

Fiction

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moves away from it into an Army camp in New Jersey that the writing becomes more alive.

If Mr. Flood has relaxed somewhat on his laurels in his second novel, he nevertheless shows enough development to make us look forward to more interesting work in the future.

—PATRICIA DONEGAN.

SUBVERTING AN INFANT GENIUS: Little Leo Demming, the youthful subject of Hildegard Dolson's delightful new novel, "A Growing Wonder" (Random House, \$3.50), suffers from an acute case of genius. At the tender age of five he is already a sophisticated draughtsman, with an incredibly mature perception of line and form. But Leo is also possessed of a widowed daddy better able to cope with the plastics game than he is with a young Leonardo, so the child's upbringing is entrusted to his Auntie Jane, a ravishingly beautiful avant-gardiste (she writes for a little magazine published in Marrakesh). Auntie Jane believes in formless art and informal education, and the infant draughtsman is bundled off to the Free Little Arts elementary school, where "spontaneous disorder" rules and the report cards are as big as restaurant menus, with marks for "Biogenetic Adaptability" and "Interpersonality of Relationships."

"Whatever had become of Mendel's Law?" muses Miss Dolson, as Leo is put through the Free Little Arts hoops (asymmetrical, of course), impressed into compulsory leap frog (over non-objective saw-horses), and forced to express his individuality as a good little Five should. Not content with subverting an infant genius, Auntie Jane gets her hooks into an adult one: a painter named Joss Rindel, whom she purloins from his loyal mistress, a lady with so-so taste and a good heart. The collision of this almost irresistible force with the objects of her attention throws off a shower of sparks that makes "A Growing Wonder" a refreshing experience.

—MARTIN LEVIN.

DULY NOTED: "The Sprig of Hemlock," by Robert Muir (Longmans, \$3.95), recalls the ill-fated armed revolt against the Massachusetts government by Daniel Shays and the "Regulators" in 1786. Well-drawn portraits of debt-ridden farmers and excitement-seekers, whose emotions and actions veer from sincere protest to unbridled license, make this an impressive first novel.

—S. P. MANSTEN.

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