

They saw all the bears first. It was fun throwing them peanuts. Betty liked a black bear that stood on its two back legs on a rock. Its mouth was open. Betty tried to throw peanuts into its mouth. At first, it was not able to catch the nuts, because she did not throw far enough. It had to climb down and shuffle after them. The bear did catch one nut, but only one. It used its paws to help it to get the others that fell near it.



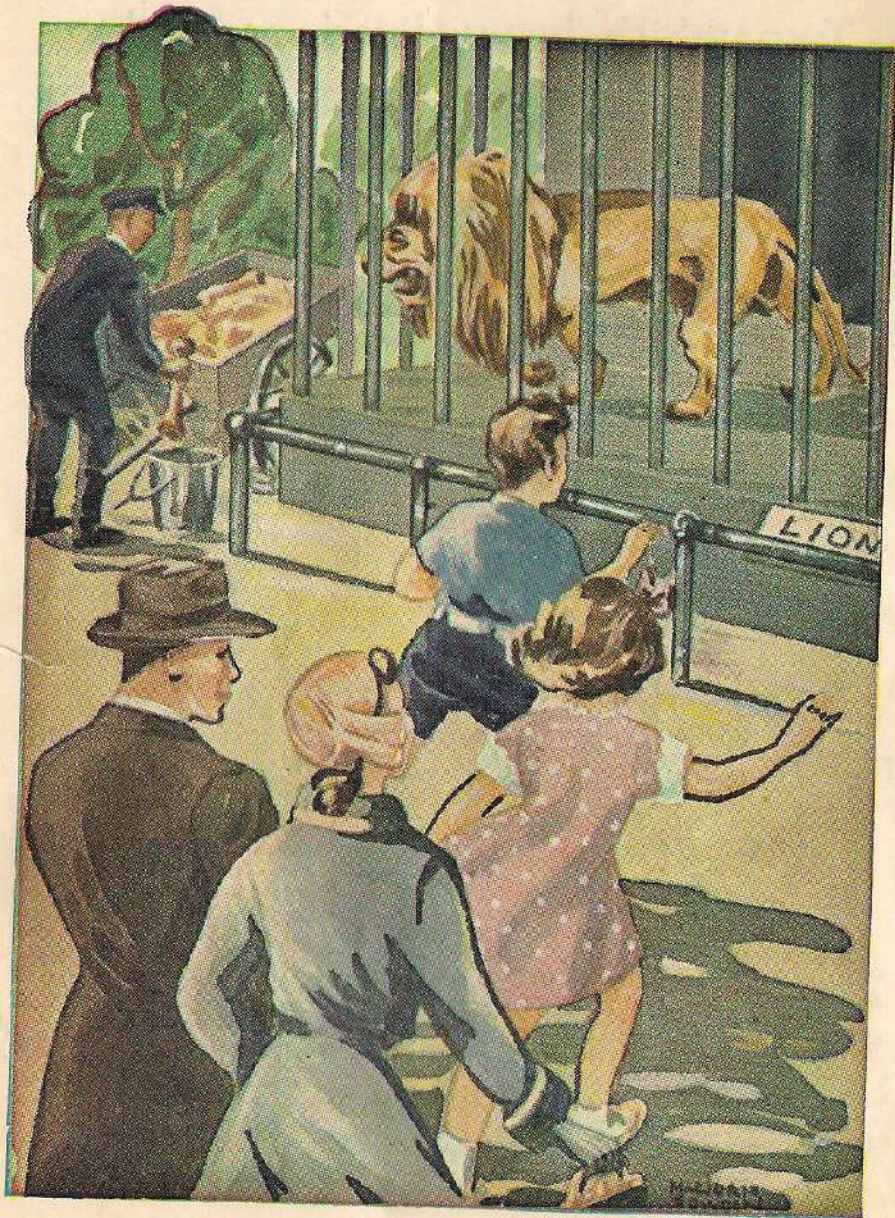
Two white bears lived next door to the three brown bears. They had a swimming pool. John and Betty kept throwing nuts into the pool. They liked making the bears swim into the water after each one.

