

THE SUBJUGATION OF SOPHRONIA MCGONIGAL

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WHEN Jimmy Crane went back home after a visit of two days and one night at the home of Philander McGonigal and the maiden sister Sophronia he was firmly convinced that the good housekeeper was made and not born; that she was the unfortunate product of environment, unbridled authority, and a lack of children or dogs about her domain to distract her attention and mitigate the rigors of her rule—and he felt a good deal of sympathy for Philander.

Of course, Philander was not self-assertive by nature. Even back in their college days he wore glasses with thick lenses, and preferred to keep the score of the ball game rather than take part in the contest. Possibly this reference grew out of his taste for mathematics, which Jimmy—who was now a lawyer—had always regarded, from a worldly point of view, as unfortunate, and he felt that his opinion was confirmed when this mental eccentricity finally landed Philander as professor thereof in a minor fresh water college at the turn of his nativity.

Philander was plied by his sister, who had kept house for him for many years and who had been in domestic command for a long time, even before their mother folded her beautiful but always inefficient hands across her breast and quietly dozed away.

Miss McGonigal was one of those good women of whom, of course, we cannot have too many in the world—but not in the house—whose belief that cleanliness was only second to godliness, with culture coming strong for the place. Emphasizing this entirely righteous attitude of mind was the fact that the McGonigals were the remnants of one of the oldest families in town. To be sure, there were the envious—on whom Miss McGonigal did not call—who intimated that they were a withering remnant and, to be sure, it was a town that had got its growth when it was young, and had since fallen far behind the pace of its more commercially aggressive neighbors; but in the pride of conscious rectitude such minor details were loftily ignored by Miss McGonigal; and the professor, busy and content with the work he loved, and with his comfort provided for as well as prescribed by his competent sister, did not think about them.

"Why, the old chap is so well taken care of he doesn't even suspect he is bullied," thought Jimmy, contemplating the situation with the unprejudiced eye of the disinterested outsider, as he leaned over the front gate smoking his after dinner cigar. Smoking in the house was distasteful to Miss McGonigal, and if any one tried it it might have been something worse. The professor never smoked.

"Did you ever keep a dog, Miss McGonigal?" he asked, when he returned to the house.

"Never, Mr. Crane," Miss McGonigal's opinion was always decisive, and her expression of them was generally terse.

"Ah, you ought to have a dog," declared Jimmy, warmly. "Nothing makes life so real, or so thoroughly humanizes people as canine association."

"Indeed?" Possibly there was the tinge of incredulity in Miss McGonigal's tone.

"And think what a companion a good dog would be for the old man here," Jimmy went on with admiring disrespect as he slapped the professor heartily on the back, "when he wants to relax his mind from the rigors of daily mathematics by a walk in the woods and fields, with a little incidental botanizing on the way to keep the time from being wasted."

"No doubt," responded Miss McGonigal, doubtfully.

"Ah, yes," persisted Jimmy, "you ought to have a dog. You are just the kind of a woman, Miss McGonigal, to love children or dogs, which, after all, are very much alike."

Miss McGonigal smiled, as well as some what compressed lips would permit, but did not reply. To contradict was discourteous, to argue undignified.

When Jimmy Crane had taken his suit case, his revolutionary ideas and his

healthily burly self off to the station, accompanied by the unsophisticated and yet unspoiled Professor, Miss McGonigal stood in the central hall of her queenom where she could look in four rooms and up the stairway. All around her—even in the library—immaculate order prevailed. Jimmy Crane would have said that it made itself unaccountably felt, but the Professor, callous from long usage, was hardly conscious of it, and to Miss McGonigal it was a source of continuous and passive triumphant delight.

"A dog!" she exclaimed, with as much scorn as her ultra good breeding ever permitted her to express in her tone.

But Jimmy Crane had thought the situation over very carefully, and he felt no doubt of the correctness of his conclusion that for the good of the McGonigals themselves—reflected as it would be on the world, which needs all the sympathy and tolerance it can get—the awful stress of order, the spotless perfection of cleanliness in the house must be relieved. This as he reasoned it out, could only be achieved by a child or a dog.

Now, Jimmy Crane was no stork, besides well, that, of course, was out of the question; but he did know about dogs and where to get them, and he chuckled with huge enjoyment as he flipped the ash from his cigar to the floor of his den with an utter disregard for cleanliness and order.

