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THE books dealt with in this article are primarily for children of over seven; in most cases they are a safe bet for both boys and girls up to fourteen, perhaps in some cases, such as *The Radium Woman* and *Columbus Sails*, up to sixteen. In all of them the story is told by print, embellished by pictures; a significant contrast to the now prevailing—and excellent—mode for under sevens, by which pictures tell the story and print merely adds the briefest comment on it. It is also notable that whereas in the under-seven class it is stories of fictitious

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN OVER SEVEN

animals which predominate, in the older class stories of real or imaginary people—mostly boys—score by a ratio of two to one over those about animals; moreover, of these animals half are real and not imaginary creatures whose histories have been carefully compiled from fact. Also, of the nine books dealing with people, four deal with historical or living persons, and only two enter the world of the far-fetched. From these facts, which may be some guide to those who are choosing books for children, it seems that authenticity and reality are regarded by authors as of supreme importance to the over-sevens, though I am not sure that they are right. Again, in contrast to the gay impressionistic picture-books for infants, many of these books appear to me, as a parent, quite dull. Wherever this is the case I should be prepared to gamble that children will find them enchanting.

In Section I, people, there are four books which tell the story of real persons, and it is quite certain that one of these, *Early Morning Island*, by R. M. Lockley (Harrap, 5s. net), comes into a class of its own. Mr. Lockley is already famous as the owner of the island of Skokholm, off the Pembrokeshire coast, and he has already written with fascinating authority of his life there among his sheep and birds. Now he has had the charming idea of putting down the adventures of his eight-year-old daughter Ann, as told by herself, illustrating them with photographs of the child among her playmates, the gulls and Soay lambs, goats and storm-petrels, ponies and puffins,

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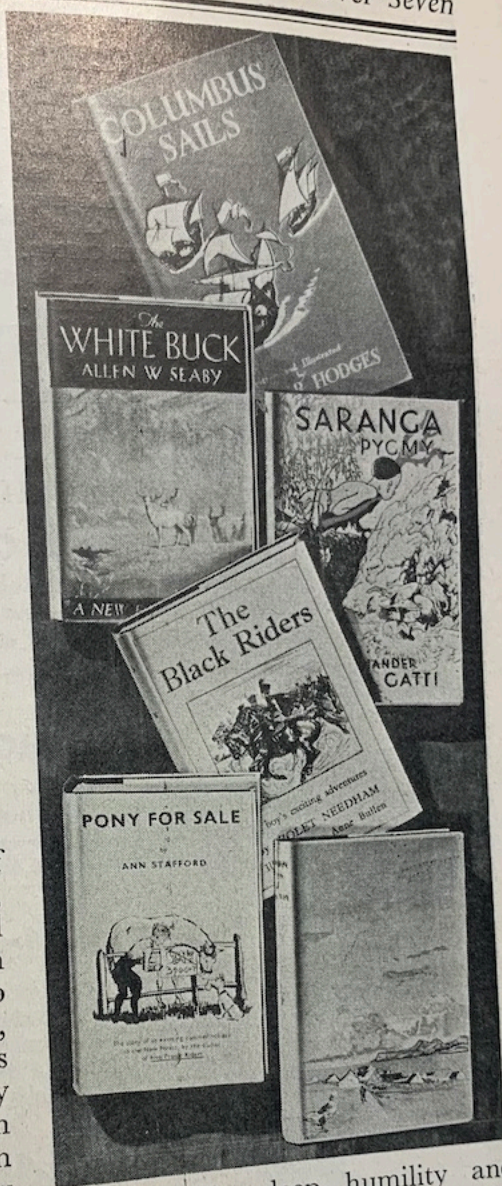
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seals and shearwaters which populate the island. There is a picture of her receiving a very wooden kiss from the washed-up figurehead of the *Alice Williams*; another of her giving a very thoughtful tea-party to a young buzzard and a crayfish; an exclusive shot of a mare's-nest; and others equally delightful. The book, indeed, is rich with all the lovely fancy and bright reality of the life of a happy child. It is absurd and serious and beautiful, but never sentimental. I have already tried it with the greatest success on an under-seven, and unless I am greatly mistaken it will enchant many an over-seventy. I think *Columbus Sails*, by

