

?PDF / Epub? ? The Bell Family Author Noel Streatfeild – Soccerjerseys-wholesale.co

Posted on 09 December 2018 By Noel Streatfeild

This version is a reprint in the Vintage Children s Classics series and it s interesting to see what the editors have decided need to be explained for twenty first century children in the additions at the end of the book Make do and mend words like ermine , perambulator and verger There s a brief biography of Noel Streatfeild, an explanation of the background to the book it was originally a radio serial and a couple of quizzes There is also, for no reason that I can discern, a Who s Who that describes the characters about whom the reader has presumably just read This book from the 1950s, published only 19 years before I was born, is definitely being presented as just as exotically historical as Little Women 1868 and The Railway Children 1905 , both also in the Vintage Children s Classic series I m starting to feel like a relic myself This is definitely not one of the best of Streatfeild s books The reader has less access to the characters inner lives than in most of her other children s books, presumably because the book started as a radio play The children are all versions of children that we ve seen before And while I think we re meant to find Ginnie amusing and to be on her side, Miss Virginia Bell came across to me as a self centred little madam The Bell Family is most interesting when read alongside Streatfeild s autobiography A Vicarage Family Alex Bell is another idealised version of Jim Strangeway or William Streatfeild, and Cathy Bell is the sort of mother who could make life in an impoverished vicarage liveable and fairly comfortable, where poor Sylvia Strangeway or Janet Streatfeild, as portrayed by Noel, failed miserably There are some wonderful passages that sound like Noel is

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describing her own father and her reaction to him Alex never got really cross He thought it wrong to be cross and so struggled to keep that he was feeling cross to himself Jane said Alex s keeping feeling cross to himself was worse than snapping out as ordinary people did, who were not parsons She thought trying hard gave him a martyred face, which made other people lose their tempers looking at it But it s impossible to imagine Janet, portrayed as Sylvia , as ever saying Do you think I d miss one minute of watching my children grow up for all the money in the world Is Noel writing for the child who felt that her mother didn t like her It s also interesting to compare this realistic book with Streatfeild s romances written as Susan Scarlett I ve recently read Babbacombe s and in both The Bell Family and Babbacombe s there is a family money box which constantly needs to be raided for emergencies and so the amount to be saved for is never reached But in Babbacombe s the money in the box is for a fur coat for the mother of the family, and she is given a fur coat by the wealthy family into which her daughter marries The ways in which the Bells come into needed money are a little realistic, although still magical in the context of the book. Recommended for fans of Streatfeild, but I d definitely start non fans off on Ballet Shoes. Cute story Good for younger readers. Number 87 on my Classics Club list, The Bell Family by Noel Streatfeild was first published in 1954 As I so adored Ballet Shoes when I read it for the first time a couple of years ago, I had very high hopes for Streatfeild s other works The Bell Family has recently been reissued by Vintage Children s Classics, with a darling cover designed by Alice Tait, and I was able to borrow a copy from my local library. The novel follows, as the title suggests, the Bell family, who are carrying out their eventful lives against the busy backdrop of London I adore the premise which is described in the blurb as follows Meet the big, happy Bell family who live in the vicarage at St Mark s Father is a reverend, Mother is as kind as kind can be Then there are all the children practical Paul, dancing Jane, mischievous Ginnie, and finally the baby of the family, Angus, whose ambition is to own a private zoo he has already begun with his six boxes of caterpillars Streatfeild sets the scene immediately The Thames is a very twisting sort of river It is as if it had to force its way into London, and had become bent in the process In the

Night

The Secret Life of Bees

The Informationist

Memoirs of a Geisha

The Golden Compass

The Two Towers

The Language of Flowers

Unlikely Brothers

Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything

The Zombie Room

The Hungry Wolves of Van Diemen's Land

Never Knowing

The Elephant Tree

Lock and Key

smaller bulge to the left is the part of south east London in which the Bells lived The people around where the Bells lived are not rich mostly they live in small houses joined on to their next door neighbours It is a very noisy part of the world People shout a lot, and bang a lot, and laugh a lot. The novel is almost like a series of short stories the family are followed throughout, but a different event takes precedence in each chapter In this manner, I was reminded of Michael Bond s delightful Paddington novels, which use a very similar structure, and Rumer Godden s children s stories, which are written in the same quaint and amusing way. As with the other Vintage Children s Classics, this edition of The Bell Family contains a wealth of extra information, ranging from an author biography to a quiz which you can take once you have finished reading As a child, I would have been delighted by this interactive aspect, and it still charmed me somewhat as an adult reader. Streatfeild is very perceptive of her characters, and The Bell Family is certainly a nice book to settle down with However, there is not really much of substance within its pages It did not have a memorable cast of characters such as those within Ballet Shoes, and it paled rather in comparison Whilst the Bell children were quite sweet, there was nothing overly distinctive about them, and I doubt I will remember much about them in a year or so I imagine that I would have enjoyed The Bell Family far had I been a child on my first encounter with it. For my full review was a time when The Bell Family were Noel Streatfeild s most popular creations Wherever Streatfeild went, she was reportedly quizzed about Miss Virginia Bell and her doings In recent decades however, the family faded from popularity and despite attempts to rebrand them into the Shoes series as Family Shoes, their adventures went out of print until Vintage came to the rescue Having no ties of childhood nostalgia here but being in the mood for some comfort reading, I was intrigued to see what I would make of the novel as an adult. The premise is of an impoverished vicarage family overcoming obstacles and in particular how the children of the family Paul, Jane, Ginnie and Angus achieve their ambitions Regular readers of Streatfeild may notice that this situation closely resembles that of Streatfeild s own childhood, which she later fictionalised in A Vicarage Family, written around ten years after the publication of The Bell Family Having read both

