

## Children's Books in Italy

By LEONILDA I. SANSONE

FULLY appreciating the fact that other countries, especially the United States and Germany are far ahead of them in the field of children's literature, the Fascisti, having put to order the various political and social problems and installed a practical and modern system of education, are now turning their attention to better books for children! The State has encouraged and assisted in many ways the literary development as well as the format of the books.

Literature for children as it is known in America is an entirely new field in Italy. The difficulty of finding suitable writers soon presented itself, as did the problem of discouraging those adult authors who thought to turn their pens from novel writing to simple tales for children. With the new educational system came the "Libro dello Stato" for use in the primary grades of all the schools in Italy. Published by the Libreria dello Stato, it is under the direct control and supervision of the Fascist State. It is an excellent production and one of the best means of instilling Italian unity into the minds of the school children.

The State took the initiative in the Children's Book Movement and has published "I Grandi Navigatori Italiani," written by Giuseppe Fanciulli and illustrated by Tummiati.

What say the waves beating upon the coast of Italy?

Dare! Dare! Dare!

It begins with the sea and ends with the sea; it begins with the first voyage around Africa and ends with the Cabots in Newfoundland. The glories of that glamorous age of adventure on the high seas; the difficulties of exploration in those early days; names and deeds revealing new worlds to every child's mind; all, pictured briefly and vividly, leave us with the desire for more unknown lands to explore. The illustrations are daring and colorful. Instead of the usual fervent Columbus kneeling on the *terra ferma* of the island he believed to be India, behold him standing squarely and haughtily, one hand holding the flag of Spain, the other boldly on his hip. The Red Indian usually shown lurking behind the trees has entirely disappeared.

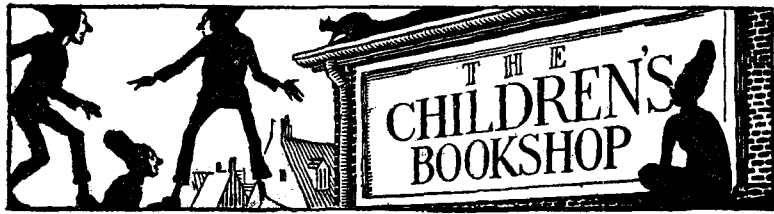
A picturesque and more dainty book is the second publication of the Libreria dello Stato, "Canzoncine Italiane," a collection of folk songs known to the children of the various regions of Italy. It is charming, with its words set to music and its delicate illustrations. But the Libreria dello Stato is not the only publisher that has produced good children's books within the last few years. Paravia of Turin is making great strides to improve his output; Bemporad of Florence, having lived too long upon the reputation of the elegant "Pinocchio," has begun to look around for new writers. The Società Editrice Internazionale of Turin offered a prize of 10,000 lire for the best children's book for 1930, and of the ninety-eight manuscripts submitted the committee had difficulty in choosing the best seven, and from these the winner. The prize was awarded to Milly Dandolo for her "Cuore in Cammino." Executed in a neat, poetic style this is a noble book deserving a high place among the few outstanding masterpieces of Italian children's literature.

"Lucino il Mozzo" is the title of Berto Bertu's story of life on a houseboat. It opens with the famous poem, "Marriage to the sea," with which the Venetian Doges inaugurated their reign, and ends with Fogazzaro's earnest prayer to the Italian sailor. It is a pity that the illustrations are neither clear nor appropriate.

A collection of happy fairy tales, "Teste allegre," by T. M. Manzella, is written in very good taste and is full of the joy of living, with no impossible adventures nor fearful complications. Legends of saints that have become traditional have been carefully gathered and written for both children and adults in "Trenta Leggende d'Oro," by A. Colombo. The book is spiritual in feeling with exquisite illustrations that are in perfect accord with the text.

Sperling and Kupfer of Milan are introducing contemporary German literature to the Italian readers. They have recently published the Italian translation of "Quando Gesù Era Piccolo" from the German of Maria Mayer, a charming book of poetic legends about the Christ child, with delicate pastels. Isidora Newman's "Nel Regno dei Fiori" is a well known volume of fairy tales taken from the German.

Bemporad has done a good thing with "Storia di Dr. Dolittle," so much loved by English and American children that one wonders why it had not been translated before. Dr. Prezzolini of Columbia Uni-



Conducted by MARION PONSONBY

versity has just completed the translation of Stevenson's "Master of Ballantrae," and recently an excellent edition of Kipling's "Kim" was published by Corticelli.

