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JOSEPHINE DASKAM'S "THE MEMOIRS
OF A BABY."*

“NEVER to have had a manuscript rejected” must be a heavy handicap for an author, when one considers how pathetically most of the masterpieces of literature have had to be peddled. Possibly, though, Mrs. Bacon’s reputed experience may refer only to ultimate rejection, which would give her a saving chance to slip into the class with the fellow who sent a story to twenty-five editors, waited a year, and then, beginning over again, had it accepted by the one to whom he had sent it first. All this by way of preliminary to *The Memoirs of a Baby*.

It is not difficult to see why a story of this kind should be accepted at an early stage of its career. It is excellently calculated to be popular—perhaps to win a place among the “Six Best Sellers”—nor will its vogue be due to the militant bad taste of “the average reader,” as some recent popularities would seem to have been. *The Memoirs of a Baby* is very bright and clever, and the characters in the pretty little domestic comedy—child, father, mother, maiden-aunt, and nurse—are all admirably done with convincing realism and compelling humour.

**The Memoirs of a Baby*. Josephine Daskam. New York: Harper and Brothers. \$1.50.

There is the humour of true things—ininitely more humorous than the humour of exaggeration affected by most craftsmen, possibly because it is more obvious, and the humour of truth carries with it a suggestion of the philosophy upon which it impinges. He who can see the simple, exuberant fun, of which even the grim side of life is full, can snap his fingers at Fate; which makes it all the more pitiful to note how most men and women—even among those accounted appreciated—must have their humour emblazoned with the union label, and how many of them are quite ready to adopt the union maxim of adjusting their standards to the capacity of the poorest workmen.

Mrs. Bacon is none of this. She is so genuinely unmechanical in her light vein that one cannot but wonder that she conceives it necessary to employ a *claque*. When I read something, chuckling gently and most healthily, I am naturally offended to find, in the next sentence, that several of the author’s creatures have the intrinsic impertinence to burst into raptures of mirth over what has very properly amused me. It is a poor trick; much worse than that of the fellow who laughs loudest at his own witticisms, because the latter may be moved by a spirit of catholic appreciation, but the other thing savours much too broadly of the professional dead-head, and a man who can see the point unaided dislikes having it rammed down his throat for purely mercantile reasons. A writer with so keen a sense of true humour as has Mrs. Bacon might well avoid such lapses, but then, I suppose the rarest quality of all is to be able to laugh at one’s own weaknesses. The self-centered attitude that inordinate success tends to engender is a dangerous peril, and I sincerely hope the author of *The Memoirs of a Baby* will be saved to us by having a manuscript rejected some day without any such fishy anticlimax as proved the undoing of her classical prototype Polycrates of Samos.

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