Chapter - III
RUDYARD KIPLING'S SHORT STORIES

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 has awakened at last to the astonishing fact of her world-wide Empire, and has now an ever-growing curiosity concerning her great possessions outre mer. The writer who can explain, in a vivid and plausible manner, the social conditions of India, Australia, Canada, and South Africa—who can show, even approximately, how people there live, move, and have their being, is assured of at least a remarkable vogue. Several vogues of this sort have already been won on more or less inadequate grounds: have been won, and lost and the cry is still: 'They come!' From among them all, so far, one writer alone, led on to fortune on this flood-tide in the affairs of men, has consciously and deliberately aimed high; taken his work seriously, and attempted to add something to the vast store of our English literature.

'In India,' Kipling says, speaking in his proper person, 'you really see humanity—raw, brown, naked humanity—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. The most brilliant group is devoted wholly to the common soldier, and of this series it appears to me that too much good is hardly to be said. Here Mr. Kipling, with all his offhandness, is a master; for we are held not so much by the greater or less oddity of the particular yarn-sometimes it is scarcely a yarn at all, but something much less artificial-as by the robust attitude of the narrator, who never arranges or glosses or falsifies, but makes straight for the common and the characteristic.1

Rudyard Kipling is one of the finest short stories 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 we know he is also a great novelist, poet and political thinker. The present chapter analyses Kipling's important short stories.

J. M. Barrie observes,

The best of our fiction is by novelists who allow that it as good as they can give, and the worst by novelists who maintain that they could do much better if the public would let them. They want to be strong, but the public, they say, prohibits it. In the meantime, Mr. Kipling has done what we are to understand they could do if they dared. He has brought no mild wines from India, only liqueurs, and the public has drunk eagerly. His mission is to tell Mr. Grant Allen and the others that they may venture to bring their 'Scarlet Letter' out of their desks and print it. Mr. Kipling has done even more than that. He has given the reading public a right not to feel ashamed of itself.

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on second thoughts, which is a privilege it seldom enjoys. Now that
the Eurekas over his discovery are ended we have no reason to blush
for them. Literary men of mark are seldom discovered; we begin to be
proud of them when they are full-grown, or afterwards. ²

1. PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS (1888):

An anonymous reviewer in the Saturday Review in London in 1888
thinks there is a good deal in a title. Could there be a much less attractive
title than Plain Tales from the Hills?

There are forty plain tales, of which twenty-eight have appeared
separately in a newspaper, and the other twelve are, in the modest words of
the author more or less new. Each tale is extremely short, the average length
being just under seven pages. Nevertheless, for the profitable disposal of
odds and ends of time or for a cross-country journey in stopping trains on
Sunday it would be hard to find better reading. Mr. Kipling knows and
appreciates the English in India, and is a born story-teller and a man of
humour into the bargain. He is also singularly versatile, and equally at home
in humour and pathos. 'Thrown Away,' a story of a commonplace youth
who killed himself in despair merely for want of proper training, is little
short of genuine tragedy, and is full of a grim humour which is decidedly
telling. 'The Three Musketeers' and 'A Friend's Friend' are farce of a high
order. Four of the stories-and four of the best-concern the British private in
regiments stationed in India. Another remarkable military story is 'The
Madness of Private Ortheris.' Ortheris goes out shooting with his friend
Mulvaney. The military stories happen to have been dwelt on here, but there
are many tales of civilians, and indeed of natives, that are really quite as
good.

As Kipling’s first book of short stories Plain Tales has the following
stories: Lispeth, Three and —an Extra, Thrown Away, Miss Youghal’s Sais,

*Plain Tales from the Hills* is the longest of the volumes, and, as its title implies, it deals mostly with Simla life. 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. Still, those who have had the most experience in India—by which we do not mean those who have moved longest and most smoothly along the official groove—will recognize that in many respects these stories give a true picture of what is at all events not an inconsiderable section of Indian society.

Kipling developed his characteristic voice in this book of 1886. The presiding teller of these tales is the breezy, cynical reporter, the knowing observer of a community to which he himself belongs. The model was Mark Twain in his role of frontier journalist, the Mark Twain of *Roughing It*,
whose stories both celebrate and poke fun at the eccentricities of Frontier life.

Some of the more important stories are analysed here.

**Lisbeth:** But it is notable that, in his work and in his life, the peoples of the foothills of the Himalayas seem to share something of the great mountains' grace. In 1885, Kipling made a recuperative journey there as far as 9,000 feet and was enchanted by the hill people and the beauty of their women. Here, one feels, are people who need nothing save protection from the white world. And, indeed, it is here that two stories are laid showing how absurd and empty, even harmful are the dreams of Christians who would seek to impose their beliefs upon the natives. In Kipling’s eyes, this was never other than foolish throughout India, but here in these idyllic hill villages it is seen as actively cruel. ‘Lisbeth,’ the heroine of the story that stands first in *Plain Tales from the Hills*, becomes half servant, half companion to the chaplain’s wife in Kotgargh. She meets and saves a young English traveller who has fallen by the wayside with fever. And she believes his loving professions of thanks.

**False Down:** Mr. Kipling’s romances are not all of equal value; far from it. Several of them might indeed be left out with no great loss. But the best are very good indeed. For example, to read ‘The False Dawn’ is to receive quite a new idea of the possibilities of life, and of what some people call the potentialities of passion. Cut down to the quick, it only tells how a civil servant, in love with one sister, proposed to another in the darkness of a dust storm. But the brief, vivid narrative; the ride to the old tomb in the sultry tropical midnight, ‘the horizon to the north, carrying a faint, dun-coloured feather, the hot wind lashing the orange trees; the wandering, blind night of dust; the lightning spurting like water from a sluice; the human passions breaking forth as wildly as the fire from Heaven; the headlong race in the whirlwind and the gloom; the dust-white, ghostly men and women all
these make pictures as real as they are strange. 'I never knew anything so un-English in my life,' says Mr. Kipling; and well he may. It is more like a story from another world than merely from another continent.

**The Three Musketeers:** Yet characteristically the finest battle scene in Kipling’s stories is not a victory but a near-disaster. The story not of the three musketeers but of the two drummer boys, Lew and Jakin, in ‘The Drums of the Fore and Aft.’ This story is more than usually cluttered with a long, though not uninteresting didactic introduction on the nature of good fighting men. They are, he suggests, “blackguards commanded by gentlemen to do butchers’ work with despatch and efficiency...” This blackguard view of the army does not tie up entirely with the *Soldiers Three*, let alone with Kipling’s hero, Lord Roberts; he would seem to be reverting to the days of the Duke of Wellington. Yet it may well have been a realistic view of the needs of the mountain pass frontier skirmishes with the Afghans which this story describes, drawn from the near-defeat of Ahmed Khel of 1880.

The Fore and Aft, the regiment, is at what Kipling believes is a dangerous stage of literacy: “the percentage of school-certificates in their ranks was high, and most of the men could do more than read or write.” As a result, in their first military encounter with Afghans in the Kohat Pass, they waver and break. And the day would have been lost through cowardice if it had not been for the two fourteen-year-old drummer boys, Jakin and Lew, who rally them with the tune of ‘The British Grenadiers.’ They do so because they’re too drunk with rum to run away and too drunk with rum to know what they are doing. “Beautiful ladies who watched the Regiment in Church were wont to speak of [Lew in the choir) as a darling.” And so apparently does the illustrator who portrays “their last stand” in the famous picture. But they are little thieves, drunkards and bullies who’ve never known anything better than the Army (unlike Rousseau’s noble savage,
Kim, who has grown up in the bazaars and on the rooftops). And they die for it, caught between the two sides cross fire, and dead drunk. It is a macabre story of defeat turned to victory, of the powers of drunkenness over cowardice.

I 'eard the-knives be'ind me, but I dursn’t face my man,
Nor I don’t know where I went to, 'cause I didn’t 'alt to see,
Till I 'eard a beggar squealin' out for quarter as 'e ran,
An’ I thought I knew the voice, an’ it was me!(‘That Day,’ p. 25)

When it comes to fighting which is the purpose of the Army on the frontier, to back up which is the purpose of the administration of the Punjab, which is the life that Kipling knew in India, it’s the breaking-point that holds him, the moment when everything seems just about to crack, the moment when we almost ran.

**His Chance in Life:** Kipling sees the Eurasians, of course, as they were in a British-dominated India. And inevitably it is their sense of whiteness that gives them their moments of victory over their depressed existence. As with the love of Michele d’Cruze and Miss Vezzis in ‘His Chance in Life’ where some atavistic drop of Yorkshire blood in the girl imposes a demand, as a preliminary to marriage, of a basic salary far beyond the hopes of her telegraph signaller lover. Beyond the hopes, but not beyond the courage and the sudden sense of authority that Michele finds, when without any white man available to take charge, he quells a religious riot far south in Orissa. And so earns promotion and his love.

**The Watches of the Night:** Kipling’s personal hatred allowed to go unchecked. He always sees as a foolish weakness - from ‘The Watches of the Night,’ a story of 1887, where we are told, “Now Mrs Larkyn was a frivolous woman, in whom none could have suspected deep hate... She never forgot,” to the ruin of the talented Manallace through giving his life to personal revenge in ‘Dayspring Mishandled’ (1928).
The Taking of Lungtungpen: And what when battle or skirmish comes to make sense of the soul-killing tedium? With the *Soldiers Three* it is always in reminiscence-short, brutal, absurd, or effectively half-comic as in the Burmese exploit 'The Taking of Lungtungpen.' The meaning of the soldiers’ tedious life it may be, but Kipling never sweetens that into glorious heroics. Indeed the most graphic moment in all the battle scenes is when the regiment returns from active service in 'Love O’ Women.' Not the melodramatics of the blackguard soldier Larry’s last syphilitic moments in the arms of his seduced girl turned whore, with its strained Shakespearian “I’m dyin’, Aigypt – dyin’,” but the homeward march of the regiment into Peshawar.

Kidnapped: And in ‘Kidnapped,’ a story of 1887, Mrs Hauksbee, whose exploits usually undermine the more cruelly narrow convention of white Indian society by humane fun, acts with uncharacteristic myopic hardness when she arranges the kidnapping of Peythroppe, a promising young government servant, to prevent his marriage to the Eurasian, Miss Castries. Kipling, indeed, seems disturbed at this humiliation of a half-caste girl deserted at the altar steps, for he gives as his reason, “marriage in India does not concern the individual but the Government he serves,” and he makes the jilted Eurasian girl behave impeccably after her sorry treatment. “Miss Castries,” he says, “*was a very* good girl.”

The Arrest of Lieutenant Golightly: The most successful story about an officer is, however ‘The Arrest of Lieutenant Golightly,’ in which a somewhat self-satisfied, extremely dandyish officer falls from his horse in a rainstorm coming down from leave in the hills. Filthy and unrecognisable he is arrested, despite all his protests, as a deserter from the ranks and treated accordingly. Perhaps it is natural that, as in ‘The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes,’ Kipling seems most in his stride when the sahib’s role is
grimly and comically reversed. His sense of life's insecurity is fully satisfied.

In the House of Suddhoo: The natives of India have been dwelling for countless centuries in the region which can make even Englishmen un-English. 'In the House of Suddhoo' he will not only be taught to shiver, though the magic employed was a mere imposture, but he will learn more of what uneducated natives believe, than official records and superficial books of travel can tell him. There is nothing approaching it in modern literature, except the Pakeha Maori's account of a native séance in a Tohunga's hut in New Zealand. The Voice, the twittering, spiritual Voice that flew about the darkness, talking now from the roof, now from the floor, now without, now within, impressed the Pakeha Maori till it said, 'Give the priest my gun.' Then the English observer began to doubt the genuine nature of the ghost. In the same way when the dead head of the native child spoke as it floated on the brass basin in the haunted house of Suddhoo, the English spectator can hardly help being moved, till the dry lips declare that the fee of the sorcerer must be doubled. Here the mistake from the artistic point of view came in. But the tragic consequences came in too inevitably Mr. Kipling acts Asmodeus here, and, as it were, lifts the roof from the native house.

The Gate of a Hundred Sorrows: On the other hand in 'The Gate of a Hundred Sorrows,' the whole life of a half-caste opium smoker, all the spectacle of will and nerve hopelessly relaxed and ruined, is transparent and masterly. At first three pipes enabled him to see the red and yellow dragons fight on his neighbour's cap. Now it needs a dozen pipes, and soon he will see their last battle, and slip into another sleep, in 'The Gate of a Hundred Sorrows.' The tales of English existence, official and military, are often diverting and witty; occasionally flippant and too rich in slang. Mr. Kipling
may have the vivacity of Guy De Maupassant, but he has neither his pessimism, nor, unluckily, the simplicity of his style.

**To Be Filed for Reference:** Kipling's planned novel Mother Maturin never was published, of course, for Kipling wrote only a part of what was intended to be his great novel of the half-life and low-life of Lahore. From the names dropped in the course of the ravings of Jellaludin McIntosh in 'To Be Filed for Reference,' we can tell that, connected with it, is the poem 'The Ballad of Fisher's Boarding House.'

So these stories which once appeared in *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore and made Kipling famous are of his famous stories. It is said,

In this collection of short stories Kipling succeeds in shattering such misapprehensions about life in India during the British Raj. Drawing on his own experience as a cub reporter, he is able to interpret the ways and beliefs as well as the work and pleasures of the Imperial administrators and the races they governed that were half a world away from his original Victorian readers. Rupert Croft-Cooke in his book *Rudyard Kipling* observes, "Isolated from the rest of Kipling’s work and re-read to-day the stories in *Plain Tales from the Hills* are impressive."

Mr. Kipling's tales really are of an extraordinary charm and fascination, not to all readers no doubt, but certainly to many men. His is more a man's book than a woman's book. The average novel reader, who likes his three stout volumes full of the love affairs of an ordinary young lady in ordinary circumstances, will not care for Mr. Kipling's brief and lively stories. There is nothing ordinary about them. The very scenes are strange, scenes of Anglo-Indian life, military and official; of native life; of the life of half-castes and Eurasians. The subjects in themselves would be a hindrance and a handicap to most authors, because the general reader is much averse to the study of Indian matters, and is baffled by *jhairuns*, and
khitmatgars, and the rest of it. Nothing but the writer's unusual vivacity, freshness, wit, and knowledge of things little known—the dreams of opium smokers, the ideas of private soldiers, the passions of Pathans and wild Border tribes, the magic which is yet a living force in India, the loves of secluded native widows, the habits of damsels whose house, like Rahab's, is on the city wall—nothing but these qualities keeps the English reader awake and excited. It may safely be said that Plain Tales from the Hills will teach more of India. Here is an unbroken field of actual romance, here are incidents as strange as befall in any city of dream and the incidents are true.

'It would be a good thing,' Mr. Mark Twain says, 'to read Mr. Kipling's writings for their style alone, if there were no story back of it.' This might be a good thing if it were not impossible, the style being the story. As well might one say, 'It would be a good thing to admire a Rubens for the way it is painted alone, though there were no picture back of it;' or, 'It would be a good thing to admire correct spelling, though there were no word back of it.' Words are what we spell ideas with. Here, then, is the difference between style and matter. The ideas are the matter, and the spelling is the style. Kipling, however, owes nothing to any other writer. No one helped to form him. He never imitated, preparatory to making a style for himself.

2. WEE WILLIE WINKIE (1888):

This book has just three long stories 'Baa, Baa, Black Sheep,' 'His Majesty the King,' and 'The Drums of the Fore and Aft.'

Baa, Baa, Blackship (1888): 'Baa, Baa, Blackship' was published in The Week's News, a supplement of the Pioneer, the Indian newspaper he worked for in Allahabad, which was read not only in Europe, but also all over India. The resuscitation of the story, the recapitulation of their son's misery as a topic of the social and club conversation, however the speakers
may have regarded it as fiction, must have been very painful to his parents. According to Louis Cornell, "Whatever its aesthetic merits, 'Baa Baa, Black sheep' provides an indispensable key to the attitudes and themes expressed in Kipling's fiction."\(^5\)

Other such books are *The Story of the Gadsbys, In Black and White, Land and Sea Tales for Scouts and Guides* (1923), *The Phantom Rickshaw*, and *The Man Who Would be King and Other Stories* (the stories of this book are: The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes, The Phantom 'Rickshaw, Gemini, At Twenty-Two, The Education of Otese Yerees, The Hill of Illusion, Dray Wara You Dee, The Judgment of Dungara, With the Main Guard, In Flood Time, Only a Subaltern, Baa Baa, Black Sheep, At the Pit's Mouth, Black Jack, On the City Wall, The Man Who Would be King). Kingsley Amis observes, “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.\(^6\) Likewise Kipling's books of stories like *Actions and Reactions* (1909) and *Rewards and Reactions* (1909) are not reissued. Many stories of such volumes are usually merged in new editions brought out by publishing houses.

Kingsley Amis observes,

*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.  

3. LIFE’S HANDICAP (1891):  
Mr. Kipling has gathered into the volume twenty-seven stories: the best of them have been already recognised by readers of the magazines as Mr. Kipling’s finest work. The book is so characteristic, for good and bad, of its author, that it may be interesting to attempt a classification of these twenty-seven stories. Eight of them, with certain limitations, are excellent: The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney, The Courting of Dinah Shadd, On Greenhow Hill, The Man Who Was, Without Benefit of Clergy, Through the Fire, The Finances of the Gods and Little Tobrah. To these may be added his fine Preface. These stories 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. Three more, The Return of Imray, Bubbling Well Road and Bertran and Bimi are powerful stories of the horrible, without any mixture of mystery and impossibility. Three -- The Mutiny of the Mavericks, The Head of the District and Namgay Doola have, more or less directly, a political moral wrapped up in them. Five more, The Amir’s Homily, Jews in Shushan, The Limitations of Pambe Serang, The City of Dreadful Night and The Dream of Duncan Parrenness are mediocre examples of Mr. Kipling’s various manners; and of these the fourth is the most striking. The remaining six do not deserve publication: The Lang Men O’Larut, Reinnelder and the German Flag, The Wandering Jew, Moti Guj, Georgie Porgie and Naboth. The volume ends with some of Mr. Kipling’s best verses.
Lionel Johnson observes, "The one great fault in Mr. Kipling's work is, not its brutality, nor its fondness for strong effects, but a certain taint of bad manners, from the literary point of view." He insists upon spicing his stories with an ill-flavoured kind of gossip, wholly irrelevant, and very offensive. For example: 'The Man Who Was,' an admirable story, full of that indefinable spirit, military patriotism and regimental pride, is spoilt by this pointless passage. Lionel Johnson observes, "And indeed they were a regiment to be admired. When Lady Durgan, widow of the late Sir John Durgan, arrived in their station, and after a short time had been proposed to by every single man at mess, she put the public sentiment very neatly when she explained that they were all so nice that unless she could marry them all, including the colonel and some majors already married, she was not going to content herself with one hussar. Wherefore she wedded a little man in a Rifle Regiment, being by nature contradictitious: and the White Hussars were going to wear crape on their arms, but compromised by attending the wedding in full force, and lining the aisle with unutterable reproach. She had jilted them all—from Bassett-Holmer, the senior captain, to little Mildred, the junior subaltern, who could have given her four thousand a year and a title."

