

Tu sais dit-il, on ne reviendra peut-être pas avant Noël, mais je penserai à toi. Tu verras, ça passera vite. Et quand l'hiver sera là, tu m'apprendras à abattre des arbres. (p. 29)

Félicien le fantôme est un livre pour les enfants de tout âge. L'histoire fait vibrer en nous la corde qui nous ramène à nos vieux rêves d'enfant. Il éveille nos sentiments de nostalgie pour le passé de nos aïeux et entour ceux-ci d'une magie spéciale. *Félicien le fantôme* saura donc plaire aux jeunes et aux parents, peut-être même aux grands-parents. A lire et à faire lire aux autres.

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In Search of the Canadian Hero

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Goggles Helmets and Airmail Stamps, Georgette Vachon. Translated by Mary Downey. Clarke, Irwin, 1974. 150 pp. \$9.95. ISBN 0-7720-0619-9.

Thomas George Prince, D. Bruce Sealey and Peter Van de Vyvere. Peguis Publishers, 1981. 52 pp. \$3.00. ISBN 0-919566-75-8.

Canada's Fighting Pilots, Edmund Cosgrove. Clarke, Irwin, 1965, paperback 1966. 173 pp. \$3.25. ISBN 7720-0225-8.

Standing into Danger, Cassie Brown. Doubleday, 1979. 391 pp. \$14.95. ISBN 0-385-13681-1.

Canadian heroism may be a rebellion against the rugged, unforgiving Canadian landscape. Then again, it may be a mystical element of the human spirit, born from living on the edge of the northern frontier. Whatever the roots of our bravery, these four books observe it as a quality unborrowed from others, grown within the boundaries of the nation. It is presented as being Canadian as lumberjack shirts and maple syrup.

Focusing on Canadian heroes of our history, specifically in aviation, war and shipwreck, the authors offer a unique vision of the champions. These adventurers are totally unlike classical models. More often than not, they lack attributes of strength and sleuth, and they perform their deeds without inherent knowledge of truth and goodness. Our herculeans have a fanatic nature; their deeds appear reckless, sheer gutsiness without purpose. Sometimes reason itself is completely absent, heroics being performed in an impulsive frenzy.

But as these four works prove, such heroes are fascinating individuals that can capture the imaginations of Canadian children.

The most appealing work is *Goggles Helmets and Airmail Stamps* by Georgette Vachon, translated by Mary Downey. It presents, as Vachon explains in her foreword, "la petite histoire" of Canadian aviation from hot air balloons to the organization of commercial airlines.

When viewing such a broad subject area, the author could easily focus on the technology, a dry subject to a child with little interest in aviation. Vachon adroitly avoids this problem by concentrating on the people rather than the machines. Her able writing transforms the early flights into suspenseful human drama, urging the reader forward with the overpowering bravado of the Canadians involved.

The book offers also a wealth of pictures of newspaper clippings which do more to illustrate the early aircraft (and the devilish glint in the pilot's eyes) than any amount of prose. By showing the frailty and sometimes the absurdity of the pioneer flying machines, the photographs complement the gallantry described in the text.

In short, the book passes on to the youngster the dynamic excitement of our aviation past and the thrilling deeds of the heroes who shrank the vastness of Canada.

Thomas George Prince is a booklet from the "Manitobans in Profile" series. It is a biography of a Canadian war hero who earned his glory during World War II and the Korean War.

Sealey and Van de Vyvere have done a competent job as biographers. The booklet does not simply laud the achievements of Prince, an easy pitfall when writing for children, but considers all aspects of this Manitoban's life. As a Canadian native, tormented by prejudice and alcohol, this hero was somewhat pitiful. Even the wartime heroics were as foolhardy as they were courageous.

This depth of focus makes Prince a most intriguing character and the booklet highly readable. To the older child needing a biography of an interesting Canadian for a school project, this booklet should be one of the first to be recommended by a librarian.

Canada's Fighting Pilots is an in-depth study of Canadian heroes who earned their fame guiding the fighters and bombers of WW I and WW II. The book offers well researched descriptions of the deeds of such airborne adventurers as Billy Bishop, Don MacLaren, Bill Barker and John Fauquier.

In documenting the exploits of the Canadians, Cosgrove cannot be faulted. His accounts are thorough and offer any war buff a most satisfactory few hours. Cosgrove also emphasizes the fanatic nature of some of the heroes, presenting them in a fine three-dimensional manner.

But the paperback does have a couple of drawbacks, considering the child reader. The book will appeal mainly to the older child. It is written at an adult level, throwing out the names of aircraft models, technical terms and geographic locations with little explanation for the aviation novice. In assuming a certain degree of foreknowledge from the reader, the book is unlikely to be a recreational one.

Also, its lack of illustrations or photographs detracts from its appeal. Considering the amount of time allotted to Sopwith Camels, Spitfires and Lancasters in the text, one or two paragraphs would be a welcome addition.

Standing into Danger, a dramatic story of shipwreck and rescue by Cassie Brown, recounts the events preceding, during and following the shipwrecks of the Wilkes, the Pollux and the Truxton on February 18, 1942, off the coast of Newfoundland. Besides the courage of the seamen, the book details the heroic efforts of Newfoundlanders in their attempt to save American lives. Brown has relied heavily upon these Canadians to provide details in the narrative.

On the whole, the book works well. The research is extensive and thorough, going as far as to include the ships' rolls and partial court martial transcripts of those charged with negligence in the incident. Like *Goggles Helmets and Airmail Stamps*, the text is written at the human level, focusing on the human drama of that fateful day.

This book will also appeal to the older child. Vocabulary is at a mature level and it is obvious that Brown wrote the book to appeal mainly to adult readers. It does, however, contain numerous

photographs and illustrations, which will help the younger reader through the fairly lengthy work.

Like *Thomas George Prince*, the book could certainly be suggested to a student wishing to present a paper on an exciting heroic event taking place in Canadian waters.

In conclusion, all four books are capable of opening doors to our heritage. When children view the American comic book superhero as an ideal, it is refreshing to know that with the aid of these works students can glean insights into the absorbing deeds of "real-life" Canadians. By showing these individuals in an honest light, detailing their character quirks and still proclaiming them as heroes, the writers illuminate a facet of the Canadian identity.

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A Prairie Tradition

LAURIE RICOU

Especially Babe, R. Ross Annett. Tree Frog Press, 1978. 192 pp. \$9.95 cloth.

There is very little to say about a collection of stories that have the same cardboard brightness as a Norman Rockwell painting. *Especially Babe*, that is, seems, now, a book more interesting for its contexts than its content. What might hold our attention for a moment is the "surround" of the stories: the patterns of popular literary conventions, the particular use of the eternal child figure, the tastes of the late Depression audience, or the glimpses of bygone rural life.

Especially Babe is a reprint of a 1942 publication, a collection of the first thirteen of some 70 "Babe" stories which R. Ross Annett wrote for the *Saturday Evening Post* between 1938 and 1962. The stories themselves are set during the years from 1932 to 1941, in a not very