

Jim: a Cautionary Tale

Cautionary Tales by Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953)

Jim, Who ran away from his nurse, and was eaten by a Lion

There was a Boy whose name was Jim; His friends were very good to him.
They gave him Tea, and Cakes, and Jam, And slices of delicious Ham,
And Chocolate with pink inside, And little Tricycles to ride,
And read him stories through and through, And even took him to the zoo-
But there it was the dreadful Fate Befell him, which I now relate.

You know - at least you ought to know, For I have often told you so-
That Children never are allowed
To leave their Nurses in a Crowd; Now this was Jim's especial Foible, He
ran away when he was able, And on this inauspicious day
He slipped his hand and ran away! He hadn't gone a yard when - Bang!
With open jaws a Lion sprang, And hungrily began to eat
The Boy: beginning at his feet.

Now just imagine how it feels When first your toes and then your heels,
And then by gradual degrees, Your shins and ankles, calves and knees, Are
slowly eaten, bit by bit.

No wonder Jim detested it!
No wonder that he shouted „HI!“
The honest keeper heard his cry, Though very fat he almost ran
To help the little gentleman. "Ponto!" he ordered as he came
(For Ponto was the Lion's name), "Ponto!" he cried, with angry Frown. "Let
go, Sir! Down, Sir! Put it down!"

The Lion made a sudden Stop, He let the Dainty Morsel drop, And slunk
reluctant to his cage, Snarling with Disappointed Rage. But when he bent
him over Jim The Honest Keeper's Eyes were dim. The Lion having
reached his head, The Miserable Boy was dead.

When Nurse informed his parents, they Were more Concerned than I can
say:- His Mother, as she dried her eyes, Said, "Well- it gives me no
surprise, He would not do as he was told!" His Father, who was self-
controlled, Bade all the children round attend To James' miserable end,
And always keep a hold of Nurse For fear of finding something worse.

