

**LANG ANDREW, POLLOCK  
WALTER HERRIES**

**HE**

Andrew Lang

**He**

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**Lang A.**

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# Andrew Lang

## He

'SHE.'

### TO H. RIDER HAGGARD

Not in the waste beyond the swamp and sand,  
The fever-haunted forest and lagoon,  
Mysterious Kôr, thy fanes forsaken stand,  
With lonely towers beneath the lonely Moon!  
Not there doth Ayesha linger, – rune by rune  
Spelling the scriptures of a people banned, —  
The world is disenchanted! oversoon  
Shall Europe send her spies through all the land!

Nay, not in Kôr, but in whatever spot,  
In fields, or towns, or by the insatiate sea,  
Hearts brood o'er buried Loves and unforgot,  
Or wreck themselves on some Divine decree,  
Or would o'er-leap the limits of our lot,  
There in the Tombs and deathless, dwelleth SHE!

## DEDICATION

*Kôr,*

*Jan. 30, 1887.*

*Dear Allan Quatermain,*

*You, who, with others, have aided so manfully in the Restoration of King Romance, know that His Majesty is a Merry Monarch.*

*You will not think, therefore, that the respectful Liberty we have taken with your Wondrous Tale (as Pamela did with the 137th Psalm) indicates any lack of Loyalty to our Lady Ayesha.*

*Her beauties are beyond the reach of danger from Burlesque, nor does her form flit across our humble pages.*

*May you restore to us yet the prize of her perfections, for we, at least, can never believe that she wholly perished in the place of the Pillar of Fire!*

*Yours ever,*

*Two of the Ama Lo-Grolla.*

## CHAPTER I. EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

As I sat, one evening, idly musing on memories of roers and Boers, and contemplating the horns of a weendigo I had shot in Labrador and the head of a Moo Cow<sup>1</sup> from Canada, I was roused by a ring at the door bell.

The hall-porter presently entered, bearing a huge parcel, which had just arrived by post. I opened it with all the excitement that an unexpected parcel can cause, and murmured, like Thackeray's sailor-man, 'Claret, perhaps, Mumm, I hope –'

It was a Mummy Case, by Jingo!

This was no common, or museum mummy case. The lid, with the gilded mask, was absent, and the under half or lower segment, painted all over with hieroglyphics of an unusual type, and *green* in colour – had obviously been used as a cradle for unconscious infancy. A baby had slept in the last sleeping-place of the dead! What an opportunity for the moralist! But I am not a collector of cradles.

Who had sent it, and why?

The question was settled by an envelope in a feminine hand, which, with a cylindrical packet, fell out of the Mummy Case, and contained a letter running as follows: —

*'Lady Betty's, Oxford.*

'My dear Sir, – You have not forgotten me and my friend Leonora O'Dolite?

'The Mummy Case which encloses this document is the Cradle of her ancient Race.

'We are, for reasons you will discover in the accompanying manuscript, about to start for Treasure Island, where, if anywhere in this earth, ready money is to be found on easy terms of personal insecurity.'

'Oh, confound it,' I cried, 'here's another fiend of a woman sending me another manuscript! They are always at it! Wants to get it into a high-class magazine, as usual.' And my guess was correct.

The letter went on: —

*'You, who are so well known, will have no difficulty in getting the editor of the Nineteenth Century, or the Quarterly Review, or Bow Bells, to accept my little contribution. I shall be glad to hear what remuneration I am to expect, and cheques may be forwarded to*

*'Yours very truly,*

*'Mary Martin.*

*'P.S. —The mummy case is very valuable. Please deposit it at the Old Bank, in the High, where it will represent my balance.*

*'M. M.'*

Now I get letters like this (not usually escorted by a mummy case) about thrice a day, and a pretty sum it costs me in stamps to send back the rubbish to the amateur authors. But how could I send back a manuscript to a lady already on her way to Treasure Island?

Here, perhaps, I should explain how Mary Martin, as she signed herself, came to choose *me* for her literary agent. To be sure, total strangers are always sending me their manuscripts, but Mrs. Martin had actually been introduced to me years before.

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<sup>1</sup> A literary friend to whom I have shown your MS. says a weendigo is Ojibbeway for a cannibal. And why do you shoot poor Moo Cows? – Publisher. Mere slip of the pen. Meant a Cow Moose. Literary gent no sportsman. – Ed. All right. – Publisher.

