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G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

## The Children's Bookshop

(Continued from preceding page)

### Books for Boys

- LUCK OF THE BLUE MACKAW. By K. P. KEMPTON. New York: Ives Washburn. 1928. \$1.75.
- THE GHOST OF THE GLIMMERGLASS. By M. P. ALLEN. New York: Harper & Bros. 1928. \$1.75.
- DRUMBEATER'S ISLAND. By KENT CURTIS. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1928. \$1.75.
- THE GIANT'S HOUSE. By HARFORD POWELL, JR., and RUSSELL CARTER. The same.
- RENFREW RIDES THE SKY. By LAURIE Y. ERSKINE. The same.
- FOR VALOR. By COVINGTON CLARKE. Chicago: Reilly & Lee. 1928. \$1.75.
- SUBSTITUTE JIMMY. By RALPH HENRY BARBOUR. New York: The Century Co. 1928. \$1.75.
- THE MACKLIN BROTHERS. By WILLIAM HEYLIGER. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1928. \$1.75.
- THE BASEBALL DETECTIVE. By CHARLES G. MULLER. New York: Harper & Bros. 1928. \$1.75.
- LENAPE TRAILS. By CLIFTON LISLE. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1928. \$2.
- DAVY JONES'S LOCKER. By REED FULTON. New York: Doubleday, Doran. 1928. \$2.
- THE DERELICT. By CHARLES NORDHOFF. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1928. \$2.

Reviewed by T. MORRIS LONGSTRETH

ON the chart of values in juvenile books the curve of average excellence is undoubtedly rising, even if no peaks jut up to show that something comparable to "Treasure Island," "Tom Sawyer," or the "Jungle Books" has appeared. Competition, that mother of improvement, has taken boys' books to nurse. With the number of writers increasing and the number of baseball innings remaining comparatively inelastic, it has been necessary to comb the planet more thoroughly for subjects, to sieve the past, even to consult the impossible. And not only do the subjects tend to vary from the usual, but the styles mature. Boys are comrades now and accredited with comprehension; truth, hesitating still this side of sex, is increasingly permitted on other topics. For example, the brutality of the sea-captain in Reed Fulton's lowering but masterly tale, "Davy Jones's Locker" is absolutely true to 1910, but would never have been permitted in the juvenile lists of a few years ago. Of course the old categories remain, and as it is impossible to review these books separately in the space allotted, I propose to comment on the tendencies shown by them.

Business life is represented by "The Giant's House" and in part by "Luck of the Blue Mackaw." The giant's house is New York City, and Jack Farrington captures it on the third assault, largely by going back home to his small town and making good. The moral is obvious and yet novel, but not at all helped by Jack's vision of himself as President in Washington. In the Mackaw book an application of the merger principle enables Jock to keep the roof over his mother's head, although few business men could survive the frightful exertions required of Jock in mastering Duganne, the evil competitor. Financial calculations pervade "The Ghost of the Glimmerglass" also, where not pearls but asbestos provides the final reward. It is interesting to note that these stories involving commerce are the least important of the list. Business may engulf juvenilia some day, but that day is not yet, thanks be.

Neither has the air come into its own if "Renfrew Rides the Sky" and "For Valor" are fair examples of the aviator story. Renfrew has not the same charm that he had in the Mounted Police story, possibly because here there is so much motion, so little time for those quiet suggestions of character which made the other Renfrew real. In both books Mr. Erskine and Mr. Clarke give the rat-tat-tat and boom of the front, and both books are good reading, but they belong to the made tale dominated by events and not by personality.

Humor is an ingredient tasted in an increasingly larger number of books, whether it be the quiet, naive observations of the boy in "Drumbeater's Island" whose thoughts are so often "poison painful" to him but funny to others, or the brisk up-to-the-minute wise-cracks of "The Baseball Detective." True humor, of situation, or of character, is very rare, but there is a feeling towards light-heartedness which seems new.

