

The Kipling Journal.

The Organ of the Kipling Society.

QUARTERLY

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News and Notes.

The Society is indebted to Mr. G. C. Beresford for the photograph from which the block for the frontispiece has been made.

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Mr. Rudyard Kipling has accepted the invitation of Lord Crewe and the executive committee of the British Institute in Paris to become a member of the London committee.

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There have been three meetings of the Society since No. 17 was published. The sixth meeting of the session was held in The Rubens Rooms, Buckingham Palace Road, S.W.I., on April 15, 1931, when Mr. B. C. Allen, I.C.S., read a paper entitled "Kipling and Jungle Life." It will be found elsewhere in this issue. Miss Flora Reader sang "Two Seal Songs," "Our Lady of the Snows," and another. Colonel C. H. Milburn was in the Chair. On May 7, another evening meeting was held in The Rembrandt Rooms, Thurloe Place, South Kensington, S.W.7., when Professor L. F. Rushbrook Williams spoke on Kipling and India. We hope to present this talk in the next issue of the Journal. Miss Beatrix Gardyne and Mr. Eric Young sang, and Major Gen. J. D. McLachlan was in the Chair. An extra and Special Meeting was held at the

bandies of a wheelbarrow, and two small wooden rollers on the struts below the handles. It was calculated to shove any wood out of its way as it was pushed along the deck." The captain was informed that the Shove Wood had been found, and ought to have inspected it if only to discover what it was like. He forgot all about the matter until the Admiral was before the contraption. "What the devil's that?" he asked, and was informed that it was the next item in the inventory. As completely at sea as the rest had been, he inquired next whether it worked all right, and was told that it had not been taken into use. His comment was "These new patterns are not as good as the old. If not satisfactory, send in a report." Two days after the inspection the mail brought to the admiral and the captain simultaneously an official errata slip which ran: "List No. 4063A, Item 35. For "Shove Wood I" read "Shovel Wooden I."

The Rhinoceros—His Spots

ON HEARING OF A NEW NOT-SO STORY.

I thought I knew those *Just-so Stories*,
 Those gems midst Kipling's other stories.
 There must have been some new edition,
 Which I must have missed—Oil sad omission.
 Oh, do be good and give the titles
 Of other Tales for my recitals.
 Perhaps we're told how Storks, the Whale
 Grew a great hump above his tail.
 Or how the Camel went by boat
 To Timbuctoo and got his throat.
 Or how the Elephant's Papa
 Got a new skin in Af-ri-ca.
 While blue dog Dingo, in Australia,
 As runner-up was such a failure.
 The Leopard walked his little lone
 Telling the Cat in an undertone,
 That the Crab had stamped on the butterfly
 And lived on Armadillo pie.
 And I long to hear in the R.K.J.
 How the spots on the Rhino came to stay.

G.E.F.

Kipling and Jungle Life.

PASSAGES FROM A TALK BY MR. B. C. ALLEN, I.C.S., AT THE
RUBENS ROOMS ON APRIL 15.

I SUPPOSE that one of the most salient qualities of Kipling is his extraordinary gift of realism. He brings places before your very eyes, his characters are not characters in a story, they are men and women living their lives before you. Take one of his more recent stories. From men's earliest childhood one has known of the apostle Paul. But till a few weeks ago he has been for me a pure abstraction. He was, I know, the author of 'epistles,' a very different thing from letters; epistles full of pitfalls for the translator and commentator; he had had, I knew, various remarkable adventures. But for me he had always remained an apostle, a thing remote from human life. Then Kipling writes a story and Paul becomes a living human being, he becomes alive.

Take again the description of the Lamas' march into the Himalayas. "Through the speckled shadow of the great deodar forests; through oak feathered and plumed with ferns; birch, ilex, rhododendron and pine, out on to the bare hillsides' slippery sunburnt grass and back into the woodlands, cooler again, till oak gave way to bamboo and palm of the valley."

Think, too, of the picture of Shamlegh. "A huge pasture ground ran up fan shaped to the living snow. At its base was, perhaps half an acre of flat land on which stood a few soil and timber huts. Behind them . . . for, hill fashion, they were perched on the edge of all things . . . the ground fell sheer two thousand feet to Shamlegh midden where never yet man has set foot."

