

KIPLING, Rudyard (1865-1936)

Millions of children have spent happy hours with Rudyard Kipling's 'The Jungle Books' and 'Just So Stories' about the land and people of India long ago. Kipling was a master storyteller. His songs, which are written in a strong marching rhythm, have the same popular style as his other writing.

Rudyard Kipling knew India well. He was born in Bombay on Dec. 30, 1865, when India was part of the British Empire. Beyond the cities and highways of British India, where the English lived, lay strange primitive country. Rudyard and his younger sister, Alice, had an Indian nurse who told them wonderful tales about the jungle animals. These stories remained in the boy's memory.

When Rudyard was about 6, he and his sister were sent to England to be educated. They were left in the unhappy home of a retired naval officer at Southsea, where the boy was often punished by being forbidden to read. Rudyard almost ruined his eyes by reading in secret every book he could lay his hands on. In the story "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep," Kipling later described the six miserable years the two children spent in this "house of desolation."

In 1877 his mother came home from India and remade his world. He and his sister were taken to Devonshire to spend the summer with her. The next year his father came home on leave and took Rudyard to see the great Paris Exhibition, the beginning of Kipling's lifelong love for France. At the end of this holiday the boy was sent to the United Service College at Westward Ho in Devonshire to be educated for the army. Rudyard read constantly French literature, the English Bible, English poets, and storytellers such as Defoe. In this school also he developed a passionate faith in England and the English people. His years at Devonshire are recorded in 'Stalky & Co.', one of the best stories about schoolboys.

Kipling's father was now principal of the Mayo School of Art at Lahore, in northwest India. When Rudyard was almost 17, he joined his family there. He became a reporter on the one daily newspaper in the Punjab, the *Civil and Military Gazette*. To get material for his newspaper articles he traveled around India for about seven years and came to know the country as few other Englishmen did.

Now Kipling began to write the poems and short stories about the British soldier in India that established his reputation as a writer. Such books as 'Plain Tales from the Hills', published in 1888, 'Soldiers Three' (1888), and 'Barrack-Room Ballads' (1892) emerged. The slim volume of 'Departmental Ditties' (1886) he edited, printed, published, and sold himself.

In 1890 his book 'The Light That Failed' told of his efforts to make a living as a writer. When his reputation was firmly established, he married an American, Caroline Balestier, and started off with her on a trip around the world. They settled in Vermont, where their first child was born, and where Kipling wrote the tales that were to make up his 'Jungle Books' (1894, 1895). Kipling's father visited them and made the famous drawings that were published first, with the stories, in *St. Nicholas*.

Their family physician had once served with the Gloucester fishing fleet, and he persuaded Kipling to go to Gloucester for the annual memorial service for the men who had been lost or drowned during the year. From this experience came the inspiration for 'Captains Courageous' (1897).

After four years in America, the Kiplings decided that their real home was in England. They rented a house in a Sussex village, where in 1897 their only son, John, was born.

The story that is known as 'Kim' had been in Kipling's mind for years. Now, stimulated by his father's keen interest, he began to write it. The book was first published in 1901.

Long visits to South Africa, where the Kiplings formed a friendship with Cecil Rhodes, and another trip through North America varied the Sussex life. Early in 1902 they bought a house near the Sussex Downs. All around it was land that had been cultivated since before the Norman Conquest. Thus, stories about Roman times, 'Puck of Pook's Hill' (1906) and 'Rewards and Fairies' (1910), were begun. Volumes

of history cannot give the vital impression that these stories give of England's past. Together they form a chain of "scents and sights and sounds" that reaches to the very heart of England and its history.

In 1907 Kipling was awarded the Nobel prize for literature. World War I brought personal tragedy when his son was killed fighting in France with the Irish Guards. More and more he withdrew from the active scene, spending the greater part of the year in his Sussex farmhouse. When he was nearly 70 years old, he began to write his autobiography, 'Something of Myself'. This curiously revealing book was published a year after his death.

Kipling died on Jan. 18, 1936, in the same month that brought the death of England's king, George V. The writer was buried in Westminster Abbey among England's honored sons.

1