RUDYARD KIPLING AND ANGELA THIRKELL; OR "I THINK KIPLING'S MARVELLOUS, ROBIN, DON'T YOU?"
Hilary Temple

{Talk given at the Angela Thirkell Society AGM 26 September 2015 and reproduced by kind permission of the author, originally in five parts in Kipling Society Newsletters between October 2024 and August 2025}

When you think back to how you first came across Kipling it was very likely the way I did: through *Just So Stories*, the *Jungle Books*, *Kim* and possibly *Puck of Pook's Hill*. Nowadays *The Jungle Book* has been permanently contaminated by Disney and none of today's youngsters will come to it fresh with its total absence of sentimentality and prettiness.

I first encountered Kipling via *Stalky & Co* which I had as a 10th birthday present from my sister and brother. It was an odd choice but my mother shared with her elder brother other school stories such as *Eric, or Little by Little* and *The Fifth Form at St Dominic's*. *Stalky* is at least partly autobiographical, with Kipling as "Beetle".

There is a bullying scene in *Stalky* that chills one even in today's fairly violent era: Stalky and his two study-mates, M'Turk and Beetle, discover that two senior boys are bullying a little one, so they trap them into being bullied in their turn. It is all the more resonant because the various tortures have a name: 'The torture of the Key - which has no key at all - hurts excessively ... "Rocking to sleep" involves three boys and two boxing-gloves.'

The book ends with some of Stalky's coevals, now aged about 30, having a reunion without him. The beauty of this arrangement is that they can gossip about him and his adventures - during the 1880s and 1890s - of bravery and sheer brazen cheek in India with a unit of Sikh soldiers who love him like a brother. A group of Pathans, who watch him at work, rival them in their admiration. All the anecdotes are classics of not expecting your men to do more than you do yourself. He pledges the British Government to all kinds of action - no reference back - and one character comments 'I'd back Stalky against the Foreign Office any day'. Imperialism clearly came in many guises.

Literary criticism focuses in a much more balanced way today upon Kipling's 'You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din' and the real meaning of 'East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet' which is all about individual courage overcoming racial origin. Some of his short stories remain very powerful, though nowadays I find too many of them rather tedious and choked with pipe-smoke. His poems, some of which, unusually, he inserted amid his prose, as in *Just So Stories*, have always been highly rated. Indeed, it is only a matter of a few years since *If* was voted Britain's favourite in a poll conducted by the BBC. But just as in Angela Thirkell (AT) the Conservative Party is meant to run the country, in Kipling England has a God-given right to run other countries so long as individuals perform to a high moral standard.

'Cousin Ruddy' was, as we recall, an admired figure in the families of the four Macdonald sisters as well as among the British public generally. But you couldn't call him particularly kind or encouraging to nascent writers: remember his only comment on Angela's childhood poetry was that her handwriting was 'like sick spiders in an inkpot'? That badly hurt her feelings. Evidently he was more comfortable when giving practical help like autographs for the children to trade at school. 'Cousin' makes him sound closer to AT than he was: born in 1865, Joseph Rudyard was the son of AT's great-aunt Alice (Macdonald) and the 25-year gap between him and Angela would have been a barrier despite Edward Burne-Jones (EB-J)'s fondness for him.[1] Ruddy is thought to have modelled the Lama in Kim on EB-J; and Angela reckoned that Ruddy owed him a lot.

His poem *We and They* epitomises the complexity of Kipling's stance. It is the more interesting to us because of Thirkell's use of the word 'They' - though for her it is a running gag, normally to refer to the post-war Labour Government:

> "Father, Mother and Me, Sister and Auntie say, All the people like us are We, And everyone else is They. And They live over the sea, While We live over the way, But - would you believe it? - They look upon We, As only a sort of They!
>
> ...But if you cross over the sea, Instead of over the way, You may end by (think of it!) looking on We As only a sort of They!"

Not a conclusion that AT was ever likely to come to, unless we count her development of Sam Adams's character! For very understandable reasons, Angela's crossing of the sea did not have the effect that India had upon Kipling who, like Beetle, was found a newspaper job there. Thirkell has [*The Old Bank House*] the iniquities of Them, starting with food. Mr Adams says:

> "If vittamins [note the pronunciation, widely adopted today but clearly regarded as "common" in AT's time] did all that good, why do my hands have industrial fatigue and drop things and forget things? Talk of night starvation; it's day starvation they've got, and everyday starvation too." "Quite right," said Dr. Ford, amused and interested. "I've no particular use for vitamins myself. However They are determined to break us. And when I say us I don't mean professional men like myself or big business men like you, or quiet, hard-working people like all of us here, but the English People. And I daresay They will," said Dr. Ford cheerfully.'

