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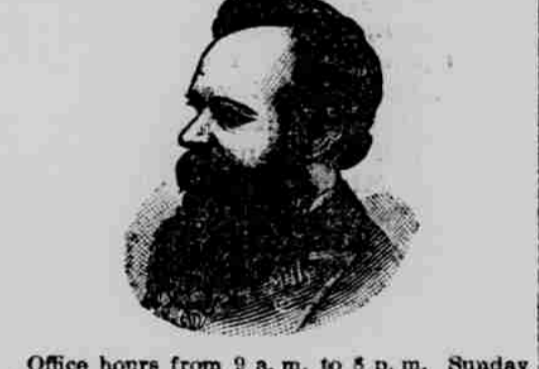
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KING Solomon's Mines.

BY H. RIDER HAGGARD.

At last, one beautiful evening in January, which is our hottest month, we steamed along the coast of Natal, expecting to make Durban Point by sunset. It was a lovely coast all along from East London, with its red sandhills and wide sweeps of vivid green, dotted here and there with Kafir kraals, and bordered by a ribbon of white surf, which spouts up in pillars of foam where it hits the rocks. But just before you get to Durban there is a peculiar richness about it. There are the deep kloofs cut in the hills by the rushing rains of centuries, down which the rivers sparkle; there is the deepest green of the bush, growing as God planted it, and the other greens of the meads and gardens and the sugar patches, white here and there a white house, smiling out on the placid sea, puts a finish and gives an air of homeliness to the scene. For to my mind however beautiful a view may be, it requires the presence of man to make it complete, but perhaps that is because I have lived so much in the wilderness, and therefore know the value of civilization, though to be sure it drives away the game. The Garden of Eden, no doubt, was fair before man was, but I always think it must have been fairer when Eve was walking about it. But we had miscalculated a little, and the sun was well down before we dropped anchor off the Point, and heard the gun which told the good folk that the English mail was in. It was too late to think of getting over the bar that night, so we went down comfortable to dinner, after seeing the mails carried off in the lifeboat.

When we came up again the moon was up, and shined so brightly over the sea and shore that she almost paled the quick, large flashes from the lighthouse. From the shore floated sweet spicy odors that always remind me of hymns and missionaries, and in the windows of the houses on the Bona-Bona a hundred lights. From a large brig lying near came the music of the sailors as they worked at getting the anchor up to be ready for the wind. Altogether it was a perfect night, such a night as you only get in Southern Africa, and it threw a garment of peace over every body as the moon came a garment of silver over everything. Even the great builded, belonging to a sporting passenger, seemed to yield to the gentle influence, and giving up yearning to come to close quarters with the baloon in the cage on the fo'c'sle, snored happily in the door of the cabin, dreaming no doubt that he had finished him, and happy in his dream.

We all, that is, Sir Henry Curtis, Captain Good, and myself—went and sat at the wheel, and were quiet for awhile.
"Well, Mr. Quatermain," said Sir Henry, presently, "have you been thinking about my proposals?"
"Ay," echoed Captain Good, "what do you think of them, Mr. Quatermain? I hope you are going to give us the pleasure of your company as far as Solomon's Mines, or wherever the gentleman you knew as Neville may have gone to."

I rose and knocked out my pipe before I answered. I had not made up my mind, and wanted the additional moment to complete it. Before the burning tobacco had fallen into the sea it was completed; just that little extra second did the trick. It is often the way when you have been bothering a long time over a thing.

"Yes, gentlemen," I said, sitting down again, "I will go, and by your leave I will tell you why and on what terms. First for the terms which I ask."

"1. You are to pay all expenses, and any ivory or other valuables we may get is to be divided between Captain Good and myself."
"2. That you pay me £500 for my services on the trip before we start, I undertaking to serve you faithfully till you choose to abandon the enterprise, or till we succeed, or disaster overtakes us."

"3. That before we start you execute a deed agreeing, in the event of my death or disablement to pay my boy Harry, who is studying medicine over there in London at Guy's Hospital, a sum of £300 a year for five years, by which time he ought to be able to earn a living for himself. That is all I think, and I dare say you will say quite enough too."

