

# BIB BALLADS

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RING W. LARDNER

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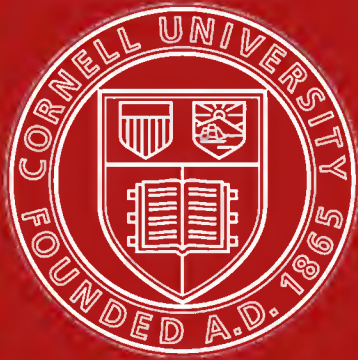
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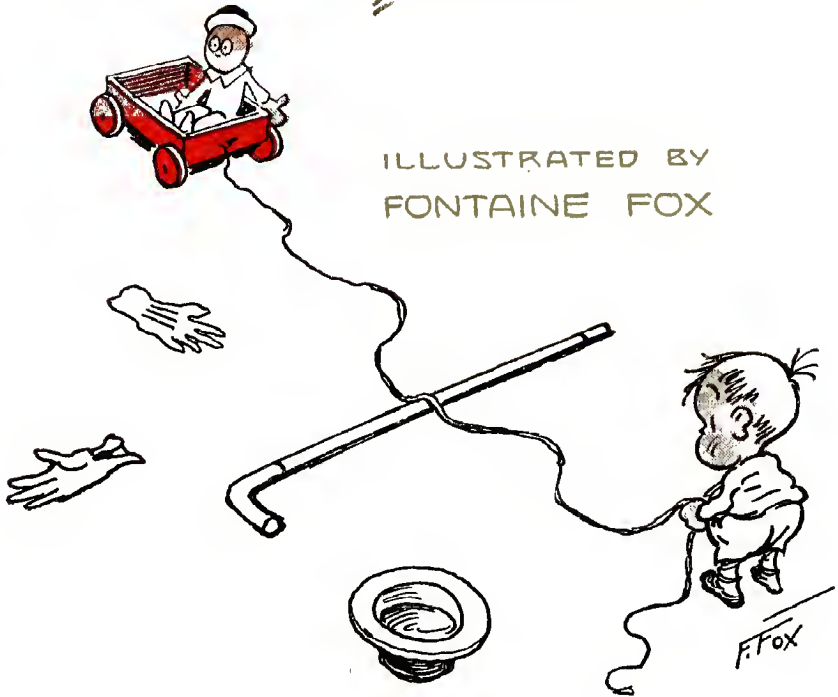


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# RIB BALLADS

BY  
RING W. LARDNER

ILLUSTRATED BY  
FONTAINE FOX



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## FOREWORD

Dear Parents:—Don't imagine, please,  
It's in a boastful spirit  
I fashion verses such as these;  
That's not the truth or near it.

A hundred or a thousand, yes,  
A million kids there may be  
Who aren't one iota less  
Attractive than this baby.

I'll venture that *your* household has  
As valuable a treasure  
As mine, but mine I *know*, and as  
For yours, I've not that pleasure.

And that is why my book's about  
Just one, O Dads and Mothers;  
But babes are babes, and mine, no doubt,  
Is very much like others.

THE AUTHOR



# BIB BALLADS



# BIB BALLADS

## GOOD-BY BILL

Dollar Bill, that I've held so tight  
Ever since payday, a week ago,  
Shall I purchase with you tonight  
A pair of seats at the vaudeville show?  
(Hark! A voice from the easy chair:  
"Look at his shoes! We must buy a pair.")

Dollar Bill, from the wreckage saved,  
Tell me, how shall I squander you?  
Shall I be shined, shampooed and shaved,  
Singed and trimmed 'round the edges, too?  
(Hark! A voice from the easy chair:  
He hasn't a romper that's fit to wear.")

Dollar Bill, that I cherished so,  
Think of the cigarettes you'd buy,  
Turkish ones, with a kick, you know;  
Makin's eventually tire a guy.  
(Hark! A voice from the easy chair:  
"Look at those stockings! Just one big tear!")

Dollar Bill, it is time to part.  
What do I care for a vaudeville show?  
I'll shave myself and look just as smart.  
Makin's aren't so bad, you know.  
Dollar Bill, we must say good-by:  
There on the floor is the Reason Why.

# BIB BALLADS



# BIB BALLADS

## A VISIT FROM YOUNG GLOOM

There's been a young stranger at our house,  
A baby whom nobody knew:  
Who hated his brother, his father, his mother,  
And made them aware of it, too.

He stayed with us nearly a fortnight  
And carried a grouch all the while,  
Nor promise nor present could make him look pleasant:  
He hadn't the power to smile.

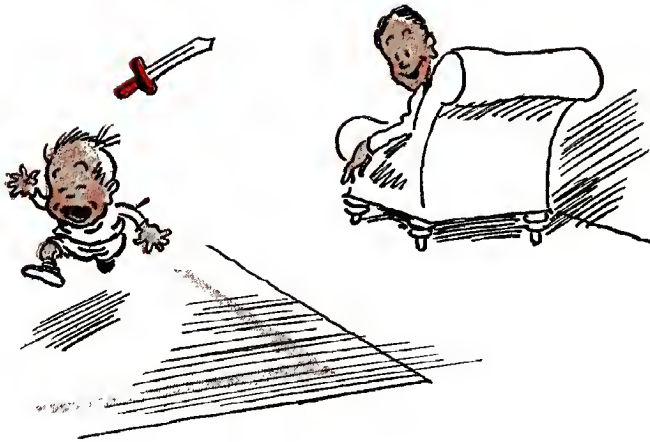
He cried when he couldn't have something:  
He cried just as hard when he could:  
Kind words by the earful but made him more tearful,  
And scoldings did just as much good.

He stormed when his meals weren't ready,  
And when they *were* ready, he screamed.  
He went to bed growling, got up again howling  
And quarreled and snarled as he dreamed.

He's gone, and the child we are fond of  
Is back, just as nice as of old.  
But I hope to be in some port European  
The next time he has a bad cold.



