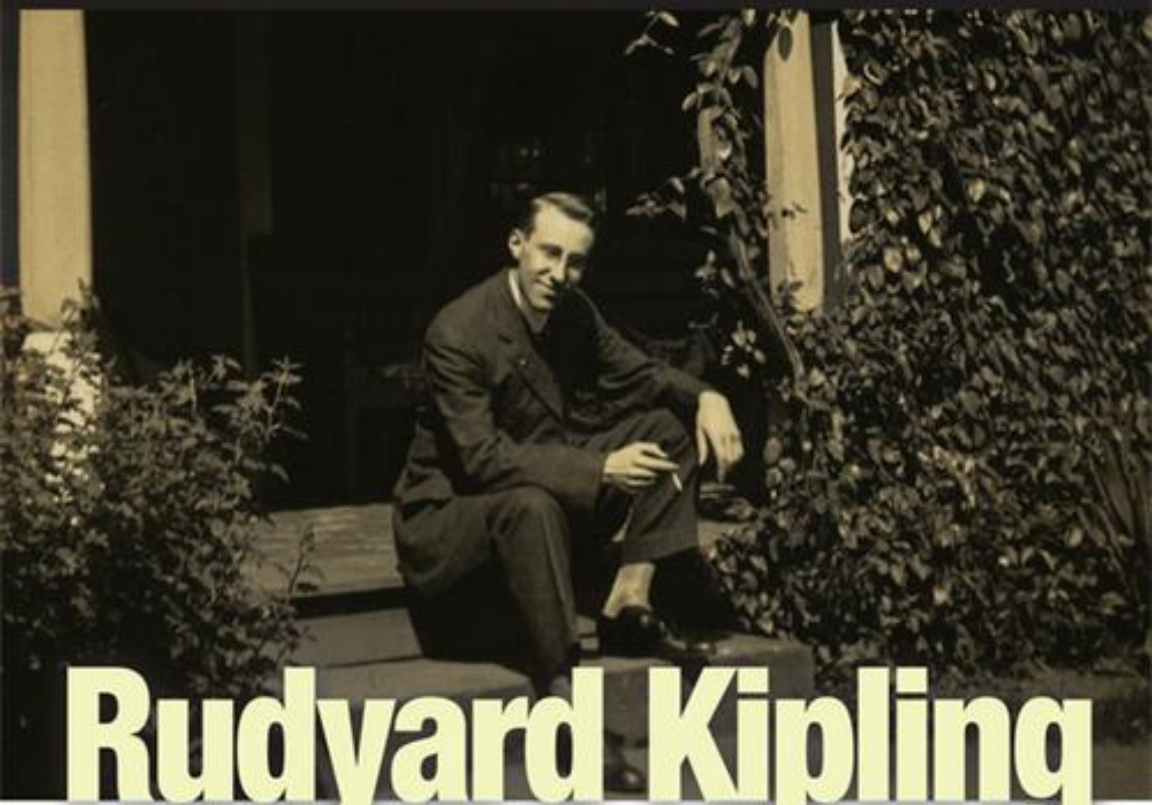


Travel Classics Enhanced



Rudyard Kipling

**The
Overseas
Men**

The Editors of New Word City



The Overseas Men

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THE OVERSEAS MEN

RUDYARD KIPLING, THE LIFE

RUDYARD KIPLING, THE QUOTATIONS

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NEW WORD CITY

THE OVERSEAS MEN

All things considered, there are only two kinds of men in the world - those that stay at home and those that do not. The second are the most interesting. Someday a man will rethink himself and write a book about the breed in a book called *The Book of the Overseas Club*, for it is at the clubhouses all the way from **Aden** to **Yokohama** that the life of the Outside Men is best seen and their talk is best heard. A strong family likeness runs through both buildings and members, and a large and careless hospitality is the note. There is always the same open-doored, high-ceiled house, with matting on the floors; the same come and go of dark-skinned servants, and the same assembly of men talking horse or business, in raiment that would fatally scandalize a **London** committee, among files of newspapers from a fortnight to five weeks old. The life of the Outside Men includes plenty of sunshine, and as much air as may be stirring. At the **Cape**, where the Dutch housewives distil and sell the very potent Vanderhum, and the absurd home-made hansom cabs waddle up and down the yellow dust of **Adderley Street**, are the members of the big import and export firms, the shipping and insurance offices, inventors of mines, and exploiters of new territories with now and then an officer strayed from **India** to buy mules for the Government, a Government House *aide-de-camp*, a sprinkling of the officers of the garrison, tanned skippers of the

