

## OBSERVATIONS

BY SARAH B. HARRIS

## Disillusion

Tom Brown at Rugby was an average boy. There were gleams of refinement and of justice, indications of the man to be, a day nearer maturity with each setting sun. In *Stalky and Co.*, the hero, who is Rudyard Kipling, hates and is hated by all the rest of the school including pupils and masters and excepting only three other boys. Tom Brown at Rugby is a boy among boys playing cricket and proud of the name of the school of which he is a pupil. *Stalky* and his mates introduce decayed animals into adjacent dormitories, spend their leisure out of bounds, smoking and despising the other boys who play cricket and are fond of athletics.

Mr. Kipling's recent poem called "The Islanders" is written from exactly the same point of view. Although he has not himself been fighting and has no intention of joining the army, he calls the Englishmen who stay at home instead of enlisting for the South African service, "muddled oafs" and "flanneled fools." At last Englishmen themselves realize the essential brutality and egotism of the author they have flattered to the top of his bent. When Kipling was a boy at school he was convinced that his schoolmates did not like him because they were "muddled oafs," who could not appreciate his superior points. It is not likely that the universal disapproval of his countrymen will have any other effect upon him now. His last story, "Kim," is seedy. It has no plot, no character analysis, no psychological postmortem. It is deadly dull and has sold only on Kipling's reputation. Story-buyers like a plot and prefer that a book should be interesting. Readers who profess to be interested only in soul tragedies and comedies do not insist upon a plot, but they do wish to see the wheels go round. And the really literary people must have a strong seasoning of psychology. There is nothing any of these people like in "Kim" and they want their money back. Disillusion affected Americans first. The English rage is late but it was sure to come. However, the disaffection in England and America will not affect the sale of any new book he may write nearly so much as the inanity of "Kim" and the brutality of "Stalky and Co." After this when the young man writes a book the publishers will not offer him a price on it "sight unseen." And the public will not buy it, as they have heretofore, without waiting for the verdict of the book reviewers. That is what a book reviewer is for: To save a man from buying an unprofitable book. And hereafter the much maligned book-reviewer will stand between Kipling and his public.

"The Islanders" has not yet been printed in this country. What we know of it at this date (January 21) is obtained from cable dispatches, and they lack fullness. Mr. Kipling advocates conscription, a system which the Anglo Saxon and the American temperament abhors. He taunts the English with getting their fighting men from Ireland, Australia and Canada.

Ye vaunted your fathomless power and  
ye flaunted your iron pride  
Ere ye fawned on the younger nations  
for the men who could shoot and ride,  
Then ye returned to your trinkets; then  
ye contented your souls  
With the flannelled fools at the wicket  
and the muddled oafs at the goals.  
Given to strong delusion, wholly believ-  
ing a lie,  
Ye saw that the land lay fenceless and  
yet let the months go by,  
Waiting some easy wonder, hoping some  
saving sign,  
Idle, openly idle, in the lee of the fore-  
spent line.

Idle except for your boasting, and what  
is your boasting worth  
If ye grudge a year of service to the  
lordliest line on earth?  
Ancient, effortless, ordered, cycle on  
cycle set,  
Life so long untroubled that ye who  
inherit forget,  
It was not made with the mountains,  
it is not one with the deep;  
Men, not gods, devised it; men, not gods,  
must keep.  
"Each one born on the island be broke  
to the matter of war."  
"Men, not children or servants, tempered  
and taught to the end."

Men who play golf and friends of the "muddled oafs at the wickets" resent the imputation that they are fiddling while the colonial troops are dying for England. The older the civilization the greater the repugnance to fighting. Men in the stone age went about continuously with a knotted club over their shoulders. Whatever they wanted they had to fight for, and to keep it they had to fight. Diplomacy is a later birth. Englishmen have fought for many centuries. Very likely the period of development when Englishmen will not longer fight is arriving. When that time comes, the colonists, the newer peoples will do the fighting or England will go to pieces unless the world has also arrived at the peace age. It is not cowardice but evolution that keeps the old races at home. No scornful poet who does not follow his own advice can alter a fact like this. It is the "muddled oaf" who strikes his brother in rage, not the finest product of an old civilization.