Mrs. Hippopotamus and her baby had a deep pool in their cage. Mrs. Hippopotamus was fast asleep in it. She left no room for baby.

“Baby Hippopotamus does not look much like a baby,” laughed John.

“No, he does not,” said Betty.





Suddenly the lions began roaring more loudly than before.

"Just listen to those lions," said mother. "They are roaring more loudly than ever. It must be nearly feeding time for them."

"I wish we could see them," said John. "When is feeding time?"

"It is soon after three o'clock, I think," said mother.

"Is it three o'clock yet?" asked Betty.

"No," said father, "not yet. If we hurry to their cages now, we shall be in time to see the man feed most of them. Come along!"

Most of the visitors went to see the lions being fed. A man came with a bucket packed with meat. The lions roared still more loudly. While the first one was being fed, the other lions kept on roaring. They roared until they were fed, too. With the meat in their paws, they tore at it with their teeth.

“What big teeth lions have!” said John. “And how very quietly they eat their tea!”



The monkeys liked playing best. One sat with an old yellow jumper on its head. Others jumped about on swings and raced up ladders. One monkey began to tug at a boot tied under a swing. Suddenly the string came off. Down he fell on top of some old peanut shells.

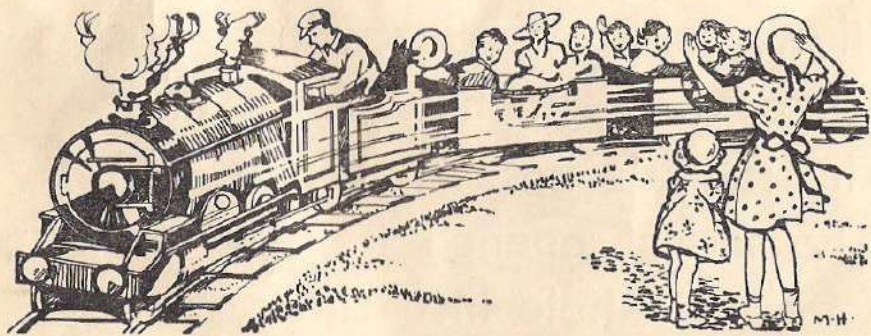
The rabbits had a small house that looked like a castle. It had a high wall round it. One rabbit was asleep in the sun. It looked like a soft toy. Betty let a nut fall over the high wall. It hit the rabbit's nose and rolled off. The animal opened its eyes and ran through a hole into the castle.

Suddenly there was a whistle.

“Did you hear that whistle?”  
asked John. “It was the train.”

They saw it through the trees.  
A man in the cabin of the engine  
drove the train. He had to drive  
round in a ring. His small dog sat  
on a seat behind the little engine  
and barked and barked.

Father gave John sixpence to buy  
two tickets. The children ran off  
together. They had a long ride.



Riding on the zoo train was fun,  
but it was more fun riding on Tiny,  
the big elephant. The children had  
to climb stairs to get on her back.  
A man called Captain Tom sat  
up near Tiny's head.

Tiny slowly rocked as she walked.  
The boys and girls on her back  
rocked, too. Bump, bump, bump!

At the end of the ride, a man  
on the stairs lifted the children  
off the elephant. Then Captain Tom  
took Tiny to the hay for her tea.  
It was her bedtime. She was tired.

“Come and see us another day,  
children!” shouted Captain Tom.



It was a bright, sunny morning in spring. Ian's big front garden was full of flowers. The trees were full of birds and their babies. A willy-wagtail was hopping about in a tin of water. A brown thrush was feeding her babies with worms.

Presently mother came to pick some spring flowers. Ian ran along behind her, with an old tin bucket and a spade. He was going to dig for worms because grandpa and he were going fishing after lunch. The thrush saw him and flew down.

Presently there was a whistle. It blew once. Then it blew again, and yet again. It was the postman.

"Good morning, Mrs. Bell," he cried, as he came up the street.

Ian went running to the gate.

"Good morning, postman," he said. "You never leave us any letters now. Have you any for us to-day, please? We live at Number Eight."

"I have one for Number Eight," said the postman. "It is for you. It has been sent by aeroplane, too. See the blue stamp near the date."

