INTRODUCTION

RUDYARD KIPLING’S journalistic writing about America occurred in two periods. He recorded his journey in 1889 from the west coast to the east in numerous travel letters collected a decade later in From Sea to Sea. Then in 1892–1896 he lived in Vermont and wrote his impressions in three articles exclusively about America and several others about his honeymoon journey to Japan with his American wife. These included passages about America and were collected in Letters of Travel (1920). He also wrote fiction and verse with an American setting, notably Captains Courageous, “A Walking Delegate” and “.007” (The Day’s Work, 1897).

There is something fortuitous about Kipling’s portrait of America. After working almost seven years as a journalist in India, he knew he had real talent for fiction and verse. By 1888 he had published Departmental Ditties, Plain Tales from the Hills and six slim volumes of stories, all widely praised by English readers across the Raj. He was determined to return to England and establish himself as an author.

Then circumstances (or Fate, as he believed) conspired to send him the long way home. During his last two years in India, he transferred from the Civil and Military Gazette in Lahore to the Pioneer in Allahabad (“India’s greatest and most important paper,” he said). There Samuel A. (Aleck) Hill and his wife Edmonia (Ted) befriended him and invited him to stay as a guest in their house. Hill was a meteorologist, a professor of physical science at Muir College and a devoted photographer. Kipling called Mrs. Hill “a brilliantly clever American woman,” seven years his senior. She became his muse and confidante, encouraging both his creative impulse and his intense attachment to her that led to his addressing love letters to her, ostensibly about another woman. The Hills asked him to accompany them to England by way of Southeast Asia, China, Japan and the United States. He needed no convincing since he had already envisioned such a trip. They left India on 9 March 1889 and reached San Francisco on May 28. The Hills proceeded directly to Mrs. Hill’s home near Pittsburgh while Kipling toured the West, rejoining them on July 24 in Beaver, northwest of Pittsburgh.
The seven-month detour en route from India to England led to thirty-nine “letters of travel” — a widely used expression during the Victorian period and beyond when British globetrotters published their impressions of most nations and races on earth. He omitted two when he collected them in From Sea to Sea (1899). These letters together with his savings paid for his journey. He wrote them for money, not fame, which may explain why he disparaged them a decade later. He had contracted with the Pioneer to post them from various destinations. He routinely took notes along the way and then finished his manuscripts during stopovers. For example, he was revising material about Japan while in Livingston, Montana, and material about San Francisco in Wellesley, Massachusetts. He wrote final drafts in leather bound manifold books interleaved with carbon. Original pages went to India where they were published in both the Pioneer and the allied Weekly News. The copies he kept and later gave to Ted Hill. These holograph copies of his reports from the Far East (but not from the United States) found their way finally to the Huntington Library in California.

There are twenty “letters” devoted to America, most of which appeared in the Pioneer between 23 November 1889 and 1 April 1890. The first one (“Shows How I Came to America Before My Time”) describes his trans-Pacific voyage with American passengers. The total number differs from the Pioneer version and from the revised From Sea to Sea because the editor in Allahabad sometimes divided Kipling’s manuscripts and because Kipling added, omitted, combined or compressed material when he revised the letters for volume publication. Of the twenty, only four describe eastern America despite his visits to major cities from Toronto to Washington, DC. One of the best (Letter Eighteen), Kipling did not reprint until 1909 in a collection of fugitive pieces called Abaft the Funnel. Another, the interview with Mark Twain, he added to From Sea to Sea although it was not included in the Pioneer series. The third, dealing with his visit to Buffalo, New York (“America’s Defenseless Coasts”), seems to be a random gathering of fragments. It did not appear in the Pioneer but in English and American newspapers and in the Civil and Military Gazette. He later tried to disown it, claiming it was “none of my work. Malignant and purposeful lying.” But we know that Edgar Taylor
(Ted Hill’s cousin) accompanied him when they saw young couples drunk in Buffalo. In addition, many of the sentiments expressed in the letter are repeated by a reporter who interviewed him. (Buffalo Courier, 12 August 1889—included in the Appendix). The remaining sixteen letters trace his journey from San Francisco north to Vancouver, B.C, then to Yellowstone Park, Salt Lake City, Omaha and Chicago.

Kipling’s reputation rose so fast after he reached England (5 October 1889) that American publishers (unhampered by copyright law) raced to exploit his name by pirating his early work. This created problems for bibliographers, compounded by Kipling erroneously claiming or disclaiming items. In London, he tried to overcome publishing difficulties with the help of two American literary agents. Wolcott Balestier arranged an authorized American edition of his Indian fiction with John W. Lovell’s company (1891). Henry James wrote the introduction. Next, Balestier and R. B. McClure’s brother, Samuel, urged Kipling to sign with the McClure syndicate. Syndication meant simultaneous publication by many news chains, which reduced the chance of piracy and increased the profit for authors but also gave editors the power to invent titles and subheadings. Unlike the Pioneer letters in Part I, the last two (Buffalo and the Twain interview) are products of syndication. Kipling, his agents and publishers were never ones to turn down money, but their hope of avoiding piracy failed, especially in the case of American Notes described below.

