



RESTING FROM HOLIDAYS

NOW THAT the pressure of the efficiently planned Christmas season is behind us we can enjoy the luxury of being without a project, and browse at random through the children's book chest of 1953, leisurely "pulling out a plum" and congratulating ourselves on our finds. —CLAIRE HUCHET BISHOP.

HAWAIIAN WONDER TALES. By Post Wheeler. Illustrated by Jack Matthew. Beechhurst Press: New York. 323 pp. \$3.75.

WE HAVE long felt that Post Wheeler's "Russian Wonder Tales" is the first choice for the storyteller who interprets that highly important group of folk tales from Eastern Russia which were retold by the poet Alexander Pushkin. They are intricate, involved stories, rich in humor and drama and fascinating in background. Mr. Wheeler clarifies them, giving them action and continuity, and bringing out the heroes or heroines who mean so much to children. His wording is rhythmic, often poetical. What he has done for these Russian tales he does now for the Polynesian folk tales that are told in Hawaii. He lets the sea, as he should, dominate the theme—the wide reaches of the Pacific, dotted here and there with the tiny islands on which these people live their lives—on, in, and sometimes under the water. Some of the stories we have had before from a poet who was also a storyteller—Padriac Colum. "The Boy Who Became King of the Sharks," for instance, the children know well. Here it is beautifully told, with the heroic quality that is so evident in these island people; here we find, for the first time I think, a story of the Menehune—the Hawaiian "little people." We have often heard of them but have never had a record of them in print before. The publishers are particularly fortunate in their choice of Jack Matthew as illustrator. The strong black-and-white drawings give a vivid sense of the strength and beauty of the Polynesian people and of the setting of these dramatic tales.

A valuable book, "Hawaiian Wonder Tales" belongs in the collection of every storyteller. And, since all the stories are complete in themselves, they should be given directly to the boys and girls, who will select their own favorites among them. Post Wheeler writes an interesting foreword, which should be of value to all lovers of folklore.

—M. G. D.

PICCOLI. A Fairy Tale. By Philippe Hakman. Illustrated by Paul Julian. New York: Simon & Schuster. 90 pp. \$3.

Tom Thumb, Thumbelina, Thumbling have acquired a new relative, Piccoli Sogni. This is the second book of 1953 on "little people," the first one being "The Borrowers." Unlike them, Piccoli has no family. She is a tiny doll who sleeps in a matchbox and belongs to Terry. Truthfully, she is Terry's "little dream," a dream familiar to many children and which some of us adults may possibly remember from our own childhood.

Piccoli is at a great disadvantage on account of her size, and she meets with hair-raising adventures. But she believes in using her head and, as a result, comes out on top, to the satisfaction of Terry and of every reader young and old. Her ways of dealing with a situation are highly original, as, for instance, when she

enlists a whole army of cockroaches on Terry's behalf!

This is a gay, delicate, touching fantasy by someone known up to this time as one of the most successful cover photographers for *Life* and the author of the hilarious book "The Frenchman." Mr. Halsman created Piccoli for the enchantment of his own baby girls.

Paul Julian, a well-known artist, painter of sets and animated cartoons, has contributed arresting and expressive colored pictures.

"Piccoli" is here to stay.

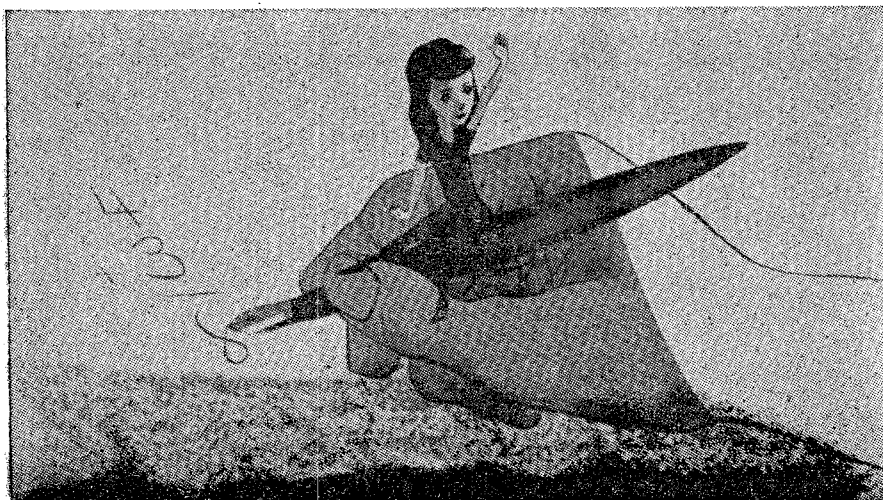
—C. H. B.

