

KIPLING AS A SCHOOLBOY AND THE PRANKS HE PLAYED

One of His Classmates Tells Amusing Incidents of the Early Days of the Great Author and How He Began His Career.

Special to The Sunday Call.

IN reading of Stalky, McTurk and Beetle of Kipling's unique stories of schoolboy life I feel as if I was meeting old friends. I knew the mischievous trio well under their true names—Bensford, Dunsterville and Kipling himself. Kipling was "Beetle," although we called him "Gigs." Dunsterville has since become an officer in the Indian army.

I first met Kipling in 1879 when he was 14 years old. In that year I joined the United Service College "Westward Ho" in the parish of Northam, North Devon, which had been in existence for several years. I was at once assigned to the same house with Kipling under a master named Pugh, and after a few terms Kipling was changed to my dormitory, over which his particular friend, Dunsterville, was eventually made sub-prefect. I sat at different times in the same classes with Kipling and during the last year that I spent at the college, 1883, my study was immediately below the one occupied by Bensford, Dunsterville and Kipling.

The masters referred to in the stories are Cornell Price, the head master; W. C. Crofts, the classical master; and M. H. Pugh, the house master, who undoubtedly suggested the "Prout" of whom Kipling speaks.

The United Service College, which was intended chiefly for the education of sons of Anglo-Indian civil and military officers, was within sight of the open Atlantic. The immediate neighborhood was of a character to delight the heart of any boy—high frowning cliffs at whose base terrible jagged rocks ran far out into the sea, and warning to vessels of their sure fate if by any unlucky chance they missed the bar. These cliffs, however, were the abode of several species of rare sea birds, thus offering a splendid field for hazardous adventures.

Not a Youthful Prodigy.

During these four or five years, as seen by his school fellows, it could hardly be said that Kipling appeared to them as a prodigy. In the first place he was always extremely near-sighted, which was perhaps the reason for his not taking any very keen interest in either field sports or athletics—a proficiency that, alone, almost makes an English boy a hero in the sight of his school fellows. On the other hand Kipling was not without any means "great." He was not always to be seen poring over his books. He was seldom at the top of his class, though to be sure he was never at the bottom. He did not take all the prizes that came in his way, and he was not even in due course promoted to the office of sub-prefect, although when he left the college in 1882 he carried with him the well-earned first prize in English literature.

"Stalky, Beetle and McTurk."

About the middle of his school life Kipling entered into a strong tie of friendship with two other boys, in many respects of his own temperament. The trio seemed to have aims of their own apart from the rest of the college, leading a kind of Bohemian existence, and amusing themselves by tilts at the powers that were, in which encounters they frequently came off victorious, as related in the "Stalky" stories. At the time when Kipling and his two chums were first assigned to a room or "study" for their own use, the esthetic wave of some seventeen years ago was sweeping over English society, and the three boys at once determined to "live up" to the prevailing fashion. They first of all painted a wonderful stork dado round their room; they purchased a number of old plates, spoutless teapots and Japanese fans and hung them upon the walls. They called it very "high art," and for a day the whole school came to see and wonder.

The United Service College had the custom prevailed in most English "public schools" of placing a great part of the out-of-class discipline in the hands of the head boys who are called prefects or monitors. In particular these boys were responsible for the maintenance of order in the large dormitories or sleeping-rooms—one prefect having charge of perhaps a dozen or fifteen boys.

Telling Stories at Night.

Now it happens that the prefect of the dormitory in which Rudyard Kipling slept was a great admirer of the stories and had one of the Arabian Nights, and conceived the idea that it would conduce to his early repose if he compelled each of the boys in his room to tell stories in turn. The idea was at once put into practice, and the boys told such stories of sport, love and adventure as the fertility of their brains brought forth; but it became quickly apparent that Kipling so far surpassed the others in that talent that the prefect insisted upon his telling stories out of his turn, the result of which practice would generally be somewhat as follows:

The light having been extinguished, the voice of the prefect would be heard: "Now, then, Gigs, a yarn." "Gigs" was an abbreviation for gig lamps—a nickname conferred upon Kipling by his school fellows on account of the extraordinarily large spectacles he wore.

There would come no response from the bed in the corner. "Gigs! You hear? A yarn." "Still no answer." "Look here, Gigs, if you don't wake up I'll—"

An expostulating voice from underneath the clothing—"Oh, what is it?" "A yarn, a yarn."

Protestingly, "But I say, it's not my turn."