"It is from auntie," said Ian.





Ian sat on the arm of a chair near his swing. Mother helped him to read his letter. It said,

“Dear Ian,

To-day is Sunday, and we have been at sea for more than three weeks now. The sun is very hot here. Everybody is trying to get cool. The swimming pool is full of people. A few people are sitting along the sides of it, with feet or legs in the water. I am up on deck, too. I am trying to keep cool by just sitting still. I can see a few sea-gulls. One is on the cover of a life-boat, which is not far from my cabin.

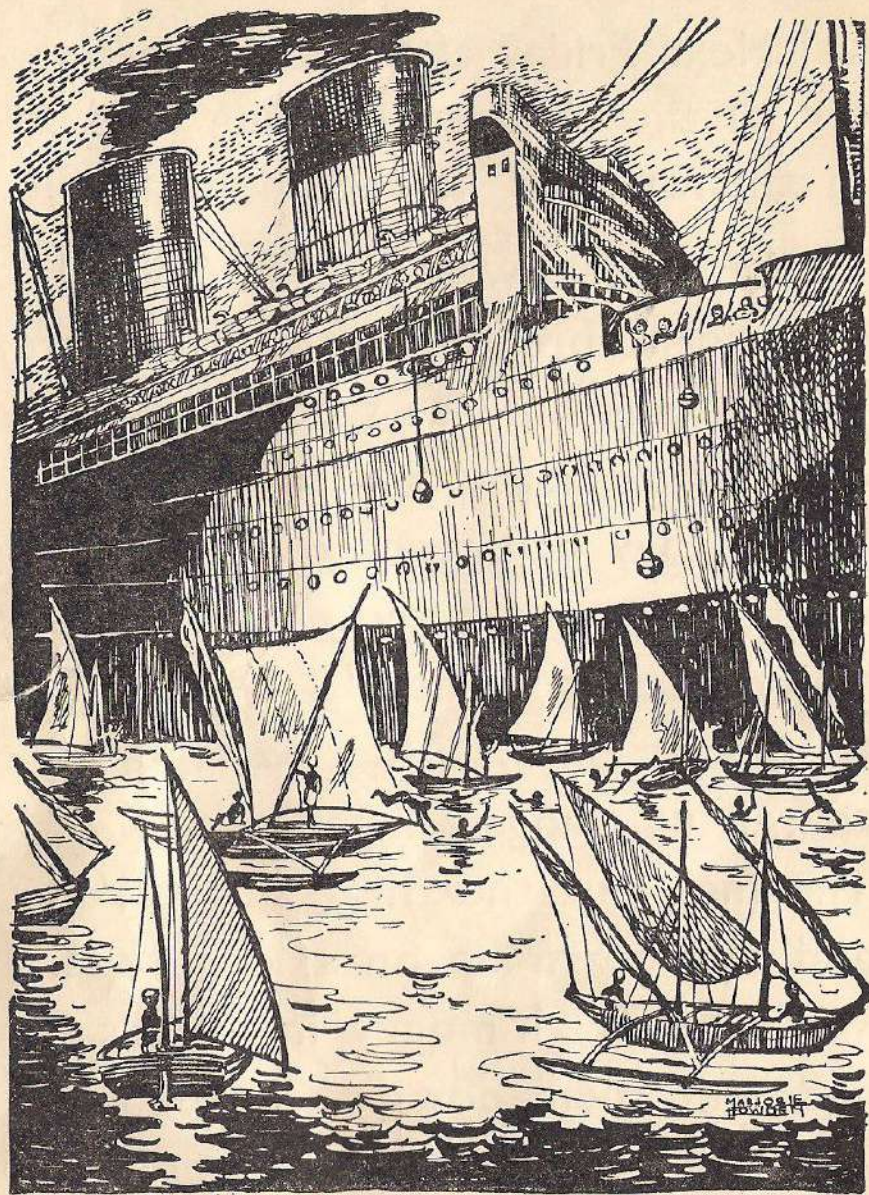
“We had a dance on Friday night, and the captain came as a visitor. All the deck was lit up in orange. Balloons and streamers were tied everywhere. We had bon-bons, too. We all had to wear funny clothes.