I was staying, as it happened, at one of our university towns, which I shall call Oxford, for short – not that that was *really* its name. Walking one day with a niece, a scholar of Lady Betty's Hall, we chanced to meet in the High two rather remarkable persons. One of them was the very prettiest girl I ever saw in my life. Her noble frame marked her as the victor over Girton at lawn-tennis; while her *pince-nez* indicated the student. She reminded me, in the grace of her movements, of the Artemis of the Louvre and the Psyche of Naples, while her thoughtful expression recalled the celebrated 'Reading Girl' of Donatello. Only a reading girl, indeed, could have been, as she was, Reader in English Literature on the Churton Collins Foundation.

'Who is she?' I said to my friend, the scholar of Lady Betty's; 'what a lovely creature she is!'

'Who, *that?*' she replied with some tartness. 'Well, what you can see in *her*, I don't know. That's Leonora O'Dolite, and the lady with her is the Lady Superior of Lady Betty's.

'They call them Pretty and the Proctor,' my friend went on, 'as Mrs. Martin – Polly they call her too – has been Proctor twice.'<sup>2</sup>

Now nobody could have called Polly bewitching. Her age must really have been quite thirty-five. I dislike dwelling on this topic, but she was short, dumpy, wore blue spectacles, a green umbrella, a red and black shawl, worsted mittens and uncompromising boots. She had also the ringlets and other attractions with which French Art adorns its ideal Englishwoman.

At my request, I was introduced; but presently some thirty professors, six or seven senior dons, and a sprinkling of Heads of Houses in red and black sleeves came bounding out of University sermon, and gathered round the lovely Leonora. The master of St. Catherine's was accompanied by a hitherto Unattached student, who manifestly at once fell a victim to Leonora's charms.

This youth was of peculiar aspect. He was a member of the nearly extinct Boshman tribe of Kokoatinaland. His long silky hair, originally black, had been blanched to a permanent and snowy white by failures in the attempt to matriculate at Balliol. He was short – not above four feet nine – and was tattooed all over his dark but intelligent features.

When he was introduced I had my first opportunity of admiring Leonora's extraordinary knowledge of native customs and etiquette.

'Let me present to you,' said the Master of St. Catherine's, 'the Boshman chief, Ustâni!'

'You 'stonish me!' answered Leonora, with a smile that captivated the Boshman. It is a rule among the tribes of Kokoatinaland, and in Africa generally, to greet a new acquaintance with a verbal play on his name.<sup>3</sup> Owing to our insular ignorance, and the difficulty of the task, this courtesy had been omitted at Oxford in Ustâni's case, even by the Professors of Comparative Philology and the learned Keeper of the Museum. From that hour to another which struck later, when *he* struck too, Ustâni was Leonora's slave.

I had no further opportunity of conversing with Leonora and Polly, nor indeed did I ever think of them again, till Polly's letter and mummy case recalled them to my memory.

Perhaps for pretty Leonora's sake I did, after all, take up and open the vast cylindrical roll of MS.<sup>4</sup> in the mummy case. Dawn found me still reading the following record of unparalleled adventure.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> I say, you know, keep clear of improbabilities! No one was ever old enough to have been Proctor *twice*. – Publisher. That's all you know about it. Why, I shall bring in a character old enough to have been Proctor a thousand times. – Ed.

<sup>3</sup> Is this *bonâ fide*? – Publisher. All right, see *She* (p. 145), Ayesha's elegant pun on Holly. It's always done – pun, I mean. – Ed.

<sup>4</sup> Don't you think it would stand being cut a little? – Publisher. We shall see. – Ed.

<sup>5</sup> There is just one thing that puzzles me. Polly and Leonora have gone, no man knows where, and, taking everything into consideration, it may be a good two thousand years before they come back. Ought I not, then, to invest, *in my own name*, the princely cheque of the Intelligent Publishers? – Ed.

## CHAPTER II. POLLY'S NARRATIVE

I am the plainest woman in England, bar none.<sup>6</sup> Even in youth I was not, strictly speaking, voluptuously lovely. Short, stumpy, with a fringe like the thatch of a newly evicted cottage, such was my appearance at twenty, and such it remains. Like Cain, I was branded.<sup>7</sup> But enough of personalities. I had in youth but one friend, a lady of kingly descent (the kings, to be sure, were Irish), and of bewitching loveliness. When she rushed into my lonely rooms, one wild winter night, with a cradle in her arms and a baby in the cradle; when she besought me to teach that infant Hittite, Hebrew, and the Differential Calculus, and to bring it up in college, on commons (where the air is salubrious), what could I do but acquiesce? It is unusual, I know, for a student of my sex, however learned, to educate an infant in college and bring her up on commons. But for once the uncompromising nature of my charms strangled the breath of scandal in the bud, and little Leonora O'Dolite became the darling of the university. The old Keeper of the Bodleian was a crusty bachelor, who liked nothing young but calf, and preferred morocco to *that*. But even *he* loved Leonora. One night the little girl was lost, and only after looking for her in the Hebdomadal Boardroom, in the Sheldonian, the Pusaeum, and all the barges, did we find that unprincipled old man amusing her by letting off crackers and Roman-candles among the Mexican MSS. in the Bodleian!