It was the professor's custom to walk to the post office Sunday morning for the mail. This was the only variation from an observance of the Sabbath in the McGonigal household that must have met the approval of the most exacting. But Miss McGonigal had correspondents whose letters sometimes arrived on Sunday morning, and she could not tolerate the thought of a twenty-four hour delay in their receipt. Miss McGonigal was an extremely womanly woman after all.

She met the Professor at the door on his return—for, as well trained and faithful as he was, she never could feel quite sure that, in his occasional fits of absent-mindedness, he would not forget to rub his boots over the coals rug before he entered.

"Nothing this morning, Sophronia," said the Professor, in response to her look of inquiry, "except one letter for me, which, I think, is from Jimmy Crane."

Miss McGonigal lost interest in the day's mail, and gave her attention to other affairs, and the Professor, following his invariable routine, went to his desk in the library to read his letter and make the proper disposition of it in his archives.

Presently he came to the door and looked into the hall and the three other visible rooms. Then, was apprehension in his expression. Miss McGonigal was not in sight. He sighed in the manner of one who has received a reprieve and went back to his desk. But he knew the relief was only temporary, and, with a brow that was wrinkled with trouble, he sat down to read the letter again. Then he shook his head slowly, and sighed again.

"Jimmy is such a good hearted fellow," he said to himself sadly, "and means so well that—"

"Philander," called Miss McGonigal, "are you ready for church?"

"Oh—ah—could you come in here a moment, Sophronia?" called the Professor, a trifle timidly, by way of reply. "Ah—sit down a moment, Sophronia, please," he went on when she appeared.

Miss McGonigal sat down with a look of surprise. Such a suggestion so near to church time was unprecedented.

"This letter is—ah—as I suspected, from Mr. Jimmy Crane," the Professor began hesitatingly and with evident effort.

Miss McGonigal, slightly puzzled, and not wholly approving of Mr. Crane any how, offered no helpful comment.

"He—ah—writes me," went on the Professor, still floundering, "that is, he says—"

"—ah—he says that he has—er—he has—perhaps," he interpreted himself desperately, "it will put the situation more clearly for me to read the letter to you."

Still Miss McGonigal made no comment, and, suspecting Mr. Crane, she also suspected that the letter contained something disagreeable.

The Professor took a deep breath.

"This is what he says," he began—"My

dear Philander—I am shipping you to-day by express a three-months-old pup, which I know you and your sister will be glad to have. He comes of a royal line of champions of the field and bench, is registered and has a genealogical tree that makes some of our oldest families look like upstarts. Of his remarkable intelligence and sagacity there can be no doubt with his ancestry, and I feel free to predict that after a year or so of intimate association with such people as yourself and your sister there will be no expression in the English language he will not understand, and, indeed, I should not be surprised if he picked up a little Greek and Latin.

"When he arrives he will probably be hungry and thirsty, so you had better give him a little crackers and milk at once. For the next two or three months feed him three meals of crackers and milk and one of ground raw meat a day. After that taper off on the crackers and milk, substituting table scraps, and by the time he is eight or nine months old he can eat anything you do. I envy you his company, and only wish I were fixed so that I could keep him myself. With best wishes to your sister, I remain as ever, very truly yours,

"JIMMY."

The Professor's voice almost faltered as he finished, and it was only a fleeting glance that he ventured to cast at his sister. Then he looked out of the window.

Miss McGonigal's bosom rose and fell with deeper breaths than usual, and her lips were compressed until the pink was all but hidden. The Professor knew the signs, and trembled—invisibly. He was doing his best to present a cheerful front.

Miss McGonigal rose and glanced at the clock on the mantel.

"It is time to start for church, Philander," she said in a low voice, which just saved herself from trembling with suppressed emotion—which she never would have confessed, even to herself, was angry.

"I shall go and on my things," she said. Then the Professor understood the situation. The problem of disposing of Jimmy Crane's gift elsewhere than in the McGonigal household would be his to solve alone. With his new burden upon him he even forgot—as he had never done before—that he was to start for church in a moment, and sat wrestling with his thoughts, oblivious to time and obligations. What would good old Jimmy say to such a rejection to his well meant gift? In the tenderness of his heart the Professor would have gladly borne physical suffering himself rather than hurt the feelings of his friend. Really, he believed he could have managed somehow about the dog, for a time at least, if he glanced at the perfection of household order which surrounded him and sighed. Sophronia would never permit—well, well, to-morrow he would see what could be done and try to explain the situation to Jimmy in a letter judiciously composed to relieve it as much as possible.

