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The Reader's Guide

Conducted by MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

Inquiries in regard to the choice of books should be addressed to MRS. BECKER, c/o *The Saturday Review*. As for reasons of space ninety percent of the inquiries received cannot be answered in print, a stamped and addressed envelope should be enclosed for reply by mail.

E. D., New York, asks for books on interior decorating of apartments published not earlier than 1929. "Form and Reform," by Paul Frankl (Harper), is for the present at least the last word in modernistic decoration; it includes build-ings, furniture, textiles, and ornaments and illustrates its opinions with a hundred striking plates. So much of our present im-petus originated at the Paris Exposition des Arts Décoratifs in 1925—which caused such dissatisfaction with existing shop-fronts that for several years after so many of them were made over, behind barricades, that the boulevards looked as if there had been a bombardment—that "Modern French Decoration," by Katharine Kahle (Putnam) has a special interest. And there is the symposium, in color, photographs and text, "Decorative Art: 1930," edited by Holme and Wainwright (Boni), a survey of present-day tendencies in house decoration, furniture, textiles, and metal work.

M. P. S., Lausanne, Switzerland, asks for information about the author of "The Heavenly Twins," whose pen name was Madame Sarah Grand. "Our own reference books tell us" she says, "only that she was Frances Elizabeth MacFall (née Clarke), born in 1862, an English novel-ist." It is amazing how this old novel re-fuses to lie down and die. Let a copy of it turn up on a bookshelf—and copies of it continue to make battered appearances there—and some young person takes it home and asks how long this has been going on? It was, I notice, a "growing-up daughter" in Switzerland who asked for this informa-tion. But I, who read it when I was a growing-up daughter, can say only that MacFall was her name, that she was one of the most determined and uncompromis-ing suffragists of her period, a friend of M. Betham Edwards (she wrote the pre-fate for that lady's memorial volume), and that though she wrote "Ideals" and several other romances, she lives in nineteenth cen-tury literature as the author of one book. Annie Russell Marble's "Pen Names and Personalities" (Appleton)—this is the book about pseudonyms for which K. L., *Nan-tucket*, just asked me, by the way—says that "When Frances Elizabeth MacFall wrote 'The Heavenly Twins' she chose the name of Sarah Grand 'because it was sim-ple, short, and emphatic—not easily forgot-ten,'" but not a word why Madame al-ways went with it. Forrest Reid, writing in that admirable symposium, "The Eigh-teen Eighties" (Macmillan), on "Minor Fiction in the Eighties" says "it was 'The Story of an African Farm' which paved the way for the 'Yellow Asters,' 'David Grievous,' and 'Heavenly Twins' of the 'nineties,' but of all the books on that de-cade those leaves I have fluttered in search of a reminiscence of Sarah Grand I am con-vinced I once read, not one that I now can find more than mentions her. Mr. Beer's "Mauve Decade" (Knopf) describes, in its chapter on Harry Thurston Peck, how the professor tried to talk of "The Heavenly Twins" to some Western suffragists and "they simply froze me alive. The woman's rights movement will never get along very far until women get down off the high horse and become rational in such matters." Here, one feels, may be the reason for the stillness about the book in contemporary records. You were not supposed to talk about it. And to this day it is remembered as a book about which a lady does not talk.

The same letter asks for other "old-fashioned novels" illustrating phases of so-cial development, like this or "All Sorts and Conditions of Men," novels too closely involved with the problems they discussed to survive their solution—or rather, their superannuation. Most of Mrs. Humphry Ward's novels are like this, all, indeed, save those based on "real life," like "Lady Rose's Daughter." Most of the novels of H. G. Wells will be. Mary Cholmondeley's "Red Pottage" was one of those single sto-ries that make a whirling sensation and keep the author alive till all its readers are dead. "Trilby" keeps coming back in one form or another; I find that "Helen's Bab-ies" still circulates in public libraries, and it was not so long ago that young ladies eating their luncheons in Trinity church-yard used to enliven the process with "Char-lotte Temple," a romance. No one recom-mended or advertised it; it just trickled from hand to hand for a century. Speaking of

books not advertised, Winwood Reade's "The Martyrdom of Man" is at last com-ing out into the open; I don't know how long it has been making its way like an underground river through the lives of readers. They have given it one to another; now Dutton not only provides it with a new dress, but advertises it; the preface tells its strange romantic story.

