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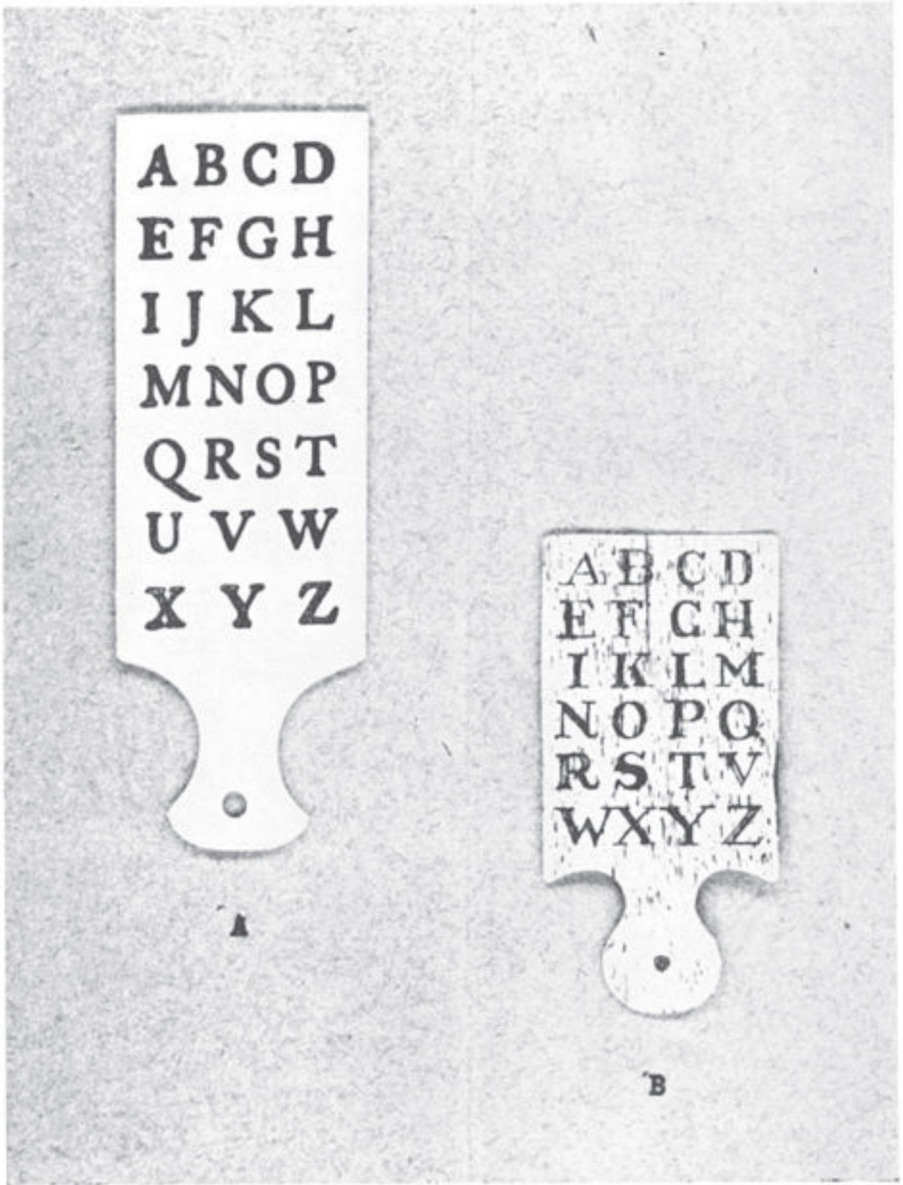
## HORNBOOKS, MOTHER GOOSE, AND THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

BY MARY VIRGINIA GAVER

PROFESSOR MARY VIRGINIA GAVER *has had extensive experience as a librarian and a professor of library service in America and abroad. Before coming to Rutgers in 1954, she was Professor of Library Service and Director of the Library at New Jersey State Teachers College at Trenton, and in 1952-53, she taught at the University of Tehran, Iran. Currently, she is serving as President of the American Association of School Librarians.*

THE OBSERVANT FACULTY MEMBER reading the monthly acquisitions list of the University Library may well have marvelled at the swelling number of juvenile books being added to the University's collections. Those who visit the fourth floor will find two ranges filled with materials, at present rapidly being welded into an organized collection by the cataloging department of the University Library. The faculty member more attuned to the higher levels of research in international politics or physics may question what this material has to do with a university library collection—a question which may be only partly answered for him by reference to the presence on the campus of the still-new Graduate School of Library Service. It is the purpose of this paper to give some attention to this phenomenon and to illustrate the contribution which a juvenile collection may make to a university program by referring to several especially interesting recent acquisitions.

