

understanding what we give, not knowing that it would be infinitely valuable if we kept it to ourselves, but simply because we are too kind to refuse. The true man will not buy fairy tales because he is kind; he will buy them because he is selfish. If Uncle John, who has just bought the *Just-So Stories* for his niece, were truly human (which, of course, Uncle John is not), it is doubtful whether the niece would ever see the book. One of the most lurid and awful marks of human degeneration that the mind can conceive is the fact that it is considered kind to play with children.

But the peculiar splendour, as I say, of these new Kipling stories is the fact that they do not read like fairy tales told to children by the modern fireside, so much as like fairy tales told to men in the morning of the world. They see animals, for instance, as primeval men saw them; not as types and numbers in an elaborate biological scheme of knowledge, but as walking portents, things marked by extravagant and peculiar features. An elephant is a monstrosity with his tail between his eyes; a rhinoceros is a monstrosity with his horn balanced on his nose; a camel, a zebra, a tortoise are fragments of a fantastic dream, to see which is not seeing a scientific species, but like seeing a man with three legs or a bird with three wings, or men as trees walking. The whole opens a very deep question, the question of the relations between the old wonder and the new wonder, between knowledge and science. The hump of a camel is very likely not so much his characteristic from a scientific point of view as the third bone in the joint of his hind leg, but to the eyes of the child and the poet it remains his feature. And it is more important in this sense that it is more direct and certain: there is a relation between the human soul and the hump of a camel, which there is not between the human soul and the bone in his hind leg. The hump still remains and the bone vanishes, if all these physical phenomena are nothing but a grotesque shadow-show, constructed by a paternal deity to amuse a universe of children.

This is the admirable achievement of Kipling, that he has written new legends. We hear in these days of continual worship of old legends, but not of the making

of new; which would be the real worship of legends. Just in the same way we hear of the worship of old ceremonies, but never of the making of new ones. If men decided that Mr. Gladstone's hat was to be carried three times around the House of Commons, they would have offered the best tribute to the Eleusinian mysteries. That is the tribute which "How the Whale Got His Throat" offers to the story of Sigurd and Hercules.

G. K. Chesterton.

III.

GEORGE HORTON'S "THE LONG STRAIGHT ROAD."*

With his habitual deftness, Anatole France laid his finger upon the most vulnerable point in the creed of Realism—the Realism that paints the commonplace lives of average, middle-class people—when he said: "Yes, it is all very true and very sad, but what of it? It teaches us nothing which we did not know before." A writer must needs have an uncommon degree of courage to choose deliberately such a theme as that of Mr. Horton's *Long Straight Road*—the sober prose of humdrum married life—since only a touch of uncommon skill and flashes of rare intuition can keep it from becoming sordid and dull. The pleasure afforded by Mr. Horton's volume—a pleasure for which his earlier works afforded scanty preparation—proves that he possesses these qualities to an unforeseen degree. The explanation of his title is found in the quotation from Stevenson upon the title-page to the effect that to him who marries the pleasure of lingering by the wayside and wandering in green pastures is henceforth denied; "the road lies long and straight and dusty to the grave." Yet the book is not written in a pessimistic spirit; rather, it impresses one as a faithful transcript from life, as Mr. Horton sees it—as any one with his eyes open may see around him any day in the week.

The background of the story is the city of Chicago; the plot involves the destinies of three married couples, destinies

*The Long Straight Road. By George Horton. Indianapolis: The Bowen-Merrill Company.

that are interwoven in the intricate fashion that is one of the commonplaces of real life and yet often seems just a trifle improbable between the covers of a book. There is Crissy, the rising lawyer, ambitious, strenuous, scrupulously honest, too much absorbed in his political aspirations to see that his devoted little wife is silently eating her heart out for an occasional word of love and tenderness. There is Crissy's friend, dull, plodding, kind-hearted Harry Chapin, a clerk in a real estate office. Before his marriage, Harry's earnings were sufficient to clothe him in the latest style and permit of the occasional extravagance of a dinner at Ma'am Galli's Italian restaurant, with its accompaniments of spaghetti and real chianti flasks full of California claret. But since he married Nellie, a pretty cloak model in a department store, his surplus earnings all go for French lessons and new bonnets and the latest literary fads—all but his daily carfare and his thirty-cent lunch and his one cigar. His road is long, indeed, and sadly hopeless, the daily treadmill of the unhappily married man on a small salary. Lastly, there are the Roths, the German family that occupy the apartment immediately above the Chapins. Their means are even more limited than Harry's; but mutual love and confidence make the daily burden light, and form the bright spot that relieves an otherwise rather sombre story. The Roths will be remembered among the pleasant acquaintances of recent fiction.

Just how these different characters react upon each other's lives; how Crissy's political rival attempts to use Nellie Chapin as a bait with which to ruin his reputation; how Mrs. Crissy is driven almost to desperation with needless jealousy; how Harry Chapin, more and more neglected, is glad to escape from his lonely and childless home to the peace and comfort of the Roth household; and how, finally, by a series of merest accidents he misses his one chance for freedom—all this is best left to be told in Mr. Horton's own excellent way. His intimate little touches of everyday life, his pictures of men and women, his glimpses of the busy, shifting scenes of a big city are all quite as good in their way as anything that we have had from other writers who have identified themselves with

Chicago, such as Will Payne or Robert Herrick. And in one respect, at least, Mr. Horton scores a special triumph, and that is in his portraiture of children. In fiction, the children are all too often banished to the nursery or the street. In real life, the closing door does not shut them wholly out; their fresh young voices, in all the thoughtlessness of childhood, still make themselves heard from above stairs or float in through the windows. And so it is in Mr. Horton's book. He makes one hear the patter of small feet on the stairs, the insistent chatter of merry tongues struggling with the intricacies of an illogical language; he is a skilful interpreter of the brightness which the presence of children sheds in happy homes, and the instinctive comfort which they know so well how to give in homes of sorrow. Above all, he emphasises the loneliness of an empty room, the pathos of a childless marriage. He deserves to be encouraged for having struck a note in fiction which, if not exactly a new note, is one that has not for a long time been struck with quite such a clear ring of truth.

Frederic Taber Cooper.

IV.

MR. JEROME'S "PAUL KELVER."*

Some great men are never found out. From that fate Mr. Jerome has escaped. Over his buried merit it will not be necessary to raise the tardy bust. Is he not saluted by the *Times* and other gallopers of fame as the successor of Dickens? How did they penetrate his disguise? I fear he was careless. Dickens wrote *David Copperfield*, and *David Copperfield* is an autobiography. Mr. Jerome wrote *Paul Kolver*, and *Paul Kolver* is an autobiography. A clear clue! There are others, too numerous to specify. (See the puppets' passion.) One, however, is frank to the verge of rashness. "I am not Doady," says Dan, "who always seems to me to have been somewhat of a—he reminds me of you, Paul, a little." Purblind is the critic who cannot take that hint and better it. The thing is a syllogism. Paul is Doady, and Doady is Dickens. Mr. Jerome is Paul, therefore Mr. Jerome is Dickens the Second,

*Paul Kolver. By Jerome K. Jerome. New York: Messrs. Dodd, Mead and Company.