

## “IF”

The poem "If", written in 1895 and published in the collection "Rewards and Fairies" in 1910, has long been considered one of Kipling's most popular poems.

Written as advice from a parent; in this case, a father (Kipling) who addresses his child by telling him that the ability to maintain a positive attitude towards life, despite all the hardships, builds self-confidence and allows to benefit from the recognition and respect of others.

## “IF”

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when others doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two imposters just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breathe a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: “Hold on!”

If you can walk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Stars – nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If others count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' effort to life's race,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And - what's more – you will have earned your place!

## **“Hymn of Breaking Strain”**

Rudyard Kipling composed the poem “Hymn of Breaking Strain” for use with the Ritual. He had it published and copyrighted.

### **Hymn of Breaking Strain**

The careful text-books measure  
    (Let all who build beware!)  
The load, the shock, the pressure  
    Material can bear.

    So, when the faulty girder  
    Lets down the grinding span,  
    The blame of loss, or murder,  
    Is laid upon the man.  
Not on the Stuff – The Man!

    But, in our daily dealing  
    With stone and steel, we find  
The Gods have no such feeling  
    Of justice toward mankind.  
To no set gauge they make us,  
    For no laid course prepare –  
    And presently o’ertake us  
    With loads we cannot bear.  
    Too merciless to bear!

The prudent text-books give it  
    In tables at the end –  
    The stress that shears a rivet  
    Or makes a tie-bar bend –  
What traffic wrecks macadam –  
What concrete should endure –  
    But we, poor Sons of Adam,  
    Have no such literature.  
    To warn us or make sure!

We hold all earth to plunder  
All Time and Space as well –  
Too wonder-stale to wonder  
At each new miracle;  
Till, in the mid-illusion  
Of Godhead 'neath our hand,  
Falls multiplied confusion  
On all we did and planned  
The mighty works we planned.

We only, of Creation  
(Ah luckier bridge and rail!)  
Abide the twin-damnation –  
To fail and know we fail.  
Yet we – by which sole token  
We know we once were Gods –  
Take shame in being broken  
However great the odds –  
The burden of the odds.

Oh veiled and secret Power  
Whose paths we search in vain,  
Be with us in our hour  
Of overthrow and pain;  
That we – by which sure token  
We know thy ways are true –  
In spite of being broken –  
Because of being broken –  
May rise and build anew.  
Stand up and build anew!

## **“The Sons of Martha”**

Rudyard Kipling wrote the poem “The Sons of Martha” to honour the work of engineers. He refers to them as Sons of Martha. The phrase comes from the Gospel according to St. Luke, Chapter 10, Verses 38–42. A reading of these verses enables one to understand better the background of the poem:

As they continued their journey, Jesus came to a village, and a woman called Martha welcomed him to her house. She had a sister by the name of Mary, who settled down at the Lord’s feet and was listening to what He said. But Martha was very worried about her elaborate preparations and she burst in, saying: “Lord don’t you mind that my sister has left me to do everything by myself? Tell her to get up and help me!”

But the Lord answered her:

“Martha, my dear, you are worried and bothered about providing so many things. Only a few things are really needed, perhaps only one. Mary has chosen the best part and you must not tear it away from her!”

So in this poem, as Kipling depicts the engineers as the Sons of Martha, the spiritual and philosophical people are the Sons of Mary.

The poem points to the great responsibilities of the engineer, but we should not overlook Mary’s part. We may be better citizens if we give some consideration to human qualities – qualities of the heart and spirit – and not entirely to material things.

## **The Sons of Martha**

The Sons of Mary seldom bother, for they have inherited that good part,  
But the Sons of Martha, favour their Mother of the careful soul and the troubled heart.  
And because she lost her temper once, and because she was rude to the Lord her Guest  
Her Sons must wait upon Mary’s Sons, world without end, reprieve, or rest.

It is their care in all the ages to take the buffet and cushion the shock.  
It is their care that the gear engages; it is their care, that the switches lock.  
It is their care that the wheels run truly; it is their care to embark and entrain,  
Tally, transport, and deliver duly the Sons of Mary by land and main.

They say to mountains, “Be ye removed.” They say to the lesser floods, “be dry.”  
Under their rods are the rocks reprovèd – they are not afraid of that which is high.  
Then do the hill-tops shake to the summit – then is the bed of the deep laid bare,  
That the sons of Mary may overcome it, pleasantly sleeping and unaware.

They finger death at their gloves' end where they piece and repiece the living wires.  
He rears against the gates they rend: they feed him hungry behind their fires.  
Early at dawn, ere men see clear, they stumble into his terrible stall,  
And hale him forth like a haltered steer, and goad and turn him till evenfall.

To these from birth is Belief forbidden; from these till death is Relief afar.  
They are concerned with matters hidden – under the earthline their altars are.  
The secret fountains to follow up, waters withdrawn to restore to the mouth,  
And gather the floods as in a cup, and pour them again at a city's drouth.

They do not preach that their God will rouse them a little before the nuts work loose.  
They do not teach that His Pity allows them to leave their work when they damn-well choose.  
As in the thronged and the lighted ways, so in the dark and the desert they stand,  
Wary and watchful all their days that their brethren's days may be long in the land.

Raise ye the stone or cleave the wood to make a path more fair or flat,  
Lo, it is black already with blood some Son of Martha spilled for that!  
Not as a ladder from earth to Heaven, not as a witness to any creed,  
But simple service simply given to his own kind in their common need.

And the Sons of Mary smile and are blessèd – they know the angels are on their side.  
They know in them is the Grace confessèd, and for them are the Mercies multiplied.  
They sit at the Feet – they hear the Word – they see how truly the Promise runs:  
They have cast their burden upon the Lord, and – the Lord  
He lays it on Martha's Sons!