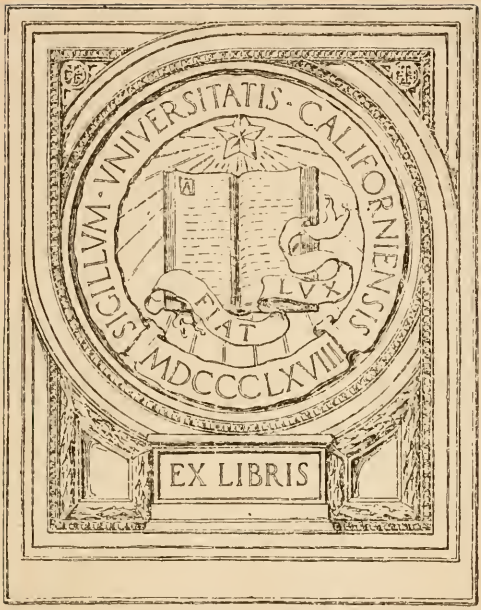
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Rudyard Kipling.

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RUDYARD KIPLING

A CRITICAL STUDY

BY

CYRIL FALLS

NEW YORK
MITCHELL KENNERLEY
MCMXV

TO

LILLA, LADY BROOKE OF COLEBROOKE,

IN TOKEN OF FRIENDSHIP AND IN

MEMORY OF GREAT KINDNESS

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

NOTE

Mr. Rudyard Kipling's works are published by Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd., and by Messrs. Methuen & Co., Ltd. Acknowledgement is made to these firms for their very courteous permission to reprint many extracts in this volume.

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I

INTRODUCTION

THERE are certain writers whose place in the history of literature is not determined merely by their merit. They are men of their hour, men who voice the thoughts and aspirations of their contemporaries, men who help to explain the writers that go before and that follow after. They come at a time of crisis, and take their part in shaping the destiny of letters. Byron in England, Chateaubriand in France are typical examples. They are foolish people who deny Byron's claim to be a great poet, but it is none the less true that Byron is a far grander figure than the worth of his poetry would warrant. He is in our eyes the great herald of revolt, the man who dared scoff at the Duke of Wellington and the Battle of Waterloo. He voices the nostalgia of Romanticism, he is the mouthpiece of *fin de siècle* pessimism. This is even truer of Chateaubriand, who was a poor poet in the main, whose Génie du Christianisme is talked of but never read, who is known to the modern world through his Mémoires

d'Outre Tombe alone. In England we have a steady succession of such men, because we have alternating periods of national self-satisfaction and despondency. It is not too much to say that the moods of the day may be traced throughout the last hundred years by the successive popularity of Byron, Tennyson, Wilde, Kipling and Wells.

For Mr. Kipling is one of these important figures, these milestones on the long and crooked road of letters. He entered the literary world of the last twenty years of the nineteenth century as forcibly and destructively as the notorious bull in a china shop. He did not attack the guardians of the china individually —that was not his way. He laughed at their designs and their workmanship, and put his foot through the subtly-fashioned and highly artistic bowls that were their chiefest delight. He did, to put his power at the lowest, more than any other one man to prepare the way for a new era.

It was a tired world, very ready to die, that Mr. Kipling demolished. It was the easier to kill that its life was rather a reflection of life than life itself, a beautiful mirage set in an ugly desert, a fantastic pleasaunce walled in from the world. To deny beauty to the mirage, to speak of this world as one of mere rottenness

and decay betokens blindness or affectation. This school had its philosophy, and it was not a mean philosophy. It produced Wilde's delightful play, The Importance of Being Earnest, one of the finest pure comedies in modern English literature; his witty and often really wise essays, his Sphinx and Salomé. It produced a whole sheaf of charming minor poetry, and at least one poet, Mr. Arthur Symons, whose best work does not deserve the adjective. It produced, as its most typical flowers, the pallid women, soaked in sin, and the fat, leering rakes of Aubrey Beardsley. And its fret and fume, the fever of Dowson and the savagery of Crackanthorpe, were fitting enough in a querulous age that was beginning to enquire whether the glories of the reign of Victoria the Good did not mask too many things that were far from being glorious. It was not unjustly that Wilde boasted that he stood in symbolical relations to the age in which he lived. Mr. Holbrook Jackson in his brilliant and stimulating book The Eighteen Nineties says: "The Eighteen Nineties were electric with new ideas which strove to find expression in the average national life." And, a little later: "Side by side with the *poseur* worked the reformer, urged on by the revolutionist." The age was an age of experiment, a stirring-up

of a society intellectually dormant. Above all, it cried out for beauty and beautiful things at a time when English taste generally was as low as it had been for a century and a half. And that taste it went very far to reform.

So much granted, it must be said that the æsthetic movement was unoriginal, and that it did not produce one really great man. It borrowed its ideas and its ideals wholesale, from the Pre-Raphaelites, from Pater, from the French Symbolistes. Wilde took Salomé from the far finer Hérodiade of Flaubert, The Picture of Dorian Gray from the infinitely more powerful A Rebours of Huysmans. Dowson imitated Baudelaire, while some of the most beautiful poems of Mr. Symons are gem-like translations, no whit behind the originals, of the work of Paul Verlaine. Wilde, Beardsley and Dowson would have been, as Mr. Jackson remarks, more at home in Paris than London. The eyes of the intellectuals were turned toward Ireland, upon the successors of Mangan, Sir Samuel Ferguson and the young Mr. W. B. Yeats. The whole trend of the period was un-English.

It was also artificial. Again to quote Mr. Jackson: "It was a characteristic of the decadence not to sing of the bloom of Nature but the bloom of cosmetics." The hymning of

London, of London's cafés and street lights and women of pleasure; Wilde's ingenious and amusing theory of the dependence of Nature upon Art were as much instances of perversion as were the acts that brought him to Reading Gaol. The 'red mouths' its young men yearned for were 'bought,' its flowers were ever 'parched,' its heroines 'wan,' its boys 'dainty.'

In the later eighties there spread bruit of a man who was delighting India with very different fare. "Mr. Kipling," said The Saturday Review, "is a new writer, or a writer new to the English as distinct from the Anglo-Indian public. He is so clever, so fresh and so cynical that he must be young; like other people, he will be kinder to life when he has seen more of it." The other critics, The Times at their head, agreed. Here was no more obsession with parched flowers and delicate sins, no reflection of French or Gaelic art. As has said M. Chevrillon, the brilliant Frenchman who has made the only adequate criticism of Mr. Kipling that has yet appeared, and whom I shall quote very often in the course of this study: "M. Kipling était Anglais d'une façon simple, violente et, de plus, très nouvelle." That is assuredly the most accurate judgment that can be, in one sentence, passed upon Mr. Kipling and his early success.

Mr. Kipling was English to the core, and we were surfeited with un-English art. He laughed sometimes at the English, but he let it be clearly understood that he was a privileged jester and that it would be unseemly for others to follow him. He loved the English intensely and he glorified them mightily, and the sound was not unpleasing to the ears of men who had been told with insistence that they were brutal and stupid and ugly. He struck again that note which was the note of Nelson, a good feeling toward the other nations, "the lesser breeds without the law," but a firm and steady conviction that the English were the superiors of all, better fighters, better rulers, better lovers, better friends. He hinted—and this I shall presently discuss—that they were the chosen people of the Lord.

Mr. Kipling was violent; that also was welcome. Violence had wearied Wilde and his school; if they depicted it, it was the violence of the lover deceived, not of the soldier in action. There had been, outside the work of the Æsthetes, a reign of prudery so excessive that the word 'sire' had been cut out of a Savoy libretto as suggestive of the stud farm. There was a pleasant thrill in reading the work of a man who was not afraid to use language such as real men used. The oaths of the smok-

ing-room, the more picturesque blasphemy of Tommy Atkins on the march and in canteen were vastly fascinating in print. And there was satisfaction to a people, of whom every year a greater proportion entered the factory and workshop or sat upon the office stool, to learn that there were yet men of its race in whom, out on the frontiers of civilization, burned the old unruly fires.

Above all, Mr. Kipling was new. He had the fortune to find himself in possession of mines almost virgin, and he made good use of them. He was not, of course, their discoverer, but he was the first who knew how to extract the ore. The average Englishman, if he had no relations in the Indian Civil Service, had the vaguest possible knowledge of India, a knowledge based on tales of the Mutiny, sentimental modern novels, and casual conversations with those most uncommunicative of beings, the officers of His Majesty's Army. It was to him, as was Persia, Arabia, or even Egypt, a hot country of palms, and black men who wore turbans. Little he knew of the thousand diversities of race and type and creed and caste, of climate and country, of conditions of life. Scarce better acquainted was he with the white men who governed this bubbling cauldron of nationalities, with their lives and the lives of their

women-folk. Mr. Kipling opened up to him a vast panorama. Here he gave a glimpse of the childless, pleasure-seeking, neurotic woman of Simla, skilled in the discovery of every kind of gratification and sated with them all; here a sight of the lonely official fighting cholera and famine in the plains; now for a moment he showed the teeming, packed bazaar. Two types in particular he drew as none had drawn them before—the young British officer and the private soldier, the long-service man of that day. "To his reader in his bay-window, after tea or after his eggs and pleasant breakfast rolls, or on his return on Sunday from his 'decent Anglican service,'" says M. Chevrillon, "he taught that living in the true sense meant living like the young English officers in India or Burmah, who at twenty-three years of age, beneath a hostile and fever-charged sun, in a half-known rebellious country, cut off with a handful of men in their charge, command, decide and, indifferent to the daily sight of corpses, shoot the rebel leader and the spy." The private soldier, with his simple philosophy, his language and his thirst and his lust all undisguised, was a yet stranger figure.

With each of these was the proper atmosphere. Mr. Kipling had a wonderful power of suggesting and summoning to the consciousness

of his readers colours, odours, sounds. This power was shown in his earliest books, though it has developed considerably since, and was at its height in the description of the Grand Trunk Road in *Kim*.

Almost all the critics were thrown a little off their balance by this youth of four-and-twenty and his amazing freshness and cleverness. Many exhausted early their vocabulary of words expressing wonderment, and were left tamely to repeat themselves as each new work appeared. The Æsthetes sneered a little, though Wilde acknowledged the power of the new-comer and contented himself with the not unfair gibe that he had seen a number of curious things through key-holes. Mr. Kipling took full revenge later in a poem wherein he laughed at Art with a capital A, representing the devil as enquiring of every work of man's hands :

It's pretty, but is it Art?

There was another form of attack which has not ceased to this day ; rather has it grown more bitter. This came from the men who objected to Mr. Kipling's opinions, to his early discovered Imperialism, to his contempt for certain forms of humanitarianism, to just that trace of brutality which helped to give him his vogue. Such attacks were—and are—

sometimes masked behind objections to his work on artistic grounds. Of the more able, an article by the late Francis Adams in The Fortnightly Review is typical. There was in it some acute and on the whole unfavourable criticism of his early verse, which would have been more important had it not been plain to all that most of this was mere clever *vers de société*, owning many models, for which its author would probably have been the last to make high claims. But it was something more than the *odium æstheticum* that made Adams use such ridiculous phrases as "little-brained, second-rate journalist," "sickening egotism and vanities," which were dotted about his review. This was merely the vicious rancour of the political controversialist, and of such attacks, so far as I am aware, Mr. Kipling has never taken the slightest notice.

At that time there was small occasion why he should. All through the nineties, till it reached its height at the beginning of the new century, was swelling and mounting that flood of Imperialism and national pride that subsided so suddenly after reaching full tide, and that is now perhaps creeping slowly up once more. It would be foolish to suggest that Mr. Kipling was responsible for its rise, but equally foolish to deny that he hastened it. Upon its waves

his bark rode triumphant. His poems had a popularity given to none since Tennyson's death; his prose was read as no prose—not Stevenson's even—had been read since the days of Dickens. He was the man of the hour, an acknowledged leader of the Anglo-Saxon race. His position was somewhat similar to that of M. Maurice Barrès in France, though precocity and patriotism were almost the only qualities shared by the two young men. M. Chevrillon bestowed upon him a title which the Frenchman had received from his contemporaries a few years earlier. He was the 'Professor of Energy' of the English people.

II

BIOGRAPHICAL

Mr. Kipling was born on the 30th of December, 1865. It is interesting though perhaps hardly profitable to enquire how far India imprinted itself upon his mind in infancy; whether, had his removal from her influence at the age of four been final, there would have persisted in him any of that Eastern fancy, that love of bright colours, that are the only un-English traits in his very English character. However this may be, the boy suffered the not uncommon fate of the children of Anglo-Indian parents. He was brought to England with his younger sister in 1871, and left in the charge of a relative at Southsea, while his mother remained with his father, engaged in his official duties in India.

In the year of Rudyard's birth John Lockwood Kipling, a skilful draughtsman, as his illustrations to his book Beast and Man in India testify, was appointed Professor of Architectural Sculpture in the Bombay School of Art. He was for some years engaged in the

Central Provinces, making casts of the mythological sculpture of the Rock Temples. Later he was appointed Curator of the Government Museum at Lahore—the 'Wonder House' of *Kim*. Beast and Man in India, his most important book, discursive and formless as it is, is a mine of information on all things Indian. Reading it, we begin to feel that Rudyard Kipling's powers of observation came to him almost inevitably. It also gives us the origins of many little incidents and customs that are scattered through his books. One such custom reappears in that horrible story, *The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes*—the catching of crows for food by means of a decoy. Mr. Lockwood Kipling relates how the Indian gypsies peg down a tame crow on its back, its legs in the air, which seizes and holds fast the other crows that after the manner of their kind come to attack it in its distress. Directly the decoy has fastened its grip upon the wild bird, a man who has been in hiding close at hand seizes the latter and despatches it. Again, in Beast and Man in India are discussed the native legends of the dancing-places of wild elephants in the forests which are the foundation of *Toomai of the Elephants*. The story of the elephant who refused to work the while his mahout was absent on a drinking-bout was drawn from the

same source. The description of monkeys at play is similar to that in *The Jungle Book*. There are here and there instances of an irony as mocking as that in the son's stories. It is pointed out that English observers often attribute the customs and creed of the tiny, high-caste fringe of culture and philosophy to the whole body of the people of India. Mr. Lockwood Kipling's comment on this is: "A description of the habits and beliefs of the Bench of Bishops would scarcely be accepted as fully representative of the masses of Great Britain." I cannot refrain from quoting one delightfully cynical native proverb from all this mass of wit and wisdom and keen observation: "The cat does not catch mice for God."

But Mr. Rudyard Kipling owed to his father a great deal more than mere hints. In the preface to *Life's Handicap* it is written: "A few (of the tales), but these are the very best, my father gave me." But above all he owed him encouragement and good advice, which is something that not every literary man can say of his father. In the dedication, written in mock old English, of his third book *In Black and White*, he thus acknowledges the debt:

How may I here tell of that Tender Diligence which in my wauerynge and inconſtante viages was in all

tyme about me to showe the Paſſions and Occaſions, Shifts, Humours, and Sports that in due proporcion combinate haue bred that Rare and Terrible Myſtery the which, for lacke of a more compleat Vnderſtandinge, the Worlde has cauled Man ; aswel the maner in which you shoulde goe about to pourtraie the same, a lytel at a time in Feare and Decencie.

Mr. John Lockwood Kipling is spoken of by all who knew him as a man of deep and wide culture, a talker witty, cynical and entertaining, and a good friend as well as a good companion. His acquaintances seem to have been legion, judging from the number of Anglo-Indians who expressed for him their affection and respect at his death a few years ago.

He married a Miss Alice Macdonald, one of three beautiful sisters. The other two married respectively Sir Edward Burne-Jones and Sir Edward Poynter. Mr. Kipling's connection by marriage with the former has in it an element of irony, seeing how much he has done to destroy the type of art for which Sir Edward Burne-Jones stood. He dedicated *Plain Tales from the Hills* to his mother, as " The wittiest woman in England." Mr. Kipling's sister, now Mrs. Fleming, is the author of two novels, The Heart of a Maid and A Pinchbeck Goddess.

Mr. Kipling's early years in England were not happy. They must have been very far

from happy, terrible even, if it be true that they formed the basis of *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep* and of the beginning of *The Light that Failed.* Remorselessly in these two stories he has painted the pictures of spirited, sensitive children cowed till they become brutal, distrusted till they are in fact untrustworthy, made to feel themselves little black sheep. It was five years ere his parents realized his unhappy case and rescued him. Then, after a visit to Paris with his father while the latter made holiday, he was sent in the year 1878 to those "twelve bleak houses by the shore" that he has made famous in every corner of the world, United Services College, Westward Ho!

In this chapter I am going to discuss *Stalky and Co.*, which is obviously largely autobiographical, just as under the heading 'Literary Foundations' I shall speak of the Mowgli stories, which seem to me to represent Mr. Kipling's very self, his idealism, his impatience with civilization and love of the primeval.

'The best school story ever written' was the verdict of enthusiasts when *Stalky and Co.* appeared. There were many who demurred, but indeed the title itself is not very high praise. We are weak in the literature of school life, perhaps because men find it very hard to recall

in maturity the sentiments, the conventions and the aspirations of youth. Tom Brown's School Days, which treats of a bygone age of school existence, the maudlin Eric of which Mr. Kipling makes such merciless fun, the commonplace Godfrey Martin, Schoolboy, the clever Human Boy, and Mr. Vachell's brilliant book The Hill are among the few that can be selected for purposes of comparison. Mr. Compton Mackenzie's Sinister Street is superior as a story to all but Tom Brown and The Hill, and in subtlety and insight excels them, but it is the tale of a very exceptional boy and of a school which is not typical of the public schools of England.

Stalky and Co. has no pretensions to being a minute study like Sinister Street. It is merely a short series of episodes, all taking place in the last two years of the stay of Beetle, the name under which Mr. Kipling chooses to pass, at the school. Corkran, otherwise known as 'Stalky' by reason of his wiles, and McTurk, the 'scowling Celt with a fluent tongue,' are likewise real personages. Stalky became in due—and rapid—course of time a colonel of Sikhs, while McTurk entered the Indian Telegraph Service. The records of the escapades and villainies of these confederates are certainly amazing. It surely needs not to ask

whether they be one and all precisely true. What does matter is that we have here the true spirit of the boy, undisguised by the sentimentality of middle age. There are just one or two occasions, notably that where Stalky propounds for the benefit of the Reverend John his opinions on married house-masters and morality, when we feel uneasily that the Mr. Kipling of thirty is speaking through the mouths of these boys of sixteen. These occasions will certainly be forgiven by every reader who is not distressed by the brutality and heartlessness of Stalky, which brutality is due simply to Mr. Kipling's accurate analysis of the young male animal. These boys are real boys, though they are exceptional boys in that they dare to own to a dislike for cricket, which is probably shared by at least twenty per cent of their kind. McTurk's explanation of their unpopularity with their house-master may be devilish, but it is also absolutely true to type.

"If we attended the matches an' yelled 'Well hit, sir,' an' stood on one leg an' grinned every time Heffy said, 'So ho, my sons. Is it thus?' an' said, 'Yes, sir,' an' 'No, sir,' an' 'O, sir,' an' 'Please, sir,' like a lot o' filthy fa-ags, Heffy 'ud think no end of us," said McTurk with a sneer.

Their exploits are only such as all boys plan

and relish. With real boys, or let us say with ordinary boys, in ordinary schools—and this school was not ordinary by reason of a certain roughness and looseness of discipline—such exploits are carried out once in every few years only, and each is talked of with bated breath till the next arrives. Mr. Kipling merely makes them occur more often, and, lest we should imagine that these boys were demigods or demidemons, unconquerable by any of human kind, he shows us in the background 'Prooshian Bates,' that 'downy bird,' the Head Master in other words, who was a man wiser than they all, and who at the proper time meted out to them the proper punishment.

Perhaps the most amusing episode is that of the boys' visit to Colonel Dabney. They have obtained permission from him to come at any time they like to his land, which would otherwise have been out of bounds. They do not even hint at this permission, and are followed by their house-master, Mr. Prout; their sworn foe, Mr. King; and 'Foxy,' the School Sergeant. There is a perfectly ludicrous scene when their friend the keeper comes upon their pursuers. He dashes past them as they lie in hiding:

"Who'm be they to combe bottom for Lard's sake? Master'll be crazy," he said.

"Poachers simly," Stalky replied in the broad Devon that was the boys' *langue de guerre.*

"I'll poach 'em to raights." He dropped into the funnel-like combe, which presently began to fill with noises, notably King's voice crying, "Go on, Sergeant! Leave him alone, you, sir. He's executing *my* orders."

"Who'm be yeou to give arders here, gingy whiskers?"

After a long-drawn struggle to explain, while the keeper persists in taking them for poachers, they are brought before Colonel Dabney. This gentleman is even hastier than his servant. He will not hear a word, but flies at once into a passion, pours upon them a stream of invective, and finally drives them away. The boys overhear every word of the interview.

In connection with this scene it may be remarked that Mr. Kipling pictures himself as the only human member of the trio. As they listen to the discomfiture of Prout, King and the Sergeant:

Beetle lay at full length on the turf behind the Lodge, literally biting the earth in spasms of joy.

Stalky kicked him upright. There was nothing of levity about Stalky or McTurk save a stray muscle twitching on the cheek.

McTurk and Stalky are like Red Indians; on the war-path they allow no emotions to

interfere with their quest of scalps. Elsewhere are given instances of this absence of ordinary human feelings. Beetle enquires, as he sits down in the study with some guests to a magnificent ' brew,' as to whence this plenty came. He knew that the study was almost bankrupt at the time. Stalky informs him coolly that the feast has been provided out of the proceeds of the pawning of his, Beetle's, watch, and hands him the ticket. The guests listen open-mouthed, but their wonder changes to blank amazement when Beetle hears of the transaction without comment, but McTurk is filled with rage and denounces Stalky for his unfairness. Last week, he declares, they took his watch and *sold* it. He had no ticket to show.

Stalky, McTurk and Beetle, who are all literary in their way, rejoicing respectively in Surtees, Ruskin and Browning, will have no traffic with sentiment. The Reverend John, the school chaplain, who is their only friend in the Senior Common Room, asks them to prevent the bullying of a little boy named Clewer. There is a half-hearted suggestion that he should be made their study-fag for his protection.

" No ! " said McTurk firmly. " He's a dirty little brute, and he'd mess up everything. Besides, we ain't goin' to have any beastly Erickin'. D'you want to walk about with your arm round his neck ? "

Thereupon they proceed, by means of an outrageous ruse, to entrap the bullies, and having them at their mercy, to inflict upon them with tenfold ferocity the tortures they have practised on Clewer.

It is hatred of sentiment, not merely on the part of Stalky and Co. but on that of the whole school, that brings about the calamity of *The Flag of their Country*. The story is a very acute study of boyish temperament; it might be set before every pedagogue as an object-lesson of the fashion in which youthful shyness and reticence can be outraged by the heavy hands of middle age. A school cadet-corps has just been started, accepted with much doubt by the boys, and a certain Mr. Raymond Martin, M.P., comes down to help on the good work by giving an address on 'Patriotism.' His opening is thus described:

> He plunged into his speech with a long-drawn, rasping "Well, boys," that, though they were not conscious of it, set every young nerve ajar. He supposed they knew—hey?—what he had come down for? It was not often that he had an opportunity to talk to boys. He supposed that boys were very much the same kind of persons—some people thought them rather funny persons—as they had been in his youth.
>
> "This man," said McTurk with conviction, "is *the* Gadarene Swine."

He makes a truly dreadful but quite credible speech, shouting aloud the things they guard in the secret places of their hearts from their closest friends, preaching the glories of service for the Empire to boys ninety per cent of whom are the sons of soldiers. Finally, to their horror, he unfurls a large, staring Union Jack, waves it before them, tells them it is the symbol of their country on which none may look without respect, and sits down. The Head saves the situation by rising swiftly and voicing their thanks for a most enjoyable evening to the speaker. He is greeted with great cheers, cheers which Mr. Raymond Martin appropriates to himself. As the boys are leaving the room a prefect picks up the flag, rolls it up, and tosses it into a locker. He is greeted with a volley of hand-clapping. Mr. Martin is universally execrated in the dormitories that night, Stalky finally summing up all the abuse with the vigour and conciseness peculiar to him. Mr. Raymond Martin is a 'Jelly-bellied Flag-flapper.' His speech actually breaks up the cadet-corps which it was intended to support.

Mr. Kipling, with that instinct he has for heightening the effect of a story by some slight half-relevant addition, tells us that Foxy, the School Sergeant, was touched to the heart by the incident of the flag!

The three leave school, McTurk for Cooper's Hill, Stalky for Sandhurst, Beetle for India and his newspaper, after a merry episode related in *The Last Term.* They are followed on one of their final excursions by a young and conscientious prefect, who believes they are breaking bounds. After an excellent tea in their favourite restaurant, they bribe the daughter of the house, pretty Mary Yeo, to step out and kiss the prefect as he passes. He runs as for his life. Says Beetle :

" Look here. If he kissed her—which is our tack —he's a cynically immoral hog, and his conduct is blatant indecency. . . ."

