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FASTA DYES

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A Day In The Life Of— BERTRAM THE BORED BABY

(Written for "The Listener"
by M.B.)



We were watching our two-year-old the other day, and feeling grateful that we were no longer two years old. So boring to be a baby. And so we dreamt up that little horror, Bertram, the Baby with the Adult Attitude. The following is a typical slice of life as Bertram sees it. Needless to say, Bertram is a firm believer in His Majesty the Baby, so his use of the Royal Plural is significant.

Woke up at six o'clock as usual. A grey day and nothing particular to get up for, still we started making our usual bid for attention. Must keep one's parents up to scratch. When no one arrived inside five minutes began tearing little strips off the wall-paper. Feel confident that they will be on the spot promptly to-morrow.

Insisted on helping our father through his toilet, and threw all the towels in the bath. This seems quite an effective trick—results almost disproportionate to the amount of effort involved—must add it to our permanent repertoire.

The same old breakfast, porridge, toast, milk. To think that once we got a kick out of making squiggles with our golden syrup! Sometimes we could almost regret the callow enthusiasms of our 18-month-old self. How long ago it seems! After breakfast had quite an amusing time helping our mother to wash up. It was obvious that she didn't want us round, but the dear woman put a brave face on it because she apparently thought it would have a bad effect psychologically if she discouraged our youthful attempts at co-operation. We let her off lightly with only one breakage, and a cup without a handle at that. Interesting. We seem to be developing a social conscience. And after this we obliged by going to play outside instead of helping with the sweeping.

THE garden is quite interesting at this time of the year—everything budding and so forth. We collected all the spikes from the Russell lupins and several pansy plants and sat quietly in a sunny corner to pull them to pieces. Our mother came out in the middle of it, and looked quite distressed. Her eyes filled with genuine tears and she sat down beside us, took the flowers in her hand and said, "Oh, Bertram, how could you! See, you've hurt the poor little flowers." You'd think at her age she'd know that flowers are inanimate. Later on we found an old bottle, thrust the somewhat battered flowers into it, and presented it to her with a nauseatingly

photogenic smile. It worked like a charm. In fact we heard her telling the insurance man that you couldn't have a nicer-natured child. Though we certainly hope we'll manage to.

Lunch, and again we present that grand old Plunket-approved trio, carrot, potato, silver beet, to-day with the addition of Steamed Fish. Anyone would think we were a chronic invalid. Must see that she reads some G. M. Smith. Sensible chap that. Advocates a good solid mutton chop from the age of 12 months (us, not the chop). Perhaps she'll be able to turn on a better spread after April 1, though personally we can't think why parents should need financial encouragement to have children—aren't we a reward in ourselves? And it isn't as if we cost much to keep. Personally we just toy with our food. We've heard mother say it's a wonder we manage to keep alive, the little we eat. Still we'll probably manage to use up our 10/- in breakages and general wear and tear.

AFTER lunch we are expected to have a little rest. We allow ourselves to be put in our cot with all our new birthday books to look at. Amazing the tripe they put across children nowadays. There's something called *Charlie Chipmunk* for example. We never liked the name of Charlie, and speaking as a New Zealand child we are not interested in chipmunks. The other book is called *The Two Naughty Puppies*. Sounds as if it had a regrettably moral flavour. The illustrations, moreover, convey little without the text, and, fortunately we feel in this case, we can't read. So inconsiderate of people to choose such unsuitable books. Why not *Brick Bradford*, where every picture tells a story, or even better, something like *Smith's Weekly* with a few pin-up girls in it? We tear both our books up and throw the pieces, confetti-wise, into the air. When Mother comes in we will scream to be allowed to sweep them up with our birthday toy broom. Interesting to see whether she will allow us (good for child

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