

KING SOLOMON'S MINES

Henry Rider Haggard



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King Solomon's Mines
by Henry Rider Haggard

First published 1885

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Henry Rider Haggard was born on June 22nd, 1856 in the rural surroundings of Norfolk, England, as eighth of ten children to William Meybohm Rider Haggard, a barrister, and Ella Doveton, an author and poet. Haggard's professional life did not begin promising: he failed his army entrance exam, and when his father sent him to London to prepare for the entrance exam for the British Foreign Office, he never took it. Instead, in 1875 his father arranged for him to go to what is now South Africa, as assistant to Sir Henry Bulwer, Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Natal; in 1878 he became Registrar of the High Court in the Transvaal.

Haggard went to England in 1880, got married, and moved back to South Africa with his wife. After the defeat of the British in the First Boer War, which ended the British government of Transvaal, the couple returned to England by the end of 1881. The three years that Haggard had spent in Africa would provide the background for most of his literary work.

Back in England Haggard studied law and was called to the bar in 1884 in London, but he never practiced, for by then his main interest was in writing. In 1885 *King Solomon's Mines* was published, and became an immediate success, followed by the equally successful *She* in 1887. Haggard went on to write a total of 58 novels, among them the *Allan Quatermain* series as sequels to *King Solomon's Mines*, where this character had been introduced, and the sequel to *She*, *Ayesha*, but he also wrote non-fiction books about Africa, farming, and agricultural and social reform. With these matters he also actively concerned him-

self, becoming a member of many commissions on land use and related affairs, which took him on several trips to the Colonies and Dominions. In 1912 he was made Knight Bachelor and in 1919 Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire as a reward for his humanitarian endeavors and dedicated public service. On May 14th, 1925 Sir Henry Rider Haggard died in a London nursing home.

Haggard was politically conservative and a staunch supporter of colonialism, but this did not keep him from portraying native African populations with sympathy, and often giving Africans heroic roles in his novels.

The influence of Haggard's adventure tales and the "lost worlds" genre that he shaped is widespread and unbroken — it can be seen in the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert E. Howard and many others, and also, of course, in many movies — the *Indiana Jones* series, for instance — and his books will surely, directly and indirectly, continue to inspire future writers and filmmakers. Both Allan Quatermain and She, however, deserve to be enjoyed by the reader in their original form, in Henry Rider Haggard's own distinctive words.

ABOUT THIS EDITION

For this e-book edition, a few modifications have been made to the original spelling: from *to-day*, *to-night* and *to-morrow* the hyphens have been eliminated; *æ* and *æ* ligatures in words such as *æons* or *Phœnician* have been resolved.

There exist two versions of this book, which, throughout the text, slightly differ from each other in their wording — as far as I can tell, the version from which the present edition's text was taken is the original one.

As an example of the discrepancies between the two versions, here is a short passage from the first chapter, with the present edition's text coming first:

Among the passengers who came on board there were two who excited my curiosity. One, a man of about thirty, was one of the biggest-chested and longest-armed men I ever saw. He had yellow hair, a big yellow beard, clear-cut features, and large gray eyes set deep into his head.

Among these passengers who came on board were two who excited my curiosity. One, a gentleman of about thirty, was perhaps the biggest-chested and longest-armed man I ever saw. He had yellow hair, a thick yellow beard, clear-cut features, and large grey eyes set deep in his head.

In chapter 11 the two versions differ more pronouncedly: the present version is set at daytime, and features an eclipse of the sun, while

the other version is set at night, the eclipse being that of the moon. The interested reader will find the “eclipse of the moon” version of chapter 11 as an appendix at the end of this book.

The footnotes signed “Editor” are, of course, part of Haggard’s text.

