INTRODUCTION

Rudyard Kipling is the most controversial author in English literature. Even today his place on Parnassus remains undecided, though a place there he is generally agreed to have, even if some critics would seek it near the summit while others relegate him to the foothills of the Himalayas.

As early as 1923, Edward Shanks wrote in the London Mercury of Kipling’s leap into a position in English political thought and feeling which, it is safe to say, no other English imaginative writer (even Milton not excepted) has ever occupied. Hence, too, comes the difficulty of looking at him dispassionately as an imaginative writer. We do not often mix together our enjoyment of literature and our partisan interest in politics, but when we do it we do it thoroughly.¹

So it comes about that we find even critics who maintain that Mr. Kipling does not write well. Time and severe impartial standards winnow his work. They will winnow much of it away; but they will certainly leave something that is unique.

When Kipling arrived in London in the autumn of 1889 ‘Art for Art’s Sake’ school was still being preached by Oscar Wilde and practiced to a greater extent by writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Henry James. A few years earlier Rider Haggard had set the critical bee-hive humming like Mowgli’s hornets’ nest with several big stones such as She and Allan Quartermain. Kipling did not raise a like storm, though Henry James was anxious to bracket them together. One needs to know that Kipling and Haggard were intimate friends. Even Barrie, Kipling’s arch rival was his friend.
But the more orthodox view was still given by George Meredith when the American editor S. S. McClure visited him, after hearing of Kipling from Sidney Colvin as ‘a new writer who seemed to have red blood in him,’ and asked:

‘Mr. Meredith, Mr. Colvin thinks very highly of a new writer named Rudyard Kipling. He believes he is the coming man. Do you know anything about him?’ ‘The coming man,’ said Meredith emphatically, ‘is not Kipling, but James Barrie.’

The popularity of Kipling’s work in the 1890s owed a great deal to its novelty. As C. S. Lewis wrote many years later:

To put the thing in its shortest possible way, Kipling is first and foremost the poet of work. It is really remarkable how poetry and fiction before his time had avoided this subject. They had dealt almost exclusively with men in their private hours—with love-affairs, crimes, sport, illness and changes of fortune ... With a few exceptions imaginative literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had quietly omitted, or at least thrust into the background, the sort of thing which in fact occupies most of the waking hours of most men. And this did not merely mean that certain technical aspects of life were unrepresented. A whole range of strong sentiments and emotions went with them. For, as Pepys once noted with surprise, there is a great pleasure in talking of business. It was Kipling who first reclaimed for literature this enormous territory.

With this new literary dimension went also the new use of language—a frankness and a largeness in the use of the language of common men that shocked many, delighted many and brought for all a refreshing blast of genuine fresh air into the hot-house atmosphere of the fin-de-siècle. ‘Here’s Literature! Here’s Literature at last!’ David Masson, elderly Professor of Literature and Rhetoric at Edinburgh is said to have declared to his
astonished students, waving over his head a copy of the *Scots Observer* containing Kipling’s poem “Danny Deever” in February 1890.

And the other great novelty of Kipling’s literary achievement was virtually to introduce the short story into English literature—and write perhaps the greatest examples of this genre that we can boast even now. Within a year of this, Kipling had entirely altered the literary scene in England with regard to short stories. He arrived with one big volume and six small ones of short stories already written and collected—*Plain Tales from the Hills, Soldiers Three, The Story of the Gadsbys, In Black and White, Under the Deodars, The Phantom Rickshaw* and *Wee Willie Winkie*—and soon had a host of readers waiting for him to collect the stories which were appearing in magazines in 1890 into *Life’s Handicap* (1891).

But it will be noticed how at first most of his critics were suspending judgment until he had written the novel which they assumed he would attempt as the real test of his potentialities as a great writer. *The Light that Failed* at the end of 1890 was written partly as a bid for these laurels—and proved that Kipling had been right in choosing the short story as the literary type most fitted to his genius. *The Naulahka* (1892) proved that he was not to excel in the romance of adventure either; only in 1901 *Kim* showed the one form of longer narrative in which he could write a masterpiece—and *Kim* stands alone, though for convenience sake it is classed as a novel.

This is not the place to enter into the circumstances which made Kipling a writer of short stories but not a novelist in the ordinary sense. Much lay, doubtless, in the whole cast of his mind; something perhaps in the brute fact that for two years he was allowed just the space for a 2,400 word ‘Plain Tale’ each week in the *Civil and Military Gazette*. But the fact remains that he conquered his reading public in England mainly with collections of short stories in volume form and from 1890 the short story
boomed in England, whether written by Kipling or Stevenson or Maugham, by Conan Doyle or G. K. Chesterton or Saki.

As several critics have pointed out right from the beginning of his career, Kipling learnt to write as a journalist and turned his experiences of daily reporting on Indian papers to good use when he graduated into literature. As Frank Swinnerton put it in his Foreword to Hilton Brown’s *Rudyard Kipling* (1945) Kipling was the first journalist, since Defoe, to bring a sense of news to the service of fiction, and he excelled in the yarn.

The result of this journalistic background and its unexpected development was well described by Desmond MacCarthy in his obituary article on Kipling in the *Sunday Times* of 19 January 1936:

His style, while loved by the unliterary, often irritated the literary because the aim of his virtuosity was always a *violent precision*. His adjectives and phrases start from the page. He forced you first and foremost to see, to hear, to touch, to smell—above all to see and smell—as vividly as words can make you do those things. When the greatest vividness was inconsistent with an aesthetic impression—well, in his work aesthetic sensitiveness went by the board.4

‘Kipling is intensely loved and hated,’ said C. S. Lewis. ‘Hardly any reader likes him a little.’ This should be less true now than when he said it decades ago since the winnowing process may have made it easier for the uncommitted reader to begin with the best of Kipling, and the passage of time should have brought nearer the happy day when his political opinions will matter no more than those of Milton or Swift or William Morris. G. L. Green observes,

But there is danger here too. Any serious student or reader must read and study all Kipling’s stories and all his poems and verses to choose the best and should do so before reading any criticism or listening to anyone else’s views on which these are. Even anthologies...
used only with reserve and read only as introductions—if introduction is deemed necessary.5

There were, of course, obvious exceptions to Kipling's sweeping condemnation of the literary knowledge and basic scholarship of his critics and reviewers. Even in the earlier period he was reviewed and his work studied seriously by men as widely read in European and Classical literature as Lang and Whibley and Henley and Gosse, as well as those who then or later held Chairs in English Literature such as J. H. Millar, Saintsbury, Quiller-Couch and Norton, while Sir William Hunter brought unrivalled knowledge of the Oriental setting of the earlier stories; and his critics also included novelists from Henry James and J. M. Barrie to Ford Madox Ford and Ian Hay, and later on Somerset Maugham and J. B. Priestley, besides poets from Alfred Noyes and Richard Le Gallienne to T. S. Eliot and Edmund Blunden.

But the majority of reviews and much of the criticism that was intended to be more serious were indeed such as Kipling describes, and he rightly ignored them and understandably paid little attention even to the more worthwhile studies by those better qualified to make them.

For, contrary to much that has been said, Kipling was a truly modest man, and very humble in the conviction that a man's best work came from without— at the promptings of his daemon, as he himself would have put it.

Two extracts from the private diary of his closest friend, Rider Haggard, are of interest in this context:

1. 23 March 1915 ... I asked him what he was doing to occupy his mind amidst all these troubles. He answered, like myself, writing stories, adding, 'I don't know what they are worth, I only know they ain't literature.' Like all big men Kipling is very modest as to his own productions. Only little people are vain ...
2. 22 May 1918 ... I commented on the fact that he had wide
fame and was known as ‘the great Mr. Kipling,’ which should be a
consolation to him. He thrust the idea away with a gesture of disgust.
‘What is it worth-what is it all worth?’ he answered. Moreover he
went on to show that anything any of us did well was no credit to us:
that it came from somewhere else: ‘We are only telephone wires.’ As
example he instanced (I think) ‘Recessional’ in his own case and She
in mine. ‘You didn’t write She you know,’ he said, ‘something wrote
it through you!’ or some such words.6

It should be added that Kipling himself was not only very well read
indeed in English and French literature for the majority of references and
quotations in his published works but took a keen interest in most of his
contemporaries, and wrote enthusiastically to those whom he knew even
slightly. Except in the case of Rider Haggard, whose imaginative
achievement he understood and appreciated as few have done, most of these
letters remain unpublished. Besides more obvious authors, he wrote letters
of praise and criticism to such writers as Barrie and Henley, Conan Doyle,
Stanley Weyman and A. E. W. Mason, Mrs Molesworth and E. Nesbit— to
name only a few.

Whether he paid any attention to it or not, Kipling received an
immense amount of criticism, from short reviews to full-scale articles by
leading critics, followed within ten years of his first appearance in literary
London by a flow of book-length studies that by now far exceeds his own
original output; if books containing essays and chapters on him are
included, the library of the Kipling Society can boast well over two hundred
volumes of biography and criticism—and even so cannot claim absolute
completeness.

Kipling’s earliest volumes were reviewed fairly extensively by Indian
papers in the English language. Departmental Ditties (1886), for example,
was greeted by the *Times of India* as a very pleasant companion for a lonely half-hour, or to while away the tedium of a railway journey. *The Bombay Gazette* compared “The Story of Uriah” to *The Biglow Papers*, and *The Englishman* felt that ‘they will suffer little by comparison with the best work of Praed or Locker.’ E. Kay Robinson who became editor of the *Civil and Military Gazette* towards the end of 1886, wrote later, “Having to my great delight discovered Kipling in 1886, I thought that the literary world at home should share my pleasure.” The editor who reviewed *Plain Tales* was Walter Herries Pollock. Lang was a close friend of his, and wrote each week for the *Saturday Review* at the time-so he cannot have missed seeing the review, and probably reading the book. Certainly it was recorded by Mrs Hill, wife of the Professor with whom Kipling was lodging at Allahabad at the time, in her diary for April 1888:

‘I shall never forget the glee with which RK came in one afternoon saying, ‘What do you suppose I just came across in reading the proof of this week’s English letter?’ Andrew Lang says: ‘Who is Mr. Rudyard Kipling?’ He was so pleased that they really had heard of him in England, for in all modesty he intends to make his mark in the world.’

Somehow, early in 1889, a copy of *Soldiers Three* got to England and was reviewed anonymously in the *Spectator* of 23 March. The six Wheeler paperbound volumes, later collected into two in England as *Soldiers Three* and *Wee Willie Winkie*, had received only superficial reviews in India. His knowledge of Anglo-Indian human nature, which is ordinary human nature under great provocation, is profound. Lang advised Sampson Low, Marston and Co., to publish the Wheeler booklets in England. Lang had met Kipling and introduced him to Haggard before writing his next review of *Plain Tales from the Hills* in the *Daily News*. Kipling’s meteoric rise to fame is well sketched by J. M. Barrie in his article “The Man from Nowhere,”
published over the pseudonym Gavin Ogilvy in the *British Weekly* on 2 May 1890. All this is confirmed shortly by Kipling in *Something of Myself*:

My small stock-in-trade of books had become known in certain quarters; and there was an evident demand for my stuff. I do not recall that I stirred a hand to help myself. Things happened to me. I went by invitation to Mowbray Morris, the editor of *Macmillan’s Magazine* ... He took from me an Indian tale and some verses . . . Then more tales were asked for, and the editor of the *St. James’s Gazette* wanted stray articles, signed and unsigned.⁹

Before political bias took the place of literary criticism, beginning with Robert Buchanan’s “The Voice of the Hooligan” in 1899, the more scholarly critics had attempted to treat fully and dispassionately of such work as was before them from the simple stand-point of literature. Lang at the beginning of 1891 was followed by Barrie and Gosse and Henry James, with a more grudging acceptance from Francis Adams and the fuller studies by Charles Eliot Norton and J. H. Millar.

