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MORE CHILDREN'S STORIES BY THE CREATOR OF "HEIDI".

When, in 1881, Johanna Spyri wrote "Heidi", that lovely children's classic which became a best-seller not only on the continent but also in the Anglo-Saxon world, little did she dream that in years to come her story would appear on the cinema screen and in television, these miracles of science that in her time lay hidden beyond the human horizon.

Johanna Spyri, born in 1829 at Hirzel, a village not far from Zurich, was one of the best known and much admired writers of children's stories. Like Jeremais Gotthelf she found inspiration in the life and doings of the ordinary, humble people of her homeland. She portrayed, with exquisite art, the men and women and especially the children of the mountain side and valleys she knew so well and much of her writing is concerned with farm labourers, goat-herds, cheesemakers, basket-weavers, wood-carvers and their daily life in their simple homes.

The story of "Heidi" on which her fame rests is, however, only one of the many children's books she wrote. A further selection of her stories, in an English translation, has now been published by J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., under the title "The Pet Lamb And Other Swiss Stories" at 10/6 net. These stories, eight of them, are collected in a well-printed volume of 244 pages with black-and-white illustrations in the text and a coloured frontispiece.

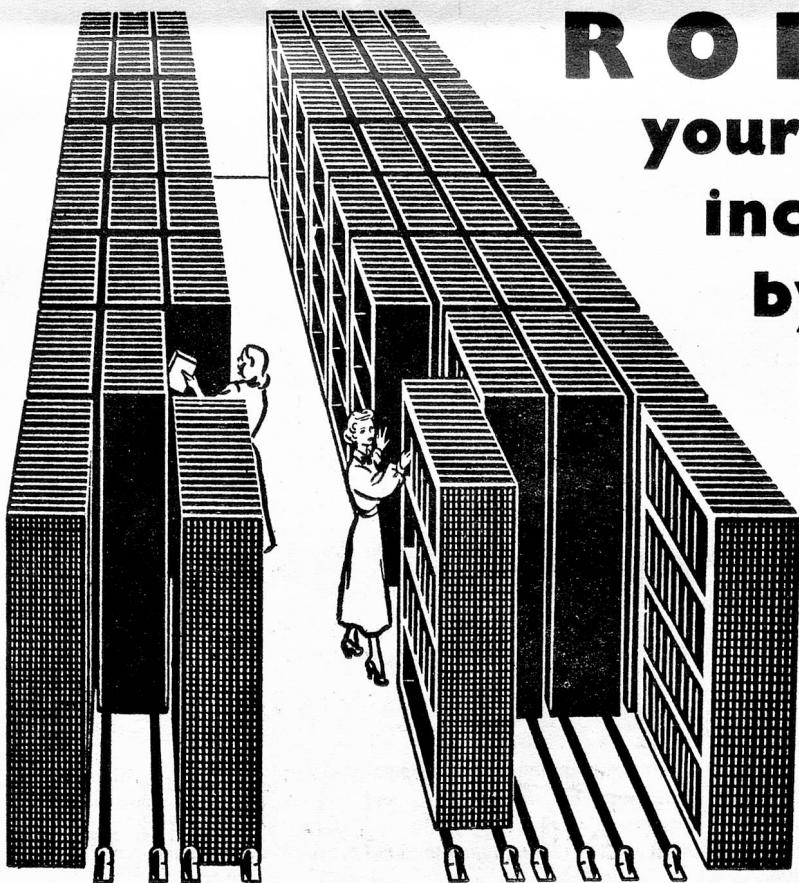
The "Pet Lamb" (its original German title is "Beim Weiden-Joseph") as well as the other stories in this collection bear unmistakeably the stamp of "Heidi". They deal with incidents and small adventures in the life of Swiss children brought up in Alpine villages, children, mostly of poor, hardworking and God-fearing people. She describes the beautiful mountain scene and introduces the simple, unsophisticated folk who inhabit its chalets and cottages, their family life, their joys and sorrows, their trust in God and their cheerful acceptance of an often hard lot. Above all she tells of the boys and girls who form the essence of the main characters in each story. She presents them with a delightful naturalness and a loving understanding of a child's mind that lends verisimilitude to her narrative.

It might be said that the stories are out-dated and old-fashioned. They are certainly a great contrast to the tales of space travel and the comic strips on which the imagination of the young generation is fed these days, but so are the timeless fairy tales which, notwithstanding all our progress, still delight the mind of the modern child.

The charm of the Spyri stories lies in the sincerity and the warm-hearted sympathy in which they are written, in their placidity and clearness, in their innocence and the implied but never rammed-down recognition of moral values and simple virtues. These things are as old as the hills yet ever fresh in their appeal to the human heart.

J.J.F.S. (January, 1956.)

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