

1892

TOMMY (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. Tommy (1892) - From "Barrack-Room Ballads," a collection of poems celebrating British army life and the soldier. The nickname "Tommy", thanks in part to this poem, refers to any British Private.

TOMMY

I went into a public-'ouse to get a pint o' beer, The publican 'e up an' sez, "We serve no red-coats here." The girls be'ind the bar they laughed an' giggled fit to die, I outs into the street again an' to myself sez I: O it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy go away"; But it's "Thank you, Mister Atkins," when the band begins to play, The band begins to play, my boys, the band begins to play, O it's "Thank you, Mister Atkins," when the band begins to play.

I went into a theatre as sober as could be, They gave a drunk civilian room, but 'adn't none for me; They sent me to the gallery or round the music-'alls, But when it comes to fightin', Lord! they'll shove me in the stalls!

For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy wait outside"; But it's "Special train for Atkins" when the trooper's on the tide, The troopship's on the tide, my boys, the troopship's on the tide, O it's "Special train for Atkins" when the trooper's on the tide.

Yes, makin' mock o' uniforms that guard you while you sleep Is cheaper than them uniforms, an' they're starvation cheap; An' hustlin' drunken soldiers when they're goin' large a bit Is five times better business than paradin' in full kit.

Then it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, 'ow's yer soul?" But it's "Thin red line of 'eroes" when the drums begin to roll, The drums begin to roll, my boys, the drums begin to roll, O it's "Thin red line of 'eroes" when the drums begin to roll.

We aren't no thin red 'eroes, nor we aren't no blackguards too, But single men in barricks, most remarkable like you; An' if sometimes our conduct isn't all your fancy paints: Why, single men in barricks don't grow into plaster saints; While it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, fall be'ind," But it's "Please to walk in front, sir," when there's trouble in the wind, There's trouble in the wind, my boys, there's trouble in the wind, O it's "Please to walk in front, sir," when there's trouble in the wind.

You talk o' better food for us, an' schools, an' fires, an' all: We'll wait for extry rations if you treat us rational.

Don't mess about the cook-room slops, but prove it to our face The Widow's Uniform is not the soldier-man's disgrace.

For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Chuck him out, the brute!" But it's "Savior of 'is country," when the guns begin to shoot; An' it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' anything you please; But Tommy ain't a bloomin' fool- you bet that Tommy sees!

THE END