



## Gypsies for the Nursery

THE GYPSY STORY TELLER. By CORA MORRIS. Illustrated by FRANK DOBIAS. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1931. \$3.

MARIE OF THE GYPSIES. By RACHEL M. VARBLE. Illustrated by EVELINA M. JACKSON. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1931. \$2.

Reviewed by ELIZABETH R. PENNELL

As a rule, the Gypsy is a pet bugaboo in the well-regulated nursery. According to the popular idea, Romanies, not content with their own prolific brood of children, are eager to add to the number by kidnapping any chance little Gorgio boy or girl who passes their way. But fashions change and this autumn, in preparation for Christmas, two books concerning Gypsies, with an obvious appeal to the nursery and the schoolroom, have already appeared. It is true that Miss Rachel M. Varble waves the danger signal in "Marie of the Gypsies," but not too vigorously. Miss Cora Morris does not wave it at all in "The Gypsy Story Teller," but she has less reason to since her book is concerned not with Gypsies but with their stories; though, in her Introductory Chapter, she manages to paint rather an alluring and idealized picture of life on the roads.

Miss Morris is not the first to tell in print the stories collected in her book, and she is careful to make this clear by giving her authorities. Romany students have long been interested in the fairy tales and folk lore of the Gypsies though, as a rule, the results of their study have been published in learned publications which, more

often than not, appear in rather a severe and forbidding form and appeal to a limited audience. The *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* in Great Britain has given much space to them, especially in the remarkable series of Welsh tales collected by Dr. John Sampson at first hand in Wales. Miss Morris does well to borrow from him as well as from Francis Hindes Groome and Gilliat-Smith in England, Whislocki in Transylvania, Paspatti in Turkey, Michlosich in Bukowina, among others. There can be no question of the interest of these stories, nor of their value in the study no less than in the nursery. They are told with the directness that is the charm of a fairy tale. At once, without useless dawdling by the way, you are plunged into the plot:

There was a Gypsy woman who had one son and his name was Peter Pretty-Face. He stuck his ring on the wall, and he said, "Mother, when blood flows from my ring, then I am dead."

Or, again:

A king had a horse, and no one was supposed to see the horse except the servant who fed him. The horse was not really a horse, but the son of an ogress who had been enchanted and changed into a horse.

With such a beginning, you know where you are and pretty well what to expect. Nor, as you go on, are words wasted in description or reflection or irrelevant incident. The events that follow are recorded with as little waste of words. And the story winds up with the same comfortable straightforwardness—the straightforwardness children love: "Jack," the hero of many Welsh tales, at the end of one of them, "married the king's daughter, and they had great merry-making and feasting, and they had a basketful of children." And in another, the "Gypsy man with children as many as ants in an ant-hill," after many adventures, went to town. He got a cart and put the money in it. Then he went to the town and he built houses

and he bought himself oxen and cows." The beautiful princesses and brave adventurers, the giants and dwarves, the fairies and dragons, all the beloved company who belong to Fairyland go about their business without idle chatter or dawdling by the way, and this is how children like to have their stories told. They also like to encounter old friends as they do here under new names, if indeed under any names at all. It is amusing to find one hero figuring as *Nameless*.

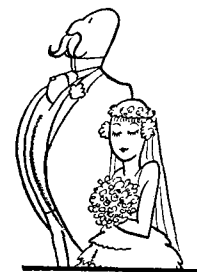
With Miss Varble's book it is another matter. Hers is one long story of a little girl, the Marie of the title, who was adopted, not kidnapped, by a tribe of Gypsies with whom a French artist, her father, wandered, painted their portraits and died, leaving her on their hands. These Gypsies, to judge by their dress and names, came from the Southeast of Europe, but their picturesqueness seems much too encumbered with drawbacks to induce any Gorgio child to run away from a pleasant and comfortable home. Marie is put to no such test as she never remembers any other sort of life. But, instinctively, she shrinks from their habits, their occupations, their trades. She does not quite like it when they rob the farmyard in the country and the shops in the town. She revolts against their old tricks of cheating the credulous country folk and she makes good the victims' losses. In a word, she must have been a great nuisance in the camp and when, finally, she runs away, no doubt it is a relief to Valdo, his family, and the whole tribe of which he was the chief.

