

## Childhood in China

THE CHINESE INK STICK. By KURT WIESE. New York: Doubleday, Doran, & Company. 1929. \$2.

TRAVELING SHOPS. By DOROTHY ROWE. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1929. \$2.

BETTY OF THE CONSULATE. By LYDIA J. TROWBRIDGE. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company. 1929. \$2.

Reviewed by ALICE TISDALE HOBART

Author of "Pidgin Cargo"

THESE three children's books on China have one very admirable quality in common. All three give authentic presentations of the Chinese, picturing them as normal human beings, with their racial peculiarities made interesting but not bizarre or fantastic. Would that I could say the same of many of the books written on China for mature readers. Were all "grown-up" books on China written with a like fidelity to truth, America would today be much farther on the road to sympathetic understanding of the Chinese people.

"The Chinese Ink Stick" will be enjoyed by any child who has reached the age when he takes an interest in what is happening in other parts of the world. It is full of details which will delight his mental curiosity. Mr. Wiese manages to give a great deal of information about China without seeming to do so. He presents it in the form of anecdotes and stories told by a stick of ink. Incidentally, the Ink Stick, in explaining itself, tells much of the history of ink in the first country to make it—China. It is a very discerning Ink Stick, with a sly sense of humor that travels from the red lacquer tray of the seller of ink to the table of the famous painter of bamboos and, thence, by a typically Chinese transaction, to another table, that of the public letter writer. The Ink Stick sees and hears much of the life of "Our Street" and of China—east, west, north, and south—while it lies on this last table for, as I have said, it is a very observing piece of ink. But the best story the Ink Stick tells, I think, is of its stay in the home of the tea merchant. Liang, the son of the tea merchant, the finder of the worn-down piece of ink and the guardian of it month after month, is not any little boy dressed up in Chinese clothes. He is a Chinese boy, acting and thinking as Chinese do. His family, although we catch only glimpses of them, are also very true to life. Only in China, where little things count for so much, would you get the to-do that is made when little Liang is discovered clasping the worn-down piece of ink. I can see, in the very flesh, the chief accountant of the tea merchant's shop nodding his head and prophesying that the noble Liang's love for the stump of ink means he is going to be a great scholar—the greatest thing that could happen to the tea merchant's son.

Surely any child who wants to know how other children in the world live will like this book. He will like the drawings, too, and so will the grown-ups in the family. Who could fail to get the humor in the picture of little Liang making New York calls with his father? The pomposity, the great dignity of little Liang! I smile every time I look at the picture. And who is there who has ever lived in China who will not be amused at the jacket with the much-decorated Japanese gentleman adorning the Rintan poster? I fear that is a touch which only the initiated will appreciate.

\*\*\*

"Traveling Shops" is slighter in texture than "The Chinese Ink Stick." It is not so full of that "number of things" which, according to Stevenson, should make us all "as happy as kings." Neither do the descriptions portray the Chinese quite so well, and the drawings do not depict so perfectly the peculiar Chinese pose and expression. Nevertheless the book succeeds in making some aspects of Chinese life extremely vivid: the cries of the fruit vendor, the candy-maker, the seller of silk threads; the birds taking their daily airing with their masters; the bargain well driven. And who can tell? Perhaps children not over-curious, just lovers of a good story, might prefer this book to the other. Certainly any child who loves animals will take delight in the story of "Buffalo," in Tse Ching riding on Buffalo's "wide gray back, in the deep hollow on either side of it. He was such a small boy that he could sit in one hollow and curl his feet in the

hollow on the other side of Buffalo's sharp backbone."

"Betty of the Consulate" gives China from a very different angle from the two other books. It is the story of a family of Americans and their life in China. Betty, the heroine, lived in China in eighteen hundred and sixty. Nevertheless, with a few exceptions, the picture the author gives is of the China I know—the China of today.

I have often wondered why more of such material has not come out of China; there are so many American children living there. And American children at home might profit greatly by reading of how their young countrymen in China spend their days, very happy without most of the things which the child in America feels are essentials.

