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functions and attendant elegances, is hymned as never before or since in literature. An ideal sensuousness recurs, of the sort which opium eaters claim for the influence of their drug. One of the most glowing passages in the book describes the opening of the first *hanmann*—prelude to feasting and love.

That such a book, in which every story opens a door to six others, should ever end, is itself something of a miracle. Midway we are seized by hallucination—a childish, Isn't it too big?—as the Persian king must have been who multiplied grains of wheat on a chessboard. With the six hundred and seventy-fourth dawn Scheherazade, for the six hundred and seventy-fourth time, falls discreetly silent, breaking the tale as usual at a point which will touch us off again. Curious how that formal framework—the thinnest of gilt borders, revealed to us knob by knob—holds the picture in; it arouses little curiosity (we have long ceased to care for her head), but at the end, when her sister leads in a nurse with three children to plead for her life, the frame, too, catches our eye, the picture is set straight on the wall. A Breughel of the East!

The merits of Mr. Powys Mathers' translation, done from the French of Dr. J. C. Mardrus, are by now well known (this is a revision of his original text of ten years ago). It is incomparably the best version we have, and once and for all, let us hope, this book has been rescued from Burton, who gave it its reputation as an unreadable florilegium of smut. Though working from the French, he restores the poetry, the fastidiousness and candid humour which are obviously in the original. Reading haphazard, I have met hardly an awkward phrase; many of the verses are charming. It may well come to be regarded, with Scott-Moncrieff's Proust, as the masterpiece of prose translation in our time.

For children there is Dent's *Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights*. It is abridged from Galland, 1821. Though over 300 pages long, it contains only ten tales (Sinbad and Aladdin account for a hundred pages). The edition I knew as a child had thirty-four. A fable or two about animals, other than "The Speaking Bird" and "The Enchanted Horse," might surely have been included. However, the best stories are here, and they are plainly told. The illustrations, as usual, fail to astound. G. W. STONIER

TRIED OUT

- Lucy Brown and Mr. Grimes.** By EDWARD ARDIZZONE. *Oxford*. 6s.
- Babar's A.B.C.** By JEAN DE BRUNHOFF. *Methuen*. 5s.
- Babar's Friend Zephyr.** By JEAN DE BRUNHOFF. *Methuen*. 7s. 6d.
- The Story of Horace.** By ALICE M. COATS. *Faber*. 3s. 6d.
- The Story of Ferdinand.** By MUNRO LEAF. *Hamish Hamilton*. 3s. 6d.
- The Baby Car.** By LOIS LENSKE. *Oxford*. 2s.
- The Bratchets.** By EDITH HOLDEN COOKE. *Oxford*. 2s.
- Whiffy McMann.** By BERTA and ELMER HADER. *Oxford*. 2s.
- About a Bee.** By HELEN TORREY. *Oxford*. 2s.
- The Hurdy Gurdy Man.** By MARJORIE WILLIAMS BIANCO. *Oxford*. 2s.
- The Story of Sambo and the Twins.** By HELEN BANNERMAN. *Nisbet*. 2s. 6d.
- Ink and the Milk; Mr. Buffin and Wellington; Bobby Robin and the Worm; Mr. Buffin and His Grey Mare.** By ROBERT HARTMAN. *Arthur Barker*, 2s. each.
- Lars in Lapland.** By H. and A. WADDINGHAM SEERS. *Harrap*. 2s. 6d.
- Mary Plain on Holiday.** By GWYNEDD RAE. *Cobden-Sanderson*. 3s. 6d.
- The Stairs that Kept on Going Down.** By COMPTON MACKENZIE. *Blackwell*. 1s. 3d.
- The Land of Little Rain.** By MURIEL FELLOWS. *Harrap*. 5s.
- Diggory Goes to the Never Never.** By MYFANWY EVANS. *Collins*. 3s. 6d.
- Mittens.** By CLARE TURLAY NEWBERRY. *Hamish Hamilton*. 3s. 6d.
- Potter Pinner Meadow.** By MOLLIE KAYE and MARGARET TEMPEST. *Collins*. 6s.
- The Gunnwolf.** By WILHELMINA HARPER. *Harrap*. 5s.
- The Magic Kite.** By KATHERINE FRENCH. *Blackwell*. 3s. 6d.
- My Little Nursery Rhymes.** By GILBERT COUSLAND. *Collins*. 3s. 6d.
- The Magic Collar.** *Lane*. 3s. 6d.
- Here We Come a-Piping.** By ROSE FYLEMAN. *Blackwell*. 2s. 6d.
- Come Out to Play.** By JOE WALKER. *Ward Lock*. 2s. 6d.
- I Spy Rhymes.** By WILMA HICKSON and ARCHIE HARRADINE. *Lane*. 2s. 6d.
- Rolling Along Through the Centuries.** By MARIE EMILIE GILCHRIST and LUCILLE OGLE. *Longmans Green*. 4s. 6d.
- The Book of Living Reptiles.** By RAYMOND L. DITMARS and HELENE CARTER. *Harrap*. 5s.

