RUDYARD KIPLING'S CAMPAIGN FOR MILITARY PREPAREDNESS 1902-1914

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ABSTRACT

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MILITARY PREPAREDNESS 1902-1914

by Kevin R. Cadigan

In the 1890's Rudyard Kipling was immensely popular. Much of his popularity was due to the fact that his writings provided his countrymen with a moral rational for imperialism. In poems like The White-Man's Burden, he proclaimed that the English were a Chosen Peoples, whose obligation as a superior race was to expand the British Empire, and carry the benefits of civilization to the backward areas of the world.

Many of his stories dealt with the British army, whose officers and men, he believed, were the finest soldiers in the world. Kipling's soldier stories were widely read, and they added to militant nationalism that characterized much of British public opinion in the 1890's. In 1899, however, came the Boer War, and with it a series of unexpected and humiliating defeats for the British army. One victim of the conflict was Kipling's reputation. Critics began to call him a militant jingo, whose stories and poems had helped to bring on the War by encouraging the dangerous notion that the British army was invincible.

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During the War Germany's attitude towards Great Britain was one of open hostility. The German people were almost unanimously pro-Boer in their sympathies, while their government, although officially neutral, launched an ambitious program of naval construction that represented a serious challenge to the traditional supremacy of the Royal Navy.

Kipling's primary objective as a writer had always been to entertain his readers. However, the shocking performance of the British army in South Africa, and England's deteriorating relations with Germany so alarmed him that his major interest changed from literature to politics. The bulk of his fiction and verse after 1899 was not literature, but rather propaganda for the cause of military preparedness--specifically, preparedness for a war with Germany.

Of all the great powers in Europe, England alone did not employ peace time conscription. Most Englishmen, as Kipling was aware, were strongly opposed to compulsory military service. For this reason he made several attempts to popularize volunteer rifle clubs for civilians, hoping that the creation of a national system of clubs would make conscription unnecessary. With the end of the fighting in South Africa, though, the public's interest in rifle clubs disappeared. Kipling was left convinced that any plan for building an

effective defense establishment that depended on volunteers was unrealistic. Accordingly, he became a staunch supporter of peace time conscription.

Between 1899 and the start of the First World War, Kipling observed with anxiety the growing strength of the German navy. England's refusal to adopt conscription led him to emphasize the importance of his country's fleet as a shield against a German invasion of England. In his writings and speeches, he pleaded with the British taxpayers to accept the enormous costs involved in maintaining Britain's naval superiority.

As part of his campaign for military preparedness, he believed that England should take the initiative in forming defensive alliances with all of the self-governing colonies in the Empire. He gave his unqualified support to the Anglo-French Entente of 1904, and made it clear that he viewed the agreement as the basis for a formal military alliance between France and England.

In addition to his other activities, Kipling frequently used his pen to attack the Unionist and the Liberal parties for having refused to endorse conscription, or spend what he considered adequate sums on defense. He thought that both parties were afraid to back unpopular measures like conscription

because they feared reprisals from the voters. He came to regard all politicians as self-seeking demagogues, more interested in winning an election than in promoting their country's welfare. He decided that democracy was a failure, and in his writings described what he believed was an ideal political order. He made his political utopia an enlightened despotism, governed by a ruling caste of scientists and engineers.

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We are very slightly changed
From the semi-apes who ranged
  India's prehistoric clay;
He that drew the longest bow
Ran his brother down, you know,
  As we run men down to-day.

(Rudyard Kipling, A General Summary)

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INTRODUCTION

Rudyard Kipling, who has been described by one modern critic as "a minor writer but a major disaster for the British Empire,"[1] was born in India in 1865. When he was five he was sent home to England to attend school.[2] In 1882, at the age of seventeen, he graduated from the United Services College, an institution which specialized in preparing boys for Sandhurst and a career in the army.[3] Kipling, however, chose to return to India, where he worked as a reporter on the staff of a Lahore newspaper.[4] It was during the seven years that he was in India, between 1882 and 1889, that Kipling wrote the first of his stories and poems with Indian themes. Their publication in England established his reputation as a rising young author. The financial rewards from his fiction and verse were such that by 1889 he could give up his job and leave India forever.[5]

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[1] A. J. Liebling, "Rung Ho, Maugham Sahib," The New Yorker, April 17, 1954, p. 114.

[2] C. E. Carrington, The Life of Rudyard Kipling (New York, 1956), pp. 1-10. Hereafter cited as Carrington.

[3] Rudyard Kipling, Something of Myself: For My Friends Known and Unknown (New York, 1937), pp. 26, 41.

[4] Ibid., p. 41.

[5] Carrington, pp. 34-67, 92.

In contrast to his adventure stories, Kipling's own life after 1889 was comparatively uneventful. Before returning to England in 1889, he visited Burma, Japan, Hong-Kong, Singapore, Canada, and the United States. The next two years were spent in London, where he continued to write while enjoying the acclaim his work was receiving from British literary critics. In 1891, his health deteriorating from overwork, Kipling embarked on a long ocean voyage which took him to South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia.[6]

Thus, by 1892, with his Indian background and his subsequent travels, Kipling had managed to see at firsthand almost all of the enormous British Empire. He was ready to settle down, and in 1892 married Caroline Balestier, an American girl. The first four years of the marriage were spent in America. After 1896, however, he made his permanent home in England, where he continued to live until his death in 1936.[7]

While Kipling's writings have always received the attention of literary critics, they have been largely neglected by students of history. This thesis represents an attempt to trace the development of Kipling's thoughts

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[6] Ibid., pp. 92-147.

[7] Ibid., pp. 148-189.

on the subject of military preparedness from the start of the Boer War in 1899 to the start of the First World War in 1914. It is based on the author's conviction that as a result of the defeats of the British army in South Africa during the opening stages of the Boer War, and the deterioration that took place in the relations between England and Germany in the first years of the twentieth century, Rudyard Kipling changed, from a writer whose main purpose had always been to entertain his readers, into a dedicated political propagandist. In this role he used his pen to preach such things as hatred of Germany, peace time conscription, the need for increased naval appropriations, Empire federation for military purposes, and eventually, when it appeared that these goals could not be fully realized within the framework of democratic government, to reject democracy for the supposed gains in strength and national efficiency that could be realized under a totalitarian regime, administered by an elite of scientific and enlightened despots.

CHAPTER I

RUDYARD KIPLING IN THE 1890'S: THE TRIUMPHANT YEARS

As an author Kipling enjoyed immediate success. His rise was meteoric. By the age of twenty-five he was receiving the kind of critical and popular acclaim which is reserved for other great writers until they are old men with their careers behind them. Much of this early fame was due to his subject matter: the British Empire.[1] Before Kipling there was practically nothing in the way of popular fiction on the subject. Consequently, he had the advantage of a fresh theme as well as the ability to present it forcefully and convincingly. The public was intrigued and delighted by his work.[2] Literary critics and other writers appeared equally impressed. In 1891 Edmund Gosse described him as "a new star out of the East, . . . [who] sweeps us away with him; he plays upon a strange and seductive pipe, and

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[1] Carrington, p. 260.

[2] "During Kipling's lifetime Macmillan's, who held the English rights of his collected volumes of stories, sold about seven million copies; Doubleday's, who held the American rights, nearly eight million" (ibid., p. 362).

we follow him like children."[3] Oscar Wilde, reviewing one of Kipling's first books, declared: "As one turns over the pages of Plain Tales From the Hills, one feels as if one were seated under a poem-tree, reading life by superb flashes of vulgarity."[4] In a letter to Henry James in 1890, Robert Louis Stevenson wrote: Kipling is "by far the most promising young man who has appeared since--ahem--I appeared."[5] In 1891, as Kipling's reputation continued to grow, Henry James replied: "The only news in literature here . . . continues to be the infant monster of a Kipling."[6] The dizzy pace continued. In 1890, Sidney Low, the editor of the St. James's Gazette, expressed the opinion that Kipling was possibly greater than Dickens.[7] Two years later a critic for The Saturday Review considered his popularity as having already placed him "within measurable distance of the foundations of a Kipling Society."[8]

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[3]Edmund Gosse, "Rudyard Kipling," The Century Magazine, XLII (1891), 901-910.

[4]Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," Intentions (London, 1891), p. 227.

[5]Quoted in Carrington, p. 145.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid., p. 104.

[8]Ibid., p. 263.

Throughout the 1890's imperialism remained the dominant theme in Kipling's writings.[9] One of his contemporaries called him "the Cecil Rhodes of literature,"[10] and John Hay listed him as one of four men most responsible for making imperialism in England a popular movement.[11] A great deal of Kipling's own popularity was due to his success in providing a moral rational for imperialism.[12] His fiction and verse breathed idealism into expansionism, and his arguments were sufficiently persuasive that by the end of the 1890's "Kiplingism" had become a synonym for imperialism itself.[13] To his readers Kipling gave his own conviction, perhaps most forcefully in The White Man's Burden, that the English had a sacred obligation to carry the gospel of good government and law to all the savage, backward peoples of the globe, a task that he once described as "aggressive altruism."[14]

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[9]"The Literary Inspiration of Imperialism," Living Age, CCXXV (1900), 807-811.

[10]William Salter, "One Side of Kipling," Ethical Record, October-November, 1900, pp. 11-12.

[11]Cited in Harvey Cushing's, The Life of Sir William Osler (Oxford, 1925), II, 1082. The others: Joseph Chamberlain, Lord Strathcona, and Lord Northcliffe.

[12]"The Poet in Politics," Review of Reviews (London), XIX (1899), 107.

[13]"Literary Inspiration, . . ." Living Age.

[14]"From Sea to Sea," Letters of Travel (New York, 1912), p. 400. Unless otherwise indicated all of the poems by Kipling cited in this thesis can be found in Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition (New York, 1940). Verse titles have been underlined rather than enclosed in quotation marks.

Kipling's reputation was built on his stories and poems about the British army in India.[15] The English people, he maintained, were all members of a "high caste and enlightened race,"[16] but the best of them, in his estimation, were the soldiers of the British army. He wrote of one young man that, "he became an officer and a gentleman, which is an enviable thing."[17] The officers of the British army, he declared in one story, "are as good as good can be, because their training begins early, and God has arranged that a clean-run youth of the British middle classes shall, in the matter of backbone, brains, and bowels, surpass all other youths."[18] In sharp contrast to his admiration for the army, he had little but contempt for the civilians who administered the Empire. He regarded them as the kind of people who preached "that lying proverb which says that the pen is mightier than the sword."[19]

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[15] See particularly Departmental Ditties and Barrack-Room Ballads (New York, 1923), and Soldier Stories (New York, 1927).

[16] "Kidnapped," Plain Tales from the Hills (New York, 1921), p. 136.

[17] "Only A Subaltern," Under the Deodars (New York, 1922), p. 217.

[18] Ibid.

[19] "On the City Wall," In Black and White (New York, 1920), p. 83.

It was the soldier, he thought, who had done the work which made the British Empire possible. Accordingly, he reserved his fictional eulogies for the fighting man.

Nonetheless, Kipling knew scarcely more about the realities of war than his readers. The man who wrote so colorfully, and with such apparent accuracy, about the British army had never seen a battle in his life.[20] His soldier stories were drawn from his own imagination, and from the yarns of the officers and men he had known in India.[21] It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Kipling idealized war in much the same way that he did imperialism. His fiction, which had little to say about the suffering or the horrors of battle, portrayed war as both romantic and glamorous; almost even as a game, a superior kind of sport, more exciting than cricket or football, and only a little more dangerous. Kipling's soldiers, typically, greet the news of war with shouts of delight, "unholily pleased," at the chance to "have a little fun."[22] An officer engaged in a border skirmish, for example, does not worry about being killed himself. He only fears his colonel, who will

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[20] Carrington, p. 79.

[21] Ibid.

[22] "On the City Wall," p. 86.

blame him for "monopolising the fun."[23] In The Light that Failed,[24] Dick Heldar, a typical Kipling hero, becomes "wild with delight . . ." at the sound of the rifle fire which announces the start of battle. "'God is very good,'" Dick exults. "'I never thought I'd hear this again. Give 'em hell, men. Oh, give 'em hell!'" For the Dick Heldars of Kipling's stories, it was not the beginning, but rather the end of a fight that was a cause for regret. "'It was a lark, . . .'" Dick exclaims after one battle. "'I only wish it had lasted twice as long.'"

Kipling was an unconscious creator of myths; during the 1890's he saw no reason to believe that there could be any very important difference between the British army of reality, and the invincible, red-coated heroes that marched from one triumph to another through the pages of his books. Until the disasters of the South African War taught him differently, Kipling believed the boast of his Irish soldier, Mulvaney (whose men swam across a river in the nude to surprise and capture a town of rebellious natives), that the British army could "take St. Pethersburg in their

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[23] "The Head of the District," Life's Handicap (New York, 1922), p. 301.

[24] Included in The Works of Rudyard Kipling: One Volume Edition (New York, 1927), p. 545.

dhrawers."[25]

Kipling's brand of militant imperialism was well suited to the England of the 1890's. For most Englishmen it was a deleriously exciting time to be alive. On contemporary maps an enormous and ever-increasing portion of the globe appeared coloured in red: British red. London music halls were crowded with audiences stamping their feet and lustily bawling out the words to songs with refrains such as, "Paint Another Red Patch on the Map,"[26] and "A Little--British--Army--goes--a--long--long--way."[27]

Kipling's writings had an enormous influence on his own generation. By 1899, his name was a household word in both England and America. In a book written in 1910, H. G. Wells recalled, "The prevailing forces in my undergraduate days was not Socialism but Kiplingism. . . . In the middle nineties . . . [Kipling] became almost a national symbol.

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[25]"Taking of Lungtungpen," Soldier Stories, p. 39.

[26]Edward Shanks, Mr. Rudyard Kipling: Second Essays on Literature (London, 1927), p. 238.

[27]"The Foundations of British Patriotism," The Kipling Journal, April, 1944, pp. 13-14. The Kipling Journal, published quarterly in London since 1927 by the Kipling Society, contains hundreds of articles on every aspect of Kipling's work. Over the years the Journal has acquired and published many of Kipling's letters, speeches, and other uncollected writings.

He got hold of us wonderfully; he filled us with tinkling and haunting quotations; . . . he coloured the very idiom of our conversation."[28] In 1904, the literary critic Charles Masterman described the English national character as it was portrayed in his literature. Kipling, Masterman declared, revealed

> the Briton to himself, a majestic figure, lord of the earth, who with the approbation of God, but by the power of his own right arm, had gotten himself the victory. It presented a figure of the Imperial race, like Nietzsche's Overman, trampling over the ineffective, crushing opposing nations, boasting an iron supremacy, administering an iron justice. [Kipling's] was the literature of the security of a confident triumph. . . . Its appeal was to many permanent elements of human emotion. It proclaimed the supremacy of England as a mother worth dying for; her children seeking danger as a bride, searching all the confines of the world; encountering and joyfully [subduing] enemies and natural forces. . . . [He gave us a vision] of the flag of England . . . as everywhere triumphant by the testimony of all the winds of Heaven. It was a literature of intoxication; adequate to a nation which, having conquered the world in a fit of absence of mind, has suddenly become conscious of the magnitude of its achievement. Small wonder that to the eyes of the men of the time there came with it something of the force of a gospel. . . . [His] proclamation of the Imperial race co-operating with God in the bloody destruction and domination of subject peoples passed into the commonplaces of a journalism which every morning revealed to the astonished clerk his devastation of Afghanistan, or . . . of Zanzibar, or slaughter of ten thousand fantastic Dervishes in a night and a day.[29]

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[28] H. G. Wells, The New Machiavelli (New York, 1910), p. 120.

[29] Charles Masterman, "After the Reaction," Contemporary Review, LXXVI (1904), 816-820.

CHAPTER II

THE BOER WAR: PART I

The last great crises of the New Imperialism came in 1899: the Boer War.

Kipling's personal interest in South Africa went back to 1891, when he had spent several weeks in Cape Colony before going on to visit Australia and New Zealand.[1] In the years that followed he had several times expressed himself in favor of expanding British power in South Africa. This expansion, as he was well aware, could only be achieved at the expense of the two Boer republics, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.[2] As early as 1893 he had made Cape Town dream--

> Of Empire to the northward. Ay, one land
> From Lion's Head to line![3]

Two years later he declared that for Britain, South Africa was:

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[1] Carrington, pp. 143-44.

[2] See particularly Kipling's "Address to the Anglo-African Writer's Club," The Times (London), May 17, 1898, p. 11. Hereafter cited as The Times.

[3] A Song of the English.

. . . the last and the largest Empire,
. . . the map that is half unrolled.[4]

The Jameson Raid into the Transvaal in 1895, followed by the Kaiser's telegram of sympathy to President Kruger, was the motivating force behind Kipling's Hymn Before Action,[5] a poem expressing his opinion that it was wrong for England to repudiate Jameson, or to punish any of the men who had participated in the invasion:

If wrong we did to call them,
By honour bound they came;
Let not Thy Wrath befall them,
But deal to us the blame.

After the Jameson Raid Kipling became increasingly concerned with the mounting tensions in South Africa between the Dutch and the British. In 1898 he made a trip to Cape Town to observe the situation at first hand.[6] Before returning to England, he was introduced to two of the leading exponents of the New Imperialism: Sir Alfred Milner, the Queen's High Commissioner in Cape Colony, and Cecil Rhodes.[7] Kipling formed a close friendship with Rhodes, that lasted until Rhodes's death in 1902.[8] The two had much in common.

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[4] The Native-Born.

[5] Carrington, p. 178.

[6] Something of Myself, pp. 160-161.

[7] Carrington, pp. 210-211.

[8] Something of Myself, pp. 160-161.

They were both romantics, and they were both imperialists. Kipling was just the man to share Rhodes's vision, and to appreciate the magnitude of his life's work: the attempt to establish an unbroken string of British possessions, which would stretch from the Cape to Cairo. "What is your dream," Rhodes asked him? "You are part of it," Kipling replied.[9]

The immediate events that preceded the Boer War can be quickly listed. In April, 1899, a petition was received at the British Foreign Office. It bore the signatures of nearly twenty-two thousand of the Queen's subjects on the Rand, who were protesting the political and economic persecution they were suffering at the hands of the Kruger government.[10] In the Transvaal, the Dutch Burghers had become a minority of the white population, while the British, contemptuously referred to by the Dutch as "Uitlanders," owned three-quarters of the country's wealth, paid five-sixths of all the taxes, and were allowed no more political rights than the Black Kaffirs.[11] From Cape Town, Sir Alfred Milner gave

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[9] Quoted in "Notes," Kipling Journal, October, 1953, p. 1.

[10] Rayne Kruger, Goodbye Dolly Gray: The Story of the Boer War (New York, 1960), p. 49. Hereafter cited as Kruger.

[11] Carrington, p. 232.

the Uitlanders his full support. "The spectacle," he declared in a cable to the Cabinet in London, "of thousands of British subjects kept permanently in the position of helots, constantly chaffing under undoubted grievances and calling vainly to Her Majesty's government for redress, does steadily determine the influence and reputation of Great Britain and the respect for the British Government within the Queen's Dominions. . . ."[12]

During the Spring and summer of 1899, both sides in the dispute drifted slowly closer to war. As a result of the Uitlanders' petition the Salisbury government instructed Milner to attempt to negotiate a settlement with President Kruger. A subsequent conference, held in Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State, proved a complete failure. Milner broke off the negotiations in disgust after five days of fruitless debate with Kruger. Further talks between representatives of the two governments met a like fate. On September 27, when war had become a near certainty, the Orange Free State announced that it would support the Transvaal in any armed conflict with Great Britain.[13]

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[12] R. C. K. Ensor, England, 1870-1914, The Oxford History of England, XIV (Oxford, 1960), 247. Hereafter cited as Ensor.

[13] Ibid., pp. 248-251.

Events moved rapidly forward. On October 9, President Kruger sent an ultimatum to the Salisbury government demanding that no more British troops be sent to Africa. In the early morning hours of Tuesday, October 10, the Boer ultimatum was in the hands of England's Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain. It was rejected before the day was out.[14] Britain's formal declaration of war followed on the eleventh, and 47,000 British troops were dispatched to the Cape under the command of Sir Redvers Buller.[15]

In the midst of the crisis, on September 29, The Times published Kipling's denunciation of Kruger in verse, The Old Issue,[16] which made up in force for whatever it lacked in accuracy of literary merit. Kruger, the poem proclaimed, was "cruel," "crafty," and "sloven, sullen, savage, secret, uncontrolled." Kipling reminded his countrymen of England's traditional hostility to tyranny, and suggested that the destruction of Kruger's despotic regime would advance the cause of human freedom.

Few Englishmen in October of 1899 entertained any doubts as to the outcome of the new war. Victory would be

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[14] Kruger, p. 57.

[15] Carrington, p. 232.

