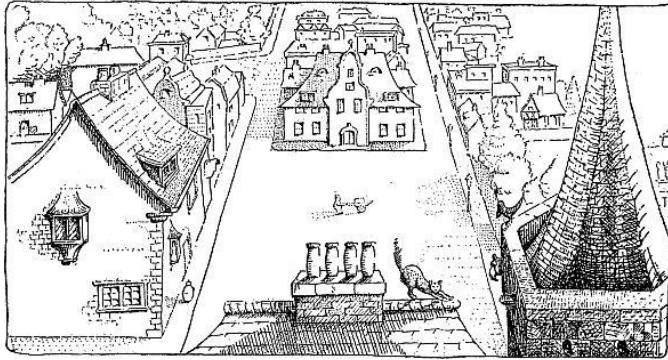


***THE STORY OF DOCTOR
DOLITTLE***

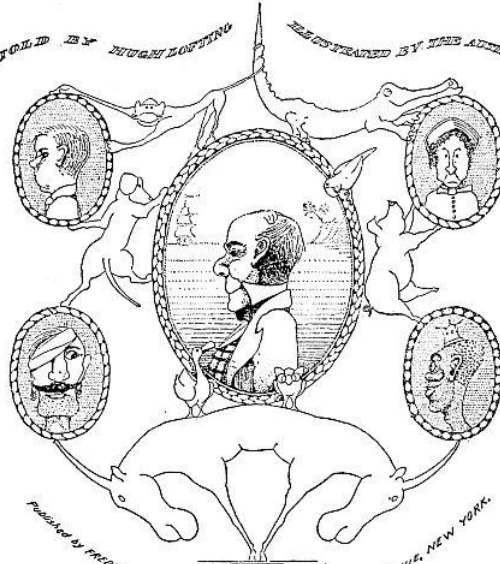


“A little town called Puddleby-on-the-Marsh”

THE
Story of
DOCTOR DOLITTLE

BEING THE
HISTORY OF HIS PECULIAR LIFE
AT HOME AND ASTONISHING ADVENTURES
IN FOREIGN PARTS. NEVER BEFORE PRINTED.

TOLD BY HUGH LOFTING REGISTERED BY THE AUTHOR



PUBLISHED BY FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY OF 413 FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK.
A. D. 1930

WITH AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TENTH PRINTING
BY HUGH WALPOLE

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First Printing,	Aug.	24, 1920
Second Printing,	Dec.	17, 1920
Third Printing,	April	16, 1921
Fourth Printing,	July	7, 1921
Fifth Printing,	Sept.	1, 1921
Sixth Printing,	Oct.	26, 1921
Seventh Printing,	Dec.	5, 1921
Eighth Printing,	April	3, 1922
Ninth Printing,	Aug.	18, 1922
Tenth Printing,	Nov.	28, 1922
Eleventh Printing,	April	2, 1923

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO
ALL CHILDREN

CHILDREN IN YEARS AND CHILDREN IN HEART
I DEDICATE THIS STORY

INTRODUCTION TO THE TENTH PRINTING

THERE are some of us now reaching middle age who discover themselves to be lamenting the past in one respect if in none other, that there are no books written now for children comparable with those of thirty years ago. I say written *for* children because the new psychological business of writing *about* them as though they were small pills or hatched in some especially scientific method is extremely popular to-day. Writing for children rather than about them is very difficult as everybody who has tried it knows. It can only be done, I am convinced, by somebody having a great deal of the child in his own outlook and sensibilities. Such was the author of "The Little Duke" and "The Dove in the Eagle's Nest," such the author of "A Flatiron for a Farthing," and "The Story of a Short Life." Such, above all, the author of "Alice in Wonderland." Grownups imagine that they can do the trick by adopting baby language and talking down to their very critical audience. There never was a greater mistake. The imagination of the author must be a child's imagination and yet maturely consistent, so that the White Queen in "Alice," for instance, is seen just as a child would see her, but she continues always herself through all her distressing adventures. The supreme touch of the white rabbit pulling on his white gloves as he hastens is again absolutely the child's vision, but the white rabbit as guide and introducer of Alice's adventures belongs to mature grown insight.

