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*Who Did As She Was Told.* The bus is crammed full, standing room only: John Keats squashed between Ouida and A. A. Milne; Coleridge treading on S. G. Hulme Beaman's toes; Marcia St. John Webb sitting on Richard Hughes' lap; Arthur Ransome arm in arm with Rosalind Vallance; people standing on the stairs and sitting with the driver. Nearly a hundred people in all; the time-table seven hundred pages long; and the bus going anywhere just to see how far it is. At seven-and-six this is a dirt-cheap ride. And without doubt, if it comes to a question (and it does come to a question) of price and value for money, this is the bargain book.

Like almost all these books *The Runaway Dolls* owes a large part of its success to its illustrations; and here, as in *Yacki*, they are by a continental artist. The title tells the story for itself and puts the book just into the Moral Purpose class, though nothing can persuade me that any child, of whatever sex or whatever age, even after reading this book, will do anything but leave its dolls and toys scattered over the drawing-room floor as though a tornado had just passed. So much indeed for the Moral Purpose.

*The Runaway Dolls* ends the jolly goods. The rest are good, but not so good. Even so, I am enchanted to welcome the first publication of Miss Patricia Robins, aged 12, who is assisted in the act by Miss Grizel Maxwell, aged 14. Miss Robins, realising her debt to those who reared her, has dedicated her book to "My Darling Mummy and Daddy, who are Paying Sevenpence a week to keep my White Rat." (I was right, it seems, in thinking that it was going to be a good Christmas for rats. Sevenpence a week! There's luxury for you.) Miss Robins, as reviewers used to say, should go far. Though it seems likely that her friend, Miss Maxwell, whose illustrations are excellent, may very well go farther.

The remaining three books are excursions into verse; the most difficult of all mediums, to my mind, where children are concerned. In this respect, Miss Fyleman knows her job, and she has here selected and translated about fifty very brief nursery rhymes from the Italian, Czech, Dutch, Norwegian, German, French, Welsh, Austrian, Chinese, and so on. These are good, but the illustrations by Valery Carrick are better. The pictures, on page seven, showing the Fond Parents (a) patting their son on the head, (b) patting him on the bottom, all inside a couple of seconds, are not only good artistically, but, in my experience, sadly true to life.

The main fault with both *Master Toby's Hunt* and *The Tale of Kimikot* is not that they lack originality or charm but that their verses can only be scanned at times after great gymnastical effort. And if a parent can't scan them what is a child to do—and think? The eighth deadly sin is a rhyme which is supposed to scare but won't. It comes even before the sin of the parent who neglects to buy *Yacki*.

H. E. BATES

## FOR THE LARGER INFANTS

**The Fairies Return.** By VARIOUS AUTHORS. *Davies*. 8s. 6d.

**Heath Robinson's Book of Goblins.** *Hutchinson*. 6s.

**Æsop's Fables.** Illustrated by HARRY ROWNTREE. *Ward Lock*. 3s. 6d.

**Sergeant Poppett and Policeman James.** By ALGERNON BLACKWOOD. *Blackwell*. 1s. 3d.

**Broody.** By MABEL MARLOWE. *Blackwell*. 1s. 3d.

**The Enchanted Blanket.** By COMPTON MACKENZIE. *Blackwell*. 1s. 3d.

**The Enchanted Island.** By COMPTON MACKENZIE. *Blackwell*. 1s. 3d.

**The Clumber Pup.** By ELEANOR FARJEON. *Blackwell*. 1s. 3d.

**Jim at the Corner.** By ELEANOR FARJEON. *Blackwell*. 5s.

**Joc Colette and the Animals.** By VERA BARCLAY. *Burns Oates*. 3s. 6d.

**Mimed Ballads and Stories.** By GERTRUDE PICKERSGILL. *Pitman*. 2s. 6d.

**Balderdash Ballads.** By J. R. MONSELL. *Heinemann*. 5s.

One feature common to all these books is that they are inexpensive; the dearest of them, which happens also to be a dear book in another sense, costs only a fraction of the price of a speed-boat—always presuming that there still exist chance infants who prefer books to machines—and the cheapest of them, belonging to the well-established series by Mr. Blackwell, are cheaper than boxes of chocolates—always presuming, I fear, that there exist odd children who don't prefer sweets to the written word. But,

fortunately perhaps, the choice of things is not always left to the child; and I think that if by some chance I happened to be Mr. Edgar Tiddle, of Hendon Green, a harassed business man with twelve nieces and nephews, and Christmas three weeks off, I would be profoundly glad of the opportunity, offered by these twelve books, of polishing off the kids' present problem for less than a couple of pounds and with neither fuss nor embarrassment.

