

KIPLING'S LITERARY REPUTATION

by

BEATRICE MERRIGOLD MACLEOD

B.A., University of British Columbia, 1934

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts

in the Department

of

English

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April, 1970

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study.

I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of

English

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver 8, Canada

Date

April 23, 1970

ABSTRACT

Kipling's perplexed relationship with his critics - and especially with those whose opinions mattered - has no parallel in the history of letters. At every stage in his career they made him the epicentre of controversy. Friends and enemies alike misrepresented him in their biased and contradictory judgments. In the '90's the majority helped to set him up as a national idol; after 1899 they engineered his fall into disrepute.

His fate at the hands of the pundits deserves to be studied in some detail. This inquiry into the state of his reputation and the aberrations of Kipling criticism between 1889 and 1914 follows the trend of the times and the shifts of critical opinion, and deals with a series of reviews published in a selected group of eight influential journals. These include the Edinburgh Review, the Quarterly, Blackwood's Magazine, the Contemporary Review, the Fortnightly Review, the Athenaeum, the Saturday Review and the Bookman.

Kipling achieved early and unprecedented success. His startling presence was noted in a spate of articles and reviews in which he was recognized as a formidable new talent. Singled out by Oscar Wilde, approved by the Times, he impressed all who chose to comment on his work, even those whose findings were unfavourable. Many were gratified and enthusiastic; many temporized. The ultra-conservative confessed to grave

misgivings; the liberal-radical were frankly suspicious of his views.

Within a very few years the critics were responding to a supereminent Kipling, revealed as a prophet of Empire. Didactic and persuasive, he grew in stature as a public figure, unofficial laureate, spokesman for the Imperialists. Criticism became correspondingly political. The general chorus of praise reached a crescendo but voices of dissent were raised in angry protest. The liberal intellectuals were busy counteracting the evils of Kiplingism by outright condemnation of the author's prose, fiction and verse.

In 1899 the Boers' declaration of war coincided with the publication of Stalky and Co., bolstering the case for the opposition and effecting an abrupt change in the critical climate. There was a sudden highly emotional revulsion. Of the eight chosen periodicals only the Athenaeum was pleased with Stalky. Of the attacks that ensued none was more savage than Robert Buchanan's article in the Contemporary Review. Those who continued to support Kipling like Walter Besant were driven to defend and to apologize.

During the war and the subsequent period of recrimination, even the Tories began to give vent to their dissatisfaction. Kipling himself drew their censure by lashing out at government and opposition alike. Scathing reviews of Kim reflected the general resentment. More than ever Kipling's well-wishers

were placed on the defensive. Former admirers justified their apostasy by explaining that the author's work had begun to decline with Stalky and Co. Some declared that the popular journalist had never been worthy of the attention he had received. Many lost interest and refrained further comment. In other quarters there was clear evidence of a deliberate move to ignore Kipling's claim to serious consideration.

By 1905 the decline of his reputation reached its final phase. The Conservative propagandist no longer threatened the Liberals. There was less bitterness, less polemical confrontation. The reviews were often perfunctory, contemptuous, ironic or gently disparaging. Most of the critics of any standing had convinced themselves that Kipling's fame had been founded on error, that his very popularity was sufficient proof of his lack of merit, that he had never been a great writer. Among the new generation of romantics, they saw him as an anachronism, out of place and out of fashion. He must in every respect be labelled "inadmissible."

Kipling was an honest but tendentious writer who met with an equally tendentious but essentially dishonest criticism. The reports of his contemporaries appear to have been seldom free from some form of special pleading. Their motivation was too often questionable and their lack of objectivity was notorious. Because they could not tolerate

his popularity, his success, his unfashionable philosophy, his discredited politics, his stubborn, retrogressive philistinism and his refusal to countenance what he called the Gods of the Market Place, the critics were led to reject Kipling's art.

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I Kipling and His Critics	1
II Early Success	11
III The Cecil Rhodes of Literature	46
IV Recriminations	108
V The Inadmissible Kipling	160
A Selected Bibliography	202

CHAPTER I

I had a whisper from a ghost, who shall be nameless, that these commentators always kept in the most distant quarters from their principals in the lower world, through a consciousness of shame and guilt, because they had so horribly misrepresented the meaning of those authors to posterity.

Gulliver's Travels

Somewhere in the Elysium of letters the ghost of Rudyard Kipling walks by himself; a throng of disembodied critics keep their distance. These are the repentant shades of commentators who misrepresented their principal to his own generation and to posterity, veterans of an epic word-war that was fought over and round him. They include both his friends and his enemies, the image-makers on his behalf and the iconoclasts in his despite, who persevered in their efforts from his first publications to his last and long after his death. By the time the mock-heroics of their controversy had passed into durable myth, they had left the reputation of a major author so thoroughly aspersed as to be considered suspect even today.

The case has no parallel in literary history. From his prodigious irruption into London's publishing circles in 1889, followed by his unprecedented popular success, Kipling attracted critical acclaim and calculated abuse, the one reaction to his work tending to provoke and intensify the other. For a decade thereafter, loud and often indiscriminate

applause muffled the cries of protest but by 1899 his self-appointed claque weakened and the opposition grew clamorous. Thereafter he faced a concerted and well-directed attack that effectually destroyed his reputation as a serious writer. In the final phase of his career he met with calculated neglect.

This fall into adversity and premature oblivion had almost nothing to do with his merit and a great deal to do with his vulnerable and anomalous position as a Public Figure. Regarded from the first with both speculative interest and suspicion, he was treated as an issue rather than as a professional story-teller and rhymers. His wide influence, strong opinions, didactic purposes and persuasive enthusiasms identified him as a force. Circumstances and inclination made him a redoubtable partisan. Instead of remaining a popular author with a known political bias, a useful party hanger-on or pamphleteer to be discreetly rewarded, he became a power in his own right. As a Power he found himself the embodiment of an Idea. When a man, however upright and independent, has been turned into an institution and a symbol, he must expect to be exploited, to be assailed, to be made the rallying point and the prime objective of ideological battles. To a tragi-comic extent this was the fate that overtook Kipling.

His writings caused him to become the centre of

unremitting public debate but he himself deliberately avoided most of the usual concomitants of fame. Moreover, when set upon, he took no hand in his own defence and, with regard to the criticism directed against him, he had little to say - a reticence no doubt prompted by his awareness as a journalist of the impossibility of refuting what has already been in print.

No modern author has enjoyed greater popularity or been more widely known. No one has been better loved or more thoroughly hated. No one has received higher praise or more savage vilification. No one of his stature has suffered a more disastrous loss of reputation. No one is more difficult to categorize. To compare him with other controversial writers serves only to underline the obvious dissimilarities. Although mentioned with Milton, Defoe, Dryden, and Byron, linked by Auden with Claudel and Yeats, the suggested parallels are coincidental rather than significant. Setting aside his political and prophetic role, we cannot associate him with any particular movement in prose or verse. We detect influences and name imitators but fail to find him a place in any school that will relate him in a satisfactory manner to the history of modern literature.

It is easier to classify the critics, who sort themselves into readily distinguishable groups. In a select minority were the honest and unaligned, who offered a good measure of thoughtful appraisal but could not pitch their

moderate voices above the fury of what Kipling called "the dog-fight". The majority, zealous friends and enemies, were hacks, unidentifiable and unremembered. The remainder were minor poets, novelists and essayists, along with a few distinguished persons whose inclusion among the recognized agents of Kipling's fall does them little credit.

The remarkable length of the Kipling bibliography bears witness to their industry. They were inspired by their contentious subject to write copiously and to use over-emphatic language. Many expressed themselves with a lack of restraint that dishonoured their calling, their critical offerings providing greater insight into their own frail human condition than into the piece of work under discussion. Subjective, prejudiced, emotional, lacking in candour, they were often incapable of measuring the artistry of the performance.

To read much of the adverse criticism is to glimpse the author in a series of distorting mirrors, in which the image is wryed according to the nature and degree of the flaw in the reflecting surface. In 1915 an apologist wrote: "There is so much envy and meanness among the living that Kipling will not be fairly rated until he has been dead for fifty years."¹

¹R. Thurston Hopkins, Rudyard Kipling: A Literary Appreciation (New York: Stokes, 1915), p. vi.

What purported to be a defence of literary standards often betrayed its provenance in personal enmity. Kipling was instinctively disliked by many for his too early popularity and far too great success. He was mistrusted because of his exotic, non-English background and despised for his lack of education, and for his apprenticeship in journalism. "It is his ignorance, his want of education, that dwarfs him,"² said Frank Harris. He was detested for his abundantly creative genius, termed "growth . . . of the tape-worm order - in one direction . . . length."³ He was condemned for his arrogance, for his "uniformly low tone of moral feeling" and "hard and gratuitous brutality."⁴ He was resented because of his indifference to and contempt for the literati, for his cheerful anti-aestheticism and for his appeal to the lower middle-class, - he was "cuddled by the lewd people of the baser sort."⁵ Finally and enduringly, he was hated by liberal thinkers for his conservatism and his identification with Empire.

²Contemporary Portraits: Second Series (New York: Published by the Author, 1919), p. 63.

³Ernest Newman, "Mr. Kipling's Stories," The Free Review, Dec. 1893, p. 236.

⁴The Edinburgh Review, July 1891, p. 141.

⁵The Bookman, Oct. 1891, p. 28.

This ambient antagonism bred certain reiterated charges both ridiculous and contradictory. There were those who accused Kipling of being a narrow-minded Englishman; others who found him dangerously cosmopolitan. He preached racial superiority; he was a half-caste; he was a socially inferior upstart and a snobbish member of the establishment; an evangelical preacher, an atheist; a prosy bore, a shallow entertainer; an effeminate weakling, a brute. His style of writing appeared at once too lucid and too obscure; pedestrian, insanely fanciful; crude, mannered and artificial. He pandered to low tastes with his offensive realism. His books purveyed hate, lies and propaganda; his verse was "not only execrable as art but . . . mendacious nonsense as well."⁶ He instigated violence and bloodshed; he was "altogether vile and detestable."⁷ He was a pernicious influence that would not last, "as temporary as the moment's passion."⁸

To his more fanatical supporters he was never otherwise than a universal genius. "He does not belong to himself, as do you and I; he is part of the country; . . . there is only

⁶Hubert Bland, Essays by Hubert (London: Max Goschen Ltd., 1914), p. 51.

⁷Francis Adams, "Rudyard Kipling," The Fortnightly Review, Nov. 1891, p. 697.

⁸A.C. Gardiner, Prophets, Priests and Kings (London: Alston Rivers Ltd., 1908), p. 293.

one Rudyard Kipling."⁹ He was "a Friend, a Force, a Future,"¹⁰ "a master of winged words,"¹¹ "the young magician upon whose lips we hang."¹² The worst of his work was said to be "better than the best of most other men."¹³ He was described as "the master of us all,"¹⁴ one who "turned common substances into gold by the alchemy of his imaginative genius."¹⁵ His admirers were given to unbridled eulogy, as noxious as and much more tedious than the equivalent measure of detraction.

The effect on the public of this long drawn out campaign with its incredible polemics was informed with irony. The articulate, anti-Kipling faction among the critics failed to shift the allegiance of the inarticulate masses of Kipling enthusiasts. The Common Reader who made literature pay was far beyond the critics' sphere of influence, knowing nothing of reviews and critical essays except for an occasional selected blurb. The deeper or higher significance of fiction

⁹G.F. Monkshood, Rudyard Kipling: The Man and His Work (London: Greening and Co., Ltd., 1902), p. 33.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 38.

¹¹Great Thoughts, Oct. 4, 1913, p. 3.

¹²Blackwood's Magazine, Nov. 1891, p. 728.

¹³The Bookman, Dec. 1898, p. 350.

¹⁴David Christie Murray, Guesses at Truth (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908), p. 275.

¹⁵The Empire Review, Nov. 1891, p. 437.

did not concern him. Naively uncommitted to literary movements and philosophies, he was free to enjoy what he read. On the other hand, the serious, analytical reader fell victim to the pundits, his susceptibility being gauged in terms of the pretensions he had to support. He looked for reassurance from those who could tell him what to approve and what to condemn in order to qualify as an initiate. The simple-hearted reader might wander off without a guide, where the superior reader, fearing to be left behind, would stumble along on the heels of the nearest accredited wise man. Thus among such aspirants Kipling was soon discovered to be unsound and unworthy of regard on both political and aesthetic grounds. By the '20's and '30's he had been repudiated by all earnest souls concerned for their cultural salvation. For fear of being damned in their intellectual functions, they dared not express a mild interest in or a qualified approval of his work - as well confess a liking for Gilbert and Sullivan or other Victoriana. In fact Kipling was far worse, his very name being accounted blasphemy. To H.E. Bates, the old Imperialist was "the most execrable famous poet the language has ever produced," "unacceptable as a stylist . . . a failure as a man."¹⁶ "The notion that Kipling was a great

¹⁶H.E. Bates, The Modern Short Story (Boston: The Writer Inc., 1941), p. 104.

writer is a myth."¹⁷

Fashions in literature and literary criticism will always prove more captious and exigent than any other dated follies. Today the situation has been reassessed and once again it is possible to approve Kipling. He has been rediscovered and rehabilitated by T.S. Eliot and others.

Nevertheless the old blague still persists. Those still influenced by the dicta of an earlier generation, remember with vague disapproval the "White Man's Burden" and "Lesser breeds without the law." There is plenty of evidence of a critical lag, a delayed reaction to earlier criticism which may be the legacy of text-books and teachers. Kipling continues to figure unsympathetically in the history books. From school anthologies he has almost disappeared. In libraries his tales, like those of Dickens, have been catalogued for children. The old prejudices are still being kept alive and even in the '60's we find Robert Graves condemning his "vulgar bloody-mindedness,"¹⁸ in proof of which he offers a mis-reading of one of the minor ballads.

It will be necessary for the purposes of this disquisition into the rise and fall of Kipling's literary

¹⁷Bates, p. 112.

¹⁸Robert Graves, "Pretense on Parnassus," Horizon, May 1963, p. 83.

reputation to follow the general trend of criticism between 1889 and 1914, a period which in effect coincides with the troubled passage between late Victorian and modern times. Detailed analysis and comparison of reviews and essays appearing in representative periodicals during those years of transition will give a closer look at the contradictions and shifts in critical opinion from the '90's when the critics voted their principal a triumph to the new century when they stripped away his honours.

CHAPTER II

It may well be unfortunate for a man's reputation that he should have great success early in life . . .

T.S. Eliot: "Rudyard Kipling"

Kipling was twenty-three when he arrived in England in the autumn of 1889. In India he had already won local fame with his short stories and satirical ballads, which made good use of a precocious knowledge of Indian and Anglo-Indian life, acquired at first hand during his seven-year apprenticeship in journalism. Before he was seventeen, he had become "fifty percent of the editorial staff" of the Civil and Military Gazette of Lahore.¹ Soon after his appointment in 1887 to an assistant editorship of the Allahabad Pioneer, "India's greatest and most important paper," he had published forty of his "turnovers" from the Gazette as Plain Tales from the Hills. His first important book of verse, Departmental Ditties, had

¹"So soon as my paper could trust me a little, . . . I was sent out, first for local reportings, then to race-meetings Later I described openings of big bridges and such-like, . . . floods on railways, . . . village festivals and consequent outbreaks of cholera and smallpox; communal riots . . . , visits of Viceroys to neighbouring Princes; reviews of armies; receptions of an Afghan Potentate . . . (this included a walk into the Khyber where I was shot at, but without malice . . .); murder and divorce trials, . . . an inquiry into the percentage of lepers among the butchers . . . " Rudyard Kipling, Something of Myself (London: MacMillan, 1937), pp. 43-44.

been brought out two years earlier. By the end of 1888 he had six more little paper-back volumes in print. Whereupon, heralded by a few complimentary notices of what in the output of most writers would be termed juvenilia, he made his way to London, where he received an encouraging welcome - as he described it long afterwards: "My small stock-in-trade of books had become known in certain quarters; and there was an evident demand for my stuff."² In his subsequent astonishing dealings with gratified publishers and editors, in the reception of his stories and rhymes by a delighted public, whose approval was soon endorsed by the majority of the reviewers, he scored a virtually immediate success. At the close of his long career, remembering this early triumph, he wrote: "In the autumn of '89 I stepped into a sort of waking dream when I took, as a matter of course, the fantastic cards that Fate was pleased to deal me."³ By 1890 he was listed among the best-sellers.

It was the heyday of the late Victorians, the high point and the end of an era. Britain was powerful, prosperous and stable, preserving a comfortable status quo after more than a half century of reform but fostering those disruptive forces of change that were soon to make a clean sweep of the old

²Something of Myself, p. 78.

³Ibid., p. 77.

order of things, social, economic and political. The 1889 volume of Punch evokes the contemporary scene with some degree of immediacy. Punch's artists recorded the current fads and follies, social rituals, fashions, dwelling on snobbism and ineptitude; they sketched debutantes and dowagers, "mashers" and long-haired aesthetes, learned feminists, stout, vulgar persons with money in drawingrooms, clubs, country-houses, and on the hunting-field; they noted the manners and dress of the lower orders, servants, shopkeepers, farmers, labourers. Their full-page cartoons depicted British pre-eminence abroad - John Bull, burly and authoritative, rebuked Venezuela, challenged France over the map of Egypt. The Queen and her navy discouraged German rivalry and sternly admonished the sailor-suited young Kaiser, the latter having dropped his pilot, Bismarck. South Africa was given due attention, since gold had brought about a boom in the Transvaal. At home the political situation was analysed weekly. The leader of the Opposition Mr. Gladstone celebrated his golden wedding. The Liberal Party had split over Home Rule for Ireland. Tories and Liberal Unionists marched together, led by Lord Salisbury in a Union Jack waistcoat and by monocled Joseph Chamberlain. Randolph Churchill, "Grandolpho", and Arthur Balfour, rebels against the "Old Gang" on the Front Bench, urged their party to adopt a modern, democratic Conservatism that would broaden its aims and its

appeal to the voters and give the word Imperialism a new meaning.

Punch could only suggest how ominously divergent were the policies of the two factions. On the right, the rejuvenated Tories and their allies called for global awareness and closer links with the dominions. On the left, Little Englanders and high-minded reformers condemned the Empire and all forms of colonialism abroad and demanded vigorous social action at home. Among the more extreme Liberals and the intellectuals, socialism was in vogue. The radical views of this minority - described by Kipling as "pernicious varieties of safe sedition"⁴ - were contained in Fabian Essays published in December, 1889.

Regardless of party differences, the game of politics remained the birthright and absorbing hobby of those designated by inheritance, education or wealth as gentlemen. Little change in this connection had been brought about by the extended suffrage and the free national schools, those measures that were to have resulted in either anarchy or the millenium.

Nevertheless, something of a revolution had occurred that might well be attributed to educational reform. There had never been so many readers and never before such a demand for reading material of all kinds. Publishers who supplied the literary needs of the community at large were required to

⁴Something of Myself, p. 91.

provide for the disparate tastes of a public which included increasing numbers of the semi-literate. The result was a proliferation not only of books but of periodicals and newspapers of all shades of opinion and all levels of style.

Many of these new publications were among the best of the century and respected the highest standards; many more catered deliberately to the mob. They ranged from models of creative artistry like the Yellow Book and the Savoy to penny weeklies of "low tone". All magazines relied on short stories and serialized novels to hold the interest of their readers, whose insatiable appetite for fiction kept book sales booming, especially sales of those cheap editions that brought popular literature to the masses.

Among men of letters the trend toward popularization was deplored. The "gutter press" and "yellow journalism", synonymous with vulgar content and inferior writing, had become particularly offensive to serious-minded critics. The very word "journalism" was associated with a conscious debasing of the language in order to indulge the rabble; it offered a simplified vocabulary, and curtailed sentences, and avoided rhetoric.⁵ The accepted standard of literary expression

⁵"There has been a tendency to follow the tastes of the vast number of people who can read at all rather than of those to whom reading means a very high standard of literary enjoyment. This has involved a less literary style . . . in tidbits of information with an appeal to cruder sentiments." "Journalism," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed., XIX, 547.

remained formal, polished, and elaborate in the manner of Pater.

The fashionable approach to letters was found in the Aesthetic Movement, influenced by the French Impressionists and initiated in England by Whistler and Pater. As a highly romantic and precious circle, it attracted gloomy young poseurs out of the universities, whose recognized hierophant was Oscar Wilde. Their ranks included numerous minor poets and a host of litterateurs and hangers-on, given to sentimental affectation, hypothetical sinfulness and morbid self-pity.

In direct contrast to this fin-de-siècle posturing, the Anglo-Saxon School rejected despair and decadence. Their leader was the poet W.E. Henley, editor of the National Observer and an outspoken Tory Imperialist, a robust soul in a crippled body. He had done much to assist a number of promising writers - Stevenson, Barrie and Yeats among others - and was one of the first to recognize Kipling.

There were other widely differing coteries, from the exponents of the new naturalism to the more mawkish of the romantics. Distinguished survivors of the older generation included Tennyson, Ruskin, Huxley, William Morris and Swinburne. Of those whose work figured on recent publisher's lists, one of the most respected was George Meredith. Thomas Hardy's Wessex Tales, Mrs. Humphry Ward's Robert Elsmere - her first popular success - and Oscar Wilde's Happy Prince had

appeared in 1888. In 1889 George Gissing published The Emancipated and The Nether World; George Moore, Mike Fletcher; Stevenson, The Master of Ballantrae; Yeats, The Wanderings of Oisín and Henry James, The Tragic Muse. James and Mrs. Ward were current best sellers, sharing the limelight with such writers as Hall Gaine, Martin Maartens and Marie Corelli. Kipling joined them within a year.

All aspects of his historical context from the socio-political to the literary are significant in any study of Kipling. No author has ever been more deeply involved in the affairs of his time. At no stage in his career can he be detached from the background of events and trends. As a subject for criticism he has always been measured against it - a constant factor expressed in terms of a variable.

In 1889 he entered a world in which he was not merely a newcomer but an outsider - an Anglo-Indian of North Country and Scottish stock, Wesleyan and Conservative, the product of a second-rate school, who lacked the advantages of higher education. His only link with arts and letters was Pre-Raphaelite; his only training in the field, his work on obscure newspapers in a remote land. Robert Graves remembers him as "a Bombay-born journalist without either a settled English background or a university education," and adds, "Kipling's uncertainty is explained by his sense of not

belonging."⁶

However alien he may have seemed in certain circles, he did not appear to suffer from any awareness of inadequacy. In luck from the first, he made friends, found influential sponsors, acquired an agent and received a warm welcome from editors. "I do not recall that I stirred a hand to help myself," he wrote in his autobiography. " . . . I considered the whole universe was acutely interested in me only - just as a man who strays into a skirmish is persuaded he is the pivot of the action."⁷ Proposed by Andrew Lang, he became a member of the Savile Club. He was adopted by Henley and approved by Walter Besant, Edmond Gosse and George Saintsbury. He reciprocated their liking. He also met writers whose works and doctrines he thoroughly disliked. Disregarding Besant's advice "to keep out of the dog-fight," he allied himself with the Anglo-Saxon group to do battle in a good cause. He proved himself as eager as Henley to serve the Empire, the Conservative party and purposeful literature and to confound the Liberals and the Aesthetes.

His work found favour with The Times; new editions of his Indian stories were published; articles, poems, and tales appeared regularly in magazines. He was endorsed by Andrew

⁶"Pretense on Parnassus," Horizon, May 1963, p. 84.

⁷Something of Myself, p. 79.

Lang.⁸ His reputation grew with the impressive volume of sales and a spate of excited reviews. Hubert Bland of the Sunday Chronicle, looking back at Kipling's phenomenal rise, recollected:

About the end of 1889 we began to talk of him. Three years later he was out and away the biggest figure in English literary life He had the distinction of winning at once, the noisy applause of the mob and the high approval of the elect.⁹

The critics acclaimed the young genius with only such reservations as became their dignity and their bias. Praise whether generous or grudging could not be denied. In 1890 "his acclaim was so tremendous that the dubieties of a refined criticism simply didn't count."¹⁰ Kipling's own comment on his early success was made at the end of his life: "I was plentifully assured viva voce and in the Press cuttings - which is a drug that I do not recommend to the young - that "nothing since Dickens' compared with my 'meteoric rise to

⁸ "At last there comes (to India) an Englishman with eyes, with a pen extraordinarily deft, an observation marvellously rapid and keen." Essays in Little (London: Henry and Co., 1891), p. 198.

⁹Hubert Bland "The Decadence of Rudyard Kipling," Essays by Hubert (London: Max Goschen Ltd., 1914), p. 35.

¹⁰J.I.M. Stewart, Eight Modern Writers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 225.

fame.¹¹

His powers were very great but far from easy to define. Bonamy Dobree has analysed his special virtues and qualities in the first chapter of Rudyard Kipling: Realist and Fabulist:

. . . It is difficult to get a unified idea of Rudyard Kipling's complex and enigmatic personality His variety is astounding. It is of no use to read a few stories of one kind and put him into a certain category. In the same volume a story of deep tragic significance may be followed by one of outrageously extravagant farce. What seizes you continually is the overflowing vitality that gives you the sense of being just there. And through the fiction, the lectures and the letters, there run threads of certain dominating ideas or intuitions, each, perhaps simple in itself, but which woven together form an intricate patterned tapestry.

He was temperamentally imbued with an exuberant zest for life . . . and an inexhaustible interest and delight in men.¹²

Dobree noted further:

His unusual power of empathy enabled him to peep through the shut door, and see into people, their motives, their desires, their bafflement These abnormal qualities would have been of little avail if he had not been a writer born.¹³

Kipling himself said of his beginnings as a writer:

¹¹Something of Myself, p. 88.

¹²Bonamy Dobree, Rudyard Kipling: Realist and Fabulist (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 3.

¹³Ibid., p. 9.

My young head was in a ferment of new things seen and realized at every turn and - that I might in any way keep abreast of the flood - it was necessary that every word should tell, carry, weigh, taste and, if need were, smell Mercifully, the mere act of writing was, and always has been, a physical pleasure to me. This made it easier to throw away anything that did not turn out well; and to practise, as it were, scales.¹⁴

The early stories, because of his special gifts, had a clarity of outline, precision, and economy of means that marked them as the products of careful craftsmanship. Publishers were eager to accept whatever he had to offer. With no lack of material and a delight in composition, he added twelve new titles to the list of his works between 1889 and 1892. By the generality of the critics, he was extolled in extravagant terms.

Those writing for the more important periodicals had their attention called perforce to the new-comer. What they found to say about him was in many instances predictable. Some who took a doctrinaire approach affirmed or denied his talent on the basis of a strict adherence to their aesthetic. Others, ignoring considerations of art, dealt with him according to the manner in which his views soothed or irritated their moral, social and political sensibilities and commitments. The ultra-conservative and prestigious

¹⁴Something of Myself, pp. 205-206.

expressed their doubts about him with dignity and restraint. All felt constrained to pay serious attention to his books.

One of the first and most influential of the longer critiques was published in a leading article in the Times on March 25, 1890. More than a full column in length, it hailed Kipling as a notable discovery.

India has given us an abundance of soldiers and administrators, but she has seldom given us a writer. There is no question, however, that she has done this in the person of the author of the numerous short stories and verses of which we give the titles below.¹⁵

The Times praised him for his revelation of the difficult conditions under which the British Army operated in India and of the hardships endured by Tommy Atkins, the horrors of the climate, the effect of heat on the European. He had given a penetrating account of various aspects of the world of the natives. His humour could only be described as admirable. The Simla stories, although "not altogether pleasant," were the result of shrewd observation. In these he was "admirably direct," while "comparatively wanting in style." But his more recent tales showed "a distinct advance in artistic power"; his verse too had improved.

. . . We are far from asserting that Mr. Kipling has yet made any claim to a place in the front rank of contemporary

¹⁵The Times, March 25, 1890, p. 3.

writers. He has given evidence of a knowledge of Indian life which would be extraordinary in any writer and is phenomenal in one so young. He has shown a truly remarkable power of telling a story dramatically and vividly. He has written a number of amusing occasional verses, not without point and sting. But he has not yet attempted "the long distance race," and the question is whether he possesses staying power. We sincerely hope that he does, and that he will show it in good time; but meanwhile it is to be hoped he will not write himself out. Modern magazines and their eager editors are a dangerous snare in the way of a bright, clever and versatile writer, who knows that he has caught the public taste.¹⁶

The Times' reviewer approved wholeheartedly of the subject matter, indicated qualified approval of the style and stressed its developing artistry. This was generous recognition to be given to a very young writer within a few months of his London debut. The only misgivings concerned his ability to maintain his initial high standard.

Oscar Wilde, on the other hand, liked neither content nor style, but admitted the presence of a curiously attractive quality. In his long and generally dull dissertation, "The True Nature and Function of Criticism", which took the form of a dialogue between "Gilbert" and "Ernest" on the state of contemporary letters, he included a frequently quoted passage of witty comment on Kipling. He began by explaining the new author's popularity:

He who would stir us now by fiction must give us an entirely new background or reveal to us the soul of man in its innermost working. The first is for the moment being done

¹⁶The Times, loc. cit.

for us by Mr. Rudyard Kipling.¹⁷

According to Wilde, Kipling offered his readers the novelty of reading about the under-bred members of a second-rate society in an exotic setting. "As one turns over the pages of his Plain Tales from the Hills, one feels as if one were seated under a palm tree, reading life by superb flashes of vulgarity."¹⁸ A total lack of style lent "an odd journalistic realism" to the Indian scene.

From the point of view of literature, Mr. Kipling is a genius who drops his aspirates. From the point of view of life, he is a reporter who knows vulgarity better than anyone has ever known it He is our first authority on the second-rate, and he has seen marvellous things through keyholes, and his backgrounds are real works of art.¹⁹

However ambiguous this statement - and the tone was both admiring and supercilious, indulgent and faintly sneering - Wilde had recognized virtues that could not be ignored, and was genuinely impressed: "He terrifies us by his truth, and makes his sordid subject matter marvellous by the brilliancy of its setting."²⁰ Popular taste demanded novelty and here was novelty of a striking kind.

¹⁷Oscar Wilde, "The True Nature and Function of Criticism," The Nineteenth Century, Sept., 1890, p. 455.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

Kipling's progress through the columns of the literary journals began in triumph, and, although the acclaim was far from unanimous, even Wilde acknowledged that the author of Plain Tales from the Hills was possessed of genius, however misapplied. An analysis of critical opinion in representative periodicals reveals the grounds for general approval and also indicates the sources and nature of dissent. To follow and compare the sequence of reviews in eight publications of widely differing editorial policies is to understand the processes by which Kipling's reputation was to be made and unmade.

Of the journals chosen for this study of the vagaries of criticism, two were unmistakably Tory, three were Liberal and the remainder ostensibly unaligned. If these were grouped according to rank and seniority, the first named must be the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly. The former, venerable and scholarly, represented Gladstonian Liberalism in political and social issues but took a very traditional stand with regard to literature. From 1855 to 1895 it was edited by Henry Reeve, a reactionary and a purist in matters of style. After his death it became less of a literary review. The Quarterly, of great prestige and authority, expressed an austere Conservatism in all departments. It was deliberate, cautious and, to judge from the emphasis in its articles, was more interested in public affairs than in letters. The editor from 1867 to 1893 was a contemporary of Reeve's, Sir William Smith, a classical and ecclesiastical scholar and a lexicographer.

On the subject of Kipling the Quarterly remained silent until July, 1892.

Blackwood's Magazine, published monthly, was noted for its extreme Tory partisanship and its enthusiastic promotion of Imperialism, but had a progressive attitude toward literature. The Fortnightly Review, also appearing monthly, was by contrast an organ of the left-wing liberals and inclined to radicalism, its political bias being fully as marked as that of Blackwood's. Referred to by Kipling as "a monthly review of sorts",²¹ it was nevertheless a periodical of some importance, and was edited to 1894 by the redoubtable Frank Harris, who had very early discovered his dislike of the Anglo-Indian outsider. The monthly Contemporary Review, another Liberal organ, was devoted to social reform and was strongly religious in tone. Except for occasional articles, it was not at first a literary journal but began to publish regular reviews after 1900, chiefly of non-fiction. It featured signed essays presenting opinions on controversial topics. The editor from 1882 to 1911 was Sir Percy Bunting, grandson of the founder of the Methodist Church.

The Athenaeum, especially prominent in the field of literature, appeared weekly. Its contributors were distinguished and knowledgeable and the quality of writing was superior. The editor to 1900 was Norman MacColl, who

²¹Something of Myself, p. 83.

actively upheld Kipling in his copyright altercation in 1890! Fully half the space of another well known weekly, The Saturday Review was given over to criticism. Walter Herries Pollock, a friend of Kipling's, was editor until 1894, when the paper came under the control and editorship of Frank Harris. During this period the staff included such outstanding writers as George Bernard Shaw and Max Beerbohm.

The Bookman, published monthly, did not appear until the fall of 1891. Totally unlike the other seven periodicals with their bleak, old-fashioned pages and small print, it was new, modern in format, attractively and profusely illustrated, and reflected a rather more popular approach to literature and art than that of the other seven journals.

