

NAXOS
AudioBooks

The Great Poets
Rudyard Kipling

Read by **Robert Hardy**

Robert Glenister • Michael Maloney

POETRY



NA147412D

(including first book publication and date)

- 1 **Gunga Din**
Barrack-Room Ballads (1892)
read by Robert Glenister 4:08
- 2 **The Virginity**
The Years Between (1919)
read by Robert Hardy 1:31
- 3 **The Ballad of East and West**
Ballads and Barrack-Room Ballads (1899)
read by Michael Maloney 7:20
- 4 **Tommy**
Barrack-Room Ballads (1892)
read by Robert Glenister 3:08
- 5 **The Roman Centurion's Song**
A School History of England (1911)
read by Michael Maloney 2:47
- 6 **Gentlemen Rankers**
Barrack-Room Ballads (1892)
read by Robert Hardy 3:06

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- 7 **Boots**
The Five Nations (1903)
read by Robert Glenister 1:36
- 8 **The Conundrum of the Workshops**
Barrack-Room Ballads (1892)
read by Michael Maloney 2:47
- 9 **Smuggler's Song**
Puck of Pook's Hill (1906)
read by Robert Hardy 2:29
- 10 **Mandalay**
Barrack-Room Ballads (1892)
read by Robert Glenister 4:23
- 11 **The Gods of the Copybook Headings**
Inclusive Edition (1927)
read by Michael Maloney 3:11
- 12 **The Betrothed**
Departmental Ditties and Other Verses (1886)
read by Robert Hardy 4:07

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- 13 **'Fuzzy Wuzzy'**
Barrack-Room Ballads (1892)
read by Robert Glenister 3:25
- 14 **The Return**
The Five Nations (1903)
read by Robert Hardy 3:43
- 15 **The White Man's Burden**
The Five Nations (1903)
read by Michael Maloney 2:12
- 16 **Danny Deever**
Barrack-Room Ballads (1892)
read by Robert Glenister 2:38
- 17 **The Female of the Species**
The Years Between (1919)
read by Michael Maloney 3:54
- 18 **The Thousandth Man**
Rewards and Fairies (1910)
read by Robert Hardy 1:41

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- 19 **The Glory of the Garden**
A School History of England (1911)
read by Michael Maloney 2:25
- 20 **If**
Rewards and Fairies (1910)
read by Robert Hardy 2:11
- 21 **Recessional**
The Five Nations (1903)
read by Michael Maloney 1:35
- 22 **L'Envoi (When Earth's Last Picture is Painted)**
The Seven Seas (1896)
read by Robert Hardy 1:10
- 23 **from Epitaphs of the War**
The Years Between (1919)
read by Robert Hardy, Robert Glenister
and Michael Maloney 6:45

Total time: 72:28

The Great Poets

Rudyard Kipling

Rudyard Kipling holds one of the most ambivalent places in the canon of English literature. Hailed in his life as the Laureate of Empire, seen by generations as the quintessential expresser of Englishness, he is still lauded today as the author of some of the best-loved verse in the language. At the same time, he is seen as the embodiment of the worst aspects of colonialism, a militarist and an apologist for the Empire he is said to have represented. Needless to say, both views are wrong.

They both touch upon truth, though. Kipling's family was living in India – the heart of the Empire – when he was born there in 1865. After a brief and sometimes miserable period as a schoolboy in England, he returned to India where he worked on the *Civil and Military Gazette*, a paper for which he always had a great fondness as a result, saying that his poem *The Virginity* was an indication of how he felt for it. From there

he went to another paper, before returning to England in 1889. He married in 1892, lived in Vermont for four years and then returned to England where he was to remain until his death in 1936. At least, he was in England when he wasn't travelling. But he was forever travelling, touring America, Canada, South Africa, Japan, Brazil, Egypt and France to name just those about which he wrote. His output was extraordinary, and his gift of ideas and expressions to English almost unparalleled in the 20th century, ranging from novels, journalism, children's stories, short stories, essays, lectures, histories, war books and of course poetry. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907. But the reason he is perceived as being closely associated with Empire is simple – he was closely associated with it.

All his life he was in some way attached to the armed forces and the forces of Empire; from his first newspaper job to

becoming a friend of Cecil Rhodes, from establishing a newspaper in South Africa during the Boer War to attending naval manoeuvres, from warning of the First World War to his work for the Imperial War Graves Commission. But this association was not blind, limited, inflexible, humourless, and destructive. It was humane, complex, couched in humility, deep in its understanding of peoples and individuals, and always questioning the commonly held notions of his time. For example, in *The Ballad of East and West*, he opens with a line that has a memorable ring to it, but one that appears to confirm the worst suspicions of his detractors: 'Oh East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet'. The problem is that he goes on to pull this assertion apart, giving equal weight to the nobility and traditions of the opposing cultures while demonstrating that East and West not only come together but are in some ways indistinguishable. In *Fuzzy Wuzzy* (a term applied to members of the Sudanese forces because they had spectacular curled and untidy hair, and one that again became horribly misused in England many years after

Kipling wrote it) he adopts as he often did the voice of a soldier – not a poet-soldier; not an officer; an ordinary rank-and-file soldier. In this, as with *Gunga Din*, *The Return* and many others, Kipling matches his empathy with the soldier and a rare perspective with technical virtuosity and a gift for phrase-making ('You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din'). In these poems, there is no triumphalism, no swaggering over the defeated armies – rather almost a melancholic admiration, an exhausted acknowledgement of the valour of the defeated. At the same time, it is never sentimental, and the brilliant rhythmic devices (*Boots*, for example) give the poems an irresistible momentum and appeal. It is too easy to dismiss this facility as facile. That is wrong. Kipling managed to write poems and phrases that resonated throughout the English-speaking world, and still do, even if that world occasionally misunderstands them.

