



The
KIPLING JOURNAL

Published quarterly by the

KIPLING SOCIETY



MARCH 1978

VOL. XLV

NO. 205

CONTENTS

NEWS AND NOTES.	2
By Roger Lancelyn Green	
WAYS OF LOOKING AT 'THE GARDENER'.	5
By Mrs. G. H. Newsom	
"THE UNFADING GENIUS OF RUDYARD KIPLING" ...	10
By Kingsley Amis	
KIPLING AND JACK FISHER'S NAVY.	13
By Rear-Admiral P. W. Brock, C.B., D.S.O.	
HON. SECRETARY'S NOTES.	14
LETTER BAG.	15

THE Council of the Kipling Society has decided that subscriptions for 1978 must be increased. All costs—printing, rent, administration and postage—have grown since 1975, when subscriptions were last reviewed. Moreover, some members are paying at rates long out-dated.

The Council therefore gives notice that in 1978 the only rates of subscription will be as follows:

	£ per year
Individual Member (U.K.)	4.00
Individual Member (Overseas)	5.00 or USA \$10.00
Junior Member (under 18 years of age)	2.00 or USA \$5.00
Corporate Member (University Library and the like) (U.K.)	8.00
Corporate Member (Overseas)	10.00 or USA \$20.00

Please revise your Bankers' Orders in accordance with these rates.

Please note that the Journal will not be sent to any member whose subscription is not paid at the new rate.

THE KIPLING SOCIETY

Forthcoming Meetings

COUNCIL MEETINGS 1978

At 50 Eaton Place, SW1, on Wednesdays 15 March, 21 June, and 13 December, at 14.30 hours. Details about the September Council will be announced in the Minutes.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On *Wednesday 13 September*, immediately before the Discussion Meeting.

DISCUSSION MEETINGS—CHANGE OF VENUE - IMPORTANT—PLEASE NOTE

Discussion meetings will be held at 'The Clarence', a pub in Whitehall, on the East side, quite near Trafalgar Square Tube station.

Wednesday 12 April 1978: Mrs. Bagwell Purefoy on 'Some of my favourite Kipling Poems'.

Wednesday 12 July 1978: Angus Wilson, CBE, C.Litt, author of 'The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling'.

Wednesday 13 September 1978: Shamus O. D. Wade on 'Kipling and the Bent Copper'.

Wednesday 15 November 1978: Miss A. M. D. Ashley on 'I would not call them Poets'.

VISIT TO BATEMAN'S

By courtesy of the Administrator, National Trust, members will be welcome to a private visit to Bateman's on Friday 12 May 1978. Lunch at THE BEAR in Burwash will be available to members who like to foregather there. Tea will be available at Bateman's.

THE KIPLING JOURNAL

published quarterly by

THE KIPLING SOCIETY

VOL. XLV. NO 205

MARCH 1978

NEWS AND NOTES

'THE STRANGE RIDE OF RUDYARD KIPLING'

It is difficult to know what to say about Mr. Angus Wilson's "critical biography" of Kipling. It adds relatively little to our knowledge of his life—but it does not profess to do so. "The inter-relation of the real world and the imagined in his art is my central subject," Mr. Wilson tells us, and he leads us persuasively through most of Kipling's work, and strikes many an unexpected and illuminating spark from material which one would have thought already over-quarried. On the whole he tends to place the earlier writing at the top of Kipling's achievements, with *Kim* as the crowning glory: "It is this Indian vision that Kipling will surely above all be remembered by, for the British Indian scene (native and Anglo-Indian) is a composition of relationships that no one else has ever put on paper, and no one else has ever made into a consistent social metaphor for human existence. A very strange man expressed himself here through a very strange, now historical, phenomenon. Against this, the obvious imperfections of the young Kipling's mind and the crudities of his craftsmanship in the early stories seem of little importance . . . all these are minor flaws in a great East Window that shines and glints and darkens and dazzles as nothing else in any literature. There are some truly inferior stories among the scores of his Indian tales and more mediocre ones, and enough masterpieces—but the vision should be taken as a whole from the first tale, 'Lispeth' in *Plain Tales from the Hills* to her reappearance in *Kim*—should be taken good and bad alike, with *Departmental Ditties* and *Barrack Room Ballads* thrown in." Though critical of some of the Jungle stories, Mr. Wilson picks out 'Purun Bhagat' and 'The Undertakers' for special mention, and maintains that "the crown of the two books is 'The King's Ankus', Kipling's best use of myth in all his work,"—but for some reason says that the "ankus" is an "elephant yoke", when it is really a goad: "It was made by men to thrust into the heads of the Sons of Hathi, so that the blood should pour out," as Bagheera tells Mowgli—and Mr. Wilson also calls Bagheera a leopard!

Many Kipling lovers will agree with his conviction that 'The Wish House' is "probably Kipling's most successful single story; certainly his best story in the psychological fashion that so many recent critics, mistakenly in my opinion, take for the necessary sign of maturity in fiction." But it is a pity that to praise this story he has to denigrate 'An Habitation Enforced' and 'My Son's Wife' which many readers (myself included) place as high or higher. But here we come back to one

of the great delights of Kiplingites—trying to decide on our own favourite stories, and to defend and explain our choice!

And here we come to one of the greatest virtues of Mr. Wilson's book—and it has many others: on page after page he brings us up sharply at story after story which we thought we knew almost by heart—and sends us rushing to re-read it.

Once again, it is a fascinating and stimulating book, hard to put down and crying to be read again and again.

"TLL CORRECT HIS CAESURAS FOR HIM!"

