The Historical Journal (2022), **65**, 415–435
doi:10.1017/S0018246X21000613

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

ARTICLE

Land Reform, Henry Rider Haggard, and the Politics of Imperial Settlement, 1900–1920

James Watts

Department of History, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK
Email: james.watts@bristol.ac.uk

Abstract

This article considers the links between land reform and emigration through the figure of Henry Rider Haggard and argues that these two issues were deeply intertwined within British politics. Land reform in Britain is often considered as a domestic issue, but imperial campaigners often presented this in terms of the British empire. Haggard campaigned for twenty years for a greater living link to the land in Britain and the empire and believed that this link had profound effects upon English patriotism, character, and health. The imperial frontier had a spirit that improved English character, an idea that Haggard developed in the 1870s and is evident in much of his fiction. Imperial emigration was presented as a patriotic act that aided imperial defence in Australia from Chinese expansion and in South Africa from indigenous opposition. Population was the only way to bolster and defend the empire. Considering his books, speeches, newspaper reviews, and his work for the Royal Colonial Institute, this article argues that British politics and the land between 1900 and 1920 should be considered in an imperial frame. Existing work has neglected the imperial aspect of land reform, and how it was presented by emigration societies, which many imperialists considered an obvious way of dealing with unemployment and increasing urbanization whilst bolstering Greater Britain.

During the 1890s, Henry Rider Haggard wished for a more serious great cause than his immensely popular adventure fiction. In his autobiography, *The days of my life*, written in 1912 but not published until after his death, he derided novel writing as the 'mere invention of romance upon romance'. Although he defended the effect of his novels, especially in their character-forming exhortations to empire to his death, he discovered instead that his 'great subject lay to my hand, that of the state of English agriculture and of our rural population'.[1]

[1] Henry Rider Haggard, *The days of my life: an autobiography* (2 vols., London, 1926), II, p. 131.

Haggard's agricultural writings and his advocacy for empire demonstrate that the campaigns over land reform in Britain should be placed alongside those for imperial emigration, particularly from 1900 to 1920, in order to see the importance of empire in debates over pastoral Britain. Many commentators, both imperial and those focused on Britain, saw a close attachment to the land as a crucial component in physical, mental, and racial health. For Haggard, who had investigated the declining state of agriculture at the turn of the twentieth century, the answer in an already 'full' England was to settle the surplus population from the towns on the wide rural expanses of Australia and Canada.[2] Emigration was presented as a solution for unemployment in Britain. Although Haggard, and his allies, like Lords Brabazon and Curzon, were ever alive to the criticism of weakening the heart of empire, and sending Britons away from hearth and home, the security of Greater Britain was relied upon to reassure sceptics.[3] In the Dominions themselves, as Eric Richards notes, Haggard's status as a novelist meant he was a figure whose 'influence stretched into Australia' as well as other settler colonies and Britain.[4]

The concentration in the ownership of land, coupled with the widening of the franchise, raised the question of the economic potential of the markets of the empire, land ownership and peasant proprietorship for many on both sides of the political divide in the early 1900s.[5] Haggard believed that agriculture in Britain was in dire straits and that the government, co-operating on an imperial level, should intervene. But he did not support tariff reform. Instead, the land would be the answer to the poverties and dirt of urbanization. In *The poor and the land*, a report on the Salvation Army and its land settlements in the United States and Hadleigh, Suffolk, in 1905, the

> palliative for these and many other troubles is to be found, not in the workhouses or in other State-supported institutions, but upon the land, whether it be the land of Britain or that of her immeasurable Empire, which between them, were our poor ten times as many, could provide for everyone.[6]

Settlement upon the land was, for Haggard, a solution to overpopulation, imperial defence, and worries about the physical and moral degeneration of racial character that dogged debate in the years after 1900. Debates about racial degeneration were widespread as many in Britain struggled to come to terms

[2] Henry Rider Haggard, *The after-war settlement & employment of ex-service men in the overseas Dominions: a pamphlet for the Royal Colonial Institute* (London, 1916), pp. 50–3.

[3] Duncan Bell, *The idea of greater Britain: empire and the future of the world order, 1860–1900* (Princeton, NJ, 2007), pp. 46–55.

[4] Eric Richards, *Destination Australia: migration to Australia since 1901* (Sydney, 2008), pp. 70–4.

[5] Paul Readman, *Land and nation in England: patriotism, national identity, and the politics of land, 1880–1914* (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 55–60.

[6] Henry Rider Haggard, *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, 1905), pp. xxix–xxx.

with the implications of urbanization and looked to the wide spaces of the empire as a solution.

Paul Readman has argued that many land reformers, Liberal, Unionist, and Conservative were predominantly opposed to imperial emigration.[7] This is true insofar as campaigners were concerned about the 'heart of the empire', but there was a strand of argument which linked emigration with the promotion of life lived upon the land in the empire. 'Migration was deeply woven into the fabric of British life' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and this extended to agricultural Britain.[8] Struggles with agricultural poverty had led Joseph Arch and the National Agricultural Union to aid emigration to Canada in the 1870s.[9] Emigration to the rural Dominions was a powerful lure given contemporary concerns about the unsanitary nature of cities in Britain and the threat of urban environments to character. Government overseas settlement schemes were prominent in the aftermath of the First World War, but there were also migration schemes for ex-servicemen to Canada before this, as Kent Fedorowich has noted. The concern to increase the population of Australia and Canada, partly for reasons of defence, and partly out of ideologies of a 'Greater Britain', were a staple of imperialist arguments about land, its connection to character, and imperial stability, in this period.[10] Emigration was ideologically tied to the land, both in Britain and the Dominions, and particularly Canada. The ambivalence about assisted emigration in Canada between 1900 and 1930 strongly favoured emigrants from rural British districts; as Janice Cavell has argued, they were assumed to be more industrious.[11] Settlers on farms were assumed to be physically fitter, healthier, harder-working, and more patriotic. Especially given issues of rising unemployment in the cities, the lure of emigration to colonies willing to give land to settlers was strong.

Issues of the land and politics in Britain were mired in the campaign for tariff reform in the 1900s. This was a prolonged political debate that had strong imperial aspects. For Joseph Chamberlain in particular, tying the empire together by bonds of interest as well as sentiment and kin was the bedrock of tariff reform. Tariff reform was intended to be a defence of British agriculture; by increasing the cost of foreign competition especially from the USA, British farmers would supposedly be given a considerable boost. But British farmers were no keener to compete with cheap grain from Canada than from the US. As such, there was a tension in imperial interest which

[7] Readman, *Land and nation*, pp. 80–5.

[8] Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and globalisation: networks of people, goods and capital in the British world, c. 1850–1914* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 64; Bill Luckin, 'Revisiting the idea of degeneration in urban Britain 1830–1900', *Urban History*, 33 (2006), pp. 234–52.

[9] Joseph Arch, *The story of his life told by himself* (London, 1898), pp. 108–9.

[10] Kent Fedorowich, 'The migration of British ex-servicemen to Canada and the role of the Naval and Military Emigration League, 1899–1914', *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 25 (1992), pp. 75–99; Bell, *Idea of greater Britain*, pp. 49–55.

