

## CHAPTER XXIV

### BY ANOTHER HAND

A year has elapsed since our most dear friend Allan Quatermain wrote the words 'I have spoken' at the end of his record of our adventures. Nor should I have ventured to make any additions to the record had it not happened that by a most strange accident a chance has arisen of its being conveyed to England. The chance is but a faint one, it is true; but, as it is not probable that another will arise in our lifetimes, Good and myself think that we may as well avail ourselves of it, such as it is. During the last six months several Frontier Commissions have been at work on the various boundaries of Zu-Vendis, with a view of discovering whether there exists any possible means of ingress or egress from the country, with the result that a channel of communication with the outer world hitherto overlooked has been discovered. This channel, apparently the only one (for I have discovered that it was by it that the native who ultimately reached Mr Mackenzie's mission station, and whose arrival in the country, together with the fact of his expulsion -- for he did arrive about three years before ourselves -- was for reasons of their own kept a dead secret by the priests to whom he was brought), is about to be effectually closed. But before this is done, a messenger

is to be despatched bearing with him this manuscript, and also one or two letters from Good to his friends, and from myself to my brother George, whom it deeply grieves me to think I shall never see again, informing them, as our next heirs, that they are welcome to our effects in England, if the Court of Probate will allow them to take them {Endnote 22}, inasmuch as we have made up our minds never to return to Europe. Indeed, it would be impossible for us to leave Zu-Vendis even if we wished to do so.

The messenger who is to go -- and I wish him joy of his journey -- is Alphonse. For a long while he has been wearied to death of Zu-Vendis and its inhabitants. 'Oh, oui, c'est beau,' he says, with an expressive shrug; 'mais je m'ennuie; ce n'est pas chic.' Again, he complains dreadfully of the absence of cafes and theatres, and moans continually for his lost Annette, of whom he says he dreams three times a week. But I fancy his secret cause of disgust at the country, putting aside the homesickness to which every Frenchman is subject, is that the people here laugh at him so dreadfully about his conduct on the occasion of the great battle of the Pass about eighteen months ago, when he hid beneath a banner in Sorais's tent in order to avoid being sent forth to fight, which he says would have gone against his conscience. Even the little boys call out at him in the streets, thereby offending his pride and making his life unbearable. At any rate, he has determined to brave the horrors of a journey of almost unprecedented difficulty and danger, and also to run the risk

of falling into the hands of the French police to answer for a certain little indiscretion of his own some years old (though I do not consider that a very serious matter), rather than remain in ce triste pays. Poor Alphonse! we shall be very sorry to part with him; but I sincerely trust, for his own sake and also for the sake of this history, which is, I think, worth giving to the world, that he may arrive in safety. If he does, and can carry the treasure we have provided him with in the shape of bars of solid gold, he will be, comparatively speaking, a rich man for life, and well able to marry his Annette, if she is still in the land of the living and willing to marry her Alphonse.

Anyhow, on the chance, I may as well add a word or two to dear old Quatermain's narrative.

He died at dawn on the day following that on which he wrote the last words of the last chapter. Nyleptha, Good and myself were present, and a most touching and yet in its way beautiful scene it was. An hour before the daybreak it became apparent to us that he was sinking, and our distress was very keen. Indeed, Good melted into tears at the idea -- a fact that called forth a last gentle flicker of humour from our dying friend, for even at that hour he could be humorous. Good's emotion had, by loosening the muscles, naturally caused his eyeglass to fall from its accustomed place, and Quatermain, who always observed everything, observed this also.

'At last,' he gasped, with an attempt at a smile, 'I have seen  
Good without his eyeglass.'

After that he said no more till the day broke, when he asked  
to be lifted up to watch the rising of the sun for the last time.

'In a very few minutes,' he said, after gazing earnestly at it,  
'I shall have passed through those golden gates.'

Ten minutes afterwards he raised himself and looked us fixedly  
in the face.

'I am going a stranger journey than any we have ever taken together.  
Think of me sometimes,' he murmured. 'God bless you all.  
I shall wait for you.' And with a sigh he fell back dead.

And so passed away a character that I consider went as near perfection  
as any it has ever been my lot to encounter.

Tender, constant, humorous, and possessing of many of the qualities  
that go to make a poet, he was yet almost unrivalled as a man  
of action and a citizen of the world. I never knew any one so  
competent to form an accurate judgment of men and their motives.

'I have studied human nature all my life,' he would say, 'and  
I ought to know something about it,' and he certainly did.

