

No Room at the Inn

(Continued from page nine)
 rug. Can't you see he's pulled the tail right off?" Junior eyed his mother accusingly.

"They're just too tired for anything," she explained. "after their trip and being dragged around all afternoon. They ought to be in bed!" Under loud protests, she stripped her sons of their booty and headed them for the stairway. Mrs. Dillon followed mutely. The moment for revolt had passed, and she succumbed to the inevitable. For the next half hour pandemonium reigned in the once quiet house. The question of bedding was a serious one. Mrs. Dillon had never thought it necessary to have more than an abundant winter supply for her two beds, and the making up of two more presented considerable difficulty. The automobile rug, various coats and wraps, even a Paisley shawl, cherished family heirloom, were pressed into service. It had been comparatively easy for Mrs. Funk to announce that the children could sleep most anywhere, but to get them to do it, was quite another matter. Artie and Henry Jr. found the cot in the sewing-room too close quarters for an amicable adjustment of their difficulties. And Gwendolyn was inconsolable at having to retire in full view of all parties on the davenport in the living-room. She absolutely refused to appear in the much advertised sleeping garment which her mother had provided as suitable for the occasion, and insisted on wearing her petticoat over it to bed.

Sadly Warren Dillon turned out the lights on an appalling state of disorder and followed his guests up stairs. It seemed to him as if a whirlwind must have swept through those rooms, to create such havoc. Quiet at last descended upon the house, but the Dillons did not sleep. In whispered tones they discussed the bolt from the blue which shattered the calm of their comfortable existence. They had been married for seven serene untroubled years. With no children to upset their schedule, the machinery of their household ran along from month to month on delightful well-oiled grooves. Occasionally they

entertained certain of their friends whose offspring were attractive and well behaved. At such times they spoke vaguely of the difficulty in finding a suitable child for adoption. But their general attitude had come to be one of faint pity for these unfortunate mortals, whose sole topic of conversation seemed to be the daily doings of their progeny, and whose goings and comings were subservient to the convenience of these diminutive tyrants. It was simply incomprehensible that their Christmas week should be upset in this way by people who had no claim upon them.

"Why, Warren," whispered Mrs. Dillon. "I know I never can stand it to have them here for a whole week—I shall be a perfect wreck."

"Yes, and so will everything we possess," said Warren. "Just tell them in the morning that they've got to find some other place to stay."

"No, Warren, you'll have to do it. You know you said that you would tell them where they got off."

"Well I've got to be at the office early tomorrow. They probably won't be up when I go. You can blame it all on me if you want to."

"Just like a man!" scoffed Mrs. Dillon. "trying to get out of everything the least bit disagreeable!"

"Well, I'll do some phoning and see if I can't locate a boarding-house for them."

"But supposing they really can't find any place to stay, we couldn't turn them out into the street?"

"Well, they're not going to stay here," said Warren firmly, and turned his back on the middle of the bed, as if that completely disposed of the subject.

But Mrs. Dillon lay staring into the darkness, tense and unsatisfied, hearing a multitude of little unusual sounds.

"Oh, dear," she whispered suddenly. "There's one of the children coughing, and Sally's not paying a bit of attention. I do hope they're not going to be sick. Perhaps they've kicked the covers off."

"Oh, do go to sleep, Laura," mumbled her husband drowsily. "They're husky little beggars—nothing phases 'em."

He got up, however, in a moment, and vanished in the direction of the sewing room. When he came back he

was chuckling. "Lying there hugging each other like two little bears," he whispered—"covers all on the floor. People like that, no business to have children."

"You'll have a chance to find out what it would be like to adopt some," suggested his wife.

"You can bet your sweet life I never planned to take on such a large order all at once," came the muffled answer from the depths of the bed-clothes.

On the evening after the arrival of the visitors, Mr. Dillon let himself in upon a scene, that, for a moment, set little currents of wrath a-tingle through his veins. He felt rising within him, an impulse to violate at least two of the ten commandments. All the movable pieces of furniture had been dragged into the centre of the living-room, and they with a motley array of garments draped over them, were serving as props and walls for a menagerie tent. He was hailed with shouts of delight by all three of the children. "Oh, Uncle Warren, you're just in time," sang out Henry Jr. "We want a lion for our biggest cage, and Aunt Laura said she knew you could roar."

In the days that followed, the Dillons swung far out of their well-oiled grooves. Nothing in all their scheme of things seemed fixed or stationary any more. There were meals at all hours, and different meals to be prepared for different individuals.

Warren found himself calling up at noon to inquire about the events of the morning. Invariably there had been events—events worthy of laughter or (Continued on page eleven)

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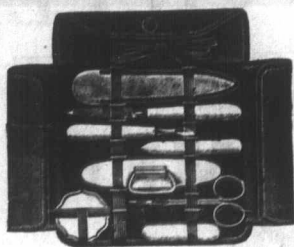
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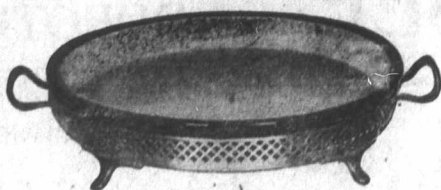
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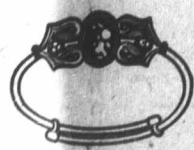
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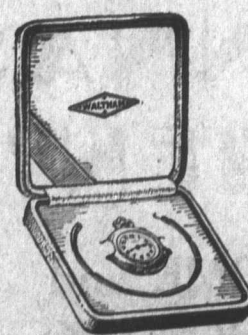
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