



## **Early Children's Books: The Fox Collection at San Francisco Public Library**

by Ruth McGurk

An essay about the Early Childrens' Books of the Fox Collection

### **Fox Collection: Introduction**



San Francisco holds a unique archive for the study of early children's books, which will interest scholars of printing, parents, artists, writers, or anyone curious about the book arts. It wasn't until the eighteenth century that children began to be treated differently from adults and a special class of literature beyond ABCs was provided for them.

The George M. Fox Collection of Early Children's Books is housed at the Marjorie G. and Carl W. Stern Book Arts and Special Collections Center at the San Francisco Public Library. Donated in 1978, it consists of over 2000 volumes of mostly nineteenth-century

picture books. It was donated by the father of George King Fox of Pacific Book Auctions who also serves as the auctioneer at PCBA's biennial auction. Fox the elder worked for the Milton Bradley toy company, which had purchased the children's book publishing company McLoughlin Brothers. Fox acquired the archives of McLoughlin Brothers, which itself was the successor to Elton and Company, publisher of valentines, toy and juvenile books. Fox then expanded his sights to early color children's books in general.

For those of a scholarly bent, the Fox collection is an untapped trove of multiple copies of the same titles, nearly complete runs of long-running series and, of course, the file copies of the McLoughlin Brothers. Some of the latter are titles acquired from English publishers, marked up with the editorial and illustrative changes thought necessary for the American market. Through studying the collection it is possible to watch publishing tactics take shape, printing conventions be established, color printing emerge from its infancy, and the emphasis in children's literature shift from moral instruction to amusement. McLoughlin Brothers themselves span the change from the didactic to the diversionary: their emblem includes the words "Educate and Amuse." The commercial considerations of a publishing house tilt their view of children from moral blank slates to potential customers. After all, gaudy illustrations sell more books than dogma.

For those who find children's books entertaining on their own account, delving into the collection is its own reward. Housed as it is in good archival fashion in envelopes within folders within boxes, there is a deal of unwrapping to be done to get at the books. The collection is not listed online and the card catalog is rife with the bibliographical lacunae of the period: few dates, few authors, fewer illustrators. So I found it more productive to plunge in than to look for specific items. The books are grouped by publisher and are shelved chronologically only to the extent that particular publishers survived for finite periods of time. I will refer to books by the series and box number in which they are housed and lastly by folder number. Sometimes there are multiple books in a folder, so it may take a little effort to find them.

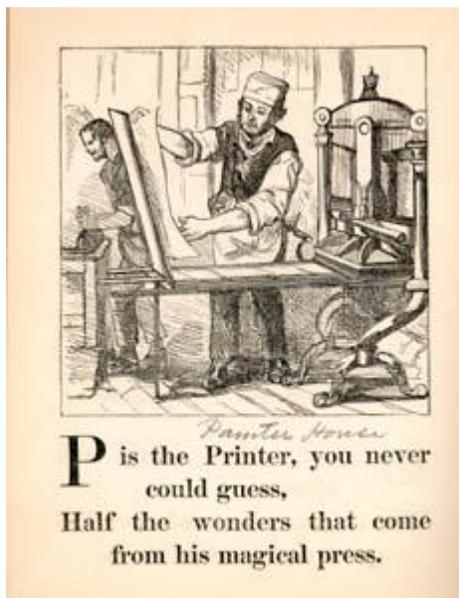
## **Fox Collection: Evocation of the Past**

There is a piquant nostalgia in handling books with inscriptions from teachers, preachers and fond old aunts. Caroline Savage is given a book "presented her for exceeding in spelling and good behaviour her schoolmates by her preceptor Anthony Forbes on May 8, 1815." The gift is a minister's tribute to his dead son. "Steale not this book for shame" is just a reminder for a thief with a yen for self-help stuck in the back of Isaac Watts' *The Improvement of the Mind* (15.1.1). Fanny Chase, Ebenezer Cook and Clarissa Noble practice their penmanship in the 1820s. Jane Eliot and Louise Wolcott make rickety attempts at writing their own names in 1843. So while slogging through quantities of inept or garish titles, some evidence of a previous reader reminds you what this particular copy meant to someone in the past. Even though they were cheap and advertised as such, their owners took the trouble to mend them with cross-

stitching. The earliest books (1790s–1840s) have clumsy illustrations with the children pictured as small adults with enormous heads. In *I Dare Not Tell A Lie* (1.1.6A) an infant who resembles David Hockney mends his trousers. *Careless Maria* (1.5.25), another hydrocephalic child, throws her toys around until her uncle tells her, "I won't tee-totums buy for such a careless girl." Stock engravings are put to odd uses, for instance, *The Little Rebel* (1.1.6A) about "little Harry Chase, who has been kept all day shut up like a culprit, as he is," is illustrated with a Chinese criminal in the stocks. *Little Ellen, The Good Girl* (1.2.14) has a "Burman Idol" on the back endpaper.

## Fox Collection: McLoughlin Brothers' File Copies

In 1903, after 55 years in business, McLoughlin Brothers issued a catalogue (4.7.10) with a picture of their works at South 11th and Berry Street in Brooklyn. Goods and carriages pour forth from a factory covering five acres of floor space. Mr. Fox clearly got a treasure when he acquired their archives.