One curiosity about his 1889 letters is that in the two-volume From Sea to Sea, three are printed at the end of the first volume and the remainder in the second. Kipling placed them between his earliest and his last travel reports in India (“Letters of Marque” and “The City of Dreadful Night”). There is no chronological order. Whether by accident or design, the American material is difficult to locate.

During much of his four-month sojourn, Kipling traveled alone and corresponded frequently with Ted Hill. (The letters are available in Thomas Pinney’s edition of The Letters of Rudyard Kipling, Vols. I and II.) Thus we have two versions of his responses to America. The differences between them are striking, no doubt determined by their
audiences. Mrs. Hill was his best friend. He spared her most of the sarcasm expressed to Anglo-Indian readers. The personal letters provide a gauge to measure his professional performance: the detail, color and drama that he added for publication. For example, in a letter from Yellowstone Park, he mentions “looking down the Canyon—from inspiration point—1700 feet sheer into the Roaring Yellowstone below. I shall never be able to describe it accurately” (10 July). His full dress account appears in Letter Twelve. He constantly embellishes the travel narrative with set-piece descriptions, humorous asides or sketches of chance-met characters. Brief glimpses of burned-out shopkeepers in Seattle, a tollgate keeper on the Yellowstone River, and a mortician in Omaha provide memorable moments. When the travel-letter format constrained him, he swerved toward fiction: for example, his short story silhouettes of an ex-convict champion of the Church of England (Letter Nine) or the pair of actresses scolded by a born-again drummer (Letter Fourteen) or the Buck Davis mystery (Part II, Letter Five). In addition, Kipling sent tall tales that Bret Harte might have written to the Pioneer, for example “A Little More Beef” and “The Bow Flume Cable Car.” These potboilers are preserved in Abaft the Funnel.

Here then was a spunky Anglo-Indian with a keen eye and a sharp tongue, age twenty-three. At the time no one suspected he would soon become a world famous writer (although c.1880 his father sketched him as a schoolboy in a procession of poets including Dante and Shakespeare) or that his relationship with America would combine some joy with much disappointment.

Kipling’s hostility toward America has surprised and angered American readers who wonder why he was so critical; indeed, why he announced in the first letter from San Francisco: “Protect me from the wrath of an outraged community if these letters are ever read by American eyes.” There are many explanations. Prominent English visitors (Mrs. Trollope, Dickens, Arnold and Bryce) had long since enumerated America’s shortcomings and taught Kipling what to expect. Americans spat too much, drank too much (or not at all), talked money and boasted too much (in an alien dialect), slouched when they
walked, and suffered bad nerves. They swindled English authors by pirating their works. They frequently granted military rank to undeserving men, which bothered Kipling as it did Mrs. Trollope and Dickens (Letter One). Of course, Americans were accustomed to English charges, but Kipling’s had a special bite by the late 90s because of his growing reputation.

His education in England and his seven years in India taught him the importance of being British. While he often satirized Anglo-Indian behavior and British mismanagement of the Raj, his first loyalty was to the Crown, and he recognized the United States as a rival. His attitudes echo those of Victorian imperialists examined by David Cannadine in *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (2001). The Raj was not only a money-making project or an exercise in racist oppression; it was an escape mechanism that allowed Englishmen who resented the crowding, dirt and class turmoil of industrial England to construct in India an almost feudal and bucolic alternative where life could be conducted as a pageant. The paradox here is self-evident because the British built bridges, railroads, dams, ships and canals, all of which seemed romantic to Kipling when a progressive mood struck him. He sometimes glorified machinery (e.g. in “The Bridge-Builders” and “.007,” both written while he lived in Vermont), and later he loved automobiles and warships; but the pastoral world held an abiding charm for him. Guided, no doubt, by a Pre-Raphaelite father (Lockwood Kipling), uncle (Edward Burne Jones) and school Headmaster (Crom Price), Kipling is an exemplar of the values that, according to Cannadine, governed the Raj: rural not urban, traditional not progressive, hierarchic not democratic. The goal was not a democratic republic ruled by enfranchised yeoman farmers but a nation of peasants managed by procurators.

