

THE WHISPER OF GLOCKEN by CAROL KENDALL.

Reviewed by ROSIE TURNER.

This is one of the many children's books that have been influenced by 'The Hobbit.' It tells of a race called the minnipins, who live in the valley that separates the Frostbite, Snowdrift, Sunrise and Sunset Mountains. Glocken, the bellringer of the village of Water-Gap, sits in his bell-tower, and daydreams about the 'heroic' deeds of the five heroes of the neighbouring village of Slipper-on-the-Water.

Suddenly he notices that the river is rising, and slowly submerging the village, and he hastens to sound the alarm. The village is evacuated, and Glocken is taken (reluctantly) from his beloved bell-tower. At the last moment he snatches an heirloom, the Whisper-stone, from its niche in the wall, and climbs into a boat. The Whisper-stone is a flat stone with curious lines scratched upon it, and has been handed down from Glocken to Glocken, since the Minnipins first entered the valley.

Glocken's companions in the boat are Scrumble, a rather smelly individual, whose job was that of a 'fish-oil presser,' Silky, a rather sentimental lady; Crustabread, who always spoke with a gulp at the beginning of each sentence, and Gam Lutie, a very important villager but a shrewish, bad tempered woman, who seems (at first) to think more of saving the town's treasure, than of saving her fellow-villagers.

These four companions finally reach Slipper-on-the-Water (the only village not submerged) and meet the five 'old' heroes, Duke Walter, a rather ludicrous figure, with a Very Grand manner of speech; Muggles, an untidy, matronly kind of woman, who is fond of giving (sometimes useless) advice; Curley Green, famed for her floating pale hair; Mingy, who is never very far away from his money-box; and Gummy, who makes up poetry!

Glocken, by this time, is feeling rather disillusioned that his 'heroes' have turned out to be just ordinary (even slightly comical) people.

The five 'heroes' decide that Scrumble, Crustabread, Gam Lutie and Glocken must travel beyond the mountains, and find out what is blocking the river and causing the flood. Such a thing is, of course, entirely against Minnipin nature, and it is with some trepidation that they agree.

Once on the other side of the mountain, they meet with the 'Diggers,' a thin spidery race of creatures, who can dig at a tremendous rate, and tend to imitate whatever the Minnipins do, so that when Gam Lutie hits the digger that is carrying her, over the head, you can imagine the result!... Silky adopts a baby digger whose leg was injured by a rock, and names it the Wafer. Gam Lutie thinks, of course, that she should be the leader of the party, and nearly brings on catastrophe when they let her have her way. Throughout the story, Gam Lutie's character softens, to the extent that when her companions are ill from eating poisoned fish-cakes, it is she who saves their lives.

The companions are captured by a huge, Troll-like race, called the Hulks, and from their dungeon they can see the cause of the flood. The Hulks have built a dam across the river, and intend to turn the valley into a reservoir! Worse still, they intend to take the Minnipins with them when they leave, to be the pets of Hulk-children. The Minnipins notice the cage, and realise its purpose, and escape to the mountains, where their friends the Diggers help them to dig out a cave. Glocken suddenly notices a gleam of gold near the cave-roof, and finds it is a bell. Further digging reveals that he has found a carillon of twenty-three bells. He strikes the last bell, and the dam collapses. Glocken then realises that he has found the Whisper, the magical bell of his forefathers. In his joy, he strikes the bell again, and the mountain falls down upon them.

In Slipper-on-the-Water, the five 'old' heroes have heard the bells, and are amazed to see that the mountain has fallen. They set out to rescue them, and Muggles eventually finds them, safe and well.

Meanwhile, in Water-Gap, the Four Heroes have been presumed dead, and a Memory-Service is arranged for the next day; so when the heroes arrive at their own village, it is to hear the second-best bellringer playing the Great Memory Peal in their honour! Glocken immediately

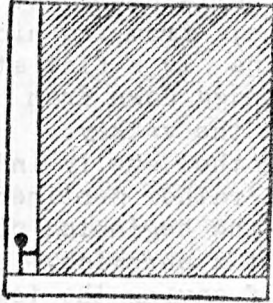
sets down his magical bells from the mountains, and plays his family's own traditional tune:-

Hear the whisper, whisper, whisper,
That lost and far-off whisper,
And remember, member, member,
The whisper of Glocken's bell.

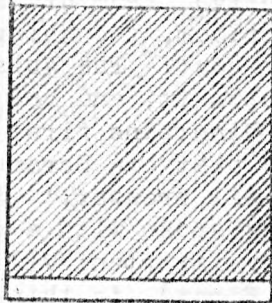
The villagers then realise that the heroes have come home again. As for the Diggers, Glocken agrees to bring the bells once a year beyond the mountains and play for them.

'The Whisper of Glocken' is published by Bodley Head at 90p.

Rosie Turner



Hobbit attacking
an oliphaunt.



Oliphaunt
retaliating.

A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA by Ursula Le Guin

This is a book for children set in a heroic fantasy world. You may recall another such, called 'The Hobbit'. This is the best since. As you see, I'm comitted, so now I have to convince you.

Earthsea is a world of islands, thousands of them, surrounded by apparently boundless ocean. It has wizards, dragons, Empires, pirates, in fact everything that a proper fantasy should have. And super maps too - never could resist maps.

Puffin 25p in UK, Ace Special in USA. A second novel set in the same world, 'The Tombs of Atuan', is now out in hardback in the USA. Mrs Le Guin has also written several SF novels, one of which 'Left Hand of Darkness' has won several awards.

I'll start you off with the first two paragraphs, how's that:

'The island of Gont, a single mountain that lifts its peak a mile above the storm-racked NNrtheast Sea, is a land famous for wizards. From the towns in its high valleys and the ports on its dark narrow bays many a Gontishman has gone forth to serve the Lords of the Archipelago in their cities as wizard or mage, or, looking for adventure, to wander working magic from isle to isle of all Earthsea.

Of these some say the greatest, and surely the greatest voyager, was the man called Sparrowhawk, who in his day became both dragonlord and Archmage. His life is told of in the Deed of Ged and in many songs, but this is a tale of the time before his fame, before the songs were made.'

- Hartley Patterson.