These I take to include any number of books with editorial and illustrative changes for the American market. *Mrs. Dove's Party* (7.1.9) has a note to "change Rule Britannia to Hail Columbia." Mr. Crowquill is changed to Miss Teachwell (7.2.9). *The Alphabet of Trades* (11.1.2) has wonderful drawings of defunct trades with handwritten comments and editorial changes throughout. "B is a baker, who makes such good bread that his fame throughout London has rapidly spread" changes "throughout London" to "through the city." *The History of Apple Pie* (11.1.5) has notes for another edition, "Sketches to be made," and adds text too. *The Good Children of the Bible* (12.2.1) is marked up for a new edition and *Bad Children of the Bible* is crossed off the cover for the New World audience. *Lost on the Sea Shore* (12.2.1) has one picture, "The Boatman's Cottage," with the comment "make this more American," and another, "Looking for the Children,"

notes with some justice that "This is a young looking father for four children." The Story of a *Troublesome Young Monkey* (12.2.1) by Dr. Gore-Illa has the bite taken out of it. When they give a monkey a gun he says, "My masters said they would make a volunteer of me. They might call it volunteering, but I call it compulsion," is shortened to "My masters said they would make a soldier of me." The Religious Tract Society *Alphabet House* (14.1.4) has extensive notes about changes necessary for an American edition. Sixteen possible new titles are listed from *Adventures of the Alphabet* to *The Letters on a Frolic*. Harry will change to Hank, Jackdaw to Bluejay, Kine to Kitten and Queen to Quince. The size will also change. *The Blue Bells on the Lea* (14.2.1) is over-the-top with Anglicisms but the sole instruction is to make the gate in one vignette look American.

## Fox Collection: Foreign Editions

McLoughlin Brothers have some connection with the D. Appleton publishing company's books for the Spanish language market. For instance, they do the chromolitho cover on *El Pardillo* but the black and white version is still done by D. Appleton, Nueva York. *El Nuevo Libro Primario de los Niños* (3.3.8) has the burros removed from the pastoral scenes. A Dr. Purñ gives his OK to editorial changes. *La Vñnus Dormida* (3.3.1) has "We think this type is not in the right place" noted on the last page. *La Caperucita Roja* (3.3.4) has the financial terms handwritten on the cover: "\$9 per gross less 1/4 + 10% (50 cents a dozen) cannot be changed or divided."

A French version of *Barbe Bleue* (4.7.7) is gridded and numbered, I presume for reproduction. *Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes* (4.10) notes on the endpaper "a full set of cuts made specially for this book mostly from Nister's edition. Some by Miss Davis." *Little Pig's Ramble from Home* (7.1.8) has "not much liked, very ordinary" penciled at the top of the first page. *Goody Two Shoes* (15.2.4) has drawings which extend past the dimensions of the printed illustrations. *Our Father's Care* (15.3.1) is "liked by little girl... needs pruning... not read word for word."

## Fox Collection: Publishing Ploys

The publishers put out dozens of titles in series with names that suggest an extended family: Aunt Busy Bee's, Uncle Buncle's, Uncle Heart's-Ease, Brother Sunshine's, Cousin Honeycomb's, Grandmama Easy's, and Mamma and Papa Lovechild's (7.1). Presumably, the big sellers in their lists would pull along the also-rans like *The Enraged Miller* (11.3.5) or *The Faithless Parrot* (11.2.4).

They are shameless in putting out sequels. The Cock Robin story is spun into *The Sad Fate of Cock Robin*, *Sick Robin and His Kind*, *Nurse Jenny Wren*, *Death and Burial of Cock Robin*, *Cock Robin Alive and Well Again* (7.2.3) and *Mrs. Dove's Party* (7.1.9). In the latter the guilty sparrow is punished by social ostracism:

And though he hopped in quite bold and undaunted,  
He found not a bird that in kindness would greet him.

Similarly, *The Three Little Kittens* live on in *The Courtship and Marriage of the Three Kittens*, *The Death and Burial of the Three Kittens* (7.2.6) and *The Three Little Kittens, Alive and Well Again* (7.2.5).

The back covers of their books are canvases for self-promotion. *Little Dame Crump and Her Pig* (3.1.10) has these fulsome remarks: "These have been especially printed for us abroad in the best and most artistic manner. Every book being printed in eight to ten different colors. No book in all the series contains anything approaching vulgarity, the Publisher's aim being to furnish amusement coupled with refinement, for our dear little ones." *Bow Bells Nursery Tales* (15.2.4) simply states, "The Cheapest in the World."

The publishers use series numbers to encourage buying complete sets of unrelated stories (7.2.6); they string out minimal material: *Birds on the Wing* (8.1.3) appears in eight books with only three birds to a book. In the *Favorite Nursery Series* (9.1.7) the pages are numbered consecutively in different books of the same size. *Mother Hubbard's Grand Party* (Box B) markets Dean's Young England's series of Oil Colour Toy Books by including pictures of title characters such as Dame Bantry, Billy Vain and Dame Crumpet in the centerfold spread, pointing out, "It will be an amusement for the children to pick out each character."

Some merchandizing efforts include George Goodwin and Sons, at the Sign of the Bible (1.4.5), Hartford, Connecticut, who give "a liberal discount to those who purchase by the quantity for Sabbath Schools and gratuitous distribution," and *Robert Merry's Museum* (2.1) periodical, 1843, which gives premiums of previous issues to new subscribers. *The Big Ship Great Eastern Alphabet* (10.1.7) is sold on board the ship.

## Fox Collection: Color

The badly observed children and stock cuts which were afterthoughts to the heavy-handed texts at the beginning of the nineteenth century give way to a riot of pattern, color and whimsy at mid-century. Illustrators leave grim vignettes behind and let their pleasure in domestic detail or chaos and fun show. Color printing takes off and veers toward vulgarity. From the murk rise the star illustrators Crane, Caldecott and Greenaway.

We tend to think of hand-coloring as a nicety but in children's books of this period it was done sloppily with little care for consistency or show-through. In books such as *Pictures and Stories for a Good Boy* (1.5.11), printed on only one side of the paper, the blanks serve as catchment areas for excess color. *Rosamond; A Sequel to Early Lessons* (5.5.4), 1821, has some nice hand-colored engravings but some of them are spoiled by too much water. Sometimes the color may have been supplied by the purchaser. *The*

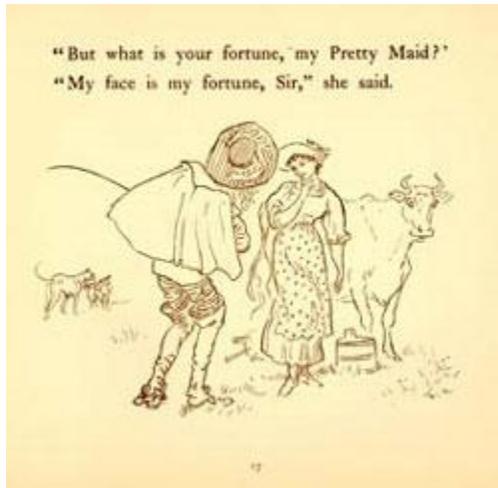
*ABC of Objects* (12.1.6) has the centers of the 'o's filled in amateurishly. There are two hand-colored copies of *Aladdin* (12.1.6) in which the same colors are applied differently. In *Little Red Riding Hood* (7.2.6), little distinction is made between hand-coloring and printed color. Given the low standards of hand-coloring, the possibility to print in color was a great improvement.

