*

"The voice that I heard sounded somewhat familiar. I soon dismounted and slipped through the gateway, and presently came to an open space, where a young man sat singing before a large audience upon a sort of raised bench with lamps on either side of him. I saw his face and, notwithstanding the turban that he wore and his Eastern robe—yes, and the passage of all those years—I knew it for that of my son. Some spirit of madness entered into me, and I called aloud, 'Roderick, Roderick!' and he looked up, staring about him wildly. The audience looked up also, and one of them caught sight of me lurking in the shadow.

"With a howl of rage, for my presence had desecrated their sanctuary, they sprang at me. To save my life, coward that I was, I fled back through the gates. Yes, after all those years of seeking, still I fled rather than die. Though I was wounded with a spear and stones, I managed to reach my horse. Then, in the interest of self-preservation, I galloped away to save my miserable life from those savages. As soon as I had reached a safe distance, I looked back and saw by the light of the fired tents that the Fung were attacking the Arabs with whom I had traveled. It was likely that they regarded these men to be parties to the sacrilege. Afterwards I heard that they killed every one of those poor men; but I escaped, who unwittingly had brought this evil upon them.

"On and on I galloped up a steep road. A short time later, I began to hear lions roaring round me in the darkness as I approached the outskirts of a remote village. I remember one of them springing upon my horse and the poor beast's scream. Then I remember no more till I found myself, I believe it was four days later, lying on the verandah of a large sturdy hut being attended by a flock of incompetent but friendly nurses."

"Sounds like these people would hardly qualify as one of the lost tribes of Israel," remarked Higgs sarcastically, puffing on his big meerschaum.

"Yes, well, I warned you that my story would be difficult

to follow. The details I will give you later. The main facts are that the people who picked me up outside their gates that next morning are called Abati. They live in a town called Mur, and allege themselves to be descended from a tribe of Abyssinian Jews who migrated to this place four or five centuries ago. These people practice a very debased form of the Jewish religion, are civilized and clever after a fashion, but in the last stage of decadence from interbreeding. Their total fighting force is about nine thousand men, although three or four generations ago they had twenty thousand. They live in hourly terror of extermination by the surrounding Fung, who hold them in hereditary hate as the possessors of the wonderful mountain fortress that once belonged to their forefathers."

"Your story does have some ultimate meaning, does it not?" questioned Orme.

"Yes, dear man, kindly bring us to the conclusion of your story," added the Professor.

"Patience gentlemen, if you please. I tried to persuade these Abati to organize an expedition to rescue my son, but they laughed in my face. By degrees I found out that there was only one leader among them who was worth anything at all, and she happened to be their hereditary ruler who bore the high-sounding titles of Walda Nagasta, or Child of Kings, and Takla Warda, or Bud of the Rose. She was a very beautiful and spirited young woman, whose personal name is Maqueda...."

"One of the names of the first known Queens of Sheba," muttered Higgs; "the other was Belchis."

"Under pretence of attending her medically, I went to see her, for otherwise their wretched etiquette would scarcely have allowed me access to one so exalted. I talked things over with her. She told me that the idol of the Fung is fashioned like a huge sphinx, or so I gathered from her description of the thing, for I have never seen it."

"What!" exclaimed Higgs, jumping up, "a sphinx in North Central Africa! Well, after all, why not? Some of the earlier Pharaohs are said to have had dealings with that part of the world, or even to have migrated from it. I think that the

Makreezi repeats the legend. I would suppose that this figure is ram-headed."

"She told me also," I continued, "that they have a tradition, or rather a belief, which amounts to an article of faith, that if this sacred idol, which, by the way, is lion, not ram-headed, and is called Harmac...."

"Harmac!" interrupted Higgs again. "That is one of the names of the sphinx--Harmachis, god of dawn."

"If this so-called god," I repeated, "should be destroyed, the nation of the Fung, whose forefathers fashioned it, would move away from that country across the great river which lies to the south. I have forgotten its name at the moment, but I think it must be a branch of the Nile.

