

1888

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

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. The Three Musketeers (1888) - From "Plain Tales from the Hills," a collection of stories of life in India. Mulvaney, Ortheris, and Learoyd arrange the abduction of a Lord, then arrive just in time to save him.

THREE MUSKETEERS

An' when the war began, we chased the bold Afghan, An' we made the bloomin' Ghazi for to flee, boys O! An' we marched into Ka, an' we tuk the Balar 'Issar An' we taught 'em to respec' the British Soldier.

Barrack-Room Ballad.

MULVANEY, Ortheris, and Learoyd are Privates in B Company of a Line Regiment, and personal friends of mine. Collectively I think, but am not certain, they are the worst men in the regiment so far as genial blackguardism goes.

They told me this story, in the Umballa Refreshment Room while we were waiting for an up-train. I supplied the beer. The tale was cheap at a gallon and a half.

All men know Lord Benira Trig. He is a Duke, or an Earl, or something unofficial; also a Peer; also a Globe-trotter. On all three counts, as Ortheris says, "e didn't deserve no consideration.' He was out in India for three months collecting materials for a book on 'Our Eastern Impedimenta,' and quartering himself upon everybody, like a Cossack in evening-dress.

His particular vice- because he was a Radical, men said- was having garrisons turned out for his inspection. He would then dine with the Officer Commanding, and insult him, across the Mess table, about the appearance of the troops. That was Benira's way. He turned out troops once too often. He came to Helanthami Cantonment on a Tuesday. He wished to go shopping in the bazars on Wednesday, and he 'desired' the troops to be turned out on a Thursday. . The Officer Commanding could not well refuse; for Benira was a Lord. There was an indignation-meeting of subalterns in the Mess Room, to call the Colonel pet names.

'But the rale dimonstrashin,' said Mulvaney, 'was in B Comp'ny barrack; we three headin' it.' Mulvaney climbed on to the refreshment-bar, settled himself comfortably by the beer, and went on, 'Whin the row was at ut's foinest an' B Comp'ny was fur goin' out to murther this man Thrigg on the p'rade-groun', Learoyd here takes up his helmut an' sez, 'fwhat was ut ye said?' 'Ah said,' said Learoyd, 'gie us t' brass. Tak' oop a subscripshun, lads, for to put off t' p'rade, an' if t' p'rade's not put off, ah'll gie t' brass back agean. Thot's wot ah said. All B Coomp'ny knawed me. Ah took oop a big subscripshun- fower rupees eight annas 'twas- an' ah went oot to turn t' job over. Mulvaney an' Orth'ris coom with me.'

'We three raises the Divil in couples gin'rally,' explained Mulvaney.

Here Ortheris interrupted. "Ave you read the papers?" said he.

'Sometimes,' I said.

'We 'ad read the papers, an' we put hup a faked decoity, a- a sedukshun.'

'dukshin, ye cockney,' said Mulvaney.

'dukshun or dukshun- no great odds. Any'ow, we arranged to taik an' put Mister Benhira out o' the way till Thursday was hover, or 'e too busy to rux 'isself about p'raids. was the man wot said, "We'll make a few rupees off o' the business." 'We hild a Council av War,' continued Mulvaney, 'walkin' roun' by the Artill'ry Lines. I was Prisidint, Learoyd was Minister av Finance, an' little Orth'ris here was-' 'A bloomin' Bismarck! made the 'ole show pay.' 'This interferin' bit av a Benira man,' said Mulvaney, 'did the thrick for us himself; for, on me sowl, we hadn't a notion av what was to come afther the next minut. He was shoppin' in the bazar on fut. 'Twas dhrawin' dusk thin, an' we stud watchin' the little man hoppin' in an' out av the shops, thryin' to injuce the naygurs to his . Prisintly, he sthrols up, his arrums full av thruck, an' he sez in a consiquinshal way, shticking out his little belly, "Me good men," sez he, "have ye seen the Kernel's b'roosh?" "B'roosh?" sez Learoyd. "There's no b'roosh herenobbut a ." - "Fwhat's that?" sez Thrigg. Learoyd shows him wan down the sthreet, an' he sez, "How thruly Orientil! I will ride on a ." I saw thin that our Rigimintal Saint was for givin' Thrigg over to us neck an' brisket. I purshued a , an' I sez to the dhriver-divil, I sez, "Ye black limb, there's a comin' for this . He wants to go to the Padsahi Jhil"- 'twas about tu moiles away- "to shoot snipe- .

