



*The*  
**KIPLING JOURNAL**

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**KIPLING SOCIETY**



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## THE KIPLING SOCIETY

THE Society was founded in 1927. Its first President was Major-General L. C. Dunsterville, C.B., C.S.I. (" Stalky ") (1927-1946), who was succeeded by Field-Marshal The Earl Wavell, G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., C.M.G., M.C. (1946-1950), Lt.-Gen. Sir Frederick A. M. Browning, G.C.V.O., K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O. (1951-1960).

Members are invited to propose those of their friends who are interested in Rudyard Kipling's works for election to membership. The Hon. Secretary would be glad to hear from members overseas as to prospects of forming a Branch of the Society in their district

The Subscription is : Home Members, 25/- ; Overseas Members, 15/-; Junior Members (under 18, anywhere), 10/-; U.S.A. Branch, \$3.50 per annum. These include receipt of *The Kipling Journal* quarterly.

**The temporary address of the Society is Beckett Lodge, Beckett Avenue, Kenley, Surrey (01-660 8711).**

# THE KIPLING SOCIETY

## Forthcoming Meetings

### COUNCIL MEETINGS

Wednesday, 21st June, 1967, 2.30 p.m.

Wednesday, 20th September, 1967, after A.G.M. at 2.30 p.m.

Addresses for these meetings not yet known.

### DISCUSSION MEETINGS

**July 5th, 1967**, at The Royal Society of St. George, 4 Upper Belgrave Street, S.W.I, at 5.30 for 6 p.m. Mrs. Bagwell Purefoy will place on view her unrivalled collection of criticism, appreciation and comment culled from the world press at the time of the Centenary, and will read and discuss. The Hon. Secretary will also give a short talk on the press comment he has amassed since 1958.

**September 13th, 1967.** Same time and place. Mr. T. F. Evans, Editor of "The Shavian," will speak on a subject not yet decided.

**November 15th, 1967.** Same time and place. Mr. R. L. Green will speak on "'The Man from Nowhere'—London 1889."

**Annual Luncheon.** The Annual Luncheon of the Kipling Society will be held at the Connaught Rooms, Great Queen Street, W.C.2, on Wednesday, 25th October, 1967. The Guest of Honour will be the Rt. Hon. the Earl Baldwin of Bewdley, author of "The Macdonald Sisters".

Application forms will be sent out in September.

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## NEWS AND NOTES

### 'LOOK, LOOK WELL, O WOLVES!'

'Where shall we lair today? for, from now, we follow new trails.' From the beginning of this year the Kipling Society changed the place of its Discussion Meetings to the Royal Society of St. George, 4 Upper Belgrave Street, S.W.I. Since the end of March the Library has been housed with the Royal Commonwealth Society, at 18 Northumberland Avenue, W.C.2; the Office has not yet reached a secure home but is at present camped by the wayside — its trail is blazed on the inner front cover and the outer back cover of this *Journal*, which Members are requested to consult until our Spring Running is complete. In this 'Time of New Talk' we must turn first to 'the word of the Head Wolf' Here follow —

## HON. SECRETARY'S NOTES

### OUR MOVE OF OFFICE

We thought we were safe at 323 High Holborn for at least another three years, but last October we received notice to quit by April, owing to demolitions. The ensuing six months were anxious ones for several of us, because we could not hope to get another London office on anything like such favourable terms. Nor were we able to let our members know our future plans, because these could not be confirmed until after the March *Journal* had been finalised. We can now announce the following arrangements, some of which we sincerely hope are only temporary.

1. *The Library.* This arrangement is *not* temporary. The Kipling Society's Library of well over a thousand books has been taken over, as such, by the Library of the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS), 18 Northumberland Avenue, W.C.2. This will undoubtedly be a great advantage, both to our members and to students. The terms under which our members will have access to our library in its new home have not yet been fully worked out, but they certainly will have such access, possibly by signing a visitors' book until they are known personally to the staff. Watch for a later announcement about this. The RCS Library is open daily during working hours, so our members will no longer need to telephone in advance. And from now on our splendid collection of books, by and about Kipling, will be catalogued and maintained by a trained staff, in a manner which up to now has not been possible.

2. *The Office.* This has been a much worse headache than the

Library, which the RCS were eager to have, and over which they have been extremely helpful. A London office is essential both to our work and our standing, but the cost of a small room with any reasonable security of tenure is, nowadays, utterly beyond our means — with one possible exception, which cannot be regarded as more than a hope. However, entirely due to the kindness of our Hon. Treasurer, Mr. M. R. Lawrance, and his firm, Messrs. Milne, Gregg & Turnbull, we have been lent working space at No. 5 Albemarle Street, W.1. This may well have saved the life of the Society. We do not wish to bother the Firm with letters and 'phone calls, so will all members who wish to write to us kindly use, until further notice, the address shown on the front and back covers of this *Journal*. Thank you.

A. E. B. P.

### EXHIBITION AT 'BATEMAN'S'

The annual visit by the Society will have taken place by the time this *Journal* is published, but Members who were not able to be present on May 5th may be interested to hear some particulars of the Kipling Exhibition on view at 'Bateman's' until the autumn. The theme of the Exhibition is 'Childhood' — Kipling's own, and that of all of us who were brought up on *Just So Stories* and *The Jungle Books*. Once again Mrs. Bambridge has lent treasures beyond price, ranging from Kipling's baptismal certificate, some of the books which he read as a child, by way of his own early efforts in *Schoolboy Lyrics*, to the delightful limericks that he wrote for his own children. Most of the books mentioned in the first chapter of *Something of Myself* are there: *The Hope of the Katzekopfs* which quotes Corbet's 'Farewell, Rewards and Fairies'; and the 'tale about a lion-hunter in South Africa who fell among lions who were all Freemasons' (James Greenwood's *King Lion*); and the 'two books of verse about child-life . . . one — blue and fat [*Poems written for a Child*] . . . the other book — brown and fat [*Child Nature*], besides *Stories told to a Child* by Jean Ingelow, one of the 'good spirits' 'in the background' at 'the little house of the Three Old Ladies.'

Among Mrs. Bambridge's loans is an early manuscript volume which contains the poem 'Two Lives,' Kipling's first published work. And there is also the manuscript of the complete 'Telscombe Tie' of which only a few lines have been published, as a scrap of song in *Rewards and Fairies*.

Kipling's own writings for children are exhibited in two cases devoted to *The Jungle Books* and *Just So Stories*. Their evolution is traced by means of manuscript facsimiles, via periodical publications to the finished books, and in the process we see also how various artists have imagined the immortals — from Mowgli and Bagheera to Taffimai and the Cat who Walked by Himself. There are also photographs of the original manuscript (now in the Berg Collection at New York Public Library) of "When the cabin portholes are dark and green" with Kipling's own delightful illustrations — perhaps actually scribbled for 'Effie' during that last, fatal voyage to America when the ship was actually 'fifty north and forty west.'

Perhaps another year will bring forth an exhibition centring round

*Puck of Pook's Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies*, the stories whose true home is at 'Bateman's' (we have a delightful fore-taste of what may be in the 'Charter of the River' drawn up by Kipling for his two younger children); and *Stalky & Co.* is only represented by a few photographs.

