

Allan Quatermain

By H. RIDER HAGGARD.

AUTHOR OF "KING SOLOMON'S MINES," "HILM," "THE WITCH'S SKIN," ETC.

CHAPTER II. THE BLACK HAND.

In due course we left Lamu, and ten days afterwards we found ourselves at a spot called Charra, on the Tana river, having gone through many adventures which need not be recorded here.

At Charra we had a violent quarrel with the headman of the bearers who had hired to go as far as this, and who now wished to extort large extra payment from us. In the result he threatened to set the Masai—about whom more anon—on us. That night he, with all our hired bearers, bolted, stealing most of the goods which had been entrusted to them to carry. Luckily, however, they had not happened to steal our rifles, ammunition and personal effects; not because of any delicacy of feeling on their part, but owing to the fact that they chanced to be in the charge of the five Wakwaks. After that it was clear to us that we had had enough of canyons and of bearers. Indeed, we had not much left for the day to carry. And yet how were we to get out?

It was God who solved the question. "Here is water," he said, pointing to the Tana river; "and yesterday I saw a party of natives hunting hippopotami in canoes. I understand that Mr. Mackenzie's mission station is on the Tana river. Why not get into canoes and paddle up to it?"

This brilliant suggestion was, needless to say, received with acclamation; and I instantly set to work to buy suitable canoes from the surrounding natives. I succeeded, after a delay of three days, in obtaining two large ones, each hollowed out of a single log of some light wood, and capable of holding six people and baggage. For these two canoes we had to pay nearly all our remaining cloth, and also many other articles.

On the day following our purchase of the two canoes we effected our start. In the first canoe were God, Sir Henry and three of our Wakwak followers; in the second myself, Umslopogana and the other two Wakwaks. As our course lay up the stream, we had to keep four paddles at work in each canoe, which meant that the whole lot of us, except God, had to row away the galley slaves; and very exhausting work it was. I say except, for of course the moment that God got into a boat his foot was on his native heath and he took command of the party. And certainly he worked us. On shore God is a gentle, mild mannered man, and given to goodly; but, as we found to our cost, God in a boat was a perfect demon. To begin with, he knew all about it, and we didn't. On all nautical subjects the two little fellows were a man of war down to the best way of handling the paddle of an African canoe, he was a perfect mine of information, which, to say the least of it, we were not. Also his ideas of discipline were of the sternest, and, in short, he came the royal naval officer over us pretty considerably and paid us out amply for all the chaff we were wont to treat him to on land; but, on the other hand, I am bound to say that he managed the boats admirably.

Three days after our start an ominous incident occurred. We were just drawing in to the bank to make our camp, as usual, for the night, when we caught sight of a figure standing on a little knoll not forty yards away, and intently watching our approach. One glance was sufficient—although I was personally unacquainted with the tribe—to tell me that he was a Masai Elmoran, or young warrior. Indeed, had I had any doubts, they would have been quickly dispelled by the terrified ejaculation of "Masai!" that burst simultaneously from the lips of our Wakwak followers, who are, as I think I have said, themselves bastards Masai. And what a figure he presented as he stood there in his savage war gear! Accustomed as I have been to savages all my life, I do not think that I have ever before seen anything quite so ferocious or awe-inspiring. To begin with, the man was enormously tall, quite as tall as Umslopogana, I should say, and beautifully, though somewhat slightly, shapely, but with the face of a devil. In his right hand he held a spear about five and a half feet long, the blade being two and a half feet in length by nearly three inches in width, and having an iron spike at the end of the handle that measured more than a foot. On his left arm was a large and well made elliptical shield of buffalo hide, on which were painted strange, heraldic looking devices. On his shoulders was a huge cap of hawk's feathers, and round his neck was a "nailber," or strip of cotton, about seventeen feet long by one and a half broad, with a stripe of color running down the middle of it. The tanned goat skin robe, which formed his ordinary attire in times of peace, was tied lightly round his waist, so as to serve the purposes of a belt, and through it were stuck on the right and left sides respectively, his short, pear-shaped simo, or sword, which is made of a single piece of steel, and carried in a wooden sheath, and an enormous knob-knorie. But perhaps the most remarkable feature of his attire consisted of a headress of ostrich feathers, which was fixed on the chin, and passed in front of the ears to the forehead, and being shaped like an ellipse, completely framed the face, so that the diabolical countenance appeared to project from a sort of leather fire screen. Round the ankles he wore black fringes of hair, and projecting from the upper portion of the calves, to which they were attached, were long spurs the spikes, from which dangled down bits of beautiful black and waving hair of the Colobus monkey. Such was the elaborate array of the Masai Elmoran who stood watching the approach of our two canoes, but it is one which, to be appreciated, must be seen—only those who see it do not often live to describe it. Of course, I could not make out all these details of his full dress on the occasion of this my first introduction, being, indeed, amply taken up with the consideration of the general effect, but I had plenty of subsequent opportunities of becoming acquainted with the items that went to make it up.

