

The Old Issue

by Rudyard Kipling
October 9th, 1899

*"Here is nothing new nor aught unproven," say the Trumpets,
"Many feet have worn it and the road is old indeed.
"It is the King—the King we schooled aforetime!"
(Trumpets in the marshes—in the eyot at Runnymede!)*

*"Here is neither haste, nor hate, nor anger," peal the Trumpets,
"Pardon for his penitence or pity for his fall.
"It is the King!"—inexorable Trumpets—
(Trumpets round the scaffold at the dawning by Whitehall!)*

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*"He hath veiled the Crown and hid the Sceptre," warn the Trumpets,
"He hath changed the fashion of the lies that cloak his will.
"Hard die the Kings—ah hard—dooms hard!" declare the Trumpets,
Trumpets at the gang-plank where the brawling troop-decks fill!*

*Ancient and Unteachable, abide—abide the Trumpets!
Once again the Trumpets, for the shuddering ground-swell brings
Clamour over ocean of the harsh, pursuing Trumpets—
Trumpets of the Vanguard that have sworn no truce with Kings!*

All we have of freedom, all we use or know—
This our fathers bought for us long and long ago.

Ancient Right unnoticed as the breath we draw—
Leave to live by no man's leave, underneath the Law.

Lance and torch and tumult, steel and grey-goose wing
Wrenched it, inch and ell and all, slowly from the King.

Till our fathers 'stablished, after bloody years,
How our King is one with us, first among his peers.

So they bought us freedom—not at little cost
Wherefore must we watch the King, lest our gain be lost,

Over all things certain, this is sure indeed,
Suffer not the old King: for we know the breed.

Give no ear to bondsmen bidding us endure.
Whining "He is weak and far"; crying "Time shall cure.",

(Time himself is witness, till the battle joins,
Deeper strikes the rottenness in the people's loins.)

Give no heed to bondsmen masking war with peace.
Suffer not the old King here or overseas.

They that beg us barter—wait his yielding mood—
Pledge the years we hold in trust—pawn our brother's blood—

Howso' great their clamour, whatsoe'er their claim,
Suffer not the old King under any name!

*Here is naught unproven—here is naught to learn.
It is written what shall fall if the King return.*

He shall mark our goings, question whence we came,
Set his guards about us, as in Freedom's name.

He shall take a tribute, toll of all our ware;
He shall change our gold for arms—arms we may not bear.

He shall break his judges if they cross his word;
He shall rule above the Law calling on the Lord.

He shall peep and mutter; and the night shall bring
Watchers 'neath our window, lest we mock the King—

Hate and all division; hosts of hurrying spies;
Money poured in secret, carrion breeding flies.

Strangers of his counsel, hirelings of his pay,
These shall deal our Justice: sell—deny—delay.

We shall drink dishonour, we shall eat abuse
For the Land we look to—for the Tongue we use.

We shall take our station, dirt beneath his feet,
While his hired captains jeer us in the street.

Cruel in the shadow, crafty in the sun,
Far beyond his borders shall his teachings run.

Sloven, sullen, savage, secret, uncontrolled,
Laying on a new land evil of the old—

Long-forgotten bondage, dwarfing heart and brain—
All our fathers died to loose he shall bind again.

*Here is naught at venture, random nor untrue—
Swings the wheel full-circle, brims the cup anew.*

*Here is naught unproven, here is nothing hid:
Step for step and word for word—so the old Kings did!*

*Step by step, and word by word: who is ruled may read.
Suffer not the old Kings: for we know the breed—*

*All the right they promise—all the wrong they bring.
Stewards of the Judgment, suffer not this King!*

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