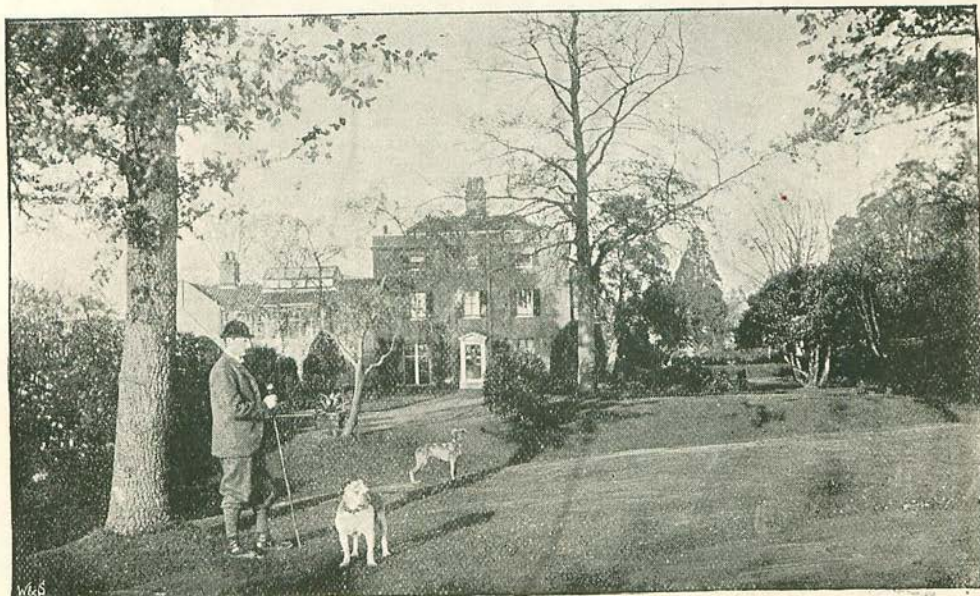




MR. RIDER HAGGARD AND THE WILD HORSES.

## Illustrated Interviews.

No. VII.—MR. H. RIDER HAGGARD.



From a Photo. by]

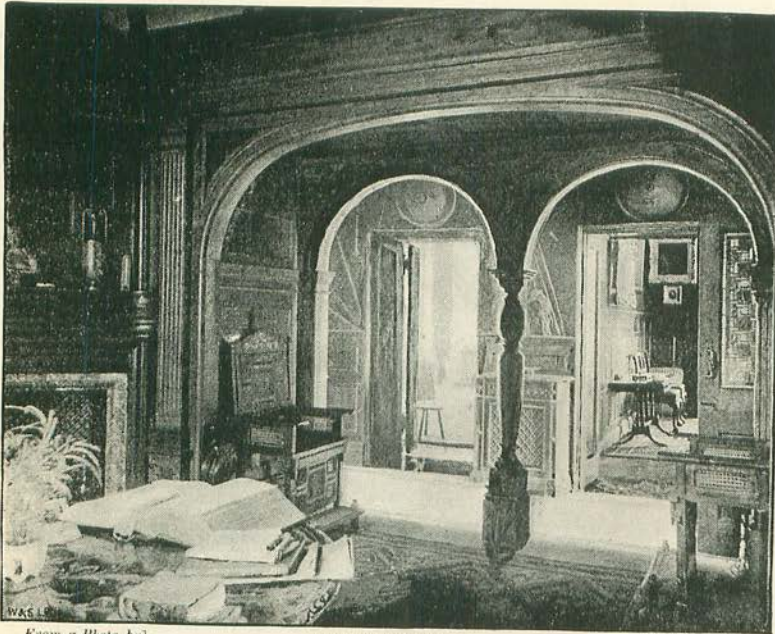
DITCHINGHAM HOUSE.

[Elliott & Fry.



DITCHINGHAM is a distinctly cosy Norfolk village, small and picturesque. Ditchingham House is a typical Norfolk home. It stands in the midst of a perfect shelter provided by the surrounding elms and beeches, for the winds which come across from the glorious valley of the Waveney, and over the Bath Hills, or the Earl's Vineyard, as it was once called—one of the prettiest hillsides in this part of Norfolk—are keen and cutting, and blow cold o' nights. Here Mr. Rider Haggard—bar-rister, justice of the peace, farmer and novelist—lives. It is no easy matter to realise that he who wanders about a compact little farm of a hundred and fifty acres, and inquires of the bailiff as he critically looks into a pig pen—"Which of these pigs are you going to kill?"—or singles out a grand turkey with a view to its successful appearance on the Christmas dinner table, is the brilliant writer of such fascinating works as "King Solomon's Mines," "Jess," "Colonel Quaritch," "Cleopatra," "Eric Brighteyes," and the creator

of that immortal woman "She." There is positively little about Mr. Haggard—whom, perhaps, one might describe as a country gentleman by profession and a novelist by accident—suggestive of the literary man. Literature! We talked of gardening and flowers over the dinner table; learnt how he had brought many of the ferns in his fern-house three thousand miles—carrying them on mules overland and in canoes down the rivers—from tropical Mexico. Some of these ferns are curious, by the way. There is one the leaves of which are five or six feet long, and a curious spotted species which grows on the ledges of rocks, in shape resembling a diminutive cart-wheel. He is passionately fond of gardening. Literature at the dinner table! It is interesting to hear him relate the most paying agricultural feat he ever accomplished, when, while on a visit to some property in South Africa, together with the assistance of his partner and a couple of Zulu Kaffirs and a mowing machine, he cut and sold hay to the value of nearly £300 in little more than a fortnight. Dinner over, we go into the drawing-room and play "Proverbs,"



From a Photo. by

ENTRANCE HALL.