" Time, 3.57 p.m. Make a note of that. What d'you mean, Beetle ? " said Stalky.

" Well ! He's a truthful little beast. He may say he was kissed."

" And then ? "

" Why, then ! " Beetle capered at the mere thought of it. " Don't you see ? The corollary to the giddy proposition is that the Sixth can't protect 'emselves from outrages an' ravishin's. Want nursemaids to look after 'em ! We've only got to whisper that to the Coll. Jam for the Sixth ! Jam for us ! Either way it's jammy ! "

" By gum ! " said Stalky. " Our last term's endin' well ! "

The last story dates from several years later, and tells how Stalky carries into operation as

a soldier in India the principles on which he has worked at Westward Ho !

Mere wide circulation is no test of a book's merit. There are certain novelists of to-day whom no critic with the slightest courage hesitates to condemn, though he knows them as the authors of the ' best sellers ' of each successive year. But when we find a book read with delight by all classes, from the intellectuals to that great public that knows naught of reviews ; when we find that we ourselves, whom our vanity puts in the first category, can return to that book again and again, year after year, and can laugh as heartily over *An Unsavoury Interlude* at the fifth as at the first time of reading, we shall be very slow to believe the noisy minority who deny that this book is a brilliant book, a true book and a book that will live.

However much of *Stalky and Co.* be fiction, I cannot but believe that the record of the Head's relations with Beetle is true. That interest and encouragement, that opening up of a fine library to a boy very eager to read, must have greatly influenced Mr. Kipling's early career, as I think the simple Spartan ideals he learnt from ' Prooshian Bates ' influenced the man himself. Mr. Kipling did go to India, and he did go to a post on a newspaper, even as it

is related in *Stalky and Co.* The town he went to was Lahore, the newspaper, The Civil and Military Gazette.

Then followed seven years of very hard work, the first five on The Civil and Military Gazette, the other two as Assistant-Editor of The Pioneer at Allahabad.

The then Editor of The Civil and Military Gazette has said of Mr. Kipling: "If you want to find a man who will cheerfully do the work of three men, you should catch a young genius." He goes on to compare a young genius thus employed to a blood horse in a wagon. He may not have the strength of a draught-horse, but he has more spirit. He will pull his load uphill or kill himself in the attempt.

Throughout these seven years Mr. Kipling was contributing poems, short stories and miscellaneous articles to the newspapers with which he was connected. At first he seems to have been permitted to do this rather as a favour, but by 1886, when he was but twenty, his name was widely known in India. *Departmental Ditties*, published by himself, brought his first fame; *In Black and White* established it. In 1889 he was sent by The Pioneer on a leisurely journey through India, and by way of Japan, San Francisco and New York to England. His contributions to The Pioneer

were published as *Letters of Marque* and *From Sea to Sea.* In 1890 appeared *Plain Tales from the Hills* and *The Light that Failed.* Mr. Kipling was the literary lion of the moment. The Times review before-mentioned had set the seal on his fame. He was inundated with invitations, courted, flattered and fêted. He accepted it all with philosophy, as unruffled by success as he had been by early hard work, and doubtless enjoyed himself vastly. In 1891 he set off on a great tour, visiting South Africa, Ceylon, Australia and New Zealand. That year *Life's Handicap,* one of the best of all his collections of short stories, had birth.

1892 was a year of great importance. On January the 18th he married Miss Caroline Balestier, sister of his friend Wolcott Balestier, in collaboration with whom he had written the *Naulahka.* In April was published *Barrack Room Ballads.*

Mr. Kipling's honeymoon was spent on a world tour. When in the East he planned a visit to Robert Louis Stevenson at Samoa. For some reason—a biographer declares because of the failure of the Oriental Bank—he was unable to make the voyage. He never met the man whom he admired so much that to a French critic he spoke of him as 'my master.'

Mr. and Mrs. Kipling now settled at Brattleboro', Vermont, living at first in a cottage on the Balestier estate. He built, largely with his own hands, a wooden house, christened 'The Naulahka,' where he and his wife lived about four years. Here he wrote *Captains Courageous*, which had a very great success, and many poems and short stories, including those in *The Jungle Books*. The last were published in 1894 and 1895 respectively. Three children were born of the marriage, of whom two, a boy and a girl, survive.

In 1896 Mr. and Mrs. Kipling returned to England, and in 1898 went to live at Rottingdean and subsequently moved to Burwash. Since then their life has been uneventful, a striking contrast to that which Mr. Kipling had lived so far. He seems to have grown more and more in love with loneliness, and in his later stories we find that the beauties of the English countryside take some of the place in his heart hitherto given to India and the glories of the Empire. He yet makes occasional excursions, and was for some time in South Africa during the war. In 1899 he underwent a very serious illness in New York, when the public of England and America waited for bulletins with an anxiety that it would scarcely have shown for any other living man. The

German Emperor telegraphed to Mrs. Kipling for news of the invalid's progress.

Even while he was creeping back to his strength his daughter Josephine, then six years old, died very suddenly from the pneumonia that had passed from him. For long none dared tell him of his loss, and the blow was the bitterest of his life. He has said himself: "People say that that kind of wound heals. It doesn't. It only skins over."

In 1907 the Swedish Academy awarded him the Nobel Prize of Literature. There was, inevitably, an outcry in the same quarters whence had come the semi-political criticism of his work that I have already mentioned. Letters poured into the Press, full of enumerations of his faults, real and imaginary; full also of suggestions, not in the best of taste, that certain other writers had better deserved the honour. The mass of reading Englishmen, however, were well content to leave politics out of the question, and accepted the award with satisfaction. Abroad it was equally well received. His reputation in Europe was by this time far greater even than in his own country; it is now almost as wide as that of Richardson, Sterne or Byron. There is scarce a European language into which some of his

works have not been translated. The paper of M. Chevrillon had appeared in his excellent book Etudes Anglaises in 1901, and had marked the commencement of his vogue in France. A Swedish Professor, Dr. Leeb-Lundberg, has written a painstaking little study called Word-Formation in Kipling, and the Fatherland, amazingly scientific as ever, has given us Herr Loewe's Beiträge zur Metrik Rudyard Kipling's, which appeared in the series Marburger Studien zur englischen Philologie. There have been other studies in languages with which I am unacquainted, while the critics of the United States have naturally had a good deal to say on the work of the man who lived for four years among them and who has depicted their countrymen so often. No book great in bulk has yet been written about Mr. Kipling, and we shall probably have long to wait ere it will be possible definitely to assign to him his place in literature.

Since the beginning of the century Mr. Kipling's muses, both Euterpe and Thalia, have been less prolific. There are who declare that they are barren, that Mr. Kipling is 'written out.' Such a statement it is impossible to deny or to affirm. It may be that the old days when subjects came so easily that it was necessary to check his own exuberance

are gone for ever. In these days we were always coming upon the famous: "But that is another story," or some phrase such as: "Later on, I will tell you of a case something like this, but with all the jest left out, and nothing in it but real trouble." I shall presently strive to show cause for my belief that in the quality of Mr. Kipling's latest work there has been little or no decline, but the fact remains that we have had from him no book since *Rewards and Fairies*, and that for some years, save for an occasional poem in The Morning Post, he has been silent altogether. It may be that he is enjoying a period of complete laziness to which none can be better entitled than he, and that after he has let lie fallow his mind for a few years there will be a renewal of productive energy. It is not too much to hope, for Mr. Kipling is not yet fifty.

Of late years he has taken some part in politics, speaking for the National Service League, writing poems for the cause of the Union. He recently made a much discussed and somewhat violent attack upon the Liberal Government then in power. He also delivered not long ago to the Royal Geographical Society a most brilliant address, wherein his description of the smells that the explorer and traveller associates with his different routes and dif-

ferent goals was equal to anything in his stories. He is, it may be, less talked of than a few years ago, but the constant reissue of his books in various forms shows that his popularity stands as high as ever.

III

LITERARY FOUNDATIONS

The soul of Mr. Kipling, no less than his body, was born in India. India with her glaring colours, her quivering heats, her thirsts, her cruelties, stamped herself deep upon his spirit. The personal pronoun that is given to countries is warranted here, for to him India was indeed one monstrous sentient being, restless and bewildering, never completely to be understood. He saw her all

> smoke and flame
> From Simla to the haze below.

The white man who ruled her could do no more than work, and pray that his work would serve; never could he have any certainty that it would. The warning given to Lord Lansdowne by Lord Dufferin in *One Viceroy Resigns* was for every official in India as well as the head of them all.

> Accept on trust and work in darkness, strike
> At venture, stumble forward, make your mark,
> (It's chalk on granite) then thank God no flame
> Leaps from the rock to shrivel mark and man.

He was fascinated by the 'terror by night' that slept never, howso peaceful might seem the land. There was a curious delight in prying into horrors that it is not well for the eyes of man to see.

There is a famous French author whose vision has likewise been turned to the East, to whom the same sights and smells have been an inspiration. It is interesting to compare Mr. Kipling with M. Pierre Loti, particularly as the latter has in Mon Frère Yves attempted a study of the life and emotions of the bluejacket in the French navy. But, just as Yves is quite another person than Mulvaney, so their creators are very far apart. M. Loti lets the sensuous side of the East permeate him. Its languors and its luxuries twine themselves about him and twist his style to their own softness. Mr. Kipling looks upon these things and feels their influence and writes of them. But he writes as a European, as an Englishman. He can understand the native, but he rarely speaks of him as if his point of view were best—never unless that native be of one of the warrior peoples of the North. He can admire the fatalistic philosophy that declares that all will happen as it has been decreed, but he does not order his affairs, and waxes exceeding wroth when he thinks that his country is ordering her affairs, on any such principle.

For the cause of this we must look to his most strongly marked characteristic. It is his energy. Energy clothes him like a garment; in M. Chevrillon's words "it nourishes and directs all his art." He glorifies the man of action above all men. His own craft he seems to despise, and I am perfectly certain that had he been given the choice of assisting in the taking of Lungtungpen or describing it, as he has, in one of the best short stories ever written, he would have desired the former. The late Professor Dowden recorded in a recently published letter that at the last Home Rule crisis he wrote to him, with Swinburne and Mr. William Watson, asking for songs for Unionists in Ireland. Mr. Kipling replied that if one came to him he would send it, but that in his opinion Irish Unionists "needed drilling a damned sight more than doggerel." That is a sentiment most typical of the man. When Irish Unionists took his advice and drilled, *he* was inspired by *them* to write poems in their honour. What he loves in England and her history is her restless energy. He delights in her violent aggression of early times. He would not dream of denying that the exploits of Hawkins and Drake were the merest piracy, but the record of them warms his blood not the less for that. In her soberer days he ad-

mires the cool, steady arrogance wherewith she supports her claims.

What it is plain to see he dreads for England is that her ever-swelling cities with their smoke and foul air should breed—as no observer can doubt they are breeding—a race less steady even if more intelligent, less purposeful, less patriotic, given to vain cries speedily forgotten, calling only, when its toil is over, for corn and circuses. It is when he imagines he sees traces of such things that his love is changed to anger against his country, that she seems "built of putty, brass and paint," that he attacks her with the scathing reproof of *The Islanders*.

It is this energy that accounts for the small part that women play in his work. Like his favourite hero, the 'Brushwood Boy,' he wants to play his game without "petticoats in the court." I say this despite my belief that much nonsense has been talked as to his attitude to women, but that I shall discuss later on. One point in this connection may, however, now be noticed. In their book on him Messrs. G. F. Monkswood and George Gamble say: "I have never met a woman that was a Kiplingite, and I should not have believed it if I had. The writings of Rudyard Kipling do not appeal to women, perhaps be-

cause they are not intended so to do." My own experience has been precisely the contrary. The two warmest admirers of his work, one of his short stories, the other of his poetry, that I have met were women, and I have known others almost equally enthusiastic. I believe that it is his very energy and violence that appeals to them. Certainly I remember that the poetry-lover, an actress, who at the slightest provocation would stand on the hearth-rug and recite for an hour on end, had a partiality for *The Ballad of Fisher's Boarding-House* and *The Truce of the Bear*.

It is, I am convinced, energy also that makes him suspicious of and impatient with civilization. He sees clearly the savage in every man, the savage beneath every system, and he asks if this civilization, admittedly a veneer, be worth while. I do not mean by this that he suggests, or ever would suggest, seriously that we should abandon it, even if we could. But I believe he experiences vague longings for primeval things, vague desires to be rid of complications, to be in a world altogether lower in intelligence but simpler and more natural. And I believe that it is these feelings that were the seed from which sprung the stories of Mowgli.

These tales of a new Romulus suckled in a

she-wolf's litter, of a creature at once man-wolf and god-man, are unique in literature. The nearest approach to an ancestor was Paul et Virginie. The bloom of their charm, at least, whatever be the fate of Mr. Kipling and his works, will never fade. It has been given to their author, as to not more than a few dozen men in all the long roll of literature, to invent a new form of expression, to employ a new convention. Mowgli, the "wise little frog," as the beasts call him, who makes himself king of the jungle, is not only a most beautiful character but a type that has stamped itself upon the minds of men, that has taken a definite and permanent place in English letters. And the marvellous knowledge, the deftness in imparting it, the boldness of imagination in these stories, cause new wonder with every new hour of study. When we read of the lives of the animals, of their customs, their laws, their speech, we say to ourselves not that such they may possibly be, but, in the heat of our enthusiasm, that so they inevitably are. They have a third quality. They are not only the outpouring of their author's most intimate spirit, the results of his search for an ideal man, not only the most daring picture of the life of animals ever drawn, but they are, as The Spectator said of them, "written by a

master in allegory of a much higher kind than any which Æsop ever produced."

Take as an instance of Mr. Kipling's boldness the following passage from *The Jungle Book*. I think we are—or were till this was written—inclined to credit the monkey with being the most intelligent of beasts. Yet in the jungle he is, we are told, despised utterly. And the reasons given are, when we regard them, very sound indeed. Monkeys are perhaps too highly developed; they play at being men, but they cannot keep to any purpose. They have no system of life like the other inhabitants of the jungle. Baloo, the old bear, who is the boy Mowgli's tutor, reproving him for playing with the monkeys, gives the reason why the jungle scorns them.

"Listen, man-cub," said the Bear, and his voice rumbled like thunder on a hot night. "I have taught thee all the Law of the Jungle for all the peoples of the jungle—except the Monkey-Folk who live in the trees. They have no law. They are outcaste. They have no speech of their own, but use the stolen words which they overhear when they listen, and peep, and wait up above in the branches. Their way is not our way. They are without leaders. They have no remembrance. They boast and chatter and pretend that they are a great people about to do great affairs in the jungle, but the falling of a nut turns their minds to laughter, and all is forgotten. We of the jungle have no dealings with them."

In a passage which seems to have carried conviction to the heart of an Edinburgh reviewer, he suggests that danger may be as thrilling to animals as it sometimes is to man.

> To move down so cunningly that never a leaf stirred; to wade knee-deep in the roaring shallows that drown all noise from behind; to drink, looking backward over one's shoulder, every muscle ready for the first desperate bound of keen terror; to roll on the sandy margin and return, wet-muzzled and well plumped out, to the admiring herd, was a thing that all glossy-horned young bucks took a delight in, precisely because they knew that at any moment Bagheera or Shere Khan might leap upon them and bear them down.

The first story of Mowgli is not in either of the original *Jungle Books*, but appeared in *Many Inventions*. It is called *In the Rukh*, and introduces Mowgli, a man full-grown, after he has been cast forth from the jungle. But somehow Mowgli, his face "that of an angel strayed among the woods," has not the same glamour in contact with white men as with his wolf-brethren and Bagheera the black panther. His world is the ideal world of fantasy, not a world that holds officials of the Indian Woods and Forests Department or Mohammedan butlers and their beautiful daughters. And this, even though the tale of a human infant suckled by wild beasts is, if we can believe the peasants

of jungle villages, less improbable than it may sound.

It is curious that while I was engaged upon this chapter there should have appeared in The Irish Times of July the 27th, 1914, a leading article on this very subject, under the heading 'A Jungle Story.' It may be of interest, though I do not consider that it matters very greatly whether or not there could possibly have existed such a creature as Mowgli. This newspaper, which is by no means "flighty," says :

"A story comes from India, apparently on good authority, which shows that the tale of Mowgli is not entirely fantastic. A wild creature, found in the jungle, has turned out to be a human child—a girl. She is almost unrecognisable as such, since hair has grown on both sides of her face and her spine, but vaccination marks have been found on her arms, so that there can be no doubt of her humanity. She has lost most of her human characteristics, except that of walking upright. Her other postures and actions are those of a monkey, and, of course, she cannot speak. When taken into captivity she was frightened, and declined to eat anything except grass and raw potatoes. It is believed that the child was abandoned in her infancy, and adopted

and brought up by monkeys, although the natives hold that her foster-parents were bears. At any rate, we seem to have here a case where a human being, beginning in extreme youth, has lived like a beast with beasts, and on friendly terms with them, and has become to all outward appearances a beast herself. The incident suggests many interesting problems. . . ."

The best of all the stories is *Red Dog*. It tells of how the dhole, the red dog of the Dekkan, which runs in great packs of two or three hundred and before which all things flee, comes north. Mowgli has by this cut himself off from the wolf pack, but he volunteers to aid it now. The wolf pack ranges itself on the shores of the River Waingunga, which the dhole will have to cross to meet it. The pack numbers but forty wolves, but the mother-wolves come from their lairs to swell its numbers. Meanwhile Mowgli sets out to meet the dhole pack, and having done so climbs a tree, seizes the leader as he springs up at him and cuts off his tail with the knife he always carries. This makes it certain that the dholes will never leave his trail. He reaches the ground and manages to slip away unscathed, while they follow with the slow, tireless lope that is their only pace. Mowgli dashes through the rocks where hive in countless millions the fierce wild

bees, the Little People whom the folk of the jungle know to be its most powerful inmates, and plunges into the river as the roar of their angry rising sounds in his ears. Half the pack is destroyed by the bees; the rest takes to the water and meets the wolves on the opposite bank. The description of the fight ensuing is one of Mr. Kipling's most graphic passages. Here I will give what of it space permits:

Then the long fight began, heaving and straining and splitting and scattering and narrowing and broadening along the red wet sands . . . for even now the dholes were two to one. But they met wolves fighting for all that made the pack, and not only the short, deep-chested white-tusked hunters of the pack, but the wild-eyed lahinis—the she-wolves of the lair, as the saying is—fighting for their litters, with here and there a yearling wolf, his first coat still half woolly, tugging and grappling by their sides. A wolf, you must know, flies at the throat or snaps at the flank, while a dhole by preference bites low, so when the dholes were struggling out of the water and had to raise their heads the odds were with the wolves; on dry land the wolves suffered, but in the water or on land Mowgli's knife came and went the same. . . . Here would be a heaving mound, like a water-blister in a whirlpool, which would break like a water-blister, and throw up four or five mangled dogs, each striving to get back to the centre; here would be a single wolf borne down by two or three dholes, dragging them forward, and sinking the while; here a yearling cub would be held up by the pressure around him, though

he had been killed early in the fight, while his mother, crazed with dumb grief, rolled over snapping and passing on; and in the middle of the thickest fight, perhaps, one wolf and one dhole, forgetting everything else, would be manœuvring for first hold till they were swept away by a rush of yelling fighters. Once Mowgli passed Akela, a dhole on either flank, and his all but toothless jaws closed over the loins of a third; and once he saw Phaon, his teeth set in the throat of a dhole, tugging the unwilling beast forward till the yearlings could finish him. But the bulk of the fight was blind flurry and smother in the dark; hit, trip and tumble, yelp, groan and worry-worry-worry round him and behind him and above him.

There is something all Homeric in this description, with its sense of vague, stark fury and slaughter blended with precise incidents like that of the leader of the pack dragging forward a dhole for the yearlings, who would be outside the thickest of the fight, to despatch.

I remember that when as a boy I read *The Jungle Books*, I felt a passionate protest rise in me when Mowgli quitted the beasts he loved and returned to men. When his friends, Bagheera the black panther, who bought his life with the price of a bull when an infant, Baloo who taught him, Kaa the forty-foot rock python who had so often befriended him, Grey Brother the eldest of the litter wherein he was suckled, bid him farewell, the pathos equals

the force of that passage I have just quoted. Cries the panther :

"Good hunting on a new trail, Master of the Jungle ! Remember Bagheera loved thee."

"Thou hast heard," said Baloo. "There is no more. Go now ; but first come to me. O wise little Frog, come to me ! "

"It is hard to cast the skin," said Kaa, as Mowgli sobbed and sobbed with his head on the blind bear's side and his arms round his neck, while Baloo tried feebly to lick his feet.

"The stars are thin," said Grey Brother, snuffing at the dawn wind. "Where shall we lair to-day ? For, from now we follow new trails."

Mr. Kipling's study of animals and wild life generally is a part only of the store upon which he can draw. He is, in fact, interested in and informed upon an amazing number of subjects —excellently "documented," as the French critics say. It is mainly for this that he has been compared to Flaubert and his disciple Maupassant. But if he has given to no one subject a tenth of the study of Flaubert, he has attacked ten times as many subjects and drawn ten times as many types. It has been declared of him that he writes of "the Hoogli like a Calcutta pilot, of elephants like a mahout, of the boar and the nilghai like a native hunter, of the poor like the president of a charitable society, like a detective of the criminal, like an

intelligent drunkard of beer and gin" (Chevrillon). To this catalogue it might be added that he describes the horses in the stables of the Maharajah of Jodhpur as if he were a stud groom, that he talks of machines—and how often has he been reproached therewith!—like a Scotch engineer. The scenes of his stories are laid in India, South Africa, the Grand Banks, the United States of America, the South Sea Islands, Devonshire, Sussex, the East End of London. He has knowledge—or at least the appearance of knowledge, for Europeans must take his word on some of these subjects—of the nature of Indian priests and fakirs, of Simla drawing-rooms, of opium-dens, mosques, zenanas, as well as Kensington studios, Sussex country-houses.

Like Flaubert, he has gained all this knowledge by very careful observation. There are times when we can say with absolute certainty that he is recording something that he has actually seen or heard. When Private Stanley Ortheris, supping with Mulvaney and Learoyd on the roof of a carriage during a regimental ball, calls their stolen champagne "the Colonel's pet noosance," that is not audacity or skill, but simply reporting. Such phrases are not invented by anybody but a Cockney. But it is seldom that he leaves us with such a certainty. Even

in cases like these, where we feel that he is giving us "life itself," as admirers of our boring present-day realists call it, he does not make the realism aggressive. He understands too well that mere slices of life, untinged with the imagination of the retailer, are wearisome. He knows—and would that the knowledge were more widely diffused!—that the average man and woman in their average surroundings are not interesting. Taken at a climax, set in unwonted surroundings, subjected to unusual influences, they may play their part worthily in any tale of "human interest." In their ordinary moods and avocations we see enough of them as it is.

On the other hand, he does not always report with complete accuracy; he allows his likings and dislikings to come between his eyes and what they look upon. For example, he dislikes—certainly at one time disliked—Russians. He has possibly met and assuredly heard of Russian officers travelling in India, ostensibly for sport, but glad to pick up any information to be had. Yet he draws in *Kim*—and it is the only false character in the book—a Russian spy who is precisely the type of man that would last be chosen for such delicate work, since he is bad-tempered, thoughtless, and full of stupid arrogance. On the other hand, he likes children,

and loves to bring them triumphant out of every difficulty. Therefore he makes *Wee Willie Winkie*—who is, nevertheless, a most delightful person—frankly incredible. This child of six, we are to believe, delivers a lady from armed rebels with a courage and a cool audacity that a brigadier of twenty campaigns might envy. But probably every reporter has his prejudices.

Mr. F. L. Knowles in A Kipling Primer, followed by Dr. Leeb-Lundberg in Word-formation in Kipling, states that his work may be divided into three periods, during which three characteristics were predominant. These are (1) the Satirical Treatment of Character, (2) the Sympathetic Treatment of Character, (3) the Spiritual Treatment. Such hard-cut lines of division are of little service, but it is true to say that Mr. Kipling was very cynical in youth, that later he broadened, and presently also deepened. The Spiritual Period, according to Dr. Leeb-Lundberg, "the great spectacle of man's eternal struggle to assert himself against the many-armed powers of fate," comes with *The Jungle Book* and *Captains Courageous*.

However this may be, it is the case that the very earliest Mr. Kipling can be sympathetic, and even tender, and that the later can be exceedingly brutal. *The Drums of the Fore and*

Aft, for example, is an intimate study of the 'nerves' that may affect the raw young soldier, not over-ably led. All his emotions when under fire for the first time, when he sees his neighbour "turn over with the rattle of fire-irons falling into the fender, and the grunt of a poll-axed ox," are analysed with skill and sympathy. The author lets us know that the soldiers of other regiments despise these men, tells how a dying Highlander refuses to take a drink of water from the flask of one of them, but he does not himself condemn, and he pities —because he understands. He shows the same kindly comprehension of the boy in *Thrown Away*, who shoots himself after a course of wild extravagance and dissipation when a strong hand might have guided him through certain early quicksands in his path and set him upon firm ground beyond that his feet would never have left. On the other hand, he has sometimes a passage in which he seems to paint himself, as apart from his puppets, brutal. *The Solid Muldoon* begins thus :

> There had been a royal dog-fight in the ravine at the back of the rifle-butts, between Learoyd's *Jock* and Ortheris's *Blue Rot*—both mongrel Rampan hounds, chiefly ribs and teeth. It lasted for twenty happy, howling minutes, and then *Blue Rot* collapsed and Ortheris paid Learoyd three rupees, and we were all very thirsty.

