
*King Solomon's
Mines*

H. Rider Haggard

*With an Introduction and Notes
by Benjamin Ivry*

George Stade
Consulting Editorial Director



BARNES & NOBLE CLASSICS
NEW YORK

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From the Pages of
King Solomon's Mines

“A sharp spear,” runs the Kukuana saying, “needs no polish;” and on the same principle I venture to hope that a true story, however strange it may be, does not require to be decked out in fine words.

(page 8)

There, there, it is a cruel and a wicked world, and for a timid man I have been mixed up in a deal of slaughter. (page 10)

“I am a fatalist, and believe that my time is appointed to come quite independently of my own movements, and that if I am to go to Suliman's Mountains to be killed, I shall go there and shall be killed there. God Almighty, no doubt, knows His mind about me, so I need not trouble on that point.” (page 30)

“There is no journey upon this earth that a man may not make if he sets his heart to it.” (page 49)

“If we cannot find water we shall all be dead before the moon rises to-morrow.” (page 58)

There he sat, a sad memento of the fate that so often overtakes those who would penetrate into the unknown; and there probably he will still sit, crowned with the dread majesty of death, for centuries yet unborn, to startle the eyes of wanderers like ourselves, if any such should ever come again to invade his loneliness. (page 70)

“The diamonds are surely there, and you shall have them since you white men are so fond of toys and money.” (page 92)

“The sun is dying—the wizards have killed the sun.” (page 124)

I shook my head and looked again at the sleeping men, and to my tired and yet excited imagination they seemed as though death had already touched them. My mind's eye singled out those who were sealed to slaughter, and there rushed in upon my heart a great sense of the mystery of human life, and a overwhelming sorrow at its futility and sadness. To-night these thousands slept their healthy sleep, to-morrow they, and many others with them, ourselves perhaps among them, would be stiffening in the cold; their wives would be widows, their children fatherless, and their place know them no more forever. (page 131)

Suddenly, with a bound and a roar, they sprang forward with uplifted spears, and the two regiments met in deadly strife. Next second, the roll of the meeting shields came to our ears like the sound of thunder, and the whole plain seemed to be alive with flashes of light reflected from the stabbing spears. To and fro swung the heaving mass of struggling, stabbing humanity. (page 146)

“We are the richest men in the whole world,” I said. “Monte Christo is a fool to us.” (page 183)

There around us lay treasures enough to pay off a moderate national debt, or to build a fleet of ironclads, and yet we would gladly have bartered them all for the faintest chance of escape. (page 183)

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H. Rider Haggard

H. Rider Haggard wrote *King Solomon's Mines*, the story goes, after his brother bet him he couldn't pen a book as exotic, thrilling, and commercially successful as Robert Louis Stevenson's 1881 adventure novel *Treasure Island*. Haggard succeeded, and went on to write dozens more best-selling tales. Though his family initially had low expectations for him, Haggard not only made a living as an author; he also learned Zulu, brokered peace treaties, took part in the annexing of territories, and acted as the British Empire's right-hand man in the diamond- and gold-rich colonies of South Africa.

Born on June 22, 1856, in Norfolk, England, Henry Rider Haggard was the eighth of ten children. His father was a country squire and barrister; his mother was an Englishwoman raised in India. Haggard exhibited little academic ambition during his youth and did not attend university. After he failed the army entrance exam, he was sent to London to prepare for a post in the Foreign Office. In 1875 family connections secured him a job as secretary to Governor Henry Bulwer in Britain's Natal colony in South Africa. For the next four years, Haggard served the British Empire in various capacities, storing in his mind settings and events he would later use in his novels. He witnessed ten rebellions and outright war, served as a diplomat and aide, and hunted big game for sport—the stuff of his countrymen's wildest imaginings. However modern society may interpret the ideas expressed in *King Solomon's Mines*, Haggard's tale is an imaginatively embellished reflection of direct experience, one that gives us a window into the British colonial mind.

In 1879 Haggard returned briefly to England, where he met an heiress from Norfolk, Louisa Margitson; they married the next year. The couple returned to Africa, but their stay was brief; in 1881 they returned to England, where Haggard read for the bar and began to write fiction. *King Solomon's Mines*, published in 1885, was Haggard's third novel and his first popular success. He followed up the best-seller with a string of other novels, including a wildly popular tale of a 2,000-year-old queen, *She: A History of Adventure* (1887). Personal suffering muted Haggard's success when his nine-year-old son died in 1891. A daughter, Liliastor, was born the next year; she would eventually publish a biography of her father.

Although he maintained a farm and country house in Norfolk, Haggard traveled to Egypt, Mexico, Canada, the United States, and South Africa. He lectured and published reports on agriculture, one of his fields of expertise. His work was often in the service of the British government, which honored him with a knighthood in 1912 and made him a Knight Commander of the British Empire in 1919.

Haggard authored more than fifty works of fiction and nonfiction in his lifetime. His psychologically complex novels about distant lands influenced writers from Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung to Joseph Conrad, C. S. Lewis, and Henry Miller. H. Rider Haggard died on May 14, 1925, in London.