After that Kipling became the butt of political prejudice, and his literary attainments were more and more ignored by critics, or assumed not to exist outside the popular fancy. An occasional reviewer broke away from what was fast becoming a stereotyped ready-made label; but on the whole no serious criticism of Kipling was written during the first two decades of the 20th century. An honourable exception was Holbrook Jackson in his excellent study *The Eighteen Nineties* (1913), where he gave Kipling a whole chapter of sensible and well-balanced description, setting him reasonably in his period, and attempting no overall judgments. The first award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Kipling in 1907 did little to reinstate him as a great writer in his own country.

It was, of course, understandable when Kipling was appealing for conscription and warning the country of its unreadiness for the European
war which he foresaw as imminent, in public speeches, in impassioned verses set up in large type in *The Times*, and even in such stories as “The Army of a Dream”; collected in * Traffics and Discoveries* and “The Edge of the Evening” collected in *A Diversity of Creatures*, (1917) and the allegory of “The Mother Hive” collected in *Actions and Reactions*, (1909), that those who disagreed with him should look with suspicion on all else that he wrote.

The First World War proved Kipling right in many respects—as he said in his poetic tribute to Lord Roberts, it was the War that he had descried. But prophets of woe are usually execrated before the event and seldom praised for their prescience after it. Perhaps Kipling was considered harmless, a toothless tiger, by early postwar writers—even as approaching the image of a ‘grand old man of letters’—and he was often described as an institution.

Overseas Maurice Hutton, lecturing in Montreal in 1918, felt able to take Kipling as a serious craftsman but in England the first attempt came, surprisingly, from the greatest poet of the new literary movement, T. S. Eliot, in a review of Kipling’s verse in the *Athenaeum*. The real beginning of modern Kipling criticism, however, came from Professor Bonamy Dobrée in a long article in the *Monthly Criterion* for December 1927 later enlarged and reprinted in his *The Lamp and the Lute* a prelude to his full-scale study of *Rudyard Kipling: Realist and Fabulist* (1967). But Eliot’s determination to treat Kipling as a major writer provoked a good deal of strenuous confutations and expressions of opinion, notably from Boris Ford, George Orwell and Lionel Trilling.

Lewis insisted that Kipling ‘was a very great writer,’ even if there were certain things about him which you did not like or even considered a serious blot. To Lewis the blot on Kipling was that ‘he is the slave of the Inner Ring’; to other critics it can be his supposed streak of cruelty, his
insistence on the Law, or his conviction that the British Empire offered the best hope of world peace and prosperity.

RUDYARD KIPLING'S LIFE AND WORKS:

Kinglsey Amis talks of Rudyard Kipling as a handsome man throughout his life. His gestures expressed something, and he had eye-sight problem. He was witty and warm. He was a good teller of stories, a good anecdotalist.

The Kiplings were a Yorkshire family, perhaps derived ultimately from Scandinavia. According to Kipling himself, they seem to have included small farmers, bell-founders, clock-makers, and the like. Although he once called Yorkshire the best county in England, and made one of his Soldiers Three (the least interesting of the three) a Yorkshireman.

Kipling’s parents are nearer our concern; they were certainly very near his heart to the end of their days. John Lockwood Kipling, born in 1837, was a craftsman and an artist, a sculptor, an architect, an illustrator, a scholar and a capable writer: in due time, the son professed to think the father a better stylist than himself. Nobody has been found to share that view, but John came to be Rudyard’s most valued critic, almost at times his collaborator. John’s wife, nee Alice Macdonald, was of Irish and Welsh as well as Scotch descent. Born in the same year as her husband, she was a cut or so above him socially. Three of her younger sisters married respectively the eminent painter Edward Burne-Jones, the then equally eminent though now forgotten painter Edward Poynter, and a rich industrialist called Alfred Baldwin (the last match was to produce the future Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin). In comparison, John Kipling must have seemed like nobody in particular.

John and Alice were married in London on 18 March 1865. Within a month they had sailed for Bombay, where John was to take up a
professional post in J. J. Arts School. The appointment preceded, indeed made possible, the marriage, and according to contemporary rumour it had been secured through the influence of Alice’s brother. She was a more forceful person than her husband, with a fluent and witty tongue that could turn to sharpness.

In 1865, ‘India’ of course comprised not only present-day India, but also Pakistan, Bangladesh and the lower half or so of Burma. India though a good third of the territory consisted of Native States under petty princes who retained some local powers, in practice the British ran the whole subcontinent. The British Empire - used in many contexts as a virtual synonym for ‘India’ - was nearly complete. Upper Burma remained to be annexed in 1886.

There had been British on the scene, under the East India Company (‘East India’ was a vague area also comprising what was once the Dutch East Indies and elsewhere), since the early seventeenth century. The Company’s troops, increasingly supplemented by British regular forces under interim arrangements, had succeeded for many years in maintaining some sort of control in a part of the world that had known continual wars, invasions and massacres for centuries. But in 1857 there came the Indian Mutiny, in fact a series of bloody local revolts with some similarity to a war of independence. Order was restored, and the Company’s authority formally passed to the British Crown, in 1858; peace was proclaimed in the following year - less than six years before the arrival of the Kiplings.

Joseph Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay, an important and thriving colonial city, on 30 December 1865. The first Christian name, that of his father’s father, was never used, except presumably at his baptism in the Cathedral there; the second, often shortened to Ruddy, commemorated his parents’ first meeting on a picnic at Lake Rudyard (now Rudyard Reservoir, near Leek, Staffordshire).
The custom of leaving largely to servants the upbringing of young children, standard among the Victorian upper classes, flourished in the Empire, the more so because of the cheapness of servant labour. The infant Rudyard had at his beck and call an ayah or nanny, the Hindu bearer who attended his father, and any or every other domestic within range.

This ayah looked after the child rudely. The child grew up rudely. When Alice went to England, her sister Louisa Baldwin spoke of the child’s screaming temper. Alice bore the girl child Trix (Alice Kipling). But Kipling was never an egoist. The boy loved his sister for ever.

Being cosseted by native servants meant affection and intimacy, and that intimacy meant, above all, that he learned their language, Hindustani or ‘the vernacular’, actually a form of Hindi with a large admixture of Arabic, Persian and other foreign elements. It was so much his language that he thought and dreamed in it, and had to be prompted to speak English with his parents as best he could. When, at the age of sixteen, he returned to India from England, he was to find himself making remarks in the vernacular of which he did not know the meaning - if literally true, an unexpected lift for the behaviourist school of linguistics.

With this key, Kipling had access to an India never approachable by most Europeans. He was also free to go where no adult of his race could venture, as into Hindu temples, and would be taken where few such adults would care to go, as to the food-marker and perhaps to less salubrious quarters.

Not every Anglo-Indian’ child grew into a writer of genius. Kipling of course brought qualities of his own to these early experiences: a truly insatiable curiosity, prodigious powers of observation and a staggering memory: an elderly Parsee testified in 1936 that the five-year-old Kipling never forgot a face or a name, and the grown-up Kipling took no notes of what he saw and heard. The happy combination of qualities and experiences
conclusively shaped his development. He himself, unsurprisingly, had the insight to acknowledge the enduring power upon him of that extraordinary time. At the start of *Something of Myself*, the autobiographical work he drafted in his last months, he applies to his own case the Jesuit mono, ‘Give me the first six years of a child’s life and you can have the rest.’ At least three of his stories include a more or less direct portrayal of his Indian childhood, but its reverberations can be felt on every page he wrote about India.

The Anglo-Indians then would send their children to England for education, and also to avoid disease for children. Alice herself lost a newborn second son in 1870. In the spring of 1871, all four Kiplings left Bombay for England; in the December of that year, Rudyard and Trix were boarded out with foster-parents at Southsea near Portsmouth.

Five households of relatives might be thought to have been available: the senior Kiplings, the senior Macdonalds, the Burne-Joneses, the Poynters and the Baldwins. The last three had, young children of their own, and Rudyard was particularly attached to his Aunt Georgiana (Burne-Jones). John and Alice chose to board their offspring with a couple called Holloway, known to them only from a newspaper advertisement and - no doubt satisfactory - references. More surprisingly still, the parents made no adequate attempt to explain what was afoot, leaving Rudyard and Trix to discover for themselves that they were now living with a pair of strangers known as Uncle Harty and Aunty Rosa.

Thereafter, Aunty Rosa tyrannized over Rudyard, willingly abetted by her adolescent son. There were regular inquisitions and beatings, often with a pseudo-religious excuse. In time, there was an unpleasant, plebeian day, school. To make matters worse, Trix was taken into extravagant favour by the family. Life was hell in all its terrors.
The Kiplings assigned the children to the Holloways on fee, because they did not want to burden the relatives. The children stayed with them at Lorne Lodge in South Sea. Capt Holloway was kind to Rudyard, but died within a year. Aunt Rosa’s harassment, probably made Rudyard a terrible figure in life and literature. In 1888, Kipling published the longish short story, ‘Baa, Baa, Black Sheep’, in which the persecutions outlined above are rehearsed in detail and with an air of great bitterness. But it is a story: the author is not on oath; he must be expected, like other authors, to have heightened such real experiences as might befall him by selective emphasis and even more by omission. Black Sheep, the Rudyard character, is never let out of his hell until the final rescue by his mother. We know that this was far from true of the real Rudyard. The picture of school life is self-evidently lopsided. Kipling returned to the theme two years later in the first chapter of his first novel, *The Light that Failed*. Here there are again persecutions and beatings, but no figures corresponding to the Captain or the Holloway son, and the hero and his young girl companion are held in equal disesteem by the Aunty Rosa character. Once again, this is fiction, though it might well be argued by some that the ‘Southsea’ episode significantly fails to be an altogether appropriate prelude to the later events of the novel.

Finally, there are two avowedly autobiographical accounts of those years. One is to be found in *Something of Myself*.

Not to speak of Kipling’s work has scenes of betrayal, ill-treatment and revenge.

The only certain result of these experiences that was certainly bad is ‘Baa, Baa, Black Sheep.’ It is a sorry tale in all senses, devoid of any conflict or tension, with a stated moral but no real point, and damagingly silent about the motives of Aunty Rosa - the character is given the same name as the person. Black Sheep might well have been unable to understand them, but even a far less skilful writer could have found a way to fill that
vacuum. As it is, the story lacks all balance. Trix said Kipling wrote it in a towering rage, not an-advantageous state of mind in which to set about producing art.

Finally, it might be noted that, between beatings, he had found time to read a fair amount—not only Robinson Cmsoe, Hans Andersen, Little Women, but also Bunyan, Fielding, Dickens—and that his unpleasant day school, which provided among other things a naval education, had not only grounded him in Latin and mathematics, but sent him away with the temporary ambition of joining the Royal Navy. That could never have happened to Black Sheep.

