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On the Care Which Is Requisite in the Choice of Books for Children (1803)

Sarah Trimmer

Mrs. Trimmer (1741–1810) was a zealous writer for a cause—most prominently for the new Sunday Schools, an early attempt to educate the English poor. For this cause she wrote volumes of Bible stories in Sacred History *(1782–1784) and* An Easy Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature *(1782), which related religion and the natural world. Her best-known work was* Fabulous Histories *(1786), later called* The History of the Robins. *It was characteristic of her that in her introduction she took pains to explain that the conversations of Robin, Jr., Dicksy, Flapsy, and Pecksy were not real, just as she carefully noted in her review of Newbery's "entertaining and instructive"* Robin Goodfellow *that the fairies were only "imaginary beings."*

During 1778–1789 Mrs. Trimmer produced The Family Magazine *for the "instruction and amusement of cottagers and servants." Here, as in later writing, she hoped "to counteract the pernicious influence of immoral books" such as* Robinson Crusoe *and Perrault's* Histories and Tales of Past Times. *She was to become more famous for* The Guardian of Education *(1802–1806); in order to protect the young and innocent from dangerous literature, she published in it the first regular reviews of children's books.*

Formerly children's reading, whether for instruction or amusement, was confined to a very small number of volumes; of late years they have multiplied to an astonishing and alarming degree, and much mischief lies hid in many of them. The utmost circumspection is therefore requisite in making a proper selection; and children should not be permitted to make their own choice, or to read any books that may accidentally be thrown in their way, or offered to their perusal; but should be taught to consider it as a *duty*, to consult their parents in this momentous concern.

Between the ages of *eight* and *twelve years* children of both sexes may lay in a considerable stock of literary knowledge, if their school exercises are so managed as to prevent the encroachments of ornamental accomplishments at the hours which should be devoted to better purposes. Whilst the course of religious instruction, before recommended, is going on by means of the *Selection from the Scriptures*, together with the *partial reading of the Bible*, Rollin's Ancient History may be read, and some well-chosen modern Histories of England, France, &c. &c. The study of *Natural History*, that never-failing source of instruction and delight, may also be extended, by means of Books, and Museums, or private collections of natural curiosities; but in the choice of the former, particular care should be taken to provide hose which are free from the general objection to books of this kind, of elating circumstances unfit for young people to be acquainted with: the ccasional view of the *natural objects* which these books represent, will nswer the double purpose of amusement and information. Books which reat in a general way of *Arts* and *Sciences* may also be put into the hands of hildren in this stage of their education; not as a regular study, but by way of assisting their ingenuity, should they discover a natural turn for simple nechanical experiments, or for any works of taste and ingenuity. But books of *Chemistry* or *Electricity*, and all that might lead them prematurely to naking philosophical experiments, we would still keep from them. To the *Gardener's Dictionary* and *Calendar* they may be allowed free access, in order to instruct them to manage their little gardens, which in a family where there are boys and girls, should be the joint concern of brothers and sisters; as some parts of gardening are unfit for girls to perform.

The study of *Botany*, we would still reserve for a more advanced age. Poetry may be read and committed to memory; and select pieces in prose, such as are to be found in various collections, calculated at the same time to improve them in useful knowldge and in the art of reading aloud. Fables are also very proper for children of this age, and they are usually much delighted with them, and enter into the morals of them with surprising facility, when they relate to the common affairs of life. Some of Gay's Fables, though it is a favourite book, are too political for children. Works of fancy highly wrought, such as the Tales of the Genii, the Arabian Nights Entertainment, and the like, we would not put into the hands of young people till their religious principles are fixed, and their judgment sufficiently strong to restrain the imagination within due bounds, whilst it is led to expatiate in the regions of fiction and romance.

Novels certainly, however abridged, and however excellent, should not be read by young persons, till they are in some measure acquainted with real life; but under this denomination we do not mean to include those exemplary tales which inculcate the duties of *childhood* and *youth* without working too powerfully upon the feelings of the mind, or giving false pictures of life and manners.

Before we quit the subject of Books for Children, we must not omit to give a caution respecting those which go under the general name of *School Books*, viz. *Grammars*, *Dictionaries*, *Spelling Books*, *Exercise Books*, and *Books of Geography*, &c. &c. into some of which the leaven of false philosophy has found its way. In short, there is not a species of Books for Children and Youth, any more than for those of maturer years, which has not been made in some way or other an engine of mischief; nay, even well-intentioned authors have, under a mistaken idea that it is necessary to conform to the taste of the times, contributed to encrease the evil. However, there are in the mixed multitude, books of all sorts that are truly estimable; and others that might be rendered so with a little trouble in revising them; a task which we assure ourselves, the respective authors of these last-mentioned books will chearfully undertake, for *new Editions*, if they consider the infinite

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importance it is of, to be correct in principle, and cautious in expression, when they are writing for the young and ignorant, upon whose minds new ideas frequently make very strong impressions.

The remarks we have now made upon the different kinds of books for children, . . . will, we trust, be sufficient to guide the inexperienced mother in her choice for children under twelve years of age. . . .

An objection may probably be made to the course of reading we have recommended, as too *desultory,* but let it be remembered, that it is designed for children, who at this period of their lives are engaged in studies which require thought and application; and that, besides their stated tasks and exercises, they have the science of Religious Wisdom to call forth the exertion of their mental faculties. Young as they still are, they may look forward to a time of more leisure for the study of the Belles Lettres; therefore, it will be sufficient if a love of reading is excited.

ART. XVI—*The History of Little Goody Two Shoes, with her Means of acquiring Learning, Wisdom, and Riches.* Price 6d. Newbery.

This Book is a great favourite with us on account of the simplicity of style in which it is written, yet we could wish some parts to be altered, or omitted. It was the practice of Mr. Newbery's writers, to convey lessons to those whom they sometimes facetiously called *Children of six feet high,* through the medium of Children's Books; and this has been done in the little volume we are examining. But in these times, when such pains are taken to prejudice the poor against the higher orders, and to set them against parish officers, we could wish to have a veil thrown over the faults of oppressive 'squires and hard-hearted overseers. Margaret and her brother might have been represented as helpless orphans, without imputing their distress to crimes of which young readers can form no accurate judgment; and should these readers be of the *lowest class,* such a narration as this might tend to prejudice their minds during life, against those whose favour it may be their future interest to conciliate, and who may be provoked by their insolence (the fruits of this prejudice) to treat them with harshness instead of kindness. We have also a very great objection to the Story of *Lady Ducklington's Ghost* (though extremely well told, and as well applied) for reasons we have repeatedly given. The observations upon animals are not quite correct; and if nothing had been introduced about witchcraft, the Book would in our opinion have been more complete. However, with all its faults, we wish to see this Book continue in circulation, as some of these faults *a pair of scissors* can rectify, and the ill effect of others may be remedied by proper explanation from the parent. But amongst the numerous writers for children of the present day, who knows but some one may take in hand to give an edition of this little Work with the *proper emendations?*

ART. VIII—*Nursery Tales. Cinderella, Blue Beard, and Little Red Riding Hood;* with coloured plates. Price 6d. each. Tabart. 1804.

These Tales are announced to the public as *new translations,* but in what respect this term applies we are at a loss to say, for, on the perusal of them we recognized the identical *Mother Goose's Tales,* with all their *vulgarities of expression,* which were in circulation when those who are now grandmothers, were themselves children, and we doubt not but that many besides ourselves can recollect, their horrors of imagination on reading that of *Blue Beard,* and the terrific impressions it left upon their minds. This is certainly a very improper tale for children. *Cinderella* and *Little Red Riding Hood* are perhaps merely absurd. But it is not on account of their subjects and language only that these Tales, (Blue Beard at least) are exceptionable, another objection to them arises from the nature of their embellishments, consisting of coloured prints, in which the most striking incidents in the stories are placed before the eyes of the little readers in glaring colours, representations we believe of play-house scenes, (for the figures are in theatrical dresses). In Blue Beard for instance, the second plate represents the opening of the *forbidden closet,* in which appears, not what the story describes, (which surely is *terrific enough!) "a floor clotted with blood, in which the bodies of several women were lying (the wives whom Blue Beard had married and murdered,")* but, *the flames of Hell* with *Devils* in frightful shapes, threatening the unhappy lady who had given way to her curiosity! The concluding print is, *Blue Beard* holding his terrified wife by the hair, and lifting up his sabre to cut off her head. We expected in Little Red Riding Hood, to have found a picture of the wolf tearing the poor innocent dutiful child to pieces, but happily the number of prints was complete without it. A moment's consideration will surely be sufficient to convince people of the least reflection, of the danger, as well as the impropriety, of putting such books as these into the hands of little children, whose minds are susceptible of every impression; and who from the liveliness of their imaginations are apt to convert into realities whatever forcibly strikes their fancy.

