

# *“Bless Its Pink Pages”*



# The *Minneapolis Journal* and Schoolchildren in the Northwest

Judith B. Erickson

TUCKED into the Saturday edition of the *Minneapolis Journal* for January 15, 1898, was a four-page tabloid for young readers. One of the day's editorials announced: "The Journal Junior department, or Journal Junior Paper, as it becomes today, is unique. There are papers for children without number and departments in daily and weekly newspapers but they are all prepared chiefly, if not wholly, by grown people for children. The Journal has taken hold of the children's department at the other end and conducts a department prepared by the children, in which, of course, they are deeply interested and which parents and teachers and almost everybody, is sure to be interested more or less." At this time of rampant circulation warfare among metropolitan dailies, these editorial claims for "Junior work" appear to have been appropriate, if not particularly modest. The *Journal Junior* (JJ) section soon grew to eight green, and later, bright pink pages that provided a lively forum for young views, as well as an engaging source of fact and fantasy for Northwest schoolchildren for over 15 years. An understanding of this

commitment on the part of the *Journal* (and many other newspapers which were its contemporaries) to their child and adolescent readers requires a look backward.

The first periodical for American children appeared in 1789. By the 1820s publishing for juveniles had become a growth industry, for the middle class was expanding and creating a ready market for aids in the upbringing of the Republic's future citizens. The earliest children's papers and books now seem grim and gloomy little offerings, unremittingly didactic and moralistic. However, it was impossible to stem for long the intrusion of secular themes. In 1841, for example, one editor gingerly introduced a short-lived "Amusements" column (the first of which contained three jokes), with the justification: "We do not think it sinful to be amused, though we would never be amused with sin." By the end of the 1840s several juvenile publications routinely carried such material.<sup>1</sup>

In this same decade, adult newspapers began to broaden their content beyond the reporting of political affairs and opinion, legislative activities, mayhem, murder, and the "melancholy accidents" that had been their mainstays to appeal to a growing, diversified readership. A few began to experiment with features for children containing puzzles, poems, "enigmas"; by mid-century American readers of all ages had considerable choice in easily procured printed matter. Pedants and moralists, unwilling to leave selection to chance or individual taste, admonished girls and boys: "Be extremely careful what you read. . . . Avoid, especially, the fictitious stories that you find in newspapers and popular magazines. They . . . tend strongly to induce a vitiated taste and an appetite for novel-reading. If

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<sup>1</sup> The author thanks Dorothy M. Burke, who recently retired as head of the Minneapolis History Collection at that city's public library, for introducing her to the Journal Juniors; Karen Nelson Hoyle, curator of the Children's Literature Research Collection, University of Minnesota, for sharing her notes and helping to locate former Juniors; Linda James and Peg Meier of the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* for assistance in tracking down biographical data on Mae H. Anson; and Misti Snow of that paper for sharing contemporary Junior work.

*Children's Magazine* (Hartford, Conn.), Jan.-April, 1789; *Youth's Cabinet Devoted to Liberty, Peace, Temperance, and Religious, Moral, Intellectual and Physical Education*, Feb. 18, 1841, p. 32, in collections of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. On the development of children's periodical literature, the author has followed R. Gordon Kelly, *Mother Was a Lady: Self and Society in Selected American Children's Periodicals, 1865-1890* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974).

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you once become accustomed to such reading, you will find it produce [sic] a kind of *moral intoxication*, so that you will feel as uneasy without it, as the drunkard without his cups, or the smoker without his pipe.”<sup>2</sup>

Adult effort notwithstanding, juvenile fiction and nonfiction of all types and on a wide variety of subjects became more and more accessible and popular. The post-Civil War period saw the acceptance of several new publications dedicated to the amusement of youngsters as an end in itself. At the same time, a new threat to public morality was envisioned when it became clear that the Sunday editions of the papers were to be a permanent feature of metropolitan journalism. Such editions proved to be more than a phenomenon of wartime, when an appetite for the latest battlefield news had restrained objections to their implications for the sanctity of the Sabbath. In 1872 there were regular Sunday newspapers and Sunday editions of dailies in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. By 1883 about 100 daily newspapers were also published on Sunday, a number which expanded to 250 in 1890. It was not only on Sundays that the power of the press was being extended, however. Between 1870 and 1900 the American population doubled, but the number of daily newspapers quadrupled and circulation increased sixfold.<sup>3</sup>

By the 1890s many keepers of the public conscience seem to have capitulated to the reality of ever-increasing newspaper circulation. Rather than advocate the protection of young people from the papers, both religious and secular commentators suggested ways to make the press serve higher purposes for the educational benefit of youth. Teachers of both Sunday and common schools were urged to look to the papers for up-to-date information, examples (including, of course, cautionary tales), lessons, and composition topics. Calls for reform continued, but they were couched in terms acknowledging the inevitability of a young readership. The superintendent of public instruction for the state of New York entreated publishers: “Give us newspapers which we can offer freely to those whom we love best, and feel that we are placing among them a friend whom we can trust, and we will do much toward driving vile reading from our midst.”<sup>4</sup>

The fourth estate began to reform itself. Through milk funds and similar public service efforts, sponsorship of parades, athletic events and other spectacles, and through the extension of educational efforts, newspapers “made themselves community ‘institutions’ as well as mass-circulation agencies.” Thus it was that in the nation’s papers of the 1890s features for children began to show up regularly as symbols of the “new responsibility.”<sup>5</sup>

Juvenile columns containing syndicated serialized stories, puzzles, and poems were often placed right next to those offering advice to mothers for dealing with re-

calcitrant offspring, a juxtaposition that says more about the innocence of the page-assemblers than of the little ones themselves. Newspapers were seeking to become good neighbors—respectable and enlightened informers and entertainers of all members of the household.

The tone of the typical children’s feature tended toward the hearty or the precious, depending upon whether the intended readers were male or female. These pages, it must be remembered, were popular, possibly because they offered to youngsters of limited means some of the same amusements available to more affluent subscribers of *St. Nicholas*, *Youth’s Companion*, or other quality juvenile monthlies of the day. The newspapers, like the magazines, kindled interest and loyalty through frequent puzzle, drawing, and writing contests. From these contests there often developed a regular correspondence between young readers and editors that led the paper to expand its activities for youth.

IT WAS in the spirit of “responsible” journalism that the *Minneapolis Journal* added several new features and advertised its Saturday edition as “the most complete family newspaper issued in this state.” In 1894 a column “For the Youngsters” began to appear rather irregularly; it contained serialized fiction or an occasional puzzle or game—all apparently from syndicated sources. Joel Chandler Harris’s “Mr. Thimblefinger and his Queer Country,” for example, ran for several weeks. At this time the *Journal* was following a pattern typical of juvenile features: a small column (rarely exceeding one-fourth of a page) was simply expanded at

<sup>2</sup> Harvey Newcomb, *How to be a Lady: A Book for Girls, Containing Useful Hints on the Formation of Character* (Boston: Gould, Kendall & Lincoln, 1847), 159. A similar book, *How to be a Man*, was published the same year and was identical with the exception of two chapters; both are in the collections of the Newberry Library, Chicago.

<sup>3</sup> See Frederic Hudson, *Journalism in the United States, from 1690 to 1872* (New York: Harpers, 1873), 337-339; Edwin Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 345, 421. For criticism of the Sunday papers, see, for example, George S. Chadbourne, “The Sunday Newspaper,” *Our Day* 7 (May, 1891): 323, and “The Curse of Print—A Lay-Sermon,” *Catholic World* 41 (June, 1885): 404.

<sup>4</sup> Charles H. Skinner, quoted in *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 11, 1902, magazine sec., 4. See also Amos R. Wells, *Sunday-School Success: A Book of Practical Methods for Sunday-School Teachers and Officers* (New York: F. H. Revell Co., 1897), 134; Richard G. Boone, “Education Through the Press and Public Organizations,” *Education* 23 (Jan., 1903): 270-276; “The Newspaper in the High School,” *The Academy* 6 (June, 1891): 260-265.

<sup>5</sup> Alfred M. Lee, *The Daily Newspaper in America: The Evolution of a Social Instrument* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 284.

# THE JOURNAL JUNIOR.

SUPPLEMENT TO THE MINNEAPOLIS JOURNAL.

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN., SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1900.

## THE HEIGHT OF THEIR AMBITIONS

THE ONE HONOR DESIRED ABOVE ALL OTHERS

The Majority of Minneapolis Juniors Prefer Some Position That Is the Result of Hard and Conscientious Work.

"Some are born great, some achieve greatness and others have greatness thrust upon them." The majority, reckoning the latter position, the result of some such pluck, perseverance, and conscientious work, preferred to being to the second class. With a large number desired honors that were world-wide, or at least national, an equally large number were content to hold an honored and respected position in their own town or immediate vicinity.

The presidential chair does not seem to have as many aspirants for the Junior as was expected, but if the wishes of those who desired to be admitted could be granted the country would be flooded with them, and as national would be such a common, every day affair that he would cause no uneasiness.