[Elliott &amp; Fry.

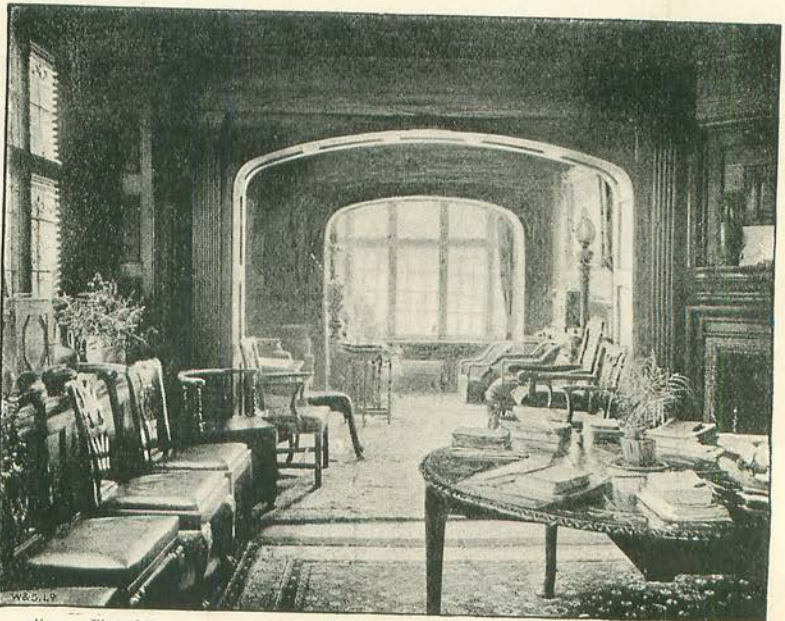
swords, lengthy spears, and ugly—though highly decorative—knives, many from various battlefields, ancient Egyptian bows and throwing-sticks, and here is an ancient cedar rod believed to be similar to the one which Moses cast before Pharaoh. On a ledge is a row of fine ostrich eggs, and just by the entrance to an ante-room are two quaint chairs with footstools combined, made of ebony, without nails, and in-

laid with ivory. These came from the East Coast of Africa. A lamp is supported on a wooden pedestal. It is made of the Royal red wood of Zululand. Only kings and princes were allowed to possess it; for a commoner to carry it meant death. So precious was it deemed

and munch great Ribston pippins picked from the tree only an hour ago.

In appearance Mr. Haggard looks just his age—thirty-five. He is tall, somewhat slim, and wears a fair moustache. His kindness makes one happy, his modesty is impressive to a degree. He tells you nothing but what is worth remembering; his life has been one long chapter of adventure, and every nook and corner of the house, wherever you turn, has some reminder of a career which has been in many ways remarkable. I spent part of the evening in going from room to room and noting these. The entrance-hall and staircases are crowded with interesting and suggestive mementoes. On the walls are Arabian shields and

laid with ivory. These came from the East Coast of Africa. A lamp is supported on a wooden pedestal. It is made of the Royal red wood of Zululand. Only kings and princes were allowed to possess it; for a commoner to carry it meant death. So precious was it deemed



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ENTRANCE HALL.

[Elliott &amp; Fry.



ON THE STAIRS.

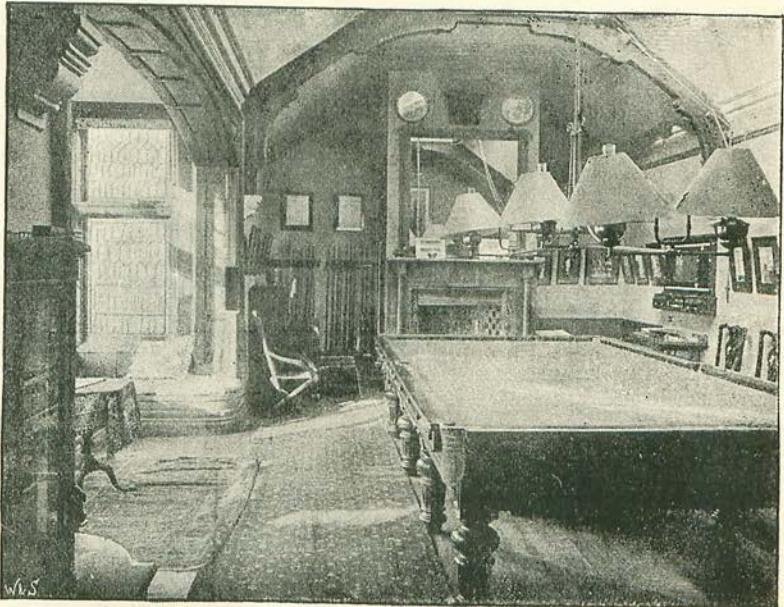
From a Photo, by Elliott &amp; Fry.

that it was cut up in small pieces and bestowed upon distinguished warriors—a sort of Zulu Victoria Cross.