# BIB BALLADS



# BIB BALLADS

## AN APPRECIATIVE AUDIENCE

My son, I wish that it were half  
As easy to extract a laugh  
From grown-ups as from thee.  
Then I'd go on the stage, my boy,  
While Richard Carle and Eddie Foy  
Burned up with jealousy.

I wouldn't have to rack my brain  
Or lie awake all night in vain  
Pursuit of brand new jokes;  
Nor fear my lines were heard with groans  
Of pain and sympathetic moans  
From sympathetic folks.

I'd merely have to make a face,  
Just twist a feature out of place,  
And be the soul of wit;  
Or bark, and then pretend to bite,  
And, from the screams of wild delight,  
Be sure I'd made a hit.



# BIB BALLADS





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## DISCIPLINE

He couldn't have a doughnut, and it made  
him very mad;  
He undertook to get revenge by screaming at  
his dad.

"Cut out that noise!" I ordered, and he gave  
another roar,  
And so I put him in "the room" and shut and  
locked the door.

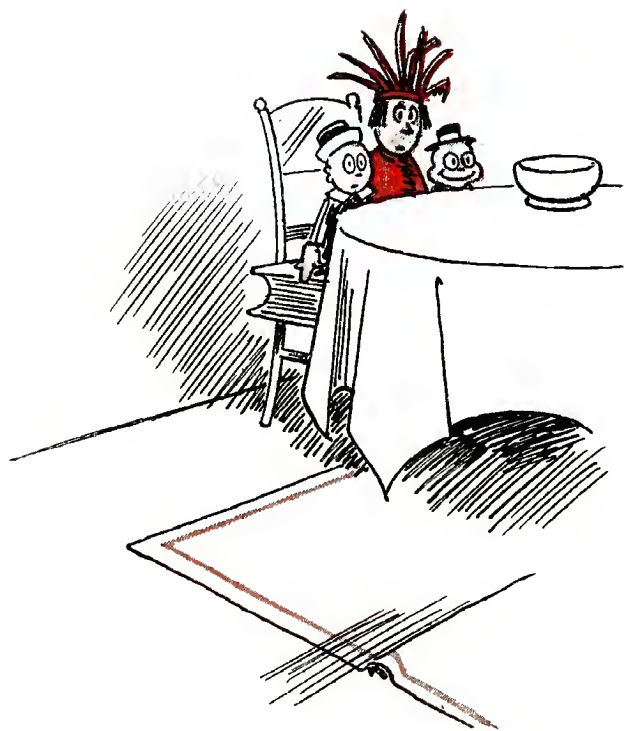
I left him in his prison cell two minutes, just  
about,  
And, penitent, he smiled at me when I did let  
him out.

But when he got another look at the forbidden  
fruit  
He gave a yell that they could hear in  
Jacksonville or Butte.

"Cut out that noise!" I barked again. "Cut  
out that foghorn stuff!  
Perhaps I didn't leave you in your prison long  
enough.

"You want your dad to keep you jailed all  
afternoon, I guess."  
He smiled at me and answered his equivalent  
for "yes"

# BIB BALLADS



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## INEXPENSIVE GUESTS

I wonder how 'twould make you feel,  
My fellow food providers,  
To have as guests at ev'ry meal  
Three—count 'em, three—outsiders.

Well, that's the case with me, but still  
I don't complain or holler.  
For, strange to say, the groc'ry bill  
Has not gone up a dollar.

These guests of ours, to make it brief,  
Can't really chew or swallow;  
They're merely dolls, called Indian Chief,  
And Funny Man, and Rollo



# BIB BALLADS



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## HIS SENSE OF HUMOR

Perhaps in some respects it's true  
That you resemble dad;  
To be informed I look like you  
Would never make me mad.  
But one thing I am sure of, son,  
You have a different line  
Of humor, your idea of fun  
Is not a bit like mine.

You drop my slippers in the sink  
And leave them there to soak.  
That's very laughable, you think  
But I can't see the joke  
You take my hat outdoors with you  
And fill it full of earth;  
You seem to think that's witty, too,  
But I'm not moved to mirth.

You open up the chicken-yard;  
Its inmates run a mile;  
You giggle, but I find it hard  
To force one-half a smile.  
No, kid, I fear your funny stuff,  
Though funny it may be,  
Is not quite delicate enough  
To make a hit with me.



# BIB BALLADS



# BIB BALLADS

## SPEECH ECONOMY

Since he began to talk and sing,  
I've learned one interesting thing—  
The value of a verb is small;  
In fact, it has no worth at all.

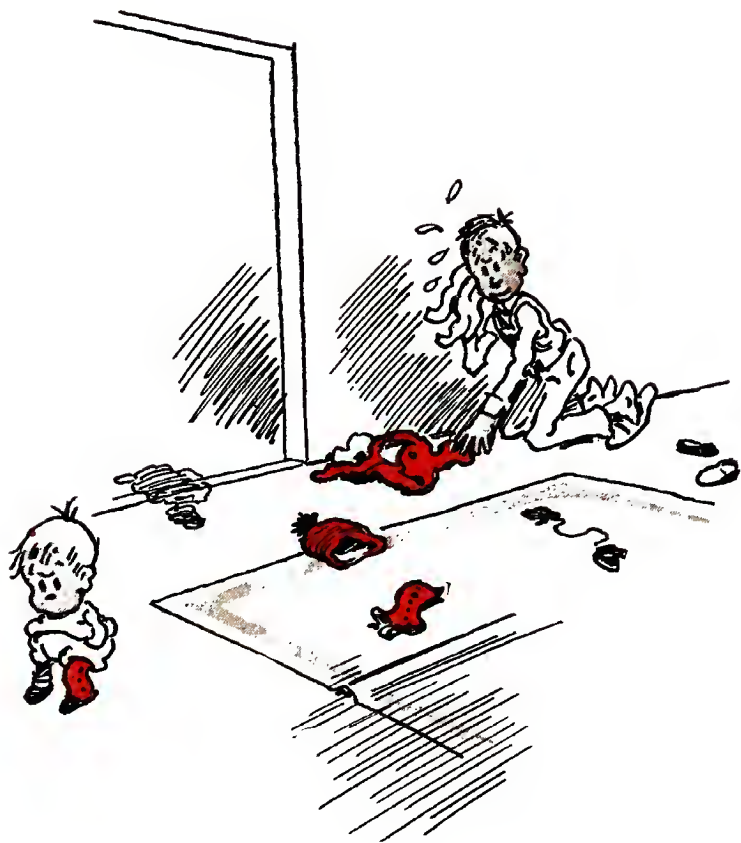
Why waste the breath required to say,  
"While toddling through the park today,  
I saw a bird up in a tree,"  
When "Twee, pahk, birt," does splendidly?

