

world. Yet another starts a bloody revolution in Russia. Yet another heals by the laying on of hands. Yet another, a German army officer, declines a challenge and shakes Junkerdom to its foundations. They swarm in the book, and one often confuses one with another. Perhaps the most nearly real of them all is Niels Heinrich Engelschall, the murderer. Niels Heinrich, at all events, manages to explain himself in logical terms. When he tells Christian why he killed Ruth Hofmann one somehow believes him. He is a loafer and a swine, but there is a certain homely sense in him. Naturally enough, Christian remains unintelligible to him. And to the elder Wahnschaffe. And to Frau Wahnschaffe, and Judith Wahnschaffe, and Wolfgang Wahnschaffe, and all the rest of the Wahnschaffii. And to Crammon, the cynical companion of his nonage. And even to poor Ruth, who loves him.

In brief, this is a novel that is not to be put on the stand and cross-examined. One must take it as one takes the new music; it obeys only its own logic, its own epistemology, its own psychology. Once that much is granted, what remains is very curious and lasting entertainment. The thing is gargantuan, but never tedious. It alarms and outrages, but it never quite gets itself heaved into the fire. It was worth doing into English, if only as an evidence of the slow but sure western march of the Slav spirit. Mr. Lewisohn's translation, as might be expected, is excellent. Now and then he falls into Americanisms—for example, the verb to *loan*—but that is not often.

H. L. MENCKEN

Tales

Enslaved. By John Masefield. The Macmillan Company.

Right Royal. By John Masefield. The Macmillan Company.

ONE of the signs that the times are good in English poetry is the fact that Mr. Masefield keeps on writing poems which tell stories. Narrative poetry may be lower than the highest kind, and broader than the most intense, but it is far from being the least sound. It is sound because it is generous. Giving us persons, or at least creatures, to watch and think about, it relieves us from the necessity, which many modern poets hold us under, of attending to the poet's own most private processes. These are often admirable and exquisite, but in the longest run they do not justify poetry. Mr. Masefield justifies poetry, even though he never produces a perfect specimen of it. He is headlong, and rough, and not profound; but he keeps on telling stories.

The volume "*Enslaved*" contains, along with a few comparatively insignificant lyrics, three narrative pieces of a more or less archaic flavor. The title poem is about an English lover who, greatly at the risk of his life, pursues the Moorish pirates who have stolen his love, and after desperate adventures extracts her from the Khalif's harem. By virtue of speed and suspense, blood, pursuit, and rapture, the tale succeeds in spite of handicaps in the way of singsong, slipshod rhythm, ludicrously forced rhyme, and undigested diction. In constant play over the changing meters, above the stanzas, the fourteeners, and the heroic couplets, runs the strain of elegy which Mr. Masefield rarely is without. Much pity and pain make the happy ending anything but an exultant one. Mr. Masefield's people, even the most fortunate of them, carry permanent scars about. The other two pieces, ballads of the supernatural, stand among their author's most impressive work to date. Metrically, and in details of phrasing, they are cleaner than almost anything else he has written; while their narrative is drastic, uncanny, and swift.

"*Right Royal*" is a bad poem, both intrinsically and because it fails to satisfy certain necessary expectations. It promised to be as good as "*Reynard the Fox*," but it is woefully, incredibly worse. There is a roll-call of horse-racing characters here as there was a roll-call of fox-hunting characters there, and there is a race now as there was a chase then; but the

sketches of persons are futile and crude, and the action is only occasionally interesting—is never furiously exciting, as might have been expected of action pushed by this pen. Mr. Masefield for once has put more poor stuff in a poem than good. He has gone not unprofitably to Vachel Lindsay for a dash of syncope:

Then came cabs from the railway stations,
Carrying men from all the nations. . . .
Silent Spaniards, merry Italians,
Nobles, commoners, saints, rascallions. . . .
Portuguese and Brazilianos,
Men from the mountains, men from the Llanos,
Men from the Pampas, men from the Sierras,
Men from the mines of the Cordilleras,
Men from the flats of the tropic mud
Where the butterfly glints his mail with blood.

This is the gathering of the clans, and could hardly have failed, once it was under swing, to be first-rate. The great bulk of the poem remains trash, with its verse that would be burlesque of verse did it have humor, and with its unwarranted excursion near the end into a factitious, sentimental mythology wherein Fate and the Wants of the Watchers play unnecessary, unconvincing parts.

MARK VAN DOREN

Moon-Calf on the Mississippi

Moon-Calf. By Floyd Dell. Alfred A. Knopf.

