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**H. RIDER
HAGGARD**

She



Introduction by Donald A. Wollheim **COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED**

152

SHE

H. RIDER HAGGARD



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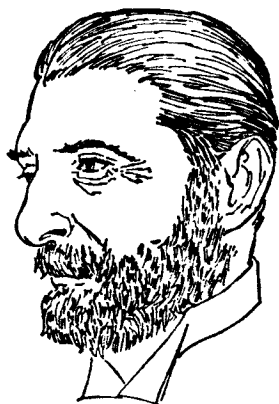
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H. RIDER HAGGARD

Introduction

“My empire is of the imagination,” says the white goddess of the lost city of Kôr at one point in this novel, and, so saying, sums up the primary element that has fascinated three generations of readers of H. Rider Haggard’s *She*. For *She* is a classic of the imagination, a milestone and foundation stone of a whole sector of fantastic novels upon which others have built and still build novels of wonder. The sector is that of the lost land, the lost race, the wonder that lies over the next mountain or beyond the farthest sea.

The empire of the imagination is a vast and boundless universe, but it has sectors that can be defined in general terms. There is, for example, the area of interplanetary adventure where scenes and events on unexplored worlds are described. There is the area of future civilizations, the plane of Utopias and nations-to-be and guesswork about where do we go from here. There is the area of other dimensions; the sector of microcosmic discovery; the ocean of undersea adventures; the archipelago of unusual inventions; and the wonderland of what-might-have-happened-if. But possibly one of the most deeply rooted in the human imagination is that of the lost race.

For lost lands and unknown peoples have tantalized humanity

since the first city arose out of the first men—for where there are men, there is wonder. And where there is a mountain, there is an eternal curiosity about what is on top of it and what lies on the other side. In the world of several thousand years ago, that world wherein all our cultures have their origins, men lived in narrow little communities and knew very little more than the names of their nearest neighbors. Travelers, for there have always been travelers, would come through now and then and spin wonderful stories of the other places they had been, tell of strange cities and unusual peoples. And so legendry arose and folklore and the desire to go and see these wonders that lay East of the Sun and West of the Moon.

The driving urge to explore did move men, and these tales played a strong part. So gradually the boundaries of the world were advanced and men learned more and more about their neighbors and about the actual world. Yet wherever they went, there was always another frontier, another land of mystery to be investigated. Such being the nature of men, there were always treasures to be sought, gold and diamonds and statuary, magical marvels, and, yes, even love to be found somewhere "back of beyond." Thus arose the legend of the lost city of gold whose ruler was a woman of supreme beauty, eternal youth, and impenetrable witchery.

This ancient vision which can be found in many a Greek and Roman legend, in many a tale from Ancient India or American Indian campfire, did not achieve its place in the columns of modern English literature until 1886, when H. Rider Haggard's novel *She* first appeared serially in a British magazine, and in 1887 in its first book edition. Why till then? Why, because everything has to start somewhere and even the imaginative novel as we know it today had its origins only in the last century. There had been many books of fantastic adventure and fantastic voyages over the previous centuries, but the shape and form of what we call "modern" novels did not truly take shape until the past hundred or so years.

The legend takes many forms according to the times. For our time, it was *She* that put the legend in its present perspective. As a result, *She* became the classic it has since remained. It is a novel that generation after generation has found unforgettable, and from which many other writers have since drawn inspiration.

It does not give anything away to say that *She* is the story of the quest by two Englishmen through unexplored Africa to seek a legendary lost city whose ruler was a white woman reputed to be both a witch and immortal. Africa in the Nineteenth Century was still the Dark Continent—that last great mass of the world to have unexplored pockets which defied the foot explorer, and races and tribes still uncharted and unconquered. The conquest of Africa was the big political arena of the now vanished empires of Europe—where Imperial Germany, Victoria's England, and Imperial-and-Republican France contended to plant their banners on new peaks and over alien peoples.

That Henry Rider Haggard should have been the one to write this classic would only have been natural, for he was among those young Englishmen who went to Africa during the height of those days of conquest and colonization. Born in 1856 in Norfolk, England, the son of a barrister, one of seven brothers, he did not get the advanced education necessary to qualify for a good position at home. Instead, at the age of nineteen, he became secretary to the Lieutenant Governor of Natal in South Africa. There he remained in various posts, and there he married, and it was not until the Boer Rebellion of 1881 that he returned home to England.