But it is in the *Jungle Books* that Kipling really gives himself to the Jungle, and in the course of his divagations reaches my own province of Assam. Even Assam is not Eden; the mosquitoes sometimes buzz, the rain is sometimes too penetrating, but the highest praise I still can give to a beauty spot like Corsica in this man-handled continent is to say that it reminds me of Assam. You may think me rather crazy, but I can cite that great traveller, Sir Thomas Holditch, as a witness on my side. "It is not," he says, "the large flat solitudes nor the cold craggy magnificence of ice fields and snow-capped peaks of the north west that first touch the chords of memory

of the shelved and antiquated Anglo-Indian official. Rather it is the butterflies and the birds, the wild beauty of Bhutan or the deep, silent, tiger-haunted forests and savannahs of the mystical valley of the Brahmaputra.

In "Toomai of the Elephants," Kipling takes us to the Garo Hills, that tumbled mass of forest-clad mountains at the western end of the Assam Range. Petersen Sahib's successors abandoned the district as they 'had swept all the hills clear of all the elephants,' but enough have been left to make the scanty population adhere to the good old custom of sleeping like birds in trees. The habit is not without its solid advantages. The route which we once were following was infested by a man eating tiger who had taken a large toll. And at night the chaukidar, after telling us of his numerous friends and relations who had been taken for rides by tigers, would retire to a little bamboo hut built in the fork of an elephant proof tree some thirty feet or so aloft, leaving us to sleep on the ground in grass huts through whose walls a tiger could force its way without the slightest difficulty. And though we kept a loaded rifle handy and as a matter of fact slept soundly enough, one could not help feeling that in that sort of country there was a great deal to be said for sleeping up aloft.

Unlike little Toomai, I have never seen the elephants' dance, but I have seen their dancing floor. We were following a track made by wild elephants through the forest, and presently we came to a place where the earth had been rammed and hammered in the way that Kipling describes. In these wild forests, as most of you doubtless know, the first paths are laid out by animals, and there is no greater road maker than the elephant. The track twists and turns, here avoiding a huge tree, there skirting a pool, never keeping quite straight, for who can advance straight through a forest? And I always imagine that many of our winding roads in the south of England are still following the tracks originally made by wild animals through the forest hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years ago. We are a conservative people, and I must confess that it pleases me to think, when strolling down an English lane, that I may be following a route traced out before there was such a thing as the English Channel.

Kipling has not laid on his colours too thickly when describing the removal of the elephants from the Kheddah. Strangely enough, they offer little or no objection to the fixing of the

cables round their necks. But when they feel that they are tied the fun begins. I have seen a large elephant kneel down, stand partly on his head and shove with its hind feet with all its might against the side of the elephant to which it was roped. I have seen an elephant jib and then come through the gate like an avalanche, dragging with it the two tame elephants to which it was bound. They dashed into a large tree, boiled and surged round it till they dug it up by the roots and then disappeared into the jungle. You may wonder why the tree was left standing there. But wild elephants are most suspicious; there must be nothing to suggest a trap, and the stockade itself is covered so thickly with creepers and green jungle that even a man can walk into it without realising what he has done. In "Toomai of the Elephants" I believe that I have detected a mistake in the detail with which Kipling imparts such a wonderful air of reality to his stories. One of the Mahouts says: "Bapree Bap, how many windings has the Dihang river? Here is another ford and we must swim the calves." Defenders of the infallibility of the master might argue that "How many windings has the Dihang river" is merely an exclamation. But I doubt whether Mahouts would swear by the Dihang. As you know it is the name given to the Tsanpo in Thibet where it breaks through the Himalayas and flows south to what is called the Brahmaputra. The Tsanpo, the Dihang and the Brahmaputra are, of course, merely three names for three different sections of the same river, though it is only of recent years that the Dihang has been even superficially and inadequately explored. The people who live in those hills do not welcome strangers, and express their disapproval in ways that even the dullest must understand, for so long as he is allowed to understand anything at all, so that in no part of its course is it much visited by mahouts. I suggest such a thing with considerable hesitation, but it really looks to be as though Homer had nodded and was under the impression that the Dihang was a river of the Garo Hills.

Everyone who loves the Jungle must feel his heart stirred by the *Jungle Boohs*, and few of the stories are more true to life than the one called "Letting in the Jungle." All over the wilder parts of Assam, men are filching away the jungle and letting in the plough. But in many cases they are only reclaiming what were once the kindly works of men which were swallowed up by the jungle many years ago. I have ridden through village