When printers overprint colors they frequently get slightly out of register and create moiré effects. Combined with the home decor of the period, which put a premium on pattern, the effect can be hallucinogenic. Overprinted blue and pink swashes represent marble in *Dog Trusty* (11.1.5). The carpets in *Miss Mouser's Tea Party* (4.3.16) and *The Home Alphabet* (13.3.2), the wallpaper, bedspreads and costumes in *At Home* (12.1.3), *A Frog He Would A-Wooing Go* (11.3.3), and *The Three Cats* (7.2.6), also give evidence of this.

### **Fox Collection: Greenaway, Caldecott and Crane**

Illustrators are not named and the author too is often anonymous. The publishers seem to be marketing series with a recognizable style and not their makers. Routledge's New Sixpenny Toy Books (11.3.5) ad on the back cover of one of the 106 titles available touts the beautiful color printing of Messrs. Leighton Brothers, Kronheim & Co., Vincent Brooks, Edmund Evans, and Dalziel Brothers, without mentioning their authors. Gradually a muddy book of little distinction about nine inches by twelve covered with ink and incident comes to be the industry standard. Kate Greenaway's and Randolph Caldecott's feel for white space and pictorial rhythm sets them apart. They soon were mentioned, along with Walter Crane and R. André (illustrator of Mrs. Ewing's books) in promotional material.

Kate Greenaway (whose books were exclusively printed by Edmund Evans, a pioneer of process color) is wild about hats. She can't resist decking out her young characters in elaborate headgear. This is partly why her children look like dwarf adults. In *Under the Window* (11.4.4), some naughty boys remark on it. "My eye! Three grannies out today." So much for wearing badminton shuttlecocks on their heads.



Caldecott uses the cover to good effect in *The Milkmaid* (11.3.3). His airy single-color sketches provide contrast to the rampant patterns of the full-color pages. He has a feel for incidental comedy in his background drawings. A cow reacts to the maid's remark, "My face is my fortune, sir." A certain Timothy Blowhorn, Esquire (in *R. Caldecott's Picture Book*, 13.4.5) lies in the cemetery as the parson passes by on the hunt. Then follows a tag drawing of a fox on a horse chasing a man. Caldecott also has a feel for pathos. A lonely fiddler at the end of "Come Lasses and Lads" in the same book pokes at a discarded garland with his bow.

Walter Crane has a bent for whimsical detail. His *Three Bears* (11.3.5) has Wedgwood plates saying Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, and Ursa Minimus, and a cowslip has a cow's head in *A Masque of Flowers* (6.1.1), 1889. Justin Schiller's census of the collection lists 18 books illustrated by Greenaway, and 46 illustrated by Caldecott and Crane.

## Fox Collection: Illustrations



There are any number of remarkable illustrations in the collection, which even includes some original woodblocks. In *The Little Orange Girl and Other Stories* (1.3.24), 1859, Indians throw elk horns onto a pyramid of elks in odd poses to secure good luck. A ghost of a turkey visits a man after he eats too much Thanksgiving dinner in *Classics of Babylond* (2.1.15), 1877. A hen is four times the size of the children in *Learning to Count: Or, One, Two, Buckle My Shoe* (3.2.4), c.1870. A duck appears to have a human head arranged in his cravat in *DoÃ±a PÃ±faga Ã³ El SÃ±alotodo* (3.3.3). A zebra looks into the black night only to see a ghost zebra with a pink penumbra in *The Horse and Other Stories* (4.2.3), 1871. Santa has on a bear suit in *Santa Claus and His Works* (4.3.6), the text of which reads:

See, the top of his head is all shining and bareâ€”  
Tis the good men, dear children, who lose all their hair.



In *A Book All About Animals* (4.10), c.1900, a leaping lion is posed against the rising moon on the attack against an unlikely looking herd of camels, sheep and oxen. In *Pictures and Tales for Little Folks* (5.4.2), a whale swallows a little boy for dinner. *Amusing Addition* (7.1.8) teaches the young to count by grouping animals into fetching combinations:

Here 6 and 3 the 9 comprise  
 6 butterflies, 3 bees  
 While 5 and 4 make 9, likewise;  
 5 monkeys and 4 trees.

*The Three Little Kittens; Alive and Well Again* (7.2.5) shows the kittens being resurrected from their graves by their husbands who sport the greatcoats of swells. The grotesquely overweight *Five Little Pigs* (7.2.6) have their faces subsumed under mounds of flesh. The pigs in *Dean's Infantile Oil-Colour Toy Book* (7.3.4) are overwhelmed by huge borders of the flags of Europe. A very theatrical heron has long black feathers trailing from its eyes in a nature book, *Birds on the Wing* (8.1.3). "A Renowned Toper" is a black and white engraving of a baby sucking on his bottle as if it were a hookah in *The Family Friend* (9.1.1), 1890. It accompanies this admonitory verse:

Let parents to keep all their loved ones from falling,  
 Be wise and inculcate the Temperance vow,  
 That firm in its precept, whatever their calling,  
 Like Baby, they drink liquor drawn from the cow.



Percy Cruikshank's *The Old Woman of Stepney* (10.1.3)

...cut the plum tree, close off from her nose,  
And made a scarecrow, dress'd up in her clothes.

