

# The Book Table

## New Books for Children<sup>1</sup>

Reviews by LEONORE ST. JOHN POWER

**T**HEY tell of nothing but youth's appearance and youth's adventure"—thus Padraic Colum offers his collection of stories<sup>2</sup> from the Mabinogion, to the boys and girls of to-day. The sense of youth seen with youth's eyes, which is characteristic of these hero stories of Celtic Britain, is not achieved by clever analyses of the heroes' motives; it is not achieved by packing the narrative full of the author's opinions and devices; it is achieved rather by the narrator's utter absorption in making his audience see and feel the glorious hero or the treacherous villain in details that stir the imagination and please the fancy. The story-tellers were usually youths themselves, apprentice-bards, whose duty it was to relate the histories, stories, and poems that were the popular literature of the day. Hence the delicious glitter of a knight riding forth on a horse with bridle of "linked gold on its head, and on its back a saddle of gold." After giving this bit of magnificence to his audience, the young apprentice-bard lost himself in describing the knight's "four-cornered cloth of purple," his silver spears "of an edge to wound the wind," and his war-horn of ivory.

The countrymen and the nobles who sat listening to the young story-teller saw themselves in the hero, the one thinking

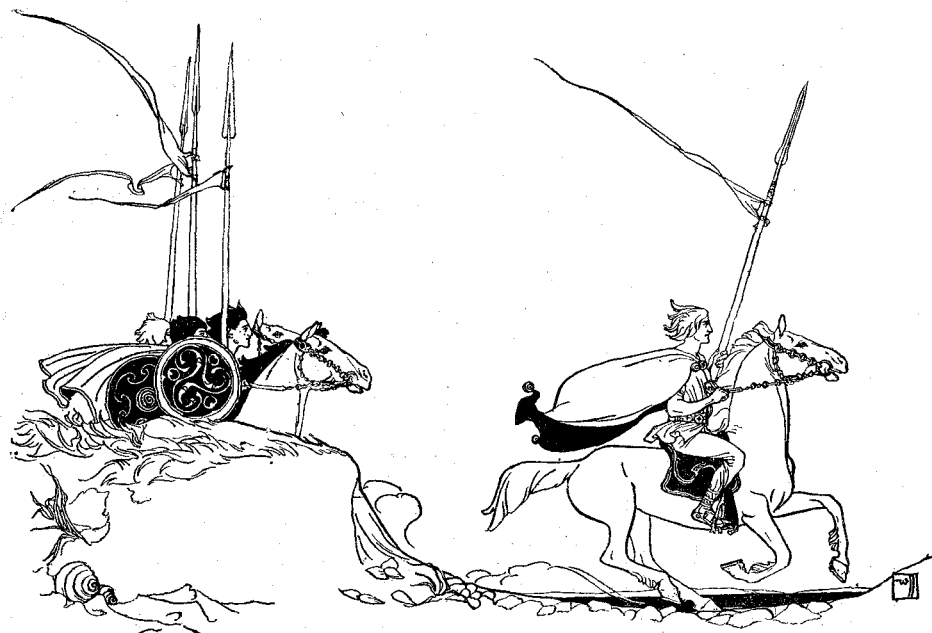
that he, too, would achieve a similar magnificence, and the other satisfied that he was a worthy knight. And for such knights there are ladies radiantly lovely—"more yellow was her head than the flower of the broom, and her skin was whiter than the foam of the wave, and fairer were her hands and her fingers than the blossoms of the wood anemone amidst the spray of the meadow fountain." Such men and women were worthy to do and dare, and they went about their battling, their dragon slaying, and enchantments with a swing that is as alive to-day as when the apprentice-bard thrilled his audiences centuries ago. Two hundred years before Sir Thomas Malory collected the stories about King Arthur then current on the Continent the story-tellers of Wales were telling stories of King Arthur that have less of a pattern of feudal chivalry, but much more of the unmastered personality of men and women. Padraic Colum, delving deep into the history and mythology of the Cymry in Britain and the Gaels in Ireland, and being himself a story-teller of rare charm, has in "The Island of the Mighty" recreated the strength and thrill of that great story-book of the fourteenth century, the Mabinogion.

