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H. Rider Haggard

**SHE**

A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

Read by **Bill Homewood**



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<b>1</b>	<b>She by H. Rider Haggard – Introduction</b>	4:57
<b>2</b>	That same evening my visit came to an end...	5:22
<b>3</b>	This letter, as may be imagined...	4:39
<b>4</b>	<b>I – My Visitor</b>	5:10
<b>5</b>	A tall man of about thirty...	7:59
<b>6</b>	He paused a while, his head sunk upon his hand...	5:07
<b>7</b>	‘There,’ he said, ‘I must go...’	4:39
<b>8</b>	<b>II – The Years Roll By</b>	4:44
<b>9</b>	I put down the letter...	5:05
<b>10</b>	In a very little while...	5:21
<b>11</b>	<b>III – The Sherd of Amenartas</b>	4:42
<b>12</b>	Job and Leo bent forward in breathless silence.	5:12
<b>13</b>	‘That is all,’ I said.	5:11
<b>14</b>	‘Of the adventures that befell me...’	5:00
<b>15</b>	‘Well, let’s see what the potsherd has to say...’	5:04
<b>16</b>	Besides the uncial writing on the convex side...	5:17
<b>17</b>	A few of the Roman names...	4:47
<b>18</b>	Then came the last entry...	4:42
<b>19</b>	‘How do you account for what my father saw...’	5:16
<b>20</b>	<b>IV – The Squall</b>	5:55

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21	'Well, Job,' I said...	6:00
22	'Bail out! bail out!' shouted Job...	5:55
23	Another minute, and with a sort of howl...	5:35
24	<b>V – The Head of the Ethiopian</b>	5:19
25	The river mouth which we were entering...	6:22
26	'Well, what is to be done now?' I asked...	5:38
27	He lifted the rifle...	5:17
28	I do not quite know what it is that made me...	5:03
29	<b>VI – An Early Christian Ceremony</b>	7:41
30	I do not know that there is any necessity...	6:00
31	The man advanced, and the tall shadowy form...	5:47
32	'Art thou awake, stranger?' he said...	5:50
33	On looking round we discovered...	5:59
34	<b>VII – Ustane Sings</b>	5:32
35	When he had gone we discussed the situation...	5:52
36	Taking the hint, we got up and went down to the stream...	6:04
37	They had a Queen, however. <i>She</i> was their Queen...	4:49
38	We three and Ustane were sitting round a fire...	6:47
39	<b>VIII – The Feast, and After!</b>	6:27
40	This is a digression at a critical moment...	5:48

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41	I sprang to my feet with a yell of horror...	5:48
42	Then it was that the two others sprang upon me.	5:26
43	<b>IX – A Little Foot</b>	5:19
44	‘Ah,’ he went on, ‘it was a gallant fight that ye fought...’	5:21
45	The morning came at last...	6:34
46	I looked up doubtfully...	6:12
47	<b>X – Speculations</b>	7:55
48	On we went through it all, till at last the sun sank...	4:50
49	Above me, as I lay, shone the eternal stars...	3:58
50	Then I fell to reflecting upon the undertaking...	6:16
51	Presently, as we blundered and floundered along...	4:59
52	<b>XI – The Plain of Kôr</b>	4:21
53	‘Behold the house of “ <i>She-who-must-be-obeyed</i> ”!’	4:42
54	By now we were well on to the great plain...	5:23
55	At last we reached the face of the precipice itself...	5:03
56	As I anticipated, we had passed...	7:13
57	<b>XII – ‘She’</b>	5:36
58	The first picture represented his death.	6:34
59	We passed down the passage...	5:30
60	Painfully and slowly old Billali crept up...	6:51

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61	'Why art thou so frightened, stranger?'	7:13
62	<b>XIII – Ayesha Unveils</b>	6:58
63	'So! The Hebrews, are they yet at Jerusalem?...'	6:07
64	'Oh man!' she said at last...	7:33
65	'Dost thou wonder how I knew that ye were coming...'	7:22
66	'Hast thou aught to ask me before thou goest...'	3:49
67	She lifted her white and rounded arms...	4:25
68	Drawn by some magnetic force which I could not resist...	5:27
69	<b>XIV – A Soul in Hell</b>	6:12
70	Next I bethought me that I had not been...	5:59
71	I was at the curtains, and they did not hang close...	7:04
72	But at length she seemed to wear herself out...	6:15
73	<b>XV – Ayesha Gives Judgment</b>	6:08
74	After I had dressed myself...	6:21
75	Then came a silence.	6:15
76	'Dogs and serpents,' She began in a low voice...	7:39
77	<b>XVI – The Tombs of Kôr</b>	6:28
78	'I, Junis, a priest of the Great Temple of Kôr...'	6:26
79	Accordingly I followed her to a side passage...	6:40
80	We left the place and entered others.	7:05

