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RUDYARD KIPLING

SOMETHING OF MYSELF
AND OTHER
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL
WRITINGS

EDITED BY
THOMAS PINNEY

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CK diary  extracts from and summaries of Caroline Kipling’s diaries, January 10, 1892–January 18, 1936, made by Charles Carrington.

CMG  *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore.


JLK  in the notes = John Lockwood Kipling (Rudyard’s father).

Kipling Papers  papers of Rudyard Kipling and his family, the property of the National Trust, deposited in the University of Sussex Library.

RK  in the notes = Rudyard Kipling.

USC  in the notes = the United Services College, Westward Ho!, North Devon.

Note: references to Kipling’s prose writings are, unless otherwise specified, to the Uniform Edition published by Macmillan; verse, unless otherwise specified, is cited from *Rudyard Kipling’s Verse: Definitive Edition*, published by Hodder and Stoughton.
INTRODUCTION

The first reaction to Kipling’s autobiography was summed up by one wit among the reviewers, who said that it was not in fact *Something of Myself* but *Hardly Anything of Myself*. He might have gone on to say that not only was it thin on the facts of Kipling’s life, it often had them wrong as well. One would suppose that these two striking characteristics of the book, its incompleteness and its unreliability, would be fatal to its appeal as an autobiography, yet that is not so: the book is a highly characteristic example of a fully formed literary master’s work – it is, in fact, Kipling’s final work – and it has all the artistic interest inseparable from that fact. And, within the limits of its carefully determined reticence, it provides a fascinating view of a remarkable life.

With such a book, however, an editor has the opportunity to be particularly useful to the reader: he can correct details that have gone wrong; he can supplement passages that fail to provide a full account; and, most important, he can provide a background against which the selection, emphasis, lighting, and colors of Kipling’s self-portrait can be better understood. I have tried to make myself useful in these ways in producing this edition.

*Something of Myself* was not Kipling’s only autobiographical writing; much of his fiction has strong autobiographical elements in it – *Stalky & Co.*, for instance – and many of his articles, essays, and speeches are partly or largely autobiographical. From the large store of such material I have chosen three published titles and an unpublished diary to supplement the narrative of *Something of Myself*, items chosen with reasonable confidence that they can be called autobiographical. One of them, “Baa Baa, Black Sheep,” is fiction,
and therefore vulnerable to the argument that it cannot be trusted since it need pay no attention to the record. I admit the force of the argument but include the story anyway, on the grounds that it seems quite close to what we know about Kipling’s experience from other sources.* I have not, however, chosen to use such an item as the first chapter of *The Light That Failed*. It is evidently drawn from Kipling’s experiences at Southsea and with Flo Garrard. But those experiences seem already to have been reworked according to the needs of the book that Kipling is writing and thus to have become something other than parts of his life story. This is not an easy distinction to maintain, admittedly. If one attends to all the voices of Kipling’s experience in his works, then hundreds of essays, speeches, poems, newspaper sketches, and stories clamor for attention as having something to add to “autobiography.” It is necessary to draw some sort of line, even if the line cannot be drawn by neat theoretical rule. I have also been forced to exclude a number of eligible items simply for reasons of space: I particularly regret “Home,” “Quo Fata Vocant,” and “Souvenirs of France.”

The four items chosen to supplement *Something of Myself* were all written within a decade of each other and all come from Kipling’s early years. In many ways, then, they offer a contrast in tone and feeling to the swan song of *Something of Myself*. I have given something of the circumstances of these supplementary items in an introductory note to each of them and have annotated them on the same principles as those applied to the annotation of *Something of Myself*, explained below on pp. xxxiv–xxxv.

I

The first thing that a reader of *Something of Myself* needs to have in mind is an outline of Kipling’s life. No full outline can be constructed from the book itself, yet without it one can form no very clear idea of Kipling’s selections and ruthless omissions.

* For a skeptical discussion of “Baa Baa, Black Sheep” as autobiography, see C.E. Carrington, ““Baa, Baa, Black Sheep” – Fact or Fiction?” *Kipling Journal*, June 1972, pp. 7–19.
INTRODUCTION

Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay on December 30, 1865, the first-born child of his parents, who had gone out to India earlier that year. His father, John Lockwood Kipling, was the professor of architectural sculpture at the government-sponsored School of Art in Bombay; his mother, Alice Macdonald Kipling, was, like her husband, the child of a Methodist minister in England, and one of four sisters who are now remembered for their marriages to remarkable men or for their remarkable children or both. One sister married Sir Edward Poynter, a notable painter in his day, whose professional success was crowned when he was made president of the Royal Academy. Another sister married a prosperous iron-founder named Baldwin and became the mother of Stanley Baldwin, prime minister of England. A third sister married Sir Edward Burne-Jones, the great painter who sustained to the end of the nineteenth century the Pre-Raphaelite vision.

This cluster of distinguished aunts and uncles in England could do little to deflect the suffering that was Kipling’s lot when, according to the strict and terrible rule of the English living in India, he was sent back to England to receive his education. The separation from his parents took place in 1871, when Kipling was not yet six. With his sister Alice (always called Trix), two years younger than he, Kipling was placed by his parents with a woman quite unknown to them who advertised her services as a foster parent to such children as Rudyard and Trix. Her name was Holloway, and she lived in Southsea, a district of Portsmouth. With her, the Kipling children spent five and a half years.

There is no evidence that Mrs. Holloway was anything but conscientious in the discharge of her stated duty to the children; unluckily, she and the young Rudyard were spiritual opposites, and for him these years were an almost unremitting experience of hell. Elements of his ordeal under Mrs. Holloway appear in The Light That Failed, and, more directly, in the story called “Baa Baa, Black Sheep.” Before the appearance of Something of Myself, however, no one besides Kipling’s wife and his sister knew that the sufferings of Dick Heldar and of Punch were drawn from the personal experience of their creator. The lacunar pages of Something of Myself devoted to “the House of Desolation” are among the most vivid in the whole
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book: the experiences they evoke, ever since the book was published and revealed the story, have seemed to Kipling’s biographers to make the crisis of his life, however that crisis may be interpreted. His relation to himself and others was, some have held, determined by the experience of these years: a mistrust of his own impulses, an unacknowledged sense of maternal betrayal, a desperate anxiety lest the things that he cherished be taken from him, have all been discovered in his life and work, and have all been traced to the years he suffered in the House of Desolation.

Early in 1878 Kipling was sent to an unpretentious public school called the United Services College at Westward Ho!, North Devon. The school had been founded by Indian Army officers not many years before to provide an education that they could afford for their sons; most of the pupils expected to enter the army, and those who did not were still likely to have India in view. The headmaster was a friend of the Kipling family named Cormell Price. If the Kipling–Holloway combination had been bad chemistry, the Kipling–Price combination worked beautifully. Kipling liked, admired, and respected Price; with his confidence in Price to sustain him, he managed to enjoy his school years. Perhaps not many famous English authors have done so, and that Kipling did is all the more testimony to the virtues of Cormell Price, for the school was without tradition, without money, without many amenities, and quite unable to attract students apart from the narrow clientele for which it had been invented.

