

# The Reader's Guide

Edited by MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

Questions and answers about books and questions of like nature should be addressed to Mrs. Becker c/o The Saturday Review.

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## THEATRE

MILTON B. R. Barker Kennedy.  
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THE HISTORY OF POPULATION  
GROWTH By Raymond Pearl.  
(Knopf).

P. A. By Felix Riesenbergl. (Mc-  
Brid).

P. T., New Mexico; R. V., New York;  
L. E., Columbus, O.; L. P. D., New  
Jersey, are for a choice of plays for  
holiday production, for children or  
grown-ups. I have already told them to  
send for Samuel French's catalogue, but  
here are some in book-form.

**P**ERCIVAL WILDE'S "The Enchanted Christmas Tree" (Appleton) and "The Toy Shop" are ideal one-acts for home or community production. A. A. Milne's "Make Believe" is in his "Second Plays" (Knopf) but is also printed separately by French; it strings a series of episodes into an evening's entertainment but may be taken apart into several amusing and easily-given little plays. After editing a collection of "One-Act Plays for Young Folks" (Brentano) in which there is a charming one by John Farrar, Moritz Jagendorf brings out this year five sparkling playlets of his own in "Fairland and Footlights" (Brentano). The familiar collection of "Holiday Plays for Home, School and Settlement" (Dodd, Mead), by Virginia Olcott, has been carried on by her "Holiday Plays" (Dodd, Mead) in which is "A Puritan Christmas"; these may be given with the least possible preparation.

There is a George-and-Dragon play in the second volume of S. L. Cummins's three books of "Plays for Children" (Doran) which makes it especially appropriate for this time of year, but at this season any good play in which children take part gladly is appropriate; for instance, "The Magic Sea Shell and Other Plays," by John Farrar (Doran), and a new volume by Stark Young; "Sweet Times and The Blue Policeman" (Holt), "Old King Cole," by Josephine Krohn (Doran), is a set of amusements in mediaeval dress inspired by Mother Goose, who, I maintain, has more and better dramatic action per poem than is found in the work of most contemporary playwrights. There is an amusing and easy Christmas play in J. W. Foley's "Sing a Song of Sleepy Head" (Dutton), and "The Dyspeptic Ogre," in Percival Wilde's "Eighth Comedies for Little Theatres" (Little Brown), is for children; and so are the excellent plays in "Ten Minutes By the Clock" and "Three To Make Ready," collections published a year or so ago by Doran. Better keep this list at hand and send me additions to it, that have been tested in performance, for in a few weeks the questions about plays for amateur production will be rushing in, as they always do at the beginning of the year, and this is a sifted selection for young performers.

H. D., Jersey City, N. J., asks for stories to read aloud at Christmas time, at length or in condensed versions.

**B**OOOTH TARKINGTON'S "Beasley's Christmas Party" is now bound with his "Cherry" in one volume (Harper) appropriate to the time, so is the new edition of two famous family stories of Grace S. Richmond, "Christmas Day in the Morning" and "in the Evening" (Dodd, Mead), bound together. "The Holly Hedge" is a new set of Christmas tales by Temple Bailey (Penn), and for verses to read aloud there is a new anthol-

ogy gathered by Margaret Widdemer, called "Yule Fire" (Macmillan).

"Somewhere in one of the volumes of Voltaire," writes A. H. M., New York, "is a story about a Dr. Akakia—I can't swear that the name is exactly spelt, but that is the sound—... (here he names four high authorities) have been unable to aid me; if the good physician is to be found I am sure that you can tell me where I can find him, in French or English."

**F**AITH so touching should meet reward. The original owner of the name was a lecturer at the Collège de France, Docteur Martin Sans-Malice: his surname, as will be seen at a glance of the intellectual eyes that make a practice of reading this column, is the same as the Greek AKAKIA, so he used this instead until his death in 1551. Just 200 years later Voltaire found it an excellent descriptive pseudonym for his "Diatribes de Docteur Akakia," a lampoon against Maupertuis. This was promptly and publicly burned by the executioner in 1752, but Voltaire saved one copy and republished it with a supplement. I simply had to print this reply instead of sending it by mail: once in a while I need to show off.

