

THE TOWN AND
COUNTRY SCHOOL

AN ANTHOLOGY

Preface

In the year 1940 the children of this school were evacuated to Yarkhill Court, near Hereford. There they enjoyed the security and beauty of the countryside, but at the same time were tormented by anxiety. Most of their fathers were fighting. Their mothers were braving the battle of London. The children were encouraged to write war poems because it was hoped that this would help them to deal with their fears, which were coming out in aggressive war games. Thus a poetry group sprang up composed of boys and girls between the ages of 8 and 14, who read and wrote poetry together.

The more varied the group (the ages of the children and the quality of their writing was very diverse) the greater the inspiration, for group work of this kind has a value that is the direct outcome of the polarity of its members.

Since this time it has been the school's endeavour to keep this group spirit alive, and it may well be that the poems and stories written by the children today are still drawn from that original source.

This magazine contains a selection of their creative work during the last sixteen years. The reader should not expect and certainly will not find the sustained quality of writing usual in literary journals. At the same time he will find work that is already art (although, of course, it has less technique than adult art); much more will be found in its workshop stage-writing that is in the process of becoming art. It is on this aspect of the poems and stories that the magazine lays stress and it is, therefore, less finished,

but more direct and revealing than its adult equivalent. Thus, selection proved comparatively simple. First of all, work was chosen which seemed accomplished, then work which was original or exciting; finally, work which came from the heart.

It is hoped that these poems and stories will be read not only by the parents and the children themselves, but also by that wider circle of educators who believe in this form of art. Over 50 years ago, the painter Cizek discovered child art and opened the door wide for a new approach to education, which not only trained the mind but also took into account the vast and hitherto largely ignored forces of the unconscious. The creative power, the innocence and unknowing profundity to be found in these poems and stories are perhaps the outcome of an education which no longer allows these deeper forces to be restricted by adult conscious one-sidedness.

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STORIES

THE OLD BRIGADE

The old brigade consisted of two horse-drawn fire tenders and three very old and worn firemen, who also looked after two very old and worn horses.

The old brigade had only been called out once this year, and it was already December.

The firemen went around with a frozen look and dreaded the fact that some one might call them out.

Suddenly some one rang the old peel bell. One of the firemen went to the door, while the other two harnessed the horses. Then the horses tried to pull the fire tenders, but alas they would not budge. So that night they had to turn away the last fire call and because the horses could not move the fire tenders (and even if they had, they couldn't have moved it far), the old fire brigade was closed down.

ANTHONY SPEARMAT age 12

AT THE BOTTOM OF A WELL

The sun was bright and the air smelt of early spring. The fragrant flowers were like rich carpets at my feet. Under the tall, green trees I ran, the cuckoo singing gaily after a long, cold winter.

Suddenly I was falling down, down, down. The air now no longer smell-ing of the flowers and the clean spring, but of wet earth sucking in the water after a heavy shower. I stopped falling and, as my eyes became accustomed to the dark, I saw high walls stretching far above me, and looking up I saw a small circle of blue that dazzled my eyes after the dimness of this hole. The walls were covered with patches of dripping moss. A rat scuttled by my feet and a toad jumped out from behind a stone. Then I realised where I was-at the bottom of a well!

SARAH SHEPHEARD age 11

THROUGH THE PRISON WINDOW

Hidden in a mass of hard grey stone was a small window. It was recessed and only a thin ray of sun pierced through its forbidding black bars onto the stone floor inside. It was cool there and bare, not like the busy street outside, where the hot sun rebounded off the scorching road, and where, tired and hot, people rushed past the window without noticing it. Nobody knew that that window was there save one, and he was tall and thin, with large, blue eyes and a dark complexion. He always turned an eye towards it when he passed, and every time he caught sight of the small slit in the wall he remembered the small square room with the four thick walls surrounding it, and the cold floor underneath the short wooden bench. Then he would turn away again and continue on his way. Today, he thought as he passed it, " it is cool in there-it is always cool in there," and the sweat poured down his cheek.

KIP HAMPTON age 15

GOING UPSTREAM

The gong sounded across the silent waters. The ship's chugging could even be felt on deck. I was standing looking back down the great Amazon with the rhythm of the engine in my bones. I observed the slowly passing mudbanks, the trees hanging over the river and the clear moon in a clear sky. The ship's propellor churned the muddy water like thick cream, while the bow cut the sluggish surface. I turned round to meet someone whom I thought was approaching me, but only the spiders on the railings and the passengers playing cards further up the deck could be seen. I walked slowly up the deck brushing away the many cobwebs in my path. The lights of the cabins dazzled my eyes and for a moment I waited, breathing in the thick humid air. Then with a few quick steps I reached the passengers playing cards. I joined in for a few rounds but I rarely won. The captain in his smart black long-sleeved jacket cheating all the time and laughing like a hyena, and the fat woman in her rich beautiful shawl, who always drank too much, had been good company for me till now. But now I was thinking of my family waiting for me at Iquitos. After I left the group of merry card-playing passengers, I mounted the few iron steps to the bridge. The bosun was steering the ship, his large brown eyes peering into the darkness ahead. His hands worked busily turning the wheel, while he explained to me how much further it was and at what time we should get there. I sat down by him looking into the jungle on both sides. The tarpaulin flapped annoyingly above our heads. He made a gesture for me to tie it down properly. I did so. We sat there silently watching the river appearing out of the jungle in front of us.

Suddenly a wind blew up, rain came down in sheets. I ran for my cabin and entered with a cloud of bugs and spiders. My lights were dimmed with swarms of moths all trying to get nearer. I rushed out again and passed down the narrow deck to the captain's cabin. There the captain and I watched through a porthole the rising water and the menacing trees torn down by the river. The captain shouting to be heard (for the rain beat heavily on the roof) said with a smile on his face, " We will arrive on time, this weather won't last."

He turned round and was lost in heaps of baggage that filled his room. I strutted happily back to my passage, telling other travellers the good news on the way.

I slept that night with the drumming of rain in my ears and an excited moth on my nose. With the morning came the sun, the parrots chattering gaily from the tree tops, the mud banks alive with crocodiles and alligators. The captain was in good spirits. The ship turned a sharp bend and the last long stretch of water lay in front of us. As the motor raced quicker and the jungle passed by faster, I made out the huts and people of Iquitos. The ship pounded forward, noise could be heard, and in the middle of natives shouting and waving I saw my son, his brown eyes aflame with happiness. The ship slowed down and soon the eager men on land had it tied up and ready to be unloaded. I helped the fat lady with her many parcels as far as the gangway and soon I was descending with a wink in my eye for the captain. I entered the mass of people waiting for us. When my foot was on shore my son ran forward and jumping into my arms yelled: "Hi, Pop. What was it like? "

I put him back on his feet and gave him one of my parcels, held his tiny warm hand and soon we were lost in the crowd of merry natives noisily meeting each other and walking off to their homes beside the Amazon.

TONI ROLAND age 16

A JAMAICAN IN LONDON

Slowly the train crawled across the Midlands, the rain beating at the windows and pattering on the roofs of the carriages as, with a whistle, the slow moving serpent swung round the corner and into a tunnel. A few minutes later it emerged into the hard beating rain again to plod slowly on to London.

The train was crammed full of people. There were at least ten people in each carriage and the corridors were blocked. Full of hot, sweating, bad tempered people all longing to get home, to reach their destination. Not all the people, however, were going home; there were many country men going up to the big city to sell their wares, foreign people who were going up to "sight-see" and have a good look at St. Paul's Cathedral; but most striking out of all these people were the Jamaicans. They were all going up there to get a job. Every one at home said how many jobs there were in London, everyone had said how the people were so nice and so kind-hearted -so surely these tall, supple men would very soon be rich and be able to fly back to Jamaica to their wives and children.

One man in particular stood out among all the other men. He was extremely tall and had very striking and sharp features. His skin was a golden brown and he was smiling, in a kind, benevolent way at a small white girl who kept on persisting in a very monotonous voice, "Me wanna sweetie Mummy, Mummy me wanna sweetie."

* * *

At 9 p.m. the train at last slowed down at Euston Station. The Jamaicans all got out of the train, none of them having any luggage except a small leather bag, and stood on the platform hesitating where to go. Gradually they all drew together and started talking. They didn't understand this strange, wet, muddy climate, for although in Jamaica it rained, it did not drizzle incessantly like this. Soon they all drew away and walked off, lost in the endless hurry and bustle of London. That was, they all drew away except the tall, smiling Jamaican. He still stood on the platform, his smile gone and a puzzled frown on his face. He did not understand, he didn't understand one thing. It was queer but it seemed as if he had expected to find the streets lined with gold and a notice up saying "Welcome Jamaicans."

At last the young man pulled himself together and walked out into the dark, grimy streets of London. The sky was pitch black and there were no stars out. Where was this greatly famed, wonderful city? he asked himself.

Across the road he saw in the dim light a notice up saying "Lodgings, two good comfortable rooms." His eyes lit up, and he ran across the road

and knocked on the door. A woman dressed in a transparent nightdress called from out of the upstairs windows: "Oh for God's sake! What in the hell is it? "

A timid voice from downstairs answered back

" I've come about the lodgings. How much is it for a week? I would not have to stay long."

" Oh go and boil your head," came back the rude answer, and it was followed by the slam of a window being shut.

The Jamaican was not discouraged, however, and after wandering about for half an hour he curled up in the garden of an old bombed house and fell asleep. He dreamt he was back in the hot boiling sun, with the blue sea, and his little white villa high up on the cliffs with the gaily-coloured birds flying round it. His dream was shattered, however, as he was woken up by a stifled giggle. He opened his eyes and saw two grimy, dirty children both giggling with fear and awe. When they saw he was awake, they ran away screaming to get their little friends to come and see their wonderful find. But when they came back their " exhibit " had gone. He was wander-ing up the road. But he was frightened this time, and when a dog ran out of one of the mysterious grey doors and ran at the stranger, the Jamaican ran, he ran and ran and suddenly found himself in a road full of traffic with people rushing past and horns hooting. Suddenly the young Jamaican noticed outside a newspaper shop " Do you want a job? if so advertise here ", in large red letters over a box of Spangles. He went inside and told the woman behind the counter that he would like to see if there were any jobs vacant. The woman answered somewhat huffily, " Oh no, not for any of your lot. There are never any jobs for you nowadays-" then she broke off as a little girl wanted to buy three Mars Bars.

The Jamaican wandered out of the shop disconsolately and for the first time a wave of home-sickness swept over him. But he brushed it away as if it were an annoying, persistent fly, and walked on. He glanced at a clock and suddenly noticed it was 2.30. He felt he was getting nowhere, nowhere at all and that made him feel bad. It made him feel he had wasted all the money he had carefully saved for ten years to come here, to this supposedly wonderful town. But he walked on and found himself in a park. It was a dull place to him. Very dull. It had no beauty and the trees were placed regularly every five yards round the park. In three-quarters of an hour he reached the river. Darkness was beginning to fall and rain drizzled down, but the river looked strangely beautiful in the dusk and the man from the foreign land across the sea lifted his head proudly and walked on. He would find work, he would be rich, he didn't care what people thought of him, he was going to accomplish the mission he had set out on. Slowly he walked away over the wide grey river into the mists of London.

CAROLINE MORTIMER age 12

WAVING TREES

Once there was a huge forest and all the trees in that forest waved unusually hard all except for a tiny little pine tree. His name was Tiddle. But Tiddle was very sad because he did not wave. But one day an angel came into the forest and she saw how sad Tiddle was so she touched him and Tiddle began to wave. He lived happily ever after.

HELEN OGILVY-WEBB age 7

The trees are waving gently in the breeze passing by. A small river is running below them. They are weeping willows dipping over the water. It is a very lovely summer's day. The river is running along very fast. Kingfishers are dipping high and low. Little birds are singing in the willows. It is all very nice and happy. The birds are very happy singing their summer tunes.

SUSAN PACKARD age 8

Once upon a time there was an old oak tree with thousands of leaves. When a breeze came all the leaves would wave and wave until the breeze was gone. But in the winter there are no leaves to wave on the trees and to make a lovely rustling sound.

