

The Children's Corner in the Alpine Club Library

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What makes the Alpine Club's library unique is that it is so wide ranging. Not the least delightful sections of it are the slightly unexpected ones: its Children's Corner for example. Not that juveniles are ever likely to trespass there without being 'put in the corner' alas! No, it is only those of our membership who have never quite grown up who can enjoy the books there. And there are certainly some of us who do so.

There are two classes of literature in which only a very few authors can hit the mark, and they are the humorous and the juvenile. Amongst the former one thinks of Edward Lear, Jerome K. Jerome, Hillaire Belloc and, now almost forgotten, Stephen Leacock — almost the greatest humorist of them all. Amongst the latter there were more who could bring it off, starting in the eighteenth century and going right up to the present time of our own delectable Beatrix Potter and Princes Charles with his altogether charming book, *The Old Man of Lochnagar*, written, we are told, for the amusement of the younger members of his family but sure to delight us all.

Most of the books written for children in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had for their purpose either school-room instruction or moral uplift; in the latter, no bad thing perhaps. After all, there is something reassuring for a child when right triumphs over wrong as it so often does in these early tales.

One of the nice things about early children's books is that so often they come in pretty bindings and in miniature format. Furthermore, they are often illustrated. So let me draw attention to two or three of the more attractive items in the AC Library.

There is *Angelo* or *The Pine Forest in the Alps*, by Geraldine Jewsbury (1812-1888), a friend of the Carlyles. This contains four hand coloured engravings of drawings by John Absolon. In a charming contemporary cloth binding.

William Tell, *The Patriot of Switzerland*, by Jean Pierre Claris de Florian; translated. It has a very attractive engraved and hand coloured title page, and is illustrated with engravings in the text.

Claudine, or *Humility the Basis of all the Virtues*, *A Swiss Tale*, by Maria E. Budden (1780?-1892). She wrote *Hofer the Tyrolese* (in the library) and several children's books. Illustrated with engraved plates.

But we see also *Three Months Under the Snow*, by J. J. Porchat, in its pretty bindings and *Rollo in Switzerland*, by Jacob Abbott.

I have drawn attention to these items in the juvenile section of the library in the hope that those who are still young at heart will occasionally go and 'stand themselves in the corner'; the children's corner I mean!