Children's Books (1844)

The Quarterly Review

The appearance in the Quarterly Review *in 1844 of a lengthy unsigned critical survey was a milestone in early literary criticism. The enlightened critic (who has been identified as Elizabeth Rigby) assailed the mediocrities of the age and pleaded for imaginative rather than didactic literature. She also advocated allowing children to choose freely rather than limiting them to the "little racks of ready-cut hay that have been so officiously supplied them." In her book list she approves a number of works of folklore, classic fiction, and school books.*

The attention of our readers has already been called to a subject, to which, the more it is considered the more importance must be attached—we mean that of children's books, which, no less in quality than in quantity, constitute one of the most peculiar literary features of the present day. The first obvious rule in writing for the amusement or instruction of childhood, is to bear in mind that it is not the extremes either of genius or dullness which we are to address—that it is of no use writing up to some minds or down to others—that we have only to do with that large class of average ability, to be found in children of healthy mental and physical formation, among whom in after life the distinction consists not so much in a difference of gifts as in the mode in which they have been led to use them. In a recent article our remarks were chiefly confined to a set of books in which not only this but every other sense and humanity of juvenile writing had been so utterly defied, that the only consolation for all the misery they had inflicted, consisted in the reflection that—however silly the infatuation which had given them vogue here—they were not of English origin. We now propose casting a sort of survey over that legion for which we are more responsible—taking first into consideration the general characteristics of those which we believe to be mistaken both as to means and end—from which many who are concerned in the education of children are vainly expecting good results, and to which many who know nothing about the matter are falsely attributing them.

In this department the present times profess to have done more than any other; and it has become a habit, more perhaps of conventional phraseology than of actual conviction, to congratulate the rising generation on the devotion of so many writers to their service. Nevertheless there are some circumstances contingently connected with this very service, which may warrant us in expressing doubts as to the unqualified philanthropy of those who enter it. Considering the sure sale which modern habits of universal education provide for children's books—the immense outfit required by schools and masters, and the incalculable number annually purchased as presents, it would be, upon the whole, matter of far more legitimate surprise if either the supplies were less abundant, or the suppliers, some of them, more conscientious. Ever since the days of Goldsmith the writing and editing of children's works has been a source of ready emolument—in no class of literature does the risk bear so small a proportion to the reward—and consequently in no class has the system of *mere manufacture* been carried to such an extent.

After the bewilderment of ideas has somewhat subsided which inevitably attends the first entrance into a department of reading so overstocked and where the minds of the writers are so differently actuated, and those of the readers so variously estimated, the one broad and general impression left with us is that of the excessive ardour for *teaching* which prevails throughout. No matter how these authors may differ as to the mode, they all agree as to the necessity of presenting knowledge to the mind under what they conceive to be the most intelligible form, and in getting down as much as can be swallowed. With due judgment and moderation, this, generally speaking, is the course which all instructors would pursue; nevertheless it is to the extreme to which it has been carried that parents and teachers have to attribute the stunted mental state of their little scholars, who either have been plied with a greater quantity of nourishment than the mind had strength or time to digest, or under the interdict laid on the imagination, in this mania for explanation, have been compelled to drag up the hill of knowledge with a wrong set of muscles. Doubtless the storing up of knowledge at an age when the powers of acquisition are most ductile and most tenacious, is of the utmost moment; but a child's head is a measure, holding only a given quantity at a time, and, if overfilled, liable not to be carried steadily. Also, it is one thing to stock the mind like a dead thing, and another to make it forage for itself; and of incalculably more value is one voluntary act of acquirement, combination, or conclusion, than hundreds of passively accepted facts. Not that the faculties can be said to lie inactive beneath this system of teaching—on the contrary, the mere mental mechanism is frequently exerted to the utmost; but the case is much the same as in the present modern school of music, where, while the instrument itself is made to do wonders, the real sense of harmony is sacrificed. For it is a fact confirmed both by reason and experience, and one which can alone account for the great deficiency of spontaneous and native power—that which comes under the denomination of genius—in the schools, English and foreign, where these modes of instruction are pursued—that the very art with which children are taught exactly stifles that which no art can teach.

