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Realistic American fiction for girls from Louisa Alcott to the present day

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Realistic American Fiction for Girls From Louisa Alcott to the Present Day

by

Merrilie Mather





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Thesis

REALISTIC AMERICAN FICTION FOR GIRLS
FROM LOUISA ALCOTT TO THE PRESENT DAY

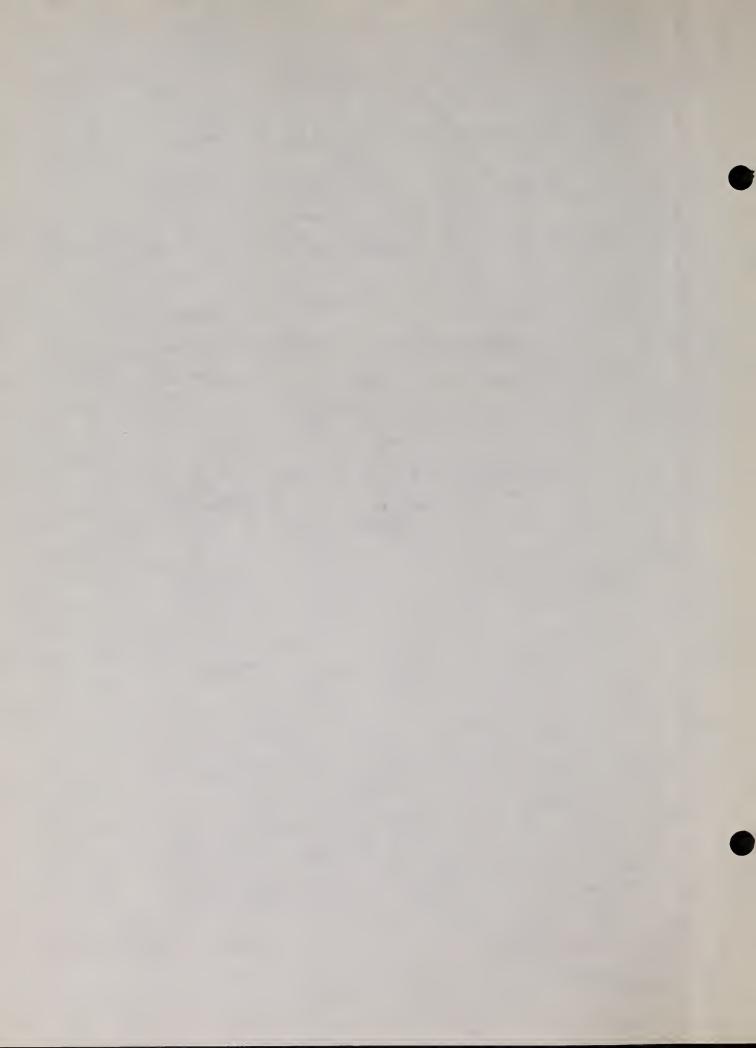
by

Merrilie Mather

(A.B., Boston University,1942)
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
1943

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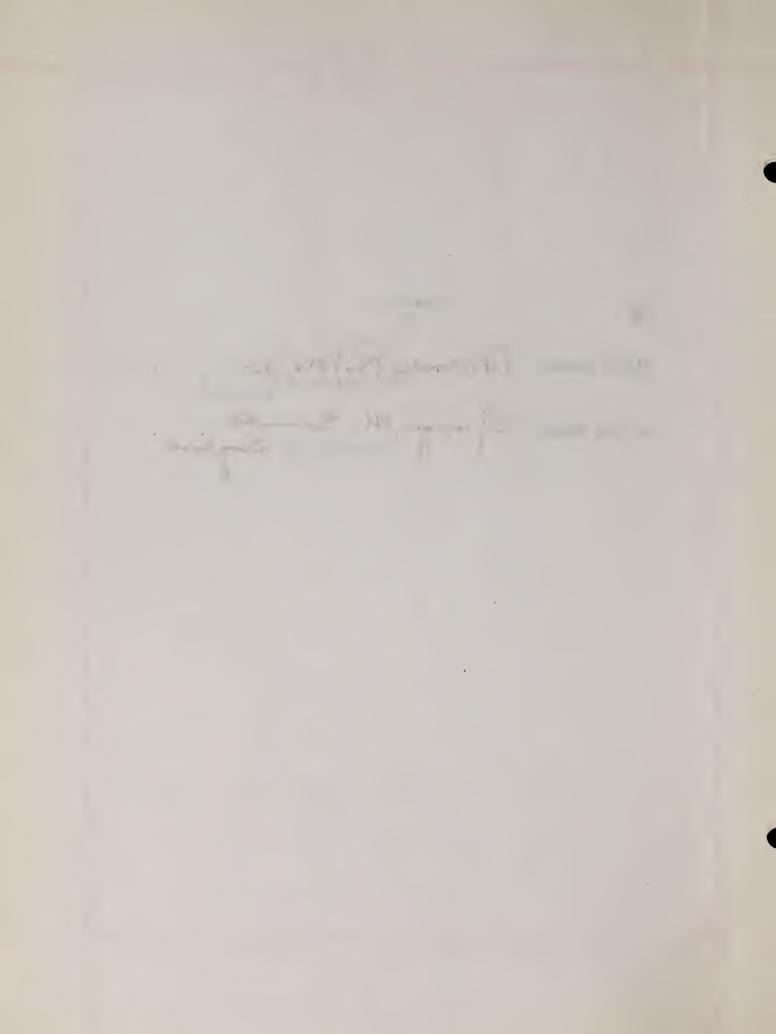
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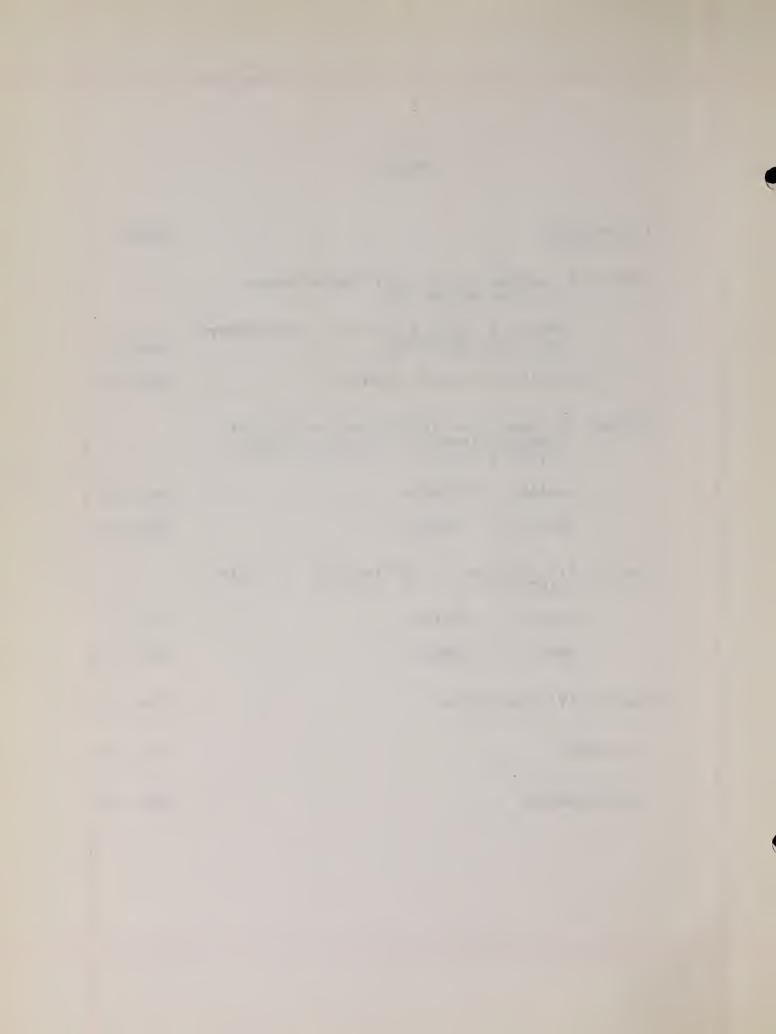
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REALISTIC AMERICAN FICTION FOR GIRLS FROM LOUISA ALCOTT TO THE PRESENT DAY

INTRODUCTION

"Arithmetic is such a bore
I cannot stand it my more.
But if you'll take my good advice
You'll find that reading's very nice.'

"Thus wrote a nine-year-old in a sudden desire to make a rhyme, and to express at the same time, a sincere opinion." (1)

This opinion might have been mine at nine years, and still is. I have a collection of children's books, for the most part the treasures of my own childhood and early adolescence. A few are the result of a hobby which I chose when I was a sophomore in high school, and my English teacher required a "hobby notebook." As I had no hobby, I had to think of one quickly, and so I chose children's books, for I loved both books and young children.

Besides these books of my own, I read many library books. I remember my little Dutch friend and me reading books for hours and hours, in the same room yet never speaking, but reading on and on.

Still earlier than the hobby days I belonged to a reading club. How I loved to read!

As to the young children, I knew also whereof

⁽¹⁾ Eaton, Anne Thaxter, READING WITH CHILDREN, p.11.

Land the state of I spoke. I grew up slowly, and during my early teens several of my friends were four, five, or six years younger than I. I felt no difference between them and me. Unlike some of my own age-group I remained a little girl. My tastes in reading hardly changed over the years.

"The adult with all sincerity may try to make his way back through memory to his own childhood and hope by so doing to understand the world in which children move, but the journey is a fruitless one..." (2)

I do not feel that I have to journey back to childhood to understand the books of which I am to write, for because I grew up slowly, I really feel I have never left the childhood world, and perhaps never shall.

I have included this explanation of my own personality because I have been forced in writing this thesis to rely often upon my own opinions of what other little girls like. That my opinions are valid I have only the above explanation as proof. When in my thesis I speak of myself I am not doing so as an individual but as one typical little girl-- a fact to be remembered at all times.

Now to discuss the subject of my thesis:
What is children's literature?

"Anything to which a child gives his spontaneous attention, anything withing hich he questions as he moves about the world, holds appropriate material about which to talk to him either in speech or in writing." (3)

This, then, is the general field of juvenile literature. The field which this thesis will attempt to cover is much narrower. In the title, REALISTIC AMERICAN FICTION FOR GIRLS, reference is made to books such as

⁽²⁾ Betzner, Jean and Moore, Annie, EVERYCHILD AND BOOKS, p. 25

⁽³⁾ Ibid., p. 43

LITTLE WOMEN, WHEN ABIGAIL WAS SEVEN, POLLYANNA, THE LITTLE COLONEL, THE DUTCH TWINS, and THIMBLE SUMMER. What surface characterisitics have these books in common? Each of them is the story of a "really, truly" little girl: not a doll or a teddybear or a toad or a fairy, but a real child, meeting the real adventures of life as any child meets them. In this sense it is theat "realistic" fiction is spoken of, and not in the sense of realism in adult literary criticism. As for the "American" and the girls! those are necessary if hampering restrictions to keep the thesis within some bounds, so that it will not run out and fill the salt sea as did the salt from the fisherman's mill. Incidentally, most girls like to read their brothers books, while usually brothers will not touch their sisters' books, as "sissy stuff." Perhaps it would be better if they did, for such reading would help to make their world more balanced and help them, when grown, to understand women better. An afternoon spent with Louisa Alcott, who is boyish antyway, or with Elizabeth Enright's THIMBLE SUMMER would do them good and might prove amusing.

An attempt to discuss fiction for girls in historical sequence will be the underlying plan of this thesis. I have been under two handicaps in making an historical survey.

The best way to write a critical, historical

review of children's literature would be to have children for critics. I should have liked about seven little girls. Unfortunately I have the acquaintance at the present time of no such group. Furthermore even if I did--. "above all, we should never try, as Samuel Crothers puts it in MISS MUFFETT'S CHRISTMAS PARTY, 'to get at the content of the child's mind.'"" (4) So perhaps I could not have used the children to any purpose, after all.

A second handicap, unexpectedly met, is the great dearth of critical material on children's books. There is a "vast amount of printed matter in relation to the technical aspects of reading."(5) There are innumerable bibliographies, a list of the "best-loved books"-"From Peter Parley to Penrod" by Jacob Blanck, a few books of interest concerning the general field, but nothing-- absolutely nothing-- in the way of sustained criticism from the historical point of view on any part of the juvenile field except the eighteenth century-- as found by me, at least.

so I am forced to rely upon my memory of my own early reading tastes and those of my girlhood friends; on a few remarks of my contemporaries about their child-hood reading; on the courage of my conviction that I know what little and adolescent girls are like; and on the books concerning the general field. "Peter Parley to Penrod" was of assistance in choosing the books to in-

⁽⁴⁾ Eaton, Anne, READING WITH CHILDREN, p. 30

⁽⁵⁾ Betzner, Jean and Moore, Annie, EVERYCHILD AND BOOKS,

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clude until the recent period and in making the survey correct as to dates and sequence. Much of the thesis will be devoted to my original reviewing of individual books, with little authoritative support. The choice of these books, however, is not a random one. The books are all either recommended or typical.

Books for children may be discussed from two points of view: from that of grown persons who are thinking of the book's effect on the child's future, and from the point of view of the child who is thinking of his immediate enjoyment. The discussion of books, therefore, will concern both the pleasure they impart and the benefits, historical, moral, or more general, to be gained from them.

One value of the "problem" dealt with lies, then, in the fact that nobody seems to have made an attempt to deal with it before. Adult literature is constantly being historified to determine the changes that have taken place within it and the changes in the society it reflects, to help one to understand better the past of the human mind, its present, and its probable future. Why should not the same type of history be written on books for children?

In making an historical survey of "realistic" girls' books, I shall try to present the answers to the following questions:

What were the changes brought about in girls'

fiction by the books of Louisa Alcott?

What have been the changes since her day, if any?

What is the underlying philosophical concept of all girls' books?

What books have endured, and why?

What books of to-day are typical and of especial interest?

There are included a few illustrations (traced), for no book for children is quite complete without pictures, and so no thesis on children's books.

In form the thesis is to be divided as follows:

Introduction

Chapter I - Louisa Alcott, Her Predecessors and

Contemporaries

- Section 1- Louisa Alcott's predecessors and contemporaries
- Section 2- Louisa Alcott; review of LITTLE WOMEN and AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL, with a contrasting of the latter with Mrs.A.D.T. Whitney's REAL FOLKS
- Chapter II Books for Girls from the Time of Louisa

 Alcott to the Year 1920
 - Section 1- Reviews of individual books, from those of Miss Alcott's immediate successors to UNDERSTOOD BETSY
 - Section 2- General commentary on the historical significance of the above, and on the general condition of children's books at the time of World War I

Chapter III - Fiction for Girls Since the Late 1920's

Section 1- Review of individual books of the recent period

- a) historical books
- b) geographical books
- c) mystery stories
- d) three books about little girls of to-day
 - 1) a poetic book and a realistic and 2 (in the adult literary critical sense) book compared and contrasted
 - 3) a modern "streamliner" of 1942

Section 2- Summary of the above Chapter IV- Conclusion

Abstract and Bibliography

In the thesis, the surface standards of judgment necessarily vary with individual books.

"But the book which is good for any reader, be he child or adult, is one which, regardless of how others value it, he considers good. It is the rare work of art that can present a theme so universal in its truth and so effective in its portrayal that all who examine it find it good. A child's reading cannot be limited to these master-pieces..." (6)

A child's reading can be limited to masterpieces, but the chances are strong it will not be.

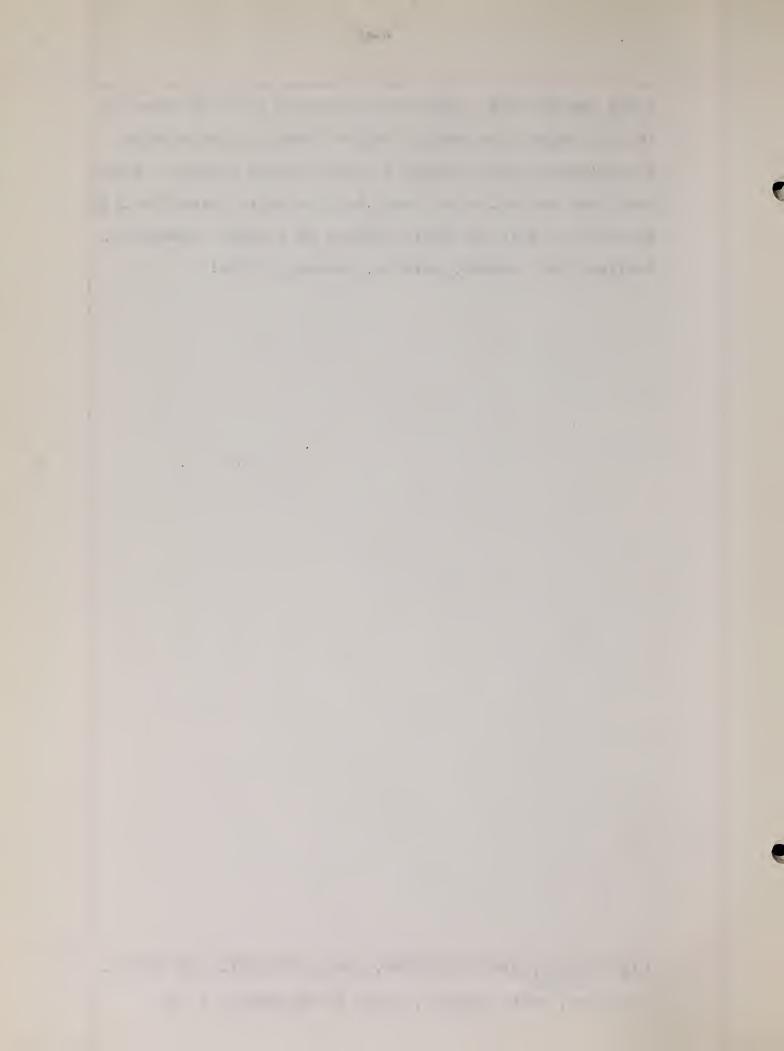
Under this varying superficial judgment an attempt will be made to judge the books more deeply. To do this, two standards will be employed. The first is that of length of popularity with children themselves, except in the case of the recent books. "In the survival of the fittest, time (represented in generations of children) is the

⁽⁶⁾ Betzner, Jean and Moore, Annie, EVERYCHILD AND BOOKS, p. 45

final judge." (7) The second standard is to be found in the following from Anatole France: When you are writing for children do not assume a style for the occasion. Think your best and write your best.Let the whole thing live!(8) For that is what any child demands in a book-- adventure, feeling, fun, beauty, animals, people, -- Life!

⁽⁷⁾ Betzner, Jean and Moore, Annie, EVERYCHILD AND BOOKS,

⁽⁸⁾ Moore, Annie Carroll, ROADS TO CHILDHOOD, p. 26



CHAPTER I

LOUISA ALCOTT, "THE INVINCIBLE";
HER PREDECESSORS AND CONTEMPORARIES

Section 1- Louisa Alcott's Predecessors and Contemporaries

"What is moral courage, mother?'
'The courage to do right.'
'Did I have moral courage when I told Mrs.
Lovejoy the truth?'" (1)

In order to understand Louisa Alcott's works it is necessary to know what had preceded her and what her immediate contemporaries were writing.

"It is hard to think of LITTLE WOMEN,"writes Cornelia Meigs, in her admirable biography of Miss Alcott, INVINCIBLE LOUISA, "as read for the first time; it is to us a tale so hallowed by association of our mothers' and our grandmothers' delight in it before our own day. A completely fresh story it was to them, a book even of a kind different from anything they had read before, a book just about themselves, so it seemed, by someone who understood them completely. It is no wonder that the first readers were seen chanted with it." (2)

There was nothing like LITTLE WOMEN in its day.

What, then, were the characteristics of girls' books of

Miss Alcott's day and earlier?

In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and the eighteenth century children's books were moral or didactic lectures written to instruct the young. Romances, fairy tales, ROBINSON CRUSOEs and KING ARTHURS, as entertainment, were for adults, not children.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that

(1 May, Sophie, LITTLE PRUDY'S SISTER SUSY, p.145

(2 Meigs, Cornelia, INVINCIBLE LOUISA, p. 206

the inspiration for most realistic fiction for girls in the nineteenth century was found in the orthodox Protestant religion, dogmatically and gloomily interpreted in didactic stories for the "little folks." From the time of LITTLE WOMEN, the words happiness, love, fun, and joy will be often repeated in this thesis, for these are keynotes to the spirit of children's literature since Louisa Alcott's day. All this joy, love, fun, and happiness would have seemed too earthly to the pious of the nineteenth century, whatever signs of spirituality modern people find in such emotions. Still shadowed by Calvanism in their religious beliefs, they thought of the world as a "vale of tears" (3) and were determined that their little Nellies and darling Gracies should also regard it thus and keep their eyes on that Heavenly Kingdom.

This spirit was shown in its most obvious form in the Sabbath School books of the era.

"Lizzie is twenty-one to-day! She feels sad about it and says."'It's dreadful to grow old.'" (4)

Ah, yes, the sands of time run quickly, Lizzie, in this horrible world.

"Emily has been very sick. Many days she was confined to a bed of weakness and pain. All this she bore with great patience.

"But Emily had one great trial. It was to be deprived of her dear Sabbath School." (5)

The number of children who are invalids in these

(5) Ibid.. p. 99

⁽³⁾ Whitney, Mrs. A.D.T., REAL FOLKS.p. 11

⁽⁴⁾ Bullard. Asa. THE CHILDREN'S ALBUM, p. 47

books is beyond belief. Life is a sickness, a weariness.

Then there is wickedness. A bad child is not a naughty imp to be forgiven soon, as a child should be, but is an evil blackguard. Here is the punishment of little Sarah:

"Soon my Sarah will have no mother; then she will be sorry for this behavior.... Ah, poor child: She forgot to honor her mother.

"Weeks passed on. Sarah's mother was taken sick; and in a few months she died. Then that afternoon's behavior rushed upon Sarah's mind..."(6)

The devil is present in diverse forms:

"Here are two schoolgirls. We will call them Sarah and Ellen...She is enticing her. Perhaps she is trying to get her to stay out of school, to run away from home, to go off with her berrying....
"She doesn't look like a wicked girl...But...

"She doesn't look like a wicked girl....But...
Satan sometimes ... puts on the appearance of an angel of light." (7)

Death.

"How many poor children, like little Emma in the picture, have a dear father or mother sleeping in the silence of the grave...." (8)

There is, of course, the white side of the picture- the little angel children:

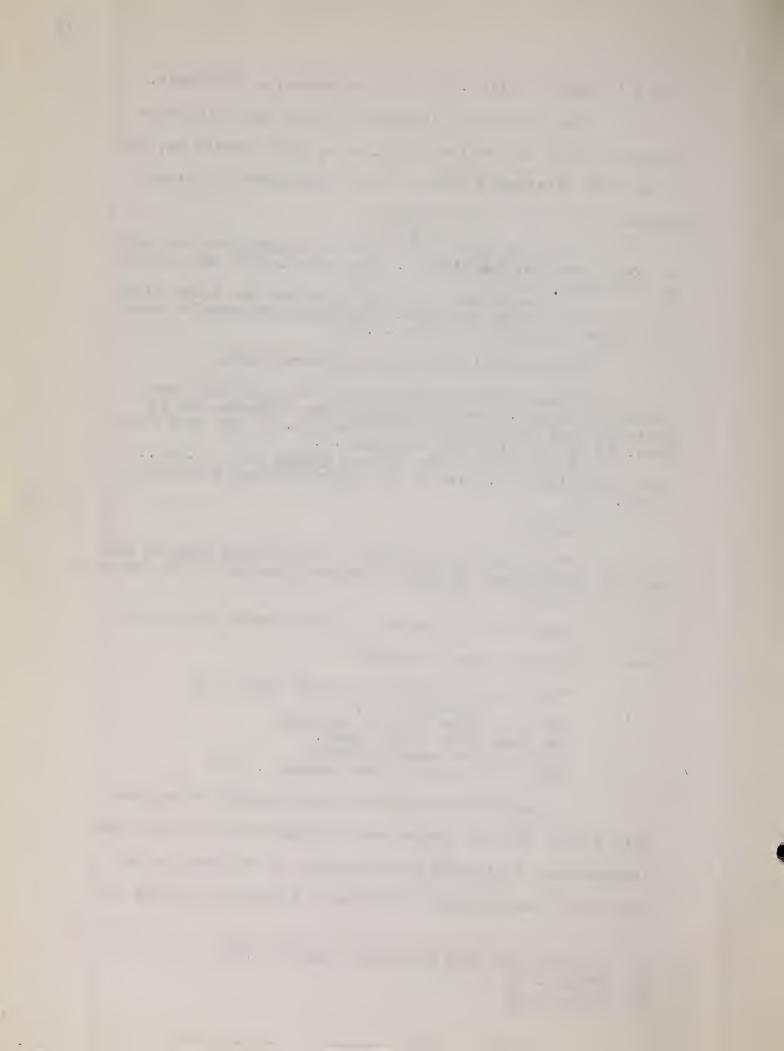
"Two darling little children came to my mind one day,
Who once were with us long ago
And then were called away.
They now are angel children
Before the great white throne..."(9)

On earth some of these good children bring baskets to the poor or reform their fathers fallen into idle drunkenness. Incidentally this theme of reformation has continued long in girls' fiction in extended and less ob-

⁽⁶⁾ Bullard. Asa, THE CHILDREN'S ALBUM, p.78

⁽⁷⁾ Ibid.,p. 18

⁽⁸⁾ Ibid., p. 18



vious forms: for example, LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY, THE
LITTLE COLONEL, REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM, ANNE OF GREEN
GABLES, and POLLYANNA all present child reformers.

The influence of Methodism is present in the nineteenth-century emphasis on the personal love of Jesus for each good little boy and girl. This would be well, if only He were not so merciless to the naughty children.

The obvious purpose of all this, as I have said, was didactic. These stories are to teach children the inevitable results of good and evil action. The morals are, in fact, stated as such:

"All deceit is displeasing to God." (10)

Occasionally the moral points out a deed that even the naughtiest child would have difficulty in carrying out:

"And do not harass or tease [little pussy] Or shackle her soft velvet feet." (11)

If anyone has ever seen a cat with shackles on, it is more than I have!

There are several reasons why these stories were poor ones for children. They have, to be sure, a few merits, being simple direct, and clear: the child knows well what the author means. In the second place, they are sincere. But their faults are more numerous than their merits. They have in them no real children, the youngsters being mere unchanging symbols of right and wrong. They are based on the false assumption that this world is a place

⁽¹⁰⁾ Bullard, Asa, THE CHILDREN'S ALBUM, p. 112

⁽¹¹⁾ Ibid., p. 149

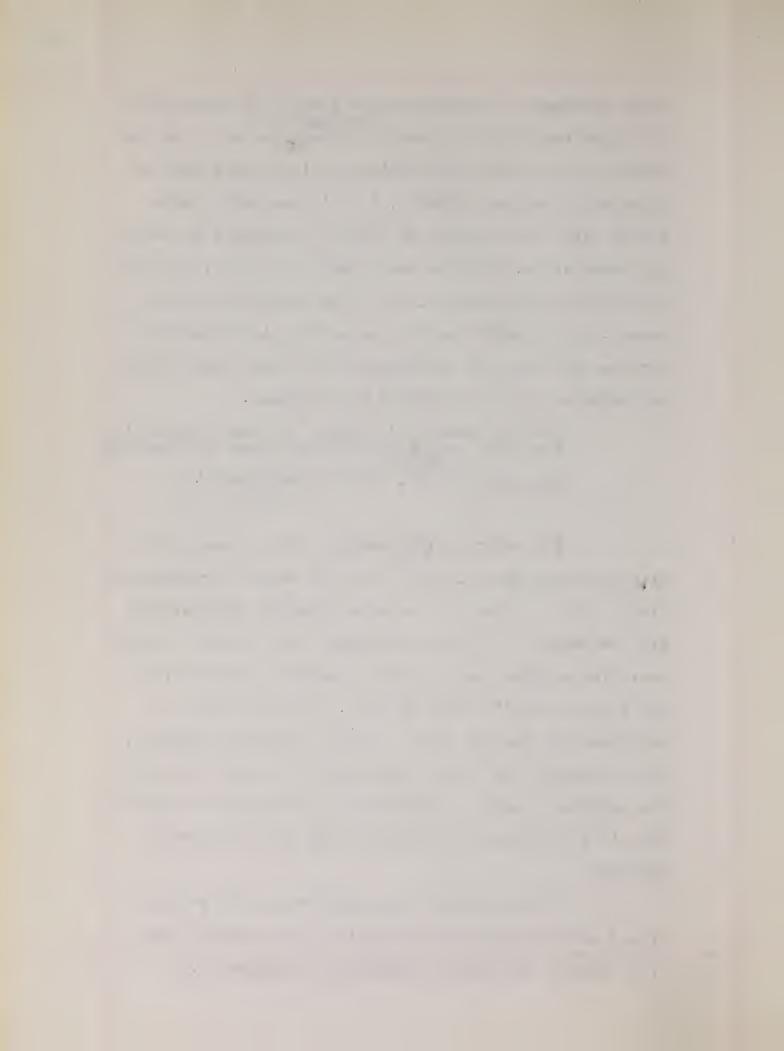
where goodness and wickedness are met, if not mercifully, die and or with unerring justice. Wicked children are put in prison because they are bad. Good children die or grow lame because they are good. Frankly, I don't see much choice. Honest labor is rewarded by wealth; dishonesty by worse and worse evils. Children are taught to do good, not for the sake of righteousness, but to be rewarded by God in Heaven. All of which would be as nothing if it were not for the fact that the stories have one basic fault which is contrary to the very spirit of childhood.

