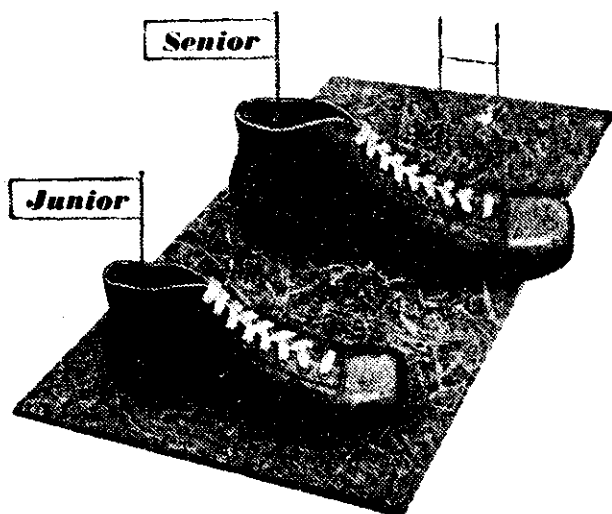


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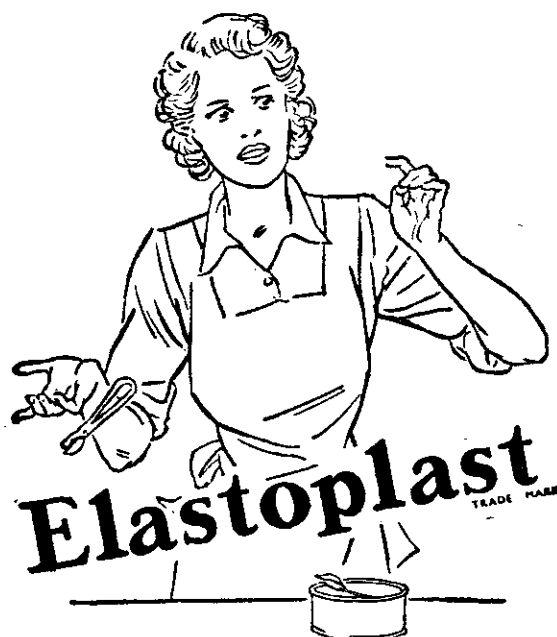
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BOOKS

In the American Grain

ALWAYS THE YOUNG STRANGERS. by Carl Sandburg; Jonathan Cape, English price 25/-.

(Reviewed by P.J.W.)

INTO the Union Hotel barber-shop in Galesburg, Ohio, there often came a pudgy Englishman with a curling moustache. He was something of a character about town who bred setter dogs, and he fascinated young Carl Sandburg, who worked in the shop brushing off the coats of customers, because unlike other Englishmen he'd known this one didn't drop his aitches. "How does an Englishman spell saloon?" the boys in the hotel used to ask. "A hess, a hay, a hell, two hoes, and a hen." The earthy flavour of small-town America, the chatter of half-Swedish lingo in the Sandburg household, anecdotes and slang tales of childhood and schooldays, murders and dynamite bombs and anarchists, reflections on the Haymarket riots, memories of Abraham Lincoln and Jesse James and General Grant's funeral, hobo days on the freight trains, the Spanish-American War—all form a part of this rambling and folksy autobiography by one of America's celebrated poets.

There were nine in the Swedish immigrant family in Galesburg, where Carl Sandburg was born in 1878. The children slept on corn-husk mattresses, and the babies were dressed in napkins made from flour sacks. His father was a blacksmith on the railroad, and the story of his early days is a familiar account of the foreign-born immigrant, clannish, hard-working and poor. Like his friends the Holmeses, who farmed in Nebraska and lived in a sod hut, his father had a fear of want which was "a dread in his heart and brain."

Carl had a good time in childhood, swimming in water-holes, attending the Knox County Fair, where the farmers and their work-worn wives brought cattle and potatoes and preserves to

display, reading Hostetter's Almanac with its cures for warts, corns, hic-coughs, and its funny drawings and jokes. But later came a succession of odd jobs and the "bitter and lonely hours" when at 19 he had thoughts of suicide. Luckily he decided instead to become a hobo, and one day jumped on a freight train at the Santa Fe station. He worked on the railroad, chopped wood, picked apples, dish-washed in hotels, milked cows, carpentered, and saw the country. When the Spanish-American War broke out he joined up and served in Cuba. His story ends with his return from the war to the home town that he "hated and loved."

His book is a story of 19th Century America, the record of "an album of faces in my memory" from the "Spring-time Years." He describes his boyhood friends, the men who made his town, the pioneers who first broke the prairie. Here are sketches of his favourite American heroes—General Beauregard of the Civil War, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Wanamaker, Whittier, George Peabody, Robert Ingersoll—and in their lives he sees something of the meaning of America. "Breeds and blood strains that figure in history were there for me, as a boy, to see and hear in their faces and their ways of talking and acting." Yankee old-timers from New England, Scotch-Irish breeds from Kentucky and Tennessee, Irish, Swedes and Germans: "Why did they come? Why couldn't they get along where they started from? . . . Those questions ran in my blood. Dark and tangled they were to run in my blood for years. . . This small town of Galesburg, as I remember it, was a piece of the American Republic."

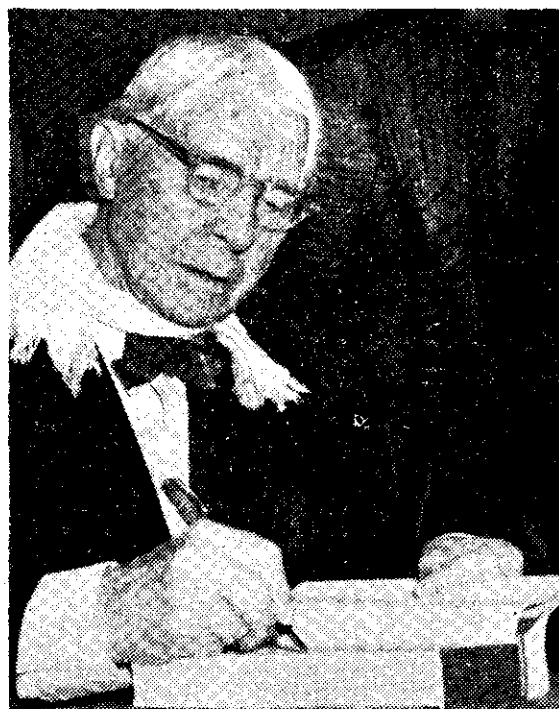
TEACHER'S LIFE

WITHIN SOUND OF THE BELL, by J. Rhoda Barr; Whitcombe and Tombs, published with the aid of the New Zealand Literary Fund, 10/6.

RHODA BARR, headmistress successively of three of this country's most important girls' schools, has written an account of her life's work as a teacher, and a record of the philosophy which she derived from, and which directed that work. After a brief account of her childhood and of her teaching career from the day when she graduated M.A. from Otago University, Miss Barr drops all pretence at systematic autobiography, and loses herself in the subject she most loves—how, when and what to teach girls. She has taken the greatest pains to get inside the minds of her pupils, but this seems of less account than the innate sympathy she seems to have for girls of all types, whether good or troublesome, academic or hard-to-interest.

"A personal judgment is seldom innocent of prejudice, and may be as temporary as it is assured." Miss Barr offers this little quotation from Walter de la

(continued on next page)



CARL SANDBURG

"An album of faces from the springtime years"

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 23, 1954.