The Lampada is a set of six small books for children beautifully illustrated by Pinocchi. They are fairy tales told in the manner of our grandmothers by such famous men as Beltramelli, beloved for his "Piccolo Pomi," and that old enchanter Luigi Capuana. Of special interest to libraries is the revised edition of the "Children's Encyclopedia," recently taken over by Mondadori and greatly improved. It is the most complete, the most practical, and the most useful reference book of its kind for Italian children.

## Reviews

SEPPALA, Alaskan Dog Driver. By ELIZABETH M. RICKER. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1930. \$3 net.

DERRY OF TOTEM CREEK. By HUBERT EVANS. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1930. \$2.

FISHERMAN 28. By JACK CALVIN. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1930. \$2.

FROZEN IN. By CLARKE CRICHTON, JR. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1930. \$1.75.

Reviewed by JOHN J. UNDERWOOD

Author of "Alaska, An Empire in the Making" SO many epics of the great North have gone unsung that it is delightful to have one of the old guard relate his experiences during the fabulous days of the Klondike rush. This, Leonard Seppala has done in a volume that is partly biography and partly autobiography. Elizabeth M. Ricker is jointly responsible for this fascinating set of tales about one of the best known of the members of the famous Arctic Brotherhood.

One after another of the famous characters of those early, colorful days of the gold rush live again in Seppala's pages. Human interest stories shift from Tex Rickard's saloon, "The Northern," where gambling was "all straight," out to the creeks where claim jumpers were surreptitiously—and vigorously—dealt with. To be alone and hundreds of miles from a settlement with an insane man trying to kill you is a thrilling thing, and then to witness the taking of the record pan of gold, three thousand dollars in one shovelful (the highest ever taken in Alaska), is another. The book is full of drama from beginning to end, but Seppala is at his best when writing of dogs. When the stricken city of Nome must have diphtheria serum, it was Seppala, the dog racer, and not Seppala the miner, who was intrusted the desperate task of fetching it. Of that race the whole world knows; the heroic dogs and their gallant driver were in the headlines in every newspaper in the civilized world, but for Seppala it may as well have been the ignominy of defeat, for Balto, a scrub dog with little or no record, was made the "newspaper" hero of the event, while Togo, the real hero, went unrecognized.

"Derry of Totem Creek" is the story of an airedale by one who understands and loves dogs. When the story opens, he and his master, Ed Sibley, partners in fair weather and foul, are in Vancouver and down on their luck. Then the master is offered a job as caretaker of a large game preserve surrounding an abandoned Indian village on the upper British Columbia coast. Before he left Vancouver, however, Ed had been warned that he would meet with trouble in carrying out his employer's orders, and indeed, he had little more than landed when the warnings began to come true.

While the book tells a good story, there is much more to it than just that; it abounds in nature lore and there is much that bespeaks an intimate acquaintance with the deep, green woods of the northwest country, while a high and abiding affection, again, for man's best friend is reflected in every chapter.

Few writers can depict Alaska in a manner satisfactory to those who know and appreciate the great Northland. Rex Beach and Barrett Willoughby did it, and now the shadow of another writer as a possible successor looms on the horizon. It is that of Jack Calvin, who in "Fisherman 28" has written a salty tale that rings true of the present Alaska.

Bert Lindsay knows there is mischief

brewing when he sails for his father's company on the four-masted bark *Queen of Asia*, bound from San Francisco to the great salmon fisheries at Nushagak. As he pursues his mission, plots and counter plots ripen, nets are corked, sails are split, and more and more people become involved.

In all the annals of big business there is nothing more dramatic than the salmon-canning industry; from the beginning of the short season of the "run" it is a drama in which only strong, rugged men may play a part. Jack Calvin carries conviction in his handling of this story. The illustrations are unusually artistic and well done. Parenthetically, the writer of this review spent part of last summer in the Nushagak country and found there some of the best trout fishing streams in America.

