

# M. I.<sup>\*</sup>

## Rudyard Kipling



I WISH my mother could see me now, with  
a fence-post under my arm,  
And a knife and a spoon in my putties  
that I found on a Boer farm;  
Atop of a sore-backed Argentine with a  
thirst that you couldn't buy—  
I used to be in the Hampshires once,  
(Glost'ers, Lincolns, and Rifles once),  
Sussex, Scottish, and Yorkshires once!  
(*ad lib.*)  
But now I am M. I.!

That is what we are known as—that is the  
name you must call  
If you want officers' servants, pickets an'  
'orse-guards an' all—  
Details for buryin'-parties, company-cooks or  
supply—  
Turn out the chronic Ikonas! Roll up the  
— † M. I.

\* Mounted Infantry.

† Number from First to Sixth, according to taste and service of audience.





My 'ands are spotty with veldt-sores—my  
shirt is a button an' frill—

An' the things I've used my bay'nit for  
would make a tinker ill!

An' I don't know whose dam' column I'm  
in, nor where we're trekkin' nor why;  
I've trekked to the Vaal from the Orange  
once—

From the Vaal to the greasy Pongolo  
once—

(Or else it was called the Zambesi once)—

For now I am M. I.!

That is what we are known as—that is the  
crowd you require

For outposts all night under freezin', an'  
rear-guard all day under fire.

Anything 'ot or unwholesome? Anything  
dusty or dry?

Borrow a bunch of Ikonas! Trot out the  
— M. I.

Our Sergeant-major's a subaltern; our  
Captain's a Fusilier;

Our Adjutant's "late of Somebody's 'Orse,"  
and a Melbourne auctioneer;

But you couldn't spot us at 'arf a mile  
from the crackest caval-ry—

They used to talk about Lancers once,  
Hussars, Dragoons, an' Lancers once,  
'Elmets, pistols, an' carbines once,

But now we are M. I.!

That is what we are known as—we are the  
orphans they blame

For beggin' the loan of an 'ead-stall an'  
fittin' a mount to the same:

Can't even look at their 'orse-lines but some-  
one starts bellerin' "Hi!

Hook it, you burglin' Ikona! Footsack,  
you — M. I.!"

We're trekkin' our twenty mile a day, an'  
bein' loved by the Dutch,

But we don't hold on by the mane no more,  
nor lose our stirrups—much.

An' we scout with a senior man in charge,  
where the 'oly white flags fly—

We used to think they were friendly once,  
Didn't take any precautions once  
(Once, my ducky, an' only once!),

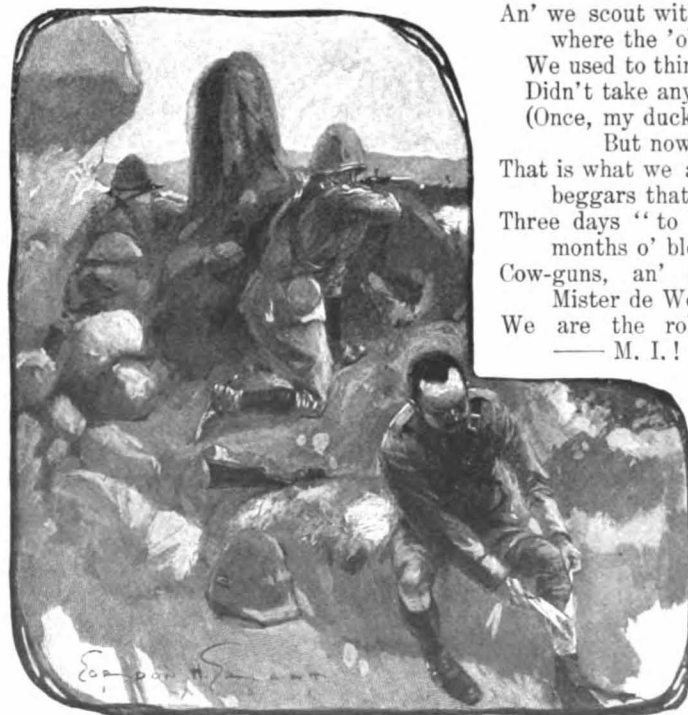
But now we are M. I.!

That is what we are known as—we are the  
beggars that got

Three days "to learn equitation," an' six  
months o' bloomin' well trot!

