

# The Epic of the Trader's Wife

BY THE CITY OF THE LONG SAND, A Tale of New China. By ALICE TISDALE HOBART. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1926. \$3.

Reviewed by FLORENCE AYS COUGH

MY eyes run along the shelves of my book-cases. There stand, hundreds of the books on China. Their variety is infinite. They run the gamut from "Bellum Tartaricum," a tiny battered volume "printed for John Crook and sold at his Shop at the Sign of the Ship in St. Paul's Church-yard 1654;" to the sumptuous catalogue of the Eumorfopoulos collection, published the other day by Benn Brothers. There are learned tomes by Jesuit missionaries, and superficial sketches by twentieth century globe-trotters, yet among them all there is no book in the least like this. It has remained for Mrs. Hobart to write the "epic of the trader's wife."

And very beautiful it is. The essentials of an epic are, according to Aristotle, "a dignified theme, organic unity, and an orderly progress of the action." These essentials Mrs. Hobart provides, and I think that she is the first writer to recognize the high office, the romantic appeal of international trade.

President Eliot once remarked upon the new position held in the twentieth century by the Commerce of Nations, and upon the necessity of highly educated, self-sacrificing men to conduct it. He could not but be pleased with Mrs. Hobart's fine, high-spirited point of view. To her the life of a trader's wife is not one spent in the selfish, sordid pursuit of wealth. Far from it; she feels herself a vital cog of the great machine which radiates as she says from

the home office building of our company. Twenty stories high it rose sheer from the pavement. . . . There it stood, the American castle of a twentieth century empire, an empire of business, an empire of oil. Here in an Eastern City, my husband in his office and I in this Company house, carried on for it. . . . No daughter of the Revolution could feel more pride in her ancestors than I do in my commercial forbears, the young and daring captains of those first sailing vessels of ours, who determined to break their way into the Asia trade which had lain so long in the hollow of Great Britain's hand and under the heel of Holland. . . . They were the hunters; we are the homesteaders. A Nation's frontiers, whether of land or trade, have but the transient quality of wanderers' night camps until women come and make homes for their men. . . . I could hold up my head in pride and take my place in the procession with the women of the Mayflower and the Covered Wagon.

The "Empire of Trade;" this is Mrs. Hobart's "dignified theme;" and as empire builders have always found help in symbols and panoplies, so she finds inspiration in the poems of Kipling and stimulus in fluttering flags. "On week days over each of my houses," she writes, "has floated the blue flag of the company, and on Sundays the Stars and Stripes."

The organic unity of the epic is perfectly preserved, nor does the action fail in orderly progress. Mrs. Hobart describes the different stations where with marvellous resource worthy of all emulation she created a series of "homes." All these stages are described with a vividness as absolute as that of the sixteen unusually beautiful photographs used in illustration. Mrs. Hobart observes keenly—has a pictorial imagination, and writes extremely well. Her Prologue takes the form of an ancient legend dealing with the marvellous coloring of China, the red brown North, and the jade-green South. It is a beautiful piece of prose.

Yet it is with a feeling of profound discouragement that I turn the closing pages of "By the City of the Long Sand, A Tale of the New China." What has Mrs. Hobart told of *China* old or new? "Nothing" is the inevitable reply. To be sure she mentions a battle which swept through her very garden; but the soldiers seemed to melt away as they came, with the inconsequence of those warriors who sprang from the dragons' teeth sown by Cadmus long ago. She speaks of famine, and commiserates with the country of her sojourn; "Poor, tortured China; poor, broken, military ridden China; bandit afflicted China;" she frequently comments upon the superstition of her servants; and speaks again and again of the "growing hatred of the foreigner." She wonders what experience must come before "the long struggle for brotherhood of trade will be realized."

Can one answer to her question be found between the lines of her own book? Filled with patriotism and high ideals, selfless in her devotion to a cause, Mrs. Hobart marches forward, the blue flag of the

company held aloft on one hand, the stars and stripes on the other, and it seems that the fluttering tips join before her and close the horizon. I say "seems" because it is difficult to believe that so intelligent an observer can have neglected entirely a study of the civilization into which foreign trade must be woven, —yet, so it *seems*.

