

LITTLE EVELYN

By Algernon Cassin

DONALD was a butler. He was also a man who all his fifty years had known and kept his exact place as he saw it of Scottish Presbyterian eyes. The unobtrusive dignity of his bearing showed that he felt and knew that others felt that he was part of his family. Service of this sort molds a man rarely. It gives him a liveliness that cannot be made to order, and any one who has eyes for it increases in self-respect through recognizing what long and personal service can make us all if we are willing.

Just now he was glancing with disappointment at the table upon which he had set the parlor lamp and carefully turned down the flame under its red shade. The table, except for an ornament or two, was empty. He went to one of the bookcases, and, kneeling before it, scanned in the half-light the titles of the books. As he came upon the one he sought he gave a little grunt of expectation confirmed, and taking out a volume of Tennyson, he began to turn over the leaves. The book, however, opened naturally of itself at the page he wanted. Placing it on the table, he gazed at it with reverent tenderness. "Eh! my dear mistress," he mused aloud; "and ye left it lyin' open there when ye were called to the Palace o' the King."

Sighing, he turned, and with a far-away mind ran an habitual eye over the room. "Na, na," he muttered, "there's na true hame here since the mistress died. There's one thing ye canna touch, McKenna." His glance made the circuit and came back again to the open book on the table. "It's a sad house," he muttered, "that has no heir." He roused himself from his reverie, and, going to the closet, took from it a brightly-colored smoking-jacket and placed it upon the back of the arm-chair drawn up in front of the open fire. In doing so, his foot touched an object under the chair, and, stooping, he drew forth a child's knit worsted slipper. He picked it up tenderly. "It's a wee thing—" he said—"a wee thing to be toddlin' all alone!"

Sighing again, he put the slipper into his pocket, and satisfying himself once more that the room was all in order, he was about to go. A suppressed snicker stopped him. It came from the direction of the chair. His mouth relaxed its seriousness as he crept toward it and looked over the back. There in a capacious leather depths huddled a little girl in her nightgown; her hair tumbled about a face so pink with merriment that it threatened disaster if it were kept in another moment. She was shaking with mirth.

"Aha! I caught ye," he cried, and pounced upon her. Her laughter spouted out in a breathy gurgle, seemingly not a moment too soon. "Ye are so funny, Donald," she bubbled, "when ye mutter to yourself! I laughed inside till I almost burst my head."

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there? I left ye in bed. Have ye no been asleep yet?"

Evelyn shook her tumbled curls gleefully. Then sobering her face, she spoke with plaintive pride: "Not one single tiny bit. I just can't go to sleep, Donald. And my room is so big and dark." She doubled her feet up under her, tailor-wise, and put more importance into her tone in anticipation of his protest. "I'm going to sit here and watch the fire."

"A pretty time o' night, indeed, to be watchin' the fire! We'll no have that. Come, dearie, let me carry ye upstairs and tuck ye in."

Evelyn increased her impressive air. "But I am natchally wake-ful. And when I'm wake-ful I can't go to sleep without any one to sing to me. Mama always had to sing me to sleep when I was wake-ful."

"I'd sing ye to sleep myself," said Donald grimly; "but Heaven knows ye'd be a long time awake. It wad be like an old corbie on the fence-rail croakin' to a wee lambkin in the meadow." He held out his arms. "Cuddle doon noo, and I'll give ye a free ride to Noddie Land."

"Oh, Donald," coaxed the little girl; "please let me stay here till Kenneth comes. I won't go to sleep. I'm really very, very wake-ful to-night. And I want to see him so much. And it's so awful late now, he'll be home soon, won't he?"

"I canna say, dearie," he said gently. "There's no tellin' that. He doesn't come in sae—" he moved a step away uncomfortably—"sae regular."

Evelyn felt that she was gaining her point by the mention of her brother's name. She had had her doubts about it before, but now she strategically pursued the topic. "And I don't see Kenneth at all any more, because I'm always in bed—or he is when I'm not at school. Then when I come home he's gone. And to-night I know I sha'n't go to sleep for hours and hours! So I shall just sit here and see him when he comes in." She settled back pleasantly, aware that an assumption of careless confidence is often half the battle. "Won't he be surprised?"

