



"It's just what a documentary ought to be and what most documentaries aren't."

Patrick Cockburn, THE INDEPENDENT

"Fascinating ... will delight lovers of Kipling."

John Walker, PRESIDENT OF THE KIPLING SOCIETY

RUDYARD KIPLING

A SECRET LIFE

THE TRUE STORY OF RUDYARD KIPLING
AND THE DEATH OF TWO OF HIS THREE CHILDREN.

*Some die shouting in gas or fire,
Some die silent, by shell or shot.
Some die desperate, caught on the wire;
Some die suddenly...*



- PRESENTS THE LARGELY UNKNOWN STORY OF THE LOSS NOT JUST ONE BUT TWO OF RUDYARD KIPLING'S CHILDREN AND THE EFFECT THIS DOUBLE TRAGEDY HAD UPON HIS WORK.
- ENDORSED BY THE KIPLING SOCIETY.
- CORRECTS THE IDEA HELD BY MANY INCLUDING THE RECENT FILM *MY BOY JACK* THAT KIPLING VIRTUALLY FORCED HIS SON TO HIS DEATH.
- TELLS THE STORY OF KIPLING'S HORRIFIC CHILDHOOD AWAY FROM HIS PARENTS FOR SIX YEARS IN THE "HOUSE OF DESOLATION".
- REVEALS THE LITTLE-KNOWN STORY OF THE DEATH OF KIPLING'S SIX-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER JOSEPHINE, A DEATH RUDYARD KIPLING NEVER RECOVERED FROM.
- READINGS BY NICHOLAS FARRELL AND KATHERINE MANNERS OF KEY EXTRACTS FROM KIPLING'S WRITING.
- POWERFUL VISUAL SEQUENCE WITH ORIGINAL LARGE-SCALE ORCHESTRAL SCORE PERFORMED BY THE MEDICI QUARTET, ENGLISH SINFONIA AND THE CITY OF PRAGUE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA.
- FEATURES CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE THREE LEADING KIPLING BIOGRAPHERS – PROFESSOR HARRY RICKETTS, PROFESSOR JAN MONTEFIORE AND ANDREW LYCETT.



The film interweaves linked themes: an analysis of the life of Rudyard Kipling, the story of Kipling's devastation at the deaths of two of his three children and the three short stories Kipling wrote around these deaths: *They*, *Mary Postgate* and *The Gardener*, all deeply moving, dark and sometimes violent.

In 1904 Kipling and his six-year-old daughter Josephine had simultaneously fallen gravely ill on a trip to the US. The illness spared Kipling but killed Josephine. He never got over her death. She was a child of enormous beauty and grace. With her death Kipling lost part of himself.

In 1915 John Kipling was killed at the Battle of Loos in an agonising death. With the death of John, Kipling had now lost two of his three children. Their deaths provoke both the utter desolation which will consume and kill this great writer, and give birth to the elegiac passages of *They* and the chillingly prophetic *Mary Postgate*, two of the short stories which lie at the heart of this film.

Finally in Kipling's short story *The Gardener* a woman is guided by a kindly man she assumes to be a gardener through the vast forest of wooden crosses to the grave of her young nephew. The gardener knows that the "nephew" is in fact the woman's son, called her "nephew" through the social shame of his illegitimacy. The stories mirror the reactions of Kipling to the loss of his children.

The three stories are amongst the greatest short stories ever written and have influenced writers as diverse as T. S. Eliot and William Golding.

In the war cemetery at Flanders where Kipling's son John is buried, another gardener follows Kipling's instructions and blows *The Last Post* by John's grave as he will do, every day, for the rest of Kipling's life. This memorial only ends when the German army captured Ypres in 1940.

Rudyard Kipling is one of the best loved authors in the world. Intriguingly, his work has not always been critically well-received yet his public popularity has always remained constant.

The programme links interviews with key contributors who include Kipling biographers Harry Ricketts (*Rudyard Kipling: A Life*) and Andrew Lycett (*Rudyard Kipling*) with dramatic reconstructions of scenes from the three short stories.

The programme powerfully portrays Kipling's deepest imaginative reactions to the loss of his children. It evokes the extraordinary intersection between the public and the private, the outer and the inner, in Kipling's life and work.

The vividness and intensity of Kipling's life are fully described and the remarkable ability that he had to enter worlds that are social, political and artistic both in India and in England is noted.

The fashions in Kipling's reputation are analysed together with the feeling that very recently his stock as both poet and novelist has risen in public and critical appreciation. The popular reach of Kipling's work both in his own life and subsequently through the many films and television adaptations made form part of the response of several of the people interviewed.

The film portrays Kipling bearing the unbearable. Though there are creative outcomes for Kipling, the idea of a grief that is too much is a subject that has great resonance and pathos for a wide audience.

Kipling is usually seen as a mixture of a great writer and a very right-wing blimpish figure. This new programme reveals what Kipling called his 'daemon' beneath – something he was born with but was amplified by the losses he bore, though often displaced into what we would now consider extreme political views.

The programme goes beneath the attractiveness or otherwise of Kipling's public persona. It is interested in the interaction between his grief and his creative force and the capacity to bear a life that in many ways was unbearable to create a central evocation of a man with a powerful inner life – one that had remarkable gifts and had to bear great personal tragedy.

In Kipling's bedroom at his house Bateman's to this day are his son's cricket bat and his daughter's portrait.



*For far - oh, very far behind,
So far she cannot call to him,
Comes Tegumai alone to find
The daughter who was all to him!*

ENDS



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