The World of H. Rider Haggard and King Solomon's Mines

- 1856 Henry Rider Haggard is born the eighth of ten children on June 22 in Norfolk, England. His father, William, is a country squire and barrister; his mother, Ella Doveton, is an amateur writer who was raised in India. Great Britain establishes a crown colony in Natal, South Africa.
- 1857 The Boers (South Africans of Dutch or Huguenot descent) establish the South African Republic in the region known as the Transvaal.
- 1859 Charles Darwin publishes *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*.
- 1865 Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* appears.
- 1867 A diamond field is discovered in South Africa. Alfred Nobel invents dynamite.
- 1873 Haggard fails the army entrance exams; his family sends him to London to be trained to join the Foreign Office.
- 1875 While in London, Haggard experiments with spiritualism. His father arranges for him to go to South Africa, where he works as a secretary to the governor of Britain's colony in Natal, Sir Henry Bulwer.
- 1877 Haggard joins the staff of special commissioner Sir Theophilus Shepstone and hoists the flag at the British annexation of the Transvaal.
- 1878 Haggard's service earns him the position of master and registrar of the High Court in the Transvaal.
- 1879 On January 22 Zulu King Cetshwayo's army wipes out a British regiment that includes many of Haggard's friends. In May Haggard resigns his post and returns to England.
- 1880 Haggard marries a Norfolk heiress, Louisa Margitson; in November the two sail to Africa to live on a farm near the Transvaal border. Émile Zola publishes *Nana*, whose realism Haggard will later denounce.
- 1881 Jock, the Haggards' first child, is born in May. When the Transvaal is ceded to the Boers, Haggard and his wife return to England, where Haggard reads for the bar.
- 1882 Haggard publishes *Cetywayo and His White Neighbours; or, Remarks on Recent Events in Zululand, Natal, and the Transvaal*, a nonfiction work that examines colonial relations in South Africa.
- 1883 Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* is published.

- 1884 Haggard is admitted to the bar and also publishes his first novel, *Dawn*, which is neither a commercial nor a critical success. Hiram Maxim invents the recoil-operated machine gun.
- 1885 Haggard's second novel, *The Witch's Head*, is published but receives little notice. A five-shilling bet with his brother prompts Haggard to write *King Solomon's Mines*; it is a huge commercial success and makes Haggard a household name.
- 1887 Haggard publishes "About Fiction" in the February issue of the *Contemporary Review*. His popular novel *She: A History of Adventure*, about a 2,000-year-old white queen named Ayesha, is released; the book enthralled psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Three other novels set in South Africa—*Jess*, *Allan Quatermain* (the first of many sequels to *King Solomon's Mines*), and *A Tale of Three Lions*—are also published. Queen Victoria celebrates her Golden Jubilee, marking fifty years as ruler of the United Kingdom.
- 1888 Haggard travels to Iceland to gather material for a novel about the Vikings. Maiwa's Revenge, Colonel Quaritch, V. C., *My Fellow Labourer and the Wreck of the Copeland*, and *Mr. Meeson's Will* are published.
- 1889 The novels *Allan's Wife* and *Cleopatra* are released.
- 1890 *Beatrice*, a novel, is published. Haggard and Andrew Lang collaborate on the novel *The World's Desire*, about Helen of Troy. Haggard travels to Mexico.
- 1891 *Eric Brighteyes*, a Viking romance set in Iceland, is published. When his nine-year-old son Jock dies, Haggard is griefstricken.
- 1892 *Nada the Lily* is published. Haggard's daughter Liliias, his future biographer, is born, raising his spirits.
- 1893 The novel *Montezuma's Daughter* is published. Natal becomes a self-governing British colony.
- 1894 *The People of the Mist* appears. Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* is published.
- 1895 *Joan Haste and Heart of the World* are published. Haggard is narrowly defeated in his bid for a seat in Parliament. H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* is published.
- 1896 *The Wizard* is published.
- 1898 *Doctor Therne* is published.
- 1899 Two Boer territories—the South African Republic (Transvaal) and the Orange Free State—declare war on Britain, thus beginning the South African War (Boer War). Haggard's novel *The Spring of Lion* is published, as well as *The Last Boer War and A Farmer's Year*, both works of nonfiction. Sigmund Freud publishes his *Interpretation of Dreams*, in which he describes a fascination with Haggard's *She*.
- 1900 Haggard travels through Italy, Palestine, and Cyprus. *A History of the Transvaal* is released.

- 1901 Haggard's reflections on his recent travels are published in *A Winter Pilgrimage*. *Lysbeth*, a novel, is also published. Queen Victoria dies.
- 1902 The Boer War ends, with the Boers accepting British sovereignty . Haggard publishes *Rural England*, a two-volume study of the problem of depopulation. Joseph Conrad publishes his novella *Heart of Darkness* in book form.
- 1903 Haggard's *Pearl-Maiden*, a novel about the fall of Jerusalem, is released.
- 1904 Haggard travels to Egypt. The historical novels *Stella Fregelius* and *The Brethren* are published.
- 1905 *Ayesha: The Return of She*, a sequel to *She*, is published, as is the nonfiction *A Gardener's Year*. Haggard is sent by the Rhodes Trust to research Salvation Army settlements in the western United States, with an eye to opening similar settlements in South Africa. His report on his research is published under the title *The Poor and the Land*.
- 1906 *Benita: An African Romance* and *The Way of the Spirit* are published. Haggard joins the Royal Commission on Coast Erosion.
- 1907 *Fair Margaret*, a novel, is published. Kipling wins the Nobel Prize for Literature.
- 1908 *The Ghost Kings* is published.
- 1909 *The Yellow God* and *The Lady of Blossholme* are released. *Queen Sheba's Ring*, a novel based on Haggard's research in Egypt, is published.
- 1910 *Morning Star*, another novel about Egypt, is published.
- 1911 *Rural Denmark and Its Lessons*, Haggard's study of Danish farms, is published.
- 1912 *Marie*, the first volume in Haggard's fictionalized history of the Zulu people, is published. Haggard is knighted for his contributions to agricultural advancement. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle publishes *The Lost World*.
- 1913 *Child of Storm*, the second volume in Haggard's Zulu trilogy, is published.
- 1914 World War I begins.
- 1915 *The Holy Flower* is published.
- 1916 *The Ivory Child* is published. *Finished*, the last volume of Haggard's Zulu trilogy, is published.
- 1919 Haggard is named a Knight Commander of the British Empire (KBE) as a reward for his service on government commissions concerned with agriculture.
- 1920 *The Ancient Allan* is published.