But indeed most of the mistakes are minor errors, apparently due to speed of thought, and then not corrected in proof. Thus many stories are wrongly named, for example—'Father and Sons' for 'The Son of his Father' (p.5); 'My Son's Life' for 'My Son's Wife' (34); 'Duncan Parseness' for 'Parrenness' (168); 'Beyond the Mill Dam' for 'Below' (185); 'The Comforters' for 'The Undertakers' (198); 'Birds of Paradise', presumably 'A Naval Mutiny' (210); "*The Irish Guards in War-time*" for *the Great War* (297); and one complete mistake of title, 'Little Foxes' when he means 'A Deal in Cotton' (338).

Actual mistakes are very trifling: Capt. P. A. Holloway was not called Harry and was not a captain of marines, and 'Lorne Lodge' is a detached house, not part of a terrace (17); is there any evidence that the Kipling children actually called Mrs. Sarah Holloway "Auntie Rosa"? and the school (still standing) was "Hope House", not "Lodge" (19); *The Hope of the Katekopfs* is an exceedingly good literary fairytale, though with the moral rather overstressed in the last two chapters (27); "mustard" is a misprint for "nuts and" in Baloo's diet (109); the dhoolas are red dogs, not yellow (182); the doctor at Brattleboro was Conland, not Conant (193); the "first friendly notice in English journals" of *Departmental Ditties* was by Andrew Lang in *Longman's Magazine* in 1886, not Sir William Hunter in 1888 (201); Kipling met A. E. W. Mason in Egypt in 1929, not 1913 (279); and *Souvenirs of France* is not a "book of collected speeches" (322).

Mr. Wilson does not find the Puck stories as satisfactory as some of us do. One reason that he suggests for why they are not more popular with today's children is in the illustrations, "the nineteen-hundreds costume of the children, Dan and Una, only adds unreality to the rather dressed-up look of the Romans and medieval and Elizabethan and French Revolutionary characters they are talking with." (p. 293). The only picture of which this is true is that of Una with Parnesius by H. R. Millar on page 145 of *Puck of Pook's Hill*, and it is interesting to note that Una has been redrawn and in doing so Millar has taken out the original date, 1906, by the time *AH the Puck Stories* was published in 1935. The only T. E. Brock illustration which shows the children (*Rewards and Fairies*, p. 124) dresses them in clothes and hats, sufficiently timeless to need no change.

THE GARDENER

An excellent account of this story by Mr. Wilson (pp. 316-8) ends with the charge that Kipling's implied reference is an artistic and emotional mistake: "All that annoys is the pointing up of so fine a story by such a cliché . . . We need neither Christ Himself nor anyone re-

turned from the dead; a gardener, perspicacious enough to see the truth, after all the hundreds of visitors who have come to the graveyard, would have been enough." The Gardener has been identified by various writers as Michael himself, Helen's brother, just a gardener, and so on. A startling new identification is suggested by Mr. Malcolm Deas of St. Anthony's College, Oxford in the *Times Literary Supplement* of January 13, namely that it is the Rector's gardener from Helen's village, and moreover that he is Michael's father! "the man Miss Turrell met in the cemetery was 'evidently a gardener . . .' He spoke English. He knew that Lieut. Michael Turrell was her son, not her nephew. Who else but the father would have known? Kipling had a very high opinion of gardeners . . ."

When the story first appeared in *The Strand Magazine* for May 1926 there was a note above the title (Vol. LXXI, p. 419): "Few stories ever roused so much discussion and divergence of opinion as that by Mr. Kipling entitled '*They*'. The following story will be likely to excite as wide a controversy." But, without entering further into it, (we hope that there will be many more letters in the TLS!) one wonders why Helen did not recognise the man, if he was Michael or her brother—and particularly if he was the Rector's gardener and/or the father of her child . . . She was neither an ancient Spartan nor a heroine in a play by Menander!

But Kipling certainly had a very high opinion of gardeners—particularly those associated with War Graves. It is no secret that, as Literary Member of the War Graves Commission (he was succeeded on his death by Edmund Blunden) Kipling wrote much of the articles published in *The Times* and issued in book form in 1928 as *War Graves of the Empire*—notably the chapter called 'The Silent World'. In this he writes of the gardeners working in the vast cemeteries in many parts of the world, in France and Flanders particularly:—"They carried on, in every sort of temporary accommodation, the ground-work of smoothing, grading, sowing and planting, till such times as the kerbs, the headstones, and the concrete beams beneath should be delivered, and jealously watched in delivery, lest they should injure the new born turf. They were necessarily left to their own devices, but even in those isolated days few took advantage . . . As their grounds matured to beauty through the seasons the gardeners found themselves recipients of many heartbroken confidences and the helpers, in every kind of trouble, of those who came their way.

"It was their business to know, point out, or, on a blind person's demand, lead up to any individual grave in their charge; to give the angle and the hour best fitted to photograph incised letters that vanish or stand out with the sun; to make a rest, sometimes, for an unsteady little hand-camera . . . and to take no heed of people who appeared once a year on a certain day, wet or fine, suffered their hour beside a certain grave and departed . . ."

"Thus the years went by over them. Some of them married French or Belgian wives, and children were born, who played among the still paths and the potting-shed, in a bilingual life . . ."

For further light on 'The Gardener' see Mrs. G. H. Newsom's paper which follows.

