

POEMS BY RUDYARD KIPLING

Born in British India in 1865, Rudyard Kipling was educated in England before returning to India in 1882, where his father was a museum director and authority on Indian arts and crafts. He was therefore thoroughly immersed in Indian culture: by 1890 he had published in English about 80 stories and ballads previously unknown outside India. As a result of financial misfortune, from 1892-96 he and his wife, the daughter of an American publisher, lived in Vermont, where he wrote the two Jungle Books. After returning to England, he published "The White Man's Burden" in 1899, an appeal to the United States to assume the task of developing the Philippines, recently won in the Spanish-American War. By the time of his death in 1936, the leftist media reviled him as the poet of British imperialism, though being regarded as a beloved children's book author.

THE SONG OF THE WHITE MEN

(1899)

Now this is the cup the White Men drink

When they go to right a wrong,

And that is the cup of the old world's hate

Cruel and stained and strong.

We have drunk that cup-and a bitter, bitter cup

And tossed the dregs away.

But well for the world when the White Men drink

To the dawn of the White Man's day!

Now this is the road that the White Men tread

When they go to clean a land

Iron underfoot and levin overhead

And the deep on either hand.

We have trod that road-and a wet and windy road

Our chosen star for guide.

Oh, well for the world when the White Men tread

Their highway side by side!

Now, this is the faith that the White Men hold

When they build their homes afar

Freedom for ourselves and freedom for our sons

And, failing freedom, War.

We have proved our faith - bear witness to our faith,

Dear souls of freemen slain!

Oh, well for the world when the White Men join

To prove their faith again!

WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

McClure's Magazine (12 Feb. 1899)

Take up the White Man's burden

Send forth the best ye breed

Go bind your sons to exile

To serve your captives' need;

To wait in heavy harness,

On fluttered folk and wild

Your new-caught, sullen peoples,

Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man's Burden

In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain.
To seek another's profit,
And work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden

The savage wars of peace
Fill full the mouth of famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch Sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hope to nought.

Take up the White Man's burden

No tawdry lie of kings.
But toil of serf and sweeper
The tale of common things.
The ports ye shall not enter,
The roads ye shall not tread,
Go make them with your living,

And mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man's burden

And reap his old reward:

The blame of those ye better,

The hate of those ye guard

The cry of hosts ye humour

(Ah, slowly!) toward the light:

Why brought ye us from bondage,

Our loved Egyptian night!

Take up the White Man's burden

Ye dare not stoop to less

Nor call too loud on Freedom

To cloak your weariness;

By all ye cry or whisper,

By all ye leave or do,

The silent, sullen peoples

Shall weigh your Gods and you.

Take up the White Man's burden

Have done with childish days

The lightly proffered laurel,

The easy, ungrudged praise.

Comes now, to search your manhood

Through all the thankless years,
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,
The judgment of your peers!

GOD OF OUR FATHERS

(22 June 1897)

God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget - lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart:
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget - lest we forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,

Lest we forget - lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
 Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
 Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
 Or lesser breeds without the Law
 Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
 Lest we forget - lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
 In reeking tube and iron shard,
 All valiant dust that builds on dust,
 And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,
 For frantic boast and foolish word
 Thy mercy on Thy People, Lord!

THE STRANGER

THE Stranger within my gate,
 He may be true or kind,
 But he does not talk my talk
 I cannot feel his mind.
 I see the face and the eyes and the mouth,
 But not the soul behind.

The men of my own stock

They may do ill or well,
But they tell the lies I am wonted to,
They are used to the lies I tell.
And we do not need interpreters
When we go to buy and sell.

The Stranger within my gates,
He may be evil or good,
But I cannot tell what powers control
What reasons sway his mood;
Nor when the Gods of his far-off land
Shall repossess his blood.

The men of my own stock,
Bitter bad they may be,
But, at least, they hear the things I hear,
And see the things I see;
And whatever I think of them and their likes
They think of the likes of me.

This was my father's belief
And this is also mine:
Let the corn be all one sheaf
And the grapes be all one vine,
Ere our children's teeth are set on edge

By bitter bread and wine.

THE YOUNG QUEEN

(The Commonwealth of Australia, inaugurated New Year's Day, 1901)

HER hand was still on her sword-hilt, the spur was still on her heel,

She had not cast her harness of grey, war-dinted steel;

High on her red-splashed charger, beautiful, bold, and browned,

Bright-eyed out of the battle, the Young Queen rode to be crowned.

