

Arab Quatermain

By H. RIDER HAGGARD.

AUTHOR OF "KING SOLOMON'S MINES," "SHE," "SHE," "THE WITCH'S HEARD," ETC.

consented to this precautionary measure. The most amusing part of the affair, however, was to see old Umslopogas' astonishment and Alphonse's delight at Good's transformation. When at last he stood up in all his glory, even down to the medals on his breast, and contemplated himself in the still waters of the lake, after the fashion of the young gentleman in ancient history, whose name I can't remember, but who fell in love with his own shadow, the old Zulu could no longer restrain his feelings.

"Oh, Bougwant!" he said. "Oh, Bougwant! I always thought thee an ugly little man, and fat—as fat as the cows at calving time; and now thou art like a blue jay when he spreads his tail out. Surely, Bougwant, it hurts his eyes to look at thee."

Good did not much like this allusion to his fat, which, to tell the truth, was not very well deserved, for hard exercise had brought him down four inches; but on the whole he was pleased at Umslopogas' admiration. As for Alphonse, he was quite delighted. "Ah! but monsieur has the beautiful air—the air of the warrior. It is the ladies who will say so when we come to get ashore. Monsieur is complete; he puts me in mind of my heroic grand!"

Here we stopped Alphonse. As we gazed upon the beauties thus revealed by Good a spirit of emulation filled our breasts, and we set to work to get ourselves up as well as we could. The most, however, that we were able to do was to array ourselves in our spare suits of shooting clothes, of which we each had one, keeping on our mail shirts underneath. As for my appearance, all the fine clothes in the world could never make it other than scrubby and insignificant, but Sir Henry looked what he is, a magnificent man. His hair was neatly combed, his eyes were clear, his nose straight, his mouth well formed, and his teeth white as milk. He was dressed in a suit of blue cloth, and his shirt was of pure white linen hemmed with purple. The kit, however, was identical, and so were the things of gold around the arm and beneath the left knee. The rowers were only a kit, their bodies being naked to the waist. Good took off his hat to the old gentleman with an extra flourish, and inquired after his health in the purest English, to which he replied by laying the first two fingers of his right hand horizontally across his lips and holding them there for a moment, which we took as his method of salutation. Then he also addressed some remarks to us in the same soft accents that had distinguished our first interview, which we were forced to indicate we did not understand by shaking our heads and shrugging our shoulders. This last Alphonse, being to the manner born, did to perfection, and in so polite a way that nobody could take any offense. Then we came to the standard, till I, being exceedingly hungry, thought I might as well call attention to the fact, and did so first by opening my mouth and pointing down it, and then rubbing my stomach. These signals the old gentleman clearly understood, for he nodded his head vigorously, and pointed toward the harbor, and at the same time one of the men on his boat threw us a line and motioned to us to make it fast, which we did. The row boat then took us in tow, and proceeded with great rapidity toward the mouth of the river, accompanied by all the other boats. In about twenty minutes more we reached the entrance to the harbor, which was crowded with boats full of people who had come out to see us. We observed that all the occupants were more or less of the same type, though some were fairer than others. Indeed, we noticed certain ladies whose skin was of a most dazzling whiteness; and the darkest shade of color which we saw was about that of a rather swarthy Spaniard. Presently the wide river gave a sweep, and when it did so an exclamation of astonishment and delight burst from our lips as we caught our first view of the place that we afterward knew as Milosia, or the Prowling City (from mi, which means city, and losia, a frown).

At a distance of some 500 yards from the river's bank rose a sheer precipice of granite, 200 feet or so in height, which had no doubt once formed the bank itself—the intermediate space of land now utilized as docks and roadways having been gained by draining and deepening and embanking the stream. On the brow of this precipice stood a great building of the same granite that formed the cliff, built on three sides of a square, the fourth side being open, save for a kind of battlement pierced at its base by a little door. This imposing place we afterwards discovered