[16] The Times, September 29, 1899, p. 7.

achieved rapidly and cheaply. After two or three decisive defeats the Boers would surrender, at which time, it was expected, their two republics would be annexed to the British Empire. The Chancellor of the Exchequer estimated that the conflict would cost no more than ten million pounds. The War Office thought it would not be necessary to send more than 75,000 troops to South Africa, and that the war itself would be over in three months.[17]

Instead, the Boer War was to cost not ten million, but nearly two hundred million pounds. It was to last not three months but two and a half years, and England was forced to send out to South Africa not 75,000, but 450,000 soldiers. Worse still, the British victory that was finally achieved was preceded by a series of humiliating defeats which cut across the country's pride like a whiplash.[18]

But in the autumn of 1899 all this was still in the future. In England, until the results of the first battles were known, optimism and confidence reigned supreme. The great majority of the public believed that England's volunteer army was the finest fighting organization in the world. The

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[17]Kruger, p. 482; Elie Halévy, Imperialism and the Rise of Labour, Vol. V of A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, 6 vols. (New York, 1961), 137. Hereafter cited as Halévy, Vol. V.

[18]Ibid.

boast of a popular song from the period was accepted by most people as being more or less the truth.

> So come you foreign soldiers, and
> we don't care who you are--
> The Uhlans of the Kaiser or the
> Cossacks of the Czar--
> Our Army may be little, but you've
> learned before to-day
> That a little British Army goes
> a damned long way.[19]

Like his readers Kipling welcomed the war. He considered the Transvaal "a festering sore,"[20] and with the rest of his countrymen was convinced the British army would have the Boers trounced in a matter of months. His personal opinion of the Dutch was that they were an "old fashioned," and backward people, ignorant of even "the elementary rudiments of civilisation. . . ."[21] What chance, after all, did a poorly disciplined lot of backs-woods farmers, from "a country overwhelmingly pastoral, . . ."[22] have against the invincible legions of Imperial Britain?

The public's faith in the ability of the British army was partly due to the almost unbroken string of victories

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[19]George K. Sims, The Dandy Fifth, quoted in The Kipling Journal, April, 1941, p. 28.

[20]"Address to the Anglo-African Writer's Club," The Times.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Something of Myself, pp. 161-162.

that had been won in the army's endemic wars with natives. Much of the public's confidence, however, was the result of having read and believed the writings of Rudyard Kipling. A few years later a critic was to observe that "while British wars consisted of batteus of blacks, with the minimum of loss and pain to ourselves, the falsity of the atmosphere of Mr. Kipling's battle tales was undiscoverable."[23] There is no reason to doubt that prior to the Boer War, Kipling's soldier stories were accepted by nearly all of his contemporaries as highly accurate accounts of the British army as it existed in reality.

In one month alone before the War, March, 1899, the British press carried such typical comments as these:

> The Times: Whether Mr. Kipling has been worth to his country, as some of his admirers declare, as much as a whole corp's d'armee, he has helped, half to create, half to popularize, a type of our soldier such as we did not before know.[24]

> The Speaker: [His writings are a symbol of] the fighting spirit of Britain and her offshoots, the indomitable will and brains she exercises by land and sea, her magnetic power over subject races, . . . the ingrained devilry of the British soldier. [Kipling] is less a figure in our literature than a literary herald-at-arms, who sounds the note of Empire with superb vibrations.[25]

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[23] Masterman, "After the Reaction," Contemporary Review, p. 817.

[24] "Leading Article," March 4, 1899, p. 7.

[25] "Rudyard Kipling," reprinted in Living Age, CCXX (1899), 786-788.

> Book Buyer: [Before 1890 the average Englishman] felt uneasy about the future. Might it not be true that money had unnerved him? Was it not possible that he had grown too fat to fight? Comfort and reassurance came from a new strong voice out of the East. [Kipling] exalted on high the private soldier, the young subaltern. . . . The mere recital of the deeds of these men compelled belief in their substantial truth. The wealth of incident, the corrobative details, the living flesh and blood of the actors, when described by this master mind, were at once so extravagant and so consistent in themselves as to supersede any effort of imagination beyond that which the eye had seen and the ear had heard. The conclusion was irrestible that only a suitable environment was wanting to reproduce from the ranks of Englishmen a Drake or a Clive, a Peterborough or a Nelson. . . . Slowly the conception of a fighting Tommy Atkins grew up to take the place of the previous widely-held belief that the British soldier was more ornamental than useful, and only to be mentioned in terms of disparagement when contrasted with the armed millions of Germany or France.[26]

In October, 1899, a month punctuated by electric tensions, which ended with the roar of artillery in faraway Africa, Kipling brought out a new book, Stalky and Company.[27] Thinly veiled as fiction, the book was actually an autobiographical account of Kipling's schooldays at the militarily oriented United Services Academy.[28] One critic who reviewed the book declared: "Mr. Kipling, as the apostle of muscle

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[26] E. H. Mullin, "Stevenson, Kipling, and Anglo-Saxon Imperialism," Book Buyer, XVIII (1899), 85-90.

[27] New York, 1920.

[28] Something of Myself, p. 26.

and aggressive imperialism, has uttered many battle-cries in his time; but this is his completest incitement to war, his crowning achievement as the supreme Recruiting Sergeant."[29] The review carried in The Times quoted approvingly Kipling's evaluation of his fictional hero, Stalky. It is just as Mr. Kipling says, The Times observed:

> India's full of Stalkies--Cheltenham and Haileybury and Marlborough chaps--that we don't know anything about, and the surprises will begin when there is really a big row on.
>
> "Who will be surprised?" said Dick. . . .
>
> "The other side. The gentlemen who go to the front in first-class carriages. Just imagine Stalky let loose on the south side of Europe with a sufficiency of Sikhs and a reasonable prospect of loot. Consider it quietly."[30]

During the bitter disillusionment of the following months, one fact was to become abundantly clear. England's "Stalkies," her supply of headlong, heartstrong officers, the military gentlemen from her public schools, were notoriously lacking in the same kind of resourcefulness and ingenuity shown by their fictional prototype.

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[29] "Mr. Kipling as a Recruiting Sergeant," The Academy, LVII (1899), 421-422.

[30] The Times, October 6, 1899, p. 8.

CHAPTER III

THE BOER WAR: PART II

Before the year was out, the words in the Times' review of Stalky and Company had become an ironic mockery. The country was shocked into a numbed horror at the news of an incredible series of British defeats in South Africa. The Boers, those same primitive farmers, despised by Kipling for their backwardness, had disastrously routed British armies at the battles of Elandsaagte, Ladysmith, Stormberg, Magersfontein, Colenso and Spionkop.[1]

An unpleasant truth was rapidly borne in upon the English people. In training, tactics, and organization, the British army was not the same efficient military machine that appeared in Kipling's writings. The plight of the army was largely the fault of the War Office. In 1899, the army was still practicing battlefield tactics dating from the Napoleonic wars. The standard training regulations, as laid down at Aldershot, continued to insist that an infantry charge be conducted by troops linked shoulder

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[1]Kruger, pp. 87-88, 98; Ensor, pp. 253-254.

to shoulder in a solid wall of unbroken flesh. Only two months a year were devoted to actual military training or field maneuvers. The average enlisted man spent the rest of the year keeping his uniform clean, polishing his equipment, and acting as a body servant to his officers.[2]

Such antiquated procedures formed only one aspect of a backward administrative and command system. Of all the great powers in Europe, Great Britain alone did not possess a General Staff Organization, who could formulate long-range military policy and see to it that the army was kept abreast of modern innovations in warfare. When England went to war in 1899, she found that the normal handicaps of a dilapidated military structure in the nineteenth century had all been dramatically intensified by the weapon of the twentieth century--automatic rifles, repeating pistols, long-range high explosive artillery, and the machinegun. Save for the airplane, the armies in South Africa fought with weapons very nearly as deadly as those used in the two World Wars of our own century. Against these new weapons the classic tactics of Aldershot were suicidal: The bayonet charge, lance cavalry, and the shoulder to shoulder formation of infantry produced mass slaughter when employed against an

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[2]Kruger, pp. 62-63.

enemy armed and equipped with the new weaponry.[3]

In the absence of a major war since the Crimean, however, the true condition of the British army passed unnoticed. Encouraged by Kipling's fiction and the army's mounting toll of victories in its wars with savages, the average Englishman remained dangerously complacent. The British defeats in South Africa, therefore, came as a rude shock. The humiliations suffered by English arms at Elandsaagte, Ladysmith, Stormberg, Magersfontein, and Colenso produced a kind of incredulous astonishment. This quickly changed to anger. "When the New Year came," J. A. Spender wrote, "it was doubtful whether the British public were angrier with the Boers for having defied the power of Great Britain, or with the Government which had landed itself and the country in such a position."[4]

The Boer successes continued through 1899. In England the initial shock at defeat was replaced by a renewed determination to fight the War to a victorious conclusion. Buller was dismissed from his command. In his place was appointed England's most famous soldier, Lord Roberts, while Kitchener was assigned to serve as his chief of staff.

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[3] Ibid., pp. 60-63.

[4] Quoted in Colonel John K. Dunlop, The Development of the British Army, 1899-1914 (London, 1938), p. 121.

The arrival of the two officers in Cape Town in January, 1900, was followed by massive troop reinforcements from England, as well as the appearance of large numbers of volunteers from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and many of the other territories in the Empire. In 1900, the War began to go in Britain's favor. In February, at the battle of Paardeburg, the Boers received their first serious defeat. Paardeburg was followed by a series of impressive British victories. With the survivors of the battle fleeing in front of his advancing troops, Lord Roberts pushed rapidly forward. On the thirteenth of March his army captured Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State. In the next three months British troops occupied the remainder of the Free State, which was formally annexed to the Empire in May. Johannesburg and Pretoria, the two principal cities of the Transvaal, fell to the British in June. In August the last organized Boer army was defeated at Bergendal. Two months later the Transvaal shared the fate of its sister republic, and became a colony of the British Empire.

By October, 1900, the War was over, or so it appeared. Lord Roberts returned to England, where he was greeted as a conquering hero. Kitchener remained behind to mop up the few Boers still obstinately refusing to surrender.

The War, however, as the British soon learned to their consternation, was far from being over. It had merely entered upon a new stage, and was to continue as a guerrilla war for seventeen more long, discouraging months. While the Boers could no longer field an army, they were able to successfully carry on the struggle as mounted infantry. Boers who had laid down their arms when Pretoria fell, or after the defeat at Bergendal, were encouraged to further resistance. Soon swarms of hard-hitting guerrilla units arose to carry out a series of destructive raids. The British, for their part, were left baffled and furious at the effectiveness of the new tactics. To combat his highly mobile foe, Kitchener was forced to adopt a variety of measures which were steadily increased in severity as the struggle dragged on.

The process of disbanding the army, begun in October, was halted. From England Kitchener demanded and was sent men and horses by the thousands. Having transformed his own army into mounted infantry, he could now for the first time pursue his elusive enemy on equal terms. When even this failed to produce decisive results, Kitchener was compelled to extend the War to the Boer women and children. The supply bases for the Boer guerrillas were their farms, which provided them with food, shelter, and spare horses. At the start

of 1901, he ordered the systematic burning of hundreds of Boer homesteads. The Boer dependants, the women and children, were imprisoned in British concentration camps.

To guard the railways, which were their communication lines, the British had constructed chains of blockhouses. These were placed at two thousand yard intervals along the tracks, filled with troops, and fortified with machineguns. Kitchener now realized that by stringing barbed wire between each blockhouse he could prevent the guerrilla parties from gaining access to large areas of the country. Vast "drives" followed, in which thousands of mounted British infantry formed themselves into cordons and herded whatever Boers they might encounter in the direction of the barbed wire and the blockhouses. The enormous numerical superiority of the British now became decisive. One guerrilla band after another was trapped in the British net. With escape impossible the Boers could only choose between fighting, and being killed,or surrendering. Every week after the start of the "drives" saw the capture of four to five hundred guerrillas. Even if the Boers continued the contest to the last man, Kitchener was pleased to observe, their final defeat was inevitable.

The Boers came to the same conclusion. In March, 1902, they asked for peace terms. The negotiations that

followed ended in the Peace of Vereeniging in May. The Boers agreed to accept the annexation of their two republics. The British for their part showed generosity by granting three million pounds to rebuild destroyed farms, and by promising that self-government would be granted in the near future.[5]

Between 1899 and 1902, Kipling made three trips to South Africa.[6] In 1900, for the first time, he saw something of war as it existed in reality.[7] He was at the front during the battle of Paardeburg in February, and at the invitation of Lord Roberts followed the British Army into Bloemfontein,[8] where he witnessed another battle, that of Karree siding.[9]

His firsthand look at the South African conflict convinced him that a primary weakness of the British army was inadequate training.[10] This was due to the fact that

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[5]The chronological account of the Boer War was taken from Ensor, pp. 252-256, 345-348; Kruger, pp. 140-160, 450-488, and Halévy, V, 69-93.

[6]Carrington, pp. 236, 246, 249.

[7]Irvin S. Cobb, "Interview with Kipling," Bookman (New York), XXXVIII (January, 1914), 10.

[8]Carrington, pp. 237-238.

[9]Kipling, Something of Myself, pp. 169-171.

[10]In his writings during the war Kipling severely criticized the performance of the British army in South Africa. See particularly: "The Outsider," and "Folly Bridge," in Uncollected Prose, The Sussex Edition of the Complete Works in Prose and Verse, 35 Vols. (London, 1938), Vol. XXX. Hereafter cited as Sussex Ed., Vol. XXX.

the regular army was too small to deal with the Boers alone, while at the same time England had practically nothing in the way of trained reserves who might be called up to fill out the ranks of the regulars. The net result was that Great Britain was forced to fight the opening months of the War with half-trained civilian volunteers, who had been given little more than a few lessons in marksmanship before being rushed to the front. From first to last it was found necessary to raise and equip an army of 450,000 men. Against the Boers this gave Britain a numerical superiority of about four to one. Nonetheless, it took England two-and-a-half years to defeat a foe whose cities and supply bases had all been either captured or destroyed.[11] As late as the spring of 1901, Kitchener was complaining that the majority of the volunteers received from England were totally useless. They could neither shoot nor ride, and had to be put through an extensive training period in Cape Town before they could be sent into battle. On almost every occasion that the British did encounter the Boers on roughly equal terms they were defeated. The whole War, in fact, from the British point of view was a potent demonstration of the superiority of the trained versus the untrained soldier.[12]

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[11] Halévy, V, 79-83, 89-90.

[12] Kruger, pp. 64-65, 147-151, 431.

This was certainly Kipling's conclusion.[13] The British volunteers, he commented disgustedly, were "full of zeal, but empty of all knowledge."[14] After witnessing a battle, he declared that the Boers "fought to kill, and by what I could make out the British fought to be killed. So both parties were accommodated."[15]

As the War finally drew to a close, it might be said with some confidence that the British people would insist that the government enact a comprehensive program of army reform.[16] Certainly this was Kipling's opinion. In July, 1901, he published a set of verses in The Times, appropriately entitled The Lesson. Our failures in South Africa, he declared, were both a surpirse and a national humiliation. But they were also educational. We have been given a painful but convincing demonstration of how woefully unprepared the British army is to fight a modern war against a well trained and disciplined army:

> Let us admit it fairly, as a business people should,
> We have had no end of a lesson: it will do us no end of good.

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[13] "Letters to H. S. W. Edwardes," reprinted in The Kipling Journal, December, 1956, pp. 13-15.

[14] "A Sahib's War," Traffics and Discoveries (London, 1924), p. 84.

[15] "The Captive," ibid., p. 9.

[16] "Leading Article," The Times, January 7, 1902, p. 7.

Not on a single issue, or in one direction or twain,
But conclusively, comprehensively, and several times
and again,
Were all our most holy illusions knocked higher than
Gilroy's kite.
We have had a jolly good lesson, and it serves us jolly
well right!
. . . . . .
It was our fault, and our very great fault, and not the
judgment of Heaven.
We made an Army in our own image, on an island nine by
seven,
Which faithfully mirrored its makers' ideals, equipment,
and mental attitude--
And so we got our lesson: and we ought to accept it
with gratitude.
. . . . . .
All the obese, unchallenged old things that stifle and
overlie us--
Have felt the effects of the lesson we got--an advantage
no money could buy us!

Then let us develop this marvellous asset which we alone
command,
And which, it may subsequently transpire, will be worth
as much as the Rand.
Let us approach this pivotal fact in a humble yet
hopeful mood--
We have had no end of a lesson. It will do us no end
of good!
It was our fault, and our very great fault--and now
we must turn it to use.
We have forty million reasons for failure, but not a
single excuse.

The Lesson struck a note of optimism. It reflected Kipling's confidence that his countrymen would profit from what they had learned at such a frightful cost in South Africa. The blood, the suffering, the expense, the shame of the first defeats: none of it had been in vain. England had received a lesson, his poem announced, "an advantage no

money could buy us," which might prove more valuable than the country's newly acquired gold mines in the Transvaal.

Events in Europe were already, in 1901, drawing Kipling's attention away from South Africa. There might well be a time in the not too distant future when Englishmen would be called upon to fight a far more formidable foe than the Boers. If, before that day came, the nation had profited from the South African debacle by instituting a thorough-going system of army reform, then nothing would have been lost by the War. Much, in fact, would have been gained.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE APPOINTMENTS TO THE FIRST AND SECOND ARMY CORPS

The British Army, the South African War had also revealed, suffered from a plethora of officers of mediocre ability. The regular army before the War was still something of a closed corporation. Wealth and influence could no longer buy commissions, but they continued to be passports to speedy promotion, and many officers were able to enjoy successful army careers while remaining abysmally ignorant about modern developments in weapons and tactics.[1]

During the Boer War, Kipling turned out a number of sharply worded pieces in which he contrasted the heroism of the men who served in the ranks of the British army with the inefficiency and criminal stupidity that was frequently displayed by their officers.[2] Very little would be gained by the enactment of any military reform program which did not include the retirement of those officers, Kipling contemptuously

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[1] Kruger, pp. 62-63.

[2] The best examples of this theme appear in the story "The Outsider," Sussex Ed., Vol. XXX, and the poem Stellenbosch.

dubbed them "The Old Guard,"[3] who had been responsible for the defeats in South Africa. Implicit within the sanguine hopes that he had expressed in The Lesson was his expectation that a thorough-going revamping of the army would eliminate the worst of the Boer war brass-hats.

The Lesson, however, had scarcely appeared before the friends of army reform received a rude shock. In the previous year (October, 1900), Lord Lansdowne, whose administration of the War Office had aroused sharp criticism, was replaced as Secretary for War by St. John Brodrick.[4] The new minister was not a happy choice.[5] Brodrick's first year in office saw abandoned the extensive scheme for army reform and reorganization which he had promised the country.[6] Of more immediate seriousness, however, was his broken pledge concerning the appointments to the First and Second Army Corps,[7] the two units that would be the first to be sent abroad in any future war. If anything had been proven by the South African conflict, it was the wisdom of reserving

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[3] In the poem, The Song of the Old Guard.

[4] Ensor, p. 611.

[5] Halévy, V, 101.

[6] Ibid.

[7] "Sir Redvers Buller and the First Army Corps," The Spectator, LXXXVII (1901), 458.

these posts for competent officers of proven ability.[8]

Now, in the autumn of 1901, Sir Redvers Buller was given command of the First Army Corps. The Second went to Sir Evelyn Wood. Kipling received the news with stunned horror. Buller's fumbling had been responsible for the disaster at Colenso in December, 1899, a defeat which had cost Britain 1,100 casualties. In addition, Buller had unnecessarily advised Sir George White, the officer in charge of the defences at Ladysmith, to surrender, and had failed at every other task assigned to him before returning to England in disgrace. As for Wood, he was deaf and had not taken any part in the War. In another war, Buller's record and Wood's handicap would insure that neither man would be allowed to lead troops into battle. The appointments seemed clearly intended as sinecures. In any case, they violated Brodrick's promise that, "No General should henceforth be appointed on the peace establishment who would not be fit and capable to undertake his command in war time."[9]

Kipling moved swiftly. He was determined to stimulate public indignation against the appointments, and, if possible, to have them reversed. Before acting he must have pondered over the words he had so confidently written in the summer of 1901:

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[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

All the obese, unchallenged old things that stifle and overlie us--
Have felt the effects of the lesson we got--an advantage no money could buy us![10]

Kipling's first response to Brodrick's appointments was a long letter to The Spectator, a journal which shared his indignation. Has the War Office learned nothing, he asked? "Three or four years ago we should have accepted both imaginary corps and imaginary generals as serious additions to our defences; but in the past twenty-four months we have been manufacturing a real Army in South Africa . . . [which contains], thanks to God and the Mauser, . . ." a large number of officers who are more competent than either General Buller or General Wood. The British people, Kipling continued, "have paid no small price in money and in blood that there might be born an Army, handled by fit and proven leaders." The appointment of Buller and Wood indicates "that, in spite of the pledges of the government, the whole army machine is to be hauled back . . . to the old ruts of impotence, pretence, and collapse. . . . It is not the triviality or ineptitude displayed in this matter that appals, but the cynical levity."[11]

Five days after Kipling's letter appeared in The

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[10] The Lesson.

[11] "On the Appointments to the First and Second Army Corps," The Spectator, LXXXVII (1901), 479.

