

## Mr. Kipling's God

*To the Editors of The Outlook:*

Among all the articles that have lately appeared to express what people have begun to think adverse to Mr. Kipling's writings, it strikes me as very singular that we have had none on his ethics or his religion, although he has become an inspirer to action and a writer of hymns. It is characteristic of our times that he should be spoken of as the "Voice of the Hooligan," as the barbarian whose song is a "yawp," as "not read by the cultured classes," but not roundly as pagan, anti-Christian, or satanic. Can any one be found to defend his ethics as Christian, as evidenced from his works? His "White Man's Burden" is quoted from the pulpit as if it was not Mohammed that instructed his followers to convert men by force, and his "Without Benefit of Clergy" is accepted among the laity as if it were not worse than Mohammedan. Are there any of his created characters that are not living strenuous lives in pursuit of "sensation" (a word often on their lips), of passion, of power, and of all that the old Romans and Norsemen used to worship under the names of deities? Is there a single instance in his works of high and holy love of anything? The love of woman that he pictures is at best a healthy animal passion, and at worst a profane and beastly one; while his love of country is such as leads him to accept wrong without even a protest. Before we judge Mr. Kipling right, it would be well to re-read the life and Divine Comedy of Dante, and the Song and precepts of Solomon.

Who is the Great God of Nations in whom Mr. Kipling believes? Is it the God of Righteousness, whose Son is the meek and merciful Christ, and whose followers go out to *preach His word*, their loins girt about with truth, their breasts covered with the breast-plates of righteousness, their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, their heads protected

by helmets of salvation, their arms advancing shields of faith, and their hands wielding the swords of the spirit—to wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places? Do Mr. Kipling's works written before or after the Hymn show such regard to these Christian principles as to warrant us in taking it for granted that it was the God of Righteousness to whom the Hymn was written?

The most widely circulated private opinion of Mr. Kipling's is that Cecil Rhodes "needs no morals; he is building an empire;" the implications, of course, being that an empire cannot be built if men are to be tied down to morality, that Mr. Kipling is an ardent imperialist and admirer of Mr. Rhodes, and that he regards morality as a dispensable quantity. All the world knows that Mr. Rhodes has not been girt about by the bands of truth, for he has ingenuously acknowledged his falsehoods; that his faith is that every man has his price and may be "squared" if one but knows his dimensions; that his weapons are those with which Dr. Jameson undertook his Raid—deceit and high explosives; that he has never shown any disposition to attack wickedness in high places; that he is himself one of the rulers of the darkness of this world, being the administrator of the corruption fund for the "improvement" of the Volksraad; and that he holds it about an even chance whether there be a God or no. Now, this doubtful god of Mr. Rhodes's (I am unwilling to begin his name with a capital letter until I am persuaded that he is the God of Righteousness) looks very much like all the devils of Milton combined into one—Lucifer, who leads men to war for pride of empire; Moloch, who tempts them to it for love of "sport" and "manly exercise;" Mammon, "the least erected fiend that fell," who entices them by gold and gems; and Belial, who inspires them with what Mr. William Watson very well calls "the loveless lust of territory."

The question of the gods of Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Kipling seems to me a very important one, because whole nations are in danger of being led unawares to their ways of thinking.