

WORDSWORTH CLASSICS

# *The Man Who Would be King & Other Stories*

RUDYARD KIPLING



# THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING

*and other stories*

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Rudyard Kipling



WORDSWORTH CLASSICS

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## INTRODUCTION

*The Man who would be King* (1889) is one of Rudyard Kipling's most famous short stories and was originally published in a volume entitled *The Phantom 'Rickshaw*. The shrewd and opportunistic white trader, Daniel Dravot, escaping the bonds of the British raj, sets himself up as a god and king of the primitive tribesmen of Kafiristan, which status and kingdom he shares with his renegade, vagabond companion, Peachey Carnehan. Throughout *The Man who would be King* there are strong echoes of the exploits of Sir James (Rajah) Brooke, the pacifier of Borneo, and later the Rajah of Sarawak. The pair succeed with their regal ambitions for a time, using their undoubted guile and the skills of diplomacy, tactics and disguise learnt in the world from which they come. However, for how long can the two adventurers maintain the fiction? Will they over-reach themselves in their quest for total obedience from the Kafiristani tribesmen? What will befall them if the thin thread of their subjects' credulity gives way under the strains of their ever-increasing claims and demands? These are the questions to which Kipling so thrillingly and ingeniously provides the answers. Among other famous short stories in this anthology of Kipling's best tales are: *Only a Subaltern*, *The Phantom 'Rickshaw*, *Wee Willie Winkie*, and *Baa Baa, Black Sheep*, the reading of which plays an essential part in the understanding of Kipling and his works.

Rudyard Joseph Kipling was born in Bombay on 30th December 1865, the son of the artist John Lockwood Kipling and Alice Kipling (*née* Macdonald), the sister-in-law of artist Edward Burne-Jones. In 1871 he was taken with his sister, Alice Macdonald Kipling ('Trix'), to England to board at Lorne Lodge in Southsea, where he endured five miserable years which he looked back on with deep bitterness. In January 1878 he went to the newly founded United Services College at Westward Ho!, near Bideford in Devon, which he described in *Stalky & Co.* in which

he cast himself as 'the egregious Beetle'. In 1880 he met and fell in love with Florence Garrard who boarded with his sister at Southsea and on whom he was to model Maisie in *The Light that Failed*. He became editor of the *United Services College Chronicle* in 1881. He left school in the summer of 1882 and set sail for India on 20th September. He arrived in Bombay on 18th October to begin work on the *Lahore Civil and Military Gazette*, writing stories as well as news. In 1889, shortly after publication of *Plain Tales from the Hills* and *Soldiers Three*, he returned to London where he became a literary success following publication of *The Light that Failed* (1890) and *Barrack Room Ballads* (1892). That year he married an American, Caroline Ballestier, and moved with her to Vermont where they lived for four years, during which time he wrote *The Jungle Book*. The Kiplings returned to England in 1896 and settled in Sussex, which forms the background for *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) and *Rewards and Fairies* (1910). Other children's books such as *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *Just-So Stories* (1902) were written for Kipling's two children. John Kipling, his son, was reported missing on his first day in action with the Irish Guards at the battle of Loos on 27th September 1915. His body has only recently been identified and placed in a marked grave. A sense of bitter emptiness entered Kipling's work after this tragedy. He became a member the Imperial War Graves Commission in 1917. He refused to accept the Poet Laureateship and other civil honours. However, he was the recipient of honorary degrees from the universities of Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, McGill, Oxford, the Sorbonne and Strasbourg, and he was the first Englishman to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature (1907). He died on 18th January 1936. His autobiographical fragment, *Something of Myself for My Friends Known and Unknown*, was published posthumously in 1937.

#### FURTHER READING

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C. E. Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work* 1955; 3rd edition, revised 1978

S. S. Husain, *Kipling and India* 1965

R. Kipling, *Something of Myself* 1937

G. Orwell, *Rudyard Kipling* 1942 (available in *The Decline of the English Murder & Other Essays*, Penguin 1965)

A. Wilson, *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling* 1977

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THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING  
*and other stories*





# *The Education of Otis Yeere*

## ONE

In the pleasant orchard-closes  
'God bless all our gains,' say we,  
But 'May God bless all our losses,'  
Better suits with our degree.