REVIEWED BY H. E. BATES

C. Walter Hodges (Bell, 7s. 6d. net), comes next to it—the story of Columbus told in three sections, first by a monk who witnessed Columbus's early struggles to obtain permission to make his voyage to the Indies via the Western ocean, secondly by a sailor who describes the voyage in the *Santa Maria*, lastly by a captive Indian brought back on the triumphant and perilous return voyage to Spain. The book is boldly written, even more boldly and imaginatively illustrated. I should back it with my shirt as a safe gift for a boy of ten to fourteen, perhaps older; and I should feel equally safe in backing *The Radium Woman* by Eleanor Doorly (Heinemann, 4s. 6d. net) as a sure thing for a girl of any age from ten to sixteen. This life of Madame Curie, rather gravely written, very beautifully illustrated by Robert Gibbings, is designed to attract children to the greater biography of Madame Curie by her



daughter. Its deep humility and gravity are in sharp contrast to the simple heartiness of *Paddle Your Own Canoe*, by Lord Baden-Powell (Macmillan, 2s. 6d. net), which I find tedious, a little sanctimonious and rather obviously moral. This very probably means that all scouts will regard its purchase as their good deed for Christmas.

Among the remaining five books of Section I, I find *Mimff*, by H. J. Kaeser (Oxford, 6s. net), very attractive. *Mimff* is an imp of a small boy

who is afraid of nothing: not even the ferocity of the butcher's dog, storms at sea, flights in aeroplanes, parachute landings, car accidents, and who runs away from home in order to find out what it is to be afraid. Mr. Edward Ardizzone, who each Christmas gets a new row of medals as an illustrator, has done seven coloured and many uncoloured illustrations for the book. Of these his picture of a French café is a masterpiece: it is possible to taste the grenadine on the marble-top table, smell the French cigarettes, be frozen by the supercilious stare of the fat waitress behind the bar. *Seeley-Bohn at School*, by Donald Gilchrist (Longmans, 7s. 6d. net), records the doings of another brat, who knows so much about trickery in the form-room that he will probably make his final appearance as an excellent schoolmaster. His portrait on the jacket, cherubic, smiling, sucking a quarter of creamy toffee and clearly preparing to set a drawing-pin or drop a stink-bomb, gives an excellent idea of his particularly revolting sort of charm. Mr. Howard Spring's *Tumbledown Dick* (Faber, 6s. net) tells the tale—"all people and no plot"—of yet another boy and his adventures among many kinds of odd characters, from Lady Mayoresses to conjurers, in Manchester and district. The book, which has about it a flavour reminiscent of the early chapters of *David Copperfield*, is packed with action and "characters," the feeling of which Mr. Stephen Spurrier has caught in some excellent black-and-white sketches. *The Black Riders*, by Violet Needham (Collins, 6s. net), is about still another boy, engaged in the really romantic business of running away with a spy in an imaginary European State where two political factions are in conflict. The writing is admirably swift, simple, and exciting, and I see

this book being furtively tucked under many a pillow late at night. Commander Attilio Gatti's *Saranga the Pygmy* (Hodder & Stoughton, 8s. 6d. net) completes the gallery of small boys with the adventures of a pygmy boy in the jungle among elephants and baboons. As far as I can get a line on my own tastes of twenty years ago, I have an idea that this strange, romantic book, full of primitive conflict and courage and some beauty, would probably have pleased me more than any.

Mr. De la Mare's tremendous omnibus *Animal Stories* (Faber, 8s. 6d. net) contains what he himself feels to be some of the best animal stories ever written. He has arranged them for children over seven, has partly re-written them, has had them illustrated by some engaging illustrations from Topsell's seventeenth-century *Historie of Four-footed Beastes*, and has contributed a lengthy preface of his own. I find the preface discouraging to the fullest enjoyment of the book, but of the quality of the book itself there can be no doubt. It is a positive bible of animal stories, full of that fanciful De la Mare flavour for which there is no substitute. *The White Buck*, by Allen W. Seaby (Nelson, 6s. net), is a completely unsentimental history of a New Forest buck, with his companions the ponies, the badgers, the stoats, the otters, and squirrels, which has been compiled out of first-hand observation and fact. *Pony for Sale* (Hamish Hamilton, 7s. 6d. net), by Ann Stafford, is also about the New Forest, is also based on fact, but tells more of a consecutive story, though I find its rather chattering style much less attractive. Lastly, *The Grey Goose of Kilnevin*, by Patricia Lynch (Dent, 6s. net): Irish, imaginative, a little fantastic, full in the line of the traditional Irish folk-legend, and altogether excellent.