In a sense, Kipling’s experience in India was a liability. It inculcated rigidly judgmental attitudes that, for him, made distinctions between freedom and license difficult. By contrast, James Bryce, the English scholar and diplomat who was older, better educated and more tolerant than Kipling, visited the American West twice before writing his impressions in 1887 (Chapter 121, *The American Commonwealth*, 1888). He noted every fault that annoyed Kipling (from the “ceaseless haste and stress” to the lawlessness that pervaded the
West), yet he marveled at seeing “phenomena absolutely without precedent in history, and which cannot recur elsewhere.” It is not surprising that Kipling became more aggressively British in the States. The Englishman in India commanded unlimited homage, whereas the Californian treated an unknown “Johnny Bull” indifferently. To Kipling the West seemed both crude and intimidating. As a result, at times he judged Americans to be adolescent nuisances but at other times prospective junior partners in world domination. He would have been surprised to learn that Benjamin Franklin advocated an Anglo-American empire before 1774 when the Boston Tea Party separated the two. If Kipling’s Anglo-Indian bias colored his response to America, it also supplied the base from which to mount a consistent and germane critique.

Another explanation for Kipling’s hostility is his reading of Harte, Harris and Twain as well as Emerson, Hawthorne and the “Schoolroom” poets. They prepared him for a rural America. But when he set foot in San Francisco, he discovered a city that had grown from 57,000 in 1860 to almost 300,000. From the gaudy opulence of Market or Kearny Street to the dives of the Barbary Coast, from machine politics to slipshod craftsmanship, the city was like urban centers everywhere. Moreover he arrived at the moment when the least attractive features of national behavior were most prominent. Although Kipling exaggerates at times, there were sufficient examples of murder, lynching, graft and dangerous rail construction to keep a Muckraker busy. He witnessed what Twain called “The Gilded Age” with its unlimited wealth or poverty and its uninterrupted influx of non-English immigrants who threatened the parent stock. In India he had learned the perils of multi-culturalism that caused recurrent religious, ethnic and racial strife.

He was wary of America’s version of capitalism, Protestantism and democracy—the great modern trinity. Aristocracy counterbalanced this trinity in England by teaching manners to capitalists, restraint to evangelicals and compromise to democrats. In America, unbridled commerce led to “Little Bile Beans” ads welcoming one to the Sea Lion caves in California and to the storefronts in Chicago screaming, “Buy Me!” He would have been outraged had he seen the pirated edition of American Notes with an ad on the back cover: “Colgate’s Soaps
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and Perfumes.” Commerce not only despoiled nature and debased taste, it contaminated religion. The image of Buddha at Kamakura in Japan moved Kipling more deeply than the American religious services he attended because they presented God as a businessman. As for democracy, political bosses conspired with an ignorant or apathetic public to subvert it.

Shortly before he reached America, Kipling had experiences with Americans that disturbed him. First, he claimed that he discovered copies of his fiction for sale in Yokohama, published in the United States. This pirating so angered him that he began the twentieth letter in the Pioneer (9 November 1889, but the passage is omitted from Number XIX in From Sea to Sea) with paragraphs called Kipling’s “curse on America.” Here is a sample:

...Because you steal the property of a man's head, which is more his peculiar property than his pipe, his horse or his wife, and because you glory in your theft, and have the indecency to praise or criticize the author from whom you steal, and because your ignorance, which is as dense as a pickpocket's ignorance of anything outside his calling, leads you to trifle with his spelling, and because you print the stolen property of aforesaid very vilely and uncleanly, you shall be cursed with this curse from Alaska to Florida and back again. Your women shall scream like peacocks when they talk and your men shall neigh like horses when they laugh. You shall call “round” “raound” and “very” “vury” and “News” “Noose” till the end of time.

Kipling’s outburst may seem peevish, but he and other English writers had legitimate complaints about American publishers unregulated by copyright law until 1 July 1891. He was also unlucky in the Americans he met in Japan and aboard ship. A Bostonian, proud of his Mayflower pedigree, made Kipling “snigger” when he ostentatiously claimed that Bostonians “don’t care what the English people think of us.” Another man warned him to keep his hands visible so that he would not be shot for drawing a concealed weapon. As a result, he imagined that Californians were armed to the teeth. Other Americans he met on the ship or at the Bohemian Club in San Francisco (not to mention importunate news reporters) were typically brusque and self-assured. Some baited him with tall tales. Western Americans had a reputation for gulling “dudes” and strait-laced Englishmen. Not to be outdone, Kipling grew more confrontational and increased the
pressure of his typical high speed, hyperbolic prose. It is not surprising that the editor of the San Francisco Examiner rejected his descriptions of the city’s armed citizenry “as they were simply ridiculous to any San Franciscan of ordinary intelligence.” In his initial letter from San Francisco, Kipling described the first news reporter he met as a boor. Years later, the reporter, Bailey Millard, evened the score by charging that Kipling exhibited “a positive genius for reporting the thing which was not” when he described events at the Bohemian Club. Millard also concluded that Kipling’s anti-democratic sentiments signified his kinship with the socialist, Eugene Debs, when in fact Kipling had more in common with Henry and Brooks Adams.