*The Lost Bower*

THIS IS THE HISTORY of a failure; but the woman who failed said that it might be an instructive tale to put into print for the benefit of the younger generation. The younger generation does not want instruction, being perfectly willing to instruct if anyone will listen to it. None the less, here begins the story where every right-minded story should begin, that is to say at Simla, where all things begin and many come to an evil end.

The mistake was due to a very clever woman making a blunder and not retrieving it. Men are licensed to stumble, but a clever woman's mistake is outside the regular course of Nature and Providence; since all good people know that a woman is the only infallible thing in this world, except Government Paper of the '79 issue, bearing interest at four and a half per cent. Yet, we have to remember that six consecutive days of rehearsing the leading part of *The Fallen Angel*, at the New Gaiety Theatre where the plaster is not yet properly dry, might have brought about an unhingement of spirits which, again, might have led to eccentricities.

Mrs Hauksbee came to 'The Foundry' to tiffin with Mrs Mallowe, her one bosom friend, for she was in no sense 'a woman's woman.' And it was a woman's tiffin, the door shut to all the world; and they both talked *chiffons*, which is French for Mysteries.

'I've enjoyed an interval of sanity,' Mrs Hauksbee announced, after tiffin was over and the two were comfortably settled in the little writing-room that opened out of Mrs Mallowe's bedroom.

'My dear girl, what has *he* done?' said Mrs Mallowe sweetly. It is noticeable that ladies of a certain age call each other 'dear girl,' just as commissioners of twenty-eight years' standing address their equals in the Civil List as 'my boy.'

'There's no *he* in the case. Who am I that an imaginary man should be always credited to me? Am I an Apache?'

'No, dear, but somebody's scalp is generally drying at your wigwam-door. Soaking rather.'

This was an allusion to the Hawley Boy, who was in the habit of riding all across Simla in the Rains, to call on Mrs Hauksbee. That lady laughed.

'For my sins, the Aide at Tyrconnel last night told me off to The Mussuck. Hsh! Don't laugh. One of my most devoted admirers. When the duff came – someone really ought to teach them to make puddings at Tyrconnel – The Mussuck was at liberty to attend to me.'

'Sweet soul! I know his appetite,' said Mrs Mallowe. 'Did he, oh *did* he, begin his wooing?'

'By a special mercy of Providence, *no*. He explained his importance as a Pillar of the Empire. I didn't laugh.'

'Lucy, I don't believe you.'

'Ask Captain Sangar; he was on the other side. Well, as I was saying, The Mussuck dilated.'

'I think I can see him doing it,' said Mrs Mallowe pensively, scratching her fox-terrier's ears.

'I was properly impressed. Most properly. I yawned openly. "Strict supervision, and play them off one against the other," said The Mussuck, shovelling down his ice by *tureenfuls*, I assure you. "*That*, Mrs Hauksbee, is the secret of our Government."

Mrs Mallowe laughed long and merrily. 'And what did you say?'

'Did you ever know me at loss for an answer yet? I said: "So I have observed in my dealings with you." The Mussuck swelled with pride. He is coming to call on me tomorrow. The Hawley Boy is coming too.'

'"Strict supervision and play them off one against the other. *That*, Mrs Hauksbee, is the secret of *our* Government." And I daresay if we could get to The Mussuck's heart, we should find that he considers himself a man of the world.'

'As he is of the other two things. I like The Mussuck, and I won't have you call him names. He amuses me.'

'He has reformed you, too, by what appears. Explain the interval of sanity, and hit Tim on the nose with the paper-cutter, please. That dog is too fond of sugar. Do you take milk in yours?'

'No, thanks. Polly, I'm wearied of this life. It's hollow.'