Discussion Meeting, 13th July 1977

WAYS OF LOOKING AT 'THE GARDENER'

By Mrs. G. H. Newsom

There was once a time when I thought that 'The Gardener' was just a very simple tale about a woman who contrives to hide from her neighbours the fact that the boy she has adopted and calls her nephew is her own son. She dotes on him, and he is loyal to her. He is killed in France in the First World War. She visits his grave in one of the big War Cemeteries where the gardener of it compassionately realises that the boy is her son. It is evident from the two verses which are the heading of the story that the unburdening of her secret to him for that short while frees her mercifully from the agony of continual concealment. The mystic ending was unexpected and it appeared to have no connection with what had gone before in the story. 'The Gardener' was for me another *deus ex machina* tale, but an inconsequential one. There were other stories by Kipling which moved me a great deal more. Imagine my surprise when I later met members of the Kipling Society who thought that 'The Gardener' was one of the greatest of Kipling's stories. There were also articles and letters in the *Kipling Journal* to this effect; and finally there were literary critics who acknowledged it as such, attracted by its elusive meaning. At the same time I discovered that there were also people who thought of 'The Gardener' in much the same way as I did, or had taken less notice of it.

There thus appeared to be a remarkable divergence of opinion about it. Kipling being the author, it is more than likely that he knew this would happen. A conversation which I had by chance with our Vice-President, Charles Carrington, set me investigating one aspect of the story. From that beginning I tried to solve its other problems (set out by R. E. Harbord in *The Readers' Guide*). Presumably Kipling knew that people would discover all its meaning eventually, but I doubt that he wanted them to delve deeply into 'The Gardener' during his lifetime.

Of course, what I did not appreciate at first was that, to those who had been at close quarters with the terrible losses in battle of the Great War, or subsequent wars, 'The Gardener' was a reminder of their experience, and I have reason to believe that the appearance of Christ in the cemetery at the end of the story, greatly consoled them.

Although the story does not mention Christ, the suggestion is clear enough in the very last words of it—"and she went away, supposing him to be the gardener." The verses before and after the story further encourage the illusion. I will read part of St. John's Gospel, Chapter XX, for comparison: "But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She supposing him to be the gar-

dener said unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master."

When I read 'The Gardener' again, it occurred to me that it was not in fact like Kipling to isolate such an important character as the gardener from the rest of his story. And so I searched for a possible connection with the earlier part of it. I discovered that I had been mistaken in my first reading. There are three or four references to the Christian faith, and one of them is the christening. I will tell you about it after commenting on some other parts of the story.

Helen Turrell appears not to have told Michael what it was that she so openly told her friends about him when she first brought him to the village as a baby. But while he is still very young he finds out something from an old servant who works in the house. Helen realises, years later, that he is acting on the assumption that this information is true. Whereupon she said to him, "You don't mean to tell me that you believed that old story all this time?" "I gave you my word of honour—and I give it again—that—that it's all right. It is indeed." By giving him this assurance, she appeared to be contradicting the gossip that he was the child of parents who were unmarried, his mother being the daughter of a retired non-commissioned officer. Most readers, I think, quite soon suspect that Michael is in fact Helen's son. How could she say to Michael that that situation was all right either, if the former was not? If she was speaking truthfully, what did she mean? Was she just lying? I will return to those questions.

Kipling's son, John, was killed in France in September 1915 at the beginning of the battle of Loos. I cannot help seeing Mrs. Kipling doing exactly what Helen Turrell in the story did: pulling down the blinds and saying to each one, "Missing *always* means dead"; and responding to words of sympathy from friends in a kind of wooden way; and feeling unable to face the young men who had returned safely to their homes. But I have seen no record that she did these things: unless this is one.

There are two other important characters in 'The Gardener'. One is Mrs. Scarsworth. Expecting and willing (according to her name) to have the severest punishment for her imagined sin, she is amazed and incredulous that she is not condemned by Helen for visiting the grave of someone who, as the story says, was more to her "than anything else in the world." "And, of course, he oughtn't to have been" she tells Helen. "He ought to have been nothing to me. But he *was*. He *is*. That's why I do the commissions, you see. That's all'." She then says that she is telling Helen all this because she is "so tired of lying." "Tired of lying—always lying—year in and year out. When I don't tell lies I've got to act 'em and I've got to think 'em always." After the confession Helen is left alone, but she cannot get to sleep for a long while. The reader is left to guess why she cannot sleep. Perhaps her thoughts were—that, if she had confessed her own secret long ago, she might have received compassion in the same quiet way as the woman had received it from her. It would have meant living for all those years "without the strain of hiding the truth from everyone. Had her own discipline of falsehood been a terrible mistake?—which would have kept her awake for quite a long time.

The second of the two characters I mention appears in the story only briefly. She is a distraught woman, and she also is looking for the grave of her son, but she does not know the name under which he enlisted, and she does not know where he fell. It might have been at Hooge or perhaps somewhere else. She thinks that an official in a wooden hut can tell her. He has "many books" containing the names and whereabouts of the graves. The unhappy woman appears to represent the mothers whose sons will never have a known grave because their remains were never identified or found. Of these in France by the end of the Great War there were over 100,000. There were many at the battle of Loos: who died and were subsequently never found. John Kipling was among them. There might, understandably, be something of the reactions of Mrs. Kipling in this woman too. Kipling no doubt knew what he was talking about when he made the wife of the official say: "Are you sure you know your grave? It makes such a difference."

I have now come to the conclusion that Kipling's story about Helen Turrell and Michael is an allegory. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* says that *allegory* means the "Narrative description of a subject under guise of another suggestively similar." The word is derived from two Greek words meaning "other" and "speaking". I have heard *allegory* also described as "a coded message by means of a story which is usually a fantasy."

