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memories will surely be in a different genre. The drawings are in a winsome, dainty olde-fashioned greetings-card tradition; but girls reaching their teens won't mind this.

Sun Before Seven has also a period charm. It is about a late-Victorian childhood in Buenos Aires. Here again a visual world is presented in which nothing is between the naked eye and its object; the microscope reveals a glowing, luxuriant, half daydream world not unlike that of Mr. De La Mare, who contributes a foreword. The character drawing has a quasi-innocent Scottish humour about it, roguish with a hint of pathos. It is more a contribution to the literature of the child than a book for children. One is unprepared for the last chapters, in which the child is forced out into "real life" by being sent away to school. The dream becomes rigid nightmare, yet absolutely convincing. The climax, when he creeps into the violin case to die, causes the same sort of emotion in the reader as the childhood chapters of *Jane Eyre* or *David Copperfield*.

ROSAMOND LEHMANN

BABAR THE KING

- Babar the King.** By JEAN DE BRUNHOFF. Methuen. 6s.
Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain. By EDWARD ARDIZZONE. Oxford University Press. 7s. 6d.
The Little Boy and His House. By STEPHEN BONE and MARY ADSHEAD. Dent. 7s. 6d.
The Musical Box. By CLARE LEIGHTON. Gollancz. 6s.
Mr. and Mrs. Hedgehog. By P. and E. C. ARDLEY. Collins. 5s.
Three Little Ducklings. By ALEC BUCKELS. Faber. 3s. 6d.
No Rubbish Here. By MYFANWY EVANS. Collins. 3s. 6d.
The Magic Pudding. By N. LINDSAY. Hamish Hamilton. 5s.
Tommy Apple and Peggy Pear. By JAMES LAVER and HENRY ROX. Cape. 5s.
A House for a Mouse. By CICELY ENGLEFIELD. Murray. 2s.
Nosy and the Slipper. Shut Eye and the Weathercock. By ROBERT HARTMAN. Barker. 2s.
Jonathan Bing and other Verses. By BEATRICE CURTIS BROWN. Oxford University Press. 2s. 6d.
The Modern Struwelpeter. By JAN STRUTHER and ERNEST SHEPARD. Methuen. 6s.



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First a word to all those who, for reasons of time, headache, boredom, etc., cannot or will not read beyond this first paragraph. Let me say to them that all of these books are good; that they will delight all ages from two to twelve and in certain cases, such as Babar Rex, all ages from two to as high as you like to go; and that any parental, avuncular, and auntular speculators with a lot of infants and no time on their hands cannot do better than shut their eyes, aim a pin and offer up a sporting prayer. If, on the other hand, they are anxious to raise their stock and get on the right side of Freddie or Angelina or Richard or Julia for another year, they will do well to read on, when I, as the harassed parent of two designing daughters, will do my best to tip them the winners and show them the wrinkles. All of these books have been tried out on the said daughters and all tips are, therefore, based on stable information.

And after a long period of trial Babar is still supreme. I do not know if, in the third year of his reign, it ought to be necessary to proclaim or explain Babar. But since there are always uncles and aunts and parents new to the game, let me say that, outwardly and physically, in round flesh, Babar is an elephant. This is just about as much the whole truth as saying that Alice was a girl, or that Peter Pan was a boy, or that Donald Duck is a bird. Babar is not only an elephant, but a personage. Furthermore, he is not only a personage, but a King. And as a king he reigns with a wisdom, a dignity, an all-embracing love and a supremacy that altogether makes the dictators in Europe look like, so to speak, twopenn'orth of ha'pence. If ever a king ruled by Divine Right it is Babar. His state is beautifully Utopian. In it the weapons of war have perished or have been beaten into roundabouts. Schools, palaces of industry, palaces of art, swimming pools, gardens, theatres have all been built in this idyllic elephantine never-never land. And over it all Babar, still in a replica of that famous apple-green suit in which he was once photographed, reigns with that absurd, adorable, benign dignity that has made him king also of the nurseries of two continents. There is no doubt whatever about this creation of M. de Brunhoff's. The gay colouring, the humour, the delicious detail have all an absolutely unfading quality. He stands quite alone. There are imitators, as I shall show in a moment, but none so good. Back Babar, therefore, and sit easy.

"Imitators" is not the best of words. More correctly, Babar has created a new school of thought. M. de Brunhoff's success rests on the fact that he had the sense to see that, in a general way, young children are very easily bored by the printed page, and that the proportion of pictures to print, in books for them, ought to be something like a forty-acre field to a tennis-court. Like many other simple truths, it was very easily seen after someone else had pointed it out. So that it is not surprising, this year, to find an increasing number of examples of the Babar school—books, that is, in which the story is primarily told in pictures and embroidered by words and not, as for so many years, told in words and embroidered by pictures. Two first-rate examples of this are *Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain*, a title which almost explains itself, and *The Little Boy and His House*, a gay little book with educational as well as pictorial value. In both of these, a small boy has adventures round the world and both books are, perhaps, more truly of the Yacki school than of the Babar. Yacki, it may be remembered, was also French, highly pictorial and comic, and altogether a book apart. Miss Leighton, being an artist first and a writer second, has already recognised the forty-acre-field tennis-court truth for herself, as lovers of her *The Wood that Came Back* will know. This book is a prime favourite, and—to abandon artistic jargon for what the experts call racing parlance—I have no hesitation in tipping *The Musical Box* as a winner in this year's December handicap. In fact, the book can't lose.