However, the first part of the story which has to do with her Gypsy experience, is much the most entertaining, anyway to the grown-up reader. Miss Varble has gathered together various details of Gypsy ways and Gypsy manners, and her evident attempt to crowd as many of them as possible into a few chapters is perhaps too evident, but it would not strike children as it must those of their elders who know something of Gypsies at first hand. After Marie makes her escape, we are back in an American world where everybody is civilized and Marie finds her surroundings more to her taste. She is taken care of in a delightful settlement, develops a talent for dressmaking, enters into the service of a rich and benevolent lady who, as the result of the miraculous chance, which is always easy for authors to arrange, owns a collection of paintings by Marie's father, and practically adopts Marie. And so, all ends happily in the good old fashion. But when, at the last, Marie is meeting her own relations in Paris and planning a career as a super-dressmaker, I cannot help feeling that I would rather be back with Valdo and his family in their van on the road. This, however, is not the moral of the tale which will leave the children, for whom it is intended, more than ever content with life in a house and among people who do not fiddle and sleep and smoke life away like the three Gypsies in Lenau's ballad.

WONDER WINDOWS. By EUGENIA ECKFORD. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1931. \$2.

THE approach to handicraft which is given in this book was undoubtedly successful in the progressive school in which it was first tried. It is not quite so convincing on paper, and the choice of title for the book seems unfortunate, for we doubt whether the modern child and the modern parent care to talk about eyes as "wonder windows."

Briefly, the plan of the book is this: Children are introduced to Japanese art by stories, and are then given directions for block printing and stencilling. There follows experience with Navaho pottery and rugs, Dutch tiles, carving in bone as done by the Eskimos. While the directions are clearly and simply given, the book seems somewhat trivial. It lacks the virility and broadness of content that characterizes some of the work in our best progressive schools. While it might interest handicraft-loving children in the home, it does not seem to make a very outstanding contribution to education.



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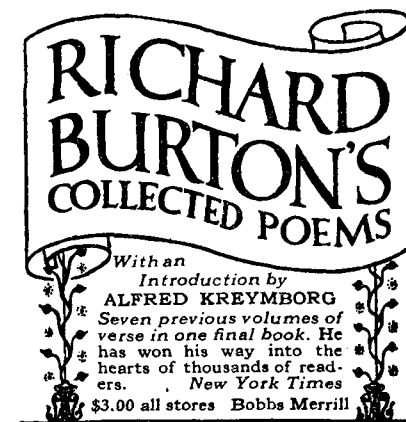
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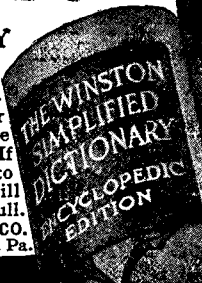
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## Two Dozen Heroines

ALL TRUE. By TEN WOMEN OF TODAY. New York: Brewer, Warren & Putnam. 1931. \$1.75.

FIVE GIRLS WHO DARED. Edited by HELEN FERRIS. New York: Macmillan Co. 1931. \$2.50.

GREAT AMERICAN GIRLS. By KATE DICKINSON SWEETSER. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1931. \$2.

Reviewed by JEANETTE EATON

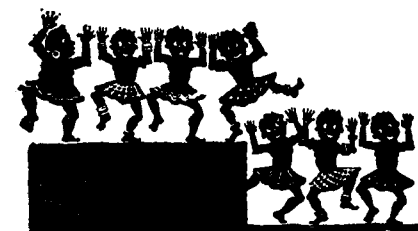
IS there in your family a young creature who wears skirts, wishes she didn't, and bases her objection on the notion that life isn't exciting for girls? If so, a positively bristling contentment with her lot may be induced by the simple method of giving her three new books to read.

Between them, "All True," "Five Girls Who Dared," and "Great American Girls," relate the adventures and accomplishments of twenty-four women. All of these individuals but three are American. All but four are still making personal history. The subjects are mutually exclusive—with one exception. Amelia Earhart begins her flight in Miss Ferris's book and describes it in "All True." Taken all together the three volumes present an arresting view of the heroic, the colorful, and the great among women, contemporary and otherwise. These stories, largely told by the individuals themselves, are well calculated to reinforce the general conviction that, granted endowment and the power of will, sex is no barrier to superior achievement. Nor will the sharp eyes of youth detect in the personal narratives any corroding element of vain-glory. Detached and humorous are most of the self comments.

This disarming quality, so essential to a winning autobiography, is especially evident in "Five Girls Who Dared." With her usual excellent editorial taste, Miss Ferris presents well integrated sections from already published life stories and prefaces each with a vignette of the subject which rounds out the girlhood tale up to the present moment. Because this collection contains only five personalities, it gives sufficient space for depth of treatment and through the delightful recollections of Mrs. Louise de Koven Bowen and Elizabeth Marbury bestows upon the reader precious and intimate bits of an America gone forever.

In both the other books the sketches are so brief that one rather has to bolt the heroines whole. "All True" contains merely self portraits faced by an editorial word of explanation. The galaxy includes ten women whose exploits in diverse parts of the world make vivid reading—especially since almost half this list of intrepid adventurers are relatively unfamiliar. Their acquaintance is a real contribution to an understanding, not alone of feminine lustre, but of those astounding complexities of our day into which their special talents have fitted.

