

DRAWN BY E. K. JOHNSON

A tall man of about thirty, with the remains of great personal beauty, came hurrying in, staggering beneath the weight of a massive iron box.

"SHE:" A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

By H. RIDER HAGGARD,

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "Dawn," "The Witch's Head," &c.

INTRODUCTION

In giving to the world the record of what, looked at from that point of view only, is I suppose one of the most wonderful and mysterious adventures ever experienced by mortal man, I feel it incumbent on me to explain what my exact connection with it is. And so I may as well say at once that I am not the narrator but only the editor of this extraordinary history, and then proceed to tell how it found its way into my hands.

Some years ago I, the editor, was staying with a brother at one of the Universities, which for the purpose of this history we will call Cambridge, and was one day much struck with the appearance of two people whom I saw going up-and-down the street. One of these gentlemen was I think, without exception, the handsomest young fellow I have ever met upon me. He was very tall, very broad, and had a look of power and a grace of bearing that turned an onlooker to him as it is to a wild dog. In addition his face was almost without blemish good face as well as a beautiful set, and when he lifted his hat, which he did just then to a passing lady, I saw that his head was covered with little golden curls growing close to his scalp.

"Good gracious!" I said to my brother, with whom I was walking, "why that fellow looks like a statue of Apollo come to life. What a splendid man he is."

"Yes," he answered, "he is the handsomest man in the University, and one of the nicest too. They call him 'the Greek god'; but look at the other one, he's Vinney's (that's the god's name) guardian,

and supposed to be full of every kind of information. They call him 'Chamo.' " I looked and found the older man quite as interesting in his way as the glorified specimen of humanity at his side. He appeared to be about forty years of age, and was I think as ugly as his companion was handsome. To begin with, he was thin, rather low-legged, very deep-chested, and with unusually long arms. His hair dark hair and small eyes, and the hair grew right down on his forehead, and his whiskers grew right up to his hair, so that there was unconsciously little of his countenance to be seen. Altogether he reminded me forcibly of a goblin, and yet there was something very pleasing and graceful about the man's eyes. I remember saying that I should like to know him.

"All right," answered my brother, "nothing easier. I know Vinney. I'll introduce you," and he did, and for some minutes we stood chatting—about the folk people, I think, for I had just returned from the Cape at the time. Presently, however, a stoutish lady, whom some I do not remember, came along the pavement, accompanied by a pretty fair-haired girl, and these two Mr. Vinney, who clearly knew their well, at once joined, and walked off in their company. I remember being rather amused because of the change in the expression of the older man, whose name I discovered was, Holly, when he saw the ladies advancing. He suddenly stopped short in his track, cast a reproachful look at his companion, and with an abrupt nod to myself, turned and marched off alone across the street. I heard afterwards that he was popularly supposed to be at work about a woman so most people are of a mad dog, which accounted for his precipitate retreat. I cannot say, however, that

young Vinney showed much aversion to feminine society on this occasion. Indeed I remember laughing, and remarking to my brother at the time that he was not the sort of man whom one would care to introduce to the lady one was going to marry, since it is exceedingly probable that the acquaintance would end in a display of her affection. He was altogether so good-looking, and, what is more, he had none of that conventional and conceited about him which usually affects handsome men, and strikes them deeply derided by their fellows.

That evening my visit came to an end, and that was the last I saw or heard of Chamo and the Greek god for many a long day. Indeed I have never seen either of them from that hour to this, and do not suppose it likely that I shall. But a month ago I received a letter and two packets, one of manuscript, and on opening the first found that it was signed by "Hector Holly," a name that at the moment was not familiar to me. It ran as follows:—

— College, Cambridge.

"MY DEAR SIR,
"You will be surprised, considering the very slight nature of our acquaintance, to get a letter from me. Indeed, I think I had better begin by reminding you that we once met, now some five years ago, when your brother introduced me and my word Leo Vinney to you in the street at Cambridge. To be brief and come to my business. I have recently read with much interest a book of yours describing a Central African adventure. I take it that this book is partly true, and partly an effort of the imagination. However



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"At last the lock yielded, and the cabinet stood open before us."

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II.

THE YEARS RUN BY

OF course, poor Violey's sudden death caused a great stir in the College; but, as he was known to be very ill, and a satisfactory doctor's certificate was forthcoming, there was no inquiry. They were not so particular about inquiries in those days as they are now, indeed, they were generally disinclined, as coming a scandal. Under all these circumstances, as I was asked no questions, I did not feel called upon to volunteer any information about my interview of the night of Violey's disease, beyond saying that he had come into my rooms to see me, as he often did. On the day of the funeral a lawyer came down from London and followed my poor friend's remains to the grave, and then went back with no papers and receipts, excepting, of course, the iron chest which had been left in my keeping. For a week after I heard no more of the matter, and, indeed, my attention was amply occupied in other ways, for I was up by my Fellowship, a task that had prevented me from attending the funeral, or seeing the lawyer. At last, however, the commutation was over, and I came back to my rooms and sat in my easy chair with a happy consciousness that I had got through it very nicely. Soon, however, my thoughts, released of the lawyer that had cradled them into a single groove during the last few days, turned to the events of the night of poor Violey's death, and again I asked myself what it all meant, and wondered if I should hear anything more of the matter, and, if I did not, what it would be my duty to do with the curious iron chest. I sat there and thought and thought till I began to grow quite disturbed over the whole occurrence; the agonising midnight visit, the prophecy of death so shortly to be fulfilled, the scenes each that I had taken, and which he had called on me to sever for his mother's sake in this. Had the man committed suicide? It looked that it. And what was the name of which he spoke? The circumstances were almost amazing, so much so that, though I am by no means nervous, or apt to be alarmed at anything that may seem to crop in the bounds of the unusual, I grew shiver, and began to wish I had had nothing to do with it. How much more do I wish it now over twenty years afterwards.

As I yet said thought there was a knock at the door, and a letter. It was a lawyer's letter, and an instant told me that it was concerned with my trust. The letter—which I still have—read thus:—

"Sir,—

"Our client, the late M. L. Violey, Esq., who died on the 25th instant in—College, Cambridge, has left behind him a Will, of which you will please find copy enclosed, and of which we are the executors. By this Will you will perceive that you take a life-interest in about half of the late Mr. Violey's property, now located in Cash, subject to your acceptance of the guardianship of his only son, Lord Violey, as granted an infant, aged five. Had we not ourselves drawn up the document in question in obedience to Mr. Violey's clear and precise instructions, both personal and written, and had he not been assured as that he had very good reasons for what he was doing, we are bound to tell you that we left bound to call the attention of the Court of Chancery to them, in order that such steps might be taken as seemed desirable in either by controlling the capacity of the executor or otherwise, to satisfy the interests of the infant. As it is, knowing that the settlor was a gentleman of the highest intelligence and accuracy, and that he had absolutely no relations living to whom he could have confided the guardianship of the child, we do not feel justified in making this course.

"Awaiting such instructions as you please to send us in regard to the delivery of the infant and the payment of the proportion of the dividends due to you,

"We remain, Sir,

"Yours faithfully yours,

"GEOFFREY AND JOHNSON."

I put down the letter, and ran my eye through the Will, which appeared from its clear intelligibility, to have been drawn on the strictest legal principles. So far as I could discover, however, it was entirely new to what my friend had said me on the night of his death. So it was not clear at all. I went into the house, and I re-read the letter which he had left with the chest. It looked old and opened it. It only contained such directions as he had already given to me as to opening the chest on Lord Violey's birthday, and laid down the outlines of the boy's education, which was to include Greek, the higher Mathematics, and Arabic. At the bottom there was a postscript to the effect that if the boy died under the age of twenty-five, which, however, he did not believe would be the case, I was to open the chest, and act on the instructions I obtained if I saw fit. If I did not see fit, I was to destroy

all the contents. On no account was I to put them on to a stranger.

As this letter added nothing material to my knowledge, and certainly raised no further objections in my mind to undertaking the task I had promised my dead friend to undertake, there was only one course open to me, namely, to write to Messrs. Geoffrey and Johnson, and express my readiness to enter on the trust, stating that I should be willing to undertake the charge of the lad in ten days' time. This done, I proceeded to the authorities of my College, and, having told them as much of the story as I considered desirable, which was not very much, after considerable difficulty succeeded in procuring them to concur in point, and in the event of my having obtained a fellowship, which I was pretty certain I had done, allow me to have the child to live with me. Their consent, however, was only granted on the condition that I vacated my rooms in college, and took lodgings. This I did, and with some difficulty succeeded in obtaining very good apartments quite close to the college gates. The next thing was to find a nurse. And on this point I came to a determination. I would have no nurse to tend to the child, and send his education to me. The boy was old enough to do without female assistance, so I set to work to hunt up a suitable male attendant. With some difficulty I succeeded in hiring a most respectable road-bound young man, who had been a helper in a hawking-stable, but who said that he was one of a family of servants and well-accustomed to the ways of children, and proposed himself quite willing to undertake the charge of Master Leo when he arrived. There, having taken the iron box to town, and with my own hands deposited it in my chambers, I bought some books upon the health and management of children, and read them, first in regard, and then closed it. John—that was the young man's name—went away.

At length the child arrived in the charge of an elderly person, who went humbly at parting with him, and I bemoaned, but he was, indeed, I do not think that I ever saw such a perfect child before or since. His eyes were grey, his forehead broad, and his hair, even at that early age, shone out as a crown, without being touched or thin. But perhaps his most attractive point was his face, which was pure gold in colour and rightly curled over his shapely head. He cried a little when his nurse finally bore herself away, and left him with me. Never shall I forget the scene. There he stood, with the sunlight from the window playing upon his golden curls, his feet crossed in one eye, whilst his look was as in with the other. I was seated in a chair, and stretched out my hand to him to induce him

whole member of the family. Nor was this all. At the foot of the other writing, printed in the same old red, was the outline of a somewhat weird drawing of a Sphinx wearing two feathers, symbols of majesty, which, though common enough upon the effigies of sacred bulls and gods, I have never before met with on a Sphinx.

On the right-hand side of this surface of the shield, painted in bright red on the spot not covered by the metal, and signed in blue paint, was the following quaint inscription—

IN EARTH AND SKIE AND SEA
STANDS THINEIN THY RE.
HOC PECTE
BOMOTHEA VINCE.

Perfectly bewildered, I turned the relic over. It was covered from top to bottom with notes and signatures in Greek, Latin, and English. The first in usual Greek was by Theistemon, the son to whom the writing was addressed. It was: "I cannot go. To thee, my son Kallistratos."

This Kallistratos (probably, in the Greek fashion, so named after his grandfather) evidently made some attempt to start on the quest, for his entry written in very faint and almost illegible script, is: "I started to seek, but the gods were against me. To thee, my son."

Between these two ancient writings, the second of which was inscribed upside down—that had it not been for the transcript of them executed by Vincy, I should not have been able to read, since, owing to their having been written on that portion of the shield which had, in the course of ages, undergone some bending, they were nearly even with the level, modern-looking signature of one Lincol Vincy, "Eliato Sep 17," which was written thereon, I think, by Leo's grandfather. To the right of this were the initials "J. B. V.," and below came a variety of Greek signatures, in usual and cursive character, and what appeared to be some repetitions of the sentence "To thy son," showing that the relic had been passed on from generation to generation.

The next legible thing after the Greek signatures was the word "ROMAE, A.D.C." showing that the family had now migrated to Rome. Unfortunately, however, the date of their settlement there is far over lost, for just where it had been placed a piece of the parchment is broken away.

Then followed a date or more of Latin signatures, jotted about here and there, wherever there was a space upon the suitable coat of their inscription. These signatures were, almost without exception, ended with the name "Vindex" or "the Avenger," which seems to have been adopted by the family after its migration to Rome as a kind of equivalent to the usual English name of "Revenge" as a surname. Ultimately, of course, this Latin cognomen of Vindex was transformed first into De Vincy and then into the plain modern Vincy. It is very curious to observe how the idea of revenge, inspired by an Egyptian before the time of Christ, is thus, as it were, embodied in an English family name, and how, as a line of the Roman surnames inscribed upon the shield I have recently since found mentioned in history and other records. They were, if I remember right,

MVSIVS, VINDEX
SEK. VARIVA, MARCVLLVS,
C. FFFIDIVS, C. F. VINDEX.

184 LARERIA TOMPEIANA, CONIVX, MACRINI, VINDEX.

the last being, of course, that of a Roman lady. After the Roman names there is a variety of a goodly number of surnames. Nobody will ever know so what is the history of the relic during those dark ages, or how it came to have been preserved in the family. My poor friend Vincy had, it will be remembered, told me that his Roman ancestors finally settled in Lombardy, and when Charlemagne invaded it returned with him across the Alps, and made their home in Brittany, where he created in England in the reign of Edward the Confessor. How he knew this I am not aware, for there is no reference to Lombardy or Charlemagne upon the relic, though, as will presently be seen, there is a reference to Brittany. To continue: the next entries on the shield, if I may except a long splash either of blood or red-pigment, and probably representing Crusaders' swords, and an almost obliterated monogram ("D. V.") in scarlet and blue, perhaps executed by that same Dorothea Vincy, who wrote, or rather painted, the doggerel couplet.

Then came what was perhaps as curious an entry as anything upon this extraordinary relic. It is executed in black-lettr, written over the crosses or Crusaders' swords, and dated fourteen hundred and forty-five. As the best plan will be to allow it to speak for itself, I here give the original Latin, of course without the contractions, from which it will be seen that the writer was a fair medieval Latinist. Also we discovered what is still more curious, a modernization of a black-letter translation of the Latin which we found inscribed on a second parchment that was in the coffer, apparently older in date than that on which was inscribed the Latin black letter translation of the usual Greek—

Expanded Version of the Black Letter Inscription on the Shield of Ancestrata.

"ISTA reliquie est valde misticum et supricillous opus, quod majores mei ex America, scilicet Deltanonia Minora, secum convehierunt; et quod in sacris clericis semper patri meo in mans feratibus quodammodo illud detruere, affirmans quod eum ab ipso Sathana recedens prestigios et dyabolos ante, nature pater inuenerat, illud in duas partes, equas quidem ego Johannes de Vincto solvas servavi et adaptari sicut apparet die hinc postmo post forum beate Marie Virginis anni gratie MCCCCXLV."

Moderated Version of the Black Letter Translation.

"TERTI seltike ya a syblite mistyvald works and a marvylous, the whyche myne caracters aforseynd dyd conweigh hider with them from Armoyce which ys to sein Britaine the Lesse and a certayne holye clerke should sylweys beare my fadir on hisse that he overgite me by far to trouble the same, aforseynd that yt was fownden in a vessel of Sathans by my selfe by eric magikes and dyvellyshes wherefore my fadir dyd take the same and to-letyt ys yn twetyne, but I, John de Vincy, dyd save whool the waye parties therof and twopeny this together agayne as ye see, on thisdaye mondaye next folowynge after the feste of Seynte Marye the Bleesed Vyrgyne, ys the yere of Salvacion fourtynto hundred and fyve and fortynto."

The next and, save one, last entry, was Elizabethan, and dated 1574. "A most strange historie, and one that did cost my father his life; for in soodegery for the place upon the east coast of Africa, his pntance was snak by a Portuguese gallion of Lorenzo Marques, and he himself perished."—JOHN VINCEY.

Then came the last entry, apparently, to judge by the style of writing, made by some representative of the family in the middle of the eighteenth century. It was the well-known quotation by Hamlet, "There are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio."

"Well," I said, when I had read these paragraphs out, at least those of them that were still legible, "that is the conclusion of the

"Another thing that makes me fix the date of this entry at the middle of the eighteenth century is that I have noticed every 'H' filled,' written about 1740, in which those two lines are obliterated almost exactly in the same way, and I have little doubt that the Vincy who wrote them did the parchment may have been there as substituted at this date. Of course, the fact really said is—

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio.
This is the dream of your philosophy." Etc.

whole matter, Leo, and now you can form your own opinion on it. I have already formed mine.

"And what is it?" he asked, in his quick way.

"It is this. I believe that posited to be perfectly genuine, and that, wonderful as it may seem, it has come down in your family since the fourth century before Christ. The entries absolutely prove it, and characters, however improbable it may seem, it must be accepted. But there I stop. That your remote ancestors, the Egyptian Princess, or some scribe under her direction, wrote that which we see on the tile I have no doubt, nor have I the slightest doubt but that her offerings and the loss of her husband had turned her head, and that she was not right in her mind when she did write it."