The girls, as a rule, wanted to be great musicians, writers of prose or poetry, and all-arounders. Generally speaking the desired honors were within human reach, but a large number, while not impossible, were hardly probable.

The majority want praise and honor from all, but rarely fully, fifth grade. A bitter school, probably knows whereof he speaks when he says he would be equipped with the appreciation of a portion of the inhabitants—the boys. "I should build a machine that would run well, know is and fill all the world that was used."

Edward Burns, sixth grade, Minneapolis school, evidently has the common and universal idea that length is the chief point of merit in poetry. In speaking of the poems he would write, he says, "I would write them in big volumes, and it would take great days and days to read them."

Benjamin Lerner, eighth grade, Adams school, would like to be an admiral like Custer, but he realizes that honors are not given for the asking. "Dewey did not make a Junior Junior without being to get his position. He got it by hard work, energy and pluck."

Edward Peterson, sixth grade, Longfellow school, is the exception that proves the rule. Most boys feel that they cannot have too long a vacation, but he would like the opportunity. If the chance ever had to choose again on account of lack of money, of giving all the money necessary in order to keep them open.

John Bonnelly, sixth grade, Wither school, believes that more honor can be gained where there are no competitors. "I should like to be a poet," she says, because "they are not so common as poets."

Myrtle Carey, fifth grade, Wither school, realizes that the first of anyone always receives more interest, so she would like to be the first woman president of the United States.

A button next to Little Aase, sixth grade, Monroe school, has been returned to the office marked with "no number." If she will send in her address it will be forwarded at once.

### IN THIS BUSINESS WORLD

**Honors for Women are Increasing in This Field.**  
(5th and 6th Grade Prizes.)  
I wish I could have the honor of being a leading business woman; one who would succeed in the world and also one who would be able to trust and depend upon. I should like to be known all over the world as the most potent business woman and after my death have my life held up as an example.  
B. B. Grade, 1300 5th St. S.  
Longfellow School.

### APPEALS TO THE BEST IN MAN

**The Power of Music is Unfolded and Unrepressed.**  
(Prize.)  
I have come to the conclusion that the greatest honor I should desire to have bestowed upon me would be that of being the most talented, greatest and most wonderful musician of the age. But why do I choose this, when there are so many more seemingly greater, and more widely reputed for playing better? Music is said to be the very speech of angels, and if that be so, what greater thing could come from man, who is no much lower in creation? How many times have our hearts been overclouded with grief and oppression has not the

sound of music seemed as if it were to carry it all off, leaving the heart free from care? Through all ages music has been the means of worship even among heathen nations, thereby proving that it is the most divine of all acquisitions, and my ambition

love! What can surpass love—the immortal substance, the golden link that binds the world? Surely not a cold stone monument, a gorgeous parade, an empty title—all unreal, earthly, perishable things—except it be the most as a race in full bloom, then gradually passes into oblivion.

I would have the people look up to me as one who had made life a grand and beautiful song. I would have them reward me with a deep, abiding love such as is given to but few of the greatest souls. As the Roman legions loved Caesar, as the Christian soldiers revered Florence Nightingale, as the British public adore their queen and as our countrymen recall the memory of Washington and Abraham Lincoln, so would I have the world feel towards me. This honor is the most fitting tribute to greatness; it is the grandest tribute to a well accomplished task.

(Continued on Sixth Page.)

## TOYS THAT WERE ESPECIALLY DEAR

THE MORE DISFIGURED THE BETTER LIKED

Home-Made Productions and Those That Could Make a Noise Had a Deeper Hold on the Affections of the Northwestern Juniors.

If all the treasured toys had been collected in one place, a large building would have been needed to store them away, but the interior view would have resembled a toy hospital or repair shop more than a toy shop where everything is new and the paint

shone, Little Falls, Minn., killed two hares with one stone when it won a rocking-horse and a drum. "One day," he said, "when I was playing with them, I fell off my horse and broke two of his legs and his neck and fell on my drum and smashed it." While preserving the usual order of things, it is the person, usually, who suffers with the broken bones.

Edward Kuebler, 4th grade, Parkman, Minn., fought it hard to get an opportunity to give vent to his pent-up feelings with his tin horns. He ran through the house and made such a noise that my mother drove me out of doors and the neighbors drove me in again.

Fred La Prambolt, 5th grade, Sleepy Eye, Minn., was the proud possessor of a ready-made horn that long. One day he fell down stairs with the case and broke it into numerous pieces, but it had the consolation, for it furnished candy to eat for a week.

Willie Thibault, 4th grade, Oak Grove school, Golden Valley, Minn., won a sled because he was good for a whole week, and he was to keep it on good behavior. A large boy took a turn on it the first day and broke it, and he ended by adding, "I have been a bad boy ever since." This is hard to believe, but perhaps he knows best.

### THE CAREER OF A MUSHMEL

If First Served was a Prize for a Horse Fly.

(Prize.)  
The first nut I ever cracked was when I was 4 years old. It was a large English walnut and I played with a half of the shell almost every day. First I used it for a nutcracker, the second time was a large black horse fly that bit my arm. Next it was used as a palette for a lady bug, and I was tired of that because the bug could not always be found. Then it became a ship in a ocean. It is still used with a fly stick in it, but it soon sunk the large ship and swam away in triumph. I now have it in my dresser using it for a ring-bob.

After dinner, Argyle, Minn.

7th Grade

THE BOY WIDE OF HIM

So He Did Not Carry His War in Peace.

(5th and 6th Grade Prize.)  
My sister and I are twins and when we were small we used to get the same kind of toys and presents. One Christmas when we were about 3 years of age my sister got a fur suit from our aunt and we were so used to having our things alike that I wanted one just like it. When I tried to find out what little boys didn't wear under her I found out a cryer could also give her old one, which I liked very much.

I wore it a few times, but the boys made so much fun of me that I decided to call it my kity. I would not wear it on a chair and play on it was going to school. If I thought he had a good lesson I would take it to my lap and stroke it for hours. I loved it so much that I took it to bed with me. I had my mind for two years, but one day when I came home from a party the dog was having a fine time with my kity and before I could catch him he had it all torn up. This made me feel so badly that I put it in my little trunk and it is there yet.

Victor P. Kilbo, Dickinson, N. D.

6th Grade

He Did Not Build Good.

(Honorable Mention.)  
The toy which I liked the best was a rocking-horse which I received one Christmas. About one month after this I recollect that I had heard my brother say when he was talking about our cat that he had a war with it as much money after it is broken, so the next day I took my rocking-horse to the woodshed and cut it in two pieces with my ax.

Then the next time I saw my brother I took him to the woodshed and showed him the remains of my rocking-horse. Then I asked him if he would give me twice as much for it as he would before I broke it; he said he would not because it was in two pieces with my ax.

Phil Stone, Morris, Minn., 4th Grade.

Concert Programs.

Once home brought me home a little toy piano and I spent a great deal of time with it. Some afternoons I would make up my playmates over, and



IT GAVE HIM HIS START.

TEX LITTE HARTNEY—I'm proud of my work.

### THE WEEK'S ROLL OF HONOR.

#### HONORABLE MENTION.

EFFIE MAE MANNING, B. B. Grade, Adams School, 2010 Washington Ave. S.

CLARA CARLSON, B. B. Grade, Longfellow School, 2230 Twenty-second Ave. S.

HONORABLE MENTION.

JULIA KIMMER, A. B. Grade, Park School, 735 Huron St. S. B.

JOE KOKESH, A. B. Grade, South Side High School, 1800 Washington Ave. S.

ROBERT BROWN, B. B. Grade, South Side High School, 2000 Twenty-second Ave. S.

OLEE DANIEL, B. B. Grade, Monroe School, 910 Twenty-second Ave. S.

HONORABLE MENTION.

ALICE CHAMBER, South Side High School, 1800 Washington Ave. S.

VICTOR F. KILBO, 4th Grade, Dickinson, N. D.

HONORABLE MENTION.

BELLE WOODMAN, B. B. Grade, Parkman, Minn.

CECIL V. WARD, 4th Grade, Farmington, Minn.

IRVING O'CONNOR, A. B. Grade, Morris, Minn.

shall be in gain honor through this accomplishment.

Elmo Mae Mandley, B. B. Grade, 2010 Washington Ave. S. Adams School.

At Home and Abroad.

(Honorable Mention.)

After due consideration, I think the most honored individual in America is the president of the United States. He is respected by everybody. This honor was given to me in the last October when the president was in Minneapolis. The crowd that simply flocked down the street fought, pushed, and trampled on each other to get a look at the ruler of this free country, and were proud of seeing the president. They had in received well in all foreign countries, and while there he is even more respected, and honored than in his own country.

Joe Kishner, A. B. Grade, 1901 Washington Ave. S. South Side High School.

The Golden Link.

(Honorable Mention.)