According to Johnson the one story in the book, admirable from first to last, is 'The Courting of Dinah Shadd': the tragedy of his life, told by Mulvaney. The Irishman's story is told with perfect truth and pity: Mr. Kipling makes not one mistake in sentiment. But had Mulvaney's colonel told the story of his life, Mr. Kipling would have filled it with cheap jests and cynicisms, gall and bitterness.

The Man Who Was: As to the officers' mess, the story 'The Man Who Was' with its charming Russian spy ostensibly on holiday in India and its officer returned like a ghost to the mess banquet of the White Hussars to show the signs of Russian prison-camp torture, has all the marks of
melodrama that made it so successful on the London stage with Beerbohm Tree in the lead. Yet there is nothing more probable than Russian spies in Peshawar in the eighties or than torture in Russian prison camps, then. What seems to falsify it is the note of awe with which young Kipling recounts the splendours and traditions of this famous regiment's ceremonial. The East African administrator Lord Lugard's reaction, when he first read the story in 1894, is interesting, because he had known service in the Afghan War in 1880 and the Burmese War of 1886-7: "His knowledge of the barrack room is greater than that of the officers' mess."

'Little Tobrah: Sometimes even individual benevolence sticks, as in 'Little Tobrah,' the eight-year-old boy who is brought before the courts for pushing his small sister down a well, but acquitted for insufficient evidence. In the court compound, "Little Tobrah, being hungry, set himself to scrape out what wet grain the horse had overlooked." Then the Englishman speaks, "Wet grain, by Jove! Feed the little beggar, some of you, and we'll make a riding boy of him yet! See? Wet grain, Good Lord." And so Tobrah tells. "The big beam tore down upon the roof upon a day which is not in my memory, and with the roof fell much of the hinder wall, and both together upon our bullock, whose back was broken. Thus we had neither home nor bullock - my brother, myself, and my sister who was blind ... There was famine in the land ... so, on a night when we were sleeping my brother took the five annas that remained to us and ran away ... But I and my sister begged food in the villages, and there was none to give ... And upon a hot night, she weeping and calling for food, we came to a well and I bade her sit upon the kerb and thrust her in, for, in truth, she could not see; and it is better to die than to starve ... I who was empty, am now full," said Little Tobrah ... "and I would sleep." Here the connection has been made, not by self-gratifying praise like Imray Sahib's of his servant's child, nor by the sentimental sense of affinity with childhood as when the narrator
encourages the creative games of little Muhammad Din, nor by the shared bliss of Holden as he and Ameera watch their gold-coloured little god Tota pulling the parrot’s tail. All these children die. The Englishman may have fed Tobrah out of pity but he has recruited him for work in the stable. And it is finally work that alone provides reason and connection both between races and within races.

The Mark of the Beast: In ‘The Mark of the Beast’ too, where the planter, Fleet’s, drunken profanation of a temple is avenged by some hypnotic spell that turns him into a human leopard, Strickland’s contribution as Police Chief is more inventive of action than of detection.

The Return of Imray: Jellaludin McIntosh, who has wholly dropped out into the native world, speaks of Strickland with contempt. The only detection that Strickland performs for us seems to satisfy his own pleasure in his authority rather than to reveal any of the famed nearly superhuman powers of seeing into the native mind that he is credited with. With the warning barks of the dog Tietjens and with the snakes protruding from the ceiling cloth, it was not too hard to find Imray’s body hidden above in the roof (‘The Return of Imray’). More difficult, perhaps, would be to condemn hanging the servant who had killed him because he feared that Imray’s blessing upon his little son had brought about the child’s death (“He said he was a handsome child, and patted him on the head: wherefore my child died. Wherefore I killed Imray Sahib in the twilight.”). But Strickland has no such difficulties. (“Do I hang, then?” said Bahadur Khan ... “If the sun shines or the water runs - yes!”).

The Head of the District: This is the central significance of one of Kipling’s best stories, ‘The Head of the District,’ which, for a number of understandable but ultimately irrelevant reasons, has been a source of so much hostility to him. In particular, the story has always been a cause of offence to liberal and Indian readers of Kipling.
Of course no-one would deny that Kipling vigorously beat the imperial drum: nor will anyone seek to contest the fact that a great number of his stories work within an implicit or explicit framework statement reiterating what might be described as the British Imperial Aptitude. Clearly Kipling’s artistic inspiration emerges “en politique.” But to say this as if it were all there is to be said: to see Kipling as “the laureate of Joseph Chamberlain’s designs,” as Mr Tindall does, is to see the surface pattern merely: - and sometimes not even that. To go further and suggest that Kipling’s relationship to the Imperial Idea is thus explained is nonsense. It is, after all, the “mystique” from which his expression emerges that must be explained if we would reach a real understanding of the precise nature of that expression: for the two are linked by the closest sequence of cause and effect. Kipling, much more so than one would at first suspect, in talking about political society is talking about self and individual consciousness. Thus even at his most “imperial,” for instance in ‘The Head of the District,’ he is never being simply political; if we ignore this fact we are closing the door firmly on any hope of understanding what Mr Annan has called “the riddle of Kipling.”

Thus if in his notorious story ‘The Head of the District’ Kipling can be seen, on one level, as launching perhaps his most savage and bitter attack on the educated native who presumed to do a Sahib’s job, the second level must, at the same time, be kept in mind. For what Grish Chunder De threatened was to introduce an entirely different code, and one that would utterly profane the Stoic ideal in which Kipling’s vision emerged. And if one takes away from man his conflict, his fight against overwhelming odds which clearly was to end in defeat, one does nothing less than deprive him of his salvation: take away man’s stoicism and that “Bulkhead ‘twixt Despair and the edge of Nothing” will at once disintegrate.
The Limitations of Pambé Serang: 'The Limitations of Pambé Serang' is an example of Kipling's respect for the perseverance of emotions, even destructive ones, over the transient, meaningless quality of much generosity or compassion or patronage; even though the title, 'The Limitations of Pambe Serang' admits the ultimate self-destructive goal of any murderous impulse under the law. Pambé, the serang, a kind of bosun on a liner, is a Malay, but born in India. Nureed, the stoker, is a Zanzibar Negro. Nureed, in a fit of drunkenness, insults Pambé, then the next morning apologises. But Pambé doesn't accept such apologies, such changes of mood. Before the voyage is out, Nureed flees Pambe's wrath and deserts, but Pambé pursues him all over the world. At last, starving and ill, Pambé lies in a Christian mission room in the East End docks. Here he hears Nureed's voice in the street below and begs the English Christian missionary to bring him up. Nureed has made money and greets the sick Pambé with Negro generosity and patronage. He sees at once what the Christian gentleman does not, that Pambé is desperately poor and he goes to give his old shipmate money. "Hya, Pambé. Hya! Hee-ah! Hulla." He bends over the sick Pambé in gay, Negro greeting. "How beautiful," says the Christian missionary, "How these orientals love like children." But Pambé knifes Nureed. "Now I can die!" said Pambé. But he did not die. He was nursed back to life with all the skill that money could buy, for the Law wanted him; and in the end he grew sufficiently healthy to be hanged ... Pambé did not care particularly; but it was a sad blow to the kind gentleman." It is a powerful story both in its telling, and in its revelation of Kipling's overwhelming fear of sentimentalism. Angus Wilson thinks Nureed is drawn from a Tamil. This story reminds us Conrad's story Lord Jim.

Naboth: The Lahore Club, one of the many noble colonial-classical buildings the English left all over India, appears somewhat anonymously as
the scene of introductory, often premonitory gossip, in a number of stories. And menace, playfully or grimly treated, is present in the few other stones of the Lahore white world, especially where that world is brought into contact with the natives. As in ‘Naboth’: “he opened our acquaintance by begging. He was very thin and showed nearly as many ribs as his basket ... a rupee had hidden in my waistcoat lining. I never knew it was there and gave the trove to Naboth as a direct gift from Heaven .. : Next morning ... he wished to prefer a request. He wished to establish a sweetmeat stall near the house of his benefactor ... I was graciously pleased to give permission ... Seven weeks later ... Naboth brought a blue and white striped blanket, a brass lamp stand, and a small boy to cope with the rush of trade ... One week and five days later he had built a mud pie place in the clearing ... he said that God created few Englishmen of my kind ... Eleven weeks later Naboth had eaten his way nearly through that shrubbery and there was a reed hut with a bedstead outside it ... Two dogs and a baby slept on the bedstead ... Two months later a coolie bricklayer was killed in a scuffle that took place opposite Naboth’s vineyard.” And so on. “Naboth has gone now, and his hut is ploughed into its native mud with sweetmeats instead of salt for a sign that it is accursed.”

4. SOLDIERS THREE (1892):

Soldiers Three has the following stories: The God from the Machine, Private Learoyd’s Story, The Big Drunk Draf, The Solid Muldoon, With the Main Guard, In the Matter of a Private, Black Jack. The Story of the Gadsbys once published separately is merged in the book later. This section has stories like Poor Dear Mamma, The World Without, The Tents of Kedar, With any Amazement, The Garden of Eden, Fatima, The Valley of the Shadow, The Swelling of Jordan, L’envoi. Black and White once published separately is merged in the book later. This section has these
stories Dry Aare You Dee, The Judgement of Dungara, At Howli Thana, Gemini, At Twenty-Two, In Flood Time, The Sending of Dana Da, and On the City Wall.

Thomas Hardy critic and also Kipling 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.9

Look at the three following quotations: 1. “We shot all the forenoon, and killed two pariah dogs, four green parrots, sitting, one kite by the burning-ghat, one snake flying, one mud turtle and eight crows ... Then we sat down ... by the side of the river and took pot shots at the crocodiles ... then we drank up all the beer, and threw the bottles into the water and fired at them ...” 2. Mulvaney had taken off his boots and was dabbling his toes in the water; Learoyd was lying on his back on the pontoon; and Ortheris was pretending to row with a big bamboo ...” 3. “There was a twitching of the muscles of the right cheek as he sighted; Private Stanley Ortheris was engaged on his business. A speck of white crawled up the water course. ‘See that beggar?... Got ‘im!’ Seven hundred yards away, and a full two hundred down the hillside, the deserter of Aurangabadis pitched forward, rolled down a red rock, and lay very still, with his face in a clump of blue gentians, while a big raven flapped out of the pine wood to make investigation.”

The first quotation comes from the story, ‘The Madness of Private Ortheris,’ in which the little cockney soldier of the Soldiers Three is overcome by one of his periodic hysterical longings to be back in London and is talked out of desertion (and certain shooting at dawn) by his friends over the long, long hours of a roasting afternoon in the rank high grass land
by the desolate buffalo-churned banks of the River Ravi that flows by Lahore’s cantonment. The second quotation comes from ‘Black Jack,’ where, once again by the desolate river’s edge, two of the Soldiers Three talk the third out of suicidal action. But this time it is Mulvaney, the talkative, intelligent, drunken Irishman who is being calmed out of one of his black moods in which he is determined to shoot a bullying sergeant - an indulgent easing of deadly constraint that will lead to hanging as sure as any desertion. The third comes at the end of the story ‘On Greenhow Hill,’ in which the silent, heavy Yorkshireman, Learoyd, unburdens himself to his friends of a long-ago tale of the death of a girl he had loved. “The recruiting sergeant were waiting for me at the corner public house. ‘Yo’ve seen your sweetheart,’ says he, ‘Yes, I’ve seen her,’ says I. ‘Well, we’ll have a quart now, and you’ll do your best to forget her,’ says he, bein’ one o’ them smart, bustlin’ chaps. ‘Ay, Sergeant,’ says I, ‘Forget her.’ And I’ve been forgetting her ever since.” Such is the life of Kipling’s soldiers.

Louis Cornell comments,

At his best, Mulvaney becomes larger than life. Tougher, stronger, more imaginative than any man could be, he takes on heroic size and enters a realm that is outside normal human experience; part of the greatness of ‘The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney’ lies in the fact that he becomes, in some mysterious way, equivalent to Krishna, the legendary hero whom he impersonates.10

Kipling’s achievement in creating the three soldiers, whose exploits are best read alongside The Barrack Room Ballads, is an extraordinary and fourfold one. Some important stories of the volume are analyzed here:

With a smaller and even more coherent society, that of the private soldier, Kipling makes increasing use of the environment he treats. At no point does one find him suggesting that there is an answer to the problems raised by the conflict of this society and the individual. Instead, his
acceptance of the military situation as an insoluble pervades the whole collection with sadness and a sense of strain, focused in the personal commitments of the narrator and his three friends, and intensified by the larger insolubles of aging, sickness, and death which form a permanent background to the action. This results in the collection as a whole presenting a more unified appearance than *Plain Tales*, so that the stories may be appreciated singly, yet are never completely detachable from their context. And Kipling’s interest in this whole society, this way of life, as well as in his individual characters, is reflected in the very framework of the book - in the pattern created by the arrangement of the stories. ‘The God from the Machine’ views military society and sees the corruption at bottom, but it is told from a distance: Mulvaney’s involvement is negligible and the story itself slight. ‘Private Learoyd’s Story’ is even slighter, though it tells more of the condition of the three and of private soldiers in general. ‘The Big Drunk Draf’ is a piece in these, dealing comprehensively with its subject, and examining military and personal problems with light-hearted clarity. ‘The Solid Muldoon’ returns one to moral problems in a military setting, and though the corruption is less apparent than in ‘The God from the Machine,’ the sadness underlying the story is deeper. ‘With the Main Guard’ treats the harshness of conditions in army life with an intensity of concern that is overwhelming. ‘In the Matter of a Private’ takes this same theme and transforms it into a thesis story, weakened only by the rhetorical introduction and conclusion, which are much less effective than a narrative frame would have been. The growing violence, hatred and harshnesses, the underlying sadness of the whole collection, find their finest expression in the last story, ‘Black Jack.’ And one’s final impression is that through this sequence of stories Kipling has approached the military condition first lightly, then with pity and horror, and that the examination has been complete, scrupulous, and intense.
‘Black Jack’ is the clearest example of the way in which Kipling can, by interweaving two tales or incidents, call on all the resources of this society which he has recreated. It is also the best example of the complex unity, both moral and aesthetic, that he can achieve by this sort of equipoise - by the elaborate structure of cross-references, parallels and contrasts between the frame and the central narrative.

There is also a loss of tact, the disastrous effect of which can be seen in ‘His Private Honour.’ Within the rules of the code by which this story lives, the narrator, as a civilian, is unbearably presumptuous in his outspokenness, and overweening even in drawing attention to his feelings on a matter which should not concern him: the narrator’s basic limitations have been forgotten.

J. H. Fenwick observes,

The most successful of all the later soldier tales is indubitably ‘On Greenhow Hill.’ In many ways it is unique in the series, and attempts new objects. Nevertheless, one can see it as a natural extension of the Soldiers Three frame, a completely happy development which in some ways highlights the limitations which Kipling has left behind, and explains why ‘The Courting of Dinah Shadd’ and ‘Love o’ Women’ are disappointing. The stories in Soldiers Three were equations of a human and a social condition, one finding its expression through the other.11

One of the first stories in the distinctively “late” manner is ‘They’ (1904), and it is convenient to open discussion of the later Kipling with a work so totally different from the conventional account of him. Even that account allows Kipling an interest in the eerie and the occult. But the first thing to be noticed about ‘They’ is that the part played by the ghostly children and the blind childless woman whose love draws them to the beautiful house she has made for them, has nothing to do with a ghost-story
strumming on the nerves. The mode of the tale is nearer to 'Burnt Norton' than to 'The Turn of the Screw.'

Kipling has taken three widely different types of British soldier, a Yorkshire man, a Cockney, and a 'Paddy from Cork,' and in spite of the savagery of the first, the cynicism of the second, and the thrasonical complacency of the third, we can fully comprehend the attractions which their company is supposed to have offered to the narrator. Of a truth it must indeed have been better to sit out with Mulvaney than to dance many dances, if Mulvaney in the flesh was at all like his literary representation.

Some of the stories in this collection introduce us to the realities of warfare in a surprisingly vivid fashion, and here also Mulvaney's sayings are full of life and originality. For example, he tells how in a peculiarly bloody engagement with some hill tribes, an Irish soldier was anxious to avenge a comrade: "Tim Coulan'll slape aisy to-night," sez he wid a grin (after bayonetting a Pathan): and the next minute his head was in two halves, an' he went down grinning' by sections.'

Mr. Kipling is equally at home in the Yorkshire and Whitechapel dialects; and perhaps the most purely humorous narrative in the book is 'Private Learoyd's Story,' a tale of successful imposture, in which the dog-fancying instinct of the Yorkshireman has full scope. The victim is thus described by the narrator. The perusal of these stories cannot fail to inspire the reader with the desire to make further acquaintance with the other writings of the author. They are brimfull of humanity and a drollery that never degenerates into burlesque. In many places a note of genuine pathos is heard. Mr. Kipling is so gifted and versatile, that one would gladly see him at work on a larger canvas. But to be so brilliant a teller of short stories is in itself no small distinction.

'The Story of the Gadsbys': There have been men who learned Greek in their cradle, and Mr. Kipling was born with an insight into life.
The knowledge of human feeling and human impulse he displays in The Story of the Gadsbys would be miraculous did we not reflect that it is intuitive: he probably knew as much at fifteen as he does at twenty-five. The book is intensely dramatic, and is packed with action and emotion. It has serious faults of diction which are all the more irritating to the reader because they might so easily have been avoided. In more than one scene Mr. Kipling crosses the line which divides art from reporting. He seems to forget that the written word does not produce the same effect as the spoken. A dialogue conducted in the slang of the mess-room only becomes vulgar when it is crystallized into literary form. Words and phrases have one value in life, another in literature, and it is the artist's business to translate, not to transcribe.