LUCINDA HUXLEY age 8

I love waving trees, especially weeping willows, because they've got that beautiful swiny feeling. When I go to the pond on the common, and when it's a breezy day, the trees on the common look lovely. In Autumn you might be walking under a lovely chestnut tree, when a little breeze would come along and push the branches and down would come a shower of leaves from a waving tree.

MARY BLANCHET age 8

NO BOUNDARY

The wind had a cold nip, but there was a bright orange sun in the sky, even though its rays were not warm. It had been a beautiful summer, but now winter was drawing in, and the Red Indians were out on their buffalo hunts, collecting stores of food for the cold winter months.

The large, shaggy buffalos roamed the American countryside. A group of men from the Pontiac Tribe were getting ready to go on a buffalo hunt. Their spears were sharp and their arrows were balanced to ensure an accurate shot.

The men had started at dawn and it was now mid-day. Everyone felt tired and hungry, but suddenly the Indians became happier because one of their scouts had sighted a herd a few miles away. The Indians began to creep through the long grass to where the buffalos were peacefully eating the grass which had been dried by the hot summer sun. The wind, which had been favouring the Indians, suddenly changed, and the buffalos were warned of approaching danger. They began to move quickly to escape. Some of the Indians shot their arrows, for they wanted food for the winter. But the arrows missed their targets.

They tried giving chase to their prey, but it was to little avail, for the buffalos were soon out of this tribe's territory. If they had entered the other territory, which did not belong to them, they would surely have been killed, if caught.

The Indians were restricted to their land, but there were no boundaries for the buffalos.

RACHEL IBBETSON age 14

A WINTER'S DAY

I woke up quite suddenly and turned over. With a shiver I pulled my feet up nearer my body and glanced at the clock. Half past six. My feet came into contact with the cold part of the sheet and I shivered again. I looked towards the window. It was frosted up and I knew it had been snowing. With a sigh I crawled out of bed and my feet hunted for the soft warmth of my bedroom slippers. Instead I put my foot into a pool of water. Snow had been melting through the ceiling. O dear, more hard work. I picked up my towel and rubbed my feet vigorously. Hurriedly I pulled on my slippers. I hurried to wash before the rest of the house-hold came down. Cold water again. Always cold water. Anyhow it certainly woke me up and I felt really refreshed when I stepped out into the garden. A draught of cold air blew into the room as I opened the kitchen door. A wonderful sight met my eyes. Against the lattice work fence hundreds of glistening, frosty spiders' webs sparkled in the early morning sunlight. No one stirred, a cock crowed in the distance and another answered it. The snow crunched under my feet. I love treading on freshly fallen snow. I feel that I am the first person in the world treading where no one else has trod.

A robin flew down from the holly bush and chirped merrily away. The air was cold and I shivered involuntarily. The sun rose higher from behind the hill and the snow glistened and sparkled. What a wonderful sight, the white fields and houses and the frozen streams. The tang in the air and the bite of the wind against one's face. How wonderful to be alive -this was life, nature in all its brilliance. With a sigh I turned back into the kitchen, shutting out the glare of the sun.

JOHN CANNON age 14

TRAILING WILLOWS

The lake shimmered in the light of the moon. All was quiet except for the little waves slipping up to the edge of the muddy beach.

Then a small grey shape slipped down from a hollow willow tree-her stomach fat with young-into the water with only a ripple. A minute later she reappeared with an eel in her mouth.

The next morning came with the mew of three baby otters. The bitch slid down to the water and started feeding herself. Three days passed and then the six little eyes saw the beautiful world. Two weeks later the puppies had their first swimming lesson. That night a sharp bark from the bitch was answered by her mate. Soon they were romping in and out of the water.

Six months later all her worries were gone-her three young otters could now live by themselves.

P. FRIEDMAN age 8

THE RUINED MILL

The old sails creaked and moaned as the wind whispered about them. Inside, the sun cast beams of light onto the cobwebs and dust covered the floor. Here and there a spider scuttled across the floor. In one corner a spider was busily absorbed in spinning a web and it took no notice of the other spiders. On the bottom floor lay one or two derelict bags of corn one of them was split and the grain slowly escaped. There came a slight movement from the corner and a field mouse ran across the floor: spying the grain he scuttled across to it and had a nibble, then hearing a sail creak, he scuttled away.

On the very top floor bats floated around, their wings making a rushing sound. Sometimes the dust caught a draught of wind and flew up into the air like a dark storm cloud. On the rafters one could dark shapes hanging upside down and now and again one flew off to join the other bats who floated round the room.

Outside, the rooks encircled the mill and then came to rest on the sails. Amongst the roof timbers house martins had made their nest and in every possible nook the rooks made theirs At the foot of the mill you could see the remains of old rooks' nests and in a tiny hole at the bottom of the mill a wren was living peacefully.

The breeze turned into a strong wind and the sails creaked reluctantly around. Here and there a piece of timber fell with a crash to the ground. The rooks cawed angrily and flew off to their nests and the house martins took refuge inside the mill. The wind moaned around the mill seeking for a place where it could enter and cause the dust to rise in black choking clouds.

That night the wind turned into a great storm and the thunder rolled amongst the hills and the lightning flashed in the sky. The rain crashed down forming little rivulets in the lanes and ditches. But the mill didn't live through that storm. In the morning, all that was left were a few split timbers and two bags of sodden corn. But even though sodden the grain still slipped slowly out of the split bag.

SUSAN HITCHER age 11

THE RUINED MILL

Bats flitted before the rising moon. A rat squeaked as it searched for grain that had been long forgotten. It flitted darkly to the top of the old mill and sat there. A breeze blew up and the torn sails creaked, but did not move. The moon rose higher and lit up with a ghostly air the mill, making it shine in the moonlight with a phosphorescent air. It moved restlessly and whispered to a bat that had alighted on its shoulder. Then it glided down the mill and moved to the mill-race. Two lovers passed and looked at the ruined mill in a frightened way and whispered stories of the shadow that lived there. Then they were gone and silence reigned.

An hour later the tawny old owl flying over the mill noticed a light in one of the top windows. He tapped himself on the head with a claw and flew on. The light grew brighter and walked across the mill-race and floated into the air. Flying in at the window it moved the lamp and lit a fire. Bats rushed everywhere and threatened to put out the light. However, they soon disappeared and It was left alone, holding a silver sword in its hand. The mill's sails creaked and moaned, although there was not a breath of wind. It sat down and waited.

The moon was high in the sky and shed a silver light on the rushing mill-race where it glided to and fro impatiently above the water. The church clock tolled eleven, and It stamped its foot in anger. Then, without warning, another breeze sprang up and blew furiously at the sails of the mill. It whirled in a perfect frenzy of delight and cooed like a dove. The sails moved and began to whirl faster and faster. Its dance became wilder and wilder as It whirled and twirled in the agony of the heat that burned in Its heart. It leaped many feet into the air and glided down again, sparks flashing from Its eyes. Then It leaped to the top of the mill and thrust a flaming brand from Its heart on to the tinder dry sails. They flared up. It thrust a silver sword into Its bosom and thus died.

In the morning, all that was left of the mill was a few charred stones.

CHARLOTTE BERESFORD age 11

THROUGH A PRISON WINDOW

The three prisoners that occupied the cell read the magazines that they already knew by heart. They never dared to think of home. It was a world that hardly existed except in dreams, and then it was misty and far away. The prisoners had, in fact, lost all hope of ever coming out of that prison alive.

Night fell and the prisoners climbed into their beds. It was a hot night and they tossed and turned but did not sleep. A glimmer of light showed at the tiny window, and one man muttered " Dawn " and watched the light grow steadily stronger. He was, however, wrong. A sweet smell filled the air and the men remembered, quite clearly now, their homes. The smell grew stronger with the light, which now filled the cell. The prisoners stared, enraptured by the lovely smell. Suddenly a tiny bird no bigger than a wren squeezed between the bars and fluttered round the cell. It alighted on a bed rail and sang a song. The notes were clear, sweet and piercing. The bird stopped singing and flew back to the prison window. Then in a voice as clear, sweet and piercing as the notes of its song it spoke to them.

" Never fear," it said, or rather sang. " You shall return one day. Forget me not for I shall never come again to bring you Hope."

For one second it stood there and then the bird was gone. With it went the light, but the smell still remained, faintly floating in the air to remind the three prisoners of what had come through the prison window.

CHARLOTTE BERESFORD age 11

THE ORGAN GRINDER

(Written by his monkey)

My master was an organ grinder, and I was his monkey! I wore a red cap, a red waistcoat with golden buttons, and I wore blue trousers.

My master was getting very old, we lived in an attic of an old boarding house which was very dirty and ancient, and he could not clean or bend about the room because he had rheumatism. So I did my best, by holding the corner of the duster and jumping around trying to " flick " off the dust. One day my master was trying to grind the old organ and I was sitting on top of it collecting pennies when a tall, thin man came walking by, he had a small black top hat and a large black umbrella!

He stopped-he seemed to like the tune my master was playing. I climbed down and ran to him carrying my master's cap which had some pennies in it, and I put on my "act" of sympathy. The stranger looked down at me, he smiled and took out of his pocket a silver piece, he dropped it into the cap and walked on. I climbed back on to the organ again, and as I looked at it, it seemed to be very much different from all the other brown ones. I picked it up and showed it to my master-he opened his mouth; he took it quickly and slipped it into his pocket. He looked at me with a puzzling look and then started playing again.

Then, one winter's afternoon, when my master was about to get up, he seemed to clutch his chest as though he was in great pain. I jumped up and rattled my cage door, I started to screech. He turned round, then fell back onto the bed. I tried in vain to open the cage door but it was no use.

He looked very ill, his face was white and he was shaking. Then I saw a bit of stick at the far end of the top of the organ. I reached out my arm, caught hold of it and I tried to get the stick under the latch-it at last opened. I jumped out. I made my way over to my master, he looked sicker than ever. I then remembered the silver piece, which he had in his pocket. I put my hand in his pocket and brought it out.

I climbed out of the window and down the drainpipe, everybody laughed at me, saying how " cute " I was. Little did they know that my master was very ill. I went into a little cafe and pulled at women's clothes trying to make them understand that I wanted to get a hot drink for my master. At last a lady understood. She took the silver piece and gave me a cup of something which smelled horrible, but still, I thought, it will help my master.

As I ran out of the cafe, people ran after me, shouting at me to bring back the cup. I climbed up the drainpipe and into the window. My master smiled at me, he took the cup and drank it, as I watched on with anxiety. He looked at me, squeezed my hand-then he fell back-he looked as though he was in a deep slumber. I know now that he was dead.

Just then the lady who had given me the cup came through the door, she went over to my master and covered him up. She then took my hand. I buried my face in her coat and I could feel the tears wetting her coat. She picked me up and carried me out.

Then as she made her way out, she called to two men, they went into the attic and carried my master's body out.

MARGARET CLARK age 15

THE ORGAN GRINDER

by Mugger Monkey

I won't say Mr. Bubbler is a hard man, he isn't, he is quite nice to me and apart from stealing me in the first place, he has treated me quite well. When I get up in the morning he puts on my red coat and orange trousers and gives me my breakfast of peanuts and milk and, in the winter, some Cod Liver Oil to keep the cold out.

After breakfast he brushes my teeth (I sometimes do them myself) and then I put my hat on and we go out. Usually we go to a garage where he keeps his organ and then we go into some crowded part of London and there we stand, me dancing and grinning and him turning the organ's handle and holding out an old cap to collect the pennies in.

But whenever there is anything big going on like the Coronation, then I am really smartly dressed. I wear real doll's underwear, a shirt and tie, trousers, jacket and real shoes and socks. On my head I wear a cap and a thick woolly scarf which covers most of my face and head.

Bubbler always says I look " A proper little gentleman, wouldn't want the folks to know you was a little monkey," and then he looks at my fingers and says, " Foine little fingers, small and strong, just roight for lifting things as folks don't want off 'em," and then we go by taxi to the biggest crowd Bubbler can find, there we alight, Bubbler pays his fare and we go to the crowd; almost always we can't see anything but Bubbler and I don't mind, we have other things to do. I walk casually up to someone and stand just behind him or her (generally him, because males have more pockets), and slip my " fine strong paws" into the pockets one by one, just as dear Mr. Bubbler has taught me, and take those jingly bags that people put what they call money into; usually after a good day's work I should have about twelve of those little bags in my satchel.

