

## A Book of the Week.

## STALKY AND CO.\*

MR. RUDYARD KIPLING'S last is quite a new departure. He has given us the regeneration of a boy before, in "Captains Courageous"; but in "Stalky and Co." he gives us what it would be almost true to call the impossible—at least, I do not know who has attempted it successfully—a glimpse into the life of boys at a public school.

If you except the mind of a woman, which has not been revealed to this writer, there is almost nothing in the visible universe which he cannot describe faithfully; it is probable therefore that this present work is as sound and as true to life as usual; but, somehow, it is not convincing, to the lay mind, in the curious and wondrous way of former stories. We never doubt that Kaa the Python, or Kala Nag, or Kotick the white seal, would have acted and spoken in the way they are represented as doing in the "Jungle Book." Their reality is unquestionable.

But one does doubt, out of the confessed smallness of one's experience of a boys' school, whether Stalky, Turkey, and Beetle, would have said and done all that is here attributed to them: and, when doubt creeps in, the Kiplingesque influence is subtly undermined. Most of his writing carries you away with it; you float upon the current of his vivid imagination, with critical faculties almost in suspense. But from this present book you stand aloof, and your attitude is that of the critic all through.

Stalky and his allies come out on the top in all that they attempt, whether the design is to outwit boys or masters the result is the same, a complete triumph; and as a public school boy remarked to me the other day—"That's not natural."

It will be understood that, natural or not, the exploits of these three young gentlemen make extremely amusing reading; especially if one is not too particular about elaborate details concerning slang, stinks, and bloody noses. The insertion of the dead cat between the dormitory floor and ceiling, was a piece of vengeance worthy of Machiavelli, and is related with all the writer's customary rollicking zest. But, as the same public schoolboy also remarked to me,—"Even school boys do sometimes talk English."

Perhaps the best bit of character drawing is that of King the House Master, who never can resist the temptation to score off small boys, and to relate his brilliant achievements in that direction to his fellow masters at meal times. One scarcely wonders that three boys, accustomed to give their minds to the discomfiture of their enemies, should have delighted in paying King out. He is fair game, and it is legitimate, and even laudable, to score off him.

The only person who has the least influence for good over Stalky & Co., is the Chaplain, and he, as far as the book allows us to ascertain, seems to owe his influence to a policy of never correcting them, and winking at their transgressions.

Two of Mr. Kipling's little prejudices come prominently to the front in this book; his dislike of compulsory athletics; and his contempt for Dean Farrar as a writer of fiction.

G. M. R.

\* By Rudyard Kipling. Macmillan and Co.

## The Camp within the West.

O did you see a troop go by  
Way-weary and oppressed,  
Dead kisses on the drooping lip  
And a dead heart in the breast?  
*Yea, I have seen them one by one,  
Way-weary and oppressed,  
And when I asked them "Whither speed?"  
They answered, "To the West!"*  
And were they pale as pale could be—  
Death pale with haunted eyes,  
And did you see the hot white dust  
Range round their feet and rise?  
*O they were pale as pale could be,  
As pale as an embered leaf;  
The hot white dust had risen, but  
They laid it with their grief.*  
Did no one say the way is long,  
And crave a little rest?  
*O no, they said, "The night is nigh,  
Our Camp is in the West!"*  
And did pain pierce their feet, as though  
The way with thorns were set,  
And were they visited by strange  
Dark angels of regret?  
*O yea, and some were mute as death,  
Though shot by many a dart,  
With them the salt of inward tears  
Went stinging through the heart.*  
And how are these wayfarers called,  
And whither do they wend?  
*The Weary-Hearted—and their road  
At sunset hath an end.*  
Shed tears for them . . . Nay, nay, no tears!  
*They yearn for endless rest;  
Perhaps large stars will burn above  
Their Camp within the West.*

From "The Hidden Tide." BY RODERICK QUINN.

## WHAT TO READ.

- "The River War: an Historical Account of the Reconquest of the Soudan." By Winston Churchill. Edited by Colonel F. Rhodes.  
"The Sovereign Ladies of Europe." By The Countess A. Von Bothmer.  
"The Daughter of Peter the Great: a History of Russian Diplomacy and of the Russian Court under the Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, 1741-1762." By R. Nisbet Bain.  
"R. L. Stevenson." By L. Cope Cornford.  
"The Private Nurse: Some Reminiscences of Eight Years' Private Nursing." By Jessie Holmes.  
"The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais." By his son, John Guille Millais.

## Coming Events.

November 18th.—American Hospital Ship Fund—Concert at Claridge's Hotel, organised by Mrs. Brown Potter. 4 to 7 p.m.

November 21st.—Chelsea Hospital for Women—Inspection of alterations and improvements; Reception by the Chairman, Lord Glenesk. 3.30 p.m.

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