"How do you account for what my father saw and heard there?" asked Leo.

"Coincidence. No doubt there are plenty of bluffs on the coast of Africa that look something like a man's head, and plenty of people who speak luscious Arabic. Also, I believe that there are lots of swamps. Another thing is, Leo, and I am sorry to say it, but I do not believe that your poor father was quite right when he wrote that letter. He had met with a great trouble, and also he had allowed this story to prey on his imagination, and he was a very imaginative man. Anyway, I believe that the whole thing is the most unimagined rubbish. I know that there are curious things and forces in nature which we rarely meet with, and, when we do meet them, cannot understand. But until I see it with my own eye, which I am not likely to, I never will believe that there is any means of avoiding death, even for a time, or that there is or was a white scarves living in the heart of an African swamp. It is both, my boy, all both. What do you say, Job?"

"I say, sir, that it is a lie, and, if it is true, I hope Mr. Leo won't meddle with so such things, for no good can't come of it."

"Perhaps you are both right," said Leo, in a quiet voice. "I express an opinion. But I say this. I am going to set the matter at rest once and for all, and if you won't come with me I will go by myself."

I looked at the young man, and saw that he meant what he said. When Leo means what he says, he always puts on a curious little look about the mouth. It has been a trick of his from a child. Now, of course, I had no intention of letting Leo go anywhere by himself, for my own sake, if not for his. I was far too much attached to him for that. I am not a man of many ties or affections. Circumstances have been against me in this respect, and men and women shrink from me, or, at least, I fancy they do, which comes to the same thing, thinking, perhaps, that my forbidding exterior is a key to my character. Rather than endure this, I have, to a great extent, secluded myself from the world, and cut myself off from those opportunities which with most men result in the formation of relations more or less intimate. Therefore Leo was all the world to me—brother, child, and friend—and until he weasled of me, where he went there I should go too. But, of course, it would not do to let him see how great a hold he had over me; so I cut about for some means whereby I might let myself down easy.

"Yes, I shall go, Uncle; and if I don't find the 'rolling Pillar of Life,' at my rate I shall get some first-class shooting."

"Here was my opportunity, and I took it."

"Shooting?" I said. "Ah! yes; I never thought of that. It must be a very wild stretch of country, and full of big game. I have always wanted to kill a buffalo before I die. Do you know, my boy, I don't believe in the quest, but I do believe in big game, and really, on the whole, if after thinking it over, you may give up your mind to go, I will take a holiday, and come with you."

"Ah," said Leo, "I thought that you would not lose such a chance. But how about money? We shall want a good lot."

"You need not trouble about that," I answered. "There is all your income that has been accumulating for years, and besides that I have saved two-thirds of what your father left to me as a consideration in trust for you. There is plenty of cash."

"Very well, then, we may as well settle these things away and go up to town to see about our guns. By the way, Job, are you coming too? It's time you began to see the world."

"Well, sir," answered Job, stolidly, "I don't look much with foreign parts, but if both you gentlemen are going you will want somebody to look after you, and I am not the man to step behind after serving you for twenty years."

"That's right, Job," said I. "You won't find out anything wonderful, but you'll get some good shooting. And now look here, both of you. I won't have a word said to a living soul about this nonsense," and I pointed to the postcard. "If it got out, and anything happened to me, my next of kin would dispair my will on the ground of insanity, and I should become the laughing-stock of Cambridge."

That day three months we were on the ocean, bound for Zanzibar.

(To be continued)



DRAWN BY E. K. JOHNSON, R.W.A.

"The top of the peak, which was about eighty feet high by one hundred and fifty thick at its base, was shaped like a negro's head and hair."

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IV.

THE SIGNAL.

"It is different in the sense that I have now to tell from that which has just been told." Goro rose the quiet coffee-house, gave the waiter a few English shillings and a couple of dollars, and the familiar to the waiter, and in their place there stood a vision of the great red man glancing in staid silver light beneath the brows of the tall African man. A gentle breeze fills the lungs and the feet of the man, and down on through the water that rippled musically against the sides. Most of the men are sleeping forward, for it is a warm night, but a slow westerly wind, hushed by some, stands in the hills, hilly morning by the stars. Three miles or more to the eastward is a low thin line. It is the Eastern shore of Central Africa. We are running to the southeast, before the North-East wind, between the mainland and the reef that for hundreds of miles fringes that perfidious coast. The night is quiet—so quiet that a whisper could rattle across the water to us from the distant land. The look at the tiller built up his hand, and says one word—
"Watch!"
We all sit up and listen. Then it comes again, a clear, metallic rattle, that thrills us to the marrow.
"To-morrow by ten o'clock," I say, "we ought, if the Captain is not set on his reckoning, which I think very probable, to make this enormous rock with a man's head and begin our descent."
"Had better not search for the raised city of the Fata of Libi," answered Leo, taking his pipe from his mouth, and heaping a log.
"Impossible?" I answered. "You were asking your Anko with that man at the other side of the afternoon. What did he tell you? He has been trading (slave-trading probably) up and down these latitudes for half of his life, and once landed on this very 'man' head. Did he ever hear anything of the raised city or the seven?"
"No," answered Leo. "He says that the country is all covered with sand, and full of snakes, especially pythons, and game, and that we can live there. But then there is a lack of oxygen all along the East African coast, so that does not go for much."
"Yes," I said, "it does—it goes for malaria. You see what sort of an opinion these gentry have of the country. Not one of them

will go with us. They think that we are mad, and open my mind I believe that they are right. If ever we see Old England again I shall be astonished. However, I don't see greatly matter to me, at my age, but I am anxious for you, Leo and Job. It's a Tom Fool's business, my boy."

"All right, Uncle Herbert. So far as I am concerned, I am willing to take my chance. Look! What is that cloud?" and he pointed to a dark blotch upon the starry sky, some miles away from us.

"Go and ask the men at the tiller," I said.
He rose and stretched his long arms, and went. Presently he returned.

"He says it is a squall, but it will pass for an hour or so." Just then Job came up, looking very stout and English in his shining suit of brown flannel, and with a sort of perplexed appearance upon his hawkish nose that had been very common with him since he got into these strange waters.
"Pardon me," he said, touching his sun hat, which was stuck on to the back of his head in a somewhat ludicrous fashion, "as we have got all those guns and things in the white-hot terra, to say nothing of the provisions in the lockers, I think it would be best if I got down and slept in her. I don't like the look of them; they dropped his voice to a passionate whisper—"of these black gentry; they have such a wonderful thievish way about them. Supposing now that some of them were to slip into the boat at night and take the cable, and make off with her? It would be a pretty go, that would."

The white-hot, I may explain, was one that we had had built at Durban, in the North of England, and brought with us, as we knew that this coast was a network of crooks, and that our night captain would be a network of crooks. She was a beautiful little, thirty-ton boat, with a masted-hull for sailing, copper-bottomed to keep the worms out of her, and full of water-tight compartments. The captain of the boat had told us that when we reached the rock, which he knew well, and which appeared to be identical with the one described upon the sheet and by Leo's father, he would not probably be able to run up to it on account of the shoals and breakers, and he had employed three boats that very morning, what we were totally ignorant of, the wind having dropped to nothing, in transferring much of our goods and stores to the white-hot, placing the guns, ammunition, and preserved provisions in the water-tight lockers specially prepared for them, so that when we did sight the white-hot

we should have nothing to do but step into the boat, and run her ashore. Another reason that induced us to take this precautionary step was that Arab captives are apt to run past the point that they are making, either from carelessness or owing to a mistake in its locality. Now, an sailor will know, it is quite impossible for a show which is only edged in sun before the moment to be back against it. Therefore we got our boat ready to run for the rock at any moment.

"Well, Job," I said, "perhaps it would be as well. There are lots of blankets there, only be careful to keep out of the main, or it may turn your head to blind you."

"Look, sir? I don't think it would much matter if it did; it is that turned already with the sight of these blackcoats and their filthy, stinking ways. They ask only if for much, they say; and they smell bad enough for it already."

Job, it will be perceived, was not attracted to the manners and customs of our black-skinned brethren.

Accordingly we pulled up the boat by the tow-ropes till it was right under the stern of the show, and Job heaved line her about as gracefully as a sack of provisions. They were returned and to down on the deck again, and stacked and lashed in such girth and jacks. The night was so black, and our brains were so full of suppressed excitement of our own and another, that we did not feel inclined to turn in. For nearly an hour we sat there, and then, I think, we both dozed off. At last I have a faint recollection of Leo sharply explaining that the boat was not a bad place to let a heffer, if you could catch him exactly between the horns, or send your knife down his throat, or some nonsense of the sort.

Then I remember no more; till suddenly—a frightful roar of wind, a drizzle of terror from the arching crew, and a whirlwind of water in our faces. Some of the iron can to lie on the handholds and lower the sail, but the point passed and the yard would not come down. I sprang to my feet and hung on by a rope. The sky fell as dark as pitch, but the moon still shone brightly ahead of us and lit up the blackness. Beneath it shone a huge white-topped boat, twenty feet high or more, was making on so on. It was on the bow—the moon shone on its mast and tipped its sails with light. On it rode beneath the fully dived by the head of our goods and stores, in the twinkling of an eye, I saw the black shape of the white-hot cast high into the air on the breaking waves. Then—a shock of water, a wild roar of boiling foam, and I

some what had excited my curiosity to an extent of which I was scarcely ashamed, and I was prepared to gratify it at any cost. Accordingly, having carefully fished the man, re-stowed the boat, and got out our rifle, we embarked. Fortunately the wind was blowing on shore land, the ocean, so we were able to hoist the sail on shore land daybreak for some hours, and off shore again at sunset, and the explanation that I offer of this is that, when the earth is cooled by the dew and the night, the hot air rises, and the fish are driven from the water to land to avoid the heat. At least that appeared to be the rule here.

Taking advantage of this favourable wind, we sailed merrily up the river for three or four hours. Once we came across a school of Hippopotami, which rose, and bellowed dreadfully at us within ten or a dozen fathoms of the boat, much to Job's alarm, and, I will confess, to my own. These were the first Hippopotami that we had ever seen, and, to judge by their insatiable curiosity, I should judge that we were the first or twice that they had ever seen. Upon my word, I once or twice thought that they were coming into the boat to gratify it. Leo wanted to fire at them, but I dissuaded him, fearing the consequences. Also we saw hundreds of crocodiles, basking on the muddy banks, and thousands upon thousands of waterfowl. Some of these we shot, and among them was a wild goose, which, in addition to the sharp curved spurs on its wings, had a spur about three-quarters of an inch long growing from the skull just between the eyes. We never shot another like it, so I do not know if it was a fresh or a distinct species. In the latter case this incident may interest naturalists. Job named it the Unicorn Goose.

About mid-day the sun grew intensely hot, and the stench drawn up by it from the water, and the heat of the air, was something too much, and caused us instinctively to swallow precautionary doses of quinine. Shortly afterwards the breeze died away altogether, and as rowing our heavy boat against stream in the heat was out of the question, we were thankful enough to get under the shade of a group of trees—a species of fig that grew by the edge of the river, and its dense and gasp till at length the approach of sunset put a period to our pleasures. Seeing what appeared to be an open space of water straight ahead of us, we determined to row there before setting what to do for the night. Just as we were about to leave the boat, however, a white stripe across the ramp, came down to the river to drink without perceiving us hidden away within fifty yards under the willows. Leo was the first to catch sight of it, and being an ardent sportsman, thirsting for the blood of big game, about which he had been dreaming for months, he instantly switched all over, and pointed like a setter dog. Seeing what was the matter, I handed him his express rifle, at the same time taking my own.

"Now then," I whispered, "mind you don't miss."

"Miss!" he whispered back contemptuously; "I could not miss if I tried."

He lifted the rifle, and the man-coloured buck, having drunk himself, raised his head and looked out across the river. He was standing right against the sunset sky on a little eminence, or ridge of ground, that ran across the swamp, evidently a favourite path for game, and there was something very beautiful about him. Indeed, I do not think that if I live to a hundred I shall ever forget that delicate and yet most fascinating scene: it is stamped upon my memory. To the right and left wide stretches of lonely, death-breeding swamp, unbroken and unrelieved so far as the eye could reach, except here and there by ponds of black and posy water that, mirror-like, flashed up the red rays of the setting sun. Behind us and before the vista of the sluggish river, ending in glimpses of a steel-draped lagoon, on whose surface the long lights of the evening played as the faint breeze stirred the shadows. To the west the huge red ball of the setting sun, now vanishing down the vapoury horizon, and flinging the great beams, high across whose arch the cranes and wild fowl streamed in line, square, and triangle, with flashes of flying gold and the lurid stain of blood. And then ourselves—three modern Englishmen in a modern English boat—straining to just upon, and looking out of town with that unrelenting desolation; and in front of us the noble buck lined out upon a background of robbly sky.

"Bang! Away he goes with a mighty bound. Leo has missed him. Bang! right under his aim again. Now for a shot. I must have one though he is going like an arrow, and a hundred yards away and more. By my eye! over and over and over. "What do you think I've wiped your eye there, Master Leo," I say, struggling against the ungenious exaltation that in such a supreme moment of one's existence will rise in the best-tutored sportsman's breast.

"Goodness you, yes," growled Leo; and then, with that quick smile that is one of his charms lighting up his handsome face like a ray of light, "I beg your pardon, old fellow. I congratulate you; it was a lovely shot, and mine were vile."

We got out of the boat and ran to the bank, which was abut through the spine and mine dead. It took us a quarter of an hour mere to leave it and cut a swath of the best reeds we could carry, and having packed this away, we had barely light enough to row up into the lagoon-like space, into which, there being a hollow in the swamp, the river here expanded. Just as the light vanished we cut anchor about fifty yards from the edge of the lake. We did not dare to go ashore, not knowing if we should find dry ground to camp on, and greatly fearing the poisonous exhalations from the marsh, which we thought we should be free from on the water. So we lighted a lantern, and made our evening meal off another ported tureen in the best fashion that we could, and then prepared to go to sleep, only, however, to find that sleep was impossible. For whether they were attracted by the lantern, or by the unaccounted smell of a white man, for which they had been waiting for the last thousand years or so, I know not; but certainly we were presently surrounded by tens of thousands of the most bloodthirsty, perfidious, and huge mosquitoes that I ever saw or read of. In clouds they came, and planged and buzzed and bit till we were nearly mad. Tobacco smoke only seemed to stir them into a merrier and more active life, till at length we were driven to covering ourselves with blankets, hats, and all, and sitting to slowly stew and continue to scorch and sweat beneath them. And as we sat, suddenly rolling out like thunder through the silence came the deep roar of a lion, and then of a second lion, moving among the reeds within fifty yards of us.

"I say," said Leo, sticking his head out from under his blanket, "lucky we ain't on the bank eh, Avaculor?" (Leo sometimes addressed me in this disrespectful way.) "Hang it! a mosquito has bitten me on the nose," and the head vanished again.

Shortly after this the moon came up, and notwithstanding every variety of roar that echoed over the water to us from the lines on the banks, we began, thinking ourselves perfectly secure, gradually to doze off.

I don't quite know what it was that made me poke my head out of the friendly shelter of the blanket, perhaps because I heard that the mosquitoes were biting right through it. Anyhow, as I did so I heard Job whisper, in a frightened voice,

"Oh, my stars, look there!"

Instantly we all of us looked, and this was what we saw in the moonlight. Near the shore were two wide and even-widening circles of crimson rings rippling away across the surface of the water, and in the heart and centre of the circles were two dark moving objects.

"What is it?" asked I.

"It is those blessed lions, sir," answered Job, in a tone which

was an odd mixture of a sense of personal injury, habitual respect, and acknowledged loss, "and they are swimming here to beat us," he added, nervously picking up an "M" in his agitation.

I looked again: there was no doubt about it; I could catch the glare of their fringes eyes. Attracted either by the smell of the newly-killed water-thuck-meat or of ourselves, the hungry beasts were actually approaching our position.

Leo already had his rifle in his hand. I shouted to him to wait till they were nearer, and meanwhile grabbed my own. Some about fifteen inches, and presently the first of them—it was the lioness—got on to it, and shook herself and roared. At that moment Leo fired, and the bullet went right down the middle of her neck at the back of her neck, and down the dropped, with a splash, dead.