When we get home Bubbler takes my satchel full of jingly things and gives me a great big hug and a large piece of cake. Oh, ,yes! Mr. Bubbler is a decent sort of cove.

NIGEL FLYNN age 12

WILD PLACES

Out, out of this hot, crowded town-far from this mob of sweating, dusty human beings. Then the mind of one of these figures worked. One of these silm figures that jostled up and down in that.

She did not come to the high silent mountains because she loved them - nor did she come to them because of adventure - no - she came to get away, get away from something big, ugly and black, perhaps it was her imagination or that fear which lurked inside her-perhaps she wanted to start her life again.

Yes, may be it was this, the high mountains had a place for people like her-for all sorts of people. These mountains were high with small valleys and cool caves. Not like that big town for people, for other people who worked and let their life pass by like the fast shadow of a mating cry of the paradise bird. These people could live in a town, but she could not.

DANIELA BORCHARD age 14

THE ORGAN GRINDER

I am a monkey. My name is Sebastian Andrew Gregory Ape but my organ grinder calls me Jacko (which I can't stand).

My organ grinder is an Italian man with a moustache and a wonderful taste for spaghetti and meat balls. His moustache isn't very nice though because he keeps it completely free of fleas (how I love fleas).

The day I first met my organ grinder I was living in a place called a "Pet shop." He came in and said, "I would like to have a leetle monkey."

Well he bought me and took me home. At his house he took the liberty of dressing me in a horrid red coat and a red hat that was just as bad.

My organ grinder has a wife and ten children. One of the little boys always pulls my tail. I scratched him once and my organ grinder did not like that at all.

Some of the children are really quite nice though. In our business my organ grinder plays (it's really grinding but he calls it playing) his organ and I hold the money cup and people put money in it. They say, "Oh, what a cute monkey. We must put some money in his cup." It is my cup but my organ grinder always gets the money. Sometimes people give me nuts. He doesn't get those!

Our organ is a hand organ and my organ grinder plays it by turning a handle on the side of it. When it works (for sometimes it doesn't) a horrible sound comes out. It doesn't bother him because his ears aren't as sensitive as mine. There's no real use for the organ but to call people's attention to me so that they can give me money and nuts.

The trials and tribulations of our business are many, but as most businesses it pays off. You see, my organ grinder's brother makes ice cream and I get some every night and he is going to take ice cream to Africa my home, and I am going with him. But I think I will miss my organ grinder.

PEGGY HUTCHENS age 12

THE DENTIST'S WAITING ROOM

I went to the dentist cheerily, it was nice to miss a lesson, and I always feel important when I walk out of the school grounds. My mother is afraid of the dentist and always groans when she has an appointment. I knocked on the door and a girl in a white uniform opened it. My immediate impression was of a warm, clean, friendly house. The woman smiled and showed me into the dentist's waiting room. Suddenly my spirits sank. Long drawn out faces greeted me. Anxious little boys asking their mothers if it hurt, young men who tried to look as if they hadn't a care in the world, but who twisted their ties nervously. Restrained conversation, an occasional cough hastily muffled rather than catch the attention of the other people. I can't understand these people, why they fear the dentist. Of course there are lots of silly stories around. "You're sure to wake up when you are having gas," or, "The dentist doesn't know what he's doing until he's done it." It's all rot, I have had gas, and it's finished before you realise it's begun. So take heart you Dentist tremblers, it's not as bad as all that.

EMILY ABERCROMBIE age 11

THE DENTIST'S WAITING ROOM

As I leave school I think how nice it is to miss an afternoon's school.

As I approach the dentist's house, I begin to think differently.

Here it is, reluctantly I press the bell; the door is opened by a receptionist who is dressed in a white overall. I am shown into a large room, the waiting room.

In the middle of the room is a large table on which lie lots of out-of-date copies of all the magazines which I read the time before. I pick up one of these and sit down.

On the far side of the table is a woman holding a large handkerchief round her mouth.

In the distance I hear the grinding sound of a dentist's drill, there is a little shriek, the drill stops.

After a pause the door opens, out steps a patient with a forced smile. My heart beats faster. " Is it my turn? " I ask myself. The woman with the handkerchief gets up and goes into the surgery.

Again the drill starts. There I sit waiting.

Suddenly the door opens. I jump up and go to face the tortures in that little room.

JAMES WYLD age 10

THE DENTIST'S WAITING ROOM

There are many different kinds of waiting-rooms but I think the most scaring is a room in the house of " J. Dentpull, Dentist."

As you enter, a number of long-faced patients look at you, and wince as a sharp pang of toothache strikes. You are only there for a routine check up. You sit down and wait. One by one the ailing patients leave. One by one the screams, wails, and sharp exclamations of " Ouch " come from the surgery next door. You pick up a Readers Digest off the table and open it. " New Way to Lessen Tooth Decay." Put that down! Pick up a Picture Post. " Have you Macleaned your Teeth Today? " As a matter of fact you haven't. You give up reading. The Secretary pops her head in. " Mr. Selwyn! "

With your teeth all seeming aching and rotten and the butterflies fluttering round your tummy, you leave the room. A few minutes later, the blood drawn from your face, you return. A filling! You sit down and pick up a paper. " Dentist injures patient with faulty drill." Help! " Man dies after swallowing filling." Save me! The radio blares, " Ladies and gentle-men, we prevent Tooth Decay. Script by Nesta Pain. Produced by John Bransby." You lean over and switch off the radio. You look out of the window. Down below in the street the road menders are using pneumatic drills. Pneumatic drills? Why, they're nothing but a large version of that ruinous thing the dentist uses. But I wouldn't like one of those in my mouth! " Mr. Selwyn ! "

When you call in at the waiting-room again to get your hat, you are gingerly feeling the new filling!

JASPER SELWYN age 10

FLOOD

(Written before the Lynmouth disaster)

The moon went down in a dark, great sky. The little village Tastra was asleep under a great massive mountain lying by a great surging river. The quiet network of houses and farms with a church gave an atmosphere of friendliness like a child clinging to its mother. The big, broad and winding river flowed surging, bubbling by, its waters rising to its banks. Its noise was lost in the woods and farms nearby. The big mountain looking over the village grew dark. Big black clouds crossed the sky. Lightning flashed, thunder clapped and rolled over the village and away across the flat landscape. A clean sheet of pearl white rain descended. The bluish brown river heaved against its banks. The people at home pulled the blankets over carefully, the animals sheltered in the barns and stables. The river heaved again, rushing quicker, thicker-it heaved again. The muddy mass of liquid poured over its banks and hurled down on the farms and houses. It rushed through the woods and houses, farms and barns. The church bells rang wildly, the people awoke, clutched for their dearest, ran across the accumulating torrent coming down the streets. They ran for the church. Animals whined and fled in terror after the people. Houses were smashed and shaken, cup-boards and tables floated away. The clean sheets of rain continued to fall. In the church, in the middle of the village, was the only dry place, here the people met. Amid the noises of the animals and the weeping of the women and children the priest held a service. When the prayer for loss and relief came, silence fell. Only the sound of bubbling water and drumming rain on the roof could be heard.

TONI ROLAND age 14

FLOOD

(Written after the Lynmouth disaster)

Mother looked pale. " We may lose hundreds of pounds," she said. " Don't worry," said John assuringly, " Those sea walls will stand up to anything. And in any case, we're insured. But inside him he felt uneasy. as though he were sure something was going to happen.

And something did happen!

Hardly had they finished their meal when a roar and a crash was heard coming from the direction of the sea. All eyes turned to the east window. and what a sight met their eyes. A tremendous breaker had crashed through a not-so-strong bit of the sea wall, which had already been battered by the howling gale outside, and now a frenzy of earth, sand and foam was surging through the gap. The terrific suction force of the water going back as the next wave came in was already damaging the rest of the wall, and great chunks of earth were being torn off the wall with the force of the waves.

Mother screamed, and Father's grave expression changed to one of horror. The two boys looked at each other with alarm and excitement written on their pale faces. They dared not look out of the window at the scene outside. Then John, with a tremendous burst of courage, flicked a glance out of the window, and what he saw in the split second was more than he could bear. The water, coming just below the high window-ledge. was licking and slapping round the walls of the house. If the river Alocé. just behind, had overflowed its banks, as it probably had, then they were trapped. Should he tell the others? He looked round the room at the white faces. Everyone looked scared and Mother was even sobbing quietly.

No! He wouldn't tell them. Why make them more frightened. Perhaps they would only be marooned for a day or two and there was plenty to eat in the larder, so they wouldn't be hungry. No, he wouldn't tell them.

"It's all right," he yelled, trying to make himself heard above the howling of the gale and the crash of the breakers on the shore. His mother was still sobbing as she sat in her armchair at one end of the table. He went over to comfort her. At least he would only have to shout to make himself heard.

Then, suddenly, there was a tremendous crash. Then a stream of water came rushing under the door. The door shivered on its hinges, and slowly it began to move. A great crack appeared down the centre of the wooden door and the hinged half swung open. For a split second everything was still, and then great torrents of dark, foaming water tumbled and whirled towards them.

"The table!" yelled John, and pushing a few plates and jars into the swishing mass below him, climbed on to the old dining table. Mother and Father saw his idea, and they, too, leapt up on to the table, but Peter was too panic stricken to move. He tried to shout for help, but all he got in answer to his cry was a mouthful of dirty salt water, so he thought the better of that and stopped in despair. Then he felt a warm hand grip his collar as Father hauled him up on to the table. Water foamed round them, and they sat there, helpless and cold, with their wet garments clinging to them like limpets. Mother, face pale and terrified, closed her eyes and fell into a faint. Father sat shivering and swearing to himself. Peter whimpered and imagined awful fates coming to him. Every now and then he screamed, as his imagination tried to escape into real life and changed boards into sea serpents, dolls into mermaids, or wisps of corn into snakes. John sat beside Mother and whispered into her ear, just in case she woke up. Then he left her. He felt that she was much happier when she was unconscious of the suffering she was undergoing. He crept over to Father.

"Don't worry, Father," he said. "If there's a large loss of things that are not insured, I'll help pay for them. We're quite all right! Please don't worry!"

"Boy," whispered Father, "You're a real comfort to me. I'll try not to worry, but I've got so much responsibility. Damn! Blow!" and he went on swearing. John sat down near Peter. "Don't worry, Pete," he said, "It'll all be over soon." Peter moved not a muscle but went on gazing into the water.

John felt unhappy. How long were they going to sit there. Maybe he would end his life on his own dining room table. He wanted to jump off the table and swim to Aldeburgh, the nearest village, but he knew he must keep calm.

They sat on the table, thinking and sleeping, until night, her dark gown rustling through the stillness, pulled her velvet curtains over the setting sun. The water, cold and dark, still lapped round the tired and helpless quartet trapped by these harsh and strong sea-monsters. The Smith family, all hope of rescue gone from their despairing minds, sat and thought, sometimes falling into a restless sleep. For four days they sat like this, all weak from hunger and thirst, all tired and despairing. Then at the first light of dawn on the fifth day, they heard a sound they had never dreamed of hearing, the crash and splash of a rowing boat. Through the battered front door it came, and into the dining room. In they all scrambled, exhausted but happy. "There you are," said John, who had been awake all the time, comforting the others, "I told you it was all right." And then the slapping of the waves and the rocking of the boat lulled the boy into a sleep of sheer exhaustion.

JASPER SELWYN age 11

EVENING EXCITEMENT

Once upon a time there was a town hidden away in the far reaches of some country. It had once been a peaceful place surrounded by a large dark forest. In the summer it was a beautiful green and inside there were lovely flowers of almost every colour. Outside of these patches there was a path leading to the forest.

As I was saying, this town had been quite peaceful until recently, when many people had begun to disappear at intervals. People thought it rather strange, but then they decided it was witchcraft. There were two facts which really settled the matter for them: it always happened when the moon was full and it always happened near the graveyard. Even though some of them were not quite sure, a party of ten men waited by the grave-yard at the next full moon; each man had a wooden stake in his hand and each was waiting expectantly for what was to come.