If an allegory, 'The Gardener' must be unusual because the narrative is suggestively similar to *two* subjects. One of them is part of the myth of Jesus; the other, part of the life of John Kipling, and the effect of his death. This is not at all obvious at a first, or even a second, reading—as is the nature of an allegory. The two subjects are different but they are made to appear similar through simultaneous allusions to them in the disguised narrative. There are also allusions, if I am not mistaken, which apply only to one or other of the subjects. This hidden writing reveals to me both the intensity of Kipling's love and reverence for his son and his natural reticence in publicly displaying these emotions.

By accepting the theory of an allegory, it will at once become apparent that Michael, Jesus, and John have something in common. John and Michael were almost exactly the same age and their histories in the war were nearly identical. It would not be the first time that Kipling compared the soldier serving at the battlefronts in the First War with the Saviour Jesus. Look for example at his poem, 'Gethsemane'. James Harrison, writing in the current *Kipling Journal*, makes a very similar point in his article, 'The Word Made Subaltern.'

And now I will return to the subject of the christening.

The first step Helen Turrell took on her return from France was to have the baby christened by the Rector. If you look in the 1662 Prayer Book, which would have been used in those days—around 1895—you will find these words in the Order of Service for the Baptism of Infants: "And we humbly beseech thee to grant that he (referring to the child) being dead unto sin, and living unto righteousness, and being buried with Christ in his death . . . that, as he is made partaker of the death of thy Son, he may also be partaker of his resurrection."

According to Charles Carrington's biography of Kipling, Kipling's

son, John, decided, early in 1914, to be baptized into the Church of England. The baptism took place with the approval of both parents who acted as sponsors. John was then aged sixteen. His death occurred eighteen months later. Because the two events were so close together, Kipling possibly remembered the words of that service and thought about the literal fulfilment of them. The Baptism service for John would have been the one for "such as are of Riper Years". In it are the following words of a prayer which is not in the service for Infants. "Beloved ye hear in this Gospel the express words of our Saviour Christ, that except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God . . . He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved . . . Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe, that he will favourably receive these present persons . . . that he will give them the blessing of eternal life, and make them partakers of his everlasting kingdom."

The Order of Service continues: "Then shall the Priest demand of the persons to be baptized, severally, these Questions following . . .

"Dost thou believe . . . in Jesus Christ . . . the Remission of Sins, the Resurrection of the flesh; and everlasting life after death?"

"Answer. All this I stedfastly believe."

The theology of death and resurrection in baptism comes from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 6, which in the Authorised Version contains these interesting words: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

Mrs. Scarsworth is, I believe, the symbol for Mary Magdalene. Do you remember that she left the hotel early next morning to go on her round of cemeteries? Mary Magdalene also came to her sepulchre early—"when it was yet dark". And, like Mrs. Scarsworth, she was a substitute who went for other people (the disciples) to the grave which was theirs, and brought a message back to them. "The Burden" the poem at the end of the story, presents an unfamiliar Magdalene—as a person who lived a lie. Such was Mrs. Scarsworth, as well as Helen Turrell.

It is sometimes thought that Helen represents Mary Magdalene. But I am sure that Helen is cast as the Virgin Mary. That, at least, would be the logical conclusion if her son, Michael, represents Jesus which my theory of an allegory involves. If any similarities are sought regarding John Kipling's parents, I can only suggest that to all committed Christians, which by his baptism John was, God is their Father. This, of course, is a spiritual relationship. George was the genealogical father of Michael—and thus he had "entangled" himself—as Joseph was of Jesus. (It is thought that Joseph and Mary were closely related.) What a strange coincidence that *Joseph* was Kipling's name too. But is it a coincidence that "George had always been rather a black sheep"?

Such an event as a virgin birth would indeed make the story a fantasy. But a supernatural one would prove Helen innocent of incest or any other illegal union. It would satisfactorily explain why she assured Michael that "it" was "all right". But she feared to let even him know

that she was his mother. Her fear of course was that if this fact was discovered no one would believe her explanation of it and—as a consequence of morality in the English middle classes at that epoch being rigidly Victorian—she, with her son, would have been rejected by "all her world", by which as "every one in the village knew" Helen "did her duty".

She may not have been actually lying about her visit to the South of France. There are possible ambiguities in the words Kipling uses, and it is easy to jump to conclusions—as the village seems to have done, and as no doubt Kipling knew his readers would! For example, although Helen discourages the notion, the story, by not disclosing the rank of *her* father, makes it possible that *he* was the retired non-commissioned officer. Which led me into thinking that, whereas Mrs. Kipling's father was a Balestier, the Old French word *balestier* described a soldier of the Roman army (who hurled heavy objects from a war machine called a *balista*).—Could Kipling have intended this amusing pun? Counterparts of the allegory, and even more wily double meanings, come to light gradually with each reading of 'The Gardener' once the truth of the story begins to be known: confirming, if doubt exists, that Kipling's narrative is *speaking otherwise* than about itself—but about the Gospel, and his deeply mourned son.

What could have given Kipling the idea of Helen Turrell's unusual problem? It is not improbable that it came from reading the evidence, in those days fully reported in the newspapers, of the case of *Russell v. Russell* which was passing through the Courts between 1922 and 1924. This *cause célèbre* raised the question in the minds of some people whether, in this instance, a virgin birth had taken place.

I have not yet mentioned that Kipling was on the Imperial War Graves Commission from its inception in 1917. He took a very active part on it, visiting the War Cemeteries in France and the Middle East. Therefore his detail about the Hagenzeele Third Military Cemetery is as nearly accurate as it can be, except that the name of it is invented. In 1928, *The Times* published a book entitled *War Graves of the Empire*. It contains a chapter by Kipling, called 'The Silent World' which is a factual account of the cemeteries. From his description of the behaviour and reactions of the visitors to them, it can easily be seen that Mrs. Scarsworth and Helen Turrell were drawn from life.