The pushing forward of frontiers must be attended by annihilation on one side or the other, or by a mutual comprehension and agreement. The covered wagons of yesterday advanced into a country inhabited by bisons and Red Indians; nor can the result be described as entirely satisfactory to either Indians or bisons. It is obviously an experiment which cannot be repeated.

The pioneer of tomorrow must be armed with the shield of comprehension, he must, to use a Chinese expression, "see with the eyes and hear with the ears of those on the four sides;" his equipment of yesterday is insufficient. In the words of the prophetess of the twentieth century "Patriotism is not enough."

## L. Adams Beck

DREAMS AND DELIGHTS. By L. ADAMS BECK. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1926.

Reviewed by ARTHUR W. COLTON

THE name of E. Barrington, author of "Glorious Apollo" (Byron) and "The Divine Lady" (Hamilton) has been better known than that of L. Adams Beck, author of "The Key of Dreams," "The Treasure of Ho," "The Ninth Vibration," and other novels concerned with the romance and religion of Asia. Now it appears that the two are one, and it is rumored that the author thinks more highly of the work of the less celebrated Beck than of the more celebrated Barrington.



Illustration by Charles Boardman Robinson for "Once on a Time," by A. A. Milne (Putnams).

Probably she is right; at any rate novelistic biography is not attractive to me. The subject is large and the discussion of it would be out of place here, but it comes to this; that no one whose life and personality is richly on record in Works, Lives, Letters, Memoirs, or Recollections, is a good subject for a novel. To put fancy face to face in competition with reality is bad for fancy. "Lady Rose's Daughter" is a poor thing, wooden and thin, compared with the letters of Mlle. de Lespinasse. None but George Moore could have written his Abelard and Heloise, but reading the actual words of those famous lovers drives the novel away into the limbo of futility.

"Dreams and Delights" is a collection of eleven stories. The first, "V. Lydiat" is a tale of dreaming double, like Peter Ibbetson. The two dreamers lost the power when they met and were married. The Hindu pundit told them that they had exchanged a rose tree for a rose, meaning that the powers of the soul were a living growth whereas this human happiness had no roots. The last, "The Man Without a Sword," perhaps the strongest of the eleven, is a tale of Japan. The more one thinks it over the more it seems a remarkable piece of work, both in substance and technique. It leaves one with the sense of a new insight, for instance, into the psychology that lies behind both the system of defense and attack called "jijitsu," and still more into the psychology of those diminutive Japanese gardens. "The Sea of

Lilies" is descriptive of Ceylon; "The Island of Pearls," of certain Buddhist monasteries on an island off the coast of China; "The Pilgrimage to Amaranath," of the Himalayas. "The Bride of a God," "The Beloved of the Gods," "The Marriage of the Princess," and "The Hidden One" are tragedies of the women of old India. "The Wisdom of the Orient" is a clever parable on feminism. "Stately Julia" should perhaps have been signed "E. Barrington." It is a resurrection of the poet Herrick.

The faith, or the discipline, shadowed forth or suggested in several of these stories has filled the inner life of millions of men, who have testified to its unmeasurable value and substantial truth. Whether the handling of it here has anything other than a literary value I am not able to say. Occasionally it seems penetrative, but one suspects all occidental treatment of it as superficial. A literary criticism might be that the author is more or less pursued by an inappropriate demon called sentimentalism.

Nevertheless I suspect that the author is right, if as rumored, she believes the work of L. Adams Beck (socially Mrs. Adams Beck) of more importance than the work of E. Barrington. Mrs. Beck is the daughter of the explorer, Admiral Moresby, has lived for many years in the East, and now lives, it is said, in British Columbia.

## Fairy Tale of the Metropolis

THE FLYING KING OF KURIO. By WILLIAM ROSE BENET. New York: George H. Doran. 1926.

Reviewed by PADRAIC COLUM  
Author of "The King of Ireland's Son"

THE FLYING KING OF KURIO" is as a story, ingenious and novel, but ingenuity and novelty are the least of its qualities. It is an imaginative story, and it has that sort of imagination that is in Mr. Benet's poems—an imagination that shows a delight in things and in creatures, in speed and in brightness, and that is happy in the devising of incidents. It is the right sort of imagination to go into the making of a children's book.