Charles J. Finger, in his wanderings in South America, must somewhere, somehow, have been touched by the same wand that made the young Mabinogs of Wales such superb story-tellers, for he

too in his "Tales from Silver Lands"<sup>3</sup> records all the vital details of "youth's appearance and youth's adventure." But he found his details in South America, where "the trunks of the trees were so large that three men holding hands could not circle them, and where there were no trees there were vines and snakelike lianas and thorn bushes and flowers so great that a man could lie down to sleep in the shade of them;" and he heard his stories, not from passing bards, but from the South American Indians. Against a tropical background of great mystery and beauty, the Indians, who were "wise in all the arts, playing the flute, working in metals, painting, woodcraft, and other like activities," wove a legendary lore that is rich in heroes, enchanters, witches, and fairies. Rich, too, in a knowledge of animal life and the forces of nature, and rich in a philosophy that has all the truth and vigor of a primitive people. And all this is accomplished in stories that are entertaining, amusing, and interesting. One of them begins, "A cold-eyed witch lived in the Cordilleras, and when the first snow commenced to fall she was always full of glee, standing on a rock, screaming like a wind-gale and rubbing her hands," and another, "Singing and waving banners, the four hundred youths with the twin brothers at their head, all of them slim and well formed, brown of skin and straight of limb, marched forth to the land of the giants, their eyes bent on the far mountains all wrapped in a blue floating mist." The woodcuts by Paul Honoré are exceptionally good, and carry the atmosphere of the stories in a manner that shows an unusual sympathy and appreciation of the subject.

In "Hari, the Jungle Lad,"<sup>4</sup> "youth's adventure" is perhaps not of such signal importance, but it is none the less interesting and absorbing to the children who follow it. The author, Dhan Gopal Mukerji, is himself familiar with the jungles of India, and he pictures tiger hunting, elephant tracking, the rush of floods, the battle of man with beast, in a manner that is convincing and thrilling.

A good story for girls is here in the very real and fascinating adventures of

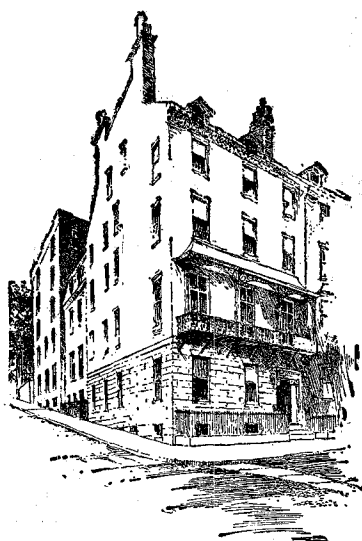


Courtesy of the Macmillan Company

End Papers (by Wilfred Jones) for "The Island of the Mighty"

<sup>3</sup>Tales from Silver Lands. By Charles J. Finger. Woodcuts by Paul Honoré. Doubleday, Page & Co., New York. \$3.50.

<sup>4</sup>Hari, the Jungle Lad. By Dhan Gopal Mukerji. Illustrated by Morgan Stinemetz. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York. \$2.



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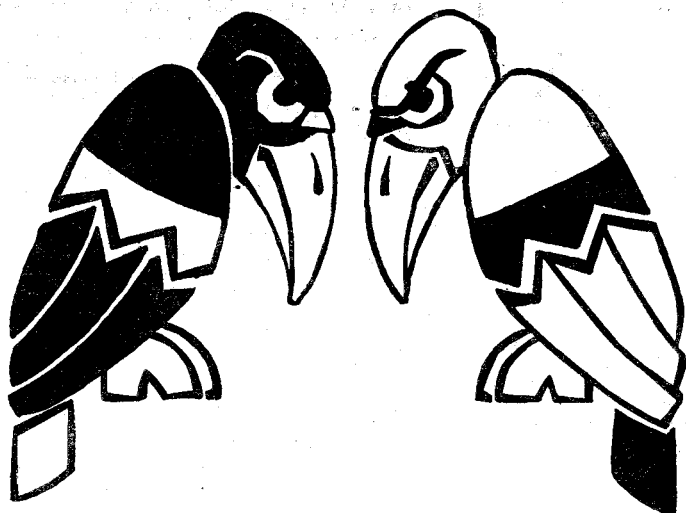
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Courtesy of the Macmillan Company

Illustration (by Boris Artzybasheff) from "Feats on the Fiord"

