

Picture Book Children, Old and New.

How the Artists of Different Times Have Portrayed Them



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If little Miss Muffet, instead of running away from the spider, had fallen asleep while she sat on the tuffet eating curds and whey a hundred years ago, and had slumbered until recent years, there is no doubt that on waking the dainty little lady would be surprised at modern pictures of herself.

She would gasp with surprise at the change of dresses. From the plain homespun garment of the day when Mother Goose sang her ditties there has been a decided departure. In the picture of Ethel Franklin Betts she would see a handsome little girl, resplendent in a white linen dress of a wonderful fit and pattern, wearing lace gloves, a lovely pearl necklace and red slippers, and eating her food with fastidious grace.

And her friends—Jack and Jill, Little Jack Horner, Little Boy Blue and the rest—she would see have all adopted a strange dress. In the fashionable, up-to-date costumes the little ones now wear, with jewelry and ribbons, she would find them more attractive than when she fell asleep. Besides, she would notice a happier, more joyful expression on the faces of her playmates of former days.

Seven Thousand Night
by Maxfield Parrish
Illustrated by Chas. Scribner's Sons
from poems of Chas. Scribner's Sons
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"Little Miss Muffet," by Ethel Franklin Betts. From "Favorite Nursery Rhymes," Reproduced by permission of Frederick A. Stokes Co. Copyright 1906 by Frederick A. Stokes Company.

"Foreign Children"
by Louise May
Illustrated by Chas. Scribner's Sons
from "Children of the World"
by Robert Louis Stevenson

There is no doubt that modern artists endow children with gentler traits than those of years ago. Besides that the modern child, if the artist is right in his conception, is brave. Take Jemmy Jed, of Mother Goose:

Jemmy Jed went into a shed
And made of a ted of straw his bed;
An owl came out and flew about,
And Jemmy Jed up stakes and fled.
Wasn't Jemmy Jed a staring fool,
Born in the woods to be scared by an owl?

He certainly was if that is Jemmy running from the shed in the picture. The woodcut shows a youngster rushing from a barn, his hair bristling with fright and his eyes staring wildly at the owls.

"I woke up in the dark an' saw things standin' in a row,
A-lookin' at me cross-eyed an' p'intin' at me—
Oh, my! I was so skeered that time I never sleep a minute—
It's almost alids when I'm bad I see things at night."



"A Kate Greenaway Group for Boys and Girls"
Come out to play.
Published in 1903.

When Maxfield Parrish took up his brush to illustrate this poem of Eugene Field, he didn't picture the boy as running from the room or screaming wildly for his mamma.

See him sitting in bed, his tiny hand clasped over his breast. But as he looks at those big, ghastly goblins, as he sees them grimacing and pointing at him, as they grow bigger and bigger, with flaming eyes like the geni of the "Arabian Nights"—boo! one almost shivers—the modern lad sits and looks on boldly. He begins to say his prayers, but run—never!

There often was something tragic in the child life of the old artists. Kate Greenaway pictures Jack and Jill in a most harrowing situation as they go head-over-heels down the hill. Ethel Franklin Betts, in an exquisite picture, shows a roguish-faced boy and a dimpled little girl leisurly bringing another bucket of water from the well. No doubt that is supposed to be after their fall.

Among modern artists you will find one type of the well-bred child, usually Russian-bloused, leather-belted, sandal-footed; they are mostly at play; their faces are happy.

Few artists within recent years have brought ogres, gnomes and fairies into the scenes. Among the cleverest of pen-and-ink artists of child life is Fanny Y. Cory Cooney. Her pictures are mostly of mischievous, romping boys and little elfin girls in underclothing.

Mrs. Florence Seovel Shinn's children are deliciously comical youngsters, usually unkempt and impressing one as about to perform some childish feat of daring.



If ANY little Miss Muffet of today does not know how her prototype dressed long ago, let her ask her grandmamma. Or, better still, let her see the children's books of verses published during the last century.

Let her get, for example, a copy of the original Mother Goose Melodies, published in Boston in 1833, and she will not only find how children dressed in those days, but also learn that artists didn't enthuse over childish frolics as they do now.

There's little Tommy Tucker—

Little Tommy Tucker,
Sing for your supper,
What shall I sing?
White bread and butter,
How shall I cut it
Without any knife?
How shall I marry
Without any wife?

Tommy Tucker, you will see in the old book, is a little boy in a straight jacket, with a belt about his waist. He doesn't prepossess you a bit—the supposedly merry youngster looks as dull as he can be.

Then compare this with a picture of the modern Tommy, in white sailor's suit, with a big necktie, a leather belt with a big buckle about his waist, and a big tam-o'-shanter or beribboned straw hat on his head.

There are probably three eras in the child-life of the country as pictured by artists. One is represented in the old Mother Goose books, the second, perhaps, best portrayed twenty or so years ago by Kate Greenaway, while the present period finds expression in the work of Jessie Willcox Smith, Ethel Franklin Betts, Maxfield Parrish and others.

"Boys and Girls Come Out to Play"
From the only true Mother Goose
Published in 1833.

There's an old poem which we all used to sing when we were children—little tots yet love it for its merry, playful spirit.

Boys and girls come out to play,
The moon does shine as bright as day.
Leave your supper and leave your sleep
And meet your playfellows in the street;
Come with a whoop and come with a call,
And come with a good will or not at all.

Now look at that old wood-cut in the ancient Mother Goose book—do those children seem to be whooping and calling? Not at all. They are supposed to be dancing in a circle, but they don't seem to be having much fun.

Kate Greenaway made a picture to illustrate the same poem. She worked in the spirit of the occasion—all of her work was spirited. Then, too, you can see that styles were changing for the little ones, just as for their elders.

Notice that little girl in the red dress! Isn't it long and narrow! But with the short

waist and the short puffed sleeves, it's quite pretty. And that bonnet—isn't it delightfully old-fashioned!

But the little ones look as though they feared their mamma would hear them as they ran out into the moonlight. Children didn't have as much freedom then as now.

Behold the little American boy of today! As he sits before the children of Japan, Turkey, Greenland and a little Indian lad, Robert Louis Stevenson makes him say:

Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
Little frosty Eskimo,
Little Turk or Japanese,
Oh don't you wish that you were me?

Certainly they do!

By deft touches the artist brings out the pathetic longing in the eyes of the little Jappie, the turbaned Turkish lad, the coy, befeared Eskimo and the half-naked little Indian.

There's the American boy of today—squat

ting on the floor regardless of everything and every one. Certainly he is satisfied with himself, for he tells the quartette:

You have curious things to eat;
I am fed on proper meat.
You must dwell beyond the foam,
But I am safe and live at home.

There's Mary, who was always unfailingly contrary. Perhaps you recall the old books with woodcuts and smudged colored pictures of Mary—frowning, cross, quarrelsome, querulous Mary. But does the modern artist make contrary Mary the disagreeable little girl we knew twenty or forty years ago? No.

If Ethel Franklin Betts is not mistaken, she is the sweetest, rosiest little damsel one might wish to meet. Among Jonquilla and narcissi Mary is pictured boeing her flower bed. She is immaculately dressed—not a speck of dirt on her dress; she wears pink gloves, a broad hat trimmed with flowers and lavender ribbon.