In those years, Haggard became well grounded in the lore and wonder of Africa, acquiring a great knowledge and deep appreciation for the native races and their lore and legendry. Quite widespread among the tribes were stories of witch queens and warrior-goddesses. One such source for *She* is the striking real-life parallel of a small tribe called the Lovedu in the Transvaal, whose ruler in 1880 and for years afterwards was a very light-skinned woman reputed to have great magical powers, who lived in seclusion and was served only by mute servants. Though Haggard never visited this tribe, he could not have helped hearing of it. In addition to that story, there was also the remarkable discovery in his time of the lost city of Zimbabwe—a vast series of ruins deep in the jungle of Rhodesia of whose history and builders nothing at all is known.

So that when Haggard, back in London, sitting around his law office with little to occupy his time, was in quest of a novel to write, it is not perhaps strange that these legends worked their spell on him. *She* was not his first novel—that was *King Solo-*

mon's Mines—but it was a close follow-up, and became a success equally as great as that other tale of unknown Africa.

H. Rider Haggard went on to write many more novels of the ancient past and of explorers who dared to traverse the unknown areas of Africa. The hero of his first novel, *Allen Quatermain*, was featured in a regular series of novels and became in his day almost as well-known as Tarzan was to become a third of a century later.

To me, it has always seemed that there have been three series which have embodied the lost-land-and-white-explorer theme which have amassed followers—and that these three series mark three different phases of the art of telling this kind of story. First, there was Haggard, whose novels show a very precise and accurate knowledge of real Africa and real Africans, who builds up his wonders with great persuasive and extensive detail so as to create a conviction of truth even among the most skeptical. Readers of the Nineteenth Century were less given to accepting miracles at face value than those of the Twentieth.

Those raised originally on Haggard tend to scoff at the novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs, who also took Africa for his province of wonders, beginning in 1914 with *Tarzan of the Apes*, and following this with a string of novels which made Tarzan a word known everywhere. I have found that those who started by reading Burroughs do not take happily to Haggard, for Burroughs' Africa was created primarily out of his own imagination; his natives are more stereotypes than actualities, and he made only the slightest efforts to establish the background for his lost cities and forgotten races. Once used to Burroughs' fast-moving and vivid storytelling, the older master's work seems almost too weighty. Yet after Burroughs, there was a period in which a ghastly series called *Bomba the Jungle Boy*, written by a pseudonymous author called "Roy Rockwood," was popular and sold in the millions of copies. I have met some unfortunates who had been weaned on Bomba—and these readers had trouble enjoying Burroughs—and Haggard would be altogether impossible for them.

Such is the sequence, with *She* the first and foremost of these novels. She-who-must-be-obeyed, the immortal white queen of a lost city, is possibly Haggard's greatest creation. Her origins lie in mythology, but what was their significance for Haggard

himself? In his biography, he speaks of a particularly hideous rag doll hidden in a closet with which a nursemaid used to threaten him when he was a very small boy. Young Henry used to call this terror-doll *She-who must-be-obeyed!* Perhaps it was from that almost forgotten memory of his childhood that he dredged the phrase when he was writing *She* in a heat of inspiration that took only six weeks from start to finish. But this is too simple, for Ayesha, the *She* of the novel, is no hideous and frightening creature; rather, she is a marvel of matchless beauty, a thing of untold powers, immortal, and not to be touched.

One could delve into psychology and come up with an obvious answer. Who is the "she who must be obeyed" in the life of every small child? Why, it is the image of the mother. Is not one's mother always supremely beautiful to the eyes of the babe? And is she surely not always immortal, always present, and is she not also all powerful, the source of witchery, and is she not one that must be obeyed?

Perhaps this is the true source for the tremendous appeal of *She-who-must-be-obeyed*. It arouses the deepest instincts of every man's lost infancy. It moves one to the quest for the return of that vanished image—for as one grows up, does not this image indeed recede, does Mother not assume a more mortal, a more fallible shape, and finally *age*?