There is almost something of the music-hall in some of the poems – they have become effectively singalongs. But the reason they are more than that is that

Kipling did not write stereotypes. In fact, he subverted them. The *Tommy* of his poem sees the hypocrisy of the public attitude to soldiers; England itself in *The Return* is seen as a fake, a plaster-cast, relative to the mesmerising glories of the East. *Recessional* was written for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, but is almost the opposite of the flag-waving jingoism that might be expected. Instead, it is sombre, reflective, elegiac and a warning of the dangers attending any Empire that fails to proceed with humility. There is sharp social satire there, too – the smug narrator of *The Betrothed* weighing up marriage relative to smoking, or the pleadings of the *Gentlemen Rankers* – the dissolute sons of the gentry forced to join up when the money ran out; and an unappetising bunch of toffs they are. For all his popularity and success, and for all his closeness to the England of everyone's imagination, he turned down the offer not only of Poet Laureate but also a Knighthood and the Order of Merit. This is surely not the work or response of a dedicated Crown-pleaser.

Kipling's views on duty, hard work,

diligence, loyalty and the like tend to go in and out of fashion. He was more than aware of that, and prepared to stand up for them. But he did so with a combination of wit, delicacy, humour and vigour in poems such as *The Gods of the Copybook Headings* (copybooks were for children to practise their handwriting in. The Victorians, never liable to miss an opportunity for moral instruction, offered their children improving maxims to copy) and *The Glory of the Garden*, and – most famously – *If*. The precepts he outlines were based on those of Dr Leander Starr Jameson, a friend of his and a man who led a raid that failed in its original intention but was indirectly responsible for two wars in southern Africa. But the poem is not about conquest, or the glories of battle, and in the face of overwhelming shifts in Britain's status and changes of social mores, it retains a treasured place in the British memory.

Kipling's only son, John, was killed in the First World War, having managed to get a posting in the first place only through his father's help. In one of the *Epitaphs of the War*, as moving a collection of poems as

those by Sassoon or Owen, Kipling wrote: 'If any question why we died. / Tell them, because our fathers lied.' It would be simple to see this as a man wrenched by grief for his own child. But as ever, Kipling is not that straightforward. He may have written often enough about the sufferings of the soldiers, and he must have been painfully aware of the irony of effectively assisting his own son to his death. But the epitaph was not self-pity. It was aimed at those who had failed to listen to the calls for arming the nation in view of the threat of war. Kipling's poem, once again, fails to fall neatly into a prescribed category and insists on being more complex than its memorability suggests, richer in allusion and more profound.

Notes by Roy McMillan
with thanks to The Kipling Society

Cover picture: Rudyard Kipling in South Africa, 1900,
illustration by Mortimer Menpes in *War Impressions* courtesy Mary Evans Picture Library



Robert Hardy, CBE, has worked extensively on the international stage, in films and on television. His best-known television roles include Siegfried Farnon in *All Creatures Great and Small* and Winston Churchill in *The Wilderness Years*. He played television's first David Copperfield, first Henry V and first Coriolanus. He has recorded all the Aubrey/Martinez books of Patrick O'Brien. Films include *Sense and Sensibility*, *Paris by Night* and three *Harry Potters*. He is a graduate of Oxford University and writes books and articles on medieval military history. He has honorary doctorates at three English universities.



Robert Glenister's varied theatre credits include *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest* and *Little Eyolf* for the Royal Shakespeare Company; *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead* and *Hamlet*. His television credits include *Heartbeat*, *Midsomer Murders*, *A Touch of Frost*, *Bramwell*, *Prime Suspect*, *Only Fools & Horses*, *Soldier Soldier* and *Hustle*. He has also read the part of Lovburg in *Hedda Gabler* and Blake poetry for Naxos AudioBooks.



Michael Maloney's many Shakespearean roles on the London stage include Edgar in *King Lear*, the title roles in *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, Prince Hal in *Henry IV Parts 1 & 2*; on film he has appeared in Branagh's productions of *Hamlet* and *Henry V*, as well as in Parker's *Othello*. Other notable films include Minghella's *Truly, Madly, Deeply*. He frequently performs on radio and TV. He has been involved in other Naxos AudioBooks productions including *King Richard III*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Poets of the Great War*. He has also played the part of George Tesman in *Hedda Gabler* and read *Selections from The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, *The Physician's Tale* from *The Canterbury Tales III*, *The House on the Strand* and Blake poetry.

The Great Poets

Rudyard Kipling

Read by **Robert Hardy • Robert Glenister • Michael Maloney**

Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) was a hugely popular poet and writer who many felt typified the late Victorian age and its self-confident Empire. But, as this collection shows, there was far more to him than patriotism.

Ranging from the tenderness of *Mandalay* ('Where the dawn comes up like thunder...') to the satire of *The Betrothed* ('A woman is only a woman, but a good cigar is a smoke'), from the vigour and compassion of *Boots* to the warmth and humanity of *If*, these poems show the depth and variety of Kipling's poetry, in readings that bring it vividly to life.

Includes **If • Gunga Din • Danny Deever • The Betrothed**

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