It was after he had "colloqued" (as he called it, in a letter to Rider Haggard) with the Head Gardener of Rouen Cemetery, on March 14th, 1925, that Kipling began writing 'The Gardener'. He worked at it during a sightseeing tour, in which he visited Evreux, Dreux, Chartres, Perigueux, the caves of the Dordogne (see C. E. Carrington: *Rudyard Kipling*). He finished it eight days later while at Lourdes—incidentally, the place where once the Virgin was seen. But I think that he must have thought for a long time before his tour, about this intricately and marvellously constructed story. 'The Gardener' was first published in *McCalls Magazine* in May of the following year, 1926.

I see the dead weeds and the wooden crosses, which Helen first saw at the cemetery, as signs of being "planted together in the likeness of his death." The crosses even had labels on them suggestively similar to the one Pontius Pilate wrote. The new white grave stones and the fresh young plants appear to illustrate that the resurrection had taken

place and the new life begun. I see Mrs. Scarsworth on her ninth visit, recognising the man she loved in the man she thought was the gardener of her cemetery. Helen's sympathy had rolled the stone away from the grave which had been guarded for too long. The Gospel does not say whether Mary, the mother of Jesus, went to the sepulchre. Kipling, it is evident to me, imagined that when she did, she did not recognise her son, just as Helen when she saw the gardener at Hagenzeele Third did not recognise the risen Michael.

[This was received with the careful attention it so richly deserved, and, after a pause for reflection, was thrown open to discussion.

Col. Purefoy observed that there are references in Dr. Tompkins' *The Art of Rudyard Kipling*: Mr. Carrington considered this to be one of the six finest short stories in the English language, but Mrs. Scarsworth was not convincing.

Mr. Webb agreed that clues were littered here and there throughout the story, but considered that it suffered from too much "blacking out", so that, as in *Mrs. Bathurst*, something essential was missing. Mr. Wade wondered if this was a virgin birth as in *Russell v. Russell*, while Mr. Greenwood, looking strictly at the data refused to accept any speculation.

The thanks of the meeting was given to Mrs. Newsom for her thoughtful and sensitive examination of a very complex story.] J.McG.

'THE UNFADING GENIUS OF RUDYARD KIPLING'

By Kingsley Amis

Annual Luncheon—20 October 1977

This might look as if it's going to be a lecture, but it isn't. I'm reading from a script only because the alternative, talking off the cuff from notes, is so painful: painful for me, and I can be absolutely definite that it would in this case be even more painful for you. Well, I learned at school that short excuses go down much better than long ones, so I'll press on to my subject, how I got to know Kipling. I chose it because it means I won't be going over ground already familiar to you: with a writer as various and as many-sided as he—I think only Shakespeare has the edge on him there—everybody's approach is likely to be different. One of the things I *didn't* learn at school was anything much beyond the fact that Kipling existed: I'm talking now about the «early 1930s. I don't just mean of course that he wasn't taught as a subject; in those days living authors were seldom so much as mentioned in the class-room, but they were constantly discussed informally, at any rate at my school, by both masters and boys. Kipling never was, perhaps in that he was no longer felt to be a controversial figure, that his best work was far behind him, or more likely that he wasn't quite respectable, too much of a flag-waver and drum-beater. Reading the earlier critical works on Kipling, those published in his life-time and for some years afterwards, I think it's impossible to over-estimate the degree to which supposedly enlightened opinion disapproved of him.

He was vulgar, a writer of journalism and doggerel, a 'word-smith'; so they said, but obviously what they meant was that he stood for England and the Empire, and that was embarrassing or worse; even as a schoolboy one could feel that. The most important event in the history of Kipling's reputation was the relinquishment of the Indian Empire in 1947; at a stroke he became the poet and chronicler of something that wasn't there any more, and so the embarrassment was gone too.

But I was a long way away from school in 1947 and I said I'd stick to a personal approach. Naturally in my unsystematic search for more and more reading-matter I had come across odds bits of Kipling. First, the Jungle Books, which were likely to be pressed on one by uncles and such. I didn't take to them. In one way I felt too old for them: talking animals were for kids, and a human being who could join in in their language was too close to Tarzan of the Apes for comfort. In another way, the books were too old for me; I felt that somewhere behind the stories there was a great body of knowledge and myth that I didn't share and wasn't being invited to share, and I still think they suffer to some extent from Kipling's vice of mystification coupled with a kind of complacency, as if he's saying 'I know a lot of secrets I'm not going to let on about, though now and then I'll condescend to drop a hint.' It wasn't for nothing that he was admitted as a Freemason at the early age of nineteen. Then I came across *Stalky & Co.*—a school story by a famous writer, I thought: certain to be good. I was disappointed: though the word hadn't then acquired that sense, I couldn't 'identify' with any of the three lads and, again, I was baffled by some of what they said to each other and sensed that there were important things they weren't going to say to each other in front of me. It wasn't until I was doing the reading for my Kipling book that I came across a phrase that expressed what I had vaguely felt all those years ago. It comes in a very funny, unintentionally funny, attack on the book when it was first published, by a nonentity called Robert Buchanan. Among many other charges is the one that the trio are 'not like boys at all, but like hideous little men'. 'Hideous' is absurd, but I can see something in 'little men', immature men, which boys often are to some extent, though I think not often to the extent of *Stalky* and his friends.