Dictatorially, "I don't care if it isn't—A yarn! After which there would perhaps follow a pause of five minutes, when the voice of the prefect would be heard again, "All right, Gigs, you brute," immediately succeeded by the crash of a boot in the neighborhood of Kipling's bed, to be followed by the muffled sound of a piece of soap striking the clothes.

"I say," from Kipling, by this time wide awake. "What is it?" "A yarn, a yarn."

"I don't know any."

From the prefect: "Oh, yes, you do; but anyway I'll give you a skeleton. Once upon a time there was a man who went to sea, killed the captain, turned pirate, got wrecked on an island, where he fought a battle against a lot of savages, married the chief's daughter, died, and lived happily ever afterward. Now go on."

With a grunt of dissatisfaction Kipling would thereupon begin, shortly, however, making the prefect the villain of the story and placing him in such

absurd situations that the whole dormitory would be shouting with laughter, and the noise of creaking shoes upon the stairs would come as a warning that the house master was on his way to see into the nocturnal disturbance.

As a College Editor.

For two years Rudyard Kipling occupied the editorial chair of the United Service College Chronicle, during which period many bright verses and clever articles from his pen appeared within the pages of that little journal. This was entirely an honorary position, which, however led to an engagement on the local paper under novel and amusing circumstances. The head master of the college, apart from his scholastic duties, held the office of chairman of the local board—partaking of the nature of an unpaid rural supervisorship, with perhaps a little patronage attached that somebody or other was anxious to possess.

This ambitious person succeeded in gaining the assistance of the editor of the local paper. The consequence was that, for a time, a number of crudely virulent personal attacks were made upon the policy of the board, to all of which the head master paid no attention whatever. Then the editor, probably having seen some of Kipling's work in the college paper, entered into an arrangement with him, that for the sum of \$2 50 a week the latter should do his best to goad the head master into the indiscretion of a report.

A Newspaper Contest With Head Master.

It was not long, therefore, before denunciatory articles appeared in the paper, treating of the board's local drainage scheme in such poignant, sarcastic terms that everybody began to talk about the matter, and the head master was compelled to take up his pen in self-defense—a literary duel thus commencing between the all unconscious master and his pupil, that afforded those who were in the secret a weekly fund of amusement.

Eventually the head master resigned his chair, but whether he discovered the personality of his brilliant antagonist is not known. Had he done so,

promotion at length found themselves brought into daily contact with this master, and having duly made note of his supreme aversion, they proceeded to stimulate it after their own fashion. So it shortly came to be noticed that the Kipling trio were putting on "style"—a fact that the master in question noticed also, but concerning which he contented himself with scornful remarks, until a shilling bottle of over-powering perfume was the direct cause of an explosion of wrath, of the class room windows being thrown wide open one cold winter morning, and of something besides invectives being hurled at the offenders' heads.

In spite of this emphatic rebuff Kipling and his chums continued their ef-

notice to the effect that patent leather shoes, among other enumerated "foppish" articles of dress, were henceforth strictly prohibited. As if in despair at the sweeping nature of this edict the Kipling trio immediately reverted to the other extreme, and the next Sunday appeared at the church caller as if they had slept in their best clothes over night, with only their shoes so wonderfully polished that the classical master first mistook them for the contraband patent leathers.

On closer inspection, however, being satisfied that his surmise was incorrect, and perhaps regarding the trio's disheveled appearance as, for once, a backward step in the right direction, he merely recommended a vigorous application of the brush, and unsuspectingly permitted them to go on their way to church.

It was not long after the service had commenced before every one in the vicinity of the Kipling trio became conscious of a most pungent and sickening odor of backing, the classical master who sat next to Kipling being the first, of course, to sniff the air with suspicion. But as the church warmed up the smell became so altogether unbearable that the classical master, taking a look of supreme disgust upon the remarkably devout and apparently quite innocent youths at his side, hurriedly rose from his seat and sought refuge in another part of the church. Then, as the other boys near by

MOST FANATICAL CHARGE THE WILD SOUDAN EVER SAW

Hordes of Shouting Dervishes Walked Right Up to Certain Death Shouting for Their Prophet and El Koran.

