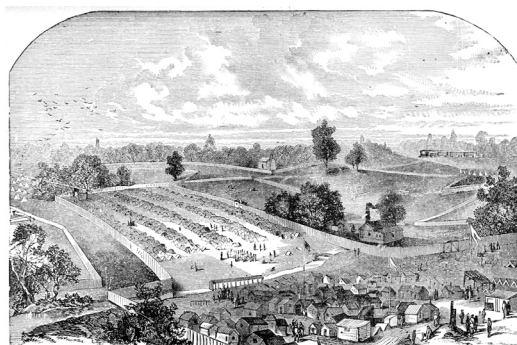


## SEVEN O'CLOCK STORIES



### Seventeenth Night: The Circus Comes to Town

---



Mother Green and Father Green were fast asleep in the White-House-with-the-Green-Blinds. The Toyman was fast asleep too. Rover and Brownie and Wienerwurst lay curled up in their kennels, with their eyes tight shut. On their poles in their house all the White Wyandottes perched like feathery balls, their heads sunk low on their breasts. On the roof cuddled the pretty pigeons, all pink and grey and white. In the barn Teddy, and Hal, and Methuselah, and Black-eyed Susan, and all the four-footed friends of the three happy children, rested from the cares of the day. Hepzebiah never stirred in her crib, and Jehosophat lay dreaming of something very pleasant.

But the crickets, and the katydids, the scampering mice, and the big-eyed owls, and the little stars, snapping their tiny fingers of light up in the sky, and Marmaduke—they were awake.

He had played very hard that day and he had leg-ache. Mother had rubbed it till it felt better and he fell asleep, but now it began to hurt again and he woke up. The Little-Clock-with-the-Wise-Face-on-the-Mantel struck, not seven times but four. It was long past midnight—it was four o'clock in the morning!

But Marmaduke didn't call his mother. He thought that it would be too bad to wake her up from that nice sleep. So he just tried to rub his leg himself.

## *Seven O'Clock Stories: Seventeenth Night*

---

It was then that he heard that far-off noise like a rumble of thunder. But it wasn't thunder. It was something rolling over the bridge down the road.

Marmaduke sat up in bed and looked out of the window into the dark shadows of the trees.

There was another rumble, and another and another. There must be, oh, so many wagons rolling by in the night. Then he heard the sound of horses' hoofs on the road, the clank of rings and iron trace chains.

He rubbed his eyes this time and looked hard out into the darkness.

Yes, he could see the tops of the big wagons, moving slowly past, under the trees and over the road.

It was a strange procession and he just had to jump out of bed, forgetting all about his leg-ache. He ran to the window, pressing his little turned-up nose against the panes.

Though it was dark still it must have been near morning. The moon was just going down behind the Church-with-the-Long-White-Finger, that finger which always kept pointing at the sky. The Old Man-in-the-Moon looked very tired and peaked after sitting up so late.

There were so many of the wagons and so many horses. They must stretch way back to the school-house, and miles and miles beyond that, Marmaduke thought.

The horses seemed very tired, for they plodded along slowly in the dark, and the drivers almost fell asleep, nodding on their seats. They looked just like black shadows.

Under the axles of the wagons were lanterns, swinging a little and throwing circles of light on the road.

Now and then one of the drivers spoke roughly to the horses. And sometimes Marmaduke heard strange noises like the sleepy growls of wild animals. Perhaps they were in those wagons!

Then Marmaduke laughed. He knew what it was. They were circus wagons! The circus was coming to town! The Toyman had told him all about it, that very day.

Once, one of the animals roared and the others answered back. Their noise was louder than the rumble of the wagon-wheels on the bridge. Marmaduke was frightened. But the roaring stopped, and all he could hear was the noise of all those wheels on their way up the road by the river.

## *Seven O'Clock Stories: Seventeenth Night*

---

Then the last wagon passed and Marmaduke went back to bed and fell asleep.

But the long procession rolled on and on till it reached the church. There was a large field nearby. Into it the wagons turned and all the horses were unhitched.

Then the cooks started fires in the stoves on the cook-wagons, and all the strange men and women had coffee. And then, just as the Sun was coming up and the night was all gone, they went to work.

Up in the centre of the field they raised three tall poles. They were almost as high as the Long White Finger of the Church. They drove many stakes into the ground. And around the tall poles they stretched almost as many ropes as there are on a ship.

Then they unrolled the white canvas and, when the Sun was just a little way up in the sky and the morning was all nice and shiny and bright, the great white tents were ready for the circus.

Back in the White-House-with-the-Green-Blinds, Marmaduke was eating his oatmeal. He asked a question that he very often asked:

“What do you think I saw?”

“Another dream?” said Jehosophat.

“No, it was real ,” replied Marmaduke. “I saw a lot of wagons, hundreds ‘n thousands, in a big line miles long. And there were wild animals in the wagons.”

“I’ll bet that was a dream ,” his big brother insisted, but the Toyman said:

“No, it wasn’t a dream, it was the circus coming to town.”

Then Father spoke up:

“That’s so, I most forgot.”

He looked at the Toyman:

“Frank,” he said, “I’ve got to go over to the Miller farm to buy some yearling steers. You’ll have to take the youngsters to that circus.”

