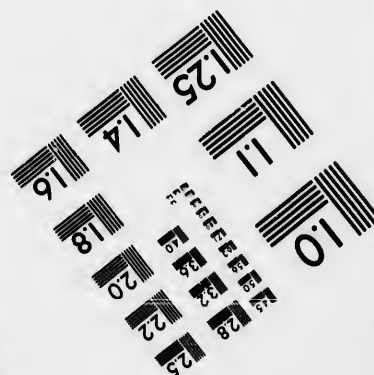
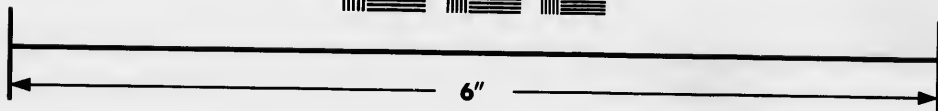
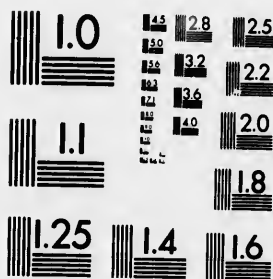


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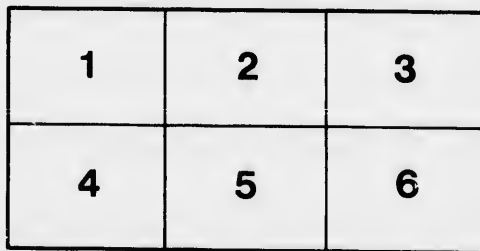
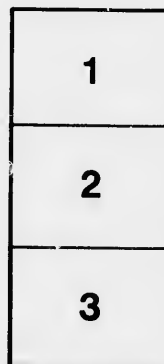
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Notes by J. P. Lash

“The Feet of the
Young Men”

1878

By Rudyard Kipling

"The Feet of the Young Men."

"Now the Four-way Lodge is opened;
Now the Hunting-winds are loose;
Now the Smokes of Spring go up to clear the brain:
Now the young men's hearts are troubled
For the whisper of the Trues;
Now the Red Gods make their medicine again."

"Who hath seen the beaver busied?
Who hath watched the black tail mating?
Who hath lain alone to hear the wild-goose cry?
Who hath worked the chosen water where the Ouananiche is
waiting,
Or the sea trout's jumping-crazy for the fly?"

"He must go-go-go away from here:
On the other side the world he's overdue.
'Send your road is clear before you,
When the old Springfret comes o'er you,
And the Red Gods call for you."

"So for one the wet sail arching through the rainbow round the
bow,
And for one the creak of snow-shoes on the crust;
And for one the Lakeside vigil, where the bull-moose leads the
cow,
And for one the mule-train coughing in the dust."

"Who hath smelled wood-smoke at twilight?
Who hath heard the birch log burning?
Who is quick to read the noises on the night?
Let him follow with the others, for the young men's feet are
turning
To the camps of proved desire and known delight.
Do you know the blackened timber, do you know that racing
stream,
With the raw right-angled log-jam at the end?
And the bar of sun-warmed shingle where a man may bask and
dream,

To the click of shod canoe-poles round the bend?
It is there that we are going with our rods and reels and traces,
To a silent, smoky Indian that we know,
To a couch of new-pulled hemlock with the starlight in our faces,
For the Red Gods call us out and we must go."

"Do you know the shallow Baltic where the seas are quick and
short;
Where the bluff lee boarded fishing luggers ride?
Do you know the joys of threshing leagues to leeward of your port
On a coast you've lost the chart of overside?
It is there that I am going, with an extra hand to bale her,
Just one single longshore loafer that I know,
He can take his chance of drowning while I sail and sail and
sail her,
For the Red Gods call me out and I must go."

"Do you know the pile-built village where the sago-dealers trade?
Do you know the reck of fish and wet bamboo?
Do you know the dripping silence of the orchid-scented glade,
When the blazoned bird-winged butterflies flap through?
It is there that I am going with my camphor, net and boxes,
To a gentle yellow pirate that I know;
To my little wailing lemurs, to the palms and flying foxes;
For the Red Gods call me out and I must go."

"Do you know the world's white-roof tree, do you know that windy
rift,
Where the baffling mountain eddies chop and change?
Do you know the long day's patience, belly down on frozen drift,
While the head of heads is feeding out of range?
It is there that I am going, where the boulders and the snow lie,
With a trusty nimble tracker that I know,
I have sworn an oath to keep it on the horns of Ovis Poli,
And the Red Gods call me out and I must go."

