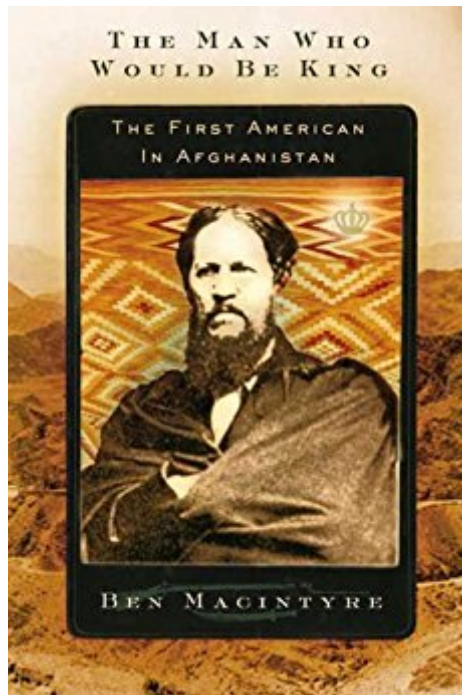




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The Man Who Would Be King: The First American In Afghanistan



Synopsis

The Riveting Account of the American Who Inspired Kipling's Classic Tale and the John Huston Movie
In the year 1838, a young adventurer, surrounded by his native troops and mounted on an elephant, raised the American flag on the summit of the Hindu Kush in the mountainous wilds of Afghanistan. He declared himself Prince of Ghor, Lord of the Hazarahs, spiritual and military heir to Alexander the Great. The true story of Josiah Harlan, a Pennsylvania Quaker and the first American ever to enter Afghanistan, has never been told before, yet the life and writings of this extraordinary man echo down the centuries, as America finds itself embroiled once more in the land he first explored and described 180 years ago. Soldier, spy, doctor, naturalist, traveler, and writer, Josiah Harlan wanted to be a king, with all the imperialist hubris of his times. In an extraordinary twenty-year journey around Central Asia, he was variously employed as surgeon to the Maharaja of Punjab, revolutionary agent for the exiled Afghan king, and then commander in chief of the Afghan armies. In 1838, he set off in the footsteps of Alexander the Great across the Hindu Kush and forged his own kingdom, only to be ejected from Afghanistan a few months later by the invading British. Using a trove of newly discovered documents and Harlan's own unpublished journals, Ben Macintyre's *The Man Who Would Be King* tells the astonishing true story of the man who would be the first and last American king.

Book Information

File Size: 2060 KB

Print Length: 368 pages

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; Reprint edition (October 28, 2008)

Publication Date: October 28, 2008

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00699S9NQ

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #272,187 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #35

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Customer Reviews

This is a story about two con men in British Imperial India who cook up a scheme to make themselves kings in Afghanistan. One of Kipling's better short stories, it was admired by writers as disparate as J.M. Barrie and H.G. Wells. It suffers a little from having had a zillion imitators in the intervening century or so, and like a lot of Kipling's works, there's an undertone of paternalistic imperialism that modern readers may find grating, but it isn't like he's showing the British in a positive light either -- this is Kipling at his best, and at his best he was too good a writer to let anyone, including the British, off the hook. Read this if you're trying to figure out whether or not you like Kipling's works that are aimed for adults -- it's very different in tone from, say,Ã Â The Jungle BookÃ Â or _Just So Stories_, which were written for children. If you like this, I recommend you grabÃ Â Plain Tales from the Hills, his first collection of stories set in British India; it should also be available online for free. If you're interested in the historical background for this story, it was at least partially inspired by a real individual, an American named Josiah Harlan.

I saw the movie , of course and who could Michael Kane and Sean Connery. The movie was GREAT and so is the book in it's own way. I have to admit I don't read that much any more for the sake of sitting down, killing time and looking for literary magic. What I do do is sit in airports, ride on planes, and wait for traffic and at the same time read my kindle. I LOVE Rudyard Kipling because he takes me to another place, another time and speaks with a language and tone that has not been polluted with political correctness. He is the Mark Twain of his times. Oh, wait,... Mart Twain was of his times. I love both of them. But, still, I guess I love RK just a touch more because I like the Adventure of his stories. and, Of course, they made such dramatic movies.

The Man Who Would Be King by Rudyard Kipling is a classic and also a Kindle Single. Because I am traveling a bit for the holidays, I am reading and posting a review for shorter works. When reading Rudyard Kipling, short stories are great for this purpose. This presentation has the story itself, a biography of Kipling, and 19 selected ÃfÂ¢Ã â -Ã Â“bestÃfÂ¢Ã â -Ã Â• Kipling quotes. It is a book that can be read from back to front, as I did, keeping the story for last. A part of the charm of Rudyard Kipling books is the insights on an Indian culture unfamiliar to many in the West.