### 'ANCIENTS OF THE COLLEGE'

The United Services College at Westward Ho! and Kipling's experiences there both in actual fact from 1878 to 1882, and in his fictional return during the writing of the *Stalky* stories, would give the foundations for an excellent Exhibition — which may one day be mounted if the exciting experiment of the last two years becomes a habit at 'Bateman's.' 'The Coll' grows yearly more legendary as fewer and fewer remain who can remember it in its 'twelve bleak houses by the shore.' Probably the last who remembered it while Kipling, Dunsterville and Beresford actually dwelt there in 'Number Five,' Robert Frederick Pearson, (Coll. No. 365), died on January 25 in his ninety-ninth year. He was at the U.S.C. from September 1880 until April 1882, and his obituary in *The Journal of the Queens Regiment* claims that 'he was a "fag" to Rudyard Kipling' — if so, we have missed our last chance of a glimpse into the true background of *Stalky & Co.!*

R. F. Pearson proceeded to Sandhurst, and obtained a commission in 'The Buffs' in 1889. He took part in the Relief of Chitral, was at Tirah (1897-8) and after thirteen years on or near the North West Frontier, served in South Africa. 'At the end of the Boer War he returned to South Africa with Baden-Powell's Police. Later, he had the unique experience of instructing at both the R.M.C. Sandhurst, and the R.M.A. Woolwich. While instructing at the former, the future Field Marshals Dill and Wavell were amongst his Officer Cadet students.'

He retired in 1908, and became Commander of the Cheltenham O.T.C. until 1925 — with a gap from 1914-19 when he re-joined his regiment and was promoted Colonel on his second retirement, and later awarded the O.B.E.

### 'SOMEWHERE'S EAST OF SUEZ'

Kipling's accuracy is often called in question, as in the case of the direction of China from Mandalay — and his excuse is always valid. A pleasant account of 'A Ten-day Passage from Europe to Asia,' with the sub-title 'The World of Kipling comes to Life on the Long Voyage East of Suez' by Delia and Ferdinand Kuhn in *The New York Times* of 8 Jan. 1967 (for which I am indebted to Professor Morton Cohen), shows how alive Kipling's memory is and how inevitably his works are called to mind at the very name of any of the places to which he gave the fourth dimension of an immortal place in his stories or poems.

'Kipling Sailed the Red Sea frequently and used it as the setting for one of his *Just So Stories*. His tale of 'How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin' ends with this verse :

" This Uninhabited Island  
Is off Cape Guardafui,  
By the Beaches of Socotra

And the Pink Arabian Sea :  
 But it's hot — too hot from Suez  
 For the likes of you and me  
     Ever to go  
     In a P. & O.  
 And call on the Cake-Parsee."

'As in "The Road to Mandalay," Kipling redrew the map here to suit his rhymes and rhythms. But who cares if Guardafui is 400 miles south of the Red Sea area where Kipling's island was ? . . . The Gulf of Aden leads us into Kipling's Pink Arabian Sea. Guardafui and Socotra, it appears, are not just fanciful names ; we sight them both . . . !

R. L. G.

## SIX HOURS WITH RUDYARD KIPLING

by Arthur Gordon

The year was 1935, the month was June, the English weather was blue and gold. The world was young, and so was I. But, driving down from Oxford in the old Sunbeam I had borrowed for the occasion, I felt my assurance deserting me.

The great man was almost a recluse now, and it was said that he did not care for Americans. Through a mutual friend I had managed to secure permission to visit him. Now as I neared the little village of Burwash, where he lived, I began to experience something like stage fright. And when I found the sombre seventeenth-century house and saw my host walking down to the gate to meet me, I grew so flustered that I hardly knew whether to shake hands or turn and run.

He was so small ! The crown of the floppy hat he wore was not much higher than my shoulder, and I doubt if he weighed 120 pounds. His skin was dark for an Englishman's; his moustache was almost white. His eyebrows were as thick and tangled as marsh grass, but behind the gold-rimmed glasses his eyes were as bright as a terrier's. He was sixty-nine.

He saw instantly how ill at ease I was. "Come in, come in," he said companionably, opening the gate. "I was just going to inspect my navy." He led me, speechless, to a pond at the end of the garden, and there was the "navy" : a six-foot skiff with hand-cranked paddle wheels. "You can be the engine room," he said. "I'll be the passenger list."

I was so agitated that I cranked too hard. The paddle wheel broke and there I was, marooned in the middle of a fishpond with Rudyard Kipling. He began to laugh, and so did I, and the ice was broken.

A gardener finally rescued us with a long rake. By then my host had me talking. There was something about him that drove the shyness out of you, a kind of understanding that went deeper than words and set up an instantaneous closeness. It was odd : we couldn't have been

more different. He was British ; I was American. He was near the end of an illustrious road; I was at the beginning of an obscure one. He had had years of ill health and pain; I was untouched by either. He knew nothing about me — there was nothing to know. I knew all about him, and so to me he was not just a fragile little man in a toy boat. He was Kim and Fuzzy Wuzzy and Gunga Din. He was Danny Deever and the Elephant's Child. He was<sup>1</sup> the dawn coming up like thunder on the road to Mandalay ; he, was the rough laughter of the barrack room, the chatter of the bazaar and the great organ tones of " Recessional ". To me he was, quite simply, a miracle, and no doubt this showed in my dazzled eyes, and he felt it.

I had had an ulterior motive in coming, of course. I wanted to meet him for himself, but I was also a puzzled and unsure young man. I had in my pocket a letter offering me a job as instructor in an American university. I didn't really want to be a teacher; I knew I didn't have the selflessness or the patience. What I wanted to be, ultimately, was a writer. But the teaching job was the only offer I had, and, at home, the dead hand of the Depression still lay heavy on the land. Should I play it safe, and say yes to the offer?

What I wanted desperately was for someone of great wisdom and experience in the field of letters to tell me what to do. But I knew this was a preposterous responsibility to thrust upon a stranger. And so I waited, hoping that somehow the heavens would open and the miracle of certainty would descend upon me.

While I waited, he talked. And, as he talked, I began to forget about my problems. He tossed words into the air, and they flashed like swords. He spoke of his friendship with Cecil Rhodes, through whose generosity I had gone to Oxford. " They say we were both imperialists," said Kipling a little grimly. " Well, maybe we were. The word is out of fashion now, and some Englishmen are weak enough to be ashamed of it. I'm not." He questioned me almost sharply about some poets of prominence : T. S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, E. E. Cummings. I said I thought they were good. " Do you ? " he said guilelessly. " Quote me a few lines."

I sat there, helpless, and he laughed. " You see," he said, " that's the trouble with verse that doesn't rhyme. But let's not be too harsh where poets are concerned. They have to live in no-man's-land, halfway between dreams and reality."

" Like Mowgli," I said impulsively, thinking of the brown-skinned boy torn between village and jungle. He gave me a look with his blue eyes. " Like most of us," he said.

He talked of ambition, of how long it took fully to master any art or craft. And of secondary ambitions : the more you had, he said, the more fully you lived. " I always wanted to build or buy a 400-ton brig," he said reflectively, " and sail her round the world. Never did. Now, I suppose, it's too late." He lit a cigarette and looked at me through the smoke. " Do the things you really want to do if you possibly can. Don't wait for circumstances to be exactly right. You'll find that they never are."

" My other unrealized ambition," he went on, " was to be an archaeologist. For sheer, gem-studded romance, no other job can touch



it." We returned to his study, a large square room lined with bookcases on two sides. There were his desk, his chair, an enormous waste-basket and his pens — the kind you dip in ink. At right angles to the fireplace was a small sofa. "I lie there," he said with a smile, "and wait for my daemon to tell me what to do."

"Daemon?"

He shrugged. "Intuition. Subconscious. Whatever you want to call it."

"Can you always hear him?"

"No," he said slowly. "Not always. But I learned long ago that it's best to wait until you do. When your daemon says nothing, he usually means no."

