Bet You Missed It—What do Babar and Richard Gere have in common?

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**GOOD-FOR-YOU FOOD IS GOOD AGAIN**

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel, Emeritus)

The wall between health food and haute cuisine has been kicked down. Fat is back, and veggie dishes are often the best on the menu. (Think char-roasted cabbage with gooseberry dressing, hazelnuts and ricotta.) Tumeric, chia seeds and kimchi are part of the global powerhouse of nutrition.

Much of this trend can be traced to Sally Fallon’s Nourishing Traditions (New Trends Publishing, 1995). It charted the good health of traditional cultures worldwide. Butter and other saturated fats were okay. Meat was all a question of balance.


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**BABAR’S LAST BOW**

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel, Emeritus)

Jean de Brunhoff created “The Story of Babar” in 1931 and followed it with six more. His son, Laurent, a more gifted artist, continued the series with 50 of his own. The latest, Babar’s Guide to Paris, will be the final book.

Laurent is 92, has lived in Connecticut with his American wife for 32 years. Phillis Rose wrote the text for the books and Laurent illustrated.

Babar and the Little Prince are the most enduring characters of French children’s literature.


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**PLUTOCRAT PROBLEMS: FAKE ART ANXIETY**

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel, Emeritus)

Being duped by an art forger is the ultimate humiliation for the rich snob. Yet it’s so common that any serious collector has been stung at least once.

Nicholas Taubman bought a Clifford Stills for $4.3 million that had been created by a starving artist in his Queens’ garage. Alec Baldwin is suing Mary Boone over a Ross Bleckner. John McEnroe and Wall Street titan Andrew Hall were ripped off.

The FBI estimates that of the $6 billion spent worldwide each year on art, 75% is fake. Is that truly possible?

At any rate, some people like hanging fake art and humble-boasting of how much they lost. Or they know their guests won’t spot their art as fake. Aristotle Onassis hung fake Goyas on his yacht.

Reformed forger Ken Perenyi says he does better now than when he was a counterfeiter. He’ll see his work in a magazine hanging over someone’s fireplace.


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**PROTESTANT BEER REFORM**

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel, Emeritus)

In the 16th century, the Catholic church controlled beer production through its monopoly on gruit, a mix of herbs and botanicals (sweet gale, mug wort, yarrow, ground ivy, heather, rosemary, juniper berries, ginger, cinnamon). This provided both flavor and preservation.

A 12th century German mystic and abess, Hildegard, didn’t care for hops, and the church followed her direction. But with gruit, the head on the beer quickly went flat.

Enter Martin Luther who quite liked the flavor of hops. And they were tax free.

Gutenberg broke the Catholic church’s hold on the Bible; Luther did the same for beer.


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**LET’S READ ABOUT VILLAINS**

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel, Emeritus)

Thomas Harris, Red Dragon (1981) (serial killer Hannibal Lecter); (2) Cornell Woolrich, The Bride Wore Black (1940) (Groom is murdered. Bride sets out to get his killers. Woolrich was a deeply troubled and deeply productive author. Lots of Hollywood work. Think Rear Window.); (3) Melville Davisson Post, The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason (1996) (Randolph Mason, rogue lawyer. Erle Stanley Gardner named Perry Mason for him.); (4) Donald Westlake, The Hot Rock (1970) (Comic humbling thief whose schemes all go wrong.); (5) Sax Rohmer, The Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu (1913) (Is this the first one? Rohmer wrote a dozen about the arch-villain over 40 years.)


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**CHARLESTON LIBRARY SOCIETY FOUNDING**

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel, Emeritus)

In 1748, craving connection to a more civilized England, 19 young men founded the first library in Charles Town. For a shared library fund, they kicked in five shillings a week, but a missed meeting brought a five pound fine. Their seal featured Minerva, Roman goddess of wisdom and sponsor of the arts.

Their membership grew to 100 by 1750. The library on lower King Street still exists with 3,000 members.