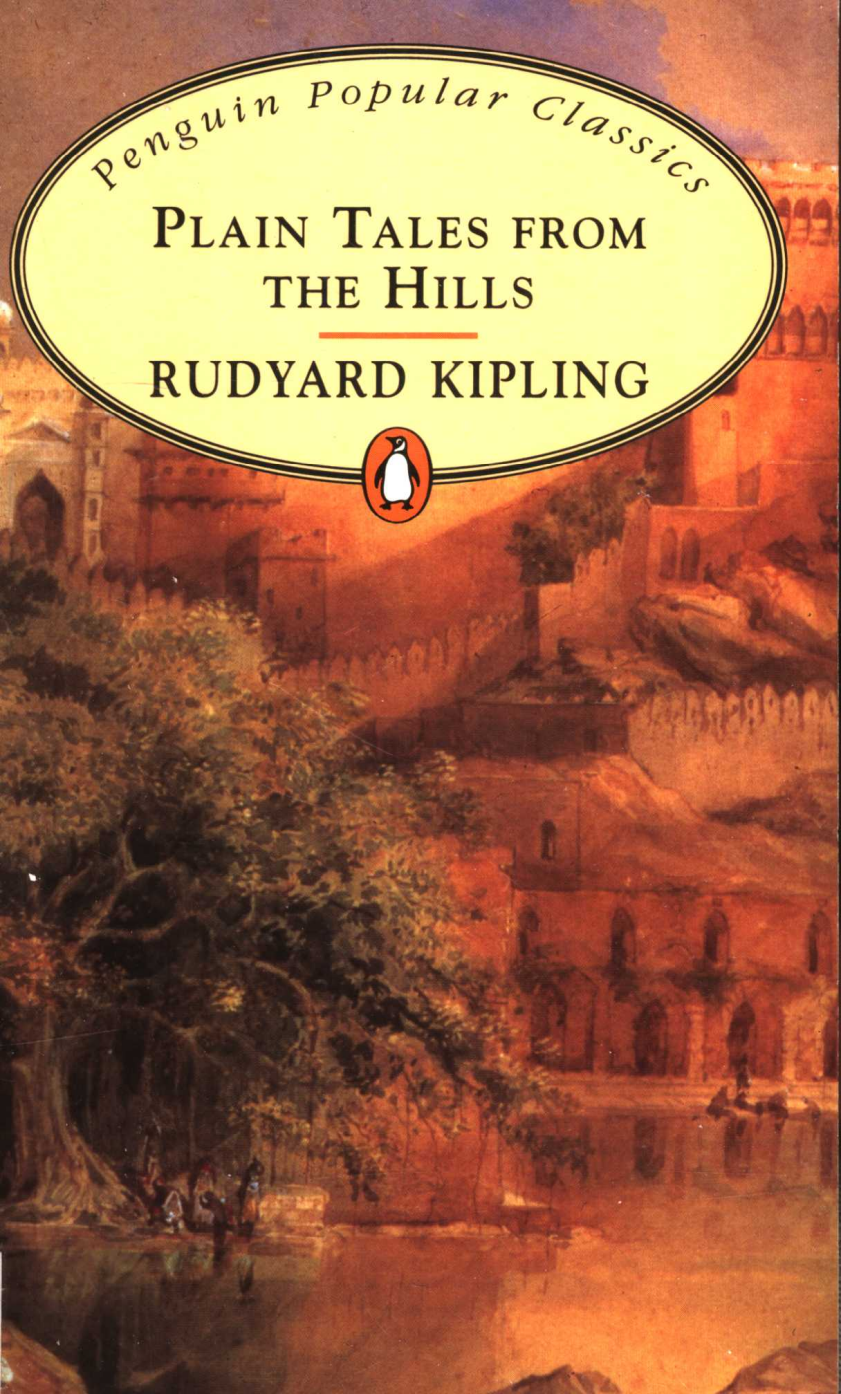


*Penguin Popular Classics*

PLAIN TALES FROM  
THE HILLS

RUDYARD KIPLING



PENGUIN POPULAR CLASSICS

PLAIN TALES FROM  
THE HILLS

RUDYARD KIPLING

PENGUIN BOOKS

## PENGUIN BOOKS

*Published by the Penguin Group*

Penguin Books Ltd, 27 Wrights Lane, London W8 5TZ, England

Penguin Putnam Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, USA

Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria, Australia

Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 10 Alcorn Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4V 3B2

Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd, Private Bag 102902, NSMC, Auckland, New Zealand

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England

First published 1888

Published in Penguin Popular Classics 1994

5 7 9 10 8 6 4

Printed in England by Cox & Wyman Ltd, Reading, Berkshire

Except in the United States of America, this book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser

# PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

BY RUDYARD KIPLING

RUDYARD KIPLING (1865-1937). Poet, short-story writer, journalist and imperialist, Rudyard Kipling remains one of the best chroniclers of the British colonial experience in India.

Born in Bombay in 1865, Rudyard Joseph Kipling was the son of John Lockwood Kipling, the author and illustrator of *Beast and Man in India*, and Alice, sister-in-law to the painter and designer Sir Edward Burne-Jones. In 1871 Kipling was brought with his younger sister to England, where he lived for five unhappy years with an elderly relative in Southsea. This period was later recalled with some bitterness in the short story *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep*. In 1878 Kipling went to study at the United Services College, a minor public school for the sons of service officers. While there he began writing verse and had a volume published privately in 1881. His series of schoolboy stories entitled *Stalky and Co* (1899) depicts his time there, with the character Beetle being something of a self-portrait. After leaving school, Kipling worked as a journalist in India from 1882 to 1889 and during this time produced a body of work - stories, sketches and poems - which had become known in England and had made him famous by the time he settled in London in 1889. *Departmental Ditties*, *Plain Tales from the Hills* and *Soldiers Three* added to Kipling's growing reputation. His second collection of poems, *Barrack-Room Ballads*, appeared in 1892 and contained some of his most famous verse: 'Mandalay', 'Gunga Din' and 'Danny Deever'. In 1892 Kipling married Caroline Balestier, the sister of his American agent, and for the next four years they lived in Vermont. While here Kipling wrote the story for which he is best known, *The Jungle Book*, and it was published to immediate success in 1894. Kipling returned to England in 1896, finally settling at 'Bateman's' in Sussex in 1902. *Kim*, which is generally considered to be his masterpiece, was published in 1901 and was shortly followed by another of his successful books for children, *Just So*

*Stories*. Kipling still travelled widely, and he experienced war at first hand when he went to South Africa in 1900. Kipling's reports about the Boer War were startling but his strong views on violence and on strengthening imperialism antagonized the anti-imperialists at home, who accused him of jingoism and of being a war-monger. Widely regarded as the unofficial Poet Laureate (Kipling refused this accolade along with many other civil honours), in 1907 he became the first English writer to be awarded the Nobel Prize. His work became gradually more sombre as the Great War approached and this is reflected in later stories such as *A Diversity of Creatures* (1917), *Debits and Credits* (1926) and *Limits and Renewals* (1932). The death of his only son in 1915 also contributed to a new inwardness of vision. Kipling died in 1936 and is buried in Westminster Abbey. An unfinished autobiography entitled *Something of Myself* was published posthumously.

Originally published in India in the *Lahore Civil and Military Gazette* for a colonial readership, *Plain Tales from the Hills* was later revised by Kipling for English publication. Such is Kipling's skill in recreating the experience of India that Oscar Wilde commented, 'As one turns over the pages . . . one feels as if one were seated under a palm-tree reading life.'