I have to go back to the ingenuity and the novelty of the story. It is of the metropolis as other children's stories are of the countryside; in it apartment-houses are taken for granted just as cottages and castles have been taken for granted. Elves that are proper to New York figure in it. It is a story for children who have visited the great hotels, have been excited about aeroplanes, who have looked at maps, and who have in their minds a juvenile pattern of our political world. And it is a fairy story—undoubtedly a fairy story.

The scene of the story is New York City and the secret country of Kafiristan. There are two children in it, Michael and Amanda; they are fortunate enough to discover what children are always longing to come into—a house apart from the house that their family live in. It is an apartment very near their own apartment: they can go into it through the cupboard when their elders are not about. And the people in this apartment are very odd and at the same time very sympathetic; they have arrangements that grown-up people seldom think of having—a Hall of Odd Moments, for instance, decorated with pictures that they themselves have painted—"Red Indians Pursuing the Purple Whale" and "The Persian King's Picnic;" they have a Camping Room and a Tower Room; Mr. Tractable—for the people are Mr. and Mrs. Tractable—makes plans and inventions, and he shows the children his architectural plan for "A Recreation Home for Superannuated Cats." He has his business mail sent to him by aeroplane from Kafiristan; he has invented the aeroplane, and his son Verry operates it. The Tractables are just the sort of people that children would like to visit.

Visits to the Tractable apartment always led to exciting and interesting happenings. On the third visit the children got to know Ignatius Halloran who drove the Interplanetary Bus; a man who had red hair and who sang very persistently the songs out of the Interplanetary Bus Drivers' Union Handbook, and they heard about bad Mr. Wimperden and the plans he had for destroying the benignant government of the secret country of Kafiristan. And then there was that dash to Kafiristan in Verry's Butterfly and Halloran's Interplanetary Bus, and there was the Ambush in the Clouds, and the Kidnapping in the Flying House, and the recovery of Eliphalet Eagle, and the clearing up of everything



on the Roof Garden of the Ritz before the Lion who used to spend his vacation and who was most at home on the Roof Garden. He was a very special Lion indeed, being none other than Leo of the Constellation. He spoke in a velvet rumble. And on the Roof Garden too was discovered, in the person of a waiter, a man who had disturbed the Tractable by making the Sign of the Ostrich from Madison Square, and we get to know what part he had to play in the hidden life of Mr. and Mrs. Tractable. The humor and fantasy that are in this scene on the Roof Garden are characteristic of William Rose Benét's story-telling.

There are about a dozen nonsense poems in "The Flying King of Kurio," all of them all that nonsense verse should be. The story is written with such high spirits that it puts one in high spirits to read it—William Rose Benét does what so few writers of our time do—puts a happy mood into his story-telling.

## Pioneer Children

ON TO OREGON. By HONORÉ WILLISIE MORROW. New York: William Morrow. 1926. \$1.75.

Reviewed by DANIEL HENDERSON  
Author of "Boone of the Wilderness"

WHEN a novelist of note makes an excursion into the world of juvenile literature, youth is the gainer. And when the novelist takes as her subject the era of pioneer achievement and brings to the children of this luxurious age the story of the amazing heroism and endurance of the youngsters who traveled the Indian-beset transcontinental trail, then indeed there is cause for those concerned about the ideals of the boy and sub-deb to be glad.

Honoré Willisie Morrow, in her book "On to Oregon," has gleaned richly in the path of Francis Parkman. Her story of the trek of the orphaned Sager children brings us a fresh intimation of the unexhausted mines of romance in American pioneer history.

One day in 1844, Dr. Whitman and his wife Narcissa, looking out from their mission-house by the Columbia River, saw staggering along the trail from the east a strange group. The leader and patriarch was thirteen-year-old John Sager, his bare feet tied up with pieces of buffalo hide, and his long yellow hair bound back from his eyes by a twist of leather round his forehead. On his back was his little sister Matilda; in his arms nestled in a wolf-skin, the baby Henrietta, born on the trail—a skeleton babe, motionless as death. Then came the lone horse Betsy, with two children on her back, and, bringing up the rear, his younger brother Francis, dragging his sister Elizabeth. The children had traveled alone from South Pass, an incredible journey of a thousand miles.

