

## ALL DONE BY KINDNESS—Concluded.

he needs some medicine."

"He spilt it all over the piano keys. It's sunk between them and some of them stick. I don't know quite what to do."

"You tell him," advised Mrs. Wellford, "that you'll smack him hard if he doesn't swallow it. Or hold his nose, dear. Get him down and put your elbow on his stomach and hold his nose. I always did that with you."

"Oh!" said Marcia weakly. And then, "Don't you think there's any way to appeal to them?"

"No, dearie, I don't. At least I've never found it. You can bribe some children, but it's better not to. They have to learn that they've got to take things because they must some day. They might as well learn young."

"I suppose so." There was a dismal silence. "Mother," said Marcia.

"Yes, dearie," answered Mrs. Wellford. She was amused, but the whole affair hurt her because it hurt Marcia.

"If a little girl poured shoe polish over your best hat, would you call it bad?"

"I would, dear. You have to teach them to respect other people's property. Naturally they're little vandals. Is that all, dear?"

"You'll send Bessie?"

"No, I can't do that."

"What!"

"No, I can't, dear. Isabel's giving a luncheon to-morrow, you know, for Ivy Farquhar. There are fifteen coming, and Flora doesn't feel well, so Bessie's doing some of the cooking, too."

"But, Mother, what shall I do?"

"Shall I send down some of that Mrs. Monday's books?"

"No, and her name was Wash, Mother."

"Oh, yes, I remember. Shall I send them? Don't you want the 'Little Helps for Little Hurts,' or whatever it is?" The family began their mirth again, and it was necessary to ask Marcia to repeat her answer.

"No," she said, bitterly, "books will not help this situation. And I must say I am hurt. I need help badly, and no one offers it, but—well, good-bye."

"Good-bye, dearie," said Mrs. Wellford, and then began to answer the many questions of her family.

"That was her red straw," said Isabel. "I'll bet she was furious. Shoe polish!"

"It's a shame," said Jimmy. His tone showed weakening.

"It's the only cure," retorted Isabel. "Give her a dose. She needs it, Jim. I'll drop in this afternoon with those little 'Soul Charts' of Mrs. Wash's. I'll bet she'll be cured if you keep it up, Jim, and please do, for she needs it, and so do we. Is your brother-in-law staying at the club? And Alice with the Neerings? Awfully good of them to help us out in this way!"

## VI.

**B**UT after Jim left the Wellfords he walked along thinking unhappily. It was really pretty rotten, that last trick, he reflected. She wasn't used to real work, and cooking and three children combined did amount to that in its most intensive form. He turned to his rooms still worried. His telephone bell greeted him, and he heard Marcia's voice, unsteady and appealing—to him.

"Jim," she said, "can you come up here? I need you. Your sister said you could manage these three children."

"I'll be up in half-an-hour."

"Haven't you your car there?" He thought he heard a gasp after that.

"No, I haven't. Laid up for repairs. Something happened to the magneto."

"Can't you take a taxi?" she interrupted.

He answered with an over-tender "Yes, dear," heard her "Then please do," and hung up the receiver. After that, picking up his coat and hat, he started out. He found her appealing to him wonderfully sweet, and it quite subdued the humour of the situation. His thoughts, always too gentle where she was concerned, turned violently sentimental over her trials. They had been horrible, but if it taught her that child-training came with one's own children and their natural growth, then it was worth everything and more than that to him. He hailed a taxi, and told the man to hurry.

Jim found Marcia surrounded with two small girls, a little boy, and a shaved cat. The animal had been treated artistically, having tufts of fur left here and there, one particularly happy omission being on the tip of pussy's tail.

"I shall have to make underwear for it," said Marcia, surveying it with the pity that only real animal-loving maniacs feel. "It is horrible. Look at it shivering!"

Jim looked and tried not to laugh. "Its neck is sort of hollow," he said. "Do you think cocoa butter would help?"

"Father has a lot of old underwear I can use," said Marcia. "Poor pussy! I called you," she went on after a moment of cat petting, "to ask you to come and spank your nephew. I am sick of the job. Your sister told me to, but I don't dare begin. I should never stop. Mr. Mackay's dress clothes are ruined, Jim. Your little niece emptied the gold-fish bowl on to the trousers."

"We saw a magician get a gold-fish out of his —" began the small culprit in explanation, but she was cut off.

"And I think that the bath waste pipe is plugged up. They filled the thing with sand while I was getting lunch."

"We wanted water lilies," began small Jimmy, "and they won't grow unless—" But he also was interrupted by Marcia, who said, "I didn't send for a plumber. What was the use? They'd have filled it with something else, and repairs would have been so futile." She got up and went towards the hall. Jim Senior followed her.

"I have learnt," she said in a dramatic tone, "that you were right. I don't know any more about child culture than you do about tanning. I was insane to think of adopting three children. Oh, heaven, to think of it!"

"I wish you'd learn something else," said Jim, looking down.

"I have," she answered softly. "I learnt it when you kissed me, but I was too stubborn to tell you so. No, don't kiss me now; go and spank those children hard, and then you can kiss me as much as you like, and Jim I want you to!"

That evening Mary and Frances told their returned mother and father about the happenings.

"We're glad you're home," they said. "She didn't boss us at all. We had to rag her, and she told Uncle Jim to spank us, and then went up into her room to lie down. But he didn't. He gave us each a shilling and kissed us, and when she came down he kissed her, too. Wasn't that funny, Mother?"



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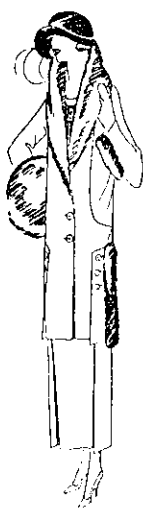
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