India has an institutionalized caste system that was embraced and copied by western colonial masters. For the Western foreigner, an adopted caste system was not formally stated but was culturally recognized by the colonizers. This is exemplified by Kipling's description at the beginning of this story of passengers on a train who were classified as

“Intermediates. There are no cushions in the Intermediate class, and the population are either Intermediate, which is Eurasian, or native, which for a long night journey is nasty; or Loafer, which is amusing though intoxicated.” (loc 18-19). A further comment on the value of these human beings is “in the hot weather Intermediates are taken out of the carriages dead, and in all weathers are most properly looked down upon.” (loc 21). Another part of the charm of Rudyard Kipling books is his phrasing and language use. On the one hand, it is reflective of his time and era. Additionally, it is multi-layered with inferences and clever wordplay so the sentences can be read and appreciated. It is not a quick read with a straightforward narrative. The entire story is an example of this but I want to give one specific example I found rather remarkable. It is long and requires a bit of a background. The Indian States in the late 1800s resembled what readers in the US might call the wild west. It was a time for adventurers, also known as con-men. To make their fortune, anyone could represent themselves as a person of position or authority and reap whatever gains and benefits the position was entitled to. As this story opens, the narrator, Kipling, is this type of individual. On a train trip, he meets another who asks Kipling to pass a message to yet a third individual. All three at this point are described (by Kipling) as penniless vagabond adventurers. Kipling passes the message but later thinks better of it. Fearing he might be thought an accomplice to a scheme or fearing more to be caught, he reveals the identity of the two to authorities. He hears they were caught. Kipling moves on with his life. Kipling settles down to “the daily manufacture of newspapers.” This could mean everything from duties as a journalist to those of a printer. The job is “legitimate” and Kipling is no longer a vagabond. This description of a newspaper office is an example of the author's depth of writing. It causes the reader to reflect on the history and culture of Kipling's era. “A newspaper office seems to attract every conceivable sort of person, to the prejudice of discipline. Zenana-mission ladies arrive, and beg that the Editor will instantly abandon all his duties to describe a Christian prize-giving in a back-slum of a perfectly inaccessible village; Colonels who have been overpassed for commands sit down and sketch the outline of a series of ten, twelve, or twenty-four leading articles on Seniority versus Selection; missionaries wish to know why they have not been permitted to escape from their regular vehicles of abuse and swear at a brother-missionary under special

patronage of the editorial We; stranded theatrical companies troop up to explain that they cannot pay for their advertisements, but on their return from New Zealand or Tahiti will do so with interest; inventors of patent punkah-pulling machines, carriage couplings and unbreakable swords and axle-trees call with specifications in their pockets and hours at their disposal; tea-companies enter and elaborate their prospectuses with the office pens; secretaries of ball-committees clamor to have the glories of their last dance more fully expounded; strange ladies rustle in and say: "I want a hundred lady-cards printed at once, please, which is manifestly part of an Editor's duty; and every dissolute ruffian that ever tramped the Grand Trunk Road makes it his business to ask for employment as a proof-reader. And, all the time, the telephone-bell is ringing madly, and Kings are being killed on the Continent, and Empires are saying, "You're another, and Mister Gladstone is calling down brimstone upon the British Dominions. Kipling, Rudyard. The Man Who Would Be King (Illustrated) + Free Audiobook - Francson Classics (Kindle Locations 88-99). Francson Classics. Kindle Edition. While employed in the newspaper trade, Kipling meets the two men he had earlier met on the train. They were in such good disguise that at first he did not recognize them. They explained they were on their way into some of the disorganized states (Afghanistan) to establish there own fiefdom. They intended to establish themselves as kings using arms as well as religion. Because they are both experienced con-men, they set up rules for themselves. The two are confident that if they follow their own rules, they will succeed; they would become kings. And they succeed, up to the point when one of them breaks one of their own rules. Kipling knows the story because one of the men returned to Kipling's newspaper office to relate the account. In this short story Kipling tells us the story of the man (not men) who would be king.

I'm a read aloud mom with a family of boys. These stories: The Phantom Rickshaw, The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Nukes, The Man who Would be King, See Willie Winkie, and Without Benefit of Clergy, catch and hold my family's attention. Gorgeous language, action - packed, amazing characters. This is a tacky, cheap edition, but it only costs \$3.00 brand new. It's worth finding Kipling at a book sale in an older, nicer edition. The stories inside are excellent, and one nice feature about this book is that no professional ditherer felt the need to add an introduction. Phew!

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