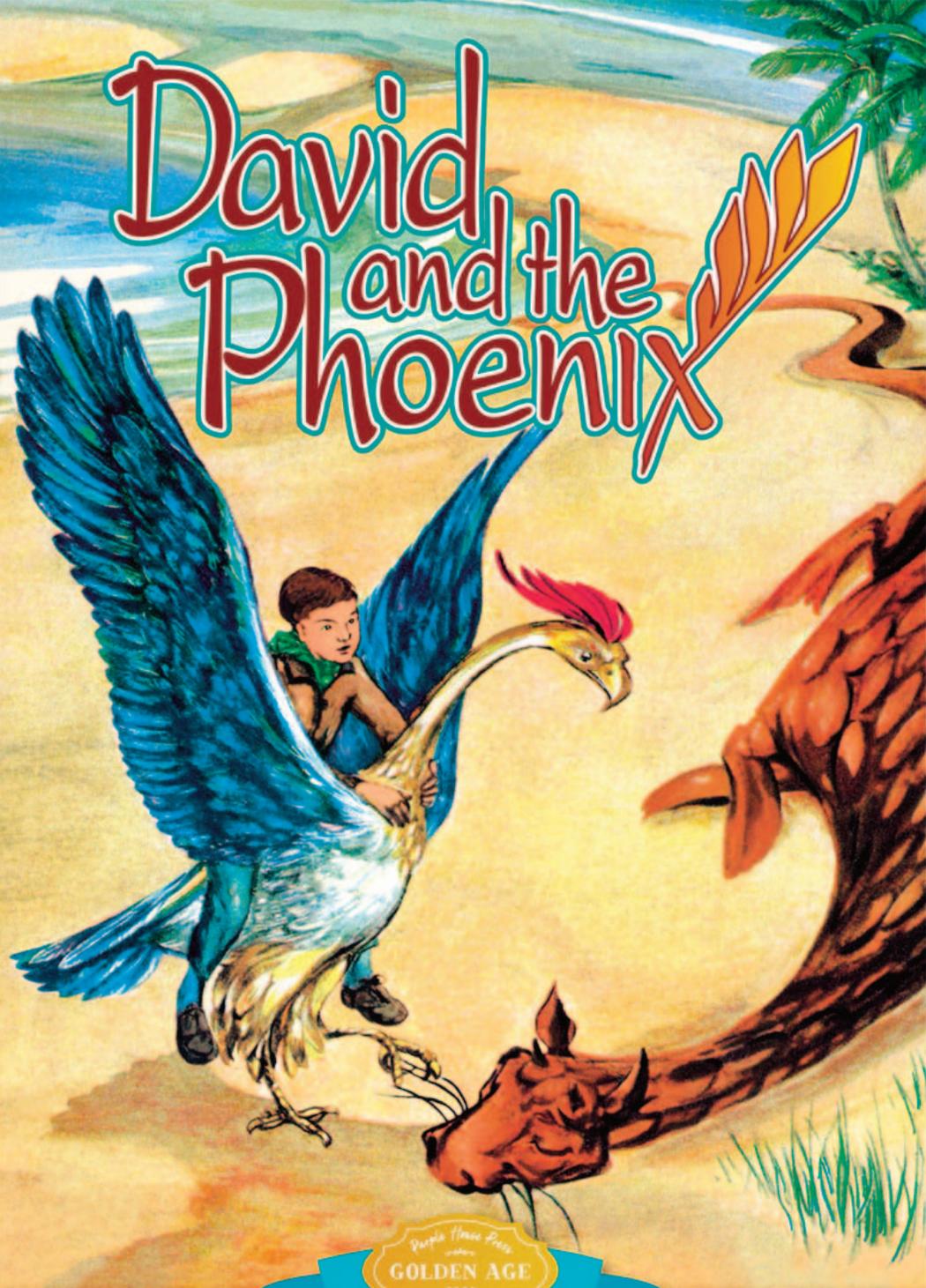


David and the Phoenix



EDWARD ORMONDROYD

Edward Ormondroyd grew up in Pennsylvania and Michigan. During WWII he served on board a destroyer escort, participating in the invasions of Okinawa and Iwo Jima. He received a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in library science from the University of California at Berkeley. Edward and his wife, Joan, moved to upstate New York in 1970. He is the author of several books for children and young adults, including the classic time-travel novels, *Time at the Top* and *All in Good Time*, both published by Purple House Press.