Mrs. Kipling called us to lunch, and afterwards I felt I should take my leave. But Kipling would not hear of it. "I'm still full of talk," he said. "You've eaten my salt, so now you must be my audience."

So we talked. Or rather, he talked while I made superhuman efforts to remember everything. He had a way of thrusting a harsh truth at you and then, in the next breath, beguiling you into a wry acceptance of it. "If you're endowed," he said at one point, "with any significant energies or talent, you may as well resign yourself to the fact that throughout your life you will be carrying coattail riders who will try to exploit you. But instead of fretting about this you'd better thank God for the qualities that attract the parasites, and not waste time trying to shake them off."

We talked of friendship; he thought young ones were best and lasted longest. "When you're young," he said, "you're not afraid to give yourself away. You offer warmth and vitality and sympathy without thinking. Later on, you begin to weigh what you give." I said, diffidently, that he was giving me a lot, and his eyes twinkled. "A fair exchange. You're giving me attention. That's a form of affection, you know."

Looking back, I think he knew that in my innocence I was eager to love everything and please everybody, and he was trying to warn me not to lose my own identity in the process. Time after time he came back to this theme. "The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. To be your own man is a hard business. If you try it, you'll be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself."

Suddenly the shadows were long on the grass. When I stood up to go, I remembered the letter in my pocket and the advice I had thought I wanted. But now there was nothing to ask. Do the things you really want to do . . . Don't wait for circumstances to be exactly right . . . When your daemon says nothing, he usually means no . . . No price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself. I knew, now, that I would refuse the teaching job and wait for my daemon to speak clearly to me.

We walked to the gate, where my host held out his hand. "Thank you," he said. "You've done me good-"

The thought that I could have done anything for him was beyond my grasp. I thanked him and climbed into the old Sunbeam. I looked back once. He was still standing there in his floppy hat, a great little

man who forgot his own illness and his own problems and spent a whole day trying to help a troubled and self-conscious boy from across the sea.

He had a gift for young friendships, all right. He gave me much more than advice. He gave me a little bit of himself to carry away. After all these years, I feel the warmth of it still.

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## KIM - NOVEL OR PROPAGANDA ?

By Elliot L. Gilbert

When *Kim* was first published in London, feeling was running rather high against some of the political positions with which Kipling's name was associated, and so the new novel was not received as well as some of the earlier works. One purely aesthetic criticism centred around the question of the story's form. Had Kipling at long last shown himself capable of writing a satisfactory full-length work of fiction, or had he not — this was the issue which concerned a number of the critics. Ever since the author had exploded on the London literary scene in 1890 with his brilliant poems and short stories, these critics had been "wondering aloud" in print whether the young man would be capable of a more sustained piece of fiction. Now, ten years later, the issue was still in doubt. Neither *The Light That Failed* nor *The Naulahka* represented Kipling at his best, and as for *Captains Courageous*, memorable though the tale was, neither its story nor its scope permitted it to be classified as a serious, adult novel. *Kim* was a different matter. It was a work of the author's full maturity, it had been written carefully over a period of many years, it was long and ambitious and into its pages its writer had distilled all of his knowledge of India and all of his wisdom about the world. If Kipling was a novelist at all, that fact would emerge from *Kim*; and in the opinion of many critics, Kipling was still not a novelist. Indeed, the author himself was in essential agreement with this judgment. Writing about *Kim* years later in *Something of Myself*, Kipling spoke of the book as being "nakedly picaresque and plotless," an estimate echoing many of the comments which greeted the work on its first appearance. For to a number of the early readers, the episodic nature of *Kim* was just another illustration of Kipling's inability to sustain a narrative beyond a relatively few pages. There was, to be sure, the general thread of a story that ran through the book, but not noticeably more of a thread than runs through *The Jungle Books*, for example. Actually, Kipling seemed to be at his best when publishing book-length works that dealt with the same characters and backgrounds throughout, and had a general forward movement, but which were, in fact, sets of short stories. In this connection see, in addition to *The Jungle Books*, *Stalky & Co.*, *Puck of Pook's Hill*, and *Rewards and Fairies*,

Modern readers may wonder why there should have been such a fuss about the question of whether or not *Kim* was a novel. If a story is good, such a reader will say, why argue pedantically over what to call it? The answer to this question is to be found in the history of the period during which Kipling wrote. When seeking to judge Kipling as a writer of fiction — to place him in the hierarchy of prose writers — critics at the end of the nineteenth century had, as the figures against whom to measure the new writer, story-tellers who had all made their marks as novelists. Some of these great men and women, though by no means all of them, had written shorter works, too — Dickens' *Christmas Carol* is an obvious example — but the short story as such was not yet fully established as a genre, and in any case no writer had ever proven himself a great artist solely through his work in that form. Thus, when Kipling first appeared on the scene with his remarkable short narratives — some of which, like "The Man Who Would Be King," were quite substantial — the natural impulse of the critics was to suppose that the new writer would soon be moving on to bigger things and to withhold their judgment of him as an artist until he had done so. Obviously, Kipling also felt this obligation to novel writing, for within two years he had published two long works, neither of which was up to the quality of his short fiction. That the short story might in itself be a worthy medium for an artist was something that for a long time did not occur either to the critics or to the writer, and so it was only natural that when *Kim* appeared everyone should have been very concerned with the question of whether or not Kipling had finally written a novel.

Another explanation for the disappointment with *Kim* as a novel lies in the literary climate of the period in which the book was published. The fact that the work was, to use Kipling's own terms, "picaresque and plotless" would certainly not have been held against it in the eighteenth century when Smollett and Sterne were writing, nor would it have been cause for criticism in the 1830's when Dickens' *Pickwick* was being serialized. But towards the end of the nineteenth century a feeling had begun to develop, largely through the influence of such men as Flaubert and Henry James, that the novel ought to be taken more seriously as an art form by its practitioners, that it should cease to be a mere public entertainment, that it should make as stringent demands upon the artist as does, for example, the epic or the tragedy. The easy-going quality of *Kim's* structure, then — its *apparent* carelessness — was bound to displease many serious readers, who had already been put off by the "vulgarity" and "journalistic brashness" of many of Kipling's stories and who therefore supposed that *Kim* was the sort of book it was because its author could not be bothered making it any better.

Today's reader has moved beyond the position which produced this early criticism of *Kim*. For example, because he sees the short story as an artistic end in itself and not just as preparation for a longer work, he is less concerned than earlier commentators with the burning question of whether or not Kipling could write a novel. Then, while he continues to demand that novelists approach the craft of fiction with high seriousness, he no longer equates such seriousness with carefully ordered,

dramatic plot structures, as some earlier critics did, and thus is relatively undisturbed by *Kim's* picaresque plotlessness. Instead, what he sees when he reads *Kim* is that the book is about the richness, the vitality, and the variety of life in India, and that the loose and seemingly thoughtless structure of the work is very clearly a function of its content.

The content of *Kim* has also come under heavy attack. To many critics, the book has seemed "Kipling as usual" — that is, just another dose of imperialism and white supremacy, the mixture as before. *Kim* may look black, the book is saying (according to these critics), but really he's white and that's all that matters. Whiteness will out. And the highest duty of a black boy in India who is suddenly discovered to be white is to educate himself properly so that he can become a member of the white man's oppressive secret service (brazenly referred to as the "Great Game") and put down any attempts by his former intimates, who do not have the magical gift of whiteness, to become their own masters.

