

## Books For Young People



—From "Mio, My Son."

**C**HILDREN love holidays, festivals, and birthdays—not only their own but those of others—and by celebrating these special occasions, in even the simplest manner, they have experiences that enrich their lives and give them happy memories. Displays of appropriate books in the school libraries and children's rooms, and reading aloud at home can make special days memorable. February is a month filled with such excuses for celebrating: the birthdays of Lincoln and Washington and the festival of St. Valentine's Day. The last gives us an opportunity to introduce older girls to beautiful love lyrics, to biographies of men and women whose lives were filled with love, and to the great love stories of our literature.

Reviewers for this issue: Alice Lohrer, Assistant Professor, Library School, University of Illinois; Della McGregor, Chief of Youth Services, St. Paul, Minn., Public Library; Margaret Mahon, Children's Librarian, Greenville, S. C., Public Library; Elaine Simpson, Secondary School Specialist, Young Adult Services, The New York Public Library; and Elizabeth O. Williams, Supervisor, Library and Textbook Section, Los Angeles, Calif., Board of Education.

—FRANCES LANDER SPAIN, Coordinator,  
Children's Services, The New York Public Library

**THE EMPEROR'S WHITE HORSES.** By Vernon Bowen. Illustrated by Hans Kreis. McKay. \$2.75. In war-torn Vienna during the summer of 1945 the training of the fabulous pure-bred white stallions continues even during periods of intermittent air raids. The blood line of these eighty Lipizzan trace back to the time of Caesar.

While Hitler and the Russian armies jockey for position and for the fall of Vienna, Colonel Podhajsky, director of the Riding School Stables, receives word from General George Patton that an American raid through the enemy lines will be made shortly in order to capture the breeding stock of the school. In the hope of insuring their safety, the stallions are to be transported to Czechoslovakia by American troops under cover of darkness.

Although based on actual happenings that took place in Austria, the book is completely fictional. The author has chosen not to limit himself to a literal interpretation of the facts, but rather to portray the spirit of what happened.

Hans Kreis, the illustrator, once owned a Lipizzan stallion. Historical-fiction and horse-story fans will find the book fascinating reading.

—DELLA MCGREGOR.

**I IS ONE.** By Tasha Tudor. Oxford. \$2.75. Miss Tudor has made this counting book as a companion volume to her "A Is for Annabelle." With flowers and birds, small animals and fruits she has decorated her pages and illustrated the numbers from one to twenty. The delicacy of her colors and

detail of design give an old-fashioned flavor to this book for the youngest.

—F. L. S.

**DIPPER OF COPPER CREEK.** By John and Jean George. Illustrated by Jean George. Dutton. \$3.50. This is the story of the water ouzel, or dipper bird, a bird that can stay under water for a long time. It is also the story of young Doug and his growing awareness of life around him, of the beauty and cruelty of nature, of the relationships of people, and of his place in society.



—From "Dipper of Copper Creek."

"the growing awareness of life."

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And above all, it is the story of a summer high in the Colorado Rockies, of the progression of the seasons, and of the response of plant and animal life to its rhythm. Mr. and Mrs. George have again, through text and illustrations, created real animals and people.

—F. L. S.

**TOUGH ENOUGH'S TRIP.** By Ruth and Latrobe Carroll. Oxford. \$2.75. Beanie Tatum and his family planned a trip from their farm in the Great Smoky Mountains, east across the state of North Carolina, to the Atlantic Ocean to visit their great-grandparents. All of the animals, even Tough Enough, were to be left at home. But when the day for departure came, Tough Enough stowed away in the old truck and was not discovered until too late to take him back. All along the way Beanie and Tough Enough found other animals that needed homes until, by the time they reached their destination, they had a small zoo. Understanding of children, a fine sense of family, and the love for animals that characterizes the other stories about Beanie Tatum are present in this book of his latest adventures.

—F. L. S.

**AFTER THE SUN GOES DOWN.** By Glenn O. Blough. Pictures by Jean Bendick. Whittlesey House. \$2.50. Here is an invitation to go with the author to The Big Woods after dark. Accept the invitation, for you will not have another one soon that will bring with its acceptance such unique and surprising entertainment. You will hear the whippoorwill tell its name over and over and over again, the bat's high squeak, and the strange singing of the grasshopper. You can observe the habits of many creatures whose activities begin when the sun goes down.