Why should one say, "Please pass the bread,"  
When "Ba-ba me" is easier said?  
And why "I'm starved. Have supper quick,"  
When "LUNCH!" yelled loudly, does the  
trick?

Why "I've been riding on a train,"  
When "By-by, Choo-choo" makes it plain?  
"Let words be few," the poet saith,  
So leave out words and save your breath.



# BIB BALLADS





# BIB BALLADS

## WELCOME TO SPRING

Spring, you are welcome, for you are the friend of  
Fathers of all little girlies and chaps.

Spring, you are welcome, for you mean the end of  
Bundling them up in their cold-weather wraps.

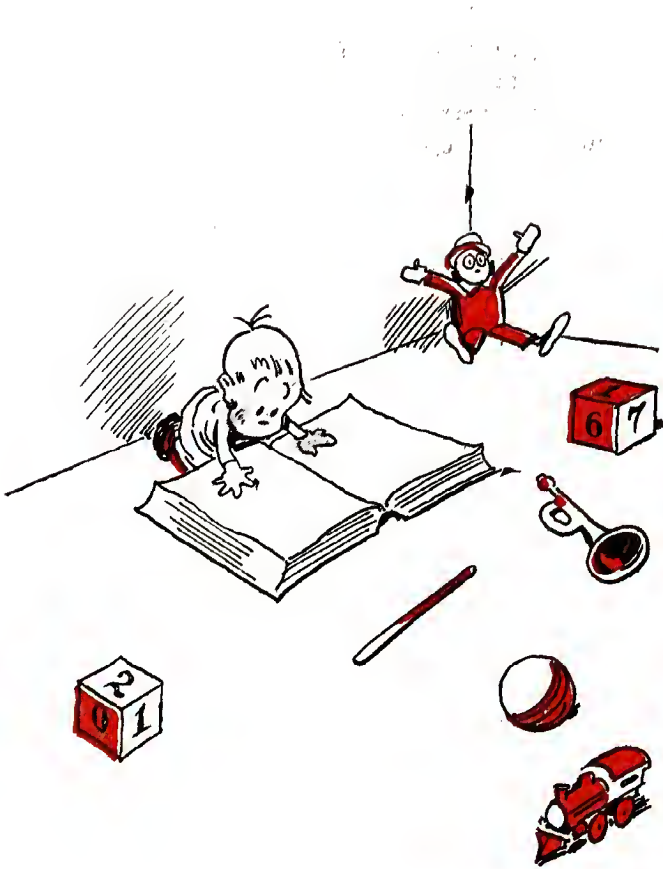
Breathes there a parent of masculine gender,  
One whose young hopeful is seven or less,  
Who never has cursed the designer and vender  
Of juvenile-out-of-doors-winter-time dress ?

Leggings and overcoat, rubbers that squeeze on,  
Mittens and sweater a trifle too small;  
Not in the lot is one thing you can ease on,  
One that's affixed with no trouble at all.

Spring, you are welcome, thrice welcome to father;  
Not for your flowers and birds, I'm afraid,  
As much as your promised relief from the bother  
Of bundling the kid for the daily parade.



# BIB BALLADS



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## TASTE

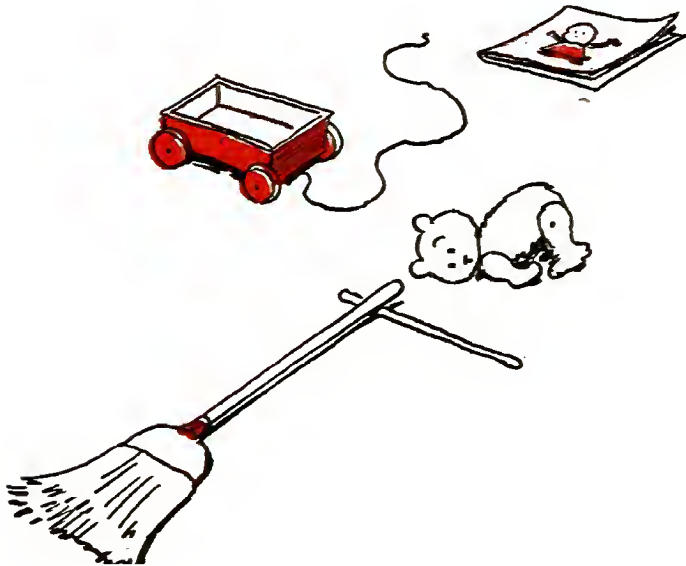
I can't understand why you pass up the toys  
That Santa considered just right for small boys:  
I can't understand why you turn up your nose  
At dogs, hobby-horses, and treasures like those,  
And play a whole hour, sometimes longer than  
that,

With a thing as prosaic as daddy's old hat.

