

# Palace – Rudyard Kipling

Palace

Rudyard Kipling

When I was a King and a Mason,  
a Master proven and skilled,  
I cleared me a ground for a palace,  
such as a King should build.

I decreed and cut down to my levels,  
but presently under the silt,  
I came on the wreck of a palace,  
such as a king had built.

There was no worth in the fashion,  
there was no wit in the plan.  
Hither and thither aimless,  
the ruined footings ran.

Masonry, brute, mishandled,  
but carved on every stone.  
“After me cometh a Builder,  
tell him I, too, have known”.

Swift to my use in the trenches,  
where my well-planned ground works grew,  
I tumbled his quoins and his ashlar,  
and cut and reset them anew.

Lime I made from his marbles;  
burned it, slaked it, and spread,  
Taking and leaving, at pleasure,  
the gift of the humble dead.

Yet I despised mot, nor gloried;  
for as we wrenched them apart,  
I read in the raised foundations

the heart of that builder's heart.

As though he had risen and pleaded,  
so did I understand.

The form of the dream he had followed,  
in the face of the thing he had planned.

When I was a king and a Mason,  
in the open noon of my pride,  
They sent me a word from the darkness,  
they whispered and called me aside.

They said-"The end is forbidden.  
"They said-"Thy use is fulfilled.  
Thy palace shall stand, as that other's,  
the spoil of a king, who shall build."

I called the men from my trenches,  
my quarries, my wharves and my shears.  
All I had thought I abandoned,  
to the faith of the faithless years.

Only I cut on the timber-only,  
I carved on the stone-  
"After me cometh a Builder,  
tell him I, too, have known."