KING Solomon's Mines.

BY H. RIDER HAGGARD.

a very seedy pair of corduroys, looks more striking than imposing. As for myself, my chain shirt being too big for me, I put it on over all my clothes, which caused it to bulge out in a somewhat ungainly fashion. I discarded my trousers, however, determined to go into battle with bare legs, in order to be the lighter, in case it became necessary to retire quickly, retaining only my veldtschoons. This, a spear, a shield, which I did not know how to use, a couple of tollas, a revolver, and a huge plume, which I pinned into the top of my shooting-hat, in order to give a bloodthirsty finish to my appearance, completed my modest equipment. In addition to all these articles, of course we had our rifles, but as ammunition was scarce, and they would be useless in case of a charge, we had arranged to have them carried behind us by bearers. As soon as we had equipped ourselves we hastily swallowed some food, and then started out to see how things were progressing. At one point in the table-land of the mountain there was a little koppie of brown stone, which served for the double purpose of headquarters and a conning tower. Here we found Infadoos surrounded by his own regiment, the Grays, which was undoubtedly the finest in the Kukuana army, and the same which we had first seen at the outlying kraal. This regiment, now three thousand five hundred strong, was being held in reserve, and the men were lying down on the grass in companies, and watching the king's forces creep out of Loo in long ant-like columns. There seemed to be no end to those columns—three in all, and each numbering at least eleven or twelve thousand men.

As soon as they were clear of the town they formed up. Their one body marched off to the right, one to the left, and the third come slowly on towards us.

"Ah," said Infadoos, "they are going to attack us on three sides at once."

This was rather serious news, for as our position on the top of the mountain, which was at least a mile and a half in circumference, was an extended one, it was important to us to concentrate our comparatively small defending force as much as possible. But as it was impossible for us to dictate in what way we should be attacked, we had to make the best of it, and accordingly sent orders to the various regiments to prepare to receive the separate onslaughts.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ATTACK.

Slowly, and without the slightest appearance of haste or excitement, the three columns crept on. When within about five hundred yards of us the main or center column halted at the root of a tongue of open plain which ran up into the hill, to enable the other two to circumvent our position, which was shaped more or less in the form of a horseshoe, the points being toward the town of Loo, their object being, no doubt, that threefold assault should be delivered simultaneously.

"Oh, for a Gatling!" groaned Good, as he contemplated the serried phalanxes beneath us. "I would clear the plain in twenty minutes."

"We have not got one, so it is no use yearning for it; but suppose you try a shot, Quatermain. See how near you can go to that tall fellow who appears to be in command. Two to one you miss him, and an even sovereign, to be honestly paid if ever we get out of this, that you don't drop the ball within ten yards."

This piqued me, so, loading the express with solid ball, I waited till my friend walked some ten yards out from his force in order to get a better view of our position, accompanied by an orderly, and then, lying down and resting the express upon a rock, I covered him. The rifle, like all expresses, was only sighted to three hundred and fifty yards, so to allow for the drop in trajectory I took him halfway down the neck, which ought, I calculated, to hit him in the chest. He stood quite still and gave me every opportunity, but whether it was the excitement or the wind, or the fact of the man being a long shot I don't know, but this was what happened. Getting dead on as I thought, a fine sight, I pressed, and when the puff of smoke had cleared away, I, to my disgust, saw my man standing unharmed whilst his orderly, who was at least three paces to the left, was stretched upon the ground, apparently dead. Turning swiftly, the officer I had aimed at began to run toward his force, in evident alarm.

"Bravo, Quatermain!" sung out Good, "you've frightened him."

This made me very angry, for if possible to avoid it, I hate to miss in public. When one can only do one thing well one likes to keep up one's reputation in that thing. Moved quite out of myself at my failure, I did a rash thing. Rapidly covering the general as he ran, I let drive with the second barrel. The poor man threw up his arms,

Rapidly covering the general as he ran, I let drive with the second barrel.

and he fell forward on his face. This time I had made no mistake; and—I say it as a proof of how little we think of others when our own pride or reputation is in question—I was brute enough to feel delighted at the sight.

