The essay presents the cultural circumstances and the main ideas of the educational reform in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century and gives an overview of the trends found in children's literature of the time. The author places Čudnovate zgode šegrta Hlapića [The Strange Adventures of Hlapich the Apprentice], a Croatian classic by Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, in the tradition of children's non-fantastic literature of childhood autonomy, of a partly idyllic, partly parabolic, nature. He also relates it to stories by the German children's author Otfried Preußler, which appeared in the mid 20th century, at the time when Hlapich was translated into German. It is the kind of literature which aims to create for its young readers the feeling of happy agreement between the self and the world, and it thus instils a basic sense of trust in its readers.

Keywords: children's literature, Europe, turn of the 20th century, Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, The Strange Adventures of Hlapich the Apprentice