



The
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Many thanks to members who have brought their subscriptions into line with the new rates. It would help the administration if you could pay on 1 January each year from 1979. If you now pay in September, October, November or December, please regard these as 'paid-up' months this year, and start again on 1 January 1979.

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THE KIPLING SOCIETY

Forthcoming Meetings

COUNCIL MEETINGS 1978

On *Wednesday 13 September* at 'The Clarence', Whitehall, immediately after the Annual General Meeting and before the Discussion meeting.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1978

On *Wednesday 13 September* at 'The Clarence', Whitehall, near Trafalgar Square Tube station, at 17.30 hours, to be followed by a brief meeting of the Council. The Discussion Meeting will take place directly after the Council Meeting; members not taking part in the Council Meeting may find solace in the bar of The Clarence between the A.G.M. and the Discussion Meeting.

DISCUSSION MEETINGS 1978

All at 'The Clarence', Whitehall, at 17.30 for 18.00 hours.

Wednesday 13 September immediately after the Annual General Meeting (17.30 hours) and the brief Council Meeting: Shamus O. D. Wade on 'Kipling and the Bent Copper'.

Wednesday 15 November: Miss A. M. D. Ashley on 'I would not call them Poets'.

ANNUAL LUNCHEON 1978

On *Friday 20 October* at The Hanover Grand, Hanover Street, London W1R 9HH (near Oxford Circus) at 12.15 for 13.00 hours. The Guest of Honour will be Peter Bellamy, a Member of the Society, who has done much to give Rudyard Kipling's songs and ballads authentic settings and performances. A book-form is enclosed with this Journal.

J.S.

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NEWS AND NOTES

As there is no particular News or Notes, but many excellent articles that have waited much too long for publication, the Editor begs the forgiveness of Members for omitting this item in the present number of *The Kipling Journal*, so as to make room for as many of them as possible.

R.L.G.

RELIGIOUS CROSS CURRENTS IN 'THE HOUSE SURGEON'

By John Coates

The subtlety of *The House Surgeon* (1909) is chiefly found in its act of moral discrimination. It involves the posing against each other of two ways of life, ethical frames of reference, rendered not as sets of precepts but given body and colour by an art of suggestive hints and indications. The tale begins on the evening after Easter Day with half-a-dozen men telling each other ghost stories. L. Maxwell M'leod Esq, playing patience by himself in the next alcove, overhears something about a curse on a family's first-born, and leans across to enquire after the party has broken up. This opening, superficially resembling countless ghost stories of the period, has all the subtlety of Kipling's mature writing. There is the allusion to the central event of the Christian calendar, the Resurrection, the overwhelming affirmation of the Christian God's power over the world. The Curse on the Firstborn suggests the ultimate plague of Egypt which broke Pharaoh's will and redeemed Israel from the House of Bondage. Easter and Passover are both offset, however, by curious and piquant intimations of the secular spirit. The evening after Easter is a time not for religion but for pleasant superstition, ghost stories, only fragments of the supernatural. And the curse on the first-born "turned out to be drains".

The effect of these allusions is to raise some slight cross-currents at the very beginning of *The House Surgeon*. There is a contrast between the great supernatural affirmations of the past, both essentially answers to evil, redemptive in character and the spirit of the present, the world of club raconteurs and the merely technical problems of drainage and plumbing.

"Maxwell M'leod" is very much part of this modern age. His assumed name carries a little of the pathos of the Jew at a time when assimilation seemed the answer to anti-semitism. "Why didn't you join our party?" the narrator asks him, but the question remains unanswered. In private conversation "M'leod" reveals a gentle and sympathetic character. He takes a natural pleasure in his wealth and his power to obtain life's good things. There is a hint of naive boasting about his expenses and of naive puzzlement at their failure to secure a happy home for his family. Kipling compresses into a characteristic tone and gesture the shyness, the simplicity, the love of creature comfort, the touch of worldly cunning:

"A man and his family ought to be happy after so much expense, ain't it?"

He looked at me through the bottom of his glass.

"M'leod" is a man interested in creating an atmosphere without pain or suffering. His insistence, at his wife's behest, that the house should have had no death in it since it was built is symptomatic. (The fact that a woman has accidentally fallen to her death just outside one of the windows is a joke at his expense as well as, for a different reason, that of Holmescroft's former owners.)

"M'leod" has pathos and charm but unlike the *Jews in Shushan of Life's Handicap* he does not have tragedy. Despite their isolation as a tiny pocket in a remote Indian city they had not lost touch with the passions of the Old Testament. The narrator there glimpses the apparently mild Ephraim slaughtering a sheep and marking the lintel of his door with its blood:

He was attired in a strange raiment, having no relation to duster coats or list slippers . . . and the nature of the man seemed changed . . . A picture of Ephraim busied in one of his religious capacities was no thing to be desired twice.

"M'leod" has lost touch with these roots of faith and suffering. His marriage to a Greek woman seems to signify his severance from his own people. He and his "good lady" live a sweet-tempered indulgent life with their "little girl". ("I say little but she's twenty"). After having given thirty years of his life to the fur trade he can only describe the depression to which the inmates of Holmescroft succumb as an auctioneer would, "it must be seen to be appreciated" or as an illness, "an influenza epidemic", rather than in moral, spiritual or even psychological terms.