"You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their soul@Sdwell in the house of to-morrow,
which
You cannot visit, even in your dreams!."
-- Gibran (12)

The world to the average child, though not a place of perfection, is not a vale of tears. To-day may be black, but if to-day is, there is always to-morrow, which will be better. If to-day is bright, then it has a brightness like nothing one will ever experience again unless one keeps a child's fresh outlook. To fill a book for children with deaths, sins, sorrows, shackles, lameness, and to neglect the bright wonder that is life on earth at its spiritual best, to leave fun and joy out of a child's book is to write down to children and not to write for children.

I have chosen for my examples so far passages from a book recommended nowhere: it is the average, run-

⁽¹²⁾ Betzner and Moore, EVERYCHILD AND BOOKS, p.63



of the -mill Sunday School book of the era.

Secular books of the period are superior, but still show the same basic fallacy-- the same lack of joy. The following from LITTLE PRUDY'S SISTER SUSY (1869) used to make me feel wretched:

"Ducky Daddles a canary rolled up his little eyes and gasped.

"'O, look, mother,' cried Susy, laughing; how funny
Dandy acts. Do you suppose it's to make me laugh? O, is he fainting away?'

"'Fainting away! My dear child, he is dying.'"(13)

Poor little Ducky Daddles! Why does he die? Because pets do die sometimes? No, to teach Susy to be less wilfull. The book shows its superioity to the Sunday School books in two respects: Susy laughs; no good little child would have had the psychological sense to laugh in the CHILDREN'S ALBUM. And, though the lesson is felt, the mother does not scold. Sometimes, however, the moral is more than implicit:

"Susy had daily trials. They were sent to her because they were good for her." (14)

As in the Sunday School literature, cripples and death:

"Prudy's rosy face began to grow pale, and. instead of laughing and singing half the time. she would now lie and cry from pain..." (15)

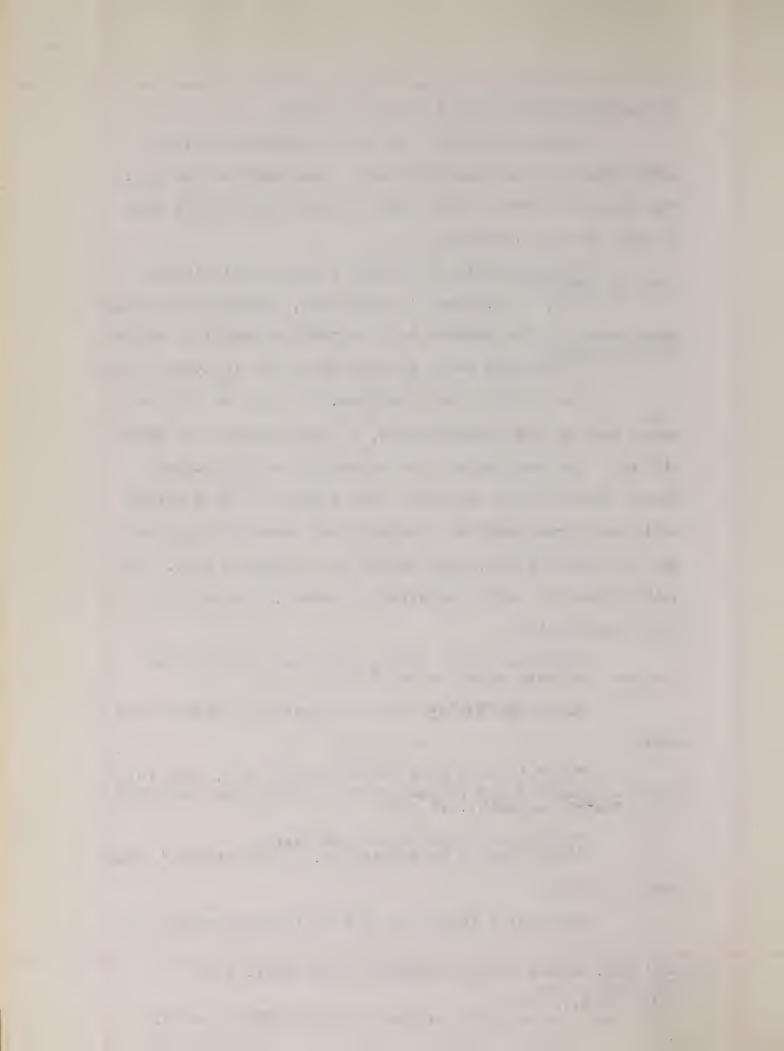
"Dottie had never looked on death.
"'You mustn't be frightened, little sister,' said
Prudy...."(16)

Death, as a lesson and not an inevitable mart of

⁽¹⁴⁾ May, Sophie. LITTLE PRUDY'S SISTER SUSY, p.92

⁽¹⁵⁾ Ibid., p.97 (13) Ibid., p. 109

⁽¹⁶⁾ May, Sophie, DOTTY DIMPLE AT GRANDMOTHER'S, p.201



the story, seems morbid and unnatural for the reading of the normal, healthy child.

Little Prudy, Sister Susy, and Dotty Dimele, though a little "oh, aren't they just too cute for words," are not mere abstractions. They show signs of promise ahead.

"Never in my world, replied the little one, with a solemn shake of her head.

"'Well, it's a lamp mat for auntie... But remember, you promised not to tell.'

"Now the very next time Prudy: sat in her aunt-

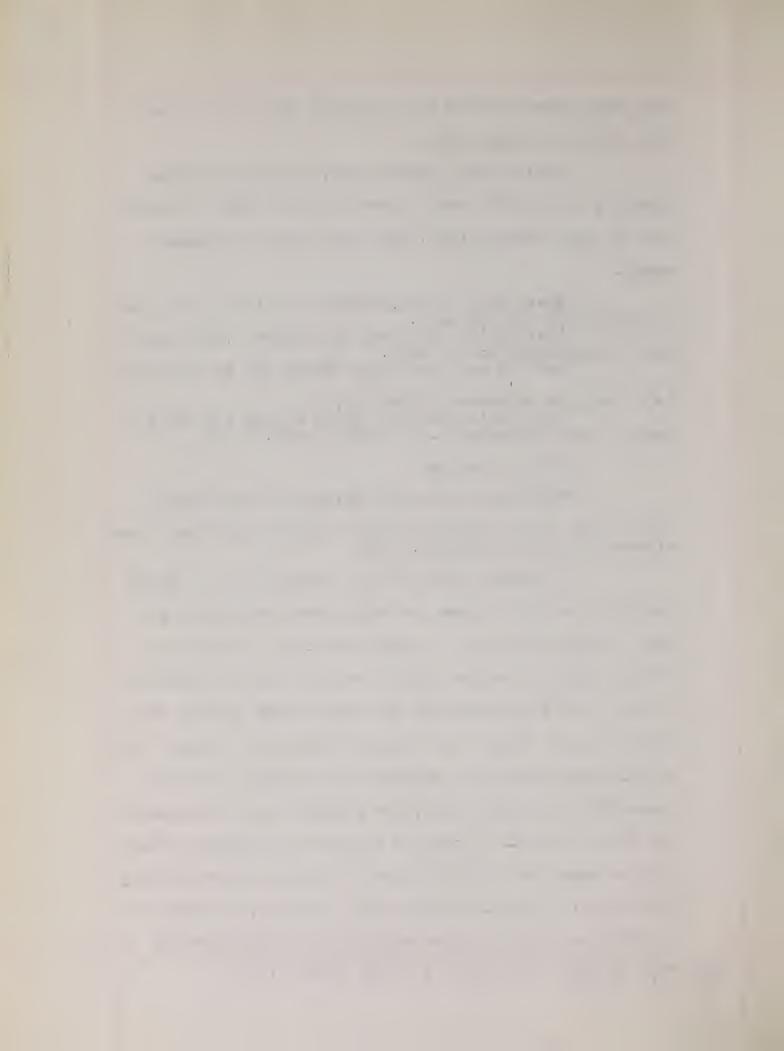
ie's lap. she whispered in her ear, -"'You don't know what we're making for you all secret, out of worsted, and I shan't tell!'" (17)

And for a wonder:

"Prudy was not always patient," even though
"Some sweet little children become almost like angels when sickness is laid upon them." (18)

To compare little Prudy directly with Jo March would not be fair, since the Prudys were younger by far than the four sisters of LITTLE WOMEN. Yet eventually LITTLE WOMEN influenced fiction even for little tots:for example, the improvement of THE FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS over Prudy. So, too, Maggie and Essie of THE FLAG OF TRUCE, 1874, by Elizabeth Wetherell, author of the earlier and more famous THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD, are younger than the Marches. THE FLAG OF TRUCE not only is filled with didactic teaching but with the didactic theme of raising the white flag before God: "Father, let Thy Will, not mine, be done" is a unifying symbol for the whole story. Discussions at

⁽¹⁷⁾ May, Sophie, LITTLE PRUDY'S SISTER SUSY, p. 10 (18) Ibid. p. 88



length play upon this idea like variations on a theme in music.

"'What else?' said Maggie, after she had considered this a moment.
"'Perhaps, - to learn how to say, "Thy will be done," and to find how sweet it is.'"(19)

Here again we have a cripple-- a cross, unrepenting one for a change-- and poverty and other lesser

ills. The book has a fascination because of the cross cripple, who keeps throwing clever questions at the pious
child, who tosses back clever answers. But there is too
much emphasis on lessons and not enough on the story to
be appealing to a child.

tion of its time is GYPSY BRYNTON. There are four GYPSY books: GYPSY BREYNTON, GYPSY'S SOWING AND REAPING, GYPSY and GYPSY'S COUSIN JOY.

AT THE GOLDEN CRESCENT, The first of these books hails from the year 1875, and they were written by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, still better known as a writer for adults. They show the influence of Miss Alcott in that the main character seems to be from life. She is no puppet-- no altogether good or bad little girl put through motions by the author.

"She had on a pretty blue delaine dress, which was wet and torn, and all stuck together with burrs; her boots were covered # with mud to the ankle..." (20)

"A fear of weather never entered Gypsy's creed; drenchings and freezings were so many soap bubbles-great fun while they lasted, and blown right away, by dry
(19)Wetherell, Elizabeth, THE FLAG OF TRUCE, p. 127 .
(20)Phebs, E.S., GYPSY BREYNTON, p.18.



stockings and mother's warm fire." (21)

Nor is she, as you see from the quotations, a little orig like the notorious Elsie Dinsmore. She is even aware that: "Girls are just as good as boys!" (22)

Gypsy has an equally lively brother, Tom. Who could forget the description of Gypsy's untidy room at the beginning of the series, and the statue Tom makes of Gypsy out of the scattered clothes. She enters the room to find the effigy.

"Just then she caught sight of him out on the ridge-pole whittling away as coolly as if he had sat there all his life.

"Good afternoon, said Gypsy politely." Good afternoon, said Tom.

"'Been whittling out there ever since dinner, I

suppose?'

"'Certainly.'" (23)

The effects of Miss Alcott are plain to see. The characters are becoming real harumscarums like Jo. The books are delightfully lively. Yet beside Miss Alcott's works they have a quaint, old-fashioned touch -- not altogether displeasing. These books about Gypsy are a mingling of the old and the new. There is Peace Maythorne, a cripple; there is death; there are moral lessons. No better passage could illustrate the old and the new than the following:

"Happy Gypsy, to whom life was as sweet as love, and the future as bright as a dream ... " could not understand Phoebe's wish to die.

"Poor Phoebe! Why didn't people make her have a pleasant time? Well, why? She -- why, she, Gypsy Breynton, -- it had not been her business, had it?... What was that about 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth?'" (24)

Here, the old and the new. Love of this life,

⁽²¹⁾ Phelps, E.S., GYPSY BREYNTON, p./xxx 50

⁽²³⁾Ibid.,p.180

⁽²⁴⁾ Phelos, E. S. GYPSY BREYNTON AT GOLDEN CRESCENT, pp. 34 and 35



death, moral. The stories follow familiar patterns -- familiar to readers of Miss Alcott and her predecessors: a tale of reformation, a boarding school story, a d city and country mouse theme.

Why this sudden coming alive of older themes into new reality and strength? Because Miss Alcott now had shown a new way of writing for girls. She had turned in her LITTLE WOMEN, not to a religious dogma or a moral for inspiration but to life itself. Not that Miss Alcott's work is without morals or religion. On the contrary. But in all her best books two things come first— the story and the characters. So the author of GYPSY BREYNTON had partly learned that it is life that counts in children's literature, not didactic, too-obvious lessons; but I but her before Miss Alcott because she partly had not realized this principle.

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CHAPTER I (cont.)

Section 2: Louisa Alcott

"Meg wanted a few curls about her face, and Jo undertook to pinch the papered locks with a hot pair of tongs.

"'Ought they to smoke like that?' asked Beth

from her perch on the bed.

"'It's the dampness drying, replied Jo.
"'What a queer smell! it's like burnt feathers, observed Amy, smoothing her own pretty curls with a superior air.

"'There. now I'll take them off and you'll see a cloud of little ringlets,' said Jo.

"'Oh,oh,oh, what have you done! I'm spoilt! can't go! My hair, oh, my hair! wailed Meg...(1)

I opened LITTLE WOMEN at random to see if it would do it. and it did. It came alive. Louisa Alcott's books usually do. but LITTLE WOMEN most of all. You may say it was a lucky accident that Miss Alcott wrote LIT-TLE WOMEN at all. You're right. It was. You may say she moralizes too much or that she doesn't always use the best English. Or that she isn't a first-rate genius. But you cannot deny that her books are alive: any little girl since 1868 would dispute with you and carry off the battle. for it is a rare little girl who doesn't love Louisa Alcott.

Louisa was born in Germantown, Pennsylvania, on November 29, 1832. She was the second child of Bronson Alcott, transcendental philosopher, and Abba May Alcott. She was said to have inherited more from her good but fiery mother, especially in emotional make-up, than from her father, who was a kindly, patient man with some strange

(1) Alcott, Louisa, LITTLE WOMEN, p. 41

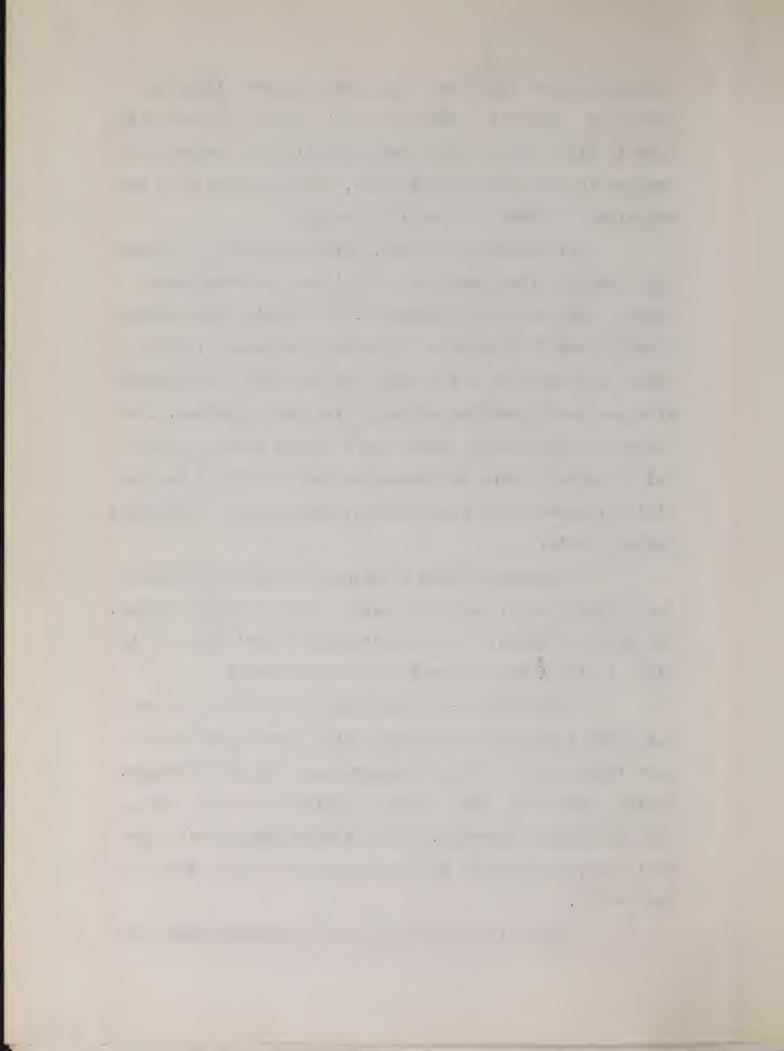
 ideas about not eating meat and some advanced ideas on education. Louisa's father was not a worldly success till late in his life. He came from Connecticut, traveled as a peddler in the South in his youth, but his first love was teaching, for which he really had a gift.

His schools, however, failed for lack of financial backing. The first one to fail was the Germantown school, then one in Philadelphia, and finally the famous "Temple School" in Boston-- this last because a little Negro pupil entered the classes and the white aristocrats withdrew their precious children from contamination. The failure of the Temple School was followed after an interval of several years at Concord by the failure of the social, transcendental experiment at Fruitlands, in Harvard, Massachusetts.

Through all this and more trouble moved Louisa, her three sisters, and their weary, long-suffering mother. And moved is right. In the first twenty-eight years of her life, Louisa's family moved twenty-nine times,

Louisa grew up influenced by four main factors: the poverty in which her family often lived, the simple love they all had for one another, the idea that someone, Louisa, must keep them all safe together free from want, and the slavery question. Louisa turned nurse during the Civil War, but most of her life was spent taking care of her family.

"There in the little room [in Concord] she made



what she called the plan of her life, and vowed to herself that she would give to these beloved ones what each one needed." (2)

And so she did. In carrying out this plan she was indeed Invincible, for it was only after a long, hard struggle that she was successful. Louisa, unlike her father, was practical. He thought one should serve the Heavenly Kingdom only by talking and preaching about it, and earthly matters would take care of themselves. Louisa thought the Heavenly Kingdom would come faster on earth if you worked hard for it. Louisa did many kinds of worksewing and teaching and even housework for pay- but writing mostly, and after the success of LITTLE WOMEN, nothing else. This is Miss Alcott's life in great haste; if you want a full account I advise the reading of INVINCIBLE LOUISA by Cornelia Meigs, a biography for girls: there is none better. Oh, yes, Louisa Alcott died in 1888, though so much of her is still alive in Jo March, it is hard to think of her as dead at all.

To discuss all Miss Alcott's books would be too long a task considering the amount of material to be covered from her day to this. So I have chosen two of her most famous stories, LITTLE WOMEN and AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL.

"Silver Secret Society from
Be like Jo and Beth of Ideal that Little Women"
So reads a scribbled inote! I once made The story
of the "Silver Secret Society" I do not remember. Appar-

⁽²⁾ Meigs, Cornelia, INVINCIBLE LOUISA, p. 79

the second secon THE RESERVE THE PARTY OF THE PA - 10 10 - 10 100 -

ently there were at least two members, for underneath ia written "Anne" and "Daisy." "Anne" was I; "Daisy" one of my little friends. She was eight; I was thirteen. The importance of this scribbling for my thesis is that the two of us were at the time under the spell of Louisa Alcott.

Note the difference in ages again. "In efforts to bring books to children when they are ready for them, it is imperative that we free our minds of the idea of standardization."(3) When I first read LITTLE WOMEN I do not remember; it is one of those books in my life that seem to go back to eternity. No doubt I was about ten. As to when I stopped liking LITTLE WOMEN, I haven't.

Note also our choice of characters. Why not Meg and Amy as well as Jo and Beth?

Also "Ideal." What ever did we mean by that? Perhaps the clue to the latter question lies in this analysis of what makes a good children's story:

The child "must have stories that are alive because they are infused with such fundamental qualities as
courage, loyalty, and kindness, qualities without which
man's existence as a higher being is inconceivable. Not
that the author should moralize; nothing will more rapidly
impair a book's value. Nowhere is the saying action speaks
louder than words' truer than in the realm of stories for
boys and girls. Young people want something to happen; they
want to see their heroes and heroines doing and experiencing without too much talk about it; the conclusions they
prefer to draw for themselves.

"The story, like the play, is the thing. It must be so alive, so absorbing, that the young reader is transported for the moment to the world of the book, and this world, however full of events, danger, and resourcefulness, must not be at variance with the laws of actual life."(4)

We saw the book not merely as a story, but as an

(4)Ibid., p. 157

⁽³⁾ Eaton, Anne, READING WITH CHILDREN, p. 159

ideal- an ideal of simple, homely contentment, of growth of character, and of courage, loyalty, and kindness. In this and in its life-likeness lie the merits of LITTLE WOMEN.

Much of the alive quality stems from the characters. We chose Beth and Jo because we loved them best.

"A person may accept certain examples as worthy of imitation, but without the warmth and glow of genuine admiration and personal sympathy, the spark necessary to carry acceptance beyond the static phase is lacking. When unaffected little girls say they 'love' Jo or Beth, Heidi, Rebecca, Lucinda (in ROLLER SKATES), or Resi (in AN EAR FOR UNCLE EMIL), they mean just that; for they feel an affinity for these other little girls out of the past and present, and adopt them as friends and companions." (5)

"The real power of the book.centers about Jo.She was Louisa to the life, more so, perhaps, than the author, ever dreamed of making her....Her victure of Jo is the Farthest thing removed from flattery....Yet Jo is loveable beyond words, and more real than any of the others."(6)

If Jo is the center, Beth is the shining star above. She is like some sweet minor music -- hauntingly lovely and sad. Sad? Have I not said often enough that joy and fun should be the qualities of a child's book?

"I like this book very much," said a child. "Beth dies. If you want to know who Beth is or how she died, read LITTLE WOMEN."(7)

"I cry over books frequently. I cried over Beth in

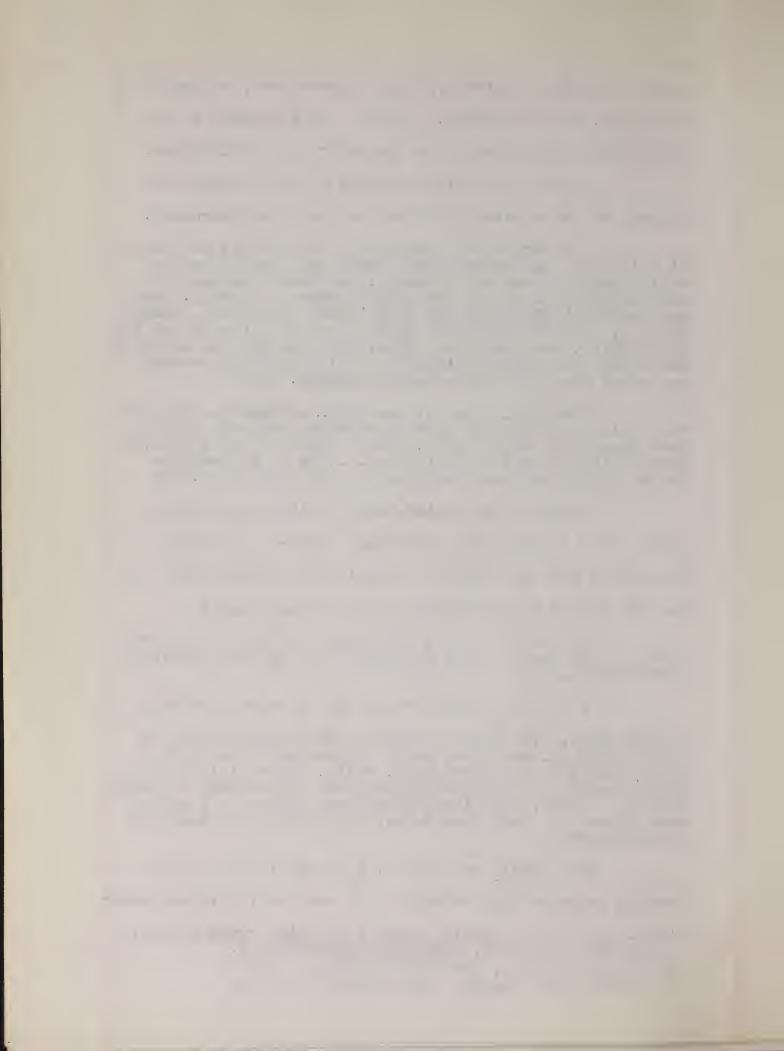
LITTLE WOMEN, over Remi in NOBODY'S BOY, over Cosette in LES MISERABLES, but those books I love, and this story or poem 'The Courtship, Marriage, Death, and Burial of Cock Robin-- and it might equally have been the passing of Ducky Daddles I hate, and always have hated. There is a difference to me. ... Beth died peacefully, with the blessing of God upon her."

So I myself once wrote. As I see it now, Beth's passing was more than peaceful -- it was inevitable and beau-

tiful. It is not a morbid lesson from which grows a story,

⁽⁵⁾ Betzner and Moore, EVERYCHILD AND BOOKS, p. (6) Meigs, Cornelia, INVINCIBLE LOUISA, p. 20%

⁽⁷⁾ Eaton, Anne, READING WITH CHILDREN, p. 159



but a story from which grows a lesson of reality. It is not so much Beth's passing that you remember as you think of her-- it is Beth herself, her patience and goodness. Like Jo, you feel you have gained much from her to enrich your life, for in death Beth is a living ideal. Living! A part of life is dying when it is thus beautiful. There is no doubt of Heaven, no futility here. This is true religion.

The other characters, though not equal to these two, are real-- with the possible exception of Professor Bhaer, who is thought to be a picture of the man Miss Alcott portrayed as her "dream husband." He seems more like an atmiable composite of certain virtues than a reality. To a young girl he seems old and unromantic after Laurie, and many are the girls who have muttered when Laurie proposes to Amy:

"But one will never cease to wish that instead of Amy it had been Jo."(8)

This, however, is just one more proof of the centrality and life of the character of Jo March.

"Marmee" in LITTLE WOMEN is one of the best adult characters in girls' books. The father, who is in the background always, is nevertheless a real presence, influencing the whole family of girls.

. In modern children's books life is often funny. So it is in LITTLE WOMEN. As early as LITTLE PRUDY the writers of juveniles were beginning to make use of the

⁽⁸⁾ Delafield, E.M., LADIES AND GENTLEMEN IN VICTORIAN FICTION, p. 131

not wholly reprehensivole but rather laughable. Laughter is a good corrective of vices. This Miss Alcott knows well as she makes fun of Jo's awkwardness, Ahy's vanity, and Meg's spendthrift moments. For example:

"If anybody had asked what the greatest trial of her life was, she would have answered at once, 'My nose.' When she was a baby, Jo had accidentally dropped her into a coal-hod, and Amy insisted that the fall had ruined her nose forever." (8)

The manyincidents of LITTLE WOMEN are as lively as Jo herself. Little girls can forgive Miss Alcott for any moralizing— and even for the death of a canary, since there is one— after they lose themselves in Amy's troubles at Aunt March's, in Jo selling her hair, in Beth with her kittens, in Meg going to "Vanity Fair." The whole book is filled with a spiritual family love. To read it is to live it; to write about it is never to do it full justice. As to LITTLE WOMEN's present popularity:

"The date at which a child hero or heroine lives seems to make little difference to young readers if they are persuaded that the child in the book is a real boy or girl. Thus the doings of Jo and Meg and Beth and Amy March are as absorbing to a ten-year-old living to-day in New York City or in Lodon or indeed in almost any city in the civilized worls (for Louisa Alcott's masterpiece has been translated into thirteen different languages) as they were to young New Englanders in 1868, when the book was first published Louisa Alcott's LITTLE MEN, JO'S BOYS, AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL, EIGHT COUSINS and its sequel ROSE IN BLOOM, UNDER THE LILACS, and JACK AND JILL, though they fall short of the genius which makes LITTLE WOMEN a children's classic, are nevertheless fresh, delightful stories which still find enthusiastic readers." (9)

Few books are more obviously drawn from life than was LITTLE WOMEN. AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL (1870) also echoes

⁽⁸⁾ Alcott. Louisa, LITTLE WOMEN. p. 60 (9) Eaton, Anne, READING WITH CHILDREN, pp.176 & 177

An Ob-Fashioned Giml by Louisa Alcott



Maud tending Puttle, and watching
the reasting of an apple.