The development of a body of literature for children sufficient in quality and quantity to justify really critical attention and study at the university level is a phenomenon of the twentieth century and,



A. Ivory Hornbook Facsimile. B. Whalebone Hornbook Facsimile.

curiously enough, it is also a phenomenon still limited primarily to the countries of northern Europe and the English-speaking world. French critic Paul Hazard, however, saves an American librarian from charges of chauvinism in making this claim. In his critique *Books Children and Men* he states:

I would grant, without argument, that the South is superior in everything with the exception of one thing. In the matter of literature for children the North surpasses the South by a large margin.<sup>1</sup>

He spells this out more specifically as the main thesis of his book:

You may talk about the invasion of machinery in America . . . [but] explorers set forth from America to all the countries of the world to bring back new story material. Artists, designers, engravers, painters from all the countries in the world arrive in America, invited to decorate the pages of children's books. The élite of the country, that long-suffering élite which rebels against any diminution of the spirit, surrounds the coming generation with a solicitude probably unequaled anywhere as a treasury of hope.<sup>2</sup>

To be worthy of study a body of literature requires well defined characteristics among which are an historical background—that is, roots in the past—and a sizeable body of practitioners who produce a sustained and substantial body of material for a particular audience, as well as critics who set the standards and criteria for evaluating the special characteristics of the literature. All these requirements are met by children's literature today and are most abundantly evidenced in the literature for children provided in England and the United States.

Literature for children undoubtedly began when the first doting parent took his little son and daughter on his knees and read to them from the book he was himself enjoying. Indeed, it could be better said to have begun when the first child sat with his elders and listened to the tales told around the camp-fire "from the time when the first flames flared high until the last coals shut their red eyes and fell asleep in their soft black blankets of soot."<sup>3</sup> Since those early days there have been many authors, from Sir John Mandeville and Geoffrey Chaucer on, whose works published originally

<sup>1</sup> Paul Hazard, *Books Children and Men* (translated by Marguerite Mitchell. Boston: The Horn-Book, Inc., 1947), p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 86-7.

<sup>3</sup> From "The Tale of the Tales" in George and Helen Papashvily, *Yes and No Stories; A Book of Georgian Folk Tales* (Harper & Bros., 1946), pp. 3-4.

for adults have been adopted as their own by the children to whom they appealed. But it was not until the latter part of the eighteenth century when John Newbery produced his *Little Pretty Pocket Book* and many other tiny books in flowery gilt covers that there began to be literature produced specifically for children.<sup>4</sup> During the nineteenth century, of course, were created *Alice*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Hans Brinker*, and *Little Women*—all beloved today as they have been for generations. It was not, however, until this century that a group of children's librarians, publishers, authors, and illustrators began their work which resulted in our present wealth and sustained production of children's books. Looking back from the 1950's we can see the tremendous contribution made by many people: Anne Carroll Moore from her vantage point in the Central Children's Room of the New York Public Library and her editorship of "The Three Owls" book page for the New York *Herald Tribune*; Franklin K. Mathews as he worked through the Boy Scouts of America to establish Children's Book Week; and New Jersey's own Frederic G. Melcher, who established in 1922 the John Newbery Medal and in 1939 the Caldecott Medal.

The literature available for children today consists of work in all forms and for all possible ranges of taste and reading ability. To name as illustrations only a highly personal list of favorites:—Biography ranges from the colorful picture books of the d'Aulaires to the vigorous Americana of James Daugherty and poetry from the Benets' *Book of Americans* to Carl Withers' *Rocket in my Pocket* and Rachel Field's delicately imaginative work. Folklorists such as Richard Chase, Philip Sherlock, and Harold Courlander offer work of a high quality for children. Realistic fiction includes stories by such diversified talents as Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Alice Dalgliesh, Robert McCloskey, Eleanor Estes, and the truly fascinating account of pioneer life left by Laura Ingalls Wilder. The writers of fantasy range from James Thurber and Dr. Seuss to Robert Lawson and William Pène Dubois and in recent years a wealth of interpretation of the world of science has been provided by many authorita-

<sup>4</sup> Research during the past decade has shown that Newbery was only the best known of a group of publishers for children in this period. Notably, one Thomas Boreman, about whom little is yet known, deserves priority over Newbery.

tive writers including Rutgers' own Carroll Lane Fenton and Ira M. Freeman.

