

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

28 *Rimmon*

(*After Boer War*)

Duly with knees that feign to quake —  
Bent head and shaded brow, —  
Yet once again, for my father's sake,  
In Rimmon's House I bow.

The curtains part, the trumpet blares, 5  
And the eunuchs howl aloud;  
And the gilt, swag-bellied idol glares  
Insolent over the crowd.

*"This is Rimmon, Lord of the Earth —*  
*"Fear Him and bow the knee!"* 10  
And I watch my comrades hide their mirth  
That rode to the wars with me.

For we remember the sun and the sand  
And the rocks whereon we trod,  
Ere we came to a scorched and a scornful land 15  
That did not know our God;

As we remember the sacrifice,  
Dead men an hundred laid —  
Slain while they served His mysteries,  
And that He would not aid — 20

Not though we gashed ourselves and wept,  
For the high-priest bade us wait;  
Saying He went on a journey or slept,  
Or was drunk or had taken a mate.

(*Praise ye Rimmon, King of Kings,* 25  
*Who ruleth Earth and Sky!*)

And again I bow as the censer swings  
And the God Enthroned goes by.)

Ay, we remember His sacred ark  
And the virtuous men that knelt 30  
To the dark and the hush behind the dark  
Wherein we dreamed He dwelt;

Until we entered to hale Him out,  
And found no more than an old  
Uncleanly image girded about 35  
The loins with scarlet and gold.

Him we o'erset with the butts of our spears —  
Him and his vast designs —  
To be the scorn of our muleteers  
And the jest of our halted lines. 40

By the picket-pins that the dogs defile,  
In the dung and the dust He lay,  
Till the priests ran and chattered awhile  
And wiped Him and took Him away.

Hushing the matter before it was known, 45  
They returned to our fathers afar,  
And hastily set Him afresh on His throne  
Because he had won us the war.

Wherefore with knees that feign to quake —  
Bent head and shaded brow — 50  
To this dead dog, for my father's sake,  
In Rimmon's House I bow!

*1903*

(From *Rudyard Kipling's Verse*. Definitive edition.  
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