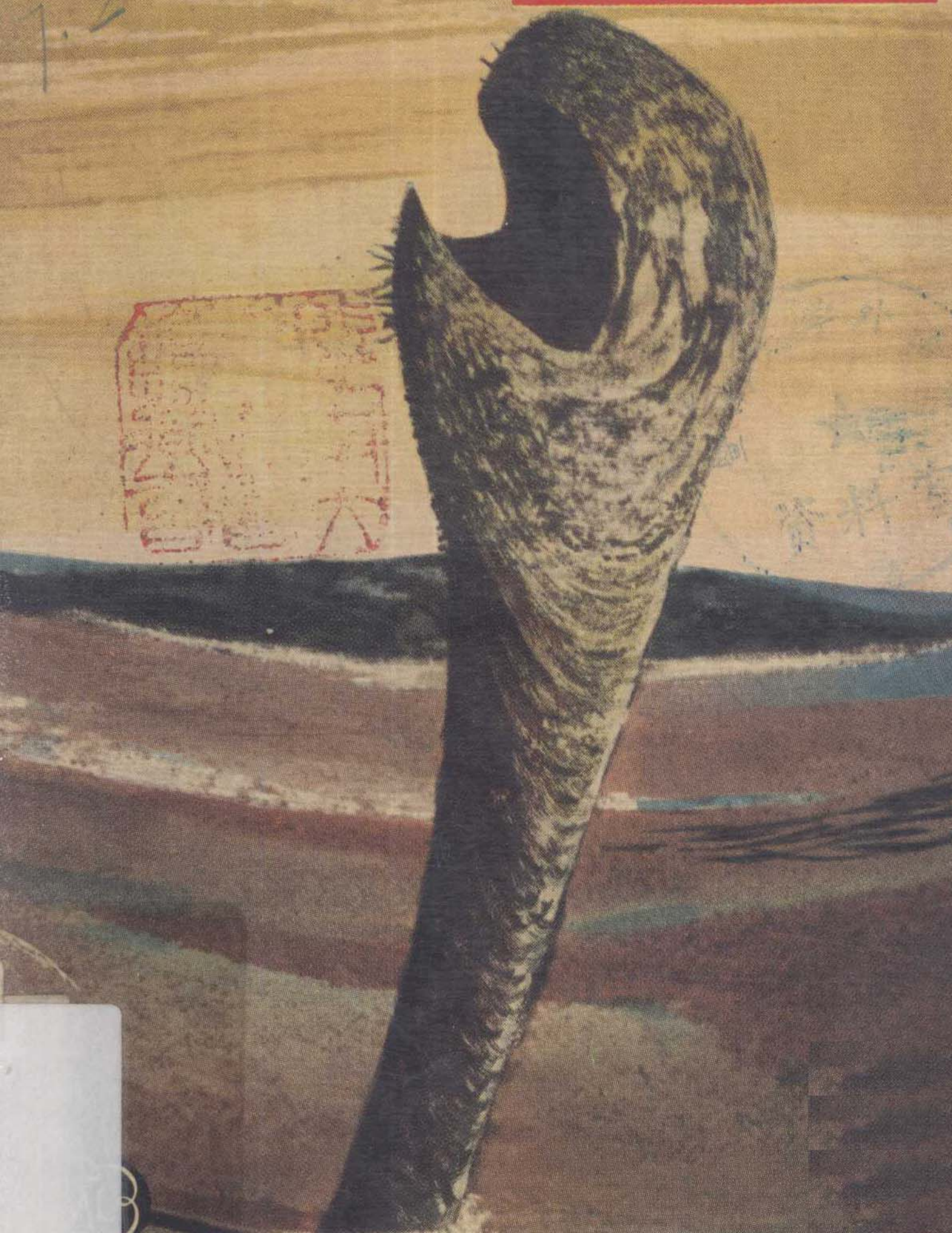


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MANY INVENTIONS

BY

RUDYARD KIPLING



'Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.' — ECCLESIASTES vii. 29.



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1964

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TO THE TRUE ROMANCE

*Thy face is far from this our war,
Our call and counter-cry,
I shall not find Thee quick and kind,
Nor know Thee till I die.
Enough for me in dreams to see
And touch Thy garments' hem:
Thy feet have trod so near to God
I may not follow them.*

Through wantonness if men profess
They weary of Thy parts,
E'en let them die at blasphemy
And perish with their arts;
But we that love, but we that prove
Thine excellence august,
While we adore discover more
Thee perfect, wise, and just.