Now doubtless such a scene would be a "royal" one to such men as Learoyd and Ortheris, but a real, serious dog-fight is to the gentleman of to-day—though it was not to his grandfather, be it remarked—an unpleasant affair. When it is carried on till one of the combatants "collapses," most of us find it rather sickening.

The last characteristic of Mr. Kipling that I will here notice is his humour. His literary parentage has been the subject of some not very conclusive discussion. Stevenson has been suggested as having influenced him in his choice of matter, the language of the Bible undoubtedly put its mark upon his style, and Henley may have helped to shape his patriotic verse. I have often thought that his grimness, his irony, his conciseness and precision of style place him in some proximity to Prosper Merimée.

It is at least certain that so far as his humour is concerned, he is the child of the Americans, above all of Mark Twain. He can be when it pleases him sardonically humorous and cleverly —sometimes a thought cheaply—witty. But for the most part his humour is that of Mark Twain and the author of The Luck of Roaring Camp, bubbling, kindly, coarse, it may be, but real and true. It does not gradually steal over us; it strikes us suddenly and violently like a

slap on the back. I believe that few normally constituted persons could read, for example, Mulvaney's exchanges with his friend Hogan, while the latter played Hamlet at Silver's Theatre, Dublin, without mirth :

"Hamlut," sez I, "there's a hole in your heel. Pull up your shtockin's, Hamlut," sez I. "Hamlut, Hamlut, for the love av decincy dhrop that skull an' pull up your shtockin's." The whole house begun to tell him that. He stopped his soliloquishms mid-between. "My shtockin's may be comin' down or they may not," sez he, screwin' his eye into the gallery, for well he knew who I was. "But afther this performince is over me an' the Ghost'll trample the tripes out av you, Terence, wid your ass's bray!"

But all these various characteristics will most clearly appear when Mr. Kipling's novels, short stories and poems are discussed and analysed. I have but one remark more to make ere I turn to the last. There has been some criticism of his early stories of the social life in India on moral grounds. But it must be remembered that he has never tried to besugar adultery, to make it attractive. It is, in fact, not with the first raptures that he has concerned himself, but with the weary, sordid days of satiety and disgust and struggle to be free. And if in reply it be urged that the same argument could be used in defence of Zola, the

last defendant for whom I should desire to hold a brief, but who cannot be accused of making vice pleasant, I can only answer that Zola's chief crimes are, first that he is needlessly disgusting, which Mr. Kipling is but seldom, and second that he is long-winded and monstrously dull, which Mr. Kipling is never. In any case, he has left Mrs. Herriott and Captain Gadsby, Mrs. Boulte and Captain Kurrell far behind.

IV

POETRY

It may be said to begin with that Mr. Kipling's poetry suffers in comparison with his prose, forasmuch as a greater proportion of it is didactic. The lessons he would teach he has striven to teach by means of his verses rather than his stories. I do not desire to enter now upon the weary old controversy concerning subjective and objective standards of beauty or merit, merely to assert my conviction that —*ceteris paribus*, as the professors say—what is created by the imagination, what is born inevitably, must be better and purer art than what is manufactured with half an eye to its own perfection and half upon something exterior which it is designed to influence. Now Mr. Kipling has written a great deal of his poetry—perhaps the greater part of it—with the object of warning, of exhorting, of criticizing his countrymen, and, but for one not very important allegory in a late book, no prose that can be said to have such a direct end.

To that extent his poetry is handicapped in competition with his prose.

It was *Departmental Ditties*, as I have already remarked, that brought Mr. Kipling his earliest fame. Looking back twenty years, with the bulk of his subsequent poetry as our criterion, we shall be disposed to consider that their importance was exaggerated. We shall admit, however, that they were clever, witty, and novel.

They were novel, but by no means original. Swinburne was parodied in this fashion :

> Before the beginning of years
> There came to the rule of the State
> Men with a pair of shears,
> Men with an Estimate—
> Strachey with Muir for leaven,
> Lytton with locks that fell,
> Rippon fooling with Heaven,
> And Temple riding like H—ll !

which is scarcely worth while. And a parody dealing with the currency such as *The Rupaiyat of Omar Kal'vin* cannot possess, and cannot have been intended to possess, more than a very transient interest. There were, however, better things than this, light, graceful *vers de société*, worthy of any of the masters of this somewhat difficult art. One of the best and merriest is *An Old Song*, that goes with a delightful swing. The last verse is as follows :

By Docket, Billetdoux, and File,
By Mountain, Cliff, and Fir,
By Fan and Sword and Office-box,
By Corset, Plume, and Spur,
By Riot, Revel, Waltz and War,
By Women, Work and Bills,
By all the life that fizzes in
The everlasting Hills,
If you love me as I love you
What pair so happy as we two ?

The Mare's Nest and *Pink Dominoes* are of the same type—light fare but spicy.

There were also exercises in that sort of satire and cynicism that abounds in *Plain Tales from the Hills*. The most famous of these is the *Study of an Elevation, in Indian Ink*. Potiphar Gubbins, C.E., its hero, is become a household word. He is an eternal type, that flourishes under every bureaucracy. Again I quote only the last verse, which gives the key-note of the poem.

Lovely Mehitabel Lee
Let me enquire of thee,
Should I have riz to what Potiphar is
Hadst thou been mated to Me ?

But far better than this is *The Story of Uriah*, with its deep and bitter indignation, concealed at first under a light tone, but bursting out unrestrained in the last verse. Mr. Kipling is not laughing, he is lashing somebody with a cutting-whip in this tale of how

Jack Barrett went to Quetta
And there gave up the ghost ;
Attempting two men's duty
In that very healthy post ;
And Mrs. Barrett mourned for him
Five lively months at most.

Jack Barrett's bones at Quetta
Enjoy profound repose ;
But I shouldn't be astonished
If *now* his spirit knows
The reason of his transfer
From the Himalayan snows.

And when the Last Great Bugle Call
Adown the Hurnai throbs,
When the last grim joke is entered
In the big black Book of Jobs,
And Quetta graveyards give again
Their victims to the air,
I shouldn't like to be the man,
Who sent Jack Barrett there.

The rhetorical *Ballad of Fisher's Boarding-House*, like the later *Ballad of East and West*, and certain other poems would be dearer to us did we not instinctively associate it with an earnest rhapsodist, reciting amidst the blue haze of a smoking concert. Not even this train of ideas can rob us of our pleasure in the splendid, swinging *Galley-Slave*, probably an allegory of the Indian Civil Service.

L'Envoi, addressed *To whom it may concern*, is entirely different from anything else in the book, and is a forerunner of those simple and

beautiful poems, generally in praise of the English countryside, that he was to put forth in after years. It has a charm that recalls some of the songs of Davenant and Sterling—to put it no higher.

> The smoke upon your Altar dies,
> The flowers decay,
> The Goddess of your sacrifice
> Has flown away.
> What profit then to sing or slay
> The sacrifice from day to day ?

I remember showing *Departmental Ditties* to a foreigner, an acute if rather narrow critic, who knew the British language and literature far better than I do myself. He looked through it for half an hour, then came to me with the page open from which this verse is quoted.

"All this may be clever stuff, but it's not poetry," was his comment. "This here is the only *poem* in the book."

Most emphatically I disagreed; yet I felt that I could understand.

Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses mark a long step forward. Grip, precision, control over metre, have increased infinitely. The slang of the canteen is used with amazing skill. These poems bear the same relation to *Soldiers Three* as *Departmental Ditties* to *Plain Tales*. But it was probably a greater achieve-

ment to put the thoughts of the private soldier into verse than to write stories of his doings. Since these songs were written there has been a great change in the attitude of the general public to the army. Something of this change is doubtless due to an improvement in the class of man who enlists and in his behaviour thereafter; something to the fact that we are as a people more thoughtful than we were twenty years ago. But perhaps even more is owing to society's greater knowledge of the soldier's life, in imparting which knowledge Mr. Kipling has been almost alone. He voiced the unhappiness of being misunderstood, the impatience of never-ending criticism, the desire for sympathy in the plea:

We aren't no thin red 'eroes, nor we aren't no blackguards too,
But single men in barracks, most remarkable like you.

The soldier knew his service:

Walk wide o' the Widow at Windsor
For 'alf o' creation she owns;
We 'ave bought 'er the same with the sword an' the flame,
An' we've salted it down with our bones.

He knew also how to respect a worthy foe, and none more than "Fuzzy-Wuzz," the howling Dervish of the Soudan, who is not only hard to kill but "generally shammin' when 'e's dead." He tells us candidly that:

An 'appy day with Fuzzy on the rush
Will last an 'ealthy Tommy for a year.

His less regenerate moments are suggested in the sardonic philosophy of *The Ladies* and *Loot.* The latter shows the advance of his power since *An Old Song.* Mr. Le Gallienne has called him "master of the singing ballad, with swinging jingle chorus," and this poem is one of the best examples of that class of verse. It begins:

If you've ever stole a pheasant-egg be'ind the keeper's back,
If you've ever snigged the washin' from the line,
If you've ever crammed a gander in your bloomin' 'aversack,
You will understand this little song o' mine.

Mr. Le Gallienne proceeds to say—and evidently he intends it as in some sort a stricture—that Mr. Kipling's favourite instrument is the banjo. If this be true, it will at least be conceded that he is a master-minstrel. In *Barrack-Room Ballads* is a "banjo song" that is not merely his best, but one of the best ever written, even if we hark back to Béranger for a comparison. No poem in English written in the last five-and-twenty years is known so widely, has so taken hold upon the imaginations of English-speaking people as *Mandalay.* Here is a puff of the very wind of Romance, spice-laden, hot from

the burnished East. The battered soldier is looking back to a heaven that distance has made all-glorious.

When the mist was on the rice-fields an' the sun was droppin' slow,
She'd git 'er little banjo an' she'd sing " *Kulla-lo-lo !* "
With 'er arm upon my shoulder an' 'er cheek agin my cheek
We useter watch the steamers an' the *hathis* pilin' teak.

The restlessness, the impatience in the clinging bonds of civilization that are Mr. Kipling's, are put into the words of the private, crying out for the East :

Where there aren't no Ten Commandments an' a man can raise a thirst.

The concluding line of the refrain is, I venture to assert, the greatest and most inspired line in contemporary poetry.

An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay !

" Banjo songs " that are inspired are far finer fare than serious poetry that is not. Just as Iolanthe and The Gondoliers are truer art than anything that Gounod or Thomas ever wrote, so *Mandalay* stands above almost all the work of the respectable poets of the later Victorian era, whom it were invidious to name.

But in *Barrack-Room Ballads* there is employed occasionally another instrument than

the banjo—the pipes in their saddest wail. *Cholera Camp* has running through it a note of poignant distress that tears the heart.

Oh, strike your camp an' go, the bugle's callin',
The Rains are fallin'—
The dead are bushed an' stoned to keep 'em safe below ;
The Band's a-doin' all she knows to cheer us ;
The Chaplain's gone and prayed to Gawd to 'ear us—
To 'ear us—
O Lord, for it's a-killin' of us so !

But little short of this in plaintive intensity is *Danny Deever*, with its final refrain :

O, they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

The "Other Verses" contain many fine things, but are not in the main up to the standard of the poems that precede them. *The Ballad of the "Bolivar"* is one of the best-known, and rings finely with the indignation that we all feel against those who send out ships "meant to founder." *The Ballad of East and West* has been much criticized, and it is certainly very uneven. Francis Adams in The Fortnightly article which I have mentioned makes one good point in showing the contrast between these two succeeding lines :

With that he whistled his only son, that dropped from a mountain crest—
He trod the ling like a buck in spring, and he looked like a lance in rest.

The first of these lines is rodomontade, and it is not unfair to demand how it came that, when after a chase lasting all night the horse of the pursued fell, the only son should happen to be at hand upon a mountain crest within reach of a whistle. The second line is expressive and splendid. *The Three Captains*, a tale of Paul Jones, is certainly the most obscure of all Mr. Kipling's poems. *Cleared* is an extraordinarily bitter expression of political feeling, though there is no doubt that it clothed in words the sentiment of a great proportion of the community on the Parnell Commission Report.

They only took the Judas-gold from Fenians out of jail,
They only fawned for dollars on the blood-dyed Clan-na-Gael.
If black is black or white is white, in black and white it's down,
They're only traitors to the Queen and rebels to the Crown.

But it was not till he reached *The Seven Seas* that Mr. Kipling's destiny was accomplished. There is therein one poem at least, *The Sea and the Hills*, that belongs to the very highest order of English poetry, that would deserve a place in a collection of the hundred finest short poems in the language. It is written in a metre that Swinburne might have used, with a theme whereon he loved to dwell. No poem that that great master of rhythm

ever put forth excels it. It is, like much of Swinburne's verse, for the ear even more than the eye, and onomatopœia is employed with more than Swinburne's skill. None save "the man that hath not music in himself" can read aloud the following verse without perceiving how the fifth and sixth lines suggest respectively the rush of the wave up the beach and the shorter back-suck as it retreats.

Who hath desired the Sea?—the sight of salt water unbounded—
The heave and the halt and the hurl and the crash of the comber wind-hounded?
The sleek-barrelled swell before storm, grey, foamless, enormous and growing—
Stark calm on the lap of the Line or the crazy-eyed hurricane blowing—
His Sea is no showing the same—his Sea and the same 'neath each showing—
His Sea as she slackens or thrills?
So and no otherwise—so and no otherwise—hillmen desire their Hills!

If one must so lack grace as to criticize this magnificent poem, the only possible criticism is that its title and the refrain in the last line of each verse are out of place. It is essentially a poem of the sea, and the desire of hillmen for their hills comes as a distraction to the mind if not to the ear.

While this is first, there are other poems that are fine, though with the best I am not inclined

to include *The English Flag* or the too-famous *Envoi* beginning :

When Earth's last picture is painted.

Tomkinson has a grim and cynical power, and *The Lost Legion*, the song of the pioneers who say :

We preach in advance of the Army,
We skirmish ahead of the Church,

is another expression of the love of the primeval to which I have frequently referred. It goes with a swing as fine as that of *Loot*.

Then a health (we must drink it in whispers)
To our wholly unauthorized horde—
To the line of our dusty forelopers,
The Gentlemen Rovers abroad—
Yes, a health to ourselves ere we scatter,
For the steamer won't wait for the train,
And the legion that never was 'listed
Goes back into quarters again !

It is curious to note how divergent are the opinions of the critics as to the merits of certain of Mr. Kipling's poems. For example, the Edinburgh reviewer calls *M'Andrew's Hymn* "splatterdash writing," while M. Chevrillon considers it as good as anything Browning ever wrote. It has certainly the qualities that are in Browning, for it is compressed and packed with thought. But it does not sustain the interest as Browning's poetry does. He has written, however, certain poems that have little

merit, and one, *The Files*, that I do not hesitate to call exceedingly bad, and that I was astonished to find included in his recently published *Collected Verse*. It begins thus :

> Files—
> The Files—
> Office Files !
> Oblige me by referring to the files.

With the exception of *Mandalay* and *The Sea and the Hills* I believe that every one of Mr. Kipling's finest poems have been poems of patriotism or poems expressive of his love for the English country-side. And it is to the latter, of all his poetry, that least exception can be taken. The man who holds—as there are who hold—that his verse is in the main disfigured by a certain garishness, a straining of the note, can find no such objection to these simple, beautiful lyrics. Those who know only the Kipling of *The English Flag*, with its trace of bluster, could scarcely imagine that he had written also :

> Buy my English posies !
> Kent and Surrey may—
> Violets of the undercliff
> Wet with Channel spray ;
> Cowslips from a Devon combe—
> Midland furze afire—
> Buy my English posies
> And I'll sell your heart's desire ;

or these beautiful lines from a poem in *Puck of Pook's Hill :*

> Trackway and Camp and City lost,
> Salt Marsh where now is corn ;
> Old Wars, old Peace, old Arts that cease,
> And so was England born !
>
> She is not any common Earth,
> Water or wood or air,
> But Merlin's Isle of Gramarye,
> Where you and I will fare.

Mr. Kipling's most famous poem *Recessional* is one that I do not think will die. I think it deserves to live. Those who think the contrary can console themselves with the reflection that it is not always the best poems of a popular poet that catch the popular sentiment. Thousands of men know *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, perhaps large portions of it by heart, who have never heard of *Ulysses*. And I believe that it will live as much for its faults as its great merits. For its weakness is the weakness of the English race, an almost intolerable arrogance beneath a mask of humility. The Englishman does not boast that he belongs to the greatest race in the world, because he is so convinced thereof that it is not worth while. M. Chevrillon, in a study of English opinion on the Boer War which is bound with that study

of Mr. Kipling that I have so often quoted, notices how absolutely confident we were at that time that we had God on our side. The Boers were, according to the general opinion, a savage, fanatical, untrustworthy race whom it was set upon us to overbear. We did not—till long afterwards—recognize their heroism, we were never allowed to realize the tremendous disproportion of the forces arrayed against one another in the struggle. One heard scarce a generous word throughout the whole duration of the war. I do not mean for an instant that Mr. Kipling is to be included in this general accusation. He knew the Boer farmer too well to despise him. His *General Joubert* was a noble tribute to a great man. But undoubtedly there is in *Recessional* a hint of this spirit of arrogance, a feeling that we are the Lord's peculiar people, that if He fails us it will be because we have deserted Him, not because the cause of the "Gentiles" seems righteous to Him. Mark this arrogance above all in the fourth verse:

> God of our fathers, known of old,
> Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
> Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
> Dominion over palm and pine—
> Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
> Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies ;
  The captains and the kings depart ;
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
  An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget !

Far-called, our navies melt away ;
  On dune and headland sinks the fire :
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
  Is one with Nineveh and Tyre !
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget !

If drunk with sight of power, we loose
  Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
  Or lesser breeds without the Law—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget !

For heathen heart that puts her trust
  In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust
  And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word—
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord.

When every possible criticism has been made, I still believe that *Recessional* remains one of the greatest patriotic hymns in the language. It may be—it almost certainly is—illogical on entering into battle to pray to God for victory, while your opponent does likewise with like conviction of a righteous cause. But it will be

done so long as men pray to a personal God and so long as they go to war. And we must not forget that in most wars both antagonists have right on their side—not absolute right as it would be understood in a perfect and logical world, but right as it must be understood in the world we live in with its conflicting ideals and creeds and nationalities. And as a patriotic hymn this is nearly perfect; it has at once simplicity, dignity and sonority. Its biblical language gives to it a sense of awe, so that one can imagine it recited in some vast cathedral on the eve of war amidst an intense, shuddering silence. It is not alone the work of a true poet, but of a poet who understands his countrymen's hearts.

Parallel with Mr. Kipling's love of the primeval is a curious characteristic, an absorbing interest in the most important appanages of civilization, its ships, its machines, its workshops. This will be of great importance in the discussion of his stories, but it is also in evidence in certain of his poems. *M'Andrew's Hymn*, for example, is full of the throb of ships' engines. He has been careful to point out that this our world is not without its glamour, though he has gone to others for the stories that are deepest charged with its essence. He has noted how each age, up to

the present, has mourned the death of Romance while

all unseen
Romance brought up the nine-fifteen.

But he has himself done much to prove that Romance is yet very much alive by the skill with which he has woven it into the technical details of modern affairs. No poem, for example, could be more purely and genuinely romantic than that from which I quote the following verse; its metre is laden with its hunger and yearning. Yet the first four lines might be taken directly from the mouth of an officer getting his ship under way:

Heh! Walk her round. Heave, ah, heave her short again!
Over, snatch her over, there, and hold her on the pawl.
Loose all sail and brace your yards aback and full—
Ready jib to pay her off and heave short all!

Well, ah fare you well; we can stay no more
with you, my love—
Down, set down your liquor and your girl from
off your knee;
For the wind has come to say:
"You must take me while you may
If you'd go to Mother Carey!
(Walk her down to Mother Carey!)
Oh, we're bound to Mother Carey where she feeds her
chicks at sea!"

There yet remains something to be said on the subject of Mr. Kipling's metres. I have already mentioned Herr Loewe's Beiträge zur

Metrik Rudyard Kipling's. It is a book that should fill us with national shame—blent with a certain sneaking feeling of national thankfulness—that such things are not done amongst us. Its thoroughness is appalling. Herr Loewe notes where such different quantities as 'chance' and 'circumstance,' 'land' and 'command' are made to rime. He calls our attention to 'frock-cŏat' and 'beam-sēa,' so accented. He is concerned over the riming of long and short 'i,' as 'wīse' and 'homilĭes.' Along this nice path I shall not follow him; I recognize too well that I write for readers infinitely less scientific than his. But I am indebted to him for many suggestions, the product of his care and industry in the study of Mr. Kipling's metres.

These are many and varied. Most poets who have great skill in the management of metre, such as Tennyson and Swinburne, love to practise it, and Mr. Kipling's dexterity is not far below that of either. Blank verse he has seldom employed, and rightly, for it is not his natural metre. He has made best use of it, perhaps, in *One Viceroy Resigns*, from which I have already quoted. This poem is very closely modelled upon Browning, and in its tone recalls Bishop Blougram's Confession. *Giffen's Debt* and *The Sacrifice of Ex-Heb* are heavy and lifeless. There is little swing in his blank verse,

little of that elasticity which alone can save this metre from monotony. More complicated as well as simpler metres he has employed with great effect. Years have made him a truer and a deeper poet, but they have not brought him greater dexterity than he possessed when he wrote *Christmas in India*, in *Departmental Ditties :*

Dim dawn behind the tamarisks—the sky is saffron-yellow—
As the women in the village grind the corn,
And the *mynas* seek the river-side, each calling to his fellow
That the Day, the staring Eastern Day, is born.

In later times his poem *The Dead King*, on the death of His late Majesty King Edward the Seventh, is an example of most masterly handling of very difficult metre. It excited more admiration in Germany, where technical skill is better understood than amongst us, than in this country. It begins :

Who in the realm to-day lays down dear life for the sake of a land more dear ?
And, unconcerned for his own estate, toils till the last grudged sands have run ?

The Alexandrine he has used in *The 'Eathen* and *The Three-Decker*, and with more effect in the fine *Anchor Song* in *The Seven Seas*. He has employed six-syllable trochaical verse, a

very rare metre in English, in *The Sergeant's Wedding :*

> 'E was warned agin 'er—
> That's what made 'im look.

But great as is his skill in such forms, it is equalled in his treatment of the simplest. And the skill needed for dealing with very simple forms of verse is as great as that for dealing with very complicated. The "common metre" of the seventeenth century, four lines of alternately eight and six feet, cross-riming, has been almost handed over since that day to the use of comic or nursery poets, because since then none have been able to write serious poetry in it. But in those days not only a great poet like Donne but a poetical *bas bleu* like "The Matchless Orinda" could handle it with ease and skill. It was in this metre that Herrick wrote :

> No marigolds yet closed are,
> No shadows great appear ;
> Nor doth the early shepherd's star
> Shine like a spangle here.

And to show that the art of very simple yet very beautiful verse-making is not dead it needs only to study some of the little poems of Mr. W. H. Davies, smelling of the country and wild flowers and the breath of cattle.

In the simplest dactylic form Mr. Kipling

has written one of the most bewitching poems that I know in praise of native land. There is magic in every word, yet not one word that belongs to "poetic diction," scarce one that might not be in the mouth of the humblest. *The Recall* is appended, in its author's fashion, to a story in *Actions and Reactions* called *An Habitation Enforced.* It relates how an American and his wife, visiting Sussex in search of health, are entrapped by its allurements, and how, after they have planned there to take up their abode, it is discovered that the wife's ancestors sprang from those parts. The story I shall consider later. With the poem I shall conclude my study of this branch of Mr. Kipling's art.

I am the land of their fathers,
In me the virtue stays;
I will bring back my children
After certain days.

Under their feet in the grasses
My clinging magic runs.
They shall return as strangers,
They shall remain as sons.

Over their heads in the branches
Of their new-bought ancient trees,
I weave an incantation,
And draw them to my knees.

Scent of smoke in the evening,
  Smell of rain in the night,
The hours, the days and the seasons,
  Order their souls aright;

Till I make plain the meaning
  Of all my thousand years—
Till I fill their hearts with knowledge,
  While I fill their eyes with tears.