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INTRODUCTION

Now that this book is printed, and about to be given to the world, the sense of its shortcomings, both in style and contents, weighs very heavily upon me. As regards to 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 which I should have liked to dwell upon at length, and which have, as it is, been scarcely alluded to. Amongst these are the curious legends which I collected about the chain armour 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 profitably have been given up to the consideration of the indigenous flora and fauna of Kukuaneland.¹ Then there remains the most interesting subject — that, as it is, has only been incidentally alluded to — of the magnificent system of military organisation in force in that country, which is, in my opinion, much superior to that inaugurated by Chaka in Zululand, inasmuch as it permits of even more rapid mobilization and does not necessitate the employment of the pernicious system of enforced celibacy. And, lastly, I have scarcely touched on the domestic and family customs of the Kukuanas, many of which are exceedingly quaint, or on their profi-

¹ I discovered eight varieties of antelope with which I was previously totally unacquainted, and many new species of plants, for the most part of the bulbous tribe. — A.Q.

ciency in the art of smelting and welding metals. This last 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 knives being made of hammered iron, and the edges of beautiful steel welded with great skill on to the iron backs. The fact of the matter is that I thought (and so did Sir Henry Curtis and Captain Good) that the best plan would be to tell the story in a plain, straightforward manner, and leave these matters to be dealt with subsequently in whatever way may ultimately appear to be desirable. In the meanwhile I shall, of course, be delighted to give any information in my power to anybody interested in such things.

And now it only remains for me to offer my apologies for my blunt way of writing. I can only say in excuse for it that I am more accustomed to handle a rifle than a pen, and cannot make any pretence to the grand literary flights and flourishes which I see in novels — for I sometimes 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 books are easier to understand when they are written in plain language, though I have perhaps 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 fine words.

Allan Quatermain.

1.

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 and write a history. I wonder what sort of a history it will be when I have done it, if I ever 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 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 pile. It is a big pile now I have got it — I don't yet know how big — but I don't 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, pile and all. But then, I am a timid man, and don't like violence, and am pretty 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 and set down my reasons, just to see if I have any.

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

Second reason: Because I am laid up here at Durban with the pain and trouble in my left leg. Ever since that confounded lion got hold of me I have been liable to it, and its being rather bad just now 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 that when one has shot sixty-five lions, as I have in the course of my life, that the sixty-sixth should chew your leg like a quid of tobacco. It breaks the routine of the thing, and, putting other considerations aside, I am an orderly man and don't like that. This is by the way.

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 pall and get rather dull, for even of cutting-up dead bodies there must come satiety, and as this history won't be dull, whatever else it may be, it may put a little life into things for a day or two while he is reading it.

Fourth reason and last: Because I am going to tell the strangest story that I know of. It may seem a queer thing to say that, especially considering that there is no woman in it except Foulata. Stop, though! there is Gagaoola, if she was a woman and not a fiend. But she was a hundred at least, and therefore not marriageable, 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 had better come to the yoke. It's a stiff place, and I feel as though I were bogged up to the axle. But "sutjes, sutjes," as the Boers say (I'm sure I don't know how they spell it), softly does it. A strong team will come through at last, that is if they ain't too poor. You will never do anything with poor oxen. Now, to begin.

I, Allan Quatermain, of Durban, Natal, Gentleman, make oath and say — That's how I began my deposition before the magistrate about poor Khiva's and Ventvögel's sad deaths; but somehow it doesn't seem quite the right way to begin a book. And, besides, am I a gentleman? What is a gentleman? I don't quite know, and yet I have had to do

with niggers – no, I’ll scratch that word “niggers” out, for I don’t like it. I’ve known natives who *are*, and so you’ll say, Harry, my boy, before you’re done with this tale, and I have known mean whites with lots of money and fresh out from home, too, who *ain’t*. Well, at any rate I was born a gentleman, though I’ve 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’ve killed many men in my time, but I have never slain wantonly or stained my hand in innocent blood, only in self-defence. The Almighty gave us our lives, and I suppose He meant us to defend them; at least I have always acted on that, and I hope it won’t be brought up against me when my clock strikes. There, there; it is a cruel and a wicked world, and, for a timid man, I have been mixed up in a deal of slaughter. I can’t tell the rights of it, but at any rate I have never stolen, though I once cheated a Kaffir out of a herd of cattle. But then, he had done me a dirty turn, and it has troubled me ever since into the bargain.

