



My dear Little People,—

To-day we'll finish our Competition list and answer our letters first, and then I'll tell you a story. We'll start rightaway with the Essays:—

Margaret Mulvey, Geraldine.—What a fine time Margaret and her folk had during the holidays. Listen to her: "Some days when it was very hot, in the afternoon my sister, my four brothers, and myself who am the oldest, got into our bathing suits and we turned the hose on ourselves." What do you think of that for fun? Then, Mother, Daddy, the seven children, and the two kittens went camping at the mouth of the Opili for a fortnight. (Altogether Margaret, I think you had a most joyous holiday, and I would have liked to join the family party at the fishing camp.—Anne.)

Pearl McNeill, Lauriston.—Pearl had a busy day on Christmas Eve shopping and on Christmas morning, the whole family went to Mass, ten miles away. After that was the fine Christmas dinner, and I really believe everyone had such a good day that they all went to bed very tired.

(I think your description of the harvesting is most interesting Pearl, and I'm sure the children would like to hear about it. We'll tell them. Pearl says this is how the harvesters stack the crop which has been cut: They first of all put a dray load of straw on the ground and on top of that they build the stack. They put the sheaves on the straw one on top of another until they reach the height on which the point begins, and then they use less sheaves for the point. In stacking five men are needed. They are the stacker, the crower, two men on the drays and one man in the paddock to fork the sheaves. And when it is finished, a stack is a fine piece of work.—Anne.)

Tessie McMahon, Cronadun, did some hay-making in the holidays, and she also went to Westport for a few weeks. Then there was an excursion to Hokitika, to the Exhibition. There seem to have been wonderful sights at that Exhibition—a pig with two bodies, stuffed birds and all sorts of fine things. Tessie's father seems to have been cutting hay nearly all the holidays, and then when Tessie thought she was going to have a day to herself, he cut the paddock of oats and she had to go help him.

(Well my dear old Tessie, it's good to know that you're father's best girl isn't it? What would he have done without you to give him a helping hand? Your letter is a real busy one.—Anne.)

Maggie Ryall, Barrytown.—This letter is about days spent picnicking and bathing, and I think there was a day at Hokitika. I suppose at the Exhibition.

(You had a pleasant holiday didn't you Maggie, but I suppose it all seems quite a long time ago now.—Anne.)

Veronica Ryan, Wangachu, spent most of her holidays playing rounders in the paddocks and swimming in the river. Also there was a day spent in Wanganui, and Veronica put in an hour or two at the museum. She says there are heaps of strange things there and she liked the birds best. She also says that any boy or girl having an hour to spare should go to the museum.

(Glad you like the museum, isn't it a wonderful place, all museums are. Are there any butterflies in the Wanganui museum?—Anne.)

This finishes the Competition letters, and I am very pleased with all my little friends who made such a good attempt. I'm only sorry that you could not all get prizes, but if you did, there would have been no Competition.

There's only space for a very short story, so, I'll pick out something which will fit in. Do you know what Acorns are and Pumpkins? Have you ever noticed what a wonderful vine the pumpkin vine is, and how graceful a great big pumpkin will hang on a slender little branch. And the tiny acorn grown on a very big tree, the Oak. Well, if you haven't noticed it someone else did, and this is what he thought:—

Once there was a country bumpkin, who observed a great big pumpkin  
To a slender stem attached;  
While upon an oak tree nourished, little acorns grew and flourished  
"Bah!" said he, "that's badly matched.

"If, despite my humble station, I'd a hand in this Creation,  
Pumpkins on the oaks would be:  
And the acorn, light and little, on this pumpkin stem so brittle  
Would be placed by clever ME."

Then, fatigued with so much thought, he, rest beneath the oak tree sought.  
He soon in slumber found repose,  
But, alas! an acorn, falling, on the spot where he lay sprawling,  
Hit him—plump upon the nose!

Up he jumped—a wiser bumpkin. "Gosh!" he said, "Suppose a pumpkin  
Came a-falling on my face!  
After all, if I had made things, I'll allow that I'm afraid things  
Might be somewhat out of place!"  
—The Acorn and the Pumpkin (La Fontaine).

Now my Chicks, when next you see a pumpkin growing, I want you to give it a second look and remember that when we fancy that we can improve on God's beautiful work round us, we're sillier even than that country bumpkin. And if anyone calls you a "silly pumpkin," you can just smile, for even a pumpkin knows its place and does not grow on oak trees so that it may fall on people's heads. You can make the frightfullest looking lanterns out of pumpkins, and it is quite easy. Get someone to give you a nice little pumpkin, and you scoop every bit of the pulp out of it, but be careful not to break the shell. Then cut two eyes, a nose and a mouth into one side, ask your mother to put a lighted candle into the hollow pumpkin, and just you see what it looks like.

Has anyone written to anyone else yet? Really, you're the most awful children I know, you won't tell your poor old Anne a single thing. When is our L.P.L.C. really going to start? Now, we've got exactly 14 members, and, to start the ball rolling, I want each of you 14 to write a letter—just one side of the paper and just one sheet—to another member of the L.P.L.C. Instead of posting it direct, send it to "Anne" just as you send the letters you write to me, and if you write those letters really well, every one of them will be printed in the Tablet. Next week I will give you the names and addresses of the members, but remember, the letters are to be sent to me this time. Think what a surprise it will be for everyone who gets a letter. Nobody will know for sure that a letter is coming to him or her, and it will be real fun. Now get ready, you little slow-coaches, I'm as worried as The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe.—ANNE.

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