The second lion—a full-grown male—was some two paces behind her. At this second he got his forepaws on to the bank, when a strange thing happened. There was a rush and disturbance in the water, such as one sees in a pond in England when a pile takes a little fish, only a thousand times fiercer and larger, and suddenly the lion gave a most terrific marling roar and sprang forward on to the bank, dragging something black with him.

"Allah!" shouted Mahomed, "a crocodile has got him by the leg!" and sure enough he had. We could see the long snout with its gleaming lines of teeth, and the reptile body behind it.

And then followed a scene that absolutely baffles description. The lion managed to get well on to the bank, the crocodile half standing and half swimming, still ripping his hind leg. He roared till the air quivered with the sound, and then, with a snappy, shrieking snarl, turned round and clamped hold of the crocodile's head. The crocodile shifted his grip, having, as we afterwards discovered, had one of his eyes torn out, and turned slightly over, and instantly the lion got him by the throat and held on, and then over and over they rolled upon the bank, struggling hideously. It was impossible to follow their movements, but when next we got a clear view the tables had turned, for the crocodile, whose head seemed to be a mass of pure, had got the lion's body in his iron jaws just above the hips, and was squeezing him and shaking him to and fro. For his part the tortured brute, roaring in agony, was clawing and biting madly at his enemy's scaly head, and fixing his great hind claws in the crocodile's comparatively speaking, soft throat, ripping it open as one would rip a glove.

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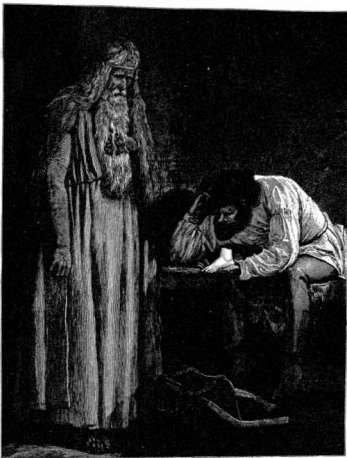
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Then, all of a sudden, the end came. The lion's head fell forward on to the crocodile's back, and with an awful gasp fell forward on to his side, his jaws still fixed across the carcass of the lion, which we afterwards found he had bitten almost in half.

This died in the death was a wonderful and a shocking sight, and one that I suppose few men have seen—then it ended.

When it was all over, leaving Mahomed to get a look-out, we managed to spend the rest of the night as quietly as the mosquitoes would let us.

(To be continued)



DRAWN BY E. K. JOHNSON, R.W.S.

"I took this cold fragment of mortality in my hand, and looked at it in the light of the lamp with feelings which I cannot describe."

"SHE:" A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

By H. RIDER HAGGARD,

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "Queen," "The Witch's Head," etc.

VIII.

THE FEAT, AND AFTER!

ON the day following this remarkable scene, a scout calculated to make a deep impression upon anybody who beheld it, more because of what it suggested and intimated to forebode than for what it revealed, it was understood to us that a feat would be held that we were menial people, and cared little for fear, but my remarks being received with the silence of displeasure, I thought it wiser to hold my tongue.

Accordingly, just before sundown, I was informed that everything was ready, and, accompanied by Job, went into the cave, where I met Len, who was, as usual, followed by Citron. These two had been on walking beforehand, and knew nothing of the projected feat till that moment. When Utanah heard of it I saw an expression of horror spring up upon her handsome features. Turning, she caught a man who was peering up the cave by the entrance, and asked him something in an impetuous tone. His answer seemed to reassure her a little, for she looked satisfied, though her face indicated that she was still somewhat uneasy. Next she appeared to attempt some remonstrance with the man, who was a person in authority, but he spoke angrily to her, and shook her off, and then changing his mind, led her by the arm, and set her down between himself and another man in the

circle round the fire, and I perceived that for some reason of her own she thought it best to retreat.

The fire in the cave was an unusually big one that night, and in a large circle round it were gathered about thirty-five men and two women, Utanah and the woman to avoid whom Job had played the part of another Scripted character. The men were sitting in pairs, but Utanah, as was their custom, each with his great spear stuck upright behind him, in a socket cut in the rock for that purpose. Only one or two wore the yellowish lion's garment of which I have spoken, the rest had nothing on except the leopard's skin about the waist.

"What's up now, eh?" said Job, doubtfully. "Then sit and wait among that I have given her no encouragement. They give me the wrong, the whole lot of them, and that's a fact. Why, look, they have asked Mahmood to die, too. Then, that lady of mine is talking to him in as slow and slow a way as possible. Well, I'm glad if he'll see, that's all."

We looked up, and saw enough the woman in question had risen, and was counting the wretched Mahmood from the corner, where, as was counted by some acute provision of horror, he had been seated, observing, and calling on Allah. He appeared unwilling enough to observe, and calling on Allah. He appeared unwilling enough to come, if he had any other reason, perhaps because it was an unaccustomed honor, but whether his food had been given to him apart. Away

I could see that he was in a state of great terror, for his scrawny legs would scarcely support his stout, bulky form, and I think it was rather owing to the resources of barbarism behind him, in the shape of a huge Anabagger with a proportionately large spear, than to the resolution of the lady who led him by the hand, that he circumscribed to come at all.

"Well," I said to the others, "I don't at all like the look of things, but I suppose that we must have it out. Have you fellows got your spears on? I mean, if so, you had better see that they are loaded."

"I have 'em," said Job, tapping his Cob, "but Mr. Leo has only got his hunting-knife, though that is big enough, surely."

Finding that it would not do to wait while the missing weapon was fetched, we advanced boldly, and moved ourselves in a line, with our backs against the side of the cave.

As soon as we were seated, on earthenware jars was passed round containing a fermented fluid, of by no means impressive taste, though apt to turn upon the stomach, made of crushed grain—most Indian corn, but a small brown grain that grows upon the coast in clusters, not unlike that which in the southern part of Africa is known by the name of Kaff corn. The wine in which this liquid was brewed seemed very curious, and as it more or less resembled many hundreds of others in use among the Anabagger I may as well describe it. These vessels are of a very ancient manufacture, and of

at my age, that I should like a man. What says the proverb—'Mistrust all men, and slay him whom thou mistrustest overmuch; and as for women, flee from them, for they are evil, and in the end will destroy thee.' It is a good proverb, especially the last part; I think it must have come down from the ancients. Nevertheless I like this Baboon, and I wonder where they taught him his tricks, and I trust that she will not bewitch him. Poor Baboon! he must be wearied after that fight. I will go lest I should awake him."

I waited till he had turned and was nearly through the entrance, walking softly on tiptoe, and then I called after him.

"My father," I said, "is it thou?"

"Yes, my son, it is I; but let me not disturb thee. I did but come to see how thou didst fare, and to tell thee that those who would have slain thee, my Baboon, are by now well on their road to *Sie*. She said that ye were to come also at once, but I fear ye cannot yet."

"No," I said, "not till we have recovered a little; but have me borne out into the daylight, my father. I like not this place."

"Ah, no," he answered, "it hath a sad air. I remember when I was a boy I found the body of a fair woman lying where you lie now, yes, on that very bench. She was so beautiful that I used to creep in here with a lamp and gaze upon her. Had it not been for her cold hands, almost could I think that she slept and would one day awake, so fair and peaceful was she in her robe of white. White was she, too, and her hair was yellow, and lay down her almost to the feet. There are many such still in the tomb; at the place where *She* is, for those who set them there had a way I know nought of, of keeping their beloved out of the crumbling hand of Decay, even when Death had slain them. Ah, day by day I came hither, and gazed on her still at last—loath not at me, stranger, for I was but a silly lad—I learnt to love that dead form, that shell that once had held a life that no more is. I would creep up to her and kiss her cold face, and wonder how many men had lived and died since she was, and who had loved her and embraced her in the days that long had passed away. And my Baboon, I think I learnt wisdom from the dead one, for a truth it taught me of the littleness of *Sie*, and the length of Death, and how all things that are under the sun go down one path, and we for ever forgotten. And so I mused, and it seemed to me that wisdom flowed into me from that dead one, till one day my mother, a wretched woman, but hard-hearted, seeing I was changed, followed me, and saw the beautiful white one, and feared I was bewitched, as, indeed, I was. So half in fear, and half in anger, she took the lamp, and standing the dead one up against the wall there, set fire to her hair, and she burnt fiercely, even down to the feet, for those who are thus kept burn excellently well. See, my son, there on the roof is yet the smoke of her burning."

I looked up doubtfully, and there, sure enough, on the roof of the sepulchre was a peculiarly unctuous and sooty mark, three feet or more across. Doubtless it had in the course of years been rubbed off the sides of the little cave, but on the roof it remained, and there was no mistaking its appearance.

"She burnt," he went on in a meditative way, "even to the feet, but the feet I came back and saved, cutting the burnt hose from them, and hid them under the stone bench there, wrapped up in a piece of linen. Surely, I remember it as though it were but yesterday. Perhaps they are there if none have found them, even to this hour. Of a truth I have not entered this chamber from that time to this very day. Stay, I will look," and, kneeling down, he groped about with his long arm in the recess under the stone bench. Presently his face brightened, and with an exclamation he pulled something forth that was curled in dust; which he shook on to the floor. It was covered with the remains of a rotting rug, which he undid, and revealed to my astonished gaze a beautifully shaped and almost white woman's foot, looking as fresh and as firm as though it had been placed there yesterday.

"Thou see, my son, the Baboon," he said, in a sad voice, "I spoke the truth to thee, for here is yet one foot remaining. Take it, my son, and gaze upon it."

I took this cold fragment of mortality in my hand and looked at it in the light of the lamp with feelings which I cannot describe, so mixed up were they between astonishment, fear, and fascination. It was light, much lighter I should say than it had been in the living state, and the flesh to all appearance was still fresh, though about it there clung a faintly aromatic odour. For the rest it was not shrunk or shrivelled, or even black and unsightly, like the flesh of Egyptian mummies, but plump and fair, and, except where it had been slightly burnt, perfect as on the day of death—a very triumph of embalming.

Four little feet! I set it down upon the stone bench where it had lain for so many thousand years, and wondered whose was the beauty that it had upborne through the pomp and pagantry of a forgotten civilisation—first as a merry child's, then as a blushing maid's, and lastly as a perfect woman's. Through what halls of life had its soft step echoed, and in the end, with what courage had it trodden down the dusty way of death! To whose side had it stolen in the hush of night when the black slave slept upon the marble floor, and who had listened for its stealing? Shapely little foot! Well might it have been set upon the proud neck of a conqueror bent at last to woman's beauty, and well might the lips of nobles and of kings have been pressed upon its jewelled whiteness.

I wrapped up this relic of the past in the remnants of the old linen rag which had evidently formed a portion of its owner's garments, for it was partially burnt, and put it away in my Gladstone bag, which I had bought at the Army and Navy Stores, a strange combination I thought. Then with Billali's help I staggered off to see Leo. I found him dreadfully bruised, worse even than myself, perhaps owing to the excessive whiteness of his skin, and faint and weak with the loss of blood from the flesh wound in his side, but for all that cheerful as a cricket, and asking for some breakfast. Job and Utane got him on to the letto, or rather the sacking of a litter, which was removed from its pole for that purpose, and carried him out into the shade at the mouth of the cave, from which, by the way, every trace of the slaughter of the previous night had now been recovered, and there we all breakfasted, and indeed spent that day, and most of the two following ones.

On the third morning Job and myself were practically recovered. Leo also was so much better that I yielded to Billali's often expressed entreaty, and agreed to start at once upon our journey to Kôr, which we were told was the name of the place where the mysterious *She* lived, though I still feared for its effects upon Leo, and especially lest the motion should cause his wound, which was scarcely skinned over, to break open again. Indeed, had it not been for Billali's evident anxiety to get off, which led us to suspect that some difficulty or danger might threaten us if we did not comply with it, I would not have consented to go.

(To be continued)



DRAWN BY E. K. JOHNSON, R.W.S.

"Behold the House of *She-who-must-be-obeyed*," said Bilik. "Had ever a queen such a throne before?" "It is wonderful, my father," I answered.

"SHE:" A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

By H. RIDER HAGGARD,

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "Duns," "The World's Head," etc.

CHAPTER X. SPECULATIONS

WITHIN an hour of our finally deciding to start five letters were brought up to the door of the cave, each accompanied by four regular bearers and two spare hands, also a herd of about fifty trained *Ambagogos*, who were to form the escort and carry the baggage. Three of these letters, of course, were for us, and one for Bilik, who, I was incessantly reminded to bear, was to be our companion, while the fifth I presumed was for the use of Utiane.

"Does the lady go with us, my father?" I asked of Bilik, as he stood questioning us things generally.

He shrugged his shoulders as he answered, "If she wills, in this respect the woman do what they please. It is morning there, and give them their way, because without them the world could not go on; they are the source of life."

"Ah," I said, the matter never having struck me in that light before.

"Do not worry them," he went on, "up to a certain point, till at last they get unbearable, which," he added, "they do about every second generation."

"And then what do you do?" I asked, with curiosity.

"Then," he answered, with a faint smile, "we, one, and kill the old ones as an example to the young ones, and to show them that we are the strongest. My poor wife was killed in that way three years ago. It was very sad, but to tell thee the truth, my son, life has been happier since, for my age prevents me from the young ones."

"To what," I inquired, quoting the saying of a great man whose wisdom has not yet lightened the darkness of the *Ambagogos*, "have you found the position one of greater freedom and less responsibility?"

"This phrase puzzled him a little at first from his vagueness, though I think my translation hit off its sense very well, but at last he was it, and appreciated it."

"Yes, yes, my father," he said, "I see it now, but all the 'responsibilities' are killed, at least most of them are, and that is why there are no free old women about just now. Well, they brought it on themselves. As for this girl," he went on, in a graver tone, "I know not what to say. She is a brave girl, and she loves the lion (Lion) then carried her the thing to him, and saved his life. And, she is, according to our custom, and to him, and has a right

to go where he goes, unless," he added, significantly, "she should try her own, for her word overrides all rights."

"And if she fails to leave him, and the girl refused? What then?"

"He" he said, with a shrug, "the hurricane bids the man to bend, and it will not; what happens?"

And then, without waiting for an answer, he turned and walked to his tent, and in ten minutes from that time we were all well under weigh.

It took us an hour and more to cross the top of the volcanic plain, and another half-hour or so to climb the edge on the farther side. Once there, however, the view was a very fine one. Before us was a long steep slope of greenish plain, broken here and there by clumps of trees mostly of the tamar tree. At the bottom of the gentle slope, some time or ten miles away, we could make out a dim sea of marsh, on which the land rears long like smoke about a city. It was very going for the reason that the slopes, and by mid-day we had reached the borders of the dismal swamp. Here we began to eat our mid-day meal, and then, following a winding and broken path, plunged into the swamp. Presently the path, as it led almost indistinguishable from any, seemed to grow so fast as to be almost indistinguishable from those made by the aquatic birds and birds, and it is in this day a mystery to me how our bearers found their way across the swamps. Ahead of the caravans marched two men with long poles, which they now and again plunged into the ground before them, the reason being that the nature of the soil, frequently changed from coarser to which I am not accustomed, so that plants that would be safe enough to cross one month would certainly swallow the explorer the next. Never did I see a more dirty and depressing scene. Miles on miles of mangrove, varied only by bright green spots of comparatively solid ground, and by deep and sudden pools fringed with tall reeds, in which the tamarina hoisted and the huge crocodile lumbered, miles on miles of it without a break, which saved the fever bug can be called a break. The only life in this great swamp was that of the aquatic birds, and the animals that fed on them, all both of which there were vast numbers. Geese, cranes, ducks, teal, snipe, and plovers swarmed all round us every kind of variety that were quite new to me, and all on a time that one could almost have fancied there were with a park. Among these birds I especially noticed a very beautiful variety of painted wings, almost the size of woodcock, and with a flight more resembling that bird's

than an English snipe. In the pools, too, was a species of small alligator or crocodile known, I do not know which, they said. Bilik told me, upon the water, the large quantities of a balsam that water made, of which the bit is very dangerous, though not, I gathered, so deadly as a cobra's or a puff adder's. The bill-fog was also very large, and with various propensities to their size; and as for the crocodiles, they were, if possible, even more than they had been on the river, and roamed as freely. Unfortunately, however, the worst feature of the swamp was the total want of eating vegetation that long about it, that was at times positive overpowering, and the malodorous exhalations that accompanied it, which we were, of course, obliged to breathe.