Continuing to speak of "old-fashioned" novels, the correspondent in Minnesota who asked for letters from other admirers of the works of Charlotte M. Yonge is get-ting some delightful mail: I have been for-warding it from all over the country, and every letter is full of affectionate grati-tude to the author and friendly remi-niscences of one novel or another of hers. This department is forever starting unex-pected sidelines; a Charlotte M. Yonge Old Home Week seems to be the latest of these.

E. R., Cincinnati, O., is interested in the number of people in this department who seem to be "setting their school lan-guage study to work." "As I happen to be one of them, perhaps I might pass on the titles of books I have found particularly helpful for German. The Chicago University Press issues a 'Junior College Series' for French, German, and Spanish; the German section is particularly good, as the readings are from modern literature. For review, Hagboldt's 'Essentials of German Reviewed' is excellent; his 'Building the German Vo-cabulary' is also helpful and contains a vocabulary of the first thousand words to learn. This month a dictionary of 2000 words most often used is to be published, each word used in a sentence or two. It seems odd that it never occurs to one in school that he could actually get enjoyment from reading in a foreign language. It is such a delight to read in the original, and gives one such a feeling of superiority!" No, it's not so odd, when you remember that the earnest effort of prep-school youth is toward the development of a perfect defense-mechanism against education in any form. This is one reason for the popu-larity of the Reader's Guide with people who were exposed to an education in their youth.

M. G., New York, soon leaving for Italy, needs a simple guide to easy Italian, such as will head toward reading the newspapers. I suggested Marinoni and Passarelli's "Simple Italian Lessons" (Holt), which presents the essentials in forty lessons, and the same authors' composition book, "Andiamo in Italia" (Holt), because this directs language study toward a supposed trip to Italy.

HERE is that information about gourds, from an authority who knows more about them than JOB—F. W. Hodge of the Museum of the American Indian:—

I do not know how far your corre-spondent E. S. N. D., Chester, Nova Scotia, has traveled in his or her search on the sub-ject of gourds and their uses, but it may be interesting to the inquirer to know of the very early and widespread use of these ob-jects among the American Indian tribes. But first the botanical side of the matter should be studied. Information thereon will be given by the Bureau of Plant In-dustry, U. S., Department of Agriculture, Washington, and by Dr. M. R. Gilmore, The Museum, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. I believe that Dr. Gilmore has de-voted considerable attention to the subject.

The Indians found many uses for gourds wherever this interesting plant grew. To mention a few, in our own Southwest they have been used from prehistoric times to the present as dippers and rattles. (I have found gourd dippers in graves at the old Zuñi pueblo of Hawikuh, New Mexico.) The first recorded historical reference to a gourd rattle in the United States was that carried by the negro Estevan, companion of Cabeza de Vaca and later the guide of Marcos de Niza to the "Seven Cities of Cibola." This rattle was the cause of Este-van's undoing and of his death at the hand of the Zuñis in 1539. In Peru and else-where earthenware vessels modeled after gourds are not uncommon, and in Peru also has been found at least one skull whose trepined aperture was covered by a part of a gourd.

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Cherries, Drop Down

By ELIZABETH J. COATSWORTH

CHERRIES, drop down, cherries, drop down,
Cherries, drop down,
Down to our laps.
If we were princesses, gay smiling princesses,
We'd wear them this evening as earrings
perhaps.
And everyone seeing us, seeing us, seeing us,
So gay, so smiling, and so debonair,
Would tell us how beautifully
Our new jewelled earrings
Set off the dark wings of our thick Spanish
hair.

Reviews

BUCKAROO. By FJERIL HESS. New York: Macmillan Co. 1931. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILL JAMES
Author of "Smoky"

TO me, deserts are long stretches of sand where there's not a bird nor a bush nor water for a hundred miles at a stretch. Most people call parts of Utah, Nevada, and Arizona desert, but when you can find clear springs at every forty miles and less, with ranches at them springs, sage and grama grass in between, scattered bunches of cattle and horses, cowboys and prospectors at home and happy there, that's not desert. It's sure barren looking to a stranger, but if the stranger would have the chance to stop and get acquainted with them barren looking scopes of country, he could go anywhere in the world afterwards and never forget that land. It's the land that God reserved for the cowboy and which will never be took away from him. There's many Western states where there's such reserves, and the plow will never tear them up.