after village, depopulated by the terrible outbreak of Kala Azar which burned up the country like a slow fire at the end of the last century. At Dimapar in the centre of the Nambar there are the ruins of a considerable city, and indeed the whole of this enormous forest is thought to have been at one time under cultivation. I once had an encounter with a rhinoceros in a "tank, and as you know the rhinoceros is no friend of man and is only to be found at a great distance from his haunts. That particular engagement showed how correct Kipling is when he says that animals never look up. I broke through a belt of high jungle and dropped down into a tank. At the same moment a huge rhino was doing precisely the same thing at the opposite end, and we advanced through the water to meet one another. He evidently neither saw me or my mahout. It was before the days of h.v. rifles and, as my elephant was a very slow one, I did not kill him with my first bullet, and never saw him again. As a matter of fact rhino take a lot of punishment. On another occasion shooting with a friend at dusk we loosed off two barrels of an eight bore and one of a .577. The rhino turned and we tracked him till dark. The next day we followed the trail till we lost it in a tangle of others, and we came to the conclusion that we must have missed him altogether. Two days later we saw vultures gathered and going to the spot found our friend lying there with three bullet holes that you could have covered with the palm of your hand, just behind the shoulder.

But to get back to " Letting in the Jungle;" dotted about, especially near the frontier, are the remains of brick buildings. The Government of the day became ' spineless,' as our Moslem friends say, the hill tribes came down and the abandoned palaces were soon reduced to this order. For some years past the tide has been flowing the other way and the jungle has been driven back. But the Assamese cannot keep the hillmen out, and if once the Gurkhas cease to guard the frontier much of Assam will revert to the condition of nature.

In " How Fear Came " Kipling describes how the primeval simplicity of Eden was broken by the reckless conduct of the tiger who killed first a buck and then a man. Are wild animals really wild, are savages really savage, or have both the benignity shown by the pacifist towards all those who abstain from hinting that possibly he may be wrong? I once embroiled myself in controversy with a learned man who argued that primitive

man was naturally peaceful, and poured scorn on one of the Cecils who had ventured to suggest that he was not. I cited savages I had known, who though in many ways attractive, were not people to whom I would willingly entrust my head. My learned adversary swept down on me with reports of travellers who declared that primitive pygmies were kind-hearted till aroused. He rather cut the ground from under my feet by laying' down that man ceased to be primitive if he had any possessions, and that however savage you might appear to be, you were really the victim of over-civilization if you attempted to grow any crops for your own consumption. I countered by asserting that it was natural to primitive man to progress and gradually grow crops, breed animals and do other things, and that it was not really safe to assume that pygmies who had remained in a state of arrested development were typical of the primitive man from whom you and I have evolved, in as much as they lacked the capacity for progress which normal primitive man had obviously possessed. My learned opponent, however, remained almost viciously unmoved by my arguments, and still contended that man was born essentially good and peaceful, and that it was only the possession of property that has converted him into the quarrelsome thing he now is.

I have never had the opportunity of meeting the purely primitive person, for though I once spent a happy hour with a gentleman who was supporting life on grass-hoppers, this was merely an unpleasant interlude in his career.

I have met people who wore no clothes worth mentioning, though this I understand is now a symptom of the higher forms of Teutonic culture, and I have met people who have been head hunters in the past, and are not likely, if Indian politics continue in their present line of development, to become head hunters once again. My own belief is that savages, if, *pace* my learned friend, I may dare to apply that term to persons who have been so corrupted by civilization as to grow a little rice, are rather quick of temper, I do not suggest that they go about biting everyone without cause like mad dogs, though head hunters can be rather troublesome. But in my experience they are quick to take offence, and when they do, their methods are not those of which the League of Nations would approve. The same holds good of animals. We have established sanctuaries in Assam, and in them the game is extraordinarily tame. Wild buffalo browse around you while you fish, and I have

known wild deer stroll calmly out of the forest and lie down barely a hundred yards away. I have seen deer and a wild pig, rather a curious combination, nuzzling one another. Elephants I consider never to be really wild or really tame. I have known them to come up in the stockade 24 hours after their capture and take plantains from my hand. On the other hand, elephants with many years of good character behind them, will break out suddenly like one of Ibsen's heroines. The rhinoceros is always an unfriendly beast, and most elephants are afraid of him. I doubt whether he ever was really the home pet. Tigers usually are harmless, to man I mean, and when they kill man for food, they kill for a good cause, though it is humiliating to feel that you are a potential joint. One tiger I heard of, apparently killed men for pleasure, but he was probably a homicidal maniac. Elephants also, apart from going musth, occasionally destroy life and property in a most unreasonable way, and as Kipling says, "of all things in the Jungle the wild elephant enraged is the most destructive." As a rule animals will let you alone unless they are provoked, but it takes remarkably little to provoke many of them. This is Kipling's view, for he tells us that "None of the Jungle people like being disturbed, and all are ready to fly at an intruder."