Alice Kipling removed Rudyard from the ‘House of Desolation’ in March 1877. They and Trix spent the summer on a farm in Epping Forest. Here there was a great deal of outdoor activity and, glasses having now been provided, a great deal of reading on Rudyard’s part. This continued through the autumn, when the trio stayed in lodgings in Brompton Road, then a relatively remote corner of London. He and Trix were given season tickets for the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Above all, there was the manuscript of a Dickens’ novel, full of revisions. By now, rising twelve, the young Kipling not only understood that books and pictures were among the most important things in the world; he had himself started to write.

By his own account, it was during the couple of months in Brompton Road that Kipling first suffered from the insomnia that stayed with him all his life.

The happy interlude ended. Rudyard was to be sent to school in earnest. The United Services College was at Westward Ho, a north Devon sea resort. The buildings, a terrace block run into one, were unprepossessing; the food was barely adequate; discipline was severe, especially in the hands of the cane-wielding Chaplain; there were bullies
among the boys, as Rudyard repeatedly discovered during his first year or more. It was Southsea on a larger scale.

The place was, after all, a public school, and of a particular type: three-quarters of the boys had, like their son, been born overseas, surely a potential bond. The Headmaster, Cromell Price, had taught for ten successful years at Haileybury. He was neither a martinet nor even a muscular Christian; indeed, he was part of the circle of Burne-Jones and William Morris, something of an advanced thinker. And the Kiplings knew him personally; to Rudyard he was already ‘Uncle Crom’

As it was, life was brutal. Rudyard wrote to his mother - who was still in England. She was distressed, and complained mildly to Price, but took no further action. When at the end of Rudyard’s first term, the Easter holidays came, so far from allowing him to spend them with her, she went to Italy to join her husband, then on his way home from India.

In time, things at the College began to improve as the place settled down. The cane-wielding Chaplain was replaced by a pipe-smoking muscular Christian. The bullying died away, or at any rate ceased to involve the growing Rudyard. He formed a close alliance with two other boys; they came to share a study which they decorated themselves after a mildly Bohemian fashion. The trio went in for rule-breaking escapades, equally mild by today’s standards and rather ordinary by any, though not such as to endear them to authority.

Rudyard emerged as the school writer, contributing a large part of the contents of its magazine, becoming secretary of its literary society, composing verses for its yearly concert.

Also ruled out in this way was any kind of career in the Army, for which most of the other pupils were destined and the College curriculum designed. Apart from a training in Latin and study of the Third Book of Horace’s Odes, Kipling’s formal education included English, French, and
mathematics (at which he was a dud). It seems clear, however, and unsurprising that the general approach was utilitarian, much more so than that prevailing in the conventional schools of the era.

Nevertheless, his education was not proper, not suitable in two important ways. Intimate knowledge of a foreign - preferably classical - language and some representative part of its literature, such as Kipling never attained, is an important part of a writer's training.

Kipling suffered in another and more material sense from the deficiencies of the teaching at the College. It not only deprived him, it ordered matters so that he remained deprived. A course of study at Oxford or Cambridge would have put things right, but both roads to it were closed. There was presumably not enough parental money to buy a place, and the College entirely lacked the elaborate machinery required to train candidates for scholarships.

Self-education via private reading is not really education at all, but it may help a developing writer to find his feet. Rudyard had arrived at Westward Ho! well acquainted with many of the English classics. In time, he and his two cronies came to share an enthusiasm for Ruskin, Carlyle and Browning, not the most obvious authors to attract it from schoolboys. Cormell Price gave him the run of his library. Rudyard worked his way through the poets from Donne to Swinburne, was significantly captivated by Peacock and his practice of scattering poems among his tales, discovered Russian writers in French translation. His fondness for American authors - Emerson, Longfellow, Poe, Whitman, Bret Harte, Mark Twain - was unusual in the England of his day.

Neither was it any sort of annexe to the Church. Price was rather exceptional among Victorian headmasters in not being a clergyman nor even a dedicated Christian - an added recommendation from the point of view of John and Alice Kipling, themselves no church goers.
Other beliefs, of more moment to him, were reinforced or acquired at the College. His own reading, allied with holiday visits to the Burne-Joneses and the Poynters, had convinced him that art - books and pictures - was nearly all important. He would use his art to celebrate life.

Kinglsey Amis observes,

There is some sort of account of Kipling's schooldays in his *Stalky & Co.*, published in 1899, but we must be careful in determining what sort. Some parts of it can be accepted as factual: the buildings, the setting, the routine, the hut in the furze-bushes used as a refuge from discipline, the decorated study where prep was shared out, the obsessive reading, the minor infractions of rules. Beyond such matters, fiction keeps breaking in. The three central characters are usually taken as portraits - 'Beetle' founded on Kipling himself, 'Stalky' and 'M'Turk' on Kipling's two associates. 'Portrait' and 'founded on' are difficult expressions; so too, in Kipling's statement that he and the others were the 'originals' of the three, is 'originals':

Even the most conscientiously literal account of, real people or incidents must be distorted by selection and emphasis, and Kipling was writing tales, and the tales have plots, and plots have a way of shaping character to suit themselves. Other figures in the book, notably the masters, cannot be claimed to be more than 'loosely based on' real people, and the central incidents - the circumventions of authority, the elaborate ruses, the ingenious table turnings - are demonstrably made up. This would not be worth saying if the book had not so often been mistaken for a lightly edited record of what 'really' went on at the College.10

Seen in this way, *Stalky & Co.* has been made to support the view that Kipling was still, after more than fifteen years, smarting at the cruel and unfair treatment he had received at the College, so much so that he decided
to pay back his persecutors with even crueller and more unfair treatment in print: the stories are dreams of an impossible series of revenges.

Jack the Giant-Killer, in various forms, is a favourite Kipling type; he reappears later as Stalky himself in an Indian setting; he was very useful in an Empire of many millions under the control of some thousands. That lesson was one of the most important that Kipling learned at school.

One story, 'The Flag of his Country', might perhaps mislead the unwary reader. A pompous visiting politician harangues the boys on their duty to the Empire and is held in thorough contempt. Their feeling comes not from any lack of patriotism but from disgust at his vulgar, over-produced statement of it. The unfortunate man is in the position of a lay evangelist preaching to Jesuits.

John Kipling, finding the university in effect closed to his son, impressed by the boy's emergent literary talents, secured for him a post on an English newspaper in India. His departure was arranged for September 1882. But there had been a little more to his adolescent years than the College and visits to relatives.

Two years earlier, aged fourteen and a half, Rudyard had gone to Southsea to fetch Trix: the two sometimes spent holidays together. The confrontation with Aunty Rosa evidently passed off without the exchange of blows, but nothing is known of it. What is established is that a fifteen-year-old girl named Florence Garrard had come to board at Lorne Lodge. She had a 'Pre-Raphaelite' look - just the thing for Rudyard the youthful frequenter of the Burne-Jones circle, and he fell in love with her. Not only that: he managed to arrange several subsequent meetings, though with such Stalky-like circumspection that no details survive.

This was not just a callow yearning. The attachment was stronger on his side than hers, but it was mutual, and it persisted for some time. When he was about to return to India, he wanted them to become engaged and left
under the impression that they were. Two years later she wrote to break it off; six years after that he ran into her by chance in London, found his feelings for her unchanged, took up with her again briefly, and then was rejected for good.

So nothing came of that first love, nothing except some parts of Kipling’s first novel, *The Light that Failed*, written, or at any rate completed and published, in that same year, 1890. Its chief female character, Maisie, is founded on Flo Garrard; how closely is unknowable, but only the most tedious kind of sceptic could doubt that Kipling was putting on paper emotions of his own when he wrote of his Dick Heldar’s unhappy passion for Maisie. To say as much is not, of course, to say anything about the literary qualities of the book, and most of the events of its narrative are fictitious in the full sense, but people interested in Kipling himself, in what son of man he was, should read it.

To take up our story again: Rudyard, or Kipling as he had better be known from now on, landed at Bombay in October 1882 and travelled by train the thousand-odd miles to Lahore up in the north-west. Here was the museum of which his father was now Curator, a European quarter, an ancient Muslim city with liquor-shops and gambling’ and opium-dens as well as palaces and mosques, a military camp, and three places of special importance to Kipling: the family bungalow, the office and print/shop of the *Civil and Military Gazette*, and the Punjab Club.

Despite the heat, attacks of fever and dysentery, and the constant threat of typhoid, he was comfortable and happy in his parents’ house. His first year was marred by periods of loneliness, with his mother off to England and his father away on leave in the hills. But at the beginning of his second, 1884, Alice returned, bringing Trix with her, and the ‘Family Square’ (Alice’s phrase) was complete. He was secure in the constant
company of three people whom he admired as well as loved, and all three of whom he came to trust as critics of his work have observed.

Life was rather less fun at the Gazette, a successful daily with a large native staff and an English editor. This man, a schoolmasterly sort of person, saw to it that his new assistant did at least his fair share of the work of making up the paper and seeing it through the press.

Other ways included night walks in the old city after the paper had been put to bed and, starting in his second year, trips to other parts of the district to report local events: village festivals, official visits, intercommunal riots.

At the Punjab Club, the food was bad but the conversation informative to a degree that might have been designed specially for Kipling. He met those responsible for every aspect of the imperial administration: civil servants, army officers, doctors, lawyers, men in the departments of education, canals, forestry, engineering, irrigation, railways.

Kipling's experience of life in this provincial centre was not confined to its upper strata. His command of the vernacular brought him into close contact with the native inhabitants of the city. And these, though predominantly Muslim, were mixed enough by religion and by race to introduce him to that limitless diversity of everything Indian which was to be one of his major themes.

For a few weeks in the year during the hottest months, he had leave to do what everybody else did. If they could and make his way up to Simla in the cool heights. This was the summer capital of the Empire, where every April the Viceroy and his staff, together with military, notables, would arrive after the immense journey from Calcutta and carry on the government of the subcontinent. There was a fierce social life, with plenty of young unmarried officials and plenty of unattended married women whose husbands were sweating away at some bridge or dam on the plains: ideal
conditions for intrigue, gossip, scandal, etc. For Kipling fresh from Lahore, it was ‘another new world,’ one that never fully accepted him. It would have accepted him all right if he had stayed in India another year or two; for the time being, he was to many an inquisitive interloper with a nose for copy.

In 1886 he got back from his stay at Simla to find a new and more adventurous editor in the chair at the Gazette. From now on, Kipling was to abandon conventional reporting and produce weekly medium length pieces, stories of regional life with a strong documentary interest. Verse was sometimes allowed too, as column fillers according to Kipling, but that was said so as to forestall criticism. A collection of these poems, in effect his first book, was published anonymously in a limited edition of 350 copies. It sold out quickly. A second edition, with Kipling’s name on it, was issued by a Calcutta firm in the same year. *Departmental Ditties* reached London, where it failed to grip, but it was all the rage at Simla, not so much for its literary qualities as for its power to shock or titillate.

The ditties are sketches about corruption, influence, place seeking, favouritism, flirtation and adultery in the ‘bad, small world’ of Anglo-India, which, as small worlds will, thought it could recognize all the characters and situations even when they were composite or fictitious. What will strike a modern reader, apart from the skill displayed, is the theme of exile and homesickness, an isolation both chafed at and jealously guarded against the interference of ignorant, incompetent outsiders – ‘the travelled idiots who duly misgovern the land.’

