

XV

W. J. HOPKINS'S "BURBURY STOKE"*

The possession of a smooth and flowing style comes to most writers only after prayer, fasting, and long and arduous work, a thing to be striven for and worthy of high commendation when attained. But is by no means the whole art of the novelist. In the case of Mr. Hopkins, it would seem to be a gift of questionable value, leaving the reader, as it does, in doubt as to whether he willfully sacrifices his ability to tell a story to his desire to be regarded solely as a stylist, or whether he uses his talent consciously to hide the fact that he has no story to tell. It is a truism of the the-

atre that a beautiful voice is often a temptation to an actor: he falls into the habit of listening to its cadence, forgetting that elocution is only a part of his art. In the same manner, style may be a pitfall to the novelist.

Mr. Hopkins flows on and on, more like the proverbial brook than the deeper waters he is so fond of describing. It is all so inconsequential and irresponsible that one has the feeling after perusing the three hundred odd pages of his latest book, that, so far as the story itself is concerned, he might have just as easily gone on for three hundred pages more, or written: "The End" half way through the present volume. The average reader will put the book down with a feeling of pleasure tempered with exasperation. And he will be right. After all, a story-teller should have a story to tell.

Mason Church.