

ALL DONE BY KINDNESS—Continued

smokes too many! He could use that money for new paper!" She danced up and down after her happy plan, smiling widely.

"Go upstairs," said Marcia, after a gasp.

They went.

At lunch the table was rocked, with the charming result of a bowl of mayonnaise and three glasses of milk falling into Marcia's lap. That the idea had been thought out could not be doubted, for, with Mary standing on one side of the table and Jimmy on the other, Jimmy had said, "One, two, three—ready."

"A game?" inquired, Marcia, smiling with that particularly saccharinely sweet smile she reserved for children.

"Yes," answered Mary. "Go!" And then with a heave the table lifted.

Laura entered, wearing, a belligerent expression.

"They done it before," she said, regarding the mess, "and their pa beat 'em for it. The little devils! And it's your skirt, Miss, that'll be a mess to-morrow. The carpet's used to their carrying ons. Your ma'll hear about this!" she threatened, as she began to collect broken china and to mop up a stream of thickly oozing cream.

Marcia drew a deep breath and closed her eyes. She decided she must reason with them. She followed Laura to the kitchen, sponged her skirt, and began to work out her plan of action. It was plain, she thought, that the children had been badly handled. Love should play the leading part and not harshness. And yet she wondered; with a throb of pity for her mother, whether she and William and Isabel had behaved like that? But, of course, if the treatment had been proper—she returned with renewed belief in her ideals, and a set smile, to the re-assembled lunch.

"Now," she said, as she again sat down, "we are going to forget everything that has been unhappy, and try to plant happy seeds in our little hearts, so that when mother returns we can tell her how good we have been. Think how sweet it will be to tell mother that our little fingers have been good, that our little tongues have been good, and that——"

A howl interrupted this.

Mary was inspecting her bowl of milk and sniffing. "I won't eat it," she said. "I won't, I won't, I won't!" Looking, Marcia understood why not. A little mouse, quite evidently long dead, floated on the top. "J-Jimmy had it," gulped Mary. "He—he said he'd put it in my bed. I—hate them! There's one in the c-coffee pot, too."

Marcia felt rather ill. Waveringly she arose from the table. "I'll be back," she said weakly, as she hurried towards the kitchen, where she sank into a chair and demanded water from the sympathetic Laura.

Slowly, very slowly, the day passed, the longest day that Marcia had ever known. On going upstairs she had confronted a horrible mess, for, unfortunately, the period of banishment had not been spent in thought.

Little Jimmy, it seemed, was a devotee of motors; the four-posted bed had become one, and he had oiled it copiously with vaseline. The result was unhappily sticky. The brush with which he had polished the "hood" was Marcia's very monogrammed affair so reeking of oil that its rescue seemed impossible. The bath tub was also an unusually interesting thing, being full of a sewing table (desert island) surrounded by Mr. Mackay's shoes all floating in water, and to young imaginations, fast-sailing ships.

Marcia almost fainted over the water-soaked shoes, her brother William being particularly fastidious as to footwear. When the door bell rang, and Laura announced the older Jimmy, she descended with relief. She told him of the happenings with a heartless voice.

"I can't understand it Jim," she said. "They don't seem to care what I say."

"You want to do," said Jim, inspecting her with speculative eyes, "not say. A hair-brush helps lots, you know."

"But Jim," she protested, "I don't believe in that. Mrs. Jennison Wash said that one should never strike a little child."

"How many had she?"

"None, but she knew a great deal about them. She's lectured for years, and has the dearest little

white dog she takes with her everywhere, even on the platform, and she says that the key to little hearts is a kiss."

"Well, the way to little reforms is a spank. My heavens, you ought to see Alice smack 'em! She does it with one hand while she's adding up her cash account with the other. My dear girl, this love stuff is all right after they pass the Indian stage, but now——" Jim Senior shook his head.

"I can't believe it!" said Marcia.

"Well, you have two more days to prove it in," said Jimmy, sitting down before the piano and picking out the *Humoresque* with one finger.

"Please don't," pleaded Marcia. "The day's been bad enough already."

"All right. Who did the frescoes in the hall?"

"They all did. Isn't it horrible?"

"Rather. That was new paper. But Alice and Bert are used to it. Last month Jimmy, my namesake, captured a bucket of tar and he lugged it in. That was all right, but he tripped at the head of the third floor stairs. If I'd been his dad I would have finished up the job with a feather bed. Tired?" he ended, his voice growing gentle as Marcia's head slipped back against the chair.

"Dead," she answered.

"You poor kiddy!"

"And I'm afraid my manner to the children was harsh."

"Oh, lord, Marcia!"

"Yes, I'm afraid it was. Mrs. Jennison Wash said that children felt the faintest hint of doubt, and that entire confidence was necessary. Jim, I don't think you realise the impressions that make themselves felt on their delicate little souls. You know, they are the little blotting-pads, absorbing life's colours."

"By the look of the entrance hall I should think they'd been exuding them."

To this Marcia paid no heed and stood up again firmly entrenched behind her theory.

"To-morrow will be happy," she announced. "We will start the day with song."

"That's all right. The kids will supply the dance. But you can tell Mrs. Mouth-Wash for me that the

way to rear little souls without friction is to put 'em in a barrel and feed 'em through a bung-hole. I see you with three orphans! Marcia, weren't you something of a mug yesterday?"

Marcia grew haughty.

"No, Jim," she answered coolly, "but I can hardly make you understand. These poor little misunderstood children have given you a wrong impression. If I could but gain their confidence——"

And then Jim laughed. It was unfortunate, that laugh; it kept Marcia from appealing to him for three days. When she did it was a last resort.

When Jim reached his rooms he wrote a note. It was addressed to Mrs. Mackay, care of the Neerings, who lived on the edge of the town. Laconic it was, but it told the story:

"All well. We're winning. I stand new paper for the hall.—JIM."

At five on the following afternoon the cook left. Her mother, it seemed, was ill and needed her. She received a convincing telegram, and Marcia, heart-heavy and faint from the shock, read it and tried to sympathise. If she had seen the person who signed the touching appeal, signed it with the one word "Mother," she would not have made an appeal to James Gibbs. He had laughed a good deal as he wrote it. The Wellfords joined in the mirth.

An hour after it was sent came a frantic telephone call from Marcia.

"Mother," she said, "the cook's left. Can you send Bessie down here? I need her fearfully. I wouldn't mind the cooking if the children weren't—well, rather absorbing."

Mrs. Wellford indulged in irony.

"Can't you rule them with love, dear?" she inquired. This had reduced the family to such wild laughter that she had to silence them. "Wait," she said, "I can't hear. Now I can go on."

"Mother," said Marcia, "does the normal child deliberately kick one on the shins?"

"Kick you on the shins?" echoed Mrs. Wellford. "Why, yes, sometimes. Look at his tongue. Perhaps

SEE OUR OFFER IN THIS ISSUE.

A Christmas Present for YOU

The Ladies' Mirror will be glad to give you a Christmas Present. In this issue you will find how you can obtain anything advertised in this Annual without cost!

Become a Subscriber.
Fill up a Form
TO-DAY.

When Writing to Advertisers, Please Mention the "Mirror."

Please pass this
copy on to your
friends.