



The Alternative

later, she found him playing bear, with tiny Miss Florence leading him about the room at the end of a long red ribbon. His hair was rumpled and his face was flushed, and it seemed that he was gasping for breath — whether from exertion or because the ribbon was choking him, she could not tell. She rescued him at once.

“I like it,” he cried. “It’s fun to be a kiddie once more. As a matter of fact, you know, I never really had a kid’s life. I’m having the time of my life.”

“Why, they’re wearing you out,” she cried. “May I ask what you were representing?”

“A bear!” shouted eleven voices. Bosworth gravely nodded.

“He was going to be a trained seal, only we could n’t get a tub for him to lie on,” said Mary’s nine-year-old worshiper.

Miss Pembroke laughed gayly. “I understood you to say last week, Mr. Van Pycke, that you were through with menagerie performances for all time.” There was a witchery in her eyes that enthralled him.

“This is different,” he protested in some confusion. “I draw the line at grown-up tomfoolery. It may interest you to know that I was a horse just before you came in. They’ve all had a ride on my back. This chap here, when I was n’t looking, took those cavalry spurs from the mantel-piece over there and, by Jove! he *did* get me moving!”

The children shrieked with glee.

“You poor man!” Mary cried, genuinely troubled over his experiences. “You’ve had a dreadful time. I’ll save