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A Jules Verne Fairy Tale. [Review of Jules Verne's *Adventures of the Rat Family*, trans. Evelyn Copeland, ed. Iona Opie and Brian Taves, Oxford UP, 1993]

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A Jules Verne Fairy Tale.

Jules Verne, *Adventures of the Rat Family*. Trans. Evelyn Copeland, intro. Iona Opie, afterword Brian Taves, illus. Felician Myrbach-Rheinfeld. 72p. Oxford and NY: Oxford UP (800-451-7556), 1993. \$14.95.

This delightful little book--the only fairy tale for children ever written by Jules Verne--warrants review in *SFS* for two reasons: it is the *first time* that this Verne story has been translated into English, and (in contrast to many) the translation and the critical afterword are both excellent and authoritative. In fact, this Oxford UP publication represents the first time in over 25 years that a previously untranslated text by Jules Verne has appeared in English--an event which raises a glimmer of hope that those *Voyages Extraordinaires* of Verne's latter years (some of which still remain untranslated) may eventually see the light of day. Verne's original "Aventures de la famille Raton"--a whimsical yet quite satiric fantasy about a bourgeois rat family who are magically metamorphosed up and down the evolutionary ladder--was published in *Le Figaro illustré* in January 1891. A slightly modified version of the tale appeared in a posthumous anthology of Verne's short stories entitled *Hier et demain* (Paris: Hetzel, 1910). I.O. Evans completed a translation of this anthology in 1965 (*Yesterday and Tomorrow*, Associated Booksellers) but he decided to omit this particular story from the book's contents. So, once again--like so often in the long and sad saga of Verne's English translations--the integrity of the Vernian oeuvre was purposefully violated. In today's marketplace, there still remain many bad translations of Verne's works (cf. my review in *SFS* #57, July 1992, 19:261-63), but recent efforts by British and American scholars appear to have finally begun to turn the tide. This book is a case in point. Highly recommended for all Verne collectors, and for children of all ages.

--ABE