L. B., Newark, N. J., asks if there is a book for Boston on the order of Helen Nicholay's "Our Capital on the Potomac" (Century) and Wiltach's "Mount Vernon" (Doubleday) for Washington.

**R**OBERT SHACKLETON'S "Book of Boston" (Penn) has been for some years the best known. This season there is a revised and enlarged edition of Annie Haven Thwing's "The Crooked and Narrow Streets of the Town of Boston: 1630-1822" (Lauriat), with plenty of plates and maps, making a delightful town history. It gives a reader something the same warm thrill Hamlin Garland describes when, in "A Son of the Middle Border" (Macmillan), he tells of his first visit to the city of his dreams. There is a brilliant book on Boston just from Houghton Mifflin, "Beacon Hill," by Allan Chamberlain, at once a survey and a history, with impressive pictures. The Boston enthusiast or the book collector anywhere may get it also in an extra illustrated edition at a price affording room for expansion of local pride. Mary C. Crawford's "Romantic Days in Old Boston" and "Old Boston Days and Ways" (Little, Brown) have a large and devoted audience—many a copy has gone out after relatives in distant parts—and there are drawings by Lester Hornby in Edwin Bacon's "Rambles Around Old Boston" (Little, Brown) that show the picturesque quality as the text brings out the historic and antiquarian features. Porter Sargent, whose "New England" (Sargent) is the standard handbook for this section, announces a guide book, "Boston," for publication early in 1926, uniform with the other handbook and with maps, directories, and any amount of detailed information. And for the dreamer there is a poet's tribute to what the city has meant to Western country, in Vachel Lindsay's "So Much the Worse for Boston," a lasting ornament to his volume called "Going to the Sun" (Appleton).

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# Uncle Tom's Cabin

By LYMAN BEECHER STOWE

IN 1850 Professor Calvin Stowe resigned his professorship at Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio, to accept a chair at Bowdoin College, his Alma Mater, in Brunswick, Maine. While he remained at Lane to settle his affairs his wife, Harriet Beecher Stowe, with their six children, made the then arduous journey to Brunswick and there settled the family pending his arrival. On the way Mrs. Stowe and her children visited her brother, the Rev. Edward Beecher, who was the pastor of a church in Boston. The whole city, or at any rate the circles in which the Beechers moved, were seething with excitement over the Fugitive Slave Law, then being debated in Congress.

At that time Mrs. Stowe met through her brother, the Rev. Josiah Henson, a freedman Negro preacher. She heard this man describe the scene when his father had been killed by the blows of an overseer for attempting to protect his wife against the lustful assaults of this same overseer. The Christian charity of Henson in describing this sordid tragedy made a lasting impression on her mind. More than any other one man, the Rev. Josiah Henson became the original of Uncle Tom.

Some weeks later while Mrs. Stowe was in the midst of the strenuous and multi-fold duties of caring for six children and trying to make habitable "a deserted, dreary, damp old house" in Brunswick she received a letter from her sister-in-law, Mrs. Edward Beecher, describing some of the cruelties and barbarities of the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law. One of her daughters said later that she remembered that after her Mother had finished reading this letter, which concluded, "Now, Hattie, if I could use a pen as you can, I would write something which would make this whole nation feel what an accursed thing slavery is!" crushing it in her hand she said, "God helping I will write something, I will if I live."

In a letter written in December, 1850, Mrs. Stowe wrote, "Tell sister Katy that I thank her for her letter, and will answer it. As long as the baby sleeps with me nights, I can't do much at anything, but I will do it at last. I will write that thing if I live." The baby who thus deferred "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was the father of the present writer.

