

When We Were Very Young

[Pete Matthews Jr](#) – <https://3nt.xyz> – December 27, 2021

Alan Alexander Milne (1882-1956) was an English author, best known for his books about the teddy bear Winnie-the-Pooh and for various poems. Milne was a noted writer, primarily as a playwright, before the huge success of Pooh overshadowed all his previous work. Milne served in both world wars... He was the father of bookseller Christopher Robin Milne, upon whom the character of Christopher Robin is based. – [Wikipedia](#)



Milne with his son Christopher Robin and Pooh Bear, at Cotchford Farm, their home in Sussex. Photo by Howard Coster, 1926.

The 1924 copyright on *When We Were Very Young* has expired, so I am able to reproduce here my favorites from A.A. Milne's classic, with decorations by Ernest H. Shepard. I hope you enjoy them!

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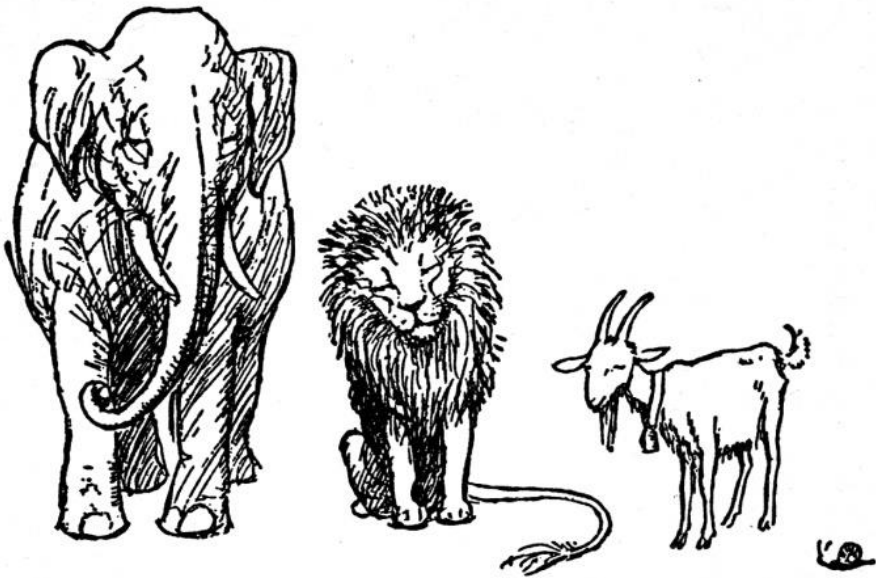
Happiness



John had
Great Big
Waterproof
Boots on;
John had a
Great Big
Waterproof
Hat;
John had a
Great Big
Waterproof
Mackintosh—
And that
(Said John)
Is
That.



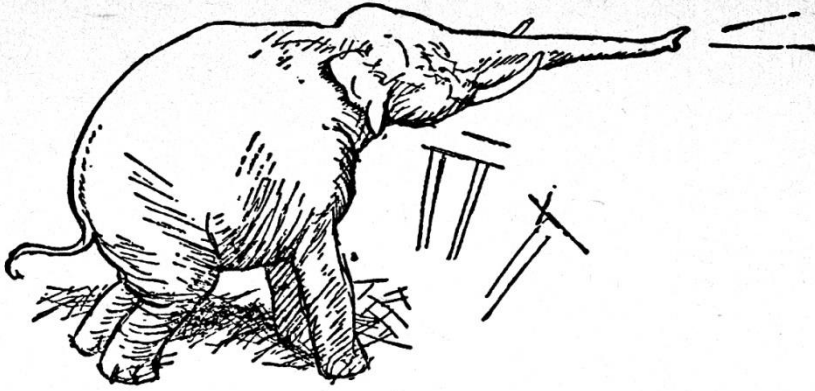
The Four Friends



Ernest was an elephant, a great big fellow,
Leonard was a lion with a six-foot tail,
George was a goat, and his beard was yellow,
And James was a very small snail.

Leonard had a stall, and a great big strong one,
Ernest had a manger, and its walls were thick,
George found a pen, but I think it was the wrong
one,
And James sat down on a brick.





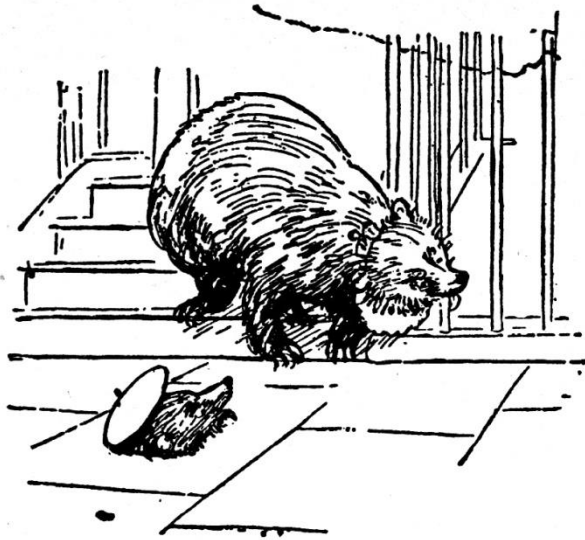
Ernest started trumpeting, and cracked his manger,
Leonard started roaring, and shivered his stall,
James gave the huffle of a snail in danger
And nobody heard him at all.