Only the Athenaeum, the Saturday Review and the Bookman brought out regular critiques of new books promptly after publication. The Edinburgh Review, Quarterly, Fortnightly, Blackwood's and the Contemporary provided occasional reviews and lengthy critical essays and were selective in their choice of material to be considered.

The earliest notice to appear in any of the eight periodicals preceded Kipling's arrival in London (in October, 1889). The Saturday Review commented favorably on two of the Indian books, In Black and White and Under the Deodars, on August 10, 1889. The reviewer prefaced his remarks with: "Mr. Kipling is a new writer . . . so clever, so fresh and so

cynical that he must be young."²² He was found to be least cynical in his tales of native life. There was a resemblance in style to Bret Harte in his "elliptical and allusive manner," but his grammar was "much better." The young author was said to display "wit, humour, observation" and the ability to tell a story. The public would expect novels, although Kipling might prove best at short stories and sketches. The anonymous critic concluded: "A new and enjoyable talent is at work."²³

In 1890 the Athenaeum joined in with a detailed and highly complimentary review of Departmental Ditties and Soldiers Three. Here was "a new writer, with something new both to say and sing." Kipling was "a satirist whose eye is keen but whose touch is seldom other than kindly."²⁴ "Mr. Kipling's verse is clever," the review went on, "but it is as a prose-writer, in our judgment, that he will make his permanent reputation."²⁵ He was "a born story-teller." His soldiers were types but living types:

They positively palpitate with actuality and we make

²²The Saturday Review, Aug. 10, 1889, p. 165.

²³Ibid., p. 166.

²⁴The Athenaeum, Apr. 26, 1890, p. 527.

²⁵Ibid.

bold to say there has never been anything like them, in literature before What position Mr. Kipling may ultimately attain to it is impossible, upon his present performance, to predict with any certainty; yet if he should prove capable of filling a larger canvas than he has yet assayed, he might conceivably become a second Dickens.²⁶

He must now, however, show himself capable of treating more important themes than even "the amusing vagaries of Tommy Atkins and the risky situations of Simla society."²⁷

A few months later the Athenaeum expressed the view that The Story of the Gadsbys was not as good as Soldiers Three, although it had humour and pathos. The "smoking-room talk" left "a disagreeable impression."²⁸ In Black and White, however, had a very different effect and Kipling might "unreservedly be congratulated on the result." The reviewer praised his "singular gift for vivid description," adding, "It is so pleasant to find things happening in a book."²⁹ He then predicted that if Kipling failed to become an Anglo-Indian Dickens, he would "at all events, occupy a high place in the literature of our day."³⁰ In December the

²⁶The Athenaeum, Apr. 26, 1890, p. 528.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., July 5, 1890, p. 32.

²⁹Ibid., Sept. 13, 1890, p. 348.

³⁰Ibid.

Athenaeum dealt with his Wee Willie Winkie and Under the Deodars, having "no desire to shirk the task his versatile activity imposes on his critics," and found the former collection of tales "admirably natural and true to life." Playing tennis with the Seventh Commandment, however, as in the adventures of Mrs. Hawksbee, left "a disagreeable taste in the mouth." On the other hand "Only a Subaltern" was "an excellent story."³¹

In 1891 the Saturday Review joined the Athenaeum in printing regular notices of Kipling's current publications; the monthly reviews, including the new Bookman examined his work for the first time; the Edinburgh Review was moved to provide a substantial critique. Only the Quarterly continued to ignore his presence.

Article VI of the Edinburgh Review of July, 1891, gave a lengthy analysis of his contribution to contemporary literature. Like Wilde, the anonymous critic began by accounting for the young author's incredible popularity and explained that it was the result of newness of subject and style.

Any writer who strikes upon a fresh vein of thought or treatment secures an eager welcome and achieves an immediate, often an exaggerated reputation, The only necessary condition is that the thought or the treatment should be

³¹The Athenaeum, Dec. 27, 1890, p. 887.

readily understood by the people. Mr. Rudyard Kipling offers this precious gift of novelty and he presents it in a popular form, which is exactly adapted to a marked fluctuation in literary fashion.³²

Kipling gave his readers a new experience, introducing them to a new world, presented in a manner that was "fresh, strong, rapid and vividly picturesque." Nevertheless, the critic seriously questioned the excellence of the work. Was it "absolute or merely relative"?³³ Next he considered the moral and social implications of the content.

A popular novelist is a power to be reckoned with The advent of a popular novelist is a matter of public interest and national concern. The novel is one of the most powerful agencies in mental, moral and social education, and it is of the first importance that so great an instrument for good or evil should be administered by self-respecting hands

Mr. Kipling's responsibility is proportioned to his power and it is to be regretted that, so far, he has shown little respect for himself or for his readers. Stories which adopt a uniformly low tone of moral feeling, or which treat adultery as the measles of married life, are not calculated to raise the standard of society. Nor does it answer the ends of morality to mete out poetical justice in the last chapter or the concluding sentence.³⁴

This admonition was followed by a discursive history of the novel and its influence on social mores. Three pages later the critic returned to Kipling to commend his gift for

³²The Edinburgh Review, July 1891, p. 132.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., p. 133.

story-telling and at the same time to deprecate his moral laxity.

Mr. Kipling . . . is a born story-teller He adopts a method of pictorial treatment, of which daring directness, sharpness of outline and naked reality, are the characteristics, and which only errs in the opposite direction to a prudish delicacy. His bold, dashing sketches of real nature, with their masses of colour concentrated on exactly the right spot, enable him to make objects picturesque which more finished work would reveal in their true ungainliness and squalor The gift of telling a short story which is complete in itself and does not seem to be a fragment of a larger whole, is a rare one, and Mr. Kipling possesses it to a very remarkable degree of perfection.³⁵

Here praise for his skill and blame for his backsliding were impartially divided. But the passage that followed reiterated the charge of his lack of "ethical purpose". Art having been weighed against impropriety and found wanting, the critic arrived at this conclusion: "The praise bestowed upon Mr. Kipling's work has been extravagant His work has been praised to excess, partly because his talents are indisputably great, partly and mainly because he caught the tide at the turn."³⁶

At this point the matter of Kipling's style was brought up as another aspect of his writing for which he was to be taken to task. It was all "hit or miss", marred by jerky

³⁵The Edinburgh Review, July 1891, pp. 136-137.

³⁶Ibid., p. 138.

sentence structure and tiresome mannerisms. Besides his objectionable turn of phrase, his attitude toward his material betrayed the journalist, who could not help "treating society as . . . copy." The tales were repulsive because of their cheap sensationalism and "the frivolous, sordid, vicious meanness of the life that they depict."³⁷ As for the verse, it was nothing but "the parerga of a man whose serious business of life is prose fiction."³⁸

The "Anglo-Indian scandals" had deeply offended the author of Article VI. Yet he approved of the soldier tales - "some of the strongest and freshest work that has appeared for several years in English fiction." And with regard to his pictures of Indian life he believed that Kipling had no equal. But another major fault was his inclination to "hard and gratuitous brutality."³⁹ This unpleasant characteristic, however, might be simply an affectation, the result of a strong reaction against "existing artistic products." The critic summed up his findings by stating that the work showed "in some respects, extraordinary promise," but that the actual performance had been "extravagantly praised."

His powers will be comparatively wasted if he does not abandon his mistaken mission of convincing the British public that a literal coarseness of treatment and a gratuitously

³⁷The Edinburgh Review, July 1891, p. 138.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., p. 141.

rough touch are necessary to emancipate art from the leading strings of pedantry.⁴⁰

This article, long, repetitive and full of digressions clearly belonged to the earnest, high-minded Victorianism of the mid-century. It expressed an honest distrust of what it believed to be popular and disreputable trends, while giving due recognition to undeniable merit. There was no hint that politics might have coloured the critical judgment.

Tory enthusiasms prompted the paeon of praise in Blackwood's Magazine. Written in the guise of a review of Life's Handicap, it offered nothing in the way of criticism in any literary sense. Again the first consideration was Kipling's amazing popularity:

We know of no recent success in the world of literature which is at all equal to that of the young man who came to us from India a few years ago with a name unknown, and in that very short period has made himself such a reputation that everything he writes is not only looked for with eagerness by readers, but is enough to make the temporary fortune of any newspaper or cheap print which is fortunate enough to secure the blazon of that name.⁴¹

His popular triumph, Blackwood's asserted, might be attributed to lively interest in India, in the life of Indian civilians and of private soldiers of the Indian army. Although in "these revelations of a new world, pure gold of genius and

⁴⁰The Edinburgh Review, July 1891, p. 151.

⁴¹Blackwood's Magazine, Nov. 1891, p. 728.

poetic insight" there was an alloy of "distasteful visions of something odious," no moral denunciation was felt to be necessary but instead a lyrical passage of panegyric.

It is far from the best of all possible worlds which he reveals to us; but it is something better. It is a world in which every cruel ill is confronted by that struggling humanity which is continually overborne, yet always victorious - victorious in defeat, in downfall, and in death: the spirit of man made, even when he knows it not, in the image of God.⁴²

Kipling was discovered to have the highest moral purpose in writing of "the terrible and splendid warfare of everlasting good against overwhelming yet temporary evil."⁴³ The reason for this perfervid prose was soon made clear:

Perhaps the highest result of Mr. Rudyard Kipling's work is to roll away for us the veil which covers that vast, teeming world, the responsibility of which, for good or evil, before God, the British nation has taken upon its shoulders, - India, in so many of its different nations and phases, and what is going on within it.⁴⁴

At this point the article ceased to be a review and the writer took advantage of Kipling's association with India to preach the glory of self-sacrifice and devotion to duty in the service of Empire. He then returned to "this wonderful youth"⁴⁵ for another two pages of eulogy, in the course of which he gave Lord Salisbury's ministry a remarkable piece of advice:

⁴²Blackwood's Magazine, Nov. 1891, p. 729.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 730.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 733.

If her Majesty's Ministers will be guided by us . . . they will bestow a Star of India without more ado upon this young man of genius, who has shown us all what the India empire means.⁴⁶

He added significantly of "the young magician upon whose lips we hang" that "no patriot leader could do a better work."⁴⁷

The tribute ended briefly with a confession - "We dwell upon none of the literary qualities of the achievement."⁴⁸ - and an expression of thankfulness that Kipling's readers were capable of recognizing true greatness:

He has proved that the public, though apt to be beguiled by Mr. Jerome K. Jerome and "The Mystery of the Hansom Cab," has yet sense enough to recognize something better when it sees it - for which we are much beholden to him: it restores our faith in human nature.⁴⁹

Blackwood's liberal-radical counterpart, the Fortnightly Review appeared to be equally lacking in dispassionate judgment. In the November issue Francis Adams, an able and incisive critic, reviewed Life's Handicap. He introduced his subject generously enough by declaring that Kipling was "not merely a writer of fiction but an artist," and that his scenes from Anglo-Indian life were neither vulgar nor immoral but "drawingroom comedy of a high order."⁵⁰

⁴⁶Blackwood's Magazine, Nov. 1891, p. 734.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰The Fortnightly Review, Nov. 1891, p. 697.

On the other hand, Adams found the characterization poor and complained that "all speakers are Kipling." Worse still the author was obviously a spokesman for "the sightless tradition of the old, hide-bound, jingoistic Anglo-Saxon" who was incapable of seeing "the miserable alien's point of view."⁵¹ Such tales as "Namgay Doola" were described as "vile and detestable"; "The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney" could be called nothing but "rubbish." "The Story of Muhammed Din," however, deserved high praise.

According to Adams, Kipling had no style, for his mode of expression was simply journalism.

No one can claim for Mr. Kipling the possession of a real prose style, or, indeed, of anything approaching to it . . . Such style qua style as he has is mere ephemeral and journalistic smartness.⁵²

But undoubtedly he had a way with words in phrase and simile. "His verbal magic of this sort" was described as that "of the poet." Most unfortunately he did not owe his great popularity to his real talent.

Must a man ever owe three-fourths of his temporary success to his defects and limitations? Smartness and superficiality, jingoism and aggressive cocksureness, rococo fictional types and over-loaded pseudo-prose, how much too much have these helped to make the name of our young Anglo-Indian story-teller familiar to the readers of the English-speaking race all over the earth.⁵³

⁵¹The Fortnightly Review, Nov. 1891, p. 697.

⁵²*Ibid.*, pp. 697-698.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 699.

Here the critic suggested that, since the "ascending force" of Kipling's work was very slight, he would soon lose ground. "His vogue may pass - it seems to be passing somewhat already."⁵⁴ His work was "on a small scale; his faults, real and grave."⁵⁵

In the Contemporary Review, the Henleyite James Barrie, a hard-working journalist about to publish his first novel, congratulated Kipling's readers on their good judgment. Kipling had "given the reading public a right not to feel ashamed of itself on second thoughts, which is a privilege it seldom enjoys." He deserved his popularity. Barrie supported this opinion by citing Mark Twain, an admirer of Kipling's style, who declared that it was "the perfection of what is called journalese."⁵⁶ Having thus hinted an apology for the manner, he stressed the originality of the matter. Kipling owed "nothing to any other writer," although he most closely resembled Bret Harte. Admittedly he could not depict women, but, Barrie maintained, he revealed in The Light that Failed "the great gift of character drawing by means of dialogue."⁵⁷

⁵⁴ The Fortnightly Review, Nov. 1891, p. 700.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ "Mr. Kipling's Stories," The Contemporary Review March 1891, p. 366.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 371.

The article continued with some comments on his shortcomings: "His chief defect is ignorance of life At present he is a rare workman with a contempt for the best materials." There was every hope that he would correct such weaknesses, since he possessed "latent capabilities" that would show him "by-and-by grown out of knowledge."⁵⁸ Comparing the new favourite with major writers of the day, Barrie stated:

Mr. Meredith and Mr. Hardy spell the greatest ideas best. Doubtless Mr. Stevenson is correct more often than any of his contemporaries, certainly a dozen times to Mr. Kipling's once; but on the other hand, it should be said that the younger writer tries to spell the bigger ideas.⁵⁹

This appreciation was at once temperate, reasonable and sufficiently generous, acknowledging Kipling's great promise, his present worth and his obvious defects.

The Athenaeum printed a long review of The Light that Failed on the first page of its April 18 issue. The reviewer mentioned the fact that the novel had been serialized - a practice to be deplored - in Lippincott's Magazine, and "judging from the swiftly succeeding issues that contained it, must have proved even a more paying speculation for the proprietors than Mr. Oscar Wilde's much debated 'Dorian Gray.'" Aside from his dislike of the alternative happy

⁵⁸The Contemporary Review, March 1891, p. 371.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 366.

ending, the critic had nothing but praise to bestow on Kipling for his first novel.

If he had written only his short stories, he would have had the satisfaction of knowing that he had permanently enriched our literature; but we were the first of those who believed that it was in him to produce more imposing, if not more enduring work. "The Light that Failed" is an organic whole - a book with a backbone - and stands out boldly among the nerveless, flaccid, invertebrate things called novels that enjoy an expensive but ephemeral existence in the circulating libraries.⁶⁰

The characters were said to be "all instinct with vitality," presented with "strong contrasts and vivid word-painting."⁶¹ The author was to be forgiven any little touch of brutality or "aptitude to trample on the public" because he had "enlarged the sum total of our experience."⁶²

The Athenaeum saw Life's Handicap as having "more grain and less chaff" than Plain Tales from the Hills. The best stories were "The Courting of Dinah Shadd," "Head of the District," "The Man Who Was," "On Greenhow Hill" and "Without Benefit of Clergy." These were described as being of "extraordinary excellence" and "true to life in the smallest particular, . . . aglow with an imagination which lends distinction to the most commonplace sayings and doings." Had Kipling written nothing else, "they would have gained

⁶⁰The Athenaeum, April 18, 1891, p. 497.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., p. 498.

him a reputation as a brilliant and original writer."⁶³ Of the remaining tales in the collection, "The Mark of the Beast" was "fascinating" but passed "the bounds of decorum." The satires on the Irish - "The Mutiny of the Mavericks" and "Namgay Doola" - were pure comedy.⁶⁴

The Saturday Review, in an article on The Light that Failed, found Kipling at his best in descriptions of war.

As long as he is out of reach of civilization (and more especially of women), and is dealing with human nature in its naked form or with the relics of bygone ages, Mr. Kipling is wonderfully true and invariably interesting.⁶⁵

Despite fine descriptive passages and other undeniable merits, the novel could not be called a success.

The book has undoubtedly good touches of character, excellent bits of description, deep knowledge of a certain kind of life. But it also has a lack of cohesion, a want of point, and a certain tone of reckless exaggeration It is rare, indeed, that a man whose talent consists in engraving a gem can produce with equal perfection a colossal statue, and writers of short stories seldom give us good novels.⁶⁶

Life's Handicap was well received, two of the stories being singled out for special praise:

"At the End of the Passage" and "The Mark of the Beast" are each of them far more deserving of separate and careful reviewing than three-quarters or nine-tenths of the three-volume novels that are published.⁶⁷

⁶³The Athenaeum, Aug. 29, 1891, p. 279.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵The Saturday Review, Apr. 4, 1891, p. 417.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 418.

⁶⁷Ibid., Sept. 12, 1891, p. 304.

The best work was contained in the first half of the book; tricks and mannerisms were evident in the weaker tales. The reviewer noted plenty of power and less humour, and a reliance for effect "on the horrible, . . . the horrible which is also the ugly." There was also apparent "a sombre fatalism"⁶⁸ in the treatment of the themes.

The first copy of the Bookman provided in its "News Notes" some information of a practical sort with regard to Kipling's public image.

Mr. Kipling's popularity is growing. "Life's Handicap" has far exceeded in sale any previous six-shilling by the author, two large editions having been called for in less than three weeks Editions at 3 s 6 d sell readily.⁶⁹

An article on Kipling's work as a whole followed, making particular reference to Life's Handicap. The reader was assured that "nothing he may yet do is likely to alter, to enhance or impair the rank he has already taken as an Observer and Recorder of what he has seen of Nature and Man." His fame was securely established. It was pointed out that he was "not really an Impressionist but a Selector" who added "magic touches"⁷⁰ and made the picture live.

The Bookman's only hint of adverse criticism had to do with the narrative style which might "lack symmetry and taste"

⁶⁸The Saturday Review, Sept. 12, 1891, p. 304.

⁶⁹The Bookman, Oct. 1891, p. 3.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 28.

but which contained phrases of "native force and beauty." Kipling had "a style of presentation wholly personal and individual."⁷¹ It was suggested that this quality might owe something to journalism but omitted to say that such a debt might be invidious.

These articles, intended for the guidance of discriminating readers, differed widely in tone and purpose. But the critics judicious, admiring, exultant, disapproving, or disparaging - all admitted Kipling's powers - readily or reluctantly. Not one disputed the fact of his essential genius. They all expected their rather limited public to find the new author of considerable, even absorbing interest but were divided on the question of his worth. When they offered their advice to Kipling and his readers, their commendation and censure were as divergent as the most completely dissimilar of current attitudes regarding manners, morals, religion and socio-political activity among the superior classes.

The critics were disturbed by Kipling's excessive popularity, unwilling to allow merit to a writer so widely and immoderately praised. What was unduly popular might well be vulgar. The good opinion of the mob was an obvious disadvantage to the serious artist. This difficulty posed by

⁷¹The Bookman, Oct. 1891, p. 29.

universal appeal had been resolved in two ways; some offered the public their congratulations for knowing a good thing when they saw it, while others, strongly traditional, remained suspicious, contemptuous or resentful of such popularity and attempted to explain it away. To the latter it resulted from nothing more than the groundling's desire for novelty and excitement or it stemmed from a change in taste, from a reaction against the cult of decadence, from a trend toward realism. Obviously Kipling knew what would take with the unenlightened. He represented another temporary fad.

All agreed that he was a gifted story-teller. The majority were convinced that his characterization was weak, that his men and especially his women were no better than types and puppets. Regarding his style, some critics would not allow him to have any - at its best it was magnificent journalese; at its worst, mere journalese. But then he had a way with words and figurative language and his descriptions were works of art.

Unfortunately he had, in the eyes of some, debased his art. He had taken literature into the mean suburbs of vulgarity. The sticklers insisted that his low moral tone represented a threat to society, at the same time as the pro-Kipling enthusiast had him fighting the good fight of "everlasting good against temporary evil." There were those for

whom his brutality and coarseness, his realism and delight in war, cut him off from civilized human beings.

In a number of instances, social and political overtones could be detected in the reviews. The great power of a popular writer was suspect. Kipling might be a boon to the new Tories but he represented a threat to Liberal principles.

He was to be judged during his lifetime and after his death by critical assessments made in the early Nineties. These were as much at variance as the crosscurrents of informed thinking that produced them. Yet a recognizable pattern of criticism had been established during the first phase of his career and would persist, altering only in degree and in emphasis.

CHAPTER III

Mr. Kipling is the Cecil Rhodes of Literature.

A Kipling Primer

Kipling's long and impressive triumphal progress was as remarkable as his instant good fortune. The thronging host of readers, English-speaking and European, were not to be disappointed in his staying power. And despite prophecies of oblivion - such as Francis Adam's suggestion in 1891 that the unfortunate vogue might already be passing - his popularity and influence continued to grow and to be confirmed and enhanced by each new volume. In 1898 the Edinburgh Review stated only half ironically that he had at that time "the best chance of all men living of ultimately becoming a Solar Myth."¹

The many months spent in travel and four years residence in Vermont did not in any way remove him from the forefront of the literary scene. Having greatly augmented his prestige with a steady, workmanlike output of tales and verse, entertaining, original, varied, and apparently durable, he returned to England in 1896, where his work was everywhere acclaimed and his reputation established. The following year, before he had reached the age of thirty-two, he was elected to the

¹The Edinburgh Review, Jan. 1898, p. 228.

Athenaeum and became the club's youngest member, numbered among "artists of eminence" and distinguished patrons of science, literature and the arts, not to mention cabinet ministers, bishops, and judges. He himself described this event as "a great, but frightening honour." It constituted a formal recognition of his literary achievement and had all the significance of an accolade.

It was the year of the Jubilee and of "Recessional". Kipling, the nation's unofficial laureate (he had declined the laureateship in 1895), received tributes of praise for his treatment of themes of national and imperial importance. Among his friends were such empire-builders as Lord Milner, Cecil Rhodes, Moberly Bell of the Times, and Joseph Chamberlain. He dined with colonial premiers. He visited the Channel Fleet and returned to hymn sea-power. He sent a copy of "The White Man's Burden" to Theodore Roosevelt. In 1899, like the minstrel in "The Last Rhyme of True Thomas," he refused a knighthood. His serious illness was linked in newspaper headlines with that of the Pope. The Kaiser inquired after his health. Public prayers were offered for his recovery. These consequences of his world-wide fame were noted in the Review of Reviews:

The incidents of Mr. Kipling's illness are of certain and legitimate public interest because of the revelation they gave of the place his stories and poems have already won in the hearts of the Anglo-Saxon people This

universal appreciation of genius is something quite new.²

That his genius was also being recognized in a practical way was indicated in the same periodical. The new "Stalky" stories were said to be appearing "at somewhere near a dollar per word."³

In his own brief memoirs, he had little to say about his "notoriety", beyond the reference to the "fantastic cards" of Fate. Of his eminence as a public figure he wrote only indirectly, now and then offering an aside such as: "During the South African War my position among the rank and file (at the Cape) came to be unofficially above that of most Generals."⁴ To his devotees his words were the inspired utterance of a national oracle. As one of his enemies expressed it: "The smart young Anglo-Indian story-teller is now a prophet. His fame is a church."⁵

Very early in his career, success had caused him to reflect on the nature of his mission: "It seemed easy enough to knock 'em but to what end beyond the heat of the exercise?"⁶

²"Kipling in America," The Review of Reviews, April 1899, p. 420.

³Ibid., p. 421.

⁴Something of Myself, p. 150.

⁵Richard Le Gallienne, Rudyard Kipling: A Criticism (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1900), p. 1.

⁶Something of Myself, p. 89.

It was then that what S.R. Crockett termed "the preaching strain in the background of his soul"⁷ came to the fore, a propensity viewed by the critics with interest and growing irritation. "Mr. Kipling cannot resist opportunities of political allusion. His love of playing the schoolmaster grows on him."⁸

A stubborn didactic impulse, inherited Wesleyan zeal, and unlimited enthusiasm combined with a forceful style and a ready-made audience encouraged him to set forth some very strong notions of his own in the form of parables, fables, allegories and tracts. He began to turn serious lessons into literature. At first his design was simply to "tell the English something about the world beyond England," but, as he explained many years later: "My original notion grew into a vast, vague conspectus . . . of the whole sweep and meaning of things and efforts and origins throughout the Empire."⁹

His imperialism, imaginatively conceived, was nevertheless fundamentally realistic. He had travelled the world over, visiting the diverse lands that made up the Empire, and felt the need for close and coherent relationships within its framework. He expressed subtle and complex views concerning

⁷The Bookman, Feb. 1895, p. 140.

⁸The Bookman, July 1894, p. 116.

⁹Something of Myself, pp. 90-91.

imperial goals, ideals of government, and concepts of law. Compelled by his nature to preach, he expounded a way of life and described the necessary stoic virtues by which to live. Inevitably his beliefs led him to identify himself with the Imperial wing of the Union Party, then in the ascendant.

Sharing Henley's "organic loathing of Mr. Gladstone and all Liberalism," he stood for the established order, loyalty to tradition and to proved institutions and laws. In other words, he was a thorough-going Conservative at a time when most intellectuals were exuberantly Liberal and even Socialist in their sympathies. Rebecca West has remarked that "Kipling looked odd in his time in his acceptance of Church and State," and that although "most of the English people were of his way of thinking in this matter . . . the rest of contemporary literature was proclaiming that these institutions were now held in contempt by all save a few financially interested reactionaries."¹⁰

From the first he made no attempt to conceal his distrust of and contempt for left-wing theorists in politics and in the arts. He denounced the projectors of Utopias and all their works, the fashionable trends in ideas, and the refinements of aestheticism. He declared himself a staunch Philistine. In "A Song of the English" he warned his readers

¹⁰The Court and the Castle (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 209.

against "whoring . . . with visions." In "Tomlinson" he wrote what one critic described as "an earnest sermon on the emptiness of culture."¹¹ He did not speak well of intellectuals, comparing them with the Bandar-log of the jungle, whose behaviour was foolish, lawless, and dangerous.

This revelation of ultra-conservatism in a popular idol must have delighted the Union Party. It came at a most fortunate time for the promoters of Empire, when their "windy passion for annexation swelled up . . . from the conquest of Matabeleland to the South African War."¹² A reaction against the Liberals had set in because of their inept foreign policy. Weakened by the split over Home Rule for Ireland, they were overwhelmingly defeated in 1895 and a powerful coalition of Conservatives and Liberal Unionists, headed by Lord Salisbury, formed the most effective Tory government in many years. Brought into the cabinet as Colonial Secretary was Joseph Chamberlain, the Birmingham "radical" and Imperialist, whose slogan "Think Imperially" became the party watchword. In an interval of peace and booming trade, the new minister instituted his imperialist policies, romantic in spirit but practicable and attractive to the electorate. He had the

¹¹G.A. Simcox, "Barrack Room Ballads," The Bookman, June 1892, p. 90.

¹²Sir Robert Ensor, England: 1870 - 1914 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 332.

support of three enthusiastic aides - Donald Smith, the Canadian High Commissioner, Cecil Rhodes of Cape Colony and Rudyard Kipling.

Hailed as "the Cecil Rhodes of literature," Kipling undertook to interpret the Empire to the people and to prepare them for their responsibilities. Imperial thinking prompted most of his topical verse published in the Times, occasional pieces like "Our Lady of the Snows," and "Hymn Before Action" with its reference to the Jameson Raid. He also wrote many tales and articles, coloured by his convictions and having a certain propaganda value. By 1900 he was working very closely with Chamberlain and had become involved to some extent in local as well as national politics.

Yet even when he served the government with his pen, he remained a free agent. He refused to accept any of the usual rewards for his extraordinary services, he supported Conservative policies only on his own terms and followed them only as they coincided with his own opinions. He went his own way, which in later years was not always that of his party, and there were occasions when his approach to national issues failed to please. The period of mutual disenchantment, during and immediately after the South African War, saw strong Tory disapproval of his current verse, which included such denunciations of smugness, inefficiency and political bungling in the War Office as "The House of Rimmon." The Conservative Laureate wrote as he pleased and, although "hated

by the middle-class left, was not understood by the Blimps."¹³

Under the circumstances, it was inevitable that politics should qualify the criticism of this period. No one could ignore his bent or mistake his message. Few reviewers with political commitments could avoid bias in reporting on his work. He had made himself a quasi-official spokesman for the Colonial Office and was thus fully identified with Imperialism. Everyone now knew exactly what to expect of him. With each new publication he fulfilled the hopes of the majority and reinforced the misgivings of a significant minority. The critics responded volubly according to their affiliations, and rushed into print with an endless series of reviews, essays and full-length books. Valuable space was reserved for articles on Kipling both in the popular press and in the journals of the intelligensia. Sometimes two and even three sets of critical comments would appear in a single copy of a given periodical.¹⁴ But little of all that was written could be described as objective or impartial.

Favourable criticism continued to be enthusiastic and generally indiscriminating. Hyperbole was a commonplace. In comparison with other writers, wrote one of his admirers,

¹³George Orwell, Critical Essays (London: Secker, 1946), p. 70.

¹⁴The American Bookman for December, 1898, contained two separate essays, "Kipling's Men" and "Mr. Kipling at the Crossroads," as well as an editorial evaluation.

Kipling "shines as a god to a pigmy."¹⁵ He was "the one writer of English . . . proof against criticism." Of those moved to lyrical modes of appreciation, none was more eloquent than Andre Chevrillon in La Revue de Paris when he described the young author "qui a séduit et maîtrisé le public anglais."¹⁶

Ici nous sommes en pleine poésie - poésie frémissante, dont les rythmes hardis battent comme des pulsations vivantes avec chaque afflux de désir et de vouloir C'est une poésie. C'est la plus profonde et la plus philosophique des poésies.¹⁷

As for the poet, a representative figure among his people, "on s'étonne quand on constate la ferveur, la richesse, l'audace et le mysticisme exalté de son rêve."¹⁸

Some of the tributes recall "The Wrong Thing," Kipling's ironic tale of a Renaissance craftsman, to whom "all art was one art," who was rewarded by the king, not for his artistry but for having saved the state money. It was often the wrong thing that charmed the reviewers - especially among those who set a higher value on his effectiveness as a propagandist than on his literary merit. An unidentified Tory enthusiast writing in Blackwood's gloated over the discomfiture of the Opposition at the hands

¹⁵Will M. Clemens, A Ken of Kipling (New York: New Amsterdam Book Co., 1899), p. 51.

¹⁶"Rudyard Kipling," La Revue de Paris, Mars-Avril 1899, p. 63.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 62.

of the true-blue champion and expressed his satisfaction in a style worthy of Eatanswill:

The shameless lies, by which the friends of disaffection and devotees of so-called philanthropy have never scrupled to fortify their cause, crumble to atoms at the touch of the artist.¹⁹

Liberal critics, whose professional talents were employed in countering his persuasive rhetoric, were suitably abusive. Some of them had suspected him from the first.²⁰ Others who had once regarded him, if not with approval at least with detachment, now joined in the attack, as he added the scandal of reactionary attitudes and Imperialism to the earlier offences of popularity, journalism, brutality and Philistinism. Moral indignation and lack of restraint marked their arguments, angry censure occasionally giving way to heavy-handed satire.

The Free Review, edited by J.M. Robertson, complained that Kipling wrote too much and that his work did not improve in quality - it was "a tapeworm growth." In his canting Imperialism he had shown himself to be "pugnaciously sentimental over the English flag," that unacceptable symbol of oppression.

¹⁹Blackwood's Magazine, Nov. 1897, p. 474.

²⁰"My normal output," Kipling noted, "seemed to have the gift of arriding per se the very people I most disliked." Something of Myself, p. 92.

He writes heroics about the English flag, which as the representative of our colonizing policy, is the living symbol of more and greater infamy than all the seas it lords it over can ever wash out.²¹

He was guilty of war-mongering and xenophobia in his hatred of Ireland and Russia and of "diabolically influencing his readers in 'The Man Who Was.'" Besides this "egregious jingoism", his stories were filled with blood-thirsty brutality.

His so fundamentally barbaric in his emotions that he revels in descriptions of human suffering that can only pain a more civilized intelligence Our humanity is being degraded.²²

He was in fact best at depicting abnormal states, "allowing for the fact that his own mental processes are abnormal rather than anything else."²³ His deranged intellect would account for his "egregious failure as a painter of civilized and normal men and women." The reviewer then summed up his writing as "a facile and deceptive impressionism . . . undeniably clever and pictorial," but "destitute of protoplasmic imagination."

