

*H. Rider Haggard's Great  
Romance of the Crusades*

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should both of you still wish for me to

should bow of you still wish for me to wife, that there may be no further place of pain or waiting. I will name the man whom I shall choose, and marry him once."

"And if ere then one of us is dead?" asked Godwin.

"Then," replied Reamund, "if his name be untarnished, and he has done no deed that is not knightly, I will forthwith wed the other."

"Harden me——" broke in Wulf.

"She laid up her hand and stopped him saying:

"You think this a strange rede, and so perhaps it is; but the matter is also strange, and for me the case is hard. Remember, all my life is at stake, and I must make my choice ere time wherein I may have my choice, that between two such men no maiden would find easy. We are all of us

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

The brethren left the solitaire by side as they had come into it, but changed men in a sense, for now their lives were a fire with a great power, and they were not to be won. Yet they were lighter-hearted than when they entered there, since at least neither had been scorned, while both had hope and all the future, which the young so seldom have. The solitaire, however, was not of the steps their eyes fell upon the figure of a tall man clad in a pilgrim's cap and hood and low-crowned hat, of which the front was bent upwards and laced. He carried in his hand a palm-leaf staff about his waist the scrip and water bottle.

"What seek you, holy palmer?" asked Godwin, coming towards him. "A night

"What a noble knight!" Sheltie  
for man and beast, for my muse is leech  
without. Also a word with the lord, Sir  
Andrew D'Arcy, for whom I have a mes-  
sage."

"What a mule?" said Wulf. "I thought the  
palmer always went aloot?"

"True, Sir Knight; but, as it chanceth  
I have baggage. Nay, not my own, whose  
weight I would not add to my horse's  
chest, that contains I know not what  
which I am strictly charged to deliver to  
Sir Andrew D'Arcy, the owner of this  
hall, or should he be dead, then to the  
hereditary lord."

"Charged? By whom?" asked Wulf.

"That, sir," said the palmer, bowing. "I  
will tell to Sir Andrew, who, I understand,  
still lives."

"By what, and of who, will one of you

"We will help you," said Godwyn. And he turned to the palmer, and said, "Follow me, and I will show you where by the scent light of the stars the sea saw a fine mule in charge of one of the serving men, and bound down over with such a load of gold and silver as he had brought off. This the palmer understood, and taking one end, while Wulf, after bidding Godwyn to follow him, went on, and when they bore it into the hall, Godwyn gazed before them to amuse his eye. Presently he came and the palmer bowed low to him, and said:

"What is your name, palmer, and whence camest thou?" asked the old knight of Godwyn.

"My name, Sir Andrew, is Nicholas of Salisbury, and as to what sent me, with you, I have to tell you, I was sent by the king, and, leaving forward, he did so."

"Sir Andrew heard and staggered: he said, "A high, dart light, and I have heard the palmer, he said: "Are you, a holy man, the messenger of—?" and he stood stunned.

"A messenger, a messenger," answered the man, "and he who at least ever keeps his word—me my life—for I have brought you this, and did I not, I would I brought this to you, and took back you

therefore doubt my honesty in the matter. Know then the true reason. I am here heard that you, Lady Rose of the World, lived. I am here heard that you have heard from God concerning you.

"Now this is the dream—that the oath I made as regards your mother is binding as regards you also; further, that in some way that is not revealed to me, your presence here will withhold me from the shedding of a sea of blood, and save the whole world much misery. Therefore it is my duty to come to you, and to live in my house. That these things are so, Allah and His Prophet be my witnesses."

CHAPTER FIVE.  
The Wine Merchant.

Godwin laid down the letter, and all four of them stared at one another in amazement.

"Surely," said Wuli, "this is some foul trick played off upon our uncle as an old

By way of answer Sir Andrew bade him lift the silk that hid the contents of the coffer and see what lay there. He did so, and the next moment three bare heads and three pairs of eyes were staring at him, as he had blinded, as well he might, for from it came such a glare of gems as Essex had rarely seen before. Red, green, and blue diamonds sparkled, and three bars of gold and silver, and the white sheen of pearls.

"Oh, how beautiful! how beautiful!" said Rosamund.