V

SHORT STORIES: I

In Mr. Kipling's early stories cynicism was, after descriptive power, the most striking characteristic. For the cynic there could be no sight more entertaining than the spectacle of social life in India. That social life may seem at first view incredible, but carefully considered it proves to be such as might be expected. Set beneath a semi-tropical sun a large but scattered colony of English men and women, belonging to the upper and upper-middle classes, for the most part young or in the prime of life. Remove from them the influence of that lower-middle class which is at home so stern a censor of morals. Let the women be so cunningly served that they are well-nigh freed from those household cares that would otherwise engage them. Give the men in their turn tasks which demand, as well as courage and absolute self-confidence, fierce bursts of painful energy, but allow long intervals of leisure. The obvious result from these

conditions will be a certain contempt for ordinary social obligations, a general slackening of the bonds of social discipline. And the restraints of sexual relationship will not be the last to be loosened.

It was upon these foibles that the young cynic directed the raking fires of his wit. He observed with his keen eyes the Mrs. Hauksbees and the Mrs. Reivers, middle-aged women with a propensity for young men and the skill of a *condottiere* in the pursuit of their quarry. He draws them for us with marvellous fidelity, even if he sees not very deep into their souls. When he relates the conversation of two ladies of this type, as in *The Education of Otis Yere*, the only word we can find to describe the impression made upon us is "uncanny." Even when a maid is wooed in the East, it is a "brazen business," he tells us, "when half the community stand back and bet on the result, and the other half wonder what Mrs. So-and-So will say to it." And if he is never salacious, he certainly never minces his words. What could be bolder in the nineties than such an opening as: "Once upon a time there was a Man and his Wife and a Tertium Quid"? It is also a model from the artistic point of view, since it brings the whole situation into focus with almost unexampled compression.

All the characteristics of these early stories are to be found in *The Story of the Gadsbys.* Here the powers that he possessed in those days, if far below those that he afterwards attained, are at their highest. *The Story of the Gadsbys* has been condemned on the score of vulgarity, I think somewhat unfairly. It is, one must admit, not a pleasant tale. Most of Mr. Kipling's early women were sorceresses, and there is something of the sorceress even about the bread-and-butter Miss Minnie Threegan, and something a little disagreeable about her fashion of captivating the fine brute Captain Gadsby. There is one brilliant and extraordinarily cruel scene between Gadsby and his whilom mistress when he tells her of his engagement, that I must quote at some length. The explanation between them has been put off by him again and again, till at last, meeting her at a banquet, he decides that it can be put off no longer.

Mrs. Herriott. (*After conversation has risen to proper pitch.*) Ah. Didn't see you in the crush in the drawing-room. (*Sotto voce.*) Where *have* you been all this time, Pip ?

Captain Gadsby. (*Turning from regularly ordained dinner-partner and settling hock-glasses.*) Good evening. (*Sotto voce.*) Not quite so loud another time. You've no notion how your voice carries. (*Aside.*)

So much for shirking the written explanation. It'll have to be a verbal one now. Sweet prospect. . . .

Then, after a long conversation :

MRS. H. Oh, what *is* the good of squabbling and pretending to misunderstand when you are only up for a short time ? Pip, don't be a stupid !

Follows a pause, during which he crosses his left leg over his right and continues his dinner.

CAPT. G. (*In answer to the thunderstorm in her eyes.*) Corns—my worst.

MRS. H. Upon my word, you are the very rudest man in the world ! I'll *never* do it again.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) No, I don't think you will ; but I wonder what you will do before it's all over. (*To Khitmatgar.*) *Thorah ur Simpkin do.*

MRS. H. Well ! Haven't you the grace to apologise, bad man ?

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) I mustn't let it drift back now. Trust a woman for being as blind as a bat when she won't see.

MRS. H. I'm waiting : or would you like me to dictate a form of apology ?

CAPT. G. (*Desperately.*) By all means dictate.

MRS. H. (*Lightly.*) Very well. Rehearse your several Christian names after me and go on : " Profess my sincere repentance."

CAPT. G. " Sincere repentance——"

MRS. H. " For having behaved——"

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) At last ! I wish to goodness she'd look away. " For having behaved "—as I have behaved, and declare that I am thoroughly and heartily sick of the whole business, and take this

opportunity of making clear my intention of ending it, now, henceforth, and forever. (*Aside.*) If anyone had told me I should be such a blackguard—— !

MRS. H. (*Shaking a spoonful of potato chips into her plate.*) That's not a pretty joke.

CAPT. G. No. It's a reality. (*Aside.*) I wonder if smashes of this kind are always so raw.

MRS. H. Really, Pip, you're getting more absurd every day.

CAPT. G. I don't think you quite understand me. Shall I repeat it ?

MRS. H. No ! For pity's sake don't do that. It's too terrible, even in fun.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) I'll let her think it over for a while. But I ought to be horsewhipped.

MRS. H. I want to know what you meant by what you said just now.

CAPT. G. Exactly what I said. No less.

MRS. H. But what have I done to deserve it ? What *have* I done ?

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) If she only wouldn't look at me. (*Aloud and very slowly, his eyes on his plate.*) D'you remember that evening in July, before the Rains broke, when you said that the end would have to come sooner or later—and you wondered for which of us it would come first ?

MRS. H. Yes ! I was only joking. And you swore that, as long as there was breath in your body, it should *never* come. And I believed you.

A long pause, during which Mrs. H. bows her head and rolls the bread-twist into little pellets : G. stares at the Oleanders.

MRS. H. (*Throwing back her head and laughing*

naturally.) They train us women well, don't they, Pip ? . . .

Then the storm bursts. She demands the reasons why their intimacy should come to an end, divining another woman. This Gadsby at first denies, but is finally driven to admit. She then tries to persuade him that from no other woman will he ever receive the love that she has given him. She breaks out :

Don't tell me anything about her ! She *won't* care for you, and when you come back, after having made an exhibition of yourself, you'll find me occupied with——

CAPT. G. (*Insolently.*) You couldn't while I'm alive. (*Aside.*) If that doesn't bring her pride to her rescue, nothing will.

MRS. H. (*Drawing herself up.*) Couldn't do it ? *I ?* (*Softening.*) You're right. I don't believe I could —though you are what you are—a coward and a liar in grain. . . .

She continues in this ignominious vein, finally, as she rises to go, pleading :

When it's all over, come back to me, come back to me, and you'll find that you are my Pip still !

CAPT. G. (*Very clearly.*) False move, and you pay for it. It's a girl !

MRS. H. (*Rising.*) Then it *was* true ! They said —but I wouldn't insult you by asking. A girl ! *I* was a girl not very long ago. Be good to her, Pip. I daresay she believes in you.

Goes out with an uncertain smile. He watches her through the door, and settles into a chair as the men redistribute themselves.

CAPT. G. Now, if there is any Power who looks after this world, will He kindly tell me what I have done ? (*Reaching out for the claret, and half aloud.*) What *have* I done ?

This is the central scene of the drama, the rest of which need not concern us. I believe that almost everybody who reads it will come to this conclusion. It may not be great art—it is not great art—but it is powerful, full of energy and movement, true to a brutal side of life. It deals with the proper matter of tragedy, men and women at odds with fate. For Captain Gadsby is not a liar and coward in grain as Mrs. Herriott calls him, nor an utter blackguard as he dubs himself. He is merely, as I have said, a fine brute, who loves Minnie Threegan with a better and less brutal love than he has ever before felt, and who tells his mistress of the change with blundering and cruel stupidity.

Of all the "sex stories," perhaps the most blisteringly cynical is *A Wayside Comedy*. There is little pleasure in the mirth of the observer of this extraordinary *ménage à cinq*. The scene is a little isolated station where the

English population consists of Boulte, an engineer, his wife and Captain Kurrell.

Kurrell had discovered that Mrs. Boulte was the one woman in the world for him and—you cannot blame them.

To these are added Major Vansuyther and his beautiful wife. Fiercely jealous because her lover is paying attentions to Mrs. Vansuyther, Mrs. Boulte in a wild outburst tells her husband the truth, and that she hates him. She goes over later to Mrs. Vansuyther's house, and enters in time to hear her husband declaring his passionate love for that lady, adding that he need not consider his wife, who is the mistress of Captain Kurrell. Mrs. Vansuyther replies that this is incredible, since Captain Kurrell has already told her that he cares not a rap for Mrs. Boulte, and that there is nothing between them. She, poor woman, whose fatal beauty has been responsible for all the pother, hates the very sight of both men, and cares only for her husband. There follows a scene in which Mrs. Boulte faints, then another between Boulte and Kurrell, the former madly jealous, not because he has been betrayed, but because Kurrell has made love to Mrs. Vansuyther. Major Vansuyther discovers nothing, so these four are left to live

out their terms of service under these extraordinary conditions.

Mrs. Vansuyther has never told the Major, and . . . she has been compelled to break her vow of not speaking to Kurrell. This speech . . . serves admirably to keep alight the flame of jealousy and dull hatred in Boulte's bosom, as it awakens the same passions in his wife's heart. Mrs. Boulte hates Mrs. Vansuyther because she has taken Ted from her, and, in some curious fashion, hates her because Mrs. Vansuyther—and here the wife's eyes see far more clearly than the husband's—detests Ted. And Ted—that gallant captain and honourable man—knows now that it is possible to hate a woman once loved, to the verge of wishing to silence her for ever with blows. . . .

Boulte and he go out tiger-shooting in all friendship. Boulte has put their relationship on a most satisfactory footing.

" You're a blackguard," he says to Kurrell, " and I've lost any self-respect I may ever have had ; but when you're with me, I can feel certain that you're not with Mrs. Vansuyther, or making Emma miserable."

Kurrell endures anything that Boulte may say to him. Sometimes they are away for three days together, and then the Major insists upon his wife going over to sit with Mrs. Boulte ; although Mrs. Vansuyther has repeatedly declared that she prefers her husband's company to any in the world. From the way in which she clings to him, she would certainly seem to be speaking the truth.

But of course, as the Major says, " in a little station we must all be friendly."

The writer of this edifying little episode has assuredly, in the cant phrase, dipped his pen in gall.

Mr. Kipling treats the problems of sex in other fashions than this. *Love o' Women*, for example, if terrible, is free from cynicism. It describes the overthrow, by that dread disease locomotor ataxy, of a man who has made the overthrow of women his peculiar pastime. The last scene where, dying, he is taken to the arms of the woman he has married, deserted, driven into a house of ill-fame, has not the less force that it is told in the brogue of Mulvaney, Mr. Kipling's most beloved of soldiers.

There is one story, *Without Benefit of Clergy*, so tender and so beautiful, that it goes far to absolve Mr. Kipling from the charges that have been levelled against him, that he could not see—could not, at least, depict—the fairest side of love. And it is out of material sordid enough that he has woven this sad and delicate romance, the tale of a young Mohammedan girl, purchased like a chattel from her mother by an Englishman. That easily made contract has been the most important act of John Holden's life, for in the two years since its sealing Ameera has become "all but all the world in his eyes." Just as it is expected that "there was going to be added to this kingdom a third

person whose arrival Holden felt inclined to resent," he is ordered away on special duty. His return, after a period of wild anxiety and, consequently, ill-managed work, is thus described:

Holden hurried through the courtyard. A light burned in the upper room. His horse neighed in the gateway, and he heard a shrill little wail that sent all the blood into the apple of his throat. It was a new voice, but it did not prove that Ameera was alive.

"Who is there?" he called up the narrow brick staircase.

There was a cry of delight from Ameera, and then the voice of the mother, tremulous with old age and pride—"We be two women and—the—man—thy—son."

Thenceforward Holden, whose sole thought has been till then for Ameera, is wrapped up in the child as well. The days of the little boy's early childhood are described as only Mr. Kipling, who loves children more than any writer of to-day, can describe them. Ameera's lullaby, charged as it seems with coming tragedy, takes one by the heart.

Oh crow! Go crow! Baby's sleeping sound,
And the wild plums grow in the jungle, only a penny a pound.
Only a penny a pound, *baba*, only a penny a pound.

But "the delight of that life was too perfect to endure." The "little lord of the house"

was carried off, almost ere his parents knew that he ailed, by the seasonal autumn fever.

His mother nearly died of grief, and Holden was himself only saved from the blackest of despair by the necessity of comforting her, of assuring her that no blame for the calamity could be laid to her door, of gradually winning her back again to life and reason.

This he accomplished little by little, while his own pain he numbed by fierce attention to his work. Ameera declared that it was because they had loved their child so much and proclaimed their love so loudly that he had been taken from them. They would make no protestations of delight, would hide their love from the jealous God.

That even was without avail. After a few months came an outbreak of black cholera. Ameera scornfully refused to follow the white *mem-log* to the hills, and, inevitably as Holden had felt, the fiend caught her. Holden went to her only just in time, for the black cholera moves swiftly.

The soul came back a little and the lips moved. Holden bent down to listen. "Keep nothing of mine," said Ameera. "Take no hair from my head. *She* would make thee burn it later on. That flame I should feel. Lower! Stoop lower! Remember only that I was thine and bore thee a son. Though thou wed a

white woman to-morrow, the pleasure of receiving in thy arms thy first son is taken from thee for ever. Remember me when thy son is born—the one that shall carry thy name before all men. His misfortunes be on my head. I bear witness—I bear witness "—the lips were forming the words on his ear—" that there is no God but—thee, beloved ! "

Then she died.

Here again is true tragedy. Mr. Kipling does not deal with mawkishness, but he is not afraid to play upon the feelings of his readers in a manner not common with the writers of his generation. To-day we are in some danger of confusing sentiment with sentimentality, of making our literature juiceless and marrowless by reason of a dread of unbaring hearts too freely, of giving too much space to a chronicle of the emotions.

Such stories as *Without Benefit of Clergy* are too rare in Mr. Kipling's collection. It must be admitted that the tone of most of his tales that deal with women resembles rather that of *A Wayside Comedy*. Woman is to him a mysterious being, not to be trusted wholly because not wholly to be understood, and not to be understood just because she is primitive, since, as he often points out, it is easier to follow the line of thought of the most complex people than of the simplest. The thoughts and

actions of Man are, save at rare moments when some smouldering fire below the crust bursts through, such as may be expected from his circumstances and his state of civilization. Woman is a simpler machine, in which the function of life-creation takes a larger part. She is governed by more primitive instincts, instincts more closely connected with race and sex. She appears illogical, because she moves in obedience to these instincts, which cannot be apprehended by the processes of logic, which seem like straws in the wind, but which, we may believe, are the tables of the law of human progress.

I do not pretend that Mr. Kipling has ever put his opinions into any such words as these, though he is not far from them in that poem which declares :

> That the female of the species is more deadly than the male.

I have simply striven to describe the feelings which, as it seems to me, underlie his sketches of women. These opinions seem to me as exaggerated and as faulty as those of the extreme exponents of Feminism, who will have it that Man and Woman are to all intents and purposes the same mentally and morally.

It is, at all events, something of a relief to

turn from Mr. Kipling's treatment of women to his studies of young English officers. He loves the type, and draws it with a loving hand. One can easily fashion a composite picture of his ideal young man from half a dozen portraits of subalterns. Bobby Wick of *Only a Subaltern*, with his " ugly, wholesome phiz," the boy who fights the cholera in his regiment by the sheer force of his personality, and, when it has been got under, himself succumbs to it, would be one. Tommy Dodd would be another, of whom in *The Head of the District* the barest glimpse is seen, shaking with fever and sending his native troopers forth to quell a hill insurrection in this manner :

" O, men ! If you die you will go to Hell. Therefore endeavour to keep alive. But if you go to Hell that place cannot be hotter than this place, and we are not told that we shall there suffer from fever. Consequently be not afraid of dying. File out there ! " They grinned, and went.

Yet another would be the gallant, simple young knight Strickland, hero of *A Deal in Cotton*, who won the heart of the great Arab slave-dealer, the scourge of all Central Africa.

But there is scarce need to draw such a composite picture, for there is one character that we can feel to be his creator's unparagoned hero, his conception of the perfection of

chivalry at this present time. A many people, besides the married lady who kissed him as he lay asleep in his cabin, have fallen in love with *The Brushwood Boy*. In effect, everyone must love him, though he is by no means everyone's ideal. He is simple and modest and brave, intelligent if not intellectual, as eager in his play as in his work. He is courteous to women, but cares not very much for their company, because he is rather afraid of them. When he does fall in love, with the girl who has been the partner of his dreams from infancy, he does so in as knightly a fashion as is consistent with his reserved English character. He is, above all, an English hero. There is in him nothing of the *beau sabreur*, nothing of the errant charm of Stendhal's Fabrice del Dongo. The problems that rack Tolstoy's Levin and Count Vronsky never present themselves to him. He has never troubled about the *culte du moi* of M. Barrès. He is just the finest flower that the gardens of Eton and Sandhurst, as they are at present constituted, can produce.

Mr. Kipling loves to contrast his boy soldiers with other types, always to the advantage of the former. The portrait of the novelist Eustace Cleever, by no means an unpleasant or grotesque figure, is drawn beside that of a group of young men on leave from India, just for this

effect. He has, after some trouble, induced the young men to talk. Says the Infant to Cleever :

" The dacoits were having a first-class time y'know —filling women up with kerosine and setting 'em alight, and burning villages, and crucifying people."

The wonder in Eustace Cleever's eyes deepened. He could not quite realize that the cross still existed in any form.

" Have you ever seen a crucifixion ? " said he.

It is really but another example of that phase in Mr. Kipling that I have already pointed out so often, this admiration of the man of the sword by the man of the pen.

I remember one critic who declared very justly that in his praise of the brilliant young soldier, swift to act in emergency, a glutton for responsibility, he spoke as if the whole British Army were officered by such. Whereas, said the critic, we all know how many there are—South Africa showed it only too clearly—who in truth know their duty, but little outside it, who are sunk in routine and have their vision dulled by the smoke of pipe-clay ; honourable and courageous men enough, but not first-class soldiers because lacking in initiative and imagination. I think Mr. Kipling had something of this feeling before the Boer War, and that he was as sadly disillusioned as

any of us. In *A Sahibs' War*, an Indian observer has some far from flattering comments to make upon our methods, but in the very amusing story *The Captive*, deliberate fun is poked at the British officer in the field.

The story is told by an American adventurer who has put his patent quick-firing gun at the disposal of the Boers. He is serving under a certain Commandant Van Zyl, the sworn friend of the British general opposing him. The two call each other by their Christian names, and the rival forces exist in a ludicrous state of communion and friendship. The American describes the operations thus :

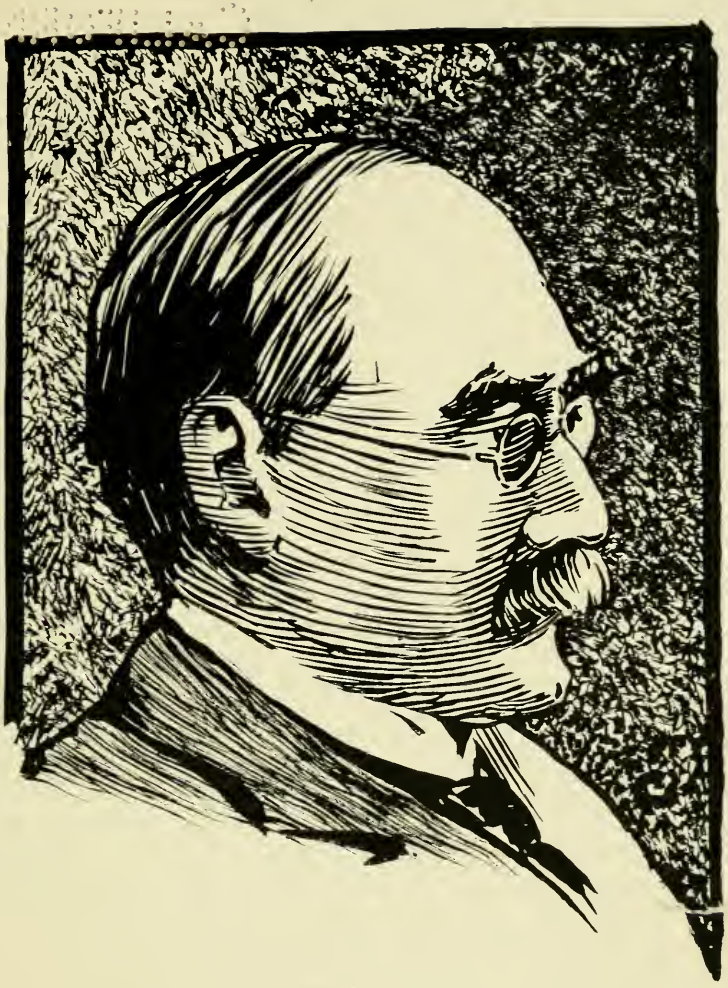
"The way we worked lodge was this way. The General, he had his breakfast at 8.45 a.m. to the tick. He might have been a Long Island commuter. At 8.42 a.m. I'd go down to the Thirty-fourth Street ferry to meet him—I mean I'd see the Zigler into position at two thousand (I began at three thousand, but that was cold and distant)—and blow him off to two full hoppers—eighteen rounds—just as they were bringing in his coffee. If his crowd was busy celebrating the anniversary of Waterloo or the last royal kid's birthday, they'd open on me with two guns (I'll tell you about them later on), but if they were disengaged they'd all stand to their horses and pile on the ironmongery, and washers, and typewriters, and five weeks' grub, and in half an hour they'd sail out after me and the rest of Van Zyl's boys ; lying down and firing till 11.45 a.m. or maybe high noon.

Then we'd go from labour to refreshment, resooming at 2 p.m. and battling till tea-time. Tuesday and Friday was the General's moving days. He'd trek ahead ten or fifteen miles, and we'd loaf around his flankers and exercise the ponies a piece."

Now this is exceedingly fine satirical writing, but there is in it some of the irritation of the man who has seen his gods—not cast down for that they never were—but prove themselves rather ordinary people, unable to subsist without afternoon tea like mere mortal men. The men who fought Commandant Van Zyl in this quiet and gentlemanly fashion would never, like Mulvaney's friends who took Lungtungpen stripped naked, "take St. Pethersburg in their dhrawers." But at least that war has shown us that we wanted to be shaken up.

Something has been said, in considering *Barrack-Room Ballads*, of Mr. Kipling's treatment of the private soldier. It is now time to discuss it with reference to his short stories. A discussion of Mr. Kipling's soldiers means a discussion of that famous trinity Privates Mulvaney, Learoyd and Ortheris, of whom the first is incomparably the greatest.

Terence Mulvaney is undoubtedly the best-known of all his author's characters. I have heard it claimed as a proof of Dickens' unequalled genius that we should know Mr.



RUDYARD KIPLING

(*From a Drawing by* B. IRVINE BATELY)

The Viscomte Robert d'Humières in his study of the English and their ways, "Through Isle and Empire," gives a thumb-nail picture of Kipling which gives one a clear idea of his personal appearance It is the best description of the famous novelist that has been written: "He does not look more than thirty. Nicholson's print makes him seem older than he is. Collier's portrait alone gives the frank, open, and youthful expression of the original. His eyes in particular hold the attention behind the immovable glasses, full of light, sympathy, and gaiety, thirsting to reflect life in all its forms. The chestnut hair is cut straight over the forehead. The thick-set, rather plump figure possesses a singular agility with none of the somewhat wooden gestures of the average Englishman."

Micawber and Mr. Pickwick if we were to meet them in the street to-morrow. That, of course, is nonsense. We should not know infinitely greater creations, Anna Karenina or Squire Western or Fabrice del Dongo, though we might make a guess at my Uncle Toby, and I hope and believe that I, at least, her most devoted slave, would not pass by Mademoiselle de Maupin. But the fact that Dickens, with the aid of an illustrator who was also a genius, has made some unusual and grotesque types familiar to men as their brothers and sisters, is proof of his vast skill in the depiction of outward appearances and characteristics. Mr. Kipling has had a like success with Mulvaney, for I believe that most of us would know that thirsty, war-scarred giant had we the good fortune to happen upon him.

Mulvaney is the perfect type of the Irish soldier, with all his good qualities, resource, humour, courage at their highest, and also all his weaknesses, chief of which is of course the unconquerable lure of the canteen. He has been made a corporal early, and has splendid prospects. But he has been "rejuced afterwards" and is now the best soldier in the regiment—when sober—and when drunk to be passed over at parade by officer and sergeant, if it be humanly possible to do so. He is loved

and laughed at, and he is not unconscious of his shame.

" An' whin I'm let off in ord'ly-room through some thrick of the tongue an' a ready answer an' the ould man's mercy, is ut smilin' I feel whin I fall away an' go back to Dinah Shadd, thryin' to carry ut all off as a joke ? Not I ! 'Tis hell to me, dumb hell through ut all ; an' next time whin the fit comes I will be as bad again. Good cause the reg'ment has to know me for the best soldier in ut. Better cause have I to know mesilf for the worst man."

He is the unquestioned head of the confederacy of three, because he is the fount of its ideas, its commander-in-chief and intelligence department at once. " 'Tis me," he explains, " has to lie awake av nights schamin' an' plottin' for the three av us." His exploits are without number. He had a hand in that *Taking of Lungtungpen*, when a lieutenant and some twenty soldiers stripped themselves naked, swam a river, and fell upon the village with the strength of demigods. Of this story one of our critics, who, if he can be as healthily enthusiastic as any, yet never loses his head, has pronounced this judgment :

" Those who have not read this little masterpiece have yet before them the pleasure of becoming acquainted with one of the best short stories not merely in English, but in any language."