I did not think, when I began "Betty of the Consulate" that I was going to like it. The little girl of three sounded pedantic and artificial, but Betty becomes a real child later. The story grows in interest and gains momentum as it progresses. In the end I liked the story a great deal, and I can understand how very much a little girl would be interested in Betty's experiences. She would gain from it, too, what Betty gained out of her experiences, namely, to take the Chinese quite naturally and to love them. Almost without exception, American children in China have a very deep love for the Chinese, who in turn care for them with an almost touching devotion. There is a sound psychology of race and country in this book that a child, reading it, would accept without knowing it by so large a name.

I must speak of one or two bits in particular; for instance, the time when the mother finds the children tobogganing down a board, elbows waving like wings, seizing at the bottom of the board a toy, and waddling back up the incline in imitation of cormorants fishing. It is gay and childlike and altogether a delightful scene. And Billy's dream when he rides through the night on the dragon's back in his nightie and the dragon throws his whiskers back and straps his long ears over the child is pure and charming whimsicality. I wish the author would write a whole book full of such flights of fancy.

These books are for children. I only hope that as sound and sane as well as delightful books on China for America's older people are being written. Such books would help to make the coming generation international-minded.

## Kentucky Magic

WITCH PERKINS. By EVELYN SCOTT. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1929. \$2.

Reviewed by STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

Author of "John Brown's Body"

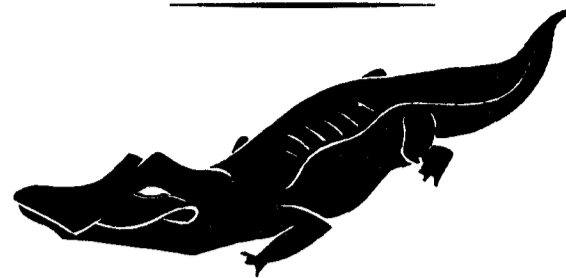
THERE is nothing insipid about "Witch Perkins." Nor is it—that deadliest of things in a book for children—"written down."

In fact, there is a flavor about the whole first part of the story of Ella and her Kentucky house and the mysterious family who moved in next door (in the days of carriages and hot egg-bread and horse-hair furniture) which reminds me of some of the best bound volumes of the old *St. Nicholas*. You can see the town and the people and feel the lazy sunlight—things are natural and easy-going—and they have the relative importance a child would give them—there is no taint of the explanatory grown-up. Though, for that matter, any child who reads this book will learn a good deal about how life used to be lived in America, in the easy, tumble-down days, and learn it without feeling instructed, either. Ella herself is very lifelike and so are the Perkins family. And Uncle Simon, that sinister pig-man, will haunt my dreams for some time.

In the second part of the book, Ella is ill and dreams. And here Miss Scott's rich and somewhat macabre imagination gives itself full play. The dream is by no means entirely comfortable—there is a very genuine quality of nightmare in it. There are amiable though pompous Brownie-dolls and a helpful Jesse James, as well as an efficient and ingenious dragon, but the spider is rather terrifying and the midnight feast of the Moonshiners has awe-inspiring moments. I don't know quite what some of our modern child-educators would say to that. Personally, I found it very enjoyable. And—as a sop of consolation—it all comes right in the end. Virtue is adequately rewarded and vice appropriately punished. "Grown-ups certainly don't know everything."

Here is a child's book which is not cut to pattern.

It is full of color and fantasy, it gives a sense of life. The themes it uses are native to our own ground. And there is not a trace of patronage in it. While, for the more horrific passages, I should think they would be the sort children read with fearful joy. Or used to, once upon a time.



## Realms of Fancy

LITTLE BLACK STORIES. By BLAISE CENDRARS. New York: Payson & Clarke. 1929. \$2.