While still a schoolboy, Kipling met and fell in love with a girl named Florence Violet Garrard. The attraction on his side was powerful and long-lasting; on her side, languid at best. Kipling regarded himself as engaged to her, but she seems never to have thought herself committed in any way. The relationship came to nothing, but it left its marks on Kipling. When, after nearly a decade of separation, he met Flo again by chance, he was at once overwhelmed by violent and confused emotion; he renewed his pursuit of her, and was again put off. However the long-term effects of this experience may be assessed, it was no light thing in Kipling’s life. Nothing is said of the affair in Something of Myself.

From school Kipling went directly to India. His father had left
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Bombay in 1875 to become head of the new School of Art in Lahore and curator of the Lahore Museum. He found a job for his son on the small English newspaper catering for the English establishment in the Punjab, the Civil and Military Gazette, published in Lahore. In his Indian years, which ran from the end of 1882 to the beginning of 1889, Kipling performed his apprenticeship to life and art. He saw the Empire at work in all of its directions and at all levels – from the viceroy high in the hills of Simla to the telegraph clerk in some remote mofussil station at the end of the line down on the plains. He paid special attention to the enlisted men of the army. He observed the routines, the amusements, the peccadillos of the civil establishment. He did all this, and more, as a hard-working journalist, able to report a criminal trial, write a ponderous summary of affairs of state, paste up a front page, fill a vacant space with verse to measure, set type if needed, deal with outraged readers, and anything else that might be wanted on a paper of which he formed half the editorial staff. “Apprenticeship” is too mild a word. In Something of Myself Kipling calls his Indian years “Seven Years' Hard” – a term of penal servitude. And when one adds to the rigors of his job the burdens of Lahore’s notorious heat, the constant threat of debilitating or fatal illness, the isolation of English life in India, and the meagerness of social opportunity, the phrase may not seem exaggerated.

Beginning about 1886, with the publication of Departmental Ditties, Kipling began to make a name for himself among the English community in India as an original and amusing writer, a better writer, in fact, than anyone who had ventured before to represent the English to themselves in that country. At the end of 1887 he was transferred to a larger and more prestigious paper, the Pioneer of Allahabad. Here he was given free rein to exercise his descriptive and narrative talents, and work poured out from his pen. It was in the little more than a year of his stay in Allahabad that he wrote and published Soldiers Three, In Black and White, The Phantom 'Rickshaw, The Story of the Gadsbys, Wee Willie Winkie, and the stories later gathered in The Smith Administration, The City of Dreadful Night, and Letters of Marque.

In Allahabad he met the third woman of importance in his life (after his mother and Flo Garrard), an American named Edmonia
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Hill. She was the wife of an English scientist employed by the government, but the fact that she was married did not prevent Kipling from making Mrs. Hill his intimate confidante: to her he poured out his hopes, ambitions, plans, frustrations, defeats; to her he submitted his stories for judgment, and his emotional life for sympathy. For a time Kipling was a lodger in the Hills' house in Allahabad, and there he wrote a number of his Indian stories under her gaze and with her response as a stimulus to creation.

When Kipling determined, as was inevitable, to return to England and try his fortune in the literary markets of London, Mr. and Mrs. Hill agreed to accompany him. They would travel by way of China and Japan, then cross the United States. The trip began early in 1889; Kipling and the Hills parted in San Francisco, they to visit her parents in Pennsylvania and he to travel the west, writing descriptive letters to the Pioneer. He rejoined the Hills in Pennsylvania and then accompanied Mrs. Hill and her sister on the Atlantic voyage to London: Mr. Hill had already gone ahead on his return to India. When, at last, Mrs. Hill was to leave England for India, Kipling was desperately miserable. In a curiously perverse gesture, he engaged himself to Mrs. Hill’s sister: if he could not have the true object of his affections, then a surrogate would have to do. The engagement quickly broke down, but that he could have entered into it at all throws a somewhat lurid light on Kipling and his emotional necessities. The episode would be echoed only a little later in the circumstances of his marriage.

For two full years – 1888–89 – two years of unbroken production and rising success, Kipling had worked, played, and dreamed in the presence of Edmonia Hill, or in the thought of her through every absence. If any woman could be called the muse of the young poet, she was that woman. Like Flo Garrard, she receives no mention whatever in Something of Myself.

Despite the confusion of his personal life, Kipling's professional life in London was a sensational triumph. He arrived there in obscurity late in 1889; within weeks his name was known everywhere. Thus began a marvellous decade, in which Kipling's output was matched only by the constant increase of his fame. He had already written with prodigal rapidity the Indian stories collected in
the series running from Soldiers Three to Wee Willie Winkie; to these were now added The Light That Failed, Life’s Handicap, Many Inventions, The Jungle Book, The Seven Seas, “Captains Courageous,” The Day’s Work, Stalky & Co., and Kim.

Early in the course of these triumphs, Kipling had met a young American named Wolcott Balestier, a sometime author who was in London representing an American publisher of dubious repute. So greatly was Kipling taken by Balestier that he agreed not only to put his American publishing arrangements in Balestier’s hands, he undertook a literary collaboration with him – a thing he had never done before and never did again* (the book that they produced, The Naulahka: A Story of East and West, 1892, has never stood high in the tale of Kipling’s books, but it is full of curious interest). When Balestier died suddenly of typhoid at the end of 1891, while Kipling was on a round-the-world tour, Kipling broke off his plans, hastened back to London, procured a special license, and, little more than a month from Balestier’s death, married his sister. One thinks irresistibly of his getting engaged to Mrs. Hill’s sister as a response to Mrs. Hill’s leaving him; now, Wolcott was gone, he would marry the sister. And he did.

By this point in the outline of Kipling’s life, the reader will be able to guess that Wolcott Balestier, like Flo Garrard and Mrs. Hill, receives no mention at all in Something of Myself. Kipling’s wife, Wolcott’s sister, Caroline Balestier, fares hardly better. She is never mentioned by name in Something of Myself, and the name Balestier figures only once, casually and indirectly, in the book (p. 66). Of the origin and character of their courtship there is not one word. That history remains almost wholly unknown still.

