

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word—
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord!

No poet, not even Swinburne, has sung of the sea, and of man's strife with the sea, more splendidly than has Kipling. Swinburne has praised the sea as his "fair green girdled mother—mother and lover of men," but Swinburne has little or nothing to say of the fierce and ceaseless struggle which man and his creatures of wood and steel wage with the sea. Even in Swinburne's wonderful tale of the rout of the "Armada" one is given the impression that the sea harms only England's foes and not her sons. Kipling knew better, and is not afraid to say what he knows, that,—

"We have fed our sea for a thousand years
And she calls us, still unfed,
And there's never a wave of all her waves
But marks our English dead."

But he knows, too, the irresistible call of the "White Horses" of the sea, and the joy that the men of the sea feel in their strife with their mighty adversary. Sea-pictures abound in all his poems, and when he wishes to tell how keenly hill-men desire their hills, he can find no better way of expressing their longing save in terms of the sea. In his sea pictures, as in all of his descriptions, Kipling's method is suggestive and not detailed. Often he gives, it may be, no more than a single word or phrase, but he makes that one expression so striking and vivid that the reader's mind at once supplies the details and realizes the scene better than it could have done after a page of uninspired detail. Here are a few examples:

"Here leaps ashore the full sou' west
Blue-empty 'neath the sun."

"The wreck that lies on the spouting reef
Where the ghastly blue-lights flare"—

"Here leaps ashore the full sou' west
All heavy-winged with brine."

"Christmas in India" is a revelation of the intensity of an exile's longing for home. Another poem, not very well known, is the exquisite "Song of the Wise Children." As "Christmas in India" depicts the yearning of the exile for his English home, so the "Song of the Wise Children" gives us the Anglo-Indian's recollections of the happy days he spent in the land of his birth as he looks back upon them after time has blotted out the memory of discomfort and homesickness. There are few passages in modern English poetry to surpass as "pure poetry" these two stanzas:

"We shall go back by boltless doors
To the life unaltered our childhood knew,
To the naked feet on the cool, dark floors,
And the high-ceiled rooms that the trade blows
though."

"To the Trumpet-flowers and the moon beyond,
And the tree-toad's chorus drowning all,