A rulo, with heart, is mine; Argyle, Minn., and yet again I have started new to recall some honor dearer than all else to me. By different pathways my thoughts have traveled over a score of rewards, but over they meet and linger at a common point, and my heart gleefully sings, "It is love, love,

some point to a full page or two, with such banners as "In the Interest of the Young Folk," "Stories and Pictures for our Children," "Our Girls and Boys," or "Little Men and Women." But these pages remained adult-ordered assemblages of items thought to have appeal or to be instructive for children. The expanded content included short stories, handicraft projects, historical anecdotes, science experiments, drawings and photographs, rebuses, and short articles about children, world events, natural history, and the like. The works of still-read authors such as Ernest Thompson Seton, E. Nesbit, Frank Stockton, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and L. Frank Baum appeared, along with those of children's writers long forgotten.<sup>6</sup>

Early on, the *Minneapolis Journal* displayed two departures from the typical pattern: its juvenile feature became locally produced, and it relied on the writing of young people themselves for its content and interest. Serious "Junior work" began in February, 1895, with an invitation for Minneapolis schoolchildren to send in news items. The top three stories earned three-, two-, or one-dollar prizes (or books of equivalent worth), and "Every piece of news of sufficient value and interest to be published in The Journal" earned twenty-five cents, or even higher, if its caliber warranted. The project was abandoned when it was observed that the young reporters, sensitive to prevailing stylistic trends, were becoming little "yellow" journalists on their own!

Mindful of the paper's proper pedagogical responsibility, a new project invited essays on assigned topics related to school subjects. It was hoped that these efforts would direct young writers along "more useful and helpful lines." Although free from the hazards of the initial plan, the compositions produced "too much sameness . . . because the pupils simply paraphrased what had been told by the teachers." The third attempt at designing a juvenile writing project met with "pronounced success," and from December, 1896, onward formed the core of the *Journal Junior* program. "It called for original papers on live subjects that would naturally appeal to children." Those of merit appeared in the Saturday edition (the *Journal* did not yet publish on Sundays), and each week's best was rewarded with a prize picture, plaster cast, or plaque that the winner donated to her or his school. "The Rialto," "The Gleaners," and "Madonnas" (in a variety of renderings) were among the popular choices to grace classroom walls the first year.<sup>7</sup>

THE EDITOR of the earliest *Journal* writing projects remains anonymous. Comments in the brief editorials that accompanied the essays suggest that the job had been assigned to the "school editor" as a sideline. He mentions having examined 384 papers in one week, implying that Junior work was picking up among young

Minneapolis scholars (and perhaps getting out of hand). Adding some strength to this notion is the fact that a month later the Junior project could claim a new, full-time editor: in April, 1897, Mae Harris Anson assumed this responsibility and began a remarkable 15-year editorial stint.

The details of Anson's biography are regrettably scant. Born in Niles, Michigan, in 1865, she was brought to Minneapolis as a child, probably in 1873 or 1874 when, it seems, her father established a cooperage and wholesale fruit business. In one editorial she speaks of going through the public schools from grades one to twelve, but her brief notice in the 1913 *Who's Who* states that she attended Bennett Seminary, an early Minneapolis private school. Whatever the case, she went on to the New England Conservatory of Music where she studied elocution and was an active participant in school debates and public performances. Back in Minneapolis in 1887, she taught elocution at the Northwestern Conservatory of Music. She lived at home and she and her stepmother "received" on Wednesdays, following the custom among the "better classes" of that era. Her father's name disappeared from local directories by 1888, suggesting that the family had left the city.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> On the early history of the newspaper's juvenile features here and below, see *The Minneapolis Journal*, vol. 3, *Its Special Features and Past Achievements* (Minneapolis: Journal Printing Co., 1899), 15-21. See also "The Origin and Growth of The Journal Junior," *Minneapolis Journal* (hereafter cited as *Journal*), Nov. 26, 1903, Silver anniversary sec., 3, and ads, editorials, and the feature "From the Journal Juniors" beginning in the *Journal*, Feb. 26, 1895.

<sup>7</sup> *Journal*, Mar. 13, 1897, p. 7, June 12, 1897, sec. 2, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Here and below, the biography of Anson has been pieced together from the following sources: United States, *Census*, 1880, 1900, Minnesota, Hennepin County, Enumeration District nos. 235, 46, sheets 37, 5, and lines 48, 72, microfilm copies in Minnesota Historical Society; Minneapolis city directories, 1874-1920; John W. Leonard, ed., *Woman's Who's Who of America: A Biographical Dictionary of Contemporary Women of the United States and Canada, 1914-1915* (New York: American Commonwealth Co., 1914), 53; Albert Nelson Marquis, ed., *Who's Who in America, 1912-1913* 7 (Chicago: A. N. Marquis & Co., 1912): 49; Warren Upham and Rose B. Dunlap, comps., *Minnesota Biographies, 1655-1912* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1912), 18; *Minneapolis Society Blue Book and Family Directory* 1 (Minneapolis: C. C. Hutchins, 1887): 12, 95; articles by Anson in the *Journal*, Aug. 13, 1914, p. 12, Dec. 27, 1914, p. 2, and in *The Bellman* 25 (Sept. 14, Oct. 26, 1918): 291-293, 455-460, 26 (Jan. 18, 1919): 70; Amy M. Davis, director of alumni relations at New England Conservatory of Music, to Judith Erickson, Mar. 12, 1984, in author's possession.

Although the brief biographical accounts state that Anson was a free-lance writer and the New York and Washington correspondent for the *Journal*, no articles under her by-line were located; periodical indexes yielded no material with her name during this time.



MAE HARRIS ANSON about 1875

While editor of the *Journal Junior*, Anson lived in a series of boarding hotels and apartments, indicating some regular rise in personal fortune. She always referred to herself as a self-supporting woman. Her name appeared in the *JJ* for the last time in January, 1913—unaccompanied by any hint of farewell or comment in either the juvenile or the adult papers. The city directory for that year states simply “Moved to Paris.” On the eve of World War I, the *Journal* published a long account of the rush on the Paris banks under her byline. She mentioned her “usual draft,” implying income from some source, but did not name it. She returned to Minneapolis at the outbreak of shooting and seems to have set to work knitting wristlets for the wounded. She apparently intended to give “parlor lectures” through which she would solicit contributions of cigarettes and sweet chocolate for the soldiers. Anson remained a Minneapolis resident in 1915, but her name disap-

peared from the directories thereafter. Two articles published in *The Bellman*, a Minneapolis-based literary and public affairs journal, indicate that she had returned to France by 1919. Here her biography comes to an abrupt end.

The person who emerges from 15 years of editorials is a bright, fair, spirited woman of high principles and strict standards, who understood young readers well and had deep concern for their development. One former Junior, Robert Brown, observed that “While we strove to win the prizes . . . we unconsciously labored as hard to win the approval and kindly criticism of its editor-in-chief, and, while we generally failed to win the prize, the sting of the loss was taken away by the gentle encouragement and the apparent justice of the critic, and our youthful hearts and minds were trained to receive with fortitude the failures and successes of our endeavors in later life.”<sup>9</sup>

The only physical description of Anson is from observations by the notary who processed her passport application in 1913. She was 5 feet 4 1/2 inches tall, brown-eyed and brown-haired, fair complected, with a straight nose and mouth, and with a round, firm chin. To stop here, however, might be to draw too stern a portrait, for Brown went on to say that her understanding grew from “the fact that her heart remained that of a girl while her mind developed the maturity of a brilliant woman of the world.” He quoted another former Junior, who claimed, “Our beloved editor is one-fifth imp,” and it was this fifth “that gets all the Juniors going. The other four-fifths are all fair, square, nice girl; it would be perfectly foolish to say woman, because when Miss Anson acts grown-up, or demure, or dignified, she is really just pretending.”<sup>10</sup>

Whatever her true persona may have been, she was in every sense an advocate for youth. The many opportunities made available to the Juniors suggest long hours and strenuous promotional effort on Anson's part. Brown, looking backward, saw the *Journal Junior* as “a monument” to her “untiring zeal and well-directed efforts in behalf of the development and progress of the youth of this great northwest.” She remained Miss Anson throughout, and Junior work seems to have been, at least for these 15 years, the center of her life. With a weekly influx of 2,500 essays, it scarcely could have been otherwise!

