

THE LORDLIEST LIFE ON EARTH

MR. KIPLING has added one more striking success to a list already long. We do not say this paradoxically, but merely to emphasise a point that has been missed by those critics who have denounced "The Islanders" as bad metre and worse poetry. Mr. Kipling's intention was to use not poetry but prophecy—in the Old Testament meaning of the word he saw before him the public as a huge and self-complacent beast, and in his desire to rouse it, it was not the lyre or the banjo that his hand closed upon, but the sjambok. This weapon he has used apparently at random, but in reality with deliberate cunning. He has done right and wrong with unsparing hand, and left the matter to be fought out as a quarrel between those who see the right, and those who see the wrong, more clearly.

There is no denying—and this too was probably intended—that to the majority the wrong is, at first sight, the more visible. The lines teem with obvious misstatements and false statements. For example, in the last forty years we have been more continuously at war than any nation in the world; there are few families in the Island that can have "said of Strife: What is it? Of the Sword: It is far from our ken"! Again, in the last two years the just complaint has been, not that we "fawned on the Younger Nations for the men who could shoot and ride," but that, on the contrary, we showed an