He had but two faults -- one was his excessive modesty, and the other a slight tendency which he had to be jealous of anybody on whom he concentrated his affections. As regards the first of these points, anybody who reads what he has written will be able to form his own opinion; but I will add one last instance of it.

As the reader will doubtless remember, it is a favourite trick of his to talk of himself as a timid man, whereas really, though very cautious, he possessed a most intrepid spirit, and, what is more, never lost his head. Well, in the great battle of the Pass, where he got the wound that finally killed him, one would imagine from the account which he gives of the occurrence that it was a chance blow that fell on him in the scrimmage. As a matter of fact, however, he was wounded in a most gallant and successful attempt to save Good's life, at the risk and, as it ultimately turned out, at the cost of his own. Good was down on the ground, and one of Nasta's highlanders was about to dispatch him, when Quatermain threw himself on to his prostrate form and received the blow on his own body, and then, rising, killed the soldier.

As regards his jealousy, a single instance which I give in justice to myself and Nyleptha will suffice. The reader will, perhaps, recollect that in one or two places he speaks as though Nyleptha monopolized me, and he was left by both of us rather out in the cold. Now Nyleptha is not perfect, any more than any other woman

is, and she may be a little exigeante at times, but as regards Quatermain the whole thing is pure imagination. Thus when he complains about my not coming to see him when he is ill, the fact was that, in spite of my entreaties, the doctors positively forbade it. Those little remarks of his pained me very much when I read them, for I loved Quatermain as dearly as though he were my own father, and should never have dreamed of allowing my marriage to interfere with that affection. But let it pass; it is, after all, but one little weakness, which makes no great show among so many and such lovable virtues.

Well, he died, and Good read the Burial Service over him in the presence of Nyleptha and myself; and then his remains were, in deference to the popular clamour, accorded a great public funeral, or rather cremation. I could not help thinking, however, as I marched in that long and splendid procession up to the Temple, how he would have hated the whole thing could he have been there to see it, for he had a horror of ostentation.

And so, a few minutes before sunset, on the third night after his death, they laid him on the brazen flooring before the altar, and waited for the last ray of the setting sun to fall upon his face. Presently it came, and struck him like a golden arrow, crowning the pale brows with glory, and then the trumpets blew, and the flooring revolved, and all that remained of our beloved friend fell into the furnace below.

We shall never see his like again if we live a hundred years.  
He was the ablest man, the truest gentleman, the firmest friend,  
the finest sportsman, and, I believe, the best shot in all Africa.

And so ended the very remarkable and adventurous life of  
Hunter Quatermain.

Since then things have gone very well with us. Good has been,  
and still is, busily employed in the construction of a navy on  
Lake Milosis and another of the large lakes, by means of which  
we hope to be able to increase trade and commerce, and also to  
overcome some very troublesome and warlike sections of the population  
who live upon their borders. Poor fellow! he is beginning to  
get over the sad death of that misguided but most attractive  
woman, Sorais, but it is a sad blow to him, for he was really  
deeply attached to her. I hope, however, that he will in time  
make a suitable marriage and get that unhappy business out of  
his head. Nyleptha has one or two young ladies in view, especially  
a daughter of Nasta's (who was a widower), a very fine imperial-looking  
girl, but with too much of her father's intriguing, and yet haughty,  
spirit to suit my taste.

As for myself, I should scarcely know where to begin if I set  
to work to describe my doings, so I had best leave them undescribed,

and content myself with saying that, on the whole, I am getting on very well in my curious position of King-Consort -- better, indeed, than I had any right to expect. But, of course, it is not all plain sailing, and I find the responsibilities very heavy. Still, I hope to be able to do some good in my time, and I intend to devote myself to two great ends -- namely, to the consolidation of the various clans which together make up the Zu-Vendi people, under one strong central government, and to the sapping of the power of the priesthood. The first of these reforms will, if it can be carried out, put an end to the disastrous civil wars that have for centuries devastated this country; and the second, besides removing a source of political danger, will pave the road for the introduction of true religion in the place of this senseless Sun worship. I yet hope to see the shadow of the Cross of Christ lying on the golden dome of the Flower Temple; or, if I do not, that my successors may.

