**THE STORY OF UNG**

 by Rudyard Kipling

Once, on a glittering ice field ages and ages ago,

Ung, a maker of pictures, fashioned an image of snow,

Fashioned the form of a tribesman -- gaily he whistled and sung,

Working the snow with his fingers. Read ye the story of Ung!

Pleased was his tribe with that image -- came in their hundreds to scan,

Handled it, smelt it and grunted: "Verily this is a man!",

"Thus do we carry our lances, thus is a war-belt slung.",

"Lo! It is even as we are, Glory and honour to Ung!"

Later he pictured an auroch. Later he pictured a bear,

Pictured the sabre-toothed tiger dragging a man to his lair,

Pictured the mountainous mammoth, hairy, abhorrent, alone,

Out of the love that he bore them, scriving them clearly on bone.

Swift came his tribe to behold them, peering and pushing and still,

Men of the berg-battered beaches, men of the boulder-hatched hill --

Hunters and fishers and trappers, presently whispering love:

"Yea, tgey are like -- and it may be. But how does the picture-man know?

"Ung -- hath he slept with auroch -- watched where the mastodon roam?

Spoke on the ice with the bow-head, followed the sabre-tooth home?

Nay! These are toys of his fancy! If he have cheated us so,

How is there truth in his image, the man that he fashioned of snow?"

Wroth was that maker of pictures; hotly he answered the call:

"Hunters and fishers and trappers, children and fools are ye all!

Look at the beasts when ye hunt them!" Swift from the tumult he broke,

Ran to the cave of his father and told him the shame that they spoke.

And the father of Ung gave an answer, that was old and wise in the craft,

Maker of pictures aforetime, he leaned on his lance and laughed:

"If they could see as thou seest they would do what thou hast done

And each man would make him a picture and what would become of my son?

"There would be no pelts of the reindeer, flung down at thy cave for a gift,

Nor dole of the oily timber that comes on thge Baltic drift,

No store of well-drilled needles, nor ouches of amber pale,

No new-cut tongues of the bison, nor meat of the stranded whale.

Thou hast not toiled at the fishing when the sodden trammels freeze,

Nor worked the war-boats outward through the rush of the rock-staked seas,

Yet they bring thee fish and plunder, full meal and an easy bed,

And all for the sake of thy pictures." And Ung held down his head.

'Thou hast not stood to the aurochs when the red snow reeks of the fight,

Men have no time at the houghing to count his curls aright

And the heart of the hairy mammoth, thou sayest, they do not see,

Yet they save it whole from the beaches and broil the beat for thee.

"And now do they press to thy pictures, with opened mouth and eye,

And a little gift in the doorway and the praise no gift can buy,

But sure they have doubted thy pictures and that is a grievous stain.

Son that can see so clearly, return them their gifts again!"

And Ung looked down at his deerskins, their broad shell-tasselled bands,

And Ung drew forward his mittens and looked at his naked hands

And he gloved himself and departed and he heard his father behind:

"Son that can see so clearly, rejoice that thy tribe is blind!"

Straight on the glittering ice field by the caves of the lost Dordogne,

Ung, a maker of pictures, fell to his scriving on bone,

Even to mammoth editions. Gaily he whistled and sung,

Blessing his tribe for their blindness. Heed ye the story of Ung!