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The Cuckoo Clock

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This is another well-produced volume in Jane Nissen's series of classic reprints. Mrs Molesworth's story was first published in 1877 and E H Shepard's cosy but clear-cut illustrations (used in the present edition) gave it a sense of freshness and modernity. Mrs Molesworth's narrative makes intriguing reading: a century and a quarter on, it remains vivid and readable, although her moralizing reflections on what constitutes good behaviour in children might seem unpalatable to today's readers. In fairness, however, it should be said that the author skilfully coats the pill of instruction with the jam of levity. The magical character who provides excitements and challenges for Griselda, the small girl heroine, is the bird in a cuckoo clock which periodically comes to life. He is, like his more famous successors, the Psammead and Phoenix of E Nesbit's stories, kind but quirky, and only prepared to help Griselda if she accords him the sort of respect that Victorian children were expected to give their 'elders and betters'. Nevertheless Griselda only rarely complains about his arrogance, as he sweeps her away from the comfortable but claustrophobic confines of the home she shares with her two great-aunts to magical adventures in improbable places such as Butterfly Land and The Other Side of the Moon, where she learns a great deal about herself and her relationships.

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