*Humorous Sea-Side Sketches* (10.2.4) shows bathing machines like Conestoga wagons out in the surf to protect the privacy of ladies taking a dip. In *Famous Fairy Tales* (12.2.3), the idle sparrow begs his bread by writing "I'm Starving" in the snow. A fat farmer with a blunderbuss shoots him and his parts hang in a nimbus.

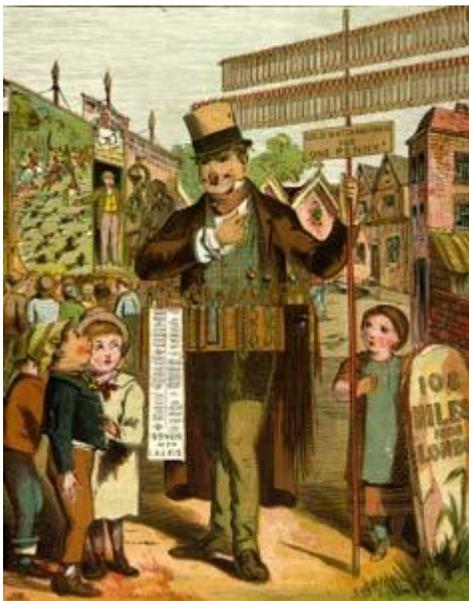


*The Ten Little Soldiers* (13.2.6) mocks the pomp and stupidity of army drills by spelling out numbers with soldiers in silly positions:

One Soldier Boy, desirous of promotion,  
"I in the world will rise," he said,  
"by merit or explosion."

In an early instance of product placement, in *Merry Pictures for the Young* (15.3.2), an ad for Clark's thread on the back cover is reinforced by a lurid centerfold of a girl sewing, with the label of the thread prominent.

The animals take over in *Sketches at the Zoo: From a Comic Point of View* (15.4.6): The elephants carry banners reading "No more penny rides!," the monkeys "More nuts!," and the bummed-out gorillas, "No poking in the ribs with sticks." A stippled pink pelican and a dour lion hold court on a dais.



In *Merry Multiplication* (Box B), a W. C. Fields lookalike hawks watches while a group of kids stands gawking at his feet. A circus barker in the background stands by greeked broadsides. "The Boa Constrictor takes his dinner alive at 1 o'clock."

## **Fox Collection: Special Cases**

The collection includes some books with moveable parts. *Mother Goose Melodies with Magical Changes* (3.1.7), 1879, has surprises revealed behind folds: the three wise men of Gotham are attacked by gulls and nightmarish fish. In a *Sleeping Beauty Pantomime Toy Book* (4.6.3), a pit orchestra plays accompaniment to a masque taking place on the stage above them. A Harlequin and Punchinello frame a clown reading a small book inserted

in the middle. *The Enchanted Tablet* (7.1.1) is a flipbook of cut-up faces. *Picture-Puzzle Toy Books* (13.4.3) have blanks in the pictures with pages of the missing objects in the front and back meant to be cut and pasted. There are a few accordions, *Sinbad the Sailor* in Marcus Ward's Japanese Picture Stories series (12.1.3) being one. *Flowers from Story Land* (3.2.12) has a picture of a boy being given a long accordion called a mile-end or pull-out: "As these showy little books were first made in London and as they stretch out a long way like the road to Mile-End they were named after that far off place."

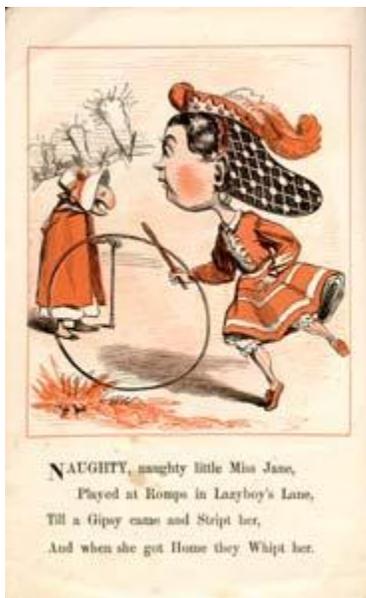
Some of the coloring books have printed color on one side and outlines on the other (*Nursery Picture Gallery*, 12.2.2); others' *Exercises in Coloring Familiar Objects* (16.1.9) and *New Studies for Coloring* (16.2.6) seem to be showpieces for the printers.

A number of books have physical oddities: there is a bound-in request for a repayment of a debt in an 1818 catechism (1.2.4); the cover of *Rosamond* (5.5.4), 1821, is marbled over a scrap sheet of bankruptcy text; and a *Little Folks* supplement (6.1.1) is used as a proof sheet for a book on golf published in New York.

## Fox Collection: Morality

The consequences for mischievous behaviour are often grim. Jim cadges a ride on a horse and comes home in a box in *Mrs. Prim and Her Son Jim* (1.1.7).

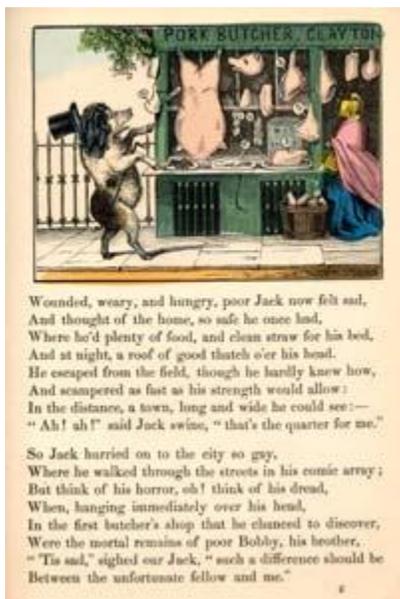
Naughty, naughty little Miss Jane,  
Played at Romps in Lazyboy's Lane,  
Till a Gipsy came and stript her,  
And when she got home they whipt her. (4.3.13)



The religious point of view is that children are bad and in need of moral instruction. Indeed, character flaws are the most notable thing about them. *Careless Corinna*, *Vain Helen*, *Impatient Walter*, *Disobedient Ralph* (2.1.6), *Tom Tearabout* (4.2.2) and *Gregory Graball* (12.1.6) populate the tales. The children are also warned about physical dangers: fire, in *Pauline and the Matches* (4.2.4) "She'll burn to deathâ€”we told her so"; guns, in *Heedless Girls and Boys* (1.4.12), 1836, in which a boy kills his sister point-blank "Handling Fire-Arms"; and water, in *Pelham's Primer or Mother's Spelling Book* (1.4.9), 1830: "Bad boys and girls who go in boats fall out and die."

