

Reviewer: You're getting a little too sombre, Santa. Have you any comic books?

Santa Claus: To be sure! "The Brownies Around the World" (UNWIN), by PALMER COX, is full of delightful comic invention; and so, in a more grotesque manner, is "Topsies and Turveys" (UNWIN), by R. S. NEWALL. Commend me above all to MR. T. H. SHEPHERD'S "Ziggags at the Zoo" (NEWNES), a very remarkable collection, not only of the funniest and maddest inventions, but of actual studies, poses, expressions of beasts and birds, obtainable only by untiring observation—moods, moments, little dramas in the caged-life of the Zoo. This is a wonderful book, and MR. ARTHUR MORRISON'S pen is found to be, in its own way, as entertaining as MR. SHEPHERD'S pencil. From the comic to the "high fantastic" is even a shorter cry than from the ridiculous to the sublime. I mean to put into many a stocking of both old and young GEORGE MACDONALD'S "Phantastes" (CHATTO & WINDUS). It is a little caviare to the general, but there never was a more delightful fairy romance. Pleasant books, in their various ways, are "The Disagreeable Duke" (GEORGE ALLEN), a Christmas whimsicality for the holidays, by ELINOR DAVENPORT ADAMS; and "Maurice, or The Red Jar" (MACMILLAN), a tale of magic and adventure for boys and girls, by the COUNTESS OF JERSEY. But there; I'm tired of the story-books. There are far too many of them published; I feel certain that there must be more "waste products" in Christmas story-books than in any other branch of publishing. Let me see what else I have. Oh! I had almost thrown this aside—a reprint of MRS. MARGARET GATTY'S "Parables from Nature" (BELL & SONS), with a memoir of the author by her talented daughter, JULIANA HORATIA EWING, and illustrations by SIR E. BURNE-JONES, P. H. CALDERON, TENNIEL, and others—a very admirable old-fashioned book. I have two charming music-books: "Lullabies of Many Lands" (ALLEN), collected and rendered into English verse by ALMA STRETTEL, with seventy-seven illustrations by EMILY J. HARDING; and "A Garland of Country Song" (METHUEN), being MR. BARING-GOULD'S collection of English Folk-Songs, arranged by MR. H. FLEETWOOD SHEPPARD. In my humble opinion the latter ought to be in every home in England. We have had, and have, English literature and English art; we have not yet had, in any sufficient sense, English music. We should like to have it; and whatever it may assimilate, the English music of the future must develop out of the English music, such as it is, of the past—out of Purcell and Folk-song.

Reviewer: What's that folio?

Santa Claus: This? The very kind of book for a Christmas present, whether it be put into the stockings of dreamy maidens, dreamy youths, whole-hearted house-wives and house-bands, or ancient ladies and gentlemen of romantic and chivalrous minds—a book of "Border Ballads" (LAWRENCE & BULLEN), with an interesting introduction by ANDREW LANG, and twelve etchings by C. O. MURRAY. The world can never tire of these "masterless poems"—"Thomas the Rhymer," "Tam Lane," "The Lass of Lochryan." Look at this illustration. That is the face of a woman who has just said—

"O, open the door, Love Gregor,
O, open the door, I pray;
For your young son that is in my arms
Will be dead ere it be day;"

and who hears, scarcely grasping its meaning, the answer—

"Awa, awa, ye ill woman,
For here ye shanno win in.
Gae drown ye in the raging sea,
Or hang on the gallows-pin."

Look, too, at the exquisite paper and type. And here, to finish with, is a new popular edition of

Scott's poems, the "Oxford" (FROWDE), edited by J. LOGIE ROBERTSON. I mean to scatter it far and wide this year; and I shall tell you why. Doubtless, as a reviewer, I am omniscient, and cultured to the highest pitch; and so, when I say that I think Scott's poetry is much under-estimated, you are bound to believe me. It is so concrete, so full of all kinds of things. Arms, and men and women, the sounds and sights of Nature, battles and wooings, keep up such a constant pageant that a brisk reader delights in the artlessness of the manner—prefers it, indeed, to a more studied one, as he might prefer an anyhow gallop on a heath to a canter in Rotten Row. Don't make any mistake. Scott will last: his poems are his *Iliad*; his novels, his *Odyssey*.

Reviewer: Been said before.

Santa Claus: Truth can never be reiterated too often. I have this "Oxford Scott" in a pretty little box, too—five small volumes for dainty people. And now I begin to feel drowsy. Help me to bed.