NEW YORK, Dec. 13.—There is now visiting relatives in this city a middle-aged man who lately came from the Soudan, where he took part in the annihilation of the Mahdi's army at Omdurman on September 2 last. He knows what wild fighting is as he saw six years' service on the plains against the Indians before he

haven't said much about the battle; that is the rest of it, but I've told you something about the first of it. What came afterward was a kind of finish up, as it were. Fighting done afterward was very plenty of it, but nothing like that first charge. I'll never forget that sight in all my living days. It can hardly be called a fight. Too one-sided, but there was lots of gun firing on our side and lots of dead and wounded on the other. Why, the mud in front of our center was literally carpeted with white, mixed all up with black, where the bare arms and legs of the poor 'beggars' showed out, and here and there a horse or two. Some of the chiefs, sheiks and emirs, they call them, rode on horseback. It was a sight to last one man all the rest of his life.

"How many killed? Well, to speak by the card, I should say just about them. That is, a great mass of them in the way of it. All that started across that open space toward our lines. I didn't see any going back. How many? I don't just know. I never counted them. I don't suppose anybody else did very closely. Just guessed at the number. The papers will tell you what the guess was. I just tell you what I know. All of them were killed. Five, seven or ten thousand; just as many as started. All of them killed, that is, sooner or later. Of course, a good many were just wounded at first, but they were all dead men before the thing was over. You don't need field hospitals for those 'beggars.' They never quit till they are dead. So you see the enemy's loss is made up of two items—killed and prisoners, and these last are not so many. The Sirdar knows his business.

"The battle was on a Friday, Well, on Wednesday night we camped near the river, about twelve miles below Omdurman. A heavy storm came up with much thunder and lightning and the rain just poured down. In the midst of it all a daybreak we struck our tents and started on the march again. Every man of us was wet through and through. We had had no rest, not a bit of sleep, and were pretty well worn out, though we had full stomachs and plenty of food within easy reach. The whole army, about 28,000 men, was well under way by 5 o'clock. The marching was heavy sure enough. The mud was so 'sticky' that when you lifted your foot a great mass of it hung on and made you step short. We began to feel better, though, when just before noon the sun came out, and after going a short distance farther we went into camp just where the little old town of Kerret, about six miles from Omdurman, where the battle was fought the next day. We halted about half past 1 o'clock in the afternoon, Thursday, September 2.

"Our line extended in a kind of a half circle, about two and a half miles, with both ends resting on the river. The position was a good one. The ground was a little high and sloped easily away to the west, offering no cover to an enemy except here and there a slight depression, a few feet below the general surface, as far as the hills, the nearest of which, Jebel Surgham, lay a little to the southwest about a mile and a quarter distant. A little farther away, directly to the west and opposite our center, ran a range of hills parallel to the river for some three or four miles.

"On our extreme left next to the river and nearest the city, which was in plain sight, was our artillery and the British brigade, with the Twenty-first Lancers in the rear of the right. Next in the circle came the 'Fuzzy Wuzzies,' or the Soudanese, our black brothers in arms. Fighters, too, they were. Then next and extending on around to the river again were the 'Gippsies,' or the Egyptian division, as they are officially called. The supply boats were in the river behind us, and the gunboats out in the stream, near our left.

"We had early supper and early to bed. The night went off quite quietly and we had a good rest. At early dawn, say 3:30 a. m., we were roused and stood to arms. The cavalry went out to take a look about, and we began breaking the zereba in front of the march through. Soon one of the gunboats fired a shell into the city, and just after the cavalry came galloping back and we knew the thing was about on, and so we were. Just after 6 o'clock we heard a mighty noise of more yelling, shouting and singing, and soon we caught sight of them without number, first to the right of Jebel Surgham and then to the left, lapping all around our front. Some few were on horseback, but the great mass were on foot. They carried a number of flags on long poles, which they kept waving as they advanced.

"When they were within about 1900 yards the artillery began on them, and many a well directed shell left a batch of them to mark where it burst. When they had gotten within 1200 yards we began with our rifles and then the Maxims, shortening the range sights as they came. They did little firing, but just kept coming. They were soon within short range and were just moved down, but those that fell were not missed, the mass was so dense. I did not see much of what went on except just in front of me. That spectacle just held my sight bound to it.

"Closer and closer, ever growing fewer and few, they came. "Just before us was one specially attractive group. A young black man, evidently a chief, mounted on a splendid dark bay, rode in the front of the main mass, waving a sword in his hand and shouting 'Allah Akbar,' which means God is great. On his left an old white bearded fellow kept pace with the horse, carrying a large white flag which he kept waving as he shouted. With them, beside and behind, pressed the throng of white turbans and black faces, even yet more than they are little better than caricatures and not in the least typical of the far-seeing, shrewd but benevolent and genial old man of the original conception. What is said to be the original of this type of portrait was painted in 1816 by the artist Tribasco, of whom little or nothing further is known. The picture is a fine oil painting, and is at present in the hands of the heirs of the late Judge Lawrence of Lowell, Mass., who reside about fifty miles west of Toledo, Ohio.