The dearest book, in, as I say, both senses of the word, is *The Fairies Return*, a collection of traditional and famous stories retold by contemporary authors, which seems to me to set a new standard in books for children of middle-age. Undoubtedly the standard in children's books, so strongly challenged already by Disney's symphonies and Mickey Mouse, will have to rise. Children's books have far too long been written in the misguided—I might almost say insane—assumption that children are angels, whereas it is painfully evident to those who are parents that they really are devils untied. Disney has recognised this, I think, and there is a spirit of devilry and mischief in his work that finds instantaneous response in children of all ages, including parents who never grow up. The stories in *The Fairies Return* have been written on this same refreshing assumption that children are perfect devils and on the further assumption that the children of to-day are so many worldly wise's who know a good deal more about things in general than their parents would like to think. This, it seems to me, is all to the good. To some it may appear heretical to Americanise *Big Claus and Little Claus*, as the authors of *1066 and All That* have done, but there is ample room for this new version as well as for the original Andersen, and he will be a pretty dull dog who doesn't burst a waistcoat button or two over this gangster version of one of Andersen's finest tales. Indeed I am not so sure that the child who receives this book is going to have, for a time at any rate, much fun with it. I fear that there will be a good deal of "Just a minute, my boy, I'm just looking at this story. You shall have it in a minute," going to "Just a minute, just a minute. Don't interrupt! I'm reading," growing to "Didn't I tell you not to interrupt! Can't you see I'm reading! Do you want me to put the book away? Well then!" developing finally to "Another word from you, young man, and upstairs you go!"

If this happens, as I am sure it will, the whole experiment will be amply justified. For the greatest children's creations, *Alice*, *Andersen's Tales*, Mickey, and so on, all appeal powerfully to the grown up too. And such is the array of contemporary talent in *The Fairies Return* that there may even be misguided parents who will appropriate the book as a collector's item. For the following writers, apart from the malicious authors of *1066 and All That*, have contributed, rewriting tales from Andersen, Grimm, *The Thousand and One Nights* and traditional sources: A. E. Coppard, whose version of *Jack the Giant Killer* is a killer itself, Clemence Dane, E. M. Delafield, Lord Dunsany, Anna Gordon Keown, Eric Linklater, A. G. Macdonnell (whose *Ali Baba*, an author, was so rich that his novel was bound to be good, and who in consequence was made an honorary LL.D., awarded the Hawthornden Prize, and elected Vice-President of the P.E.N.), E. Arnot Robertson, Helen Simpson, Lady Eleanor Smith, E. O. Somerville, Robert Speaight, Christina Stead, and G. B. Stern. These authors have, together, made a bumping book, and one to which I hope the publishers will contrive to issue a yearly successor.

In comparison with this book the rest of them, with the notable exception of Mr. Heath Robinson's *Book of Goblins* and the two books of ballads, appear rather like flat sherbert. But perhaps only by comparison, for Æsop is never dull, though I sometimes wonder if he is not lost on children, and Mr. Harry Rowntree's coloured illustrations are full of humour and gaiety, and the re-telling by Miss Blanche Winder is brief and succinct, though neither the illustrations nor the text seem to me nearly so fresh and lively as the work in Mr. Robinson's *Book of Goblins*. This is a fat book, containing about fifty folk-lore and fairy tales collected from Central Europe by Mr. A. E. Johnson, whose light is so hidden under Mr. Robinson's bushel that he ought to be picked out for special mention. He deserves better luck and greater honour for his research; and still greater honour if he is responsible for the writing of these delightful tales.

There are already fifty-six titles in the Blackwell series and this number includes the new stories by Miss Marlowe, with her story of the moon-struck rabbit, Mr. Blackwood and the scorching business of the Flying Squad and the maiden in distress, Miss Farjeon's romantic dog-story, and Mr. Compton Mackenzie's two excellent tales of enchantment, with the geography—trust Mr. Mackenzie—all as correct and neat as a council plan. And here one may revert to Mr. Edgar Tiddle; for Mr. Blackwell's

books, uniform in format and price, would save Mr. Tiddle a great deal of embarrassment and jealousy if by some chance five of his nieces and nephews belonged to one family.