1921 *She and Allan*, a sequel to *She*, is published.

1923 *Wisdom's Daughter*, another *She* sequel, is published.

1924 *Heu-Heu; or, The Monster* is published.

1925 Henry Rider Haggard dies on May 14 in London.

1926 *The Days of My Life: An Autobiography of Sir H. Rider Haggard* is released, as is another Quatermain adventure, *The Treasure of the Lake*.

1927 *Allan and the Ice-Gods* is published.

1937 A British film version of *King Solomon's Mines* is made, with Paul Robeson as Umbopa and Sir Cedric Hardwicke as Allan Quatermain; some scenes are filmed on location in Natal.

1950 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer makes a film version of *King Solomon's Mines* starring Deborah Kerr and Stewart Granger.

1959 *Watusi: Guardians of King Solomon's Mines*, a film based on Haggard's novel, is released; it stars George Montgomery.

1980 Haggard's private diaries are published.

1985 Sharon Stone, John Rhys-Davies, and Richard Chamberlain star in a film remake of *King Solomon's Mines*, proving the enduring popularity of the 100-year-old novel.

Introduction

Haggard's Way

“GRIP” IS A QUALITY H. Rider Haggard aimed for in his novels, and the best of them, especially *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), remain compulsively readable as popular literature. The adventure of the elephant hunter Allan Quatermain in his quest for King Solomon's treasure in Africa remains an addictive page-turner, despite some aspects that have inevitably dated the book. The story of the voyage to the fictional kingdom of Kukuluanaland has lasting resonances for the book's intended readers: “all the big and little boys,” as Haggard's dedication puts it. Modern critics have made much of the sexist implications of Haggard's dedication to the “boys.” In her introduction to the recent reprint edition of Robert Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys*, editor Elleke Boehmer points out that the Victorian classic of civic education for boys was an “immediate success amongst young audience male and female alike” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. xi). Baden-Powell's book, so expressly intended (and entitled) for boys, was also devoured by Victorian girls. Haggard's dedication probably did not scare off girl readers of his day either. Nor should it make today's reader jump to conclusions about the book's audience and intent. Haggard admitted he wrote *King Solomon's Mines* in direct competition with a recent bestseller, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, also a book ostensibly for boys but one that has always been read by girls—and adults of both sexes.

Prefiguring Edgar Rice Burroughs's Tarzan books and other popular literature, *King Solomon's Mines* is genuinely involved with Africa, however consciously Haggard mythicizes the subject matter. This is only to be expected in an author for whom Africa was a subject of lasting preoccupation. Born at West Bradenham Hall, Norfolk, England, in 1856, the son of a country squire, Henry Rider Haggard was seen as unpromising by his family. When young Henry failed to get an army commission, he was sent off to Natal, South Africa, in 1875 as secretary to the governor of Britain's Natal colony. His career advanced, and in 1877 he transferred jobs, to work for the special commissioner. The following year he became master and registrar of the High Court in the Transvaal. His six years in Africa would provide inspiration for the rest of his writing life.

His friend Andrew Lang would later write that Haggard had “found himself” by writing *King Solomon's Mines*. One might add that Haggard found himself even before, by going to Africa, which transformed a rather muddled civil servant into a decisive and productive Victorian writer. This metamorphosis is akin to the change experienced by another Victorian novelist, Anthony Trollope (1815-1882), after Trollope landed a job as post-office inspector in Ireland, which awakened his own latent talents.

Haggard was deeply involved with public service, and published many books of history and advocacy, most of which are unread today. He never took his adventure stories as seriously as his nonfiction books, such as *Cetywayo and His White Neighbours; Or, Remarks on Recent Events in Zululand, Natal, and the Transvaal* (London: Trübner and Company, 1882); *The Last Boer War* (London: Kegan Paul and Company, 1899); and *A History of the Transvaal*, (New York: New Amsterdam Book Company, 1900). Obsessed with the fate of poor rural communities, he published studies like *A Farmer's Year: Being His Commonplace Book for 1898* (London: Longmans and Company, 1899); *The Poor and the Land: Being a Report on the Salvation Army Colonies in the United*

States and at Hadleigh, England, with Scheme of National Land Settlement, and an Introduction (London, New York: Longmans, Green, 1905); *Rural Denmark and Its Lessons* (London, New York: Longmans, Green, 1911); *Regeneration: Being an Account of the Social Work of the Salvation Army in Great Britain* (London: Longmans, Green, 1910); and *Rural England: Being an Account of Agricultural and Social Researches Carried Out in the Years 1901 & 1902* (London, New York: Longmans, Green, 1902). Haggard also wrote extensively about World War I: *A Call to Arms to the Men of East Anglia* (London: R. Clay, 1914), and *The After-War Settlement and Employment of Ex-Servicemen in the Oversea Dominions* (London: Published for the Royal Colonial Institute by the Sain Catherine Press, 1916).

