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"As most gardeners are genial folk who enjoy laughing at themselves, there will be an uproarious welcome for *How to Make a Garden Grow*." Thus the blurb for the latest Heath Robinson. Mr. Robinson's inventions are as delightfully practicable as ever, but Mr. Browne's libretto must have been specially designed for gardeners. "Unlike punting, tracheotomy and playing the Nigerian nose-flute, topiary is almost as easy to do as it is to spell." Highly recommended for Middleton addicts. *My Line of Life* is Mr. Heath Robinson's perfectly serious autobiography, and consequently a little out of place here. He tells the story of how a would-be landscape painter made his reputation and his living by letting an eccentric little genius lead him astray from his more serious work. The Heath Robinson we know best first came to life as a very amiable children's hero called Uncle Lubin. How his innocent ingenuity was received by puzzled editors who failed to see the joke, how it was exploited during the war, and how it assisted the Great Western Railway are related with engaging modesty. All phases of the crazy Robinson, and of the serious illustrator of Rabelais, Kipling and Don Quixote are illustrated.

Outside Britain, A Guide to This Grave New World, is political satire written before the word "umbrella" became an emetic. It is sharper than most wit about characteristic British foreign policy, but its good humour on such subjects as dictatorship, armaments, protests and axes is an inadequate fire-escape. Messrs. Riddell and Dower must suffer because our national Polonius has gone several worse than their imaginary Blenkinsop. If you have the stomach for fun about front page news you may like this:

As everyone knows, fifteen imitation Mussolinis . . . are continually visiting twenty-three substitute Hitlers . . . (wigs by Clarkson), in thirty-seven uniforms and five special trains, while the Entire Armed Forces of both countries line the railways with their hands in the air and their backs to the engines, protecting them from the cheering, bribed, brow-beaten multitudes (none of whom are allowed within two miles of the friendship) because as the railway companies so aptly put it IT IS DANGEROUS TO LEAN OUT OF THE WINDOW.

James Cleugh has written a survey of the amazing years 1919 to 1929 without ever explaining why the Stout Party collapsed. "The dabbler in dreams which were once realities, the explorer of the quasi-fairyland of Lloyd George, Baldwin, and Ramsay

MacDonald, of booms and slumps, slogans and crazes, strikes and Bright Young People, must continually draw, like Alice's Duchess, the moral of everything." But this explorer keeps his morals to himself, and never nudges one even when reporting how very This English this England has been. He has covered not only political action and rhetoric, but also most of the things which the press thought important during those ten years. I list a few names from his index: Daisy Ashford, Mr. Justice Avory, Bakst, Max Beerbohm, Horatio Bottomley, W. J. Bryan, the British Gazette, Coué, Lord Curzon, James Douglas, Ronald True, Pussyfoot Johnson, Pilsudski, Rothermere, Irene Savidge, Snowden, Vaquier, Voronoff, Romer Wilson, and Zinoviev. Mr. Cleugh quotes THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION more frequently than any other publication, and has indeed a very proper attitude to everything. History being much funnier than fiction he deserves an enormous sale amongst the melancholy.

Last year's *Lilliput Annual* was described by this journal as "bright, varied, amazingly cheap, and just the thing for magpie reading." This year it is excellent for Little Jack Horner reading, remarkably cheap, bright and varied.

I'm a Stranger Here Myself is very hard to quote because Mr. Ogden Nash has discovered that you can make a joke in a page and a half of loose couplets just as well as in a tight quatrain. However his last four lines on England can be uprooted:

England is the last home of the aristocracy, and the art of protecting the aristocracy from the encroachments of commerce has been raised to quite an art,

Because in America a rich butter-and-egg man is only a rich butter-and-egg man or at most an honorary LL.D. of some hungry university, but in England why before he knows it he is Sir Benjamin Buttery, Bart.

Anyhow, I think the English people are sweet, and we might as well get used to them because when they slip and fall they always land on their own or somebody else's feet.

That will be all for this year.