But moral failings such as vanity are thought to be more important in *Watts's Songs Against Evil* (4.2.10):

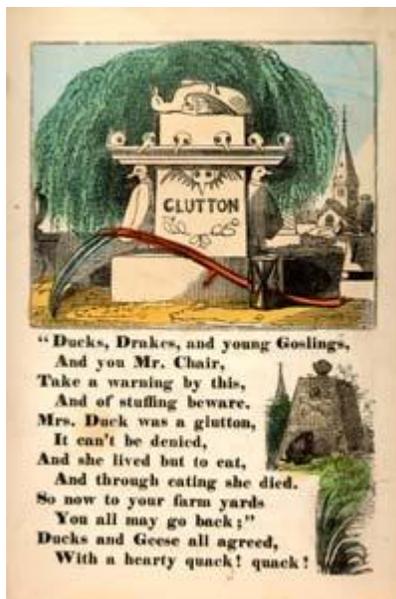
Why should our garments, made to hide  
Our parent's shame, provoke our pride?  
The art of dress did ne'er begin  
Till Eve our mother learnt to sin.



This sentiment changes over time into an admonishment not to put on airs. In *The Little Pig's Ramble from Home* (7.1.8), Jack Pig sports a wig and top hat but is brought up short when he gets to town and sees a pig dressed out at a butcher's shop. Gluttony is also frowned on. *Dinner Party and Death of Mrs. Duck* (15.4.1) ends with Mrs. Duck lying dead on top of her tombstone which reads "glutton" encircled by duck skulls, a scythe and an hourglass. *Sammy Tickletooth* (4.2.8) eats yeast dough at his peril and Little Jacob eats so much he dies. Where death scenes are relished, deep religiosity is not far behind. The vocabulary in the *Good Boy's Primer* (1.6.9) reflects this. "De gen er a cy" and "e pis co pa cy" are broken into syllables so the young miscreants can sound out the words for themselves.

## Fox Collection: Ads

The back covers of many serial publications have ads that would raise eyebrows today. A 1911 *Little Folks* magazine (6.1.1) has a mother's claim that "I have reared my own four children on Goat's Milk and won first prize at every Baby Show at which I have entered them." An ad for Bradford Manufacturing Company on the back of *Favorite Tales #1* (7.1.6), reads: "No one more than the British matron can fully appreciate the sound policy which prompted BM Co. to give the retail buying public all the advantages of wholesale manufacturing prices. They offer a splendid choice of autumn woollens for dresses, amongst which the gem Koh-i-noor & Baroness Camel's Hair Cloths, The Grosvenor, Alexandria, and Cairo, and Healtheries, are perfect in their way. The progress of the nineteenth century is not more patent than the excellency of the black and coloured cashmere which bear that name." One suspects the copywriter was getting paid by the word. Crosby's Vitalized Phosphates are recommended on the back of *Philip and Robin* (7.2.8): "Physicians alone have prescribed 157,780 bottles as pleasant to take and free from all danger. Those involved in brain work would be saved from the fatal resort to chloral and other destructive stimulants."



On page ii of *The Family Friend* (9.1.1) there is testimony for Pulvermacher's World Famous Galvanic Belts: "My case was one of chronic constipation and nervous debility of thirty years' standing... Yours gratefully, Miss M. E. Long." In *The Comic Alphabet* (10.1.3) by Cruikshank, "Q is the Quack who gets his money by cheating," and on the back cover is an ad for aqua amarella, a check on baldness.

An ad for patent medicine on the back of *Jack Spratt and His Wife* (15.4.7) exclaims, "Do Not Untimely Die! Sore throats cured with 1 dose. Bowel Complaints 1 dose. Typhus 2. Diphtheria 3. Scarlet Fever 4. Dysentery 5."

## Fox Collection: The Language of Flowers and The Blues

The elaborate *Language of Flowers* (1.6.2), 1836, shows a highly wrought pastime at its apogee: "A party walking in a garden, through the means of flowers presented to each other, may carry on a conversation of compliment, wit, and repartee; A few Rules may be necessary: I or Me is expressed by inclining the flower to the left; thou or thee, by sloping it to the right. If a flower presented upright expresses a particular sentiment, when reversed it has a contrary meaning." Some of the flower signifiers are Benevolence = Potato; Beautiful Eyes = Variegated Tulip; Energy in Adversity = Camomile; Render Me Justice = Chestnut Tree; Vulgar Minds = African Marygold (sic); We May Be Poor, but We Will Be Happy = Vernal Grass.

In a similar spirit in 1844, Peter Parley sees fit to classify the blues (2.1): "What are 'the Blues?' Your reasonable blue is a communicative, suggestive thing, and I always court its society."

Order I, Class I. Blues of reverie: pleasing, but not to be too much indulged. Class II. Rum blues: pestiferous. Class III. Blues of indigestion: horrible. Class IV. Blues of bad conscience: frightful.