The landings are lined with many portraits of Norfolk worthies; the walls are decorated with African horns. This huge bull's head belonged to an animal shot by Mr. Fred Jackson, the explorer. Here stands a quaint old cabi-

net. It is exquisitely carved, and was the property of Lady Smith, who inherited it in her youth, and died at the age of a hundred and four. It is said to contain forty secret drawers, a score of which yet remain to be discovered. The billiard-room is exceptionally interesting. An oil-painting of Mrs. Haggard, by Kerr, hangs here, and on one side of the room are the original drawings by Greiffenhagen for an, as yet, unpublished edition of the novelist's "World's Desire." Greiffenhagen's work is marvellously real. His "She" pictures, which hang downstairs, are exceptionally striking black-and-whites. In a niche of the billiard-room

—somewhat hidden from view—is a desk of Charles Dickens. It was bought at the Gad's Hill sale. Close by is a little cabinet. The glass door is opened, and from a tiny silver Icelandic Communion cup a number of rings are put into my open hand. One of the most striking of these is a gold band, thousands of years old, with hieroglyphics engraved upon it signifying "Haggard" (as an Egyptian might have written it) "the Scribe makes an offering to the God of Dawn." Another gold ring is from the mummy of Queen Taia, the feminine Henry VIII. of Egypt, and one of the most fascinating and beautiful women that ever lived. Its inscription



From a Photo, by]

BILLIARD ROOM.

[Elliott &amp; Fry.

reads, "Ank Bes, Bes Ank" ("the living Bes, Bes the living"). It has been mended. Mr. Haggard wore it for a year, but unfortunately he broke it whilst getting out of a cab. Queen Taia must have worn it all her life, for it shows signs of constant use. Then Mr. Haggard takes from his finger a signet ring he always wears. It was found at Deir-el-Bahari. Its red stone is believed to chronicle the portrait of Rameses the Great, the Pharaoh of the Oppression, with whose coffin it was discovered.

Here is a Gnostic ring in mediæval lead setting, and yet another—a golden circlet—which will always be associated with his career. It is the scarab that figures in "She." It is a heavy ring, and bears the words, "Suten se Ra" ("Royal Son of the Sun").

A grand piece of oak carving, dated 1664, surrounds the fireplace in the dining-room. Here is an admirable portrait of the novelist by John Pettie, R.A. On either side of window are paintings of two of the Hamiltons—ancestors of Mrs. Haggard—who were loyal to their King, Charles II.

A story is told of the faithful Cavalier who hangs in the dining-room. No stauncher Royalist breathed, and he rode from London to Norwich in great glee with the news of the Restoration. Unfortunately, he got into a meeting of Roundheads, but so full



From a Photo. by]

CHARLES DICKENS'S DESK.

[Elliott &amp; Fry.

of joy was he that he shouted the news to them as loudly as he could. They nearly killed him for his kindness. A Sir Joshua Reynolds hangs here—the portrait of a lady and her child. She was the wife of an officer who was called away to the French wars. During his absence a little one was born, and the dotting mother and loving wife, expecting him to return soon, had this picture painted for him. But he never came back again. The lady could not afford to pay for it, and the canvas remained in Sir Joshua's studio

for some time, until finally bought at his auction by Dr. Hamilton, of Lynn.

The drawing-room is a delightfully cosy apartment, with its white enamelled chimney-piece and its inviting cushioned corners. Knick-knacks in china fill the recesses;



QUEEN TAI'A'S RING.



PHARAOH'S RING.



SCARAB IN "SHE."

IMPRESSIONS OF RINGS IN SEALING-WAX.

more curios from distant climes, amongst which is a little glass photo of a small child in a plaid frock—an early portrait of Rider Haggard. Mexican combs, exquisite embroidery and fans, are picturesquely scattered about, and freshly plucked flowers

fill the vases. Near the window—looking out on a stretch of lawn strewn with the fallen leaves from the trees—on an easel, is a picture of Mr. Haggard's mother, a photograph of Barrington Foote, and a charming oil colour by Leon Little—"Dawn on the Thames."

The study is a perfect treasure-house of curios. An important resident of the working room is Jack, a tame rat, who is liberally supplied with

nuts, which he readily cracks. Just by the fireplace is the gun cupboard, designed by its owner. The drawer contains a thousand cartridges. A number of fishing-rods also find a convenient corner in it. It is impossible to chronicle every curio—the Greek vases and ancient pottery, strings of beads from the necks of mummies, and Zulu battle-axes and assegais. A marvellous



From a Photo. by]

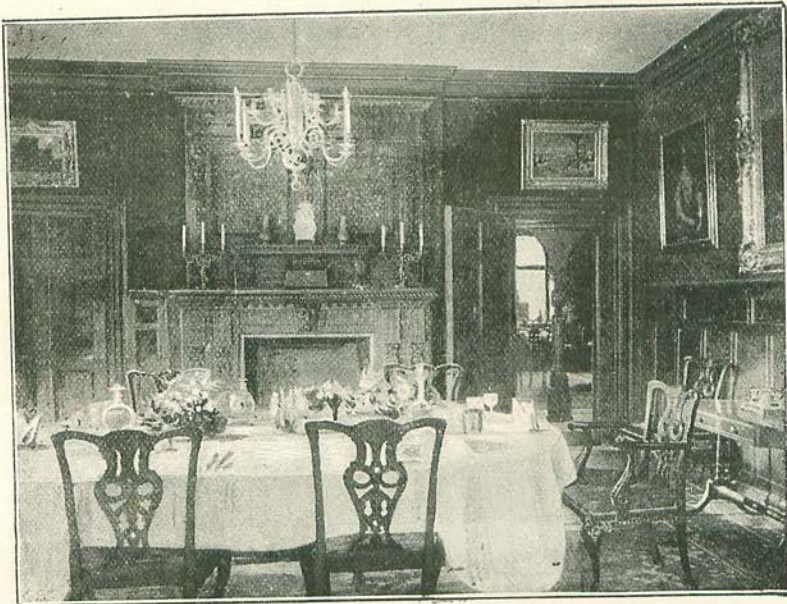
DRAWING-ROOM.