Dr. Blough has made another fine contribution to his science books for seven-to-ten-year-olds. This book will also catch the attention of both older children and adults because of its accuracy and interesting style. The artist has done a good job of harmonizing with, and illuminating, the text.

—MARGARET MAHON.

**BALL IN THE SKY.** By Esther M. Douty. Illustrated by Douglas Gorsline. Holt. \$2.75. Not only the air-minded youth of today will enjoy "Ball in the Sky" appeal, but so will all who enjoy reading about men of vision and courage. This inspiring biography of John Wise, father of American ballooning, is a book the family can share, though it is written for young readers of eleven and up. Undaunted by failure, apathy, and the ridicule of those around him, John Wise strove with patience and skill to develop a field of scientific endeavor in the then little known area

of aeronautics. This is an exciting, well-written book of man's early attempts at flying. —ALICE LOHRER.

**CLAIM JUMPERS OF MARBLE CANYON.** By Rutherford Montgomery. Illustrated by William Moyers. Knopf. \$2.50. Not the lure of gold, but of uranium, leads to an action-packed story for the ten-to-fourteen-year-old boy. Mike and Jerry, two modern teen-age boys, seek to find and rescue their partner, Uncle Jonas, kidnapped by three lawless, desperate claim jumpers of Marble Canyon, Colo. The fast-moving story also brings out the sharply contrasting characters of the two brothers. It points up the results of plans hastily conceived and executed, and those carefully thought out in advance. The characters and events are natural and plausible, and make another good adventure story. —A. L.

**SOUTH SEA HOLIDAY.** By Lydia Davis. Illustrated by Tom Davis. Little, Brown. \$2.95. When Dr. Johnston from Rarotonga in the Pacific Ocean went to visit some of his patients on faraway coral islands he took his two children, Michael and Mandy, for a long-promised holiday. The beauties and realities of Polynesian life on these little known islands are vividly portrayed in this story, based on real experiences. The 600-hundred-mile journey by schooner, brings amazing adventures with whales and sharks and thrilling suspense as the family explores caves and coral reefs. Picturesque legends of the seas and the islands are recounted and there is a warm, human relationship with Kimi the little South Sea islander stowaway. Both boys and girls of ten to twelve will enjoy this tale.

—ELIZABETH O. WILLIAMS.

**SURE THING FOR SHEP.** By E. H. Lansing. Illustrated by Ezra Jack Keats. Cro-



—From "Mio, My Son."

"An allegorical fairy tale . . .

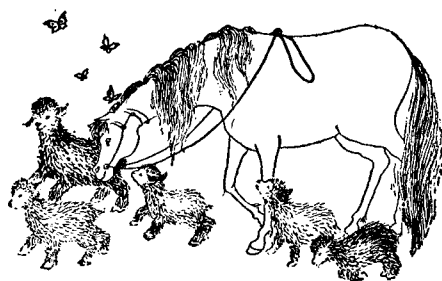
well. \$2.50. When Granny died Shep wanted to stay on in the hillside cabin, but there was thirty dollars due in back taxes—a fortune to a fourteen-year-old Kentucky mountain boy. Uncle Jake came to help him, but Uncle Jake's plans were puzzling, and his fondness for the bottle brought them to near catastrophe a number of times. But there was something likable and loyal about Uncle Jake, and although honest Shep did not always approve of his methods, he, too, was loyal. With the help of Katy, the crow, and a broken-down race horse they solved their problem. A folk-tale quality pervades this story, and the artist captures it in his excellent illustrations. —M. M.

**MIO, MY SON.** By Astrid Lindgren. Illustrated by Ilon Wikland. Viking. \$2.50. Andy is in Farawayland. "He's in a place where the silver poplars rustle . . . where the fires glow and warm at night . . . where there is Bread That Satisfies Hunger" . . . where he can ride Miramis, the beautiful white horse with the golden mane, and play with Pompoo, the son of the rose gardener . . . and, "where he has his father, the King who loves him, and whom he loves." But in order to stay here Andy had to fight single-handed and kill with a "fearsome"

sword the cruel Sir Kato. All this is told in "Mio, My Son," an allegorical fairytale of exquisite and rare beauty with drawings by an artist of the same sensitive mind as the author.

—M. M.