Several weeks later while attending a communion service in the college chapel Mrs. Stowe saw suddenly before her mind's eye the death of Uncle Tom when he was killed by Legree—the climax of the story where the two men come to the final struggle in which the one has the physical and apparent victory and the other the spiritual and real victory. In later describing the experience Mrs. Stowe said the scene appeared to her "like the unrolling of a picture scroll." Had she been describing it in our day she would undoubtedly have compared it to a moving picture. At the same time the words of Jesus were sounding in her ears, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." It seemed as if the crucified, but now risen and glorified Christ, were speaking to her through the poor black man, cut and bleeding under the blows of the slave whip. She was so deeply affected that she could scarcely keep from weeping aloud. That Sunday afternoon she went to her room and wrote what had appeared to her mental vision. As there was no proper paper at hand she used some brown wrapping paper in which groceries had been delivered. Later in the day she gathered her children together (her husband was absent delivering a course of lectures) and read them what she had written. When she had finished all the children were weeping and the two little boys cried out, "Oh, mama, slavery is the most cruel thing in this world!" The chapter entitled "The Death of Uncle Tom" as it stands in the published book is practically identical with what Mrs. Stowe wrote at this time on the brown wrapping paper and read to her children.

Many weeks later, after Professor Stowe's return, he happened upon these sheets of brown paper and read what was written on them. With tears in his eyes he hunted up his wife and said, "Harriet, here is the climax of that book on slavery which you have been meaning to write. Now, begin at the beginning and work up to it."

After she had begun working on the

book Mrs. Stowe wrote to her brother, Charles Beecher, who was at that time employed in a cotton commission house in New Orleans, and asked him to gather data for her about the slavery conditions on and along the Mississippi River, particularly on the so-called "down the river" plantations which were for the most part owned by absentee landlords and conducted by hired overseers. Charles Beecher had devised and used a kind of shorthand system of his own which equipped him particularly well for taking notes. There is a scene in the book where Legree on the Mississippi steamer doubles up his fist and says to his companion, "Ye see that fist! That fist's hard as nails from knocking down niggers. I don't bother with sick niggers. I work mine in with the crop and then get me a new lot." That remark was overheard and taken down verbatim by Charles Beecher. It was a rather singular coincidence that it was this very remark which F. Hopkinson Smith once quoted in defence of his assertion that "Uncle Tom's Cabin" presented a grossly exaggerated picture of the evils of slavery.

Mrs. Stowe needed no data on the agreeable and patriarchal side of slavery since she had lived for years in Cincinnati on the border of Kentucky where she had made many friends among the slave owners whom she had visited from time to time on their plantations. One of these friends afterward said that entire pages of the book were exact descriptions of scenes that Mrs. Stowe (then Miss Beecher) had seen from the window of her room while visiting on their plantation.

After the work was well under way Mrs. Stowe wrote to her friend Gamaliel Bailey, the editor of *The National Era*, an Abolition paper published in Washington, D. C., asking him if he would care to run her story as a serial. He replied in the affirmative with the result that the serial publication in that paper started June 5th, 1851, and was not concluded until April 1st, 1852. The serial was not received with much enthusiasm. That such was the case is not to be wondered at when you realize that its readers were dyed in the wool Abolitionists to whom Mrs. Stowe's effort to be scrupulously fair and to present the patriarchal and picturesque aspects of slavery as fully as its seamy side appeared a kind of heresy. All previous writers of Abolition literature had confined themselves to unqualified abuse of the institution and those connected with it.

While the story was appearing serially Mrs. Stowe received a letter from a young Boston publisher by the name of John P. Jewett, the predecessor of the present house of Houghton Mifflin Co., making her an offer for its publication in book form. He made two alternative propositions, either a half and half division of all profits and expenses or a straight 10 per cent royalty on the list price of all copies sold. Mrs. Stowe knew nothing about business and her husband, the Professor, knew if possible even less. Therefore, they turned for advice, as was their custom in all such matters, to his cousin Philip Greeley, a substantial man of affairs who had been Collector of the Port of Boston and was then a Representative in Congress. On being shown Mr. Jewett's letter Cousin Philip said, "Why, Calvin, there is really no choice. You and Harriet have no money to gamble with. Take the 10 per cent of course. After all you know what a novel is, particularly a novel written by a woman. Even if successful it's merely a flash in the pan and then it's all over. You tell Harriet that if she makes enough money out of it to buy a new black silk dress I shall consider her very fortunate." We descendants have sometimes wished that Cousin Philip had taken the trouble to read the MS. before giving this safe and sane advice.

