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Apprentices to Life

BY BERTHA E. MAHONY

A RECENT editorial in the *Saturday Review* pointed out that much relief from the vulgarity and brutality of many modern novels and plays of an entirely adult world are to be found today in such books as "The Would-be-goods" and "Dream Days." In writing about some of the finest new books for young people, I should like to call attention to the fact that every one of these books offers literature either of a rarely imaginative quality, or a finely presented cross-section of life in America or some other part of the world.

More than that, although not written for that purpose, many of these books present again and again the way to accomplish the education of the whole man. That is why I have wanted to call this paper "Apprentices to Life."

In August I spent a wonderful afternoon with a Pueblo Indian girl, a graduate of Mount Holyoke, who had been doing practice teaching in Cambridge. She was returning to teach in a government school for her people. "Why," said she, "does there have to be so much agonizing over and dread of a communal form of society? And why do so many new experiments have to be tried? The Pueblo people are living today in the same manner as they have always lived." During the course of the afternoon she praised "The Waterless Mountain," Mrs. Armer's book which received the 1931 Newbery Award. "It was true," she said, "to the Navajo life."

"Waterless Mountain," I have read many times, and Eunice Tietjens's book published the same year, "A Boy of the South Seas." I never read them without wishing that they might be read everywhere by parents and educators with eyes to see and ears to hear. Both books present the pattern for the kind of training of body, mind, and spirit which results in full-statured, free, and effective people.

The book which has just received the Newbery Medal Award for 1932—"Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze," by Elizabeth Foreman Lewis—shows the development of a boy's personality with the growing skill of his hand. Young Fu is apprenticed for three years to a coppersmith. He and his mother, a widow, come down from a hill country village to the walled city of Chungking. There his mother finds work in a bristle factory. The boy begins his apprenticeship with a fine craftsman.

They live in a single room. But a scholar lives in the same house, and with him Young Fu soon begins to learn to read and write. So Young Fu's heart, head, and hand move on apace in the midst of the violent and uncertain present-day Chinese life. Banditry, flood, plague, common to China and the excess of human nature common everywhere flow through this unusually fine story.

Korea's future is bound up with China's, as of course is Japan's. But we in America have known very little of Korea's culture. Now in Younghill Kang's "The Happy Grove" we have the author's boyhood story. We see how much alike are Chinese and Korean ideals. In both countries the scholar is revered, the warrior not at all.

In both is a rich and ancient culture with the making of beautiful things inherent in it. Indeed one of the teachings of Confucius vastly important in Korean life is that poverty and hardship are nothing compared with the incapacity to see what is beautiful, what is fine. Those who have enjoyed "The Happy Grove" may follow the young Korean into later life and to America in "The Grass Roof."

In "The Happy Grove" a boy must find himself in a world of ancient culture confused and oppressed by a conquering westernized nation. In "Peter: Katrinka's Brother," by H. E. Haskell, a Russian lad, believing heartily in the new ideals of his country sees beloved old customs and traditions connected with his village home disappear with a sense of loss and bewilderment while he walks ahead bravely. And in this book Katrinka, beloved in earlier books, marries just as she might have become a prima ballerina.

"An Apprentice of Florence," by Anne D. Kyle, tells how Neno, a boy apprenticed to the silk trade, makes good to such an extent that he is sent on an important mission to Constantinople and there sees and has a part in its siege and fall. This book will take its place with that shelf of books which now includes Marion Lansing's "Magic Gold," Eloise Lowmsbery's "Boy Knight of Rheims," Elinor Whitney's "Tod of the Fens" and "Try All Ports," and those volumes of Agnes Danforth Hewes, "Swords on the Sea," "Spice and the Devil's Cave," and her new volume of this year, "The Glory of the Seas." Mrs. Hewes has a connecting theme in these three volumes although they are separate stories—the history and development of trade.