Well: apart from 'If, which even my father liked, and which I thought differed from most things my father liked by being pretty good, that must have been about as much Kipling as I knew by the time of his death, in 1936, which completely passed me by, as I suppose it must have a lot of people, with King George V fatally ill and himself dying two days later. In the five years before I left school I came across some more of Kipling, largely I suppose in anthologies. Those two strange and terrible stories. 'The Mark of the Beast' and 'At the End of the Passage' thrilled me and frightened me, and I must have looked to see if there were any more like that, but couldn't find any. I also met several of the poems, including of course "Danny Deever". I would have had to be an unusually stupid and insensitive young man not to have recognised that as about the most harrowing poem in the language, but I didn't do what I should have done and did do with other poets I first came to in anthologies and go in search of the *collected* poems: it must have been that old anti-imperialistic prejudice still working away somewhere. In fact I knew disgracefully little of Kipling until after his big revival began about ten years ago. Then I really went into

the poems, especially the Barrack-Room Ballads and the grand, grave public pieces like the 1914 one, "For All We Have and Are", and I discovered a great poet; if I had to choose whether to save the verse or the prose from the bonfire, it would have to be the verse. Poems okay, then, but I was still rather hung up on the stories, partly I think because the ones that people went round talking about tended to be the later, more complicated ones like 'Dayspring Mishandled' rather than the earlier, more straightforward and immediate ones like 'Without Benefit of Clergy'. Then chance, or rather BBC television, intervened. There was to be a series of short films on writers' houses, and Kipling's house, Bateman's in Sussex, was an obvious candidate. Who was to present it? (this is a reconstruction). Obviously an admirer if possible. Who might admire an imperialist jingoist racist like Kipling? Try an elitist fascist militarist like Amis—my political views have moved a little to the right of centre. So, they rang up and said, Are you by any chance an expert on Kipling? Yes, I lied; always say yes at the start; you can say no later if you have to. So it was arranged, with me reading away like mad in the meantime at Kipling and also at a rather good book *on* him by somebody called Charles Carrington. Finally I went off with a TV crew to Bateman's for three days. And it was rather unpleasant, the house. I'm the last person to be sensitive to the atmosphere of places, but I found this one depressing and ominous. So did the TV chaps. When I asked them, two of them said they wouldn't fancy spending a night there. Well, we did the film, it was shown, and as a result Thames & Hudson the publishers asked me to write the Kipling volume in a series of theirs. In it, I told the story of the depressing quality of Bateman's, and got a letter from a lady who said she was interested that someone else had had her experience: years before, she and a friend had visited the house as tourists and both of them had been struck with the most appalling gloom. 'To shake it off we went into the garden' she wrote, 'but it followed us everywhere.' I mentioned this to an acquaintance at my club, who immediately said 'Oh, worse in the garden. Everybody knows that.' Does everybody? I'd be interested to hear—after I've concluded my remarks by saying merely that to write my book, short as it was, I naturally had to read every word of Kipling, and found (what shall I say?) great treasures there. In particular, because it's not so often mentioned, I found some wonderful travel writing, for instance in the *From Sea to Sea* volumes. I was especially struck by the account of Japan: how beautiful, what charming people, but with a streak of bloodthirstiness that promised serious trouble in about three generations. He was there in 1889, 52 years before Pearl Harbor. Among so many other qualities, Kipling was an astonishingly accurate prophet: he knew what would happen when *the* Empire went. Alas!

Discussion Meeting, 16 February 1977

KIPLING AND JACK FISHER'S NAVY

By Rear-Admiral P. W. Brock, C.B., D.S.O.

'Years ago,' said the admiral, 'an American naval friend speaking of his own Service told me "Our Navy is full of surprises!" Some experience of the U.S.N. in both Hitler's War and the Korean War convinced me that he was dead right—surprises both good and bad.'

This applied equally to 'Jacky' Fisher, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone, and the fleet which he created between 1904 when he first became First Sea Lord, and 1915 when, after being re-appointed in late 1914, he deserted his post on disagreement with Churchill over the Dardanelles.

His personality was full of contradictions; he attracted many admirers, from the highest in the land to popular journalists, and repelled many others. The former found him irresistible, when he chose to be: others were apt to find resistance expensive. It is still hard to be impartial.

He was deeply religious, worshipping an old Testament Jehovah regularly, and several times on some Sundays, but capable of meanness. The belief that he had a Cingalese grandmother seems unfounded, though it was a long time a-dying, but he could rule like a legendary Oriental despot, tempered by flashes of humour and unexpected generosity.

A great admirer lately has been the American naval historian, Professor Arthur Marder, who has drawn a portrait of Fisher taking over a 'moth-eaten and drowsy' Navy, uninterested in fighting efficiency. Unhappily, too many of our historians seemed to think that 'Marder says . . .' ends discussion; and accept his statement that until late in the 19th century it was not unusual for H.M. ships to throw practice ammunition overboard rather than defile decks and paintwork. Such a general statement is hard to disprove, but a long search for evidence shows proof of many practices carried out as laid down, often against odds, and only clear evasion—oddly enough, by J. A. Fisher, flag-captain in HMS *Bellerophon* in 1877, who sometimes 'ditched' practice ammunition to expedite his admiral's return to Bermuda!

Kipling's impressions of the pre-Fisher Navy do not suggest drowsiness, as witness his account of life aboard H.M.S. *Pelorus* under Captain Bayly in 1897 and '98, several poems, and even *Judson and the Empire*, back in 1890.

Fisher often had prophetic vision but seldom pursued it to a useful conclusion, notably in recognising submarine potentiality when it was barely out of the egg but pursuing no counter-measures. His most publicised innovation was H.M.S. *Dreadnought*, the first all-big-gun ship, but other navies had the same idea, and her alleged 'one year in building' was achieved only by diverting guns from two other ships, delaying them two years. Greater deliberation allowed Tirpitz marked improvements in German submarines and battleships.