Some of these writers, such as the d'Aulaires, Dr. Seuss, James Daugherty, and Robert Lawson, produce illustrations as distinguished as their writing. In addition to them, many other vigorous and imaginatively perceptive illustrators work to interpret children's literature and contribute richly to its appeal and effect. Peculiarly important in making possible the high quality of this production has been a large corps of designers and editors who are now working in more than sixty publishing houses. Pioneers in this work, such as May Masee at Viking and Doris Pattee at Macmillan and Alice Dalgliesh at Scribner's, have been especially influential in this sphere of children's literature. These editors are sensitive to new needs which their work can help to meet and within recent years have responded creatively to such demands, for example, as that for sturdier yet artistic bindings, for science literature geared to the elementary school level, and for trade books of style and appeal that can be enjoyed by the first and second grade reader. In this last area, trade books for first and second grade readers, a research project is currently in progress under the direction of the Graduate Library School.

The product of these practitioners is continuously tested and subjected to criticism. Anne Carroll Moore, the French critic Paul Hazard, Bertha Mahoney Miller, Walter de la Mare, Anne Thaxter Eaton, Annis Duff, Roger Lancelyn Green, and May Hill Arbuthnot are among those whose work has chronicled the evaluation of children's literature in the past twenty-five years. Cornelia Meigs and a group of colleagues issued their *A Critical History of Children's Literature* in 1953 and in the same year Lillian H. Smith's *The Unreluctant Years* proved to be an outstanding statement of criteria for judging various forms of literature for children. The volumes of *The Horn Book Magazine*, which now cover thirty-four years, and of the newer *Junior Bookshelf*, published in England, provide the major journals of criticism while a number of fine magazines present reviews of the current output. The bibliographical apparatus is extensive and detailed and is characterized by a high degree of co-operative evaluation.

There should be little argument that there exists in this country

an audience for this body of literature. The swelling attendance in our public schools is all the evidence needed here. That this audience is a reading audience may need to be underscored, however, and the claim is made here that Johnny *can* and *does* read—Dr. Flesch notwithstanding. In areas where excellent public library systems have been developed, where school administrators have recognized the value of school libraries by providing personnel and rich collections of books, and where there are excellent bookstores, children are indeed reading, and reading voraciously. A case can be made, however, that many of our children, including many in New Jersey, do not have these resources of public libraries, school libraries, and bookstores—but that is another story.

If juvenile literature be, as the writer has claimed, a body of literature worthy of serious study and investigation at the graduate level, what are the categories of material needed and in what ways can they be used to serve various divisions of the University and to enhance the holdings of its Library? The present collection now consisting of almost three thousand titles was in large part the gift of the Douglass College Library. Transferred to the University Library in 1954, it had been carefully built up over a period of about twenty-five years by the Library staff and the faculty of its Department of Library Science. The availability for study by current students of many fine examples now out of print is due to the careful work of the staff and faculty at Douglass. The collection, being added to by current purchases and gifts, represents by many examples some of the interests which it can potentially meet; such an organization as the Friends of the Rutgers University Library could help to meet these interests and needs in depth. In spite of its lack of depth, the collection already represents a number of valuable books justifying care in its preservation and its use for scholarly purposes.

The antiquarian interest is probably the one which most readily appeals to a university community. In the normal undergraduate or even Master's program in Library Service, however, the use of early examples of children's books, in editions printed before 1800, is likely to be limited to reports on the part of a few students with special background, since course work even at the Master's level is of necessity concentrated on the current rather than the antiquarian. However, the acquisition of several examples of hornbooks and of

the most comprehensive history of the hornbook provides excellent material for introductory consideration in class and for displays in the Library.

Authentic hornbooks have been cited as being among the "crown jewels of the nursery," in the sense that they are preeminent among even such rarities as an 1846 *Book of Nonsense* of Edward Lear or a 1765 *Mother Goose's Melodies*. Hornbooks, in the opinion of A. W. Pollard, are "rarer than first folio Shakespeares."<sup>5</sup> Like children's books today, they were used to pieces and loved to death by the child fortunate enough to own one. Hornbooks, however, were neither books nor stories for reading, although they were objects of trade sold in large quantities in the book stores of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A hornbook was actually a textbook, an early form of primer, containing the alphabet, the numerals, the syllables by which children learned to read in those days, and frequently various edifying Biblical texts. In content, they were closely akin to the samplers which many Americans now cherish as examples of their great-grandmother's skill at needlework. Physically, most hornbooks were like a small paddle made of oak to which sheets of paper imprinted with the letters, numerals, *etc.* were pasted. A protective cover of horn was then placed over the sheet on each side of the paddle and secured with a narrow brass strip and nails. Two hornbooks were seen recently by the writer at the William L. Clements Library in Ann Arbor which consist of a heavy leather paddle with the horn secured by strips of leather. Magnificent hornbooks of silver filigree work may occasionally be seen in exhibits at the Morgan Library in New York. More ordinarily, the teaching material was printed on cardboard shaped like a hornbook and sometimes in the shape of the battledore (with folding leaves).