DURING Anson's first months, it became clear that the *JJ* was to be an educational venture. As a separate, half-size supplement, the expanded feature, inaugurated on January 15, 1898, carried the statement: “The Junior is published by the Minneapolis Journal for the public school children of the northwest, in and above the fifth grade and is devoted principally to their own writings. There is no expense attached, and all are wel-

<sup>9</sup> *Journal*, Sept. 8, 1912, sec. 2, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Here and below, see Records of the Bureau of Citizenship, U.S. Department of State, 1913, passport application, Mar. 12, 1913; *Journal*, Sept. 8, 1912, sec. 2, p. 6.

come as competitors. Full particulars will be mailed upon application. The editor wishes to encourage correspondence and suggestions from teachers." The announcement in the first issue contained a message to instructors: "This plan kills two birds with one stone—it enables the teacher to announce a subject on which she can rest assured each pupil will have to do some original thinking, and at the same time the school has an opportunity to secure a handsome picture." While it was not required that the essays be written in school, the newspaper recommended that the contest be used weekly "in the regular exercises of English compositions." It was the desire of the *Journal*, said Anson, "to furnish such good subjects for competition that the pupils will be repaid for writing them whether successful in securing a prize or not." The project never received official sanction from any educational authority, but it was claimed that teachers regarded it "as a material aid in their work; primarily, in developing original thought and expression, but also in its reflex action in the creation of an *esprit du corps* [sic] and keen interest in study, which is sometimes missed in ordinary school work."<sup>11</sup>

The essay contests, at first open only to Minneapolis

pupils, later welcomed entries from "everywhere The Journal is read." Contest topics differed, because of the longer travel time required for the "northwest" essays. The prizes were the "handsome pictures appropriately framed and ready to hang in the schoolroom of the winner," which earlier had proved popular. Each one would "bear the name of the winner inscribed with the fact that the gift came through the competition of a certain date." Lest one question the attractiveness of such a prize, it must be remembered that many of the schools were of recent construction, and classrooms of the day were often large, crowded, and generally devoid of decoration. Reproductions of "great art" were just beginning to be low cost enough that they could be used in the schoolroom, accompanied, of course, by articles in pedagogical journals on how to use them to best effect. Furthermore, as Anson was well aware, such a prize boosted the stock of the essayist as no individual award might have done.<sup>12</sup>

There were forms of individual recognition in addi-

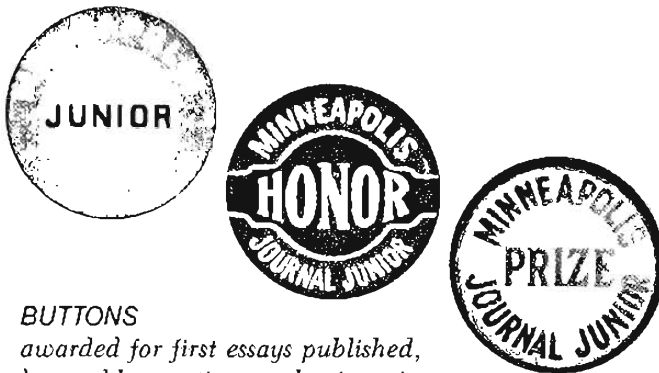
<sup>11</sup> *Journal*, Jan. 15, 1898, *The Journal Junior* supplement (hereafter cited as *JJ*), 4; *The Minneapolis Journal*, vol. 3, p. 19.



A "BART" CARTOON,,  
February 5, 1898, depicts the  
rivalry for the school picture  
awards given by the Journal  
Junior.



tion to the prize pictures. The first time that a youngster had an essay printed, he or she was sent a souvenir button. Prize winners received a special button, as did those whose essays merited "honorable mention." (Having three pieces printed was considered equivalent to an honorable mention, and the appropriate button could be obtained "upon application.") When school was not in session, creative projects were awarded "vacation prizes"—generally books, athletic equipment, sketching kits, and the like. In later years, there were cash prizes and published noncontest work was recompensed at the rate of \$1.50 per column.



#### BUTTONS

awarded for first essays published,  
honorable mention, and prize winners

THE PAGES of the *Journal Junior* not taken up by the weekly essays did not lack for interesting material. There were puzzle contests, for example, apparently ubiquitous in juvenile features; four cards awarded for successful solutions could be turned in to the *Journal* in exchange for a book. Anson also revived the junior reporting scheme; her results were similar to the first ones, but eventually she solved the sensationalism problem by appointing "school reporters." Juniors were also invited to write poetry, short stories, and occasionally serialized fiction (each chapter composed by a different, particularly able writer). Youngsters with artistic rather than literary bents were asked to submit drawings, cartoons, and photographs. For one graphics competition Juniors wrote and designed advertisements for actual Minnesota firms. This came to the attention of the publisher's journal *Printer's Ink*, which not only found the project generally laudable, but said of one artist: "His lettering and drawing are peculiarly clean and attractive, and far better for advertising purposes

than that for which many advertisers pay very good sums of money." The art work carried its own award system, and beginning in 1902 the submissions were saved and assembled into "portfolios" which could bring the fortunate winners a four-month scholarship at the Minneapolis School of Fine Arts.<sup>13</sup>

Anson also used contributions from adult writers and either rewrote or reprinted short articles, poetry, and illustrations from other newspapers and children's periodicals. She was more careful in noting her sources than many of the juvenile-page editors who followed the same practices. This was consistent with her editorial stand on originality and its shady side, plagiarism, about which she wrote at least annually. Not surprisingly, Anson's editorials also waged constant war on lackluster prose, inept spelling, and casual grammar. Her ultimate outrage was directed at the unwary button-seeker who presented an entry on sheets of paper that varied in size, or who had perchance used pencil or worse, *both* sides of the page! She was more concerned with creativity than correctness, however, and told her readers that "There are three things which the editor hunts for in the papers each week and which she recognizes so far as space will permit. The first is ideas. The second is ideas, and the third is more ideas."<sup>14</sup> Literary criticism was but a part of Anson's editorial output. Her 15 years of columns contain homilies on an extraordinary range of topics, and for them alone she deserves a place among writers for children.

Like many Americans of her day, Anson placed great faith in hard work, telling the Juniors, "If you want a certain object, go after it with your whole heart and soul, and victory will come to you sometime, just as the dropping of water will at length wear out the stone." She had a special message on the subject for young women: "If a girl is not afraid of any honorable work, and wants an education badly enough to take anything that offers, there is no reason why she should not pay her way thru college quite as easily as a boy does. It is merely a case of, 'Does she want it earnestly enough?' " Generally her editorials were on the profeminist side of issues relating to women.<sup>15</sup>

Anson frequently found grist for her editorial mill in the children's writings. Many of the essay topics were related to the real and the ideal of the school experience; on occasion these seem to have called forth views that she found less than uplifting. At such times, she came down solidly on the side of the educational establishment, particularly where classroom discipline was at issue. "The association in the school room, between teacher and pupil is what might be called a mutual aid society. A teacher is not your natural enemy," she reminded. "Just think of how often you are reproved at home, and compare that with what you get in school. The scales are in favor of school, arn't [*sic*] they?" She

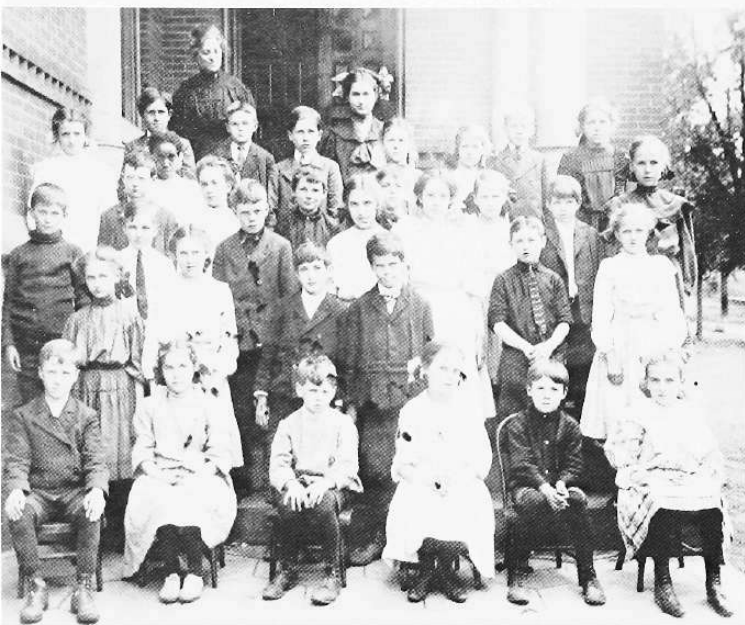
<sup>12</sup> *JJ*, Jan. 22, 1898, p. 2. On art in the classroom, see Estelle M. Hurl, "Picture Study in Education," *The Outlook* 61 (Jan. 21, 1899): 174-176.

<sup>13</sup> *Printer's Ink*, Oct. 16, 1903, reprinted in *Journal*, Oct. 21, 1903, p. 5. See also *Journal*, Sept. 6, 1902, p. 4, and Anson's editorial of same date, *JJ*, 4.

<sup>14</sup> *JJ*, Jan. 28, 1899, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> *JJ*, May 8, 1897, p. 11, Sept. 30, 1906, p. 4.





