

**1888**

**PIG**

**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. Pig (1888) - From "Plain Tales from the Hills," a collection of stories of life in India. A man who was nearly slain by a vicious horse seeks revenge on the man that sold it to him.**

## PIG

Go, stalk the red deer o'er the heather, Ride, follow the fox if you can! But, for pleasure and profit together, Allow me the hunting of Man, The chase of the Human, the search for the Soul To its ruin,- the hunting of Man.

-The Old Shikarri.

THE difference began in the matter of a horse, with a twist in his temper, whom Pinecoffin sold to Nafferton and by whom Nafferton was nearly slain.

There may have been other causes of offence, but the horse was the official stalking-horse. Nafferton was very angry; but Pinecoffin laughed, and said that he had never guaranteed the beast's manners. Nafferton laughed too, though he vowed that he would write off his fall against Pinecoffin if he waited five years. Now, a Dalesman from beyond Skipton will forgive an injury when the Strid lets a man live; but a South Devon man is as soft as a Dartmoor bog. You can see from their names that Nafferton had the race-advantage of Pinecoffin. He was a peculiar man, and his notions of humour were cruel. He taught me a new and fascinating form of shikar. He hounded Pinecoffin from Mithankot to Jagadri, and from Gurgaon to Abbottabad- up and across the Punjab, a large Province, and in places remarkably dry. He said that he had no intention of allowing Assistant Commissioners to 'sell him pups,' in the shape of ramping, screaming countrybreds, without making their lives a burden to them. Most Assistant Commissioners develop a bent for some special work after their first hot weather in the country. The boys with digestions hope to write their names large on the Frontier, and struggle for dreary places like Bannu and Kohat.

The bilious ones climb into the Secretariat. Which is very bad for the liver. Others are bitten with a mania for District work, Ghuznvide coins or Persian poetry; while some, who come of farmers' stock, find that the smell of the Earth after the Rains gets into their blood, and calls them to 'develop the resources of the Province.' These men are enthusiasts. Pinecoffin belonged to their class. He knew a great many facts bearing on the cost of bullocks and temporary wells, and opiumscrapers, and what happens if you burn too much rubbish on a field in the hope of enriching used-up soil. All the Pinecoffins come of a landholding breed, and so the land only took back her own again. Unfortunately- most

unfortunately for Pinecoffin- he was a Civilian, as well as a farmer. Nafferton watched him, and thought about the horse. Nafferton said, 'See me chase that boy till he drops!' I said, 'You can't get your knife into an Assistant Commissioner.' Nafferton told me that I did not understand the administration of the Province.

Our Government is rather peculiar. It gushes on the agricultural and general information side, and will supply a moderately respectable man with all sorts of 'economic statistics,' if he speaks to it prettily. For instance, you are interested in gold-washing in the sands of the Sutlej. You pull the string, and find that it wakes up half a dozen Departments, and finally communicates, say, with a friend of yours in the Telegraph, who once wrote some notes on the customs of the goldwashers when he was on construction-work in their part of the Empire. He may or may not be pleased at being ordered to write out everything he knows for your benefit. This depends on his temperament. The bigger man you are, the more information and the greater trouble can you raise.

Nafferton was not a big man; but he had the reputation of being very 'earnest.' An 'earnest' man can do much with a Government. There was an earnest man once who nearly wrecked... but all India knows that story. I am not sure what real 'earnestness' is. A very fair imitation can be manufactured by neglecting to dress decently, by mooning about in a dreary, misty sort of a way, by taking office-work home, after staying in office till seven, and by receiving crowds of native gentlemen on Sundays. That is one sort of 'earnestness.' Nafferton cast about for a peg whereon to hang his earnestness, and for a string that would communicate with Pinecoffin. He found both. They were Pig.

