



The House Without Windows

Books Reviewed:

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[Brian Alderson](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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?She went east from her home on a shady path through beautiful woodlands, with here and there a grove of great, massive pines. And as she walked she sang merrily.? Thus Eepersip Eigleen, leaving her family on page 7 and walking, running, swimming, climbing, with quite a lot of singing going on as well for the rest of the book's two hundred odd pages. Although her parents and some neighbours, the Ikkisfields, the Wraspanes, and the Brunios (Follett has quite a way with names) make farcical attempts to recapture her she escapes with the help of a friendly doe and its fawn. She has taught herself to go barefoot, finds permanent sustenance in a healthy diet of berries, and she works out how to make dresses from ferns so that, thus equipped, she becomes a child of nature, travelling from meadow to sea to mountain through endless landscapes of flowers, trees, and streams amidst an Eden of animals, fish, and birds. Personkind does not obtrude itself in all this except when we (and she) are startled to discover that a sister has appeared back home and ? time being of no account - is later prevailed upon to join her in her mountain expedition. (That is aborted when the young thing gets homesick.) What other ending is possible in this paean of Romantic Wanderlust than that she should desert this House Without Windows (which we are now busily destroying) to become ?a sprite of the meadow, a naiad of lakes, a nymph of the woods?.

First published in America by Knopf in 1927 the book became an instant bestseller largely because it was the work of a twelve-year-old. Her original manuscript, begun when she was ten, was burned in a house-fire so this was its second outing. Eleanor Farjeon, in a gushing review, reprinted here, called it ?a child's dream of childhood?, overcome by Follett's sustained glorying in her naturesscape. But without any similarly sustained contrast by way of setbacks or dramatic confrontations the text takes on the character of something from the pen of Basil Fotherington-Thomas.

Hamish Hamilton have done the work proud in terms of production ? attractively put together,with fine wash drawings of birds and beasts throughout by Jackie Morris. She also writes an introduction outlining the strange and sad life of Barbara Newhall Follett who grew up to marry in 1934 but then, five years later, left her house with windows and was never seen again.

Links:

[1] <http://edbtjyw.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-house-without-windows>

[2] <http://edbtjyw.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/239>

[3] <http://edbtjyw.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/brian-alderson>