

A NOTE ON KIPLING.

In this age of lavish literary output no writer has so caught the fancy of the reading world as Rudyard Kipling has done; but this interesting fact alone is not proof that his work is of permanent literary value. If we wish to make a just estimate of the absolute and abiding place of a living writer, we are confronted with insuperable difficulties. To begin with, we are too near to view him dispassionately; time alone can fashion the moulds for true criticism of a new literary form, and make a final judg-



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ment possible. The likes and dislikes of individuals pass too often among contemporaries for criticism, and unthinking people are moved as much by the fad of the moment as by the abiding classic. Of Rudyard Kipling we can speak but provisionally; what we say, favorable or adverse, must of necessity bear the mark of uncertainty. Recognizing the truth of all this, however, one feels safe in saying that Kipling has that strange power and insight—something of that divine insanity called genius; that he has

given to the world some work which will live when much of the merely pretty, the pseudo-aesthetic, the sentimental and the farcical in modern book-making shall have crumbled into dust, unread and unregretted.

What strikes one first in Kipling's work is his universal knowledge and wide sympathy. He may not know an engine as accurately as the foreman of an engine-house does, but he knows it in a way that makes it a living thing, and we overlook the inaccuracies about bolts and screws. After all, truths are greater than facts. His sympathy has gone out to all workers, toilers on land and sea; and the man who refused to be lionized in scented drawing-rooms, took off his hat to the weather-stained seamen who manned the pilot boat in New York harbor, and who on recognizing Rudyard Kipling waved their oil-skins and shouted—

"By sport of winter weather
We're walty, strained and scarred,
From the kentledge on the kelson
To the slings upon the yard,
The ocean's had her will of us
To carry all away."

This love of humanity blossomed early. It is significant that the child Kipling, trudging over a ploughed field on the Dekkan plain with his hand in that of a native husbandman, called back to his mother in Hindustani, at that time as familiar to him as English, "Good-bye, mother; this is my brother!" And has not the native of India come nearer to us in the bonds of brotherhood, because Kipling has broken down the barriers of race and class, and drawn aside the curtains that so closely veiled the lives of Indians and Anglo-Indians in that great empire of the East? The words of real genius are ever a revelation. The types, the materials, are always at hand but the artist alone sees and immortalizes them. Even when the pyramids were a-building India held treasures untold; ages passed; no one fully explored the