Ernest started trumpeting and raised such a rumpus,
Leonard started roaring and trying to kick,
James went a journey with the goat's new compass
And he reached the end of his brick.

Ernest was an elephant and very well-intentioned,
Leonard was a lion with a brave new tail,
George was a goat, as I think I have mentioned,
But James was only a snail.

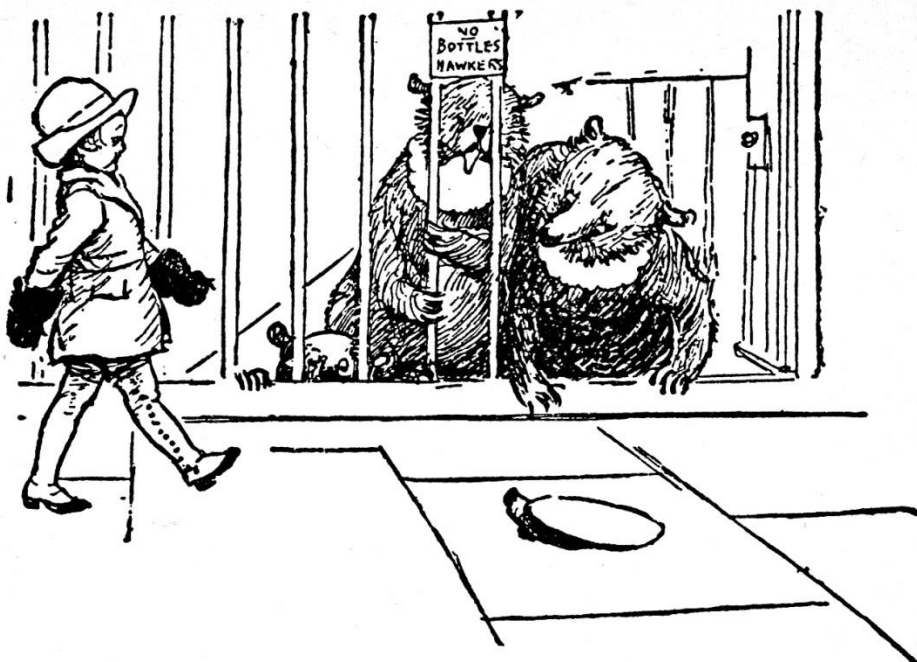


Lines and Squares

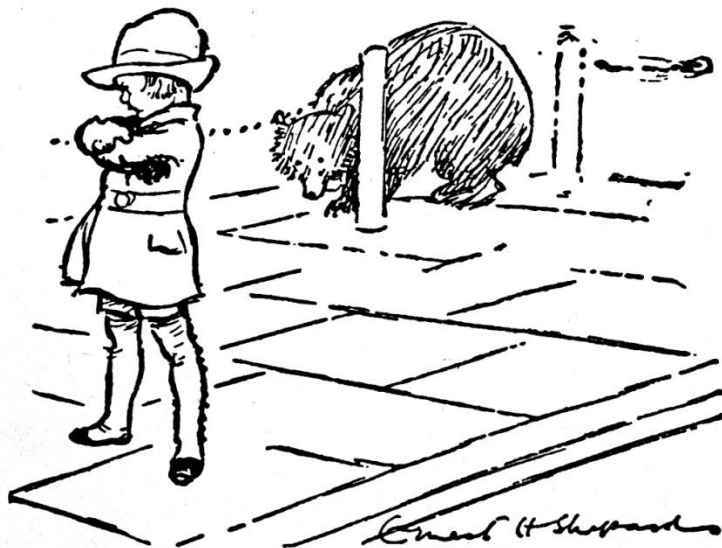


Whenever I walk in a London street,
I'm ever so careful to watch my feet;
 And I keep in the squares,
 And the masses of bears,
Who wait at the corners all ready to eat
The sillies who tread on the lines of the street,
 Go back to their lairs,
 And I say to them, "Bears,
 Just look how I'm walking in all of the squares!"