"No," answered Sir Henry, "I accept them gladly. I am bent upon this project, and would pay more than that for your help, especially considering the peculiar knowledge you possess."
"Very well. And now that I have made my terms I will tell you my reasons for making up my mind to go. First of all, gentlemen, I have been observing you both for at least a few days, and if you will not think me impudent, I will say that I like you, and think that we shall come up well to the yoke together. That is something, let me tell you, when one has a long journey like this before one."

"And now as to the journey itself, I tell you flatly, Sir Henry and Captain Good, that I do not think it probable that we can come out of it alive, that is, if we attempt to cross the Sulliman Mountains. What was the fate of the old Don da Silveira three hundred years ago? What was the fate of his descendant twenty years ago? What has been your brother's fate? I tell you frankly, gentlemen, that as their fate was so I believe ours will be."

"I pause to watch the effect of my words, Captain Good looked a little uncomfortable; but Sir Henry's face did not change. "We must take our chances," he said.
"You may perhaps wonder, why, if I think this, who am, as I told you, a timid man, should undertake such a journey. It is for two reasons: First, I am a fatalist, and believe that my time is appointed to come quite independently of my own movements, and that if I am to go to Sulliman's Mountains to be killed, I shall go there and shall be killed there. God Almighty, no doubt, knows his mind about me, so I need not trouble on that point. Secondly, I am a poor man. For nearly forty years I have hunted and traded, but I have never made more than a living. Well, gentlemen, I don't know if you are aware that the average life of an elephant-hunter from the time he takes to the trade is from four to five years. So you see I have lived through about seven generations of my class, and I should think that my time cannot be far off anyway. Now, if anything were to happen to me in the ordinary course of business, by the time my debts were paid there would be nothing left to support my son Harry whilst he was getting in the way of earning a living, whereas now he would be provided for for five years. There is the whole affair in a nutshell."

"Mr. Quatermain," said Sir Henry, who had been giving me the most serious attention, "your motives for undertaking an enterprise which you believe can only end in disaster reflect a great deal of credit on you. Whether or not you are right, time and the event of course alone can show. But whether you are right or wrong, I may as well tell you at once that I am going through with it to the end, sweet or bitter. If we are going to be knocked on the head, all I have to say

is that I hope we shall get a little shooting first—eh, Good?"
"Yes, yes," put in the captain. "We have all three of us been accustomed to face danger, and hold our lives in our hands in various ways, so it is no good turning back now."
"And now I vote we go down to the saloon and take an observation, just for luck, you know." And we did—through the bottom of a tumbler.

Next day we went ashore, and I put Sir Henry and Captain Good up at the little slatly I have on the B. sea, and which I call my home. There are only three rooms and a kitchen in it, and it is built of green brick with a galvanized iron roof, but there is a good garden with the best loguit trees in it that I know, and some nice young mangoes, of which I hope great things. The curator of the botanical gardens gave them to me. It is looked after by an old hunter of mine, named Jack, whose thigh was so badly broken by a buffalo cow in Sikkunis country, that he will never hunt again. But he can potter about and garden, being a Griqua by birth. You can never get your Zulu to take much interest in gardening. It is a peaceful art, and peaceful arts are not in his line.

Sir Henry and Good slept in a tent pitched in my little grove of orange-trees at the end of the garden (for there was no room for them in the house) and what with the smell of the bloom and the sight of the green and golden fruit—for in Durban you will see all three on the tree together—I dare say it is a pleasant place enough (for we have few mosquitoes here unless it happens to come an unusually heavy rain).

Well, to get on—unless I do you will be tired of my story before we reach up at Sulliman's Mountains—having once made up my mind to go I set about making the necessary preparations. First I got the deed from Sir Henry, providing for my boy in case of accident. There was some little difficulty about getting this legally executed, as Sir Henry was a stranger here, and the property to be charged was over the water, but it was ultimately got over with the help of a lawyer, who charged £20 for the job—a price that I thought outrageous. Then I got my cheque for £500. Having paid this tribute to my hump of caution, I bought a wagon and a span of oxen on Sir Henry's behalf; and besides they were, it was a twenty-two-foot wagon, with iron axles, very strong, very light, and built throughout of stink-wood. It was not quite a new one, having been to the Diamond Fields and back, but in my opinion it was all the better for that, for one could see that the wood was well seasoned. If anything is going to give in a wagon, or if there is green wood in it, it will show out on the first trip. It was what we call a "half-tent" wagon, that is to say, it was only covered in over the after twelve feet, leaving all the front port free for the necessities we had to carry with us. In this after-part was a hide "cart" or bed, on which two people could sleep, also racks for rifles, and many other little conveniences. I gave £125 for it, and think it was cheap at that price. Then I bought a beautiful team of twenty salted Zulu oxen, which I had had my eye on for a year or two. Sixteen oxen are the usual number for a team, but I had four extra to allow for casualties. These Zulu oxen are small and light, not more than half the size of the African oxen, which are generally used for transport purposes; but they will live where the Africans will starve, and with a light load will make five miles a day better going, being quicker and not so liable to get footsore.