(Lara Bund
(M.M.)



Miss Alcott's own career.

"The heroine of this. Polly, is not Louisa herself, but the adventures and trials through which Polly went follow very closely her own tribulations in her early efforts to make a living." (10)

Miss Alcott's purpose in writing AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL is stated in her own Preface:

"The 'Old-Fashioned Girl' is not intended as a perfect model, but as a possible improvement upon the Girl of the Period. Who seems sorrowfully ignorant or ashamed of the good old fashions which make woman truly beautiful and honored, and, through her, render home what it should be-a happy place..." (11)

"Older people who can remember say that AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL is an absolutely accurate picture of Boston society in her time, with all its small customs and habits and invariable laws of procedure. As we see Polly break through some of them, express her opinions of others, we we understand more fully what Louisa thought." (12)

Polly is one of the first of an endless number of heroines who visit city cousins to reform them or visit the country to be reformed themselves.

"'How different?' asked Polly again....
"'Well, you dress as a little girl, for one thing."
"'I am a little girl, why shouldn't I?'...

"'You are fourteen, and we consider ourselves

young ladies at that age'....
"Polly's eye went from one little figure to the other, and she thought that Fanny looked the odder of the two: for Polly lived in a country town, and knew very little of city fashions." (13)

book with REAL FOLKS by Mrs. A.D.T.Whitney, which though written rublished a year later is the voice of an earlier age.

REAL FOLKS has a theme like that of AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL in that it is a criticism of Boston society and has girls from the country come to town. It is founded on a religious

⁽¹⁰⁾ Meigs, Cornelia, INVINCIBLE LOUISA, p. 219
(11) Alcott, Louisa AN OLD-FASHIONED CIPI P.

⁽¹¹⁾ Alcott. Louisa, AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL, p. 5 (12) Meigs, Cornelia, INVINCIBLE LOUISA, p. 15 (13) Alcott, Louisa, AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL, p. 8

and the second s ---- basis.

"But there, behind-- how little, in our petty outside vexations or gladnesses, we stop to think of or perceive it!-- is the actual, even the present, inhabiting; there is the kingdom, the continuing city, the real heaven and earth in which we already live and labor, and build up our homes and lay up our treasure; and the living Christ and the living Father and the innumerable company of angels and... friends...gone-- are the Real Folks." (14)

There is what I can only characterize as a twisty style to this book. It twists about in wording, in conversation, and in characters appearing and disappearing as it turns new chapter corners. It is undeniably the most puzzling book I have ever read. It is furthermore a strange mixture of writing for the young and the old.

"Marcus Grapp, who had the start of Luclarion in this 'meander' -- as their father called the vale of tears-by just two years time, and was y-clipped by everyody and but his mother 'Mark' -- in his turn, as they grew old together, cut his sister down to 'Luke.' Then Luther Grapp called them both 'the Apostles.' And not far wrong; since if ever the kingdom of heaven does send forth its Apostles -- nay, its little Christs -- into the work on earth, in these days, it is as little children into loving homes." (15)

"Luke" and "Mark" are children young enough to play that images in looking-glasses are realitizes, and it is stated several times in the book that it is for the young; but the young would have a hard time in deciphering the "y-clipped" sas well as the very adult psychology of the rich and poor mothers who argue as to the value of spending life thinking only of surfaces and not reaching to the real. The author has not kept her audience consistently in mind, nor has she picked from her characters one to serve always as an anchor for the rest.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Whitney, Mrs. A.D.T., REAL FOLKS, xxx p. 304 (15) Ibid., p.11

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The morality of the book is evident. It becomes laughable at times through the language. For example, two little girls know their father is dying: "Who was taking care of their father? They did not ask. In the night he had been taken care of." (16)

what a relief to turn from this indefinite hodgepodge to the simplicity of Miss Alcott. She always keeps
her audience in mind. There are no "y-clipped"'s nor abstractions nor adult discussions here.

"Part of the magic of Louisa's charm for young people surely lies in the fact that she sees things through their eyes, that she depicts the ups and downs of the early adventures of life all from their point of view. The youthful readers all feel entirely that Louisa is on their side".

Here, like LITTLE WOMEN, AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL is alive, alive with fun though Miss Alcott was ill all the time she wrote it, alive with good characters. There is a moral basis, to be sure. But first of all it is a good story. Tom, wild, red-headed boy, is almost as much fun as Jo.

"'It's time to go the station, Tom.'
"'Come on, then.'

"'Oh, I'm not going; it's too wet. Shouldn't have a crimp left if I went out such a day as this; and I want to look nice when Polly comes.'

"'You don't expect me to go and bring home a strange girl alone, do you?' And Tom looked as much alarmed as if his sister had proposed to him to bring home the wild woman of Australia." (18)

A real boy. And an inviting start that crackles with vitality and fairly pushes you on. Who is Polly? Who is talking? Will Tom go?

⁽¹⁶⁾ Whitney, Mrs. A.D.T., REAL FOLKS, pp. 728 (17) Meigs, Cornelia, INVINCIBLE LOUISA. p. 227 (18) Alcott, Louisa, AN OLD FASHIONED GIRL, P.1

Fanny, Polly herself, Mr. Shaw, Grandma, Mrs.

Shaw. Mr. Sydney, Trix are all life-like, and best perhaps is little Maudie:

"'I don't care! it was cold [ice-cream] and I warmed mine on the wegister and then it was nice; only Willy Beiss spilled it on my new Gabwielle.'" (19)

"Fame during a life-time is something to win: but fame and affection which are to last a hundred years are seldom earned. These Louisa[has] had, with a richness of deserving about which we love to think as we look back at her, gay-spirited, vivid, and hopeful, waving...to us across the century." (20)

⁽¹⁹⁾ Alcott, Louisa May, AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRI, p. 10

⁽²⁰⁾ Meigs, Cornelia, INVINCIBLE LOUISA, pp. 231 & 232

CHAPTER II

BOOKS FOR GIRLS FROM THE TIME OF
LOUISA ALCOTT TO UNDERSTOOD BETSY-1870 to 1920

Section 1 - Reviews of Individual Books of the Period

The most immediate successors of Louisa Alcott were Susan Coolidge and Margaret Sidney.

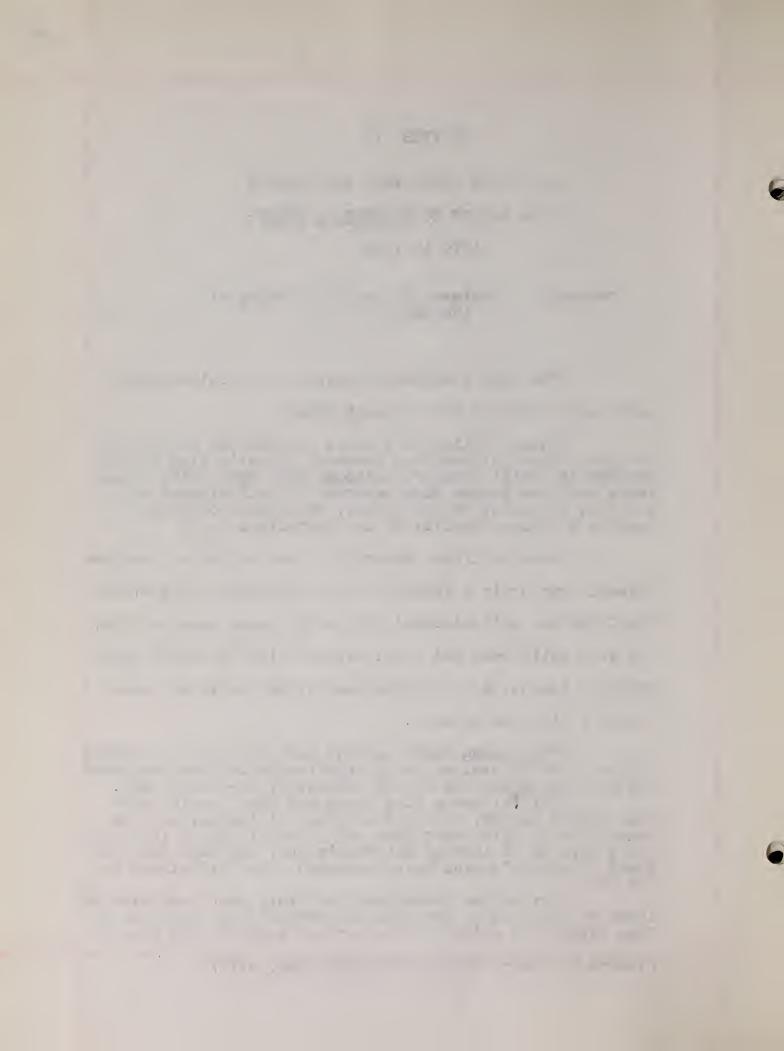
"Susan Coolidge's stories of Katy and Clover and the other Carr children and Margaret Sidney's FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS are still popular, although they were written many years ago. For though they describe a world without automobiles, wireless, or aeroplanes, children recognize the reality and human quality of the characters." (1)

Susan Coolidge, whose real name was Susan Chauncey Wolsey, grew up in a family of five children in Cleveland, Ohio. She was well-educated, led a wholesome outdoor life, and as a child read and read. Her own life, depicted with artistic talent, is the background of her books as Louisa Alcott's life was of hers.

"The young Carrs of WHAT KATY DID, 1870 invented a game of their own, and enjoyable though it must have been one can understand why it was eventually forbidden them.

"Kikari was a game which had been popular with them a year before. They had invented it themselves, and chosen for it this queer name out of an old fairy story. It was a sort of mixture of Blindman's Buff and Tag-- only instead of anyone's eyes being bandaged, they all played in the dark...

"It may be remembered that Katy Carr (the heroine) later on met with an accident and became first good and * then positively priggish. Luckily her brothers and sisters



remained unregenerate and delightful.

"Admirable paper games were played by Katy and her friends at school, but they never did anything out of doors excepting go for walks." (2)

THE FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS, a book of ten years later, is the story of one of the jolliest groups of youngsters ever put on paper. Ben, Polly, Phronsie, Joel, and Davy are human and lovable. Perhaps Margaret Sidney gained some of her lively way of telling stories by living in the same house in Concord that the Alcotts had formerly inhabited.

Margaret Sidney's real name was Harriet Mulford Stone, and she was brought up in New Haven, Connecticut, where her father, an architect, owned a large library. As a child, Harriet had a natural faculty for story telling, and the dearest treasures of her youth were a set of clippings about which she "made up" stories.

She always longed for country life and "little brown houses" and lived with the Peppers in fancy for years before writing of them. Polly came first into her mind as an occupant for a little brown house, and about her grew up all the rest-- the kind mother, jolly old-fashioned kitchen, and lively brothers and sisters who "did things in their own way." (3)

The little Peppers are a younger group of children than the March sisters. Their story is a lesson to any
child brought up in reasonably comfortable circumstances,
for these little girls and boys are happy with few material
comforts.

"''Cause there isn't anything to cook, said Ben,

⁽²⁾ Delafield, E.M., LADIES AND GENTLEMEN IN VICTORIAN FICTION. p. 232

⁽³⁾ Kunitz & Haycroft, Editors, JUNIOR BOOK OF AUTHORS-account of Margaret Sidney

coolly, cutting out a piece of dough for a jumble, 'we don't keep Thanksgiving.' "'Not keen Thanksgiving!' said Jasper.

"'Well, then,' said Jasper, leaning over the table, 'I'll tell you what I should think you'd do -- try Christmas.'

"'We never had a Christmas,' said little Davie reflectively; what are they like, Jasper?!" (4)

Yet these children and their mother are happy in each other and in the joys that do come their way -- a Christmas finally. Mrs. Pepper is the explanation for all rhis. One never forgets Polly's cake for her mother's birthday, burned and without frosting but with flowers in the middle hole.

Their mother's"delight in the cake was fully enough to satisfy the most exacting mind. She admired it on every, side, protesting that she shouldn't have supposed Pollycould possibly have baked it as good in the old stove; and then she cut it and gave a piece to each child with a

bosy on top.
"'You've never had a cake-birthday, Joel, 'said

his mother; 'you haven't got to that yet.'

"'When is it a-coming?' asked Joel, who was decid edly of a matter-of-fact turn of mind.

"'I don't know,' said Mrs. Pepper, laughing;'but there's plenty of time ahead.'" (5)

"Plenty of time ahead" courage and optimism are the gifts of Mrs. Pepper to her family. Here as in LITTLE WOMEN is the central theme of family love, of homely contentment. There is fun a plenty in this poverty-stricken brown house in spite of troubles.

"'But my gingerbread boy,' cried Phronsie | the four-year old running eagerly along with a particularly ugly looking specimen of a cake figure in her hand, is the beyam-ti-fulest, isn't it, Polly?' "'Oh, dear!' groaned Polly, 'it looks just awful.

⁽⁴⁾ Sidney. Margaret, FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS AND HOW THEY GREW, (5)Ibid., p. 218 & 219

doesn't it, Ben?'
"'Hoh, hoh! laughed Joel, in derision, 'his leg is crooked, see, Phronsie -- you better let Davie and me have it.'" (6)

Always talking and often laughing are the Pepper family. There is little direct moralizing, but the implied, underlying lesson is there. "A simple book," the author calls it in her dedication. It is truly simple, and like a few other books is all the dearer to the heart for its unpretentious modesty.

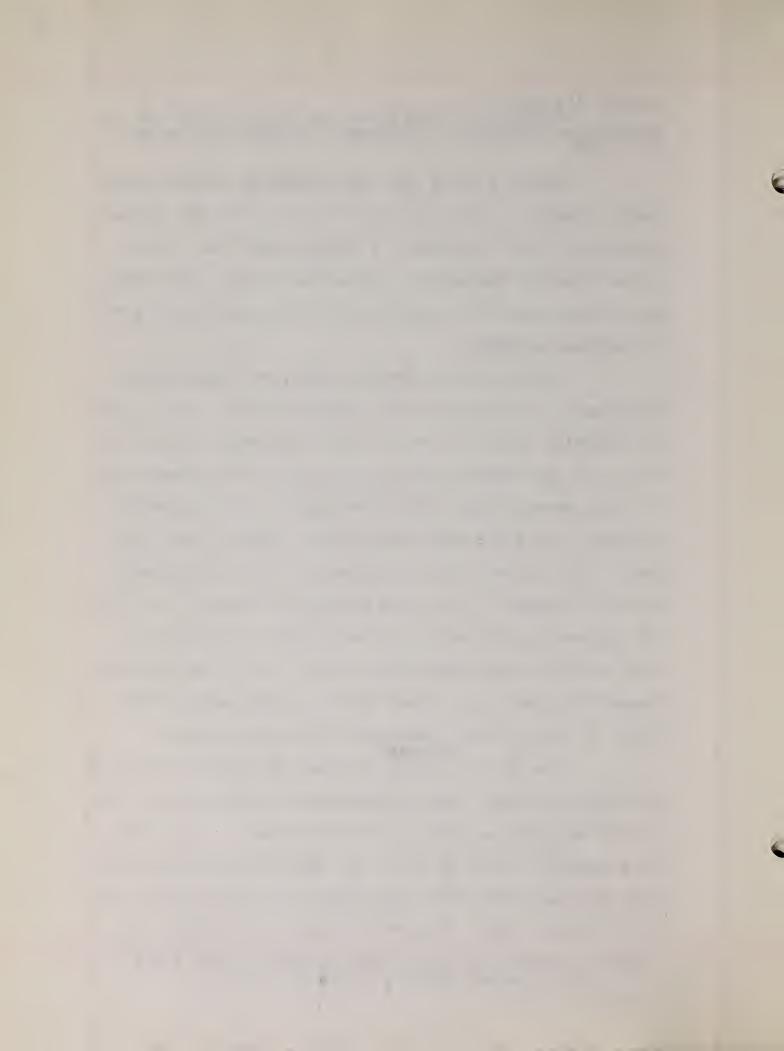
Pyrnelk, not so famous as the Peppers and the Katy Dids, is a plantation story of the pre-Civil War South. Its primary object is the keeping alive of the old stories, legends, traditions, games, hymns, and superstitions of the Southern slaves." (7) It reflects the Negroes' intimacy with the Lord, their awareness of the presence of the Devil; their careful training of the white chillun in manners. The author claims for the book no literary merit but hopes it will serve to amuse the little folks." (8) It is not a defence of slavery: the author claims no knowledge of the right or wrong of the institution of slave-holding.

The idea of a book teaching primarily what amounts to history and not a moral lesson and the idea that a book should be simply amusing is a new departure in the field of children's books. We shall see this combination of history and amusement often again in such books as Ethel Parton's MELISSA ANN or Eliza Orne White's WHEN ABIGAIL WAS

⁽⁶⁾ Sidney, Margaret, FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS, pp. 194 & 195

⁽⁷⁾ Pyrnelle, Louise, DIDDIE, DUMPS, AND TOT, p.V

⁽⁸⁾ Ibid., p VIII



SEVEN.

As one reads of Uncle Snakebit Bob and how the Robin's breast turned red and of Aunt Nancy, who brought up the field workers' children on doses of "vermifuge" and of Daddy Jake, who claims to have known a "Marse Forfer July" (Fourth of July) in his youth, one is reminded of Uncle Remus. The book is filled with tales delightful to children, and the youngsters, black and white, are up to all kinds of monkeyshines. There is a peculiarly lovable quality to the naughty little "niggers" who refuse to take their daily vermifuge and answer all the questions wrong in Sunday school.

"'Du't [dust] made the first child: And to the question 'What did He make yer fer?' was promptly answered.

'Marse Adam.'" (9)

The games of the Negroes are fun, too. One notes how often in children's books of this era games do have a part: in WHAT KATY DID, LITTLE WOMEN, and REAL FOLKS.also, games are played.

"'I ac' monkey motions, too-re-loo; I ac' monkey motions, so I do.
I ac' 'em well, and dat's a fac'-I ac' jes' like dem monkeys ac,'"

sing the colored folk on the old plantation. (10) the

The story has its center in the lives of three white children, who live like little queens, but talk like "niggers" -- Diddie, Dumps, and Tot are their nicknames. It is mostly a gay-hearted tale, though there is poor Ann,

⁽⁹⁾ Pyrnelle, Louise, DIDDIE, DUMPS, AND TOT, p. 87 (10) Ibid., p. 128

a yellow Negress, who had had the "misfortune to be educated," (11) and thus knew despair at her lot. Also, in its ending, the story reflects the bitterness left in the Southerners by the Civil War. To a young child, this might prove harmfully depressing or it might mean little in comparison with the jolly times that precede it, but to a girl a little older or to a very thoughtful child, it gives much to ponder. The old plantation came to a sorry end-- the house burned, its master dead, its mistress insane, its Diddie widowed by the war, its Tot dead, and its Dumps an old maid taking care of her poor mother. A strange ending for a child's book, and a strange world where wars bring sorrow to such a merry group as Diddie, Dumps, and Tot. For this ending seems to prove a feeling one has had from the first, in part that the book is the story of Dumps' own childhood.

A book of the same decade is Frances Hodgson Burnett's SARA CREWE; OR WHAT HAPPENED AT MISS MINCHIN'S.

Mrs. Burnett was born in Manchester, England, but later lived in a log cabin in Knoxville, Tennessee. She had a writing career of sixty years. She married Dr. Swan M. an American Burnetts, they had two sons, the great grief of Mrs. Burnett's life being the early death of one boy, Lionel, who had served for the model of her famous "Little Lord Fauntleroy." Mrs. Burnett was a lady of impulsive nature and exaggerated actions arising from her "make-believing" mind.

SARA CREWE is one of the best stories for children ever written on the theme of a wish come true, a dream

realized. The plot is a little artificial in that a friend of Sara's father should appear so conveniently; yet I doubt whether there is ever a child who does not believe in this miraculous appearance. Why not? Dreams do sometimes come true.

The two features one remembers from SARA CREWE are the sadness and the miracle. One forgets how funny the story is, now and then. Of course one remembers Miss Minchin, though really it would be pleasanter to forget her. Here is the first-- perhaps the only eample in children's realistic fiction, of an utterly despicable character.

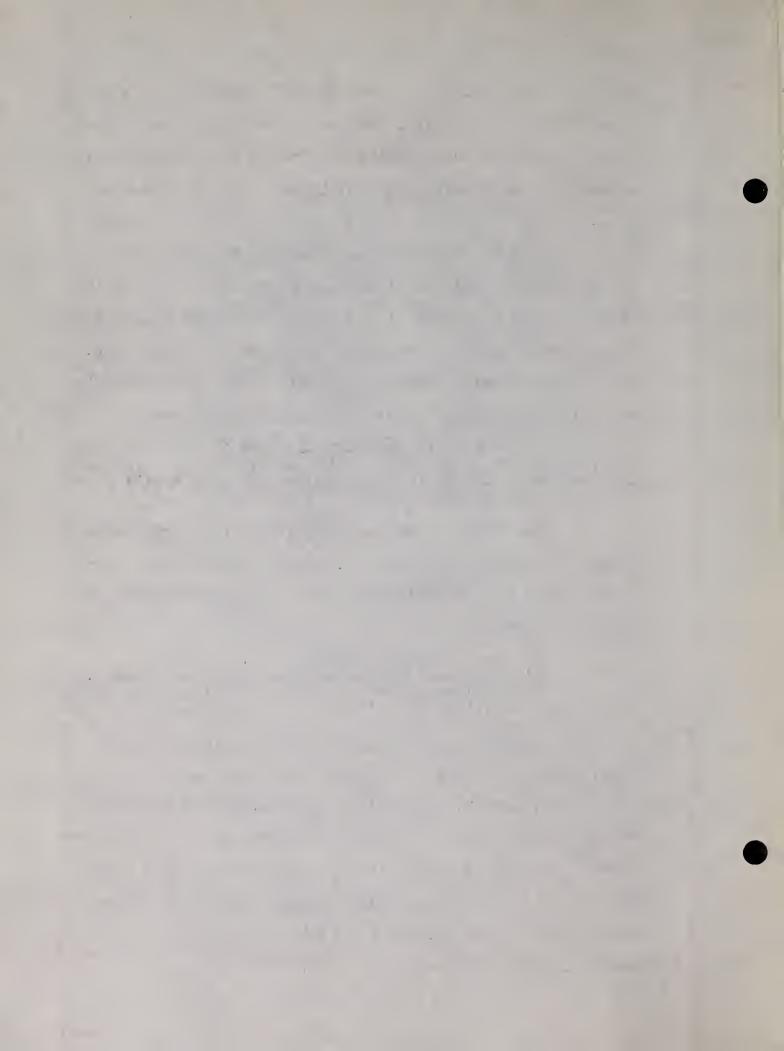
"Miss Minchin was tall, and had large, cold, fishy eyes, and large, cold hands, which seemed fishy, too, because they were damp and made chills run up and down Sara's spine when they touched her..." (12)

How hateful she is, Miss Minchin! How enjoyable to hear Sara, even when she is poverty-stricken and helpless, defeat Miss Minchin and make a fool of her before her fashionable school!

"'I was thinking,' Sara said.
"'Beg my pardon immediately,'said Miss Minchin.
"'I will beg your pardon for laughing if it was rude.' said Sara,'but I won't beg your pardon for thinking'.'
(13)

Miss Minchin was stupid to be so tricked. But at other times she has the upper hand, and poor little Sara, friendless, hungry, living in an attic, is the most pitiful child in all literature for girls. There is no more pathetic scene in any juvenile book than that of Sara scolding her doll. No wonder girls I spoke to about the story said, "SARA CREWE? Oh, how I cried!"

⁽¹²⁾ Burnett, Frances H., SARA CREWE, pp. 5 & 6 (13) Ibid. p.30



"One of these nights when she \Sara \ came up to the garret cold, hungry, tired, and with a tempest raging in her small breast. Emily's stare seemed so vacant, her sawdust legs and arms so limp and inexpressive that Sara lost all control of herself.
"'I shall die presently.' she said at first.

"Emily stared.

"'I can't bear this!' said the poor child, trembling. 'I know I shall die. I'm cold, I'm wet, I'm starving to death....Do you hear!'

"She looked at the staring glass eyes and complacent wax face, and suddenly a sort of heart-broken rage

seized her....

"'You are nothing but a doll!' she cried.' Nothing but a doll -- doll -- doll 'You care for nothing. You are stuffed with sawdust. You never had a heart. Nothing could ever make you feel. You are a doli!!

and after a while "'You can't help being a doll, she said with a resigned sigh.... 'Perhaps you do your sawdust best.'" (14)

Probably it is because of the sadness that when the turn for the better comes, there is nothing more enchantingly happy. Here we have in realistic girls' books for the first time, romanticism. Imagination is not a leading characteristic of Miss Alcott's books or of the Pepper family, but in SARA CREWE, imagination becomes the child's supreme gift. She imagines herself a princess; she imagines herself in a warm room with plenty to eat. And, wonder of wonders, the greater part of her imaginings come true. Because children live in their books, there are few more marvelous experiences for them than the discovery with Sara of her room that strange evening:

"The little, cold, miserable room seemed changed into Fairyland. It was actually warm and glowing. "'Tt is bewitched' said Sara. 'Or am I bewitched'

Romanticism in girls' books is surely not at all out of place. "Dreams, fancies... are the natural heritage

(15) Ibid., p. 51

⁽¹⁴⁾ Burnett, Frances H., SARA CREWE, pp. 18 & 19

of childhood and are at the foundation of what is beautiful and poetical in literature, art, and human experience."

(16) SARA CREWE presents the first of a number of children who are highly poetical and imaginative by nature—

Anne of Green Gables and Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm come immediately to mind.

Another of SARA CREWE's qualities is humanitarianism. Already there has appeared in LITTLE WOMEN the March girls' giving away of a meal to the poor. In the Sunday School books, in DOTTY DIMPLE, in GYPSY, charity has a place. Here in SARA CREWE is the scene of Sara, the beggar child, and the rolls. A whole story on this same theme is Mrs. Burnett's LITTLE SAINT ELIZABETH. How often the writers of children's fiction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were zealous reformers, on paper and in life. Alice Hegan Rice in MRS. WIGGS, Annie Fellows Johnsston of THE LITTLE COLONEL, Jean Webster of DADDY-LONG-LEGS Frances H. Burnett of SARA CREWE, Lucy Fitch Perkins in THE DUTCH TWINS are among many who plead, as some of them also worked for, various humanitarian causes. Mrs. Rice and Mrs. Johnston were interested in social service work, Jean Webster in orphan asylum reform, Kate Douglas Wiggin in the kindergarten movement, Mrs. Burnett in Christian charity. and Lucy Perkins in world friendship and peace. All this is reflected in their books.

To return to SARA CREWE, let us note last that the author is an artist in the skilled use of language to (16) Moore, Annie Carroll. ROADS TO CHILDHOOD, pp.23 & 24

create atmosphere:

"In the first place, Miss Minchin lived in London. Her home was a large, dull, tall one, in a large, dull square where all the houses were alike, where all the sparrows were alike, and where all the door-knockers were alike; and on still days-- and nearly all the days were still...." (17)

After SARA CREWE comes Sarah Orne Jewett's BETTY LEICESTER, in 1889.

Sarah Orne Jewett was an author of fame in the field of adult fiction with a realistic New England country background. In recent years an author frequently attains recognition in the writing of books for both children and adults: Rachel Field. Elizabeth Madox Roberts, and Anne Parrish are examples. In the time of BETTY LEICESTER, though children's books often became popular with adults (especially is this true in the early twentieth century) the best writers of adult literature became more and more shy of being stamped as "juvenile."

