

Letters

Science Books for Children

The launching of sputnik I and sputnik II has speeded up the re-evaluation of science education in this country.

For some years now it has been my thought that there ought to be an award for the best science book for young people, similar to the Newberry and Caldecott awards. The John Newberry Medal for the Most Distinguished Contribution to American Literature for Children has been awarded annually since 1922, while

the Caldecott Medal has been presented to the artist of the most distinguished picture book of the year.

There is no reason why, in this scientific age of ours—or space age, if you will—the American Association for the Advancement of Science should not make an annual award of a medal, named for an illustrious scientist, in order to single out what the association considers to be the best book on a scientific subject for young children. This would help to develop the idea that the study of science is, after all, part of the study of the humanities; it would help to encourage writers of science books; it would help

to bring the fields of literature and scientific endeavor together.

It is a truism that our children are the hope of the future. It is they who will be the scientists of the future. I believe, therefore, that establishment of an AAAS science award would be a worthy project, eminently fitting as part of our increased emphasis on science education for the very young. Science education is not only for college and high-school students; it must of necessity begin in the elementary-school grades. I would like to see an award of this type given for books that are published for children below the age of 12. An example of the kind of book that might be honored by such a prize is the beautiful little volume by Irma Eleanor Webber called *Up Above and Down Below*, which is meant for grades two to four in the public schools.

H. ROGOSIN

Hollywood, California

Shorthand Notation

In *Science* recently [127, 297 (7 Feb. 1958)], H. C. H. Kernkamp describes a method for indicating castration by use of the sex symbols ♀ and ♂ with a portion of the circle removed.

Many laboratories develop a shorthand type of notation to indicate "physiological state." Our own is quite convenient and may be of interest. Castration is indicated by a cross superimposed upon the circle of the gender symbols; immaturity is denoted by incomplete symbols (the female symbol without the crossbar; the male symbol without the arrowhead); pregnancy, by making the vertical bar of the female symbol tangential to the left of the circle, as in the letter *p*; and so on.

NATHAN MILLMAN

Ortho Research Foundation,
Raritan, New Jersey

"Abominable Snowman"

Recent accounts [*Science* 123, 1024 (1956); 126, 858 (1957)] have given various interpretations of the Abominable Snowman or Yeti of the Himalayas. This note on the same subject is directed toward pointing out some aspects of the legend which have been overlooked. The interpretation that tracks in the snow ascribed to the Yeti may be made by man is valid in some instances, but it is clear that footprints cannot logically be attributed to even the most solitary hermit when they are made in remote glaciated terrain at great altitudes where local inhabitants simply would not travel.

The explanation that the Yeti tracks are made by red bears raises a number of difficulties. The footprints, such as those photographed by Eric Shipton in

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