all kinds of things like that when you travel with kids. This friendship started one day when Mary refused to eat her meal. When Mary refuses to eat her meal at home, we simply let her go hungry. But the waitress, a thin, elderly woman, had a whole bag of tricks on how to make kids eat. She hadn’t used them since her own family had grown up and left her. These tricks consisted of games about little men running up and down Mary’s throat, stories about little girls who didn’t grow up or grew into monsters without mouths (that woman could have kept a child psychologist in business all by herself) along with nutches of song, jiggling imitations of swooping aeroplanes and black looks.

If there’s anything Mary loves it’s to have something like this going on during her meal. Every day from then on, she refused to eat a sufficient until the waitress came over and went into her act. It was all very well except for the fact that the waitress tired of the game, and began to look at Mary as if she would just like to get her alone for ten minutes. But to disguise her feelings she’d just stand there, waving a spoon of cereal and telling us about the time she used to make her living examining coconut fibre mats in a factory in Milwaukee. I still know just how to make coconut fibre mats.

All in all, travelling with children is something that just makes a normally tough life all the tougher, and if I can get away with it I’m going to do my travelling from now on until they’re old enough not to want parents anywhere near without them. Most of the joys of travel are lost on youngsters anyway. Children take their own world along with them wherever they go. They start in any part of the world exactly where they left off at home. Put them down in the middle of the Nevada Desert, and they immediately try to take some little Navajo kid’s toys away from him. Canada’s back-basketed prairies are just something ride across while staring at a strange man who would like the left alone. Oceans are something that people occasionally put merry-go-rounds beside. Old Spanish architecture is something that reminds them that they want a drink of water. All these things they can enjoy just as well at home, which is a good place to leave them.

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