Readers may also find the following books of interest: Kingsley Amis, *Rudyard Kipling and His World* (1975); Charles Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work* (1970); R. L. Green, *Kipling: The Critical Heritage* (1971); Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself* (1936; re-issued 1977); Harold Orel, *Rudyard Kipling: Interviews and Recollections* (1983); Norman Page, *A Kipling Companion* (1984); J. I. M. Stewart, *Rudyard Kipling* (1976); and Angus Wilson, *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling* (1977).

TO

THE WITTIEST WOMAN IN INDIA

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

## PREFACE

EIGHT-AND-TWENTY of these tales appeared originally in the *Civil and Military Gazette*. I am indebted to the kindness of the Proprietors of that paper for permission to reprint them. The remaining tales are, more or less, new.

RUDYARD KIPLING.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
Lispeth . . . . .	I
Three and—an Extra . . . . .	9
Thrown Away . . . . .	15
Miss Youghal's Sais . . . . .	27
'Yoked with an Unbeliever' . . . . .	35
False Dawn . . . . .	42
The Rescue of Pluffles . . . . .	54
Cupid's Arrows . . . . .	62
The Three Musketeers . . . . .	69
His Chance in Life . . . . .	77
Watches of the Night . . . . .	85
The Other Man . . . . .	93
Consequences . . . . .	99
The Conversion of Aurelian McGoggin . . . . .	107
The Taking of Lungtungpen . . . . .	114
A Germ-Destroyer . . . . .	122
Kidnapped . . . . .	129
The Arrest of Lieutenant Golightly . . . . .	136
In the House of Suddhoo . . . . .	144
His Wedded Wife . . . . .	155
The Broken-link Handicap . . . . .	163
Beyond the Pale . . . . .	171



	PAGE
In Error . . . . .	180
A Bank Fraud . . . . .	186
Tods' Amendment . . . . .	196
The Daughter of the Regiment . . . . .	205
In the Pride of his Youth . . . . .	213
Pig . . . . .	222
The Rout of the White Hussars . . . . .	232
The Bronckhorst Divorce-Case . . . . .	246
Venus Annodomini . . . . .	254
The Bisara of Pooree . . . . .	261
A Friend's Friend . . . . .	269
The Gate of the Hundred Sorrows . . . . .	277
The Madness of Private Ortheris . . . . .	286
The Story of Muhammad Din . . . . .	297
On the Strength of a Likeness . . . . .	302
Wressley of the Foreign Office . . . . .	310
By Word of Mouth . . . . .	318
To be Filed for Reference . . . . .	325

## Lispeth

Look, you have cast out Love ! What Gods are these  
You bid me please ?  
The Three in One, the One in Three ? Not so !  
To my own gods I go.  
It may be they shall give me greater ease  
Than your cold Christ and tangled Trinities.

*The Convert.*

SHE was the daughter of Sonoo, a Hill-man of the Himalayas, and Jadéh his wife. One year their maize failed, and two bears spent the night in their only opium poppy-field just above the Sutlej Valley on the Kotgarh side ; so, next season, they turned Christian, and brought their baby to the Mission to be baptized. The Kotgarh Chaplain christened her Elizabeth, and 'Lispeth' is the Hill or *pahari* pronunciation.

Later, cholera came into the Kotgarh Valley and carried off Sonoo and Jadéh, and Lispeth became half servant, half companion, to the wife of the then Chaplain of Kotgarh. This was after the reign of the Moravian missionaries in that place, but before Kotgarh had quite forgotten her title of 'Mistress of the Northern Hills.'

Whether Christianity improved Lispeth, or

## 2 PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

whether the gods of her own people would have done as much for her under any circumstances, I do not know ; but she grew very lovely. When a Hill-girl grows lovely, she is worth travelling fifty miles over bad ground to look upon. Lispeth had a Greek face—one of those faces people paint so often, and see so seldom. She was of a pale, ivory colour, and, for her race, extremely tall. Also, she possessed eyes that were wonderful ; and, had she not been dressed in the abominable print-cloths affected by Missions, you would, meeting her on the hillside unexpectedly, have thought her the original Diana of the Romans going out to slay.