The tables and shelves have been loaded for  
you  
With volumes of pictures—they're pretty ones,  
too—

Of birds, beasts, and fishes, and old Mother  
Goose

Repines in a corner and feels like the deuce,  
While you, on the floor, quite contentedly look  
At page after page of the telephone book



# BIB BALLADS



# BIB BALLADS

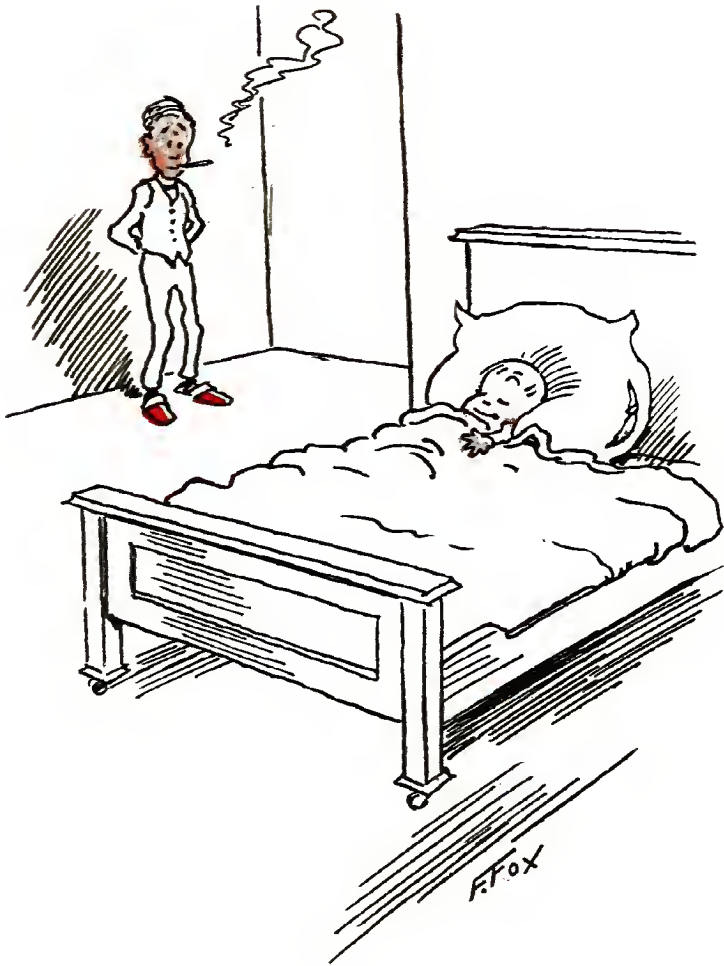
## RIDDLES

If it's fun to take books from the bookcase,  
If you really believe it's worth while  
To carry them out to the kitchen  
And build them all up in a pile,  
Why isn't it just as agreeable then  
To carry them back to the bookcase again?

If it's fun to make marks with a pencil  
In books that one cares for a heap;  
To tear out the pages from volumes  
One likes and is anxious to keep,  
Why isn't it pleasure to put on the hummer  
A magazine read and discarded last summer?



# BIB BALLADS



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## HESITATION

I've orders to waken you from your nap,  
And orders are orders, my little chap.  
But I hate to do it, because it seems  
A shame to break in on your blissful dreams.

I've sat and watched you a long, long while,  
And not since I came have you ceased to smile.  
So it strikes me as wrong to arouse you, boy,  
From sleep that's so plainly a sleep of joy.

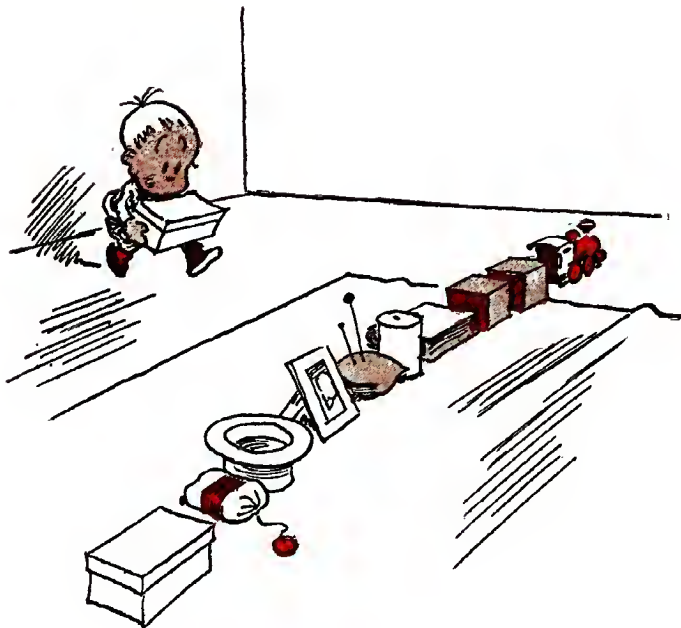
'Twill make a big diff'rence tonight, of course,  
But p'rhaps you are riding a real live horse;  
In dreams, it's a pleasant and harmless sport,  
So why should I cruelly cut it short?

Maybe you have for your very own  
A piece of pie or an ice cream cone:  
If that's your amusement, why end it quick?  
Dream-food can't possibly make you sick.

Orders are orders and I'm afraid  
It's trouble for me if they're disobeyed,  
But I'll bet if the boss could see you, son,  
She'd put off the duty, as I have done.



# BIB BALLADS





# BIB BALLADS

## HIS WONDERFUL CHOO-CHOOS

When I see his wonderful choo-choo trains,  
Which he daily builds with infinite pains,  
Whose cars are a crazy and curious lot—  
A doll, a picture, a pepper pot.  
A hat, a pillow, a horse, a book,  
A pote, a mintie, a button hook,  
A bag of tobacco, a piece of string,  
A pair of wubbas, a bodkin ring,  
A deck of twos and a paper box,  
A brush, a comb and a lot of blocks—  
When I first gaze on his wonderful trains,  
Which he daily builds with infinite pains,  
I laugh, and I think to myself, "O gee!  
Was ever a child as cute as he?"

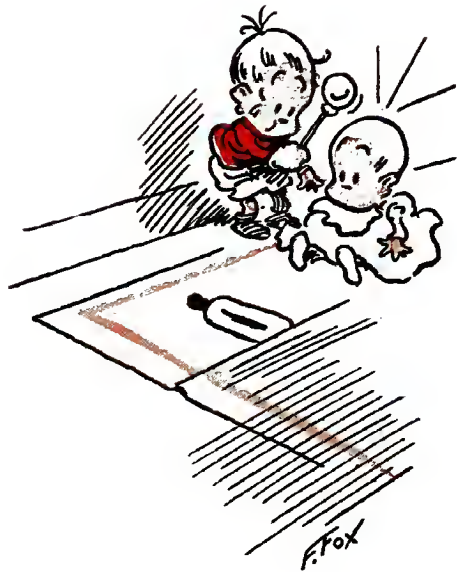
But when he's gone to his cozy nest,  
From the toil of his strenuous day to rest,  
And when I gaze on his trains once more,  
Where they lie, abandoned, across the floor,  
And when the terrible task I face  
Of putting each "Pullman" back in its place,  
I groan a little, and think, "O gee!  
Was ever a child as mean as he?"

