

Swing Into Books

By ALICE DALGLIESH

ALTHOUGH it is August as this is being written, children's books for the fall are pouring in to reviewers. Apparently the publishers have made a great effort to get their picture books out on time for Children's Book Week, which to avoid coinciding with American Education Week, was set one week earlier than usual, November 1-7. Our young people's number will be dated November 7, and that issue and the Christmas one will present some of the best books of the year. However, I cannot resist starting with a few, especially with the tiny ones that children like to own.

The theme of Children's Book Week 1964 is "Swing Into Books," and the poster showing a child on a swing between the legs of Bruno Munari's tall flamingo is very gay. All the streamers, and the mobile, feature animals, as do so many of the younger books. The use of animals solves the problem of making Book Week decorations that will interest a wide range of ages. "Swing" is supposed to have a double connotation, I believe, though for the teens books and swing scarcely coincide.

We are fortunate (or in a few cases unfortunate) in having movies that tie in with children's books. A package that just came in contained Harcourt, Brace's *Mary Poppins* and *Mary Poppins Comes Back*, by P. L. Travers (\$5.95), a nice fat book with a pink jacket bearing a picture of Julie Andrews, who plays Mary Poppins. Walt Disney made the film, and those who must have pictures (and text) from the film will find these in various Golden Books. The Harcourt volume has the original illustrations by Mary Shepard, with color added to some of them. I judge by Pamela Travers's remark on the jacket flap that she may have been a little surprised by the Walt Disney Studio's version of her story. As she says: "It is interesting to see how books undergo a sea change when transferred to another medium. . . . Magic when translated to the screen inevitably becomes trick."

On the other hand, I was interested in a theory advanced by Robert B. Radnitz in the August 28th *New York*, the Sunday *Herald Tribune* magazine. In an article entitled "For Better Films, Start with Children" he claims, "If our sincere desire is to make artistic adult films, then we must educate our audience,

starting with the children, to accept them." I had never thought of children's book films as building up a new audience of movie-viewers; rather the other way: children look for the book after seeing the movie. Mr. Radnitz, who made *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, *Misty*, and *A Dog of Flanders*, also says that any major studio coming out with an announcement slate of films for children will receive strong backing from . . . the press, publications and the public." As I remember, one of our newspaper critics reviewed favorably the scenery of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, and ended, "Kiddies, it's all yours." Well. . . !

THESE films are for middle-group children perhaps eight to ten or eleven. Young children do not need motion pictures at all. However, many of us have been interested in the semi-movie project quietly being carried through at Weston Woods Studios in Connecticut under the direction of Morton Schindel. I say "semi-movie" because he has an iconographic technique that gives the effect of motion on the screen, and his group of films, *Picture Book Parade*, has been most successfully used in schools and libraries. Special music and narration of the story accompany each film.

The Tiny Little House. By Eleanor Clymer. Pictures by Ingrid Fetz. Atheneum. 56 pp. \$2.95. The little house was crowded in between two tall city houses, and nobody lived in it. Jo Alice and Jane took it over and cleaned it up. Then they found a tenant, an old lady who made delicious peanut butter cookies. Unfortunately, the landlord arrived and demanded rent. How his heart was melted by peanut butter cookies is the part of the story that almost no one—including wise four- to eight-year-olds will believe, but it's a neat and tasty ending. Color pictures, comfortably literal but with a touch of style, make it a book any small girl should enjoy owning. Ages 4-8.

A Surprise in the Forest. By Eleanor Schick. Illustrated by the author. Harper & Row. 32 pp. \$1.95. One day when Mouse was walking in the woods he found a Surprise, and the tiny story holds its surprise until the very end. Threes and fours will like rereadings because for them the plot of a story is satisfying over and over. Perhaps children will like to read it to themselves later—when they can improvise surprise endings of their own. Sometimes it is, in itself, a pleasant surprise to find a small book

I visited Mr. Schindel's studio last year, and was particularly impressed by the way M. Sazek's travel picture books (San Francisco, New York, and so forth) come to life on the screen. Mr. Schindel is also planning to produce some short regular movies of stories from children's books. The *short* is important; I can remember how the very young audience (some only three and four) wriggled in their seats at *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm*, which was really not for them, and not a very good film—except for the scenery. If younger children are to be taken to motion pictures, they need artistic, carefully produced pictures, and not the blaring, often terrifying, wide-screen pictures that play to grown-ups.

