



The Complete Stalky and Co.

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First published in 1899, *Stalky and Co.* is a collection of school stories based on Kipling's own experiences at the United Services College. Kipling himself appears as the central character called Beetle and through him shows how school is a pattern-maker for the experiences of life. *The Complete Stalky & Co.*, first published 30 years later, includes five stories not published in the original edition.

The Complete Stalky and Co. Details

Date : Published June 24th 1999 by Oxford University Press, USA (first published 1929)

ISBN : 9780192838599

Author : Rudyard Kipling , Isabel Quigly (Editor)

Format : Paperback 368 pages

Genre : Classics, Fiction, European Literature, British Literature, Childrens, Short Stories

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From Reader Review The Complete Stalky and Co. for online ebook

Rue Baldry says

This book is largely written in obsolete schoolboy slang, so it's not an easy read. I love it, though, it's an amazing insight into boys' boarding school life in the late nineteenth century. It's an open window into a disappeared world. It's a brutal world, but one with justice and friendship in it, where respect has to be earned. The moral code is quite unlike ours. Also it is very funny and sometimes moving, too.

Wetdryvac Wetdryvac says

Despite the fairly obvious empire and race problems of Kipling, I absolutely adore this book, and pick it up pretty regularly. More than any book I know, the flow of the words and the painful humor are well executed.

Matt Brant says

Adults probably read this today because JK Rowling revived the school story with her Harry Potter books. Heaven knows, in our kinder gentler age, the punishment doled out to the bullies in The Moral Reformers will be seen as gratuitously cruel and violent. Still, Kipling gets his point across: the brutality of school life had its limits and was a necessary part of training for a career in Imperial Management, in which kid gloves would be laughably inappropriate. Kipling did not gloss over reporting that numbers of Old Boys of the school were indeed killed while serving. Nor does he have patience with jingos. A vulgarian, I liked these knock-about, well-written stories.

Orinoco Womble (tidy bag and all) says

As a kid I dreamed of going to boarding school; dunno why, as I probably would have been bullied and mocked there even more than I was in a small rural public school. But I did; maybe I just wanted to leave home for 9 months out of every year.

I first heard of Stalky and Co about 25 years or so ago, cross-referenced in The Railway Children when Peter shouts at one of his sisters something along the lines of, "You're not funny--and you got it out of Stalky!" Up to then, the only Kipling books I was really aware of were of course The Jungle Books. I picked up this edition of Stalky and Co. shortly after and read it several times. What was my surprise about a year ago to discover this "Complete" edition, which contains 4 "Stalky stories" not included in the standard editions! I really enjoyed learning how Stalky got his name, and some of the footnotes were useful, particularly the one that explains the moniker of "Rabbits-Eggs" (up to now I figured he sold rabbits and eggs, either of his own production or poached from the hens of others). However, I can see why the stories weren't included in the standard editions offered up to the young when first published; the "missing" stories are a bit long and verbose and less interesting than the rest (particularly "The Idolaters" which--dare I say it?--pushes credulity to the very limit, even for Stalky and co.) I have marked it as for "children" but I am aware that all that Latin and literary quotations and etc will no longer appeal to many young people today, unless they're as odd and

literary-minded as I was myself from about age eight--and at that time in that place, I was indeed an oddity!

A small quibble I have with the edition itself; the editor/proofreader repeatedly confuses the use of the question mark with the exclamation point, turning several exclamations into questions that really shouldn't be (and aren't in other editions). This is so frequent in some paragraphs as to become annoying. I also object to modern editors mucking about with the language of classic authors. Although unafraid to include the racial epithet "nigger" more than once, for some reason the editors felt led to remove the word "*bukh*" from the text on page 282. I've read the old edition often enough to remember that Tertius uses the term "*bukhing*" to mean "telling a tale"; the editors in their wisdom decided to cut the word entirely, though they had no problem with other Hindi words such as "*Boh*", "*nullah*", "*rapparee*" and many others. They may have felt unsure of its exact meaning, but if Kipling used the word, why did they take it upon themselves to remove it--particularly as other footnotes indicate lack of certainty when "explaining" other references?

Cécile Chabot says

Hilarious

Simon says

One of the least enjoyable and most unpleasant books I've read. A portrayal of the belief that privilege gives you privilege, that it gives you the right to bring unhappiness to those around you if this brings you happiness. The most extreme of the public school books that show that the horrors, mis-management and mutinies of empire were created in the common rooms and studies of English public schools.

I'm opposed to the privileges of private education but have enjoyed many books that deal with it either through their humour (Molesworth, Bunter, Simon Raven) or an underlying decency (Tom Brown) but this is 270 pages of boys pulling the wings off flies for their own amusement. It's a junior Bullingdon Club, where the vilest, the squittiest and the most brazen take the prizes. The popularity of the book goes some way to explain the popularity of other celebrations of elitism over merit such as rugby union and the conservative party. I know Beetle is supposed to represent the young Kipling and my view of Kipling takes a dive at the thought but to me he comes across as a self-promoting, weasly little squirt in the mould of Michael Gove.

"An unpleasant book about unpleasant boys at an unpleasant school."

Flinx says

This is a book I 19ve been meaning to read for a while and just got around to it. Being about ten years too late, it was not as exciting as it would have been back then yet I still got a good glimpse at Kipling 19s writing (never having read any of his books in original beforehand).

Up to the very last pages I was under the impression that the book would be a turn of the century teen book but Part II changed my mind and, subsequently, had me reconsidering, coming to the conclusion that it 19s not a bad collection of short stories for young people to read. The ingredients for an adolescent book are there: adventure, characters one can relate to, moral of the story, etc., as well as a lovely, classical, English style.