### GLOSSARY

Bodkin—A napkin.  
Mintie—A mitten.  
Pote—A pencil.  
Twos—Cards.



# BIB BALLADS



# BIB BALLADS

## COUSINLY AFFECTION

Why do you love your Cousin Paull?  
For his sweet face, his smile, and all  
The little tricks that charm us so?  
You're not quite old enough to know  
How cute he is; to realize  
How clever for a child his size.  
I'm sure you can't appreciate  
The things that make us think him great.

And yet you love your Cousin Paull,  
Is it because he's twice as small  
As you, just right for you to maul?  
Because he won't fight back, or bawl?  
Because when he is pushed he'll fall?  
And, where most kids would howl and squall,  
He takes it, nor puts in a call  
For mother? Am I warm at all?  
Is this why you love Cousin Paull?



# BIB BALLADS



# BIB BALLADS

## MY BABY'S GARDEN

My baby has a garden,  
"Planted" four days ago;  
And nearly half his waking hours  
He spends among his precious flowers  
With sprinkling can and hoe.

My baby has a garden,  
And Oh, how proud he is'  
When, yielding to his pleading, we  
Lay work aside and go to see  
This masterpiece of his!

Behold my baby's garden,  
Close by a rubbish pile!  
Look at the sprinkling can and hoe  
And flowers; then tell me if you know  
Whether to sigh or smile.

The flowers in baby's garden,  
Flat on the ground they lie.  
Two hyacinths, a withered pair,  
Plucked from the pile of rubbish, where  
They had been left to die.

The flowers in baby's garden,  
"Planted" four days ago,  
Grow every hour a sadder sight,  
Weaker and sicklier, in spite  
Of sprinkling can and hoe.



# BIB BALLADS



# BIB BALLADS

## DECISION REVERSED

When I mixed with the shoppers and fought in  
vain

To get what I sought, in the Christmas rush;  
When they stood on my toes in the crowded  
train,

Or dented my ribs in the sidewalk crush,  
I dropped my manners and snarled and swore,  
And thought: "It's a bothersome, beastly  
bore!"

But when, at the Christmas dawn, they brought  
My kid to the room where his things were  
piled,

And when, from my vantage point, I caught  
The look on his face, I murmured: "Child,  
Your dad was a fool when he snarled and swore,  
And called it a bothersome, beastly bore."



# BIB BALLADS





# BIB BALLADS

## THE GROCERY MAN AND THE BEAR

He was weary of all of his usual joys;  
His books and his blocks made him tired,  
And so did his games and mechanical toys,  
And the songs he had always admired:  
So I told him a story, a story so new  
It had never been heard anywhere;  
A tale disconnected, unlikely, untrue,  
Called The Grocery Man and the Bear

I didn't think much of the story despite  
The fact 'twas a child of my brain,  
And I never dreamt, when I told it that night,  
That I'd have to tell it again;  
I never imagined 'twould make such a hit  
With the audience of one that was there  
That for hours at a time he would quietly sit  
Through The Grocery Man and the Bear

To all other stories, this one is preferred:  
It's the season's best seller by far,  
And out at our house it's as frequently heard  
As cuss-words in Mexico are  
When choo-choos and horses and picture books  
fail,  
He'll remain, quite content, in his chair,  
While I tell o'er and o'er the incredible tale  
Of The Grocery Man and the Bear.

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## COMING HOME

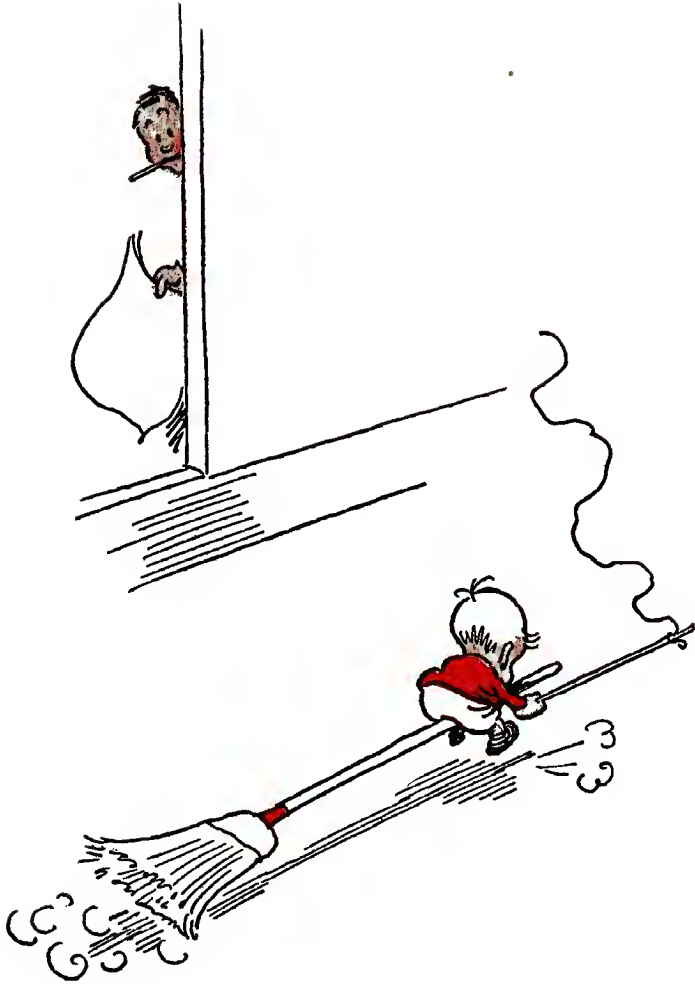
Prepare for noise, you quiet walls!  
You floors, get set for heavy falls!  
Frail dishes, hide away!  
Get ready for some scratches, stairs!  
Clean table linen, say your prayers!  
The kid comes home today!

