

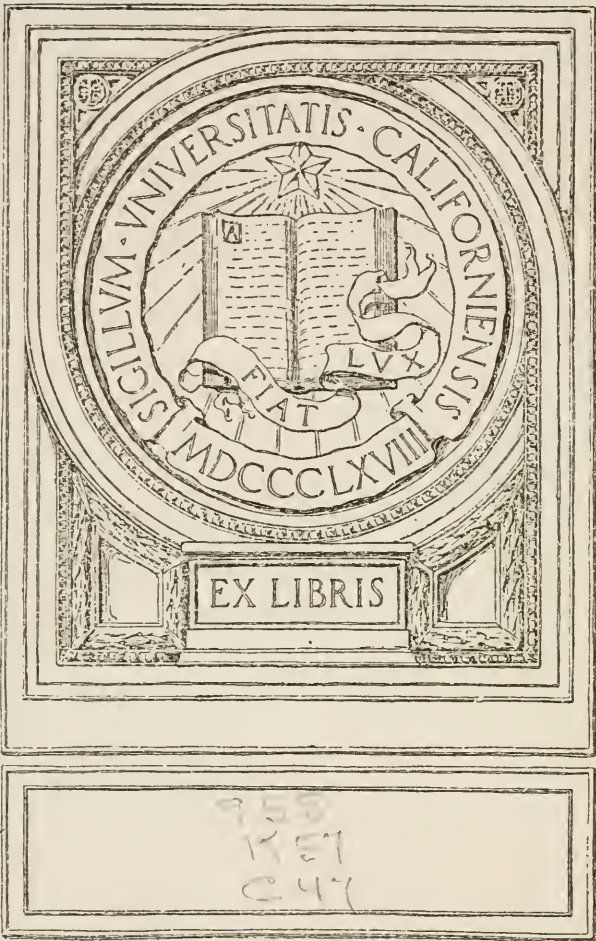
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RUDYARD KIPLING
THE MAN AND HIS WORK

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RUDYARD KIPLING
HIS LIFE AND WORKS



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Rudyard Kipling

RUDYARD
KIPLING
HIS LIFE AND WORKS

BY
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TO
MY WIFE

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His Life

His Life

IN the last hours of the dying year of 1865—

“Between the palms and the sea,
Where the world-end steamers wait”—

there was born to Literature one of her most vigorous sons, Rudyard Kipling.

He was the son of John Lockwood Kipling, C.I.E., the Head of the Lahore School of Art, evidences of whose great work in making casts from the famous mythological sculptures of the temples of the central provinces of India may be found in the principal museums of the world.

Rudyard Kipling's mother was one

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of a trio of beautiful women, each of whom married an artist, one sister marrying Sir E. Poynter and the other Sir E. Burne-Jones.

There is a charming little love-token wrapt up in the choice of the name Rudyard, as it was at Rudyard Lake, near Burslem, at a picnic given by friends, that John Lockwood Kipling first met his wife.

At the age of twelve Rudyard Kipling left Bombay with his father, visiting the great Exhibition of Paris on his way to school at the United Service College, "Westward Ho," where he remained five years.

There is nothing very remarkable to tell about his school career, which he has immortalized for us in *Stalky and Co.*, himself being "the Beetle." The only thing of general interest being that it was really here he began his journalistic career, as he

was editor for two years of the *United Service College Chronicle*.

It was doubtless during these years he collected material for his priceless schoolboy maxims, some of which run :—

†“ If you have any doubts about a quantity, cough. In three cases out of five this will save you being asked to ‘say it again.’

“ The two most useful boys in a Form are (A) the master’s favourite, *pro tem.*; (B) his pet aversion. With a little judicious management (A) can keep him talking through the first half of the construe, and (B) can take up the running for the rest of the time. N.B.—A syndicate should arrange to do (B’s) imposts in return for this service.

“ A confirmed guesser is worth

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his weight in gold on a Monday morning.

“Never shirk a master out of bounds, pass him with an abstracted eye, and at the same time pull out a letter and study it earnestly. He may think it is a commission or some one else.”