The ominous phrase "frozen in" might spell tragedy for some people, but to Clarke Crichton, Jr., it spelled romance. Clark was cabin boy on the famous schooner *Nanuk*, which sailed from Seattle to North Cape, there to engage in fur trading. He tells about walrus hunts, whales, polar bears, life aboard a trading schooner, and draws interesting and colorful pictures of the small Russian villages, where his ship stopped en route to secure the necessary permission from the Russian government to carry on the fur trading business. All went well during the pleasant Arctic summer, but before the million dollar fur cargo was stowed away the ice began to form and almost over night became so thick there was no hope of getting the little ship out. Men of the North are noted for making the best of bad situations, and this is exactly what everyone on the *Nanuk* did. Thus far the story might be just the repetition of many such stories and Clarke would settle down to spend the winter on the boat. But such is not the case, and there is further adventure in store for him as the airplane, so identified with the modern Alaska, enters, and the gritty men, the lad, and Marion Swenson, the one girl on board, face the prospect of going "outside" by this means.

On the next trip to the *Nanuk*, Colonel Ben Eielson and Earl Borland, two of the most gallant men the North has ever known were lost. Clarke pays his tribute to them in a frank, boyish style.

ROY CHAPMAN ANDREWS: DRAGON HUNTER. By FITZHUGH GREEN. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1931. \$1.75.

Reviewed by ELLSWORTH HUNTINGTON

MR. FITZHUGH GREEN has the right idea in choosing subjects for his books for boys. He thinks that the story of a living hero is much more worth while than a blood and thunder story of adventure which never happened and usually could not happen. He is especially fond of writing about explorers. He has taken his readers with Admiral Peary to one pole and with Commander Byrd to the other. He has told them about Martin Johnson, who hunts lions with a camera, and Captain Bartlett, who almost makes his ships travel on the ice. All these are men whom it is well worth while for boys to read about. Roy Chapman Andrews, whom Mr. Green calls a dragon hunter, is a worthy addition to this list.

Mr. Andrews's early adventures are passed over somewhat briefly, and the rest of the book is devoted to his expeditions to China and the neighboring deserts in search of relics of ancient man. Naturally the greater space is devoted to adventures, but along with this there is much scientific information. In fact, the author makes a great effort to reconstruct the far distant geological past. It will be remembered that Mr. Andrews's expeditions were much more successful in finding eggs and bones of ancient dinosaurs than in finding traces of early man. Therefore the dinosaurs, or dragons, as Mr. Green calls them, occupy an important place in this book, but they do not crowd out the explorers and the natives.

While the book is admirable in purpose and plan it does not quite accomplish its purpose. I found that my ten-year-old boy was interested in it, but did not find in it anything like the charm of "Tom Sawyer," which he was reading at the same time. The trouble lies partly in the fact that the author strives so hard to produce an effect that he ceases to be natural. He tells how great a man is Roy Andrews, how wonder-

ful were his adventures, and how marvelous were the dragons. It would be better to tell the facts in such a way that they speak for themselves. Sometimes, too, Mr. Green's English is a little careless. Moreover, in a few instances, such as the dates of the dinosaurs and the description of how their bones and eggs were petrified, a greater degree of scientific accuracy would be desirable.

Personally, I wish that the author spoke of his subject as "Mr. Andrews" instead of "Roy," but doubtless I am old-fashioned. Nevertheless, the book is good and is to be recommended far above a great many stories of adventure.

THE BOY SCOUTS' BOOK OF TRUE ADVENTURE. By Fourteen Honorary Scouts. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1931. \$2.50.

Reviewed by MITCHELL CHARNLEY

YOU might legitimately assume, after reading this book, that the "fourteen honorary scouts" who contributed to it had been chosen for their literary achievements rather than for doing a good deed a day. They have told their tales of adventure in a stirring, unvarnished style that turns the compilation from just-another-book into an honest contribution to the boy literature of the year.

It's old stuff to say that the best writing is the simplest. But if you want convincing evidence of it, you'll find it here. These men—Orville Wright, Donald MacMillan, Meriam Cooper, Lincoln Ellsworth—are scientists, explorers, men of action. They have put down their stories in so direct, straightforward a manner as to make you want more—a manner that makes more colorful and compelling than could the most Masfieldian style the yarns they have to tell.

Among all the tales, Lindbergh's is perhaps the least effective. But for good reason. His story, telling of a flight over the Caribbean Sea, is nothing more than a newspaper dispatch, "selected" by the flier as his contribution to the book. Byrd's tale of his trans-Atlantic flight, Ellsworth's of the voyage of the *Norge* from Spitzbergen to Nome, Wright's of the first successful airplane flight (a tale differing, incidentally, in many minor particulars from those previously told by the Wrights), all profit by comparison.