[Elliott &amp; Fry.

piece of embroidery lies on the table; it is of Mexican workmanship, some two hundred years old, evidently from a priest's cope. Here is a bronze jar from the tomb of an Etruscan monarch. Over the door is a Mexican idol in green jade; it once had eyes and teeth of emeralds—alas! now extracted. It weighs thirty pounds, and its possessor, who declares it to be the

best that ever came out of Mexico, owns to having smuggled it to England wrapped up in a dress. The tobacco-jar is a huge one; the pipes—a good score of them—are neatly arranged in a rack.

"These little things were picked up on the battlefield of Isandlwana," said Mr. Haggard, taking a small bowl from the mantel-board. One by one we exam-



From a Photo. by]

DINING-ROOM.

[Elliott &amp; Fry.



From a Photo, by]

THE CONSERVATORY.

[Elliott &amp; Fry.

had *missed fire!* Some poor fellow had pinned his faith to it. The little piece of lead I now held in my hand probably meant—a life lost.

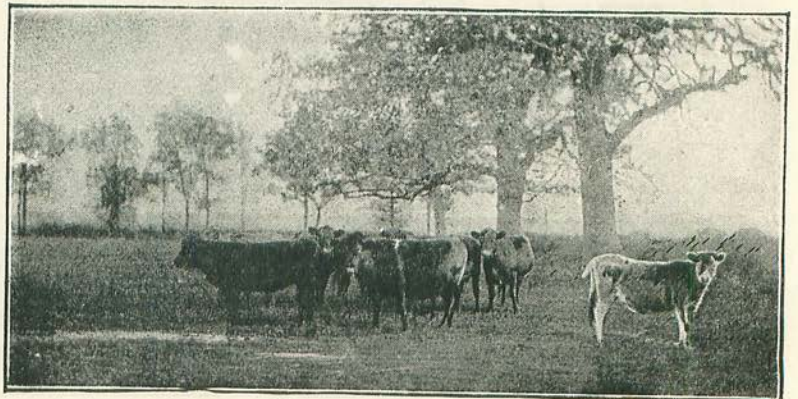
The shelves are well stocked with volumes; one of them is devoted to holding the bulky covers which contain the original MSS. of his works. Every one is marked with the time it took to write. A small shelf near the window is peculiarly interesting. The scores of paper volumes it supports are all pirated editions of his works issued in America. No author has suffered more than he in this respect. He has even had books published under his name in the States of which he never wrote a line. In the case of "Allan Quatermain" some enterprising Americans got hold of a set of uncorrected proof-sheets and published them.

And so we passed the evening going through the house, and, when the morrow came, walked through the meadows and newly-planted orchards round the farm. Now Mr. Haggard appears in an easy knickerbocker suit, and carries a long Zulu stick surmounted with a huge knob, which has helped him over rough paths for many years. The Mexican ferns are flourishing, the chrysanthemum houses loaded with blossoms. "Poacher," a fine young dog, which follows in every step of its master, bounds up. Poacher has a family history.

ined them—a sixpence dated 1859, a pair of eye-glasses (probably once belonging to an officer), a pair of nail scissors, a farrier's hook, a pen. Every one of them seemed to speak!

"Look at this!" cried Mr. Haggard, almost excitedly. "I never noticed that till this moment."

It was an English revolver-cartridge that



From a Photo, by]

MR. HAGGARD'S RED-POLLS.

[Elliott &amp; Fry.

Its mother was a famous lurcher—a poacher's dog—and was known all over the West of Norfolk. It was set at Mr. Haggard's keeper one night by its master, and there was shooting. The dog was captured, and its owner was charged with attempted murder. The silent prisoner was condemned to be shot after the trial. Mr. Haggard begged for the poor creature, won her, and her offspring has instinctively turned out a faithful animal.

The fowls are running over tiny hillocks, and the turkeys are making their presence known by their own peculiar cackle. One of the labouring hands here is known to his familiars as "Young Sam." We met "Old Sam," his father—who was Mrs. Haggard's grandmother's coachman—just now in the lane. "Old Sam" cannot be many years off a centenarian; "Young Sam" is nearing seventy. Your Norfolk folk are long-lived. A beautiful little Alderney calf of ten weeks wins admiration, and then we walk through the meadows, and the good points in some grand red-polls—the famous Norfolk breed of cattle—are discussed. It is as trim a farm as any for miles round; the result of two years' labour has worked wonders with the land since Mr. Haggard took it "in hand." We cut some roses—still in bloom—wave a good-bye to Angela and Dorothy, his two little daughters—who are just off for a ride—and enter the house delightfully fresh and ready for work after our morning's walk.

