

# SPRING ROADS TO CHILDREN'S BOOKS

By Anne Carroll Moore

*Hound  
My heart's delight  
Moon white  
Sun bright  
Hound from Under-the-Sea  
You left a King  
To follow me.*



HE oak-wood in the Gap of the Dragons had the redness of Spring on its branches. Midyir's queen came from the Sidhe-mound, lamenting—

"Is the tale sorrowful?" asked the Gubbaun, the maker of worlds and shaper of universes, who had twice commanded his Son to "shorten the road" for him. "Story telling", the Son replied, "is the shortening of a road", and he began his sorrowful, joyful tale with its "joyful ending".

Long before they set forth on their journey to the strange far country of Balor, the Gubbaun had tested his skill in the use of the magic tools of his trade and proved himself a Master-Craftsman whose fame had spread beyond the Black Waters until it reached the Court of Balor of the Mighty Blows and stirred the mind of that terrible king. "Build me a dune", he said, "strong as the foundation of the earth; a dune with courts and passages and secret chambers; with carvings on the walls of it, and carved monsters in the crevices of it; a dune that climbs and blossoms in spires and twists and flame-like billowing curves and fantasies; such a dune as never from the begin-

ning of days shaped itself on the ridge of the world. Gold ye shall have in plenty, and rich jewels and cloaks of honour. Ye shall stagger under the load of your riches. I Balor have said it."

The Master-Smith and his flute playing Son set to work with the help of djinns and dwarfs and giants and goat footed men, and demons of the air and fabulous animals and monstrous beings and strange beasts. And as the dune took shape and grew the Son of the Gubbaun wished with all his heart for a reed flute that he might play out his joy. But no reeds grew in Balor's desolate country and the desire grew stronger and stronger within him until at last he fashioned a flute of metal. One day, as he was playing upon it, a poor woman came and prayed for the "good will of his music" on behalf of her sick child who no longer had any "delight in life".

"I will make a Music of Delight for him", said the Gubbaun's Son. "I will play Strength and Joy." Every day after that he played until he played away the sickness. "He played until the child laughed and danced and tumbled over himself with delight." And the child, who could hear the stir of a bird's wing at the other end of the world, heard the whisper of Balor's plan to put the Master-Smith and his Son to death when the dune was finished—"lest the like of it be reared for another"—and warned them in time to make their escape or we should never have had the fine story of "The Gubbaun's Feast".

Ella Young says that it took her nearly twenty years to gather these fourteen stories of the Gubbaun Saor, which she has retold, piecing some of them together from mere fragments, in "The Wonder-Smith and His Son". It was in Achill Island that she heard the first one, told by an old man of eighty as he guided her along a wild promontory a thousand feet above the sea. He knew only two of the stories, but had heard that there were others. Then and there Miss Young made up her mind to get them. In her introduction she tells where she went to find them, and one begins to realize why the book is so spacious and clear sighted, so full of sunshine and beauty and world wisdom.

It is the distinctive quality of Miss Young's prose that it has been well hammered yet retains its living relation to things which still are, in nature or in the mind of man.

Refreshing to readers of any age living anywhere, the stories seem to me to belong in a peculiar sense to boys and girls who are growing up in great cities without seeing the wonder and magic of swift destruction and fresh creation. "Build me a dune [or a skyscraper]. . . . Such a dune as never from the beginning of days shaped itself on the ridge of the world" has no sound of strangeness to architects, engineers, and builders of a century of skyscrapers. Before skyscrapers came suspension bridges. The Master-BUILDER of the Brooklyn Bridge played the flute sometimes. One likes to think of that when crossing the "Bridge of-the-Magic-Web" and to remember also how he brought to a strange far country all the skill of his trade. Yet the first work that he did was raising canary birds to sell.

