

## Books for Girls

By ELIZABETH W. MORRIS

ALMOST all fishermen have honest moments, and if you catch them in one of these they will admit that their array of flies and "spinners" and other lures are invented, bought, cherished, and used more to please the fishermen than to please the fish. What the fish want is real, honest-to-goodness worms, crickets, helgramites, and crawfish. Let us grant ourselves an honest moment, and admit that "books for girls" are, for the most part, invented, bought, and read, if read they are, more to please the mothers than the girls.

Easy reading—guaranteed "wholesome," guaranteed "sweet, simple, and girlish" (how the girls loathe that phrase!), guaranteed not to contain anything a girl cannot at a glance understand, not to contain a real love-affair, though one may be discreetly suggested as likely to occur just beyond the back cover of the book, guaranteed not to arouse pity or terror or questioning—in short, not to contain any of the elements that this dangerous thing called life is chiefly made up of—safe books, so written that mothers, looking for the "right thing for my daughter," can feel perfectly at ease.

The situation is naively given away by a notice on the gay paper cover of one of these "girls' books." It is printed across one corner and it reads: "For girls 8 to 15. Tear this off before giving this book to a child."

There we have it! In other words, don't let the girl know she is pigeonholed, let her suppose you think of her, not as a "girl of eight to fifteen," but as a real person, a human being, herself. Does she not know? Is she cheated? We hope not, but we suppose by careful management her hunger for reality may be staved off for a few years—years in which she ought to be getting ready to meet the rest of reality, such of it as has not already turned up inside her own breast. Can we wonder that at sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, our girls plunge for themselves? They are out to know "life;" they are out to get thrills, and they get them.

It is hard to say just what the difference is between a real book and these books-for-girls. One is reminded of the difference between trees in town and trees in the woods. We first cut down all the trees to make a nice town, and then, missing something, we remember about trees, and plant some, in rows, carefully. So with our girls—we clean up and sterilize their environment, so far as we can, and then plant out in it such experiences as we think they should have. Now, of course, nothing first-rate was ever written with the motive of doing good to somebody else (that is the trouble with most sermons) so the writers of "juveniles" are handicapped from the start. Moreover, you cannot write a real book unless you are a real person, writ-



Illustration from "Tewa Firelight Tales" (Longmans, Green).

See page 305

ing for real persons. And you will hardly catch real persons writing books to be sold to mothers-of-girls-from-eight-to-fifteen—even if the labels are to be torn off before the volumes reach their readers.

There is no great harm in these books. But when one thinks of the great books, and even of the good books, that our girls and boys will never have time to read, and then sees these piles and piles of books—flimsy pseudo-literature—being unloaded across the counters, it tests one's optimism. Our girls will read a dozen stories, all run in the same mould, about boarding-school and camp, and they will never have time to read John Muir's story of his boyhood, or Anna Shaw's story of her girlhood, or Ak-



IT is easy and usual to describe the genus "children's book" by saying that it is a book for children. But would we say, "This is a book for grown-ups"? Which grown-ups? What sort of grown-ups? No! The adult world with its million types and tastes offers a sufficiently wide choice, but choose his audience the author of a book for grown-ups must first and foremost. Obviously he cannot please all in such a rich diversity, nor will the term "for grown-ups" lead him to his friends or later his friends to him—it carries no further than its own generalization. It would seem that the parallel phrase "for children" might also require specification before its usefulness begins. But such, apparently, is not the case. It serves only too well as it stands.

This is probably because the juvenile world, unlike the case-hardened world of maturity, will simplify under our hands, and authors, being human, do not resist the temptation of the easy way. It is not at all hard to simplify writing about child-life merely by negating the grown-up situation. Drop out the manifold branchings of adult activity—children are not doctors, lawyers, merchants, chiefs—and the problem of special knowledge drops out for the author. A few simple affairs of home and school fill youthful days, and again it is easy to find suitable material for children's stories on a negative principle—don't write about death or the devil. Differences in the children themselves need not trouble. Indeed, by disclaiming responsibility for such childish subtleties as parents and educators fall heir to, there are

sakov's—but we are here today to think about books for girls!

