

ILLUSTRATING BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

By Annie Carroll Moore

“THE greatest artists are none too good to make drawings for children’s books,” wrote Rockwell Kent from Alaska in 1918. He tells of reading from a book of King Arthur stories to his nine year old son. “I don’t think the pictures in the book are half nice enough,” said Rockwell. “I think of a wonderful picture when you read the story and when I see the one in the book I’m disappointed.”

No wonder the boy who watched the making of the drawings for “Wilder-ness” was disappointed by a conventionalized illustration for a King Arthur story. The names of the artists are not given in the list of books mentioned in Rockwell Kent’s delightful journal of a winter spent in the wilds of Alaska, but I am quite ready to believe there wasn’t a breath of life in the King Arthur pictures and that the illustrations for “Andersen’s Fairy Tales” were also a disappointment.

Every time I’ve opened “Wilder-ness” I have been tempted to slip in a short list of books whose illustrations live in the memory and which I think would light up a cabin in Alaska or elsewhere for a boy like young Rockwell Kent. Since his father clearly states that imagination and romance in pictures and stories are what a child wants above everything else and that those qualities in illustration are the rarest, he may like to be reminded of a few books whose pictures possess them to a degree which sets them apart from all others.

Without any hesitation at all, I

should leave “Water Babies” behind to make room for the Ruskin Grimm—“German Popular Stories” is the title under which the first selection and translation of “Grimm’s Fairy Tales” into the English language was reprinted, at Ruskin’s request, in 1868. The book was edited by Edgar Taylor, who made the original translation just a hundred years ago in 1823. Of the original etchings by George Cruikshank, Ruskin says they were unrivaled in masterfulness of touch since Rembrandt, while to Gleeson White, after days spent in hunting up children’s books of the period, they appeared as masterpieces of design, justifying for the first time the great popularity of Cruikshank and giving almost the first glimpse of the modern ideal in illustration.

In its present form the book is not attractive to children without introduction, but I have never known a child who did not respond to the inimitable drawing for “The Elves and the Shoemaker” and, once discovered, turn back to it again and again. Of the versions of Grimm this is the most satisfactory to read aloud. Ethel Sidgwick has lately dramatized from it “The Giant with the Three Golden Hairs” and “The Robber Bridegroom”, keeping very closely to her favorite text. Ruskin’s introduction in defense of children’s rights to their inheritance of fairy tales as the remnant of a tradition possessing historical value is even more needed today than at the time it was written, for on both sides

of the water there has been far too much careless editing and rewriting of old fairy and folk tales to accompany new illustrations. "Grimm's Household Stories", as pictured by Walter Crane, has delighted two generations of children in American public libraries and bids fair to hold a high place in years to come.

And after I had put the Ruskin Grimm in place of "Water Babies" on the Alaska bookshelf, I would substitute for "The Tree Dwellers", the "Nonsense Books" of that prince of travelers and painter of mountains, Edward Lear. The first of these books appeared in 1846, the fourth and last in 1877. For "The Cave Dwellers", I would substitute Thackeray's Christmas Pantomime "The Rose and the Ring" with his own matchless drawings, published in 1850. "The Sea People" would give right of way to Tenniel's "Alice" in the order of chronological sequence. The first volume appeared in 1865, the second in 1871.

To share the approach to any one of these books through the pictures and the artist's personality as revealed by his contemporaries is a delightful experience. If the text has seemed silly or has bored anybody, M. H. Spielman's "History of Punch" and the bound volumes of the magazine itself will send that person to look at the pictures in "Alice" and "Through the Looking Glass" with a new sense of wonder and admiration for the artist who took so much out of his own head. It is thrilling to boys and girls to know that Sir John Tenniel never forgot anything he had ever seen, and that he could reproduce it to the life. "I have a wonderful memory of observation", he says, "not for dates but anything I see I remember." When Lewis Carroll wanted him to use models for the illustrations of "Alice" he flatly refused

and declared he needed none, any more than the author — a mathematician — "needed a multiplication table to work a mathematical problem". It has been said of Tenniel that his pictorial memory surpassed his imagination but to "Alice" he brought both. "It is a curious fact", he wrote some years later to Lewis Carroll, when asked to illustrate another of his books, "that with 'Through the Looking Glass' the faculty of making drawings for book illustrations departed from me and notwithstanding all sorts of tempting inducements, I have done nothing in that direction since."

