

SEVEN O'CLOCK STORIES



Nineteenth Night: Wienerwurst's Brave Battle



Mr. Sun must have known that it was Jehosophat's birthday, he made it so bright, not too sunny nor yet too cool.

The three children, Mother, Father, and the Toyman, were all crowding about something which stood in front of the barn. The three tails of three doggies wagged as if they thought it was fine. Mr. Stuckup came to take a look. So did Miss Crosspatch and the Wyandottes; and the pigeons flew down from their house on the roof and perched on its seat.

It was something for Jehosophat, of course. It was his birthday, and he had tried hard to be good ever since he had had that talk with the tall man on the white horse in the picture.

It was something he had always wanted,—a little cart with a real live pony in the shafts. And the pony was all dressed in new harness, spick and span and shiny.

Not very tall was the little pony. His ears twitched just on a level with Jehosophat's head.

Jehosophat put his arm around his neck and patted his black coat, which was almost as shiny as the harness itself. He looked at the tail. It was nearly a yard long and very thick. That pony was certainly handsome. And Father had given him—cart, harness, and all—to Jehosophat for his birthday, for his very own, to keep just as long as the pony lived. And that was the finest

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present any boy could have—ever.

The name was a very important matter. The boys each had a dozen they could think of, but Mother and Father and the Toyman couldn't think of any. At least they wouldn't give any suggestions. They thought it was Jehosophat's right to name his own pony.

It was settled at last,—“Little Geeup.” Where-ever Jehosophat got that name nobody knew. I really believe he read a story once about a horse called that. Or perhaps he remembered one of the circus ponies with the same name. Anyway, that was the one he chose. So it can't be changed now, any more than Jehosophat's own, or Marmaduke's, or Hepzebiah's.

A moment more they looked Little Geeup all over, from the black mane on his neck down his sleek back to his fine full tail. A moment more they looked at the little cart, its bright red body with the blue lines around it, the wheels and spokes, which were bright yellow, and the shafts and the whiffletrees, which were yellow too.

Then they got in. Little Hepzebiah sat on the seat with Jehosophat. He proudly held the reins. Marmaduke sat behind, his legs hanging over the tail-board, with Wienerwurst wriggling on his lap.

“Tluck, tluck,” called Jehosophat. Little Geeup obeyed. The yellow wheels turned, and down the driveway they went, Father and the Toyman hurrying alongside, Rover and Brownie barking behind.

There were lots of fine carriages out that day, but never so fine a turnout as that little red cart with the yellow wheels and the black pony in the shafts.

Jhosophat didn't have to learn how to drive Little Geeup. Father had often let him drive Old Methuselah when they went to town, and the little black pony was quite safe.

At last Father and the Toyman stopped and waved good-bye. So off the children drove, up the road by the river.

“Where shall we go?” asked Jehosophat.

Now Marmaduke was thinking over something Tody the Clown had told him—about making other folks happy.

“Let's take Johnny Cricket for a ride,” he suggested.

The driver agreed, so they turned from the road by the river and drove up a lane. At the end was a house. It was a very small house and a poor one too.

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Here lived Johnny Cricket, the lame little fellow, who never could run or play like the three happy children.

There wasn't much furniture in his home, or much money either, hardly enough to buy him new crutches, to say nothing of toys that little boys like.

"Whoa!" called Jehosophat, in front of the gate.

Then he got out and knocked at the door.

It opened. Johnny's Mother was there.

Jehosophat took off his hat.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Cricket, can we take Johnny for a ride in my new cart?"

"Of course," replied she. "My! Won't Johnny be glad to go for a ride in that pretty cart! He's been very lonesome."

So out hobbled Johnny, all smiles. Crunch, crunch, crunch went his crutch down the gravel walk.

"Hepzebiah, you'll have to sit in the back with Marmaduke," commanded the owner of the little cart.

So the little girl climbed over the back of the seat and sat with Marmaduke and Wienerwurst. And they helped Johnny in carefully, and off they drove up the lane, enjoying the woods and the nice warm sun. Johnny enjoyed it ever so much, but not more than they. I guess the three children were quite as happy, for to make others happy brings the best sort of happiness.

At last they turned round and drove back.

They were just trotting past the Miller Farm when they heard a great growl.

Over the fields, with great leaps, a big dog was running. Now Jake Miller's dog, Prowler, was the worst dog in the neighbourhood. Often the three children had heard Father say "He ought to be shot."