[11] Janice Cavell, 'The imperial race and the immigration sieve: the Canadian debate on assisted British migration and empire settlement, 1900–1930', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34 (2006), p. 346.

Haggard tried to circumvent. Tariff reform was, for Haggard and many Tory farmers in Britain at the turn of the century, 'made on behalf of the towns' in its intended stimulus to manufacturing.[12] Instead, he advocated small holdings as an economically viable alternative, a view shared with land reformers like Christopher Turnor, Gilbert Parker, and Jesse Collings, although these figures had very different views on tariff reform and the place of the empire in land reform.[13]

Henry Rider Haggard's role in agricultural writing and land reform is becoming increasingly well known.[14] Beginning with surveys of what he already knew, gardening and farming on his own estate in Norfolk, Haggard tested the waters with publications on agriculture. He then moved onto a wider survey in 1901–2, *Rural England*. His tour took him across twenty-seven counties in England as well as the Channel Islands. This book spanned a thousand pages and was intended to be of use to policy-makers and campaigners, and highlight the plight of agriculture in Britain. At this stage, Haggard was principally proposing alleviating the lot of the labourer on the land through government policies on taxation and possibly a light import duty. His views became more interventionist and linked to the empire as he progressed. In particular, Haggard wanted to encourage small holdings, independent farmers on the land, either in Britain or in the empire. In 1905 and 1910, he undertook work for the Salvation Army that shifted his views on assisted emigration as well as the viability of settling people on farmland across the empire. Between these two works, Haggard served on the Committee for Coastal Erosion and Afforestation from 1905 to 1908, the latter part being added by his request from an interview with Lloyd George, increasing its scope and allowing him to consider the land more widely.[15] Haggard then considered how British agriculture could again be aided by examining Denmark in 1911, a net exporter of food without protection that attracted widespread British interest. All of this work made him an acknowledged expert on agriculture and the questions surrounding it, notably the prevailing anxiety concerning urbanization. In 1912, Haggard began discussions with the government and others about working on a commission to encourage imperial emigration. This began as a Royal Commission, was interrupted by the war, but ended up being undertaken privately for the Royal Colonial Institute (RCI) in 1916. Haggard continued working on novels as well as promoting land reform and assisted emigration, which came to fruition after the war, but his participation did dwindle after 1919.[16]

[12] Henry Rider Haggard, *Rural England: being an account of agricultural and social researches carried out in the years 1901 & 1902* (2 vols., London, 1906), I, p. xv.

[13] Readman, *Land and nation*, p. 96.

[14] Ibid., p. 75; Jeremy Burckhardt, *Paradise lost: rural idyll and social change since 1800* (London, 2002).

[15] Norfolk Record Office, MS 4694/8.

[16] Henry Rider Haggard, *A gardener's year* (London, 1898); idem, *A farmer's year being his commonplace book for 1898* (London, 1899); idem, *Rural England*; idem, *The poor and the land*; idem, *Regeneration: being an account of the social work of the Salvation Army in Great Britain* (London, 1910); idem, *Rural Denmark and its lessons* (London, 1911); idem, *After-war settlement*; idem, *Days of my life*.

The ideal of rural life in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, on which campaigns for land reform and emigration drew, was a powerful one.[17] A southern English vision of the pastoral that occluded issues of agricultural poverty and unemployment tended to hold sway. The benefits of a country life, healthy air, and open space, contrasted with the sink of the cities, were seen as beneficial to the country, its people, and the empire.[18] Rural vigour was widely commented upon in the speeches in societies like the RCI. The *Review of Reviews*, reporting on one of these speeches in 1909 by Dr Richard Arthur, president of the Immigration League of Australasia, noted that military reservists in India, those who are 'young, active, accustomed to a rough life, and often able to handle horses', would be excellent settlers in Australia.[19] Their rough and ready life in India was a recommendation for settlement in the empire, although there were doubts about the numbers the colonies could take. There was considerable medical support for living on the land. The medical journal *The Lancet*, reviewing Haggard's *After-war settlement* pamphlet in 1916, argued that 'A healthier life in freer surroundings for themselves and their families will be the attraction that will weigh in the balance when the relative merits of urban and rural industries come to be estimated.'[20]

Despite this emphasis on the rural, emigrants did not always conform to expectation. The majority of emigrants to Canada between 1900 and 1914 went to the towns and cities, notably Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, and Saskatoon. It is also important to note that even after the 1922 Empire Settlement Act, British values were not the only, or even over-riding, ones across the Canadian West.[21] Emigration literature, however, continued to play strongly on the rural ideal, emphasizing British and yeoman stock, and displaying the bounties of the prairies and countryside. Despite the lure of the city, the prairie's population tripled during these same dates, to 1.7 million.[22] In the protracted discussions concerning the emigration of ex-servicemen to Canada between 1900 and 1914, Kent Fedorowich notes that, alongside the scepticism of the British government about lost manpower, the Canadian government expressed reserve about the suitability of ex-servicemen. In an interview with Canadian representatives in London and emigration proponents, they argued instead that the 'need of Canada is first and always for men who are prepared to work on the land and that...this is the only class of men who should be encouraged to emigrate'.[23] Linked with eugenicist and Social Darwinist fears about the degeneration of people in

[17] Krishan Kumar, *The making of English national identity* (Cambridge, 2003); Martin Wiener, *English culture and the decline of the industrial spirit* (Cambridge, 1981); Peter Mandler, 'Against "Englishness": English culture and the limits to rural nostalgia, 1850–1940', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 7 (1997), pp. 155–75.

[18] Robert Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 203–11.

[19] 'Imperial emigration: a proposed solution', *Review of Reviews*, 40 (1909), p. 52.

[20] *The Lancet*, 23 Sept. 1916, pp. 564–5.

[21] David Smith, 'Instilling British values in the Prairie provinces', *Prairie Forum*, 6 (1981), pp. 138–9.

[22] Cavell, 'Imperial race', p. 350; Magee and Thompson, *Empire and globalisation*, p. 70; Marjory Harper and Stephen Constantine, *Migration and empire* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 17–18.

[23] Fedorowich, 'Ex-servicemen', p. 97.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X21000613 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the slums of urban Britain, some Canadians objected that their Dominion should not be used to relieve British urban unemployment.[24]

The agricultural notion of what working in Canada meant was a powerful one, but it often stumbled on practical barriers and opportunities for urban work. Debates like these were ones that Haggard was particularly involved with in securing agreements for land for ex-servicemen during his tour of the Dominions in 1916. This tour 'captured the public imagination', as Fedorowich puts it, and was 'a tremendous public relations victory for the RCI over an intransigent British government'.[25] Haggard's tour linked the fortunes of rural Britain and the pastoral lands of the empire together as an imperial image of Britain in the dark days of the First World War.

