

Reproduced by kind permission of Evensford Productions Limited and
Pollinger Limited. Copyright © Evensford Productions Limited, 1933.

Knights folded against the long blue coats of the janissaries; the white cross of St. John was battling with the curved moon of Islam. Over the ravelin they fought; but from Mount Schebanas from over the counterscarp, more Turks were pouring, hundreds of them, uncounted numbers.

The rhythm of that is worth having, and Mr. Lindsay, after a slow start, has a fine tale to tell, in which his hero is captured by the janissaries, finds and rescues his father (a slave of the Turks), and sails back to Bristol, after the triumph of the Knights, with an idea that there may be room in the world for Turks as well as Christians, and that (unlike his creator) one can have too much of the ravelin-and-javelin business.

Mr. Day Lewis's Dick Willoughby is the son of an Elizabethan seaman who, having lost his parents, is lured to a sinister castle and nearly done to death there by a villainous cousin, who besides coveting his estates is the leader of a Popish plot. Dick, aided by the heroine, escapes, and after sailing the Spanish Main returns to save the Queen's realm, dispatch his cousin, and live happily ever after. Scores of writers for boys must have knocked together these properties: some of them may have been as clever as Mr. Lewis in the invention of ingenious details. But he has swallowed whole the conventions of the zoons-and-tushery school and has made a moving, fresh and vital thing out of shabby tinsel. This is not prose for boys only, and Mr. Lewis, if he had written nothing else, would have signed himself by this tale a poet:

The morrow dawned fair, with a nipping south-easterly wind. Standing in the waist of the ship Dick watched the mole slip past and the Retribution's two smaller sister ships, the Ark and the May of Lyme, come nosing out of harbour behind them. It was Sunday, the mariners' lucky day for starting a voyage. But the chiming bells of the town were soon drowned by the creak of cordage, the slatting of sails, the shrill whistles of the quartermasters, and the smash and smother as the beak at the vessel's bows began to take the weight of the Channel chop. England receded. Dick's heart leapt with the leaping ship: and somewhere, miles away on their starboard beam, Cynthia was riding the desolate woodlands alone.

Tushery is a new line for Mr. Strong, but having decided to describe the condition of England at the time of the Peasants' Revolt in the guise of a boy's story, he plays the game according to longbow and jerkin rules with a beautiful mastery. He is clearly not so much interested in his two heroes, who are captured by the peasantry on their march to Canterbury and are carried by them to London and to the parleys between Wat Tyler and Richard, as in the clash between the suffering poor and the nobility, and in the contrasted states of town and countryside, princes, priests and serfs. Whether or not this is good history, it is beautifully pointed sociology, and is likely to leave the peasants' cause vivid in a boy's mind long after he has forgotten what the tale is about.

Gift books are not like gift horses, and no one knows what a boy will read. But if, as is wisest, these books are left about where children are, they are all of them of the kind which will be picked up and thankfully carried away.

BARRINGTON GATES

DOGS

Dashenka. By KAREL CAPEK. *Allen and Unwin.* 5s.

Just Dogs. By K. F. BARKER. *Country Life.* 10s. 6d.

Me and My Dogs. By Lady KITTY VINCENT. *Country Life.* 5s.

Do You Want a Dog? By R. WELLDON FINN. *Country Life.* 3s. 6d.

The Pups I Bought. By R. WELLDON FINN. *Country Life.* 3s. 6d.

"What kinda dog is he?" says one Black Crow to another.

"What nationality is he?"

"Oh!" says the other, "he's part Sarah Bernhardt."

And after that strange misalliance has been successfully explained away:

"And what's the other part?"

"Oh! he's jas' plain dog, that's about all."