But it is, after all, ungracious work quarreling with a man for being no better than he is. Scientific criticism has simply to explain the phenomena of literature; and we may profitably sum Mr. Kipling up in the phrase that he is less an intelligence than a bundle of sensations, more or less

²¹Ernest Newman, "Mr. Kipling's Stories," The Free Review, Dec. 1893, p. 248.

²²Ibid., pp. 240-241.

²³Ibid., p. 247.

vivid and generally of a barbaric order.²⁴

Whether hostility stemmed from conviction or editorial policy, the articles had all the vehemence of political debate. Although an unfriendly critic might temper his severity with ridicule, he seldom failed to take Kipling and his transgressions seriously.

Richard Le Gallienne, whose own poetry and prose fantasies had been reviewed uncharitably,²⁵ produced a full-length volume in which, more adroitly than some of his contemporaries, he assailed the evils of Kiplingism with mocking disparagement. While acknowledging Kipling's cleverness and appeal, he underrated his art. The stories were ephemeral, their "exceptional reality" enduring "only while you read them."²⁶ He objected to the preaching tendency in "A Song of the English," which sounded "the first note of Mr. Kipling's later Methodistical jingoistic manner,"²⁷ and warned the public not to mistake him for a great poet, for "in him the banjo has found its Apollo."²⁸

²⁴Newman, p. 248.

²⁵The Saturday Review (August 1, 1896), p. 129, questioned his talent - "Has Mr. Le Gallienne a future or is he merely the beautiful decay of his first spring?" - and commented (May 14, 1898), p. 530, on his "mastery of puerility and dulness."

²⁶Le Gallienne, p. 92.

²⁷Ibid., p. 51.

²⁸Ibid., p. 65.

But it was Kipling, "the unofficial M.P. for British Possessions,"²⁹ whom Le Gallienne denounced and whom he blamed outright for the rise of Imperialism. It was he who had "roused the sleeping nerve centre"³⁰ and "strengthened its natural hypocrisy."³¹

Like any other nation we conquer countries for the purely selfish and natural purpose of extending our trade, but it is not a Christian proceeding and we are the only Christian nation that pretends it is.³²

When it came to Imperialist expansion, his was "the most responsible voice . . . the voice of the tide at its height."³³ He also represented a threat to social legislation:

For progressive thought there has been no such dangerous influence for many years. Of all that our best poets, philosophers and social economists have been working for, he is directly or indirectly a powerful enemy.³⁴

Not only was he guilty of "contempt for Democracy, the woman movement, the education of the masses" but also of a "cynically inpuident," anti-intellectual bias, in which "the things of the mind are at a discount." As proof of this incurable Philistinism, Le Gallienne cited, from the story "To Be Filed for Reference," a passage stating that education had made a man's mind "a perfect rag-bag of useless things"³⁵ and then assured the author that "to be able to quote Horace is more

²⁹Le Gallienne, p. 64.

³⁰Ibid., p. 128.

³¹Ibid., p. 129.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., p. 140.

³⁴Ibid., p. 160.

³⁵Ibid., p. 125.

important, from any broad human standpoint, than to be an initiate of the engine-room of the greatest liner."³⁶

Not all those who impeached Kipling for his maleficent influence undervalued his accomplishments. Henry Austen, writing in The Dial deplored his popularity, which he termed "the Kipling Hysteria." He had been disturbed by the recent global concern for the national idol's health.

To this hysteria of unreasoned admiration, to this toy tempest of flatulent adulation, the dangerous illness of the forceful and brilliant writer has naturally given increase. But already signs of reaction are appearing. Trained minds are beginning to question the new gospel . . . of force pernicious in the extreme . . . against democracy.³⁷

Austen did not question Kipling's genius, in spite of being soured by the extravagant praise accorded "Recessional" and convinced that "Henley or Rennell Rodd could do better." In fact he expressed the hope that this distinguished author might "break away from false ideals and renounce bad literary manners," being yet "gloriously young."³⁸

Between 1892 and 1899 the whole trend of Kipling criticism would appear to have been determined by three considerations - the tendentious nature of the content of his writing, his forceful style, and the authority of his reputation, whether the critics were favourably disposed or

³⁶Le Gallienne, p. 125.

³⁷Henry Austen, "The Kipling Hysteria," The Dial, May 1899, p. 327.

³⁸Ibid.

unfriendly, their evaluations of his work were influenced by these factors. In the major periodicals under examination there is no mistaking their importance.

This undue influence, however, was not apparent in the Quarterly's first article on Kipling, published in 1892. Preeminent among reviews and ultra-conservative in its judgments it weighed its pronouncements carefully. The journal's spokesman was not impressed by the young writer's growing fame but was instead aggrieved by his popularity and was prepared to deny him any messianic role to which he might aspire.

Let us consider if the latest and, in some respects, the most popular of our story-tellers fulfils the idea (of a man of genius) or whether he is not a fresh instance of individualism run wild. If applause, loud and vehement, were a test of greatness, the question is answered. Mr. Kipling has made a name to which every bookstall in the British Empire bears witness. He is famous, if to be read and talked about wherever the English language is spoken can make him so.³⁹

According to the Quarterly, he deliberately courted the favour of the mob with his sensationalism and delight in violence and exploited the patriotic feeling of the public as a whole. His "war-realism" was appalling. He saw in man "the fighting animal."⁴⁰

In structure and scope his tales were little better than anecdotes, "idylls of the smoking-room," told with a realism

³⁹"Mr. Kipling's Tales," The Quarterly Review, July 1892, p. 134.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 135.

that was not art but "mimicry, a kind of everlasting present tense by which the whole scene is enacted over again with sounds and colouring complete."⁴¹ Treatment of the material was superficial; he painted "only the surface" of his scenes. His use of words, the nature of his dialogue, and his insistence on reproducing dialects, which were "far from being exact," represented serious flaws in his writing.

But, for the Quarterly, the most distressing aspect of his work was not his style. It was the moral atmosphere of his stories.

We cannot turn over Mr. Kipling's pages without being offended by the coarseness of their tone Vitality . . . keeps at a safe distance from refinement. It cannot trust itself in the society of good women or of courteous and self-respecting men He sacrifices the ideal to his passion for vitality.⁴²

It was conceded that some of his Simla sketches were powerful, for all their "laughable, hideous, cynical, smart, vivacious, fashionable frivolity."⁴³ Other tales of India had both "power and pathos" and there were "the elements of a great poem scattered through these finer stories."⁴⁴ It was a pity in such cases that the characterization was limited to types, that motives were never satisfactorily developed and that the moods expressed were "simple and violent." "Without Benefit

⁴¹The Quarterly Review, July 1892, p. 137.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 143.

of Clergy," "a weird and touching love story," had been well done.

It is one of the most perfect things he has written To praise it there is no need, for who could follow the story and not feel its truth, its sadness, its human touches.⁴⁵

The message for Empire, however, was found wanting. It lacked "faith in an ideal which can resist furnace-heat."⁴⁶ Kipling insisted too much on the dangers for Europeans of life in India and wrote far too many stories of madness and suicide to be accepted as an Imperial oracle. He was nevertheless a skilled and articulate story-teller. The Quarterly had no doubts about his ability: "That Mr. Kipling had the art of writing short stories as well as Hawthorne, Edgar Poe or Bret Harte was clear from the first."⁴⁷ But as a novelist he was a disappointment. The Light that Failed must be called a pagan tragedy since it was not Christian and "not so human by a great deal as it ought to be."⁴⁸ He was advised to go back to the native experiences "which brought out his gift for sympathy in its most persuasive form."⁴⁹ And once again he was warned against indulging in violence, for it was not a sign of strength and it repelled the sensitive reader, and

⁴⁵The Quarterly Review, July 1892, p. 146.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 154.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 156.

⁴⁹Ibid., p.159.

against stressing truculent cynicism and coarseness. "We should hesitate," the critic added, "to put his stories into the hands of a woman, . . . neither do we think the best women (and we mean such as have brains) would feel any pleasure in reading them."⁵⁰ To redeem his work, the author must "surrender to the ideal." His future reputation would "depend on the subordination of other qualities, however brilliant, to a belief in the best things about God and Man."⁵¹

The Quarterly's appeal to religion and morality echoed that of the Edinburgh Review. In Victorian eyes Kipling was too cynical, too ready to be clever, too much given to crude realism and violence, and too little of a moralist. Acceptable fiction inculcated a wholesome lesson and this gifted but unsound young man lacked the necessary seriousness and idealism to make his stories the vehicle for art on the highest plane.

The Quarterly had nothing to say at this time about his verse, although Barrack-Room Ballads had appeared in May and was being reviewed with great enthusiasm. The Athenaeum acclaimed "this extraordinary product of our time," with all its "power of epithet and of descriptive language." Kipling was declared to be "unapproachable in 'Barrack-Room Ballads'".

⁵⁰The Quarterly Review, July 1892, p. 159.

⁵¹Ibid.

proper."⁵² The Saturday Review predicted the early "foundation of a Kipling Society."⁵³ The reviewer commended "Danny Deever," "Oonts," "Fuzzy-Wuzzy," and "Mandalay" for "the absolutely glove-like fit of every word upon every thought."⁵⁴ He considered "Mandalay" as "a work of very high art indeed."⁵⁵ There were occasions when the poet dropped his dialect and the lines lost their power and when his muse suffered from "the exuberance of youth." But "The Ballad of East and West" was "one of the greatest pieces of epic narrative which is to be found in our literature."⁵⁶ In the Bookman, G.A. Simcox was somewhat less generous, when he described the verse as "sparkling, vigourous, but disappointing."⁵⁷

Very different from the admiring tributes was a second essay on Kipling written by Francis Adams for the Fortnightly Review. He had stated in 1891 that the new author, despite certain grave faults, must be recognized as an artist. Two years later he qualified his earlier judgment in an article entitled "Mr. Kipling's Verse." He confessed that he had once experienced "a keen pleasure . . . in reading

⁵²The Athenaeum, May 14, 1892, p. 629.

⁵³The Saturday Review, May 14, 1892, p. 580.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 581.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷The Bookman, June 1892, p. 90.

Barrack-Room Ballads" but that "a reading of his other verses had checked that pleasure and chilled it to the bone." The preludes and envoys of the new volume he saw as unnecessary and even insulting, remarking that "Mr. Kipling does not seem to believe in the intelligent reader."⁵⁸ The poetry was no more than "a feast of patter-songs, dispensed to the twang of the banjo in the bibulous atmosphere of the post-prandial smoke concert," and containing nothing but "more or less discreet variations on the ever-fertile subject of adultery."⁵⁹ Adams detected weak imitations of Browning and Tennyson but no evidence of originality. Admittedly over a third of these poems were "good of their kind, light, bright and readable,"⁶⁰ but they must not be taken seriously. Kipling was merely a gifted journalist: "We shall find no conscious and critical development in this man. He begins as a journalist of genius, and as a journalist of genius he seems fated to end."⁶¹ Not only had he shown all the failings and idiosyncracies of journalism but he had made it very clear that he despised "culture and art."

Justifying his original estimate of Kipling's verse, Adams commented on its wide appeal but referred to that

⁵⁸"Mr. Kipling's Verse," The Fortnightly Review, Nov. 1893, p. 185.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 189.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 193.

popularity in the past tense.

His vogue was the most universal one of our time. His popular limitations were plentiful enough, his cheap effects were glaring enough, to win him the applause of the intellectual groundlings, the noisy imperious "pit" of our contemporary theatre of art. Yet his achievement was so real and striking, his contribution to literature was so undeniable that no one possessed of candour and intelligence could refuse to take him seriously.⁶²

His ballads were undoubtedly attractive but they were unlikely to last. "They have already had an ample, perhaps too ample a measure of justice done to them," for they were mere "doggerel, clever doggerel, attractive doggerel, inspired doggerel."

The more one reads these Ballads, the thinner and thinner appear the worst of them, the more and more dubious all but one or two of the very best; and as for the "other verses," the twenty poems that follow them up, there are some of them so appallingly bad that they paralyse all efforts at consideration.⁶³

Obscurity was another occasional fault, as in "The Three Captains" and "uncertainty of touch" was perpetual. "The Ballad of East and West" was least like a failure and "Gunga Din" came "near to being a little masterpiece of its kind" but was spoiled by "superficially smart things."

Adams found the Anglo-Indian Kipling in every respect inferior to the Australian Adam Lindsay Gordon, who was "a

⁶²The Fortnightly Review, Nov. 1893, p. 201.

⁶³Ibid., p. 204.

poet of an altogether larger and broader calibre."⁶⁴ Unlike Gordon, Kipling contributed "no appreciable body of work." It was "mostly tour de force" and did not "wear as twenty or thirty percent of Gordon's work wears." The only poem likely to survive was "Mandalay," an example of "powerful impressionist doggerel."⁶⁵

A hundred years hence some appreciative and enquiring person may be searching the British Museum for any other work done by the man who wrote "Mandalay."⁶⁶

Adams had atoned for the mistaken generosity of his first article by confessing his error and showing Kipling his place among colonial poetasters. Nothing more could be expected of a journalist whose appeal was to the mob and one, moreover, who openly despised the arts. No direct reference was made to his reactionary and Imperialist views, the criticism being kept on a literary plane. But the Fortnightly Review, in the words of the editor, "had certain radical traditions and leanings"⁶⁷ and Frank Harris had disliked Kipling ever since reading his anti-Irish verses on the Parnell case. "Our disagreement," he wrote many years later, "went

⁶⁴The Fortnightly Review, Nov. 1893, p. 211.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 213.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 214.

⁶⁷Frank Harris, Contemporary Portraits, Second Series (New York: Published by the author, 1919), p. 48.

far deeper than words."⁶⁸ And Kipling too had his memories of "a monthly review of sorts edited by a Mr. Frank Harris, whom I discovered to be the one human being that I could on no terms get on with."⁶⁹ Where the Fortnightly was concerned, he had offended by excessive popularity and impudent anti-intellectualism. That he had also transgressed the fashionable code of political idealism was clearly understood.

After Barrack-Room Ballads came Many Inventions, a collection of short stories. The Athenaeum, observing that Kipling was "not at his best in the novel," adjudged him to be outstanding "within the narrower limits of the ballad and the conte," in which his special talents of "swift intuition and stern repression" were particularly effective. "This brilliant book" contained "one of the most masterly things its author has yet done,"⁷⁰ a story of the Indian army entitled "Love O' Women." The Saturday Review selected "A Matter of Fact" as the most striking of the new tales. It held the attention "from first to last as in a vice." Of the others "The Disturber of Traffic" and "In the Rukh" were good; "Brugglesmith" was "rollicking fare" and "The Finest Story in the World," "extraordinarily successful." Some of the author's old faults of coarseness and bad taste might still

⁶⁸ Harris, p. 53.

⁶⁹ Something of Myself, p. 83.

⁷⁰ The Athenaeum, July 8, 1893, p. 55.

be in evidence but his merits showed "no sign of diminution."

There is an immense deal of humour, any quantity of good sense and discernment, and all that true and excellent appreciation of the English . . . and England, which is the honourable distinction of all Mr. Kipling's work.⁷¹

In the Bookman praise was tempered by the dubious comment: "Mr. Kipling alters scarcely at all." It was further qualified by the assertion that the tales in Many Inventions were "not equal to his earlier masterpieces," the reason being that the writer took "less pains." The critic Y.Y. was of the opinion that he was unlikely to improve on his earlier achievements.

Mr. Kipling has his own sphere and in that he is never likely to excel himself. He has done enough A dozen of his short pieces will stand as a masterpiece probably never to be rivalled.⁷²

He had not attempted to correct his faults - "intentional obscurity" being one of the worst. He still remained "individual and beyond rules."⁷³

From Y.Y.'s point of view, Kipling had reached his highest standard with "In the Rukh." "A Matter of Fact," while "original and picturesque," had its epilogue "very coarsely and obscurely worked out." In the English scenes the "taint of journalism" spoiled everything and, as a result, "The Finest Story in the World" was a "dead failure." For the same reason

⁷¹The Saturday Review, June 17, 1893, p. 669.

⁷²The Bookman, July 1893, p. 113.

⁷³Ibid.

"Brugglesmith" was "poor." But the allegorical "Children of the Zodiac" had turned out to be "highly original and in some parts very striking." And "The Record of Badalia Herodsfoot," in which Zola's influence was unmistakable, was "the best piece of Zolaism . . . any Englishman has yet done." Badalia was a "grand creation."

Its grim humour is terrible Mr. Kipling sees . . . how hideous is the hell in which pullulate the misbegotten, untrained, vicious children, whom we call Men and Women of the unemployed and criminal classes.⁷⁴

When first of the Jungle Books appeared in 1894, the Athenaeum's reviewer described it as "inimitable" and was certain that none of Kipling's "numerous inventions" would prove more popular. It was "in every respect a most desirable possession alike for children and their elders." Best of all the "queer stories" with their "clever verses" was "Toomai of the Elephants."⁷⁵

The Saturday Review complimented the author on his latest book. It was a memorable achievement.

The new volume . . . helps us to enter, by the power of the imagination, into the very nature of the creatures (birds and beasts) In this latest evidence of his talent, Mr. Kipling shows us how close an observer he is, how little escapes his attention when once he rivets it upon an object, and with what brilliant intuition he creates a plausible and coherent impression.⁷⁶

⁷⁴The Bookman, July 1893, p. 114.

⁷⁵The Athenaeum, June 16, 1894, p. 766.

⁷⁶The Saturday Review, June 16, 1894, pp. 639-640.

Of particular interest were "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" and "Servants of the Queen," the latter story being "more boldly fabulous than the rest." The verse too was admirable - "Shiv and the Grasshopper" exhibited a "rare magic of plaintive colloquialism."

Mr. Kipling is to be congratulated on a very genuine success in a field where, even for a man of great powers, failure might reasonably have been anticipated.⁷⁷

But in the Bookman the reviewer G.Y. showed a tendency to cavil at Kipling's didacticism. He disapproved of "The White Seal," "Servants of the Queen," and "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" on the grounds of political allusion and sermonizing. The author seemed unable to resist these inartistic proclivities.

His love of playing the schoolmaster grows on him. It is this quality that is at the bottom of the imperfect sympathy which runs parallel in many readers' minds with a warm admiration for him. The pedagogue in him hides under free and vigorous and unconventional speech, but he is mostly there.⁷⁸

This unpleasantly didactic element, however, did "not greatly offend in 'The Jungle Book,'" for the tales were "rich in vitality and imagination." There was "something sternly grand about all the Mowgli stories," in which "Rousseau-like ideals in a beast community" were described. The poetry too, G.Y. pointed out, had special merits.

Every time a verse occurs as the heading of a chapter one is inclined to think that Mr. Kipling should write nothing

⁷⁷The Saturday Review, June 16, 1894, p. 640.

⁷⁸The Bookman, July 1894, p. 116.

else, so instinctive is his power over vigorous rhythm, and so vivid are his ballad pictures.⁷⁹

Early in 1895 S.R. Crockett, the popular Scottish novelist, discussed Kipling's prose for the Bookman. He was well aware of the preaching vein but made no objection to the use of allegory. In "Some Tales of Mr. Kipling" he had only praise to offer and the assurance that "men of the book and pen read Kipling for their own pleasure."⁸⁰ Nothing exceeded his "magic" and his power to delight, for he created a "new world" for his readers.

The Second Jungle Book came out in October, 1895. The Athenaeum gave the new stories a congratulatory review:

The 'Jungle Books' rank among Mr. Kipling's best productions. Large ideas inform them, and something of that epic imagination to which we have before referred as Mr. Kipling's most precious gift.⁸¹

They were "partly child's book and partly allegory." In this volume, the critic pointed out, "the allegory - or, let us say, poetry - prevails," as in "The Spring Running," the theme being "the awakening of the human soul" or "'pervigilium Veneris.'"

The Saturday Review, now controlled by Frank Harris, experienced certain misgivings and described the book as "a disappointment." Whereas the first volume had deserved high

⁷⁹The Bookman, July 1894, p. 116.

⁸⁰Ibid., Feb. 1895, p. 139.

⁸¹The Athenaeum, Feb. 29, 1896, p. 278.

commendation in 1894, the second was now said to lack "the freshness of its predecessors."⁸² The best story in the collection was unquestionably "Red Dog." "The King's Ankus" was "made in Germany for a moral story on the undesirableness of riches." On the whole it was "perhaps the worst book Mr. Kipling has produced." In the same issue and on the same page a review of The Stolen Bacillus and Other Incidents labelled Kipling's humour "a false gaiety" when compared with that of H.G. Wells.

The Bookman came to the conclusion that the books were "very good" but that they had received indiscriminate praise. They were "not within the comprehension of one child in a thousand," and were merely designed to illustrate the author's own notions of social order:

The tales of the forest inhabitants have given him a welcome, to us slightly tedious opportunity of formulating Mr. Kipling's ideal human code in which a kind of military obedience forms one chief article.⁸³

Nevertheless, some of the stories "have notes of a wild grandeur that hardly one of the poets of the day could equal,"⁸⁴ especially "Letting in the Jungle" and "The Miracle of Purun Bhagat" with its "wonderful insight." When Kipling spoke "of things at the back of common life," he always had "a ring of greatness."

⁸²The Saturday Review, Dec. 1895, p. 843.

⁸³The Bookman, Feb. 1896, p. 158.

⁸⁴Ibid.

The year 1896 saw the publication of a third book of verse, The Seven Seas. It was attacked by the Saturday Review in an unsigned article, written in a low-keyed, arch and ironic style, which expressed a strong dislike of the poetry and a frank animosity toward the poet. The critic - in all probability Max Beerbohm - accused Kipling of deluding both the press and the public and of cunningly leading them to accept whatever he chose to offer:

A new volume of poems by Mr. Rudyard Kipling is an apparition of very considerable moment. It can hardly be questioned that among English-speaking authors of less than thirty-five years of age he is by neck and shoulders the most prominent. His vitality and force are so extraordinary that they sweep the goddess Criticism off her legs. A new book of Mr. Kipling's is received nowadays by a throng of eulogist reviewers whose unanimity would do credit to the chorus at the opera. There is no doubt that Mr. Kipling, who is as adroit as he is masterful, encourages and determines this choral burst of praise. We do not mean to suggest that he leads the claque in any secret way (he is far too big a person for that) but he very astutely lays down the line which the reviews are to take in discussing his public writings. In the present volume, for instance, the cynical reader will turn to a little group of literary allegories with peculiar pleasure. - "The Last Rhyme of True Thomas," "In the Neolithic Age," "The Story of Ung," "The Three-Decker" - all excessively clever and all written to instruct the reviewer what he is to say, to tell him what his attitude must be. He is to insure the creator, the manly maker of music . . . against "criticism," by which Mr. Kipling invariably means malignant and envious attack, since no other form of critical analysis seems ever to have occurred to him.⁸⁵

Frantic popularity and adulation had encouraged him to palm off inferior work on his readers:

⁸⁵The Saturday Review, Nov. 21, 1896, p. 549.

. . . Mr. Kipling is now on the verge of finding himself able to put off the English world with anything he likes, however blunt and ragged and undistinguished. "There are nine and sixty ways of constructing tribal lays," he shouts over and over again. No, dear Mr. Kipling, there is only one way, which "all your great forefathers used from Homer down to Ben." (We beg pardon, it is now spelt 'Omer'.) You had mastered that way once. How have you unlearned it?⁸⁶

His present verse, the critic was convinced, was far below the standard achieved in 1892, despite the "richness of vocabulary," the refreshing style, and the "verbal melody". The blame for his decline lay in his political inclinations, his desire "to indite little tracts in verse for the instruction of the War Office"⁸⁷ and his "abuse of technical terminology." Another weakness of the current work was obscurity - "so regrettable a tendency to turbid expression."

We will refrain from pouring any more drops of gall into "the cup that the Press is holding up in the exchanged Fleet Street Forest," as Shelley might say The public have determined that Mr. Kipling is delectable en masse.⁸⁸

Popular, over-praised, obscure, steeped in technical jargon and politics, Kipling could not expect to be endorsed by the Saturday Review, however indulged he might be by the Fleet Street journalists.

⁸⁶The Saturday Review, Nov. 21, 1896, p. 549.

⁸⁷Ibid. At this point the reviewer parodied one of Kipling's favourite metres in "Hospital Hymn," with such lines as "The inspissated alkaloids with eczema contend."

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 550.

The Bookman dealt with The Seven Seas in an unusual double-barrelled review provided by the critics Y.Y. and A.M. The tone of the former was sardonic.

The "Seven Seas" is a garland of poems and songs more or less nautical, to which is hung a pendant of over a dozen new "Barrack-room Ballads." I have examined it with wonder, reluctant admiration, repulsion, dismay. And, worse, I have promised to write about it - to write about admitted masterpieces which are entirely out of my line, which I can neither understand nor appreciate; which violate the literary principles which I hold most dear.⁸⁹

Y.Y. had admired the Anglo-Indian short stories but found Kipling's more recent volumes repulsive.

His earlier prose works down to Many Inventions, I studied with enthusiasm and eulogized in these columns. Of his late prose I have read nothing; of his poetry but a few fragments. And now I find it just what I feared - as clever, as powerful, as utterly inadmissible, beyond my comprehension and remote from my sympathies.⁹⁰

The critic could not admire the "New Poetry" either in form or in content and was appalled by the dangerously attractive specimens provided by Kipling.

His peculiar province . . . is the Brute-Man, or Man-Brute. . . . He is going and will go too far, carrying the public along with him. . . . His marvellous pictures . . . must perforce tend to make us not only condone, but positively admire the lawless force, the furious passions, the sordid

⁸⁹The Bookman, Dec. 1896, p. 65.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 65-66.

vulgarity, the wildly picturesque sins of the Brute-Man.⁹¹ His proper vehicle, Y.Y. continued, was prose, for "poetry should never reflect the sordid ideas and coarse expressions of vulgar minds."⁹²

In the second part of the review, A.M. reproached those critics who took Kipling's verse too seriously. His doggerel ballads were unquestionably "well made" but to feel "bound to admire them" was "an affectation."⁹³ The poet was "in his most objectionable mood" when he wrote of "that undisciplined love of his for law and order, . . . the law and order of the nursery maid." But he had upon occasion the power to lift "our hearts with . . . homage for the dignity of man."⁹⁴

Kipling's popularity was at its height in 1897, the year of the Jubilee and of "Recessional." At this time the Quarterly, which had rejected him in 1892, bestowed its blessing on his efforts and Blackwood's nominated him to succeed Tennyson as the nation's leading poet, not as laureate but as a spiritual guide by right of his achievement and inspiring message.

In October, 1897, the Quarterly's substantial review of The Seven Seas began with the question: "Is Mr. Rudyard Kipling a poet?" and at once supplied the answer: "The

⁹¹The Bookman, Dec. 1896, p. 66. ⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid., p. 67.

⁹⁴Ibid.

affirmative is incontestable."

His whole utterance vibrates with an audible, if somewhat coarse, pulse of feeling, is quickened by a bold, if somewhat bravado, passion, is instinct with a buccaneer's daring, an imperialist's idealism, a man's fibre and flesh and blood. And it is resonant with corresponding lilt and rhythm. It swings effects on its reader by its flashing, dashing refrains. Neither sensation nor cadence are ever sustained and both are seldom delicate. They are earthly but not earthy, compact of the world but not of clay.⁹⁵

Kipling might lack delicacy but was not deficient in idealism. His books were filled with salutary moral teachings and inspirational themes.

He has gripped life as he found it; and wherever he has found heroism, or fidelity, or self-sacrifice, or duty, or a seeking after God, he has worthily repeated it. His whole message is informed with a scorn of the petty and the sordid, the sickly and the maudlin, as well as with a most signal humour.⁹⁶

He was to be compared with Wordsworth in his revelation of "certain classes of our fellow creatures in their habit as they live." And in his honest craftsmanship, he proved himself a true poet, "though often a swashbuckler . . . never a charlatan."⁹⁷ He had written verse that was "wonderful," "sudden and subtle." The Seven Seas, which disclosed "a thoughtfulness far in advance of his other poems," contained

⁹⁵The Quarterly Review, Oct. 1897, p. 324.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 325.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 327.

individual pieces that were outstanding for their subtlety, pathos and buoyant humour.

Kipling found favour with the Quarterly as a result of his verve and his moral earnestness. The previous charges of brutal cynicism and crude violence and sensationalism had been forgotten.

He is the only one of our modern poets who, with all his emphatic individuality and robust violence, has habitually abandoned himself to his characters, to ideals, to patriotism. . . . He is good for the flabbiness, for the critical uncreativity of our generation We believe that his energy will ripen and deepen, for his standard is neither poor nor common.⁹⁸

The Quarterly as an organ of the higher Toryism, was well pleased with the edifying turn that his later work had taken.

But for Imperialist Tory enthusiasm carried to the point of absurdity, no publication could outdo Blackwood's Magazine. The manifest delight of the first article on Kipling had turned into extravagant panegyrics by 1898. In November, 1897, an essay on Tennyson concluded with a discussion of the problem of finding a worthy successor to the late Poet Laureate - Alfred Austin being a negligible quantity. "We . . . scan the horizon to catch the faroff coming light of the foreheads of a new generation of poets."⁹⁹ The outlook was discouraging, with exponents of aestheticism and subversive ideologies everywhere in evidence.

⁹⁸The Quarterly Review, Oct. 1897, p. 330.

⁹⁹Blackwood's Magazine, Nov. 1897, p. 629.

Upon what are the poets of today engaged? . . . A cunning mixture of blasphemy and immorality, . . . cloudy visions of neurotic Radicalism in the diction of Bedlam, or . . . the cant of an arrogant agnosticism in superior and sniffing stanzas. Is there nothing to relieve the ominous darkness of the prospect?¹⁰⁰

Blackwood's regarded Kipling as the only light in a great darkness; he represented the only hope for sanity and the survival of traditional and spiritual values.

We venture to predict that English poetry will be permanently enriched by Mr. Kipling's pen more signally than by any other living writer . . . We turn to that memorable "Recessional," which alone of all the poems that have appeared since the late Laureate's death made an instantaneous and a deep impression on the public intellect and conscience.¹⁰¹

Kipling alone could be depended on to undertake the great quest and "follow the Gleam."¹⁰²

When Captains Courageous appeared on the autumn book list, the Athenaeum took the view that the new book was a sociological novel with "a slight and somewhat obvious moral." "Like *Middlemarch*," it described a state of society, creating an "atmosphere and tone of a strange mode of life." The technical terms were new and strange but comprehensible when in context. The sea pieces showed "artistry and subtle skill" and the story as a whole could be considered "a decided success as regards the aim which the author appears to have

¹⁰⁰Blackwood's Magazine, Nov. 1897, p. 629.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

had before him."¹⁰³ For the first time, however, the Athenaeum's reviewer had not been entirely satisfied. He warned Kipling that the spirit of satire was not compatible with patriotic fervour.

Mr. Kipling, it would appear, aspires to be the Hogarth as well as the Tyrtaeus of the British Empire; and that he has the qualities to play the former role, his Anglo-Indian sketches and the present book amply testify. But Literature is a jealous mistress and hardly allows of a divided allegiance. Whatever patriotism may gain from books like the present it is to be feared letters must lose.¹⁰⁴

The Bookman, in a brief critique of the same work, complained of the author's tedious didacticism: "We have met Mr. Kipling the educationist before now, but have never quailed under his eye for so long at a time."¹⁰⁵ The book had been made a vehicle for the author's questionable philosophy and constituted "a paeon to what seems to be the strongest conviction that Mr. Kipling holds - the value of strict, unreasoning discipline." As a description of the life of the Grand Banks fishermen, it was "more instructive than enticing"; it all sounded "very accurate" but made "very dull" reading.

The Liberal Edinburgh Review, in the January issue of 1898, did not find Kipling dull and made no objection to either his philosophy or his politics. He was in fact treated with

¹⁰³The Athenaeum, Oct. 30, 1897, p. 589.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., pp. 589-590.

¹⁰⁵The Bookman, Nov. 1897, p. 47.

considerable respect, praised for his "extraordinary faculty of observation" and for his "varied and vivid" descriptive passages. His present work was said to far surpass his earlier efforts, which had been unpleasantly cynical. And, instead of being rejected for Imperialism, he was commended for the sincerity of his views.

One of the best qualities in Mr. Kipling's work is the serious and patriotic interest he evidently feels in the position of England in India, and his thorough belief in the greatness of his country, in spite of governmental and departmental weaknesses and blunders.¹⁰⁶

The merits of various stories were touched on appreciatively. The author, however, was cautioned to avoid the "pitfall of sensationalism and 'shockers' of an exaggerated and pernicious stamp" to be found in his "nightmare literature." Although The Light That Failed and Captains Courageous had been overrated, The Jungle Book was "most remarkable and original" and offered "the best promise of retaining a permanent place in our literature."

Whereas the tales were "wonderfully well told, the verses were "unequal." In poetry the use of "broken language" and slang must always be considered highly objectionable. The poems might have been appreciably better written in standard English. Kipling was warned against the degrading effect of colloquialisms and slang, and reminded that slang was an "evil

¹⁰⁶The Edinburgh Review, Jan. 1898, p. 209.

and destructive influence" and that "those who assist in bringing about such bathos of literary language will hardly deserve well of their country."¹⁰⁷ Dialect might be permissible but slang was "a deliberately concocted corruption and debasement of language, the offspring, not of simplicity but of vulgarity of mind." Unless the author could correct this very grave fault, his fame would not live.