Here, then, are ten new books, just "released" upon a waiting world of mothers. Three<sup>1</sup> are about boarding-school or camp. Two<sup>2</sup> are about the recovering of wealthy uncles, lost through accident or villany, and badly needed by poor but charming nieces and nephews. Three<sup>3</sup>, and these among the best, have a thread of honest adventure against a saving background of history: Hartford of the "Charter Oak" period, Texas frontier garrison life fifty years ago, Gettysburg during its great battle.

One<sup>4</sup> is a readable story about five rather attractive and almost real children, suddenly orphaned, who ran away in their flivver and found a new home for themselves. And one<sup>5</sup>, the best, is about a girl who wanted to "write," and did, in spite of the opposition of her family, her village, and her lover. But the tangled love affairs of this story would throw it out of the eight to fifteen class—a good book for even an eighteen-year-old to read, if there were not so many great books unread.

This is the heart of the trouble—not that the books are bad, but that they get in the way of their betters. And behind the situation is—over-production, and the consequent need to find new markets. Each publisher wants to put out the best girls' book of the year. Can we blame him? Each secures the best to be found, dresses it out as attractively as possible, and uses every known trick to make it "go over big." Can we blame him?

We blame no one, but protective measures ought to be instituted in behalf of our young people, for whom the world's best literature is not too good, while the time in which to read it is all too brief.

<sup>1</sup>Carol of Highland Camp, by Earl Reed Silvers. D. Appleton and Co. \$1.75.

<sup>2</sup>Raquel of the Ranch Country, Alida Sims Malkus. Harcourt, Brace and Co. \$2.00.

<sup>3</sup>Soapsuds' Last Year, by Ethel Comstock Bridgman. Century Co. \$1.75.

<sup>4</sup>The Real Reward, by Christine Whiting Parmenter. Little, Brown and Co. \$2.00.

<sup>5</sup>Storey Manor, a Mystery, by Ethel Cook Eliot. Doubleday, Page and Co. \$2.00.

<sup>6</sup>Civilizing Cricket, by Forrestine C. Hooker. Doubleday, Page and Co. \$2.00.

<sup>7</sup>The Regicide's Children, by Aldine Havard. Charles Scribner's Sons. \$1.00.

<sup>8</sup>Sewing Susie, by Elsie Singmaster. Houghton Mifflin. \$1.50.

<sup>9</sup>The Harrison Children, by Otto M. and Mabel S. Becker. Doubleday, Page and Co. \$1.75.

<sup>10</sup>Emily's Quest, by L. M. Montgomery. Frederick A. Stokes. \$2.00.

very few lines of differentiation that the author must observe. The word "children" firmly in mind—we all know what we mean by "children"—the rest is not difficult. It is a good take-off for any writer.

There are, of course, a few handles to pick the word up by. "For children" presupposes simple divisions on lines of age and sex. Immediately we have the boy's book, which often tells about the things boys do not do nowadays or more usually recounts what every boy does, and the girl's book, which prettily domesticates adventure in home and boarding-school. For younger children we have the magic-story, presenting magic as "anything impossible," a definition much more accessible than the stirring of the imagination anciently involved in the word, or else we have the everyday story, once more about what every child does, so that the youngster can have the pleasure of meeting old friends in not too new places. All kinds of stories are certainly "for children." They are not almost everything that a grown-up book might be.

It is only when we shift to the child's own point of view that our efficient author's generalization falls to the ground. Between its letters suddenly appear all the infinite particularities of a world that varies in its own ways immeasurably more than the grown-ups', a world whose simplicity, like nature's, is not so simple as it seems. And the writer who lightly tries to find an audience here is indeed a rash being. Or, to put it differently, perhaps only those who try lightly, because of some remnant of joy in their otherwise oppressed breasts, are not rash.

## Fairy Tales

A BOOK OF PRINCESS STORIES. By KATHLEEN ADAMS AND FRANCES ELIZABETH ATCHINSON. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1927. \$2.50.

FAIRY tales and legends seem to be the natural food for children, as inevitable and necessary as milk. Juggle your vitamins and calories as you will, milk remains the complete food. And so, if everything but stories of fairies and of magic were taken from a child's literary diet, something of everything that is essential would be left.

Therefore, we can greet with pleasure another well-thought-out collection called "A Book of Princess Stories," by Kathleen Adams and Frances Elizabeth Atchinson, charmingly illustrated by Lois Lenski. Each tale has a heading and final in line-drawing suggestive of the story and full of quaintness and humor. Then, there are four full-page color illustrations which are done with a happy disregard of perspective (an unnecessary elaboration from a child's point of view) and quite in the spirit of old tapestries. Here the sun peeps over the horizon on the same plane with the much simplified Princess in the foreground, while between them lambs gambol, flowers bloom, and castles raise their turrets with a decorative dismissal of realism.