The “surprising ‘otherness’ of everything” in Japan enchanted him during his month there and unprepared him for America. Imperfect as his knowledge of Japan was, his eye responded to the disciplined artistry he saw everywhere, from temples to antique shops. Amidst the cherry blossoms and decorous people, he “crooned” to himself “because the sky was blue and I was alive beneath it with a pair of eyes in my head.” To him the Japanese seemed fastidious and their children mannerly. Americans were rude with brattish children. Japanese houses and shops, albeit fragile, were spotless and elegant, reminding him of fine cabinet work. Clapboard, western America was dirty, spittoon laden, fit for burning.

Kipling’s hostility seems exaggerated for yet another reason. To this day, many Americans know the pirated American Notes (M. J. Ivers, New York, 1891—repeatedly reprinted) rather than the revised text in From Sea to Sea. There is a copy of this pirated edition signed by Kipling with a note on the title page: “(all pirated) imperfect and inaccurate.” The book contains an unrepresentative fraction of the whole (seven out of twenty letters), a fraction that magnifies his negative impressions and neglects his praise of America as well as the humor he found in the incongruities between American illusions and American reality. That the letters were “all pirated” is true only in the sense that he was not paid for them. Some had appeared in the Pioneer and others were syndicated in the American and English press, no doubt with his blessing. Kipling complained that he had received anonymous letters from Americans, and “they ain’t polite!” In
addition, the editor of *American Notes* appended an essay by Andrew Lang, the English man of letters, scolding Kipling for visiting America with the attitude: “How clever I am, and how funny every one else is!” In fairness, one must add that some American readers objected to the revised *From Sea to Sea* edition as well as *American Notes*.

One final explanation for Kipling’s negativism was his isolation once the Hills departed from San Francisco. Like many servants of the Empire, Kipling was a displaced person, a typical example of the British Diaspora. He was a loner, all his life seeking a safe haven—a home, a Masonic Lodge, a comfortable place that affirmed his identity and supported his creativity. Ironically, while yearning for roots, he became a globetrotter, like many writers of his generation, so that by his death in 1936 he had visited and written about six continents. The wolf pack in *The Jungle Books* expressed an ideal that he attained only for brief periods. After he left the “family square” in Lahore and moved to Allahabad, the Hills, especially Ted, served his need. But the Hills abandoned him in California so that he traveled alone, complaining frequently to Ted: “The quality [of my work] has sadly deteriorated because you were not there to supply the necessary stimulus”; “I feel like a rudderless or Ruddyless ship without you and the writing won’t flow easily.” He had letters of introduction to people who treated him well but were strangers all the same. Even the men who invited him to go salmon fishing brightened his mood only temporarily.

As if his complaints about America were insufficient to make readers uncomfortable, Kipling’s final judgment on the letters is even more troubling. When he edited them for inclusion in *From Sea to Sea*, he removed many critical or tactless remarks and corrected errors, but he prefaced the collection by deploring piracy and objecting to American publishers’ “disinterring old newspaper work from the decent seclusion of the office files.…” In the preface to *Abaft the Funnel*, he wrote: “Messrs. B. W. Dodge and Company have issued without my knowledge or sanction the following odds and ends unearthed from newspaper files of twenty years ago, and therefore unprotected by copyright. I should never have reprinted them but Messrs. Dodges’ enterprise compels me to do so.” Little wonder that he filed suits against American publishers.
After such a disavowal, what justifies republishing this material, especially with Kipling’s deletions restored? One answer is that, while he was actually writing the letters, he wrote Ted Hill: “a good deal of my good name depends on these letters and I want to make ‘em worthy of the illustrations.” (He was referring to Aleck Hill’s photos of Southeast Asia and Japan.) Later he planned to collect them and other ephemeral pieces in a book tentatively called “The Book of Forty-five Mornings,” but nothing came of it. By the end of the 90s when he returned to the letters, his “good name” no longer depended on them.

Another answer to the question of why republication is that most readers value the letters. The editors of the Readers’ Guide expressed gratitude for the “pirates” who retrieved and preserved them, thus filling in the detail of Kipling’s early career. Mark Twain declared in his autobiography that Kipling “wrote dashing, free-handed, brilliant letters, but no one outside of India knew about it.” When Allen Nevins revised his anthology, America through British Eyes (1948), he excluded Kipling in favor of soberer essays by Spencer, Arnold, Bryce and others; but he noted: “in all the century-long literature of the subject no descriptive passages show greater vividness and stylistic felicity than those of Kipling.”

This estimate is a reminder that Kipling rarely wrote dull prose and never wrote what he called “the bland drivel of the globe-trotter.” His description of the Yellowstone gorge has the same spectacular color as Thomas Moran’s famous painting, The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone (1872), that helped establish the first national park. Or one may be reminded of William H. Jackson’s vivid black-and-white photographs of barren landscapes or railroad locomotives. (Clarence S. Jackson, Picture Maker of the Old West William H. Jackson, 1947.) Every letter contains drama after drama that make for lively reading. Except for Robert Louis Stevenson and Isabella Bird, few English authors rival Kipling in describing late-nineteenth-century western America.