While we were hesitating what to do, the Masai warrior drew himself up in a dignified fashion, shook his spear at us, and turning, vanished on the farther side of the slope. "Hullo!" hailed Sir Henry from the other boat, "our friend the caravan leader has been as good as his word, and set the Masai after us. Do you think it will be safe to go ashore?"

I did not think it would be at all safe; but, on the other hand, we had no means of cooking in the canoes, and nothing that we could eat raw, so it was difficult to know what to do. At last Umslopogana simplified matters by volunteering to go and reconnoiter, which he did, creeping off into the bush like a snake, while we hung off in the stream waiting for him. In half an hour he returned and told us that there was not a Masai to be seen anywhere about, but that he had discovered a spot where they had recently been encamped, and that from various indications he judged that they must have moved on an hour or so

before, the man we saw moving, no doubt, been left to report upon our movements.

Thereupon we landed, and having posted a sentry, proceeded to cook and eat our evening meal. This done, we took the situation into our serious consideration. Of course, it was possible that the apparition of the Masai warrior had nothing to do with us, that he was merely one of a band bent upon some marauding and murdering expedition against another tribe. Our friend the consul had told us that such expeditions were about. But when we recalled the threat of the caravan leader, and reflected on the ominous way in which the warrior had shaken his spear at us, this did not appear very probable. On the contrary, what did seem probable was that the party was after us, and awaiting a favorable opportunity to attack us. This being so, there were two things that we could do, one of which was to go on, and the other to go back. The latter idea was, however, rejected at once, it being obvious that we should encounter as many dangers in retreat as in advance, and, besides, we had made up our minds to journey onward at any price. Under these circumstances, however, we did not consider it safe to sleep ashore, so we got into our canoes, and paddling out into the middle of the stream, which was not very wide here, managed to anchor them by means of big stones fastened to ropes made of cocoon fiber, of which there were several fathoms in each canoe.

Here the mosquitoes nearly ate us up alive, and this, combined with anxiety as to our position, effectually prevented me from sleeping as the others were doing, and somehow, in the most unaccountable way, I had suddenly become nervous. There was no particular reason why I should be, beyond the ordinary reasons which surround the Central African traveler, and yet I undoubtedly was. If there is one thing more than another of which I have the most complete and entire scorn and disbelief, it is of presentiments, and yet here I was all of a sudden filled with and possessed by a most undoubted presentiment of approaching evil. I would not give way to it, however, although I felt the cold perspiration stand out upon my forehead.

In the distance I heard a hippopotamus splash faintly, then the owl hooted again in a kind of unnatural screaming note, and the wind began to moan plaintively through the trees, making a heart chilling music. Above was the black bosom of the cloud, and beneath me swept the black flood of the water, and I felt as though I and death were utterly alone between them. It was very desolate.

Suddenly my blood seemed to freeze in my veins and my heart to stand still. Was it fancy, or were we moving? I turned my eyes to look for the other canoe, which should be alongside of us. I could not see it, but instead I saw a lean and clutching black hand lifting itself above the gunwale of the little boat. Surely it was a nightmare! At the same time a dim but devilish looking face appeared to rise out of the water, and then came a flash of the canoe, a quick flash of an awful yell from the Wakwak who was sleeping by my side (the same poor fellow whose odor had been annoying me), and something warm spurted into my face. In an instant the spell was broken; I knew that it was no nightmare, but that we were attacked by swimming Masai. Snatching at the first weapon which came to hand, which happened to be Umslopogana's battle-axe, I struck with all my force in the direction in which I had seen the flash of the knife. The blow fell upon a man's arm, and, catching it against the thick wooden gunwale of the canoe, completely severed it from the body just above the wrist. As for its owner, he uttered no sound or cry. Like a ghost he came, and like a ghost he went, leaving behind him a bloody hand still gripping a great knife, or rather a short sword, that was buried in the heart of our poor servant.