This is a harsh judgment, one that can only be answered by letting the book speak for itself. And here we see the real significance of the argument about whether *Kim* is or is not a well-constructed novel. For those critics who feel that *Kim* is a carelessly written book whose structure is not artistically meaningful, will naturally — in the absence of guidance from Kipling — emphasize that part of the story they think most important, and since the secret service does play a major role in the book, they will feel justified in trotting out all the old political clichés about the author and reading them into his novel. Those critics, on the other hand, who see the novel as a meaningful structure and who therefore accept the book's own statement of its theme, recognize that the focus in *Kim* is not on the boy's "betrayal" of his friends but is rather on the whole teeming world of India as that world impinges itself on the mind of the boy. The central image of the book is not the secret service, it is the Grand Trunk Road; and the book's central action is not the tracking down of spies, it is the more general questing of all the characters in the book, a questing of which the spy hunt is but one example and of which the searching of the lama for the River of the Arrow is the ultimate symbol. In short, what is most striking about *Kim* to any reader is the breadth of the canvas, the scope of the book, a scope which renders comparatively insignificant (this is the crucial point) any particular part of the whole.

The consciousness through which we observe the events of this book is essentially the boy's. The hero-worship of such men as Creighton and Lurgan, which would perhaps be ugly in Kipling himself, is perfectly understandable in *Kim*. Boys don't tend to make abstract or long-range political judgments, and so when *Kim* likes someone, it is because of some particular attribute of skill or kindness on the part of that individual with which the boy can enter into a personal relationship. Thus, so far from being, as some critics suggest, an elaborate apology for the British presence in India, *Kim* apologises for nothing. Instead, it is a brilliant picture of a particular reality, a reality which has the force, for *Kim*, that "The Law" has for Mowgli in *The Jungle Books*, and which the young *chela* would have no more reason to question than

he would the rising of the sun. This becomes especially clear from Kim's relationship with the babu. The very word "babu" is a term of contempt, a snobbish reaction on the part of men who have spoken English from birth toward those who are painfully trying to learn and who are rather absurdly proud of their accomplishment. But never for a moment do we, encountering Hurree Chunder Mookerjee through Kim, take this patronizing attitude toward the babu. ("God made the hare and the Bengali. What Shame?" Kim quotes the proverb at one point). The world of the secret service, as it comes to us through Kim's mind, has developed an aristocracy of talent; therefore, praise of the secret service is not praise for its ultimate political goals (which are simply taken for granted), but rather for its creation of such an aristocracy.

All this would be very well, of course, if the readers of *Kim* were limited to twelve-year-olds. But it is hardly a defense of Kipling against the charge that his book's object is to glorify the British in India to say that, on the contrary, his book has no object at all except to go along stringing out disconnected impressions. The fact is, however, that the novel's structure does inevitably impose upon the story at least one inescapable theme or idea. The book begins and ends with the lama; everything that happens does so within the framework of the lama's quest for the River of the Arrow. Now at first it may seem that the lama's quest does not differ materially from the quests of any of the other people he and his *chela* encounter on the Grand Trunk Road. All men quest; it is in the nature of life to quest. The beggar looking for his evening meal, the secret service out to trap a spy, the lama searching for his river are all one, or at least they seem to be. But by the end of the book we have come to realise that all of the quests of this world are absurdly futile since the triumphant conclusion of each search is only the beginning of the next. The lama's quest alone is real, for it is a quest for the end of all questing, and it is successful. In a trance, the soul of the holy man has left its body and has joined with the oneness of all creation. And looking back, the soul sees "the stupid body of Teshoo Lama lying down," sees the whole world of trivial acts it has left and knows them for what they are — games. The men who are still engaged in playing them may call them *great* games if they like, but games they are. The only reality is the oneness which the lama has achieved and of which his love for the boy is the symbol. It is on this note that the novel ends. No wonder Mark Kinkead-Weekes was able to write of *Kim* that "in its wisdom and humanity [it is] the living contradiction of nine-tenths of the charges levelled against its author."

# A CONVERSATION WITH KIPLING ON CONRAD

By Edmund A. Bojarski

*University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland*

One of the few areas of Joseph Conrad's life and work which remain almost completely unexplored by the literary historian is his relationship with Rudyard Kipling. Although both writers lived in the same vicinity for years, shared a pioneer passion for the automobile, and competed with each other for the favour of the reading public, there seemed to be few, if any, direct personal contacts between them.<sup>1</sup> In December 1885 when Kipling's first work, "Quartette," appeared in the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore, Conrad was the second mate aboard the *Tilkhurst*, a coal freighter docked in Calcutta. The Polish born British merchant seaman had evidently not as yet felt the urge to fictionalize his adventures — his first short story, "The Black Mate," was still almost a year in the future — and it is unlikely that at that time the young second mate of the *Tilkhurst* came across this first work of the man who, ten years later, was to be his rival.<sup>2</sup> In a letter dated Christmas 1898, however, Conrad advised Mrs. Karol Zagorski, a relative in Poland collecting material for an article on English literature, that "Among the people in literature who deserve attention the first is Rudyard Kipling . . ."<sup>3</sup> By this time Conrad, who was working on "Heart of Darkness," had moved to Pent Farm at Stanford, near Hythe in Kent, not far from Kipling's home at Rottingdean. Conrad, hardly an avid reader of poetry, ". . . seems to have had little interest in his British contemporaries and only to have read their books when the author was a personal friend,"<sup>4</sup> evidently made an exception in the case of his famous neighbour. Earlier that same year he had written a defense of Kipling (and indirectly of himself) against Arthur Symons who criticized *Captains Courageous* and *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. The article, called "Concerning a Certain Criticism," was submitted to *Outlook* early in 1898, but was never published.

Four years later the Kiplings moved to Bateman's (later renamed Welcoming House), their dream home on Pook's Hill in Burwash, but they were still practically within hailing distance of the Conrads at Pent Farm. It was from Welcoming House that Kipling wrote on October 9, 1906 :

Dear Conrad,

What a book — *The Mirror of the Sea* ! I took it up as soon as I arrived and sailed along with it until I went to bed. Certainly I recognized the description of the winds, which I consider almost as splendid as the description of the darkness in "Typhoon," but I have read and re-read it all and I thank you sincerely and gratefully. This ought to make an even more vivid impression on someone who has sailed in sailing ships than on me, and that's saying a lot.<sup>5</sup>

Conrad's reaction in a letter to Galsworthy gives an indication of the

relationship between the two men : " Kipling sends me an enthusiastic little note. The Age of Miracles is setting in ! . . . The End of the World is at hand . . ."6

A much less well known Kipling assessment of Conrad and his work which has escaped the attention of Western Conradists was made in a conversation more than two decades later with one of Conrad's countrymen, a Polish linguist, diplomat, and literary essayist named Jan Perłowski. Perłowski (1872-1941), like Conrad, was a ward of Conrad's uncle and guardian, Tadeusz Bobrowski, and met Conrad in 1890 during the novelist's visit to Poland.<sup>7</sup>

In 1928 Perłowski served his government as a diplomatic representative in Madrid. One morning he was summoned to the telephone to be told by a familiar female voice, " My father arrived yesterday. Please come over tonight. You will find only my father, my husband, and me." The invitation was extended by the charming Mrs. Bambridge, wife of a member of the British Embassy in Madrid and daughter of Rudyard Kipling.

That evening Mrs. Bambridge introduced Perłowski to her father as one of Kipling's Sincerest admirers, and Perłowski added that he did indeed ascribe great meaning, not only in the literary sense, to Kipling's work. The conversation soon turned to Conrad, and Perłowski was impressed by the generosity with which Kipling brought up and discussed the unusual talent which in recent years had been overshadowing his own work.