These were halcyon hours, happier as Leonora grew up and received the education prescribed for her by her parent. Her Hebrew was fair, and her Hittite up to a first class, but, to my distress, she mainly devoted herself to Celtic studies.

I should tell you that Leonora's chief interest in life was the decipherment of the inscriptions on her cradle – the mummy case which had rocked her ancestors since Abraham's time, and which is now in your possession. Of itself it is a sufficient proof of the accuracy of this narrative. The mummy case is not the ordinary coffin of Egyptian commerce. The hieroglyphics have baffled Dr. Isaac Taylor, and have been variously construed as Chinese, Etruscan, and Basque, by the various professors of these learned lingoos.<sup>8</sup>

Now about this mummy case: you must know that it had been in Leonora's family ever since her ancestress, Theodolitê, Pharaoh's daughter, left Egypt, not knowing when she was well off, and settled in Ireland, of all places, where she founded the national prosperity.<sup>9</sup>

The mummy case and a queer ring (see cover) inscribed with a duck, a duck's egg, and an umbrella, were about all that the O'Dolites kept of their ancient property. The older Leonora grew the more deeply she studied the inscriptions on the mummy case. She tried it as Zend, she tried it as Sanskrit, and Japanese, and the American language, and finally she tried it as Irish.

We had a very rainy season that winter even for Oxford, and the more it rained the more Leonora pored over that mummy case. I kept telling her there was nothing in it, but she would not listen to me.

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<sup>6</sup> I may as well say at once that I *will not* be responsible for Polly's style. Sometimes it is flat, they tell me, and sometimes it is flamboyant, whatever they may mean. It is never the least like what one would expect an elderly lady don (or Donna), to write. – Ed.

<sup>7</sup> See *The Mark of Cain* [Arrowsmith], an excellent shillingsworth. – Ed. Is this not 'log rolling'? – Publisher.

<sup>8</sup> Don't you think this bit is a little dull? The public don't care about dead languages. – Publisher. Story can't possibly get on without it, as you'll see. You *must* have something of this sort in a romance. Look at Poe's cypher in the *Gold Beetle*, and the chart in *Treasure Island*, and the Portuguese's scroll in *King Solomon's Mines*. – Ed.

<sup>9</sup> Is not *this* a little steep? – Publisher. No; it is in all the Irish histories. See Lady Wilde's *Ancient Legends of Ireland*, if you don't believe me. – Ed.



I choose to tell. When I had done this thing I put him secretly away in a fitting box, even as Set concealed Osiris. Then came my maidens and tidied him away, as is the wont of these accursed ones. From that hour, even until now, has no man nor woman known where to find him, even Jambres the magician. For though the mummifying, as thou shalt not fail to discover, was in some sort incomplete, yet the tidying away and the losing were so complete that no putting forth of precious papyri into cupboards beneath flights of stairs has ever equalled it.

'Now, therefore, shall I curse these maidens, even in Amenti, the place of their tormenting.

'Forget them, may they be eternally forgotten.

'Curse them up and down through the whole solar system.'

'This is very violent language, my dear,' said I.

'Our people swore terribly in Egypt,' answered Leonora, calmly.

*'But it is vain, no woman can curse worth a daric.'*<sup>10</sup>

*'But for this, the losing of the one whom I mummied, must I suffer countless penalties. For I, even the seeress, know not what the said maidens did with the said mummy, nor do you know, nor any other. And not to know, for I want my mummy to have a good cry over, is great part of my punishment. But this I, the seeress, do know right well, for it was revealed to me in a dream. And this I do prophesy unto thee, my daughter, or daughter's daughter, ay, this do I say, that a curse will rest upon me until He who was mummied shall be found.*

*'Now this also do I, the seeress, tell thee. He who was mummified shall be found in the dark country, where there is no sun, and men breathe the vapour of smoke, and light lamps at noonday, and wire themselves even with wires when the wind bloweth. And the place where the mummy dwelleth is beneath the Three Balls of Gold. And one will lead thee thither who abides hard by the great tree carven like the head of an Ethiopian. And thou shalt come to the people who slate strangers, and to the place of the Rolling of Logs, and the music thereof.*

*'Thereafter shalt thou find Him, even Jambres. And when thou hast healed him the Curse shall fall from me!*

*'Nor, indeed, shall the un-mummifying be accomplished, even then, unless thou, O my daughter, or my daughter's daughter as before, shalt go with He-who-was-mummied to the Hall of Egyptian Darkness and sit in the Wizard's Chair that is thereby, even the seat which was erst the Siege Perilous. These things have I said, well knowing that they shall be accomplished.*

*'To thee, my daughter!*

*'Thy Grandmother.'*

'There, Polly, what do you say to *that*?' said Nora.