What is more, this lot were thoroughly "salted," that is, they had worked all over South Africa, and so had become proof (comparatively speaking) against red water, which so frequently destroys whole teams of oxen when they get on to "strange" (veld) (grass country). As for "lung sick," which is a dreadful form of pneumonia, very prevalent in this country, they had all been inoculated against it. This is done by cutting a slit in the tail of an ox, and binding in a piece of the diseased lung of an animal which has died of the sickness. The result is that the ox sickens, takes the disease in a mild form, which causes its tail to drop off, as a rule about a foot from the root, and becomes proof against future attacks. It seems cruel to rob the animal of his tail, especially in a country where there are so many flies, but it is better to sacrifice the tail and keep the ox than to lose both tail and ox, for a tail without an ox is not much good except to dust with. Still it does look odd to trek along behind twenty stumps, where there ought to be tails. It seems as though nature had made a trifling mistake, and stuck the stern ornaments of a lot of prize bulldozers on to the rumps of the oxen.

Next came the question of provisioning and medicines, one which required the most careful consideration, for what one had to do was to avoid lumbering the wagon up, and yet take everything absolutely necessary. Fortunately, it turned out that Good was a bit of a doctor, having at some period in his previous career managed to pass through a course of medical and surgical instructions, which he had more or less kept up. He was not, of course, qualified, but he knew more about it than many a man who could write M. D. after his name, as we found out afterward, and he had a splendid traveling medicine chest and a set of instruments. Whilst we were at Durban he sent off a Kafir's big toe in a way which it was a pleasure to see. But he was quite flabbergasted when the Kafir, who had sat stolidly watching the operation, asked him to put on another, saying that a "white one" would do at a pinch.

There remained, when these questions were satisfactorily settled, two further important points for consideration, namely, that of arms and that of servants. As to the arms I cannot do better than put down a list of those we finally decided on from among the armful store that Sir Henry had brought with him from England, and those which I had. I copy it from my pocket-book, where I made the entry at the time.

"Three heavy breech-loading double-eight elephant guns, weighing about fifteen pounds each, with a heavy charge of eleven drams of black powder." Two pounds of these were by a well-known London firm, most excellent makers, but I do not know by whom mine, which was not so highly finished, was made. I had used it on several trips, and shot a good many elephants with it, and it always proved a most superior weapon, thoroughly to be relied on.

"Three carbine five-hundred expressions, constructed to carry a charge of six drams, for use on elephants, and admirable for medium-sized game, such as eland and sable antelope, or for men, especially in an open country and with the semi-hollow bullet."

"One double No. 12 central-fire Keeper's shot-gun, full choke both barrels." This gun proved of the greatest service to us afterward in shooting game for the pot.

"Three Winchester repeating rifles (not carbines), spare guns."
"Three single-action Colt's revolvers with the heavier pattern of cartridge."

This was our total armament, and the list of each class of the cartridges was in a separate book, which I will not trouble you with. It will doubtless observe that the

no apology for detailing it at length, for every experienced hunter will know how vital a proper supply of guns and ammunition is to the success of an expedition.
Now, as to the men who were to go with us. After much consultation we decided that their number should be limited to five, namely, a driver, a leader, and three servants.

The driver and leader I got without much difficulty, two Zulus, named respectively G. Za and Tom, but the servants were a more difficult matter. It was necessary that they should be thoroughly trustworthy and brave men, as in a business of this sort our lives might depend upon their conduct. At last I secured two, one a Hottentot called Ventvogel (wind-bird), and one a little Zulu named Khiva, who had the merit of speaking English perfectly. Ventvogel I had known before; he was one of the most perfect "spoozers" (game-trackers) I ever had to do with, and tough as whipcord. He never seemed to tire. But he had one failing so common with his race, viz., that he could not swim. But as we were going beyond the region of grottoes, this little weakness of his did not so much matter.