You dhrive - like Hell? 'Tis no manner av use to the , bekaze he doesn't your talk. Av he anything, just you and Go for the first - mile from cantonmints. Thin , an' the you an' the you the better will that be; an' here's a rupee for ye?" "The -man knew there was somethin' out av the common in the air. He grinned an' sez, " I goin' damn fast." I prayed that the Kernel's b'roosh wudn't arrive till me darlin' Benira by the grace av God was undher weigh. The little man puts his thruck into the an' scuttles in like a fat guinea-pig; niver offerin' us the price av a dhrink for our services in helpin' him home. "He's off to the Padsahi ," sez I to the others.' Ortheris took up the tale 'Jist then, little Buldoo kim up, 'oo was the son of one of the Artillery grooms'e would 'av made a 'evinly newspaper-boy in London, bein' sharp an' fly to all manner o' games. 'E 'ad bin watchin' us puttin' Mister Benhira into 'is temporary baroush, an' 'e sez, "What you been a doin' of, " sez 'e.

Learoyd 'e caught 'im by the ear an' 'e sez-' 'Ah says,' went on Learoyd, "'Young mon, that mon's gooin' to have t' goons out o' Thursday- to-morrow- an' thot's more work for you, young mon. Now, sita, tak' a an' a , an' ride tha domdest to t' Padsahi Jhil. Cotch thot there , and tell t' driver iv your lingo thot you've coom to tak' his place. T' doesn't speak t' , an' he's a little mon. Drive t' into t' Padsahi Jhil into t' watter. Leave t' theer an' roon hoam; an' here's a rupee for tha."

Then Mulvaney and Ortheris spoke together in alternate fragments: Mulvaney leading [you must pick out the two speakers as best you can]:- 'He was a knowin' little divil was Bhuldoo,- 'e sez an' cuts- wid a wink in his oi- but sez there's money to be made- an' I wanted to see the ind av the campaign- so says we'll double hout to the Padsahi Jhil- an' save the little man from bein' dacoited by the murtherin' Bhuldoo- an' turn hup like reskooers in a Vic'oria Melodrama- so we doubled for the , an' prisintly there was the divil av a hurroosh behind us an' three bhoys on grasscuts' ponies come by, poundin' along for the dear life- s'elp me Bob, hif Buldoo 'adn't raised a rig'lar of decoits- to do the job in shtile. An' we ran, an' they ran, shplittin' with laughin', till we gets near the - and 'ears sounds of distress floatin' molloncolly on the hevenin' hair.' [Ortheris was growing poetical under the influence of the beer. The duet recommenced: Mulvaney leading again.] 'Thin we heard Bhuldoo, the dacoit, shoutin' to the man, an' wan of the young divils brought his stick down on the top av the -cover, an' Benira Thrigg inside howled "Murther an' Death." Buldoo takes the reins and dhrives like mad for the , havin' dishpersed the - dhriver- 'oo cum up to us an' 'e sez, sez 'e, "That nigh mad with funk! Wot devil's work 'ave you led me into?"- "Hall right," sez we, "you catch that there pony an' come along. This been decoited, an' we're going to resky 'im!" Says the driver, "Decoits! Wot decoits? That's Buldoo the ""Bhuldoo be shot!" sez we. "'Tis a woild dissolute Pathan frum the hills. There's about eight av thim coercin' the . You remimber that an' you'll get another rupee!" Thin we heard the av the turnin' over, an' a splash av water an' the voice av Benira Thrigg callin' upon God to forgive his sins- an' Buldoo an' 'is friends squotterin' in the water like boys in the Serpentine.' Here the Three Musketeers retired simultaneously into the beer.