The stories are well chosen and range from a stark little folk-tale called "Gold Tree and Silver Tree," which is derived from the Celtic ("Celtic Fairy Tales," by Joseph C. Jacobs) to Rose Fyleman's "The Princess Who Could Not Cry" with its background of humor and good sense. George MacDonald gives some very knowing explanations of fairy lore in the "Princess Day-Light" and quite clears up the fatal question of fairy god-mothers in general and wicked ones in particular.

One is curious to know where the "Princess Carpillon" was found. To judge from its stately artificiality of tone and the descriptions of high-born shepherds moralizing in lovely glades, it might be seventeenth century French, but there is no reference to the source of the story whatsoever.

It is too bad that Miss Adams and Miss Atchinson did not choose to be clearer in the matter of sources. In the preface, to be sure, there is an incomplete list of titles and authors, though in some cases one is referred to another collector of tales such as Andrew Lang or Howard Pyle. To salute the creator of a story as one reads it, is a mere matter of courtesy and it would seem desirable to make such an act of acknowledgment easy for the reader.

## Boys and Books

By SAMUEL SCOVILLE, JR.

He who learns to read books escapes the vermin of life and adds eternity to time. He communes with the mighty dead and gains a host of friends, wise and brave, with whom he can counsel and on whom he can call.

SO wrote old Seneca from the blood and mud of Nero's court. One likes to believe that he found some solace in his beloved books in that den of wild beasts before he fell a victim to their ferocity.

One of the outstanding problems of parents today is how to teach their children to acquire this habit of reading books. In these days of movies and magazines when what used to be taboo is now tabloid, many of our young people never do read in the true sense and their minds, so far as literature goes, are only a clutter of newspapers and periodicals.

Some time ago through the American

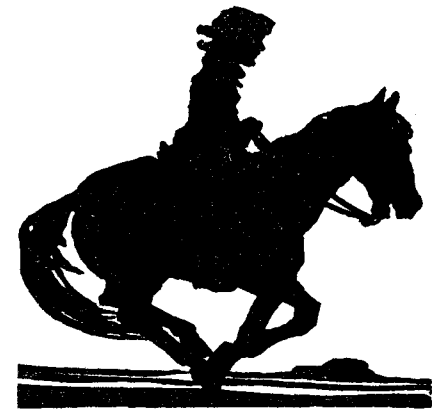


Illustration from "Civilizing Cricket" (Doubleday Page).

Library Association a questionnaire of some thirty-six thousand children was taken in an attempt to find out what books the children of today will read. The answers received were significant, even if discouraging to some of the more serious minded of the librarians. Such a delightful children's book—by adult standards—as Kenneth Grahame's "The Wind in the Willows" had practically no appeal to any of the thirty-six thousand. Nine hundred of them liked a series unanimously voted by the librarians to be trash. One boy from Iowa gave a revealing answer when he wrote about one of these banned volumes:

"I like this book because it suits my taste. I have a wild taste."

Another boy wrote about "East of the Sun and West of the Moon," "I like this book because it is easy to understand what it means. There are no words that will stop you reading. I like books of that sort."

A young misogynist wrote of the "Courtship of Miles Standish": "I like it because it was about a brave man who was afraid to ask a lady to marry him."

Still another youthful cynic, writing of "Evangeline" said: "It doesn't seem possible that a girl would walk so many miles for her beau when now a girl wouldn't walk one mile to see him."

One of my own children once summed up the situation so far as she was concerned by telling me that she liked "talky" books. Whenever she essayed a new book she looked to see whether it contained a sufficient quantity of dialogue. If the pages were unrelieved by numerous quotation marks she fared farther.

Scores of worthless books are read to pieces and by boys who care nothing for the "Last of the Mohicans," "Captains Courageous," "Hans Brinker," "The Talisman," "Puck of Pook's Hill," or similar masterpieces, according to adult standards. "Why?" is the question of exasperated and conscientious teachers, librarians, and parents.