Boris Artzybasheff has let himself go with imaginative power and beauty of

line in his drawings for this book as he did with Padraic Colum's "The Forge in the Forest". Original and forceful as the work of this young artist is, however, he is never out of harmony with the text he is illustrating. His decorations and cover design, and the typographical excellence of "The Wonder-Smith", make it a notable forerunner of well made books of 1927. The potential influence of such drawings and decorative designs upon boys and girls just entering the teens is incalculable, and the importance of their personal ownership of some of them cannot be too strongly urged at any season. The delicate line drawings for Margery Williams Bianco's Easter story for little children, "The Apple Tree", reveal still another aspect of Mr. Artzybasheff's work. The initial letters for this little apple-green book are fascinating to children.

Girls midway of the teens and many



From "The Wonder-Smith"

years older will find a book after their own hearts in Marguerite Clément's "Once in France". Out of French history and legend Mlle. Clément has recreated ten stories, giving to each of them the characteristic setting of the province or city to which it belongs, Brittany — Provence — Alsace — Touraine — Paris. Thoroughly French in conception, the stories were first written in English with an intimacy and charm born of familiar acquaintance with the American girls and boys of high school age to whom Mlle. Clément has told them. Not one of her tales is hackneyed. Joan of Arc's friendship for Heliote, the daughter of the artist of Tours, who painted her flag, brings her closer to the girl of our time than she has ever seemed before. It is Heliote, not Joan, who is the heroine of this story, and the drawing which illustrates it is of Heliote whose wedding chest was a matter of such concern to Joan that she wrote a letter asking her "good city of Tours" to give one hundred gold crowns to Heliote because the girl "wanted to buy so many things". "It is not every woman saint who remembers at the critical time her friend's need of towels", comments Mlle. Clément, and then she tells how true a friend was Heliote in Joan's tragic hour of need. Very poignant and beautiful is Mlle. Clément's rendering of this tale of her own native province of Touraine. It must have been deeply felt in her own girlhood to take on such life and meaning for other girls. I have said elsewhere that I believe this is the most important book which has been published for children and young people since the war, not alone for what it contains for English speaking readers in its own right, but for the influence it will exert upon the conception and writing of other books when it is trans-

lated into other languages, as it well deserves to be. I attach this importance to it because of the appalling lack of readable books concerning the lives of girls and women in general and its inevitable effect upon the quality of fiction commonly known as girls' books. It is high time girls and women were taken from the limbo of historical allusion and legend and humanized to the point of recognition by the girl of modern times; but it must not be forgotten that it takes the feeling of an artist to do this. Such work cannot be commandeered or serialized for the convenience of the trade. It requires a fine sense of drama and time enough to absorb the atmosphere in which the characters are to live again.

The old formula "give us another Louisa Alcott" will not do for the 1930's. We must go further back than that for a fresh start with girls. The Wonder-Smith's amazing and lovable daughter Aunya, who should have shared the title of this book instead of the Son, is closer to the sports-loving, out-of-door girl of today. She has all the cleverness of her father, with that ready wit and proverbial wisdom of her own with which Ella Young does not fail to refresh the jaded reader of what Miss Alcott herself characterized as "moral pap for the young". Aunya and the fascinating little Duchess Anne of Brittany led very different lives in their different worlds, but one feels the joy of life was keen in both. How good is a girl's life, the mere living, may yet be told with gusto in terms of our own day if we can but free ourselves from the "moral complex" in considering girls' books.

Eleanor Farjeon brought something of this lightheartedness and gaiety of spirit to her "Martin Pippin in the Apple Orchard", a book much loved in the teens by girls who still care for

poetry and fairy tales. Of its stories "The King's Barn" (which I think the best one) will bear reading again alongside "The Wonder-Smith" and "The Princess Shepherdess" of "Once in France".



From "Once in France"

Miss Farjeon possesses the rare gift of creating fresh fairy tales as well as of reinvesting old tales with new life. I have long wondered about her as a person, but she has always been in Italy when I have been in England, and I know her only through her writings and as the granddaughter of Joseph Jefferson and the daughter of B. L. Farjeon, a popular writer of the post-Dickens period, whose Christmas books "Blade o' Grass" and "Golden Grain" bore fruit for girls in California. That she is companionable to children and understanding of childhood I was reasonably certain before I read the enchanting stories of her "Italian Peep-Show". No child should sail for Italy or remain at home without a copy of

this book. I regret to state that the American edition will not be available until fall, but its publishers have consented to the reproduction of one of Rosalind Thornycroft's pictures. There is a picture in color for each story so entirely in the spirit of Miss Farjeon's text as to lead one to exclaim: "Who is the artist and how did it all happen?"

