

1892

GUNGA DIN (From Barrack-Room Ballads)

Rudyard Kipling

Kipling, Rudyard (1865-1936) - An English novelist, short-story writer, and poet who spent most of his youth in India, and is best known for his children's classics. In 1907, Kipling was the first English writer ever to be awarded the Nobel Prize in literature. Gunga Din (1892) - From "Barrack-Room Ballads," a collection of poems celebrating British army life and the soldier. This poem praises Gunga Din, the Hindu water-carrier for a British Indian regiment.

GUNGA DIN

You may talk o' gin and beer When you're quartered safe out 'ere,
An' you're sent to penny-fights an' Aldershot it; But when it comes
to slaughter You will do your work on water, An' you'll lick the
bloomin' boots of 'im that's got it.

Now in Injia's sunny clime, Where I used to spend my time A-
servin' of 'Er Majesty the Queen, Of all them black-faced crew The
finest man I knew Was our regimental bhisti, Gunga Din.

He was "Din! Din! Din!

You limping lump o' brick-dust, Gunga Din!

Hi! slippery hitherao!

Water, get it! Panee lao! (1)

1 Bring water swiftly. Text of Footnote

You squigy-nosed old idol, Gunga Din!"

The uniform 'e wore Was nothin' much before, An' rather less than
'arf o' that be'ind, For a piece o' twisty rag An' a goatskin water-
bag Was all the field-equipment 'e could find.

When the sweatin' troop-train lay In a sidin' through the day,
Where the 'eat would make your bloomin' eyebrows crawl, We
shouted "Harry By!" (2) Till our throats were bricky-dry, Then we
wopped 'im 'cause 'e couldn't serve us all.

It was "Din! Din! Din!

You 'eathen, where the mischief 'ave you been? You put some
juldee (3) in it

2 Mr. Atkins equivalent for "O' brother".

3 Be quick.

Or I'll marrow (5) you this minute If you don't fill up my helmet,
Gunga Din!" 'E would dot an' carry one Till the longest day was
done An' 'e didn't seem to know the use o' fear.

If we charged or broke or cut, You could bet your bloomin' nut,
'E'd be waitin' fifty paces right flank rear.

With 'is mussick (6) on 'is back, 'E would skip with our attack, An'
watch us till the bugles made "Retire," An' for all 'is dirty 'ide 'E
was white, clear white, inside When 'e went to tend the wounded
under fire!

It was "Din! Din! Din!" With the bullets kickin' dust-spots on the
green.

When the cartridges ran out, 5 Hit you.

6 Water skins.

You could hear the front-files shout, "Hi! ammunition-mules an' Gunga Din!"

I sha'n't forgit the night When I dropped be'ind the fight With a bullet where my belt plate should 'a' been.

I was chokin' mad with thirst, An' the man that spied me first Was our good old grinnin', gruntin' Gunga Din.

'E lifted up my 'ead, An' he plugged me where I bled, An' 'e guv me 'arf-a-pint o' water-green:

It was crawlin' and it stunk, But of all the drinks I've drunk, I'm gratefulest to one from Gunga Din.

It was "Din! Din! Din!" 'Ere's a beggar with a bullet through 'is spleen; 'E's chawin' up the ground, An' 'e's kickin' all around:

For Gawd's sake git the water, Gunga Din!

'E carried me away To where a dooli lay, An' a bullet come an' drilled the beggar clean.

'E put me safe inside, An' just before 'e died:

"I 'ope you liked your drink," sez Gunga Din.

So I'll meet 'im later on At the place where 'e is gone

Where it's always double drill and no canteen; 'E'll be squattin' on the coals, Givin' drinks to pore damned souls, An' I'll get a swig in hell from Gunga Din!

Yes, Din! Din! Din!

You Lazarushian-leather Gunga Din!

Though I've belted you and flayed you, By the living Gawd that made you, You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din!

THE END