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## Two Lucrative Vocations

Ex-Treasurer Meserve of Nebraska has been indicted by the grand jury charged with embezzling the interest on school funds. Nebraska state treasurers are convinced that the people intend that they should enrich themselves with interest money from state banks. The state treasurer is yet to be elected who does not believe that the state moneys, particularly the school funds, are his private, speculative fund. Joe Bartley was the most unfortunate of a succession of treasurers. He was sentenced to the penitentiary for breaking the law. He paid as much attention to it as any of his predecessors and was apparently as scrupulous as his successors. Bartley's predecessors were not punished. But it begins to seem certain that the state treasurer who speculates with school bonds, or who pockets the interest of the money collected by taxation will be held responsible by the people, irrespective of party. There are many risky ways of getting rich, but if the people at large continue to grow more and more opinionated about the legitimate and illegitimate use of state money, burglary will be a safer and more visible means of support than pocketing the interest of money raised by taxation. When a man gets along in the journey of life to the point where he has age and experience enough to be state treasurer, or a first class burglar, he should take counsel with himself as to which vocation has the smaller chances of arrest and imprisonment. The people of Nebraska seem to be determined that the state treasurer shall restrict himself exclusively to the use and enjoyment of his own salary. This view in the history of the state is unique. The state treasurers have not yet adjusted themselves to it. The investigation into Mr. Meserve's accounts has resulted in the indictment. The jury charged him with depositing a part of the permanent school fund in the Stock Yards bank at South Omaha, with receiving the interest upon it and retaining it for his own enjoyment, and that there-

by he embezzled it from the temporary school fund to which it belonged. During the course of the investigation President T. B. McPherson of the Stock Yards bank and other officers of the institution testified before the jury.

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## The Smooth Road

A young man in Kansas City was sentenced a fortnight ago to twenty-five years in the penitentiary. In his trial he said to the judge that he had been drunk but three times in his life. He was only seventeen years old. On a Sunday in June at Troost park in Kansas City Thomas Redmond stabbed Thomas Scruggs. At the recent trial of the case the murderer confessed that he had not know Scruggs before he picked a quarrel with him in the park, that he knew nothing against him and was conscious of no desire to injure him. Whisky makes some men want to fight and to kill. It made this boy who, when he committed the murder was only sixteen years old, want to kill somebody. He killed a stranger whom he had never seen before and who was endeavoring to get out of his way. When he sentenced the boy to twenty-five years in the penitentiary the judge said: "The road to the penitentiary is kept smooth by whisky. It's whisky, whisky, whisky. I can't imagine anything more sad than to see a boy of your age and surroundings go to the penitentiary. Some have suggested that I might shorten your sentence. But that would not benefit you. The best thing for you to do when you go to the penitentiary is to be the very best prisoner that ever went there. You did violate the law in its worst form, but you can convince the officers by your conduct that you are a man and that you ought to be free. Perhaps you will be pardoned. You can only get it by pursuing this policy. Never let a black mark be made against you. You can go to the penitentiary and come out and be a good citizen. You pursue this course and you will get along better and have a better chance of pardon than if you had a short sentence."

The judge's address to the prisoner needs to be interpreted. "You did violate the law in its worst form," is intended for no reflection on the law but on the man. Probably the judge meant that the violation was an exaggerated offense against the law. Then, "Perhaps you will be pardoned. You can only get it by pursuing this policy." "It" has no grammatical antecedent but we are accustomed to perverted English and we have learned to supply nouns and set dislocated sentences. But this judge's decisions when they are quoted are quite as likely to be used to strengthen one side of a given case as another.

When sentence is about to be pronounced upon a murderer his victim and victim's family are forgotten. Unshriven, unprepared, the victim is hurled to death. A single, startled, agonized cry, and it is all over. The murderer's old mother, sisters and perhaps children cling around him at the trial and it is a constant effort to remember the rigid form six feet under ground. Ordinarily the victim's old mother is not present and the horror of punishing the prisoner according to his deserts is what appeals to the jury and judge, especially if the prisoner is young and innocent looking. We are always most affected by that which is nearest and most plainly in sight. The starving millions in India only moved us to a gentle pity because we could not see the babies suffering for food and the half-crazed old people. The solemn voice of the judge sentencing the young man to twenty-five years in the penitentiary creates an aching pity for him and his mother. Even the judge forgets the silent one and his family.

It is impossible considering the stage which human nature has reached to arrange matters in accordance with the ideas of the prohibitionists. Nevertheless the temperance agitation which was begun and is continued by a company who believe that man can be made good by laws, has made drink-

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