

# THE FIVE NATIONS

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METHUEN AND CO. LTD.  
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.  
LONDON

*Twenty-eighth Edition*

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| <i>First Published</i> . . . . .  | <i>September 1903</i> |
| <i>Second Edition</i> . . . . .   | <i>1903</i>           |
| <i>Third Edition</i> . . . . .  | <i>1907</i>           |
| <i>Fourth Edition</i> . . . . .   | <i>1908</i>           |
| <i>Fifth and Sixth Editions</i> . . . . .                               | <i>1909</i>           |
| <i>Seventh Edition</i> . . . . .  | <i>1910</i>           |
| <i>Eighth Edition</i> . . . . .   | <i>1911</i>           |
| <i>Ninth Edition</i> . . . . .  | <i>1912</i>           |
| <i>Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Editions</i> . . . . .      | <i>1913</i>           |
| <i>Fourteenth and Fifteenth Editions</i> . . . . .                      | <i>1914</i>           |
| <i>Sixteenth and Seventeenth Editions</i> . . . . .                     | <i>1915</i>           |
| <i>Eighteenth and Nineteenth Editions</i> . . . . .                     | <i>1916</i>           |
| <i>Twentieth Edition</i> . . . . .                                      | <i>1917</i>           |
| <i>Twenty-first, Twenty-second, and Twenty-third Editions</i> . . . . . | <i>1918</i>           |
| <i>Twenty-fourth Edition</i> . . . . .                                  | <i>1919</i>           |
| <i>Twenty-fifth Edition.</i> . . . . .                                  | <i>1920</i>           |
| <i>Twenty-sixth Edition</i> . . . . .                                   | <i>1922</i>           |
| <i>Twenty-seventh Edition</i> . . . . .                                 | <i>1923</i>           |
| <i>Twenty-eighth Edition</i> . . . . .                                  | <i>1927</i>           |

‘ET DONA FERENTES’

IN extended observation of the ways and works of  
man,

From the Four-mile Radius roughly to the plains of  
Hindustan :

I have drunk with mixed assemblies, seen the racial  
ruction rise,

And the men of half creation damning half  
creation's eyes.

I have watched them in their tantrums, all that  
pentecostal crew,

French, Italian, Arab, Spaniard, Dutch and Greek,  
and Russ and Jew,

Celt and savage, buff and ochre, cream and yellow,  
mauve and white,

But it never really mattered till the English grew  
polite ;

Till the men with polished toppers, till the men in  
    long frock-coats,  
Till the men that do not duel, till the men who  
    fight with votes,  
Till the breed that take their pleasures as Saint  
    Laurence took his grid,  
Began to ‘beg your pardon’ and—the knowing  
    croupier hid.

Then the bandsmen with their fiddles, and the girls  
    that bring the beer,  
Felt the psychologic moment, left the lit casino  
    clear ;  
But the uninstructed alien, from the Teuton to the  
    Gaul,  
Was entrapped, once more, my country, by that  
    suave, deceptive drawl.

. . . . .

As it was in ancient Suez or ‘neath wilder, milder  
    skies,  
I ‘observe with apprehension’ when the racial  
    ructions rise ;

And with keener apprehension, if I read the times  
aright,

Hear the old casino order: 'Watch your man, but  
be polite.

'Keep your temper. Never answer (*that* was why  
they spat and swore).

Don't hit first, but move together (there's no hurry)  
to the door.

Back to back, and facing outward while the linguist  
tells 'em how—

"*Nous sommes allong à notre batteau, nous ne voulong  
pas un row.*"

So the hard, pent rage ate inward, till some idiot  
went too far . . .

'Let 'em have it!' and they had it, and the same  
was serious war.

Fist, umbrella, cane, decanter, lamp and beer-mug,  
chair and boot—

Till behind the fleeing legions rose the long, hoarse  
yell for loot.

Then the oil-cloth with its numbers, as a banner  
fluttered free;  
Then the grand piano cantered, on three castors,  
down the quay ;  
White, and breathing through their nostrils, silent,  
systematic, swift—  
They removed, effaced, abolished all that man  
could heave or lift.

Oh, my country, bless the training that from cot to  
castle runs—  
The pitfall of the stranger but the bulwark of thy  
sons—  
Measured speech and ordered action, sluggish soul  
and unperturbed,  
Till we wake our Island-Devil—nowise cool for  
being curbed!

When the heir of all the ages ‘has the honour to  
remain,’  
When he will not hear an insult, though men make  
it ne’er so plain,

When his lips are schooled to meekness, when his  
back is bowed to blows—

Well the keen *aas-vogels* know it—well the waiting  
jackal knows.

Build on the flanks of Etna where the sullen smoke-  
puffs float—

Or bathe in tropic waters where the lean fin dogs  
the boat—

Cock the gun that is not loaded, cook the frozen  
dynamite—

But oh, beware my country, when my country  
grows polite!