Clarion Review

Juvenile Fiction

Perils of Cyril Wright: Overcoming Impediments
Clement London
Xlibris
978-1-4010-9279-5
One Star (out of Five)

The Perils of Cyril Wright is the story of a young man who prospers in spite of physical limitations. Cyril is the focus of his parents' lives, and when they die, Cyril must go to live with a retired aunt. The protagonist's disability is never fully explained in the story, although at one point it is described as "severe." After hearing the governor announce that it was time for his daughter to marry, Cyril decides to compete with her other suitors, despite his aunt's protests that it would not be suitable because of his physical condition.

Although Cyril has led a life of "limited physical activities," he still manages the journey to reach his beloved. He has not had a physically active life, but Cyril exercises his mind. He composes a riddle about his travels that confounds the governor's daughter and wins her hand.

The subject of the story is a fitting theme for a children's book, but the execution leaves something to be desired. The language is somewhat stiff and includes words and phrases that may not be understood by young readers, such as, "Cyril was born with some physical impediment, which sometimes made him the butt of silly jest in his inner city neighborhood and school." While parents who read books aloud to their children must usually stop to explain some things, the volume of words that would need defining in this story would make a chore of reading it out loud. The romance between Cyril and the governor's daughter is also described in clinical terms that will be unfamiliar to young readers: "Their courtship began immediately, with logical, human emphases," the author writes.

In fact, the confusion over the intended audience for *The Perils of Cyril Wright* begins on the cover, which features a painting of a shoreline. The illustration from the title page, showing a boy being cared for by two adults, would have been a better choice for the cover illustration.

The story becomes repetitive at certain intervals, reviewing information that was already

established, and it almost seems to start over at one point.

It is clear that Clement London, a former professor at Fordham University, has made a well-intentioned effort to reach young readers with a message of hope through this story. Unfortunately, the book falls short because it is written in language that will go over the heads of most young readers.