“Uncle dressed as an old woman. He wore my pink dress. He wanted to wear a hat, so I made him one. I used pink paper and some flowers. You should have seen his face! He made it look ever so old.

“I dressed as a clown. I wore yellow and blue clothes, and a hat like a tent. You should have seen the funny teeth I had in my mouth!

“Next Friday afternoon, a party for all the children is being held in their room. It should be fun.

“Last week, we called at Colombo. Many dark brown people live there. Before our ship had stopped, we saw eight small boats coming out to it. When they had reached the side of it, the men in those boats began to talk to us. They all began to talk at once. They were trying to sell us things. I got a bag. The men put the things in baskets and sent them up on a long rope. We put enough money in the baskets and sent them down the rope again. That is how we paid the men.



“A number of boys came swimming out to the ship. They did not want to sell us things. They wanted us to throw money. I threw a penny. Splash! Uncle threw five pennies.

“Whenever a penny hit the water, a boy would dive down, and come up with the money in his mouth. Then he would swim round about, ready to dive again. He wanted as many pennies as he could get.

“Yesterday, we saw men in hats that were like buckets upside down. Wear your beach bucket upside down on your head, and you will see how they looked. I sent you a hat yesterday, with black strings on it.



"We shall be leaving the boat soon. In eight days we shall be in England. It will be the middle of autumn there. We have had a most happy holiday on the boat. We shall not like leaving it.

"Uncle says he will remember to send a few stamps to-morrow. Tell mother to write to us soon. I must write grandpa a few lines to-morrow, and tell him our news. He always likes to hear from us.

"Give my love to all at home.

Good-bye, dear,

With love from  
Auntie Ann."

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"Our break-up concert will start at two o'clock, mother," said John.

"Grandma and I will try to be at the concert then," said mother. "But we shall have to hurry. Baby is still asleep in his cot."

"We are to have a break-up party to-morrow because that will be our last school day," said Betty. "We shall be home for seven weeks."

"There are seven more days yet to Christmas," cried John. "I hope I get an engine or a cricket bat this year. I love playing cricket."

"I want a book and a new doll with dark brown hair," said Betty. "My old doll has no hair at all."

John and Betty had lunch. Then they ran back to school together, to help to get the hall ready.

In one corner of the hall stood a barrel. A green tree grew in it. David's father had taken the tree to school. The children had made small presents and had taken them to school, to put on the tree. Then they had tied silver string, bells, stars, and tiny pink candles to it. Peter's silver star was at the top.