Spectator, General Buller came to the aid of his critics by making a rash and somewhat incoherent speech. Attempting to defend himself, he was foolish enough to declare that in telling White to surrender Ladysmith, he had intended to help White by relieving him of responsibility for the decision to surrender.[12] The idea of a general assisting a fellow officer to surrender was preposterous. The British press was roused to a fresh burst of anger against the bewildered Buller. The agitation was kept up until Broderick bowed to the clamor and relieved him of his command.[13]

At the height of the furor resulting from Buller's speech, Kipling's poem The Reformers was published in The Times. The verses were more than merely a personal attack against Buller. Kipling was alarmed at the single mindedness with which the press was pursuing the General's inadequacies. He agreed that Buller should be dismissed--and promptly. But Buller, he reminded his readers, was only a symbol of what was wrong with the whole British army. In Kipling's opinion it was dangerous nonsense to make Buller the scapegoat for the defeats in South Africa, "his nation's sacrifice to turn the judgment from his race." It would be better to allow

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[12]"General Buller," The Times, October 11, 1901, p. 10.

[13]Kruger, p. 483.

Buller to keep his command, if dismissing him meant that the British public would forget the stern necessity for army reform, complacently assuming that it had been achieved by sacking one incompetent officer. In taking this position, Kipling was not at all concerned with sparing Buller's feelings, but rather with saving his countrymen from falling into the disastrous illusion that it was an individual who was to blame rather than an institution. As he had been careful to point out in The Lesson: "It was our fault, and our very great fault--and now we must turn it to use. We have forty million reasons for failure, but not a single excuse" [italics mine].

CHAPTER V

THE CASE FOR PEACE TIME CONSCRIPTION

The performance of the British army in South Africa had initiated the clamor for army reform, but the public's continued interest in the subject after 1902 resulted from a growing awareness of how universally hated their country was by all the great powers of Europe. The defeats at the start of the War had acquainted a watchful Europe with the appalling defects that existed in the training and organization of the British army. The imperial colossus, it was observed, had feet of clay. In France, Germany, and Russia, the Boer victories were greeted with howls of delight and were interpreted as the first step in the long overdue dismemberment of Britain's swollen Empire. The press in France, where the memory of Fashoda still galled, conducted a ferocious anti-British campaign. The German foreign minister, Count Bülow, confidently predicted that England would lose the war. In Russia the advocates of an aggressive foreign policy urged the Tsar to take advantage of the opportunity offered by England's preoccupation with the Boers and move against India. It was well for England that

she was able to seize the offensive after 1899. For the possibility of foreign intervention in South Africa, or of an attack against some other portion of her Empire did not appreciably diminish until the great British victories that came in the winter and spring of 1900.[1]

During the war the Kaiser's government followed a policy of neutrality. However, there were German volunteers fighting with the Boers, and most of the German press was violently pro-Boer. Chamberlain's offer of an alliance between the two countries was arrogantly rejected.[2] Of more consequence for the future, though, were the German Naval Laws of 1898, 1900, and 1901, whose announced purpose was to give Germany a navy second only to Great Britain's.[3]

The German naval laws and Europe's response to Britain's difficulties in South Africa increased the support for army reform in England. Neither, however, brought the advocates of reform any closer to agreeing on the specific nature of the measures that should be included in a military reorganization program.[4] The most serious weakness of the

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[1]Kruger, pp. 144-145.

[2]Ibid., pp. 75, 107, 144, 154, 156.

[3]Halévy, V, 112, 115.

[4]A number of the different proposals for military reform are discussed in: "Mr. Rudyard Kipling's Idea," The Spectator, LXXXVIII (1902), 40; "Leading Article," The Times, January 4, 1902, p. 9.

British army was its chronic shortage of trained and experienced troops. It was no accident that the average Boer made a better soldier than his English counterpart. Under the ever-present threat of an attack by wild animals or marauding natives, the Boer males grew up with guns in their hands. Almost all were expert marksmen, and it was this training that allowed the Boers to nearly defeat Britain at the start of the War, and later, having lost the offensive themselves, to carry on the contest for two-and-a-half years.[5] As The Times concluded in a 1902 editorial: In a modern war "the courage of the untrained man is wasted in conflict with those that are trained. . . ."[6]

For Great Britain, then, the South African War had demonstrated the desirability of maintaining in peacetime a large, trained, ready reserve, capable of being called up in an emergency to fill out the ranks of the regular army. The whole problem pointed towards one solution: peace time conscription. In her refusal to adopt conscription England was alone among the great powers of Europe. Freedom from compulsory military service was traditionally regarded as one of the rights of Englishmen. Most people found the whole

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[5]Kruger, pp. 63-64, 403-405.

[6]"Leading Article," January 7, 1902, p. 7.

idea of a draft so repugnant that it would probably mean political suicide for the party which first suggested it.[7] There was scarcely a statesman at even the darkest moments of the War who could be brought to publicly declare in its favor.[8] In 1902 the Spectator declared that the English people would never accept conscription "except under fear of utter subjugation."[9]

Obnoxious as compulsory military service might be, the worsening international situation, combined with the wretched performance of the army in South Africa, kept the issue before the country. Here it received the endorsement of a number of organizations and prominent individuals. Lord Roberts, after his return from South Africa, came out in favor of conscription, and the National Service League, dedicated to introducing universal training, was founded in 1901.[10] As for Kipling, by the end of the War he had become

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[7]This point is discussed in "Mr. Rudyard Kipling's Idea," The Spectator.

[8]One possible exception was Lord Rosebery, the leader of the Liberal Imperialists, who, before the tide of defeat had been turned, January, 1900, announced publicly his willingness to consider the merits of a system of conscription (Halévy, V, 101-102).

[9]"Mr. Rudyard Kipling's Idea," The Spectator.

[10]David James, Lord Roberts (London, 1951), p. 415.

an ardent supporter of peace time conscription.[11] The bungling and inefficiency of the half-trained recruits that he had seen in South Africa had left him appalled. "The British soldier," he wrote, "failed in every point except courage."[12] The knowledge that the War had been needlessly prolonged due to England's shortage of trained troops horrified him.[13] He believed that many of the English dead had died unnecessarily, the men who might have lived if there had been time to give them two months of intensive military training before sending them into battle.[14] In a story written in 1900, he described the reaction of a British Colonel in Cape Town to the news that another batch of inexperienced recruits had arrived from England. The colonel's Second assures him that the new men will "learn in time." Before they do, the Colonel replies, most of them will have been killed, captured, or wounded.[15] Kipling returned to the same theme two years later in a story entitled "The Captive." One of his characters, a British General,

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[11] "Letters to H. S. W. Edwardes," Kipling Journal.

[12] "The Captive," Traffics and Discoveries, p. 34.

[13] "A Sahib's War," Ibid., p. 85.

[14] "The Outsider," Sussex Ed., XXX, 126-127.

[15] Ibid.

declares that he would like to see the war "'last another five years. We'd have an army then. . . . My command here I regard as a training depot. . . . With luck, we ought to run half a million men through the mill.'"[16]

In an interview with Irvin S. Cobb in 1913, Kipling confessed that he had never seen any fighting in India. "But I did see war in South Africa," he said. On the battlefields of South Africa he had expected to "see charges, and thin red lines, and hear hoarse commands and stand silent and thrilled in that dread hush before the battle." But instead of individual heroics, he found "method and precision and application of modern efficiency ideas [which] makes the carnage that follows all the more ghastly." The dead and the wounded seemed to Kipling "like innocent bystanders who . . . [had] got in the way of some great civil engineering scheme and had been torn and blown up."[17]

Kipling admitted that he had been surprised by the firepower of the machinegun and the scientific accuracy of the new long-range artillery. Modern warfare, Kipling concluded, is like a "mathematical problem, with some of

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[16] Traffics and Discoveries, pp. 24, 25, 27.

[17] "Interview with Kipling," Bookman.

the aspects of a surgical operation by the highest paid specialists. . . . There is no more romance or glamour in war." Against the new tools of destruction, he had decided, mere brute courage was not enough. War in becoming scientific had become professionalized, and in the future would demand vast armies of skilled men who had been taught their business in peace time.[18]

When the South African War ended, Kipling believed that public opinion would force the government to enact a sweeping series of military reforms. For a time he thought that the widespread interest in army reform might well end in peace time conscription. To a friend he wrote:

> The memories are the things that are going to do us all good. . . . I don't know how you feel about some form of compulsory service for home defence, but all the chaps who've done their whack in South Africa seem to me to be pretty red-hot on the subject of conscription. What would you have given when you went out [to South Africa], for a sound working knowledge of rifle-shooting and extended order drill put into you from your twelfth to your fifteenth years, instead of a hasty and inadequate . . . run through in a month?[19]

Despite his burst of optimism, Kipling was fully aware of the prejudices that the majority of his countrymen held against compulsory military service. Accordingly, before

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[18] Ibid.

[19] "Letters to H. S. W. Edwardes," Kipling Journal.

adopting an uncompromising stand on the issue, he investigated a number of alternatives to conscription. For a short time, during and immediately after the War, he believed that the basic requirement of the trained soldier might be met by teaching civilians marksmanship on a voluntary basis. His first reaction to the British defeats in 1899 had been to form a rifle club for the people of his own town, Rottingdean. It was his hope that conscription might be avoided through the creation of a national system of such clubs.[20]

In his efforts to popularize rifle clubs on the national level, Kipling attempted to convince his sports-minded countrymen of the attractions of target shooting as a game, different only from cricket or football in that its ultimate purpose was more useful. In the summer of 1901 he expressed his views on the subject in The Spectator.

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[20] H. E. Blyth, "Kipling at Rottingdean," Kipling Journal, April, 1953, p. 5. The club in Rottingdean numbered some fifty members. Kipling regarded the club's purpose as being important enough to justify erecting a tin shed so that the members might practice during the winter (Kipling, letter to Dr. Conland, July 24, 1900, Carpenter Collection, Library of Congress). After returning from South Africa, Kipling made several alterations in the range itself, the most important being to make it a thousand yards long, the first range of that length in Great Britain, he boasted to Julian Ralph, to have been started by "purely private enterprise" (Letter, October 15, 1900, Carpenter Collection).

The members of the club in Rottingdean, he explained, represented every occupation in the village: blacksmiths, shopkeepers, carpenters, farmers, school teachers, and the village vicar. Rifle practice was anything but a gentleman's sport:

> If we lose our tempers the target will not answer back; we cannot impress the unseen markers by our rank, wealth, or achievement in the world without. . . . We cannot patronise anyone. . . . Unlike cricket, football, lawn-tennis or fives, any man can play the game; for here, no more than on the high veldt, will the discreet bullet tell its billet whether the dispatcher was old, unlovely, poor, weak, or ill-clad. . . . We are enjoying the game for its own sake; because it is sane, and healthy, and quiet (infinitely quieter than a cricket match, does not knock our daily work to pieces, . . . and opens to us a happy new world of interest and ideas.[21]

Unfortunately, it soon became apparent that the new sport had failed to catch the public's imagination. Kipling, accordingly, changed his tactics. He continued his attempts to promote a national system of rifle clubs, but after the article in The Spectator, the superiority of target practice to aristocratic cricket was replaced by a very different argument: Rifle practice, it now appeared,

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[21] "A Village Rifle Club," reprinted in Sussex Ed., XXX, 250-251. Kipling's interest in target practice was primarily for its military value. It is significant that he said nothing about a second function of the club in Rottingdean, the teaching of military drill to the members (Kipling to Conland, July 24, 1900).

was really not a game after all, but instead a sane and intelligent method for giving civilians peace time military training, the kind of training, in fact, that they would need to defeat an invading army on their own beaches.[22]

The Boer War had been over for two months when Kipling delivered a speech at ceremonies opening a rifle club in Lower Sydenham. Despite the return of peace, he chose to emphasize the practical usefulness of marksmanship as a way of preparing for war. The South African conflict, he told his audience, demonstrated the danger of having "the overwhelming bulk of the population . . . brought up in absolute ignorance of the use of firearms." Rifle clubs, he now thought, were not a luxury, but a necessity. Kipling was not advocating preparedness for another round of imperial wars, where defeat meant only a loss of prestige. This was preparedness for survival, survival in a war where England might have "to be defended by swarms of civilian riflemen sitting behind hedges and sniping at the enemy."[23]

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[22] "Mr. Rudyard Kipling on Rifle Ranges," The Times, August 4, 1902, p. 6. Kipling's opinion on the matter did not change again. In a letter in 1906, he answered a question on the subject by declaring: "I write to agree entirely with your views on the futility of rifle ranges as 'sport.'" The letter was reprinted in The Morning Post (April 17, 1906, p. 12) under the caption: "Mr. Kipling on Chinese Slavery."

[23] "Mr. Rudyard Kipling on Rifle Ranges," The Times.

He elaborated on the theme: "Rifle-shooting must be taught to the individual on the same basis as we . . . [teach] A B C. We . . . [do] not wait until a boy . . . [is] 18 or 19 and . . . [thinks] he would like to be Lord Chancellor before teaching him his letters, and similarly we must not wait until he . . . [is] 18 or 19 and [decides that he wants] to die for his country before putting a rifle into his hands." Kipling encouraged the members of the new club to practice basic military drills in addition to marksmanship. Military preparedness, he assured them, did not turn men into "inflammable barbarians." A man who can drill and shoot does "not go into the streets blazing away with his rifle, [or] . . . fall into military formation every time he . . . [hears] an omnibus."[24]

Until the end of the war, Kipling found it possible to hope that the civilian rifle clubs might conceivably be a satisfactory substitute for conscription. But the clubs had one fatal weakness: membership was purely voluntary. While they attracted a considerable number of enthusiasts during the War, interest in the movement waned abruptly after 1902. Kipling's club in Rottingdean, along with many others, lost so many members that it was forced to disband.

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[24] Ibid.

It was a bitter blow for Kipling. With a lavish expenditure of his own time and money he had made the Rottingdean club a model of the type that he hoped would one day be established in every village in England.[25]

It was the collapse of the rifle-club movement that made Kipling turn to conscription. Since most men could not be persuaded to prepare for war, it would be necessary to use compulsion. The Kipling who arrived at this conclusion was a very different man from the arrogant, young Anglo-Indian who had considered the regular British army an invincible juggernaut, largely because its ranks were filled exclusively by volunteers, men who were all professional soldiers. "The worst of conscription," he had declared in 1889, "is that it sweeps in such a mass of fourth and fifth rate citizens who, though they may carry a gun, are likely, by their excusable ineptitude, to do harm to the morale and set-up of a regiment."[26] The Boer War changed his mind. He admitted as much in 1904 when he wrote: "A thousand trained Englishmen ought to be as good as another thousand trained Englishmen."[27] He no longer believed that there was

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[25]Blyth, "Kipling at Rottingdean," Kipling Journal.

[26]"From Sea to Sea," Letters of Travel, p. 481.

[27]"The Army of a Dream," Traffics and Discoveries, p. 264.

any unbridgeable gap between the career army and the civilian volunteers. In South Africa he had seen, for the first time in his life, an army of citizen soldiers. It was not the same army he had known in India, "but the Army of the People, heavily laced with Reservists, family folk, who have kiddies and businesses over the sea. Blacksmiths, gardeners, club-porters, and small shopkeepers were among those represented, and their physique was almost as admirable as their spirit."[28] Kipling was quick to notice that the raw recruits, if they had nothing else, had the courage of professionals: "They were wonderful even in the hour of death--these men and boys--lodge-keepers, . . . ex-butlers . . . and raw town lads of twenty."[29] Once properly trained, as the war was to prove, these soldiers made as good fighting material as the professionals themselves.[30]

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[28]"With Number Three," Sussex Ed., XXX, 82.

[29]Something of Myself, p. 168.

[30]"On the Appointments to the First and Second Army Corps," The Spectator.

CHAPTER VI

THE ISLANDERS: A PLEA FOR PEACE TIME CONSCRIPTION

"It is a very foolish thing," one of Kipling's contemporaries wrote in the winter of 1902, "to look at Rudyard Kipling from a purely literary point of view. . . . He is so much more than a literary man that the ordinary standards of literary criticism do not apply to him any longer."[1] At about the same time the critic, William Archer decided: "Whatever may be . . . [Kipling's] ultimate place in literature, there can be no doubt that his poems have won him for him what perhaps he values more--a place in the history of his country."[2]

The comments of both critics were provoked by a single poem, The Islander's, Kipling's powerfully worded endorsement of peace time conscription. Kipling composed the verses in 1902 shortly before leaving England on the

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[1] Editorial, "The Islanders," Bookman (New York), XIV (1903), 630-631.

[2] William Archer, Poets of the Younger Generation (London, 1903), p. 220.

last of his three wartime visits to South Africa.[3] The Islanders was published by The Times in January,[4] and immediately succeeded in touching off a prolonged and furious national debate over the whole issue of compulsory military service.

Despite the army's unsatisfactory performance in South Africa, and the alarm over Germany's naval laws, neither had been sufficient to produce any real popular support for conscription.[5] Those who did favor compulsory military training found the attitude of the British government on the subject even more discouraging. In 1901, Kipling had tangled with St. John Brodrick, the Secretary for War, over his appointments to the First and Second Army Corps.[6] But it was Brodrick's opposition to conscription that completed Kipling's disenchantment with the new minister.[7]

The Islanders, the work of a bitter and angry man,

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[3]Carrington, p. 248.

[4]January 4, 1902, p. 9.

[5]Elie Halévy, The Rule of Democracy 1905-1914, Vol. VI of A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, 6 Vols. (New York, 1961), 154-155. Hereafter cited as Halévy, Vol. VI.

[6]"On the Appointments to the First and Second Army Corps," The Spectator.

[7]Halévy, VI, 163.

was written with the hope of persuading Englishmen to see the necessity for conscription. In this sense the poem was a failure. Kipling's verses, however, did succeed in attracting more immediate attention than any other polemical poem composed in the twentieth century. One journal, for example, called it "an acute social and political force," with "power enough to shake the ministry."[8]

The Islanders opened by denouncing the British people for being materialistic and complacent:

> Fenced by your careful fathers, ringed by your laden seas,
> Long did ye wake in quiet and long lie down at ease;
> Till ye said of Strife, "What is it?" of the Sword, "It is far from our ken";
> Till ye made a sport of your shrunken hosts and a toy of your armèd men.
> Ye stopped your ears to the warning--ye would neither look nor heed--
> . . . . . .
> Ye hampered and hindered and crippled; ye thrust out of sight and away
> Those that would serve you for honour and those that served you for pay.

The defeats in South Africa, Kipling declared, resulted from England's refusal to accept compulsory military training in peace time.

> Then were the judgments loosened; then was your shame revealed,
> At the hands of a little people, few but apt in the field.

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[8] "Editorial," Independent, LIV (1902), 412-413.

Yet ye were saved by a remnant (and your land's long-suffering star),
When your strong men cheered in their millions while your striplings went to the war.
Sons of the sheltered city--unmade, unhandled, unmeet--
Ye pushed them raw to the battle as ye picked them raw from the street.
And what did you look they should compass? Warcraft learned in a breath,
Knowledge unto occasion at the first far view of Death?
. . . . . .
But ye said, "Their valour shall show them"; but ye said, "The end is close."
. . . . . .
Then ye returned to your trinkets; then ye contented your souls
With the flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddied oafs at the goals.
Given to strong delusion, wholly believing a lie,
Ye saw that the land lay fenceless, and ye let the months go by
Waiting some easy wonder, hoping some saving sign--
Idle--openly idle--in the lee of the forespent Line.
Idle--except for your boasting--and what is your boasting worth
If ye grudge a year of service to the lordliest life on earth?[9]
Ancient, effortless, ordered, cycle on cycle set,
Life so long untroubled, that ye who inherit forget
It was not made with the mountains, it is not one with the deep.

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[9]Much of the anger generated by the poem was directed at the phrase, "the lordliest life on earth," and it was quoted against Kipling as proof that he was a rabid militarist, who thought that young men would enjoy a year of compulsory service ("The Islanders," The Academy, LXII (1902), 663). Kipling angrily denied the accusation, saying that the phrase was meant to describe the peaceful civilian life of the average Englishman, which was "Ancient, effortless, ordered, cycle on cycle set" (Kipling to E. V. Lucas, letter quoted in the Kipling Journal, July, 1953, p. 9, and Something of Myself, pp. 239-240). The reader is left to decide the truth for himself.

Men, not gods devised it. Men, not gods, must keep.
Men, not children, servants, or kinsfolk called from
afar,
But each man born in the Island broke to the matter of
war.
Soberly and by custom taken and trained for the same,
Each man born in the Island entered at youth to the game--
As it were almost cricket, not to be mastered in haste,
But after trial and labour, by temperance, living chaste.
As it were almost cricket--as it were even your play,
Weighted and pondered and worshipped, and practised
day and day.

Kipling dismissed the arguments advanced by the opponents of conscription, and concluded by describing England's probable fate if she continued without conscription and became involved in a war with one or more of the Great Powers of Europe.

But ye say, "It will mar our comfort." Ye say, "It will
minish our trade.
Do ye wait for the spattered shrapnel ere ye learn how
a gun is laid?
For the low, red glare southward when the raided
coast-towns burn?
(Light ye shall have on that lesson, but little time
to learn.)
Will ye pitch some white pavilion, and lustily even
the odds,
With nets and hoops and mallets, with rackets and bats
and rods?
. . . . . .
Will ye pray them or preach them, or print them, or
ballot them back from your shore?
Will your workmen issue a mandate to bid them strike
no more?
Will ye rise and dethrone your rulers? (Because ye were
idle both?
Pride by Insolence chastened? Indolence purged by Sloth?)
No doubt but ye are the People; who shall make you
afraid?
Also your gods are many; no doubt your gods shall
aid.