Geniuses are rare and, without being at all an undue praiser of times past, one can say without hesitation that until the appearance of Hugh Lofting, the successor of Miss Yonge, Mrs. Ewing, Mrs. Gatty and Lewis Carroll had not appeared. I remember the delight with which some six months ago I picked up the first "Dolittle" book in the Hampshire bookshop at Smith College in Northampton. One of Mr. Lofting's pictures was quite

enough for me. The picture that I lighted upon when I first opened the book was the one of the monkeys making a chain with their arms across the gulf. Then I looked further and discovered Bumpo reading fairy stories to himself. And then looked again and there was a picture of John Dolittle's house.

But pictures are not enough although most authors draw so badly that if one of them happens to have the genius for line that Mr. Lofting shows there must be, one feels, something in his writing as well. There is. You cannot read the first paragraph of the book, which begins in the right way "Once upon a time" without knowing that Mr. Lofting believes in his story quite as much as he expects you to. That is the first essential for a story teller. Then you discover as you read on that he has the right eye for the right detail. What child-inquiring mind could resist this intriguing sentence to be found on the second page of the book:

"Besides the gold-fish in the pond at the bottom of his garden, he had rabbits in the pantry, white mice in his piano, a squirrel in the linen closet and a hedgehog in the cellar."

And then when you read a little further you will discover that the Doctor is not merely a peg on whom to hang exciting and various adventures but that he is himself a man of original and lively character. He is a very kindly, generous man, and anyone who has ever written stories will know that it is much more difficult to make kindly, generous characters interesting than unkindly and mean ones. But Dolittle is interesting. It is not only that he is quaint but that he is wise and knows what he is about. The reader, however young, who meets him gets very soon a sense that if he were in trouble, not necessarily medical, he would go to Dolittle and ask his advice about it. Dolittle seems to extend his hand from the page and grasp that of his reader, and I can see him going down the centuries a kind of Pied Piper with thousands of children at his heels. But not only is he a darling and alive and credible but his creator has also managed to invest everybody else in the book with the same kind of life.

Now this business of giving life to animals, making them talk and behave like human beings, is an extremely difficult one. Lewis Carroll absolutely conquered the difficulties, but I am not sure that anyone after him until Hugh Lofting has really managed the trick; even in such a masterpiece as “The Wind in the Willows” we are not quite convinced. John Dolittle’s friends are convincing because their creator never forces them to desert their own characteristics. Polynesia, for instance, is natural from first to last. She really does care about the Doctor but she cares as a bird would care, having always some place to which she is going when her business with her friends is over. And when Mr. Lofting invents fantastic animals he gives them a kind of credible possibility which is extraordinarily convincing. It will be impossible for anyone who has read this book not to believe in the existence of the pushmi-pullyu, who would be credible enough even were there no drawing of it, but the picture on page 153 settles the matter of his truth once and for all.

In fact this book is a work of genius and, as always with works of genius, it is difficult to analyze the elements that have gone to make it. There is poetry here and fantasy and humor, a little pathos but, above all, a number of creations in whose existence everybody must believe whether they be children of four or old men of ninety or prosperous bankers of forty-five. I don’t know how Mr. Lofting has done it; I don’t suppose that he knows himself. There it is—the first real children’s classic since “Alice.”

HUGH WALPOLE.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

“A little town called Puddleby-on-the-Marsh”

“And she never came to see him any more”

“He could see as well as ever”

“They came at once to his house on the edge of the town”

“They used to sit in chairs on the lawn”

“‘All right,’ said the Doctor, ‘go and get married’”

“One evening when the Doctor was asleep in his chair”

“‘I felt sure there was twopence left’”

“And the voyage began”

“‘We must have run into Africa’”

“‘I got into it because I did not want to be drowned’”

“And Queen Ermintrude was asleep”

“‘Who’s that?’”