The question for Mr. Kipling to consider is whether he wishes for a future in literature or whether he is content to interest himself and us by brilliant and piquant studies of episodes in life and nature. If he wishes for future fame, for a permanent place in the world's library, we believe he has it well within his choice, if he would go to work seriously and aim at giving us his best, instead of being content to please and interest us for the moment.¹⁰⁸

In 1891 the Edinburgh Review had complained of his brutality, low moral tone, poor style, and displeasing journalistic traits. After seven years, the venerable journal assured him a place in history, provided he adhered to standard English.

The October copy of Blackwood's in 1898 greeted the publication of Kipling's collected works (in twelve volumes) with a fulsome eulogy. The author was hailed as "the most remarkable writer of his generation," one who had become universally popular.

¹⁰⁷The Edinburgh Review, Jan. 1898, p. 212.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., pp. 225-226.

It has been his portion to gain the ear of the great non-literary reading public, and at the same time to win the enthusiastic applause of that limited body of men whose pleasure in a work of art is derived from a perception of the means as well as of the end. Such good fortune falls to few.¹⁰⁹

There might be those who were capable of pointing out flaws "real or imaginary," in his work, but they could not, "being in full possession of their senses, pass him by."¹¹⁰

In his wide appeal he was said to resemble Stevenson; in his versatility he could be compared only with Shakespeare. In imagination he had no equal. The article gave amply documented evidence of his versatility and detailed proof of his amazing mastery of specialized knowledge and technical vocabulary relating to sciences, trades, professions and arts.

What Blackwood's considered his greatest achievement was acknowledged with solemn emphasis:

It is merely his due to attribute to him the chief share among men of letters in that revival of the Imperial sentiment. . . . To have reawakened a great people to a sense of its duties and responsibilities, to have fanned the drooping flame of an enlightened but fervent patriotism - these are achievements of which few indeed can boast It has been Mr. Kipling's enviable task to bring down patriotism from the closet to the street, and to diffuse its beneficent influence among millions who had hitherto remained untouched.¹¹¹

A lengthy discussion of political issues followed, dealing with the Liberals' mismanagement of foreign affairs between

¹⁰⁹Blackwood's, Oct. 1898, p. 470.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 471.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 473.

1880 and 1885 and naming Majuba Hill and Khartoum as "specimens of the application of Liberal principles to foreign politics." Because of such ineptitude "the nobler elements in the Liberal Party were forever severed from the baser."¹¹² Blackwood's noted that the Jubilee of 1887 had awakened the spirit of the nation and that the celebrations of 1897 had shown "ideas and aspirations of a loftier order . . . to have taken root in the nation's heart." But not even Kipling's inspiring message could make an impression on the Liberal leader: "The emotions of patriotism and the fine sense of national honour were, unhappily, strangers to the bosom of William Ewart Gladstone."¹¹³

It must be considered providential that Kipling interested himself in political affairs and that his "most characteristic work" was "really saturated with politics . . . the politics of true statesmanship." Proof of his commitment to the Tory cause was the ballad "Cleared," which passed censure on the Parnell Commission with such lines as "We are not ruled by murderers but only by their friends." It was "one of the most trenchant pieces of rhetoric in any language." The author had become a powerful champion of Conservative principles: "No more formidable attack has been delivered upon Liberalism in the present

¹¹²Blackwood's, October 1898, p. 474.

¹¹³Ibid.

generation that Mr. Kipling's work taken as a whole."¹¹⁴ Blackwood's was particularly pleased with those tales that embodied useful political lessons, and noted that "Mr. Kipling has taken the pains to set forth his opinions in direct and almost didactic shape." He had been especially effective in reducing "Liberal principles ad absurdum" in matters relating to India by revealing that great land to his readers, familiarizing them with the people and the country and giving them brilliant glimpses of everyday life. The military stories were "very fine." A highly significant and clever political parable was contained in "The Man Who Would Be King." The fables of the Jungle Books were "magnificent."

The poetry deserved to be recognized for its unique qualities:

His highest flights are high indeed and it is true of his best work, as of all the world's greatest poetry, that it can be read and re-read without losing its freshness. . . .¹¹⁵ His record as a poet is one of steady and rapid progress.

"Recessional" assured him a place among the immortals, for it "seemed to concentrate in itself the glowing patriotism of a Shakespeare, the solemn piety of a Milton, and the measured stateliness of a Dryden."¹¹⁶ But then Kipling was far more

¹¹⁴Blackwood's, Oct. 1898, p. 475. That the Liberals were aware of the seriousness of the threat posed by Kipling was apparent in Richard Le Gallienne's full-scale attack.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 480.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 481.

than a poet and storyteller - he must be recognized as a spiritual leader and teacher.

It is well for us that a great writer should be in our midst, strengthening our weak hands and confirming the feeble knees. . . . The constant burden of his song teaches the lesson which it most behoves the younger generation to learn.

"But the head and the hoof of the Law
And the haunch and the hump is - Obey."¹¹⁷

In proclaiming him a paragon among writers, Blackwood's paid tribute to a peerless crusader against the evils of Liberalism.

Political considerations did not weigh with the Athenaeum, which reacted rather coolly to the 1898 collection of short stories, The Day's Work. These tales were "not as a whole up to his best level"¹¹⁸ and could not compare with "The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney" or "The Man Who Would Be King." The best were "The Tomb of His Ancestors" and "The Maltese Cat." "The Bridge Builders" and "William the Conqueror" suffered from being too long; "The Walking Delegate" was tedious, and ".007" was overloaded with boring technical details. At the same time, the reviewer added, these stories must be rated "well ahead of the large mass of such things collected for us by competing publishers, and we ask for more."¹¹⁹

The Bookman thought highly of "The Bridge Builders."

¹¹⁷Blackwood's Oct. 1898, p. 482.

¹¹⁸The Athenaeum, Oct. 15, 1898, p. 521.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 522.

The volume opens with a display of Mr. Kipling's best force. "The Bridge Builders" is a magnificent story and a kind of summary of his strength. His consummate skill in using technical knowledge; his robust and intelligent appreciation of work and heroism; his sense of the great and lasting things above man's little life, seem now and then through rifts in the cloud-smoke of the day's work, have seldom been given better expression.¹²⁰

The reviewer then quoted at length the fine passages describing the approach of the flood and commented admiringly on the treatment of the opium dream of the council of the gods.

One must linger over this strange and fascinating tale of the utmost strength of man and the watchfulness and lastingness of the gods, a tale where both human and divine fears are revealed shudderingly, in an indescribable medley of realism and mysticism that never revolts the imagination. The tale is enough to redeem any book.¹²¹

Unfortunately The Day's Work was in need of "some redemption." Readers were told that they "would be well advised" to close the book at page 44, for seven of the remaining stories, like "The Ship that Found Herself" and "The Maltese Cat," belonged to the category of "Moral Tales." These "are good if you can read them" but "are otherwise intolerable."¹²²

A year later, the annual Kipling volume raised a storm of critical invective and bitter controversy that was without precedent or parallel. The publication of Stalky and Co. in October, 1899, which coincided inauspiciously with the Boers' declaration of war, met with an unaccountable degree of

¹²⁰The Bookman, Nov. 1898, p. 52.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid., p. 53.

hostility. It is not easy to decide, at a distance of seventy years and in a state of conditioned insensitivity, what it was about the book that critics found disturbing. Why a series of innocuous school-boy stories should have been widely condemned as "irreverent, not true to life and . . . brutal"¹²³ was a question that puzzled Kipling and is today almost unanswerable. The adventures of Beetle, Stalky and McTurk were not unlike those of the heroes of the Boys' Own Annual in 1899. The difference lay in the skill with which the tales were constructed, the degree of realism, the application of boy-psychology and peripheral philosophy. The Kipling version did not represent a new approach to the genre. Young readers of the late '90's were not restricted to moralizing "Ericism" and apparently did not suffer from any lack of popular entertainment in book form. In 1899 the Christmas supplement of the Saturday Review approved a substantial number of new publications for boys. (The list did not include Stalky and Co.) The reviewer of "Yarns of School and Sea" was convinced that "the morbid and mawkish stuff one finds in stories of the Eric type are best away."¹²⁴ He was in complete sympathy with the more robust tone of the new fiction for juvenile reading but complained that in far too many instances the characters were

¹²³Something of Myself, p. 135.

¹²⁴The Saturday Review, Dec. 9, 1899, p. viii.

superficially drawn. He saw the need of a school story that would interest both boys and adults, one that would describe life at school with realism. The Boys of the Priory School, in which the delination of character was good, was "the study of a milksop" who turned out to be a hero. Wynport College developed its theme of "the metamorphosis of a spoilt child into a public school boy" with "plenty of fun and go." The Boys of Dormitory Three, the "adventures of a sextet of cheeky young rascals," displayed a good deal of spirit and was "well put together."

In Stalky and Co. the "boys of Study No. 5" were a trio of cheeky young rascals. However, when the record of their escapades had been examined by The Saturday Review in November, the comments had been heavily disapproving. And there were other critics who hastened to press charges of brutality, coarseness and moral depravity. Yet all belonged to a generation that still read Marryat without a qualm. The suspicious searchings and determined fault-finding of political opponents were behind much of the outcry. Nevertheless the source of offence seemed to go deeper than politics, for a number of the author's former well-wishers were affronted by the book. Perhaps it was because they took their Kipling very seriously or because they refused to accept a degree of realism in the description of the activities of the unregenerate young. Perhaps they had retained a Wordsworthian vision of boyhood.

Whatever the reason for their disgust, they had a great deal to say in the way of reprobation.

The book's outrageous features were not soon forgotten, the effect of its arraignment persisting into the new century. In 1905 the well-known educator A.C. Benson referred to Stalky in The Upton Letters. He had found great literary merit in the stories but said that they did not give a fair picture of school life, that the boys were very unusual boys, "highly-coloured, fantastic, horribly human and yet somehow grotesque," given to "lawlessness unbridled and yet obviously wholesome and manly."¹²⁵ He acknowledged that in the presentation of the masters Kipling "portrayed with remorseless fidelity the faults and foibles of my own class." On the other hand he declared, the book was "unjust to school-masters," reducing them to mere "usherdom."¹²⁶ In 1911 the Encyclopaedia Britannica mentioned it as "a lurid account"¹²⁷ of school life. Kipling's socialist counterpart, H.G. Wells, in whose memory Stalky and Co. had festered for twenty years, cited the stories in his Outline of History as horrid examples of Imperialist propaganda. He attributed a particularly sinister significance to them, finding on every page evidence of "a new scorn for the

¹²⁵The Upton Letters (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1905), p. 98.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹²⁷"Rudyard Kipling," 11th ed., XV, 825.

ideas of democracy that had ruled the earlier nineteenth century, and a revived admiration for the overbearing and the cruel."

It was quite characteristic of the times that Mr. Kipling should lead the children of the middle and upper-class British public back to the Jungle to learn "the law," and that in his book Stalky and Co. he should give an appreciative description of the torture of two boys by three others ¹²⁸

This incident epitomized all the evils of a retrograde political system.

Before resorting to torture, the teaching seems to be, see that you can pump up a little justifiable moral indignation and all will be well. If you have the authorities on your side, then you cannot be to blame. Such apparently, is the simple doctrine of this typical imperialist.¹²⁹

Wells' opinion seemed to be borne out in Stalky and Co., in which he detected a cunning plot involving both church and state.

Headmaster and clergyman turn a deaf ear to the complaints of an indignant mother In this we have the key to the ugliest, the most retrogressive, and finally fatal idea of a tacit conspiracy between the law and illegal violence.¹³⁰

In 1920, freely interpreted as political allegory of the most deplorable kind, Stalky was identified as the crude text-book of what was described as "Kiplingism."

When, after being serialized, it appeared in book form in October, 1899, it provoked a climactic exchange between two

¹²⁸Outline of History (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1920), II, 423.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid., p424.

well-known men of letters, Robert Buchanan and Sir Walter Besant. The encounter took place in the Contemporary Review in three stages - attack, defense and renewed assault. Buchanan's first abusive article was published in November, 1899, Besant's mild reply in January, 1900, and the former's savage rebuttal in February. This word-battle coincided with the humiliating early phase of the South African War, which had broken out in October and was to be associated with Kipling almost as inevitably as with Chamberlain, Milner, and Rhodes.

Buchanan, a cross-grained Glasgow socialist a generation older than Kipling, was the author of many narrative poems, plays, and novels now forgotten. He had also a gift for writing damaging critiques, being still remembered for an article in the Contemporary in 1871 on "The Fleshly School of Poetry" which had brought retaliation from Swinburne and Rossetti. Almost thirty years later, when he turned his choleric attention to the author of Stalky and Co. in "The Voice of the Hooligan," his strictures were worded in a manner so forceful and unparliamentary that Besant was moved to protest. Buchanan at once prepared a second attack intended to demolish both the "hooligan" and his ally. Then illness put an end to the possibility of further passages of arms between the two critics, both of whom died in 1901.

Published subsequently in pamphlet form as The Voice of the "Hooligan": A Discussion of Kiplingism, the first article

indicted Kipling as the very incarnation of all that was pernicious and abominable in contemporary society. Buchanan made no secret of his political stand. He began by expressing his regret that Gladstone, that "unselfish and conscientious statesman," was no longer present to redeem the degeneracy of the age. "Fashionable society," was, in his opinion, "rotten - root and branch" and in it could be found "neither purity nor decency." Similarly popular literature had "run to seed in fiction of the baser sort."

Its most extraordinary feature at this moment is the exaltation to a position of almost unexampled popularity of a writer who in his single person adumbrates, I think, all that is most deplorable, all that is most retrograde and savage, in the restless and uninstructed Hooliganism of the time.¹³¹

Kipling's reputation bore no relationship to his inconsiderable literary output of "brief anecdotal stories and occasional verses" dealing with a romantic country in "little kodak-glimpses" - "little tales and smoking-room anecdotes seasoned with . . . social impropriety."¹³² These were concerned "almost entirely with the baser aspects of our civilization." The author's only merit lay in the fact that he was "bright and clever."

To account for such undeserved fame, Buchanan suggested that the average reader had become too lazy to read longer and

¹³¹The Contemporary Review, Nov. 1899, p. 778.

¹³²Ibid.

more serious works. In addition to this indolence and apathy, certain other factors had influenced public opinion - "the growth of militant and military spirit;" "Primrose League aggression," indifference to religion," and Imperialism.¹³³

In Barrack-Room Ballads, "Mr. Kipling's estimate of himself as a poet was a delusion." His style ranged from the "lowest Cockney vulgarity" to "the very height of what Americans call 'high-falutin'." The content of "brutal violence . . . horrible savagery, unmitigated barbarism" was as repulsive as the "tone of vulgarity and triviality unredeemed by a touch of human tenderness and pity." The Seven Seas was more varied and less vulgar, but evinced the same "brutality and latent baseness." Only in the Jungle Books had the author "got near to a really imaginative presentation of fine material."¹³⁴

"How, then," Buchanan asked, "are we to account for the extraordinary popularity of works so contemptible in spirit and so barbarous in execution?" Undoubtedly Kipling had been welcomed as a novelty by a reading public that had tired of "the insincerities and affectations of the professional poets" and had been conditioned by the "vulgarity, flippancy and . . . radical unintelligence" of cheap journalism. In conjunction with these favorable circumstances he "had the good, or bad,

¹³³The Contemporary Review, Nov. 1899, p. 780.

¹³⁴Ibid.

fortune to come at the very moment when the wave of false Imperialism was cresting most strongly upward."¹³⁵

In Buchanan's estimation, Kipling, being "incapable of serious thought or of deep feeling" represented the voice of the mob:

He represents, with more or less accuracy, what the mob is thinking, and for this reason he is likely to be forgotten as swiftly and summarily as he has been applauded, nay to be judged and condemned as mean and insignificant on grounds quite as hasty as those on which he has been hailed as important and high minded.¹³⁶

Buchanan seized upon Stalky and Co. as irrefutable proof of Kipling's "moral baseness." He designated the book "repulsive and disgusting, . . . a savage caricature of boyhood." Stalky and his friends were incredibly vicious:

It is simply impossible to show by mere quotations the horrible vileness of the book describing the lives of these three small fiends in human likeness; only a perusal of the whole work will convey to the reader its truly repulsive character and to read the pages through, I fear, would surely test the stomach of any sensitive reader.¹³⁷

Here several passages from the episode of the dead cat in the dormitory were cited to provide examples of "the vulgarity, the brutality, the savagery" that reeked "on every page." The book was undoubtedly prophetic of "recent political developments," the war in South Africa. It reflected the times.

Only the spoiled child of an utterly brutalized public could possibly have written Stalky and Co. or, having written

¹³⁵The Contemporary Review, Nov. 1899, p. 785.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ibid.

it, have dared to publish it The heroes of this deplorable book . . . join in no honest play or manly sports, they lounge about, they drink, they smoke, they curse and swear.¹³⁸

The stories represented the very epitome of Hooliganism, depicting the morals and manners of the street ruffian, connoting only violence and barbarous outrage and threatening "to corrupt the pure springs of our literature."¹³⁹

To this tirade, Walter Besant replied promptly but with dignified restraint in the January issue of the Contemporary, "Is It the Voice of the Hooligan?" He had been distressed by Buchanan's rancorous assault:

The most melancholy chapter in the History of Literature is that which relates to the attacks made upon authors by their contemporaries. Among all the professions that of letters is the only one in which its members are permitted to attack, to deride, to abuse, to misrepresent each other.¹⁴⁰

Having expressed his concern at this state of affairs, he lamented the absence of true criticism; "The critical faculty, always rare, is at the present moment, when it is so much wanted . . . more rarely found than any other." He reminded Buchanan that a man had no right to call himself a critic simply because he knew how to write. The true critic must be a judge.

¹³⁸The Contemporary Review, Nov. 1899, p. 785.

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 788. The Stalky tales were, as Kipling termed them, "tracts or parables on the education of the young." Buchanan was not alone in finding them shocking and brutal. The critical reaction to the book caused the author "to wonder, not for the first time, at which end of their carcasses grown men keep their school memories."

¹⁴⁰Ibid., Jan. 1900, p. 27.

After discussing the ideal approach to criticism, Besant went on to justify the popularity of Kipling, whose "vast following . . . may not be critical, yet does not with one consent give its admiration and affection except for good and sufficient reasons."¹⁴¹ He then enumerated some of Kipling's special qualities as a writer: his intense realism, his ability to tell a story in the right words, his enthusiasm for humanity, his power of attracting and interesting all classes of readers, his amazing variety and wealth of material, his great gifts of observation and sympathy, his originality and daring. Kipling's world-wide audience was an indication of his stature as a writer.

But what an audience it is! The people sit in a theatre of which the front seats are at his feet and the farthest tiers are twelve thousand miles away.

He could be compared only with Scott and Dickens but "in their lifetime their audience was smaller."¹⁴²

Rudyard Kipling is the first of the storytellers to whom it has been granted to speak, while he yet lives, to the hundred millions of those who read the Anglo-Saxon tongue.¹⁴³

Defending him against Buchanan's charges of irresponsible empire-building and glorification of violence, Besant maintained that Kipling was a "son of the Empire, . . . the poet of the Empire," not a "Jingo-Rhymer," and quoted a number of lines

¹⁴¹The Contemporary Review, Jan. 1900, p. 35.

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Ibid.

from "Recessional" and passages from other works that demonstrated his inspirational qualities. If he dwelt on scenes of warfare, it was because "war restores a sense of duty, sacrifice and patriotism." He might be a promoter of Empire but his motives were above suspicion.

It is not on the side of those who are ruled and led by . . . lust (for gold) that Kipling stands: nor is it for barbaric conquest and the subjugation of free peoples that he sings.¹⁴⁴

Buchanan had maligned Kipling when he accused him of vulgarity and triviality. In Besant's view, he had achieved great things in his depiction of the Common Man, revealing "below the rough and coarse exterior the manhood of soldier and sailor, of engineman and lighthouseman and fisherman."¹⁴⁵

Whereas Buchanan had been frankly abusive, Besant had conducted his counteroffensive impersonally and reasonably. Now, in February, 1900, the former returned to the attack and struck out at Kipling and Besant in a belligerent article, "The Ethics of Criticism." With the symptomatic bitterness of a disappointed man, he remarked that Besant's "own career had been sunny . . . and so it was fitting and natural that he should uphold the ways of Literature as ways of pleasantness and profit."¹⁴⁶ He accused his opponent, "that good old custodian of the City's peace," of proclaiming him "a rogue

¹⁴⁴The Contemporary Review, Jan. 1900, p. 38.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., Feb. 1900, p. 221.

and a liar" and all because he had "wantonly assaulted a good young genius of Christian disposition."

Buchanan once again charged Kipling with Jingo-Imperialism and repeated his condemnation of war in all its forms as "simply murder with another name." As he moved to the attack, he commented uncharitably on a mixed metaphor in one of Besant's most eloquent passages and mocked the latter's concern for the amenities of criticism:

Our good Sir Walter, so full of anxiety for his fellow craftsman, so shocked and shamed when one of those craftsmen protests against homicidal mania and Jingo-patriotism in another.¹⁴⁷

He admonished Besant for his "enthusiasm for Mr. Rudyard Kipling" and for his attempt to justify his protégé "on the score of a legion of omnivorous readers." Regretting that he had "to speak so roundly to a harmless soul," he turned his attention from Sir Walter to inveigh against "the egregious Mr. Kipling's evil influence"; and to denounce the arch-Imperialist for the part he had played in encouraging "beneficent homicide" in South Africa.

The angry and irrepressible Buchanan was to have the last word in the controversy for years to come. The quarrel which he relinquished would be taken up by a younger generation of critics and, in many instances, with the same lack of moderation. But the most significant aspect of this debate had nothing to do with Buchanan's thundering invective. What was

¹⁴⁷The Contemporary Review, Feb. 1900, p. 226.

remarkable was the fact that Besant, in the role of Kipling's champion, had been put on the defensive. Like Mafeking and Ladysmith, Imperialism and the poet-prophet of Empire had come under siege. From 1899 on, Kipling criticism was more likely to be concerned with manoeuvres of attack and defence than with a simple alignment of opposing forces.

In the three journals that reviewed Stalky and Co., there was an interesting divergence of opinion. The Athenaeum gave the book unhesitating and delighted approval. The Saturday Review strongly protested its falseness and brutality. The Bookman invited two schoolmasters to take the responsibility of judging its merit. The first of these guest critics, from Charterhouse, denounced the stories outright; the other, from Kipling's own school Westward Ho, succeeded in remaining tactfully noncommittal. The two articles, under the title "Kipling at School," were illustrated with two new portraits of the author and a cartoon depicting "Beetle."

The Athenaeum expressed a satisfaction that was unqualified by any doubt. Stalky and Co. was an outstanding achievement.

Most English boys - and most Englishmen who have anything of the boy still in them - will rejoice in "Stalky and Co." . . . Mr. Kipling . . . has every reason to feel proud of the success with which he has photographed the English public-school boy's talk and sentiments.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸The Athenaeum, Oct. 14, 1899, p. 515.

Kipling's realism was entirely admirable - the book contained "no idealizing halo."

He sees the British boy with his infinite capacity for fun, his finite capacity for insubordination, his coarseness in word and act, modified by an ultrasensitive delicacy of feeling in certain directions.¹⁴⁹

The stories had a fundamentally serious purpose and an "eminently didactic" tone. The author "not only describes, he defends; the implication of the whole book is a glorification of the public-school method of training character." In "The Flag of their Country," the boys were shown to despise cheap appeals to their patriotism and to feel revulsion and embarrassment in the presence of "the yellow-bellied flag-flapper." The reviewer commented: "Mr. Kipling evidently does not believe in what is known as appealing to a boy's higher feelings."

The tales clearly made up "an organic whole," and indicated a "true artistry such as has not been displayed by Mr. Kipling in his previous efforts." The book was read by boys with delight and pronounced "Spiffing!"¹⁵⁰ A favourite tale was "The Moral Reformers," with its "torture" scene. The reviewer, apparently knowledgeable about boys, mentioned its brutal features without disapproval: "It has a touch of cruelty in it which appeals to the savage elements of that age."

¹⁴⁹The Athenaeum, Oct. 14, 1899, p. 515.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 516.

The Saturday Review took a serious and moralistic approach to Stalky.

The story of school life is too often a superficial and highly personal, epic of bullying, sneaking, smoking and venturing out of bounds. None of these occupations, not even the first, is essential to the picture.¹⁵¹

All that distinguished the community spirit of a school was ignored:

The one thing which lies in every boy's experience, . . . namely the searching domination of the corporate mind . . . is neglected by the storyteller, clean omitted, or misunderstood, or noticed as if it were a joke, only in one of its least important manifestations.¹⁵²

Among the essentials which Kipling had left out of the stories were "public spirit, indissolubly bound up with the supremacy of games, . . . the all-pervading rigour of good form, . . . the immense sense of propriety, . . . the social scale, calculated on an athletic basis," and "the peculiar, and familiar, ideals of success."

All such facts of state and society must be omitted by the storyteller, to leave his picture of school a fantastic and unrecognizable medley of childishness and cruelty.¹⁵³

Thus anyone expecting a true account of the corporate activities of a school would be disappointed in and more than likely revolted by Stalky and Co. The rebellious trio, Stalky, Beetle, and McTurk, had been made to "fill the canvas," the school being relegated to the background. What, then, was Kipling's

¹⁵¹The Saturday Review, Nov. 4, 1899, p. iii.

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³Ibid.

purpose?

If the author . . . was not attracted by school life, What is it fires his interest? For the book is written with an almost feverish relish.¹⁵⁴

It was the reviewer's belief that these slangy descriptions of stupendous practical jokes must have been intended "to make the reader 'feel warm inside,'" and that the public was, no doubt, expected to appreciate this kind of unpleasant nonsense. The critique ended on a note of withering irony:

And the reader . . . who does not feel warm inside when Mr. Kipling gives the word is no true Briton. On that head, at least, the book seems absolutely convincing.¹⁵⁵

For the Bookman, Mr. T.E. Page, a master at Charterhouse, wrote an article on Stalky and Co. which stressed the deplorable attitude of Kipling's schoolboys toward the masters. He described the protagonists as "three boys who are at war with the masters, despise the prefects and sneer at all school games."¹⁵⁶ Their vices included "a taste for surreptitious tobacco." With a school-master's touch of satire, he pointed out a passage in one of the tales that discussed "evil smells" with "admirable and appreciative skill." But he denounced the latent ribaldry of an incident in which Beetle suggested an indelicate rhyme for "stenches," and strongly objected to the episode dealing with the torture of the school bullies. In the

¹⁵⁴The Saturday Review, Nov. 1899, p. iii.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. iv.

¹⁵⁶"Mr. Kipling's Schoolmasters and Schoolboys," The Bookman, Nov. 1899, p. 44.

final exploit of "Study No. 5," which found the trio bribing a girl to kiss a weak prefect, he detected "a very questionable tone" which aggravated the extravagant impossibility" and "palpable absurdities" of the story.

Page's moral indignation was further roused by the manner in which the author delineated his characters:

Space forbids me to dwell, as I might wish, on the gross caricatures which Mr. Kipling presents not only of boys but of masters.¹⁵⁷

The headmaster lacked dignity and the other masters were merely there to have tricks played on them. But the worst example was to be found in Kipling's shocking treatment of Mr. Prout who had been "accidentally drawn as a human being and a gentleman" and who was made the victim of his pupils. In the author's own words, "The boys knew well how to flick him on the raw."¹⁵⁸ This kind of thing, Mr. Page declared, was a "deliberate malignancy" that was "wholly vile."

In spite of Mr. Kipling, experience shows that boys who set themselves to "flick" a weak but kindly master "on the raw" are very rarely the boys who turn out brave officers or distinguished men. Happily too they are very rare in Public Schools. If Mr. Kipling's own experiences were indeed such as he depicts, he would wisely have left them to a kind oblivion. On the other hand, as a record of ordinary school life, his book, apart from other defects, is a gross and absolute travesty of facts.¹⁵⁹

A more objective view was taken by Arthur H. Walker,

¹⁵⁷The Bookman, Nov. 1899, p. 46.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

B.A., Headmaster's Assistant at the United Services College, Westward Ho. The setting of Stalky and Co. being his own school, his position was a trifle awkward, for he could neither directly approve Kipling's supposed reminiscences nor could he condemn so illustrious an "Old Boy."

It is hardly fair to raise the direct question of the truth or falsity of the pictures drawn in the book. Apart from the necessary predominance of "the imaginative element" in an avowed work of fiction, the point of view presented is that of a boy.¹⁶⁰

He saw the background of the stories as being "obscured by the foreground" and felt that the book might prove dangerous reading for a schoolboy, "because his masters are not like those in the book and he is no Stalky." He concluded sensibly that the work was not to be criticized as a picture of school life and refused to make any attempt to pronounce on its literary merits:

The schoolmaster will, for the most part, decline to regard it as in any way affecting him or his work. It is outside his province and foreign to all his experience.¹⁶¹

Walker's statement was carefully and tactfully inexpressive but his personal distaste for the book was clearly implied.

By the late '90's Kipling's virtual apotheosis by popular consent had noticeably affected the trend of serious criticism. The critics had been constrained to pay him the

¹⁶⁰The Bookman, Nov. 1899, p. 46.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

respect of unremitting attention. The majority had taken a hand in his translation. The more conservative and conscientious had come to speak well of him. Those once indifferent had been nudged by his popularity into showing an active interest in his work. Others who had learned to dislike him and who distrusted his popularity were kept busy attempting to neutralize his influence. The militant and factious had been impelled to predictable critical extremes.

The era closed in the ordeal of a mismanaged war that put to the test the whole concept of Imperialism. A decade of Kipling criticism ended in noisy polemics.

CHAPTER IV

When my Imperialistic iniquities were established after the Boer War . . .

Something of Myself

Mr. Kipling and the public have had a magnificent run together, and now there is a natural halt, and a mood of quiet and surmise.

The Bookman, 1903

"Natural halt" and "mood of surmise," terms that, judging from the best-seller lists, affected Kipling's public very little, should rather have been applied to the state of mind of the critics. Among these "Priests and Pontiffs," whom the author neither respected nor attempted to conciliate,¹ the general decline of his reputation set in with the publication of Stalky and Co. in the autumn of 1899. The book came on the market just as the Boers declared war. At this juncture evidences of hostility multiplied in the literary journals - the anger of recognized enemies, the estrangement of committed friends, the carping adjudication, the grudging half-praise, the intimations of boredom, the deliberate slights. The trend persisted and turned into a move to end the Kipling cult and put the idol in his rightful and undistinguished place.

That there should be revisions and reversals of opinion about him was inevitable. The span of close critical attention

¹Something of Myself, p. 211.

coinciding with almost universal acclaim, had already lasted for ten years. The reviewers were unlikely to prolong such flattering consideration or to maintain their interest at the high level of the '90's. But the process by which a vogue gradually wanes was accelerated by the events of history. The Kipling-fashion in literature was closely linked with the Chamberlain-fashion in political economy. Both fell into disrepute as a result of the war.

Imperialism lost ground during the conflict and never afterwards recovered its vigour. Had that unprofitable interlude in South Africa been brief, efficiently conducted, decisive and without painful associations, it would have disturbed - in England at least - only the opposition, the Pro-Boers, the Little Englanders and the intelligentsia. It was however, a humiliating and uncomfortable business, fully publicized in the press, domestic and foreign, and in the end most of those responsible for the policies that promoted it were discredited. From 1899 on the Imperialists were everywhere embattled. Chamberlain came under heavy and continuous attack, although as Colonial Secretary he could neither direct war policy nor control military operations. And by the time the war ended, the Imperialist movement, that had so recently radiated an optimism in which business prospered and the stock-market boomed, had lost its following; its chief proponents, their political influence. Well-known figures disappeared

from the scene of action. Cecil Rhodes died in 1902; in the same year Lord Salisbury was replaced by Arthur Balfour as leader of the Unionists. In 1903 Chamberlain, who for more than seven years had been the power behind the Prime Minister, resigned from the Cabinet, having been defeated by the right-wing Conservatives over the tariff issue of Imperial Preference. The embarrassed Unionist government lingered until the last days of 1905. In the subsequent election the Liberals triumphed - even the Tory leader failed to retain his seat. Kipling's day as a government spokesman was over. And as Imperial glories had inflated his fame, so their eclipse tended to diminish his claims to respect. The Artist suffered with the Imperialist.

Kipling himself, disillusioned by war, took a hand in his own undoing. He directed angry, unsubtle verse against all whom he considered guilty of dereliction of their national duties. He struck at military ineptitude, administrative backsliding, complacency, indifference, public apathy and the manifold stupidities of the entire nation. The admonitory rhymes vented his disgust and indignation - "There's somethin' gone small with the lot," in the words of the ex-soldier in "Chant Pagan." His most merciless satire, "The Islanders," was published in the Times early in 1902. Its ironies spared no one. It was a wholesale denunciation that was certain to rankle and to provoke an obstinate resentment.