"I suggested to her that, under the circumstances, her people had better try to destroy the idol. Maqueda laughed and said it was impossible, since the thing was the size of a small mountain. She also remarked that the Abati had long ago lost all courage and enterprise, and were content to sit in their fertile and mountain-ringed land, feeding themselves with tales of departed grandeur and struggling for rank and high-sounding titles, till the day of doom overtakes them.

"I inquired whether she were also content, and she replied, 'Certainly not'; but what could she do to regenerate her people, she who was nothing but a woman, and the last of an endless line of rulers?

"'Rid me of the Fung,' she added passionately, 'and I will give you such a reward as you never dreamed. The old cave-city yonder is full of treasure that was buried with its ancient kings long before we came to Mur. To us it is useless, since we have none to trade with, but I have heard that the peoples of the outside world worship gold.'

"'I do not want gold,' I answered; 'I want to rescue my son who is a prisoner of the Fung people.'

"'Then,' said the Child of Kings, 'you must begin by helping us to destroy the idol of the Fung. Are there no means by which this can be done?'

"'There are means,' I replied. I then tried to explain to

her the properties of dynamite and of other more powerful explosives.

"Go to your own land,' she exclaimed eagerly, 'and return with that stuff and two or three who can manage it, and I swear to them all the wealth of Mur. Thus only can you win my help to save your son.'"

"Well, how does your story end?" asked Captain Orme.

"They gave me some gold and an escort with camels which were literally lowered down a secret path in the mountains so as to avoid the Fung, who ring them in and of whom they are terribly afraid. With these people I crossed the desert to Assouan in safety, a journey of many weeks. I left them encamped at this place nearly thirty days ago, bidding them await my return. I arrived in England this morning, and as soon as I could ascertain that you still lived, I began to seek out your address. Some helpful chaps at the hotel where I was staying gave me your location, and I came here directly."

"I think I know why you came to me, but what is it that you want me to do?" asked the Professor.

"I came to you, Higgs, because I know how deeply you are interested in ancient artifacts. I also wished to give you the first opportunity, not only of winning wealth, but also of becoming famous as the discoverer of the most wonderful relics of antiquity that are left in the world."

"With a very good chance of getting my throat cut in the process," grumbled Higgs.

"As to what I want you to do," I went on, "I also need you to help me find someone who understands explosives. Someone with the courage and will to undertake the business of blowing up the Fung idol."

"Well, that's easy enough, anyhow," said the Professor, pointing to Captain Orme with the bowl of his pipe. He then added, "the Captain is an engineer by education, a soldier and a very fair chemist; also he knows Arabic and was brought up in Egypt as a boy—just the man for the job if he will go."

I reflected a moment, then, obeying some sort of inner prompting, looked up and asked: "Will you join me in this

venture, Captain Orme, if terms can be arranged?"

"Yesterday," he replied, coloring a little, "I should have answered, 'Certainly not.' Today I answer that I am prepared to consider the matter—that is, if Higgs will go too, and you can enlighten me on certain points. But I warn you that I am only an amateur in the three trades that the Professor has mentioned, though, it is true, one with some experience."

"Would it be rude to inquire, Captain Orme, why twenty-four hours have made such a difference in your views and plans?"

"Not rude, only awkward," he replied, coloring again, this time more deeply. "Still, as it is best to be frank, I will tell you. Yesterday I believed myself to be the inheritor of a very large fortune from an uncle whose fatal illness brought me back from South Africa before I meant to come. Today I have learned for the first time that he married secretly, last year, a woman much below him in rank, and has left a child, who, of course, will take all his property, as he died intestate. But that is not all. Yesterday I believed myself to be engaged to be married; today I am undeceived upon that point also. The lady," he added with some bitterness, "who was willing to marry Anthony Orme's heir is no longer willing to marry Oliver Orme, whose total possessions amount to under £10,000. Well, small blame to her or to her relations, whichever it may be, especially as I understand that she has a better alliance in view. Certainly her decision has simplified matters," and he rose and walked to the other end of the room.