BETTY LEICESTER has certain virtues, but on the whole it is a stiff little book. There is about it an oversentimentality, especially in the author's attitude toward the young heroine. There is a tendency in authors to become too aware of the youth of their childish creations and of their own comparative age. They forget to be "as little children" and become all too patronizing, if unconsciously so:
"Good night, Betty." coos the author. "Good night, dear Betty, in your best bedroom sound asleep all the summer night and dreaming of those you love." (18)

Betty is called in the introduction to the edition

⁽¹⁷⁾ Burnett, Frances. H. SARA CREWE, pp. 3 (18) Jewett. Sarah Orne, BETTY LEICESTER, p. 37

of the book which I read (1928) an "undoubted little lady," which is the whole trouble with her. She keeps calling her father "Papa dear" and saying "Dear me, no," and when her father says, "God bless you, dear, and make you a blessing," (19) it is one "dear" too many, and the reader's teeth begin to grind. The language of the book is dated; perhaps it is this more than the actual character that makes one suspect Betty is a prig. She has a "droll companion" (20); her writing case is "very plain and nice and convenient" (21); and she says, "My enemy now is making little funs of Mary." (22)

No one could miss the morals here: they stick out like kxxxxe freckles instead of being spread through like a delicate sun-warmed tan: "But Betty was no coward. She had been taught to show energy and make light of difficulties."(23) "Indeed, and so should you, my dear little reader, "is not said, but it might as well be.

In form the book has the fault of being interrupted toward the middle by a series of letters from some of Betty's European friends in whom the young reader finds scant interest.

The book is too serious: in spite of the attempts there is no real humor to it. When Betty gives a "great shake of laughter" in answer to her traveling companion's (24) "Creation's real queer," the child who reads the book may see absolutely nothing funny. Creation is queer; everybody knows that. The book has no exuberance; it is all solid seriousness.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Jewett, Sarah Orne, BETTY LEICESTER, p. 5

⁽²⁰⁾ Ibid., p. 15 1/4

⁽²¹⁾ Ibid. p. 196 14 (22) Ibid., p. 176 (24) Ibid., p. 7 (23) Ibid., p. 36

Nevertheless, BETTY TEICESTER shows itself in a few respects to be the handiwork of an artist if not of a person with true insight into youngsters.

When Betty wonders what the sea smells like, and then "thought of a salt oyster," (25) one realizes that Miss Jewett had keen perceptions. The flavor of back-country New England is the book's real charm:

"The up-country road wound first past several farms and within sight of the river; then it took a sudden northward turn, and there were not so many white elders by the way as there were junipers and young birches.... From one high point...there was a beautiful view of the low lands that lay toward the sea...." (26)

Another quality that might be appealing to girls is the constant reference to food. I remember one friend of mine telling me that she liked nothing better in books than reading what the people had to eat. Betty Leicester is always eating.

Betty has not the static, always-good-or-always-bad characterization of the Sunday School fiction. Like Jo and her sisters she grows and develops. Says her father of Betty: "I don't mean she doesn't have many days when she only considers the world's relation to herself, but on the be very whole, she begins to zanzidzk serious about her own relation to the world.'" (27)

An author who had the combination of true artistic ability and knowledge of little girls was Laura E. Richards, whose famous CAPTAIN JANUARY was product of the year 1891.

(27) Ibid., p.265

⁽²⁵⁾ Jewett, Sarah Orne, BETTY LEICESTER, p. 16

⁽²⁶⁾ Ibid., p. 138

Laura E. Richards was the child of distinguished parents. Her father was Samuel G.Howe, friend and teacher of the blind; her mother, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, intellectual leader of Boston and author of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Laura had five brothers and sisters, her favorite playmate being her brother Henry, with whom she hunted elephants and rhinoceroses" (28) in games at their summer home in Newport, "Green Peace." Her childhood's winters were spent in Boston. She married Henry Richards; they had seven children, to whom she told stories and nonsense rhymes and sang songs. A number of the portraits in her books are real. She led a very long, happy life, and until her recent death lived in Gardiner, Maine.

captain january is a beautiful little story. It is much shorter than LITTLE WOMEN and about the same length as SARA CREWE. The details picked for inclusion in the story are skilfully chosen. There is not a word too much, nor a bit of forcing lessons down into a child's consciousness.

To a child this book is intriguing because of its unusual setting. Children like new experiences in books:

(29)

"There is an island off a certain part of the coast of Maine on which Star and her "Daddy," Captain January, lived."I wonder what it would be like to live in a lighthouse," thinks the little-girl reader. It is delightful, this lighthouse with Star's little room:

"It was the funniest little place, this room of Star's, the queerest, quaintest little elfin tower! It was

⁽²⁸⁾ Kunitz and Haycroft, JUNIOR BOOK OF AUTHORS (29) Richards, Laura E., CAPTAIN JANUARY, p. 5

built out from the south side of the tower, almost like a swallow's nest, only a swallow's nest has no window looking out on the blue sea. There was a little white bed....And be side the looking glass, and above it, and in fact all over the walls, were trophies and wonders of all kinds and descriptions. There was a star-fish with ten legs...." (30)

The book has also a spirit of adventure. In the simple, quiet homeliness of LITTLE WOMEN and THE FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS, in all of Sara Crewe's imaginative career we have not met anything so exciting as the shipwreck in CAPTAIN JANUARY, told in the old Captain's down-East language:

"'And the waves were breaking over you all the time?' cried the child with eager inquiry.
"'Wal, they was that, Honeysuckle!'said the Captain. 'Bless ye, I sh'd ha' been washed off like a log if it hadn't ben for the rope!'" (31)

The child-reader, like Star, would listen eagerly.

In CAPTAIN JANUARY we have the use of a pet to add to a child's interest: (Animals must always be a delight in little girls' books.) "But this time it was very evident that Imogene, who was in truth a large white cow with a bell round her neck...." (32)

Here.too, is a doll, Mrs. Neptune, with tiny black snail shells for eyes and sea-weed hair, that Captain January had carved for little Star out of a piece of drift-wood. As in SARA CREWE there is a moving doll scene-- when Star renounces a handsome new doll for the battered Mrs.Neptune, who represents to her her "Daddy's" love. "But when she had finished her scrutiny, Star took the beautiful doll and buried it deep under velvets and satins at the very bottom of the great chest. This done, she kissed Mrs. Neptune

⁽³⁰⁾ Richards, Laura E., CAPTAIN JANUARY, D.5

⁽³¹⁾ Ibid., p.24

⁽³²⁾ Ibid., pp. 30 & 31

solemnly...." (33)

captain January's chief power, however, lies in its moving of the reader's emotions. At twenty-two I cried over this book as I would have at ten.and for the same reasons. It is beautiful.

Neither Star nor Captain January is the center of this story: the real center is their love for one another. There is no reason why an abstract emotion should not be the center of a little girl's book. A child may not understand pure abstractions, but he understands their concrete manifestations as well as any adult. A child loves and hates, feels joy and pain, and gradually comes to understand these emotions in others. Children's books ought in some way to widen the child's experience, and in this process, morals, historical facts, and geography lessons are less important than the opening of the child's mind to the spiritual values of life. In CAPTAIN JANUARY a child finds one of the truest tenderest "love" stories ever written -- "love", of course, in its highest sense, what the Bible calls "charity."

The whole book breathes with the love of the old Captain for his little Star-- in the names he calls her-"Cream Cheese from the Dairy of Heaven,""Lily Flower," "Jewel Bright,""Peach Blossom," and "Ariel", in the doll he
carves for her; in the cow he buys for her; in the lessons
he gives her from the Bible and Shakespeare; and finally in
his renunciation of her for her future good.

Death here as in LITTLE WOMEN seems inevitable

and right. "Wave, little Star. Wave your little blue apron from the rocks....For Captain January's last vovage is over. and he is already in the haven where he would be."(34)

Four years after the publication of CAPTAIN JAN-UARY there entered the literary world the first of a series of twelve volumes about the life of Lloyd Sherman, who was nicknamed the "Little Colonel." The author of this series was Annie Fellows Johnston.

Alice Hegan Rice. author of MRS.WIGGS OF THE CAB-BAGE PATCH, wrote the following in appreciation of her friend and fellow-Kentuckian. Mrs. Johnston:

"With every generation of girls comes a best-beloved story-teller....For many years Louisa M. Alcott held the high honor, but, with her gracious passing, came the ne-

cessity for another guide.
"With unerring instinct the girls of the present generation (1895 was the publication date of THE LITTLE COLONEL) turned to a sleepy little Kentucky town, stormed one of its loveliest homesteads, and, capturing its modest little mistress, acclaimed Annie Fellows Johnston theirnew and accomplished leader.

"What is the secret of this universal allegiance? If I had to express it in the language of the children themselves. I should say: 'Mrs. Johnston remembers and under stands.'... She sees youth, not through the telescope of time, but through its own radiant eyes

"It would be difficult to estimate the inspiration and influence that have gone forth from her books ... "

One of the most generalized and unthinking criticisms made of some juvenile fiction is that it comes out in "those interminable series." The critic fails to take into consideration that there are psychological factors in children which impel them to wish to know "what happens next." Children, as I have said, live in their books; the characters become their friends. What more natural questions

⁽³⁴⁾ Richards, Laura E., CAPTAIN JANUARY, p.78 (35) Johnston. Annie F. THE LAND OF THE LITTLE COLONEL D. IX

in a girl's mind than, "I wonder whom Lloyd marries? Mal-colm? Bob? Keith? Phil? Does Mary Ware ever come to Ken-tucky?" The answers to these questions are important to the girl reader. Hence the series grows -- and grows oftentimes without the author's wish that it do so.

The most famous of girls' books usually have at least one sequel. ALICE IN WONDERLAND was followed by ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS; LITTLE WOMEN and AN OLD-FASH-IONED GIRL were each written in two parts. ANNE OF GREEN GABLES is the first of a series of Anne books. Lucy Fitch Perkins wrote of twins in every corner of the globe. REBEC-CA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM is not without its NEW CHRONICLES OF REBECCA. And so on. Sometimes the original volume is so superior to the rest that there is no choice in ranking which is first in merit; sometimes it would be hard to choose the better or the best of the books.

Most of the best series of books for girls, however, were not planned in the beginning to be a series before the first book has become popular: for example, THE

LITTLE COLONEL. The worst of the series were so planned.

An author chooses a heroine with typical characteristics of
courage. loyalty, and virtue, and buts her through an unlimited number of exciting experiences, one after another.

with little organic sequence, like the form of the medieval
Romances. Especially is this true to mystery series: I have
read in my day probably a hundred of these books, dressed in
pretty light blue or green covers. I do not believe that

they impaired my literary taste; they are good entertainment for the time. But that they did me no good I have only the fact that I remember absolutely nothing about them as proof. Do I remember THE LITTLE COLONEL? Yes, I can quote the opening lines. I read the book so many times.

One should remember that in books for girls there are series and series, and judge them, not on that basis, but on their intrinsic worth.

Another objection that might be made to THE LITTLE COLONEL books is that they are sentimental, a valid objection. But whether sentimentality is always to be regarded in the same light that modern cynics and realists regard
it in, is another question. To be sure, sentimentality has
its bad effects: it makes the child unrealistic in her attitude toward life. The morbid, the ugly, the cynical parts
of life are dodged, and the child begins to live in a
dream.

On the other hand, sentimentality does have its good side. A sentimental book is an idealistic book, and in idealism lies the hope of the world. The best of idealism is rooted and grounded in realities, but have we not still a place for dreams, especially in the world of a young girl? Very often modern realism in adult literature never dreams at all. If the people of earth were more sentimental about one another, would the world be as it is now? I doubt it, for sentimentality is often merely an overflow of love.

"The Land of the Little Colonel, "wrote Mrs.Johns-

ton in 1929, "like all Gaul' is divided into three parts. One lies in the State of Kentucky, one in the Country of Imagination, and one in the dear demesne of Memory. (36)

The picture of this land in the twelve volumes of the series may be compared to a long tapestry of the dreams, joys, sorrows, good times, school days, and pets of girlhood. The tapestry is mostly done in soft, romantic pastel shades. There is the gentle rose pink of Old Southern romance: "'Oh, the locus' trees a-blowin'; she sang softly. 'An' the moon a shinin' through them. And the starlight an' pink roses....'" (37)

There is the soft lavender of grief:

"She [Lloyd] wandered about the place, touching the trees and vines with caressing hands, feeling that she might soon have to leave them all.

"She loved them all so dearly-- every stick and stone, and even the stubby old snowball bush that never bloomed." (38)

There is the golden daffodil yellow of fun, laughter, and joy:

"It makes me think of the night we had a Hallow-e'en party-at the haunted house of Hartwell Hollow,' said Katie, looking up at the bare branches overhead....Then she clapped a white-gloved hand over her rag mouth to choke back a giggle. Kate had begun holding her arms in the aimless fashion peculiar to rag dolls...." (39)

Soft blue is the color of charity. Little Elise prays for the lost child of whom she has been told:

"Now I lay me down to sleep;
I bray thee, Lord, her soul to keep.
If she should die before I wake,
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take." (40)

Only occasionally do we find a splotch of brightest color, and Mary Ware, Lloyd's little friend from the

West, is involved in most of these.

(36)Johnston, Annie F., THE LAND OF THE LITTLE COLONEL, p. 3

(37)Johnston, Annie F., THE LITTLE COLONEL, p. 99

(38)Johnston, Annie F., THE LITTLE COLONEL, p. 84

(39)Johnston, Annie F., THE LITTLE COLONEL AT BOARDING SCHOOL, (40)Johnston, Annie F., THE LITTLE COLONEL'S HOLIDAYS, p. 178

"Your hair is coming undone,' whispered the girl behind her Mary . 'Let me plait it for you....'
"Evidently Mary's hair suggested brushes to Jenny for presently she dived in her desk for something....Then rubbing the braid's end across the cake of wet paint, she proceeded with joy to paint the African lion in her geography book...." (41)

The bright color of unquestioned realism is here.

And fat, jolly little Mary Ware is not least among the little girls in books.

In the tapestry are green landscapes and figures of people, animals, and flowers. The stories are of boarding school, dogs, house parties, journeys, boy friends, girl friends, young love affairs. All of romantic girlhood is here. This is the woof of the stories; the warp is morality and idealism. The books have scattered through them allegorical stories of knights and fairy princesses, of weavers and "roads of the loving heart." "Keep tryst.' Keep tryst or die!" (42) Some children find these tales boring interruptions: others read them lovingly. Again and again Tennyson figures, and Kipling and Stevenson.

"F.Scott Fitzgerald said that a young Southern girl 'had been raised on the warm milk of Annie Fellows Johnston.' I was obliged to grin at the wicked patness of the picture," wrote Marie Sidel Moore in 1935. It started me pondering on the gently powerful hold Annie Fellows Johnston has had on countless thousands of children... For now, forty years later, modern youngsters are lapping up that warm milk as avidly as their mothers did before them. In households from Maine to California (and in many countries besides America), the children's copies of their LITTIE COLONELS are even more beloved and dog-eared than their Alices.

"There is no putting your finger on why any of this is true. Certainly no mere Sweetness and Light ever kept any book alive. Perhaps it is because the Little Colonel stories are gallant and spirited, and the setting is

⁽⁴¹⁾ Johnston, Annie F., THE LITTLE COLONEL IN ARIZONA, pp. 50 & 51

⁽⁴²⁾ Johnston, Annie F. THE LITTLE COLONEL'S CHRISTMAS VACATION, p. 87

. somehow timelessly romantic and glamorous. In any case, the milk is potent. Once you have tasted it, you are more or less charmed for life." (43)

Whether MRS.WIGGS OF THE CABBAGE PATCH by Alice Hegan Rice is an adult's or a child's book is debatable. Children do, I know, read the story and enjoy it.Mrs.Wiggs is amusing and optimistic, two characteristics that make her delightful to child readers. The book is based on Mrs. Rice's own social service work in Louisville. and contrary to advisers on the art of fiction writing, Mrs. Wiggs was taken quite whole from life, yet is a successful creation.

In 1903 appeared REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM.

"Rebecca, Kate Douglas Wiggin's very real little heroine, is still contemporary in feeling with children of to-day." (44)

In REBECCA, as in the first LITTLE COLONEL book, is the theme of a child reforming an older person through her utter charm. As I have said, this harks back to the Sunday School lore of the nineteenth century in which little Nellie cures her father of drunkenness. There is also in REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM the same situation we have already seen, and shall often see again, of a girl thrown for the first time on her own inner resources. Rebecca is on a journey when the book opens into (for her) a strange new world.

"Thomas Bailey Aldrich called her"the nicest child in American literature.'"(45) The origin of the character, according to both Kate's and her sister's accounts,

⁽⁴³⁾ Moore, Marie Seidel, Foreword to THE LITTLE COLONEL, Shirley Temple Edition

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Eaton Anne T. READING WITH CHILDREN p 177 (45) Smith, Nora Archibald , KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN AS HER SISTER KNEW HER, p. 307

was inspirational. Nora Smith tells of this origin as follows:

"During the progress of a painful illness, she came driving into K.D. Wiggin's vision one winter in New York, sitting erect on the slippery leather seat of the old stage coach, her yellow calico frock standing stiffly out around her, her precious pink parasol held carefully by her side. The wheels rattled, the horses' hoofs whirled up the summer dust, -- and Rebecca Rowena Randall alighted at the gate of the Brick House at Riverboro, holding her bunch of faded lilacs." (46)

The character was not entirely the result of inspiration, however, for in her Nora Smith sees "much of Katte's own eager, dreaming childhood, (47) in Hollis, Maine.

To me Rebecca is an entertaining character as long as she is left to herself. But I feel that when she is written about from the point of view of the grown people in the story, she is over-praised, and in that way over-sentimentalized. Perhaps a little girl would feel this way about Rebecca; perhaps not. Children are apt to identify them selves with those characters of whom they read. If a little girl identified herself with Rebecca, no doubt she would not care how much praise Rebecca received. It is because I thought myself very like Anne of Green Gables that every word of praise of her in the book seemed like a pat on my own head, and so I had no similar comment to make upon that book.

Another objection I make to REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM is that the story in itself is too expository. The earlier parts of the book are fun, but as Rebecca grows

older, the author no longer tells what happens to her by (46) Smith, Nora Archibald, KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN AS HER SISTER KNEW HER, p. 307

(47) Ibid., p.307

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incident, but explains and explains.

Why is it, then, if Rebecca is over-sentimentalized, and the book is too expository, the book remains a perennial favorite? It is for two reasons, the chief being Rebecca herself. From the moment she begins to talk, one realizes that in Rebecca one has met the real article. Who will ever forget her remark about the pink parasol? "It's the dearest thing in life to me, but it's an awful care. " A true child's delight in pretty belongings is here.

There is her revealing conversation with Emma Jane:

Rebecca speaks -- "'If you could be a tree, which one would you choose?'

..."'I'd rather be an apple blossom -- the one

that blooms wink by our pig pen.'

"'I'd choose to be that scarlet maple, Rebecca says, just on the edge of the bond over there. Then I could

see so much more than your tree....'
"'When I'm old enough to earn money. I'm going to have a dress like this leaf, all ruby color, - thin. you know, with a sweeping train and ruffly, curly edges; then I think I'll have a brown sash like the trunk of the tree, and where could I be green? Do theyhave green petticoats, I wonder?'"(49)

Rebecca is not without her humanly outraged moments. She writes a bit of verse as follows:

> "Of all the girls that are so mean, There's none like Minnie Smellie. I'll take away the gift I gave. And pound her into jelly." (50)

There is a lovable quality to Rebecca, but still better, merhaps, there is a laughable one. Unconsciously she is being humorous as she remarks: "Mrs.Matthews reminded me of a line in a hymn we sang: 'Wide as the heathen nations are.'" (51)

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Wiggin, Kate Douglas, REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM, p.8

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Ibid. p.149

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Ibid., p.87 (51) Ibid., p.205

Occasionally the book rises to other emotions than laughter. This bit from Rebecca's conversation with Aunt Jane about the latter's love, killed in the Civil War. is restrained yet touching in its pathos.

"'He died just before.'
"'Oh.' And Rebecca's eyes grew misty.
"'It was hard. Rebecca.'...

"Rebecca but her cheek down until it touched her aunt's gray hair and softly batted her as she said, 'I'm sorry, Aunt Jane.'" (52)

Sometimes there is a vivid expression not in Rebecca's words. For example, one can feel the glow of happiness in the house of the poor Simpsons when with the new lamp first lit, they were celebrating in its honor: Rebecca, Emma Jane, and the Simpsons were there, but "The lamp as it glowed upon them seemed to be having the party." (53)

The second reason for REBECCA'S continuing popularity is without doubt the fact that in its opening chapters it is filled with amusing incident -- Rebecca's arrival, the selling of the Rose-red, Snow-white soap, and the sacrifice of the parasol being the most memorable.

Underlying the story is a burning faith in God and life, as expressed by Rebecca in her impromptu prayer:

"'Our Father Who art in Heaven... Thou art God in Syria just the same as in Maine,...over there to-day are blue skies and yellow stars and burning suns....The great trees are waving in the warm air, while here the snow lies thick under our feet...but no distance is too far for God to travel, and so He is with us here as he is with them there'..." (54)

Perhaps no book has a more impassioned expression of optimism in spite of difficulty than Rebecca's outburst

⁽⁵²⁾ Wiggin. Kate Douglas, REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM, D. 176

⁽⁵³⁾ Ibid., p. 166 (54) Ibid..p. 204

to her mother, who does not understand her child's buoyant spirits:

"'Why, mother, it's enough joy just to be here in the world on a day like this: to have the chance of seeing, feeling, doing, becoming. When you were seventeen, mother, wasn't it good just to be alive?'...

"'I often think how dreadful it would beif I were not here at all...No Rebecca; never any Rebecca! To be alive makes up for everything; there ought to be fears in my heart, but there aren't: something stronger sweeps them out, something like the wind!'" (55)

There followed in the wake of REBECCA OF SUNNY-BROOK FARM at least four books which drew part of their inspiration from that book's popularity. ANNE OF GREEN GABLES by Lucy Maud Montgomery, Eleanor Porter's POLLYANNA, UNDER-STOOD BETSY by Dorothy Canfield, and DADDY-LONG-LEGS by Jean Webster.

Annie Carroll Moore in her ROADS TO CHILDHOOD sings a song of complaint about the condition of juvenile fiction in 1920:

... "the books ordinarily written for girls are inferior in theme and treatment to the books written for boys.... They [the authors] are still busy with self-analysis and the reformation of characters of their own invention. There has been no real creation of girl character since REBECCA. No girl has been free to live her own life.

"Stories for girls continue to be introspective, sentimental, moralizing, or didactic. The deluge of 'glad books' following in the wake of POLLYANNA has given pause for reflection. POLLYANNA is more wholesome than ELSIE DINSMORE, but may she not be quite as far from reality? UNDER-STOOD BETSY was a hopeful glimpse of what may yet be done by a competent writer, but UNDERSTOOD BETSY would have been a better story and would have made a larger appeal to girls had educational theory and practice been left out of it." (56)

She continues in the words of an outraged librarian: "Why do the writers for girls always send their heroines to the country to be made over, or bring country (55) Wiggin, Kate Douglas, REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM, p. 340

(56) Moore, Annie C., ROADS TO CHILDHOOD, p.36

girls to the city to re-shape the lives of their artificial cousins? (56)

Remember the city mouse-country mouse theme in AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL.

The outstanding books of the four mentioned above are, in my opinion, ANNE OF GREEN GABLES and UNDERSTOOD BETSY. Both are still fondly read, as is DADDY-LONG-LEGS. POLLYANNA became too notorious to remain so popular. Since Anne came first, let us discuss her first.

In the beginning I shall assert that to Miss Moore's remark that "there has been no real creation of girl character since REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM" (56) I at least have two objections; one is Anne, and the other is Betsy. That there were no others may be true. Certainly Pollyanna is not worth much.

Of the four, ANNE OF GREEN GABLES (1908) shows the closest kinship to REBECCA. What is the quotation with which ANNE begins?

"'The good stars met in your horoscope, Made you of spirit and fire and dew. Browning(57)

This is the identical quotation with which Nora Smith characterizes her sister, whom she says to have been like Rebecca in her childhood.

Both books begin with the arrival of a child into a new world where she is not much wanted. Each child proves herself fascinating in personality. Both girls are continually into mischief -- Anne more so. ANNE and REBECCA are

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Moore, Annie C., ROADS TO CHILDHOOD, pp.37 & 38 (57) Montgomery, L.M., ANNE OF GREEN GABLES, title page

alike in that they fade in interest toward the end as the children grow into young ladies. Crotchety old ladies, staunch supporters, young gentlemen admirers, villainesses, best pals are to be met in both books. Since, therefore, ANNE came after REBECCA in time, ANNE owes much to REBECCA, and is inferior as an original creation.

But originality of plot, theme, and minor characters are not the only tests of worth in a book. It is Anne heself, and the beautiful scenery of Prince Edward Island, home of Lucy Montgomery, which save this book from being a slavish imitation. Anne's spirit may be partly similar to Rebecca's, but there is no question but what each is a different and equally alive creation.

Anne as a character was the result of an advertitem tixement the author saw in a Sunday School newspaper:

"Elderly couple apply to orphan asylum for a boy.

By mistake a girl is sent to them." (58)

Since her creation she has been popular with children and with "red-headed people all over the world." (58)

Aside from Anne's red hair and rabbit-running chatter, I.at twelve years, felt that Anne was like me. A twelve-year-old "novel" of mine reflects this fact. I say this, not to sneak of myself, but to suggest that there is about romantic, fiery, self-conscious.introspective, beauty-loving Anne a universality. No doubt many girls just entering their teens feel closely akin to her in her troubles.

For a picture of a romance-loving little girl,

there is noone, not even Rebecca, like her:

"'Oh, I can carry it,' the child responded cheerfully. 'It isn't heavy. I've got all my worldly goods in it, but it isn't heavy....Oh. I'm glad you've come, even if it would have been nice to sleep in a wild cherry tree.... I've never belonged to anybody -- not really. But the asylum was the worst...there is so little scope for the imagination in an asylum -- only just in the other orphans.... I don't ever expect to be a bride myself. I'm so homely, nobody will ever want to marry me -- unless it might be a foreign missionary. I suppose a foreign missionary mightn't be very particular. But I do hope that someday I shall have a white dress. That's my highest ideal of earthly bliss....Yes, it's red... Now you can see why I can't be perfectly happy.... It will be my life-long sorrow.... They should call that [that road] 'The White Way of Delight.'" (59)

And so Anne talks in the first few pages of the book. Like REBECCA, it is filled with humorous incidents, The best are Anne breaking her slate over Gilbert's head, Anne confessing a sin she had not committed, and Anne dyeing her hair green.

One can compare Anne's prayer with Rebecca's:

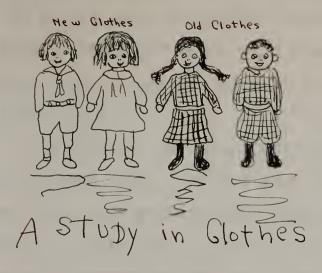
"Gracious heavenly Father, I thank thee for the White Way of Delight and the Lake of the Shining Waters and Bonny [a geranium] and the Snow Queen [a tree in bloom]I'm really extremely grateful for them. And that's all the blessings I can think of just now to thank thee for . As for the things I want, they're so numerous that it would take a great deal of time to name them all, so I will only mention the two most important. Please let me stay at Green Gables, and please let me be good-looking when I grow up. "Yours respectfully,

"Anne Shirley." (60)

Here in children's literature is the verybreath of romanticism. Sentimental? Yes, but like Matthew, her staunch advocate, I think Anne should not give up her romance. "Scope for the imaginatio" is a good in a world where all aometimes is too horribly real; there is a joy in romantic imagination. I do not recommend too many Anne's for

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Montgomery. L.M., ANNE OF GREEN GABLES, pp. 18 - 25 (60) Ibid., p.67

The second secon



Dear Fremy Lean Webster (M.M.)

children's books, but one of her is enchantment. I am not the only one who has ever liked Anne. Mark Twain said of her: "In ANNE OF GREEN GABLES you will find the dearest and most moving and delightful child of fiction since the immortal Alice." (61)

In 1912. Jean Webster in DADDY-LONG-LEGS told another famous or phan story, followed by its sequel, DEAR ENEMY, the latter more grown up than most of the books discussed. Not for nothing was Miss Webster the niece of Mark Twain, and both her stories are brilliant in humor, and note-worthy for the author's own clever sketches.

A climax of over-sentimentality in the stream of fascinating heroines of whom REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM was the first, is Pollyanna, the glad girl. Eleanor Porter's heroine, too, is a child on her own, and the plot is unoriginal; but the main trouble with her is that she is in the book to prove a philosophical concept— that anyone can find something to be glad about, be it only a pair of crutches. As a didactic symbol of optimism Pollyanna is an unchanging quantity rather than a real child. She is the "good little girl" of Sunday School lore all over again. Furthermore, the philosophy is too obviously presented, whatever truth may lie in the fact that personal attitude in life does make a difference to personal happiness.

Whether UNDERSTOOD BETSY by Dorothy Canfield (1917) was a book written entirely for children or partly to present an educational theory to adults. I do not know.