The book covers a lot of ground, from airplane to Indians, from Asiatic hunting with the Roosevelts to Arctic shipwreck with Bob Bartlett. For any boy, whatever his age, it will make adventure in these civilized times not only a reality, but a very stirring and understandable reality.

THE ASTONISHING ANTS. By JULIE CLOSSON KENLY. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1931. \$2.50.

Reviewed by BEVERLY KUNKEL  
Lafayette College

TO one who is not familiar with the scientific literature pertaining to the ants, the present volume will seem as highly imaginative as the stories of fairies and goblins which prove so universally appealing to children. As a matter of fact, the habits and actions of the ants are described accurately in this delightful book and from a point of view which is quite novel—that of the ant itself as it looks out on the world. The perspective of the ant is preserved.

Antland is a wonderful place to visit, and no child or his parents can venture far into it without being as greatly astonished as was Alice in Wonderland. The book ought to produce a goodly number of myrmecophiles among its youthful readers.

The book is illustrated with fascinating wood cuts showing close-up views of the ants and their surroundings which have the appearance of illustrations of "Gulliver's Travels."

WHAT'LL YOU DO WHEN YOU GROW UP? By BERTA and ELMER HADEN. Longmans, Green. 1931.

A gay little book for the very young man, with bright-hued illustrations depicting practitioners of all professions from policeman and baker to judge and President. The book has jingles lively, if not always melodious, to elucidate its pictures.

The John Newberry Medal for the best children's book of the year was last week awarded to Elizabeth Coatsworth for her "The Cat Who Went to Heaven." The medal, bestowed annually was established by Frederic G. Melches of the *Publishers' Weekly* in honor of Sir John Newberry, one of the first publishers to recognize the importance of books for children. Miss Coatsworth has written several other books for children, as well as three volumes of adult poetry.



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## British Museum Catalogue

BRITISH MUSEUM. General Catalogue of Printed Books. Volume 1, A-Aeg. London: William Clowes & Sons, Limited. 1931.

Reviewed by H. W. LYDENBERG  
New York Public Library

IS the glory of the British Museum library its books, its catalogue, its staff?

Earnest advocates of each would not be hard to find. The staff includes scholars of distinction in the classics, palaeography, the graphic arts, linguistics, and many other fields of scholarship. The present Director, Dr. George Francis Hill, speaks with authority on Greek history and numismatics. His predecessor, Sir Frederick Kenyon, was versatile enough to edit the newly discovered manuscript of Aristotle on the Constitution of Athens (1891) and the letters and poetical works of the Brownings. Other instances come readily to mind.

In mere counting of the number of books the Museum library and the French Bibliothèque Nationale run a pretty rivalry. Which is the larger depends partly on the definition of what constitutes a book and partly on how the counting is done. But in choiceness and comprehensiveness of selection of its books the Museums stands in a class by itself. Here and there one may find a library with a larger or more important collection on this subject or that, but nowhere will one find a larger general collection, with all subjects, all authors, all ages, all countries, all editions so well represented as in that pile in old Bloomsbury.

Without a catalogue, however, what good would books be, and what use could the staff put them to, no matter how scholarly and learned that staff might be? Few students have used any Museum books within the past generation who would not gladly stand up and call the library blessed for setting before them that stolid, unemotional, reliable, matter-of-fact record of the printed resources it puts at their command.

For those who care for that sort of thing it is a fascinating story to think back over

the struggles about the problem of cataloguing such a collection as the Museum. It might need a bit of patience, to be sure, but doubtless would not be impossible, to find today a reader who recalled the combination of manuscript and printed catalogues that had to be consulted before the printing began in 1880 of what most of us now know as "the" catalogue of the Museum. By that date there were over two thousand volumes in the manuscript register of printed books. And in addition the reader had to dip into the five volume catalogue of the library of George III, presented to the nation in 1823 by his loving eldest son, and also into the three volumes prepared by Payne and Foss recording the library of Thomas Grenville bequeathed in 1846. Once one had consulted these three alphabets he might be comfortably sure he had learned what the Museum had by or about the man he was looking for. In 1841 Panizzi had brought out, against his better judgment, volume 1 of a printed catalogue the trustees had instructed him to prepare. This covered the letter A, and it was Panizzi's contention that to print a catalogue of such a collection as each letter of the alphabet was finished was foolish and impossible. This single volume demonstrated the correctness of his position, and for nearly forty years to come readers had to use the ponderous manuscript volumes and to pray for length of life to await the hoped for printed record.