Nor can *Mr. and Mrs. Hedgehog*, which continues the adventures of Horace. The first book of these delightful creatures won a lot of money for backers last year, and there is no doubt that Horace and missus, plus the twins, should run well again in this year's race. The field against them is extremely stiff, however, with *The Magic Pudding* (Norman Lindsay up) sure to be running a fast race. This is an Australian horse, bred in the bush, and trained by the noble Society of Puddin' Owners, a powerful group composed of Bunyip Bluegum, Bill Barnacle and Sam Sawnoff. These are a pretty hot trio and the horse is strongly fancied in, as they say, well-informed quarters. I like the look of him myself. Another horse sure to be carrying a lot of money is *Tommy Apple*, a juicy little colt that ran well last year, and *Peggy Pear*, a nice coloured filly from the same stable. These look

pretty good to me, peeping through the paddock fence on the book's cover. Other two-year-olds from the Cape stable include Lady Leek, Cissie Onion and Monsieur Aubergine—altogether a strong lot.

Coming down to what you might call the Shetland stakes, i.e., to small books for small people, Alec Buckels' *Three Little Ducklings* will take some knocking off. Mice are amusing, squirrels are charming, hedgehogs are quaint, but ducks are, always, anywhere and for ever, irresistibly comic. Witness the ousting of Micky by Donald. Also it is worth noting that mice, generally speaking, are very far from being amusing for most people, in real life; whereas ducks are even more comic in life than in books or on the screen. However, this does not detract from Miss Englefield's charming *A House for a Mouse*, in the same way as a dislike of real rabbits will not spoil enjoyment of Miss Evans's *No Rubbish Here*, which is a good old-fashioned once-upon-a-timer and none the worse for that. Before we leave the Shetlands for the Poetic Plate, in which that old-timer Struwwelpeter makes a great come-back, I must give a strong tip for the two horses from the Buffin stable. These are real Shetlands: tiny but really classy, and very nippy. With Robert Hartman up, they will be well among the favourites.

Finally the Poetic Plate: only two runners, with *Jonathan Bing*, nice horse though he is, miles behind that rejuvenated old war-horse Struwwelpeter. Trained by Jan Struther and prettily ridden by Ernest Shepard, this is the boy for me. By Hoffman, so to speak, out of Belloc, it is what Mr. Sherwood Anderson, who knows a horse when he sees one, would call a humdinger. What a humdinger is I don't know, but *A Modern Struwwelpeter* is it. You will, perhaps, remember the old Struwwelpeter: long hair and finger-nails, fidgety Phillip, naughty Frederick, the boy who wouldn't eat his soup, the boy who didn't look where he was going. This book was a sort of moral trousers' press: it pressed your conscience as flat as an ironed pancake. It was a nightmare. Take a look, now, at the modern version: at those awful kids who say O.K., and bump off their governesses, and eat too much ice-cream and cross the traffic lanes without looking. If your children do all these things, this is the book for you. Even if they don't do these things—in which case you should consult a

specialist, not me—this is still the book for you. It should win by a dozen lengths, in record time. H. E. BATES

THE DAUGHTERS OF GENTLEFOLK

Prefects at Springdale. By DORITA FAIRLIE BRUCE. Oxford University Press. 5s.

Susan's Last Term. By WINIFRED DARCH. Oxford University Press. 3s. 6d.

A Schoolgirl in Switzerland. By KATHLYN RHODES. Harrap. 5s.

The Winifred Darch Omnibus. Containing: For the Honour of the House; Cicely Bassett, Patrol Leader; Margaret Plays the Game. Oxford University Press. 3s. 6d.

Stories about girls' schools contain a truly astounding variety of adventures, but in one respect they are alike—the rampageous creatures depicted in their pages are one and all chockablock with gusto. Hither and thither, pigtailed flying, the giddy things career, verve streaming from them. Stirring doings are afoot on every page, for if it isn't a burglar in the chapel it's a spy in the swimming-bath. Can Madge reach the top of the spire? Will Miss Pringle find Myrtle's bull's-eyes? Has Prudence unmasked the music master? One reads breathlessly on and on.

In *Prefects at Springdale* there is a bizarre recluse called Miss Peters who enlivens her conversation with cries of "Hoots toots" and "Tits, lassies!" She offers a prize for the most go-ahead house. The girls are in a great flutter. What shall they do to be go-ahead?

"This idea at least," said their house-captain triumphantly, "is entirely my own. It came to me—just came to me—in a blinding flash. Girls, this house is going all out for domestic science." And they do too, eventually winning Miss Peters' prize, which turns out to be "a pot of exquisite Eastern workmanship, containing a dwarf cedar tree, gnarled into a perfect miniature." The names of some of the girls who receive this delightful award are Marion Banister, Louise Sturges, Isolt Kingsley, Tibbie Macfie and Fearnelith Macpherson.

The girls are all fearfully keen on a ripping games mistress called Miss Stewart, and can one wonder? "It isn't her beauty and her auburn colouring, but she's got that—that sort of glamour." In addition she has "a pair of wide hazel eyes, unconscious charm" and ever such a knack with a lacrosse stick. She goes for walks on Sunday afternoons with a plucky little junior called Faith Kersey, who has "eyes like drowned violets" and is an "undeveloped genius at throwing-in." It is Faith who canoes down the flooded main street to the rescue of two girls who are singing hymns while imprisoned in a ruined tomb. Need I add that the headmistress, a Miss Timmins, is simultaneously shinning up a high wall, and that she reaches the top?

Susan's Last Term is crammed with incident. There is a temporary headmistress, Miss Kirkley, who makes wild accusations:

