

AT THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

By Willette Provost

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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.

"You're awfully quiet tonight, uncle," said the child. "Are you lonesome because you're going away tomorrow?"

"Perhaps that's it, sweetheart. I won't see you for two long months, and I'll miss my little girl dreadfully."

She jumped up from the rug and climbed on his knees, putting her little arms around his neck and kissing him.

"Are you sorry I'm going away?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. No one ever tells me the nice stories you do, Uncle Fred. Won't you please tell me a story now before mother says it's bedtime; just a little one—just a sweetie teeny one, about a bear?"

The man paused and glanced at the corner of the room. The music had changed to "Bonnie Sweet Bessie."

"All right," he said. "I will see if I can make up a little story that you will like."

The child pulled his head down close to hers and kissed him. He began:

"Once upon a time there lived two small bears who were playmates. They were very happy and used to dwell in a sort of fairyland all of their own. But by and by the boy bear, who was called Cubbie, was told by his father, Big Bruin, that he was old enough to go away to school. When Cubbie heard this, he went to little Fluffie, his playmate, and told her the woful news, and she tried to comfort him.

"It'll only be for a little while, Cubbie," she said, "and then when you come back I'll be here in the woods just the same, and you'll come to see me!"

"Yes," he answered bravely, "and you'll be grown up and stuck up, like



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.

"Fluffie's big eyes were filled with tears, for Cubbie had never spoken to her so crossly before. "Why, Cubbie," she said, "even if you were away for years and years and years we'd love each other just as much as we do now, wouldn't we?"

"That seemed to comfort him. They were sitting under a favorite tree. He put his arm around her, and when Fluffie's mother came to look for her long after she found that they had fallen asleep in each other's arms."

The girl at the piano was playing a lullaby.

"Well, Cubbie went away, and when he came back next year he found that Fluffie and her mother had wandered away to live in some other woods, but no one seemed to know where."

The music grew faint, almost ceased.

"The years passed and Cubbie grew to be a great big, rough bear. He often thought of little Fluffie and wondered what she was like and if she remembered him."

The man paused.

"Go on, Uncle Fred. What did the big boy bear do?" said the child.

"Well, his papa wanted him to stay at home and marry a very beautiful and wealthy little bear, but it was not his little Fluffie; so he said no."

"Then, after a long while, to please his father, who was dying, he promised to ask the beautiful little bear to be his wife. You see, he had almost given up hope of seeing his Fluffie again."

All was silence in the corner by the window. The girl at the piano was listening.

"Fluffie was mean not to have come back, wasn't she, Uncle Fred?"

"Perhaps she couldn't get back, dear," answered the man. "She might have got lost. It must have been that way, for one day she did come back to the old woods."

"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.

"I don't know," she said. "Am I, dear?"

A Purist.

Most persons believe Stevenson's verses for children may, without correction or amendment, safely be placed in the hands of the impressionable youngster without corrupting either his morals or his English. But there are some who think otherwise, says an exchange.

Little Alice's mother, having taught the child to say "Time to rise," in which "the birdie with a yellow bill" figures, the child announced that she meant to recite it to her teacher.

"Well, and what did Miss Prim say to 'the birdie with a yellow bill'?" asked Alice's mother when the little girl returned from school.

"She says it is quite a pretty thought. But this is the way she makes me say it now, mamma:

"A birdie with a yellow bill
Hopped upon the window sill,
Cocked his shining eye and said,
'Are you not ashamed, you sleepy-head?'"

"But that was not the way the birdie said it, Alice," the mother remonstrated.

"No, mamma, I know. But teacher says it isn't good English to say, 'Ain't you 'shamed, you sleepy-head?'"

Spanish Politeness.

The most perfect example of Spanish politeness was a letter left for the Duke of Marlborough by Don Arrom de Ayala, a Spanish consul, who committed suicide in Blenheim park on April 14, 1850:

My Lord—I humbly ask your lordship's pardon and forgiveness for the great liberty I have taken in coming to put an end to my dreary and miserable existence in your park. It may be a childish feeling, but one cannot blow his brains out in a common road or on one of those cultivated fields full of cottages and life and civilization and railways and establishments of all kinds in which your blessed country of England abounds.

I mean no offense. Your manor is one of the most noble, splendid things I ever saw in my life, and I have traveled about and seen everything worth seeing. You have the finest Rubens that can be seen. That should have a great attraction for me under other circumstances, but now they have been of no use. I am your lordship's most obedient servant.

ARRON DE AYALA.

Dancing Dervishes.

A visitor to Constantinople gives this picture of the dancing dervishes: "The worshippers, having divested themselves of their flowing cloaks, stretched out their arms and began to revolve, at first slowly and rhythmically, but gradually warming to it. In a few seconds the hall beneath was alive with a host of figures reeling and twirling round and round with ever increasing rapidity to the weird music of reed flutes and cymbals—both instruments conducive to spiritual exaltation. In a few more seconds their long white robes bulged and expanded like colossal parasols, until the whole mass merged in one immense cloud of calico, while their towering headdresses assumed the appearance of a large congregation of chimney pots suddenly gone whirling mad."

The Cause of the Row.

An Irish undertaker was laying out the deceased husband of a weeping Hibernian widow. The corpse wore a wig, and it was very difficult to induce it to stay on straight, as wigs ought always to do, even if they don't. The bereaved widow was called in to assist. "Go an' git me a pot of glue, Mrs. McGovern," said the undertaker, "so that I may keep his wig where it belongs."

Mrs. McGovern set out after the sticking material and after a time she returned. "Here is the glue for ye," she said, with a sigh.

"Mrs. McGovern, you kin take back the muckilage," said the undertaker. "The difficulty is fixed. I used a tack."

And that was what caused the row.

—Bradford Era.

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." Other members, if they see him, carry on their conversation in low tones or go to the smoking room or cafe. Very few new members are admitted to the club, but those who are fortunate enough to get in or those who bring visitors are reminded of this custom.

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 incumbent."
"Is she looking for one?"—Life.

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