Union and Castle Lines, and naval men from the squadron at Simon's Town. Here they talk of the sins of Cecil Rhodes, the insolence of Natal, the beauties or otherwise of the solid Boer vote, and the dates of the steamers. The *argot* is Dutch and Kaffir, and every one can hum the national anthem that begins "Pack your kit and trek, Johnny Bowlegs." In the stately Hong Kong Clubhouse, which is to the further what the Bengal Club is to the nearer East, you meet much the same gathering, *minus* the mining speculators and *plus* men whose talk is of tea, silk, shortings, and Shanghai ponies. The speech of the Outside Men at this point becomes fearfully mixed with pidgin-English and local Chinese terms, rounded with corrupt Portuguese. At Melbourne, in a long verandah giving on a grass plot, where laughing-jackasses laugh very horribly, sit wool-kings, premiers, and breeders of horses after their kind. The older men talk of the days of the Eureka Stockade and the younger of "shearing wars" in North Queensland, while the traveller moves timidly among them wondering what under the world every third word means. At Wellington, overlooking the harbor (all right-minded clubs should command the sea), another, and yet a like, sort of men speak of sheep, the rabbits, the land-courts, and the ancient heresies of Sir Julius Vogel; and their more expressive sentences borrow from the Maori. And elsewhere, and elsewhere, and elsewhere among the Outside Men it is the same - the same mixture of every trade, calling, and profession under the sun; the same clash of conflicting interests touching the uttermost parts of the earth; the same intimate, and sometimes appalling knowledge of your neighbor's business and shortcomings; the same large-palmed hospitality, and the same interest on the part of the, younger men in the legs of a horse. Decidedly, it is at the Overseas Club all the world over that you get to know some little of the life of the community. London is egoistical, and the world for her ends with the four-mile cab radius. There is no provincialism like the provincialism of London. That big slack-water

coated with the drift and rubbish of a thousand men's thoughts esteems itself the open sea, because the waves of all the oceans break on her borders. To those in her midst she is terribly imposing, but they forget that there is more than one kind of imposition. Look back upon her from ten thousand miles, when the mail is just in at the Overseas Club, and she is wondrously tiny. Nine-tenths of her news - so vital, so epoch-making over there - loses its significance, and the rest is as the scuffling of ghosts in a back-attic.

Here in Yokohama the Overseas Club has two mails and four sets of papers - English, French, German, and American, as suits the variety of its constitution - and the verandah by the sea, where the big telescope stands, is a perpetual feast of the **Pentecost**. The population of the club changes with each **steamer** in harbor, for the sea-captains swing in, are met with "Hello! where did you come from?" and mix at the bar and billiard-tables for their appointed time and go to sea again. The white-painted warships supply their contingent of members also, and there are wonderful men, mines of most fascinating adventure, who have an interest in sealing-brigs that go to the **Kurile Islands**, and somehow get into trouble with the Russian authorities. Consuls and judges of the Consular Courts meet men over on leave from the **China** ports, or it may be **Manila**, and they all talk tea, silk, banking, and exchange with its fixed residents. Everything is always as bad as it can possibly be, and everybody is on the verge of ruin. That is why, when they have decided that life is no longer worth living, they go down to the skittle alley to commit suicide. From the outside, when a cool wind blows among the papers and there is a sound of smashing ice in an inner apartment, and every third man is talking about the approaching races, the life seems to be a desirable one. "What more could a man need to make him happy?" says the passerby. A perfect climate, a lovely country, plenty of pleasant society, and the politest people on earth to deal with.