

Better Books for Children

EVERY three months a selected list of children's books is supplied to "The Listener" by the Broadcasts to Schools and Children's Programme Departments of the NZBS. Officers who make the selection—from books received by this journal—have special opportunities for noting the present trends of children's literature. On the approach of Children's Book Week they were asked to look back over the recent past and to tell our readers what they had noticed. Their report is printed below

CHILDREN'S books today are exciting and interesting. Girls and boys like to read about other girls and boys, a point which has been realised most effectively by Roland Pertwee in his story *The Islanders*.

One obvious trend is the great number of scientific stories. David Craigie's *Dark Atlantis* is a powerful tale. In the manner of H. G. Wells, Donald Suddaby has written *Lost Men in the Grass*, *The Star Raiders*, an account of a journey to Venus, and *The Death of Metal*.

There are excellent biographies, too. *He Went With Captain Cook* by Josephine Kamm, and *The Story of George Stephenson* by John Thomas are two of them. Books about television, theatre and ballet, have come from women writers, Noel Streatfield, Pamela Brown, Lorna Hill. These are delightful, yet thoroughly authentic because they are written by people who really have experienced the life they write about.

Many stories are published in book form after being used successfully as radio programmes. Diana Ross's stories for younger children will be well known in this way; the *Little Red Engine* books, *The Tooter* and other stories and *Nursery Tales*, some of which made good radio, are equally successful as books. Ruth Ainsworth, an Australian, has published *Ruffy Tufty Stories*, first heard in ABC programmes. *The Islanders* was published also after being very successful as a radio play.

The traditional adventure story, packed with smugglers, gold and kidnapping, is well represented by *The Golden Quest* by Frank Crisp, *Danger to Windward* by Armstrong Sperry, and *The Green Sailors* series by Gilbert Hackforth Jones. Peter Dawlish, himself a sailor, writes a good yarn about the sea in the "Dauntless" books. In *Aztec Gold* he extends the seafaring touch to his knowledge of foreign countries. Another writer who uses his own experiences as an explorer and naturalist in his books is René Guillot, whose future publications will be worth watching. To date we have seen *Companions of Fortune*, *Sama* and *Sirga*. In his usual neat manner, Ian Serrailier has woven into his *Ballad of Kon-Tiki* all the adventure and romance of that epic journey.

Foremost among books by contemporary writers, however, is the tale which combines accurate historical facts with the essential elements of adventure and human interest. Why this emphasis on the past? Kingsley is reputed to have enjoyed writing most his *Westward Ho*, a tale with the true Elizabethan flavour. Perhaps present-day writers have realised, too, that adventure in abundance can be found in the days of other notable reigns. But—the anecdotes must be bound up with historical accuracy. These books, in true R. L. Stevenson fashion, tell about girls and boys who



"Some of the noblest lords in England were plopping into the lake like ducks"

(From "The Barons' Hostage," a Pageant Book by Geoffrey Trease)

are made to seem as responsible (almost) as grown-ups. The Pageant Series, edited by Geoffrey Trease, try to give a glimpse of important historical events through the eyes of children of the times. Ronald Welch's *The Gauntlet* tells how a present-day boy finds himself living in medieval times whenever he handles an ancient gauntlet he has found. Among other titles in this "historical" group, *The Wool Pack* by Cynthia Harnett,

The Gentle Falcon by Hilda Lewis, and *Brother Dusty Feet* by Rosemary Sutcliffe stand out.

Keeping pace also with the children's novel, are magazines for girls and boys, notably *Collins Magazine*, which has been re-named *Collins Young Elizabethan*. In content and styles, children's literature has moved on with new vigour.

(More information about books for children will be broadcast in the holiday programmes outlined below.)

SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAMMES

WITH no more spelling and no more sums for two weeks, from Monday next, school-children will be able to tune in after the nine o'clock weather forecast each morning to the special holiday programme arranged for them by the staff of Broadcasts to Schools. There will be quiz sessions, stories, songs, music and book sessions. Each Monday morning's programme will begin with *What's To Come*, a short summary of the broadcasts for that week. The first part of each holiday programme will be for the younger children, up to about eight years, and the second part for those aged nine to 12.