Charles Whibley observes,

There is not one but lives and convinces the reader of his life. Captain Gadsby's explanation with Mrs. Herriott is done with amazing dexterity and with that impartial recognition of the facts that holds the scales of sympathy even. There is a haunting pathos in 'The Valley of the Shadow,' and the situation, almost new to literature, is handled with a fine discretion. When Gadsby, uncertain if his wife will live another hour, stumbles into the garden and merely says in answer to Mafflin's inquiry, 'Your curb's too loose,' the touch is so true that it is hard to believe that Mr. Kipling was not a witness of the scene. None, except Count Tolstoi, has introduced the unimportant in an emotional crisis with better tact. And with how sure a hand is drawn the picture of Gadsby 'funking a fall on parade!' The effect of marriage upon the Captain of the Pink Hussars is the result of inspiration rather than of observation. The man who 'led at Amdheran after Bogul-Deasin went under, and came out of the show dripping like a butcher,' is afraid to gallop in column of troop! Where in
literature has the demoralisation of comfort found clearer and stronger expression?12

'The Story of the Gadsbys' is nothing but a series of ordeals, some facetious and some serious. The whole was intended to be 'an Anglo-Indian Autour du manage'; and it might have turned out well, for the Gadsbys' marriage has to outlast nearly every strain to which an Anglo-Indian marriage can be subject. But something went wrong, as Kipling realized later. The innocence and good intentions of old Gaddy and his Minnie win victories that seem contrived, and the story keeps descending into troughs of the commonplace: the nervous bridegroom, the compromising letter from an old flame, the tender announcement of pregnancy. Only at the end does Gadsby face a real dilemma and the story take on substance. The carefully built structure of domestic happiness is finally confronted by a moral imperative, the Captain's duty to his regiment; Gadsby's weakness is exposed, and for a moment he becomes real.

In Black and White: The misfortune is that good and bad are sent out into the world together. The alliance is not a permanent one, but though it endures but a brief while it is imprudent. In Black and White exhibits the same glaring inequalities to which Mr. Kipling has accustomed us. When the two stories are set side by side it is difficult to believe that the author of 'In Flood-Time' also wrote 'The Sending of Dana Da.' The latter is perhaps worthy to beguile a railway journey; the former is one of the finest examples of its genre in the language. He who can read it without a thrill is dead to words. Never has the relentless might of the flood found clearer expression. The rain-swollen river dashes and swirls through the whole story.

An invidious critic might say, and not untruly, that Mr. Kipling has, consciously or unconsciously, formed himself on the model of Mr. Bret Harte. He has something of Mr. Harte's elliptic and allusive manner, though his grammar is very much better. He has Bret Harte's liking for good
qualities where they have the charm of the unexpected. Perhaps the similarity is increased by the choice of topics and events on the fringes of alien civilizations. It may also be conjectured that Mr. Kipling is not ignorant of ‘Gyp’s’ works. In any case he has wit, humour, observation; he can tell a story, and he does not always disdain pathos, even when the pathetic is a little too obvious.

Perhaps the most excellent of his tales is ‘Dray Wara Yow Dee,’ the confession to an Englishman of a horse-dealer from the Northern frontier. This character, in his cunning and his honesty, his madness of revenge, his love, his misery, his honour, is to our mind a little masterpiece. There is a poetry and a melancholy about the picture which it would be hard, perhaps impossible, to find in more than one or two barbaric or savage portraits from a European hand. His confession must be read; we shall not spoil it by analysis.

‘The Judgement of Dungara’: Just as disastrous is the result of the mission of Justus Krenk, Pastor of the Tübingen Mission to the people of the Berbulda Hills in ‘The Judgement of Dungara.’ This was written in 1888 before the Germans had acquired the satanic quality that they increasingly had for Kipling from 1890. They were seen as well-intentioned, plodding people. But their Mission in Berbula is a disaster as great as Dan and Peachey's kingdom. ‘The chapel and school have long since fallen back into the jungle,” the story ends. But there is a difference, for ‘The Man Who Would Be King’ ends in horror, while the Krenks are driven out by a rather schoolboyish joke. It marks the difference of the hills of the Himalayas from the hills of the frontier - and of their inhabitants. It marks the two views of primitivism which alternate in Kipling’s mind - half-devils who crucify and half-children who defeat by gigantic practical jokes. In various degrees, this mixture lies in most of the native Indian world which was the most powerful fictional love affair of his life.
In Flood Time: Is there no connection, then, between race and race, or between individuals of the same race in this northern corner of India, the Punjab? A chance contact may go deep, for the moment, as in 'In Floodtime,' where the hurrying Sahib is held up all night at a ford by rushing floodwater that even the elephants refuse to face. Here he listens to the old Moslem ford guard's tale. It is a grim enough story of his impious wooing of a Hindu girl and his coming to save her in another terrible flood of time past, riding his rival's floating body – "I twisted my fingers in the hair of the man, for I was far spent, and together we went down the stream - he the dead and I the living." But the old man is a solitary and so he can talk. "I see few sahibs. Forgive me if I have forgotten the respect due to them." Even so, "is it likely that the Sahib would speak true talk to me who am only a black man?" Nevertheless there is confidence given in that night, even if it is not the Sahib's confidence. Perhaps the old man feels free to speak because "the Sahib takes it [the old man's liquid tobacco] like a Mussulman." All the same, when the flood subsides and morning comes, the old man has to affirm his status. "Money? Nay, Sahib, I am not of that kind."

'On the City Wall': Kipling achieves his most complex portrayal of native India in a story that has not been much discussed by critics — 'On the City Wall', first published as part of In Black and White in December 1888. It is a story that takes little account of the conventions of the narrative art: the ostensible climax, for instance, where the reporter discovers that he has unwittingly helped a revolutionary to escape from the police, is too minor an incident, placed too close to the end of the tale, to seem in proportion with the rest of the story. But 'On the City Wall' is more than the account of an exciting night of religious riot in the alleys of Lahore. In its pages the forces that were to shape modern India confront one another and struggle towards a partial and ironic resolution. At the centre of the story,
involved in the action and yet apart from it, is the figure of Lalun, the courtesan. India as a sinister, desirable woman is an old symbol, but for Kipling it still kept part of its validity. He had seen Lalun’s counterpart standing at the door of a decayed house in Calcutta, caught in the glare of a policeman’s lantern, ‘blazing — literally blazing — with jewellery from head to foot’. But Lalun herself — with her barbaric wealth, her ancient songs, her beauty, her uncanny knowledge of worldly affairs, her inaccessibility— becomes less a real prostitute than a representative figure of India; she will take part in the scheme to liberate Khem Singh, but in the end she will be unchanged, unaffected by its outcome. The character of Lalun reminds us Kamala in Hermann Hesse’s novel Siddhartha. Louis Cornell observes that “The story addresses to contemporary politics of Lahore.”

5. MANY INVENTIONS (1893):

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.


George Saintsbury says,

Many Inventions is not only good, but very good. I am inclined to think it, using words carefully, the best volume that Mr. Kipling has done. It is, of course, unequal; nobody could write fourteen different
tales of the widest range of subject and style and not be unequal. Of course one reader will like this better than that, and another that better than this. The stories draw nigh with fitful success to that 'True Romance' which Mr. Kipling has celebrated, in verse as heartfelt if not quite as finished as he has ever written, at the beginning of the book, and has not extolled too much. For what is romance but creation? and what is creation if not divine? As for the separate stories, I confess to being in something like the frame of mind of Miss Snevellicci's papa-'I love 'em everyone,' but as a person of taste must speak with graduated affection, I think I like 'My Lord the Elephant' most as a whole, and 'The Children of the Zodiac' least. The 'Finest Story in the World' which is itself a legend of metempsychosis, has affected me in a very strange fashion, for it seems to me that (in another state of existence, of course) I heard Mr. Kipling tell it, and tell it better than here. 'His Private Honour' is the noblest and most complete; the conclusion of 'Love O' Women' (which seems to me as a whole to suffer from ups and downs) is the most passionate and accomplished, I am too much of a Jingo to be quite a fair judge of 'Judson and the Empire' or 'A Conference of Powers,' but it is to me a blessed thing to think that Mr. Kipling, like Kingsley before him, will breed up Jingos by the thousand. 'Badalia Herodsfoot,' though excellent, has been done better before by Dickens and others, with a little less freedom of speech than Mr. Kipling is nowadays. And of the more imaginative and ghostly pieces 'The Lost Legion' seems to me to bear the bell. But what a jejune enumeration of personal impressions is this! For the book is to be read and rejoiced over by the reader, not analysed or even pronounced on by the critic, 'which is 'is 'abit,' as Mr. Kipling's friend the policeman says.14

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The Disturber of Traffic: In this there is ‘The Disturber of Traffic’ that humorous yet oddly realistic study of a lighthouse-keeper in the Dutch East Indies who is driven mad by watching the streakiness of the sea.

Angus Wilson suggests there is even a fear that Challong’s (Caliban) animal side of nature, may play too large a part in the preoccupations of a Prospero, an artist, isolated as is Dowse, the Java Straits lighthouse-keeper. And yet, as we know, there is a desperate longing to escape not only from urban civilisation but from the civilising forces of the group, of the Square and so on. But not alone. It is a horrible and purposely puzzling tale, carefully told without clear definition.

‘The Disturber of Traffic’ is said to have been composed by Kipling while staying with the Balestiers on the Isle of Wight. Certainly the framework of the story is laid in a Channel lighthouse, in which “I” spends a night of fog listening to the keeper’s story of strange doings in time past in another lighthouse far away in the Java Straits.

‘The Finest Story in the World’: ‘The Finest Story in the World’ is said to have been aroused by his cousin Ambo Poynter’s ineffectual search to express himself in poetry. No doubt the London clerk who has visions half-recaptured of his previous lives as a Roman galley slave and in a Viking ship comes from Poynter’s search to express himself to his famous cousin. The metempsychotic theme itself comes from Indian days and is given a special and very well-realised ironic twist by the fact that rational interpretations of it are offered by an educated Bengali. But the real core of the story lies in the clerk’s recalling, both in prose and in verse, of the atmosphere of the Roman galley.

His Private Honour: In a story, ‘His Private Honour,’ written when kipling had returned to London as the literary man of the hour in 1891, his ‘I’ allows himself to muse for a page on his dream of an independent British India grown great, “a colonised manufacturing India with a permanent
surplus and her own flag." Kashmir he envisages as a military training ground.

The book *Many Inventions* includes six Indian tales, of which two concern characters who also appear in *Soldiers Three*. In 'His Private Honour' Ortheris's conduct is dictated by a code which transcends the army rule book. Other notable stories are: 'The Disturber of Traffic', about the delusions and growing obsession of Dowse, a lighthouse keeper in the Java Straits; 'The Finest Story in the World' in which Charlie begins to recall moments of previous lives as a Roman galley slave and on a Viking ship; and 'The Record of Badalia Herodsfoot', a realistic account of the heroine’s struggle for survival in the London slums of the 1890s.

**A Matter of Fact:** The story 'A Matter of Fact,' is in framework a not very good joke against American journalists, but it contains one of his first and best pieces of crude poetic writing of the kind that we should now call science fantasy. This is the death of the grotesque and blinded sea monster thrown up from the ocean’s depths by an earthquake and wounded by a passing liner, and with it, the moving cry of misery that comes from its mate. The passage expresses Kipling’s deep sense of pity with a clear force, that is impossible where he is concerned with human beings and with all the tabus that he holds necessary against indulgence of feeling for the individual.

**In the Rukh:** 'In the Rukh' is about a certain Gisborne of the Indian Forestry Service who loses a forest guard by a man-eating tiger and going to the place of the kill gets his first introduction to Mowgli.

**Brugglesmith:** 'Brugglesmith,' for instance, that crazy farce in which Kipling piled absurdity on absurdity on it seemed that he would rouse the London night about him in guffaws, is the legitimate forebear of 'The Bonds of Discipline' a monstrous pantomime on board a cruiser when a foreign agent is' discovered as a stowaway and is treated to an exhibition which
includes a ratings’ tea-party on the bridge and culminates in the sham execution of a Marine for murder and his burial at sea all of which the agent notes and subsequently publishes to the world.

**Love-o’-Women:** 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.

**6. & 7. THE FIRST JUNGLE BOOK (1894) and THE SECOND JUNGLE BOOK (1895):**

*The First Jungle Book* (1894) has the following stories: Mowgli’s Brothers, Kaa’s Hunting, Tiger! Tiger!, The White Seal, Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, Toomai of the Elephants and Her Majesty’s Servants.

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.15
The idea of the *Jungle Books* had other advantages for Kipling. The psychology was of necessity most primitive. The beasts were beastly, each in his own fashion, the man was manly and the woman, Messua, was womanly. He could have his types now and no one could gainsay him. A simple adjective would do to distinguish the characters of each creature, and these need never develop or react except in the simplest and most direct way.

But if he played with the laws of nature, making Baloo the bear a teacher and Kaa the serpent a friend, and all the animals talkative and obedient to the Jungle Law, he imposed certain other restrictions on his fancy which made the liberties he took with fact seem reasonable, and produced an effect of strict reality. There is --none of the nonsense with which other writers have humanized the beasts—they do not live in little houses or use human utensils or eat human food or follow human habits. They remain beasts, and it is faintly shocking, though perfectly in keeping with the whole conception, that they should speak of the day's kill, instead of, like the three bears in another fairy-tale eating their bowls of porridge. There is nothing of Tiger Tim or of Donald Duck about the creatures Kipling made. They keep their terrible powers and their natural desires, being only gifted with certain extra qualities of logic and loyalty, being, like other characters in less imaginary stories, a little larger than life. Their sentiments and emotions are the elemental ones-Mowgli's love for his foster-parents and foster-brothers, the pride of Baloo the bear and Bagheera the panther in their brilliant pupil, the treachery of Shere Khan the tiger and so on. But they seem quite inevitable, as one reads. The whole convention is accepted from the moment when Father Wolf rescues Mowgli, then "a naked brown baby who could just walk," from Shere Khan.

That convention, in its fundamentally scrupulous fidelity to natural laws, gave the fullest scope to Kipling's craving for correct detail. Of the
ways of wild creatures and of human beings in wild places he had perhaps learnt much from his father, but it is 'the quiet and certain manner in which he reveals as knowledge, never delaying but always enriching the story, never lecturing or showing off yet always ready to outline some hazy patch of background with a few clever strokes, which gives to these stories a reality which would be remarkable in an account of the everyday life of familiar people. “The camel doubled up camel-fashion like a two-foot rule, and sat down whimpering.” “A big brown fruit-eating bat brushed past his ear; a ‘porcupine’s quills rattled in the thicket, and in the darkness between the tree-stems he heard a hog-bear digging hard in the moist warm earth, and snuffing as it digged.” “He met with more adventures than can be told, and narrowly escaped being caught by the basking shark, and the spotted shark and the hammerhead, and he met all the untrustworthy ruffians that loaf up and down the seas; and the heavy polite fish, and the scarlet spotted scallops that are moored in one place for hundreds of years, and grow very proud of it; but he never met Sea Cow, and he never found an island that he could fancy.” ‘Good. Begins now the dance-the Dance of the Hunger of Kaa. Sit still and watch.’ He turned twice or thrice in a big circle, weaving his head from right to left. Then he began making loops and figures of eight with his body, and soft, oozy triangles that melted into squares and five-sided figures, and coiled mounds, never resting, never hurrying, and never stopping his low humming song. It grew darker and darker, till at last the dragging, shifting coils disappeared, but they could hear the rustle of the scales.” “He crawled back over the huddled dogs, dusted the dry snow from his furs with the whalebone beater that Amoraq kept by the door, tapped the skin-lined roof of the house to shake off any icicles that might have fallen from the dome of snow above, and curled up on the bench. The dogs in the passage snored and whined in their sleep, the boy-baby in Amoraq’s deep fur hood kicked and choked and gurgled, and the mother of the newly
named puppy lay at Kotuko’s side, her eyes fixed on the bundle of sealskin, warm and safe above the broad yellow flame of the lamp.”

It is said,

The growth of these books is as visible a thing as the growth of Mowgli himself, and Kipling seems to have scorned any kind of revision or excision which would have made it less obvious. He is never at pains to hide his own way of developing from his initial intent; he never gives a false finish to his work. The earliest reference to Mowgli was in a short story, ‘In the Rukh,’ which appeared not in the Jungle Books at all but in Many Inventions. This was published as a collection in book form in June 1893, a year before The Jungle Book, and the particular story may have first been written before that. ‘In the Rukh’ is about a certain Gisborne of the Indian Forestry Service who loses a forest guard by a man-eating tiger and going to the place of the kill gets his first introduction to Mowgli.16

This Mowgli could have developed from the idealised wolf-boy of the Jungle Books, there is no absolute inconsistency between the two. Clearly Kipling having written ‘In the Rukh’ as a short story wanted to return to his theme and to picture the subject of it in boyhood. He did so, but frankly as a fairy-tale, showing Mowgli as he wished him to be and not as he appeared to forestry officials. But there is a further development. The first story in The Jungle Book, ‘Mowgli’s Brotehrs,’ carried some of the usual phraseology of a tale addressed to children. Father and Mother Wolf are almost relatives of Brer Fox, and although the Law of the Jungle is in being and the pack is howling, there are such direct addresses to childhood as: “Now you must be content to skip ten or eleven whole years, and only guess at all the wonderful life that Mowgli led among the wolves, because of it were written out it would fill ever so many books.” As Kipling became

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more involved in the bloody destinies of his wild animals the stories grew more

The following is a critical analysis of the major stories of the two Jungle Books.

'Rikki Tikki Tavi: 'Rikki Tikki Tavi' has rightly commanded some attention because the fight between the mongoose and the snake takes place in that clearly seen backyard bungalow compound which is Kipling's visual forte; but it is marred surely for modern readers by the whimsical intrusion of the human family.

The Miracle of the Purun Bhagat: 'The Miracle of the Purun Bhagat' is a very fine story. It tells of the Indian Minister who rises to be the toast of London's smart dinner tables and to win the K.C.I.E. and who then changes overnight to become a wandering sanyasi or holy man. It has been hailed as Kipling's tribute both to educated India and to the Hindu way of life. And so it is both; but it has also been pointed out that the denouement of the story, when the holy man, up in the foothills of the Himalayas, leaves his anchorite's rock cell to warn villagers of an impending avalanche, is a tribute to the Western code of action rather than to the Hindu way of passivity. This is surely right, but it is also no chance mistake of Kipling's. He is attempting to pay tribute to both systems and yet to suggest that the Western creed of human concern will assert itself in a crisis.

Whether he is right or not, the story convinces. It is surely a curtain-raiser to Kim, in which the Lama's Wheel and the Great Game (East and West) meet in one man, Purun Bhagat.

The Undertakers: 'The Undertakers,' the story of the river-bank predators - the mugger-crocodile, the jackal, the adjutant stork - is unique in his work, for, in the hypocritical dialogue between these three ruthless cowards he creates a wonderful interchange, humorous and stylised, that might come out of Ben Jonson's Volpone or The Alchemist.
Yet the accent, for all their unevenness, must fall upon the Mowgli group. In the first place, these stories make the most central statement about The Law, that ill-defined, yet absolute and categorical barrier that stands between man and anarchy, and, more importantly, between man and the probably meaningless death and destruction that await him and all his works.

Lord Annan has interestingly shown how close Kipling’s approach is to Continental social philosophy of the time. As Mr Sandison says, contrary to Lord Annan’s view, Kipling doesn’t subordinate the individual to society, he invents a rigid social rule (The Law) to shield the individual (and himself) from a constant nagging anxiety about his ultimate fate. Indeed the whole of this book is intended to suggest that Kipling’s art is suffused with a personal and mysterious despair and apprehension of exactly this kind.

Angus Wilson observes,

The condemnation, then, of the Bandar-log, and the Black Rat at the ‘Mill Dam, and Aurelian McGoggin, and the Wax Moth, and the Mugger, and Shere Khan, and Jellaludin McIntosh is not just for their selfishness and frivolity but because they will bring horror to themselves and other men if their anarchic behaviour spreads. But finally, I am not sure, interesting though these speculations about The Law are, whether they throw so much light on the excellencies of Kipling’s work, upon the way he creates his magical effects. With Shamsul Islam, I would say that Kipling was neither a thinker nor a sociologist but primarily an artist.¹⁷

The chief glory of his art in the Mowgli stories lies in his extraordinary combination of the natural and animal world with the world of the humans. Baloo is a bear and a housemaster; Bagheera is chiefly a
leopard but a wise, sensual man more worldly than the bear; Kaa is primarily a python, delighting in his coils and glistening skin, lusting to chase and kill, but he is also an exceptional and clever man, knowing himself yet accepting The Law, perhaps a true intellectual as opposed to the Bandar-log who are monkeys and “intellectuals”; the jackal is Mussolini’s forerunner, and Shere Khan Hitler’s, as wartime telegrams between the Kipling Society and General Wavell rightly suggested.

Into this world comes the lovable, strong, highly intelligent wolf-cub boy, Mowgli, who learns the simple Law which in more complicated form he will have later to follow in human society. And, by his superior human intelligence and compassion, eventually also wins mastery in the animal world. The Law of the jungle is absolute and can be followed by the animals with comparative ease, for they do not know tears or laughter, the things that make man’s life both more glorious and more complex and far more painfully burdensome among human beings than has ever been known in the Eden of Kaa and Baloo, however bloody and terrible many of the deeds that happen in the jungle.

All this about The Law is interesting, but as far as Kipling’s art goes, it often gets in the way, with too much didactic moralising. In The First Jungle Book, only one story is reasonably free from it and that doesn't really get going until halfway through. ‘Kaa’s Hunting’ contains one of the most horrible scenes in all Kipling’s work - and that work contains many such. It is the picture of the Bandar Log monkeys swaying helplessly towards their doom in the great ruins of the King’s palace in a hypnotic trance induced by the coiling and looping of Kaa, the python’s body and his “never stopping, low humming song.” It is made more terrible by the jungle fact that, were it not for Mowgli’s human unsusceptibility to the snake’s enchantment, Baloo and Bagheera, Kaa’s erstwhile co-hunters, would inevitably sway towards their death with the monkeys. For, in the jungle, all
alliances - and bear, python and leopard have hunted together to rescue Mowgli - break up when the kill is on. It is made, indeed, even a little too horrible by a certain relish with which Kipling recites the awful fate of the frivolous, mischievous monkey folk.


The King’s Ankus: The crown of the two books is ‘The King’s Ankus,’ Kipling’s best use of myth in all his work. The story opens deceptively and purposely as the most sensually idyllic of all the scenes in this Eden, with Mowgli “sitting in the circle of Kaa’s great coils, fingering the flaked and broken old skin that lay looped and twisted among the rocks just as Kaa had left it ... It is very beautiful to see - like the mottling in the mouth of a lily.” This lolling in the python’s folds during the heat of the day gives way to the evening visit to the jungle pool. ‘Then the regular evening game began - of course Kaa could have crushed a dozen Mowglis if he had let himself go... They would rock to and fro... till the beautiful, statue-like group melted in a whirl of black and yellow coils and struggling legs and arms.” But the jungle paradise of learning life’s laws and strengthening the body is always circumscribed by what even the wisest of the animal-preceptors, even Kaa, the python, doesn’t understand; such unknown dangers nearly always relate to men and their ways.

So it is in ‘The King’s Ankus.’ Mowgli, sleepy and relaxed after his wrestling, expresses his content: “What more can I wish? I have the Jungle and the favour of the Jungle. Is there anything more between sunrise and sunset?” It is then that Kaa, who loves the boy, as all his animal protectors do, pours into Mowgli’s ear (serpent-like) the knowledge of something new.
A very old white cobra, that lives deep beneath the ruins of Cold Lairs, guards a mass of objects (Kaa could make neither head nor tail of them) that have been in his care for centuries - they are, the old cobra says, things “for the least of which very many men would die. “Mowgli is sure that these new things “must be a new game,” but Kaa declares, “it is not game. It is - it is - I cannot say what it is.” It is, of course, the treasure of the kings who once ruled in the ruined city, gold and jewels in abundance, described by Kipling in a restrained *Yellow Book* manner that is as pleasing as it is fitting.

The white cobra is one of Kipling’s most fascinating creatures. In it he suggests that sense of something repulsive and frightening that, if we are honest, we must admit to find in some very old people.

But the cruelty, the venom that lies beneath the pathos soon shows itself, as he seeks to entrance Mowgli with the treasure, as all humans are entranced by gold, and then to make sport, in killing the trapped boy. “Is this not worth dying to behold? Have I not done thee a great favour?” he asks, and then calls to the angry Kaa, “See the boy run. There is room for great sport here. Life is good. Run to and fro awhile and make sport, boy.” But the cobra is impotent as well as old, his venom has dried up. Mowgli scorns to kill him, as he also scorns the royal jewels and coins he does not understand. His curiosity only bids him take the jewelled and golden ankus or royal elephant goad. And in a day, he sees four men lose their lives in lust for it. At last, he takes it back into the cobra’s deep den. He is not yet ready to leave his jungle Eden, perhaps the sight of what gold does to men has even deferred his instinctive urge to grow towards manhood by a story or two.

**The Spring Running:** But at last it comes in ‘The Spring Running,’ where Bagheera the leopard, seeing the boy in tears says that he will soon leave the jungle for human life, for animals don’t know tears. This final story is a moving, if a little disjointed piece. Mowgli goes off to
assume later his proper human duty under The Law as a member of the Forestry Service of the Indian Government of Her Majesty (told in ‘In the Rukh,’ a story published earlier than the *Jungle Books*). But, in fact, Mowgli, the wolf boy in the jungle, is surely only the shadowy if delightful precursor of Kim, the street arab, who knows all guiles yet remains in Eden innocence, a far more delightful hero, for, unlike Mowgli, his zest for life is not the product of bodily health and physical content only, but of an endless desire to see and know new things. Kipling takes his myth of Eden away from the world of animals, where Mowgli is the master of the Jungle, to the scene of the Grand Trunk Road so rich in human variety, where Kim is something much better than a master - The Little Friend of all the World.

The sequence of stories about the boy Mowgli, accidentally thrust put of the human community into the jungle, forms the core of these collections. His growth from jungle boyhood to dominance over the animals, and his eventual return to human service as a forest ranger, provide the basic framework. The code of conduct in the animal world is severe and requires a high level of responsibility; this is demonstrated in ‘Letting in the Jungle’, where retribution is brought on the village which sought to destroy Mowgli. In comparison with the jungle law and the stoic social duty of the animals, humanity is unruly and undignified. Mowgli’s discovery of his inner nature takes the Jungle Books close to the conventions of the bildungsroman. There are strong elements of myth, too, in the recurring leitmotif of a fallen Eden: Mowgli is effectively shut out from his boyhood paradise when the blood-tie with humanity reclaims him. The theme of a divided emotional and cultural allegiance is present in the stories outside the Mowgli group, notably in “The Miracle of Purun Bhagat”, about a man who has to adjust from western codes of conduct to the life of a Hindu holy man.

It was the Hills’ photographs and accounts of the Seonee jungle, which they visited, that gave Kipling much of the scenic background for *The
Jungle Book. Most important, the Hills surely set his mind more firmly on a world outside India.

Three of the seven stories in The First Jungle Book and five out of the eight in The Second Jungle Book concern Mowgli and his jungle empire. For many people Mowgli, Baloo, Bagheera, Kaa and Co. are the Jungle Books - a kind of Greyfriars. But the merits of the individual Mowgli stories vary very much. Only a few, and perhaps only parts of these, show Kipling at his very top form.

The interest in the Mowgli group as a whole cannot really be a literary one. It is connected with his pervasive idea of the Law which is expressed in them more continuously than in the rest of his work, although hardly less obscurely. But first one should mention the two or three non-Mowgli stories whose excellence has been overshadowed by that attractive jungle predecessor of Kim.

8. THE PHANTOM RICKSHAW (1898):

This book is not reissued afterwards. In fact it is clubbed with Wee Willie Winkie. The original book had just three long stories, My Own True Ghost Story, The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes and The Man who would be King.

The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes: The crown of this terrible hidden gulf between conquerors and conquered is to be found in ‘The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes,’ a story written early in Kipling’s Lahore days, when he was still nineteen, when perhaps he saw more deeply into the heart of things than he fully realised. It is laid near Pakpathan in the desert areas that border the Sutlej River, some one hundred miles from Lahore. A desolate region for a man to be stationed in the eighties of the last century. By the strangest of coincidences the area might now see many bus-loads of tourists, for it was here in the nineteen-twenties that was excavated the
buried city of Harappa that flourished on the River Ravi in 2000 B.C. Strange because in this region on the banks of the twin tributary of the Indus and the Sutlej, Kipling lays his grand guignol of the deep sand crater where are shut up those who, apparently dead, came to life in the fires of the ghat. Here they are forcibly kept, as dead to the world as their yet undiscovered neighbours of four thousand years before. Into this crater Morrowble Jukes, an English engineer, falls with his horse. And here amid the half-starved derelicts, feeding off crows, sleeping in sand burrows, “huddled over tiny fires of refuse and dried rushes,” Jukes fights out a survival battle with a Brahmin, Gunga Dass, whom he had formerly known as a telegraph master. How Gunga Dass, who himself has been driven to eat crows, the most uncleanly thing a Brahmin could touch, goads and teases Jukes, plays upon his hopes and laughs at his despairs in a decrescendo of the respectful manner that he had formerly shown to a sahib, is a masterpiece of inventive telling. Only the inartistic and improbable escape of Jukes at the end of the story prevents it from being among the first dozen of all Kipling’s stories. As it is, it remains one of the most powerful nightmares of the precariousness of a ruling group, in this case of a group haunted by memories of the Mutiny not yet twenty years old. And, so incredibly, written by an author not yet twenty years old himself.

‘The Man Who Would Be King’: It is said,

The Man Who Would Be King’, the best of the stories Kipling wrote in India, must conclude any study of his apprenticeship, not only because of its brilliance, but because in a sense it embodies and sums up Kipling’s attitude to India and the role of the British in the land they had conquered.18

The story is susceptible of innumerable interpretations: in its mysterious way it is concerned with issues larger than the adventures of a
pair of English ne'er-do-wells in the unexplored hills of Kafiristan. Nevertheless, the form of the tale is straightforward. Dravot and Carnehan are tragic figures, conquerors who, like Tamburlaine, conceive the ambition of becoming emperors. They are above the common run of mankind; they are as strong and vigorous as Mulvaney, as subtle at disguise as Strickland, as worldly and cynical as McIntosh Jellaludin. With courage and luck they pile success upon success until they become gods in the eyes of their primitive subjects. But in the end they violate the conditions of their success. Dravot overreaches himself in wanting to take a wife from among their subjects, and his failure of judgment causes him to pull down upon his own head the frail structure his courage and ambition have reared. Lous Cornell comments that,

In the manner of the telling, ‘The Man who would be King’ is beyond praise. Kipling never surpassed himself; every touch contributes to the effect of the whole. But though the outlines are so clear that the story has been made into a successful action film, the meaning remains rich and complex.¹⁹

10. STALKY & CO. (1899):


*Stalky & Co* 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, a school founded by retired army officers largely to fit its pupils for
an army career. Stalky, M'Turk and Beetle (the last a loose self-portrait of Kipling) are a schoolboy trio who conduct a battle of wits with the masters and other boys. Stalky's cunning and self-reliance, his willingness to infringe the minor social rules of the school and to take his punishment when his transgressions are discovered come to represent a highly practical ethic. It is notable that the authority of the headmaster, Trooshian’ Bates, is never seriously questioned, and that the laws of social responsibility and self-discipline are affirmed by the trio. Kipling's didactic intention in writing about the education of the young is clearly signalled in the final story, where the ex-schoolboys continue their exploits in India at the frontiers of the Empire they have implicitly been learning to defend.

Kingsley Amis observes,

*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.\(^{20}\)

In *Stalky & Co.* he conveniently brought home the lesson, by constantly overriding the prevailing English public-school ethics, which derived ultimately from the great influence of Thomas Arnold’s reforms at
Rugby School in the early years of Victoria’s reign. A mature boy (and the Stalky trio were in fact, as they are in fiction, strangely mature, or, more truly, like boyish men rather than boys) will not accept the ruling of his life by repeated rotes, whether “pijaws” from the padre, or talks about house honour from the housemaster, or pep talks on the team spirit from the prefects. Within the framework of what the school demands, which we learn from the last story in the book is what service for the Empire (and, indeed, what the preservation of civilised society) demands, though the boys always deflate it in their everyday life to some practical demand like getting through exams, a man or a boy has every right to use any weapon in order to learn what life is really like and to find out how he is best fitted to live.

Here we come upon a feature of Kipling’s work which is always disturbing - the deliberate cruelty of the goodies to the baddies in order to teach them a lesson, or simply as a necessary expression of mastery. It occurs throughout his writing career from an Indian story like ‘The Mark of the Beast’ to a story like ‘Beauty Spots’ of 1932. The former is a very good horror story and the latter is a much better comic tale than is usually admitted. But there are, in each, little giveaway phrases which suggest a pleasure in the proceedings which is in subjective excess to the art of the story – “several other things happened also, but they cannot be put down here” “the first dry sob of one from whom all hope of ... authority was stripped forever.” Kipling was a fierce man, and a very gentle one, yet there is somewhere in him a pleasure in the pain of others.

**Beauty Spots (1932):** Probably Carrie’s suspicious nature was most evident in the village; but Kipling himself surely shared much of it. This is the only aspect of his private post-war life that is reflected in his stories. ‘Beauty Spots’ (1932), a Stalky-like farce, is concerned with the turning of the tables against village spreaders of rumours. It is no more than an amusing story, but its social attitude is a good corrective to the false
stereotype of Kipling as a snobbish would-be gentleman. Mr Gravell, the hero, is, as so often in Kipling, a self-made man, who retires to the country to investigate manuring for his hobby. From the first, he shows no disposition to be involved in village life. He is a man of single purpose. But this is not what Major Kniveatt believes: he is sure that this nouveau riche has come there to buy his way on to various local councils. He sets about spreading slanders and rumours to destroy Gravell’s character. So much for the widely held view that, in Kipling, all regular officers are on the side of the angels. It is notable that one of the rumours the Major spreads is that the self-made hero’s son is half-caste because his complexion is so dark (something actually due to war-time poison gas). It is strange to find Kipling putting into print this absurd canard about his own birth that had dogged him for so many decades. Such self-identification of Kipling with self-made men is surely very understandable, for this is exactly what he was. His friends and acquaintances covered a remarkably wide social field, but notable Kipling friends in the post-war years were just two such men Morris, the motor-car man (later Lord Nuffield) and Sir Percy Bates, the director of the Cunard Shipping Line. Some of the appeal of Rhodes and Harmsworth and Beaverbrook had been exactly this.

But ‘Beauty Spots’ and another farce of the same period, ‘Aunt Ellen’ have another purpose than attacking the village. The true hero of “Beauty Spots” is the self-made man’s son, who avenges his father by means of a practical joke involving a pig. When the Major becomes the laughing stock of the village at the end of the story, Kipling writes, “The generation that tolerates but does not pity went away. They did not even turn when they heard that first dry sob of one from whom all hope of office, influence, and authority was stripped for ever drowned in the laughter in the lane.”

Most English boys-and most Englishmen who have anything of the boy still in them-will rejoice in Stalky & Co. Boys will declare that the book
is 'spiffing' and if they read it in school hours-a not impossible feat-will have to keep a handkerchief ready to stuff into their mouths to prevent their laughter attracting the attention of the form-master. Mr. Kipling himself has every reason to feel proud of the success with which he has phonographed the English public-school boy's talk and sentiments. Mr. Kipling knows his English boy, as he seems to know everything, outside and inside-especially outside.

_Stalky & Co._ is almost a complete treatise on the strategy and tactics of the British schoolboy—or perhaps one should say the British public-school boy. Reverence for the head authority and contempt for all other authority, respect for most aspects of physical training, and utter indifference towards the training of the intellect, underlie the whole Stimmung of the book. Mr. Kipling has taught his public how Matthew Arnold's Barbarians are trained. Here he not only describes—he defends; the implications of the whole book is a glorification of the public-school method of training character, or perhaps we should qualify, and say training the character of the leading classes. Two of the stories are bracketed together as 'Slaves of the Lamp, I.', and 'Slaves of the Lamp, II.' (the last story of the book—a kind of epilogue), with the seeming intention of showing that the tricks boys play upon their form-masters come in usefully as training in strategy for frontier warfare. In the first of the stories Stalky scores off the best-hated master by leading a drunken carrier to think that the said master had used a catapult against him, where-upon he resorts to reprisals, and the formmaster's study is made to suffer. In the last story Stalky, now a lieutenant on the frontier, is defending a fort which is attacked by two native tribes that have for the moment sunk their feuds. Stalky steals out with a detachment to the rear of their encampments, and, when the attack takes place, peppers one of the tribes with shots, seemingly coming from the direction of the other. Result, revival of the feud, and the form-master tribe is attacked by the carrier one.
In short, these portions of the book are, in a measure, Mr. Kipling’s answer to the question our neighbours are asking, *A quoi tient la supériorité des Anglo-Saxons?*

An anonymous reviewer observes,

It is natural to compare *Stalky & Co.* with Mr. Kipling’s other boys’ book, *Captains Courageous*: one treats of the boy in his native and natural environment, the other of a boy in strange surroundings. Both are eminently didactic in tone, the chief lesson inculcated being that of the good effects of a sound whacking on a boy’s character, even if the cane is applied with seemingly ‘flagrant injustice.’ In both cases the type of boy to be turned out is that of the military or commercial organizer. ‘Save he serve, no man may rule’ -not perhaps, a very subtle lesson, nor particularly one that needs insisting on, but it is brought home with all Mr. Kipling’s astonishing force, and in *Stalky & Co.* is presented with even a certain amount of polemical intention.21

Of Kipling’s long stories, *Stalky & Co.* deals entirely with children; *Captains Courageous* is in intent the story of a boy, so is *Kim.* *The Light That Failed*, in its first and best chapters, is a study of child-life; while that wondrous thing *The Jungle Book*, stronger than Aesop and with a witchery all its own, what is it but a sustained treatise on the claims of the commonwealth and the development of the individual?