Speaking with quiet animation, Kipling began with the familiar observations on Conrad's language and style. " When he spoke English," he observed, " it was sometimes difficult to understand him, but with a pen in his hand he was first amongst us." When reading Conrad's novels, Kipling often wondered about the origin of some particular turn of phrase used by this foreigner, not encountered anywhere previously and not only reflecting a remarkably fresh thought, but in a thoroughly English way. Kipling thought that this was simply some " substitution of his former personality," the replacement of Conrad's original personality by another. But this was true only in the sphere of language since in spirit, according to Kipling's conviction, Conrad had within himself nothing English. " Reading him," he said, " I always have the feeling that I am reading a good translation of a foreign writer."

Kipling then went on to clarify this idea, which was strangely synonymous with the impressions of many of Conrad's readers in Poland. Kipling believed that in addition to his enormous talent and unequalled technique, the exoticism of Conrad's soul was probably what attracted English readers. There is in the average Englishman a complex of emotions suppressed by a puritan culture, and Conrad set free those suppressed emotions. His characters, masterfully drawn and understandable to the English reader, have an emotional temperature higher by a few degrees than is normal for the English. In their intensity, Conrad's characters usually move " to the pitch of emotion," but since the gradual progression takes place virtually before the reader's eyes, even he succumbs to what is, for him, an unusual increase in,

emotion and " getting red in the face," experiences sensations unknown until now.

" Have you noticed," continued Kipling, " the countless types of people in Conrad obsessed by one idea or emotion ? Have you observed to what intensity the specific feeling of fear and terror is brought in Conrad ? That man must have suffered horrible nightmares himself. And love, too, is in his work of the most romantic kind imaginable. The English reader, outwardly unemotional, enjoys that sincere exaltation, just as every Englishman enjoys Chopin's romantic music." Perłowski listened, struck by this analogy from Kipling, who did not know a line of Polish poetry, but did know the greatest of Polish poets in melody.

Beyond that, in Kipling's judgment, Conrad's moral world was also non-English. " In English writing," he said, " one can obviously find anything, especially in these times when every author pursues originality. But Conrad was sincere. In the novel which he prized most highly of all his work and which is really his masterpiece, *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, we find attitudes foreign to our society. In this novel he is more akin to the Russians than to the English. His 'purely humane' attitude toward that Negro does not suit the English spirit, which is Christian but not 'humanitarian.' This book might have been written by Maxim Gorky. Conrad's foreign spirit stands out even more clearly in another of his novels, equally excellent from the artistic point of view, *Lord Jim*. In its very fundamentals the novel has something distinctly non-English. First, it should be noted that in its foundations it is by no means, as some maintain, the internal drama of a man guilty of transgression and suffering the pangs of conscience. The real theme of the book poses the question of whether or not a man is responsible for his actions. Conrad expresses the view that under certain circumstances, that responsibility may be reduced to such a degree as to be almost non-existent. Undoubtedly Conrad has a point, and *in* specific instances that is how it really is." " In general, however," said Kipling, " I would not advise Conrad to put forward such a thesis before any of our English juries, which retain to the present our old Anglo-Saxon conviction that every man bears responsibility for his own actions."

At this point the conversation turned to the autobiographical character of *Lord Jim*. Perłowski described Conrad's past in detail and Kipling laid down some restrictions. " If," he said, " the sinking ship which Lord Jim, one of the officers, left in a moment of some kind of obscurity of the spirit, is supposed to be Poland, then why, having discovered his error, does Conrad not return to the deck of the *Patna* ? In the novel this was impossible. The ship luckily reached port and Lord Jim's return would have been of no use. But the Polish *Patna* remained in danger for many long years after the publication of the novel. Conrad could have corrected his mistake at any time, and yet he did not do it. It becomes obvious that there is a misunderstanding here, and that Conrad's novel is not autobiographical."



## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Not one of the major Conrad biographers describes a meeting with Kipling.
- 2 Gerard Jean-Aubry, *The Sea Dreamer : A Definitive Biography of Joseph Conrad*, translated by Helen Sebba, Allen and Unwin, London, 1957, p. 108.
- 3 Jocelyn Baines, *Joseph Conrad : A Critical Biography*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1960, P. 144.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 Jean-Aubry, p. 249.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Jan Perłowski, " O Conradzie i Kiplingu," *Przegląd Współczesny*, Warsaw, 1937, *passim*.

## BOOK REVIEW

J. I. M. Stewart. **Rudyard Kipling.** Victor Gollancz : 28s.

Mr. J. I. M. Stewart has the happy gift of being able to write well in a little space about a big subject. In 190 pages he tells the story of Kipling's life and chronicles his works, alternating skilful narrative with discerning analysis. The result is a book that we have for years been hoping would appear, a first-rate general essay on Kipling, as valuable to the specialist who has read every word that Kipling wrote as to the undergraduate in search of a thoughtful introduction to the man and his work.

The ground Mr. Stewart covers will of course be familiar to readers of the *Kipling Journal*, but the book will never bore them. Knowing that he cannot tell all, Mr. Stewart selects the salient facts and draws penetrating insights from them. He avoids none of the controversial points—Kipling's return to London to wed Carrie, the feud with Beatty, the question of vulgarity in the tales—they are all there, in fresh, often convincing, retelling.

Mr. Stewart's approach to the works is also engaging, for he uses them not merely to punctuate the passing years but to illustrate Kipling's large themes and to reveal his mind and heart. And Mr. Stewart tells the tale in front of a carefully sketched historical backdrop that reminds us how much Kipling was a child of his time and how important it is to know him in order to come to terms with the forces that made and ran the British Empire. With illuminating results Mr. Stewart delineates the conditions of public schools in Victorian England, the facts of the Indian Civil Service, the issues that led to the Boer War. One example will suffice to show how adroitly he selects facts to drive home historical reality. In describing conditions in India when Kipling went to work there, he reminds us that in the hot season the government moved to Simla, where, " with a staff consisting of two principal secretaries, a dozen aides-de-camp, and a corps of messengers, the Viceroy administered, virtually with an absolute power, a mingling of races more than twice as numerous, and ten times as densely planted, as the present population of the United States of America."

In dealing with the stories, Mr. Stewart shows time and again the deep springs of subtle meaning and feeling that run beneath the surface of Kipling's work. He is aware too that even though Kipling was fond of speaking of his " daemon " and insisted that " something " wrote his stories through him, he was all the same a conscious and deliberate craftsman, artisan as well as artist.

Mr. Stewart sees Kipling as a product of two cultures. He notes that though Kipling often writes of pain, he goes on to prove himself the champion of forgiveness and healing. In sum Kipling's message is affirmative. Mr. Stewart sees a constant development and growth in Kipling's stories, and even though he sees no parallel development in the verse, he agrees with T. S. Eliot that Kipling was master of the "mixed form," that some of his greatest poetry is imbedded in his prose.

The aging Kipling offers a sad picture. The theme of isolation enters his work as well as his life, he withdraws and becomes more conservative, and he is "at loggerheads with almost every trend of government." He grows increasingly pessimistic and he loses his popular audience. But Mr. Stewart knows that even if Kipling's notions about how the world ought to be run were not adopted, even if his brand of art went out of vogue in the early part of our century, Kipling remained to the end true to himself and to his gifts. His essential integrity did much to lift his work above the market place and ultimately to make his life and work worth the thoughtful analysis of so distinguished a storyteller and critic as Mr. Stewart.

It is a pity that Messrs. Gollancz did not provide this book with some illustrations and an index.