'Turn religious, then. I always said that Rome would be your fate.'

'Only exchanging half-a-dozen *attachés* in red for one in black, and if I fasted, the wrinkles would come, and never, *never* go. Has it ever struck you, dear, that I'm getting old?'

'Thanks for your courtesy. I'll return it. Ye-es, we are both not

exactly – how shall I put it?’

‘What we have been. “I feel it in my bones,” as Mrs Crossley says. Polly, I’ve wasted my life.’

‘As how?’

‘Never mind how. I feel it. I want to be a Power before I die.’

‘Be a Power then. You’ve wits enough for anything – and beauty!’

Mrs Hauksbee pointed a teaspoon straight at her hostess. ‘Polly, if you heap compliments on me like this, I shall cease to believe that you’re a woman. Tell me how I am to be a Power.’

‘Inform The Mussuck that he is the most fascinating and slimmest man in Asia, and he’ll tell you anything and everything you please.’

‘Bother The Mussuck! I mean an intellectual Power – not a gas-power. Polly, I’m going to start a *salon*.’

Mrs Mallowe turned lazily on the sofa and rested her head on her hand. ‘Hear the words of the Preacher, the son of Baruch,’ she said.

‘Will you talk sensibly?’

‘I will, dear, for I see that you are going to make a mistake.’

‘I never made a mistake in my life – at least, never one that I couldn’t explain away afterwards.’

‘Going to make a mistake,’ went on Mrs Mallowe composedly. ‘It is impossible to start a *salon* in Simla. A bar would be much more to the point.’

‘Perhaps, but why? It seems so easy.’

‘Just what makes it so difficult. How many clever women are there in Simla?’

‘Myself and yourself,’ said Mrs Hauksbee, without a moment’s hesitation.

‘Modest woman! Mrs Feardon would thank you for that. And how many clever men?’

‘Oh – er – hundreds,’ said Mrs Hauksbee vaguely.

‘What a fatal blunder! Not one. They are all bespoke by the Government. Take my husband, for instance. Jack *was* a clever man, though I say so who shouldn’t. Government has eaten him up. All his ideas and powers of conversation – he really used to be a good talker, even to his wife, in the old days – are taken from him by this – this kitchen-sink of a Government. That’s the case with every man up here who is at work. I don’t suppose a Russian convict under the knout is able to amuse the rest of his gang; and all our men-folk here are gilded convicts.’

‘But there are scores –’

‘I know what you’re going to say. Scores of idle men up on leave. I admit it, but they are all of two objectionable sets. The Civilian who’d

be delightful if he had the military man's knowledge of the world and style, and the military man who'd be adorable if he had the Civilian's culture.'

'Detestable word! *Have* Civilians culchaw? I never studied the breed deeply.'

'Don't make fun of Jack's Service. Yes. They're like the teapoys in the Lakka Bazar – good material but not polished. They can't help themselves, poor dears. A Civilian only begins to be tolerable after he has knocked about the world for fifteen years.'

'And a military man?'

'When he has had the same amount of service. The young of both species are horrible. You would have scores of them in your *salon*.'

'I would *not*!' said Mrs Hauksbee fiercely. 'I would tell the bearer to *darwaza band* them. I'd put their own colonels and commissioners at the door to turn them away. I'd give them to the Topsham Girl to play with.'

'The Topsham Girl would be grateful for the gift. But to go back to the *salon*. Allowing that you had gathered all your men and women together, what would you do with them? Make them talk? They would all with one accord begin to flirt. Your *salon* would become a glorified Peliti's – a "Scandal Point" by lamplight.'

'There's a certain amount of wisdom in that view.'

'There's all the wisdom in the world in it. Surely, twelve Simla seasons ought to have taught you that you can't focus anything in India; and a *salon*, to be any good at all, must be permanent. In two seasons your roomful would be scattered all over Asia. We are only little bits of dirt on the hillsides – here one day and blown down the *khud* the next. We have lost the art of talking – at least our men have. We have no cohesion –'

'George Eliot in the flesh,' interpolated Mrs Hauksbee wickedly.