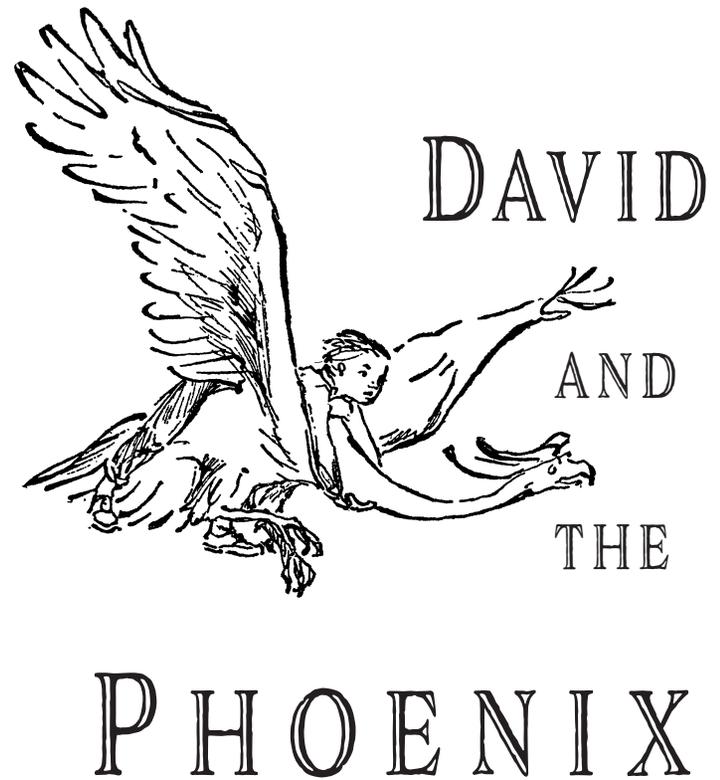
EDWARD ORMONDROYD

Books by Edward Ormondroyd

Time at the Top
All in Good Time
Castaways on Long Ago

For younger readers

Jonathan Frederick Aloysius Brown
Michael the Upstairs Dog
Theodore
Theodore's Rival
Broderick
Johnny Castleseed



by Edward Ormondroyd

ILLUSTRATED BY JOAN RAYSOR

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Author's Foreword and Dedication

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David and the Phoenix was my first book. I began writing it in the late 1940s when I was a student at the University of California at Berkeley. The kernel of the story popped into my head one day as a vision of a large and pompous bird diving out of a window, tripping on the sill, and crashing into a rose arbor below. Somehow (I'm still mystified by the process) the bird became the Phoenix and the window became a boy's bedroom window. With that settled, all I had to do was invent what happened before and after.

The book was published in 1957 by Follett Publishing Company of Chicago. Its reception was quiet but warm, and it did pretty well for a first book. The trade edition went through three printings. A Sunday school magazine (whose name I've forgotten) serialized it, with illustrations by Kurt Wiese. The Commonwealth Club of California chose it for their 1957 Juvenile Book Award. Best of all, in 1958 the Weekly Reader Children's Book Club brought out its own edition, thereby ensuring a wide-spread audience.

Readers began to get in touch to tell me how much they liked the book. Teachers wrote to say that they read it aloud to their classes, and they would send me packets of letters from their pupils. Several classes turned it into a play and sent me photographs of some wonderfully inventive costumes. Occasionally I would be introduced to someone at a party, who would say, “Oh! Are *you* the one who wrote—?” and go on to tell me that they had enjoyed it as much as their son or daughter had.

Eventually the book went out of print—but not, apparently, out of memory. When my wife, Joan, and I moved to the country in 1975, our newspaper carrier left a note in the box: “Thank you for *David and the Phoenix*. There are lots of us Phoenix watchers out here.” By now I was getting letters and phone calls like this: “I read your book when I was young, and I loved it. Do you know where I can get a copy for my son (or daughter or niece or nephew)?” This was before the Internet, and I could only suggest searching in used book stores. Later, when the Net was up and running, and booksellers began to come online, searching became easier—but finding didn’t. Used copies were scarce and prices asked for the rose to discouraging levels.

So I was delighted when Jill Morgan recently called me to say that, as a dealer in used children’s books, she was aware of the continuing demand for *David and the Phoenix*

and wanted to do something about it. Her proposal was direct and audacious—to bring the book back into print by republishing it herself. And so she has, in this facsimile of the original edition; and here, under the imprint of her new Purple House Press, the Phoenix flies again!

How can I better express my thanks than by dedicating this new edition, with love and the deepest gratitude, to Jill Morgan (may your first book prosper as mine did!) and to all you readers, who for more than 40 years have kept the tale of a boy and a bird alive in your hearts.

May 16, 2000

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1: *In Which David Goes
Mountain Climbing,
and a Mysterious Voice
Is Overheard*



ALL THE WAY THERE DAVID had saved this moment for himself, struggling not to peek until the proper time came. When the car finally stopped, the rest of them got out stiffly and went into the new house. But David walked slowly into the back yard with his eyes fixed on the ground. For a whole minute he stood there, not daring to look up. Then he took a deep breath, clenched his hands tightly, and lifted his head.