The regiment who had seen the feat cheered wildly at the exhibition of the white man's magic, which they took as an omen of success, while the force to which the general had belonged—which, indeed, as we afterward ascertained, he had commanded—began to fall back in confusion. Sir Henry and Good now took up their rifles and began to fire, the latter industriously "browing" the dense mass before him with a Winchester repeater, and I also had another shot or two with the result that, so far as we could judge, we put some eight or ten men *hors de combat* before they got out of range.

Just as we stopped firing there came an ominous roar from our far right, then a similar roar from our left. The two other divisions were engaging us.

At the sound the mass of men before us opened out a little, and came on toward the hill up the spit of bare grassland at a slow trot, singing a deep-throated song as they advanced. We kept up a steady fire from our rifles as they came, Ignosi joining in occasionally, and accounted for several men, but of course produced no more effect upon that mighty rush of armed humanity than he who throws pebbles does on the advancing wave.

On they came, with a shout and clashing of spears; now they were driving in the outposts we had placed among the rocks at the foot of the hill. After that the advance was a little slower, for although as yet we had offered no serious opposition, the attacking force had to come up hill, and came slowly to save their breath. Our first line of defense was about half way up the side, our second fifty yards further back, while our third occupied the edge of the plain.

On they came, shouting their war cry "Twala! Twala! Chiele! Chiele!" (Twala Twala! Smite! Smite). "Ignosi! Ignosi Chiele! Chiele!" answered our people They were quite close now, and the tollas or throwing-knives began to flash backward and forward, and now with an awful yell the battle closed in.

To and fro swayed the mass of struggling warriors, men falling thick as leaves in an autumn wind; but before long the superior weight of the attacking force began to tell and our first line of defense was slowly pressed back, till it merged into the second. Here the struggle was very fierce, but again our people were back and up, till at length, within twenty minutes of the commencement of the fight, our third line came into action.

But by this time the assailants were much exhausted, and had besides lost many men killed and wounded, and to break through that third impenetrable hedge of spears proved beyond their powers. For awhile the dense mass of struggling warriors swung backward and forward in the fierce ebb and flow of battle, and the issue was doubtful. Sir Henry watched the desperate struggle with a trembling eye, and then without a word he rushed off, followed by Good, and flung himself into the hottest of the fray. As for myself I stopped where I was.

The soldiers caught sight of his tall form as he plunged into the battle, and there rose a cry of—

"*Nazia Incubu!*" (Here is the Elephant!) "*Chiele! Chiele!*"

From that moment the issue was no longer in doubt. Inch by inch, fighting with desperate gallantry, the attacking force was pressed back down the hillside, till at last it retreated upon its reserves in something like confusion. At that moment, too, a messenger arrived to say that the left attack had been repulsed; and I was just beginning to congratulate myself that the affair was over for the present, when, to our horror, we perceived our men who had been engaged in the right defense being driven toward us across the plain, followed by swarms of the enemy, who had evidently succeeded at this point.

Ignosi, who was standing by me, took in the situation at a glance, and issued a rapid order. Instantly the reserve regiment round us (the Grays) extended itself.

Again Ignosi gave a word of command, which was taken up and repeated by the captains, and in another second, to my intense disgust, I found myself involved in a furious onslaught upon the advancing foe. Getting as much as I could behind Ignosi's huge frame, I made the best of a bad job, and toddled along to be killed, as though I liked it. In a minute or two—the time seemed all too short to me—we were plunging through the flying groups of our men, who at once began to reform behind us, and now I am sure I do not know what happened. All I can remember is a dreadful rolling noise of the meeting shields, and the sudden apparition of a huge ruffian, whose eyes seemed literally to be starting out of his head, making straight at me with a bloody spear. But—I say it with pride—I rose to the occasion It was an occasion before which most people would have collapsed once and for all. Seeing that if I stood where I was I must be done for, I, as the horrid apparition came, flung myself down in front of him so cleverly, that, being unable to stop himself, he took a header right over my prostrate form Before he could rise again, I had risen and settled the matter from behind with my revolver.

Shortly after this, somebody knocked me down, and I remember no more of the charge.

When I came to I found myself back at the koppie, with Good bending over me with some water in a gourd.

"How do you feel, old fellow?" he asked, anxiously.

I got up and shook myself before answering.

"Pretty well, thank you," I answered.

"Thank heaven! when I saw them carry you in I felt quite sick. I thought you were done for."