'And collectively, my dear scoffer, we, men and women alike, have *no* influence. Come into the verandah and look at the Mall'

The two looked down on the now rapidly filling road, for all Simla was abroad to steal a stroll between a shower and a fog.

'How do you propose to fix that river? Look! There's The Mussuck – head of goodness knows what. He is a power in the land, though he *does* eat like a coster-monger. There's Colonel Blone, and General Grucher, and Sir Dugald Delane, and Sir Henry Haughton, and Mr Jellalatty. All Heads of Departments, and all powerful.'

'And all my fervent admirers,' said Mrs Hauksbee piously. 'Sir Henry Haughton raves about me. But go on.'

'One by one, these men are worth something. Collectively, they're

just a mob of Anglo-Indians. Who cares for what Anglo-Indians say? Your *salon* won't weld the Departments together and make you mistress of India, dear. And these creatures won't talk administrative "shop" in a crowd – your *salon* – because they are so afraid of the men in the lower ranks overhearing it. They have forgotten what of Literature and Art they ever knew, and the women –'

'Can't talk about anything except the last Gymkhana, or the sins of their last nurse. I was calling on Mrs Derwills this morning.'

'You admit that? They can talk to the subalterns though, and the subalterns can talk to them. Your *salon* would suit their views admirably, if you respected the religious prejudices of the country and provided plenty of *kala juggahs*.'

'Plenty of *kala juggahs*. Oh my poor little idea! *Kala juggahs* in a *salon*! But who made you so awfully clever?'

'Perhaps I've tried myself; or perhaps I know a woman who has. I have preached and expounded the whole matter and the conclusion thereof –'

'You needn't go on. "Is Vanity." Polly, I thank you. These vermin' – Mrs Hauksbee waved her hand from the verandah to two men in the crowd below who had raised their hats to her – 'these vermin shall not rejoice in a new Scandal Point or an extra Peliti's. I will abandon the notion of a *salon*. It did seem so tempting, though. But what shall I do? I must do something.'

'Why? Are not Abana and Pharpar –'

'Jack has made you nearly as bad as himself! I want to, of course. I'm tired of everything and everybody, from a moonlight picnic at Seepee to the blandishments of The Mussuck.'

'Yes – that comes, too, sooner or later. Have you nerve enough to make your bow yet?'

Mrs Hauksbee's mouth shut grimly. Then she laughed. 'I think I see myself doing it. Big pink placards on the Mall. "Mrs Hauksbee! Positively her last appearance on *any* stage! This is to give notice!" No more dances; no more rides, no more luncheons; no more theatricals with supper to follow; no more sparring with one's dearest, dearest friend; no more fencing with an inconvenient man who hasn't wit enough to clothe what he's pleased to call his sentiments in passable speech; no more parading of The Mussuck while Mrs Tarkass calls all round Simla, spreading horrible stories about me! No more of anything that is thoroughly wearying, abominable and detestable, but, all the same, makes life worth the having. Yes! I see it all! Don't interrupt, Polly, I'm inspired. A mauve and white striped "cloud" round my excellent shoulders, a seat in the fifth row of the Gaiety, and *both* horses

sold. Delightful vision! A comfortable arm-chair, situated in three different draughts, at every ballroom; and nice, large, sensible shoes for all the couples to stumble over as they go into the verandah! Then at supper. Can't you imagine the scene? The greedy mob gone away. Reluctant subaltern, pink all over like a newly-powdered baby, – they really ought to *tan* subalterns before they are exported, Polly, – sent back by the hostess to do his duty. Slouches up to me across the room, tugging at a glove two sizes too large for him – I *hate* a man who wears gloves like overcoats – and trying to look as if he'd thought of it from the first. "May I ah-have the pleasure 'f takin' you 'nt' supper?" Then I get up with a hungry smile. Just like this.'

'Lucy, how *can* you be so absurd?'