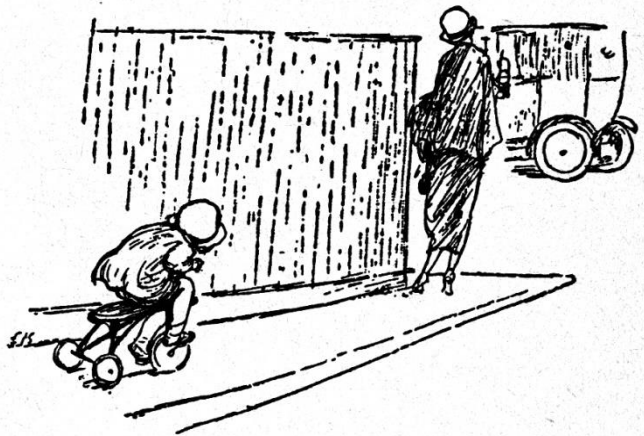
And the little bears growl to each other, "He's
mine,
As soon as he's silly and steps on a line."
And some of the bigger bears try to pretend
That they came round the corner to look for a
friend;
And they try to pretend that nobody cares
Whether you walk on the lines or squares.
But only the sillies believe their talk;
It's ever so portant how you walk.
And it's ever so jolly to call out, "Bears,
Just watch me walking in all the squares!"



Disobedience

James James
Morrison Morrison
Weatherby George Dupree
Took great
Care of his Mother,
Though he was only three.

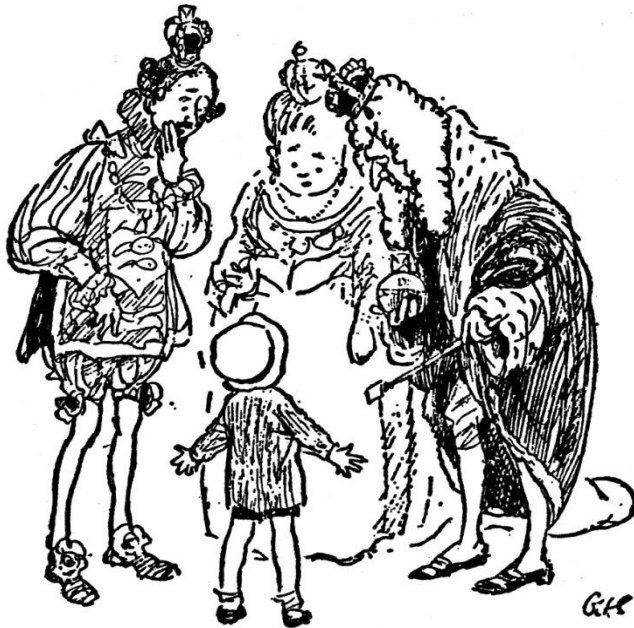
James James
Said to his Mother,
“Mother,” he said, said he:
“You must never go down to the end of the town,
if you don’t go down with me.”



James James
Morrison’s Mother
Put on a golden gown,
James James
Morrison’s Mother
Drove to the end of the town.
James James
Morrison’s Mother
Said to herself, said she:

“I can get right down to the end of the town and be
back in time for tea.”

King John
Put up a notice,
“LOST or STOLEN or STRAYED!
JAMES JAMES
MORRISON’S MOTHER
SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN MISLAID.
LAST SEEN
WANDERING VAGUELY:
QUITE OF HER OWN ACCORD,
SHE TRIED TO GET DOWN TO THE END
OF THE TOWN—FORTY SHILLINGS
REWARD!”



James James
Morrison Morrison
(Commonly known as Jim)
Told his
Other relations
Not to go blaming *him*.

James James
Said to his Mother,

“Mother,” he said, said he:

“You must *never* go down to the end of the town
without consulting me.”



James James
Morrison's mother
Hasn't been heard of since.
King John
Said he was sorry,
So did the Queen and Prince.
King John
(Somebody told me)
Said to a man he knew:

'If people go down to the end of the town, well,
what can *anyone* do?'

(Now then, very softly)

J. J.
M. M.
W. G. Du P.
Took great
C/o his M*****
Though he was only 3.

J. J.
Said to his M*****

"M*****," he said, said he:

"You-must-never-go-down-to-the-end-of-the-town-
if-you-don't-go-down-with ME!"



The King's Breakfast



The King asked
The Queen, and
The Queen asked
The Dairymaid:
“Could we have some butter for
The Royal slice of bread?”
The Queen asked
The Dairymaid,
The Dairymaid
Said, “Certainly,
I’ll go and tell
The cow
Now
Before she goes to bed.”

The Dairymaid
She curtsied,



And went and told
The Alderney:
“Don’t forget the butter for
The Royal slice of bread.”



The Alderney
Said sleepily:
“You’d better tell
His Majesty
That many people nowadays
Like marmalade
Instead.”

The Dairymaid
Said, "Fancy!"
And went to
Her Majesty.
She curtsied to the Queen, and
She turned a little red:



"Excuse me,
Your Majesty,
For taking of
The liberty,
But marmalade is tasty, if
It's very
Thickly
Spread."