The call for a continued and strengthened connection to the land was an issue that remained strongly cross-party in Britain, although with differing motivations for Conservatives and Liberals.[26] As an argument that worked well within the 'political economy of empire', as E. H. H. Green has put it, Haggard's campaigning for imperial emigration and settlement complemented arguments for increased imperial trade.[27]

Haggard's intervention concerning small holdings in the early 1900s, 'represented a turning of the tide' in much Unionist opinion that had previously balked at encouraging small-scale landholdings.[28] Haggard had a specific constituency within Unionism that was wary of protectionism, but that was profoundly concerned about the decline of English agriculture. Although Haggard's position within the party was marginal, his concerns were not. Over two-thirds of candidates for English seats in the 1906 election mentioned land reform in their addresses, and by 1910, land reform had become an accepted part of the Conservative and Unionist platform.[29] Acknowledging the argument about the natural conservatism of those on the land and householders, the Conservatives attempted to 'cut the ground, literally as well as metaphorically, from under Socialism'.[30] Nevertheless, qualms about sending Britons overseas and weakening the centre of the empire persisted in imperial Liberal as well as Conservative and Unionist circles. Haggard worked at an oblique angle to the party he had stood for as a parliamentary candidate in

[24] Cavell, 'Imperial race', pp. 351–2.

[25] Kent Fedorowich, *Unfit for heroes: reconstruction and soldier settlement in the empire between the wars* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 53–9; Trevor Reese, *The history of the Royal Commonwealth Society, 1868–1968* (London, 1968), pp. 117–19.

[26] Antony Taylor, '"We dream our dream still": ruralism, empire and the debate about New Australia in Britain', *Labour History Review*, 77 (2012), pp. 163–87; Clare Griffiths, *Labour and the countryside: the politics of rural Britain, 1918–1939* (Oxford, 2007).

[27] E. H. H. Green, 'The political economy of empire, 1880–1914', in William Roger Louis, ed., *The Oxford history of the British empire*, III: *The nineteenth century* (Oxford, 1999), p. 355.

[28] David Thackeray, *Conservatism for the democratic age: Conservative cultures and the challenge of mass politics in early twentieth century England* (Manchester, 2013), pp. 59–61; Readman, *Land and nation*, p. 78; idem, 'The Edwardian land question', in Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman, eds., *The land question in Britain, 1750–1950* (London, 2010), p. 190.

[29] Readman, 'The Edwardian land question', pp. 181–200.

[30] E. H. H. Green, *The crisis of Conservatism: the politics, economics and ideology of the British Conservative party, 1880–1914* (London, 1995), p. 195.

Norwich in 1895. He boasted in his autobiography that 'as a party man I am the most miserable failure' for he would never obey the whip, being too independent in his 'crossbench mind'.[31] Nevertheless, Haggard's work was supported by figures like the Conservative politician and soldier, Ernest George Pretyman, and contributed to a reorientating of Unionist policy, although government scepticism about assisted overseas settlement persisted through the First World War.[32] Interest in agricultural reform was part of a wider political repositioning of the party, as a result of the widening franchise, to appeal as a less aristocratic party. Small holders could be a working-class bastion against socialism. Haggard's work burnished an anti-urban image of English identity, not as one of Peter Mandler's 'aesthetes' for stately homes, but as a supporter of the farming squire and smaller landholders.[33] The 'image of the yeoman homestead, and not that of the stately home, represented the English countryside ideal', as Readman has aptly put it, and Haggard's efforts were tapping into this.[34]

The link between the land question in Britain and emigration to the predominantly rural Dominions is a complex one, but it was one that appealed to many in Britain. For Haggard, especially during the First World War, emigration seemed natural; as he put it in his evidence to the National Birth Rate Commission, 'here in Europe men battle and die in thousands over little strips of Mother Earth; there [The Dominions] great territories lie unoccupied'.[35]

I

Decisions to emigrate to the colonies could be based on numerous factors: the experiences of friends and family, job opportunities, propaganda, but the ideal of imperial travel has also been traced to the boys' stories that were so common in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century.[36] Adventure stories like Haggard's, particularly *King Solomon's mines*, and the *Allan Quatermain* novels, were criticized for their glorification of war and fighting. Adventure or 'Romance' writers were betraying the uplifting and moral vision of the mid-Victorian novel. Liberal MP Charles Masterman, in 1905, accused literature under these 'apostles of the New Imperialism' of 'deserting to the enemy'.[37] Haggard and his fellow writers were often derided by contemporaries. In 1891, J. K. Stephen famously attacked the perceived jingoism, and popularity, of the novels of Haggard and Kipling, praying for a time

[31] Haggard, *Days of my life*, II, p. 106.

[32] Readman, *Land and nation*, p. 81; Reese, *Royal Commonwealth Society*, pp. 117–19.

[33] Peter Mandler, *The fall and rise of the stately home* (New Haven, CT, 1997), pp. 108–9.

[34] Paul Readman, 'Jesse Collings and land reform, 1886–1914', *Historical Research*, 81 (2008), p. 312.

[35] *Problems of population and parenthood [being the second report of and the chief evidence taken by the Nation Birth-Rate Commission, 1918–1920]* (London, 1920), p. 259.

[36] Bradley Deane, *Masculinity and the new imperialism: rewriting manhood in British popular literature, 1870–1914* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 85–114; Patrick A. Dunae, 'Boys' literature and the idea of empire, 1870–1914', *Victorian Studies*, 24 (1980), pp. 105–21; Joseph Bristow, *Empire boys: adventures in a man's world* (London, 1991).

[37] Quoted in Deane, *Masculinity and the new imperialism*, p. 2.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X21000613 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> When the Rudyards shall cease from Kipling
> And the Haggards ride no more.[38]

Haggard answered the charge in his autobiography that his pages 'have breathed war' and was 'quite unrepentant', contending that war 'brings forth many noble actions'.[39] Similarly, in a letter to an unnamed correspondent in 1920, he argued, 'I had rather write of clean heroic fighting, than of crime and such like. At least I have stimulated the love of our Empire in some – when I was last in Africa I met several whom my books had sent there – to their gain.'[40] Haggard was very proud of his novels for expressing the combination of the spirit of warlike adventure and inspiring Britons to uphold the empire and the frontier. In his *Diary of an African journey* from 1914, Haggard records meeting a Mr Donovan in Durban, the overseer of a compound for 'native labourers'. Donovan tells Haggard that it was his work that caused him to come out to South Africa and led Haggard to reflect,

> I begin to think I must have had some hand in providing South Africa with what it so sadly needs, British population, during the last quarter of a century. Many superior persons turn up their noses at my romantic work... yet, it appears to have some practical influence in the world.[41]

Although possibly flattery or exaggeration on Donovan's part, to have drawn British people out to be on the frontier was a cause of great pride for Haggard. Haggard spends a number of pages in his diary detailing the compound that Donovan ran and the authority and opportunities for action that were the benefits of emigrating to the empire. Haggard was careful to note in this extract how emigration was something that South Africa 'so sadly needs'. Haggard worried about the population imbalance that prevailed in South Africa and saw it as a great service to the empire to encourage greater white emigration. As he noted in this passage, the imperial inspiration, the 'practical influence' that his novels had upon the British belief in and actions for the empire, were what Haggard considered his greatest literary service.