FREDERICK LAWS

IT'S IN THE BAG

- Babar at Home.** By JEAN DE BRUNHOFF. Methuen. 7s. 6d.
The Forest Pool. By LAURA ADAMS ARMER. Longmans. 7s.
Mr. Heinie. By M. A. and A. S. BEISTLE. Harrap. 2s. 6d.
Niki Takes a Holiday. By R. WORLEY and ROBERTS JOHNSON. Michael Joseph. 3s. 6d.
Perri. By FELIX SALTEN. Cape. 5s.
Mr. Jones of the London Zoo. By MARGUERITE BULLER. Country Life. 2s. 6d.
Buffo and Petro. By ALISON B. ALESSIOS and THERESA KABAL. Longmans. 6s.
Mumfie's Magic Box. By KATHARINE TOZER. Murray. 5s.
Little Elephant Comes to Town. By DORIS ESTCOURT. Oxford University Press. 3s. 6d.
Christmas at the Four Paws Club. By ABBIE PHILLIPS WALKER. Hamish Hamilton. 5s.
Heyo, Brer Rabbit! By ENID BLYTON. Newnes. 6s.
Creatures Great and Small. By THEODORA HORTON. Oxford University Press. 3s. 6d.
Bennie Black Lamb. By CICELY ENGLEFIELD. Murray. 2s.
Twin Kids. By INEZ HOGAN. Dent. 2s. 6d.
Hedgehog's Holiday. By GEOFFREY FORD. Macmillan. 6s.
The Stage-Struck Seal. By JAMES HULL. Blackwell. 2s. 6d.
Plain Jane. By MARY COLVILLE. Collins. 6s.
Sambo and Susan. By KATHARINE HARRISON WALLACE. Collins. 5s.
Bramshill. By JOAN PENELOPE COPE. Constable. 7s. 6d.
First Friends. By WILLIAM THE GREAT. Oxford University Press. 3s. 6d.
The Fireman. The Baker. The Engine Driver. By M. C. CAREY and NORA LAVRIN. Dent. 1s. 6d. each.
The Magic Train. Lane. 3s. 6d.
My Book About Trains. By JOHN ANDERSON. Oxford University Press. 2s. 6d.
The Little Sailing Boat. By LOIS LENSKEY. Oxford University Press. 2s.
Lark Legends. By NORMAN HUNTER. Lane. 6s.
Rudkin. By YVONNE WINGFIELD KING. Frederick Muller. 5s.
A.B.C. and 1.2.3. Oxford University Press. 3s. 6d.
Our Old Nursery Rhymes. Oxford University Press. 3s. 6d.

These books have been reviewed not only by me but, where possible, by my three children: i.e., two girls aged 6½ and 5,

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SCRIBNERS

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and a small boy of 18 months, whose major interests in life at present are the broken works of a grandfather clock, a musical doll and as much to eat as possible, and to whom books, in so far as they mean anything at all, are objects to be scribbled on with coloured chalk or to be torn up. To the girls, on the other hand, books are already a passion; and these thirty books, which for three weeks have been scattered over floors, beds, chairs, tables and anywhere else where children could pick them up or lay them down, have been pretty well exhaustively handled by them. From their likes and dislikes and from the experience of reviewing children's books for a period of five years, some hard but irrefutable facts have emerged; and of these at least one ought to be a golden rule for all who propose to buy books for children. This is that the book which the grown-up loves is often, alas, the book which the child hates; and *vice versa*. For instance, though I cannot stomach the sugary jujubes of Mr. Milne, my children delight in them; and again, though I regard *The Forest Pool* as being, with its sun-saturated pictures of Mexican life, one of the most imaginatively exciting books on this list, my children, for the moment at least, have no use for it. Similarly they show lukewarm interest in three books, *Bramshill*, *Plain Jane* and *Sambo and Susan*, that are themselves the work of children, though the adult will feel bound to take off his hat to these three young ladies for what are really, even by adult standards, remarkable feats of child imagination. In fact, of the four sections into which I propose to divide the list—Animals, Everyday Life, Books by Children and Legends, leaving *The Forest Pool* belonging to no section at all—the Books by Children section seems by far the least popular.

Section I, Animals. Babar is unique. This book, which unhappily must be the last of the complete Babars because of the death of Jean de Brunhoff, is the most delightful in the six-volume history of this droll, humane, gentlemanly and universally lovable elephant. There must be many children who have not yet been introduced to Babar; thousands who have heard of Alice or Peter Pan and have seen Mickey and Donald, who do not yet know this immortal elephant. The sooner that is remedied the better, for Brunhoff can knock Disney, his true competitor, into many cocked hats. Brunhoff and Disney deal in the