The cosiness, the comfort, the ebullient hospitality and love of the good life are delicately handled by Kipling. There is nothing gross about "M'leod"; no trace of an anti-semitic stereotype. The nub of the matter lies rather in his creation of a way of life which excludes tragedy, fatality and mystery. Although some of his personal characteristics are necessary for the plot, one cannot help feeling that Kipling has noted a climate current in Judaism from Moses Mendelssohn in the eighteenth century to his own contemporary, the widely-respected Israel Zangwill¹, the tendency to seek escape from the historical dilemma of the Jew through "assimilation" and the values of the Enlightenment. Liberal Judaism of this kind was dominant in Jewish circles when *The House Surgeon* was written.

"M'leod" is a charming exemplar of these values in their material

rather than consciously intellectual sense. His "little place" Holmescroft is an attractive suburban house in a new and "exclusive residential district of dustless roads". The copper beech in the garden is "promising". He remarks on the cost of the building land and of the faintly absurd Queen Anne golfing pavilion. The house itself is lavishly furnished but close, the bedrooms smelling of perfumed soap. The antiseptic newness of everything seems designed to banish depth and the past. The many casual callers, the "appropriately clothed" young men and maidens playing tennis are pleasant but unmemorable.

I was introduced to many fine ladies and gentlemen of those parts. Magnificently appointed landaus and covered motors swept in and out of the drive, and the air was gay with the merry outcries of the tennis-players. As twilight drew on they all went away . . .

Darkness has been pushed to one side rather than dispelled. M'leod needs confirmation from the narrator. It is possible to flood Holmescroft with electric light from a switch in the veranda :

"You can do that from your room also . . .

There's something in money, ain't it".

A house without darkness and where no death has ever taken place ought to still apprehensions they attempt to suppress. Miss M'leod hints at the possibility of the supernatural but associates it with Greece when she was a little girl, not England.

The House Surgeon, however, is concerned not with the supernatural but with that element of the moral life the "M'leods" have tried to deny. The depression which comes on occupants of Holmescroft is not a fear of the unknown. In descriptions of it its palpability is emphasised. It is like a falling wall; the headlamp of a motor, shining a black beam, a raging tooth-ache, a burning-glass. It produces physical symptoms, a click in the brain like the click in the ear of a man descending in a diving-bell. The concrete imagery carries an association of something real and present, almost homely, rather than mysterious. One is amazed and angry at it rather than afraid. In comparing the feeling to the Horror of Great Darkness mentioned in the Bible, Kipling implies that this very concrete thing is part of man's traditional knowledge and moral experience; something "M'leod's" ancestors knew but which he has forgotten. Its essence lies in the pain of conscience. We know of Evil because we have done evil. The narrator falls asleep and dreams "that most terrible of all dreams" in which all our misdeeds are wiped away.

and in the very bliss of our assured innocence, before our loves shriek and change countenance we wake to the day we have earned.

There are two inferences here; Human beings hurt those they love and they inevitably colour their mental landscape by their action. This is what the moneyed innocence of the "M'leods" ignores.

In this humane story Kipling is not concerned to score a facile moralistic point about "M'leod's" way of life. What he does imply is that this charming, ingenious man ignores the reality of "sin" and "guilt" in experience. As the narrator leaves after his second visit he tries to console him with the gift of a narwhal horn from his collection 'much as a nurse gives a child sweets for being brave at the dentist's.'

The moral dimension has been replaced by presents and gentle cajolery; guilt has shrunk to embarrassment.

The House Surgeon's moral sophistication is not content with making one fairly obvious statement about modern materialism or blandness. Whatever the previous inhabitants of Holmescroft, the Misses Moultrie, ignored it was not the Fact of Sin. The "M'leods" may have forgotten it. By contrast the Misses Moultrie were soaked in it and Kipling does not suggest that their Calvinism is a superior wisdom. (After his childhood experiences this would scarcely have been likely.) Their religion is festering and claustrophobic associated with a possibly neurasthenic range of ailments which afflict the two surviving sisters. The air of the sickroom conditions their lives, a world of "washes, gargles, pastilles and inhalations", of secret devotion to rival medicines. The sisters share

a double-bedded room reeking with steam and Friar's Balsam. Their emotional range confines itself to narrow religious beliefs. The solicitor suggests that Miss Mary's brooding "along certain lines" in religion may have disturbed her mind. There is something unhealthy in her almost automatic assumption that her sister's death was suicide and she seems to hug the thought of her Eternal Damnation :

I warn you we are Evangelicals. We don't believe in prayers for the dead. "As the tree falls —"

Kipling indicates that the sin-obsession like "M'leod's" blandness is a spiritual problem. Mary's Calvinism is presumptuous in its attempt to prescribe God's courses of action, to penetrate His mysteries. As Baxter remarks,

The facts as God knows 'em may *be* different—even after the most clinching evidence.

The madness of her faith and the emotional intensity of her sheltered life are the fuel for a psychological "projection". The gloom of Holmescroft is the effect of her rigid moods and years of obsession.

This "phantom of the living", an idea fashionable at the time, is less interesting than the role of the "house-surgeon" himself. There is, in the title of the tale, a declaration of its medical dimension. The narrator is a kind of doctor, although the disease to which he ministers is spiritual and moral. His approach is calm and rational, seeking to appraise himself of the facts, pursuing various lines of enquiry in his diagnosis. Part of the pleasure of *The House Surgeon* probably stems, as Angus Wilson has recently suggested², from its sustained allusion to Sherlock Holmes and the detective work necessary before the source of the blight can be revealed. Without denying this particular nuance, however, it is probably worth emphasising that the role of surgeon rather than detective is the dominant one. The narrator does more than unearth the salient facts. He ministers to a mind diseased and redresses a moral balance.

Kipling is careful to establish the narrator's attitude, his particular ambience; a blend of detachment, sympathy, tact and humour, appropriate to the best kind of medical man. And this is surely significant. The problems are moral and spiritual. The solutions are the product, almost, of a medical analysis. The story affirms the value of a calm deliberation; the power of sane human reason to cope. It is true that not just facts but questions of moral judgement are involved. There is an underlying optimism in the value given to evidence, however, If it is rationally assessed and forcibly presented it will be effective. The narra-

tor supplies proof that Mary's sister fell to her death accidentally and that proof is accepted. There is no suicide and therefore no eternal damnation. The depression over the house lifts.

Despite its praise of sanity and its basic optimism *The House Surgeon* is not facile. Its point is that the dark moral places in life must be faced. The "M'leods" have not faced them. Miss M'leod calls the narrator "Mr Perseus" and suggests that she will be chained to her rock unless he can save her. The allusion is apt. Perseus dealt with the horror of Medusa, not directly, but by catching her reflection in his shield. Human reason, through art and moral reflection, has power over fears, morbidity and obsession.

The conclusion of *The House Surgeon* has all that subtlety and ambivalence associated with Kipling's middle and late phases. In one way the story ultimately endorses the "M'leod's" values. When the evil has been faced and exorcised, their love of life, domestic happiness and humanity are left free and, we are to feel, this is right. Miss M'leod's little song, the seeming end of the tale is an affirmation of innocent joy as the best reaction to life. It rejects Calvinism and its Angry God and implies that acceptance of one's limitations is the sanest response.

Why should'st thou now unpleasant be
Thy wrath against God venting
That He a little bird made thee
Thy silly head tormenting?

The happiness of the "M'leods", the little birds, is not foolish. The contentment of God's humble children is, on the whole, fittest for their humanity, rather than a meddling with perplexity and mystery.

This is not the true end of *The House Surgeon*, however. As in most of Kipling's later work the story is not complete in itself. Its meaning is modified by the poem which accompanies it, the curiously named *Rabbi's Song*. The theme of these verses is obviously pertinent to *The House Surgeon*; the power of thought to colour "wall or beam or rafter" with its own unhappiness, as Holmescroft is tainted. More interestingly they are a verdict on human life. The title of the poem possibly alludes to the "M'leods" but will perhaps recall to many readers Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra*. Kipling sets against the classic statement of Liberal Judaism—"the best is yet to be", the view of another kind of Rabbi, a hint of the earlier wisdom the "M'leods" had set aside :

If Thought can reach to Heaven
On Heaven let it dwell
For Fear that Thought be given
Like power to reach to Hell.

The power of thought means it must be disciplined towards the positive. Given the nature of things escapes from the dark places are bound to be pieces of luck; or to depend as they do in the story on the intervention of a sane, reasonable and sensitive man who is capable of facing the moral problem. He must protect those who are not and guard their peace for them. This is the "means" the poem refers to :

Our lives, our tears, as water
Are poured upon the ground.
God giveth no man quarter,
Yet God a means hath found :

Though faith and hope have vanished
And even love grows dim,
A means whereby His banished
Be not expelled from Him !

NOTES

1. *The Wisdom of Israel*. Ed. Lewis Browne, London, 1962, p.556-562.
2. Angus Wilson, *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling*, London, 1977, p.268.

KIPLING AND MODERN INDIA

By Kalyan K. Chatterjee

The East-West theme is one of the most recurrent ones to agitate the minds of many and the imagination of a few throughout the sway of Britain over India and beyond. The conception of the East-West contact as a mighty cultural force which awakened the dormant country and brought it to the fold of modern history was characteristic of the optimism of the nineteenth century. It was believed that India would take its place side by side with the progressive nations of the world once it received the light of Western civilisations through the good offices of the British administration, and, implicitly, through the acceptance of the Christian faith. Macaulay, Trevelyan, Bentinck, Elphinstone and the Evangelists both in India and in the home country had written and spoken glowingly and eloquently on the prospect and the fact is that they were joined by the leading members of the Indian society too. But in the latter half of the nineteenth century this optimism began somewhat appreciably to wane on both sides, but first more on the British side, represented especially by the civilians, the 'men on the spot', who also happened to be the audience for whom Kipling started writing. This class of civilians, college and university graduates from Britain, who worked in the heat and dust of India, were not gullible faithfuls of the White Man's Burden and all that, but they were far from believing that Indians had come close to be eligible to bear their own burden. All this is known history and the knowability of this history has worked adversely for Kipling's literary reputation in India: for example, he has figured very little in the list of English authors in the school and college syllabi in India. He has been inevitably associated with British superiority and condescension in their attitudes to Indians and this association is a powerful argument for simplism. However, it is reasonable that Indians would squirm a little to read the stories that were not in fact aimed at them but to the readers of the *Civil and Military Gazette*, who loved to see the mirror of their life in Kipling's ballads, stories, sketches, and skits. But much of Kipling's Indian phase was not so restricted any way, and some, notably *Kim*, had brewed in his mind for a long time, bridging his childhood memories with his youthful sojourn in India, which he carried back with him to write with the sense of a more universal audience than the claustrophobic little England in the tropics.