On we went through it all, till at last the sun sank in million splendour just as we reached a spot of rising ground about two acres in extent—a little oasis of dry in the midst of the mire wilderness—where Bilik announced that we were to camp. The camping, however, turned out to be a very simple process, and consisted, in fact, in sinking down on the ground round a wicker fire made of dry sticks and some wood that had been brought with us. However, we made the best we could of it, and smoked and ate with such appetite as the smell of things, nothing less would allow, for it was very hot on this low land, and just, oddly enough, chilly at times. But, however hot it was, we were glad enough to keep near the fire, because we found that the mosquitoes did not like the smoke. Presently we rolled ourselves up in our blankets and tried to go to sleep, but to far as it was concerned the bill-fog, and the extraordinary roaring and alarming sound produced by hundreds of wings beating high in the air, made sleep an impossibility, to say nothing of our other discomforts. I turned and looked at Lion, who was next me; he was sleeping, but his face had a flushed appearance that I did not like, and by the flickering fire-light I saw Utiane, who was lying on the other side of him, raise herself from time to time upon her elbow, and look at him anxiously enough.

However, I could do nothing for him, for we had all already taken a good dose of quinine, which was the only preventative we had; so I lay and watched the stars come out by thousands, till all the darkness such of Heaven was seen with glimmering points, and every point a world! There was a glorious night by which one might well measure his own indignities! Slow I grew up thinking about it, for the mind writes itself as it drives to people with the infinite, and to trace the heritage of the Almighty as He writes from sphere to sphere, or rather His purpose from His works. Such things are not for

And so, so that we should not learn the secret of the paths through the bowels of the mountain. To this I of course assented cheerfully enough, but Job, who was now very much better, notwithstanding the journey, did not like it at all, saying, I believe, that it was but a preliminary step to being hot-pottered. He was, however, a little censured when I pointed out to him that there were no hot pots handy, and, so far as I knew, no fire to heat them in. As for poor Leo, after turning restlessly for hours, he had, to my deep thankfulness, at last dropped off into a sleep of no import, I don't know which, so there was no need to blindfold him. The blindfolding was performed by binding tightly round the eyes a piece of the yellowish linen whereof those of the Amshagger who condescended to wear anything in particular made their dresses. This linen I afterwards discovered was taken from the tents, and was not, as I had at first supposed, of native manufacture. The bandage was then knotted at the back of the head, and finally brought down again and the ends bound under the chin to prevent its slipping. Utzate, by the way, was also blindfolded. I do not know why, unless it was from fear that she should impart the secrets of the route to us. This operation performed we started on once more, and soon, by the echoing sound of the footsteps of the bearers and the increased noise of the water caused by reverberation in a confined space, I knew that we were entering into the bowels of the great mountain. It was an eerie sensation, being borne along into the heart of a mountain we knew not whither, but I was getting used to eerie sensations by this time, and by now was pretty well prepared for anything. So I lay still, and listened to the tramp, tramp of the bearers and the running of the water, and tried to believe that I was enjoying myself. Presently the men set up the melancholy little chant that I had heard on the first night when we were captured in the whale-boat, and the effect produced by their voices was very curious, and quite indescribable on paper. After a while the air began to get exceedingly thick and heavy, so much so, indeed, that I felt as though I were going to choke, till at length I felt the linen take a sharp turn, drew another and another, and the sound of the running water ceased. After this the air got heavier again, but the turns were cautious, and to me, blindfolded as I was, most bewildering. I tried to keep a map of them in my mind in case it might ever be necessary for us to try and escape by this route, but, needless to say, failed utterly. Another half-hour or so passed, and then suddenly I became aware that we were once more in the open air. I could see the light through my bandage and feel the freshness of it on my face. A few more minutes and the caravan halted, and I heard Billal order Utzate to remove her bandage and undo ours. Without waiting for her attention I got the knot of mine loose, and looked out.

As I anticipated, we had passed right through the precipice, and were now on its further side, and immediately beneath its beetling face. The first thing I noticed was that it was not nearly so high here, not so high I should say by five hundred feet, which proved that the led of the lake, or rather of the vast ancient crater in which we stood, was much higher than the surrounding plain. For the rest, we found ourselves in a huge rock-surrounded cup, not unlike that of the first place where we had sojourned, only ten times the size. Indeed, one could only just make out the frowning line of the opposite cliffs. A great portion of the plain thus enclosed by nature was cultivated, and fringed in with walls of stone, placed there to keep the cattle and goats, of which there were large herds about, from breaking into the gardens. Here and there rose great grass mounds, and some taller away towards the centre I thought that I could see the outline of colonial ruins. I had no time to observe anything more at the moment, for we were instantly surrounded by crowds of Amshagger, similar in every particular to those with whom we were already familiar, who, though they spoke little, pursued round us so closely as to obscure the view to a person lying in a hammock. Then all of a sudden a number of armed men arranged in companies, and marshalled by officers who held an ivory wand in their hands, came running swiftly towards us, having so far as I could make out, emerged from the face of the precipice like ants from their burrows. These men as well as their officers were all robed in addition to the usual leopard skin, and, as I gathered, formed the body guard of Sir himself.

Their leader advanced to Billal, saluted him by placing his ivory wand transversely across his forehead, and then asked some question which I could not catch, and Billal having answered him the whole regiment turned and marched along the side of the cliff, our comrades all lining following in their track. After going thus for about half a mile we halted once more in front of the mouth of a tremendous cave, measuring about fifty feet in height by eighty wide, and here Billal descended finally, and requested Job so I myself to do the same. Leo of course was far too ill to do anything of the sort. I did so, and we entered the great cave, into which the light of the setting sun penetrated far some distance, while beyond the reach of the light it was faintly illuminated with lamps which seemed to me to stretch away for an almost immeasurable distance, like the gas lights of an empty London street. Another thing that I noticed was that the walls were covered with sculptures in bas-relief, of a sort, pictorially speaking, similar to those that I have described upon the vase, save across principally, then bas-relief pictures, and pictures of creatures, and the torture of criminals by the placing of a hot, presumably red-hot, pot upon the head, showing whence our hints had derived this pleasant practice. There were very few battle-scenes, though many of death, and men running and weeping, and from this fact I am led to believe that this people was not much subject to attack by exterior foes, either on account of the isolation of their position, or because of their great strength. Between the pictures were columns of stone characters of a formation absolutely new to me, at any rate they were neither Greek nor Egyptian, nor Hebrew, nor Assyrian—that I can swear to. They looked more like Chinese than anything else. Near to the entrance of the cave both pictures and writing were worn away, but farther in they were in many cases absolutely fresh and perfect as the day on which the sculptor had ceased work upon them.

The regiment of guards did not come further than the entrance to the cave, where they formed up to let us pass through. On entering the place itself we were, however, met by a man robed in white, who bowed humbly, but said nothing, which, as it afterwards appeared that he was a deaf mute, was not very wonderful.

Passing at right angles to the main cave at a distance of some twenty feet from the entrance was a smaller cave or wide gallery, that was pierced into the rock back to the right and to the left of the main cave. At the mouth of this gallery to our left stood two guards, and from this circumstance I argue that it was the entrance to the apartments of Sir herself. The entrance to the right gallery was guarded, and down this the mate indicated we were to proceed. A few yards down this gallery, which was lighted with lamps, we came to the entrance to a chamber with a certain smell of some gross material, not unlike a Zambiar mat in appearance, hung over the doorway. This the mate drew back with another profound obeisance, and led the way into a good-sized apartment, keen, of course, out of the solid rock, but to my great surprise. In this room was a stone bedstead, pews full of water for washing, and beautifully tanned leopard skins to serve as blankets.

Here we left Leo, who was still sleeping heavily, and with him stayed Utzate. I noticed that the mate gave her a very sharp look, as much as to say "Who are you, and by whose orders do you come here?" Then he conducted us to another similar room which Job took, and then to two more that were respectively occupied by Billal and myself.



DRAWN BY E. K. JOHNSON, R.W.S.

"The hand grasped the curtain, and drew it aside."

"SHE:" A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

By H. RIDER HAGGARD.

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "Danvers," "The Witch's Head," etc.

XII.

"SEE"

Let me first say that, after seeing to Leo, and to such matters as put on clean clothing, for what we were wearing had not been changed since the loss of the ship. Fortunately, as I thought, the things I had, by far the greater part of my personal baggage had already been packed into the whale-bow, and was therefore saved—and brought inside by the team—although all the things which were of value and necessity to the natives were lost. Nearly all our clothing was made of a well-thatched and very strong grey flannel, and besides I found it for travelling in these places, because though a Scottish jacket, shirt, and pair of trousers of any weight almost four pounds, a great consideration in a tropical country, where every extra ounce tells on the man, and men of all colors, which was so apt to result from sudden changes of temperature.

Never shall I forget the comfort of the "wash and brush-up" which my boy was a slave of, of which we had none.

Obviously I discovered that the Amalagas, who do not mention skin among their more distinguishable qualities, use a kind of horse hair for washing purposes, which, though unpleasant to the touch, still does good service to it, hence I very fair substitute for it.

By the time that I was dressed, and had washed and trimmed my hair, later, the previous condition of which was certainly noteworthy, I began to give weight to Ri'da's application for me, the first time I was so much away when, without the slightest preparatory word of warning, the curtain over the entrance to my tent was flung aside, and another man, a young girl this time, appeared to me by signs that I could not misunderstand—she is, by opening her mouth and looking down it—what there was something ready to do. Amazingly I followed her into the next chamber, which we had not yet entered, where I found her, who had also, to my great astonishment, been conducted thither by a fair maid. J'd had never got over the advances that former lady had made to him, and returned only yet who were new to him of similar design.

"Your young master has a way of looking at one, etc," he would say significantly, "which I don't like especially."

This fresh man was twice the size of the sleeping ones, and I saw at once that he had originally served as a servant, and was probably an ex-convict, because, for the Prince of the Dead, for I say to myself as to these half-out-of-control men were nothing more or less than was necessary, in which for some of signs the usual manner of the great extinct men whose monuments surrounded us had been first preserved, with an art and a complacency that has never since been equalled, and then hidden away for all time. On each side of this reclining man was a long, solid, round table, about three feet wide by three feet six in height, hewn out of the living rock, of which it had formed part, and was still attached to, at the base. These tables were slightly inclined on a central board, to give room for the hands of any one sitting on the same ledge that had been cut for a bench along the side of the cave at a distance of about two feet from them. Each of these was so arranged that it ended right under a shaft placed in the rock for the admission of light and air. On examining them carefully, however, I ran that there was a difference between those that had to cut my attention, viz., that one of the tables, that on the left as we entered the cave, had evidently been used, not to cut on, but for the purpose of embelishing bodies. That this was beyond all question the one was clear from five shallow depressions in the side of the table, all shaped like a human form, with a separate space for the head as in it, and a little ledge to support the neck, each depression being of a different size, so as to fit better varying in stature from a full-grown man to a small child, and with little holes bored at intervals to carry off food. And, indeed, if any further confirmation was required, one had but to look at the wall of the cave above to find it. For there, scratched all round the apartment, and looking round as best as the day it was done, was the personal representation of the dead, embelishing, and burial of an old man with a long beard, probably an ancient king or grander of this country.

The first picture represented his death. He was lying upon a couch which had five short curved posts at the corners coming to a hook at the end, in appearance something like a wicker net of cane, and was evidently in the very act of expiring. Gashed round the mouth were women and children weeping, the women with their hair hanging down their faces. The next scene represented the embelishing of the body, which ends upon a table with decorations in it, similar to the one below; and, probably, indeed, it was a picture of the same thing. These were seen

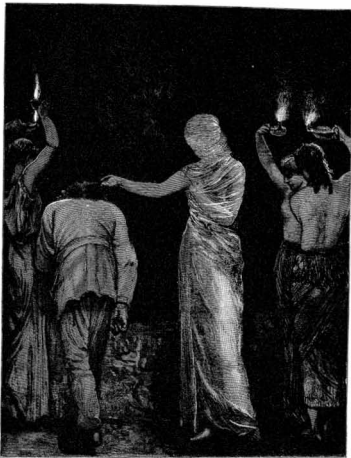
employed at the work—some representing, one holding a basket shaped exactly like a parrot's nest, in which the corpse and was fixed in an incense holder, was doubtless the great precious stone, while the child, who was represented as standing at the head of the corpse, held a kind of egg large as his head, and pointed from it some scowling fiend, which fell apparently into the basket. The next curious part of this sculpture is that both the man with the basket and the one who passed the fiend are represented as holding their noses, either I suppose because of the stench arising from the body, or more probably to keep out the aromatic fumes of the hot fluid which was being poured into the dead man's veins. Another curious thing which I am unable to explain was that all three men had a band of lines tied round the face, with holes in it for the eyes.

The third sculpture represented the burial of the deceased. There he was, stiff and cold, stretched in a linen robe and laid out on a stone slab such as I had that upon of our first superstitious place. At his head and feet lay a heap, and by his side were placed several of the bearded pointed vases that I have described, which were probably supposed to be full of perfumes. The fifth chamber was crowded with coffins, and with men sitting on a sort of bench, while near the front of the room stood a man with a staff, which he was preparing to come to view.

These sculptures, looked at merely to satisfy art, were remarkable, but I think no apology for describing them rather fully. They speak also of being of surprising beauty as representing, probably with scientific accuracy, the last rites of the dead in practice among an utterly lost people, and even then I thought how envious some unfeeling friends of my eyes at Gibraltar would be if ever I got an opportunity of describing that wonderful wonder to them. Probably they would say that I was exaggerating, notwithstanding that every page of this history once has so much actual evidence of its truth that it would certainly have been quite impossible for me to have invented it.

To return. As soon as I had hastily examined these sculptures, which I think I understand to mention were executed in wood, we set down to a very excellent meal of boiled (corn) fish, fresh milk, and other made of meat, the whole being served upon china wooden plates.

When we had eaten we returned to our low poor Leo was getting on, he had some that he must now wash and have his hair cut, he had some that he must now wash the poor boy in a



DRAWN BY E. K. JOHNSON, R.W.S.

"When the lamps were held up I saw that it was nothing but one vast charred-heap."

"SHE:" A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

By H. RIDER HAGGARD,

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "Damon," "The Witch's Head," etc.

XIV.

A SOUL IN DURESS.

It was nearly ten o'clock at night when I cast myself down upon the floor, and began to gather my scattered wits, and reflect upon what I had seen and heard. But the more I reflected the less I could make of it. Was I mad, or drunk, or dreaming, or was I merely the victim of a gipsy's and some elaborate hoax? How was it possible that I, a rational man, not unacquainted with the most extraordinary facts of our history, and likewise an absolute and utter agnostic in all the Occipitopocus that in Europe goes by the name of the supernatural, could believe that I had within the last few minutes been engaged in conversation with a woman two thousand and odd years old? The thing was contrary to the experience of human nature, and absolutely and utterly impossible. It must be a hoax, and yet, if it were a hoax, what was I so weak as to believe, too, was to be said of the figure on the water, of the woman's extraordinary acquaintance with the remote past, and her ignorance, or apparent ignorance, of any subsequent history? What, too, of her wonderful and useful inventions? That, at any rate, was a praiseworthy, and beyond the experience of the world. No merely marvellous woman could share with such a supernatural radiance. About that the fact, at any rate, seems to be right—it was not safe for any man to look upon such beauty. I was a hardened veteran in such matters, having, with the exception of one painful experience

of my green and tender youth, put the matter as I sometimes think that this is a matter) almost entirely out of my thoughts. But now, in my better hours, I found that I could never put away the vision of those glorious eyes! and, alas, the very dulcitude of the woman, whilst it horrified and repelled, attracted even in a greater degree. A person with the experience of two thousand years or her back, with the command of such tremendous powers and the knowledge of a mystery that could hold off death, was certainly worth falling in love with, if ever woman was. The, alas, it was not a question of whether or no she was worth it, for as far as I could judge, not being versed in such matters, I, a fellow of my culture, would for what my friends are pleased to call my integrity, and a respectable man now well on in middle life, had fallen, absolutely and hopelessly in love with this whole creature. Nevertheless, it must be confessed! She had warned me fairly, and I had refused to take the warning. Certain on the final certainty that is ever prompting man to chase the evil from woman, and staves on the natural impulse that begets it? It is the cause of half, or, more than half, of our misfortunes. Why cannot men be content to live alone and be happy, and let the women live alone and be happy too? But perhaps they would not be happy, and I am not sure that we should either. Here was a nice case of affairs. I, at my age, to fall a victim to this modern Cleopatra! But then she was not modern, at least she said so. She was almost an ancient as the original Cleo.