'Your grandmother!' I replied.

'Polly!' said Miss Nora, looking at me with quite needlessly flashing eyes, 'you and I will set out on the search for this unhappy mummied one.'

'Don't you think the critics will call the  *motive* rather thin?' I demurred.

'Thin, to rescue my ancestress from a curse!' said Leonora.

'There's just one other thing,' she mused. 'Shall we take a low comedy character this time, or not?'

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<sup>10</sup> From the use of the word *daric* I conjecture that Leonora's ancestress lived under the Persian Empire. There or thereabout. – M. M.

'Let's take Ustâni,' I proposed, 'he can double the part with that of the Faithful Black! A great saving in hotel bills and railway fares.'

## CHAPTER IV. THE EQUIPMENT

After it had been decided that we should start in search of '*He* who had been mummified alive,' the next step seemed to be to go. But Leonora demurred to this.

'We must have our things,' she said; 'what do you think we should take?'

'Scissors,' I replied; and I regret to say that at first she misinterpreted the phrase.

Leonora is a powerful as well as a pretty girl, and when the bear fight that ensued was over my rooms were a little mixed.

This suggested mixed biscuits, that invaluable refreshment of the traveller, and from one thing to another we soon made up a complete list of our needs.

The scissors, and skates, and the soap we procured at the Church and State stores,<sup>11</sup> but not, of course, the revolvers. The revolvers we got of the genuine Government pattern, because both Leonora and I are dreadfully afraid of fire-arms, and we knew that *these*, anyhow, would not 'go off.' The jam we got, of course, at the official cartridge emporium, same which we did *not* shoot the Arabs. The Gladstone bag and the Bryant & May's matches we procured direct from the makers, resisting the piteous appeals of itinerant vendors. Some life-belts we laid in, and, as will presently be seen, we could have made no more judicious purchase.

As, from information received on a mummy case, we were travelling in search of a mummy, of course we laid in a case of Mumm, which was often a source of gaiety in our darkest hours. The wine was procured, as I would advise every African traveller to do, from Messrs. – .<sup>12</sup>

Being acquainted with the deleterious effects of a malarious tropical atmosphere, we secured a pair of overalls, advertised as sovrán for 'all-overishness,' the dreaded curse of an African climate. These we got at the celebrated emporium of Messrs. – .<sup>13</sup>

Our preparations being now exhaustively completed, Leonora and I returned to Oxford, packed our things, and consulted as to the route which we should adopt.

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<sup>11</sup> Won't the critics say you are advertising the stores? And the tradesmen won't like it. – Publisher. Where would the *stern reality* of the story be (see *Spectator*), and the contrast with the later goings on, if you didn't give names? – Ed.

<sup>12</sup> Messrs. Who? Printers in a hurry. – Publisher. Suppressed the name. Messrs. – gave an impolite response to our suggestions as to mutual arrangements. – Ed.

<sup>13</sup> Name suppressed. When eligible opportunity for advertisement as a substitute for a cheque was hinted at, Messrs. – brusquely replied, in the low Essex *patois*, 'Wadyermean?'

## CHAPTER V. DOWN THE DARK RIVER

Down the Dark River, the mystic Isis, so Leonora had decided, we sped: Ustâni plying the long pole of the dhow, or native flat-bottomed boat, while we took it in turns to keep him up to his work by flicking him with a tandem-whip.

The moon went slowly down, and it occurred to Leonora to remark that we were 'going down' too, an unusual thing so early in term. Like some sweet bride into her chamber the moon departed, and the quivering footsteps of the Don<sup>14</sup> shook the planets from their places, to the consternation of the Savilian Professor of Astronomy, who, as in duty bound, was contemplating these revolutionary performances from the observatory in the Parks. A number of moral ideas occurred to Leonora and myself, but out of regard for Ustâni's feelings we denied them expression. I began, indeed, to utter a few appropriate sentiments, but the poor Boshman exclaimed, 'You floggee, floggee, Missy, or preachee, preachee, but no *both*

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<sup>14</sup> Do you mean the Dawn? – Publisher. Every Oxford man knows what I mean. – Ed.

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