

School Book Famine

BY WILLIAM McANDREW

AS the textbook goes, so goes Vermont—and every other state and territory. Here and there a wild and glad teacher warmed by a scornful training-school pedagogue to adventure in “nishtiv ‘n’ ‘riginality,” tries working from her own outlines. The children have to copy her words into notebooks. A lot is lost in the air between milady and the scribbling plodders. Then back they come to the textbook as the most complete and economical source of the best of our knowledge of the fundamental information, skills, and culture, such as belong to the educated man.

Yet the educational journals are now summing up reports from school people who complain that education has gone lame from lack of nutrition. The textbooks have worn out. Orders were withheld in the lean years. Torn and dirty volumes are in use everywhere. Moreover, so fast have changes come in science, history, geography, and even in the teaching of reading and arithmetic, that books of 1920, commonly in use in 1929, are reservoirs of error. A regiment of researchers and experimenters in the psychological laboratories of universities here and abroad have tested and tabulated the ways the mind works; and their statistically indisputable conclusion settles that a large number of heretofore accepted ways of going at a lesson waste time and damage minds.

Textbook writers are swift in getting the proved and improved ways into their new works and revised volumes. The traveling bookmen, whom publishers organize in classes and give lessons on demonstrating a book to schoolmasters, are the best educated salesmen extant. They have learned the futility of resisting a revised text of a rival publisher when it is threatening to push out their

own outmoded book. They are scouts in the field, eagerly searching for authorial talent. Now, whenever you talk with one of these missionaries of learning, he tells you frankly of the plight of the nation's think works, struggling with tools that ought to be scrapped, of schools obliged to have two to six pupils using one book. Since the business upturn the schools have remained starved from lack of material for instruction; but even so there has never been a sufficient appropriation in most schools of the country for texts. By and large, the book cost before depression was only two percent of the school budget.

Relief from the crisis won't come from trustees. And though those who have the most complete knowledge of book famines at any time are publishers, a campaign by them for adequate textbook supply would be as spoofy as the florists' ballyhoo for Mother's Day.

The sufferers most injured of course are the children. They are not wise enough to know what is debilitating their schooling. Teachers are the next hardest hit. They and the school managers, principals, and superintendents know how to present the case to school boards, to Parent-Teacher Associations, and to local clubs. Following such a movement through to the end would give the participants a sort of education that is rich with surprises in happy contrast to school routine. There is good precedent for this, set by those who said to Pharaoh, “There is no straw given to us and they say to us make brick: the fault is in thine own people.”

No text gets more attention than the reading book. Nowadays it is swinging back toward the main purpose of the old McGuffey series. The early schoolmaster

had a hunch that after reading something of the right sort we should feel, as the Scots say, “upliftit.” Into the laboratories of the experimenters in education comes the echoing voice of an old, old love long dead, “McGuffey, McGuffey.” These were the books that quietly stole into you and made you different.

It isn't necessary to “write down” for children. I remember a teacher who was wont to read the stories of Greek heroes to her class from the old, stately book of classical Dr. Smith. There was a noble stride to his style. The youngsters were so taken with these tales that the gentle lady got Hawthorne's Wonder Book, covering the same field, and tried that on them. The way the great Nathaniel had diluted the rations for tender stomachs failed to satisfy. The glory that was Greece was not in them.

In spite of the cleverness of the didactic grown person, there is an undertow in the minds of children, sweeping when unhindered. In it are mystery, imagination, nobility—the forces that were in the great writers when the whole race was young.

The educational world is sensing it. I have to review about forty school books a year. I am startled by the rebellion of textbook writers against the common tradition that the literature class room must be, most of all, a workhouse. Teacher-writers in their prefaces are boldly urging: don't kill the appetite by tasks. Reading is for enjoyment and satisfaction. Literature is art and life, not a chore. Schools have educated readers never to want to see a classic again.

“If Romeo,” commented Herbert Low of Erasmus Hall High School, Brooklyn, “had written of her character such an examination as schools ask, he would have fled from Juliet in disgust.”

William McAndrew, formerly associate superintendent of schools in New York City and later superintendent of schools in Chicago, is editor of The Education's Review and School and Society.