⁽⁶¹⁾ From a publishers' advertisement of the ANNE OF GREEN GABLES series

A CONTRACTOR OF THE PARTY OF TH Dorothy Canfield Fisher was born in Lawrence.

Kansas. in 1879. She was a student of linguistics, and is
famous as an author of adult literature. She has lived for
many years in Vermont.

UNDERSTOOD BETSY is a worth-while book in spite of Miss Moore's criticism of its presentation of educational theory. I do not believe the story would have much foundation for its existence without its theme of education.

Over didacticism is wrong in a child's book, but I do not believe an author can write anything worth-while without teaching something either consciously or unconsciously to his child reader. So I am not ready to condemn any book on the grounds that it is not pure entertainment. Indeed, it is this very underlying lesson which gives the book its deeper significance.

As to this "education" being beyond some children's grasp, "children are past masters at pulling their/ø own particular plums out of any pie," (62) and here are many plums worth pulling. For a child brighter or older, education might well be of interest. After all, youngsters spend a good part of their lives being taught. in school or out, and also grow up to be future teachers and parents. The theory in UNDERSTOOD BETSY is sound, and presented in relatively simple language. Evidently the book enjoys some popularity. for the Boston Public Library now has at least four copies in circulation.

UNDERSTOOD BETSY begins with an ironic humor, strangely adult in quality:

⁽⁶²⁾ Betzner, Jean and Moore, Annie, EVERYCHILD AND BOOKS, p.159

"When they were out walking (Aunt Frances took her out for a walk up one block and down another, no matter how tired the music lesson had made her (Aunt Frances), the aunt's eyes were always on the alert to avoid anything which might frighten Elizabeth Ann. If a big dog trotted by, Aunt Frances always said hastily: There, there, dear! That's a nice doggie, I'm sure. I don't believe he ever bites little girls...Mercy! Elizabeth Ann, don't go near him!... Here, darling, just get on the other side of Aunt Frances if he scares you so.' (By that time Elizabeth Ann was always pretty well scared)" (63)

The book. to be sure, makes its direct and conscious appeal to a little girl. In fact, so conscious is Miss Canfield of her audience that she may be said at times to assume a style for the occasion, (64) in that she makes a direct acknowkedgment of the relationship between author and reader. With a quaint, old-fashioned air, she takes the young reader into her confidence: I wonder if you can guess the name of a little girl... (65)-- meaning, of course you can; this book belongs to both of us. In this is a flattery to the reader not at all displeasing.

In UNDERSTOOD BETSY we have a true appreciation of small-girl nature: "There was, of course, no reason on earth why they should giggle, which is, of course, the very reason why they did...." (66)

As in CAPTAIN JANUARY, there are appealing pets: "Elizabeth Ann bent her thin face over the warm, furry, friendly little animal (a kitten)..."(67)

And there is the spirit of adventure, in the won-derfully told story of Betsy and little Molly, left behind at the country fair, and obliged to earn their way home. The reader lives the whole experience with Betsy.

⁽⁶³⁾ Canfield, Dorothy, UNDERSTOOD BETSY, D. 6

⁽⁶⁴⁾ France, Anatole: see page 8 of thesis, footnote (8)

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Canfield, Derothy, UNDERSTOOD BETSY, p. 137 (66) Ibid., p. 181

"She ran as fast as she could drag Molly's fat legs to the horseshed where Mr. Wendell had tied his horses and left the surrey. The horseshed was empty, quite empty." (68)

The reader, too, sees the procession of the fair animals:

"The prize stock was being paraded around the Fair: the great prize ox, his shining horns tipped with blue rosettes; the prize cows with wreaths around their necks...." (69)

The reader feels finally the unusual depth of Uncle Henry's emotion when the children have come wearily home:

"But what was the matter with Uncle Henry? He ran up to them exclaiming, 'Are ye all right? Are ye all right?'" (70)

The intensity of this outburst is lost on a person unacquainted with the entire story, for one of the book's chief features is its reflection of the taciturn Vermonters who seldom give vent to their feelings but have deep emotions which remain unexpressed in words. The outburst of Uncle Henry is, therefore, most unusual.

In contrast is the humorous situation near the beginning of the book, when Betsy is told by her Uncle to hold the reins, for he has some "figgering" to do--when she has never before in her life done any task alone. He does not talk to her for the entire journey except for

⁽⁶⁸⁾ Ibid., p. 210

⁽⁶⁹⁾ Ibid., p. 223

⁽⁷⁰⁾ Ibid.,

gruff answers. Her delight in her sudden realization that she can do something by herself is genuine. "For it was the first thing she had ever done all herself...every bit ...every smitch! She had thought of it (the way to drive the horse) and she had done it. And it had worked." (71)

The educational theory in the book is put in terms that, I believe, all but the youngest child could understand. Besides the obvious teaching there is the fact that Betsy grows into more of a person on the Vermont farm. She learns to be selfless:

"She had said her 'Now I lay me' every night since she could remember, but she had never prayed till she lay there with her face on the rock, saying over and over, 'Oh, God, please please, please make Mr. Pond adopt 'Lias."

She comes to know that happiness is often compounded of simple, quiet, homely things, lit by the warmth of sharing:

"...the little girl looked down at her pets and listened absently to the keen autumnal wind that swept around the old house, shaking the shutters and rattling the windows. A stick of wood burned in two and fell together in the stove with a soft, whispering sound. The lamp cast a steady radiance on Uncle Henry bent seriously over the checkerboard, on Molly's blooming, round cheeks and bright hair, on Aunt Abigail's rosy, cheerful, wrinkled old face, and on Cousin Ann's quiet, clear dark eyes...

"That room was full to the brim with something beautiful, and Betsy knew what it was. Its name was Happiness." (73)

The best lesson of all the book, though, is the following, which reminds a grown-up or a child of the infinite and grand mystery of human personality:

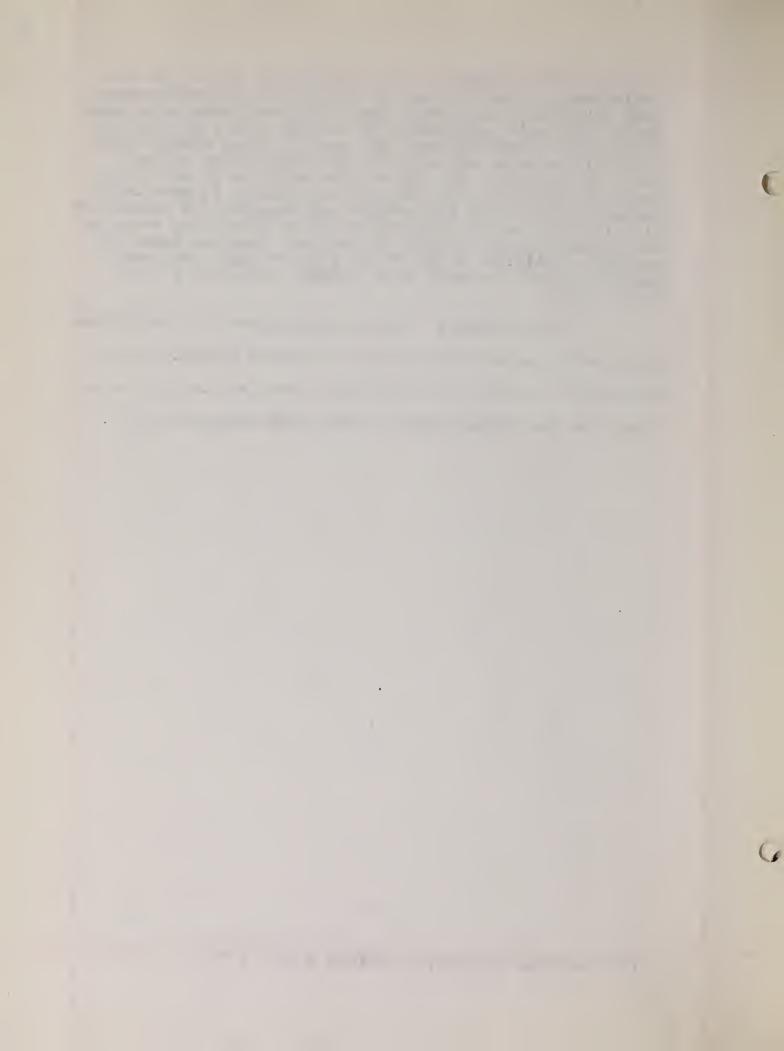
"The answer to that question is that she didn't because Cousin Ann was Cousin Ann. And there's more in that than you think! In fact, there is a mystery in it that no-

⁽⁷¹⁾ Canfield Dorothy, UNDERSTOOD BETSY, p. 36

⁽⁷²⁾ Ibid., p.185 (73)p. 270 & 271

philosophers, though, like all scientists and philosophers, they think they have gone a long way toward explaining something they don't understand, by calling it a long name. The long name is 'personality,' and what it means nobody knows, but it is perhaps the very most important thing in the world for all that. And yet we know only one or two things about it. We know that anybody's personality is made up of the sum total of all the actions and thoughts and desires of his life. And we know that though there aren't any words or any figures in any language to set down that sum total accurately. still, it is one of the first things that everybody knows about anybody else. And that is really all we know!" (74)

This speech is long and expository for a children's book, but it comes in the midst of so much action, is so definitely connected with the story, and, all in all, is so wise that one somehow does not feel like objecting to it.



CHAPTER II (cont.)

Section 2- Summary of the Characteristics of Girls' Books from WHAT KATY DID to 1920

In the first section of this chapter (II) I have been reviewing books in historical sequence. Now it seems desirable to summarize the characteristics of these books, to add information about a few other books of the period representing ancestors of types which have become increasingly popular in recent years, and to give an idea of the state of juvenile literature at the close of the first World War.

First will be the summary. Certain qualities are to be found in all the books I have discussed. Other qualities are in some of the books but not in the rest. Still others are represented by a single volume.

1. Reflection of the life-experience of the author.

All of the books for girls discussed, in the period from 1870 to 1920, reflect in one way or another the life-experience of their authors. Following the lead of Louisa Alcott, Susan Coolidge, Sarah Orne Jewett, Annie Fellows Johnston, Kate Douglas Wiggin all turned to their own childhoods and girlhoods for incidents, characters, emotional situations and settings. Very probably the same is

true of Louise Pyrnelle. MRS.WIGGS OF THE CABBAGE PATCH was, as I said, drawn directly from life.UNDERSTOOD BETSY was the result of Dorothy Canfield's own interest in the field of education.

2. Imaginary stories.

On the other hand, the period was not without its stories drawn largely from the imagination. THE FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS are all imaginary children, if convincing. REBECCA of SUNNYBROOK FARM was partly inspirational in origin as a single character: ANNE OF GREEN GABLES grew from a news item. SARA CREWE and CAPTAIN JANUARY are too plotted to have been drawn directly from helter-skelter life.

3. Romanticism.

Several of the authors of girls' books in this period show marked romantic tendencies. A minor example of this is the inspirational origin of REBECCA already spoken of. The emphasis on imagination in ANNE OF GREEN GABLES and SARA CREWE is romantic in origin. So also the love of external nature avowed by the little-girl heroines Anne, Rebecca, and Pollyanna. Settings themselves are romanticized: the Little Colonel's Lloydsboro Valley, Kentucky, the rocky island of Captain January. Prince Edward Island in ANNE, the plantation in DIDDIE, DUMPS, AND TOT are all glamorous places. The young heroines often have almost unbelievable charm and fascination.

4. Sentimentality.

Sometimes these same heroines are over-sentimen-

talized, as in BETTY LEICESTER and REBECCA, and even more so in POLLYANNA. Sentimentality, if in a charming guise, is one of the chief characteristics of THE LITTLE COLONEL series.

5. Realism and humor.

On the other hand, we have found in these books much realism in characters. Katy Carr, the little Peppers, Diddie and her sisters, Sara, Star, Mary Ware, Rebecca, Anne, and Betsy are all real little girls. Incidents, too, are often remarkably life-like. The most realistic scenes in these books are often the funniest ones.

6. Books with emotions other than laughter.

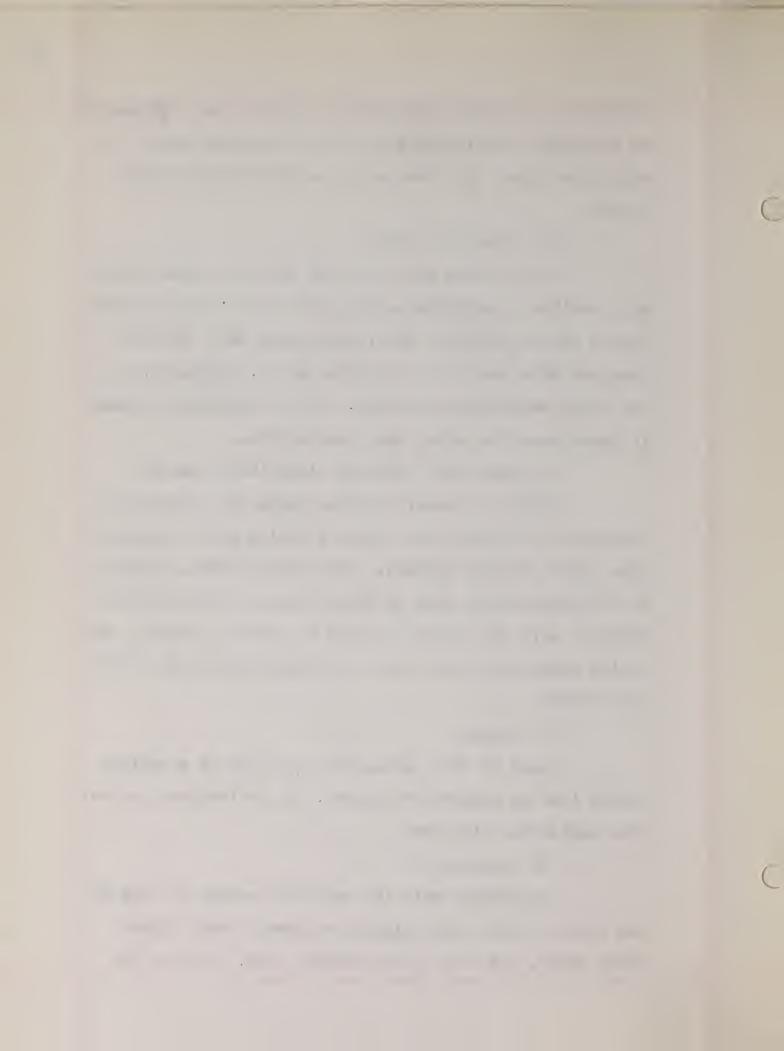
Still, a number of these books are emotionally persuasive in other ways than in bringing about laughter. SARA CREWE, CAPTAIN JANUARY, THE LITTLE COLONEL, REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM, ANNE OF GREEN GABLES, and UNDERSTOOD BETSYALL move the reader to tears as well as laughter. Exciting adventures are found in CAPTAIN JANUARY and UNDERSTOOD BETSY.

7. Series.

Some of these books are the first of a series, rather than an independent volume. In one instance, an entire series was discussed.

8. Simplicity.

Contrasted with the romantic settings of some of the books we find other simple and homely ones. UNDERSTOOD BETSY, THE FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS, MRS. WIGGS OF THE



CABBAGE PATCH, and REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM are examples of books with simpler backgrounds.

9.Sectionalism.

DIDDIE, DUMPS AND TOT is a Southern book first, last, and always.

10. Humanitarianism.

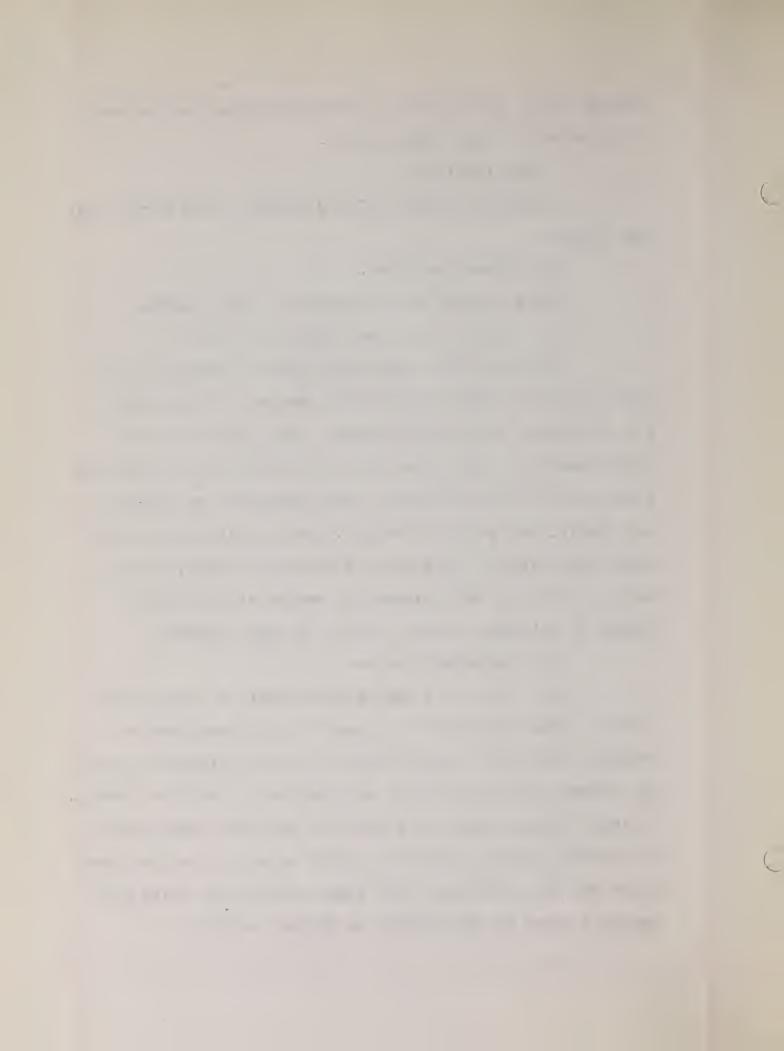
This quality was discussed at length above.

11. Family groups and single heroines.

WHAT KATY DID, THE FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS, DIDDIE, DUMPS, AND TOT, THE LITTLE COLONEL series, and MRS.WIGGS are stories of jolly family groups. The other books have single heroines about whom the whole book centers, with the exception of CAPTAIN JANUARY. The characters are usually not static, but grow and develop. Some heroines do not remain little girls, but grow up into young ladies. In fact, many of the books were written to appeal to the ages of eleven to thirteen, rather than to younger children.

12. Stereotyped plots.

The plots of a surprising number of these young "novels" tend to follow set lines. Thus we have seen repeatedly "city and country mouse" stories, children on trips to strange new environments, and fascinating child reformers. Another popular type is the story of boarding school days, THE LITTLE CLONEL AT BOARDING SCHOOL being an example. Chronicles are also prevalent. The least stereotyped plots are probably those of SARA CREWE and CAPTAIN JANUARY.



13. Teaching.

There is not one of these books but what teaches some lesson to the child reader. Usually these lessons, unlike those of the earlier Victorian books, are subordinate to story and characters. The skill of the author in teaching subtly or obviously is the main difference between one book and another.

14. Optimism.

All these books are based on a fundamentally optimistic philosophy of joy in life and in growth. Not one of them is unidealistic or pessimistic in tone.

15. Development.

The remarkable fact is that between the years 1870 and 1920, though the average girl's book has its surface differences, fundamentally there was very little change in realistic fiction for girls. If this is true for these books, the best of their kind during the period, it was undoubtedly much more true of lesser books, which always tend to be copies.

I have already quoted the passage from Annie Carroll Moore's ROADS TO CHILDHOOD, published in 1920, about the poor condition in which she found girls' books at the close of the first World War. The war itself probably had much to do with the decline of children's books in general.ROADS TO CHILDHOOD as a whole is a plea for better books for children, with more original plots and less dulness, as well

as for "informed criticism of good work and poor work" in juvenile fiction.(1)

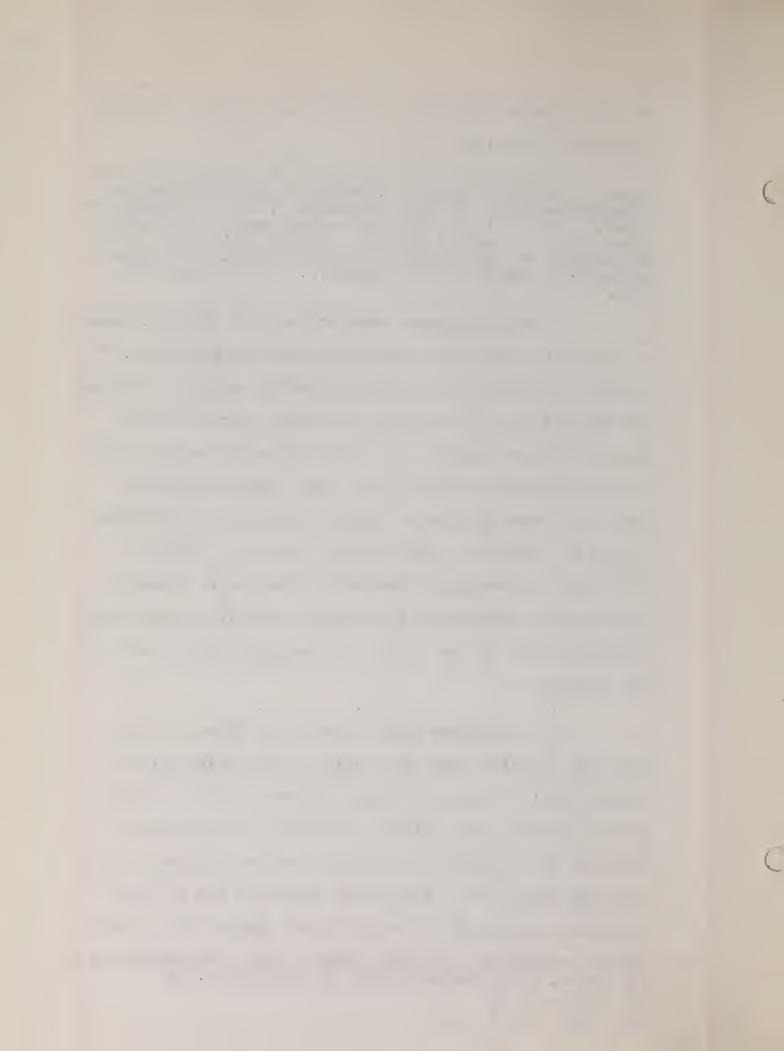
"To be dull in a new way," she writes, "has not been an inspiring slogan....Contemporary writers of distinction hesitate to enter the field...." (2) "Somehow or other," she continues, "the impression seems to have got about that a juvenile author ...divests himself as far as possible of any natural or acquired ability to write, and adapts him self to a formula... 'a successful juvenile'." (3)

Books on science were the rule of the day. Books to instruct rather than amuse the young had come back. "It is the didactic period of the Eighteenth Century in France and England and of the early Nineteenth Century in New England all over again..." (4) She longs for another Golden Age in juvenile fiction like that which followed the year 1873. When Mary Mapes Dodge took over the editorship of the ST. NICHOLAS magazine, most famous of juvenile periodicals. Although I have made objection to a few of Miss Moore's statements, her general analysis of the state of girls' books in the years 1918 and 1919 is no doubt all too correct.

In analyzing girls' books from 1870 to 1920.I have not included even every class of realistic fiction for the period. Also, divisions between periods in literature are at best arbitrary. Naturally there were authors in the juvenile field whose work both preceded and followed World War I. Eliza Orne White was one of these: since the quality of her work did not change much, I have chosen to discuss one of her books in the next section of (1) Moore, Annie Carroll, ROADS TO CHILDHOOD, p. 28

⁽²⁾ Ibid., p. 27

⁽³⁾ Ibid., pp. 77 (4) Ibid., pp. 23 & 24



my thesis.

I should like now to discuss more briefly than in the preceding section two or three books which were the ancestors of much popular fiction for girls in the present day.

The first is MERRYLIPS by Beulah Marie Dix, 1906. Merrylips is an historical romance about a little girl Cavalier who disguised herself in boy's clothing and "fought" in the Puri tan Revolution. The story is a ripping good one, adventure piling on adventure. There is not a bit of emphasis on morals. That the book is popular to-day, I can testify, for in the copy I read was written succinctly and enthusiastically by some child, "Swell Book." There are to-day many popular books on historical themes for little girls.

Another type of book frequent of late years is that about children in other lands. One of the greatest of these is HANS BRINKER, OR THE SILVER SKATES, 1865.

"One of the earliest stories for children about another country, it is still one of the best loved. In this book, accepted in Holland as a true picture of Dutch life, the characters have a reality which children everywhere find convincing." (5)

That this book is so "accepted in Holland" is amazing, since Mrs.Dodge wrote it without having visited the country. Its success can be ascribed to her learning of Dutch life through reading and to her genius.

On the whole, however, books about other countries before 1911 were didactic lectures. "Each author

⁽⁵⁾ Eaton, Anne T., READING WITH CHILDREN, pp.204 & 205



Fric and Elsa
from
Norway
Lucy Fitch Perkins
(M.M.)



tried to stuff his books as full of information as he possibly could. They were dull, of course...." (6)

"Thirty years ago, however, THE DUTCH TWINS appeared (the book has had many printings), and entitles Mrs. Lucy Fitch Perkins to be ranked as the first of the truly modern writers of geographical stories for children. The many TWIN books which followed possess, on the whole, a remarkable freshness and spontaneity, but among them all THE DUTCH TWINS stands out for the genial picture of childhood, presented with an engaging simplicity and realism. The illustrations by the author, who made the drawings for all her books, possess the same gentle humor and child-like quality as the text, and have much to do with the book's universal appeal." (7)

Since Mrs. Perkins' work, like Eliza Orne White's both preceded and followed the World War, and I chose to read THE NORWEGIAN TWINS, as THE DUTCH TWINS was always among the missing at the public library, I shall have more to say about Mrs. Perkins' work in my next chapter.

Another geography story of the earlier period, one of my own favorites, is KATRINKA - THE STORY OF A RUSSIAN CHILD by Helen Eggleston Haskell (1915). Katrinka and Peter live in Czarist Russia in a peasant's hut. One night their father and mother are taken to Siberia, for they had a printing press in their home. Peter and Katrinka, left alone, nearly starve, but after a long journey, the little girl is made a member of the Imperial ballet. The story, in spite of a happy ending, is unforgetable as a picture of the suffering of Russian peasants in pre-Communist days. The contrast between the extreme wealth of the Russian nobility and the extreme poverty of the people is vivid. The book has two sequels about later developments in Russia.

⁽⁶⁾ Eaton, Anne T., READING WITH CHILDREN, p. 196 (7) Ibid., pp. 197 & 198

Another type of fiction for girls grown popular in recent years is the mystery story. It is interesting to note how often children's books follow trends in adult fiction. Historical novels for adults are followed by historical stories for girls. Modern detective stories for adults are the suggestion for little girls' "mysteries."

The first of the mystery-story writers for girls, and in my opinion the best, is Augusta Huiell Seaman, author of THE BOARDED-UP HOUSE, THE SAPPHIRE SIGNET, JACQUELLINE OF THE CARRIER PIGEONS, etc. Writers of mysteries must, according to Mrs. Seaman, have imagination and curiosity, love of unraveling problems—of solving riddles, and keeping others in suspense. Mrs. Seaman, brought up on Sherlock Holmes and Poe, started writing mystery stories in the years 1910 to 1913. She knew that little girls loved mysterious events, so why not mystery stories for them as well as adults—omitting, of course, the crime element, but keeping all the conjectures, thrills, and suspense of adult detective stories? Thus began 'mysteries." (8)

And now let us turn in the next chapter to the more recent stories for girls.

CHAPTER III

FICTION FOR GIRLS SINCE THE LATE 1920'S

Section 1- Reviews of Individual Books
a) Little Girls of Long Ago

Parallel to the present-day incresse of interest in adult literature called historical romance and in biography runs a stream of stories for the young by recent authors about children, real or imaginary, who dwelt in the days when mother, grandmother, or even great-grandmother was young. I have already mentioned one such book of earlier date-- MERRYLIPS by Beulah Marie Dix.

"Certain present-day writers have recently been remarkably successful in their stories of little girls in a setting of an earlier day. Because of their truth as child portraits, their spontaneity and humor, JANE HOPE by Elizabeth Janet Gray; TABITHA MARY and VINNY APPLEGAY by Ethel Parton; and Lucinda of Ruth Sawyer's ROLLER SKATES are accepted by children of to-day as contemporaries and boon companions." (1)

These are by no means the only newer books of historical fiction. Because there are more than I could possibly discuss, I have chosen a representative group of three-- Eliza Orne White's WHEN ABIGAIL WAS SEVEN (1931), THE WILLOW WHISTLE (1940) by Cornelia Meigs, and MELISSA ANN (1941) by Ethel Parton.

