

# H. Rider Haggard

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

## Sir H. Rider Haggard



<b>Born</b>	22 June 1856 Bradenham, Norfolk, England
<b>Died</b>	14 May 1925 (aged 68) London, England
<b>Occupation</b>	Novelist, scholar
<b>Nationality</b>	British
<b>Period</b>	19th & 20th century
<b>Genres</b>	Adventure, fantasy, fables, romance, sci-fi, historical
<b>Subjects</b>	Africa
<b>Notable work(s)</b>	<i>King Solomon's Mines</i> , <i>Allan Quatermain Series</i> , <i>She: A History of Adventure</i>

---

Signature



---

**Sir Henry Rider Haggard**, KBE (22 June 1856 – 14 May 1925) was an English writer of adventure novels set in exotic locations, predominantly Africa, and a founder of the Lost World literary genre. He was also involved in agricultural reform throughout the British Empire. His stories, situated at the lighter end of Victorian literature, continue to be popular and influential.

## Biography

### Early years

Henry Rider Haggard, generally known as H. Rider Haggard or Rider Haggard, came from a line of Danish descent and was born at Bradenham, Norfolk, the eighth of ten children, to Sir William Meybohm Rider Haggard, a barrister, and Ella Doveton, an author and poet. He was initially sent to

Garsington Rectory in Oxfordshire to study under Reverend H. J. Graham, but unlike his older brothers who graduated from various private schools, he attended Ipswich Grammar School. This was because his father, who perhaps regarded him as somebody who was not going to amount to much, could no longer afford to maintain his expensive private education. After failing his army entrance exam, he was sent to a private crammer in London to prepare for the entrance exam for the British Foreign Office, for which he never sat. During his two years in London he came into contact with people interested in the study of psychical phenomena.

## South Africa, 1875–1882



 Portrait of H. Rider Haggard c. 1902

In 1875, Haggard's father sent him to what is now South Africa to take up an unpaid position as assistant to the secretary to Sir Henry Bulwer, Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Natal. In 1876 he was transferred to the staff of Sir Theophilus Shepstone, Special Commissioner for the Transvaal. It was in this role that Haggard was present in Pretoria in April 1877 for the official announcement of the British annexation of the Boer Republic of the Transvaal. Indeed, Haggard raised the Union flag and read out much of the proclamation following the loss of voice of the official originally entrusted with the duty.

At about that time, Haggard fell in love with Mary Elizabeth "Lilly" Jackson, whom he intended to marry once he obtained paid employment in Africa. In 1878 he became Registrar of the High Court in the Transvaal, and wrote to his father informing him that he intended to return to England and marry her. His father forbade it until Haggard had made a career for himself and by 1879 Jackson had married Frank Archer, a well-to-do banker. When Haggard eventually returned to England, he married a friend of his sister, (Mariana) Louisa Margitson in 1880, and the couple travelled to Africa together. They had a son named Jack (who died of measles at age 10) and three daughters, Angela, Dorothy and Liliias. Liliias became an author, edited *The Rabbit Skin Cap* and *I Walked By Night*, and wrote a biography of her father entitled *The Cloak That I Left* (published in 1951).

## Haggard in England, 1882–1925

Moving back to England in 1882, the couple settled in Ditchingham, Norfolk, Louisa's ancestral home. Later they lived in Kessingland and had connections with the church in Bungay, Suffolk. Haggard turned to the study of law and was called to the bar in 1884. His practice of law was desultory and much of his time was taken up by the writing of novels which he saw as being more profitable. Haggard lived at 69 Gunterstone Road in Hammersmith, London, from mid-1885 to circa April 1888. It was at this Hammersmith address that he completed *King Solomon's Mines* (published

September 1885). Heavily influenced by the larger-than-life adventurers he met in Colonial Africa (most notably Frederick Selous and Frederick Russell Burnham), the great mineral wealth discovered in Africa, and the ruins of ancient lost civilisations of the continent, such as Great Zimbabwe, Haggard created his Allan Quatermain adventures. Three of his books, *The Wizard* (1896), *Elissa; the Doom of Zimbabwe* (1899), and *Black Heart and White Heart; a Zulu Idyll* (1900), are dedicated to Burnham's daughter, Nada, the first white child born in Bulawayo; she had been named after Haggard's 1892 book *Nada the Lily*. Haggard belonged to the Athenaeum, Savile, and Authors' clubs.<sup>[13]</sup>

## Aid for Lilly Archer



H. Rider Haggard at the end of his days (undated picture)

Years later, when Haggard was a successful novelist, he was contacted by his former love, Lilly Archer, née Jackson. She had been deserted by her husband, who had embezzled funds entrusted to him and he had fled, bankrupt, to Africa. Haggard installed her and her sons in a house and saw to the children's education. Lilly eventually followed her husband to Africa, where he infected her with syphilis before dying of it himself. Lilly returned to England in late 1907, where Haggard again supported her until her death on 22 April 1909. These details were not generally known until the publication of Haggard's 1981 biography by Sydney Higgins.

## Public affairs and honours

Haggard was heavily involved in reforming agriculture and was a member of many commissions on land use and related affairs, work that involved several trips to the Colonies and Dominions. It eventually led to the passage of the 1909 Development Bill.

He stood unsuccessfully for Parliament as a Conservative candidate for the Eastern division of Norfolk in the 1895 summer election, losing by only 198 votes. He was made a Knight Bachelor in 1912 and a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1919.

The locality of Rider, British Columbia, was named after him.

## Death

He died on 14 May 1925 at age 68. His ashes were buried at Ditchingham Church. His papers are held at the Norfolk Record Office.

## Writing career

After returning to England in 1882, Haggard published a book on the political situation in South Africa and handful of unsuccessful novels before writing the book for which he is most famous, *King Solomon's Mines*. He accepted a 10% royalty rather than £100 for the copyright.

A sequel, *Allan Quatermain*, soon followed, and *She* and its sequel *Ayesha*, swashbuckling adventure novels set in the context of the Scramble for Africa (the action of *Ayesha* however happens in Tibet). The hugely popular *King Solomon's Mines* is sometimes considered the first of the Lost World genre. *She* is generally considered to be one of the classics of imaginative literature and with 83 million copies sold by 1965, it is one of the best-selling books of all time. He is also remembered for *Nada the Lily* (a tale of adventure among the Zulus) and the epic Viking romance, *Eric Brighteyes*.

While his novels portray many of the stereotypes associated with colonialism, they are unusual for the degree of sympathy with which the native populations are portrayed. Africans often play heroic roles in the novels, although the protagonists are typically, though not invariably, European. Notable examples are the heroic Zulu warrior Umslopogaas and Ignosi, the rightful king of Kukuanaaland, in *King Solomon's Mines*. Having developed an intense mutual friendship with the three Englishmen who help him regain his throne, he accepts their advice and abolishes witch-hunts and arbitrary capital punishment. Three of Haggard's novels were written in collaboration with his friend Andrew Lang who shared his interest in the spiritual realm and paranormal phenomena.

Haggard also wrote about agricultural and social reform, in part inspired by his experiences in Africa, but also based on what he saw in Europe. At the end of his life he was a staunch opponent of Bolshevism, a position he shared with his friend Rudyard Kipling. The two had bonded upon Kipling's arrival at London in 1889 largely on the strength of their shared opinions, and the two remained lifelong friends.