Vaguely now there came to him the remembrance of a long forgotten dog that he had known in his boyhood, a dog that was always glad to see him, that was always eager to join in any game, that was grateful for attention and patient without it, that was—

"Philander!" Miss McGonigal stood in the doorway with the light of a new idea, a discovery, triumphant in her eyes.

"Philander, when did Mr. Crane say he shipped that?" she hesitated at the uncustomed word—"that pup?"

"Why, let me see—his letter is dated yesterday. He must have shipped it then."

Miss McGonigal's eyes snapped with a flash of vindication.

"And that—that animal," she said, cutting off each word with an emphatic distinctness which it was fortunate Jimmy Crane could not hear, "has been cooped up in some kind of—of vehicle since yesterday, without food and probably without water! Philander, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals shall hear of this!"

The Professor was aghast and speechless. Such a view of the situation had not occurred to him before.

"More humanity requires," Miss McGonigal went on, with the same emphasis, "that immediate steps be taken to relieve the animal of its sufferings. You will hunt up the express agent at once, Philander. And—Miss McGonigal stiffened perceptibly—"I will go with you."

There was some comment on the unusual fact that the McGonigal pew was not occupied at the morning service that Sunday, but, as far as is known, no explanation was ever offered for the unaccountable absence of the Professor and his sister.

With a hatchet the express agent knocked some slat of the crate, while the dog cringed with fright at each step of the bundle of reddish brown fur and crouched at Miss McGonigal's feet while it feebly wagged a thin strip of a tail and looked up at her with appealing eyes.

She stooped down and placed her hand tenderly on the baby dog's head.

"Oh, you poor little dear!" she exclaimed, with an unusual infection in her voice. "You've just been scared to death in that cruel old crate, haven't you? There, there, it's all right now; nobody shall hurt you and you shall have some crackers and milk right away."

She took the soft little body in her arms and stood up.

"Philander," she said, in her usual tone, "telephone for a carriage."

The Professor's jaw dropped and he looked at her in the face of amazement that seemed to petrify him.

"A carriage, Philander," she repeated. There was no mistaking her meaning or her tone.

"Yes, Sophronia, at once," replied the Professor hastily, galvanized into life by the look she gave him.

"I'm just finishing," replied the Professor, cheerfully. There was a pleasant feeling of relief in his mind.

"Well, be sure to tell him what a dear little fellow he is—the dog, I mean," Miss McGonigal corrected herself with a slight flush at her ambiguous rhetoric, though as "Jimmy" Crane was six foot two and weighed 220 pounds, none but her perspicacious would have thought of being her accuser.

"And now, Philander," she went on, "the first thing we must do is to select a suitable name for him. Have you anything to suggest?"

"No, I believe not," he answered, discreetly with a strong premonition that the question had already been settled.

"Well, it had occurred to me that, as he is little and brown, and gives signs of unusual intelligence—Do you know, Philander," she interrupted herself, almost enthusiastically, "when I gave him the crackers and milk this morning he accidentally spilled a little on the piece of oilcloth on which I had set the bowl, and when he got through he licked it all up as neatly as any one could wish? I'm sure he is going to be a very careful and orderly dog."

"That was nice of him, wasn't it?"

able absence of the Professor and his sister.

The express agent admitted that he had received a small dog in a crate by the morning train that day, but had not noted to whom it was addressed. It was now at the office with the other packages. No, he had not thought of giving the dog anything to eat or drink.

The withering glance that Miss McGonigal cast at him took effect. Why, certainly he would, to oblige the Professor and Miss McGonigal, be glad to go to the office and deliver the consignment to them at once.

As the door of the express office was unlocked a plaintive little cry came from within that went direct to Miss McGonigal's unoccupied maiden heart.

"I guess that's him now," said the express agent, cheerfully.

There he was, in a crate, jammed into a far corner, where the air was none too good or plentiful, and, to make matters worse, other packages were piled over and

around him. Little and reddish brown he was, with white feet and a white breast, and silky ears that really seemed too large for him, and big, brown, pathetic eyes.

"Release him!" commanded Miss McGonigal.

With a hatchet the express agent knocked some slat of the crate, while the dog cringed with fright at each step of the bundle of reddish brown fur and crouched at Miss McGonigal's feet while it feebly wagged a thin strip of a tail and looked up at her with appealing eyes.

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"That was nice of him, wasn't it?"

