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A Sign of the Times

by Miriam Silver

Although his sister had slammed her bedroom door in his face William was not upset, he was used to this treatment, remained undaunted and shouted,

“You’ll be sorry, I’m in double figures, I’ve got rights and thumped her door to emphasise his opinion shouting at the same time, “I’m gonna tell mother, you’ll get into trouble.”

On his way to seek support he pushed a door and on seeing a parent he said, “Um! Father, sorry to disturb you,” using his grown up voice.

“What is it now?” growled his father over his newspaper.

“I thought that now I’m in double figures you could stop those two from ... and perhaps I could have a bit more pocket money?”

There it was, all out in the open. Only none of it had any effect on his long-suffering parent who lifted his head up to say,

“Spare me William, now go to school.”

“Can’t, s’closed, it’s holidays, can’t go anywhere, nuffin to do, sweets rationed, beach covered in barbed wire...” he expostulated hopelessly.

“When I was your age I always had plenty to do, there’s the war effort, the Spitfire fund, go and ask your mother, she’ll know”.

Recognising defeat William slouched off, called Jumble his faithful dog and made his way to seek consolation in the den, his gang’s secret inside the woods , disguised under unwanted, disused dangerous pieces of corrugated sheets of iron.

“I’ve made a decision, I’m going to help the war effort,” he announced on arrival standing on a box, from where he watched the scuffle.

“Come on, lets prove we’re in double figures. We could even say we’ve earned our tea. There’s all that old iron stuff, Spitfire fund needs it, those grownups don’t, we’ll take it to the Scouts’ dump.”

By this time Douglas, Henry and Ginger were hungry, so William’s idea was welcome, anything to overcome their terrible school reports.

The inspired friends enthusiastically went in and out of huts, sheds and garages, and up garden paths collecting wheelbarrows, lawn mowers, garden tools even bikes, in their opinion disused and unwanted since the outbreak of war.

Heaving their findings onto the wheelbarrow they made their way to the Scouts’ depot where, because the door was closed they dumped it all on to the gravel path, stood back, admired their efforts and went home complete with dust and dirt glowing with righteousness.

They heard later, when this motley collection was found by the chief scout who couldn’t open his doors, he hadn’t even pointed the finger of suspicion at them.

“Well, would you believe it, leaving it there, can’t get in, a real sign of the times, so inconsiderate.”

Basking in their good deeds William, Henry, Ginger and Douglas positively shone awaiting praise for their efforts when they presented themselves for William’s birthday tea.

Little did they know the furious neighbours were on their way to demand they returned their ‘old iron’. The Scout bloke needed access and he’d recognised his bike.