

Books in Our Library

Lynda Boak Redington, Editor

LIBRARY HOURS:

Wednesday, Friday and Saturday
2-5:30 p. m.

New books in the Wilton Library:
Concord in Jeopardy — Doris Leslie.

"Story of an artist and three women who are important influences in his life. The canvas is broad and the scene is set in England and in Florence". Baker & Taylor.

We Live as Children—Kathryn Hulme.

"Picture of the development of children of divorced parents in San Francisco—their father a rich man, their mother living in poverty."

A Day of Battle — Vincent Sheean.

A story of the battle of Fontenoy in 1745.

Suwannee River; strange green land—Cecile H. Matschat.

One of the "Rivers of America" books.

Ethel A. Hart, Librarian.

We Live as Children by Kathryn Hulme. Knopf, \$2.50. Reviewed by Frances Couster

In "We Live as Children" Kathryn Hulme outlines with sympathetic understanding the psychological and emotional reactions of three very engaging children to the fact that their parents are divorced.

The family portrait is painted by Tom, so called perhaps because of her skill at baseball and her tendency to ignore, for herself, certain feminine virtues which she admires in her older sister, Jen.

Buz is younger than Tom but makes the most of his prerogatives—in the absence of a father—as the man of the family.

Mother is referred to in the various neighborhoods in which they live in San Francisco, as a grass widow with three children between eight and eleven.

The story is costumed in the period of the early nineties, the days of pompadours and ruffles. The San Francisco earthquake scene and its aftermath of human nobilities and relationships is the high spot in the family experience but only slightly less dramatic than a memorable visit to the circus.

Mother is a charming character. The exigencies of her position require great tact and the saving grace of humor and she seems to be equal in her own gentle way to many difficult occasions. She plays the game of life with the children with such sportsmanship and resourcefulness that the last admirable qualities of their "problem father" are almost obscured by the lustre of his personal elegance and prosperity. In the words of Tom, she is not like a parrot in any way but, "One of us who is, for some reason always left behind when we go dressed in our best to ride in father's steamer to visit the mill he owns."

These occasions have considerable distinction for the children and they capitalize them for the benefit of their neighborhood friends who are duly impressed in a period when a family automobile and a divorce were not so common as they are in 1938.

Father does not come very often but when he does he comes in style and Tom finds such comfort as she may from that, as she reflects upon the fact that all the other fathers in the neighborhood came home every night.

The kindest thing to be said

for the father is that he has a dual personality. He has, no doubt, his pangs of conscience and his paternal moments hidden under his particular kind of cynical cruelty but one can not know when he may be a genial Dr. Jekyll or a malignant Mr. Hyde. This fact gives zest, as well as pain, to the early years of his children and their mother but in spite of the pain the reader is conscious to the last page of an irresistible link, between him and them that is never broken.

As the years pass his immediate importance lessens and we find the children a bit skeptical as they echo mother's admonition "We must only wish for his happiness, he has been unhappy so long" on the day she announces his third marriage.

Engrossed meanwhile in their own destinies Jen is feverishly following the war news and, because of a certain young man, knits a little faster every time the president sends another warning note abroad. Buz celebrates by enlisting on that day in the Navy; Tom's hopes are centered on college and even Mother has hitched her wagon to a career.

There are but few minor characters in the book, such as Grandmother and father's lady friends in passing, and except for the earthquake, there are few incidents not entirely related to the main characters.

There is no plot and the author makes no obvious attempt to point a moral though it might well give food for thought to fathers—and mothers of young children who are tempted to improve their marital relations through separation and divorce.

The author's style is expressive and there are undertones of humor and sentiment which make the book very pleasant reading indeed.

Ridgefield

George G. Scotts Married 43 Years

Judge and His Wife Tendered Surprise at Candlewood

Judge and Mrs. George G. Scott celebrated their 43rd anniversary Sunday at their home at Lake Candlewood. It was a surprise to them. The following friends dropped in to offer congratulations: Mr. and Mrs. George A. Lewis, Judge William H. Cable, George Crofut, Mr. and Mrs. George E. T. Travis, George G. Scott, Jr. and Miss Wilma Fairchild of Danbury; Mr. and Mrs. Chauncey B. Lamb of Hartford; Mrs. Allie Thoricht and daughter Lorraine, of Richmond, Va.; and the following from Ridgefield: Mr. and Mrs. Francis H. Bedient, Mr. and Mrs. George A. Mignerey, Mr. and Mrs. Harold E. Finch and daughters, Katherine and Winifred, Mr. and Mrs. Edward P. Scott and daughter, Dorothy, and sons, Edward, Jr., and James.

Mr. and Mrs. Scott were married in Ridgefield by Rev. Foster Ely pastor of the Episcopal Church. Mrs. Scott's maiden name was Miss Faustina Jennings.

In the evening their son, George G. Scott, Jr., took his parents and Miss Fairchild to the Old Hundred Inn in Southbury for an anniversary dinner.

"Obedience is not truly performed by the body, if the heart is dissatisfied"—Saadi.