"Now the four-way lodge is opened, now the smokes of council rise;
Pleasant smokes, ere yet 'twixt trail and trail they choose;
Now the girths and ropes are tested, now they pack their last
supplies:
Now our young men go to dance before the Trues,
Who shall meet them at those altars, who shall light them to
the shrine?
Velvet-footed who shall guide them to their goal?
Unto each the voice and vision, unto each his spoor and sign;
Lonely mountain in the northland, misty sweat-bath 'neath the line;
And for each a man that knows his naked soul;
White or yellow, black or copper, he is waiting as a lover,

Smoke of funnel, dust of hooves or beat of train;
Where the high grass hides the horseman or the glaring flats
discover;
Where the steamer hails the landing or the surf boat brings the
rover;
Where the rails run out in sand-drift . . . Quick! Ah, heave the
camp-kit over;
For the Red Gods make their medicine again;
And we go-go-go away from here;
On the other side the world we're overdue.
'Send the road is clear before you
When the old Spring-fret comes o'er you
And the Red Gods call for you."

"The Feet of the Young Men."

THIS is to many the most beautiful of Kipling's poems. It recalls memories of delightful days in the woods, on the seas and lakes and rivers and prairies, and in camp. By simple, yet artistically worded questions, left unanswered, it describes nature in her most charming dress and paints a picture in almost every line.

The title of the poem but poorly indicates its scope. The idea is that everywhere, at some time of the year, the feet of the young men are drawn towards their favorite outdoor haunts. They are called by an irresistible voice, and must go. Each has his favorite pursuit and favorite place. For one, yachting; for another, hunting; for a third, shooting; for a fourth, fishing; and so on. 'Tis after the winter is over, and when the days lengthen and the air is balmy and nature herself comes out in leaf and flower and beauty. when the ice has gone and the streams and lakes are free, that the desire to get away from indoor life and the work and bustle of business becomes strongest. 'Tis then "the old spring fret comes o'er you"; but there is a fall fret and a winter fret and a summer fret as well.

The opening is a reference to the spring:

"Now the Four-way Lodge is opened;
Now the Hunting-winds are loose;
Now the Smokes of Spring go up to clear the brain:
Now the young men's hearts are troubled
For the whisper of the Trues;
Now the Red Gods make their medicine again."

When the subject is outdoor life and hunting, thoughts of our North American Indians, and of their lives in the woods and on the prairies, naturally arise in the Anglo-Saxon mind. It is therefore fitting and pleasing that the author should have commenced with metaphors suggested by Indian customs and mythology. "The Four-way Lodge," a lodge with openings to the four points of the compass, where the Indians meet every spring to hold council and to

discuss questions concerning the tribe or band and to commence the season's hunting and quest for food. Here it refers to the world's hunting lodge itself, closed during winter, and imprisoning the hunting winds, the winds which carry to all quarters of the globe the medicine of the Red Gods, medicine which, when taken by the young men, fits them for the chase and brings on that restless feeling which Kipling so exactly describes as "the old spring fret."

"The Smokes of Spring go up to clear the brain." The metaphor here is suggested by an Indian custom. When any important movement of an Indian tribe is contemplated, the chiefs and head men meet in council for discussion. There, during the meeting, they smoke their pipes to clear their brains and help them in their decisions. In a subsequent verse the four-way lodge is again mentioned, and the smokes of council are referred to.

"Now the young men's hearts are troubled for the whisper of the Trues." What are the "Trues?" Is the allusion here to some Indian legend or belief, or do the Trues mean Nature herself? All that is true and real as distinguished from the artificial and false? I wish Kipling himself would tell us.

Our Canadian national emblem, the beaver, is honored by being mentioned first in the poem; indeed to Canada is due a liberal share of the beauties which are portrayed. We know that Kipling spent some time in Canada and fished on one of our salmon rivers and visited our North-West. His facility for absorbing in a short time the very essence and charm of what he sees is excelled only by the facility with which in choice and artistic language he describes it:

"Who hath seen the beaver busied?
Who hath watched the black tail mating?
Who hath lain alone to hear the wild-goose cry?
Who hath worked the chosen water where the Ouananiche is waiting,
Or the sea trout's jumping-crazy for the fly?"

All these delightful pictures are taken from Canada. The home of the beaver is with us. The black tail is one of our most beautiful deer, now unhappily very scarce. In Manitoba and our North-West the wild goose breeds. The Ouananiche (pronounced Win-an-ish), or land-locked salmon, is found only in Canada. The rivers of the lower St. Lawrence, of the Baie de Chaleur, and of the Labrador and New Brunswick and Nova Scotia coasts, abound with sea trout.