"Not this time, my boy. I fancy I only got a rap on the head which knocked me out of time. How has it ended?"

"They are repulsed at every point for the time. The loss is dreadfully heavy; we have lost quite two thousand killed and wounded, and they must have lost three. Look, there's a sight!" and he pointed to long lines of men advancing by fours. In the center of, and being borne by each group of four, was a kind of hide tray, of which a Kukuana force always carried a quantity, with a loop for a handle at each corner. On these trays—and their number seemed endless—lay wounded men, who as they arrived, were hastily examined by the medicine men, of whom ten were attached to each regiment. If the wound was not of a fatal character, the sufferer was taken away and attended to as carefully as circumstances would allow.

But if, on the other hand, the wounded man's condition was hopeless, what followed was very dreadful, though doubtless it was the truest mercy. One of the doctors, under the pretense of carrying out an examination, swiftly opened an artery with a sharp knife, and in a minute or two the sufferer expired painlessly. There were many cases that day in which this was done. In fact it was done in most cases when the wound was in the body, for the gash made by the entry of the enormously broad spears used by the Kukuanas generally rendered recovery hopeless. In most cases the poor sufferers were already unconscious, and in others the fatal "nick" of the artery was done so swiftly and painlessly that they did not seem to notice it. Still it was a ghastly sight, and one from which we were glad to escape; indeed, I never remember one which affected me more than seeing those gallant soldiers thus put out of pain by the red-handed medicine men, except, indeed, on an occasion, when, after an attack, I saw a force of Swazis burying their hopelessly wounded alive.

Hurrying from this dreadful scene to the further side of the koppie, we found Sir Henry (who still held a bloody battle-ax in his hand), Ignosi, Infadoos, and one or two of the chiefs in deep consultation.

"Thank Heaven, here you are, Quatermain! I can't quite make out what Ignosi wants to do. It seems that, though we have beaten off the attack, Twala is now receiving large reinforcements, and is showing a disposition to invest us, with a view of starving us out."

"That's awkward."

"Yes; especially as Infadoos says that the water supply has given out."

"My lord, that is so," said Infadoos; "the spring cannot supply the wants of so great a multitude, and is failing rapidly. Before night we shall all be thirsty. Listen, Macumazahn. Thou art wise, and hast doubtless seen many wars in the lands from whence thou camest—that is, if, indeed, they make wars in the stars. Now tell us, what shall we do? Twala has brought up many fresh men to take the place of those who have fallen. But Twala has learned a lesson; the hawk did not think to find the heron ready; but our beak has pierced his breast; he will not strike at us again. We, too, are wounded, and he will wait for us to die; he will wind himself round us like a snake round a buck, and fight the fight of 'sit down.'"

"I hear you," I said.

"So, Macumazahn, thou seest we have no water here, and but a little food, and we must choose between these three things—to languish like a starving lion in his den, or to strive to break away toward the north, or"—and here he rose and pointed toward the dense mass of the foes—"to launch ourselves straight at Twala's throat. Incubu, the great warrior—for to-day he fought like a buffalo in a net, and Twala's soldiers went down before his ax like corn before the hail; with these eyes I saw it. Incubu says 'Charge;, but the Elephant (Incubu) is ever prone to charge. Now what says Macumazahn, the wily old fox who has seen much and loves to bite his enemy from behind? The last word is in Ignosi the king, for it is a king's right to speak of war; but let us hear thy voice, too, of him of the transparent eye."

"What sayest thou, Ignosi?" I asked.

"Nay, my father," answered our quondam servant, who now, clad as he was in the full panoply of savage war, looked every inch a warrior king, "do thou speak, and let me, who am but a child in wisdom beside thee, hearken to thy words."

Thus adjured, I, after taking hasty counsel with Good and Sir Henry, delivered my opinion briefly to the effect that, being trapped, our best chance, especially in view of the failure of our water supply, was to initiate an attack upon Twala's forces, and then I recommended that the attack should be delivered at once, "before our wounds grew stiff," and also before the sight of Twala's overpowering force caused the hearts of our soldiers "to wax small like fat before a fire." Otherwise, I pointed out, some of the captains might change their minds, and, making peace with Twala, desert him, or even betray us into his hands.