It was he who, after he had left the army, gave his unrivalled aid to the young officer bringing down *The Big Drunk Draf'* to the sea. And he was the hero of that crazy, side-splitting escapade told in *The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney*, when he stole a palanquin, was packed in it on to a train while dead drunk, carried to Benares, at that moment full of palanquins bearing the queens of India to a festival at the temple of Prithi-Devi, watched the women praying, and finally, clothing himself in the broidered lining of the palanquin, appeared before them as Krishna himself. The improbability of this story simply shouts at one as one reads, which has led certain dull people to condemn it, and Francis Adams to rank it with his really poor stories such as *The Lang Men o' Larut*. But those with a real sense of humour, who have been by this mad tale reduced to most painful and helpless laughter, will be well content to do without probability.

Private Stanley Ortheris, the little Cockney, is as interesting in his way. If we love him less it is because the Irishman is more sympathetic than the Londoner. Ortheris is the crack shot and the humorist of the regiment, with far fewer weaknesses than his friend and apparently without emotion. Yet he too has

his periods of remorse and affliction, when he is not a pleasant companion. Learoyd, the "six and a half feet of slow-moving, heavy-footed Yorkshireman, born on the wolds, bred in the dales, and educated chiefly among the carriers' carts at the back of York railway station," is the least satisfactory of the three. We are told that he had for "chief virtue an unmitigated patience which helped him to win fights," but he takes very small part in the discussions that reveal the personality of the other two. It is, however, from a story, *On Greenhow Hill*, of which he is hero, that the best glimpse of the three and their relations is to be gained.

The episode began with the nightly disturbance of the camp, on a ridge of the Himalayas, by a deserter from a native regiment. Thinking that he was beside the native wing of the camp he fired at intervals and shouted to his old comrades to come out and fight against the English. Ortheris and Mulvaney had words as to the advisability of getting up and pointing out his mistake, Mulvaney declaring that "'tis rainin' entrenchin' tools outside."

"Wot's the good of argifying? Put a bullet into the swine! 'E's keepin' us awake!" said another voice.

A subaltern shouted angrily, and a dripping sentry whined from the darkness—

" 'Tain't no good, sir. I can't see 'im. 'E's 'idin' somewhere down 'ill."

Ortheris tumbled out of his blanket. " Shall I try to get 'im, sir ? " said he.

" No," was the answer. " Lie down. I won't have the whole camp shooting all round the clock. Tell him to go and pot his friends."

Ortheris considered for a moment. Then, putting his head under the tent wall, he called, as a 'bus conductor calls in a block, " 'Igher up, there ! 'Igher up ! "

The men laughed, and the laughter was carried down wind to the deserter. . . .

" An' that's all right," said Ortheris, withdrawing his head. . . . " S'elp me Gawd, tho', that man's not fit to live—messin' with my beauty-sleep this way."

" Go out and shoot him in the morning, then," said the subaltern incautiously.

On the morrow Mulvaney and Ortheris went to lie out for the deserter as he came up a watercourse to the camp. Ortheris, the expert, selected the range.

" This is something like," he said luxuriously. " Wot a 'evinly clear drop for a bullet acrost. How much d'you make it, Mulvaney ? "

" Seven hunder. Maybe a trifle less, bekaze the air's so thin."

After a sighting shot to make sure, and joined by Learoyd, they lay down to smoke and wait. The stolid Yorkshireman, reminded by a spur in front of them of the moors at home,

came out of his shell and told of his early romance. When a boy, driving a mining wagon-team, he had come by a broken arm and all but a cracked skull by falling off a stone wall after drinking too much ale. He was carried insensible to the house of Jesse Rowntree, a leading light of the Primitive Methodists, and nursed by Jessie Rowntree's daughter 'Liza. Under the influence of Jesse, of the preacher, the Rev. Amos Barraclough, still more of 'Liza, he became "converted," attended regularly at chapel and took the bass part in Jesse's oratorio. Yet his heart was never wholly in the business; he dreaded ever the "cast-iron pride o' respectability" of these folk. This led the three to discuss the attitude of the lower-middle class to soldiers. Said Learoyd:

"They'd tell tales in th' Sunday-school o' bad lads as had been thumped and brayed for bird-nesting o' Sundays and playin' truant o' week-days, and how they took to wrestlin', dog-fightin', rabbit-runnin', and drinkin', till at last, as if 'twere a hepitaph on a gravestone, they damned him across th' moors wi' 'an' then he went and 'listed for a soldier,' an' they'd all fetch a deep breath, and throw up their eyes like a hen drinkin'."

"Fwhy is ut?" said Mulvaney, bringing down his hand on his thigh with a crack. "In the name av God, fwhy is ut? I've seen ut, tu. They cheat an' they swindle an' they lie an' they slander, an' fifty

things fifty times worse ; but the last an' the worst by their reckonin' is to serve the Widdy honest. It's like the talk av childer—seein' things all round."

"Plucky lot of fightin' good fights of whatsername they'd do if we didn't see they had a quiet place to fight in. . . . I've bin turned out of a measly arf-license pub down Lambeth way, full o' greasy kebmen, 'fore now," said Ortheris with an oath.

"Maybe you were dhrunk," said Mulvaney soothingly.

"Worse nor that. The Forders were drunk. *I* was wearin' the Queen's uniform."

Were I to write a chapter to describe the indignation at their treatment that Mr. Kipling puts into the mouths of his soldiers, I could not do it so well as by the quotation of this passage.

Learoyd went on to tell how his friendship for the preacher turned to hatred when he began to fear that he would win the hand of 'Liza, who was ailing. One day he took him down the pit with him, and suddenly, as it grew dark, a fierce passion surged up within him, and he seized Barraclough and held him over a bottomless hole.

"Now, lad," I says, "it's to be one or t'other on us—thee or me—for 'Liza Rowntree. Why, isn't thee afraid for thysen ?" I says, for he were still i' my arms as a sack. 'Nay ; I'm but afraid for thee, my poor lad, as knows naught,' says he. . . . 'Liza Rowntree's for neither on us, nor for nobody o' this earth. Dr. Warbottom says—and he knows her, and her

mother before her—that she is in a decline, and she cannot live six months longer. He's known it for many a day. Steady, John! Steady!' says he. 'And that weak little man pulled me further back and set me again' him, and talked it all over quiet and still, me turnin' a bunch o' candles in my hand, and counting them ower and ower again as I listened."

The blow stunned him, and when Jesse took his daughter to Bradford, the air of Greenhow being too keen, he fell to moping, and gave up the chapel. In the winter he threw up his job and went to Bradford. 'Liza was dying, he was told, and her father would not let him see her. Going straight from the house he met a recruiting-sergeant and enlisted. Next morning he returned to say farewell, the ribbons in his hat. Jesse bade him begone with his "devil's colours flyin'," but 'Liza, hearing his voice, commanded that he should be allowed up.

"Her eyes were all alive wi' light, and her hair was thick on the pillow round her, but her cheeks were thin—thin to frighten a man that's strong. 'Nay, father, yo mayn't say th' devil's colours. Them ribbons is pretty.' An' she held out her hands for th' hat, an' she put all straight as a woman will wi' ribbons. 'Nay, but what they're pretty,' she says. 'Eh, but I'd ha' liked to see thee i' thy red coat, John, for thou was allus my own lad—my very own lad, and none else.'

"She lifted up her arms, and they come round my

neck i' a gentle grip, and they slacked away, and she seemed fainting. 'Now yo mun get away, lad,' says Jesse, and I picked up my hat and I came downstairs."

The recruiting-sergeant, "one o' them smart, bustlin' chaps," tells him that, having seen his sweetheart, he must have a quart and do his best to forget her. "And," says Learoyd, "I've been forgettin' her ever since."

He threw away the wilted clump of white violets as he spoke. Ortheris suddenly rose to his knees, his rifle at his shoulder, and peered across the valley in the clear afternoon light. His chin cuddled the stock, and there was a twitching of the muscles of the right cheek as he sighted; Private Stanley Ortheris was engaged on his business. A speck of white crawled up the watercourse.

"See that beggar? . . . Got 'im."

Seven hundred yards away, and a full two hundred down the hillside, the deserter of the Aurangabadis pitched forward, rolled down a red rock, and lay very still, with his face in a clump of blue gentians, while a big raven flapped out of the pine wood to make investigation.

"That's a clean shot, little man," said Mulvaney.

Learoyd thoughtfully watched the smoke clear away. "Happen there was a lass tewed up wi' him, too," said he.

Ortheris did not reply. He was staring across the valley, with the smile of the artist who looks on the completed work.

I have quoted from this story at great length,

not because it stands among its creator's best, but because it is perhaps the most representative of the soldier tales. It is an example of Mr. Kipling's skill and good faith in giving us all sides of a soldier's character, without false reticence or idealization. Nothing could exceed the contrast of Learoyd's tenderness and emotion as he tells of the death of his sweetheart, and the cruelty of Ortheris next instant, gloating over the death of the deserter—whom, be it remembered, he was under no necessity to shoot—feeling an " artist who looks on the completed work."

And such contrasts are true of these men. They are, as Mr. Kipling reminds us, primitive men caged in by a few very simple regulations. " Their duty is to keep themselves and their accoutrements specklessly clean, to refrain from getting drunk more often than is necessary, to obey their superiors and to pray for a war." All these things they accomplished without changing their natures or becoming very civilized. They were, says sarcastically Mr. Kipling, who loves them very well, " in no sense refined, nor to be admitted to the outer-door mats of decent folk." Those who do not share his love, who so much abominate roughness and drunkenness that they find no palliatives even in steady courage and good faith

and *esprit de corps*, will yet be prepared to admit that, were they in some crisis where the ordinary rules of civilization were set aside, there be none they had rather find at their elbows than Privates Mulvaney, Ortheris and Learoyd.

I shall say a few words on the attitude of these men to their discipline, because it is that of every old soldier who has the reputation of being a good man. It is something apart from all discussion, never to be questioned. They may despise some callow youth, twenty years their junior, set to command them. They may know their drill and the tactics of hill-warfare an hundredfold better than he, and be aware of their superior knowledge. But they will obey his commands cheerily, and, if it be possible, give to him in a difficulty aid that will never be set to their score. All this is to them an axiom of their service. Ortheris, when a young fool strikes him, "the best soldier of his inches" in the regiment, with his cane, and tears his tunic, lies to a superior officer as to the cause of the accident. His whole soul is filled with murderous hatred of the man, but he knows full well that the telling of the truth would drive the officer from the regiment, and that is unthinkable. How the officer, by a stroke of genius, salves the wound in the only

possible way by granting the private the right of personal combat—when they are miles away from barracks—and wins his undying admiration by knocking him down, is told in *His Private Honour*.

There are few soldiers who need be discussed once we have made the acquaintance of these three. *The Mutiny of the Mavericks* is the tale of an Irish emissary from New York sent to induce a regiment of his countrymen to revolt against the English. They make a vast parade of revolution, drink his beer by the firkin, and finally, when a hill-war breaks out, drive him to death on the Afghan knives. It is more brutal and less interesting than the majority of Mr. Kipling's stories, but has one amusing and fertile-brained scoundrel in it, the Ulsterman Dan Grady. In the South African tales appear a few more, while in *Their Lawful Occasions* is one most engaging sailor, Mr. Moorshed, who makes us regret that Mr. Kipling has not turned more of his attention to the sister service.

Mr. Kipling sets on the title-page of one of his best books of short stories, *Life's Handicap*, the native proverb, "I met a hundred men on the road to Delhi and they were all my brothers." That motto is not strictly appropriate—at least, if he could make the statement of the

Delhi road, he could not of the London. For there are certain types of men who are not his brothers. The men who think that nationality is a snare and a check upon civilization, who believe that war is a thing so terrible that scarcely anything can justify it, who would have all brutality and force and the fighting spirit taken from the world, are not in fraternity with him. He despises them, and he does not understand them. If he were told that he stood upon a lower plane of civilization than they, he would with unholy glee rejoice in that fact. But the simple men, the young officers unmoved in the tightest of tight places, their blasphemous subordinates who take the sword with small care that they may perish by the sword, the old Indian priests who "sit and meditate on the latter end of things," the Indian peasant who says :

> But the wheat and the cattle are all my care,
> And the rest is the will of God,

the shepherd knitting on the Wiltshire Downs, and the Newfoundland fisherman rocking in his dory on the Grand Banks, these are his brethren, these the men whose hearts he knows, and it is to hear him tell of these that we open his books.

VI

SHORT STORIES: II

To his keen delight in the things of this world, Mr. Kipling joins a curious—it might be said a superstitious—interest in things that are outside it. In almost every collection of stories there are chronicles of the supernatural. And there are no half-measures with him. When he quits the earth, he spreads his wings beyond the moon; when he writes of the supernatural he lets his imagination have full play. He has not that air of telling the most ordinary of stories which Hoffmann—for example—assumes when he is about to deal with the wildly improbable. Far from telling a plain tale in a plain man's fashion, he is reticent, nervous, as he pretends, of shocking by revealing all he knows or guesses. He hints at more terrible mysteries and horrors than he reveals, puts broken sentences of fear into the mouths of his characters, that stimulate curiosity without revealing.

In this he shows himself master of the tale of fantastic horror. Tales of the super-

natural wherein precise details are given may interest us—Mr. Kipling himself has written several such—but they do not thrill or carry us away. One can make natural things far more terrible than ghostly. No tale of magic of Hoffmann is so terrible as that of the nobleman who finds his loved and beautiful wife devouring corpses in the churchyard. But by judicious restraint, by skilful hints and clever suggestion of unearthly atmosphere, a *milieu* of terror and dreadful mystery can be built up. When we strip the veil from black Horror—or indeed from riggish Delight—she assumes straightway smaller proportions than we had thought.

The Phantom 'Rickshaw is one of the earliest of such stories. Having ill-treated and in fact helped to kill the woman who has been his mistress, a man is haunted by her in her black and yellow 'rickshaw. When he rides on the Mall at Simla with his fiancée, he sees always his former love in the 'rickshaw in front of him; whenever he is out of doors alone it pulls up beside him and she begins to reproach him. Eventually the strain drives him mad. The story is "creepy," but faulty in the extreme. When the poor wretch, now quite off his head, blurts out the whole tale to his fiancée, she, instead of trying to comfort him and taking

him into her father's house as surely any human girl would have done, slashes him across the face with her riding-whip and goes off at a gallop. This is a grievous weakness, but a type of weakness of which Mr. Kipling has seldom been guilty since his hand has become practised.

The Mark of the Beast makes every other story of the kind that I have read seem child's play. The Spectator said of it that it was "matchless in horror and terror." We use such words carelessly enough, but if we take them in their most exact and literal meaning they are more or less adequate. It is a question whether any man has a right to put such dreadful pictures before us. But it is, as I have said, the telling rather than the tale that makes the flesh creep, and a bare recital of the story may not seem to those who do not know it to warrant the things I have said of it.

A drunken reveller, returning with Strickland of the Police, who appears so often in other stories, and the narrator, slips from them as he passes the temple of Hanuman, the Monkey-god, rushes in, and grinds the ashes of his cigar-butt into the forehead of the image.

"Shee that?" he says. "Mark of the B—beasht! *I* made it. Ishn't it fine?"

Instantly there is uproar. The temple fills with people, and it looks ugly for the intruders. Suddenly a Silver Man, stark naked, "a leper as white as snow," comes from behind the image. He rushes at Fleete, where he sits in maudlin content on the ground, throws his arms round him, mewing the while like an otter, and drops his head upon his breast. Thereat the priests are silent, and the Englishmen are allowed to go. That in itself frightens Strickland. "They should have mauled us," he says.

Next morning Fleete demands for breakfast underdone chops, and eats three of them in a revolting manner. He tells the others that he has been bitten by mosquitoes in a curious way, and shows them on his breast a mark like the rosette on a leopard's hide. Then they go to the stables to inspect the horses.

There is at once a tremendous scene. The five horses "reared and screamed and nearly tore up their pickets; they sweated and shivered and lathered and were distraught with fear." Returning to the stable with the narrator alone, Strickland proves conclusively that it is Fleete they fear. Subsequently Fleete's pony will not let him approach, and the other two ride out, leaving him alone to sleep.

They return in the dusk and their horses bolt on the drive from something grovelling on the ground. It is Fleete. When they force him to return they find that in the light his eyes are horrible, with a green light behind them. He is plastered with dirt from head to foot. He goes at once to his room, where they hear him moving about. Presently from the room comes the howl of a wolf.

People write and talk lightly of blood running cold and hair standing up and things of that kind. Both sensations are too horrible to be trifled with. My heart stopped as though a knife had been driven through it, and Strickland turned as white as the tablecloth.

The howl was repeated, and was answered by another howl far across the fields.

That set the gilded roof on the horror.

They rush in, find Fleete climbing out of the window, seize him and bind him with the leather thongs of the punkah-rope. His snarls are those of a wolf, not of a man. "Any one entering the room would have believed that we were curing a wolf's pelt. That was the most loathsome accessory of all."

The doctor certifies that Fleete is dying from the most terrible form of hydrophobia he has ever seen. He leaves them, believing that nothing can be done. Round and round the

house they hear a mewing like the mewing of a she-otter. At each cry the beast that was Fleete falls into a fresh paroxysm. He foams at the mouth and grows gradually weaker.

On a sudden resolution they wait outside the door, and after a terrible struggle, capture the Silver Man as he passes the door. They drag him into the room where Fleete lies, and the latter doubles backward into a bow as if poisoned with strychnine.

"I think I was right," said Strickland. "Now we will ask him to cure this case."

Strickland has put the barrels of an old shot-gun into the fire, and, wrapping a towel round his hand, he now seizes them. They tie the leper to a bedstead.

"This part," says Mr. Kipling, "is not to be printed."

Eventually they force the leper to take the spell off, and let him go. Fleete falls into a natural sleep. Next morning he wakes, tired out, but himself, regretting that he has mixed his drinks "last night." Of the intervening day he is unconscious.

Mr. Kipling, with his usual uncanny skill, "sets the gilded roof on the horror."

When Fleete was dressed he came into the dining-room and sniffed. He had a quaint trick of moving

his nose when he sniffed. "Horrid doggy smell," said he. "You should really keep those terriers of yours in better order. Try sulphur, Strick."

Strickland promptly goes into hysterics and the narrator follows suit.

I think that the effect of this story and of others such as *The Return of Imray*, in which Strickland also plays a part, is heightened by the fact that it is told in the first person. That is, indeed, one of the best methods of telling a tale of magic, since it invests it with a false air of verity.

At the End of the Passage is perhaps not a story of the supernatural, for it records horrors that have been fairly well authenticated. An engineer, overworked and prostrated by the heat of the Indian desert in summer, when there is "neither sky, sun, nor horizon—nothing but a brown-purple haze of heat," is unable to sleep for fear of that which comes upon him in his slumbers. If he can get sound asleep, "deep down," he is safe, but that has not now happened for days, and his dread of falling lightly asleep is so intense that he keeps a spur in his bed to rowel himself back to wakefulness—and safety. When his friends return after leaving him alone while they go about their business for a fortnight, he is lying dead. "In the staring eyes was written

terror beyond the expression of any pen." His personal servant gives this verdict :

" Heaven-born, in my poor opinion, this that was my master has descended into the Dark Places, and there has been caught because he was not able to escape with sufficient speed. We have the spur for evidence that he fought with Fear. Thus have I seen men of my race do with thorns when a spell was laid upon them to overtake them in their sleeping hours and they dared not sleep."

This is gruesome enough, but it will find credence ready enough. Then, with his favourite trick of " setting the gilded roof on the horror," Mr. Kipling makes the doctor photograph the terrible eyes of the dead, then hastily tear up the films and emerge " very white indeed." Says he :

" There was nothing there. It was impossible."

" That," said Lowndes, very distinctly, watching the shaking hand striving to relight the pipe, " is a damned lie."

I think he succeeds in his effort. We scarce pause to wonder whether there could be preserved on the retinæ of the human eye the form of that Fear that slew Hammil. Medical evidence is, I believe, against the author.

Mr. Kipling has written tales of magic in which there is no horror, just as he has written tales of horror in which the supernatural plays

no part. One that much impressed M. Chevrillon, but that I think scarce worthy of the praise he lavishes upon it, is called *The Finest Story in the World*, and tells of a young bank clerk, who has been in previous incarnations a galley-slave in Greek and Viking ships, and who, in a sort of trance, remembers his experiences. Eventually he falls in love, and love at once drives from his soul the recollections that the narrator has been drawing from him painfully, little by little. So the greatest story in the world is never finished.

Somewhat similar is *Wireless*, the story taking its name from the fact that the central theme is interwoven with an account of some experiments in the then novel wireless telegraphy. A young consumptive, a chemist's assistant placed in circumstances resembling those of Keats, of whom he has never heard, is in some way imbued with his spirit, and, in a trance, writes portions of The Eve of St. Agnes and the Ode to a Nightingale. The story is well told, but it is surely a weakness that the man should write down his ideas in the exact words of Keats.

They has shared with *The Brushwood Boy* the greatest admiration of all its author's mystery stories, and of all his stories of children also. It is very beautiful, but somewhat

obscure. It is not, for example, clear why the teller of the story, who has visited the blind woman and her court of ghost children, and discovered her secret, should find it necessary to say good-bye to her for ever. *The Brushwood Boy* is disconnected and rambling; it is intensely interesting, but it does not maintain the same level of interest all through what is a very long "short story." Its theme is the story of what may be called "twin dreams," of a man and a woman who have each had the same dream, in which both participate, over and over again from childhood. So, though they have not met since he was a small boy and she little more than a baby, they share the knowledge of a wonderful dream-country, of the brushwood-pile—that gives the tale its name—which is their starting-point, of the Thirty-Mile-Ride along the beach, of the policeman who will turn them back, of "They" who threaten and pursue. Mr. Kipling manages to give the effect of that curious inconsequence of dreams, so complete that we almost seem to discover in them a fourth dimension. He suggests too the weird, formless terrors of nightmare.

They forgathered in the middle of an endless hot tropic night, and crept into a huge house that stood, he knew, somewhere north of the railway station

where the people ate among the roses. It was surrounded with gardens, all moist and dripping; and in one room, reached through leagues of white-washed passages, a Sick Thing lay in bed. Now the least noise, Georgie knew, would unchain some waiting horror, and his companion knew it too; but when their eyes met across the bed, Georgie was disgusted to see that she was a child—a little child in strapped shoes, with her black hair combed back from her forehead.

"What disgraceful folly!" he thought. "Now she could do nothing if Its head came off."

Then the thing coughed, and the ceiling shattered down in plaster from the mosquito netting, and "They" rushed in from all quarters. He dragged the child through the stifling garden, voices chanting behind them, and they rode the Thirty-Mile-Ride under whip and spur along the sandy beach by the booming sea, till they came to the downs, the lamp-post and the brushwood-pile, which was safety.

Mr. Kipling has not always handled love scenes with insight, but in this case, when the explanation between the two comes to be made, he has told the tale of the love of an English man and maid as tenderly as the very different scenes between Holden and his beloved native mistress in *Without Benefit of Clergy*.

Many of these stories are told with an earnestness that compels us to believe that he does seriously credit the interference of the

supernatural with the destinies of men. Yet he is always ready to poke fun at a society affecting to have evidence of such interference. *The Sending of Dana Dan* is an amusing account of the way in which an old native tricks a knot of mystery-mongers by filling the quarters of one of them with a never-ending stream of kittens, which the society takes for a " manifestation."

One of the best " horror tales," which has in it nothing of the supernatural, is *The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes*, who, when out riding, falls into a pit where dwell the Hindus who have had the misfortune to recover from trance or catalepsy, especially from the collapse of the cholera, when " you are carried to be burnt almost before you are dead." These creatures—they can scarce be called men—live in badger-holes in the sand, and food is occasionally tossed down to them from above. Some of them catch crows by the expedient of the decoy that I have already mentioned. It is impossible to climb the sides of shifting sand, and the one side towards a river from whence exit might be possible is guarded both by a quicksand and a boat moored in the river containing riflemen.

The striking part of the tale is not its plot, which is trivial, but the power and subtlety

and rather savage skill with which is pictured this loathsome community, its customs and its manner of life. There is in it a certain resemblance to *A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms*, for these creatures are no less horrible than the Yahoos. It is not so much a story as an ugly allegory of the human race. I think Mr. Kipling rouses our disgust yet more than Swift, because he is apparently more sincere, less obviously malicious and eager to paint things in their vilest form.

Bertran and Bimi The Spectator called "detestable," which is the most appropriate epithet that could be found. It is the story of a marvellous orang-outang, spoiled and petted by a French naturalist, that sits at his table and smokes cigars. The fellow marries a pretty half-caste French girl, and neglects the great ape; whereupon the latter bursts through the ceiling of the room in which the terror-stricken girl has locked herself, and tears her into little pieces. When he has returned, in the words of the German who tells the story:

"Den Bimi come to dinner at der same table mit us, und the hair on his hands was all black und thick mit—mit what had dried on der hands. Bertran gave him sangaree till Bimi was drunk and stupid, und den——"

Hans paused to puff at his cigar.