In any case, Indians too have turned a new leaf, and while they now read and enjoy Kipling, free from the tensions of the past, and quite often with an admixture of yearning for the good old British days, it will not be out of place for me to strike a personal note. I have just returned to Kipling's unfavourite place, Bengal, to his favourite, that is, Simla and the neighbouring valleys, the heart of the Kipling country. Immediately before my arrival in Simla, I too was an expatriate, in America, where during my youthful days as a greenhorn, I had to answer occasionally for Gunga Din, Babu Hurry Chunder Mookerjee, the Bengal Lancers and the Royal Bengal Tiger. The legendary East had acquired its Kiplingesque associations in the folk imagination of that country. This in retrospect leads me to think that while Kipling's 'imperialist' views and jingo ethics continue to be regarded by critics as the unredeeming feature of his works, the folk imagination has hardly taken any note of this and concentrated on the story-telling part, the good wholesome tales and their exotic locales and allusions, the air and aroma, the heat and dust, and the picturesque cavalcade of Hindusthan, all of which are so vividly pictured forth in his books. This picture, however, is not there to merely serve as a backdrop. It gives us the sense of the country and the society, it creates, in other words, the sense of *being* there. This fact attracts me powerfully to his stories and ballads.

There are, of course, other things besides. One such is a theme that appeals to a contemporary as he thinks of the bequest of the East-West contact, the 'imperialising' phase of the European nations in the East: the theme of the White Man in an alien land where he is called upon to fight and rule. This is a framework theme for his Indian stories; it is a framework, in fact, for many of his contemporaries. One may even go further and say that the theme is a sort of source mythology for much literary writing, but probably a greater amount of not so literary writing in the entire history of Indo-British contact, for example, diaries, social commentaries, biographies, autobiographical novels, travelogues. There is one patent misconception about the white man hero of Kipling, affecting his reputation in India particularly. This white man, the unifying theme in Kipling, is not so much really the big white man, the policy-maker, the ruler, or the merchant owner, but rather the common, and sometimes very common and small Englishman, who finds his mettle, his metier, not always ending happily for him, as administrator, soldier, manager: jobs testing the characteristic British fortitude and pluck. He has the climate and unruly country to combat with on one hand and on the other, to face the challenge of the imperial system itself, in which he is more often acted upon than actor. The ballads of the *Departmental Ditties and other Verses* and the stories of *Under the Deodars* and *Plain Tales from the Hills* do make us see the point of C. S. Lewis's remark that Kipling is not 'the panegyrist of the whole imperial system' and that 'his admiration is reserved for those in the lower positions', the 'bearers of the burden' (*Selected Essays*, Cambridge: University Press, 1969, p.240).

But it is not only the theme, but the life and vitality of it all, the realism and the vividness. It is said that Kipling was a master of devising a context and then planting a story in it. This is a good explanation for the immediacy of appeal, the vividness that his stories have

even today. But the vividness comes from another source: the intensity of life lived as a passage for which a reckoning had to be given. This consciousness brought out some typical English virtues of the characters, but it also made them see in India only an extension of *their* work, *their* codes of honour, and love, and service. The white man's state of mind in the East has been explored with more subtlety and depth by novelists like Conrad and Forster, and Orwell has even shown the double corruption of imperialism (of the ruler and the ruled alike in *Shooting an Elephant*: the title essay). But the life and vitality of Kipling's ballads and stories can be compared only with works like the *Canterbury Tales*. What he lacks in the way of a probing philosophical mind he compensates for by the vividness and dramatic quality of his stories. It is particularly remarkable that like Chaucer his realism and his zest in portraying a whole cavalcade of people come into full play in *Kim*, dealing as much with roadside drama as pilgrimage, both literal and allegorical.

The image of the country he makes a sensuous one but he does not sentimentalise. A wealth of objectifying details coupled with his narrative speed, the clever insertion of a native word here and an archaic word there, the ballad epigraphs and refrains, a wayside comedy, or a jousty tale all give us a sense of the exuberant life lived in the tropical open. Think for example, of the appeals to the senses in *Kim*: 'The *ghee*- and curry-scented noons, the warm whispering nights and the flitting shades, the diamond bright mornings and the noise of the marketplace, the picturesque carts bringing colourfully dressed women from the valleys, the railway carriages with people drawn from various parts of the country, and the pilgrimage march to Benares with novel turns of events and new acquisitions. India is a presence and a protagonist in Kipling. What other 'Indo-Anglian' writer gives us a more vivid sense of the country? I cannot resist excerpting a beautiful passage from *Kim* :

The Grand Trunk at this point was built on an embankment to guard against winter floods from the foothills, so that one walked, as it were, a little above the country, along a stately corridor, seeing all India spread out to left and right. It was beautiful to behold the many-yoked grain and cotton wagons crawling over the country roads: one could hear their axles, complaining a mile away, coming nearer, till with shouts and yells and bad words they climbed up the steep incline and plunged on to the hard main road, carter reviling carter. It was equally beautiful to watch the people, little clumps of red and blue and pink and white and saffron, turning aside to go to their own villages, dispersing and growing small by twos and threes across the level plain. Kim felt these things, though he could not give tongue to his feelings, and so contented himself with buying peeled sugar cane and spitting the pith generously about his path. From time to time the lama took snuff, and at last Kim could endure the silence no longer.