Following his marriage Kipling settled in the United States, building a house near Brattleboro, Vermont, where the Balestier family was living. His daughters Josephine and Elsie were born there, and Kipling worked steadily and well during the four years of his Vermont residence. It came to an end in a distressing and humiliating way. Mrs. Kipling quarrelled with her brother Beatty Balestier; the quarrel inevitably drew Kipling in, and the upshot

* Except for his work with C.R.L. Fletcher on A School History of England, a much more restricted collaboration.
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was a sharp encounter between the brothers-in-law, a threat of physical violence on Beatty’s part, and a court case brought by Kipling in order to restrain Beatty. The hearing gave the papers a field day. Kipling, horrified by what had happened and by the resultant publicity, did not wait for the trial to come on; he left with his young family for England, never to return to the United States, with but one, fatal exception. Nothing of this violent and destructive turn in Kipling’s life appears in Something of Myself.

Back in England, Kipling settled briefly on the coast of Devon near Torquay and then in the village of Rottingdean, on the Sussex coast. Here his son John was born in 1897. Early in 1899 Kipling took his family back across the Atlantic on a visit to New York. There, after a stormy winter crossing, first the children, then Kipling, fell ill in their New York hotel. Pneumonia developed, and for some days Kipling lay on the edge of death. As they had on the very different occasion of Kipling’s family quarrel in 1896, the American papers had a field day with Kipling’s illness and recovery. It was front-page news throughout the country, the object of an unwholesome excitement over the drama of a “great writer’s” struggle with death. When Kipling at last pulled through, it was to be told that his beloved first-born, Josephine, had died of the illness that had spared him. The experience was so bitter that Kipling could never bring himself to revisit the United States, despite many invitations and many opportunities. He had evidently had some idea of reconciliation in making the trip in the first place; the disastrous outcome fixed in him a settled dislike for the United States, a dislike sometimes passing into contempt for the country’s foolishness, sometimes warming into anger at its barbarities. Of this nightmare journey back to the country where he had once lived and worked in flourishing confidence there is no word in Something of Myself, save one passing reference to his illness in New York (p. 30). Josephine is not named, though her birth is noted (p. 68).

Kipling, whose restless life seemed to be that of a man who belonged to no particular country, nevertheless needed a place – or an idea that he could project upon a place – to which he could be loyal. The decisive end to his tentative affair with the United States was followed by a protracted and finally unsatisfactory affair with
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South Africa. He went there first with his family early in 1898. He returned, after the catastrophe of his illness and Josephine’s death, at the beginning of 1900, officially because the doctors told him that he could no longer spend winters in England after the damage done to his lungs by pneumonia. Unconsciously, he was looking for a new land to which he could transfer his affections and his hopes for redeeming action.

The Boer War had just begun, and Kipling plunged with excitement into the conflict of words, ideas, and visions that accompanied the fighting. He committed himself unreservedly to the side of his friends, Ceci Rhodes and Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, Rhodes’s lieutenant. South Africa was to be a British dominion; the Dutch were to be subdued, then transformed; the limitless possibilities of the splendid country were to be realized by the unmatched abilities of the English colonist. And so on. It is at this point in his career that Kipling’s political enthusiasms, and his political hatreds, begin to crowd into his work. He spent the winters of every year from 1900 through 1908 at the Woolpack, the attractive little house that Rhodes had built for him outside Cape Town, and he produced much work there. Most of these stories and poems are more overtly “imperialist” than anything that he did before or after, and not many of them have been regarded as among his best work. That they had passion behind them, however, cannot be doubted.

During these years, from the turn of the century down to the First World War, the love affair between Kipling and his public came to an end. He had grown all too audible as a political voice. He wrote insultingly about his political enemies, and they were surprisingly many. His art seemed to grow obscure and harsh as his political passions intensified. Kipling was caricatured by the press; worse, people began to grow bored by his criticizing and his exhorting both.

For Kipling himself, the South African episode ended in disillusion, leaving the taste of dust and ashes. The war against the Boers had been won; but the victory was then, as Kipling saw it, betrayed by the Liberals in England. Coming to power in a landslide electoral triumph in 1906, they proceeded rapidly and systematically to undo all that had been done before: the Boers were returned to political
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power; the great Imperialists, Milner and Jameson, were discredited or subverted; Rhodes’s scheme of dominion was destroyed by visionless men who knew not what they did. In Kipling’s imagination, the giants had been overcome by a swarm of mean-spirited dwarfs. Kipling left South Africa in 1908, never to return. It was all a disappointment from which he never fully recovered. His view of the world from this period on is marked by a tendency to see conspiracy and betrayal everywhere in public life. The experiences of the child in the House of Desolation were now repeated on a larger scene for the man.

In 1902 Kipling and his wife bought a house called “Bateman’s” in East Sussex, near the village of Burwash. The house, built of stone in 1634 by a local iron master, was Kipling’s residence for the rest of his days. He took up Sussex as another adopted country, enthusiastically informing himself of its history and antiquities, using its lore in stories and poems, and constructing a private mythology of Sussex values and Sussex meanings. Yet he was curiously aloof from the actual Sussex around him. He was personally remote from the villagers, and he accepted very few of the civic responsibilities that might have gone with his long residence and his status.

The First World War, when it came, was at first a sort of relief for Kipling. He had long prophesied it; Germany’s rivalry with England had been an obsessive anxiety for Kipling since the Boer War, and a part of him at least was eager to see the question brought to trial. He urged his son John into the fray, using his influence to obtain a commission for the boy in the Irish Guards. John went out to France in 1915 – he was barely past his eighteenth birthday – and disappeared in one of the minor engagements associated with the Battle of Loos. Perhaps he was annihilated by a shell or buried in an explosion: no one knows. John’s is one of the many thousand names on the pathetic memorial to the missing dead at Dud Corner, in northern France, a memorial that Kipling helped dedicate after the war, when he devoted himself to the work of the War Graves Commission. Nothing of this appears in Something of Myself. John is named when his birth is mentioned (p. 80); but the pathos of his father’s remark on that birth – that it occurred “under what seemed
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every good omen” – would go undetected by a reader who knows only what Kipling chooses to tell in *Something of Myself*.

As the war dragged on, and the appalling tale of casualties mounted, Kipling came to see quite clearly what unrelieved horror modern war had become. If he had, once, thought too lightly of war’s miseries and too highly of its glamor, that was all changed now: there was no glamor. But he never doubted that the Germans – the Huns, as he insisted on calling them always – had to be defeated and must be made to pay for their transgression. To the sense created in Kipling by the Boer War that power was used to conspire and betray was now added the sense that power could be in the hands of highly civilized barbarians: the Huns.

The settlement of Versailles was, of course, in Kipling’s view another work of betrayal, mocking the sacrifices of the Allies. To the end of his life, Kipling’s view of public affairs seemed to alternate between the equally ugly convictions that things were being run by venal traitors or by sub-human savages. It must be candidly acknowledged that this grim sense of things is strongly stamped upon *Something of Myself*. As a view of things from the vantage point of 1935, it was not wholly imaginary. But these unlovely ideas color all of Kipling’s backward view when politics are his subject.