Although few fans of Haggard's novels today have read these hard-to-find nonfiction texts, Haggard himself felt they represented his highest achievements. Unlike Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who valued his own eccentric writings on spiritualism over his immortal Sherlock Holmes stories, Haggard may have been at least partly right in his evaluation of his own work. The myths so abundant in *King Solomon's Mines* and *She* are bolstered by factual material, hard-won life experience of the kind detailed in Haggard's books about history, agriculture, and war, as well as in his private diaries and letters. The latter are better known since Denys Edwin Whatmore self-published a series of short books containing excerpts from Haggard's letters about activities for the public good. Three of the titles are: *Deeds for the Church: Rider Haggard* (Cheltenham: D. E. Whatmore, 1995); *Deeds for Children and Young People: Rider Haggard* (Cheltenham: D. E. Whatmore, 1996); and *Deeds for the Salvation Army: Rider Haggard* (Cheltenham: D. E. Whatmore, 1996). In addition, the Rider Haggard Society (www.riderhaggardsociety.org.uk), a British organization, has through its occasional journal worked since 1985 to propagate a more rounded view of Haggard. Even so, the only two texts by Haggard that are still widely read remain and look likely to remain—*She* and *King Solomon's Mines*.

Rapid Writing

Haggard admitted he wrote *King Solomon's Mines* in six weeks, a quickness that surprised his writing friends like Andrew Lang and Robert Louis Stevenson. The latter sent Haggard a letter cautioning him about excessive haste. Yet the famed Belgian-born detective storywriter Georges Simenon (1903-1989) often wrote entire books even faster. The French novelist Stendhal (Marie Henri Beyle, 1783-1842) typically completed novels in a matter of weeks. Speed in writing per se is not necessarily a threat to quality; adventure writers in particular can be like the journalists of whom the noted critic Karl Kraus (1874-1936) wrote, "They write worse when they have time." Pacing was essential for Haggard, who claimed that writing a text fast helped to energize it, making it irresistibly readable. He described his approach with typical dash in his autobiography, *The Days of My Life* (1926; see "For Further Reading"): "Such work should be written rapidly and, if possible, not rewritten, since wine in this character loses its bouquet when it is poured from glass to glass."

The speed of writing translates to speed of reading, with as few impediments as possible to the reader's momentum. Although there are a number of exotic words in *King Solomon's Mines* that require annotation, their frequency decreases as the book advances, and Haggard often provides his own, perfectly serviceable translation of local terms. As a result, the reader does not need to pause to understand the reference, but can plunge ahead to find out what happens next, which is essential for the enjoyment of a real page-turner like *King Solomon's Mines*.

Despite Haggard's speed and occasional carelessness about details, *King Solomon's Mines* shows

some real control of structural and stylistic elements, which is part of its lasting power. To cite one stylistic aspect used coherently throughout the book, Haggard used italics almost always to convey the horror of death, such as when an elephant picked up a servant “*and tore him in two*” (p. 46). In a cave discovered along his trip, Quatermain finds that a servant who was alive the night before is now “*stone dead*” (p. 68). These italics denoting urgent shock in relation to death recur throughout the story, like underlining in a letter excitedly dashed off to a friend.

One of Haggard’s goals, as expressed in “About Fiction” (*Contemporary Review*, February 1887) was to create an interesting book, as he felt the Anglo-American novel had declined into a series of dull domestic dramas. Haggard alluded to William Dean Howells (1837-1920), who wrote novels like *A Woman’s Reason* (1883), *A Modern Instance* (1882), and *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), as an example. By focusing on the imaginative and fantastic domains, Haggard aimed at exciting the reader in the way that he felt naturalistic nineteenth-century fiction had ceased to do. In this goal he succeeded brilliantly, as generations of readers have conceded.

In *King Solomon’s Mines*, with a dour feeling of fatalism, the elephant hunter Allan Quatermain agrees to join a dangerous treasure hunt. Quatermain is presented as an amateur author, whose first statement at the beginning of the book is one of modesty, of being aware of his book’s “shortcomings.” As narrator, Quatermain dithers over lore and legends that he might have included in *King Solomon’s Mines* had he “given way to [his] own impulses” (p. 7). Authorship as a form of discipline and control is also expressed at the end of the story, when Quatermain announces, “And here, at this point, I think I shall end this history” (p. 207). The reader is reminded that the story does not end by itself; the writer ends it. Control and consciousness were keywords for Quatermain as an author—and quite possibly for Haggard as well.

Haggard’s protagonist Quatermain describes himself as a 55-year-old man who has survived the job of elephant hunter much longer than most of his colleagues. Quatermain explains at the start of his tale, “I am a timid man, and don’t like violence,” (p. 9) and near the end, after many heroics, he reiterates, “I never had any great pretensions to be brave” (p. 188). Such self-definitions are repeated throughout the book until the narrative itself begins to seem like a means of self-definition. The effort to write, as well as the events narrated, define the narrator.

There may not be much progression of character in *King Solomon’s Mines*, but Quatermain rings true precisely because of his lack of grandiose pretensions. Quatermain’s self-deflating tone may include something of Haggard’s own ironic self-regard. When Haggard traveled to Africa in 1914 and his photo was plastered on the local newspaper *Natal Witness*, Haggard noted in his diary that his image looked “exactly like that of the mummy of Rameses the Second,” a recently disinterred Pharaoh. This lack of vanity or vaingloriousness is unusual in a generation of writers on Africa that included such egomaniacs as Sir Richard Burton, translator of *The Arabian Nights*.