For three long weeks you've been, O House,  
As noiseless as the well-known mouse,  
As silent as the tomb.  
And you've stayed neat, with none on hand  
To track your floors with mud and sand,  
To muss your ev'ry room.

The ideal place for work you've been,  
But soon a Bedlam once again,  
A mess, a wreck. But say,  
I wonder will it make us mad.  
No, House, I'll bet we both are glad  
The kid comes home today.



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## HIS IMAGINATION

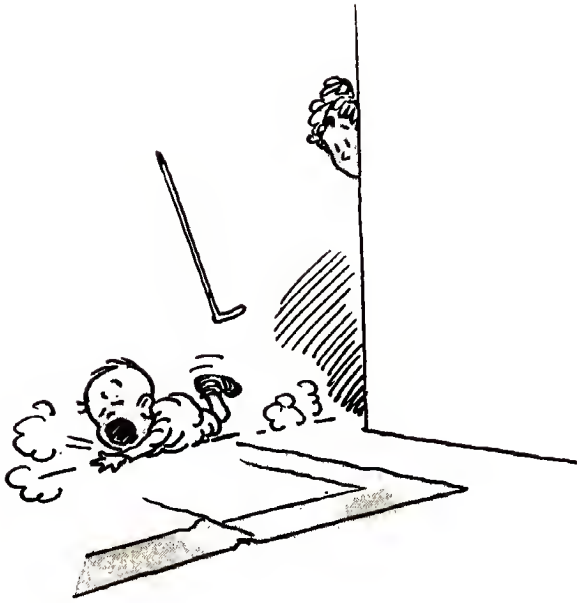
One thing that's yours, my little child  
Your poor old dad is simply wild  
To own. It's not a book or toy;  
It's your imagination, boy.  
If I possessed it, what a time  
I'd have, nor need to spend a dime!

I wish that I could get astride  
A broom, and have a horse to ride;  
Or climb into the swing, and be  
A sailor on the deep blue sea,  
Or b'lieve a chair a choo-choo train,  
Bound anywhere and back again.

If I could ride as fast and far  
On ship or horse, in train or car,  
As you, at small expense or none,  
If I could have one-half your fun  
And do the things that you do, free,  
I'd give them back my salary.



# BIB BALLADS



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## HIS MEMORY

Besides my little son's imagination,  
Another thing he has appeals to me  
And agitates my envious admiration—  
It's his accommodating memory.

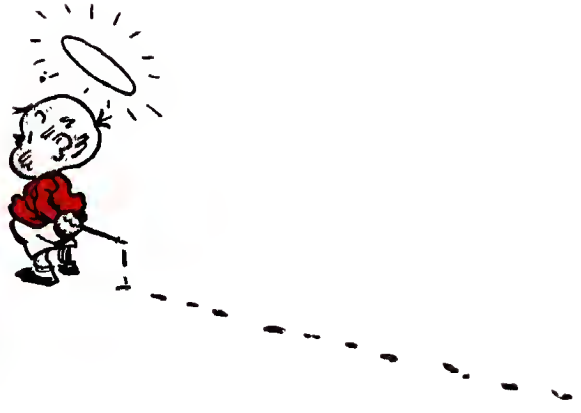
An instant after some unlucky stumble  
Has floored him and induced a howl of pain,  
He's clean forgotten all about his tumble  
And violently sets out to romp again,

But if, when I leave home, I say that maybe  
I'll get him something nice while I'm away,  
It's very safe to bet that Mr. Baby  
Will not forget, though I be gone all day.

Ah, would I might lose sight of things  
unpleasant:  
The bills I owe; the work I haven't done,  
And only think of future joys and present,  
Like the approaching payday, and my son.



# BIB BALLADS





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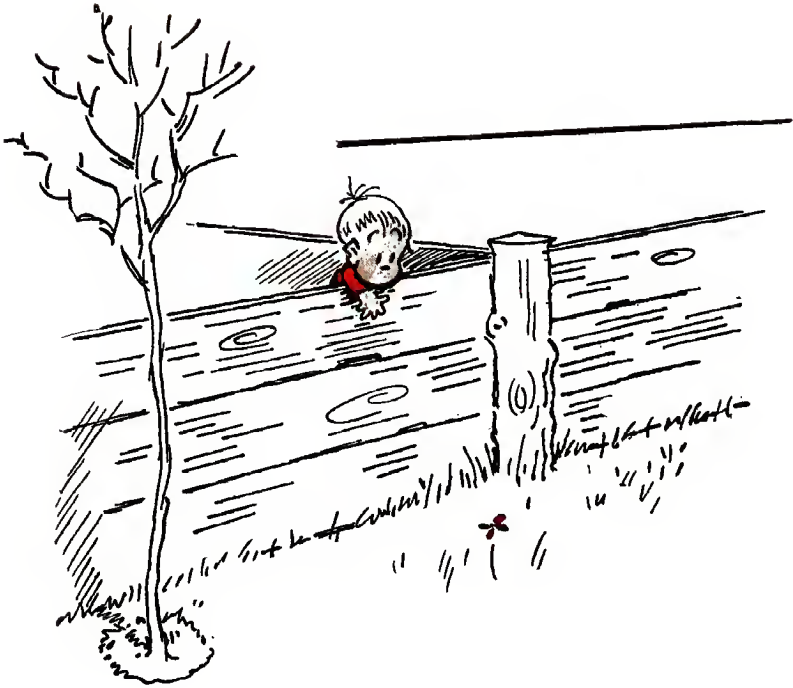
## CONFESSION

A sleuth like Pinkerton or Burns  
Is told that there has been a crime.  
He runs down clues and leads, and learns  
Who did the deed, in course of time.  
It's just the other way with me:  
The first thing I am sure of is  
The criminal's identity,  
And then I learn what crime was his.

