

## SEVEN O'CLOCK STORIES



### Fourth Night: Just Before Supper

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In the afternoon the sun grows tired of his hot walk across the sky. Beyond the Green farm are the blue hills behind which he sleeps each night.

When he is almost there the three happy children go down to the barn to watch their four-footed friends come home.

Sometimes Frank, the hired man who helps Farmer Green, is late and does not go for the cows. All day long they have been in pasture. Sometimes they eat the grass and pink clover. Sometimes they wade in the little brook which flows there. But when it grows late, even if Frank does not come, they know it is supper time and leave the pasture.

When they reach the barnyard fence they stand outside calling to be let in. Then Frank comes and lets down the bars. They walk into the yard and through the doors into the big red barn.

There are ten cows but Jehosophat, Marmaduke, and Hepzebiah love four of them better than the rest. Their names are "Primrose," "Daisy," "Buttercup," and "Black-eyed Susan."

Now just as there are different kinds of chickens so there are several kinds of cows—Guernseys, Jerseys, Alderneys, and Holsteins.

"Primrose," "Daisy," and "Buttercup" are Jerseys and are a pretty brown. "Black-eyed Susan" belongs to the Holsteins and is black and white. "Black-eyed Susan" gives more milk than her companions but their milk has richer cream.

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Each cow has a stall to sleep in. In front of each is a box or manger. Frank climbs up the tall ladder to the loft, which is the second story of the barn, and throws down the hay. Then he takes his sharp pitchfork and tosses a lot of hay in each manger. You would never think cows could eat so much. One box of shredded-wheat would do for all the Green family and visitors too, but “Primrose” and “Daisy” and all the rest each eat enough hay to fill many shredded-wheat boxes.

Jehosophat, Marmaduke, and Hepzebiah love to stand in the doorway of the barn and smell the hay as the cows chew it. It is very sweet smelling.

They do not go too near the stalls, for while the cows are eating their supper, they switch their tails to keep off the flies. Once “Black-eyed Susan” switched her tail across Marmaduke’s face. It felt like a whip and he ran away crying. But “Susan” didn’t mean it for she is a very gentle cow.

And once Jehosophat came too near old “Crumplety Horn,” the white cow with the twisted horn. She kicked at Jehosophat and over went the pail of milk which his father had almost full.

The children like to see their father and Frank sit on their three-legged stools in the stalls and milk the cows. The milk spurts into the pails and it sounds very pleasant.

The milk is very warm when it comes from the cows so Farmer Green puts it in great cans as tall as Jehosophat. Then he carries the cans to the spring-house where it is cool, and leaves them overnight by the well. The children will drink some of it in the morning. Tonight they will drink this morning’s milk, which is cool now.

About the time the cows come home the horses come back too.

First comes “Hal” the red roan. A red roan is a horse that is red-coloured, sprinkled with little grey hairs. Then there is “Chestnut” who is called that because he is coloured like chestnuts when they are ripe in the fall, and “Teddy,” the buckskin horse. He is tan-coloured and has a black stripe on his backbone. Farmer Green got him from the West. There is a little mark called a brand on his flank which tells that.

“Old Methuselah” and “White Boots” do not do much work now. “Old Methuselah” is all white. He was pretty old when Farmer Green bought him so he was nicknamed for the oldest man in the Bible. “White Boots” is a bay mare. That means a red-brown mother horse. She has four white feet. By her

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side runs a little black colt with funny legs. Jehosophat gave him his name, “Black Prince.”

“Hal” and “Teddy” and “Chestnut” are very tired for they have been pulling the plough, the wagon, or doing some farm work all day.

Very glad they are to get their heavy leather collars and harness off and rest in the cool barn. They have hay to eat but they have been working hard so they have oats besides. Jehosophat, Marmaduke, and Hepzebiah eat oats too but theirs are flattened out and cooked. We call it oatmeal. The oats for the horses are not flat but round like little seeds, and are not cooked on any stove. Farmer Green cuts the stalks in the oat field. Then he takes them to the threshing-machine, which knocks the little oats off the stalks. Then they are put in bags to keep for the horses.

But the little black colt with the funny long legs does not eat them. He gets milk from his mother. He is just a baby horse, you see, but when he gets bigger he will have oats and hay too.

Now all the animals are busy eating, the pigs with their curly tails, the sheep, the lambs, the cows, the little calves, the horses, and the colt with the funny legs. It is time for the three happy children to have their supper so they run back to the house. Soon, very soon, they will be fast asleep in Slumberland, which is where the Little-Clock-with-the-Wise-Face says you should be now. Good-night.