



"The Mark of the Beast"

Notes on the text

These notes, by John McGivering, are partly new, and partly based on the ORG. The page and line numbers below refer to the Macmillan (London) Standard Edition of Life's Handicap, as published and frequently reprinted between 1891 and 1950.

[April 5 2006]

[Title] see Revelations 3 for the beast with seven heads and ten horns and another with two horns.

[Heading] Perhaps an Indian proverb, perhaps one of Kipling's.

[Page 240, line 1] **East of Suez** The southern end of the Suez Canal was seen as the 'gateway to the East' by European travellers. This was also the title of a collection of verses with illustrations by Donald Maxwell. See also "A Return to the East" (*Letters of Travel*) and the verse "Mandalay."

[Page 240, line 10] **Strickland** the police-officer, with an uncommonly deep knowledge of India and Indians, who also figures in a number of Kipling's stories"; The Return of Imray" the next story in this volume; "Miss Youghal's Sais," and "The Bronckhorst Divorce Case" (*Plain Tales from the Hills*); "The Son of his Father" (*Land and Sea Tales*); and "A Deal in Cotton" (*Actions and Reactions*). He also appears in *Kim*. See *ORG*, p. 16 (Volume 1) for his origins. [Angus Wilson](#) (p. 66) is not impressed by the powers attributed to Strickland.

[Page 240, line 12] **Dumoise** This doctor also appears in "By Word of Mouth" (*Plain Tales from the Hills*).

[Page 240, line 20] **Dharmsala** hill-station and capital of Kangra Division, Punjab, ninety-five miles north-west of Simla.

[Page 241, line 9] **wet** in this context, a night of solid drinking.

[Page 241, line 11] **The Frontier** usually understood to be the North-West Frontier with Afghanistan. See "The Head of the District" earlier in this volume for an impression of life there.

Catch 'em – Alive – Os Mid-nineteenth century slang for fly-traps, but here used for a party of reckless young soldiers. Kipling employs the expression again some twenty years later in "The Horse Marines" (*A Diversity of Creatures*) with reference to vessels manned by their naval counterparts.

[Page 241, line 14] **Khyberee** a tribesman from the region of the Khyber Pass.

[Page 241, line 17] **pool** in this context, a game for up to twelve players somewhat similar to snooker.

[Page 241, line 18] **the marker** a club servant who keeps the score for the players.

[Page 241, line 21] **the Biggest Liar in Asia** See [Kipling's sketch in the CMG of November 7th 1887.](#)

[Page 241, lines 27-29] **Auld Lang Syne etc.** traditional New Year song by Robert Burns (1759-1796), also played when a ship sails. These lines indicate a very drunken evening, as will be seen overleaf.

[Page 241, line 30] **annexed Burma** see “The Taking of Lungtungpen” (*Plain Tales from the Hills*), “Georgie Porgie” (*Life’s Handicap*), and “A Conference of the Powers” (*Actions and Reactions*).

[Page 241, line 31] **Sudan** a large portion of Africa, south of Egypt and the Sahara Desert, scene of some of the action of *The Light that Failed*. At that time governed by the British.

[Page 241, line 32] **Fuzzies** Sudanese warriors – see [the notes by Roger Ayers on the verse “Fuzzy-Wuzzy”.](#)

[Page 241, line 33] **Suakim** (Suakin) seaport on the west coast of the Red Sea. See “Little Foxes” (*Actions and Reactions*) and *The Light that Failed*.

[Page 242, line 5] **sherry and bitters** the 'sherry' usually found in India at that time may not always have been the real thing from Jerez in Spain, so the addition – within reason – of almost anything would have improved the flavour ! See “The Honours of War” (*A Diversity of Creatures*, page 115, line 3) where 'The Infant' does not permit his guests to put bitters into anything above twenty years old.

[Page 242, line 7] **Capri** wine from the island of the same name in the Mediterranean Sea.

[Page 242, line 8] **Benedictine** a beautiful but very strong liqueur flavoured with herbs originally made by monks in Normandy.

[Page 242, line 10] **bones** in this context, beef -bones, boiled, the marrow extracted, seasoned and eaten on toast or perhaps 'devilled' in a hot and spicy sauce. [See Robin McDouall, *Clubland Cooking*, Phaidon 1974, p. 163.]