HALLORAN'S HILL. By Margaret Ann Hubbard. New York: The Macmillan Co. 248 pp. \$2.50.

Margaret Ann Hubbard has a gift for bringing to life the Midwestern American boy's world. Last year his setting was South Dakota in "Thunderhead Mountain"; now it is the country around Duluth in 1899, when the Duluth, Missabe & Northern Railroad was the "busiest little railroad in the world." Today still the D. M. & N. is thriving, having to its record the carrying of an estimated fifty million tons of ore in 1953. Even now probably the D. M. & N. fills the dreams of many a young boy around Duluth who sees himself in the future as a "hoghead" or a "tallowpot," a "boomer" of some sort. The D. M. & N. has been modernized but it still employs "call boys," whose job is to go around town and wake up the different crew shifts.

"Halloran's Hill" is the story of such a boy at the turn of the century. Chap is a groceryman's son who has no use for grocery but thinks, talks, and dreams railroad, and steam engines especially, from morning throughout the night.

This book about him is a fine study of a boy's growing into a man. There



—By Paul Julian, for "Piccoli."

is a contagious enthusiasm in Chap's choosing neither what is more secured nor what yields more money, but what he likes best to do, and it therefore seems too bad that the author did not spare his gallant spirit the burden of a financially successful ending which is unnecessary and tends to weaken an otherwise convincing story. Nevertheless, excellent in its portrayal of the different characters and conditions of life at the turn of the century in its part of the country. Through a brisk and quite masculine quality of style the author knows how to convey the romantic grandeur of the railroad. Some pages fill the reader with excitement and wonder, and some sentences in their sheer simplicity ring like poetry.

A book for boys from twelve on, and a good piece of Americana.

—C. H. B.

THE DRAGON AND THE BOOK.

By Christine Price. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 196 pp. \$2.75.

Beauty and history and memorable characters hold fast the reader's attention in this story of King Alfred's time and his hard-won stand against marauding Danes. Crammed with action, the overall effect of the poetic writing is enchantment with the scene and the ancient time brought so near as we follow the fortunes of the novice monk, the boy Wilfred. We meet him first in the still woods at Edengarth.

No breeze rustles the oak leaves, dry and brown, and the first notes of his pipe drop one by one into vast silence. "Low as the whistling of the nightingale the sound quivered across the little green valley where the monastery lay, deep in the forest called Andredsweald, and a white pony grazing on the sun-warm slope raised her head and listened." But the Dragon ships of the Danes had come back to rob and kill. The Danes have heard of a fabulous psalter the copying of which has been entrusted to the boy, Wilfred, and of the search for the beautiful book, now lost, now found, and followed by Wilfred. Bright images and delicate dramatic prose bring scene after scene before us. Abbot Anselm, King Alfred (no better story of Alfred has been given young people), Lady Judith, who comes into possession of the writings that open a wide new earth and heaven to her, move through the book as in a pageant.

Christine Price is a painter and has illustrated her own book and, out of a scholar's devotion and a poet's feeling for the English language, she has

made a lasting volume for young readers and their elders.

—ERNESTINE EVANS.

BRIGHT SUMMER. By Ernie Rydberg. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 131 pp. \$2.50.

Teresita is the eleven-year-old heroine in this story of a Mexican family in the fruit country of California. The little girl is handicapped by an iron brace on her leg. She can't hurry like other children and is therefore a little lonely, but she has a wonderful eye for the trees and the wind and the creatures along the road and in the fields. She sees, and she can draw; her school teacher gives her a painting kit and helps find her a doctor who can operate on her leg. The book is full of other people: brothers and sisters, Mama who cannot read but does not let her children know it; workers in the orchard. Mr. Rydberg tells a warming story.

—E. E.

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE BALLET. By Noel Streatfeild. Pictures by Moses Soyer. New York: Franklin Watts, Inc. 93 pp. \$1.75.

