

The Christmas Bookshelf

A good deal has been said lately about the bad effect of sensational literature upon the juvenile mind. But it is natural enough that young people should like exciting stories, and the plain way out of the difficulty is to provide them with the best material of the kind. As the Christmas book season is just beginning, there is no lack of choice. Nor could the most carping critic complain that the bulk of the books of adventure do not breathe a thoroughly healthy tone. Where to find untrodden ground vexes many a writer's soul; but as yet few have taken

A TRIP TO THE MOON

For originality, therefore, Mr. Tremlett Carter's "The People of the Moon" (The Electrician Printing and Publishing Company) may well hold the first place. Here is a pseudo-scientific romance of the Jules Verne style, very much up to date—or, rather, indeed, the elaborate scientific details overlay the story rather too thickly for the average reader, but the tale itself is thrilling in the extreme, and cleverly worked out. Our astronomers would need very powerful telescopes to discover such wonders of the moon as described by Mr. Tremlett Carter. It is a long flight from theory to history, yet the romance in the career of "The Last of the Vikings" (Bell) links the two together. Captain C. Young sketches the adventurous life of that famous Norseman Harald Hardrada, who left his bones on English soil in the contest with our own King Harold. If the style of the narrative is a trifle dry, there is variety enough in the hero's exploits to delight any boy. Plenty of romance comes to hand also in "The Chain of Gold" (Fisher Unwin), wherein Mr. Standish O'Grady gives a vivid picture of the escapades of two wild Irish lads, who become involuntary Crusoes in the cliff caverns of their own land. With a strong dash of the supernatural to heighten the mystery, Mr. O'Grady's story is most attractive.

"THE RED TRUE STORY BOOK"

Mr. Andrew Lang seems at length to have exhausted the fairy



MR. HAMILTON'S FIGHT WITH THE SEA-LION
From "The Red True Story Book"

legends of the world, and "The Red True Story Book" (Longmans, Green and Co.), as the name indicates, is made up of stories from fairy tales, and read like legends of Norsemen. What legend of ancient bravery can equal the story of the last stand of Captain Wilson's party? This story, narrated by Mr. Rider Haggard, is placed first of the series, and justly so. The greatest tribute paid to the bravery of Wilson and his men was that of the Matabele chief when his warriors, according to the Zulu custom, were about to mutilate their fallen foes. "Let them be," he said, "they were men who late their fathers were men." With a happier died like men, men whose fathers were men. With a happier termination is the story of the wreck of the *Wager*, in which is narrated the sufferings of Admiral Byron, then a midshipman. One of the minor incidents of the expedition, was Mr. Hamilton's fight with the sea-lion, for the animal, although mortally wounded, escaped when the crew was perishing from starvation. The Adventures of General Marbot, whose ferocious mare Lisette saved him at the battle of Eylau, are from the translation of his Autobiography by Mr. Butler. The illustration shows Lisette catching a thief in the stable yard. Many of the stories tell of the adventures of Prince Charlie and of the '45. Mr. Lang contributes a lengthy account of the life and death of Joan the Maid. Among the writers are also Mr. S. R. Crockett, to whose pen are due "The Bull of Earlstown" and "Grissell Baillie"; Mrs. Lang, Mr. McCunn, while the stories of shipwreck are told by Miss May Kendall and Mrs. Bovill.

LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE

Sea stories never seem to lose their popularity, so the majority of the boys' books deal with the delights and miseries of the briny. They are more practical than usual, and are singularly unanimous in showing the hardships of a sailor's existence, as if to warn sea-struck lads that there are two sides to the picture. Witness "Nailing the Colours" (Jarrold), by W. C. Metcalfe, whose hero has the ill-luck to meet with a most brutal collection of shipmates. The aim of the book is to show how a lad of consistent religious principles can influence the most unlikely individuals, and the description of everyday life on a sailing ship, without mutiny, or any extraordinary sensation, proves very interesting. The hero is just a little too saintly. Very much the same end is pursued by "The Southern Cross" (Ward, Lock, Bowden), for Mr. S. G. Fielding also has to tell of cruel officers and a pious lad, who unfortunately meets with the proverbial destiny of the good boy—early death. There is more excitement and humour in this second story, but either would be a capital book for a boy's club. There is a grain of history in the next yarn, "In the Days of King George" (Cassell), as Lieutenant-Colonel Percy Groves chooses the fearsome times of the Irish Rebellion of '98 for a brisk chapter of Irish and French intrigue, with plenty of fighting and mutiny thrown in. Who would have thought of writing these sea stories but for the pioneers of ocean travel, those gallant ancient explorers whom Mr. Horace Grosset has pictured in "Out With the Old Voyagers" (Methuen). All our familiar friends are here, Columbus, Vasco da Gama and Hudson, Drake and Hawkins, Davis and Froisher, and many others, with their doughty deeds set before us in brief form. Heroes of more recent date find their record in "Stories of the Royal Humane Society" (Simpkin, Marshall, and Co.), where Mr. Frank Mandell relates many a touching simple tale, showing that heroism may find its place in everyday life without going far afield. It is quite a change to come on land again and hear how schoolboys can amuse themselves in good honest fashion through "An Old Boy's Yarns" (Cassell). There is nothing out of the way in Harold Avery's descriptions of boyish pranks in and out



GENERAL NARBOT'S MARE LISETTE CATCHES THE THIEF
IN THE STABLE
From "The Red True Story Book"

of school, but they are bright, merry pictures of healthy, happy English boys.

SOMETHING TO LAUGH AT

As a rule children's picture-books are more pretty than funny, so the exception is well worth noting. It may be truthfully said that Miss Florence Upton's "The Adventures of Two Dutch Dolls and a Golliwogg" (Longmans, Green) is one of the best books of the kind for many a long day. The quaint woodenness of the dolls and the odd variety of expression in their ugly faces show Miss Upton to be a real humorist, who can extract merriment out of the most unpromising material. The "Golliwogg" is comic enough, but the dolls carry off the honours. Their adventures are retailed in simple verse by Bertha Upton. By the side of this clever volume may be put a reminiscence of that humorous artist whose place has never yet been filled, "Randolph Caldecott's Painting Book" (S.P.C.K.). If the children of the present generation can hope for no more fun from this vanished hand they can at least grow familiar with his work by colouring the outlines from the models of his most popular drawings, set on the opposite page as guide.

"FAIRY TALES FAR AND NEAR"

A welcome addition to Christmas literature comes from the pen of Mr. Quiller Couch in "Fairy Tales Far and Near" (Cassell and Co.). Stories of beautiful princesses and enchanted princes fill the pages of the book. Prince Hatt is one of the latter, and on him unheard-of evils are worked by a malignant troll. This simple story of Northern lore, shorn of its fantastic and elaborate framework of enchanted castles and the monstrous north winds, is of the prettiest of fairy tales. It deals with the always pathetic theme of the loving wife who unwittingly injures her husband, and spends her life in repairing the long-forgotten injury. Many of the stories are derived from the French; but whatever their source, they never lack in interest. Even the familiar Bluebeard is made to live again.

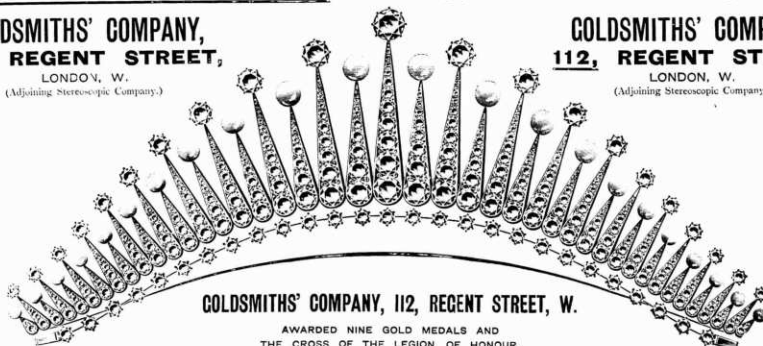
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