Late the next year (1887) Kipling was promoted to the staff of a sister paper, the Allahabad *Pioneer*. It was of higher standing than the *Gazette*, with a weekly supplement which he was to edit. The move took him halfway across India to a city of largely Hindu population, despite its Muslim name. If he was lonely at first he found plenty of work to do, writing extended stories for the supplement and contributing articles based
on a journey round the Native States of Rajputana in northern India. These articles, collected in his travel volumes, *From Sea to Sea*, show his characteristic curiosity and powers of absorption.

In January 1888 Kipling’s first book of fiction, *Plain Tales from the Hills*, was published. The title perfectly suggests the straight from the shoulder quality and - to a reader in England - remote setting of the contents, as well as catching the attention. (Did John Kipling suggest it? His son was for most of his life very and oddly bad at naming his works. This reminds us Mark Twain’s inability to name his books which actually either his friend Howells or his wife did. The hand does not fly to a volume called *Actions and Reactions*. But, of course, by the time it came out- 1909-something like Interest Rates in Puerto Rico would have done well enough, provided ‘Rudyard Kipling’ was on the title page.)

Kingsley Amis says,
Most of the forty *Plain Tales* had appeared first in the *Gazette*. The known fact that they were written to a length, to order, in haste, has told against them in critical esteem: they are held to be vulgar, knowing, sickly written. Anyone who was unaware of their provenance, any contemporary in England, might be forgiven for thinking the collection a work of tremendous talent, pessimistic about human behaviour, certainly, often designed to appeal to the reader’s more malicious instincts, well yes, but wise as well as worldly, wise, full of atmosphere, touching, harrowing, comic, and inflexibly just to the natives, who are portrayed on the whole as worthier than the Anglo-Indians they encounter. Kipling was to write better stories than any of these, but no subsequent volume so consistent in quality.¹¹

To be sure, these are anecdotes: how a subaltern’s suicide was covered up, how a horse race was fixed, how a woman won her husband back from a rival, how a bank manager prevented his unpleasant assistant
from dying in misery, how a colour sergeant's wife set an example in a cholera outbreak, how a Hindu girl was punished for having an affair with an Englishman. But the last, alluded-to, 'Beyond the Pale,' is one of the most terrible stories in the language, and even the slighter themes contribute to the whole: the book is a whole, a composite portrait of Anglo-Indian life such as its author could not possibly have foreseen when he was scribbling off each item in the newspaper office. Not very likely, at least.

*The Plain Tales* soon sold out in India, but hung fire in London. Kipling's new stories for the *Pioneer* were being collected in successive paperbacks and marketed by the Indian Railway Library. So his fame spread through India and beyond, because railway travellers take books home, even when 'home' is as far as England. He was writing away, off on a trip for the *Pioneer* that took him down to Calcutta, where he was impressed chiefly by the heat, the night, the stink, and the efficiency of the police. The city was the administrative centre of British India, the abode of remote officialdom where no real work was done.

He returned to Allahabad, was called back to Lahore to relieve the editor of the *Gazette*, and went up to Simla on his last visit. Now he was determined to leave for England.

Characteristically, and luckily for us, he decided not to go home the conventional way, through the Suez Canal, but via the Far East, the United States and the Atlantic. The success of the railway publications had brought him enough money to get to England; in the company of an American couple, he sailed from Calcutta in March 1889. He was to make one brief return visit, but in effect this was for him the last of India.

India and Kipling had been made for each other. She gave him what no other English writer was ever to experience in comparable fullness and intensity; he brought to her exactly those gifts which were necessary to commemorate, in the words of an Indian writer, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, 'the
many faces of [that] country in all their beauty, power and truth.’ And her mark was set on him for life with the exception of some travel pieces, seven or eight stories and a few dozen poems (not a large exception in the case of such a copious author) all his best work reflects or remembers India.

His years there had also formed his outlook on the world, his beliefs, his politics. All this may seem a large subject; it certainly seemed so to critics in his lifetime and in the period immediately following.

It is said, Kipling was an authoritarian in the sense that he was not a democrat. To him, a parliament was a place where people with no knowledge of things as they were could dictate to the men who did real work, and could change their dictates at whim. His ideal was a feudalism that had never existed, a loyal governed class freely obeying incorrupt, conscientious governors. He was vague about how you became a governor: you probably (as in the Empire) just found you were one. Nevertheless, birth, influence, money, educational status and the like must not count as qualifications for leadership. Merit, competence I. and a sense of responsibility were what did count: ‘the job belongs to the man who can do it’. As George Orwell pointed out, Kipling was further from being a fascist than can easily be imagined in a period when totalitarianism - a very different thing from authoritarianism - is accepted as a possibly valid or even desirable system.¹²

Kipling was an imperialist. He accepted the Empire as it stood and he approved the annexation of Upper Burma. His position has been explained semi-mystically the Empire was justified because it fostered virtue in its administrators and psychologically the Empire was attractive because it was an island of security in a turbulent, hostile universe.

Kipling was a racialist, or racist. The White Man’s Burden is indeed a burden, an arduous duty, not the inheritance of a natural privilege, and the
white men must carry it not because they are white but because they are qualified; for instance, the Americans in the Philippines must govern their ‘new-caught, sullen peoples, half devil and half child’ who cannot govern themselves. This is a limited racialism: white men, in practice those whose native tongue is English, are good at exercising authority in beneficent ways and have the wherewithal—medicine, transport systems, law-enforcement—to do it. Kipling believed in the separation, or rather the continued separateness of races.

But as regards sexual dealings: ‘A man should, whatever happens, keep to his own caste, race, and breed. Let the White go to the White and the Black to the Black’—unless he wants a disaster. This is an appeal to prudence rather than prejudice, as he goes on to demonstrate (in ‘Beyond the Pale’).

Most of the ignorant castigation of Kipling as a racialist in the full aggressive sense comes from a single famous line of verse quoted out of context:

Oh, East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet,
which is followed by the qualification:

Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgment Seat; which in turn leads to the antithesis:

But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,

When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the Earth!¹³

This, however, is not a complete antithesis.

Kipling was a paternalist. This is an ugly word with, nowadays, an ugly connotation it does not deserve.

Kipling believed in something ill-defined, though practical and unmysterious, called ‘The Law.’ It pervades his Jungle Books, but it has
nothing to do with the law of the jungle as we usually think of it (that is, the weak finish last). What is envisaged is society as a network of obligations, each individual doing the job appropriate to him to the best of his ability. Law, order, duty, restraint, obedience, discipline (to tidy up a line from a poem) may sound to us in combination like the programme of some right wing political adventurer; for Kipling they were values to be pursued freely, at the bidding of self-respect and self-reliance.

Kipling spent his journey to England in mixed states of feeling. Shipboard life was fun and there was the ship itself to be explored thoroughly, most of all below decks, where the real work went on. Some of the places visited on the way disturbed him. Burma had attractive women, but too many sinister Chinamen, and the whole place seemed too Oriental. ‘Singapur’ struck him as very unhealthy; ‘I want to go Home! I want to go back to India! I am miserable’, he cried, or rather wrote in one of the travel articles he sent back to the *Pioneer*. Hong Kong brought more Chinese, all working like fury. At this stage China itself ought to be annexed, he considered, but a short trip to Canton suggested to him a better course would be to ‘kill off’ the whole nation. They had frightened him, a rare achievement, not by overt menace but by the universal contempt they exuded.

Japan, where Kipling spent a month, was a different matter, neat and beautiful, with gentle, gracious people who yet had ‘a strain of bloodthirstiness’ in them. The main trouble with them was that, under American influence, they had adopted a constitution and a parliament.

So at last to San Francisco, ‘a mad city’ with shootings in the streets and rude hotel clerks. Everybody talked with an American accent, started getting drunk at 10.30 a.m. and had the vote. The women were free and lively, the men tough, masculine and generous, the children very spoilt. After a visit to Vancouver, where it was quieter and more civilized, Kipling
returned to the United States. At Omaha he found detestable burial customs, embalmed bodies in backless dress, suits looking out through the windows of their coffins half a century before Evelyn Waugh came along. Americans were friendly and honest, also ignorant, 'cocksure, lawless and casual'. They were always running down their own country in conversation and praising it embarrassingly. 'I love this people,' Kipling summed up.

In October 1889, when he was not quite twenty-four years old, Kipling arrived in London. He was not unknown from the outset, his cousins visited him, he made new literary contacts, joined the Savile Club, began to be published in England and to move on his rapid march to fame. But he was lonely, ailing and depressed, missing India and the sun, suspicious of the prevailing current of artistic talk and behaviour. With all his knowledge of the outside world, he was a colonial in the London of the English Decadence, on the eve of the Nineties and The Picture of Dorian Gray. The gulf never narrowed: indeed it widened.

Some of this put itself right over the following few months, though the unsuccessful encounter with Flo Garrard in the spring could hardly have cheered him up. He was writing and being printed at top speed; by the end of 1890 he was famous in England and America. His Barrack Room Ballads and a number of stories had come out in periodicals. The Times had pronounced favourably and at length on Plain Tales from the Hills, he had finished and published (in the US) (The Light that Failed, and his Indian Railway Library tales had appeared in collected editions as Soldiers Three and Wee Willie Winkie. The last two volumes contain little of Kipling's best work.

Wee Willie Winkie consists first of pieces that might be called fancy tales from the hills about amours and adulteries at Simla and elsewhere. They lack the economy and force of the earlier stories, and are written in a cheaply urbane style that, together with the setting and subject-matter, might
make the unversed reader mistake them for the work of Somerset Maugham on an off-day. Kipling saw - or his mother told him - that this sort of thing was not his forte and he never again attempted it.

Four of the stories, including the eponymous one, are about young children. Two of them are little monsters of whimsy, their infantile dialect reproduced with a fidelity, or at least an assiduity, that raises the hair.

Also included is the grossly overrated long tale, ‘The Man Who Would Be King’. The man, or as it turns out the men (there are two of them), would attain royal status among some tribe beyond the hills, it seems by the merest cunning and effrontery.

The telling of the story is very full and detailed, despite its teller’s reduced condition and the tiresome wanderings of mind so caused.

This is a story with an unusually elaborate frame even for Kipling.

Nothing so sternly pedagogical need be said of the stories written in London and collected in *Life’s Handicap*. ‘The Cowning of Dinah Shadd’ and ‘On Greenhow Hill’ reintroduce the Soldiers and make suffering human beings of two of them; the frame, device also reappears, but trimmed down in both and properly related to the main narrative in the latter. ‘Without Benefit of Clergy’ starts off as an account of a liaison between an Englishman and a native girl but, unlike ‘Beyond the Pale’, a harsher treatment of a similar theme, turns into an unsentimental elegy for all doomed love. We might be tempted to see in the two horror stories, ‘The Mark of the Beast’ and ‘At the End of the Passage’, a reflection of the author’s own low spirits at the time of writing, if we did not know how often low spirits in the self produce high spirits on paper.

*The Barrack Room Ballads* were a quite new venture, indeed without precedent (or descendant) in English poetry as regards both style and content. The Cockney dialect and the heavy rhythms of the music, hall song were used for serious purposes, and the life of the common soldier furnished
the themes: parades, women, action, beer, leave, natives, officers, NCOs, sun, cholera, cells, discharge. Out of these conventionally unpromising elements Kipling produced among others the most harrowing poem in our language (‘Danny Deever’) and a love lyric (‘Mandalay’) unique for what a critic in 1900 called its ‘wonderful transmuting use of the commonest material’. A powerful underlying message of the Ballads is that freedom, order, and learning and everything we call civilization depends in the last resort on the activities of a few score thousand commonplace, ignorant, vulgar, violent men whom it is all too easy to despise.