All of these books have been put to the only right and proper test: they have been tried out on children. The children in question were two small girls of five and a half and four years, less frequently another of seven, and a very small boy of four months, who registered violent gymnastic reactions in the arms and legs when confronted by the red rag of *Ferdinand*, which at that time had not been read and was thus not recognised as the story of a bull. Freudians please note. The reactions and opinions of these children were spontaneous as far down the list as *Lars in Lapland*. From that book to *The Magic Kite* there was a sharp lessening in interest, age alone being responsible. Mr. Cousland's book and *The Magic Collar* then gave them a tremendous kick, after which there was another gap, the verse leaving them luke-warm, and *The Book of Living Reptiles*, though in my opinion about the best book in the list, giving them the horrors and shudders completely. In these gaps parents of children from seven up to about fourteen (in the case of the Reptiles, older) will, with odd exceptions, find the books they are looking for.

I hate to say it, but M. Jean de Brunhoff has, in *Zephyr*, missed the target. I will explain all about *Zephyr* in a moment, but the slight deviation of M. de Brunhoff's aim lets in Mr. Edward Ardizzone, who scored an inner last year with *Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain*, and who hits the bull smack, this year, with *Lucy Brown and Mr. Grimes*. His method is the same as that used by M. de Brunhoff in the Babar stories and is, to my mind, the perfect method of story-telling for children of all ages up to ninety; by it, text is made subordinate to pictures. The method clearly borrows something from the film, and the text, as used by both Mr. Ardizzone and M. de Brunhoff, is merely a background commentary supplying slight guidance, a faint moral or a flavour of tears and sugar where necessary. This means that, unless the pictures are superb, the book is a flop. Mr. Ardizzone's pictures are first rate, and his pictures of Mr. Grimes, the friendless old gentleman who is befriended and nursed back to health by Lucy, are quite masterly in their colouring and comic untidiness (but why, Mr. Ardizzone, hasn't Mr. Grimes got a cracker at the tea-party? Answer that! This unjust omission has caused grave concern in the breast of a four-year-old); and the book is altogether a winner. It is hard to say why *Zephyr* is not so good. M. de Brunhoff has put into his creation the same inexhaustible passion for detail, the same prodigal love of colour and adventure, as he put into Babar. I fancy the reason may be zoological. Almost the whole secret of children's stories in which animals are heroes behaving and talking like human beings lies in choosing animals which are, in actual life, as unlike human beings as possible. Thus, at one end of the scale, Mickey; at the other, Babar. It is absurd and fascinating to see so small an animal as a mouse playing a piano, and equally absurd and fascinating to see so large an animal as an elephant leaning one elbow on the mantelpiece, because we know that in real life they would never do it. But it wouldn't be half so exciting to see a monkey doing the same thing, because such things are done by monkeys, as near as matters, in real life. In choosing a monkey to follow Babar M. de Brunhoff has, to my mind, made a mistake. *Zephyr* is too near us. The charm of Babar lay in that ponderous dignity, the gentlemanly gravity and the courteous tenderness of all he did. Huge but human, Babar was loved immediately. *Zephyr* has shown no signs of being loved, in my household at any rate, yet. However, there is a Babar this year, and very good it is. All that has been said in praise of Babar, by me or anyone else, goes for *Babar's A.B.C.* Into the same category as Babar and Mr. Ardizzone's books, come *Ferdinand* and *Horace*, bull and bear. Both are warmly recommended, though I must record a slight preference for the savagery of Horace, who made a meal off great-grandpa, great-grandma, grandpa, grandma, and so down the family tree, as against the docility of Ferdinand, who loved flowers and chewing the cud better than bull rings and matadors. Horace is also coloured.