The second edition of Tuer's *History of the Horn-Book* just acquired by the Rutgers University Library contains in a pocket at the back of the volume three hornbook facsimiles: one of oak covered with leather, one of cardboard, and one of ivory.<sup>6</sup> The ivory

<sup>5</sup> As quoted in William Targ, ed. *Bibliophile in the Nursery; A Bookman's Treasury of Collectors' Lore on Old and Rare Children's Books* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1957), p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew W. Tuer, *History of the Horn-Book* (London: Leadenhall Press; New York: Scribner's, 1897), 486 pp. Pocket contains three hornbooks, one of oak, one of cardboard, and one of ivory.

hornbook is stated by Tuer to be "of a type which was unknown to the writer until after the appearance of the first (two volume) edition, now out of print, of this 'History'." This ivory hornbook is four by one and three-eighths inches in size. On the face is imprinted the alphabet in Caslon capitals; on the reverse is the lower case alphabet and the numerals one to zero. It is still clean and white and the letters are of silver, though now tarnished. At the same time these three hornbooks in the second edition of Tuer were acquired, an additional one was also obtained. This is smaller, three by one and one-half inches, of similar though not exactly the same design. One alphabet has been provided on the face only; the letters have been cut into the surface, with black ink pressed into the grooves. The print is Victorian in style, probably dating from 1840 to 1860. It is made of old whalebone, badly scored, and has been broken at one time but carefully mended.<sup>8</sup>

It appears quite likely that the whalebone hornbook is a fake or certainly a facsimile dating from the mid-nineteenth century at the earliest, by which time authentic hornbooks had died out of use. Whether it was carved, like scrimshaw work, by a whaler on a long voyage, one can only conjecture. Certainly it is hard to conceive that either it or the ivory facsimile were made for utilitarian purposes, since their delicate fragility would not withstand hard wear. Sale of only three presumably authentic ivory hornbooks has been recorded in the past twenty years (one undated at \$190, one *ca.* 1750 at \$105, and a third, probably early XIX Century, at \$180). Only fragmentary references have been found to material about such hornbooks and further study of these early "textbooks" might form an interesting investigation for a graduate student. That the hornbook is not entirely a by-gone artifact is illustrated by the surviving use of the term in many ways (as the title, for example, of the most important critical journal of children's literature) and as the model, complete with alphabet, for the matrix case used in the Linophoto system—one of the very newest techniques of printing.

<sup>7</sup> Tuer, *op. cit.*, pocket at back. The reader interested in examining the first edition of this work, two volumes bound in white calf with seven hornbooks in the two pockets, may examine a fine set in the Rare Book Room of the Firestone Library, Princeton University.

<sup>8</sup> Acknowledgment is gratefully made to Mr. Gillette Griffin, Curator of the Graphic Arts Collection, Princeton University Library, for help in determining these facts.



Material for study of a much earlier children's book, one of the very first "literary classics" written for a child audience, can now be carried out with the aid of another recent acquisition. This is Perrault's *Tales of Mother Goose*, a two-volume publication by the Morgan Library consisting of a facsimile of the 1695 manuscript, together with critical text and transcription by Jacques Barchilon. The frontispieces of both the manuscript and the first edition of 1697 are reproduced, and provide the first reference in print to "Mother Goose" giving as they do the title of "Contes de ma mère l'oye." The critical text will be particularly valuable to the graduate student wishing to pursue further analysis of these stories, which are still favorites today as they were 250 years ago. Another beautiful acquisition which contributes to our knowledge of the roots of children's literature is *The Art of Beatrix Potter* (London & New York, Warne, 1955) with stunning reproductions of the early work of this artist. These give a new understanding of the long apprenticeship which preceded *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and her other inimitable story books, as well as of the minuscule detail with which Beatrix Potter's illustrations were drawn. These materials, housed of course in the Special Collections of the Library, will it is hoped be joined by other select editions of children's story books and textbooks. For example, it would be particularly desirable to have a set of the original editions of Randolph Caldecott's picture books or, preferably, the magnificent folio edition of these classic titles. Even a small selection of such examples can provide interesting exhibits and primary source materials for special consideration by both students and faculty.