I saw my hair, and jumped up off my couch, feeling that if I did not do something I should also go all my head. What did the man about the scarabæus, too? It was Leo's scarabæus, and had come out of the old coffin that Vinoy had left in my rooms nearly one-and-twenty years before. Could it be after all that the whole story was true, and the writing on the shroud was not a forgery, or the invention of some chick-brained, long-forgotten individual? And if so, could it be that Leo was the man that she was waiting for—the dead man who was to be born again? Impossible again! The whole thing was ghastly; who ever heard of a man being born again? But if it were possible that a woman could exist for two thousand years, this might be possible also—anything might be possible. I myself might, for aught I know, be a reincarnation of some other forgotten folk or perhaps the last of a long line of ancestral spirits. Well, never do guess, why not? Only, unfortunately, I had no recollection of these previous conditions. The idea was so absurd to me that I burst out laughing, and, abandoning the unexplained picture of a gipsy-looking woman on the cover with, called out to him aloud: "Who knows, old fellow!—perhaps I was your contemporary. By Jove! perhaps I was you and you are I," and then I laughed again at my own folly, and the sound of it rang dimly along the charred roof, as though the ghost of the warrior had stirred the phantoms of a laugh. Next I thought me that I had not been to see how Leo was,



DRAWN BY E. K. JOHNSON, R.W.S.

"Next second her tall and willowy form was sagging back across the room."

"SHE:" A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

BY H. RIDER HAGGARD,

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "Danis," "The Wild's Head," &c.

CHAPTER XVI. (Continued)

"Come," I said, "I have seen enough. These are the bodies of those who died of the great sickness. I suppose?" I asked, as we started away.

"Yes. The people of Kile always embalmed their dead, like the Egyptians, but there art in greater than the art of the Egyptians, because whereas the Egyptians dismembered and drew the brain, the people of Kile injected fluid into the veins, and thus reached every part. But stand those skulls out," and she knelt at length at one of the little drawers opening out of the passage along which we was walking, and motioned to the man to light us in. We entered into a little chamber similar to the one in which I had slept of our first sojourn here, and there were two more benches or beds in it. On the benches lay figures covered with yellow linen,² on which a fine and sparkling dust had gathered in the course of ages, but nothing like the coating that one would have anticipated, for in these deep-brown caves there was no material to turn to dust. About the bodies on the stone shelves and floor of the tomb were many pointed cones, but I saw very few ornaments in any of the tombs.

"Lift the cloth up, oh Hully," she said, but though I put out my hand to do so I dare it back again. It dried the covering, and to speak the truth I was awed by the dead solemnity of the place, and the presence before us. There was a little length at my feet the dress I brought, only to discover another and put their cloak lying over the benches upon the stone bench. Tho' also the woman, and then for the first time for thousands upon thousands of years did living eyes look upon the face of those chilly dead. It was a woman; she might have been thirty-five years of age, or perhaps a little less, and had certainly been beautiful. Even now her robe clear-cut lines, marked out with delicate black eyebrows and long eyelashes that drew three thin lines of shadow from the deep upon the ivory line, were wonderfully beautiful. There rolled in white, down which her blackish hair was streaming, the slight her long long sleep, and on her arm, as I face forward against her breast, there lay a little bundle. She gazed at me sight, although in a way that troubled it without shame—I could scarcely withhold my breath. It

"All the time that the Anahapses went out upon the north, which accounted for its perfect calm. It was well guarded, however, and every traveler it required to become every adventurer, and was the latest and best time I ever saw"—L. H. B.

tomb one back across the dim path of the ages to some happy home in dead Imperial Kile, where this woman lay quiet about with beauty had lived and died, and lying taken her last breath with her in the tomb. There they were, mother and babe, the white masson of a forgotten human history, speaking more eloquently to the heart than could any written record of their lives. Reverently I replaced the grave cloth, and with a sigh put flowers in his hand, in the purpose of the Everlasting, have only blossoms to be gathered to the grave, I turned to the body on the opposite shelf, and gazed curiously at it. It was that of a man in advanced life, with a long grizzled beard, and eye rolled in white, probably the husband of the lady who, after surviving her many years, came at last to sleep once more for good and all trouble her.

We left the place and entered others. It would be too long to describe the many things I saw in them. Each one had its occupants, for the low benches and cold spots they had adapted between the completion of the cave and the destruction of the race had evidently sufficed to fill these concealing, comfortable as they were, and each appeared to have been undisturbed since the day that they were laid there. I could fill a book with the description of them, but to do so would only be to repeat what I have said, with variations.

Nearly all the bodies, so masterly was the art with which they had been treated, were so perfect as on the day of death thousands of years before. Nothing came to injure them in the deep silence of the living rock, they were beyond the reach of heat and cold and damp, and the windless drap with which they had been saturated were evidently expanding in their effort. Here and there, however, we saw an exception, and in these cases, although the flesh looked sound enough externally, if one touched it a little, it revealed the fact that the figure was but a pile of dust.

This meant, Anahaps told me, from these particular bodies having either owing to heat or to the burial or other causes, been sealed in the preservative. Instead of his being injected into the substance of

² Anahaps afterwards showed me the two boxes of which this ancient preservative was constituted. It is a low black tin box, and in the deep green is embedded a sheet of the preservative, or rather upon the sheet leading up to the body itself. The boxes are long and narrow, a vivid green in color, but having a figure and in the center, and not containing a word in general description. They have no metal or glass parts, but being the essential thing there in so many that one hardly dare it. The last instance,

the flesh. About the last tomb we visited I met, however, my one word, for its contents spoke even more eloquently to one's human sympathies than those of the first. It had but two occupants, and they lay together on a single shelf. I withdrew the grave cloth, and, there clasped hands to heart, was a young man and a blossoming girl. Her head rested on his arm, and his lips were pressed against her breast. I opened the man's thin robe, and there over his heart was a dagger-point, and beneath the girl's fair breast was a neat cord snail, through which her life had slipped away. On the rock above was in inscription in three words, Anahaps translated it. It was *Wahid in Death*.

"What was the life-history of these two, who, of a truth, were beautiful in their lives, and in their death were so divided?"

I closed my eyes, and imagination taking up the thread of thought that its well shrouded back across the ages, entering a glimpse on their lives as it real and vivid in its detail that I could almost for a moment think that I had glimpsed over the Past, and that my own eyes had peered into the yellow hair streaming down her glowing against her garments many white, white blossoms that was white then, the robe, were disarming with its beauty her that was without gold. I seemed to see the grave cover filled with widows, bearded and clad in mud, and on the lighted side where Anahaps had given judgment, a man standing, and on the next a man clad in purple, and below him and behind him some and fair maiden, chanting a wedding song. While stood and gazed upon the stone, here that the fairest thou—more than a Lily, and more cold than the dew that glistens in its heart. But as the man drew near the blackboard, and put his arm about her—his long fingers massed—and kissed her pale face, in which the blood drew up like lights of the red down across the quiet sky. And next there was turmoil and uproar, and a rushing of sword, and they lay the youth from her tomb, and stretched him, but with a cry

however, was made from the rock, as I among the people of Kile there is a few which Anahaps himself is obliged to be master of the inscription, to the effect that unless given permission to one under a deadly spell was to be retained, with the dagger impaled thru the ribs. The slight and fixed of my eye, as she uttered the translation, "The safe of the preserved man, and as a momentary glimpse, and from the Kings of Kile desired a large portion of these precious documents"—L. H. B.

had been gone!" and she burst into an awful flood of tears, sobbing as though her heart would break, and yet managing to look leveler than ever as she did it. At last she cried:

"Forgive me, my Holly—forgive me for my weakness," she said. "Thou seemst after all I am a very woman. Think—now think of it. This morning didst thou speak of the place of torment appointed by this new religion of thine. Hell so Hades thou dost call it—a place where the vital essence lives and retains an individual memory, and where all the errors and faults of judgment and unaccomplished patients and the unsubstantial terrors of the mind where-ick it hath at any time had to do come to rack and haunt and gibe and wring the heart for ever and for ever with the vision of its own hopelessness. Thus, even thou, have I lived for two thousand years—for some sixty generations, as ye reckon time—in a Hell, as thou callest it—tormented by the memory of a crime, tortured day and night with an unfulfilled desire—without companionship, without comfort, without death, and led on only down my dreary road by the dim light of hope, which though they flickered here and there, and now glowed strong, and now were not, yet, as my skill told me, would one day lead unto my deliverer.

"And then—think of it still, oh Holly, for never shalt thou hear such another tale, or see such another scene, nay, not even if I give thee ten thousand years of life—and thou shalt have it in payment if thou wilt—think: at last my deliverer came—he whom I had watched and waited for through the generations—at the appointed time he came to seek me, as I knew he must come, for my wisdom could see ere, though I knew not when or how. Yet see how ignorant I was! See how small my knowledge, and how faint my strength! For hours he lay here sick unto death, and I felt it not—I who had waited for him for two thousand years—I knew it not. And then at last I see him, and behold, my chance is gone but by a hair's breadth even before I had it, for he is in the very jaws of death; whence no power of mine can draw him. And if he die, surely must the Hell be lived through once more—once more must I face the weary centuries, and wait, and wait till time in its fulness shall bring my beloved back to me. And then thou gavest him the medicine, and that five minutes dragged along before I knew if he would live or die, and I tell thee that all the sixty generations that are gone were not so long as that five minutes. But they passed at last, and still he showed no sign, and I knew that if the drug work not then it, so far as I have had knowledge, works not at all. Then thought I that he was once more dead, and all the tortures of all the years gathered themselves into a single venomous spear, and pierced me through and through, because once again I had lost Kallitrazos! And then, when all was done, behold! he sighed, behold! he lived, and I knew that he would live, for none die on whom the drug takes hold. Think of it now, my Holly—think of the wonder of it! He will sleep for twelve hours, and then the fever will have left him!"

And she stopped, and laid her hand upon the golden head, and then bent down and kissed the brow with a chastened abandonment of tenderness that would have been beautiful to behold had not the light of joy in the heart—for I was jealous!



DRAWN BY E. K. JOHNSON, R.W.S.

"Even now, maybe, she haunts us."

"SHE:" A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

By H. RIDER HAGGARD,

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "Damon," "The Witch's Head," etc.

XVIII.

"OO, WOMAN!

THEY followed a silence of a minute or so, during which she appeared, if one might judge from the almost anguished ravine of her face—for she looked anguished sometimes—she be plunged in a happy way. Suddenly, however, a new thought struck her, and her expression became the very reverse of serene.

"Almost had I forgotten," she said, "that woman, Ustane. What is she to Kullikass—his servant, or—?" and she paused, and her voice trembled.

I shrugged my shoulders. "I understand that she is wed to him according to the custom of the Anshaggar," I answered; "but I know not."

Her face grew dark as a thunder-cloud. Old as she was, Ayrkha had not lost her judgment.

"Then there is an end," she said; "she must die, even now!" "For what crime?" I asked, horrified; "she is guilty of nothing, that there are not guilty of herself, oh Ayrkha. She loves the man, and he has been pleased to accept her love; when, then, is her sin?"

"Truly, oh Holly, there are faiths," she answered, almost passionately. "Where is her sin? Her sin is that she stands between me and my desire. Well, I know that I can take him from her—his death there a man upon this earth, oh Holly, who

could resist me if I put out my strength? Men are feebler far so long only as temptations pass them by. If the temptation be but strong enough, there will the man yield, for every man, like every man, hath his breaking strain, and passion is to them what gold and power are to women—the weight upon their weakness. Before me, it will be fore with mortal women in that heaven of which they speak; if only the spirits be more fair, for their bodies will never turn to look upon them, and their heaven will become their hell. For man can be bought with woman's beauty, if it be but beautiful enough; and woman's beauty can be ever bought with gold, if only there be gold enough. So was it in my day, and so it will be to the end of time. The world is a great mart, my Holly, where all things are for sale to him who bids the highest in the currency of our desires."

These remarks, which were as cynical as might have been expected from a woman of Ayrkha's age and experience, poured upon me, and I answered, sadly, that in no heaven there was no marriage or giving in marriage.

"Ere would it not be heaven, dost thou mean?" she put in.

"Ere upon that, Holly, to think so ill of so poor women! Is it, then, marriage that marks the line between thy heaven and thy hell? But enough of this. This is no time for disputing and the challenge of our wits. Why dost thou always dispute? Art thou also a philosopher of these latter days? As for this woman, she must die; for though I can take her husband from her, yet,

while she lived, might he think tenderly of her, and that I cannot say with. No woman shall dwell in his thoughts; my empire shall be all my own. She hath had her day, let her be content; for better is an hour with love than a century of loneliness—now might she still swallow her."

"Nay, nay," I said, "it would be a wicked crime; and from a crime thought cannot but what is evil. For they can take do not this deed."

"It is, then, a crime, oh foolish man, to put away that which stands between us and our ends? Then is our life one long crime, my Holly; for day by day we destroy that we may live, since in this world none, save the strongest, can endure. Those who are weak must perish; the earth is so the strong, and the fruits thereof. For every tree that grows a shade shall wither, that the strong ones may take their share. We can to place and power over the dead bodies of those who fall and fall; we win the food we eat from out the mouths of starving babes. It is the weakness of things. Thus regard, too, that a crime breeds evil, but heaven they do not lack experience; for out of crimes come many good things, and out of good grows much evil. The cruel rage of the tyrant may prove a blessing to thousands who cross after him, and the sweet-heartedness of a holy man may make a vain man's slave. Man doeth this and doeth that from the good or evil of his heart; but he knoweth not to what end his moral sense doth prompt him; for when he willeth he is blind to where the line shall fall, nor

by his will. But if she was personally acquainted with a locality she could, as in the case of ourselves and the whole, throw in reflections upon the past and also the reflection of anything that was passing there at the time. This power, however, did not extend to the minds of others. For instance, she could show me the interior of my college chapel, as I remembered it, but not as it was at the moment of reflection; for, where other people were concerned, her art was strictly limited to the facts or memories that when we tried, for her amusement, to show her pictures of the world, such as St. Paul's or the House of Parliament, the result was most imperfect; for, of course, though we had a general idea of their appearance, we could not recall all the minute details, and this therefore was the artistic necessity to a perfect reflection. It was not so, and so far from accepting a natural explanation of the matter, which was after all, though strange enough in all conscience, nothing more than an instance of glorified and perfected telepathy, he set the whole thing down as a manifestation of the blackest magic. I shall never forget the look of terror which he wore when he saw the motion of the last perfect portrait of his long-remembered brethren staring at him from the quail water, or the merry wailing of laughter with which Ayesha greeted his contumacious. As for Leo, he did not half like it either, but ran his fingers through his yellow curls, and remarked that it gave him the creeps.

After about an hour of this amazement, in the latter part of which Leo did not participate, the music by signs indicated that Billith was waiting for an audience. Accordingly he was told to "crawl up," which he did as awkwardly as usual, and announced that the dance was ready to begin. *He Stiv* and the white strangers would be pleased to attend. Shortly afterwards we all rose, and Ayesha leaving through a dark cloak (the way, by the way, that she had worn when I saw her cursing by the fire) over her white shrappling, we started. It was the same as in the open air, on the mountain-side, except that in front of the great cave, and thither we made our way. About fifteen paces from the mouth of the cave we found three chairs placed, and here we sat and waited, for as yet no dancers were to be seen. The night was almost, but not quite, dark, the cross being not rises as yet, which made us wonder how we should be able to see the dancing.

"It is still good to understand," said Ayesha, with a little laugh, when Leo asked her, and we certainly did. Scarcely were the words out of her mouth when from every point we saw dark forms rushing up, each bearing with them what we at first took to be enormous flaming torches. Whatever they were they were burning furiously, for the flames stood out a yard or more behind each bearer. On they came in the open air, on the mountain-side, with their flaming burdens. Leo was the first to discover what these heralds were.

