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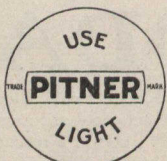
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ter, she suddenly caught hold of the Rabbit. But he came quite willingly. Like the rest of the proceedings, the move seemed novel and interesting. He had never met any one like Mrs. Barker before. It was a terrific ordeal he was subjected to and if the charwoman had not been naturally vindictive, it would have more than satisfied her craving for revenge. Even the gentlest women reveal a strain of cruelty in dealing with dirt, confusing often the foe with his lurking-place. In hunting the enemy out of an ear or an eye, they act as if in hostile territory. The Rabbit suffered all this. In addition, his eyes smarted with hot water, and his mouth became an active volcano of soapy lava. But he did not complain. He had a notion that this was his guest's queer way of showing friendliness. Had his schoolfellows seen him, his reputation would have suffered; but their ideas on manliness were not his. He had never had to fight against feminine ministrations. He only thought it odd, well meant, and rather unpleasant.

Then Mrs. Barker did his hair. She was not rough with the tangles, but this was mere selfishness. Any woman would have enjoyed ordering such fluffy curls.

And now, unless her visit was an imposture, she must come to the chastisement.

"Do you know who I am?" she said suddenly, in a most fearful voice.

"No."

"Well, I am George Barker's mother—the boy whose coat you cut. I am the woman who has promised to thrash you within an inch of your life."

"I said I wasn't afraid of any woman," said the Rabbit quietly.

Mrs. Barker glared at him, but he steadily looked her down. Her eyes fell before his. It was as George had foretold. She had met more than her match. It made it worse that his ascendancy was not a physical one. To be outfaced by a babe and sent about her business! Very abashed was Mrs. Barker as she turned round and walked away. She was pleased that the Rabbit came after her, to explain that he had not meant to spoil the suit, but that did not restore her pride. It was so obvious that the apology had not been prompted by fear, and yet shame was not the sole emotion. There was an odd sort of joy, too. There had been more in the Rabbits' face than mere defiance. There had been comprehension. He had understood, as George would never have understood, why it was impossible for her to raise her hand. A child's mind is a clear pool, and on its margin there is generally a woman peering into the waters for a softened reflection of herself; but the surface is easily troubled. George's mind ruffled at a breath, and in the ripples his mother saw her features distorted out of humanity. But from the orphan's clear depths it was a good woman that had smiled back at her. Despite the ignominy of her return, the expedition was scarcely regretted.

When Mrs. Barker got back to Salisbury Buildings, she found the doorway thronged by gossiping neighbours. She tried to pass through with a short "Good evening," but the talkers knew of her mission, and chorused for information. It was the very situation she had been dreading. However, by selecting for answer only the most convenient questions, she came through the ordeal triumphantly. Her reputation for hardness was even increased. You must picture her standing under the fanlight, her huge red arms crossed, and her face some six inches above the others, which are pushed upwards towards her.

"Law! Mrs. Barker, what a time you've bin! Whatever have you bin doing to him?"

"His friend was there, and I had to wait until he left."

"And then you torked to the young master?"

Mrs. Barker caught at the equivocation.

"Yes," she said grimly. "I torked to him. You can say that. I torked to him."

"She combed 'is hair for 'im, I'll be bound," said a lover of justice gleefully.

"Yes, I combed his hair for him. When I had finished," she added, with a flash of humour, "you wouldn't have known him."

A soft-hearted auditor edged away, but the others were eager for detail.

"You made him smart?"

"Yes, I made him smart; and, what is more," she said, her voice rising to an excited shriek, "I ain't done with him! Before he's a week older I shall go round and make him smart again."

Then she pushed her way through. She devoted what was left of the evening to mending the serge jumper with a piece of inconspicuous tweed. George, still awed by the morning's tragedy, moved about quietly. Mrs. Barker had it in her mind to say something gentle and reassuring, but, not finding the words, contented herself instead with kissing him when he was asleep.

THE CHINESE TAG DAY.

THE method of raising money for charities by such means as the conferring of decorative coat labels on "tag day," is not altogether original, says *The Argonaut*. From times immemorial in China a donation of 20,000 taels to charity has secured for the donor the much-prized peacock's feather, while for half that sum a title of nobility is conferred on one's ancestors to the third generation. The late Emperor of Brazil followed the same method when erecting a hospital in Rio de Janeiro. Having found a difficulty in obtaining the necessary funds, he announced that the title of "baron" was to be conferred on every subscriber of 100,000 milreis, and that of "count" on subscribers of 250,000 milreis. This announcement produced the desired effect, and the hospital was soon completed. The opening ceremony was performed by the emperor, and attended by a large number of the newly ennobled, who did not altogether relish the words inscribed in letters of gold on the gable of the new building, "Human Vanity to Human Misery."

THE INTERCOLONIAL.

(Montreal Gazette.)

IF politicians were courageous there would be a hope that something would come from the suggestion that the Intercolonial Railway should be sold or leased to a company. Hardly a newspaper off the line of the road has a word to say in defence of its past and present management, which has made it in operation the costliest railway property in America, and in capacity to build up the country it traverses one of the least effective. Almost everywhere the indications are that a hearty welcome would be given to any proposal that would free the national treasury from the burden of keeping the property fit to do its profitless business. From some twenty-five constituencies whose electoral judgment might be influenced by the I. C. R. vote, however, comes protest, and where constituencies are affected the less is of greater influence than the whole.

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