The basic purpose of the juvenile collection at present, however, is to provide laboratory materials for students of the Graduate School of Library Service who wish to specialize in services to children and young people. A fundamental part of their professional preparation must be the development of a broad knowledge of literature for children and young people, ability to evaluate materials for all kinds of readers and for building library collections, skill in judging the illustrated book for children—in short, study of the entire body of this literature. The collection therefore is being built to provide examples of the work of outstanding authors, examples of the literary classics in various editions and series for comparative study,

examples of the work of outstanding illustrators, and a representative selection of all the content areas from astronomy to zoology with which children's librarians must be familiar. Furthermore, since literature for the high school age is also a subject of study at the Library School, a very limited selection of such titles is being included in the collection. These materials, however, might well be of as great significance to other departments in the University, such as the School of Education and the English Department, since it is certainly as important for teachers as for librarians to have a real familiarity with the literature for the age they teach.

The collection can also, in addition to these primary functions, serve many peripheral needs and interests in the University community. What better way for the displaced Hungarian student to assuage his home-sickness or gain familiarity with his new language than by reading Kate Sereby's beautiful retelling of the Hungarian legend *The White Stag*, illustrated with her superb lithographs prepared on glass? The collection contains many similar works from other nationalities and a growing selection of books published in Scandinavian countries, France and Italy, and even a few picture books from Russia. For a Christmas exhibit, along with other Christmas pictures might be placed Maud and Miska Petersham's *The Christ Child* in the edition printed in Vienna with the deepest and most gorgeous blues and Lauren Ford's *The Ageless Story*, which illustrates the Christmas antiphons with tiny New England scenes and characters set in initials and borders. Or, progress in the graphic arts might well be illustrated by displaying Kate Greenaway's *The Language of Flowers*, Rosamond Prager's *The Adventures of the Three Bold Babes*, and Bruno Munari's latest extravaganza *Il Venditore di Animali*. These are only a few examples of the wide ranging interests which can be served by the Juvenile Collection, which truly reflects in its scope the "republic of childhood."

As a conclusion to this brief picture of the juvenile collection in a university library, it should be of interest to note the handling of children's literature at the Library of Congress. Although many students concur in the claim that children's literature now represents a subject worthy of serious study and investigation, this fact has not yet been recognized by the nation's greatest library. The results of this lack of recognition have been detailed in "The Sayers Report,"

the product of a careful analysis by the former Director of Children's Work at the New York Public Library. Children's books at the Library of Congress are scattered throughout every division in the library—from Orientalia and the Air Studies Division to the Division for the Blind. The special audience to whom these books were addressed has been ignored in the symbols by which they are classified on the shelves, in the headings under which they are listed in the catalog, and in the lack of specially qualified bibliographers to interpret the materials to the many inquirers at the Library of Congress. Mrs. Sayers's findings included, among others, that

children's books and reading constitute an area of research in their own right . . . [that] children's books have values in existing collections and are recognized for their ability to further knowledge and research . . . [and that] the richly articulated and scholarly classification of the Library of Congress has been applied to matter which does not merit such scholarship on the one hand, and on the other serves to becloud the ultimate use of a book intended for children and for people who study the content and use of books for children.<sup>9</sup>

The significance of these findings for our own collection is both negative and positive. Negative, in that the use of the Library of Congress classification, to the extent that it reflects practice at the Library of Congress itself, makes the open-shelf use of the collection at Rutgers very difficult; therefore means must be found by the instructor to ameliorate this condition. Positive, in that "The Sayers Report" verifies the worthiness of the material as a potential contribution of real value to the Graduate School of Library Service for which it is primarily intended, as well as for the University as a whole.

A proud heritage this should be for any university, but especially for one seeking to educate for many professions serving the needs of children.

What an astonishing record it is when viewed as a whole, this record of children's literature. . . . It is a record that cannot be matched by any other country or by any other literature. . . . Yet nowhere is there anything to compare with the English achievement. Nowhere, that is, but in America, which inherited and enlarged the tradition that served children.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Frances Clark Sayers, "The Sayers Report," *Library Journal*, October 15, 1952, p. 1770.

<sup>10</sup> Henry Steele Commager in Cornelia Meigs and others, *A Critical History of Children's Literature* (Macmillan, 1953), pp. ix-x.