I know of only one other artist who so perfectly realizes the conception of the author while communicating his own essential spirit. In his introduction to the new edition of "Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings", published in 1895, Joel Chandler Harris wrote of A. B. Frost's illustrations: "You have breathed the breath of life into these amiable brethren of wood and field. By a stroke here and a touch there you have conveyed into their quaint antics the illumination of your own inimitable humor which is as true to our sun and soil as it is to the spirit and essence of the matter set forth."

Gleeson White had said of Frost in "Children's Books and Their Illustrators": "By his cosmopolitan fun he has probably aroused more hearty laughs by his inimitable books than even Caldecott himself."

The pity is that Frost has done no series of picture books corresponding to the Caldecott picture books of which "John Gilpin" published in 1878 was the first, and "The Great Panjandrum", appearing in 1885, the last. The proposal to illustrate these books to be printed in colors was made to Caldecott by Edmund Evans, who had

begun printing the Walter Crane toy books more than ten years before. It is interesting to learn from Walter Crane's "Reminiscences" that while Caldecott arranged for the drawings of his toy books on a royalty basis, Walter Crane was never able to make a similar business arrangement for himself. Whether Caldecott's motto "the fewer the lines the less error committed" had anything to do with it is difficult to affirm, but we like to think it may have. There are far too many lines drawn which mean nothing in books designed for children.

Caldecott's love for animals and knowledge of them, his interest in everything connected with farming, markets, and country life in general, his lively humor and sense of beauty make of each of his picture books a pictorial record of England looking from the nineteenth century back to the eighteenth.

Randolph Caldecott is bound to America by many ties and by none more securely than those fastened upon him by the children of the public libraries. His illustrations for Washington Irving's "Old Christmas" brought the book to life, and it is amusing to find that these illustrations were considered "inartistic, flip-pant, vulgar and unworthy of the author" by one of the leading publishers of London when the drawings were submitted. "Old Christmas" was published in 1876.

Caldecott met Mrs. Ewing while the story of "Jackanapes" was simmering in her brain and at her request made a colored sketch of a fair haired boy on a red haired pony. At this time he designed a cover for "Aunt Judy's Magazine" and arranged to illustrate other stories of Mrs. Ewing, who had unbounded admiration for his work. After years of ill health Randolph Cal-

decott died in St. Augustine, Florida in 1885.

Kate Greenaway gives two or three charming glimpses of her friendship for Caldecott in the letters included in her *Life* and her correspondence with Ruskin, edited with rare interpretation of the artist and the child in "Kate Greenaway" by M. H. Spielman and G. S. Layard. I do not suggest this book to take to Alaska, although I could be quite happy in rereading both text and drawings any time, anywhere.

It is next to being in England in springtime to look at these drawings of old cottages and farmhouses set in fields or gardens where flowers bloom more naturally than in any book I know and children dance and play with a grace, and gravity, and charm that Kate Greenaway alone knew how to give. "Marigold Garden", the "Pied Piper" (of which 150,000 copies were sold), "A Day in a Child's Life", will be looked at with new eyes after reading what the critics of her own and other nations, notably the French, have said in praise of her art and her love of childhood for its own sake. The publication of "Under the Window" in 1878 gave Kate Greenaway a place of her own in the world and doubtless was a determining influence in Boutet de Monvel's decision to make picture books of and for the children of France, for it was in that very year that he made the drawings for the French edition of "St. Nicholas" by which he became known as an illustrator. Delagrave, who asked Boutet de Monvel to make the illustrations for a child's history of France, published this French "St. Nicholas". Between 1883 and 1897 Boutet de Monvel, a portrait and genre painter, was painting the children of France, creating and naming characters so true to life that no one who has met them

in his books will fail to recognize them in the Luxembourg Gardens or on their way to a village school in the Aisne. Many of Boutet de Monvel's pictures are true portraits of his own children, or of his brothers and sisters as he remembered them. "Nos Enfants", "Filles et Garçons", "La Civilité", "Vieilles Chansons", and "Chansons de France" all record children playing, singing, and dancing under French skies.

"Jeanne d'Arc" was published in 1897 and became deservedly popular among American children as soon as it was given a place in the children's room of a public library as well as in its art department. I would take a copy to Alaska by all means, and preferably in the French language, to fix the authenticity of the book in the boy's mind and stimulate a spontaneous desire to read the simple text which accompanies the pictures. It is now possible to include two or three of Beatrix Potter's little books which are as true to nature and art in the French language as in their native English.