Nafferton became an earnest inquirer after Pig. He informed the Government that he had a scheme whereby a very large percentage of the British Army in India could be fed, at a very large savings, on Pig. Then he hinted that Pinecoffin might supply him with the 'varied information necessary to the proper inception of the scheme.' So the Government wrote on the back of the letter, 'Instruct Mr. Pinecoffin to furnish Mr. Nafferton with any information in his power. Government is very prone to writing things on the backs of letters which, later, lead to sore trouble.

Nafferton had not the faintest interest in Pig, but he knew that Pinecoffin would flounce into the trap. Pinecoffin was delighted at being consulted about Pig. The Indian Pig is not exactly an important factor in agricultural life; but Nafferton explained to Pinecoffin that there was room for improvement, and corresponded directly with that young man.

You may think that there is not much to be evolved from Pig. It all depends how you set to work. Pinecoffin being a Civilian and wishing to do things thoroughly, began with an essay on the Primitive Pig, the Mythology of the Pig, and the Dravidian Pig. Nafferton filed that information- twenty-seven fools-cap sheets- and desired to know about the distribution of the Pig in the Punjab, and how it stood the Plains in the hot weather. From this point onwards, remember that I am giving you only the barest outlines of the affair- the guy-ropes, as it were, of the hideous web that Nafferton spun round Pinecoffin.

Pinecoffin made a coloured Pig-population map, and collected observations on the comparative longevity of Pig (a) in the sub-montane tracts of the Himalayas and (b) in the Rechna Doab. Nafferton filed that, and asked what sort of people looked after Pig. This started an ethnological excursus on swineherds, and drew from Pinecoffin long tables showing the proportion per thousand of that caste in the Derajat. Nafferton filed the bundle, and explained that the figures which he wanted referred to the Cis-Sutlej states, where he understood that Pigs were very fine and large, and where he proposed to start a Piggery. By this time, Government had quite forgotten their instructions to Mr. Pinecoffin. They were like the gentlemen, in Keats' poem, who turned well-oiled wheels to skin other people. But Pinecoffin was just entering into the spirit of the Pig-hunt; as Nafferton well knew he would do. He had a fair amount of work of his own to clear away; but he sat up of nights reducing Pig to five places of decimals for the honour of his Service. He was not going to appear ignorant of so easy a subject as Pig.

Then Government sent him on special duty to Kohat, to 'inquire into' the big, seven-foot, iron-shod spades of that District. People had been killing each other with those peaceful tools; and Government wished to know 'whether a modified form of agricultural implement could not, tentatively and as a temporary measure, be introduced among the agricultural population without needlessly or unduly exacerbating the existing religious sentiments of the peasantry.' Between those spades and Nafferton's Pig, Pinecoffin was rather heavily burdened.

Nafferton now began to take up '(a) The food-supply of the indigenous Pig, with a view to the improvement of its capacities as a flesh-former. (b) The acclimatisation of the exotic Pig, maintaining its distinctive peculiarities.' Pinecoffin replied exhaustively that the exotic Pig would become merged in the indigenous type; and quoted horse-breeding statistics to prove this.

The side issue was debated, at great length on Pinecoffin's side, till Nafferton owned that he had been in the wrong, and moved the previous question. When Pinecoffin had quite written himself out about flesh-formers, and fibrins, and glucose and the nitrogenous constituents of maize and lucerne, Nafferton raised the question of expense. By this time Pinecoffin, who had been transferred from Kohat, had developed a Pig theory of his own, which he stated in thirty-three folio pages- all carefully filed by Nafferton. Who asked for more.