And as the Piper pipes, out from ‘somewhere east of Suez,’ to answer to the roll-call, comes crowding such a goodly company, a feast here for the student of child-life and for the lover of children.

*Stalky & Co.* in that respect, became a precedent in adult fiction. It was the first of a number of school-life novels for the full-grown reader; later on, perhaps, for the full-blown. In the twentieth century these became common. Retaliation for *Stalky* came and was in turn retaliated upon. H. A.
Vachell's *The Hill* (1905), produced in the stock form of a (ten) six-shilling novel for the regular circulating library public, provoked the counterblast of Arnold Lunn's *The Loom of Youth*, written when its author himself was only just out of school, set a second supply going, until it almost became a distinction for a public school not to have a novel all about itself under a thin disguise.

11. **JUST SO STORIES (1902):**

An anonymous reviewer in the *Athenaeum* observed in 1902 that, *The Just So Stories*, 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, and better than other mysteries which he has attempted to tackle with expert haste. The result is that several of these stories—for instance those concerning the invention of letter-writing and of the alphabet by the daughter of a cave-dweller, the independence of the domestic cat, the reason for the elephant's trunk—are perfect, told once for all so that other tellers need not hope to compete. The stories being for younger folk than the *Jungle Books*, deal a good deal in what is pure nonsense to the child, and clever fooling with ornate words and phrases to the adult—such writing, in fact, as the catalogues of remedies in Kingsley's *Water Babies*.\(^{22}\)

Kipling's *Just So Stories* has stories like How the Whale got his Throat, How the Camel got his Hump, How the Rhinoceros got his Skin, How the Leopard got his Spots, The Elephant's Child, The Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo, The Beginning of the Armadilloes, How the First Letter was Written, How the Alphabet was Made, The Crab that Played with the Sea, The Cat that Walked by Himself and The Butterfly that Stamped.
Kingsley Amis observes,

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.\(^{23}\)

*The Just So Stories*, published soon after *Kim*, were written for adults to read aloud to children. They are full of fascinating words, sounds and expressions.

The first seven of *The Just So Stories* are without doubt the cream of the collection. They are all united by the same little joke. It is typical of their excellence that this should be an entirely adult joke, for the special merit of the best of these stories is that they are written to be read aloud by adults to children.

The whale’s throat, the camel’s hump, the rhinoceros’s skin, the leopard’s spots, the elephant’s trunk, the kangaroo’s physique, the armadillo altogether, are all jokes about evolutionary adaptation. And, as such, they are closely related to the natural scene, the surroundings – Kipling’s forte – and they are most fully realised in the two stories with South African settings.

When the stories of private man’s advancement begin, we are in the land of Tegumai and Taffy, of Kipling and his own children, and sentimental whimsicality takes over; while the last stories are again too marred by humans, cosy (the Cat that Walked By Himself), or mock-oriental (the Butterfly that Stamped).
Yet - and this is less usually recognised - there are important differences between these seven stories, the kinds of play indulged are quite distinguishable.

In the camel and rhinoceros stories, we get a special emphasis on funny adult words and expressions which have clearly appealed to his children, by their difficulty of pronunciation, or, perhaps, and this can only guess, because they were favourite words of grown-ups. "When the world was so new - and all ... He lived in the middle of a Howling Desert ... most 'scrutiatingly idle ... that's made a' purpose", in "How the Camel". A little more ingenious and playful in 'How the Rhinoceros,' "more than oriental splendour ... it was all done brown and smelt most sentimental ... two piggy eyes and few manners." Language has changed greatly since then, but the phrases, the very sounds of the words, and the cliché pomposity in some of them still appeal to children.

The leopard and the elephant stories keep up these mocked phrases and word plays – "He would indeed! They didn't indeed! (Leopard)... full of 'satiable curiosity do you happen to have seen a crocodile in these promiscuous parts?" (Elephant). Or, in the Leopard story, when the Ethiopian has turned black to fit in with the forest scene on the wise Baboon Baviaan's advice, the Leopard asks, "But what about me?" "You take Baviaan's advice too. He told you to go into spots" "So I did" (said the Leopard). "I went into this spot with you, and a lot of good it has done me."

But beyond this verbal play, these two stories are filled with colour – "forest full of tree trunks all exclusively speckled and sprotted and spottled, dotted and splashed and slashed and hatched and cross-hatched with shadows" (Leopard); or the famous "great grey-green greasy Limpopo River, all set about with fever trees" (Elephant).
In the Kangaroo story the mood changes completely. It is almost a chant — “Not always was the Kangaroo as now we do behold him,” it begins, and then for many pages it is carefully orchestrated.


He had to!

“Still ran Kangaroo - Old Man Kangaroo. He ran through the ti-trees; he ran through the mulga [etc., etc.,]

He had to!”

It also contains in Kangaroo’s frivolous impudence a kind of gaiety unusual in Kipling - Make me different from all other animals; make me, also, wonderfully popular by five this afternoon!”

As for the Armadillo story, it is full of more obvious, but perhaps slightly more grown-up tongue-twisting fun as the Tortoise and the Hedgehog evade the young Jaguar’s hunger by confusing him. “Are you sure of what your Mummy told you,’ said slow and solid Tortoise, ‘Are you quite sure? Perhaps she said that when you water a Hedgehog you must drop him into your paw, and when you meet a Tortoise you must shell him until he uncoils.”

Angus Wilson observes,

But each of the seven is a triumph in the special art of communicating with young children. Kipling had glimpsed the Camel’s Arabian desert and the Rhinoceros’s Arabian sea shore from a ship; he had touched upon the Kangaroo’s Australia; he had sailed in the Whale’s ocean; he had “never sailed the Amazon ... never reached Brazil ...”

“Oh, I’d love to roll to Rio. Some day before I’m old,” he was sixty-one when he eventually got there in 1927; but the South African veldt and rain forest, and the Limpopo he had seen and felt. This is why the Leopard and the Elephant are the most visual of all The Just So
Stories. It was an artistic gain from the South African years if a small one.24

12. TRAFFICS AND DISCOVERIES (1904):
The present book has the following stories: The Captive, The Bonds of Discipline, A Sahib’s War, ‘Their Lawful Occasions,’ The Comprehension of Private Copper, Steam Tactics, ‘Wireless,’ The Army of a Dream, ‘They,’ Mrs Bathurst, and Below the Mill Dam.

The Captive: For the rest, ‘The Captive’ has been highly praised, but here we are confronted with all the growing faults of Kipling’s later work – over-technical language, too elaborate a framework of narration - and there is none of the compensating depth that makes the best of his later stories so fine.

The South African stories, then are spoiled by muddle, because Kipling’s social and political ideas were at this time increasingly confused by the contradictions in a complex world that would not arrange itself according to his simplistic vision. They are muddled also because he had not yet truly found a mine of imaginative richness to replace India.

A Sahib’s War: It is typical that the most fully seen story of the war, ‘The Way That He Took”, should peter out as a boy’s story, a simple account of a military ruse to avoid ambush. Yet, in the more adult Boer War stories, the vision is seldom there. Once, however, it is unforgettable, the description in ‘A Sahib’s War” of the shelling of the old Boer pastor’s house by Australians, in revenge for the killing of a young British subaltern.

The subject of ‘A Sahib’s War’ the enticement of a small British detachment by the hospitality of a Boer pastor and his wife, and the prearranged sniping in which the commanding subaltern is killed, is neither improbable nor dramatically unpromising. The violence with which the treachery is answered is shocking, but then Kipling means to shock us and,
as always, he knows how. The demoralised collapse of the treacherous or the bullying is for him a necessary demonstration of the victory of the good. Hence we are given the collapse of the pastor’s fat old wife when she believes that she and her beloved idiot son are to be killed: “She followed upon her knees and lay along the ground, and pawed at my boots and howled ... the woman hindered me not a little with her screechings and plungings.” But this is a war story and the narrator is a brutal man, a Sikh veteran.

What has his old theme of the loving relationship between an Indian servant and the little white sahib, which he has brought with him from his Bombay childhood, to do with South Africa's war? Or even the devotion of a Sikh non-commissioned officer to his British officer which takes us back to Plain Tales? There were Indian troops from the British Indian Army serving in Africa. Kipling may have been right to think that there should have been more. But it is an irrelevance. Of the real and large community of Indians in South Africa he showed no awareness whatsoever. In all his winter stays at the Cape, he never visited Natal where the large Indian trading community now lived perhaps it was as well, for the advocate of their cause was Gandhi, a Babu lawyer. His concern for Indians in ‘A Sahib's War’ is merely a sentimental nostalgia. What could have been a clearly seen and terrible story of war's brutal necessity is smothered by extra dimensions.

The Comprehension of Private Copper: Equally in ‘The Comprehension of Private Copper’ when the tables are turned on the cultivated Dutch burgher bully who has been torturing the English tommy, Copper, the description of his break down into hysteria is detailed. The comment by one of the tommies, “E screams like a woman,” is brutal and contemptuous.
The same floating Indian memories are even more out of place in 'The Comprehension of Private Copper.' Here the Transvaal burgher who captures Copper and tortures him is given a chi-chi accent, a dark complexion and a plover's-egg eye so that we are forced to conclude that his father who settled in the Transvaal was a Eurasian rather than an Afrikaner. And this, in fact, undoes Kipling's propaganda against the treacherous rich Boer farmers. The only reason for this muddle seems to be the desire to provide Private Copper with memories of his Indian service, for his captor's broken Eurasian chi-chi accent, as he taunts him, recalls an incident at a regimental dance in Umballa, the main military cantonment in the Punjab.

The Army of a Dream: 'The Army of a Dream' as well as the political satirical poems which begin in 1902 with the championship of the rights of the tummies returned from South Africa to a new, vigorous and less class-bound society, and end in 1912 with 'The Benefactors,' a poem prophesying an alternative to coal to free us from the tyranny of the miners' union.

'They': In the story, 'They,' the blind, childless woman speaks of how she has been laughed at. The narrator comments, "I was silent reviewing that inexhaustible matter - the more than inherited (since it is carefully taught) brutality of the Christian people, beside which the here heathendom of the West Coast Nigger is clean and restrained.

The earliest story that announces this new world of Kipling's is 'They,' published in August 1904, nearly two years after the move. When one says that this story reveals much of Kipling's desperate mourning for his dead Josephine; and that it expresses to the full his almost mystical love of children; and that it does both in the form of an enigmatic account of the psychical phenomenon of dead children returned to a beautiful old house and garden to assuage their parents' grief; and that it was published in the year of the knockout Success of Peter Pan on the West End of London.
stage; the reader may expect the worst. Yet ‘They’ has little of the whimsy
or of the sentimentalism that might be feared. Of Barrie’s particular sort of
self-consciously fey writing Kipling was, thank God, quite incapable, as
also of any self-consciously childlike humour.

The defect of ‘They’ is less grave: in the last resort, it has a small
touch of that paraded mystery which makes all but a very few “psychic”
stories irritating, but a very small touch.

It is almost a direct fantasy of Kipling’s longing to see and touch his
daughter again. A man, motoring westward across Sussex from the Weald in
the east, from Bateman’s in fact, comes, by chance, in the centre of the
county, by a rough track, on to the lawn of a great Elizabethan country
house, hedged with yews clipped to the shapes of great peacocks and
horsemen and maids of honour. Here he sees children peeping at his
intrusion from upper windows and playing and giggling by the fountain.
The blind lady who owns the house accepts casually his talk of the children
to whom she devotes her life, but whom she cannot see. The narrator’s
conversation with the blind woman is well organized to suggest to the
reader what the children are without the narrator’s knowing it.

A few months later, the narrator returns and, this time, his
conversation with the blind woman is interrupted by the drama of an
illegitimate village child ill with meningitis. Only just in time for the reader,
in fact, for the conversation about the nature of the dreams of blind people,
interesting enough in itself, is just about to run into Kipling’s increasing
weakness – pretentious specialized knowledge - with Freemason’s talk of
The Egg. Only the narrator’s modern means of transport can bring a doctor
and a nun nurse to the dying child, after a well-described motor dash about
the Sussex countryside. Months later, in a cold autumn the motorist return
again. This time he learns from the village shop that the bastard child has
died and that the mother, Jenny is “walking in wood.” He still does not
realise that it is to this house and its woods and gardens that bereaved parents go for comfort and here Kipling earns high marks, for so often, when a narrator is behind the reader in comprehension, irritation grows with his slowness to understand. But in ‘They’ one is convinced that the narrator is an intelligent man who can only learn gradually what sort of place he has found and why he is drawn there. At last, on this cold day, in the great hall of the house, beside a great fire, while the mistress discusses estate affairs with a cheating tenant farmer, the narrator, sitting idly by, comes to know by the feel of a child’s fingers and its kiss on the palm of his hand what these children are that he has glimpsed and heard for so long—for the kiss is the “half-reproachful signal of a waiting child not used to neglect even when grown-ups were busiest – a fragment of the mute code devised very long ago....” The kiss is a dangerously conventional token that Kipling risks. But, as often, where emotion is very deep, the risk is safely taken. Only the end of the story seems unsatisfactory. The narrator announces that he will return no more. “You think it is wrong, then?” she [the blind woman] cried.... ‘Not for you [he replied]. A thousand times no. For you it is right... For me it would be wrong.’... ‘Why?’ she said... ‘Oh! I see,’ she went on, simply as a child, ‘for you it would be wrong.”

Andrew Rutherford observes,

Technically, Kipling’s fiction shows a comparable variety, but for modern readers the most interesting development is probably his evolution of that complex, closely organized, elliptical and symbolic mode of writing which ranks him as an unexpected contributor to ‘modernism’ and a major innovator in the art of short story.”

Rutherford gives the example of ‘They’ in this regard.

Of course, increasingly as conventional religion had broken down in the mid and late nineteenth century, people had been turning to the occult. But the younger Kipling’s scepticism about this, associated in India with
Madame Blavatsky's frauds, is clearly expressed in the comic story, 'The Sending of Dana Da' (a story probably of the eighties) where an occultist is farcically visited by a plague of kittens.

However, his mother claimed to be "psychic". And what his mother claimed Kipling would hardly have allowed himself openly to mock. Now, by 1904, his sister Trix had given herself up to the pursuit of psychic experience. But, with her, this spiritualistic concern was clearly associated with a breakdown of personality. From his letters to the writer Rider Haggard, it is clear that Kipling himself experienced what seemed transcendental experiences, for he and Haggard agreed that such intense, mystic moments cannot be prolonged. Like many Celtic families, many of the Macdonalds experienced what they believed to be second sight, Rudyard among them. But he carefully avoided using his gifts or, at any rate, making them public. Indeed, his words to Haggard suggest that he does not believe such powers are in the control of those who are visited by them. This was the chief reason, surely, why he did not believe in organized attempts to make contact with psychic powers.

The pressure upon him, both from within himself and from friends and acquaintances, above all from Trix, to resort to mediums after his son was killed in action in 1915, must have been considerable, as it was upon many bereaved people in the Great War. His answer was firmly given in the poem, 'En-Dor':

Oh the road to En-Dor is the oldest road
And the craziest road of all!
Straight it runs to the Witch's abode
As it did in the days of Saul'
And nothing has changed of the Sorrow in store
For such as go down on the road to En-Dor.
No doubt he had his beloved sister's tragic mental distress in mind when he wrote this. Perhaps there were many reasons for not resorting to En-Dor.

And all this, seen purely artistically, is sadly unnecessary, for, in truth, the strength of the story lies in the evocation of the Sussex countryside, not in its psychic mystery. The opening passage where, "I let the country flow under my wheels. The orchid-studded flats of the East gave way to the thyme, ilex and grey grass of the Downs, these again to the rich comland and fig-trees of the lower coast ..." is the beginning of a whole life of the Sussex countryside, which, if it never equals his Indian evocation (the place is so much smaller, the body of the stories describing it so much less), is the real healing of the wounds that Kipling felt, the real recapture of his famous daemon.

Hermione Lee in his introduction to this book writes this:
The narrator discovers an alternative secret society in 'They': spiritual, feminine, magic, and innocent. He learns its private codes, just as he learns about naval maneuvers or wireless telegraphy. But he cannot belong to it, because, for all Kipling's strenuous efforts to convince us and himself otherwise, he is an outsider, and recognize solitariness as our condition.26

Mrs Bathurst: He produced only one post-war story laid in South Africa. It has been highly praised and, as he clearly spent much effort upon fashioning it, it must be discussed. This is the famous 'Mrs Bathurst' which has aroused as much puzzle-solving among his devotees as the unfinished Edwin Drood has among Dickensians. But, although important work which breaks new ground is often likely to puzzle the most sensitive and perspicacious readers, puzzle in itself is no merit in literature. Admirers of Kipling have understandably but mistakenly seized on the difficulty of not knowing what Kipling really means in 'Mrs Bathurst' in order to insist...
he too can be "difficult" like authors so admired by highbrows. But the
difficulty of Mrs Bathurst is of little interest, for, in the last resort, the story
is empty.

A naval warrant-officer named Vickery, of whom we know next to
nothing save that his dentures are ill-fitting, deserts from his ship at Cape
Town and disappears. We know that in the preceding week he has been
obsessed night after night by the chance appearance in the news on the
cinema screen of Mrs Bathurst, a New Zealand hotelkeeper, who is beloved
by a large number of seamen who visit Auckland. Of her we know a little
more - the way she puts her hand up to the curl behind her ear, her
generosity to her seafaring customers, her long memory for faces she has
seen years before, her blindish way of looking at people. For the rest we are
told that she has a mysterious appeal - "It", the first use of Elinor Glyn's
later famous term for sex-appeal. To this story, given by Vickery's
shipmate, Pyecroft, is added the information from Hooper, a South African
railway inspector, that beyond Bulawayo, on the way to the Zambesi, two
bodies have been found, two tramps it is thought, turned to charcoal by the
lightning of a great thunderstorm. Both disintegrate on touch. One has the
false teeth and tattoo marks of Vickery.

What does it mean? Why is he there? What has he done to call down
such wrath? Who is the other? Is it Mrs Bathurst herself? The answer to the
last question seems, pretty certainly, no. But if Vickery's dead mate is
somebody totally unknown to the reader, what is the meaning of that? The
questions remain and will remain unanswered.

Bellow the Mill Dam: And there is one excellent story in this
volume, which has been neglected by later readers, although it was the
subject of much discussion in right radical political circles when it first
appeared in the Monthly Review in September 1902, two months after the
cultured Arthur Balfour had succeeded the aged Lord Salisbury as
Conservative Prime Minister of England. This story, 'Bellow the Mill Dam' is a political fable expressing Kipling's alarm and dismay at England's apparent inability to address herself socially, imperially, culturally and technologically to the future. It embodies his antipathy to the traditional elitist, conservative but, at the same time, laissez-faire cultural and political outlook of Balfour's country-house world.

