**IN THE NEOLITHIC AGE**

by Rudyard Kipling

In the Neolithic Age savage warfare did I wage

For food and fame and woolly horses' pelt.

I was singer to my clan in that dim, red dawn of Man

And I sang of all we fought and feared and felt.

Yes, I sang as now I sing, when the prehistoric spring

Made the piled Biscayan ice-pack split and shove.

And the troll and gnome and dwerg and the gods of cliff and berg

Were about me and beneath me and above.

But a rival of Solutré told the tribe my style was outré.

'Neath a tomahawk of diorite he fell

And I left my views of art, barbed and tangled, below the heart

Of a mammothistic etcher at Grenelle.

Then I stripped them scalp from skull and my hunting dogs fed full

And their teeth I threaded neatly on a thong

And I wiped my mouth and said, "It is well that they are dead

For I know my work is right and theirs was wrong."

But my totem saw the shame; from his ridgepole shrine he came

And told me in a vision of the night:

"There are nine and sixty ways of constructing tribal lays

And every single one of them is right!"

Then the silence closed upon me till they put new clothing on me

Of whiter, weaker flesh and bone more frail

And I stepped beneath time's finger, once again a tribal singer,

And a minor poet certified by trial!

Still they skirmish to and fro, men my messmates on the snow,

When we headed off the aurochs turn for turn,

When the rich Allobrogenses never kept amanuenses

And our only plots were piled in lakes at Berne.

Still a cultured Christian age sees us scuffle, squeak and rage;

Still we pinch and slap and jabber, scratch and dirk;

Still we let our business slide -- as we dropped the half-dressed hide --

To show a fellow savage how to work.

Still the world is wondrous large, seven seas ftom marge to marge,

And it holds a vast of various kinds of Man

And the wildest dreams of Kew are the facts of Khatmandhu

And the crimes of Clapman chaste in Mataban.

Here's my wisdom for your use, as I learned it when the moose

And the reindeer roamed where Paris roars tonight,

"There are nine and sixty ways of constructing tribal lays

And every single one of them is right!"