Lispeth took to Christianity readily, and did not abandon it when she reached womanhood, as do some Hill-girls. Her own people hated her because she had, they said, become a white woman and washed herself daily ; and the Chaplain's wife did not know what to do with her. One cannot ask a stately goddess, five feet ten in her shoes, to clean plates and dishes. She played with the Chaplain's children and took classes in the Sunday School, and read all the books in the house, and grew more and more beautiful, like the Princesses in fairy tales. The Chaplain's wife said that the girl ought to take service in Simla as a nurse or something 'genteel.' But Lispeth did not want to take service. She was very happy where she was.

When travellers—there were not many in those years—came in to Kotgarh, Lispeth used to lock herself into her own room for fear they might take her away to Simla, or out into the unknown world.

One day, a few months after she was seventeen years old, Lispeth went out for a walk. She did not walk in the manner of English ladies—a mile and a half out, with a carriage-ride back again. She covered between twenty and thirty miles in her little constitutionals, all about and about, between Kotgarh and Narkunda. This time she came back at full dusk, stepping down the break-neck descent into Kotgarh with something heavy in her arms. The Chaplain's wife was dozing in the drawing-room when Lispeth came in breathing heavily and very exhausted with her burden. Lispeth put it down on the sofa, and said simply, 'This is my husband. I found him on the Bagi Road. He has hurt himself. We will nurse him, and when he is well your husband shall marry him to me.'

This was the first mention Lispeth had ever made of her matrimonial views, and the Chaplain's wife shrieked with horror. However, the man on the sofa needed attention first. He was a young Englishman, and his head had been cut to the bone by something jagged. Lispeth said she had found him down the hillside, and had brought him in. He was breathing queerly and was unconscious.

He was put to bed and tended by the Chaplain, who knew something of medicine; and Lispeth waited outside the door in case she could be useful. She explained to the Chaplain that this was the man she meant to marry; and the Chaplain and his wife lectured her severely on the impropriety of her conduct. Lispeth listened quietly, and

#### 4 PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

repeated her first proposition. It takes a great deal of Christianity to wipe out uncivilised Eastern instincts, such as falling in love at first sight. Lispeth, having found the man she worshipped, did not see why she should keep silent as to her choice. She had no intention of being sent away, either. She was going to nurse that Englishman until he was well enough to marry her. This was her programme.

After a fortnight of slight fever and inflammation, the Englishman recovered coherence and thanked the Chaplain and his wife, and Lispeth—especially Lispeth—for their kindness. He was a traveller in the East, he said—they never talked about ‘globe-trotters’ in those days, when the P. & O. fleet was young and small—and had come from Dehra Dun to hunt for plants and butterflies among the Simla hills. No one at Simla, therefore, knew anything about him. He fancied that he must have fallen over the cliff while reaching out for a fern on a rotten tree-trunk, and that his coolies must have stolen his baggage and fled. He thought he would go back to Simla when he was a little stronger. He desired no more mountaineering.

He made small haste to go away, and recovered his strength slowly. Lispeth objected to being advised either by the Chaplain or his wife; therefore the latter spoke to the Englishman, and told him how matters stood in Lispeth’s heart. He laughed a good deal, and said it was very pretty and romantic, but, as he was engaged to a girl at Home, he fancied that nothing would happen.

Certainly he would behave with discretion. He did that. Still he found it very pleasant to talk to Lispeth, and walk with Lispeth, and say nice things to her, and call her pet names while he was getting strong enough to go away. It meant nothing at all to him, and everything in the world to Lispeth. She was very happy while the fortnight lasted, because she had found a man to love.