Late in 1915, only a few days before his son John was reported missing, Kipling was diagnosed as having “gastritis.” This announced the onset of the illness that eventually killed him, and that gave him, in the next twenty years, an overflowing measure of disabling pain, anxiety, depression, and general wretchedness. The record of his wife’s diary gives an account of suffering so frequent, so intense, and so baffling as to make one wonder how Kipling continued to function, as he somehow managed to do. “Sick and miserable”; “wretched with pain”; “constant spasms of pain”; “a dreadful night of pain”; such are the refrains that run through all these years in the diary account. Kipling was operated on in 1922, and he underwent innumerable examinations and treatments both before and after that date. Not until 1933 was a duodenal ulcer diagnosed; by that time, Kipling had only three more years to live. He would die from the hemorrhage the ulcer at last produced. This
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prolonged and intense suffering of course receives no mention in
Something of Myself, though for the last twenty years of his life it must
have been the chief fact in Kipling’s daily awareness.

The narrative of Something of Myself scarcely proceeds beyond the
move to Bateman’s in 1902 and to the writing of such books as Pack of
Pook’s Hill, before the catastrophe of the war. Whether Kipling
meant to carry it any further no one can say now; but if he had, given
his studied avoidance of all merely personal revelation, he would not
perhaps have had much to tell. Kipling’s life after the war was, to all
external view, reduced to his routine at Bateman’s, varied by
frequent trips to London on the work of the War Graves Commis-

sion, the Rhodes Trust, and other duties. He was also a regular
traveller to the continent, mainly to France. France now became the
last and least disappointing of Kipling’s countries of the mind. He
was constant in his praise of the French; he had real pleasure in being
among them; and he rejoiced in the recognition they gave him both
as an artist – “le grand Rutyar” – and as a stout supporter of the
French against the Germans. He continued to devote himself to
writing and to developing his art. He died on January 18, 1936.

II

The occasion of Kipling’s deciding to write Something of Myself can
only be guessed at. He began it on August 1, 1935, at Bateman’s,
when he had scarcely six months to live. Perhaps a general sense of
the approaching end is all one needs to suppose as a sufficient
motive. Our evidence of the book’s progress is almost wholly derived
from his wife’s diary, and is meager enough. When he began, Mrs.
Kipling recorded that the autobiography was to deal with “his life
from the point of view of his work” – an interesting statement of
limitation at the outset. Kipling wrote steadily at the book for a
fortnight, and then revised what he had done. He took the manu-
script with him on a trip to Paris and Marienbad at the end of
August, and after his return continued to work on it all through
September. On October 1, an installment of the book was given to
Kipling’s secretary to be typed. Work continued in October, and he
is reported as “revising” it on the 21st of that month. After continu-
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ing to work on the book through November, he broke off on December 2. He then resumed it in mid-month, when he is reported as revising the typescript (December 16). The last day on which he is reported as working on the autobiography is December 26, 1935, four days from his seventieth birthday. In January he died.

When Kipling died, then, he had been at work on Something of Myself for a period of not more than five months and a few days, and with many interruptions during that time. For a writer so fastidious as Kipling, who was more deeply committed to the arts of compression than to those of expansion, a narrative of such length composed in so short a time could be regarded only as, at best, a draft of his intentions. Yet what he left must have been distinct enough to persuade Mrs. Kipling, always fierce in the defense of her husband’s reputation, that it was close enough to what he had meant to do. At any rate, on some unknown date in 1936 she began to prepare Something of Myself for publication. A contract for the book was signed on October 22, 1936. A typed copy of the manuscript was sent to Macmillan, the publisher, on November 26; Mrs. Kipling returned corrected proofs to Macmillan on December 21; and the book was published on February 16, 1937. Before publication, selections totalling about a third of the book ran serially in the Morning Post, the New York Times, the Sydney Mail, and the Civil and Military Gazette of Lahore in January and February 1937.

We learn a little about Mrs. Kipling’s editorial practices from two sources: the correspondence, now in the British Library, between Kipling’s agents, the firm of A.P. Watt, and the publisher, Macmillan; and the correspondence between Mrs. Kipling and H.A. Gwynne, the editor of the Morning Post, now in the Stewart Collection at Dalhousie University. Gwynne was an old friend of Kipling’s, and it is evident that Mrs. Kipling relied on him especially in settling many editorial decisions. “No-one,” she wrote to Gwynne on October 20, 1936, “loved him [Kipling] better or longer than you or has a more thorough understanding of him from the literary side.” Gwynne did the work of making the extracts from the ms to be serialized, and in connection with this he had a chance to see and to discuss with Mrs. Kipling the actual text that Kipling had left behind.
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From the Watt and Gwynne correspondences we learn that Mrs. Kipling corrected the proofs for the text of both the newspaper serialization and the book; that she supplied many corrections of detail, including some made after publication; that she sometimes altered or cut out passages; and that she selected the illustrations for the book. What we do not learn is the condition and character of the manuscript that she had to work from, nor whether she made any extensive cuts. If the manuscript survives, its whereabouts are unknown. The corrected proofs were returned to Mrs. Kipling, and it is more than likely that she then destroyed them. All that can be safely surmised is that she had the manuscript before her, and one or more typescript versions containing some correction and revision by Kipling himself.

The letters that passed between Mrs. Kipling and Gwynne in October and November 1936, when she was working with him on the preparation of the text for newspaper serialization, contain some interesting evidence of her editorial practice. One of her guiding principles was to present Kipling in a way to avoid offense and controversy. Thus she writes on November 3, 1936:

On page 5 [of the galley proofs for the Morning Post] I think I would like you to omit the words I have omitted and substitute those I have marked on the margin. I think the thing as it stands is too offensive, if it is not libellous, and I don’t, above all things, want to have that kind of criticism of the Autobiography. I don’t, in fact, want anything that people can ride off and dispute about.

Obviously, this rule would justify much omission; how often Mrs. Kipling may have applied it cannot now be known.

Another principle is stated in a letter of November 5, 1936, as she thanks Gwynne for his labor in cutting the text down for the purpose of serialization:

It has been a terrific job for you, and for me something quite intolerable. This thinking back into the past is not an easy matter for me. I want to be wise and I want to remember everything that he said to me about the Autobiography, and I chiefly want to remember what he meant to change in another and later draft.
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This, too, since it privileges merely prospective notions about the book – what Kipling might have done – would seem to authorize considerable changes; but, again, if such changes were made, we have no way to recognize them. Whatever was actually done, it is clear that in principle at least Mrs. Kipling in her role as editor did not feel bound to take her husband’s words as she found them.