Again it becomes apparent that America has turned ballet conscious. Perhaps this form of art is more adapted to the American temperament at large than painting or music. Going through the country one is surprised to meet so many children interested in ballet, and so many parents deploring the scarcity of good teaching.

This book is for girls and their parents who are fortunate enough to live not too far from a good teacher. It is the story of a ten-year-old girl who goes to the theatre, sees a ballet for the first time, and, like many other children under the same circumstances, thinks that she wants to become a ballerina. Only, she is in dead earnest, and we follow her through her first interview with the teacher, the beginning of her training, the development of her technique. The difficulties inherent to an artistic career, ballet especially, are not minimized by the author, who knows what she is talking about. There are diagrams and drawings, and a short history of a ballet.

In a book which acknowledges its debt to Arnold Haskell we are surprised to find no mention of Isadora Duncan, to whom, though not a ballerina in the academic sense, Mr. Haskell paid homage several years ago in his book "Balletomania." Though Isadora's highly original contribution to the art of the dance may have had no influence on ballet



By Jack Matthew, for "Hawaiian Wonder Tales."

directly, yet it awoke in many Americans a sense of beauty of movement, and no one interested in ballet, especially among Americans, should ignore her name.

Except for this one omission we find this first book on the ballet absorbing and distinguished in its simplicity. A must for all young devotees of the ballet.

—C. H. B.

IN THE BIG TIME. By Katherine L. Bakeless. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 208 pp. \$3.

Thirteen informational stories of stars of stage and screen, concert hall and night clubs, including John Mulholland the magician, are here described without undue dramatizing. Yehudi Menuhin's parents, in the days before baby sitters, took their baby to concerts, where he did not cry, but listened. Marian Anderson used to wash dishes. Fred Astaire came from Omaha. Beginnings, middles, and ends, their careers all constitute stories of talent and perseverance, and indirectly brief young people on the mountain trails others have climbed to the peaks—Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, Catherine Cornell, James Stewart, Burl Ives, Hildegard, and others.

—E. E.

SKATING FOR BEGINNERS. By Barbara Ann Scott and Michael Kirby. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 106 pp. \$3.75.

It is unlikely that anyone can learn to skate from a book. However, if you are already practising skating this volume will interest you whether you are six or sixty. Away from the ring it will help you to remember what you learned, check on your mistakes, memorize principles. It will also help you "think skating," which is so important in the training of one's body and the development of the art.

This is a well-documented book, neatly and clearly presented, containing many simple and excellent pictures and diagrams, a practical chart, interesting photos, a short survey of the history of skating, an index of terms, a list of clubs, etc. Both authors are well-known skating stars.

—C. H. B.

Fiction

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recall the grotesque demons carved in stone on the cathedral. They are especially fascinated with a secret stream which runs under the old and dirty quarter of the city, exactly under the local house of prostitution, where the runaways from school repair to explore the underlying stream and the more respectable bourgeois recover from the austere continence imposed by their frigid wives.

In the other section of the city, prim and respectable, live the upper-middle-class men of property: the mayor, the judges, the industrialists, the superannuated old maids dedicated to charity and to perfidious slander, and the notary, Maître Marguet. Maître Marguet is assailed by temptation. Vainly does he pray to God that He avert from him the images of those provincial maidens whom he sees from his study, going on their errands: he is one of those innumerable men of respectability who populate French fiction who in middle age cannot resist the lure of sin and must pay for too conventional a family life.

A lurid sadistic murder is committed one Saturday afternoon at five o'clock. The maid of Madame Marguet is found in a pool of blood, horribly mutilated, her clothes torn off. The monster Troussequin, whom Maître Marguet had employed as a house painter that day, is at once suspected and put under arrest by Sergeant Maillard. The examining magistrate, in the irrefutable French manner which Marcel Aymé, bent on showing the sadistic cruelty of stern judges, likes to satirize, is going to prove him guilty.

Fortunately, one of the hoodlum companions had played truant that very Saturday afternoon and, with a couple whose puppy love he chaperoned, had escaped from school and climbed the cathedral tower. From the tower, as the bells rang five, he had caught sight of Maître Marguet going about the attic of his house, where the murdered maid lived. The boy reveals what he had witnessed. His father, the mayor of the city himself, all would rather allow Troussequin the outcast to be convicted than to expose the true culprit, who was a paragon of respectability and a pillar of conventional order. But innocence wins in the end. The sex-obsessed notary will be judged and the monster, saved by the testimony of a child, will be rehabilitated.