The next five books on the list are uniform, and anyone faced with the problem of giving five equal presents to one family could do a thousand times worse than give this complete Hurdy-

Gurdy Series. At ten shillings they make a very good set, though they are of course quite separate as stories. *The Baby Car*, the illustrations for which faintly recall *Toy-Town*, will be quite safe for any child as young as three, and it is perfect as a beginner's reader. *About a Bee* and *Whiffy McMann* come into the same category, both good, with pictures more important than text but text just important enough. Whiffy is a kitten, and there is another kitten, boon reprobate to a dog and a hen, in *About a Bee*. *The Hurdy-Gurdy Man*, much more ambitiously illustrated by Mr. Robert Lawson, is more advanced than these, and I would back it as a favourite for a girl about nine or ten. Animals have here been replaced by real people, the Hurdy-Gurdy man having adventures in a too-neat town with its Baker, Policeman, Mayor and School Teacher, and the book generally recalls Hans Andersen. But *The Bratchets* score, in my experience, the biggest success. This is interesting, for though the Bratchets are animals, no zoologist could identify them. A combination of hare, bear, ass, goat, fox and wolf (and maybe some more), these mythical creatures, seven in family, have become favourites next to Babar, and Bratchet itself a household word. Such a success for a mythical animal, still farther removed from ourselves than either mouse or elephant, seems to emphasise still more the reasons for M. de Brunhoff's failure with Zephyr. The Bratchets, anyway, are first rate, and if you can give only one of the Hurdy-Gurdy series, give this. Another charming set is made up by the four Buffin Books, excellent as first readers too. I don't think Mr. Buffin needs any more introduction now than Babar, and all I can say to those who have never met him is simply go ahead and get this series and then see how long it takes you before your life is worried out for Buffins Nos. 1 to 4, published in previous years. Mr. Buffin is easily recognisable, on the covers of these handy little books, as a sort of combination of Mr. Gladstone, Farmer Giles, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. James Agate, and the funny thing is he knows a lot about horses. *The Story of Sambo and the Twins* also belongs to a series. The same sensible size as the Buffins, and more gaily illustrated, it has just a couple of tear-drops in it. If it came to an argument, I would in fact just prefer it to the Buffins, having a weakness for its gay-coloured miniatures.

In fact, colour is everything. Even when you advance up the scale towards the seven and ten year olds, and romance has to be touched with realism and the exploits of other children become more fascinating than human-playing animals, it is still the book with colour which hits the bull's-eye. But I hope I am too sensible to make hard and fast rules about the taste of children, and *Mittens*, which is not really coloured but only cloudily pinked, would stand ready to make a fool of me if I were. *Mittens* is all about a kitten, and the stuffiness of Mrs. Newberry's illustrations are a greater delight than the text itself. But if you are looking for colour go straight for *Potter Pinner Meadow* (inhabited by moles, lizards, tortoises, rabbits, mice, etc.); *Diggory Goes to the Never Never*, with its delicious tree-bears and kangaroos, *The Land of Little Rain*, a story of Hopi Indian children illustrated with all the broad pure colour of an Indian blanket, and for *The Gummie Wolf*, an excellent anthology of tales in which it is a little surprising to find Mr. Carl Sandburg side by side with Miss Fyleman and Mr. Hugh Lofting. Of the uncoloured books, in all of which text is more important than pictures, I find *Lars in Lapland* a tremendous favourite, and though I dislike magic as much as I love kites, I can say the same for Miss French's book. *Mary Plain* is new to me, and I can't say that the illustrations to the antics of this odd little bear excite me, though the text is good and the heroine already a favourite. And lastly, reluctantly, I must confess to absolute luke-warmness for Mr. Compton Mackenzie, whose book is far, far too literary, and then some, for children.