With the new century, first in * Traffics and Discoveries* (1904), Kipling normally prefaced or followed (sometimes both) his stories when they were collected, with poems, often written quite separately and often themselves in Kipling's later years more or less painfully obscure. Sometimes this is a happy conjunction, giving extra meaning or clarity to story and poem, sometimes it makes for a crossword-puzzle obscurity, more flattering to the ingenuity of the reader than really enriching of the works; sometimes it produces difficulty which unsophisticated Kipling devotees love to ponder, but which is surely due to lack of any worthwhile relationship. Occasionally the juxtaposition throws light upon the author as much as upon his work. This is so, I think, with the poem "Rahere" that follows 'The Wish House.' Here, "King Henry's jester, feared by all the Norman Lords is seized with a black melancholy, "Hence the dulled eye's deep self-loathing." And as the court physician says, "For it comes - it comes, said Gilbert, as it passes - to return." In his torment, Rahere walks through the streets, and passing the gallows, he sees:

Beneath the wry-necked dead
Sat a leper and his woman, very merry, breaking
Bread...
And she waited on him crooning, and Rahere
Beheld the twain,
Each delighting in the other, and he checked
And groaned again.

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For he sees that passion can endure, as the physician comments,
For it comes - it comes, said Gilbert, and thou
seest it does not die!

Any physical pain or malady, Kipling counts as bliss beside the agonies of despair.

It is this that he reiterates in his ‘Hymn to Physical Pain’ placed before his story, ‘The Tender Achilles’ of 1929:
Wherefore we praise Thee [physical pain] in the deep,
And in our beds we pray
For Thy return that Thou mayest keep
The Pains of Hell at Bay! (‘The Tender Achilles’)

It is said,

The two collections of stories, Traffic 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. 27

13. PUCK OF POOK’S HILL (1906):

Puck of Pook’s Hill (1906) has the following stories: Weland’s Sword, Young Men at the Manor, The Knights of the Joyous Venture, Old Men at Pevensey, A Centurion of the Thirtieth, On the Great Wall, The Winged Hats, Hal o’ The Draft, Dymchurch Flit and The Treasure and the Law. It is said,

Since settling at Bateman’s Kipling had become absorbed by the countryside and the history of England. The result of this new preoccupation was Puck of Pook’s Hill (1906), a series of stories based on episodes in English history. In these tales, brought to us by
the freckle-faced and ageless Puck, we are given not only a vivid picture of times gone by, but a sense of continuity and traditions, of the past living on in the present. The stories are told by Puck to two children but the narration itself is given by historical characters such as Parnesius, a Roman legionary officer, a Norman knight and an Anglo-French smuggler of the 1790s.28

The stories 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. Most show individuals who are able to illuminate their historical predicaments, such as the centurion, Parnesius, whose unorthodox handling of his Imperial duties - in cooperating with the Picts - shows an insight which is absent from the higher echelons of the declining Roman Empire. The stories also point to the capacity of civilization to renew itself. The God Weland, in 'Weland's Sword', is freed from an unwanted heathen immortality by a novice monk, Hugh. While Weland adapts to the Christian world, Hugh becomes a warrior. Along with one of the Norman invaders, Sir Richard Dalyngridge, he brings leadership and good management to the land. The figure of Old Hobden, known to Dan and Una as someone who had instinctive understanding of local traditions and the ways of the world, is also a representative of a stoical spirit in the common man which can endure historical change.

A sequel to the collection, *Rewards and Fairies* (1910), followed a similar format. Both volumes contain some of Kipling's best-known verse. The latter volume has stories like 'A St Helena's Lullaby', 'The Way through the Woods' and others.

The cyclical view of history which marks *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) and *Rewards and Fairies* (1910) was a well-established theory of the
nineteenth century, deriving, as Kipling derives his, from the decline of the Roman Empire. During the late nineteenth century, men, who had lost faith in a benevolent ordering of the universe and could see nothing but chance where once had been the Divine plan, felt that their pessimism could be limited, at any rate in the short run, by a picture of historical civilisations rising and falling and being replaced by others. For Imperialists, perhaps, to make such a comparison between Britain and Rome gave a comforting sense of accepting one’s worst fears (the end of the British Imperial system) and yet having faith that the torch of law and order and decency and culture would not be forever extinguished. As has often been pointed out, Kipling’s arrangement of the collection *Puck of Pook’s Hill* is very significant. The first story ‘Weland’s Sword’ tells of the old heathen god’s adaptation to a Christian world, and the next three stories show the return of law to the land after the Norman conquest; only then does he go back to the fading-out of law and order with the Roman legions on the Wall in the fifth century. Thus renewal is asserted from the start.

This was the overall philosophy and even perhaps plan of these two volumes of stories as Kipling originally worked them out while Josephine and her cousin played at Cavaliers and Roundheads in the Rottingdean garden, or as John and Elsie romped with the lion cub in the grounds of “The Woolsack” or sailed the pond at Bateman’s, but it does not dominate the final arrangement of the stories. This is largely random. The cohesion arises far more out of the conception of the past as containing many secret moments which, when illuminated, tell us by what tricks and strains and endurances and renunciations and sudden visions men have stretched the fabric of civilised knowledge and behaviour without rending it. These stories contain more than any other of Kipling’s stories the idea of intuitive flashes or insight - as when Pertinax, Parnesius’ fellow captain on the Roman Wall, in his cynical, adaptable power of leadership one of Kipling’s
most interesting characters, guesses from the wording of Emperor Maximus’s optimistic, cheery letter that the Emperor’s cause is lost; or, as when the Red Indian Chief passing a Philadelphia window, where Talleyrand, the destitute French exile, sits playing dice with himself, guesses that there is a bad man and a great chief. In no group of his stories does Kipling bear such effective witness to his sense of coincidence in human life or of the purely marvelous.

Of course, the talk of governesses and nursery tea and Latin lessons and so on in the framework of the stories does mask their fine quality for adult readers. Not more than the constant reappearance of old Hobden, poaching or hedging, which for many serious critics is the central theme of the collection, the assertion of England’s common man weathering every historical change. Yet, on occasion, the comments of the children are a splendid dramatic device heightening the effect of the stories, as when, in the last story of Harold’s survival into Henry I’s reign as a lost, half-witted old man protected by Rahere, the jester, Dan comments, at the most subtly moving moment, “I think this tale is getting like the woods, darker and twistier every minute.” But there is no doubt that ‘The Eye of Allah,’ Kipling’s finest story of historical conjecture, which was not published until 1926, gains by not being set like the two collections in the Dan-Una-Puck framework.

Yet the stories are so excellent that they can well support their “told to the children” setting. And there are advantages. One of these is that, when Puck takes the children back into the past, the narration is always made by some figure from that time - three stories, for example, by Parnesius, the Roman legionary officer; three by Sir Richard Dalyngridge, a Norman knight; two superbly narrated by Pharaoh, the Anglo-French smuggler turned successful Pennsylvania tobacco merchant in the seventeen-nineties; one by Culpepper telling of the Plague in a seventeenth-century village, and
one by St Wilfrid and so on through a wonderful array of voices. Of course, they are Edwardian in their note even when, as with Culpepper, the seventeenth-century note is well preserved, but they are beautiful self-revelations of the men who tell as well as of the stories they are telling — Browning’s *Men and Women* without Browning’s self-conscious quirks.

Only the stories told by highborn women fail: ‘Gloriana’ where Queen Elizabeth narrates, and “The Marklake Witches”, told by a Regency county girl, have all the unreality of Mrs Burton or Trix in a Simla historical pageant.

Angus Wilson observes,

Many of Kipling’s most cherished themes are embodied in these stories - the desolate obligation of obedience in the Roman Wall stories - the only ones where didacticism overcomes the evocation; the political wisdom of mercy in ‘Old Men at Pevensey’; the special civilising contribution of the Jews to society in ‘The Treasure and The Law’; the terrible price to be paid by the individual for society’s advances in ‘The Knife and the Naked Chalk’; the whole debate about the gipsy trail in life in ‘Brother Square Toes’ and ‘A Priest in Spite of Himself,’ where the super-gipsies Talleyrand and Napoleon are given life in a small-time smuggler’s tales; the tragic quality of loyalty in ‘The Tree of Justice.’

These stories alone make the two volumes an enlightenment, for Kipling’s sense of delight in man’s diversity has full sway. The best of all is a story of sheer wonder, ‘The Knights of the Joyous Venture,’ where Kipling’s fancy knows no bridle, adding Norman knights to a Viking trading ship with, among the crew, a Chinese found half dead on the icy shores of Muscovy, and taking the whole wondrous band to fight a battle for gold on the West African coast against gorillas. It is Kipling on his top form.
The two volumes also contain some of his best accompanying verse: the much-loved lyric poem, 'The Way Through the Woods'; the strange hymn to Calvary, 'Cold Iron'; the Roman legion's marching song, 'Rimini'; 'A Smuggler's Song' in which the little girl is told: "Them that asks no questions isn't told a lie; Watch the wall, my darling, while the Gentlemen go by!", and best of all, think, the sinister prophecy of eventual disaster sung at Napoleon's cradle, 'A St Helena Lullaby.' Here Kipling's pessimistic determinism has seldom been more telling:

How far is St Helena from a little child
at play?
What makes you want to wander there with
all the world between?
Oh! Mother, call your son again or else
he'll run away,
(No one thinks of winter when the grass
is green).30

The dark and cautious pessimism of this poem, set against the gay delight in adventure for itself that marks Sir Richard Dalyngridge's fabulous exploit against the gorillas, may be said to straddle the whole contradiction in Kipling's character. We cannot possibly hold those politically strident years from 1900 to 1910 wasted that produced such magnificent stories and poems.

And in the story 'The Knife and the Naked Chalk' we get a serious allegorical treatment of the basic importance of a man's mother that cannot be smiled away. Here a neolithic pastoral man gains the knife that will protect his tribe's sheep from wolves by giving in return to the Forest People his eye. But the price he pays is, in fact, much greater, for, in his turn, he is treated as a god and must give up the girl he loves. It is his mother who comforts him for his loss. "Whether you live or die, or are
made different, I am your Mother.” And he comments, “There is only one Mother for the one Son.”

Alfred Noyse says,

In *Puck of Pook’s Hill* we suspect that Mr. Kipling has for the first time dug through the silt of modern Imperialism. He has gone back to the old ground-works and seen the inscription upon them. The scheme of the book is simple. Some children meet Puck, the fairy, who introduces them in separate, yet connected stories to Romans, Normans, Saxons, Picts and Englishmen from different periods of English history; and the chief of these characters tell their own stories—grim, humorous and pathetic, in a manner illustrating the respective period of each; and on each successive period one seems to find inscribed *After me cometh a Builder!* We know no book in the guise of fiction that gives the pageant of our history with such breadth and nobility of feeling, and with so sure and easy a touch. There are few passages in modem fiction more beautiful than that which describes the chivalry of a Norman to a conquered Saxon woman, whom he falls in love with, and eventually, though at first she rails against him as an enemy, wins and weds. There are few passages in modern fiction more stoically grand than the farewell letter of the doomed Caesar to his two young captains on the Great Wall.31

**LATER SHORT STORIES**

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. He was a comparatively rich man and could luxuriate in the things that so many writers have wanted-slow maturing of his plans, polishing, re-writing, scrapping, selecting to his heart's content. He has himself suggested his own process to other writers:

This leads me to the Higher Editing. Take of well-ground Indian Ink as much as suffices and a camel-hair brush proportionate to the interspaces of your lines. In an auspicious hour, read your final draft and consider faithfully every paragraph, sentence and word, blacking out, where requisite. Let it lie by to drain as long as possible. At the end of that time, re-read and you should find that it will bear a second shortening. Finally, read it aloud alone and at leisure. Maybe a shade more brushwork will then indicate or impose itself. If not, praise Allah and let it go, and "when thou hast done, repent not." The shorter the tale, the longer the brushwork and, normally, the shorter the lie-by, and vice versa. The longer the tale, the less brush but the longer lie-by. I have had tales by me for three or five years which shortened themselves almost yearly.\(^{32}\)

All these later tales (though the earliest of them must go back to Kim's time) are what Kipling called" pumiced ivory-smooth," but never over-written. He does not hesitate and search for words or visibly form his phrases as Pater did. He is always- at ease, unhurried but never distracted from his theme. He seems to have been content to become an Elder Craftsman. No longer audible is the confident chuckle of the early stories, the air of "I can do it, you just watch." His stories, on the contrary, open quietly now, sometimes slowly, and go steadily forward to their riotous or wistful climax.
But it is not so much in the manner of them as in the matter that there is the most notable change from the tales which Kipling had written in the 19th century. Then he was sometimes satisfied with a plot—now every story has an idea. No longer is the picture or incident which is to form the basis of five thousand words of skilled narrative hastily grabbed because it can suitably lead to a neat situation, a prettily turned last paragraph. No longer are the characters themselves designed to fit the gaps in an artful mosaic. First, now, is the theme, and there has been time to choose it from a dozen. The plot is there and is often crisp and clever, but it does not twist its characters from their natural growth.

Except for one story, rather unsubstantial compared with its predecessors, the soldiers three have disappeared, alas, and in their place is Mr. Pyecroft of the Royal Navy. (Kipling had been, on naval exercises with the Home Fleet.) Pyecroft is a joy and Kipling’s contemporary readers must have learnt to anticipate with relish the outrageous events which followed his every appearance. But they missed Mulvaney, Learoyd and Ortheris and looked in vain for their reappearance with Private Copper in South Africa, and never knew quite the same frank friendship with any of the later reappearing characters. It seemed a little unfair that Kipling who liked to turn back and find his old and well-tried creation—he was still breathing fresh life into the mummy of Mr. King in 1926—should altogether have abandoned his comrades from Lahore. But perhaps he felt that in Kim he had satisfied himself wholly with the rich food of India for, with the exception of a fragment calledu The ‘Dept’ in his last book and three sketches in his book for Scouts and Guides, Kipling never wrote another story with an Indian setting. The nearest he came to it was in ‘A Sahib’s War,’ which is about a Sikh officer in South Africa, while ‘In the Presence’ most faithfully portrays Gurkhas in England and in ‘A Deal in Cotton’ a leading part is played by an Indian bearer.
It is said,

His stories followed the course of his own life. Kipling, as we have seen, made authenticity one of the highest virtues, and although he is in no mean sense autobiographical, it is not hard to see that he sometimes turned personal experience to account. There are first of all, the Boer War stories. Then came that classic of early motoring, ‘Steam Tactics,’ in which, Kipling says, he faithfully drew the nature and attributes of his first car, a Loco-mobile. ‘The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat’ also gives a picture of motoring while it was yet a novelty to literature and even in ‘They,’ to which it was incidental, Kipling could not resist a few realistic lines which only a pioneer motorist could have written.

In three stories he told of a man, or a man and wife, learning their way to the heart of an English country home ‘An Habitatin Enforced,’ ‘My Son’s Wife’ and ‘Beauty Spots.’ The brook at the end of the garden at Bateman’s with its ancient mill not only flows through Puck of Pook’s Hill and Rewards and Fairies, but trickles or flood in ‘An Habitation Enforced,’ ‘Below the Mill Dam’ and ‘Friendly Brook.’

In Something of Myself Kipling describes his home at Torquay, outwardly large and bright but inwardly burdened with a “brooding Spirit of deep despondency.” It cannot be doubted that in ‘The House Surgeon’ he gave point to this. His stories of the First world War turn inevitably on loss, though in neither ‘Mary Postgate’ nor ‘The Gardener’ is it a son who has been killed as Kipling’s own boy was. It would not be true to say that Kipling owed more to personal experience in his later writings than he had done in such straightforward autobiography as ‘Baa Baa Black Sheep,’ or the early part of ‘The Man who Would be King.’ But it is not fanciful, to “see in these six books the very natural outcome of his life from 1902 onwards, the life of a man who had travelled widely and with trained
observation, a man who travelled still, a well-to-do man who owed his material success to nobody and nothing but his own ability, a man who loved humour for its own sake, a householder much visited by friends and wanderers and men of action, a husband and father, and above all an Englishman who had come home to be absorbed by his own country.

Almost every story in these latter collections has its parent in the earlier ones, for Kipling remained faithful to certain types of tale, however much his exercises in each type varied or matured. 'Brugglesmith,' for instance, that crazy farce in which Kipling piled absurdity on absurdity on it seemed that he would rouse the London night about him in guffaws, is the legitimate forebear of 'The Bonds of Discipline' a monstrous pantomime on board a cruiser when a foreign agent is discovered as a stowaway and is treated to an exhibition which includes a ratings' tea-party on the bridge and culminates in the sham execution of a Marine for murder and his burial at sea all of which the agent notes and subsequently publishes to the world. This in turn leads to 'Steam Tactics' in the same book. Here a policeman trying to enforce the speed limit is kidnapped and left at night in a park where the owner keeps wild animals at large. So to 'The Puzzler,' an extravaganza in *Actions and Reactions*, in which the Lord Chief Justice with a stump-leg barrel-organ strapped to his shoulder joins an Italian organ-grinder in chasing a monkey through a strange house, the owner and his wife arriving while the hunt is in progress in the bedrooms. Kipling's greatest achievement in this class was 'The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat' in *A Diversity of Creatures*. No other English writer has attempted, sheer farce on this scale, so that the superlatives which suggest themselves are scarcely necessary. Starting simply, with a conscious platitude, it goes forward with an awful inevitability through a series of wild imbecilities till the noise of its rhapsodic foolery fills the world. It is, incidentally, a tale of vengeance—not for some serious crime, but for
stupidity and malice, and Kipling takes care to have the reader on the side of the avengers, and to give him the incidental pleasure of seeing that vengeance magnificently fulfilled. In the same collection are two more such tales, ‘The Horse Marines’ and ‘The Vortex,’ the latter a grand piece of nonsense between a bore and a swarm of bees. But it is perhaps significant that this is printed immediately before his first two war stories of 1915, and thereafter he did not again let himself go in burlesque until, in his last collection, _Limits and Renewals_ he does so, though with restraint, in ‘Beauty Spots.’

14. ACTIONS AND REACTIONS (1909):

This book is not reissued afterwards and some of its good stories are published in new editions. The original version has the following stories: An Inhabitation Enforced, Garm—a Hostage, The Mother Hive, With the Night Mail, The Puzzler, Lottie Foxes and The House Surgeon.

_The Mother Hive:_ This menace as he saw it, from the left, Kipling satirised in ‘The Mother Hive’ (1908) as he had attacked the Balfourites in ‘Below the Mill Dam.’

Neither of Kipling’s two fables quite rival Orwell, let alone Swift, although some of his invective and denunciation in verse has a fierceness that recalls his great poetic forebears.