As regards also the excessive clearness of explanation, insisted upon now-a-days as the only road to sureness of apprehension, it is unquestionably necessary that a child should, in common parlance, understand what it acquires. But this again must be taken with limitation; for Nature, not fond

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apparently of committing too much power into a teacher's hand, has decreed that unless a child be permitted to acquire beyond what it positively understands, its intellectual progress shall be slow, if any. As Sir Walter Scott says, in his beautiful preface to the Tales of a Grandfather, "There is no harm, but, on the contrary, there is benefit in presenting a child with ideas beyond his easy and immediate comprehension. The difficulties thus offered, if not too great or too frequent, stimulate curiosity and encourage exertion." We are so constituted that even at the maturest state of our minds—when length of experience has rendered the feeling of disappointment one almost unjustifiable in our own eyes—we find the sense of interest for a given object, and feeling of its beauty to precede far more than to follow the sense of comprehension—or, it were better said, the belief of fully comprehending;—but with children, who only live in anticipation, this is more conspicuously the case; in point of fact they delight most in what they do *not* comprehend. Those therefore who insist on keeping the sense of enjoyment rigidly back, till that of comprehension has been forcibly urged forward—who stipulate that the one shall not be indulged till the other be appeased—are in reality but retarding what they most affect to promote: only inducing a prostration, and not a development of the mental powers. In short, a child thus circumstanced is submitting his understanding and not exerting it—a very deplorable exchange. . . .

[W]ith few exceptions, the minds of children are far more healthily exercised and generally cultivated than in a former generation. But, while gladly admitting this to be the fact, we are inclined to attribute it far more to the liberty now allowed them in promiscuous reading than to any efforts which have been made of late in their own department—far more to the power of ranging free over field and pasture than to all the little racks of ready-cut hay that have been so officiously supplied them. Children seem to possess an inherent conviction that when the hole is big enough for the cat, no smaller one at the side is needed for the kitten. They don't really care for "Glimpses" of this, or "Gleanings" of that, or "Footsteps" to the other—but would rather stretch and pull, and get on tiptoe to reach the sweeter fruit above them, than confine themselves to the crabs which grow to their level. The truth is, though seldom apprehended by juvenile book-writers, that children are distinguished from ourselves less by an *inferiority* than by a *difference* in capacity—that the barriers between manhood and childhood are marked less by the progress of every power than by the exchange of many. A mere weaker decoction of the same ideas and subjects that suit us will be very unsuitable to them. A genuine child's book is as little like a book for grown people cut down, as the child himself is like a little old man. The beauty and popularity of Lamb's "Shakspeare's Tales" are attributable to the joint excellences of both author and transposer, but this is a rare exception:—generally speaking, the way in which Froissart is cut into spoon-meat, and Josephus put into swaddling-clothes, has only degraded these authors from their old positions, without in any way benefiting the rising generation by their new. The real secret of a

child's book consists not merely in its being less dry and less difficult, but more rich in interest—more true to nature—more exquisite in art—more abundant in every quality that replies to childhood's keener and fresher perceptions. Such being the case, the best of juvenile reading will be found in libraries belonging to their elders, while the best of juvenile writing will not fail to delight those who are no longer children. "Robinson Crusoe," the standing favourite of above a century, was not originally written for children; and Sir Walter Scott's "Tales of a Grandfather," addressed solely to them, are the pleasure and profit of every age, from childhood upwards. Our little friends tear Pope's "Odyssey" from mamma's hands, while she takes up their "Agathos" with an admiration which no child's can exceed. Upon the whole the idea of a book being too *old* for a child is one which rests upon very false foundations. If we do not mistake his department of enjoyment, we can hardly overrate his powers of it. With most children the taste for Robinson Crusoe will be carried out into Columbus's discoveries, Anson's voyages, and Belzoni's travels; the relish for scenes of home-life into Evelyn's Diary, Cowper's Letters, or Bracebridge Hall. With very many the easy neatness or pompous sounds of verse, from John Gilpin, or Gay's Fables, to Alexander's Feast, or Paradise Lost, have an ineffable charm. Some of no uncommon capacity are known to be smitten with the mysterious pathos of Young's Night Thoughts. But yesterday we saw one little miss sucking her thumb over Thalaba.

