

Allan Quatermain

By H. RIDER HAGGARD.

AUTHOR OF "KING SOLOMON'S MINES," "THE WIFE'S HEAD," "THE WIFE'S HEAD," ETC.

INTRODUCTION.

DECEMBER 23. "I have just buried my boy, my poor handsome boy, of whom I was so proud, and my heart is broken. It is very hard, having only one son, to lose him thus; but God's will be done. Who am I that I should complain? The great wheel of fate rolls on like a juggernaut, and crushes us all in turn; some soon, some late, it does not matter when; in the end it crushes us all. We do not prostrate ourselves before it like the poor Indians; we fly hither and thither—we cry for mercy; but it is of no use, the blind, black fate thunders on, and in its season reduces us to powder.

"Poor Harry to go so soon! just when his life was opening to him. He was doing so well at the hospital; he had passed his last examination with honors, and I was proud of him; much prouder than he was, I think. And then he must needs go to that smallpox hospital. He wrote to me that he was not afraid of smallpox, and wanted to gain the experience, and now the disease has killed him; and I, old and gray and withered, am left to mourn over him, without a chick or child to comfort me. I might have saved him, too—I have money enough for both of us, and much more than enough—King Solomon's mines provided me with that; but I said, 'No, let the boy earn his living; let him labor that he may enjoy rest.' But the rest has come to him before the labor. Oh, my boy, my boy!"

"I am like the man in the Bible who laid up much goods and builded barns—goods for my boy, and barns for him to store them in; and now his soul has been required of him and I am left desolate. I would that it had been my soul and not my boy's!"

"We buried him this afternoon under the shadow of the gray and ancient tower of the church of this village where my house is. It was a dreary December afternoon, and the sky was heavy with snow, but not much was falling. The coffin was put down by the grave, and a few big flakes lit upon it. They looked very white upon the black cloth. There was a little hitch about getting the coffin down into the grave—the necessary ropes had been forgotten; so we drew back from it and waited in silence, watching the big flakes fall gently one by one like heavenly benedictions and melt in tears on Harry's pall. But that was not all. A robin red-breast came as bold as could be and lit upon the coffin and began to sing. And then I am afraid that I broke down, and so did Sir Henry Curtis, strong man though he is; and as for Capt. Good, I saw him turn away too; even in my own distress I could not help noticing it."

The above, signed "Allan Quatermain," is an extract from my diary written two years and more ago. I copy it down here because it seems to me that it is the fittest beginning to the history that I am about to write, if it please God to spare me to finish it. If not, well, it does not matter.

CHAPTER I. THE CONSUL'S YARN.

A week has passed since the funeral of my poor boy Harry, and one evening I was in my room walking up and down and thinking, when there was a ring at the outer door. Going down the steps I opened it myself, and in came my old friend Sir Henry Curtis and Capt. John Good, R. N. They entered the vestibule and sat themselves down before the wide hearth, where I remember a particularly good fire of logs was burning.

"It is very kind of you to come round," I said, by way of making a remark; "it must have been heavy walking in the snow." They said nothing, but Sir Henry slowly filled his pipe and lit it with a burning ember. As he leaned forward to do so the fire got hold of a gassy bit of pine and flared up brightly, throwing the whole scene into strong relief, and I thought what a splendid looking man he is. Calm, powerful face, clear cut features, large gray eyes, yellow beard and hair—altogether a magnificent specimen of the higher type of humanity. Nor did his form belie his face. I have never seen wider shoulders or a deeper chest. Indeed, Sir Henry's girth is so great that, though he is six foot two high, he does not strike one as a tall man. As I looked at him I could not help thinking what a curious contrast my little dried-up self presented to his grand face and form. Imagine to yourself a small, withered, yellow-faced man of 63, with thin hands, large brown eyes, a head of grizzled hair cut short and standing up like a half worn scrubbing brush—total weight in my clothes, nine stone six—and you will get a very fair idea of Allan Quatermain, commonly called Hatter Quatermain, or by the natives "Macumazahn"—anglicized, he who keeps a bright lookout at night, or, in vulgar English, a sharp fellow who is not to be taken in.

Then there was Good, who is not like either of us, being short, dark, stout—very stout—with twinkling black eyes, in one of which an eye glass is everlastingly fixed. I say stout, but it is a mild term; I regret to state that of late years Good has been running to stoniness in a most disgraceful way. Sir Henry tells him that it comes from idleness and overfeeding, and Good does not like it at all, though he cannot deny it.

They sat and smoked and drank whisky and water, and I stood by the fire also smoking and looking at them. At last I spoke, "Old friends," I said, "how long is it since we got back from Kukuana-land?" "Three years," said Good. "Why do you ask?" "I ask because I think that I have had a long enough spell of civilization. I am going back to the wild."

Sir Henry laid his head back in his arm chair and laughed one of his deep laughs. "How very odd!" he said; "oh, Good!" Good beamed at me mysteriously through his eye glass, and murmured, "Yes, odd—very odd."