MORTON COHEN.

## REPORTS ON DISCUSSION MEETINGS

### September 21st, at the Ulster Room, Overseas House

As the Chairman remarked on introducing this evening's speaker, Colonel Purefoy's careful and entertaining expositions of selected stories have become virtually an annual event: long may they continue. This evoked enthusiastic "hear-hears" from among the audience. His choices for this evening were "Brugglesmith", "The Horse Marines" and "My Sunday at Home", and his discourse follows in his own words.

Partly from a sense of duty I devoted the last two sessions where it fell to me to open the discussion, to serious and rather difficult stories; so I thought that we had earned a bit of fun tonight and could take a look at some of the Comics. This is not, actually, as light or simple a matter as it may sound, for when a writer of genius turns his hand to funny stories we may be certain that, however hard he may have tried otherwise, they will be much more than just funny stories. A great deal has been written about Kipling's use of laughter, and of course in your comments later on there is no need to confine yourselves to the three stories I have picked on. Regard them rather as a catalyst (if that is the right word), or as a Point of Origin from which your views on all Kipling's senses of humour can radiate. In that respect, I have drawn quite a lot on Doctor Tompkins. She sees three types of funny Kipling story. Type One, the mere farce: "Complex", she says, "complex, deliberately wrought, visually rich and ringing with various voices, these

astonishing structures stand along the road of his art." One of our stories tonight belongs to this type. Type Two, she considers, are "those in which the ridiculous incidents serve some extraneous purpose", and our two remaining ones this evening do, I think, do that. Type Three are "the punitive farces, in which killing ridicule is aimed by angry men at an offender". I haven't chosen any of these, because we are here tonight to have a bit of Fun and not to be angry, but I myself would add Type Four, which I would call the Everlasting Giggle—where there is no wild laughter that can only survive two or three readings, but where, instead, you can't stop giggling for the rest of your life whenever you think of them. "The Janeites", with Humberstall's "obese words on the breach of the ten-inch", and "The Propagation of Knowledge", where "for decency's sake," a few questions were hastily bundled in to the last ten minutes of the oral exam—and all answered by one boy, "since they involved dates."

The more uproarious farces do not, however, go on making us roar once we know them well. Yet we go on reading them, and Doctor Tompkins tells us why we do, in words we might find it hard to express ourselves. Our relish of the Total Event, the smoothness and rapidity with which incidents interlock, and—above all—the infectious vigour and picturesqueness of the writing.

And so to this evening's business. Early in the 1890's, Kipling wrote to his friend C. E. Norton of Harvard: "I have a yearning upon me to tell tales of extended impropriety—not sexual or within hailing distance of it—but hard-bottomed unseemly yarns. One can't be serious always." And to another: "I wonder if people get a tithe of the fun out of my tales that I get in doing 'em." I once asked Mr. Carrington how Kipling gratified this low craving, and his answer was "Brugglesmith" and "My Sunday at Home" which are two of our stories for this evening; I'll explain why I've added the third one later.

"Brugglesmith", which first saw the light in 1891, is the only farce in which the Narrator (whom I'll call N) takes an active part; in the others he is either an onlooker or wasn't there at all, merely being told about it later. Among Kiplingites the name is immortal; I keep imagining it is the name of the creature himself, not where he lives, but I expect you are like me in that whenever you read the address 'Brook Green, Hammersmith' (and there really *is* such a place) or hear it on the radio, you want to say "Why not give it its proper name?"

Well, the tale starts quietly enough: smoking on the bridge of a passenger ship in the Thames with no puzzle or crisis in sight. There is, however, "an echo of fearful bellowings", a phrase almost repeated just before the crisis in another of tonight's stories: "There was clamour—the voice of one bellowing to be let out, and the feet of one who kicked." When the action does begin it is with a rush, and the description of the inky tangle of buoys, low-lying hawsers and moored ships with the tide—and the dinghy—ripping through them makes a landlubber shudder. After that I must admit that, for a bit, the author has me rather foxed, both as to which way the dinghy is facing and where she is. There are some nautical pundits here this evening, so I expect they'll set me right. When the Castle Liner looms ahead, Bruggles (as I will call him) says "Keep her port light on our starboard bow"—an absolutely certain way

of colliding with her, unless the dinghy is still travelling stern first, in which case you would have thought that, surging along at that speed, Bruggles would have been compelled to consider her stern as the bow for the time being. Then about her position; we are given to understand that she started a little below London Bridge—the Pool of London is not mentioned—yet, after the preliminary drifting and then *ten minutes* of being steered in the racing tide, the bridge is still ahead: "Yon's London Bridge—take her through."

So we come to the verses. I can't locate "The smartest clipper that you could find", though it is not unlike a Bab Ballad, but the notorious "Ye Towers o' Julia . . ." is, I need hardly tell you, compounded of bits of three works: Gray's 'The Bard', Spenser's 'Prothalamion', and Bishop Ken's 'Glory to Thee, my God, this night', but you may *not* know that this outrageous verse was once given in a scholarship exam to an eminent College, with the instruction "Assign the following to its author on grounds of style." Finally, the line about "Prudent, cautious self-control" is from Burns's "A Bard's Epitaph". This jumble of literary knowledge does make us realize that, like Macklin, the mess steward in "The Janeites", poor Bruggles must once have known better days.

You know the story of N's rescue by the River Police, of how he thought he had got away, and stopped to laugh too soon and was ensnared again, and how the long trek to Hammersmith began and took place. It is worth remarking on the sudden change in N's intentions. Up to Charing Cross his sole wish was to get away from his loathsome encumbrance: now, with rescue at hand, he decides to stay with him, and the only possible reason is that he must have thought that by doing so, he would win the final trick in a match in which Doctor Tompkins sees ten turns. And this is the time to mention that "Brugglesmith" comes into the second category of farce, where the ridiculous incidents serve an outside purpose, the purpose here being to shew the dangerous advantage that the disgraced holds over the respectable. "A good name is as a savoury bakemeat," hiccups Bruggles, "I ha' nane." And perhaps, also, the story chastens an attitude that is a little smug and self-satisfied, and a newly acquired dignity rather consciously worn. At any rate, for the Narrator, the situation is *far* from comic and his hard-won reputation is definitely at risk. Was it written, perhaps, as a Cautionary Tale for the author himself?

As in all the Farces the pictures are extraordinarily vivid. After cowering in the little boat in the black, swirling tide, we see Bruggles striding deliberately into the river, the horrid shock of the striped yellow blanket suddenly behind N's shoulder in the lamplight, the shiny oilskins of P.C. Dempsey outside Charing Cross, the trundle-trundle of the ambulance on its long, long journey, and that ever-growing ever-spinning cocoon of copper wire.

Superimposed on every Kiplingite's map of London should be a thick black line shewing the east to west ambulation of Bruggles on that memorable night.

Back in 1948 somebody wrote to the Journal asking for people's lists of favourite stories. I submitted a long list and, with the idea of

stirring up trouble, I added a short list of what I called Abominable Stories. One of these was "The Horse Marines", and it is largely because I've changed my mind about it that I've included it with the other two. For some of you, also, may on first reading have dubbed it exaggerated, extravagant, and calling for the too-easy loud laugh. But on getting to know it better I've come to look on it as a good bit of fun—still extravagant, mind you, but easy to understand and with some very clever touches. It first appeared in *Pearson's Magazine* in 1910, and not in book form till 1917, and it is worth noting that, apart from a little-known play, it is our sixth and final meeting with Pycroft, and one of the three Pycroft adventures where the Narrator was not present at the action, which was told to him later. Perhaps I can remind you of Pycroft if I say: "Only water, warm water, with perhaps a little whisky and a lemon." It moves very smoothly from the present into the past and finishes again in the present, and its first merit is that, unlike many Kipling stories, it poses its problem in the first dozen lines: Why the Dickens has the car got four new tyres?