Similarly, the notion of the frontier settler colonies as being a place that represented the modernity of the British race, less hidebound by custom and hierarchy than Britain itself, was an intrinsic aspect of Haggard's argument. Replying to Jesse Collings's and Wilmot Corfield's letters in *The Times*, Haggard represented Britain, and especially parliament, as a place that struggled to act, and where the man who wanted to get things done was part of a 'troublesome tribe'. In Australia, Mr Corfield would find the 'breath of spring in the air of countries that have not been frozen for centuries in the frosts of custom, walled-up by "established interests" and swaddled in

[38] J. K. Stephen, published in the *Cambridge Review*, 1891, See Philip Waller, *Writers, readers, and reputations: literary life in Britain, 1870–1914* (Oxford, 2006), p. 959.

[39] Haggard, *Days of my life*, II, p. 16.

[40] Norfolk Record Office, MS 4694/31/14, 3 Jan. 1920.

[41] Henry Rider Haggard, *Diary of an African journey (1914)*, ed. Stephen Coan (London, 2001), p. 234.

red tape'.[42] Emigration was the bedrock of the British empire, and the continuance of the frontier spirit was an integral part of the striving brilliance of the British race.

It was self-evident to Haggard that fiction should reinforce morals. In Haggard's mind, war had given men some of its finest qualities, 'such as patriotism, courage, obedience to authority, patience in disaster, fidelity to friends and a noble cause, endurance and so forth'.[43] Novels helped form what Haggard saw and wanted in the English, adventurous pioneers. As he recounted in this letter, expressing sentiments that were doubtless nurtured through the First World War, the duty that his fiction had performed was to help in the formation of virtue, 'clean heroic fighting', and steer people clear of vice, which he thought was encouraged in novels of 'crime and such like'. The notion of 'clean heroic fighting' was also linked here, seamlessly, to Africa and those he met on his tour in 1914. The virtuous attributes his books fostered, largely through the themes they discuss, were ones that, he argued, maintained Britain during the First World War. They also gave the British readers the stimulation for 'the love of our Empire'. Africa was the stage for those who possessed these virtues and those who went out there, went out 'to their gain'.[44]

This sentiment was echoed by Haggard down to the end of his life. Giving evidence to the National Birth Rate Commission, in 1919, which was investigating the decline in the British birth rate, Haggard argued that

> By nature the Englishman is an adventurer, not an agriculturalist, in which he differs from the Highlander, the Welshman and the Irishman, for the reason that the Celts are land-lovers. As soon as the Englishman found the opportunity, he began to desert the soil and to return to his ancestral occupation of adventure.[45]

Rather than an overarching imperial British identity, this was an exclusively English spirit in the empire.[46] The Englishman was called to the empire to express his innate spirit as 'an adventurer' far more than the other peoples of the British Isles. Constructing English identity in this way was far less consensual and did not fit into settled notions of the 'English Gentleman' or the imperial mission. But this was an extract from evidence in which Haggard was attempting to encourage the English to be 'an agriculturalist'. A page later in his evidence, he argued that

> as much as any man in England I am convinced of the necessity of reserving, and indeed increasing, the population on the land, which is really the

[42] *The Athenaeum*, 9 Feb. 1916; Haggard, *After-war settlement*, p. 54.
[43] Haggard, *Days of my life*, II, p. 103.
[44] Haggard, *Diary of an African journey*, p. 234.
[45] *Problems of population and parenthood*, p. 257.
[46] Peter Mandler, *The English national character: the history of an idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven, CT, 2006), pp. 136–40.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X21000613 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> nursery of our race. There the healthy men and women are born and reared who in the end our cities devour.

Haggard goes on to call attention to the land in the Dominions where 'great territories lie unoccupied, crying to be tilled'.[47] But it is not necessary to see a contradiction here. Being reared on the land was a strong link to the ancestral greatness that gave the English the spirit and strength necessary for pursuing empire. The English needed agriculture, but it was not the calling of their race. The 'great territories' of the empire were there for their true calling, the adventure of the frontier and the unknown. Instead, Haggard envisioned the English as exemplars of, appropriately for the notions of a man close to Theodore Roosevelt, 'rugged individualism'. Whether on the frontier in Africa, or supporting a farm in Canada, South Africa, or Australia, it was these same concepts of character that were called for.

Promoting the ideal imperial English character, one far more daring and sharper than in Britain, links to the fascination with boyhood so often found in Haggard's novels and beyond. From Robert Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883) to Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901), there was a growing imperial fascination with boyhood.[48] But, although this was undoubtedly a considerable aspect of Haggard's novels, as the dedication of *King Solomon's mines* 'to all the big and little boys who read it' indicates, this is less apparent in his non-fiction. In his call for a life free from the drudgery and vice of the cities, the idealization of character is based upon the freedom of life upon the land. Like the adventurers who populate his novels, Haggard's non-fiction called for a combination of classic imperial ruling virtues, leadership, and restraint as well as the edge of barbarity. There is an element of Deane's 'cultural cross-dressing' here, using the supposed characteristics of praised, vigorous, and warlike indigenous peoples to reinvigorate the ruling classes of the empire.[49] Haggard encouraged the rejection of civilization and its weakening ephemera in order to make it on the frontier. But his view was closer to a recasting of the existing arguments around imperial character than a new imagining of empire.

In his later tour for the RCI in 1916, Haggard noted how the Dominion governments were always concerned about vetting emigrants to 'satisfy certain standards'.[50] Character was needed to flourish in the empire no matter the benefits of settling upon the land. Personal responsibility was emphasized as 'in the end everything depends upon the man himself and, I may add, upon the man's wife'.[51] The adventure of the frontier could here be imagined alongside its domestication in the figure of the home-making wife. Concern with the gender balance of the colonies and the place of women as crucial aspects of creating stable societies in the colonies, a partial gender recodification as

[47] *Problems of population and parenthood*, pp. 258–9.

[48] Deane, *Masculinity and the new imperialism*, pp. 85–114; Dunae, 'Boys' literature and the idea of empire', pp. 105–121; Bristow, *Empire boys*.

[49] Deane, *Masculinity and the new imperialism*, p. 51.

[50] Haggard, *After-war settlement*, pp. 18 and 27.

[51] Ibid., p. 37.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X21000613 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Marie Ruiz has argued, was shared far beyond the deeply misogynist Haggard.[52] The journalist and Colonial Editor of *The Times*, Flora Shaw, had argued that in terms of colonial settlement, 'man wins the battle, but woman holds the field', as she put it in her speech on the Klondike to the RCI in 1898.[53] Societies for female emigration had been working to promote a gender balance, and a domesticating influence, throughout the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Lisa Chilton and James Hammerton have shown.[54] Advocating this emigration did, however, often encounter opposition as concerns were voiced about suggesting 'that Englishmen should make absolute slaves of their sisters'.[55] More commonly, concerns were raised about the danger of unsupervised travel and advocates of emigration had to emphasize the support for female emigrants in Britain and their destinations.