We lit our pipes in the study.  
Mr. Haggard was born on June 22, 1856.

He comes of a Scandinavian family, and for some generations his ancestors have been Norfolk squires. His father is William M. Rider Haggard, J.P., D.L., of Bradenham Hall, Norfolk, where the novelist was born. His mother had literary powers, and published some volumes of poems and songs. Mr. Haggard good-humouredly assures me that he was not an interesting infant. He passed his early years at Bradenham, then went abroad, and returned to England, when he entered the Grammar School at Ipswich.

He was destined for the Foreign Office, but in 1875 was appointed secretary to Sir Henry Bulwer, G.C.M.G., at Natal, and two years later fulfilled a similar position to Sir Theophilus Shepstone, K.C.M.G., then on a special mission to the Transvaal. He was there during the whole crisis surrounding the annexation of the Transvaal, and—then a young man only just out of his teens—hoisted the English flag in the Queen's name. A little photo of the party, as they appeared on this memorable morning, hangs



MRS. RIDER HAGGARD AND DAUGHTERS.  
[From a Photo, by Elliott & Fry.]

in his room with that of the Union Jack.  
"The real reason," said Mr. Haggard, "why the Transvaal was annexed was to prevent its inhabitants being wiped out of the world by Cetewayo. The Transvaal forces had been defeated, and Cetewayo had massed his regiments to attack it. Sir Theophilus Shepstone knew that, unless the territory became Queen's land, Cetewayo would take it. I never saw Cetewayo."  
Then the story of his life begins in real earnest. When he was twenty he was





SIR THEOPHILUS SHEPSTONE AND HIS STAFF (1876-77) ABOUT TO HOIST THE UNION JACK AT THE ANNEXATION OF THE TRANSVAAL. MR. RIDER HAGGARD IN THE FOREGROUND.

*From a Photograph.*

appointed Master of the High Court there, the first in the Transvaal, and probably the youngest ever known. As such he was guardian of all the orphans.

"The Boers were very litigious over the question of land, and would spend four times the value of a plot over a lawsuit. They were much in the hands of the lawyers. The scale of legal charges was simply wicked. A solicitor would open a bill of costs with a retaining fee of fifty guineas. When I was appointed Master of the Court I made a dead stand against this. The first bill presented to me was for £600. I knocked off a discount of £400. There was a tremendous agitation against me, but my superiors upheld me, and in the long run I triumphed. I used to go on circuit over hundreds of miles in an ox waggon.

"Yes, we often had murder trials. One of the most singular that I remember, because of the strange behaviour of the prisoner, was this: One night I was standing on the verandah of Government House. I heard a shot. Inquiries were made, and it transpired that a private in a regiment quartered at Pretoria had opened the canvas of his sergeant-major's tent—who was just then writing home to England—and shot him. The man then went

away with the intention of killing his adjutant and colonel. He was arrested, brought up for trial, and a plea of insanity was put in. The trial ran into the night, and the large and crowded court was lit with six candles only, which gave it a peculiarly solemn appearance. The jury adjudged the prisoner 'Guilty.' I rose up and asked the man, in the formal words, and with my most dignified manner, if he had anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon him. His reply, uttered in a most jaunty voice, was, 'Nothing at all, thank you, sir.' There was a question about his sanity. At any rate, whilst his dead comrade was being given a soldier's funeral, and the band was playing 'The Dead March in Saul' past the jail, the fellow was whistling merry English songs! In the end, his sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life, he escaped, and, so far as I know, was never recaptured.

"The Zulus are amongst the most courageous people in the world—they have no fear of death. There was a chief living in Transvaal territory. He was a magnificent fellow in strength and stature. A magistrate of his district went to collect certain taxes. The chief refused to pay, called on his tribesmen, who killed the magistrate and

seven men. The chief was caught, his kinsmen were condemned to imprisonment, he to death. The morning of the execution arrived, and I went to the jail and saw his hands tied behind his back. Through an interpreter he was asked whether he had anything to say. He cried out loudly:—

“‘Why all this trouble—why this fuss? I do not fear death. If I am to be killed, kill me.’

“With these words he broke away, walked deliberately across the yard and on to the gallows. He examined the noose of twisted buffalo hide, and took his stand unflinchingly over the trap. The executioner was intoxicated, the High Sheriff was overcome with the scene and had to retire—I myself was obliged to push and exhort the executioner in order that he might perform the fearful task, and, at last, the brave Zulu fell. The whole thing lasted some minutes, but during this time the man never winced, nor showed the slightest emotion.

“I held office as Master of the High Court for two years, when I resigned. The Zulu war broke out in 1879. I was in South Africa then. I knew of the disaster at Isandlwana twenty hours before the express reached Pretoria. An old Hottentot woman told me. Her words were, ‘The red-coats lay like leaves upon a plain.’ How the news travelled over the plains in the time I cannot tell, for I was 200 miles from the scene of action.

When there are hills they shout news from top to top, but there were none here. On receipt of this news a volunteer corps was raised to go to Zululand—a company of mounted gentlemen known as ‘The Pretoria Horse’—who, though eventually much cut up, did excellent service in the Boer war. I was elected lieutenant and adjutant of this corps.