THIS year Weston Woods Studios co-operated with the American Library Association in producing an adult film, *The Lively Art of Picture Books*, which presents the work of thirty-six picture-book artists, and includes interviews with Maurice Sendak, Barbara Cooney, and Robert McCloskey. This was written and directed by Joanna Foster Dougherty. The film is both rented (booked up through December) and sold to cities or PTA groups. Those interested should write to Weston Woods Studios, Weston, Connecticut, or to the American Library Association in Chicago for information and prices. The film begins with Randolph Caldecott and includes present-day artists, with Mrs. Dougherty, Children's Book Specialist for *Publishers' Weekly*, commenting on the books as they are shown on the screen.

illustrated, as is this one, entirely in simple black line—with a modern touch. Ages 3-6. (5?)

Childhood Is a Time of Innocence. Written and illustrated by Joan Walsh Anglund. Harcourt, Brace & World. 32 pp. \$1.95. This pretty little book is for sentimental ladies. Children who have had the other Anglund books may like it for its small size and pictures, but they have no real kinship with such statements as: "Childhood is a time of innocence. It is the morning time of life. . . . It begins with being born and ends with growing up." This is childhood as seen by an adult, and it is hung about with happiness. All ages (?).

See Saw. By Joan Kahn. Pictures by Crosby Bonsall. Harper & Row. 24 pp. \$1.95. This is another tiny book, with black-and-white pictures of great simplicity. It is also a participation book because the children will soon be saying it as they play see saw; they may also be able to read it. Ages 3-6 (scarcely extended to 7 and 8?)

Lito and the Clown. By Leo Politi. Scribners. 32 pp. \$3.25. All the gaiety and color of a traveling carnival came to a village in

Mexico, but Lito was sad. He didn't want to see the carnival or the tall clown on stilts who advertised it because Paquita, Lito's kitten, had been chased away by a stray dog and might never be found again.

The plot is slight, but action steps up as kitten and dog disrupt a puppet show. The tall clown is able to help so all ends well. Ages 4-8.

The Happy Lion and the Bear. By Louise Fatio. Illustrated by Roger Duvoisin. McGraw-Hill. 32 pp. \$2.95. The Happy Lion is one of the top-favorite characters in picture books, also one of the most decorative. In this story (among the best) he argues with a new bear at the zoo, and they do a good deal of roaring and growling. At the end they are friends, and the moral, skillfully inserted in the lion's conversation, is "One should not roar at people before one knows them better." (See SR, Aug. 22 for interesting interview with the Duvoisins by Haskel Frankel.) Ages 4-8.

Shoes for Punch. By Joceylyn Arundel. With pictures by Wesley Dennis. McGraw-Hill. 32 pp. \$2.50. Both boys and girls—especially those who like ponies—will enjoy this story of a little Shetland that wanted shoes. The utterly realistic pictures in sepia make it hard for adults to visualize a pony asking for shoes, but the combination of text and pictures won't bother the younger children. What Punch wants is to have shoes that make sparks and go clip clop on the road—and he gets his wish. Ages 4-8.

Hear Ye of Boston. By Polly Curren. Illustrated by Kurt Werth. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard. 36 pp. \$3.95. Polly Curren says that American history used to puzzle her as a child because there were so many things "going on at once in different places"—which, of course, is rather characteristic of history. She proposes to show one series of events (the beginnings of the American Revolution) as they happen in various places. Beginning with her own city, Boston, she offers a pleasant, readable narrative with adequate pictures. I simply cannot visualize young children's understanding of history being clarified in this way, but perhaps we shall understand the author's purpose better as other books appear. Crispus Attucks, the Negro killed in the Boston Massacre, seems to have been given his place in one picture, though it is not very clear. Ages 5-8.

Nikkos and the Pink Pelican. By Ruth Tooze. Pictures by Janina Domanska. Viking. 64 pp. \$2.75. The famous pelican that lives on the island of Mykonos has been featured in three books within the last two years. Evaline Ness made him into a fairy tale; this story is realistic, for a Greek-American artist goes to the island and meets Nikkos, a Greek boy who is also a friend of the pelican. The book has a slightly different slant, for it shows an American girl going to the home of her forebears and painting all the lovely colors she sees there. She also helps Nikkos to paint. "I live in Chicago," she tells Nikkos. "Sometimes we are called 'Greek-Americans.'" It's the only way to distinguish the various groups, I suppose, but one can see she's a bit sensitive about that hyphen. The Japanese solved it by being Nisei; however, they are the only ones who have. Janina

Domanska's pictures in three colors are attractive. Ages 7-10.

