

“ For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard—
All valiant dust that builds no dust,
And guarding calls not thee to guard—
For frantic boast and foolish word,
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord ! ”

The hymn was a revelation in more ways than one. The majesty and restraint of its great lines were proof conclusive that the splendid succession of English poets had not yet fallen desolate. Several years before its appearance the literary critics had given a unanimous verdict in favor of the artistic genius of Rudyard Kipling. He had taken his acknowledged place among word-artists as a master of style, metre and every form of rhetorical device. But he was still looked upon as the least reflective of our great poets. The “Recessional” first brought him to light as a national prophet.

During the Jubilee celebration, humble souls all over the Empire were dreading lest the national rejoicing should be made an excuse for national boasting and vain glory; lest the heart of the British people should be turned from

“ What makes a nation happy and keeps it so,”

to the dangerous trust in material forces which, Milton also tells us,

“ Ruins kingdoms and lays cities flat.”

Kipling brought the vague fear to self-consciousness. He revealed the nation's heart to the nation. He took the almost sub-conscious dread of the better people, and with a poet's insight and a poet's passion he brought it forth in conscious and coherent words. He expressed the awe-inspiring thought. What is all this pomp and power, all the material greatness of the Empire, all the splendor of national riches, but dust and ashes, unless God be with us till the end? And he gave articulate voice to the hitherto dumb but real dread—“Lest we forget, lest we forget!” Henceforth not only in the judgment of the critics, but in the popular judgment as well, Kipling “also is among the prophets.”

Not only so, but the “Recessional” also revealed the essentially religious genius of the wonderfully versatile poet. The