**YOUNG MARINER MELVILLE.** By Jean Gould. Illustrated by Donald McKay. Dodd, Mead. \$3. Jean Gould has put her emphasis on the action-filled years Melville spent at sea from the time he sailed as ship's "boy" at the age of nineteen and was caught up in the



. . . of exquisite and rare beauty."

magic of an exhilarating and exotic, but also brutal and dangerous, new world until he returned from his final voyage as a mariner on a U.S. man-of-war at the age of twenty-five.

People and events that influenced or provided material for his writing are presented in detail; his compulsion to tell his stories to the world, his reception by critics and readers, and his final years spent in comparative obscurity are included, but not at length.

Through the narrative and the quotations from Melville's own writings, the teen-age reader will be drawn to this young mariner who is exultant in the fascination of the sea but shocked by the cruelty and thoughtlessness of man, and may go on to read the books of this expert storyteller with greater understanding. —ELAINE SIMPSON.

**MEDICINE IN ACTION.** By Margaret O. Hyde. Illustrated by Clifford N. Geary. Whittlesey House. \$2.75. This is an illuminating book for the teen-ager who might be thinking of medicine as a career, or who is curious about this amazing science. Also, the adult layman who knows little about modern medical practices and miracles, but would like to have a discussion of them in understandable language and entertaining style will find this a rewarding book. It discusses the work of those in medical careers, the thrilling adventure of searching for new wonder drugs in far places, and the advances made in treating mental illness. It closes with a challenge and with a hope that with the aid of modern medicine mankind will continue to grow healthier and happier.

—M. M.



—From "Sure Thing for Shep."

"A folk tale quality pervades . . ."

## The Reviewer's Duty to Damn

Continued from page 25

walk like good tin soldiers. Please send cropper.)

I have said that an avalanche is a release of stored-up forces. The alignment of those forces is not peculiar to *SR*; it is in fact descriptive of the fundamental split in all general discussion of poetry today. One attitude believes basically that poetry must avoid all "difficulty," that it is offensive to discuss esthetic principles, that to anatomize an art form is to destroy it, and that the real purpose of art is "to breathe forth BEAUTY." In practical application this attitude tends to become a kind of surviving Genteel Tradition.

The poetry of the surviving Genteel leans heavily to the big abstractions loudly proclaimed, to bluebirds, to "yet I know's" and "do but command's," and to the wonder the wonder of being fifty in a vague suburban way. For present purposes, let me summarize the opposite attitude with a line and a half from Browning: "Thoughts may be/ Over-poetical for poetry." Poets and readers of this persuasion (I have already described it in some detail in some of my earlier articles and need not repeat all the specifications here) tend to find the output of the Genteel Tradition to be mushy and mindless. And there is the division: one group wants poetry pretty, vague, and easily effusive. (Because easy effusion is subject to telling ridicule, the Genteel are naturally inimical to close criticism. The trouble is they can seldom if ever survive it.) The other group wants poetry to be real, physical, and disciplined. The stored-up forces of the present avalanche are simply the forces of the offended Genteel: when I took over as Poetry Editor of *SR* a year ago I began systematically to uproot Genteel poetry and to substitute whatever you want to call the other kind. I never imagined everyone would like it, but that remains my policy and it will be my policy for as long as I am its Poetry Editor.

ONE last charge delivered by the avalanche is that a reviewer commits a social impropriety, a somehow cowardly action, in expressing contempt for poems written by a socially gracious lady, *even if the poems justify such contempt*. It would be much better, runs this argument, to ignore the poems in silence. Clearly, however, to grant this argument is in effect to deny the reviewer the right to offer any but favorable reviews—a situation already

dangerously prevalent in all our mass media.

I must insist in rebuttal that a reviewer's duty is to describe the book as accurately as he can. Twice in quite a number of years as a reviewer I have reviewed a book not simply harshly but contemptuously. It occurs to me that twice in something like fifteen or twenty years is not exactly a general compulsion to character assassination. If I come on another book as bad as Mrs. Lindbergh's, by an author whose name passes currently as a serious writer, I shall certainly review it in the same terms of contempt. I have only two reservations to make: the first is that the author's reputation be such that there is reasonable danger that the poems will be taken seriously; the second is that the more unfavorable a review happens to be, the more meticulously it must be documented.