I shall discuss these books in the order of publication: so first let us listen awhile to ABIGAIL by Eliza (1) Eaton ,Anne T., READING WITH CHILDREN, p. 177

Orne White. Yes, I mean "listen to," for that is the way you feel as you read this book. Some books a child looks at or reads from, but this book she listens to. It is as if she were sitting at her grandmother's knee, and her grandmother began: "Once there was a little girl named Abigail."

I have already referred to the difficulty of knowing where in my thesis to place the works of Eliza Orne White. She is known as

"...the little girl's novelist. Over a long period of years her books have appeared, always with spontaneity and zest in the writing; her long series of little heroines are well characterized and never fail to have individuality. Each one is presented with real knowledge of human nature and with a keen and delightful humor. The home background is characterized by a fine and understanding relationship between children and adults that is refreshing."(2)

In the year 1920 her books were already highly approved; she was called a "born psychologist" and "a very good story teller." (3)

She was born in 1856 in Keene, New Hampshire, where her father was a minister. She lived in just the right place for a little girl to grow up in who was to write stories for other little girls, for there were all the things children like: beauty, out-of-doors, friends, kittens, chickens, and flowers. She saw Dickens in her childhood, and was sure he was admiring her new cape. "I thought it very pretty myself." (4)

Miss White wrote twenty children's books in all.

In 1934 she was living in Brookline, Massachusetts and making mud pies with her five-year-old neighbor-- and knowing they were really pies. "The good thing about an imagination,"

⁽²⁾ Eaton, Anne T., READING WITH CHILDREN, p. 182 (3) Moore, Annie Carroll, ROADS TO CHILDHOOD, p.

⁽⁴⁾ Kunitz and Haycraft, JUNIOR BOOK OF AUTHORS, account of Eliza Orne White

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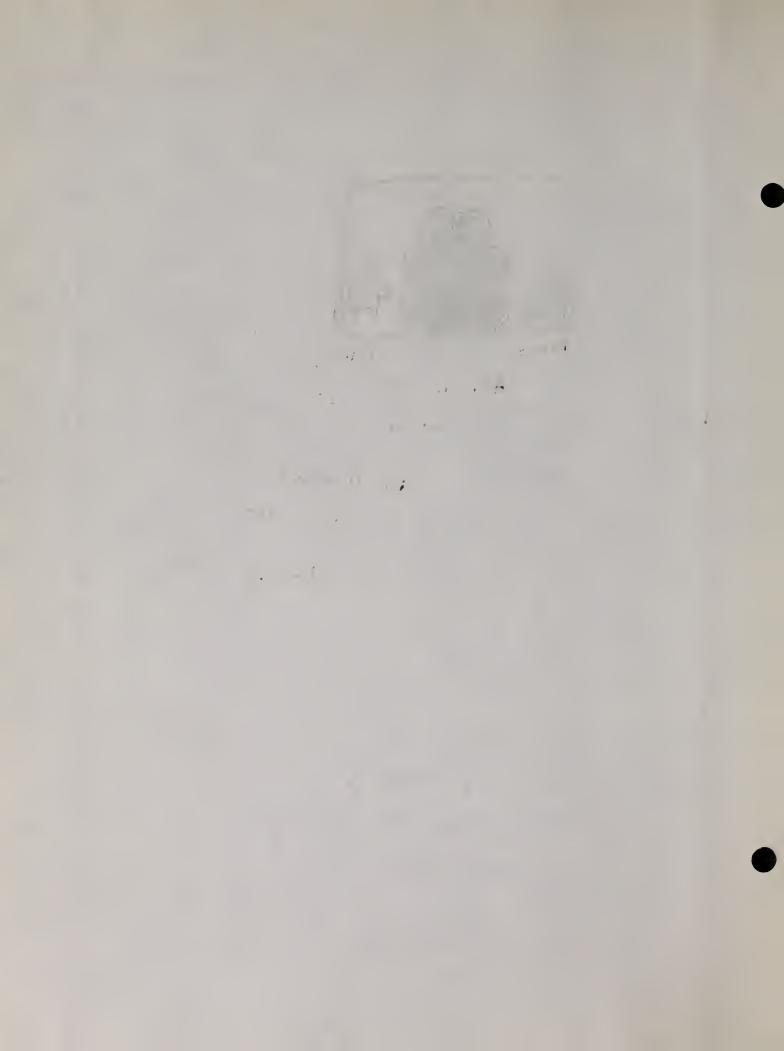


Abivail and Esther

Hist Hummel

Scisson out

(M.M.)



she wrote, "is that it defies time." (5)

Miss White's WHEN ABIGAIL WAS SEVEN is for the youngest little girls. It is illustrated with scissor cuts by Lisl Hummel. The idea that this book is about a little girl, not of to-day but of yesterday is not stated flatly, but cleverly grows out of the action, for little Abigail, when the story begins, is making a sampler.

"'Esther Moorhouse 1797-- how nice that looked with the two sevens...still, Abigail Wetmore 1828 would look just as well.'" (6)

The sense of period is brought out again by matters of dress:

"The little girls were in white dresses. Abigail wore a pink sash and a cottage bonnet with pink ribbons. Esther had on a blue sash and her cottage bonnet with sky blue ribbons." (7)

Though this story may have happened long ago, it has a humor and a reality that are of no particular time:

"'I am not often naughty,' said Abigail, 'but when I once begin to be, I like to see the thing through. If I am going to be punished, I might as well have the fun of a grand treat to be punished for." (8)

A very human little girl!

The two little girls, Abigail and Esther, are clearly differentiated as characters by their conversation. Abigail is lively and up-and-coming; Esther is shy and sweet. When Abigail's doll is given a present, Esther is asked if her doll, Peggy, would like one, too. Esther says with the sweetest smile, "Of course Peggy would like a present if you want to give her one, but she's got a nice disposition; she isn't the a bit jealous." (8)

(6), thid:; p: 182 (9) Ibid:, pp. 123 & 124

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid., account of Eliza Orne White (6) White, Eliza Orne, WHEN ABIGAIL WAS SEVEN, p.2

There are not often shy little girls in children's books: Esther is a darling child, and there are real little girls just like her.

Joel, Abigail's brother, is amusing. Listen to the honest-to-goodness little boy: "'I don't want to travel with that scrubby cat!'" (10)

Grown-ups in this book are particularly sympathetic and human. Father Wetmore says of his little niece, Esther, when the child is too shy to speak: "Esther and I do not need any words to express our feelings. We have a language of our eyes that is quite superior to speech." (11)

The relationship between Amigail and Joel is psychologically very well done:

"She knew perfectly well that he had asked her to play with him because he was sorry he had hurt her foot, and she knew perfectly well that she had forgiven him (though neither spoke), but Priscilla [the oldest sister] was still harping on Joel's lack of good manners and all proper feeling." (12)

There are bits of historical reference when Abigail visits Salem. "On Sunday afternoon Uncle Timothy
took them for a long walk. They went to the hill to see
where the witches had been hanged...." (13)

And again: "They were coming to a quaint house with seven gables...."(14)

There is also moral teaching in the book, now and again. Always it is done in an appealing way, and connected closely with the story.

[&]quot;Think, for instance, how you would feel if you

⁽¹⁰⁾ White, Eliza Orne, WHEN ABIGAIL WAS SEVEN, p.35

⁽¹¹⁾ Ibid., p. 101

⁽¹²⁾ Ibid., p.41 (13) Ibid., p. 17 (14) Ibid., p.62

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were a cat, and a giant came, along and pulled your tail and turned you upside down: (15)

And again: "'I'm sure it is a nice thought,' Abi-gail said to herself; 'I'll be truly considerate.'" (16)

In the recent period of girls' books, as in the preceding one, is the same happy quality. So here: "She had been happy then, but she did not know how much happier she could be." (17)

Quaint is the word for Abigail- quaint and lovable Cornelia Meigs, whose THE WILLOW WHISTLE will be the next book discussed, is one of the best juvenile writers living to-day. She was born December 6, 1885. A member of a large family, one of her chief amusements was telling stories to the younger children. She is a graduate of Bryn Mawr, and a teacher. In 1934 she received the Newberry Medal for INVINCIBLE LOUISA, and was also awarded the \$2000, Beacon Hill Bookshelf Prize for her story THE TRADE WIND. She believes that confidence and hard work bring success in the writing of juvenile literature.

"THE WILLOW WHISTLE is one of the few well-written interesting stories for younger children with a background of an earlier day." (18) It is an adventure story of a little girl and boy on the prarie in pioneer days.

There are Indians, always thrilling to youngsters, and their customs:

"Gray Eagle dropped words now and then of a way he and his comrades had of showing friendship for a white man they had come to trust. It was to take the white man's children to their camp for a visit..." (19)

⁽¹⁵⁾ White, Eliza Orne, WHEN ABIGAIL WAS SEVEN, p.62

⁽¹⁶⁾ Ibid., p.132

⁽¹⁷⁾ Ibid., p. 125 (18) Eaton, Anne, READING WITH CHILDREN, p. 170 (19) Meigs, Cornelia, THE WILLOW WHISTLE, p. 19

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Mary Anne, heroine of the book, visits Gray Eagle's camp and plays with little Indian children. The whole story is exciting. There are the enemies of Gray Eagle, the Arikarees.

"'Why must we hide?'Eric said.

"She hushed himinstantly.' Not so loud! Speak in a whisper. The Arikarees might hear us...." (20)

They are like two children playing Indians, but the exciting thing is that it was real. The spirit of adventure is so strong in this book that there is little time for anything else. Humor creeps in here and there during lulls; very young humor it is:

Mary Ann studied her spelling book "with her mind wandering so far away that presently she was saying, 'F-o-x, ox, O-x, fox!'" (21)

The pioneer atmosphere is maintained by the story of the building of the new schoolhouse. Eric had helped to build his own school. Think of that!

"When his glance wandered for a moment from his book to the angle of the roughly finished roof, he could see the beam that he had cut with his own hands." (22)

Oh, it is all wonderfully exciting.

A book for girls a little older is story MELISSA

ANN by Ethel Parton, author of TABITHA MARY and VINNY APPLE—
GAY. Ethel Parton was born in 1862 in New York City. Her

parents were Mortimer Thomson, a humorist with the pen name

of 'Philander Q.K.Doesticks,' and Sarah Willis Eldredge.One

⁽²⁰ Meigs, THE WILLOW WHISTLE, p.48

⁽²¹⁾ bid., p.63 (22) bid., p. 143

the second secon

of her grandfathers founded THE YOUTH'S COMPANION. In her childhood Ethel Parton, orphaned, lived in Newburyport in the care of a grandmother, uncle, and aunt. Her stories usually have a Newburyport background and are based on stories told her by living lips, especially those of her grandmother and aunt. She must have enjoyed writing for children, for she wrote in 1934, "It is like getting away from grown-ups and all being of an age together." (23)

MELISSA ANN begins slowly, but once the story is under way with the arrival in Boston of Mitty's (Melissa Ann's) cousin Lucy from Newburyport, it is filled with action and events.

"'Only think, Lucy, 'she said, 'how many things seem to be happening all at once! It is only a few days ago that Captain Purvis came home -- and then it was my birthday and now Dick is going to sea -- and Grandmother has come -- and Saturday they'll launch the FAIR MELISSA. Only think!'"

(24)

The sense of the period which the book presents is the result of many details -- of samplers as in WHEN ABIGAIL WAS SEVEN and of sailing vessels. One of the most amusing episodes in the book is that of Mitty's pantalets; which in for pantalets in 1820 were just coming into fashion. Lucy, an up-to-date little lass, told Mitty that she really should wear pantalets. In spite of her grandmother's disapproval of the fashion, Mitty made a pair for herself from a pillow case, but one leg, unfortunately, fell off in the middle of a gay party:

"The buzz of talk and the noisy cracking of nuts stopped; laughter and talk were cut off...; the younger

⁽²³⁾ Kunitz and Haycraft, JUNIOR BOOK OF AUTHORS, account of Ethel Parton

⁽²⁴⁾ Parton, Ethel, MELISSA ANN, p. 258



"The Fair Melissa"
M. A. hawson
(M. M.)

Full and By, said Mitty ... and Home ward Bound .



children were warned to be quiet by their mothers, when Mitty's voice soared up loud and clear above the sudden silence. It reached every corner of the big room, and to every startled ear that was expecting the minister's 'Let us pray,' it said mournfully, 'There isn't any use in just one pantalet.'" (25)

Funniest of all is the squash doll episode.Mitty's summer-squash doll is boiled by mistake by the cook for dinner: "Squashes were meant to b'ile, and she had b'iled it." (26)

Mitty was much upset to learn that she had eaten her own "Almeria," but is comforted by a gravestone made by her young friend Dick, with this inscription:

"In Memory of Almeria Mitford

missionary wife to the heathen
who was pious and
vtrtuous and
Eaten by Cannobles
July 26,1820" (27)

The characters, both grown-ups and children, are excellent. Dainty, blonde Lucy, who is a little vain about her clothes, and Mitty, dark, and less interested in appearances, are both engaging.

Pantalets "'are coming into fashion more and more; Mother says so. They are more haut ton than anything else, " says Lucy, showing off her French. But Mitty "...was too happy to care about spots as long as they were only the fault of the wind and the Merrimac River." (29)

The friendship between Mitty and Lucy is pleasant. When Mitty finds that she may remain always in Newburyport, rather than return to Boston, Lucy says: "Of course you would do to stay. Granny has told me, too, but I wasn't a bit surprised. I knew perfectly well that if we

⁽²⁵⁾ Parton, Ethel, MELISSA ANN, pp.73 & 74 (26) Ibid..p. 181

⁽²⁶⁾ Ibid., p. 181 (27) Ibid., p.184 (28) Ibid., p. 61

⁽²⁹⁾ Ibid., p. 275

once got you here, we would never let you go.'" (30)

Dick and Grandmother Otway are also life-like.

Mitty and Madam Otway, who claims at first not to care much for little girls except for Lucy, are talking.

"'Don't you like any children but Lucy?'asked Mitty.

"'Some,' said Madam Otway. 'Run away, child.'

"'You like Dick Purvis, don't you?'said Mitty.
"'An heroic lad,' said Madam Otway. 'Young Richard is exceptional.

"'Do you like me?' said Mitty. 'Just a little?' [Madam Otway sent Mitty away stiffly, but could

not disguise her feelings: she called Mitty back.]

"'If you wish, 'said Madam Otway crisply, 'you can call me 'Granny,' as Lucy does.'" (31)

Minor characters, including Kish, the cat, are also successful. The settings of Boston and Newburyport, especially the latter, are authentic. Newburyport is described with affection: "Never had there been in Boston any such glorious spread of gardens and trees and town and spires and sails and sky and river and sea. (.. "(32))

When unpleasant happenings occur in the book, they are mitigated by humorous touches. Fido, a dog who dies, is not a popular dog:he is called an imbecile of a beast by the doctor who attends Mitty and Dick. She has suffered an injury in resuing Fido from the sea, and Dick has caught a chill in the same rescue. Mitty likes the sound of "imbecile, and the next time she has been naughty and repents, to the amusement of her elders: "'I know,' she wept, 'my behavior has been perfectly imbecile.'" (33)

Ethel Parton has an artist's delight in words, especially in the names of old clipper ships: "The wet

⁽³¹⁾ Parton, Ethel, MELISSA ANN, pp.240 & 241

⁽³²⁾ Ibid., p. 111

⁽³³⁾ Ibid., p. 172

green boughs of the young elm trees tossed above the hurrying figures...'FULL AND BY, 'said Mitty suddenly,' and HOMEWARD BOUND.'" (34)

As in all the girls' books discussed, teaching is present -- in the general historical background of the book; and also here is joy:

"From the minute that Mitty jumped out of bed and ran to look out the window, with the curtains billowing in about her, and her nightgown whipping like a flag on a pole, she could hardly keep quiet a moment. She was too happy. She danced as she stepped, and sang as she dressed..." (35)

I would like to mention briefly four other books of interest about little girls of long ago. The first is AWAY GOES SALLY, by Elizabeth Coatsworth, the story of a little girl who

"...has the novel and exhilarating experience of traveling, with her three aunts, all the way from Hingham, Massachusetts, to the Penobscot River in a little house built by her uncle Joshua and drawn on a sledge by six yoke of oxen. The story is told with an imaginative feeling for the New England country in winter and a humorous and kindly understanding of the characters described." (36)

As in ALICE-ALL-BY-HERSELF by the same author, besides text and pictures, there are delicate little poems.

year-old tom-boy of pioneer days in Wisconsin, is another entertaining story of early American life. It is based on the experience of the author's own grandmother, and is patriotic in the best sense of the word. A little Girl Scout I met this winter told me in its entirety a story told by one of the children in this book. CADDIE had certainly impressed her: I think she did not omit a single detail.

⁽³⁴⁾ Parton, Ethel, MELISSA ANN, p. 205

⁽³⁵⁾ Ibid., p.265

⁽³⁶⁾ Eaton, Anne T., READING WITH CHILDREN, pp. 170%171

 Still another book about pioneer times is ALL THE DAYS WERE ANTONIA'S by Gretchen McKown and Florence Stebbins Gleason.

"'Tony,'the lttle heroine, goes West with her mother by stagecoach in the 1870's, from Cheyenne to Dead-wood City, where her father has already gone to establish a pioneer bank. Actual experience has gone into the making of this book, for Florence Stebbins Gleason went herself as a small girl to Deadwood, Dakota, where her father had a bank for the miners. The book is written with charm and humor, and Antonia and the life of a pioneer mining town are extraordinarily real." (37)

A book with a pretty pink cover is Margery Biance's story of Chris and Emmie, BRIGHT MORNING, published in 1942. Chris and Emmie live in Victorian London, where they wear longish dresses, high, buttoned boots, and see the Queen ride by. It is an amusing little story for the younger children. Who will ever forget Emmie naughtily licking the wall paper, or the children's fear of the Boom Co-Boy, as they called the advertising man on stilts who frightened them?

But we have tarried long enough with the little girls of long ago, although there are many more that might be mentioned.

b) Children of Far Away

"...Whatever opportunities in actual life exist for traveling, all children in these days of excellent travel books can, in spirit, visit 'foreign lands where wonders are.' The sensitive, understanding, well-written books about other countries should play a part in the reading experience of every child. They enlarge his sympathies and encourage understanding. Human nature, they say, is the same the world over, and thus they bring home to him in his impressionable years the truth that it is the individual that matters and not the individual label." (38) national

⁽³⁷⁾ Eaton, Anne T., READING WITH CHILDREN, p.176 (38) Ibid., pp. 214 & 215

the state of the s As is the case with the little girls of long ago, there are many books which might be discussed about the children of far away. I have, therefore, for lack of space and time chosen a typical example, Lucy Fitch Perkins' THE NORWEGIAN TWINS, for full discussion, and three other books for briefer mention.

I already introduced Lucy Fitch Perkins in the preceding chapter of my thesis as the first of modern geography story-book writers. She was born in Indiana in 1865. She made in her youth long visits to Massachusetts, and attended the Art School at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. She married Dwight Heald Perkins; they had two children.

She saw the need for mutual respect between the peoples of the earth. This perception and a visit to Ellis Island, where she became inspired by the "melting pot" idea, caused her to write THE DUTCH TWINS and its numerous sequels. She is interested in presenting themes of significance: for example, she emphasizes the tremendous importance of the various types of land ownership on peoples, as in THE IRISH TWINS, where absentee landlordism is dealt with.

THE NORWEGIAN TWINS is the story of Eric and Elsa, their Far and Mor, Mouser, their cat, Grendel, their dog, the Tomt, Old Anders, and Ingeborg, Elsa's doll. Besides being a typical Norwegian boy and girl, Eric and Elsa are real children.

"This book is about Eskimos in general, said an eight-year-old reader.' I do not like to read about Eskimos

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in general,' meaning that he preferred books in which the characters had names and there was the thread of a story! (39)

THE NORWEGIAN TWINS would fulfill this youngster's demands,

for it has both individualized characters and a gentle but lively story.

THE NORWEGIAN TWINS is unusual for a children's book in having a "foreword" addressed to young readers. I believe this device is not especially commendable, for it keeps the child waiting impatiently for the story to begin. Once it does begin, however, it is persuasively charming. Most of the information about Norwegian life comes about through what the characters do rather than through direct teaching:

"Elsa, meanwhile, bustled about the kitchen as if she were Mother Lisbet. She swept the hearth, swung the crane out over it, hung the soup kettle on it, filled the tea-kettle, and then swung the crane back EXER again over the flames." (40)

Only occasionally does diret teaching creep in:

"Of course there had to be a Tomt, because at that time everybody believed that there was one such little goblin for every house in Norway..." (41)

The story reflects many Norwegian superstitions and customs. Besides the Tomt, there are the Necken, the Trolls, and fairy music. Part of the story of Siegfried and the whole of a Norwegian folk tale, "The Husband Who Minded House," are included. An example of a custom is the following:

"The moment supper was over, Eric and Elsa went to their Father and Mother, as all little Scandinavian children do, took their hands, and said, 'Takk for maten' Thank you for the meal'.... (42)

(41) Ibid., p. 19 (42) Ibid., p. 23

⁽³⁹⁾ Eaton, Anne T., READING WITH CHILDREN, p. 196 (40) Perkins, Lucy Fitch, THE NORWEGIAN TWINS, p. 19

The food that this Norwegian family eat is described, and their house. The differences of Norwegian sized life from life in the United States are emphasized, but the likenesses, too, are brought out: "Though the children knew every word of 'The Three Bears', just as you do to-day". (43)

There is moral teaching, also univerally applicable. Said <u>Far</u>, "'Being brave isn't just the same thing as not being afraid. If you do the thing you're afraid to, that's being brave.'" (44)

The story is an adventurous one: the children are lost; Eric finds a wolf puppy; Ingeborg, the doll, has her legs mended. In connection with the last incident, I wish to say that the book is quietly and unobtrusively humorous, now and again. There is a sweetness to this smiling. For example, Old Anders, the man who made the doll Ingeborg would be pleasing to any little girl who loves dolls for his concern in his creation: "Old Anders almost dropped the frying panthat time, for sure! He was proud of Ingeborg, and when he saw her dreadful condition, he was shocked!"

The book is once reminiscent of UNDERSTOOD BETSY, when it makes a direct appeal to the youthful reader.Beneath the whole is the following purpose briefly stated at the end of the book, in its "Suggestions to Teachers":

This book is "to give children experience which will develop an attitude of friendliness and of understanding for other peoples of the earth; to learn in an elementary way how certain people in the world live, and why they work and play and live in the ways that they do; and to acquire certain basic, principles about the kind of country in geographic

⁽⁴³⁾ Perkins, Lucy Fitch, THE NORWEGIAN TWINS, p.73

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Ibid., p.25

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Ibid., p.59

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Kate Seredy (M.M.)



which these people live; the climate of the country, and how it affects the ways in which the people live." (46)

THE YEAR IS A ROUND THING is another book about readers
Norway, by Helene Ebeltoft Davis. Designed for older girls
than THE NORWEGIAN TWINS, it is written in interesting,
straightforward prose. The plan of the story is that of the
wheel of the year, each month a stopping place, a spoke, a
chapter. Again we have a reflection of the climate, foods, occoupations, holidays, recreations, cutoms, and superstitions of a foreign people.

Helene Ebeltoft Davis's book is American by publication, but her "home is in Norway so far north that it lies within the Arctic Circle. Here may be enjoyed the pranks of the young Ebeltofts and their activities, which follow the seasons -- the reader's imagination is stirred by the strangeness of the aurora borealis, a Christmas moming lighted only by the moon, and the welcome to the sun on January first ." (47)

For the younger children again is Esther Brann's book of stories and pictures, NANETTE OF THE WOODEN SHOES. Nanette is a little girl of Brittany who picks strawberries for shipment to England, buys long French bread for her Grandmere, marches in a Church procession, and celebrates Bastille Day. The book is a bit stylized in its youthfulness, but as a picture of Brittany it seems authentic. NANETTE, too, fulfills the eight-year-old's requirement by telling a group of stories about individualized foreign characters.

Resi of Appenzellerland in E.R.Gaggin's AN EAR

FOR UNCLE EMIL is a busy, resourceful, amusing child. Kate

Seredy's beautiful drawings make her still more real." (48)

(46) Perkins, Lucy Fitch, THE NORWEGIAN TWINS, "Suggestions

(47) Thaxter, Anne T., to Teachers"

READING WITH CHILDREN, p. 204

(48) Ibid. p. 203

the state of the s the court of the state of the s The story of Resi may seem artificial to one familiar with the genius of HEIDI by Johanna Spyri; the plot is definitely manufactured. Nevertheless the book is faithful in its details to the spirit of the country it describes, and its Resi is indeed an interesting child.

Children may in these books and the many, many others about foreign lands and remote parts of the United States make more "enchanting journeys" than are even possible in automobiles or ships. "For all the world-- a larger world than any one of us will ever see with his physical eyes--is before them, the magical East, the vigorous West, Northern snows, and the brilliance of tropical seas." (46)

c) Mystery Stories

The origin of girls' mystery stories has already been stated in the preceding chapter of the thesis. "Mysteries" usually do not equal in artistry other children's books, if we compare the best examples of each type. I have already mentioned the numerous series of mystery stories which are of no literary value. I have also mentioned as better written the "mysteries" by Mrs. Seaman, to which I was devoted.

Like detective stories in adult fiction, "mysteries for children are meant to be enjoyed for a short period only. Once the reader has solved the riddle, there is little point in re-reading the book. This accounts for the mystery series: the child does not solve the same problem again and again, but may solve many problems, one after the other. Also, it accounts for the lesser literary value, because the story needs (46) Eaton, Anne T., READING WITH CHILDREN, p. 193

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to be good entertainment only, and is not intended for "chewing" and re-reading. This does not mean that mystery stories could not and should not have more value than momentary entertainment, but it does explain why they tend to lack the polish of other children's books.

Girls' mystery stories, without the crime element found in adult stories, as a harmful moral influence on the young, tell of treasure hunts, of mistaken identity, of queer houses, and of unexplained strangers.

A fairly recent mystery story for girls is MERE-1917
DITH'S ANN, by Elizabeth Janet Gray, 1931. I chose this book to read because I had seen Elizabeth Gray recommended as a children's writer for her historical books. MEREDITH'S ANN is aubtitled "An Out-of-door Story for Girls," but it is a typical "mystery" none the less. It opens with one of the the young characters pleading:

"Mickey wished for just one little thrilling, satisfying mystery to make perfect the spring in the mountains that was just beginning." (47)

Mickey's wish is granted. A "Mystery Man" comes to the mountains and keeps looking queerly at Meredith's Ann, Mickey's country friend. Ann is an orphan who has just inherited money. Why does this man keep looking at her? Is he after her money? Does he want to kidnap her? Is he involved in the lumber swindle that his boss put over on Ann's so-called "father," Mr. Meredith? Who is the Mystery Man?

The story is nothing if not exciting; forest fire is its climax. Any more permanent value lies in the descrip(47) Gray, Elizabeth Janet, MEREDITH'S ANN, p.1

 tions of the White Mountains of New Hampshire in the spring and early summer. Birds pop in now and then, together with information about them, Ann being a bird specialist.

The book's faults are those frequent in a story which emphasizes excitement and doing. The characters are a little sketchy, and there is not much thought to carry away for your enrichment. The book also seems manufacturedly juvenile. That is to say, one can see the author saying to herself: "Now what do children like in books?" "Conversation," says her answering mind. And so she fills the book with talk and talk. "Excitement," says her answering mind again. And so there is the forest fire.

Read once, MEREDITH'S ANN is, in fact, entertaining; read twice, it would fall flat.

As to the solution of the mystery, that is for you to find out.

A book superior, from my point of view, is Augusta Huiell Seaman's THE VANDERLYN SILHOUETTE, 1938. It is a mystery story about historic Richmond Hill, former estate of Aaron Burr and his young daughter Theodosia, which stood where stand two of the great office buildings of present-day New York. The book has a glamor from this fact alone: only to think that here on this teeming city block was once a quiet country estate! The book deals with Richmond Hill, not at its height, however, but in its decline, when it belonged to John Jacob Astor and was occupied only by cross Grandfather de Groot and John Vanderlyn, artist and friend

and the second s Manager and the second of the Burrs. The young heroine of the story, Theodosia Watkins, lives with her mother and cousins, David and Prissy, in the caretaker's house rather than with her grandfather in the big mansion. But she has access to the big house, and what a mysterious place it is! She finds a secret message there in a bed-post, the pineapple top of which unscrews— the outline of a silhouette, and a mysterious poem:

"This shadow-head which I have hid Shall ever be thy guide. Count twenty from the northern end, Upon the western side. For where this likeness marks the spot Shall end thy quest- and doubt it not." (48)

With the aid of John Vanderlyn, young Dosia is able to "end her quest" and also to solve the mystery of the presence of two strangers on the Richmond Hill estate. Anything more about the plot of THE VANDERLYN SILHOUETTE would be to reveal too much, and that is never fair with a mystery story. The plot, as you may see from the queer verse above, is that of a treasure hunt-- just what treasure I shall not divulge.