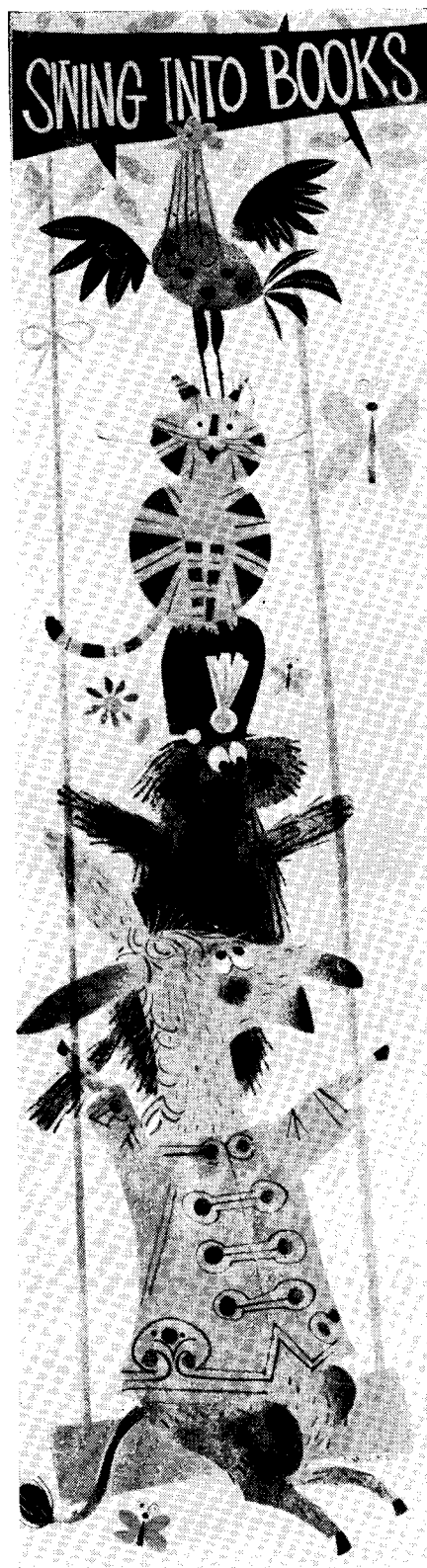
Ribsy. By Beverly Cleary. Illustrated by Louis Darling. Morrow 192 pp. \$2.95. This story of the familiar and much-loved Huggins family starts (literally in a pictorial chapter head) with a flea. The flea is under the collar of Ribsy, the Hugginses' dog, whose effort to dislodge it starts the story moving. Ribsy is on center stage all the time. He gets lost in the parking lot at the shopping center, and the Huggins family is distraught. Meanwhile the family that finds Ribsy gives him a violet-scented bubble bath—perhaps the funniest chapter in the book. Ribsy travels on through other amusing adventures. When he finds the way back to his family, Mr. Huggins delivers the understatement of the story: "The dog is ours and has been for several years. We just—misplaced him for a while." Ages 8-12.

The Bee Man of Orn. Story by Frank R. Stockton. Pictures by Maurice Sendak. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 48 pp. \$3.50. This is one of Mr. Stockton's more involved stories, and it has been given a rather heavy production, which lacks magic though it is artistically good. The Bee Man lives with a houseful of bees and eats honey, but is never stung. He is not, however, satisfied with his life and wishes to know his origins, to return to what he was—a theme much in keeping with present-day nostalgia for "the good old days." A magician changes him into a baby, and he is brought up by a woman who sits tearing her hair because her own baby has been carried off by a dragon. Years later the magician passes by, and finds that the man has grown into exactly what he was before—The Bee Man of Orn. Ages 8-10.

The Life of a Queen. By Colette Portal. Translated by Marcia Nardi. Braziller. 24 pp. \$2.95. While we put much emphasis on realistic nature stories, it is interesting to see that the French have different ideas. The publisher claims that this book is "a nature tale giving authentic information and insight into the life of familiar creatures." It isn't exactly that, however, for imagination has entered in: the work of the ant queen is realistic enough, but she does have a rocking chair, a bed, and other appurtenances, including a crown.

Nevertheless, this is a most striking picture book with color illustrations beautifully reproduced, so we can enjoy the European touches of fantasy. Ages 7-9.