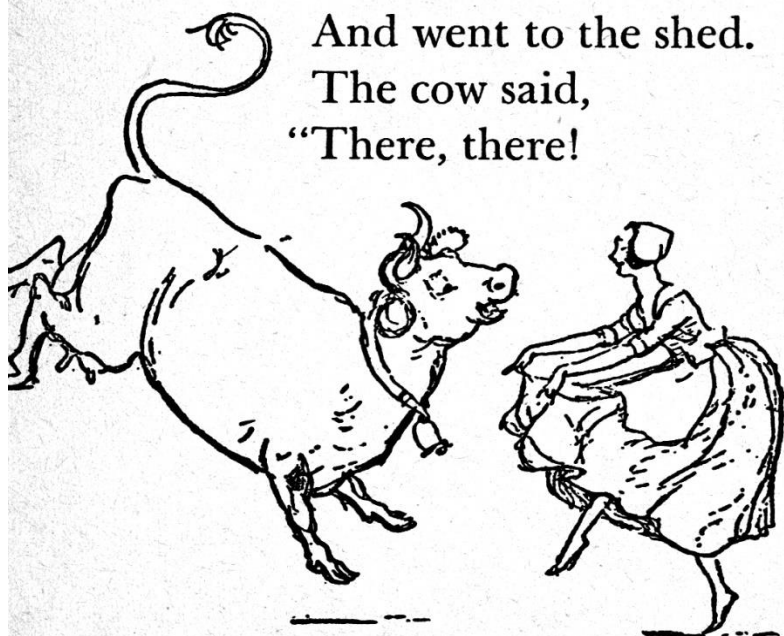
The Queen said
"Oh!"
And went to
His Majesty:
"Talking of the butter for
The Royal slice of bread,
Many people
Think that
Marmalade
Is nicer.
Would you like to try a little
Marmalade
Instead?"



The King said,
"Bother!"
And then he said,
"Oh, dear me!"
The King sobbed, "Oh, deary me!"
And went back to bed.
"Nobody,"
He whimpered,
"Could call me
A fussy man;
I *only* want
A little bit
Of butter for
My bread!"



The Queen said,
"There, there!"
And went to
The Dairymaid.
The Dairymaid
Said, "There, there!"
And went to the shed.
The cow said,
"There, there!"



I didn't really
Mean it;
Here's milk for his porringer
And butter for his bread."
The Queen took
The butter
And brought it to
His Majesty;
The King said,
"Butter, eh?"
And bounced out of bed.
"Nobody," he said,
As he kissed her
Tenderly,
"Nobody," he said,
As he slid down
The banisters,
"Nobody,
My darling,
Could call me
A fussy man—
BUT

I do like a little bit of butter to my bread!"



Bad Sir Brian Botany



Sir Brian had a battleaxe
with great big knobs on;
He went among the villagers
and blipped them on the head.

On Wednesday and on Saturday, but mostly on the
latter day,
He called at all the cottages, and this is what he
said:

“I am Sir Brian!” (*ting-ling*)

“I am Sir Brian!” (*rat-tat*)

“I am Sir Brian, as bold as a lion—
Take *that!*—and *that!*—and *that!*”

Sir Brian had a pair of boots with great big spurs
on,

A fighting pair of which he was particularly fond.
On Tuesday and on Friday, just to make the street
look tidy,

He'd collect the passing villagers and kick them in
the pond.

“I am Sir Brian!” (*sper-lash*)

“I am Sir Brian!” (*sper-losh!*)

“I am Sir Brian, as bold as a lion—
Is anyone else for a wash?”





Sir Brian woke one morning, and
he couldn't find his battleaxe;
He walked into the village in his second pair of
boots.

He had gone a hundred paces, when the street was
full of faces,
And the villagers were round him with ironical
salutes.

“You are Sir Brian? Indeed!
You are Sir Brian? Dear, dear!
You are Sir Brian, as bold as a lion?
Delighted to meet you here!”

Sir Brian went a journey, and he found a lot of
duckweed;



They pulled him out and dried him, and they
blipped him on the head.

They took him by the breeches, and they hurled
him into ditches,
And they pushed him under waterfalls, and this
is what they said:

“You are Sir Brian—don’t laugh,
You are Sir Brian—don’t cry;
You are Sir Brian, as bold as a lion—
Sir Brian, the lion, good-bye!”

Sir Brian struggled home again, and chopped up
his battleaxe,
Sir Brian took his fighting boots, and threw them
in the fire.
He is quite a different person now he hasn’t got his
spurs on,
And he goes about the village as B. Botany, Es-
quire.

“I am Sir Brian? Oh, *no!*
I am Sir Brian? Who’s he?
I haven’t got any title, I’m Botany—
Plain Mr. Botany (B).”