There's been a good book wrote that's called "Buckaroo." It's been wrote by Fjeril Hess. It's supposed to be a book for girls, but I liked it and I'm thinking that any girl, even one that's flighty and high-time crazy, will sure more than stop and read that book twice if she ever gets a hold of it. Boys and men will like it, too.

"Buckaroo" is the story of a girl of the East that's been used to have somebody open the door for her and escort her to a limousine. She'd graduated from school and wanted to branch out to see what use she could be and hires out as a schoolma'am to go West. She'd heard of the "open spaces" and cowboys, and thought how romantic that would be to see and live all of that.

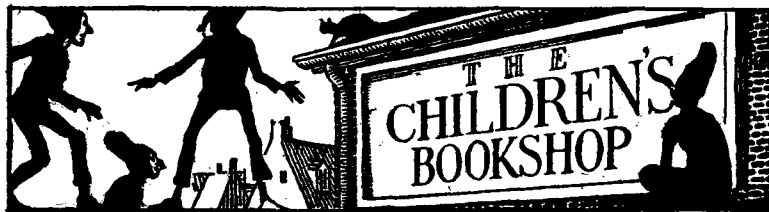
Well, as it goes, the ranch where she was to teach school disappointed her, so did the country. She cried and wished she was home all the first week, but that cleaned her out good and after that she begin to take interest in things, she begin to smiling, doing things, and the first things she knowed she got a new sight for the country around, got to admiring things and even helped built the house she was going to teach in. The family she was with was natural and good to her, and finally, with the good buckaroos that was around she went as high in her interest as to wanting to be one herself.

Her teaching the kids at the ranch is good, and she found plenty of time to ride on the side and have many experiences. The girl is game, and she gets to fit in as one of the family. She asks a lot of questions that any greenhorn would ask, and the way they're answered is to me the best part of the book. Because there's information there that many a greenhorn would ask, and they's answered true. I know because I've rode in many such countries as the author tells of. Most likely she knows the Kawich range, the White Mountains close to Death Valley, Rhyolite, and all them places. Well, I rode for outfits from that country plum down through hers and away into Mexico. So I ought to know if she knows what she's talking about, and I'll say she does.

The details in the story are a world of information. I liked Lynn, the main character in the story. Ted and Dannie and Jasper are such cowboys as you'll find on open ranges, they're not the kind that you read of in wild west stories, they're real.

True to Lynn, the girl in the story, there come a time when she felt like she was part of the country, and the owner of the family, so, when summer come and her school term was over, it come before she knowed it, and she cried some more. She even kissed her saddle before she left.

She didn't fall in love with any of the cowboys nor any of the mining engineers while she was at the ranch, she had a lot of traveling to do yet, see the world, study music and so on, but I'll bet my best boots if she's the girl I think she is, after she seen all she wants to, she'll realize that she fell in love with all the cowboys there, the en-



Conducted by MARION PONSONBY

gineers, and the whole country which she rode over while teaching school at Pinon. The book is well illustrated with mighty fine drawings by Lee Townsend.

AMERICAN SONGS FOR CHILDREN.
Selected by WINTHROP PALMER. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1931. \$2.50.
Soft, various, and sublime.
Exempt from wrongs of Time.

THESE words of Coleridge are not an unfitting description of Mrs. Palmer's "American Songs for Children." Her book reminds one of the magic pitcher of Baucis and Philemon, whose fountain of sweet, invigorating milk never ran dry.

The songs spring from the very roots of life. Deep and varied experiences have given them birth, long years have proved their enduring charm, and now they are a priceless heritage of which no child should be cheated.

Who would not have a garden full of flowers, and see color and beauty from every window of his home? This is, unfortunately, not possible at all. But the color and beauty of these wonderful old songs belong to everyone, and every color of the rainbow is in them.

There are the gay pinks and blues of songs like "Peanuts," "The Wedding of Mr. Duck," and "The Shoemaker,"—the lively green of "Yankee Doodle" or "Froggie Went a-Courting,"—the magic opalescence of the Negro spirituals, the "Creole Lullaby" and "Omaha Love Song"—and the splendid gold and crimson of "The Battle Song" and "California," etc., etc.

A book like this is very heartening, and a most welcome oasis of melody in an increasingly noisy and mechanical world.