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81	'Behold the lot of man,' said the veiled Ayesha...	6:12
82	<b>XVII – The Balance Turns</b>	5:59
83	'So, my Holly, sit there where thou canst see me...'	7:04
84	I rose, and sank on the cushioned couch beside her...	6:15
85	'Well, my Holly,' she continued...	6:08
86	'Thou comest in a good time, Ayesha,' I said...	6:21
87	One thing, however, was certain...	6:15
88	<b>XVIII - 'Go, Woman!'</b>	7:39
89	I felt it was hopeless to argue...	6:28
90	'Who is this man?' she said, pointing...	6:26
91	That night I passed in Leo's room...	6:40
92	On the following day Leo got up...	7:05
93	<b>XIX – 'Give me a Black Goat!'</b>	7:24
94	After about an hour of this amusement...	6:14
95	'I promised thee a strange sight, my Holly,' laughed Ayesha...	5:34
96	I thought that the entertainment was now over...	5:20
97	<b>XX – Triumph</b>	7:09
98	Here Ayesha half rose from her couch...	6:45
99	'I am not Kallikrates, and, as for being thy lord...'	6:52
100	Suddenly, with a snake-like motion...	5:15

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101	Then, turning to Leo, and laying her hand...	3:08
102	She paused in her strange and most thrilling allegorical chant...	6:46
103	<b>XXI – The Dead and Living Meet</b>	7:34
104	I turned to see what effect was produced upon Leo...	7:20
105	As we passed to our own apartment...	4:28
106	No doubt she was a wicked person...	4:20
107	<b>XXII – Job has a Presentiment</b>	6:13
108	‘Come, come, Job,’ I said seriously...	6:41
109	‘And thou, too, oh Holly...’	6:31
110	‘Thou lookest high,’ answered Ayesha...	6:40
111	‘Rise, Ayesha,’ he said sadly...	7:13
112	<b>XXIII – The Temple of Truth</b>	6:59
113	In connection with the extraordinary state of preservation...	4:54
114	‘There was a spot here, Kallikrates,’ she said to Leo...	7:16
115	‘Come,’ said Ayesha, after we had gazed and gazed...	7:12
116	<b>XXIV – Walking the Plank</b>	7:30
117	‘Goodness me, Leo,’ I said...	5:24
118	‘Here must we pass,’ said Ayesha.	4:41
119	‘We must wait awhile,’ called Ayesha...	5:07
120	This settled me...	4:58

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121	<b>XXV – The Spirit of Life</b>	6:57
122	'And I returned, having learned from him...'	7:01
123	'Such is the tale, my love...'	7:14
124	'I swear, even in this most holy hour...'	7:36
125	For a long period we travelled on thus...	5:59
126	We reached the head of the cave...	7:31
127	<b>XXVI – What We Saw</b>	6:59
128	'Oh, <i>look!</i> – <i>look!</i> – <i>look!</i> ' shrieked Job...	6:33
129	But who can tell what had happened?	6:39
130	'Let's see it come once more,' said Leo...	7:50
131	<b>XXVII – We Leap</b>	7:39
132	Shortly after this, suddenly...	7:04
133	Clearly all that we could do was to trust...	6:31
134	<b>XXVIII – Over the Mountain</b>	5:11
135	'Billali,' I said, 'once, thou knowest, I did save thy life...'	6:36
136	'Farewell, my son the Baboon,' he said...	7:51

**Total time: 13:45:48**

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## H. Rider Haggard

(1856–1925)

# SHE

## A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

Those who have read or listened to Sir Henry Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* will have felt the emptiness one always feels at the end of a good book – not simply at the sudden loss of a good read, something to while away the time, but rather a kind of bereavement, having spent so many hours in the company of compelling characters. Our narrator, the hunter Alan Quartermain, has become a close friend by the end of the story, having shared with us his heart, as well as his deeds. At the end, of course, we are also suddenly deprived of Africa – Rider Haggard's Africa – an Africa of magic, mystery and adventure, of wild animals and lost tribes, of Nature at her most red in tooth and claw.