In the school sports' story, competition is achieving wonders. In "The Baseball Detective," the second book devoted to the life and thoughts of "Fatso" Johnson, suspense

in the matter of athletic results is skilfully protracted by means of Fatso's desire "to do a little light detecting." "Substitute Jimmy" with its easy good-nature and "The Macklin Brothers"—an admirable story of brotherly "love"—are by veterans, neck and neck claimants of the boys' first regard, but Mr. Muller with only his second story is challenging them.

With "Lenape Trails," "Davy Jones's Locker," and "The Derelict" another atmosphere is breathed. The eye is lifted from the contemporary baseball diamond and focussed on the Penn's Woods of 1724, on the round-the-Horn expedition to the Spaniard's Oregon, on an atoll in the South Seas. "Lenape Trails" would make any absent Pennsylvanian homesick. Each page mentions old and musical names, and the story grows reasonably from its environment. In "The Derelict," Charlie Selden, who has strangely survived the sharks and pirates of "The Pearl Lagoon," now tightens up his belt and takes a deep breath preparatory to new killings. Here is style. An incessant train of realistic detail is borne on the long rhythms of romantic prose to fine effect. The sea, the weather, the island, the life on it, are all there. Sometimes I wonder if there is no humor in the South Seas. Even Mr. Nordhoff, who has managed the transfusion of his own experienced blood into the veins of young Selden, eschews humor. Perhaps the humor of that latitude does not fit into a boys' book and would necessitate the transposition of a vigorous yarn which pleases discriminating tastes into another key. Absence of this final virtue also keeps "Davy Jones's Locker" just what it purports to be—historic adventure, vividly presented by virtue of courage and insight and strong prose.

### Fourteen Samples

- LINDA'S ELDORADO. By ALLEN CHAFFER. New York: The Century Co. 1928. \$1.75.
- THE SEA GIRL. By MARGUERITE ASPINWALL. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1928. \$1.75.
- THOSE CARELESS KINCAIDS. By LOUISE SEYMOUR HASBROUCK. New York: The Century Co. 1928. \$1.75.
- THE CARAVAN GIRLS. By MARGUERITE ASPINWALL. The same.
- MYSTERY GATE. By LUCILE MORRISON. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co. 1928. \$1.75.
- THE DRYAD AND THE HIRED BOY. By ETHEL COOK ELIOT. New York: Doubleday, Doran. 1928. \$2.
- UPSTAIRS AND DOWNSTAIRS. By EDITH BISHOP SHERMAN. The same.
- LITTLE CABBAGES. By MILDRED CRISS MCGUCKIN. The same.
- TANGLE GARDEN. By ELIZABETH JANET GRAY. The same.
- THE LUCK OF OLD ACRES. By ELAINE GOODALE EASTMAN. New York: The Century Co. 1928. \$1.75.
- RUSTY RUSTON. By MARIAN HURD MCNEELY. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1928. \$2.
- CORNELIA'S CUSTOMERS. By JANE WINTERS. New York: The Century Co. 1928. \$1.75.
- CHERIQUE. By MARY F. WICKHAM PORCHER. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1928. \$1.75.
- THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ANNIE SHAW. By AUGUSTA HUIELL SEAMAN. New York: Doubleday, Doran. 1928. \$2.

Reviewed by HELEN CHRYSTIE

BOOKS in which characters are alive, or books that are really felt by their authors often give us a feeling of growing understanding. Why is it that most authors of children's books seem wilfully to avoid this office of enlarging the emotional or psychological horizons of their readers? Here are fourteen stories for girls from eleven to sixteen years old. They are all about young people and what they did, with happy endings at wholesale for everybody involved. The reader naturally imagines herself having the same exciting experiences. Characters are broadly outlined, but with only two exceptions, no character grows alive on the page and draws the reader out of herself into somebody else. "Mystery Gate," because it has a hero who is an Irish tramp actor, a perfect gentleman who has "eyes to see and a heart to feel," and "Little Cabbages," because it stretches the young imagination to understand the love of an old French book-worm for his treasures, are the most onward leading of these books.