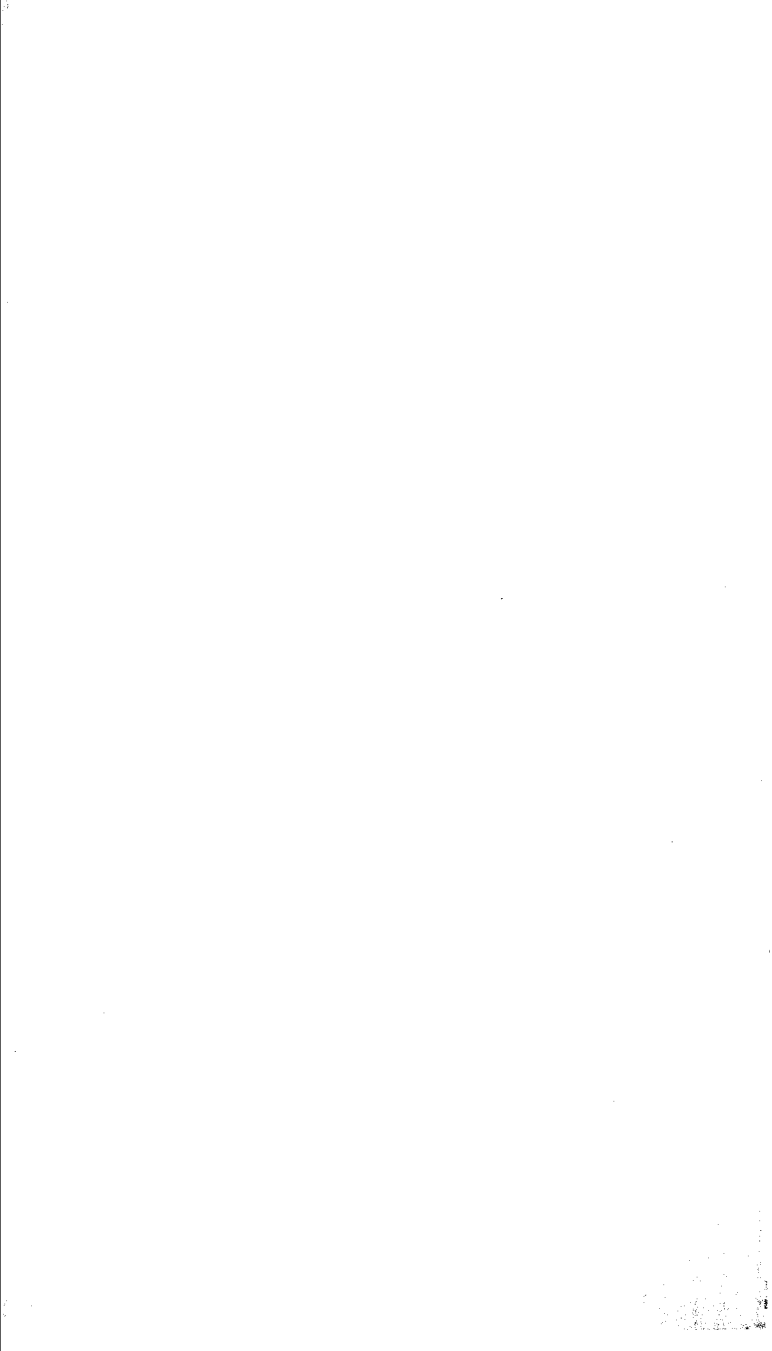
Many have been the books which have presented the vision of this lost glorious immortal queen, books which have followed Haggard's. One thinks of such titles as Pierre Benoit's *Atlantida*, of Mabel Fuller Blodgett's *At the Queen's Mercy*, whose African explorers found such a queen, named La, ruling over a tribe of blacks, or of Burroughs' *The Return of Tarzan* which introduced a similarly named La, High Priestess of the lost city of Opar. Then there was *The Crystal Sceptre* of Philip Verrill Mighels in 1901, and novels by A. Hyatt Verrill a few score years later with similar maidens. Sax Rohmer with *She Who Sleeps* and James Hilton with *Lost Horizon* carry on the *She* legend. In A. Merritt's novels we find this also, with his witch-women Yolara, Adana, and Norhala. One could compose a long list of the stories and books which have carried Haggard's theme in a multitude of incarnations.