When Marjorie Medary's Jameson family in "Prairie Anchorage" comes sailing into New York Harbor from Yarmouth on the "Halcyon," they look with pride upon a great clipper off for China, "The Flying Cloud," which figures also in "The Glory of the Seas," made by a ship builder from Nova Scotia, for Donald McKay came from Shelburne. Hannah Jameson's grandfather Quigley was a sea captain and ship owner and Hannah should have been a boy and a sailor but she brings all the qualities the finest kind of young sea captain might have to their new life in an Iowa prairie town, and helps her father, a cabinet maker, establish there a farm and a home for her mother and younger sisters. From the time this family leaves its Nova Scotian home to the end of the tale their experiences and adventures have the character of things lived and passed down in family history.

Spanker the parrot is an important character, and even though their home is on an Iowa prairie, Hannah's ship, "The Sea Hawk," does actually come in at last.

The seafaring tradition strong in "Prairie Anchorage" is strong also in Ethel Parton's "Tabitha Mary." Tabitha Mary Pitpoole is an orphan in the Newburyport of 1825 and Uncle Nimmy, one of her best friends, is a seafaring man, with plenty of sea yarns for young and old alike. He had found that his audience couldn't tell true tales from false, so Uncle Nimmy often



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entertained himself at the same time he did his listeners. But Tatsy didn't like to be in doubt, and she and Uncle Nimmy had a code by which Tatsy alone could tell whether the story was true or false. Tatsy is such a thoughtful, understanding and capable child that her dearest wish comes to her at the end of the story, and Uncle Nimmy has a part in it.

The first Merino sheep from Spain to arrive in this country actually do arrive in this story on the "Two Marias" in charge of their young Spanish shepherd. Newburyport is Miss Ethel Parton's home and she is writing not from research but from the people and life she has known. The book is full of humor and genuine New England life. "Tabitha Mary" is a high spot in a fine book year.

Captain Grant would enjoy Miss Parton's book and Miss Parton would certainly enjoy "Half-Deck," that absorbing account of the first two voyages of a fourteen-year-old boy from Glasgow, written by a man who was himself a captain at twenty-four. I have seen the enjoyment of one middle-aged man with this book, and one middle-aged woman, and I know that every one who has a liking for the sea will welcome the chance to make this trip on the *Monarch* with a young apprentice like George Grant, and a senior apprentice full of wit and kindness like Bruce Burns. This is the real thing for the ocean of recent years as Tabitha Mary is the real thing for a New England port fifty years ago.

"Jane Hope," by Elizabeth J. Gray, is a light-hearted story of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in the years just before the Civil War.

"I believe you're going to be pretty after all," said Stephen Farthing to Jane Hope one day. "Pretty," said Stephen calmly, "but pig-headed."

And later,

"Jane Hope, why won't you let your mother marry the Doctor?"

"You want your mother to be happy, don't you?"

"She is happy."

"I said you were pig-headed."

"I don't look the way I mean to be at all, when you're talking," she said, pinching little holes in the grass with a twig while her lip trembled.

"I know you don't mean to be the way you look, but that's how people see you from the outside."

"Selfish and pig-headed?"

"Yes."

But "Jane Hope" is intelligent and not stubborn. She is original, too, and as independent and courageous as Hannah Jameson or Tabitha Mary. "Jane Hope" has a quality like "Tabitha Mary" in that its author, Elizabeth Janet Gray, is writing out of first-hand knowledge of this university town and of past events and people from the accounts of older relatives and friends.

You can put Mrs. Knut Hamsun's "A Norwegian Farm" with books like Thomas Bailey Aldrich's "Story of a Bad Boy" and Miss Parton's "Tabitha Mary." It is a true picture of family life with the interest centered upon the two brothers Ola and Einar and the two little sisters Ingerid and Martha. The two boys have their first summer as herdsboys in the hills. The little girls get lost on a blueberry jaunt and are rescued by "the wild boar," in other words, the pet pig. Father and the children join the Christmas masqueraders. There are the first days at school for the little girl. The calf goes ski-ing and the boys help to find a home for the little orphan herds girl. All is set down simply, unforgettably.