In *She* we are invited once again to escape into this world, and within five

pages are willingly packing our bags to travel with the indomitable Mr Holly, to follow a trail of clues and half-legends, to be shipwrecked, to travel on foot through some of the most forbidding terrain on the planet, to witness cruel torture and death, to be attacked and captured, and, probably breathless with terror, to meet the beautiful semi-goddess Ayesha, the *She* of the title, richly portrayed as a sort of cross between The Queen of Sheba and Medusa. She presents herself exotically:

*'...Arabian am I by birth, even "al Arab al Ariba" (an Arab of the Arabs), and of the race of our father Yarab, the son of Kahtan, for in that fair and ancient city Ozal was I born, in the province of Yaman the Happy...'*

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Sir Henry Rider Haggard draws liberally on ancient history and legend for the background. His narrator, Ludwig Horace Holly, is an academic and putative Fellow of a Cambridge University college, who presents the tale as a memoir for publication. The story itself is thrilling and rolls along at high speed, often going from triumph to catastrophe in a page. Where the tale steps into areas of superstition or flirts with the paranormal, Holly mitigates any improbability with the insertion of scholarly asides. E.g. the following footnote: 'The Kallikrates here referred to by my friend was a Spartan, spoken of by Herodotus (Herod. ix. 72) as being remarkable for his beauty. He fell at the glorious battle of Plataea (September 22, B.C. 479), when the Lacedaemonians and Athenians under Pausanias routed the Persians, putting nearly 300,000 of them to the sword...' Holly has been drawn into the African adventure when he finds himself the guardian of the son of a friend, who, it transpires, bears a striking resemblance to this Kallikrates.

In his *The Da Vinci Code*, and in subsequent books, author Dan Brown

makes extensive use of cryptic visual and literary clues to lure the reader in as detective. In *She*, written over a century earlier, the chase is doubly exciting because we are allowed to interpret these and yet be suspicious of them, as Holly himself is. He remains firmly unconvinced that humanity may have as-yet-untapped powers of longevity, until events lead him to question this:

*a veiled form was always hovering, which, from time to time, seemed to draw the coverings from its body, revealing now the shape of a lovely blooming woman, and now again the white bones of a grinning skeleton, and which, as it veiled and unveiled, uttered the mysterious and apparently meaningless sentence: '... in the Circle of the Spirit life is naught and death is naught. Yea, all things live for ever, though at times they sleep and are forgotten.'*

The style is always elegant, and often poetic:

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*the moon went down in chastened loveliness, she departed like some sweet bride into her chamber, and long veil-like shadows crept up the sky through which the stars peeped shyly out. Soon, however, they too began to pale before a splendour in the east, and then the quivering footsteps of the dawn came rushing across the newborn blue, and shook the planets from their places...*

Sometimes the style is elegiac and philosophical:

*The sun that rose today for us had set last night for eighteen of our fellow-voyagers!... But one day a sunrise will come when we shall be among those who are lost, and then others will watch those glorious rays, and grow sad in the midst of beauty, and dream of Death in the full glow of arising Life! For this is the lot of man.*

As in *King Solomon's Mines*, Haggard is perfunctory in his descriptions of animal

deaths. However, when it comes to humans, Haggard spares us very little detail, though Holly's self-deprecation at times rescues us from the horror:

*Lying on my back there, so that their bodies might protect me from spear thrusts from above, I slowly crushed the life out of them, and as I did so, strange as it may seem, I thought of what the amiable Head of my College at Cambridge (who is a member of the Peace Society) and my brother Fellows would say if by clairvoyance they could see me, of all men, playing such a bloody game.*

The comical, anachronistic references to home may make us laugh, but they add to the tension. On encountering his first cannibal, Holly is outraged:

*'In our country we entertain a stranger, and give him food to eat. Here, ye eat him, and are entertained.' 'It is a custom,' he answered, with a shrug, '...but then... I do not like the taste of strangers, especially after*

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*they have wandered through the swamps and lived on wild-fowl.'*

Rider Haggard was a contemporary of H.G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling and Robert Louis Stevenson, and his novels take us to exotic places, like those of Kipling and Stevenson; but he shares a love of mystery, of 'other-worldliness', with Wells. In the 19th century *She* would certainly not have been described as 'A book for boys' – Haggard's own description of *King Solomon's Mines*. Haggard is expert at portraying the sensual and the erotic without crude strokes of the pen; and he is never coy, always honest, bold and painterly:

*ankles more perfect than ever sculptor dreamed of ...I might talk of the great changing eyes of deepest, softest black, of the tinted face, of the broad and noble brow... a godlike stamp of softened power, which shone upon that radiant countenance like a living halo...*

The complete unveiling of Ayesha is one

of the most erotic passages in English literature. Ayesha represents the timeless object of male erotic longing, and yet is never submissive, coy or artfully seductive; she is absolutely dominant. Her other name is *She-who-must-be-obeyed*.