*Joc, Colette and the Animals* at first reminded me of those nature study books, read collectively at school, in which one was properly led up the garden path by two children who were not children at all but spirits in league with the Education Committee. These children set out together, in the book, on country walks, and one prepared oneself for a story. Then suddenly came the disillusionment, the sickening realisation that it was all really propaganda.

"Look, Father, at the pretty buds on that large tree. What tree, Father, do you suppose it is?"

"That my dear children, is the horse chestnut. Observe that the buds are sticky. This stickiness is to prevent the buds, dear children, from being molested by frost, insects, disease and other agents. But let us look closer and observe further."

Horror! I thought for a moment that the nature book, which I hoped was dead, had been resurrected by Miss Vera Barclay, but I am glad to say that the thought was an injustice to her. Her story is certainly one of children and nature; but there is life in it, and she is not in league with any committee as far as one can judge, though she is concerned not only with a story about a cat, a parrot, a mouse, a guinea-pig, and other animals, but with the practical business of feeding and rearing these animals, as well as with their habits and origins. In short, if you want to give an animal book that has fact in it as well as fiction, ask for Barclay's.

After Miss Farjeon's pleasant book of stories, which however lack a little of that devil which I look for more and more in modern children's books, there remain only the two books of ballads, which are perfect companions to each other, Mr. J. R. Monsell's being utterly clownish and irresponsible, and Miss Pickersgill's a serious attempt to introduce the mimed ballad to children. Full stage directions are given to the little plays in Miss Pickersgill's book, but no music; a lot of music is given in Mr. Monsell's, but no stage directions; from which I infer that performers are expected to behave in one case with extreme propriety and in the other to act the giddy goat. The mimes will need a good deal of practice. The rest will come naturally.

H. E. BATES

## ADVENTURES FOR BOYS

and give them unstinted praise: Elizabeth Foreman Lewis, L. E. O. Charlton, and M. I. Ross.

*Young Fu* was first published in America a year or two ago. I read it at the time, and have re-read it with unabated pleasure. It is a straightforward story of a Chinese boy, apprenticed to a coppersmith in a city fifteen hundred miles up the Yangtze River. His perfectly credible adventures bring him into contact with all manner of people; and the reader looks through Young Fu's eyes and feels his excitements and his triumph. Mrs. Lewis informs without being informative; you don't learn about Young Fu's China—you live it. It is a long time since I read *Kim*, and without re-reading *Kim* I won't recklessly say whether Mrs. Lewis has beaten Kipling. But I will say that *Young Fu* is in *Kim*'s class. It is short, 245 pages even with Kurt Wiese's illustrations, which help to make the story actual. I don't know whether Mrs. Lewis can manage a longer and more complicated story, but I hope she will try. Meanwhile, over the shorter distance *Young Fu* moves beautifully, and is worth the money.

Like Mrs. Lewis, Air-Commodore Charlton has taken trouble to select from wide and well-remembered experience. For years past boys' books have been roaring with aeroplanes; but in fiction they are bad masters and good servants. Air-Commodore Charlton speaks with the accents of experience. You feel that he is not making the most of a little knowledge, but has plenty of reserve power. You also feel that he is not writing down to the reader, but talking along companionably and easily. It was obvious, from his own autobiography, *Charlton*, that he could, if he would, write first rate boys' stories; and the two here are first rate. Of *The Stolen Expedition* I complain only that the beginning is a trifle slow. It is fifty pages or so before the plot really gets going; but when the guardian and his pilot come to grief in the Sahara, and the two boys from the army come upon them with the stolen expedition, there are various high spots very accurately handled. *The Stolen Expedition* is produced in the format of an ordinary novel, and I wish that *Near East Adventure* were also in the small size instead of being puffed up and badly illustrated. Here there is no hesitation at the beginning; two Brighton boys run away and are quickly kidnapped by air. Their adventures start from the word go. What is equally important is that they keep up and make a strong finish. Whether the situations are unusual (with Charlton they generally are) or familiar, all details are realistically and naturally finished off.

The next two volumes are all for and by boys. The publisher