They had got there just before dark, about 8.30 p.m. They waited until midnight before anything happened. It was Tom who saw it first, when he pointed it out to the others. When they saw it they wanted to run away but fear held them rooted to the spot, all they could do was to watch it coming closer and closer. It was just about to attack Fred when Bill snapped to his senses and stabbed the werewolf with his wooden stake. The werewolf coughed once, twice, three times, spun round and fell. As he lay dying, he told them, while gasping for breath, how he had become a werewolf, how he had gone into the forest several months before, how he had got himself lost, and when wandering about had come upon a clearing in the forest where he had seen a large gathering of werewolves, and how one of them had scratched him. He told of his escape and his return to the town after many hours of wandering. Then he told them what it was like turning into a werewolf, about the sudden impulse to look at the moon, the magnetic force, the feeling of being drawn towards it, and then of the race of fiery blood through your body, making you more and more thirsty for someone's blood, and finally the changing from your soft, velvety smooth skin into a shaggy, messy, hairy skin. In feeling that you could kill anything and nothing could kill you except a wooden stake. Then he coughed again and was silent. He had died and the terror of the town was ended. The werewolf turned back into his natural form, and to the surprise of the town's people it was someone they had never seen before. It was a boy of about eighteen, very handsome, dark-haired, well-built-the kind of boy any girl could easily love.

RICHARD CRONBACH age 15

STARS

It's a long, long way, far away where you glistening mysteries lie.
You who are worlds of your very own who see us by day and are yourselves unseen.

These bright spots in the sky were seen by our fathers and prefathers.
Perhaps they all saw them differently in the same way, I don't know.

Far, far away in another land people see you, as you stand and guard the moon from any harm that might happen to him. You who reflect your shapes in the still, cooling lakes and play in the high waves of clouds.

The high powerful waterfalls fall in time with your unheard music which can be heard only in the lone valley.

DANIELA BORCHARD age 14

THOUGHT

THE FIRST MUSIC

A theory of development of language

Once upon a time, long, long, ago, when the first man had only just arrived, there lived a little elf named Jimpy. One day Jimpy was just tidying away the breakfast things, when he heard a knock on the door. He ran to open it, and found his friend Jumpy bouncing about outside.

"Come on in," said Jimpy. "You look excited. Come and tell me the news."

"Sammy Sparrow has just come back from his holiday in the south . . ." "Oh, has he, and how did he like it? I expect he's very healthy," said Jimpy excitedly.

"Let me finish what I'm saying," said Jumpy impatiently.

"Oh, I'm sorry, yes, go on." Jimpy had a habit of interrupting.

"Well, he's seen some queer creatures down in the south. He asked a rook what they were, and he said that they were called humans."

"Humans?"

"Humans! "

"I am going to see them!" said Jimpy, and set to work packing some clothes for the journey. At last he set out. After a while, he got tired, so he sat down by a brook and rested.

"Gurgle, gurgle," said the brook.

"Oh, how lovely!" exclaimed Jimpy, and he pushed some spit into the back of his mouth and blew.

"Gurgle, gurgle," he sang, and he jumped up and said: "Why I can make lovely music!" and he walked away, gurgling just as happily as ever.

By and by the wind heard him singing.

"Why, that is the brook's song," thought the wind, who was very jealous.

"Why can't he sing my song?" and he puffed himself up and blew.

"Shhh, sssssh, sssssshhhhhhhhhhh. Lisssssssstennnnnnnnnn," he whispered.

Jimpy listened, but since all he could hear was the wind saying "ssssshhhhhhhhh," he growled and said:

"Shhhh, sssssh, sssssssshhhhhhhhhhh, I can't hear anything with you making that row."

"Ah, that one worked," thought the wind, and it sneaked away. When it had gone Jimpy laughed.

"Why!" he said, "there is nothing to listen to at all, but I have got something else to add to my collection."

He walked on, collecting more and more sounds, the squeak of a frightened mouse, the song of a bird, the rustle of the rushes by a stream, and many other things besides, until at last he arrived at the human's camp. He sat down and started singing all the songs he had learnt. A human walked past and heard it.

"How lovely!" he said, and started imitating Jimpy.

That evening, the man taught the others to imitate, and soon everybody was singing happily over their everyday tasks, while Jimpy walked back to Elfland.

JASPER SELWYN age 9

FALLING LEAVES

The leaves fall softly on the faded grass, rustling and rushing, circling and spiralling to the ground. Multi-coloured, varying in hues from bright green to deep purple and rich russet. Pitter-patter, patter-patter, softly carpeting the ground for many yards around their tree itself.

Leaves . . . symbolic, no? The human race for instance, constantly changing and fading and falling, withering and shrivelling, lying lifeless on the earth, only to be hidden in turn by more. Layers upon layers, thickly falling, quickly falling. They are to be replaced by the new green sappy buds, which eventually and finally and ultimately, as is the fate of all things, will fall and be hidden also.

Leaping and clasping and falling apart, whirled by the breezes, soaked by the rains, dried by the sun's rays. Up and down, dancing, eddying about my feet like a whirlpool.

They seem to crave peace, as does every living thing. As they swirl helplessly they appear to seize at twigs, as if hoping to anchor themselves - only to be torn away by the merciless wind, and sucked into the thick of the fight, into the chaos they vainly and futilely strive to elude.

We humans are much like the falling leaves. We are in a similar state of confusion and bewilderment. We are torn two ways by the fierce gales of the soul and brain. There are two main subconscious desires in the mind of every man. Two armies, ever alert to fight; two parties constantly engaged in desperate unconscious warfare. They are the two wills-the will to live-and the will to die. The instinctive struggle for survival, and the unconscious but fierce longing for the cool peace of death.

Two armies in every mind; two parties in every brain, two angles to every thought; two points to every conversation; two stems and two roots to every argument. We are nothing but the field of battle for these fighters, and thus we have no say whatever in their councils of war or treaties of peace. Each man is a battleground for his conflicting emotions; until the more feeble among us, having desperately clutched at straws, break down beneath the strain. We take the easier course. Death. Or, failing that, madness.

Death is quietness and solitude; rest and peace. Immortal rest and eternal peace. This quietude we crave eludes us constantly. It is like the fruit of Tantalus-within our grasp. Yet as we reach to take it, lo! It is gone! Convention and fear, cowardice, courage, call it what you like, forbids us to take it. For, once we have filed the chains of our prison and made good our escape, we can never return. The armies will have destroyed themselves, and cannot fight again--ever.

Pitter, patter. Pitter, patter. Swirling, leaping turmoil of colour and life and death. Falling leaves-or falling lives?

Pitter, patter. Pitter, patter. Rustling and rushing and hissing like the surf. A mere scattering-a mere heap of leaves. Or a chaotic bewilderment of lives?

It is futile for the frail leaves to attempt battle with the force of the wind . . . The older and more wise we grow, and the more we learn, the worse the struggle is: the harder strikes the knowledge of the inequality and unfairness of this mental-and also (in a subtle way), physical contest.

Whirling in the cyclone of time, we puppets that have dared to conquer the world, and now even presume the conquest of the Universe! ! Inanimate things we may beat-ourselves we can never conquer, nor even understand. Because behind the Reality that is a human being, is the Unreality that is his mind-the shadow behind reality-the fantastic fiction that is fact.

Pitter, patter. Pitter, patter. Pitter, patter. Swirling and rushing on, till they chance to meet some vague philosopher.

SYLVIA HOBBS age 15

PATH THROUGH THE SEA

The sky darkened, and a strange roar was heard. The waves rose and fell, crashed and roared, and the mighty ships bobbed about like corks in a wash-basin. Thunder pealed and lightning darted about the sky. Suddenly a great wall of churning water and foam appeared on the horizon. It surged along, swallowing up everything from seagulls to great ships. A huge liner, hurrying to get away, was caught up in this great tidal wave, tossed around and about, and deposited, a broken wreck on the exposed sea bed. Then a few thousand tons of sea came crashing down on it. The tidal wave roared onward, leaving behind it a dry path across the sea bed, about a hundred yards across, walled in by the tidal wave on one side, and the great flurrying mass of foam and green water that was the angry sea on the other.

JASPER SELWYN age 10

THE SEARCH FOR GOLD

A grab for Gold as the workmen were given their wages; a dozen hands reaching for the middle of the table, where the bags of money sat. Each man took his bag and held it tight, peering at his Gold, the Gold they had all worked so hard for. The Gold They Could See whenever they felt tired with their work. The Gold that kept their wives and children alive. The few shillings they got that were so important and so valuable to them. It was the goal of every week's work; it was the Gold that they loved, the Gold that they treasured. England's heart would be sad if she had no Gold, no Gold to satisfy her people.

KIP HAMPTON age 14

CRAWLING THINGS

Snakes, slithering through the undergrowth. Slimy creatures that crawl on the earth. Now the water is rippling. It is an Anaconda. Slowly it rears its glossy body, two feet thick, out of the river. This is no mere creeper but several hundredweights of muscle, strong and powerful. The thing that has startled it is a boat, a small nature canoe with two black and one white man in it.

The black men are at the paddles, the European sits behind, a camera slung round his neck. Suddenly the great body of the snake crashes down upon them. The white man and one native are crushed in the giant coils of the Anaconda. The other scrambles ashore with a broken foot. The crawling thing slithered from his path. He must crawl now like the rest of them. Man is a crawling thing himself when his inventions are no use to him.

It was out of animals man came and he can always slip back to them. Now a wolf's head looks at him through the dense jungle. It is not like the heads of other wolves. The sunken eyes are bleared and bloodshot, the ears are not pricked up but drooping.

Now he comes out-his skin is stretched over his bones, the ribs are clearly visible and the coat has developed mange. He crawls after the man who crawls away. And so the grim tragedy goes on. A man and a wolf are hunting each other, both crawling things in the vast jungle. The gulf between them has narrowed down to a slit and the man and wolf are, though enemies, close together in their misery.

HAZEL RUSSMAN age 10

DID YOU SAY "STOP"?

One of the most difficult problems of our age is that science is advancing far too rapidly for the evolution of man's brain. In the past 2,000 years man has gone forward a long way, but his brain cannot cope with the new discoveries put forward by scientists every day of the week. I should say that today science is 1,500 years ahead of our time. The people of today are just about fit to cope with the problems of 554, A.D., and not with the atomic bombs of today.

The whole question is whether or not we should let science stagnate for several hundred years to let the evolution of man cope with it. At the present rate we are liable to blow ourselves up one day and the day gets nearer and nearer with every new atom bomb that is made. First there was the atom bomb, then the hydrogen bomb, next the cobalt bomb and then what?

The people that say peace can only come through this series of bigger and better bombs are just echoing the words of past generations. I expect that these words will sound familiar to you: "These devastating new weapons will so revolutionize modern warfare that the possessor of it will be able to dictate peace." These words have been written in many newspapers and books in the world, yet do you know that in 1903 Sir Hiram Maxim said the same thing about the machine gun, and you can see how out-dated machine guns are today. Doubtless the inventor of the spear said much the same thing since it was entirely revolutionary compared with sticks and stones.

But you may ask how one can stop the march of progress? First of all you have to outlaw all atomic power whether used for bombs or generating electricity. Doubtless there are great possibilities in atomic power. Mathematicians say that it is the only power that can be used for interplanetary flight. But I say that we should leave all atomic power to the men of the future. There are plenty of other less dangerous power supplies left open to us that have not been touched, such as cosmic rays and the various waves emitted by the sun.

The next step would be to devote all the brain power that now goes to science to other pursuits such as the arts. Then I think religion would come into its own.

But all this is entirely conjecture, so I leave you with this question. "Did somebody say 'Stop'?"

VIVIAN COOK age 14

THE CITY UNDERNEATH THE WATER

I looked down over the side of the boat at the golden bottom of the sea, the fish swimming around between strands of seaweed. Then I noticed a white blob on the bottom. Then another and another. The marble palaces of the city underneath the water. There were slender towers and marvellously carved archways. The fish were swimming in and out of the buildings, and I wished I was with them. Then a palace more beautiful than all the rest came into view. This was surely King Neptune's. Then the city was gone.

"Oh, how beautiful," I exclaimed.

"It is indeed a strange formation of rock," remarked my guide, and started to gabble its history.