But to return to the present liberty of indiscriminate reading: we doubt in most cases if it be owing to any conviction of its real superiority, or whether, in the great increase of publications, and the prevailing fashion of throwing open libraries and scattering books through every room of a house, it has not rather been suffered from an impossibility of prevention. We fear, in short, that parents are far more inclined to look on this as a necessary evil than as an incidental good, and are by no means satisfied in their consciences as to the time spent in useless reading, or the risk incurred by pernicious. But may not these misgivings, like many another concerning the education of children, be traced to our giving ourselves too much credit for judgment, and them too little for discernment? As regards useless reading, so long as it does not interfere with habits of application, and powers of attention, we are but poor judges of its real amount. Children have an instinct of food which more cultivated palates lose; and many is the scrap they will pick from hedge and common which to us seem barren. Nor may the question of pernicious reading be left to its usual acceptation, more especially as what is so called deserves the epithet, not so much on account of any absolutely false principle as from a tendency to inflame the passions or shock the taste, and therefore falls innocuous on a mind where the passions are silent and the taste unformed. With the immense choice of irreprehensible works before us, no one would deliberately put those into a child's hands where much that is beautiful is mixed up with much that is offensive; but, should they fall in their way, we firmly believe no risk to exist—if they will read them at one time or another, the earlier perhaps the

better. Such works are like the viper—they have a wholesome flesh as well as a poisonous sting; and children are perhaps the only class of readers which can partake of one without suffering from the other.

We are aware that a small party exists who not only deny the quality of the modern juvenile school, but go so far as to question the quality and policy of children's books altogether. Tieck, a true genius as well as a most learned man, is said never to have allowed one to enter his house. Such a mode of prevention, however, is worse than the evil itself. Juvenile books are as necessary to children as juvenile companionship, though nothing can be worse for them than to be restricted exclusively to either. Doubtless the imaginary exemption from the rules and ceremonials of general literature, which little books as well as little folks enjoy, has, as we have seen, fostered a host of works from the simply unprofitable to the directly pernicious, which would otherwise not have seen the light. But neither this nor any other consideration should forbid the cultivation of a branch of literature which, properly understood, gives exercise to the highest powers both of head and heart, or make us ungrateful to those writers by whom great powers have been so devoted. For children are not their only debtors—nor is the delight with which we take up one of the companions of our childhood entirely attributable to associations of days gone by—nor the assiduity with which we devour a new comer solely ascribable to parental watchfulness—but it is with these as with some game which we join at first merely to try whether we can play as we once did, or with the view of keeping our little playmates out of mischief, but which we end by liking for its own sake—though we do not always say so.

In truth it is good for both that the young and the old should frequently exchange libraries. We give them a world of new ideas, but they do more, for they purify and freshen our old ones. There is nothing like the voice of one of these little Mentors to brush up our better part. There is no reading from which we rise more softened in heart, more strengthened in resolution, nay, not infrequently, more enriched in information. And this brings us to a more grateful portion of our task, and one in which that general tone we were bound to observe in our deprecatory remarks may be exchanged for a more particular kind—for, considering the numbers of little volumes that have passed through our hands with a view to preparing this article, it may perhaps not seem presumptuous in us to specify modern works both of amusement and instruction which have struck us as, on the whole, most worthy of the attention of parents and teachers. At the same time the following list has been the incidental more than the intentional result of our search, and therefore professes no systematic completeness, or categorical accuracy: moreover, we doubt not that by many a reader our selection has been already anticipated. As regards also the old children's books, the much-read and roughly-treated friends of a whole little generation, whose crazy backs and soft cottony leaves have stood a greater wear and tear than any of their sprucer successors could survive—which tell not only of the

times when they were devoured but of the very places—which recall the lofty bough whence the feet hung dangling at a height which now does not take them off the ground, or the pleasant nook where the little reader sat huddled up in a position which it would now be extremely inconvenient to assume—which speak of days when, engrossed in their pages, all sorrow was forgotten, and when there were no real sorrows to forget, and when even solitary confinement was borne without a murmur, if one of them could be kidnapped to share it—as regards these dearly loved books, which tell all this and much more, our impartiality of judgment might be well suspected had we not lived to see their charm extend to the hearts of the present generation as well as linger round those of the past. In our enumeration, therefore, of such works as we would most willingly see in the hands of children, we must be allowed to name many of the old school which have been superseded in circulation by works bearing no comparison with them in value, and which, though never to be forgotten by some readers, are, we have reason to know, totally unknown to others. We commence, then, with the books of direct amusement, attempting no further classification than such as the age of the child suggests.