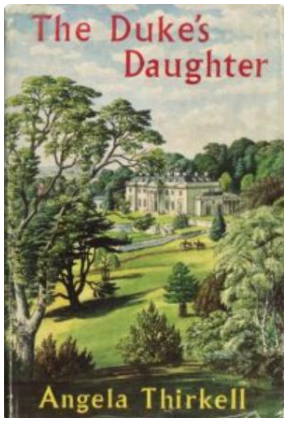
There is then a hubbub of *oratio obliqua*, each remark being typical of the speaker, including: 'one got quite enough to eat but it always made one feel too full and she hoped They felt too full too (Mrs. Dean, who was almost wide awake in her interest); she would tell one what, one did get enough to eat only it was all the wrong things and no wonder one felt that horrid feeling and she expected They felt it too and that was probably what made Them so beastly [*Lucy Marling*].'

[1] Angela Thirkell was a granddaughter of EB-J

Thirkell refers this back to Kipling [*County Chronicle*] when Mr Shergold the housemaster comments, "One might write a book about how awful the government are and call it *They*, sir." Everard Carter as headmaster says, "One might ...So might Kipling." We are presumably meant to take this allusion. Mr Traill tries to score by pointing out that using material from Kipling will incur copyright problems. Mrs Morland says virtually the same thing [*Never Too Late*]. '"THEY ... I don't mean Kipling ... because I'd have to pay royalties if I did. I mean Whoever They Are." 'Here, however, she means those unseen powers that make you lose things. Could all this have been a family joke as well as a real issue? Kipling would obviously have had ideas and expressions pinched from his works and there are references elsewhere to his sensitivity to plagiarism.

Here are one or two contextual borrowings before we get to specific Relusions[2]. The Red Cross and St John Hospital Libraries are significant in Thirkell. The origin of this was May Gaskell's War Library, which she conceived on the night of 4 August 1914. She had collected books for wounded soldiers in the Boer War and feared a repeat. May's son-in-law had written from South Africa: 'We have cut up the Rudyard Kipling volumes into numbered parts and we pass them down the beds, for a volume each is too precious.' The War Library was taken over by the Red Cross, and May and her friends spent much time repairing books, perhaps slicing up the more substantial works to make them go further. Thirkell would have known this and puts 'bookbinding' into several of the novels, as by World War Two there would have been a hefty stock of titles published in paperback as well as used books needing reinforcement. But there is an even stronger link here: despite (or perhaps because of) the 20-year difference in their ages, Burne-Jones and May Gaskell had an intense relationship in which he idealised her and she confided in him the 'profound secret' that Josceline Dimbleby uses as the title for her biography. And it was through Burne-Jones that May had met Kipling.

Difficult though Kipling was reputed to be - for instance, he refused to write any kind of tribute for Burne-Jones's centenary exhibition of 1933 and Thirkell was unsurprised by this - the psychological welfare of wounded soldiers obviously struck a chord with him, perhaps because of the loss of his son John. He donated copies of his own works but also suggested that small-scale magazines should be made for the less literate or more damaged men; he even specified that they should contain four sheets and include pictures, jokes and colour. It would have been easy for the educated middle classes to overestimate their target audience in this respect. Just as Dickens pops up all over the place, so does Kipling appear in sundry Relusions throughout all but the earliest Barsetshire novels. And they are not always just quotations from his works. I imagine, for instance, that Pook's Piece [*Marling Hall*], also Pooker's Piece [*Before Lunch*] is a reference to Pook's Hill. Mr Middleton begins a lecture on the pre-Norman variants Pooker, Pook or Puck, even though it turns out that Pooker was a nineteenth-century clergyman, a typical piece of wit that underlines Mr Middleton's pretentiousness. (Pucken the cowman escapes comment.) A reference to leaf-dipping [*The Duke's Daughter*] is also reminiscent of Puck of Pack's Hill. As we have seen, further afield the Pathans [*Northbridge Rectory]* were regarded as heroic by Kipling - Stalky is their advocate and has an almost magical relationship with them - but they merely present Thirkell's characters