Then he sat down to read. Fifteen minutes later he glanced at the couch. There in the forbidden place once more lay Kim, looking at him with mischievously watchful eyes. The Professor squirmed a little guiltily in his chair, and went on with his reading.

Half an hour later the latch of the front gate clicked. The Professor laid his book down hastily, stepped quickly to the couch and lifted Kim to the floor, tossed a sofa pillow over the place where the dog had been lying to cover up, until he had time to remove them, any incriminating hairs, and rolled a small rubber ball across the floor. The dog made a dash for the ball, while the Professor dropped back into his chair and hurriedly resumed his reading.

"Why," exclaimed Miss McGonigal, entering the library, "he's playing with his ball, isn't he?"

"Yes," responded the Professor, brazenly, "he's having a splendid time."

And the days passed and Kim received no whippings, but much food and waxes of fat and impertinent. With growing gle he delighted to gnaw the highly polished tip of Miss McGonigal's Oxford, greedily to her edification, though she said nothing of the increased expense she was put to to keep herself in presentable footwear.

Once when the Professor came home in the afternoon he found four hairs on the sofa, though he was sure he had picked them all off carefully before he had left that morning. But as Miss McGonigal said nothing about being forced to the extremity of whipping the dog he decided, guiltily, that he must be more careful in the future.

Another afternoon he came home somewhat earlier than usual. Through the parted curtains of the library as he came up the walk he caught a view of the interior of the room and stopped in amazement. In her usual chair sat Miss McGonigal with her embroidery. On the forbidden couch, peacefully sleeping, lay Kim. The professor opened and closed the front door noisily; then he accidentally dropped his cane so it would fall clear of the rug with a terrific clatter, and he was unusually slow about hanging up his hat.

When he entered the library Miss McGonigal was sitting in her usual chair with her embroidery. Kim was chewing his rubber ball on the floor. Over the selected spot on the forbidden couch lay a sofa pillow.

"Why," exclaimed the Professor, with something very much like relief in his tone, "he's playing with his ball, isn't he?"

"Yes," responded Miss McGonigal, brazenly, "he's having a splendid time."

During dinner the next evening Kim did not wander from one chair to the other with begging eyes, as was his habit. In fact, he did not appear in the dining room at all while the meal was in progress.

This was unusual, and the Professor was suspicious.

This was unprecedented, and Miss McGonigal was apprehensive.

But both suppressed their feelings. Indeed, the dog was not mentioned in all the dinner table talk, and, strange as it may seem, before the meal was finished recollection of him had temporarily been obliterated by other interests.

Three weeks later Jimmy Crane dropped in unexpectedly one afternoon to observe the effect of his nefarious plot. In the middle of the library floor was a tooth-marked rubber ball, under the reading table was a dingy and much frayed tag with a knot in it, and the couch from which Kim plunged to meet him as he entered was a badly torn old slipper.

Miss McGonigal's greeting was the most cordial he had ever received from that undemonstrative lady.

"Well, how's the pup?" asked Jimmy when they were all seated.

"I think he is the best, and I'm sure he is the smartest and cutest little baby dog that ever lived," declared Miss McGonigal enthusiastically, "and we shall never be able to thank you enough for giving him to us."

"A good dog is a mighty good thing in more ways than one," said Jimmy, a little ambiguously. "What do you call him?"

"Well," said Miss McGonigal, "he was so little and brown and bright that he deserved to call him Kim. He looks so—so Indian, you know."

"Indian," roared Jimmy, forgetful of his manners under the stress of the situation, "that pup's a red Irish setter, Kim!" he snorted. "Kim! And a red Irish setter, eh?" said the Professor, curiously. "Red Irish—Umh—mh, well," he added in a thoughtful tone, "we might reverse the spelling of his name."

CAESAREAN SECTION IN ALBERT COUNTY

An Albert county correspondent writes that the operation known as Caesarean section, was performed by Dr. W. A. Ferguson of Moncton recently at Edgett's Landing, a small village two miles from Hillsboro.

The women had been accidentally shot in the abdomen by her five year old son who was playing with a revolver. But mother and the newly born child are both progressing well, and the child has been named Ferguson, after the surgeon who performed the operation.

In some parts of England auctions are held with a minute sand glass. The highest bid made between the time the glass is turned till the sand runs out wins the article that is under the hammer.



THE PROFESSOR'S JAW DROPPED AND HE LOOKED AT HER IN A STATE OF AMAZE.



THEN THEY BOTH LAUGHED AND ALL PRESENCE WAS AT AN END.