

AMONG OUR BOOKS



THE little mother came to me yesterday to ask about a holiday book for her small boy of seven.

"He does not care for fairy stories," she said. "He always asks if they are true. Can you tell me of anything true, yet simple and entertaining?"

That little lad will grow up to the level of fairy stories later on in life. Some of us never reach fairy land until we are climbing down beyond the fifties; then we begin to realize that nothing is

too beautiful to be true. But I answered the mother's query instantly, "Give him 'Cot and Cradle Stories.'" The volume is just published, and it is a delightful collection of child tales; 'really true,' as the little ones say, yet with sufficient touch of imagination to make the botany and the natural history slip down sweetly."

I read the tales before meeting the dear old author, and was charmed with the simplicity and freshness of them. In purest and most direct English, Mrs. Traill tells of the butterflies, birds and bees. She brings all the beauty of our Canadian woodlands about us; so that while we read we are really among the pretty creatures, all in the sunshine of a summer's day.

There are the adventures of the chipmunks, "Tit and Tat," "On Minnewawa Island in Stony Lake," "The Fate of the Queen Bees," "The Dragon-fly's Ball," "Midge, the Field Mouse," "What the Grey Parrot Said," and a dozen more of woodland tales, full of the very essence of nature life. We feel that they are written by one who is in touch with the dear mother earth in her most joyous moods.

The quiet humor that has been Mrs. Traill's happiest possession during her long life peeps out here and there, even in these pretty nursery nature-stories. In "The Dragon-fly's Ball," a charming study of insect life, she tells of a spider of low degree, who demands an invitation on account of being "seventh or eighth cousin to Mr. Tick, the death-watch"; of Harry-longlegs, who "can dance a minuet on the water."

"The Death Moth, to be sure, produced a slight chill on his arrival, but this was politely attributed to the falling dew."

Even older folk smile at the merry satire that gleams through the little sketch, while we admire the naturalist's knowledge so entertainingly set forth.

We come across such sunny descriptive bits as this:

"One bright May morning, when the sun had warmed the water in the river, the great green dragon-flies came out and the little

water-beetles danced their reels on the top of the water under the shade of the overhanging willow trees; the May-flies, too, came up from the bottom of the river—where they had lain in their little houses snug and safe all winter—and sported themselves on the broad leaves of the water plants, and the little red-spotted Lady-birds found nice resting-places on the docks and mallow leaves beside them."

And this:

"Presently the great green Dragon-fly, who had thrown off the warm cloak he had worn while sheltered by the roots of the white water-lily at the bottom of the lake, and now sat sunning himself on the smooth surface of her large green leaf, spread his gauzy wings to dry in the warm rays of the sun. Looking about him with his bright eyes, he saw that all the creatures on the lake were sad and sorrowful, grieving that they had no Queen to make laws for the protection of the newly hatched dragon-flies and May-flies and shad-flies.

"Our good old Queen, the white swan, is dead!" they cried, "and we have not found anyone to be Queen of the lake."

"Then I will choose a Queen for you," said the dragon-fly; "the pure white water-lily, who is wise as she is fair. She left her crystal palace this morning at break of day, and came up like a bride to meet the glory of the rising sun. He filled her lap with gold and sweet perfumes, and wrapped her round with ivory whiteness, and decked her with gems of light more rare than rubies or diamonds. Is she not worthy to be our Queen? Has she not been a nursing mother in her care of us under the water when we were weak and helpless?"

"All the other water-flowers bowed their heads and said, 'Yes, we too will have the sweet white water-lily to be the Queen of the lake.'

"Then there was a great clapping of wings among the May-flies, the young dragon-flies, the shad-flies, and thousands of silvery-winged moths and shining beetles who had all lain at the bottom of the lake, shut up in their hard prison-like little cases under the shelter of the roots of the water-lily, and were now waiting for flight into the gay sunbeams on shore, and they all cried out, "The White-lily shall reign over us; the White Water-lily is our Queen!"

"Cot and Cradle Stories" is without doubt the best collection of child stories that Canada has yet produced.

It should find a place on every nursery bookshelf, since the tales are of the kind that may be read and re-read with increasing pleasure. They have stored within them all the murmurous delights of our Canadian woods and waters; all the golden fleckings of the sunshine into the trees and mosses.

The knowledge that a number of these stories were written by Mrs. Traill during the past summer as she walked about her little wooded island, Minnewawa, may not add to their merit; but it does somewhat increase our interest when we picture this rare old authoress of ninety-three, watching bees and birds and smiling out her pretty fancies for Canadian children.

COT AND CRADLE STORIES, by Mrs. Catharine Parr Traill. Briggs Publishing Co., Toronto.

FAIRY STORIES FOR OUR CHILDREN.

In entering a plea on behalf of good, old-time fairy stories for our children, I think the very best may be found in the myths of the Old World, brought up, or down, to date. Talented writers, such as Nathaniel Haw-

thorne, Rev. Alfred Church, Rev. Charles Kingsley, and others, have written these old classic legends and myths in an easily understood and most interesting style. This class of reading has, for so many centuries, been handed down from one generation to another that its real intrinsic merit stands unquestioned. Otherwise it would have been swamped and utterly buried beneath the vast and ever-increasing pile of less worthy fiction. In many of these old-time stories there is a hidden inner truth or lesson which the child may not even suspect in his eager acceptance of the tale, but by the perusal of which he is unconsciously adding to the riches of his mental storehouse, from which he may with profit draw in after years.

Such books as "The Water Babies," also "The Greek Heroes," by Rev. Charles Kingsley; "Adventures of Ulysses," by Charles Lamb; "Stories of the Old World," by Rev. Alfred Church; "Wonder Book for Boys and Girls," by Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Arabian Knights," together with "Grimm" and "Anderson," make a list of works that will simply never die in their strong and abiding interest for the young of all lands. Do not be deterred from buying by the somewhat difficult titles of some of the above mentioned books. From the first to the last page your little boy or girl will be held spellbound by the wonderful blending of the real and the ideal found in these stories. Then the language used in telling them is an education in itself. The purest and best of English is used—forcible and strong in its simplicity. I have all of the books named on the table as I write, and my little boy of eight has for fully two years past been strongly interested and charmed by the magic of their pages.

How deeply indebted we stand to them for whiling away the "slow-footed" hours of many a stormy winter's day! Also in times of sickness they have proved an ever-ready help. Do not be afraid of letting the children read fairy stories. They form the food for the children's imagination best suited to their years. Starve their minds by withholding this kind of pabulum and you will dwarf their spiritual or soul growth. By refusing food for their emotional natures you may make your children's characters more selfish, sharper and more practical than nature ever intended they should be when she implanted this strong desire for fairy lore in their souls. But, remember, time will soon enough tear away all the clinging vines of the imagination from life's bare facts and problems.

Let the young folk revel in their imaginary paradise peopled by fairies, sprites, elves, gnomes and goblins while they may—no keener delight will, perchance, await them in their coming years.

"VINCA."

For
Pearly
Teeth

CHEW

Somerville's Pepsin

.. GUM ..

A medicinal Chewing Gum, recommended by physicians for Indigestion; 5c. per bar. Sold everywhere—take no substitute.