Haggard was arguing that the government should help to co-ordinate imperial emigration and keep it under the British flag where, on the land, character would be sure to improve. Despite the conditions and seeming reluctance of the Dominion governments to accept soldiers without serious consultation as to their selection, Haggard argued in a letter that

> attempting to conserve its population to the Empire instead of allowing it to percolate to foreign countries will become to be acknowledged one of the utmost importance indeed of Empire – that some machinery will be set up at home which is competent to handle the business on Empire lines.[56]

Haggard wished to maintain the population of Britain beneath the British flag, diverting emigration away from the USA. During his tour for the RCI, his 'war offering', he could believe that there might be some realization to his hopes.[57]

Reflecting on his reasons for farming in a later book on *Rural Denmark and its lessons* in 1911, Haggard stated, 'I farm because I love the land...the bedrock of everything, wherein man is rooted and out of which he draws all that makes him man.'[58] By the 1910s, Haggard had become more widely recognized as an authority on farming and the living connection with it.[59] In 1911, after

[52] Marie Ruiz, *British female emigration societies and the New World, 1860–1914* (London, 2017), pp. 153–8; Julia Bush, *Edwardian ladies and imperial power* (London, 2000), pp. 106 and 122.

[53] Flora Shaw, 'Klondike', *The Royal Colonial Institute: Report of Proceedings vol. XXX*, no. 3, 31 Jan. 1899, p. 190.

[54] Lisa Chilton, 'A new class of women for the colonies: the imperial colonist and the construction of empire', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 31 (2003), pp. 36–56; A. J. Hammerton, *Emigrant gentlewomen: genteel poverty and female emigration, 1830–1914* (London, 1979).

[55] A direct response to Flora Shaw's advocacy for imperial emigration, 'English ladies on the Prairies', *Morning Post*, 14 Jan. 1899, p. 3.

[56] Norfolk Record Office, MC32/47. This is unsigned and undated, but can be dated to 1916.

[57] *The private diaries of Sir Henry Rider Haggard 1914–1925*, ed. Sidney Higgins (London, 1980), 3 Jan. 1916, p. 49.

[58] Haggard, *Rural Denmark and its lessons*, pp. 253–4.

[59] His articles on rural Denmark provoked letters to *The Times* from a farmer in Denmark. 'Rural Denmark', R. A. Westenholz, *Times*, 20 Mar. 1911; 'Rural Denmark', Primrose McConnell, *Times*, 27 Mar. 1911; 'To the editor of *The Times*', R. A. Westenholz, *Times*, 3 Apr. 1911.

reading *Rural Denmark*, Robert Baden-Powell asked his advice on farming to teach to the Boy Scouts. His aim was to 'teach the young farmer the latest methods' and was 'most grateful for any hints or suggestions'.[60] Encouraging this life was axiomatically beneficial for these two veterans of the South African frontier. The land produced yeomen who formed the heart of England. It was the 'bedrock' of a man in the same way that he drew sustenance for his body from the food it produced. Concern persisted for many about the 'remains of a feudal system' that Haggard noted in a speech in Ottawa in 1905, which allowed 'no man on the land...chance to rise', especially as the franchise widened.[61] The concentration of land ownership was creating a class of farmers who had no real connection to the land they farmed. Making them freeholders of this land, many Conservatives argued, would not only benefit 'character' but would act as a bulwark against revolutionary and communal ideas.[62] This yeoman class was necessary 'if our Country is to continue in its present place' because they 'rear a stamp of children very different to those who are bred in the great towns'.[63]

Despite the association of pastoralism with 'Little England', this idea of connection with the land was extended on an imperial basis.[64] These notions of Englishness, the rural, and character led Haggard to support the garden city movement and the founding of Letchworth. In 1904, at a conference at Letchworth, he praised the integration of small holdings into the city and the work that Letchworth represented ameliorating rural depopulation.[65] The garden city movement coincided with many of Haggard's aims in improving the social and physical health of those in the cities and was exported by town planners across the empire, particularly in Southern Australia and South Africa, as well as the USA, in the years after 1910.[66]

In *Rural England*, Haggard foretold the 'progressive deterioration of the race'. Comparing the expense of his scheme for an agricultural post with the Ugandan railway he asked, 'should not rural England have the same benefit of the experimental investment of money as is freely granted to savage Africa?'[67] Decrying the expense of empire, contrasted to the need of money in Britain, became increasingly common in some circles, especially in the wake of the South African War. Concerns over the expense of war led even committed imperialists, albeit usually Liberals, to seriously question the

[60] 23 Oct. 1911. Quoted in *Lives of Victorian literary figures VII: Joseph Conrad, H. Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling by their contemporaries, Volume 2: H. Rider Haggard*, ed. Lindy Stiebel (London, 2009), p. 213.

[61] Haggard, *Days of my life*, II, p. 265.

[62] Readman, 'The Edwardian land question', p. 185.

[63] Haggard, *Rural England*, I, p. xix.

[64] Mandler, *The English national character*, pp. 148–50.

[65] 'The Garden City Conference: speech by Mr Rider Haggard', *Observer*, 11 Sept. 1904, p. 5.

[66] R. K. Home, 'Town planning and garden cities in the British colonial empire 1910–1940', *Planning Perspective*, 5 (1990), pp. 23–37; Liora Bigon, 'Garden cities in colonial Africa: a note on historiography', *Planning Perspectives*, 28 (2013), pp. 477–85.

[67] Haggard, *Rural England*, II, pp. 541 and 558.

expense of the empire in public.[68] But, for some, this argument for increased domestic investment in the health of Britons on the land was an imperially inflected one. The greatness of the imperial race in Britain was of paramount concern. Winston Churchill argued in 1905 in the *Lincoln Gazette* that, 'if we are to have a great Empire and be worthy of it, we must have a healthy home'.[69] There was a growing conviction that access to the land in England and the settler empire was crucial because it preserved and strengthened the imperial race. In 1890, playing fields in London were praised by the cricketer and future colonial secretary Alfred Lyttelton as areas that not only aided public health but encouraged 'that love of manly games which had done so much to make Englishmen and England what they were'.[70] Urbanization was of greater importance than the imperial mission because it threatened the imperial people themselves.

Concern about degeneration was linked with contemporary concerns about 'national efficiency' from the 1890s, but was amplified in the wake of the South African War, as it was linked to unemployment and its effects upon national and personal character.[71] The slums were creating an inferior race of men in physique and intelligence, something that, in different tones, was a cause of concern for Keir Hardie, Lord Rosebery, and Arthur Balfour.[72] Haggard subscribed to these concerns and pointed the finger squarely at the 'mafficking' celebrations after the relief of Mafeking and, using the example of recruitment for the South African War, the decline in manners and character.

> The physique deteriorates...The intelligence too is changed; it is apt no longer to consider or appreciate natural things, but by preference dwells on and occupies itself with those more artificial joys and needs which are the creation of civilized money and pleasure-seeking man.[73]

Civilization, to Haggard, led to artificiality, 'pleasure-seeking', as well as weakening the race both mentally and physically. Civilization, whatever its benefits, was a veneer to the savagery that constituted the fundamental make-up of humanity. Cities severed the connection with the soil, threatening the English race. As Haggard reflected years before in *Allan Quatermain*, in men, one part in twenty was civilized, and it was the other parts that were relied upon in a crisis.[74]

[68] Readman, *Land and nation*, p. 82.

[69] Ibid., p. 82; *Lincoln Gazette*, 21 Oct. 1905, p. 6.

[70] *Morning Post*, 'Playing fields for London', 6 Mar. 1890, p. 2.