(The tireless REVIEWER leads SANTA CLAUS out of his study, and then returns in the highest of spirits to tackle the pile of minor poetry.)

A NOTE FOR CHILDREN.

THE YELLOW FAIRY BOOK, Edited by Andrew Lang.
London: Longmans, Green & Co.

SOME day, very likely, there will be a *Children's Review*, in which young people and those who understand young people will point out to each other what books they should read at Christmas and other tides. It will be a model review that, consisting, to begin with, of just one sheet in two sections, devoted respectively to "Dull Books" and "Capital Books"; for children know perfectly well that there can be no third section in dealing with books of entertainment. Grown-up people, who get into the power of wicked enchanters, are often deluded into believing that they derive delight from dull books; but children never make that mistake: even the priggish girls who profess to be vastly entertained by dull books are not deceiving themselves; they are only trying to impose on the boys.

Very well, then; here is a short notice of Mr. Lang's "Yellow Fairy Book" from the *Children's Review*, a periodical which exists at once if you only think so:—

"For a fourth time we are happy to be able to head our Christmas list of Capital Books with a Fairy Book edited by Mr. Andrew Lang. We like it so much that we at once drop into poetry like Mr. Silas Wegg, although we trust never to resemble in any other respect the bad fairy who assailed the peace of Belfin's Bower:—

"Fairy books, red, green, and blue
O'er the wide world wandering flew;
Now with charms, enchanted rings,
Mirrors and wheels and swords and things,
A fourth appears on golden wings.

Told in easy-running prose,
Told in pictures quaint and queer,
Dzens four of tales are here,
All about the joys and woes
Of princes and of princesses,
Spell-bound by cunning sorceries:
Of Golden Crabs, and Iron Stoves;
The Dragon and his grandmother;
Of philtres and enchanted loaves;
Of talking beasts of every fur;
Of Donkey-Cabbages and Frogs,
And of the monstrous-sighted Dogs
That sat upon the money-chests;
Of malice, and the dreadful tests
That wicked kings set simpletons;
Of Ferko and the Healing Water;
The Flying Ship, the Flower Queen's Daughter.

"Of Giants too our authors tell;
And of the Prince Invisible;
The temple with the book of Lovers
In golden letters, golden covers,
The Golden Isle, the Golden Fountain,
The Golden Stream, the Golden Mountain;
Pebble and flower and magic plinth,
And of the Desperate Labyrinth,
And who they were that mouldered there pent;
And of the Seven-Headed Serpent.

"Hark! the children clap their hands!
Here we have good, better, best,
Tales from all the old-world lands,
And from the wigwams of the west—
Forty-eight good tales and true!
Andrew Lang, long life to you!
And Fortune send you tales of spooks
For many other Fairy-books!

"Thus far our poet. In conclusion, we have to say that we rejoice very much because Mr. Lang and Mr. Jacobs have successfully resisted the assault of those wicked magicians who would destroy the pleasure of children in the interests of a branch of the Black Art called Folklore; and also to record it as our opinion that the great popularity of fairy tales is one among many signs of a renaissance of Romance. There are plenty of people we know ready to denounce it as a recrudescence; but you will find them, as a rule, wicked enchanters in disguise. When we have recovered from the mental panic into which we have been thrown by the Scandinavian thunderstorm, we shall find the air sweeter and clearer than it ever was before; we shall no longer appear to be surrounded by an impenetrable Present of Social Problems, for the great Past shall once more become visible stretching away into Wonderland. Science can do much, but it cannot kill the Past. Romance is the good fairy of the Past; and Science is the good fairy of the Present. We hope the two will soon manage to live at peace."

There is some truth in the remarks of this writer in the *Children's Review*. It is a wise child that knows its own father: in the intensity of modern life we are apt to forget sometimes that the Present is the child of the Past, not self-begotten nor the offspring of any theory.

SOME MORE FAIRY BOOKS.