Idols of greasy altars built for the body's ease;
Proud little brazen Baals and talking fetishes;
Teraphs of sept and party and wise wood-pavement gods--
<u>These</u> shall come down to the battle and snatch you
from under the rods?
From the gusty, flickering gun-roll with viewless
salvoes rent,
And the pitted hail of the bullets that tell not whence
they were sent.
When ye are ringed as with rion, when ye are scourged
as with whips,
When the meat is yet in your belly, and the boast is
yet on your lips;
When ye go forth at morning and the noon beholds you
broke,
Ere ye lie down at even, your remnant, under the yoke?

With few exceptions the public's response to the verses was an outburst of indignant anger.[10] From furious readers <u>The Times</u> received dozens of letters that attacked Kipling for his supposed insult to the British national character.[11] <u>The Times</u> itself considered the poem sufficiently important to make it the subject of two edigorials.[12] <u>The Islanders</u> also attracted the attention of other influential British journals, whose reaction to the verses, as Kipling had hoped, was a prolonged re-examination of the arguments for and against conscription.

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[10]Kipling's position on compulsory military training did receive the support of a small minority of <u>The Times</u>' readers, whose letters appear in the issue of January 7, 1902, p. 10.

[11]Issues of January 6 to 27, 1902.

[12]"Leading Articles," January 4, 1902, p. 9, and January 7, 1902, p. 7.

The hostile criticism evoked by The Islanders either condemned Kipling for being a rabid militarist, while denying the need for conscription, or quarrelled with his comments on sports. The enthusiasts for football and cricket, fruious over the reference to "flanneled fools," and "muddied oafs," summoned up the ghost of Wellington. How dare Kipling insult the footballer and the Cricketer? "The Iron Duke was wiser than Mr. Rudyard Kipling."[13] Wellington "said that Waterloo was won on the playing field of Eton; and yet a man, one Rudyard Kipling, ventures to reprove the nation for winning . . . [the present War] in the cricket pavilion and on the grand stand of the football field."[14] The poem is "a violent libel, . . . insolent and mendacious. . . . This un-English hatred of manly sport [is] . . . thoroughly characteristic of the anaemic, white livered jingoism which revels in vicious bloodshed."[15] While a nation is waiting for war, it "can do many worse things than play cricket

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[13]"Mr. Rudyard Kipling and 'The Islanders': The New David and the Modern Goliath," Current Literature, XXXII (1902), 358-359. The article consists of a collection of the comments made on The Islanders by Kipling's contemporaries that appeared in British periodicals.

[14]Letter signed "J. F.," The Spectator, LXXXVIII (1902), 38.

[15]"Mr. Rudyard Kipling and 'The Islanders,' . . ." Current Literature.

and football."[16] Certainly, "there is a high, brave spirit in these 'flannelled fools' and 'muddied oafs' which we in England should not like to see die. . . . [Let us, therefore,] close our ears to traitors."[17]

Conscription was still regarded as a threat to British liberties. Was it not true, asked The Monthly Review, that "under conscription the civilization of the European nations has retrogressed," and that compulsory military service has bred only "fear," "greed," and "terror."[18] "England with conscription made law," warned a French Anglophile, "would no longer offer the conditions under which Parliamentary institutions flourished."[19]

On another level, The Islanders was the inspiration for a number of parodies. One was set to music and included in the score of the successful musical comedy, A Country Girl, which opened in London two weeks after the publication of Kipling's verses:

> There's a writer of rhymes which appeared in The Times
> Who is down upon football and cricket,
> And he pours out his soul upon the oaf at the goal
> And the flannellette fool of the wicket.

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[16] "The Islanders," The Academy.

[17] W. J. Knox Little, letter to The Times, January 15, 1902, p. 12.

[18] "'The Lordliest Life on Earth,'" VI (February, 1902), 3-4.

[19] "The Islanders," The Academy.

There was violence feared when his poem appeared,
But the poet was hardly a dreamer;
When the oafs in the mud came to look for his blood
He was off to the Cape on a steamer![20]

The inference that Kipling had fled the country to escape the vengeance of his readers was unpleasant, but a more severe indictment was The Oaf's Answer, a set of anonymous verses in The London Star:

Fenced by our patient fathers, ringed by our peaceful seas,
Long did we wake in quiet, and long lie down at ease,
Till you said of Strife:--"Where is it?" of the Sword:--"Let it flash again!"
Till you made a god of wanton war and an idol of armed men.

The author of The Oaf's Answer considered Kipling a militarist and declared that The Islanders had been written for the express purpose of involving England in another war as soon as the South African conflict was concluded:

Sons you would tear from their mothers, lads from their lasses sweet.
And brush them under the wheels of war like the dust and dirt of the street.[21]

As The Oaf's Answer indicates, it was Kipling's advocacy of conscription that produced the most vituperative criticism of The Islanders. The Academy, for example,

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[20] "Notes on 'The Islanders,'" The Kipling Journal, June, 1959, pp. 3-5.

[21] Reprinted in "Mr. Rudyard Kipling and 'The Islanders,' . . ." Current Literature.

stated that conscription in England was neither necessary nor desirable. Most of the supporters of conscription, The Academy added, are like Mr. Kipling, people who take a delight in war for its own sake.[22] The London Review of Reviews agreed: Kipling's message "is a savage warning that unless the nation adopts conscription it is doomed to perish." But there is no need for conscription, The Review of Reviews continued, "if the nation repents and turns from evil ways, . . . and [abstains] with horror from all thought of forcing its yoke upon unwilling subjects."[23]

Other opponents of conscription believed, as Kipling had before the Boer War, that England was a great power because she employed only volunteers in her armies. The citizen who fought for purely patriotic reasons, it was still thought, must always make a better soldier than the unwilling and resentful conscript.[24] The Islanders, one critic wrote to The Times, is the work of a foolish "alarmist." England has been "completely successful" in every war since the Crimean. Was it not through the victories of volunteers that Britain gained possession of nearly a fourth of the

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[22] "The Islanders," The Academy.

[23] "The First Faint Signs of a National Awakening," XXV (1902), 147-149.

[24] W. J. Knox Little, letter to The Times.

earth's land surfaces? British military power commands the respect of all nations. There is no power on earth who would dare attack us. Even now, when we have "deposited . . . about 200,000 'striplings' in South Africa . . . that invader does not turn up, and Brighton and Hastings and Eastbourne probably will not redden the Southern sky this evening. If they do so, I will ask your leave to withdraw this letter."[25]

The Times, The Spectator, and The Monthly Review believed that England's geographical position and the superiority of her navy made a large conscript army unnecessary. The Spectator denied the need, "while the fleet exists, . . . [for that] amazing supply of men" which conscription would bring into being. The Times declared that the strength of the British navy was such that no foreign power could hope to successfully invade England. Consequently, The Times decided, "a conscript army . . . would be . . . quite useless for our needs. It could not be sent abroad to fight . . . and it would have no likelihood of fighting at home."[26]

The rapid expansion of the new German navy, however, challenged the old assumption that the invasion of England

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[25]Sir Herbert Stephen, January 6, 1902, p. 4.

[26]"Leading Article," The Times, January 4, 1902; "Mr. Rudyard Kipling's Idea," The Spectator; "'The Lordliest Life on Earth,'" Monthly Review.

was impossible. The Spectator admitted that the British navy could only stop an invader if it managed to intercept his transport vessels.[27] But what would happen if an enemy army did succeed in reaching England?

In The Islanders Kipling had described the conquest of the country by just such an army, and had argued that only conscription would supply enough experienced soldiers to prevent defeat. The Spectator, though opposed to any system of "Continental conscription," agreed with Kipling that it would require more than the courage of civilian volunteers to repel an invader:

> The science of war has made terrible advances, so that the unskilled . . . are but food for cannon. Ten thousand men in possession of Hampstead and Sydenham would hold London at their mercy, though London contains a nation of brave men. [Preparedness] . . . can only be secured by training. The rush of a crowd, however numerous or however self-sacrificing, upon a modern army, however small, is but a rush of victims upon their doom. . . . That is all that . . . [Mr. Kipling] says, and not only every soldier, but every politician who has thought upon the subject knows it to be true.[28]

But it was here that the same problem arose which had caused Kipling to become an advocate of conscription. If The Spectator's estimate is correct, fully two-thirds of English people were agreed on the desirability of increasing

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[27] "Mr. Rudyard Kipling's Idea."

[28] Ibid.

the size of the army, and of devising some means whereby civilians could be given military training in peace time.[29] Nonetheless, Kipling was still practically alone in his insistence that nothing short of conscription would accomplish either objective.

While The Islanders was an effective piece of propaganda for conscription, it produced, as Kipling admitted himself, little in the way of practical results.[30] The verses, however, did succeed in stimulating a renewed interest in the proposals for a national system of rifle and drill clubs. The Times announced it would support the government if target practice and military drill were made compulsory in the nation's schools.[31] The Spectator, while continuing to repudiate all forms of compulsion, urged the government to sponsor a national system of rifle clubs, and declared: "We would make the competition of the rifle range take the place of a popular sport."[32] Both schemes, however, amounted to nothing more than the same substitute for conscription which Kipling had rejected as being both unworkable and unrealistic.

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Kipling, letter to Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, June 16, 1902, Kipling Journal, July, 1957, p. 19.

[31] "Leading Article," January 4, 1902.

[32] "Mr. Rudyard Kipling's Idea," The Spectator.

CHAPTER VII

"THE ARMY OF A DREAM"

One result of The Islanders, however, was a letter that Kipling received from Lord Roberts asking him to go on with his campaign for compulsory military training.[1] Thus encouraged, Kipling renewed his efforts to popularize conscription. Despite repeated failures and at a considerable cost to his own reputation, he continued to work toward this goal until the start of the First World War twelve years later.

As Kipling had feared, England's desire for a return to normalcy after the Boer War proved stronger than her fear of Germany. In the autumn of 1903, H. O. Arnold-Forster replaced St. John Brodrick at the War Office.[2] Shortly thereafter, the Esher Commission was created with the task of drawing up a program for army reform. Kipling was bitterly disappointed when the Commission's Report, published in February, 1904, refused to endorse conscription.[3] What

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[1] Carrington, p. 248.

[2] Ensor, p. 362.

[3] "Notes," Kipling Journal, June, 1960, p. 21.

army reforms the Esher Commission did favor, Kipling declared were totally inadequate, and he publicly accused the members of the Commission of attempting to conceal the War Office's responsibility for the British defeats in South Africa at the start of the Boer War.[4]

He expressed his anger in The Song of the Old Guard, a savage poem describing the supposed joy of the military incompetents at the War Office upon learning that Parliament had accepted the Esher report, whose timid reforms did not include any suggestion that they be dismissed from their positions.

Know this, my brethren, Heaven is clear
   And all the clouds are gone--
The Proper Sort shall flourish now,
   Good times are coming on--

The evil that was threatened late
   To all of our degree
Hath passed in discord and debate,
And, Hey then up go we!

A common people strove in vain
   To shame us unto toil,
But they are spent and we remain,
   And we shall share the spoil
According to our several needs
   As Beauty shall decree,
As Age ordains or Birth concedes,
   And, Hey then up go we!
. . . . . .
Till Armageddon break our sleep.

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[4] Ibid.

What the British army needed, as Kipling had said in 1902, was "revolution and not reform."[5] To his disgust, it appeared as if there would be precious little of even the latter. In 1904, following the publication of the Esher Report, and after conducting his own study of the military problems confronting England, Kipling published "The Army of a Dream," a long article on the very radical changes in the British military system that he personally favored.[6]

"The Army of a Dream" describes Kipling's conception of the model army of the future. As its backbone, there are a hundred thousand permanently mobilized professional soldiers, the Imperial Guard. The Guard is composed of the elite troops of all the nations in the British Empire, who serve as a common imperial defense force. As an auxiliary to the Guard there is the Reserve, a vast organization of citizen soldiers. In theory, but not in fact, only volunteers serve in the Reserve. In place of conscription, Kipling substituted a variety of potent social and economic pressures, calculated to make life intolerable for men refusing service in the army. Such malcontents are disfranchised by the State, denied all poor relief, legally classified with lunatics and minors, and scorned by the women. Similar coercive

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[5]"The Captive," Traffics and Discoveries, p. 34.

[6]"The Army of a Dream" first appeared in June, 1904, in the Morning Post, and was later reprinted in the book Traffics and Discoveries, pp. 243-300.

techniques are employed in all of Britain's overseas territories. As one of the soldiers in Kipling's militaristic utopia says happily: "No Volunteer no Vote is the rule throughout the Empire."[7]

The American military historian Walter Millis once wrote that "The Army of a Dream" reads "like a cheerful forecast of the Nazi and Communist system of training children to war from the cradle, a kind of Orwell 1984 in reverse, since the author seems completely approving of the total militarization and regimentation which he describes."[8]

Millis is quite right. The England that Kipling envisaged in "The Army of a Dream" is an armed camp, a garrison state, where all individual considerations are subordinated to military prestige and national security. Citizens in this England of the future enjoy, for all practical purposes, a life-long military obligation. It begins at the age of eight, when a boy receives his first compulsory lessons in marching and drilling. "You've got to be drilled when you're a child, same as you've got to learn to read, . . ." Kipling wrote. By the time they are ten, boys know "their company-drill a heap better than they . . . [know] their King's English." This program,

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[7] Ibid., p. 263.

[8] Arms and Men (New York, 1956), p. 181.

broadened to include rifle practice and sessions at army training camps in the summer, continues until the young male becomes eighteen. Though now considered an adult, he is required to go on with his military training on a part-time basis until the age of thirty-five, when he joins an inactive reserve, the Home Defense Establishment, and is liable for duty only in the event of a national emergency. The end product of this system is a nation in which every able-bodied male becomes a professional soldier merely by donning a uniform.[9]

One of the soldiers in Kipling's dream army remembers with horror that there was once a time when people in England were so incredibly short sighted that they actually encouraged schoolboys to waste their leisure hours playing militarily useless games like football and cricket: "'The notion of allowing a human being to reach his twentieth year before asking him to put his feet in the first position was raving lunacy, . . .'" he declares.[10]

The descriptions of the military maneuvers conducted by "The Army of a Dream" are significant if only because they indicate that as early as 1904 Kipling was convinced that England's next war would be fought, if not on her own beaches,

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[9]"The Army of a Dream," pp. 253-264.

[10]Ibid., p. 246.

then certainly on the continent of Europe. In "The Army of a Dream," he recommended, for example, that certain British national holidays be set aside for practicing combined land and sea operations. "Our army to be of any use," he wrote, "must be an army of embarkation." An England in possession of Kipling's model army would be able to have hundreds of thousands of men in Europe before the end of the first seventy-two hours of a war.[11]

What country would "The Army of a Dream" be fighting? Although Kipling was careful not to mention Germany specifically, the strategic importance of the Channel ports, and the known ability of the Germans to mobilize rapidly their own forces were certainly factors that influenced his thinking, and explain his emphasis on the necessity for speed in sending a British expeditionary force to Europe as soon as war began.

Kipling also argued that England's national security would be increased if all soldiers were trained to perform a variety of specialized military tasks. Each member of the Imperial Guard is trained for duty in the navy, the cavalry, the infantry, and the marines. It was Kipling's theory that by making the personnel of the armed forces

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[11] Ibid., pp. 260-261.

interchangeable, it would be possible to provide the various services in war time with immediate replacements for their casualties.[12]

"The Army of a Dream" embodied all of Kipling's ideas on the subject of military preparedness, and, despite any concessions he might make to the tender feelings of his countrymen, by talking of social pressure as a substitute for government action, his dream army could never have been created or maintained by anything but conscription.

Most of Kipling's readers found "The Army of a Dream" nearly as distasteful as The Islanders. The Times referred to it as "a most repellent pamphlet."[13] The London Bookman thought it unworthy of serious discussion.[14] The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art declared that Kipling "should fine himself an amount that would hurt every time he thought of . . . Army Reform."[15] He has done enough "special reporting" and "special pleading" and should go back to entertaining his readers instead of irritating them.[16]

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[12] Ibid., pp. 263-264.

[13] Times' Literary Supplement, October 7, 1904, p. 304.

[14] "Traffics and Maffics: The Strange Case of Mr. Kipling," XXVII (1904), 76-78.

[15] "Reform and Mr. Kipling," XCVIII (1904), 494.

[16] Ibid.

As a piece of literature "The Army of a Dream" added nothing to Kipling's reputation. Its practical results, he admitted himself, were equally discouraging.[17] The British government refused to study the article's more worthwhile suggestions. A letter that Kipling wrote in 1905, however, suggests that he did not regard his effort as a total failure: "I am having 'The Army of a Dream,'" he informed a friend, "reprinted in pamphlet form, as there have been numerous requests from adjutants of volunteers, . . . to get it to give to their companies."[18]

Kipling's biographer, C. E. Carrington, believes that there is a marked resemblance between "The Army of a Dream," and the Territorial Army organized by R. B. Haldane, Britain's Secretary for War between 1905 and 1912.[19] While it is true that Haldane shared Kipling's grasp of the importance of speed in getting an expeditionary force to Europe in the event of war,[20] there is no evidence that he was influenced by "The Army of a Dream," or even that he ever read the article.

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[17]Letter to Mrs. Hill, March 8, 1905, Carpenter Collection.

[18]Quoted in Carrington, p. 313.

[19]Ibid., p. 324.

[20]Ensor, pp. 525-526.

Despite his Tory sympathies, Kipling was not sorry in 1905 to see an end of the Balfour ministry.[21] Concerning army reform the government had accomplished virtually nothing since the end of the South African War;[22] and for Kipling this was an issue of far more importance than the domestic squabbles dividing England's two major parties. The elections of 1906 returned the Liberals, who remained in power through the rest of the postwar years. During most of this time, until 1912, the Secretary for War was R. B. Haldane, whose military reorganization program created the famous Territorial Army. Kipling regarded most of Haldane's reforms with a jaundiced eye, frequently condemning them for being too little, too late, or too overly inspired by motives of false economy.[23] For this reason his writings, as one of his contemporaries observed as early as 1906, continued to predict "the coming of [a] new war, red with the trampling of the nations."[24]

Kipling's real quarrel with Haldane's army, however, involved the old issue of conscription. Kipling steadfastly

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[21]Carrington, pp. 301-302.

[22]Ensor, p. 362.

[23]"Mr. Kipling's Warning," The Times, September 26, 1913, p. 3.

[24]Talcott Williams, "Kipling in Prose and Verse," Book News Monthly, XXV (1906), 207-208.

denied Haldane's theory that the volunteer system could ever be made to produce an army whose numerical strength would suffice for England's needs.[25]

During the years immediately before the First World War Kipling regularly attended army maneuvers at Aldershot.[26] He was there in the last summer of peace, August, 1913,[27] and "conceived," as he watched a sham fight, "the whole pressure of our dead of the Boer War flickering and re-forming as the horizon flickered in the heat."[28] His convictions remained unchanged. The Territorial Army, he admitted, was better than nothing, but in numbers and training he considered them entirely inadequate. He was certain that in a real war, Haldane's men would be swiftly crushed by the superbly disciplined millions who comprised the German military machine. He voiced his fears in a letter to Coulson Kernahan, a friend who shared his views on the necessity for conscription:

> I've been seeing something of the Territorials this summer [Kipling wrote], and from my point of view it all boils down to one thing. If we could get the training the men would be all right,

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[25] Ensor, p. 592.

[26] Carrington, pp. 324-325.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Something of Myself, pp. 230-231.

> but what we are doing now ain't business--foot, horse, or gun. I wish you could keep on hammering at a longer time in camp and the regimental capitation efficiency, as it used to be in the Volunteers, instead of fines for not attending training.[29]

In the letter to Kernahan, Kipling had suggested measures designed to improve the efficiency of Haldane's army. However, it was the limited size of the Territorials, rather than the quality of their training, that he continued to find most alarming. Granted, Haldane's reforms had given England an army superior to the one with which she had entered the Boer War with in 1899. Nonetheless, a good small army was hardly a substitute for a good large army--Germany's, for example.

Kipling's dissatisfaction with the Territorials persuaded him in 1913 to make a final effort for the cause of compulsory military service. He was fully in accord with the aims or the National Service League, an organization attempting to popularize conscription. Under the sponsorship of the League, Kipling delivered a speech at Burwash in September, 1913. He warned that any future European war would probably bring with it the attempted invasion of the British Isles. Should the navy fail us, he went on, and an

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[29]Quoted in Coulson Kernahan's book, Nothing Quite Like Kipling Had Happened Before (London, 1944), p. 15. Hereafter cited as Kernahan.

enemy successfully cross the Channel, England might easily be conquered. The present British army is so deficient in numbers, training, and organization that it gives little promise of being able to successfully resist such an invasion attempt. Only peace time conscription, he concluded, will give the nation an army large enough to guarantee our continued existence as an independent and sovereign power.[30]

In two editorials that followed the Burwash speech, Kipling's position on conscription received the support of the powerful London Times.[31] Conducting an evaluation of the efficiency of the Territorials, The Times discovered "serious defects" in the army's equipment, but such shortcomings, the paper added, "are, of course, trifles when compared with the supreme need for men. . . ."[32] The strength of the Territorial Army, the paper found, was fifty thousand men short of the minimum figure that Haldane himself had declared necessary to make the organization effective.[33] Equally alarming in the opinion of The Times was the fact that the number of volunteers for service in the Territorials

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[30]"Mr. Kipling's Warning," The Times.

