

Too Many Mirrors

I LIVE IN A CITY. By JAMES S. TIPPETT. New York: Harper & Bros. 1927. 75 cents.

LOOKING OUT OF JIMMIE. By HELEN HARTNESS FLANDERS. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1927.

MAGPIE LANE. By NANCY BYRD TURNER. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1927. \$1.60.

Reviewed by MARGARET WIDDEMER

NOTHING should be more reverently approached than the writing of books for little children. Nothing is more casually undertaken. Nine children's books out of ten are done on the principle of a *St. Nicholas* poem of my childhood, concerning a

... writer man

Who'd written treatises and themes, till "For a change," he said
"I think I'll write a children's book before I go to bed."

Furthermore, poems are a more serious offense than prose, because with any luck rhyme sticks in the child-mind as prose cannot. Yet people go complacently on doing the kind of child-verse they would have been bored to death with when they were children, unless they were the kind who never could like rhyme at all—a very strange kind of children.

The child mind does not want to see itself in a mirror. The normal little one reacts to magic, adventure, and drollery up to a further point of the monstrous and grotesque than adults can bear. And as a case in point, the day when "Slovenly Peter" was a nursery classic, or even the day when the moral rhymes of Jane and Ann Taylor reigned, was better for the child than the state of affairs since the "Child's Garden of Verse" became the norm. Grotesqueries or moralities, they were at least narratives, not static photographic studies. And they drew the child beyond his little self to a world beyond, of whatever kind.

Today Milne's "When We Were Very Young" has superseded Stevenson as the inspiration of fashionable child-poetry. Now, charming and unique as it is, this book is only the child-mind mirrored exquisitely for the delight and amusement of its elders. It cannot give the child much more than himself. The little more is charm and poetic feeling. And while manner may be imitated, charm and poetic feeling cannot.

✻ ✻

Mr. Tippet's "I Live in a City" is advertised by its publishers as "putting romance and glamour into the happenings of every day." Here is the first stanza of the book, a fair sample:

When I go to the country in the summer
I have a house and yard
But it's very different
In New York City.

This statement does not seem glamorous to me. It would not when I was aged four to eight, as it is marked on the jacket, have enchanted me any more than it does today. Not being sub-normal, I knew that much, but did not thrill to it. The rest of the book contains equally bald statements of facts about cities. They are in rhyme form, but they possess neither poetry, beauty, charm, strangeness, nor indeed anything which can amuse, illumine, or develop a child's mind. Their only merits are accuracy and simplicity. They might be a literary rendition of short exercises done by a bored child who had been required to do once a day his impression of Apartments, Parks, Telephones, Electricity, and "What I Saw on My Walk Today." . . . Have I been unjust? But no. Here is another at random:

If the window sticks
Call the Superintendent.
If the lights play tricks
Call the Superintendent . . .

It is bad enough to keep a child in an apartment. But to make his mental pictures of this stuff is worse. It is dreadful to remember the helpless children who will have this read them by earnest parents.

"Looking Out of Jimmie" has a charming format, closely imitating the Milne book again. But again we find no more than literal, sometimes wordy, transcriptions of the child-mind. There is a certain sweetness of outlook here, though we still lack poetic merit and the sense of magic or adventure—and seek in vain for the story-poem the child prefers. And when Mrs. Flanders forgets for a moment her long painstaking descriptions of Jimmie's presumed feelings about Daddy and Mother



CHRISTMAS, celebrated in the twentieth century chiefly by the making of gifts—thus some future account of our mores. And in addition, perhaps, "the weariness of soul characteristic of a material age too often accompanied these gifts." All true—this very Christmas! But when it comes right down to it, how many of us would willingly eliminate the gift-way of celebrating Christmas? There must be some compensation in the giving of gifts, then, for the trouble that it has become to arrange for their giving, something in the very nature of a gift that allures. Perhaps it is that a gift always is a gift for a' that. If it becomes a reward, a bribe, a tribute exacted, then it is no longer a gift. And how many things are there in this curiously overlaid civilization of ours that do keep their integrity?

Furthermore, a gift is not merely a purchase conditioned by utility or necessity—it opens to our choice the whole world of delectable objects amidst which there is usually no reason for us to wander. And the fact that the object of our final selection will not remain with us is compensated for by the success of self-esteem springing from a direct hit on the desires of the second person. It is skill amounting to art that is required to delight not only ourselves but the person to be favored. And here perhaps is the truest reason why the making of gifts keeps its freshness forever. Giving is an art, an expression of personality, free except for such conditions as depend on personality. No one can constrain another to give, and we all have it dinned into us that "money cannot determine the worth of a gift." It remains an affair between two people (the second one always along invisibly) who are in secret league for un-

necessary and mutual delight. In short, a gift is one of the few real luxuries left in this our modern life, which has so sadly succeeded in making necessities of most luxuries.

