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Kipling ~ The Cambridge Manuscript

Since 1913 Magdalene College, Cambridge, has elected a succession of outstanding figures in literature and the arts to Honorary Fellowships of the College. On the occasion of his election in 1932, Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) presented the College with a manuscript poem entitled ‘To the Companions’ which celebrated Magdalene’s best-known graduate, Samuel Pepys. After his death, his widow, Caroline Kipling, bequeathed the present collection of manuscript poems – many of them redrafted and corrected, and thus giving insights into Kipling’s creative process – to the College. The bound volume comprises some twenty-eight poems in all (including multiple versions of key stanzas of ‘The White Man’s Burden’), together with a fragment of an unpublished poem entitled ‘The Song of the Engines’. Its publication in the Cambridge Library Collection makes the poems available to the scholar, the Kipling enthusiast, and the general reader.

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KIPLING

THE CAMBRIDGE MANUSCRIPT

The 28 Autograph Poems Presented to
Magdalene College, Cambridge



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07222-9 - The Cambridge Manuscript: The 28 Autograph Poems Presented to Magdalene College, Cambridge
Kipling

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge, CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108072229

© in this compilation The Master, Fellows and Scholars
of Magdalene College, Cambridge, 2015

ISBN 978-1-108-07222-9 Paperback

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FOREWORD

Since 1913 Magdalene College, Cambridge, has elected a succession of outstanding figures in Literature and the Arts to Honorary Fellowships of the College. The first of these was Thomas Hardy, followed by Rudyard Kipling and T.S. Eliot, Benjamin Britten, the typographer Will Carter and the Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney.

On the occasion of his election in 1932 Kipling presented the College with a manuscript poem entitled 'To the Companions' which celebrated Magdalene's best-known graduate, Samuel Pepys. After his death in 1936 Kipling's widow, Caroline Kipling, bequeathed a substantial collection of manuscript poems to the College. Two further benefactions followed from the Kipling family: the portrait by William Strang R.A. painted in 1913, which had probably been commissioned by Max Aitken (later Lord Beaverbrook) as a gift to the Kiplings; and the endowment of the Kipling Fellowship begun by Caroline and completed by her daughter Elsie.

This volume reproduces the Magdalene Kipling, a manuscript which is casual in its doodles and scribbles yet monumental in its significance for our understanding of Kipling as a poet. The handwriting speaks to us of the painstaking and minute act of composition, of the careful and extensive revision, and of the moments of relaxation when the poet jots down a few ideas or draws on a spare corner of his paper.

The manuscript is written on loose sheets, mostly of blue India paper. These have been mounted and bound into an album. Someone, possibly Caroline's secretary, has typed a partial list of contents. The volume comprises some twenty-eight poems in all (including multiple versions of key stanzas of 'The White Man's Burden') together with a fragment of an unpublished poem entitled 'The Song of the Engine'.

For the first time, this facsimile reproduces the manuscript in its entirety, appending the Magdalene College autograph of 'To the Companions'. The Strang portrait forms the frontispiece. In addition to the original typed list of contents there is an appendix, which lists the poems and guides the reader to modern editions.

This volume is printed in the Cambridge Library Collection by permission of the Master and Fellows of Magdalene College.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to thank the staff of the Pepys Library who have worked to bring this project to fruition over a number of years: in particular, Sophie Connor, Aude Fitzsimons, Phillipa Grimstone and Catherine Sutherland, as well as the College Archivist Dr Ronald Hyam. Dr Jeffrey Lewins generously encouraged the production of this facsimile from the very start. Thanks also to our photographer, Maciej Pawlikowski, for his expertise and advice.

At an early stage, the plans for this volume benefited greatly from the involvement of the late Dr Andrew Brown, without whose energetic support it would never have moved on from being just a promising idea. Finally, I should like to record my thanks – for their infinite patience with a long-running project, as well as for their care and design skills – to the Cambridge Library Collection team at Cambridge University Press.

M.E.J. Hughes
Pepys Librarian

Cambridge University Press

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Rudyard Kipling, a portrait by William Strang (1913).
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