In wild goose shooting it is essential that the sportsman should lie concealed and make no noise. This can be more easily accomplished if he be alone, therefore 'tis usual for each sportsman to "lie alone"

when waiting for the birds to come. While in the air wild geese keep up a constant calling, and many times they can be heard long before being seen. This simple question, "Who hath lain alone to hear the wild goose cry," in itself paints the picture and recalls to the sportsman the hours (sometimes weary enough) spent in his "hide" or "blind" waiting patiently to hear the "honk," "honk" of the old gander leader, and the answering calls of the flock behind.

"Ouananiche" is the Indian name for one of the most prized of Canadian game fishes. 'Tis found in greatest numbers in the upper waters of the Saguenay River, as it discharges from Lake St. John. 'Tis found also in limited numbers in a few places in the Maritime Provinces. From its resemblance to a salmon 'tis thought that originally its progenitors were salmon which had to come up from the sea and been "land-locked" and unable to return. They are caught by fly-fishing, and give excellent sport; in weight they run from two to five or six pounds. Here again the simple question, "Who hath worked the chosen water where the Ouananiche is waiting," in itself paints the picture, and recalls to the angler some of his most delightful days. "Worked the chosen water." To the fly-fisherman this tells the whole story.

These questions naturally give rise to the query: "Where can one see the beaver, the black tail, the wild goose and the Ouananiche?" and the reply is:

"He must go-go-go away from here;
On the other side the world he's overdue.
'Send your road is clear before you,
When the old Spring-fret comes o'er you,
And the Red Gods call for you."

Have you never been? Then go at once. You've waited too long already; you're now overdue; and, when next year the old spring fret comes o'er you, when you have taken the medicine of the Red Gods and have heard them calling, pray that God send your road is clear before you so that you may go again.

The poem continues:

"So for one the wet sail arching through the rainbow round the bow,
And for one the creak of snow-shoes on the crust;
And for one the Lakeside vigil, where the bull-moose leads the cow,
And for one the mule-train coughing in the dust."

There is a picture in each of these lines. What an array of talent it would take to properly illustrate the whole poem! And what a variety of treatment could be applied to each idea!

In deer hunting, moose hunting particularly, advantage is taken of the crust which forms on the snow when after a thaw it freezes again. This crust will generally bear a man on snowshoes, but is seldom strong enough to bear a deer or moose. A hunter on snowshoes has a great advantage and can readily overtake the animal, hampered as it is by constantly breaking through the crust. 'Tis to this kind of hunting allusion is made by the line, "And for one the creak of snowshoes on the crust."

In moose hunting in the fall 'tis not an uncommon thing for the hunter to wait quietly for hours on the shore of a lake near a place where, from the footprints, he knows the moose come down to drink. This is "the Lakeside vigil" referred to in the line, "And for one the Lakeside vigil where the bull-moose leads the cow."

These two scenes are Canadian, and the author probably got in Canada the experience or information which enabled him to depict them so well.

Where railways do not run, especially over wide plateaux or prairie country, and where the mule is the chief mode of locomotion, for security as well as for company and for carrying purposes, a mule train is made up and the journey is performed by all together rather than singly. In the dry season the roads are very dusty, and the passing mule train makes it rise in clouds. 'Tis to this kind of travel allusion is made by the line, "And for one the mule-train coughing in the dust."

To those who have camped in our woods, and especially to those who have fished in our salmon rivers, the next verses will always be the favorites:

"Who hath smelled wood-smoke at twilight?
Who hath heard the birch log burning?
Who is quick to read the noises on the night?
Let him follow with the others, for the young men's feet are turning
To the camps of proved desire and known delight.
Do you know the blackened timber, do you know that racing stream,
With the raw right-angled log-jam at the end?
And the bar of sun-warmed shingle where a man may bask and dream,
To the click of shod canoe-poles round the bend?
It is there that we are going with our rods and reels and traces,
To a silent, smoky Indian that we know,
To a couch of new-pulled hemlock with the starlight in our faces,
For the Red Gods call us out and we must go."

"Who hath smelled wood-smoke at twilight? Who hath heard the birch log burning?" What a host of memories these simple ques-

tions bring up! The camp fire, the jolly company, the stories and songs, the music of the river, the canoes at the river's edge, the tents white in the moonlight, and the delicious perfume of the hemlock boughs on which the blankets for the beds are laid.