The next two books, both winners, rely almost solely on the beauty of photography for their effect. Nothing better is being done, anywhere, than Mr. Gilbert Cousland's photographic tales for children. His genius excels in taking the child's eye view of life, in giving freshness and enchantment to the living everyday scene. This year he takes a slightly different and obviously more difficult line in *My Little Nursery Rhymes*, but he succeeds triumphantly in recreating all the delicious beauty and half-real fancy of twenty-six traditional verses, and for pure imagination and artistry this is the first book on the list. *The Magic Collar* appears to be anonymous; but this in no sense detracts from its excitement or the sound workmanship of its photographs of children, dogs and a very English policeman, and the book has been a great favourite with the infants already mentioned. I would like to say as much for *Come Out to Play*, but verses for

children are like beef-steak: when they're not good they're not good. Fortunately those in search of verses for children can go with confidence to an excellent little anthology compiled by Miss Fyleman, who in *Here we Come a-Piping* has collected together poems by Christina Rossetti, John Clare, Stevenson, Kingsley, Lewis Carroll, Walter de la Mare and about a score of others. I am as sure of the success of this as I am unsure of the *I Spy Rhymes*, in which the illustrated verses are minus about half the rhyme endings, the game being to fill them in by the help of the pictures. My criticism of this is that it is all too difficult for the very young and will probably be reckoned all too cissy for those old enough to do it. A hit-or-miss book, this. But those who think finding the missing rhyme a cissy game ought, I think, to fall hard for *Rolling Along*, the history of wheels through the centuries, from the wheels of primitive chariots down to the wheels of streamlined trains to-day. A man's book, this, first rate in every way, from America.

Also from America comes what is, to my mind, the best book of the whole bunch. *The Book of Living Reptiles*, though it gives my own children the shudders, horrors and willies, is a book that appeals at once to the imagination and intelligence, satisfies a desire for knowledge and beauty, and is a geography, encyclopaedia and adventure all in one. It describes, in sensible and unpretentious text, and in some remarkably vivid colour-maps, the extant reptiles of North, South and Central America, the Galapagos Islands, the West Indies, Europe and England, Africa and Madagascar, India and Malaya, New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand. Snakes, lizards, crocodiles, terrapins, iguanas, turtles and dragons crawl all over it in vivid orange and pink and blue and tropical green. An unusual book. But you feel sure your son would not like it? You are afraid your daughter would have the nightmare? Don't worry. I guarantee that if you buy this book your son or daughter, or anybody else's son or daughter, will stand precious little chance of getting a look in, let alone a nightmare, as long as you are about. H. E. BATES

"BIGGLESWORTH! THEY WOULDN'T DARE!"

Biggles—Air Commodore. By CAPTAIN W. E. JOHNS. Oxford. 3s. 6d.

Jagers Swoops Again. By JOHN TEMPLER. Oxford. 2s.

When I was King. By G. I. WHITHAM. Blackie. 5s.

The Schoolboy King. By MARK DALLOW. Nelson. 3s. 6d.

Robber Castle. By DIANA PARES. Harrap. 3s. 6d.

Flag of the Desert. By HERBERT BEST. Blackwell. 5s.

Tales of St. Cedrics. By L. C. DOUTHWAITE. Nelson. 3s. 6d.

The Richard Bird Omnibus. Oxford. 3s. 6d.

A lot of important news never seems to get into the papers. That business, for instance, of the French battleship bombed off Tilbury; the unnamed Power (can you guess, boys?) with a submarine base in the Indian Ocean; the infant King of Bolko Vornia kidnapped in the middle of the hols, and the infant King of Sylvania on the very first day of them. "But Bigglesworth!" cries Colonel Raymond of the Yard, "They wouldn't dare!" Wouldn't they, the poor fools! Armed with kris and sandbag and seaplane, they haven't a hope against Biggles's pipe and grin. Stalin and his gang might as well attack Peter Fleming.

Mr. Herbert Best, describing his hero, may also be describing an author of the post-Ballantyne school. Bill Griffiths, he says, absurdly pink for all his years in West Africa, settled back in his long deck-chair, sun-helmet and shot-gun beside him on the floor. And he wagged his ears.

The wagging continued, painstakingly, persistently, and his round pudgy face wore an unwonted expression of intense concentration. But the portrait must be enlarged. It must include so much accurate knowledge of gunnery and aeroplane design, such intimate acquaintance with joystick and petrol leads, that I don't see how the fellow can avoid being a swot. He grins and growls and grunts; in moments of conscious grandeur he replies quietly: but he seldom speaks. He exclaims "Jumping mackerel!" He is fond of jokes.

Smack. . . The chair tilted over and the Winkle, losing his balance, fell back into the fireplace.

Apart from a rather weather-beaten sister he naturally knows no women. And I strongly suspect him of being a road-house man, a leatherette settee man, an inhabitant of Weybridge.