From the time he left India, Kipling’s life became hectic. The journey was itself stressful and may have alerted him to American “nerv-
ousness” in cities “where men live at breaking strain.” He reached England in October and almost immediately became a celebrity, partly based on work previously published in India but also on the verse published in William Henley’s *Scots Observer*, and then as *Barrack-Room Ballads*. In the spring of 1890 he met Wolcott Bales- tier, an American literary agent, who arranged for Kipling’s books to be published in the United States at an advantageous royalty rate. (His English literary agent, A. P. Watt, complained that he could have done better.) Both he and Bales- tier shared a commitment to fair play for English writers hitherto exploited by American publishers, one of whom, John Lovell, outpaced his competitors by sending Bales- tier to London to recruit authors. He and Kipling became friends and agreed to co-author a novel, *The Naulahka: A Story of East and West*, not published until April 1892. Kipling’s first order of business was the semi-autobiographical novel *The Light that Failed*. He completed a draft in August 1890, and the book appeared in America that autumn published by J. W. Lovell, and then the following January in England with a different conclusion. He added new stories to those first published in India and called the collection *Life’s Handicap* (1891).

His publication record gives little sense of the strain he underwent during this period. Ted Hill noted that he came close to breakdowns in Canton, China, and in the United States. By the time he finished *The Light that Failed* he had another case of nerves that led, when combined with influenza, to a recuperative trip to Sorrento as a guest of Lord Dufferin (former Viceroy of the India). Less than a year later, he avoided another collapse by taking a prolonged trip to South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

In addition to overwork, there is another explanation for his nervous exhaustion. Circumstantial evidence suggests that courtship played a major role. One refrain in his travel letters is falling in love—with Burmese or Japanese maidens as well as pretty American girls who caught his eye. There is “a big Kentucky blonde” in San Francisco, a sad farmer’s daughter in Oregon, a striking girl from New Hampshire in Yellowstone Park, and Mormon girls galore in Utah. When Kipling left America, he was engaged to Ted Hill’s sister, Caroline Taylor; but the relationship collapsed within four months. At the same time he met his boyhood sweetheart Flo Garrard and in
May 1890 spent four days with her in Paris where he discovered she preferred a woman friend. The episode lends color to the fitful sexual lighting that illuminates *The Light that Failed*. During 1889–1890, after the Hills returned to India, Kipling briefly had a substitute for Ted in the middle-aged novelist Lucy Clifford, and throughout the period he expressed partiality for American girls.

Aleck Hill died prematurely in India, 23 September 1890, and the Kipling family feared that Ted Hill might be a candidate for marriage. Something traumatic seems to have happened between Aleck’s death and Ted’s brief stay in London en route home to America. There is a two-sentence letter from Kipling to Ted’s sister, his erstwhile fiancée, dated early December 1890: “Would you care for me to come over between 8–8:30? And if I come would Mrs. Hill think fit to see me?” After the thousands of words he had written to Ted Hill over the previous four years, the question whether she would “think fit to see me” comes as a shock. What events caused this will probably never be known. The two resumed their correspondence after the death of Kipling’s daughter.

Within thirteen months of this letter, Kipling married another American, Caroline Balestier, sister of Wolcott. Despite warnings against her from Kipling’s mother and Lucy Clifford, she clearly filled a vacuum in his life. He met her in 1890 after Wolcott brought her to England to keep house for him. Like her brother, she had the kind of energy that Kipling admired in Americans. Both had visited the American West (Colorado) that provided half the setting for *The Naulahka*. Her relationship with Kipling began with mutual respect and evolved into affection. After a quick trip to the States in May–June 1891, Kipling stayed with the Balestiers (Carrie, her mother and sister) at Wolcott’s house on the Isle of Wight. Then (for his mental health) he left England on 25 September for an extended trip to South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. On the return journey, he went to India and reached his family in Lahore just before Christmas when he learned of Wolcott’s death on 6 December. He hurried back to London on 10 January and married on 18 January 1892. This terminated his fantasy love-life (impressively articulated in the poem “Mandalay”) and harnessed him to “a good man spoiled” (as his father called Carrie). It also precipitated endless speculation about
the relationship between Kipling and Wolcott that might explain Kipling’s hasty marriage. Henry Adams, among others, had misgivings about the couple’s compatibility. He said, “Somehow, somewhere, Kipling and the American woman were not one, but two, and could not be glued together…” But their courtship survived several months of separation, and their life together in America began with high hope.

