

The Lion and Albert

There's a famous seaside place called Blackpool,
That's noted for fresh-air and fun,
And Mr and Mrs Ramsbottom
Went there with young Albert, their son.

A grand little lad was their Albert,
All dressed in his best; quite a swell,
With a stick with an 'orse's 'ead 'andle,
The finest that Woolworth's could sell.



They didn't think much to the ocean:
The waves, they was fiddlin' and small
There was no wrecks and nobody drowned,
'Fact, nothing to laugh at at all.

So, seeking for further amusement,
They paid and went into the zoo
Where they'd lions and tigers and camels
And old ale and sandwiches too.

There were one great big lion called Wallace;
His nose was all covered with scars.
He lay in a som-no-lent posture
With the side of his face on the bars.

Now Albert had heard about lions,
How they was ferocious and wild.
To see Wallace lying so peaceful,
Well... it didn't seem right to the child.

So straight 'way the brave little feller,
Not showing a morsel of fear,
Took 'is stick with the 'orse's 'ead 'andle
And shoved it in Wallace's ear!



You could see that the lion didn't like it,
For giving a kind of a roll,
He pulled Albert inside the cage with 'im
And swallowed the little lad... whole!

Then Pa, who had seen the occurrence,
And didn't know what to do next,
Said, "Mother! Yon lions 'et Albert."
And Mother said "Eeh, I am vexed!"

Then Mr and Mrs Ramsbottom —
Quite rightly, when all's said and done —
Complained to the Animal Keeper
That the lion had eaten their son.

The keeper was quite nice about it;
He said, "What a nasty mishap.
Are you sure that it's your boy he's eaten?"
Pa said, "Am I sure? There's his cap!"



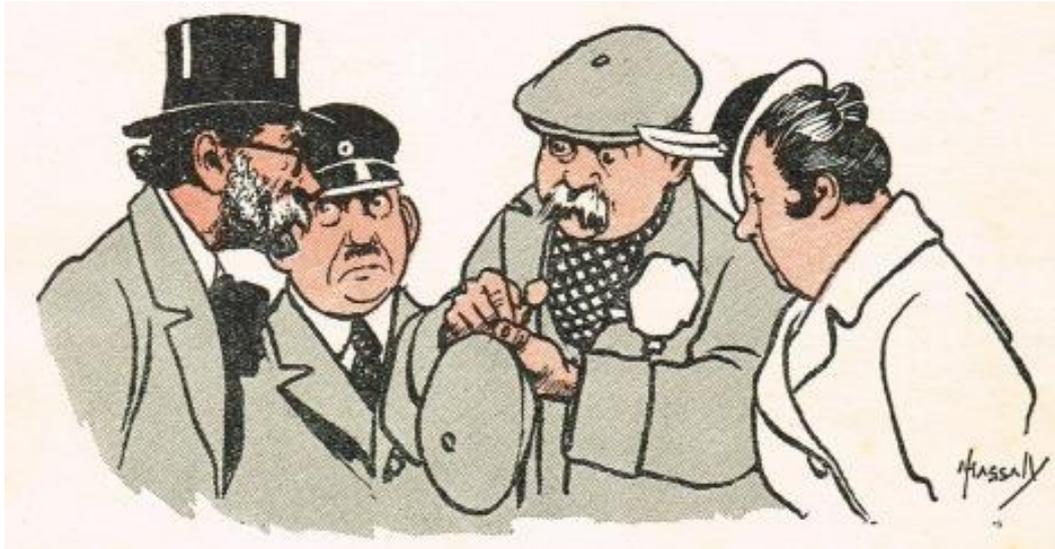
So the manager had to be sent for.
He came and he said, "What's to do?"
Pa said, "Yon lion's 'et Albert,
And 'im in his Sunday clothes, too."

Then Mother said, "Right's right, young feller;
I think it's a shame and a sin
For a lion to go and eat Albert
And after we've paid to come in!"

The manager wanted no trouble.
He took out his purse right away,
Saying, "How much to settle the matter?"
Pa said "What do you usually pay?"

But Mother had turned a bit awkward
When she thought where her Albert had gone.
She said, "No! Someone's got to be summonsed!"
So that was decided upon.

Then off they went to the P'lice Station
In front of a Magistrate chap.
They told 'im what happened to Albert,
And proved it by showing his cap.



The Magistrate gave his o-pinion
That no-one was really to blame.
He said that he hoped the Ramsbottoms
Would have further sons to their name.

At that Mother got proper blazing,
And "Thank you, sir, kindly!" said she.
"What?! Waste all our lives raising children
To feed ruddy lions? Not me!"

Marriott Edgar (1880-1951)

Marriott Edgar



Marriott Edgar as a Pantomime Dame

Made famous by Stanley Holloway (and in Lymington by Brian Mather), *The Lion and Albert* is a monologue written in the 1930s by Marriott Edgar, who originally earned his living as a Pantomime Dame. He met Stanley Holloway when they were both performing in *The Co-Optimists*, a touring all-star seaside Pierrot show. Holloway commissioned 16 monologues from Edgar.

Born into a Manchester theatrical family, Marriott's siblings included a half-brother (from a broom-cupboard encounter his father had with an actress at a party) who became the famous journalist and best-selling thriller writer Edgar Wallace.

The Lion and Albert is based on an actual news story that both Holloway and Marriott Edgar had heard. It is set in the menagerie at Blackpool Tower, and it became one of Holloway's most successful pieces. The lion was given the name Wallace, after the first African lion to be bred in Britain (whereas Edgar Wallace took his assumed surname from the author of *Ben Hur*).

The illustrations from the edition of the monologues published in the 1930s are by John Hassall, famous for his many posters, such as "Skegness is So Bracing" and "The Kodak Girl", as well as his books of fairy tales. He is the father of the poet Christopher Hassall and the printmaker Joan Hassall.