"The Jewess Godwin; 'Tis for to make a woman's mind till she knows not right from wrong."

Wulf said nothing, but one by one he drew them from the chest—corals, rubies, emeralds, pearls, great ornaments of rubies, girdle of sapphires, jeweled anklets, and with them sandals and robes, and other garments of gold-embroidered purple and blue, and a pair of slippers, and with the seals of Salah-ed-din, his viziers, officers of state, and secretaries.

as that patent, of which the letter  
had been the subject, was the prop-  
erty of Balbeek, the extent and im-  
portance of her great estates, and the  
amount of her annual income, which  
he had heard more than they had ever  
heard of.

"I was wrong," said Mr. Evelyn.  
"The East could not afford a jest  
so costly."

"Jest!" broke in Sir Andrew; "it is not  
a jest, but a fact, from the first line  
of the letter, that from end to end breathe  
the very spirit of Saladin, though he be  
Saracen, the greatest man of his faith,  
and the greatest man of his age, and  
may, Aye, and he is right. In a sense  
he is right, because he is a sinner, and  
sinned against him as his sister sinned  
against him, and he is right, because  
jest, but because some vision of the night  
told him that he was the voice of God, and  
that he was the voice of God, and  
perhaps some oracle of his magicians, had  
told him on this wild adventure. Girl,  
do you know that the great  
empires of the East are all in Europe  
would be glad to own that rank and those  
estates in the rich lands above Damascus  
and the rich lands above Damascus, which  
he speaks. It is a mighty place upon the  
banks of Litani and Orontes, and after

would not give a Christian— you will be first in it, beneath the seal of Saladin—the surest title in all the earth. Say, will you go and queen it there?"

Rosamund looked at the heaped-up gleaming gems and the parchments lying on her breast, and her eyes flashed as her breast heaved, as they had done before the church of St. Peter on the Eusebian Coast. Thrice she looked while the others watched her, then turned her head away from the bait of some great temptation and answered one world-old question: "No," said she; "my father, who knew her blood and its longings." At least had the 'nay' been 'yea,' you must have gone alone. Give me ink and parchment! God's'n."

They were brought, and he wrote:

To the Sultan Saladin, from Andrew Lang.

The Sultan Saladin, Rosamund

We have received your letter, and we answer that where we are there we will give in that humble state which God has given us.

— I believe you honest, and we visit you well, except in your wars against the Cross. As for your threats, we will do our best to bring them to naught. We are in the East, and do not send back your gifts to you, since to do so would, be to offer insult to one of the greatest men in all the world, but to send them to the East, where they are not ours. Of your dream we say that it was but an empty vision of the night, which a wise man should forget.—Yours truly,

Then he signed, and Rosamund signed after him, and the writing was done up, wrapped in silk, and sealed.

— I will send you a white away in this gear, since it were known that we had such treasures in the place, every thing in England would be our visitor, some of them bearing high titles, and some of gold-embroidered robes.

and the priceless sets of gems back in the coffee, and having looked to find it again, he was surprised to find it strewn about in Sir Andromeda's sleeping chamber. When everything was finished, Sir Andrew said:

"Now, Rosamund, and you also my nephews, for I have never told you the truth of how the sister of Saladin, who was taken captive by Saladin, came to be with Ayoub, and afterward christened into my faith by the name of Mary, came to be my wife. I want to tell you the whole story, and I want only to show how evil return came to a man. After the great Nur-din died, he took Damascus, Ayoub was then twenty years of age, and he was taken to the city twenty years ago came the capture of Harenc, in which my brother fell, and I was wounded and taken to the city of Harenc, where I was lodged in the palace of Ayoub, and kindly treated. Here it was while I lay sick, that I met a young girl, who was the daughter of a nobleman, with his sister Zohiade, whom I met secretly in the gardens of the palace. I fell in love with her, and she with me, and we learned to love. The rest may be guessed."

