

LIONS & CROCODILES

Ten Nonsense Songs

for Children

(Big and Wee)

BY

HUGH S. ROBERTON

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FOREWORD

IN that part of Canada which lies west of the Great Divide, there are many rivers, but the Frazer river is the river of rivers, the river into whose bosom all the baby rivers go, there to be borne to the great deeps of the Pacific.

It was on a farm on the Frazer river that Joan, the subject of these songs, was brought up.

Her companions on the farm were mostly men and dogs. Thus it was that she learned to use expressions which little boys and girls at home here would find it difficult to understand. Where they would say, "Oh, dear me," Joan would say, "Oh, boy," and so on.

She was brought to me at the prairie city of Winnipeg one sunny day in June, a little, dark-haired, brown-eyed, elfin-like four-year-old, as elusive, as wilful, and as fearless as a prairie pony. If you asked her to do something she wanted to do, she would say, "O.K., Buddy." If you offended her, she would say, "Say, Bo, I'm through with you." When she made it up with you, which she always did, and quickly too, she used one word only, the word, "Shake." Thus we became pals at once, so pally, indeed, that in moments of special graciousness I, who was her grandfather, was elevated by her ladyship to the high rank of "Baby," a rank I had not occupied for about sixty years.

My job was to bring her home to Scotland, not that Scotland was her home, for she was born in California, and brought up, as I have already told you, in British Columbia. But to Scotland she was to come. That, as she herself would have expressed it, was a "cinch," which just means that it was a certainty.

So there we were, this child of Nature and I, travelling nearly 5,000 miles together, Eastward Ho to Montreal, and East again to Glasgow. What could I do? I who knew nothing about the upbringing of children.

It was a situation, I can tell you, and one out of which I had to find the best way I could. So can you blame me that I tried to become a child again, a very difficult thing to do when one wears long trousers and has a bald head. But it happened, as strange things often happen. She played with her bricks and other toys, and I played with the only toys I have known for many years, my words and my notes. She built houses for me, and I built songs for her. And if the songs have outlived the houses, it is not because the songs are better than the houses, but simply because, while you can knock down houses, you cannot knock down songs. That is the way of songs.

Because these songs entertained her and made her happy, I think they might entertain you and make you happy, that is, if civilisation has been kind to you, and has left enough of the child in you to understand, not only that "a little nonsense now and then is relished by the wisest men," but (and this is more important), that there is often as much sense in nonsense as there is nonsense in sense; indeed, nonsense is often just a wayward way of expressing sense. Be that as it may—here are JOAN'S songs.

Wee Willie Winkie

AND OTHER SCOTTISH NURSERY SONGS



Music

by

J. MICHAEL DIACK

Illustrations

by

JESSIE ISABEL GARROW

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