The majority of the accompaniments are obviously arranged for a child or an amateur, but, towards the end of the book, a few suddenly burst out into fairly ambitious choral effects, presenting difficulties that a child's fingers could not compass, and over which the untrained hand of an amateur would fumble.

TALES OF THE PERSIAN GENII. Retold by FRANCES JENKINS OLCOTT. With illustrations by WILL POGANY. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1931. \$3.

Reviewed by MARY F. LABAREE

THE Orient may or may not have needed, may or may not need, our superimposed and infiltrated Occidental contraptions and ways of doing, but without if or perhaps, for freeing the imagination and for lamps ashine down ways of thinking, the Occident is deeply and irrevocably in debt to and in need of the Orient.

Scholars of many lands have delighted to offer translations from the tongues of Western Asia. We are duly grateful that English-writing scholars have done their share of this translating work, and so made available not only profound religions, treatises, histories and poems of many brands, but treasure trove of the One Thousand and One Nights and many another collection of tales.

In this tested collection from different sources, Frances Jenkins Olcott has relied on translations, some of which were known in England as early as 1765 and been loved by such diverse individuals as Gladstone, David Copperfield, and Archbishop Whately. (Though perhaps the Archbishop only approved and missed out on the loving.) Three of the aforementioned translations bear most pleasing labels: "The Delightful Lessons of Hiram, Son of Asmar," "The Delight of Hearts," "The Bagh O Bahar."

The tales in this volume are told by benevolent Persian Genii to Patna and Coulor, children of Imam Guilar of Terki in the province of Mazanderan which as everyone should know, lies in the northern confines of Persia, bordering upon the Caspian Sea.

Two ravishing youngsters were Patna and Coulor, son and daughter of the Imam, and to the perfection of the outer boy and girl, their proud and over-anxious father wished to add perfection of mind and character. In order to learn "true wisdom" and "find peace and happiness," he thought to send them, for meditation, into desert places; but a gracious and sensible fairy saved them for the destiny of serving their

fellow men by herself undertaking their education in a fashion both amazing and abrupt. So it comes about that neither like ordinary boy and girl in Mazanderan nor like pelicans in the wilderness, but in the abode of "Good Genii who obeyed the will of Solomon, the son of David, on both of whom be peace," they learned unforgettable lessons—not from tedious lesson books but from the lips of the Good Genii, who had gone up and down the world, far and wide and long, until they knew the hearts and ways of world-folk, as no mere mortal might in one little life, attain the knowing.

I myself would sit more than one night through, at the feet of such tellers of tales, learning "true wisdom," and with joy in the learning. Neither printed page nor cinema can fully take the place of that ancient and honorable line of tellers of tales, men and women of gorgeous imaginations and bosoms, whose sole business was to serve as storehouses of the lore of their people.

With the charming Patna and Coulor, follow their Fairy into the fountain, and you will not over-soon return to Mazanderan or Maine or California.

THE WHITE LEOPARD. By INGLIS FLETCHER. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1931. \$2.50.

SON OF THE WHITE MAN. By HERBERT BEST. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1931. \$2.

Reviewed by G. GORDON TRENER

BOTH these books are more than ordinarily interesting and well-informed accounts of the life of an average white man isolated among the primitive tribes of Africa. The white man succeeds mainly because he must—it is the old story of the survival of the fittest—for in darkest Africa the weak go under swiftly and inevitably.

In the "White Leopard" Inglis Fletcher has been very successful in showing this. With his hero, Stephen Murdoch, we plunge into an atmosphere of steaming tropic heat, and before there is time to get more than the haziest idea of our bearings, we are called upon to give judgments that would have baffled Solomon, to track down lions, witch doctors, slave dealers, rogue elephants, and journey through forests and swamps for days and weeks on end.

Fever-wracked, worn to lean shadows, aching in every limb, our reason tottering on its throne, we still have initiative and courage and a remnant of strength left to carry us to the secret, inviolable stronghold of the Black Emperor—that super-fiend who has long terrorized the district. Unarmed we face the enemy, and, by the power of the human eye quell him once and for all!

Wonderful! Yes, but our self-esteem is considerably deflated when we close the book—escaping at last from the spell that Stephen Murdoch has cast—and realize that without him we should never have achieved such triumphs. And, being human, we try to square the thing by detracting a little from Murdoch's glory.

Would he, for instance, have translated that message the native drums were sending, when even Kalaiti failed to do so? Could one unarmed man face a human tiger like N'yamgundu and subdue him merely by superiority of character?