We move swiftly into the little shop, where we spot Pycroft's broad blue bottom as he shines his fierce little uncle's boots, and soon after that the story proper has begun—on Westminster Bridge. Well, you know the chain of events that follows—or you do if you've done your homework—and if you think they are a bit far-fetched it is worth noting how the author minimizes this, not only by the smooth passage from event to event (the manoeuvres produce the boy scouts, the boy scouts produce Morshed, Morshed has a score to pay off with the author's car and an uncle who needs chastening, etc., etc.), but to all this is added the 'sauce piquante' of Jules—Jules the Froggy sailor who knows no word of English. There is reason to believe that this ingenious diversion was not entirely Kipling's brainchild; the French Navy did pay a visit to Portsmouth before 1914, and by all accounts the Entente Cordiale was Cordiale right up to the end. Jules is certainly a godsend to this story; he intervenes on at least nine occasions, preventing the long narrative from becoming monotonous, and I, personally, like his last appearance best. "Houpla!" he shouts unexpectedly, near the climax, when he is just starting to get a glimmer of what's going on, and fetches the rocking-horse a wallop on the behind; and at the end of it all he has to be returned to his own navy, because "he wouldn't have kept much longer without someone in his own language to tell it to." *There's a picture for you!* Incidentally, in case anyone is puzzled about his serving in a 'Cassowary Cruiser', this was Pycroft's version of a *Croiseur Cuirassé*, or French armoured cruiser.

One other detail in this story before I mention one possible purpose in it besides laughter. When the right time comes, Morshed doesn't say "Stick the rocking-horse up there"; he says "Trot out Persimmon". This famous order was the subject of some letters in the *Journal* fifteen years ago. The first was from a distinguished American doctor, who remarked that Persimmon, who won the Derby in 1896, would hardly be remembered as such by a young N.O. in 1910, or else that it is as a *sire* that Morshed is thinking of him, since by 1910 he had become one of the most famous sires in the world. Another writer considered that

Persimmon would always be remembered as a Derby winner, because he won it for the Prince of Wales. The date of the French Navy's visit might help in this, and perhaps somebody here knows it.

Finally, besides laughter, which Kipling usually regarded as a healthy release, there is one side to "The Horse Marines" that he is fond of stressing in other stories (for instance in "The Honours of War"): that the older generation need have no fear for the worth of the younger. As the long-pensioned-off CO. admits, wringing out his trousers, "There's nothing wrong with the service—Heaven pardon me for doubting 'em. Same old game—same young beggars." And Pycroft too is impressed, in a different way. "Mark you," he says of the scraping, "not one single unit of 'em even resorted to his belt. They confined themselves to natural productcks—hands and the wurzels." Note, too, that Pycroft tells his story in three chapters; in other words he twice "resooms his narrative." In "The Bonds of Discipline" this method cost the Narrator five hot whiskies and lemon to get him restarted; luckily for him "The Horse Marines" was told just after breakfast.

I haven't anything special to say about the poem at the end, "The Legend of Mirth"—where the four stuck-up archangels are at last made to laugh at themselves. I am more interested in the seraph who does the work—the one "With folden wings and slumber-threatened brow." He, surely is own brother to the "curly-haired, bat-winged, faun-eared Imp of the Pit in "On the Gate", who, because of his cheerful disposition, is promoted from the Department of Civil Death to a more congenial job.

So we come to the third story in our list. Everyone has his favourite in each category of Kipling story, and among the farces "My Sunday at Home" has always been mine. I think partly because I came on it just after starting to read Kipling, about 1941, when I was approaching him as a rather serious task to be undertaken. Having no idea what it was about, I started it one night, lying in bed in a hotel far from home; and as what *must* be going to happen became more and more clear, I felt an enormous sense of relief that the job I had embarked on could include such tremendous fun—and I lay in my lonely bed and howled and wept! Well, the story first appeared in 1895, four years after "Brugglesmith", so the wonderful descriptions of the scenery and of the blessed lack of population were of 70 years ago, and I fear you will have to agree that both those things—and the May weather also—have sadly changed today. Mr. Carrington tells us what we should have realized before—that Kipling saw this countryside because his parents were living at the time in Wiltshire, at Tisbury, and that the immortal name Framlynghame Admiral is merely derived from the delightful names of real places around there, such as Fonthill Bishop and Teffont Magna. He also quotes Kipling as describing the story as 'a piece of broad farce, viler than "Brugglesmith", which made me laugh for three days.' Kipling apparently first intended to call the story "The Child of Calamity", but that greatly inferior title was never used.

It starts with a verse from Emerson's "Brahma":

If the Red Slayer thinks he slays, Or if the slain thinks he is slain,  
They know not well the subtle ways I keep and pass and turn  
again.

which I can only imagine as meaning that things seldom work out as you think they are going to—but perhaps somebody will correct me on that later. The story has the great merit, alone among the farces, of happening virtually all in one place, and while the Narrator takes no part in any farce save "Brugglesmith", in no other but *this* does he keep on ramming home how utterly neutral he is. Listen to these bits: "The matter seemed to be so purely personal that I withdrew to a strategic position on the overhead bridge", "I was a million leagues removed from that unhappy man of another nationality", "I was in the centre of things, so all sides were alike to me", "The fly had been so obviously sent to the doctor, and to no one else, that I had no concern in it", "I abode in obscurity at the end of the platform". What is more, the emphasized neutrality in this story has been commented on by more than one advanced writer, their views being, as far as I can make out, that we can now begin "to trace the metaphysical as distinct from the psychiatric bearings of farce." If anybody can explain to me what that one means, I'll be greatly obliged!

Perhaps because the events do virtually happen all in one place, they, and the scenery with them, do make on me, at least, a more vivid impression than those of any other farce. I called the 'Persimmon' order famous to Kiplingites, but surely, far easier to picture and to hear are the immortal words of that badged and belted guard . . . "Has any gentleman here got a bottle of med-i-cine? A gentleman has taken a bottle of poison (laudanum) by mistake." And when the Narrator realizes what has caused the misunderstanding, doesn't he so cleverly avoid labouring the point—just saying in passing: "There is nothing, unless perhaps the English language, more terrible than the workings of an English railway line." And he goes on to point out how the platform is all buzz and bustle while the train's there, then, a second later it's gone and all's dead—when it had seemed that the train was there "for all eternity". That seemingly permanent feature of trains must have impressed him, because he said much the same five years later in his true account of a hospital train in the Boer War, "With Number Three": ". . . I came aboard early, and while we lay silent as a ship in port, I felt that Number Three Hospital Train—iodoform-scented, washed, scrubbed and scoured—had plied since the beginning of time."

What an artistic piece of work the whole thing is, weaving together the marvellous countryside and the disgusting navy, and making event lead into event so smoothly that it is hard to believe it didn't all happen. And at the high point of his description we find another feature of life, or rather of Nature, that must have impressed him, for again he wrote about it twice—how Day reaches its absolute peak and then, at a tangible moment, turns down towards Night. "It was the very point of perfection in the heart of an English May Day. The unseen tides of the air had turned, and all nature was setting its face with the shadows of the horse-chestnuts towards the peace of the coming night." Compare that with a description in one of the Letters of Marque, written seven years earlier: "At a certain hour the impetus of the morning dies out, and all things turn their thoughts to the prophecy of the coming night. The set of the day has changed, the machinery is beginning to run down."