“Cheering and waving leaves and swinging

out of the branches to greet him”

“John Dolittle was the last to cross”

“He made all the monkeys who were still well come and be vaccinated”

“*ME, the King of Beasts*, to wait on a lot of dirty monkeys?”

“Then the Grand Gorilla got up”

“‘Lord save us!’ cried the duck. ‘How does it make up its mind?’”

“He began reading the fairy-stories to himself”

“Crying bitterly and waving till the ship was out of sight”

“They are surely the pirates of Barbary”

“And you have heard that rats always leave a sinking ship?”

“Look here, Ben Ali—”

“Sh!—Listen!—I do believe there’s someone in there!”

“You stupid piece of warm bacon!”

“Doctor!’ he cried. ‘I’ve got it!’”

“And she kissed the Doctor many times”

“The Doctor sat in a chair in front”

“He began running round the garden like a

crazy thing”

**THE STORY OF
DOCTOR DOLITTLE**

THE FIRST CHAPTER

PUDDLEBY



ONCE upon a time, many years ago—when our grandfathers were little children—there was a doctor; and his name was Dolittle—John Dolittle, M.D. “M.D.” means that he was a proper doctor and knew a whole lot.

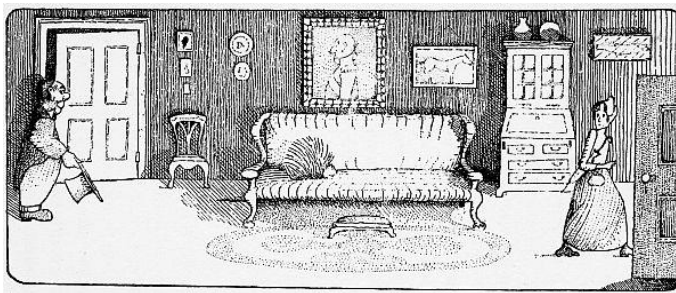
He lived in a little town called, Puddleby-on-the-Marsh. All the folks, young and old, knew him well by sight. And whenever he walked down the street in his high hat everyone would say, “There goes the Doctor!—He’s a clever man.” And the dogs and the children would all run up and follow behind him; and even the crows that lived in the church-tower would caw and nod their heads.

The house he lived in, on the edge of the town, was quite small; but his garden was very large and had a wide lawn and stone seats and weeping-willows hanging over. His sister, Sarah Dolittle, was housekeeper for him; but the Doctor looked after the garden himself.

He was very fond of animals and kept many kinds of pets. Besides the gold-fish in the pond at the bottom of his garden, he had rabbits in the pantry, white mice in his piano, a squirrel in the linen closet and a hedgehog in the cellar. He had a cow with a calf too, and an old lame horse—twenty-five years of age—and chickens, and pigeons, and two lambs, and many other animals. But his favorite pets were Dab-Dab the duck, Jip the dog, Gub-Gub the baby pig, Polynesia the parrot, and the owl Too-Too.

His sister used to grumble about all these animals and said they made the house untidy. And one day when an old lady with rheumatism came to see

the Doctor, she sat on the hedgehog who was sleeping on the sofa and never came to see him any more, but drove every Saturday all the way to Oxenthorpe, another town ten miles off, to see a different doctor.



“And she never came to see him any more”

Then his sister, Sarah Dolittle, came to him and said,

“John, how can you expect sick people to come and see you when you keep all these animals in the house? It’s a fine doctor would have his parlor full of hedgehogs and mice! That’s the fourth personage these animals have driven away. Squire Jenkins and the Parson say they wouldn’t come near your house again—no matter how sick they are. We are getting poorer every day. If you go on like this, none of the best people will have you for a doctor.”

“But I like the animals better than the ‘best people’,” said the Doctor.

“You are ridiculous,” said his sister, and walked out of the room.

So, as time went on, the Doctor got more and more animals; and the people who came to see him got less and less. Till at last he had no one left—except the Cat’s-meat-Man, who didn’t mind any kind of animals. But the Cat’s-meat-Man wasn’t very rich and he only got sick once a year—at Christmas-time, when he used to give the Doctor sixpence for a bottle of medicine.

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