[2] The Angela Thirkell Society refers to allusions, particularly those of a literary nature, as 'relusions', because of a malapropism by a character in *The Old Bank House*. 'I admit I don't quite take the relusion,' said Mr. Adams ...'but my little Heth would, ...she's a great reader and anything literary she's down on like a pack of wolves.'

with a pronunciation problem: are they Paythans or Ptarns or what? Was this also a family joke? And as the herd at Kipling's house Batemans had its Blizzard and Buttercup, so Rushwater has its Romany Rubicon and other alliterations.

I had a note on a bit of paper for some time bearing the question 'Why Turk?' for the name of the Marlings' dog. It turns out that the Kiplings had a bloodhound of that name, though there is no trace of his being a burden as was poor Turk [*The Old Bank House*]. Anyway, I was able to throw away the piece of paper. Now to some proper Relusions. One of the most famous lines from Kipling's poetry, already mentioned, is: 'Oh East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet'. Sister Chiffinch [*Miss Bunting]* refers to this as a 'saying' when someone has mentioned Tony Morland being in Burma: it has the kind of resonance that makes it seem an organic rather than a manufactured product. The following three lines, which are almost never quoted, give the twist to the poem:

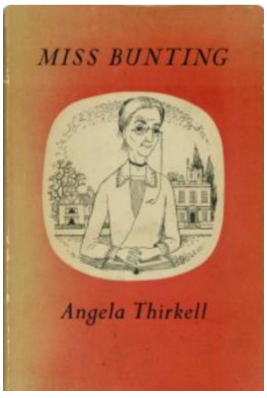
> 'Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
> But there is neither East nor West, Border nor Breed, nor Birth,
> When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth.'

Others following hard upon this include: 'Sisters under the[ir] skin[s] - Judy O'Grady and the Colonel's lady from *Barrack Room Ballads*. Thirkell uses them variously in *Marling Hall* when Lettice is thinking about common office workers fancying David; *Private Enterprise* about Mrs Colonel Matcham being virtually a prostitute; and *Happy Returns* in relation to Mrs Crawley's and Mrs Simnet's views about the Palace. The poem is one we might find slightly unpleasant nowadays, being Cockney memories of women the speaker has been with. Kipling often writes in this voice, as in 'On the Road to Mandalay:

> 'An' I'm learnin' 'ere in London what the 10-year soldier tells:
> If you've 'eard the East a'callin', you won't never 'eed aught else.'

The abundance of apostrophes makes deciphering difficult on occasion, but it reads aloud well.

Thirkell uses 'Take up the white man's burden' [*The Duke's Daughter]* from Kipling's poem of the same name, combined with 'He knew what the 10-year soldier tells' in relation to the Americans in Korea, the sense of this being that the conqueror serves the conquered. 'Lesser breeds without the Law' [*Recessional*] comes up often in Barsetshire thinking. 'Law' in Kipling, incidentally, is not just legal structure but a whole system of knowledge and values and the necessity of accepting things as they are. Thirkell transmutes this into 'alien race without the law' [*Growing Up*] and 'One of the lesser sheets [ie newspapers] without the law' in *Miss Bunting*; Mrs Belton reflects on the 'deep hidden shame of feeling that England's name had been lowered in the eyes of all lesser breeds' [*Love Among the Ruins*]; and 'men who now allow any lesser breed without the law to spit upon the Flag of England [*Happy Returns].* The poem continues:



> 'The tumult and the shouting dies -
> The captains and the kings depart -
> Still stands Thine ancient Sacrifice, An humble and a contrite heart.
> Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet, Lest we forget, lest we forget!

