

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

12 *Eddi's Service*

(A. D. 687)

("The Conversion of St. Wilfrid" — *Rewards and Fairies*)

Eddi, priest of St. Wilfrid

In his chapel at Manhood End,  
Ordered a midnight service  
For such as cared to attend.

But the Saxons were keeping Christmas, 5  
And the night was stormy as well.  
Nobody came to service,  
Though Eddi rang the bell.

"Wicked weather for walking,"  
Said Eddi of Manhood End. 10  
"But I must go on with the service  
For such as care to attend."

The altar-lamps were lighted, —  
An old marsh-donkey came,  
Bold as a guest invited, 15  
And stared at the guttering flame.

The storm beat on at the windows,  
The water splashed on the floor,  
And a wet, yoke-weary bullock  
Pushed in through the open door. 20

"How do I know what is greatest,  
How do I know what is least?  
That is My Father's business,"  
Said Eddi, Wilfrid's priest.

“But — three are gathered together — 25  
Listen to me and attend.  
I bring good news, my brethren!”  
Said Eddi of Manhood End.

And he told the Ox of a Manger  
And a Stall in Bethlehem, 30  
And he spoke to the Ass of a Rider  
That rode to Jerusalem.

They steamed and dripped in the chancel,  
They listened and never stirred,  
While, just as though they were Bishops, 35  
Eddi preached them The Word,

Till the gale blew off on the marshes  
And the windows showed the day,  
And the Ox and the Ass together  
Wheeled and clattered away. 40

And when the Saxons mocked him,  
Said Eddi of Manhood End,  
“I dare not shut His chapel  
On such as care to attend.”

*1910*

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