Since spoken word Man's spirit stirred
Beyond his belly-need,
What is is Thine of fair design
In thought and craft and deed;
Each stroke aright of toil and fight,
That was and that shall be,
And hope too high wherefore we die,
Has birth and worth in Thee.

Who holds by Thee hath Heaven in fee
To gild his dross thereby,
And knowledge sure that he endure
A child until he die —
For to make plain that man's disdain
Is but new Beauty's birth —
For to possess in loneliness
The joy of all the earth.

TO THE TRUE ROMANCE

As Thou didst teach all lovers speech
 And Life her mystery,
 So shalt Thou rule by every school
 Till love and longing die,
 Who wast or yet the lights were set,
 A whisper in the Void,
 Who shalt be sung through planets young
 When this is clean destroyed.

Beyond the bounds our staring rounds,
 Across the pressing dark,
 The children wise of outer skies
 Look hitherward and mark
 A light that shifts, a glare that drifts,
 Rekindling thus and thus,
 Not all forlorn, for Thou hast borne
 Strange tales to them of us.

Time hath no tide but must abide
 The servant of Thy will;
 Tide hath no time, for to Thy rhyme
 The ranging stars stand still —
 Regent of spheres that lock our fears
 Our hopes invisible,
 Oh 'twas certes at Thy decrees
 We fashioned Heaven and Hell!

Pure Wisdom hath no certain path
 That lacks thy morning-eyne,
 And captains bold by Thee controlled
 Most like to Gods design;
 Thou art the Voice to kingly boys
 To lift them through the fight,
 And Comfortress of Unsuccess,
 To give the dead good-night —

A veil to draw 'twixt God His Law
 And Man's infirmity,
 A shadow kind to dumb and blind
 The shambles where we die;
 A sum to trick th' arithmetic
 Too base of leaguings odds,
 The spur of trust, the curb of lust,
 Thou handmaid of the Gods!

Oh Charity, all patiently
Abiding wrack and scaith!
Oh Faith, that meets ten thousand cheats
Yet drops no jot of faith!
Devil and brute Thou dost transmute
To higher, lordlier show,
Who art in sooth that utter Truth
The careless angels know!

*Thy face is far from this our war,
Our call and counter-cry,
I may not find Thee quick and kind,
Nor know Thee till I die.*

*Yet may I look with heart unshook
On blow brought home or missed —
Yet may I hear with equal ear
The clarions down the List;
Yet set my lance above mischance
And ride the barriere —
Oh, hit or miss, how little 'tis,
My Lady is not there!*

THE DISTURBER OF TRAFFIC

From the wheel and the drift of Things
Deliver us, good Lord;
And we will meet the wrath of kings
The faggot, and the sword.

Lay not Thy toil before our eyes,
Nor vex us with Thy wars,
Lest we should feel the straining skies
O'ertrod by trampling stars.

A veil 'twixt us and Thee, dread Lord,
A veil 'twixt us and Thee:
Lest we should hear too clear, too clear,
And unto madness see!

The Prayer of Miriam Cohen.

THE Brothers of the Trinity order that none unconnected with their service shall be found in or on one of their Lights during the hours of darkness; but their servants can be made to think otherwise. If you are fair-spoken and take an interest in their duties, they will allow you to sit with them through the long night and help to scare the ships into mid-Channel.

Of the English south-coast Lights, that of St. Cecilia-under-the-Cliff is the most powerful, for it guards a very foggy coast. When the sea-mist veils all, St. Cecilia turns a hooded head to the sea and sings a song of two words once every minute. From the land that song resembles the bellowing of a brazen bull; but off-shore they understand, and the steamers grunt gratefully in answer.

Fenwick, who was on duty one night, lent me a pair of black glass spectacles, without which no man can look at the Light unblinded, and busied himself in last touches to the lenses before twilight fell. The width of the English Channel beneath us lay as smooth and as many-coloured as the inside of an

oyster-shell. A little Sunderland cargo-boat had made her signal to Lloyd's Agency, half a mile up the coast, and was lumbering down to the sunset, her wake lying white behind her. One star came out over the cliffs, the waters turned to lead colour, and St. Cecilia's Light shot out across the sea in eight long pencils that wheeled slowly from right to left, melted into one beam of solid light laid down directly in front of the tower, dissolved again into eight, and passed away. The light-frame of the thousand lenses circled on its rollers, and the compressed-air engine that drove it hummed like a blue-bottle under a glass. The hand of the indicator on the wall pulsed from mark to mark. Eight pulse-beats timed one half-revolution of the Light; neither more nor less.