Mrs. Kipling had long experience of dealing with manuscripts and proofs, and there is every reason to think that in handling the details of copy she did a careful and capable job. She did not, however, appear to make much effort to check the factual details of her husband’s narrative. As a result, the book as published contains a good many mistakes about times, places, and names. Once it had appeared, she began to receive notes of correction from various sources, and these – or some of these, at any rate – she undertook to incorporate into subsequent printings. There is only one edition of Something of Myself, but the differences in detail between the text of the first printing and the text printed in the Outward Bound and Sussex Editions in 1937 and 1938 – the last texts that Mrs. Kipling is likely to have had anything to do with – are quite considerable.

All of the changes that I have detected have been noted in this edition. Some are trivial, such as the correction of Katzkopfs to Katzkopfs (p. 7). Others are more substantial: Kipling’s attribution of a poem to Wordsworth is corrected to Scott (p. 7); and his “friend Captain Bagley” is re-identified as “my friend Captain E.H. Bayly” (p. 86). In one case, Kipling’s account of his meeting with Sir Edward Grey, the passage was found to be so incorrect that most of it was simply omitted in reprinting. It is highly probable that all of these changes in the published text were made only after Mrs. Kipling had seen and approved them. One may add that not every correction that she sent to the publisher was actually made. The statement that Kipling went to Canada in 1906 (p. 115) she corrected to 1907 in a note to the publisher in November 1936; at the same time, she changed Kipling’s reference to the Duke of Northumberland (p. 125) to Earl Percy (ms, Dalhousie University). For some reason neither correction was made, and the mis-statements are to be found in all printings of the book.

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III

We can never be sure, when we are speaking of the things “left out” of Something of Myself, whether they were left out by Kipling himself or were quietly omitted by Mrs. Kipling, the editor. Nor, even supposing that an omission in any given instance was Kipling’s, can we be sure that he would not have supplied it in revision. We are dealing with a text at several removes from what may be imagined as its author’s final intention: it had not been finished; * it had not been revised as Kipling surely would have revised it – that is, not once, but repeatedly and over a long time; and it had to pass through the hands of an editor, an editor who certainly had privileged information, but who had also the handicap of an intense personal interest in the story that Kipling had to tell.

The very structure of the book tells us pretty clearly, however, that Kipling’s main object was to give special prominence to the first half of his life: childhood; India; early success; Vermont; South Africa; Bateman’s – these are the organizing divisions of the narrative, which ranges beyond their limits only incidentally. Within those limits, as has already been said, Kipling (or the published book) omits almost everything in the way of personal crisis after the years of childhood: there is nothing of Flo Garrard, or of Mrs. Hill, of his courtship, of his illnesses and breakdowns, of his quarrels, or the afflicting deaths of friends, parents, children, to speak only of the merely factual omissions. The omission to describe his interior life is even more obvious. Yet the suffering of his childhood in the House of Desolation, and the labor of his Seven Years’ Hard in India are both brought out clearly; these two parts of his life are made more prominent than any other, while the Kipling of the middle and late years hardly exists as a subject in the pages of Something of Myself.

Kipling’s self-presentation thus rather oddly confirms the distortion in the popular idea of his life and work: that the more interesting part of both was complete by the turn of the century, more or less.

The older Kipling, if not much of his story is told, is nonetheless

* It is arguable, however, that the book belongs to the class of “complete fragments,” of which Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” and Macaulay’s History of England are distinguished instances.

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present everywhere in the book as a narrative voice, the personality that sees and judges. Some aspects of that personality are distinctly unattractive. It is often querulous, given to saying ill-tempered things about the English (“the inhabitants of that country never looked further than their annual seaside resorts”); or about radical politics (“pernicious varieties of safe sedition”); or about publishers (“one cannot get ahead of gentlemen of sound commercial instincts”). He can be unfairly contemptuous, as he is towards Emily Hobhouse, the self-sacrificing humanitarian, or stubbornly and sweepingly hostile, as he is towards the Irish (“their instincts of secrecy, plunder, and anonymous denunciation”) or the Americans (“frank, brutal decivilisation”). About Americans he had to admit some concessions and qualifications. He had, after all, taken great interest in his life in the United States. At one point he speaks of his more than four years in Vermont as an “unreal life, indoors and out” (p. 78), a perplexing enough judgment, but perhaps indicating Kipling’s recognition that not everything in his American experience could be subsumed under “frank, brutal decivilisation.”

There are other unattractive things evident in Something of Myself that we must take as belonging to the personality expressed in the book. Anti-Semitism shows up in Kipling’s remarks about “Israel” and its vocation to “abet disorder,” and there is a distinct lack of charity in such incidental remarks as that on Oscar Wilde – “the suburban Toilet-Club school favoured by the late Mr. Oscar Wilde” (p. 128: and what does “Toilet-Club” mean?). Frequently Kipling writes as though the world were largely made up of knaves. An exemplary instance is his account of the turn-about that the Civil and Military Gazette made over the Ilbert Bill when Kipling was a very young and, he says, a very naive newspaperman. After strongly opposing the Bill for a time, the CMG changes its tune. Kipling wants to know why, but is put off with “none of your dam’ business.” When he goes that night to the Club, he is, to his bewildered astonishment, hissed by everyone at the table: “Your dam’ rag has ratted over the Bill.” Then, he says, he put two and two together: his proprietors had sold out for a price. “A few months later one of my two chief proprietors received the decoration that made him a Knight.” And others were being paid for their betrayal too: “certain
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smooth Civilians” who had “seen good in the Government measure” were somehow “shifted out of the heat to billets in Simla” (pp. 31–32).

It is impossible now to know anything about the “smooth Civilians,” but Kipling’s insinuation about his proprietors is false. James Walker and George Allen, the two chief proprietors, did in fact receive knighthoods, but not until long after the affair of the Ilbert Bill in 1883 (Allen was knighted in 1897; Walker in 1903). Kipling must have known that neither Allen nor Walker had been knighted during his Indian years. He must also have known that the Ilbert Bill, as finally passed, had been gutted: the provision that had raised all the fuss among the English in India in the first place was given up, after which there was nothing to object to. But Kipling says nothing of this. He chooses instead to tell the story of the Ilbert Bill affair in such a way as to make one of his proprietors, at least, seem certainly to have bargained for honors at the cost of his principles. Since Kipling’s re-arrangement of the facts has the effect of “revealing” a conspiracy, it must have satisfied a grim and somewhat perverse wish on his part to discover such things. This is not, perhaps, surprising in a man writing at the end of a life that had been devoted to so many causes by then defeated or discredited, but it is not attractive.

In matters merely personal he shows a comparable tendency to prefer to see conspiracy or active malice at work when things go wrong, rather than accident, or incompetence, or any of the abundant other reasons for disappointment in an imperfect world. So, in the comic episode of The Times and its publishing the bogus Kipling poem called “The Old Volunteer,” Kipling is unable to take it as the sort of innocent prank that literary jokers are always trying to pull off: to put over a fake in the name of a famous author on the editors of a prestigious paper. It is hard to see that any more insidious motive was at work behind “The Old Volunteer.” Yet Kipling is determined to see it as a work of malice, and, moreover, of Jewish malice: so he combines paranoia with anti-Semitism in this instance.