At the start of chapter 1, Quatermain informs us: “I am not a literary man, though very devoted to the Old Testament and also to the ‘Ingoldsby Legends’” (p. 9); the latter is an early Victorian compilation of odd and grotesque jokes in prose and verse by Richard Harris Barham (1788-1845). Mention of *The Ingoldsby Legends* is a running gag throughout the *King Solomon’s Mines*. Quatermain misattributes lines from Walter Scott to “Ingoldsby” in a jape that resulted in a chiding letter from Robert Louis Stevenson, who thought the error was Haggard’s own, rather than his protagonist Quatermain’s. Reflecting its narrator’s literary tastes, *King Solomon’s Mines* veers in tone between the Victorian jokes of *The Ingoldsby Legends* and the sober majesty of the Old Testament. *A*

the story advances, the Bible and *The Ingoldsby Legends* are repeatedly invoked until they are yoked together in an unlikely identification. During one potentially tragic moment in chapter 6 when Quatermain and his friends are dying of thirst, the narrator decides to read the poem “The Jackdaw Rheims” from *The Ingoldsby Legends* (p. 59). Later, at the height of battle, Quatermain states “Warlike fragments from the ‘Ingoldsby Legends,’ together with numbers of sanguinary verses from the Old Testament, sprang up in my brain like mushrooms in the dark” (p. 148). The disparate texts join as inspiration for the bloodbath to come.

The influence of the Bible on *King Solomon’s Mines* can hardly be overstated, starting with the title itself, which honors a biblical monarch renowned both for his wisdom and his wealth. Aside from many explicit references, there are also many biblical allusions, such as when Sir Henry Curtis convinces Quatermain to join the expedition to Africa. Curtis explains that the company will search for his lost brother Neville: “We had quarrelled bitterly, and I behaved very unjustly to my brother in my anger” (p.16). This description echoes the prose cadences of the King James Bible; the fratricidal story of Cain and Abel from the Bible is surely not far behind. This richness of reference is part of the lasting fascination of *King Solomon’s Mines*.

When the travelers arrive at the Hall of the Dead to discover the beheaded, mummified corpse of a Zulu king, Quatermain likens this horrific image to Hamilton Tighe, a beheaded sailor who in *The Ingoldsby Legends* appears carrying his own head (p. 176).

Racism and Sexism

The depiction of Africans in *King Solomon’s Mines* has rightly attracted much condemnation in recent years. At the start of the book, Quatermain announces that he doesn’t like calling natives by the term that today has become known as “the n-word” and yet he abundantly uses another term, *kafir*, which in South Africa is hardly less offensive (p. 11). The villainous king Twala is introduced as having “the most entirely repulsive countenance we had ever beheld. The lips were as thick as a negro’s, the nose was flat, it had but one gleaming black eye ... and its whole expression was cruel and sensual to a degree” (p. 96).

It is true that Quatermain says some Africans are gentlemen, while some “mean whites with lots of money” are not (p. 10). Still, the book contains some mean-spirited jokes against Africans, such as when some natives sample champagne belonging to their employers and Quatermain tells them that it is medicine and they are “as good as dead men. They went on to the shore in a very great fright, and do not think that they will touch champagne again” (p. 27). Presumably this joke was intended as punishment for stealing champagne, but it seems unjustified all the same.

Africans are also the subject of some bluff, gross-out humor, such as the gratuitous account of a native whose toe amputation “was a pleasure to see,” followed by the “Kafir” asking after the operation for a white toe to be attached in place of the missing one (p. 33). Perhaps the most low-minded instance of racism in the book occurs when Umbopa, eventually revealed as exiled royal, whose real name is Ignosi, states that “black people” do not “hold life so high as [whites]” (p. 118). By having an African say this, Haggard lends extra authority to this dehumanizing notion. Similarly, the native maiden Foulata declares herself opposed to miscegenation: “Can the sun mate with the darkness, or the white with the black?” (p. 197). Putting racist sentiments in the mouths of African characters is a particularly insidious form of racist discourse.

Yet the nobility of Umbopa/Ignosi as depicted in *King Solomon's Mines* is undeniable. Haggard does not have a uniformly low opinion of Africans, at least not much lower than his view of humanity in general. Elephants stampeding during a hunt are described as pushing one another "in their self-panic, just like so many human beings" (p. 44). Haggard is suggesting that animals at their worst can be as bestial as humans. Africans who are spared the impediments of modern Western culture might be noble, but they can sometimes reveal character flaws as bad as Western man's.

Similarly, Quatermain's translations of what certain Africans say in the narrative reflect his view of Africa and Africans. Umbopa speaks of the mountains leading to the treasure as "a strange land then a land of witchcraft and beautiful things; a land of brave people, and of trees, and streams, and white mountains, and of a great white road" (p. 50). The noble Umbopa's prose cadences seem to prefigure the style of Ernest Hemingway. Yet elsewhere the ancient, evil African crone Gagoola intones "Blood! blood! blood! rivers of blood; blood everywhere ... Footsteps! footsteps! footsteps! the tread of the white man coming from afar" (p. 100). The thrice-repeated rhythmic incantations are comparable to the Civil War tune, "Tramp! Tramp! Tramp! The boys are marching," by George Frederick Root (1820-1895), as well as ballads by Haggard's friend Rudyard Kipling, like "Gunga Din": "It was 'Din! Din! Din! / 'Ere's a beggar with a bullet through 'is spleen.'"

