

I, THE KING

By WAYLAND WELLS WILLIAMS.

(Copyright, 1924.)

(Continued From Saturday)

"Mama," said Kit, "you're the beautifullest lady I ever saw!"

Marcelline, her job done, seized him by the shoulders and mauled him about, tickling and fondling him, and talking the while in her incredibly rapid French. "Ah, il sait bien, le jeune monsieur! Voilà le bon goût! Il y en aura bien d'autres qui diront la meme chose de soit!"

"J'espere qu'ils ne le diront pas," said Mrs. Newell, laughing.

Marcelline threw up her hands from the elbows, seemingly annoyed, for some inexplicable reason. "Oh, ces Americaines!" she said, blustering.

She put a fur cloak on Mama, who then stooped and kissed Kit. "Good night, my angel. Remember to go and see Papa. He's in the dining room."

The house seemed strangely quiet and empty after she was gone. Kit went into the dining room and found Papa sitting alone at the table eating and reading a newspaper. Kit sat down on a chair at the side. His father looked up.

"Hello! How is it you're not in bed?"

"I don't go till eight o'clock."

"That so? Quite a seasoned roue you're getting to be. Well, what you been doing?"

Kit told him. His father listened vaguely; soon he returned to his paper, which was propped up against a claret bottle before him. Presently Kit ceased talking, and thought. The silence of the room, the drab clothes of Papa, the noiseless comings and goings of Nana, it was all so different from the bustle and beauty of Mama in her bedroom. Men were so different, so uninteresting, so unresponsive. His father had said nothing at all about the kittens.

He slipped off his chair and went to his father. "What? Oh, going to bed. Well, good night, Sonny. Sleep tight." He kissed Kit briefly and returned to his paper.

"I like Papa," Kit told Nana expansively as he got into bed, "but I love Mama!"

Kit had a birthday; he was going to be seven. There was a party, and the Hoffingtons and the Nevins and a lot of other children came.

Strings of different colors had been wound all over two floors of the house. You started in the big drawing room; each child was given a string and told to follow it. There was a present hidden at the other end, and he who first reached it (no breaking the thread, mind) would get not only the present, but a prize. They played games for a while, and then they went into the dining room

and sat down at little tables and ate ice cream and sat down at little tables and ate ice cream and cake and candy and pulled crackers. After that they returned to the drawing room; some one played the piano and those who knew how to, danced. The others just ran around.

Kit was one of the latter. He enjoyed it hugely, but presently he knew he was not enjoying it so much. He was beginning to feel very queer indeed. When that passed he ran about as before, but not because he wanted to. It was the thing to do. He wanted to lie down, but you couldn't lie down at a party, with all these children having a good time. No one noticed! Why wouldn't some one see he was feeling queer, and take him upstairs? He couldn't tell any one. He strayed by his mother, pawing her with his hands, but she only said, "Having a good time, honey?" and smiled. He sat down and pretended to play a game he had been given.

At last the children began to go. He could hold out now, he thought. They laughed and chattered in the hall, shaking hands with him and Mama and saying they'd had a very nice time. When the last one was out of the door, he rushed up to the nursery.

"Oh, I feel sick!" he cried. "Nana, I feel so sick..."

Oh, the joy of it, being able to be sick without shame, who heartedly! After all was over he lay on the bed, gasping, but happy. "Oh, Nana," he moaned, "it's almost as nice as eating!"

His mother came in and was informed of the misfortune. "He was feeling very queer for some time, ma'am, he said, but he wouldn't come upstairs and be sick because of the party. He was such a little gentleman he couldn't bear to leave his little guests till the very end."

His mother sat down on the bed, bending on him. "Was that it, darling? Mother's brave boy! He wouldn't leave his party! He was a sweet boy, that's what he was?"

Softly she ran her fingers on his throbbing head. His happiness became mixed; this praise was sweet, but it wasn't quite deserved. He hadn't been braver about anything; he had simply not wanted to show signs of sickness before all those children. It would have been a humiliation. Still, it didn't matter much. He let it pass, and accepted the homage.

Nana was going away home, to England. Her mother had died and her father was all alone, and she had to go and take care of him.

It's just as well, Kit heard his father say. He supposed he meant it was just as well for Nana's father to have Nana as her mother.

There was talk of a German governess. Nana began it. Whenever Kit crossed her she would say, "Well, I dare say you'll like your German governess a great deal better! Hm!" and wipe her eyes.

One afternoon Mrs. Newell took Kit out in the broom alone, and told him they were going to Aunt Emma's to meet the new governess.

Aunt Emma was Mrs. Newell's only sister, and she lived in an old brick house on West Eighth street. She was a little older than her sister, and much stouter, and not so beautiful at all. She sat smiling behind her tea table as they came in and waved her left hand at an angular being in black, with large red hands and a large red face. "This is Fraulein Rock," she said. "Fraulein, this is my sister, Mrs. Newell, and the young man."