Now, to bring the subject quickly within the small walls of our Bookshop, though there are no statistics handy, probably three out of four Christmas presents are given to children. Here surely should be the best of opportunities for the practise of a gentle art, for benevolence is undoubted, sympathy should be strong, and understanding can call experience to its aid, while the subtle-simple nature of the child should make an ideal testing-ground for the intelligence and the intuition of parents or maiden aunts. To come more securely within The Bookshop, out of the three gifts that go to children probably one at least is a book, and what better material for pleasure dependent on personality is there than a book? Put the book and the child happily together, and you have indeed celebrated Christmas at its best.

If only the subject could rest thus joyfully! But, alas! the statistics of bookbuying for children at Christmas have pretty well flooded out the artistic use of opportunity. The hurried mother usually buys before she thinks or even asks. Reliable guides, printed or human, are not often at hand. If only some memory of Hans Andersen or Edward Lear, some thrill at the right kind of picture-book, anything first hand and personal could illumine the parental mind, or some real understanding of the child in the case supplement lack of book knowledge or experience! If there is no saving glimmer at all of pleasure recalled or anticipated, why, then it would seem that the child might fare better with a tinker-toy than with the resultant book.

and Nurse, and slips into mother-nonsense, it is rather pleasant, as in the quatrain—

A Toat is very hubbly,
With bumps and bunches nubbly
And chins and foreheads doubly
And chest quite often bubbly.

Here is the sort of thing to please the child who is trying out the sounds of the English language. There is also a rather nice Milnean rabbit poem. But oh, how much better Nancy Byrd Turner does rabbits! Of course there is a difference in children. Mrs. Turner's children get the magic, the excitement of rabbits, Mrs. Flanders's Jimmie relates very lengthily how Daddy got red hunting them; what the Baker did about them. One doesn't much care.

Nancy Byrd Turner's "Magpie Lane" is the sort of book I could, and shall give to a child without any feeling of having helped to introvert its mind or dwarf its intelligence. The poems are musical, with the ballad-swing children love. They do not force the child against a mirror. They are about exciting things like Dick Whittington, and dogs who steal dolls and aren't ashamed, and resolute cats who won't climb down from trees, and Magpie Lane and Bow Bells and Oxford Town (that magic of unknown names to children!) and cheerful drollery such as a child chuckles over. And they have real beauty; witness "Candle Song."

Bend, little flame!
Bend like a flower as I blow!
Tulip colored and all aglow,
Nobody guesses the way you go
Nor the way you came.

There is an authentic thrill for a child's spine in "Bells," in "Old Man Long Ago," in "Going up to London,"

Riding, riding downward by many a silver ridge

And many a slope of amethyst, I'll come to London Bridge,

If I met the King himself he'd smile beneath his frown—

Who is this comes riding up so light to London Town?

As good in their very different way; as delightful to children, are such rhymes as the one beginning

I met four young and handsome kits
In black fur coats and velvet mits. . . .

and the story of

Fanny from the city had never seen a fowl
She didn't know a guinea from a gander or an owl.

Perhaps the average child of today has not heard much of silver ridges, of Oxford Town and "Bow Bells crying sudden-sweet like angels in the air," of such long and lovely words as "Buccaneer," and "Aslant," and "exquisite." But surely it is only fair that he should be given the chance to know them. Even the most self-centered baby grows tired of staring in the glass.

An Old Friend

DOCTOR DOLITTLE'S GARDEN. By HUGH LOFTING. New York: F. A. Stokes Co. 1927. \$2.50.

Reviewed by DAISY NEUMANN

JUST as Alice was surprised to discover that it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place, so our children might be surprised to find that the people who write books for them in series are usually overworking a good idea. In a former generation, however, juvenile writers appear to have exploited their good idea with such a degree of success that many of that day's classics come down not singly, but in a body. The "Five Little Peppers" series, the long line of "Little Colonel" books, to say nothing of Elsie Dinsmore's incredible diuturnity, and countless other old friends are proof enough that after the close of Volume One its readers are eager to continue and find out what happened-next.

On this last count, though there is little to distinguish it from the six predecessors, we prophesy a long life to "Doctor Dolittle's Garden." In it the grave Thomas Stubbins has recorded faithfully the "Tales of the Home for Crossbred Dogs," which are very amusing, the transatlantic round-trip of a waterbeetle on the foot of a duck, the fruits of the jolly Doctor's research on the subject of insect-language, and an account of his marvellous journey to the Moon in the company of said Thomas Stubbins, Chee-Chee the monkey, and Polynesia the parrot.

This volume is fanciful and entertaining like the former ones. And yet, because we know his capacity for being even more entertaining, we feel it would be a good thing should Doctor Dolittle encounter on one of his magic adventures the Red Queen. For she might tell him in a friendly sort of way, as she told Alice, that if he wants to get anywhere he must run twice as fast as that.