'This is a good land—the land of the South!' said he. 'The air is good; the water is good. Eh?'

'And they are all bound upon the Wheel,' said the lama. 'Bound from life after life. To none of these has the Way been shown.' He shook himself back to this world.

The primeval appeal of the country to Kipling's imaginative being and

the picaresque allegory in which he seemed to find a personal context for his generally Buddhistic interpretation of the Indian, that is, Oriental, faith (not without an admixture of Christianity), for example, in stories like *Kim* and the 'The Miracle of Puran Bhagat', partake of his deep Indian experience to which he, like Kim, was not always able to give tongue. This experience, this Indian experience is where to start re-discovering Kipling as an Indian author.

It is not that the other side of Kipling is to be overlooked, or somehow suppressed, nor are we troubled that the ballads and stories are thickly coated in the ideas and opinions of the age of imperialism, for one thing they are only *ideas* and *opinions*; it is the *stories* that count. True, they often read like *exempla* or what he himself called a 'Tract' ('This is not a tale exactly. It is a Tract; and I am intensely proud of it'—said he in 'The Conversion of Aurelian McGoggin', *Plain Tales from the Hills*). But even when they are such tracts, they give interesting vignettes of the sojourners' life in India, including the gem of an advice: 'Believe me, Pagett, to deal with India you want first-hand knowledge and experience' (The Enlightenments of Pagett, M.P., *Under the Deodars*).

The Kipling heroes, the officers and other personnel of the imperial infra-structure, do make up a certain world. There is a tender side; the flutter of love in the heart of a young officer separated from his newly-wed wife in the hills, or worse, at home, the little tricks by which another officer sets distances at naught by teaching his wife to decode heliographic messages; there is also a pathetic side: the sudden but inevitable death in the hot killing plains, the hardship of keeping the family in Simla in summer, and the few who were afraid of 'present pain' ('The Last Relief,' *PTH*), in spite of the myth of the fearless white man. There is also the heroic side, the subalterns and corporals who crowd the Kipling galaxy of incredibly strong-bodied lion-hearted men enjoying good fights whether sportingly among themselves or with the fierce frontiersmen of north-western India. But all this is again a part of myth-making; Kipling wanted physical symbols of the mental courage that Englishmen must have to keep a sub-continent many times larger than Britain under British law. These stories, these vignettes from departments and barrack-rooms, these stories from hill resorts and parching plains add up to a saga of imperial life, the condition of telescoping one country into another, each trying to retain its identity. One could almost see in these stories an emerging epic pattern. It is the emerging pattern of life that attracts us today to Kipling.

The nineteenth century dichotomy between the East and West, the contemplative and spiritual East opposed to the active and intellectual Europe was a faith that seems simplistic to-day, but it was shared by imperialists and nationalists alike. Nationalistic Indians were rather fond of emphasising the contemplative and spiritual tradition of India, given to an exaggerated introspection under the onslaught of Western ideas. For example, Tagore, often in spite of his awareness of the philosophical issues, spoke of the distinctive value of India's quietist, contemplative tradition. Another famous nationalist and philosopher, Sri Aurobindo, remained preoccupied with characterising the Indian civilisation in what seemed to be almost a quest for self-identity (he was a totally Anglicised Indian returning to India to be a nationalist).

In a collection of essays by him (*Ideals and Progress*. 1920). we come across remarks like this:

But the fundamental difference has been that Asia has served predominantly (not exclusively) as a field for man's spiritual experience and progression: Europe has been rather a workshop for his mental and vital activities.

Kipling was hardly the kind to lend himself to such philosophising, but it is remarkable that those among the best known of his Indian characters, for example, Puran Bhagat and the lama (*Kim*), should be conceived in terms of 'spiritual experience and progression', and it is this aspect of their character that has given them their immortality.

As regards the white superiority, Kipling's much-assailed myth was based as much on Indian attitudes as British presumption (the double corruption of imperialism!). The overwhelming majority of Indians tacitly accepted the white man as leader both in war and in government. The only people who did not so accept wholeheartedly were the English-educated, the class nurtured by imperial care!

In any case the attitudes have changed and are changing more. The love-hate relationship between the two nations has shed a lot of its element of hate and been replaced by a fond nostalgia for the good old days of the past. As one who was one of the first and foremost to create in English literature an Indian experience, Kipling should be a presence to reckon with in the somewhat disparate pantheon of 'Indo-Anglian' writers.

What in Kipling appeals today is what irked our forebears: Kipling's compulsive habit of telling it as it is, or at least, giving the impression of doing so, of being ruthlessly pragmatic, a state of mind typifying the British civil servants. Indian writers are notorious as sentimental cry-babies, but the Kipling swagger and cynical wit, and above all his creation of a new idiom and new rhythm to embody the Indian experience are things that can start a new Kipling wave in India.

WHEN 'HE' WAS ONE OF 'US'

By Frank C. Middleton

The recent weekend school in Farnham, Surrey, tutored by Professor Charles Carrington, assisted by Mr. Phillip Mason, proved to be a stimulating and emotional experience for the 50 Kiplingites present.

