Peak Inside the Holiday House Press Clippings Archives to See the Original Reviews of

THE RELUCTANT DRAGON

by Kenneth Grahame

illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard

Original Publication Date: November 14, 1938
“‘The Reluctant Dragon’ by Kenneth Grahame is a typical Holiday House book: original in itself, perfect of its kind, and utterly charming. Has anybody ever pointed out that these books make ideal collectors’ items?”

—Publisher’s Weekly, 1938

“A rare combination of wit and imagination on the part of the author, humor on the part of the illustrator, together with outstanding format designed by Helen Gentry, make this a delightful edition of a popular fantasy.”

—Booklist, 1938

“With this intriguing triumvirate, Kenneth Grahame has given us a little classic; so march up, ladies and gentlemen, and procure your first editions . . . for we prophecy that they will become valuable.”

—Boston Herald, 1939

“It is a title for every child’s library. And a good many adults, if they do not already know him, will be delighted with his delectable dragon who had a kind heart. . . . It belongs wherever it finds a kindred spirit.”

—Library Journal, 1939
This Dragon Was
Not Fighting Kind

The Shepherd's little son had read many books about dragons, so when his father discovered that there was a dragon in the cave on the hillside where he took the sheep for grass, he wasn't a bit excited.

The boy went up to see the dragon and found him very quiet, amiable sort of dragon who never wrecked gardens or frightened princesses or ate solitary travelers. In fact, he wanted to be left alone, for he was working on a sonnet and wanted to be quiet.

The dragon lived in the cave for a time very happily until his presence was discovered by the villagers and they sent for St. George. Things looked pretty serious, for St. George had never been known to lose a battle with a dragon and the boy didn't want his dragon friend hurt. This called for some quick thinking, but the boy managed it, and you will be surprised to learn what a reasonable man St. George was.

Children from 10 to 13 will enjoy this book, so different from the usual dragon story.

The Reluctant Dragon
By Kenneth Grahame, illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard (Holiday House, New York; $1.25).

Kenneth Grahame's delightful tale of the gentle, philosophical creature who happened to be a dragon, but was very reluctant to fight and didn't want to bother anybody, has become a children's classic since it first appeared as a chapter in Dream Days. Now The Reluctant Dragon appears in a separate edition (Holiday House) charmingly designed by Helen Gentry and illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard, who also did Mr. Grahame's Wind in the Willows.

Neither children nor grown-ups will ever forget the story of the Boy who was a dragon, his fair tales, so wasn't surprised when a dragon turned up in the neighborhood—in fact, he became a fast friend of the scaly creature. This dragon was quiet and harmless, and, indeed, a very social sort of fellow, but dragons are supposed to be, so St. George was sent for to fight him. The Boy arranged a friendly match between them in which nobody was hurt; St. George was awarded the decision, the dragon became a social success and the townsmen were happy.


The reluctant dragon first appeared in the author's Dream Days. The Boy whose line was dragons and who in "an afternoon of work" read natural history and fairy tales with no special distinction between them, was not at all surprised to learn from his father that a real dragon was in the cave on the downs. The illustrations illustrate Shepherd's delicate humor of the author, and this present edition designed by Helen Gentry, is an extremely attractive book. Grades 4-6.

See Booklist: 35: 143 Dec. 15 '38.

Holiday House has also printed as a slightly larger book "The Reluctant Dragon," a chapter from Kenneth Grahame's "Dream Days," with new illustrations by Ernest Shepard.
Reluctant Dragon by Kenneth Grahame, a perfect story for Armistice Day.


A delightful story of a dragon who has survived to the present day only because his easygoing nature kept him out of prehistoric combat. Slightly unscientific but not more so than Alice in Wonderland. Its humor is in a similar vein. It is sensitive to nature, exciting and colorful and it has that deliciously quiet satire which will appeal to the adult long before it reaches the child. 8-10 years.
—CECILIA S. HADE

The Reluctant Dragon — Kenneth Grahame, Holiday House, N. Y., 1938, $1.25.

First separate edition of this delightful story with special illustration by the artist who created the immortal drawings for Wind in the Willows.

PN 1461 G7 R4


Also reviewed. All ages.

AAR Booklist Dec. 10, 1938

The book note below was published in the current issue of The Horn Book, and may be reprinted provided credit is given to HORN BOOK.

Kenneth Grahame The Reluctant Dragon Holiday House $1.25

Illustrated by Ernest Shepard

Along with this little group of folk and fairy tale treasures, thanks should be given Holiday House for Kenneth Grahame's The Reluctant Dragon in a separate volume with Ernest Shepard's drawings. The shepherd and his wife in this story were very glad that their little boy liked to read books. "They knew that book-learning often came in useful at a pinch, in spite of what their neighbours said. What the boy chiefly dabbled in was natural history and fairy tales, and he just took them to heart."

THE HORN BOOK MONTHLY, Boys and Girls for Young People
264 Boylston Street, Boston, Massachusetts