*CHILDREN from the Emerson School in Minneapolis, 1900; many Emerson students wrote essays for the JJ.*

was not above pointing out her own role in the young Juniors' education. Commenting on a visiting professor's report of the failure of schools generally to do a good job of teaching English, she noted with obvious pride that "We seem to have solved the problem fairly well here in the northwest through the *Journal Junior* work, if the testimony of teachers, university professors and children who have seen its practical workings means anything."<sup>16</sup>

She sometimes focused on the flawed thoughts of a single essayist. Contradicting a young sophisticate who had written, "In the morning I assist with the housework, as I am too old to think of playing," Anson declared, "We merely fear what other people may think or say about it." She continued: "human beings develop better if they take regular doses of play. We are never too old for it, though a false sense of dignity frequently makes us think that we are." On other occasions she sought to correct unhealthy trends which ran throughout a week's compositions. "Juniors . . . have been bloodthirsty and yellow-journally,—terribly so," she complained in 1908. "Juniors should not have such things in their minds, anyway, and if they persist in letting them get there and stay there, they must find some other place to work them off than the columns of *The Journal Junior*."<sup>17</sup>

Some of Anson's most interesting commentaries relate to the daily news events, which she frequently interpreted in terms of their possible impact on the Juniors. The war with Spain, for example, received much attention, and the editor advised the Juniors "to make

scrap books of everything they can get pertaining to this war. It is very likely the only one they will be personally concerned in, for while Uncle Sam has manfully shouldered the fight pushed upon him, he is eminently a lover of peace." This prediction was not vindicated, and doubtless many former Juniors went off to fight the Kaiser in 1917. On the whole, though, considering her Victorian origins and the context in which she was writing, Anson's messages to the northwest youngsters seemed quite on the mark.

There are other delightful features found in the aging pages of the *Journal Junior*. There were, for example, the letter exchanges between northwest children and those of other lands (in which it was expected that "the school life of the civilized world" would ultimately be covered); the school gardening program ("made especially attractive by the \$218.00 in prizes"); and the great Flag Campaign of the Summer of 1898 (that collected \$100.00 for the purchase of the first banner to wave over the new Minneapolis courthouse tower).<sup>18</sup> It was the weekly essay contests, however, that formed the heart of the *Journal Junior*.

IN MID-1899 Anson was receiving from 1,200 to 2,000 essays each week, and the paper stated proudly: "Assuming that the average teacher reaches with her influence forty pupils, Miss Anson and *The Journal Junior*

<sup>16</sup> *JJ*, Sept. 30, 1906, p. 4, Mar. 10, 1900, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Here and below, *JJ*, Sept. 24, 1898, Jan. 6, 1900, May 3, 1908, all on p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> The letter-writing and gardening programs were introduced in the *Journal*, Feb. 28, 1899, p. 7, Nov. 9, 1901, sec. 2, p. 16; the flag campaign was launched in *JJ*, June 11, 1898, and discussed weekly through Sept. 10, 1898.

*THIS FLAG atop the Minneapolis courthouse in 1898 was purchased with funds raised by Journal Juniors.*



have an audience as great as a thousand teachers." By 1903 the essay count for the 40-week school year stood at 100,000 and it was claimed in the silver anniversary edition that 1,200 pictures had been hung on the walls of northwest schoolrooms at the not inconsiderable cost to the *Journal* of \$8,400. "It would be difficult to estimate the influence for good which this department has upon child life in the northwest." Two years later, the paper felt still more confident of the value of Junior work; Anson's tally of every essay published during her seven-year editorship showed that two-thirds of the 1905 honor graduates of the Minneapolis high schools had been "more or less regular writers" in the weekly contests.<sup>19</sup> Such claims fail to answer the question of whether the program created or simply attracted superior students; there is no doubt, however, that Anson was an exacting taskmistress who set high standards. If a young writer contributed regularly and took her advice seriously, there is no reason to think that his or her writing would not improve.

The topics that Anson developed were genuinely imaginative and provided young people with a forum on issues of concern to them and upon which they might write with authority, even though lacking in years. Through their writing, they could express opinions, relate anecdotes, and recount true incidents as well as create tales—sometimes from specified ingredients, sometimes totally from their own imaginations. There were literally hundreds of subjects, among them: "The one thing necessary for contentment. Why?"; "Would you rather be a man or a woman?"; "Nicknames, do they fit?"; "A Patchwork Story" (to incorporate one letter, one fan, one wig, one ball, one automobile); "Zero."; "Have the necessary evils of war outweighed the good that has resulted?"; "Why Susan Never Told."; "A Picnic."; and "Three things that are wrong to do and three things that are right. Why?" The surviving printed essays provide a valuable legacy of the thoughts, activities, and opinions of turn-of-the-century children and adolescents.

Anson held her Juniors to the strict conventions of "formal" English which prevailed in print journalism in her day. She seems to have favored literary reference, for one finds frequent quotation in the early essays that were chosen for publication. Ninth-grader Helen Alexander, for example, based her preference for being a woman on the fact that "women are today more universally loved and respected than the mighty (?) lords of creation. Their subtle influence is more powerful

and their low, sweet voices more effective in pleading than those of men." She went on to explain that it was for this reason that women were discouraged from practicing law, for "It is a well-known fact," she said, "that few men can withstand the force of a woman's tears, and when sorrowing beauty is pleading at the feet of Justice, who shall say Justice shall not relinquish the scepter and Mercy rule instead." She cited Shakespeare to further her case: "'Beauty itself doth of itself persuade The eyes of men without an orator.'" She ended on a more juvenile note: "And by the way, the Bard of Avon was correct."<sup>20</sup>

In 1900 when the essay topic was "What would you like to invent? Why?" two-thirds of the girls cried out for dish-washing and scrubbing machines; the boys, Anson noted, "ran more to electric apparatuses and sleds that would run uphill as well as down." Other inventions related to more personal and onerous aspects of life familiar to all children—chores, tidying up one's room, and getting up and away in the mornings. Brewer Goodsell's device to enable "boys and some men" to jump into their clothes was to have consisted of "a frame suspended from the ceiling on which would be hung trousers, coat, waist and everything except shoes, which would have to be put on by hand. The clothes would fasten with buckles instead of buttons, so I could get out of bed, step into the frame, release a spring and be dressed."<sup>21</sup>

On the issue of "Would you rather be a man or a woman?" the dislike of restrictions imposed by fashion, for example, predicated many of the choices against being female. Dragging skirts and the time required for braiding and pinning up long hanks of hair were at issue. The subject of gender equality was also raised. Mary V. Albertson would not have changed her "lot if it were possible," because "she now enjoys equal rights and authority with man with the exception of the franchise and a few other minor limitations."<sup>22</sup>

During Anson's editorship, war was considered a glorious undertaking, particularly while Americans were actually fighting the Spanish. However, eighth-grader Colin Landin wrote: "Perhaps the greatest idea which man can propound is one which will eliminate the hatred and distrust engendered by selfishness. . . . As war is apparently the greatest seeming enemy with which the people of this generation have to contend, it is very essential that we should contrive some method by means of which the power of this enemy of peace and industry may be dissolved. The proposition is that instead of shooting solid metal cannon balls at an enemy, a substance of an as yet unknown substance be produced. . . [which] would destroy the hatred of the enemy, causing him to throw aside all munitions of war with the exception of a flag of truce, with which he would advance to arbitrate terms of peace."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *The Minneapolis Journal*, vol. 3, p. 21; *Journal*, Nov. 26, 1903, p. 3, June 10, 1905, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> *JJ*, Mar. 10, 1900, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> *JJ*, Jan. 27, 1900, p. 1, 7.

<sup>22</sup> *JJ*, Mar. 10, 1900, p. 1.

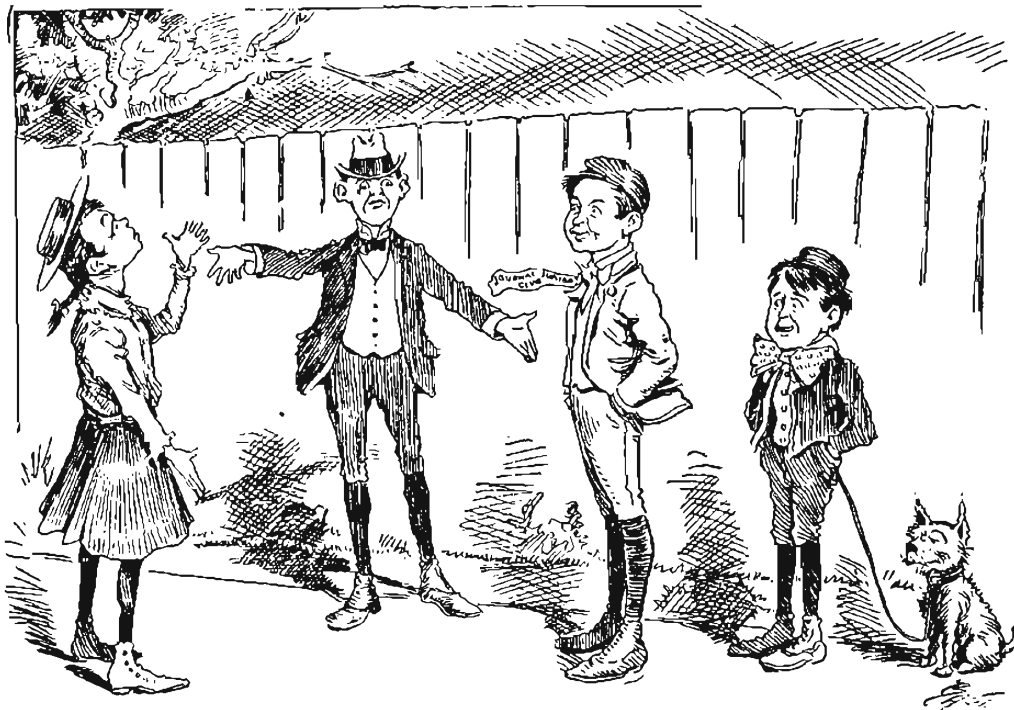
<sup>23</sup> *JJ*, Jan. 27, 1900, p. 6.