Fenwick checked the first few revolutions carefully; he opened the engine's feed-pipe a trifle, looked at the racing governor, and again at the indicator, and said: 'She'll do for the next few hours. We've just sent our regular engine to London, and this spare one's not by any manner so accurate.'

'And what would happen if the compressed air gave out?' I asked.

'We'd have to turn the flash by hand, keeping an eye on the indicator. There's a regular crank for that. But it hasn't happened yet. We'll need all our compressed air to-night.'

'Why?' said I. I had been watching him for not more than a minute.

'Look,' he answered, and I saw that the dead sea-mist had risen out of the lifeless sea and wrapped us while my back had been turned. The pencils of the Light marched staggeringly across tilted floors of white cloud. From the balcony round the light-room the white walls of the lighthouse ran down into swirling, smoking space. The noise of the tide coming in very lazily over the rocks was choked down to a thick drawl.

'That's the way our sea-fogs come,' said Fenwick, with an air of ownership. 'Hark, now, to that little fool calling out 'fore he's hurt.'

Something in the mist was bleating like an indignant calf; it might have been half a mile or half a hundred miles away.

‘Does he suppose we’ve gone to bed?’ continued Fenwick. ‘You’ll hear us talk to him in a minute. He knows puffickly where he is, and he’s carrying on to be told like if he was insured.’

‘Who is “he”?’

‘That Sunderland boat, o’ course. Ah!’

I could hear a steam-engine hiss down below in the mist where the dynamos that fed the Light were clacking together. Then there came a roar that split the fog and shook the lighthouse.

‘GIT-toot!’ blared the fog-horn of St. Cecilia. The bleating ceased.

‘Little fool!’ Fenwick repeated. Then, listening: ‘Blest if that aren’t another of them! Well, well, they always say that a fog do draw the ships of the sea together. They’ll be calling all night, and so’ll the siren. We’re expecting some tea-ships up-Channel. . . . If you put my coat on that chair, you’ll feel more so-fash, sir.’

It is no pleasant thing to thrust your company upon a man for the night. I looked at Fenwick, and Fenwick looked at me; each gauging the other’s capacities for boring and being bored. Fenwick was an old, clean-shaven, gray-haired man who had followed the sea for thirty years, and knew nothing of the land except the lighthouse in which he served. He fenced cautiously to find out the little that I knew and talked down to my level, till it came out that I had met a captain in the merchant service who had once commanded a ship in which Fenwick’s son had served; and further, that I had seen some places that Fenwick had touched at. He began with a dissertation on pilotage in the Hugli. I had been privileged to know a Hugli pilot intimately. Fenwick had only seen the imposing and masterful breed from a ship’s chains, and his intercourse had been cut down to ‘Quarter less five,’ and remarks of a strictly business-like nature. Hereupon he ceased to talk down to me, and became so amazingly technical that I was forced to beg him to explain every other sentence. This set him fully at his ease; and then we spoke as men together, each too interested to think of anything

except the subject in hand. And that subject was wrecks, and voyages, and old-time trading, and ships cast away in desolate seas, steamers we both had known, their merits and demerits, lading, Lloyd's, and, above all, Lights. The talk always came back to Lights: Lights of the Channel; Lights on forgotten islands, and men forgotten on them; Light-ships — two months' duty and one month's leave — tossing on kinked cables in ever troubled tideways; and Lights that men had seen where never lighthouse was marked on the charts.

Omitting all those stories, and omitting also the wonderful ways by which he arrived at them, I tell here, from Fenwick's mouth, one that was not the least amazing. It was delivered in pieces between the roller-skate rattle of the revolving lenses, the bellowing of the fog-horn below, the answering calls from the sea, and the sharp tap of reckless night-birds that flung themselves at the glasses. It concerned a man called Dowse, once an intimate friend of Fenwick, now a waterman at Portsmouth, believing that the guilt of blood is on his head, and finding no rest either at Portsmouth or Gosport Hard.

