

SEVEN O'CLOCK STORIES



First Night: The Three Happy Children



Not once upon a time but just now, in a white house by the side of a road, live three happy children.

Their mother and father gave them very odd names, for two old uncles and one aunt, which pleased the old people very much. Their names are all written in the big family Bible,—Jehosophat Green, Marmaduke Green, and Hepzebiah Green.

Jehosophat is just seven years old. His birthday comes on Thanksgiving Day this year. It does not come on Thanksgiving Day every year, of course. See if you can guess why.

Marmaduke is five, “going on six,” he always says. Little Hepzebiah, who toddles after her brothers, tells everyone who comes to visit that she is “half-past three.” She heard her brother say this once and she imitates all he does and says. Perhaps that is why her father calls her a “little monkey.”

These happy children all live in the country. They do not know much about elevated trains and subways and automobiles and moving pictures but they do know a great deal about flowers and birds and chestnuts and picnics and lots of things which you would like too, if you lived in the country.

Each place you see has its advantages. All good is not found in the country,

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nor all in the city. If we keep both eyes open we will see lots of enjoyable and beautiful things wherever we are.

The house in which Jehosophat and Marmaduke and Hepzebiah live is large. It has many rooms to sleep in and eat in and play in. It is painted white and has wide windows with green blinds.

Around the house are large trees. The branches seem to pat the house lovingly and to protect the children when the sun is too hot or the rain comes down too fast.

They are fine for swings and bird-houses, these trees, and some throw down acorns and others cones and soft pine needles for the children to play with.

Behind the house and gardens are red barns, chicken yards—and oh lots of animals,—the three dogs, Rover, Brownie, and little yellow Wienerwurst and all the rest. You will come to know them later. Each has his funny ways and queer tricks just like people. Around the house are fields with growing plants and oh—we almost forgot the pond where Jehosophat and his brother sail boats.

Mother, that is Mrs. Green, is not too thin nor yet too plump. She is just what a mother ought to be, with kind, shining eyes, and soft cheeks. She is always cooking things or doing things for Jehosophat and Marmaduke and little Hepzebiah.

Father—the neighbours call him Neighbour Green—is very strong. He can lift big weights and manage bad horses. He can do lots of work and yet somehow he finds time to do things for the children too.

His eyes are blue, while mother’s are brown. When he laughs, Marmaduke thinks it sounds like the church-bells on Sunday. Once he had a moustache but that went when mother said he would look younger without it. Now sometimes, when he works hard, he does not have time to shave every day. On Sunday mornings Hepzebiah loves to watch him take the brush and cup. The cup has flowers painted on it. When he turns the brush in the cup it makes something like whipped cream, or the top of mother’s lemon pies.

And after he takes it off with the razor his face is red and shiny and smooth. Hepzebiah always likes to kiss her father, but she likes to kiss him best on Sunday mornings.

Tonight you have met all the family so we must stop for the clock says “after seven.” Tomorrow we will meet all the animals and they are really part of the family too.