The Hidden Wound

Chronicle of a Death
Foretold

Blubber

When You Reach Me

The Ordinary Princess

books, *Bell Family* does feel slightly like *The Whicharts* to *Vicarage s Ballet Shoes* *Streatfeild* does have form for re using old material. The Bell parents are idealised versions of the characters who *Streatfeild* presents as her own parents in *Vicarage* Alex Bell is the kindly vicar who believes that there is no point in ever getting cross and who holds no grudge at being cut off by his father for entering the church His wife Cathy is the practical and warm woman who contrasts sharply with the much colder mother who *Streatfeild* depicted in *A Vicarage Family* Cathy s repeated assertions of how little money matters to her A sample speech is Do you think I d miss one minute of watching my children grow up for all the money in the world seems like wish fulfilment for *Streatfeild* when one considers how she later depicted her mother s resentfulness about the family finances The four Bell children are Paul who plans to be a doctor, Jane who longs to dance, Ginnie who likes get in the way as much as possible and Angus who adores animals There is also Esau the dog, beloved by all but fed the most appalling diet I have ever read it was a miracle the poor animal made it to the end of the book still alive. The other thing which makes *The Bell Family* rather different to most of *Streatfeild* s other novels is that it started life as a radio serial The book is therefore structured as a series of short stories rather than having an over arching plot, with each episode resolved rapidly and with no major incident ever really taking place The characters seem thinly drawn but I can imagine that might not have come across as strongly on the radio Ginnie apparently had the breakout role, with her habit of referring to herself as Miss Virginia Bell taken as endearing over the airwaves while on the page it is rather irksome It was unfortunate that although she was clearly intended to provide the comedy, she grated on me increasingly as the book progressed Between noseying in on someone who was ill and then not practising safe quarrantine standards, being rude to others, thoughtlessly promising other people s time in the hope of gaining glory for herself and then kidnapping a baby, she seemed less of a heroine and of a brat There are brats elsewhere in *Streatfeild* s fiction but they usually get a comeuppance. *The Bell Family* felt rather tired as a concept While *Streatfeild* often recycled character types in her other novels, somehow the situations tend to feel fresh Here, things

just felt very repetitive The usual fretting over what to wear, the sniping against wealthier relatives looking down their noses, grief over frocks not being what they should be, etc, etc If anyone ever wants to start up a Noel Streatfeild drinking game, I propose that one be obliged to take a sip every time she uses the word gorgeous or gorgeously you'll be hammered in no time and then down one's glass when the phrase sweetly pretty crops up it always does sooner or later And at that point, I feel like the Grinch, which was the last thing that I wanted when I only picked the book up because I knew that Streatfeild stories always end happily and I'm a sleep deprived first time parent. Streatfeild was a commercial writer who made her living writing stories that would sell The Bell Family had the feel of a second rate The Family at One End Street, which was published a decade previously One End Street broke ground in telling stories about a working class family but were rather interesting Yet although Vintage is clearly trying to press the family Bell as a pleasing period piece, it feels less vintage and just dated The dilemmas are never strong enough to generate real drama, the resolutions always too quick and over the top to be believable and the character development non-existent In other books, the child protagonists are encouraged to make better choices Ballet Shoes Pauline learns not to be a diva, White Boots Lalla suffers the consequences of being mean to Harriet, The Growing Summer children come to realise that they are not such martyrs after all but there is no such growth for the Bells It is not that Streatfeild is a substandard writer, it has been well over fifteen years since I last read A Vicarage Family and I still remember its painful final page, but here, the usual Streatfeild sparkle is absent. I am a big fan of Streatfeild but this family had no redeeming features Very saccharine writing Ghastly This was fun Jolly good fun, I'm almost tempted to say All in all, The Bell Family is a typical, old fashioned children's story Streatfeild tells the tale of a very charming, loud and noisy family and their everyday struggles and adventures The Bell family is not exactly poor they do not starve and they live in a very comfortable house However they cannot afford the small luxuries in life The eldest daughter Jane is pining for dance lessons, the youngest daughter Ginnie has a desperate need for a new dress, and the summer holiday is quiet and dreadful, as the family cannot afford to go