The success of the Ballads was immediate; after their first book, publication a couple of years later, it started to become widespread to a degree surpassed only by that of Shakespeare (and Anon.). Before the end of the century the poems were being recited or sung in music-halls and at smoking-concerns.

Soon after arriving in London, Kipling had met a young American publisher Wolcott Balestier. He had literary ambitions, among which was writing a novel in collaboration with Kipling, an unlikely project, it might be thought, given the latter’s determined self-sufficiency. But he took to Balestier, as most people did, and for the next year and a half enjoyed with him the closest friendship of his life. The novel, *The Naulahka*, was written and eventually published. (The title refers to a fabulous necklace). It is by no means a bad book. The first four chapters, certainly Balestier’s work, show an engaging light wit that Kipling never attempted. If the former used the same son of style in talk as in writing, we have a good unsensational reason for the latter’s attachment to him.

More to the point: in the autumn of 1890 Kipling met a girl three years older than himself, Caroline Balestier, Wolcott’s sister, who was over in England with her mother and the other sister. Carrie was to become Kipling’s wife. She was small, energetic, competent and protective; she
came from a ‘good’ Vermont family and, as the sister of a valued friend, might have seemed very suitable. Evidently Kipling’s parents, in London on a visit, did not think so.

Kipling was ill that winter with tropical diseases contracted in India. A long sea voyage was recommended. After some vacillation, he set off alone on a trip round the world in August 1891. His chief ports of call were in the White Dominions: South Africa, New Zealand and Australia, though he did not stay long in any. Late in the year he landed in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and soon took the train up through India to Lahore. He was with his parents when a cable arrived from Carrie: Wolcott Balestier was dead of typhoid in Germany. Kipling left at once, not staying for Christmas as he had planned. On 10 January he was back in London and on the 18th he and Carrie were married. When *Barrack-Room Ballads* appeared as a book, he commemorates his dead friend in a dedicatory poem that was triply embarrassing: part of it was based on an earlier poem about something else, its language would seem rather high-flown even if applied to St Francis or Nelson, and what on earth had Wolcott Balestier to do with Tommy Atkins. Nevertheless, the poem is touching as a gesture.

The marriage (to round off the topic) was as happy as most. In some respects, Carrie was the dominant partner. She organized her husband’s affairs, kept his accounts, saw to his mail, filtered his visitors - a useful service for a man who hated intrusion and who was so much sought after.

Their daughter Elsie, later Mrs George Bambridge, has written what seems a remarkably fair-minded account of her parents’ relationship. Her mother was moody and difficult, often filling those round her with her own tensions: a not unfamiliar type. This attribute sometimes exhausted Kipling, though he never complained. On the other hand, Carrie was intelligent, witty, loyal, kind, and above all brave.
Kipling's money troubles were over for the time being. He and Carrie would go on a real trip round the world. They reached New York in February 1892 and as soon as possible left that grotesquely bad place to visit Carrie's family near Brattleboro in Vermont. Kipling - or was it Carrie - decided they must settle here on the family estate in due course. Some land was made over to them by her brother Beatty Balestier, an amiable scapegrace. With this agreed, the couple travelled to the west coast of the continent, partly by way of Canada, a country for which Kipling always had a particular affection. In the spring they came to Japan.

For a year they lived modestly in a small cottage on the estate. It was there that, in December, their first child, Josephine, was born. The following spring, their financial worries now over for good, they set about having a house built to their own plan. The place was christened 'Naulakha' in memory of Wolcott and the family moved in at the end of the summer. For the next three years it was their base, though there were trips to Bermuda and to England, an enforced stay in Washington for Carrie's recovery from a domestic accident, and Kipling visited Gloucester, Mass., to look at the fishing-fleet (a source of material for Captains Courageous). Elsie was born in February 1896.

Until the last few months, their stay in Vermont was a contented and useful one. Then, two disparate series of events combined to upset fatally the ordered life at Naulakha.

In 1895 the States and England had fallen out over a frontier dispute in South America. Hostility continued for months, war was supposed possible at one stage, and although matters were patched up in mid-1896. Kipling's confidence in his position in the US was badly damaged. He also became involved in a family quarrel. Beatty Balestier had quarrelled with his sister, among other things over their respective rights to pan of the land round Naulakha. He had gone bankrupt and was drinking with some
persistence. He may have resented his brother-in-law's affluence and fame: anyway, there was a scene that stopped short of fisticuffs but went as far as Beatty threatening Kipling's life. Whether it was a serious threat or not, Kipling went to the police. Beatty was arrested. There was immense and, to Kipling at any rate, agonizing publicity. Before the trial could take place, the Kiplings had left for England.

He produced a single story with a Vermont setting, 'A Walking Delegate', in which the characters are horses.

As already noted, the Vermont years were productive - of stories and poems founded on previous experience. Their quality is uneven.

*The Jungle Book* and *The Second Jungle Book* were once enormously popular with children, and even today not many people need to be told who Mowgli and Shere Khan are, though this knowledge must sometimes come only from having seen the Disney film.

The stories collected in *Many Inventions*, some of which had been written or begun in London, include an excellent piece of straight science fiction in 'A Matter of Fact' (it ends with a dig at the United States), and an enjoyable action yarn about southern Africa, 'Judson and the Empire'. Two others are of higher repute without altogether deserving it.

'The Finest Story in the World' is a story about a story that 1894 never gets written because the man with the material for it, a London clerk who remembers previous existences as a galley slave, keeps turning his attention to what he thinks are more important matters, So they are: the unwritten story, from what we are told of it, could never have come anywhere near being the finest in the world, because the details about the galleys, though they seem most convincing, are not of great interest in themselves, and the written story fails because reincarnation is such an intractably dull idea.
In ‘Love-o’-Women’ what is between the inner pair of quotes is supposed to be a man’s nickname. This excites incredulity: could you bring yourself to say, for instance, ‘Have one on me, Love-o’-Women’! Kipling here indulges too in his favourite vice of over, mystification - old Love-o’, Women is a disappointed man, but we never find out quite what disappointed him. The climax, though melodramatic and improbable, touches our pity, and the opening is admittedly splendid, perhaps the most powerful he ever devised. It turns out, however to be the opening to one of his frame-narratives.

The poems of the American period likewise vary in merit. There were more Barrack Room Ballads, almost up to the level of the original series. Kipling was breaking fresh ground as well in pieces like ‘The Song of the Banjo’, which would be among his very finest achievements but for its idiotic choruses. The most celebrated of the new poems are the two long, elaborate dramatic monologues, ‘M.’Andrew’s Hymn’ and ‘The ‘Mary Gloster.’ They are certainly fine performances, technically outstanding even for their author, but some readers have found in them more to admire than to be moved by.

The four Kiplings arrived back in England in September 1896 and first took a house near Torquay, there settled in the village of Rottingdean, near Brighton. There was no shortage of companionship now, and none of public anention, either. Kipling was becoming more than a leading writer with an unusually large audience he soon turned into a national figure. This was partly the result of his having begun to contribute to The Times a number of poems on important issues of the day.

These pieces are not patriotic; they take patriotism for granted. Their subject is not the greatness of England but her duties and dangers. The tone is grave and quiet: again he had found a new style for a new theme. ‘Recessional’ is the best known and one of the best, an urgent warning
against the irresponsible use of national power written on the occasion of Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee in 1897. One phrase in it, ‘lesser breeds without the Law’, is still able to be misunderstood. The reference is not to Indians or any other Asians, none at that time being any sort of international threat, but to European nationalisms, chiefly German, as Orwell pointed out in his essay of 1942. These are without the Law of duty and self-restraint in that they do not recognize it. Another phrase in another fine poem, ‘For All We Have and Are’ (1914), brought Kipling some obloquy. ‘The Hun is at the gate’ has been taken as an incitement to racial hatred. ‘The Hun’ is a metaphor for ‘the barbarian, the enemy of decent values’, and ‘the gate’ is not that of England and the Empire, but that of civilization. If there is a fault here, it is one of overstatement only.

This series of poems made Kipling the national bard in place of Tennyson, who had died in 1892 after over forty years as Poet Laureate. The office had been filled again in 1896 by the nonentity Alfred Austin; Kipling, though strongly lobbied for had not even been approached, on the grounds that he would certainly have refused (When Austin died in 1913, the situation repeated itself). In time, Kipling was to turn down a knighthood and other titles, while accepting honorary degrees and, in 1907, the Nobel Prize for Literature. Recognition by a government meant recognition by a political party, and no political party must feel that it had reason to count on his support. He had to retain his freedom of action. Very well, but why did he also decline the Order of Merit! This was in the gift not of Lloyd George or Stanley Baldwin, but of King George V, with whom Kipling was on warm personal terms by the time of the last offer.

At first sight, Kipling’s attitude to public recognition is not altogether straightforward. He had a ‘horror’ of intrusions on his personal life, of reporters, of the regular bus-loads of sightseers who came peering into his garden at Rottingdean, even into his house. This feeling was so strong in
him that in one of his science/fiction stories, 'As Easy as ABC', he went so far as to depict a future state of society in which invasion of privacy is a uniquely serious legal offence. At the same time he joined clubs, went in for speech-making, gave readings from his works and, considering his profession, could not have gone a better way about becoming a public figure if he had tried.

The period 1897-1902 produced its full share of prose. First to be published was Captains Courageous, a short novel more popular, according to Carrington, with American than British readers. The details of maritime life have their own interest, but the plot is defective. There is not a single first-rate story in the collection called The Day's Work: some scrapings of the Indian barrel, a couple of half-cock Anglo-American jokes, some accounts of personified machinery and of personified animals which must be of limited appeal.

One of the machinery stories, '007', concerns an American railway engine.

Stalky & Co., mentioned earlier, aroused some opposition when it appeared. An eloquent and unintentionally very funny attack came from one Roben Buchanan, a now-forgotten novelist and controversialist who had earlier denounced the Pre-Raphaelite poets for the naked eroticism of their work. 'Only the spoiled child of an utterly brutalised public could possibly have written "Stalky & Co."', he screamed now, went on about 'horrible vileness', and thought the central trio 'not like boys at all, but like hideous little men'. That last remark is nearer the bone. Boyishness is missing from the book, and with it departs some probability, and with that we lose some interest too. The trouble with the various adventures is not that they are revenge-fantasies, or that they are 'vile', but that they are rather dull. And Stalky and the others are not particularly hideous. but they are not very attractive either. They lack warmth.
The book *Just So Stories* has not gone the way of the *Jungle Books*: it is still very much read. The illustrations by the author are of great interest to those with any sort of interest in him. They are highly competent, often haunting, often comic, and always marked by a strong personal outlook. An artist of some merit was lost in Kipling, or rather declared redundant while his alter ego forged on with the pen.