[31]"On Universal Training," September 26, 1913, p. 3; "The State of the Army," September 27, p. 5.

[32]"The State of the Army."

[33]"On Universal Training."

had "been steadily falling for months."[34] It must be said, The Times concluded, that "the Territorial system . . . has not fulfilled the expectations of its author, and is not . . . adequate for the defence of the country. . . ."[35]

Turning to the question of peace time conscription, The Times thought that despite the shortage of volunteers for the Territorials, so many Englishmen had become alarmed at the possibility of a general European war that it could no longer "be said that the nation at large will not tolerate any compulsory form of military training. . . . Every day, in fact, brings nearer the moment when . . . [it] will become a matter of practical politics. . . . Universal service has become and must soon be acknowledged as a necessity. . . ." When adopted, it will promote "the stability of the nation."[36]

Kipling guessed, and rightly, that if conscription ever became what The Times called "a matter of practical politics,"[37] it would only be after a war had begun, rather than before. Naturally a pessimist, he eventually came to

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[34]"The State of the Army."

[35]"On Universal Training."

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid.

accept the bitter truth that while England remained at peace, she would probably never adopt compulsory military service. Accordingly, after his disappointment with the public's response to "The Army of a Dream," he directed his efforts, to some degree at least, away from what he regarded as the ideal, conscription, and made a second attempt to popularize rifle clubs.[38] He still believed that the culbs would never be a satisfactory substitute for conscription, but, like the Territorials, they were better than nothing.

As late as 1913 Kipling was urging the merits of a national system of rifle ranges, to be built by the government and made available to all the people of England.[39] But as early as 1904, in a letter to The Times, he had added a new twist to this old issue.[40] While England's adult males might resist conscription for themselves, there seemed no reason why they should object to making rifle practice mandatory in all the nation's schools. Unlike a military draft, the idea could hardly be attacked as a violation of the rights of Englishmen. All of Britain's public schools had compulsory games, and the penalty for not participating

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[38]See Kipling's 1910 story, "The Parable of Boy Jones," Land and Sea Tales, The Writings in Prose and Verse of Rudyard Kipling, XXXI (New York, 1937).

[39]Cobb, "Interview with Kipling," Bookman.

[40]"Mr. Kipling on Universal Service," The Times, January 9, 1904, p. 10.

(often a public flogging) was always severe.[41] In his letter, Kipling estimated that the average boy between the ages of twelve and seventeen spent twenty-five hundred hours participating in school athletic programs. Accordingly, he suggested that all British schools be required to substitute a small proportion of the time normally spent on cricket and football for lessons in military drill and target practice. It might even be as little as ten per cent, he thought and not amount to "much more than an hour and a half a week, . . . but in five or six years that would go far towards making a trained man."[42]

One of his last attempts to popularize rifle clubs was "The Parable of Boy Jones," a story published in 1910. The plot centers around the activities at a target club in a small English town. The story opens at the club's shooting range, where the instructor is expressing Kipling's own conviction that "'well-directed small-arm fire [can wipe] up . . . artillery, even in position.'" The villain of the piece is Boy Jones, who visits the range as a guest of one of the club's regular members. Observing the field used

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[41]"I do not recall," Kipling wrote, that the English school boy "is anywhere consulted about his 'racial tendencies,' 'the sublime instincts of an ancient people,' or his 'Anglo-Saxon individuality'" (Ibid.).

[42]Ibid.

for target practice, he comments: "'This would make a thundering good golf-links.'" As he watches the shooting, Boy Jones suddenly notices that instead of the usual stationery bull's-eyes, the targets on the range are all in motion. Each five second interval brings before the marksmen -- the figure of a man.[43]

Before the story is over, Boy Jones, who has attempted and failed to hit the sawdust soldiers himself, is ready to admit the respectability of rifle practice as sport:

> [But] "don't tell me," [he declares] "that when the hour strikes every man in England wouldn't -- er -- rally to the defence of his country like one man."
>
> "And he'd be so useful while he was rallying, wouldn't he," [the friend replies sarcastically].
>
> "Imagine one hundred thousand chaps of your kidney introduced to the rifle for the first time, all loading and firing in your fashion! The hospitals wouldn't hold 'em."
>
> "Oh, there'd be time to get the general hang of the thing," [Boy Jones says cheerily].
>
> "When that hour strikes," [his friend answers], "it will already have struck, if you understand. There may be a few hours--perhaps ten or twelve--there will certainly not be more than a day and a night allowed us to get ready in."
>
> "There will be six months at least," [Boy Jones is sure].
>
> "Ah, you probably read that in a paper. I shouldn't rely on it, if I were you. It won't be like a county cricket match, date settled months in advance."[44]

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[43] Land and Sea Tales, pp. 178, 184-185.

[44] Ibid., pp. 184-185.

As the "Parable" ends, a member of the club discovers the body of a dead rabbit, accidently killed by a stray bullet: "The marker held up the still kicking body of a glossy black rabbit. One side of its head was not there. 'Talk of coincidence,'" he says, looking at Boy Jones, "'the poor little fool! Jumpin' about after his own business and thinking he was safe; and then to have his head fair mashed off him like this!'"[45]

Shooting ranges and target practice was one substitute for compulsory military service which Kipling attempted to popularize. Another, curiously enough, was the new Boy Scout organization, founded by his friend, Baden-Powell, after the Boer War.[46] From the beginning, scouting had aroused the suspicions of pacifists and anti-militarists who regarded the movement as a dark plot to train boys for war while pretending to teach them citizenship.[47] At one Boy

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[45] Ibid., p. 189.

[46] Carrington, pp. 323-324.

[47] In 1909, Haldane was subjected to a number of questions in Parliament on the relationship between the War Office and the Scout movement. He admitted that he had planned to allow some Boy Scouts to participate in future Army maneuvers, but had subsequently been forced to yield to public indignation and cancel the permission. He added: "This must not be taken to mean that the War Office does not greatly appreciate the value of the Boy Scout training" (The Times, September 16, 1909, p. 7). It is perhaps significant of the public's attitude toward the movement that The Times always listed scouting news under the classification "Naval and Military."

Scout parade, an old woman was heard to comment angrily, "little murderers."[48] It is impossible to be sure what Baden-Powell believed, but he once wrote: "Scouting is like a game of football. . . . Football is a good game, but better than it, better than any other game, is that of man-hunting."[49]

Whatever Baden-Powell's motives were, Kipling certainly regarded the Scouts as an organization that, potentially at least, could be used to give young boys the rudiments of military training.[50] One of his gifts to the Scouts was the poem A Boy Scouts' Patrol Song.[51] The words were set to the tune of "A Life on the Ocean Wave," and sung by boys all over England.[52] He also attended a number of the larger Scout rallies;[53] his presence as a famous author was undoubtedly helpful as a means of stimulating recruiting.

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[48]Kernahan, p. 42.

[49]Halévy, V, 93.

[50]Kipling's letter on the Boy Scouts, The Times, November 4, 1911, p. 10.

[51]"Mr. Kipling and the Scout Movement," The Times, September 16, 1909, p. 8.

[52]Carrington, pp. 323-324.

[53]Ibid.

CHAPTER VIII

KIPLING AND THE ROYAL NAVY

Between 1902 and 1914, Kipling was as convinced of the imperative necessity for increasing the size of the British navy as he was of the need for adopting the compulsory military service that would accomplish the same objective for the army.

In 1897 and 1898, at the invitation of the Royal Navy, Kipling had spent several weeks at sea observing fleet maneuvers in the English Channel.[1] On both occasions he had been deeply impressed. The British navy he declared, has "such strength and such power as we and the world dare hardly guess at."[2] It is "the strongest fleet in the world,"[3] and "any other breed of White-Men, with such a weapon to their hand, would have been exploiting the round Earth in their own interests long ago."[4] In the same vein, Kipling wrote

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[1]Carrington, pp. 208-209, 212-213.

[2]The two voyages are described in Kipling's A Fleet in Being. Notes on Two Trips with the Channel Squadron (London, 1898), p. 34.

[3]Ibid., p. 47.

[4]Letter to J. W. Mackail, 1897, quoted in Carrington, pp. 208-209.

in 1897 to his friend, the novelist Rider-Haggard, that "any nation save ourselves with such a fleet as we have at present would go out swiftly to trample the guts out of the rest of the world. . . ."[5]

The defeats of the British army in South Africa during the Boer War, and England's failure to adopt peace time conscription after the War increased Kipling's estimate of the strategic importance of the British navy's traditional task of so dominating the English Channel that it would remain an impassable barrier for a potential invader. It was for this reason that he vigorously supported the series of British naval laws between 1902 and 1914 that provided for sharp increases in the size of the navy. Unlike many of his countrymen, however, he refused to believe that the navy alone could ever constitute an invincible shield against invasion. His agitation for conscription resulted from the conviction that no matter how powerful the British navy became, it would always be at least theoretically possible for an enemy army to succeed in crossing the Channel.[6] It was for this reason that he insisted that England's national security demanded the creation of a large

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[5]Quoted in Rider-Haggard's The Cloak that I Left (London, 1951), p. 195.

[6]"Mr. Kipling's Warning," The Times.

conscript army, the one kind of army that he believed would be able to repel such an invader.

The arrogant boastfulness that appeared in Kipling's descriptions of the British navy in 1897 and 1898 vanished immediately with the start of the Boer War in 1899. As the first reports of the defeats of the British army in South Africa reached England, Kipling presented his revised opinion on the comparative strength of the British navy in a speech in Sussex. The British navy, he declared, in view of its importance in protecting England from foreign invasion, is really after all only "a very insignificant naval force." He urged the public to accept the extra taxes that would be required to guarantee "that the Navy may be efficient, may be strong, and, above all things, may not fail us in the hour of need."[7]

From the Sussex speech in 1899 to the start of the First World War, Kipling's ideas on the subject of naval affairs remained the same. After 1899 he became a rabid exponent of navalism, constantly urging the necessity for making further additions to the already swollen size of the British fleet. As he cynically observed in 1910: "There's

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[7]"Mr. Rudyard Kipling and the Navy," The Times, November 25, 1899, p. 11.

not much justice in this world . . . without a navy."[8]

In contrast to his disillusionment with the British army, Kipling continued to admire the fighting abilities of the Royal Navy after the Boer War, and to respect the quality of the fleet's preparation for "Armageddon." It was the navy, he thought in 1908, that would "save the nation in the dark days ahead." It was the attitude of the British public that Kipling found alarming. He was convinced, he declared in a 1908 speech, "that the very thoroughness with which the navy has protected the Nation in the past may constitute a source of weakness both for the navy and the Nation." England has "been safe for so long," that many tax-payers "are utterly ignorant of the facts . . . on which England depends for her existence." For Great Britain a strong navy was not a luxury, but rather an imperative necessity. He compared the opponents of increased naval appropriations, to "the monkeys in Brazil." They have been safely sitting on the same branch for so long that they begin to imagine that the branch can be sawed off without any danger to themselves.[9]

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[8]"A Priest in Spite of Himself," Rewards and Fairies (New York, 1916), pp. 209-210.

[9]"The Spirit of the Navy," October, 1908, A Book of Words, Selections From Speeches and Addresses Delivered between 1906 and 1927 (New York, 1928), pp. 52, 54. Another attempt to stimulate public interest in the navy was Kipling's article, "Our Silent Navy: Is It Forgotten," The Navy and the Empire Series, No. 1 (London, 1904), p. 49.

After 1908, Kipling continued to launch vitriolic pronouncements against the stupidity of those pacifists and foolish idealists, who (to use Kipling's own words) seemed to regard the British navy "as a brutal and blood thirsty anachronism, which if it can't be openly abolished, ought to be secretly crippled as soon as possible."[10] For Kipling the attitude of the sort of liberal who was willing to starve the navy for extra funds to spend on social reforms was incomprehensible.[11] The kindest thing he could say about such men was that if they were not secret traitors, they were certainly irresponsible fools.[12]

Before the First World War, Kipling acted in the interests of both the army and the navy by opposing any legislation that came before Parliament whose enactment might damage the peace time efficiency of the two services or their ability to wage war. His biting satire, "The Horse Marines,"[13] a story written in 1910, attacked a scheme of Haldane's to save the government money on the army estimates by having

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[10] "The Spirit of the Navy," A Book of Words, p. 53.

[11] "Mr. Kipling and the Navy," The Times, July 14, 1910, p. 12.

[12] Ibid.

[13] A Diversity of Creatures, The Writings in Prose and Verse of Rudyard Kipling, XXII (New York, 1925).

cavalry recruits taught to ride on skillfully designed wooden rocking-horses.[14] The following year he struck a similar blow for the navy. In 1911 the Asquith government sought the approval of the House of Commons for the Declaration of London. The Declaration embodied a number of controversial recommendations drawn up by an International Prize Court at the Hague Conference of 1907. The point at issue was an article in the Declaration that asked all nations to accept raw materials carried on neutral vessels in war time as absolute non-contraband. If Great Britain had accepted this provision, it would have seriously reduced the usefulness of her naval superiority in the First World War, when the success of the British blockade in depriving Germany of raw materials was a decisive factor in ending the War in 1918.[15]

As he had on similar occasions in the past, Kipling turned to verse. His indictment of the Liberal government, the poem entitled The Declaration of London, was published as Parliament reassembled to vote on the Declaration following the festivities which had greeted the Coronation of George V:

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[14]For a report of the questions Haldane was asked in the House of Commons about the rocking-horses, see The Times, April 19, 1910, p. 6.

[15]Ensor, pp. 447-448.

We were all one heart and one race
    When the Abbey trumpets blew.
For a moment's breathing-space
    We had forgotten you.
Now you return to your honoured place
    Panting to shame us anew.

. . . . . .

Our ears still carry the sound
    Of our once-Imperial seas,
Exultant after our King was crowned,
    Beneath the sun and the breeze.
It is too early to have them bound
    Or sold at your decrees.[16]

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[16]Only after considerable difficulty did the government succeed in getting the Declaration through the Commons, and it was later rejected by the Lords (Ibid.).

CHAPTER IX

ALLIANCES: EMPIRE FEDERATION FOR MILITARY PURPOSES

While urging conscription at home, Kipling also favored strengthening England through the creation of a series of defensive alliances with other nations. Even before the Boer War he had been an advocate of collective security on the imperial level.[1] What he saw of the fighting in South Africa between 1899 and 1902 increased his respect for the troops who had come to Britain's aid from Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. He found most of them better soldiers than his own countrymen.[2] Together, the poor performance of the British army in South Africa and the German naval program, left him convinced by 1902 of the need for a formal military agreement between England and the rest of the self-governing states in the Empire.

In July, 1902, the representatives of six of the self-governing colonies assembled in London, where the

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[1]The best example of Kipling's thinking on the subject is his long poem A Song of the English, written in 1893.

[2]Kipling, letter to Julian Ralph, November 22, 1901, Carpenter Collection.

British government proposed the establishment of an imperial defense alliance.[3] Kipling's poem The Houses, addressed to the countries represented at the conference, made clear the reasons for such an alliance.

> Twixt my house and thy house the pathway is broad,
> In thy house or my house is half the world's hoard;
> By my house and thy house hangs all the world's fate,
> On thy house and my house lies half the world's hate.
>
> For my house and thy house no help shall we find
> Save thy house and my house--kin cleaving to kind;
> If my house be taken, thine tumbleth anon.
> If thy house be forfeit, mine followeth soon.
>
> 'Twixt my house and thy house what talk can there be
> Of headship or lordship, or service or fee?
> Since my house to thy house no greater can send
> Than thy house to my house--friend comforting friend;
> And thy house to my house no meaner can bring
> Than my house to thy house--King counselling King!

Unfortunately, the touchy issue of colonial nationalism prevented anything from being accomplished regarding a common defence plan for the Empire.[4] To conscription and increased naval appropriations, Kipling was forced to add imperial federation for military purposes as another objective to be fought for in his campaign to prepare England for war with Germany.

The self-governing colonies, however, had long been interested in cooperating with the mother country in the

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[3] Ensor, pp. 371-372.

[4] Ibid.

area of economics, and of establishing a system of imperial preference in trade. Before England could join such an inter-colonial customs union, though, she would have to abandon or at least to modify her free trade policy.[5] Kipling was one of a number of influential Englishmen who supported the proposed customs union.[6] He took no interest in the validity of the various economic arguments that revolved around the merits of free trade versus protectionism. What he did believe was that imperial federation for commercial purposes was a small price for England to have to pay if it led to an imperial military alliance.[7]

In the 1890's, Kipling had not been unduly troubled by the knowledge that the union between the White nations in the Empire was based primarily on emotional ties like sentiment, tradition, and common heritage. After 1902, though, his fear of a war with Germany led him to believe that the relationship between England and her self-governing colonies ought to be carefully defined and set forth in treaties and specific commitments.[8] England, he now thought,

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[5] Ibid., pp. 372-374.

[6] "Letters to the Family," in Letters of Travel, p. 140.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., pp. 230-240.

could no longer afford the luxury of an alliance system based on nothing stronger than the amorphous bonds of sentiment and tradition. Specifically, he considered it to be grossly unjust that while England was pledged to aid any portion of the Empire attacked by a foreign power, the self-governing nations were unwilling to make a like guarantee in return.[9] In 1907, as a method of coercion he recommended, half-seriously, that England cancel all of her own promises of military assistance. Faced with the horrors of "an annual invasion," the colonies, he said, would quickly change their minds about the wisdom of a reciprocal alliance.[10]

The same year, 1907, saw the meeting of another colonial conference in London, whose results helped strengthen the concept of Dominion status.[11] A Commonwealth of free nations held no attractions for Kipling. He considered it a poor substitute for a strong, federated Empire, dependent for its security on a military draft and a common imperial army. His ideal was still the Empire as he had imagined it in his 1904 article, "The Army of a Dream."[12]

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[9] Ibid.

[10] "The Puzzler," Actions and Reactions, The Writings in Prose and Verse of Rudyard Kipling, XX (New York, 1920), p. 218.

[11] Carrington, p. 307.

[12] Traffics and Discoveries, pp. 250-254.

In the autumn of 1907, Kipling was offered an honorary degree by McGill University. His acceptance produced a long list of requests for speeches from other Canadian organizations. For the first and last time in his life Kipling submitted to the ordeal of an extended lecture tour, seizing upon it as an opportunity to carry his views on Empire federation to the Canadian people.[13] The Canadian Pacific donated a private railroad car, which he used as he travelled from Quebec to Vancouver.[14] The journey was punctuated by stops for speaking engagements, at Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Victoria.[15]

The cities changed, but the message that Kipling delivered to his audiences in each of them remained the same: In the face of a common peril, the member states of the British Empire must forge a stronger union.[16] He was lavish in his praise for the assistance the Canadians had given Britain during the Boer War. It was a demonstration, he declared, that the member nations of the Empire could co-operate as effectively in war as they did in peace. England, he assured his audience, will never forget that when

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[13]Carrington, p. 308.

[14]Kipling, Something of Myself, p. 213.

[15]James Stewart, Rudyard Kipling: A Bibliographical Catalogue (Toronto, 1959), p. 505. Hereafter cited as Stewart.

[16]"Letters to the Family," Letters of Travel, pp. 234-237.

she

> was in distress Canada went to her aid, as Australia went, as New Zealand went, as the Crown colonies went, without one thought of present interests, or politics, or pocket. . . . Out of that great gathering of our men on the plains of South Africa there was born, I think, a treaty of mutual preference between the various members of . . . [the] Empire which . . . regular diplomatists will find it difficult to annul.[17]

The Canadians, he noted, were right to be proud of their wealth and material progress. He warned, however, that the Canadian people would be making a serious mistake if they allowed nationalism to blind them to the obligation they owed to the rest of the Empire. For, he said, "To whom much has been given, from them much--much--shall be required!"[18] He added: "A young country must take long views. . . . Our four young nations--the Big Four--[Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa] have a long, an uphill, and a triumphant road to tread."[19] Kipling stressed that peace and security could only be maintained if the nations of the Empire travelled this road together. This was true, he declared, because "when all is said and

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[17]"Imperial Relations," A Book of Words, pp. 25-26.

[18]"Growth and Responsibility," Ibid., p. 34.

[19]"Imperial Relations," p. 27.

done, we have only each other to depend upon."[20]

Despite the warmth of his Canadian reception, when Kipling returned to England he was aware that he had not succeeded in his main purpose, that of awakening the Canadian people to a realization of the need for a greater degree of imperial unity.[21] He expressed his disappointment in a series of articles entitled "Letters to the Family." He made no attempt to conceal his bitterness over the lack of Canadian support for an imperial defense treaty. Canada, he wrote, has become a wealthy country; militarily, however, she is still pathetically weak. Without British support,

> she would very soon cease to exist as a nation. The anxious inquirer is told that she does her duty toward England by developing her resources; that wages are so high a paid army is out of the question; . . . that a little wise diplomacy is all that will ever be needed in this so civilised era. . . . The question before Canada is not what she thinks or pays, [for military protection] but what an enemy may think it necessary to make her pay. If she continues wealthy and remains weak she will surely be attacked under one pretext or another.[22]

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[20]"Growth and Responsibility," p. 31.

[21]Letter to Lord Milner, quoted in Carrington, p. 309.