"Shocking business," whispered Higgs; "been poorly treated," and he proceeded to express his opinion of the lady concerned, of her relatives, and of the late Anthony Orme, ship owner, in language that, if printed, would render this history unfit for family reading.

"What I do not exactly understand, Adams," he added in a loud voice, seeing that Orme had turned again, "and what I think we should both like to know, is *your* exact object in making these proposals."

"I am afraid I have explained myself badly. I thought I had

made it clear that I have only one object—to attempt the rescue of my son, if he still lives, as I believe he does. Higgs, put yourself in my position. Imagine yourself with nothing, and no one left to care for except a single child; and that child is suddenly stolen away from you by savages. Imagine yourself, after years of searching, hearing his very voice, seeing his very face, adult now, but no less precious. Then, just when you are about to realize the dream of being reunited with him, your plans fall prey to a fanatical mob, and to a breakdown of your courage. Lastly, imagine having to live with this regret and the knowledge of your cowardice, while dwelling within a few miles of the son whom you had deserted.”

“Well,” grunted Higgs, “I don’t need a great deal of insight to see that you are now a man who is driven by guilt and depression. What of it? If you mean that you are to blame for your son’s lot; I don’t agree with you. You wouldn’t have helped your son by getting your own throat cut, and perhaps his also.”

“I don’t know,” I answered. “I have brooded over the thing so long that it seems to me that I have disgraced myself. Well, there came a chance, and I took it. This lady, Walda Nagasta, or Maqueda, who, I think, had also brooded over things, made me an offer—I fancy without the knowledge or consent of her Council. ‘Help me,’ she said, ‘and I will help you. Save my people, and I will try to save your son. I can pay for your services and those of any whom you may bring with you.’

“I answered that it was hopeless, as no one would believe the tale. She then drew from her finger the throne-ring or state signet that you have in your pocket, Higgs, saying: ‘My mothers have worn this since the days of Maqueda, Queen of Sheba. If there are learned men among your people they will read her name upon it and know that I speak no lie. Take it as a token, and take also enough of our gold to buy the stuffs whereof you speak, which hide fires that can throw mountains skyward. Purchase also the services of skilled and trusty men who are masters of the stuff, two or three of them only, for more cannot be transported across the desert, and come back to save

your son and me.' That's all the story, Higgs. Will you take the business on, or shall I try elsewhere? You must make up your mind, because I have no time to lose, if I am to get into Mur again before the rains."

"Got any of that gold you spoke of in your possession?" asked the Professor.

I drew a skin bag from the pocket of my coat, and poured some of the coins out upon the table. The Professor, with a calm and collected manner, examined it carefully.

"Ring money," he said presently, "might be Anglo-Saxon, might be anything; date absolutely uncertain, but from its appearance I should say slightly alloyed with silver; yes, there is a bit which has oxidized—undoubtedly old, that."

Then he produced the signet from his pocket, and examined the ring and the stone very carefully through a powerful glass.

"Seems all right," he said, "and although I have been fooled in my time, I don't make many mistakes nowadays. What do you say, Adams? Must have it back? A sacred trust! Only lent to you! All right, take it by all means. I can live without the thing. Well, it is a risky job, and if any one else had proposed it to me, I'd have told him to go to—Mur. But, Adams, my boy, you saved my life once, and never pressed me for a bill, because I was hard up. I haven't forgotten that. Also, things are pretty hot for me here just now over a certain controversy which I suppose you haven't heard of in Central Africa. I think I'll go. What do you say, Oliver?"

"Oh!" said Captain Orme, waking up from a reverie, "if you are satisfied, I am. It matters little to me where I go, as long as it is forward."