

Robert W. Buchanan (1841-1901)

2 *The Ballad of Kiplingson*

There came a knock at the Heavenly Gate, where the good St. Peter sat,—
‘Hi, open the door, you fellah there, to a British rat-tat-tat!’

The Saint sat up in his chair, rubb’d eyes, and prick’d his holy ears,
‘Who’s there?’ he muttered, ‘a single man, or a regiment of Grenadiers?’

‘A single man,’ the voice replied, ‘but one of prodigious size,
Who claims by Jingo, his patron Saint, the entry to Paradise!’ 5

The good St. Peter open’d the Gate, but blocking the entry scan’d
The spectacl’d ghost of a little man, with an infant’s flag in his hand.

‘Your name? Before I let you pass, say who and what you were!
Describe your life on the earth, and prove your claim to a place in *there!*’ 10

‘Wot! haven’t you heard of Kiplingson? whose name and fame have spread
As far as the Flag of England waves, and the Tory prints are read?’

‘I was raised in the lap of Jingo, sir, till I grew to the height of man,
And a wonderful Literary Gent, I emerged upon Hindostan!’

‘I sounded the praise of the Empire, sir, I pitch’d out piping hot
The new old stories of British bounce (see Lever and Michael Scott); 15

‘And rapid as light my glory spread, till thro’ Cockaigne it flew,
And I grew the joy of the Cockney cliques, and the pet of the Jingo Jew!’

‘For the Lord my God was a Cockney Gawd, whose voice was a savage yell,
A fust-rate Gawd who dropt, d’ye see, the “h” in Heaven and Hell!’ 20

‘O I was clever beyond compare, and not like most young muffs,
Tho’ I died last night, at an early age, of a plethora of puffs.

‘O lollipops are toothsome things, and sweet is the log-roll’d jam,
But the last big puff of the Log-rollers has choked me, and here I am!’

‘But I was a real Phenomenon,’ continued Kiplingson, 25
‘The only genius ever born who was Tory at twenty-one!’

‘Alas, and alas,’ the good Saint said, a tear in his eye serene,
‘A Tory at twenty-one! Good God! At fifty what *would* you have been?’

‘There’s not a spirit now here in Heaven who wouldn’t at twenty-one
Have tried to upset the very Throne, and reform both Sire and Son!’ 30

‘The saddest sight that my eyes have seen, down yonder on earth or here,
Is a brat that talks like a weary man, or a youth with a cynic’s leer.

‘Try lower down, young man,’ he cried, and began to close the Gate—
‘Hi, here, old fellah,’ said Kiplingson, ‘by Jingo! just you wait—

‘I’ve heaps of Criticisms here, to show my claims are true, 35
That I’m ’cute in almost everything, and have probed Creation through!’

‘And what have you *found*?’ the Saint inquired, a frown on his face benign—
‘The Flag of England!’ cried Kiplingson, ‘and the thin black penny-a-line!

‘Wherever the Flag of England waves, down go all other flags;
Wherever the thin black line is spread, the Bulldog bites and brags!’ 40

‘And I warn you now, if you close that Gate, the moment it is done,
I’ll summon an army of Cockney Gents, with a great big Gatling gun!

‘O Gawd, beware of the Jingo’s wrath! the Journals of Earth are mine!
Across the plains of the earth still creeps the thin black penny-a-line!

‘For wherever the Flag of England waves’—but here, we grieve to state, 45
His voice was drown’d in a thunder-crash, for the Saint bang’d-to the Gate!

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