

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR
IN TEN VOLUMES
ILLUSTRATED
VOLUME V



Ferdinand and Ariel

The Children's Hour

STORIES FROM SEVEN OLD FAVORITES

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Houghton Mifflin Company

Between the dark and the daylight, when the night
is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupations, that is
known as the Children's Hour.

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TO THE CHILDREN

This volume is made up of stories from seven famous books. These books are as different as they can possibly be; and yet there are not many boys and girls who do not like every one of them. The chief reason for this is because they seem so true, so much more "real" than most other stories. When you read about Tom Thumb, for instance, you do not really believe that there ever was a little boy no bigger than his mother's thumb; at least, you do not believe it in the same way that you believe the sun shines or the wind blows; but when you read "Robinson Crusoe," you feel as if every word of it must be true.

The first of these books is "The Pilgrim's Progress." In one way it is a little like a fable; that is, when you read it the first time, it is simply a good story. Afterwards—sometimes a long while afterwards—you read it again or sit thinking about it, and suddenly you see that it has another meaning, that it is more than the story of a man who makes a wonderful journey. This book was written in jail by a man named John Bunyan. The English laws of that time would not allow any one to preach except clergymen of the Church of England. Bunyan, however, felt that it would be wicked for him to obey these laws, so he kept on preaching. He was thrown into prison, and the prisons of those days were horrible places. "If you will promise not to preach again, you [pg 012] shall be free," said the officers. "If you let me out to-day I will preach again to-morrow," declared Bunyan; and meanwhile he preached to the other prisoners. He thought of his wife and children and of how little he could do to support them while he was in jail; he thought of his little blind daughter Mary; but still he said to himself, "I must, I must do it." For twelve long years he stayed in prison. He made tags for shoe laces to sell to help his family; and he wrote the book that has been read by more people than any other volume except the Bible.

The second book, "Robinson Crusoe," was written by Daniel Defoe; and he, too, knew what it was to be in jail. He was not imprisoned for preaching, but for his political writings. Once when he had written a pamphlet that did not please the authorities, he was condemned to stand in the pillory. The people took his part, and, in-

stead of throwing stones at him, they dropped roses about him and bought thousands of copies of a poem that he had written while in jail.

He wrote many books, but his best, "Robinson Crusoe," was produced after he had become a middle-aged man and had some money and a big, homely house with plenty of ground for his favorite gardening. The way the book came to be written was this. A sailor named Alexander Selkirk spent more than four years alone on the island of Juan Fernandez. When he was rescued and brought to England, many people went to gaze at him in his goatskin clothes and to hear him talk about his life on the island. Defoe went with the others, and he never forgot the stories told by the sailor in goatskins. Seven years later he worked in his garden [pg 013] and thought about the desert island. Then he went into his house and wrote the book that everybody likes, "Robinson Crusoe."

"Gulliver's Travels" was written by an Irish clergyman named Jonathan Swift. He was a strange man. Some people said he was a genius, and some said he had always been a little insane. When he wrote, he often seemed to care for nothing but to say the most cutting, scornful things that he could. There was one class of persons, however, who loved him from the bottom of their hearts, and they were the poor people about his home in Ireland. It is true that he sometimes scolded them, but they saw straight through his grumbling and understood that he really cared for them and wanted to help them, and they loved him and trusted him. He lived more than two hundred years ago, but the Irish have never forgotten him; and even to this day, if you should wander about in Ireland, you would see in many a little cottage people gathered around the fire, telling over and over the stories that their grandmothers had told them of his kind heart and his peculiar ways.

"The Pilgrim's Progress," "Robinson Crusoe," and "Gulliver's Travels" were all written by men of the British Isles, but our fourth book, "Don Quixote," was written by a Spaniard named Cervantes. He was a soldier part of his life and as valiant a fighter as his own hero. For five years he was a prisoner of war; he was poor and sick and in one trouble after another; but he was always brave and cheerful and good-humored. In his day, the Spaniards read few

books except queer old romances of chivalry, the sort of tale in which a great [pg 014] champion goes out with his squire to wander over the world in search of adventures. He makes thieves give back what they have stolen, he sets prisoners free, he rescues beautiful maidens who have been dragged away from their homes; in short, he roams about making people do whatever he thinks proper. Sometimes he takes a castle all by himself, sometimes he gets the better of a whole group of champions or a host of giants or even a dragon or two. Cervantes's book makes fun of such tales as these. His hero attacks a terrible company of giants standing on a plain all ready to destroy him; but the giants prove to be windmills, and their sails give him many a heavy blow before his fight with them is over. Another time, he finds the giants in his very bedroom; and the courageous knight cuts off their heads as fast as he can swing his sword. Blood flows like water; only when a light is brought, it does not prove to be blood but—well, it is not fair to tell the rest of the story. We must let Cervantes do that for himself in "Don Quixote's Battle with the Giants."

