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Books for Children

CHILDREN'S books offer a ready-made solution to many gift problems, and this season there seems to be an even wider selection than usual, though the variation in quality is as great as ever. A new publication suitable for nearly all ages is *The Wonder Gift Book for Children* (Odham's Press Ltd.; our copy from Whitcombe and Tombs). Although the paper and binding tend to reflect to-day's austerity standards, and the layout is not inspired, the stories, poems and articles (by authors of international standing) are first-class reading.



For older children one of the best-written books offering is *The Otterbury Incident*, by Cecil Day Lewis. (Putnam and Co. Ltd.; our copy from Roy Parsons, Bookseller, Wellington). In a racy, matter-of-fact style, packed with modern (i.e., post-war) slang and plenty of humour, *The Otterbury Incident* describes the adventures of a gang of schoolboys who help the police to catch the usual counterfeiters and other "crooks," but in its freshness of approach and down-to-earth realism the book is something out of the ordinary in its line. Without carrying the comparison too far, the gang's adventures are just about as credible and exciting as those of Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer. Boys from 12 to 15 should relish the story if they can understand all the allusions to contemporary English life.

Other children's books recently received are classified below according to age-group.

STANDARD V. TO FORM IV.

ALFRED'S JEWEL. By Allen W. Seaby. Harrap and Co. Ltd. *THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN THE U.S.A.* By Elizabeth Yates. Phoenix House, London. *ADVENTURE AND DISCOVERY 3*. (Authors various). Jonathan Cape. *INSECT LIFE*. (The Visual Library Vol. 1.). Winchester Publications Ltd., London (our copy from Oswald-Sealy N.Z. Ltd.)

ALFRED'S JEWEL (the title refers to the aetel in the Ashmolean Museum) is a story of Alfred's England with the action centring mainly on the Athelney district. The style is occasionally a little stiff and didactic, but on the whole the book creates a vivid and generally accurate picture of life in Saxon times.

By describing the experiences of two young English children fortunate enough to make the 20th Century Grand Tour—through the United States—*The Young Traveller in America* is geography and history made not only easy but attractive. It is matter of fact rather than romantic, but children of the age for which this is designed are often severely matter of fact themselves.

Adventure and Discovery 3 is a good example of a common enough type. It contains 25 accurate, factual articles on subjects like sailing, skyscrapers, and newspapers, all well illustrated with photographs and diagrams.

Insect Life is an adaptation of the comic strip and film strip to book form. The purpose is semi-educational, but the captions don't help much to explain the pictures, e.g.—

The life of the Honey Bee is a tale of a strange community of individual lives dedicated to a communal cause, with all the toil, and, at times, ruthless sacrifice that such a cause entails.

STANDARD III. TO STANDARD V.

BHIMSA. THE DANCING BEAR. By Christine Weston. Macmillan and Co. *PADDLES, THE STORY OF A SEA-LION*. By Edward B. Tracy. Harrap. *BLACK GULL*. By Derek Lamport. Harrap.

BHIMSA describes the adventures of two small boys (one white, one brown) and one large dancing bear (brown) in the plains and jungles of India. It is a well-written and thoroughly satisfying story with excellent printing and binding and good line-drawings by Stuart Tresilian. *Paddles*, also well-written and well-illustrated, is the biography of a sea-lion, and includes his experiences in a circus. The story is absorbing, with few romantic frills. In *Black Gull* two brothers and a sister spend their holidays in the Scilly Isles and get involved in adventures with "crooks." The style is rather pedestrian—"Gosh" and "Coo" are stock expletives.

STANDARD I. TO STANDARD III.

MALKIN'S MOUNTAIN. By Ursula Moray Williams. Harrap. *MILLY-MOLLY-MANDY AGAIN*. Told and Drawn by Joyce Lancaster Brisley. Harrap. *LITTLE BROWN TALA STORIES*. By May Wynne. Harrap.

A BLEND of Disney and Hans Andersen, *Malkin's Mountain* is an excellent fairy-tale which one can criticise only on the ground that it is too long for young readers to absorb at one sitting, and thus may cause some heart-burning at bedtime. The author's illustrations are hardly up to the standard of the text. *Milly-Molly-Mandy* must be universally known to Standard One children. This new book in the series is well up to standard. *Little Brown Tala* lives in the Indian jungle and has adventures with Miya the Rat, Ugga-duwa the Wild Cat, Amfoo the Ape, and others, after the style of the *Jungle Books*, though on a more superficial level. The book is well produced, with colour plates and black and white illustrations.

PRIMERS TO STANDARD I.

LITTLE MISS PINK AND LITTLE MISS PINK AT GREYTOES. Text by Rodney Bennett, pictures by Astrid Walford. Harrap. *BOSKY GOLDFISH*. By Peter Thornhill. Harrap. *THE ADVENTURES OF JONATHAN SEAL*. By Heloise des Salles. Jonathan Cape. *THE BOOK OF THE FOUR COLOURED PENCILS*. Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press. *FOLLOW THE FLUTE*. By Helen Mosley, illustrated by Helen Vincent. Georgian House, Melbourne. *THE UNCLOUDED YEARS*. Stories by Innes Cameron, photographs by Marion Thomas. Georgian House.

THE two *Little Miss Pink* books are in the best tradition of "infant" books, with particularly good colour (continued on next page)