Henry Rider Haggard was knighted for his work on humanitarian subjects, but he will be remembered for his fiction. He

was to write fifty-eight novels up to the time of his death in 1925, but it is for *She* and for *King Solomon's Mines* that he will remain among the immortal knights of that infinite realm claimed by Ayesha when she exclaimed, "My empire is of the imagination." Yes, indeed it is, and to travel within its border is to travel among marvels.

DONALD A. WOLLHEIM

SHE



Introduction

In giving to the world the record of what, considered as an adventure only, is, I suppose one of the most wonderful and mysterious experiences ever undergone by mortal men, I feel it incumbent on me to explain my exact connection with it. So I will say at once that I am not the narrator but only the editor of this extraordinary history, and then go on to tell how it found its way into my hands.

Some years ago I, the editor, was stopping with a friend, '*vir doctissimus et amicus meus*,' at a certain University, which for the purposes of this history we will call Cambridge, and one day was impressed with the appearance of two persons whom I saw walking arm-in-arm down the street. One of these gentlemen was, I think without exception, the handsomest young fellow I have ever seen. He was very tall, very broad, and had a look of power and a grace of bearing that seemed as native to him as to a wild stag. In addition his face was almost without flaw—a good face as well as a beautiful one, and when he lifted his hat, which he did just then to a passing lady, I saw that his head was covered with little golden curls growing close to the scalp.

"Do you see that man?" I said to my friend, with whom I was walking; "why, he looks like a statue of Apollo come to life. What a splendid fellow he is!"

"Yes," he answered, "he is the handsomest man in the University, and one of the nicest too. They call him 'the Greek god.' But look at the other one; he is Vincey's (that's the god's name) guardian, and supposed to be full of every kind of information. They call him 'Charon,' either because of his forbidding appearance or because he has ferried his ward across the deep waters of examination—I don't know which."

I looked, and found the older man quite as interesting in his way as the glorified specimen of humanity at his side. He appeared to be about forty years of age, and I think was as ugly as his companion was handsome. To begin with, he was short, rather bow-legged, very deep chested, and with unusually long

arms. He had dark hair and small eyes, and the hair grew down on his forehead, and his whiskers grew quite up to his hair, so that there was uncommonly little of his countenance to be seen. Altogether he reminded me forcibly of a gorilla, and yet there was something very pleasing and genial about the man's eye. I remember saying that I should like to know him.

"All right," answered my friend, "nothing easier. I know Vincey; I'll introduce you," and he did, and for some minutes we stood chatting—about the Zulu people, I think, for I had just returned from the Cape at the time. Presently, however, a stout lady, whose name I do not remember, came along the pavement, accompanied by a pretty fair-haired girl, and Mr. Vincey, who clearly knew them well, at once joined these two, walking off in their company. I remember being rather amused by the change in the expression of the elder man, whose name I discovered was Holly, when he saw the ladies advancing. Suddenly he stopped short in his talk, cast a reproachful look at his companion, and, with an abrupt nod to myself, turned and marched off alone across the street. I heard afterwards that he was popularly supposed to be as much afraid of a woman as most people are of a mad dog, which accounted for his precipitate retreat. I cannot say, however, that young Vincey showed much aversion to feminine society on this occasion. Indeed I remember laughing, and remarking to my friend at the time that he was not the sort of man whom it would be desirable to introduce to the lady one was going to marry, since it was exceedingly probable that the acquaintance would end in a transfer of her affections. He was altogether too good-looking, and, what is more, he had none of that self-consciousness and conceit about him which usually afflicts handsome men, and makes them deservedly disliked by their fellows.