Reviewed by CHARLES J. FINGER

Author of "Courageous Companions"

THIS is why I hold M. Cendrars in respect. Those Africans I have known, Gold Coast and Senegal district people, were more given to sit listening to twanging instruments than to story telling and I rarely found tale tellers. M. Cendrars was luckier or more diligent than I. He may have gone further afield, for to talk of Africa is like talking of Asia; in the equatorial continent there are peoples as far apart as are Nairs and high class Hindus, while African languages differ as do the tongues of China from the tongues of Ceylon. Also there is this. In Africa there have been strange migrations resulting in a mixing of customs and languages and cultures, so that to catch the real simon-pure folk tale is rare. As to that mixing, you recall how Livingston, the first white man in the Linyanti district, stood amazed when he heard natives salute him with a Hail Mary! and a pious Moslem exclamation, though both greetings were sadly blurred. Therefore it is easy to see why folk tales also are blurred. Indeed the only tale I heard that bore no touch of derivation was one I have entitled "The Wizard and the Paint Stick," and when writing it I sinned greatly and in a way to horrify the folk-lore student, going to great lengths to adorn, for I craved a music of my own.

M. Blaise Cendrars does not sin in that way. His eleven tales have the ring of native simplicity where construction is concerned. They are quite unaffected, are presented with a singular modesty. They take upon themselves an order of course and climax. They are tales told by someone who tells for the delight of doing it. When there appears an obvious piece of derivation from European sources as in the story of "The Lazy Judge," with its

Cat, bite the mouse!  
Dog, bite the cat!  
Stick, strike the dog!  
Fire, burn the stick!

he lets stand what he finds. So this book of tales is of a sort to please the young mind, if there is proper discrimination and a thought that the interest appeals to that age lying between "Mother Goose" and Grimm. Going beyond that age you misplace the book. The safest way is for book-sellers to advise the book's purchase by those who have the will and the ability to read aloud to youngsters. Also the wise reader-aloud should be apt and ready with synonyms, because to thunder out such words as "vanquished," "delirium," "consumed," "husbandman," "supreme," "gesticulated," is to run the danger of whirling young listeners out of the land of fairy and fancy into a void of dull fact and mystification. For, verily I say unto you, whoso carries a dictionary shall not walk in glowing and shining realms. In that lies a gentle hint for the translator of the book.

## The Saturday Review of LITERATURE

HENRY SEIDEL CANBY.....Editor  
AMY LOVEMAN.....Managing Editor  
WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.....Contributing Editor  
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.....Contributing Editor  
NOBLE A. CATHCART.....Publisher

Published weekly, by The Saturday Review Co., Inc., Henry S. Canby, President; Roy E. Larsen, Vice President; Noble A. Cathcart, Secretary-Treasurer, 25 West 45th Street, New York. Subscription rates, per year, postpaid: in the U. S. and Mexico, \$3.50; in Canada, \$4; in Great Britain, 18 shillings; elsewhere, \$4.50. All business communications should be addressed to 25 West 45th Street, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 1, 1879. Vol. 6, No. 17.  
Copyright, 1929, by The Saturday Review Co., Inc.

## When Religion Was Young

HOW THE GREAT RELIGIONS BEGAN.

By JOSEPH GAER. New York: Robert M. McBride & Company. 1929. \$3.

Reviewed by GILBERT LOVELAND

A CULTIVATED gentleman whose especial interest is social ethics once told me that no one really gets interested in religion before thirty-five. He meant, of course, interested in the sense of feeling some need of religion as a consolation or as a guarantor of meanings and values in life. Of an objective interest in religion, and of a curious interest in the history of religions, there is surely increasing evidence; and for this kind of interest age-limits cannot be set. Within a month a college president told undergraduates that any person of culture must in these days recognize religion as an aspect of the human scene and be intelligent about it whether appropriating it or not.

It is probable that this interest in religion extends even below college age. A merely superficial knowledge of the history of mankind demands some acquaintance with various religions. In "How the Great Religions Began," Mr. Gaer has told the story of the religions simply, entertainingly, instructively, and reverently. Having addressed his book to boys and girls, he has wisely made it simple in style, vividly personal, and—may one say, of these hoary figures?—anecdotal in its treatment of the central characters. Any youngster who is beginning to have an acquaintance with world history will find the book easily within his ken.