There is one more thing that I intend to devote myself to, and that is the total exclusion of all foreigners from Zu-Vendis. Not, indeed, that any more are ever likely to get here, but if they do, I warn them fairly that they will be shown the shortest way out of the country. I do not say this from any sense of inhospitality, but because I am convinced of the sacred duty that rests upon me of preserving to this, on the whole, upright and generous-hearted people the blessings of comparative barbarism. Where would all my brave army be if some enterprising rascal



were to attack us with field-guns and Martini-Henrys? I cannot see that gunpowder, telegraphs, steam, daily newspapers, universal suffrage, etc., etc., have made mankind one whit the happier than they used to be, and I am certain that they have brought many evils in their train. I have no fancy for handing over this beautiful country to be torn and fought for by speculators, tourists, politicians and teachers, whose voice is as the voice of Babel, just as those horrible creatures in the valley of the underground river tore and fought for the body of the wild swan; nor will I endow it with the greed, drunkenness, new diseases, gunpowder, and general demoralization which chiefly mark the progress of civilization amongst unsophisticated peoples. If in due course it pleases Providence to throw Zu-Vendis open to the world, that is another matter; but of myself I will not take the responsibility, and I may add that Good entirely approves of my decision. Farewell.

Henry Curtis

December 15, 18--.

PS -- I quite forgot to say that about nine months ago Nyleptha (who is very well and, in my eyes at any rate, more beautiful than ever) presented me with a son and heir. He is a regular curly-haired, blue-eyed young Englishman in looks, and, though

he is destined, if he lives, to inherit the throne of Zu-Vendis, I hope I may be able to bring him up to become what an English gentleman should be, and generally is -- which is to my mind even a prouder and a finer thing than being born heir apparent to the great House of the Stairway, and, indeed, the highest rank that a man can reach upon this earth.

H. C.

NOTE BY GEORGE CURTIS, Esq.

The MS of this history, addressed to me in the handwriting of my dear brother Henry Curtis, whom we had given up for dead, and bearing the Aden postmark, reached me in safety on December 20, 18--, or a little more than two years after it left his hands in the far centre of Africa, and I hasten to give the astonishing story it contains to the world. Speaking for myself, I have read it with very mixed feelings; for though it is a great relief to know that he and Good are alive and strangely prosperous, I cannot but feel that for me and for all their friends they might as well be dead, since we can never hope to see them more.

They have cut themselves off from old England and from their homes and their relations for ever, and perhaps, under the circumstances, they were right and wise to do so.

How the MS came to be posted I have been quite unable to discover; but I presume, from the fact of its being posted at all, that the little Frenchman, Alphonse, accomplished his hazardous journey in safety. I have, however, advertised for him and caused various inquiries to be made in Marseilles and elsewhere with a view of discovering his whereabouts, but so far without the slightest success. Possibly he is dead, and the packet was posted by another hand; or possibly he is now happily wedded to his Annette, but still fears the vengeance of the law, and prefers to remain incognito. I cannot say, I have not yet abandoned my hopes of finding him, but I am bound to say that they grow fainter day by day, and one great obstacle to my search is that nowhere in the whole history does Mr Quatermain mention his surname. He is always spoken of as 'Alphonse', and there are so many Alphonses. The letters which my brother Henry says he is sending with the packet of manuscript have never arrived, so I presume that they are lost or destroyed.

George Curtis

## AUTHORITIES

A novelist is not usually asked, like a historian, for his 'Quellen'. As I have, however, judging from certain experiences in the past, some reason to anticipate such a demand, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr Thomson's admirable history of travel 'Through Masai Land' for much information as to the habits and customs of the tribes inhabiting that portion of the East Coast, and the country where they live; also to my brother, John G. Haggard, RN, HBM's consul at Madagascar, and formerly consul at Lamu, for many details furnished by him of the mode of life and war of those engaging people the Masai; also to my sister-in-law, Mrs John Haggard, who kindly put the lines of p. 183 into rhyme for me; also to an extract in a review from some book of travel of which I cannot recollect the name, to which I owe the idea of the great crabs in the valley of the subterranean river. {Endnote 23}

But if I remember right, the crabs in the book when irritated projected their eyes quite out of their heads. I regret that I was not able to 'plagiarize' this effect, but I felt that, although crabs may, and doubtless do, behave thus in real life, in romance they 'will not do so.'

There is an underground river in 'Peter Wilkins', but at the time of writing the foregoing pages I had not read that quaint but entertaining work.

It has been pointed out to me that there exists a similarity between the scene of Umslopogaas frightening Alphonse with his axe and a scene in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. I regret this coincidence, and believe that the talented author of that work will not be inclined to accuse me of literary immorality on its account.

Finally, I may say that Mr Quatermain's little Frenchman appears to belong to the same class of beings as those English ladies whose long yellow teeth and feet of enormous size excite our hearty amusement in the pages of the illustrated Gallic press.

