

## Sex Education for the Young

by ZENA SUTHERLAND

Once upon a time I visited a kindergarten class in a private school in Michigan. The teacher was reading the D'Aulaires' *Don't Count Your Chicks* (Doubleday, \$3.50) because the children had had a hen and chicks in the classroom. The children listened to the story of the foolish woman who daydreamed about the fortune she'd make selling eggs until, nose in the air, she tripped and smashed the lot. "Now," said the teacher, "I'll tell you the name of the story," and she did, "and you tell me why it's called that." Little hands waved frantically, and the child called on announced triumphantly, "Because one of the eggs might be sterile!"

The reply was engaging even though he'd missed the point, but, more than that, it was impressive to realize that those children were getting the facts about reproduction rather than misinformation—or as in the case of many city children—no information.

One can't escape the hue and cry about sex education in the schools, and I wish to join the huers and criers. I firmly believe that it is precisely the classroom atmosphere that will engender a matter-of-fact, sensible attitude toward sex, and thereby enable the parents to do a better job of answering their children's questions. Many parents feel inadequate or uncomfortable about such discussion; we are not all adept at instruction, and some may have—and display—a self-consciousness that will surely instill in their children an echoing sense that the subject is embarrassing.

From various newspapers and magazines, here are a few comments on articles that appeared in them. "Where I go to school . . . there's a Family Life and Sex Education Course. It taught me a lot of things which neither I nor my parents knew." "We object to the current program of forcing on to our school children an overdose of sex." "Wow! When I read your article on sex education I flipped! I'm thirteen and have recently received a course on sex education. It was nothing like your article implied. [The article had examined pros and cons.] Actually it was pretty dull. I mean that by the time you get to eighth grade and you don't know what's happening, you'd better forget it. That's

why I feel that sex education should be taught to the lower grades (fourth, fifth and sixth). Young kids should have the right to get the RIGHT information FIRST." "I would like to say something to parents. Go ahead and protest sex education in the schools. Go ahead and let your son or daughter find out for themselves. You may never see your grandchild. My parents never did."

There's no more reason to be uncomfortable about reproduction than about nuclear fission, and one can regard both with awe and marvel while understanding how they function. Learning facts (some prosaic, some wonderful) about sex just as one learns in school about any other subject will much more likely divest it of elbow-poking sniggering or the uneasy allure of the taboo than will sessions in camera. It isn't an either-or proposition. The parent has a role as does the school.

The past year has seen a spate of sex education books, most of them good and the majority of them for younger children. In 1949, Milton Levine and Jean Seligmann wrote *A Baby Is Born* (Simon & Schuster; now available from Golden Press, \$2.95), an explicit and dignified presentation. A few more have been published in the intervening years, but only a few.

One of the best of the past year was *Before You Were a Baby*, by Paul and Kay Showers (Crowell, \$3.50; SR, Nov. 9). For ages seven and eight, it was followed by a companion volume, also by Paul Showers, *A Baby Starts to Grow* (Crowell, \$3.50), which repeats facts about reproduction but does not give some of the information about insemination that was offered in the first book. An excellent book for the very young is Andrew Andry's *How Babies Are Made* (Time, \$3.95), which uses paper sculpture as illustration, explains insemination, and, as does Arthur Shay's *How a Family Grows* (Reilly & Lee, \$3.95), stresses the special love that human parents feel in conceiving a child. The latter, which is for ages nine to eleven, also discusses menstruation, nocturnal emission, and illegitimate babies.

Three books designed for the very young child, by Esther Meeks and Elizabeth Bagwell, are *Families Live Together*, *How New Life Begins*, and *The World of Living Things* (Follett,

\$3.50 each). Although flatly written and repetitive, they are informative and geared for family use. *Living Things and Their Young*, *How We Are Born*, and *Man and Woman*, by Julian May (Follett, \$3.50 each), a set for children nine to eleven, is guilty too of duplication of material but is better written. A set for older children is in preparation.