Kipling's personal contacts with Fisher seem to have been few but friendly—lunch at Admiralty House, Portsmouth; Fisher's offer to nominate John Kipling for a cadetship and correspondence about renting a Martello Tower—but he clearly disapproved of Fisher's feud with his junior rival, Lord Charles Beresford, which split the Navy into two camps and finished Beresford. On 13 July 1910 Kipling presided at a dinner given to Lord Charles and *The Times* reported him as saying that Beresford 'had striven all his life to make the Service more and more equal to the task which would one day be laid upon it . . . instantly ready for war as far as ships and men were concerned, but also a Navy with its plans prepared beforehand to make or meet any conceivable form of attack. The men must be ready, the ships must be ready, and the national organisation for war must above all be ready.'

Since Fisher's plans were confined to himself, clashed with those of the War Office and reflected his view that history was merely a record of exploded theories, and time was short, the Kaiser's War exposed some avoidable weaknesses.

The discussion which followed included contributions from Mr. Daintith, Mr. Webb a welcome new member, Mr. Waring, and Professor Carrington, whose judicial comment was that although in both World Wars the British leadership had been condemned the fighting services had eventually been more than a match for their enemies.

HON. SECRETARY'S NOTES

Back Numbers of the Kipling Journal. We have complete runs of the Journal from No. 1 to No. 204 in the office. Some issues are photocopies, but most are originals. Council has authorised me to offer these for sale at £1.00 per copy, post free in U.K., carriage extra overseas. I am ensuring that at least one copy of every issue is in the library, and more in the office, so that by photo-copying we shall always be able to supply any back number that people want.

Subscriptions. May I draw attention to the new rates of subscription which are published on the inside front cover of the Journal. Your co-operation in bringing your Bankers Orders up to date would be particularly appreciated by the administration.

'An Easy Guide to THE READERS' GUIDE TO RUDYARD KIPLING'S WORKS' is available from the Society's Offices, 18 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BJ, price 75p including postage.

The Indexing of the Journal has been a bit spasmodic during the last fifty years. Would any Member care to have a go at bringing the Index up-to-date? We can't tackle this in the Office, but we can supply all the necessary copies of Journals and past Indices. It would be a worthwhile labour of love. Please get in touch if you would like to take this on.

LETTER BAG

Dr. Cross (September, 1976) misread my article of the year before—I was not looking for information on F. D. Underwood. I knew from Dr. Cross's previous contribution and other sources how Underwood and Kipling became acquainted. Indeed, I have the text of some verse Kipling wrote on the back of his photograph that he sent to Underwood, after he learned that Underwood had named two towns 'Rudyard' and 'Kipling'. This seems to have been published previously only in the WPA guide to Michigan (New York, 1941):

"Wise is the child who knows his sire",
The ancient proverb ran,
But wiser far the man who knows
How, where and when his offspring grows,
For who the mischief would suppose
I've sons in Michigan?

Yet I am saved from midnight ills
That warp the soul of man,
They do not make me walk the floor,
Nor hammer at the doctor's door;
They deal in wheat and iron ore,
My sons in Michigan.

O, tourist in the Pullman car
(By Cook's or Raymond's plan),
Forgive a parent's partial view,
But maybe you have children too—
So let me introduce to you
My sons in Michigan.

What concerned me was how and when F. N. Finney ever became acquainted with Kipling.

Now, thanks to Dr. Cross and Ms. Grace Tratt of the Dalhousie University Library, Halifax, N.S., I have my information. I can even add bits to that provided by Dr. Cross. According to Ms. Tratt, who takes her information from the Kipling-Finney correspondence in the Killian Memorial Library at Dalhousie, plans were made for a visit by Finney to Vermont in July, 1896, but there is no confirmation that this took place. Finney did visit the Kiplings in England in 1897, and again in 1907. The correspondence ends shortly thereafter, without any reference to a trans-continental train trip by Finney which beat the record set by Harvey Cheyne. Perhaps Philip Mason is right in saying that it was another railway magnate who broke the record.

That leaves me with only two points from my original article—that Kipling may well have known Austin Corbin, and that Corbin's private car *Oriental* may have been the model for Harvey Cheyne's *Constance 1*

THE "WORST SLIP"

Having noticed a reference to Kipling's "worst slip" in your delightful speech at the Luncheon, I am reminded that I discovered this error some ten years ago or more. It occurs on page 124 of *Cap-Jains Courageous* in these words: "Now the chief engineer of the liner could have done no more, and no engineer of thirty years' service could have assumed half the ancient mariner air with which Harvey, first careful to spit over the side, made public the ship's position for that day, and then, and not until then, relieved Disko of the quadrant." A prize howler! The engineers have nothing to do with the navigation of the ship, or her position on the ocean, beyond raising and maintaining steam for required speeds, and the care of the machinery.

By the implication of his own words in *Something of Myself*, page 212: "Luckily the men of the seas *and the engine room* (my italics) do not write to the press and my worse slip is still underided", Kipling virtually confirms that this is the error. In my view it can be no other.

P. W. INWOOD

Kipling's "Worst slip" (see *Something of Myself* p. 212) is to be found in 'Winning the Victoria Cross' on page 7 of *Land and Sea Tales for Scouts and Guides*.

"Then there was a negro captain of the foretop, William Hall, R.N., who with two other negroes, Samuel Hodge and W. J. Gordon of the 4th and 1st West Indian Infantry, came up the river with the Naval Brigade from Calcutta to work big guns. They worked them so thoroughly that each got a cross."