ANY lover of fine fiction must rejoice in the surfaces of Floyd Dell's first novel much as a cabinet-maker does when he rubs his fingers along a planed board or an old gardener when he turns a cool, firm, ruddy apple over and over in his hand. The style of "*Moon-Calf*" will arouse despair in the discerning. Colloquial and flexible, it is also as dignified as only a natural simplicity can make it—a natural simplicity, moreover, so disciplined with an artist's consciousness that it never stumbles or dips as mere nature can sometimes do; and it fits its theme without a wrinkle. That theme is the adventures of a poet in certain river counties and towns and villages of Illinois. Plainly autobiographical in its essential outlines, the story has no seams to show where autobiography leaves off and invention begins. The two melt together in the heat of an imagination which has reduced them, apparently, to one element. At the same time, that imagination here shows no trivial or obvious signs of its heat. If it ever felt vexed at the spiritual limitations of Maple and Vickley, it now speaks without vexation; if it ever revolted against the conventions of those communities, it here relates an unconventional career without one touch of bravado; it is beyond and above argument, in the finer regions of narrative and art.

Felix Fay, this particular moon-calf, has, indeed, the ordinary adventures of poets in the inconsiderate world. As a child he dreams and blunders, and he keeps on doing it until the end of the volume. But the sentimentality with which the ordinary novelist reports such adventures is worlds away from this novel. Mr. Dell, sympathetic as he is toward Felix, knows that such men at bottom are stubborn, even ruthless, in their development, and cannot lightly be turned back by all the obstacles they may encounter. Felix suffers, but he grows with an undeviating steadiness, forcing his head upward through the hard crust of his environment until he reaches a maturity of dimension symbolized by his departure for Chicago. Subtle in the representation of Felix, who not only carries with him the reputation of being a charming poet but proves it by the charming verses which have been written for him, Mr. Dell deserves a larger credit for the observation and wisdom and tenderness and reserve with which he has represented the little world in which Felix takes stock of himself and it. Just how substantial and real that world is will not at first appear; it seems to have, for instance, nothing like the thick texture of actuality which appears in Sinclair Lewis's "*Main Street*." The difference be-

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tween these two novels, however, lies largely in their different manners of documenting themselves: "Main Street" offers its evidences on every page, almost as if it had a heavy array of footnotes; "Moon-Calf" has equal erudition, but has absorbed it, has worked it into the narrative, and hints at its wealth without revealing it. Mr. Dell, quieter and kindlier than Mr. Lewis, has come nearer than he to a classic roundness and grace. It would be hard to surpass, anywhere in recent fiction, the older men in "Moon-Calf," Adam Fay, the fat philosopher Wheels, Comrade Vogelsang, James F. Bassett. The younger men are not quite so good, but the women if anything are better. They play perhaps a disproportionate part in the story, as if their charm had attracted Mr. Dell away from the other concerns of his hero. They are of a rich variety of type and disposition. There are truth and loveliness in Felix's tentative flirtations with various girls and particularly in the full-blooded, richly imagined affair with Joyce Tennant, which makes up a fourth of the entire narrative. Yet the truest, loveliest thing in the book is the strange, cool, wild, innocent, provocative, pathetic little episode of twelve-year-old Felix and fifteen-year-old Rose.

C. V. D.

Books for Children

OF all the new children who have come to town "Little Friend Lydia" (by Ethel Calvert Phillips: Houghton Mifflin) is perhaps the nicest child to play with. Brought up in a Children's Home (though a cheerful one), she has dreams of acquiring a set of parents all her own. The dream, with the help of Santa Claus, comes true in a manner most satisfying to all concerned. But too much prosperity is not easily borne, and Friend Lydia's early unselfishness becomes a little dimmed, till she in turn gets the fever of adopting and acquires an orphan of her own. Ethel Calvert Phillips (who needs no other introduction to children than as the author of "Wee Ann") paints her children in a sunny atmosphere with remarkably true coloring. Another wideawake story is that of lovable Jinks, whose ambition to do good in the world, in the role of fairy princess, brings her face to face with ever unsuspected complications and the inevitably reproachful "Oh, Virginia!" (by Helen Sherman Griffith: Penn) from her unsympathetic mother.

A further case for adoption is "The Thirteenth Orphan" (by Christine Chaundler: Nisbet). This time the scene is England and the heroine, pathetic Jane, who even to gratify the benevolent (and stout) Board of Managers cannot do her full duty as an orphan by growing husky and stolid on underdone roast beef. Her fancy thrives, however, even in the grim orphanage, and the almost visible fairies keep tryst with her in the long hours of drudgery—scrubbing, mending, putting the even littler orphans to bed—just the little light tasks that Matron said should be a pleasure for Jane to do in her spare time. Being a fairy story, "The Thirteenth Orphan" lacks the realism of "Little Friend Lydia," and there is too much black and too much white. But extremes are dear to childhood and small readers will quarrel with neither the wickedness of Miss Plunkett, the teacher, nor the sweetness of the sad-eyed Lady Lethbridge.