It is superior to MEREDITH'S ANN in its skill to make the child feel the mysteriousness of the situation, in the complication of its puzzle, and in its more careful/characterization. In style, however, it is by no means equal to the best in contemporary juvenile fiction. The author is so occupied with the matter of her mystery that she spends insufficient time over her manner. Her prose is good, correct,

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Seaman, Augusta H., THE VANDERLYN SILHOUETTE, p. 103

journalistic, but lacks the artistic feel of such a book as MELISSA ANN or ALICE-ALL-BY-Herself. Once it makes the mistake of twisting out of proper balance the relationship between children and adults. Young Davie is able to make two grown men run in fear by throwing burrs at them from a tree. They do not even stop to investigate who it is that is attacking them, and their running does not seem natural.

The adverse criticism above may seem inconsistent with my previous statement that Mrs. Seaman is the best of mystery story writers for children. The criticism is, however, from my present more adult point of view. At eleven I should have thought THE VANDERLYN SILHOUETTE, because of its sheer interest, quite perfect, I am sure.

d) Two Modern Little-Girl Characters: Child of Dreams and Child of Reality
1. Child of Dreams

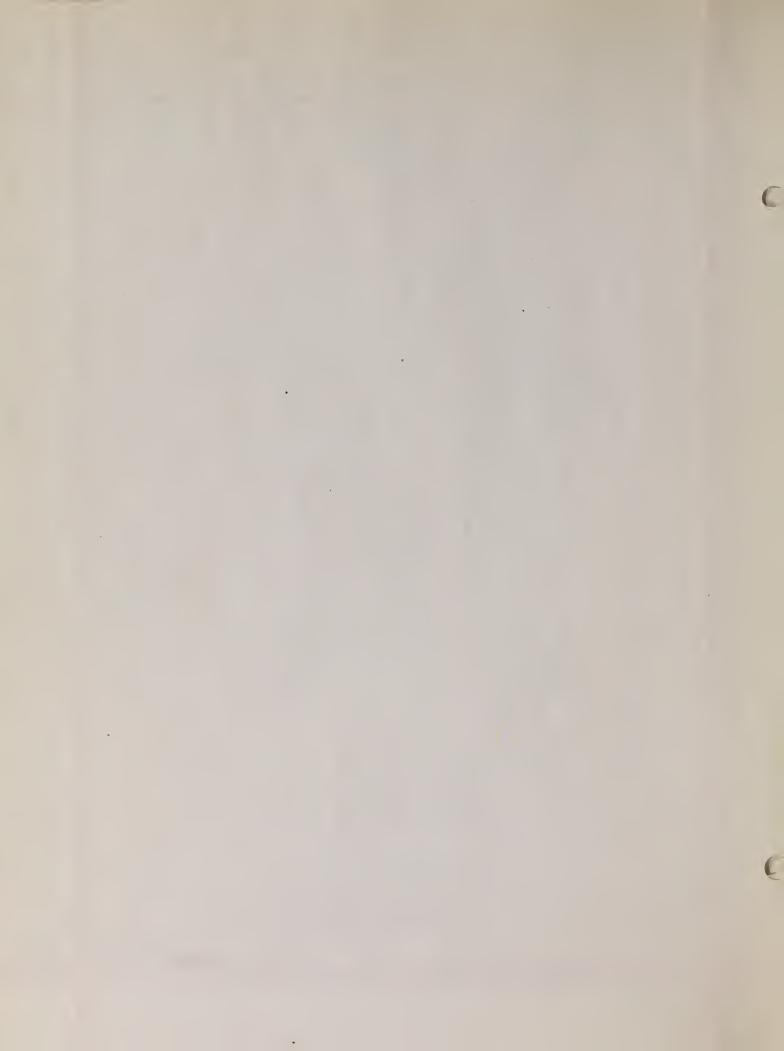
In 1937 came to the literary world a little girl named Alice, who sees the State of Maine through dreamy, poetic eyes. The next year from the Middle West came Garnet of the pigtails, who hated to wear dresses and shoes, in Elizabeth Enright's THIMBLE SUMMER.

ALICE-ALL-BY-HERSELF by Elizabeth Coatsworth and THIMBLE SUMMER have much in common, yet remain in other ways quite unlike.

As was said before, many children's books of an earlier day had for their heroines little girls who grew up and went to academies and even, maybe, had beaux, but these two little girls stay little throughout their sto-

child . . "ALICE Was MAU

"Alice - All - By- Herself " Maro Anceli



ries. Also, these books have turned away from the plot of country girls going to the city to reform their city cousins or of country girls going to the city to be reformed -- the set plots which were so complained of in 1920. They are both chronicles of every-day life, ALICE ALL-BY-Herself being the more episodic of the two.

The main difference between the two books lies in the style of the respective authors. THIMBLE SUMMER is vivid, accurately real, life-like, and colorful prose; ALICE-ALL-BY-HERSELF is dainty, sweet, lovable prose in its essence very like poetry.

Aside from the continuous presence of Alice, each episode could be a short story. The finding of the sea cat Vinegar Tom, the hunting of the herb Costmary, the flowers of Miss Abby, and the figurehead-maker are all tiny stories in themselves. Who is this Alice that holds a book together by her presence? She is a "thoughtful, imaginative little girl, with a very real background of Damariscotta, Maine." (49) She is a dear, sweet child, more modest than such a wonder as Rebecca, but gifted with insight and an understading heart. One feels that the author loves her, and that little girls will, too. She does not intrude herself upon the reader, yet everything is blown with a breath of delight because of her presence.

"Alice was a quiet child with a bang of dark hair and two small braids tied with red ribbon, who went about with her thoughts often in a dream; and often her dreams were of the sea, for twice every day the great salt tides of the ocean poured up the river on which the town where she lived

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Eaton, Anne T., READING WITH CHILDREN, p.179

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was built, and spread inland like a flood of green glass, and twice every day, the tides raced down the river to the sea once more. Alice was accustomed to the smell of salt water, mixed with the scent of her mother's garden..." (50)

From this quotation you may understand part of the book's appeal which lies in the "down East" atmosphere. The Indians and the circuses, the sea and the past, deserted farmhouses, sea-shells and figureheads, ice and mud, herbs and flowers, parrots and geese are mingled together as the essence of Maine in this book.

To a child much of the entertaining quality of the book might lie in its originality. The various episodes are concerned with unusual though real experiences. The sense of a new adventure for a child is here, and brings with it a new wonder, all shining.

For example, the book is filled with unusual pets:

"Robin proved to be a very plump, droll donkey with long ears and an innocent babyish expression as well as a will of his own..." (51) -

"As for Calypso (the seal), she grew fatter and fatter, for she had only to bark and someone was sure to throw her a mackerel or a slice of fish....

"But everyone was well pleased; and the man with the fishcart who stopped morning and afternoon at the kitchen door...smiled with satisfaction as he made out his bill at the end of the month." (52)

A real, live seal. What fun!

And then there is the remarkable cat, who lived by the sea:

"There, faintly, she saw a little way off Vinegar Tom, sitting and staring at the new moon. The tide had turned and the breakers sounded louder in the night air. Overhead, the beam of the lighthouse lantern solemnly circled the darkness.

"Alice could have found no words for all that she

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Coatsworth, Elizabeth, ALICE-ALLBBY-HERSELF, p.35

⁵¹⁾ Ibid., p. 91

⁽⁵²⁾ Ibid., p.44

felt.

"She ran to Vinegar Tom and laid her fingertips on his scarred head. 'I'm going to be your witch, she said.

"Vinegar Tom gave his short-sudden purr." (53)

In this book is humor-- sudden, unexpected, often delicate humor peeking out from the story like a laughing little star from behind a pink cloud:

"...he (the baby next door) was a difficult child to play with, because he always kept his back turned toward her, no matter where she stood." (54)

ALICE-ALL-BY-HERSELF has a beauty of words--words with the same dainty, feminine quality as the pictures with which the little volume is decorated.

"What are your favorite words, Mother?' Alice asked.

"Her mother...answered instantly, 'Tranquillity and delight.'

"Alice thought for a while.'They make me feel the way lilies of the valley do.'" (55)

And says the other of Alice's two understanding and poetic-hearted parents:

"The opening of an eight-inch Cereus flower in a room filled with silence of night and snow outside is a lovely thing to remember.'" (56)

Heightening the charm of beautiful words, each episode closes with a miniature poem:

"In fury and terror
The tempest broke.
It tore up the pine
And shattered the oak,

Yet the humming bird hovered Within the hour, Sipping clear rain From a trumpet flower." (57)

The book abounds in flowers. Then there are the

⁽⁵³⁾ Coatsworth, Elizabeth, ALICE-ALL-BY-HERSELF, p.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Ibid., p. 171

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 88 (56) Ibid., P. 109-110

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Ibid., p.34

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different names of the herb Alice and her mother went to find. Listen to them: Costmary, Sweetmary, Sweet Tongue, Bible Leaf, Lavendar, Sachet Plant. The beauty of words.

There is teaching in both THIMBLE SUMMER and ALICE ALL-BY-HERSELF. Much of it is teaching of the modern type-through incident, through atmosphere, through the picturing of the real world in an artistic way. In ALICE some of the teaching is historical. The book revels in the ever-present sense of the past. There are the Indian shell-heaps, the chair for Marie Antoinette, the home of the figure head maker.

"...but a few tongues of flame pulsed in the fireplace and outlined a dark figure stretched in a blanket on the hearth....

"Now,' said her father, 'you, too, have seen an Indian asleep by the kitchen fire, Alice. Remember it when you read about the old days. They are never quite dead." (58)

But most of the teaching is moral -- or perhaps one might better say spiritual. It comes about naturally because Alice is a loving child indirectly influencing other children to be more loving. For example, there is Brownie, the abused circus pony. With tender gentleness she trains the impish horse until he becomes, for her at least, rideable. She refuses to leave him until she has trained him though other fascinating joys beckon. She loves Brownie, you see. The chapter ends appropriately, and not in the least sentimentally, thus:

"What is once loved You will find Is always yours From that day.

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Take it home
In your mind
And nothing ever
Can steal it away." (59)

ALICE-ALL-BY-HERSELF, like all the best children's books, is written from a deep, fundamental optimism, from the spirit that life is worth living-- not only worth living, but a gift to be thankful for. Perhaps all wishes do not come true, but Alice has the wisdom to know it is often better that way.

Alice's parents and she travel out one morning to see deer; there are none, but she has a pleasant trip.

"'That was a good idea of yours, Alice, getting up this morning,' said her father..., but I'm sorry we didn't see the deer.'

"'Oh, I'm not,' said Alice earnestly....Wasn't it really better this way, Father?'

"Her father considered the question a moment, his

eyes on Alice's upturned face.

"'I do believe you're right, Alice, he said at last, looking at her with an air of surprise and pleasure. But how did you know that? Very few people do,'" (60)

d,2) Child of Reality

Garnet is a far different little girl from Alice, but she, too, understands the fundamental fact that there is a joy in life. She feels happiness for no reason at all:

"But now the happiness was growing out of all bounds. Garnet felt that pretty soon she might burst with it, or begin to fly, or that her pigtails would stand straight up on end and sing like nightingales! She could hold it in no longer. The time had come to make a noise, and whooping at the top of her lungs, she leapt out of the shadowy, willowy grove.

lowy grove.

"Griselda, the finest of the Jersey cows, raised mild, reproachful eyes and stared a long time at Garnet, turning handspring after handspring down the pasture." (61)

Much of the joy in THIMBLE SUMMER arises from the

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Coatsworth, Elizabeth, ALICE-ALL-BY-HERSELF, p.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Ibid., p.85

⁽⁶¹⁾ INTEXX Enright, Elizabeth, THIMBLE SUMMER, p. 124

humor in it. It is an extremely realistic story, but its gaiety is like a bright-colored patchwork quilt with only now and then a sombre square.

"One of the great charms of healthy, happy children is their spontaneous gaiety, bubbling spirits and delight in fun and nonsense as expressed by different twemperaments. Its importance in normal development is especially realized at times of unusual strain, when the atmosphere is charged with anxiety and sorrow....But under any circumstance, a sense of humor is one of the great assets of life....Teachers and parents need it quite as much as children.

"Books are an ever-ready source of amusement...." (62)

THIMBLE SUMMER is filled with spontaneous gaiety, from Citonella's story about the young lady of sixteen who had the soda fountain, to Garnet's wild ride on the empty bus when the driver went 'round corners on two wheels, to the following:

"Suddenly the woman began to sing. Garnet held onto the edge of the automobile seat.' Rock of Ages, cleft for me, sang the woman; and Garnet understood about the cookstove trembling. She had never heard a voice so powerful before. It filled the sedan till her head reeled and her ears rang. And it floated richly and enormously out into the summer day. Garnet saw three little tow-headed children on the fence with their mouths wide open in surprise "The song ended, and the woman turned her head

expectantly.
"Well, how was that? inquired the husband.

"'Oh, it was wonderful, said Garnet weakly. 'I never heard anything 80 -- so huge in all my life.'" (63)

The humor arises out of situations and often from conversation. Citronella, Garnet's fat friend, remarks of her prospect of ironing on a day when it is 110 in the shade:

"A fine thing to have to do on a day like this... I bet you I'll melt all over the kitchen floor like a pound and a half of butter. "(64)

The book is filled with action and incident, but perhaps it is just as important as a book of characters.

⁽⁶²⁾ Betzner & Moore, EVERYCHILD AND BOOKS, p. 170 (63) Enright, Elizabeth, THIMBLE SUMMER, pp. 74 & 75 (64) Ibid., p. 5

"I'm skind of old for this," nemarked Citronella, iti", ti salis slita & tull', never aou are "I'm never going to be tooold for it,"
said Harnet." Elizabeth Enright

(m. m.)



There is Garnet herself, lively and lovable. But though the book centers about her, she is not an All-By-Herself, as is Alice. One reason I would recommend this book for the reading of little boys is that the little boys in it are so real. There is baby Donald:

"'Ponies,' bragged Donald.'I rode on real live ponies around a ring, and I was on the big merry-go-round and the little merry-go-round and that thing like a train.' He looked at his mother. 'But I want to go on the whip cars, and I want to go on the Ferris wheel.'

"'No,' said Mrs. Linden automatically. She had

"'No,' said Mrs. Linden automatically. She had been saying it for two hours about those particular things." (65)

As in Eliza Orne White's WHEN ABIGAIL WAS SEVEN, there is here a delightful brother and sister friendship.

"'Jay!' said Garnet. 'Timmy [her pig] got first

"'I know,' said Jay. 'I saw him get it. Look, I won something for you. A present, because of Timmy.'
"Oh, Jay was wonderful, Garnet thought, ripping

"Oh, Jay was wonderful, Garnet thought, ripping the string and paper from the box with eager fingers....
"There resting elegantly on a watermelon pink

lining were a comb, brush, and looking glass all made of pearly lavendar stuff. Garnet was overwhelmed by their beauty.

"'Oh, Jay!' she said. It was all she could say.
"'Okay, forget it,' said Jay in embarrassment.
'I just thought you could use 'em....'" (66)

That is perfect psychologically.

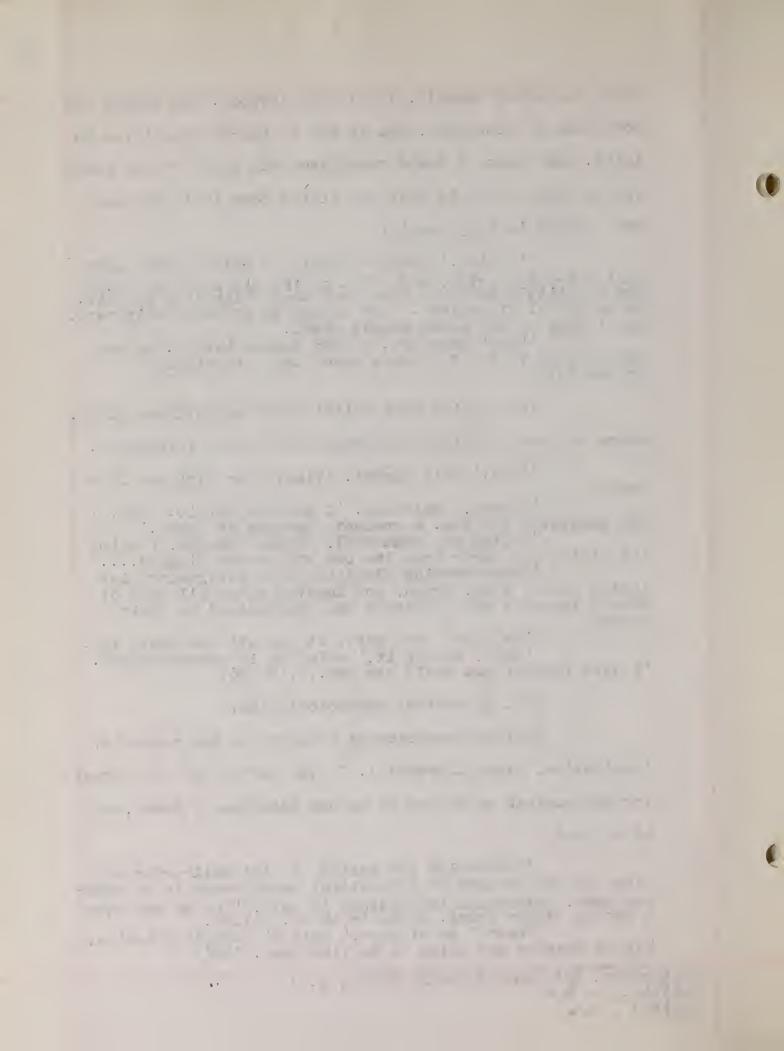
Another character of interest is the romantic, imaginative, plump Citronella. I like her as well as Garnet for she reminds me of one of my own childhood friends, she is so real.

"Citronella was gazing in the mail-order catalog at the picture of a beautiful young woman in an evening gown. Underneath the picture it said, 'You're the top; a perfect dance frock. Sizes 14 to 40. \$11.98.
"When I am sixteen,' said Citronella dreamily, all my dresses are going to be like that.'"(67)

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Enright, Elizabeth, THIMBLE SUMMER, p. 118

^{(66 1}bid., p. \$ 118

⁽⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 6



There is something of kinship between Citronella and Mary Ware, who loved beautiful clothes in the LITTLE COLONEL series.

Like LITTLE WOMEN and WHEN ABIGAIL WAS SEVEN,
THIMBLE SUMMER includes interesting grown people, among the
best of them Mr. Freebody, who says:

"'I could eat an elephant...a nice, roasted elephant with onions and brown gravy....
"'Next to roast elephant, I like pie best of all"
(68)

There is little introspection in this book. When Garnet does have an introspective moment, it is true to the nature of any little girl:

"Garnet went to wash her face and hands.
"I have a nice mother, "she thought to herself.

I have a nice family."

"It made her feel safe and warm to know that she belonged to them and they to her." (69)

Like Alice, Garnet is a home-body, except for the one instance when she runs away. Love of place, though not so often talked of, is as evident here as in ANNE OF GREEN GABLES. The background of Garnet's young life is a busy farm:

"Corn was picked every day, and that was pleasant, walking in the rustling, good-smelling aisles between the stalks..."

"And canning! Oh, those weeks of harvesting and peeling and preparing apples, peaches, tomatoes, cucumbers, plums, and beans. All day the kitchen smelled like heaven and was filled with steam." (70)

The realism of THIMBLE SUMMER does not hesitate to record unpleasant details. For example, there is the history of Eric, the little boy tramp:

"I didn't ride on the bus much, though, I saved

the money for food and hitchhiked. At night I slept in hay-

⁽⁶⁸⁾ Enright, Elizabeth, THIMBLE SUMMER, p. + 67

⁽⁶⁹⁾ Ibid., p.49

⁽⁷⁰⁾ Ibid., p. 64

)

stacks, and old barns, and once when it was raining I spent the night in an empty drain pipe beside the road. It took me three weeks to reach Oregon...'" (71)

So, too, there are bills and quarrels and hurting feet. Yet the book is mostly joy -- joy arising partly from the many adventures with which it is filled. Garnet watches the building of a new barn, is locked in the public library, runs away to the city, goes in swimming, exhibits her pig Timmy at a fair, and gets stuck on a Ferris wheel. The plot is less episodic than that of ALICE-ALL-BY-Herself because it is tied together by the thimble device. The thimble of the title is one which Garnet finds when swimming; she believes it is "magic" and luckily affects her whole summer. There is also the use of foreshadowing as Garnet hears ahead of time about the fair she later attends. But the whole book flows along as naturally as life itself. The lest son for a child is no specific in information or advice, but a mere enlarging of the child's experience as she shares the life of a little girl on a farm in the Middle West. It is characterized by Anne T. Eaton in READING WITH CHILDREN thus:

"THIMBLE SUMMER by Elizabeth Enright tells of little-girl life in the Middle West in the present day, with so much humor and perception that it delights not only tenyear-olds but adults. The characterization is keen and clear, and the conversation natural. The author writing with ease and charm, has caught and preserved a genuine picture of American life." (72)

These books represent two distinct trends in stories for children-- one poetic, the other as near to modern realism for adults as anything in fiction for lit-

⁽⁷¹⁾ Enright, Elizabeth, THIMBLE SUMMER, p. 43

⁽⁷²⁾ Eaton, Anne, READING WITH CHILDREN, p.178

THE RESERVE THE PARTY OF THE PA , many the second secon many to the contract of the contract of the tle girls could be. Both books are alive, written with art and love. Which one prefers depends on one's own temperament. So, too, it would be with a little girl. Child of dreams or child of reality, one may take one's choice. I know mine.

d.3) A"Stream-liner" of the Year 1942

For a book with a truly modern dash, THE LONG WHITE MONTH by Dean Marshall (1942) is a surprising proof of the fact that books for girls have really changed little in some of their fundamental characteristics from the time of Louisa Alcott to the present day.

The technique of the author is that of a person who has had a long procession of excellent books for girls to serve as models. I do not mean that the author lacks an original touch, but I do mean that the style of the book is modern and finshed.

There is excellent psychology in the inward thoughts of the little heroine;

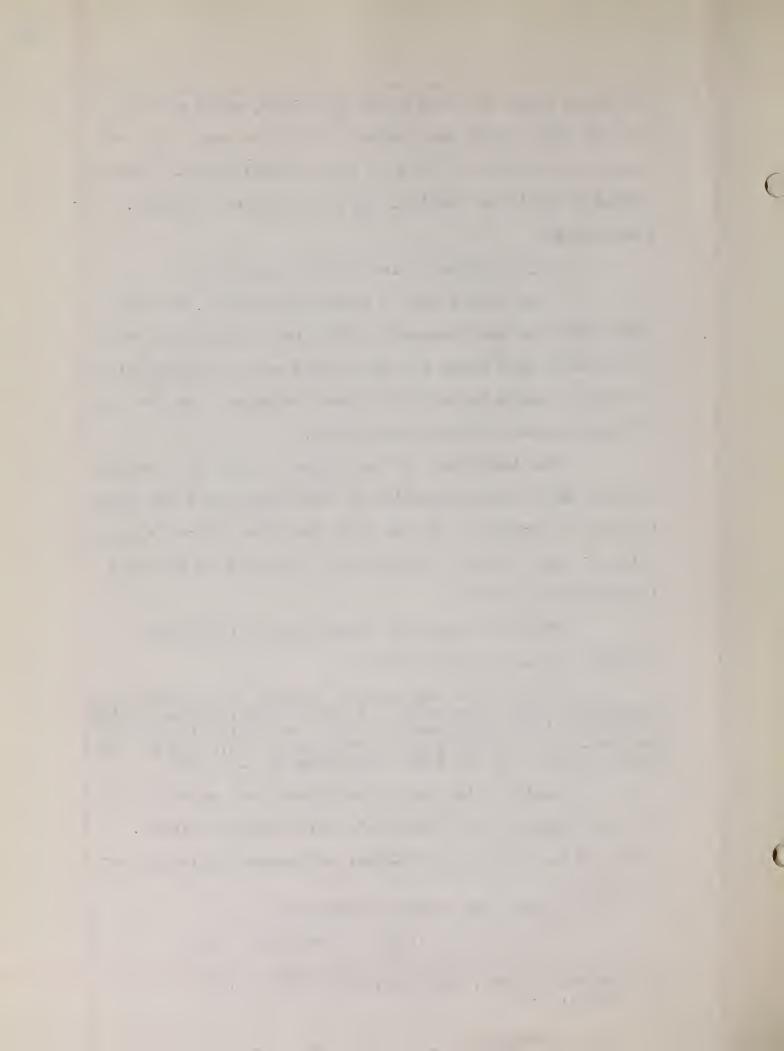
"The little dog stopped pulling and walked along dejectedly. Priscilla knew just how he felt. It was a pity Mattie didn't have a leash for her! She would like a bright red one. She imagined herself prancing along, with Mattie hauling firmly at the leash. She giggled...." (73)

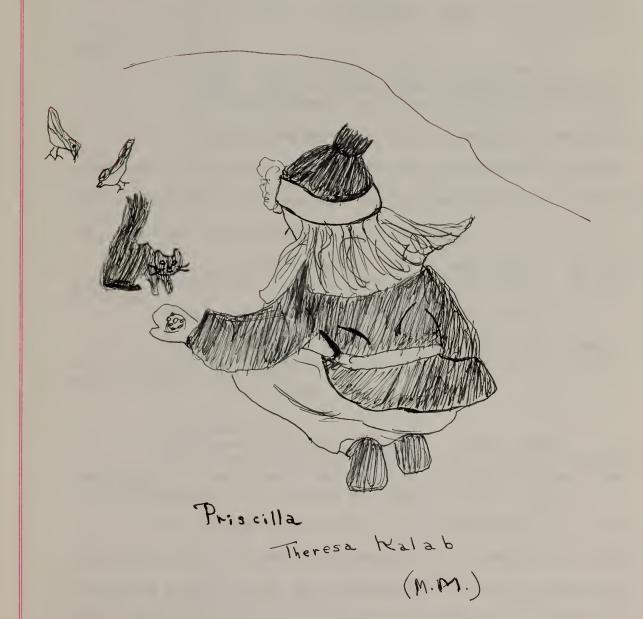
Again it is the skilled touch that makes the little girl reader open Priscilla's gift packages slowly. First she must see the outsides. How mysteriously full of suspense:

"There was a funny lumpy one.

"There was a large, oblong one." (74)

⁽⁷³⁾ Marshall, Dean, THE LONG, WHITE MONTH, p. 17 (74) Ibid., p.16







Allie and

And so on, through eleven packages.

Pathos is the result of only one sentence. A tiny girl, Ann, is lost: "The snow was ten inches deep, and Ann was little." (75) With a few well-chosen words the author has said much.

As in ALICE-ALL-BY-HERSELF, there is poetry to create atmosphere:

"There was a fairy, flake of winter, Who, when the snow came whispering, Silence, Sister crystal to crystal sighing..." (76)

Characterization is done cleverly through conversation. It is easy to see from the following both that Ann is a considerably younger child than Priscilla, the heroine, and that she is peculiarly adorable.

"Ann twisted around to stare solemnly in Priscillas face. 'I almost didn't come,' she observed calmly, 'but I did come.'

"Priscilla smiled at her. 'I see you did.'

"Ann said, 'I like it at Susan's house. When I am a big girl, as big as you are, I am going to live with her. Will you like that?'
"'I won't be here,' Priscilla said.

"'Why won't you?'
"'Because I am just visiting for one month.'
"'No,' said Ann thoughtfully. 'No, you are not. You

are going to live here always, and I am coming to see you, and after awhile I am coming to live with you.'" (77)

The humor is alive and up-to-the-minute. How very like you and me is Ann, who, because she is really too small to shovel snow, has to have something to blame besides herself, and says: "'This is a very bad shovel....I think it is made wrong.'" (78)

Another sort of humor is also introduced -- humor

⁽⁷⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 216

⁽⁷⁶⁾ Ibid., p. 220 (77) Ibid., 3. 61

⁽⁷⁸⁾ Ibid., p. 20 g

so mingled with pathos that it is hard to tell where one begins and the other leaves off. Psychologically, the following again is outstandingly well done. Priscilla has forgotten to feed her birds:

"'They will starve,' cried Priscilla.'The snow covered all the food I left out, and I didn't think. I didn't think! The poor little things! What will they do?'