These things covered ten months, and Pinecoffin's interest in the potential Piggery seemed to die down after he had stated his own views. But Nafferton bombarded him with letters on 'the Imperial aspect of the scheme, as tending to officialise the sale of pork, and thereby calculated to give offence to the Mohammedan population of Upper India.' He guessed that Pinecoffin would want some broad, free-hand work after his niggling, decimal details. Pinecoffin handled the latest development of the case in masterly style, and proved that no 'popular ebullition of excitement was to be apprehended.' Nafferton said that there was nothing like Civilian insight in matters of this kind, and lured him up a by-path- 'the possible profits to accrue to the Government from the sale of hogbristles.' There is an extensive literature of hog-bristles, and the shoe, brush, and colourman's trades recognise more varieties of bristles than you would think possible. After Pinecoffin had wondered a little at Nafferton's rage for information, he sent back a monograph, fifty-one pages, on 'Products of the Pig.' This led him, under Nafferton's tender handling, straight to the Cawnpore factories, the trade in hog-skin for saddles- and thence to the tanners. Pinecoffin wrote that pomegranate-seed was the best cure for hog-skin, and suggested- for the past fourteen months had wearied him- that Nafferton should 'raise his pigs before he tanned them.' Nafferton went back to the second section of his fifth question. How could the exotic Pig be brought to give as much pork as it did in the West and yet 'assume the essentially hirsute characteristics of its Oriental congener'? Pinecoffin felt dazed, for he had forgotten what he had written sixteen months before, and fancied that he was about to reopen the entire question. He was too far involved in the hideous tangle to retreat, and, in a weak moment, he wrote, 'Consult my first letter.' Which related to the Dravidian Pig. As a matter of fact, Pinecoffin had still to reach the acclimatisation stage; having gone off on a side issue on the merging of types.

Then Nafferton really unmasked his batteries! He complained to the Government, in stately language, of 'the paucity of help

accorded to me in my earnest attempts to start a potentially remunerative industry, and the flippancy with which my requests for information are treated by a gentleman whose pseudo-scholarly attainments should at least have taught him the primary differences between the Dravidian and the Berkshire variety of the genus *Sus*. If I am to understand that the letter to which he refers me, contains his serious views on the acclimatisation of a valuable, though possibly uncleanly, animal, I am reluctantly compelled to believe,' etc. etc.

There was a new man at the head of the Department of castigation. The wretched Pinecoffin was told that the Service was made for the Country, and not the Country for the Service, and that he had better begin to supply information about Pigs.

Pinecoffin answered insanely that he had written everything that could be written about Pig, and that some furlough was due to him.

Nafferton got a copy of that letter, and sent it, with the essay on the Dravidian Pig, to a down-country paper which printed both in full. The essay was rather high-flown; but if the Editor had seen the stacks of paper, in Pinecoffin's handwriting, on Nafferton's table, he would not have been so sarcastic about the 'nebulous discursiveness and blatant self-sufficiency of the modern Competitionwallah, and his utter inability to grasp the practical issues of a practical question.' Many friends cut out these remarks and sent them to Pinecoffin.

I have already stated that Pinecoffin came of a soft stock. This last stroke frightened and shook him. He could not understand it; but he felt that he had been, somehow, shamelessly betrayed by Nafferton. He realised that he had wrapped himself up in the Pigskin without need, and that he could not well set himself right with his Government. All his acquaintances asked after his 'nebulous discursiveness' or his 'blatant self-sufficiency,' and this made him miserable.

He took a train and went to Nafferton, whom he had not seen since the Pig business began. He also took the cutting from the paper, and blustered feebly and called Nafferton names, and then died down to a watery, weak protest of the 'Isay-it's-too-bad-you-know' order.

Nafferton was very sympathetic.

'I'm afraid I've given you a good deal of trouble, haven't I?' said he.

'Trouble!' whimpered Pinecoffin; 'I don't mind the trouble so much, though that was bad enough, but what I resent is this showing up in print. It will stick to me like a burr all through my service. And I did do my best for your interminable swine. It's too bad of you- on my soul it is!' 'I don't know,' said Nafferton. 'Have you ever been stuck with a horse? It isn't the money I mind, though that is bad enough, but what I resent is the chaff that follows, especially from the boy who stuck me. But I think we'll cry quits now.' Pinecoffin found nothing to say save bad words; and Nafferton smiled ever so sweetly, and asked him to dinner.

**THE END**