The Writer of 'Allan Quatermain'

Endnote 1

Among the Zulus a man assumes the ring, which is made of a species of black gum twisted in with the hair, and polished a brilliant black, when he has reached a certain dignity and age, or is the husband of a sufficient number of wives. Till he is in a position to wear a ring he is looked on as a boy, though he may be thirty-five

years of age, or even more. -- A. Q.

#### Endnote 2

One of the fleetest of the African antelopes. -- A. Q.

#### Endnote 3

Alluding to the Zulu custom of opening the stomach of a dead foe. They have a superstition that, if this is not done, as the body of their enemy swells up so will the bodies of those who killed him swell up. -- A. Q.

#### Endnote 4

No doubt this owl was a wingless bird. I afterwards learnt that the hooting of an owl is a favourite signal among the Masai tribes.  
-- A. Q.

#### Endnote 5

Since I saw the above I have examined hundreds of these swords,

but have never been able to discover how the gold plates were inlaid in the fretwork. The armourers who make them in Zu-vendis bind themselves by oath not to reveal the secret. -- A. Q.

#### Endnote 6

The Masai Elmoran or young warriors can own no property, so all the booty they may win in battle belongs to their fathers alone. -- A. Q.

#### Endnote 7

As I think I have already said, one of Umslopogaas's Zulu names was the 'Woodpecker'. I could never make out why he was called so until I saw him in action with Inkosi-kaas, when I at once recognized the resemblance. -- A. Q.

#### Endnote 8

By a sad coincidence, since the above was written by Mr Quatermain, the Masai have, in April 1886, massacred a missionary and his wife -- Mr and Mrs Houghton -- on this very Tana River, and at the spot described. These are, I believe, the first white people

who are known to have fallen victims to this cruel tribe. -- Editor.

Endnote 9

Mr Allan Quatermain misquotes -- Pleasure sat at the helm. -- Editor.

Endnote 10

Where Alph the sacred river ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea

Endnote 11

Mr Quatermain does not seem to have been aware that it is common for animal-worshipping people to annually sacrifice the beasts they adore. See Herodotus, ii. 45. -- Editor.

Endnote 12

There is another theory which might account for the origin of the Zu-Vendi which does not seem to have struck my friend Mr



Quatermain and his companions, and that is, that they are descendants of the Phoenicians. The cradle of the Phoenician race is supposed to have been on the western shore of the Persian Gulf. Thence, as there is good evidence to show, they emigrated in two streams, one of which took possession of the shores of Palestine, while the other is supposed by savants to have immigrated down the coast of Eastern Africa where, near Mozambique, signs and remains of their occupation are not wanting. Indeed, it would have been very extraordinary if they did not, when leaving the Persian Gulf, make straight for the East Coast, seeing that the north-east monsoon blows for six months in the year dead in that direction, while for the other six months it blows back again. And, by the way of illustrating the probability, I may add that to this day a very extensive trade is carried on between the Persian Gulf and Lamu and other East African ports as far south as Madagascar, which is of course the ancient Ebony Isle of the 'Arabian Nights'. -- Editor.

#### Endnote 13

There are twenty-two letters in the Phoenician alphabet (see Appendix, Maspero's *Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'Orient*, p. 746, etc.) Unfortunately Mr Quatermain gives us no specimen of the Zu-Vendi writing, but what he here states seems to go a long way towards substantiating the theory advanced

in the note on p. 149. -- Editor.

Endnote 14

These are internal measurements. -- A. Q.

Endnote 15

Light was also admitted by sliding shutters under the eaves of the dome and in the roof. -- A. Q.

Endnote 16

This line is interesting as being one of the few allusions to be found in the Zu-Vendi ritual to a vague divine essence independent of the material splendour of the orb they worship. 'Taia', the word used here, has a very indeterminate meaning, and signifies essence, vital principle, spirit, or even God.

Endnote 17

Alluding to the Zulu custom. -- A. Q.

Endnote 18

In Zu-Vendis members of the Royal House can only be married by the High Priest or a formally appointed deputy. -- A. Q.

Endnote 19

Alluding to the Zu-Vendi custom of carrying dead officers on a framework of spears.

Endnote 20

The Zu-Vendi people do not use bows. -- A. Q.

Endnote 21

Of course, the roof of the Temple, being so high, caught the light some time before the breaking of the dawn. -- A. Q.

Endnote 22

Of course the Court of Probate would allow nothing of the sort. -- Editor.

Endnote 23

It is suggested to me that this book is The Cruise of the "Falcon", with which work I am personally unacquainted.