Instantly there arose a hubbub and confusion, and I fancied, rightly or wrongly, that I made out several dark heads gliding away toward the right hand bank, whither we were rapidly drifting, for the rope by which we had been moored had been severed with a knife. As soon as I had realized this fact, I also realized that the scheme had been to cut the boat loose, so that it should drift on to the right bank (as it would have done with the natural swing of the current), where no doubt a party of Masai were waiting to dig their shovel-headed spears into us. Seizing our paddle myself, I told Umslopogana to take another (for the remaining Askari was too frightened and bewildered to be of any use) and together we rowed vigorously out toward the middle of the stream; and not an instant too soon, for in another minute we should have been aground, and then there would have been an end of us.

As soon as we were well out, we set to work to paddle the canoe up stream again to where the other was moored; and very hard and dangerous work it was in the dark, and with nothing but the notes of God's stentorian shouts, which he kept firing off at intervals like a fog horn, to guide us. But at last we fetched up, and were thankful to find that they had not been molested at all. No doubt the owner of the same hand that severed our rope should have severed theirs also, but was set away from his purpose by an irresistible inclination to murder when he got the chance, which, while it cost us a man and lim his hand, undoubtedly saved all the rest of us from massacre. Had it not been for that ghastly apparition over the side of the boat—an apparition that I shall never forget till my dying hour—the canoe would undoubtedly have drifted ashore before I realized what had happened, and this history would never have been written by me.

CHAPTER III. THE MISSION STATION.

We made the remains of our rope fast to the other canoe, and sat waiting for the dawn and congratulating ourselves upon our merciful escape, which really seemed to result more from the special favor of Providence than from our own care or prowess. At last it came, and I have not often been more grateful to see the light, though, so far as my canoe was concerned, it revealed a ghastly sight. There in the bottom of the little boat lay the unfortunate Askari, the simo, or sword, in his bosom, and the severed hand gripping the handle. I could not bear the sight, so landing up the stone which had served as an anchor to the other canoe, we made it fast to the murdered man and dropped him overboard, and down he went to the bottom, leaving nothing but a train of bubbles behind him. Alas! when our time comes, most of us, like him, leave nothing but bubbles behind, to show that we have been, and the bubbles soon burst. The hand of his murderer we threw into the stream, where it sank. The sword, of which the handle was ivory, inlaid with gold (evidently Arab work), I kept and used as a hunting knife, and very useful it proved.

Then, a man having been transferred to my canoe, we once more went on about 11 o'clock. Just as we were thinking of halting, as usual, to rest, and try to shoot something to eat, a sudden bend in the river brought us in sight of a substantial looking European house, with a veranda round it, splendidly situated upon a hill, and surrounded by a high stone wall with a ditch on the outer side. Right against and overshadowing the house was an enormous pine, the top of which we had seen through a glass for the last two days, but of course without



The Mission Station.

knowing that it marked the site of the mission station. I was the first to see the house, and could not restrain myself from giving a hearty cheer, in which the others, including the natives, joined lustily. There was no thought of halting now. On we labored, fortunately, though the house seemed quite near, it was still a long way off by river, until at last, by 1 o'clock, we found ourselves at the bottom of the slope on which the building stood. Running the canoes to the bank, we disembarked, and were just hauling them up on to the shore when we perceived three figures, dressed in ordinary English looking clothes, hurrying down through a grove of trees to meet us.

"A gentleman, a lady, and a little girl," ejaculated God, after surveying the trio through his eye glass, "walking in a civilized fashion through a civilized garden, to meet us in this place! I don't think I've seen the most curious thing we have seen since we came to this river."

Good was right; it certainly did seem odd and out of place—more like a scene out of a dream or an Italian opera than a real tangible fact; and the sense of unreality was not lessened when we heard ourselves addressed in good broad Scotch, which, however, I cannot reproduce.

"How do you do, sirs?" said Mr. Mackenzie, a gray haired angular man with a kindly face and red cheeks; "I hope I see you very well. My natives told me an hour ago they spied two canoes with white men in them coming up the river; so we have just come down to meet you."

"And it is very glad that we are to see a white face again, let me tell you," put in the lady—a charming and refined looking person. We took off our hats in acknowledgment, and proceeded to introduce ourselves.

"And now," said Mr. Mackenzie, "you must all be hungry and weary; so come on, gentlemen, come on, and right glad we are to see you. The last white that visited us was Alphonse—you will see Alphonse presently—and that was a year ago."

