

News for my Friends

New Boys Go Bush Again and the Kipling Connection

MOVING ON — SOON

SOMETIME within the next six months, I hope to move to The Rock, 30 km southwest of Wagga Wagga.

So from the end of July, before writing or faxing, please phone 02 4829 0297 to check if I have moved. If you do not get my recorded message, my new address will by then be settled, and available from 02 9673 2235 at Newman Resources, St Marys.

Father James Tierney

Rudyard Kipling

by A.B. ‘Banjo’ Paterson

One expects a great literary giant to be in some way a sort of freak: drink, women, temperament, idleness, irregularity — nearly all the great writers of the past have had one or other of these drawbacks, and some of them have had them all. [...] So, when I went to stay with Kipling in England [in 1901, after meeting him in South Africa at the Boer War], I was prepared for literally anything. Would he drink? Would he be one of those men who had half a dozen wives with a complementary number of concubines? Would he be up all night telling me how good he was, or would he recite his own poetry with appropriate gestures?

None of these things happened. [...] **Kipling was remarkable in that his life was so very unremarkable.**

He hated publicity as his Satanic Majesty is supposed to have holy water; and in private life he was just a hard-working, common sense, level-headed man, without any redeeming vices that I could discover. [...]

Frankly, they [his English contemporaries] looked upon him as one of those infernal know-alls, who wanted to do all sorts of queer things. What right had anyone to come along and suggest that there would be a big war, and that England should be prepared for it? [...]

Kipling, out of his own pocket, bought enough land for a rifle-range and paid the wages of a retired sergeant-major to teach the yokels drill and musketry.

[...] Kipling himself lost his only son in the Great War, and was asked to write an epitaph to be put on a tablet in the centre of the thousands of war graves. He wrote, “**Had our fathers not lied to us, so many of us would not be here.**” And who shall blame him? Needless to say, they did not use it.

A.B. Paterson, *Happy Dispatches*, 1934,
in *The World of ‘Banjo’ Paterson*,
edited Clement Semmler, 1967.

There are similarities between the Church in Australia and the former British Empire. In their heyday, it was inconceivable that either could dwindle or diminish, let alone vanish. But the sun has set on the British Empire and the Catholic Church and Christianity in Australia are imperilled... As far back as 1897, Rudyard Kipling, in his stirring hymn, *The Recessional* — so appropriate for Anzac Day: full text, next page — warned the British people that the survival of their empire depended on their **fidelity to God.**

NOW ON SALE at the Cardinal Newman Faith Resources

NEW BOYS GO BUSH AGAIN

by Father James Tierney: adventure in 434pp
plus 78 pp of Appendices: \$15 with PPK \$8.

An earlier book in the Bush Boys series quoted Kipling. See *Bush Boys on the Move* pp. 91-92:-

Greg, however, had further requirements. “Remember? I said there was one more thing for all six of us to do, to be complete Bush Boys? We’ve gotta take the Kipling Oath on a Khyber knife.” Even Pete looked puzzled. So Greg declaimed:-

*O East is east and West is west
And never the twain shall meet,
Till earth and sky stand presently
At God’s great judgement seat.
But there is neither east nor west,
Border nor breed nor birth,
When two strong men stand face to face
Though they come from the ends of the earth.”*

Kevin thought how appropriate it was for their black and white gang. Greg kept quoting:

*They have looked each other between the eyes,
And there they have found no fault,
They have taken the oath of the brother in blood,
On leavened bread and salt.
They have taken the oath of the brother in blood,
On fire and fresh cut sod,
On the hilt and the haft of the Khyber knife
And the wondrous names of God.”*

The Ballad of East and West by Rudyard Kipling.
(The Khyber Pass is between Afghanistan and Pakistan.)

He opened his pocket knife and hacked off six pieces of his Mum’s homemade bread. He sprinkled each with a pinch of salt. “Leavened bread and salt,” he said. “Eat it! It means we’re at peace like blood brothers.” Each ate solemnly.

Greg dug chunks of earth from the cave floor and gave each of them a bit. “Sprinkle it on the fire,” he commanded. “If you break the oath may you be burnt by bushfires and return to dust and ashes with the earth.” No one dared ask, ‘What oath?’ but they did as he said.

