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A Kipling Chronology

HAROLD OREL

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To Larry and Joan McCaffrey

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General Editor's Preface

Most biographies are ill adapted to serve as works of reference – not surprisingly so, since the biographer is likely to regard his function as the devising of a continuous and readable narrative, with excursions into interpretation and speculation, rather than a bald recital of facts. There are times, however, when anyone reading for business or pleasure needs to check a point quickly or to obtain a rapid overview of part of an author's life or career; and at such moments turning over the pages of a biography can be a time-consuming and frustrating occupation. The present series of volumes aims at providing a means whereby the chronological facts of an author's life and career, rather than needing to be prised out of the narrative in which they are (if they appear at all) securely embedded, can be seen at a glance. Moreover, whereas biographies are often, and quite understandably, vague over matters of fact (since it makes for tediousness to be for ever enumerating details of dates and places), a chronology can be precise whenever it is possible to be precise.

Thanks to the survival, sometimes in very large quantities, of letters, diaries, notebooks and other documents, as well as to thoroughly researched biographies and bibliographies, this material now exists in abundance for many major authors. In the case of, for example, Dickens, we can often ascertain what he was doing in each month and week, and almost on each day, of his prodigiously active working life; and the student of, say, *David Copperfield* is likely to find it fascinating as well as useful to know just when Dickens was at work on each part of that novel, what other literary enterprises he was engaged in at the same time, whom he was meeting, what places he was visiting, and what were the relevant circumstances of his personal and professional life. Such a chronology is not, of course, a substitute for a biography; but its arrangement, in combination with its index, makes it a much more convenient tool for this kind of purpose; and it may be acceptable as a form of 'alternative' biography, with its own distinctive advantages as well as its obvious limitations.

Since information relating to an author's early years is usually scanty and chronologically imprecise, the opening section of

some volumes in this series groups together the years of childhood and adolescence. Thereafter each year, and usually each month, is dealt with separately. Information not readily assignable to a specific month or day is given as a general note under the relevant year or month. Each volume also contains a bibliography of the principal sources of information. In the chronology itself, the sources of many of the more specific items, including quotations, are identified, in order that the reader who wishes to do so may consult the original contexts.

NORMAN PAGE

Introduction

Preparing an Author Chronology for Rudyard Kipling is a more complicated task than compiling one for an author who, from choice or because of limited funds (or whatever reason might apply), travelled moderately, moved quietly within a narrow circle of acquaintances, and maintained relatively uncomplicated relationships with a very small number of publishers. Kipling wrote about an unusually large number of visits to foreign countries, including, very close to the end of his life, Brazil; of his fellow professionals, only H. Rider Haggard comes close to matching him in the number of journeys made to far-flung corners of the globe. Kipling met and cultivated close friendships with scores of world leaders. And because of the cheap paper editions of Kipling's works, his widespread popularity throughout the world, and the absence of copyright protection in the United States, his publications have 'a more interesting and tortuous history than those of any other contemporary author'.*

I have tried to identify, factually and in as straightforward a manner as possible, key happenings in Kipling's life that help to explain the richness of his subject matter and the wide range of his allusions. It should be made clear, from the outset, that Kipling's posthumously published memoir, *Something of Myself*, valuable though it is as a final statement (for example, about the way in which he inked out words and sentences in successive drafts of his stories), is vague on dates; it is surprisingly incomplete as a record of key figures and events; and it sometimes offers us an inaccurate rendering of matters which we can check elsewhere. But, then, Kipling never had the time he needed to complete or edit the 'autobiography', such as it is, and perforce we must be satisfied to have it at all.

I have not deemed it necessary to identify every story in a collection, or to review the contents of individual volumes,

* A.W. Keats (ed.), in James McG. Stewart, *Rudyard Kipling: A Bibliographical Catalogue* (Toronto: Dalhousie University Press and University of Toronto Press, 1959) p. vi.

because such information is readily available elsewhere. However, major works are listed, year by year, as they came out. Important meetings and introductions are cited, though it would, for example, be tedious to list every encounter between Kipling and Cecil Rhodes, even if the information were available (and it is not). Moreover, because my emphasis is on Kipling as a creative artist, details of his restless travels in France, Belgium and Switzerland, travels that occupied fully two to six months of every year both before and after the First World War, have been kept to a minimum. Kipling's conscientious work for the Imperial War Graves Commission, the multiplying problems affecting the health of both Carrie and himself, and the speeches, banquets and honorary degrees of his final decades, have been viewed as less important, in this Chronology, than his earlier adventures and achievements. I believe that this emphasis is the one desired by most readers.

Only a few abbreviations are used, most notably RK for Rudyard Kipling, JLK for John Lockwood Kipling, and AMK for Alice Macdonald Kipling. Titles of books have always been spelled out. (Kipling wrote so many books that many readers would find it difficult to keep in mind what each set of initials might stand for.)

An Author Chronology, of course, can be very long indeed. At the University of Sussex, Brighton, four collections of Kipling materials are of particular interest to those who would like to accumulate additional materials for the study of Kipling's life: Kipling's own personal papers, the Baldwin Papers, the Carrington Papers, and the Hollings Collection of press cuttings. The first – the Kipling archive from Wimpole Hall – fills some 31 manuscript boxes, $16 \times 11 \times 4$ inches, and the press cuttings take up 21 volumes (most of them of folio size). These collections also contain hundreds of letters on personal, social and literary matters; an edition of the letters to Kipling's children, *'O Beloved Kids'*, has been prepared and published by Elliot L. Gilbert (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), and Thomas Pinney is preparing a multi-volume edition of selected correspondence for Macmillan, to be published in the near future. The availability of these collections, recently opened to Kipling scholars, guarantees a continuing stream of publications that, inevitably, will modify our view of Kipling the man, and our understanding of what he accomplished. Also, there exist a

number of other valuable collections of Kipling materials, such as the Doubleday Collection in the Princeton University Library; these deserve, and will get, fuller treatment than they have thus far received.

Here, in a convenient and (I hope) a readable format, is a chronicle of major events in Rudyard Kipling's life.

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