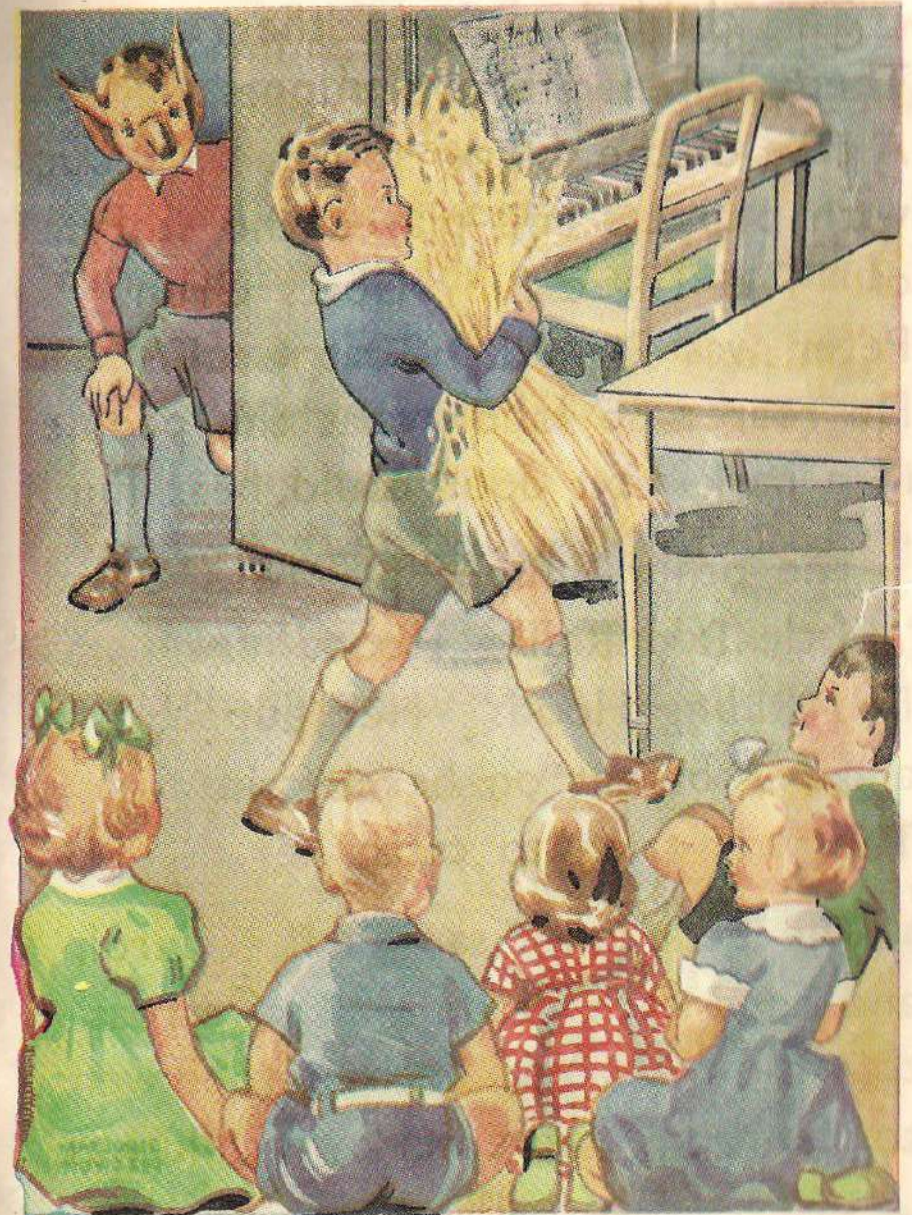
The hall was full by two o'clock. The mothers and other visitors sat in rows of seats along three sides of the hall. The children sat on the floor in the middle of it. The biggest boys in John's grade sat at the back. They were bigger than any of the other children.

Presently everybody was ready. The children in each grade stood up quietly. They sang "Good Afternoon to You" to all the people. Then they sat down again, and Miss Green had a talk to the visitors.

"We do hope that you will like our break-up concert," she said.



First of all, the children sang carol after carol very quietly. Then four boys from a first grade played the story, "The Three Pigs." Joy's brother was the wolf. He had ears, nose, and tail like a wolf. He blew so hard that his face went bright red. Ian's brother Bob was the pig who had to carry a load of hay. Bob did not carry it far. He kicked a leg of a table. Bump! The load of hay fell to the floor. Bob made his house there.



The children sang another carol. Then there were two puppet plays. A few of the bigger boys came out with puppets and played the story of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff." Peter was Big Billy Goat Gruff. He roared so loudly that the people in a park next door could hear him.

The other puppet play was called "Little Red Riding Hood." Ann was Red Riding Hood. Her puppet had a paper basket on her left arm. The wolf tried to catch her.

The little ones sang a new carol, and then each grade walked across to its own room. Each mother went to the room where her own child was.

Every child had made two gifts, one for mother, and one for father. There were cards, too. The gifts and cards were kept together with rubber bands. One card said,  
"A merry Christmas to mother,  
With love from  
Ian."

Betty gave mother a tiny parcel. She whispered, "A merry Christmas and a happy new year, mother."  
"Thank you, dear," said mother.



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On the way home grandma gave  
the children an orange each

"I have had such a happy time  
to-day, children," she said.

"And so have I," said mother.  
"It has been such fun coming to see  
you all. May I keep the gifts  
until Christmas and open them then?"

"Only seven more days to go!"  
shouted John. "Hooray, hooray!"



*W. H. P.*