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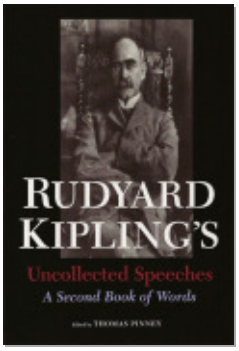
Introduction



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Introduction

FEW READERS OF KIPLING will think of him as a maker of speeches, yet he made them at fairly regular intervals throughout his working life: he gave the earliest on record when he was still only seventeen years old; the latest, in the last year of his life. Kipling was famous at a very young age, and was naturally sought after to ornament a variety of public occasions: political dinners, Navy League meetings, elections, dedications of buildings, academic ceremonies. He also had a wide range of interests and was willing to do something to promote them: naval preparedness, imperial trade, opposition to home rule, ships, automobiles, airships, and transport in general, medicine in all its branches. Often, as a famous man, he was compelled to make at least some brief remarks when he found himself at a public dinner and could not refuse the insistent cry of "speech, speech." At other times he produced carefully studied exercises, as when he received an honorary degree at the University of Edinburgh, or on his installation as Rector of the University of St. Andrews. Besides making formal addresses at such times, Kipling had also to attend luncheons and dinners, to meet academic dignitaries and to mingle with students; such encounters produced a variety of informal utterances from Kipling, many of which were eagerly taken down by the press.

Some of his recorded remarks can hardly sustain the fixity of print, but even these slight things contribute to fill in our idea of Kipling in his many and varied relations. So do the things we learn of in connection with the speeches; how, for example, it made him "very proud" to have returned to his old school in 1894 "as a big man"; how he amused the members of the Tavern Club in 1895 by reciting "The Song of the Banjo," or the Society of Medical Phonographers in 1897 by reciting "Mandalay"; how he went about distributing pajamas and pillow-slips to the Cape Town hospitals during the Boer War; how he ad-libbed "asides" when passing trains interrupted his speech at the Sydenham rifle range; how he lectured the passengers on the *Empress of Ireland* as their ship sailed up the St. Lawrence; or how, in the last months of his life, he was eagerly interested in talking to Canadian schoolchildren visiting England. There are many touches of this kind.

It is interesting, too, to learn something about Kipling's delivery—voice, manner, gesture. He had, we are told, "a light, clear voice." He spoke rapidly, and without oratorical gesture—"he talks rather than orates." Another

[18.119.131.72] Project MUSE (2024-04-24 07:09 GMT)

observer speaks of hearing Kipling in his "briskest and blithest conversational vein." But if he was not given to oratorical intonations and gestures, he prepared himself carefully. Coulson Kernahan reports that Kipling had memorized his Mansion House speech in 1915 (collected in the Sussex Edition as "The Soul of a Battalion") but that when the blaze of a photographer's flashbulb momentarily disconcerted him he at once pulled a manuscript from his pocket and went on by reading. Rider Haggard said of the speech that Kipling made in 1920 to the Royal Society of St. George (collected in *A Book of Words* as "England and the English") that "evidently he had learned it by heart in his usual fashion." Rapid, unrhetorical, carefully composed—evidently Kipling had little of the dramatic style of the spellbinding speaker. The two known recordings of Kipling speaking—late speeches recorded by the BBC on 12 July 1933 and 6 May 1935—confirm the "light, clear voice" but are not at all rapid; he speaks deliberately, with carefully placed emphases.

The formal speeches, whether long or short, always show at least something of the marks of a master of the language and are always, therefore, worth reading. They have almost nothing to say about Kipling's work as an artist. Since Kipling did not talk about his art in his conversation, nor in his letters, nor, directly, in any of his published writing, we can hardly expect to find him doing so in his speeches. Instead, the familiar themes are such political concerns as the character of imperial relations (the speeches on his Canadian tour in 1907); the need for military training in the speeches before the war; the appeal for complete commitment during the war and—increasingly—the awfulness of the Germans. After the war no clear theme emerges. In the speeches that he chose to collect in *A Book of Words*, the bond between France and England and the need to preserve it against all threat is prominent, as it is in the speech of 22 May 1922, collected here. Other speeches touch upon the memory of the war in various ways.

In his letters, and, no doubt, in his private conversation, political questions frequently worked Kipling up to say extravagant things; they have that effect in his speeches too, even if their delivery was not in the fire-eating style. The two extreme instances in this collection are the speeches at Tunbridge Wells in 1914 and the speech at Folkestone in 1918.

Apart from politics, which dominates, the range of interest in these speeches is quite diverse: hospital supply in Cape Town, the needs of the Navy, early automobile travel, the history of Burwash, air safety, the design of war graves, military bands, medicine—the list suggests the variety of interests that Kipling has always been known for. It is not pretended, however, that this collection is published for its intrinsic interest; it is published be-

cause the items it contains are by Rudyard Kipling, a fact that is certainly the first claim they have upon our attention. They belong to his work, though an admittedly minor part of it, and they help to fill in the record of a great writer's activity.

Since few, if any, of the titles under which these speeches first appeared in print were given them by Kipling, I have usually provided a title of my own devising that aims only to give a clear identification.

As with the titles, so with the punctuation. I have regularized some details (e.g., closing quotations when only one quotation mark has been provided), but other irregularities have been allowed to stand. Such details are, I think, too small to interfere with the convenience of the reader, and to the student of the history of the language they may be of some interest.

It should be recalled that Kipling published a selection of his speeches in 1928 under the title *A Book of Words: Selections from Speeches and Addresses Delivered between 1906 and 1927*. Hence this volume of Kipling's uncollected speeches is called *A Second Book of Words*.