"The Islanders" and other rhymed sermons deepened the critics' "mood of surmise" until with many it amounted to a conviction that Kipling had long been over-rated. He was not a great writer but an incredibly successful popular journalist of vulgar tastes who appealed primarily to the lower classes. Too busy with political concerns for his own good, he had degraded his genius. It was therefore almost impossible to admire his work. Ever since Stalky and Co., moreover, his writing had been deteriorating. His wartime doggeral had a very objectionable tone.

In the coteries where politics and literature overlapped, Kipling by now had contrived to alienate the ultra-Conservatives while perpetually infuriating the Liberals. The latter kept up their abusive articles in "various journals, not at all badly written, with a most enviable genius for perverting or mistaking anything that did not suit their bilious doctrine."² The former now began to take the brash Imperialist to task for his lack of dignity.

In December, 1900, the Anglo-Saxon Review³ contained an article by Arthur Waugh, "The Poetry of the South African Campaign." The preamble was especially significant.

²Something of Myself, p. 92.

³A short-lived quarterly miscellany of expensive format, edited and published by Randolph Churchill's widow, Mrs. George Cornwallis West.

There is . . . no moment so dangerous to criticism as that of the reaction from a first popular acclamation Criticism so seldom keeps its head, either in the hour of enthusiasm or in that of reaction. The caprice of current criticism may well be the despair of the creative artist. Over-praise is followed in an hour by over-blame.⁴

The critics, Waugh went on, had been "grievously disappointed" by the quality of the poetry which had come out of the war and, in particular, had been dissatisfied with Kipling's contribution.

Mr. Kipling has, by popular consent, taken rank among us as the poet of the larger Imperialism and it was to him that we naturally looked to support the occasion. His "Recessional," a brave and dignified piece of rhetoric rather than a great poem, had proved him able to stand above the surging excitement of the hour, and to point a moral that would have followed well upon the call to arms. For it must be remembered that the country had been spared for a long while from a considerable campaign, that a new generation had arisen to whom war meant little beyond the glamour of bugles and banners, and for whom some searching sense of the duties and responsibilities of power was of paramount importance. We were going forth to crush a rebellious state in the name of progress and humanity. It was necessary that the blow should be struck with no uncertain hand; but it was also right that it should be struck with dignity and self-respect.⁵

Regrettably, Kipling had neglected to uphold either the dignity of literature or of the nation.

He might have written a "ProceSSIONal" which would have carried a burning message to the heart of every soldier in the army of which he is the accepted laureate. In the place of this, he wrote "The Absent-Minded Beggar."⁶

⁴Arthur Waugh, "The Poetry of the South African Campaign," The Anglo-Saxon Review, Dec. 1900, p. 42.

⁵Ibid., p. 46.

⁶Ibid., p. 47.

The writer was aware that Kipling had not produced that "remarkable piece of banjo-and-kettledrum vivacity" believing it to be poetry. He explained the purpose of the composition - to raise money for charitable purposes. The verses, which were patterned on music-hall songs and "filled . . . with the nudging spirit of vulgarity," had raised large sums for soldiers' wives and children. Unfortunately, however, the song appealed to "the rampant passion of commercialism" at a time when high ideals should have been maintained and it had allowed "the few opponents of the war" to suspect that the campaign might have been undertaken for "commercial acquisitions." Kipling's appeal had been made on the basis of an "ignoble sentiment" with its refrain "pay, pay, pay" indicating a "lower code of morality." Worse still, the song's calculated vulgarity showed that the poet had become infected with the pernicious demagoguery of popular journalism.

Year after year the power of the newspaper has been growing in England; it was always a menace to literature and is now a triumphing rival, . . . intellectual food for an entirely new body of readers: it fills the half-educated with false ideals, and sends the squeamish empty away.⁷

It also encouraged "the spread of lower middle-class ambition." And Kipling, instead of making a stand against this threat, had with his "shouting song handed over the poetry of the hour, scrip and scrippage into the hands of sensational journalism."⁸ Waugh complained that Kipling's imitators

⁷Waugh, p. 48.

⁸Ibid., p. 49.

fostered cockneyism, cynicism, and the "omnipotent commercialism of Fleet Street." Such scruples and fears were those of a high Tory convinced that popular journalism allied with commercial interests would lower standards both cultural and moral, unsettle the masses, threaten the very integrity of literature, and present to the world an inglorious image of Britain's imperial mission.

Kipling the journalist was accused not merely of being popular but of deliberately courting popularity. In Fame and Fiction: An Enquiry into Certain Popularities,⁹ Arnold Bennett examined the various recipes for exciting the enthusiasm of the "average reader," and noted that an infallible prescription for success was a "deplorable sentimentalism." It was his belief that nothing had "contributed more surely to the vogue of Mr. Rudyard Kipling among the majority than his constant abuse and falsification of sentiment."¹⁰ Another unworthy method of currying favour with the public was "that of obsequious pampering of mental laziness and apathy which marks the most successful journalism." It was an expedient that Kipling had "not disdained to modify . . . to his own ends."¹¹

⁹Bennett undoubtedly had Kipling's fame in mind when he stated that the only "sound reputation of an artist is originally never due to the public but to the critics, . . . those persons who have genuine convictions about an art." Fame and Fiction (London: Grant Richards, 1901), p. 197.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 15.

¹¹Ibid., p. 135.

With the Unionists still in power and Kipling a political threat, the fears of the left-wing writers led them to marshal against him all the old charges and to add to these such new accusations as might inhibit his undeserved popularity and influence. A.G. Stephens had this purpose in mind in The Red Pagan and frankly advertised his intentions.

This note of some of Kipling's short-comings is written to assist in putting him where he belongs, and to serve as a counterblast to the adulation of the mob.¹²

According to Stephens, lack of maturity made it impossible for Kipling to write a novel. He had no intellectual capacity but a child's view of life, "the prerogative of a narrow, undeveloped brain."¹³ He could not write of love but instead expressed a child's delight in machinery. He was knowing and superficial - his work was filled with errors - and he saw life "as a series of disconnected impressions."

Stephens went to some trouble to accuse him of being a shameless plagiarist: "It is a good thing for literature that there are few writers as unscrupulous as Kipling."¹⁴ His "Recessional," for example, could be traced to at least three sources. "Kipling took emotion and attitude from Newman, metre from Quarles, the line Dominion over palm and pine from

¹²The Red Pagan (Sidney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., Ltd., 1904), p. 138.

¹³Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 124.

Emerson, and the rest from his memory and the daily newspapers."¹⁵ And yet, Stephens was forced to admit, despite all his faults Kipling was "good."

It is all the more pity that he should become official pander to the baser military and commercial spirit, all the more pity that his writings should be marked by lapses of taste and execution, of truth and honesty.¹⁶

The same purpose and many of the same arguments were to be found in the pamphlet Rudyard Kipling: A Criticism written by John M. Robertson, editor of the Free Review and a crusading anti-Imperialist. Acknowledging that Kipling had the gift of "vivid visualization and tersely vivid expression," Robertson denied that his work added any "total and enveloping truth to its primary truth in the matter of verisimilitude of detail."¹⁷ In other words, "the sense of reality in his writings" was illusory for all "total congruity was lacking." Kipling was "false to human nature," morally false. He dealt in the inconsistent and the improbable and even his pictures of Indian life were untrue. Kim was a "bogus miracle."¹⁸ The soldiers in his stories were merely the author's mouthpieces and uttered his heresies.

¹⁵A.G. Stephens, p. 129.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁷Rudyard Kipling: A Criticism Reprinted from The Indian Review, Madras, 1905, p. 5.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 12.

He hates all opponents of the recent war, and hates Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman as officially typifying them; so his Cockney soldiers must needs voice his malice and his partisanship, and snarl at Sir Henry as "Old Barbarity" on the score of his censure of the policy of territorial devastation. The picture is ludicrously false. The British soldier in the field is not a prating deputy of Lord Milner and Mr. Kipling and the Daily Mail.¹⁹

Robertson considered him "a man of no thinking power, as apart from visualization and imagination." His treatment of an agnostic who suffered aphasia was proof that he was incapable of creating such a character.

He angrily resents . . . the pretension of anybody to reject the normal religious beliefs which Mr. Kipling emotionally, if vaguely, cherishes.²⁰

He was a shallow conformist whose intolerance betrayed his "want of intellect."

Turning to the issue of Imperialism, Robertson charged him with preaching the racial superiority of the Anglo-Saxon.

It is quite in the prevailing taste thus to let racial self-exaltation serve as a covering for any multitude of sins. Yet it is critically inconceivable that any author's reputation can be permanently maintained on such a basis.²¹

Kipling was full of "vaunting" and "vain-glory" and "vulgar hatred for other races."

Thus it is that Mr. Kipling with his underbred swagger and brawling imperialism, humiliates his own race in the act of glorifying it. He turns a great literary gift to illiterary use, making his style and his imagination the instruments of the spirit of Jingo journalism of all races.²²

¹⁹J.M. Robertson, p. 13.

²⁰Ibid., p. 14.

²¹Ibid., p. 17.

²²Ibid., p. 20.

In the opinion of this Liberal journalist his attacks on the opposition showed him to be a stubborn partisan, narrow-minded, immature and lacking in judgment.

All this is perfectly in keeping with Mr. Kipling's past record. He vilifies the present Liberal leader as he vilified Mr. Gladstone in the past. He treats Boers and Pro-Boers as he treated Home Rulers in previous stories.²³

Robertson was in complete agreement with Stephens on the subject of Kipling's artistic deficiencies.

He is finally beyond the pale of great art, with all his gift, because of his intellectual limitations, which keep him school-boyish, parochial, morally vulgar in his total relationship to life and to his fellow men.²⁴

As an artist he was "strong only on the temperamental and technical side . . . and weak to the last degree in the moral and intellectual."²⁵

The assaults of the left-wing in these and similar exercises in pamphleteering were countered by equally biased works devoted to Kipling's defence. In Rudyard Kipling: The Man and His Work, G.F. Monkshood and George Gamble undertook his vindication. The result was an absurd collection of such unrestrained tributes as "The Empire was a map; Rudyard Kipling made it a fact";²⁶ "He is not only a patriot himself, he is

²³J.M. Robertson, p. 25.

²⁴Ibid., p. 27.

²⁵Ibid., p. 29.

²⁶G.F. Monkshood and George Gamble, Rudyard Kipling: The Man and His Work (London: Greening and Co., Ltd., 1902), p. 34.

a cause of patriotism in others";²⁷ "He is a Friend, a Force, a Future."²⁸

The slurs of his detractors, Monkshood and Gamble either methodically contradicted or rationalized. Certainly, they acknowledged, he did not write for women but for men. And while applauding the reactionary anti-feminism attributed to him, they condemned "the revolting daughters and shrieking sisterhood of our day." He was neither mad nor un-English. His work showed that he was entirely English, not an "hysterical Celt" or "neurotic Norman," but "Saxon to the marrow, . . . preeminently wholesome and unconventionally sane."²⁹ His views on racial superiority were undoubtedly justified.

It is a rooted opinion of his that the arising of the Englishman is the finest thing that has happened in all the world; and there are records not a few, set down in the printed books of History, that rather go to warrant his belief.³⁰

Commenting on the imputations that his education was defective and his intellect inferior, Monkshood and Gamble admitted that Kipling was not "academical" and that this alleged deficiency was "the rock upon which so many of his critics - friendly or otherwise - have foundered." He had no need to prove himself a great scholar; he was a great artist.

²⁷G.F. Monkshood and George Gamble, p. 35.

²⁸Ibid., p. 38.

²⁹Ibid., p. 44.

³⁰Ibid., p. 45.

He has been labelled as the English Maupassant. This is the finest compliment ever paid to Maupassant: one third of whose work is unmitigated filth.³¹

Brutal he might be occasionally but never "base." His style might be compressed but it was not "contorted." He was not perhaps a prose stylist but "his manner fitted his matter" with "none of the long-windedness of earlier writers."³² He must always be numbered "among the greatest of the tellers of tales."

The aspersions against his poetry, his apologists indignantly refuted.

A few there are who assert that Rudyard Kipling cannot write poetry at all. Such assertion is not a mistake; it is a false-hood born of malice and envy, or of ignorance and apathy, or a mere love of the conventional.³³

There was no denying that he was sometimes journalistic, and that he used slang upon occasion. But his work remained "true as well as clever" and was "brave, inspiriting and manly."

That his writings were tendentious must be accepted as past dispute. His fiction had a serious purpose.

Rudyard Kipling is not only a writer, he is a propagandist. . . . He has endeavoured to write across the skies the word Imperialism, and thus to turn gelid rate-payers into fervent patriots. And he has partly succeeded.³⁴

He had not invented the Imperial idea but had done much to promote the welfare of the Empire.

³¹G.F. Monkshood and George Gamble, p. 47.

³²Ibid., p. 49.

³³Ibid., p. 61.

³⁴Ibid., p. 274.

Imperialism was by him merely exploited - for all it was worth which happened to be a great deal and happens to be a great deal more.³⁵

He had done his country an invaluable service by stressing the need for preparedness and exposing the anti-Imperialists at home.

More than any one particular man he has taught us that as things are at present ordained, the little Englander is an enemy of his country.³⁶

But not even Monkshood and Gamble could forgive Kipling for having written "The Islanders," although they condoned his bad taste by explaining the nature of the provocation.

The poem is a collection of half-truths delivered with doubled force. The poet sang so loudly that he failed to hear himself. That is one of the several disadvantages of having to shout against an impertinent liar like Mr. Lloyd-George, and a juggling fat-wit like Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman; above all against an irresponsible zany like Mr. Labouchere, and an unscrupulous moralist like Mr. Stead; every one of whom did as much to prolong the Boer war . . . as Steyn, De Wet, Botha and all the irreconcilables put together.³⁷

He should not, however, have condemned the people but the rulers. At the same time it was all the fault of the Opposition and Rudyard Kipling remained "one of the greatest friends of the British Empire that have stepped to the front in this our day."³⁸

³⁵G.F. Monkshood and George Gamble, p. 274.

³⁶Ibid., p. 285.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 286-287.

³⁸Ibid., p. 287.

There were others, more rational and more moderate than Monkshood and Gamble, who came to Kipling's defence. An article in The English Illustrated Magazine in December, 1903, put forward a reasonable explanation of the current cross-fire of adverse criticism.

Mr. Kipling is a force in politics as in letters. But this makes it harder to judge him fairly. . . . [He] is very English . . . He loves the didactic; he dallies gladly with allegory; he has, like Defoe, practical ends. He is an artist born, but also a born preacher, though it is fair to say, that he does not make himself a missionary, and his ministrations are confined to his own people who have need of his advice.³⁹

The merits of his prose were touched upon, together with his technical excellence, his powers of observation, his simple but rare artistry. His verse showed certain weaknesses but was "vigorous and sincere."

We do not look to him to rival the work of thinkers like Mr. Meredith, to walk with dreamers like Mr. Yeats or A.E. . . . Mr. Kipling's work may safely be left to speak for itself. . . . He has deserved well of England and well of the Empire. He has never hesitated to speak plainly to his countrymen He has been faithful to Art also.

Perhaps no English man of letters since Byron has seen his ideas and his manner of conveying them so widely welcomed among the reading public He commands the attention of the public because he can be easily understood, because his manner is that which his age admires and recognizes and because he has something new to say which he must say plainly and does say well.⁴⁰

³⁹F. York Powell, "Rudyard Kipling," The English Illustrated Magazine, Dec. 1903, p. 295.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 296.

But the apologists, no matter how eager or how able, had no effect on the general drift of criticism. A number of writers attributed their censure to a noticeable deterioration in the quality of his work. They professed to admire his earlier stories and poems but could not tolerate the new Kipling. Hubert Bland of the Sunday Chronicle remarked on "the obvious, the lamentable, the almost inexplicable decline of his literary power"⁴¹ after 1899, and saw in the post-war years a "dismal story of decadence." Other critics blamed the corrupting influences of Imperialism. G.K. Chesterton excused Kipling's attachment to militarism on the grounds of his love for discipline, order and efficiency. However, he considered the "cosmopolitanism" of the Imperialist a dangerous influence. "He admires England but does not love her."⁴² Arthur Quiller Couch found him at his worst in jingoistic verse that glorified the Empire.

Mr. Kipling in his greater moments cannot help but see that he, with every inspired singer, is by right the prophet of a law and order compared with which all the majestic law and order of the British Empire are but rags and trumpery.⁴³

An anonymous appeal to Kipling to return to his former style of writing and a hint that he should avoid Imperial entanglements came presumably from Sir Henry Newbolt, who had

⁴¹Hubert Bland, Essays by Hubert, p. 46.

⁴²G.K. Chesterton, Heretics (London: John Lane, 1905), p. 46.

⁴³Arthur Quiller Couch, From a Cornish Window (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith, 1906), p. 272.

been a faithful admirer and imitator. The Monthly Review, of which he was editor, in February, 1903 published as an editorial a mildly satiric "Essay of Criticism" written in heroic couplets describing the consequences when Imperialism had taken to war and to verse. Apollo had deserted Olympus,

And in the forum now his art employs
And what he lacks in knowledge gives in noise.⁴⁴

Kipling had not distinguished himself on that occasion nor afterwards. "The Indian Drummer has but raised a boom." A phrase borrowed from "The Islanders" appeared in one couplet with ironic implication.

The lordliest life (since Buller made such hay)
Is killing men two thousand yards away.⁴⁵

Kipling had intended "the lordliest life" to refer to the ordinary life of a civilian⁴⁶ but the expression was consistently interpreted to mean life in the army and quoted as proof that he was guilty of jingoism.

But England smiled and lightly pardoned him
For was he not her Mowgli and her Kim.⁴⁷

The parodist concluded by apostrophizing the erring poet -

O Rudyard, Rudyard, in our hours of ease
(Before the War) you were not hard to please.⁴⁸

⁴⁴The Monthly Review, Feb. 1903, p. 2.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁶Something of Myself, p. 22.

⁴⁷The Monthly Review, Feb. 1903, p. 3.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 4.

and urged him to forsake his present evil ways and return to his true calling.

To your Own People you the law could preach,
And even now and then without offence
To Lesser Breeds expose their lack of sense.⁴⁹

Before turning to the literary journals under special consideration, it may be of some interest to examine the cautious views of Edmund Gosse in his article on "English Literature" written for the Tenth Edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica in 1902. Here Kipling figured conspicuously among contemporary men of letters but no conclusive assessment of his work was given. He was the only new poet mentioned by name and was described as "the fountain and the origin" of the "Imperialist or Nationalist school of poetry."⁵⁰ Although his talent had been much "discussed and disputed, . . . the most adverse criticism could not dream of denying his influence as a force in recent English literature."

This kind of poetry, about which it is not unfair to say that - for better or for worse - it abandoned the slopes of Parnassus for the hustings and the music-hall has attracted to its practice several writers of talent and a host that have no talent at all.⁵¹

In prose fiction, according to Gosse, much was being written that seemed quite unrelated to current history except

⁴⁹The Monthly Review, Feb. 1903, p. 4.

⁵⁰Encyclopaedia Britannica, 10th ed., IV, 256.

⁵¹Ibid.

for "the literature of colonial imperialism, inspired by the extension of the British Empire."⁵²

Here, at any rate, we have a movement which bears a definite relation to the history of the time. In the forefront of this moving army stands the figure of Mr. Rudyard Kipling, whose literary appearance in England, in 1890, was so novel, so vigorous, so overwhelming in its sense of individuality and young life, as to raise him at once to a position in the public gaze brilliant enough almost to discountenance criticism.⁵³

With his early books, his Indian studies, "so dazzling in their novelty," that "perverse romance," The Light that Failed, and the "brilliant success," the Barrack-Room Ballads, he won wide acclaim.

The youthful Anglo-Indian swept everything before him; no such world-wide notoriety had, perhaps, ever been obtained by an author so rapidly or so early in life.⁵⁴

Since then, however, his position had come to be less prominent and critical misgivings were apparent.

Mr. Kipling's work, from Many Inventions of 1893 and The Jungle Book of 1894, down to Kim of 1901, has been poured forth with great profusion, but has caused less critical amazement. It has naturally fallen into perspective, and taken its place in the general scheme. The picturesqueness of a new landscape, the persuasiveness of a new manner, have lost their first bewildering glitter, and criticism has not failed to note that these qualities are sometimes achieved at the cost of literary tone and moral distinction.⁵⁵

⁵²Gosse, p. 258.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

Nevertheless among the new-comers to the literary scene,⁵⁶ Kipling filled "incomparably the most conspicuous place," and "his influence upon the taste and thought of the mass of his countrymen" was "unparalleled among that of active men of letters at the opening of the 20th century."⁵⁷ Gosse said nothing about the recent unpopular verse, nor did he associate the fortunes of war with the change in the critical climate.

An article which appeared in the Bookman in January, 1903 clearly expressed the "mood of surmise" - the disenchantment and the loss of confidence felt by many reviewers and their determination to put Kipling in his place. In "Mr. Kipling: Where does He Stand?" Wilfred Whitten questioned "the validity of his claims to distinction":

What is the true nature of his achievement? . . . One must not judge of Mr. Kipling's literary value by the noise and racket of his progress . . . ⁵⁸

His essential lack was said to be his inability to portray individual character; he could only describe types. Thus he appealed to his readers only in a collective sense.

His tales have held us spell-bound; his songs have possessed us; and yet it would seem his message has always

⁵⁶Other contemporary novelists whom Gosse mentioned briefly were Meredith, Hardy, Stevenson, Shorthouse, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Besant and Payn. The rising generation was ignored.

⁵⁷Gosse, p. 258.

⁵⁸The Bookman, Jan. 1903, p. 141.

been to the street rather than to the house, to the rate-payer rather than to the man.⁵⁹

In some respects he resembled Byron; but "Kipling captured us in the mass," not singly, whereas Byron "touched men as men." There was another "fatal lack" in Kipling; his work failed to "permanently haunt and bless." Whitten admitted that he had great powers of observation and an amazing ability to assimilate facts.

But . . . literature does not live by facts alone, however new and strange and picturesquely woven. . . . Mr. Kipling's greatest possession must not be confused with true literary power over things seen If true literature is something more than masterful diction and plenteous vision . . . then it may be suggested that Mr. Kipling's writings are distinguished from all other of our time in giving so much to the reader and so little to the man.⁶⁰

Not even as an Imperialist did he satisfy those who hoped for the highest idealism.

Mr. Kipling's services to the Empire . . . have been very great Great things have been done but not the greatest or the finest His patriotism . . . in moral depth . . . will not compare with the formative patriotism that breathes through the writings of Mr. Meredith.⁶¹

Whitten's essay was appropriately illustrated with a reproduction of the famous Punch cartoon of the "Ruddikipple", a small, spotted, frog-like creature. There was a sardonic

⁵⁹Whitten, The Bookman, Jan. 1903, p. 141.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 142.

⁶¹Ibid.

caption:

This little animal is very strong and vigourous and knows everything. If anybody tries to beat it, it brings out a fresh tail and then nobody can't touch that either. It stirs everybody up so it would make a pew-opener want to die for his country.⁶²

The changing attitude toward Kipling was clearly reflected in the periodicals, fewer articles being devoted to serious analysis of his work and relatively little space given to reviews. He was more likely to be discussed and compared with others in general essays on poetry and fiction. Whether the attention he received was respectful or insulting, there was less of it as time went on - far less in 1905 than in 1900, when moral indignation was at its height. Not infrequently he was ignored altogether. From the end of the century, the Fortnightly Review made only brief references to his writings or his politics; after 1901 Blackwood's seemed to have lost interest in his excellence; the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly began to consider him unworthy of their notice. And although the Contemporary had introduced regular reviews, it did not often evaluate fiction and seldom remarked on a new book by Kipling. The Athenaeum, Saturday Review and the Bookman, although they differed on points of criticism, showed signs of tiring of his presence, tended to snub his recent productions, recanted previous good opinions and were disposed to relegate him, as being out of favour and out of fashion, to

⁶²Whitten, The Bookman, Jan. 1903, p. 142.

the background of the literary scene.

Despite the fact that the war-time verse was not formally reviewed until the greater part of it had been collected with later poems in The Five Nations in 1903, some occasional pieces met with strong disapproval when they first appeared. "The Absent Minded Beggar" written to publicize a fund-raising scheme promoted by the Daily Mail had given offense to the fastidious minded. From January to April, 1900 the Saturday Review printed in its correspondence section a series of indignant letters protesting against that "miserable production." These undoubtedly were in sympathy with editorial views, since only two letters written in Kipling's defence were published. Many of the charges were merely variations on familiar themes. One correspondent accused the author and the publisher of the song of "having an eye to the commercial side of the matter even in the din of war," and entered a protest against "Kipling's continued degradation of the soldiers of the Queen." He was a "vulgar Rhymester" of "low intellectual standards."

Can we not devise something more elevating, more sane, more inspiring, more true? Lying on the parched veldt of the African soil they look up confidently to a merciful Creator, before whom they have done their duty, and their last sob is consecrated to mother, or sister, or wife. Surely such men are worthy of a better poet.⁶³

⁶³The Saturday Review, Jan. 20, 1900, p. 79.

Another letter-writer complained: "Mr. Kipling . . . has done evil in debasing the tone of Imperial feeling, and in presenting an utterly false picture of the British army."⁶⁴ Several inveighed against the supposed exploitation of the private soldier by the Daily Mail.

It is little less than a scandal and an outrage that the soldiers of the Queen should be exploited and made ridiculous for the glorification of a prancing poetaster and the pushing publisher of a halfpenny dreadful.⁶⁵

"A Soldier" professed himself gratified by "protests in your journal." An "Anglo-Indian Civilian" backed this "righteously indignant protest." The first complainant wrote again to announce that "Kiplingism" was "poison, unChristian, indecent and immoral." He made reference to other champions of the good cause.

Let me say that it is encouraging and comforting to perceive day after day spring up "heroes" in this strife against libertinism and recklessness, the Clement Scoles, the Robert Buchanans, the Editors of Reviews like yours and many others, the very Bayards of literature and art without fear and without reproach. May you aid them in the strife with this hydraheaded monster.⁶⁶

Of the two correspondents who attempted to exonerate Kipling, the first praised him "for bringing home the greatness of our inheritance" and reminded the public that all

⁶⁴The Saturday Review, Jan. 27, 1900, p. 106.

⁶⁵Ibid., Feb. 3, 1900, p. 139.

⁶⁶Ibid., April 7, 1900, p. 427.

proceeds of the song went to the "A.M.B." fund.⁶⁷ The other had been irked by "sentimental unveracities" in one of the original letters and suggested that the writer study "the fighting man in history."⁶⁸

In July, 1900, the Quarterly, which three years before had bestowed its formal blessing on Kipling, declared him "the poet of the Imperial idea, of the sense of Imperial responsibilities, and of the romance of Imperial expansion,"⁶⁹ but intimated, that his poetic genius had "many limitations" and that he failed to give adequate expression to "the deeper effects of Imperialism." This last phrase recalled the stir created by "The Absent-Minded Beggar" and similar light verse. Again in October, 1900, an article entitled "English Patriotic Poetry," which dealt with Kipling's ballads and the work of other poets whose theme was love of country, noted the power of his diction and rhythm. "Never were words so emphatic strung together in so emphatic a metre."⁷⁰ The political efficacy of such poems could not be disputed.

No more bitter punishment for Little Englanders, if any survive, could be devised than to set them to paraphrase and annotate Mr. Kipling's ballad of "The English Flag."⁷¹

⁶⁷The Saturday Review, Feb. 10, 1900, p. 173.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, April 7, 1900, p. 428.

⁶⁹"The Conditions of Great Poetry," The Quarterly, July, 1900, p. 170.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, Oct., 1900, p. 527.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, p. 528.

Much of what he wrote was, of course, "glorified vulgarity,"⁷² and had proved extremely popular.

The eleemosynary success that has attended Mr. Kipling's song, "The Absent-Minded Beggar," and Sir Arthur Sullivan's setting, proves that these artists have more exactly gauged (than did Tennyson) the mind of the lower middle class.⁷³

The next year, on July 29, 1901, the Times published "The Lesson," which summed up in an undignified jingle what the nation had learned as a result of the war. Promptly on August 3, in "Mr. Kipling's Descent," the Saturday Review exclaimed against the abominable effrontery of the poet.

Verse so bad and treatment of a subject of such high moment so coarse, in combination, are enough to make the gorge rise even of those who possess by no means a very delicate stomach.⁷⁴

He was capable of something better. Although his short stories were not as well written as Mr. Bret Harte's they were still "uncommonly good." His "Recessional" was "fine." But these verses were "contemptible as literature." "What is serious is the detestable vulgarization . . . by Mr. Kipling of a subject of great concern to the nation."⁷⁵ An inevitable "lowering effect" was to be feared, the lines having been produced by a writer with the reputation of being an Imperial spokesman.

⁷²"The Conditions of Great Poetry," The Quarterly, Oct. 1900, p. 534.

⁷³Ibid., p. 535.

⁷⁴The Saturday Review, Aug. 3, 1901, p. 135.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 136.

Mr. Kipling has something of a world-wide vogue - ephemeral it certainly is but still world-wide - and we believe that there is a general idea, not by any means confined to this land, that he utters the voice of Empire in these matters of Imperial concern Mr. Kipling's verses go forth as the Voice of the nation Foreign nations cannot fail to notice an exhibition such as this. To them it is not Mr. Kipling speaking but England; and they may notice . . . that even in his humiliating confessions of failure and muddle, John Bull must swell a little as he dwells on the fact that Heaven has accorded to his favoured race a more complete and valuable lesson than any other country has had the advantage of.⁷⁶

But the Saturday Review did not believe him to be an "irremediably lost mind" and felt that he might yet be capable of redeeming himself if he were warned in time.

It was not until July, 1902, that the Edinburgh Review reported on Kipling's recent verse. A substantial article on "War and Poetry" outlined the history of poems inspired by war and considered the literary aftermath of South Africa. (The final Boer surrender had taken place in June.) This poetic output had been disappointing - Kipling's efforts among the rest.⁷⁷

Mr. Kipling's verses upon the departure for Table Bay of the fifty thousand men, who were so easily and rapidly to conquer the Dutch Republics had some go and ring but were ephemeral.⁷⁸

⁷⁶The Saturday Review, August 3, 1901, p. 135.

⁷⁷The unlucky Poet Laureate, Alfred Austin, had written "exhortations hardly exhilarating enough to animate the gentlest charge."

⁷⁸The Edinburgh Review, July 1902, p. 42.

Kipling, in being allotted a place among poets who wrote of scenes of battle, must be recognized as an original genius who had popularized his art.

Mr. Kipling suddenly brought down poetry from the high cliffs upon which it had been kept by the Tennyson school to the familiar levels of the street, and barracks, and ship-decks; he won the heart of an immense public and he extended the influence of poetry. He did in poetry that which Macaulay did in history, making his themes seem like plain and visible life. Mr. Kipling has not much used his lyre (he would probably prefer to call it his banjo) to celebrate specific deeds of old or battles of today. He has translated into verse with extraordinary fidelity and skill the view taken of life by the unlettered Englishman of the roving disposition . . . a rough idealist in his way, . . . the new Ulysses.⁷⁹

He was an innovator, in that he saw war not as Byron saw it in "The Eve of Waterloo" but in all its ugliness and horror.

Mr. Kipling is strong as a war realist . . . He is not a mere glorifier. He has ventured to describe . . . a shameful rout of British soldiers He tears aside the veil of poetic weaving by which the beauties and glories of war are made to appear, the defects or ugliness hidden. This is something new.⁸⁰

This particular variety of realism was new but it also had something reprehensible about it.

Mr. Kipling's is not the frank, childish pleasure in blood and carnage of old Norse, or Welsh, or Afghan bards reciting before barbarous audiences. He is the modern realistic artist consciously describing fights in which he has not taken part for the amusement of a public which has also not taken part, but which likes to have its sensations excited in a novel manner. The grateful public, one may add, rewards its favoured bard not like the barbarous chief, with cups or chains of gold,

⁷⁹The Edinburgh Review, July 1902, p. 48.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 49.

but by the purchase of thousands of copies of cheaply printed volumes.⁸¹

The modern purveyor of the vicarious pleasures of violence was amply rewarded. But in thus removing the ideal from poetry he dragged it down to a very low level of morality.

It may be that poetry . . . passes . . . through three stages, those of uncivilization, civilization and decivilization - and that the last resembles the first with an immense moral difference. If Mr. Kipling's lower treatment, for he had a much higher one at his command, anticipates or founds the war-poetry of the future, some will look back with regret to the style of "Hohenlinden" and "The Eve of Waterloo."⁸²

Finally, the "sad misfortune of war was a theme unworthy of the artist whose "true and eternal business is to express, not the darkness of the world, but the manifestations of love and wisdom." Kipling with all his originality and realism was a disappointment to the Edinburgh Review.