'High hopes faint on a warm hearthstone' [*The Winners*] again sounds proverbial and means in short 'women hold you back'! In *Miss Bunting*, Anne quotes it to Robin Dale about his prospective career in teaching and in *Happy Returns*, Swan uses it of Tony Morland - someone has got the better of Tony! Rather more subtly and reflectively [*Jutland Cottage*], John Leslie

remarks, "I am sure that high hopes can faint on a cold hearthstone just as easily as on a warm one, or even more so." '

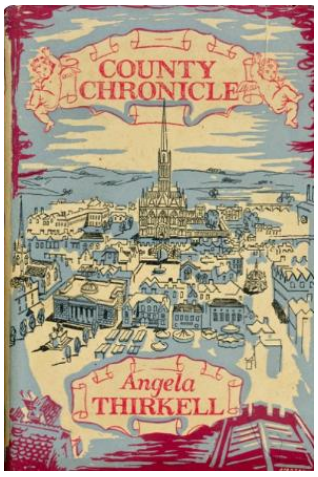
Other less known but very Angela Thirkell relusions[3] include 'The dead they cannot rise, and you'd better dry your eyes' from *Barrack Room Ballads* which Charles rightly admits he may slightly have misquoted [*County Chronicle*] and repeats in *The Duke's Daughter*. The story behind this is the soldier who comes back from the war and finds the grieving widow of a friend. Mrs McFadyen also uses this relusion for her reflections - first in *Close Quarters* ('You'd best take me for your true love') then echoed at the end of the same chapter.

In an entirely different voice 'A Nation spoke to a Nation, / A Throne sent word to a Throne: / 'Daughter am I in my mother's house, / But mistress in my own'[4]. Appropriately Thirkell applies this mainly to feminine contexts. Miss Bunting and Miss Merriman (I'm not sure of the order of precedence here), those eminences grises, meet for the first time and instantly acknowledge each other as equals. 'In the look that passed between [them] a Throne spoke to a Throne and a silent language sped between them which none else in the room could understand, which none else might share' [*Miss Bunting*]. The prospect of Anne Dale's twins causes another relusion at the meeting between Sister Chiffinch and Matron: 'Exactly what happened when a Nation spoke to a Throne Robin never knew and told Anne he was glad he didn't because he would have been frightened out of his wits.' [*County Chronicle*]. In *The Duke's Daughter* Heather 'greeted her father as a kind of equal... Daughter am I in my father's house, but Mistress in my own were the words that would have explained it.' And in *Enter Sir Robert* we have 'Of all the single combats in the world, perhaps one of the most impressive is when - in the great words of a great poet - a Throne speaks to a Throne.' This is Mrs Halliday and Laxton - not even about the coffin but much lower-key in mock-heroic style: the hanging-rails for the linen tablecloths.

The Skraelings come in a couple of times to demonstrate Mr Tebben's knowledge. As we all know they were inhabitants, probably of Eskimo origin, of the north-east coast of North America described by Norse explorers. Richard is 'certainly no Skraeling', he says, the unexplained implication being that he was unfazed by the bull. 'Mr Palmer did make an inquiry as to what his host was talking about, but his niece (Betty, of course) silenced him by saying "Kipling", at which Mr. Tebben winced.' [*August Folly*]. In *Miss Bunting* we have it spelt Skroeling and Anne Fielding says, "I wish a bull would bellow ... [t]hen those Skroelings would stop talking and run away." "What do you know about Skroelings?" said Mr Tebben, amused at this girl's interest in Icelandic matters. "Out of Kipling," said Anne. "It's called 'The Finest Story in the World'. It's marvellous, Mr. Tebben. You would love it. It's all about reincarnation." Mr. Tebben was disappointed by this second-hand approach to Icelandic literature...'

[3]Relusions - allusions, particularly those of a literary nature. For explanation, see previous newsletter.
[4] The opening verse of Kipling's 'Our Lady of the Snows'

Brugglesmith is a Kipling Relusion that personally I find slightly silly in its original state. It is the title of a short story in which a drunken man can only say the word as being his address in response to a police officer's enquiries about why he is vainly trying to get into a house; and the policeman is able to deduce that he means Brook Green, Hammersmith. But you will remember its crucial importance in Thirkell. We are at the *Old Bank House*:' "Adams, that's my name, Sam Adams," said that gentleman. "And I may say I'm sorry I pulled your bell so hard. That wire wants a bit of tightening. The bell pull nearly came out in my hand." "Like Brugglesmith," said Miss Sowerby, holding out her capable but dirty hand. "How do you do. Come in." "I admit I don't quite take the relusion," said Mr. Adams, stepping into the hall and looking admiringly at its proportions and the square staircase beyond, "but my little Heth would, that's my daughter, Miss Sowerby. She's a great reader and anything literary she's down on like a pack of wolves". "Kipling," said Miss Sowerby.' [*The Old Bank House*]



