

## Children's Books

By MONICA REDLICH.

(Reviews of children's books ought really to be seen by children as well as by their elders. After all, the children read the books. The elders only pay for them. These reviews are written, therefore, in the hope that children may find them readable—and useful.)

### The Best of Both Worlds

It is by no means certain that children get the best of the standard, parents-and-guardians world: but it is quite certain that they have a world of their own, mixed up with the nursery, the gardens, and the dining-room, which makes life considerably more interesting—and which, in the matter of books, gives them an unfair advantage. In their fiction, the pookas, the gnomes, the desert islands, and the magic walking sticks are part of the ordinary, expected material. There are two worlds to be written about: and any proper survey must, like the books themselves, combine the best of both.

There are, of course, several first-rate stories which manage with one world only. First of these comes *Bevis*, by Richard Jefferies (Cape, 7s. 6d.). There is make-believe here: Bevis and Mark explore the Mississippi, the Nile, and the islands of New Formosa, and Serendib, all within a few miles of their home: but it is a record of their actual doings round the Long-pond, and of how they learned to shoot, to swim, and to sail a boat. The camping, and the epic battle of Pharsalia are some of the best episodes in a supremely good book, which is now republished with illustrations by E. H. Shepard. Girls have enjoyed *Bevis* as much as boys, but a book which they should specially note is *Hitty*, by Rachel Field (Routledge, 7s. 6d.). It is the autobiography of a very charming person, a doll who was made over a hundred years ago of mountain ash. She had many adventures. She went from Maine to the South Seas, was wrecked, heard Patti sing, and was picked up by Dickens. *Hitty* is a grave and delicate book, and a model to all writers of memoirs.

Friends of the Swallows and Amazons will be glad to hear that they have had more adventures—at least *Peter Duck*, by Arthur Ransome (Cape, 7s. 6d.), tells of “the adventures they had always hoped to have.” They go treasure-hunting in the Caribbees, with Captain Flint, Gibber the monkey, and Peter Duck, who is a very able seaman. Pirates, a waterspout, crabs, and an earthquake, enliven their travels. Some readers may prefer out-and-out pirate tales; but the children are as keen as ever, and Peter Duck himself will be a firm favourite. I did not read Eric Kistner's *Emil and the Detectives*, but I wish I had done so. Anton, of *Anton and Annaliese* (Cape, 7s. 6d.) is, he says, very like Emil: and Anton is extremely nice and most resourceful. His rich and eccentric friend Annaliese goes selling matches in the streets for fun, as Anton does from necessity. This is a delightful and satisfying story. An equally satisfying book is *The Magic Walking-Stick*, by John Buchan (Hodder and Stoughton, 6s.). I found this so exciting that I could not put it down. Bill, who was at Eton, had a magic stick which took him anywhere he liked. He had the best of several worlds, and the most exciting of them all was the kingdom of Gracia, where he helped to put the young Prince Anatole on the throne. An adventure story of the very best kind. *Mock Uncle*, by Brenda E. Spender (Country Life, 6s.), is “a story for medium-sized people.” Jimsie and Ruffie, and Little Pitters (who used too many long words, but was nice in spite of it) were left alone one Christmas, but found a Mock Uncle who could equally well tell good stories and fight a burglar. A real uncle is the leading figure in *Three's Company*, by John Thorburn (Country Life, 6s.). His two nieces are, to say the least of it, difficult, but his tales of giraffes, of Francis the Fish, and other amusing persons, kept them quiet, and will keep other hearers laughing heartily.

