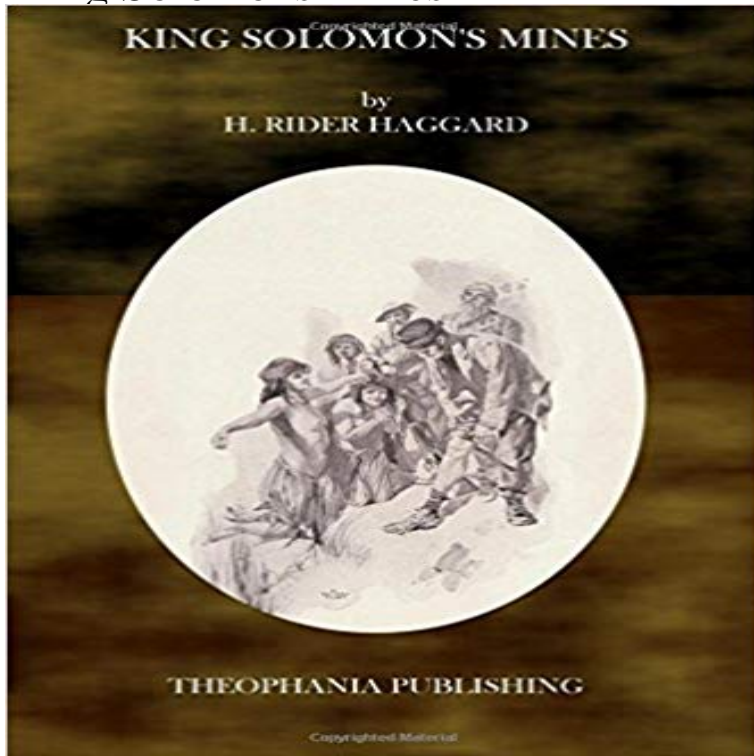


# King Solomons Mines



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Allan Quatermain, an adventurer and white hunter based in Durban, in what is now South Africa, is approached by aristocrat Sir Henry Curtis and his friend Captain Good, seeking his help finding Sir Henry's brother, who was last seen travelling north into the unexplored interior on a quest for the fabled King Solomon's Mines. Quatermain has a mysterious map purporting to lead to the mines, but had never taken it seriously. However, he agrees to lead an expedition in return for a share of the treasure, or a stipend for his son if he is killed along the way. He has little hope they will return alive, but reasons that he has already outlived most people in his profession, so dying in this manner at least ensures that his son will be provided for. They also take along a mysterious native, Umbopa, who seems more regal, handsome and well-spoken than most porters of his class, but who is very anxious to join the party. Travelling by oxcart, they reach the edge of a desert, but not before a hunt in which a wounded elephant claims the life of a servant. They continue on foot across the desert, almost dying of thirst before finding the oasis shown halfway across on the map. Reaching a mountain range called Suliman Berg, they climb a peak (one of Sheba's Breasts) and enter a cave where they find the frozen corpse of Jose Silvestre (also spelt Silvestra), the 16th-century Portuguese explorer who drew the map in his own blood. That night, a second servant dies from the cold, so they leave his body next to Silvestra's, to give him a companion. They cross the mountains into a raised valley, lush and green, known as

Kukuanaland. The inhabitants have a well-organised army and society and speak an ancient dialect of IsiZulu. Kukuanalands capital is Loo, the destination of a magnificent road from ancient times. The city is dominated by a central royal kraal. They soon meet a party of Kukuana warriors who are about to kill them when Captain Good nervously fidgets with his false teeth, making the Kukuanas recoil in fear. Thereafter, to protect themselves, they style themselves white men from the starsorcerer-gods and are required to give regular proof of their divinity, considerably straining both their nerves and their ingenuity.

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