Kipling also provides an excellent put-down for Miss Dale to use with Oliver Marling. [*County Chronicle*] He is pontificating about his wretched Bohun and says: ' "I am only wondering ... whether my chapter on his Rosicrucian studies may not be a little stiff for the ordinary reader." ...Now was the moment when his dear sister Lucy was badly needed, to say "Rot" in no uncertain tones, but Lucy was at that moment in her garden at Edgewood..."Perhaps," said Miss Dale, "some of your readers will be glad to hear about Bombast Paracelsus and Read what Fludd the Seeker tells us, Of the Dominion that runs Through the cycle of the Suns" and that, she said to herself, will show you. "Good lord! Do you read the mystics?" said Oliver. "Oh no. Only Kipling," said Miss Dale. "You will find the poem in *Plain Tales from the Hills*. Is there anything in the evening paper?" ' As they say in triumph nowadays - Yes-s-s-s-s!

There is an embarrassing scene [*Happy Returns*] during the dance at the Nabob when Charles brings in three ices and offers them on one knee to Edith, Justinia and then Clarissa. '"Last, loneliest, loveliest, exquisite, apart - and God send no one will come down on me for royalties as it's Kipling - will you accept an ice, as cold as your heart, as pink as ..."at which Clarissa [who is already wrought-up] got up with brimming eyes, looked round for help, saw none, and went quickly out of the room.' Dr Perry gives Charles a dose of reviving brandy and lectures him about getting on with it. The point of this is that Charles and Clarissa have been engaged for some time with no movement on either side. The odd thing is that Kipling wrote this to describe Auckland, New Zealand: as we so often see, Thirkell is brilliant in her ability to adapt a reference to a context quite remote from its origins. The verse is the last in the poem 'The Song of the Cities' and in full reads 'Last, loneliest, exquisite, apart - / On us, on us the unswerving season smiles / Who wonder, 'mid our fern, why men depart / To seek the Happy Isles!'

The death of George VI provokes a reference by Mary Leslie [*Jutland Cottage]* to 'the Kipling poem about all the great men who welcome Jane Austen [into heaven].' Canon Fewling picks up the point and says,' "He [Kipling] knew. He knew almost too much. I have sometimes thought that after a hundred years or so he will be recognised as a prophet. If I were literary I should like to write something about his prophetic works. Now, there's one called The City of

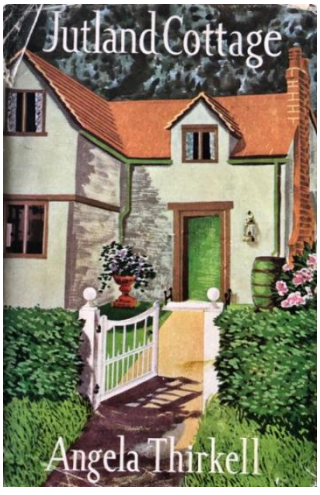
Brass and it says word for word everything that has happened and is happening in England. But no one ever mentions it.'" A very despairing poem, it attacks early liberal reforms when the Labour Party first came into existence, bewailing the notion of paying people to be idle (though to our way of thinking this means not letting them starve through unemployment). We could well claim that this remains an issue today. Additionally [*Close Quarters*] Mrs MacFadyen recalls Frank Churchill taking a second, slightly but correctly and Canon Fewling replies, '"Mess that woman's heart. Do you know Kipling's poem about her? You know I am a Kipling fan - dreadful expression, but come to stay. I know so much of him by heart."'

The following Stalky references may be too tenuous to be Relusions and are perhaps more like echoes. Stalky's study-mate, the Irishman M'Turk, is described by Kipling as 'viceroy of four thousand naked acres ..., lord of a crazy fishing boat' and speaking as an equal to a local irascible landlord in Devon. Thirkell picks Aubrey Clover, of all people, to allude to this as he says to Denis Stonor: '"Not the way you and I used to behave"...speaking in the role of the ex-public-school man, heir to thousands of impoverished acres.' [Love Among the Ruins]. Another echo is 'Mr Adams found time to come over and deal so faithfully with the trouble-makers that the grumblings subsided' [The Old Bank House] compared with 'The Head began with Stalky, M'Turk and Beetle. He dealt faithfully by them.' - that is, caned them for impudence.