In Eliza Orne White's "Where is Adelaide?" Eleanor Lattimore's "The Seven Crowns," and Irene Mott Bose's "Totaram" are younger apprentices to life than any of those mentioned earlier. It is strange that one season should give us four such salty heroines as Tabitha Mary, Hannah Jameson, Jane Hope and Adelaide—independent, courageous, full of initiative, and with a forthrightness combined with real understanding. Birgit in "The Seven Crowns," who is living with her grandmother in Copenhagen, has plenty of initiative, too. One day she brought home from the market a live fish. And another day two delightful rats—if you like rats—that danced. "Totaram" is a little village boy of India whose story is told with so much truth and skill that he is our "Little Rice Plant" for ever more.

And then there are the picture books for apprentices. This year more good ones than can be mentioned in this paper. Apprentices of almost any age, even journeymen and master craftsmen, will enjoy "The Conquest of the Atlantic" by the d'Aulaires, beautiful lithographs in

color and black and white. Text and pictures tell the story of man's conquest first of his own fears; then of the terrible myths of darkness conjured by his ignorance, and then of the sea itself. The story includes all the types of craft to aircraft of 1933. Then there is the new "Ola and Blakken" by the same artists, and to one reader more delightful even than the first "Ola." In the new volume, Ola with the help of the three little girls Line, Sine, and Trine and all the farm animals, save the beloved Blakken from the Troll Cock and capture the cock and celebrate his capture with a feast. The Norwegian land with its northern lights and mountains, its homes bright with gayly painted furniture and its creatures of farm and folk lore as presented by these young artists make one of the most fascinating picture books of our day.

The Petershams' "Get-Away and Hary János" is exciting, too, with the color, gaiety, and verve of the drawings. Get-Away is a worn-out toy horse and Hary János, a faded one-armed wooden soldier doll from Hungary. Together they travel to a beautiful land of flowers, birds, castles, cottages, and Christmas trees where old toys become new.

Turn from these to the stillness and peace of Helen Sewell's "Blue Barns," lithographs in black and white which tell the Vermont story of a gander who raised seven little ducks (the goose was too

busy eating!) until one spring day, the ducks joined their wild brethren and flew away. Or choose an English farm picture book if you will in Clifford Webb's "Butterwick Farm"—line drawings with lovely blue-green and red-brown color. But on no account miss Wanda Gag's "The ABC Bunny"—black and white lithographs of bunnies hiding, leaping, somersaulting, inquiring, running. Nor must you miss Dorothy Lathrop's "Little White Goat" which leads two children into lovely adventures with creatures of the wood. Elizabeth Mackinstry's reed pen picture book, "The Fairy Alphabet," as used by Marlin—

A is for Ariel famed far and wide,
B is the Bat it delights him to ride,
C is for Caliban, half man and half fish,
D is for Dreaming that gets us our Wish.

is different from all the others and is a proper introduction for two books of sheer magic in their style and charm. These two are Padraic Colum's "The Big Tree of Bunlahy" and Dunsany's "The Curse of the Wise Woman."

The craftsmen of the book should take pride in the bookmaking of "The Big Tree of Bunlahy." Then pen and ink drawings by Jack Yeats are a perfect decoration for stories which might otherwise be better without pictures. The type and the printed page are beautiful and the gray-green binding just right. It is a collection

of thirteen tales such as grow only in Ireland and any age will enjoy.

Books published this year and discussed in the above article:

YOUNG FU OF THE UPPER YANGTZE. By ELIZABETH F. LEWIS. Winston. \$2.
THE HAPPY GROVE. By YOUNGHILL KANG. Scribners. \$2.
PETER: KATRINKA'S BROTHER. By H. E. HASKELL. Dutton. \$2.
AN APPRENTICE OF FLORENCE. By ANNE D. KYLE. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.
THE GLORY OF THE SEA. By AGNES D. HEWES. Knopf. \$2.
PRAIRIE ANCHORAGE. By MARJORIE MEDARY. Longmans. Green. \$2.
HALF-DECK. By GORDON H. GRANT. Little, Brown. \$2.
JANE HOPE. By ELIZABETH E. GRAY. Viking. \$2.
A NORWEGIAN FARM. By MARIE HAMSUN. Lippincott. \$2.
WHERE IS ADELAIDE? By ELIZABETH ORNE WHITE. Houghton Mifflin. \$1.75.
THE SEVEN CROWNS. By ELEANOR LATTIMORE. Harcourt, Brace. \$1.75.
TOTARAM. By IRENE MOTT BOSE. Macmillan. \$1.90.
THE CONQUEST OF THE ATLANTIC. By INGER and E. P. d'AULAIRE. Viking. \$2.
OLA AND BLAKKEN. By INGER and E. P. d'AULAIRE. Doubleday, Doran. \$1.75.
GET-AWAY AND HARY JANOS. By MAUDE and MISKA PETERSHAM. Viking. \$2.
BLUE BARN. By HELEN SEWELL. Macmillan. \$1.75.
BUTTERWICK FARM. By CLIFFORD WEBB. Warne. \$2.
THE ABC BUNNY. By WANDA GAG. Coward-McCann. \$2.
LITTLE WHITE GOAT. By DOROTHY LATHROP. Macmillan. \$2.
THE FAIRY ALPHABET. By ELIZABETH MACKINSTRY. Viking. \$1.50.
THE BIG TREE OF BUNLAHY. By PADRAIC COLUM. Macmillan. \$2.25.
THE CURSE OF THE WISE WOMAN. By LORD DUNSANY. Longmans, Green. \$2.

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From the *Saturday Review of Literature*,
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In the News

BOYS' BOOK OF NEWSREEL HUNTERS. By Irving Crump. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1933. \$2.

"MAKING" THE SCHOOL NEWSPAPER. By Irving Crump. The same. \$1.50.

JIM OF THE PRESS. By Graham M. Dean. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company. 1933. \$1.75.

RITCHIE OF THE NEWS. By William Heyliger. New York: Appleton-Century Company. 1933. \$2.

Reviewed by MITCHELL V. CHARNLEY

NEWSPAPER men, if you believe them, never seem quite able to understand the fascination their life has for the laity. Probably you shouldn't believe them; probably they know that the aura of romance in which popular imagination clothes the reporter is more than a reflection of their own fascination with their jobs.

Boys are no different from their elders. Every boy has a period—later than the cowboy and engineer periods, somewhat earlier than the diplomat—when he is going to be a reporter; and every boy has a secret certainty that he would really be a cracking good writer if only he hadn't decided to be a bond salesman.

So the wonder is that there have not been more boy's books built around the newspaper scene, rather than that there is this fall a sudden rush of such books. Perhaps it is only the judgment of book editors that has held off the rush, for every journalist tries at least once to prove that he's a fiction writer, and nine times out of ten his first trial is set into a newspaper background.

Two of the four books here discussed are fiction, two non-fiction. The latter pair are the work of Irving Crump, journalist of many years' experience and author of at least a dozen boys' books.

Of these two, Mr. Crump's "Boys' Book of Newsreel Hunters" is notably the better job. It is a collection of tales of the men who make the news reels, and the subject offers plenty of adventure, courage, resourcefulness—qualities that will make any book attractive to boys. There's a thrilling story of how Cameraman Jack Taylor photographed the killing of a big cave tiger in the hinterland of Amoy. There's another about the time Russell Muth flew above Vesuvius's fire-spewing mouth and almost fell in the crater. There are tales of movie thrills with Byrd in Antarctica and with Wilkins at the North Pole, of "shooting" war scenes and Memorial Day race crashes and World Series baseball. The book is a spirited collection of such yarns—material that must have made Mr. Crump's typewriter rattle.

It gives the boys more than entertainment, however. All the obstacles that face the newsreel hunter, all the speed he must attain to beat his rivals, all the imposing organization of the modern news movie business are detailed and made attractive. Though Mr. Crump might have saved a good many words in some of his tales, and though he has made Pangborn and Herndon land in Canada instead of Wenatchee, Washington, on their world-circling flight, he's done a job that boy readers (and often adults) will devour.

