

A Book of the Week.

"THE JUNGLE BOOK."*

MR. RUDYARD KIPLING has written for the delectation of children, and of such grown up people as are sufficiently intelligent, a book of stories about wild animals, their laws, manners, and customs. It is difficult not to believe, after reading "The Jungle Book," that Mr. Kipling has not been a wild animal himself in some previous state of incarnation, so intimate is his knowledge of their ways, and so marvellous are his descriptions of their various and widely differing characteristics.

"Mowgli" is the story of a human baby who was adopted by a most attractive family of wolves, who nourished him, reared him, and taught him the laws of the jungle—

"Which never orders anything without a reason, forbids every beast to eat man, except when he is killing to show his children how to kill, and then he must hunt outside the hunting grounds of his pack or tribe. . . . The reason the beasts give among themselves is that man is the weakest and most defenceless of all living things, and it is unsportsmanlike to touch him."

The wolves were very loyal to their adopted child, and made his quarrels their own. The reader will conceive a much higher opinion of the wolf people after reading Mr. Kipling, and a much lower opinion of the tiger people, who are cruel and savage, and very treacherous, according to "The Jungle Book." How Mowgli revenged himself on the jungle autocrat, Shere Khan the tiger, and how he hunted him with buffaloes, and spread his skin on the council rock before the assembled pack of wolves, is told with great vigour in a later story, entitled "Tiger Tiger."

"Kaa's Hunting" tells of the mysterious fascination that snakes have over other animals. The Bandar Log, or monkey people, steal Mowgli and Baloo the brown bear, and Bagheera the black panther, who loved the little human, entreat the aid of Kaa the rock snake, "the whisper of whose name makes the monkeys' tails grow cold." I think that there have been few things in modern literature more weirdly enchanting than the following description of "The Dance of the Hunger of Kaa."

"He turned twice or thrice in a big circle weaving his head from right to left. Then he began making loops and figures of eight with his body, and soft oozy triangles that melted into squares and five-sided figures, and coiled mounds, never resting, never hurrying, and never stopping his low humming song. It grew darker and darker, till at last the dragging, shifting coils disappeared, but they could hear the rustle of the scales. . . . 'Bandar-Log,' said the voice of Kaa at last, 'can ye stir foot or hand without my order? Speak!' 'Without thy order we cannot stir foot or hand, O Kaa!' 'Good, come all one pace nearer to me.' The line of the monkeys swayed forward helplessly, and Baloo and Bagheera took one stiff step forward with them. 'Nearer!' hissed Kaa, and they all moved again."

The end of the Bandar-Log I must needs leave to the reader's imagination till he can acquire the book and have the felicity of reading it therein; but I can-

not refrain from quoting one verse of the road song of the monkey people, because I think the earlier part of it shows that monkeys *must* have been the ancestors of some politicians and literary critics!

"Here we sit in a branchy row,
Thinking of beautiful things we know,
Dreaming of deeds that we mean to do,
All complete in a minute or two,
Something noble and wise and good,
Done by merely wishing we could.
We've forgotten, but—never mind,
Brother, thy tail hangs down behind!"

The White Seal, with his conceit and daring, is quite as interesting a personage in his way as Mowgli. "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" is the story of a little Mongoose, and how he killed all the snakes in the house of the family that he took under his especial protection. Rikki-Tikki is such an attractive little beast that, ever since reading his history, I have longed to possess a Mongoose of my own as a domestic pet, and nothing but the remembrance that, as there are no snakes in South Kensington for the little animal to kill, and that in consequence he would most likely find life barren and unendurable, prevents my hurrying off to "Jamracks," or some other emporium of wild animals, in order to secure a Mongoose of my own.

All these stories are charming, and yet I think that "Toomai of the Elephants" will most likely prove to be the greatest favourite, both with the children and their elders. It tells how Kala Nag, the big tame elephant, took brave Toomai, the son of his keeper, to see the wild elephants dance, a sight which had never been seen by mortal eyes before.

The fine description of the child's night ride on Kala Nag's head through the jungle, and the glowing account of the wild elephants' crashing dance is too long for quotation, but it is truly a splendid *tour de force*, in which Mr. Rudyard Kipling's almost unique powers of description are to be found at their very best.

"The Servants of the Queen" is a gossip held in camp, after a weary month of rain, by the camels, elephants, horses, bullocks and mules, that were all gathered together to be reviewed at Rawal Pindi. I do not think it is so successful as the other stories, although it is full of that intimate knowledge of camp life, the secret of which Mr. Kipling alone of modern writers possesses.

A. M. G.

Inventions, Preparations, &c.

PEAT WOOL.

This is, comparatively speaking, a new preparation in this country, although it has been employed for some years past, to an increasing extent, upon the Continent. The absorbing and anti-septic qualities of peat are so well known that they require no explanation. It is especially in cases, therefore, in which there are profuse discharges of any kind,

*"The Jungle Book," by Rudyard Kipling. 6s. Macmillan & Co., 1894.

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