Of the four adverbs used in the preceding paragraph to qualify Mr. Gaer's manner of telling the story of religions, the greatest is, I think, the last—"reverently." Here are matters about which it would have been easy to write smartly, flippantly, even scornfully. Instead he has written as one believing that some divine spirit has tried to reveal itself to men in every one of the great faiths; as one believing that in each of them there is valuable truth.

A commendable feature of the book is its way of suggesting interrelationships among some of the religions described. Though Brahminism was the native religion of both Gautama the Buddha and Mahavira the Jaina, these two princes in purifying their religion founded two new faiths which included only part of the teachings of Brahmanism. Abraham brought from Chaldea to Canaan a whole body of religious belief and practice that made the base of the Hebrew religion. And Mohammed, as a camel-driver, learned the teachings of both Jews and Christians from the travelers he met and talked with in the market-places of Syria, Persia, and Egypt. Mr. Gaer is all the while pointing out that most of the great religions have had antecedents.

Book One tells of the religions of India: Brahmanism, old and new; Buddhism, Jainism. One of the finest parts of the book is the story of Prince Sidhatta Gautama, who for his holy life became known as the Buddha. Book Two describes the beginnings of the religions of China and Japan: Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto. Book Three describes the growth of the one-God idea, in Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity. Here the chapter on Judaism, Religion of Many Prophets, is exceedingly sympathetic; and that on Christianity is enriched with many legends probably not known to those whose acquaintance with the first things of their faith is derived from the Christian Bible. Book Four is devoted to Mohammedanism, Flaming Sword of the Desert.

Using historical fact as much as possible for the framework of his story, but decorating it richly with the lore and legend so abundant at hand, Mr. Gaer has made a book of religion that should find a large youthful audience. (For an older audience, too, it should prove a most interesting survey of the whole history of religions.)

I find myself wishing that he had stopped with Book Four. At that point he had fulfilled the promise of the title, "How the Great Religions Began." Book Five, in size only a tenth of the work, and in value even less, could be omitted without great loss. For in the fifth book the author attempts to recite the developments of Christianity from the Dark Ages through the Reformation to the present. This latter-day history is involved stuff. The concision required in this book does violence to a sense of proportion. The picture of the Roman

Catholic Church, displaying Crusades, Indulgences, the Inquisition, and a Martin Luther, cannot be a very happy one; a happier picture needs a larger canvas. One misses, too, when he writes of Waldo, Wyclif, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox, the Anabaptists, and the Quakers, some reference to John Wesley. Methodists are mentioned in only one parenthetical aside: "'Quakers' is only a nickname that clung to them, just as the nickname 'Methodists' clung to another Christian sect." Moreover, to include a few short paragraphs about American-born sects seems to be wandering far from "How the Great Religions Began."

One can, however, easily overlook the last tenth of the book because of the beauty and strength of the preceding nine-tenths.

There are eight striking wood-engravings by Frank W. Peers, and, for end-pieces, maps showing the birthplaces of religious leaders; these add greatly to the effectiveness of the book.



Illustration from "The Snow Queen,"  
by Hans Christian Andersen

## The Story of the Bible

THE BOOK OF THE BIBLE. By JOHN W.

FLIGHT. New York: Oxford University Press. 1929. \$1.

IN one hundred and fifty pages of clear, big type, Dr. Flight has condensed the story of the Bible, gathering together only those parts that are "of interest or meaning to young folk."

His method is to use the very words of the King James Version for the more important passages, joining these selections with dignified prose narrative of his own making. The result is a brief Bible, giving much of the flavor of the original, and the essential substance of it. The author has not tried to provide a substitute for the Bible: "it is to be hoped," he says, "that the reading of this book may lead many to read the Bible for themselves, and to appreciate their heritage in the noblest Book that ever appeared in the English language."