Haggard applies European history—and not just English prosody—to Africa by having Captain Good, a friend of Sir Henry Curtis, refer to the murderous King Twala as "just like a black Madame Defarge" (p. 110). The French Revolutionary character Madame Defarge in Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) is ferociously vengeful and knits the names of her intended victims. Yet in *King Solomon's Mines* Quatermain and his party, not Africa and King Twala, are, in their plot to overthrow a cruel king, the real revolutionary participants. This curiously layered simile is typical of the complexity and contradictions of *King Solomon's Mines*.

Women too are treated roughly in *King Solomon's Mines*. Quatermain informs the reader almost casually that "women bring trouble as surely as the night follows the day" (p. 119). Shortly after this misogynistic statement, murder is described as a kind of symbolic rape, when the young maiden Foulata is threatened with ritual execution by a leering aggressor who taps his spear and cries, "She shrinks from the sight of my little plaything even before she has tasted it" (p. 121).

King Solomon's Mines reflects an awareness of what may be called the Eros of otherness. In a running gag repeated *ad nauseum*, Captain Good's bare white legs are the objects of admiration for Africans who "satisfy their aesthetic longings" (p. 127) by staring at them, as Quatermain puts it with heavy ironic humor. Descriptions of Kukuana women fall into racial stereotypes: "the lips are not unpleasantly thick as is the case in most African races" (p. 88). Umbopa is described as a "tall handsome-looking man, somewhere about thirty years of age, and very light-coloured for a Zulu" (p. 35). Haggard accepts the racist notion that lighter skin is handsomer than dark, and Africans are more beautiful when they look less African and more European in appearance.

Even beautiful Africans are not described in any great admiring detail. Umbopa gets only a passing reference about a period of famine during which he wore "a leather belt strapped so tight round his stomach ... that his waist looked like a girl's" (p. 67). This mild observation scarcely has the erotic charge of the words describing a dead athlete who wears a "garland briefer than a girl's" in A. E. Housman's "To An Athlete Dying Young," in his classic 1896 collection *A Shropshire Lad*. Some critics have written about homoerotic aspects of *King Solomon's Mines*, but in truth they are difficult to find.

Still, the descriptions of sexuality in *King Solomon's Mines* have attracted much critical comment. One critic even noted that H. Rider Haggard and Sigmund Freud were born in the same year, 1856. Thus, when Haggard is described by other critics as “pre-Freudian,” this is not strictly true. Extra-Freudian or Super-Freudian might be a more apt term, as Haggard's directness in sexual matters almost makes Freudian interpretation seem obsolete.

Instead of being buried in the unconscious, sexuality is right on the surface in Haggard's world, as the map leading to King Solomon's Mines, which names mountains known as Sheba's Breasts that are on the way to the treasure (p. 22). An accompanying text supposedly written in 1590 by the Portuguese adventurer José da Silvestra when he was “dying of hunger,” also refers to “the north side of the nipple of the southernmost of the two mountains I have named Sheba's Breasts” (p. 23). Da Silvestra adds that any future treasure seeker must “climb the snow of Sheba's left breast till he comes to the nipple” (p. 23). In Victorian England, where in sitting rooms, piano legs were prudishly covered by rugs and referred to coyly as “limbs,” this frank description of female body parts must have been powerful. The impact must have been something close to the impact on later generations of nude photographs of African women in *National Geographic* magazines. Elizabeth Bishop's poem “In the Waiting Room” describes a young girl sitting in a dentist's office circa 1918, waiting for her Aunt who is being treated. She looks at the photographs in a *National Geographic* magazine: “black, naked women with necks / wound round and round with wire / like the necks of light bulbs. / Their breasts were horrifying.” Likewise, Haggard's young readers, boys and girls both, were confronted by unexpected references to the unadorned female body in *King Solomon's Mines*.

Critical Reaction

King Solomon's Mines was an impressive popular success, with more than 30,000 copies sold in Britain in its first year of publication, 1885. Among its enthusiastic readers were the future American president Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), Britain's prime minister William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898), and a precocious English eleven-year-old, Winston Churchill (1874-1965). *King Solomon's Mines* also received generally glowing reviews. The poet and scholar Andrew Lang (1844-1912) in the *Saturday Review* praised Haggard's “very remarkable and uncommon powers of invention and the gift of ‘vision’.” Lang separated Haggard from the “hack book-makers for boys” who wrote books based on other books they had read, instead of real-life experience. However, the *London Church Quarterly Review* dissented, complaining about the narrative, which “trembles on the verge of sensuality” and contains “indiscriminate and individual slaughter, whole corpses and dismembered limbs, skulls and bones, duels and suicide, torture and treachery, witchcraft and madness.”

Some reviews of the American edition of the book, which appeared in 1886, were even more equivocal. *The Dial*, while appreciating the excitement of the tale, complained about the “crudeness of many of Mr. Haggard's sentences.” A Boston publication, *Literary World*, even made a punning reference to the novelist's name: “The book reeks with brutality and suffering, and enough to make the reader as haggard as its author.” Affectionate joshing and parodies by Haggard's friends and readers appeared as a sign of the book's striking novelty. The minor nineteenth-century poet James Kenneth Stephen (1859-1892) penned “To R. K.” some humorous doggerel that was published in the *Cambridge Review* and later collected in his *Lapsus Calami* (Cambridge: Macmillan and Bowyer, 1891):

When mankind shall be delivered

From the clash of magazines,
And the inkstand shall be shivered
Into countless smithereens:
When there stands a muzzled stripling,
Mute, beside a muzzled bore:
When the Rudyards cease from kipling
And the Haggards Ride no more.