Watch For This New American Romance That Promises To Win Your Heart

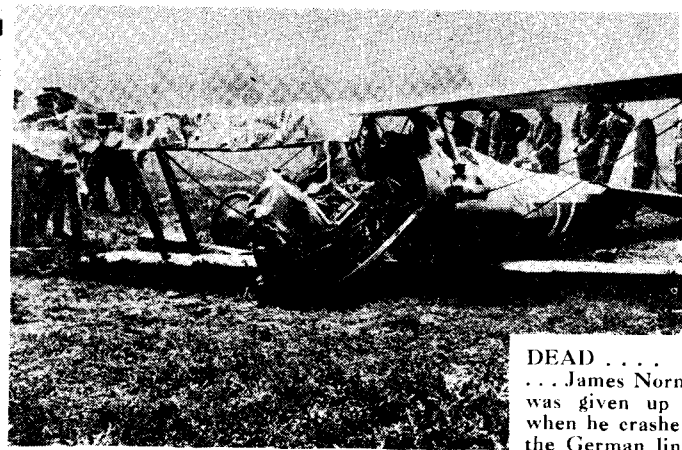


The TURBULENT PENDRAYLES by TOBIAS WAGNER. To be published April 5th. \$2.50. LITTLE, BROWN & CO.



FROM CANADA . . .

Snow drifts attract Mazo de la Roche whose "Jalna" novels introduced a new family which immediately won, and has long held a place in the hearts of her readers.



DEAD . . .
... James Nor
was given up
when he crashe
the German lin



FAMILIARLY QUOTED . . .

. . . for generations, John Bartlett's famous book first appeared in 1855. Re-edited by Christopher Morley, it is on the Little, Brown list for 1937.



THAT INTERNATIONAL SLEUTH . . .

. . . E. Phillips Oppenheim finds himself at sea. (1934)



THE HOPE DIAMOND . . .

. . . weighs gently on Mrs. Evalyn Walsh McLean as she autographs copies of "Father Struck It Rich." (1936)

PENSIVELY . . .
... Louisa May Alcott bends over her work. About the time she served as nurse in Union Hospital, Georgetown, 1862.



"QUO VADIS" . . .
... Henryk Sienkiewicz and his son walking in street in Cracow, Poland in 1912.

THE people who often as interested they write. Yet though a famous name so though always of On this page are earthed from our f photographs have published.

One Hundred Years of One

LITTLE, BROWN



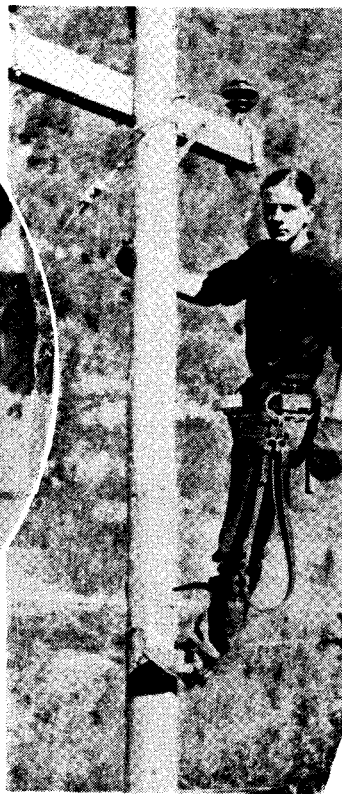
n Hall
or lost
behind
, 1918.

ALIVE . . .
... fifteen minutes
later, Hall is shown
banded, sur-
rounded by his cap-
tors.

**IMMORTAL
COOK . . .**
A rare photograph
of Fannie Merritt
Farmer, taken be-
fore her famous
"Boston Cooking
School Cook
Book" became
the standard
American guide
for brides,
wives, mothers,
grandmothers.