same goods; the coloured fantasy of an animal behaving like a human being, both succeeding because, among other things, it is comic to see anything so tiny as a mouse and so enormous as an elephant playing a trombone or firing a machine-gun or riding a bicycle. But there is a significant difference. Where Disney needs an army of fellow-artists, script-writers, musicians and a fifty-thousand-dollar camera in order to animate figures which, as static drawings, have more or less the value of any hack illustrations for a thick-paper Nursery Rhymes, Brunhoff secures all his animation by a beautiful gift of implication, without tricks, on paper. In *Babar at Home*, Babar is married and Celeste, his wife, suddenly bears triplets. During the confinement, Babar, to ease the tension, goes off on a bike ride. Suddenly he hears the gun announcing the royal birth, leaps on his bike, and tears off full speed for home. For that sort of sequence Disney alone knows what the permutations and combinations are. Brunhoff does the thing so well, in fifty strokes, that you can hear the bike-tyres sizzling. Another instance: as the children grow up they demand amusement and there is a double-page spread of the nursery with grandfather Cornelius giving the young Alexander a swing on his tusks that is a masterpiece in its humour, animation and the wittiness of its commentary on human nature. Babar has one more virtue: he may be read, and should be read, by everybody. The influence of the noble Babar is slightly evident in *Little Elephant Comes to Town* and *Mumfie's Magic Box*; there is a crazy gang made up of two elephants, three lambs, a squirrel, a hedgehog, a seal, a Grecian pig, two horses, a real zoological cat, Brer Rabbit, a sausage dog, a collection of entertaining riff-raff in *Christmas at the Four Paws Club*, and almost everything from ants to hippopotami in the excellent and informative *Creatures Great and Small*. All the books in this section, with the notably crazy exceptions of *Mr. Heinie* and *Niki Takes a Holiday*, the story of a circus horse who escapes and corrupts a collection of farm horses by teaching them all the circus tricks, have one thing in common. They are all reading books rather than picture books. Even Niki is a black-and-white picture book. Here Mr. Heinie, the sausage dog, droll, Teutonic-serious and depicted in a series of pictures which have something of the Teutonic flamboyancy of a German picture-postcard, scores full points. Mr. Heinie comes of the lineage that bred Babar: an example of pure Aryanism, naturally. I warmly recommend the Aryan Herr Heinie, in fact, to all, even to those unprepared to believe that anything good can be inspired by anything Germanic. Heinie is certainly a hot dog. I am sorry to have to record him, however, as the sole example of the *genre* in which words are subordinate to pictures, a class growing rapidly as popular with old as with young, and that the rest of the books in Section I are mostly plain story books illustrated in the conventional way of competent and fairly often plain pictures. The influence of Jean de Brunhoff and Mr. Edward Ardizzone appears not to have spread. This is a pity, for these got more encores in my house than any, though it seems obvious that later they will be challenged and beaten by such books as *Perri: The Youth of a Squirrel*, by the author of *Bambi*, a word that will soon be on as many lips as Snow White, since the book is now in process of being Disneyfied. *Perri* is admirable, but I doubt if children of under ten will appreciate its note of grave and tender fantasy. They will need almost a grown-up tuning fork to get the pitch of this lyric of a squirrel's life in the woods, so delicately recorded by Felix Salten in squirrel notation. *Perri* is imaginatively real; *Mr. Jones of the London Zoo* is real life. He is the prodigal cat, already featured by the press, who made friends with the lion cub and was lost and is found. At half-a-crown this gay little book will solve the problem of present-or-just-a-card? and is a sure winner. *Buffo and Petro* and *Mumfie's Magic Box* are both exceptions to my strictures that most of this section's books were conventionally coloured; the former comes from America, though its heart and its authors are Greek, and if you want pictures as gay as a cross-stitched peasant pinafore I would recommend this story, admirably printed for small children, about the little Greek Petro and his pet pig Buffo. *Mumfie* is the next best thing to Babar: a crazy elephant who inclines to make whoopee and is kept on firm earth by his friend the Scarecrow. This is good fat value at five shillings, with some scores of the delicious black-carmine-blue illustrations by the author. The other elephant, *Little Elephant Comes to Town*, is a step in the other direction, *Little Elephant Comes to Town*, is a step in the other direction, with some good double-page pictures, and is an acceptable substitute for the real thing. It is a much smaller book: a mistake, perhaps, for even on paper elephants seem to demand more leg-room than lambs or horses.