But it did bring home to me how much in the past is the time when Rudyard Kipling was an ever present and potent influence for 'us' the ordinary folk with a Board or Church school background. As a relic of those days may I relate my own memories.

I was born in Victoria's time and when about 10 or 11 years old, while spending the summer holidays at my aunt's cottage in Alfriston, Sussex, I found the village most excited because a novelist, Jeffrey Farnol, staying at the Market Cross Inn there, was writing a novel on old Sussex and had promised to include some of the villagers in his story.

But an old character 'pooh poohed' his reputation and pointed out that "there was a fellow over at Burwash, named Rudyard Kipling, who was very much better and composed songs as well". And what boy could forget a name like that. It was not long after that I became awestruck by spotting this strange name in my hymnbook. To think that he wrote hymns like those old saints and how that phrase "undefiled heritage" has stuck in my memory.

The years before the Great War were the first great days of the Boy Scout movement. It did not surprise us to know that Rudyard Kipling was a friend of our own godlike Chief Scout B.P. (Baden-Powell). Indeed, his oft recited "If" got so caught up in our imagination with the Scout Law and the Apostles' Creed as to become our religion and most difficult to live with.

In 1916 I became a junior clerk in the Admiralty, Whitehall, London. This was in a monastic civilian department leavened by some Southern Irish, ebullient men, lukewarm towards England's war.

Under their influence, we had frequent 'smoking concerts', usually at Anderton's in the Strand, when we entertained ourselves with party pieces, recitations and songs. And this is where Kipling came into his own.

In recitals, "Gunga Din" was overshadowed by such feats of memory as "McAndrews Hymn" and "Mary Gloster". We had our favourites, "The Ladies", for instance and of course, straight off the press, "Minesweepers". But invariably the last item of these concerts would be a dramatic rendering of "Bolivar" by Tim Hurley, a solemn Irishman, who usually passed out soon afterwards.

Then there were the Kipling songs with rousing choruses and very well sung, "Mandalay", "Boots", "Young British Soldier", "Absent Minded Beggar", we had some Boer War veterans amongst us, and the choice "Follow Me 'Ome". Yes our nights out were very much Kipling affairs.

Later in that war, some Kipling naval verses were put to music by Edward Elgar and presented at the London Coliseum in St. Martins Lane. The title was something like "Fringes of the Fleet" or "Sea Warfare". We would slip across Trafalgar Sq. to the matinees and listen again and again to "Lowestoft Boat", "Minesweepers" and "My Boy Jack".

My first sight of the great man was a macabre one. A number of us were given free tickets for a war charity Garden Party in Chelsea to be attended by the heroic and famous on a wet and windy day. On the stage of one of the booths stood that silver tongued charlatan, Horatio Bottomley, entertaining us with a talk on rape by the Germans. As we listened, the canvas sheet at the side of the booth was lifted up and out stepped Rudyard Kipling, his face screwed up with misery and embarrassment. He passed between the old rascal and us, clutching the lapels of his frock coat, and was gone. It must have been hell for him, the recognition by the gawping crowd and the presence of the notorious Bottomley, who incidentally was the popular squire of Upper Dicker here in Sussex.

Some of us who were too young to serve overseas before the war ended in November 1918 could not rest until we had seen the battlefields in France and so, at the first opportunity, we spent our annual

holidays over there. I separated at Nancy and spent my two weeks working my way along the old battle front. By the time I reached Ypres I had had enough. I was jaded, depressed and lonely and decided to make this my last. Out of Ypres Railway Station, nothing ahead until I got to the destroyed barracks, turned left through the cleared area to the town square. In front of me the stacked stones of famous Cloth Hall. To the right, the Menin Gate looking over the wastes towards Poperringe. To the left a make-shift cafe, where, as I ate, they told me that the bodies of five British soldiers had been found in the cellars that week. Lying about the café were a number of English books probably left over from the war. One of them was *Rewards & Fairies*, a shabby paperback by Tauchnitz of Paris. I borrowed, made myself comfortable in the sunshine on the blocks of stone of the Cloth Hall and spent the whole afternoon and evening lost in Kipling's Sussex—and remained dedicated ever since.

Times changed at the Admiralty. The roistering Irish left for the newly founded Free State and were replaced by dour ex-servicemen. Life now became earnest with grievances and staff protest meetings. No more 'smoking concerts'. Instead of recitals of "McAndrews' Hymn", there were speeches by Ramsay MacDonald. Instead of Kipling choruses we sang the "Red Flag" with great gusto—and little conviction. Rudyard Kipling was no longer one of 'us' but one of 'them' consorting with Prime Ministers, Admirals and such.

But his later stories had a great attraction for us. Short stories were popular. It was the practice to circulate the glossy magazines, the *Strands*, *Nashes* and *Windsors*, among the staff. Whenever a new Kipling story appeared, it was exciting. I am sure many of us became Freemasons because of the influence of his stories.

Then there seemed to be an interim when there were no new stories and interest faded. Quite unexpectedly the unbelievable happened. It seemed years later when flicking through one of the second rate magazines, unheralded and unpublicised, there was a new Kipling story. I shall never forget the thrill of it and "Proofs of Holy Writ" will always be a warm favourite.