[22]"Letters to the Family," Letters of Travel, pp. 234-236. "'Letters to the Family,'" wrote one critic, "are one of the most notable contributions to Imperialist literature from the point of view of the Colonies that has yet appeared" (Cyril Falls, Rudyard Kipling, A Critical Study [New York, 1915], p. 187).

He challenged the assumption of the Canadians that they could remain militarily secure without pain or sacrifice because England would protect them in the event of war. The English government, Kipling warned, is the servant of "an excess of voters who . . . loudly resent that any money should be diverted from themselves; and since money is spent on fleets and armies to protect the Empire, . . . argue that if the Empire ceased to exist armaments would cease too, and the money so saved could be spent on their creature comforts. . . . If the Empire were threatened they would not, in their own interests, urge England to spend men and money on it."[23]

"Letters to the Family" included a grim admonition for all the Dominions. If imperial federation is to come at all, Kipling declared, it must be now. More "time will not be allowed us to multiply to unquestionable peace. . . ."[24]

Kipling's final comment on the subject of imperial defence appeared in a story published immediately before the start of the War in 1914. As an example of the kind of

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[23] Ibid., pp. 235-236. Even before his Canadian trip, in the Spring of 1907, Kipling had written in a letter: "I never realized that the English of the Island were so genuinely vindictive against the English of the Empire" (Letter, quoted in Ellis Ames Ballard, Catalog Intimate and Descriptive, of My Kipling Collection [Philadelphia, 1935], p. 246).

[24] Ibid., p. 239.

deluded thinking that he had preached against for nearly fifteen years, Kipling created Mr. Lingman, a Dominion statesman who is visiting England. Mr. Lingman refuses to recognize the need for a firm military alliance between England and the Dominions: "My idea," he says, "has always been that the component parts of the Empire should take counsel among themselves on the approach of War, so that, after we have decided on the merits of casus belli, we can co-ordinate what part each dominion shall play whenever war is, unfortunately, a possibility." By the end of the story, however, Mr. Lingman has changed his mind. He has come to realize that in a world where crises occur without "any approaching warning," the chances for survival are greatly enhanced by preparing to meet them. The Empire, he now thinks, should have a gigantic, permanently mobilized army, capable of being "brought to bear, without any respect to the merits of the casus belli, instantaneously, automatically, and remorselessly at the first faint buzz of war."[25]

The same considerations that led Kipling to advocate a military pact among the member nations of the Empire, made him a vigorous supporter of his country's defense arrangements with France. As early as 1896 he had suggested that England

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[25]"The Vortex," A Diversity of Creatures, pp. 451-452, 466.

could profitably enter into an alliance with France.[26] The idea had been dropped during his own anti-French phase at the time of the Fashoda crisis.[27] It was revived again in 1902 as he grew increasingly apprehensive over the possibility of a war with Germany. He was delighted when the Anglo-French Entente was signed in 1904. To a French acquaintance, Vicomte d'Humières, he expressed the opinion that the agreement was the hope of the future for both countries. Only Germany, Kipling said, "the Middle-Ages with modern guns"--will stand to profit if France and England ever quarrel again. It is "for the sake of tomorrow," he concluded, that our two countries must learn how to work together to-day.[28] Kipling demonstrated his interest in strengthening and maintaining the Entente again when Edward VII died in 1910. His memorial poem thanked the King for helping to create the atmosphere of mutual trust that had

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[26]Letter to C. E. Norton, quoted in Carrington, pp. 178-179.

[27]Letter to Douglas Murray, October 14, 1899, Carpenter Collection.

[28]Letter, August 7, 1904, quoted in the Preface to d'Humières, Through Isle and Empire (New York, 1905). Kipling's letter, written shortly after the creation of the Entente, was made public and became the subject of an approving "Leading Article" in The Times of September 13, 1904, p. 8.

made the alliance possible.[29] Between 1909 and 1914 Kipling made a number of visits to France. What he observed of the mounting tensions there confirmed his own view, that a general European war was only a matter of time.[30] His liking for the French, however, was increased by personal contacts with men like Clemenceau, who were able to convince him that in the next war England would not be fighting Germany alone.[31] When the President of the French Republic made a state visit to England in the summer of 1913, Kipling seized upon it as an opportunity to express his confidence in the Entente. His poem, France, composed for the occasion, praised the courage that had always been displayed by Frenchmen and Englishmen in their wars against each other in the past. But now both nations--

> . . . watch the new years shape, wondering if they hold
> Fiercer lightnings in their heart than we launched of old.
> Now we hear new voices rise, question, boast, or gird,
> . . . . . .
> Now we count new keels afloat, and new hosts on land,
> Massed like ours (rememberest thou?) when our strokes were planned.
>
> We were schooled for dear life's sake, to know each other's blade.
> What can Blood and Iron make more than we have made?
> We have learned by keenest use to know each other's mind.
> What shall Blood and Iron loose that we cannot bind?

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[29] The Dead King.

[30] Kipling, letter to Mrs. Hill, April 4, 1914, Carpenter Collection.

[31] Ibid.

CHAPTER X

THE ATTEMPT TO TERRIFY

Kipling preached the necessity for conscription, Army reform, naval increases, and Empire federation as a means of preparing England for a war with Germany. On one level, he delivered this message in the form of speeches and articles. Frequently, however, it was poetry that became a medium for conveying his political opinions. He published, between 1902 and 1914, a large number of verses which, like The Islanders, were deliberate attempts to terrify his countrymen into accepting the various military reforms that he championed himself. The poems of this period typically take the form of attacks against the materialism and complacency of the British people, who are condemned for their folly in not spending more on defence and for their refusal to adopt peace time conscription. The punishment for their sins, he predicted, would be a dreadful day of reckoning, specifically the country's defeat in some future war. He portrayed the consequences in exceedingly unpleasant terms, and could describe in detail England's conquest by a barbaric enemy, under whose rule the English people are systematically

reduced to the level of perpetual serfdom.[1]

For Kipling, Germany's military advantage over England increased with the passage of every year after 1902. In contrast, his own country's response to the mounting menace from across the channel, her larger naval appropriations and the small Territorial Army, appeared so inadequate to him that he became increasingly pessimistic about the chances for averting a British defeat when war did come. Modern England, he thought, was passing through a period similar to the last days of the Roman occupation: once again civilization was being challenged by organized barbarism. He expressed the notion in a 1906 story.[2] As the symbols for his own despair he chose two Roman officers of the late fourth century, Parnesius and Pertinax, who are charged with what

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[1]The following poems should be read: The Islanders, Before a Midnight Breaks in Storm, Rimmon, The Old Men, The Dykes, all written in 1902 and 1903, and included in Kipling's book The Five Nations (New York, 1903). "They are not poems alone," wrote one critic, "but political pamphlets in verse, audacious indictments of existing conditions . . . that [refuse] to be forgotten. It is hard, if not impossible to treat them simply as literature, to weigh their aesthetic value apart from their political significance and the events which begot them" (F. T. Cooper, "Mr. Kipling's The Five Nations, An Appreciation," World's Work, VII [1903], 4138-4140). After 1903 the student of Kipling's work should consult The Heritage, 1905, The Veterans, 1907, The City of Brass, 1909, The Dead King, A Departure, 1910, and Macdonough's Song, 1912.

[2]Something of Myself, p. 205.

has become an impossible task, defending the Great Roman Wall against the barbarians. As Parnesius had, Kipling felt himself "to be a man with a rotten stick standing before a broken fence to turn bulls." It was a mood of somber fatalism. He captured it in Pertinax's comment before the final onslaught: "'We be two dead men, my brother!'"[3]

But like the Romans of his allegory, Kipling refused to abandon an effort that seemed to him increasingly hopeless. He did what he could to halt "the effortless ordered drift towards Armageddon."[4] As for his countrymen, he continued to--

> Warn them of seas that slip our yoke
> Of slow conspiring stars--
> The ancient front of things unbroke
> But heavy with new wars.[5]

While the tocsin of alarm could be most dramatically sounded in verse, similar warnings of impending doom appear

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[3]"The Winged Hats," Puck of Pook's Hill, The Writings in Prose and Verse of Rudyard Kipling, XIX (New York, 1920), pp. 208-209.

[4]Something of Myself, p. 240. Note the use of the words "Effortless," "Ordered," in The Islanders. Kipling wrote later about the years between the South African and the First World Wars: "There was always heavy written work. . . . This was specially the case during the three years before, . . . [1914] when warnings came thick and fast, and the wise people to whom I conveyed them said: 'Oh, but you're so-o-extreme'" (Ibid., p. 212).

[5]Our Fathers Also.

in Kipling's private letters, stories, and speeches. "The Mother Hive," an allegory composed in 1908 chronicled the subjugation and enslavement of a society of bees by their mortal enemies, the wax moths. The bees, it soon becomes clear, represent the English people, and, as Kipling was careful to point out, their destruction is the direct result of a number of internal weaknesses in the hive. Like Englishmen, the bees, through generations of self-indulgence, have become grossly materialistic, a fact which not only encourages aggression, but also makes successful resistance impossible.[6]

Kipling's views remained the same after 1908. In a letter in 1911 he wrote despondently: "Things in England are as mad as usual. If there were any logic in the English we should be steering straight for at least three revolutions at the same time, so I presume that they will neutralize each other. Meantime the Teuton has his large cold eye on us and prepares to give us Toko when he feels good and ready. . . . But we ought to see in a few years now."[7]

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[6]"The Mother Hive," Actions and Reactions, pp. 91-116.

[7]To Duckworth Ford, December 10, 1911, quoted in Carrington, p. 317.

Among Kipling's numerous attempts to frighten the British people into accepting his views on military preparedness was "The Edge of the Evening," a story about airplanes published in 1913.[8] In 1909, the Frenchman, Blériot, made the first successful crossing of the English Channel by air. The development of the new invention followed rapidly. In 1911 the British government found it necessary to enact an Aerial Navigation Law, giving the Home office authority to prohibit the movement of aircraft over proscribed areas.[9] The same year the activities of German agents in England produced another piece of legislation, the Official Secrets Act.[10]

Kipling saw his first airplane in 1910 while on a visit to France.[11] He was quick to grasp the machine's military potential,[12] and followed with intense interest the

[8]Included in A Diversity of Creatures.

[9]Ensor, pp. 433-434.

[10]Ibid., p. 444.

[11]Carrington, p. 325. Even earlier, 1905, Kipling's science fiction story, "With the Night Mail," Actions and Reactions, had imagined something of the airplane's future potential.

[12]Address at Folkestone, "On Aeronautics," The Times, October 26, 1910, p. 12. As late as 1910, The Times was still listing all news about airplane testing and development under the heading "Sport, Agriculture, and Country Life." Glancing at this section the contemporary reader is immediately struck by the many brief accounts of the testing activities of German fliers.

tests conducted by the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Aldershot.[13] At the same time, however, the extraordinary progress of the Germans in the field of aeronautics left him even more conscious that the British people were a nation sitting "in kimonoes on dynamite kegs."[14] "The Edge of the Evening" -- the title itself suggests approaching tragedy -- opens on an English country house where a summer garden party is in progress. The party is interrupted by the arrival of a strange airplane which lands on the lawn. Its two passengers are German spies, who have crossed the Channel to take aerial photographs of British defense installations. The forced landing is the result of engine trouble. When the kindly but unwitting Englishmen come forward to offer assistance, the Germans reply by attempting to murder them.

In the same year that he wrote "The Edge of the Evening," 1913, Kipling delivered an address for the National Service League at Burwash. As the subject for his speech, Kipling turned to the theme that he had treated so frequently in fiction and verse. Deliberately he played on the fears of his audience. All attempts to introduce conscription into England had failed, he declared, because it is "almost as

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[13] Carrington, p. 325.

[14] "The Edge of the Evening," A Diversity of Creatures, p. 333.

impossible to make a people who have never known invasion realize what invasion is as it is to make a man realize the fact of his own death."[15]

Should England be invaded, he warned, the civilian populace will not be allowed to go on with their normal lives, or merely required to pay taxes to officials with a foreign accent:

> Even attempted invasion does not mean that; it means riot and arson and disorder and bloodshed and starvation on a scale that a man can scarcely imagine to himself; it means disorganization of every relation of life . . . from the highest to the lowest. As things stand at present, we have neither the men nor the means nor the organization nor the will . . . [to successfully resist invasion]. That is why those of us who think go about in fear and in doubt; that is why those of us who do not think are full of silly boastings one day and of blind panic the next; that is why we have no security inside or outside our borders; that is why we tell each other lies to cover our own fears and yet know all the time that our lies are useless. In this matter we must take refuge behind no paid member of Parliament. The power to change this wasteful state of affairs lies in the hands of the people of England. The responsibility is ours and the punishment if we persist in our folly, in our fraud, and in our make-believe--the punishment will fall not only upon us but upon the third and fourth generation of those that hath betrayed their country.[16]

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[15] "Mr. Kipling's Warning," The Times.

[16] Ibid.

CHAPTER XI

WHY DEMOCRACY WAS REPUDIATED

In 1900 the literary critic William Salter plucked a quotation from Herbert Spencer and applied it to Kipling: "'We are in the course of rebarbarization and there is no prospect but that of military despotisms, which we are rapidly approaching.' If Mr. Kipling's influence is to be followed, I am afraid that this is so."[1]

Long before 1914 Kipling had decided that England's failure to adopt peace time conscription was the result of her system of government: political democracy. As a young man in India he had developed a deep admiration for the efficient and generally enlightened despotism which characterized British Colonial Administration. He left India firmly convinced of the merits of a political system which allowed what he called the "strong man" to "govern alone."[2] Later, in the 1890's, a list of the qualities that he most respected in a society appeared in the poem

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[1] "One Side of Kipling," The Ethical Record. Salter added: "It is said by those who have read him carefully that the word 'freedom' does not occur in his books. Certainly he has no song in praise of liberty. . . ."

[2] "From Sea to Sea," Letters of Travel, p. 492.

McAndrew's Hymn. They were: Law, order, duty, restraint, obedience, discipline. His omission of freedom is significant, but it does not necessarily imply any active dislike for democracy. That was to come later. In the 1890's, Kipling seems merely to have entertained the suspicion that democracy was an inefficient form of government, a handicap for any country who wanted to become strong and respected. On his visit to Japan in 1889, for example, he was told by a Japanese acquaintance that Japan was becoming more like England, and now had a constitution, a Parliament, and two political parties. Kipling had replied: Your political parties "will both tell lies to you and to each other. . . . They will pass bills, and spend their time fighting each other. Then all the foreign governments will discover that you have no fixed policy. . . . Then, when you have sufficiently disgusted the foreign powers, they will wait until the Liberals and the Radicals are fighting very hard, and then they will blow you out of the water."[3]

Democracy for Kipling, in other words, was a luxury, which only powerful nations like England could afford. Then came the Boer War. The frightening defeats of the opening months caused Kipling to reverse his earlier opinion.

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[3] Ibid.

Democracy was still a luxury, but its cost, in terms of national inefficiency was greater than he had imagined.[4] Of what possible use, he asked himself, was a representative government, or a set of personal liberties which could not be enjoyed without endangering England's national security?

It was not the defeats in South Africa, however, but rather his country's refusal to adopt conscription after the War which turned Kipling into an active and vocal opponent of democracy. He came to believe that in every democratic country the votes of the majority of the citizens were given to the candidate who would promise them something for nothing. Conversely, these votes were also employed as weapons to strike down any politician or political party foolish enough to support unpopular measures, such as conscription, or higher taxes to meet the costs of increased army and navy appropriations.[5]

Kipling's low opinion of democracy was the result of his even lower opinion of the intelligence and the motives of the common man. He once described himself as "a political

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[4]"On Amnesty to the Rebels," Sussex Ed., XXX, 7.

[5]Kipling advanced this thesis on a number of occasions. It appears in two poems, The City of Brass and A Servant When He Reigneth, and in "Letters to the Family" Letters of Travel, pp. 235-236, 239, and a 1908 speech, "The Spirit of the Navy," A Book of Words, pp. 52-54.

Calvinist."[6] He thought that men were creatures born in sin, more prone to do evil than good, generally ignorant, frequently irrational, and sufficiently selfish that they almost invariably pursued their own interests at the expense of society. "The raw fact of life," he once wrote, "is that mankind is a little lower than the angels. . . . But if you begin by the convention that men are angels, they will assuredly become bigger beasts than ever."[7]

He became convinced after the South African War that democracy was nothing but government by the incompetent and for the incompetent. The failure of either the conservatives or the Liberals to endorse conscription after the Boer War led him to hate the politicians of both parties. He considered most of them as nothing but the self-seeking servants of the irresponsible mob who had put them in office.[8] Politics, he said on one occasion, was "a dog's life without a dog's decencies."[9] After reading a book about pirates, he

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[6]Something of Myself, p. 237.

[7]Quoted in Bonamy Dobrée, "Kipling the Visionary," The Kipling Journal, April, 1956, p. 3.

[8]The only two statesmen that Kipling ever genuinely admired were Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Milner. The poem Things and the Man, 1904, was written as a tribute to Chamberlain, and for Lord Milner, who most closely approximated his ideal of the strong man ruling alone, he wrote in 1905 a poem entitled The Pro-Consuls.

[9]Quoted in Carrington, p. 314.

commented: "I don't suppose the pirate did much more harm than the politician."[10]

Kipling was not alone in concluding that while England remained at peace the nature of her political institutions made it almost impossible to pass a conscription law. In 1902, The Spectator, although refusing to endorse conscription, had agreed with Kipling on the desirability of peace time military training. "It is rather a melancholy thought," The Spectator observed, "that upon this subject, so vital to its very existence as well as to its future, the country will receive but little assistance from the wisdom of Parliament, [whose members] . . . are hampered by the fear . . . that if they take a lead, and the lead is not entirely sanctioned by opinion, they will lose all influence with the electors." As for compulsory military service, The Spectator thought that it was "useless to discuss its advantages--and it has some--or its disadvantages--and it has many--for the terrible laws necessary to enforce it cannot, except in extremity, be got passed. . . ." The Spectator concluded, to advocate conscription in England is nothing but "a waste of intellectual energy."[11]

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[10] Ibid., p. 379.

[11] "Mr. Rudyard Kipling's Idea."

The same theme was taken up by A. Irving Muntz in a letter to The Times. Conscription, he declared, "is not against the laws of nature nor an outrage on the British constitution; thrones will not topple for it, though a government, conceivably, might. And is this not the difficulty--the supposed reluctance of this free people to surrender the thing they mistake for liberty, and their anticipated vengeance on those who may have the temerity to ask it?"[12]

The evolution of Kipling's thoughts on the subject of popular government, between the end of the Boer War and the start of the First World War, can be traced chronologically. The Islanders, written in the winter of 1902, was as much a tract against the failures of democracy as it was a propaganda piece for conscription. A month after the poem's publication he expressed his personal disgust with the policies of the Unionist Government by remarking that in England statesmen "seem as dead as the dodo."[13]

By 1904 it had become clear that the Unionists had no intention of trying to pass a peace time conscription law. Kipling considered the refusal to back conscription a policy

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[12] January 7, 1902, p. 10

[13] "On Amnesty to the Rebels," Sussex Ed., XXX, 7.

of expediency, based on the party's fear of defeat at the next election. His thoughts on the subject in 1904 appeared in "The Army of a Dream," where his military utopia was constructed around the axion: "No Volunteer No Vote."[14] The same year he wrote to H. S. W. Edwardes: "I wish I felt confident that the powers that be were going in for a year's service. I think they'll try to water the whole thing down to please the public, and then, when the smash comes, the virtuous public will rise in its wrath because the Government did--what it was ordered to do."[15] In another 1904 letter, to Vicomte d'Humières who had visited England, Kipling declared: "From the point of view of an inhabitant, I am specially delighted with your tributes to the energy of the [English] race, a thing which some of us at times to-day begin to doubt. There exists--I am glad you did not see it--an England which, ruined by excess of comfort, has gone to sleep and, because it snores loudly, believes that it is thinking."[16]

Practically everything which occurred on the English political scene after 1904 added to Kipling's growing hatred

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[14] Traffics and Discoveries, p. 26.

[15] "Letters to H. S. W. Edwardes," The Kipling Journal.

[16] Preface to d'Humières, Through Isle and Empire.

for democracy. While the Unionists remained in power he continued to attack the Balfour government's failure to act on army reform. Following the Unionist defeat in the 1906 election, he was equally articulate in denouncing the Liberals for the same reason. Although he had little affection for either political party, he found the political ideology of the Liberals particularly repugnant. In the 1890's he had condemned the more radical section of the Party, for talking what he termed "pernicious varieties of safe sedition,"[17] and for believing that peace could be achieved through unilateral disarmament, by "snatching away England's arms when she isn't looking--just like a naughty child--so that when she wants to fight she'll find she can't."[18] He considered the Liberals of 1906 even more fuzzy-minded than the ones he had known in the nineties. The new Liberalism seemed to him perilously close to Socialism. He suspected the Party was trying to turn England into a welfare state, and said their schemes for social betterment were nothing more than "robbing selected Peter to pay for collective Paul!"[19] The most dangerous Liberals, of course, were those whose

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[17] Something of Myself, pp. 99-100.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Quoted in Carrington, p. 316.

zeal for social reforms like National Insurance had so blinded them to the threat from Germany that they were prepared to pay for their welfare legislation by slicing funds off the army and navy estimates.[20]

Liberal or Conservative, though, a politician remained a politician. Shortly after the Liberals came to power he wrote to H. A. Gwynne: "I am glad you have seen the politicians at close quarters. They are a macaroni-backed crew, even the best of them, and they will follow any winning causes."[21] It is significant that in his pronouncements against democracy, Kipling seldom mentioned any particular political party by name. In 1913, when a Canadian politician referred to him as the semi-official propagandist for the Tory party, he angrily threatened to sue the man for libel.[22] He did not attack any political party so much as he attacked what he called "the fatal weakness" of the party system, the principle that the voters should be allowed to influence

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[20] "Letters to the Family," Letters of Travel, p. 139.