This expression of opinion seemed, on the whole, to be favorably received; indeed, among the Kukuanas my utterances met with a respect which has never been accorded to them before or since. But the real decision as to our course lay with Ignosi, who, since he had been recognized as rightful king, could exercise the almost unbounded rights of sovereignty, including, of course, the final decison on matters of generalship, and it was to him that all eyes were now turned.

At length after a pause, during which he appeared to be thinking deeply, he spoke:

"Incubu, Macumuzahn, and Boughwan, brave white men, and my friends; Infadoos, my uncle, and chiefs; my heart is fixed. I will strike at Twala this day, and set my fortunes on the blow, ay, and my life; my life and your lives also. Listen: thus will I strike. Ye see how the hill curves round like the half-moon, and how the plain runs like a green toward us within the curve?"

"We see," I answered.

"Good; it is now midday, and the men eat and rest after the toil of battle. When the sun has turned and traveled a little way toward the dark, let thy regiment, my uncle, advance with one other down to the green tongue. And it shall be that when Twala sees it he shall hurl his force at it to crush it. But the spot is narrow, and the regiments can come against thee one at a time only; so shall they be destroyed one by one, and the eyes of all Twala's army shall be fixed upon a struggle the like of which has not been seen by living man. And with thee my uncle shall go Incubu my friend, that when Twala sees his battle-ax flashing in the first rank of the 'Grays' his heart may grow faint. And I will come with the second regiment, that which follows thee, so that if ye are destroyed, as it may happen, there may yet be a king left to fight for; and with me shall come Macumuzahn the wise."

"It is, well, oh, king," said Infadoos, apparently contemplating the certainty of the complete annihilation of his regiment with perfect calmness. Truly these Kukuanas are a wonderful people. Death has no terrors for them when it is incurred in the course of a duty.

"And whilst the eyes of the multitude of Twala's regiments are thus fixed upon the fight," went on Ignosi, "behold, one third of the men who are left alive to us (*i. e.*, about six thousand) shall creep along the right horn of the hill and fall upon the left flank of Twala's force, and one third shall creep along the left horn and fall upon Twala's right flank. And when I see that the horns are ready to toss Twala, then will I, with the men who are left to me, charge home in Twala's face, and if fortune goes with us the day will be ours, and before Night drives her horses from the mountains to the mountains we shall sit in peace at Loo. And now let us eat and make ready; and, Infadoos, do thou prepare, that the plan be carried out; and stay, let my white father Bougwan go with the right horn, that his shining eye may give courage to the men."

The arrangements for attack thus briefly indicated were thus set in motion with a rapidity that spoke well for the perfection of the Kukuana military system. Within little more than an hour rations had been served out to the men and devoured, the three divisions were formed, the plan of attack explained to the leaders, and the whole force, with the exception of a guard left with the wounded, now numbering about eighteen thousand men in all, was ready to be put in motion.

Presently Good came up and shook hands with Sir Henry and myself.

"Good-bye, you fellows," he said, "I am off with the right wing according to orders; and so I have come to shake hands in case we should not meet again, you know," he added, significantly.

We shook hands in silence, and not without the exhibition of as much emotion as Englishmen are wont to show.

"It is a queer business," said Sir Henry, his deep voice shaking a little, "and I confess I never expect to see to-morrow's sun. As far as I can make out, the Grays, with whom I am to go, are to fight until they are wiped out in order to enable the wings to slip round unawares and outflank Twala. Well, so be it; at any rate, it will be a man's death! Good-bye, old fellow. God bless you! I hope you will pull through and live to collar the diamonds; but if you do, take my advice and don't have anything more to do with pretenders!"

In another second Good had wrung us both by the hand and gone; and then Infadoos came up and led off Sir Henry to his place in the forefront of the Grays, whilst, with many misgivings, I departed with Ignosi to my station in the second attacking regiment.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST STAND OF THE GRAYS.

In a few minutes the regiments destined

Continued on next Page.

January is gone, yet some papers are still publishing those lists of marriageable young men.

Church Howe has $100,000 invested in his Nemaha county stock farm and has 125 head of trotting horses.

The girl's industrial school building at Geneva is well along toward completion, and is said to be admirably arrangek for its purpose.

The principal of the Ulysses schools has been arrested on the charge of unmetcifully beating his pupils.