When Rudyard Kipling died in 1936, it was the wistful loss of an old friend of years before. Had it happened 20 years earlier then it would have been the death of the Master.

I heard in "University Challenge" on I.T.V. the other evening, Mer-ton College, Oxford, say that the author of "Mandalay" was Oscar Wilde, of all people. Yes it is a long time since I heard that there was a fellow over at Burwash who wrote good stories and composed songs too. I must look up the latest edition of the hymnbook and see if Rudyard Kipling is still included with the saints.

NEW MEMBERS:

We welcome (in order of joining): Mrs. D. Anstey, C. D. Cox, Professor J. Hutchinson (USA), University of Sussex Library, Miss Bride-well, Mrs. Lucas, Father Edmund Histon, Howard Mather, A. H. Peters, Sam Abrams (Spain), J. W. Curram (USA).

KIPLING'S PLACE IN LITERATURE

By Walter Allen

T. S. Eliot called Rudyard Kipling "the most inscrutable of authors . . . a writer impossible wholly to understand and quite impossible to belittle." On the face of it, it was an extraordinary judgement to pass on an author who was the idol of the plain, philistine, notably non-literary public, suggesting that he was as difficult, almost as hermetic to popular understanding as Eliot himself might be construed to be, and that if it was impossible to belittle him it had not been for want of many people trying. As the celebrant of British imperialism and "the white man's burden", which was one of his own phrases, in his lifetime Kipling was anathema to all good liberals both with a large and a small initial letter, and even today, forty years after his death, fairness to him is not easy.

Part of the difficulty in making a judgement lies in the complexity of his character, part in the disconcerting range of his subject-matter. It is impossible to read *Plain Tales from the Hills* generally without being forced partially to agree with the nineteenth-century critic who accused him of honouring "everywhere the brute and the bully". At the same time it is impossible not to be struck with the warmth of his sympathy both for children and for those, men and women, white and brown alike, caught up in inter-racial sexual relations, as in "Without Benefit of Clergy". He appears, indeed, in these stories as, to borrow Bagehot's phrase for Dickens, the "special correspondent for posterity" reporting the day-to-day life of the British Raj in the last decades of Victoria's reign. That he was an unillusioned observer of the nature of imperialism emerges clearly in what is probably the finest of his Indian stories, "The Man who would be King", in which two down-at-heel adventurers seize a country to the north of Afghanistan and only fail to establish a dynasty there because of the character-defects of one of them. It is an ironically grim fable on the nature of empire-building.

Though in his lifetime Kipling was seen as above all a writer about India, in fact he spent less than ten years of his adult life in the country, and it seems clear that his imagination widened and deepened after leaving it. His range is extraordinary, so much so that it is impossible to pick out any one story as typical of Kipling; instead, there are peaks of excellence, each *sui generis*, and in a narrow space all one can do is give instances. There is "Mrs. Bathurst", a study in sexual magic and, in its subtlety and indirection and mastery of the rendering of character through dialogue, possibly the most remarkable story in the language. It compels realisation that Kipling was not only a modern but at times even a modernist writer.

There are the great mythopaeic stories of Sussex life, in particular "Friendly Brook", a story very pagan in tone about what in effect is a local deity of the kind we find in Latin poetry, and "The Wish-House", a beautiful story of self-sacrifice in which something like an instance of ancient folk-lore is astonishingly invented. There are stories based on scientific invention, such as "The Eye of Allah", in which the microscope is invented—and smashed to bits—in a medieval monastery, and

"Wireless", in which an early experiment in transmission by radio is magically tied up with the presence of an apothecary's assistant, whose mind in a trance is invaded by the spirit of John Keats. There are stories of morbid psychology like the chilling and in my view often misunderstood "Mary Postgate". There is the haunting story of phantom children, "They", which so influenced Eliot in the writing of "Burnt Norton".

That he was the greatest of English short-story writers can scarcely be doubted. He was never a successful novelist, though *Kim* is a case on its own, a wonderfully sympathetic evocation of Indian native life. He was, obviously, one of the great children's writers, and it was precisely in such works as *The Jungle Book*, *Puck of Pook's Hill* and *Stalky & Co.* that he most unambiguously dramatised his moral values, what he called the Law, which "lesser breeds" were without. Above all, perhaps, with his younger contemporaries Joyce and Lawrence, with whom one feels he would have had little sympathy, he was one of the undisputed masters of specifically modern English prose.

A definitive critical estimate of Kipling as a poet is still awaited. He stood apart from the general poetic theories and practice current in his lifetime and forged his own characteristic expression in poems like "Danny Deever" and "Mandalay" out of the music hall ballad, which he brought into literature. His most famous poem, "Recessional", is obviously one of the great hymns. He was in a very real sense that rarest of beings, a genuine popular poet, and whatever his final place in our poetry may prove to be, one thing is certain. More lines and phrases from his verse have passed into the common mind and speech than those of any other English poet of the century.

PETER BELLAMY SINGS THE BARRACK-ROOM BALLADS OF RUDYARD KIPLING

Free Reed Records, Duffield, Derby. FRR 014.

Peter Bellamy, a folk-singer and student of Kipling, has now recorded twelve of the Barrack-Room Ballads. This recording follows his 'Oak, Ash and Thorn' (Argo ZFB 11) and 'Merlin's Isle of Gramarye' (Argo ZFB 81).