Meanwhile we had been walking up the slope of the hill, the lower portion of which was fenced off, sometimes with quince fences and sometimes with rough stone walls, into Kaffir gardens, just now full of crops of mealies, pumpkins, potatoes, etc. In the corners of these gardens were groups of neat mushroom shaped huts, occupied by Mr. Mackenzie's mission natives, whose women and children came pouring out to meet us as we walked. Through the center of the gardens ran the roadway up which we were walking. It was bordered on each side by a line of orange trees, which, although they had only been planted ten years, had in the lovely climate of the uplands below Mt. Kenia, the base of which is about 5,000 feet above the coast line level, already grown to imposing proportions, and were positively laden with golden fruit. After a stilted climb of a quarter of a mile or so—for the hillside was steep—we came to a splendid quince fence, also covered with fruit, which inclosed, Mr. Mackenzie told us, a space of about four acres of ground that contained his private garden, house, church and outbuildings, and, indeed, the whole hill-top. And what a garden it was! I have always loved a good garden, and I could have thrown up my hands for joy when I saw Mr. Mackenzie's. First there were rows of rows of standard European fruit trees, all grafted; so for on the top of this hill the climate was so temperate that very nearly all the English vegetables, trees and flowers flourished luxuriantly, even including several varieties of the apple, which, generally speaking, runs to wood in a warm climate and continually declines to fruit. Then there were strawberries and tomatoes (such tomatoes) and melons and cucumbers, and indeed every sort of vegetable and fruit.

"Well, you have something like a garden!" I said, overpowered with admiration not untouched by envy.

"Yes," answered the missionary, "it is a very good garden, and we well reward my labor; but it is the climate that I have to thank. If you stick a peach stone into the ground it will bear fruit the fourth year, and a rose cutting will bloom in a year. It is a lovely climate."

Just then we came to a ditch about ten feet wide and full of water, on the other side of which was a hooped stone wall eight feet high, and with sharp flints plentifully set in mortar on the coping.

"There," said Mr. Mackenzie, pointing to the ditch and wall, "this is my magnanimous opus; at least, this and the church, which is the other side of the house. It took me and twenty natives two years to dig the ditch and build the wall, but I never felt safe till it was done; and now I can defy all the savages in Africa, for the spring that fills the ditch is inside the wall, and bubbles out at the top of the hill winter and summer alike, and I always keep a store of four months' provisions in the house."

Crossing over a plank and through a very narrow opening in the wall, we entered into what Mr. Mackenzie called her domain—namely, the flower garden, the beauty of which it is really beyond my power to describe. I do not think I ever saw such roses, gardenias, or camellias (all reared from seeds or cuttings sent from England); and there was also a patch given up to a collection of bulbous roots, mostly collected by Miss Florence, Mr. Mackenzie's little daughter, from the surrounding country, some of which were surpassingly beautiful. In the middle of this garden, and exactly opposite the veranda, a beautiful fountain of clear water bubbled up from the ground, and fell into a stone work basin which had been carefully built to receive it, whence the overflow found its way by means of a drain to the most round the outer wall, this most in its turn serving as a reservoir, whence an unfeeling supply of water was available to irrigate all the gardens below. The house itself, a massively built single storied building, was roofed with slabs of stone, and had a handsome veranda in front. It was built on three sides of a square, the fourth side being taken up by the kitchen, which stood separate from the house—a very good plan in a hot country. In the center of this square thus formed was, perhaps, the most remarkable object that we had yet seen in this charming place, and that was a single tree of the conifer tribe, varieties of which grow freely on the highlands of this part of Africa. This splendid tree, which Mr. Mackenzie informed us was a landmark for fifty miles round, and which we had ourselves

seen for the last forty miles of our journey, must have been some 300 feet in height, the trunk measuring about 16 feet in diameter at a yard from the ground. For some seventy feet it rose a beautiful tapering brown pillar without a single branch, but at that height splendid dark green boughs, which, looked at from below, had the appearance of gigantic fern leaves, sprang out horizontally from the trunk, projecting right over the house and flower garden, to both of which they furnished a grateful proportion of shade, without—being so high up—offering any impediment to the passage of light and air.

"What a beautiful tree!" exclaimed Sir Henry.

"Yes, you are right; it is a beautiful tree. There is not another like it in all the country round, that I know of," answered Mr. Mackenzie. "I call it my watch tower. As you see, I have a rope ladder fixed to the lowest bough, and if I want to see anything that is going on within fifteen miles or so, all I have to do is to run up it with a spyglass. But you must be hungry, and I am sure the dinner is cooked. Come in, my friends; it is but a rough place, but well enough for these savage parts; and I can tell you what we have got—a French cook!" And he led the way on to the veranda.

As I was following him, and wondering what on earth he could mean by this, there suddenly appeared through the door that opened on to the veranda from the house a dapper little man, dressed in a neat blue coat suit, and shoes made of tanned hide, and remarkable for a bustling air and most enormous black mustaches, shaped into an upward curve, and coming to a point for all the world like a pair of buffalo horns.

