

This book gets off its mark very smartly and throughout is notable for a certain slickness - a movement that is andante at its slowest and allegro con brio at its speediest.

I found the contrast rather obvious between the Francie of F. on the Run and the Fr. of this book. That faery quality which he had in the former book is missing and given entirely to Pegeen. Francie takes his place among his real people - his family and school companions - and that is perhaps all right, like some Ulysses who has the most fantastic adventures abroad and sheds the cloak of fantasy on his own doorstep. Indeed, I feel that the author is at some pains to underline this new Francie. In making him contrast with Liam the lover of little things, she seems to me to change him somewhat for the worse, compared with the other book.

I should have preferred that the animal lover - the little Saint - should have been called Kevin, who was the Irish Saint Francis. I am sure that the author knows that Kevin Francis is a very favoured coupling of names in Ireland now. She will know the Legend of Glendalough, I am sure. It is most beautifully told in the lovely ballad of Dora Sigerson. You can obtain a copy of a collection of her excellent ballads - remaindered - at Hanna's, Nassau street, for 3d. I agree with Douglas Hyde's opinion that she is the best writer of ballads for generations. (Becoming more practical, I'll get ye a copy and enclose it with this.)

I found the mischief-making of Pegeen very plausible: so much so that I have - with a certain reluctance, as who should confess to being more of a simpleton than his public pretensions would allow - to confess that I often felt that she was going to do what she didn't oughter and was somewhat upset at this foreknowledge and had a fear for Pegeen. This is as much as saying that Pegeen was alive to me.

The childlike love element - what a crude phrase! - was most happily handled. My fears proved needless, I am very

The illustrations are less happy, I think, than in Fr. on the Run. That of Widow Magee on p. 17 is ok because she is a frightening old chrone. But the lady of Castle Dermot in Fr. on the Run, also shown in profile, is too like this and not my piece of pie, as I remarked before. The one on p. 79 is a great bit of work, I think. It reminds me of the exciting quality of the picture in the former book of Francie in the tree watching the departing bus. And others are fine: p. 183, 221, 243, 130.

pleased to admit.

My total impression from the two books is that the author could, if she wanted to, write the most excellent books of this kind of a real sort. I mean that she could use the real throughout and succeed brilliantly. I am not denying her success with Celtic stories and characters twice alive - alive in the dream-world and in the real world at one and the same time. But I'd very much like to read a book of hers which relied solely upon the real world of children and the large-little world of home. I do think she could achieve a book that would be universal in its truth, as Charlie Chaplin's silent comedy is with its tears in the heart of it. I mean such a book as should have children for characters and have that amazing quality of The Wind in the Willows.

I hope it is not presumptuous - or thought to be - if I recommend the author to read some of the stories of 'Saki'. I do not know of any story which has a real boy in it so perfectly as 'The Lumber Room'. In all I say to you and write about your wife's books I assume that children's books are on the same level as any others. Taking all the works of fiction I have read I know that I award my own biscuit ~~is~~ for greatness to The Wind in the Willows, Alice in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz (assuredly, for all its defects), one or two of the short stories of 'Saki' derived from his own boyhood, and with less confidence to Farnol's Chronicles of the Imp and Pinocchio. I cannot make any sense of the notion that Tolstol's War and Peace, The Pickwick Papers, The Deserted Village, Dante's epics, Joyce's Portrait of the Artist . . ., or any others generally acclaimed as masterpieces of the world's literature - that these are great and the others I have mentioned - addressed to children, for the most part - are of a different species of books. All this is to say that I treat Hilda van Stockum's books with the same respect as those of the great writers mentioned, and hope she will achieve greatness in the sphere she has by mind and heart chosen for herself.

(I note that although the book Pegeen is published in 1942 we still have Irish Free State. This dates the books unnecessarily, I think. But to call this country 'Eire' when writing in English is barbaric - or diplomatic, if you prefer to put it so.)