[71] G. R. Searle, *The quest for national efficiency* (Oxford, 1971); G. R. Searle, 'The politics of national efficiency and of war, 1900–1918', in Chris Wrigley, ed., *A companion to early twentieth century Britain* (Oxford, 2003), p. 58.

[72] G. R. Searle, '"National efficiency" and the "lessons" of the war', in David Omissi and Andrew S. Thompson, eds., *The impact of the South African War* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 196–8.

[73] Haggard, *Rural England*, II, p. 568.

[74] Henry Rider Haggard, *Allan Quatermain* (London, 2006), pp. 12–13.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X21000613 Published online by Cambridge University Press

This link to the character and the defence of Britain made Haggard such an exponent of small holdings. As *The Observer* reported of Haggard's speech in Letchworth, Britain

> needed that strong, steady, equal-minded man who was only bred upon the land. Every nation wanted him. We were at peace at present, but the time might come when, very likely, our national existence would depend on the existence of that class from whom we could draw for defence.[75]

Haggard's ideal in the agricultural reforms that he was pursuing, his great mission for the empire, was in relieving the degeneration and sickliness of the race.

II

Haggard's report for the Salvation Army in 1905, *The poor and the land*, led to one of his first calls for imperial assisted emigration. In this, he called for a commissioner – Haggard naturally suggested himself – to be sent to South Africa to investigate the possibility of establishing 'land colonies anywhere within the boundaries of the British empire'.[76] Sir John Gorst asked the colonial secretary, Alfred Lyttelton, whether he supported this. Lyttelton replied that the report has 'induced me to propose the appointment of a departmental committee to consider the questions' raised by Haggard.[77] On this occasion, the prospect of assisted emigration for the poor directed through charitable organizations was lost in the election of the following year. Nevertheless, as Haggard wrote in his report, his investigations had received favourable, if hardly impassioned, press attention.[78]

For many supporters of land reform, qualms persisted about schemes of emigration. Although advocates of colonial emigration as a part of land reform were not 'thin on the ground...their arguments did not command anything like universal consent'.[79] Even confining consideration of the criticism to Conservative and Unionist circles, the idea of sending Britons overseas was, for some, anathema. There was a perception that the real problem was one in Britain itself where its finest sons could not thrive on their own native soil. As *The Daily Express* lamented in 1912, it was 'young blood leaving England'.[80] Instead, reformers emphasized that attention should be paid to the 'heart of the empire' as, widespread opinion had it, great nations and empires degenerated from within.[81] There was also considerable doubt that the Dominions would accept emigrants who were not self-reliant. As such, the attempted export, as it was considered, of Britons even within the empire

[75] 'The Garden City Conference: speech by Mr Rider Haggard', *Observer*, 11 Sept. 1904, p. 5.
[76] Haggard, *The poor and the land*, pp. 19–20.
[77] 'Back to the Land Movement: Mr Rider Haggard', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 July 1905, p. 8.
[78] Haggard, *The poor and the land*, pp. 145–57.
[79] Readman, *Land and nation*, p. 80.
[80] Ibid., pp. 81–2; *Daily Express*, 30 Dec. 1912.
[81] See Readman, *Land and nation*, pp. 80–5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X21000613 Published online by Cambridge University Press

could be considered unpatriotic and un-imperial, burdening the colonies with a domestic problem.[82]

Haggard sympathized with these arguments, but saw the settler colonies as simply being included within Britain. As he advised his godson Roderick in 1912 on where he might emigrate to, 'personally in no case would I go to any country, such as Java or Sumatra, over which the British flag does not fly'.[83] Similarly, in 1919, he wrote to *The Times* quoting a correspondent who detailed the miseries of British soldiers who emigrated to California and how they 'would be wise to do so within the confines of the British Empire'.[84]

The rural land of the Dominions would also change the 'alarming fall in the birth rate' that he detected in cities that, anyway, produced unhealthy children.[85] Britain's cities were producing men who he thought unworthy of the empire. As he put it in his report on the Salvation Army's work in 1910, *Regeneration*, 'can we afford to go on parting with the good and retaining the less desirable?'[86] This work reiterated many of his arguments for regenerating the population, and the potential for emigration. The worry for Haggard was that the best of the British race was emigrating, which the state could do little about, but it could redirect it away from the USA and to the empire. Despite this link of the flag, there was still, especially amongst those who had campaigned for land reform within Britain, criticism of Britons, and particularly demobilized soldiers, being exiled overseas rather than being found employment within Britain.

Haggard was roused to conduct a letter exchange in the pages of *The Times* during 1916 with one of his critics who argued that he was attempting to 'exile' the men of Britain. His exchange with Jesse Collings was reprinted in the *After-war settlement* pamphlet, which gives some idea of the importance Haggard credited to it. Collings was a Unionist MP who had been promoting land reform in Britain since the unauthorized programme of agricultural reforms, including the famous 'three acres and a cow' in the 1880s.[87] For Collings, 'our rural districts are already enough depleted without taking steps to turn them into a desert'. Haggard assured readers that he was very supportive of maintaining rural life in Britain, emigration was only voluntary, and he saw a closer link between the Dominions and Britain than Collings. Moreover, he was incredulous of Collings's claim that there was a considerable portion of England that could still be put to agriculture.[88] Collings represented a strand of Conservative and Unionist argument that viewed emigration from Britain, even to destinations within the empire, as weakening and perilous. The exodus from the land that urbanization and the agricultural depression was causing meant that for Collings, instead of encouraging emigration, steps should be taken to keep agricultural labourers on the land

[82] 'The decrease of population and the land', Montague Crackanthorpe, *Times*, 13 Jan. 1906.
[83] Norfolk Record Office, MC 536/37, 775 X2, 4 June 1912.
[84] 'Ex-servicemen abroad', Henry Rider Haggard, *Times*, 10 May 1919.
[85] Haggard, *After-war settlement*, p. 38.
[86] Haggard, *Regeneration*, p. 84.
[87] Readman, 'Jesse Collings', pp. 300–1; Haggard, *After-war settlement*, Appendix B, p. 53.
[88] Haggard, *After-war settlement*, Appendix B, p. 50.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X21000613 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in Britain.[89] Radical Liberals like Charles Roden Buxton, the chairman of the Co-operative Small Holdings Society, argued instead that Haggard had not fully applied his argument concerning the land and the compulsory purchase of it. Buxton recommended allotments that would prove the demand for small holdings amongst agricultural labourers who were a 'timid people'.[90]

In many ways, Collings and his promotion of yeoman proprietorship, along with refinements in the Small Holdings and Allotments Act in 1908, had the better of this argument up to 1914, as Paul Readman has pointed out.[91] But it was the war and the threat of millions of demobilized soldiers after it that encouraged notions of assisted emigration. Haggard argued, using the example of emigration after the South African War, that this was likely to happen anyway, and it was better that British people settled these lands, instead of 'Teutons and other foreigners'. During the First World War, whilst Haggard was touring the Dominions for the RCI, his pronouncements on the Germans, their threat to the British empire, and the necessity of unity in response was emphasized. In notes made for a speech in Ottawa in 1916, he described the Germans as 'Satan come to Earth' who have brought them 'face to face with the downfall of Christianity'. He then counterpoints this with the British who represent the 'Empire the Land of Liberty Holy star of Justice'.[92] Linking emigration to the pre-emptive defence of the empire, Haggard argued that the Dominions needed this emigration to form prospective white militias to defend themselves.[93] The charge of military sacrifice, later captured in the 'Homes for Heroes' General Election campaign, was why Haggard and the RCI had to guard themselves so closely against the charge of 'exiling' British soldiers.