By mid-February the couple had visited Carrie’s family in Brattleboro, Vermont, and were soon on their way across mid-America to Canada where they enjoyed Vancouver prior to sailing on 4 April to Japan. Their plan was to travel around the world visiting Robert Louis Stevenson (and his American wife) in Vailima en route, but on 9 June the Japanese bank that held their funds failed, and they returned to Vermont. They lived first very spartanly in a cottage usually inhabited by a hired hand. Then they bought land from Carrie’s brother and built an impressive house, generously staffed with servants. They seemed intent on settling permanently. Their two daughters were born in Vermont. Kipling’s writing flourished, producing extraordinary royalties. He completed the diverse collection, *Many Inventions* (1893), the two *Jungle Books* (1894–1895), *Captains Courageous* (1897) and a number of poems in *The Seven Seas* (1896). The marriage seemed promising with Carrie (three years older than he) meticulously tending domestic affairs and Kipling free at his desk. For Christmas 1895, Kipling wrote in Carrie’s diary: “So ends our fourth and best year.”

Trouble came first because President Cleveland created an international crisis by invoking the Monroe Doctrine to denounce Britain as the aggressor against Venezuela during a border dispute with British Guiana. Kipling was so alarmed that he planned an escape to Canada and England. Not long after this crisis abated, a more serious conflict occurred between Kipling and Carrie’s spendthrift brother, Beatty. Ill will had grown for months partly because of Carrie’s officious treatment of bankrupt Beatty and partly because Beatty resented Kipling’s wealth and fame. In May 1896 they came near blows and, like a pair of hotheaded boys, landed before a Justice of the Peace. When Kipling filed charges, Kipling’s despised newspaper reporters descended on the town hall for the public hearing, adding their lurid accounts to the poisonous gossip already widespread. Pub-
lic opinion held that rich Kipling with the manners of an English squire was no match for a local happy-go-lucky tippler. To avoid litigation and harassment by journalists, the Kiplings left America on 1 September 1896 and returned only once, February–June 1899, when Kipling almost died of pneumonia, the disease that killed his favorite daughter.

Kipling’s journalistic writing during his second American period is meager compared with the 1889 series. He wrote all except one of the letters within months of his arrival in the States. When he and Carrie set forth to Japan, he did not send manuscripts to the Pioneer because his work was now syndicated and appeared in various newspapers. But the truncated journey yielded only nine items, three exclusively American and the remainder on Japan and Canada. (Some of the latter contain American material that I excerpt.) The Times (London) and the New York Sun published all of them between April and December 1892. One exception was “Leaves from a Winter Note-book” (Part II, Letter Five) which Harper’s Magazine published in May 1900, although he wrote it in 1894 while visiting England.

This second series was entitled “From Tideway to Tideway 1892–95” and later published in Letters of Travel (1920). Two of the American letters (Part II, Letters One and Five) are prose idylls celebrating rural New England, both written with a less excited hand and a more tolerant attitude than one finds earlier. In the third (“On One Side Only”), Kipling returns to his old grievances: Americans disregard their own laws, and they worship the Gospel of Rush. When he crossed into Canada, he found that citizens were more law abiding and relaxed than Americans but overly impressed with America’s success. As in 1889, he preferred rural and small town America—from The Dalles, Oregon, to Musquash (Beaver), Pennsylvania. But that did not prevent his recognizing that urban-industrial centers were the dynamos that destined America for great nation status. It is symptomatic that he found perfect symbols of America on Vermont farms (Part II, Letter Four) and at Concord, not New York or Washington DC, though the latter impressed him (“my ideal of a Headquarters of administration and . . . a thoroughly beautiful city”). In a letter to Ted Hill (17 September 1889), he wrote: “I wonder if you will understand how and why I came very near to choking when I saw
‘The Minuteman’ [Daniel C. French’s statue celebrating the Battle of Lexington] and realized that I was standing on the first battlefield in the very beginning of things. I can’t explain the emotion, but there it is for you.” As in his Just So Stories for children, genesis legends captivated him.

In both groups of letters, Kipling’s occasional tributes to America fail to counterbalance his grievances. He arrived at the moment when the United States achieved maturity. By 1890 the frontier phase of history ended, with Frederick J. Turner reading its obituary in 1893. (Kipling anticipated Turner’s thesis in his poem “The Voortrekker” [first titled “The Foreloper”] that appeared untitled as an epigraph to “Captains Courageous”—Part II, Letter Three). The frontier experience had transformed the language, created new kinds of humor, new religious sects and new social and political behavior that upset Kipling. Moreover, the Civil War had already decided the nation’s future, not as agrarian but as industrial and technological. Although Kipling later celebrated modern machinery, he disliked industry’s ravaging nature and its tendency to create class conflict. Collectivism was displacing frontier individualism, as the rise of organized labor made clear. Overshadowing all of these changes, the American Revolution had established “lawless rebellion” against authority.

Kipling could not have foreseen in detail that America would become the model for post-colonial independence worldwide, but like all intelligent Anglo-Indians after the Mutiny of 1857, he had premonitions that darkened the future. They prevented his sympathizing with American optimism. His gloomiest prediction occurs in 1892 (Part II, Letter Four): “Now a nation does not progress upon its brainpan, as some books would have us believe, but upon its belly as did the Serpent of old; and in the very long run the work of the brain comes to be gathered in by a slow-footed breed that have unimaginative stomachs and the nerves that know their place.” This indictment of Victorian faith in the advances of social and hard sciences is not only an expression of Tory conservatism but also Anglo-Indian fatalism that is often called “pre-scientific” thinking or atavism. The basic insight is that worldly evil is not caused by visionaries and pioneers who create ideals but by the consolidators, the “bottom feeders” who institu-
tionalize and regulate ideals. Like Mark Twain, Kipling presumed that calamity lay just around Time’s corner.