Stalky & Co are at a school that aims to send its students on to Sandhurst, often via a crammer. Bits of this come out in Thirkell. 'Back to the Army again, Sergeant,' from Barrack Room Ballads, is quoted by Mr Wickham with the sense that you have to recover from a shock and take up your habitual activities, in this case recalling that he had been turned down by Effie Arbuthnot [Jutland Cottage]. No origin is given, Thirkell presumably assuming, as she so often does, that the reference is familiar to her reader. At first glance it appears a jolly little ditty:

> 'Back to the Army again. Sergeant Back to the Army again.
> 'Ow did I learn to do right about turn?
> I'm back to the Army again.'

In fact, this is Kipling criticising the practice of letting good, enlisted soldiers go after six years' service. They can then find no jobs and have to cheat to re-enlist: the man in the poem changes his name, and of course has to pretend not to know any drill. I first came across this quotation being used by Lord Peter Wimsey who was talking to Bunter at the time - a real sergeant. We shall come to a darker Relusion in similar vein later on.



'The ship that found herself' is a Kipling Relusion that is suddenly and unexpectedly brought in by Justinia Lufton in a fashion that suggests that AT was aware that her character was under-developed and thus mismatched badly with that of Swan whom we have known and loved for years. Swan is describing [Jutland Cottage] how the settling of the school at Harefield has been thought out '"down to the last brass farthing - if there is such a thing. But that isn't all." ... "You mean The Ship That Found Herself," said Justinia. "Clever, clever girl," said Swan admiringly. "That's it.... we have got to get into tune with Harefield, or get it to meet us halfway." ' The idea of this, as Mr Scatcherd would say, is that the different parts of the ship claim superiority in the story that bears this title but realise at the end that they are all members one of another and it is at that level that the crew have to get them to work together.

I don't know if 1953 was a particularly Kipling year for Thirkell but there are several other Relusions in Jutland Cottage. Tubby Fewling is regretting the reference in the last chapter of the Book of Revelations to 'no more sea'. Mrs Crofts suggests tactfully to him that St John the Divine was probably fed up with having to live on an island and that it was 'wishful thinking'. Canon Fewling thanks her and says:' "Kipling has a very good poem about that very thing and how the mariners will be allowed to keep their sea for ever. And he was a prophet, you know, though most people haven't noticed it." ' That poem is 'The Last Chantey' and significantly it is also reluded to by Mr Parkinson [Close Quarters], visiting Admiral Phelps who is lodging with Tubby and wants a reading out of the Bible but not Revelations because of the 'no more sea' problem. He reports to Canon Fewling,' "So I took the liberty -1 do hope you don't mind - of taking out one of your Kipling volumes with the verses about all the seamen who didn't like the idea of heaven without any sea and how the Lord called the good sea up to Him, And 'stablished its borders unto all eternity... I think he liked it.'"We like it too, because it demonstrates that Mr Parkinson has arrived in Barsetshire society.

Lydia Keith is not really the type to generate Relusions as she isn't reflective enough, but a very interesting one is used about her in Cheerfulness Breaks In. Mrs Keith perceives that she has carried off 'the much sought-after barrister as captive of her bow and spear'. There are masses of references to this in publishing and it actually derives from a very intense passage in Scott's Ivanhoe [chapter 24] between Brian de Bois Guilbert and Rebecca: 'The eye of the Templar flashed fire at this reproof - "Hearken," he said, "Rebecca; I have hitherto spoken mildly to thee, but now my language shall be that of a conqueror. Thou art captive of my bow and spear, subject to my will, by the laws of all nations; nor will I abate an inch of my right, or abstain from taking by violence what thou refusest to entreaty or necessity." "Stand back!" said Rebecca.' Who would deny that Lydia is a worthy successor to Rebecca! Kipling's poem 'The Captive' retains this intensity, but to mourn the waste of well-educated Brits in the Empire.

'A scrimmage in a border station -
A canter down some dark defile -
Two thousand pounds of education Drops to a ten-rupee jezail -
The Crammer's boast, the Squadron's pride, Shot like a rabbit in a ride!
The "captives of our bow and spear"
Are cheap - alas - as we are dear.'

An almost equally exotic Relusion is 'giddy harumphrodite' which again has been much quoted down the years - for instance in a briefing manual on automatic weapons! Kipling invents the word to refer to the Marines in 'Soldier and Sailor Too':

' 'E isn't one of the reg'lar line, nor 'e isn't one o' the crew,
'E's a kind of a giddy harumphrodite - soldier and sailor too.'