Such subjects as death, loss following divorce, misunderstanding, and pleas for acceptance do not appear in the *JJ*, most likely because Anson chose not to print them. Victorian conventions attempted, probably with little success, to shield children from the seamier and more painful aspects of life. Another unexpected absence in the essays is mention of the problems surrounding acculturation, which many of the young writers must have been experiencing; two-thirds of the Minnesota children of Junior age were either first- or second-generation Americans in 1900. One can only be curious about what has been deleted from the *Journal Junior* view of turn-of-the-century childhood by Mae Anson's personal taste and sense of propriety.

THERE WAS one additional feature of Junior work that does open a bit wider the window on childhood past. Briefly, between 1898 and 1900 the Juniors were banded into clubs whose activities were described in the paper. In responding to the affiliation pressures from its young readers, the *Journal* may truly have been the initiator, as was claimed, of an unusual chapter in the history of the American press. The *Journal Juniors* and the many other clubs which various periodicals placed under their patronage have a unique niche in the annals of American youth organizations as well.<sup>24</sup>

While there was no dearth of associations for youth in the 1890s, the choices available outside of urban centers were probably not wide. There were more than 60 nationally organized groups, but fewer than a dozen were devoted to secular ends; the greater number were church- and temple-related young people's societies that offered little more by way of program than weekly prayer and praise sessions augmented occasionally by well-supervised socials. They are better described as groups whose members were young than as youth organizations as we know them today. It is safe to say that the options available at the end of the last century left much room for innovation. It was this shortfall in alter-

<sup>24</sup> In 1900 the *Minneapolis Tribune* imitated the *Journal Junior* idea; the *St. Paul Daily News* "borrowed" essay topics, sometimes verbatim, and the *St. Paul Globe* organized similar clubs and writing programs. Other newspapers that imitated the club plan were the *Washington Post*, the *Des Moines Capital*, the *Chicago Tribune* and *Daily News*, the *New York American* and other papers in the Hearst chain. A number of monthly magazines—*The Christian Advocate*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *American Boy*, for example—sponsored clubs, the most famous of which was the St. Nicholas League. The league was an outlet for the early works of such writers as Edna St. Vincent Millay, E. B. White, Ring Lardner, and Minnesotans F. Scott Fitzgerald and Harrison Salisbury. Paul Rosta, "The Magazine that Taught Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and Millay How to Write," *American Heritage*, Dec., 1985, p. 40-47.



The Girl—My mother belongs to the Colonial Dames.  
Reginald—My father is descended from the English nobility.  
The Junior—Well, you people haven't any the best of me; I belong to a Journal Junior Club.

natives that created opportunities for periodicals as the sponsors of youth clubs and orders.

The impetus to "get up a club" seems to have come in most cases from young readers themselves; however, it does appear that editors were quick to grasp the image- and circulation-building potential of a positive response to these pressures. Typically, autonomous groups of young friends were encouraged to get together, and "upon application" they received charters, membership cards, and usually some kind of button, which provided them with an identity larger than their own neighborhoods or schools. In some cases, the paper supplied model constitutions and/or recommended schedules for activities. The main purposes of the individual chapters, however, were generally left to member discretion. Those that emerged reflected the secular interests of youth themselves, rather than the religious causes pushed by most adult-sponsored associations of the day.

The autonomous clubs under periodical sponsorship represented a final gasp of "semi-dependence" for young people before adult-led scouting, "Y" work, and the many other groups that followed completed the formal assault on their leisure hours. It was in this context that the Journal Junior clubs were born in September, 1898. Just where the idea originated was never completely clear. Perhaps a description of the Journal Junior Gopher Club at Marcy School, composed of a "loyal quartet . . . [of] enthusiastic contributors whether they have papers printed every week or not" planted the idea. Or perhaps the *esprit de corps* may have been a residuum of the summer flag campaign. Whatever the source, the club idea's time had come, and chapters were formed quickly throughout Juniordom. Requests for charters and buttons (first one free, 5¢ to replace a lost one) poured in, in spite of Anson's disclaimer that she was merely a "recorder" and not a "promoter of clubs." Existing clubs could, if they wished, add the Junior presence. The published minutes provide some delightful views of the activities and interests of the first Journal Juniors; in them one discovers that those writers of prim and perfect prose were, after all, kids, sorting out as best they could the complex processes of growing up in American society.<sup>25</sup>

Many groups were Very Serious in purpose—obviously imitating adult societies of the day. There were clubs "for the study of geography"; societies "to study literature, beginning with the work of American

authors"; groups "to discuss in the regular senate way, all the impending bills and measures that come up before the United States senate and also to have a little social amusement"; clubs "to debate on the question of the day and write essays to be read at the meetings"; and current events clubs. There were also some that today might be dubbed "Show-off Societies," like the one in which all members gave "one minute speeches and several piano solos were played," followed by Rachel Reneberg's reading of her "essay on 'Friendship' which was excellent."<sup>26</sup>

Some groups had philanthropic intents such as sewing or otherwise constructing small items for the use of convalescing military men; others simply added an occasional good work to regular club activities, such as the Wide-Awake Gopher Chapter No. 3's assessment of 10¢ from each member to buy presents for sick soldiers. There were also groups devoted to such truly popular activities as military drill and sham battle, stamp collecting, nature study, and a new hobby, photography.

A few admitted to more frivolous aims. Hobson Chapter No. 19 was "organized for amusement only," and "the Jolly Journal Juniors Chapter No. 209 met for the frolic and good time they always have." Many accounts describe picnics, socials, holiday parties, and regularly comment on the refreshments served at meetings. By the end of 1899, a good many of the clubs, with Anson's encouragement, had developed their own newspapers (carrying mastheads such as "Crescent Squib," "Wide-Awake," and "Breezy Blabber"). The Pride of '99 Chapter No. 177 announced the following rules in its "Flashlight": "1. No one shall write in a sarcastic manner; 2. No one must be angry at anything in this paper, as what is written is only for fun," and "3. While the paper is being read no one shall laugh or talk, as laughing and talking are forbidden in the constitution." The same issue announced that the debate topic for the following meeting was "Resolved: that John Cabot's voyage was more profitable than that of Columbus."

Other glimpses of juvenile club life come through the minutes. Madison Chapter No. 216, for example, adopted the almost familiar motto: "Be on to others as you would like them to be on to you." The Old Glory Chapter No. 100, composed of veterans of the flag campaign, announced at its formation that members were "patriotic to a fault, for our colors are red, white and blue, our symbol, an American flag, and our motto, 'America forever!' Our flower is the American Beauty rose and our pass word, Last but not Least. 'Star Spangled Banner' is our club song, and woe to the member who does not know it at the next meeting." Apparently the national anthem was no less a challenge for the Juniors than it has proved elsewhere; the next week's minutes pleaded for a music box which played it, for "by

<sup>25</sup> *JJ*, Mar. 5, 1898, p. 2, Sept. 24, 1898, p. 2, 4, Oct. 10, 1898, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Beginning Oct. 1, 1898, the *JJ* carried a column entitled "The Journal Junior Clubs"; the information here and in the following four paragraphs is drawn from those columns; see, especially, *JJ*, Oct. 29, 1898, p. 6, Nov. 5, 1898, p. 5, Feb. 25, 1899, p. 6.

their own confession, the members cannot succeed in singing this, their club song, without some mechanical appliance to keep them on the key by main force." Old Glory members decided to devote one meeting each month to debate, one to historical research, and one to the "improvement of self." The remaining assembly was to be "for the laudable purpose of 'killing time.'"

Anson encouraged communication among chapters, and one corresponding secretary editorialized: "Harold Gurnee writes in one of his letters to a Home Chapter that in Old Glory Chapter the boys do all the work and the girls sit around and giggle. Old Glory Chapter must be an odd chapter, for the girls, as a rule, do all the work in every other club." In response, the United States Senate Chapter No. 243 claimed that it was starting out "with the most cheering prospects for a large, long and distinguished career" without any female members at all!