It is of this strange pilgrimage that Mrs. Morrow has made herself historian—first the story of the ambition of the father, a Missouri farmer, to own a homestead in Oregon, and help to prevent the British from taking possession of the Oregon country; the experiences of the family with a caravan of trappers, traders, and settlers; the meeting with Kit Carson; the death of the parents, the resolve of John, the elder son, to "carry on" and bring his flock across the Rockies.

The author a mother herself, understands the language of youth, and has told her story with a simplicity, directness, and vividness that will capture and hold the attention of every boy and girl who opens the book.

## Treasure-Trove

ANOTHER TREASURY OF PLAYS FOR CHILDREN. Edited by MONTROSE J. MOSES. With illustrations by Tony Sarg. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1926. \$3.

WHEN Montrose J. Moses promises anything like "A Treasury of Plays for Children," he is as good as his word. He actually does produce real dramatic treasure. We can think of no better book than this to put into the hands of boys and girls from ten years old on to high school age, especially if they are inclined towards play-acting and what normal child isn't inclined that way at the very slightest excuse? Most don't need any excuse at all to prance before the footlights rigged out as a pirate or a princess or some other equally entrancing character.

Mr. Moses has shown great resourcefulness and skill in making his selection of plays. The dozen he

has chosen are varied and contrasted not only as to text and type but as to length as well. Here we find Drinkwater's "Abraham Lincoln" settled as a near-neighbor of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," and the "Racketty-Packetty" people of Frances Hodgson Burnett's doll-house romance sandwiched between "Don Quixote" and a play by Lord Dunsany. All this is as it should be, for growing youngsters must have all kinds and sorts of plays to try their teeth on, dramatically speaking. Teachers and parents will be especially grateful for the real wealth of good material crowded into the book, besides all the fun and gaiety and spirit of make-believe. After the thin and clap-trap plays hastily jumbled together for children to learn and act, these charmingly, and in many cases maturely, written plays, should be hailed with joy everywhere. We own to a thrill of delighted excitement at reading "Racketty-Packetty House" again after nearly thirteen years, and the rhymes of "The Mikado" never did seem more amazing to us. Here, too, is our old favorite of Portmanteau Theatre days, Stuart Walker's dramatization of "The Birthday of the Infanta," and "Treasure Island," and an earlier A. A. Milne play called "Make-Believe." There is also a particularly interesting and imaginative little play by Lord Dunsany about the boy inventor, James Watt, and his discovery of steam. It sounds as if it couldn't be a play at all fashioned out of such strange dramatic material. But it is, and a most unusual and a beautiful one, too.

There are helpful notes all along the way, practical notes and real suggestions, not just wordy explanations that no one wants to read. Mr. Moses also gives many charming and informal notes about the plays themselves, how they first came to be produced, and in many cases his personal recollections of them and little incidents about the authors. His book is a joy from cover to cover, worth ten of the year's ordinary juveniles.

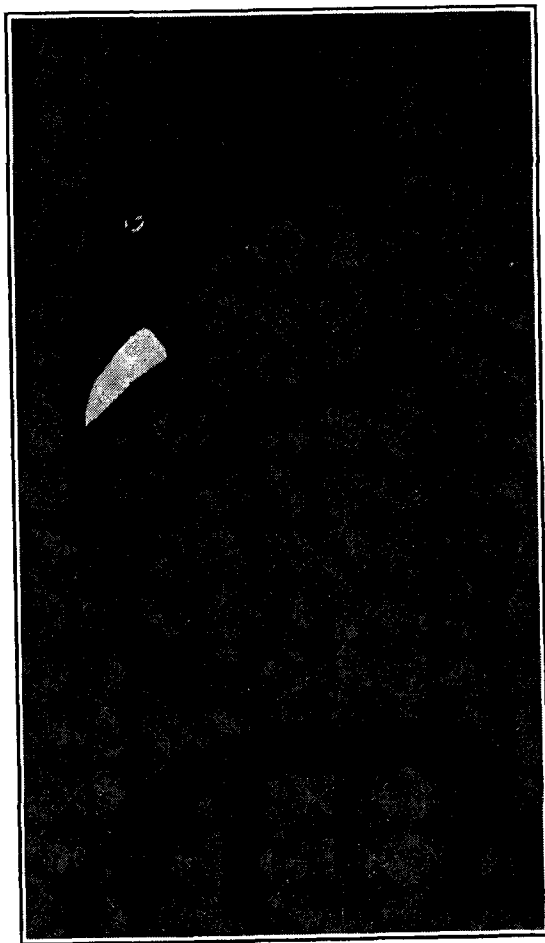


## Ebenezer the Devout Elephant

IN Ebenezer the brow of Cæsar  
Broods o'er the eye of Mars;  
His trunk is slender, his heart is tender,  
His thoughts are fixed on the stars.