Greg held out the blade of the knife. “You’ve gotta put your finger on it,” he told them, “because it’s an oath like a ‘cross my heart and spit’, and ‘cut my throat if I break it’.” Somehow six greasy, grimy fingers fitted on the short, stout blade of the scout knife. “Now say after me,” he ordered. They repeated his words, phrase by phrase. “I promise — to save the bush — and keep the Ten Commandments — so help me God. — Amen.”

“Congratulations,” said Greg, beaming on them, now that the solemn part was over. “That makes us the highest grade of Bush Boys. And once they take the oath, Ruff and Tim will be full members [...].

* * * *

Kipling and Paterson are my favourite poets. Incidentally, Paterson’s visit to Kipling fulfilled the latter’s *Ballad of East and West*, as quoted above:-

*When two strong men stand face to face,
though they come from the ends of the earth.*

My mother often quoted Kipling to me as a child, especially excerpts from his poem “*IF*—” which is on the next page.

Father James Tierney

Rudyard Kipling' "IF —"

ON THE BRINK OF MANHOOD

IF YOU can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream — and not make dreams your master;
If you can think — and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken.
And stoop and build'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings — nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run.
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And — which is more — you'll be a Man, my son!

A doctor told me that medicos put a twist on the last line:
And you'll have a heart attack, before you're 21!

THE RECESSIONAL

GOD of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle line,
Beneath Whose awful (sic) Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine —
Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!

2. The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart:
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
A humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!

3. Far called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire:
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!

4. If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the Law —
Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!

Kipling wrote *The Recessional* almost as a hymn of national penitence for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The controversial line, "Lesser breeds without the law" is, at the worst, compassionate rather than racist, as are Christ's words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". Besides, it may mean Kaiser Wilhelm II, who expansionist program was already evident in 1897, 17 years before World War I, which Kipling had foreseen and strove to forewarn.

Father James Tierney

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5. For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube or iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord! Amen.

Parodies on IF— a tribute to Kipling

TO A BOY — with a homely twist in the last line

IF YOU can keep quiet for a single minute —
When being spoken to, can stand quite still,
Or learn that there is really something in it
When told that untold sweets will make you ill.
If you can cease from one continual chatter,
Other than when you're actually asleep
Or moderate your most infernal clatter,
Or fold your clothes, not leave 'em in a heap.

If you can make one pile of all your treasures
Rather than scatter them about the room,
If you can be content with simple pleasures,
And not with those that crash or shriek or boom.
If you can let your sister, sometimes, be the winner,
And not retaliate when you are hurt,
If you can learn to sit and eat your dinner
And never spill a spoonful down your shirt.

If you can keep your hands and face quite spotless,
When all the other lads are caked with clay,
Or answer me, when I have asked you, not less
Than fifteen times, to cease your grimy play,
If you can climb, nor burst your pants asunder,
Or whilst I'm saying this, wait till I'm done,
There's not the slightest doubt you'll be a wonder...
But if you CAN'T — you'll be a boy, my son!

DAD TALKS WITH JUNIOR

IF YOU can drive your car, when all about you
The surging traffic hems and hampers you,
And trust yourself when Dad and Mother doubt you,
Yet, make allowance for that doubting too.
If you can curb the urge to "make it faster",
If you can drive and not make speed your aim,
If you can keep your temper when disaster
Is barely missed — with someone else to blame;

If you can stand to hear the horns a'blowing,
Yet give a fellow turning right a break,
If you can bear to see the traffic flowing,
And wait, and wait, and wait, for safety's sake;
If you can drive in crowds and not be frantic,
And dodge the careless walkers all the while,
If, meeting with a crazy driver antic,
You keep your driving poise, and still can smile;

If you can fill each dangerous highway minute
With sixty seconds' cautious driving done,
Then here's the car and all the petrol in it —
Here are the keys — good luck to you, my son.

These parodies are from Russ Tyson's *Philosopher's Note Book*, Landsdowne Press, Melbourne, 1961.