"Great heavens!" he shouted, "they are corpses on fire!" I stared and stared again—he was perfectly right—the torches that were to light our entertainment were human mummies from the caves!

On rushed the bearers of the flaming corpses and meeting at a spot about twenty paces in front of us built their ghastly burdens crossways into a huge bonfire. Heavens! how they roared and flared. No tar barrel could have burnt as these mummies did. Nor was this all. Suddenly I saw one great fellow seize a flaming human arm that had fallen from its parent frame, and rush off into the darkness. Presently he stopped and a tall streak of fire shot up into the air, illumining the gloom, and also the lamp from which it sprang. The lamp was the mummy of a woman tied to a stout stake let into the rock, and he had fired her hair. On he went a few paces, and touched a second, then a third, and a fourth, till at last we were surrounded on all three sides by a great ring of bodies flaring furiously, and emitting a noise which they were pronounced to herald rendered them so inflammable that the flames would literally spout out of the ears and mouth in tongues of fire a foot or more long.

Nero illuminated his garden with live Christians soaked in tar, and we were now treated to a similar spectacle, probably for the first time since his day, only happily our lamps were not living ones.

But although this element of horror was fortunately wanting, to describe the awful and hideous grandeur of the spectacle thus presented to us is, I feel, so absolutely beyond my poor powers, that I scarcely dare attempt it. To begin with, it appealed to the moral as well as the physical susceptibilities. There was something very terrible and mysterious about the employment of the remote dead to illumine the organs of the living; in itself the thing was a statue, both on the living and the dead. Caesar's dust—or is it Alexander's!—may stop to light up a bangle, but the functions of these dead Caesars of the past was to light up a savage orgie. To such base uses do we cease, of so little account are we in the minds of the super-mundane, and how dead most of what we so far from revering our memory, will live to cause us for forgetting them into such a world of woe.

Then there was the physical side of the spectacle, and a vivid and splendid one it was. These old victims of Kôr burnt, as to judge from their inscriptions they had lived, very fit and with the utmost liberality. With their eyes were visible to the eyes. As soon as ever a mummy had burnt down to the ankles, which it did in about twenty minutes, the feet were kicked away, and another one put in its place. The bonfire was kept going on the same generous scale, and its flame shot up, with a hiss and a crackle, twenty or thirty feet into the air, throwing great flashes of lighter far into the gloom, through which the dark forms of the Amharig fitted in and out like devils replenishing the infernal fires. We all stood and stared aghast—shocked, and yet fascinated—at so strange a spectacle, and had expected to see the spirits those flaming forms had once released come creeping from the shadows to work vengeance on their persecutors.

"I promised thee a strange sight, my Holly," laughed Ayesha, whose services alone did not seem to be affected: "and, behold, I have not failed thee. Also, it hath its lesson. Trust not to the future, for who knows what the future may bring! Therefore, live for the day and endeavour not to escape the dust which seems to be men's fate. What thinkest thou those long-forgotten sobles and ladies would have felt had they known that they should one day flare to light the dance or bail the pot of savages? But see, here come the dancers; a merry crew—are they not? The stage is lit—how for the play?"

As she spoke, we perceived two lines of figures, one male and the other female, to the number of about a hundred, each advancing toward the human bonfire, arrayed only in the usual leopard and buck skins. They formed up in perfect silence in two lines, facing each other between us and the fire, and then the dance—a sort of infernal and fiendish concern—began. To describe it is quite impossible, but though there was a good deal of tossing of legs and double-shuffling, it seemed to our unstarved souls to be more of a play than a dance, and, as usual with this dreadful people, who would never have taken any interest in the colour lines in which they live, and whose jokes and amusements are drawn from the inexhaustible stores of preserved mortality which which they share their homes, the subject appeared to be most ghastly. I know that it represented an attempted murder first of all, and then the final slice of the victim and his struggling from the grave, each act of the abominable drama being carried out to perfect silence, being resounded and finished with a furious and most revolting dance round the supposed victim, who writhed upon the ground in the red light of the fire.

Presently, however, this pleasing piece was interrupted. Suddenly there was a slight commotion, and a great, powerful woman, whom I had noted as one of the most vigorous of the dancers, came, made mad and drunken with unalloyed excitement, bounding and staggering towards us, shrieking out as she came:—

"I want a black goat, I must have a black goat, bring me a black goat!" and down she fell upon the rocky floor foaming an evil whining, and shrieking for a black goat, about as hideous a spectacle as can well be imagined.

Instantly most of the dancers came up, and got round her, though some still continued their capers in the background.

"She has got a Devil," sang out one of them. "Run an get a black goat. There, Devil, keep quiet! keep quiet! You shall have the goat presently. They have gone to fetch it, Devil."

"I want a black goat, I must have a black goat!" shrieked the foaming raving creature again.

"All right, Devil, the goat will be here presently, keep quiet, there's a good Devil!"

And so on till the goat taken from a neighbouring island did at last arrive, being dragged bleating on to the scene by its horns.

"Is it a black one, is it a black one?" shrieked the possessed.

"Yes, yes, Devil, as black as night," sang aside, keeping it behind thee, don't let the Devil see it has got a white spot on its rump and another on its belly. In one instant, Devil. There, cut its throat quick. Where is the taster?"

"The goat! the goat! the goat! Give me the blood of my black goat! I must have it, don't you see I must have it! Oh! oh! oh! give me the blood of the goat!"

At this moment a terrified *Sh* announced that the poor goat had been sacrificed, and the next minute a woman ran up with a sverer fall of the blood. This the possessed creature, who was then raving and foaming her wilds, seized and drank, and instantly recovered, and without a trace of hysteria, or fits, or being possessed, or whatever dreadful thing it was she was suffering from. She stretched her arms, smiled faintly, and walked quietly back to the dancers, who presently withdrew in a double line as they had come, leaving the space between us and the bonfire deserted.

I thought the entertainment (*Sh*) was now over, and feeling rather queer, was about to ask *Sh* if we could rise, when suddenly what at first I took to be a balloon came hopping round the fire, and was instantly met upon the other side by a lion, or rather a human being dressed in a lion's skin. Then came a goat, then a man wrapped in an ox's hide, with the horns wobbling about in a ludicrous way. After him followed a blebok, then an impala, then a woodoo, then more goats, and many other animals, including a girl seen up in the shining scaly hide of a lion's constrictor, several parties which trailed along the ground behind her. When all the beasts had collected they began to dance about in a lumbering, unnatural fashion, and to imitate the sounds produced by the respective animals they represented, till the whole air was alive with roars and bleating and the hissing of snakes. This went on for a long time, till, getting tired of the position, I asked Ayesha if there would be any objection to Leo and myself walking round to inspect the human torches, and, as he had nothing to say against it, we started, striking round to the left. After looking at one or two of the flaming bodies we were about to return, thoroughly disgusted with the grotesque weirdness of the spectacle, when our attention was attracted by one of the dancers, a particularly active leopold, that had separated itself from its fellow bearers and was whisking about in our immediate neighbourhood, but gradually drawing into a spot where the shadow was darkest, equilibrium between two of the flaming mummies. Drawn by curiosity, we followed it, when suddenly it darted past us into the shadows beyond, and as it did so erected itself and whispered, "Come," in a voice that we both recognised as that of Utanac. Without waiting to consult me Leo turned and followed her into the cave darkness, and I, feeling sick and hot at heart, went after them. The leopard crawled on for about fifty paces—a sufficient distance to be quite beyond the light of the fire and torches—and then Leo came up with it, or, rather, with Utanac.

"Oh, my lord," I heard her whisper, "so I have found thee! Listen, I am in peril of my life from 'She-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah.' Surely the Baboon has told thee how she drove me from thee? I love thee, my lord, and those art mine accords to the custom of the country. I saved thy life! My Lion, will thou cast me off now?"

"Of course not," ejaculated Leo; "I have been wondering whether thou hadst gone. Let us go and explain matters to the Queen."

"Nay, nay, she would slay us. Thou knowest not her power—the Baboon there be, he knoweth, for he saw. Nay, there is but one way: if thou wilt cleave to us, thou must flee with me across the marshes even now, and then perchance we may escape."

"For Heaven's sake, Leo," I began, but she broke in.

"Nay, listen not to him. Swift—the swift—death is in the air we breathe. Even now, mayhap, she heareth us," and without more ado, she proceeded to back her arguments by throwing herself into his arms. As she did so the leopard's head slipped from his hair. I saw the three white finger-marks upon it, glancing sidelong in the twilight. One moment realising the dangerous nature of the situation, I was about to interpose, for I knew that Leo was not too strong-minded where women were concerned, when—oh! horror!—I heard a little silvery laugh behind me. I turned round, and there was *She* herself, and with her Billith and two male mites. I gaped and nearly sank to the ground, for I knew that such a situation must result in some dreadful tragedy, of which it seemed exceedingly probable to me that I should be the first victim. As she approached me she raised her arms and covered her eyes with her hands, while Leo, not knowing the full terror of the position, merely coloured up, and looked as silly as a man caught in such a trap would naturally do.

(To be continued)



DRAWN BY E. K. JOHNSON, R.W.S.

"As we were returning Billie met us"

"SHE:" A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

By H. RIDER HAGGARD,

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "Damon," "The White Heat," etc.

CHAPTER XX

TRAGEDY

They followed a moment of the most painful silence that I ever knew. It was broken by Aysha, who addressed herself to Len.

"No, my dear girl, I am not," she said, in her softest tones, which yet had the ring of steel about them, "look not so heedful. Surely the night was a pretty one—the hoped and the lost!"

"Oh, keep it all," said Len, in English.

"And then, Uman," she went on, "surely I should have passed this by had not the light fall on the white across thy hair. Well! well! the dawn is done—see, the lights have burnt down, and all things end in darkness and in calm. So thou thoughtest it a fit time for love, Uman, my sweet—and I, dreaming not that I could be deceived, thought thee already for away."

"Play not with me," murmured the wretched woman, "they see, and let there be an end."

"No, why? It is not well to go to sleep from the hot lips of love days in the cold mouth of the grave," and she made a motion to the man, who hastily stepped up and caught the girl by either arm. With a snarl he sprang upon the wretch, and hurled him to the ground, and then stood near him with his feet set, and his face deadly.

"Aysha laughed. "It was well shown, my guest; thou hadst a strong arm for one who is late now sick. The rest of thy journey I pray thee let this man see and do my bidding. He shall see how the girl, the night air grows chilly and I would welcome her to some one place. Truly she whom thou dost love shall be favored of me also."

I took Len by the arm, and pulled him from the prostrate man, and he, half bewildered, obeyed the pressure. Then we all set out for the cave across the plateau, where a great pile of white houses, which was all that remained of the fire that had lit the dancing, by the dancers had remained.

In the course we gained Aysha's head—all too soon it seemed to me, having a premonition of what was to come lying heavy on my heart.

Aysha passed herself again her cushions, and having dismissed Len and Billie, by signs made the slaves tend the lamps and stoves, all went our girl, who was her favorite personal attendant. We three remained standing, the wretched Uman a inch to the left of the rest of us.

"Now, oh Holly," Aysha began, "how came it that thou who didst bear my words hiding this evil deed?"—and she pointed to Uman—to go from hence—thou art whose prayer I did vainly spare her life—how came it, I say, that thou wast a duress to what I do to-night? Answer, and for thine own sake, I say, speak the truth, for I am not minded to bear lies upon this matter!"

"It was by accident, oh Queen," I answered. "I knew naught of it."

"Do believe that, oh Holly," she answered, softly, "and well it is for thee that I do—thou dost all the guilt upon thyself."

"I don't see any particular guilt about it," broke in Len. "She is not anybody else's wife, and it appears that she has married me according to the custom of this wretched place, so who is the worst? Any way, maiden," he went on, "wherever she has done I have done too, so if she is to be punished let her be punished alone; and I will then," he went on, working himself up into a fury, "that if thou hiddest one of those dead and dumb victims to teach her again I will tear him to pieces!" And he looked as though he meant it.

Aysha listened in icy silence, and made no remark. When he had finished, however, she addressed Uman.

"Hast thou sought to say, woman? Then say, say, thou, mother, who didst think to thy own shame thy patient's pretty maid, even against the great word of my will? Tell me, for I am would not understand. Why didst thou do this thing?"

And then I think I saw the most tremendous exhibition of moral courage and integrity that it is possible to conceive. For the poor doomed girl, knowing what she had to expect at the hands of her terrible Queen, knowing, too, from bitter experience how great was her power, yet gathered herself together, and out of the very depths of her despair found materials to defy her.

"I did it, oh Queen," she answered, drawing herself up to the full of her stately height, and throwing back the panache-tails of her head, "because my love is stronger than she gave. I did it because my life without this man whom my heart chose would be but a living death. Therefore did I risk my life, and more that I knew that it is better to die young, yet am I glad that I did risk it, and pay it away in the ending, yet, because he embraced me once, and said me that he yet loved me."

How Aysha had met our man by chance, and then said down again, "I have an oath," said our Uman, his rich voice ringing sweet and full, "and I am not a Queen, nor do I live for ever, but a woman's heart is heavy to sink through water, however deep, oh

Queen! And a woman's eyes are quick to see, even through thy veil, oh Queen!"

"Listen! I know it, thou dost love this man thyself, and therefore wouldst thou destroy me who stand across thy path. Ay, I do—I do, and go into the darkness, nor know I whether I go. But this I know. There is a light shining in my breast, and by that light, as by a lamp, I see the wretch and the lover that I shall not share myself half before me like a scowl. When first I knew my love," and she pointed to Len, "I knew also that death would be the bridal gift he gave me—so I looked upon me of a soldier, but I cannot not look, being ready to pay the price, and behold, death he gave! And now, even as I know that, so do I, standing on the steps of doom, know that thou dost not reap the profit of the crime. Mine he is, and though thy beauty shall fill a man against the stars, mine shall be remain for thee. Never here upon this earth shall he look thee in the eyes and call thee wife. Vain, too, art thou, I see,"—and her voice rang like the cry of an inspired prophet: "ah, I see!"

Then came an answering cry of mingled rage and terror. I turned my head. Aysha had risen, and was standing with her arms outstretched hand pointing at Uman, who had suddenly stopped speaking. I gazed at the poor woman, and as I gazed I saw upon her face the same, cold, dead expression of terror that I had seen once before when she had broken out into her wild chant. Her eyes grew large, her nostrils dilated, and her lips blanched.

Aysha did nothing, she made no sound, she only drew herself up, stretched out her arm, and her tall veiled form quivering like an open lid, appeared to look fondly at her victim. Even as she did so Uman, and her hands to her head, staggered and reeling across, turned round twice, and then fell backwards with a dead groan upon the floor. Both Len and myself rushed to her—she was still dead—dashed into death by some supernatural electric agency of sympathy which will haunt the dead. She had expired.

For a moment Len did not quite realize what had happened. But when he did, his face was as white as mine. With a savage cry he rose from behind the corpse, and turning, leaped upon Aysha. But she had been watching, and seeing him rising, hurried out her hand again, and he came staggering back, senseless, and would have fallen, had I not caught him. Afterwards he told me that he felt as though he had suddenly received a violent blow in the chest, and, what is more, cared so though all the world had been taking out of him.

These Ayuda people... "Forgive me, my guest, she said softly, addressing him... "If I have offended you in any way..."

"No, my friend," she said, "I have not. I have only been... "I am sure you are not a murderer..."

"I am sure you are not a murderer..." "My name is not Kullikawa..." "I am sure you are not a murderer..."

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That light is Love? All she is false. All she is shadow moving upon water. All she is wind and sun. All she is light as the night on the measure of Love? She shall say to me, 'Behold, it dwelleth in the spirit. From such does it draw its content. For beauty, it is as a rose. It flows like its rays, but she, as beautiful, and some know where the star shone, it is the heaven where it shall set.

Then turning to Len, and laying her hand upon his shoulder, she was a bliss and more triumphant than, and it balanced success that gradually settled from idealized pain into pure and magnetic joy:

Long have I loved thee, ah, my love, yet has my love not loved me. Long have I loved thee, Len, and told my reward to it heaven.