In 1880 he returned to India, soon after being appointed to the assistant editorship of the *Civil and Military Gazette* and the *Pioneer*, in which journals his first stories appeared.

Mr. E. K. Robinson has given us the following impression of Kipling in these early years (1886):—

“His face had not acquired the character of manhood, and contrasted somewhat unpleasantly with his stoop (acquired through much bending over an office table), his heavy eyebrows, his spectacles, his

sallow complexion: while his jerky speech and abrupt movements added to the unfavourable impression. But his conversation was brilliant, and his sterling character gleamed through the humorous light which shone behind his spectacles."

He has also given us the following graphic picture of Kipling at work:—

"There was one peculiarity of Kipling which I really must mention, namely, the amount of ink which he used to throw about. In the heat of summer, white cotton trousers and a thin vest constituted his office attire, and by the day's end he was spotted all over like a Dalmatian dog. He had a habit of dipping his pen frequently and deep into the ink-pot, and as all his movements were abrupt, almost jerky, the ink used to fly. When he darted

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into my room, as he used to do about one thing or another in connection with the contents of the paper a dozen times in the morning, I had to shout to him to stand off, otherwise, as I knew by experience, the abrupt halt he would make and the flourish with which he placed the proof in his hand before me would send the pen full of ink—he always had a full pen in his hand—flying over me.

“Driving or sometimes walking home to breakfast in his light attire—plentifully besprinkled with ink, his spectacled face peering out under an enormous mushroom-shaped pith hat, Kipling was a quaint-looking object.”

It is interesting to compare this description with Sir Edward Russell's, written many years later when Rudyard Kipling had “arrived.” He

describes him as a “practical, spruce, well-groomed little figure and making a splendid income—not an Amos or an Isaiah.”

In 1891 he visited America, where he wrote *The Naulahka* in collaboration with Woolcott Balestier, who lived at Vermont, near Brattleboro, and whose sister Carolyn he married in All Souls' Church, Portland Place, London, on January 18, 1892.

He soon returned to Brattleboro, where he finished *Many Inventions*, and wrote several of the poems of *The Seven Seas*.

Since those days Rudyard Kipling has travelled far, having acted as journalist, war correspondent, and as a civilian in the wake of an army. He has visited Africa, America, Australia, China, and Japan.

After the death of his brother-in-law a few years later, of whom he

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wrote, "He had done his work, and held his peace, and had no fear to die," he came to England, where he has made his home. First at Rottingdean, the village whose church is the Mecca of all lovers of Sir Edward Burne-Jones and William Black. In this sequestered village Rudyard Kipling lived for many years in a house opposite the vicarage, where the Duke of Wellington, Cardinal Manning, and Bulwer Lytton were educated; here, too, is the celebrated White Horse Hotel, with whose host, Welfare, a confirmed Radical, Kipling, the advanced Imperialist, had many a warm discussion over the politics of the day. From there he removed to Burwash, Surrey, which is his present home, and where doubtless

“ . . . as a wearied traveller that hath passed a long journey, though perhaps met with some delights by the way, is then gladdest when he comes within kenning of his country. . . . ”



Prose Works

Prose Works

To the careful student of literature, Rudyard Kipling's stories offer a somewhat baffling problem. To criticize a man who is so obviously sincere is always a thankless task. His meteoric flight from obscurity to fame recalls Byron's ascent in the literary firmament.

The great difference between the two styles being that whereas one appeals as a man to man, the other appeals as a man to a class, service, or community of men. It is, perhaps, this last in Kipling's work that will debar him from his place amongst the Immortals. It has been well written that Kipling has too

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seldom “drawn a man for a man’s sake, he has drawn many a man for an Empire’s sake, for the Army’s sake, for the Civil Service’s sake, for a Tribe’s sake.”

What literary level has Rudyard Kipling reached—what measure of literary success is his? Not the success denoted by his balance at his banker’s, but his success as an artist. Will his works last? Are they of the fibre that classics are made? Will work like his and his distinguished contemporary, Pierre Loti, be read by generations yet to be?