The portrait shows the familiar blue coat with brass buttons, the red-and-white shirt, the beaver hat with the stars and stripes on the band. Western Australia has an act in force prohibiting the landing of any one who cannot write out a given passage in English.

"It Was Courage Gone Mad; a Hundred Hands and More Bore on the Flag; Then Down It Went With Not a Hand Left to Raise It, and the Field Was Carpeted With the Dead. The Like of That Charge Was Never Seen Before, Not Even in the Soudan."

there is a probability that young Kipling would have been painfully made aware of the fact, as the time and the birch are still important factors in English "public" school discipline. When a looking glass first engages the serious attention of a youth, a somewhat luxurious devotion to the wardrobe is often the result. In that respect, Kipling and his two particular chums inclined to ward the Bohemian, until they perceived in the opposite extreme a chance to enact a rood part, which, for the time being, afforded their companions no little amusement. At the United Service College it happened that there was a certain classical master who had developed a profound aversion to anything approaching foppishness, and to whom fancy waistcoats, sporting scarves and silk handkerchiefs were an abomination second only to what was termed the "modern" side of the school.

Having Sport With the Master.

To such an extent did this master carry his discrimination in the matter of clothes that those attending his classes or coming more particularly under his jurisdiction, who evinced the least tendency to "style" were promptly made the butts of his most withering sarcasm, and were even occasionally peremptorily ordered not to appear again in his presence wearing conspicuously offensive garments. Now Kipling and his two chums in the course of

forts to approach the extreme height of fashion, borrowing such likely garments as they did not themselves possess, and choosing Sunday as the day on which to make a brave display of their personal adornments, for the three sat close to the classical master for some reason, decided to hold his peace, and thereafter permitted the edict regarding foppishness to fall into abeyance.

MICHAEL GIFFORD WHITE.

A member of General Merritt's party says that while the bearing of the Germans there left much to be desired at first, a markedly more cordial feeling grew up as the American army and navy demonstrated their capabilities. It appears that a German official called upon General Merritt after the capture of Manila, complimented him upon the appearance of his troops, and remarked: "I notice you have many Germans among them." By this the German official intimated that the infusion of German blood explained the efficiency of the American soldiers.

General Merritt, it is added, replied jestingly: "We make a citizen of a German in three years and we make a soldier of him in five years."

French counts have nine equal pearls in their coronets, while the British Baron is entitled to a coronet of four big pearls.

went back and enlisted in the British army.

He gives the following graphic account of the first part of the battle of Omdurman:

"I never saw anything like it and I've seen some fighting in my time out West on the plains before I went back to her Majesty's service. Nor you never saw anything like it and you have seen some service, too. Nor none of you. Nor nobody that wasn't there at the time.

"There never was anything like it, at least in our time.

"They talk about the Old Guard at Waterloo. They were brave men, all right and good enough, and stood their ground and the last man died where he stood. They could have shown 'the white' if they had wanted to, but they didn't want to. They were game to the death. But they could give as good as they got, barring numbers, and they were hemmed in and circled about so they couldn't run; none braver than they were.

"But these Dervishes beat all. We knew the 'beggars' (Tommy Atkins' modification of Baggaras, who constituted a large part of the Mahdi's fighting force) could fight, and would fight.



left ran away, but a lot found sure death where they stood.

"But at Omdurman it was all different. They came right on to certain death, walking, as it were, over their own dead bodies, and knowing they couldn't help themselves.

"Order! Not much. No more than one would see in a herd of cattle, moving across the plains, but there was a certain show of fixed resolve and regular purpose that made one feel queer when he knew that they were coming at him. Not that we were scared. No, a bit of it. We could have no doubt of the result. We knew our strength. We knew what they could do. That was the main thing. We knew that they had a long way to come over good open ground well under the range of our Maxims and rifles, to say nothing of our field batteries, which were in good positions and all ready, while they, poor 'beggars,' could do us little hurt until they got right up to close quarters, if they ever did, as they had few guns that would carry any distance and most of them had only spears and swords.

"What were they counting on? Well, I can't say, unless it was on their numbers. There was a lot of them, too, but not enough for the work that they had cut out for themselves—poor 'beggars.' They could not have dreamed of what they were running up against.

"About the battle? Well, maybe I