Rudyard Kipling himself, a friend to both Haggard and Andrew Lang, also penned a humorous verse in 1889 in homage to them. As reprinted in *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling* (Vol. 1, 1872-1889, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990), Kipling's verse, written in the style of the American western author Bret Harte (1836-1902), conjured up the notion of a lecture tour that Haggard and Lang might one day make to the United States:

I reside at Table Mountain and my name is Truthful James
I am not versed in lecturin' or other sinful games.
You will please refrain from shooting while my simple lyre I twang
To the tale of Mister Haggard and his partner Mister Lang....
In the ears of Mister Haggard whom they hailed as Mister Lang
The societies of Boston ethnologically sang
And they spoke of creature-legends, and of totem, myth, and sign
And the stricter laws of Metre—Mister Haggard answered 'Nem.'

Sir Henry Chartres Biron (1863-1940) wrote a more ambitious, book-length parody, *King Solomon's Wives; or, The Phantom Mines*, under the pseudonym Hyder Ragged (London: Vizetelly and Company, 1887). The Hyder Ragged parody describes a trip across a desert and an encounter with King Twosh. *King Solomon's Treasures*, John De Morgan's American parody, also appeared in 1888 (New York: N. L. Munro). These and other parodies were reprinted in *King Solomon's Children* (New York: Arno Press, 1978). Their existence is evidence of the strong and immediate impact of *King Solomon's Mines* on readers on two continents and beyond.

After King Solomon's Mines

Haggard quickly found himself a genuine literary celebrity after the success of *King Solomon's Mines*. He hobnobbed with other literary personalities in London, attending tea parties and dinners at the home of the English poet, author, and critic Sir Edmund William Gosse (1849-1928). A preserved guest book attests that at one such gathering, Haggard rubbed elbows with such literary immortals as Thomas Hardy, Henry James, Walter Pater, and Robert Bridges. At another event at the Gosse home, Haggard was a guest alongside Sir Max Beerbohm, Aubrey Beardsley, and the painter Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema.

Haggard did not permit his renown to interfere with his productivity, and he churned out a series of bestsellers. A partial list of novels he subsequently published includes *She* (1887), *Jess* (1887), *Allan Quatermain* (1887), *A Tale of Three Lions* (1887), *Mr. Meeson's Will* (1888), *Maiwa's Revenge* (1888), *My Fellow Labourer and the Wreck of the Copeland* (1888), *Colonel Quaritch, V.C.* (1888), *Allan's Wife* (1889), *Beatrice* (1890), *Eric Brighteyes* (1891), *Nada the Lily* (1892), *Montezuma's Daughter* (1893), *The People of the Mist* (1894), *Joan Haste* (1895), *Heart of the World* (1895), *The*

Wizard (1896), *Doctor Thorne* (1898), *The Spring of Lion* (1899), *Lysbeth* (1901), *Pearl-Maid* (1903), *Stella Fregelius* (1904), *Ayesha: The Return of She* (1905), *Benita: An African Romance* (1906), *Fair Margaret* (1907), *The Ghost Kings* (1908), *The Yellow God* (1909), *The Lady Blossholme* (1909), and *Queen Sheba's Ring* (1909).

Despite his continued activity, Haggard's latter years were not joyful. His nine-year-old son Jock died in 1891, and Haggard's ensuing depression led to permanent respiratory and digestive problems. In his memoir *The Days of My Life* Haggard admitted that his best novels were "among the first dozen or so" he wrote between *King Solomon's Mines* and *Montezuma's Daughter*. Haggard ascribes the falling off in quality of his output to the shock of his son's death and his own subsequent bad health. "Although from necessity I went on with the writing of stories, and do so still, it has not been with the same zest. Active rather than imaginative life has appealed to me more."

Part of this active life was a careful study of farming conditions in Britain, which resulted in books like *A Farmer's Year* (1899) and *Rural England* (1902), as mentioned earlier. In 1902 Haggard was asked to become a commissioner for the British government and report on agricultural labor colonies that had been established in the United States. On his return from America and Canada, he began to concentrate on such agricultural issues as soil erosion. He experimented successfully on his own estate, Kessingland Grange, situated beside the North Sea. Joining the Royal Commission on Coastal Erosion and Afforestation, he was also active in helping the Salvation Army and its founder, General William Booth (1829-1912). Bad health after 1909 slowed him down, despite the honor of knighthood, bestowed in 1912 for services to the British Empire, rather than for literary achievement. A sense of duty made Haggard accept membership on a six-person Royal Commission to visit the various dominions of the British Empire. Starting in 1912, this commission's activities necessitated trips to Australia and Africa during which Haggard energetically gathered material for future books. As Haggard's biographer Morton Cohen aptly puts it, "His holidays were inspection tours of the world."