## Fox Collection: Games

*Nice Little Games for Nice Little Boys* (7.1.9) has a nasty game called Baste the Bear in which a boy is tied by a rope in a circle marked on the ground. The other boys hit him with knotted handkerchiefs. His master tries to touch one of the other boys without letting go of the rope or pulling the bear out of the ring. If he succeeds, that boy becomes the bear and selects his master. *Alphabet of Sports* (7.2.6) has Vulcan's Forge, a game for girls dressed to the nines. "All seated, the Leader says to one, 'Cyclop, can you forge?' 'As well as you.'" Mother-May-I appears as The Grand Mufti. *Home for the Holidays* (8.1.2) has a consistently underclass point of view throughout different odes to upper class pursuits: "Cricket: All boys should play cricket" a fine manly game; It braces the nerves and strengthens the frame." "Lawn Tennis: and even in these science days there's no one denies ball-playing is an innocent and healthy exercise. Every one can't get a lawn on which the game to play. Yet many can enjoyment find in busy, smoky towns."

Kate Greenaway's *Book of Games* (11.4.1) has as a party game The Stool of Repentance in which people write what they think of you on slips of paper while you leave the room. One of them reads these opinions out loud and when the person guesses correctly who wrote it, the author leaves the room and the fun begins again. *British Sports and Games* (15.3.5) has the wicket-keeper intently staring at the ass of a batsman in an Almodovar moment. *Father's Gift* (3.2.13) has a "number of rude boys collected together" who cut off kite strings with their thumbnails and then when the kite "being thus cut loose, falls at a

distance... some of the ill-bred little villains who have cut her loose" steal it. Strictly speaking this last is probably not a game but a mischief.

## Fox Collection: Natural History

The Miscellanies popular early in the nineteenth century don't contain much factual information about animals. They treat exotic animals as wonders and domestic animals as moral exemplars. They are full of cryptic pronouncements. *Children's History of Beasts* (1.3.16), 1835, says about the monkey, "The name of this animal is taken from the sound of its voice." *Knowledge for Every Child* (1.4.21), 1845, says of the Hog that it "is a disgusting and a clumsy animal. He is filthy, greedy, and stubborn; but he is very useful at his death." Natural history books at mid-century begin to have more accurate portrayals (e.g., *Book of Quadrupeds for Youth*, 5.1.5) and to leave the moralist's point of view behind (e.g., *Harrison Weir's Alphabet and Stories of Birds*, 7.3.4). This apparently irritates the dyed-in-the-wool anthropocentrics, viz: *What Grandma Grundy Told Her Little Grandchildren About Pet Birds* (12.1.6): "And though wise men and women who write books on Natural History tell us long stories of Robins that fight, and of Robins that peck worms to pieces, and say that Bobby is a very cruel little fellow, we will not listen to their tales, will we? But we will go on thinking, as long as we live, that the Robin-redbreast is one of the dearest little birds and sweetest singers, sent by God to cheer the cottage of those who dwell in 'solitary places'."

Perhaps the new information stimulates the Victorian craze for collecting insects. In *A Week Spent in a Glass Pond by the Great Water Beetle* (3.2.14), by Juliana Horatia Ewing, even little kids know their genus species. Molly says, "Oh, Francis! Francis! The water-soldier, Stratiotes Aloides is in flower." She also says, "What makes me so very sorry is, that I don't think we ought to have 'collected' things unless we had really attended to them, and knew how to keep them alive."

## Fox Collection: Dogs and Type

### The Tail End of this Topic (Dogs)

Dogs in the 1840s have both nobler names and expressions than those found in children's books today. Towser, Turk, Tray, Dash, Spark, Trusty, Ponto, Hector and Snap also bear a passing resemblance to William Rehnquist.

"Why is a dog biting his tail like a good economist?" asks *The Little Riddler* (1.2.14). "He makes both ends meet."

# Type

There's very little evidence of typographic play in these books. Putting "great, huge bear" in 24 point type, "middle bear" in 18 point and "little, small, wee bear" in 8 point in *The Story of the Three Bears* (1.3.2) is about as far as it goes. In *The Toy Grammar; Learning Without Labor* (7.2.1), there is type in bold capitals in different sizes. "I'd BE Verb Active. Ain't that Droll?"

Some amazing swash lower case 'g's enliven *The Comic Animal ABC* (Box B) in which

Fat French Frogs  
Feel Fine and Free  
Fingering the Fifes  
You see.

The more elaborate the chromolithographed illustrations get, the more washed-out and wan the type. There are some fun drawn alphabets of the rustic variety in *Steamboat Alphabet* (7.1.3) and of signal wires crossing through an alphabet of pylons in the *Railway Alphabet*.

## Fox Collection: Alphabets

Alphabets give their creators scope to celebrate current technology. *Cousin Chatterbox's Railway Alphabet* (7.1.5) takes pride in all the conveniences of this mode of travel. The *Big Ship Great Eastern Alphabet* (10.1.7) has "H for Hawse-holes, through which the chain-cables pass... O for Ordnance, fired in cases of need" (with a little girl and a dog huddled up to the big gun) and "X for explosion which burst the great funnel by force."

The *Alphabet of Trades* (7.1.5) has an interesting mix of old and new: An "engineer is E planning steam machinery" & "Y begins yeoman who is born to plough the land and till the corn." All sorts of things filter into alphabet books. In the *Alphabet of English Things* (11.1.3),

Z are the zones, that encircle the earth;  
When the zero we reach, of all heat there is dearth.

I guess this means Greenwich (?!). In another *Alphabet of Trades* (11.5.5), c.1865,

N is a newsboy, who plies well his calling,  
And 'Latest Edition' always is bawling.

Z stands for zoologist, also for zany;  
so please take your choice: that's if you have any.

The picture shows an egghead peering at a lion in a vitrine against a dense black background. *The Alphabet of Flowers* (11.5.6) has "Oleander, the gardener's pride; He thinks it the finest in all England" grown in a pot like a spindly poinsettia, a sorry pass for the freeway immortal. V stands for Vagrant, Victuals and Virgin in *Read's Pictorial Alphabet* (10.1.1).

Q was a Quaker, very plain in his dress,  
And rather austere, but good none the less.