On Monday, August 24, the first week-day of the holidays, the programme will include "Dolly Deer, Her Run For Life," a story from the series *Mrs. Giraffe's Jungle School*, and a quiz session for the senior group. Tuesday's programme will start with *Good Books Are Good Companions*, a talk connected with Children's Book Week which reopens the old question of which books would be good company on a desert island. This is followed by some songs for the holidays, a U.S. music-appreciation series which emphasises participation by the children, and by *George*, a piquant little story by Trevor Williams about a four-footed friend who ends up quite literally immersed in a book. On Wednesday there is the junior quiz, and a ballad of the Fleet—*The Revenge*, by Lord Tennyson. The junior section of Thursday's programme consists of *Big Black Dragon*, an Australian aboriginal story written by Ruth Park. This will be followed by a talk on the Coronation, by W. E. Leicester, a Wellington lawyer, who was in London at the time. Friday's session will be devoted to the telling of the Maori legend, *Maui Captures the Sun*, and to a talk entitled *Maori Carving*, which is mainly about the building of a Maori house.

The first session of the second week of the holidays, on Monday, August 31, will include another story from *Mrs. Giraffe's Jungle School* and the senior quiz session. On Tuesday the juniors will be told some interesting things to make while on holiday, and the seniors will hear *Schwanda the Bagpiper*, the story of Weinberger's opera of that name. On Wednesday there is the junior quiz and a talk on life in Liberia by Arthur Barker, a New Zealander who recently spent two years there. Thursday's programme consists of a light, bright variety session for the juniors, and *What's New In Books*, in which current good reading is reviewed. Another of Ruth Park's stories, *The Shaky Island*, opens Friday's programme, and after that listeners will hear about life on a New Zealand coaster.

The holiday programmes will be heard from all YA and YZ stations.

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 21, 1953

(Solution to No. 657)

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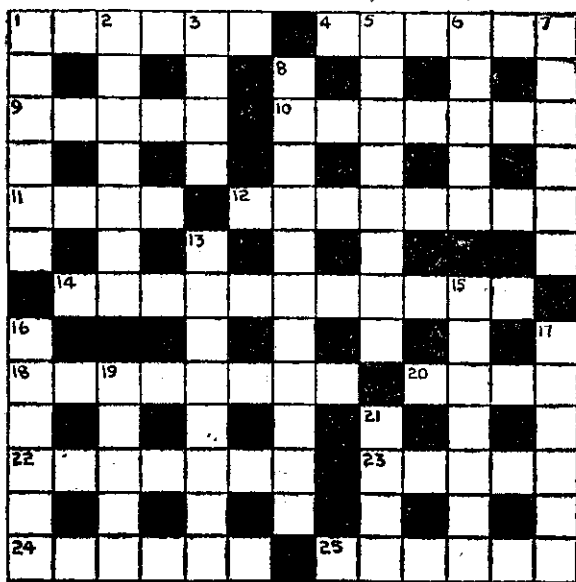
Clues Across

- You may hear them at Christmas time.
- A deficiency in dear Thelma's diet?
- When out of order this broom makes me sob.
- The girl whom Tennyson invited to come into the garden begins to be weakly sentimental.
- "She gave me a good character, But said I could not —" (Lewis Carroll in "Alice in Wonderland")
- Pillared portico in front of a Greek temple.
- Come in a hall (anag.).

"THE LISTENER" CROSSWORD

- Musical instruments, out of step in the end?
- Marco's little game?
- Grass, and to spare.
- Usually found at a jeweller's, but to be found in a baker's shop also.
- "That's the wise —; he sings each song twice over
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture!" (Brown- ing).
- Behind.
- Place apart with a mixture of oils and tea.
- Confused setter.
- This alarm sounds like poison.
- If you have this hand, you have the mastery.
- What a rolling stone doesn't gather.

No. 658 (Constructed by R.W.H.)



Clues Down

- He doesn't believe in round figures.
- Regarding malice, an interval of rest.
- Nothing less than limbs.
- Disorderly lions after an emu.
- Recover strength.
- "Home is the sailor, home from the sea, And the —, home from the hill" (R. L. Stevenson).
- I come in trap (anag.).
- If you overturn these defences you'll get a smart rap.