Also for ages nine to eleven are two lucid and detailed books by Kathleen Elgin, *The Female Reproductive System* and *The Male Reproductive System* (Watts, \$2.95 each); a revised edition of *Growing Up*, by Karl de Schweinitz (Macmillan, \$2.95), and *The Beginning of Life*, by Eva Knox Evans (Crowell-Collier, \$3.95). The last is marred by a condescending tone but is factually dependable. All of these titles, however, are matter-of-fact about reproduction, birth, and growth.

*The Human Body*, by Sadie Hofstein in consultation with W. W. Bauer, M.D. (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, \$3.75), provides for a slightly older child information on genetics and pubertal changes as well as on reproduction. A just-published book for adolescent girls, Wardell Pomeroy's *Girls and Sex* (Delacorte, \$4.50), may well arouse controversy, since it includes some infrequently discussed topics: homosexuality, lesbianism, sex play, coitus and contraception. To that bored thirteen-year-old who flipped: actually, it isn't pretty dull.

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**Goggles!** Written and illustrated by Ezra Jack Keats. Macmillan. 34 pp. \$3.95. What small boy doesn't like to outsmart big boys, and what urban youngster hasn't run into the neighborhood overlords? Peter finds a pair of motorcycle goggles, glassless but impressive, and shows them off to an admiring younger boy. Some big boys come along and demand the goggles, Peter's dog races off with them, and Peter—with small Archie in tow—outwits the gang and retrieves his loot. The plot is slight but realistic, the ending is satisfying, and the dilapidated neighborhood setting will make the book especially welcome in urban programs. The illustrations—bold, simple pictures in warm colors, imbued with humor and particularly suitable for group use—are Keats at his best. Ages 5-7.

**Boy, Was I Mad!** By Kathryn Hitte. Illustrated by Mercer Mayer. Parents' Magazine Press. 33 pp. \$3.50. "I was mad one day. I mean I was REALLY mad! So I ran away." Thus begins the odyssey of a small and grumpy cowboy, whose indignation keeps slipping as he responds to the friendly overtures of people he meets and each time has to pull himself together and remember that boy, is he mad. After a last highly enjoyable game with a friend, the child goes home. The theme is not unusual, but the story is nicely told, and the always light-hearted

illustrations are often incongruously silly—as, for example, a store window that says, “Food” and another store window, two pages later, that says, “More Food.” Ages 5-8.

**Come Along!** By Rebecca Caudill. Illustrated by Ellen Raskin. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 32 pp. \$3.95. The taut limitations of haiku often impose a depth or latent content that makes the form a difficult medium for the very young to fully appreciate. Here the poetry is succinct and tender, reveling in the familiar phenomena of the seasons, yet so simply written that it can be read aloud to the small child. “The brown thrasher sings and dares me to be busy. I stop and listen.” And, “I stare at the rain/ And rain, like our old gray cat/ Stares coldly at me.” The illustrations, rich with color, are filled with a rioting of birds and flowers. Ages 7-9.

**What Is It For?** By Henry Humphrey. Illustrated with photographs. Simon & Schuster. 48 pp. \$4.50. Some objects on the urban scene are familiar to most children, some are not. Here a series of photographs are captioned by the title question and followed by clear, straightforward explanations of a manhole cover, a sidewalk grating, the night depository slot of a bank, et cetera. Additional photographs show the object from the other side or what happens after it has been opened or used. Fresh material in good format make this an interesting book that can be read aloud to younger children. Ages 8-9.

**Danny Dunn and the Smallifying Machine.** By Jay Williams and Raymond Abrashkin. Illustrated by Paul Sagsoorian. McGraw-Hill. 139 pp. \$4.50. Insatiable curiosity again leads Danny and his two pals into adventure, this time a science fantasy of satisfying proportions. Investigating on their own, the three children find that the barn in which Professor Bullfinch has been conducting mysterious experiments is filled with strange machinery. Not one to hesitate, Danny pulls a lever that precipitates him into a jungle world of monstrous plants and ferocious beasts, where he and the others finally realize they have become tiny humans dwarfed by tall grass and insects. The writing is imaginative and sprightly, the dialogue frequently informative and even more frequently amusing. Ages 10-12.

