

THE SUBTLE TRAIL. By JOSEPH GOLLOMB. Macmillan. 1928. \$2.

Mr. Gollomb in this novel adds his quota to the large band of detective fiction in the form of the Goldfish, an individual of no passion or emotion save curiosity. His particular method of detection is by psychology, although in addition he seems to possess a knowledge of some rare drugs which comes in handy. The Goldfish on the whole appears to do his duty in a manner which resembles tolerably well that of other detectives in other novels. To be honest, there are a few cases in which he acts in a manner quite sensational and original. But he does his duty nobly; he ferrets out the crime before it really starts, ferrets out the originator of the crime, and drives him to death under a train in a subway. It is a readable novel but not really a good detective story. Mr. Gollomb asks us to accept too many things which strain our sense of reality. It doesn't make his novel less readable but it does make it less artistic.

HOLLYWOOD GIRL. By J. P. McEvoy. Simon & Schuster. 1929. \$2.

The McEvoy humor is still going strong. "Hollywood Girl" takes Dixie Dugan, our old friend of "Show Girl," and projects her into the antics and inanities of Hollywood. Mr. McEvoy employs again the delightful method of "Show Girl" in putting his story across. He uses anything but sober narratives: telegrams, letters, excerpts from *Variety* and every other paper read by good Hollywoodians; snatches of dialogue heard here and there; and, for our surprise, one stretch of pure stream of consciousness in James Joyce's best manner. To be sure, there is a plot: will Dixie get a break in the pictures, will she marry, and if so, whom? But this plot is just about as absorbing as last night's newspapers. Dixie's marriage is merely so much sawdust, and Mr. McEvoy knows it. It's the wisecracks that count—wisecracks allusive and sly, wisecracks new last Tuesday, wisecracks just this side of being not quite nice, and just plain garden wisecracks. Mr. McEvoy is a master of the day's idiom, a genius in the juggling of the pointed topicality. Five years from now "Show Girl" and "Hollywood Girl" will need a glossary; to-day, however, they are quite first-class and should on no account be missed by the alert-minded citizenry.

But "Hollywood Girl" is not all laughs. Mr. McEvoy has been in Hollywood, and by evidence of this book he hated it. Throughout these later adventures of Dixie, there is an undercurrent of bitter condemnation of the life, the standards, the ethics of Hollywood. We see Dixie unhappy and friendless, resolutely sticking to her decency, when a "yes" and a few hours of acquiescence would have made everything easy. We see the terrifying stupidity of many of the producers and their underlings; we sense the peculiar poignancy of growing just a little too old. True, all this has been said many times already; it may be damned as hopelessly trite. Well, perhaps it is, but more likely it is important enough to say again, to keep on saying as often as we can find anyone as effective as Mr. McEvoy to repeat it for us. If any screen-struck girl wants to play with Hollywood fire, let her first read between the lines of Mr. McEvoy's humor.

Readers of *Variety* (a periodical whose circulation would be over a million a week if the right people were incited to have a try at it) will howl with joy at "Hollywood Girl," and everyone else with any appreciation of the lighter aspects of his times will snuggle into his easy chair and treasure every quip and crack as so much pure gold.