Kit shook hands with the black and red lady, who put her other hand on his shoulder. It felt heavy and unfamiliar there, quite mannish. "Would you like me to come and live with you?" she said in a guttural, halting voice.

"I don't think so," said Kit promptly.

Aunt Emma laughed and the German lady grew even redder. "That isn't polite, Kit," said Mrs. Newell, not laughing. "Mamma is one of the things you'll have to teach him, I'm afraid, Franklin."

"I shall try my best," said Fraulein. Her voice sounded grim.

Kit could see when manners came into it. The woman had asked a ridiculous question, to be answered by a boy of seven. Assuredly he did not want to teach this black and red creature in the place of the gentle Nana.

But she came and was installed in the nursery the very afternoon of the day when Nana left weeping for England. Her hands were rough as well as red, and he hated the feeling of them when she bathed him. Also she immediately began to talk in her incomprehensible language, apparently expecting him to understand her. Also she took an unworthy and trivial attitude toward some of his most sacred arrangements.

"She wouldn't let Pollex in," he told his parents next morning at breakfast, "even after I had my bath. And she made me say my prayers kneeling down, and she didn't put out my blue blanket. And when I spilled water out of my bath she slapped me."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Mr. Newell out of his eternal newspaper, "but Lussy had picked up something rather good, for once. It would be extraordinary if we were to find one jewel in that collection."

That afternoon Kit went to the park with Pollex and Pollex. He introduced her to the Hoffingtons' nurse, as his mother had told him to, but their conversation was not spontaneous. They sat stiffly on a bench, Fraulein following Kit with a hawk's eye, and replying in monosyllables to Nurse's offerings. Apparently Fraulein wasn't going to be popular in the Mall. Well, he didn't wonder.

In the course of the afternoon Kit got away with the Mercers' nurse and undid her bonnet strings. She was a great friend of his, and gentle as Nana. She did not object strenuously, though he knew she did not like it. After the first time Fraulein told him not to do it. Of course, he paid no attention; when the fit seized him he came running back and pulled the white strings out. Fraulein, in an instant was on her feet, stamping, glowering, roaring. Kit danced away on the grass, as was his custom.

"Yah!" he cried. "Catch me!"

Now Fraulein really used her voice. The Mall rang; children stopped playing, nurses looked up from their work in amazement. "Kommi!" she roared. "Kommi gleich! Wenn ich sage Kommi, dann kommst du! Hast du verstanden? ... Nicht? Dann werd ich dir mal lernen, du ungezogenes Ding!"

Without the slightest haste, still following, she strode out toward Kit. He watched her, paralyzed. It was not in him to run away; his legs simply would not take him. "Kommi hier!" said the dragon, stopping. Kit came. She seized him with one hand and held him firmly with the other; she belabored his ears, boxing them soundly, right and left, till his head swam and his eyes were blind with tears. "So, so, so, mein Fräulein! Ich werde dir noch zeigen, dir! Willst du? Willst du? Du, du... Jetzt geht du dich entschuldigen. Kommi! Teil die Butter, you are sure!"

She took him before the Mercers' Mary and held him there, by the

ear. "I'm sorry, Mary," said Kit, his head down, his tears falling and splashing on the pavement. Then the dragon let him go and he staggered away, wiping his face on his sleeve.

After that the Mall warmed up to Fraulein perceptibly. Nurses and governesses came up to pass the time of day or ask her advice on when to

turn. Children eyed her with awe; to win a smile from her was to win distinction.

Kit's attitude toward her was less one of hate than might be supposed; it was more that of a scientist who has discovered a totally new, dangerous and immensely powerful element. She was something new in people.

The contrast between her handling of this affair and Nana's conduct of the similar one a few years back did not escape him for a moment. Unreservedly, though he hated to do it, he must yield Fraulein the palm.