These signs of hostility and mistrust are expressed in another way: his combative defensiveness of his private life. His private life was emphatically his private life, not to be known by or shared in by
anyone who had not been invited. This is certainly a reasonable and dignified position. But any effort to step over the line that he drew around himself always provoked a furious agitation and deep distress in Kipling, as though not an indecorum merely but a real aggression were threatened against him. His outburst against the reporters of Boston, briefly alluded to on p. 67, is an instance: and that goes back to the very early days of his fame. It is not to be expected that in writing an autobiography – even one restricted, as the sub-title says, to “My Friends Known and Unknown” – he could overcome something so deeply laid in his character.

Indeed, a part of the method of Something of Myself is not just concealment and omission but repeated reminders to the reader that only certain kinds of things are to be talked of. The notification begins with the title – only Something of myself is in question* – and is continued in most of the chapter titles: not his domestic life but “The Very-Own House”; not the inner history of his books, but “Working-Tools.” The most striking and oblique of these titles are “The Interregnum” and “The Committee of Ways and Means.” The first of these covers the little more than two years between Kipling’s return to England at the end of 1889 and his marriage at the beginning of 1892. These were the years of exciting and rapid fulfillment, when all the energies and abilities laboriously developed during the Seven Years’ Hard in India were suddenly released on an international public. Most men, in looking back on such a period and trying to find a name for it, would surely invent something positive. Not Kipling; it was merely an “interregnum.” But between whose reigns? That of Caroline, his wife, at one end, clearly enough; but whose was the first? his mother’s? Mrs. Hill’s? his Indian employers? However we answer that question, we are left with Kipling’s judgment that the brilliant years of his first fame were not a fruition, or a harvest, or a conquest, but only a time without a ruler and without a dynastic name.

An even more extravagant reduction and concealment of things is

* According to Lord Birkenhead, the title was given to the book by Lord Webb-Johnson after RK’s death; Birkenhead also states that Webb-Johnson “edited” the book (Rudyard Kipling, New York, 1978, p. 333). I have no evidence on these points beyond Birkenhead’s statement.
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accomplished by the phrase “The Committee of Ways and Means.” This, it develops, is Kipling’s image for his marriage, and it arises from the young husband and wife’s coping with their experience on honeymoon in Japan, when their bank fails and they are left stranded and nearly penniless in a far country. As a metaphor for marriage in its sense of a partnership against the world, it is by no means a bad one. But what a message of invincible reticence Kipling sends to his readers in such a figure!

One can hardly overlook the distortions, the reticences, the bad-tempered parts of Something of Myself, since they lie so obviously in the way of the reader. They have their value as contributing to the portrait of Kipling, but they are not what make the book worth reading. It is time now to turn to some of the things that do. One of the first is the descriptive mastery that was always Kipling’s and is found in this, his last work, in fully matured form. Scenes, gestures, impressions are rendered in a way that combines the utmost vividness with the utmost economy; the book is so rich in moments of this sort that one can choose only by a sortes kiplingianae. Open the book to p. 61, and there discover General Booth of the Salvation Army, glimpsed on the pier of the remotest southern port of New Zealand:

I saw him walking backward in the dusk over the uneven wharf, his cloak blown upwards, tulip-fashion, over his grey head, while he beat a tambourine in the face of the singing, weeping, praying crowd who had come to see him off.

Open again to p. 94, to the description of the wide country north of Bloemfontein, in the Orange Free State, where Kipling saw, for the first and only time, a live battle take place, in “a vacant world full of sunshine and distances, where now and again a single bullet sang to himself.”

Then to the left, almost under us, a small piece of hanging woodland filled and fumed with our shrapnel much as a man’s moustache fills with cigarette-smoke. It was most impressive and lasted for quite twenty minutes. Then silence; then a movement of men and horses from our side up the slope, and the hangar our guns had been hammering spat steady fire at them. More Boer ponies on more skylines; a last flurry of pom-poms on the right and a little frieze of far-off meck-tailed ponies, already out of rifle range.
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The selection and ordering of detail, and its transformation by a variety of surprising images, all work to create a richly complex vignette with what seems, deceptively, the most casual, impressionistic ease.

Open to p. 117, and there find Kipling at the other end of the world, in Stockholm, to receive the Nobel Prize; the Swedish king had died while Kipling and his wife were on their way to Stockholm, and they arrived to find the court in mourning:

Winter darkness in those latitudes falls at three o'clock, and it was snowing. One half of the vast acreage of the Palace sat in darkness, for there lay the dead King's body. We were conveyed along interminable corridors looking out into black quadrangles, where snow whitened the cloaks of the sentries, the breeches of old-time cannon, and the shot-piles alongside of them. Presently, we reached a living world of more corridors and suites all lighted up, but wrapped in that Court hush which is like no other silence on earth.

Unsympathetic readers may perhaps jib at the last phrase, seeing in it something of Kipling's notorious "knowingness," but it is not out of place from a man whose fame has doubtless taken him into more than one palace and who is about to receive the Nobel Prize; and even if it were, it would be only a small deduction from a passage so controlled and yet so brilliant.

Each of the passages that I have just quoted renders something seen in different parts of the world. They point to another of Kipling's outstanding qualities, fully at work in Something of Myself: the quick and sympathetic perception of local life. His move to Sussex in 1902, for example, showed how he could respond to novelty. Sussex opened up an English world he had not known before, and, as Something of Myself shows, he studied its types with affectionate curiosity: the poacher "by heredity and instinct," and his wife, who would "range through a past that accepted magic, witchcraft and love-philtres"; the "smuggling, sheep-stealing stock" who lived in the village, and who were, most of them, "artists and craftsmen, either in stone or timber, or wood-cutting, or drain-laying or - which is a gift - the aesthetic disposition of dirt."

He had been equally quick, earlier, to take the feel and flavor of his neighbors in Vermont, who lived in a country whose roads were
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"sketched in dirt" and whose farm houses were, often, "reduced to a stone-chimney stack or mere green dimples still held by an undefeated lilac-bush." His view of decaying rural New England mingled clear judgment and sympathy:

It would be hard to exaggerate the loneliness and sterility of life on the farms. . . . What might have become characters, powers and attributes perverted themselves in that desolation as cankered trees throw out branches akimbo, and strange faiths and cruelties, born of solitude to the edge of insanity, flourished like lichen on sick bark. (p. 70)

One can only regret that Kipling never ventured to write those stories about New England that he once hoped to do.