“Just previous to this I was nearly killed. I was on a mission

for the Government to visit a chief in a distant mountainous district. I little dreamed that there was a plot to murder us. My love for moonlight scenery saved us. We had the option of two roads. I suggested the less frequently used one, where we could get a better view of the mountains in the moonlight; we took it. On the other path a party of natives were lying in ambush for us. In this way I believe that we escaped death and perhaps torture.

“The Pretoria Horse were ready to proceed to Zululand, but we were prevented by the sudden rising of the Boers. We were to have accompanied Colonel Weatherley’s horse. They were subsequently destroyed, with the exception of six men. Colonel Weatherley had two sons out there—the elder was my clerk in the High Court, and the other, little Rupert, who was very weakly, was a great favourite of his father. The poor little fellow accompanied his father everywhere, and in the fight of Slobane was assailed by the Zulus. The Colonel is believed to have died fighting over his poor boy’s body. The other son—who is still in the army—was coming into camp when he caught sight of a pretty pony passing his way. The saddle was empty. He caught it, and not knowing whose it was, rode into camp on its back. It had carried his little brother out that day.



"Englishmen were precious just then. I was sent out in command of a handful of men to watch the Boer camp. We had spies there. They would report to me every evening, and I sent despatches to Pretoria—about twenty-one miles away—as we had relays of horses all along the road, and could reach the town in an hour. The headquarters of the Boer camp were near an inn where I was stationed with my men. One day, having got wind of the reason of our presence, the Boers came down on us in force, took possession of the inn, and threatened to kill us. I had a very smart sergeant there, whom I sent into the room where they were gathered to keep a watch upon their movements. Needless to say he knew Dutch. The Boers have a great horror of dynamite, and when things began to look serious my sergeant saw one of them light his pipe and fling the still burning match on to the floor. Hurriedly, but with the utmost caution, he picked it up, blew it out, and threw it away with a fervently expressed 'Thank Heaven!'

"This attracted the attention of the Boers. 'Why had he done that—what did he mean?'

"'Don't you know?' the sergeant asked.

"'Know what?' said the Boers.

"'Why, the British Government store all their dynamite under this place. If I hadn't put out that match we should all have been blown into ten thousand atoms!'

"'Almighty!' said the Boers, and five minutes afterwards the place was clear.

"About this time there was an extraordinary panic in Pretoria. A Boer rode in to say that Cetewayo's 'impis' were within twenty miles of Pretoria, and would attack that night. My captain was sent out to ascertain the truth of this, and I was left in command of the corps. Only that morning horses had been served out to us. Orders came to saddle up and be ready. I marched the men into the yard where the horses were, and when we got there every man wanted the best horse. It was difficult to settle their claims, but I hit upon the idea of a scramble. I ordered the men to rush in together and each make for one. In ten minutes all were suited; but the trouble did not end here.

"'Mount,' I cried.

"The men did so—but only for an instant. The next moment the troop burst like a bombshell, nearly every horse bolted, and many men were thrown off. One poor fellow's foot caught in a stirrup and he was

nearly kicked to death. I do not believe that any of those horses had ever been saddled before! The panic grew. In the midst of all a thunderstorm raged—the rain fell in sheets. Women and children were weeping, the men were burying their money. It transpired afterwards that the whole idea of an attack of Cetewayo was the invention of a mad Kaffir. (See frontispiece.)

"I returned to England at the end of 1879 and married in the following year. I went back, however, to Africa with my wife, in order to look after some property I have in the Newcastle district of Natal. On our arrival I heard of the Boer rebellion. Whilst in Maritzburg my wife and I dined with Sir George Colley, the Governor of Natal—a party altogether of some twelve or fourteen people. It was a night or two before Sir George started up country to attack the Boers. Within a month the majority of those present had been killed, and I believe that at this moment Lady Colley, Mrs. Haggard, and myself are the sole survivors of that dinner party.

"I heard the action at Lang's Neck being fought. We went up country, believing that Sir George Colley would not attack the Boers with the men at his disposal. It was a terribly rough journey—we were nearly carried away by flooded streams, and the roads were cut into a slough by the guns. I arrived with my wife at my house, on the borders of Newcastle, and the following afternoon went out duck shooting. I heard the sound of distant heavy firing. I listened intently. At that moment the disastrous action at Lang's Neck was being fought. Then came a period of great and terrible trouble—battles fought and battles lost. Reinforcements poured in. One Sunday afternoon while I was sitting after luncheon on the verandah of my house, I thought that I heard the sound of guns. My wife and servants in the house believed it to be distant thunder. I saddled my horse, rode into Newcastle, a mile and a half away, and on the road called in at the telegraph office. The messages were just then passing through to England of the fearful defeat at Majuba. I rode on into the camp as fast as I could, but they had no news there, for troops were marching out towards Majuba as though nothing had happened. But the people at the telegraph office were right!

"The Boers came down and cut our communications. They burnt the next place to us, and for some weeks we lived in

a state of anxiety, anticipating an attack at any moment. Zulu scouts were out every night; we slept with loaded rifles by our sides and six horses always saddled in the stables. Sometimes we sat up all night. Ultimately we were driven into laager by the Boers. Then came the news of the surrender of the English Government to the Boers, just when thousands of troops were advancing to our relief. It was received with entire incredulity. I, for one, refused to believe it. When the truth became known, the most extraordinary scenes occurred at Newcastle. It was crowded with thousands of refugees, natives, loyal Boers, and English people driven in from the Transvaal. The town went mad. Three or four thousand people were huddled together

terribly afraid, but as we went up the mountain and we found that the English did not hit us, we gained heart and pushed on. They ran away. I sat on the rocks and shot them as they ran like bucks. They nearly killed me—look here,' pointing to his scarred cheek, 'but I paid them out for it. It was *alter lekker* (very nice). They tumbled over one another. We killed thousands of them.'