It would not be a fruitless exercise to analyse this in the light of the sexual politics of Victorian, and even early 20th-century, England. In the character of Holly we have a man who, by his own admission, is 'branded by Nature with the stamp of abnormal ugliness...' This man never hopes to experience reciprocal love, and yet is allowed intimate time with the goddess. The episode is moving because – such is Haggard's skill – we admire Ludwig Horace Holly for his courage, his candour and his humility, and he deserves to be loved. By the end of the book, Ludwig Horace Holly, now a Fellow of his Cambridge college, seems to us a great man, and our friend.



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Henry Rider Haggard was born in 1856. His mother was an amateur novelist and his father a barrister and country gentleman. Henry was sent to Ipswich Grammar School, before taking a post in South Africa as secretary to Sir Henry Bulwer, Governor of Natal. At the age of 22 he was appointed Registrar of the Natal High Court, at which time he fell in love with an African woman, and became fascinated by Zulu culture and traditions. It is interesting that both *King Solomon's Mines* and *She* feature a loving, brave, black African woman. He returned briefly to England and married a Norfolk heiress, Mariana Louisa Margitson, taking her back to South Africa where they ran an ostrich farm. Eventually, with the intention of pursuing a career in the law, he moved back to Norfolk with Mariana, and was called to the bar at the age of 28.

Perhaps there was more of his mother in him than his father, for it was not long before he gave up his practice in order to write novels of adventure and discovery. He was excited by R.L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, published in 1883, and wrote *King Solomon's Mines* in less

than a week. *She*, with its cryptic clues, facsimiles, hieroglyphics, Latin and Greek sections, took six weeks. He dedicated the book to his friend, the mythologist and writer Andrew Lang. Haggard became an expert agriculturalist and, among the 40 books which he wrote in a long career were several on farming. For his services to the British Empire, both diplomatic and agricultural, he was knighted in 1912 and awarded the KCBE in 1919. He died in London in 1925.

### **Notes by Bill Homewood**



**Bill Homewood's** West End credits include leads in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Grand Hotel*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *The Boys From Syracuse*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Hollow Crown* (Royal Shakespeare Company). His innumerable television series include *The Professionals*, *Berkeley Square*, *A Wing and a Prayer*, *The Renford Rejects*, *London's Burning*, *Casualty*, *Coronation Street*, *Crocodile Shoes*, *The Bill* and *Spy Trap*. Bill also directs theatre in the USA, the UK and France, where he runs a ranch with his wife Estelle Kohler. His recordings for Naxos AudioBooks include *Les Misérables*, *King Solomon's Mines* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

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Edited by Mike Shah

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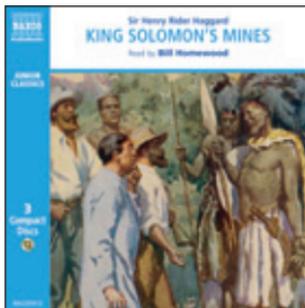
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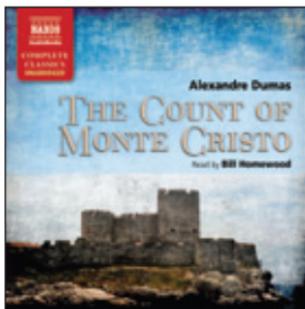
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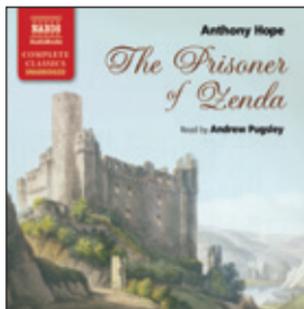
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H. Rider Haggard

# SHE

## A HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

Read by **Bill Homewood**

Somewhere in Africa, a tiny, primitive tribe, the Amahaggers, live secretly amongst the debris of a lost Egyptian civilization, ruled by the beautiful semi-goddess Ayesha, or She-who-must-be-obeyed. Ludwig Horace Holly, a Cambridge academic, is reluctantly drawn into plans for a voyage in search of this legendary queen. With his adopted son, Leo, he sets out on a brave journey, following a trail of clues. Shipwrecked and captured by cannibals, their voyage soon turns into a nightmare. This masterpiece of suspense and adventure, by the author of *King Solomon's Mines*, contains some of the most sensual, gently erotic passages in 19th-century literature.



**Bill Homewood** is well known for his appearances in numerous television shows and leading roles in the West End and for the Royal Shakespeare Company. His other recordings for Naxos AudioBooks include *Les Misérables*, *King Solomon's Mines* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

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