They put a teaser to Ebenezer,  
They asked him why fishes swim.  
He did not answer—as no man can, sir—  
And oh, the wisdom of him!

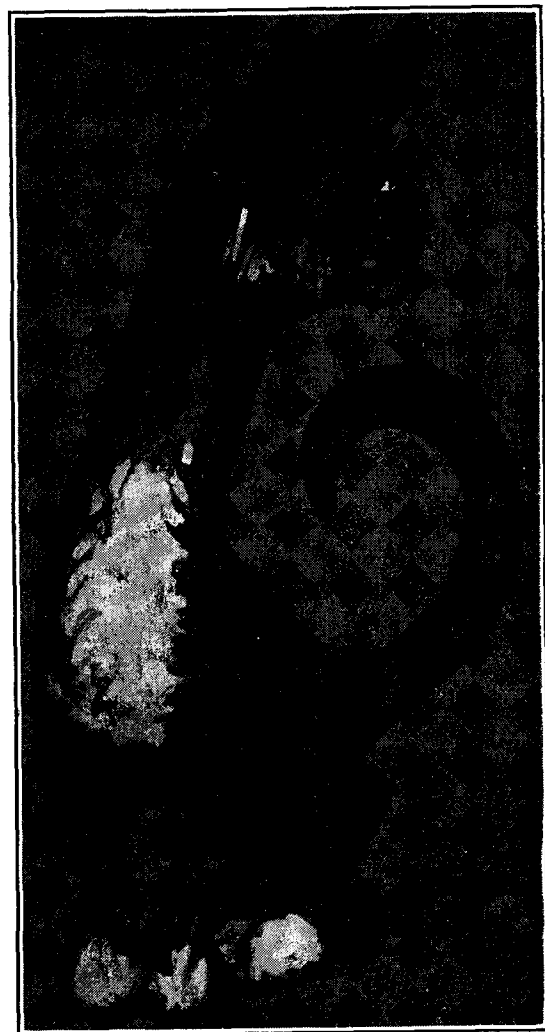
If, Ebenezer, I had your beezer,  
I might look dignified.  
But—vain to importune fickle Fortune—  
That gift is still denied.



The Mona Lizer,—oh, Ebenezer, —  
I might have painted rare-o  
Like Leonardo,—or been a bard-o  
Like T. Vergilius Maro.

But not *this* geezer! So, Ebenezer,  
Of *nothing* I can be proud;  
Alas, Great Cæsar, how Fortune flees,—her  
Wheel awhirl in the cloud!

The Mexique greaser, my Ebenezer,  
Surpasses me in worth.  
Therefore—how happy I am, old chappie,  
That you are here on earth!



## Isabel the Aloof Tigress

I CALLED to Isabel. She would not come.  
I stood outside her cage and simply bawled.  
My voice got hoarse. I thought, "I'm going  
dumb!"  
"O-o-o-o-oh IS-ABEL!" I called.  
I sadly turned away. I had no choice.  
She would not recognize her master's voice.

I wandered weeping to a butcher's shop.  
Blinded with tears I bought a pound of steak,  
A leg of lamb, and English mutton chop,  
And certain strings of sausages they make.  
Slowly I then retraced my steps. "My dear,"  
I murmured as I entered, "Can you hear?"

She switched around as though she had been shot.  
She bounded forth and fell upon the meat.  
She ate it where I left it—on the spot  
Whence I decamped with all too-hurried feet.  
From round the door I watched her frantic feast;  
And, "Oh," I wailed, "Oh Isabel, you *beast!*"

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HENRY SEIDEL CANBY .....Editor  
WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT .....Associate Editor  
AMY LOVEMAN .....Associate Editor  
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY .....Contributing Editor

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