Haggard and other proponents of emigration such as Lords D'Abernon and Curzon were conscious of this criticism. Their argument was based upon the imperial links of the empire, the belief in the racial brotherhood of Britain (or England) across the settler colonies, strengthening each part to strengthen the whole. As Curzon put it in his speech at the farewell dinner for the commencement of Haggard's work on the Dominions and after-war emigration, Britain is 'a small country. The area available for settlement is restricted' and 'is it not clear that the majority of the men will have to be guided elsewhere? First and foremost, we want not to send them to America or to Foreign countries. We want to keep them for ourselves and our own.'[94] Haggard hoped they could establish that life upon the land was, of itself, more beneficial. Then, emigration from increasingly urban and industrial Britain to the overwhelmingly agricultural Dominions could seem obvious. This was especially the case as the conception of Greater Britain and the notion of the Dominions as essential parts of Britain itself took greater

[89] *Times*, 3 Feb. 1916, quoted in Haggard, *After-war settlement*, Appendix B, p. 50.
[90] 'The government and small holdings', Charles Roden Buxton, and Helmsley, *Times*, 4 May 1907.
[91] Readman, 'Jesse Collings', pp. 292–314; idem, *Land and nation*, pp. 173–6, 180.
[92] Norfolk Record Office, MC 536/43, notes for a speech in Ottawa, 1916.
[93] Haggard, *After-war settlement*, p. 38.
[94] 'Land for soldiers: Sir R. Haggard's mission', *Times of India*, 1 Mar. 1916.

hold.[95] Nevertheless, Haggard often contended that the 'Institute had no desire to promote emigration'.[96] Instead, if they were 'determined to go', the aim was to make it 'easy and profitable for them'.[97] Promoting emigration in this way was an attempt to assert imperial patriotism during the First World War. It was to allow 'British citizens to rear British families in British lands, to sustain the traditions and uphold the honour of the British flag', as Curzon put it.[98]

After his tour, Haggard was appointed to the Empire Settlement Committee chaired by Lord Tennyson, which reported in 1917, supporting free passage for ex-servicemen to the settler colonies. The work Haggard did with the RCI raised the profile of emigration and settlement, and the unexpected support that he found in the Dominions made it a political possibility.[99] The grants for free relocation for ex-servicemen and women in 1919 and the Empire Settlement Act of 1922 drew on this work by Haggard in securing agreements for land settlement and the framework of assisted emigration. By 1921, approximately 42,000 ex-servicemen, their dependants, and ex-servicewomen had emigrated.[100] In a context of building 'homes fit for heroes', support for emigration was uneven. Nevertheless, as Leo Amery, the undersecretary of state for the colonies, put it in his diary, 'but for the activities of Sir Rider Haggard and the Royal Colonial Institute, the Government might not have developed a policy at all'.[101]

The military aspect of demobilization and emigration tied together prominent strands of thinking about emigration, character, and imperial defence. Lord Selborne, first lord of the Admiralty and soon to succeed Lord Milner as high commissioner of South Africa, argued in 1903, in line with geopolitical theorists of the day, that Britain must 'learn to think imperially' if it was to compete 'in the same rank with the US, Russia and Germany.'[102] Competition with other great powers was coupled with concern over the military strength of Japan. This was a fear that was often elided into a general fear of Asia. Imperial unity was inherently racial and was based upon the brotherhood of the settlers of the white colonies.[103] Arguments over tariff reform, emigration, and imperial preference were an integral part of this project in the 1900s. As E. H. H.

[95] Bell, *Idea of greater Britain*, pp. 52–3.

[96] 'Land for soldiers: Sir Rider Haggard's good beginning, Hobart', *Observer*, 9 Apr. 1916; 'Soldier-settlers in the Dominions', *Times*, 8 Apr. 1916.

[97] Haggard, *After-war settlement*, p. 38; Fedorowich, *Unfit for heroes*, p. 56.

[98] 'Land for soldiers: Sir R. Haggard's mission', *Times of India*, 1 Mar. 1916.

[99] Lucy Noakes, 'From war to domestic service: ex-servicewomen and the free passage scheme 1919–22', *Twentieth Century British History*, 22 (2011), pp. 1–27; Dane Kennedy, 'Empire migration in post-war reconstruction: the role of the Oversea Settlement Committee, 1919–1922', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal concerned with British Studies*, 20 (1988), p. 405.

[100] John A. Schultz, 'Finding homes fit for heroes: the Great War and empire settlement', *Canadian Journal of History/Annales Canadiennes d'Histoire*, 18 (1983), p. 110.

[101] J. Barnes, ed., *The Leo Amery diaries*, I: *1896–1929* (London, 1980), p. 246.

[102] Green, *Crisis of Conservatism*, p. 195.

[103] Jonathan Hyslop, 'The imperial working class makes itself "white": white labourism in Britain, Australia, and South Africa before the First World War', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 12 (1999), pp. 398–421.

Green has noted, 'wherever the notion of imperial preference appeared the theme of racial unity was never far behind'.[104]

In the decade before the First World War in Britain, there was also concern about the food supply in Britain in the event of a European war. Jesse Collings and others who advocated a return to the land in Britain drew heavily on this as an argument for not supporting emigration; Britain needed to support itself.[105] C. R. L. Fletcher and Rudyard Kipling in *A school history of England* similarly worried, 'if anything happened to all you Big Steamers...why you'd have no coffee or bacon for breakfast'.[106] Nevertheless, faith in the Royal Navy – Fletcher and Kipling's solution was 'big warships' – to protect food supplies from the USA and the Dominions was crucial in opposing this view. Haggard was more concerned with the sources of this food on the sparsely populated land of North Australia that presented tempting prospects to enemies in search of land to settle.

The growing population of China, and the potential threat this posed to Australia, the British empire, and the white population of the USA, was a common imperial paranoia in the early twentieth century.[107] The transnational identities of whiteness that Haggard was drawing on in his campaigns for assisted emigration were constituted through notions of imperial solidarity and racial defence.[108] Fears of racial submergence recurred in Haggard's thinking.[109] As he put it in a letter to his Norfolk neighbour William Carr in 1913,

> The weak point of the place is the smallness of the population and the fact that most of it crowds into the cities. No doubt Australia lives in great danger and she knows it. The first time England is involved in serious trouble it may out, for what is there to prevent Japan or China when she is strong enough from taking possession of the same empty Northern territory and by degrees working south. Population is their only chance.[110]

A numerous, strong people drawn from the land was an integral part of Haggard's support for land reform and a state-funded emigration scheme. Settling a potential militia across the empire was crucial to imperial defence

[104] Green, *Crisis of Conservatism*, p. 201.

[105] Jesse Collings, *Land reform: occupying ownership, peasant proprietorship and rural education* (London, 1908), pp. 311–28.