*Kim* (1901) is the crown of this period and quite likely of Kipling’s whole output, in prose at least. Late in life, he lamented that he had never written a real novel; *Kim* did not count; it was ‘nakedly picaresque and plotless’. What of that it is a narrative with characters and events; it is not only the finest story about India (Chaudhuri’s verdict), but one of the greatest novels in the language. Its subject is the land and the people. Kipling’s gift for accumulating detail was never shown better or at such length or with such power: sights, sounds, smells and exactly what men and women wear, exactly what they do in the course of their travels and of settling down for the night, exactly what they eat and how they cook and serve every dish - and if he says coriander when he means cardamom one will let it go. The people are shown not just in the mass, but in four carefully varied individual portraits: a Pathan, an elderly upper caste lady from the North, West Provinces, a Bengali, and a Tibetan lama. These, especially the last are triumphs of educated imagination. There is nothing like them anywhere else, not even in the rest of Kipling’s work.

In January 1898 the Kipling’s took ship for Cape Town. They were now five in number, a son having been born the previous August; he was christened John after his grandfather. The purposes of the journey were to avoid the English winter, chiefly for the sake of Kipling’s health, and to give him a second look at South Africa for interest’s sake. As it turned out, the visit was to mark the beginning of an important episode in his life. He renewed an acquaintance with Alfred Milner, the British High
Commissioner, and Cecil Rhodes, the founder of the recently named colony of Rhodesia (which in those days included what is now Zambia). Kipling took the train up to Bulawayo and explored it on a bicycle. He also studied the conditions under which the English, speaking settlers had to live in the two Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, and found them abominable. When he left in April he was already a convinced though not violent anti-Boer.

The projected 1898-99 winter trip was cancelled in favour of one to the United States: Carrie wanted to see her mother and Kipling had some copyright trouble to clear up; not perhaps a very pressing motive in his case. The Atlantic crossing was rough. Josephine and Elsie caught colds; on arrival in New York their condition worsened, then improved again. Carrie, too, came down with fever; she soon recovered. But the sickness would not go away. Kipling was soon taken seriously ill with pneumonia, so much so that his life was feared for. Crowds gathered outside his hotel, and it can be said as truly as it can ever be said that the world waited anxiously for the outcome. As the reader will know, it was favourable in his case. Six-year-old Josephine, however, had suffered a relapse and died a couple of days after her father was pronounced out of danger.

It took Kipling months to recover from his illness: nothing is known of his recovery from the loss of his daughter. As soon as he could travel, in June 1899, he took the remnants of his family back to England. He never again visited the United States.

That October, the South African War broke out. It is enough, that Kipling took the British side, partly, like his friends Milner and Rhodes, out of instinct, partly; again like them, because he felt he had seen evidence that the Boers were enemies of freedom and progress in that part of the world. At any rate, he worked for the cause. He formed a volunteer company at Rottingdean; he drummed up money for soldiers' dependants; he wrote
poems. The first of these, 'The Absent, Minded Beggar', was also used as a 
fund raiser: reprint fees, performing rights and the like brought in £250,000.

In all, Kipling spent seven or eight months of the next two and a half 
years in South Africa. He visited wounded soldiers, worked for an Army 
newspaper, was closely consulted by generals and politicians, had a ringside 
view of a battle. He saw the workings of the Empire more intimately, and 
when they were under much greater stress, than ever during his time in 
India. And yet all that came directly out of this contact, which continued in 
peacetime, was three second rate stories and some ephemeral verses. 
Perhaps he had not cared for the experience; especially in its first months, 
the war had shown up England as less strong than might have been thought.

It seems clear that the patriotic zeal he had shown in those first months diminished later. The book he completed at Cape Town in early 
1902 was his Just So Stories.

The year 1902 was one of change for Kipling. Peace was signed in 
South Africa. Kipling and his family moved into their final house, 
Bateman's, at Burwash in Sussex. Half his life was over, the more important 
half in many ways. When Orwell said of Kipling that he 'belongs very 
definitely to the period 1885-1902', he had in mind Kipling's political 
outlook, his seeming failure to accommodate himself to subsequent changes 
in that sphere. Kipling developed early and he went off early.

One of the best stories Kipling wrote after settling in Bateman's is 
'The House Surgeon', a powerful macabre tale about a house that throws a 
pall of depression over occupants and visitors. This is supposed to refer to 
his house near Torquay, in which both he and Carrie are known to have felt 
uncomfortable. 'The House Surgeon', by the way, could not have been 
written earlier than 1904, seven years after he left Torquay.

It would be unfair, and false too, to conclude that Kipling spent his 
last thirty-four years in an over ground dungeon. He was one of the first
motorists, beginning with a steam-driven American 'locomobile' in which he explored Sussex. He and Carrie went on visits and received visitors, from Stephen Leacock to Georges Clemenceau, though they saw few of their neighbours. The South African trips ceased after 1908. Developments there had disappointed Kipling, who had not bargained for seeing, within a few years of England's clearly won victory, preparations under way for a Union of South Africa-under the British Crown, admittedly, but according equal rights to the Boers, who were the wrong 'race' to do any governing. But in 1907 there had been a visit to his beloved Canada, and in 1909-14 the family took winter holidays on the Continent, chiefly in France, a country to which he always showed a very unjingoistic devotion. In 1913 they went as far as Egypt, where Lord Kitchener proved to be engaged in maladministration. The half-dozen years before the First World War found Kipling engaged in speech-making - not written propaganda - on behalf of the right wing of the Conservative Party.

One of the most famous of Kipling's volumes is *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906), a linked series of tales told in the first person by characters from selected stages of our island story, of whom the best presented is a Roman centurion. Always one to fiddle with modes of presentation, Kipling has each of them in turn summoned in the flesh by the not unamiable sprite, Puck, for the benefit of two comparatively unrevolting Edwardian children - it is a children's book that has won much favour from adults. The structure has its drawbacks. There are constant interruptions at which questions are asked and hard bits cleared up. This helps to see to it that what should be romantic becomes businesslike and everyday. As Gillian Avery has acutely observed, the various narrators are not ghosts, there is no nimbus of mystery about them, and they seemed a child like dressed-up figures from pageant. Puck would have been better advised to turn his time-machine round and send the children off to the past with no one to hold their hands. The tales
themselves are often clever and vivid, but they are weighed down by the sense that the author's grasp of the sweep of British history is being not so much drawn upon as shown off.

The two collections of stories, *Traffics and Discoveries* and *Actions and Reactions*, can be considered together: both are mixed bags. At the top of the list come three tales of the supernatural, not the savage or horrific supernatural as we meet it in some of the Indian pieces, but something gentle and elegiac. 'The House Surgeon', just referred to, is remarkable not only for its evocations of malaise but also for, so to speak, the clarity of its mystery: the reason for the haunting and the manner of its dispersal are conveyed in full without a word of oven explanation. 'Wireless' is better known, but it cuts less deep. The reader's attention is directed more to the skilful counterpointing of its two themes - communication in space by telegraphy and in time by some means or other - than to the pathos of the consumptive chemist's assistant whose mind becomes attuned to that of Keats.

In another famous tale, 'They', a character seeming to represent Kipling comes across a Sussex house and garden in which a blind woman is surrounded by the ghosts of dead children, one of whom proves near the end to be the visitor's daughter. It is perhaps the directness of the link between the later pan of the story and Kipling's loss of Josephine that has led critics to conclude that that loss has not been fully 'resolved.

There are three other notable, or noted, stories in these two collections. 'With the Night Mail' is an interesting piece of science fiction, ahead of its time in more than the obvious sense with its enthusiastic delineation of a non existent technology. The use of faked magazine extracts, including facsimile advertisements, is deeply science fictional, a commendation one needs not explain to those who know the genre, and cannot in this space to those who do not. As is the way with such manners,
'Mrs Bathurst' has by its obscurity attracted attention instead of repelling it; authorial self-indulgence can leave out too much as well as put too much in. *Rewards and Fairies*, a sequel to *Puck of Pook's Hill* turns out to contain that deservedly celebrated poem, 'The Way through the Woods', a pastoral lyric so well done and far outside its author's usual range, whatever that is, as to make it difficult to think of a literary parallel. Two other poems of the years leading up to the First World War stand out from a large mass of the second-rate, not that second-rate Kipling is to be despised. 'The Wage Slaves' sums up his creed of the dignity of work in tones of sober emphasis with an ironical edge and a poise that falters only in the last four lines. 'The Sons of Martha' takes the same theme at a quicker pace, mingling the literal and the figurative with triumphant ease until, again, the end, which brings a sad lurch into religiosity.

Some of that second-rate verse yields something to the biographer's lens. A poem like 'Sussex', in which the natural and man-made beauties of the county are hymned, is well written, observant, thoughtful and too emphatic, the work of a man pushing down his roots by willpower. The same could be said of the story, 'An Habitation Enforced', in which an American couple settle among English country-folk. The latter are too wise and understanding and un-changed and selfless. Nobody shows the strangers any hostility, suspicion or even indifference. Some scenes could even form the basis of the script of a heart-warming American film starring Robert Taylor and Sylvia Sidney. To put the matter less colourfully, the tone and content of the story are Anglophile, something which a real Englishman cannot be.

This failure of connection was soon spotted, among others by G. K. Chesterton, who wrote of Kipling that he was 'the globetrotter; he has not the patience to become pan of anything'. And so he thinks of England as a place.
Two rather later stories suggest this. 'My Son's Wife' (1913) is a gentle, mildly funny rustic comedy in which we can detect a full and genuine assimilation of Sussex and 'Friendly Brook' (1914), while insisting firmly on its author's understanding of the rural life about him, does so only insofar as it is his metier to understand people unlike himself, with no more emphasis than can be found in *Kim*.

The war that Kipling had foreseen and feared came about. To him, what England had undertaken was a defensive crusade, the acceptance of a terrible necessity. No one could have been less subject to dreams of any simple triumph.

He and Carrie got down to practical work on behalf of Belgian refugees and with the Red Cross. Although troubled by illness, he engaged upon a round of military hospitals and camps in England, then, in August 1915, a visit to the troops in France that took him to the front line. In the following month he visited ships of the Royal Navy at official request. A few days after his return to Bateman's, there arrived a telegram with the news that his son John, aged just eighteen and serving as a subaltern with the Irish Guards, was wounded and missing in France.

Kipling, experienced in such matters, knew at once what this signified. According to one account, Lord Beaverbrook (then Max Aitken) arrived at the house for lunch that very day and was met outside it by his host, who told him that John was dead; Beaverbrook turned his car round and drove back to London. Kipling surmounted the loss with remarkable bravery and reticence.

Kipling had little time to write fiction during the war. Two stories of early 1915, however, are of particular interest. The dating is important: immediately beforehand. England had suffered her first air-raids, with more and far worse expected; the V-boat campaign against merchant shipping
was officially announced; and reports of German atrocities in Belgium had been circulated - true or not, they were widely believed.

The first-begun of these stories, 'Sea-Constables', tells how a British captain refused medical aid to the captain of a neutral ship that had been trading with the Germans, whereupon the man died. The author makes no explicit comment, but the message is clear: serve him right! This disagreeable tale is presented in Kipling's most irritating style, virtually all in dialogue crammed with technicalities and leaving obscure what exactly took place. He did not have the story printed in book form until 1926, which perhaps suggests that he had his own doubts about it.

'Mary Postgate' is a different matter. Mary is a middle-aged virgin, companion to an infirm old lady. One day a bomb falls on their village and kills a little girl. Soon afterwards, Mary finds a mortally hurt German airman lying in the shrubbery. So far from calling a doctor, she fetches a revolver and brandishes it at the injured man, saying in broken German that she has seen the dead child. Within minutes the airman dies, at which point Mary experiences sexual release. That is the crux; there are other things in the story, including a couple of obscurities: why and where the aeroplane crashed, for instance.

