



★ **BEGINNING** three years ago with about two dozen voices, the 42B Choristers number to-day nearly 50 children between the ages of seven and 17. Anita Oliver is the choir's conductor, and accompaniments are played by William Davie (violinist), F. Wilkinson (cellist)—Choristers themselves—and the studio pianist, Joy Stewart. The group shown above are the Junior Choristers, heard on Sundays at 9.30 a.m. The seniors broadcast at 5.30 on Sunday evenings.

of titbits for yet another kind nurse to take to Elizabeth.

The feeling grew that no trouble was too much for the patients. We had odd glimpses of a strange world centred on itself and turning inwards, somehow resenting the impact of those of us outside.

I found out why I couldn't see Elizabeth. The children's hospital was closed to visitors during the measles epidemic. Why couldn't the Sister have told me that? I spoke to a doctor friend.

"Oh, yes," he said easily, "I know. Some of them are like that. But you should see the parents they have to deal with. Awful pests."

I thought of mothers, not very wise, frightened, a bit hysterical. "But, Sister. . . ." "The door to the garden is on the left." Pests. I suppose so. I suppose I was, too.

I went to see the house surgeon. They saw us all together in the waiting room. They were mostly youngsters, looking full of knowledge and purpose, but not yet quite at ease with the witch doctor's manner. I felt again that the patients mattered tremendously, that all this huge place was just working to make Elizabeth well. It was we who were outsiders, in some way resented, and why not? We were the merely healthy.

THEN it began to be weeks. More letters, more little parcels, more fanciful desserts packed a little insecurely in cardboard boxes. And the precious scraps of news. I wondered if they realised, those kind nurses of ours; if they knew how we jumped to the phone, how we learned their bulletins by heart and re-issued them to our friends.

And now the news was getting better, always a little better. Under the guidance of knowledgeable friends, we took to the illicit pastime of window visiting. We stalked through bushes, and peered furtively through windows. Thank goodness Elizabeth's was open. She looked so much better, was thrilled to see us. She gave expert advice as to which starched figures could be safely ignored, which must be bobbed down for. It was

hair-raising, but wonderful for the morale. After a few times perhaps we got careless, for suddenly there was Sister at the window. "We don't want window-visitors," she said and shut it in our faces.

"That old Sister Snake," said Ann with feeling on the way home, "that beastly old Sister Snake."

At last she was convalescing, almost normal, home in a fortnight, in a week. To the last Sister really couldn't say when she'd be out. Complications might arise, one never knows. I timidly ventured to mention what the doctor had said to me. I was quietly set aside. Pests. All of us.

She came out the next day. Ann and I were in a flutter. We packed clothes and wondered if they would still fit her. Would she be changed? Would she be glad to be back? We gave the case to a smiling nurse and waited outside the ward. At last she came, walking very sedately and carefully in the unaccustomed shoes. She smiled rather uncertainly, little and yet self-possessed in the long high corridor.

Ann jumped at her and gave her a bear hug. I thanked someone vaguely, signed something, and then we were out in the car. In the back seat Elizabeth and Ann sat with their arms round each other, talking rapturously both at once. Elizabeth looked well, but very pink and white and fragile beside rufy-tufted brown Ann. I thought how careful I would be of her, how wisely I would feed her. I wouldn't be careless and let things slide as I seemed to so often. I told myself again how lucky I was. She was well again. Good old witch doctors. Good old high priestesses. Good old Sister Snake. Let them put on all the airs they liked. They'd cured Elizabeth.

In the back seat the billing and cooing changed suddenly to a passionate frenzy. Above it soared Elizabeth's shattering soprano.

"Ann, you're a beastly little rat. Mummy, Ann's took half my chocolate."

I relaxed in peace. The family was itself again.

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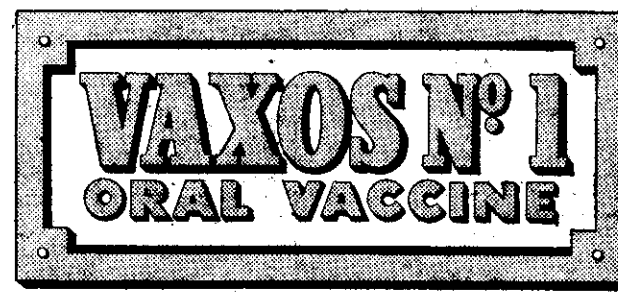
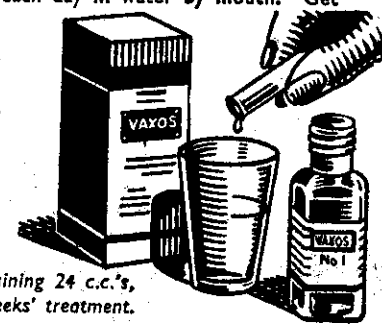
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