"To the camps of proved desire and known delight." What an assurance of success is conveyed by this line. The desire has been proved, and the delight is known.

In dry seasons, when every blade of grass and every leaf and twig on the ground, when the very ground itself, is parched and dry, fire is often started in the woods in some mysterious way, and for miles around it spreads and burns for many weeks, leaving large tracts of standing timber black and charred. Many of these fires have occurred along the hillsides adjoining salmon rivers, and, though in course of years the new growth has again covered the place, yet the blackened tree trunks are still standing and can be seen for miles around. Through the valleys between ranges of hills the river runs, a series of rapids and pools from source to mouth.

In the spring, when the snow on the water-sheds melts, the river becomes a torrent, carrying down trees, logs, roots and stumps torn from the over-flooded banks. So great is the rush of water that the greater part of this debris is carried to the sea, but, as the water falls and as the mouth of the river is reached, where the stream is more sluggish, some of the trees and logs get caught and form a jam, which sometimes turns the course of the river at a right angle, a mass of tangled tree trunks, branches, roots and logs.

The river is very tortuous in its course, and during the summer at almost every bend there is a dry bar or beach of gravel, pebbles and small flat stones, called "shingle."

The current is so swift even in the places where the surface of the water is not broken into rapids, that in ascending in canoes (the only practicable mode of navigation) the paddle is useless. The canoe-men use poles, ten or twelve feet in length, with which they shove the canoe along. These poles are pointed at one end and "shod" with an iron socket to prevent them from being bruised and broken by contact with the stones on the bottom. When poling one man stands in the bow, the other in the stern of the canoe. They work together, at each stroke lifting their poles at the same time and shoving them down at the same time and on the same side. They are usually well-made, athletic fellows, and their action is the very poetry of motion. Of necessity the canoe is kept close to the shore, and as the iron strikes the stones under water

a click is heard, which to the fisherman is sweet music indeed. This click can often be heard before the canoe appears around the bend. How beautifully all is described, and how vividly the pictures are painted! In some rivers the canoe-men are Indians, and very skilful guides they make. "A silent, smoky Indian." Did three words ever before so well describe an Indian guide?

"Traces" here refer to an arrangement of hooks used in fishing. From fishing the poem turns to yachting—

"Do you know the shallow Baltic where the seas are quick and short;
Where the bluff lee boarded fishing luggers ride?
Do you know the joys of threshing leagues to leeward of your port
On a coast you've lost the chart of overside?
It is there that I am going, with an ext and to bale her,
Just one single 'longshore loafer that I know,
He can take his chance of drowning while I sail and sail and sail her,
For the Red Gods call me out and I must go."

"Leeboarded fishing lugger." A fishing boat with "lee boards" hanging over the side to check drifting, as distinguished from a centre board, which is let down into the water through the keel.

"Just one single 'longshore loafer.'" A perfect description of the kind of man met with by the summer tourist on every coast; one who would rather spend his time loafing about the shore on the chance of a few days' or hours' lazy employment in attendance upon a sportsman, and would rather take his chance of drowning, than accept steady employment on the farm or in the mill or at the docks. What a charming recklessness and abandon this verse portrays!

"Single" here is probably used in contradistinction to "married."

The scene is now changed to the East Indian Archipelago, where the sago palms grow; where the earth is wet and swampy; where the lovely orchids flourish; where the graceful active little lemurs gambol among the trees, and where the flying foxes or fox bats dart through the air in countless numbers.

"Do you know the pile-built village where the sago-dealers trade?
Do you know the reek of fish and wet bamboo?
Do you know the dripping silence of the orchid-scented glade.
When the blazoned bird-winged butterflies flap through?
It is there that I am going with my camphor, net and boxes,
To a gentle yellow pirate that I know;
To my little wailing lemurs, to the palms and flying foxes;
For the Red Gods call me out and I must go."

What artist, except in imagination, could paint the picture here

described? An orchid-scented glade; fantastic and wonderfully colored flowers, dotted here and there above and below, beads of moisture standing on every leaf; no sound of any kind to break the silence save the patter of the falling drops as a butterfly, rivalling in color the orchids themselves, flaps from flower to flower. "The dripping silence of the orchid-scented glade, when the blazoned bird winged butterflies flap through." Exquisite poetry and word painting! The "gentle yellow pirate" is a fitting guide to so gentle a scene.

"Pile-built village." In parts of Africa, the East Indies and other places where the sago palm grows best and where the sago dealers go to buy, the whole ground, in the rainy seasons, is covered with water, and the natives who live there build their houses or huts on posts or piles, several feet above the surface. Whole villages are thus built.