The murder story is told unconvincingly, the search for the murderer does not allow for much mystery

since everything was clear to the reader from the outset. The victim never appeared alive in the story and arouses little interest. As to the notary, he is even more mechanical and conventional than such middle-class notables are likely to be. The book is redeemed by a fine grasp on concrete details of everyday life, by a vivid style, by moments of hilarious satire and of cordial sympathy with all truants and outlaws, vagabonds and prostitutes. But it is on the whole a perfunctory affair and a very moderately successful attempt at comedy. It is a strange undertaking indeed, said Molière, to make people laugh.

Shades of DHL

D. H. LAWRENTIAN NOVEL: Though the novel form has proved hospitable to poetic, symbolic, and other experimental works, one always fears for the novelist as one sees him taking those first steps into the forest where even his most gifted predecessors have occasionally lost their way.

The novelist who forswears a conventional approach to such elements of his art as plot and characterization knows that he cannot dispense with them, but only that he must find some other way of introducing them, some way that will permit him to lay appropriate stress on the themes and meanings with which he is primarily concerned. Charles Ingle's "*The Waters of the End*" (Lippincott, \$3) fails to transform the author's overriding interests into the stuff of fiction, ultimately destroying the effectiveness of the novel both as poetry and as fiction.

The thread of Mr. Ingle's story has to do with an act of expiation or fulfillment performed by Brian Bruce, whose father was lost in a small boat ten years earlier. Brian, together with his younger brother Rob and a friend, Richard (who is presumably brought along to point up the virtues of Brian and Rob), fits out a small boat for the symbolic reenactment of Thomas Bruce's voyage, being scrupulously careful not to learn too much of navigation (in order to preserve the myth inviolate). Through this remarkable performance, which apparently—though not certainly—ends in disaster, Brian establishes his and Rob's moral superiority to their mother, grandmother, uncle, and all other Bruces; whether Richard ceases to be a mucker is not established.

This extraordinary adventure, which must in part be inferred from the aimless and frustrated actions and thoughts of the elder Bruces, is told in a heavily overwritten prose that is a sad (and explicit) memorial to D. H. Lawrence. —MILTON CRANE.

Josephson

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concept of economic determinism, broadly speaking, was embraced even by scions of banking families like Professor E. R. A. Seligman. It seemed to be embodied in the career of John D. Rockefeller himself, as even Nevins pictures it. By means regarded as "morally indefensible," he relates, by use of secret railroad rebates and espionage, the "anarchy" of small, competitive oil producers was ended and order and efficiency introduced into their field. A business world of small weak units was made "inevitably" to give way to a world of concentration and highly organized power. "Great business aggregations are not built without frustrating, crushing, or absorbing multitudinous small enterprises," concludes the modern apologist of Rockefeller. The historical concepts of Marx—aside from his advocacy of Socialism—have permeated our culture so generally for a hundred years that one finds Nevins unconsciously echoing one of the most familiar of Marxian doctrines: that which sees the rising capitalist class as an agency of progress leading to the triumph of "scientific" and large-scale industry.

Our Rockefellers, then, were not "morally worse" than their contemporaries of the Gilded Age, in Nevins's view, and above all should not be judged by the ethical standards of the present era. By their very ruthlessness in business, terrible even for that "loose period," he holds, they were enabled to build with all the greater speed a vast oil empire that would one day, in wartime, help save our country. Here one finds a philosophy of economic materialism in no way different from that which Beard, in earlier life, embraced—save that Beard preserved always a moral balance somewhat wanting in our current crop of revisionists. And if Dr. Nevins is going to teach us to "appreciate" or condone the moral ruthlessness of our older captains of industry, if he is going to let the end always justify the means, then I fail to see what arguments we can bring to bear against the Russian Communists. Reinhold Niebuhr was quite right in his recent observation (in "*The Irony of American History*") that our conservative apologists for unbridled monopoly, for the American way of materialistic life, are little better than the Communists.

There was nothing "effeminate" about Beard's idealism. That, incidentally, was the kind of accusation usually directed at reformers by the