And the eclipse—that was altogether too opportune, and so old and threadbare a device! Surely the moon has served her turn in making magic for the white man! Fickleness has always been attributed to the moon-goddess, and, yet, could any deity have worked more faithfully for so many years in eclipsing herself at the necessary psychological moment for the valiant hero at the mercy of savage tribes?

"Son of a Whiteman" is a much slighter tale, for the interest centres round a boy, which limits the field of operation to a certain extent. But the author, Herbert Best, does not recognize too many limitations, and the boy has the wildest adventures and escapes.

The fault that shows its smug head occasionally in the "White Leopard" is more pronounced here. Jerry is miraculously infallible. His masterly grasp of native psychology, his philosophy and mature judg-

ment when confronted with dangerous complicated problems, are hardly those of a boy!

But it is a good story. The flavor of Africa is authentic, the incidents characteristic and arresting. The Elders of the Zanta tribe, with their secret grove and sacred crocodile, are pleasantly gruesome, although it is doubtful if their High Priest would have been quite so ingenuously confiding.

Morgan, the old foreman, is one of the best drawn characters in the book, and the shrewd way in which this old timer outwits his lazy superstitious workmen is most amusing and convincing.

DIGGING IN YUCATAN. By ANN AXTELL MORRIS. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1931. \$3.50.

Reviewed by HERBERT J. SPINDEN
Brooklyn Museum

IN this book which Ann Axtell Morris has written for young folks describing her experiences over several years among the ruins of Chichen Itza one finds more real stuff than in most recent books on Central America written for adults. You feel that her contact with facts is close and genuine, that her enthusiasms are authentic, and that, best of all, she grasps a true adventure.

Archeology is exploration of the past, a quest for the hopes and fears which have inspired man's rise from a savagery to civilization. The true archeologist confronts a stone image in jungle depths and says: "Tell me why your people made you!" Now it takes a really magic gift to make stones speak and it takes another magic gift to make the hurrying world listen. Perhaps the best reason for seeking to recover fossil emotions is that we need them to make our own illusions of grandeur complete. If some philosopher of a future age should wish to compose a fitting epitaph on our present splendid age he well might write: "They wanted to know it all."

Chichen Itza in northern Yucatan has a longer recorded history than any other city in the New World and while the painting, sculpture, and architecture found here do not always reach peaks of excellence for the great Maya nation nevertheless many things brought to light in the exploration of this site by the Carnegie Institution of Washington are of outstanding interest. Daily we are becoming more conscious of the fact that American Indians bequeathed to the modern world a great heritage. "I used to hear so much about Columbus discovering America," says Mrs. Morris,

"that I began to believe Columbus invented America. Not until recently did I realize that America was a flourishing institution for centuries before Columbus was ever born, that millions of Americans had lived and died surrounded by civilized wealth and luxury before Europe accidentally stumbled upon the other, very live, half of the world."

By condensing five or six years of field work on a large project into the compass of one book Mrs. Morris obtains a richer mixture of incidents and discoveries than is usual in a scientific narrative. There are interesting patches of local color—lights on Indian character and the lore of plants and animals. The plain tale of how jobs are begun is enlivened by drama, the setting up of serpent columns, the piecing together of many stones each with a bit of fresco, painting, the showing up and excavation of a buried temple, the devastation of rare and most severe hail stones that stripped the trees.

Mrs. Morris tells her story with humor and lively comment and generally in a way that should appeal to young readers. Occasionally one meets a bit of artificial romancing as when she repeats the unproven tale of virgins thrown into the deep pool of sacrifice at Chichen Itza and the quantities of gold taken out. Most of the skulls of victims are those of men and boys, and far from being a king's ransom the few pounds of yellow metal dredged from the Sacred Cenote would not ransom a missionary. One looks in vain for the explanation that human sacrifice at Chichen Itza was brought in by the Toltec Mexicans and is not a normal ceremony of Yucatan.

The illustrations by Jean Charlot add sprightly caricatural touches, but the photographs are not as brilliant as might be expected from the material available.

The great Harry Houdini's real name was Erich Weiss. He was born of German-American parents in Wisconsin in 1874 and died five years ago. Mr. W. B. Gilson, with the aid of Houdini's widow, has now edited a volume of Houdini's personal memoranda of his escapes, to be published in England by Philip Allan.