"Making" the School Newspaper, however, is not so fortunate a subject nor so readable a book. Masquerading as fiction, it follows a high school boy from his first efforts to "make" his school paper's staff to his triumph as its editor. The book is not fiction, however. It is frankly a manual for the high school newspaper worker, and it is so heavily interlarded with verbose advice and with examples of what actual papers have done in actual situations that it becomes pretty dull reading. In one instance it offers advice that professional newspaper men, at least, would find it hard to agree with.

"Jim of the Press," in contrast with "Making" the School Newspaper, may be said to be semi-fiction. It is the story of the journalistic adventures of a boy who, starting as a linotype operator in a small-town newspaper office, graduates into a reporter's job and at length becomes an

Associated Press staff man in the state capital. Though neither the boy nor the other figures who move through the book are very live, and though the story is marred by the presence of a conventional and not very convincing villain, young readers will enjoy it. It has authentic newspaper background, and the somewhat disconnected incidents of which it is fabricated are interesting.

The fourth book is William Heyliger's "Ritchie of the News." As usually happens when a book by Mr. Heyliger appears in competition with others similar to it, this one steals the show. Todd Ritchie, young assistant to the editor of a weekly paper, finds himself saddled with responsibility for handling the paper when the editor is smashed up in an automobile accident; he takes the paper through a trying period, making mistakes but eventually overcoming the obstacles his job presents.

The story is as simple as that. Its excellence lies in the warm life of the background Mr. Heyliger creates, and in the genuine reality of the boy and the men and women with whom he deals as well as of the situations he meets. There's nothing heroic about Todd Ritchie; but there's a gripping sincerity and honesty about the adventure he experiences. You believe in the boy and you know, whether or not you are a newspaper man, that his problems are as real as daylight.

I don't believe this is among Mr. Heyliger's three best books: I like "Quinby and Son," "High Benton," "Johnny Bree" better. But it's a grand story for any boy's library.

Mitchell V. Charnley is a member of the department of technical journalism of the Iowa State College.

New Pictures for Children's Classics

THE ARTHUR RACKHAM FAIRY BOOK. Old Tales with New Illustrations by Arthur Rackham. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company. 1933. \$2.50.

ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES. Illustrated by Elizabeth MacKinty. New York: Coward-McCann. 1933. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THESE two new volumes of time-hallowed stories for children with new illustrations by two distinguished artists, one English and one American, are books of selections. First, Mr. Rackham has made a book of old favorites, chosen chiefly from Perrault, the traditional English tales, the Arabian Nights, and Hans Andersen. He also includes the English poet Southey's famous story of "The Three Bears," "Hansel and Gretel" from Grimm, "Beauty and the Beast" by Madame de Villeneuve, and Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle."

Rackham's brilliance and versatility have long been familiar to us. He has impressed a distinct style of his own upon the illustration of classics for children. His idiosyncrasy in draughtsmanship and coloring is so well known that there is little to add to former comment upon it. But in this particular book there are two things to note: one is his use of the silhouette, a most accomplished use; the other, his sketches in apparently casual thin line that, to me, are the most enjoyable things in the volume. On pages 24 and 25, in the story of "Hop-O'-My-Thumb," we find an extreme example, a rapid delineation of little figures that would seem in the manner almost of a child's drawing, were they not by a master-draughtsman. "Dick Whittington" is done entirely in silhouettes, as is "Henny-Penny," and with what expression! But for a rapid and yet gorgeously lively sketch, turn to page 236 which shows the cat at the carriage of the King, telling his Majesty about the Marquis of Carabas! Examining the colored plates, I should like to point out two in particular: the lovely face and head of "The Sleeping Beauty" and the so very bearish "Three Bears," both of which are delineations to dwell on with delight. Lippincott has also brought out this season the "Goblin Market" of Christina Rossetti, illustrated by