Apart from the doles and monkeys, nearly all the animals in the *Jungle Boohs* are most attractive creatures. Baloo, the old brown bear, is the very embodiment of kindness and wisdom. Our black bears in Assam were the absolute converse: stupid and savage, though their savagery very possibly was partly due to stupidity. The Bandar-log are people whom Kipling holds in small esteem. "They are always just going to have a leader, and laws and customs of their own, but they never did, because their memories would not hold over from day to day, and so they compromised things by making up a saying, 'What the Bandar-log think now the Jungle will think later.' They boast and chatter, and pretend that they are a great people about to do great affairs in the Jungle, but the falling of a nut turns their minds to laughter and all is forgotten." There is little doubt that Kipling felt that there are certain sections of the human race to whom this description might justly be applied. But worthless though they may be, the description of the rush through air is a fine one. "His escort would rush him up to a tree till he felt the thinnest topmost branches crackle and bend under them, and then with a cough and a

whoop, would fling themselves into the air outward and downward, and bring up hanging by their hands or their feet to the lower limbs of the next tree. Sometimes he could see for miles and miles across the still green jungle as a man on the top of a mast can see for miles across the sea, and then the branches and leaves would lash him across the face and he and his two guards would be almost down to earth again." Those of you who from some little clearing on a hill have looked out across miles and miles of Indian forest will appreciate that description.

Of the wild dog I have little knowledge: he may be as nasty a customer as Kipling says. But I can recall one fine beast with bushy tail and glossy coat, who was a real thing of beauty as he sunned himself on the bank of a forest stream. According to Kipling, Mysa, the bull buffalo, has nearly the worst temper of anyone in the jungle. That is not my experience. With us bison are much more dangerous, as they are apt to double on their tracks and charge from the side the shikari following them. But how he hits off the startled buffalo when he describes the great dripping bull breaking out of his wallow like a shell exploding.

But what wisdom is there in many of the jungle laws. "Strike first and then give tongue," and "sorrow never stays punishment, but punishment settles all scores." What humour in its inhabitants, Kaa, Ikki, who is 'full of stories half heard and very badly told'; Bagheera who checks Kaa's 'there are tales I could tell that'—with a "that need a clear night when we are well fed to praise properly." Kaa the thirty foot python who complains that the branches are not what they were when he was young, "rotten twigs and dry boughs are they all."

There is wisdom, too, in the adjutant in "The Undertaker," who holds that "To be clever is one thing; to dust, sweep and sprinkle seven times a day wearies the very gods themselves." Take again this description of his feelings after eating something in Calcutta. 'Immediately I was afflicted with an excessive cold which, beginning in my crop, ran down to the extreme end of my toes, and deprived me even of speech . . . The chief wonder of the matter, setting aside that marvellous coldness, was that there was nothing at all in my crop when I had finished my lamentings.'

The adjutant had done his very best to describe his feelings after swallowing a seven pound lump of Wenham Lake ice."

I have had hardly any personal experience of muggars. In Assam they are rare, though we have many gharials, who take a heavy toll of fish, but leave men as a rule alone. I knew one poor fellow who was grievously mauled by one, but as he had inadvertently driven his fish spear into it, he could hardly complain if it paid him back in kind. As Kipling says, a mortally wounded crocodile can get away into the water 99 times out of 100, so they afford poor sport, and being let alone increase greatly in numbers. Pelicans, cormorants, porpoises and gharials, are a perfect pest to our fisheries, and we have no machinery to keep them down.

In "The Tomb of His Ancestors," Kipling describes with unerring touch the persistence of the tradition of administrators amongst the jungle tribes. As he says, India is full of the tombs of forgotten Englishmen. They are to be found on the old frontier between Bengal and Assam, covering the remains of traders who lived and bartered there nearly 150 years ago, when the Brahmaputra valley was still under native rule. One I knew belonged to an adventurer in the Khasi Hills, who had taken a lease of certain lime quarries for as long as he remained above ground. His heirs to maintain their title buried him in a masonry vault whose floor rested on and not under the earth.

To those of us who have known and loved the jungle, the great gift that Kipling offers is to recall the jungles of our youth. To those who know the forests of the Central Provinces his books make most appeal, but even in outliers like myself they awaken poignant memories. Once more I can hear the water clattering down the rapids, and see the little waves shimmering under the moon. Once more I hear the elephants trumpeting and the peacocks calling in the forest, the cry of the barking deer at night, and the curious rasping noise of the leopard seeking his prey. The charm of the jungle lies in the fact that here one sees the earth as God made it, here for a space one turns back the clock and lives for a time with primitive man. And it is Kipling whom we have to thank for unlocking these fragrant chambers in our memories.