Being a savage by birth, she took no trouble to hide her feelings, and the Englishman was amused. When he went away, Lispeth walked with him up the Hill as far as Narkunda, very troubled and very miserable. The Chaplain's wife, being a good Christian and disliking anything in the shape of fuss or scandal—Lispeth was beyond her management entirely—had told the Englishman to tell Lispeth that he was coming back to marry her. 'She is but a child, you know, and, I fear, at heart a heathen,' said the Chaplain's wife. So all the twelve miles up the Hill the Englishman, with his arm round Lispeth's waist, was assuring the girl that he would come back and marry her; and Lispeth made him promise over and over again. She wept on the Narkunda Ridge till he had passed out of sight along the Muttiani path.

Then she dried her tears and went in to Kotgarh again, and said to the Chaplain's wife, 'He will come back and marry me. He has gone to his own people to tell them so.' And the Chaplain's wife soothed Lispeth and said, 'He will come back.' At the end of two months Lispeth grew impatient, and was told that the Englishman had gone over the seas to England.

## 6 PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

She knew where England was, because she had read little geography primers ; but, of course, she had no conception of the nature of the sea, being a Hill-girl. There was an old puzzle-map of the World in the house. Lispeth had played with it when she was a child. She unearthed it again, and put it together of evenings, and cried to herself, and tried to imagine where her Englishman was. As she had no ideas of distance or steamboats her notions were somewhat wild. It would not have made the least difference had she been perfectly correct ; for the Englishman had no intention of coming back to marry a Hill-girl. He forgot all about her by the time he was butterfly-hunting in Assam. He wrote a book on the East afterwards. Lispeth's name did not appear there.

At the end of three months Lispeth made daily pilgrimage to Narkunda to see if her Englishman was coming along the road. It gave her comfort, and the Chaplain's wife finding her happier thought that she was getting over her 'barbarous and most indelicate folly.' A little later the walks ceased to help Lispeth, and her temper grew very bad. The Chaplain's wife thought this a profitable time to let her know the real state of affairs—that the Englishman had only promised his love to keep her quiet—that he had never meant anything, and that it was wrong and improper of Lispeth to think of marriage with an Englishman, who was of a superior clay, besides being promised in marriage to a girl of his own people. Lispeth said that all this was clearly impossible because he had said he loved her, and the Chaplain's wife had, with her

own lips, asserted that the Englishman was coming back.

‘How can what he and you said be untrue?’ asked Lispeth.

‘We said it as an excuse to keep you quiet, child,’ said the Chaplain’s wife.

‘Then you have lied to me,’ said Lispeth, ‘you and he?’

The Chaplain’s wife bowed her head, and said nothing. Lispeth was silent too for a little time; then she went out down the valley, and returned in the dress of a Hill-girl—infamously dirty, but without the nose-stud and ear-rings. She had her hair braided into the long pigtail, helped out with black thread, that Hill-women wear.

‘I am going back to my own people,’ said she. ‘You have killed Lispeth. There is only left old Jadéh’s daughter—the daughter of a *pakari* and the servant of *Tarka Devi*. You are all liars, you English.’

By the time that the Chaplain’s wife had recovered from the shock of the announcement that Lispeth had ‘verted to her mother’s gods the girl had gone; and she never came back.

She took to her own unclean people savagely, as if to make up the arrears of the life she had stepped out of; and, in a little time, she married a wood-cutter who beat her after the manner of *paharis*, and her beauty faded soon.

‘There is no law whereby you can account for the vagaries of the heathen,’ said the Chaplain’s wife, ‘and I believe that Lispeth was always at heart an infidel.’ Seeing she had been taken



## 8 PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS

into the Church of England at the mature age of five weeks, this statement does not do credit to the Chaplain's wife.

Lispeth was a very old woman when she died. She had always a perfect command of English, and when she was sufficiently drunk could sometimes be induced to tell the story of her first love-affair.

It was hard then to realise that the bleared, wrinkled creature, exactly like a wisp of charred rag, could ever have been 'Lispeth of the Kotgarh Mission.'