

THE ENGINEER'S BOOKSHELF

By WILSON R. DUMBLE

AROUND THE WORLD IN ELEVEN YEARS—
by Patience, Richard & John Abbe—Stokes—1936—
(\$2.00)

THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN—*by Martha Gellhorn*
—Morrow—(\$2.50)

BURY THE DEAD—*by Irwin Shaw—Random*
—House—1936—(\$1.00)

Les Enfants Abbe

Once in a lifetime there appears among the bookstalls a book written by children and for adults. This, I admit, does not sound reasonable, but nevertheless it is true. I am referring to **AROUND THE WORLD IN ELEVEN YEARS**, one of the most enchanting travel volumes that has ever been my pleasure to read. The authors are Patience, Richard and John Abbe; and although at times the reader questions just how much of the script was left untouched by Mamma and Papa Abbe before it ever went to the publishers, he must acknowledge that the Enfants Abbe are most unusual children.

The children's father, it appears, is a news photographer of international importance; yet that fact did not stop him from marrying a most charming Manhattan actress and having a family while he bounced about the capitals of Europe in the line of duty. The children were born in France, and their parents took them every place from Moscow to Madrid. Their inspired innocence at times furnishes consternation in the mind of the most seasoned reader, who bravely moves on, page after page, into the most naive chronicle that he could ever fancy in his most romantic youth.

Let me quote a short paragraph showing Patience's child-like idea.

"When we went home Mamma said, 'You know this is a real lace collar and all the presents were heirlooms.' An heirloom is a thing your grandmother had and then your mother and so on down, and it gets older and older. Mamma said, 'Madame le Comtesse is a valiant lady.' Valiant means someone who loses all their money and doesn't whine about it."

Concerning their Russian experiences, the children tell that "we all got sick in Russia, playing with the samovar. We made tea with it. I, Patience, got sick with bed-bugs and wore bandages around by arms and legs."

They write about everyone, those Abbe children, everyone from Stalin to Alexander Woollcott. To them Mr. Woollcott was "a big man in a big coat made out of

a camel." But the reader reluctantly leaves them on a ranch in Colorado in the summer of 1935, hoping that some day he will have the pleasure of meeting them in person. No doubt, however, in the flesh they could not be any more charming than they are on the pages of their book.

F E R A

From time to time the literary firmament is enhanced with lesser luminaries known as short stories. Such a volume has recently been published under the title, **THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN**. Martha Gellhorn, the author, has been a member of Relief Administrator Hopkins' board of investigation; and in a brilliant manner and with a technique quite all her own she has recorded her experiences with the Federal Emergency Relief group.

In accents meek but not always low Miss Gellhorn recounts the struggles of the lowly families on the river front in Arkansas; records Mrs. Maddison's homespun emotions when she is sent back to the land to make a home for her children out of an abandoned shack; pictures the down and out American on relief; on relief but surely off-guard.

Tragically but surely, each little story moves to its inevitable close, a calm, swift, clear-cut tale of America during her worst economic crisis. Probably the best story is the last in the little book, a story about thirteen-year-old Ruby, who, for the sum of a dollar which she used to buy roller skates, becomes a member of a house of ill-fame. Ghastly, inconceivable as it is, the reader follows the story of the child to the police courts, watches her receive medical treatment from the blunt court physicians, witnesses the visit made to her by her mother who was unaware of her whereabouts.

Miss Gellhorn has done in **THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN** more than a mere job of reporting; she has achieved a definite place as a short story writer with her clear understanding of identifying her reader with her characters. A good piece of work, surely it deserves consideration as an outstanding short story volume of 1936.

The Dead Past

As the years have advanced during the last decade, and as the war clouds have grown thicker and thicker over the European horizon, book after book has been published thrusting its significant blows against war. There have been novels, there have been volumes of poetry and there have been plays. But the greatest of these is plays.

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

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