"Madame lids me to say that dinner is served. Messieurs, my compliments," then suddenly perceiving Umslopogana, who was loitering along after us, and playing with his battle-axe, he threw up his hands in astonishment. "Ah, mais quel homme!" he ejaculated in French, "quel sauvage affreux! Take but note of his huge choppars and the great pit in his head."

"Ay," said Mr. Mackenzie, "what are you talking about, Alphonse?"

"Talking about!" replied the little Frenchman, his eyes still fixed upon Umslopogana, whose general appearance seemed to fascinate him; "why, I talk of him," and he rudely pointed "of ce monsieur noir."

At this everybody began to laugh, and Umslopogana, perceiving that he was the object of remark, frowned ferociously, for he had a most lordly dislike of anything like a personal libel.

(To be continued.)

The danger of a malarial atmosphere may be averted if you will occasionally take a dose of Dr. J. H. McLean's Chills and Fever Cure. 20-m.

AN ORIGINAL VERSION.—There lived near Alexandria, in Virginia, an old colored man and woman, whom their acquaintances called Daddy and Mamma Williams. He had had educational advantages, and could read in a fashion peculiarly his own; but his wife, although lacking as regards erudition, possessed great force of character, which she often displayed in a manner that was very irritating to her husband. When she became particularly fractious, Daddy would take the Bible, and open to that chapter in Revelation beginning, "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet," etc.

With impressive solemnity he would read as follows: "An' dere 'peared a great wonder in heben, a woman!" Slowly closing the book, he would gaze sternly at his now subdued wife, for the passage never failed to produce the desired effect.

—IDA H. H. GABRIE, IN EDITOR'S DRAWER, *Harpis's Magazine for August.*

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Carrie—Oh, Frank! Tillie was telling me about composite photographs. How are they made?

Frank—Very simple. You draw the portraits of any number of persons on thin, transparent paper, and then place one upon another, right eye upon right eye, left eye upon left, and mouth upon mouth.

Carrie—But, Frank, can't the thin paper be dispersed with?

It could and was.—*Boston Transcript.*

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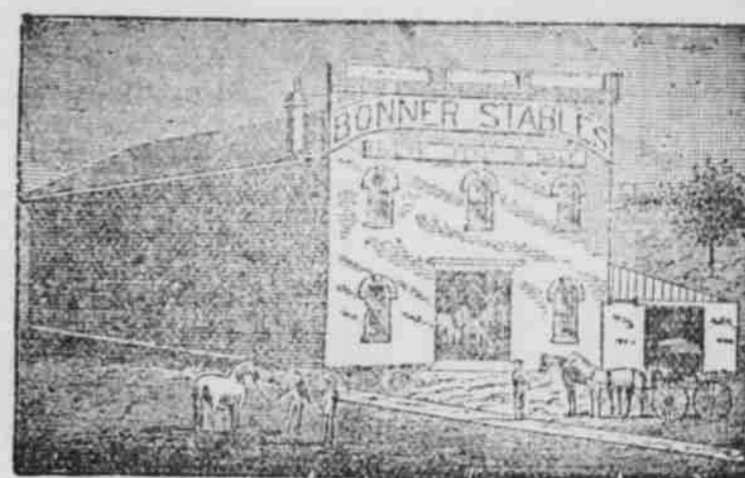
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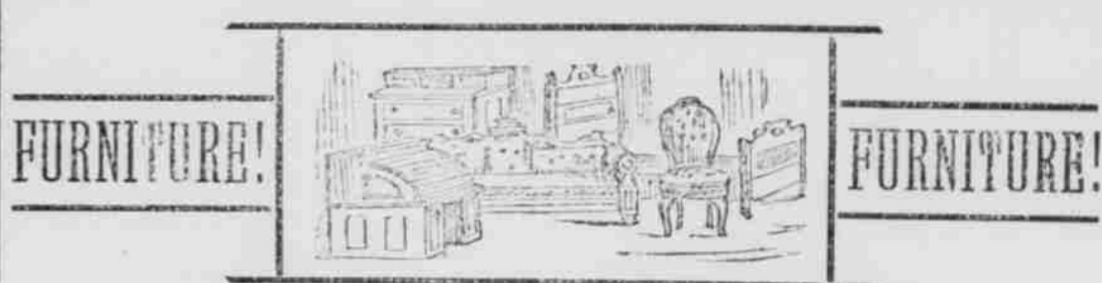
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