"I don't quite understand," said I, looking from one to the other, for I dislike mysteries. "Don't you, old fellow?" said Sir Henry; "then I will explain. As for Good and I were walking up here we had a talk."

"If Good was there you probably did," I put in, sarcastically, for Good is a great hand at talking. "And what may it have been about?" "What do you think?" asked Sir Henry. "I shook my head. It was not likely that I should know what Good might be talking about, he talks about so many things."

"Well, it was about a little plan that I have formed—namely, that if you were agreeable we should pack up our traps and go off to Africa on another expedition."

"I fairly jumped at his words. 'You don't say so?' I said. 'Yes, I do, though, and so does Good; don't you, Good?'"

"Rather," said that gentleman. "Listen, old fellow," went on Sir Henry, with considerable animation of manner. "I'm tired of it too, dead tired of doing nothing, except play the squire in a country that is sick of squires. For a year or more I have been getting as restless as an old elephant who scents danger. I am always dreaming of Kukuana-land and good old King Solomon's mines. I assure you I have become the victim of an almost unaccountable craving. I am sick of shooting pheasants and partridges, and want to have a go at some large game again. There, you know the feeling—when one has once tasted brandy and water, milk becomes insipid to the palate. That year we spent together up in Kukuana-land seems to me worth all the other years of my life put together. I dare say that I am a fool for my pains, but I can't help it; I long to go, and what is more, I mean to go."

"Ah," I said, "I thought you would come to that sooner or later. And now, Good, what is your reason for wanting to trek—have you got one?" "I have," said Good, solemnly. "I never do anything without a reason; and it isn't a lady—at least, if it is, it's several."

"I looked at him again; Good is so overpoweringly frivolous. 'What is it?' I said. 'Well, if you really want to know, though I'd rather not speak of a delicate and strictly personal matter, 'I'll tell you; I'm getting too fat.'"

"Shut up, Good!" said Sir Henry. "And now, Quatermain, tell us, where do you propose going to?"

"I lit my pipe, which had gone out, before answering. 'Have you people ever heard of Mt. Kenia?' I asked. "Don't know the place," said Good. "Did you ever hear of the Island of Lamu?" I asked again.

"No. Stop, though—isn't it a place about 300 miles north of Zanzibar?" "Yes. Now listen. What I have to propose is this: That we go to Lamu, and thence make our way about 250 miles inland to Mt. Kenia; from Mt. Kenia on inland to Mt. Lekakisera, another 300 miles, or thereabouts, beyond which no white man has, to the best of my belief, ever been; and then, if we get so far, right on into the unknown interior. What do you say to that, my hearties?"

"It is a big order," said Sir Henry reflectively. "You are right," I answered, "it is; but I take it that we are all three of us in search of a big order. We want a change of scene, and we are likely to get one—a thorough change. All my life I have longed to visit those parts, and I mean to do it before I die. My poor boy's death has broken the last link between me and civilization, and I'm off to my native wilds. And now I'll tell you another thing, and that is, that for years and years I have heard rumors of a great white race which is supposed to live in some where up in this direction, and I have a mind to see if there is any truth in them. If you fellows like to come, well and good; if not, I'll go alone."

"I'm your man, though I don't believe in your white race," said Sir Henry Curtis, rising and placing his arm upon my shoulder. "Ditto," remarked Good; "I'll go into training at once. By all means let's go to Mt. Kenia and the other places with an unpronounceable name, and look for a white race that does not exist. It's all one to me."

"When do you propose to start?" asked Sir Henry. "This day month," I answered, "by the British India steamboat; and don't you be so certain that things don't exist because you do not happen to have heard of them. Remember King Solomon's mines."

Some fourteen weeks or so had passed since the date of this conversation, and this history goes on its way in very different surroundings.

After much deliberation and inquiry we came to the conclusion that our best starting point for Mount Kenia would be from the neighborhood of the mouth of the Tana river, and not from Mombasa, a place over 100 miles nearer Zanzibar. This conclusion we arrived at from information given to us by a German trader whom we met upon the steamer at Aden. I think that he was the dirtiest German I ever knew; but he was a good fellow, and gave us a great deal of valuable information. "Lamu," said he, "you goes to Lamu—oh, ze beautiful place!" and he turned up his fat face and beamed with mild rapture. "One year and a half I live there and never change my shirt—never at all."

And so it came to pass that on arriving at the island we disembarked with all our goods and chattels, and not knowing where to go, marched boldly up to the house of his majesty's consul, where we were most hospitably received.

"Well, where are you gentlemen steering for?" asked our friend, the hospitable consul, as we smoked our pipes after dinner.

"We propose to go to Mt. Kenia, and then on to Mt. Lekakisera," answered Sir Henry. "Quatermain has got hold of some yarn about there being a white race up in the unknown territories beyond."

The consul looked interested, and answered that he had heard something of that too. "What have you heard?" I asked. "Oh, not much. All I know about it is that a year or so ago I got a letter from Mackenzie, the Scotch missionary, whose station, 'The Highlands,' is placed at the highest navigable point of the Tana river, in which he said something about it."

best way; but I warn you that you are likely to have a rough journey, for I hear that the Masai are about, and as you know, they are not pleasant customers. Your best plan will be to choose a few picked men for personal servants and hunters, and to hire bearers from village to village. It will give you an infinity of trouble, but perhaps on the whole it will prove a cheaper and more advantageous course than engaging a caravan, and you will be less liable to desertion."