[Page 242, line 12] **fourteen degrees of frost** 18° Fahrenheit, or minus 8° Centigrade. Extremely cold.

[Page 242, line 19] **Hanuman** the Monkey-God, a Hindu deity who built a causeway between India and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) He also appears in “The Bridge-Builders” (*The Day’s Work*), and “In Flood Time” (*Soldiers Three*).

[Page 242, line 23] **the great gray apes** see the verse “The Legends of Evil.”

[Page 243, line 13] **a Silver Man** in certain forms of leprosy the affected area becomes perfectly white, nodules may form in the mouth and larynx, there is also destruction of tissue which would explain his inability to speak. See lines 18-19 below – 'a leper of some years standing' and [Dr. Sheehan’s notes above.](#)

[Page 243, line 15] **naked in that bitter ... cold** this would indicate his leprosy was of the anæsthetic variety where there is loss of sensation in the skin which becomes white.

[Page 243, line 17] **a leper as white as snow** 2 Kings, 5, 27.

[Page 244, line 31] **Managing Committee of the temple** a joke with a grain of truth in it; a club and a cathedral are administered in much the same way by a committee. The latter, however, is known as the Chapter, with the Dean in the chair.

[Page 244, line 1] **Indian Penal Code** the following Sections apply;

- **295 Injuring or defiling a place of worship with intent to insult the religion of any class ...** 2 years imprisonment or a fine or both.
- **295A Deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feeling of any class ...** up to three years imprisonment and a fine or both.
- **296 Disturbing religious assembly ...** up to one years imprisonment or a fine or both.

[It is possible the prosecution would have difficulty in proving 'intent' in the case of a drunken man, so Article 296 would probably apply, as it certainly would in “The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney” (Life’s Handicap); Ed.]

[Page 246, line 25] **pickets** in this context posts driven into the ground for tying up horses – usually in the open; in a stable they are usually secured to a ring in the wall, unless in a loose-box. (page 147, line 15)

[Page 247, line 33] **blister-flies** probably those of the genus *Cantharis vesicatoria*.

[Page 248, line 21] **go and change** into evening dress – they are all due to dine out.

[Page 250, line 8] **lamps** these would probably be paraffin (kerosene) similar to those illustrated on the back cover of *Mrs. Hauksbee & Co.*, ed. Whitehead.

[Page 251, line 14] **boot-jack** a board with a notch at the end so a man can pull off his riding-boots by inserting his heel into the notch and standing on the board with the other foot.

[Page 251, line 22] **Hydrophobia** See [Dr. Sheehan’s notes above](#).

[Page 252, line 5] **curing a wolf’s pelt** a very smelly process.

[Page 252, line 18] **Pinafore** *H.M.S. Pinafore*: Gilbert and Sullivan’s comic opera first produced in 1878 - Ensemble in Act 2:

Goodness me -
Why, what was that ?
Silent be,
It was the cat !

[Page 254, line 8] **mahseer** one of the species of the fish *Barbus* found in the larger Indian rivers; see [Hobson-Jobson](#), p.538.

[Page 255, line 21] **strychnine** a bitter-tasting poisonous alkaloid which causes muscular spasms and death.

[Page 256, line 30] **night-gong** a metal disc giving a musical note when struck – believed to be Chinese in origin, reaching India via Java and Malaysia. Used for marking the hours, See [Hobson-Jobson](#), p. 385 and 372.

[Page 257, line 21] **laying out** in this context, preparing a corpse for burial.

[Page 258, line 7] **There are more things ...**

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
[Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act 1, scene 5.]

[Page 258, line 20] **hysterics** over-action of some parts of the nervous system – peculiar behaviour, laughter and weeping – see *Black*, p. 284 ff. Kipling exaggerates here; it is probably merely uncontrollable laughter caused by relief of tension, a motif that occurs many times in his work and is discussed extensively by the commentators.

[Page 258, line 29] **Strickland had married** See the note to page 240, line 10 above and *ORG* Volume 1, p. 16f. for an essay on Strickland and his origins.

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