There it was! — as Dad had described it, but infinitely more grand. It swept upward from the valley floor, beautifully shaped and soaring, so tall that its misty blue peak could surely talk face to face with the stars. To David, who had never

seen a mountain before, the sight was almost too much to bear. He felt so tight and shivery inside that he didn't know whether he wanted to laugh, or cry, or both. And the really wonderful thing about the mountain was the way it *looked* at him. He was certain that it was smiling at him, like an old friend who had been waiting for years to see him again. And when he closed his eyes, he seemed to hear a voice which whispered, "Come along, then, and climb."

It would be so easy to go! The back yard was hedged in (with part of the hedge growing right across the toes of the mountain), but there was a hole in the privet large enough to crawl through. And just beyond the hedge the mountainside awaited him, going up and up in one smooth sweep until the green and tawny faded into hazy heights of rock. It was waiting for him. "Come and climb," it whispered, "come and climb."

But there was a great deal to do first. They were going to move into the new house. The moving van was standing out in front, the car must be unloaded. David would be needed to carry things. Regretfully, he waved his hand at the peak and whispered, "It shouldn't take long—I'll be back as soon as I can." Then he went around to the front door to see what could be done about speeding things up.

Inside, everything was in confusion. Dad was pushing chairs and tables around in an aimless way. Mother was saying, "They'll all have to go out again; we forgot to put down the rug first." Aunt Amy was making short dashes between the kitchen and the dining room, muttering to herself. And Beckie was roaring in her crib because it was time for her bottle. David asked, "Can I do anything?" — hoping that the answer would be no.

"C'mere," Aunt Amy said, grabbing him by the arm. "Help me look for that ironing board."

When the ironing board was finally located, Mother had something for him to do. And when he was finished with that, Dad called for his help. So the afternoon wore on without letup—and also without any signs of progress in their moving. When David finally got a chance to sneak out for a breathing spell, he felt his heart sink. Somehow, in all the rush and



confusion, the afternoon had disappeared. Already the evening sun was throwing shadows across the side of the mountain and touching its peak with a ruddy blaze. It was too late now. He would have to wait until morning before he could climb.

As he gazed up miserably at the glowing summit, he thought he saw a tiny speck soar out from it in a brief circle. Was it a bird of some sort, or just one of those dots that swim before your eyes when you stare too long at the sky? It almost seemed like the mountain waving its hand, as if to say that it was quite all right for him to wait until morning. He felt better then, and returned more cheerfully to the moving.

It was long after dark before the moving van drove away. Beckie crooned happily over her bottle, and the rest of them gathered in the kitchen for a late supper of sandwiches and canned soup. But David could not eat until he had found the courage to ask one question:

“May I climb the mountain tomorrow?”

Aunt Amy muttered something about landslides, which were firmly fixed in her mind as the fate of people who climbed mountains. But Dad said, “I don’t see why not, do you?” and looked to Mother for agreement.

Mother said, “Well...be very careful,” in a doubtful tone, and that was that.

You never know what you will find when you climb a mountain, even if you have climbed them before—which, of course, David never had. Looking up from the foot of the mountain, he had thought that it was a smooth slope from bottom to top. But he was discovering as he climbed that it

was not smooth at all, but very much broken up. There were terraces, ledges, knolls, ravines, and embankments, one after another. The exciting part of it was that each feature concealed the ones above it. At the top of a rise would be an outcropping of strangely colored rock, invisible from below. Beyond the outcropping, a small stand of aspens would quiver in the breeze, their quicksilver leaves hiding a tiny meadow on the slope behind. And when the meadow had been discovered, there would be a something else beyond. He was a real explorer now. When he got to the top, he thought, he would build a little tower of stones, the way the explorers always do.

But at the end of two hours’ steady climbing, he was ready to admit that he would never reach the peak that day. It still rose above his head, seeming as far distant as ever. But he did not care now. It had been a glorious climb, and the distance he had already covered was a considerable one. He looked back. The town looked like a model of a town, with little toy houses and different-colored roofs among the trees that made a darker patch on the pattern of the valley floor. The mountains on the other side of the valley seemed like blue clouds stretching out over the edge of the world. Even the peak could not give him a better view than this.

David gazed up the face of a scarp which rose like a cliff above him—a smooth, bare wall of rock that had halted his climb. Halfway up the scarp was a dark horizontal line of bushes, something like a hedge. Apparently there was a ledge or shelf there, and he decided to climb up to it before he returned home. To scale the rock face itself was impossible,