JASPER SELWYN age 9

CAPTIVITY

The lion paced restlessly up and down his cage. His " clear bubbling stream " was limited to a pond in the concrete. His " jungle " was a forest of bars. His " wide plain " was a concrete floor.

He was a fine lion. He had a black and tawny mane that went to his shoulders. His eyes were tawny too. His forelegs were powerful; his body sloped down gracefully.

He remembered the day he had seen that small, woolly creature in the glade. He remembered how he had killed it with a powerful blow of his powerful fore-paw. As he was feeding, a gate had closed behind him. He remembered how he had been put in a cage. He thought he had heard one man cry out in pain. Then had followed a bumpy stretch and then he found himself in the Zoo.

He loathed the pink-faced people with their acrid smell. He loathed the way they nudged each other and twittered when he yawned. He loathed the rails, the concrete, the cheeky Pumas, the noise. He hated the lion house, the Zoo itself. Some day perhaps he would go back to Africa. Some day, some day

The lion was asleep.

HAZEL RUSSMAN age 10

LOST IN THE MOONLIGHT

I could not sleep and the strange eeriness of the moonlight drew me to the window. I gazed down on the motionless, tranquil garden. Then out of the silence came the beautiful sad music of a single violin. It made me want to dance, to follow it wherever it might be. I ran down into the garden, out of the gate, over the moor, and there I saw him; tall and thin, his head tilted towards the sky. He was no mortal; he was transparent. I ran towards him, and he turned round and smiled such a strange, forlorn smile. The music faded away and so did he. I loved him and his music but now they are both somewhere lost in the moonlight.

VIDA LITVINOFF age 13

THE QUIET POOL

The pool was very still and quiet, when suddenly a head appeared, then another. It was spring, and all the creatures had woken up. The pond was full of spawn, and everything had come alive, after the stillness of the winter.

All the frogs and toads were darting as they did last summer, and even the water beetles were lively once again.

The summer flew by and in about a week it seemed winter was here again, and everything went to sleep, and the pool was quiet and still once more.

DAYL BEVEN age 9

VOYAGE THROUGH ICE

It was a hot day, even hot for a day in Asia.

It was on such a day that my first hard voyage began.

We were lying on the warm hay, by " we " I mean my dog and I.

It was our favourite nest, a place where no-one-no-one at all could disturb us.

Then it was that I started my voyage deep, deep into the frozen terror which is hidden in our minds-that iced-up terror, that unconscious mind which is so hard to penetrate. Yes, my mind had wandered away into that big, hard block of ice where that coloured light shone, where the loud music came from. Why did I want to know all that-why?

DANIELA BORCHARD age 14

FEAR

Fear, there it lay, in the deep hollow space of the mind covered with layers of unhappiness.

Why, why was it there? Where did it come from?

From the first day of Life or from hunger, non-understanding. Perhaps from pain or thoughts of revenge? No, no it could not end like this, it has to come out somewhere.

Perhaps on some dark day, or against someone who is weaker. It lies there where the darkness lies, it comes there where the fire is-why?

DANIELA BORCHARD age 14

IF I HAD THREE WISHES

If I had three wishes, first I would wish for a little yellow aeroplane with at least three seats, and then I could fly over the tree-tops and swoop down at the old park pond.

My second wish would be a magician, who gets a string of sausages out of your jumper when there aren't any there, and who makes people disappear into thin air.

My third wish is that I could go to Bracklesham Bay and play with the silver sand, and bathe in the cool, rippling blue sea.

ALEX STOWELL age 9

THE OLD COBBLESTONE PATH

At the old little cottage there were no crazy paths but they were all cobbled. Every day the baker walked up the oldest path. One day the owner died and an American family moved in. They had the complete cottage overhauled and the cobbled paths were all turned into grass. When it was finished it had fluorescent lighting and central heating.

The paths were all short, well trimmed green grass. There was a massive garden with lots of trees for the four children to play in. A large pond with goldfish in it was in the middle of the square lawn. There was a summer house, a see-saw and two swings. The old cobbled path was lined with tulips and it felt so proud.

PETER FRIEDMANN age 9

THE SACRED GROTTA

The wind howled through the branches of the bare trees.

" Autumn, autumn! How beautiful you are! . . . Oh God! " she said, " Is He a misty cloud of power or is He a mighty rod of strength? " . . .

"Autumn, autumn, how do you make one think so much? What strange effects you have upon my thoughts that I should wonder about God! "

" I wish this could go on for ever," said her companion. Her companion was her other self . . . that self which can only be seen when one looks into the silvery lake, where the willows weep their hearts away ... for nobody heeds their suffering.

Her companion always said to her just what she needed. For it was herself.

Just like a fairy, a vivid orange leaf floated down towards her lap. It took so long in falling, that she sang to it as it did so. It was obedient, first to one puff of wind, and then, disobeying it, only to obey another ... then all at once, like a flurry of violins, the leaf came twirling faster and faster at her. But she caught it, and on looking up to where it had come from, she saw a bird looking at her, with black, black eyes.

She wondered what it thought of her ... she wondered what her companion thought of her ... so she turned her large eyes, which always seemed so sad, to the lake full of the willow trees' tears, and asked her companion " What do you think of me? "

Just at that moment the leaf dropped out of her hand, and fell on the face of her companion, so that she saw her no longer. At the same time the blackbird finished his gaze and flew off. The last she saw of her leaf was it going along the silvery lake of tears, towards the sun. The leaf and the bird went on until she was left alone under the weeping willow trees, with her companion in the lake made from their tears.

ROSEMARY LEA age 14

THE HEDGEHOG WAKES UP

" Grunt, snuffle, snort! " Oh dear I do get hungry," and a hedgehog came out of a heap of dead leaves. Two eyes blinked sleepily. One beetle became food for Mr. Prickles. The hedgehog proceeded to grumble as hedgehogs always do.

" It's been almost twenty weeks since I've had dinner. I'm very hungry and very sleepy and whoever wakes me will get a hell of a pricked nose " (which was swearing and was no language for a respectable hedgehog).

Mr. Prickles felt very much like putting on his nightcap and going back to bed. However, he thought it would be wiser to put on his top hat and starched collar and go for a walk. He arranged his spines in order because he did not want to look like his vulgar relative, the porcupine, who was always untidy and preferred wood to a nice juicy slug. He ambled along the path, tipping over stones to see if there were any fat woodlice under them.

Suddenly there was something on his back. It was a drop of rain. Before long it was a regular downpour. Mr. Prickles dived into a hole which he knew led into a rabbit warren. We may leave him there knowing that it will be a long time before the hedgehog ventures out again.

HAZEL RUSSMAN age 10

SMALL FEET

There is a scurrying of small feet across the attic floor. Let us look into one of the holes.

Two beady eyes are searching the room. Then an exquisite nose, supporting long, silver whiskers. Next, two beautifully rounded ears, followed by a slender body. The fore-legs are delicate, covered with fine, white fur and ending in dainty feet. The hind-legs are strong, with powerful haunches. They end in long, white feet equipped with claws. But the greatest beauty is the tail. It is pink, but that is hardly visible. The tail is covered with long, silky hair, the pink giving it a pearly sheen. Each hair curls at the end so that the whole tail looks like a cascade of curls. The mouse (I can't forgive myself for comparing it with a mouse but I have no better term) stands for a moment on his hind-legs, then seems to melt into the moonlight.

There is a scurrying of small feet across the attic floor

HAZEL RUSSMAN age 10

LITTLE ORANGE TREE

Little orange tree, standing in the orchard, what do you do all day when you stand near the apple tree, hearing the birds sing love songs to every beautiful thing?

Little orange tree, standing in the orchard, what do you think about after the sunrise and before the sunset?

Do you sway to the music of the wind, do you drop oranges on a poor soul's head when she nibbles your leaves? Do you whisper advice to the cat as she tiptoes cautiously across your bough?

Or perhaps you take lessons on how to grow good fruit and strengthen your trunk from the wise lemon tree, and take your worries to the motherly old apple tree.

But may be you don't do anything but sway with the wind and thank the One who made you for the rain that falls from heaven, and the warm sun to dry you.

Little orange tree, you must have a lovely life all by yourself.

DIANNE RICHTER age 11

DRESSING UP IN 1860

I could not find young Louise anywhere. She had been very quiet since her mother had died and would sit for hours staring out of the window. I walked up the narrow stairs of our very old country house and called her again. This time she appeared out of the attic, her face flushed with pleasure and her frail body was draped in her dead mother's clothes.

This small, happy, almost pathetic figure brought tears to my eyes. She wore a faded pale blue dress-the one that had always been kept for Sundays, with a tiny trace of lip stick on the sleeve. On her head was the round, large hat with clusters of cherries that I used to hate, but now it seemed so dear and unreal.

The black lace gloves which didn't quite meet and the red velvet shoes two sizes too big all made her a figure out of wonderland. And she walked daintily down the stairs and in her own imagination she took the place of her mother. I tried to attract her attention but she walked on as if in a trance wrapped up in her dreams. What was the point in disturbing her -to her my matters were trivial. So I let her live in wonderland-for another half hour.

VIDA LITVINOFF age 12

STORIES

SUMS

One and Two were playing about in a sum-book.

Suddenly One said, " I'm older than you because I am fifty, you are only ten."

Of course Two was very angry. " I've had enough of you! "

" But that was only in the game," protested One.

" Game or no game, I've had enough of you. You can go out of here at once! "

" Boo-boo! Don't want to go out of here; want to stay here; boo-hoo! "

" Well you're going out of here! " And Two pushed One out and slammed the door behind him, and locked it firmly!

That evening, Twenty came home from work, tired and angry. " Where is One? " he shouted. (One always pulled up Twenty's chair.)

" Well, father . . . " began Two, when Twenty interrupted: " No ` wells', where is he? "

" Well, father," began Two again. " Well, father, we had a quarrel, and I pushed One out."

" What? Well bring him in! "

So Two went out, and half an hour later came back with One. " Here he is father," said Two.

" Good," thundered father.

Some days later, One and Two were playing. " I'm older than you," said One.

" O.K., have it your own way! " said Two.

MICHAEL BIEBER age 9

WHEN FATHER MENDED THE CLOCK

" Oh bother! " exclaimed my father, " that's the third time that clock has struck thirteen."

My father had been sitting at the kitchen table for the past four hours trying to mend the clock. There had been nothing wrong with it, but my father rather fancied himself as a handy man. But by the time he had taken it to pieces twice and put it together twice there was something very wrong with it. At last my father was satisfied with the result and he put the clock back on the mantelpiece and went into dinner. Everybody else had finished long ago and was reading quietly.

" Ah," said my father to no one in particular, " that clock's all right now, I've set the alarm for six o'clock."

" Brrrrrrrrrrrr " went the alarm clock. My father was the first to wake up. " There now, what did I tell you," he said. " Its' a bit dark out-

side," said my mother. " All right," said my father, " if anyone says it's not six o'clock I'll get out of bed and dial TIM." " All right," said my mother, " it's not six o'clock yet."

When my father had 'phoned he came back looking very red. It was twelve o'clock at night. Hours later he woke up and looked out of the window; he jumped out of bed, tore downstairs and dialed TIM. " Oh gracious," he screamed, " It's ten o'clock."

My father went off to work that day very late vowing all the time that never again would he mend a clock.

TASHA PARSON age 8

CUL-DE-SAC

Round it span, faster and faster, its weird whistle rising, ever rising. Then Martin stopped pumping and sat on his heels to watch the top spin; to watch the circles move outwards and vanish when they reached the rim. Where did those coloured circles go, he wondered, they seemed to reach the rim, then go back to the centre to start their journey again, to the strange accompaniment of the humming, produced by the holes in the top. But, he pondered, how could they go back to the middle and not be seen by him on the way? No, they must go somewhere else. But where? He thought a while, then he said: "Daddy, where do the pretty rings go?" His father looked up irritably from his stock taking. "Don't bother me now, Martin, can't you see I'm working?" he said, "why do I have to do this," he asked himself, "I'm a farmer, not a d---n clerk". He had added the figures three times already, getting a different answer every time.

