

AT THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

By Willette Provost

The room was dark save for the bright gleam from the hearth. In a comfortable armchair before the fire a man reclined. On the rug in front of him a little child was sitting, watching the glowing embers. Over in a dim corner a girl was playing very softly—so softly that the melody seemed to be but a part of the gathering shadows.



THE GIRL STOOD WITH HER HAND ON THE BACK OF HIS CHAIR.

all big lady bears, and you'll think yourself too good to talk to me! And Cubbie began to growl like a real bad bear.

"Ah, goodie!" exclaimed the child. "I'm glad, aren't you, uncle?"

"Yes, dear, but there was something about her that Cubbie could not understand. He finally came to the conclusion that she did not care for him any more."

The man was gazing earnestly into the fire as he spoke; he seemed to have forgotten the presence of the child. Then he looked down and smiled. She had fallen asleep.

"And that's the end, for Uncle Fred's little girl has gone fast asleep. I wonder if auntie will call mother to put her little girl to bed?"

In response the girl rose from the piano and, coming over to the fire, stood behind him for a moment with her hand resting on the back of his chair.

"I would like to know what this big rough bear is going to do, for pussy may want to know when she wakes in the morning?" she asked.

"Oh, live and die an old bachelor and write stories for little ones like Sweetheart here—stories to put them to sleep."

"But I thought you said the bear was going to marry some one."

"That was long ago. The beautiful and wealthy bear," he added, with a smile, "found out in some way that he had asked to marry her only because of his father's dying wish, and she positively refused to do so."

"But supposing Fluffie did not know of this. Supposing she had known he was engaged, but never heard of the breaking of the engagement until to-day," said the girl gently. "If she had not known, would the big bear have forgiven her for doing as she did?"

A light shone in the man's eyes—a light that revealed a dawning hope.

"Was that the only reason?" he asked quickly. "Was the bear—oh, hang the bears, Fluffie, are you not engaged to some one?"

The girl bent her head and kissed his forehead.

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CARE FOR SLEEPERS

A CLUB WHERE DOZING MEMBERS ARE NEVER DISTURBED.

There is a good reason for this custom, which is not allowed to be violated—a short sleep which culminated in a tragedy.

There is an exclusive club in upper New York where the employees are forbidden from awakening any member who drops asleep in his chair in the library or sitting room. If a visitor inquires for him he is "out."

A physician who belongs to the club explained the reason of it. "It is wrong under any circumstances," he said, "to awaken a man who has fallen into a natural sleep. How do you know but it is the first time he has been able to sleep for hours or even days? This phenomenon of sleep is a very complicated one. There are many grades of sleep, and they affect different men in different ways. Dreams are the result of defective or partial sleep, and their common occurrence in the lighter varieties of the state shows that the rest taken by most persons is not profound or continuous even while it lasts.

"Don't you know that scores of persons in New York take a long trolley ride in the evening simply to produce a feeling of sleepiness? If a man looks straight ahead of him or reads a newspaper his ride will do him little good. He might as well remain at home on his front stoop. But if he looks about him, constantly shifting his gaze from one scene to another, he gets into a state of drowsiness such as is brought about by artificial means when it is called hypnotism. That is why so many men feel like dozing in the club after they come in from a ride or a drive in the park.

"Sleep induced by overeating is not natural. That brought about by stimulants is nothing but blood poisoning and stupor. It may be desirable and even necessary in some cases to produce this stupor. But the state into which the brain is thrown is not sleep. If natural sleep follows, it is a contingency and not the effect of the stimulant. But I was going to tell you a story, not deliver a medical lecture. I must not mention names, but many old club men of New York will remember the tragedy.

"There was a man who was quite prominent, both in a business and social way, in the life of this city. A dreadful family misfortune brought on insomnia. He would sometimes go forty-eight hours without sleep; then after a normal night or two he would not be able to sleep for a week. All his life until his trouble came upon him he had been habitually a heavy sleeper. After two or three months of this insomnia attack his health began to give way. Physicians tried all the usual means of overcoming the difficulty, but failed. He was prescribed sleeping drafts until it became dangerous to continue them longer.

"Then he went to Europe, taking a competent young physician of my acquaintance as companion. Specialists abroad prescribed walking and mountain climbing, but they discovered that there is nothing to be gained by increasing the fatigue of the body when worry of mind will not allow the repose to which the limbs are entitled. The man came home little the better for his trip. He retired from business. His strength wasted away.

"Finally by one of those curious freaks of nature we occasionally caught him dozing at the club. All who knew his misfortune sympathized with him. We moved about as though in a sick chamber until he awoke. He seldom slept more than twenty minutes and told us that his restlessness at night continued. One afternoon he came in positively drowsy. To a friend he said:

"I feel as though I could sleep for a week, but I can't sleep in my own home—no. Find me a bed here."

"We got him upstairs to a room and put a man on guard at the door, with instructions to see that no servant was allowed to disturb him or make a noise. An hour or so afterward an accident in the kitchen brought the fire engines up to the door. There was really no danger, but before a ladder could be raised poor Blank's body came tumbling into the area.

"He was killed. Suicide? No. It was the opinion of all of us that sudden awakening from the first sound sleep he had enjoyed for more than a year upset his mind and that when he was awakened by the noise he did not realize where he was. In a frenzy he leaped from the window."—New York Times.

Chinese Scandal Merchants. In China there is a profession for ladies, strange because openly and handsomely remunerated in the current coin of the realm. It is carried on by elderly ladies, who go from house to house of rich people, announcing their coming by beating a drum and offering their services to amuse the lady of the house. This offer accepted, they sit down and tell her the latest scandal and the newest stories and on dials and are rewarded at the rate of half a crown an hour, besides a handsome present should some portion of their gossip have proved particularly acceptable.—London Tit-Bits.

Natural Inquiry. He—I'd like to meet Miss Bond. She—Why? "I hear she has thirty thousand a year and no incubance." "Is she looking for one?"—Life.

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