"And then?" said I.

"Und den Bertran he kill mit his hands, und I go for a walk upon der beach. It was Bertran's own piziness. When I come back der ape he was dead, und Bertran he was dying abofe him; but still he laughed liddle und low und he was quite content. . . ."

"But why in the world didn't you help Bertran instead of letting him be killed?" I asked.

"My friend," said Hans, composedly stretching himself to slumber, "it was not nice even to mineself dot I should live after I haf seen dot room mit der hole in der thatch. Und Bertran, he was her husband. Goot night, und—sleep well."

The Spectator was of opinion that *Bertran and Bimi* exceeded what was permitted, that it should never have been written. I suggested that the same thing has been said of *The Mark of the Beast*, and possibly of *The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes*. I am inclined to argue that these last two, with *The Return of Imray* and *At the End of the Passage*, stand on the right side of the line, if one is to be drawn, and *Bertran and Bimi* on the wrong. And the chief reason I would urge for this conclusion is that this story is full of *unnecessary* horror and ugliness. It is not, to begin with, in any sense a good story judged by the high standard I am striving to apply; it does not hold us captive or set us thinking. The other four, and

particularly *The Mark of the Beast*, have these qualities. The horror in them is not unnecessary. It is applied with skill to a definite purpose, which purpose it achieves.

The Quarterly Review said of some of the more ebullient of his verses, "Mr. Kipling, though often a swashbuckler, is never a charlatan." Never was fairer criticism, and it can be applied also to the subject under discussion. If Mr. Kipling sometimes leaves dross and dirt in the figures he forms, it is not because he is a clumsy and careless craftsman, but because he works for great and wide effects, and is not always as nice as he might be in his treatment of small. Maupassant, perhaps the greatest master of the short story that any literature can show, errs far more often than he in the way I have described. Scattered among masterpieces he gives us stories whose brutality and sordidness there is no genius or power to excuse, stories at once uglier, more sickening and *less interesting* than *Bertran and Bimi*.

We shall notice, if we make careful study of these stories, how, over and over again, Mr. Kipling "works up" the situation, as a journalist would say, with a few deft touches. Sometimes the touches are too obviously those of a journalist, but not often, and that is a

risk which has to be run. Consider, for example, the effect of this one sentence from *My Own True Ghost Story :*

> Peshawur possesses houses that none will willingly rent, and there is something—not fever—wrong with a big bungalow in Allahabad.

Or this from *At the End of the Passage :*

> The resonant hammering of a coffin-lid is no pleasant thing to hear, but those who have experience maintain that much more terrible is the soft swish of the bed-linen, the reeving and unreeving of the bed-tapes, when he who has fallen by the roadside is apparelled for burial, sinking gradually as the tapes are tied over, till the swaddled shape touches the floor and there is no protest against the indignity of hasty disposal.

Most of these touches may be more profitably considered in discussing Mr. Kipling's prose style. I mention them now to lay stress upon the skill with which he plays on our apprehension as upon a stringed instrument. That is what the great journalist does, and the successful writer of short stories must resemble the journalist in keeping up the interest from start to finish. Maupassant had this power, Hoffmann had it in a less degree ; Poë and Villiers de l'Isle Adam lost it seldom, Balzac too often. Pater, Wilde and Anatole France, though one had exquisite grace, the

second dancing wit, and the third possesses both, are often found lacking. Their stories sag somewhere or other. They interest us intensely, but we can read them in sections. With regard to Mr. Kipling I can only give my own experience on this point. In writing these chapters it has happened again and again that, referring to some particular passage, I have against my will read on to the end of the story, which I had probably read half a dozen times before. This is the precise opposite of the leisurely art of Dickens or—in our own day—Mr. de Morgan. It may not be the highest form of literature, but it is the highest form of the short story.

VII

SHORT STORIES: III

PERHAPS the best story Mr. Kipling ever wrote is *The Man who would be King.* Sir J. M. Barrie has declared that it is "the most audacious thing in fiction, and yet it reads as true as Robinson Crusoe." The late S. R. Crockett tells us that several literary men of his acquaintance, striving to arrive at a verdict as to Mr. Kipling's best story in which none should be influenced by his neighbour, each wrote the name of that which he considered best on a slip of paper, which he then put into a bowl. On every slip was written *The Man who would be King.*

It is perhaps, like Mr. Wells' fine tale The Country of the Blind—which, by the way, always seems to me a sermon in favour of the dogma which Mr. Wells elsewhere condemns—in the nature of an allegory. Two adventurers establish themselves in the midst of a little mountain tribe in Afghanistan, and become its absolute rulers. The people, deceived by trumpery miracles, hold them gods. They

flourish exceedingly, make laws, form an army, live in splendour and luxury. All is well till one of them desires a woman to live with him, and demands a woman from the tribe. A girl is brought, but she comes sullen and struggling, dazed with fear at the idea of the embraces of a god. When he touches her she bites him, and draws blood. That dispels the illusion. At the very instant the king's blood flows, his kingdom falls. He is a man, the people realize, and therefore an impostor. He is seized after a fight, tortured and slain.

No summary can give any adequate idea of this story. It is, as Sir J. M. Barrie says, as real as Robinson Crusoe; it moves breathlessly, with an *élan* like a cavalry charge. No collection of the best short stories could be considered representative if it were omitted.

Mr. Kipling, when he portrays types other than those which are associated with his name, is not always successful. I have already made mention of the Russian officer in *Kim*, and the picture he draws elsewhere of the doings of a French spy on an English man-of-war is even worse. There is no nation in Europe less likely to employ a complete fool for such work than the French. So his Liberal is generally a caricature, like Mr. Groombride in *Little Foxes*

—if an exceedingly able and malicious caricature. He has, however, on occasion drawn types that might have seemed unsympathetic to his talent with great skill.

One of these is McIntosh Jellaludin in *To be Filed for Reference*, one of the best stories in *Plain Tales from the Hills*. This man is exiled and outcast, a white man living with a native woman, drunken and degraded, and all the time writing a wonderful book of philosophy. It is merely an episode, but a fascinating episode.

There has been some difference of opinion with regard to the merits of Mr. Kipling's later collections of stories for children, *Puck of Pook's Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies*. As children's stories I doubt whether they are successful. They are too complicated, they do not move directly enough on their path. Compared, for example, with Mr. Andrew Lang's historical stories for children, they are far higher literature, but—as I have proved to my own satisfaction—less interesting to children. No child, in fact—if we decide to apply that name to persons only who are below the age of fifteen—can really understand them. Many "grown-ups," on the other hand, delight in them. I have known women who were shocked and wearied by what they con-

sidered the brutality of the earlier stories, who were fascinated by these. Undoubtedly, if they possess less of the old force and brilliance, the apparent truth and ease that brought Mr. Kipling his first fame, they show at its highest a polished beauty that had been increasing in each book he published.

The method of telling these stories is infinitely clever, and shows Mr. Kipling's use of the " machinery " of fiction, always skilful, at its highest. Puck introduces to two children a number of representatives of England in various ages, each of whom tells them what life was like in his day. There is a man of the Stone Age, who, in *The Knife and the Naked Chalk*, tells how the early inhabitants of Britain discovered the use of steel to defend themselves against the wolf, their ancient foe. There is a Roman born in Britain during the occupation, who has never seen Rome, who tells of the days of her decline and the last fights upon the wall. There is a Norman who tells of the Conquest, and others.

There is a certain sameness in the characters he draws in these different ages. He puts the stories very often into the mouths of noble young men like Parsenius the Roman and Sir Richard Dalyngridge the Norman, who serve powerful, less scrupulous, more truculent over-

lords such as Maximus and De Aquila. I imagine that he does this because he desires not to present flawed heroes to children, and yet cannot avoid drawing strong, ruthless men of power with the faults as well as the merits of their kind. A particularly fine character is De Aquila, the man who aims at the amalgamation of Norman and Saxon rather than the subjugation of the latter, who works with the vision before his eyes of the great and united England that was to come long after him.

In all these stories Mr. Kipling displays a great deal of historical knowledge, but he also shows a quality that is even better for his purpose. In every one of them there is an intuition, a bold attempt to grip the spirit of the age with which he deals, a daring power of invention in those details which give reality and conviction to his pictures. With infinite skill he gives to these historical figures all the outward truth and accuracy that Merejkowski imparts to his, though he never succeeds, like the Russian, in drawing characters which belong to any age but his own. It scarce needs to say that in this fine gallery of portraits there is not one that approaches that of Leonardo da Vinci as he appears in *The Forerunner*. That Leonardo is in thought as well as in word and deed the great genius of the Renaissance,

of the time when men were awakening. Mr. Kipling's Emperor Maximus is a Lord Kitchener, his Parsenius a young English subaltern, two thousand years before their time.

Before I pass on to speak of the stories of machines, I would mention some animal stories besides the tales of Mowgli, and first one that stands very nigh the summit of his art. Those who know the great game of polo may be inclined to set *The Maltese Cat* as high as *The Man who would be King* or *Without Benefit of Clergy*. If "the tale's the thing" be a sound motto, if a man should value a story for that in it which appeals to him, then are they thoroughly justified. This truly delightful story—which, like *The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes, The Return of Imray* and many others, has been translated into French—tells how a game of polo for the championship of Northern India is played from the point of view of the winning ponies. These are led by a little grey wonder, The Maltese Cat, who by his science and judgment and undaunted courage not only inspires the other ponies and wins the match against the most expensive cattle in India, but saves the life of the captain of his team by his sagacity. Mr. Kipling, it need hardly be said, knows the game of polo, at any rate as then played in India, as he knows the

oaths of the private soldier and the chatter of the bazaar. He tells this story with a rattle and rush that keep us in a high state of excitement from its start to its thrilling climax. As in so many of his stories, we fancy that, though he does not obtrude it upon us, he pokes a lesson slyly at us. The ponies are discussing the game in advance somewhat lugubriously, wondering how they can make shift to stand up against their formidable opponents.

"Money means pace and weight," said Shiraz, rubbing his black silk nose dolefully along his neat-fitting boot, "and by the maxims of the game as I know it——"

"Ah, but we aren't playing the maxims," said the Maltese Cat, "we're playing the game."

In later editions the *Jungle Books* have been rearranged. All the stories of Mowgli have been put together in the first, and all the stories in which he does not appear in the second. Many of these are excellent, though far below *Red Dog* or *Kaa's Hunting*. Among the best are *The White Seal* and *The Undertakers*, an amusing account of a cynical conversation between three of the world's most evil scavengers, a crocodile, an adjutant crane and a jackal. Mr. Kipling has done us one poor service by these tales; he has prepared

the way for a whole flood of imitations, most of them exceeding indifferent. No popular monthly magazine is now complete without its "tale of the wild," though not more than two of the authors combine knowledge with the power of telling a good story.

The *Just So Stories* are children's stories in a far truer sense than *Puck of Pook's Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies.* One is sorry for the child between the ages of ten and fifteen who has not learned how the Whale got his Throat, how the Leopard got his Spots, of the Cat that Walked by Himself and the Butterfly that Stamped. Best of all perhaps is *How the Alphabet was Made*, wherein the forming of letters is described with much ingenuity and a good deal of science. Some of the poems between the stories are delightful, particularly that after *How the Camel got his Hump*, which tells little boys and girls how to avoid a like calamity.

Even in these stories there are many things, many of Mr. Kipling's most characteristic quips, that children will not understand. Sometimes, indeed, he seems to be winking at the grown-ups from his pages, over the children's shoulders, as when he draws an Egyptianized baboon, and in the note appended to the picture says: "The umbrella-ish thing about

his head is his Conventional Mane." He shows himself, by the way, in this book an excellent draughtsman, not only humorous and imaginative, but with a real gift for line. The picture of Old Man Kangaroo running away, and finding time to "be rude to" Yellow-Dog Dingo over his shoulder as he runs, is as full of life as it is of fun. The *Just So Stories* deserve their place on the nursery bookshelf with Alice in Wonderland and Edward Lear's Nonsense Songs and Stories. No praise can be higher than that.

Everyone has loved *The Maltese Cat*, and no one has objected to the sentiments and ideas that have been put into his clever little grey head. On the other hand, some of the severest criticism has been directed against those stories in which he has endowed machines with life. Now it is obvious that this is a problem which each individual reader must solve for himself. It is perfectly legitimate to endow machines with life, to make them sentient beings, if you can give reality to your sketch and if you can make it interesting. Has Mr. Kipling done this in *·007* and *The Ship that Found Herself?* There are not wanting critics who complain that he has not; I can only say that for me he has, that the illusion is complete.

I believe, in fact, that in my boyhood the former was my favourite of all short stories. ·007 is a locomotive engine, of the highest type, and the story merely tells of his first introduction to the yard, of his dread of the noise and rush and clatter, of his first run—to rescue an engine that has been derailed—of his success, and his final promotion to draw the White Moth that takes the overflow from the Purple Emperor, the great express of the American millionaire. The talk of the engines awaiting their turn, the boasting of the several types over their several high qualities, is most amusing and convincing. And the run of ·007 is splendid. We thrill with his hopes and fears as he flies through the night for the first time, fleeing from his own shadow, shuddering at each unrailed bridge, with the tool-car clattering behind him.

I am prepared to admit, however, that there is a little too much mechanism in *The Ship that Found Herself.* Its central idea is excellent; any sailor will proclaim its truth. It is, shortly, that a ship is not a ship till she has "found herself." She is, to begin with, a conglomeration of ribs and girders and rivets; when she has "found herself" she is a perfect unity. And to arrive at this point she must endure a certain battering from the elements

she has to face, and all the theories of her construction must be vitiated. For in theory none of her rivets can move the hundredth fraction of an inch ; they are immovable as a rock. In practice, however, everything must give a little, everywhere there must be a little " play," till that whole that is the ship is an elastic, living thing. Then, and not till then, has the ship " found herself."

The story tells of the first crossing of the Atlantic by the Dimbula, a first-class cargo-boat, a more wonderful machine, Mr. Kipling contends, than a great liner. The one for success must simply be more gorgeous than the most gorgeous of hotels ; in the other, every inch of cargo-capacity and every extra knot of speed must be weighed anxiously against the cost of fuel. The Dimbula encounters very heavy weather. Her groaning as she meets it is the groaning of her countless parts, frames, deck-beams, stringers, capstan, screw-shaft, funnel, rivets. Just as she makes harbour, apparently severely damaged, since she shows signs of her treatment that to the inexperienced eye seems serious, a new voice is heard. It is the voice of the Dimbula, no longer of her parts. She is all one now, a ship in truth. She has " found herself."

The record of all the different voices, the

enumeration of a hundred different parts of the ship with which none but a seaman—perhaps, rather, none but a ship-builder—is likely to be conversant, becomes after a time a little wearisome. It is not, as some critics have maintained, bad in itself. There is rather too much of it. Yet the story is a good one, and the final emergence of the "personality" of the Dimbula well told.

The love of machinery has not waned. *With the Night Mail* in *Actions and Reactions* is its latest proof. In this story Mr. Kipling meets Mr. Wells on his own ground; he looks into the future and he describes the machines he sees there. He has not to fear from comparison. This is a story told, as a special reporter would tell it, of the crossing of the Atlantic in the aerial postal packet. The airship, its machinery, are described with a gusto that seems to show a boyish delight in their invention. The description of the great storm that is met merits the hard-used adjective "epic." He fits in, incidentally as it were, a little sketch of the society of the time. In reality all is in the hands of the A.B.C.; the Aerial Board of Control. It has come to be recognized by all the principalities and powers of the world that the world's supreme concern is the traffic. Gradually every other interest

has been subordinated to this, and so gradually, even unwillingly, the A.B.C. has found all the affairs of mankind upon its shoulders. It is a less intellectual, less thoughtful picture than that of Mr. Wells in The World Set Free—but it makes better reading.

He has appended to *With the Night Mail* a series of announcements of the A.B.C., a number of advertisements, answers to correspondents, etc., which are supposed to be taken from the newspaper in which it appeared.

It has been said that these mock advertisements are unworthy of a serious artist. I must repeat an argument I have already used. If they interest or amuse intelligent persons, then they are not unworthy, and I cannot believe that they fail in this respect. They are interesting because, even if merely examples of the quackery that fills the advertisement pages of our newspapers, they show thought in its adaptation to another, an imaginary, age.

But best of all is a review of the biography, by his son, of the great scientist of aeronautics, often mentioned in the story, Xavier Lavalle. Lavalle's theory of the cyclone has revolutionized knowledge, and upset the theories of the hitherto dominant "Spanish School." Would that all book-reviewing were as vivid as the relation of this incident:

M. Victor Lavalle tells us of that historic collision (*en plane*) on the flank of Hecla between Herrera, then a pillar of the Spanish School, and the man destined to confute his theories and lead him intellectually captive. Even through the years, the immense laugh of Lavalle as he sustains the Spaniard's wrecked plane, and cries : " Courage ! *I* shall not fall till I have found Truth, and I hold *you* fast ! " rings like the call of trumpets.

I have spoken of the similarity of Mr. Kipling's humour to that of the Americans. There are one or two stories, on the lines of *The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney*, that depend on humour and that alone for their effect. Their plot is of the simplest, and very often quite absurd, so that, if the fun flags for an instant, if the note is not sustained from start to finish, we find ourselves cold and carping. *My Sunday at Home*, for example, is, though it too has its joyful moments, grotesque and strained. But there are two others, *Brugglesmith* and *The Puzzler*, that cannot be beaten in this type. The latter tells how the narrator detects a famous judge and two dignified elderly friends striving to solve the problem, with the aid of a monkey taken from an organ, whether or not the tree known as the " monkey-puzzler " deserves its name, and of the consequences of the experiment.

My memory of my first acquaintance with *Brugglesmith*, a bacchanalian adventure with a blackguardly old Scottish engineer whom the author pretends he wheeled home through the streets of London at night, is peculiarly vivid. On that occasion I came as near as I trust will ever be my fate to being thrust out of the British Museum Reading Room by its dignified officials.

These stories reveal Mr. Kipling as a master of that roaring mirth which is peculiarly a mark of the Anglo-Saxon race. He cannot exercise it at will, he fails sometimes when he would appear to have striven most. It is indeed the rarest of gifts, and often fails the few who possess it. There is one other living Englishman only who can, as the saying is, "make you laugh till you cry," and it was in one book only that he succeeded in the feat. This power of producing helpless laughter that Mr. Kipling and Mr. Jerome possess, is something altogether apart from the ordinary standards by which literature is judged. It is some indefinable quality, very human, very near to the foundations of our being, some current that passes between certain chosen persons and the crowd. The man who has it may fail sometimes in judgment of his fellowmen, but he has with them a closer bond even

than the mind. He is linked to that in them which defies analysis, the common consciousness of humanity set amid incongruous elements, the hidden inner spirit, "the thing call'd soul."

VIII

NOVELS

The novel is to-day as assuredly the chief means of expression as it was in the days of Fielding, Sterne, Richardson and Smollett, as was the drama under Elizabeth and rimed verse from Cleveland to Pope. Short stories, the publishers tell us, do not sell. Save for the work of a few masters in the craft, Mr. Kipling, Mr. Conrad, Mr. Wells, Mr. Blackwood, Mr. Mason, and one or two others, they are a drug in the market. The lending libraries are inclined to frown upon them, and the displeasure of these potentates of letters is not lightly to be faced.

It is not then surprising that an author such as Mr. Kipling, the greatest in his own particular art that English literature has produced, should yet have been tempted to try his mettle in a field that did not suit nearly so well his peculiar powers, and where he had to meet and bear comparison with rivals infinitely more redoubtable. He has not been entirely successful. He has written four long books,

one of them with a collaborator. Of these the first three, all interesting, all good stories well told, have added nothing to his fame, and will take a place when his work is tried by posterity far below the best of the *Jungle Books*, *Life's Handicap* and *The Day's Work*. In the last he has justified his ambition, and produced one of the finest novels that has appeared since the beginning of this century.

The Light that Failed has been much abused, and has merited some of the abuse. It is raw, uncomely, and "unpleasant" in the sense that hardly one of its characters is sympathetic. The Athenæum declared of it, "it is an organic whole—a book with a backbone—and stands out boldly among the nerveless, flaccid, invertebrate things called novels that enjoy an expensive, but ephemeral existence in the circulating libraries." That may be, but the praise is in itself an admission that the book is no masterpiece, for masterpieces are not compared, however favourably, with the "nerveless, flaccid, invertebrate things called novels." As a "novel of the year" it is well enough; as a novel of its generation it is not very noticeable. The more we admire Mr. Kipling, the higher the standard by which we judge his work, the less attention shall we pay to *The Light that Failed*.

But judged by lower standards, by the standard of the everyday tale of adventure and character, it is at least "a rattling good story." Dick Heldar is a real and living figure. The accounts of his unhappy boyhood and companionship with Maisie are real and living likewise, and pathetic as well. His adventures in the Soudan, whither he goes as artist war-correspondent, the comradeship with Torpenhow, the return, and, after a terrible struggle, the wild joy of success, when his pictures and his fame are everywhere, all these are exciting, yet always credible. There is something intensely pathetic in the worship of this fierce, brutal man for the refound Maisie, for we can see from the first that that chilly little person will never bring him happiness. She also is an artist, but without inspiration, and filled with a selfish dread of being overmastered by Dick's genius and personality. He fights manfully to win her, to impress upon her all the joys of the roving life he has led, to set her aflame with desire for all the things he has seen and can show her. There is one passage in particular that has been much quoted, wherein he rises to high and rare eloquence, and puts all the lure of romance in a few shining sentences.

What do you think of a big, red, dead city built of

red sandstone, with raw green aloes growing between the stones, lying out neglected on honey-coloured sands? There are forty dead kings there, Maisie, each in a gorgeous tomb finer than all the others. You look at the palaces and streets and shops and tanks, and think that men must live there, till you find a wee gray squirrel rubbing its nose all along the market-place, and a jewelled peacock struts out of a carved door-way and spreads its tail against a marble screen as fine pierced as point-lace. Then a monkey —a little black monkey—walks through the main square to get a drink from a tank forty feet deep. He slides down the creepers to the water's edge, and a friend holds him by the tail, in case he should fall in.

Tragedy has never been far off, and at last it comes. Dick, despairing at the ill-success of his suit, and left alone in their quarters by Torpenhow, is at work upon a picture which he hopes to make his masterpiece. It is a modern "Melancholia," and his model is a little girl of the streets who has been taken up and befriended by Torpenhow. As the work progresses he is much worried by failing eyesight. At last going to an oculist, he hears the dread verdict. His optical nerves have been badly damaged by a wound received in the Soudan, and the loss of his sight is a matter of months at the longest. He returns, plunged into despair, and works feverishly to complete his picture, keeping himself going and pur-

chasing forgetfulness by fierce bouts of drinking. When Torpenhow returns, he finds him a dirty, dishevelled, unshaven wreck—but the great picture is finished.

Almost at once blindness descends upon him, and at the same time the model, who has fallen in love with Torpenhow and is fiercely jealous of Dick's influence with him, destroys the picture. The truth is kept from Dick for a long time, and he believes the picture to be intact and talks of the fame it will bring him. And then at last, when Maisie comes to see him she reveals the truth, and reveals also—what is far harder for him to bear—her dread and horror of his blindness. That is the end. He accompanies Torpenhow to Africa once again, and "a merciful bullet" comes to his succour.

That at least is the only version I care to discuss, the version its author originally conceived. The sentimentalized, sugared version which ends with Dick in Maisie's arms is weak, and—in view of the girl's character—most unlikely.

There is in this book an extraordinary collection of unpleasant people. The woman who is the guardian of Dick and Maisie in childhood is vile, the firm that buys Dick's sketches is represented by a bandit, Maisie is a cowardly, selfish soul, Dick himself brutal and savage.

His paintings, Maisie declares, "smell of tobacco and blood," and the same might be said of his character. Yet he is at least brave and loyal and honest and a dreamer of fine dreams, and Maisie is none of these things. The pleasantest personage is undoubtedly "the Red-haired Girl," who herself loves Dick silently.

The affection of Dick and Torpenhow is of that close, silent, yet almost fiercely-possessive kind that is common between such men. Torpenhow looks upon him, "his eyes full of the austere love that springs up between men who have tugged at the same oar together and are yoked by custom and use and the intimacies of toil."

And the conversations between the two are excellently rendered. When, for example, Dick finds the little weary prostitute, whom his friend has taken in out of compassion and without his knowledge, asleep on the sofa, he exclaims :

"Oh, I say, old man, this is too bad ! You mustn't bring this sort up here. They steal things from the rooms."

Now this is exactly the tone which one bachelor would adopt to another under the circumstances, but there are few other than Mr. Kipling who would have dared to say so.

Most writers would have dragged in a word or two of reproof or disgust for the edification of the righteous. Dick is merely anxious as to the fate of the spoons.

There lies one of Mr. Kipling's great merits. Always he strives, not always with success, but never relinquishing the effort from lack of courage, to " draw the thing as he sees it."