One of the strongest and most impressive elements in Kipling's view of life, wherever he found it, was his sense of how the present is bound up with the past. Sometimes this is based on obvious mementos, as in Lahore, where

The dead of all times were about us – in the vast forgotten Moslem cemeteries round the Station, where one's horse's hoof of a morning might break through to the corpse below; skulls and bones tumbled out of our mud garden walls, and were turned up among the flowers by the Rains. (p. 27)

Sometimes the perception is more fanciful, as when he writes of the Sussex workmen who came to dig a well for him that they were "two dark and mysterious Primitives" who had come "out of the woods that know everything and tell nothing." At its best, this perception of the past in the present, and of the present in the past, raises scenes and characters in Something of Myself to a new level of seriousness and dignity without falsification. In describing a story that he wrote for Pack of Pook's Hill but later discarded, Kipling suggests how past and present mingled for him:

I went off at once – not on Parnesius, but a story told in a fog by a petty Baltic pirate, who had brought his galley to Pevensey and, off Beachy Head – where in the War we heard merchant-ships being torpedoed – had passed the Roman fleet abandoning Britain to her doom. (p. 105)
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The imagined Baltic pirate reminds us that the Roman retreat from Britain opened the way for the German invasions that followed, just as the allusions to merchant ships being torpedoed remind us that the Germans had only yesterday been repelled from those same shores: scenes 1,500 years apart become versions of each other.

It is appropriate that Kipling devotes by far the most extended discussion of his literary work in Something of Myself to the two collections of stories about the English past, Puck of Pook’s Hill and Rewards and Fairies. In these, despite the fact that they are historical fictions, his most personal experience is to be found: the stories belong, many of them, to the small patch of England that he had elected to live in; they are told to his own children, who, he hoped, would inherit not only the place that he had made for them but the special understanding and sympathy that he had for it; a number of them are stories of artists of different kinds and hence fables of his own experience; and they express the living connection between past and present that is, I think, at one of the deepest levels of his imagination.

In his presentation of himself as an artist, Kipling does not talk about the imagination. He emphasizes instead the element of craftsmanship, and the link between the artist in literature and the artist in all sorts of crafts: stone cutters, masons (he was, we remember, a reverent Mason from an early time), hedgers and ditchers, horse-dealers, ship captains, soldiers, and anything else demanding a secure knowledge of how to do something. He did this not in any spirit of self-deprecation but out of a real pride in the sense of craft and commitment. The line he drew between those who were the real thing and those who only played at it was unyielding; as he wrote of his hard-earned status as a newspaperman in India, “the difference . . . between me and the vulgar herd who ‘write for papers’ was, as I saw it, the gulf that divides the beneficed clergyman from ladies and gentlemen who contribute pumpkins and dahlias to Harvest Festival decorations” (p. 42). Like a good craftsman, he paid special attention to his materials: “I made my own experiments in the weights, colours, perfumes, and attributes of words in relation to other words, either as read aloud so that they may hold the ear, or, scattered over the page, draw the eye” (pp. 43–44).
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At another level, Kipling chose to speak of himself as the servant of a “Daemon” in his art: the Daemon was something apart from him, a “not-self” who used Kipling as the channel of an invention and expression that Kipling himself was powerless to account for. This is the ancient Socratic notion of the artist, who may be the instrument of power but who is without knowledge. Kipling would not have objected to the somewhat condescending view of the artist that the idea implies. He appears to have been unaffectedly modest in the face of his gifts at the same time that he was genuinely proud of his participation in a craft. The two attitudes are not contradictory but complementary.*

We come closest to Kipling’s intimate idea of himself as an artist, I think, in his identification of himself with Browning’s Fra Lippo Lippi, an association that runs like a leitmotif through the earlier part of Something of Myself. If Kipling could not say, as Fra Lippo does, “I was a baby when my mother died / And father died and left me in the street,” his case was close enough; and in Mrs. Holloway he had an equivalent to “Old Aunt Lapaccia,” under whose hard tutelage Fra Lippo learned to read the signs of the world:

Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things and none the less
For admonition.

At school Kipling discovered the Browning of Men and Women, the collection in which “Fra Lippo Lippi” first appeared; and in describing the experience of that discovery at the end of his life in Something of Myself, he again claims kinship with Fra Lippo Lippi: “a not too remote – I dare to think – ancestor of mine” (p. 22). The opening lines of the poem stand at the head of the third chapter of Something of Myself, the “Seven Years’ Hard” of the Indian experience. The scene in Browning’s poem is of the discovery by the town guard of the unclerical Fra Lippo returning to the Medici Palace late at night after a revel in the city:

* In RK’s late story, “Proofs of Holy Writ,” Shakespeare, preparing to translate Isaiah for the King James Version, announces that “I wait on my Demon!” But he is shown throughout the story as a shrewd master of his craft.
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I am poor Brother Lippo by your leave.
You need not clap your torches to my face.

Kipling did not have to explain himself for his unseemly conduct, but, like Fra Lippo, he wants to explain the hard conditions of his apprenticeship and to justify his art by an appeal to his experience. The *apologia* of the priest would be a parallel to that of the journalist.

It is remarkable that Kipling identifies himself in each of the three formative phases of his life — childhood, school years, and Indian apprenticeship — with Fra Lippo. And so, when he has proven his abilities in India and has the pages of *The Week’s News* opened to him without restriction, he describes his response in the boast of Fra Lippo:

'Twas ask and have,
Choose, for more’s ready!

Fra Lippo, as Browning presents him, was the founder of artistic realism, intent on portraying the world and the flesh and the devil in all their variety and color, to the scandal of his churchly employers: “give us no more of body than shows soul,” they say. But Fra Lippo cannot be restrained from painting all that he sees, not out of a wish to scandalize but from a conviction of the good of the world: “it means intensely and means good” is his defense of whatever it may be that he renders. It is doubtful that Kipling, even the young Kipling, would have given an unqualified Yes to the peculiarly optimistic tenets of Fra Lippo’s realism. But he shared many of the assumptions that lay beneath the dominant realistic practice of the high Victorian age. And he quotes with approval, in *Something of Myself*, the aesthetic credo of “Fra Lippo Lippi”:

If you get simple beauty and naught else,
You get about the best thing God invents.

It is in the figure of the artist especially, rather than in the idea of art, that Kipling saw his closest relation to Fra Lippo: both were keen observers, sharpened by personal suffering; both delighted in the variety of the world; both were exhilarated by the act of offending against official notions of decorum; both took the most intense pleasure in the exercise of their art; both knew they possessed
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a talent far beyond the ordinary, and that it should not lie buried. Kipling could hardly have put it more modestly when he hoped to be recognized as among the remote kindred of Fra Lippo Lippi: he was close kin — and from the upper branch of the family.

Kipling’s subject in Something of Myself was his “working life” only. What idea did he have of that as a whole? The only explicit venture that he makes towards answering this question is curiously passive. “It seems to me,” he announces in the opening sentence, “that every card in my working life has been dealt me in such a manner that I had but to play it as it came” (p. 3). His part, then, was only to know the rules of the game being played; and if he had good cards, then that was to be ascribed, with tranquil piety, to “Allah the Dispenser of Events.”

