

## I HEARD THE CHILDREN SINGING

I walked into the picture-hall to watch the children play,  
Instead I found a concert that was getting under way;  
It seems the little critics here had seen the adult show,  
And said 'twould be much better if the kids could have a go.

They put their heads together and worked out the whole campaign,  
And then invited Uncle Jack to show them how to train;  
A princess for accompanist, a dancing teacher too,  
And last a man behind the mike to help to pull them through.

Three boys were brave enough to join a gang of noisy girls,  
Who practised hard on scorching days despite their plaits and curls;  
They sang their songs, they jumped about, and kicked their legs up high,  
Then said that they were good enough to give the show a try.

The curtain cords were busted but they told two little boys  
That they could pull the curtains if they didn't make a noise;  
The hall was packed, the seats were full, the people at the back  
Were straining so to see the stage I thought their necks would crack.

A hush arose as at the mike the compere took his place,  
With formal suit and tie precise below his anxious face;  
The fear that aught should go amiss, betrayed by worried frown,  
Need never have been in his heart; they'd never let him down.

They opened with a chorus that was heard right through the hall;  
The ship was rolling right and left enough to make them fall;  
But they were so determined that they'd do the concert well,  
They didn't care a jot about the Indian Ocean's swell.

Ten dancing girls with nifty feet gave us a Digger Show,  
They tapped their toes and kicked heels all lined up in a row;  
Their legs they swung in unison, they swayed with rhythmic beat,  
And everyone who watched them there was dancing in his seat.

A specialist in somersaults came on to do her stuff,  
But just as she began her turn the sea got rather rough;  
As o'er her head her legs she threw the ship gave quite a lurch,  
And feet that missed the accompanist near knocked her from her perch.

But unperturbed she carried on and tied herself in knots,  
And put her head between her toes and in the strangest spots;  
Then just to show the doubting ones she wasn't in a trance,  
She brought her little sister on and both performed a dance.

An Aussie migrant six years old sang us a nonsense song,  
With such assurance in his smile he couldn't just go wrong;  
When vast applause and loud encores brought him again in sight,  
He said: "Another song I'll sing, but on another night!"

An expert in the ballet art amongst the others shone,  
So lightly floating round the stage as graceful as a swan;  
She pirouetted through the air like any fairy queen,  
And as the music died away just melted from the scene.

For those who say tuition is essential to success,  
A lassie tapped a dance or two in green and golden dress;  
Though never she'd a teacher had in any dancing school,  
With self taught steps she showed herself exception to the rule.

Not only operatic stars can sing in foreign tongues,  
For juveniles that lovely night gave out with youthful lungs  
the merry songs of other lands the way they were composed,  
In accents that a knowledge showed you'd never have supposed.

I would that I could speak in full of all the children small,  
Who entertained the crowd that night within the cinema hall;  
But if a writer vests his poem in over long attire,  
The people who perceive its length just throw it in the fire.

For unexpected talent shone that had been kept quite dark,  
With soloists who sang sweet songs that called to mind the lark;  
Or others who with master-touch called on the crowd to sing,  
So that they in the chorus joined and made the rafters ring.

The instrumental section too had not been left quite bare,  
A dancer chasing butterflies contributed her share;  
A tiny girl with ballet heart showed us a step or two,  
And we were quite astonished at the things that they could do.

In tuneful words a song they sang of how a swagman strong  
Had camped and watch his billy boil beside a billabong;  
They conjured up a picture of a land so young and free,  
A picture of our homeland or our motherland to be.

The sweetest things must end at last, though we were all enthralled,  
And thought that heaven's happiness had partly been forestalled;  
With hearts replete and full of praise we thanked these children sweet,  
And hope that life's most gentle paths will grace their dainty feet.

Roland. "ASTURIAS" 13-6-47.

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