And there he was—running straight towards them, and little Wienerwurst had jumped over the tailboard and out of the wagon, and was trotting alongside.

"Urrururur," growled Prowler. He had almost reached the gate. He was long and big, and really looked more like a savage animal than a dog. Pieces of chain hung from his neck and dragged alongside in the earth as he ran. He must have broken away from his kennel.

Through the gate he bounded, then stopped still and growled in suspicion.

"Out—out—out!" he seemed to be saying. He thought they had no right in front of his home, not even when they were driving on the road, which was free to all.

The three happy children and Little Geeup didn't like the looks of things

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very much.

“Here, Wienerwurst—come here,” called Marmaduke. He wanted his little dog to jump back in the wagon and be safe.

But Wienerwurst was no coward. Besides, he was a friendly little fellow, and liked to be polite to everybody, dogs and people too, even if sometimes he did chase the pretty pink pigeons and the White Wyandottes. But that was just in fun, of course.

So he just stood still and looked at the big bad dog and wagged his tail in a friendly way, and smiled.

But that big bad dog Prowler didn’t appreciate that at all. He opened his big jaws and showed his teeth and gave a deep growl.

“Out—out—out!” he repeated.

And then Wienerwurst gave his tail a wag, and advanced a step or two.

Quick as lightning Prowler jumped at him.

Wienerwurst didn’t run. Yet he was so little and the other dog was so big. And his ear hurt too, where the other dog bit him.

The big dog was jumping at him again and again and biting him too, but I guess Wienerwurst must have heard Father and the Toyman tell the boys once never to start a fight, but always to stand up for one’s rights, and never to be a coward, or run away.

That Prowler had no right at all to tell him to get off the road nor to bite him!

And so, though he was only a yellow dog and small and weak, Wienerwurst barked bravely and tried his best to fight off the big dog.

It wasn’t a very happy chorus of growls and barks and squeals. It sounded something like this:

“Gurrrrr—gurrr-uh—ow—ow—gurr—gurr—ow—wuf—ar—gurr—ow—wow—uh- wuf—xxx—x !!!”

Jehosopha pulled on the reins.

“We must stop that,” said he. “Hepzebiah you sit here.”

Out he jumped, but his brother was ahead of him, for Marmaduke loved Wienerwurst even more than they did.

At the big dog’s collar they pulled, and they grabbed tight hold of his chain, trying to drag him away so that he wouldn’t hurt little Wienerwurst. But he was very strong, that wicked bad dog. They couldn’t budge him at all.

But just then they heard the sound of wheels. They were glad.

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Help was coming at last!

A wagon drove up. It was the country postman, who delivered the mail to the farms, in a wagon.

“Whoa!” the postman shouted and out he jumped with his whip!

He ran straight for the big dog, and out of the gate ran Jake Miller too. I guess he felt ashamed of himself for keeping such a dog as Prowler. The two men grabbed the chain and whipped the big bad dog till he let go of Wienerwurst and ran back to his kennel.

Tenderly the two boys lifted their little friend into the cart, and drove home as fast as they could.

They forgot all about the pony and the fine new cart, just thinking of their poor hurt doggie.

Mother and the Toyman brought water in a basin, and the Toyman poured something from a bottle, which coloured the water all dark. With a little clean rag he washed out the cuts on Wienerwurst’s face and the back of his neck.

Then out to the workshop he went and brought back a little can. He unscrewed the top and took out some of the salve inside. It was coloured just like peanut-butter and was soft and healing. On each cut he put a little of the salve, then wound the little doggie all up in nice soft bandages too. And Wienerwurst licked the Toyman’s hand to show how thankful he was.

They made him a little bed, but he didn’t stay in that long. The Toyman was such a good doctor that Wienerwurst felt better already. Still he didn’t play very much that day.

Mother sent the Toyman over to the Cricket farm to ask Johnny’s mother to let her boy stay for the night.

He did—for three whole days—and great fun they had with Little Geeup, and the red dogcart, and the little lame boy, giving Wienerwurst rides to make him all well.

And Father and the Toyman made Jake Miller chain up the wicked dog—very tight this time—with a chain that would never break.

And soon that bad dog died, which was a good thing too. Nobody wasted many tears on him.

But little Wienerwurst got well and strong, and chased the pretty pink pigeons—in fun of course—just as fast as ever he did.