For every I said once, and then went down from thee. Then in a great vision I met my partner, and from those eyes it was the eyes of Love, and without a word I knew of redemption, and I found me as with the breath of my knowledge. And now, to it with grace of eye, and hence forth. Let out of the great back that I have, I see, from among the dry bones and ashes of the dead.

I have known, and my reward is with thee. I have known Death, and Death hath brought back to me him that was dead.

Thou art the light, the fair, the future. Thou art the path that I shall tread across the everlasting shadows.

The hour is at hand, Night hath laid away into the valley. Let shall we die, my love, and only shall we go. Come not shall we, but with the shadow of King. My love and I, we shall be as the light of the world, and I shall be as the light of the world, and I shall be as the light of the world.

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out my presence from the past, and give in strength to words in the lightning of thought. I had, and she struck back with my spirit with visions of dead days.

"Behold now, let the dead and living meet! Across the path of Time they still are, and some look on power upon beauty, with oblivious mind the sorrow up that the world lives from life to life, muffled the brain with padded memory (It is here in the madness of utterance, and I shall see they are, the workings of our sleep shall roll away as thunder through the air, and the traces vision of the past shall rise in music like the waves upon waves beneath the sun; and the weeping and the laughter the lost hours shall be found once more surely under the cliffs of immemorable Time.

"Ay, the sleep shall roll away, and the voices shall be heard, when down the compassed choir, around our great reliance in life, the lightning of the Spirit hath power to seek out the purpose of being; questioning and having those separated days of life, and shaping them in a swift vision may safely live as we need to our upward fate.

"Therefore, have no fear, Kullikawa, when thou dost live, and let us be late here—shall look upon those eyes departed and who beamed and died as long ago, do but turn one page in the book of Being, and show thou what it will become.

"Behold!"

With a sudden motion she drew the shroud from the lifeless one, and the lightning of thought came to her, and she struck back with my spirit with visions of dead days. She was a bliss and more triumphant than, and it balanced success that gradually settled from idealized pain into pure and magnetic joy:

Long have I loved thee, ah, my love, yet has my love not loved me. Long have I loved thee, Len, and told my reward to it heaven. For every I said once, and then went down from thee. Then in a great vision I met my partner, and from those eyes it was the eyes of Love, and without a word I knew of redemption, and I found me as with the breath of my knowledge. And now, to it with grace of eye, and hence forth. Let out of the great back that I have, I see, from among the dry bones and ashes of the dead.

I have known, and my reward is with thee. I have known Death, and Death hath brought back to me him that was dead.

Thou art the light, the fair, the future. Thou art the path that I shall tread across the everlasting shadows.

The hour is at hand, Night hath laid away into the valley. Let shall we die, my love, and only shall we go. Come not shall we, but with the shadow of King. My love and I, we shall be as the light of the world, and I shall be as the light of the world, and I shall be as the light of the world.

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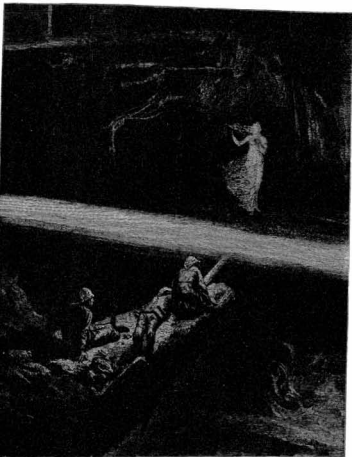
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DRAWN BY E. K. JOHNSON, R.W.S.

"It is not," she called.

"SHE:" A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

By H. RIDER HAGGARD.

Author of "Alec Selwyn's Mission," "Damon," "The Witch's Head," etc.

CHAPTER XXII. (continued)

We were as usual shown in by the master, and after these had moved Apollo settled, and once more Lady Leo embraced her, which notwithstanding his benevolence of the previous night, he did with more alacrity and fervor than in ordinary courtesy requires.

"No fall her white hand on his head, and looked him fondly in the eye," "Dost thou wonder, my Kollikross," she said, "when thou dost call me all those names, and when we shall of a truth be for one another and to one another? I will tell thee. First, must thou be ever as I see me immortal indeed, for that am I not, but so cruel and bold as against the attacks of Time, that his arrows shall gleam from the armor of thy vigorous life as the useless glass heaves from waste. As yet I may not share with thee, for thou, and I are different, and the very brightness of my being would burn thee up, and produce decay thee. Thou couldst not even bear to look upon me for too long a time lest thine eyes should ache, and thy veins swim, and therefore (with a little exception) need I presently veil myself again." (This by the way she did not do.)

"No! hark, thou shalt not be tried beyond endurance, for this very evening, on hour before the sun goes down, shall we start hence, and by tomorrow's dawn, if all goes well, and the need is not lost to us, which I pray it may not be, shall we stand in the place of life, and thou shalt bask in the fire, and come forth glorified

as an man ever was before thee, and then, Kollikross, dost thou call me wife, and I will call thee husband."

Leo uttered something in answer to this astounding statement, I don't know what, and she laughed a little in her confusion, and went on.

"And thou, too, oh Holly; on thee also will I confer this boon, and thou of a truth shalt thou, for an evergreen tree, and this will I do—well, because thou hast pleased my Holly, for thou art not altogether a fool, like most of the sons of men, and because, though thou hast a mind of philosophy as full of nonsense as those of the old days, yet hast thou not forgotten how to turn a pretty phrase about a lady's eyes."

"Hullo, old fellow!" whispered Leo, with a return of his old chameleonism, "have you been paying compliments? I should never have thought of you!"

"I thank thee, oh Apollo," I replied, with as much dignity as I could command, "but if there be such a place as thou dost describe, and if in this strange place there can be found a fairer view than can hold off Death when he comes to pluck us by the hand, yet would I none of it. For me, oh Apollo, the world has not proved neither in our ears, and sweetest and the best she gives her children for their daily food. Steins to eat and later water for their thirst, and stripes for tender captives. Who would endure this for many days? Who would so leave up his back with necessities of last

hours and leave out of his neighbor's sorrow that he cannot learn, and wisdom that brings not consolation? Hard is it to die, because our delicate flesh shrinks back from the worm, it will not feed, and from that sickness which the winding-sheet doth create from our view. But harder still, to my fancy, would it be to live on, green in the leaf and hair, but dead and rotten at the core, and yet that other more worm of mortification gnawing ever at the heart."

"Dost thou, Holly," she said, "yet dost long life and strength and beauty beyond measure seem power and all things that are dear to man?"

"And what, oh Queen," I answered, "are those things that are dear to man? Are they man's labors? Is not ambition but an endless ladder by which we brighten ever climbed till the last unreachably rung is mounted? For bright leads us to height, and there is no resting-place upon them, and our feet grow upon rung, and there is no limit to the number. Dost not work's surface and beyond unknown, and no longer serve to satisfy or pleasure, or to buy an hour's ease of mind? And in those we end to wisdom that we may hope to reach it? Either, the more we learn shall we see thereby be able only to better comprehend our ignorance? Did we live ten thousand years could we hope to solve the secrets of the seas, and of the space beyond the seas, and of the land that hangs there in the heavens? Would not our wisdom be but as a quivering hunger calling our consciousness day by day to a knowledge of the empty



DRAWN BY E. K. JOHNSON, R.W.S.

"Aphra turned towards it, and stretched her arms to greet it."

"SHE:" A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

By H. RIDER HAGGARD,

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "Down," "The Witch's Head," etc.

CHAPTER XXIV. (Continued.)

I STRUGGLED with my hands, and if ever I felt sick in my life I felt sick then, and I am not ashamed to say that I heaved and lunged.

"Steady then and not afraid," called this strange creature in a hoarse, guttural voice, from where she stood perched like a bird, on the highest point of the rocky mass. "Make then way for Kullikhan's."

This struck me; it is better to fall down a precipice and die than be laughed at by such a woman; so I clenched my teeth, and in another instant I was on that horrible, screeching, bending plank, with horridous squeals and around me. I have always hated a great height, but never before did I realize the full horrors of which such a position is capable. Oh, the sickening sensation of that yielding board resting on the two moving supports! I gave a cry, and thought that I must fall; my entire crop? It seemed to me that I was falling, and my delight of finding myself sprawling upon that stone, which rose and fell beneath me like a boat in a reef, cannot be expressed in words. All I know is that I leaped, but scarcely enough, I thank Providence for preserving me so far.

Then came Lavi's turn, and, though he looked rather queer, he came across like a rope-dancer. Aphra stretched out her hand to clasp his arm, and I heard her exclaim, "Bravely done, my love—bravely done!" The old Greek girl's lips in that joy!

And now only poor Job remained on the further side of the gulf. He crept up to the plank, and yelled out, "I can't do it, it's still full here that nearly gone."

"You mean," I said, "you mean, Job, it's as easy as carrying a bun." I suppose that I said this to verify my own opinion, because the expression conveys a wonderful idea of facility. As a matter of fact I know no more difficult operation in the whole world than catching flies—that is, in warm weather, where they have all their faculties—unless, indeed, it is catching mosquitoes.

"I can't, it's—can't, indeed."

"Let the man come, or let him see and perch there. See, the light is dying! In a moment it will be gone!" said Aphra.

I looked, she was right. The sun was passing below the level of the hole or slit in the precipice through which the ray came.

"If you creep there, Job, you will die alone," I yelled; "the light is going."

"Come, in a man, Job," roared Lavi; "it's quite easy."

Then, indeed, the miserable Job, with, I think, the most awful

yell that I ever heard, precipitated himself face downwards on the plank—he did not dare, smell shoes on him, to try to walk it, and commenced to draw himself across in little jerks, his poor legs hanging down on either side into the unknown abyss.

His violent jerks at the foot board made the great stone, which was only balanced on a few inches of rock, oscillate in a most sickening manner, and to make matters worse, just as he was halfway across the flying ray of hard light suddenly went out just as though a lamp had been extinguished in a curtained room, leaving the whole howling wilderness of air in blackness.

"Come on, Job, for God's sake," I shouted in an agony of fear, while the stone, gathering motion with every swing, rocked so violently that it was difficult to hang on to it. It was a truly awful position.

"Laid have mercy on me!" yelled poor Job from the darkness. "Oh, the plank's slipping!" and I had a violent struggle, and thought that he was gone.

But just at that moment his outstretched hand, clinging to agony at the eye, met my own, and I heaved—oh, how I did heave, putting out all the strength that has placed Providence to give me in such abundance—and to my joy in another minute Job was grasping on the rock beside me. But the plank! I felt it slip, and heard it knock against a projecting knob of rock, and it was gone.

"Great Heavens!" I exclaimed. "How are we going to get back?"

"I don't know," answered Lavi, out of the gloom. "Falls into the clay is the evil thereof! I am thankful enough to be here."

But Aphra merely called to me to take her hand and support her head.

XXV.

THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

I felt as I was bid, and in fear and trembling lit myself down over the edge of the stone. I sprang my legs out, but could touch nothing.

"I am going to fall!" I gasped.

"No, let yourself go, and trust to me," answered Aphra.

Now, if the position is considered, it will be easily understood that this was a greater demand upon my confidence than was justified by my knowledge of Aphra's character. For all I knew she might be in the very act of consigning me to a horrible doom.

But in life we sometimes have to try our faith upon strange shores, and so it was now.

"Let yourself go!" she cried, and, having no choice, I did.

I let myself slide a pace or two down the sloping under-side of the rock, and then pass into the air, and the thought flashed through my brain that I was lost. But no. In another instant my feet struck against a rocky floor, and I felt that I was standing on something solid, and out of reach of the wind, which I could hear singing away overhead. As I stood there, thinking my stars for those small moments, there was a thip and a shuffle, and down came Lavi straight at me.

"Hello, old fellow!" he called out, "are you there? This is getting something, is it not?"

Just then, with a terrible yell, Job arrived right on the top of us, knocking to both down. By the time that we had struggled to our feet again Aphra was standing among us, and holding up light the lamps, which fortunately remained unbroken, as did the spare jar of oil.

I got out my hot Brevet and May's was matches, and they struck us merrily, close in that awful place, as in a London drawing-room.

In a couple of minutes both the lamps were alight, and a curious scene they revealed. We were huddled up in a rocky chamber, some twelve feet square, and started enough we looked; that is, except Aphra, who was standing calmly with her arms folded, and waiting for the lamps to burn up. The chamber appeared to be fairly natural, and partly hollowed out of the top of the cone. The roof of the natural part was formed of the swinging stone, and that of the back part of the chamber, which sloped downwards, was hewn from the live rock. For the rest, the place was worn and dry—a perfect haven of rest compared to the giddy ginnacles of cliffs, and the quivering spar that shot out to meet its side.

"There," said Lavi, "safety have we come, though once I feared that the rocking stone would fall with us, and precipitate us into the bottomless depths beneath, for I do believe that the rock greth down to the very wains of the world. The rock whence the cone stands hath crumbled beneath the swinging weight. And now that Lavi" nothing towards Job, who was sitting on the floor, busily wiping his forehead with a red cotton pocket-handkerchief, "is here, my dearest old fellow, for as a pig is he striped, hath he fall the plank, it will not be easy to reverse across the gulf, and so that end must I make a plan. But now pass a while, and look at the place. What think ye that it is?"

"We know not," I answered.

arrows through the rosy air; and now the edge of the pillar itself appeared. Ayesha turned towards it, and stretched out her arms to greet it. On it came very slowly, and lapped her round with flame. I saw the fire run up her form. I saw her lift it with both her hands as though it were water, and pour it over her head. I even saw her open her mouth and draw it down into her lungs, and a dread and wonderful sight it was.

Then she paused, and stretched out her arms, and stood there quite still, with a heavenly smile upon her face, as though she were the very Spirit of the Flame.

The mysterious fire played up and down her dark and rolling locks, twisting and twining itself through and around them like threads of golden lace; it gleamed upon her ivory breast and shoulder, from which the hair had slipped aside; it slid along her pillared throat and delicate features, and seemed to find a home in the glorious eyes that shone and shone more brightly even than the spiritual essence.

Oh, how beautiful she looked there in the flame! No angel out of heaven could have worn a greater loveliness. Even now my heart faints before the recollection of it, as she stood and smiled at our awed faces, and I would give half my remaining time upon this earth to see her once live that again.

But suddenly—more suddenly than I can describe—a kind of change came over her face, a change which I could not define or explain on paper, but none the less a change. The smile vanished, and in its place there came a dry, hard look; the rounded face seemed to grow pinched, as though some great anxiety were leaving its impress upon it. The glorious eyes, too, lost their light, and, as I thought, the form its perfect shape and evenness.

I rubbed my dazzled eyes, thinking that it was the victim of some hallucination, or that the refraction from the intense light produced an optical delusion; and, as I did so, the flaming pillar slowly tumbled and tumbled off whithersoever it passes to in the bowels of the great earth, leaving Ayesha standing where it had been.

As soon as it was gone, she stepped forward to Leo's side—it seemed to me that there was no spring in her step—and stretched out her hand to lay it on his shoulder. I gazed at her arm. Where was its wonderful roundness and beauty? It was getting thin and angular. And her face—by heaven!—her face was growing old before my eyes! I suppose that Leo saw it also; certainly he recoiled a step or two.

"What is it, my Kallikrates?" she said, and her voice—what was the matter with those deep and thrilling notes? They were quite high and cracked.

"Why, what is it—what is it?" she said, confusedly. "I feel dumb. Surely the quality of the fire hath not altered. Can the principle of Life alter? Tell me, Kallikrates, is there aught wrong with my eyes? I see not clear," and she put her hand to her head and touched her hair—and oh, horror of horrors!—it all fell off upon the floor, leaving her utterly bald.

"Oh, God!—God!—God!" shrieked Leo, in a shrill falsetto of terror, his eyes nearly dropping out of his head, and foam upon his lips. "God!—God!—God!" she shrieked up; she's turning into a monkey!" and down he fell upon the floor, foaming and gushing in a fit.

True enough—I faint even as I write it in the living presence of that terrible refection—she was shrieking up; the golden snake that had encircled her gracious form slipped over her hips and fell upon the ground; smaller and smaller she grew; her skin changed colour, and in place of the perfect whiteness of its lustre it turned dirty brown and yellow, like an old piece of withered parchment. She felt at her bald head: the delicate hand was nothing but a claw now, a human talon like that of a badly-preserved Egyptian mummy, and then she seemed to realize what kind of change was passing over her, and she shrieked—oh, she shrieked!—she rolled upon the floor and shrieked!