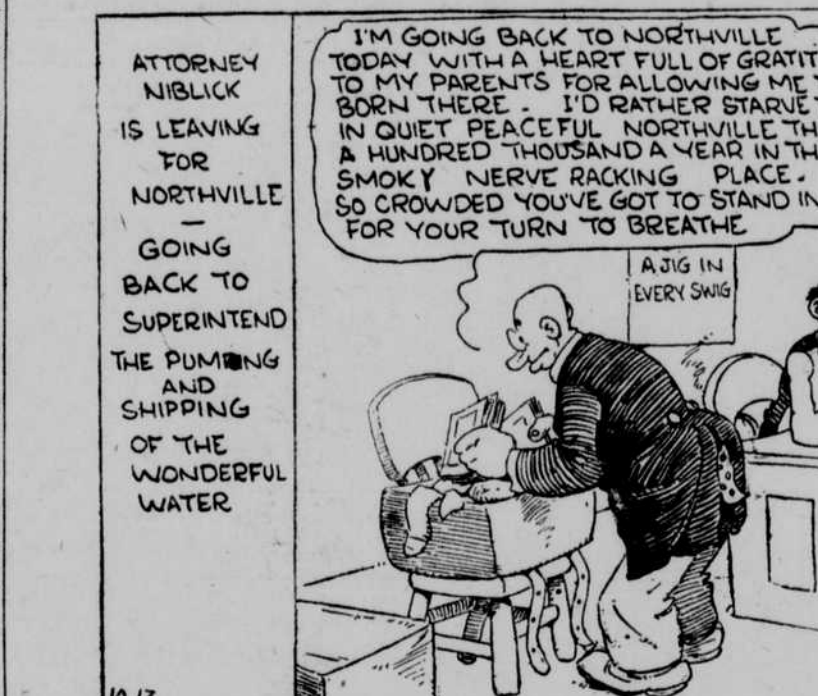
But his respect soon mixed with a quite real liking. Fraulein was never unjust nor was she always unpleasant; in time of need she never failed and when in the mood for it she could be affectionate. But above all she was effective. It occurred to Kit that it might not be a bad idea to be the sort of person she was, if by any improbable chance, he ever grew up.

In a month he was talking and being read to in German. He gained a colloquial knowledge of the language which never entirely left him, and stood him in good stead on one occasion.

CHAPTER II.
I.
At the age of five Kit had begun going to kindergarten at Miss Loeb's school, and continued in the "primary department" of the same institution. When he was nine he left there and went to Miss Gurnibeth's on East Sixty-third street, which was a very different matter. There were only boys there, and they all called each other by their last names.

(To Be Continued Tomorrow.)

THE NEBBS



10-13

IN BEAUTIFUL NORTHVILLE.



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Barney Google and Spark Plug



10-13

BARNEY SURELY WAS EXCITED.



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New York

--Day by Day--

By O. O. McINTYRE

New York, Oct. 12.—A page from the diary of a modern Samuel Pepys: Up betimes, a fairish day, to a breakfast of sliced pineapple and calf brains with scorched butter sauce, as brave as ever I ate. So to my stint with great zest.

Gli Boag and Gilda Gray dropped in and gave me a noble walking stick they brought from Vienna and my wife some lace kerchiefs and much fooling, rag, tag and bobtail.

To luncheon with Archie Andrews and our wives and thence to the studio of Dean Cornwell and he showed us some fine paintings and I deem him foremost of all the illustrators.

Later all of us to Greenwich by benzine buggy, dropping Dean off at Manaroneck, and to the Indian Harbor Yacht club, but the service so shoddy we put back to the Westchester-Dillmore for dinner. Home late and to bed.

The fashionable Westchester crowds are interesting to watch. The men bronzed and clad in knickers and jaunty blazers. The ladies—bobbed, blithe and beautiful. Westchester dines when weather permits all fresco at the several picturesque spots which provide enchanting vistas of the sound and rolling greenward.

The terraces have delightful little rose arbors for the love birds. The cafe menus offer all the delicacies—Astrakhan caviare, pate de foie gras, and all the rare French sauces.

Other folk as well as the young seem to have been pepped up with surreptitious cocktails at the dinner hour. Afterward the young troop away to moonlight bathing parties and the older folks settle down to high stake bridge. The talk is of yachts, stock markets, the high price of chartreuse and injustice of the income tax.

There is also a soupcon of dowagers—great ladies who never serve in their majestic stride. They are given to lorgnettes and shepherd's crooks and are continually scoring their husbands for having accepted just one more in Bill's room.

The self abasement of flunkies at fashionable resorts around New York is startling. They fairly grovel to wheedle the tip. They are rather important looking nobodies in gold braids, plush coats and patent leather boots. And so many ditches in the world waiting to be dug.

It is quite obvious—and don't ask more silly questions—that I do not belong to the Westchester set. Still it is nice to look in on them now and then. One leaves with a greater respect than ever for suspenders and corn beef and cabbage.

Not so long ago a lady in Kansas wrote me: "You, living at the Ritz, and twitting fashionable folk!" I admit I am miscast, but when I moved there it happened to be the only hotel in town with sense enough to house well-bred, small dogs. So I stayed on and on, spurred by my indomitable will to achieve an ambition. I want to muster courage to speak to the elevator starter who, in the evening, wears brocaded knickerbockers and slippers with silver buckles.

Living at the Ritz zings a few ill-listons about swank. I notice there are more patrons interested in where Ben Turpin's next film is showing than there are patrons who wonder if Chalapin's voice is in good form.

And speaking of opera and those who yell it, the Metropolitan is being all washed up for the fray. The New York season is nearing. Then in a few weeks they are off to Florida again. Hard life, hard life.

BRINGING UP FATHER



10-13

PICKING A TOUGH ONE.



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Drawn for The Omaha Bee by McManus



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JERRY ON THE JOB



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ABIE THE AGENT



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When a Feller Needs a Friend



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By Briggs



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Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hershfield



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