THE EARLY SUCCESS of the club idea led to some moves toward formalization by the end of 1898. In November Anson announced that "the long delayed manuals" were ready. Unfortunately no copy seems to have survived, but it probably was a routine set of instructions for drawing up a constitution, electing officers, conducting meetings, and the like. By the end of the year, plans were afoot to federate the individual chapters into one grand association, and in January, 1899, 54 duly elected delegates met in Minneapolis to draft the constitution. Their task was framed on a rather pretentious preamble which summed up why adults no doubt found the club worthy, but gave little hint why adolescents did. The delegates decided that each chapter could "be its own judge of qualification requisite for membership . . . the only restriction being that all active members shall be pupils of public schools." The clubs were to be strictly self-governing; teachers or other interested persons might be elected "honorary members," but they could not hold office or vote. Anson took for herself the title "General Secretary"; it was the one office for which election was not required. Delegates also nominated several versions of a club yell for chapter vote. Some weeks later, the winner was announced:

Sky-you-sky-you-sky-you-yes.  
We're the people, well, I guess.  
Minneapo-l-i-s-  
Journal Juniors, yes, yes, yes!<sup>27</sup>

Among the other matters taken up at the convention was the election of an "Honorary President." The unanimous choice was Frank R. Stockton, a popular writer of both youth and adult fiction, perhaps best remembered for his short story, *The Lady or the Tiger?* He was an appropriate choice, for his own first published work won a contest in the *Boys' and Girls' Journal*



THEY'LL ALL BE HERE.

while he was in high school. In February, Anson published Stockton's acceptance letter in full. In it he requested a photograph of the editor, stating, "I am afraid it is not likely that I shall know you in any other way." He was not, however, reckoning with Mae Anson. In May of 1899, while on a vacation trip to the East, she added Stockton's home to her itinerary. So excited that she failed to note the need for an umbrella, our heroine slogged through a downpour—on the Hoboken ferry, a one-hour train ride, and around the New Jersey countryside by carriage. Her quest was successful, and in a long, detailed article was pronounced well worth the effort. Stockton's kind words about the Juniors had, she reported, repaid her "for the many hours of hard work and weariness that have been necessary to bring the work to the present standard."<sup>28</sup>

At the close of 1899, there were more than 200 Journal Junior club chapters. The pinnacle of their endeavor came in the fall of 1899, when admiration for Admiral George Dewey, the hero of Manila Bay, remained high. A young Rosemount member, Archie Cadzow, proposed that Juniors contribute toward the

<sup>27</sup> On the convention, see *JJ*, Jan. 21, p. 5, Jan. 28, p. 3, Mar. 4, p. 5, 1899. The convention was also covered by the *Journal*, Jan. 13, p. 4, Jan. 14, p. 4, Jan. 16, p. 7, 1899. A second convention was held April 12, 1900.

<sup>28</sup> "Stockton, Francis Richard," *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* 1 (New York: James T. White & Co., 1893): 396; Stockton to Anson, reprinted in *JJ*, Sept. 10, 1898, p. 4; *JJ*, May 27, 1899, p. 4.



price of a watch as a token of their esteem. His idea was turned into a much grander plan, however, when the *Journal* spearheaded a drive, aided by 175 regional papers, that ultimately collected a penny each from 50,000 schoolchildren! The sum was set so that even the poorest child could take part; donors received a "neat certificate" attesting to their generosity. The Woonsocket, South Dakota, chapter helped to stir up enthusiasm with this quatrain:

Hear the pennies dropping, dropping  
Climbing as they fall,  
One for every Junior  
Dewey gets them all!

A five-year-old supporter dictated her letter of transmittal with 20 pennies collected from friends. "I like Dewey. I've got a cat named Dewey, so they is two Deweys. I got 20 pennies for Dewey's watch. I guess he'll be glad."<sup>29</sup>

From all accounts, the admiral was indeed touched by this gift. The timepiece created for the occasion was a dandy: the letters G-E-O-R-G-E. D-E-W-E-Y re-

<sup>29</sup> The "Dewey Watch" campaign began Oct. 7, 1899; it is discussed in *JJ* editorials through the remainder of the year. Here and below, see, especially, *JJ*, Oct. 14, 21, 1899, both p. 4. On the presentation, see *Journal*, April 25, 1900, p. 1; *JJ*, April 28, 1900, p. 4. The actual watch, but not its fob, is in the collections of the Chicago Historical Society.

EDITOR ANSON's awareness of foreign affairs is evident in Bart's cartoon of April 28, 1900.



HED HEARD OF DEWEY'S WATCH.  
The Queen Regent. Alfonso! Alfonso! What in the world are you smashing your ball for?  
The little King of Spain - I see by the papers that the Northwestern children give watches to people who like Spanish ships.

placed the numerals on the face, and the fob incorporated bits of metal from fallen Spanish vessels, a torpedo, and gold from the Philippines, all rounded up by the U.S. Navy. It was inscribed: "Presented to Admiral George Dewey, U.S.N., by the children of Minneapolis and the Northwest, May 1, 1900; Each Donor Contributing One Cent." Mae Anson and young Archie traveled to Washington for the presentation, which included a scrapbook containing the names of the contributors and a history of the project.

This prodigious effort seems to have commenced the swan song of the *Journal Junior* chapters. The club column was suspended, as in the previous year, for the school summer vacation of 1900. By this time there had



THE DEWEY WATCH, showing its inscription

been 307 subordinate bodies; it is probable that between five and six thousand youngsters had been club members. Although the reopening of school brought a new point scheme for drumming up interest among high-school writers, the club work, for reasons nowhere stated, was not resumed. But the essay contests continued, and the *Journal Junior* remained a lively, interesting publication.

ANSON'S NAME remained on the masthead until January, 1913. After reviewing many good things that had happened in past centuries in years numbered "13," she expressed the hope that the present year would be one of good beginnings for all and apparently retired from Juniordom. The new editor, although unnamed in the paper, was A. J. Russell, a popular local columnist for the *Journal*. He made no major changes in the format. In his history of the newspaper, written to commemorate its 50th year, he made no mention at all of his association with the little paper. The *Journal Junior* vanishes from all available microfilm editions in April, 1913, but there is some evidence that it continued at least through the fall of that year. While no explanation

was given, it is to be noted that an expanded comic section appeared at about this time. In some other newspapers, this addition was associated with the demise of the juvenile feature pages.<sup>30</sup>

Mae Anson took young people seriously in an era when their concerns and problems were frequently trivialized. The essays, stories, and drawings in which Juniors gave expression to their worlds and their views were treated with the respect due literary and artistic productions. The knowledge that work would be appraised fairly undoubtedly gained for the *JJ* the support of parents and teachers and served to motivate some of the contributions that came streaming in each week. Looking back, Kate Talbot Finkle recalled, "The blessed little Journal Junior! How it developed the timid and tamed the braggart! Don't you remember the thrill of those printed stories? In the teeth, at that, of the Girl Who Spelled Correctly and the One Who Wrote a Beautiful Hand!" Its influence, said ex-Junior Brown, "was exerted on us during a period in our lives when we did not realize its significance and value; it is not until we can view the results through the more mature judgment of later years that we can appreciate the full extent of its meaning."<sup>31</sup>

Caroline Barron, who became a teacher and later the first woman to hold a high-school principalship in the Minneapolis system, shared memories of Junior-dom. Her mother, she recounted, believed that even summer vacation days should contain "a couple of hours 'gainfully employed,' educationally speaking." On most days, this meant a dose of Dickens for as many of the eight children who could be gathered up after the chores were done. "Monday, the exception, was the day we wrote for the Journal Junior." She continued, "We discussed the assigned topics, tossed ideas around. . . . After we had written our first versions, we read them aloud; Mother was included in the audience. Discussion, criticism, re-writing followed, with careful scrutiny of the final product. Is there a better way to teach written English?" At the time, Barron remembered, "We gloated over those prizes more than over the classroom pictures some of us won during the school term." Her brother Howard reported a more immediate benefit from the literary skills honed on Junior essay topics. He was kept busy writing themes for his girlfriends, who in turn kept him in fudge!<sup>32</sup>

It was not just the gifted who gained from being "published authors." Anson printed a letter from a teacher about one of the boys in her class: "The people here generally regard him as an ignoramus, but there is more in him than any pupil in the room. People were surprised to know he could do anything, and it increased the boy's self respect." Another Junior, Esther Chapman, gave her own account of the meaning of her first printed essay. "Your own name stares at you—

almost like the name of a perfect stranger. . . . You begin to read, with a warm parental glow, this brainchild of yours." She went on to a more serious analysis of being published: "It meant first of all, the awakening of a certain confidence in your own powers." For the shy child, or one not self-assured, or who had not won honors in other spheres, the first *Journal Junior* story imparted "a dawning confidence in your own worth, and how it made for you a real place in the 'aristocracy of brains' in your schoolroom."<sup>33</sup>

Other important groups of children for whom the *Journal Junior* provided a special form of support were those who had already begun to practice their crafts in pursuit of careers as artists or writers. At the time of the 1912 reunion, two former members were identified as editors of newspapers, and in 1928 Russell noted that it was as a Junior that "Miss Fannie Kilbourne, afterwards famous as a writer of stories and novels, did her first work." Several of noted Minnesota woman suffrage activist Clara Ueland's brood were Juniors and, of them, Anne and particularly Brenda earned distinction as writers. Brenda, with two other former Minneapolitans then living in New York, published a short-lived feminist paper, *Judy*, in 1919.<sup>34</sup>

Not all aspiring Minnesota authors managed to crack Anson's selection canons. In 1901, a hopeful Harry Lewis penned an essay on the tiger for the week's topic, "The Story the Circus Animals Told." His diary entry for August 11 laments: "A great day for throw downs. Found out this morning that my paper wasn't even published in the Junior Journal—let alone a prize or honorable mention." Anson would have applauded the determination of his conclusion, however: "Persistancy [*sic*] is one great element in success. I have 3 other MSS. out and some others shall follow." Temporarily daunted with the rejection of these also, the 16-year-old did not resume writing until mid-September. Within three decades, however, Sinclair Lewis received the Nobel Prize

<sup>30</sup> *JJ*, Jan. 12, 1913, p. 4; A. J. Russell, "Up from the Horse Car Days—A Story of the Journal," *Journal*, Dec. 4, 1928, p. 19. For more on Russell's editorship, see Alma Scott, *Wanda Gág: The Story of an Artist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), 104, 306, 312-317; Wanda Gág, *Growing Pains: Diaries and Drawings for the Years 1908-1917* (Reprint ed., St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984), 17, 95.