Smaller she grew, and smaller yet, till she was no larger than a shee baboon. Now the skin was puckered into a million wrinkles, and on the shapeless face was the stamp of unutterable age. I never saw anything like it; nobody ever saw anything like the frightful age that was graven on that fearful countenance, no bigger now than that of a two-months' child, though the skull remained the same size, or nearly so, and let all men pray to God they never may, if they wish to keep their reason.

At last she lay still, or only feebly moving. She who, but two minutes before, had gazed upon us the loveliest, noblest, most splendid woman the world had ever seen, lay still before us, near the masses of her own dark hair, no longer than a big monkey, and hideous—oh, too hideous for words. And yet, think of this!—at that very moment I thought of it—it was the same woman!

She was dying: we saw it, and thanked God—for while she lived she could feel, and what must she have felt? She raised herself upon her bony hands, and blindly gazed around her, wailing her head slowly from side to side as a tortoise does. She could not see, for her whitish eyes were covered with a horny film. Oh, the horrible pathos of the sight! But she could still speak.

"Kallikrates," she said, in husky, trembling notes. "Forget me not, Kallikrates. Have pity on my shame; I shall come again, and shall once more be beautiful, I swear it—it is true! Oh—oh—oh—" and she fell upon her face, and was still.

On the very spot where twenty centuries before she had slain the old Kallikrates, she herself fell down and died.

Overcome with the extremity of horror, we, too, fell on the sandy floor of that dread place, and swooned away.

(To be continued)



DRAWN BY E. S. JOHNSON, R.W.S.

"Next instant I felt Leo seize me by the right wrist with both hands."

"SHE:" A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

By H. RIDER HAGGARD,

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "Damon," "The Witch's Head," etc.

CHAPTER XXVI. (continued)

I felt not how long we lay thus. Many hours, I suppose. When at last I opened my eyes the other two were still outstretched on the floor. The only light still leamed like a celestial dawn, and the black wheels of the Spirit of Life still rolled upon their tracks, as if I were the great pillar was passing away. I started up by the hideous little monkey frame, covered with dried yellow parchment, that once had been the glorious Sir Leo. It was the hideous dream—it was an awful and insupportable sight.

What had happened to bring this shocking change about? Had the waters of the life-giving Fire changed? Did it, perhaps, from the time we had been an essence of Death instead of an essence of Life? Or was it that the frame once charged with its nerveless life could bear no more, so that were the process repeated—it could not at what lapse of time—the two impressions recastled out of the body as which they acted as it was when they came into contact with the very essence of life? This, and the like, would answer for the sudden and terrible springing of Leo. I have not the slightest doubt myself but that the same may have happened before me was just what the frame of a woman would be if by any extraordinary means life could be preserved in her all the length of the age of seventy-two centuries.

But who can tell what had happened? There was the fact. Once since that awful hour I have reflected that it required no great stretch of imagination to see the finger of Providence in the matter. Anybody locked up in her living tomb waiting from age to age for the coming of her lover marked but a small change in the order of the World. But Anyola strong and happy in her love, clothed in immortal youth and godlike beauty, and the warden of the creature, would have revolutionized society, and even perchance have changed the destiny of mankind. Thus she opposed herself against the eternal Law, and strong though she was, by it was swept back to nothingness, swept back with shame and hideous mockery.

For some minutes I lay listlessly viewing these terrible sights in my mind, while my physical strength came back to me, which it soon did in that balmy atmosphere. Then I lookt up me of the others, and staggered to my feet, to see if I could arouse them. But first I took up Anyola's knife and the gray seal with which the had been wont to hold her dazzling lockets from the eyes of men, and, averting my head so that I might not look upon it, covered up that dreadful relic of the glorious dead, that shocking epitome of human beauty and human life. I did this hurriedly, fearing lest Leo should recover, and see it again.

Then, stepping over the perturbed masses of dark hair that lay upon the sand, I stamped down by Job, who was lying upon his face, and turned him over. As I did so his arm fell back in

a way that I did not like, and which sent a chill through me, and I glanced sharply at him. One look was enough. Our old and faithful servant was dead. His nerves, already shattered by all he had seen and undergone, had utterly broken down beneath this last dire sight, and he had died of nerves, or in a fit brought on by terror. One had only to look at his face to see it.

It was another blow; but perhaps it may help people to understand how overwhelmingly awful was the experience through which we had passed—we did not feel it such at the time. It seemed quite natural that the poor old fellow should be dead. When Leo came to himself, which he did with a groan and trembling of the limbs about ten minutes afterwards, and I told him that Job was dead, he merely said, "Oh!" And, mind you, this was from no heartlessness, for he and Job were much attached to each other; and he often talks of him now with the deepest regret and affection. It was only that his nerves would bear no more. A hump can only give out a certain quantity of sound, however heavily it is beaten.

Well, I set myself to rousing Leo, who, to my infinite relief, I found was not dead, but only listless, and in the end I succeeded, as I have said, and he set up; and then I saw another dreadful thing. When we recovered that awful place his raving last time we gained the outer air it was snow white. Before, he looked twenty years older.

She: A History of Adventure

By H. RIDER HAGGARD

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," "Danvers," "The Witch's Head," &c.

XXVIII.

OVER THE MOUNTAIN

"THE next thing I recollect is a feeling of the most dreadful stiffness, and a sort of vague idea passing through my half-awakened brain that this was a carpet that had just been beaten. I opened my eyes, and the first thing that fell on me was the venerable countenance of our old friend Billali, who was seated by the side of the improvised bed upon which I was sleeping, and thoughtfully stroking his long beard. The sight of him at once brought back to my mind a recollection of all that we had recently passed through, which was accentuated by the vision of poor Leo lying opposite to me, his face knocked almost to a jelly, and his beautiful crowd of curls turned from yellow to white, and I shut my eyes again and groaned.

"Thou hast slept long, my Baboon," said old Billali.
"How long, my father?" I asked.
"A round of the sun and a round of the moon, a day and a night hath thou slept, and the Lion also. See, he sleepeth yet."
"Blasphemed I sleep," I answered, "for it swallow up recollection."

"Tell me," he said, "what hath befallen ye, and what is this strange story of the death of Her who dieth not. Thinketh thee, my son: if this be true, then is thy danger and the danger of the Lion very great—nay, almost is the pot red whereof ye shall be pecked, and the stomach of those who shall eat ye are already hungry for the flesh. Knowest thou not that these Amabagger, my children, those dwellers in the caves, hate ye? They hate ye as strangers, they hate ye more because of their brethren whom *She* put to the torture for ye. Assuredly, if once they learn that there is naught to fear from Her, from the terrible One-who-must-be-obeyed, they will slay ye by the pot. But let me hear thy tale, my poor Baboon."

"Thus adjured, I set to work and told him—not everything, indeed, for I did not think it advisable to do so, but sufficient for my purpose, which was to make him understand that *She* was really no more, having fallen into some fire, and, as I put it for the real thing would have been incomprehensible to him—been burnt up. I also told him some of the horrors we had undergone in effecting our escape, and these produced a great impression on him. But I clearly saw that he did not believe in the report of *Ayesha's* death. He believed indeed that we thought that she was dead, but his explanation was that it had suited her to disappear for a while. Once he said, in such a tone as if she had done so for ten years, and there was a tradition in the country that many centuries back no one had seen her for a whole generation, when she suddenly re-appeared, and destroyed a woman who had assumed the position of Queen. I said nothing to this, but only shook my head, sadly. Alas! I knew too well that *Ayesha* would appear so more, at any rate that Billali would never see her.

"And now," concluded Billali, "what wouldst thou do, my Baboon?"
"Nay," I said, "I know not, my father. Can we not escape from this country?"

He shook his head.
"It is very difficult. By *Kôr* ye cannot pass, for ye would be seen, and as soon as those fierce ones found that ye were alone, well," and he smiled significantly, and made a movement as though he were placing a bit on his head. "But there is a way over the cliff wherem I once spoke to ye, when ye were driving the cattle out to pasture. Then beyond the mountains are three days' journey through the marshes, and after that I know not, but I have heard that seven days' journey from thence is a mighty river, which floweth to the black water. If ye could come thither, perchance ye might escape, but how can ye come thither?"

"Billali," I said, "once, thou knowest, I did save thy life. Now pay back the debt, my father, and save me mine and my friend's the Lion's. It shall be a pleasant thing for thee to think of when thine hour comes, and something to set in the scale against the evil doing of thy days, if perchance thou hast done any evil. Also, if thou dost, and if *She* doth but hide herself, surely when she comes again she shall reward thee."

"My son the Baboon," answered the old man, "think not that I have an ungrateful heart. Well do I remember how thou didst rescue me when those dogs stood by to see me drown. Measure for measure will I give thee, and if thou canst be saved, surely I will save thee. Listen: by dawn to-morrow be prepared, for litters shall be kept to lead ye over the mountains, and through the marshes beyond. This will I do, saying that it is the word of *She* that he doth, and that he who obeyeth not the word of *She* doth is for the hyenas. Then when ye have crossed the marshes, ye must strike with your own hand, so that perchance if good fortune go with ye, ye may live to come to that black water whereof ye told me. And now, see, the Lion wakes, and ye must eat the food I have made ready for ye."

Leo's condition, when once he was fully aroused proved not to be so bad as might have been expected from his appearance, and we both of us managed to eat a hearty meal, which indeed we needed sadly enough. After this we lapsed down to the spring and bathed, and then came back and slept again till evening, when we once more ate enough for five. Billali was away all that day, no doubt making arrangements about litters and harness for the long and arduous journey in the middle of the night by the arrival of a considerable number of men in the little camp.

At dawn the old man himself appeared, and told us that he had by adding *She's* dead name, though with some difficulty, succeeded in getting the necessary men and two guides to conduct us across the swamp, and that he urged us to start at once, at the same time announcing his intention of accompanying us, so as to protect us against treachery. I was much touched by this act of kindness on the part of that silly old man, for he would have to return, six days' journey through those deadly swamps with no light undertaking for a man of his age, but he consented to it cheerfully in order to promote our safety. It shows that even among those dreadful Amabaggers—who are certainly with their gloom and their devilish and ferocious rites by far the most terrible savages that I ever heard of—there are people with kindly hearts. Of course self-interest may have had something to do with it. He may have thought that *She* would surely repay him, and demand an account of us at his hands, but still, allowing for all deductions, it was a great deal more than we could expect under the circumstances, and I can only say that I shall for as long as I live cherish a most affectionate remembrance of my nominal parent, old Billali.

Accidentally, after swallowing some food, we started in the litters, feeling so far as our bodies went, wonderfully like our old selves after our long rest and sleep. I must leave the condition of our minds to the imagination.

Then came a terrible fall up the cliff. Sometimes the ascent was natural, most often it was a big rock roadway cut, no doubt, in a carefully enough. Leo's hair has lately been so some small extent regarding his hair, he says, it is now a yellowish grey, and I am not without hopes that it will in time come quite right.

first instance by the old inhabitants of *Kôr*. The Amabagger who drive these more cattle over to some year to pasture outside; all I know is that those cattle must be uncommonly active on their feet. Of course the litters were useless here, so we had to walk.

By mid-day, however, we reached the great flat top of that mighty wall of rock, and grand enough the view was from it, with the plain of *Kôr*, in the centre of which we could clearly make out the pillared ruins of the Temple of Truth, to the one side, and the boundless and melancholy marsh on the other, which lay beyond that wall and a half mile and a half covered with (linkers). Nothing grew there, and the only thing to relieve one's eyes were occasional pools of rain-water (for rain had lately fallen) wherever there was a little hollow. Over the flat crest of this mighty rampart we went, and then came the descent, which if not so difficult a matter as the getting up, was still sufficiently break-neck, and took us all slopes. That night, however, we camped in safety upon the mighty slopes that rolled away to the marsh beyond.

On the following morning, about eleven o'clock, began our dreary journey across those awful seas of swamps which I have already described.

For three whole days, through stench and mire, and the all-prevailing fumes of fever, did our bearers struggle along, till at length we came to open rolling ground quite unswampy, and mostly treeless, but covered with grass of all sorts, which lay beyond that most desolate, and without grass, and without any other district. And here on the following morning we had farewell, not without some regret, to old Billali, who stroked his white beard, and solemnly blessed us.

"Farewell, my son the Baboon," he said, "and farewell to thee too, oh Lion. I can do no more to help ye. But if ever ye come to your own country, be advised, and venture no more into lands that ye know not, lest ye come back no more, but leave your white bones to mark the limit of your journeyings. Farewell once more; when shall I think of ye, or will thou forget me, my Baboon, for though thy face is ugly thy heart is true." And then he turned and went, and with him went the tall and sullen-looking bearers, and that was the last that we saw of the Amabagger. We watched them winding away with the empty litters like a procession bearing dead men from a battle, till the mists from the marsh gathered round them and hid them, and then, left utterly desolate in the vast wilderness, we turned and came around us, and at each other.

Three weeks or so before four men had entered the marshes of *Kôr*, and now two of us were dead, and the other two had gone through adventures and experiences so strange and terrible that Death himself hath not a more fearful countenance. Three weeks—and only three weeks! Truly time should be measured by events, and not by the lapse of hours. It seemed like thirty years since we saw the last of our white-men.

"We must strike out for the Zambesi, Leo," I said, "but God knows if we shall ever get there."

Leo nodded. He had become very silent of late, and we started with nothing but the clothes we stood in, a compass, our revolvers and express rifles, and about two hundred pounds of ammunition, and so ended the history of our visit to the ruins of mighty *Kôr*.

As far as the adventures that subsequently befell us, strange and varied as they were, I have, after deliberation, determined not to record them here. In these pages I have only tried to give a short and clear account of an occurrence which I believe to be unique, and which I have done, not with a view to immediate publication, but merely to put on paper while they are yet fresh in our memories the details of our journey and its result, which, I believe, prove interesting to the world if ever we determine to make them public. This, as at present advised, we do not intend should be done during our joint lives.

For the rest, it is of no public interest, resembling as it does the experience of more than one Central African traveller. Sufficient it is to say, that we did, after incredible hardships and privations, reach the Zambesi, which proved to be about a hundred and seventy miles south of where Billali left us. There we were for six months imprisoned by a savage tribe, who believed us to be supernatural beings, chiefly on account of Leo's youthful face and snow-white hair. From these people we ultimately escaped, and, crossing the Zambesi, wandered off southwards, where, when on the point of starvation, we were sufficiently fortunate to fall in with a half-caste Portuguese elephant-trainer who had followed a troop of elephants farther inland than he had ever been before. This man treated us most hospitably, and ultimately through his assistance we, after insupportable sufferings and adventures, reached Delagoa Bay more than eighteen months from the day when we emerged from the marshes of *Kôr*, and the very next day managed to catch one of the Donald Corrie boats that ran round the Cape to England. Our journey home was a prosperous one, and we set our foot on the quay at Southampton exactly two years from the date of our departure upon our wild and seemingly ridiculous quest, and I now write these last words with Leo leaning over my shoulder in my old room in my college, the very same into which some two-and-twenty years ago my poor friend Vinney came stumbling on the memorable night of his death bearing the iron chest with him.

Is Leo really a reincarnation of the ancient Kallistrates of whom the writer speaks? Or was *Ayesha* deceived by some extraordinary racial resemblance? The reader must form his own opinion on this as on many other matters. I have mine, which is that she made no such mistake.

And that is the end of this history so far as it concerns science and the outside world. What its end will be as regards Leo and myself is more than I can guess at. But we feel that it is not reached yet. A story that began two thousand years ago may stretch a long way into the dim and distant future.

Often I sit alone at night, staring with the eyes of the mind into the blackness of ebonian time, and wondering in what shape and form the drama will be finally developed, and where the scene of its last act will be laid. And when that final development ultimately occurs, as I have no doubt it must and will occur, in obedience to a fate that never swerves and a purpose that cannot be altered, what will be the part played therein by that Egyptian Amenahet, the Princess of the race of the Pharaoh Hakos, for the love of whom the ancient Kallistrates lived, and vowed to die, and pursued by the insupportable vengeance of the outraged Goddess, fell down the coast of Libya to meet his doom at *Kôr*.

THE END.