*Puppet Parade*, by Carol Della Chiesa (Longmans, 7s. 6d.), comes from Italy with a beautiful wrapper. It is a tale of the marionettes, acting in their different towns and playing pranks on one another. These charming people may seem a little strange to English children: but any with slightly out-of-the-way tastes will like them very much. With *Perkin the Pedlar*, by Eleanor Farjeon (Faber and Faber, 6s.) we come back to England: to twenty-six different places in England, in fact,

from Appledore through the alphabet to Zeal Monachorum, with a tale and a rhyme for each place. The book is finely illustrated by Clare Leighton, whose own book, *The Musical Box* (Longmans, 7s. 6d.), charmingly designed and hand-lettered, is the tale of a little town in a French musical-box. It is just the thing for readers who are not yet very sure of themselves. The same can be said of another hand-lettered book, *Snippy and Snappy*, by Wanda Gag (Faber and Faber, 3s. 6d.), which is a tale of two field-mice: and there is another adventurous pair of mice, slightly older, in Cicely Englefield's *George and Angela* (Murray, 2s.). *The Story of Fuzzypop the Hedgehog*, by Alison Uttley (Heinemann, 2s. 6d.) is something like the Peter Rabbit books, with coloured pictures, and would be agreeable at bed-time. So would *For the Moon*, by Ella M. Monckton (F. J. Ward, 6s.). It tells of a small princess who cried for the only thing she had not got, and of the gardener's boy who brought her the moon in a sack. This also is hand-lettered, but the pages seem overcrowded, though Mr. Webb's pictures, like the text itself, are spiced with humour. *Patsy and the Leprechaun* (Blackwell, 3s. 6d.) is another Baker book, and all discerning nursery readers know what that means. This book by Margaret and Mary Baker, with its delightful silhouettes, is full of interest and humour. Patsy, the Irish cobbler's son, and the pig, the hen, the leprechaun, and Katie, are all the sort of people whom one likes at first sight—and afterwards. *The Adventures of King Paul the Forty-Fifth*, by Nigel Brooke (Joseph, 3s. 6d.) makes lively reading for someone of about the King's age. King Paul was eight, and, though troubled with a Nurse, he had a Court Magician who arranged about his sums, and put all the people in the cages at the Dog Show, so that the dogs could stroll round and make remarks on them.

*What O'Clock Tales*, by Laurence Housman (Blackwell, 7s. 6d.), are of India, the South Seas, the forests, and other places, all of them in the special, second world where trees may talk and shoes go by themselves, and the Dark Huntsman rides. They are by turns thoughtful, humorous, and exciting; and I think Mr. Housman pessimistic in saying that twelve years old is the latest age to read them. Far more fantastic, and equally delightful, is *The Unicorn with Silver Shoes*, by Ella Young (Longmans, 7s. 6d.). It is about a prince called Ballor's Son, and his adventures with Angus, Flame of Joy, and the Pooka who could change his shape. There are ogres, kelpies, sacred cats, and djinns, in a rich, strange book where something surprising happens on every page. *Moonshine and Magic*, by Alison Uttley (Faber and Faber, 6s.), proves again that Mrs. Uttley still knows and enjoys the second world which most people leave soon after they reach double figures. Rabbits, clocks, and ponies move familiarly in her pages, and her bees are the nicest and the best housekeepers I have met for a long time. Some of these stories are rather slight: but the best of them are exactly as they should be. Rose Fyleman's *The Easter Hare* (Methuen, 3s. 6d.) is another good gallimaufry of stories, and is very conveniently small. I enjoyed the dragon stories, and the unicorn one, and the one about the sea-serpent, very much indeed: but do children really like a story to wind up with “Wasn't that a sad end to the conceited kite?” *The Golden Keys*, by Hampden Gordon (Murray, 6s.), is a very up-to-date fairy tale. Magic ices are sold on the Stop-me-and-buy-one system: there is a G.B.C. (Gnome Broadcasting Company), and a Prune-Faced Pog-Thistle. Bosh's adventures would puzzle the ordinary fairy-tale audience, but they will delight those who have not absolutely decided that they don't believe in all that sort of thing.

### Our Not So Dumb Friends

Is there any animal who has not a place in one of these books? It seems doubtful: but, if there is, I advise him first of all to search through the preceding article, for some of the odder ones, such as unicorns, have got into that. If he is still left out, he had better approach a publisher, and appear in time for next Christmas.

Quite the most remarkable book is about an old friend, Moorland Mousie. *Older Mousie*, by Golden Gorse (Country Life, 10s. 6d.) continues the adventures of this very delightful pony, and of Tinker, Topper, and, of course, of Patience, Jack and Michael. Mousie has some excellent runs, gets lost,