The top had slowed down by now, so Martin grasped the plunger in his little hand and started pumping, pumping, faster and faster he pumped, quicker and quicker it span, faster and faster the coloured rings rushed outwards till they became a multicoloured blur rushing out, out to ... where? The faster it spun, the higher and louder rose the whine till Martin's father, who had added up his gains and losses a fourth time and got yet another answer, turned and shouted: "Martin, get that blasted noise out of here". Martin grabbed his top and ran. Out of the room into the passage, down the passage and through the open door into the evening sunlight, across the yard and into the barn, into its dark interior with a warm musty smell of hay mixed pleasantly with a smell of tarred wood, up the ladder into the loft he clambered like a monkey. He squatted down on the hard boards in a square of sunlight produced by a small dirty be-cobwebbed window and started pumping. Faster and faster he pumped till the top flashed in the sunlight, till its hum turned to a dismal wail. Where?! Where??!! did the rings go? They must go somewhere! But where? If they could go there, so could he! He'd go with them! Follow them to wherever they went! Faster he pumped, still faster, his eyes fixed on the colours as they travelled outwards, ever faster. Faster and faster till the whirling colours filled his vision, took possession of him. His head seemed to spin too, and he seemed to be leaving his body behind. All the colours of the top flashed and whirled in front of his eyes. He felt as though he was spinning, whirling like a top, as though he was being flung, outwards with the colours, spinning, spinning, quicker and quicker till suddenly it stopped. He found himself on a circular area of glass, like stuff surrounded by strange vegetation, it was strangely shaped and coloured but it never stayed one shape or colour for a moment together, it was always changing. Martin started to walk towards the vegetation when the circular area he was standing on, which had not kept the same size all the time he had been standing there, suddenly turned into a road stretching out before him, it then abruptly changed his mind and did a right hand bend a few yards in front of him. He kept walking straight on, so the road condescendingly changed into a straight one. Martin walked for what seemed to him many miles along this road which although it kept reasonably straight amused itself by constantly changing from a white, ribbon like main-road to a narrow cart's track. Then as he walked, night suddenly fell.

Then all around him in the darkness he heard strange and horrible sounds and saw strange and lurid lights. Martin was terrified. He gave a little cry and started running. He ran until his heart felt as though it was bursting. Till his head swam and his legs felt as though they were no longer his. And all the while he felt cold clammy things clutching at him, brushing his face and hair. This terrified him even more, he forced himself to even greater efforts, his head throbbed, a sort of film seemed to cover his eyes, then, through the darkness and obscurity of his swimming brain, he heard a voice faintly crying: " Martin, Martin ". He seemed to see a light ahead of him. Again the voice cried: " Martin, Martin!" It seemed to be coming from a circle of light ahead. Martin forced his flagging muscles to a last mighty effort, urged his legs, which felt as though they were made of wood, to a last great push, the circle of light swam towards him, he felt his strength giving, his head seemed to burst, a blaze of many colours exploded in front of his eyes, he seemed to be falling, falling, then every-thing went black.

His mother walked into the barn calling: " Martin, Martin, where are you, bedtime!" She reached the bottom of the ladder and stood there thinking. Then she climbed up into the loft and found Martin. He lay there in the square of last sunlight apparently exhausted. " Martin ", she cried, rushing forward and taking his head in her arms "Martin!" His eyes flickered open, the mist of blackness drifted away and he saw the face of his mother swimming before him. " Mummy", he said faintly and clutched her still terrified. " Poor boy ", she said. " He has been having a night-mare ". She picked him up and carried him to the house.

But the top had vanished!

MARK GAUDIN age 15

TRACKLESS WASTE

He stood and stared with glazed, despairing eyes at the unbroken panorama of trackless waste before him, dancing and shimmering in the heat haze. The wizened shrubs seemed to try and withdraw into themselves to cower vainly before the searing merciless heat of the grim ball of fire pursuing its path across the cloudless cerulean vault above. He gazed bitterly at the shrivelled, brown, isolated blades of Brass, a mockery of those lush green meadows whose image appeared continually in his mind. And the dust-each footfall stirred it up so that it hung in the super-heated air, coating everything in a fine dry layer, choking and blinding him. His mind was a dull ache with no thought but that he must go on, on. why or where he neither knew nor cared. So on he staggered and stumbled, to eternity, or so it seemed. The dust caked in the sweat which dried almost as soon as it was formed. It felt to him that his strength was evaporating in the sweat, so that he became weaker, ever weaker. Suddenly he fell, and only with a supreme effort did he raise himself to blunder onwards. Again he fell, again he tried to raise himself from the painfully hot earth. But this time he lay back-and then lay still.

He had found his lush green meadows-they were his, now, for ever.

DAVID RYAM age 15

DEATH

My tree was standing there by the river, a big black oak. Its long branches swept over the corner of the field in which it was growing. The long rustics in the river and on the bank looked to it for shelter from the wind and rain. The cows, grazing in the field, used the tree for a rubbing post, and slept under it when shade was needed. The birds too built their nests in its big spreading branches. My oak was a friend to all.

Often after walking by, one would turn back and look at it again and ponder. Its branches crossed and lay in themselves. Its form was great and symbolic. I just watched and saw its colour change, its leaves fall, its buds come out. I watched it for two years, and then I knew it was my tree. my favourite tree.

One day I was ill and had to stay in bed. That night there was a thunderstorm. I thought of my tree, the birds, cows, rushes and the river. The lightning lit up and crackled all around. The boom of thunder, like a cannon crashing upon the enemy. Splitting noise, a crack and then the storm was over.

The new day came and I got up although still unwell, and went to see my tree. It was down, deep down, struck down, and kept down. It was dead. The birds flown, the cows gone, the rushes crushed. Death! My tree, my friend.

TONI ROLAND age 13

ONE EXPERIENCE OF CHILDHOOD

Not living in London I was about six by the time I was first old enough to realise anything of the wonders of the city.

Moving staircases were the chief attraction of London, and then the restaurants and the bigness of it all. My brother and I would have stayed for hours going up and down the escalators, but everyone seemed in such a terrible hurry that we did not have a chance. As soon as we had reached the climax where we jumped daringly off the other end, we were whisked away down the draughty, echoing passages to the underground platform.

I used to like the trains almost as much as the escalators, but after the first few times it got rather tame somehow. I could never understand how the grown-ups always knew where to get off and what to do and how to get the right train to the right place.

I was always bewilderingly hurried along with my head the wrong way round because all the most interesting things happened behind me.

When we went to a large corner-house for lunch we always did ourselves properly. Nothing on the menu was too expensive. If there was any we had asparagus, and always, unfailingly waffles with melted butter and maple syrup.

Not being used to the size and grandeur and brilliance of everything I trailed round in a kind of dream, so excited that I couldn't feel tired. Besides there were far too many things to look at.

LISA DYER age 13

CROWDS

(London during the heatwave 1955)

A shining, blinding sun stared at London in its oppressive stagnant heat; its rays leapt from the clear blue sky unhindered by cloud melting just here and there little patches of tar that fastened themselves to the shoes of passers-by. The parks became crowded, then overcrowded, finally an area of reclining and sleeping bodies, a lazily drifting conglomeration of people, their clothes looking stupidly out of place: a business man sweating under his waistcoat, another, sleeves rolled up, coat creased beside him, trouser legs rolled up to reveal a pair of somehow ridiculous suspenders over a pair of sagging socks. His head was thrown back, his mouth wide and gasping, his eyes closed and concealed by a recent edition of the Daily Mirror.

Cars, 'buses and lorries streamed by, packed and congested: the road was traffic-jammed at every inter-section, while at the traffic lights it moved gingerly through streams of people who bridged the roads at a moment's abatement of the mechanized caterpillar that wound it's way slowly, Im-patiently and despairingly between them.

Trafalgar Square had become a fleshpot of sweating, listless humanity, it dangled its fingers in the fountain, filled the benches, sat on the steps. Young children clambered over the lions, a mass of "Converters " stood at the foot of the column proclaiming the glory of God and on placards and posters His teachings and preachings worded like advertisements for Welgars Shredded Wheat. The booming voices of these converters dimmed as Big Ben, entangled with scaffolding, loomed nearer. A little boy on an obviously new bicycle sped unhindered between the stationary lines of traffic as they waited for the lights to change, then a squeal of brakes, the sound of breaking metal, al little boy is thrown clear of his bike, while the newly prized toy is devoured beneath an advancing car. Tears flow as he sees his possession crushed, the new and shining lamp broken, the wheels twisted and mangled, one small superficial tragedy in this heaving cosmopolitan city of many millions.

Big Ben is stared at by passers-by, the pavement is a living stream of people, then the bridge is gained at last. The muddy but cool water drifts by them. At last one can lean forward and regard London, look at this home of so many, the World's greatest city and then be swallowed into its stomach as its crowds stream past you, gathering you inside them and bearing you down its streets and avenues, in its trains and buses till you are lost in a maze of aimless drifting crowds.

JOHN HALL age 16

" AND ISABELLA LAUGHED . . .

"

The evergreen bushes shone like emerald leaves as the rain spattered on them. Andrew looked out of the window and thought " How stupid the others are. Of course boys don't have to drink milk if they want to be strong-there were lots of other things instead " and he was even told that crusts had made his hair as curly as it was.

Because Andrew hadn't drunk his milk at supper he had been sent to the day nursery in disgrace. Here he was, with his chin against the window - his tears like the rain falling, falling onto the window-sill.

A blackbird flew through the trees to the evergreen bushes and settled itself comfortably in its nest. Andrew was fascinated, his tin soldiers were now forgotten as they bravely stood at attention in rows of ten, some wounded in action and others by the big cannon ready for the order to " fire! "

Andrew had forgotten these leaden heroes and watched the bird sheltering her eggs from the beads of rain that had settled among the folds of her brown wings. It was his first experience of seeing such a thing; he hadn't ever been taught by his so very learned tutor that little creatures even existed; he knew his French and Latin though.

" It's my secret," he said out loud to the empty nursery. " It's my very own discovery. No one else in the world can know that I saw my little bird protect her eggs." Already Andrew had become possessive about the blackbird.

Nurse entered. " Don't be so sulky, my lad. There are some children who would have been only too eager to drink that milk, but you wasted yours and look, you have tomato juice on your new suit! You might as well wear your old play things all the day; your father will have something to say about this, you mark my words," and she stalked from the room haughtily, smoothing the tight bun at the back of her head. Andrew wished he could wear his play clothes.

They didn't need fussing over or looking after as much as all the lace and do-da he was wearing now.

Every evening Andrew kept a crust or two, which wouldn't make much difference to his already curly black hair, to give to his blackbird in he? nest. No one noticed and no one would have minded either, except nurse, of course.

Isabella came from the town to visit her Aunt Angela and her cousin Andrew in the country. She was very pretty indeed. She wore a blue velvet coat and bonnet, little lace gloves over her dainty long hands, and white buttons all down her front.

Travelling was very tiring and so Isabella was washed and put to bed after seeing Andrew to exchange a polite " Hello " and " How are you? Andrew vowed he wouldn't let a girl into his secret, she would " tell "! His other cousin had " told " about his collection of stones, so he wouldn't tell this cousin. " Silly girls," he thought.

However, the next morning Isabella came to breakfast with Andrew in his day nursery. She was very sweet and was not over-polite (although she was constantly being reprimanded for it), and she did look charming in her yellow satin dress frilled with grey lace. Even Andrew had to admit it. They talked on such things as her Mamma's new hand-bag, scent bottle and his father's dogs.

Andrew grew to like her. She wasn't silly or `above him,' and she was interested in the same books as he was. Both were ten years old, but she was a more educated sort of child, and inclined to be more understanding than any of the grown ups.

Andrew asked Isabella if she wanted to know a secret. She replied " Oh yes, Andrew. I've not been let into very many, but the ones I have been told I have never told to anyone, ever," and her small white face was serious. Andrew's was, too. " Come over to the window, then." Just as he thought she looked so very much as though she would keep his secret. "What is it?" She sounded rather surprised. "All I can see is your garden." Andrew suddenly grew frightened. What if she didn't think any-thing was unusual about a bird's nest. He forced a smile, " Well . . . he began. But she was laughing: " You don't mean that old nest, there, do you Andrew? Why it's an ordinary blackbird's nest. I don't think much of that. How disappointing."