"Ann's eyes filled with tears. 'The poor little things!'

"A sob escaped Priscilla." They'll die!

"'They'll die,' Ann sobbed back....Then she gulped down another sob and inquired earnestly, 'Who will die, Priscilla? What poor little thing?'" (79)

Yet, despite the modernness of this story, what actually have we here for a plot? A city child goes to the country and meets with new experiences which prove beneficial. She is not reformed "morally," but does develop in knowledge and experience. The parallel with UNDERSTOOD BETSY is unmistakable, even to the over-zealous aunts and the walks around the city block under strictest supervision.

The story is obviously written to teach the little reader about birds, but the teaching is charmingly painless and put in terms interesting and easy of comprehension:

"The all-black-and-white lady woodpecker twisted her head around at Priscilla and gave it a funny little bob.
"'Do you mind?' Priscilla asked her sympathetically. 'Do you think it isn't fair for the man to have the pretty redbands...?"

"'I know what you want to tell me.Ladies have to sit on their nests and take care of their children....It's all right for the man to fly around and look pretty. You have work to do.'

"She looked down at her red snow-suit and added thoughtfully, "'It's lucky I'm not a bird, isn't it?'" (80)

Grandfather even preaches: "'Yes, you be kind to Marshall, Dean, THE LONG, WHITE WINTER, p. 213 (80) Lbid., pp. 170 & 171

 the birds, little girl, and they'll be kind to you...!"(81)

Finally there is, as always, the expression of joy in some phase of life: here, in Priscilla's new home and her new friend.

"And Priscilla, as she turned her back on the white woods, had time to think how warm and bright and safe the little cabin looked with fire glow and lamplight streaming from its windows and its door, and Susan standing there outlined against the light.

"It was really something she felt in her heart rather than thought in her mind..." (82)

(82) Ibid., p. 175

⁽⁸¹⁾ Marshall, Dean, THE LONG, WHITE WINTERP 146

CHAPTER III (cont.)

Section 2- Summary of the Characteristics of Realistic Fiction for Girls from 1920 to 1942

In my preceding chapter I discussed the condition of juvenile literature at the close of the last World War. Miss Moore, if you remember, was pleading for a Golden Age in children's books. Has the recent period of juvenile literature lived up to her desires?

On the whole, I should say, overwhelmingly yes.

Never have there been so many books for the young. In artistry this new juvenile literature, though perhaps equaled by much that went before at its best, has never been surpassed. What is this new world of children's books like?

First of all, let us remember that the modern child faces a real world very different from that of his predecessors. Children's worlds are always made up of the contemporary, yet certain stable factors lie in the background of any child's life, no matter into what period he or she happens to have been born. The home, the church, the school are still the most influential factors in a child's existence. The difference in a modern child's world from that of children of earlier periods lies mainly in the complication of it, in the many new paths of experience open to him or her.

 "What a parade of life passes the very doorsteps on which children sit and through the streets on which they skip! The business of life as it moves along, coming from somewhere and going someplace, is all there, in its variety, color, and freshness. The permanent features provide a familiar and hence secure background against which the novel and exciting stand out in bold relief....Buying and selling delivering and receiving, hurrying and pausing, talking and listening are all there in infinite variety for the young to see and question....Forces operate in these streets before the eyes of children which are not easy to understand and over which they have no control. Danger, anger, gaiety, kindness, lossession, and strength....Things to long for, to reject, to possess are found there. Ideas to scorn, to laugh at, and to accept are found there. People to hate, to understand, and to love appear there." (1)

Travel has become an accepted part of the lives of children. Directly with their own senses they are able to experience woods and hills, seas and lakes, towns and cities that in older days they would just have read about. Modern ways of travel have "destroyed space and isolation and make the world of people easy to approach." (2) Children easily become acquainted with the modern tools of industry, agriculture, communication, and construction.Radio and motion pictures open other vast new worlds of experience. Advertising constantly appeals to children. Then, as always, there is the world of play. The real world of the modern child is, then, a vast and complicated place where much choice and adaptation are necessary. So, too, the modern world of books.

"Just as the real world of to-day in which the child must make his way is vast, complicated, and conflicting, so is the world spread out before him in books. Old books, 'canonized by time'; new ones begging for recognition; big books, impressive in their size and scope; little books lees obvious but no less appealing... So numerous are they and so rapidly do they accumulate that some see in this increasing production a grave menace. Others rejoice at the

⁽¹⁾ Betzner, Jean & Moore, Annie, EVERYCHILD AND BOOKS, pp.28 & 29

⁽²⁾ Ibid., p. 30

THE THE PARTY OF T ,-101 expanding opportunities offered in this very quantity..."(3) In 1937 alone, forty-nine million juvenile books rolled off the presses.

As to the content of these books:

"There seem to be few limits. The restricted array of subjects once thought appropriate for the young has expanded to a degree quite disconcerting to those who think of children's literature as limited to classics or the portrayal of child life only in its most attractive aspects..."

(4)

Modern children's books depend often upon much painstaking research. Especially this is true of books about youngsters of other lands and of long ago. Hardly would it be possible for an author to publish a successful juvenile about a country she had never visited as did Mary Mapes Dodge with her HANS BRINKER. Books must be unmistakably authentic to the last detail. An example of a book for girls that is based on careful research and scholarship is HITTY: HER FIRST HUNDRED YEARS (1929) by Rachel Field. As the story of a doll, HITTY does not come within the scope of this thesis; nevertheless I cannot refrain from mentioning it as one of the best books for ten-year-olds written since the World War. HITTY is more than authentic, to be sure: it is a true piece of art, and is alive.

In modern books for girls (and boys) illustrations are often equal to the text in importance. In such a book as AN EAR FOR UNCLE EMIL by E.R.Gagin the pictures are even superior to the story. Kate Seredy, the artist, has attained such life in them that the story seems artificial by contrast. The majority of illustrations are in color, or if in

⁽³⁾ Betzner & Moore, EVERYCHILD AND BOOKS, p. 41

⁽⁴⁾ Ibid., p. 43

black and white, their medium is of special interest-- wood cuts, for example. Books for girls must to-day appeal to the eye as well as to the ear. The attractive packages (figura-stories tively speaking) in which children's karks come wrapped account for one of the chief differences between them and earlier books. Neither story nor pictures stand alone, but are interdependent and support one another.

To encourage juvenile authors, prizes have been established during recent years— the John Newberry Medal, "awarded for the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children' (in existence since 1921), the New York HERALD TRIBUNE Spring Prizes, and the Julia Ellsworth Ford Foundation Annual Contest." (5)

An interesting development in recent juvenile fiction is a number of books written by little girls themselves. OUR FAMILY by Adet, Anor, and Meimei Lin, the book of the Abbex children, and a diary of a little Pennsylvania girl of long ago named Mary Scarborough Paxton are three of the best of these. The books mentioned are all autobiographical, of course. When the young turn to writing fiction, they often write fanciful rather than realistic tales.

To write modern juvenile fiction, it takes the combined efforts of "poet, statistician, historian, humorist, fiction writer, painter...and etcher." (6)

All this vast world of juvenile books depends for existence on two factors. The first is freedom of speech, so that authors and artists are able to work unhampered, as

(6) Ibid., p. 44

⁽⁵⁾ Betzner & Moore, EVERYCHILD AND BOOKS, p. 47

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they have not been free to do in countries where dictatorships have prescribed the books for the young. The second is an extension and expansion of the fundamental purposes for which juvenile literature is written.

juvenile literature turn from the gloom of earlier days and from the primary importance of teaching over entertainment. Teaching, as we have noted, however, still existed in all juvenile literature. To-day, teaching is still a part of every realistic children's book. The difference between the modern book and its predecessors is one of emphasis and of expansion of values rather than an absolute difference. The ideal of the modern juvenile author is to enrich in some way the personality of the young reader. "Good literature is thought of as intrinsically moral because it portrays selected experience, real and ideal, with fidelity and artistry." (7)

Perhaps the fact that the modern authors and critics of juvenile fiction have troubled to express their ideals that that the troubled to express their ideals that that for juveniles in modern terms, as the above, makes one feel there is a greater intrinsic difference between books of to-day and yesterday than there is. Really, changes have not been great. Perhaps this is because children of all ages and climes are much alike in their tastes, and since Louisa Alcott's day books have been written by authors all of whom have been as anxious to entertain the children as to satisfy the adult demand for good moral in-

⁽⁷⁾ Betzner & Moore, EVERYCHILD AND BOOKS, p. 158

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fluences for the young. Yet this attempt to reach the philosophical grounds underlying juvenile fiction is symptomatic of a new interest, in the tendency of adults to try to bring up children rather than talk down to them. It is this same new interest, perhaps, that has made many successful authors of adult literature turn, in more recent years, to the juvenile field.

To summarize, then:

Modern books for little and adolescent girls are better illustrated than formerly. The best of them are as well written as the best books of the past, with a style that sometimes approaches the artistic merit of poetry. The authors of these new books seem to have loved writing them and to have expended great care on them, so that the young readers will care for and love them in proportion. There are to-day more books of note for the younger girls. The whole field has expanded as to subject matter -- the new types of geography stories, mystery stories, and historical stories giving the authors opportunity for new treatments. Romanticism is still present in the accounts of the little girls of the past: the worder of long ago is always romantic to little girls. So also there is romance in the poetrytinged works of Elizabeth Coatsworth. Realism, however, make snew gains in a story such as THIMBLE SUMMER. Sentimentality is rarer, but never can an author for girls be entirely without sentiment if she is to please her readers. Books continue to reflect the life experience of their auThe state of the s

thors. Naturally, stories of long ago and far away are sometimes imaginary in plot if accurate in detail. Humor is prominent in these books, and other emotions are appealed to. Series continue to be written, but to-day the best books are usually the single volumes. This is undoubtedly due to the amount of preaching against the series idea by critics rather than to any attitude of the children themselves. Settings are both simple and romantic. Sectionalism is not present, but the stories are filled with local color and atmosphere. Groups of children or single heroines are still the centers of books, but single heroines who steal the whole story as axa REBECCA and ANNE are not common. Even ALICE-ALL-BY-HERSELF is as much a story of Maine as it is of Alice. Humanitarianism is not so obviously dealt with as formerly, but humanitarian motives are at the basis of some of these books. Especially strong are the pleas for understanding between human beings of different nations as represented by the books about children of far away. Kindness to animals is often a part of the lesson of three of the books I chose as representative of the last decades. Teaching of various kinds -- historical, geographical, moral, spiritual -- still exists. One even finds diret moralizing, but always done so pleasantly that it seems natural and artistically right.

It is in their intrinsic philosophy that these books remain, as I have said, very like their predecessors. They are still moral, still optimistic, and still idealistic.

CHAPTER IV

Conclusion

"Oh, for the heart of a child to find
A land of Romance,
Greener than Ireland, wilder than Scotland,
Fairer than France." (1)

In writing this thesis upon the history of girl's realistic books from Louisa Alcott to the present day, I have been, if you remember, trying to answer a number of definite questions as asked in my Introduction:

What were the changes brought about by Louisa Alcott in girls' fiction?

What if any have been the changes since her day?

What is the underlying philosophical concept of all girls' books?

What books have endured, and why?

What books of to-day are typical and of special interest?

The body of the thesis, I believe, answers more or less fully all the questions but the one on the philosophical concept underlying girls' books. For although I have mentioned the subject now and again, I have nowhere drawn together my ideas and presented them in their entirety.

The basic underlying philosophy of all girls' books -- of all children's books, in fact, that I have any

⁽¹⁾ Poem "Children" by R.B.Ince from READING WITH CHILDREN by Anne T. Eaton, p. 39

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knowledge of -- written in the United States of A merica and in all other democratic countries since the late nine-teenth century, is optimistic idealism.

whatever we may believe ouselves, whatever fear and doubt we may feel, we preach idealism to our youngsters either directly or indirectly. There are, of course, in children's books passages which if they were emphasized would be truly horrible: Sara Crewe starving in a garret, children and their fathers lost in a snowstorm in THE WILLOW WHISTLE, drought in THIMBLE SUMMER, shootings in ALL THE DAYS WERE ANTONIA'S. But the emphasis is not on horror. Books for children are compounded of ideals—of joy in life and growing, of laughter, development toward a better personality, of charity, of wonder, romance, and excitement, of the leisure taken to appreciate nature and beauty.

"What is this life if full of care We have no time to stand and stare...

No time to see, when woods we pass where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight Streams full of stars, like skies at night.

A poor life this, if full of care We have not time to stand and stare." (2)

"...the best books written for children undeniably contribute to the world... a composite joy, made up of the author's pleasure in telling his tale and his read?" er's delight in hearing it." (3)

A very obvious statement, this -- that children's books are idealistic. Why, what else could they be, you ask.

In Hitler's Germany of to-day children are not

⁽²⁾ Poem "Leisure" by W.H.Davies from READING WITH CHILDREN by Anne T. Eaton, p. 30

⁽³⁾ Eaton, AnneT., READING WITH CHILDREN, p.

educated for life, as we have educated the young here in America, but for war and death. There is, to be sure, an idealism in the devotion to a national cause, but it is a warped idealsim, so warped that it leads only to futility and destruction. I wonder if we are not running the same danger when we write on What You Children Can Do to Win This War or even books about War Nurses. Why do we teach hatred to children by dressing up Humpty Dumpty as Adolf Hitler, as I have seen in a recent book of nursey rhymes? Do we wish to make of our children, warriors? Do we want to perpetuate our quarrels into future generations? We moderns pride ourselves often on being realists, but can it be that we, too, are warped idealists? We are stubborn and full of pride, and so do not say to children, "Here, we've made a mess of the world. Here is the world as it might be. See if you can do a better job." So we write war books for them, teaching them that war is all heroism and that being an American is more important than being a citizen of the world, that the evil, war-time present is more important than their future. Probably many books written for children in the recent months will prove ephemeral. They are based on the immediate situation and will have nothing to say to children in the future -- let us hope, the very near future. If you are one of those persons who feels that the children are in this war-torn world, that the war cannot be kept from their lives, and so they must be made to participate psychologically even in the hatred of war, then you will

disagree with me. But if you are a person who thinks that
the future in children's lives is more important than the
present and who has long ceased to read LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE
in the comic strips because Annie has turned into a superpatriot, playing at a war that is horribly real to some, then
you will agree with my sentiments about teaching war psychology to the very young.

The future world of books for children, let us hope, will not contract into a narrow nationalism. I read an interesting article recently on the subject of post-war education in the NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE. Mention was made of the necessity in the post-war world of putting education, including children's books, on an international basis, leaving out and foregoing even some of the classics if they tend to perpetuate old animosities between nations. This is my own dream, also, for the future world of children's books. Let us continue to be real idealists in children's literature.

And I say this in face of the fact that as I write this thesis I am aware of the great gulf that lies between all the books under discussion and the actual world of to-day. Having grown up reading these idealistic books myself, and realizing that the same is true of my contemporaries, and then having to face the ugly world of the present, I wonder sometimes if these optimistic pieces of fiction are any fairer to educate children for life than Hitler's Germany has been to educate their children realistically for death, since for all young people of the present

. - the same situation has to be faced -- and realistically.

"...onely the Poet, disdayning to be tied to any such subjection (to Nature), lifted up with the vigor of his owne invention, dooth grow, in effect, another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or quite new formes such as never were in Nature....

"Nature never set forth the earth in so rich a tap estry, as divers Poets have done...; nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely. Her world is brazen, the Poets only deliver a golden...Which delivering forth [of ideal persons] also, is not wholie imaginative, as we are wont to say to them that build & Castles in the ayre: but so farre substantially it worketh not only to make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellencie, as Nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus upon the worlde, to make many Cyrus's, if they will learn aright why, and how that Maker made him...

" Let us give right honor to the heavenly Maker of that maker..." (4)

So wrote Sir Philip Sydney in the years 1583 to 1595 in his "Defense of Poesie."

To bestow a Jo upon this world, a Garnet, an ANNE, to grow another world than the real world, to paint life as it should be, not as it is— that has been and is the task of juvenile authors. For in so doing they enrich the lives of their young readers, and in doing this they are enriching the future of the real world.

In the children of to-day does lie the hope of tomorrow, and wars and evils and the present shrink away beside their future importance. And to the young, always, and to the young in heart:

> "Books are bridges Shining, free, Which link us to Ourselves-to-be." (5)

by Betzner and Moore, title page

⁽⁴⁾ Smith and Porter, THE GREAT CRITICS, pp. 195 & 196 (5) Poem by Virginia Scott Miner from EVERYCHILD AND BOOKS

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ABSTRACT OF A THESIS ON

REALISTIC AMERICAN FICTION FOR GIRLS
FROM LOUISA ALCOTT TO THE PRESENT DAT

by
Merrilie Mather
(A.B.,Boston University. 1942)

AN ABSTRACT of a Thesis on the Subject,

REALISTIC AMERICAN FICTION FOR GIRLS,
FROM LOUISA ALCOTT TO THE PRESENT DAY

The introduction of my thesis on Realistic American Fiction for Girls discussed my reasons for writing on the subject, and the two handicaps I was under in so doinglack of direct criticism by children themselves, and lack of secondary source material. It also stated that the thesis was to be an attempt to deal with girls' books about "really truly" little girls from an historical point of view. It stated that the discussion of books would be concerned both with the pleasure they impart and the lessons they teach. It set up my standards of the value of the books. Though varying judgments were to be used superficially, an attempt to judge the books more deeply as tales of living value, and according to the length of their popularity (except for recent works), was to be made. The introduction also outlined the thesis for the reader, and furnished the fundamental questions to be answered by the body of the thesis.

Chapter I, Section 1 dealt with Louisa Alcott's predecessors, who wrote didactic, moral, often gloomy tales for the young. I criticized these books as poor ones for their basic fallacy-- lack of joy.

Chapter I, Section 2 dealt with Louisa Alcott herself. A short account of her life was followed by a

discussion of two of her most famous stories, LITTLE WOM-EN and AN OLD-FASHIONED GIRL. The latter was contrasted with Mrs. A.D.T.Whitney's REAL FOLKS. Miss Alcott's books were shown as, first of all, good stories filled with life and not didactic lessons, though teaching is not lacking in them. All her best books are idealistic and optimistic.

Chapter II, Section 1 concerned itself with fiction for girls from Louisa Alcott's immediate successors to Dorothy Canfield. Individual reviews of books by Susan Coolidge, Margaret Sidney, Louise Clarke Pyrnelle, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Sarah Orne Jewett, Laura E.Richards, Annie Fellows Johnston, Kate Douglas Wiggin, Lucy Maud Montgomery and Dorothy Canfield were given. Briefer mention was made of Alice Hegan Rice, Eleanor Porter, and Jean Webster.Quotations were given, not only to illustrate and explain the particular books, but to show the close kinship between book and book in their fundamentally and unchangingly optimistic spirit. Also quotations or discussion was given to show that none of the books is pure entertainment.

In Chapter II, Section 2, a summary of the outstanding elements of the books of the preceding section was given under the following headings: reflection of the life-experience of the author, imaginary stories, romanticism, sentimentality, realism, and humor, books with emotions other than laughter, series, simplicity, sectionalism, humanitarianism, family groups and single heroines, stereotyped plots, teaching, optimism, and development. The poor

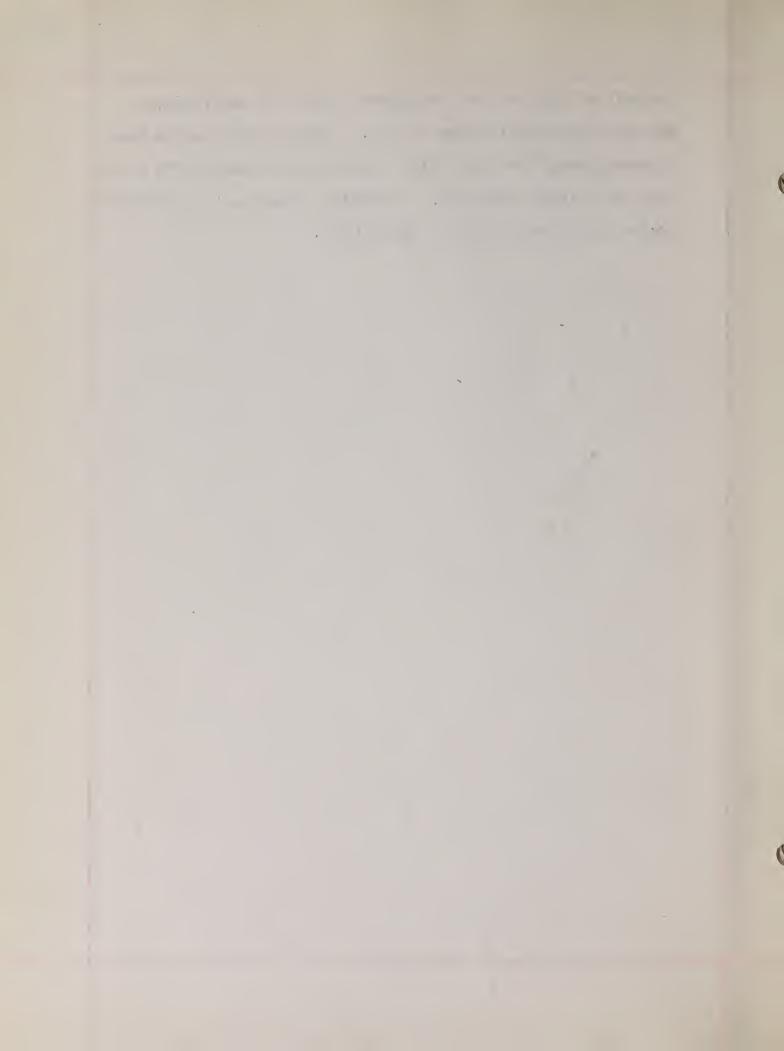
condition of juvenile fiction at the close of World War I was discussed. Then the ancestors of some particular types of girls' fiction become increasingly popular in recent years was dealt with briefly: the beginnings of historical, geographical, and mystery stories as written to-day.

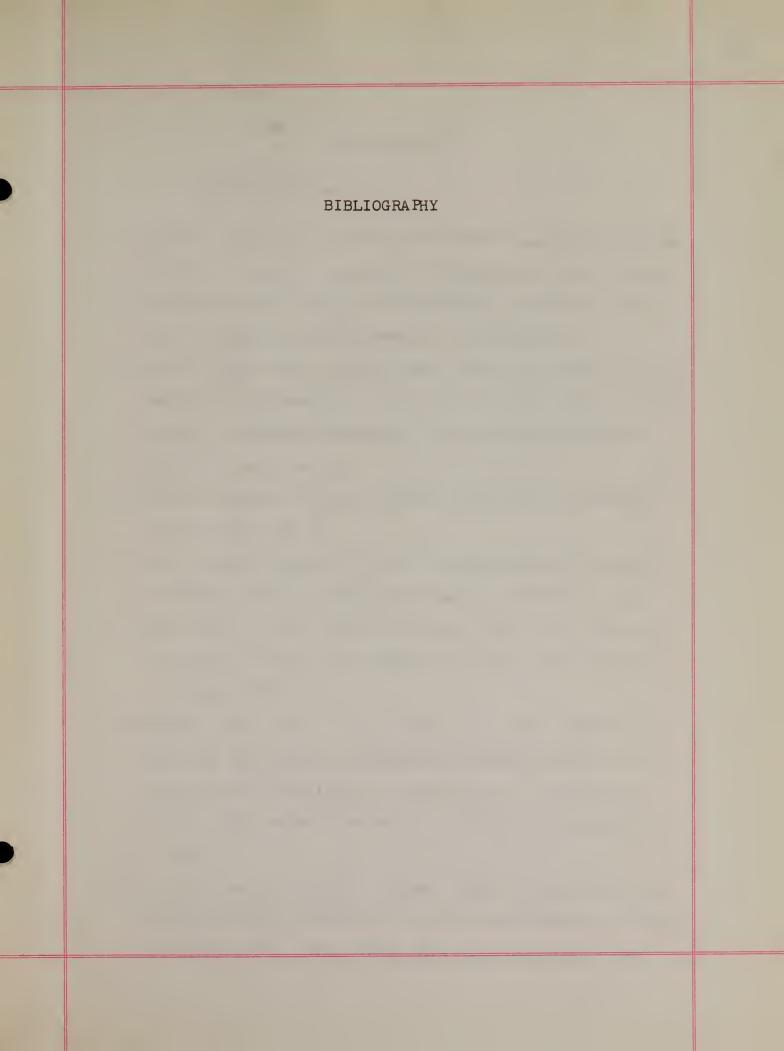
Chapter III, Section 1 again turned to individual books. It discussed recent historical stories such as those by Eliza Orne White, Ethel Parton, and Cornelia Meigs; geographical stories such as Lucy Fitch Perkins' famous "twin" books, "mysteries" such as those by Elizabeth Gray and Augusta Huiell Seaman. THIMBLE SUMMER by Elizabeth Enright and ALICE-ALL-BY-HERSELF by Elizabeth Coatsworth were compared and contrasted as recent examples of realistic as against poetic prose. THE LONG WHITE MONTH by Dean Marshall (1942) as a typical contemporary book was then reviewed. It was noted that this book shows the fundamental lack of change in realistic girls' books from Louisa Alcott to the present day. Again, all these books were found to teach as well as entertain.

Chapter III, Section 2 dealt with the modern period in summary -- with its expanded values, its better illustrations, its infinite variety and quantity of material. Again, lack of change in basic philosophy of girls' books was noted.

Chapter IV, the Conclusion, discussed this spirit of optimistic idealism, questioning its worth in the face of the present world situation. I touched briefly on my

prejudices against war-propaganda books for children, as being of ephemeral value if any. I gave my idea as to the international basis on which I hope future children's books will be written. Finally, I defended idealism in children's books of the past and for the future.







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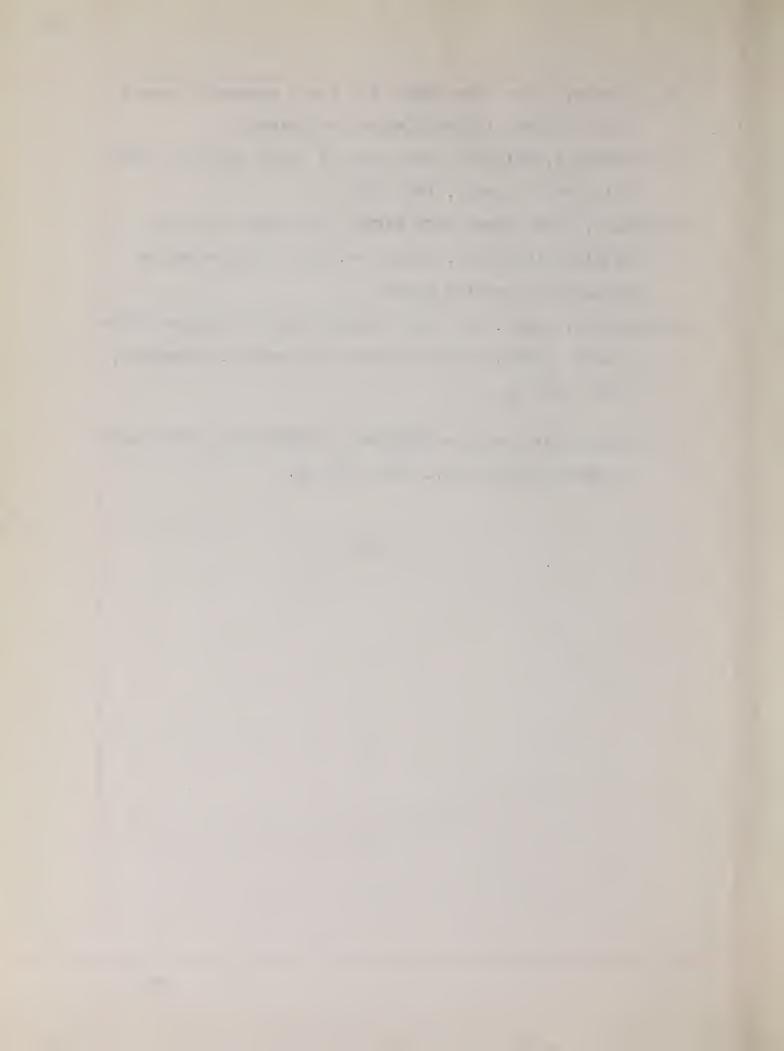
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