Stephanie says

These stories by Rudyard Kipling are about the antics of a group of boys at a British "public school" (what Americans would call a private boarding school), and some of the stories follow them into adult life. Very entertaining!

Kimberly says

I read this for a class and was surprised by the sly witticisms and cleverness of the boys. If you can read past the Victorian speech, the stories are hilarious.

Elena says

People have tried to talk me out of liking this book since before I actually read it. There's something less than subtly discouraging about opening your book on a quote by a George Sampson that says "an unpleasant book about unpleasant boys at an unpleasant school". But I don't know who George Sampson was and, after looking it up on the internet, it's this guy who shows up:

Of course, if I were to read the fifth line of the introduction I would find that Wells "condemns the heroes as self-righteous bullies", and I do know who Wells is, but let's be honest. I never made it that far into the introduction.

Stalky, Beetle and M'Turk have so much fun being unpleasant that I'm on their side. They're bullies, but they're fun bullies, and brilliant ones, and they enjoy playing with language and messing with people just as much. I don't mind that they're mean. Of course, there's this scene.

"He says he doesn't know anything about bullyin'. Haven't we taught you a lot?"

"Yes-yes!"

"He says we've taught him a lot. Aren't you grateful?"

"Yes!"

"He says he's grateful"

But beatings happened in that sort of school, and this one is unusually light-humoured. In the one that Saki writes in the Unbearable Bassington, the one doing the flogging enjoyed it. Stalky & Co are ruthless (and it's epic) but they're far from sadists. Speaking about epic, what's there not to like about a whole story translating Horace? Nothing, that's what.

It's just that... When King complains about the smells that come from the other class, Paddy comments, because he remembers last term's Ode:

"Non hoc semper erit liminis aut aquae caelestis patiens latus."

"This side will not always be patient of rain and waiting on the threshold".

King, the teacher, retorts:

"And you remembered? The same head that minted probrosis as a verb! Vernon, you are an enigma."

When your class has been called names for similar reasons for many years, that cracks you up.

And there's french, too:

'Shut up! Did you ever know your Uncle Stalky get you into a mess yet?' Like many other leaders, Stalky did not dwell on past defeats.

The cheroot burned with sputterings of saltpetre. They smoked it gingerly, each passing to the other between closed forefinger and thumb.

'Good job we hadn't one apiece, ain't it?' said Stalky, shivering through set teeth. To prove his words he immediately laid all before them, and they followed his example. . . .

'I told you,' moaned Beetle, sweating clammy drops. 'Oh, Stalky, you are a fool!'

'Je cat, tu cat, il cat. Nous cattons!' M'Turk handed up his contribution and lay hopelessly on the cold iron.

And there's the english:

"Come to my arms, my beamish boy!" carolled M'Turk, and they fell into each other's arms dancing. "Oh, frabjous day! Calloo, callay!"

Through the Looking Glass. They're total fanboys, they adore or despise.

I suppose that, being Kipling-the-evil-imperialist, it might be relevant to include this quote too:

He shook it before them- a large calico Union Jack, staring in all three colours, and waited for the thunder of applause that should crown his effort.

They looked in silence. They had certainly seen the thing before- but [...]. What, in the name of everything caddish, was he driving at, who waved that horror before their eyes? Happy thought! Perhaps he was drunk.

I understand that what I have written in praise is also proof that the book is completely outdated. But it'll be more accurate to say that it has lost its public. It's definitely a book for kids, as I was when I read it, and contrarily to Saki there is no innuendo, and the games are the sort that you enjoy as a teen, when lots of things are done for not other reason than to tap into new energy. But it also requires that you have an understanding of where these students were headed, that this was an empire building its future; and you have to like mocking forgotten books and dead languages.

Jack Zivvi says

I've been overlooking this book which is forever on my (British Public) School summer reading list since I started there, so happy I eventually read it, a true gem!

Delightful references throughout from the classics and from literature, lovely. I've glanced at a few other reviews saying it's very dated, I've never really understood that as a proper criticism these stories are well written and compelling and I at least find time travel is possible with books, distance and era drop away

when character and story are centre stage.

And what perfect characters! An aesthete no less!

School stories ARE old fashioned anyway, it's part of why they are whatever it is that they are. The Complete Stalky & Co. Is the best collection of school stories I have ever read. They aren't that dated anyway, the essence is still there, the friendships, rivalries, 'house politics' fads, all brilliantly done. I'm surprised how much I loved this book, only wish I'd've discovered it at 13.

Andrew says

I deserve a campaign medal for ploughing through this dated boys' book...it was beyond the call of duty! It's fair to say that literary style has moved-on in leaps-and-bounds since Kipling wrote this, with its mute assumption that readers had a wide grasp of classical languages & lore & biblical knowledge, to go with their now-archaic sense of proprieties & implicit sense of social class & imperial pretensions. I liked some of the passages, where Kipling was writing from the heart, perhaps remembering old friends & mentors, & indeed his own younger self; in these passages, Stalky & his chums begin to live a little beyond the naughty but worldly-wise schoolboys, & the reader begins to see that in the shadow of these callow youths walk the heroic men (soldiers & colonial administrators...journalists & writers?) that would blossom all over the Empire.

Was it worth the effort? I'm afraid to say, no...but without an exclamation mark. It was just past its sell-by-date!

Jane says

It's like a whole book about Harry and the Weasley twins, but minus the magic. Incredibly funny if you like things like Tom Sawyer or Catch 22.

Jacob says

Reading too many books right now, can't concentrate on this one. Will have to return to it later.

Thomas Bätzler says

I've read the Oxford University Press edition - it has wonderful footnotes which enabled me to "get" much of the humor.
