

the profound study of abstruse subjects and matters of great moment, we delve with some inward pleasure into Christmas stories, Christmas poetry, and into Christmas essays. We never tire of these, either; and annual after annual is devoured, and we appear, ladle and bowl in hand, like poor Oliver Twist before the overseers, and ask "for more." But the publishers are equal to the occasion, and our pathway is strewn liberally with these stories of a day. Many of the tales and sketches are trashy enough, and we feel annoyed with ourselves for wasting so much time in their perusal; but what's the use of being angry?—all persons at this season read them; and though they know before-hand that they are about to read the veriest twaddle and nonsense, they go through the same performance as regularly every year as our old-fashioned Dutch clock tolls out, in a very melancholic tone, the hour twenty-four times a day.

Tom Hood's famous "Song of the Shirt" was first given to the London public through the medium of one of these annuals. If we are not mistaken, the great punster was the originator of this style of literature. Tom Hood's Comic Annual was a rare book, and every year, though the last one contained some sorry puns, for poor Tom was dying, and he wrote his fun from between propped-up pillows at the back of his head, and the tears of his weeping, heart-broken wife before him, it was loaded with puns and wit in prose and poetry. There is a Tom Hood's Comic Annual now published in London by the late poet's son, and though scarcely quite up to the old one, there is always something pretty good in its pages, and the price is only a shilling.

Then, besides the several "Annuals," we have the Christmas or extra numbers of the Magazines. "London Society" prints a very beautiful one. The reading matter is generally weak; but the illustrations, large and small, are superb. Christmas poetry is not the most exalted poetry in the world; but sometimes something unusual comes to the surface, and as we read everything Christmas times, we cannot fail to see and appreciate it; so there is no danger of its sinking quite into oblivion. "Cassell's Magazine" usually sends out a fine brochure, and every one remembers Mr. Dickens' stories of Christmas. The charming "Christmas Carol," with little "Tiny Tim" and old "Scrooge," was issued at this season; so were "Mugby Junction," "Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings," and "No Thoroughfare." The "Belgravia Annual" is the extra number of the *Belgravia Magazine*, over whose destinies Miss Braddon, of "Aurora Floyd" memory, presides, and this high type of sensationalism does her work very well. Her staff of writers is a very good one: Mr. Justin McCarthy, a clever essayist, but too great a lover of scandal to suit our tastes, Mr. George Augustus Sala, who can write about anything in a very easy, gossipy way, and to every one's entire satisfaction, and the mythical Mr. Babington Whyte, about whom such a stir was made in literary circles some years back, and who was charged with plagiarism, when the story entitled "Circe" came out under his name, all write regularly, or did write, for "Belgravia," and "Belgravia" is "taken in" by the better class of the London public: the aristocracy read it always.