anywhere. The Bell family is constantly contrasted with their relatives who are rich but very obnoxious. While the Bell family isn't glamorous, they are good people who deserve lovely lives. As you read the story you cannot help but root for them. Jane deserves to succeed as a dancer, the family deserves a nice holiday and the eldest son Paul should be allowed to become a doctor. Streatfeild works magic as she unfolds her story. The Bell Family is a charmingly simple tale of a large family and their little hopes and sorrows. Well, Little People, What's the News? Meet the Big, Happy Bell Family Who Live in the Vicarage at St Marks. Father is a Reverend, Mother is as kind as kind can be. Then there's all the children: Practical Paul, Dancing Jane, Mischievous Ginnie, and finally the baby of the family, Angus, whose ambition is to own a private zoo. He has already begun with his six boxes of caterpillars. And not forgetting Esau, a sure-fire competitor for the most beautiful dog in Britain. Follow their eventful lives from tense auditions to birthday treats, from troubled times to hilarious escapades. Includes exclusive material in the backstory you can find out which one of the Bell children you most resemble. Vintage Classics is a twenty-first century classics list aimed at year olds and the adults in their lives. Discover timeless favourites from Peter Pan and Alice's Adventures in Wonderland to modern classics such as The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas and The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time. As a child I loved Noel Streatfeild's most famous work Ballet Shoes. I had dreams of being a ballerina which were never to materialise, although I did do a few dance exams which were pretty much exclusively because of that book. Yet for some reason I never read any of Streatfeild's books, until now. Vintage Classics published this edition of The Bell Family this spring. Originally a radio series in the 1950s, the Bells are a typical post-war family struggling to make ends meet. They have to make do and mend, utilise hand-me-downs from the wealthier side of their family and look for ways to bring in extra money. There isn't much of a plot, but that really doesn't matter. It is very much character-driven. Each of the children brings their own personality and charm to the book. Paul, the sensible eldest child, Jane who harbours dreams of attending ballet school, rash and mischievous Ginnie who is desperate to find her role

in the family I must admit to having a soft spot for her She s a feisty, determined madam and baby of the family Angus, who collects all manner of bugs in his quest to start his own zoo Then there is Esau the dog, who the Bell s are convinced is the most beautiful dog in Britain Mrs Gage, the housekeeper, has oodles of compassion and is a lovable addition to the character list The relationships between the children are a heart warming reminder that being part of a family unit involves hard work and compromise, emphasised by the teamwork ethic which is a running theme throughout the book As with any text of this age it is 60 years this year since *The Bell Family* was first published it contains words that are no longer in common usage However, there is a useful glossary in the extra features, alongside detailed author facts, information about life in the 1950s and a quiz to find out which Bell child you most closely resemble There are also beautiful line drawing illustrations by Shirley Hughes OBE, drawn in 1954, which compliment the story perfectly. I can t say how much I enjoyed this book which reflected on an era so different to the consumerist society we currently live in It has similarities to classics such as *The Railway Children*, and I think *The Bell Family* deserves the same level of acclaim it has been overlooked for far too long I m going to keep my copy, something I rarely do these days, because I know I will read it again in the future

Vintage Classics has a diverse range of titles, and the quality of the books is second to none They are good value for money and have modern covers to appeal to a young audience The hardest part is choosing which of these timeless children s books to read next although I must admit I m very tempted by *Emil and the Detectives*. At first I thought I wouldn t like this book the girls gush so, and there was a smell of the *Skating Shoes* family about it Again the parents aren t Mum and Dad but Cathy and Alex , making it hard to remember who s who just at first Why did Streatfeild consistently do that in the thirties calling your parents by their names was not a thing There s a singing little brother, a girl who just has to dance, and an angry little sister who thinks she knows it all, along with a rather shadowy eldest boy and the obligatory dog However it did get better, though I got fine and tired of the youngest girl the obligatory fat kid everyone laughs at calling herself Miss Virginia Bell in conversation. Published in 1954, but with a definite feeling of

earlier My edition had notes in the back about how everyone in Britain had to make do and mend and how clothes were much expensive then but they neglect to mention that the quality of clothes etc was also much higher, and a dress or suit could be used for years and years without showing a lot of wear There s a bit encouraging kids to find money making activities, including the tiresome old trope of a lemonade stand In these days of health and safety , I don t think that would go very far.An okay sort of read Three and a half stars. I ve been indulging in nostalgia rereading my Noel Streatfeild books that my mother read to me when I was very young and then sat on my bookshelf for decades There is something wonderfully sweet, comfortable, and innocent about these books and they remind me of my childhood Though it was nothing like is described in the books I just read a lot of these sort of books when I was a kid but I can t say much good about the actual writing She uses almost all the same characters just with different names throughout most of her books and some of the characters can be pretty annoying The plots also tend to be very similar and this particular book barely had a plot at all The author also seems to be terribly afraid about children becoming spoiled and lazy This might just be a popular idea of the time A lot of the old fashioned ideas in the books tend to grate a bit, and some things like her need to point out which girl is pretty and which is ugly bugged me Though it was nice escaping into these books, there are other much interesting and better written books about children from this time period in England that I can get the same sort of nostalgia from so I won t be reading these again.

NOEL STREATFEILD

The Bell Family