"Pierre Lapin" or "Jeannot Lapin", accompanied by Beatrix Potter's "Christmas Tale of the Tailor of Gloucester" in English, would make a child or grown up feel at home anywhere.

Two books I should want to take to Alaska for their remarkable pictorial impressions of the north and the folk interest are: Snorre Sturlason's "Kongesagaer", which is illustrated by six of the leading artists of Norway, and "Norske Folkeeventyr" illustrated by Erik Werenskiöld. The illustrations in both books are unique in their power to reincarnate the old sagas and invest the life of both animals and people of the north with the racial inheritance which belongs to them.

Since neither of these books is readily obtainable for a journey I would make a point of asking a boy to go to see them wherever they could be found. Asking boys to look at certain special books in libraries or bookshops is a most interesting thing to do. If I could find a volume of "St. Nicholas" between the date of its first publication, 1873, and 1883, I would certainly add it to the Alaskan collection, for among the pictures the drawings of the best artists of the day would be reprinted. Mary Mapes Dodge did not hesitate to ask anyone, writer or artist, to do his best work for children. The reason why so many of the pictures in "St. Nicholas" are remembered is for the simple reason that the drawings were good and the subjects interesting. Howard Pyle was a contributor to "St. Nicholas" years before his illustrations for "Robin Hood", "Pepper and Salt", and "Wonder Clock" gave him his own place among American illustrators of children's books. Palmer Cox, whose "Brownie Books" are still the favorite picture books in American libraries after more than forty years, made his first drawings for "St. Nicholas".

The good art of this American magazine stands out in constructive testimony of what could be done in a period when æsthetic movements of one sort or another were playing, as they are still, with all sorts of things which had no bearing on the illustration of books for children.

Young Rockwell Kent must be fourteen years old now. He came back from Alaska at the end of six months, but that bookshelf still intrigues my imagination and I should like to add to it two books of Lovat Fraser, "Nursery Rhymes" and "Pirates", both of which have been received with enthusiasm by big boys and little ones

in the children's rooms of the libraries in the holidays of 1922. "Nursery lore remains with us, whether we would or not, for all our lives", he says in his introduction to "Pirates", published in 1913; "and generations of ourselves, as schoolboys and pre-schoolboys, have tricked out Piracy in so resplendent a dress that she has fairly ousted in our affections, not only her sister profession of 'High Toby and the Road', but every other splendid and villainous vocation."

The untimely death of Lovat Fraser in 1921 is as great a loss to children's books as to the dramatic world, which he enriched by his "Beggar's Opera".

To place a "Velveteen Rabbit" at the end of a bookshelf which spans a century of illustration of children's books may seem a strange thing to do to those who have not seen William Nicholson's pictures for it, and who are unacquainted with the artist's remarkable character portraits which appeared about twenty-five years ago.

Mr. Nicholson has always been thought of as the painter of what he sees. His character portrait of the old Queen with her dog done from life anticipated Lytton Strachey's book by many years and surpasses it for those pictorially minded. He has painted some remarkable portraits of children.

Why should he be interested in bringing a velveteen rabbit — a child's nursery toy — to life? I wanted to know so I went to Appletree Yard to ask him. The story touched him, he said, and he had taken it away with him on a holiday at the request of Sydney Pawling who had fallen in love with the story, believed it a classic for children, and wanted to give it the best form he could devise.

Mr. Nicholson had worked from models to some extent — I found the

velveteen rabbit on the chimney piece in the studio, the old skin horse had been in his family for many years — but it is his imaginative understanding of the past and the reality of children and their interests in his own life which enabled him to give personality to a velveteen rabbit in a nursery and place him in the open fields and woods with his wild brothers with a certainty of record that admits of no challenge by child or grown up.

The children say of the pictures, "You can almost see the Velveteen Rabbit changing."

Wilderness. By Rockwell Kent. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

German Popular Stories. Illustrated by George Cruikshank with an introduction by John Ruskin. Chatto and Windus.

Grimm's Household Stories. Illustrated by Walter Crane. The Macmillan Co.

The Complete Nonsense Anthology. By Edward Lear. Duffield and Co.

The Rose and the Ring. Illustrated by W. M. Thackeray. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass. Illustrated by Sir John Tenniel. The Macmillan Co.

Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings. Illustrated by A. B. Frost. D. Appleton and Co.

An Artist's Reminiscences. By Walter Crane. The Macmillan Co.

Picture Books. Illustrated by Randolph Caldecott. Frederick Warne and Co.