When Son comes up with hanging head  
And smiles a certain kind of smile,  
When he's affectionate instead  
Of playful: when he stalls awhile  
And starts to speak and stops again,  
Or, squirming like a mouse that's caught,  
Asserts, "I am a GOOD boy," then  
I look to see what harm's been wrought.



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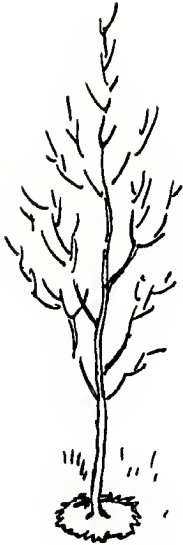
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## HIS LADY FRIEND

Who is Sylvia? What is she  
That early every morning  
You desert your family  
And rush to see her, scorning  
Your once cherished ma and me?

Are her playthings such a treat?  
I will steal 'em from her;  
Better that than not to meet  
My son and heir all summer.  
Save when he comes home to eat.

Or is she herself the one  
And only real attraction?  
Has your little heart begun  
To get that sort of action?  
Better wait a few years, son.



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## DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

“MYSELF!” It means that you don’t care  
To have me lift you in your chair;  
That if I do, you’ll rage and tear.

“MYSELF!” It means you don’t require  
Assistance from your willing sire  
In eating; ’twill but rouse your ire.

“MYSELF!” It means when you are through  
That you don’t want your daddy to  
Unseat you, as he used to do.

Time was, and not so long ago,  
When you were carried to and fro  
And waited on, but now? No! No!

You’d rather fall and break your head,  
Or fill your lap with cream and bread  
Than be helped up or down, or fed.

Well, kid, I hope you’ll stay that way  
And that there’ll never come a day  
When you’re without the strength to say,  
“MYSELF!”



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## THE ETERNAL GREETING

What is the welcoming word I hear  
When I reach home at the close of day?  
"Glad you are with us, daddy, dear?"  
Something I'd like to hear you say?  
No, it is this, invariably:  
"Daddy, what have you got for me?"

"Deep affection," I might reply;  
What would it profit if I did?  
I might answer: "The price to buy  
Clothes and edibles for you, kid."  
You would repeat, insistently:  
"Daddy, what have you got for me?"

Isn't my Self enough for you?  
Doesn't my Presence satisfy?  
No, that spelling would never do:  
You want Presents, a new supply,  
When you inquire so eagerly:  
"Daddy, what have you got for me?"

'Twould be much nicer and cheaper, son.  
If I were welcome without a toy,  
But as I'm not, I must purchase one  
And take my reward from your look of joy  
When you open the bundle and cry: "O, see!  
See what daddy has got for me!"



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# BIB BALLADS

## GUESS AGAIN

"I guess I'll help you, daddy."  
And daddy can't say "No;"  
For if he did, 'twould wound you, kid,  
And cause the tears to flow.

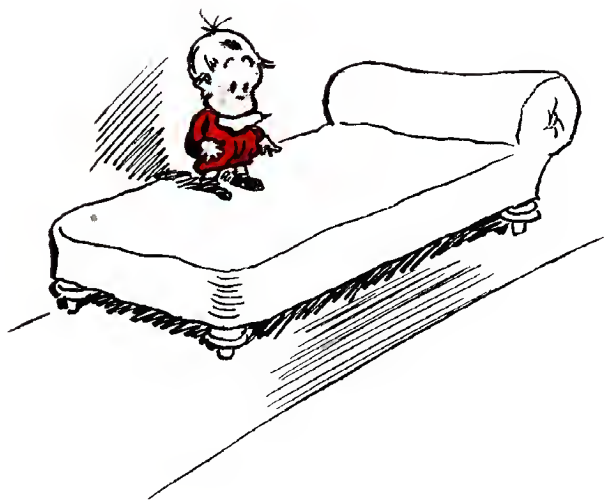
"I guess I'll help you, daddy."  
And daddy says: "All right,"  
And tries to do, ignoring you,  
Whatever work's in sight.

But what's the use of trying?  
As well be reconciled  
To quit and play the game that may  
Be pleasing to you, child.

To quit and play, or roughhouse.  
Or read, as you elect:  
For I'm afraid the guess you made  
Was wholly incorrect.



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## NEARLY A SINECURE

"I'm going to the office,"  
So says my youngster, and  
Gets on the train to take him there  
(The train's the sofa or a chair,  
Whichever's near at hand.)

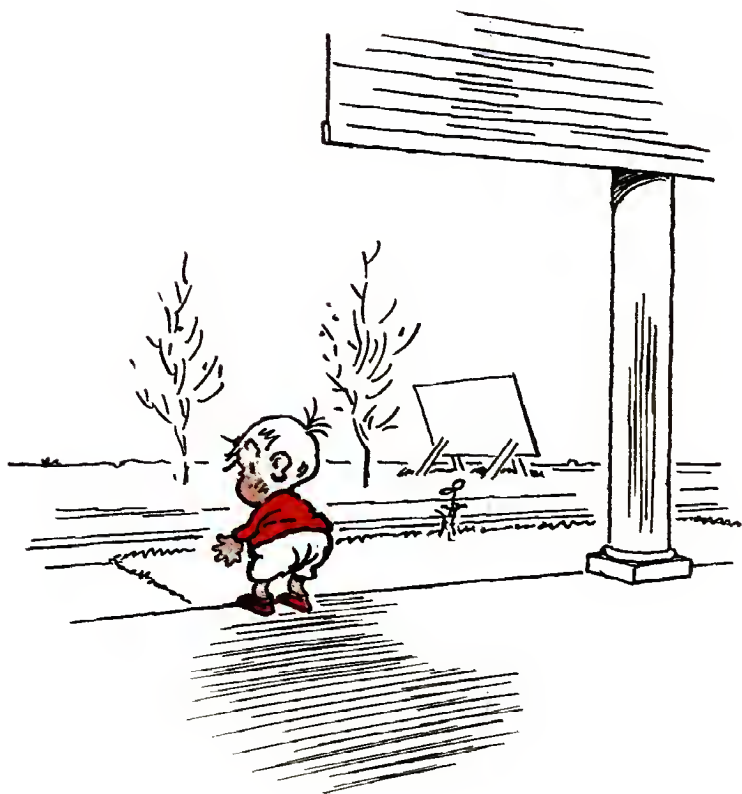
"Now I am to the office,  
I'm working now, says he.  
And just continues standing there  
On that same lounge or that same chair,  
As idle as can be.

