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# Kipling's Country

LIMITS AND RENEWALS. By RUDYARD KIPLING. Macmillan. 7s. 6d.

KIPLING, on a visit to America, was taken very ill there, but recovered; and it is said that America never forgave him for not dying there. The ironies of the situation are such as would appeal to Kipling, who revels in such situations, and the whole business would give him delightful material for a story, called by some title like *The Man Who Spoiled His Own Funeral*, just as Tchekov would have revelled in the story of his own death, when his body was taken back to Russia in a railway-van labelled "Reserved for Fish."

*Limits and Renewals* is, in every way, typical of Kipling. He deals with the same people as ever, against the same backgrounds; he depicts them with all the old masterly economy, the same powerful irony and pungent humour; his writing is still, at its best, dry, tough meaty stuff; none of the old virtues indeed are lacking. Similarly he retains his vices: Before or after, and often before and after every story he still thinks fit to insert a poem, a piece of verse, a ramble of unmitigated, cymbal-clanging, cheap, brass-band doggerel—call it what you will. He still has a weakness for archaic words and archaic expressions. He has a still greater weakness for words of great length and obscurer meaning.

A critic once condemned him as a master of picturesque reporting. He does it as easily as ever. Yet a story of Kipling's cannot be read lightly; one must masticate him slowly, with solemn concentration and alertness, going back over the obscure long words and the tough sentences until one catches the taste of his meaning and his sly humour. To skip a paragraph is to lose everything. He is, in a way, always a little too quick and smart for his reader, breaking off at subtle tangents without warning.

What bronchitis had spared of him came, by medical advice, to Stephano's island, that gem of sub-tropical seas, set on a height above the Line where parrots do not breed.

Yet there were undoubtedly three of them, squawking through the cedars. He asked a young lady, who knew the island by descent, how this came. "Two are ours," she replied. "We used to feed them in the veranda, but they got away, and set up housekeeping and had a baby."

"What does a baby parrot look like?"  
"Oh, just like a little Jew baby. I expect there will be some more soon." She smiled prophetically.

The economy of this passage is enough to make one sick with envy. Yet does it altogether serve its purpose? There is something smart and slick about every line that makes one suspicious. "What bronchitis had spared of him," is cheap, and the conversation rattles out as hard and mechanical as the sound of a typewriter. Neither is the story itself, *A Naval Mutiny*, among the best.

For the best one must go to *Beauty Spots*, a masterpiece of rich ironies and sly humour, the story of which is too good and subtle and complicated to set down here. *Dayspring Mishandled* is a piquant piece, almost diabolical in its shrewd satire. *The Tie* is a gem. Reading

them one begins to wonder what label of fame America would have pinned to the Kipling dead on its doorstep. A poet? Most likely. A short story writer? I doubt it. Yet his stories are surely the best of him.\*\*\*\*

H. E. BATES

## Other Novels of the Week

IMPERIAL MAJESTY. By Alexei Tolstoy. Elkin Mathews. 8s. 6d. Count Tolstoy is now a Soviet writer. In this novel he tells a dramatic tale of Muscovy in the days of Peter the Great. Substantial and closely written, it commands respect for its vigorous writing and strong character drawing.\*\*\*\*

THRALGATE OF LAYLAND HALL. By Charles Forrest. Gollancz. 7s. 6d. A successful farmer fifty years old becomes the lover of his stockman's daughter. A commonplace story, but in this author's hands made subtle and poetic, because he works the rural scene into the psychology of his characters. A really striking novel.\*\*\*

TURN SINGLE. By Morna McTaggart. Nicholson and Watson. 7s. 6d. Jean, aged 19, well-off, intelligent, untrained, aimless, loses her adored father, falls in love with the wrong man, and then tries desperately to shape her life into some sort of pattern. A thoughtful, sensitive study of a modern type of girl.\*\*\*

EVE, AN ARTIST'S MODEL. By Douglas Sladen. Werner Laurie. 7s. 6d. The story starts in the Chelsea Arts Club. Eve is a girl who, having no training and needing work, becomes an artist's model. She marries a successful R.A. A carefully-written novel, in which the heroine's charm will be felt by every reader.\*\*\*

A MODERN MELODY. By Geoffrey Moss. Hutchinson. 7s. 6d. "Darling," the girl says to the man within two minutes of first meeting him. A comedy of modern youth, in London and Paris, written in an exciting style. There is a murder, too.\*\*\*

THE VEIL OF VERONICA. By Gertrud von le Fort. Sheed and Ward. 7s. 6d. A German woman convert to Catholicism writes this story of a conflict in the heart of a girl between paganism and Christianity. The setting is modern Rome. By far the most accomplished religious novel we have read for many years.\*\*\*\*

FORTUNE FAVOURS FOOLS. By Ralph Arnold. Heinemann. 7s. 6d. One young man who was always at a disadvantage compared with another young man, and how the former eventually got the better of the latter. Highly amusing and original in its situations. But the author's reflections are spun out rather thinly.\*\*\*

MR. JUBENKA. By Adrian Alington. Chatto and Windus. 7s. 6d. How a deposed Balkan king becomes an exile in England is the theme. Clever satire, full of fun, and not a little charm of style.\*\*\*

OLD BARTY. By Cecil Hunt. Ward, Lock. 7s. 6d. A sentimental story of a professional violinist. Musical detail well done. Good story-telling.\*\*\*

To enable readers to judge the merits of novels at a glance, we add stars to these short notices. Five stars denotes a masterpiece, four stars a novel of outstanding quality, and so down to one star