Kipling's first book of the 20th century was Kim, a picaresque novel of which he himself approved. "My Daemon," he wrote in his memoirs, "was with me in the Jungle Books, =Kim and both Puck books."⁸³ The greater number of the critics, however, were with him only in their estimation of the Jungle Books. When, preceded by the usual publisher's fanfare, Kim

⁸¹The Edinburgh Review, July 1902, p. 50.

⁸²Ibid., p. 51.

⁸³Something of Myself, p. 210. "And so much for Kim which has stood up for thirty-five years. There was a good deal of beauty in it, and not a little wisdom." p. 142.

reached the reviewers early in October, 1901, they were still uneasily mindful of Stalky and Co. and aware of the jarring echoes of "The Absent-Minded Beggar" and other war-time verse. Their response was not, on the whole, encouraging; the articles were sketchy and brief. Even Blackwood's which received the book with thorough-going approval, reminded its public of the author's recent lapses of taste. "Having, we confess, shied at Stalky and Co., we fell with a double portion of alacrity upon 'a new Kipling'."⁸⁴ The Quarterly austere deprecated the "not very lucid or brilliant poems in the 'Times',"⁸⁵ and although considering Kim an improvement, expressed impatience and dissatisfaction with the author: "One is inclined to wish that Mr. Kipling . . . would cease to play what a critic lately called his role of Inspector-General of the British Empire and would devote all the work of his remaining days to India." The Athenaeum, expressing a gratified surprise, took note of the quality of "cunning enchantment" displayed by Kipling, "which one had scarce expected of him." The Bookman took up more than half of a short, casual review with an analysis of the Small Boy Hero in recent fiction, citing Stevenson and other writers who had introduced that implausible character. The Contemporary Review was not in the least

⁸⁴Blackwoods, Dec. 1901, p. 793.

⁸⁵"The Romance of India," The Quarterly Review, July 1902, p. 53.

impressed with Kim: "The tale . . . is not of absorbing interest, . . . but it is beyond comparison better than 'Stalky and Co.'"⁸⁶ The Saturday Review had some harsh things to say and wasted no space in doing so, expressing succinct disapproval in less than a third of a column in a two-column page and lumping Kim with equally unacceptable new works by Gilbert Parker and Max Pemberton, The Right of Way and The Giant's Gate.

The Quarterly's critic concluded that Kim was far from being a noteworthy achievement: "The story is nothing to speak of, and comes to an end, it seems, because it is long enough."⁸⁷ Its outstanding features were "lively pieces of decription" and the way in which it created "the atmosphere of India." Although "not much of a story," it had some merits, for one can recognize "an allegory of all life in the joint travels of Kim and the lama."⁸⁸

Blackwood's, on the other hand, acknowledged Kipling's preeminence as a writer of fiction.

In discussing a few of the novels of the last six months or so, it is right and proper, on many accounts which it were superfluous to specify, that due precedence should be awarded to Mr. Kipling.⁸⁹

⁸⁶The Contemporary Review, Nov. 1901, p. 754.

⁸⁷The Quarterly Review, loc. cit.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 55.

⁸⁹Blackwood's Magazine, Dec. 1901, p. 793.

The reader was assured that he would not be disappointed in Kim. "Mr. Kipling has decidedly "acquired merit by this his latest essay. There is a fascination, almost magic in every page of the delightful volume."⁹⁰ After giving a detailed outline of the story, the reviewer commended "a portrait gallery of unusual extent and interest" and in particular the character study of Kim, "from first to last a masterly conception" and as a picture of adolescence "incomparably fresh and true."⁹¹ Only the two English chaplains, shown to be obtuse in their dealings with Kim and the lama, were not considered to be well drawn or believable.

Obviously the value of the novel lay in its imperial message.

Its secret lies in the wonderful panorama it unrolls before us of the life of the great Peninsula over whose government England has now presided for more than a century.⁹²

Zealously, Blackwood's emphasized the political import of the work.

We may not leave Mr. Kipling's book without brief reference to the sense of exhilaration with which it cannot but be read by all Britons who are lovers of their country. The episode of the Russian and the French explorer whose discomfiture is so dexterously engineered by Hurree, is to us one of the most pleasing, as it is certainly one of the most entertaining in the book. To the despicable minority of our country - men who invariably lavish their sympathy and

⁹⁰Blackwood's Magazine, Dec. 1901, p. 793.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 794.

⁹²Ibid., p. 795.

support upon the king's enemies, the whole tone of the work will be as gall and wormwood. Mr. Kipling lifts the veil and reveals a wheel or two at work night and day for the preservation of our Indian Empire.⁹³

The Fortnightly Review failed to mention Kim but in August, 1902, alluded briefly to the Indian tales in "Some Phases in Fiction." The critic, Walter Sichel, stated that the author possessed "no finer sense of the external and spiritual," a judgment apparently intended to indicate a lack of true perception and intellectual capacity.

Mr. Kipling had recourse to the undisciplined, unmechanical East, to the clash of war and the tragi-comedies of the camp for his vivid presentments - presentments too often pitched in the modern twang of the banjo; presentments so jerky and rapid that the breath is often taken away - vocal also with the patter of the street urchin, for poet as he undoubtably is, he remains the "Gavroche" of fiction.⁹⁴

This passage conveyed several of the customary objections - that Kipling's style was abrupt, highly coloured and over-emphatic and that he himself was innately vulgar and immature, a street urchin among writers.

The Contemporary Review pointed out that the critics were by no means in agreement in their evaluation of Kim.

There has been an agreeable diversity of opinion among the reviewers concerning Mr. Rudyard Kipling's new story 'Kim,' . . . One tells us it is unredeemed trash, another that it is nothing less than a masterpiece. Neither statement is true.

⁹³Blackwood's Magazine, Dec. 1901, p. 793.

⁹⁴Fortnightly Review, Aug. 1902, p. 290.

Without Mr. Kipling's name on the title page the book would attract little attention; but such as might by chance take it up would find it in parts wonderfully vivid and picturesque, if in others grievously heavy and dull.⁹⁵

Only the passages of description redeemed the book, which was nothing more than "a series of short sketches."

Mr. Kipling observes with uncommon sharpness and describes with abounding vigour, but his is not the imagination that can seize and mould large and complicated issues, whether of circumstance or of character.⁹⁶

Kim contained "nothing half so good as 'The Drums of the Fore and Aft' or 'Krishna Mulvaney'," two of the early tales of the Indian army.

The book in some respects exceeded the expectations of the Athenaeum. There was a new sensitivity in the writing.

To us it seems to contain evidence of a higher quality of observation and divination, of something more of spiritual beauty and aspiration underlying phenomena than we had reckoned on.⁹⁷

The principal characters were given due praise, the "pilgrim lama" being outstanding. Kim, although a "complete boy," was inclined to prove too clever. Certain scenes showed a "rather brutal energy," in particular the fight with the spies. But, unfortunately the writing had deteriorated.

The style is, we are sorry to find, not good. It is not necessary, or indeed desirable, to torture the English language in order to be vivid.⁹⁸

⁹⁵The Contemporary Review, Nov. 1901, p. 754.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷The Athenaeum, Oct. 26, 1901, p. 552.

⁹⁸Ibid.

No examples of the supposed barbarisms were quoted in the article.

The Saturday Review's brief notice contained nothing that could be called complimentary, and much that might have been intended as a calculated insult. Once again the distinctive, mocking style was suggestive of Max Beerbohm.

The reading of a long story by Mr. Kipling inspired the reflection that his proper sphere is the short story, just as the reading of his short stories often provokes a desire that he would refrain from writing altogether.⁹⁹

The novel, the anonymous reviewer went on maliciously, was "not altogether without merits, for the author has evidently tried very hard to feel in sympathy with the spirit of the Orient. . . . But the general effect is one of intense weariness." As a result of cursory reading or deliberate misreading, the reviewer gave a false picture of Kim, who was accused of "not being so savoury a character as Mr. Kipling evidently believes."¹⁰⁰

Kimball O'Hara picks up a living as a pander with all the precocity of a young Oriental and . . . is easily turned into one of the shrewdish spies of the Indian Government.

The tone of the review was spiteful; the purpose, derisory and its hasty concluding sentences betrayed the same ill-will.

Fear takes possession of us lest the author should be so ill-advised as to publish a sequel. The illustrations are original but scarcely convincing, and we must protest against

⁹⁹The Saturday Review, Oct. 12, 1901, p. 466.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

the author's irritating habit of prefacing each chapter with a piece of his own doggerel, nearly always pointless and perplexing.¹⁰¹

This last piece of undisguised animosity could scarcely qualify as literary criticism and was not much different, except in style, from similar attacks of the '90's.

Y.Y. of the Bookman did not entertain a very high opinion of Kim. In a perfunctory review, he protested against the juvenile hero "the small boy who acts by intuition precisely like a big, bold, crafty, experienced man." He deplored the all too frequent appearances of this "incredible young imposter" in current fiction and warned that "this freak" would soon be "exaggerated to its death."¹⁰² Nevertheless he conceded that novels in which the central character was a boy did serve to counteract an undesirable trend in contemporary writing.

The strongest charm of these books is that they simplify humanity by eliminating one of its complications - a sexual passion. . . . It is because such books have done and are doing much to foster the healthiest and manliest instincts and to spoil the flavour of prurient novels and the problem-plays, that we choose deliberately to be blind to the improbability of 'Kim', nay even to its incidental coarseness.¹⁰³

Y.Y.'s careless reading of the story resulted in some curious conclusions and misapprehensions concerning the precocious

¹⁰¹The Saturday Review, Oct. 12, 1901, p. 467.

¹⁰²The Bookman, Nov. 1901, p. 18.

¹⁰³Ibid.

urchin (Kim was thirteen, not eleven, when he first met the lama). The whole book, Y.Y. decided, had a good many faults - an incredible hero, an "absurd revision of 'Jew Fagin,'" in Mr. Lurgan, and secret service marvels scarcely to be believed by the sensible reader. But there was strength shown in the delineation of the native characters, who were "alive, distinctive and . . . racy." Above all there was "the delightful old lama." "But what held the book together seemed to be the skilful use of local colour" and the "sympathetic flashes that are Mr. Kipling's peculiar glory," effects which gave the novel its principal claim to distinction.

Its charm lies in its travel pictures, peopled with a life so strange to our eyes, yet as he paints it, so near to our hearts. And its glory in those magic touchès, those lightning flashes which for an instant light up some secret hidingplace of the Common World-Soul, and show the treasure within to be pure, bright gold.¹⁰⁴

This final flourish of hermetic allusion was quite inconsistent with the gist of the review, which did not recommend Kim to the reader.

Kipling had yet another book ready in the autumn of 1902, a collection of tales for young children. The Just So Stories were well received in modest reviews by the Athenaeum and the Bookman and dismissed in eight lines by the Saturday Review.

¹⁰⁴The Bookman, Nov. 1901, p. 19.

The Athenaeum intimated that Kipling met with a greater degree of success in writing for children than in interfering in political matters.

He understands young folks as few writers do, and better than other mysteries which he has attempted to tackle with expert haste.¹⁰⁵

The new work should regain for him "the favour which he has lost in some quarters by indifferent verse." It was an "outstanding book."

The Saturday Review objected to the "slangy, careless writing," considered the stories "vague and unsatisfactory," except for "The Cat that Walked by Himself" and "The Butterfly that Stamped."¹⁰⁶

G.K. Chesterton reviewed the Just So Stories for the Bookman.

Mr. Rudyard Kipling is a most extraordinary and bewildering genius. Some of us have recently had reason to protest against certain phases of his later development, and we protested because they were pert and cockney and cruel and full of that precocious old age which is the worst thing in this difficult cosmos, a thing which combines the brutality of youth with the disillusionment of antiquity, which is old age without its charity and youth without its hope.¹⁰⁷

After voicing this rather obscure complaint, which was probably levelled at Stalky and Co., he paid a generous

¹⁰⁵The Athenaeum, Oct. 4, 1902, p. 447.

¹⁰⁶The Saturday Review, Dec. 6, 1902, p. viii.

¹⁰⁷"Mr. Kipling's Just So Stories," The Bookman, Nov. 1902, p. 57.

tribute to the latest work, "this superb thing." The stories were "new legends" and read "like fairy-tales told to men in the morning of the world."¹⁰⁸

When early in 1903 a dramatized version of The Light that Failed was produced in London, "Max" of the Saturday Review took the opportunity to fleer at the author.

"Kipling's Entire" was a forced and unpleasant little essay, which had no other purpose than to advertise Beerbohm's obsessive dislike of Rudyard Kipling. The author's name, he asserted, was "obviously a pseudonym for a woman," for the typical Kipling heroes - among them Dick Heldar, "a brute and a bounder" - were "so insistent on their manliness that their creator must be feminine."¹⁰⁹ The pettiness of Beerbohm's attack was unredeemed by the usual witty insults. Influenced more by envy and prejudice than by a concern for literary standards, "Max" railed on for many years in cartoon and in print against the intolerable outsider, who had for so long held the foremost place in popular favour.

By October the critics were hard at work on The Five Nations, a collection of uneven verse, some of which had already been roughly handled. They rejected it almost unanimously, such of the new pieces as had merit having

¹⁰⁸Chesterton, p. 57. It was this same copy of the Bookman that contained Whitten's sceptical essay, "Mr. Kipling: Where Does He Stand?"

¹⁰⁹The Saturday Review, Feb. 14, 1903, p. 199.

suffered from contamination with those previously published.

The Fortnightly Review did not review The Five Nations but printed an essay by G.K. Chesterton on "The Political Poetry of Mr. William Watson," in which Kipling was cited as a foil for Watson, a poet known for his pro-Boer sympathies. Chesterton referred to the former's "foreignness," a notion which he seemed to cherish and which he developed further in Heretics. Kipling was un-English; his methods were French. He resembled Zola and Maupassant and the French decadents who wrote poetry in the argot of the slums. His very Orientalism must be called French. Moreover his stories were unquestionably "sultry." His was "an alien landscape," whereas that of Mr. Watson was English - not popular perhaps, but "Miltonic and Wordsworthian."¹¹⁰ The French influence was what made Kipling's "splendid realism and picturesqueness" seem especially original.

The Contemporary Review, in summing up The Five Nations, compared Kipling and William Watson, to the former's disadvantage. It was Kipling's work that had deteriorated, not that of his rival.

We find no falling-off in those qualities that have given Mr. Watson so high a position among living writers of English verse.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰The Fortnightly Review, Nov. 1903, p. 765.

¹¹¹The Contemporary Review, Nov. 1903, p. 758.

Kipling, of course, would always find an audience among the indiscriminating public.

Those who like this sort of book will find this the sort of book they like. . . . Popular acclaim has enthroned Mr. Kipling as the Poet of Empire, our one great national singer. But is he a Poet? Is he not rather an anti-poet visited at rare moments by inexplicable poetic inspirations.¹¹²

The popular attitude toward his writing was insufferable,

It has come to this - you must be touched to ecstasy by Mr. Kipling's muse, or you are a Little Englander, a pro-Boer, an anti-Imperialist. . . . Much as I admire certain phases of Mr. Kipling's genius, the ideals of manhood and nationhood that find utterance in his verse are as repugnant to me as their expression is exacerbating.¹¹³

Much of his output was offensive, his verse on the South African War was execrable; "The Lesson," "vulgar, incredible doggerel."¹¹⁴ He did not reflect honour on his countrymen.

When a nation chooses an anti-poet as the interpreter and, if he be strong enough, as the moulder of its highest aspirations, it must surely be a matter of grave concern to every thinking member of the community.¹¹⁵

The Athenaeum found fault with the tiresome didacticism of the poems.

We hate poetry, said a great poet, that has a palpable design upon us. The most familiar part of this volume is open

¹¹²The Contemporary Review, Nov. 1903, p. 758.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 759.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

to such aversion; we have Mr. Kipling's lessons concerning kinship, geography, war, and politics so dinned into our ears by his and other forcible means that they now seem stale innovations which have become truisms, a belated second helping to a not always palatable dish.¹¹⁶

Admittedly Kipling had done "much for the idea of imperialism, perhaps more than any other living man," and "Recessional" and two or three other patriotic poems of recent date were admirable, but "The Five Nations" included some very bad verse, "sad doggerel" which was "unworthy of him and grossly unworthy of the British people." The worst of it was "the intellectual vulgarity of 'The Lesson!'" There were, however, a few signs of better poetry and a more spiritual approach.

The Saturday Review condemned the book outright, and expressed the belief that Kipling's hack-writing career had destroyed his talent for poetry.

Unhappily, whatever of the poet there was in Mr. Kipling was gnarled and twisted from its right growth . . . by his deliberate choice of the qualities of journalism above the qualities of literature.¹¹⁷

"The Sea and the Hills" was "ruined by the emphasis on language," by "inexplicable vulgarisms" and "bathos of thought." As the "Imperial pulpiteer" he had been guilty of perpetrating "The Lesson" and "The Islanders." Journalism had encouraged his bad taste and coarseness.

¹¹⁶The Athenaeum, Oct. 10, 1903, p. 474.

¹¹⁷"Mr. Kipling, Journalist," The Saturday Review, Oct. 31, 1903, p. 548.

He has fallen into a vulgarity of conceit which, as a lie in the soul, intentionally kills the cleaner inspiration. Mr. Kipling may be many things; he is not a poet.¹¹⁸

The November Bookman included The Five Nations among the "books most in demand during the month" and, at the same time, gave it a very disparaging review. In "To Poets - Two Patriotisms," Y.Y. contrasted Kipling with William Watson.

In gleaning into a little volume his patriotic effusions of the last few years, Mr. Watson, not a little to his advantage, has just been forestalled by Mr. Kipling. Even in justice to the latter, be sure to read them in their due order, otherwise you may be engulfed in a horrible doubt whether any of Mr. Kipling's volume, even the "Recessional" is true poetry at all.¹¹⁹

Watson, said the reviewer, was a true poet and although displaying "a narrowness of practical view," and "whimsical prepossessions," he invariably gave proof of a "conscientious refinement of craftsmanship." Kipling, on the other hand, was "the fearless and exuberant genius," who could "do a few things superlatively, most things cleverly, and always in a way of his own."¹²⁰

From the very first we recognized in Mr. Kipling something greater than a popular tale writer, and still believe that he will survive as the most original, most wonderful literary phenomenon of the latest Victorian generation.¹²¹

¹¹⁸The Saturday Review, Oct. 31, 1903, p. 549.

¹¹⁹The Bookman, Nov. 1903, p. 90.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

But he had been demoralized by his popular and commercial success: "To amuse himself and his public, and to make money, he has lately produced much inferior work."¹²²

At first, Y.Y. continued, he had seemed to possess many poetic gifts - imagination, forceful diction, descriptive powers, a special talent for rhythm and rhyme. He had been, as a rule, "rough and coarse" and yet had shown occasional "pathos and literary refinement."¹²³ In spite of this early promise The Seven Seas had offered nothing remarkable except for a few "jingling songs," and now The Five Nations had put an end to any hope of his becoming a serious poet. Why had he failed as a poet? Because of "influences fatal to the development of poetic gifts." He did not lead a poet's life of contemplation but was always "gadding about." There was much that was ugly in his verse - it was possible that he did not care for beauty.

The greater part of the volume gave the readers nothing new and much that had already been over-emphasized:

Mr. Kipling preaches (in verse) more unmercifully than ever on Colonialism, National Inefficiency, Soldiers and the rest.¹²⁴

Y.Y. commented on the obscurity in "The Dykes" and in "some pieces which we feel are allegorical," a tendency to "forced and noisy epithets," and examples of bathos in "The Sea and

¹²²The Bookman, Nov. 1903, p. 90.

¹²³Ibid., p. 91.

¹²⁴Ibid.

the Hills."¹²⁵ The trick of repetition and refrain was responsible for the effectiveness of some of his poems. "The over-praised 'Recessional' owes everything to its 'Lest we Forget,'"¹²⁶ for the ideas were obvious, like those in professional hymn-writing. Y.Y. regarded the "Service Songs" of the army as "a vulgar, sentimental bore." "As for the jargon - the bad grammar and studious elision of every aspirate - we are sick of it."¹²⁷

In contrast with The Five Nations Mr. Watson's For England was "true poetry." Its "pellucid simplicity" made it unnecessary to read a line twice. And with this "felicitous lucidity," the poet never lost his dignity and self-respect. Notwithstanding the fact that these poems "were all inspired by the pro-Boer movement," Y.Y. had read his work with "warmest sympathy and cordial gratitude."¹²⁸ Mr. Watson might now and then be mistaken in his views; but "he does not obtrude facts - only great moral principles."

Mr. Kipling forgets, Mr. Watson remembers, that the bard is concerned not with the hard facts of history, but with the moralities and poetries of life.¹²⁹

In effect, the post-war Kipling had been repudiated and termed an anti-poet by a number of responsible critics, some of whom slighted even his once highly extolled "Recessional."

¹²⁵The Bookman, Nov. 1903, p. 91.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 92.

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 94.

¹²⁹Ibid.

A year later he fared badly as a writer of prose. In 1904 when the Contemporary, the Athenaeum, the Saturday Review, and the Bookman gave their opinion on Traffics and Discoveries, their conclusions amounted to an unequivocal rejection of Kipling the short story writer.

The Contemporary Review could not share Kipling's too obvious delight in mechanical contrivances. "They had been spoiled by the introduction of the car and some of the other tales, by the jargon of the mechanic and the engineer.

Mr. Kipling's love of technical terms and exaggerated slang has so grown upon him that there are many passages in these sketches that are almost unintelligible to anyone who has not been brought up in an engine room.¹³⁰

His style and his subject matter were not merely distasteful but dangerous in their brutalizing and decivilizing effect.

As a writer Mr. Kipling seems to have deliberately turned his back on the finer instincts of humanity, to have lost all delicacy of touch and vision, and to have set himself the task of inculcating an ideal of manhood and human life that cannot be too strongly condemned and opposed by those who hope for the ultimate humanizing of the world.¹³¹

He was condemned in this instance with so little reference to the stories that the judgment would seem to have been based on a predetermined policy of critical attrition.

The comments of the Athenaeum were concise, frank and unpropitious.

¹³⁰The Contemporary Review, Nov. 1904, p. 764.

¹³¹Ibid.

All the best stories are well worth reading as psychological studies Not more than two of the stories would qualify as literature.¹³²

"A Sahib's War" and "The Captive" were to be commended, but "Mrs. Bathurst" was "hardly worth including anywhere" and the ghost story, "They," although charming and delicate, must be considered "thin." The review ended abruptly with a quelling dismissal, which was scarcely warranted by the circumstances:

We get too strongly from this book the impression that Mr. Kipling thinks his lightest word should by no means be suffered to fall to the ground.¹³³

It was evident from this rebuff that he was to be taught a lesson.

The critic who wrote "Reform and Mr. Kipling" for the Saturday Review was more generous in his assessment of Traffics and Discoveries than might have been expected. He vouched for the forceful narrative qualities of the latest stories: "We cannot trace, as some have traced, any loss of power in the telling."¹³⁴ The author's idioms were "right" and he had demonstrated his ability to catch "turns of speech and phrase," especially in "The Bonds of Discipline" and "The Captive." On the other hand his style still suffered from mannerisms, technical jargon, and dialect. And his urgent special pleading in the cause of Empire had done him no good as an artist.

¹³²The Athenaeum, Oct. 8, 1904, p. 476.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴The Saturday Review, Oct. 15, 1904, p. 494.

Mr. Kipling has allowed his delighted enjoyment of technical phrase and trans-literated brogue to dominate his natural power. He has also another master, an unfortunate desire to preach army reform and what we may perhaps call "Empirics" through some sort of dramatic form; and between the Charybdis of Empire and the Scylla of his own mannerism, Mr. Kipling, much wandering and wily traveller though he is, finds no way of escape.¹³⁵

But although it was "not a fine book," Traffics and Discoveries had "some admirable bits." The skill in pictorial presentation and such tales as "They" deserved to be applauded. As literature, however, the work was scarcely viable.

Why is it that these flashes of a power which now and again suggest genius - a word we use deliberately - should lead to the production of so little work good enough to live.¹³⁶

The Bookman had, in this connection, something more explicit and revealing to offer in Y.Y.'s "Traffics and Mafficks or the Strange Case of Mr. Kipling." This essay on criticism, fully half of which was introductory, opened with an interesting but somewhat inconsistent fable, written in a parody of a Kipling style.

Once upon a time . . . the cruel World, hounded on by relentless Inquisitors called Critics, presumed to persecute the Children of Genius, evilly entreating them for their lapses and backslidings, and if they repented not, haling them to the dreadful dungeons of Oblivion. . . . When summoned by some Big Bird to behold him soaring and screaming gloriously against the sun, they would hail him for all time as a born Eagle. And so he might have remained - nesting snugly on his laurels; but when he grew too old, or too fat

¹³⁵The Saturday Review, Oct. 15, 1904, p. 494.

¹³⁶Ibid.

and lazy to soar, sometimes he would tire of privacy, and call out, "Come, all the World! and hear me cackle, and behold me waddling majestically to the horsepond" And then the Critics - the impudent critics - would cry out: "You an Eagle! We know better now. At your best you were never more than a very big, very strong-winged Goose! And because you once managed to beguile us, we have a good mind to wring your ugly neck." Of course the people wanted to shy stones at him, but their crafty guides said: "Stop! You are pelting him with roses. Just take no notice. Ignore him - that is what he dreads worst." So in those bad times, the very Biggest Birds were terrorized into unseemly cautions. . . . Once they had been acclaimed as Swans or Eagles, they cunningly suppressed every anserine instinct; . . . and above all they knew how to retire with dignity - and in time.¹³⁷

Now one of the Biggest Birds had ceased to practice a cautious restraint. And the Critics were finding it difficult to take effective action - here Y.Y. shifted his metaphor, but made his intentions quite plain.

The dear old Ages of Faith have returned. Once we have canonized our literary saints, we are their devotees for life; they do what they like with us, feed us on dry husks or garbage, flout us, torture us - even bore us. . . . In our spacious indulgence we judge a writer by his best alone; his worst we condone as legitimate 'pot-boiling.'¹³⁸

In such cases the author's asset was "no longer his genius but his name" which he had proceeded to exploit.

He knows that publishers, editors, critics and public will snatch eagerly at the feeblest drivel signed by him So he makes his hay while the sun shines.¹³⁹

¹³⁷"Traffics and Mafficks," The Bookman, Nov. 1904, p. 76.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 77.

¹³⁹Ibid.

Y.Y. then applied these observations to Kipling and to the present state of his relationship with the critics, who were being forced to spend their time and ingenuity on a paltry object, his most recent work.

Today, every reviewer has to exhaust himself by concocting some columns of conventional civility, cold compliment and veiled depreciation of Mr. Kipling's new book, while far better work from less famous pens can claim but a few lines.¹⁴⁰

Traffics and Discoveries did not deserve to be compared with his earlier prose.

Mr. Kipling's books are sold by size and weight. His last one is of the usual size, priced at six shillings. Well, I should value it at something less than sixpence. On the other hand, many of the sort tales in his earlier volumes would be cheap at a guinea to any reader of taste.¹⁴¹

How, Y.Y. demanded, could he "steel himself to print such a volume as his last?"¹⁴² The best story, "A Sahib's War" was a relic of the Boer War period. The remainder were all unpleasantly "redolent with petrol and machine oil." "Wireless" was not only "pointless" but "needlessly repulsive." Kipling dragged the car, his "hideous toy" into the ghost story "They," which "in more delicate hands" might have been worthy of notice. Many of these tales displayed a "decadent

¹⁴⁰The Bookman, Nov. 1904, p. 77.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Ibid.

tendency to obscurity and mystification," and were marred by abrupt and rambling beginnings. Y.Y. expressed his distrust of the author's so-called "realism" and held the view that his use of jargon and "patter" was simply "bad art."

The effect - on me at least - is at first exasperation, then a creeping sadness, and at last a profound gloom.¹⁴³

The reviewers had called a halt - even though the cry had been heard only within their own ranks and the offending book still defied their concerted efforts by remaining on the best-seller list. Those whose livelihood required them to produce a critique as each new volume appeared had tired of the invariable success of the prolific and persistent Kipling, who had never been one of them and who gave them no respite. - Some, like Le Gallienne had hoped to win approval for their own work and had failed. - Kipling had grown too great and must be humbled. There were other writers and new schools of thought to occupy the journals and to take his place. He had done nothing in recent years to endear himself to the critical establishment and his themes had ceased to afford pleasure. The war had hastened the obsolescence of his subject matter and the policies of the Imperialists. The commentators were weary and resentful of his presence, a fading comet in their skies.

¹⁴³The Bookman, Nov. 1904, p. 77.

To persuade his readers of their error in judgment, the reviewers either dwelt on his imperfections or implied their censure by neglect. There were various approaches to the undertaking - Kipling had never been a poet and a writer of distinction - or, alternatively, he might have become a poet and had once written great prose, but he had been led astray by the politicians, the public and his own love of money and his artistry had deteriorated. The content of his books was of no permanent interest and had become increasingly stale, as well as brutal, over-sentimental, bathetic and un-English. He was obsessed by the grotesque physiology of machines. He preached incessantly a false and pernicious doctrine - or he failed to preach worthily and on the highest plane what he professed. The sentiments he voiced were deliberately popularized, vulgar, coarse and undignified, appealing shamelessly to the lower middle-class and the semi-literate readers. His moral standards were low. His ugly realism led him to depict scenes that were indecent, indelicate and cruel. In style he betrayed himself as a cheap journalist, his sentences being choppy, rapid, careless and over-emphatic, filled with slang and technical jargon. His verse was mere doggerel. His finest gifts of observation and vivid reportage were insufficient to redeem his defects. There had once been a touch of true genius in his tales and in some of his verse but it had degenerated and in his current writing had been altogether lost.

CHAPTER V

The notion of Kipling as a popular entertainer is due to the fact that his works have been popular and that they entertain. However, it is permitted to express popular views of the moment in an unpopular style: it is not approved when a man holds unpopular views and expresses them in something very readable.

T.S. Eliot: "Rudyard Kipling."

Y.Y. of the Bookman sounded the keynote for much of the adverse criticism that followed. Attitudes and opinions, revealed with exceptional candour in "Traffics and Mafficks," were easily recognizable in other articles - the tone of exasperation, the carefully phrased "conventional civility, cold compliment and veiled depreciation." Apart from neglect, disparagement rather than invective was the strategy by which an unacceptable author was to be put down and his monopoly of public attention ended. The campaign proceeded to the evident satisfaction of the critics, without having any noticeable effect on the sale of the books that were slighted or condemned.

Between 1904 and 1914, Kipling made fewer demands on the time and patience of his reviewers, offering them only three new collections of short stories and verse, Puck of Pook's Hill, with its companion piece, Rewards and Fairies, in 1906 and 1910, and in 1909 Actions and Reactions. His remarkable series of annual publications had been broken after 1904. Before that time at least one book had come off the press each

year - except for 1900 - ever since his London debut in 1889. Such critics as had deplored his prolific past noted the lapse in creativity as a proof of failing powers.

The unflattering notices of this period were usually written from one of two readily justifiable positions: either that Kipling's natural gifts had deteriorated or that his fame had been from the beginning a myth originating in specious attractions and fostered through misapprehension and inadvertance. Those who subscribed to the latter school of thought were convinced that he had never been more than a vulgar, mediocre talent masquerading as a genius of the first order. Y.Y. had managed to entertain both notions at once in his fable of the goose.

According to George Moore, Kipling's inflated reputation had been founded on error, the critics having been misled by sheer novelty. They had taken skillful description and use of local colour for great literature.

There was not one critic in London who was not deceived in the eighties, when Mr. Kipling came with his Plain Tales from the Hills. His stories are filled with hookahs and elephants, parakeets and crocodiles; they are as amusing as the zoological gardens with beer ad lib.¹

As a result, his fame was so outrageously exaggerated that "the name of Shakespeare was introduced a propos of Mr. Kipling." Now Moore and others equally perceptive knew better,

¹"Avowals," Pall Mall Magazine, July 1908, p. 375.

for the Anglo-Indian's world was before them, "rough, harsh, coarse-grained." It was clear that he had never been worthy of the adulation he had received.

Then there were those who confessed to having admired his early work but could see only a pitiful state of decline in later productions. In an article published in the New Age Arnold Bennett explained how he had come to renounce Kipling and all his later works, after the publication of Stalky and Co. and Kim.

Nearly a quarter of a century has passed since "Plain Tales from the Hills" delighted first Anglo-Indian, and then English society. There was nothing of permanent value in that book, and in my extremest youth I never imagined otherwise. But "The Story of the Gadsbys" impressed me. So did "Barrack-room Ballads." So did pieces of "Soldiers Three." So did "Life's Handicap" and "Many Inventions." So did "The Jungle Book," despite its wild natural history. And I remember my eagerness for the publication of "The Seven Seas" And I remember the personal anxiety which I felt when Kipling lay very dangerously ill in New York. For a fortnight, then, Kipling's temperature was the most important news of the day. I remember giving a party with a programme of music, in that fortnight, and I began the proceedings by reading aloud the programme, and at the end of the programme instead of "God Save the Queen," I read, "God Save Kipling," and every body cheered. "Stalky and Co." cooled me, and "Kim" chilled me.²

Bennett's reaction would appear to have been motivated, at least in part, by his political views:

²The New Age, Nov. 4, 1909, reprinted in Books and Persons: Being Comments on a Past Epoch, 1908-1911 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1917), pp. 160-161.