Far from the world of fairies is the utterly prosaic group of children who experience "The Strange Year" (by Eliza Orne White: Houghton Mifflin). Many of Miss White's admirers regretted that she wasted her talents on "The Blue Aunt." These readers will feel even more unhappy at the smallness of "The Strange Year," wherein the trifling annoyances of sugar rationing, coal shortage, food substitutes, daylight saving, and vanishing domestic service are chronicled as if they were the real hardships of the war, and thrift stamps, knitting, and tricolor ribbons are the essential insignia of patriotism. Another book which aims to teach patriotism and public spirit is "Trudy and Timothy and-the-Trees" (by Bertha Currier Porter: Penn) which is not so bad as its title. These New Hampshire children, who have won a trip to the National Capital (by making jelly),

are exalted at receiving a bow from the President of the United States, "a stout fair man" with "the pleasantest friendly smile," which would seem to stamp the books as scarcely recent. This is one of three recent children's books concerned with the Forest Service. The best of these is "Treasure Mountain" (by Edna Turpin: Century), though forestry yields place to flower worship. It would be worth while to put up with the disagreeable little heroine if young folks could learn from this to enjoy wild-flowers in their native setting. The chances are, however, that they will be so carried away by the excitement of getting lost in a Virginia cavern that the flowers will be forgotten.

The conspiracy to trick children into nature study is not yet suppressed. In "The Land of the Great Out-of-Doors" (by Robert Livingston: Houghton Mifflin) Pen and Penny, at the ages of five and six, take turn about in reciting, in monologue, the advantages of farm life. The impersonator frequently forgets, in his desire to have the valuable information imparted, that he is under contract to use the speech of childhood. However, the stories will undoubtedly find favor with the little folk, and their atmosphere is fresh and wholesome. This is more than can be said of "Nuova" (by Vernon Kellogg: Houghton Mifflin), wherein Vernon Kellogg aims to instruct and entertain "children from five to fifty." It must be a brilliant light which can sweep so wide a range and awake an answering flash along the line. In this case the result does not justify the effort. Mr. Kellogg, in telling this story of bee life, says: "Most of this that I have written about bees is true: what is not, does not pretend to be." But there are no danger signs to warn the child reader when he is following fancy away from the true path. Fortunately the story is so pitched to the adult ear that not many children will be concerned with the fate of Nuova, who is not a new woman but a new bee. Nor will its failure as a child's book insure its success with the grown-ups for whom this "fine and gentle satire both on certain types of modern women and on the socialistic propaganda" (as the publishers phrase it) is primarily intended. A more genuine book of fairy lore is "Trails to Wonderland" (by Isa L. Wright: Houghton Mifflin). These stories are exuberant, and though some of them are too sentimental, children will gladly accept The Little Tin Rooster, and The Old Whale's Toothache will be as popular as the Aquarium.

Children have now explored, storybook in hand, much of the wide world. They are fortunate if their guide be not only a native of the visited country but a true interpreter. "A Boy in Serbia" (by E. C. Davies: Crowell) is rarely well told. Little Milosav's adventures would make a good story anywhere, and his contacts with old Serbian customs and superstitions give a clearer picture of country life in his corner of the Balkans than many a more comprehensive book of travel. "The Hidden Treasure of Rasmola" (by Abraham Mitrie Rihbany: Houghton Mifflin) is another vivid glimpse into a faraway land. Mr. Rihbany, when a boy in Syria, actually dug for treasure by moonlight, under an old fig tree, with all the proper spells and incantations. Whatever his own portion of success in the mysterious venture, he has passed on a treasure to the reader.

In marked contrast to the authenticity of these two stories is "The Italian Twins" (by Lucy Fitch Perkins: Houghton Mifflin), who must be regarded merely as stepchildren in the evergrowing family of Twins. One is always sorry when Mrs. Perkins fails to reach her own high mark. But this incredible tale of the kidnapping of two little aristocrats in Florence, by pretended gypsies who carry them to Venice, shows no side of real Italian life. Its only point seems to be that had not Beppo studied his geography he could never have found the way home. It is almost a pity that the earlier twins were so conspicuously successful, for the production of series becomes a pernicious habit.

If the American girl, from her proud dominance of the magazine covers, brooks no rival in the affections of the publishers, the American boy holds a place quite as unassailable as national hero. Not only at school and on the athletic field, but