

he had even laughed at her at first, until he himself had taken a hand. Now he not only admitted failure but openly declared him mentally and morally deficient.

Perhaps this view of Oakley's was a little hard, and his own failure may have contributed somewhat to his harshness, but Mrs. Todd, in spite of herself, almost agreed with him. The fender before her was only the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual gracelessness the Todd household had suffered under ever since the boy had come. He was like some malicious little hermit mouse who chose for the most part an unobtrusive solitude that was more apt than not to culminate in some small act of mischief, utterly upsetting to household serenity. Soon after his coming, she remembered, she had returned from an afternoon of shopping to find her room decked in disorderly brilliant festoons of already withering flowers, where bright carnations and roses predominated, and which told her at a glance that her dearly cherished boxes in the tiny conservatory off the dining room had been stripped ruthlessly bare. She remembered this the more plainly as it was the first time her indignation had gotten beyond her self-control, and James had received silently the first of a series of well-deserved but unprofitable punishments.

Even then she had only struck him because her temper had gotten beyond her; for she did not believe in corporal punishment, and save on such occasions as this, when the enormity of the offense had induced a swift retribution, she had taken the saner method of sending the child to his room to ponder in solitude on the wrong that he had done. She wondered if he ever did ponder on these wrongs, if so imperfect a sense of right and wrong had any reflective or repentant quality. And as she wondered she heard the front door open and close, and Oakley came down the hall and into the room. She looked up at him and sighed wearily.

"Why, what's the matter, Hilda?" Mr. Todd asked. "Has the boy been at it again?"

He was a handsome man, well-knit and correct, and she was fond of him and his sympathy.

"Look at that, Oakley," she answered, pointing at the outraged fender and the sift of brass filings on the hearthstone. "I don't know what on earth we are ever to do with the boy."

Oakley looked and swore softly under his breath.

"Lord, Hilda," he said, "'do'? The boy deserves a beating and he is going to get one. It's all very well for you to send him off to reflect, as I suppose you've done now, but a child that does that sort of thing does not reflect at all. The old-fashioned remedy is the only one that will make him feel and remember."

"But will it not seem inconsistent of us? I have carefully explained to him so often why he was not whipped, that every time we whip him I wonder if we are not doing wrong."

"No, we're doing wrong to let this kind of thing keep on. What on earth we took him for is more than I'll ever be able to explain to myself. In a year we can send him away to school. Before then, I expect, he will burn down the house about our ears. Do you suppose it would be too late to lend him to the Carsons for a little while? They seemed anxious enough for him at first, and you're getting all tired out with the child. I think it's only fair that they should stand part of the burden, and he has as much claim on them as he has on us."

"I don't know what we're ever going to do with him, Oakley, and I do wish that we had let Sam and Janey take him in the first place. But if we should go to them now, wouldn't it look as if we had no steadfastness of purpose?"

"Steadfastness of purpose be hanged! I am not going to see you in nervous prostration just for a little thing like that. Good gracious! What's that? I told you so."

The wild scream of a frightened servant sounded from the floor above. Oakley Todd dashed out of the room to take the stairs at a rush, leaving his wife standing with one hand pressed against her heart.

For a moment or so there were ominous runnings to and fro and the rumbling shift of furniture. Then a somewhat dishevelled Mr. Todd returned dragging by the collar a resisting, black-smutched little boy.

"Just as I said," panted Mr. Todd, "he'll have the house burned down about our ears. No, don't be frightened, a pitcher of water put it out. But the curtains are ruined and the carpet soaked. The boy's a perfect little devil."

James rubbed the back of a blackened hand across his mouth. He looked puzzled, but this time was plainly frightened.

"I was lighting a fire in my locomotive," he said, as if half in explanation and half in apology.

"That settles it, said Mr. Todd savagely. "If Carson is fool enough to take him, he shall have him. The country's the place for a child anyhow."

When Mrs. Todd wrote Janey Carson that night, however, she thought it only fair to give the Carsons some hint of the true reason of their request and a fair warning of the problem they would undertake should they now, at this late date, consent to receive their incorrigible nephew.

"He is cold, mischievous and sulky," she wrote, "and I am afraid would have a bad influence on your two sweet little girls; but our resources and our patience are both at an end, and unless you care to try the experiment, we shall have to send him away as soon as possible to some school where they know how to manage such boys."

"Sammy," said Mrs. Carson, when she had read through to the end, "they're beaten. They're at the end of their rope six months sooner than you said they would be, and we can have him. They shan't get him again, shall they, Sammy?"

Carson, long, thin and humorous, unfolded himself from the arm-chair at the head of the table, and coming round, bent over his wife's shoulder to kiss her.