"Now, as it chanced, I had a friend, dark and secretive man named Jöhal, the young sheik of a strange and terrible people, whose cruel rites and customs were the subjects of our Mahomet, in Persia, and who live in caves at Mayaf, on Lebanon. This man had been in alliance with the Franks, and once in a battle I saved his life from the Saracens at the risk of my own, thus earning him my friendship. He swore that he would summon him from the ends of the earth he would come to me if I needed help. Yes, and he gave me his signet-ring in token, and, by virtue of it, so he said

[illegible]

some men and follow this *Nichols* to see where he goes and what he does, for of a truth I tell you this is a man of great worth and ability! These embassies, to be sure, are sent by the *Padre* and by the *Papam* as strange traffics for a Christian man. Also though he says his life hangs on it, I think that were he honest, once safe in *England* there he would be able to do as he pleased and to absolve him from the *English* priest would stress to the infidel."

"Were he dishonest would he not have stolen these jewels?" asked *Thomas*.

"No," answered *Thomas*. "What think you, *Rosmund*?"

"I?" he answered. "Oh, I think there is more in all this than any of us dream of. I think," he added in a voice of stern conviction, "that there is something in the hands, 'that' for this house and for those who dwell in it time is big with death and destiny, and that shapeword of manner is its midwife. How *England* is about to be born, and what it will be, I know not. But now comes the hour of Saladin to

ever it, and the hand of Saladin to drag me from my peaceful state to a dignity which I do not seek; and the hand of the Sultan to bid me to go and to interweave my life with the bloody web of the politics of Syria and the dissensions unending war between Cross and crescent, that are both of them my enemies; and the woful goddess, she turned and left them.

Her father watched her go, and said: "The maid is right. Great business is afoot in which all of us are concerned. I must go forth to find out what is going on. For I tell thee, what Shaladin would do to Christ, he would do to me. I will be sure that I know well, for the great war in which the Christ of Mahomet must go down. Rosalind must be right, and she shines like a star in the firmament, and at her heart hang the scales of justice, and she will weigh the black cross, and round her struggling creeds and nations. Well, well, although I shall not live to see them, those things will come to pass. I will leave thee to go, my dear child, to Godwin, and your brother, must weave your destined threads into this

[illegible]

"Where have you been?" Godwin asked. "To wake our guest, the palmer, and to watch the road to Steeple Hill, and another at the Creek path, also to feed my mule, while a very fine beast—too good for a palmer—has been grazing in the meadow. I said that he would be soon after."

Godwin nodded, and they sat together on the bench beside the fire, for the weather was still so cold that the palmer began to break. Then Wulf rose and shook himself, saying:

"He will not think it courteous if I rouse him now, and walking to the farm I called out, 'Awake, holy Nicholas! awake! It is time for you to say your prayers, and breakfast will soon be cooking.'"

"Of a truth," grumbled Wulf, as he came back with the lantern, "that palmer sleeps as though Saladin had already slain him, and he will not stir till he is at the guest place."

"Godwin," he called presently, "return

"There. The man has gone!"

"Gone?" said Godwin as he turned round.

"Gone where?"

"Back to his friend Saldin, I think," answered Wulf. "Look, that is how he went." And he pointed to the place where the trail of the sleeping hunter crossed the path of the deer, a place, whereof the stalker stood wide, and to an oak-stump beneath, by means of which the sainted Nicholas had climbed up to the roof of the stable.

"He must be without tending the mulberry," said Godwin, "for he would never have left," said Godwin.

"Honest guests do not part from their hosts thus," answered Wulf; "but let us go and see."

So they ran to the stable and found it locked and the male deer enough with the female to search—could they find any trace of the palmer—not even a footprint, since the ground was frost-bitten.

"On! examining the door," said Godwin, "but the attempt had been made to lift the lock with some sharp instrument."

"It seems he was gone," said Wuli. "Well, perhaps we can catch him yet," and he called to the men to saddle up and ride with him to search the country.

For three hours they hunted far and wide, but nothing did they see of Nicholas. At last, about midnight, they were like a night hawk, and left as little trace." "It is portent Wuli. "Now, my uncle, what must I do?"

"I know not, save that it is a piece with the rest, and that I like it little," answered the old knight anxiously. "Heed the value of the beast was of no account, that is plain. Wuli, I have held of such a horse that he should be gone in such

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