The Toyman didn’t seem worried about that. He looked just “tickled,” “like a boy himself,” Mother said.

So, after dinner, old Methuselah was hitched up, and away they drove,—the Toyman, Jehosophat, Hepzebiah, and Marmaduke, with little Wienerwurst, as usual, in back. He was very happy, barking at all the carriages hurrying up the

## *Seven O’Clock Stories: Seventeenth Night*

---

road to the circus.

They came to the field with the big white tents and were just going to turn in, when they heard music way off in the streets of the town.

“Why, I most forgot,” said the Toyman to Jehosophat. “There’s the circus parade over on Main Street. In the big city they have the parade and the circus all in one big building, but in the country towns they have the parade first in the street, and the performance after, in the tents.”

“Tluck, tluck!” he called to Methuselah, and jog, jog, jog, the old horse trotted into town. In Uncle Roger’s barn the Toyman unhitched him, and gave him some hay and some oats too, for it was a grand holiday. Then hand-in-hand the Toyman and the three happy children hurried over to Main Street.

So many people were crowded on the sidewalk that the children could hardly see. But Jehosophat ducked under the stomachs of two big fat men and sat on the curb-stone. And the Toyman held Marmaduke on one shoulder and Hepzebiah on the other. He was very strong. From their high perch they could look right over the heads of all the people at that great circus parade.

Hark! They were coming!

First the band. They were dressed in gay uniforms of red and blue, with gold tassels too, and bright brass buttons.

Ahead of them marched the leader of the band—the tall Drum Major. He had on a high fur cap, twice as big as his head. In his hand he swung a long black cane, called a “baton.” It had a gold knob on it, bigger than a duck’s egg.

He raised the cane and the music began!

Trrat——trrat——trrat——trrat——trrat ! went the little drums.

Boom——boom——boom——boom——boom ! went the big bass drum.

hum—

hum—

hum—

Hum—

hum—hum !

sounded the shiny horns.

ter-loo

ter-loo

ter-loo

## *Seven O’Clock Stories: Seventeenth Night*

---

Loo-loo-loo

ter-loo-loo !

gaily whistled the little fifes.

Then they all sounded together in a grand crash of music that made all the people happy and excited, and they almost danced on the sidewalk.

And all the time the tall Drum-Major kept twirling that baton with the gold knob on it till Jehosophat’s eyes most popped out of his head.

My! how he could twirl it!

But other wonderful things were coming now, marching by very swiftly,—ladies on horses that pranced and danced; cowboys on horses that were livelier still; a giant as tall as the big barber’s pole; and a dwarf no higher than that tall giant’s knee.

And great grey elephants, all tied together by their trunks and their tails; and zebras like little horses painted with stripes; and cages on wagons, full of funny monkeys, making faces at all the people; and lions and tigers, walking up and down and showing their sharp teeth.

Then something happened!

One of the circus men must have been sleepy that morning, for he hadn’t fixed the lock on that cage just tight. And the big tiger felt very mean that day. He snarled and he snarled, and he jumped at the bars of his cage.

Open came the door. Out leaped that wicked tiger right on the street, and the people ran pell mell in all directions.

The two fat men were so frightened that they fell flat on their stomachs. The barber shinnied up his pole, and hung on for dear life to the top. The baker-man tumbled into the watering-trough, and all the rest rushed higgledy-piggledy into the houses and stores.

The Toyman picked up Hepzebiah, Marmaduke, and Jehosophat, hurried them into the candy-store, and shut the door tight.

It was full of beautiful candies,—chocolate creams and peppermint drops, snowy white cocoanut cakes, black and white licorice sticks, and cherry-red lollypops. But the three children never noticed those lovely candies at all. They just looked out of the glass door at that tiger, walking up and down the street, a-showing his teeth and a-swishing his tail.

The tiger looked at all the people behind the windows and doors. They were

## *Seven O’Clock Stories: Seventeenth Night*

---

all shivering in their boots, and he didn’t know which one to choose. Then he looked up at the man on the barber-pole, and he was shivering too.

Then all of a sudden the tiger stopped.

“Girrrrrrrrrrrhhh !”

He saw the butcher shop.

The door was open. Some nice red pieces of beef hung on the hooks.

He licked his chops and ran into the shop and jumped up at the first piece of beef and ate it all up. He never saw the stout butcher, who was hiding under the chopping block. The butcher’s face was usually as red as the beef, but now it was as white as his apron, and his feet were shaking as fast as leaves in the wind.

But just as the tiger was gobbling the last morsel up, down the street galloped a cowboy

on a swift horse. He stopped right in front of the butcher shop.

Out went his hand.

In it was a rope all coiled up.

Around his head he twirled it, in great flying loops. Then he let it fly.

And it fell around that wicked tiger’s head and neck, just as he was finishing his dinner.

Then the circus men came with big steel forks, and they ran at that tiger, and they tied him all up in that rope very tight, and put him back in the cage on the wagon, while he growled and growled and growled.

So the parade started again and all of the people came out of their hiding-places, all but the fat men who hurried off home, as soon as they found their breath, and the old ladies who said they guessed they’d go to missionary meeting after all. A circus parade was too heathenish.

Soon it was all over, and the rest of the people hurried off to the field with the big white tents.

And what they saw there we will tell you tomorrow night.