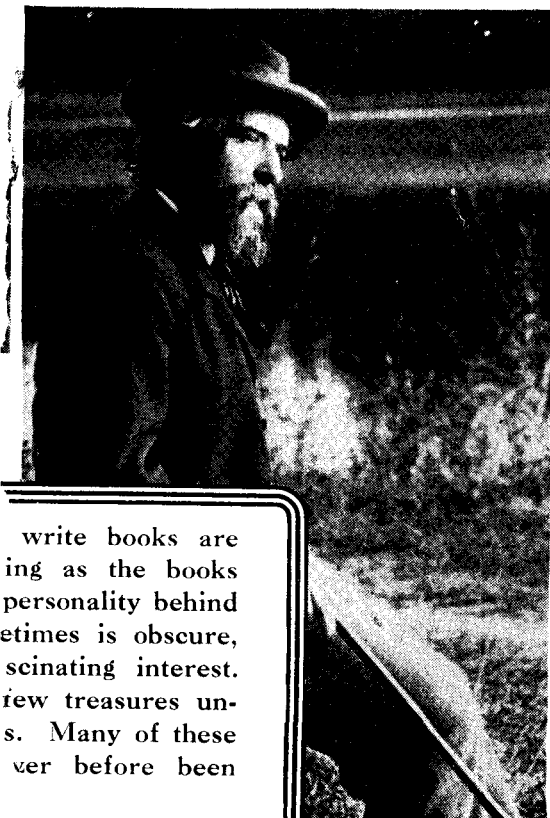
THE LAST of his books published
during Donn Byrne's lifetime was
"Destiny Bay" (Little, Brown,
1928). The Ireland he loved was
the scene of his untimely death.



TELEGRAPH POLES . . .
... hold no mystery for the author
of "Slim": back as far as 1927 Wil-
liam Wister Haines knew his job.



PAY DIRT . . .
Walter D. Edmonds, author of "Drums Along the Mohawk,"
finds the "Edmonds Country" (northern New York State
prolific both in crops and in literary inspiration.



write books are
ing as the books
personality behind
etimes is obscure,
scinating interest.
few treasures un-
s. Many of these
ver before been

ok Publishing Under
& COMPANY

1937

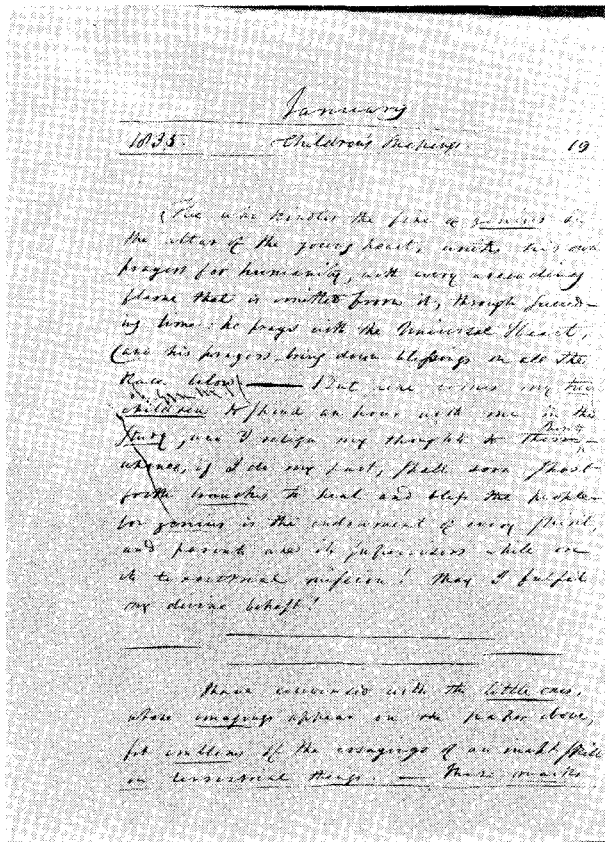
DAUDET PAUSES..
... by the stream
while his thoughts go
back to "Letters from
My Mill" which first
appeared in 1866.



"WHO SAYS . . .
... those stylish yellow oilskin
coats are worn only in New York?"
asks Courtney Ryley Cooper, who
wore one in Colorado in 1924.



ALL QUIET . . .
... is the shady spot
in Switzerland where
Erich Maria Re-
marque was snapped
last fall.