at a distance, and we could see that their occupants, who were evidently much frightened, were consulting what to do. Without giving them time for further consideration, which we thought might result unfavorably to ourselves, we instantly took our paddles and advanced toward them, Good standing in the bow and taking off his cocked hat politely in every direction, his amiable features suffused with a bland but intelligent smile. Most of the craft retreated as we advanced, but a few held their ground, while the big rowboat came on to meet us. Presently we were alongside, and I could see that our appearance—especially Good's and Umslopogas's—filled the rowers with astonishment and wonder with admiration, and made of the man we first met, except that his shirt was not made of brown cloth, but of pure white linen hemmed with purple. The kit, however, was identical, and so were the things of gold around the arm and beneath the left knee. The rowers were only a kit, their bodies being naked to the waist. Good took off his hat to the old gentleman with an extra flourish, and inquired after his health in the purest English, to which he replied by laying the first two fingers of his right hand horizontally across his lips and holding them there for a moment, which we took as his method of salutation. Then he also addressed some remarks to us in the same soft accents that had distinguished our first interview, which we were forced to indicate we did not understand by shaking our heads and shrugging our shoulders. This last Alphonse, being to the manner born, did to perfection, and in so polite a way that nobody could take any offense. Then we came to the standard, till I, being exceedingly hungry, thought I might as well call attention to the fact, and did so first by opening my mouth and pointing down it, and then rubbing my stomach. These signals the old gentleman clearly understood, for he nodded his head vigorously, and pointed toward the harbor, and at the same time one of the men on his boat threw us a line and motioned to us to make it fast, which we did. The row boat then took us in tow, and proceeded with great rapidity toward the mouth of the river, accompanied by all the other boats. In about twenty minutes more we reached the entrance to the harbor, which was crowded with boats full of people who had come out to see us. We observed that all the occupants were more or less of the same type, though some were fairer than others. Indeed, we noticed certain ladies whose skin was of a most dazzling whiteness; and the darkest shade of color which we saw was about that of a rather swarthy Spaniard. Presently the wide river gave a sweep, and when it did so an exclamation of astonishment and delight burst from our lips as we caught our first view of the place that we afterward knew as Milosia, or the Prowling City (from mi, which means city, and losia, a frown).

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CHAPTER XII. THE GREAT STAIRS. The big rowing boat glided on up the cutting that ran along to the foot of the vast stairway, and then halted at a flight of steps leading to the landing place. Here the old gentleman disembarked, and invited us to do likewise, which, having no alternative, and being nearly starved, we did without hesitation—taking our rifles with us, however. As each of us landed, our guide again laid his fingers on his lips in salutation and bowed deeply, at the same time ordering back the rowers who had assembled to gaze on us. The last to leave the canoe was the girl we had picked out of the water, for whom her companion was waiting. Before she went a way she kissed my hand, as though as a token of gratitude for having saved her from the fury of the hippopotamus, and it seemed as if she had by this time quite got over any fear she may have had of us, and was by no means anxious to return in such a hurry to her lawful owners. At any rate, she was going to kiss Good's hand as well as mine, when the young man interfered and led her off. As soon as we were on shore a number of the men who had rowed the boat to us, and who had been waiting for us, came forward to meet us. They were dressed in the same simple, but elegant, manner as the men on the boats. They were all of the same type, though some were fairer than others. Indeed, we noticed certain ladies whose skin was of a most dazzling whiteness; and the darkest shade of color which we saw was about that of a rather swarthy Spaniard. Presently the wide river gave a sweep, and when it did so an exclamation of astonishment and delight burst from our lips as we caught our first view of the place that we afterward knew as Milosia, or the Prowling City (from mi, which means city, and losia, a frown).

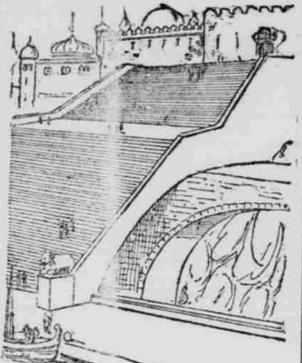
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louched his forehead, and of a sudden he saw a vision of the completed work, and saw, too, through the machinery, and how the difficulties connected with the flying arch that had hitherto baffled his genius were to be overcome. Then he awoke and once more commenced the work, but on a different plan, and he did not believe it, and on the last day of the five years he led the princess, in a bride, up the stair and into the palace. And in due course he became king by right of his wife and founded the present Zu-Venid dynasty, which is to this day called the "House of the Stairway," thus proving once more how energy and talent are the natural stepping stones to grandeur. And to commemorate his triumph he fashioned a statue of himself dreaming and of the fair woman who touched him on the forehead, and placed it in the great hall of the palace, and there it stands to this day.



The great staircase. Such was the great stair of Milosia, and such the city beyond. No wonder they called it the "Prowling City," for certainly those mighty works of solid granite did seem to frown down upon our littleness in their somber splendor. This was so even in the sunshine, but when the storm clouds gathered on her imperial brow, Milosia looked more like a supernatural dwelling place, or rather, like a mortal city, carved by the patient genius of generations out of the red silence of the mountain side.

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two fingers across the lips in salutation. Then soft footed attendants advanced from between the pillars, bearing seats which were placed in a line in front of the thrones. We three roadways themselves, quite unperceived, stood down, Alphonse and Umslopogas standing some passage to the right, and a similar blare from the left. Next a man with a long white wand of ivory appeared just in front of the right hand throne, and cried out (To be continued.)

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