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CLASSICS

RUDYARD KIPLING

THE MAN WHO  
WOULD BE KING  
AND OTHER STORIES



THE WORLD'S CLASSICS  
THE MAN WHO WOULD  
BE KING  
AND OTHER STORIES

RUDYARD KIPLING (1865-1936) was born in Bombay in December 1865. He returned to India from England in the autumn of 1882, shortly before his seventeenth birthday, to work as a journalist first on the *Civil and Military Gazette* in Lahore, then on the *Pioneer* at Allahabad. The poems and stories he wrote over the next seven years laid the foundation of his literary reputation, and soon after his return to London in 1889 he found himself world-famous. Throughout his life his works enjoyed great acclaim and popularity, but he came to seem increasingly controversial because of his political opinions, and it has been difficult to reach literary judgements unclouded by partisan feeling. This series, published half a century after Kipling's death, provides the opportunity for reconsidering his remarkable achievement.

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THE WORLD'S CLASSICS



RUDYARD KIPLING

*The Man who would  
be King*

*and Other Stories*



*Edited with an Introduction by*

LOUIS L. CORNELL

Oxford New York

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford New York  
Athens Auckland Bangkok Bombay  
Calcutta Cape Town Dar es Salaam Delhi  
Florence Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi  
Kuala Lumpur Madras Madrid Melbourne  
Mexico City Nairobi Paris Singapore  
Taipei Tokyo Toronto

and associated companies in  
Berlin Ibadan

Oxford is a trade mark of Oxford University Press

Introduction, Note on the Text and Explanatory Notes  
© Louis L. Cornell, 1987

General Preface, Select Bibliography, and Chronology  
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First published as a World's Classics paperback 1987

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Kipling, Rudyard, 1865-1936.

*The man who would be king and other stories.*

(The World's classics)

Bibliography: p.

I. Cornell, Louis L. II. Title.

PR4854.M16 1987 823'.8 86-16444

ISBN 0-19-281674-8 (pbk.)

11 13 15 17 19 20 18 16 14 12

Printed in Great Britain by  
BPC Paperbacks Ltd.  
Aylesbury, Bucks

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## GENERAL PREFACE

RUDYARD KIPLING (1865–1936) was for the last decade of the nineteenth century and at least the first two decades of the twentieth the most popular writer in English, in both verse and prose, throughout the English-speaking world. Widely regarded as the greatest living English poet and story-teller, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, recipient of honorary degrees from the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Durham, McGill, Strasbourg, and the Sorbonne, he also enjoyed popular acclaim that extended far beyond academic and literary circles.

He stood, it can be argued, in a special relation to the age in which he lived. He was primarily an artist, with his individual vision and techniques, but his was also a profoundly representative consciousness. He seems to give expression to a whole phase of national experience, symbolizing in appropriate forms (as Lascelles Abercrombie said the epic poet must do) the 'sense of the significance of life he [felt] acting as the unconscious metaphysic of the time'.<sup>1</sup> He is in important ways a spokesman for his age, with its sense of imperial destiny, its fascinated contemplation of the unfamiliar world of soldiering, its confidence in engineering and technology, its respect for craftsmanship, and its dedication to Carlyle's gospel of work. That age is one about which many Britons—and to a lesser extent Americans and West Europeans—now feel an exaggerated sense of guilt; and insofar as Kipling was its spokesman, he has become our scapegoat. Hence, in part at least, the tendency in recent decades to dismiss him so contemptuously, so unthinkingly, and so mistakenly. Whereas if we approach him more historically, less hysterically, we shall find in this very relation to his age a cultural phenomenon of absorbing interest.

Here, after all, we have the last English author to appeal to readers of all social classes and all cultural groups, from

<sup>1</sup> Cited in E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Epic Strain in the English Novel*, London, 1958, p. 15.

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