"That's false!" I said, 'you haven't killed a thousand men during the whole war.'

"His reply was, 'Ah, well. You lie and I lie, but I say we killed thousands of them. But I bear no malice. *In future if an Englishman touches his hat to me I shall acknowledge it!*'"

"It was at my house that the convention with the Boers was signed. I myself was so overcome with the disgrace of the situation, that I abandoned South Africa and returned to England. I felt I could no longer live there as an Englishman—in those days Natal was no longer a country for Englishmen to live in. I arrived in the old country after being nearly shipwrecked. By the bye, I have been actually shipwrecked. It was whilst returning from Iceland.

"I determined then to go to the bar, and I studied here at Ditchingham. Whilst studying I began to write books. My first was a historical work, 'Cetewayo and his White Neighbours.' I lost £50 over it. Then I tried novel writing. My first story was 'Dawn.' It went the round of several publishers, but nobody would have it, so I re-wrote it and made it end up happily—the ending of the original was somewhat sad. I worked so hard at that book that my sight gave way and I had to finish it in a darkened room. It was accepted and paid fairly well. I made £10 out of it as a start, but afterwards more. Then came 'The Witch's Head.' By that time, though this novel was something of a success, I thought I had had enough—that the game



"THAT'S FALSE!" I SAID.

in the market square—drunk, crying, cursing—and every group ruined. The members of the English Government were burnt in effigy, and words were said which I do not care to repeat.

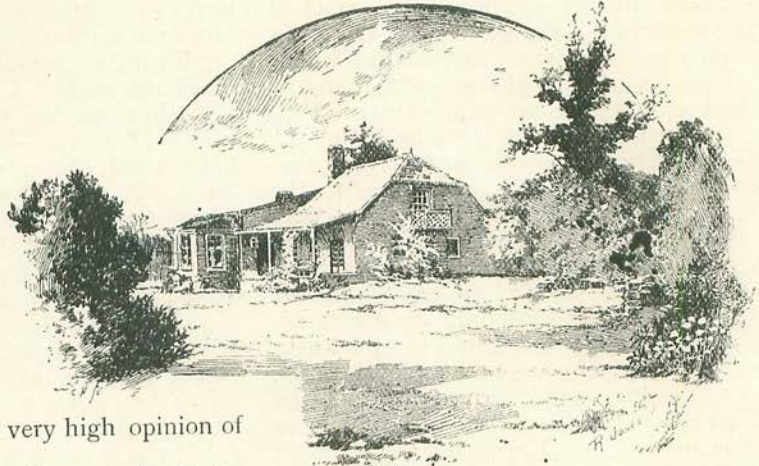
"I believe the English only hit three men at Majuba—one was killed, the Boers say, one badly wounded, and one man had his cheek grazed. This latter man thus described the action to me some weeks afterwards. 'At first,' he said, 'we were

was not worth the candle. I was called to the bar, and practised for about a year. I had read a good deal of talk in the papers of boys' books, and I determined to write one. I did it in my spare evenings, chiefly for amusement. The title of it was 'King Solomon's Mines.' It was a big success, and remains so, though I never had a very high opinion of it myself."

I have just had put into my hand the bone with which the old Don in the famous romance used to write. There is ink on it still. Here, too, is the veritable chart itself—the original map of those wonderful mines. Shall I help to destroy its delightful romance if I tell how this curious piece of linen of three hundred years ago really came into existence? A sister-in-law of Mr. Haggard's ingeniously executed the whole thing, and those fearfully and wonderfully made characters were penned by her own hand with coloured pigments! Mr. Haggard tells a merry story of a little adventure he had one day with this map.

He was taking it to be bound with the MSS., and travelling on the Underground Railway. The frontispiece of "King Solomon's Mines" is an exact reproduction of the original map. An old lady got into the same compartment as the novelist, and opening a copy of this very work, at once became deeply interested in the frontispiece. She turned it this way and that way—all ways, but was more puzzled than ever. It was impossible for Mr. Haggard to resist the temptation. He took the *real* thing out of his pocket, put it on his knee, and began studying it too. It caught the innocent old lady's eye. She looked from book to author, from copy to original, and was perfectly bewildered. Mr. Haggard got out at the next station, and when the train left the platform there was the old lady staring at him out of the window with indescribable amazement still written on her face.

In connection with "King Solomon's Mines" he once received a letter from a girls' school in America, thanking him most gratefully for writing a book "without a woman in it"! He also received a round



MR. HAGGARD'S HOUSE, IN WHICH THE BOER CONVENTION WAS SIGNED.

robin from the members of some great firm of electricians in Austria, acquainting him with the pleasure that some work of his had given them. It bore seven signatures, each writer of which was of a different nationality.