What is the reviewer's contract with the author, the publisher, and his own readers? I think the author and the publisher are one in this: they, as part of their promotional process, offer the book for sale, and as part of their promotional process they send me a copy with the request that I state my considered opinion of the work in print. I do not ask for the book: it is sent to me. Moreover, if I say anything especially favorable about the poetry, there is an excellent chance that my remark will be excerpted and used in promotion for this book or on the dust-jacket of the next. My contract with my readers is simple enough: to be honest. Had I liked this book, I should certainly have said so, and all hands would have been happy. I did not like it, and I tried to say exactly how much I did not like it, and for what reasons.

I may be wrong in thinking Mrs. Lindbergh writes dismal stuff. But I have asked no one to take my word for it. Rather, I have tried to document point by point what I submit to

be the slovenly incompetence of the writing.

Let me confess, moreover, that I had long been waiting for the proper chance to do an out-and-out unfavorable review. I was in no sense lying in wait for Mrs. Lindbergh. I had simply decided as basic policy that it was necessary for *SR* from time to time to publish a review in which a bad book was called bad in so many words and for carefully detailed reasons. In the course of the last six months or so, I have passed over many possible subjects on the grounds that they were too insignificant to be worth a real assault. Mrs. Lindbergh's book happened to fill the bill perfectly. To the extent that she cares anything at all about this review my pre-set decision was a misfortune. I must insist, however, that the real misfortune was in writing these poems. I was especially ready to sail into them, first, because they provided an excellent opportunity to define further that sort of pernicious poetry I mean to have none of in *SR*, and, second, because they provided an opportunity to offer an essential challenge to the whole pussy-footing process of book reviewing in our national mass-media. It is even possible that in my zeal to press these two charges I overstated my objections to Mrs. Lindbergh's poetry. I cannot feel that I did, however, and I must still rest my case on the critical methods of the review itself.

The fact is that reviewing in the United States seems to have succumbed to a mindless sort of approval of everything. The very fact that the author is a human being seems to plead that to dislike his writing would be to offend him. I have long been appalled by the national review standards (and lack of standards) and that I have long been determined to do something about them as Poetry Editor of *SR*. I was especially delighted, therefore, to find in the current issue of *The American Scholar* an article by Geoffrey Wagner entitled "The Decline of Book Reviewing." Mr. Wagner argues tellingly a number of points I have often argued less well: (a) that different reviewing standards are often applied on the same page of a given periodical, (b) that it is almost impossible to find an unfavorable review in our mass media, and (c) that the reviewers themselves are forced to cheat their real opinions or to quit. Here is part of what Mr. Wagner says on that last point:

Who has not heard complaints from some friend who read a eulogistic review of what turned out to be a rotten novel? While there can be no question of the reviewer today not being allowed the free





play of review, one cannot help observing that the big review media seem to employ extremely unexact and optimistic men and women. There is even the suspicion abroad that a reviewer is dropped like a hot potato should he consistently "pan" the books he is sent. (The sourpuss! Some poor devil has to sell these things.)

Mr. Wagner goes on to point out how this process cannot help but corrupt the reading tastes of the masses. He then cites two instances of double-standard reviewing that fascinate me in their implications:

Readers have seen "Marjorie Morningstar" reviewed on the front pages of *The New York Times Book Review* in a friendly notice by Maxwell Geismar, only to be followed by his sharp "criticism" of the same book in the pages of the *Nation*. Readers are also able to compare, if they wish, Edgar Johnson's kid-gloves review of Gordon Ray's recent book on Thackeray in *The New York Times Book Review* with his distinctly less cordial approach to Ray in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* for last March.

I think I need hardly argue that the state of things Mr. Wagner describes is real, and dangerous to the standing of good literature in our society. I would add one further charge against the American book reviewer: he has destroyed his own vocabulary. Our review media use the same terms for discussing the junk produced along

the Spillane-Wouk axis as they do for the efforts—good or bad but at least seriously undertaken as living art—produced along the Hemingway-Thomas Mann axis. The publishers and their jacket-blurbing tradition are certainly partners in this guilt. (One of these days I mean to do a survey of book-jacket prose and let the chips and advertising contracts fall where they may.) Between them and the natural laziness of all sentimentality, book reviewing has confused even its own inner standards. Lacking any true sense of good and bad writing, lacking any standard by which they may feel justified in damning bad writing, the reviewers have tended to settle for gentle, meaningless, polite noises. They have become readers without conviction. As reviewers their immoral (what else can I call it?) trimming to all winds has helped to pollute all reading tastes.