In the "Other America"

THE TIGER WHO WALKS ALONE. By CONSTANCE LINDSAY SKINNER. Macmillan. 1927. \$1.75.

Reviewed by ARTHUR RUHL

THE setting of "The Tiger Who Walks Alone" would appear to be Venezuela, Columbia, or Ecuador, or possibly, the land of "Montalba," in which its many adventures take place, is a composite of all three.

It was here that sixteen-year-old Dick Wynn came with his uncle, Professor Wynn, who was making a scientific expedition into Montalba's jungles. This meant in itself snakes, crocodiles, poisoned arrows, and various kindred and more or less exciting things, but Dick, as it happened, had met a Spanish-American soldier of fortune, General Mendez, in London, and as Montalba was General Mendez's own country, and he was about to start a revolution there, Dick's possibilities of adventure were plainly increased. Indeed, he soon finds himself in the thick of a South American revolution, and by the side of his dashing and gallant friend, sees it through to its successful end.

(Do crocodiles, by the way, bark, as they lie along the river banks, until you can scarcely hear yourself think? The reviewer didn't know it, and rode on a river steamboat for the better part of a fortnight up the Magdalena River once, past rows of alligators, and never heard a squeak. But maybe they do.)

The Montalba which the American visits is the romantic and slightly theatrical South America which Richard Harding Davis used to write about in "Soldiers of Fortune" and "Captain Macklin." If the Dick Wynns who read Miss Skinner's story were actually to buy a ticket to any of the Caribbean ports and try to find a Montalba, or a revolution like that pictured here, they might be disappointed. Idealistic and quixotic soldiers like General Mendez, trying to make their little countries safe for democracy, are rather scarce in the Caribbean region, where "revolution" is generally merely a name for that show of force or the use of it, with which one political group turns out another political group when it thinks that it is strong enough to do so or that the Ins have been in long enough. They are not very romantic affairs, these revolutions, and as machine-guns and modern rifles become more and more common, they are a good deal more destructive than they used to be, and probably more unpleasant.

If this side of Miss Skinner's story smells a bit of the footlights, on the other hand, she doesn't patronize the South Americans, or look down on them from the heights of the supposedly superior Nordic, but tries to give them their due, and to suggest that they may be no less interesting and likable because they are Latin and different. And that is something to be properly grateful for. The "tiger who walks alone," by the way, isn't a real tiger at all, but just what he is should doubtless be left to the breathless readers of the story.

For Boys and Girls

ADVENTURES IN READING. By MAY LAMBERTON BECKER. New York: Frederick A. Stokes. 1927. \$2.

Reviewed by REBECCA LOWRIE

THIS is a book for boys and girls. If boys and girls can be persuaded to read a book telling them what they should read, they will find it vastly more than a list of the great books of childhood—and after. Here is no smug catalogue of improving reading prepared by an adult with an eye to accepted classics. Not at all. Mrs. Becker is personal and friendly. She tells you about the books she has liked, and why she had liked them, and how the adventure of reading ties up with the adventure of living.

Not all the books she talks about are "juveniles." And this to my mind, gives her book its greatest value. She doesn't tie an age-limit tag to anything—which indicates how well she knows the younger generation as it approaches adolescence. Her fiction list includes most of the books that none of us can do without. So do the lists of history and biography.

Aside from the chapters on poetry, the drama, travel, nature, science, and adventure there is an admirable chapter on the Romance of Words and one "Not to be read unless you are determined to be an author."

"Adventures in Reading" is a book for boys and girls.

And it's a lucky parent into whose hand it falls!

For continuation of *Children's Bookshop* see page 404.

CENTURY SUGGESTIONS FOR CHRISTMAS

BOOKS THAT WILL ADD DISTINCTION TO YOUR GIFT LIST

A rare book—more thrilling than fiction and every word of it true!

THE SILENT FORCE

By **T. MORRIS LONGSTRETH**

A brilliant, graphic history of the Mounted Police of Canada, written with the cooperation of the men of the Force. Illustrated, \$4.00

An author analyzes the strangest of human habits—tobacco smoking

THIS SMOKING WORLD

By **A. E. HAMILTON**

A good-humored and impartial examination of the custom of tobacco smoking and its effects on society and the individual. Illustrated, \$2.50

Gorgeous hours in the high places of Western Europe

CLOUDLANDS OF FRANCE

By **AMY OAKLEY**

Illustrated by Thornton Oakley

Memorable wanderings through the mountains of France from the Maritime Alps to Haute Savoie. By the author of *Hill-Towns of the Pyrenees*. \$4.00

A stimulating book from the pen of a prominent sociologist

STANDING ROOM ONLY?

By **EDWARD ALSWORTH ROSS**

A brilliant forecast of the problem which threatens the future of the race. A provocative book. \$3.00



"He has a vein of human sympathy not familiar to American authors."