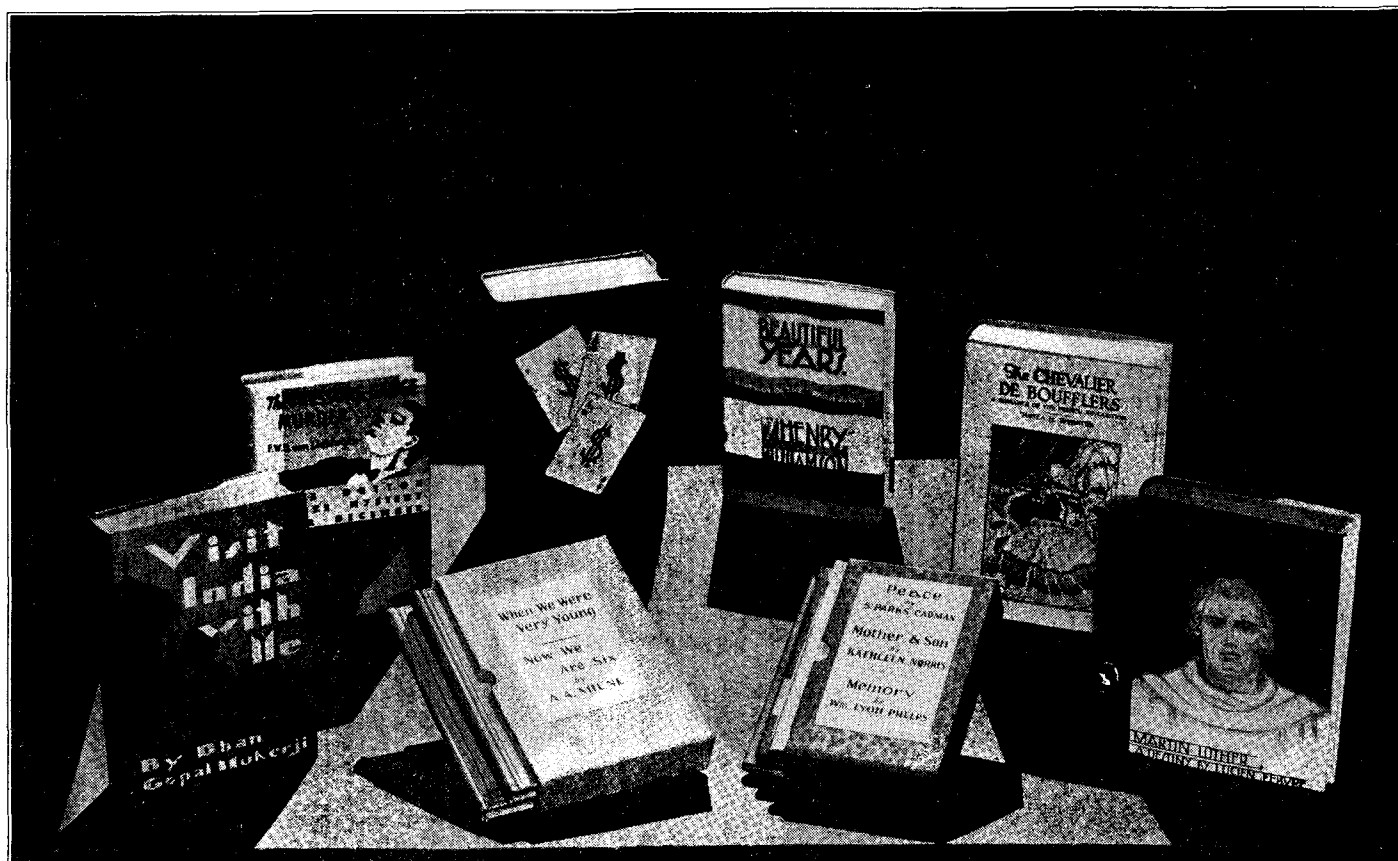
Juvenile

(The Children's Bookshop appears on the next page)

HOLIDAY POND. By EDITH M. PATCH. Macmillan. 1929. \$2.

In this little book, so charmingly gotten out, ten phases of animal or insect life in or around Holiday Pond are described. Each is a small life cycle, told as a true story—the hero endowed, of course, with a real name to lend verity to the situation. It is perhaps too grandiloquent to say that the book has a simple dignity, in its quiet and straightforward style; but it is, indeed, very delightful to read—not lively enough, perhaps, for the youngest children, but excellent material for those just above, in its suggestion of quiet and friendly observation of small live things all about. The illustrations, partly photographs and partly quaint and imaginative drawings, add much to the reader's pleasure. The book is square and rather flat, and offers a pleasant firmness for a child's grasp.

(Continued on page 499)



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Children's Book Clubs

By KATHERINE ULRICH

CHILDREN'S book clubs are a product of the age of vitamin D, of pulverized vegetables and specialized private schools and sun lamps. In other words, they belong to the age when parents are doing everything in their power to get the best that is available for the mental, cultural, and physical development of their offspring. Children's book clubs belong to to-day and probably to to-morrow. Yesterday they would have been out of place and misunderstood.

There is no need to rehearse the changes which conspired to bring this condition about. For one thing, the day of the development of the child is also the day of the emancipation of the parent. Strangely enough, though the two seem to be at odds with each other, they are working together to create something that will be of mutual value. Life at the present is full, crowded, and hurried. And parents are certainly more sensible, more modest than parents of fifty years ago who believed that by the mere act of parenthood they were licensed to assume complete charge of their child's welfare.