. . . Kipling's astounding political manifestation, chiefly in verse, have shocked and angered me. As time has elapsed it has become more and more clear that his output was sharply divided into two parts by his visit to New York, and that the second half is inferior in quantity, in quality, in everything, to the first. It has been too plain now for years that he is against progress, that he is the shrill champion of things that are rightly doomed, that his vogue among the hordes of the respectable was due to political reasons, and that he retains his authority over the said hordes because he is the bard of their prejudices and of their clayey ideals. A democrat of ten times Kipling's gift and power could never have charmed and held the governing classes as Kipling has done . . . ³

At the same time, Bennett acknowledged, Kipling "at his worst" was "an honest and painstaking artist."

When he went on to review Actions and Reactions, however, Bennett mentioned only two stories - "An Habitation Enforced," which he claimed idealized the English land system, and was besides "sentimental . . . unconvincing . . . and wildly untrue to life,"⁴ and "With the Night Mail," which he called "a glittering essay on the sham technical."⁵ Over the whole collection lay "a thin powder of dullness."⁶ He compared these recent tales with "On Greenhow Hill," finding the earlier work "still well done," and quoted an admirable couplet from the epigraph:

³Bennett, p. 161.

⁴Books and Persons, pp. 162-163.

⁵Ibid., p. 164.

⁶Ibid., p. 165.

That she who for his [Love's] bidding would not stay
At Death's first whisper rose and went away.

Such lines and such stories, Bennett suggested, the older Kipling could not equal.

Like Bennett, W.L. Phelps found distasteful everything published after the turn of the century. In Puck of Pook's Hill he considered art to be "conspicuous by its absence."

It was lucky that Plain Tales from the Hills preceded Puck of Pook's Hill and that The Light that Failed came before Stalky and Co.⁷

These later books, he continued, might never have got into print without Kipling's prestige.

In the same vein, Hubert Bland, writing in the Sunday Chronicle on "The Decadence of Rudyard Kipling," stated that he preferred "Wee Willie Winkie" to Rewards and Fairies; he admitted that he had not read Puck of Pook's Hill. For this falling-off he blamed the evil latent in Kipling's nature.

What I suggest is that certain germs of evil . . . which were observable in his mental and moral constitution from the first have developed at the expense of other germs, germs of good, that were obvious in equal, nay, in much larger numbers. There was always in his work, except in the very best of it, a certain jarring, discordant note of . . . brag and bluster, of sham masculinity, of affected robustness. Those of us who admired and believed in him were often hard put to it to defend him against the accusation freely brought of blind and flamboyant jingoism. We excused him on the grounds that . . . he was a very young man, and that he still preserved the heart

⁷Essays on Modern Novelists (New York: MacMillan, 1910), p. 210.

of a schoolboy. Time cures healthy schoolboys . . . but alas! it has not cured Kipling.⁸

Bland did not dilate on the degree of noxious jingoism contained in Rewards and Fairies. He did not attempt to justify his stand which, after all, was taken on a matter not of artistic but of political decadence.

Similar criticism based directly on strong opposition to Imperialist politics was still prevalent. Kipling continued to be blamed for promoting the war, for having led a lunatic procession of empire-builders to military and moral disaster. A.C. Gardiner wrote:

Twenty years ago Mr. Kipling went up in the sky like a rocket . . . A decade of delirium was to culminate in a great catastrophe, twenty thousand British dead on the South African veldt and the saturnalia of Mafeking night in London . . . The bard of the banjo marched ahead of the throng, shouting his songs of the barrack-room, telling his tales of the campfire and the jungle, proclaiming the worship of the great god Jingo.⁹

His was the "heathen heart that puts its trust in reeking tube and iron shard." He "made men feel martial and aggressive," for "it was not the soul of England that he loved and sang, but the might of England."¹⁰

But however detestable the sins of the past, even more unnatural were his present backslidings, which included his

⁸Essays by Hubert Bland, pp. 49-50.

⁹A.C. Gardiner, Prophets, Priests and Kings (London: Alston Rivers, 1908), p. 293.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 298.

advocacy of increased military preparation and his refusal to recognize the real needs of the British people. Bland, after remarking on "his almost morbid love of strength," declared that Kipling had no sympathy with or concern for the plight of the masses.

Given that flashing sword and naught else matters. The condition of the masses of her sons and daughters, of the workers in her factories and her mines and the toilers in her fields - these people . . . who are England, never come for a moment into Mr. Kipling's purview.

The miserable result of this setting up of a materialist ideal, this loss of a spiritual conception of life, this forgetting of social justice, is that Mr. Kipling now writes verse which is not only execrable as art but which is mendacious nonsense as well.¹¹

It was a complaint voiced by many that he lacked a social conscience, that he gave to the worship of power what should have been devoted to "his own poverty-stricken and helpless people."¹² Neither his doctrine nor his art was acceptable to these critics.

Nevertheless some of the former bitterness and urgency of the strictly political battle was disappearing from the attacks. The situation had changed with the decisive Tory defeat in January, 1906 that made Kiplingism less of a threat. The old Imperialism was virtually dead; its prophet was out of

¹¹Bland, pp. 51-52.

¹²Great Thoughts, Oct. 4, 1913, p. 2.

office and it was as an unofficial member of the Opposition that he denounced Liberal policies and warned of the danger of German militarism. Much of his old exuberance seemed to have gone and his vision was gloomy, his philosophy more determinedly stoic, his mood, as in Puck and Rewards and Fairies, almost elegiac. He kept on his original course but with all the twentieth century winds against him.

It was Kipling who, anticipating Huxley, borrowed the phrase "brave new world" and in "The Gods of the Copybook Headings," applied it with telling irony to the new era of enlightenment promised by liberal thinkers. Their idealism represented the very antithesis of his own opinions and in his view stood for everything that was wrong-headed and dangerous to the state. They were not simply anti-imperialist, anti-patriotic social reformers; they were in every respect anti-Victorian, repudiating the traditions, standards, goals and institutions, arts and letters and even the heroes of the previous generation. They were adopting the psychology of Freud, the philosophy of Bergson and to some extent the political economy of Marx, variously modified. They promoted an increasingly recondite and experimental literature addressed to the discriminating reader and reflecting an ultra-romantic humanism. Their relationship with Kipling was one of mutual aversion.

The whole rationale of the quarrel went far deeper than the issues over which they fought. Their differences were idiosyncratic and irreconcilable - the intelligentsia being romantics, and their opponent, at heart a classicist. It was T.S. Eliot who recognized Kipling's classical bent and compared him with Dryden. The suggested historical parallel cannot be described as close but, without carrying the comparison further, Eliot pointed out an interesting similarity in essentials.

They arrive at poetry through eloquence; for both, wisdom has primacy over inspiration; and both are more concerned with the world about them than with their own joys and sorrows, and concerned with their own feelings in their likeness to those of other men rather than in their particularity.¹³

That Kipling was the very opposite of romantic - except for the details of setting and incident in his work - is not difficult to prove. He saw man as a rational being given to irrational behaviour; imperfect and imperfectible; in need of discipline, a sense of duty, and responsibility. He did not idealize the underprivileged. He feared change, believing that the survival of civilization depended on tradition and the maintenance of order, that the law must come first for the good of society. To him, practical considerations and the exercise of common sense must preclude visions and theories.

¹³"Rudyard Kipling," A Choice of Kipling's Verse, (London: Faber and Faber, 1941), p. 29.

He did not trust the judgment of democracy. In general, whether directly or by way of fable, he spoke to his readers as plainly and impersonally as Dryden or Pope, offering no self-revelation or confessions. An enemy of the sentimental, he understated emotion and avoided any analysis of "romantic" love. Often sententious and almost invariably didactic, he could balance and point a paradox or proverb and turn it into an epigram - not always new but very often memorable.¹⁴ He handled satire well and expressed himself neatly and vigorously at the expense of those whom he had the "gift of arriding per se."

There can be no doubt that his feud with the intellectuals was aggravated by the deliberate philistinism of his satire. He was never conciliatory; he took every opportunity to insult the Bandar-log, his old enemies, who were "going to do some splendid things"; to ridicule their most sacred articles of faith and profane their favorite catchwords. This comprehensive mockery had a serious purpose. Convinced that in misguided idealism lay a threat to order and decency, he preached continually against "Uplift, Vision and Breadth of Mind" and illusory "Social Progress." He warned against the "Gods of the Market" who "promised perpetual peace," "abundance for all" and the "Fuller Life."¹⁵

¹⁴"The truthful, well-weighed answer/that tells the blacker lie." "Gehazi."

¹⁵"The Gods of the Copybook Headings."

Thus in the world of ideas he was stubbornly and reprehensibly out of fashion and out of favour. After 1906 his critical reputation continued to wane until among literary figures he became almost an anachronism. Yeats, Galsworthy, Bennett and Wells, who were his exact contemporaries, seemed rather to belong to the rising generation - those who were striking anti-Victorian literary attitudes in coteries such as the Bloomsbury Group, all true believers in the "March of Mankind," critics of empire and of the social system with its materialism, repression and hypocrisy. Yeats, six months older than Kipling, assumed that the revolt against Victorian standards in literature had begun with Pater and that the forces of reaction had been overthrown by 1900.

Victorianism had been defeated, though two writers dominated the moment who had never heard of that defeat or did not believe in it; Rudyard Kipling and William Watson. Indian residence and associations, had isolated the first; he was full of opinions, of politics, of impurities - to use our word - and the word must have been right, for he interests a critical audience today by the grotesque tragedy of "Danny Deever," the matter but not the form of old street ballads, and by songs traditional in matter and form like the "St. Helena Lullaby."¹⁶

In the pre-war period, Kipling had become badly dated. Henry Newbolt, reviewing a volume of collected verse in the *Book Monthly* wrote of the earlier poems:

They come back to us as it were from a land beyond the sunset The young . . . can hardly imagine a world of

¹⁶W.B. Yeats, Introduction to The Oxford Book of Modern Verse (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), pp. xi-xii.

which these were the favourite songs: the world before the German fleet, before the rise of Japan, before the Boer War¹⁷

For the current depreciation of his work, Newbolt first of all blamed history and the transitional nature of the times and, in the second place, the occasional character of the subject matter, which would necessarily have lost its appeal.

He has put into verse a great deal that was never intended for poetry but for argument, politics, invective or admonition. . . Mr. Kipling wasted on temporal things what was meant for eternal.¹⁸

Here a former admirer and imitator found him outmoded because he had always been far too topical.¹⁹

To others his writings were unpalatable because he lacked the requisite sensibility, the thoughtful discernment and the vision, to create a work of art. Years older than Kipling, George Moore, whose "new realism" had been influential but not widely successful, contrasted him with Loti, declaring that "Mr. Kipling has seen much more than he has felt and we

¹⁷Henry Newbolt, "Kipling the Poet," The Book Monthly, X (Jan. 1913), 234.

¹⁸Ibid., 235.

¹⁹Where Kipling was unmistakably up-to-date in his interest in machines he succeeded only in giving offense. There were innumerable protests against his irrational delight in engine-rooms, wireless telegraphy and automobiles. In the case of the motor-car, with reference to "They" in Actions and Reactions, he was warned by Scribners against "making literature of gasoline." (Oct. 1907, p. 507). Mechanical devices did not belong to the aesthetic of either poetry or prose.

prefer feeling to seeing," that he wrote "with an eye that appreciates all the eye can see," but that "of the heart" he knew nothing.²⁰ Moore complained that the detailed description in Kim of evening on the Grand Trunk Road was "more ethnological than poetic," and added, "Was it not a shame to observe that wistful hour so closely?"²¹ He concluded that the author's coarse, journalist's nature made him incapable of subtlety, for his was "the shoddy tune of the average man."²²

His popularity was always offensive to the critics. It was a problem frequently debated and explained. According to A.C. Gardiner, his early appeal was "perfectly attuned to the temper of the times."²³ Hubert Bland felt that he had always purposely directed his message to the common man and considered that his fame was "due to the method and manner of his expression; but more still has been due to the fact that he has given voice to the thoughts and emotions of inarticulate millions."²⁴ Frank Harris insisted that he was able to speak for the crowd because of his own innate vulgarity. "A great part of Kipling's popularity and consequent quick rise to

²⁰George Moore, "Kipling and Loti," Pall Mall Magazine, July 1908, p. 376.

²¹Ibid., p. 377.

²²Ibid., p. 379.

²³Prophets, Priests and Kings, p. 296.

²⁴Essays by Hubert, p. 41.

wealth and influence are due directly to his passionate, blind herd-feeling."²⁵ Clement K. Shorter of the Sphere thought fit to mention, when interviewed by Rudolph de Cordova, that "Mr. Kipling was not discovered until he was published in shilling volumes."²⁶ His popularity, Dixon Scott contended, was the critics' chief source of complaint and the true cause of their turning against him.

The exasperating fellow went popular . . . The public's enjoyment of Kipling was too true to be good. Criticism grew querulous, qualified, hedged; criticism discovered defects.²⁷

Whatever their reasons for choosing to condemn Kipling, the intellectuals made common cause against him and when, in 1907, he became the first English recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature, they joined in a chorus of scandalized protest.

Mr. Rudyard Kipling is the first Englishman to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature He is chosen as our representative man of letters, while George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, and Algernon Charles Swinburne are still amongst us. The goldsmiths are passed by and the literary blacksmith is exalted. We do not know the grounds of the decision; but we do know that Mr. Kipling is not our king Where George Meredith sits is the throne of English literature.²⁸

²⁵Frank Harris, Contemporary Portraits, p. 60.

²⁶"The Present State of Literary Criticism in England," Great Thoughts, Oct. 4, 1913, p. 240.

²⁷"The Meekness of Mr. Rudyard Kipling," Men of Letters (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917), p. 51.

²⁸Gardiner, p. 293.

Those critics who were still disposed to comment favorably seemed, as before, to have been put on the defensive. More than ever they found themselves answering the same reiterated charges and complaints; and in doing so some readily admitted the presence of inexcusable faults but offered in extenuation certain undoubted merits. G.H. Mair began by listing all Kipling's failings including "violent rhetoric" and "the sentimental brutalism which too often passes for patriotism in his poetry"²⁹ and then extolled his more recent work, Puck of Pook's Hill and Rewards and Fairies for "the justness and saneness of its temper." On the other hand, Dixon Scott, while praising the publications after Kim as Kipling's best, defended even his militarism as "a longing for quiet comeliness and order."³⁰ An editorial in Great Thoughts deplored the criticism that accused a great writer of "crude and harsh violence."³¹ One apologist asked that Kipling be "remembered by his achievements and not by his failures."³² Another blamed the war for his fading reputation:

On the imposing wave, whose crest was the disastrous

²⁹G.H. Mair, Modern English Literature (London: Williams and Norgate, 1911), p. 240.

³⁰Dixon Scott, p. 59.

³¹Great Thoughts, Oct. 4, 1913, p. 3.

³²David Christie Murray, Guesses at Truth (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908), p. 272.

bubble of 1899, rolled the best known lyrics of Mr. Kipling, and it was not his fault that their subject matter has become widely distasteful or that his worst work has been cried loudest in the street.³³

Cyril Falls, author of Rudyard Kipling: A Critical Study, had no doubt as to the cause of the loss of prestige:

The temporary falling-off in Mr. Kipling's popularity is due merely to a temporary change of fashions. It is, indeed, a falling-off rather in the estimation of the critics than in that of the reading public.³⁴

Falls added defiantly: "I do declare, and will maintain in the face of all the 'high-brows' that ever sneered, that he is a great writer of short stories."³⁵ John Palmer, in his more partisan Rudyard Kipling, gave it as his opinion that Kipling was the victim of political and literary prejudices, his worst offense being that he was not a left-wing pamphleteer.³⁶ The truth of the matter was that he brought "political prejudice into his work less than almost any living contemporary."³⁷ R. Thurston Hopkins agreed with both these conclusions and expressed the belief that Kipling would

³³Trevor Blakemore, "Rudyard Kipling: The Poet of Reality," Poetry Review, April 1912, p. 165.

³⁴Cyril Falls, Rudyard Kipling (London: Martin Secker, 1915), p. 205.

³⁵Ibid., p. 207.

³⁶John Palmer, Rudyard Kipling (New York: Holt, 1915), p. 35.

³⁷Ibid., p. 33.

be rediscovered after twenty years. He attributed much of the existing antagonism to envy and malice on the part of the critics.³⁸

The article "Rudyard Kipling" in the eleventh edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica represented a cautious balance between extremes. A coolness and some degree of "veiled depreciation" were indicated in such comments as: "He was imbued with a type of imperialism that reacted on his literature not altogether to its advantage." The "imperial sentiment" was said to be largely his responsibility.

In his subsequent work his delight in the display of descriptive and verbal technicalities grew on him. His polemic against "the sheltered life" and "Little Englandism" became more didactic. His terseness sometimes degenerated into abruptness and obscurity.³⁹

Nevertheless he was conceded to be "one of the rare masters in English prose of the art of the short story."⁴⁰

³⁸R. Thurston Hopkins, Rudyard Kipling: A Literary Appreciation (New York: Stokes, 1915), p. vi.

³⁹"Rudyard Kipling," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed., (1910) XV, 826.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 827. Depreciation was no longer veiled in an article in the 13th edition, which dealt with his work after 1906. The tone was cavalier and the treatment of the author very different from that accorded his contemporaries. Rewards and Fairies was described as "neither better nor worse than its predecessor." Another collection of stories had turned out to be "in the old manner, clever but not attractive."

"His immense efficiency was never of the kind in which genuine growth or development is possible . . . He had the journalist's ability to use with apparent mastery the 'cant' of many trades and callings: but this gift though engaging,

Of the eight selected periodicals only five paid any attention to Kipling during the decade. The Quarterly compared his romances with those of Loti in 1905.⁴¹ The Contemporary Review published a single notice in 1906 and nothing thereafter. The usual reviews were given in the Athenaeum, the Saturday Review and the Bookman. The remainder made no reference to current publications. The Edinburgh Review⁴² had very little more to say except for unfavourable mention of Kipling's later verse in Walter de la Mare's "Popular Poetry" in October, 1914. Blackwood's volunteered no more panegyrics, or comments of any kind, but gloomily predicted the end of Imperialism after the calamitous General Election of 1906. It was "an ill-omened conclusion," and "the heaviest indictment ever made against the Democracy . . . Ireland will be given Home Rule and the rest of the Empire will be freed from any kind of rule whatsoever."⁴³

is artistically unimportant." (13th ed. (1926) II, 638).

He was said to have affected "a large, cloudy, oracular utterance that appears more profound than it is." (p. 639).

⁴¹The Quarterly Review, July 1905, pp. 49-51.

⁴²The Edinburgh Review's next allusion to Kipling's work was contained in "Anglo-Indian Fiction" in October 1925, which dealt with E.M. Forster's Passage to India.

⁴³"Musings without Method;" Blackwood's Magazine, Feb. 1906, p. 278.

The Fortnightly Review ignored him completely. Even in an article on the preferences of the reading public - from shop girls and servants to "University men" - based on a survey of lending libraries, his name was not included either in the lists of favourite authors or elsewhere - although the lengthy report attested to the popularity of Annie Swan, Victoria Cross, "the authoress of East Lynne," Conan Doyle, Hall Caine, Wells, Hichens, E.F. Benson, Galsworthy, E.V. Lucas, W.W. Jacobs, Lawrence Hope, Anthony Hope, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Jack London, Elinor Glyn, Marie Corelli, Hardy, and Meredith and many others.⁴⁴ It was a strange omission, in view of Kipling's perennial appearance among the best-sellers.

When Puck of Pook's Hill came out in the autumn of 1906, the reviewers of the four interested periodicals gave highly contradictory estimates of its success. It afforded the Contemporary nothing but pleasure, as "an ideal book for English schoolchildren the world over."⁴⁵ The harsh judgment passed on Traffics and Discoveries was forgotten in an expression of unqualified satisfaction:

It is literature in both conception and execution and it is calculated to give a taste for good literature . . . It is sound history - a series of as brilliant historical sketches, true to the very life, as have ever been penned. But nevertheless there is nothing didactic about the book.⁴⁶

⁴⁴"England's Taste in Literature," The Fortnightly Review, Jan. 1912, pp. 160-171.

⁴⁵Contemporary Review, May 1907, p. 760.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

Not only did the book contain "historical literature of the first class" but the occasional poems might well "make modern rhymers jealous."

These appreciative comments were nullified by the Athenaeum which denounced the new volume as sly propaganda - although it had welcomed and acclaimed Stalky and Co. as a fine work.

In his new part - the missionary of empire - Mr. Kipling is living the strenuous life. He has frankly abandoned story-telling and is using his complete and powerful armoury in the interest of patriotic zeal. We find his design peeping out everywhere in his writing and here it is cunningly set to engage the feet of children.⁴⁷

He was accused of deliberately seeking to indoctrinate the young with Imperialism and love of country. The reviewer went on to grant him vigour and confidence, but, after having charged him with cunning, described his approach to his subject as clumsy. There was not enough "story." Only "Dymchurch Flit" stood out "in its method, style and picturesque beauty" as an "exquisite piece of work."⁴⁸

The Saturday Review rebuked the author for offering the public an inferior work in a genre unsuited to his talents. He was told that it was "not on such books as 'Puck of Pook's

⁴⁷The Athenaeum, Oct. 6, 1906, p. 404.

⁴⁸Ibid.

Hill,⁴⁹ that one would wish him engaged." It was "a book for children" and provided "little scope for his especial virtues." The stories must be described as "at best but second-hand work" and the whole was nothing but "a patchwork," displaying a too modern "touch of prevision."⁵⁰ The style was good in the tales of the Normans, poor, in those of the Romans. The review then concluded with mild praise for two of the poems, "Three Part Song" and "Harp Song of the Dane Women."⁵¹

A different report came from the Bookman with Alfred Noyes' "Kipling the Mystic." Far from suspecting Puck of Pook's Hill of concealing imperial designs, Noyes saw in it evidence of a notable change, or a remarkable process of spiritual regeneration on the part of the author. Kipling seemed at last to have turned away from the evil courses of the empire-builders.

"Chops, more chops, bloody ones with gristle in them!" - the cry of the baser sort of Imperialist - has gently subsided into a fat smile, a benevolent radiation of sweetness

⁴⁹Kipling's own views concerning Puck of Pook's Hill are found in Something of Myself,: "Since the tales had to be read by children, before people realised that they were meant for grown-ups; and since they had to be a sort of balance to, as well as a seal upon, some aspect of my 'Imperialistic' output in the past, 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." (p. 190).

⁵⁰The Saturday Review, Oct. 6, 1906, p. 430.

⁵¹Ibid.

and light, since it dawned upon the Mafficking patriot that he must pay, pay, pay, and yet again pay, for even his most sanguinary and most human chops with his own yellow coin. We have not much belief in the depths of either of these common moods; but we believe there are "the makings of a blooming soul" somewhere behind them⁵²

The germ of something better was apparent in these new stories.

We see, in this book, signs of a great change in Mr. Kipling. It is not perhaps his best work; but it looks like the beginning of his best and greatest work. It would certainly be the most interesting of all his writings if it were not for the fact that it illuminates and makes his former work even more arresting than it was when he had "a voice with which statesmen might have to reckon."⁵³

The brutal materialism of the '90's had disappeared and in its place was an understanding of human values.

In "Puck of Pook's Hill" we suspect that Mr. Kipling has for the first time dug through the silt of modern Imperialism. . . We know of 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.⁵⁴

Again Noyes stressed the political implications behind these sketches from history by suggesting that "On the Great Wall," a tale of Roman Britain, might well be proof that Kipling saw "the writing on a certain modern wall."

Mr. Kipling was, at the high tide of popular Imperialism, one of the very few popular Imperialists who could either have written or echoed the feeling of his "Recessional" How

⁵²The Bookman, Nov. 1906, p. 81

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 82.

deep this vein of mysticism goes in him, it is impossible at present to judge. But let popular Imperialism beware of him. The day may come when he will turn and rend them as he turned and rent large masses of his devoted readers in that delightful onslaught which he called "The Islanders." Mystics are always dangerous to materialists . . . He was never more the interpreter to the English-speaking people than he is in this book.⁵⁵

Perhaps Noyes hoped to justify his appreciation of the book by dwelling on an entirely suppositious disavowal on the part of Kipling of his imperial theme.

Three years later - an unprecedented interval between publications - Actions and Reactions met with the same mixed response. The Athenaeum's review was urbane in tone but written in the familiar style that offered disparagement disguised as fair-minded commendation - an advocacy that had the effect of censure. This latest book was "rather loosely strung together," resembling "those casual collections of tales . . . which both good writers and bad are ready to give to the press, and which in number are probably limited only by the limit of public patience."

In view of the fact that, except for occasional poems, Mr. Kipling has given his hand a good deal of rest lately, the casualness of the present work may seem matter of complaint. But, after all, the complaint would be hardly fair, for the author is judged by a standard which he, not another has given us: taken by itself, there is hardly a tale in this volume which is not unmatched in its kind, in its alertness, knowledgeableness, the quick understanding of human nature revealed in every scrap of dialogue. All the old charms are

⁵⁵The Bookman, Nov. 1906, p. 82.

here: is it fair to grumble because we have not something more, because (for this must be confessed also) the years have not brought to this brilliant genius the weightiness and repose of the philosophic mind? Mr. Kipling's political opinions have no doubt matured and strengthened; with them we have no concern. But his way of enforcing his views smacks more of the partisan and the journalist than the philosopher.⁵⁶

The reviewer then implied that the author had reached the final stage of his career and that the present adjudication might very well be conclusive:

If . . . Mr. Kipling's genius has never matured as once we hoped it might, the time has come when our judgment of his work may fairly reach toward finality.⁵⁷

A number of the stories were examined and mildly praised. None, however, was without flaw. "An Habitation Enforced" could not be described as being as "complete and reasonable" as Henry James' treatment of the same subject; "A Deal in Cotton," which soared "beyond comparison" in some of its "great moments," was weakened by the "jejune and boring" nature of "ostensible plot."⁵⁸ "Little Foxes" was "a story rather poor in itself and excellent only for its side-lights." In "The Mother Hive" the "literary merits" were not "excessive." "With the Night Mail," although it would "please some," "we could easily have spared."⁵⁹ The critic soon came to this unpropitious conclusion:

⁵⁶The Athenaeum, Oct. 16, 1909, p. 453.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

A great work 'Actions and Reactions' cannot be called. But the expectation that Mr. Kipling's gifts will ever concentrate on some stupendous achievement must now be given up.⁶⁰

The Saturday Review's "Vigour or Rant?" filled two columns with ironic gibes:

It is the combination of strength and tenderness that makes Mr. Kipling's work remarkable. Or would these virtues of his be more accurately named brutality and sentimentality? It depends on the point of view; and the point of view depends on whether the style of these three hundred pages appears to you vigorous, manly speech, or the ranting and whining of an unpleasantly accented unpleasant voice. Both views are possible, and we propose to give a few examples from this book which may simplify the choice between the two.⁶¹

The reviewer exposed the sentimental core of "An Habitation Enforced," summarized the plot to its disadvantage and added scathing remarks about the final poem.

And then the poem at the end implies that English soil actually calls American millionaires to come and settle on it. . . . The verses ought to be invaluable to estate agents in Kent, Sussex, and Surrey, especially on gravel soils.⁶²

Each story received the same treatment with emphasis on the elements of the sentimental and brutal to be found on every page.

⁶⁰The Athenaeum, Oct. 16, 1909, p. 454.

⁶¹The Saturday Review, Oct. 16, 1909, p. iii.

⁶²Ibid.

. . . "A Deal in Cotton," the best story, also gives the purest examples of these leading virtues of Mr. Kipling, so beautiful in themselves, so exceeding beautiful in company.⁶³

In "The Magic of Kipling" the Bookman devoted all but the final paragraph (almost two columns) of its review to one story, "An Habitation Enforced."

It is a tale you read with a constant tender laughter fluttering round you, and a sob at the back of your throat. To congratulate the writer is an impertinence - the story bears its own congratulations.⁶⁴

"With the Night Mail" was mentioned as containing "some genuine constructive work that rises to the verge of creation."⁶⁵ There was no hint of superciliousness but something of the straightforward admiration found in earlier critiques.

In the case of Rewards and Fairies, a year later, the Athenaeum spoke well of some of the poems but was dissatisfied with the stories.

If you want him at his best, it will not be in these prose stories, but rather in some of the verses lavishly scattered throughout the pages.⁶⁶

In his prose it was his "vitality and modernity" that most

⁶³The Saturday Review, Oct. 16, 1909, p. iv.

⁶⁴William Hope Hodgson, "The Magic of Kipling," The Bookman, Nov. 1909, p. 100.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶The Athenaeum, Oct. 22, 1910, p. 483.

impressed the reviewer. But the latter rendered "this medium improper for him" and, in spite of the fact that Rewards and Fairies had "more frankly artistic leanings" than Puck of Pook's Hill, it seemed to lack "the finer and rarer sense of fantasy," such as that of the Celtic school. Instead it was "invariably and at all costs real."

Mr. Kipling's is forthright unconvincing Anglo-Saxon glamour which we could have done without. But he has chosen this method of appearing before his public and we must accept it . . . Here are no fairies in point of fact; here is a blunt, sturdy series of historical pictures, covering a survey of old England.⁶⁷

Unlike the Athenaeum, the Saturday Review preferred the prose to the verse but was far from being impressed by the work as a whole. One recognized the usual Kipling style:

This is the very voice that resounded in the best tales. The style, as of old, is a mixture of Bible, Ballad and Cockney English. Here are the same harsh strength and melting softness. The invention is excellent.⁶⁸

On the other hand, the machinery of Puck and the children was "tiresome and unnecessary" and "strained credulity." The characters were unreal and the stories lifeless despite "all the stridency and bustle." As for the verse, the writer's power as a poet had "diminished."⁶⁹

⁶⁷The Athenaeum, Oct. 22, 1910, p. 483.

⁶⁸The Saturday Review, Oct. 15, 1910, p. 485.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 486.

One or two (of the poems) are vigorous in Mr. Kipling's usual clearcut archaic manner and iron sententiousness, but he frequently spoils his effects by a mysterious kind of nonsense peculiarly his own.⁷⁰

Here an objection was raised to the obscurity of "A St. Helena Lullaby," in which the reader had been given no clue to the speaker's identity.

Added to this there are many words used simply to fill up the line, as for example, the last half of

"The South across the water underneath a setting star" said of St. Helena . . . There are numerous other absurdities which we can only suppose are due to the jig and rant of his verse getting into Mr. Kipling's head to the detriment of his reason.⁷¹

The critique which had begun in a complacent mood ended with a degree of petulance.

In the Bookman H.A. Hinkson took a different point of view from that of either the Athenaeum or the Saturday Review and wrote of the rare quality of enchantment that the book possessed, of "those delectable children, Dan and Una,"⁷² of the "vivid stories."⁷³ "The Looking Glass" was a "fine spirited poem"⁷⁴ and the tale of "The Knife and the Naked Chalk" deserved special mention. On the other hand "Mr. Kipling, Magician," was showing signs of a gradual decline

⁷⁰The Saturday Review, Oct. 15, 1910, p. 486.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²The Bookman, Nov. 1910, p. 97.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

in his artistry.⁷⁵

At times Mr. Kipling's grip seems a little less sure than of old, his point of view less defined and one is conscious of a feeling of overstrain. His meaning is not infrequently obscure and with difficulty we disentangle ourselves from the meshes which he has woven for us.⁷⁶

Although contradictory both in general purport and in detail, these reviews were, on the whole, indicative of a shift to a more moderate critical position. The approach had become one of matter-of-fact accommodation to a familiar presence that was either tedious or merely commonplace. Kipling, with all his panoply of persuasive rhetoric and contentious opinions, was now an old story. Expressions of antagonism and approval alike had been to some extent controlled and modified, the one becoming more subtle, the other less generous. The Athenaeum and the Saturday Review continued to teach the rest to sneer but without resorting to abuse; the Contemporary and the Bookman responded with measured appreciation. The other four journals kept silent either because they chose to snub Kipling or because he was no longer of particular interest to their readers.

Serious criticism had already begun to peter out; no occasional articles of any length were being written. After 1910 several volumes of critical biography appeared, all of

⁷⁵The Bookman, Nov. 1910, p.98.

⁷⁶Ibid.

the sort that are usually put together after an author's death. It was generally assumed that Kipling had reached the final phase of his career. He published no new fiction between 1910 and 1917. Among the influential critics he had few admirers, the majority denying him any place in the hierarchy of literary figures. They dismissed him from the contemporary scene, relegating him to the '90's which had witnessed his precocious rise to fame and his exaggerated vogue. His day of glory and notoriety had come to an end with the mismanaged South African conflict and its troubled denouement. The decline of the official reputation of Kipling the artist, - in no way affecting the prestige of Kipling the entertainer - was announced in most of the important journals by representative men of letters.