[106] C. R. L. Fletcher and Rudyard Kipling, *A school history of England* (Oxford, 1911), pp. 235–6; Avner Offer, *The First World War: an agrarian interpretation* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 217–33.

[107] Douglas Lorimer, *Science, race relations and resistance: Britain, 1870–1914* (Manchester, 2013), p. 246; Ross G. Forman, *China and the Victorian imagination: empires entwined* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 3–4; Erika Lee, *At America's gates: Chinese immigration during the exclusion era, 1882–1943* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003).

[108] Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the global colour line: white men's countries and the international challenge of racial equality* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 2.

[109] Haggard, *Days of my life*, II, pp. 268–70.

[110] Norfolk Record Office, MC 536/40, letter to Willy, 12 Feb. 1913.

given the fear of a burgeoning threat from the populations of Asia.[111] In a speech at the University of California in San Francisco in 1905, Haggard reiterated his theme concerning the weakening effect of cities.[112] Reporting the speech approvingly, *The Times of India* quoted,

> Another danger is from the East. Unless we reform, the Mongol hordes, who have not the evils of the Occident, will sweep over us as they have done in the past. The men are strong in Asia, and why? Because they are brave, because they are patriotic, because they are determined and wholehearted...they have drawn on a land of primitive virtues, which alone make people.[113]

Haggard was deeply concerned about the great populations in Asia over-ruling 'our white races'. Maintaining Britons who were emigrating under the British flag was an integral part of this argument. In his autobiography, this imperial consideration was paramount. 'I start with this axiom. If the Western nations... allow their population to crowd into the cities, then, I say, the career of the Western nations is going to be short.'[114] Living on the land was a key aspect of imperial defence. The increase in population from living on the land was because 'a large family is a valuable asset to the small-holder; in the city it is nothing but a drawback'.[115]

His speech in San Francisco highlighted his contempt for the weakening and decadent aspects of civilization that recurs in his non-fiction and fiction work. *She* concerns the decline of a decadent African civilization, and one with many British parallels: Ayesha with Queen Victoria, and underground, labyrinthine Kor with the British empire, and particularly London. *She* also expressed Haggard's concerns, and those of charities like the Salvation Army, that Haggard researched in 1910 with *Regeneration*, about the nerves and fitness of the working class, as Job, manservant to Holly and Leo, is the only white figure to die in the book.[116] Haggard's later trilogy concerning the fall of the Zulu kingdom, *Marie* (1912), *Child of storm* (1913), and *Finished* (1917), was published during the period in which he was advocating emigration and they reveal his preoccupation with the 'primitive virtues' of his San Francisco speech. Civilization may have had many boons, but 'the evils of the Occident' meant that the British needed to reconnect with their manly savage edge to maintain their position. 'Primitive virtues' were ones that he hoped would be revived in the connection with the land.

A healthy population was the 'real wealth of the nation' and the bulwark against the spectre of China. The Chinese, strong because they were 'untiring

[111] Offer, *First World War*, pp. 166–8.

[112] Anti-Asian agitation and legislation was prominent in the Western United States from the 1880s onwards. Offer, *First World War*, pp. 171–3; Lee, *At America's gates*, pp. 33–6.

[113] 'THE YELLOW PERIL', *Times of India*, 2 May 1905, p. 6.

[114] Haggard, *Days of my life*, II, p. 268.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Troy Boone, *Youth of darkest England: working-class children at the heart of Victorian empire* (London, 2005), pp. 85–91.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X21000613 Published online by Cambridge University Press

land-bred men', would cast 'their eyes around for worlds to conquer', and seeing the emptiness of Australia would attempt to seize it. Haggard further defended his argument against those who derided this threat as a 'bogey' using the example of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905.[117] Haggard was particularly fulsome in *Days of my life*, perhaps because it was not published in his lifetime, but his views are similar to his other public pronouncements on this threat to white supremacy. Arguing in *The after-war settlement* that if living on the land increased not only the healthiness but also the number of people living in the empire, then it would be key to enabling 'the British to hold and protect a realm that covers one quarter of the earth'.[118]

As Kent Fedorowich and Andrew Thompson have noted, the racial exclusiveness of the white settler societies was a basis of their identity and culture. Where non-European migration threatened to appear in large numbers, particularly in Australia, 'the power of imperial networks to discriminate against indigenous peoples', as well as to provide a basis for white superiority through 'white labourism' and white power over government, was 'striking'.[119] Haggard's call for more white settlement and a reinvigorated race attached to the land was one strand of this strengthening of bonds of global white Britishness. It was crucial in practical terms for the coming race war that he prophesied.

III

Late Victorian and Edwardian debates concerning land reform and emigration were not as separate or opposed in the period before the First World War as has sometimes been argued. Although this was evidently the desire of some proponents of land reform, Haggard and other imperial advocates of emigration and living on the soil advanced the argument in 'Greater Britain' terms. Imperial emigration was imagined in terms of healthy rural living, the strength of the frontier, and the defence of the empire.

Linking rural Britain with the empire has proved to be controversial but it is vital to remember that the empire was often present in pastoral Britain and debates concerning British agriculture. Policy-makers considering imports and exports of foodstuffs, as well as emigration, had the empire firmly in their minds for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Campaigners looked to the empire to alleviate the unhealthy cities as well as bolster the difficulties of farming communities. This is not to argue that the empire makes up the most important facet of land reform or British agriculture, but that it needs to be placed more firmly within that debate.

[117] Haggard, *Days of my life*, II, p. 269.

[118] Haggard, *After-war settlement*, p. 38.

[119] Kent Fedorowich and Andrew S. Thompson, 'Introduction: mapping the contours of the British world: empire, migration and identity', in Kent Fedorowich and Andrew S. Thompson, eds., *Empire, migration and identity in the British world* (Manchester, 2013), p. 14; Bell, *Idea of greater Britain*, pp. 49–55.

Settling Britons on the land, away from the cities, was advocated as a way of maintaining the empire through the two-fold benefits of sharpening and toughening the British character through the frontier and peopling the vulnerable areas of the empire with these toughened Britons to defend it. Emigration and settling on the land were presented as a wide-ranging boon in solving imperial defence, unemployment, and worries of racial degeneration, which were common in imperial circles at this time.

Emigration, for many of its advocates, was still conceived of in terms closely linked to land reform and the benefits of a rural existence. Haggard argued that most of England was already cultivated, and farming in Britain was unprofitable and crippled by the legacies of the feudal system. Therefore, the natural solution for a Britain that many imperialists already extended naturally across the globe was to settle more people on the land across the empire. This argument gained increasing currency during the First World War as concern mounted over what to do with demobilized soldiers, and directly led to the 1919 ex-servicemen's free passage scheme and the Empire Settlement Act of 1922. For Haggard and other advocates of imperial emigration and rural life, the union of these issues seemed obvious under the British flag, especially as so much emigration went to the USA. But it was the link between the land, character, and imperial defence and patriotism that gave the argument currency in Britain.

Cite this article: Watts J (2022). Land Reform, Henry Rider Haggard, and the Politics of Imperial Settlement, 1900–1920. *The Historical Journal* **65**, 415–435. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X21000613