[21] Quoted in Carrington, p. 318.

[22] Ibid., p. 314. In June, 1914, Francis Gribble wrote of Kipling: "Of late years, . . . he has put himself forward as the town-crier of the Tory party--proclaiming extreme Tory views in exceedingly offensive language. The more he rants, the louder the hacks of the Tory Press applaud" ("Rudyard Kipling," Everyman, June 5, 1914, p. 37).

the policies of a government by their power to appoint and remove their representatives.[23]

As Kipling had feared, Campbell-Bannerman's Liberals, like Balfour's Unionists, were unwilling to risk their party's political future by supporting any measure as universally unpopular as peace time conscription. Kipling's second attempt, after 1904, to introduce such innocuous substitutes for conscription as rifle clubs and target shooting in the nation's schools was an admission of his own defeat. He attributed his failure to democracy: that wretched system which handed the whip of coercion to the mob, and turned statesmen into fawning, impotent ciphers, little better than slaves to the brutes who had voted them into office. "It must be hard for those who do not live there," he told the Canadians in 1907, "to realize the cross between canker and blight that has settled on England. . . . Every form of unfitness, general or specialised, born or created, during the last generation has combined in one big trust--a majority of all the minorities to play the game of government." England's most serious weakness "is an excess of voters," who resent having to pay taxes for defense. And whatever the English voters object to is important, if

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[23]"On Amnesty to the Rebels," Sussex Ed., XXX, 7.

only because "their leaders need their votes."[24]

It was this sort of thinking that in 1908 led Kipling to define democracy as "any crowd on the move--that is to say, the helpless thing which breaks through floors and falls into cellars; overturns pleasure boats by rushing from port to starboard; stamps men into pulp because it has lost six pence, and jams and grills in the doorways of blazing theatres." It is government based on the worship of "Demos--a jealous God of primitive tastes and despotic tendencies."[25]

Between 1909 and 1911 Kipling stoutly resisted the Liberal government's proposed Parliament Bill, which would reform the House of Lords by reducing the power of the Upper House to veto legislation. In 1911, the Liberals, now under the leadership of Asquith, obtained the promise of George V to, if necessary, create enough Peers to carry the bill. In the constitutional crisis which followed, Kipling supported the "Die-Hards," the minority of Peers who had sworn to vote against the bill despite the King's threat.[26] Kipling's reasons for opposing the Parliament Bill were made clear in a speech at Brighton in the autumn of 1910. It was the

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[24]"Letters to the Family," Letters of Travel, pp. 139, 235-236.

[25]Ibid., p. 181.

[26]Carrington, pp. 316-317.

division of power in England between the House of Commons and the House of Lords, he thought, which in the past had prevented the worst evils of democracy, and had made it possible for England to become powerful enough to gain possession of "one square mile in every four of the globe," with responsibility "for the protection of one person in five out of the entire population of this . . . planet." With this form of government, England had "abated the pretensions and cooled the imaginations of Kings, churches, armies, mobs and their leaders."[27]

Despite the statements contained in the Brighton speech, Kipling's personal opinion was that England, even without the Parliament Bill, was already too democratic. The bill's passage would remove the last checks the state had against the wishes of that selfish, undisciplined animal: the mob. With all power in the hands of the voters, there would be nothing to stop them from destroying the country in a frantic rush to get something for nothing. They would beggar the army, starve the navy, and wreck England forever. In 1911 he wrote:

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[27]"The Ritual of Government," A Book of Words, p. 63. The merits of divided government, of checks and balances, is the subject of the poem, My Father's Chair.

It is not wealth, nor talk, nor trade, nor schools,
nor even the Vote,
Will save your land when the enemy's hand is
tightening round your throat.[28]

At the start of the controversy over the Parliament Bill in 1909, Kipling attacked the Liberals in a lengthy poem entitled The City of Brass. He accused the party's leaders of encouraging idleness at home by their socialistic policies; of keeping themselves in power by bribing the voters with handouts in the form of domestic welfare legislation, and of financing the whole program with money that ought to have been spent on the army and the navy. He warned Englishmen that the Liberals had "pulled down the walls that their fathers had made them--the impregnable ramparts of old, they razed and relaid them--

As playgrounds of pleasure and leisure, with limitless
entries,
And havens of rest for the wastrels where once walked
the sentries;
And because there was need of more pay for the shouters
and marchers,
They disbanded in face of their foeman their yeomen
and archers.
They replied to their well-wishers' fears--to their
enemies' laughter,
Saying: "Peace! We have fashioned a God Which shall
save us hereafter.
We ascribe all dominion to man in his factions conferring,
And have given to numbers the Name of the Wisdom
unerring.

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[28] Together.

Arrived the day of judgement (a war, presumably with Germany), and England "passed from the roll of the Nations in headlong surrender!"

The City of Brass was made the subject of an editorial in the London Nation. It was once possible, the magazine proclaimed:

> for poets and patriots to speak of their country with a certain . . . affection. . . . But now, bold and inharmonious as a Spartan invasion, up comes Mr. Kipling with his City of Brass, . . . and pours contempt on all our pride. Exultant with savage joy, almost as though he were the Barbarian himself, he foretells the speedy destruction of our land and Empire. . . . The causes of our impending overthrow are interesting because they are just the things on which . . . we rather flattered ourselves, thinking we deserved something of the eulogy of Pericles. . . . [He] traces the ruin of our country to our tolerance in daily life, our pleasure in public festivals, our objection to drill-sergeant discipline, our love of personal freedom, our belief in the general heart and brain of our people, and our desire to believe in the same powers of self-government in others. [And he opposes] . . . those particular qualities of freedom and tolerance and kindliness which we believe to be our country's noblest distinctions in history.[29]

In August, 1911, the Parliament Bill was passed and became law. In July, when passage of the bill had become a certainty, Kipling wrote dejectedly to Moreton Frewen: "I suppose that there will be something left of the island after everybody has finished with it, but frankly, I don't

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[29]"A Mouth of Brass," Nation, V (1909), 486-488.

see what."[30] Kipling's fears, however, were exaggerated. The new limitations on the Peers' veto left the basic situation unchanged. The staunchest opponents of conscription, after all, were not to be found in the Upper Chamber, but in the House of Commons.

Between 1911 and 1914, Kipling continued to see in popular government the explanation for the failure of his various attempts to make his countrymen do more in the way of preparing for war: Empire federation, conscription, increased naval appropriations--everywhere he found himself frustrated and defeated by the same obnoxious political system. His philosophy of military preparedness, he admitted himself, could only be implemented by compulsion, and in England all of the instruments of coercion were now in the hands of the mob. The country, he said in a 1912 speech, put the Liberals into office "because we hoped to get something for nothing. Else why did we turn our backs on tariff reform? . . . And what is our reward to-day? What have we gained? A land without a constitution, within measurable distance of civil war [over the issue of Home Rule for Ireland], under the very shadow of Armaggeddon, for which by land and by sea and in our own distracted souls we are utterly unprepared." It was

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[30]Letter, dated July 31, 1911, Frewen Papers, Library of Congress.

not just England that the Liberals were leading towards destruction, but the whole Empire; for on England's "fate hangs the destinies of one-fifth of the human race."[31]

Kipling deserves a minor place in the intellectual history of the early twentieth century if only because he was more **than** merely a negative critic. For example, while he indicted the government for its failure to adopt peace time conscription, he also, as in "The **Army** of a Dream," put forward a number of specific suggestions, some with considerable merit, to improve the fighting abilities of the British army. Similarly, he was not content just to criticize democracy. Between 1905 and 1912 he gradually developed a political philosophy whose ideas, while not wholly original, clearly indicated the nature of the political system that he hoped would one day replace democracy. In working out his philosophy Kipling recalled what he had seen of British colonial administration in India. The foundation stone of his political credo became the concept of benevolent despotism, with the accompanying assertion that a political utopia would consist of a government where power was in the hands of efficient, enlightened professionals. All decisions affecting military security, justice, and the administration of

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[31]"Kipling on the Stump," Literary Digest, XLV (1912), 904-905.

government could then be made by an elite of strong, capable men, instead of by the unthinking and vulgar masses.

Kipling's conception of a political utopia appears most clearly in two stories "With the Night Mail," written in 1905,[32] and "As Easy as A.B.C.," written in 1912.[33] Both stories are placed in the twenty-first century, where "Democracy" is equated with "Disease," and as a form of government has been repudiated by rational men.[34] All sovereign states have disappeared, and world peace has been achieved under the benevolent dictatorship of the scientists and the technocrats (the same people, in fact, whose occupations normally place a premium on efficiency). The rule of science has replaced that of the elected demagogues, whose loose talk of liberty and personal freedom hurled the world of the twentieth century into a cataclysmic disaster. By the twenty-first century, however, all that is left to remind men of the black period in human history before democracy perished are "inherited memories of horror, panic, fear, and cruelty."[35]

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[32] In Actions and Reactions.

[33] In A Diversity of Creatures.

[34] "As Easy as A.B.C.," A Diversity of Creatures, p. 24.

[35] Ibid., p. 14.

In the two stories, power is exercised by an international authority, the "Aerial Board of Control." The members of the Board are scientists and technicians drawn from the former nations of the earth, who have united as an international partnership of the efficient few to govern the inefficient many. It is also a partnership of equals, in which no single nation is permitted a greater influence than any other in determining the Board's decisions.

"As Easy as A.B.C." indicates the extent of Kipling's hatred for democracy by 1912. The story begins as the headquarters of the Aerial Board of Control, in London, receives a message from the frantic people of Chicago, asking for assistance in crushing the revolt of a primitive and superstitious sect who call themselves the democrats. The democrats, it soon becomes clear, are a throwback to the type of political barbarism that existed in twentieth century England. They have committed the monstrous sin of preaching "popular government" to the inhabitants of Chicago. The democrats want to return "to the old Voodoo-business of voting with papers and wooden boxes and word drunk-drunk people and printed formulas and news sheets!"[36]

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[36] Ibid., p. 27.

The Aerial Board dispatches a military force to Chicago, and the uprising is quickly suppressed. MacDonough's Song, sung by the victors after the democrats have been defeated, is an impassioned tirade against democracy:

> Whether the People be led by The Lord,
> Or lured by the loudest throat;
> If it be quicker to die by the sword
> Or cheaper to die by vote--
> These are things we have dealt with once,
> (And they will not rise from their grave)
> For Holy People, however it runs,
> Endeth in wholly Slave.
>
> Whatsoever, for any cause,
> Seeketh to take or give
> Power above or beyond the Laws,
> Suffer it not to live!
> Holy State or Holy King--
> Or Holy People's Will--
> Have no truck with the senseless thing.
> Order the guns and kill!
> Saying--after--me:--
>
> Once there was The People--Terror gave it birth;
> Once there was The People and it made a Hell of Earth.
> Earth arose and crushed it. Listen, O ye slain!
> Once there was The People--it shall never be again![37]

The members of the Aerial Board are told that the democrats first became a menace in Chicago when they began to make speeches (employing "metaphors" which "were of the

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[37] Ibid., p. 14. Italics are Kiplings. This poem, one of his admirers admitted, was probably "the most nakedly, blatantly, 'unpopular' thing Kipling has ever written" (Katharine Gerould, Modes and Morals [New York, 1920], p. 261).

most Medieval") describing their barbaric system of government:

> [They] demanded that every matter of daily life, including most of the physical functions, should be submitted for decision at any time of the week, month or year to . . . anybody who happened to be passing by or residing within a certain radius, and that everybody should forthwith abandon his concerns to settle the matter, . . . by putting crosses on paper, which rubbish should later be counted. . . . Out of this amazing play, . . . [they] assured us, would automatically arise a higher, nobler, and kinder world, based-- . . . [they] demonstrated this with the awful lucidity of the insane-- . . . on the sanctitity of the Crowd.[38]

At the end of the story it is decided to send the democrats to England, where they can be exhibited as relics from the past, who will "do the voting trick as often as you ask 'em a question." As living museum pieces they will serve as a constant reminder of the type of institutional primitivism from which the world has finally escaped.[39]

Kipling's last comments on the subject of popular government were the series of epitaphs in verse that he wrote in 1919.[40] He suggested as an inscription for all the British dead:

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[38] Ibid., pp. 31-32.

[39] Ibid., pp. 40-44.

[40] Epitaphs of the War.

If any question why we died,
Tell them, because our fathers lied.

On the tomb of any British politician he would have inscribed:

I could not dig: I dared not rob:
Therefore I lied to please the mob.
Now all my lies are proved untrue
And I must face the men I slew.
What tale shall serve me here among
Mine angry and defrauded young?

CHAPTER XII

"THE HUN IS AT THE GATE!"

(For All We Have and Are)

Kipling's activities in last months of peace indicate how little remained by 1914 of the same writer who had once, before the South African War, been content to use his pen for no other purpose than that of entertaining his readers. In a speech to the members of the Royal Geographic Society in February, 1914, Kipling declared that despite the advances of science and the inventions of weapons like the submarine and the airplane, one thing remained eternal: "Only the spirit of man carries on, unaltered and unappeasable. There will arise--they are shaping themselves even now--risks to be met as cruel as any that Hudson or Scott faced; . . . and decisions to be taken as splendidly terrible."[1] He visited France in April. In a letter from Paris he said that he found it impossible to do any writing: "Life is so exacting from the political point of view that one has only time to watch it just now and wonder what new smash will turn up."[2]

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[1] "Some Aspects of Travel," A Book of Words, p. 213.

[2] Letter to Mrs. Hill, April 4, 1914, Carpenter Collection.

He returned to England in May, and was soon actively supporting the Unionist Party's attempt to prevent the Liberals from passing their proposed Home Rule Bill for Ireland.[3]

In the domestic crisis that the bill produced, Kipling took the side of the Ulster Protestants who had sworn to resist, by force if necessary, their incorporation into a Catholic, semi-independent Ireland.[4] He opposed Home Rule because it violated all his convictions on the subject of imperial federation. He was convinced the Catholic Irish could not be trusted with self-government.[5] Despite his support for the Ulster Protestants, however, Kipling was alarmed by their behavior. Their fear of becoming a persecuted minority in an Ireland governed by papists had made them desperate. By 1914 Ireland was on the brink of civil war. Worse still, the Ulstermen were arming themselves with rifles imported from Germany.[6] A civil war in Ireland would give Germany a distinct advantage in Europe. Britain would be required to send large numbers of troops to Ireland, whose involvement there, perhaps indefinitely, would significantly

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[3]Carrington, pp. 327-328.

[4]Ibid., p. 326.

[5]Something of Myself, p. 130.

[6]Carrington, p. 326.

reduce the strength of her forces for a war in Europe.

Kipling revealed his distaste for the Home Rule Bill in an angry speech, and in his bitter poem The Covenant.[7] His speech indicting the Liberal government was so extreme that several members of the Asquith Ministry are reported to have demanded that he be arrested on a charge of sedition.[8] To his friend H. A. Gwynne, who edited the right-wing conservative Morning Post, Kipling wrote: "You talk of the German danger. Does it occur to you that a betrayed Ulster will repeat 1688 in the shape of a direct appeal to Germany? And that in doing this she will have the sullen sympathy of a great many people in England who are suffering under intolerable misgovernment?" Ulster, he continued, remembering the Kaiser's earlier sympathy for the Boers, "is nearer than South Africa; and a betrayed Ulster is more dangerous than twenty southern Irelands in open revolt."[9]

Until the end of May, Kipling gave his time and energy to grinding out partisan statements designed to block the Home Rule Bill. But then it was June and the assassination

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[7]A report of the speech appears in "Mr. Kipling on Ulster," The Times, May 8, 1914, p. 6.

[8]Stewart, p. 293.

[9]Quoted in Carrington, pp. 326-327.

of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand at Sarajevo became the occasion for the War that he had so long predicted. In the following weeks such domestic problems as Ireland and votes for women grew daily less important. England entered the War in August; Kipling was not surprised. The day War was declared he opened his wife's diary, and under the date August 4, wrote: "Incidentally Armageddon begins."[10]

As he had done on a similar occasion fifteen years earlier, Kipling's first response to the War was a poem addressed to the British nation. Like The Old Issue, written at the start of the Boer War, Kipling's new poem, For All We Have and Are, first appeared in The Times.[11] But the mood of his verses in 1914, however, was very different from that of The Old Issue, which said nothing about the grimmer side of war. For All We Have and Are struck a somber note. It was a call to arms that carried with it a statement on the horrors of war:

> For all we have and are,
> For all our children's fate,
> Stand up and take the war.
> The Hun is at the gate!
> Our world has passed away,
> In wantonness o'erthrown.

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[10] Ibid., p. 329.

[11] September 2, 1914, p. 9.

There is nothing left to-day
But steel and fire and stone!
        Though all we knew depart,
        The old Commandments stand:--
        "In courage keep your heart,
        In strength lift up your hand."

Once more we hear the word
That sickened earth of old:--
"No law except the Sword
Unsheathed and uncontrolled."
Once more it knits mankind,
Once more the nations go
To meet and break and bind
A crazed and driven foe.

Comfort, content, delight,
The ages' slow-bought gain,
They shrivelled in a night.
Only ourselves remain
To face the naked days
In silent fortitude,
. . . . . .
There is but one task for all--
One life for each to give.
What stands if Freedom fall?
Who dies if England live?

CHAPTER XIII

THE WAR YEARS AND AFTERWARDS: "THE LULL 'TWIXT BLAST AND BLAST" (The Storm Cone)

While this thesis was never intended as a biography, it would be difficult to conclude without a brief description of the last twenty-two years of Kipling's life, from 1914 to 1936.

During the First World War, Kipling would perhaps have been justified if he had reminded the British public that at least a portion of the terrible price in blood that they were paying out in the War against Germany could have been avoided if they had heeded his strictures on military preparedness. The temptation to say, "I told you so," must have been very great. Yet there is no indication of this attitude in any of Kipling's War time writings.

As he had during the South African War, Kipling made several visits to the front lines. He watched battles from the trenches in France, and went to Italy in 1917 to observe the Italian campaign.[1]

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[1] Carrington, pp. 336-337, 342, 345.

At the start of the War, Kipling refused an invitation from the British government to write propaganda for the allies. The offer was rejected for the same reason that had led him in the past to turn down a title or any other sort of official recognition. He would not write to order. He was unwilling to accept honors from a government that he might later feel compelled to attack, and after the start of the War he frequently used his pen against statesmen and generals when they blundered.[2]

While he would not write the government's official propaganda, Kipling was more than willing to use his talents to stir up hatred against Germany. In point of fact, practically everything that he did write after August, 1914, was directed toward this goal.[3] He had come to hate Germany long before the War. It was a hatred that grew with every year: from the Kaiser's telegram to Kruger after the Jameson raid; to the pro-Boer attitude of the German people in the South African War; to the naval competition and armaments race initiated by Germany at the turn of the century. In 1915 Kipling's only son, eighteen-year-old John Kipling, a Second

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[2] Ibid., pp. 333, 347.

[3] Most of Kipling's writings on the War appear in The New Army in Training (London, 1915); France at War (London, 1916); The Fringes of the Fleet (London, 1915); Sea Warfare (London, 1916); The War in the Mountains (New York, 1917); The Eyes of Asia (New York, 1918); The Years Between (London, 1919); The Irish Guards in the Great War (London, 1923).

Lieutenant in the Irish Guards, was killed in action at the Battle of Loos.[4] It would be too strong a statement to say that Kipling's mind was affected by his son's death. His sanity was untouched, but his loathing for the Kaiser, the German government, and the German people deepened into a kind of brooding megalomania.

The following excerpts from Kipling's wartime speeches are indicative of his feelings. In 1915 he declared:

> However the world pretends to divide itself, there are only two divisions in the world to-day--human beings and Germans. All mankind bears witness . . . that there is no crime, no cruelty, no abomination that the mind of man can conceive, which the German has not perpetrated, is not perpetrating, and will not perpetrate if he is allowed to go on. He does not recognize the existence of any law, least of all those he has subscribed to himself, in making war against combatants or non-combatants, men, women, and children.[5]

[In 1917 he said:]

> Everywhere these Germans do evil, whether they be soldiers, shop-keepers, travellers, missionaries. They do evil deliberately. It is their nature. It is the mark of their nationality. They are like microbes--wherever they abound; the evil develops and infects everything roundabout. . . . The man who tells a lie, who violates a woman, who kills a child, knows that he is breaking the human law.

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[4] Carrington, pp. 332, 339, 341.

[5] "A Call to the Nation," Kipling Journal, printed in the issues of April, 1946, p. 8, and October, 1946, p. 13.