Of the various methods of learning to read I think that we all agree that the most desirable road to an appreciation of books is access to a bulging library and freedom therein. The growing-up reader will select and discard quite rightly as his tastes and experience and interest keep step with his years. Unfortunately this approach to intelligent reading presupposes a natural born inclination to read, a library at hand, and a fair amount of leisure. Also a real asset to the scheme is a partner, a watchful and sympathetic adult, who encourages and directs with proper callousness.

In the days of horses and for those who had them, such methods worked comfortably enough. And only one hundred years ago the few publishers of children's books vied with one another to see who could produce the tiniest book. One achieved the very height of insignificance—a volume that was one and one-eighth inches tall!

In 1929, children's book clubs came into being, like all innovations, because of the demand for them. Modern science has explained to the parent the necessity for a diet of well-balanced starches, carbohydrates, proteins—which includes a certain amount of candy. Modern educators have explained the necessity for an equally well balanced diet for minds to grow on, and reading for fun plays no small part in the plan.

The parent sends his child to the best school available. He feeds him according to the advice of a specialist, but what is he to do when faced with 850 new children's books published in the fall of 1929?

Don't let anyone say there are plenty of good books already published; why bother with the new? Unquestionably books for adults as well as for children which have survived the test of years are many of them better than the common run of books from year to year. Yet, like living friends, contemporary books are close to us. They speak our language and interpret—no small godsend to youth.

The organization and plan of children's book clubs were based on the advice of specialists in the children's book field. They coincide with the principles of modern education. They have advisory boards composed of men and women who are prominent in various fields which have to do with the advancement and development of young people. To be sure, there is no question to-day in anyone's mind that books in their contents, their appearance, and their style have profited greatly by better understanding the demands of children. Books on science and invention, books on nature study, on travel, on exploration, and on the various phases of present-day existence must satisfy and keep step with the diversified interests of to-day's child.

Children's book clubs are thoroughly cognizant of these facts. They can, through the plan of sending one book a month, give the young subscriber a well-rounded and stimulating program of reading. They can by insisting on good typography and general excellency in make-up give a child a feeling for nice books. They can offer boys and girls the nucleus of a fine library

and for children in small towns, where the opportunity to buy books is especially limited, the clubs can fill an outstanding need. They can foster intelligent reading by broadcasting intelligent books. They can assist in breaking down the woeful state of mind which exists like a bad habit in many adults, that is, that books are needed by the young only when Yuletide rolls around. These are the more general probabilities which may be accomplished by children's book clubs. The clubs are too young at present to predict with any certainty the extent of their influence.

There is, however, one other very important contribution that they may make. They may subtly imbue boys and girls with the realization that reading is fun. The term, "required reading," has tainted the minds of too many book novices. Shakespeare, Dickens, and Scott, to mention only a few worthies, have been shown up in the light of a duty. For some the stigma carries over. Books in general are regarded with skeptical mistrust.

This is where the sound psychology of the world-old club idea may be especially useful. The joining spirit in youth, though by no means limited to those under sixteen, is particularly rampant. To belong is cozily convivial, and at the same time distinguishedly exclusive. The regulation accompaniments of club membership, such as the badge or pin, the magazine in which members can find self-expression as well as news, the contests, all are expected and necessary parts of the picture. There is not a reason in the world why a book club for boys and girls should lack for any of the delightful trimmings. Books are no longer precious morsels deserving only reverence and singular attention. The more widely they are distributed, the more gleefully devoured, the greater the quota of intelligent readers and the greater the returns for the reader, author, publisher, bookseller—not to mention the last to arrive on the scene, children's book clubs.

Reviews

THE LANES OF LYNWOOD. By CHARLOTTE M. YONGE. Illustrated by MARGUERITE DE ANGELI. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1929. \$1.75.

OLAF THE GLORIOUS. By ROBERT LEIGHTON. Illustrated by HENRY FITZ. The same.

THE PYRAMID BUILDERS. By FRANCIS ROLT-WHEELER. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1929. \$1.75.

SUSANNA AND TRISTAM. By MARGORIE HILL ALLEE. Illustrated by HATTIE LONGSTREET PRICE. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1929. \$2.

A VOYAGE TO TREASURE LAND. By ANNA CURTIS CHANDLER. Illustrated by HAZEL DE BERARD. New York: Harper & Bros. 1929. \$2.50.

Reviewed by CATHERINE WOODBRIDGE

WHEN children outgrow the wonder of fairy tales, they turn most eagerly to the wonder of history to set them dreaming. This group is fresh proof of the steady demand for books with historical background. Two of them are reprints from a generation back, but are no less modern in their appeal than the others, for children have not the prejudice of literary fashions and demand only a good, rousing story.