William Hall won his V.C. on 10th November, 1857, in the Indian Mutiny. Private Samuel Hodge won his on 30th June, 1866, in West Africa in the kingdom of Barra. Corporal William James Gordon won his V.C. also in West Africa, at the town of Toniataba in 1892. So we have two men winning their V.C.s at the wrong place, at the wrong time, in the wrong war. William Hall had already retired on his naval Petty Officer's pension when Corporal Gordon won his V.C.

So far we have six errors in 50 words. But there is worse to come, for Kipling adds "They must have done a good deal for no one is quite so crazy reckless as a West Indian negro when he is really excited." Hall was not a West Indian, but a Nova Scotian, the son of a United States slave freed by the British. And none of these three men were "crazy reckless" when they won their V.C.s.

Hall's and Hodge's bravery was the prolonged "cool, calm and collected" variety. At the siege of the Shah Najaf, Hall served his gun, under tremendous enemy fire (including grenades) within twenty yards of the enemy wall.

To quote the London Gazette, 4 Jan, 1867: "Samuel Hodge, Private, 4th West India Regt. Date of Act of Bravery: 30 June 1866. For his bravery at the storming and capture of the stockaded town of Tubabecolong, in the Kingdom of Barra, River Gambia, on the evening of the 30th June, last. Colonel D'Arcy, of the Gambia Volunteers, states that this man and another, who was afterwards killed—pioneers in the 4th West India Regt.—answered his call for volunteers, with axes in hand to hew down the stockade. Colonel D'Arcy having effected an entrance, Private Hodge followed him through the town, opening with

his axe two gates from the inside, which were barricaded, so allowing the supports to enter, who carried the place from east to west at the point of the bayonet. On issuing to the glacis through the west gate, Private Hodge was presented by Colonel D'Arcy to his comrades as the bravest soldier of their regiment, a fact which they acknowledged with loud acclamations". Hodge was terribly wounded on this occasion.

Gordon's act of bravery was quickly performed but hardly ranks as "crazy reckless when excited". To quote the London Gazette, 9 Dec. 1892: "William James Gordon, No. 2829., Corpl., The West India Regt. During the attack on the town of Toniataba, Major G. C. Madden, West India Regt., who was in command of the troops, was superintending a party of twelve men who were endeavouring with a heavy beam to break down the south gate of the town, when suddenly a number of musket-muzzles, were projected through a double row of loopholes which had been masked. Some of these were within two or three yards of that officer's back, and before he realised what had happened L.-Corpl. Gordon threw himself between Major Madden and the muskets, pushing that officer out of the way, and exclaiming "Look out, sir!" At the same moment L.-Corpl. Gordon was shot through the lungs. By his bravery and self-devotion on this occasion the lance-corporal probably saved the life of his commanding officer."

SHAMUS O. D. WADE

NEW MEMBERS. We welcome (in order of joining): Edwin K. Respas (USA), John R. Strother (USA), Miss Florence E. Brunnings (USA). Gesamthochschule Bamberg (W. Germany), British Library West Yorkshire, Kakatiya University (India), V. Carlson, N. Allen, Miss A. Walsh., Mrs. Schwelt, Mrs. D. Sampson, Miss C. Mallett (six Australian Members), Mrs. J. Beharo (Eire), Rev. A. R. Ankers, Mrs. H. C. Granger (Australia), Miss C. Hophouse, R. K. Neilson Baxter, James Cameron (President of the Society), Michael Watson, H. P. Maier (West Germany), Mrs. P. J. Rector, James F. Holmes, Mary Medlock (USA).

The Kipling Society

Founded in 1927 by J. H. C. Brooking, M.I.E.E.

President

James Cameron

Vice-Presidents

Lt.-Colonel A. E. Bagwell Purefoy	J. R. Dunlap (U.S.A.)
R/Adml. P. W. Brock, C.B., D.S.O.	Mrs. C. Fairhead (British Columbia, Canada)
J. V. Carlson (Melbourne, Australia)	R. Lancelyn Green, B.LITT., M.A.
C. E. Carrington, M.C.	P. W. Inwood
E. D. W. Chaplin	Joyce M. S. Tompkins, D.LITT.
T. E. Cresswell	F. E. Winmill

COUNCIL

Elected Members of Council

Anne Shelford, Chairman	The Rev. G. H. McN. Shelford
R. O'Hagan, Deputy Chairman	S. Wade
A. J. Buffin	Dr. T. H. Whittington

Ex-officio Members of Council

R. Lancelyn Green, Hon. Editor	Margaret Newsom, Hon. Librarian
P. A. Mortimer, Hon. Treasurer	John Shearman, Hon. Secretary

Honorary Auditors:

Milne, Gregg & Turnbull

Meetings Secretary:

J. H. McGivering

Assistant Secretary:

Mrs. R. Oliver

Office:

c/o The Royal Commonwealth Society, 18 Northumberland Avenue,
London WC2N 5BJ. Telephone 01-930 6733.

The office is usually staffed on Tuesdays and Thursdays

Melbourne Branch, Australia

President: J. V. Carlson

Honorary Secretary: Mrs. Ivy Morton, Flat 7, 13 Hughendon Road,
East St. Kilda, 3182 Melbourne, Australia

Victoria British Columbia Branch, Canada

President: Mrs. D. A. Copeland Vice-President: Mrs. C. Fairhead
Honorary Secretary: Mrs. R. Hokanson, ≠ 1211, 703 Esquimalt Road,
Victoria, British Columbia, V9A 3L6

United States of America

Honorary Secretary: Joseph R. Dunlap, 420 Riverside Drive, Apt 12G,
New York, NY 10025