—Harry Hansen, *New York World*

BUGLES IN THE NIGHT

By **BARRY BENEFIELD**

Author of *The Chicken Wagon Family*

"We like *Bugles in the Night* better than *The Chicken-Wagon Family* and that is putting our appreciation and enjoyment in the very strongest terms."—*Boston Herald*

"A romantic story that leaves a mist in the eyes."—*Philadelphia Public Ledger*. \$2.00

A book that captures the spirit of Manhattan in prose and picture—

HIGHLIGHTS OF MANHATTAN

By **WILL IRWIN**

Illustrated by E. H. Suydam

The high places, hidden regions and furtive corners of Bagdad-on-the-Subway as it is today. "Will Irwin knows his New York, loves it, understands it."—*N. Y. Evening Post*. A beautifully illustrated gift book. \$6.00

"For the youth of this country, or any other country for that matter, one cannot praise it too highly."

—*New York World*



THE BOYS' LIFE OF COLONEL LAWRENCE

By **LOWELL THOMAS**

The celebrated author of *With Lawrence in Arabia* now writes the story of T. E. Lawrence for American boys. The best selling boys' book of the year. Now in its 15th thousand. "Any boy who has read the Arabian Nights will receive with joy this story."—*Christian Advocate*. Illustrated, \$2.00

"The most distinguished achievement of Mr. Anderson's creditable career."

—*Philadelphia Inquirer*.



THOSE QUARRELSOME BONAPARTES

By **ROBERT GORDON ANDERSON**

"Mr. Anderson knows his Napoleon, in fact the whole Bonaparte family; and he possesses the ability to make them live again. He is truly a great artist."—*Indianapolis Star*. \$2.50

Distinguished Fiction

THE ANATOMY OF VIRTUE

By Vincent Sheean

The story of Judith Quayle, the "American Duchess." \$2.00

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

By Clara Shanpe Hough

"Here is a corking good newspaper yarn."—*Rochester Times Union*. \$2.00

THE WAY OF SINNERS

By F. R. Buckley

A swashbuckling tale of medieval Italy. \$2.00

DAPHNE'S IN LOVE

By Negley Farson

Love, Model 1927, in the entertaining story of a modern girl. \$2.00

DELIA DEMONSTRATES

By Berton Braley

The story of a modern business woman, written by the popular humorist. \$2.00

DIRT ROADS

By Howard Snyder

How happiness came into the life of Ellic Wingate, and then passed away. \$2.00

THE RINGTAILED RANNYHANS

By Walt Coburn

A story of the Montana hill-country that rings true. \$2.00



The story of the Mississippi River and its valley—from the time of DeSoto to the present day.

FATHER MISSISSIPPI

By **LYLE SAXON**

"In this brilliantly conceived and written study Lyle Saxon proves his right to the title, the new chronicler of the South."—*Boston Transcript*. Illustrated, \$5.00

Important Non-Fiction

EARLY AMERICAN GLASS

By Rhea Mansfield Knittle

The latest volume added to *The Century Library of American Antiques*. Illustrated, \$4.00

CANDLE DAYS

By Marion Nicholl Rawson

Early American arts and implements. Illustrated, \$3.50

BIOGRAPHY: THE LITERATURE OF PERSONALITY

By James C. Johnston

The remarkable book about biography, with a foreword by Gamaliel Bradford. Illustrated, \$2.50

THE RADIANT STORY OF JESUS

By Alphonse Seche

A brilliant new story of Jesus; powerful and reverential. \$3.50

SOME FAMOUS SEA FIGHTS

By Fitzhugh Green and Holloway Frost

The great maritime battles of history described by two naval experts. Illustrated, \$3.50

The most widely praised autobiography of the year. By the author of *Two Lives*.

THE LOCOMOTIVE GOD

By **WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD**

"It is a torrential confession. I submit that it is a tremendous book, one of the greatest autobiographies in our literature."—*Burton Rascoe, The Bookman*. \$4.00

Psychoanalysis for the Parlor! The new popular pastime—

I'VE GOT YOUR NUMBER!

By **WEBSTER & HOPKINS**

Soul secrets are laid bare by this new "party" book now in its 15th thousand! \$1.00

Charming tales for children, gathered from many lands.

TALES WORTH TELLING

By **CHARLES J. FINGER**

A fine story book for youngsters, illustrated in color by Paul Honoré. \$3.50

The most fascinating book on the Orient to appear in years—

DESERT WINDS

By **HAUSA**

Revealing the mind of a great race—the Arabs, and the spirit of a world religion—Islam. "Hausa has translated in vivid prose the majesty and beauty of the desert and its people."—*Syracuse Post-Standard*. Illustrated, \$3.50

THE CENTURY CO.
Publishers of Enduring Books