



## Eddy's—Washboards

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his bottle without his rebellious hands having to be held. It was another month before Nurse O'Brien could coax him on her knee, but there he must be treated with respect. One soft golden Saturday in September, the little Jewess stopped at the gate of the Day Nursery to show Izzy in a glory of embroidery going to be photographed. His little round arms and neck were bare and his lovely round legs and toes stuck out so distractingly from the embroidery that Nurse O'Brien rashly caught him and rained kisses on them. And Izzy, for the first time since they had known him, smiled, smiled a bit tolerantly and a bit roguishly, but, oddly enough, it was the McIvor at whom he smiled across Nurse O'Brien's golden, stooping head. And when the little Jewess brought them each a photo-card the next week, giving it with a shy gratitude across her reserve, Izzy sat with his dimpled knees and his embroideries, still wearing the tolerant, roguish smile. But that was an occasion. And further liberties were not tolerated. In October he crept-hitched, rather-with an eye always on the offing whence nurses or amorous small girls might swoop. Blocks and toys he played with alone, abandoning them when gregarious youths approached.

And now it was November, a grey shivery November day, darkening at four o'clock as the children splashed and clamored, getting ready for tea. The heart of Nurse O'Brien was heavy. One of the social workers had dropped in during the afternoon with wet eyes and three children. A mother had wrapped a dead wee baby in a shawl and gone to her day's work leaving the three children playing at home. The little unconscious things had been playing doll with the shawled tragedy and the girl had brought them away. The grimness of it was dragging at the matron's spirit. She said "Grace" listlessly and unheedingly while Sammy counted his "pieces" over and over with a digit finger, and surreptitious bites were taken off specially jammy corners, and Mary Marchuck put out a graceless tongue at the chiding elder sister, and a new little plaid stranger girl sobbed on unrecon-

ciled to a new world. Nurse McIvor held the base of supplies for the just-over-a-year, bread-andmilk dozen or so who sat around her in a semi-circle, hands on knees, wide waiting eyes, like little frogs on toadstools, opening and shutting their mouths as the spoon came their way. Nurse McIvor admonished as she fed. "Are ye a nice girl, Violet Mather?" Violet's Glasgow head bobbed in vigorous assent. Johnny Bisparka nodded over his spoon. Johnny was always sleepy as the late Duke of Devonshire. "Wake up, Johnny Bisparka!" she laughed at him. But he lapped his nourishment still with droopier, heavier lids, swaying on his stool. Izzy devoted himself seriously to the matter in hand, his eye lifting sometimes to Nurse O'Brien as she sat unusually still in the midst of the vibrant life of the Nursery, grieved and apart. And with some queer instinct of his queer baby-heart, bye-and-bye he slipped off his stool, crept in his queer side-wise fashion to the distrait little matron, and, quite suddenly, laid a confiding hand on her white linen knee. When the little Jewess slipped in from the grey evening she found her baby contented in the matron's arms, her lips on his little soft head, the comfort of tears in her Irish eyes. And, quite suddenly, as Izzy had laid his hand on her knee, quite suddenly the little Jewess buried her face in Nurse O'Brien's lap, and, her arms around her baby, and Nurse O'Brien's arms around them both, the bitter reserve of her broke down for the first time since she had taken her baby and come away, but broke down into a devastating storm of racking, terrible tears. "God-God-bless!" she said brokenly when she could speak again, and slipped away her baby tucked into her shawl.

They had grown very near after that, the little Jew-Mother and the Irish nurse. And, all at once, it was Christmas Eve, crisp and white and starry. The Day Nursery had had a delectable Tree the day before, with all the mothers and all the babies and all the other mothers who had made the Day Nursery

come to be, and even a redeemed father or two. Today the matron had sent her staff all off to their homes or their friends. She herself was in a little green dinner-dress, the gold of her hair bound tightly above her gay face. She was going to dinner bye-and-bye with a certain distant cousin, a detrimental soldier-man from a military base along the Pacific. Her eyes were very dreamy in her gay face.

Izzy's mother had slipped in to sit a bit in the evening, had helped with the unusual robing, and had been told of the soldier-cousin.

"Lady-go away?" she wondered drearily.

"Not yet—not for a long time yet." Molly assured her, her face rosy, patting the black little shoulder.

Then she flitted off, tying up a belated parcel or two. And the little Jewess sat very still, brooding, Izzy straight and serious on her knee.

Molly O'Brien looked at her troubled-

ly, her heart that had lifted to the coming of the soldier-detrimental falling again at sight of the bleak little woman and the straight, serious baby.

"What is it, Ruth?" she asked gently.

Ruth lifted a wan face. "Izzy," she said. "And me. The heart is empty. There is not—to come—anyones."

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Then again, as in June, the door-bell rang. Before the women had stirred, the door opened with a rush and a comely young Jew with tumbled black hair and a very red tie was impetuously in the room, his arms outstretched to Ruth.

Ruth, the red spots flaming in her thin cheeks, rose with Izzy tight to her breast, and, standing, froze into a terrible stillness. One hand pointed to the door.

"Ruth!" the man appealed, his arms dropping.
Still she pointed.

Still she pointed. His handsome face hardened. "I stay," he said. "I tell."

Then a torrent of Yiddish came from him, gestures, appeals, a tale of travel. "Calgary," the matron heard, and saw his hands full of the money he drew from his pockets. But his wife stood on like a Fate, Izzy tight against her.

All at once she cut into his torrent of Yiddish with a s vord-like question. The matron heard that it concerned a Rosa Finkelstein. But it sent the young Jew into a roar of laughter and another tor-rent of Yiddish. Then his face grew contrite as Ruth swayed a bit, and his arms went out again as the matron caught Ruth and steadied her into a chair. Her arms loosened around Izzy, and that unexpected young person, slipping to the floor, looked up at the handsome, flushed young man bent over his mother, hitched nearer, caught a cheerful-checked trouser, and, with an indubitable crow, stood up on his feet. His father caught him up with a shout of delight, and Ruth smiled unsteadily up at the two of them, and little O'Brien, her Irish heart lifting again nearly out of her small pulsing body, slipped away and left them alone together.

"Lady!" a soft voice called at the stairs bye-and-bye. And when she went down, "My man,' said Ruth shyly—"he come." And, between them, they told her. There weren't "pretty girls" in earnest, it seemed. Ruth was jealous and her man had teased her. When she of unreason and went away, Jospeh took Izzy one night in a sudden flame had been equally furious and wouldn't explain. On the night he went suddenly to Calgary, Rosa Finkelstein had gone West too, and Ruth thought they had gone together. But Rosa and her husband were home from Edmonton for the holiday, Joseph had just met them. And now the lady was going out and they must go too. Joseph was full of thanks and Ruth had a shy "God bless" for the soldier cousin, and Izzy held up his funny little face of his own free will to be kissed.

"They don't know, though, that it's blessed Christmas!" thought Molly, in whimsical pity. "But 'God bless' is warm and sweet. And it's Christmas for them just the same. A little child and peace."

Then she gasped and caught them back as they had just gone.