The numerous stories which embody an ulterior purpose are modern "stories with a moral." The moral is not preached, but it

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## The Children's Bookshop

is part of the story; it is conveyed by the youthful enthusiasm of the characters for their purposes. The ideal of coöperation is a part of several of these stories, especially "The Luck of Old Acres." "Rusty Ruston" teaches the joy of hard work. "Cornelia's Customers" shows that interesting people can be found at home as well as abroad. The story of "Tangle Garden" is built around the idea that the fortune of a happy family is not their fortune in money. Perhaps the most interesting idea contained in these stories is in "Those Careless Kincaids." This book brings to the fore the fact that, in spite of the independent relationship of modern mothers and modern daughters who are one another's "girl friends," good old-fashioned mother love cannot be downed. But the spirit of headlong enthusiasm which gives vitality to these ideas is a more important characteristic of the books, making them books for young people, than the fact that they are stories about young people. Youthful enthusiasms, though they may be intolerant and a little stupid compared with the wisdom of a grand old person, are a prerogative of youth that its literature can well foster. It is partly because of this quality of enthusiasm that Dickens's stories are good reading for young people. Though we would have our books for the young less introverting, we would not abolish the species, "Juvenile Books"! If their authors were only less wary of broadening the imagination and remained wary of wilting the spirit of youth, young people's books would be brought closer to our best literature, without any necessity of becoming extinct as a class.

How many times has a girl's answer to, "What kind of books do you like best?" been, "Boys' books!" "The Rover Boys" would undoubtedly win the girls' vote from an "Elsie Dinsmore story," but modern authors have become aware of this preference, and it is no longer possible completely to distinguish girls' books from boys' books. This group of books for girls are all stories of adventure, and the first eight listed above are both mystery and adventure stories. Each one has a heroine, but except in "Upstairs and Downstairs" and in "Mystery Gate" she is one of a large family and shares her adventures with her brothers or with other boys. There are no love affairs, but there are especially devoted friendships between girls and boys. The most absorbing of these adventure tales are the "Sea Girl," about the clipper ship days in Nantucket, and "Linda's Eldorado," about the gold rush of 1852 in Washington Territory. The mystery plot of "The Caravan Girls" is notably unusual; that of "The Dryad and the Hired Boy" is a kidnapping story that a tabloid would be glad to print. Most of the mystery stories, either by historical background or by expressing a spirit of family coöperation, have a slight counter interest to the plot. The excellent plot of "The Disappearance of Anne Shaw," however, is absolutely alone in its glory.

A good mystery plot is certainly the path of least resistance toward holding the interest of young readers. Hence the superabundance of such stories. Most of us know from experience that Mrs. Seaman writes a good mystery story, and there comes a time early in the life of everyone when he wants to read a mystery story. But, are we willing to feed the young stories stressing plot to the exclusion of other ingredients which make a good novel? It is like developing their sense of art with pictures containing color but devoid of line and shadow and perspective!

A cowboy once said of a pair of yearling calves whom he knew intimately, "Those two are an awful lot alike to be so different." He might have been talking about these fourteen books. All stories about girls and boys, all stories of adventure with unmitigatedly happy endings, and, most of them, stories that embody some truth about life—they have few very distinct differences of style. "Mystery Gate" is fanciful; "Little Cabbages" is unique in the group for its method of inserting frequent verses that are written by the heroine who is an unusually imaginative child. Only one of these books, "Those Careless Kincaids," is food for a sense of humor. The humor is in the conversation and in the adventures which are both exciting and funny, and a good deal of comedy is due to a four-year-old youngster who is so mechanically minded that he takes three screw drivers instead of a teddy bear to bed! Young people who are eager for adventure, and enthusiastic to champion an ideal, will enjoy the best of these books. They would still enjoy them, however, if they directed the imagination toward a keener understanding.

(Continued on next page)

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