The House Treasury, by Felix Summerly, including *The Traditional Nursery Songs of England, Beauty and the Beast, Jack and the Beanstalk,* and other old friends, all charmingly done and beautifully illustrated, which may be left to the discretion of parents. These are a grateful relief after the spiritless flippancies—the Prince of Wales's Alphabet, for instance, and other such trash of the day—while the involuntary pleasure they afford to grown up minds will go far to convince us what the delights of children really are.

Puss in Boots, with the designs of Otto Specker. We consider this as the *beau-ideal* of a nursery-book; yet it will afford much entertainment to older readers, and please all admirers of art. The engravings in the English book are even better than those in the German original.

Nursery Rhymes, Original Poems, by the Misses Taylor, of Ongar. Admirable little books. It was justly said of them by a contemporary Review, "the writers of these rhymes have far better claims to the title of poet, than many who arrogate to themselves that high appellation." Nevertheless they are too generally superseded by a tribe of very contemptible juvenile versifiers.

Æsop's Fables. There are several versions in English of this book—which furnishes more amusement to the child and wisdom to the man than almost any other we could mention. Good fables cannot be too much recommended. While other books are labouring at a fact they are teaching a principle, and that the more securely from the child's complete unconsciousness of the process.

Persian Fables, by Rev. H. G. Keene. A very wise and attractive little volume.

Gay's Fables—it is enough to name: the first we believe in date, and inferior surely to none in merit, of all the classics of the nursery.

Prince Leboo. We would wish this beautiful character to live in the hearts of all children.

German Popular Tales, translated from Grimm. An exquisite book for children, and one far surpassing in every way the many recently published German collections, for which it has mainly supplied the materials. Care should be taken to procure the original edition of 1823, illustrated by George Cruikshank—a baser edition being in circulation.

Evenings at Home, by Mrs. Barbauld and Dr. Aikin; but Mrs. Barbauld deserves the greater share of credit, as the scientific dialogues will scarce find a voluntary reader. There is a classic beauty and simple gravity in this lady's writing, which, knowing how great a favourite she is with all children permitted to posses her, shows how unnecessary as well as ungraceful is that flippant clap-trap manner now so much in vogue. We have been surprised to find the little request at juvenile libraries for this work.

Parent's Assistant, by Miss Edgeworth. Popular as Miss Edgeworth's writings were in the last generation, they deserve to be still more so now, when the beauties of her writing are more than ever wanted, and their few deficiencies, if we may say so of one to whom we owe a deep debt of gratitude, less likely to take effect. Therefore it is with the greatest pleasu that we have observed the preference evinced for her books by childre who are plentifully supplied with the more showy works of her succes sors—all, it is needless to say, greatly her inferiors in mind and skill.

Popular Tales, by Miss Edgeworth.

Garry Owen, by the same, is a charming little piece, perhaps not so universally known.

The Child's Own Book. One of the best modern versions of old materials, and far superior to one entitled "The Child's *Fairy Library.*"

Leila on the Island, Leila in England, Mary and Florence, by Miss Anne Fraser Tytler. These are excellent—especially the Leilas. Miss Tytler's writings are especially valuable for their religious spirit. She has taken a just position between the rationalism of the last generation and the puritanism of the present, while the perfect nature and true art with which she sketches from juvenile life, show powers which might be more ambitiously displayed, but cannot be better bestowed.

Mrs. Trimmer's Robins, Adventures of a Donkey. These two books have saved numerous nests from plunder, and warded off many a blow from a "despised race." They give, it is true, no precise ideas of the anatomical formation of the animals described, but they invest both the robin and the donkey with a sentiment of kindliness and humanity in the breast of a child which we are inclined to think of far more value.