The Naulakha, written in collaboration with his brother-in-law Wolcott Balestier, is even less satisfactory than *The Light that Failed*. It is without doubt the least known of Mr. Kipling's books. It is as a story perhaps more exciting than *The Light that Failed*, but less balanced, with less precise sketches of character, and a purely trivial plot. The tale of the quest of the rajah's wonderful jewel is merely an excuse for the introduction of thrilling and gorgeous Indian scenes. And even if India is well described, there is none of that magic suggestion of atmosphere that we expect from Mr. Kipling. It is quite unlike his ordinary work. It might be, in fact, a good translation of a book on India, supposing him to have studied it, of M. Jean Richepin, who is well enough, but an artist of inferior calibre to Mr. Kipling. It has its moments, but there are not enough of them. I shall not deal with it at greater length.

Captains Courageous is a far better book, I think a book that would appeal to boys more than *Puck of Pook's Hill*, written expressedly for them. But, as was said of Treasure Island, it will appeal to " all boys from nine to ninety." There is an infectious vigour about the tale, the smell of salt is borne to us from its pages. It is a fine epic of high and manful endeavour, of the hard and dangerous yet happy lives of simple men. A Mr. James Oliphant, I am reminded by my allusion to Treasure Island, sets it above this book. The value of his criticism may be gauged by the intelligent remark elsewhere in his book (Victorian Novelists): " Not many people would think of reading Treasure Island a second time." *Captains Courageous*, good as it is, is a long way below Stevenson's splendid book. There is no figure to compare with that terrible sea-cook John Silver. I am inclined to agree with this critic in assigning definitely to Mr. Kipling a place in literature higher than Stevenson's, but that is no reason for setting one of his inferior works above what is very nigh the latter's masterpiece. I think that the Mr. Kipling who declared that Stevenson was his master would object very strongly to seeing *Captains Courageous* accorded a higher place than Treasure Island.

The story begins with a young American "bounder" of fifteen, son of a millionaire, plaguing the passengers of an Atlantic liner crossing the Grand Bank with his insolence. A sardonic German presents him with a very strong cigar, which quite overwhelms him. He falls overboard and is picked up by a dory belonging to the smack We're Here of Gloucester, Massachusetts. He meets his rescuers with his usual insolence, and offers them a large sum to take him at all speed to New York. But the crew of the We're Here disbelieve his tales of wealth. They have only just begun their fishing, and the price they will obtain for their catch seems much bigger than any vague sum the young millionaire can promise. They decide to continue their fishing, and to make young Harvey work like the rest. After an attempt at rebellion, when he is knocked down by Disco Troop, the owner, he is set to assist the 'boy,' young Dan, his son.

Then follows the weakest part of the story, for Harvey seems transformed by that blow on the nose, casts off at once his selfishness and ill-natured precocity, and becomes the best of good fellows. We are given to understand that he always was this at bottom, but that he had been spoiled by the injudicious treat-

ment of his mother. That is quite possible, but it is scarcely credible that the evil qualities of years of mismanagement and indulgence should so quickly remove under the influence even of such fine characters as the crew of the We're Here.

They are splendid people one and all, from stern Disco Troop to his merry son Dan. Even Uncle Salters, the farmer and booby of the crew, is lovable. Most charming of all is Manuel, the "Portugee," whose dory rescued Harvey. When work was finished for the day, and they sat round the cabin,

> Manuel's talk was slow and gentle—all about pretty girls in Madeira washing clothes in the dry beds of streams, by moonlight, under waving bananas; legends of saints, and tales of queer dances or fights away in the cold Newfoundland baiting-ports.

The accounts of the fishing from dories, of the salting and packing of the cod, of the habits and customs of the sailors, suggest that Mr. Kipling, during the years he spent in the United States, served his time on one of these smacks. That does not mean that there is anything pedantic in the tale—far from it. It is a splendid, realistic story of a splendid race of men.

When the We're Here with Harvey aboard has finally reached port, there is an account

of his father's dash across America to meet him, with all the detail and all the sheer love of speed that Mr. Kipling puts into his stories of the railway.

Captains Courageous, better than *The Light that Failed*, far better than *The Naulakha*, is yet not to be mentioned in the same breath as *Kim*. The publication of *Kim* marks in some respects the highest point of Mr. Kipling's career. Many of his best books were published before he had reached his full fame. He was now, at the beginning of the new century, in the sun of his highest popularity. His stories and his poems were read everywhere and everywhere quoted. Yet his complete novels had not borne out the promise of his other work. Malicious critics had labelled *The Light that Failed* 'The Book that Failed,' and I have given my reasons for holding that they were not altogether wrong. It had been said that he could not write a great novel, and *Kim* seemed to some the proof of a deliberately accepted challenge. If that were so, his confidence was triumphantly vindicated.

As compared with *The Light that Failed*, the whole book is elaborate. Here are no hasty, impressionist sketches, but careful, loving full-length portraits. Kim himself, his saintly lama, the delightful Hurree Chunder

Mookerjee, Mahbub Ali, the old princess, even the lesser characters like Lurgan and Colonel Creighton, are people whom, looking back on the book, we seem to have known. And nowhere has Mr. Kipling been so successful in creating for us the atmosphere of the East, its silence and its cruelty and its mystery, the smells of the bazaars, the colours and the glare, the heat and the flies, the sweetmeats and the dust.

Kim is a tale of the Secret Service of India, which is itself probably in no way a thing of the author's imagination, however much he may have embellished it for the purposes of his story. Kim is a little white boy stranded and alone in India, son of an Irish private who died of drink and opium. His only friend is one Mahbub Ali, a swaggering, rakish Afghan horse-dealer, who is one of the most trusted players of "The Game," as the work of the Secret Service is called. Kim first takes a hand in the Game by conveying to Colonel Creighton, the head of the service, a note that Mahbub is anxious to be rid of, since it threatens his life. When he has delivered it he lies outside the house, as the native children among whom he has lived would have done, and overhears plans for putting down a rising in the north which the letter forebodes.

Meantime Kim has made the acquaintance of a wonderful Thibetan lama outside the "Wonder House" at Lahore—the Museum of which Mr. Lockwood Kipling was Curator—and has become his *chela* or disciple. The lama is on a quest, the quest of a river that sprang from the arrow of Gaudama when he excelled all that strove against him in shooting. Kim is neither convinced nor sceptical; India is full of priests and every one has a quest of some sort. This one he loves, so he decides to accompany him. Together they take the road, Kim begging for his master according to the custom, and owing to his skill and impudence they live well.

The description of the Grand Trunk Road is one of the most marvellous passages in Mr. Kipling's works. He is perhaps, less concise, less determined to spare every word that he can do without than is his wont. He paints his picture in leisurely fashion and takes many pages to do it. It were of little use to quote anything from the description if one did not quote nigh all, which is of course impossible. That description is an answer to the cry that the world has become in every corner a sober and monotonous place. We feel as we read Kim's own delight in that scene of ten thousand shifting bright-garbed actors.

Presently they fall in with the train of an old princess, returning to her native hills after a visit to her daughter. Kim manages discreetly to bring himself and his master to her notice and into a favour that serves them well in later days. The witty, foul-tongued, *rusée* dame is altogether delightful, one of the most humorous characters Mr. Kipling has created.

All this time Kim has been prophesying a great war "with guns," telling of the exact number of men who will be engaged, exactly as he heard it from the lips of Colonel Creighton. In India, apparently, fame comes from glib prophecy even before it is fulfilled, and Kim is considered a prodigy. When, later, the prophecy is fulfilled, and the exact force he has named is sent forward, he is not far short of a god.

Kim is eventually captured by his father's old regiment, straying near to it in curiosity when he sees its badge, a red bull on a green field. The Indian woman who had lived with O'Hara his father had told him after the latter's death that "nine hundred first-class devils, whose god was a Red Bull on a green field, would attend to Kim," which was all she could remember of the man's rambling directions. Instantly the chaplains of the regiment decide

that he must be sent to school, and the old lama offers to pay his expenses so that he may go to a first-class school instead of learning with the drummer-boys. So Kim finds himself at one of the great Roman Catholic schools of India where the sons of English officials and of the richer "half-sahibs" are educated. There he abides some years, varying work with delightful holiday trips in native costume with the lama, who yet continues his quest. But those mighty players of the Game, Colonel Creighton and Mahbub Ali, have marked an apt pupil, and are determined that he shall not slip through their fingers. Kim is sent to the house of Lurgan, "the Healer of Sick Pearls," to receive his training.

Here he is taught scientifically to observe and memorize the slightest details of costume, of colour, of speech that are presented to him, to scorn all the most mysterious forms of fear, to wear a dozen different disguises and to assume with each the language, the bearing, the manner of walking and sitting and sleeping of the race or caste he represents. He comes through all his tests, gains the approval of the Babu Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, one of the very best players of the Game, and is sent forth. He is at first given no direct duties,

but is to serve his apprenticeship to the Road by following the lama upon his quest.

Then follow countless adventures, of which the old lama is of course kept ignorant. If an objection can be made against this part of the story, it is on the ground that, in such a vast beehive as India, some of Kim's meetings with old friends and foes stretch coincidence rather far. This can be forgiven for the sake of the thrilling vista of intrigue, of stealthy plot and more cunning counter-plot, which now opens before us. Kim performs one great feat in disguising a Mahratta fellow-worker, who is fleeing from his foes. He has been marked so that he will be known when the train in which he travels reaches its destination, where he will be arrested on a charge of murder, the corpse and a dozen witnesses ready to swear they saw the act being all prepared. Kim changes him to the likeness of a fakir, and enables him to elude the police, gaining great credit for his resource. Finally he aids Hurree Chunder to trick two Russian spies, to steal their papers and break up their camp.

After long wanderings the saintly old lama ends his quest in a fashion in which pathos and humour are equally blended. He sees a canal, which to his half-blind eyes bears all the signs of his river, falls into it, and is with difficulty

saved from drowning by Hurree Babu. His days come to an end at the hill-castle of the old princess, who loves him and his disciple very dearly.

Of all the characters in this book Hurree is the best. I think that he will share immortality with Mulvaney if it comes to any of Mr. Kipling's people. Mr. Lockwood Kipling's fine illustrations have made us familiar with the huge, cow-like figure, his enormous flabby calves bare from the knee to the tops of his socks. He is, as he is never tired of asseverating, "a fearful man," afraid of his own shadow, but he has been in "dam'-tight places more than hairs on my head," and come out of them with credit. He affects, like many of his class, to be a free-thinker, but he is superstitious to the last degree. He is something of an ethnologist and a student of religious beliefs. "It is," says Mr. Kipling, "an awful thing still to dread the magic that you contemptuously investigate—to collect folk-lore for the Royal Society with a lively belief in all Powers of Darkness."

Philosophy is at times a very real aid to him, however. When he tells Kim that he is about to attach himself to the camp of the Russian spies as an interpreter, to spy upon them in his turn, the latter, knowing the risks and his natural cowardice, is astonished.

"Will they kill thee?" he asks.

"Oah, thatt is nothing," says Hurree. "I am good enough Herbert Spencerian, I trust, to meet little thing like death, which is all in my fate, you know."

Mr. Kipling revels in the speech of the university-trained Bengalee, and its mixture of slang and pomposity. When Kim has done well, and Hurree is going to report the same to Colonel Creighton, he says to him:

"I tell our mutual friend you take the bally bun, by Jove!" and when handing over to Kim the dress in which he is to take the road:

"Oho! That is inconspicuous dress of *chela* attached to service of lamaistic lama. *Com*plete in every particular," said Hurree Babu, rolling into the balcony to clean his teeth at a goglet. "I am of opeenion it is not your old gentleman's precise religion, but rather sub-variant of same. I have contributed rejected notes to Asiatic Quarterly Review on these subjects. Now it is curious that the old gentleman himself is totally devoid of religiosity. He is not a dam' particular."

The old princess sums up her philosophy thus:

"I have seen something of this world, and there are but two sorts of women in it—those who take the strength out of a man and those who put it back. Once I was that one, and now I am this."

The lama is wonderful. This saintly old yellow man embodies all the qualities that in

the East make for holiness,—reverence, gentleness, abstention from all interference in the lives of others, skill in the law and philosophy of his ancient creed, the power of prolonged silent prayer and ecstasy. If he lacks some of the attributes of perfect holiness as it is generally pictured amongst us of the West, we can yet love and understand him. He is no knight of God setting forth to attack wrong, no valiant soldier leading the battle against the legions of evil. But the holiness of Madame de Guyon and of Fénelon, the doctrines of Quietism which were in effect those of some of the most venerated saints of the Catholic Church, and notably of Saint Teresa, are not very far from him. They are an admirable antidote to what may be termed the "fussy" forms of religion so prevalent in England to-day, when attention to ashpits in mean streets—how estimable in itself!—is held an effective substitute for praise and prayer.

As a "detective story" alone, *Kim* stands above any I have read, but it is far more than a detective story. It is also the best English novel of Indian life that has ever been written. It roused in this country, indeed also in America and on the Continent, an interest in India and its life, as opposed to the life of its English garrison, that not even its author's

short stories had been able to awaken. It has an indescribable fascination; one reads it again and again with new delight. It has that quality which is the hall-mark of a great book —it never grows stale.

It is curious and to be deplored that *Kim* should have had no successor, that Mr. Kipling should since have attempted no complete novel. It may be that he feels the critics to be right, that he is not fitted for novel-writing, that he has exhausted his powers in that respect by struggling on past three very partial successes to this master-stroke. It must indeed be remembered that he has written but little of any kind since its publication. If that supposition be true, ours is the misfortune, and it is heavy.

IX

STYLE

Mr. James Oliphant, of whose criticism I have spoken elsewhere disparagingly, has his moments, and in one of them he says :

"With Mr. Kipling ten pages will go for fifty pages of many novelists. Every sentence, every phrase, every word almost, tells its own tale. If the strokes are few, there is yet no vagueness in the sketch, for every line is placed where it is most significant."

Compression is indeed one of the most striking characteristics of Mr. Kipling's style. He makes use of the short story, of the short paragraph, of the short sentence. He puts both thought and description into the narrowest possible space. Sometimes he leaves us, as it were, to complete a story for ourselves. This must always be taken into account in estimating the volume of his work. When we look at Mr. Kipling's published work in bulk, it seems large enough, but when we come to think that there is here what would be for another man the bones and materials for

hundreds of books, we realize the vast strain of production to which he must have put himself in early days. It is small wonder if the fount begins now to run dry.

The following sentence from *The Return of Imray* is a really amazing example of compression. Speaking of Tietjens, Strickland's great Rampur hound, Mr. Kipling says :

> Strickland owed his life to her, when he was on the Frontier, in search of a local murderer, who came in the gray dawn to send Strickland much farther than the Andaman Islands.

In thirty words we are not only told in what place and circumstances Strickland owed his life to his slut, but it is implied that when Strickland caught the man it would be his fate to be imprisoned, probably for life, in the convict settlement of the Indian Government in the Andaman Islands, that the man knew this, and intended that Strickland should be sent " much farther." That is surely the limit of possible compression.

Of the short sentence he is indubitably a master. He loves to begin a story or a paragraph with a sentence of not more than a dozen words that drive straight to the heart of the situation. I take the following almost at random from various stories in *Life's Handicap :*

The Indus had risen in flood without warning.

Imray achieved the impossible. Without warning, for no conceivable motive, in his youth, at the threshold of his career he chose to disappear from the world—which is to say, the little Indian station where he lived.

"Prisoner's head did not reach to the top of the dock," as the English newspapers say.

The Biblical sentence is as a rule—though not always—a long sentence, so that it may seem contradictory after extolling Mr. Kipling's prowess in the management of the short to add that he has been greatly influenced by the language of the Bible. But Mr. Kipling uses long sentences on occasion, and certainly in a form that would not have been used had there been no English Bible. Take for example this sentence from *The Head of the District:*

Wherefore the Very Greatest of All the Viceroys took another step in advance, and with it counsel of those who should have advised him on the appointment of a successor to Yardley-Orde.

Or this passage from *Without Benefit of Clergy:*

It struck a pilgrim-gathering of half a million at a sacred shrine. Many died at the feet of their god; the others broke and ran over the face of the land carrying the pestilence with them. It smote a walled city and killed two hundred a day.

This use of Old Testament language is particularly assumed when Mr. Kipling speaks

of such things as are common in the Old Testament, the Goodness or the Wrath of God, the greatness of a king's might, peace and prosperity or war, famine, pestilence and death.

One of the reasons why Mr. Kipling's compression seldom leaves us in doubt as to his meaning is the vigour of his phrases. Another is the special significance that he attaches to single words, and the bold use he makes of the hyphen. He is never afraid to take a word or an expression from vulgar use, even in a passage of lofty tone, if it will add force to his sentence. M. Chevrillon was very greatly impressed by the power of his phrases, and has collected a great number of them. A few of the following are taken direct from him, the rest struck my own eye in perusing his works.

Kaa, the rock python of *The Jungle Book*, "seemed to *pour himself along the ground.*"

The sun is spoken of as "*driving broad golden spokes* through the lower branches of the mango trees."

Mulvaney in *With the Main Guard* relates:

"I saw a sword *lick out* past Crook's ear, an' the Paythan was tuk in the apple av his throat like a pig at Dromeen Fair."

In summer, through the furious May heats, the *rukh reeled in the haze.* (*In the Rukh.*)

The lightning spattered the sky *as a thrown egg spatters a barn-door.* (*The Return of Imray.*)

Any regiment can advance, but few know how to retreat *with a sting in the tail.* (*The Brushwood Boy.*)

The gilt-edged Purple Emperor, the millionaires' south-bound express, *laying the long miles over his shoulder as a man peels a shaving from a soft board.* (*·007.*)

The steady wolf's trot that *eats up the long miles like fire.* (*The Jungle Book.*)

Dr. Leeb-Lundberg has made a careful study of the words used by Mr. Kipling, but he sometimes overreaches himself in his erudition. It is interesting to consider Mr. Kipling's use of the hyphen in such instances as ' tree - land,' ' capable - of - ruling - men,' ' dust-haze,' ' man-talk,' but it is utterly absurd to comment gravely upon such hyphened and compound words as ' tight - lipped,' ' unprintable,' ' unproven,' ' unlover - like,' ' round - eyed,' any one of which could be found in a thousand books by the most conservative authors. And to put such a word as ' goose - rumped ' under the heading ' Transferred Meaning ' betrays sheer ignorance of the language. Dr. Leeb-Lundberg has certainly never discussed the points of an Irish hunter.

Mr. Kipling has that power, given to but a few, of imparting by means of a single word a peculiar form and significance to his sentence,

so that there are certain sentences which if read aloud to any who knew the rest of his work would be instantly recognized. I can think of no author of recent years to whom this applies so strongly as to him except George Borrow. I give the following instances of that "extra word" that makes magic of a whole sentence:

Mahbub Ali, whose caravans penetrated far *and far* into the Back of Beyond. (*Kim.*)

So did the scar of the stake burn on my hide till we watched their villages die *under* in the spring growth. (*The Second Jungle Book.*)

It was a slope of gap-hedged fields *possessed* to their centres by clumps of brambles. (*An Habitation Enforced.*)

I shall, without attempting to emulate Dr. Leeb-Lundberg, just mention Mr. Kipling's frequent and effective use of onomatopœia. He speaks of the 'phut' of a bullet, the 'soft *wheep, wheep* of unscabbarded knives,' 'the indefinite "Euh" that runs through the speech of the pundit class,' exemplified in this case by Eustace Cleever in *A Conference of the Powers*. Snake hisses are variously represented by the sounds 'Kssha!' 'Ngssh!' and others. A body falls feet first into water with a 'keen, clean *schloop*.'

I have mentioned Mr. Kipling's skilful use

of dialect. It must be admitted that he uses bad, outworn Irish jargon of the stage Irishman. The 'fwhat,' 'reshume,' 'bhoys,' 'bekaze,' become a little wearisome after a time. The modern method of representing the speech of Irish people is, of course, to avoid all eccentricities of spelling as far as possible, and rely for effect on skilful inversions and turns of phrase. I do not think, however, that it is possible for an Englishman to do this with success. Let anyone—be he native or no—who has lived among Irish people compare Mr. Kipling's Irish with the following from one of the books of the greatest masters of Irish dialect that have ever written, and he will see the difference between the real thing and the able imitation :

"I had a lovely colt one time from that one's dam," remarked James Hefferman, "the grandest one ever I bred. Sure I thought the world wasn't good enough for him. And I put him within in the best house I had. Sun, moon, nor stars didn't shine on him, nor the breath of Heaven didn't touch him ; and after all he died on me ! I wouldn't have wished it for twenty pounds."

"You would not indeed, sir," said Tim, sympathetically.

"Well, that's the way always," resumed James Hefferman in philosophic acceptance of the mysterious decrees of providence. "And look now at this one,

that I didn't lave hand nor foot to, only to throw her out on the hill with the bullockeens, she's as healthy as a stone."

But the Misses Somerville and Martin are wizards, and I am not at all sure that the dialect of Mulvaney is not closer to the talk of the real Irishman than the flowery and conventional language put into his mouth by Synge and Lady Gregory.

Mr. Kipling's officers' slang is as good and as true as that of the men. "I can shove a crock along a bit," says a character in *The Story of the Gadsbys* in modest deprecation of his horsemanship, and the hero of *The Brushwood Boy* is delighted to "snaffle out of the campaign" a year's leave. Where he does not know he invents with amazing boldness. When we hear the young Roman officer in *Puck of Pook's Hill* invite a friend to drink with the summons: "Come and wet the Eagles!" we are amused, but filled with admiration as well. It is so ingenious that we feel it must be true.

But if he is always forceful and sometimes brutal in his style, he has passages of exceeding beauty, phrases as flawless as those of Pater or Gautier. Those who read him hastily or carelessly will scarce recognize the following:

The smoke-scented evening, copper-dun and turquoise across the fields. (*Kim.*)

At this level the lower clouds are laid out, all neatly combed by the dry fingers of the East. (*With the Night Mail.*)

It is noticeable that his most beautiful phrases are called forth not by the Indian scenes that have made him famous, but by the English country-side, particularly by the visions of old English country-houses. In another age and other circumstances Mr. Kipling might well have been the painter of the leisurely life of manor and farm, meadow and corn-field, covert-side and gun-room, village green and bar-parlour. The following sentences will show that if he has "heard the East a-callin'," the voice of England has been, if not so loud, at least as insistent.

The humid stillness, heavy with the scent of box, cloaked us deep. Shears I could hear where some gardener was clipping; a mumble of bees and broken voices that might have been doves. (*They.*)

The house, accepting another day at end, as it had accepted an hundred thousand gone, seemed to settle deeper into its rest among the shadows. (*Ibid.*)

Here they found the ghost of a patch of lucerne that had refused to die; there a harsh fallow surrendered to yard-high thistles; and here a breadth of rampant kelk feigning to be lawful crop. (*An Habitation Enforced.*)

Everything else was a sort of thick, sleepy stillness smelling of meadow-sweet and dry grass. (*Puck of Pook's Hill.*)

Georgie was looking at the round-bosomed woods beyond the home paddock, where the white pheasant-boxes were ranged ; and the golden air was full of a hundred sacred scents and sounds. (*The Brushwood Boy.*)

Mr. Kipling in early days must have worked fast. His output of work between 1890 and 1900 was very great and very diversified. Yet, though the prose of those days was less graceful than that of *Kim* and *Actions and Reactions,* it was no less precise and well-balanced. If a man has, as Mr. Knowles says of Mr. Kipling, " the gift of the inevitable word," there is no need for him to search long for it. It is hard to find anywhere in his work any trace of slackness, any evidence of carelessness where style is concerned. His sentences never sag ; long or short they are always crisp, always under control, as strong in the conclusion as in the commencement. He describes an Indian Station as he describes the monkeys moving through the jungle, with wonderful brevity, in short ringing sentences that at their best are magnificent and at their worst those of a good journalist of the present day who has left " journalese " long behind.

The following are good examples of his powers of description. The first is from *A Wayside Comedy*, the second a scene from *The Jungle Book* wherein Mowgli is kidnapped by the monkeys.

Kashima is bounded on all sides by the rock-tipped circle of the Dosehri hills. In Spring, it is ablaze with roses ; in Summer, the roses die and the hot winds blow from the hills ; in Autumn, the white mists from the *jhils* cover the place as with water, and in Winter the frosts nip everything young and tender to earth level.

Then they began their flight ; and the flight of the Monkey-People through tree-land is one of the things nobody can describe. They have their regular roads and cross-roads, up hills and down hills, all laid out from seventy or a hundred feet above ground, and by these they can travel even by night if necessary. Two of the strongest monkeys caught Mowgli under the arms and swung off with him through the tree-tops, twenty feet at a bound. Had they been alone they could have gone twice as fast, but the boy's weight held them back. Sick and giddy as Mowgli was, he could not help enjoying the wild rush, though the glimpses of earth far down below frightened him, and the terrible check and jerk at the end of the swing over nothing but empty air brought his heart between his teeth. His escort would rush him up a tree till he felt the thinnest topmost branches crackle and bend under them, and then with a cough and a whoop would fling themselves into the air outwards and

downwards, and bring up, hanging by their hands or their feet to the lower limbs of the next tree. Sometimes he could see for miles and miles across the still green jungle, as a man on the top of a mast can see for miles across the sea, and then the branches and leaves would lash him across the face, and he and his two guards would be almost down to earth again. So, bounding and crashing and whooping and yelling, the whole tribe of the *Bandar-log* swept along the tree roads with Mowgli their prisoner.