See Transcript Below*

Louisa Alcott's Earliest Literary Effort as Her Father's Collaborator

IF you will look closely at this photograph, you will see, a few lines from the top of the page, two additions obviously not made by the author, one a bold, sharp scribble and the other a light, wavy line. The bold strokes are probably the earliest preserved pen marks of Louisa May Alcott. The lighter line is the contribution of her sister, Anna, and the manuscript is a page from the five-million-word journals of Bronson Alcott. Although these journals have never been lost, they have been strangely overlooked. It was left for Odell Shepard to make the literary "discovery" of them. With the exception of the author, he is probably the only person who has read them in their entirety and in their pages he has rediscovered a man whose character and attainments must rank in stature with our very greatest. His contemporaries appreciated the true worth of Bronson Alcott, but posterity has either forgotten him or distorted his memory. "Pedlar's Progress: The Life of Bronson Alcott," with which Mr. Shepard has won Little, Brown and Company's Centenary Prize Contest, will in the opinion of the publishers make beautifully clear to this generation why Emerson called Bronson Alcott "the highest genius of his time" and why Hawthorne said of him, "there was no man . . . whose mere presence, the language of whose look and manner, wrought such an impression."

*TRANSCRIPT OF PAGE PICTURED:

Children's Shapings. He who kindles the fire of *genius* on the altar of the young heart, unites his own prayers for humanity, with every ascending flame that is emitted from it, through succeeding time: he prays with the Universal Heart, and his prayers bring down blessings on all the race below.—But here comes my *two children* to spend an hour with me in this study, and I resign my thoughts to their spirits—whence, if I do my part, shall soon shoot forth to heal and bless the people—for *genius* is the endowment of every spirit, and parents are its supervisors while on its terrestrial mission! May I fulfill my divine behest!

I have conversed with the *little ones*, whose imagings appear on the paper above; fit emblems of the essayings of an inapt skill on terrestrial things.—These marks

One Hundred Years of Book Publishing Under One Name
LITTLE, BROWN & CO. PUBLISHERS, BOSTON



1837 1937

Author and Publisher

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manuscript, I have never once wailed about make-up, publicity, advertising, or sales. It is not, understand please, that there has not been opportunity—there was that memorable time—but let it go. I write books; they publish them.

I touch here, of course, on a question endlessly debated in the literary world, and on an emotion as complex and perilous as any that this curious relationship involves. It is a relationship, the partnership of writer and publisher, fraught with as inexplicable emotions and unpredictable crises as any marriage. Like marriage also it is a drawn battle at best, a tension to be relieved only, not resolved. Its most delicate balance and most serious friction are involved in the discussions of the completed manuscript. Is it really completed? Shall the publisher insist on the changes he feels desirable? Shall he exercise either his tact or his authority to obtain deletions, revisions, re-writing, which he believes will improve it? When he does so is he moved by critical considerations, by his experience as a merchandiser, by his own feeling for the book? How far is he passing judgment on the book, and how far is he trying to write his own book? And how far shall the writer accept his advice? How far can the writer trust it as an objective judgment superior to his own, which is tired and weathertossed by the long process of creation? How far shall he distrust it as alien to his own vision? At what point shall he decide that since the vision is his, the responsibility must be his also?

The trade of publishing is nowhere more difficult than here. What it has of craft and skill as well as intuition and experience is called for in the decision to intervene or leave alone. I know that, but I know also that so far as I am concerned he must not intervene. It is my book, written as I see it; if it is wrong or bad, that is my guilt, and he is entitled to say so and to refuse to risk his money. What shudders, apprehension, and disgust I may have cost Little, Brown & Company I do not know, for they have held their peace. And that is why I am bound to them more securely than any contract could bind me.

One thing more. Some months ago I quite casually told Alfred McIntyre that I had burned all I had so far written on a novel he was even then delicately publicizing in his releases. Eighty thousand words had gone up the chimney and "Mountain Time" must begin again at scratch and could not possibly come out till at least a year after the date he had announced for it. He said, "All right," and talked genially about other things. If you can do that, you are a publisher, my son. . . . Still, I should like to see his face when he reads here his first notification that "Mountain Time" has got to go over for still another year.

Sunken Treasure

BY ODELL SHEPARD

IN mere priority of literary experience there is slight value and no merit. If this were not so, printers and proof-readers would have an unfair advantage. Any sensible person would prefer to be the best reader of a given book, as John Keats probably was of Chapman's Homer, rather than merely the first one. Yet the sensation of being "the first that ever burst" into this or that sunless sea of literature is unquestionably thrilling. Or so I found it, at any rate, during the two or three months of a recent summer during which I read steadily on and on into a huge mass of writing which, in large part, had never been seen by any eyes other than the writer's and my own.