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Bloomsbury, London

Lambs hop all over the books of Miss Englefield and Miss Hogan, and these fluffy creatures will again, at two shillings and half-a-crown, solve the small present problem. I don't think *Heyo, Brer Rabbit!* needs any introduction, nor Miss Blyton, who has done well to retell the original stories in her own way, preserving their individual raciness while dispensing with the difficult negro idiom of the original. This is a gilt-edged investment that will show returns for years. *Hedgehog's Holiday* is quoted at the same figure, *Christmas at the Four Paws Club* at a shilling less, and you could hardly make a mistake with any of them as solid, if not quite magical, investments for the eight-to-tens. *The Stage-Struck Seal*, concerning the slippery acrobatics of a circus seal, raises an interesting question because of something on the jacket: "Children will enjoy this delightful nonsense tale because it is like something they might write themselves." It is indisputable, I think, that children will enjoy the book; but do children write like this?

It so happens that Section II is composed entirely of the work of children, and there is no nonsense, whichever way you look at it, about any of them. They are deadly serious, so serious that in the case of *Bramshill* only the delights of mis-spelling save the book from a haughtiness verging on snobbery. I don't doubt the talents of Joan Penelope Cope—she has enviable gifts of observation and decoration—but the book starts far too high in the social scale for me; it reads like a kitchen-maid's dream after a supper of pork pie and *Peg's Paper*. But similarly I have no doubt that, where I deplore, children will heartily enjoy this picture of one of the oldest mansions in England and a child's-eye view of most of the blue blood of the realm. I much prefer Miss Katharine Harrison Wallace's (aged 12) three country stories, most particularly her touching romance of the horses Sambo and Susan, and its delicious it-all-comes-right-in-the-end close-up of the horses in wedding harness. There is never the faintest touch of precocious snobbery in this book; it is the child mind expressing itself, in simple prose and some delightfully serio-comic pictures, without a trace of sophistication. As to *Plain Jane*, by Mary Colville (aged 13), I take off my hat to a young genius. I have been so engrossed in her drawings of Shetland ponies and so stunned by the fact that she has never had a drawing lesson in her life that I have forgotten to read her book. And now I daren't

read it, in case she should write as well as she can draw, which I shrewdly suspect she can. Her drawing reveals remarkable talent. Her ponies not only kick up their legs; they kick holes in the page. They not only run across the pages; they are hurled across by the wind and energy of her talent. Into almost every picture in this book she gets a flick of authentic energy or grace that has the born touch about it. I daren't say more than this for fear of succumbing to the temptation of extravagant prophecy. I can only take off my hat again to this remarkable child and wish her a fifty-thousand sale.

Section III contains nothing that can inspire an eulogy half as airy as this; but Dent's little series of Everyday Books, to which are now added *The Fireman*, *The Baker* and *The Engine Driver*, are first-rate; and nothing since Mr. Gilbert Courland's famous photographic stories of everyday events and objects has charmed me so much as Miss Yates' *First Friends*. This is purely a babies' book; it records in pictures the objects that a small child knows and cherishes: its chair, dog, fruit, cup, doll, cot, boots. The photography is clean, polished and unpretentious with a simplicity that I suspect is a mark of high technical dexterity. I recommend the book warmly. *The Magic Train*, the story of an ordinary local passenger train that ran away and flew in the clouds, is well photographed and well told too: a clever book that scores a double by appealing at once to the child's imagination and its love of everyday events. *The Little Sailing Boat* gets tucked in here because I hardly know if Mr. Small, an enormous favourite last year, is real or imaginary. But he is a sure winner.

Section IV is small, with *Our Old Nursery Rhymes* and the *A.B.C.* thrown in not as makeweights but because of great popularity. For children under 5 they are admirably gay and simple. *Rudkin* is an attempt to break new ground in fairyland, but whether this story of an adventurous, forgetful Brownie will succeed as Miss Constance Holme says it succeeds will depend on the conservatism of the child. I would tip it as a fairly sure bet for a girl of 10. *Larkie Legends* are the quite crazy adventures of cock-eyed kings and queens recorded by the man who invented the priceless Professor Branestawm. They have had considerable and obviously well-deserved success in the Children's Hour. They belong, it should be remembered, to the realms of pure super-Carollian crankiness; the quick-witted child will revel in them.

Finally, but really primarily, *The Forest Pool*. This story of two small Mexican boys comes from America and is the fruit of a talent whose roots have been deeply nourished by the Mexican tradition and scene. Its pictures, broad, rich, profoundly simple, have some of the quality of primitive art. The book is clearly for the extra-receptive; it will touch the chords of the imaginative child very strongly. If you are not lucky enough to have or know such a child, buy it for yourself, open it on Christmas Day, and feel the Mexican sun glow up from its pages, see the iguanos run along the flower-bell trees, and hear the silences of the Mexican forest. It is a remarkably lovely book.

H. E. BATES