In Cheerfulness Breaks In Philip says,' "I suppose I'm a bit of a giddy harumphrodite, myself: soldier and schoolmaster too.'" Mr Wickham also uses it to describe Mrs Leslie when she is trying to count dinner guests:' "What a mind, what a mind!... A giddy Harumphrodite, guests and arithmetic too - that's what you are.'" [Close Quarters]. If you Google 'harumphrodite', by the way, you get a prim little message saying "Did you mean hermaphrodite?"

This by no means represents the total of Kipling Relusions: a proper study would take in some of the more obscure, though possibly no less important. Of course there are whole swathes of

Kipling that are NOT used as Relusions - although I admit that this could turn into a rather precious exercise! Some missed opportunities that occurred to me are:

'The female of the species is more deadly than the male'. I cannot find it anywhere in the Barsetshire novels, yet AT demonstrates very adequately that this was a sentiment to which her bosom returned an echo.

'And walk with kings nor lose the common touch'.

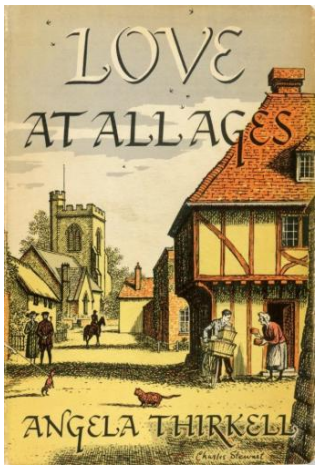
'They shut the road through the woods
Seventy years ago.
Weather and rain have undone it again,
And now you would never know
There was once a way through the woods.'

Perhaps Barsetshire is too well-regulated to need this, although the neglect of the grounds attached to big houses is well described.

'It's Tommy this and Tommy that, an' 'Chuck 'im out, the brute!'
But it's "Saviour of 'is country" when the guns begin to shoot.'

And there is only the odd tiny reference to Just So Stories, the Jungle Books and Kim. I was convinced that I would track down Mutta Kundra [Growing Up; Jutland Cottage] in Kipling as it sounds as if it ought to be in India, a mule is involved and 1915 is so specific. So far I haven't: the search must continue!

The blood relationship with Rudyard Kipling was a source of great pride to Angela Thirkell who as we have seen found him intellectually and poetically a giant. They had such different upbringings - Angela's as a cherished daughter and (particularly) granddaughter, Ruddy's a nightmare of separation, bullying and ruined eyesight through having to read in secret at night. Then Kipling makes a good choice of spouse while Angela fails. His career is set out before him whereas this would not have been appropriate for Angela. Both of them were, I think, quite angry people whose anger was at least partially channelled into their writing, while leaving them with plenty spare to be really difficult with their families. Both lost children, though in different ways. Both have very strong ideas about what constitutes appropriate behaviour and they won't countenance any falling-off. Thirkell's is the relatively simplistic view, but this is not to be wondered at, given their respective experiences. Is Kipling perhaps more of a man's man? Thirkell admires him as a prophet but does not love his work and characters as she did those of Dickens, since the latter she could take on her own terms and weave him into her work far more liberally than she did Cousin Ruddy's.



I shall let Ludo and Nurse have the last word, even though you will protest that neither of them is literary. Lydia plays a significant role by presenting to Ludovic their spare copy of the Definitive Edition of Kipling's verse [Love At All Ages] after Harry Merton has amazed everybody, including us, by having heard of heliographing because he has actually been reading Kipling. It is clear from the gift that Lydia has her eye on Ludo as son-in-law elect. When he shows it to Nurse she comments that it's a 'funny name' and wonders at anybody having time to write a book that size. Defensively Ludo cites as another funny name Rider Haggard. This is AT at her most laid-back (as we would say nowadays). Reluding to the immortal verse of J. K. Stephen entitled 'To R.K. [1891]':

'Will there never come a season
Which shall rid us from the curse
Of a prose that knows no reason
And an unmelodious verse ...
When there stands a muzzled stripling,
Mute, beside a muzzled bore:
When the Rudyards cease from Kipling
And the Haggards ride no more.'

Nevertheless, we have to say with Anne that he does remain absolutely marvellous.