The Story of Moslem Art. By Christine Price. Illustrated with photographs and drawings by the author. Dutton. 159 pp. \$4.95. Opening dramatically, this handsome book shows the Arabs sweeping into the many countries they will conquer—and the art they will then appropriate, setting the local artists and artisans to work to produce it. Besides providing many pictures of Persian manuscripts and mosques with elaborate decoration characteristic of the times, the author demonstrates that not all Moslem painting is an imitation of the past; present-day artists use their ancient themes and also paint in a realistic western style. The book is an effective introduction to both Islamic art and history. Ages 12 up.



—Ed Emberley.

One of the streamers made for Children's Book Week.

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Criminal Record



The Recluse of Herald Square. By Joseph A. Cox. Macmillan. \$4.95. Death in New York of "Ida Wood," 94, in 1932 in shabby room containing a fortune in securities (plus 50 \$10,000 bills) led to arduous detective work in Louisiana and Ireland which paid off literally and handsomely. This altogether engrossing narrative is by a jurist who figured prominently in solution of case and in divvying of the inheritance (1,103 lucre-lovers tried to horn in, 10 made the grade).

Enchanting Little Lady: The Criminal Life of the Marquise de Brinvilliers. By Virginia Vernon. Abelard-Schuman. \$4.50. This is the life story of the world's first known arsenic poisoner (France, 1630-1676), beheaded for her numerous and varied wrongdoings. Brisk and lively, but with some built-in dialogue.

Five Times Maigret. By Georges Simenon. Harcourt, Brace & World. \$5.95. This quintuple omnibus (all units restored to circulation are novel-length) is mandatory for any mystery fan who never heard of the great Sûreté ace—if such there be, which is highly unlikely. Long live auld acquaintance, as the French have it.

Three Times Three Mystery Omnibus. Edited by Howard Haycraft and John Beecroft. Doubleday. \$6.50. This 830-page blockbuster includes three novels (Chandler, Household, Marsh), three novelettes (McBain, Christie, Stout), and nine short stories by other tried-and-true practitioners. Perfect for that flight around the world with stop-overs.

Killer in the Rain. By Raymond Chandler. Houghton Mifflin. \$5.50. These eight previously uncollected stories are the work of a 'prentice Chandler trying himself out (1934-41) and succeeding brilliantly. The introduction is by Philip Durham of UCLA. Essential reading.

Ellery Queen's Double Dozen. Edited by Ellery Queen. Random House. \$4.75. Twenty-four tales from *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* compose this 19th annual collection (only 23 authors, but one author offers 3-in-1 job and one story is a two-man collaboration). Choice assemblage, as usual.

Two Men in Twenty. By Maurice Procter. Harper & Row. \$3.95. Chief Inspector Martineau of Granchester (English

megalopolis), with assorted cops and copesses, locks horns with top-flight mob of London heisters. An absolute knock-out!

You Only Live Twice. By Ian Fleming. New American Library. \$4.50. James Bond, British Secret Service ace, after blowing two cases following death of his bride of a day, is sent to Japan on a win-all or lose-all basis. Ian Fleming died about the time the American edition of this book was released. The publishers have one more Fleming manuscript, *The Man with the Golden Gun*, which will be published in 1965.

The Clocks. By Agatha Christie. Dodd, Mead. \$4.50. Discovery of elderly male's corpse in blind woman's living room containing six timepieces hands Detective Inspector Hardcastle real toughie, but Hercule Poirot takes it all in stride. Heavily overpopulated, but a sure-fire attention-gripper, naturally.

Friday the Rabbi Slept Late. By Harry Kemelman. Crown. \$3.95. North-of-Boston Jewish community jolted when body of pregnant woman turns up in temple parking lot; good local cops ask many questions. Sensitive performance, with fine comic relief; a winner all the way.

The Antagonists. By William Haggard. Washburn. \$3.50. Ultra-Curtain scientist, flown to London to deliver speech, has real rough time; Red diplomat, British security head, and Yank undercover man team effectively. A-1.

Night of the Short Knives. By Burke Wilkinson. Scribners. \$4.50. SHAPE staff tizzies as Red agents go all out to crack Allied morale; plot climaxes in kidnapping, followed by lurid marine activity in Seine estuary. Long, but not too long, and thoroughly takable.

My Name Is Death. By Lesley Egan. Harper & Row. \$3.95. L.A. lawyer's male divorce client is tagged for murder, but doubts arise as clues and corpses accumulate. Spreads out a bit, but comes together nicely as tension builds.

Vendetta for the Saint. By Leslie Charteris. Crime Club. \$3.95. First full-length tale in 20 years recounting exploits of "the Robin Hood of modern crime" takes him from Naples to Sicily on trail of *mafiosi*. Welcome back *sig-*
—SERGEANT CUFF.