The lemur is an animal found in Madagascar and some of the adjacent islands; it somewhat resembles a monkey, and is about the size of a domestic cat. There are many varieties, but the ring-tailed lemur is the most beautiful. It is extremely gentle and active and graceful in its movements, and utters at intervals a little plaintive cry or wail something like that of a cat.

The flying fox, or fox bat, is also found in Madagascar and the neighboring islands and in other places. It has a long pointed muzzle and wooly fur covering the neck, and resembles a fox. It is, however, a bat, and flies like a bat.

The scene again changes, and, from the land of the palms and orchids and perpetual heat, we are taken to mountains of perpetual snow.

"Do you know the world's white-roof tree, do you know that windy rift,
Where the baffling mountain eddies chop and change?
Do you know the long day's patience, belly down on frozen drift,
While the head of heads is feeding out of range?
It is there that I am going, where the boulders and the snow lie,
With a trusty nimble tracker that I know.
I have sworn an oath to keep it on the horns of Ovis Poli,
And the Red Gods call me out and I must go.

The most northern extremity of the elevated Tibeto-Himalayan mountain plateau is one of the Panirs, a name given to elevated plateaux in Central Asia. The highest ridge of the Himalayan mountains has been called the "Roof of the World." Kipling here calls it "the world's white roof-tree." These mountain ranges are the home of wild sheep. Here at an elevation of 16,000 feet above the sea level is the home of the magnificent Ovis Poli, named after the

celebrated Venetian traveller, Marcus Polo, who met with it in his adventurous travels through this region in the 13th century. It is remarkable for the great size of the horns of the old rams and the wide open sweep of their curve, so that the points stand boldly out on each side far away from the animal's head, instead of curling round nearly in the same plane, as in most of the other species. The horns of the best specimens are sometimes from 56 to 58 inches long. The Ovis Poli has been so prized by specimen hunters, and has been so often hunted, that it is very difficult now to get a good head. The hunter must exercise the greatest patience as well as skill in approaching the animal, and must not hesitate to crawl on hands and knees and lie down flat on the frozen snow for long spells, "belly down on frozen drift," watching an opportunity to approach nearer and nearer to a specimen, "head of heads," which is seen feeding out of range. A guide, or "trusty nimble tracker," skilled in the habits of the sheep, as well as in knowledge of the locality, is essential.

The description of the places of proved desire and known delight end with this verse. The rest of the poem is a summing up of the whole.

"Now the four-way lodge is opened, now the smokes of council rise;
Pleasant smokes, ere yet 'twixt trail and trail they choose:
Now the girths and ropes are tested, now they pack their last supplies:
Now our young men go to dance before the Trues.
Who shall meet them at those altars, who shall light them to the shrine?
Velvet-footed who shall guide them to their goal?
Unto each the voice and vision, unto each his spoor and sign;
Lonely mountain in the northland, misty sweat-bath 'neath the line;
And for each a man that knows his naked soul;
White or yellow, black or copper, he is waiting as a lover.
Smoke of funnel, dust of hooves or beat of train;
Where the high grass hides the horseman or the glaring flats discover;
Where the steamer hails the landing or the surf boat brings the rover;
Where the rails run out in sand-drift . . . Quick! Ah, heave the camp-kit over;
For the Red Gods make their medicine again;
 And we go-go-go away from here;
 On the other side the world we're overdue.
 'Send the road is clear before you
 When the old Spring-fret comes o'er you
 And the Red Gods call for you."

The allusion here is to meetings in council of young men in the world's hunting lodge who plan and discuss their various trips and have pleasant smokes together ere they separate, "ere yet 'twixt trail and trail they choose," each choosing his own destination, each having

his own vision of enjoyment, each hearing a voice calling him, each having a companion "who knows his naked soul." It matters not how or where the sportsmen come, whether by steamer, by mule train, by railway or on horseback, to a wharf, through the surf, in the jungle, on the prairie, or on the last built railway in the desert; in the cold north or the hot south; however or wherever it may be, the guides, those who are to meet them at their altars, to light them to their shrine and to guide them to their goal, be they white or yellow, black or copper, be he a 'longshore loafer or a gentle yellow pirate, be he a trusty nimble tracker or a silent smoky Indian, each waits as a lover for the sportsman's return. A very pleasant thing is the hand-shaking with your last year's guide.

Z. A. LASH.

Toronto, Canada, October, 1898.