If is, of course, conceivable that there are still "plain dogs" in the world, but reading these five books on dogs and their owners one can hardly believe it any longer. It would be interesting to offer a prize for a plain dog. There would, of course, be no entries, since every dog-owner in the country from the merest child with a fat Spaniel to the stoutest lady with a Pekingese would be as reluctant to confess to a plain dog as a parent to a plain child. The pedigree of one's family no longer matters;

but the pedigree of one's dogs can put one with the elect or with the damned. One of Mr. Chesterton's characters somewhere declares: "I can stand a dog so long as it isn't spelt backwards." The plain fact is that thousands of people have always spelt dog backwards, and the dictator who could arise and talk about the divine right of dogs would find himself in power in a night. "I tell you that not only does every dog go to heaven, but that under my regime every dog shall live a heaven on earth." There would be universal acclamation for such sentiments. In Europe the man who threw a brick at a dog would be sent to the concentration camp; in America he would be lynched. The problem of non-Aryan and negro dogs would doubtless present slight difficulties. But no doubt the old law for the under-dog would apply.

In these five books there are, naturally, no under-dogs. Even Mr. Capek has failed to seize the chance for satire and has given us a well-bred little history of a well-bred little dog complete with beautiful photographs and typically Capek drawings. He has tried hard to make us believe that he is not such a fool about this terrier as other people would be, but there is worship and foolery in every drawing and every photograph and every word. The illustrations are the best part of the book, as they are also in *Just Dogs*, a title which has just saved itself from being a piece of pure heresy. *Just Plain Dogs* might very well have landed Mr. Barker into trouble with the upper dogs. *Me and My Dogs* has less to do with dogs than with Scottish castles, Indian army officers, and the authoress herself, who talks a good deal about the Happy Hunting Grounds to which all her dogs, plainly spelt backwards, have gone and will go. Mr. Welldon Finn's two books present an interesting case. In *Do You Want a Dog?* he has written the only sane and intelligent book of the five, a sound and candid book about any sort of dog, spelt dog, and every sort of fool who wants to own one. But in *The Pups I Bought* he is becoming facetious, school-boyish, and altogether irritating, spelling all his dogs backwards and proving himself as big a fool over them as Mr. Capek has done over his terrier. Moreover, it is a serious kind of foolery, very near idolatry. One longs for the dog-writer who can laugh at himself. But there is no doubt he is rare as the plain dog.

H. E. BATES

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

The Life of Hans Christian Andersen. By SIGNE TOKSVIG. *Macmillan.* 10s. 6d.

Signe Toksvig's able and comprehensive life of Hans Christian Andersen excites in us the blended feelings of sympathy and exasperation with which the Danish writer's friends and acquaintances always listened to his youthful outpourings. So naive, so sensitive, so tearful, so easily depressed and exalted, so vain, so gay, so childishly winning a nature has surely never before flowered in literary genius. His grandfather was a harmless madman; his father the cobbler, a free thinker, was high-strung and ambitious; his mother was "self-respecting and competent." And the dreamy child, with his confiding manner and gift of making friends easily, early found an audience at school and among the neighbours for his tales and recitations. Everybody had to listen to him, and if snubbed he was cast down and wept. Awkward and ungainly though he was, people found his self-confidence amusing and sent for the boy to sing in their drawing-rooms. But nothing came of this, and when he was thirteen his father died and, on his mother remarrying, Hans Christian, with twenty-eight shillings and a letter of introduction, set out to seek his fortune in Copenhagen. The theatre was his aim, and, after many rebuffs, the new friends he made subscribed to ensure him food and lodging and lessons from a tutor in Latin. After three more years, says his biographer, "of poets, princes, sordid lodgings, hunger, poor clothes, cultured houses opening to him, head laurel-wreathed in the stars, wet feet in the mud, Hans Christian was leading an aimless coloured hectic life." When his plays and petitions to the theatre directors had all been refused, his patrons sent him to Rector Meisling's school to study in earnest. Here as a boarder he suffered for years from the rector's contempt and severity, and at twenty played the Joseph to Mrs. Potiphar Meisling, who used to lock her sleeping spouse into his bedroom. Before a fateful examination, he confides to his diary, possessed, as his biographer tells us, by his two demons, one of fear and one of ambition. "Oh, God, are you really there? Yes, still! Oh, why did I come so far, rise so high, unnoticed no longer, and now I must sink? Madness devour my brain that I may forget! Big