'And sweep out on his arm. So! After supper I shall go away early, you know, because I shall be afraid of catching cold. No one will look for my 'rickshaw. *Mine*, so please you! I shall stand, always with that mauve and white "cloud" over my head, while the wet soaks into my dear, old, venerable feet, and Tom swears and shouts for the *mem-sabib's gharri*. Then home to bed at half-past eleven! Truly excellent life – helped out by the visits of the *Padri*, just fresh from burying somebody down below there.' She pointed through the pines toward the Cemetery, and continued with vigorous dramatic gesture –

'Listen! I see it all – down, down even to the stays! *Such* stays! Six-eight a pair, Polly, with red flannel – or list, is it? – that they put into the tops of those fearful things. I can draw you a picture of them.'

'Lucy, for Heaven's sake, don't go waving your arms about in that idiotic manner! Recollect everyone can see you from the Mall.'

'Let them see! They'll think I am rehearsing for *The Fallen Angel*. Look! There's the Mussuck. How badly he rides. There!'

She blew a kiss to the venerable Indian administrator with infinite grace.

'Now,' she continued, 'he'll be chaffed about that at the Club in the delicate manner those brutes of men affect, and the Hawley Boy will tell me all about it – softening the details for fear of shocking me. That boy is too good to live, Polly. I've serious thoughts of recommending him to throw up his commission and go into the Church. In his present frame of mind he would obey me. Happy, happy child!'

'Never again,' said Mrs Mallowe, with an affectation of indignation, 'shall you tiffin here! "Lucindy your behaviour is scand'lus."'

'All your fault,' retorted Mrs Hauksbee, 'for suggesting such a thing as my abdication. No! *jamais!* nevaire! I will act, dance, ride, frivol, talk scandal, dine out, and appropriate the legitimate captives of any woman I choose, until I d-r-r-rop, or a better woman than I puts me to shame

before all Simla, – and it's dust and ashes in my mouth while I'm doing it'

She swept into the drawing-room. Mrs Mallowe followed and put an arm round her waist.

'I'm *not*!' said Mrs Hauksbee defiantly, rummaging for her handkerchief. 'I've been dining out the last ten nights, and rehearsing in the afternoon. You'd be tired yourself. It's only because I'm tired.'

Mrs Mallowe did not offer Mrs Hauksbee any pity or ask her to lie down, but gave her another cup of tea, and went on with the talk.

'I've been through that too, dear,' she said.

'I remember,' said Mrs Hauksbee, a gleam of fun on her face. 'In '84, wasn't it? You went out a great deal less next season.'

Mrs Mallowe smiled in a superior and Sphinx-like fashion.

'I became an Influence,' said she.

'Good gracious, child, you didn't join the Theosophists and kiss Buddha's big toe, did you? I tried to get into their set once, but they cast me out for a sceptic – without a chance of improving my poor little mind, too.'

No, I didn't Theosophilander. Jack says –'

'Never mind Jack. What a husband says is known before. What did you do?'

I made a lasting impression.'

'So have I – for four months. But that didn't console me in the least. I hated the man. *Will* you stop smiling in that inscrutable way and tell me what you mean?'

Mrs Mallowe told.

'And – you – mean – to – say that it is absolutely Platonic on both sides?'

'Absolutely, or I should never have taken it up.'

'And his last promotion was due to you?'

Mrs Mallowe nodded.

'And you warned him against the Topsham Girl?'

Another nod.

'And told him of Sir Dugald Delane's private memo about him?'

A third nod.

'*Why?*'

'What a question to ask a woman! Because it amused me at first. I am proud of my property now. If I live, he shall continue to be successful. Yes, I will put him upon the straight road to Knighthood, and everything else that a man values. The rest depends upon himself.'

'Polly, you are a most extraordinary woman.'

'Not in the least. I'm concentrated, that's all. You diffuse yourself, dear; and though all Simla knows your skill in managing a team –'

'Can't you choose a prettier word?'

'*Team*, of half-a-dozen, from The Mussuck to the Hawley Boy, you gain nothing by it. Not even amusement.'