When this finally began to appear in the early 'eighties the alphabet opened in bloodless and unemotional fashion with "a method of raising hops in red bogs," and continued letter by letter for two decades till the roll was closed with J. Zz's "the genuine . . . will of a clergyman lately deceased; whose son now deservedly possesses one of the highest stations in the church; containing his remarkable apology for adultery." A second alphabet began in a set of supplementary volumes running from 1900 to 1905.

And there the record stopped. But the

years that followed the closing of the first alphabet witnessed an amazing growth of libraries throughout the world, an unprecedented use of the library in college and university life, and a constantly increasing demand for the Museum catalogue. It went out of print in 1909. In itself it had a unique value in the world of scholarship; it attained a scarcity value as the supply vanished and the demand increased year by year. The younger generation of instructors found themselves in institutions demanding research on their part but unable to put at their command one of the fundamental tools of research. It was not long before these insistent voices stormed at their librarians, "Well, if you can't buy a set of the Museum catalogue, why don't you get the Museum to reprint it and bring it up to date? Heaven knows there are enough errors to justify reprinting and enough important books published in the last quarter century to call for inclusion in such a record!"

By dint of much dripping the stone was finally worn into. Though the World War left the Museum in straitened circumstances for administration and for purchase of books, and though the British nation had little money to spend on anything but necessities, Sir Frederick Kenyon, Director of the British Museum, announced in 1928 that the Museum was prepared to begin preparation of a new edition of the catalogue if sufficient subscribers were enrolled to justify the expense. Estimating an edition of about 500 copies he felt at least 200 should be taken by the United States and Canada.

When this news reached this country the Bibliographical Society of America, which had long been urging reprinting, now realized it had an opportunity to support its pleas by action. By 1930 results were so encouraging that the Museum decided to begin work on revision and preparation of copy even though the canon was not wholly completed.

And now the result lies before all who care for the world of books, a folio volume of over 500 pages, two columns of the same measure and general appearance as the original catalogue, printed on paper of strong and tough fibre that bids fair to withstand the constant handling and rubbing it must experience each time it is taken between fingers of readers. The work has lost some of the peculiarities that made the user of the earlier record keep constantly on his guard; i and j, u and v, for instance, are no longer counted as one letter. But on the whole it has a delightfully familiar sound when one turns to it for help.

The Introduction to volume one was signed by W. A. Marsden, Keeper of

Printed Books, last November, and tells the earlier history of the manuscript and printed catalogues, an accurate and reliable, if somewhat impersonal statement. A few there be who would have rejoiced to see a more detailed valuation of the work of Sir Henry Ellis and the Rev. Henry Baber and John Winter Jones and Thomas Watts and Richard Garnet and George K. Fortescue and Alfred Pollard, and the goodly army of overlooked workers whose efforts are accepted by users of the catalogue as spontaneous productions, so naturally brought forth as to require and deserve no commendation. The few who know better carry little weight, speak with voices of slight penetration and volume, and perhaps it is better so. Certainly those who follow them in the humble ranks of cataloguers give them fullest praise.

THE recent celebration of the three hundredth anniversary of the establishment of Massachusetts as a self-governing commonwealth has provided the occasion for an exhibition which was opened in the Main Exhibition Room of the New York Public Library on June 11th. The tercentenary has also afforded an opportunity to display a selection of books and other material drawn from the Library's notable collection of Americana.

Following the illustrious example of the Reverend Thomas Prince, one of the early historians of New England, who began his "Chronological History of New England" with the Creation, the exhibition takes the discovery of America in 1492 as its starting point. It has therefore been possible to indicate the interest of England in the discovery of the New World, the part she played in the sixteenth century voyages of exploration, and some of the causes and motives for the great Puritan emigration to New England; it has also enabled the Library to display some of its great treasures, many of which visitors seldom have an opportunity of seeing.

There has been no attempt to tell the detailed story of the founding of Massachusetts. The purpose has been to present some of the important original sources for the history of the Massachusetts Bay colony, in other words, to show the raw materials of the modern historian.

All of the books shown are of considerable historical importance; many of them are of extraordinary interest for the history of printing in the United States; some are rarities, famous all over the world of books and bibliographers, because so few copies have survived the years and the enemies of books. With perhaps half a dozen exceptions, all the books and tracts displayed were printed before 1800, and nearly three-quarters of them before 1650.

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