**Defense Mechanisms: From Virus to Man.** By Hal Hellman. Illustrated with photographs and drawings. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 150 pp. \$3.95. There are innumerable ways in which living organisms can protect themselves from their environment, their enemies, and their own extinction. In a brisk style that eschews technical terminology, the author discusses camouflage, adaptation, chemical warfare, symbiosis, mimicry, color attraction, and a host of other devices. The list of suggested readings is impressive and alluring. Ages 10-13.

**River Patrol.** By Roderic Jeffries. Harper & Row. 192 pp. \$3.50. Young mystery

buffs are usually forced to choose between adult books and those designated as teen-age mysteries, which are usually compounded of omniscient adolescents, contrived plots, and pedestrian writing. All these are abjured in *River Patrol*, a cracking good detective story. Jim Westbury, serving on the river patrol of an English force, is accused of malingering by his superior officer because the facts he has reported don't agree with some testimony. Jim finds a loophole (at the suggestion of an older colleague) and then begins the slow, patient digging and the experienced cooperation that are the essence of police work. The crime itself is dramatic, but the solution is arrived at, believably, by dogged work and only an occasional flash of inspiration. Ages 10-14.

**Digging Up Adam: The Story of L. S. B. Leakey.** By Mina White Mulvey. McKay. 216 pp. \$4.95. Louis Leakey was born in Kenya and initiated with his Kikuyu friends into the tribe before becoming one of the most publicized anthropologists of our time. His discoveries have been startling, and his theories about primitive men controversial. Mrs. Mulvey has made the most of this dramatic material; she is objective in discussing Leakey's theories, lucid in describing his work, and admiring rather than adulatory in assessing the man. Ages 12-15.

**Stock Market abc.** By Joanne K. Friedlander and Jean Neal. Illustrated by Tom Dunnington. Follett. 96 pp. \$2.95. Add this to your portfolio as a crisp, bright, and lucid guide to the stock market for the neophyte investor. It discusses the operations on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, common and preferred stocks, mutual funds, over-the-counter sales, the role of the stockholder, investments other than stock, market terminology, and translation of the financial pages of newspapers. The illustrations are amusing and often informative, and the writing has a cheerful vitality. Precautions are included; market tips are not. Ages 12 up.

**An Empty Spoon.** By Sunny Decker. Harper & Row. 115 pp. \$4.95. Sunny Decker, aged twenty-two, was tired of middle-class suburbia and applied for her first teaching job at a high school in a Philadelphia black ghetto neighborhood. Al-

though the students in her English classes varied in intelligence, few of them lacked the capacity for learning. They often couldn't read and occasionally couldn't write; some found it difficult to get to school because they had to take care of their children or work, and some of them just didn't want to come to school. The vitality and flair with which *An Empty Spoon* is written makes the book more enjoyable, but it would be interesting in any case, because Sunny Decker was passionately involved in teaching and she tells it as it is, hostilities included. Bonus: a lively sense of humor. For young adults.

**Miss Owen-Owen.** By Margaret Forster. Simon & Schuster. 256 pp. \$5.95. With massive complacency, Lettice Owen-Owen takes over as headmistress of a high school for girls in the tight little island of an English town, ruthlessly pushing her faculty into programs they dislike, offending everyone she meets, and obdurately refusing to recognize defeat. When the town's schools are consolidated, Miss Owen-Owen proposes to run the school as a private institution, blandly unaware that she has alienated any possible support. She is at once a detestable and pitiable character, etched in vinegar and wholly convincing. The pictures of entrenched provincialism and of irritated hostility engendered by the outsider are brilliant, a varied canvas against which the protagonist is monolithically memorable. For young adults.

