The Nobel Prize in Literature 1907 - Rudyard Kipling SUMMARY

Kipling was born in Bombay in 1865. At the age of six he moved to England in the care of some relatives and he lived there for many years because he returned to India on reaching the age of seventeen. Thanks to his capacity as a journalist, and for his own purposes, he travelled extensively throughout India.

His experiences in the eastern country inevitably influenced Kipling's writings, so much so that it has even been said that they have brought India nearer home to the English nation than has the construction of the Suez Canal. In the cycle entitled The Seven Seas (1896) Kipling reveals himself as an imperialist, a citizen of a world-wide empire. He has undoubtedly done more than any other writer of pure literature to draw tighter the bonds of union between England and her colonies.

The accusation has occasionally been made against Kipling that his language is at times somewhat coarse and that his use of soldier's slang in some of the broadest of his songs and ballads verges on the vulgar. Though there may be some truth in such remarks, their importance is offset by the invigorating directness and ethical stimulus of Kipling's style. He has won immense popularity, not only in the Anglo-Indian world, which possesses in him a great literary master, but also far beyond the limits of the vast British Empire.

In addition, even if Kipling may not be eminent essentially for the profundity of his thought or for the surpassing wisdom of his meditations, His great power of imagination enables him to give the reader not only copies from nature but also visions out of his own inner consciousness. His landscapes appear to the inner vision as sudden apparitions do to the eye and they make the reader feels like a character of the story.

As regards Kipling’s point of view on the world, his philosophy of life is diffused with a piety characteristic of the Old Testament, or rather perhaps of Puritan times based upon a conviction that exists a God who is first and foremost Almighty Providence. If Kipling is an idealist from an aesthetic point of view by reason of poetical intuition, he is the same from an ethical-religious standpoint by virtue of his sense of duty.

There are lots of movements that have had their influence in English literature: in Kipling may be traced perhaps of Defoe, Spenser and Tennyson. Clearly, however, imagination is as strong in him as empirical observation. Though he does not possess the refined and sensuously beautiful style of Swinburne, yet he escapes, on the other hand, all tendency toward a pagan worship of pleasure.

If on one side Kipling is quite independent as a writer, from the other he has learned something from others: from Defoe he adopts the accuracy in depicting every detail and a sense of the values of exactness in the use of terms and phrases. Like Dickens he feels a keen sympathy with those of low degree in the community, and like him he can perceive the humour in trifling traits and acts. But his style is distinctively original and personal. It accomplishes its ends by suggestion rather than by description; it is not quite uniformly brilliant but it is always very expressive and that’s why he is actually define one of the greatest genius in the realm of narrative that Great Britain has produced.