Well, it’s eighteen months or so ago since I first met Sir Henry Curtis and Captain Good, and it was in this way. I had been up elephant hunting beyond Bamangwato, and had had bad luck. Everything went wrong that trip, and to top up with 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, and also my wagon and oxen, discharged my hunters, and took the post-cart 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 on back to Natal by the *Dunkeld*, then lying in the docks waiting for the *Edinburgh Castle* due

in from England. I took my berth and went aboard, and that afternoon the Natal passengers from the *Edinburgh Castle* transhipped, and we weighed anchor and put out to sea.

Among the passengers who came on board there were two who excited my curiosity. One, a man of about thirty, was one of the biggest-chested and longest-armed men I ever saw. He had yellow hair, a big yellow beard, clear-cut features, and large gray eyes set deep into 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 remember a modern Dane who did me out of ten pounds; but I 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, and as I looked at my friend standing there by the companion-ladder, I thought that if one only let his hair grow a bit, put one of those chain shirts on to those great shoulders of his, and gave him a big 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 the blood will show out, I found out afterwards that Sir Henry Curtis, for that was the big man's name, was of Danish blood.² 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 short, 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

² Mr. Quatermain's ideas about ancient Danes seem to be rather confused; we have always understood that they were dark-haired people. Probably he was thinking of Saxons. — *Editor*.

of my life, and they have always been just the best and bravest and nicest fellows I ever met, though given to the use of profane language.

I asked, a page or two back, what is a gentleman? I'll answer it now: a royal naval officer is, in a general sort of a way, though, of course, there may be a black sheep among them here and there. I fancy it is just the wide sea and the breath of God's winds that washes their hearts and blows the bitterness out of their minds and makes them what men ought to be. Well, to return, I was right again; I found out that he *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 it was impossible that he should be promoted. 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 get to the prime of life. Well, I suppose they don't mind it, but for my part I had rather earn my bread as a hunter. One's half-pence are as scarce, perhaps, but you don't get so many kicks. His 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 at. He was so very neat and so very 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 I afterwards found that this was a mistake. He put it in his trousers pocket when he went to bed, together with his false teeth, of which he had two beautiful sets that have often, my own being none of the best, caused me to break the tenth Commandment. But I am anticipating.

Soon after we had got under way evening closed in, and brought with it very dirty weather. A keen breeze sprang up off land, and a kind

of aggravated Scotch mist soon drove everybody from the deck. And as for that *Dunkeld*, she is a flat-bottomed punt, 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 backward and forward as the vessel rolled, and marking the angle she touched at each lurch.

“That pendulum’s wrong; it is not properly weighted,” suddenly said a voice at my shoulder, somewhat testily. Looking round I saw the naval officer 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 always are 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 gets on to that subject. I only know one worse thing, and that is to hear a merchant skipper express his candid opinion of 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 sat together, and I sat opposite to them. The captain and I soon got into talk about shooting and what not, he asking me many questions, and I answering as well as I could. Presently he got on to elephants.

“Ah, sir,” called out somebody who was sitting near me, “you’ve got

to the right man for that; Hunter Quatermain should be able to tell you about elephants if anybody can.”

Sir Henry, who had been sitting quite quiet listening to our talk, started visibly.

“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 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 saloon Sir Henry came up and asked me if I would come into his cabin and smoke a pipe. I accepted, and he led the way to the *Dunkeld* deck cabin, and a very good cabin it was. It had been two cabins, but when Sir Garnet, or one of those big swells, went down the coast in the *Dunkeld* they had knocked away the partition and never 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 whiskey, and the three of us sat down and lit our pipes.

“Mr. Quatermain,” said Sir Henry Curtis, when the steward had brought the whiskey 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 and 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 outspanned 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 in the beginning of May, in a wagon, with a driver, a voorlooper, and a Kaffir hunter called Jim, announcing 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 the white man, with a native servant, had started off for the interior on a shooting trip, he believed.”

“Yes.”

Then came a pause.

“Mr. Quatermain,” said Sir Henry, suddenly, “I suppose you know or can guess nothing more of the reasons of my — of Mr. Neville’s journey to the northward, or as to what point that journey was directed?”

“I heard something,” I answered, and stopped. The subject was one which I did not dare to discuss.

End of sample

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