The over-all record of his encounters with the critics printed in the eight periodicals indicated a clearly defined pattern of values, shifting from white, to black and indeterminate grey, the dominant tone in each area being checkered with dissent. Despite inconsistencies and variegated judgments, there was no mistaking the trend of opinion.

With certain notable exceptions the individual sequences of reviews showed the same tendencies. The Edinburgh Review had found Kipling's early books worthy of attention but deplored his journalistic style and instances of brutality. By 1898, however, although he was warned against the use of

slang, the expressed approval of his work amounted to whole-hearted acceptance. A few years later, he was described as a popularizer who pandered to the tastes of a thrill-seeking public. In 1914 his only claim to greatness was said to be his Imperialist associations.

The Quarterly, slow to accept new writers, had strongly disapproved the frank barbarity of the first stories yet in 1897 was moved to set its seal of approval on Kipling, giving him generous praise, only very mildly qualified. The patriotic verse of 1900 was still pleasing, but little good was found in Kim in 1902 and not long afterwards the author was dismissed as a journalist who wrote only for readers of "a certain class."

From the first the less fastidious Blackwood's had been delighted, even ecstatic - the motives for such admiration being political rather than literary - and had no fault to find with Kipling, except perhaps where he hinted at ineptitude in the performance of the army chaplains in Kim.

The Fortnightly Review, with its very different bias, had seen him first as an artist having many faults but as early as 1893 was prepared to deny his artistry and to attack him at all points. No further articles were devoted entirely to his work. In 1902 he was mentioned as lacking spirituality and the next year was compared unfavourably with William Watson the anti-Imperialist and pro-Boer.

At the beginning, the Contemporary had offered restrained commendation of the short stories and later gave prominence to the Buchanan-Besant exchange over Stalky and Co. and the writer's work in general, Buchanan significantly being given the last word. Kim was reviewed in 1901, on which occasion it was decided that the novel depended for its reputation on Kipling's name and his powers of clever description. In 1903 the epithet "anti-poet" was introduced in the review of The Five Nations; "technical jargon" was considered to be the most serious blemish in Traffics and Discoveries. In the final notice in 1907, Puck of Pook's Hill was termed a good collection of tales for children.

The Athenaeum gave Kipling its blessing throughout the '90's. Even The Light that Failed received a flattering critique and had its "brutal" passages amply justified. The journal was thrilled with Barrack-Room Ballads, described Many Inventions as "brilliant" and the Jungle Books as "inimitable" and admired the "true artistry" of Stalky and Co. Then between 1899 and 1901 came a sudden volte-face. Kim had a poor style, The Five Nations was a dull work, besides being unspiritual and didactic, Traffics and Discoveries could not be called literature. Puck of Pook's Hill flaunted a dubious patriotism and was further marred by a variety of clumsy devices. Actions and Reactions must be considered as the work of an author who had reached the end of his career,

and Rewards and Fairies, while more artistic than Puck, had no real merit.

The Saturday Review expressed great satisfaction with both stories and verse until after 1894, when the editor, Walter Pollock, was succeeded by Frank Harris. The latter's known antipathy to Kipling was shared by a distinguished member of his staff Max Beerbohm. In 1896, a reviewer - he may well have been "Max" - disgusted by the usual chorus of praise, accused Kipling of leading the critics by the nose and of foisting second-rate work on the public and declared that he was no longer an artist but a propagandist. Stalky and Co. was angrily denounced in 1899. Following a blast against the vulgarity of "The Lesson," Kim and The Just-So Stories were severely handled. In 1903 Max, as drama critic, was unpleasant about the stage version of The Light that Failed. The Five Nations was rated low for its journalism and political didacticism; Puck of Pook's Hill could only be looked upon as second-hand material; Actions and Reactions and Rewards and Fairies proved merely tiresome.

Of the eight periodicals, The Bookman contained the most inconsistent series of reviews. In its first issues, Kipling was featured as a great artist and "marvellously popular." If Barrack-Room Ballads proved somewhat disappointing, The Naulahka deserved to be highly commended. In 1893, however, the author was taken to task by N.Y. for Many

Inventions; the next year he was recognized as a fine writer but one who was too intent on sermonizing. The Second Jungle Book received an admiring tribute whereas The Day's Work was said to contain only one well-written story. Stalky and Co. reviewed by interested outsiders, aroused nothing but hostility and disgust. Kim came in for thorough punishment at the hands of Y.Y.; yet in 1902 The Just-So Stories gave Chesterton the greatest enjoyment and he wrote of it with unreserved expressions of delight. Wilfred Whitten's substantial article of January, 1903, dealt with the author's deficiencies as an artist. His shortcomings as a poet occupied the reviewer of The Five Nations, who saw in his work little that could compare with that of William Watson. The following year Y.Y. condemned Traffics and Discoveries and frankly derided the author's claims to greatness. Nevertheless in 1906 the critical climate again altered as Alfred Noyes rejoiced in the mysticism of Puck of Pook's Hill and in Kipling's evident abjuration of Imperial follies. Rewards and Fairies too was judged to be quite well done, despite indications that the old sureness of touch had been lost.

If it were possible to plot these reviews on a multiple graph - the horizontal axis representing Kipling's year-to-year literary output and the vertical, the critics' response estimated in degrees of warmth - the resulting profiles would give an interesting overview of contemporary evaluation. There

would be a coincidence of certain curves, some close parallels, occasional inversions and lapses in continuity. In all instances but one, the trend would be downward, a general low being recorded between 1899 and 1904 and relatively little change apparent thereafter.

The many contradictions revealed by such a graph would be impossible to reconcile. Nor could modern criticism agree with the values allotted to each work, at times the very antithesis of those accepted today. Kim, now generally listed among the best of the many publications, would be found at the lowest point on the diagram and the first Anglo-Indian volumes would be plotted unduly high. From a survey of the evidence it would be absurd not to conclude that Kipling was wronged by his contemporaries, that he was very often misrepresented by both his uncritical admirers and his detractors, that he was set on a pedestal and adored beyond reason and that he suffered an undeserved fall, that a great deal of what was written about him was such as no literary canon could justify.

Even H.G. Wells, who was no friend of his, was moved to comment on the strange vicissitudes of his reputation.

Kipling has . . . been so mercilessly and exhaustively mocked, criticized and torn to shreds - never was a man so violently exalted and then, himself assisting, so relentlessly called down.⁷⁷

⁷⁷The New Machiavelli (London: John Lane: The Bodley Head. 1911), p. 128.

Throughout his career the critics had done him less than justice because they made criticism serve ends that had little or nothing to do with literature. Their unusual degree of fallibility cannot be attributed simply to incompetence, for there were among them a number of able and perceptive men of letters. It must therefore be assumed that the irrational tendency of their reviews was determined in part by variable factors not ordinarily related to matters of aesthetics, by the exigencies of history, politics, and fashionable philosophy. Besides these extraneous influences, the individual reviewer must be kept in mind - his training, tastes, ambitions, achievements, predilections, and capacity for objective judgment or for partisanship.

Where Kipling was concerned, bias was always a good deal in evidence. Political considerations came before matters of artistry in the columns of Blackwood's and the Fortnightly Review. Possession of a social conscience seemed to be a proof of merit required by the Contemporary. Newer trends in literature occupied the attention of the Athenaeum and the Saturday Review. Personal prejudice was also conspicuous in the latter - as in the case of Max Beerbohm - and in the Bookman, where Y.Y. could not tolerate Kiplingism in any guise. Both the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly sought to maintain established, formal, literary criteria. Their guarded approval of a popular journalist did not extend beyond the end of the

century, when the war-time reaction set in. All were profoundly affected by the war which further upset the balance of judgment and made it almost impossible for the critics to separate Kipling's writings from the disturbing events with which they seemed so painfully involved.

Whatever form of prejudice got in the way of objectivity, whatever the complex motives that shaped the more disingenuous reviews, the resulting criticism had in its later phases all the appearance of a campaign, a concerted move to pass censure on Kipling. There were individual attacks like those of Beerbohm and J.M. Robertson that were almost obsessive, as though the provocation were such that the writer could not help himself. And there were other exercises in detraction, less abusive but more influential, provided by writers adept at fault-finding and phrasing left-handed compliments.

These detractors were further encouraged by their subject, who stubbornly ran counter to the spirit of the age as expressed by his peers, and placed himself in opposition to their favourite projects and to their aspirations. Prophet, propagandist, debater in verse and prose, preacher from his own texts, he made what he wrote readable and persuasive and roused the worst in his enemies. In the first place they detested the excessive popularity by which his old-fashioned and reactionary philosophy of work, duty, and service to the Empire was perpetuated in those best-selling, six-shilling volumes. And next, they deplored on aesthetic grounds the

indisputable vulgarity of books that had so wide an appeal.

There were, as one of his supporters expressed it, "plenty of people to dispute Mr. Kipling's right to the place which has been assigned to him by popular consent."⁷⁸ Among them was Arnold Bennett, who saw the critic's function as being sacerdotal and uncompromising. Critics, he asserted, were "all those persons who have genuine convictions about an art," to whom "art looms enormous" and whose views "amount to a creed . . . that . . . must be spread."⁷⁹ They alone had the right to vouch for artists and to establish their fame. "The sound reputation of an artist is originally due never to the public but to the critics."⁸⁰ Kipling's reputation could not be sound, having been too long in the hands of the public. Once the reviewers had concurred in the popular estimation of his worth. Then in increasing numbers they had turned against him. Some rebellious critics, like Y.Y., found nothing to approve in his writing after 1893. Others like Bennett drew the line at Stalky and Co. in 1899.

Asked to review The Seven Seas, Y.Y. pronounced the book "clever" and "powerful" but "utterly inadmissible," work that could not properly be allowed or received by the

⁷⁸David Christie Murray, Guesses at Truth (London: Hurst and Blackett, Ltd., 1908), p. 272.

⁷⁹Fame and Fiction: An Enquiry into Certain Popularities (London: Grant Richards, 1901), pp. 197-198.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 197.

conscientious critic without protest. He followed this judgment with a frank confession of insuperable and right-minded prejudice. The kind of criticism meted out to Kipling's later stories and verse was for the most part the product of just such laudable bias. It was as though the author had been placed in a special category of inadmissible writers and was to be given none of the consideration that might be granted those of whom no particular harm was known.⁸¹

Because Kipling was inadmissible and intolerable, there was seldom a new, clear-sighted survey of his work. Instead the unfriendly reviewer would either rake up the old objections or, taking a thematic approach, would stress only one familiar aspect of Kiplingism and search the text for evidence. The book would be discarded with little reference to its worth but the author would once again have been set up as an effigy for ritual burning.

The tone of the adverse criticism, which had begun in anger and risen to fury, subsided at last to cold, censorious irony, contempt, impatience and weariness. The substance of the critiques very often consisted either of unsupported generalizations following a doctrinaire preamble or of picayune

⁸¹The Bookman found Captains Courageous "dull" but described J. Maclaren Cobham's Wilt Thou Have This Woman as "a good and even piece of work, . . . a thoroughly readable story." Nov. 1897, p. 48. And in 1898 the same periodical praised Edwin Pugh's Tony Drum: A Cockney Boy: "There is not much book company now better than is to be found in Tony Drum." However, most of the stories in The Day's Work were considered "good if you can read them . . . otherwise intolerable." Nov. 1898, p. 53.

fault-finding unrelated to broader issues. At the same time the inferences were plain enough. On the score of art, Kipling was dull, didactic, moralizing old-fashioned, vulgar, popular, insensitive, realistic. Morally he was coarse, indecent, indelicate, ribald, brutal, sadistic, lawless and given to "unbridled passions." In politics he was reactionary and undemocratic. He was a Jingo-Imperialist, an enemy of the people, in league with repressive government. His philosophy was shallow, school-boyish, lacking in significance and profundity - his creed of duty and work, his preaching of stoic virtues, his pessimism, his mysticism belonged to the past. He was a professed anti-intellectual. His style could only be termed unacceptable; it was mannered, abrupt, frequently obscure. He would always be a journalist and an amateur of slang, profanity, dialect, and technical jargon. Writing thus flawed must be wholly despised.

The success of the intelligentsia in counteracting his influence was delayed among the uninstructed readers, but did affect those to whom critical dogma was of greater consequence, to the extent that reading Kipling became a discreditable occupation or a secret vice - what George Orwell described as "almost a shameful pleasure."⁸²

To the neophytes of belles-lettres, Kipling's very name was a reproach; he was the epitome of the recalcitrant

⁸²George Orwell: Critical Essays (London: Secker, 1946), p. 81

spirit. Not only had he refused to follow the "March of Mankind" but he had led others away from progress. He had been proved a false prophet; what he had written was manifestly false doctrine besides being out-of-date, unreadable, and lacking in artistry. He was banished to the children's shelves for a long exile.

Denied any kind of immortality by the judgment of a panel of his responsible contemporaries, he somehow contrived to outlast them. Orwell, who had his own reasons for disliking him yet generously admitted his special gifts, recognized his exceptional staying power and observed dispassionately:

Kipling is in the peculiar position of having been a byword for fifty years. During five literary generations every enlightened person has despised him, and at the end of that time nine-tenths of those enlightened persons are forgotten and Kipling is in some sense still there.⁸³

Peter Porter, the Australian poet, said of Kipling that he was "made of durable stuff - real emotions, real craftsmanship, real language, real courage," and concluded: "I would bet a lot of money he will still be read in 2065."⁸⁴

⁸³Orwell, p. 70.

⁸⁴The Listener, Apr. 8, 1965, p. 515.

The critics who followed his career, who first made and then demolished his reputation, did not live to recognize the irony of their performance or to note the discrepancy between what they were impelled to write and what they might have written had their convictions been less insistent and the circumstances less perplexed. Now, much that stood in the way of an impartial criticism has become irrelevant. The unpopular views, so well-expressed and readable, no longer require to be put down.

As early as 1939, a poet who could scarcely be expected to sympathize with Kipling stated the manifest truth that in the ultimate evaluation of any writer only the crafting of language mattered.

Time that is intolerant
Of the brave and innocent . . .
Worships language and forgives
Everyone by whom it lives . . .
Time that with this strange excuse
Pardons Kipling and his views . . . 85

⁸⁵W.H. Auden, "In Memory of W.B. Yeats."

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Contemporary Works 1889-1914:

- Adams, Francis. Essays in Modernity. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1899.
- Beerbohm, Max. A Christmas Garland. London: Heinemann, 1912.
- Bennett, Arnold. Books and Persons. London: Chatto and Windus, 1917.
- _____. Fame and Fiction: An Enquiry into Certain Popularities. London: Grant Richards, 1901.
- _____. Literary Taste: How to Form It. London: New Age Press, 1909.
- Benson, A.C. The Upton Letters. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1905.
- Bland, E. Nesbit. (ed.) Essays by Hubert Bland. London: Max Goschen Ltd., 1914.
- Charles, Cecil. Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Works. London: J. Hewetson and Son, 1913. (The Queen's Quartos).
- Chesterton, G.K. Heretics. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1905.
- Clemens, Will M. A Ken of Kipling. New York: New Amsterdam Book Co., 1899.
- Couch, A.T. Quiller. From a Cornish Window. Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith, 1906.
- Falls, Cyril. Rudyard Kipling: A Critical Study. London: Martin Secker, 1915.
- Gardiner, A.C. Prophets, Priests and Kings. London: Alston Rivers Ltd., 1908.

- Gosse, Edmund. Questions at Issue. London: Wm. Heinemann, 1893, pp. 255-293.
- _____. "English Literature." Encyclopaedia Britannica. 10th ed. (1902), IV, 256-258.
- Hopkins, R. Thurston. A Literary Appreciation. New York: Frederick A Stokes, 1915.
- James, William Price. "Rudyard Kipling." Encyclopaedia Britannica. 11th ed. (1910), XV, 825-826.
- Knowles, Frederic Lawrence. A Kipling Primer. Boston: Brown & Co., 1899.
- Lang, Andrew. Essays in Little. London: Henry & Co., 1891.
- Le Gallienne, Richard. Rudyard Kipling: A Criticism. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1900.
- Mair, G.H. Modern English Literature. London: William and Norgate, 1911.
- Mansford, M.F. and A. Wessels. Kiplingiana. New York: Mansford and Wessels, 1899.
- Matthews, Brander. Books and Play-Books. London: Osgood, McIlvaine & Co., 1895.
- Monkshood, G.F. and George Gamble. Rudyard Kipling: The Man and His Work. London: Greening & Co., Ltd., 1902.
- Murray, David Christie. Guesses at Truths. London: Hurst & Blackett, 1908.
- Palmer, John. Rudyard Kipling. New York: Holt, 1915.
- Parker, W.B. The Religion of Mr. Kipling. New York: Mansfield and Wessels, 1899.
- Peddicord, W.J. Rudyard Reviewed. Portland, Oregon: Press of Marsh Printing Co., 1900.
- Phelps, William Lyon. Essays on Modern Novelists. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1910.
- Robertson, John M. Rudyard Kipling: A Criticism. Madras: Reprinted from The Indian Review, 1905.

Scott, Dixon. Men of Letters. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917.

Stephens, A.G. The Red Pagan. Sidney: Bulletin Newspaper Co., Ltd., 1905.

Wells, H.G. The New Machiavelli. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1911.

Later Works:

Baker, Ernest A. The History of the English Novel. New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1964 [1936], X, 105-156.

Bates, H.E. The Modern Short Story. Boston: The Writer Inc., 1941.

Bodelsen, C.A. Aspects of Kipling's Art. Manchester: University Press, 1964.

Bowra, C.M. Poetry and Politics: 1900 - 1960. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966.

Braybrooke, Patrick. Kipling and his Soldiers. London: C.W. Daniel, 1925.

Brion, Marcel. Rudyard Kipling. Paris: La Nouvelle Revue Critique, 1929.

Brown, Hilton. Rudyard Kipling: A New Appreciation. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1945.

Carrington, C.E. Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1955.

Chevillon, Andre. Three Studies in English Literature. London: Heinemann, 1923.

Cohen, Morton. (ed.) Rudyard Kipling to Rider Haggard. The Record of a Friendship. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1965.

Cooke, Rupert Croft-. Rudyard Kipling. London: Home and Van Thal Ltd., 1948.

Cunliffe, J.W. English Literature during the Last Half Century. New York: Macmillan, 1923.

- Daiches, David. A Critical History of English Literature. Vol. II. New York: Ronald Press, 1960.
- Dobree, Bonamy. The Lamp and the Lute. London: Frank Caro, 1929.
- _____. Rudyard Kipling. London: Longman, Green & Co., 1951.
- _____. Rudyard Kipling: Realist and Fabulist. London: Oxford, 1967.
- Eliot, T.S. A Choice of Kipling's Verse. New York: Doubleday, 1962 [1941].
- Elwin, Malcolm. Old Gods Falling. London: Collins, 1939.
- Ensor, Sir Robert. England: 1870 - 1914, ed. Sir George Clark. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963 [1936]. The Oxford History of England.
- Gilbert, Elliot L. Kipling and the Critics. New York: University Press, 1965.
- Graham, Walter. English Literary Periodicals. New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1930.
- Harris, Frank. Contemporary Portraits. New York: Published by the Author, 1919.
- Hart, Walter Morris. Kipling: The Story Writer. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1918.
- Kipling, Rudyard. Something of Myself. London: Macmillan, 1937.
- Land, Myrick. The Fine Art of Literary Mayhem. New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1963.
- Léaud, Francis. La Poétique de Rudyard Kipling. Essai d'Interprétation Générale de son Oeuvre. Paris: Didier, 1952.
- Lucas, E.V. Post-Bag Diversion. London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1934.
- Maurois, Andre. Prophets and Poets. New York: Harper, 1935.
- Muddiman, Bernard. Men of the Nineties. London: Danielson, 1920.

- Orwell, George. Critical Essays. "Rudyard Kipling."
London: Secker, 1946.
- Pinto, Vivian de Sola. Crisis in English Poetry: 1880 - 1940.
London: Hutchinson, University Library, [1958].
- Raymond, E.T. Portraits of the New Century. London: Ernest
Benn Ltd., 1928.
- _____. Portraits of the Nineties. London: T. Fisher
Unwin Ltd., 1921.
- _____. Uncensored Celebrities. London: T. Fisher Unwin
Ltd., 1918.
- Rutherford, Andrew, ed. Kipling's Mind and Art. Edinburgh
& London: Oliver & Boyd, 1964.
- Sampson, George. "Rudyard Kipling," Encyclopaedia
Britannica. 13th ed. [1926], II, 638-639.
- Shanks, Edward. Rudyard Kipling: A Study in Literature and
Political Ideas. London: Macmillan, 1940.
- Stewart, J.I.M. Eight Modern Writers. Oxford: Clarendon
Press, 1963.
- Stewart, James McG. A.W. Yeats, ed. Rudyard Kipling: A
Bibliographical Catalogue. Toronto: University of
Toronto Press, 1959.
- Tomkins, J.M.S. The Art of Rudyard Kipling. London: Methuen
& Co., 1959.
- Wells, H.G. The Outline of History. Vol. II. New York:
Macmillan, 1920.
- West, Rebecca. The Court and the Castle. New Haven: Yale
University Press, 1957.
- Williams, Charles. Poetry at Present. Oxford: Clarendon
Press, [1930].

General Periodicals:

- "The Automobile in Fiction." Scribners. XLII (Oct. 1907), 507.

- Austin, Henry. "The Kipling Hysteria." The Dial, XXVI (May 16, 1899), 327.
- Blakemore, Trevor. "Rudyard Kipling: The Poet of Reality." The Poetry Review, April 1912, pp. 165-167.
- "The Brutal in Literature." Great Thoughts. London: Smith's, Aug. 15, 1914, p. 186.
- Chesterton, G.K. "Books to Read." Pall Mall Magazine, Dec. 1901, p. 573.
- Chevillon, Andre. "Rudyard Kipling." La Revue de Paris, Paris: Bureaux de la Revue de Paris, Mars-Avril 1899, II, 34-74 and 621-653.
- De Cordova, Rudolph. "The Present State of Literary Criticism in England." Great Thoughts. London, Nov. 1913, p. 240.
- Graves, Robert. "Pretense on Parnassus." Horizon, V (May 1963), 83-84.
- Hooker, Brian. "The Later Work of Mr. Kipling." North American Review. May 1911, pp. 721-732.
- Kennedy, J. "Anglo-Indian Novelists and Hinduism." The East and the West. April 1903, pp. 171-181.
- "Kipling in America." Anon. Review of Reviews. April 1899, pp. 420-421.
- Maurice, Arthur Bartlett. "Kipling's Men." The Bookman. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., Dec. 1898, pp. 348-350.
- _____. "Kipling's Verse People." The Bookman. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., March 1899, pp. 57-62.
- _____. "Kipling's Women." The Bookman. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., Jan. 1899, pp. 479-481.
- Moore, George. "Kipling and Loti." Pall Mall Magazine. July 1908, pp. 375-379.
- "Mr. Rudyard Kipling's Writings." The Times. March 25, 1890, p. 3.
- "Mr. Kipling and London." Anon. Great Thoughts. London; Oct. 4, 1913, p. 82.

"Mr. Kipling at the Crossroads." The Bookman. New York, Dec. 1898, pp. 350-351.

Newbolt, Sir Henry. "An Essay on Criticism." The Monthly Review, Feb. 1903, pp. 2-3.

_____. "Kipling the Poet." The Book Monthly, Jan. 1913, X, 234-235.

Newman, Ernest. "Mr. Kipling's Stories." The Free Review, Dec. 1893, pp. 236-248.

Plater, C.D. "The Cult of Kipling." The Month. Jan. 1900, pp. 28-33.

"Poet of the Empire," (Editorial) Great Thoughts. Oct. 4, 1913, p. 3.

Powell, F. York. "Rudyard Kipling," The English Illustrated Magazine, Dec. 1903, XXX, 295-296.

"The Present State of Criticism in England." Great Thoughts. Oct. 4, 1913, p. 240.

"Rudyard Kipling as Poet." Anon. Great Thoughts. Aug. 15, 1914, p. 312 and Aug. 22, 1914, p. 325.

Sarath, Roy. "Rudyard Kipling Seen Through Hindu Eyes." North American Review. CXCIX, (Feb. 1914), 271-281.

Shepperson, George. "The World of Rudyard Kipling." Sunday Times. May 6, 1962, p. 29.

Warner, W. Lee-. "A Review of Kim." The Empire Review. ed. C. Kinlock Cooke, II (Nov. 1901), No. 10, 437-441.

Wilde, Oscar. "The True Function and Value of Criticism." The Nineteenth Century. Sept. 1890, p. 455.

Special Periodicals:

The articles and reviews selected for detailed study have been listed in chronological order.

The Athenaeum

- Apr. 26, 1890. pp. 527-528. Anon. rev., Departmental Ditties
and Soldiers Three.
- July 5, 1890. p. 32. The Story of the Gadsbys.
- Sept. 13, 1890. p. 348. In Black and White.
- Dec. 27, 1890. pp. 886-887. Wee Willie Winkie and Under the
Deodars.
- Apr. 18, 1891. pp. 497-498. The Light that Failed.
- Aug. 29, 1891. pp. 279-280. Life's Handicap.
- May 14, 1892. p. 629. Barrack-Room Ballads.
- July 8, 1893. p. 55. Many Inventions.
- June 16, 1894. p. 776. The Jungle Book.
- Feb. 29, 1896. p. 278. The Second Jungle Book.
- Oct. 30, 1897. pp. 589-590. Captains Courageous.
- Oct. 15, 1898. p. 521. The Day's Work.
- Oct. 14, 1899. pp. 515-516. Stalky and Co.
- Mar. 3, 1900. p. 272. From Sea to Sea.
- June 30, 1900. p. 810. Anon. rev., Le Gallienne.
- Oct. 26, 1901. pp. 466-467. Kim.
- Oct. 4, 1902. p. 447. "Juvenile Literature."
- Oct. 10, 1903. p. 474. Five Nations.
- Oct. 8, 1904. p. 476. Traffics and Discoveries.
- Oct. 6, 1906. p. 404. Puck of Pook's Hill.
- Oct. 16, 1909. pp. 453-454. Actions and Reactions.

Oct. 22, 1910. p. 483. Rewards and Fairies.

Nov. 30, 1912. p. 155. The Collected Verse of Rudyard Kipling.

Blackwood's Magazine

Nov. 1891. pp. 728-734. Anon. rev., Life's Handicap.

Feb. 1897. p. 231. "The Indian Mutiny in Fiction."

Nov. 1897. pp. 615-629. "Lord Tennyson."

Oct. 1898. pp. 470-482. "The Works of Mr. Kipling."

Dec. 1901. pp. 793-795. Anon. rev., of Kim.

Feb. 1906. p. 278. Report on General Election.

The Bookman (London)

I (Oct. 1891), 28-30. Anon. rev., "The Work of Rudyard Kipling."

II (June 1892), 90. G.A. Simcox, "Barrack-Room Ballads."

II (Aug. 1892), 151. Anon. rev., The Naulahka.

IV (July 1893), 113-114. Y.Y., "Many Inventions."

VI (July 1894), 116. G.Y., "The Jungle Book."

VII (Feb. 1895), 139-140. S.R. Crockett, "Some Tales of Mr. Kipling."

IX (Feb. 1896), 158. Anon. rev., "Another Jungle Book."

XI (Dec. 1896), 65-67. Y.Y. and A.M., "Symposium: The Seven Seas."

XIII (Nov. 1897), 47-48. Anon. rev., Captains Courageous.

XV (Nov. 1898), 52-53. Anon. rev., "Mr. Kipling's New Book."

XVII (Nov. 1899), 44-46. T.E. Page and Arthur H. Walker, "Kipling at School."

XX (Nov. 1901), 18. Y.Y., "The New Kipling."

- XXIII (Nov. 1902), 57-58. G.K. Chesterton, "Mr. Kipling's 'Just So Stories.'"
- XXIII (Jan. 1903), 142-143. Wilfred Whitten, "Mr. Kipling: Where Does He Stand."
- XXV (Nov. 1903), 90-94. Y.Y., "Two Poets - Two Patriotisms."
- XXVII (Nov. 1904), 76-78. Y.Y., "Traffics and Mafficks."
- XXXI (Nov. 1906), 81-82. Alfred Noyes, "Kipling the Mystic."
- XXXVII (Nov. 1909), 99-100. William Hope Hodgson, "The Magic of Kipling."
- XXXIX (Nov. 1910), 97-98. H.A. Hinkson, "Mr. Kipling, Magician."

The Contemporary Review

- LIX (Mar. 1891), 365-371. James Barrie, "Mr. Kipling's Stories."
- LXXVI (Nov. 1899), 778-788. Robert Buchanan, "The Voice of the Hooligan."
- LXXVII (Jan. 1900), 27-38. Walter Besant, "Is it the Voice of the Hooligan?"
- LXXVII (Feb. 1900), 221-226. R. Buchanan, "The Ethics of Criticism."
- LXXX (Nov. 1901), 754. Anon. rev., "Kim."
- LXXXIV (Nov. 1903), 758-759, 904-905. Anon. rev., The Five Nations.
- LXXXVI (Nov. 1904), 763-764. Anon. rev., Traffics and Discoveries.
- XCI (May 1907), 460. Anon. rev., "Puck of Pook's Hill."

The Edinburgh Review

- CLXXIV (July 1891), 132-151, 416. Anon. rev., "Indian Tales."
- CLXXXVII (Jan. 1898), 203-226. Anon. rev., "The Works of Mr. Rudyard Kipling."

CXCVI (July 1902), 42-50. Anon. rev., "War and Poetry."

CCXX (Oct. 1914), 416. Walter de La Mare, "Popular Poetry."

The Fortnightly Review

L (Nov. 1891), 696-700. Francis Adams, "Rudyard Kipling."

LIV (Nov. 1893), 185-189. Francis Adams, "Mr. Kipling's Verse."

LXXII (Aug. 1902), 290. Walter Sichel, "Some Phases in Fiction."

LXXIV (Nov. 1903), 465. G.K. Chesterton, "The Political Poetry of Mr. William Watson."

The Quarterly Review

CLXXVI (July 1892), 132-159. Anon. rev., "Mr. Kipling's Tales."

CLXXXVI (Oct. 1897) 324-330. Anon. rev., "The Seven Seas."

CXCII (July 1900), 170. Anon. rev., "The Conditions of Great Poetry."

CXCII (Oct. 1900), 527-535. Anon. rev., "English Patriotic Poetry."

CXCVI (July 1902), 52-55. Anon. rev., "The Romance of India."

CCII (July 1905), 49-51. Anon. rev., "Comparing Kipling with Pierre Loti."

CCXXII (Oct. 1915), 395. Anon. rev., "The War and the Poets."

The Saturday Review (London)

Aug. 10, 1889. pp. 165-166. Anon. rev., In Black and White and Under the Deodars.

April 4, 1891. pp. 417-418. The Light that Failed.

Sept. 12, 1891. p. 304. Life's Handicap.

Nov. 7, 1891. p. 537. "The Flag of England."

- May 14, 1892. pp. 580-581. "Mr. Kipling's Ballad."
- June 17, 1893. pp. 659-660. Many Inventions.
- June 16, 1894. pp. 639-640. Jungle Book.
- Dec. 21, 1895. p. 843. The Second Jungle Book.
- Aug. 1, 1896. p. 129. Le Gallienne.
- Nov. 21, 1896. pp. 549-550. "The Seven Seas."
- Apr. 24, 1897. p. 443. "The Vampire."
- May 14, 1898. p. 530. Le Gallienne.
- Nov. 4, 1899. p. iii. Stalky and Co.
- Dec. 9, 1899. p. viii. "Yarns of School and Sea."
- Jan. 20, 1900. p. 79-80. Correspondence Jan. - Apr. 1900.
- Jan. 27, 1900. p. 106.
- Feb. 3, 1900, p. 139.
- Feb. 10, 1900. pp. 173-174.
- Feb. 17, 1900. p. 204.
- Feb. 24, 1900. p. 237.
- Mar. 3, 1900. p. 268.
- Apr. 7, 1900. pp. 427-428.
- Aug. 3, 1901. pp. 135-136. "Mr. Kipling's Descent."
- Oct. 12, 1901. pp. 466-467. Kim.
- Dec. 6, 1902. p. viii. The Just So Stories.
- Feb. 14, 1903. p. 199. Max Beerbohm, "Kipling's Entire."
- Oct. 31, 1903. pp. 548-549. Anon. rev., The Five Nations
"Mr. Kipling Journalist."
- Oct. 15, 1904. p. 494. "Reform and Mr. Kipling."

Oct. 6, 1906. p. 430. "Mr. Kipling's Latest Adventure."

Oct. 16, 1909. pp. iii-iv. "Vigour or Rant."

Oct. 15, 1910. pp. 485-486. Rewards and Fairies.