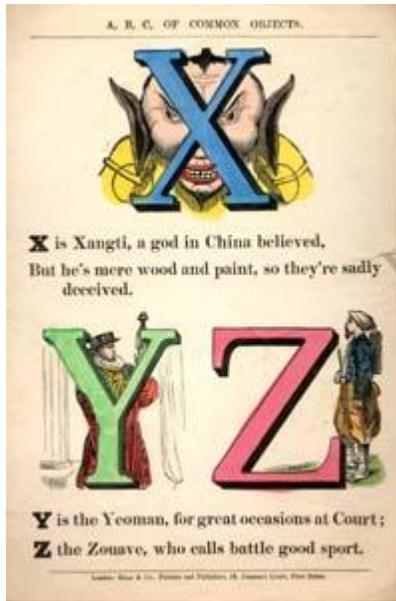
He carries himself with his thin nose in the air in *Tom Thumb's Alphabet* (11.5.6) and is pestered by a smirking ragamuffin.

When war creeps into the alphabet books, V shows a veteran uncle with no eye or leg. In *The Soldier's Alphabet* (13.2.4)

Y is a yokel with funds getting low;  
He thinks, as he reads, to the wars he will go

as he stands in the street staring at an enlistment poster.

*The Union ABC* (2.1.4), dating from the Civil War, shows Lincoln's portrait surrounded by the instruments of destruction. X is a particular challenge to the writers of ABCs. From "X is the next letter" in *The Poetic Gift* (1.4.12), 1842, it only gets better. Xebec and Xerxes ("An uncle has said I'll tell you about him but now go to bed," in *Arthur's Alphabet*, 4.4.3) have a long run. Then, xacca and xacotoo (for cockatoo) make an appearance after the existence of Australia registers in England.



XYZ page from "Read's  
ABC of Common Objects"

X is Xangti, a god in China believed,  
But he's mere wood and paint, so they're sadly deceived.

in *Read's ABC of Common Objects* (10.1.7).

X stands for excellent, when on barrels of beer;  
So the more x's, the better the cheer.

from *Routledge's Picture Gift Book* (11.5.5). Lastly, there is the bang-up "Xeter Xlex  
Xtollod an Xcellent Xpert" in *Peter Piper's Painting Book* (16.2.3).

## Fox Collection: Race, Gender, Class

The social hierarchy is reinforced in entertainments. Somebody's got to be at the butt end of the mockery and opprobrium. In the nineteenth century the lower classes and foreigners each come in for a share. What makes cultural assumptions so pernicious is that nobody takes any notice of them at the time. Even in our era of political correctness, where you can barely tell a joke about your own ethnicity, I'm sure howlers that equal those that follow pass unremarked.

In *The Alderman's Feast; A New Alphabet* (7.1.8),

K was the kitchen where supper was cooked,  
But none of the visitors into it looked.

The *Cat's Quadrille* (8.1.4) mocks the pomposity of the social register set:

Miss Scratchemwell,  
A dashing belle,  
Showed much dissatisfaction,  
And turned with scorn,  
From cats low-born,  
who danced with vulgar action.  
Her scorn was shared  
By cats who stared  
with faces long extended;  
They cried, 'Let's go!'  
They went "and so  
The Cat's Quadrille was ended.

Illustrated *Sabbath Facts* (9.1.3), c.1868, has this ad on the last page: "These readings are a series of tracts by popular authors and are intended for the more thoughtful amongst our skilled mechanics and artisans. They treat on subjects in which the Working Classes are deeply interested." Any NASCAR fans in the house? Girls are expected to take a back seat to their brothers and not to be too bold. In *At Home* (12.1.3), a brother and sister ape the ways of their parents at the breakfast table and the boy is assumed to be superior. In *Good Little Girls Book* (4.7.5), not the vain, slovenly or snappish, but the forward girl wants to talk to her father's friends about the French king: they try to shut her up for overreaching. In *A Soldier's Children* (14.2.2), it is pointed out to the girls that they can't expect to be generals, only to nurse their wounded husbands and to tend gardens to grow wreaths for their now-dead husbands' graves.

Even the ampersand must bow and scrape in *The History of Apple-Pie* (7.2.9):

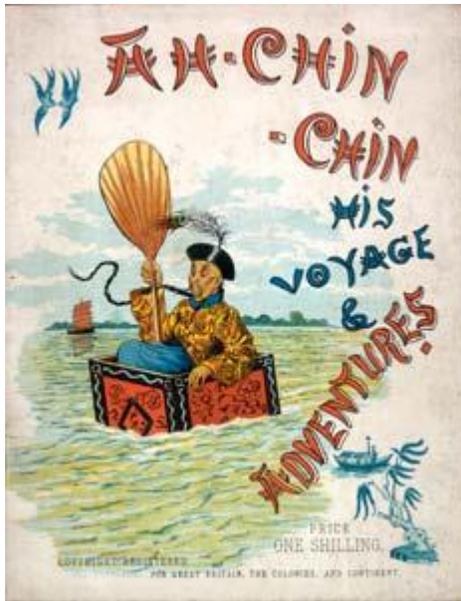
& then & came,  
Though not one of the Letters;  
And, bowing, acknowledged  
Them all as his betters.  
And hoping it might not  
Be deemed a presumption  
Reminded all their honours  
Must have conjunction.



Irishmen are depicted as halfwits and cretins in *Brave Donald* (2.1.6) and, in *Alphabetical Costumes* (2.2.4), the women are seen as sluts. In *Pictures and Stories for Little Two Shoes* (9.1.7), "Norah" is a slatternly Irish girl with her shirt falling off who gives the writer pause because he wants to condemn her for being too aware of her appearance at the same time he wants to criticize her for not keeping it up:

"Norah seems to be clean and shoes and stockings are not much worn in her part of the world; but she might keep her clothes neater. Girls have often to be reproved for thinking too much, instead of too little, about dress, which silly and vain people make a matter of far too great importance."

So there is some satisfaction in the story told in *Our Horse Soldiers* (15.3.3) about King George II reviewing the troops and asking the Colonel who commanded the cavalry, "Why, your men have the air of soldiers, but their horses look poorly. How is that?" "Sire," replied the Colonel, "the men are Irish and gentlemen, the horses are English."