Perhaps four seconds after  
He first got on his train:  
I see him getting off once more.  
He steps or falls onto the floor  
And says, "I'm home again."

I don't know what they pay him,  
Nor where the office is,  
The nature of the boy's posish  
I've never learned—but how I wish  
I had that job of his!



# BIB BALLADS



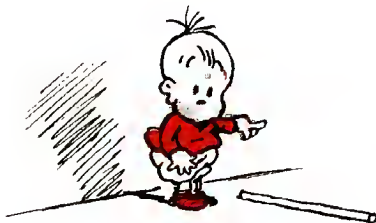
# BIB BALLADS

## THE HECKUSES

That may not be the proper way  
To spell their name; I cannot say.  
I've never seen 'em written out;  
I've only heard 'em talked about.  
They're coming here tonight to dine,  
So says that little son of mine.  
But all last week, 'twas just the same:  
They were to come, and never came.

And I'm just skeptical enough  
To think they're all a myth, a bluff;  
Mere creatures of my youngster's brain,  
Whose coming he'll await in vain.  
And yet to him they're very real.  
They own a big black auto'bilé.  
They work downtown, and they'll arrive  
Out here at one-two-three-four-five

The Heckuses are four all told  
There's Mrs. H., who's very old,  
And Baby Heckus, and a lad  
Named Tom, and Bill, the Heckus dad  
Beyond this point I can't describe  
The fascinating Heckus tribe  
I can but wonder how he came  
To think of such a lovely name



# BIB BALLADS



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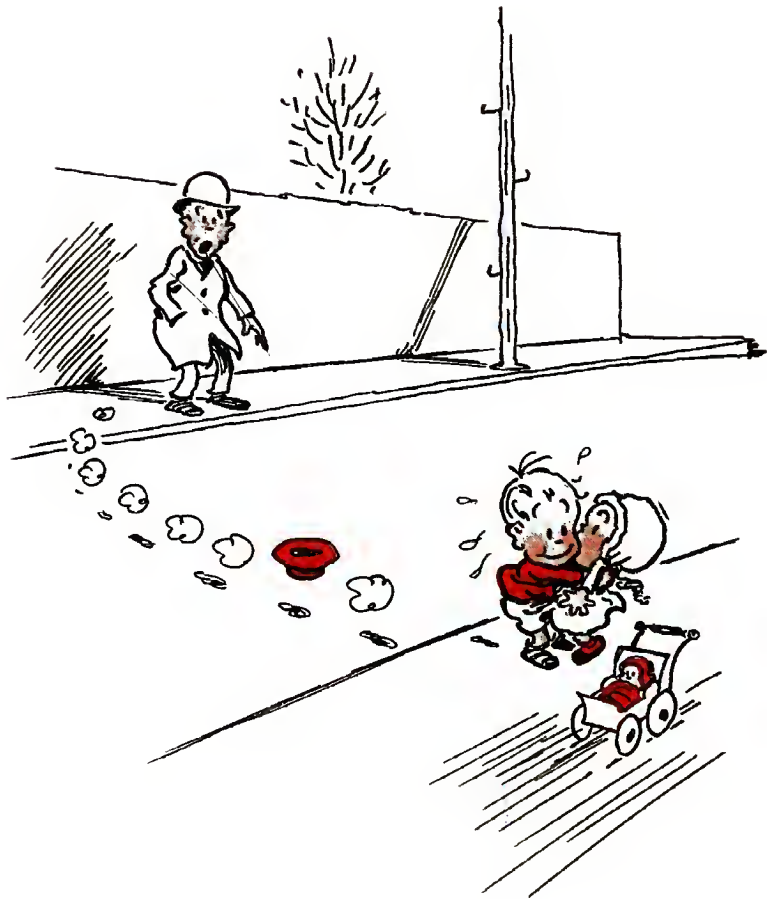
## HIS FAVORITE ROLE

You could be president as well as not,  
Since all you'd have to do is think you were,  
With that imagination that you've got;  
Or multimillionaire if you prefer,  
Or you could be some famous football star,  
Or Tyrus Cobb, admired by ev'ry fan;  
Instead of that, you tell me that you are  
The Garbage Man.

Why pick him out, when you can take your choice?  
Is his so charming, nice, and sweet a **role**  
That acting it should make you to rejoice  
And be a source of comfort to your soul?  
Is there some hidden happiness that he  
Uncovers in his march from can to can  
That you above all else should want to be  
The Garbage Man?



# BIB BALLADS





# BIB BALLADS

## THE PATHS OF RASHNESS

Up to the sky the birdman flew  
And looped some loops that were bold and new.  
The people marvelled at nerve so great  
And gasped or cheered as he tempted fate.  
More daring each day than the day before.  
Till the birdman fell and arose no more.

The bandit bragged of his daylight crimes  
And said: "I'm the wonder of modern times."  
Bolder and bolder his thefts became,  
And the people shook when they heard his name.  
He boasted: "I'm one that they'll never get."  
But he jollied himself into Joliet.

Well, son, I suppose you would be admired  
For the valorous habit that you've acquired  
Of rushing at each little girl you meet  
And hugging her tight in the public street.  
But the day will come, I have not a doubt,  
When you'll stagger home with an eye scratched out.



# BIB BALLADS



# BIB BALLADS

## THE NEW PLAYTHING

I wonder what your thought will be  
And what you'll say and do, sir,  
When you come home again and see  
What Daddy's got for you, sir.

I wonder if you'll like it, boy,  
Or turn away disgusted.  
(You've often scorned a nice, new toy  
For one that's old and busted.)

I wonder if you'll laugh, or cry,  
And run in fright to mother,  
Or just act bored to death, when I  
Show you your brand new brother.