- COSSACK FAIRY TALES AND FOLK TALES. Selected, edited, and translated by R. Nisbet Bain. Illustrated by E. W. Mitchell. London: Lawrence & Bullen.
- MORE CELTIC FAIRY TALES. Selected and edited by Joseph Jacobs. Illustrated by John D. Batten. London: David Nutt.
- THE GOLDEN FAIRY BOOK. With 110 illustrations by H. R. Millar. London: Hutchinson & Co.
- A BOOK OF FAIRY TALES. Retold by S. Baring-Gould. With numerous illustrations and initial letters by Arthur J. Gaskin. London: Methuen & Co.
- JACK THE GIANT-KILLER AND BEAUTY AND THE BEAST. Illustrated by S. J. Anning Bell. ("Banbury Cross" Series.) London: Dent & Co.
- A FARM IN FAIRYLAND. By Laurence Housman. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.
- THE STORY OF ALEXANDER. Retold from the original. By Robert Steele. Drawn by Fred Mason. London: David Nutt.

MR. NISBET BAIN'S "Cossack Fairy Tales" stands out as one of the most interesting of what may be called the original collections of fairy and folk tales of the present season. It is translated from the Ruthenian, the language of the Cossacks, a dialect which is said to possess a noble literature, folk-songs not inferior to those of Servia, and folk-tales many of which are unique of their kind. The isolation and primitiveness of the Cossack should be favourable for the preservation of old myths and to the independent development of new ones, and Mr. Bain

urges that there are peculiar and original elements in these stories not to be found in the folk-lore of other European peoples—such data as magic handkerchiefs (generally beneficial, but sometimes terribly baleful), demon-expelling hemp-and-tar whips, cattle teeming eggs, &c. However this may be—and it is a rash thing nowadays, as Mr. Bain is aware, to assert that there is anything new in folklore—the main thing from the point of view of Christmas readers is that these stories are all extremely attractive, and told with refreshing simplicity and spontaneity. The compiler has done well to preserve in several instances the story-teller's catch at the end, such as: "And I, too, was there, and drank mead and beer, and what my mouth could not hold ran down my beard. For you there's a *kacka* (story), but there be fat hearth-cakes for me the asker, and if I have aught to eat you shall share the treat"—a touch which, bringing before us the personality of the story-teller and his audience, seems to reproduce with delightful vividness the atmosphere in which these stories were originally told.

For richness and variety, however, no folklore surpasses that of the Celts, and Mr. Joseph Jacobs has been easily able, out of an embarrassment of material, to compile a second admirable volume of Celtic stories, which he entitles "More Celtic Fairy Tales." Mr. Jacobs has drawn largely upon the best and earliest collector of Irish folklore, whom he rightly styles "the inexhaustible" Kennedy; but he includes in his book a number of tales which are equally characteristic of Celtic Scotland. Tales which he is allowed to quote from the more recent collections of Dr. Douglas Hyde, Mr. Larimie, and Mr. Curtin, add a novelty to this volume, which is, moreover, rather better illustrated than the majority of similar books this season.

The "Golden Fairy Book," in its general idea, get-up, and title, seems to be an imitation of that excellent series of fairy-books associated with the name of Mr. Andrew Lang. It is, on the whole, a very good selection, comprising tales from many countries, not simply from the folklore, but also from the fairy-literature which certain celebrated authors have created with the aid of their own imagination. Amongst the authors thus laid under contribution, for instance, are Alexandre Dumas, Voltaire, George Sand, Moritz Jokai, Leimentov, Laboulaye, Souvestre. The illustrations are by no means so bad as many we have seen this year.

Of the illustrations to the collection of fairy tales which Mr. Baring-Gould has edited for Messrs. Methuen we can speak in less qualified praise. These are from the hand of Mr. Arthur Gaskin, and they carry on their face the seal of the true artist. With these illustrations and initial letters, and with the old-fashioned type and the excellent paper and printing, this is altogether a very charming volume. Mr. Baring-Gould has confined himself to the old favourites, "Jack the Giant Killer," "Beauty and the Beast," and their companions. It would be well, it seems to us, if he had presented them as he had found them; but he has thought it well to "improve" upon the style of some of the old story-tellers, and he has not always done so with happy effect.

But for a dainty presentation of a few—not so many as Mr. Baring-Gould has brought together—of the old favourites, in their old words, with the accessories of artistic illustration and crafty book-binding, commend us to the two little volumes of Messrs. Dent. These tiny booklets, with the bit of ribbon to tie their covers together, are what the enthusiastic and expressive feminine would sum up as "sweet."

The illustrations to "A Farm in Fairyland"—a book both the writing and illustrating of which seem to be the work of Mr. Laurence Housman—are distinguished by much originality and inventiveness in design. Sometimes the effect is very charming, as in the title-page and frontispiece, but sometimes Mr. Housman's originality expresses