"Little Princess Nina."<sup>5</sup> The daughter of a Russian noble and a Mohammedan mother, Nina retains a vivid personality throughout a story that is varied in scene and intensely interesting. The childhood of Nina, spent in the home of her Mohammedan grandfather, with his fiery principles, his ceremony, and his poetic language, her visits to the stately home of her noble grandmother, the customs of the Grusians and the Tartars, and, finally, the boarding-school in Petrograd, open up a world of fascination to the girl who loves new places and amusing, entertaining people. These same girls, as well as their brothers, will find in "The New Moon"<sup>6</sup> a story that makes pioneering days in America the height of romance and courage. Well written and imaginative in its details of Indian life and the forests, this story shows how the young Irish boy, Dick Martin, makes his way in a new country. "If your heart turns over inside you when you see the Mississippi then you will know you are the man for the wilderness," is Dick's introduction to the unsettled shores of the great river. As in "Master Simon's Garden," Miss Meigs weaves a story into American history that is romantic as well as an accurate picture of the time.

An unusual book among the children's books of the year is "Nicholas: A Manhattan Christmas Story."<sup>7</sup> Unusual because it presents a city to children with all its traditions, its actualities, and withal it is a good story with interesting characters. Children living in the country sometimes dream of visiting "towered cities," and for them "Nicholas" will provide hours of delight. The traffic towers, the subways, the shops, the old

historic places, all become real under the guidance of the jolly Nicholas, who finds New York a friendly city full of color and warmth for the stranger. The illustrations, including a pictorial map of New York, drawn by Jay Van Everen, carry out the spirit of the book.

The very interesting thing about "Number Two Joy Street"<sup>8</sup> is the people who contributed the stories, poems, and pictures. G. K. Chesterton plays hide and seek with a Dragon, A. A. Milne offers a merry solution to the difficulty of providing a successor to the royal throne in his story "Prince Rabbit," Hugh Walpole tells a story about a strange thing that happened to him when he was a boy, Hilaire Belloc contributes some amusing verses about Sarah Byng, who revels in illiteracy and quite openly "does not care a pinch of snuff for any literary stuff." The stories are uneven in merit, but the book has an individuality and character about it that is refreshing.

"Tony Sarg's Book for Children"<sup>9</sup> looks as though its author-artist had had an immensely good time doing it. From

<sup>8</sup> Number Two Joy Street: A Medley of Prose and Verse. By G. K. Chesterton, Walter de la Mare, Hilaire Belloc, Hugh Walpole, Rose Fyleman, and Others. D. Appleton & Co., New York. \$2.50.

<sup>9</sup> Tony Sarg's Book for Children. Greenberg Inc., New York. \$3.75.

<sup>5</sup> Little Princess Nina: The Story of a Russian Girl. By L. A. Charskaya. Translated by Hana Muskova. Henry Holt & Co., New York. \$2.

<sup>6</sup> The New Moon. By Cornelia Meigs. The Macmillan Company, New York. \$2.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas: A Manhattan Christmas Story. By Anne Carroll Moore. With drawings by Jay Van Everen. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York. \$2.

the miniature theater on the cover, which is worked by moving a series of cartoons on the inside, to the charming sketch at the end, in which the author takes leave of the children, the book has an air of fun that will capture every child who sees it. The book begins with the adventures of Mary and her dog Freckles in Nantucket. The quaint old houses, with their "Widow's Walks," the tall church steeple, the busy wharf, the cobbled streets, all are pictured delightfully. Mary and Freckles bring a great deal of life to the old town, and the pictures of their doings are most amusing. Nantucket, with its fine stretches of moors, is an ideal place for horseback riding, so the lively Mary takes to riding, and her horse, Black Beauty, gives the artist splendid opportunity to make some spirited pictures of what can happen to a horse, a dog, and a red-haired little girl. The second part of the book is "Little Anne Takes her Marionettes to Buckingham Palace." After the royal family are seated in the front row a scene of much merriment begins; crowns are scattered and royal dignities lost. It is all most entertaining. The latter half of the book is called "Little Moments in the Lives of Great Men," and consists of a series of comic sketches of Sir Walter Raleigh, Columbus, Napoleon, Demosthenes, and Sir Isaac Newton. The spirit of the book is gay and genial and the drawings are original and clever.

New editions of the tried and loved children's books of ten or more years ago, well printed, and in some cases beautifully illustrated, make a fine showing this year. The most distinguished of these is "Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales"<sup>10</sup> illustrated by Kay Nielsen. This artist has lent his exquisite imagination and his genius for decoration to interpreting the art of the great Danish story-teller. In lovely delicate colors and in black and white the Princesses, the brave Tin Soldier, and the mysterious Snow Queen

<sup>10</sup> Fairy Tales: Hans Andersen. Illustrated by Kay Nielsen. The George H. Doran Company, New York. \$6.



