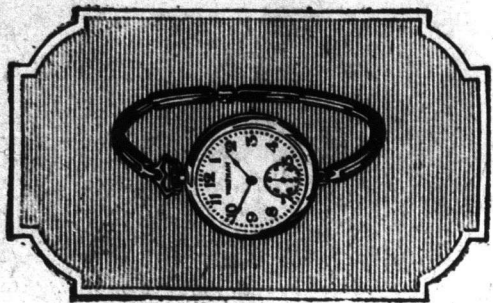




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He trotted faithfully beside you

WAS it your fault? Certainly not. It was the fault entirely of that inscrutable abstraction which they called Providence.

Providence made you a small boy, to begin with; and Providence additionally saw to it that everything which was most undesirable in the way of a dog should follow you home; yet when this combination resulted in its usual disaster, Providence always discreetly stood from under and left you to get out of the mess as best you might, by yourself.

Really, to be a small boy is to be but a hanger-on by sufferance to the ragged edge of the world, belonging to no rightful zone of enjoyment, and possessed of weird disqualifications which shut one out of each and every kingdom—animal, vegetable, or mineral.

They were very illogical—you thought—also very numerous. For to an abiding mother and father were added variable nurses and cooks, a fairly constant aunt, her attendant uncle and whole droves of intermittent grandparents. And it seemed to be the chief business of everybody either to rate you for not being around when they wanted you to be around, or to berate you for being around when they wanted you not to be. And the only safe rule to go by was to hurry out of the way the very minute you found yourself wanting to stay, and vice versa.

Very illogical. According to their dictum, no sooner did you succeed in outgrowing the shameful condition of wanting privileges for which you were "too young," than you found you had entered that shameful state of coveting diversions for which you were "too old." If there ever were a period of exact suitability, you missed it; it leaked by you in the night. No morning ever dawned upon it.

They were formidable only when massed together into a forbidding society, strewing "don't" in the path of experiments, like tacks in advance of a bicycle; collectively, they stood for all things evil; individually, though, they were none so bad.

Your father was pretty harmless, except on Sundays. He devoted that holy day of rest to evening up such scores as he had been unable to attend to on week days after he came home from business. At least, so it seemed. Sunday looms in memory as a day of much blistering, moral and bodily.

He would know nothing about anything, if your mother had not told him, at supper time. But everything came up after the pie—how you had been kept in at school; or barred out, as the case might be; what you had done to Jimmy Baxter's cat; what you had said to Jimmy himself; and what Jimmy's mother had said to you—oh, nothing was kept sacred. Your mother's excuse for all this breach of faith was that she wanted to make a good boy out of you. First the teacher took a whack at you; then your mother; finally your father. All for the same thing, too.

In the Days

By Marion Hill

No matter how far away from the house you were when you were bad, you always found that the news of it got home first. Hearing it, your mother used to say she was "surprised," and your father used to say that he "expected as much." It is rather queer that you should have happened to be their son, for they knew so little about you. Your mother was always imagining you to be the possessor of a stack of virtues, highly impossible to you; and your father was generally suspecting you of a heap of iniquitous conceptions, equally impossible.

Aunt Leila was the only one who seemed capable of arriving at a decent average; you were just "boy" to her, which simplified a lot of things. When you and a scrape tumbled into the house together, Aunt Leila was neither surprised nor expectant; she merely grinned companionably or laughed outright.

Some people called your Aunt Leila young; a palpable misstatement, for she was married—how account for Uncle Edmund else? And—even at that tender age—you knew that matrimony was very much of a settler, so far as youth was concerned.

Now, in the affair—or rather, continuous performance—of Baxter's cat they were all mistaken. They thought you did not like cats.

Nothing could be further from the truth. You liked cats. You did, indeed. But you mostly liked them in motion. And you generally spared yourself no exertion to furnish them with adequate incentive.

You used scientifically and honestly to feel that anything which had power to move with the whole-souled abandon of a cat ought to be kept moving; otherwise were wasted one of nature's best gifts to the cat tribe.

Why should they have expected you to prove your love by going through life with a cat on your heart? Did they think that a cat was easily obtainable? They should have known, as you did, that a cat belongs invariably to high places, to fence tops, to shed roofs, not impossibly to flagpoles, especially when you were near.

But a dog belonged to the good, good earth; he was always underfoot and reachable. How you ached for a dog. For a permanent one. The transitory dog was a daily occurrence. He adopted you on your way from school and came home with you; as far as the back door, no farther. Then you were taken to task for the happening and were detailed forth with the dog to lose him. Losing him generally occupied the whole of the afternoon—if it were a nice day.

Will you ever forget the admirable dog that absolutely refused to stay lost? that turned up at nightfall, con-



As a bedfellow he indulged

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