

A Holiday Page for Children

A Peep Into Animal Town Schoolroom

By Ralph Bergengren in the "Christian Science Monitor"

TINY TOM, as everybody in Animal Town called the youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry W. Bear, was a very small cub for his age, but, as his mother often said to his father, and his father agreed with her, there was plenty of time for him to grow into quite a good-sized bear, even if not one of the largest.

"Size," said Mr. Bear, "is not so very important if you are intelligent. He will grow, and he already has a splendid memory. If anybody asked me, Florabelle, I should have to reply that our Tiny Tom has a better memory than any other child in Animal Town."

"Nobody is likely to ask you, Henry W.," said Mrs. Bear, "so you will not have to reply. But I dare say you are right."

"I was a small child myself," said Mr. Bear. "But when I began to grow I grew like a weed."

"You're not so very tall now," said Mrs. Bear.

They were talking of Tiny Tom, because Mrs. Bear was about to make him a new suit for best, and of course she had consulted Mr. Bear before beginning to cut up any of Mr. Bear's trousers.

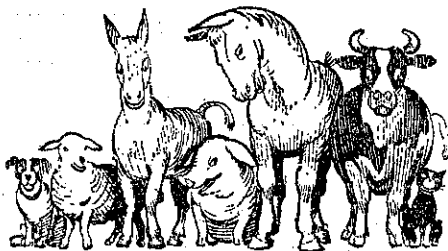
"When I was his age," said Mr. Bear, "Mother made me a new suit out of part of a pair of Father's old trousers. But just after that I began to grow like a weed. I grew so fast the suit was too small for me before it wore out, and the next suit took a whole pair of Father's old trousers and part of the coat. I've often heard her tell about it."



"He's a dear good child," said Mrs. Bear affectionately. "Why, he couldn't be a better child if he was as big as an elephant."

"He's a good child, all right," said Mr. Bear. Coming from Mr. Henry W. Bear that was quite the best thing that could be said for any child, and everybody in Animal Town who knew Tiny Tom Bear, and even those who had only heard of him, felt the same way.

As Miss Kitty Bear, who taught the Animal Town Public School and was a distant cousin of Mrs. John Bear, said to Mrs. William Henry Mouse, who was



chairanimal of the Animal Town School Committee, "I know how highly you think of me as a schoolteacher, Mrs. Mouse, but I sometimes think a great deal of our fine discipline, and the devotion of our little ones to study, should be credited to Tiny Tom Bear. Children are so imitative, you know, and the example that Tiny Tom sets the others is so excellent, and they all think so much of him, that I sometimes wish I could keep him from growing up. But, of course, that is an idle wish, and he will not be old enough to graduate for some years yet. But what a memory—!"

"Speaking of memory," Mrs. Mouse interrupted, "has his father mended that hole in the schoolroom floor?" For Mr. Henry Bear was the Town Carpenter.

"Not yet, Mrs. Mouse," said Miss Bear. "I must admit that his memory doesn't seem to be as good as Tiny Tom's. But it isn't a very big hole, and I'm sure he'll think of it some day, sooner, or later, when he's going by with his tools."

"I must make a note to speak to the other ladies of the School Committee about it," said Mrs. Mouse. "Have you a pencil and a piece of paper, Miss Bear?"

"I have a pencil," said Miss Bear, "but I haven't a piece of paper."

"Never mind," said Mrs. Mouse. "I will make a mental note."

"When I tell the children," said Miss Bear, "to be careful about a hole in the floor, they are careful about the hole in the floor, even during Relaxation Hour. But all the same, the sooner the floor is mended the better."

Mrs. Mouse must have mislaid her mental note somewhere, for she never said anything about the hole in the schoolroom floor to the rest of the School Committee. So the hole stayed in the floor.

Relaxation Hour in the Animal Town Public School came once a week, and when Miss Bear had first suggested it there had been some opposition in the School Committee. The three ladies, Mrs. W. H. Mouse, Mrs. John Bear, and Mrs. Sylvanus Squirrel, were holding a meeting at Mrs. Bear's house, as they always did, because there was no room in Mrs. Mouse's or Mrs. Squirrel's house for Mrs. Bear to get in.

"This Relaxation Hour," said Mrs. Squirrel sitting on the table, "is new to me. Of course I have all the respect in the woods for Kitty Bear,

but when I was a child and went to school we went there to study and not to relax. If we had to relax, we relaxed after we had got home."

"It is only one hour a week, Sarah," said Mrs. Bear, sitting in a chair.

"One hour a week," said Mrs. Squirrel, after figuring on a piece of paper, "is four hours and a fraction over every month. That's a good deal of relaxation, my dears. And when you think how much geography or arithmetic or grammar or history or current topics a child may learn in four hours and a fraction over, why, it seems to me a sheer waste."

"Kitty says," said Mrs. Bear, "that they learn more in the study hours than they did before they had any Relaxation Hour."

"I don't think you quite understand Relaxation Hour, Sarah," said Mrs. Mouse, sitting beside Mrs. Squirrel on the table. "When you and I went to school we didn't have any Relaxation Hour and so our relaxation was spread all over the study hours. That is how Kitty explains it to me, only then it wasn't called 'relaxation' but 'being naughty.' We relaxed by whispering to each other, and passing notes and putting on the dunce cap for fun and things like that."

"You see, with a Relaxation Hour once a week, Sarah," said Mrs. Bear, "they have all their childish play at once and get it over with till next week."

"Perhaps they do," said Mrs. Squirrel, "and I see plainly that I am in a minority. But I shall suggest to Kitty Bear that she at least add something of an educational nature."

So every week Miss Bear had one of the children speak a piece during Relaxation Hour.

"To-day we have Relaxation Hour," said Katharine Fox to Theodore Bear as they walked to school together. "And it's your turn to speak a piece."

"It's my turn all right," said Theodore gloomily.

"What's it about?" asked Katharine.

"I don't know," said Theodore. "I read it aloud to Tiny Tom after school yesterday, and then I took it home and forgot to learn it by heart. And now I've lost the paper and I can't even remember what it is about."

"I don't wonder you look worried," said Katharine.

Except during Relaxation Hour anybody who had looked into Miss Kitty Bear's schoolroom would have said at once, "This is the most perfectly disciplined and rightly behaved school in the world." There the children sat, row after row, studying as hard as they could.

But when Miss Bear smiled and said, "Now, children, Relaxation Hour," everybody relaxed at once. And what fun they had, scribbling on the blackboard, and playing school, which, strange to say, was their favourite game in Relaxation Hour!

About halfway through Relaxation