"Great American Girls," by Kate Dickinson Sweetser, spans America's outstanding women from the time of Sacajawee, the romantic young squaw who helped Lewis and Clark, to Maude Adams. The ten selections are interesting and the stories have a dramatic value, unfortunately undermined by the author's tendency to gush. Because each sketch ends in a finale compared to which the advertising blurb is the epitome of restraint, the book is likely to prejudice the realistic girl of today. If she bears up under Jane Addams she will certainly say, "Blah!" to the touched-up likeness of Lady Astor. Such a method of "over-selling" the heroine throws into high relief the dignified and sincere presentation achieved by Helen Ferris.



FROM THE "SING-SONG PICTURE BOOK"

## Parti-Colored Tunes

THE SING SONG PICTURE BOOK. By HERBERT and JOHANNES GRÜGER. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1931. \$1.50.

NO wonder that a fabulous number of copies of "The Sing Song Picture Book" have been sold in Germany, where everyone sings, where songs are beautiful, and where picture books have reached their highest modern development. All this does not compete against the book, but makes an atmosphere in which it flourishes. It appeals to people with music not only in the ears but in the blood, and to a public accustomed to new ideas in artistic expression. On the left-hand page is a melody so simple that a baby just talking can take it readily from his mother's lips—supposing of course that she is a mother who sings to her child. On the right-hand page, opposite the music, little figures in color—it may be ducklings, little leaping horses, fir-trees of varying heights, or companies of ascending and descending angels—take the rise and fall of the tune and keep the rhythm. It sounds harder than it is; one look at the page and you get the idea. It is not trick notation, nor one of those dismal subterfuges for learning the notes of the scale by means of grotesque men and women climbing on the lines of the staff. No one learns a note from these pictures; he learns music, not how to play music.

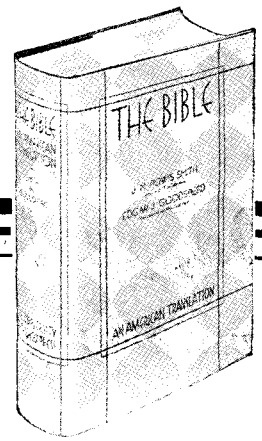
A good way to try out the book would be something like this. Borrow a baby, any baby old enough to climb into your lap and liking you well enough to do so. Show him the picture for "My Horse," which is a translation of the nursery classic "Hop, hop, hop," one of the easiest of songs to sing. He will at once indicate with a rapturous finger that these are horses; they are red and blue, but that does not fool him. Then sing the song, and as you do, follow with your finger or his along the line of little jumping horses that go up and down with the tune. You will no doubt do this more than once; sooner or later, probably days later, you can, in the course of this repeated singing, slide over on the left-hand page and do the same with the unadorned notes. That's all there is to it. But somehow it is music. On one page flocks of angels soar and come lightly to earth to the tune of "Vom Himmel hoch": it is curiously moving. Some designs are fun, like the melting snowmen and dancing hearts, or the "ten little negro boys" climbing up and tumbling down in rows; some are tender, like the lambs on green hillocks, some are strong in rhythm, like the swinging pendulums marking "Big clocks make a sound like tick-tock-tick-tock" and the little clocks that quicken the beat.

## Sans Wings Or Wands

(Continued from page 283)

he is all the pirates. The frontier West, the old South, ancient maritime New England, have each a picture in four colors and each sums up its section and its period, the New England one in a way to bring tears to an exile. The full-page heroes look as a right-minded young person knows they should look, being heroes. The story thus indicated in pictures is expressed in words by rapid and dramatic narrative, the drama being of events rather than of persons. I am never sure that histories are accurate, but I know when they make me take part in history, and I have an idea this one may have that effect on young Americans. Small pictures in tint recur like motifs in the text, and the typography is a delight.

A few more books like these may take the curse off history for the young. For of all subjects it seems to need, to reach all but exceptional children, Alice's famous requirements of plenty of pictures and conversation. Here are certainly plenty of grand pictures, the style in each case sufficiently conversational, and because each is written with a central idea in mind, they hang together and form continuous narratives.



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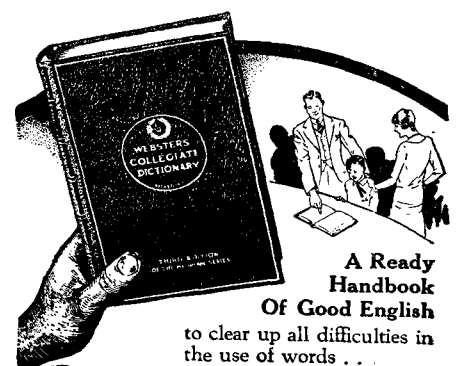
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