Games, and the idea of playing, are, in fact, quite prominent among the figures that run through Kipling’s work. The polo match in “The Maltese Cat” is a perfectly serious version of working life; the maneuverings between boys and masters in Stalky & Co. make up an elaborate game; the picaresque experiences of Kim are all an apprenticeship that will qualify him to take part in the game of Imperial politics — the “great game.” One could name many other such versions of game-playing to be found in the stories and poems. Card-playing, however, is not very frequent, nor does it provide for Kipling the sort of game that can be elaborated into a figure of the moral life. That he should choose it to represent his own working life is no doubt a determined understatement, intended to make clear at once that there was to be no boasting, no self-congratulation, in his version of his own accomplishments. In this respect, it fits readily with Kipling’s dependence upon his Daemon, who, like good luck in a card game, cannot be compelled but only waited for. The figure of the cards recurs in Something of Myself, but it is not really insisted upon. His years of obscure toil in the provincial remoteness of the Punjab were evidence, Kipling says, of “how discreetly the cards were being dealt me” (p. 41): only thus, he thinks, could he have learned his trade with so little risk of being hurt or spoiled. When fame does come, he is already used to the game: “I took, as a matter of course, the fantastic cards that Fate was pleased to deal me” (p. 47). Kipling’s final use of the figure occurs after he describes how he
discovered the rich layers of history that surrounded him in Sussex. Evidences of Phoenicians, Romans, Armada times, ghosts, shadows, and all the “Old things of our Valley” converged to produce the stories of *Puck of Pook’s Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies*: “You see how patiently the cards were stacked and dealt into my hands?” (p. 109).

The mild notion of “fate” implicit in the card-playing figure is perhaps no more than would arise from any perception of pattern in one’s life: the pattern is not so much created by one’s efforts as discovered afterwards. The idea is given a new twist in a passage towards the end of the book, when Kipling makes a rare excursion into his dream life. He has been writing, disapprovingly, of the temptation to dive after “psychical experiences,” and then, in spite of his disapproval, offers one of his own, a dream about his being at some inexplicable ceremony and of someone’s coming to speak to him. Six weeks later, in actuality, Kipling finds himself at a ceremony in Westminster Abbey to honor the war dead, and there recognizes the images of his dream made real. “But how, and why, had I been shown an unreleased roll of my life-film?” (p. 126).

How seriously should we take that metaphor? Are our lives already on film? Are they scenarios already written, cast, acted out, and stored? Life, then, is solely and simply the process of developing the images already laid up in the film? Kipling, of course, affirms nothing; yet his choosing to tell this story at all is strongly suggestive. He touches lightly on the mysteries of perception in a few other places in *Something of Myself*, as when, early in the book, he wonders how he could have associated the name “Cumnor” with “sorrow and darkness and a raven that ‘flapped its wings’” without knowing the poem that expressed these things (p. 7):

> But how and where I first heard the lines that cast the shadow is beyond me — unless it be that the brain holds everything that passes within reach of the senses, and it is only ourselves who do not know this.

The thought is not pursued.

Kipling’s attraction towards the “occult,” to the imaginative persuasion that we are surrounded by mystery and that the overwhelming truth of one’s life is already determined but hidden, to be
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revealed only in tantalizing glimpses, is written out in so many forms and in so many stories that it would be impossible even to enumerate the evidence here. In T.S. Eliot’s words, “Kipling knew something of the things which are underneath, and of the things which are beyond the frontier.” I make the point only to draw attention to what might be called the final reticence in Something of Myself: Kipling’s unwillingness to acknowledge and to develop for his “friends known and unknown” what must have been the chief form of religious experience that he knew. Without the evidence of his other work, such hints and light breaths of suggestion as occur in Something of Myself would certainly not seem to ask to be taken seriously.

Biographers can, no doubt, go wrong in their work: they can be kept in ignorance of essential facts; they can get the emphasis wrong; they can misread, misinterpret, misjudge. It is arguable, however, that no autobiographer can go wrong: every mistake, distortion, suppression, or invention has its expressive value and contributes to the self-definition of the autobiographer. The truth of autobiography is whatever the subject chooses to tell, and if he tells much that did not happen and does not tell much that did, we are not therefore misinformed. To get the full expressiveness of this indirect sort of revelation, however, it is obviously necessary to know something of what did or did not happen and might or might not have been put in. Since we have at least some such knowledge about Kipling, his autobiography has both direct and indirect evidence for the reconstruction of the man in the mind of the reader. It is also the work of a master of his craft.

IV

In annotating this edition of Something of Myself I have tried to identify names, places, and events, to ascertain dates, to provide information about Kipling’s writings, and to call attention, at appropriate places, to material omissions in the narrative. I have also tried, with incomplete success, to identify the sources of Kipling’s quotations, but I have not made any attempt to comment on his richly allusive style. When he writes that “My telegrams were

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given priority by sweating R.E. sergeants” (p. 88) or that the cowkeeper’s son “was on terms of terrifying familiarity with the herd-bull, whom he would slap on the nose to make him walk discomposedly” (p. 119), the temptation is strong to refer the reader to 11 Henry IV and to Sir James Melville’s Memoirs. But to do this on every occasion would be to swell the notes intolerably. I have therefore refrained, and leave to the reader the pleasure of tracing the rich current of allusion that flows strongly just below the surface of Kipling’s prose.

I have pleasure in acknowledging my dependence, as an editor of Something of Myself, upon the work of my predecessor, the late Roger Lancelyn Green, whose notes on the book in R.E. Harbord’s Readers’ Guide to Kipling, vn (1972), 3359–415, have materially simplified my task; in some cases, as in the identification of Kipling’s childhood reading, Mr. Green has solved puzzles to which he alone has had the key. I would also like to thank a knot of friends from the Kipling Society, who have helped me in this as in my other work on Kipling: Lisa Lewis, Margaret Newsom, John Shearman, and George Webb.

The text of this edition is that of the first printing of Something of Myself, London, Macmillan, 1937. The book was reprinted several times during 1937, allowing opportunity for the correction of such mistakes as had been noticed by Mrs. Kipling and by others (see above, p. xxi). In 1937 it was added as the final volume to the Outward Bound Edition in the United States (Scribners, 1897–1937); in 1938, to the Sussex Edition in England (Macmillan, 1937–38). There does not seem to be any alteration of the text after the date of the Sussex Edition, but the number of changes between then and the first printing is considerable. No complete collation of the various printings has been made, but I have called attention in the notes to such changes as I have detected by an incomplete comparison.

Kipling’s diary is reproduced by kind permission of the National Trust and the Houghton Library; and the illustrations to “Baa Baa, Black Sheep” by courtesy of the Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

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