Well, I have exceeded my time on this lovely story, and you all know it anyway. As we've said already, after several readings of the Farces, though you still love them you don't expect to go on yelling with laughter; but I do still find explosive the incident of that crisp, clear English voice saying "Go on, driver," and the well-booted leg that emerged from the cab, with the stout, outraged, dancing little dignified Squire wriggling at the end of it.

A delighted audience lost no time in proceeding to dissect the stories seriatim, in comment, question and answer, with the *Reader's Guide* on two of them available for reference. The *Breslau's* dinghy, it was suggested, was making its erratic way up-river either from the Pool of London or just above Tower Bridge. If, as is possible, an effort was being made to get out of the cluster of ships and lighters along the wharves and into midstream, a course with the Castle liner's port light on the starboard hand would have been possible (with the risk of being swept on to the liner's bow by the tide) except that the ship, either moored or at anchor, would not have been shewing any navigation lights. However, the meeting decided that the wild commands of an inebriated man need not be regarded as serious navigation.

An argument arose about Reginald Cleaver's illustration in *Humorous Tales* shewing "Brugglesmith" dressed in a semi-serviceable topper and overcoat, and the doubt, despite oral evidence of custom at the beginning of the century, that he wore a lounge suit underneath remain unresolved. This took no account, however, of the circumstance that, apart from the unlikelihood of *l'habit de rigueur* in the Engineers' mess (or even in the saloon during discharge and loading of cargo), the possession of evening dress or a dinner jacket by a "boilermaker from Greenock" of the period was not even a remote possibility, and Moss Bros. had not by then begun their invaluable hire service.

Brook Green, Hammersmith, it was stated, was the private address of Charles Whibley (1862-1930) one of the Henley-Kipling group of writers, who has been described as a "scholarly *bon viveur* with a well-earned liver complaint."

"The Smartest Clipper" was identified as a sea-shanty adapted from an old negro song "Let the bulgine run" ("bulgine" = "engine").

Colonel Purefoy, having suggested that it might be rewarding to trace the odyssey of the ambulance to its destination, this has now been done: it is almost a straight line, as follows. Strand, Charing Cross, Trafalgar Square, Pall Mall, St. James's Street, Piccadilly, Hyde Park Corner, Knightsbridge, Kensington Road, Kensington Gore, Kensington High Street, Hammersmith Road, Brook Green (the turning opposite St. Paul's School), totalling five miles. There is an alternative (but unlikely) route through Leicester Square.

The flaw in this otherwise perfect story, according to the concluding note in the *Reader's Guide*, is that the bell could not have behaved in the way described. The non-electric bell was actuated by a system of wires and bell-crank-levers (as engineers still call them in other contexts). That is to say, there is no straight run of wire from front door to basement, but at every angle traversed by the system is placed a bell-crank-



lever and between each lever is a length of wire. So that a violent tug on the front door bell-knob would probably wrench the wire away from the lever at the far end of the hall, but the bell itself would stay in the basement kitchen. Nevertheless, it is one of the greatest comic yarns of all time. For this the writer of the note was denounced as a "spoil-sport," but to all appearances remained unmoved.

The meeting had little to add to the speaker's remarks on "The Horse Marines," and readily agreed to its merits as an outstanding exercise in the comic. "The square man with remarkable eyes" surpasses some of his earlier performances by his essays into a foreign language, and students of Pycroftian philology may like to consider whether his *more sang frays* (dead, drunk or damned) is a free rendering of *mort sans phrase* (death without fuss or heroics) from the mouth of Jules, in whom there was no blemish.

Enquirers whether bridoon (military snaffle and rein) was named after a person, or vice versa, may be interested in its derivation from *bridon* (Fr) a snaffle, and from "bride," a bonnet-string, and *bride* (Fr), a bridle.

Evidence was forthcoming from all sides that the name Persimmon was a household word circa 1910 and not only in racing circles, so that its use by Morshed was entirely likely. It is on points like this that our author always scores. However, the *Entente Cordiale* was established by the Franco-British Treaty of 1904, and the Franco-British Exhibition was held in 1908, so that it is reasonable to assume that the visit of the French Fleet was some time between these dates.

"My Sunday at Home," of which R. Thurston Hopkins wrote: "It is a curious fact that the one story written by Kipling which has raised a storm of protest from squeamish people on account of its coarse humour should contain the first direct suggestion of his intention to pass to the quiet kindness of the English wayside for his deepest inspiration . . . it is avowedly Rabelaisian," received even more exhaustive treatment in discussion than the other two stories. The unidentified locality of Framlynghame Admiral may have been derived, it was suggested, from Framlingham in Suffolk (Rider Haggard's country), and the station called Hinton Admiral on the S.R. (formerly L.S.W.R.) between Brockenhurst and Bournemouth.

The *Reader's Guide* explanation of the mystery of the bottle of medicine states that it had been consigned as a "passenger train package" in charge of the guard, a common method of despatch in those days. To reply to one or two questions on this point, my good friend the booking clerk at St. Margaret's (S.R.) tells me that the service referred to as "passenger train package," as distinct from the Passenger Train Parcels Service, is still in existence for packages up to a maximum of 8 lbs., but is infrequently used, a major condition being that the package must be called for at the destination station.

Colonel Purefoy's plea for enlightenment on "the metaphysical as distinct from the psychiatric bearings of farce," a phrase that might daunt the bravest, was answered by Doctor Tompkins with an elaboration and paraphrase of her remarks on the growth of Kipling's humour in comparison with what he had heard at the Saville Club of "Hardy's grave and bitter humour," and in whose steps he is sometimes found

to be walking (page 47, *The Art of Rudyard Kipling*). She dwelt on the psychiatric use of laughter in that it eases (mental) strain, as in "The Wrong Thing" and to a small extent in "A Doctor of Medicine." At least one hearer was reminded of the catharsis induced by the pity and terror of Greek tragedy, and assumes that this was what she was alluding to, at the other extreme, so to speak. (Compare the comic and pathetic aspects of *Don Quixote*).

The spontaneous burst of prolonged applause at the end of the proceedings avoided the need for a vote of thanks, and there were congratulations all round on another most enjoyable discussion.

P. W. I.

15th February, 1967.

The first meeting to be held at the new venue, the Royal Society of St. George, 4 Upper Belgrave Street, S.W.I., was devoted to a reading and discussion of the following selected items of the Verse and one of prose. Those selected and notified in advance by Members are indicated by an asterisk.

- \*Minesweepers
- The Changelings
- The Wet Litany
- \*The Roman Centurion's Song
- \*A Pilgrim's Way
- The Captive
- \*My New-Cut Ashlar
- When Earth's Last Picture is Painted
- \*Four-Foot
- The Land
- The Legend of Evil (II)
- The Last Rhyme of True Thomas
- The Ballad of the Clampherdown
- \*Values in Life (prose, from *A Book of Words*)

The verses were read by Mr. P. W. Inwood with his usual verve and attack, and the discussions following each were energetic and amusing. It was altogether an entertaining and enjoyable evening, in most pleasant surroundings; and if the choice of poems revolved too much round the Seven Seas for some Members—they have only themselves to blame for not submitting enough alternative suggestions!

R. L. G

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We are delighted to welcome the following new members :  
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 Messrs. J. F. Dunstan, M. R. Vigar, E. H. White. CANADA : Mrs. E. E. Stewart; Sir George Williams University Library. U.S.A.: Mr. B. H. Pool.



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