She came to the Old Queen's presence, in the Hall of Our Thousand Years

In the Hall of the Five Free Nations that are peers among their peers:

Royal she gave the greeting, loyal she bowed the head,

Crying—"Crown me, my Mother!" And the Old Queen rose and said

"How can I crown thee further? I know whose standard flies

Where the clean surge takes the Leeuwin or the coral barriers rise.

Blood of our foes on thy bridle, and speech of our friends in thy mouth

How can I crown thee further, O Queen of the Sovereign South?

"Let the Five Free Nations witness!" But the Young Queen answered swift

"It shall be crown of Our crowning to hold Our crown for a gift.

In. the days when Our folk were feeble thy sword made sure Our lands:

Wherefore We come in power to take Our crown at thy hands."

And the Old Queen raised and kissed her, and the jealous circlet prest,

Roped with the pearls of the Northland and red with the gold of the West,

Lit with her land's own opals, levin-hearted, alive,

And the Five-starred Cross above them, for sign of the Nations Five.

So it was done in the Presence—in the Hall of Our Thousand Years,

In the face of the Five Free Nations that have no peer but their peers;

And the Young Queen out of the Southland kneeled down at the Old Queen's knee,

And asked for a mother's blessing on the excellent years to be.

And the Old Queen stooped in the stillness where the jewelled head drooped low

“Daughter no more but Sister, and doubly Daughter so

Mother of many princes—and child of the child I bore,

What good thing shall I wish thee that I have not wished before?

“Shall I give thee delight in dominion—mere pride of thy setting forth?

Nay, we be women together—we know what that lust is worth.

Peace in thy utmost borders, and strength on a road untrod?

These are dealt or diminished at the secret will of God.

“I have swayed troublous councils, I am wise in terrible things;

Father and son and grandson, I have known the hearts of the Kings.

Shall I give thee my sleepless wisdom, or the gift all wisdom above?

Ay, we be women together—I give thee thy people's love:

“Tempered, august, abiding, reluctant of prayers or vows,

Eager in face of peril as thine for thy mother's house.
 God requite thee, my Sister, through the excellent years to be,
 And make thy people to love thee as thou hast loved me!"

IF

IF you can keep your head when all about you
 Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
 IF you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
 But make allowance for their doubting too:

IF you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
 Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
 Or being hated don't give way to hating,
 And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

IF you can dream and not make dreams your master;
 IF you can think and not make thoughts your aim,
 IF you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
 And treat those two imposters just the same;

IF you bear to hear the truth you've spoken
 Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
 Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
 And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;

IF you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings,
And never breathe a word about your loss:

IF you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

IF you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings -- nor lose the common touch,
IF neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
IF all men count with you, but none too much:

IF you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And -- which is more -- you'll be a Man, my son!

THE WRATH OF THE AWAKENED SAXON

(this poem is attributed to Kipling, but we are still trying to verify this)

It was not part of their blood,
It came to them very late,

With long arrears to make good,
When the Saxon began to hate.

They were not easily moved,
They were icy -- willing to wait
Till every count should be proved,
Ere the Saxon began to hate.

Their voices were even and low.
Their eyes were level and straight.
There was neither sign nor show
When the Saxon began to hate.

It was not preached to the crowd.
It was not taught by the state.
No man spoke it aloud
When the Saxon began to hate.

It was not suddenly bred.
It will not swiftly abate.
Through the chilled years ahead,
When Time shall count from the date
That the Saxon began to hate.

A SONG OF THE ENGLISH

(1893)

FAIR is our lot—O goodly is our heritage!

(Humble ye, my people, and be fearful in your mirth!)

For the Lord our God Most High

He hath made the deep as dry,

He hath smote for us a pathway to the ends of all the Earth!

Yea, though we sinned—and our rulers went from righteousness

Deep in all dishonour though we stained our garments' hem.

Oh be ye not dismayed,

Though we stumbled and we strayed,

We were led by evil counsellors—the Lord shall deal with them!

Hold ye the Faith—the Faith our Fathers sealèd us;

Whoring not with visions—overwise and overstate.

Except ye pay the Lord

Single heart and single sword,

Of your children in their bondage shall He ask them treble-tale!

Keep ye the Law—be swift in all obedience

Clear the land of evil, drive the road and bridge the ford.

Make ye sure to each his own

That he reap where he hath sown;

By the peace among Our peoples let men know we serve the Lord!

Hear now a song—a song of broken interludes
A song of little cunning; of a singer nothing worth.
Through the naked words and mean
May ye see the truth between
As the singer knew and touched it in the ends of all the Earth