

Sir Henry Rider Haggard
KING SOLOMON'S MINES

Read by **Bill Homewood**



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| 1 | Chapter 1: I Meet Sir Henry Curtis | 4:57 |
| 2 | Soon after we had got under way... | 5:17 |
| 3 | Chapter 2: The Legend of Solomon's Mines | 5:25 |
| 4 | Then he went on feebly... | 4:32 |
| 5 | Chapter 3: Umbopa Enters Our Service | 5:18 |
| 6 | Then I bought a beautiful team... | 5:46 |
| 7 | Chapter 4: An Elephant Hunt | 5:47 |
| 8 | With the first light we were up... | 4:08 |
| 9 | Chapter 5: Our March Into The Desert | 5:08 |
| 10 | Next day we made an arrangement... | 3:42 |
| 11 | We had nothing to guide ourselves by... | 3:27 |
| 12 | At sunset we halted... | 3:30 |
| 13 | Chapter 6: Water! Water! | 3:44 |
| 14 | After a while we rose... | 3:13 |
| 15 | The events of the next three miserable days... | 4:46 |
| 16 | Chapter 7: Solomon's Road | 4:22 |
| 17 | Presently Sir Henry spoke. | 4:33 |
| 18 | 'Greeting', I said in Zulu... | 3:34 |
| 19 | Now just before I had asked for the rifle... | 3:42 |
| 20 | Chapter 8: We Enter Kukuanaaland | 5:12 |

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| 21 | So soon as we started... | 5:57 |
| 22 | Chapter 9: Twala the King | 4:26 |
| 23 | When we woke it was to find... | 5:38 |
| 24 | Twala sat silent... | 4:02 |
| 25 | The figure stood still for a moment. | 3:07 |
| 26 | Chapter 10: The Witch-Hunt | 5:36 |
| 27 | The remainder of that day... | 4:16 |
| 28 | With a wild yell Gagaoola's horrid ministers... | 4:38 |
| 29 | Chapter 11: We Give A Sign | 5:05 |
| 30 | Thoroughly wearied out... | 4:23 |
| 31 | Foulata wrung her hands... | 4:51 |
| 32 | Chapter 12: Before the Battle | 2:57 |
| 33 | Just before sundown... | 4:05 |
| 34 | Chapter 13: The Attack | 3:09 |
| 35 | Hurrying from this dreadful scene... | 4:29 |
| 36 | Chapter 14: The Last Stand of the Greys | 4:07 |
| 37 | Just when we thought it was all over... | 3:58 |
| 38 | But at this time the matter went no further... | 4:49 |

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| 39 | A cry of dismay rose from the Buffaloes... | 4:21 |
| 40 | Chapter 15: Good Falls Sick | 4:26 |
| 41 | A few days after this last occurrence... | 3:32 |
| 42 | Chapter 16: The Place of Death | 3:45 |
| 43 | Before we had finished examining... | 4:42 |
| 44 | After about twenty paces... | 4:20 |
| 45 | Chapter 17: Solomon's Treasure Chamber | 4:38 |
| 46 | Following the passage for about fifteen paces... | 4:03 |
| 47 | Hark! Cry upon cry... | 5:31 |
| 48 | Chapter 18: We Abandon Hope | 4:09 |
| 49 | As we stood, utterly depressed... | 4:07 |
| 50 | Chapter 19: Ignosi's Farewell | 5:26 |
| 51 | Chapter 20: Found | 3:23 |
| 52 | PS | 3:32 |

Total time: 3:50:01

Sir Henry Rider Haggard

KING SOLOMON'S MINES

Like many of the greatest adventure stories, *King Solomon's Mines* is written in the first person. Our hero, Allan Quartermain, introduces himself as a gentleman-cum-rough diamond... 'At an age when other boys are at school I was earning my living as a trader in the old Colony. I have been trading, hunting, fighting or mining ever since.'

Within pages we are breathlessly following Quartermain and his companions, the comical, lovable, naval officer Captain John Good ('He was very neat and very clean-shaved, and he always wore an eye-glass in his right eye... he put it in his trousers pocket when he went to bed, together with his false teeth, of which he had two beautiful sets') and the valiant Sir Henry Curtis ('...perhaps the biggest-chested and longest-armed man I ever saw. He had yellow hair, a thick yellow beard, and large grey eyes set deep in his head. I never saw a finer-looking man.') on a daunting quest for a long-lost diamond mine. Their gruelling journey in all temperatures across inhospitable, lion-infested bush and mountain, desperately short of water and

often starving, brings to mind the exploits of today's Special Forces making long escapes from deep inside enemy lines.