The artist is the mother of the three English children,

Bridget, Chloe and Nan  
For Whom This Book Began.

They were all living together, at a villa in Fiesole, seeing and feeling what Italy is like. Miss Farjeon pulled her stories straight out of Italian skies and streets and palace towers and chance words of the old milkman and of Anina, the cook, who told her the King of Tripoli was to bring the *Pasta*, on a day when there was none in Fiesole. I shall have more to say of the King of Tripoli, for I think his story ranks with great stories for little children. The deep poetry of the world's need is behind all its gaiety. Yet the touch is as light as a humming bird's wing. "The Little Black Boy" out of "Songs of Innocence" called to me as I read of this black king, for Miss Farjeon has the power of evoking the pure joyousness of childhood for its own sake as well as the gift of capturing the essential spirit of the place she writes about, whether it be Fiesole in time of almond blossom or Hampstead Heath in May. With a thread of gold she has bound the stories together by her clear sketches of what she has seen and felt in Italy, giving truer impressions of Florence than are to be found in any conventional book of "other lands".

It was perhaps a little unfortunate that I should still have been poring over the lovely new edition of "Songs of Innocence", reproduced from one of William Blake's originals, when "Joan's



From "Italian Peep-Show"

Door" opened, revealing the unimaginative and far too numerous drawings for this book of verse. Such lines as

Blow the Stars home, Wind, blow the Stars  
home  
Ere morning drowns them in golden  
foam. . . .

need neither picture of sunrise nor earth blown stars but the clear mirror of a child's mind.

There are fairies behind "Joan's Door", but it is characteristic of Miss Farjeon that she does not make them too common:

Don't go looking for fairies,  
They'll fly away if you do.  
You never can see the fairies  
Till they come looking for you.

But there are plenty of things you may look for, such as cracks in the pavement, lost farthings, spring in Hampstead, and marmalade:

I simply can't tell you how glad I am  
When the Marmalade is Apricot Jam.

Of course not! "She tells the truth about what she sees and feels", I said to myself, and closing "Joan's Door" very softly I stole away into "The House Without Windows" looking for "A Little Girl Lost". Eepersip Egleen is her name, and if you would learn some of the rarest secrets of childhood you too will follow after this human child, who feels such joy in nature that she escapes from her parents and wanders away into the forest, there to make friends with a doe and her fawn. A dancing, singing, laughing child is this once lonely little daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Egleen, who lived in a "brown shingled cottage on one of the foothills of Mount Varcrobis".

Authentic child imagination is here, with a felicity of phrase which will appeal to children and grown ups who, like Barbara Follett, have found life good before they were nine. "No books meant more to her between the ages of six and ten than 'The Three Mulla-Mulgars', 'A Little Boy Lost', and 'The Princess and the Goblin'", says Wilson Follett, her father, in a note telling how the story was first written as a present for her mother on her own ninth birthday, of the heart-breaking loss of the manuscript when the house of its printer burned down and its subsequent recovery by a feat of memory.

It is extraordinarily interesting and rewarding to the first American reviewer of "A Little Boy Lost" to trace the influence of W. H. Hudson's child story, written to please the child he once was, upon a living child who may fairly claim kinship with him. Eepersip lives a more ardent life than little Martin ever did. She is a strong, radiant little girl rejoicing in all she sees and feels, while Martin lived more remotely in the dreams wild nature brought to him.

Eepersip's pungent characterizations of her parents and their friends, the Wraspanes and the Ikkisfields, who are constantly making stupid plans to catch her and bring her back out of her wildness to their own way of living, may well give pause to the novelist who labors to invent situations and characters as children see them and to parents who are seeking light on education — their own, as well as their children's.