No sooner had Haggard returned to England than he leapt into action to support England's entry into World War I in 1914. During the war, he would travel again to South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. By the war's end his chronic bronchitis had developed into emphysema. By the mid-1920s he was fighting what he called in a diary entry "a losing battle with pain, weakness, and depression." Operated on for an abscess, he did not recover, and he died on May 14, 1925. His grave is in Ditchingham, a small town in Norfolk, England, where he has been honored with a street named after him, Rider Haggard Way. In St. Mary's Church, Ditchingham, a stained-glass window that pays tribute to Haggard includes images of his farm in South Africa and of the Egyptian pyramids. Carved in marble, above a vault containing his remains, are the words:

Here lie the ashes of Henry Rider Haggard
Knight Bachelor
Knight of the British Empire
Who with a Humble Heart strove to Serve his Country.

Later generations of readers have retained their affection for the author of *King Solomon's Mines*. *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1951), the noted British novelist Graham Greene (1904-1991) praises the "poetic elements" of Haggard's books, which, according to Greene "live today with undiminished vitality." The great British critic and literary historian George Saintsbury (1845-1933) ranked *King Solomon's Mines* alongside *Treasure Island* and

stated he wished he had written “the fight between Twala and Sir Henry.” Other adventure writers from Haggard’s era, including A. E. W. Mason, Stanley Mason, Anthony Hope-Hawkins, and H. E. Marriott-Watson are in the oubliettes of literary history, whereas Haggard’s best books have remained in print continuously since they first appeared.

King Solomon’s Mines has been translated into African languages (among its dozens of foreign editions). Its Portuguese translation was done by the eminent novelist and short-story writer José Maria Eça de Queirós (1845-1900). Eça de Queirós was no slouch—Émile Zola called him “greater than Flaubert”—and by translating Haggard into Portuguese in 1891 (as *As Minas de Salomão*), he added to the European prestige of the book. Perhaps most curiously, *King Solomon’s Mines* has been abridged and edited for wide use not just as a text for learning English as a foreign language in Africa, China, and elsewhere, but also for young readers.

Authors as diverse as C. S. Lewis, D. H. Lawrence, and Gilbert Murray fell under the spell of Haggard’s adventure stories. Today, the British writer John Mortimer continues to pay wry tribute to Haggard in the popular series of mystery stories featuring a British barrister, Rumpole of the Bailey. The aging Rumpole refers to his daunting wife with affectionate irony as “She Who Must Be Obeyed,” a takeoff of Haggard’s *She* novels. Despite the unamusing ways in which parts of Haggard’s books have dated, most readers still feel affection for *King Solomon’s Mines* and *She*.

Targets of Loathing

Haggard did not single out Africans for despising, according to the informative *Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire*, by Wendy R. Katz. His other novels and private writings also express disdain for “Jews, communists, trade unionists, Irish, Quebecois, and Indian nationalists.” Jews and Communists, according to Katz, were the special targets of Haggard’s loathing, far more than any other category of people, and as he aged, the intensity of his hatred increased. Although not present in *King Solomon’s Mines*, Jews are portrayed unattractively in *She*, *The World’s Desire*, *The People of the Mist*, and others among Haggard’s novels. In later private writings, Haggard blamed the Russian Revolution on Jews, and after the Romanov family was killed by the revolutionary forces, Haggard noted with extreme bigotry in his diary for 1920: “The tendency of the Jew to torture before he kills is a curious indication of his character which apparently has not varied since the days of Pontius Pilate” (Katz, 150). Katz concludes that Haggard was “an imperial propagandist, a man who made use of every opportunity to advance matters relating to Empire.... Through his fiction, the ideas and attitudes that accrue to imperialism were conveyed almost effortlessly to the largely uncritical and accepting reader.... His fiction, only superficially innocuous, contributed generously to the process of shaping the imperial mentality” (p. 153).

One of the advantages of historical hindsight is that we may read *King Solomon’s Mines* today as a period piece, with a conscious awareness of its imperialist messages. No matter how much Haggard may seem to be a critic of Victorian society, in many ways *King Solomon’s Mines* at its most sincere reinforces the deepest beliefs of its day. Thus, when Sir Henry offers to Umbopa a cherished creature without a trace of irony and it is wholly accepted by the noble African, the words seem to come from Haggard’s own heart:

“But there is no journey upon this earth that a man may not make if he sets his heart to it. There is nothing, Umbopa, that he cannot do,

there are no mountains he may not climb, there are no deserts he cannot cross ... if love leads him and he holds his life in his hand counting it as nothing, ready to keep it or to lose it as Providence may order” (p. 49).

In this declaration, Haggard is close to Baden-Powell’s exhortations in his scouting guide, as well as literary friends like the poet William Ernest Henley (1849-1903). Henley’s most famous poem “Invictus” (written in 1875), is a forthright assertion of Victorian self-possession: “It matters not how strait the gate, / How charged with punishments the scroll, / I am the master of my fate: / I am the captain of my soul.”

Unlike the reader of 1885, we do not need to accept the underlying political, social, gender, and racial theories of *King Solomon’s Mines* as self-evident. Bolstered with recent publications by such excellent researchers as Stephen Coan, Gerald Monsman, and James Danly, among others (see “Further Reading”), we may appreciate what is still effective and exciting in Haggard’s book, while discarding what is obsolete, or even potentially perilous.

Benjamin Ivry is the author of biographies of Arthur Rimbaud (Absolute Press), Francis Poulenc (Phaidon), and Maurice Ravel (Welcome Rain Publishers). His poetry collection *Paradise for the Portuguese Queen* (Orehises) appeared in 1998. He has also translated many books from the French by such authors as André Gide, Jules Verne, and Balthus.

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