After many years of writing books for boys and trying to persuade said boys to read them, of having charge of the reading of boy scouts and of numerous boys' clubs, besides four boys of my own, I have arrived at a number of general conclusions outside of those stated above by the boys themselves. In the first place boys' tastes are very much like those to which Thackeray confessed: "I write novels for other people but the books which I like to read myself are those without love or any of that sort of nonsense, but full of fighting, escapes, robbery, and rescue."

Again, a book that a boy will read must march, or better yet, gallop. Let it halt if only for a few times and it has lost a boy-reader.

Lastly, nearly all boys like animal stories. Accordingly, experimenting through a number of years with all kinds of boys, I have finally worked out a first-aid list of ten

(Continued on next page)





## YESTERDAY AND TODAY

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Louis Untermeyer

"An excellent compilation . . . an edifying well of inspiration for the young reader."—*Boston Transcript*.  
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# The Children's Bookshop

(Continued from preceding page)

books with one of which I have always been able to catch the attention of any boy except one who belongs to that hopeless residuum who will go to their graves guided only by the Sunday newspapers.

None of the books in this list are worthless, although some of them do not rank high from a literary standpoint, noticeably one of my own, which I tried out because it appeals to that love of woodcraft and out-of-door adventure which a considerable percentage of boys have. The way to get boys to read books is to begin. Once started, and the standard of reading can be steadily raised. Undoubtedly, many better lists can be prepared. I offer this one only because in my experience it has worked with most boys from twelve to sixteen years old.

The list is as follows: "The White Company," by Conan Doyle, "The Black Arrow," by Stevenson, "Seventeen," by Booth Tarkington, "The Jungle Book," by Kipling, "The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood," by Howard Pyle, "Mysterious Island," by Jules Verne, "The Three Musketeers," by Dumas, "Boy Scouts in the Wilderness," by Samuel Scoville, Jr., "The Call of the Wild," by Jack London, and last and by no means least, "Careers of Danger and Daring," by Cleveland Moffatt.

"The White Company" is Doyle's best book. To write it he tore the very bowels out of Froissart as he once said about it. It is full of the rescues, robberies, and escapes that boys like and is written by a master of his craft. If a boy likes that then comes "Ivanhoe," the second best historical novel in the English language. If once he falls under the spell of that book he is saved. All of Scott stretches away before him. Oh, to read those magic volumes again for the first time! Then at the last I try him with the greatest historical novel in any language, "The Cloister and the Hearth." That desperate fight with the robber-band at the inn, the escape from the wind-mill, the duel to the death with the bear—let the boy-reader sample one of those and he will read the whole book and is a reader for life.

"The Black Arrow" leads, of course, to "Treasure Island" and the "Master of Ballantrae," both of which are too strong meat for the average boy. "Robin Hood" is always popular. "The Call of the Wild" is one of the best of our modern animal stories, "Seventeen" catches the boy who a generation ago liked "Tom Sawyer." "The Three Musketeers," helped by the movie, often now appeals to boys. Lastly, for tactile minds, for boys who care more for motor cars and machinery than they do for books and reading, try Cleveland Moffatt's "Careers of Danger and Daring," stories of steeple-jacks, firemen, riggers, balloonists, wild animal trainers—a library in itself.

## Informational Books

By LEILA V. STOTT

"TEXT books are no good, they skip all the interesting parts." This verdict of a twelve-year-old boy in the City and Country School expresses, I believe, a universal objection on the part of children to condensed information. What they enjoy are books rich in the kind of detail that adds vivid human interest to a story. The original narratives of explorers are good instances of this kind of writing. Henry Hudson's red cloak, described by the mate of the *Half Moon*, Columbus's diary notes of the weather on his first trip across the Atlantic, Father Jogues's story of his escape from the Mohawks, details like these we find capturing the imagination of eight and nine-year-old children sufficiently to reappear in their spontaneous dramatic play.

Most children need to be introduced to material of this kind by having parts read aloud to them. Indeed there are unlimited possibilities to such a use of all kinds of books written directly for grown-ups, books of travel, history, biography, science, and even novels, from which extracts can often be chosen to vivify the feeling of a specific environment or period. The very successful science teacher in our school replied the other day to an inquiry about science books for children, that the best ones he knew of were those written for grown-ups. His objection to most of the books written for children was what he described as a tone of "Come little children and let us unfold to you the wonders of the universe." But his laboratory was full of girls and boys from ten to thirteen, lingering after school hours to hear him read aloud from De Kruijff's "Microbe Hunters."

