

Vinegar Tom about a great fat wicked thieving cat who, when life (in the shape of Police Dog Dan) gets too hot for him turns to mousing to earn an honest bowl of cream. David Fisher is an accomplished draughtsman and his characters leap from the page—his only mistake is that when the police fail to recognize Vinegar Tom (in the text) because "he's almost black . . . from crouching behind the books" the drawing shows him as blatantly orange as ever.

Dan McDougall and the Bulldozer wins next place because it is the only book in the entire collection about a machine. Even so, it is set in Australia, so there are difficult bits about "the iron barks and the stringybarks and the box-trees . . . the red gums and the blue gums and the scribbly gums. . .". Still, a machine is a machine, and boys will be grateful. Gerald Rose's drawings are always good, and it is he and his wife who have produced *St. George and the Fiery Dragon*; somehow it seems a shame to spoof the gallant knights of long ago before the children have had a chance to read their more traditional adventures.

The Happy Lion is one of the Duvoisin's nicest creatures (Louise Fatio is M. Duvoisin's wife), and Francophiles will welcome the French text of *Le Bon Lion* as much as his newer adventures in Africa.

ONE EYE ON THE POT

Four books aiming somewhere near the six year mark pose the question once again whether or not writers and artists who normally set their sights at a grown-up world make good storytellers for children. The conclusion seems to be, so far as these particular writers are concerned, that they do not.

The most successful of the four is also the only novice—Anthony Abrahams, who with the help of his sister (who provides the drawings) has created an agreeable new character in *Polonius Penguin Comes to Town*. The shadow of Ardizzone lurks not far away, but there is no blame in following a master. Polonius, the only penguin who is afraid of the sea, leaves his water-happy relations at the South Pole and stows away in a ship!

"Pleese, sir", said the sailor. "Beg to report, sir, that I've found a stowaway, sir."

"Then send him home again", said the Captain sternly.

"Please, sir, we've already sailed fifty miles away from his home", replied the sailor.

"Bother", said the Captain. "We can't go back just for a stowaway. He will have to come with us to London. But he will have to work hard to pay for his journey."

And so he does. Arrived at the Port of London, Polonius is taken on leave by his sailor friend, and soon settles down to life ashore with seven-year-old Timmy. When it gets too hot he migrates to the fishmonger's and sleeps on a block of ice. Finally, Timmy teaches him to swim in the bath and he returns to the Pole a braver, wiser penguin. The narrative skips along, the pictures pick up every point, and the result is a splendid tale for reading aloud or to oneself.

The other three are strictly for the sophisticated. Best by a long way is *The Mad King of Chichihoo*, whose wit is mainly for adults, but there are so many good jokes that some will spill over on to the children, and

the drawings are splendid. The king neglects his kingly duties (not that the people notice, only the Court) and takes to cooking; alas, all stomachs turn at the sight of his dishes, and he has to advertise for a wife who will eat the royal fare and wash up afterwards. The ending is feeble, but perhaps there is to be a second helping.

Mr. Bates puts one on the spot. He cleverly discovered a young artist who had done wonderful paintings of Greek village life, and round them wrote a story: the result was *Achilles the Donkey*. Success was certain, and now follows *Achilles and Diana*, in which Achilles takes a wife. The pictures are as good as before and the book will sell like anything, but it is not a children's book. Mr. Bates has written a novelette, and his hero and heroine spend most of their time snoozing in the stable (which is asinine for snoozing).

Edward Bawden's effort must be one of the most unattractive children's books ever produced. Ruthless without rhyme or reason, cautionary but amoral, more leer than Lear and illustrated with peculiar nastiness, these nine tales were apparently conceived some time ago for the artist's own children. Heaven knows what prompted the publishers to bring them forth into the light of day.

ANTHONY ABRAHAM'S: *Polonius Penguin Comes to Town*. Illustrated by Hilary Abrahams. Dennis Dobson, 13s. 6d.

JOHN VERNEY: *The Mad King of Chichihoo*. Illustrated by the Author. Collins, 12s. 6d.

H. E. BATES: *Achilles and Diana*. Illustrated by Carol Barker. Dennis Dobson, 15s.

EDWARD BAWDEN: *Hold Fast by your Teeth*. Illustrated by the Author. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 18s.



From *The Criminal Career of Vinegar Tom*