The stereotypes about foreigners in *A Rapid Tour Around the World* (5.1.1), 1846, persist 150 years later: "In France, dress is a very important thing with every individual from the highest to the lowest." The Italian vends sculptures. The Chinese "are extremely bigoted in their attachment to the customs and opinions of their own country, which they denominate The Celestial Empire." In *The Nations of the Earth* (11.1.2), 1858, Italians "do not work very hard, for they can live on bread and grapes, and do not need beef and beer like the strong men of England... The Germans are slow, but industrious; The mother of Our Good Queen is a German and the noble Prince Consort is a German, so we must love and honor Germany." In Southern Asia: "You see here a prince and princess playing with their birds and looking peaceful; but we know they are cruel, and hate all Christian people." *Ah-Chin-Chin His Voyage and Adventures* (P.Y.4) is an amazing tour of the English colonies with racist caricatures and ethnic slurs like

His appetite was quite Chinese;  
 he gratified his wishes  
 with dogs and mice served up in rice  
 and such like dainty dishes.

The hero cheats fate and ends up as a merchant and then Lord Mayor of London.

## Fox Collection: Colonialism

The library has another collection of historical children's literature, the Effie Lee Morris Collection, which focuses on ethnic and social stereotypes. In the Fox Collection, there are loads of topical patriotic books about England's wars. Queen Victoria sends off the army here and there. "Over a million and a 1/ 2 of Kopf's consolidated soups have been sent to the troops in Afghanistan and South Africa." In *A Soldier's Children* (14.2.2), the

narrator wants to "pray particularly for the very poor ones who die of fever and miss all the fighting and fun" in Africa. "And if the black men kill our men, send down white angels to take their poor dear souls to heaven."

The outlook in *Picture Alphabet of Nations of the World* (8.1.7) is colonial:

A handsome people are the Greeks,  
who own a classical land;  
But restless, wayward, and disposed  
to spurn a ruler's hand.

...

In far New Zealand's fertile isles  
Lives a courageous race;  
But ev'n the bold Maori soon  
To white men must give place.

Fictional adventures are set in the West Indies and New South Wales in *The Adventures of A Little Sailor Boy* (7.3.2).

The beef and mutton grew in tins,  
for cattle changed their habits  
when all their food was eaten up  
by kangaroos and rabbits. (*Ah-Chin-Chin*, P.Y.4)

Antipodean mammals, such as wombats, begin to turn up in natural histories *The Wild Animal*, 13.4.4). India is not as well-represented as Australia but the onus of the Raj is upheld by a doll in *The Life of a Doll* (13.1.3). She must show the "dark Hindoos" how well she can walk.

## **Fox Collection: Slavery and Racism**

The material on slavery is fairly extensive, most takes the abolitionist stance but few opportunities are missed to add a racist caveat or two—“lazy and stupid being the favorites. The African in *Men and Manners, in Verse* (1.5.9) is typical:

Where delicious fruit and gold,  
Are alone at his command,  
Where the ivory is sold,  
is the Negro's native land.  
And though black his hue may be,  
And though indolent his soul,  
There he roves in liberty,  
Far from tyrant white's control.

*An Amusing Trial In Which A Yankee Lawyer Rendered A Just Verdict* (1.5.11), 1841, has a protagonist with the imagination to see himself in his slave's shoes:

A Yankee lawyer long had kept  
A negro-man with whom he slept.  
. . . And thus he said, why should not I  
Be slave instead of Cuff, and he  
As well be running after me  
As I for him? "I'll let him go,  
Whether he's free by law or no.

There is racist caricature aplenty. "B stands for Boatmen, who work hard for the money" in *Dinah's ABC* (3.1.12).

J stands for Jim, the funny Jim Crow.  
N stands for Niggers, well able to row.

*Topsy* (4.7.1) is die-cut in the shape of a little black girl eating watermelon. Friday is depicted as a minstrel with a banjo and a bowtie in one *Robinson Crusoe* (4.7.3). Papa Poodle in *The Blue Bells on the Lea* (14.2.1) reads a book upside down.

Those woolly locks of yours  
grow thicker and thicker, Papa Poodle,  
Does the wool tangle inside  
as well as outside your head,  
and is it that which makes you such a noodle?

The titles of *Lazy Little Jerusalem* (2.1.6), and ads for "Cut-Up Niggers, Six Kinds" and The Funny Little Darkies and the Camptown Races give an idea of their contents.



A patronizing attitude goes along with protecting "the harmless black-a-moor" in *Inky Boys* (4.2.4) in which St. Nick dips white boys in an inkpot for causing mischief. *Blanche and Cora or Love and Duty* (13.3.3) is an overwrought fantasy in which a slave girl is befriended by an English family who move to Florida. She speaks like Tonto in "The Lone Ranger": "Me look like English missie now; don't me, Mother?" She saves the sleeping daughter by shooting a snake with a bow and arrow. Her feat is meant to convince readers that even slaves have their good qualities.

## Fox Collection: Conclusion

The attitudes in children's books of the last century reveal sensibilities and humor far removed from those of today. We look with amusement at the simple banalities and ponder the occasionally sublime or profound touch:

"Heard you the sermon for the poor to-day? I did; and, if I might determine, 'Twas what it professed to be" "A remarkably poor sermon!" (pasted-in endpaper from *The Child's Cyclopedia*, 1.3.17, 1841). From *Home Pastimes or Enigmas, Charades and Conundrums to Exercise the Mind* (1.5.17), we learn: "What wine is Mock agony? " "Champagne."

But sage advice is handed down from *The Bears of Augustusburg* (5.2.2):

"It is not good to eat cherries with great lords."

---

Reprinted from *The Ampersand*, quarterly journal of the Pacific Center for the Book Arts. Summer 2000.

Thank you to the staff of The Book Arts and Special Collections Center at the San Francisco Public Library" Andrea Grimes, Asa Peavy, and Susie Taylor for their assistance.