The first third of the book seems to me a unique human document, a spontaneous contribution to the literature of childhood produced by a child of nine. I think it will be enjoyed by many children if they can be brought into natural association with it, because Eepersip is such a living, lovable character, so definite in her movements of mind and body. Her capacity for running, leaping, tree climbing, dancing, and singing lends virility and charm to all her lovely companionship with the deer of the forest, the birds, the butterflies, the flowers and trees, whose life she has chosen to share. Even when most elusive Eepersip seems real. Her persistence and resourcefulness, and success in

evading her captors, seem prophetic of the better day for girls in story books which has already come to the swimming, riding, walking, hockey playing, mountain climbing girls outside of books who, like Aunya, Daughter of the Gubbaun, still look to story telling "to shorten the road".

The Wonder-Smith and His Son. By Ella Young. With illustrations by Boris Artzybasheff. Longmans, Green and Company.

The Forge in the Forest. By Padraic Colum. Illustrated by Boris Artzybasheff. The Macmillan Company.

The Apple Tree. By Margery Williams Bianco. Illustrated by Boris Artzybasheff. George H. Doran Company.

Once in France. By Marguerite Clément. Illustrated by Germaine Denonain. Doubleday, Page and Company.

Italian Peep-Show. By Eleanor Farjeon. With illustrations in color by Rosalind Thornycroft. Frederick A. Stokes Company.

Songs of Innocence. By William Blake. Facsimile edition, reproduced from an original in the British Museum. Minton, Balch and Company.

Joan's Door. By Eleanor Farjeon. Illustrated by Will Townsend. Frederick A. Stokes Company.

The House Without Windows. By Barbara Newhall Follett. Alfred A. Knopf.



From "Once in France"



## THE LONDONER

*"Truth" Fifty Years Old—An Insurance against Libel Actions—  
A Thief and the Booksellers—A Beggar, and Beggars in General—The  
"Times Literary Supplement" and its New Baby—A Correspondence  
on Book Production—Translations—The Letters of George Gissing*

LONDON, March 1, 1927.

AMONG the other matters which I should like to discuss this month is one which may not have been noticed in the United States. This is the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the English weekly periodical, "Truth". "Truth" is unlike any other paper, as far as I am aware, in either England or America. It is one of the apparently genuine antiques in the newspaper world. For instance, its cover design remains today exactly what it was at the time of the paper's foundation. Even "Punch" has made a concession to the development of modern printing, by introducing color into what was once plain black and white. Not so "Truth", the paper most frequently picked up by actors in scenes upon the London stage. The classic lady who adorns the cover of "Truth" is unmistakable, wherever she may appear. "Truth" has readers—I truly believe—who see no other paper whatever. I am convinced that those who live in the country very frequently decide which theatres they will visit upon one of their not-too-frequent excursions to the city. I am sure that these same people invest their money in accordance with the advice given each week by the financial experts of "Truth". As for all the tricksters and bucket shop dealers, they still live in terror of the paper which has exposed more of their number than any other periodical whatever. It is a

proud record to be an indispensable paper; and "Truth" has another record of which it may well be proud. This is that it has changed its direction only three times—really, only twice—since it was established. It was founded by Henry Labouchere, the "Labby" of popular talk for half a century of political life. He was the paper's first editor, but he knew very well that he would not always be interested in controlling it, and so he immediately appointed one Voules to act as business manager. Voules quickly became acting editor, and he remained editor long after Labouchere had lost interest in his toy. He took as assistant Mr. R. A. Bennett, and Mr. R. A. Bennett, who for thirty four years has filled the editorial chair, is still editor, and seems likely to live forever, in order that he may never have a successor. All this time, as a very unboastful leading article in the anniversary number mentions, the paper has had a constant succession of distinguished contributors. It claims to have published the first short story of H. G. Wells, and it once enjoyed the privilege of having (for a very short period) Bernard Shaw as its art critic. And it is still as well written as ever. During the war its leading articles were more fearless and more candid than those of any other paper in London. They were admirable. In commenting thus upon the fiftieth anniversary of "Truth", I venture to