Students of American letters have long been aware that Bronson Alcott left a large body of manuscript which, if it were only accessible, might assist in the interpretation of Transcendentalism and of New England's great period of reform. Many students of American thought have long wished to examine this voluminous record of one whom Emerson called "the most remarkable man and the highest genius of his age," and whom his contemporaries often called "Emerson's master." For half a century, however, the eighty bound volumes of Alcott's manuscripts—more than half of them private journals, and the rest comprising "Autobiographical Collections," records of travel, public conversations, genealogical jottings, drafts of unpublished books, and minute observations upon the writer's children in their infancy—have been resting almost undisturbed on the shelves of a private library in Concord, Massachusetts. So far as scholarship is concerned, they have never before been read.

For this fact we may thank that trait of



ALCOTT'S HOUSE AT CONCORD
Photograph by Bernard DeVoto.

human nature which prevents a prophet from attaining high honor in his own country, among his own kin, and in his own house. Concord has long regarded Bronson Alcott with the amused tolerance which an oyster may be imagined as feeling toward its own pearl; and America in general has not yet begun to respect a man who, as some few still remember, was not respected by his butcher. If we hesitate to set him down once for all as an incompetent and impecunious charlatan, the reason is, chiefly, that Emerson, who must be allowed to have known him well, did somehow manage to put up with him, and that he himself did manage to beget a daughter who was rather impressively "successful." Yet even with such assistance Bronson Alcott was not quite "respectable" in the full, rich sense of the word. The history of his reputation reminds one of the astonishment expressed by Senator Hoar when he learned that some one was proposing to publish the journals of Henry Thoreau—actually to put into print the random jottings of that same town-loafer whom he had often seen trundling a wheelbarrow down Main Street, with a patch on the seat of his trousers.

Alcott published himself to his own time chiefly by sixty years of conversation; but the tradition of his talk, except as it is preserved in the pages of Emerson and Thoreau, is now dwindling away. Indeed, the man might soon become a mere name if it were not for the huge mass of his unpublished writings, extending by a rough estimate to some eight million words, which he left to represent him. When these are taken into consideration, however, Alcott is seen to be one of the most fully recorded of all Americans. It is true that the early series of his journals, written in his youth in the New England hills and during his years of peddling in Virginia, were destroyed, perhaps intentionally, in 1833. Alcott himself, moreover, lost the journals dealing with his momentous visit to England and with his famous experiment at Fruitlands. Finally, two or three hundred pages of his earlier journals have been deleted, with scissors, by some unnamed domestic censor. But these deplorable gaps are really of slight importance in the tireless day-in and day-out continuity of a record which extends from 1826 to 1882 and which carries the reader from western Connecticut to Boston, Concord, England, New York, and ten times into the West. Although by no means a skillful writer, Alcott had an orderly mind and a patient, faithful, slow-pulsed hand. There are certain matters such as failure, sickness, debts, sex, and what he calls "family straits" which he will not write about, but he does write copiously and some-



BRONSON ALCOTT

times almost brilliantly about Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Garrison, the Channings, and a multitude of other earnest and somewhat humorless minds that made up his busy and eager world. Alcott was passionately fond of human association and he had a vast number of acquaintances. For many years, moreover, he was a neighbor and a friend of three or four men about whom we can never hear too much. His manuscripts are, in effect, an enormous letter from the nineteenth to the twentieth century.

In reading these manuscripts, so clean and clear and for the most part carefully written, one feels the excitement of an explorer. They recall that ancient tale about the spoken words that were first frozen into a long silence and then were suddenly melted into audibility for ears quite other than those at first addressed. They bring Alcott to life, like Rip Van Winkle, in an America decidedly unlike the one he knew. And scores of men and women whose names are even more dim and distant than his come to life here along with him. For all their serenity and their preoccupation with things of the mind, Alcott's manuscripts seem to crumple space and time and to crowd his past into our present. In the words of one who was a chief participant, they show us the beginnings of the anti-slavery movement in Boston, the inception and growth of the Transcendental Club, the early experiments in modern methods of education and the changing attitude toward childhood, the development of utopian and communistic schemes such as those of Brook Farm and Fruitlands, and the gradual intensification of feeling which led to the War between the States. Although written from a New Englander's point of view, they come from a man who

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