In a Foreword, Professor William Lyon Phelps writes: "If one had to choose, I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without the Bible. . . . Men of all shades of belief and of all shades of unbelief are pretty well agreed that the Bible is the best book in the world." And he records that he would like to require "every candidate for admission to any American college or university to pass an examination in this volume, 'The Book of the Bible,' if it were not that this scheme would defeat its object by making the reading an odious task rather than a delight.

There are many illustrations, some of them in color. Maps to illustrate the Old Testament and the New Testament are printed on end-papers.

The Oxford University Press, which issues some of the most important works of scholarship that are current, is inviting its friends, young and old, to a puppet show. The invitations have gone out in the name of Mr. Punch and the party signalizes the entrance of the American branch of the publishing house into the field of juvenile literature.

## The Bible for Everybody

STORIES FROM THE BIBLE. By WALTER

DE LA MARE. Illustrated by THEODORE NADEJEN. New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation. 1929. \$3.50.

THE CHILD'S BIBLE. The words of the Old and New Testaments arranged, illustrated, and explained for young people. Edited by JOHN STERLING. With pictures from the great Art Galleries and Black and White Drawings by T. HEATH ROBINSON. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1929. \$3.75

Reviewed by WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

NEITHER as a man nor as a child have I been afraid of any book, always excepting those in the higher latitudes of mathematics; at the age of five I read the whole undiluted Bible through, and am glad I did. But in these less rigorous days, when the classics are presented to children in the form of predigested tablets, it seems necessary to arrange, or abridge, or rewrite the Bible; and if such things must be, I have not seen the undertaking managed any more skillfully than in these two volumes.

It is often said that young people do not read the Bible nowadays. While it is true that they do not read it as much as they should, or as much as young people did when books were few, it is probably true that they know more about it than they do of any other book or books. If a reference to the Bible seems to be understood by only a few in a large company, try any other book on them and see what happens.

Walter de la Mare has written a charming introduction; charming in its modesty, in its reverence, in its appreciation. Furthermore, he gives a portion of the book of Ruth in six successive versions, Wycliffe (c. 1382), as revised by John Purvey (1386), Miles Coverdale (1536), The Geneva Bible (1560), The Douai Bible (1609), and the Authorized Version (1611), in order to show the difficulty of retelling any of the stories after those masterpieces of translation. Mentioning some of the difficulties that confront those who open the Bible for the first time, Mr. de la Mare says: "My small endeavor has been to lighten some of these difficulties, while yet keeping as close to the spirit of the text as I am capable of. In many passages I have kept even to the letter. Apart from that, remembrance of what the matchless originals in the Bible itself meant to me when I was a child is still fresh and vivid in mind, and these renderings are little more than an attempt to put that remembrance as completely as I can into words."

Such a statement is more than disarming. It strengthens our confidence in the ability of the writer to accomplish his task. There are nine divisions—The Garden of Eden, The Flood, Joseph, Moses, The Wilderness, Samson, Samuel, Saul, David.

The style is so simple, so beautiful, and so appealing that it will reach not only the children, but all discerning readers. I do not care for the illustration—no, not at all.

The "Child's Bible" is a bigger book, over five hundred pages in double column; the pictures are far better for children than in the other volume; selections from the masterpieces have been made, and the black and white drawings seem to me exactly adapted to their purpose. They are indeed delightful and should arouse rapturous responses. There are also maps and explanatory drawings.

Selections are made from both Old and New Testaments, and words like *void* and *firmament* are immediately followed by parenthetical definitions (*empty*) and (*the sky*).

Thus the language of the Authorized Version is maintained and the meaning not lost. The Notes are unobtrusive and excellent, and when any portions of the text have been omitted, the omissions are indicated, the bridge to the next passage is well built, and the narrative made continuous. Furthermore, the paragraphs are skilfully made, and the headings arouse curiosity.

Altogether, this is a book to delight and to inspire children. I wish that it could have been made lighter in weight, as well adapted to their little hands as to their little minds.