"Primarily, then, were it Lamu at this time a party of Wakwafi Askari (soldiers). The Wakwafi, who are a cross between the Masai and the Wataveta, are a fine manly race, possessing many of the good qualities of the Zulu and a greater capacity for civilization. They are also great hunters. As it happened, these particular men had recently been engaged by an Englishman named Jansen, who had started from Mombasa, a port about 150 miles below Lamu, and journeyed right round Kilimanjaro, one of the highest known mountains in Africa. Poor fellow, he had died of fever when on his return journey, and within a day's march of Mombasa. It does seem hard that he should have gone off thus within a few hours of safety, and after having survived so many perils, but so it was. His hunters buried him, and then came on to Lamu in a dhow. Our friend the consul suggested to us that we had better try and hire these men, and accordingly on the following morning we started to interview the party, accompanied by an interpreter."

In due course we found them in a mud hut outside the town. Three of the men were sitting outside the hut, and fine, frank looking fellows they were, having a more or less civilized appearance. To them we cautiously opened the object of our visit, at first with very scant success. They declared that they could not entertain any such idea, that they were worn and weary with long traveling, and that their hearts were sore at the loss of their master. They meant to go back to their homes and rest awhile. This did not sound very promising, so by way of effecting a diversion I asked where the remainder of them were. I was told there were six, and I saw but three. One of the men said that they slept in the hut, and were yet resting after their labors—"sleep weighed down by grief and sorrow made their hearts as lead; it was best to sleep, for with sleep came forgetfulness. But then should be awakened."

Presently they came out of the hut, yawning—the first two men being evidently of the same race and style as those already before us; but the appearance of the third and last nearly made me jump out of my skin. He was a very tall, broad man, quite six foot three, I should say, but of an odd and uncouth make. My first glance at him told me that he was no Wakwafi—he was a pure bred Zulu. He came out with his thin, aristocratic looking hand placed before his face to hide a yawn, so I could only see that he was a "Keshia," or rigger man, and that he had a great three-cornered hole in his forehead. In another moment he removed his hand, revealing a powerful looking Zulu face, with a humorous mouth, a short woolly beard tinged with gray, and a pair of brown eyes keen as a hawk's. I knew my man at once, although I had not seen him for twelve years. "How do you do, Umslopogaas?" I said, quietly, in Zulu.

The tall man (who among his own people was commonly known as the "Woodpecker," and also as the "Slaughterer") started, and almost lost the long handled battleax he held in his hand fall in his astonishment. Next second he had recognized me, and was saluting me in an outburst of sonorous language which made his companions the Wakwafi stare.

"Koo-y-umcool!" (chief of the five Wakwafis, Koo-y-umcool!) (chief from old-nightly chief). "Koo-y-umcool!" (father). "Macumazahn, old hunter, slayer of elephants, eater up of lions, clever one! watchful one! brave one! quick one! whose shot never misses, who strikes straight home, who grasps a hand and holds it to the death" (i. e., is a true friend). "Koo-y-umcool!" (what does that mean here, the voice of the dead? "Macumazahn—oh—and I have never counted but those whom I have ripped open, nor have I reckoned those whom another man had struck."

"Be silent," I said, for I saw that he was getting the blood fever on him; "be silent; well art thou called the 'Slaughterer.' We were not here of thy deeds of blood. Remember, if thou comest with us we fight not save in self defense. Listen; we need servants. These men—"and I pointed to the Wakwafi, who had retired a little way during our "indaba" (talk)—"say they will not come."

"Will not come!" shouted Umslopogaas; "where is the dog who says he will not come when my Father orders! Here, thou"—and with a single bound he sprang upon the Wakwafi with whom I had first spoken, and seizing him by the arm, dragged him towards us. "Thou dog!" he said, giving the terrified man a shake. "Didst thou say that thou wouldst not go with my Father? Say it once more and I will choke thee"—and his long fingers closed around his throat as he said it—then, and those with thee. Hast thou forgotten how I served thy brother?"

"Nay, we will come with the white man," gasped the man. "White man!" went on Umslopogaas, in simulated fury, which a very little provocation would have made real enough; "of whom speakest thou, insolent dog?"

"Nay, we will go with the great chief." "So," said Umslopogaas, in a quiet voice, as he suddenly released his hold, so that the man fell backward. "I thought you would." "That man Umslopogaas seems to have a curious moral ascendancy over his companions," Good afterwards remarked, thoughtfully. (To be continued.) English Spavin Liniment removes all Hard, Soft, or Calloused Lumps and blemishes from horses, Blood Spavin, Curbs, Splints, Sweney, Stiles, Sprains, Sore and Swollen Throat, Coughs, etc. Save \$50 by use of one bottle. Warranted by Fricke & Co. druggists, Platts-mouth. 34-1yr

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