The first of these passages I quoted chiefly for its briefness. Scarcely any other author now writing could have induced himself to give so short a description of his stagery, even though such absence of detail is the highest merit in a short story. No other would have contrived to tell us so much of what life in the station was likely to be all the year round in the same space.

The other passage is longer and more brilliant. It would be impossible to call up more vividly the rush and sweep, the slash of the branches, the whooping and the noise of the monkeys' swift journey through the trees. It is in such swiftly-described detail that Mr. Kipling displays that kinship with Defoe that Sir J. M. Barrie has noted. He is not a realist in the acceptation of the word to-day, certainly not a "naturalist" of the school Brunetière so much disliked. He writes often of ugly things

but never of commonplace things. But he has the realistic style at its best; by which I mean that his style is such as to give his reader a sense of the reality of the things he describes. And this is true quite apart from those clever tricks that I have mentioned, of telling the story in the first person with allusions to other stories in which the same characters play a part, of poking fun at himself, as where he says of a wild boar: "Therefore I wished to shoot him, in order to produce the tushes in after years, and say that I had ridden him down in fair chase." All these things give a semblance of reality, but not all of them are sufficient to account for the reality that is in Mr. Kipling's stories. There is, besides them, an incommunicable and inexplicable power in his style.

In style as well as in matter, Mr. Kipling avoided the prevailing tendencies of the age in which he began to write. He can make a sparkle with epigram and paradox now and then, but he never seeks to set whole pages ablazing. A subaltern in *The Story of the Gadsbys* remarks that "Simla's stiff with Colonels' daughters," which is reminiscent of Mr. Dumby's remark as to the number of good women in the world. Yet nothing could have been further removed than the style of Wilde's

stories and essays and those of Mr. Kipling. It is the same with ornamentation. The passages I have quoted are comparatively rare, Mr. Kipling being for the most part content to write vivid, clean-cut prose, without much regard to its beauty and adornment. It is, as I have explained, as a rule only when dealing with subjects that seem to him beautiful—and I am sure that the English country-side is to him the most beautiful thing in the world—that he appears deliberately to arrange and choose his words with an eye for comeliness as well as for effectiveness.

To sum up then, Mr. Kipling is not a master of uniformly beautiful prose such as—to take widely different examples—Addison, Goldsmith, Pater or Mr. Thomas Hardy, but there are to be found, particularly in his later work, passages of a grace and charm that cannot be surpassed. Apart from this, he has at his command a vigour of phrase, a power of compression, a mastery of the weighty short sentence, a gift of " working up " a situation by means of a few deft touches, that set him alone among the writers of to-day.

X

IMPERIALISM

The word "Imperialism" held a few years ago—and retains to-day to a considerable extent—a great glamour for Englishmen. England was slow in awakening to the fact that her colonies, children of her body, were growing up, till some of them, like not too well-mannered maidens in their late teens and early twenties, began to proclaim that they could no longer be kept tied to the apron-strings of an elderly and rather fussy mother. They objected to being called Colonies at all. One, the best-beloved, called herself a Dominion; another could not brook even the slight hint of dependence this word seemed to imply—she would be a Commonwealth. Even before these things came about there had been men who saw the danger in the situation. Disraeli did something to amend it; it was left to Chamberlain to change it altogether.

His weapons were tact, sympathy, justice, iron firmness where need was. The grumblers

were converted into friendly daughters, managing their own establishments, but not above coming to their mother for advice. The bonds between them were those of sentiment on England's side, sentiment and self-interest on their own. Chamberlain made a great effort to strengthen those of self-interest by means of trade preference, and it was from small beginnings of this sort that the great Tariff Reform movement, that for several years completely dominated English politics and obscured all other issues, sprung. And no intelligent observer can imagine that, if for the moment Tariff Reform be, as Punch suggests, the neglected wife of the party that swore allegiance to it, its day is yet done.

But if Tariff Reform did not at once "sweep the country," Imperialism did. The name and the thing gripped the English people so firmly that even those who disliked the latter intensely were forced—if they desired to obtain a hearing—to pay lip service to the former. One London Liberal newspaper alone was found with the courage to attack Imperialism by name; the rest spoke of "jingoism" as the enemy and advocated a sane and healthy "Liberal Imperialism" which they found it not over-easy to define.

If the first name that association sum-

moned to the mind on mention of the word Imperialism was that of Joseph Chamberlain, the second was undoubtedly Rudyard Kipling. Mr. Kipling was not only an Imperialist, but seems to have taken very seriously his role of Imperialist leader. He made, for example, about seven years ago, a long tour in Canada, and published in The Morning Post a series of papers entitled *Letters to the Family*, which are one of the most notable contributions to Imperialist literature from the point of view of the Colonies that has yet appeared. He took no great part in the Tariff controversy, and was wise to confine himself to the great ideal of Imperial Federation, and not to follow some of the Unionist leaders in their somewhat crude incursions into the domain of Economics. I cannot but think that, had Mr. Kipling had any close connection with the Unionist organization or any control over Unionist policy in those years, there would have been less of the sordid appeal to "make the Foreigner pay," a closer realization on Unionist platforms and in the Unionist Press of the nature of international trade and of the fact that it did not precisely mean that we were hastening to our ruin because our imports exceeded our exports by so many millions or tens of millions. The equally sordid but more

successful Radical parrot-cry, "Your food will cost you more!" would have been countered by the honest reply: "Yes, your food—or some small portions of your food—may cost you a very little more. But we hope thereby, at the cost of whatever slight sacrifice this may entail, to knit closer the bonds of our Empire, to strengthen throughout the world the spread of Anglo-Saxon civilization. We hope also, by increasing and encouraging the agricultural population of this country, to check national deterioration, and so, by increasing our vigour, to increase also our combative power in the world's markets. We believe that any small sacrifices made for these ends would be repaid twofold."

I have said something of Imperialism in connection with Mr. Kipling's poetry. A great deal of this is of course indirectly imperialistic, because it glorifies the strong men on the frontiers, but there were certain poems in which Mr. Kipling attempted, and with fair success, to define the philosophy of British Imperialism. *A Song of the English* is perhaps chief of these, and therein he stated the position occupied by the Colonies with reference to England. It was not perhaps great poetry, but at least pleasant poetry, as well as straightforward and clear.

A Nation spoke to a Nation,
A Queen sent word to a Throne ;
Daughter I am in my mother's house,
But mistress in my own.

Then follow the voices of all the great centres of English life and thought and civilization, each telling of its own peculiar features and estate.

Mr. Kipling's Imperialism is something that will be found inevitable from a study of the writer and the man. Its roots are embedded in just those qualities from which spring his most characteristic poetry and prose. It draws nourishment from his love of action, his love of order, a delight in—that almost mounts to a worship of—speed and strength and cleanness and energy. No man echoes more loudly the cry : " My country, may she be always right ! But—right or wrong—my country ! " He has a bitter hatred for the forms of Radicalism displayed in the Sunday gutter-paper, thinly disguised in *Private Copper* under the name of " Jerrold's Weekly," which would always support a German artisan against an English nobleman, a negro against a white overseer, a mutinous soldier against his officer ; which has done its best to arouse hatred of Russia, our great ally, because, forsooth, she is not governed on a mock-demo-

cratic party system, such as we bear with as we may.

It draws nourishment also, we cannot doubt, from his passionate love of England and his belief in the English race as a civilizing force. *The Bridge Builders* is a pæan of the English. A brilliant young engineer has built a great bridge across the Ganges, all supported by the patent steel truss which bears his name. Just as it is complete comes a terrible storm and flood; the river seems to rise in her wrath to overwhelm the man who has bridled her and destroy his work. That night, in the midst of the storm, he hears the gods discussing, hears Mother Gunga in the form of a crocodile bring her plaint before them, and ask for strength to sweep away this obstruction that the cursed white man has set up. Krishna tells her that it is useless. "To-morrow sees them at work. Aye, if ye swept the bridge out from end to end they would begin anew." When he wakes he finds his bridge intact.

The White Man's Burden was written in America, where it created a great sensation. There are not wanting those who believe that the white man's burden is something that he puts upon the shoulders of the black man when he colonizes his lands. But if there is the country of the Amazon on one side of the

account—and that is the domain of the half-white man, who has never excited anybody's enthusiasm—there is India on the other. Mr. Kipling is insistent upon the devotion of the sons of England who "serve and love the lands they rule." He says of India, in *On the City Wall:*

> Year by year England sends out fresh drafts for the first fighting-line which is officially called the Indian Civil Service. These die, or kill themselves by overwork, or are worried to death or broken in health and hope in order that the land may be protected from death and sickness, famine and war, and may eventually become capable of standing alone. It will never stand alone, but the idea is a pretty one, and men are willing to die for it.

Mr. Kipling does not think that we are near that blessed day "when war and wounds shall cease." In *On the City Wall* he speaks of "that lying proverb which says the Pen is Mightier than the Sword," and certainly, at this moment, with all Europe in hellish turmoil, it would be stupid to deny that he is right. Being then jealous for English civilization, believing, as he has rightly believed, that there were those who would if they had an opportunity drown that civilization in blood, he has been insistent that we should stand ready to defend it. It was during the Boer

War, when all the air was full of reports of incompetence in the field, of untrained volunteers poured out to South Africa who had to be set to drill at Cape Town because it would have been murder to have sent them to the front, that he burst out into bitter mockery of our unpreparedness. And indirectly he mocked at the statesmen who dared say no word of reproach to the touchy democracy they courted.

No doubt but ye are the People—your throne is above the King's.
Whoso speaks in your presence must say acceptable things;
Bowing the head in worship, bending the knee in fear—
Bringing the word well-smoothen—such as a King should hear.

As we all know, the words made some impression, but no very deep one. When the war was over we did indeed reform our army and strengthen our navy. But the former was rather diminished than increased, and the mass of the nation forgot it for far better-beloved heroes, "the flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddied oafs at the goals."

The great tide of Imperialism, that had for so long stood high in England, sank after the Boer War. The Unionist Party was utterly defeated at the polls—for the time being

almost annihilated. The minds of men, so far as they were not occupied with the positions of the Chelsea and Manchester United Football Clubs in the table of the Football League, turned to a consideration of social evils. Strikes, many of them well justified, some frivolous, broke out all over England; there were collisions with the soldiery which dimmed the brightness of the new affection for the army that the war had brought. For the first time since the days of Reform and Chartism there was a widely-spread impatience with the privileges of the aristocracy, now given over with unlimited zest to its own pleasures and allying itself more and more closely with the predatory forms of wealth represented by the worst type of Yankee and Israelite. A clever and brilliantly successful campaign was carried out against the House of Lords under the inspiration of Mr. Lloyd George. Many men declared, with some *prima facie* reason, that they could not think of Empire till they had seen that tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, apothecary and ploughboy were properly fed, clothed and housed at home. Young men of ninety and veterans of nineteen met in debating clubs and parliaments all over the country and did these things to their own satisfaction, incidentally making England into a republic, abolishing

all incomes over five hundred a year, and selling the navy to Turkey to devote the proceeds to a fund to put an end to war.

In such surroundings arose a new race of readers who knew not Mr. Kipling, and a new race of writers arose to minister to them. Two or three skilful novelists made names for themselves with books based upon the work of the French naturalistic school, and gradually a whole tribe of young and intelligent men and women divined that there was an income to be made by the exploitation of this form of "degenerate Romanticism" as M. Maurras called it. Many of them equalled, a few excelled the leaders at this game. The brothel, the slum, the chamber of accouchement, as well as the stuffy parlour of a Midland town and the mahogany-horned dining-room of comfortable suburbia became the mines wherein the modern school of novelists sought their raw material.

There ensued undoubtedly a considerable decline in Mr. Kipling's popularity, and consequently in his power as a national leader. It was imagined, because he had not roared so loudly in slum-scenes as some of the younger lions, that he lacked sympathy for poverty and affliction, that he was tainted by the cruel doctrine of success. I believe that he refused

to follow the trend of popular literature because he found it dreary and inartistic. And those who accused him of lack of sympathy for the poor must have forgotten the saying of Badalia Herodsfoot, the heroine of his only slum story: "No more you can't pauperize them as 'asn't things to begin with. They're bloomin' well pauped."

All might have yet been well, for all the critics of any standing were already committed to Mr. Kipling's praise, had he himself been more amenable. But not only did he refuse to conform to the new ideas—he attacked them. Not only did he attack the new prophets—he laughed at them. Now laughter is more deadly than chastisement with scorpions. In the criticisms of such stories as *Little Foxes* we can detect a note of hatred that makes intelligent criticism absolutely impossible. Nor is this wonderful, for no man lashes out harder nor carries a sharper-toothed whip than he. Mr. Groombride sits to this day on the green benches at Westminster, and he never forgets.

In the story it is related how an early Governor of "Ethiopia" starts a pack of hounds, and hunts foxes along the banks of Ethiopia's great river and the irrigating canals flowing from it. He ordains that each man on

whose land earths are left unstopped shall receive a certain number of strokes with his crop, and that special privileges shall be granted to those on whose land a fox is found. The whole population takes an intense interest in the pack, which gradually comes to be bound up in their minds with the administration of justice. Eventually the beatings become a legend, replaced by three symbolical taps across the shoulders because the people do not believe that without them justice is really done. Meanwhile, however, a youth who has spent his leave collecting hounds for the sake of fresh blood speaks of the beatings to a Liberal M.P., who demands further information as to this famous pack. In a spirit of mischief the young man tells him of dreadful atrocities, bastinadoes which result in the foot being amputated at the ankle. The victims are, he says, known as the " Mudir's Cranes," and to complete the absurdity he gives, as the Ethiopian translation of this expression, a word so foul that its use is almost a defilement.

Mr. Groombride writes down the story and the word, and when his party comes into power remembers them. The Governor suddenly receives an intimation that he is arriving, and that all facilities for intercourse with the

populace are to be given to him. The despatch is couched in the most insolent and overbearing terms, and the Governor is naturally somewhat annoyed at the prospect of Mr. Groombride preaching the wildest sedition to the people for whom he is responsible. However, he makes the best of things, and manages to convey a hint to the people that the wanderer is mad. Mr. Groombride, accompanied by his servant Abdul with a large umbrella, primed with a speech in the native language learned by heart, sallies forth. He is mocked by the people and his interpreter, and imagines that he is being praised when he is being laughed at. Finally he delivers his speech. After telling of the speedy righting of the cruel wrongs which they endure, he comes to the chief point.

"Would, then, his brethren, whom he loved, show him a Mudir's Crane whom he desired to love?"

Once, twice and again in his peroration he repeated his demand, using always—that they might see he was acquainted with their local argot—using always, I say, the word which the Inspector had given him in England long ago—the short adhesive word which, by itself, surprises even unblushing Ethiopia.

There are limits to the sublime politeness of an ancient people. A bulky, blue-chinned man in white clothes, his name red-lettered across his lower shirt-front, spluttering from under a green-lined umbrella

almost tearful appeals to be introduced to the Unintroducible; naming loudly the Unnameable; dancing, as it seemed, in perverse joy at mere mention of the Unmentionable—found those limits. There was a moment's hush, and then such mirth as Gihon through his centuries had never heard—a roar like to the roar of his own cataracts in flood. Children cast themselves on the ground, and rolled back and forth cheering and whooping; strong men, their faces hidden in their clothes, swayed in silence, till the agony became insupportable, and they threw up their heads and bayed at the sun; women, mothers and virgins, shrilled shriek upon mounting shriek, and slapped their thighs as it might have been the roll of musketry. When they tried to draw breath, some half-strangled voice would quack out the word, and the riot began afresh. Last to fall was the city-trained Abdul. He held on to the edge of apoplexy, then collapsed, throwing the umbrella from him.

Mr. Groombride should not be judged too harshly. Exercise and strong emotion under a hot sun, the shock of public ingratitude, for the moment ruffled his spirit. He furled the umbrella, and with it beat the prostrate Abdul, crying out that he had been betrayed.

In which posture the Inspector, on horseback, followed by the Governor, suddenly found him.

Is it to be wondered at if Mr. Groombride, when he comes to review a book of Mr. Kipling's for the journal honoured by his distinguished contributions and the magic "M.P." after his

name, finds him lacking in sympathy and descriptive power? One gentleman who has won some notice both as a politician and as a literary critic, while allowing him "flashes of higher inspiration and aspiration," speaks of his "underbred and brawling imperialism," and adds that his work is "beyond the pale of great art." This is not ignorance, as it might seem, for the gentleman in question has some conception of great art, and knows that many of Mr. Kipling's short stories stand with the greatest ever written. Nothing but the bitterest, most blinding malice could account for such statements by a man not altogether a fool.

Lord Hugh Cecil has told us that the three sentiments that make a modern Conservative are, firstly, conservatism with a small c, a love of old and tried things, of order and symmetry; secondly, that love of Church and King, that mystic attachment to the Sovran and the national Church that marked the Cavaliers and may be called the beginning of Toryism; and, thirdly, that Imperialism that I have striven to define. Some people have some of these qualities, and lack in others. Mr. Gladstone, for example, had not a trace of Imperialism in his composition, yet was a very fair Tory in his devotion to the Anglican

Church and his care for the privileges of the Crown. Mr. Kipling is a complete Conservative, though he would not always have deserved the title. In earlier years it seemed that he had only, of the three concomitants, Imperialism. Living, as he did, in India, and later in the United States, travelling constantly to and fro from one thriving colony to another, he was filled with some impatience of the ease and arrogance of "a sheltered people," vastly well pleased with itself and its way of life. He saw in the new lands he visited, many good things that we were without at home, that we could have acquired, but that in sheer haughty ignorance we rejected. He has grown no less contemptuous of our failings and slackness, but he has come to love the good things of our civilization more dearly. Later stories, since he has resided in England, have shown more and more clearly his passionate love for the old, unchanging—or at least scarcely changed—life and customs of the English village. That feeling that M. Barrès has expressed with such marvellous eloquence as regards France, has come to him as regards England. We are part of the earth of England, and England "is not any common earth." It claims us and holds us because it is pervaded with the bodies of countless generations of Englishmen,

as the atmosphere about is heavy with their souls.

Mr. Rupert Brooke, in some brilliant studies of Western America, declares that, as the curtain of dusk slips gently down upon the masses of the Rocky Mountains, amid some of the most splendid scenery in the world, there is no sense of awe. One does not feel that these wilds are haunted, that they are, as we feel of scenes at home, packed thick with the spirits of the dead who have looked upon them. One fears no ghost; for there are no ghosts to fear. The trees that rustle softly, the breezes that whisper down the gorges, carry no plaint of souls departed. The beautiful land is barren of hidden life, barren of mystery. With us it is the contrary. When we look upon Stonehenge, when we stand on a high-piled barrow where Dane and Saxon lie together, when we land at evening on an island in some Irish lake and see the ruins of a tower built long before the Folk Wandering had brought those Danes and Saxons to Western Europe, then we feel that we do not stand alone. We are not, we cannot be, independent of those that have gone before and of those that follow after. We are tiny links in an immeasurable chain.

That is why the English and Irish and

Scottish men who dwell on the land—the first above all—are Conservative in truth and in fact, whatever may be the passing political creed they profess. That is why we have a sense of permanence such as is not possible in a new country. The estate carpenter of *An Habitation Enforced* insists that the American couple who have bought the land of the wife's ancestors and settled down shall have their farm bridge built of oak rather than larch. Larch is well enough, but if it were used their infant son would "no sooner be married than we'll 'ave it *all* to do again." That carpenter is the true type of English Conservative, and he is a type that his creator has grown more and more to love.

The voice of Mr. Kipling as a national leader has never changed its message. He would not shout with the crowd, so the crowd has for a time refused to follow him. But he is so very much an Englishman, has in him so deeply embedded the love of the most typical English traits, that the neglect of his teaching will not last long. If England remains the old England, and does not become the home of cosmopolitanism and internationalism, Mr. Kipling will always be read as an authority on Englishmen. In all probability, should his years reach the normal span of life, he will

himself witness his return to the position of national seer. In any case he will remain for posterity the great fount of information as to the characters and fashion of Englishmen, soldiers, sailors, colonizers and administrators, in the closing years of the Nineteenth Century.

XI

CONCLUSION

It will be long ere the final word on Mr. Kipling is written. He is not, I am firmly convinced, of yesterday and to-day alone, but of to-morrow also and still more of the day after. Mr. E. B. Osborn has declared that the sons of the superior young men who sneer at him now will be rediscovering him in twenty years' time. There are of course precedents for this sequence of intense popularity, comparative neglect, and renewed lustre. Coventry Patmore has been subjected to like treatment, though it must be remembered that Mr. Kipling's books have continued to sell in vast numbers all through the blackest period, while Patmore was no more than a name for twenty years or more. I should not be surprised if the change came sooner than Mr. Osborn has prophesied. I believe, in fact, that it is even now on its way.

The day of naturalistic literature is not yet over, but must be well-nigh done. Its gray tide is still bleak and high, but it has receded

a little, and a few rare and shining shells gleam in patches it has left bare. The Crock of Gold was a book that may mark an epoch. At a bound we went back to the beauty and charm and delicious fantasy of the old French faëry-tales, if not to something better still. Mr. James Stephens is very far removed from Mr. Kipling, but they have one thing in common. They are both essentially Romantics, both Idealists, both, in Nietzsche's jargon, 'Dionysians' in contrast to the "theoretical men" who have for so long dominated English letters. Like the English and French allies in conflict with the Teuton array, they are different—perhaps even unsympathetic—in temperament, but they fight the same battle. When one drives back the foe, the other also can mend his position.

I have striven to show that the temporary falling-off in Mr. Kipling's popularity is due merely to a temporary change of fashion. It is indeed, a falling-off rather in the estimation of critics than in that of the reading public, for, as I have said, his sales have always been vast, to be measured in the case of each book by the ten thousand. I say this because I believe he has qualities that make for permanence. He will not be remembered, I have suggested, as a great poet, at least he will not

take his place among the dozen great poets of England. But he will be remembered as a poet sometimes great, with a mastery of the technique of his art, with occasional flashes of magnificent power, as in *The Sea and the Hills ;* with an admirable gift of transmuting into real poetry the dialect of the Cockney and the slang of the camp, as in the *Barrack-Room Ballads ;* with a *curiosa felicitas* in the blending of the beautiful and the simple, as in *The Recall* and other poems I have quoted ; and a wonderful cleverness in the fashioning of graceful and witty *vers de société*, as in the *Departmental Ditties.* There are many poets who have made and have retained a considerable name who will be found, if their work be fairly examined and appraised, to have accomplished much less.

But, while many of his poems will, so far as I can judge, remain notable as long as English is read, it will not be upon his poetry that his chiefest fame will rest. We bandy about lightly enough the adjective "great." There is but one English novelist now alive who is great beyond all manner of doubt, and one American to whom we may with slightly less certainty apply the title. Mr. Kipling I do not call a great novelist in the same sense as Mr. Hardy and Mr. James, though he is the

author of one book, *Kim*, that is a great novel. But I do declare, and will maintain in face of all the "high-brows" that ever sneered, that he is a great writer of short stories. I will add that he is one of the greatest writers of short stories that has ever lived. A short story does not call for precisely the same qualities as a novel, and there never was a man better endowed with the qualities needed for almost every type of short story than Mr. Kipling.

He is, to begin with, a master of pathos, not of the slowly worked-up, morbid pathos of Dickens, but of pathos swift, clean-cutting, poignant. He is a master of true tragedy, which is the conflict of man and his inexorable fate. He is a master of "blood and thunder," not sheer melodrama—though he uses this too when he wills—but the roar and terror of the clamorous battle. He has the secret of gripping the human heart with fear, knows, as it were, the soft places in the compositions of strong men whereon to lay his hand. No writer, not Hoffmann, not Poe even, handles the eerie and the supernatural more effectively and more terribly. He is a humorist of the highest order, not delicate but often subtle; at his very best when dealing with the vagaries of some lovable, deeply-flawed character like Mulvaney. Lastly, to make all these things

of most effect, he has a swiftness, a conciseness, a power of concentration that are unique. His worst enemies, who dislike the material of his stories, the characters and their actions, admit that he tells them magnificently.

But, when we have thoroughly explored his qualities, when we have enumerated and analysed and criticized, we come always to that which anneals the whole, to that energy which "nourishes and directs all his art." There is no other writer of whom one can read "at a sitting" so much as of Mr. Kipling. That is because his pages are aflame with an energy that they impart to the mind of his reader. Dash, glamour, spirit, *verve*, *élan*—we can exhaust our own nouns and borrow from another language, and yet not add a word too many. We divine always as we read the presence of a powerful, domineering spirit, intent on its purposes, spending itself freely for the things it loves, brutal to the things it hates, with more strength than sweetness and more honour than courtesy. He is the Englishman with all his qualities at their highest, as his friendliest observers—let us say the French of to-day—see him. His good man is a man of action; his god is a God of action.

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