> But a German does not know it, he does not feel it. The bridges are broken forever between them and us. Henceforth there will be two races upon the earth--the human race and the German race.[6]

[In 1918 he offered the opinion that:]

> The Hun has been educated . . . from his birth to look upon assasination and robbery, embellished with every treachery and abomination that the mind of man can elaborately think out, as a perfectly legitimate means to the national ends of his country. . . .[7]

Kipling's services did not go unrewarded. In May, 1917, he received a message from the Prime Minister offering him any honor he might care to accept. He replied by message that he wanted nothing.[8]

He was disgusted by the peace terms accorded Germany at the end of the War. He considered them far too generous. Wilson's fourteen points (Kipling met the American President at a Buckingham Palace reception when he visited Britain after the Armistice) he termed "idiotic."[9] He feared they would tie the hands of the victorious allies, and prevent them from giving Germany the punishment she deserved.[10]

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[6]"Address at Bordeaux," Kipling Journal, April, 1946, p. 9.

[7]"Kipling's Message," Kipling Journal, July, 1946, p. 15.

[8]Carrington, p. 353.

[9]Ibid., p. 348.

[10]Ibid.

In a 1917 speech he indicated what his own policy towards the defeated Germans would have been. "Civilized nations," he argued "must resort to the sterilizing process; they must put into force measures of international hygiene. Beware of the German microbe. . . ."[11] His poem Justice, written in 1918, was a further elaboration on this theme. It called for the complete disarmament of Germany and the punishment of German War criminals.

After the War, Kipling retained both his interest in politics and his hatred for Germany. During the 1920's, he served as one of the Imperial War Graves Commissioners, a job that demanded a considerable amount of his time and energy. In Europe there were a million British dead to be found, exhumed, identified, and reburied in permanent cemeteries. He suggested the inscription that was transcribed on the stone of sacrifice in each cemetery: "Their name liveth for evermore."[12]

Kipling's last years were tragically reminiscent of the decade before 1914. Germany was rearming, and while her leaders pursued the policies that would lead to a Second World War, a disarmed and badly divided England attempted to

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[11] "Address at Bordeaux."

[12] Carrington, p. 344.

persuade itself that the catastrophe could be averted by timely concessions, fair play, and the voice of reason. To the generation of Englishmen that would one day fight Hitler's Germany, Kipling offered the same advice that he had given to their fathers: adopt peace time conscription. The impotence of British arms, he assured them, did nothing to keep the peace, but instead only invited aggression. Appeasement of Germany? He considered it dangerous nonsense, a policy which only encouraged the barbarians to believe they could conquer Europe on the cheap.[13]

He did not live to see the second War with Germany. But before his death in 1936 he wrote The Storm Cone, a grim poem predicting the War that came three years later:

> This is the midnight--let no star
> Delude us--dawn is very far.
> This is the tempest long foretold--
> Slow to make head but sure to hold.
> Stand by! The lull 'twixt blast and blast
> Signals the storm is near, not past;
> And worse than present jeopardy
> May our forlorn to-morrow be.
> . . . . . .
> Only the darkness hides the shape
> Of further peril to escape.

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[13]Kipling's pronouncements against the Germans after the First World War were published under the title "Kipling and the Germans," The Kipling Journal, July, 1945, pp. 11-12.

CHAPTER XIV

KIPLING AND HIS CRITICS

"Kipling's literary reputation has suffered a Waterloo with British military prestige in the Transvaal,"[1] a critic announced with satisfaction in 1901. After the start of the Boer War, Kipling was attacked by many of his contemporaries as a jingoistic militarist, who preached a gospel of arrogance and ruthlessness, and who took a cruel delight in war for its own sake. His stories and poems, it was felt, had hymned the nation into a bloody and purposeless conflict on the South African veldt. Specifically, it was thought that his all too convincing, though fallacious descriptions of the British army in the 1890's were partly responsible for the aggressive temper of the English people at the start of the War.[2]

The attack against Kipling continued after the end of the War in 1902, when his disillusionment with the British army and his growing fear of Germany led him to

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[1] Michael Monohan, "The Kipling Blue Pill," The Philistine: A Periodical of Protest, XIII (1901), 129-130.

[2] The best article by a contemporary on this point is Masterman's, "After the Reaction," Contemporary Review.

advocate peace time conscription. Bertrand Russell called him that "destable man," and thought of him as a "satan."[3] Max Beerbohm despised Kiplimg so much that he portrayed him, in a series of critical articles and brutal caricatures, as the personification of the mindless, aggressive militarist who made wars for other men to fight, and who was interested only in cruelty and physical violence.[4]

Kipling frequently received a hostile reception even from the people who shared his opinions. A proposal for military reform could be opposed merely because he had been the one to suggest it. The anger provoked by The Islanders, for example, was only partly due to the national aversion to compulsory military training. An editorial on the poem in The Bookman recalled:

> Three years ago it was Kipling himself who proclaimed in brassy notes the pride of race, who despised the "lesser breeds," and who saw in the clean-limbed, nonchalant, and well-fred "flanneled fools" whom he now withers by his scorn, the masters of the earth in peace and war, . . . the finest soldiers in the world. [Then came the Boer War] and a few Dutchmen who knew nothing of polo "crumpled up" . . . his Guards and Lancers and Highlanders, . . . and to-day Mr. Kipling is calling his athletic but utterly untrained young

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[3]Bertrand Russell, "A Fifty-six Year Friendship," quoted in The Kipling Journal, June, 1960, p. 3.

[4]G. M. Trevelyan, A Layman's Love of Letters, Kipling Journal, December, 1954, p. 6.

> Englishmen mere "muddied oafs." [He would do well] to moderate his indigantion against those who still are labouring under a delusion which he himself has done far more than any other living man to foster and perpetuate.[5]

A summary of the indictment drawn up against Kipling between the time of the first British defeats in South Africa to the start of the First World War would include statements such as: He is "on the side of all that is ignorant, selfish, base, and brutal in the instincts of Humanity," [6] and is "indirectly or directly concerned in fanning the evil passions of semi-barbarous crowds." [7] He is "vulgar," "brutal," and a moral "retrograde," with "no enthusiasm for art." [8] "An improvement in our gear of an ironclad or a maxim gun would give him infinitely more pleasure than the discovery of a masterpiece by Raphael or Phidias." [9] Of all English writers he is "easily the most sinister and malign." [10] Poets before him "have usually been in advance of their age;

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[5] "The Islanders," Bookman (New York).

[6] Robert Buchanan, "The Voice of the Hooligan," Contemporary Review, LXXVI (1899), 774-776.

[7] Robert Buchanan, "The Ethics of Criticism," Contemporary Review, LXXVII (1900), 221-223.

[8] Henry Murray, "Rudyard Kipling," in Robert Buchanan and other Essays (London, 1901), p. 155.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Charles Russell, "Are There Two Rudyard Kiplings?" Cosmopolitan, XXXI (1901), 653-655.

he has reversed precedent by reviving in the nineteenth century the spirit of the fourteenth."[11] He is "the laureate of the gospel of blood and iron."[12] He represents "the spirit that Bismarck was the incarnation of in Germany, the spirit that Nietzsche exemplified in philosophy, the spirit of the Jameson Raid, the disregard of the ordinary laws of morality, [that] we had supposed till recently were the special glory of the nineteenth century."[13] His soul is like "an English expedition going out to shoot savages with maxim guns."[14] His ideas are "barbaric,"[15] They are typical of the uneducated mind that despises everything "which does not conform to that material standard which substitutes Mayfair for Sinai and speaks its prophecies through the mouth of the machine gun. . . . His gospel of violence leads nowhere except to more violence."[16] When Robert Bridges was appointed

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[11] Ibid.

[12] George Hamlin Fitch, Modern English Books of Power (San Francisco, 1912), p. 2.

[13] Salter, "One Side of Kipling," Ethical Record.

[14] George Moore, "Avowals," Lippincott's Monthly Magazine, LXXIII (1904), 99-103.

[15] W. B. Parker, "Rudyard Kipling," World's Work, XV (1908), 9921-9924.

[16] A. G. Gardiner, "Rudyard Kipling," Prophets, Priests, and Kings (London, 1914), pp. 324-327.

Poet Laureate in 1913, one British Journal declared that Kipling had not been offered the post because the Prime Minister, Asquith, considered him a dangerous man, and "the only poet we have who could make a war."[17] Later, following the death of his son in the First World War, Kipling received a number of letters, brutally informing him that he deserved his loss for having provoked the War.[18]

Toward the end of his life, in 1930, Harold Laski predicted: Kipling will be remembered "in the historian's note-book as a man who did in England what Bernhardiand Treitschke did in Germany. . . . He will symbolize the literature of hate, of malignant grandiosity, and of Jingo ambition."[19]

Kipling might have succeeded in salvaging much of his literary reputation and popular appeal had he been content to confine his political opinions to essays and articles. Instead, with few exceptions, he chose to express his ideas as he had always done, through the medium of fiction and verse. His reasons for doing so are not clear. Perhaps he

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[17]"Mr. Rudyard Kipling," The Sketch, July 30, 1913, p. 17.

[18]Carrington, p. 341.

[19]"Four Literary Portraits," quoted in The Kipling Journal, October, 1930, pp. 78-79.

believed he could entertain his readers while simultaneously preaching at them. Possibly he was convinced that his popularity (still considerable with the general public) as a novelist, poet, and story teller would assure his views a wider audience if they were presented under the guise of fiction.

Unfortunately, however, Kipling's talent was not equal to the challenge. The attempt to combine literature with politics proved a failure, or at best only a very limited success. "An audience slipping away or turning their backs is everywhere apparent," wrote one critic in 1904.[20] A review of Kipling's Traffics and Discoveries, the book that included "The Army of a Dream" carried the comment: "He shouts, he occasionally deafens us, but he has ceased to impress."[21]

There is no doubt that the quality of Kipling's work fell off sharply after 1899. His last long and purely non-political work was the popular romance Kim, published in 1901. The following year, in a highly critical essay entitled "The Writer Who Does Not Care,"[22] Frank Moore Colby observed

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[20] Masterman, "After the Reaction," Contemporary Review.

[21] Review, Traffics and Discoveries The Academy, LXVII (1904), 311.

[22] Bookman (New York), XV (1902), 85-87.

that Kipling's answer to the public's demand for more books like Kim had been to undertake "the conduct of the British government through the agency of bad verse. The Islanders may be true and statesmanlike, and rifle clubs may be founded on the strength of it, and cricketers may hang their heads for shame." But from the point of view of literature, Colby declared, it is Kipling at his worst. "As literary pleasure-lovers, his readers have a right to complain. Bother his prophecies and devil take his reforms and all those ballads with a purpose. . . ." Kipling, Colby thought, should forget crusades and devote himself exclusively to literature. He should give up politics, Colby went on, if only because his influence on the political life of the British nation is so slight as to be totally negligible. "Beyond stirring up rows and coining some quotable phrases, what has he done for politics these last few years? [As] . . . a counselor of nations [he is] always certain beyond human certainty, and almost always wrong."

Colby's advice was ignored. Neither his own failures, or the savage personal attacks by the critics persuaded Kipling from the path he had deliberately chosen. Colby himself had admitted with grudging respect: "He will not repent, or conform, or edit himself, or study how to please. But there is about him a sort of surly sincerity even at his

worst. . . . Whatever his sins are, they are not sins of subservience. . . ."[23] Faced with a choice between literature and politics, Kipling decided on politics, with the result that for many years he wrote little more than a vituperative journalism, whose interest to-day is almost solely confined to the student of history. In 1914, two months before England declared war on Germany, another critic, echoing Colby's judgment twelve years earlier, found a sad contrast between the mediocre quality of Kipling's writings after 1900, and "the magnificent achievements of his genius in the inspired days before the Moth and the Rust entered in and corrupted it."[24]

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Gribble, "Rudyard Kipling," Everyman.

CHAPTER XV

A CONCLUSION

Was Kipling a militarist? There is reason to believe that it was only his poor vision which prevented him from making a career out of the army.[1] Throughout his writings, both before the Boer War and afterwards, there is seldom absent the shrill note of the drill sergeant. It appears, perhaps most typically, in his jungle stories for children, when the boy Mowgli finds that while there are many laws to be learned in the jungle--

> . . . the Head of the Hoof of the Law and the haunch and the hump is---Obey![2]

In Kipling's defense, however, it may be argued that his views on the subject of conscription, if unacceptable to his contemporaries, were those of a realist. He advocated conscription because he realized that in peace time it was the one means whereby a standing army with a large reserve could be created. He would have agreed with the conclusion of the German officer in 1910, who came away from observing the volunteers of the Territorial Army to report: "The

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[1] Kipling, Something of Myself, 26, 35, 41.

[2] The Jungle Books (New York, 1948), I, 93.

young men lack the training given by compulsory service. The Territorial Army is a joke."[3] Eventually, during the First World War, in 1916, England adopted peace time conscription. It might also be noted that the year of compulsory army service that Kipling asked for in The Islanders is less than the two year requirement that exists in the United States at the present time.

An admirer of Kipling's once wrote about him that "patriotism was the passion that shaped his life."[4] The same idea was expressed by one of his detractors, who observed: "Kipling is to me a standing warning of the danger of treating the instinct of patriotism as if it were an all-sufficing virtue."[5] This was Kipling's most serious weakness. As the critic A. G. Gardiner has said, Kipling never appreciated the England of Milton and Shakespeare, the small insular England which "taught the world the meaning of liberty." He understood, Gardiner added, only "the might of England, the thunder of its battleships and the tread of its armies across the plains."[6] Kipling was in fact a poet who celebrated

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[3]Halévy, VI, 192.

[4]André Chevrillon, "Rudyard Kipling as a Frenchman Sees Him," Around the World with Rudyard Kipling (New York, 1926), p. 76.

[5]Quoted in "Kipling's Attack on the British Government," Literary Digest, XLVIII (1914), 1425-1426.

[6]"Rudyard Kipling," Prophets, Priests, and Kings, p. 325.

materialism and power. He did love England, but, as Harold Laski put it, "the England he loved was a strident and greedy Brittania, shrieking defiance of a world which did not appreciate her strength. War and its glories, power for its own sake, . . . conquest for the sake of victory, the pride of knowing no equal--these, for Mr. Kipling, were the supreme virtues."[7]

If Kipling's patriotism was malignant and dangerous, it was because it equated bigness with greatness, and measured everything in terms of military power and national security. Certainly such productions as "The Army of a Dream,"[8] and "As Easy as A.B.C.,"[9] so horrified many of his contemporaries that it became impossible for them to admit the merits of any of his views on the subject of military preparedness. His philosophy was incapable of dealing with anything more abstract than moral absolutes. He wrote in 1901: "Ye cannot in one place rule and in another bear service. Either ye must everywhere rule or everywhere obey. . . ."[10] The statement may be taken as a summary for his whole political

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[7] "Four Literary Portraits," Kipling Journal.

[8] Traffics and Discoveries.

[9] A Diversity of Creatures.

[10] "A Sahib's War," Traffics and Discoveries, p. 81.

credo: Inflexible, rigid, and dogmatic, it led him to reject anything which opposed, or appeared to oppose, national security. Its implications led him into such excesses as "Democracy is Disease,"[11] and made his recommendations for saving England in a war with Germany so outrageous that they frequently appeared more undesirable than defeat itself.

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[11] "As Easy as A.B.C." A Diversity of Creatures, p. 24.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Primary Sources

For Kipling's own writings the following books were the most useful. His autobiography, Something of Myself: For My Friends Known and Unknown (New York, 1937), was helpful for information on his political views after the Boer War. The best of his poems on imperialism are in The Seven Seas (New York, 1925), first published in 1896. A good collection of his stories about the British army before the Boer War is Soldier Stories (New York, 1927). Most of Kipling's poems on the South African War are in The Five Nations (New York, 1903). The same book includes a number of the poems which, like The Islanders, were an attempt to frighten his countrymen into accepting conscription by describing the ease with which a well trained enemy army could conquer England. Traffics and Discoveries (London, 1924), includes a number of Kipling's stories about the Boer War, and his long article "The Army of a Dream." The war stories portray the various weaknesses in the training, organization, and leadership of the British army that Kipling had observed during his visits to South Africa. "Letters to the Family," in Letters of Travel

(New York, 1912), includes Kipling's views on Empire federation and a number of his more specific criticisms of democracy. In The Years Between (London, 1923), Kipling published a collection of the poems on army reform, the Royal Navy, Empire Federation, and democracy, that he wrote between 1902 and 1918. Unless otherwise indicated, however, the source for all of the poems that have been mentioned in this thesis was Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition (New York, 1940).

The only easily available source for Kipling's speeches is A Book of Words, Selections from Speeches and Addresses Delivered between 1906 and 1927 (New York, 1928). Most of his speeches, however, were never included in book form. A guide to Kipling's uncollected speeches, with a list of the periodicals in which they were reported, appears in James Stewart's Rudyard Kipling: A Bibliographical Catalogue (Toronto, 1959).

Of the numerous editions of Kipling's works, the most complete, though expensive and difficult to obtain, is the thirty-five volume Sussex Edition of the Complete Works in Prose and Verse (London, 1938). Volume thirty of this edition, entitled Uncollected Prose, contains the stories on the South African War that were not collected by Kipling in Traffics and Discoveries.

For Kipling's letters: A list of those which have been published in periodicals or books appears in Stewart's bibliography. In the United States the largest collection of Kipling's unpublished correspondence is at the Library of Congress. The Chandler Collection and the Carpenter Collection of Kipling's letters are in the library's rare book room. Letters that Kipling wrote to Theodore Roosevelt and to Moreton Frewen are in the Roosevelt Papers and the Frewen Papers, in the library's manuscript division. Kipling's letters, especially those in the Carpenter Collection, were particularly useful in providing information for his views on army reform during the Boer War, and his reasons for advocating conscription after the War. Another good source, both for letters and uncollected speeches, was The Kipling Journal, the quarterly published in London by the Kipling Society since 1927.

For the opinions of Kipling's contemporaries about his writings, both before and after the Boer War, there are literally hundreds of articles. Some of the better ones in the 1890's, which explain his popularity and success at providing a moral rational for imperialism are: Edmund Gosse, "Rudyard Kipling," The Century Magazine, XLII (1891), 901-910; "The Literary Inspiration of Imperialism," Living Age, CCXXV (1900), 807-811; "The Poet in Politics," Review of Reviews

(London), XIX (1899), 107. The extent to which Kipling's stories about the British army before the South African War influenced the thinking of his contemporaries is discussed in: "Leading Article," The Times, March 4, 1899, p. 7; "Rudyard Kipling," Living Age, CCXX (1899), 786-788; and E. H. Mullin, "Stevenson, Kipling, and Anglo-Saxon Imperialism," Book Buyer, XVIII (1899), 85-90.

The best of the articles which make the charge that Kipling was a militarist, whose writings helped to bring on the War by presenting a false picture of the British soldier, and by encouraging the public to feel aggressive and arrogant are: Charles Masterman, "After the Reaction," Contemporary Review, LXXVI (1904), 816-820; two essays by Robert Buchanan, "The Voice of the Hooligan," Contemporary Review, LXXVI (1899), 774-776, and "The Ethics of Criticism," Contemporary Review, LXXVII (1900), 221-223. The most complete and carefully reasoned discussion of this point appears in Alfred G. Gardiner's "Rudyard Kipling," Prophets, Priests, and Kings (London, 1914).

The Islanders, beside producing numerous attacks against Kipling, encouraged a thoughtful examination of the whole question of peace time conscription in: "Mr. Kipling's Idea," The Spectator, LXXXVIII (1902), 40; and two "Leading Articles" in The Times, January 4, 1902, p. 9, and January 7, 1902, p. 7.

Other aspects of Kipling's political activities after the Boer War, particularly his campaign for peace time conscription, are dealt with in: "Traffics and Mafficks: The Strange Case of Mr. Kipling," Bookman (London), XXVII (1904), 76-78; "Reform and Mr. Kipling," The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art, XCVIII (1904), 494; "On Universal Training," The Times, September 26, 1913, p. 3; "The State of the Army," The Times, September 27, 1913, p. 5.

Kipling's preference for military security and national prestige at the expense of political democracy and individual freedom was the subject of several highly critical articles: "A Mouth of Brass," Nation (London), V (1909), 486-488; William Salter, "One Side of Kipling," The Ethical Record, October-November, 1900, pp. 11-12; "The First Faint Signs of a National Awakening," Review of Reviews (London), XXV (1902), 147-149.

Secondary Sources

The best biographical treatment of Kipling is C. E. Carrington, The Life of Rudyard Kipling (New York, 1956). The book supplies a great deal of new information about Kipling's personal life, for Carrington was the first person to be given access to the Kipling family papers. The biography, however, is chiefly devoted to a chronological

account of Kipling's life, with most of the emphasis being placed on his literary rather than on his political activities. The Kipling Journal was also used as a secondary source. The hundreds of articles about him that have been printed in the Journal were useful for facts on every phase of Kipling's career.

Concerning the military aspects of the period, a good narrative account of the South African War, with a discussion of the causes for the British defeats at the start of the War, is Rayne Kruger's Good-Bye Dolly Gray: The Story of the Boer War (New York, 1960). Kruger, who is both a South African and a distant relation of Paul Kruger, the President of the Transvaal Republic at the time of the War, has nonetheless managed to write an impartial account of the conflict as seen from both sides. For information on the British army after 1902, the most useful secondary sources were Elie Halévy's Imperialism and the Rise of Labour, 1895-1905, and The Rule of Democracy, 1905-1914, volumes five and six in his History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1961).

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