The book is rich in characters. This tough 'man's world' is softened by the presence of the serene and beautiful Foulata, a Zulu girl who becomes devoted to Captain Good. We admire the honest, quiet Zulu Umbopa who joins them as a tracker and are not at all surprised when it transpires there is more to this man than meets the eye. The writer's description of the ghastly Gagaoola, witch and prophetess, reminds us of the most frightening of children's fairy tales...

'...I observed the wizened monkey-like figure creeping from the shadow of the hut. It crept on all fours, but when it reached the place where the king sat it rose upon its feet, and...revealed a most extraordinary and weird countenance – that of a woman of great age so shrunken that in size it seemed no larger than the face of a year-old child, although made up of a number of deep and yellow wrinkles. Set in these wrinkles was a sunken slit, that represented the mouth... the visage might have been taken for that of

a sun-dried corpse had it not been for a pair of large black eyes, full of fire and intelligence, which gleamed and played under the snow-white eyebrows, and the projecting parchment-coloured skull, like jewels in a charnel-house. As for the head itself, it was perfectly bare, and yellow in hue, while its wrinkled scalp moved and contracted like the hood of a cobra...'

Reading the novel today one is struck by a condescending attitude towards the native African and certain other races. This was of its time. After all, British Empire history, with all its certainty of the innate superiority of the white British and their culture, was never more passionately respected than in the late nineteenth century, and was indeed taught in British schools until the 1960's, when many a church and Sunday School wall was adorned with portraits of a rock star-like platinum-blond Jesus resting his hands gently on the heads of adoring little children of other races. Haggard's more patronising moments, though they grate, are however leavened with some humanity and wit, and often with admiration, though they would not be written today.

'...I knew the man Jim who was with him. He was a Bechuana by birth, a good hunter, and for a native a very clever man.'

The story takes us from England to Natal, and on to the legendary lost mines set in the mythical kingdom of Kukuanialand, ruled by the fearsome Twala — 'husband of a thousand wives... student of the Black Arts, leader of a hundred thousand warriors, Twala the One-eyed, the Black, the Terrible.'

We soon forget that this is fiction. Haggard's research and knowledge of Zulu tribal custom, of flora and fauna, is comprehensive. The tale unfolds realistically, even when the plot verges on the preposterous. It is a delicious idea that there may be undiscovered lands and civilisations, which we accept readily. The story builds up, via twist after twist, to a massively dramatic ending and the reader, having finally escaped the frightening Kukuanialand with the heroic Alan Quartermain, is almost as relieved and happy as he when he reports...

'Above us were the blessed stars, and in our nostrils was the sweet air.'

We can only agree with Sir Henry Curtis when he writes to Quartermain at the end of this thrilling adventure: 'You have done your day's work.'

Sir Henry Rider Haggard was born in 1856. His mother was an amateur novelist and his father a barrister and country

gentleman. Henry was sent to Ipswich Grammar School, before taking a post in South Africa as secretary to Sir Henry Bulwer, Governor of Natal. At the age of 22 he was appointed Registrar of the Natal High Court, at which time he fell in love with an African woman, and became fascinated by Zulu culture and traditions. He returned briefly to England and married a Norfolk heiress, Mariana Louisa Margitson, taking her back to South Africa where they ran an ostrich farm. Eventually, with the intention of pursuing a career in the law, he moved back to Norfolk with Mariana, and was called to the bar at the age of 28.

Perhaps there was more of his mother in him than his father, for it was not long before he gave up his practice in order to write novels of adventure and discovery. He was excited by R.L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, published in 1883, and determined to write an even better book. He believed a good novel should flow fast from the pen of the writer, and wrote *King Solomon's Mines* in less than a week. He became an expert agriculturalist and, among the 40 books which he wrote in a long career, were several on farming. For his services to the British Empire, both diplomatic and agricultural, he was knighted in 1912 and awarded the KCBE in 1919. He died in London in 1925.

Notes by Bill Homewood

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Sir Henry Rider Haggard

KING SOLOMON'S MINES

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King Solomon's Mines is set in nineteenth century Africa. Allan Quartermain, hunter, is commissioned by the valiant Sir Henry Curtis and his jovial friend Captain Good to lead them to the fabled lost mines of King Solomon. In the company of these dauntless men we undertake the most exciting safari ever described. We hunt big game, we go to war with the terrifying King Twala of Kukuanaland and his diabolical henchwoman Gagaoola – and are amazed by the twist at the end.



Bill Homewood lives in the South of France, where he and his wife, actress Estelle Kohler, keep Portuguese horses on their ranch in the foothills of the Cévennes. Bill has worked extensively on television, film and radio, on stage in the West End, major theatres in Britain and America and with the RSC. His other recordings for Naxos Audiobooks include *The Hunchback Of Notre Dame*, *The Count Of Monte Cristo*, *The Three Musketeers*, *The Man In The Iron Mask*, *Les Misérables*, *The Lady of the Camellias* and *The Moonstone*.

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