Having got these two men, I looked in vain for a third to suit my purpose, so we determined to start without one, trusting to luck to find a suitable man on our way up-country. But on the evening before the day we had fixed for our departure the Zulu Khiva informed me that a man was waiting to see me. Accordingly, when we had done dinner, for we were at table at the time, I told him to bring him in. Presently a very tall, handsome-looking man, somewhere about thirty years of age, and very light-colored for a Zulu, entered, and, lifting his knob-stick by way of salute, squatted himself down in the corner on his haunches, and sat silent. I did not take any notice of him for awhile, for it is a great mistake to do so. If you rush into conversation at once a Zulu is apt to think you a person of little dignity or consideration. I observed, however, that he was a "Keshia" (ringed man), that is, that he wore on his head the black ring, made of a species of gum, polished with fat and worked in with the hair, usually assumed by Zulus on attaining a certain age or dignity. Also it struck me that his face was familiar to me.

"Well," I said at last, "what is your name?"
"Umbopa," answered the man in a slow, deep voice.
"I have seen your face before," "saw my face at the place of the Little Hand" (Sandilwana) "the day before the battle."
Then I remembered, I had seen one of Lord Chelmsford's guides in that unlucky Zulu war, and had had the good fortune to leave the camp in charge of some wagons the day before the battle. While I had been waiting for the cattle to be inspanned I had fallen into conversation with this man, who held some small command among the native auxiliaries, and he had expressed to me his doubts of the safety of the camp. At the time I told him to hold his tongue, and leave such matters to wiser heads; but afterward I thought of his words.

"I remember," I said, "what is it you want?"
"It is this, 'Macumazani' (that is my Kafir name, and means the man who gets up in the middle of the night, or in vulgar English, he who keeps his eyes open). I hear that you go on a great expedition far into the north with the white chiefs from over the water. Is it a true word?"
"It is."
"Hear that you even go to Lukanza River, a moon's journey beyond the Manica country. Is this so also, 'Macumazani'?"
"Why do you ask whether we go? What is it to thee?" I answered, suspiciously, for the objects of our journey had been kept a dead secret.

"It is this, O white men! that if indeed you travel so far I would travel with you."
There was a certain assumption of dignity in the man's mode of speech, and especially in his use of the words "O white men!" instead of "O Lokosis" (chiefs), which struck me.

"You forget yourself a little," I said. "Your words come out unwelcome. That is not the way to speak. What is your name, and where is your kraal? Tell us, that we may know with whom we have to deal."
"My name is Umbopa. I am of the Zulu people, yet not of them. The house of my tribe is in the far north; it was left behind when the Zulus came down here a thousand years ago, long before Chaka reigned in Zululand. I have no kraal. I have wandered for many years. I came from the north as a child to Zululand. I was Cetywayo's man in the Nkomabakosi Regiment. I ran away from Zululand and came to Natal because I wanted to see the white man's ways. Then I served against Cetywayo in the war. Since then I have been working in Natal. Now I am tired, and would go north again. Here is not my place. I want no money, but I am a brave man, and am worth my place and meat. I have spoken."

I was rather puzzled at this man and his way of speech. It was evident to me from his manner that he was in the main telling the truth, but he was somehow different from the ordinary run of Zulus, and I rather mistrusted his offer to come without pay. Being in a difficulty, I translated his words to Sir Henry and Good, and asked them their opinion. Sir Henry told me to ask him to stand up. Umbopa did so, at the same time slipping off the long military great coat he wore, and revealing himself naked except for the moncha round his center and a necklace of bones' claws. He certainly was a magnificent-looking man, I never saw a finer native. Standing about six feet three high, he was broad in proportion, and very sharply. His face light, but his skin looked severely more than dark, except here and there where deep black scars marked old assaigu wounds. Sir Henry walked up to him and looked into his proud handsome face.

"They make a good pair, don't they?" said Good; "one as big as the other."

"I like your looks, Mr. Umbopa, and I will take you as my servant."