Kate Greenaway. By M. H. Spielman and G. S. Layard. Adam and Charles Black.

Under the Window. By Kate Greenaway. Frederick Warne and Co.

Jeanne d'Arc. By Boutet de Monvel. Plon, Nourrit.

Pierre Lapin. By Beatrix Potter. Frederick Warne and Co.

Pepper and Salt. By Howard Pyle. Harper and Bros.

Robin Hood. By Howard Pyle. Charles Scribner's Sons.

The Brownies. By Palmer Cox. The Century Co.

Nursery Rhymes. By Lovat Fraser. T. and E. C. Jack. Alfred A. Knopf.

Pirates. By Lovat Fraser. Billing and Sons. Robert M. McBride and Co.

The Velveteen Rabbit. By Margery Williams. Illustrated by William Nicholson. William Heinemann. George H. Doran Company.

THE BOOKMAN'S GUIDE TO FICTION

THE BOOKMAN will present each month tabloid reviews of a selected list of recent fiction. This section will include also the books most in demand according to the current reports in "Books of the Month", compiled by the E. R. Bowker Company, The Baker and Taylor Company's "Monthly Book Bulletin", McClurg's "Monthly Bulletin of New Books", and "THE BOOKMAN'S Monthly Score". Such books as the editor especially recommends are marked with a star.

YELLOW BUTTERFLIES—Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews—*Scribner*. A tribute to all mothers of that unknown soldier who lies at Arlington.

IN THE DAYS OF POOR RICHARD—Irving Bacheller—*Bobbs-Merrill*. Benjamin Franklin, humanly and faithfully presented, makes this historical novel a warm and moving tale.

FLOWING GOLD—Rex Beach—*Harper*. The Texas oil country furnishes a comparatively new setting for the good old story of business daring and frontier romance.

MISS MAPP—E. F. Benson—*Doran*. Gentle social comedy such as English villages exist to provide.

THE YELLOW TRAIL—E. Manchester Boddy—*Times-Mirror*. A blood and thunder story. If you like it at all, you'll like it a lot.

ALCATRAZ—Max Brand—*Putnam*. Every lover of a good horse will enjoy reading how the hero won this marvelous golden chestnut racer.

HUNTINGTOWER—John Buchan—*Doran*. A middle aged Scottish grocer foils Russian plotters, and not entirely by his accent. Rather good characterization and humor.

THE GENTLEMAN FROM SAN FRANCISCO—I. A. Bunin—*Seltzer*. Not because they are Russian and so in vogue but because they have been given power to nurture deep, hysterical emotion, these stories should be read.

ROBIN—Frances Hodgson Burnett—*Stokes*. Carries on the story of "The Head of the House of Coombe" and is a trifle more sentimental.

***ROUGH-HEWN**—Dorothy Canfield—*Harcourt, Brace*. A story of simple love told with simplicity but also with a deep psy-

chological understanding of life which makes it actually exciting.

***ONE OF OURS**—Willa Cather—*Knopf*. If Miss Cather herself had fought in the war this would have been one of the most perfect studies of American youth ever written.

ABOVE SUSPICION—Robert Orr Chipperfield—*McBride*. The only one to solve this murder mystery is the stone mason, Geoff Peters, and he confides only in the reader.

THE COUNTRY BEYOND—James Oliver Curwood—*Cosmopolitan*. A beautiful and exotic heroine, a heroic young man, the great northwest, a wise dog—mixed in thrilling moments such as only happen in this author's great northwest.

CHARLES REX—Ethel M. Dell—*Putnam*. Says Toby in this novel: "I don't know—very much about—love. No one ever—really—loved me before." But how much Miss Dell knows about love is soon evident.

THE BLACK WATER O'DEE—James McKenzie Douglas—*Barton*. Good material for a novel describing the smugglers of Scotland under the Georges has been ruined by a melodramatic Mr. Malaprop.

THE SHADOW ON THE GLASS—Charles J. Dutton—*Dodd, Mead*. All the old familiar props revived, to make a brand new mystery story.

TUMBLEWEEDS—Hal G. Evarts—*Little, Brown*. This lively account of the last great land rush in the west has its full share of love making, cowboys, and road agents.

PEREGRINE'S PROGRESS—Jeffery Farnol—*Little, Brown*. An artistic young man turns from his evil ways to adventure in rollicking fashion along the old highway.

THE LOST MR. LINTHWAITE—J. S. Fletcher—*Knopf*. His nephew found him by very