

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"MAGPIE."*

A charming story and one that we can recommend with confidence. Baroness von Hutten is noted for her delightful characterisation of child life, and "Magpie" is no exception to her success. Indeed the charming and humorous drawing of the child alone would render the book noteworthy, but there are besides many other attractive persons, to say nothing of the brightness of its literary style. It is written in the first person, and the *raconteur* is an elderly and fairly well-to-do bachelor.

He was, on our introduction to him, waiting for his clean waistcoat to be sent from the laundry before he could complete his toilet, as he was dining out. "I had no waistcoat, but I should have one, Brankles, the peerless Brankles, would bring it. She always did."

It was Magpie who at the eleventh hour brought the garment. Mrs. Brankles had perpetrated twins the night before, hence the strange messenger. "Beyond observing that she was fat, very fat indeed, I had hardly time to notice her. We had gone down the first pair of stairs, I thinking that with any luck at all I should be able to reach Grosvenor Place by eight, when she made an arresting remark. 'I like,' she said with an audible sniff, 'the smell of this place.' That was Magpie all over; she was always unexpected. I bade her come with me in the taxi. 'I will take you as far as Buckingham Palace Road,' I explained, and on seeing her face I blushed for the disgraceful old vehicle into which I helped her. It should have been a gold coach with a rose-coloured interior.

"As we made our way through the thick clotted traffic she talked, bless her, how she talked!

"She was nearly eleven. She lived in Blantyre Buildings where Mrs. Brankles lived. Mrs. Brankles was very nice wasn't she? And didn't she look like a currant bun? She lived with her father who was a painter. He didn't paint much. She had no mother. She had reason to believe she died before she was born."

It is not a usual thing for well-to-do elderly gentlemen to give little laundry messengers a lift in their taxi when on their way out to dinner, and it is the unusual that is always so refreshing. There is a good deal of like atmosphere in this story.

"Mag and I were friends from the first."

Truth compels me to say that physically she was not at that time all that I could have wished. If I had had my own way she would have been slim—even skinny—rather than the over-otund person she actually was. To put it bluntly, Miss Pye, at the age of eleven, was extremely fat. She bulged; her cheeks bulged; and her legs were awful. Her eyes, of course, were already beautiful

* By Baroness Von Hutten. (Hutchinson & Co., London.)

—clear hazel eyes with an odd sort of bluish shadow over them; her eyelids were then, as now, her only real extraordinary beauty. They are thick, smooth, velvety things which open and fold back without crumpling.

Mag's father, as a parent, was a negligible quantity.

Mr. Quest decided to undertake her education. In conjunction with Madame Aimée, who lived in the rooms over Mag., they arrange a scheme to this end.

Mag listened politely.

"Who's going to take care of father?" she said. "You see he has his breakfast at half past nine, and then, a little after ten, I have to get him off to work. Then I have to make his bed, and sweep and dust; then I have to do some shopping; and once a week, of course, I do the washing and ironing. Then father has his lunch at one, and at two I stroke his head until he goes to sleep; and then I come up to Madame Aimée and do her shopping; and then——"

"For goodness sake be quiet," I burst out. "Do you never have a moment to yourself?"

"It's all to myself up to now," she answered. "I only wondered when you meant me to learn all those things."

Don't you want to learn more of Mag? Well, you would be well advised to read the whole of this charming story, which contains besides other romances and several surprises.

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

March 13th and 14th.—Central Midwives Board. Penal Cases, Special Meetings. Board's Offices, Queen Anne's Gate Buildings, Dartmouth Street, S.W. 11 a.m.

March 15th.—Central Midwives Board. Monthly Meeting. Queen Anne's Gate Buildings. 3.30 p.m.

March 17th.—Irish Nurses' Association. Annual Meeting. 34, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin.

WORD FOR THE WEEK.

Mistrust a state of hopelessness and depression because you are then under the influence of a bad spirit; but when your heart is light and you feel strong and joyous, go forward, for God is with you.—*S. Ignatius Loyola.*

PAPER SUPPLY RESTRICTIONS.

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)