

To combat the idea that Chehov is a pessimist, he selects passages from his writings, placing them side by side with others from the works of H. G. Wells, demonstrating their similarity of belief in the ultimate greatness of Man's destiny and that such faith is a necessary foundation to make our lives significant. Not that Mr. Gerhardt would suggest that Chehov is a follower of Wells,—rather that he "anticipated Mr. Wells." He draws yet another interesting comparison between Tolstoy and Chehov: Tolstoy was "out to see the lie in life;" Chehov "saw the lie, but he also saw farther and deeper. He saw the truth behind the lie . . . and the truth behind the lie evoked pity in him. And this is what made him a great artist."

Mr. Gerhardt has a fine appreciation of Chehov's "artistic handling of psychology;" of the art by which he clothes "a plot of naked irony with pity and human understanding," and of his terse but graphic descriptions, whether of scenes or emotions.

Biographical details are not lacking in this study; it is true they are scattered through two hundred pages, but having read them, no one will readily forget the man Chehov who, in early manhood, wrote "Medicine is my lawful wife, and literature my mistress."

This volume also contains many interesting anecdotal and critical allusions to famous Russian authors and their contemporaries of other lands.

V. HENRY-ANDERSON.

New York City.

Jacob's Room

A cryptic, futurist picture of the topsyturvyness of life given somewhat as children's puzzles are plotted by numbered dots in Sunday supplements is JACOB'S ROOM (Virginia Woolf, Harcourt, Brace, \$2.00). Newspaper puzzles yield something understandable, child-fashion. The dots on the paper of *Jacob's Room* cheat us of a story. We get the impression that a young Englishman,—anywhere in space, anywhere in time,—is tumbling down the stairs of life. We are reminded of the picture of a futurist stairway called *Falling Downstairs* which is naively minus any figure, human or otherwise. For we never

quite meet Jacob face to face. He is conceived as being there nevertheless. By sudden brilliant flashes of verbal lightning we do catch glimpses of him alighting on sundry landings,—Cambridge, London, Athens. There he brushes swiftly, inconsequentially against other vague, never-to-be-met-again stairway tumblers. Chasms in the continuity of experience are exposed, not explained. We are forced to quick, disconcerting leaps from the intimate and immediate to the remotely abstract and metaphysical. Unrelated moments and moods are intentionally recorded in the disjointed words of a dazed sleep-walker.

One reviewer called *Jacob's Room* the most beautiful prose of the year. It is, however, not a novel. The chapters are self-sufficient entities, brilliant pieces of descriptive writing, character sketches,—of everyone except Jacob,—reflective essays on the illusions of life. Scraps of conversation, irrelevant happenings have the air of promising that in the light of some subsequent knowledge they will prove immensely significant,—only they never do. Façades only are indicated. It is for us to model the backs of people and events. A remark Jacob's mother made about his letters applies to the book. She said, "Jacob tells me really nothing I want to know."

ELEANOR TAYLOR HOUGHTON.

Pasadena, Calif.

The Wind-Boy

Children's eyes are clearer than older eyes; they are forever seeing the world with more wonder and brightness than grown-ups can see it. The children in Ethel Cook Eliot's book, *THE WIND-BOY* (Doubleday, Page, \$2.00), can see with such crystal clearness that when their mother, who is modelling a statuette called "The Wind-Boy" fails to give him a happy expression, the children, with their eyes of light, see the real Wind-Boy and make him their playmate. With the happiness they bring him, his expression changes so that the mother can make her statuette a thing of joy and a work of art.

It is a girl from the mountains, whose eyes are like "the purple mountains with calm stars risen in the sky above," who teaches the children to become "deep-

still" so that they will see into the Clear Land which hangs above our world and is bathed in a pure light. "This land below is only a copy of that shining."

The children in *The Wind-Boy* embody Wordsworth's idea that

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

Shades of the prison-house begin to close

Upon the growing Boy,

But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,

He sees it in his joy."

The Wind-Boy himself, who is the best of playmates, might be one of Peter Pan's brothers and the Clear Land another Never-Never Land

Mrs. Eliot is fitted to tell children's stories in an imaginative, whimsical fashion which holds the interest of both little boys and little girls because she has two children of her own, Alexander and Torka. She is the wife of Professor Samuel A. Eliot, Jr., of Smith College.

LOUISE HOVDE.

Northampton, Mass.

Great and Small Things

In these articles (GREAT AND SMALL THINGS, by Sir Ray Lankester, F.R.S., MacMillan, \$2.50) a great scientist writes clearly and non-technically for the instruction of ordinary people. None of us, perhaps, can afford to keep a young gorilla as a household pet, but anthropoid John's picture forms the frontispiece of the book, and the first article tells how John was for two years a petted child of a lady in London, for whom he developed an almost human affection, and the untimely parting from whom caused him to pine and die. Much information is incidentally given as to the structure and habits of these rather delicate and sensitive animals, and as to the possibilities of rearing them in captivity for purposes of observation.

Other articles deal with the use of the cinema film for illustrating movements that puzzle by rapidity or otherwise, as in the case of phagocytes devouring harmful bacteria, and of the legs of centipedes and certain marine worms. Such illustrations in the case of larger animals, as the galloping horse, are doubtless familiar.

Three articles deal with pond-snails, their blood, and the peculiar modes of re-

production of certain fleas infesting such snails. This leads up to an account of the liver-fluke and its parasitic life-stages in passing between snail and sheep, and of the researches which have shown farmers how to protect their sheep from the disease.

In articles dealing with longevity, it is reasoned that the mass of our body-cells is merely a husk to "protect the germ-cells until they are set free to multiply and start a new individual or husk, enclosing in its turn a certain number of cells of the immortal germ-plasm." The longevity of the body or "husk" guarding this deathless germ-plasm "is a question of physiological adaptation, varying according to the advantage of the species by natural selection." Thus the tendency to death is innate in the body or "husk" cells. But our aim should be to make it easy for everyone to reach the physiologic limit of age, say one hundred years, and to be healthy and useful to the last.

This book is particularly well worth reading by all who are interested in the problems of life.

WILLIAM R. TYMMS.

St. Louis, Mo.

Voyage

Harold Vinal is known as a sea poet, although he frequently employs other means. He has, however, a specific right to the sea title: While others record the physical aspect of the waters,—Masefield, the storm, the harshness; Millay, the dunes and fishes,—Vinal stresses the intangible, yet none the less potent element which, for want of a more precise word, we call *spirit*.

"Sea folk have speech that is not quite their own,

The sea is in their talk and the sound of water,"

exemplifies the point. That (prepare, gentlemen, here is my gage) that is the insight of genius.

This super-comprehension flashes occasionally through the poet's other themes:

"But in the gloom the frost begins to rub" instances the same knowledge of the uncanny, the sinister,—name it what you will. "Divine things run on light feet," to quote Carl Van Vechten from memory.