That same evening my visit came to an end, and this was the last I saw or heard of 'Charon' and 'the Greek god' for many a long day. Indeed, I have never seen either of them from that hour to this, and do not think it probable that I shall. But a month ago I received a letter and two packets, one of manuscript, and on opening the former found that it was signed by 'Horace Holly,' a name which at the moment was not familiar to me. It ran as follows:—

—"College, Cambridge, May 1, 18—

"MY DEAR SIR,—You will be surprised, considering the very slight nature of our acquaintance, to get a letter from me. Indeed, I think I had better begin by reminding you that we once met, now several years ago, when I and my ward Leo Vincey

were introduced to you in the street at Cambridge. To be brief and come to my business. I have recently read with much interest a book of yours describing a Central African adventure. I take it that this book is partly true, and partly an effort of the imagination. However this may be, it has given me an idea. It happens, how you will see in the accompanying manuscript (which together with the Scarab, the 'Royal Son of the Sun,' and the original sherd, I am sending to you by hand), that my ward, or rather my adopted son Leo Vincey, and myself have recently passed through a real African adventure, of a nature so much more marvellous than the one which you describe, that to tell the truth I am almost ashamed to submit it to you lest you should disbelieve my tale. You will see it stated in this manuscript that I, or rather we, had made up our minds not to make this history public during our joint lives. Nor should we alter our determination were it not for a circumstance which has recently arisen. For reasons that, after perusing this manuscript, you may be able to guess, we are going away again, this time to Central Asia, where, if anywhere upon this earth wisdom is to be found, and we anticipate that our sojourn there will be a long one. Possibly we shall not return. Under these altered conditions it has become a question whether we are justified in withholding from the world an account of a phenomenon which we believe to be of unparalleled interest, merely because our private life is involved, or because we are afraid of ridicule and doubt being cast upon our statements. I hold one view about this matter, and Leo holds another, and finally, after much discussion, we have come to a compromise, namely, to send the history to you, giving you full leave to publish it if you think fit, the only stipulation being that you shall disguise our real names, and as much concerning our personal identity as is consistent with the maintenance of the *bona fides* of the narrative.

"And now what am I to say further? I really do not know, beyond once more repeating that everything is described in the accompanying manuscript exactly as it happened. As regards *She* herself, I have nothing to add. Day by day we have greater occasion to regret that we did not better avail ourselves of our opportunities to obtain more information from that marvellous woman. Who was she? How did she first come to the Caves of Kôr, and what was her real religion? We never ascertained, and now, alas! we never shall, at least not yet. These and many other questions arise in my mind, but what is the good of asking them now?

"Will you undertake the task? We give you complete free-

dom, and as a reward you will, we believe, have the credit of presenting to the world the most wonderful history, as distinguished from romance, that its records can show. Read the manuscript (which I have copied out fairly for your benefit), and let me know.

"Believe me, very truly yours,

"L. HORACE HOLLY.¹

"P.S.—Of course, if any profit results from the sale of the writing, should you care to undertake its publication, you can do what you like with it; but if there is a loss I will leave instructions with my lawyers, Messrs. Geoffrey and Jordan, to meet it. We entrust the sherd, the scarab, and the parchments to your keeping, till such time as we demand them back again.—L. H. H."

This letter, as may be imagined, astonished me considerably; but when I came to look at the MS., which the pressure of other work prevented me from doing for a fortnight, I was still more astonished, as I think the reader will be also, and at once made up my mind to press on with the matter. I wrote to this effect to Mr. Holly, but a week afterwards I received a letter from that gentleman's lawyers, returning my own, with the information that their client and Mr. Leo Vincey had already left this country for Thibet, and they did not at present know their address.

Well, that is all I have to say. Of the history itself the reader must judge. I give it to him, with the exception of a very few alterations, made with the object of concealing the identity of the actors from the general public, exactly as it has come to me. Personally I have made up my mind to refrain from comments. At first I was inclined to believe that this history of a woman, clothed in the majesty of her almost endless years, on whom the shadow of Eternity itself lay like the dark wing of Night, was some gigantic allegory of which I could not catch the meaning. Then I thought that it might be a bold attempt to portray the possible results of practical immortality, informing the substance of a mortal who yet drew her strength from Earth, and in whose human bosom passions yet rose and fell and beat as in the undying world around her the winds and the tides rise and fall and beat unceasingly. But as I read on I abandoned that idea also. To me the story seems to bear the stamp of truth upon its face. Its explanation I must leave to others.

¹ This name is varied here and throughout in accordance with the writer's request.—EDITOR.