The fifth book, the "Arabian Nights," is a mystery. We do not know who composed the stories or who brought them together in one collection. We cannot even tell where they came from. The most we can say positively is that two hundred years ago a Frenchman traveling through the East came across them in some Arabian manuscripts and translated them into French. Whether they came in the first place from Arabia or Persia or India, whether they were composed five or six hundred years ago or at least one thousand, no one can say. Many learned scholars have tried in vain to [pg 015] answer these questions; but if we had to choose between having the stories and knowing who wrote them, I do not believe that any boy or girl who had read even one of them would find it difficult to make a choice.

The sixth book, "The Travels of Baron Munchausen," is said to have been written by a German named Raspé; but it is just as well not to believe this statement too positively, for it is quite possible that Raspé had nothing to do with the book. Learned scholars have held profound discussions on the source of the stories. One in particular, that of the frozen tunes which began to play of themselves as soon as they thawed, has been found in some form in several

countries. The best match for the Baron's version is the old tale of the merchants who set out one day to buy furs. When they came to a river, they saw the fur dealers standing on the opposite shore. The dealers held up their furs and seemed to be shouting their prices, but it was so cold that the words froze in the air. Then the merchants went out on the ice and built a great fire. It warmed the air overhead, and the words thawed and came down. But long before this, the dealers had gone home. The merchants thought the prices too high, so they, too, went home; and that was the end of the tale. The "Travels" is full of stories as absurd as this, but told in such a way that while you are reading them, and sometimes for as much as five minutes afterwards, you feel as if they were really true.

The seventh and last of the books is the plays of Shakespeare. A play always contains a story, and it is the stories of some of Shakespeare's dramas that are [pg 016] given here. In the real plays there is much more than stories, however, because Shakespeare was not only a story-teller but also a poet. A poet must express what he sees and thinks in a way to give pleasure and he must see more than other people. Now when Shakespeare puts a thought into words, we find that no one else has expressed it so well. Moreover, he sees more clearly than any other writer how a person would feel and behave in various circumstances. As we read the plays, we say to ourselves of one character after another, "That is just the way I should feel if I were that person." We think of them as real people. We talk of what they would have done if circumstances had been different. It is only a great genius who can make out of words characters that seem almost as real as the people around us, but this is what William Shakespeare has done.

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

CHRISTIAN PASSES THROUGH THE WICKET GATE

By John Bunyan

In process of time *Christian* got up to the Gate. Now over the Gate there was written, *Knock and it shall be opened unto you*. He knocked therefore more then once or twice, saying, —

"May I now enter here? Will he within
Open to sorry me, though I have bin
An undeserving Rebel? Then shall I
Not fail to sing his lasting praise on high."

At last there came a grave Person to the Gate named *Good-Will*, who asked Who was there? and whence he came? and what he would have?

Chr. Here is a poor burdened sinner. I come from the City of *Destruction*, but am going to Mount *Zion*, that I may be delivered from the wrath to come. I would therefore, Sir, since I am informed that by this Gate is the way thither, know if you are willing to let me in.

Good-Will. I am willing with all my heart, said he; and with that he opened the Gate.

So when *Christian* was stepping in, the other gave him a pull. Then said *Christian*, What means that? The other told him, A little distance from this Gate, there is erected a strong Castle, of which *Beelzebub* is the Captain; from thence both he and they that are with him shoot [pg 020] arrows at those that come up to this Gate, if haply they may dye before they can enter in. Then said *Christian*, I rejoyce and tremble. So when he was got in, the Man of the Gate asked him, Who directed him thither?

Chr.Evangelist bid me come hither and knock (as I did); and he said that you, Sir, would tell me what I must do.

Good-Will. An open door is set before thee, and no man can shut it.

Chr. Now I begin to reap the benefits of my hazards.

Good-Will. But how is it that you came alone?

Chr. Because none of my Neighbours saw their danger, as I saw mine.

Good-Will. Did any of them know of your coming?

Chr. Yes, my Wife and Children saw me at the first, and called after me to turn again; also some of my Neighbours stood crying and calling after me to return; but I put my fingers in my ears, and so came on my way.

Good-Will. But did none of them follow you, to persuade you to go back?

Chr. Yes, both *Obstinate* and *Pliable*; but when they saw that they could not prevail, *Obstinate* went railing back, but *Pliable* came with me a little way.

Good-Will. But why did he not come through?

Chr. We indeed came both together, until we came at the Slow of *Dispond*, into the which we also suddenly fell. And then was my Neighbour *Pliable* discouraged, and would not adventure further. Wherefore getting out again on that side next to his own house, he told me I should possess the brave countrey alone for him; so he [pg 021] went *his way*, and I came *mine*: he after *Obstinate*, and I to this Gate.

Good-Will. Then said *Good-Will*, Alas, poor man, is the Cœlestial Glory of so small esteem with him, that he counteth it not worth running the hazards of a few difficulties to obtain it?

Chr. Truly, said *Christian*, I have said the truth of *Pliable*, and if I should also say all the truth of myself, it will appear there is no betterment 'twixt him and myself. 'T is true, he went back to his own house, but I also turned aside to go in the way of death, being persuaded thereto by the carnal arguments of one Mr. *Worldly Wiseman*.

Good-Will. O, did he light upon you? What! he would have had you a sought for ease at the hands of Mr. *Legality*. They are both of them a very cheat. But did you take his counsel?