

The 13th  
**British  
Silent Film  
Festival**

**PHOENIX** SQUARE  
FILM & DIGITAL MEDIA

## She

Friday 16 April, 9am

UK 1925

Director: Leander de Cordove

Production Company: Reciprocity Film  
2hrs

### Credits

Director: Leander de Cordova

Producer: G.B. Samuelson

Script: Walter Summers

Based on the novel by: H. Rider Haggard

Director of Photography: Sydney Blythe

Art Director: Kurt Richter

### Cast

Betty Blythe: Ayesha, She-who must-be-obeyed

Carlyle Blackwell: Kallikrates/Leo Vincey

Alexander Butler: Mahomet

Henry George: Horace Holly

Jerrold Robertshaw : Billali

Tom Reynolds: Job

Mary Odette: Ustane



### Reviews

#### Bioscope May 28<sup>th</sup> 1925

Though the late Sir Rider Haggard is said to have declared that his success as a novel writer spoilt his career as a barrister, there is little doubt that the general public owe more to him as the author of such stories as 'She' and 'King Solomon's Mines' than they would be likely to do for any legal knowledge he might have contributed to the nation. The elaborate film version of 'she', shown by Reciprocity Films at the Palace on Monday afternoon, shows all the qualities of imagination and sense of spectacular effect that one has been led to expect from the Samuelson Studios, and there can be little doubt that this will prove a popular rendering of a story to which the termination of the author's long and distinguished career will doubtless give renewed interest. The work of adaptation has been skilfully done, the interest of the story commencing at once with the production of the mysterious case containing the sherd which carries in

mysterious messages of two thousand years ago. The Producer loses little time in plunging closely on the lines laid down in the book, through full advantages are taken of the descriptive power of the camera in the depiction of events which have happened in the past. The strange, long forgotten tribe discovered by Holly and his companions is shown with the imagination and much artistic detail, and the producer has been very successful in blending the modern element atmosphere of the three travellers with the romantic atmosphere of a pre-historic tribe. ....

**Acting** – Betty Blythe has a part in “she” for which her statuesque beauty fully qualifies her, and her garments of gorgeous and barbaric design. She is at her best in those scenes which make least demand on the emotions. The best acting proves to be that of Ustane, the maiden who first captivates the fancy of Leo Vincy, a part charmingly played by Mary Odette. Carlyle Blackwell, handicapped by an unconvincing wig, fails to give any interest to Leo Vincy and the rest of the acting is not greatly distinguished.

**Setting and photography** – The settings, which for the most part are necessarily studio built, are remarkably effective, and the final scene where the travellers seek the Fire of Life gives an extraordinary impression of a vast and rugged mountain region. The lighting is admirable but the photography is inclined to be dull and heavy.

**Suitability** – Spectacular production of Sir H. Rider Haggard novel. Good for any class hall.

#### **Kinematograph weekly May 28<sup>th</sup> 1925**

Excellent mounting and vivid atmosphere help this fairly faithful generally acceptable version of the famous Rider Haggard novel. It has striking moments of direction, and the vogue

of the story should prove strong attraction for most halls.

**Acting** – Betty Blythe, in characteristically daring undress, is statuesque rather than fiery, but is very well cast. Carlyle Blackwell as Vincy does quite good work, despite the palpable fair wig, and Tom Reynolds and Henry lend good characterisation, though both rather overact. Mary Odette gives a capable and unaffected rendering of the native girl Ustane.

**Production** – The story has been followed without interpolations and if the full dramatic possibilities are not wholly realised, there are some arresting climaxes, which will not disappoint. The big scenes have been well handed. Relief to balance is not very prominent. The authors subtitling is good.

**Setting and photography** - Full use has been made of exceptional studio resources. And many of the scenic and lighting effects are splendidly done, the atmosphere being also helped by much good camera work, and artistic mounting.

**Box-office angle** – the subject should attract anywhere.

#### **H. Rider Haggard**

**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 around the British Empire. His stories, situated at the lighter end of Victorian literature, continue to be popular and influential.

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 Umslopogas and Ignosi, the rightful king of Kukanaland, 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 his novels are 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.

Haggard's stories are still widely read today. Ayesha, the female protagonist of *She*, has been cited as a prototype by psychoanalysts as different as Sigmund Freud (in *The Interpretation of Dreams*) and Carl Jung. Her epithet "She Who Must Be Obeyed" is used by British author John Mortimer in his *Rumpole of the Bailey* series as the private name the lead character, a barrister with some skill in court, uses for his wife, Hilda, before whom he trembles at home. Haggard's Lost World genre, influenced popular American writer Robert E. Howard, and other American pulp writers such as Edgar Rice Burroughs, Talbot Mundy and Abraham Merritt. Allan Quatermain, the adventure hero of *King Solomon's Mines* and its sequel *Allan Quatermain*, was a template for the American character Indiana Jones, featuring in the films *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Temple of Doom*, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* and *Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. Quatermain has gained recent popularity thanks to being a main character in the *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry\\_Rider\\_Haggard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Rider_Haggard)