I damned "The Unicorn," first, for the reasons stated in the review itself—because the poetry struck me as miserable stuff and because I am not willing to concede that personal distinction can compensate for slovenly performance. (Had Mrs. Lindbergh's performance been on Broadway instead of in the bookshops, imagine what the drama critics would have done to her.) I did so, more importantly however, because her book was bound to have a wide circulation and to receive many vague accolades. I cite a single example: in *SR* Dec. 22 (my review had already been written and was awaiting publication) *SR* undertook its annual "critics'" poll of the best books of the year. "The Unicorn and Other Poems" was tied for second place with three votes. You may be sure that the votes Mrs. Lindbergh received were all from "newspaper critics" and included none from the panel of experts who had been polled (That distinction between "newspaper-critics" and "experts" is not accidental.)

I submit that when a book I believe to be as certainly meritless as "The Unicorn" comes that close to winning even an informal national poll as the best book of verse of the year, then I conceive myself to have a duty to state my objection to this sort of stuff with no apology to the author or to the traditions of the Genteel. Should I wait till it wins the Pulitzer? I think it is time, rather, to cry Hellfire. Or there is no pulpit.

The principles on which I reviewed "The Unicorn" are the principles on which I hope to see all *SR* poetry reviews based, and I urge those same principles on all the nation's review media. With the exception of the "notice" (which is not a review really, but simply a basic statement that the

book exists, with one or two personal comments by the reviewer) I shall hope that reviews in these pages conform to the following principles. I cannot, of course, control what the reviewer writes. I can and will "kill" reviews that ignore these principles, and I can and will call more and more upon the reviewers who observe them.

1. The reader deserves an honest opinion. If he doesn't deserve it give it to him anyhow.

2. No one who offers a book for sale is sacrosanct. By the act of publication and promotion, the citizen-human-being forfeits his privileges as a non-competitor. Having willingly subjected himself to judgment he must accept either blame or praise as it follows. If in doubt, assume that the book is signed by Anonymous.

3. Evaluation must be by stated principle. The reviewer's opinion is only as good as his methods.

4. A review without reference to the text is worthless.

5. Quotation without analysis of the material quoted is suspect.

6. If you cannot document a charge, pro or con, do not make it.

7. Poetry is more important than any one poet. Serve poetry.

8. Limitations of space often make it difficult and sometimes impossible to apply these principles as carefully as one would wish. No space limitation, however, is reason enough for forgetting that these principles exist.

#### LITERARY I. Q. ANSWERS

Column One should read: 17, 11, 14, 8, 1, 6, 3, 18, 4, 16, 13, 2, 7, 10, 9, 12, 5, 20, 15, 19. Column Two should read: 15, 14, 7, 19, 8, 4, 9, 12, 16, 10, 6, 3, 13, 5, 17, 2, 1, 18, 20, 11. Or in extenso: 1. Thomas Bailey Aldrich and Bret Harte—1836. 2. Sherwood Anderson and Willa Cather—1876. 3. Eugene Field and Lafcadio Hearn—1850. 4. Hamlin Garland and Bliss Perry—1860. 5. Ernest Hemingway and Stephen Vincent Benét—1898. 6. William D. Howells and Edward Eggleston—1837. 7. Sinclair Lewis and Ring Lardner—1885. 8. Herman Melville and Walt Whitman—1819. 9. Edna St. Vincent Millay and Elmer Rice—1892. 10. Eugene O'Neill and T. S. Eliot—1888. 11. Edgar Allen Poe and Abraham Lincoln—1809. 12. Robert Sherwood and Louis Bromfield—1896. 13. Gertrude Stein and Zona Gale—1874. 14. Harriet Beecher Stowe and Horace Greeley—1811. 15. Eudora Welty and Richard Wright—1909. 16. Edith Wharton and O. Henry—1862. 17. John Greenleaf Whittier and Henry W. Longfellow—1807. 18. Kate Douglas Wiggin and Elbert Hubbard—1856. 19. Tennessee Williams and John Hershey—1914. 20. Thomas Wolfe and Mari Sandoz—1900.

#### FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 712

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 712 will be found in the next issue.

GQ L WLJ RWVFGRA OGA

VHPAR GJFY OGA ORLE, JY

YJR DLJ FLSR GF QPYW

OGW.

—QPLJSKGJ.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 711

If misery loves company, misery has company enough.

H. D. THOREAU.