Courtesy of the Macmillan Company

Illustration (by Boris Artzybasheff) from "Feats on the Fiord"

will enchant the eye as well as the heart of all grown-ups and children who are fortunate enough to possess this beautiful book.

Another illustrator whose work has for the last two years added to the gayety of the Christmas books is Claud Lovat Fraser, whose "Nursery Rhymes" and "Pirates" charmed us when they appeared in 1922. This year Lovat Fraser is represented in Walter de la Mare's "Peacock Pie,"<sup>11</sup> a book of verse, not old, but already dear to the children of many households. Mother Goose has captivated artists for years, and each year she comes out in a new gown. C. B. Falls has done Mother Goose<sup>12</sup> the honor this year in a fine edition with colored plates and many line drawings.

Frances Bedford contributes new illustrations for "At the Back of the North Wind,"<sup>13</sup> a distinguished young Russian artist gives new life to "Feats on the Fiord,"<sup>14</sup> and several of such fine stories for boys as "Martin Hyde,"<sup>15</sup> "Jim Davis"<sup>16</sup> and Robert Southey's "Life of Nelson"<sup>17</sup> appear in illustrated editions. The girls will find "What Katy Did"<sup>18</sup> and "Nelly's Silver Mine" back again with new pictures. All these "old timers" will give fathers and mothers a chance for some enjoyable recollections of the books they read when they were children.

<sup>11</sup> Peacock Pie. By Walter de la Mare. With illustrations by Claud Lovat Fraser. Henry Holt & Co., New York. \$5.

<sup>12</sup> Mother Goose. Pictures by C. B. Falls. Doubleday, Page & Co., New York. \$4.

<sup>13</sup> At the Back of the North Wind. By George MacDonald. Illustrated by Francis Bedford. The Macmillan Company, New York. \$1.75.

<sup>14</sup> Feats on the Fiord. By Harriet Martineau. Illustrated by Boris Artzybasheff. The Macmillan Company, New York. \$1.75.

<sup>15</sup> Martin Hyde, The Duke's Messenger. By John Masefield. With illustrations by T. C. Dugdale. Little, Brown & Co., Boston. \$2.00.

<sup>16</sup> Jim Davis. By John Masefield. Illustrated in color by Stephen Reid. David McKay, Philadelphia. \$1.50.

<sup>17</sup> The Life of Nelson. By Robert Southey. With illustrations by A. D. McCormick. Houghton, Mifflin Company, Boston. \$2.

<sup>18</sup> What Katy Did. By Susan Coolidge. With illustrations in color by Ralph Fallen Coleman. Little, Brown & Co., Boston. \$2.

## Other Children's Books Recommended

(Including new editions of old favorites)

**THE WONDERFUL ADVENTURES OF LUDO, THE LITTLE GREEN DUCK.** By Jack Roberts. Duffield & Co., New York. \$2.

**JACKO AND THE DINGO BOY.** By Howard R. Driggs. The University Publishing Company, New York. \$1.25.

**THE POPPY SEED CAKES.** By Margery Clark. Illustrated by Maud and Miska Petersham. Doubleday, Page & Co., New York. \$2.

**THE PEEP-SHOW MAN.** By Padraic Colum. Illustrated by Lois Lenski. The Macmillan Company, New York. \$1.

**THE VANISHING COMRADE.** By Ethel Cook Elliot. Doubleday, Page & Co., New York. \$1.75.

**WHAT SHALL WE PLAY?** By Edna Geister. Decorated by E. McKinstry. The George H. Doran Company, New York. \$2.50.

(Continued on page 414)

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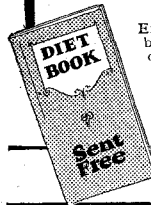
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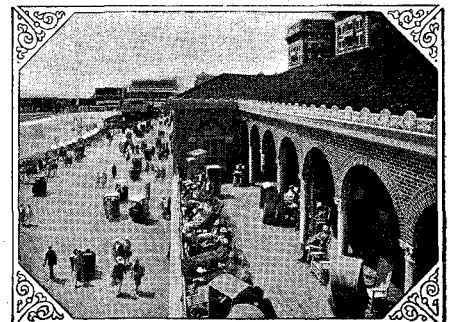
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