In the same way younger children are held year after year by a simple description of life in a lumber camp in which the important factors seem to be what the men eat for breakfast, how they dress, and what time they get up in the morning. No story whatever in the ordinary sense is needed to lend dramatic interest to these simple facts vividly described.

In comparison with books like these the informational story in which conversations are carried on primarily to convey information, inevitably fails. But this is by no means to rule out all stories with informational content. A good story written primarily as a story against a background of history, geography, or industry fills so great a need in our school experience that our constant search is for more and more real literature of this kind. What we need in endless quantity are books that will do for all ages of children, what is done for older ones and adults by such modern novels as Hémon's "Maria Chapdelaine" or Donn Byrne's "Marco Polo," and by the great historical fiction and drama and poetry of all time.

See page 311 for brief reviews of informational books.

## Children of Other Lands

CHILDREN OF THE MOOR. By LAURA FITTINGHOFF. Translated from the Swedish by SIRI ANDREWS. With Illustrations by GUSTAV TENGGREN. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1927. \$2.50.

BIBI: A LITTLE DANISH GIRL. By KARIN MICHAELIS. Translated by LIDA SIBONI HANSON. Illustrations by HEDVIG COLLIN and BIBI. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1927. \$2.50.

THE ADVENTURES OF PINOCCHIO. By CARLO LORENZINI. Translated by MAY M. SWEET. With illustrations by HERMAN I. BACHARACH. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1927. \$2.

THE MYSTERY OF CASTLE PIERRE-FITTE. By EUGENIE FOA. Translated by AMENA PENDLETON. Illustrated by FRANK DOBIAS. New York: Longmans, Green Co. 1927. \$2.

THE MERRY PILGRIMAGE. Translated by MERRIAM SHERWOOD. Illustrated by J. ERWIN PORTER. New York: The Macmillan Co. The Little Library. 1927. \$1.

LITTLE JACK RABBIT. By ALICE DUSSAUZE. Translated by ALAN MACDOUGALL. Illustrated by ANNE MERRIMAN PECK. New York: The Macmillan Co. The Little Library. 1927. \$1.

NIMBLE-LEGS. By LUIGI CAPUANA. Translated by FREDERIC TABER COOPER. Illustrated by I. B. HAZLETON. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1927. \$1.50.

THE PRINCESS WHO GREW. By P. J. COHEN DE VRIES. Translated from the Dutch by L. SNITSLAAR. Illustrated by RIE CRAMER. New York: Frederick A. Stokes. 1927. \$1.50.

Reviewed by MARGERY WILLIAMS BIANCO  
TRANSLATIONS fill an important place in a child's reading. They provide his first means of contact with life and environment other than his own. However informative a story may be dealing with another race or country it can never convey the actual spirit of that country as does the book that is a direct product of it; the view is always from the outside. This does not apply so much to the imaginative tale which is more or less universal and relies on no particular background, as to the realistic tale, but even here there is marked difference in the trend that fantasy will take; "Pinocchio" is as inherently Italian in conception as "Alice" is English. Where the story is one dealing realistically with the life of the country the interest is more vital, the field of experience widened, and the whole picture clarified by the sense of personal contact. How far that contact is induced will depend upon the writer and to a great extent upon the translator also, who can do much in bringing about a direct understanding. The happiest translation is naturally that in which the consciousness of the translator as a medium is most nearly lost.

Of this type of story "Children of the Moor," translated by Siri Andrews from the Swedish of Laura Fittinghoff is an excellent example. Here the contact is naturally and immediately established, not only through the simplicity of the story itself and the language in which it is told but also by that curiously direct and intimate atmosphere which seems a characteristic of

"The Ten Princes" is perhaps the finest of the Indian novels. . . . one of the most celebrated Hindu romances."

# THE TEN PRINCES

Translated from the Sanskrit

By ARTHUR W. RYDER

W. Norman Brown has this to say and a great deal more in the New York Herald Tribune Books: "The adventures are erotic, picaresque, romantic, yet withal valorous and refined. . . . It is a book of irony written by one who saw life as a somewhat mad but amusing spectacle. . . ."

The Boston Transcript, incautiously admitting that "there may be a few readers shocked by portions of the book," is enthusiastic: "The Ten Princes is amusing, exciting, and new in style and language."

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