**Cleopatra, Sister of the Moon.** By Margaret Leighton. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 215 pp. \$3.95. At last, here's a young people's biography of the Standard Siren Symbol in which Cleopatra is a human being, albeit a powerful, shrewd, and beautiful one, a woman whose motivations and ambitions are depicted—against the background of Mediterranean power struggles and the complex intrigues of the Alexandrian court—as credible and dramatic. Neither Caesar nor Mark Antony is made larger than life, and both of the great love affairs are devoid of romanticized aura. This is impressive historical writing: not a great book, but a very good one. In it the broad course of events is made vivid, but not submerged, by small incidents and minor characters. Ages 12-16.

**A Touch of Earth.** By Janina David. Orion. 208 pp. \$4.95. In the bleak Warsaw winter of 1943 there were few Jewish families left intact. Janina was thirteen and had been hidden in the home of a family friend, a German-born Catholic who took her to a convent when the police became suspicious. Janie was given a new name and a fictitious background, but she never felt safe, even when she became a convert. This is an absorbing, harrowing story of the grim but not always unhappy life she lived there and of the years just after the war, when her relatives deplored her religion and Janina herself was torn with conflict. The Sisters and their charges are vividly characterized, and the battle against poverty, illness, and fear is lightened by moments of compassion and courage. Ages 13 up.



From “Boy, Was I Mad!”



# Booked for Travel

David Butwin

## A Country Ramble—II The Loveliest Village

ONE OF THE high commandments governing the life of a sports-car devotee is: Thou shalt not retrace thy tracks. I have clung zealously to that credo since graduating from the tricycle stage, certainly a milestone in the life of any traveler, a time when he first opens his eyes to routes more adventurous than a circle tour of the block on which he lives.

In England, or at any rate in the west country I explored by MG in early September, a man runs little risk of driving the same road twice: he could scarcely find it again. Striking out one morning from Bladon, the quiet Oxfordshire village where Churchill is buried, I found the way to Oxford easily enough, but once there, struggling for a parking spot and dodging on foot through the crowded mid-day streets, I determined to steer clear of city life for the rest of the circuit. I did pay a call on Merton College, whose somewhat sequestered location, indeed its very name, seemed a source of bafflement to the Oxford burghers I questioned along the way. At Kay's

Tobacconist, News Agent, and Stationers, a young woman behind the counter shrugged and said: "I tell you where you can find out. There is a post office on the corner. It's actually a dress shop, but Mr. Holmes will help you. He's in the back."

There was no one of Mr. Holmes's gender on duty, but a pair of clerks in the dress department pooled their resources and started me on a course that led finally, with one stop at a Marks & Spencer emporium (purchase: a beige Shetland turtleneck for a mere \$5.70), and two or three additional queries, to the hallowed gates. The most reliable directions I received were from a fellow customer at the sweater counter, a young man whose voice indicated Chicago.

By then the very finding of Merton College was an anticlimax. So, after one tour of the dewy green courtyard, I plowed back through the drizzle to my car, confirming en route a recently postulated theory that pretty English girls from the provinces, so refreshingly uncostumed and unpainted, cut far lovelier figures than their maxi-coated, mini-spirited sisters from London's West End.

I picked up the trail of the Trout, a pub that had come recommended by a London friend who remembers it warmly as one of the high points of his Oxford education. This institution, though several miles out of Oxford, I had no trouble finding. The several sources I consulted batted out directions as though by rote.

If an American were to dream up the ideal country pub, down to the broad weathered beams, highbacked corner booths, and cheery, muffled din, he could hardly improve on the Trout. Through mullioned windows there is a view I thought only Disney could have created: a tributary of the Thames tumbling through a lock and flowing beneath a rickety wooden bridge. On the sagging balustrades was gathered a committee of peacocks, letting loose now and then their haunting cries, as though disputing the latest order of business. I was shown to the only available roost indoors, a small round table in a corner near the bar, behind which a white-aproned chef was slapping great hunks of beef on a crowded grill. Above him on the wall was perhaps the Trout's only *gaucherie*, a larger-than-life color rendition of the morsels my mouth watered for.