Cow-guns, an' cattle, an' convoys—an'  
Mister de Wet on the fly—

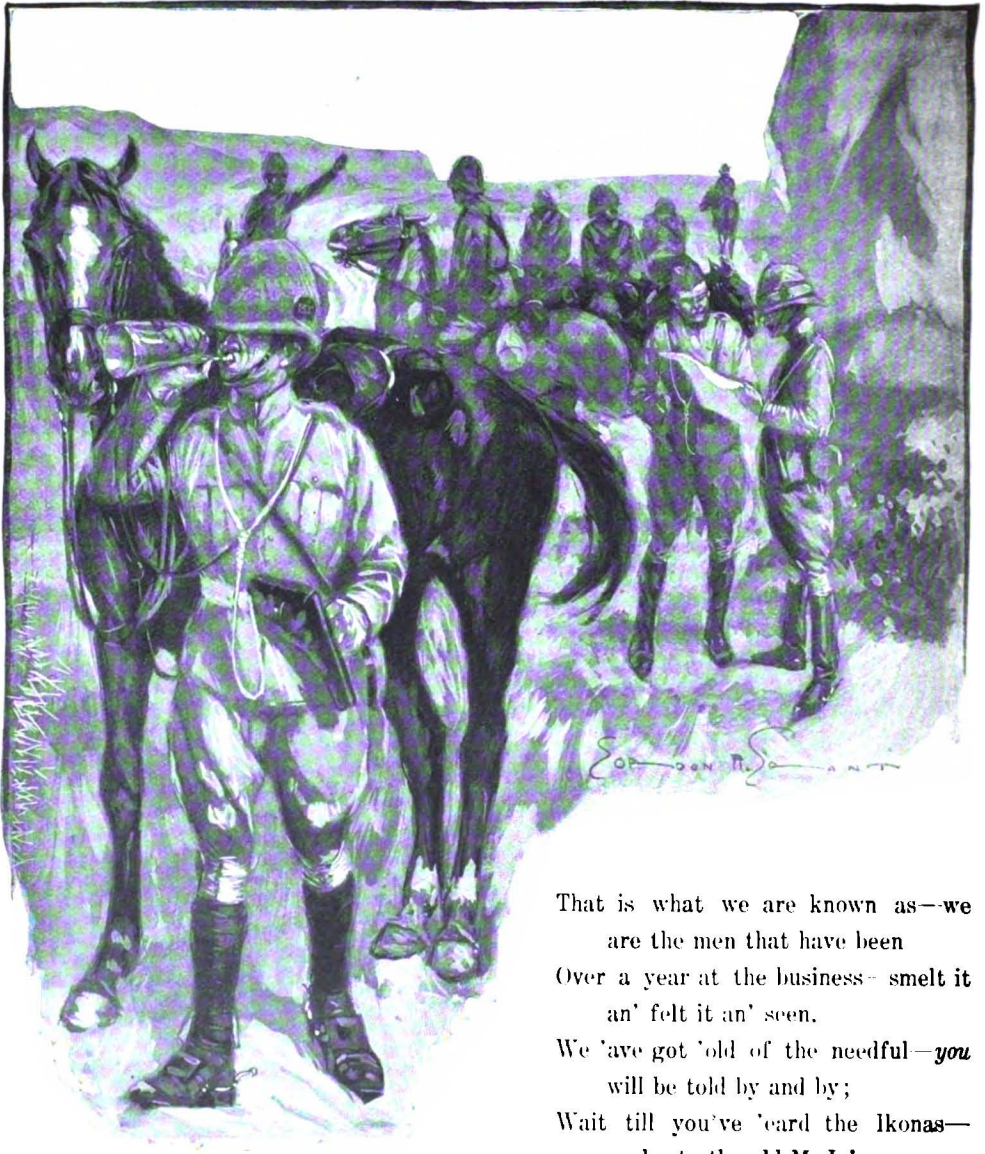
We are the rollin' Ikonas, we are the  
— M. I.!





The new fat regiments come from 'ome— I wish my mother could see me now,  
 imaginin' vain V.C.'s a-gatherin' news on my own,  
 (The same as our talky-fighty men which When I ride like a General up to the scrub  
 are always Number Threes\*); an' ride back like Tod Sloan—  
 But our words o' command are "Scatter" Remarkably small on my 'orse's neck to let  
 an' "Close" an' "Let your wounded lie." the shots go by.  
 We used to rescue 'em noble once— We used to fancy it risky once  
 Givin' the range as we raised 'em once, (Called it a reconnaissance once),  
 Gettin' 'em killed as we saved 'em once, Under the charge of an orf'cer once,  
 But now we are M. I. ! But now we are M. I. !  
 That is what we are known as—we are the That is what we are known as—that is the  
 lanterns you view word you must say  
 After a fight round the kopjes, looking for When you want men to be Mausered for one  
 men that we knew. and a penny a day.  
 Whistlin' and callin' together—'altin' to We are no dollar Colonials—we are the  
 'catch the reply; 'ome-made supply;  
 "'Elp me! O 'elp me! Ikonas! This way Write to the London Ikonas! Ask for the  
 the ——— M. I.!" ——— M. I."

\* Horse-holders when in action, and therefore generally out of range or under cover.



That is what we are known as—we  
 are the men that have been  
 Over a year at the business—smelt it  
 an' felt it an' seen.  
 We 'ave got 'old of the needful—*you*  
 will be told by and by;  
 Wait till you've 'eard the Ikonas—  
 spoke to the old M. I.!

I wish myself could talk to myself as I left  
 'im a year ago.  
 I could tell 'im a lot that would save 'im a  
 lot on the things that 'e ought to know!  
 When I think o' that ignorant barrack-bird,  
 it almost makes me cry.  
 I used to belong in an Army once  
 (Gawd! what a rum little Army once),  
 Red little, dead little Army once!  
 But now I am M. I.!

*Mount—march, Ikonas! Stand to your  
 'orses again!*  
*Mop off the frost on the saddles—mop up  
 the miles on the plain.*  
*Out go the stars in the dawnin'—up goes  
 our dust to the sky,*  
*Walk—trot, Ikonas! Trek jou,\* the old  
 M. I.!*

\* Get ahead.