" I love it. Yes, I ... I think it's beautiful! " Andrew said defiantly. " Oh really! I thought you were grown-up, but you're still a baby-boy; Andrew's a little baby-boy, baby-boy," she chanted and skipped out of the room.

" So," thought Andrew. " She wasn't a nice girl after all, and I didn't even tell her my secret, she guessed it." Andrew was terribly downcast at the thought. " Well, I suppose it wasn't much of a secret, but I did see it first. Oh well! " He threw a tin soldier into the box, so that it made a clinking sound as it hit his " comrades in arms."

Isabella left that afternoon, and on saying her farewells to Andrew she made a brief apology. But Andrew felt she was apologising for thinking he was older than he was. " Good-bye, Isabella."

ROSEMARY LEA age 16

THE LIFE OF A GOLLYWOG

I started my career in a factory. At least I can't remember being myself then, because I was all bits and pieces. A piece of red flannel and a piece of blue flannel, long strands of black wool, some black silk, and a box full of stuffing. It's a blessing I'm good at bone structure or I couldn't have told you how I began. Owing to an error in the sewing of my legs, I was put sixpence cheaper than the other gollywogs, and I am very indignant to this day, for a little error in sewing makes no difference to a brilliant brain like mine. Anyway, that comes later. One day in came a girl (I didn't much like the look of her as she was wearing fur gloves, and I thought it was particularly hot) to buy a present for her baby sister, as I later found out. I tried to look as miserable as I could (I got that gag from a Pal gollywog), which fortunately wasn't difficult, for, as I said before, it was very hot and stuffy in the shop. Well, it worked, I recommend it for any brand of sympathy wanted, and I was lifted from the shelf and into a bag. Imagine what torment I suffered in being mixed with a lot of red-faced tomatoes and green-faced brussel sprouts, but I bore it with the spirit of my grandfather, and I may tell you my pride is wounded to this very day. I think I might have had a brilliant career if the dog hadn't pulled off my legs (damn the girl who sewed on my legs so badly) but still it's nice to lie on the place of honour, my mistress's bed, on which the dog is never allowed, and think about my life.

EMILY ABERCROMBIE age 11

NIGHT FLIGHT

How many people have had to flee over the border at night?
Hundreds!

Anna, a Russian girl of nine, was one of them. With her little brother, Alexis, she had tried to escape over the Russian border.

Her mother had died when Alexis was born, and their father was in a Russian prison; so they had to flee alone.

Their aim was to get to England and to people who would take pity on them. (They were well equipped with money.)

It was at the dead of night and the two runaways were nearing the border. Alexis was chattering incessantly and Anna was wondering what to do to make him stop, when suddenly, she hit upon an idea.

" Alexis," she said, " Let's play that we are running away from a lot of people. Before us lies the border line. That is a line where many people stand to try and catch us. But once we are over that line, we are safe. Do you understand, Alexis? "

" Yes," he agreed. " But if many people want to catch us, how shall we get over the line? "

" Well, we must keep very quiet," said Anna, in a know-all tone. " We must not talk. Let's walk on tiptoe, too."

" Yes," whispered Alexis, " Oh, dear, I'm scared."

" Never mind. It's only a game," comforted Anna. How she wished it really was!

They walked on for a bit, in silence. Then Anna said, " Whatever the people say, don't make a sound. Even if the people find me, just get over the line to safety."

" Isn't it dark," said poor Alexis, worried by these instructions. They reached the summit of the hill they were climbing. From there they could see the border line. It was marked out by one solitary lantern.

" Look," whispered Anna, " Behind that light, we will be almost safe."

" What does almost mean? " asked Alexis.

" Nearly," whispered Anna. " Now, we must be very quiet."

They were very quiet. Hand in hand, the brother and sister crept softly nearer and nearer to the border. Each step seemed like a mile to them, and each second an hour.

" Would they slip through?

Anna now began to doubt.

But she tried to work it out.

Not far away-just a few yards,

The border would lie.-But there will be guards.

Each one in cruel silence, standing by his post,

As watchful and as silent, as a mortal ghost.

Would they slip through?

Now the border lay a foot away from them, now an inch. Now they were on the border line, both hearts thumping, furiously, both bodies violently trembling.

Now they had crossed the border line. They were safe! -or were they?
" Who goes there? " yelled a voice.

In the dark, Anna found Alexis's hand. Catching it in her own, she pulled little Alexis away from the terrible border.

And as the two children broke into a run, they knew that they were safe.

" That was a nice game," whispered Alexis, as dawn at last began to break.

" Let's go on playing it," said Anna. " Now we must find a boat that will take us to another place, where people won't find us."

" Alright," agreed Alexis.

It was now bright morning, Alexis fast asleep in a cabin, downstairs, but Anna remained on deck, watching the bright sun come towards her.

" Our night flight is over! " she thought jubilantly. " Oh, I was frightened, I must say won't it be lovely to be in England-and safety!

(This story is partly true.)

NAOMI JACOBY age 11

THE STORY OF A FLEA

I and my brothers and sisters were born in a crevice of a dog's ear, in a beautiful little hole sheltered by hair, where the dog could not scratch us out. Our loving mother deserted us as soon as she had laid us as eggs, so we never knew her, but we had too much to think about in our struggle for survival to worry about her. With my sixty-seven little brothers and sisters and myself it was definitely an example of the survival of the fittest. When we hatched there were sixty-eight of us, but by the time we were old enough to suck blood, there were only ten, as we had nothing to eat but each other.

I was not sorry when my jaws grew strong enough to fasten themselves into the skin of our dog, as there is nothing more delicious than thick, warm blood.

We were always on the crawl looking for fresh places to bite, and we tickled so much that we almost drove our dog mad.

I had several very narrow escapes from human beings when they deflea-ed our dog. Once I was actually caught between two enormous things that I found to be a finger and thumb, which squeezed and pinched me very hard, and then dropped me into a bowl of some sort of weak disinfectant poison. All around me floated other fleas, either dead or drowning, and I was very nearly drowned. Fortunately the bowl was knocked over by a clumsy foot, and we were all swept out into some grass, and so I was able to escape.

I hopped and hopped for a whole day all round an enormous garden. during which time I refreshed myself on an old rat and a dying bird, neither of which tasted very nice to me because I am rather high class, and prefer larger animals.

In the evening to my surprise I found my way onto the dog again, and he carried me into the house. But now I had a purpose in life. I was determined to take my revenge on the cruel human that had tried to drown me. I climbed onto the person when he was sitting down, and stayed quiet until he went to bed. In the night I had a lovely exciting time playing hide and seek. I bit the person in all the tenderest parts of his body, injecting as much poison as I could each time, and as soon as he started to scratch I hopped away and hid in the blankets, only to come back again as soon as it was safe. I made the man strip his bed twice in search of me, and he even changed his pyjamas, in a dreadful fury, but I remained quite merciless until I decided that I would like a rest myself.

I have travelled quite a lot now, and have plagued many human-beings, although they are not as tasty as dogs, and as I am well out of your reach. I might as well tell you that I shall be visiting you tonight!

JOHN CANNON age 14

From My Book of Stories

THE BIRD IN THE CAGE (In the original spelling.)

Once upon a time there was a little princess. She had a lovely little bird which sang all day and all night but the princess was bad because she wouldn't let the bird out. So the bird was very unhappy. One day the princess left the cage door open. The bird flew out and met an elephant. The bird was very frightened when he saw the great big creature, but the bird stood still and stared. He was so surprised. The elephant was very ugly but very kind. He said, "If you want to go past I will let you and if you are tired I will carry you." "Th-th-th-thank y-y-you I'd rather walk across." So the elephant stood aside, but instead of walking the bird flew across. When she got across she found herself in a most beautiful garden. On one side there were fairies being married and on the other side there were fairies having a picnic but there were no birds. When the fairies saw the little bird they all stood up and clapped their hands. "A bird a little bird," they shouted. Then the queen of the fairies came running up. "Oh little bird, are you not the little bird who is a pet to a little princess?" "Yes," said the little bird, "but the princess would not let me out in the garden so I flew away." "In that case," said the queen, "I shall put a spell on her." So while the queen was making the spell the bird flew back to the princess to see what would happen. A few minutes later the princess came running in from the garden. She put her finger out and the bird hopped on it. Now the princess always lets the bird out in the garden every morning.

SUSIE age 6

THE QUALITY OF MERCY

A low growl escaped the angry old puma; he was angry because his skill at hunting and trapping was slowly leaving him, and the result was that he was going hungry. The last meal he had had was yesterday evening, and it was now evening the next day.

He had been walking at a simmering, sulky gait all this time, but suddenly through a clearing he spotted a small group of does with their young. His anger vanished, and caution took its place. He sank lower down into the undergrowth and began bellying his way towards his prey. He was only three yards away now and excitement gripped him. His long tail began twitching and the whole of his lithe, sleek body became tensed as he wriggled his hind legs well under him for the spring. The wind was with him, so edging his way nearer still, he made ready.

He sprang and his body became uncoiled. Huge dagger-like claws came unsheathed. Razorsharp fangs showed themselves beneath curled jowls and then were lost in the flesh of his victim. The death-cry of the terrified buck was horrible, it came from the depth of the little fellow's lungs in a last effort to remain alive.

It was all over, and far away in the killer's lair, there was a sound of satisfied purring, as he filled his famished belly with food. His eyes had lost that sallow, hungry look, they now were bright and fiery. His lean body began to look sleek once more.

And so, he would go on killing to live; and to live, he must kill. It was one or the other and he chose to live; you see, there is no quality of mercy in the heart of the jungle.

ELMA CAMERON age 12

ON THE FRINGE OF THE DESERT

He hesitated there, not knowing where to go. To turn back would mean capture! To go forward would mean certain death! The running of feet and shouting of angry voices that were heard in the distance helped him to make up his mind. Quickly he ran across the short, dry grass, over the dry earth and into the desert. He couldn't stop now! The heads of his chasers were just appearing over the hill. Faster and faster he ran until he could hear the shouts of the angry men no longer. Suddenly he couldn't run any more. His legs seemed to have changed into leaden sticks and he could not move them. Sitting down on the hot sand his mind went over the events.

It had all started about a month ago. Usually he would go out each morning and bring back food for his little family in the evening. How happy it made him to see his little wolf cubs chew contentedly on the bird or small animal he had brought home. But slowly it became harder and harder to find food. The rabbits, who made up the main course of his meal, had developed a disease. He didn't know what the illness was, but he did know it was killing all the animals he fed on. How quickly it spread from one rabbit to another! Lately he found it impossible to find food for himself and his family. Slowly he watched the cubs' tummies swell with hunger. He had listened to the crying of his mate and brood.

A wildness of fury had swept through him suddenly. He wasn't going to see them die! Like a streak of lightning he bolted out of the den and through the forest, and there, enclosed in a wire fence, were about ten lambs. With one push he had broken the wiring and grabbed one animal. Bang! Bang! sounded through the night and he started to run. And here he was, hot and thirsty, dying in the desert because of one man's carelessness. With one more moan, he lay down and fell into eternal slumber.

JULIE ALLAN age 14

THE LOVELY STORY

It was a lovely story, I dreamt about it all night. I thought the bit about the dance was the best part, and when the monkey drank up all the lemonade, but I fell out of bed when I remembered how the aquarium tipped over and how the fish was spanked by the octopus, but I climbed into bed when I remembered the beautiful maiden walking through the cool woods.

Then suddenly there was a ring, ring, ring, shut-up, ring, ring, ring, oh all right, I'll get up, but it was a lovely story.

MARY age 7

THE LITTLE DONKEY

Once upon a time there was born in a meadow a little grey donkey. Her name was Nena. One day she had to go on a long journey to Bethlehem. The little donkey trotted along the road. Soon he came to Bethlehem. It was crowded with people. Joseph was the master of the little donkey. Mary rode on the little donkey's back. She was going to have a baby. The inn was crowded with people. There was no room in the inn so they had to sleep in a stable. Nena had half the stable, Mary and Joseph had the other half. The baby was born. His name was Jesus. He was a King. Nena was very proud of him.

SUSAN PACKARD age 8

STALKING HIS PREY

It was ahead of me. It was always ahead of me and, I supposed, always would be. Would I ever get it? The wind was in my favour, the ground to my advantage, and yet the clear-cut hoof prints told me that my prey was at least an hour ahead of me.