Then the manuscript volume of "She" is taken down from one of the shelves. It was written in six weeks, and a fortnight out of that time was occupied largely in doing a friend's work—reporting cases in the Divorce Court for *The Times*. To write a novel in little more than four weeks is a truly remarkable undertaking, the brilliant result making it a still greater accomplishment. Mr. Haggard sat down to write it with a very slight idea of the plot, only with the great creative character in his mind—that of an immortal woman—a type. A story which a lady once wrote and told him—the story of a woman and a cave—helped him in writing "She." The original sherd of "She" is over the mantelpiece.

Soon afterwards he left the bar, finding that his reputation as an author was detrimental to his practice there. The success of "King Solomon's Mines" and "She," the rush now for his earlier works—comparatively little read—was sufficient inducement for him to go on. As one work succeeded the other, his reputation was strengthened, his genius as a writer of romance impressed every book lover, his descriptive powers were considered as marvellously real as they were in many cases brilliantly imaginative. He is a great traveller. He spends months in a country where the scene of his work is to be laid. His notes of the

'Oh look! look! look!' shrieked you in a shrill falsetto of terror (213).  
 his eyes nearly dropping out of his head & foam upon his lips  
look! look! look! she's shrivelling up she's turning into a  
 mummy' & down he fell upon the floor foaming &  
<sup>spasming</sup> ~~bottom~~ in a fit.  
 'True enough - I faint even as I write it in the living

presence of the terrible collection <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>shrivelling up</sup>.  
 The golden ena that had emerged <sup>from</sup> ~~from~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>fell upon the ground</sup>.  
 smaller & smaller: the paws the claws, changed colour &  
 in place of the whiteness of its tuft, grew dirty brown -  
 & yellow like an old piece of withered parchment: the  
 felt at her bald head - the delicate hand was nothing  
 but a claw now - a human talon like that of a badly preserved  
 Egyptian mummy, & then she seemed to realize what this  
 of change was passing over her, & she shrieked at the

scenes, the people, and their manners are purely mental. The hardest travelling—in search of "scenes"—he ever had in his life was in Mexico. He characterises the roads in the wilder parts as indescribable, the food worse, whilst, in the hot country, sleep was most difficult to obtain, owing to the constant torment of venomous insects. A new work will soon appear, centred in these tropical regions.

Before he wrote "Eric Brighteyes" he went to Iceland. He made his way to Bergthorsknoll, the residence of Njal, the hero in "The Story of Burnt Njal"—who was burnt to death in the house there. The irrepressible novelist, with that love of search which he possesses, commenced digging in the floor of the old hall, and there found traces of the burning after eight hundred years. He retains fragments of some of the charred beams in a small Egyptian jar in the study.

He says that he has been often charged with plagiarism, and gave me a most amusing instance of such charges, which are so easy to bring, and so recklessly made.

"I once wrote a skit called 'Mr. Meeson's Will,'" he said. "It was a little hit at the

Court of Probate, where I practised. The heroine of the skit is supposed to have a will tattooed upon her shoulders. Now, it appears that there was a French novel—which I had never seen, read, heard, or dreamed of—in which there is a fair damsel who has a will tattooed on another part of her body. I was at once charged with appropriating this idea. Nothing of the kind. The real origin of my tattoo was a trick played upon an eminent Q.C. by his pupils, who sent in a set of papers to him for his consideration, in which the will propounded was supposed to be executed upon the human skin of somebody who was cast away on a desert island. The case interested our friend the Q.C. immensely, and he was so taken in as to give the matter a great deal of time, and actually gave a written opinion as to the validity of the document. This is a fair sample of the accuracy of these charges." Also he has been attacked because some of his tales are full of fights. "But," he says, "did reading of fighting, or even of the oppressions and cruelties of tyrants, ever harm any human creature; and are there, on the other hand, no virtues to be learned from stories of warriors



From a Photo. by)

THE STUDY.

(Elliott & Fry.

faithful to the last, and of the heroic deaths of men? Is a boy, for instance, the worse for being taught that his hands were given him to defend his head; or, if need be, his cause and his country? I believe that there is more evil to be learned from what may be read in a week's issue of the daily papers than from all the books which deal with fighting and kindred adventures that are published in a generation. And while I hold this opinion I shall go on writing about such things, though sometimes I like to undertake an orthodox novel by way of a change. A man is not necessarily of a sanguinary mind because he tells stories of how people killed each other in past ages, or in the land of fable."

Mr. Haggard claims to create every character in his novels, and he considers six months a fair time to complete an important work. He takes no share in the arrangements for the publication of his books, which are managed by Mr. Watt, the literary agent, and never reads a review of them, unless it chances to appear in some

paper which he takes in, because he says that, if the notice be favourable, it is apt to give an author too good an idea of himself; and, if the reverse, to worry and discourage him, and to disgust him with his work. Moreover, he is of opinion that the writer of a book knows a great deal more of its strong and weak points than any reviewer, however impartial, which all reviewers are not; and that Time is likely to be a better judge than either author or critics, all of whose individual opinions are, therefore, somewhat superfluous. He usually writes some three or four thousand words a day, sitting down at a great oaken writing table, with a liberal supply of foolscap paper, about half-past four, working on till dinner-time, and again resuming the thread of his story at night for an hour or two. In the morning the farm and his correspondence claim him. His favourite work, and the one he considers his best, is "Eric Brighteyes." "She" comes next. Amongst his own characters his love leans toward "Beatrice."

HARRY HOW.



A MEXICAN IDOL.