The *Jungle Books* are equally important for gauging Kipling’s attitude because of the monkey-people, the Bander-log, a lawless community of chatterers who remind some readers of democratic Americans. To be sure, Indian readers, especially Bengalis, suspected Kipling of mocking them. But in “Kaa’s Hunting” (1894), which Kipling wrote in Vermont, the Bander-log shout, “We are great. We are free. We are wonderful. We are the most wonderful people in all the jungle! We all say so, and so it must be true.” This sounds similar to the Fourth of July exercises that Kipling witnessed in Yellowstone Park and elsewhere, although one may also conclude that people always and everywhere produce their own chattering class.

Kipling and America were not destined for long-term friendship. In 1895 he met President Cleveland and the Cabinet in Washington and described the men as a “colossal agglomeration of reeking bounders.” He might have concluded the same a century later, while conceding that Cleveland was more honest than some of his successors.

But if Kipling’s misgivings about America outweigh favorable opinions, this does not interfere with his providing accurate pictures, except when Americans misinformed him—for example, the Mayor of Ogden, Utah, who mistakenly predicted Mormonism’s demise. Nor do his professions of affection signify hypocrisy: “Let there be no misunderstanding about the matter. I love this People, and if any contemptuous criticism has to be done, I will do it myself” (Letter Fourteen).

Kipling was adept at combining contradictions in his own life as well as his fiction. Mowgli is both beast and man. The schoolboys in *Stalky & Co.* are rebels and patriots. Kim is both English and Indian. Kipling famously described the two sides of his head, which enabled him to dislike and admire America at the same time. Self-analysis rarely suited him, so that contradictory values or ideas did not challenge each other seeking reconciliation. His poem “An American” (1894) perfectly expresses contradictory attitudes unresolved and in suspension. On the other hand, there was no suspended judgment when he met “a young English idiot” with a valet in Yellowstone Park who told him “that ‘you can’t be too careful who you talk to in these parts,”
and he stalked on fearing, I suppose, every minute for his social chastity” (Letter Twelve).

Less than a year after Kipling returned to England, a reporter interviewed him about his American experience (see the Appendix). His response was less judgmental, perhaps defensive. He admitted that he “hurled twelve-barreled curses at the country” in the Pioneer letters but justified this by noting the many “discomforts that a civilized traveller . . . is obliged to submit to.” At the same time, Americans’ frankness of speech makes them resemble Anglo-Indians. They are “nearer to my life than the English.” It is true that during his years in Vermont he made lifelong friends; yet on balance the generic American struck him as undisciplined and therefore unreliable, always prepared for boom-bust cycles and rainbow chasing.

Kipling himself provided a caveat applicable to all travel writing. A decade after his 1889 American visit, he spent several winters in South Africa and suggested that “a man could not write anything of value about a country unless he had been born there.” (Renee Dorback, Kipling’s South Africa, Plomstead S. A., n.d., p.89). But readers familiar with his penchant for plenary declarations know that he often over-stated his case.

Kipling is often called one of the most “readable” authors in English and American literature. He “wrote short” while Henry James, whose writing Kipling ranked higher than his own, wrote (very) long. His career coincided with the triumph of the mass press that made the printed word accessible to any literate person. He began as a journalist, and some critics at the turn of the twentieth century condemned his “telegraphic” or slangy style, his “overloaded pseudo-prose” and fragmented sentences. But time was on his side. What seemed eccentric in 1890 became standard.

In the 1889 series, Kipling’s audience created a novel tone that anticipated later journalistic practice. The epistolary mode itself suggests intimacy and even playfulness that was intensified in Anglo-Indian journalism. Anglo-Indians were extremely self-conscious, confined as they were in enclaves across the subcontinent. In the 1880s there were about 70,000 civilians and 52,000 troops sta-
tioned among more than 235 million “natives” and scattered over a million and a half square miles. In an environment where the incidence of suicide, murder and madness was abnormally high among the British, the need for solidarity was powerful. Kipling’s audience mistrusted journalists and controlled more strictly than any anonymous public what and how he wrote. A memorable description of this grassroots censorship appears in his autobiography. Members of his club hissed him when the newspaper where he worked endorsed an unpopular reform. Readers in India also expected a familiar tone that licensed his apostrophizing them (“O excellent and toil-worn public of mine”), for example in the first paragraphs of Letters Eight and Twenty. The tone has a peculiar effect on American readers now. It is as if we were eavesdroppers, uninvited listeners to conversations about us.