His work here has been to rescue the rough soldier songs from their quaint and inappropriate Victorian and Edwardian drawing-room settings, and to present and perform them with their own harsh, cruel, sentimental, robust, cynical authenticity.

Peter Bellamy has drawn, for his settings, on Kipling's much-loved London Music Halls and on traditional songs. Thirty-seven years ago Royal Air Force barrack-rooms resounded with just such tunes, but the words we sang were less inspired.

The printed notes accompanying the record, which include the words of all the recorded Ballads, are almost impeccable, and the illustrations are just right. Highly recommended.

DISCUSSION MEETINGS

12th April 1978

SOME OF MY FAVOURITE KIPLING POEMS

Mrs A. E. Bagwell Purefoy

This was an overdue appearance by a valued member who remained in the background assisting the Colonel in important work for the Society during the many years he was our Hon. Secretary. Mrs. Bagwell Purefoy paid her husband a very handsome compliment in thanking him for all he had taught her about Kipling. We might say the same ourselves.

The Speaker had never aspired to be a literary person, despite Honours in Eng. Matric., and confessed that she was unable to distinguish between Kipling's verse and poetry. As T. S. Eliot found the same problem we make no attempt to solve it but merely enjoy what we read.

It was impossible, the Speaker felt, to mention even a quarter of her favourite works, but she always took the Inclusive Edition of the Verse on holiday when she would have time to enjoy it, recall when she first read each item and then read it again with enjoyment.

Eddi's Service came first, founded on a legend of A.D. 687 when a Prior promised that his senior priest would hold a service every Christmas Eve in a tiny chapel. This is associated with *The Conversion of St. Wilfrid*, one of the most beautiful of Kipling's stories.

Then *When Earth's Last Picture is Painted* and *The Thousandth Man*—before *Simple Simon* in *Rewards and Fairies*. These took the Speaker back to her nursing days when she and her colleagues could go about the East End in uniform—alone, where policemen hesitated to go in pairs.

Mrs. Bagwell Purefoy then read, with great feeling, *A Ballad of Burial* and recalled the comfort she had from Kipling's verses when she was obliged to break the news of a death during her service at the London Hospital.

On a more cheerful note, her children were delighted with the *Just So Stories* and the verses associated with them her daughter more so than her son, possibly because the latter was not caught at the right age! Here followed "The Camel's hump is an ugly lump . . ." and "Pussy can sit by the fire and sing . . ."

Sussex—a special Home Poem—can be applied to a favourite home wherever it is, and so can *The Land*

For whoever pays the taxes old Mus' Hobden owns the land.

The Dawn Wind—reflecting Kipling's insomnia—shows the awakening of England at the end of the Dark Ages and the beginning of enlightenment in Europe: it is a special favourite, as is *The Anvil*, showing William the Conqueror making England into a nation.

My Boy Jack shows the sorrow of a mother for the loss of her son, while *A Son (Epitaphs of the War)* reflects the sorrow of Kipling himself.

The Speaker again recalled her time at the London Hospital where she and her colleagues decorated their rooms with pictures and—in many cases—a framed copy of *If*—: the latter often providing an apt quotation to illustrate the events of the day. It was here that she began to read Kipling poetry (from the library—her salary was £30 p.a.!) while later her children brought her to the Puck and Mowgli stories.

During the 1939 war, *Big Steamers* comforted her while the Colonel was overseas, and so did *The Children's Song*

Land of our birth, we pledge to thee . . .

and other favourites included *The Roman Centurion's Song*, *The King's Job* and "*Together*"—Queen Elizabeth I and the Spanish Armada—and *The Secret of the Machines*.

The last of the *Songs from English History* mentioned by Mrs. Bagwell Purefoy was *The Glory of the Garden*, a charming allegory that obviously comes from Kipling's heart.

The Speaker concluded with a reference to the sea poems and those for children, who loved Kipling as he loved them, as the late Mrs. Nancy Brett, his own children's Governess used to relate and as confirmed by the late Mrs. Bambridge in her Epilogue to Carrington's Biography.

After this delightful glimpse into a charming mind, which was received with great attention, members present expressed their appreciation, and, after a pause to collect their thoughts, began an informal discussion which so pleased your Reporter that he was unable to do more than jot down one or two observations which included a very well-sung snatch of *If*—which, we discovered to our delight, goes to the tune of "When a felon's not engaged in his employment" from *The Pirates of Penzance*!

One member remembered *The Children's Song* as No. 1 in the *Public Schools' Hymn Book* and still recalls with horror after more years than he cares to remember, being made to 'copy out three hymns' as an imposition.

The fate of the Centurion was debated—was he sent aboard his ship under arrest, or does his ghost still march along Stane Street, looking for his wife and son? This, naturally, brought *The Way Through the Woods* to mind, while one member delighted in *The Song of the Banjo* and another recalled *The Undertaker's Horse*!

A side-issue—part of the charm of these meetings—brought *The Record of Badalia Herodsfoot* to notice with the reminder that the critics had taken Kipling to task for 'trying his hand' at this *genre*, as they thought, in imitation of others: little did they know that he was the first!

The appreciation of the meeting was then formally but sincerely conveyed to Mrs. Bagwell Purefoy, together with thanks for an enjoyable evening.

J.H.McG.

The Kipling Society

Founded in 1927 by J. H. C. Brooking, M.I.E.E.

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