‘The Army of a Dream’ as well as the political satirical poems which begin in 1902 with the championship of the rights of the tummies returned from South Africa to a new, vigorous and less class-bound society, and end in 1912 with ‘The Benefactors,’ a poem prophesying an alternative to coal to free us from the tyranny of the miners’ union.

Only the heady impact of victory in war could allow Kipling to believe that England was really the England of our dreams. If he could sustain the illusion, there were thousands of returned tommies who could
not. To them Kipling offered the Empire, emigration, colonisation, the old hope of renewal in Australia that Dickens had given to Mr Micawber and poor fallen little Emily in 1848, but with an added realism that the tommies knew and had tested the promised land, South Africa.

The village is hardly pleasantly painted in ‘They’ or ‘The Wish House’ or ‘My Son’s Wife’ - and there are more satirical overtones to the Sunday at church in ‘An Habitation Enforced’ than is usually allowed. Unlike the returned tommy, who must emigrate or stifle, Kipling had until 1908 The Woolsack to winter in, and after that, Engelberg or St Moritz and skating, or after the War, the pleasure cruise, the motoring holiday, the Riviera. That his escapes were increasingly a rich man’s (and a sick man’s) escapes does not make them any the less vital comings up for air for a man who regularly found the English settled world turning into a stifling grave.

For the moment, with the Victorious War behind him and hopes of a new society before him, he could only urge emigration to the south to those who couldn’t bear England, and, luckier himself in his two homes, compensate by trying to make England a better place for the talented, the ambitious, and the young. It meant a fairly full-scale attack on all the entrenched establishment and this he made in three or four or five poems and in ‘Below the Mill Dam.’

Some of these poems, notably ‘Rimmon’ (1903) and ‘The Song of the Old Guard,’ directly relate to the necessity of purging the army of the old officer class who, in his opinion, had so nearly lost us the war before Roberts and Kitchener came on the scene.

Perhaps the most striking is the satire upon the Old Guard’s self-satisfied resumption of power:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Know this, my brethren, Heaven is clear} \\
\text{And all the clouds are gone } \\
\text{The Proper Sort shall flourish now}
\end{align*}
\]
Good times are coming on . . .
A common people strove in vain
To shame us unto toil
But they are spent and we remain,
And we shall share the spoil
According to our several needs
As Beauty shall decree,
As Age ordain or Birth concedes
And, Hey then up go we!

Until at last:

Then come, my brethren, and prepare
The candlesticks and bells
The scarlet, brass and badger’s hair
Wherein our Honour dwells
And strictly fence and strictly keep
The Ark’s integrity
Till Armageddon break our sleep...
And, Hey then up go we!

In the most famous of these poems, however, ‘The Islanders’ it is -not so vague. It attacks all classes and all aspects of English life, but its strongest play is against the upper and upper-middle classes, the complacent supporters as he saw it of a Tory government that, in its cultured aristocratic indifference, was too idle to listen to its great man, Joseph Chamberlain, in his warning of the German menace and his plea for Imperial unity.

In his scornful attack on the nation’s determined blindness to its dangers, only a glancing blow is made at his later enemies - the trade unions, the Socialists, or the worshippers of democracy:

[When the enemy invades]
Will ye pray them or preach them, or print
them, or ballot them back from your shore?
Will your workmen issue a mandate to bid them
strike no more?
Will ye rise and dethrone your rulers (because
you were idle both)?
Or at the Commercial classes:
Ye say it will ‘minish trade)
This poetry of invective has still, one believes, power to affect for,
apart from its telling hits at contemporary fetishes, it expresses a mood of
anger at complacent conservatism and contented obsolescence which is
general and recurrent.
Incidentally, it is this that ties the radical Charles Dickens the
advocate of emigration to the colonies as a panacea, the co-supporter with
Ruskin and Tennyson of violent suppression of the black rebellion in
Jamaica.

With the Night Mail (c.1904): In ‘With the Night Mail’ (c.1904),
one of his science-fiction views of the” future world, the narrator looks back
to “the horrible old days when men were taught that they might go to
unspeakable torment after death”. It even led him on occasion to associate
cruelty directly with Christianity.

In the twenties, when the reaction to the Great War was at its height,
such utterances (and Kipling made many) were dismissed as bad faith. Kipling can be charged with Bottomley-like bad faith; but I think that he can be charged with an excited sincerity that is near to the point of no return. As such, it is often repulsive. And it continued after the war and towards all kinds of Germans.

Kipling critic Kingsley Amis observes,
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.’

**The Puzzler:** ‘The Puzzler,’ published in 1906, has as its central figure, Penfentenyou, “his colony’s Premier in all but name ... Politically, his creed was his growing country; and he came over to England to develop a Great Idea in her behalf.” He is probably meant for Canadian, for he had been in “De Thouar’s First Administration.” The character is from the start satirically as well as sympathetically seen. But what he learns from England, he learns from a farcical incident in which various distinguished Englishmen indulge in a schoolboyish joke with an organ-grinder’s monkey up, a monkey-puzzle tree. The narrative is in the middle rank of Kipling’s humorous tales.

**The House Surgeon:** The best of these stories is ‘The House Surgeon,’ the story of the discovery of the psychological source of the haunting of a house and hence its exorcism. Kingsley Amis calls it “a powerful macabre tale.” Here the theme is a deliberate device. The story is consciously his Sherlock Holmes piece. Conan Doyle was a neighbour in Sussex and an old friend with whom, as he told Rider Haggard, he later found increasingly little in common. There is an odd irony in this imitation of Sherlock Holmes in psychic form, for years after this story was written, Doyle was completely to capitulate to spiritualism. The intention to imitate is obvious, the haunted house is called Homescroft and the narrator-investigator says, “I am less calculated to make a Sherlock Holmes than any man I know.” Nevertheless, his investigation makes one of Kipling’s most enjoyable and professional stories. Not the least, because the central
characters are as unexpected as is Kipling’s sympathy with them - a Scottish Jewish furrier and his Greek wife with their vulgar, nouveau-rich suburban home. But this unexpectedness is increasingly to be an exciting feature of his later stories and one which often atones for their artistic failure. Yet, finally: the story succeeds because here the psychic is a device with no very deep roots and worked out in a well-known convention.

16. REWARDS AND FAIRIES (1910):

Kipling’s next book *Rewards and Fairies* which is a sequel to *Puck of Pook’s Hill* volume, has a fine introduction by the author. Kipling writes there:

Once upon a time, Dan and Una, brother and sister, living in the English country, had the good fortune to meet with Puck, alias Robin Goodfellow, alias Nick O’ Lincoln, alias Lob-lie-by-the Fire, the last survivor in England of those whom mortals call Fairies. Their proper name, of course, is ‘The People of the Hills.’ This Puck, by means of the magic of Oak, Ash, and Thorn, gave the children power-

To see what they should see and hear what they should hear, Though it should have happened three thousand year.

The result was that from time to time and in different places on the farm and in the fields and the country about, they saw and talked to some rather interesting people. One of these, for instance, was a Knight of the Norman Conquest, another a young Centurion of a Roman Legion stationed in England, another a builder and decorator of King Henry VII.’s time; and so on and so forth; as I have tried to explain in a book called *Puck of Pook’s Hill.*
A year or so later, the children met Puck once more, and though they were then older and wiser, and wore boots regularly instead of going barefooted when they got the chance, Puck was as kind to them as ever, and introduced them to more people of the old days.

He was careful, of course, to take away their memory of their walks and conversations afterwards, but otherwise he did not interfere; and Dan and Una would find the strangest sort of persons in their gardens or woods.

In the stories that follow I am trying to tell something about those people.36

*Rewards and Fairies* has the following stories: Cold Iron, Gloriana, The Wrong Thing, Marklake Witches, The Knife and the Naked Chalk, Brother Square-Toes, ‘A Priest in Spite of Himself,’ ‘The Conversion of St Wilfrid, A Doctor of Medicine, Simple Simon and The Tree.

Rupert Croft-Cooke comments

Kipling’s later stories were the “sequels” and Kipling had already written a *Second Jungle Book* after the first, Stevenson had written *Cotriona* to *Kidnapped*, Barrie, unfortunately, *Tommy and Grizel* to *Sentimental. Tommy*, and Haggard and Doyle had followed the fashion— a fashion which is at the moment unpopular among writers of large successful books. When *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906) caught the public imagination it was followed in 1910 by *Rewards and Fairies*. Each consists of a sequence of short stories in which the children Dan and Una’ are entertained by the return of people from history and legend who meet them in their own secret corners of their Sussex home, always introduced by the very English sprite Puck, “alias Robin Goodfellow, alias Nick o’ Lincoln, alias Lob-Lie-by-the-
Fire, the last survivor in England of those whom mortals call Fairies.37

The whole sequence is a clear expression of Kipling's love for England. But it is not quite the love of an Englishman for his homeland which is expressed here, that inarticulate nostalgia which becomes embarrassing in words. It is the love of a man who has first heard the name from a distant country and has come to know his beloved after he has reached manhood. Someone has pointed out that the best descriptions of London have been written by provincials who had never taken the capital for granted but in childhood had heard of it with awe and in boyhood had longed chiefly to get to it. Kipling could take nothing English for granted. He was discovering and learning to love the country to the end of his life. He saw and understood things, about her which no English-born Englishman would have seen or understood, because he would never have known the excitement of discovery. He viewed England and English history affectionately, intimately, shrewdly, but always with wonder, always as a man finding his own birthright.

That suggestion of wonder gives him a peculiar affinity with the children of his book.

"Kipling has always been," says Dixon Scott, "one of those blessed born innocents who never grow up, who are never quite at home in the world, but who wander through it, like-Hawthorne or Poe, a little alien and elf-like, a little envious of the happy folk in housen, and this quality of envy of the practical grown-ups and genuine worldlings is, indeed, the essential characteristic of the man and the key to and core of his work.38

Perhaps his loneliness in childhood, perhaps his being" the little man from India,"in some way isolated him from every society in which he moved. First an English boy among Indian servants, then a self-conscious myopic
stranger in an English public school then a journalist among soldiers and Civil Servants, and finally a wanderer roosting in Sussex—he seemed fated to escape the comfortable gregariousness of others. And this put him in sympathy with animals and children and gave us perhaps these books as well as Mowgli’s adventures. He looked at the Sussex downs as though it was for the first time, and with his Dan and Una travelled happily into the past.

The sequence provides an admirable answer to those who have supposed Kipling to be, philosophically, conservative, a lover of the old order who feared or disliked the new. For in these, as elsewhere, while he is most sensitively conscious of change he never bemoans it. Though the stories are told in the Sussex of the first decade of the century with telegraph poles filing across the downs, railway lines cutting the denes, motor-cars beginning their noisy procession through the lanes, never once is there a suggestion of regret or a hint of exasperation at the broken peace. On the contrary the theme of the sequence, if it may be fairly condensed into a few words, is the all-enduring all-surviving spirit of England, constant to certain fundamentals but absorbing, reforming, developing through the centuries. This is stressed by the unvarying background, and the artless variety of period. A fair proportion of the stories told by the cheerful and substantial ghosts who visit Dan and Una. are set in the corner of Sussex in which the children lived, and landmarks which had survived play their part in them. Old Hobden, the poacher, is a descendant of Hob of the Delle whom Puck had known in Danish times and the children’s’” Forge Mill—our Mill” is “that newly invented watermill below the Forge” to Parnesius the Centurion of nearly two thousand years ago. Yet author and imaginary narrators and the children themselves are unperturbed by the constant changes in outward things—indeed the old craftsmen of the stories are interested in modern methods and never regret their own.
The stories indeed are more often than not concerned with sweeping changes, movements of invading races, new religions, new civilisations, considered sometimes in allegory, sometimes quite simply and personally through the old narrator’s eyes. The last stand of the Romans in a country threatened by Picts and Danes alike, the ousting of the Norse Gods by Christianity, the New World, the Norman Conquest—or right back to the end of the Stone Age and the coming of Iron in that fine and terrible story, ‘The Knife and the Naked Chalk.’ Change is the very substance of more than half of the tales and is viewed always with a steady detachment.

There is another and more thoughtless criticism of Kipling which is disputed here—that he was a propagandist in prose, a writer who was forever trying to make out a case. If this had been true what excellent opportunities these stories would have provided. With his matchless ingenuity in such things he could have taught a lesson in every tale, could have made them into parables—and without loss of entertainment. But nowhere is he guilty of this.

For here, once again, it was the story which came first. Why search for the doctrine or private sympathies of the writer when his object is, as ever, to tell a tale and tell it as well as he could? Those two beautiful stories of the last Romans left by their warring emperors on the island and facing the fearful desolation and dangers of the ‘Wall would by the wildly far-fetched, be called a warning to Imperial England with her regiments-out along the North-West Frontier of India and quarrelling parties at home. But why suppose anything of the sort? Why try to gather from” ‘The Treasure and the Law’ Kipling’s attitude towards Jews or towards Anti-Semitism? Or from ‘The Conversion of St. Wilfred’ his feelings about Catholicism? He never waits to make artificial points. There are no polemics here. It is the polished stone of a many-faceted narrative that he seeks to present in a brilliant setting.
And with what patient cleverness he succeeds. In these two books his technique, if not his inspiration, reached its height. Perhaps, for the first time, there is a little too much cunning in his work, though however intricate the stories they never lack spontaneity. Again to quote Dixon Scott. “If the reader will turn back to those wise fairy-tales he will see that each is really fourfold: a composite tissue made up of a layer of sunlit story (Dan’s and Una’s plane), on a layer of moonlit magic (plane of Puck), on a layer of history story stuff (Rene’s plane and Gloriana’s), on a last foundation of delicately bedimmed but never doubtful allegory.” It almost seems as though Kipling was conscious of his own virtuosity.’ He himself wrote afterwards of these two books:

I worked the material in three or four overlaid tints and textures, which might or might not reveal themselves according to the shifting light of sex, youth and experience. It was like working lacquer and mother o’ pearl, a natural combination, into the same scheme as niello and grisaille, and trying not to let the joins show.” The joins do not show. There is the self-consciousness in the delicate work. It is said, “The most that can be said is that Kipling has learnt detachment, that he does not approach his task with quite the same boyish eagerness to get his story down on paper. The stories are never fabricated, never unspontaneous, but they are more scrupulously chiselled than those of the early books. And, if it may be said of a writer who scarcely ever used an unnecessary word, mere economical.

In the stone-age story of the Puck cycle, ‘The Knife and the Naked Chalk,’ Una and Dan the two children, are on a visit to the Downland seaside from the Weald (as, Indeed, Elsie and John Kipling may often have visited their great-aunt, Georgie) and they get into conversation with a local shepherd, who urges the virtues of the chalkland over the “messy trees of

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the Weald... they draw the lightning and... so, like as not you’ll lose half a score of ewes struck dead in one storm... Now press your face down and smell the turf. That’s Southdown thyme.” But Una says of the Downland, “It’s just like the sea, you see where you’re going, and - you go there, and there’s nothing between.” And Dan concurs, “When we get home I shall sit in the woods all day.”

This is an amusing example of how Kipling disliked a rebuff. In this story the shepherd says, “You come to talk to me the same as your father did,” and the whole passage implies a former regular relationship between the father and the shepherd. Yet in fact, old Steve Barrow, the well-known local shepherd, refused to let Kipling hear the old Sussex ballads he knew, saying, “That Rudyard Kipling would send ‘em to Lunnon and make a mort of money out of ‘em.” Perhaps not an unfair judgement of the Kiplings’ strong commercial sense.

Despite the accompanying poem in praise of the Downs that, at that time at any rate, Kipling’s longing was for the Weald and the lushness and privacy. Rottingdean had seen the end of the past - the Stalky stories were brought together and completed there; Kim was, at last, made whole; the Just So Stories completed. A wonderfully productive time, but the last of his boyhood and of India and the jungle world. The summer and autumn months at Rottingdean in those years were not empty times either. Here he made his practical contribution to ‘The Army of a Dream’ by his organisation of the Rifle Club, which, no doubt, he hoped would be the start of a whole chain of such groups linking the men of England in fitness, defence and fellowship. The flavour of it can be found in his story “The Parable of the Boy Jones”.

At Rottingdean he made a very close friendship with his cousin, Stanley Baldwin, which was to endure even the political divergences of his last years. Baldwin would seem to have been in private as well as in public
life a peacemaker -- something badly needed in the Macdonald world. Kipling’s affection for his aunts and cousins was as great as Baldwin’s, but he had surely neither the same patience nor the same tact. And these were badly needed with Phil Burne-Jones who, with worldly failure, had grown a strangely moody man, now gloomy, now witty. Rudyard’s enormous success could hardly have helped and the temperamental effects were far near home.

Then there were political differences, that a time when Kipling was becoming increasingly obsessed with politics, must have been difficult. And for Carrie, surely, the move from Rottingdean must have been something like Rudyard’s escape from Balestiers in Brattleboro save that then they were pushed, and now they went of their own accord. The new artistic inspiration that came to Kipling with this last move in his life was compounded of three elements, which curiously inter-twine in many of the stories -- psychological illness, psychic phenomena and the Sussex countryside.

17. A DIVERSITY OF CREATURES (1917):

This small book of Kipling’s stories published in 1917 has some interesting stories like The Village That Voted the Earth Was Flat, Regulus, As Easy as ABC, Transportation and others.

If we had any misgivings, strengthened by some recent excursions in journalism, that decadence had set in with Mr. Kipling, this new book puts them to rest. He has never shown himself a greater master of the art of storytelling, never combined creative imagination with more triumphant realism, or handled his own English prose with more ease, economy, and certainty of effect. The first of the fourteen, ‘As Easy as A.B.C.’ is perhaps the finest short story of the future ever written. A sort of sequel to ‘With the Night Mail,’ it is dated A.D. 2065, and is an historical episode in a world
that has passed through the most profound and complete of social revolutions. Politics have ceased. No human being takes any interest in government, for all things run smoothly and in perfect order under a small and unobtrusive Aerial Board of Control, which leaves absolute privacy and security to the individual. 'Transportation is Civilization. Democracy is Disease.' In such a world, crowds and the people are the one source of evil, and a sporadic outbreak of now obsolete and mediaeval democratic agitation in Chicago arouses a storm of agoraphobia, and brings about the events to be narrated. Mr. Kipling does not describe, but makes the reader's imagination vividly realize, the wonders of aerial navigation, the ground-circuits, and the destructive sound-vibrations and withering rays of light, which are the defences and the artillery of the future. He moves among these sensations as if they were the commonplace of existence, as if mankind had been used to them for generations. His is a realism that Swift might have envied.