Just as he superseded the elaborate Victorian English of, say, Thackeray or George Eliot, so he ignored modern stylistic experiments practiced by Joyce or Hemingway. His range seems mid-range (half Victorian, half modern)—or did until computer language appeared. Today if you submit passages of Kipling’s expository or descriptive prose to any PC software’s spell-check or grammar check, you learn that his spelling, punctuation, grammar, syntax, diction and style all need editing. There are several reasons for this. He admitted that in 1889 he wrote hastily. Second, he wrote long hand, squeezing two lines of text between the printed lines on each page. For “native” compositors, deciphering words and especially punctuation was difficult. Third, not only have conventions governing language changed, the differences between American and English usage were more pronounced a century ago. For example, relative pronouns “which” and “that” are interchangeable for Kipling. He frequently ignores capital letters, as in “Yellowstone river.” Erratic punctuation becomes a barrier in the Pioneer text, and when Kipling revised it, there are countless additions or deletions of commas, semicolons and colons that make the revision easier to read. Even humble hyphens and apostrophes come and go by the dozen: “to-day,” “tho,” “apple-tree,” “Hell’s halfacre.” Errant spellings may vex some readers but do not interfere with meaning, for example “Livingstone,” honor-honour, civilise-civilize, defence-defense. Heart-felt, heart felt and heartfelt
all communicate, but decorum insists on one. Only rarely does he leave the reader with a downright murky sentence.

Language is important because Kipling continually denounces American English as if he had never enjoyed Twain, Harte or Harris, his boyhood favorites. One must imagine how these authors sounded when read aloud by English teenagers in order to understand why hearing Americans speak disappointed him. There was no question about meaning, but the sound hurt his ears. As a poet, he was acutely sensitive to oral language. He read by ear as well as eye, hence American colloquialisms such as “blatherumskite” (talkative person) amused him. This also explains his occasional stunting with prose, for example the flashy, Latinate hyperbaton in the sentence: “Saved from the jaws of the cowcatcher, me wandering devious a stranger met.” Or the perverse word order in: “bad place to beg in after dark—on a farm—very—in Vermont.” Perhaps he recalled Alfred Jingle in Dickens’ Pickwick Papers.

In 1899, Kipling’s primary task was to edit, not recompose. He cut many factual errors, some anti-American sentiments and many superfluous or redundant passages. He broke long paragraphs into shorter ones. Already in the second American series, paragraphs are somewhat shorter, as if he had learned a lesson from editors of the pirated American Notes who consistently split long paragraphs. (After his father published Beast and Man in India [1891], Kipling advised him to begin new paragraphs whenever subjects changed.) He revised for Anglophone readers, not Anglo-Indians. As a result, standard English words replace Hindi words. He omits a long description of restructuring the American army (Letter Thirteen). This passage together with other examinations of American military preparedness (Letter Nineteen) demonstrates Kipling’s adherence to an old tradition in British India. Fear of Russia’s influence in the East meant that every Briton was a spy (a precursor of Kim), expected to use his eyes and ears and record what he saw or heard. Kipling complied while in India, China and Japan; and the habit persisted in the States.

The second letter series posed fewer problems. He was already an established author, and there was no need to compose hastily. Nonetheless, changes from the newspaper to the book version are numerous. Punctuation received the most attention.
Because my aim is to recreate Kipling’s first printed version, any attempt to modernize or Americanize the text seems pointless. One does not wish to blunt the immediacy and spontaneity of Kipling’s journalism. For the early series, I have simply duplicated the *Pioneer* version; and for the second series, I follow the first newspaper publication in the United States, omitting editors’ subheadings and correcting misprints in both. In the 1899 revision, Kipling substituted English for Indian terms; and I have listed the latter in a glossary with his translations. Statements that he added in the 1899 revision are included in brackets. As George Webb observed (in “A Note on the Notes,” *Kipling’s Japan*), Kipling made few “concessions to the uninformed of his day and none to ours” with his political, topical and literary allusions. Nonetheless, he “can still be enjoyed without the help of glossary or notes.” Some literary allusions are difficult to identify, but the text requires little commentary because the America Kipling saw is the America we know today—except that spittoons and free lunches are gone, wooden railway trestles are now steel or concrete, and ethnic slurring is muted. Commerce rules still, still sanctioned by the March of Progress.

The reader of Kipling’s “letters” may enjoy dividing himself in two. One half is an imaginary Anglo-Indian perhaps jolting along on the railway en route to Allahabad with a copy of the *Pioneer* dated 1890. He will try to imagine why Americans behave so oddly or whether eastern Washington sage-flats really look like the Bikaner Desert. The other half is a twenty-first century reader wondering if eastern Washington is really as forlorn as western India and surprised at Mr. Kipling’s astute and often prophetic assessments of America’s faults. The nation remains a work in progress, liable to hazards similar to those that undermined the British Empire.