... 'And if anybody was to come to you and say, "I know the Javva currents," don't you listen to him; for those currents is never yet known to mortal man. Sometimes they're here, sometimes they're there, but they never runs less than five knots through and among those islands of the Eastern Archipelagus. There's reverse currents in the Gulf of Boni — and that's up north in Celebes — that no man can explain; and through all those Javva passages from the Bali Narrows, Dutch Gut, and Ombay, which I take it is the safest, they chop and they change, and they banks the tides first on one shore and then on another, till your ship's tore in two. I've come through the Bali Narrows, stern first, in the heart o' the south-east monsoon, with a sou'-sou'-west wind blowing atop of the northerly flood, and our skipper said he wouldn't do it again, not for all Jamrach's. You've heard o' Jamrach's, sir?'

'Yes; and was Dowse stationed in the Bali Narrows?' I said.

'No; he was not at Bali, but much more east o' them passages,

and that's Flores Straits, at the east end o' Flores. It's all on the way south to Australia when you're running through that Eastern Archipelagus. Sometimes you go through Bali Narrows if you're full-powered, and sometimes through Flores Straits, so as to stand south at once, and fetch round Timor, keeping well clear o' the Sahul Bank. Elseways, if you aren't full-powered, why it stands to reason you go round by the Ombay Passage, keeping careful to the north side. You understand that, sir?'

I was not full-powered, and judged it safer to keep to the north side — of Silence.

'And on Flores Straits, in the fairway between Adonare Island and the mainland, they put Dowse in charge of a screw-pile Light called the Wurlee Light. It's less than a mile across the head of Flores Straits. Then it opens out to ten or twelve miles of Solor Straits, and then it narrows again to a three-mile gut, with a topplin' flamin' volcano by it. That's old Loby Toby by Loby Toby Straits, and if you keep his Light and the Wurlee Light in a line you won't take much harm, not on the darkest night. That's what Dowse told me, and I can well believe him, knowing those seas myself; but you must ever be mindful of the currents. And there they put Dowse, since he was the only man that that Dutch Government which owns Flores could find that would go to Wurlee and tend a fixed Light. Mostly they uses Dutch and Italians; Englishmen being said to drink when alone. I never could rightly find out what made Dowse accept of that position, but accept he did, and used to sit for to watch the tigers come out of the forests to hunt for crabs and such-like round about the lighthouse at low tide. The water was always warm in those parts, as I know well, and uncommon sticky, and it ran with the tides as thick and smooth as hogwash in a trough. There was another man along with Dowse in the Light, but he wasn't rightly a man. He was a Kling. No, nor yet a Kling he wasn't, but his skin was in little flakes and cracks all over, from living so much in the salt water as was his usual custom. His hands was all webby-foot, too. He was called, I remember Dowse saying now, an Orange-Lord, on account of his habits. You've heard of an Orange-Lord, sir?'

‘Orang-Laut?’ I suggested.

‘That’s the name,’ said Fenwick, smacking his knee. ‘An Orang-Laut, of course, and his name was Challong; what they call a sea-gypsy. Dowse told me that that man, long hair and all, would go swimming up and down the Straits just for something to do; running down on one tide and back again with the other, swimming side-stroke, and the tides going tremenjus strong. Elseways he’d be skipping about the beach along with the tigers at low tide, for he was most part a beast; or he’d sit in a little boat praying to old Loby Toby of an evening when the volcano was spitting red at the south end of the Straits. Dowse told me that he wasn’t a companionable man, like you and me might have been to Dowse.

‘Now I can never rightly come at what it was that began to ail Dowse after he had been there a year or something less. He was saving of all his pay and tending to his Light, and now and again he’d have a fight with Challong and tip him off the Light into the sea. Then, he told me, his head began to feel streaky from looking at the tides so long. He said there was long streaks of white running inside it; like wall-paper that hadn’t been properly pasted up, he said. The streaks, they would run with the tides, north and south, twice a day, accordin’ to them currents, and he’d lie down on the planking — it was a screw-pile Light — with his eye to a crack and watch the water streaking through the piles just so quiet as hogwash. He said the only comfort he got was at slack water. Then the streaks in his head went round and round like a sampan in a tide-rip; but that was heaven, he said, to the other kind of streaks, — the straight ones that looked like arrows on a wind-chart, but much more regular, and that was the trouble of it. No more he couldn’t ever keep his eyes off the tides that ran up and down so strong, but as soon as ever he looked at the high hills standing all along Flores Straits for rest and comfort his eyes would be pulled down like to the nesty streaky water; and when they once got there he couldn’t pull them away again till the tide changed. He told me all this himself, speaking just as though he was talking of somebody else.’