

Housecleaning

(AS TOLD BY LITTLE JIM)

Me and Ned have come to the conclusion that we wish there was never such a thing as house-cleaning. We never get anything good to eat when Ma's house-cleanin', and we can't find our books to go to school, in the mornings, and—well nothin' seems to go right. I'll try and describe to you just why me and Ned, who is six, and Pop, don't like house-cleanin' time. I'll take for a sample our last house-cleanin' cyclone.

Well do I remember it, and Ned and Pop also, if you should ask 'em. I was awake that Monday mornin' by my big sister who was yellin' in my ear at the top of her voice, "Jim I say, get up! It's seven o'clock and house-cleanin' begins today. Now you and Neddie get right up." I was mad at her yellin' so loud and also when I thought of the miseries of the week to come, so I said rather gruff like, "Why Nannie how did you happen to get up so early after bein' up so late last night with your finance? At that, Ned, who had just awoke up, snickered and Nannie flounced out of the room and banged the door hard.

When we got downstairs to breakfast Ma said, "Boys as soon as you finish eating go up stairs and pull the tacks out of the carpet in your sister's room." I sighed loudly and so did Ned, cause we did want to have a game of ball before school time. However we knew that what Ma said went, so we up and did it.

Then we went to school and came home for dinner hungry as bears. When we went rushin' to the table, Ma, she said, "Boys, I'm sorry I have nothin' hot for you, but we were so busy we couldn't leave the cleaning to cook a big dinner, so you just eat what you see this time." At that I made a face and grabbed a cold potato and crammed it in my mouth and Neddie did likewise, but it tasted like cotton battin', and I could barely swallow it. The rest of the meal was like the cotton battin' potato and I was sure glad Pop wasn't there to enjoy it. Pop has lunch down town; he's on a big paper staff and writes swell particles. I might add, in all modesty, that that is where I get my irritability, or rather, I guess it's called, ability, for writing.

Well to precede with my narrative, we had to wash the dishes for Ma that day. I was as mad as a hatter and so was Ned. We decided not to repay evil for evil though and to break a few dishes as could be. Between us we did fairly well. Ned only broke four cups and me one platter. That was all.

Tuesday and Wednesday passed in like misery. I was late for school twice that week, because everything was topsy turvy and I couldn't find my books and cap, high or low. Ma,

she'd say, when I asked her about 'em, "Oh boys how do you expect me to keep track of your things in house-cleanin' week?"

On Thursday night, we meanin' Ned and me, trudged up to bed, but low there was no bed to be seen! Me, being two years older'n Ned, tried to cheer him up and then went and asked Ma, "Oh," said Ma, "I'm so sorry children, but Nance and I just finished your room half an hour ago and didn't have time to put your bed up. Do you think you could sleep on a shake-down to-night?" I felt like shakin' the whole house down, but Ma did look fearfully tired so I said nothing and held my peace. When I woke up in the mornin' I wasn't on the shake down at all, but on the hard floor beside it with a stiff neck.

Saturday came and we skipped and went fishin, to escape the torture of havin' to wash dishes and beat carpets. We caught four trouts, Neddie catchin' his first fish. That cheered us up some and we hurried home and asked Nance to cook the fishes. "Oh," said Nance in dismay, "There isn't time, because we want to just have lunch instead of dinner so that we can be completely through house cleaning by supper time." Neddie was just about to let lose the water works 'cause he did want his first fish cooked. Howsoever Ma, she comes along and said, takin' Ned on her lap, a thing which me, being as old as I am, have quite outgrown.

"Never mind baby" said she, "Mother will cook her boys' fish at supper and we'll celebrate the end of house-cleanin' by buyin' some ice cream with cherries on it." At that Neddie brushed away a tear from the end of his nose and let out a regular whoop.

At supper time, there was sure a great family reunion, and I will admit that the house looked great. Ma had on a nice new blouse and looked more like herself; Nance was all smiles and Pop was beamin' and crackin' jokes, that we'd heard, at the extremest, six times before. Ned was so proud of his fish and so puffed up I thought he'd bust his clean blouse. While me, I felt, once again, well fed and cymbalized.

That was all near a year ago an' it's near house cleanin' time again, an' I suppose Pop and Ned and me will have to go through the same tortures and miseries. However we'll have to bear it with a sigh until it's all over. As I sed before, I wish house cleanin' had never come into existence.

P.S.—Maybe some of these words are spelt wrong, and the swell, big words I've used haven't exactly the right meaning, but I comed as close to 'em as possibly.

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