Son of a Genius, by Mrs. Hofland. A very beautiful tale, and the best of this lady's numerous little books, which are mostly too much of the *novellette* style to recommend.

Hope on, Hope ever, Strive and Thrive. Both excellent—by Mary Howitt—whose children's books are numerous, but very unequal in merit, and some of them, we regret to say, highly objectionable.

Holiday House, by Miss Catherine Sinclair; a book full of mirth for children; the work of a genuinely kind, and very clever spirit.

Lamb's Shakspeare's Tales. This is a juvenile gift of the highest value. He indeed understood Shakspeare and children too.

Lamb's Ulysses. Also a beautiful specimen of art in itself.

Robinson Crusoe. No wonder that Burckhardt found the surest plan for captivating a group of wild Arabs—the children of the desert—was to translate for them a chapter of Defoe's masterpiece.

Settlers at Home, Feats on the Fiord, The Crofton Boys, by Miss Martineau. These volumes of "The Playfellow," especially the first and third, will be read with delight through every generation in a house. We purposely omit the remaining volume, "The Peasant and the Prince," which has a reprehensible purpose and tendency.

Masterman Ready, by Captain Marryat. The best of Robinson Crusoe's numerous descendants, and one of the most captivating of modern children's books. The only danger is lest parents should dispute with their children the possession of it.

May You Like It. A pathetic and fascinating volume.

Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life. We have already said a word or two on this delightful volume—the work of one of the highest and most amiable of contemporary minds—a genius which shines with equal felicity in the tender and the humorous vein. It is fast becoming a child's book.

Croker's Fairy Legends. A book quite after a child's own heart—full of dancing fun and grotesque imagery.

Elizabeth, or the Exiles of Siberia.

The Fool of Quality—a well done abridgment—in our early day highly relished by young people.

Undine, translated from the German of La Motte Fouqué—a romance for all ages.

Vicar of Wakefield.

Phantasmion, by Mrs. Henry Coleridge; a tale of fairyland, full of captivation for man, woman, and child.

Arabian Nights. We forbear to intrude our prejudice in favour of the old edition over Lane's more correct version, because we are convinced that whichever children have the pleasure of reading first will be the lasting favourite.

As regards those works which convey more direct information without any expense of interest, we may mention,

Contributions of Q. Q., by Miss Jane Taylor; a work which cannot be too highly praised; religious precepts, moral lessons, and interesting information, all given in a sound and beautiful form. Another instance of the popularity of *good writing*—this book being in high favour with children. In its present form this work is perhaps not generally known, as it was published in detached portions in the "Youth's Magazine," and the parts have only lately been collected. But many a reader is acquainted with "The

Discontented Pendulum," "How it Strikes a Stranger," &c., which appeared in separate pieces, and will be found in various selections of prose reading.

Willy's Holidays. by Mrs. Marcet.

The Boy and the Birds, by Miss Emily Taylor; a delightful little volume.

Bingley's Stories of Dogs, [*Bingley's Stories of*] *Horses*, [*Bingley's Stories of*] *Travellers*, [*Bingley's Stories of*] *Shipwrecks*. A set of works which, professing only to amuse, instruct and edify in no common degree.

Uncle Philip's Whale Fishery, of which the same may be said.

Stanley's Birds. This is by the present Bishop of Norwich—it well deserves its great popularity.

Mrs. Marcet's Conversations on Land and Water. This is so far superior to the usual class of modern books, in which it is thought necessary to give instruction a garnish of amusement, that, though drawn up in that garrulous form we so much condemn, we cannot omit to recommend it here.

Harry and Lucy, by Miss Edgeworth. It matters not how learned Miss Edgeworth may make her Harrys and Lucys, we defy her to make them dull.

White's History of Selborne, for young people. The omissions are judicious.

Peter Parley's Tales of Animals. A collection of interesting anecdotes, and very attractive to children, but the only work by the real Simon Pure we should care to see in their hands. Nor have we been more satisfied with the other writers under the same mask, which in most cases seems to have been assumed only to carry down a shallowness and flippancy of style which otherwise would not have been tolerated.

Goldsmith's Animated Nature.

Selections from the Spectator, Guardian, and Tatler, by Mrs. Barbauld. To the credit of children, this is one of their greatest delights.

Howitt's Country Boy's Book. A capital work, and we are inclined to think his best in any line.