S. J. Keeler Tells Of "Leather Man"

Wilton Man Delves Into History of Famous Local Visitor

(A paper delivered before a meeting of the Wilton Historical Society on June 28th by Samuel J. Keeler.)

Nearly fifty years have passed since the Leather Man made his last visit to Wilton, but his memory still lingers with some who remember his visits here in his solitary wanderings on foot around the south-western part of Connecticut. He came through Wilton regularly once a month always stopping at the same houses.

Of his life very few specific facts are known. His past was always a topic for speculation and his existence here in America was shrouded in mystery, for the Leather Man very seldom talked, and never about himself. This reticence is probably accounted for by his inability to speak English, although some say that his throat was paralyzed, and others, that he had taken a vow of silence in expiation for some crime committed in his youth.

The following facts, however, are not far from the truth: He was born in Bordeaux, France, in 1817, the son of a well-to-do leather merchant, and lived there following his father's trade until he was nearly 40. Why he came to this country and assumed his strange mode of living, no one knows, but tradition has it that when a young man he was deeply in love. His family did not approve of the girl of his choice and would not allow the marriage.

The first recollections of him in Connecticut were around 1858; when he began his thirty years of walking the highways and by ways of Woodbury, Southbury, Thomaston, Naugatuck, Birmingham, Derby, Bethany, New Haven, Stratford, Wilton, New Canaan and probably many others.

Woodbury is reported as his favorite haunt. He would often stay there several weeks whereas his other stops were merely overnight.

Once his family sent someone over to find him in a vain effort to get him to return to France. He was located but refused to give up his nomadic life.

The apparel of the Leather Man was singularly strange. It consisted of shoes, pants, coat and hat fashioned by him entirely of pieces of leather bound with leather thongs. From time to time, when he would have to repair his suit, he used leather boot-tops. It is reported that young boys in towns where he stopped took great pride in oiling his hide garments, which became dried and cracked with exposure to all weather. Summer and winter, year in and year out he never changed his manner of dress. As he became older there was hardly any of the original leather left in his clothes, so patched had they become with years of constant wear.

He was a short, stocky man and in his younger days, very strong. A story is told that when the New England Railroad was laid above Danbury it demolished one of his caves. The workmen gave him enough cross-ties to build a hut. These, usually requiring the strength of two men, he carried alone up a steep hill where he built his shelter.

His last visit to Wilton is vividly recalled by Dick Moriority of this town. It was on March 4, 1889; the day that President Harrison was inaugurated. He had stopped at John Comstocks (the present home of Dr. Wilton) for breakfast as was his us-

ual custom and then went to Bel-den Hill past the Center School which stood on the corner of Drum Hill Road. Thence across the reservoir back into the West Woods to the Moriority home. Here he would always drink one glass of cider (being a temperate man) and get a few apples to take along as he started off toward New Canaan.

It is reported that the Leather Man never crossed the threshold of a man-made dwelling. If this is true he broke the precedent on his last stop in Wilton, when because of his weakened condition he was induced to enter the Moriority house for a bowl of bread and milk.

He died a few weeks after leaving Wilton, at Mt. Pleasant, White Plains, N. Y., when he was about 72 years of age.

The Leather Man's first cave in Wilton was in the hollow which is now the Norwalk Reservoir. After the reservoir was built he slept in a crude rock shelter back of the upper reservoir, which is still known as the "Leather Man's Cave". A native of Wilton remembers one night when he was coon hunting up near the second cave and saw the light of a small fire. He went over and there was the Leather Man sitting by the fire with his shoes off. When he saw someone coming he grabbed his shoes and held them as though he were afraid they might be taken from him.

On his last visits to Wilton he showed signs of his advanced years. His large leather bag, filled with food, cooking utensils, a prayer-book and the rest of his

wordly-wealth, had been replaced with a smaller, lighter one. A cancer on his lip had eaten the flesh away so that his teeth showed in spite of a piece of bed ticking which he put over it. (In the photograph of him he is evidently trying to hide it with his hand). In these later years he became more bent, more shuffling in his gait, and he would pause to rest more frequently by the road side. Only his keen eyes lost none of their penetrating spark with the passing of years.

All who remember the Leather Man speak of him kindly. His terrifying mien never seemed to frighten the children and he was never subjected to their rude taunts which so grotesque a figure might easily have inspired. He was always honest and temperate, having the bearing of a gentleman; bothering none and befriended by many.

The following is a short verse written, I think, by Mrs. David Lambert of Wilton.

One misty moisty morning
When cloudy was the weather
I chanced to meet an old man
Dressed all in leather
I began to compliment
And he began to grin
And how-do-you-do, and how-do-you-do,
And how-do-you-do again.

Wilton Farmers Beaten

For the second time this season, Wilton had to accept defeat. Before a crowd of 3,000 fans on Monday night at Amusement Park, Norwalk the Black Yankees took Wilton over, 4-3. Ahearn pitched for Wilton.

new canaan 952

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