

THE STEWART KIPLING COLLECTION AND SOME NOTES ON ITS SIGNIFICANCE

By A. W. YEATS

THE James McGregor Stewart Collection of the works of Rudyard Kipling was gathered quietly over a period of nearly fifty years. No publicity heralded its major acquisitions, and little was known about it, even by the near neighbours. Dalhousie University's announcement of the gift of the collection evoked surprise at the time of Mr. Stewart's death, but only recently has the importance of the collection become known. Its research possibilities will not become fully clear for another generation.

Several factors contributed to Mr. Stewart's dream of building the finest Kipling collection possible. First was his love for the Kipling works themselves. His was not merely an acquisitive spirit — primarily, it was appreciative. He read and took delight in every book he bought. Moreover, he had a scholar's mind which found the study of bibliography stimulating. When applied to Kipling study, this interest became the avocational leisure-time pursuit of his mature years. His own use of the collection indicates its significance. For over twenty years he was at work compiling a comprehensive bibliography of the Kipling printings, the majority of which are represented by items in his own library.¹

Equally important as his love for the Kipling works and his interest in bibliography was a fortunate accident of birth. He was twenty-four years Kipling's junior, a fact of genuine significance.

A substantial collection, or even a fine collection, of any author's works may be built by the author's contemporaries, but a definitive collection is more likely to be built a generation or so following a writer's lifetime than during it. This lapse of three or four decades allows the transitory and topical interest in an author and his generation to pass, it allows a writer's work to have made some artistic impact on the work of succeeding authors, and it allows the major collector to have specific advantages tipped in his favour.

The first of these is that sufficient time will have elapsed for scholars to have brought out bibliographies to aid the specialized collector in building his library. Publication of bibliographical

¹ His bibliography of the works of Rudyard Kipling is now being edited for publication and will shortly be issued by the Dalhousie University Press and the University of Toronto Press.

data, critical review by scholars and the reading public, and even attack upon accepted positions must have passed before the facts of any author's printings become clear. This point is of special importance if the author collected is obscure or if his works are more than ordinarily voluminous. With Kipling these considerations become almost startling. His publishing career extended over sixty-three years (1881-1944). Nearly four thousand separate printings of his works exist, and his publications are spread, in a literal sense, over six continents. His printings in India, England, and the United States are of major importance; those of South Africa, South America, New Zealand, and Australia are less so.

Secondly, nearly all great collections are formed by amalgamating smaller ones. During an author's lifetime he has his special devotees who collect his works, and each is likely to come by his share of rare or unique materials. The author dies, his vogue passes, and in time the heirs of the early collectors place their holdings on the market. The Stewart Collection was formed not only from materials from the current market, but important blocks of its holdings came out of the dispersed libraries of earlier Kipling collectors: Ellis Ames Ballard, George Barr McCutcheon, Archibald Firestone, John Quinn, E. W. Martindell, Frank Brewer Bemis, and Rudolph August Witthaus.

Another advantage of the later collector is that one or two generations of the reading public will have passed judgment on the merits of the material collected, and, while by no means infallible, considered general opinion is usually a reliable indicator of those works destined to endure. The *consensus gentium* may have little affinity with the voice of God, but for a rule of thumb in a work-a-day world, man's collective judgment is of value even to a collector. He has ample suggestion where he should concentrate his energies and his investment. Also, if blessed with sound literary judgment, he has the personal satisfaction of knowing that his specialized holdings will eventually confirm public taste, or, failing that, will serve as the foundation for revaluation.

Mr. Stewart, as a collector, appears not to have been motivated so much by fondness for specific Kipling titles as by an effort to build a collection of great academic value. Most collectors concentrate upon an author's books, his manuscripts, and association copies of his books. His first appearances in newspapers and magazines are usually neglected because such materials are bulky and difficult to house. They are, in general, unsightly, and they present a distinct fire hazard. Mr. Stewart,

none-the-less, tried to acquire every link from the author's manuscript down to the last revised text published during the author's life-time. He employed students for several years to search the copyright records of the British Museum and the Library of Congress. With information thus derived, he sought every periodical first appearance. Consequently, he has brought together under one roof more of the magazine printings of Kipling's works than exist in any other library. Loss through bomb damage in the periodical section of the British Museum makes many rare and out-of-print English periodicals in the Stewart collection unique. Nearly five hundred Kipling periodical items form a part of the collection, and the exact number and nature of these first printings will not be determined until the task of cataloguing is complete.

Young Kipling began his literary efforts with the editorship of his school paper, *The United Services College Chronicle*, and this experience was followed by seven years of work for English language newspapers in India (1883-1890). No library possesses anything like complete files of the four Indian newspapers to which he contributed — *The Civil and Military Gazette*, *The Pioneer*, *The Pioneer News*, and *The Week's News*. Only odd copies of these papers exist in any public library on this side of the Atlantic, and no report has ever been made concerning European holdings. It is thought, however, that complete files are non-existent. The Stewart Collection is indeed fortunate in having complete files of the *Chronicle* and relatively complete files of both *The Pioneer* and *The Week's News*. Moreover, these last two files have very close association with the author himself; they were his own.

Further strengthening its position as the major library for Kipling textual study are its holdings of special copyright issues. These items represent the first published text in England and in the United States of many Kipling works produced after 1891, the date of adoption of the International Copyright Law. Both the Library of Congress and the British Museum have virtually complete files for their respective countries of these special Kipling copyright printings, but no library has complete files of both. These materials do not overlap, and the two files are vastly divergent in content. The Stewart Collection is the only library that comes near to completing both series. Over one hundred such special printings are in the collection, some eighteen of which represent English copyright issues—some of the rarest printed items in the whole of Kipling bibliography.

Of the books in the collection, much could be written.

Nearly twelve hundred first editions and association copies are represented. These comprise roughly ninety per cent of the items in the known Kipling bibliography, and, correspondingly, represent the bulk of the collection. In addition, there are roughly three hundred volumes devoted to Kiplingiana, bibliography, and biography. There is a comprehensive group of the many U.S. piracies, as well as the many unauthorized English private printings. In round numbers, some two hundred volumes are devoted to Kipling items in translation — French, Russian, German, Czech, and Scandinavian language versions being the most common.

The materials thus described by no means exhaust the Stewart holdings, but something of the general nature and significance of the items has been indicated. These volumes now begin their service as a memorial and a gift twice given — once from the pen of the author who wrote them, and once from the hand of the man who possessed the instinct to love them and the generosity to share them.