Stories for Children from the History of England, by Mr. Croker. This skilful performance suggested the plan of Sir W. Scott's

Tales of a Grandfather.

Southey's Life of Nelson.

Mutiny of the Bounty.

Lives of the Admirals.

The (abridged) *Life of Columbus*, by Washington Irving.

Hone's Every-Day Book. Excessively interesting to children from the earliest ages.

Sketch Book.

Bracebridge Hall.

Fragments of Voyages and Travels, by Captain Basil Hall.

The Waverley Novels.

We should think a selection of these, with some of the prints *representing realities* from the Abbotsford edition, would be the most popular child's book in the world; and the drawing-room set would last a good while longer.

Works of a more directly religious cast:—

Watts's Hymns,

Hymns for Infant Minds, by the Misses Taylor of Ongar,

Mrs. Hemans's Hymns for Childhood. These are all that can be required for the exercise of early piety, and three more beautiful little works cannot be desired.

Child's Christian Year.

Tracts and Tales, and

Sacred Dramas, and other writings, by Mrs. Hannah More.

Agathos, and other tales, by Archdeacon Wilberforce. These are indeed the works of a master. Their success can surprise no one.

The Distant Hills,

Shadow of the Cross. Two beautiful little allegorical works, of which a child can make no false application. The explanatory dialogues at the close of each will be found of the utmost utility.

Gospel Stories, by Mrs. Barrow. This is not to be confounded with the mob of little books bearing similar titles: it is a very remarkable specimen of skill, and treats some of the most difficult passages in Gospel History with a clearness that may guide and help many an experienced parent in the instruction of her children.

Ivo and Verena. A most impressive little volume.

Loss of the "Kent" East Indiaman. A lesson to young and old.

Burder's Oriental Customs.

Translations from Fénélon.

Keble's Christian Year.

Pilgrim's Progress. The sooner read the better.

. . . In the list thus offered, it would be absurd to imagine that all have been mentioned that are worthy of attention. As we said before, we offer what has indirectly presented itself to us, more than what we have directly sought for. The aim, also, has been more to contract than to expand—to the exclusion of many works highly respectable in ability, but too similar and numerous to be distinguished. Being also convinced by experience, that it is the out of school reading which equally leaves the deepest impression on the child, and gives the greatest licence to the writer, it is this branch of juvenile books to which our chief attention has been devoted. As to the works of an older kind fitted for children's reading, we need hardly remind those concerned in their welfare, that Homer, Shakspeare, Milton, and Addison, are enjoyable and appreciable from a very early age, and that the child's store of such reading is one of the richest legacies the adult can inherit. And in an age when, by a strange perversity of reasoning, a twofold injury, both in what is required and what is withheld, is inflicted upon

children, it behoves us the more to supply them with those authors who, like old plate, though their pattern may go out of fashion for a season, yet always retain the same intrinsic value.

Upon the whole, we should be happy if, by calling attention to the real excellence and beauty of a genuine child's book, we could assist in raising the standard of the *art* itself—the only effectual way, it seems to us, of checking the torrent of dressed-up trumpery which is now poured upon the public. For on taking a retrospective view of the juvenile libraries of the day, it is very obvious that there are a set of individuals who have taken to writing children's books, solely because they found themselves incapable of any other, and who have had no scruple in coming forward in a line of literature which, to their view, presupposed the lowest estimate of their own abilities. Nor has the result undeceived them—on the contrary, they write simple little books which any little simpleton can understand, and in the facility of the task become more and more convinced of its utter insignificance. The whole mistake hinges upon the slight but important distinction between *childish* books and *children's* books. The first are very easy—the second as much the reverse—the first require no mind at all—the second mind of no common class. What indeed can be a closer test of natural ability and acquired skill than that species of composition which, above all others, demands clearness of head and soundness of heart, the closest study of nature, and the most complete command over your materials? A child's book especially requires that which every possessor of talent knows to be its most difficult and most necessary adjunct, viz. the judgment evinced in the selection of your ideas—the discretion exercised in the control of your powers. In short, the *beau-ideal* of this class of composition lies in the union of the highest art with the simplest form; and if it be absurd to expect the realisation of this more frequently in children's books than in any other, it is quite as absurd to attempt to write them without keeping it in any way in view.