First of the reprints, "The Lanes of Lynwood" is a convincing and vivid reconstruction of the age of chivalry. The figures of the Black Prince and Bertrand du Guesclin are authoritatively portrayed. The precedent is, of course, that of Sir Walter Scott, though without his abundance of detail. The descriptions are short enough for the patience of youngsters. Miss Yonge's chief source is the "Chronicle" of Froissart, and it is her avowed intention to encourage her readers to turn back to him. At one point there is an almost literal transcription of his story of Orthon which serves to give an idea of medieval story telling. Finally the manner in which the virtues of chivalry are portrayed without glorifying war is surprisingly in keeping with modern tendencies.

"Olaf the Glorious" is a retelling of the "Saga of Olaf Triggvison," first Christian King of Norway from the "Heimskringla"

or Chronicle of the Kings of Norway, compiled by Snorre Sturlason in the twelfth century. Mr. Leighton has kept to characteristic genealogical ramifications without allowing the thread of the story to become too involved. Some scenes, simply mentioned in the original, he has amplified with dialogue of his own, in order to make more vivid the personality of his hero. The violent outcroppings of the pagan Viking spirit through a veneer of Christianity, which are of the very essence of the saga, he has not attempted to modify where they actually contribute to the story. In fact the narrative has all the spirit of the original. It still bears the earmarks of oral telling and, though abridged and organized, is a very real saga.

Of the books by contemporaries, "The Pyramid Builders" is historical only in background. It is the story of a boy prince of one of the upper Nile kingdoms at the time when Cheops was building the great pyramid at Gizeh. The author has used his archaeological knowledge to build up a setting in which the strange occultism of ancient Egypt becomes plausible. Tumultuously exciting from the opening paragraph, the book contains interesting descriptions of the City of the Dead and of the construction of the great pyramid.

"Susanna and Tristram," with its Quaker simplicity, could hardly be a greater contrast to ancient Egypt. Its pace is the quiet jog trot of the old white horse which carries Susanna and her little brother in courageous quest of the means of livelihood. But there are excursions into adventure along the Underground Railway. The old white horse becomes the carrier of a slave hunted through three states, and Susanna's gallant spirit outwits all their pursuers with Yankee pluck and ingenuity. The story has a distinctly American flavor.

"A Voyage to Treasure Land" is an outgrowth of the author's story-hours for children at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. There she tells in costume such stories as this book contains, each designed to portray some typical field of artistic activity, such as vase painting in ancient Greece, or tapestry weaving in Belgium in the fifteenth century. Her illustrations are stereopticon slides and objects from the museum galleries. It is very difficult to reproduce all these circumstances in a printed book. Details of construction that have an immediate interest before an actual object lose their meaning before a mere black and white drawing, however good. The choice of subject, the illustrations, and the manner of criticism are all excellent, but the stories are not exciting enough in themselves to tempt the child into swallowing incidental information. Furthermore, there is a stiltedness of style, which cannot be supposed to reproduce any foreign habit of speech as it is used informally from Greece to the New York of Captain Kidd. The book falls short through lack of the personality which is the compelling force in the museum story hours.

A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY OF THE WORLD. By V. M. HILLYER. New York: The Century Co. 1929. \$3.50.

Reviewed by HELEN S. UNDERHILL

IT is incredible when we look back twenty-five years to recall how limited was the teaching of geography. What stress was laid upon bounding states and countries, naming their capitals and largest cities, and giving their latitude and longitude! The child whose memory was good swelled with pride, but certainly his imagination and interest were never aroused as they are today. Yeomans showed some ten years later what the teaching of geography might be when he wrote his illuminating articles in the *Atlantic*, and it has grown and expanded since until geography is perhaps the most fascinating study the school has to offer.

In "A Child's Geography of the World" the author takes you on a delightful jaunt, selecting people and things and places that come within the child's ready comprehension and yet are full of wonder, lingering here and there just long enough to make you want to go back some day and learn all about it. It is not a text book nor does it aim to take the place of one; an afternoon's ramble over the countryside with a jolly and sympathetic teacher has real value as well as entertainment, but an intimate knowledge of trees and plants and stones can be gained only by applied study. To stimulate the desire for this detailed study which will come later in the geography grade is the essential purpose in his book and that he has achieved this end most delightfully no one can doubt. Amusing little sketches by the author add to the reader's interest.