A great deal of the wartime verse is, not surprisingly, occasional, called forth by some turn in affairs abroad or at home. In large part it survives as poetry long after its demise as propaganda. General statements of defiance like 'A Song in Storm' retain their impact; elegies like 'The Children' still go to the heart; the indignation of 'Mesopotamia' will touch those who never knew its cause.

After the war, Kipling's ill-health continued. Carrie was more protective than ever: she even came to supervise the farming of the estate. But there were constant visitors, from Rider Haggard to Frank Buchman, and Kipling kept in touch with technological developments, especially
was officially announced; and reports of German atrocities in Belgium had been circulated - true or not, they were widely believed.

The first-begun of these stories, ‘Sea-Constables’, tells how a British captain refused medical aid to the captain of a neutral ship that had been trading with the Germans, whereupon the man died. The author makes no explicit comment, but the message is clear: serve him right! This disagreeable tale is presented in Kipling’s most irritating style, virtually all in dialogue crammed with technicalities and leaving obscure what exactly took place. He did not have the story printed in book form until 1926, which perhaps suggests that he had his own doubts about it.

‘Mary Postgate’ is a different matter. Mary is a middle-aged virgin, companion to an infirm old lady. One day a bomb falls on their village and kills a little girl. Soon afterwards, Mary finds a mortally hurt German airman lying in the shrubbery. So far from calling a doctor, she fetches a revolver and brandishes it at the injured man, saying in broken German that she has seen the dead child. Within minutes the airman dies, at which point Mary experiences sexual release. That is the crux; there are other things in the story, including a couple of obscurities: why and where the aeroplane crashed, for instance.

A great deal of the wartime verse is, not surprisingly, occasional, called forth by some turn in affairs abroad or at home. In large part it survives as poetry long after its demise as propaganda. General statements of defiance like ‘A Song in Storm’ retain their impact; elegies like ‘The Children’ still go to the heart; the indignation of ‘Mesopotamia’ will touch those who never knew its cause.

After the war, Kipling’s ill-health continued. Carrie was more protective than ever: she even came to supervise the farming of the estate. But there were constant visitors, from Rider Haggard to Frank Buchman, and Kipling kept in touch with technological developments, especially
aeronautical ones. When, in 1919, the airship R.34 crossed the Atlantic, the crew took with them one book, his *Traffics and Discoveries*, to compare their experience with the science-fiction’ airship story in it, ‘With the Night Mail’. The volume was finally presented to him autographed by everyone on board. Such was the nature and extent of his fame.

The Kiplings continued to travel, especially to France. The first few of these visits were hardly pleasure-trips. They involved Kipling, now a member of the Imperial War Graves Commission, in inspecting and reporting on the state of the British and Dominion burial grounds. On one of these tours, in 1922, he was presented to King George V, there on an official occasion; it was from that encounter that their friendship sprang up. After another and more serious bout of illness in the same year, Kipling was on the move again, to the Continent, to North Africa, to Brazil and in 1930 to the West Indies, the Kiplings’ last long voyage.

Politically he became more and more isolated, falling off the right wing of the Conservative Party. When he found out what Hitler was up to he ceased his lifelong habit of marking his books with the Hindu good-luck emblem of the swastika (a mirror, image of the Nazi one), and in his last public speech he gave a warning of Germany’s aggressive intentions. There was almost no one in power he felt he could rely on except the King, who shared some of his knowledge of the Empire and his concern for what was happening in it. He no longer trusted his cousin Baldwin, Tory Prime Minister though a large pan of the 1920s, growling, ‘Stanley is a Socialist at heart.’

His literary standing was curious. The critics who had discovered and praised him had shifted their enthusiasm to newer luminaries. On the other side of the spectrum lay the Kipling Society (founded 1927), whose hagiographical activities he regarded with ‘gloomy distaste’ — Carrington’s phrase.
Kipling’s penultimate collection of stories, Debits and Credits, appeared in 1926. It contains some self-indulgent fantasy, some exercises in the supernatural, evidence of a preoccupation with disease, some stuff about Freemasons, and three good stories. There is more good than that in the volume: it is hard to find anything by Kipling that is without its successful moments.

In ‘The Wish House’, the interests in the supernatural and in disease are combined. An old countrywoman has intentionally visited on herself the cancer once suffered by her former lover. This part is done with assured restraint, but what is more striking is the skill and insight with which the old woman is made to reveal her nature, her history, her ways of thought to a sympathetic contemporary. Kipling, at sixty-odd, is extending his range once more.

The same combination of themes is to be found in ‘A Madonna of the Trenches’. Here perhaps there is some superfluity. For the phantom of a woman in England to appear to her lover in wartime France is all right (better, in fact), and the same can be said of her mysterious ability to foresee the exact date of her death from cancer. The two together form a largeish lump to swallow, and the Masonic frame story does not help to wash it down.

‘The Eye of Allah’ is a kind of science fiction. A forerunner of the microscope turns up in a thirteenth-century English monastery and is destroyed on purpose as too likely to attract charges of diabolism. The monastic setting displays Kipling’s grasp of detail - detail of processes as well as of appearances - at its very best.

The last collection, Limits and Renewals (1932), shows a sad but not strange decline. Disease, now accompanied by madness, comes back as a recurrent theme. There is a revenge-comedy, ‘Beauty Spots’, among Kipling’s unfunniest, which is saying something. There is a neat detective
story in ‘Fairy-Kist’, despite its title. And, among other pieces, there is
‘Dayspring Mishandled’, which seems to Professor J.M.S. Tompkins,
usually an excellent critic, ‘one of Kipling’s great achievements.’

One of the disease-and-madness group has prefixed to it a poem,
‘Hymn to Physical Pain’, that has attracted attention less for its merits - it is
efficient but not outstanding as verse - than for the light it seems to throw on
its author’s inner life. Pain is seen as a sort of goddess with the blessed
power of obliterating grief, remorse and other spiritual discomforts.

In some ways, the most interesting work of these last years is the
autobiographical Something of Myself, referred to earlier. The ‘some thing’
carries an ironical stress – ‘but by no means everything’. None of the
emotional crises he underwent are discussed, and little is to be learnt of his
life in the domestic and social senses. As regards the part he took in the
literary world of his era, not much is said because there is not much to say.
Despite his immense celebrity, he remained an isolated figure, a member of
no group or alliance, adopting no attitude to any writer then living. He
would not review books or otherwise pronounce on contemporanes.

On the positive side, Something of Myself gives some valuable and
fascinating information about the United Services College, his ‘seven years’
hard life in India, and his stay in America. If some of this is the product of
unconscious revision, what he felt when looking back tells us a great deal
about him. With the unsurprising exceptions of life at Southsea and the
bullying at the College, everything is seen tolerantly, much of it with a calm
benevolence. His admission that he was fully capable of personal hatred
testifies chiefly to unusual frankness and insight; it has been said that he was
slow to forgive a slight, but at this stage any animosities seem long
forgotten.

Kipling’s indifference to public opinion of his work was admirable.

47
Since 1915, Kipling had never for long been free of internal pain attributed to 'gastritis'. It was not until 1933, as his daughter writes, that duodenal ulcers were diagnosed, by which time an operation was thought inadvisable. Not long after his seventieth birthday he suffered a severe haemorrhage and was taken to Middlesex Hospital, where, on 1 January 1936, he died. He was cremated at Golders Green and his ashes were laid in Poets’ Corner in Westminster Abbey.

He had borne his illness with fortitude, not allowing it to diminish his essential good nature. He was an affectionate man, especially towards children, who returned the feeling. His interest in people made him an excellent companion; his courtesy to strangers (as opposed to intruders) was often remarked. Apart from his attachment to Wolcott Balestier, and a less intense one to Rider Haggard (who died in 1925), he formed no very close friendships. The last dozen years of his life were overshadowed by that loneliness which had always dogged him.

Unlike many writers, Kipling was good with his hands, always drawing, painting, manufacturing ancient documents that were made to appear as authentic as possible, not only in orthography and calligraphy, but also in the appearance of the paper; all this for his own amusement. When amateur theatricals - a favourite diversion since his schooldays - were called for, he was the costume-jewellery man.

Food and drink appealed to him, at least until his ulcers began to give trouble. His American publisher, Frank Doubleday, records that, on arrival at Kipling’s bedside in New York in 1899, his offers of help were met with the immediate request for a continuous supply of the best whisky available.

As early as 1900, Kipling’s standing, secure enough with the reading public, began to be questioned by critics. But then there was the troublesome fact of his popularity: how could serious writer be appreciated in music halls? And the man who in India had been taken to be a hostile
observer of the workings of the Empire was now emerging as its apologist, as the ‘unofficial M.P. for British Possessions’.

That phrase was coined by Richard Le Gallienne, a poet and essayist born within a couple of weeks of Kipling. His *Rudyard Kipling: a Criticism* (1900) set the tone for over a generation. The book is full of penetrating critical remarks, true and false predictions, and a mild liberal panic.

Mr Kipling’s general significance and influence is viewed as dire, in the extreme. ‘Nothing if not reactionary’, he glorifies war, and approval of violence creeps into supposedly impartial, documentary accounts.

The reason for Kipling’s popularity was that in him ‘the Englishman as brute’ and philistine had never had an admired writer on his side before.

The tone of an obituary lecture delivered in the year of his death is hardly bold enough to be called defensive: he was a philistine, a tradesman, a tale-smith, perhaps forgivable in the light of his Southsea experience and slightly redeemed by the dependence of his poetry on work rhythms.

In their different ways, Eliot and Orwell led the reaction in Kipling’s favour. A poet who had once been the voice of England and tended to dislike her enemies might have something to be said for him in 1941, and Eliot’s account of Kipling’s virtues was both cogent and enthusiastic.

Quite soon afterwards, the Empire was no longer there and the man who had understood and described it, the only man to have done so, could be posthumously allowed to edge his way back into decent society. By the 1960s, the Kipling revival (among critics and scholars) was in full swing, and today his standing is higher than ever before. Nevertheless, the argument has not been concluded. If it is no longer quite true to say, as John Gross did in 1972, that “Kipling remains a haunting, unsettling presence, with whom we still have to come to terms.”

Kipling’s biographer Kingsley Amis concludes his book with this reroration,
Among the great volume of his work, a perhaps unexpectedly large amount can now be seen to be of the highest quality. The diverseness of his poetry alone is without parallel in our language, and, among the varied forms in which he excelled, the ones he invented himself predominate. With all his breadth there went the gift of distilling a whole thought into a few memorable words. No modern writer has added more phrases to the language. As a travel writer he is unequalled, and has been very much undervalued. His one successful novel is a freak as well as a masterpiece, but he is clearly our best writer of short stories. Once again, his range is wide: the tragic, the comic, the satiric, the macabre, anecdote, fantasy, history, science fiction, children's tale. And he cuts deep. What if he never explored some emotions and some parts of experience. The ones he threw open are a more than sufficient compensation.\textsuperscript{15}

Another biographer Angus Wilson observes,

But a critic has to say more. He has to say that this persistent evasion of introspection, of further questioning of the source of the despair and anxiety and guilt that enmesh so many of his best characters in his best stories, does keep him out of the very first class of writing and from the ranks of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy and Samuel Richardson and Charles Dickens and Stendhal and Proust. I name my favourites only, but there are a score of them. In short-story writing, notably Chekhov. Although, of course, self-knowledge doesn’t make a great writer, but ... On the other hand, the company of the great is fairly large; the number of writers who have, like Kipling, gone out-side the usual range in a hundred different directions and done so with rarely combined gifts - delicacy of craft and violence of feeling, exactitude and wild impressionism, subtlety and true innocence - is very small \textit{Kim}, I believe, is great in its own right; and, for the rest, he did so many, many things very well indeed that the greatest novelists never saw
to do. It secures him a sure place in Olympus. John Gross comments, "Kipling remains a haunting, unsettling presence, with whom we still have to come to terms."  