'Well? What came next?' said I.

'Fwhat nex'?' answered Mulvaney, wiping his mouth. 'Wud ye let three bould sodger-bhoys lave the ornamint av the House av Lords to be dhrowned an' dacoited in a We formed line av quarther-

column an' we disceded upon the inimy. For the better part av ten minutes you could not hear yerself spake. The was screamin' in chune wid Benira Thrigg an' Bhuldoo's army, an' the shticks was whistlin' roun' the , an' Orth'ris was beatin' the -cover wid his fistes, an' Learoyd yellin', "Look out for their knives!" an' me cuttin' into the dark, right an' lef', dishpersin' army corps av Pathans. Holy Mother av Moses! 'twas more disp'rit than Ahmid Kheyl wid Maiwund thrown in. Afther a while Bhuldoo an' his bhoys flees. Have ye iver seen a rale live Lord thryin' to hide his nobility undher a fut an' a half av brown swamp-wather? 'Tis the livin' image av a water-carrier's goatskin wid the shivers. It tuk toime to pershuade me frind Benira he was not disimbowilled: an' more toime to get out the . The dhriver come up afther the battle, swearin' he tuk a hand in repulsin' the inimy. Benira was sick wid the fear.

We escorted him back, very slow, to cantonmints, for that an' the chill to soak into him. It suk! Glory be to the Rigimintil Saint, but it suk to the marrow av Lord Benira Thrigg! Here Ortheris, slowly, with immense pride- 'E sez, "You har my noble preservers," sez 'e. "You har a honour to the British Harmacy," sez 'e. With that 'e describes the hawful band of dacoits wot set on 'im. There was about forty of 'em an' 'e was hoverpowered by numbers, so 'e was; but 'e never lorst 'is presence of mind, so 'e didn't. 'E guv the -driver five rupees for 'is noble assistance, an' 'e said 'e would see to us after 'e 'ad spoken to the Kernul. For we was a honour to the Regiment, we was.' 'An' we three,' said Mulvaney, with a seraphic smile, 'have dhrawn the par-ticu-lar attinshin av Bobs Bahadur more than wanst. But he's a rale good little man is Bobs. Go on, Orth'ris, my son.' 'Then we leaves 'im at the Kernul's 'ouse, werry sick, an' we cuts hover to B Comp'ny barrick an' we sez we 'ave saved Benira from a bloody doom, an' the chances was agin there bein' p'raid on Thursday. About ten minutes later come three envelicks, one for each of us. S'elp me Bob, if the old bloke 'adn't guv us a fiver apiece- sixty-four rupees in the bazar! On Thursday 'e was in 'orspital recoverin' from 'is sanguinary encounter with a gang of Pathans, an' B Comp'ny was drinkin' 'emselves into Clink by squads. So there never was no Thursday p'raid. But the Kernul, when 'e 'eard of our galliant conduct, 'e sez, "Hi know there's been some devilrysomewheres," sez 'e, "but I can't bring it 'ome to you three." 'An' my privit imprisshin is,' said Mulvaney, getting off the barand turning his glass upside down, 'that, av they had known they wudn't have brought ut home. 'Tis flyin' in the face, firstly av Nature, secon' av the Rig'lations, an' third the will av Terence Mulvaney, to hold p'rades av Thursdays.' 'Good, ma son!'

said Learoyd; 'but, young mon, what's t' notebook for?' 'Let be,' said Mulvaney; 'this time next month we're in the . 'Tis immortal fame the gentleman's goin' to give us. But kape it dhark till we're out av the range av me little frind Bobs Bahadur.' And I have obeyed Mulvaney's order.

THE END