"You bet they shan't Janey," he said. "I'll stipulate that we're to keep him

if we take him at all. What do they say about him? Why, Janey, girl, what on earth are you crying about?"

Mrs. Carson turned blue eyes that struggled between laughter and tears to her husband's face.

"Oh, just the whole thing," she said, slipping her hand into his. "Just those good, proper, dutiful idiots and that poor forlorn little scrap. Hilda must have suffered torments. You know duty and fairness are hobbies of her's and she writes me that 'James' as she calls him, in addition to many other things, is 'cold, mischievous and sulky.'"

"Well, I guess he is," said Mr. Carson.

"Sam!"

"Certainly, I mean what I say. Isn't it about time you were off to school, kiddies?"

The little Miss Carsons blushed and put down their suspended spoons. When they had said good-bye twice around, and the Carsons were left alone, Carson drew his chair close up beside his wife's.

"I mean exactly what I say, Janey," he said, "and if we are going to take the boy we must make up our minds to it. We undoubtedly shall find him all of those unpleasant things, and it will upset things and spoil the kiddies' manners, but if you are game to try it, I am."

"But 'cold,' Sam!"

"Well, I know, but I really think he will be cold. You will have to soak him in that solution of yours, Janey, and then we can peel him."

"Peel him?" asked Mrs. Carson suspiciously. "What solution?"

Sam Carson's humorous mouth twitched. "Oh, the same you soaked another crank in," he said.

"Don't tease me," she said. "What on earth are you talking about?"

"Love," Mr. Carson whispered, and pushed back his chair. "I believe I'll go up and get him this afternoon, if you say so."

"You'd better telephone them," said Mrs. Carson, "and then bring him here as late as you can. I want some chance to get his room ready. The children's room is so nice that his will seem pretty bare to him at first, I am afraid."

"He probably won't notice it one way or the other," said Mr. Carson.

"Yes, he will, Sam. You know as well as I do that's part of the whole thing. If he is ever going to be proud either of himself or of us, we must give him something to be proud of. Of course I don't know, never having had a son before, but from what I've seen of other people's boys, I should say a boy took as much satisfaction in a room of his own as girls do in theirs; although, of course, in a different way."

So all that day Mrs. Carson moved, shifted and arranged, pausing to view her efforts from time to time, and trying the very difficult feat of imagining herself a little boy of six. But when she came downstairs from tucking her new problem into bed, she smiled in happy triumph at her husband.

"Well, how did you get on?" Sam asked. "You will admit he's not demonstrative."

"No, poor little soul, he isn't," said Mrs. Carson, "but I got at him well enough. I think we rather puzzle him, Sam and that he will be good for two or three days while he wonders about us. I never saw such a child. All his emotions seem to have been replaced by a sort of passive resistance. I actually had to put his arms around my neck myself when I kissed him good-night. He doesn't know what an honest hug is. But you wait and see, Sam; I am going to teach him."

For two or three days things went smoothly enough. Jimmy, as he had been rechristened, crept about awestruck in a strange new world. The little suburban town seemed to him the wildest open country, and the people careless, happy-go-lucky beings. He said little to anyone, and his small cousins, prepared and eager to welcome him as a brother, were surprised and disappointed at his silent rejection of the affection they frankly offered.

"Jimmie isn't used to little girls," their mother explained to them, "and you must pretend not to notice if he isn't nice to you."

But as the strangeness wore away, the old imp of silent mischief returned to Jimmie. Little things disappeared from their familiar places, small trifles were found broken, and here and there a door or panel bore the devastating hieroglyphics of restless accustomed little hands.

"I guess it's your turn now, Sam," said Mrs. Carson.

She told him of growing outrage.

"All right," said Sam complacently, "send him along."

"You won't hurt him, will you, Sam?" said Mrs. Carson.

Carson grinned expansively. "Not unless he needs it," he said.

Mrs. Carson brought Jimmy into the room with her arm about his shoulder. At the doorway she stooped, kissed him and left him to his fate. The old trouble was in Jimmy's eyes and the old look of still uncomprehended terror on his face. With his hands behind him, he picked and twisted at the portiere.

"Well, Jimmy," said Mr. Carson.

Jimmie's eyes sought the floor, but he did not answer.

"I want to talk to you, Jimmy. Suppose you come over here near me."

Jimmie did not look up, but dragged laggard feet across the floor. When he reached Carson's side, Carson leaned over and swung him onto his lap with a strength that startled and pleased him—he naively and secretly supposed that Carson acquired it in tilling the soil.

"Look here, Jimmy," he said. "I want you to listen to me very carefully; will you?"

In the surprise at his new situation, Jimmy nodded.

"Well, this is it, Jimmy boy. You've come here to stay for always. Do you

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HE AND JIMMY GRUBBED SIDE BY SIDE.