



A. A. Milne: His Life

Ann Thwaite

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A.A. Milne is one of the most successful English writers ever. His heart-warming creations-Winnie-the-Pooh, Christopher Robin, Eeyore, Tigger and Piglet-have become some of the best-loved children's characters of all time, and readers the world over are familiar with the stories from the Hundred Acre Wood. Yet the man himself has remained an enigma. Although in many ways his behaviour was that of a typical golf-playing, pipe-smoking Englishman, Milne refused to be typecast, and his publishers despaired when he turned from writing popular columns for Punch to writing detective stories. They complained again when the detective writer presented them with a set of children's verse, but when *When We Were Very Young* became one of the best-selling books of all time, Milne's credibility as one of the world's favorite authors was sealed. In this biography of Milne, Ann Thwaite reveals the man himself, in all his complexity. As W. A. Darlington put it in 1921, commenting on Milne's highly popular plays, 'Mr Milne is obviously at heart (like all humorists) a serious person, with things to say.' He had strong political feelings, and was a pacifist even before his experiences on the Somme in 1916. There was always something darker and more tangled under 'the bright glitter of surfaces'. At his father's school, Milne was taught by the young H. G. Wells, who remained a lifelong friend; later, J. M. Barrie called him 'my Mr Milne' and was 'uncommon proud of him'; later still, P. G. Wodehouse became one of his greatest admirers, and a friend - but was then deeply hurt by Milne's strong reaction to the notorious wartime broadcasts. Milne's personal relationships, including those with his wife and son, were not always easy. In *A. A. Milne: His Life*, Ann Thwaite has produced a vivid, sympathetic and entertaining portrait of both the man and his work, set in the context of his time, which stands as the definitive life of a writer whose work has earned some loathing (for its supposed 'whimsy') but much more devotion among readers of all ages, not only in English-speaking countries but all over the world.

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