<sup>31</sup> *Journal*, Sept. 8, 1912, sec. 2, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Barron to Judith Erickson and Diane Hedin, Aug. 30, 1983, in author's possession; Misti Snow Schumacher, "Memories of essays past," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, May 29, 1984, p. 2C.

<sup>33</sup> *JJ*, Jan. 28, 1899, p. 4; *Journal*, Sept. 8, 1912, sec. 2, p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> *Journal*, June 3, 1919, p. 12, Dec. 4, 1928, p. 19. Neither Brenda Ueland's autobiography, *Me*, nor her book, *How to Write*, mentions the Juniors.



for literature—the first American to be so honored.<sup>35</sup>

Several writers of children's literature had early success on the *Junior's* pages; Elizabeth Olds, Minnesota-born artist and also author/illustrator of six books for children; Lyla Hoffine, educator and author of eight volumes, all with American Indian themes; and Borghild Dahl, high-school principal, professor of literature and journalism, and author of 17 books. Dahl's career is the more remarkable because she was virtually blind. As an 11th-grader, she wrote in a livelier, less stilted style than many of her contemporaries on the topic "A Welcome Picture," an incident recalled in a slightly different form in Dahl's 1960 tale, *Minnetonka Summer*.<sup>36</sup>

Probably the career most advanced by *JJ* work was that of Wanda Gág. In 1908 the family was nearly destitute following her father's long illness and death. As

<sup>35</sup> Mark Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis, An American Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 35-36.

<sup>36</sup> Olds to Erickson, Feb. 15, 1984, and Hoffine to Erickson, Feb. 21, 1984, both in author's possession; Dahl, in *JJ*, July 8, 1906, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> Here and two paragraphs below, see Gág, *Growing Pains*, xxvi, 17, 95.

*THE GÁG CHILDREN*, about 1908; standing, from left to right, Stella, Debli, and Wanda; seated, Howard, Asta, and Nelda.



the oldest of the seven children, Gág felt most keenly the counsel of well-intended advisers, who held that she should forget about finishing her schooling, "stop drawing, and clerk in a local store to support the family." Gág felt otherwise and, somehow, at the age of 15 summoned the fortitude to reject the advice. Of this period, Gág said, "I drew postcards and place cards, and instead of writing and illustrating stories and poems for pleasure, I now did so with the purpose of turning them into cash. This would have been impossible had it not been for the *Journal Junior*, bless its pink pages!"<sup>37</sup>

Upon discovering that the *JJ* actually paid for creative efforts, Gág "immediately deluged" the paper. Her work must have found favor with Anson, for in 1909 she "commissioned" a series of ten, full-page drawings for each of which Gág would be paid five dollars. She worked out a story called "Robby Bobby in Mother Goose Land," which appeared on the last page of the paper, designed to appeal to the "Littlest Juniors."

Anson took more than a purely editorial role in promoting the work of gifted Juniors. Gág explained that "with Miss Anson's acceptance of it [the story] came a package containing 20 sheets of Bristol board, several bottles of India ink, pencils, pens, erasers, a ruler and a draughtsman's triangle. The lack of these materials must have been evident to Miss Anson, for I used any paper I could find, had no way of drawing right angles and often cleaned off my pencil marks with bread crumbs." At the end of her first 15 months of work, Gág recorded with satisfaction a clear profit of \$100.00. After two years she wrote, "I have had in the *J.J.*: 36 pictures, 4 stories, and 4 poems, besides of course the Robby Bobby set, which really consisted of 60 pictures and a story." During this period she also drew and sold countless valentines, greeting cards, and birthday

*A FRAME* from Wanda Gág's "Robby Bobby in Mother Goose Land"



books, gave drawing lessons to children, carried most of the burden for keeping the household running, and managed to complete high school.

Gág's story does not stop here. When Russell became editor in 1913, he noted that "Some day, the *Journal Junior* is going to be proud to record that some noted artist did his first work for this paper. . . . One of the first pen drawings that drew attention to itself for its excellence was that done by Wanda Hazel Gág." He went on to predict "for her a future not only in artistic work but in literature." At the same time, Russell wrote to Gág to say that if she ever came to Minneapolis, he would like to meet her. To condense a long tale, through Russell's intervention, Gág received a year's scholarship at the St. Paul School of Art and, through another scholarship arranged by the *Journal*, was able to spend a year at the Minneapolis School of Art. Her gifts carried her, again on scholarship, to the Art Students League of New York, and to success, as predicted, as both illustrator and writer. Several of the other Gág children, including Flavia, who herself wrote and illustrated children's books, increased the family treasury through appearances on the pink pages of the *Junior*.<sup>38</sup>

Not all of the young people who responded to the weekly call for essays aspired to leave their marks on American belles-lettres, and that some did so was but a part of the harvest of *Junior* work. At the time of the 1912 reunion, former members were found living all over the United States at work in "the ministry, medicine, the law, architecture, literature, civil engineering, teachers, social settlement work, manufacture and business of varied kinds."<sup>39</sup> Anson, in toasting the Juniors—past, present, and future—observed that "the seed sown in the pioneer days" had indeed "borne good fruit." She might have been quite surprised and not a little gratified at one of the most recent fruits of her early labors.

During the school years of 1983-84 and 1984-85, the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, direct descendant of the *Journal*, revived the weekly essay contests for Minnesota schoolchildren, using Anson's remarkably still-relevant topics. The contemporary essays were printed each Tuesday, along with several of those of the original Juniors. Like her predecessor, this feature's editor, Misti Snow, plowed through from 200 to more than 2,000 entries weekly, depending on the appeal of the subject.<sup>40</sup>

The most notable difference readers of the two sets of essays found was that of literary style. Gone was the turgid, late-Victorian prose with its careful attention to

form, allusion, and lofty thought. In its place was the chatty, perhaps somewhat irreverent, but very open style of today's young writers. There were differences in content as well. Inventions, for example, designed to enhance human effort at the turn of the century, seemed more likely to be created to replace it altogether in the contemporary versions. The complaints about the inconveniences of plaiting and controlling long hair were updated to those of perming and styling among today's females. Unlike Anson, however, Snow did not edit out the dark side of American childhood. Thus, in the contemporary feature, there were essays about the problems of divided families, deaths and illnesses of parents, siblings, friends, and pets that clouded the lives of youngsters. These were printed alongside descriptions of the joys of accomplishment, appreciation of family, and the multiple wonders and pleasures of life in the late-20th century. There was one disturbing leitmotif running through the contemporary essays, unknown to the earlier Juniors: the fear of nuclear holocaust.

If there is a lesson (and somehow one suspects that Anson would have had us seek one) to be learned from the *Journal Juniors*, it is that young people have opinions which they can and will express, given an opportunity. They do not speak with one voice on any issue; their viewpoints are as varied as are they themselves. They do, however, ask to be heard.

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<sup>38</sup> *JJ*, Jan. 26, 1913, p. 4; Scott, *Wanda Gág*, 104.

<sup>39</sup> *Journal*, Sept. 8, 1912, sec. 2, p. 6.

<sup>40</sup> For the revival of the *Journal Juniors* (including the list of topics), see Jim Fuller, "Turn-of-the-century idea will give today's students a forum," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Aug. 28, 1983, p. 1K. The 1983-84 program was summarized in Misti Snow Schumacher, "Essays reveal joy and pain of growing up in '84," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, May 29, 1984, p. 2C. On program and topics for 1984-85, see Misti Snow Schumacher, "Young writers invited to share thoughts on *Journal Juniors* page," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, Aug. 28, 1984, p. 1C. The "Journal Junior" feature appeared each Tuesday of both school years on p. 2 of the Variety section; in 1985-86, the feature was replaced by a monthly "Mindworks" program, also edited by Snow.

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