'And you?'

'Try my recipe. Take a man, not a boy, mind, but an almost mature, unattached man, and be his guide, philosopher, and friend. You'll find it *the* most interesting occupation that you ever embarked on. It can be done – you needn't look like that – because I've done it.'

'There's an element of risk about it that makes the notion attractive. I'll get such a man and say to him, "Now, understand that there must be no flirtation. Do exactly what I tell you, profit by my instruction and counsels, and all will yet be well." Is that the idea?'

'More or less,' said Mrs Mallowe, with an unfathomable smile. 'But be sure he understands.'

## TWO

Dribble-dribble – trickle-trickle –  
 What a lot of raw dust!  
 My dollie's had an accident  
 And out came all the sawdust!

*Nursery Rhyme*

SO MRS HAUKSBEЕ, in 'The Foundry' which overlooks Simla Mall, sat at the feet of Mrs Mallowe and gathered wisdom. The end of the Conference was the Great Idea upon which Mrs Hauksbee so plumed herself.

'I warn you,' said Mrs Mallowe, beginning to repent of her suggestion, 'that the matter is not half so easy as it looks. Any woman – even the Topsham Girl – can catch a man, but very, *very* few know how to manage him when caught.'

'My child,' was the answer, 'I've been a female St Simon Stylites looking down upon men for these – these years past. Ask The Mussuck whether I can manage them.'

Mrs Hauksbee departed humming, '*I'll go to him and say to him in manner most ironical.*' Mrs Mallowe laughed to herself. Then she grew suddenly sober. 'I wonder whether I've done well in advising that amusement? Lucy's a clever woman, but a thought too careless.'



A week later the two met at a Monday Pop. 'Well?' said Mrs Mallowe.

'I've caught him!' said Mrs Hauksbee: her eyes were dancing with merriment.

'Who is it, mad woman? I'm sorry I ever spoke to you about it.'

'Look between the pillars. In the third row; fourth from the end. You can see his face now. Look!'

'Otis Yeere! Of *all* the improbable and impossible people! I don't believe you.'

'Hsh! Wait till Mrs Tarkass begins murdering Milton Wellings; and I'll tell you all about it. S-s-s!' That woman's voice always reminds me of an Underground train coming into Earl's Court with the brakes on. Now listen. It is *really* Otis Yeere.'

'So I see, but does it follow that he is your property!'

'He *is*! By right of trove. I found him, lonely and unbefriended, the very next night after our talk, at the Dugald Delanes' *burra-khana*. I liked his eyes, and I talked to him. Next day he called. Next day we went for a ride together and today he's tied to my 'rickshaw-wheels hand and foot. You'll see when the concert's over. He doesn't know I'm here yet.'

'Thank goodness you haven't chosen a boy. What are you going to do with him, assuming that you've got him?'

'Assuming, indeed! Does a woman – do *I* – ever make a mistake in that sort of thing? First' – Mrs Hauksbee ticked off the items ostentatiously on her little gloved fingers – 'First, my dear, I shall dress him properly. At present his raiment is a disgrace, and he wears a dress-shirt like a crumpled sheet of the *Pioneer*. Secondly, after I have made him presentable, I shall form his manners – his morals are above reproach.'

'You seem to have discovered a great deal about him considering the shortness of your acquaintance.'

'Surely *you* ought to know that the first proof a man gives of his interest in a woman is by talking to her about his own sweet self. If the woman listens without yawning, he begins to like her. If she flatters the animal's vanity, he ends by adoring her.'

'In some cases.'

'Never mind the exceptions. I know which one you are thinking of. Thirdly, and lastly, after he is polished and made pretty, I shall, as you said, be his guide, philosopher, and friend, and he shall become a success – as great a success as your friend. I always wondered how that man got on. *Did* The Mussuck come to you with the Civil List and, dropping on one knee – no, two knees, *à la Gibbon* – hand it to you and say, "Adorable angel, choose your friend's appointment?"'