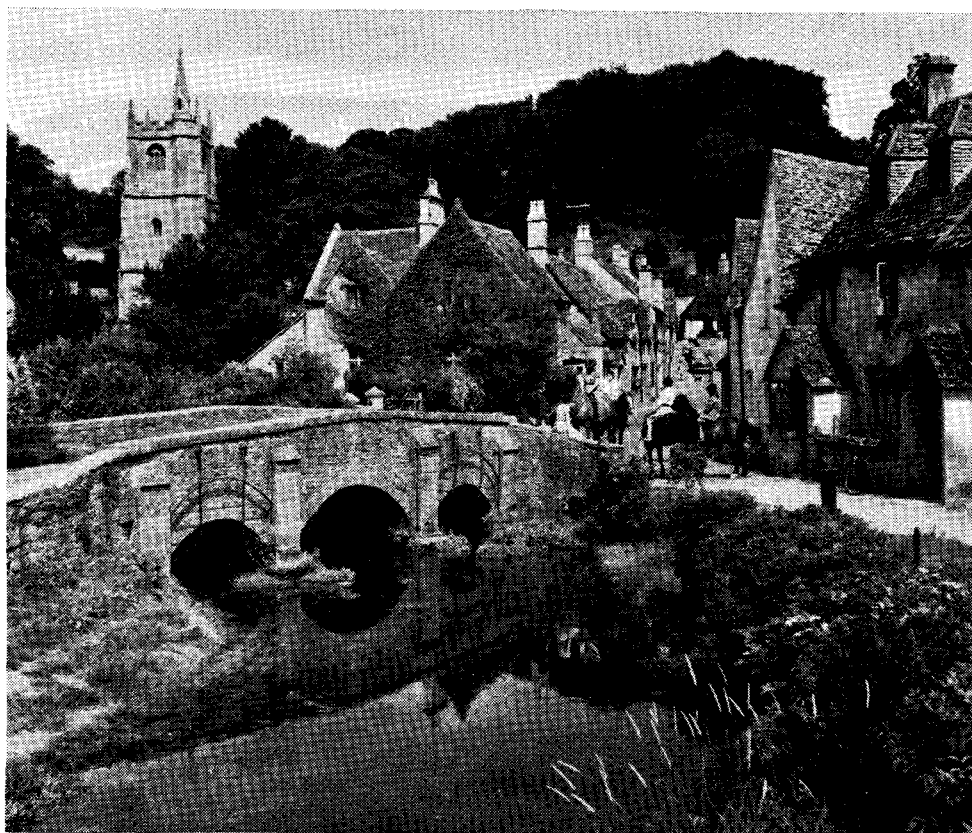
My waiter, indeed most of the staff, seemed slightly misplaced too, as though he should have been bearing platters of spaghetti or curry. I asked the swarthy, silver-haired waiter his name. "I am François," he said.

"You aren't French, are you?"

"No, I am Italian, thirteen years in England. My real name is Francesco, but here they say it is easier to call me François. We are not English, most of us at the Trout. The cook is Italian, the other waiter is Indian."

François heaped before me a bowl of bubbling minestrone, a basket of bread, and a pint of bitter, then the medium *entrecôte* and a mixed salad, and last a bowl of strawberry ice cream with coffee. It all produced a feeling of such pleasant sluggishness that I dared to order a fat cigar for the road. The bill was about \$3.50, a sum I would have paid to hear the peacocks cry.

Shunning all roads wider than country lanes, I headed west toward the Cotswolds, a range of lovely wooded hills that gave their name to a long-wooled breed of sheep centuries ago but that have generally avoided glorification by the muses, save the following verse by John Drinkwater: "And not a girl goes walking/Along the Cotswold lanes/But knows men's eyes in April/Are quicker than their brains." My eyes were only for the curving lanes, made more navigable by a recent shearing of overhanging greenery. There was no sun to fix my bearings,



Castle Combe and the Bybrook—Since Doctor Dolittle left, sanity has returned.