Why could I never capture it? What made it so fleet of foot that even though it was unaware of my presence, it managed to get ahead of me, swiftly, silently?

Suddenly, I saw it-yes I saw it leaping ahead of me. My weary limbs received unnatural strength, my hopes and heart were high. Silently, I made my way towards it, calm and cool. Still unaware of my presence it leapt onward, onward. I followed, but no longer with awe. Now that I could see it I hated it; yes, I hated beauty, for all the suffering it had cost me. I longed to see it fall.

I slunk about the soil upon which it had already trod, while it leapt on ahead. In descending a hill I had lost sight of it. My former fears returned.

Suddenly, silhouetted against the sky, stood my stag upon a great rock. The sun shone down upon it. I stood in the shivering shade of a holly bush, and all the awe that I possessed came to me then. Surely he was a king.

A kind of bitterness choked me for a minute. I longed to stand in the sun with it, but I dared not. Therefore. I crept up behind it, strained and shivering.

On a sudden, I realised that from my position I could shoot it. I felt my heart pounding within, the blood rush to my face an icy nerve sweeping through my body. I sweated and suddenly felt violently sick. I knew that as soon as I vomited the stag would hear me. I must be quick, very quick. I raised my gun and tried to take a steady aim. But my hands trembled and no matter how I struggled I could not gain control of them. The seconds ticked by. I could have wept. Never again would I receive such an invitation to kill. But the stag showed no inclination to move. I sat down and made fruitless efforts to be relaxed. Each time I rose, I felt I had gained self control; each time I sank down to my seat in bitter disappointment; I saw the time passing by, yet it remained at my side.

I resumed the ascent of the rock in growing anxiety. Surely the stag would hear me, surely he would sense my approach. Yes, he knew I was coming and his grace would not permit himself to flee. The higher I Climbed, the more violent my emotions, but I felt more steady. Suddenly, I felt a terrible fire in my head. I turned dizzy and gave way to my involuntary actions, feeling that I was below, watching the actions of another.

I leapt up to the sun, beside which he stood. It was setting, and the deep red colour mingled with the gentle brown of his coat. He turned and gave me a long look, and in his eyes there was only a sadness, deeper than the outer miseries of man.

I dropped my eyes and could not face him. Suddenly, I felt myself crying-I, who so often had been called hard hearted. In vain I tried to stop this childish action, but all the bitterness that was within me came out in the form of tears, with the beauty that surrounded me. He looked and understood. Suddenly, all went a whitish yellow before me. I felt my

hands drop their sole weapon, and I knew no more. I had experienced a few moments of bitter happiness, which I was never destined to meet again

The moon rose over a dark sky. The day dawned. The sun rose to a climax and then fell to a graceful exit. It was night once more and this time there was no moon.

I came to myself and found that I was lying upon the ground. I shivered in the eerie darkness. Then, self-consciously and ashamed, I rose and fled from his Holy rock.

NAOMI JACOBY age 13

ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF A HUNTED STAG

I am Taga the stag. I awoke one crisp, frosty morning in the remote fells of Scotland to find that my little pool, that had served me well through the past winter months, had frozen up. The hair on my back was brittle with the heavy fall of frost that had come during the night and it was on my long shapely horns too. The steam from my nostrils went up into the clear crystal air like a billow of smoke. I shook the frost from my coat and decided that it would be a good thing to get some food. When I returned out from the wood I heard clearly yet faintly the sound of the hunter's horn, but this worried me little, for many was the time that I had been hunted by the Lord from the hill top castle. I found some tender shoots of fern and ate my fill. The sun had come out now and the frost was melting and dropping to the ground in crystal drops. After eating, I went to look for some water but I had no luck so I licked the surface of the ice on my pool. As I was thus engaged, I saw in the dull green thickness of the ice, the reflection of a huntsman's head come out of some ferns about fifteen feet away. I was transfixed with horror, but Taga the great knew no fear. I bounded away in fine style with buckshot whistling through my horns. I fled faster, but it was not the buckshot that I cared for, it was what came after it; the dogs. Huge beasts with lolling tongues and glistening teeth. I could hear them coming now, and their bark was worse than any report from a gun. I looked round in terror to find a place to hide and, after crossing a rushing torrent of water, I found a small cave just big enough for me. In I plunged and lay down panting. I could hear the dogs yapping excitedly, but soon the yapping died away, and I was left to my thoughts amidst the stillness of the surrounding hills, and the now risen sun. I got up, and went home to safety and comfort.

NEIL CRAWFORD age 13

STALKING HIS PREY

The small bird did not know that it was being stalked. But its stalker did not care-he was out for his dinner.

The bird saw a worm which it stalked until its beak went forward quickly and grabbed it in its mouth. Then the bird's stalker jumped forward and got him in his jaws. There was a crunch. The prey was caught. But the hunt was not over for the lynx came by. There was a loud hiss as the lynx sprang, but he fell short. The stalker turned and tore open j the lynx's throat. This was the humour of Nature.

CRAIG SAMS age 11

POETRY

THE SEA

The day was bright
The sand was gold dust.
The sea was like the sky
But in the ocean deep,
Where the sea roars like thunder
And lightning flashes,

Fishes of the deep
All rainbow colours
Green, yellow, and stripy ones
And where oysters
Die and rest in peace.

PETA VAN ROOD age 9

LIFE

There was nothing there
Only a streak
One solitary blade of grass.
This blade,
Grown from a seedling small
This merest sign of life.
Beneath this blade
The sodden earth
One tiny patch of ground,
Is full of life
In smallest form,
Insect, leaf and worm.
Each atom from whence
This world was made,
Each its own small world,
Is life in all
Its former ways,
And this will never change.

GILLIAN BOOTH age 15

FALLING LEAVES

Whistle you may
You wiping wind
Throwing leaves
O'er field and wood
Dropping them
O'er hedge and road
Pushing them
In house and barn.

Hum you may
You soft night wind
Pulling leaves
From branches long
Sailing them
Through shadow and moonlight
Resting them
Beneath their mothers.

TOM ROLAND, age 12.

THE MARE FROM THE SEA

Pounding over the short-cropped turf,
Nobody rides on the mare from the surf,
Dripping and black, she thunders back,
Back to the wet black sea.
Plunging in, as if she had fin,
She says farewell to her neighing kin,
And forever more denies everything but the roar
Of the heaving, rolling sea-o.

CHARLOTTE BERESFORD age 10

PORTUGAL

Landscape

Rolling hills and windmills
Eucalyptus and pine,
Parched fields and yellow squash*,
And a mile away from the sea.

People

The people are friendly,
Hardworking and bent,
Tilling their land
With wrinkled hands,
For the soil is not soil
But sand.

* A vegetable grown in Portugal.

SETH MYDANS age 9

THE GERM

I was a germ and a very nice germ
And an excellent germ at that
With a twisted mouth and a hairy body.
My original home was a cat.
Somehow, though, I left that cat
I really don't know how,
I remember crawling up a piece of grass
When I was eaten by a cow.
I went down its throat till I reached its waist
(If a cow has a waist at all,)
And then I got made into milk
Because I was so small.
I was milked into a milking pail,
Then, before I realized,
I went into a large machine
And came out STERILISED.

GILLIAN BOOTH age 15

SWANS

The swans swim slowly,
The swans swim evenly,
The swans swim noiselessly
Together on the moat.
They swim slowly in the dark green waters.

They take their ease, floating in the reeds.
In the evening they swim,
In the morning they fly.
They fly around in circles
With their long white neck
Stretched out in front,
With their bright orange beaks
Glittering in the sun beam
And their green webbed feet
Hanging in the air.
They are strong and healthy,
Big and white as they swim.
Noiselessly, evenly and slowly
In the dark green waters.

They are beautiful.

Yarkhill 1943

ERNEST WEISS age 9

THE SPIRIT OF LONDON

Below the stars and glimmering moon
Lies London fast asleep
Yet though it sleeps, the planes keep watch
And search-lights sweep the skies.

Sirens are going, people wake up
And quickly run down the street
To get to their shelters and seek safety there
Whilst overhead aeroplanes meet.

The houses in London are shaking
And buildings in ruins crash down
Bombs are falling, fires are blazing
But people smile and go on.

At last it all ends, the raiders have gone
Silence is over the town,
Soon -one by one the stars fade out
And dawn creeps over the sky.

Yarkhill 1940

ROBIN BOWLEY age 10

POEM

Is it the sun that stares at me from the sky,
Or is it a light so bright, that it is so infallibly deep?
It lays me bare, and uncovers all my thoughts,
Opens my heart and sets me free of care.
My mind is then revealed to the inquisitors
Of all I ever dreamt and ever saw.
I think of things so deep that my eyes are
Not for them, nor are my thoughts,
For I am drawn to build this dream of thoughts, and make it
As a wall of bricks, a chain of links,
Each thought connected, yet as different as the straight
young elm

Compared with a bent and twisted ashen tree,
Dwarfed in youth by blight and pestilence;
Yet both are beautiful to see. And thus
This connection so connects each thought,
And so the chain goes on from link to link,
A never ending line of thought and dream,
To reach the sky before the thought can break,
And render me again unto the outside world.
The light has faltered,
My thoughts have gone; I wander on again.
That passing cloud has shuttered all my dream,
And that insistent light is hidden from my view.

GILLIAN BOOTH age 15

WAR POEM

The bombs that whistle
The guns that roar,
The windows that break
And shake the floor.

The Fighters are up
And fighting their way
They're shooting down planes
Day after day.

The people that go to shelter
And have wounds and injuries
Come out helter-skelter
To find their families.

When the pilots come home
They are welcomed with joy
Now the raid is all over
The girl kisses her boy.

Yarkhill 1940

JOHN EAVES age 10

GOODBYE CUCKOO

Good Bye Cuckoo
Your wing is spread,
Your song is gone,
T'will be another year until
We hear again
Your happy note.

Another year will come and go
And pass me by
Like thoughts upon the wing of time,
And I will wait
As in a dream.

I'll wait and wait
And long for you to sing!
For when you sing
The earth is new and fresh and green,
And life is new
And life is young.

But when you've finished,
When you've sung-
The earth is tired and old and grey,
Oh cuckoo, dearest cuckoo, stay!

EMILY ABERCROMBIE age 13

AIR RAIDS

I hear the distant drone of planes
The fighters take to flight,
The searchlights light up the darkened sky,
And guns begin to roar.

The sirens go quite close to me
And people rush for homes
The air raid shelters begin to fill
And guns still scream and roar.

Down in the shelters the people rest quietly.
The wardens go round full of cheer,
And people have drinks and talk to each other,
They don't think of the danger that's near.

The all clear has gone
The people go home
And return to their work
And the fighters come back for a roll.

Yarkhill 1940

ANDREA STRESSER, age 13

SWANS

White, graceful shapes.
Floating majestically
On the wide expanse of blue water,
Leaving a rippling wake behind,
As symbol of a great calm.

Suddenly, as though roused to fury.
They take to wing, and swooping
With a great beating of their wings,
Sail over the dwarfed lake,
Now symbols of untameable might.

Yarkhill 1941

ANDREA STRASSER age 14

MARCH

Quick cold streams,
Bursting buds,
Hard green against soft brown,
Crocuses and daffodils.
Small crystal clouds
Swept across a deep blue sky
By quick cold winds.
Short twitters from birds
Silent through the winter.
New life pressing into the world
With forceful energy.

Yarkhill 1940

ANDREA STRASSER age 13

THE SWANS

Their great forms
Silent, cold
Glide smoothly on the ripples
Of the pond's brown surface.

Proud, disdainful
Their necks arched
They swim abreast
Towards their home,
Hidden amongst the reeds.

Intangible white
Shadows, reflected
In the water,
Are you never roused
Or angered?
Are you too noble to play?

Suddenly, as if a
Whirlwind had whipped them,
The two white beings
Soared in to the sky.
Flapping wildly their
Merciless wings –
And craning their
Beautiful necks.

Down, down the crack
Of air being beaten,
Swooping, climbing,
Twisting, turning
Around the browning reeds.

Ungainly birds, calm
Yourselves,
You are not really like this,
Superior beings cold, intangible,
Stay where we may watch and love you.