But apart from the doubtful debt we owe him as a writer of classics, we are emphatically under an immense obligation to him for helping to arouse us to our responsibilities as Empire rulers, whose mission he defines with such noble simplicity in the following verse:—

“Keep ye the Law—be swift in all obedience,
Clear the land of evil, drive the road and
bridge the ford.

Make ye sure to each his own,

That he reap what he has sown :

By the peace among our peoples let men
know we serve the Lord.”

As special pleader for India, he is perhaps at his best in *His Private Honour*. He gives us a vision of what India might be. He says, “. . . a territorial army for India, an army of specially paid men, enlisted for twelve years' service in Her Majesty's Indian possessions, with the option of extending, on medical certificates, for another five, and a certainty of a pension at the end, . . . I left that territorial army swelled to a quarter of a million men far behind, and swept on as far as an independent India, hiring warships from the mother-country, guarding Aden on the one side and Singapore on the

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other, paying interest on her loans with beautiful regularity, but borrowing no men from beyond her own borders—a colonized, manufacturing India, with a permanent surplus and her own flag.”

(His portrayal of Anglo-Indian life is also very subtle and accurate. It is not too much to say that one may find in the advice given to Rudyard Kipling by Gobiend, a holy man in the Chubari, the whole gamut of Kipling’s work; it is given in the preface to *Life’s Handicap*, in which he says: “Tell them first of those things which thou hast seen, then what thou hast heard, and, since they be children, tell them of battles and kings, horses, devils, elephants and angels; but omit not to tell them of love and such like.”

Much interest is often centred in an author’s method, and Kipling has

told us that for one story of his which reaches the public, six are destroyed. He writes: "It is not what you write, but when, all thought is abortive speech . . . psychologically regarded, every printed page is a picture-book; every word concrete or abstract is a picture. The picture itself may never come to the reader's consciousness, but deep down below in the unconscious realms, the picture works and influences us." (Much admiration is often expressed for Kipling's extraordinary grasp of detail, and his ability to infuse life and romance into such normally prosaic things as screws, bolts, and piston-rods. (Occasionally his power to interest is obscured by too great a wealth of detail.) This fault, however, seldom obtrudes itself. *The Day's Work* is a particularly fine example of suppressed detail. His

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description conveyed in a few strong deft touches of the Dust Storm in the *False Dawn* is superb. *The Love of Women*, perhaps the most ghastly of all his tales, is a wonderful piece of work; while the humour of *Brugglesmith* is magnificent fooling.

It is greatly to be deplored that he was persuaded to alter the ending of *The Light that Failed*, the original being infinitely more artistic than the second.

The realistic school of painters has a strong ally in Rudyard Kipling, as one can easily feel the biting sarcasm which underlies Dick's description of his encounter with the Art Editor when showing him his *Last Shot*. "I lured my model, the beautiful rifleman, up here with drink: I drored him, and I redrored him, and I tredrored him, and I made him

a flushed, dishevelled, bedevilled, scalliwag, with his helmet at the back of his head and the living fear of Death in his eye, and the blood oozing out of a cut over his ankle-bone. He wasn't pretty . . . the art manager of that abandoned paper said his subscribers wouldn't like it, it was brutal and violent—man being naturally gentle when he is fighting for his life. . . . I took my *Last Shot* back. Behold the result! I put him into a lovely red coat without a speck on it. That is Art. I cleaned his rifle—rifles are always clean in service, because that is Art. I pipe-clayed his helmet; pipe-clay is always used on active service, is indispensable to Art. I shaved his chin. I washed his hands and gave him an air of fatted peace. Result—a military tailor's pattern plate: price, thank Heaven, twice as much

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as for the first sketch, which, was moderately decent.”

(It is perhaps by his *Jungle Books* that his fame will last. Who, having read, will ever forget Mowgli, Shere Khan, Bauderlog, Baloo and Bagheera? While his *Just So Stories* are inimitable, to mention only one, *How the Camel got his Hump*, being wholly delightful. His pictures, too, of child life in *Wee Willie Winkie* are radiant with insight and sympathy, while his stories in *Puck of Pook's Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies* are full of magic and enchantment.)