Not long before the contract was signed for the book publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" Mr. Jewett wrote Mrs. Stowe that he feared she was making the story too long for one volume. He pointed out that the subject was a very unpopular one and that while one volume might possibly sell, two volumes might prove fatal. Mrs. Stowe replied that she did not make the story, that the story made itself, and that therefore she could not control its length.

The book was written in "the old windswept castle of a house" in Brunswick with the exception of a few chapters which were written in Boston while she was visiting her brother, Edward Beecher, and

a part of the last chapter which she wrote in the Stone Cabin, the Stowe house in Andover, Mass., where the family had moved on Mr. Stowe's acceptance of a professorship in the Andover Theological Seminary. The book was published March 20th, 1852. Professor Stowe took the so-called first copy off the press down to the station in Boston and presented it to Cousin Philip Greeley just as he was taking his train for Washington. He read it on the train and after a time he began to shed tears as he read. To weep in public over a novel, particularly a novel written by a woman, was a humiliating experience for a New England man of affairs so when he reached Springfield Cousin Philip decided to go to a hotel and spend the night where he could weep in privacy and decency. He finished the story in the small hours of the morning in his hotel room. Ten thousand copies of the book were sold within a few days and over 300,000 copies during the first year and eight power presses running night and day could barely keep pace with the demand. During the first few weeks it was acclaimed with enthusiasm in the South. Southerners were at first enthusiastic about it for exactly the same reasons that its Abolition readers in its serial form had not been enthusiastic. One of the first notes of censure was struck by a religious paper, the *New York Observer*, which denounced it as an attack upon the Divinely sanctioned institution of slavery. This hostility quickly spread to the other papers of conservative character and when its effect began to be felt the Southern press and public.

Its original favorable reception in the South had momentarily encouraged Mrs. Stowe to hope that she had accomplished one of her aims in writing it. Her friendship among slaveholders had led her to conclude that they were dominantly fine Christian people who would not knowingly tolerate anything wrong. She believed that they were too close to slavery to see its evils but that could these evils be dramatized in the form of a story they would themselves become the leaders in seeking its abolition. She and all her family, including her brother, Henry Ward Beecher, had always so strongly disapproved of the violent methods of the Abolition Party that, in spite of their ardent approval of its purpose, they had refused to join it.

Very soon after its American publication the book was issued in London by Sampson & Low and had a sale in Great Britain and the Colonies which at the end of a decade was estimated at three and one-half million copies. Its translation into foreign languages speedily began and long continued. Mrs. Stowe's youngest son, my father, Charles Edward Stowe, has a set of the book in twenty-six different languages. It has probably sold in foreign tongues over 1,500,000 copies.

While I was writing this article Christopher Morley called to my attention one of the curious tokens of the universal dissemination of the book which are constantly cropping up. In a book on the famous Flemish post-impressionist painter, Van Gogh, is shown in his "Portrait of an Arles Woman (1889)" a copy of the French edition of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" on the table at which the woman is seated. A friend who was visiting a salt mine in Austria some years ago found one of the miners reading during his meal hour a copy of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" in the Czech language. When the writer was in Germany many years before the war he found the book was there widely used in the schools in connection with the study of English. At one time it had the curious fate of being placed on the Index Expurgatorius by the authorities of the Vatican. On this sale and the huge British sale the author received nothing beyond a few courtesy checks. There was then no international copyright.

Houghton Mifflin Co. report the original edition has sold in this country 944,000 copies. In the myriads of unauthorized and cheaper editions it has probably sold several times that number. The world sale in all editions has probably closely approximated 10,000,000 copies. Mrs. Stowe's copyright expired several years before her death and although her publishers generously continued to pay her royalties on the authorized edition it amounted to little by reason of the scores of unauthorized editions with which it had to compete. She was thus deprived in her old age of her most considerable source of income.