The present thesis has four chapters. The thesis begins with Introduction (as seen above) where details about Kipling's life and works are provided for a better understanding of Kipling's imperialism as depicted in his works.

The first chapter is about the theme of imperialism and Anglo-Indian fiction. Anglo-Indian literature is quite rich both in subject matter and form. The Englishmen who ruled India and other parts of the world had their own ways of life. They had their own means for entertainment and instruction. Literature was one such means for their time-passing or value-judgements. It reflected them in myriad forms. They did creative writing. Some of the important Anglo-Indian writers were Meadows Taylor, Rudyard Kipling, E. M. Forster, Edward Thompson and others. These writers reflected the theme of imperialism in their fiction. The first chapter makes a brief yet critical survey of the same.

Chapter II is a critical analysis of Kipling's fiction. An effort is made to analyze his novels which speak of his racism, imperialism, Christian attitude, western prejudices and the like. Kipling was a racist and an imperialist. This of his attitude and the so called 'Law' which he insisted upon in life as well as politics is studied in his novels, particularly Kim.

As just stated above, Kipling wrote three novels – *The Light that Failed* (1891), *Naulahka* (1892) and *Kim* (1901). The first one *The Light That Failed* (1891) was written in collaboration with the American writer Charles Wolcott Balestier, whose sister Caroline Starr married him in 1892. The novel closely reflects the young Kipling's life at that time. His hero Dick Helder, an orphan, has been brought up with Maisie, another orphan,
by a guardian. After roughing it about the world as a war artist Dick comes
to London and gets success in work. He falls in love with Maisie. But she
remains cold. Dick goes to the War as a patriot. He thinks that the White
Europe must subdue the black and brown parts of the world. He fights in
Egypt and dies. Kipling's next novel Naulahka is a romance. The title refers
to a fabulous necklace. The first four chapters, certainly Balestier's work,
show an engaging light with that Kipling never attempted. The Naulahka
has for its plot the quest of a famous necklace by an American adventurer,
who has promised to present it to the wife of the President of the Railway
Board. The book is known for its anti-feminist criticism. Kipling was a
masculine writer, no doubt. The Naulahka proved that he was not to excel
in the romance of adventure either; only in 1901 Kim showed the one form
of longer narrative in which he could write a masterpiece-and Kim stands
alone, though for convenience sake it is classed as a novel.

Kim (1901) is one of the best prose works of Kipling. It is a narrative
with characters and events; it is not only the finest story about India, but one
of the greatest novels in the language. Its subject is the land and the people.
Kipling's gift for accumulating detail was never shown better or at such
length or with such power: sights, sounds, and smells. The people are shown
not just in the mass, but in four carefully varied individual portraits: a
Pathan, an elderly upper caste lady from the North West Provinces, a
Bengali, and a Tibetan lama. These, especially the last are triumphs of
educated imagination. Nirad Chaudhuri, himself 'the sword of the empire'
admired this work. Kipling's biographer Angus Wilson thinks, "Kim secures
him a sure place in Olympus."18 T. S. Eliot who calls Kipling 'the first
citizen of India' thinks the same. His writings justify the empire. Kim speaks
about orients' lack of sense of time and discipline. Kim, the indianized
westerner recreates his own consciousness of Indian life.
The following is a critical analysis of Kipling’s empire writing as is evident in his short fiction. It was inevitable that sooner or later someone should make a systematic effort, in the interests (say) of literature and art, to exploit India and the Anglo-Indian life. England awakened at last to the astonishing fact of her world-wide Empire, and had then an ever-growing curiosity concerning her great possessions *outre mer*. The writer who could explain, in a vivid and plausible manner, the social conditions of India, Australia, Canada, and South Africa—who could show, even approximately, how people there lived, moved, and had their being, was assured of at least a remarkable vogue. In India, Kipling thought, one really could see humanity—raw, brown, naked—with nothing between it and the blazing sky, and only the used-up, over-handled earth under foot.

Henry James observes,

Kipling’s Indian impressions divide themselves into three groups, one of which, I think, very much outshines the others. First to be mentioned are the tales of native life, curious glimpses of custom and superstition, dusky matters not beholden of the many, for which the author has a remarkable flair. Then comes the social, the Anglo-Indian episode, the study of administration and military types and of the wonderful rattling, riding ladies who, at Simla and more desperate stations, look out for husbands and lovers; often, it would seem, the husbands and lovers of others. (and) The most brilliant group is devoted wholly to the common soldier...

Chapter III is about the theme of imperialism in Kipling’s short stories. Rudyard Kipling is one of the finest short story writers in the English speaking world. His major collections of short stories are *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888), *Wee Willie Winkie* (1888), *Life’s Handicap* (1891), *Soldiers Three* (1888), *Many Inventions* (1893), *The Jungle Book*
(1895), The Second Jungle Book (1895), Phantom Rickshaw (1898), The Day's Work (1898), Stalky & Co. (1899), Just So Stories (1902), Traffics and Discoveries (1904) and Puck of Pook's Hill (1906). As James observes, Kipling's Indian tales depict the Anglo-Indian life in full perspectives.

*Plain Tales from the Hills* is the first and the longest of the volumes, and, as its title implies, it deals mostly with Anglo-Indian life in Simla. The picture that Mr. Kipling gives is not altogether a pleasant one; but then he does not profess to be an optimist or to represent society as all varnish and veneer. And probably he himself would be the last to maintain that his Mrs. Reiver and Mrs. Mallowe, and even the great Mrs. Hauksbee, the most wonderful woman in India, represent Anglo-Indian society as a whole, or that even at Simla men and women have nothing to do but to make love where they ought not. The second book *Wee Willie Winkle* has just three long stories “Baa, Baa, Black Sheep,” “His Majesty the King,” and “The Drums of the Fore and Aft.” *Life's Handicap* published in 1891 had 27 stories. They deal with the faluous triumvirate of privates, with the British army, and with the comedy and tragedy of native life and character. Two stories, “At the End of the Passage” and “The Mark of the Beast” are concerned with the grim and terrible possibilities and impossibilities of sickness, weariness, fear, superstition, climate, work, and, to put it plainly, the devil, as shown by the experiences of Englishmen in India. Regarding the next book *Soldiers Three* (1892), Thomas Hardy critic and also Kipling's admirer Edmund Gosse observes,

We have hitherto had in English literature no portraits of private soldiers like these, and yet the soldier is an object of interest and of very real, if vague and inefficient, admiration to his fellow-citizens. Mr. Thomas Hardy has painted a few excellent soldiers, but in a more romantic light and a far more pastoral setting."
The collection *Many Inventions*, contains much of Kipling's most characteristic and most enduring work. He is no longer satisfied with the merely exciting, the merely bizarre or the merely comic. Kipling is interested in people as people and not as chessmen moved to make a surprise ending or a clever twist in the plot.

Kipling's two *Jungle Books* (1894 and 1895) are more mature works. Rupert Croft-Cooke observes,

Kipling made what so many writers have desired and created a world of his own in which the laws of probability were of his own choosing. Swift, Butler, 'Anatole France, Cabell, Jatnes Stephens are but a few of the story-tellers who have demanded an escape from the tiresome inhibitions imposed by space and time and the common understanding of cause and effect. Kipling created a Jungle in which there was Law and even Order, in which the animals, while conscientiously retaining certain of the habits of their kind, spoke and loved and obeyed as humans.21

The book The Phantom Rickshaw (1898) was not reissued afterwards. In fact it is clubbed with *Wee Willie Winkie*. The original book had just three long stories. *Stalky & Co* (1899) is a collection of nine stories, first published in 1899. Five other Stalky tales appeared in separate collections; the 14 tales were brought together in The *Complete Stalky & Co.* (1929). Kipling drew on his boyhood experiences at the United Services College at Westward Ho! in Devon. An anonymous reviewer in the *Athenaeum* observed in 1902 that

The *Just So Stories* (1902), in which Mr. Kipling appears both as author and illustrator, should regain the favour which he has lost in some quarters by indifferent verse. Mr. Kipling is, at his best, the most inspired teller of tales that we have; he understands young folk as few writers do.22
It is said,

The two collections of stories, *Traffics and Discoveries* and *Actions and Reactions*, can be considered together: both are mixed bags. At the top of the list come three tales of the supernatural, not the savage or horrific supernatural as we meet it in some of the Indian pieces, but something gentle and elegiac.\(^{23}\)

The stories of the volume *Puck of Pook Hills* (1906) were intended for both adults and children. The meeting of two children, Dan and Una (loosely modelled on Kipling’s own children), with the nature spirit Puck provides the framework for tales reaching back in English history, past the Normans and Saxons to the Roman invaders. A sequel to the collection, *Rewards and Fairies* (1910), followed a similar format.

Kipling settled at Bateman’s in 1902, and from then till his death in 1936 his output in fiction consisted of six books of short stories—*Traffics and Discoveries* (1904), *Actions and Reactions* (1909), *A Diversity of Creatures* (1917), *Land and Sea Tales for Scouts and Guides* (1923), *Debits and Credits* (1926) and *Limits and Renewals* (1932) - an average of two or three short stories a year for the last thirty-four years of his life. It is significant that his autobiography *Something of Myself* gives only twenty-eight pages to this period, though in years it was nearly half his lifetime.

Chapter IV is a critical analysis of Kipling’s writings of the empire. This is a criticism about Kipling’s white attitude. One can find many of his imperialistic insights about empire writings in his fiction. This is more so of his short stories.

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) was a world famous English writer of poetry, novels, and short stories. His dramatic ballads retain the vitality of honest speech—humorous, vulgar, and unpoetic. His lyrics remain
impressive for their moral intensity and insights into historical processes. He was one of the great masters of the short story. Many of his tales exploit for the first time the discoveries of a mechanistic Western society, and the best of them return to the enduring riddle of India and the East and the ironies of cultural contrast that Kipling knew and appreciated.

As we know the British ruled India and many parts of the world (one fourth regions) for more than three hundred years. They even defeated the mighty French and Spanish. The industrial revolution that took place in Europe particularly helped them in controlling the far-flung colonies. The British as the Christians and the white race showed their religious and racial superiority and domination on all those whom they called the blacks of browns. The political thinkers, even the British monarchy, and the intelligentsia supported what we can call the British imperialism. One example is Mr. Rudyard Kipling who supported and at times fervently wrote of this with zeal. Kipling’s views about the British empire and his racism are discussed in the fourth chapter.

The thesis has a conclusion where the arguments of each of the previous chapters are summed up. Besides, there are the possible findings. There is a select bibliography.
References:


11. Kingsley Amis, Rudyard Kipling, Ibid., p. 44.