Some artists excel in giving an air of the marvelous and stupendous to things that really exist. Such is Mr. Pennell in his romantic pictures of colossal buildings, engines, and machinery. Others, like Mr. Muirhead Bone, can make the most incredible structures and implements of war matters of everyday familiarity. Mr. Kipling can do both. He can make the ordinary ultra-romantic; he can let us feel at home in a world where everything is new, strange, and astounding. To him romance is a plaything, which he handles with the skill and ease of a tennis champion brandishing a racket. Though none of the other stories travels into the world of mechanical wonders, several, perhaps most, would in cold analysis seem quite as improbable. In three, 'The Dog Hervey,' 'In the Same Boat' and 'Swept and Garnished' occult sympathies, some form of telepathic bond, or a faculty of seeing the invisible, are rendered more than credible by like realistic devices. There are farces, such as 'The Vortex,' 'The Horse Marines' and
‘The Village that voted the Earth was Flat’ which pile situation on ludicrous situation, and climax on climax, long after it seems as if the final limit of extravagance had been reached. The last-named story is a piece of uproarious comedy that exceeds ‘The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney’ and has the advantage of being laid in the home counties, and enacted by local magnates, villagers, city men, and M.P.s such as we all know. The success with which the inventor brings off his daring complications of humorous circumstance is not a whit less amazing than that of his ‘Easy as A.B.C.’

It is, in fact, all as easy as A.B.C. to Mr. Kipling, and that is perhaps what chiefly enthrals the discriminating reader and seizes our admiration. For it is the manner, not the matter, of these latest masterpieces which challenges attention. Mr. Kipling offers nothing conspicuously new. Various as the contents are, we are well acquainted with their different kinds. He set the direction in every instance years ago. The only wonder is that he is able to proceed still farther in everyone. True, there is nothing of the same kind of imagination as in ‘They’ or ‘The Brushwood Boy’. This set contains no story having the fundamental seriousness of several earlier ones that cling to memory. But as a craftsman, and something higher than a craftsman, Mr. Kipling has gone on developing. Though he is not a novelist, his character-drawing is substantial enough to last out the different events of many stories. Stalky and Beetle reappear here, and the former has obviously lived. There are also some Sikhs and Goorkhas reminiscent of *Kim* and other Indian stories. Perhaps it is a result of the War that infractions of the sixth commandment are treated with such sang-froid and nonchalance in ‘Friendly Brook’ and ‘The Edge of the Evening.’ Each story is followed by a kind of epilogue in verse, which sometimes explains a rather cryptic meaning, or at least enforces its bearing as Mr. Kipling conceives it. ‘The Land’ is an excellent history of the British peasant, who was there when the Romans came, and still is in real possession, ‘For whoever pays the taxes
old Mus’ Hobden owns the land.’ But the average quality of the verse is low; some pieces, such as ‘The Children,’ in spite of a Swinburnian measure and fluent double-rhyming, are merely consecutive lengths of prose.

We should like to have quoted from that charming comedy of schoolboy humours and howlers, ‘Regulus’ to show what Mr. Kipling can do in the way of Platonic as well as other dialogue. He is first-rate on the teaching of Latin and its effect on living. But to open the book anywhere is to see that he is a supreme master of style, in all its applications.

The Village That Voted the Earth Was Flat: But the horrors of England - the Egyptian scribe Bal-Phour as he calls him in a skit, the detestable Churchill and “Squiff” Asquith and Lloyd George, and the insufficient Haldane, trade union revolutionaries weak Lords, suffragettes - all were soon to pale beside the Ulster Question. Nevertheless, the almost paranoid nightmare that Kipling (and many right-wing people) made out of what they saw as a radical conspiracy in these years produced from Kipling’s pen an excellent farce. ‘The Village That Voted the Earth Was Flat’ was not published until 1917 in the book of stories, A Diversity of Creatures - It is dated as 1913.

The farce, as so often, depends on the motor car. And in this case the pirate-hero motorists are Kipling, an eminent Journalist, a brilliant young ex-Oxonian and a Tory M.P. They are charged with speeding in a village. Brought before the local Justice of the Peace, they are, in their opinion, monstrously and very pompously convicted. Charged and convicted shortly after them is the famous music hall impresario, “Bat” Masquerier. The J.P., it emerges, is the local landowner and a Radical M.P. Something of the air of conspiratorial myth that entered of Kipling’s views in those years may be gauged from this description of the village.

This story was the last comic fling before Armageddon broke out, it is also a piece of violent farce at a time when Kipling’s political speeches and
intentions had, like those of most of his associates, reached a point of hysteria which threatened violence. The promise of Home Rule for Ireland, made by the Liberal leaders to the Southern Irish politicians, on whom, after 1910, their parliamentary majority depended, brought the Right Wing to a point of frenzy.

18. DEBITS AND CREDITS (1926) and
19. LIMITS AND RENEWALS (1932):

Brander Matthews observes,

It is pleasant to welcome this new collection of Rudyard Kipling's short stories in Debits and Credits the first in ten years; and it is pleasant to know that his popularity is attested by the steady sale of his many volumes. His earliest books, those which gave him his sudden fame, Plain Tales from the Hills, Soldiers Three, and their companions, were not protected by copyright in this country when they first appeared; they were pirated by half-a-dozen publishers; and they were sold by tens of thousands. The international copyright act went into effect on the first of July, 1891; and Kipling has been able to profit by the books he has written in the past thirty-five years. To the courtesy of the publishers who have just issued Debits and Credits, I am indebted for the privilege of stating that since they took over the publication of Kipling's books they have sold more than two and a half million volumes. Kim and Just So Stories have each attained to a circulation of more than 150,000; and The Day's Work is not far behind.

Two of the fourteen tales are, as it were, omitted chapters from Stalky & Co., that intimate study of a boy's school, in which Kipling recovers the days of his youth, just as Mark Twain did when he wrote Tom Sawyer. Two others, 'Enemies to Each Other' and 'On the Gate' are fantasies not
unrelated to 'The Children of the Zodiac.' A fifth, 'The Eye of Allah' is a resuscitation of the remote past with Roger Bacon for the central figure—a resuscitation which might easily have been included in *Puck of Pook's Hill* or *Rewards and Fairies*, and which is worthy of that companionship. A sixth, 'The Bull that Thought' is to be set by the side of 'The Maltese Cat' in that this new tale pictures for us a bull-fight as the earlier story presents a polo match; and the adventure of the thinking bull is richer in content and deeper in meaning than the exciting narrative wherein the quick-witted polo pony is the protagonist.

Half-a-dozen of the other tales have to do with the War, as the War was seen in retrospect by certain of the surviving combatants; and no other visions of actual fighting more illuminating than two or three of these, in which we are made to see the ghastly horrors of the days in the trenches and also to catch a glimpse—and often more than a glimpse—of the joy of the combat, the fleeting ecstasy of battle, the glorious hour of strife, which seemed for the moment to make fighting eternally worth while. One of the sequels to war's alarms, 'The Gardener' is a beautiful tale beautifully told; and in its spirit it is akin to 'They' as it has something of the same misty mysticism at the end, which leaves us wondering exactly what had happened and who the mysterious gardener might be. But those will pierce the veil who recall the memorable meeting of Mary Magdalen with 'one in the likeness of a gardener.'

In two of the tales, 'The Wish-House' and 'The Madonna of the Trenches', both stories of love enduring through life and even after death one can find a new note—the note of passion, of deep and dominating passion, not debased by the puerile salacity which is paraded in certain contemporary fictions falsely acclaimed as frank and daring. In these two stories of Kipling there is no leering lewdness, there is true passion,
presented with manly reticence, but burning none the less and all the more fiercely because it is an inward fire, which never comes to the surface.

**On the Gate:** As one would expect, the wartime activities of Rudyard Kipling play very little part in the three war stories that he produced. The death of Kipling’s son, John, at the battle of Loos in October 1915, put an effectual end to his imaginative use of war. In 1916 he wrote ‘On the Gate,’ a story of the overworked task of St Peter and his assistants in that year of the terrible casualty lists. Its surface is mockery of bureaucracy, very effective. Its deeper demand is that can for mercy for and sinners that was to press upon him increasingly after the war with the attendant dismissal of all creeds and divisions Bradlaugh, Calvin, Ignatius Loyola all work together to receive souls with compassion. The story was not published until after the war, no doubt, as Haggard says, at Carrie’s request: perhaps she found the subject unbearable treated in Kipling’s determined humorous surface tone. Perhaps Kipling himself felt the underlying mood of mercy, even though it is not explicitly extended to the German enemy, who are never mentioned, to be inappropriate while the war lasted. Anyway, save for some of ‘The Epitaphs of War,’ Kipling’s poems for the rest of the war continued to be fierce and hating condemnations of the enemy. In one single poem he seems to allow himself public lamentation, ‘My Boy Jack’:

> Have you news of my Jack?
> Not *this tide*…

But the answer is stoic:

> Oh dear, what comfort can I find?
> *None this tide nor any tide*
> *Except he did not shame his kind* …

His creativity in fiction came to an end until the hostilities ceased. But, before John’s death in 1915 had hit him so cruelly, he did write three excellent war stories in which ruthlessness, not mercy, is the mood.
‘Swept and Garnished,’ ‘Mary Postgate’ and ‘Sea Constables’ were all, in fact, published in magazines (in that order) between January and September 1915, before his personal tragedy.

The Eye of Allah: ‘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 Bull that Thought’ (1924), ‘The Miracle of St Jubanus’ (1930), and ‘Teem’ (1935). French visits did produce three stories – ‘The Bull that Thought’ (1924), ‘The Miracle of St Jubanus’ (1930), and ‘Teem’ (1935). The evocation of France is that of a man who loves that country, but perhaps the love is a little self-conscious, a little the stereotype of France made by many Englishmen, especially of the upper middle classes, in the twenties, when many of them decided to settle there. It is a real affection - and, of course, with Kipling, a splendid eye, but it is (and Kipling says so) the France of the bonne bourgeoisie and of village life, that they loved. It is, after all, the era of Agatha Christie’s Hercule Poirot. How did those middle-class Francophiles feel when the Front Populaire arrived, Kipling did not live to see it. How much he loved the countryside may be seen in his letter about Les Baux, quoted in a life of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, where he speaks of its wild rockiness as more awful than either Chitor or Amber - surely his highest praise. But the evocation of the Camargue and the Crau, in ‘The Bull that Thought’ is spoiled by a lot of embarrassing wine and food talk, and that of the Auvergne village in ‘The Miracle of St Jubanus’ by the cliché quality of the wise country cure and the foolish atheist village schoolmaster.

But the interest of two of these short stories – ‘The Bull that Thought’ and ‘Teem’ - lies outside their disputable artistic merits. Some critics of
Kipling, struck by what they feel to be his evasion of the final ethical and metaphysical problems he propounds, have declared that he is really to be seen as an aesthete, an artist for whom the craft in his work is the final value of life.

It is possible to read ‘The Bull that Thought’ as the account of a bull with exceptional skill in the bull-ring and ‘Teem’ as a statement by a truffle-finding dog of the skills needed for finding truffles. It is also very reasonable to read both stories as metaphors for the tactics and skills of the artist.

The Gardener: Kipling’s other story of the war is for many of his admires his finest work. ‘The Gardener’ is brilliantly carried out, full of subtle, ambiguous, yet meaningful, nuances. It is also his saddest story because it is the one in which he allows his deepest sympathy most open range and ends on pity without any active solution. And it is without violence. All this probably makes it his most agreeable story; it is finally flawed by one of his annoying, puzzling endings which have so captivated those who want to range him on the side of the “clever”, and, in particular, because this “puzzling” ending is encased in cliché. The main body of the story certainly demands the highest praise.

Helen Turrell, a young woman of means and family, goes from her village to the South of France for her health. While there, she learns that her brother, George, “an Inspector of the Indian Police, had entangled himself with the daughter of a retired non-commissioned officer and had died of a fall from his horse a few weeks after his child was born.” This nephew Helen adopts – “luckily it seemed that the people of that class the boy’s mother’s family) would do almost anything for money.” Aunt and nephew, loving and loved, are a popular feature of the village. When Michael, the nephew, wishes to call her “Mummy” like the other boys at school, she explains that she is only his aunt, but that he may call her “Mummy” at bed-
time. When he learns that she has told the whole village of his parents’ illicit love, he upbraids her. “‘Why did you tell?’ – ‘Because it’s always better to tell the truth,’ Helen answered… ‘When the troof’s ugly I don’t think it’s nice.’ “ Yet later, at ten, rather improbably precocious, he accepts his bastardy with, “Don’t you bother, Auntie. I’ve found out all about my sort in English History and the Shakespeare bits. There was William the Conqueror to begin with, and - oh, heaps more, and they all got on first-rate.”

These changes in his attitude to his supposed bastard birth work admirably against our knowledge of his real bastard birth by Helen herself (which, of course, Kipling never states). Just before Michael goes to Oxford, the war breaks out. Luck seems always to be on his side, until “a shell-splinter dropping out of a wet dawn killed him at once. The next shell uprooted and laid down over the body what had been the foundation of a barn wall, so neatly that none but an expert would have guessed that anything unpleasant had happened.” This parallel to Helen’s burial of her relationship to him is Kipling at his best.

Then follow some fine pages describing her return from grief to a deadened “normality” (Is it Carrie’s progress he describes?). At last Helen goes off on a visit to Flanders to see Michael’s grave. Here, amid a number of interesting encounters, is one especially well conveyed with a Mrs Scarsworth, who chatters on about her many visits on behalf of bereaved relations, only at last to break down with the revelation that it is her illicit lover she has come there to honour. At the end, Helen herself goes to the great graveyard and, despite all her documentation, is lost before the endless rows of crosses. A man, planting there, asks her “‘Who are you looking for? – ‘Lieutenant Michael Turrell - my nephew’ said Helen ... as she had many thousands of times in her life ... ‘Come with me and I will show you where your son lies.’ “ Then the story ends: “When Helen left the cemetery, she
turned for a last look. In the distance she saw the man bending over his young plants; and she went away, supposing him to be the gardener.”

Many interpretations have been put on this - that it was Michael himself; Alexander Woollcott, the American theatre critic, had a friend to whom Kipling confided that the gardener was Helen’s brother and Michael’s father; and so on. The last words, with their echo of the Bible account of Mary ‘Magdalene at Jesus’s grave, are surely clear enough.

The fact seems clear enough. All that annoys me is the pointing up of so fine a story by such a cliche. Not because it is a Christian one that Kipling chooses, but because he doesn’t need to define his ending at all. We need neither Christ himself nor anyone returned from the dead; a gardener, perspicacious enough to see the truth; after all the hundreds of visitors who have come to the graveyard, would have been enough.

In Anna Karenina, Levin says, “Christ would never have said those words if he had known how they would be abused. Of all the Gospel those are the only ones remembered.” –“Supposing him to be the gardener” is, as with ‘The Madonna of the Trenches’ although less seriously, a misjudgement of taste - it both reduces the story which has worked perfectly on its straight human level, and treats the Christian quotation as a ready-made text.

It is said, “But, at the last, it is the artistic victories of the story that remain with the reader, not its concluding mistake. Helen Turrell has denied her life’s meaning out of convention. All this is shattered by the momentary intense action of a shell-splinter. This whole theme is expressed symbolically in Helen’s thoughts when she is being shuttled from one Government authority to another after Michael is missing: “Once, on one of Michael’s leayes, he had taken her over a munition factory, where she saw the progress of a shell from blank-iron to the all but finished article. It struck...
her at the time that the wretched thing was never left alone for a second; and, ‘I’m being manufactured into a bereaved next-of-kin,’ she told herself, as she prepared her documents.” Such is the extra meaning of “killed in action.”

The Madonna of the Trenches: Before this he had seen something of Flanders trenches for himself and had reported for Beaverbrook on the landing of the Canadian troops on the French shores. His knowledge of trench warfare, of course, was to be made solid by all he learned in writings his Irish Guards history. Nevertheless the extraordinarily powerful map sense of trench life that he conveys in a story of the war written later in the post-war years, ‘The Madonna of the Trenches.’

According to Kipling’s biographer Kingsley Amis, 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.41 Some good stories of the volume are ‘The United Idolators,’ ‘The Propagation of Knowledge’ and others.

But in the years after the short and powerful trio of 1915 stories, the most marked effect of the War on his imagination was in his continued concern for the rest of his life with the mental and nervous effects left by their war experiences upon ex-soldiers and ex-officers. Eight of the stories in the last two collections of his life - *Debits and Credits* (1926) and *Limits and Renewals* (1932) - are directly concerned with this subject. The last of these stories, “The Miracle of Saint Jubanus”, was first published as late as 1930.
But, testimony though they are to the degree to which he saw the post-war world not as a new beginning but as a tragic aftermath, they also directly look back to his pre-war dwelling upon despair, its sources, and the hopes for its cure. Indeed his most terrible general evocation of madness, 'The Mother's Son' is used as a preface to one of the least successful of these stories - 'Fairy Kist' written first in 1924.

These and other post-war stories have been acclaimed by recent critics as his stories of compassion, and so, of course, they are; but not, I think, as the critics intend to suggest, a new and final compassionate phase in his old age. It seems that compassion is the mark of much of his best work from Indian days continuously onwards. It may be, as Mr Alan Sandison has ably argued, that, apart from *Kim*, the great lack in Kipling's work is love.

More important one of the best of the post-war stones, 'Day-Spring Mishandled', and one of the most surprising, because it stands all alone in his work in its subject matter, is a direct account of the crippling effects upon a man of talent and good nature that cherished hatred brings.

No doubt his son's death, in its hideous setting, as he constantly points out, of the deaths of millions of others, set Kipling's mind in his last years much upon the theme of all-embracing mercy; but, as importantly another reason for this change was also that he had come close to exhausting his strongly-felt emotion of hatred by what he had written during the war.

The purpose he intended was the winning of a war that he believed to be not only just, but necessary, in order to save the world from a brutal tyranny.

Here is the evidence of the culmination of his violent anti-Germanism (growing since the early nineties). In the Indian stories, the enemy command respect. Fuzzy Wuzzy is a damned good enemy. Adam Strickland in 'A Deal in Cotton' (1904), in administering a district of Sudanese he saves
from being sold into slavery. It is the chivalric notion of "East is East" to face." There is no element of this in anything that Kipling has to say of the German enemy. Already, in his science-fiction fantasy, 'With the night Mail' (1905), that includes brilliant parodies of the newspaper advertisements of the year 2000, the world is ruled by an Aerial Board of Control that includes all races and both sexes, war has been abolished in 1967, everything is international; yet the Danes are still admonished for using German equipment. His speeches and articles of the Great War, even given his natural violence of expression, have to be seen as purposely exaggerated to stimulate hatred of the enemy. Yet, we feed upon what we write and say, and that starting from sincere motives, Kipling's anti-Germanism over the years does verge on racist obsession. In the Daily Express, for example, in May 1916, he writes,

One thing we must get into our thick heads is that whenever the German man or woman gets a suitable culture to thrive in he or she means death and loss to civilised people, precisely as germs of any disease ... mean death or loss to mankind.\(^{42}\)

Kipling, or his publishers, sometimes after his death, published many of his (or of their own) collections. Some of them are looked into in the following pages.
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