Many stories are current as to the remuneration Kipling receives for his work, but surely no man was ever offered a higher sum than was offered him by the editor of the *Cantab*, a magazine published by Cambridge undergraduates, who made Kipling

the following offer for a contribution from his pen.

“So long as we have any garments left in our wardrobes and an obliging avuncular relative, we are prepared to make any sacrifices to obtain some of your spirited lines.” In reply to their request for a photograph of him to be published in their paper he wrote: “I have not one by me at present, but when I find one I will send it, but not for publication, because my beauty is such that it fades like a flower if you expose it.”

Poetical Works

Poetical Works

“Each for the joy of the working, and each
in his separate star
Shall draw the things as he sees it, for the
God of Things as they are.”

So sings the mastersinger who more than any other poet deserves the title of Laureate of Empire. Rudyard Kipling's poetical genius is a thing apart and of great versatility, [his range of subjects being immense. It is, indeed, a far cry from *The Recessional* to *Fuzzy Wuzzy*; in his verse he speaks with a directness and vividness unequalled by any writer of poetry.] Perhaps his

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greatest and most enduring poem is *The Recessional*, which sounded the exact note of warning that was needed to bring our nation to its senses at a time when it was almost losing its head in an orgie of rejoicing. It is full of intense palpitating life and yet singularly restrained and refined; it is in every sense a great poem, taking in as it does with one mighty sweep the immensity of the British Empire. It is like one of the inspired Psalms of David, which ever makes such a direct appeal to the hearts and consciences of men. The poem appeared in *The Times*, and the manner of its writing, told in Kipling's own words, will be of interest: "That poem gave me more trouble than anything I ever wrote.

✧ I had promised *The Times* a poem

on the Jubilee, and when it became due I had written nothing that had satisfied me. *The Times* began to want that poem badly, and sent letter after letter asking for it. I had many more attempts, but no further progress. Finally *The Times* began sending telegrams. So I shut myself in a room with the determination to stay there until I had written a Jubilee poem.

Sitting down with all my previous attempts before me, I searched through those dozen of sketches, till at last I found just one line I liked. That was *Lest we forget*. Round these words *The Recessional* was written." Next in importance is *A Song of the English*, written at the time of the opening of the Imperial Institute. In it Rudyard Kipling gives us an almost

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panoramic view of the Empire, embracing as it does descriptions of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Rangoon, Singapore, Quebec, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Hobart, and Auckland. There is much that is poor and often grotesque, but the gems of the piece are of such exquisite purity as far to outweigh any defects. It is as the author modestly puts it :

“ . . . A song of broken interlude
Of a singer nothing worth,
Through the naked words and mean
May ye see the truth between
As the singer knew and touched it in the
ends of all the Earth ? ”

The most beautiful verses are undoubtedly those three which belong to *The Dead from the Deep* ; but, taken as a whole, it is a

fine coherent picture of the destiny of the Empire.

The White Man's Burden written for our American cousins, is also a superb piece of work. None of his soldier poems excel *Fuzzy Wuzzy* and *Tommy*. As in his prose, animals come in for a share of his genius. His poem to the exasperating commissariat camel "Oonts," who

" . . . blocked the whole division from the rear-guard to the front,
An' when we got him up again the beggar goes and dies,"

gives a vivid picture of the joys of transport.

In no poem is the bloody misery of war so nakedly portrayed as in *Snarlleyow*. Of all his later poems

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undoubtedly the finest is *If*, a copy of which ought to be given to every young man on attaining his majority.

There is one very noticeable trait running through all Kipling's work—he has practically no reverence or place for women in his scheme of things, although none have sung with greater pathos the cry of the abandoned mistress in “Mary, pity Women.” It is this seeming callousness that lays him open to the charge of cheap cynicism.

Like all great poets, there is much of the mystic in Rudyard Kipling. He believes essentially in a personal religion rather than to a cleaving to old-established ritual and creed. His religion is of the same robustness and masterful strength as men of the type of Sir Richard Grenville, and may be epitomized in the two lines

which he appended to the end of
Life's Handicap :

“ Help me to need no aid from men
That I may help such men as need.”



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