"To see you curled up sound asleep and catchin' your death o' cold! But it's a surprise he'll no get this night. Come now, my wee lassie!" He scooped her up suddenly. "Please, please, Donald!" she cried. "I'm not sleepy a bit."

"Tubs, ye wee beggar! The sandman'll be snatchin' ye in twenty winks. There ye go!" He hoisted her lightly to his shoulder in spite of her wriggling protestations. "And I'll tell ye all about the brownies and the guidwife's charm."

"Oh, will you?" cried Evelyn, delighted. She made one trial more, however, relapsing into pliancy. "But, I'm so wake—" "And how they churned the butter, *Chug! Chug! Chug!*" went Donald in a pleading tone. At each *chug* he took an artful step toward the door. "To pay for the wee cakes she left on the hearth for them. Every time one took a nibble, the others pushed the churn-handle doon, and then pulled it up again. *Nibble-chuggery! Nibble-chuggery!* And one o' the brownies on the churn wad jump doon and the one at the cake wad clamber up. And then it wad begin again. *Nibble-chuggery! Nibble-chuggery!* And they went out into the hall and up the stairs."

A live coal dropped from the grate and soon afterwards the mantel clock struck ten. Left to itself, the room took on the well-kept air of a hotel apartment kept ready for transient occupation. The butler was right. It was a room from which the personality had departed. It was no longer a center of household life. There lay about it the subtle melancholy of a place which, created lovingly to be lived in, is now committed to the orderly care of servants.

A short while only was it left alone, however. For a young man, letting himself in at the street door and taking off his overcoat in the hall, entered briskly. He was a good looking, clean-built fellow, wearing youth in a buoyant fashion, though with a suggestion of over-drawing upon his vitality. His fine-grained face had begun to harden somewhat defiantly to dissipation, and although the hardening was as yet but superficial, it marred a sensitive mouth and gleamed a little uneasily from a frank eye.

The butler came noiselessly into the room. Seeing the young man, he gave an unconscious movement of surprise. "Ah, Master Kenneth, you're home!" he said.

Kenneth was quick to discern and resent its slight note of censure. "Well," said he, with a touchiness only partially controlled, "don't stand there as if it petrified you."

"Pardon me, sir," answered the butler quietly, "I didna look for ye so soon."

The boy was a little ashamed of his irritability and the tone he found himself taking, but the man's conciliatory respectfulness annoyed him. "I know well enough," he said shortly, "that I'm back earlier than usual. Now that I am here, however, let us both try to make the best of it."

"Ye have no reason, Maister Kenneth," said the butler without raising his voice, "to speak to me in that way. I'm real glad to see you home again—at so guid an hour."

"I shall come home when and as late as I please," retorted Kenneth aggressively. Then, feeling that the man deserved to know his place, "Please to understand that. And make no comments on it in the future."

"Verra weel, verro weel," the other answered. "If anybody could have prevented ye, it wad hae been done lang since."

"See here, Donald," broke in the young man, catching fire. "I'm no child. And I'm sick of this everlasting attitude of yours. Don't take it on yourself to control my behavior."

Donald's mouth had settled grimly. "Maister Kenneth!" he interposed with dignity.

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

He eyed her with transparent sternness. "Miss Evelyn, what are ye doin' there?"

no longer trust himself to speak. Kenneth's glance fell upon the book lying on the table. "Is it you," he cried, his exasperation suddenly shooting out again, "who keeps putting this book here and leaving it open as if—as if some one had just been reading it?"

Donald hesitated. He felt the subject had come up at an unfortunate moment. Then, after a brief silence, he decided to make the best of it. "Ay, it was me put it there," he said gravely.

"In spite of the fact," said Kenneth, "that I have repeatedly put it back on the shelf again, you would take it out?"

"I wad take it out," repeated the butler slowly. "Is this my house or yours?" cried Kenneth passionately. "What do you mean by doing such a thing?"

The butler paused again. "I'd rather na' tell ye," he said at last, "when you're in this mood."

"What did you do it for?" thundered the boy.

"I thought you would see it and—" "Well, I have seen it," Kenneth broke in. "I've seen it many times. Could anybody miss it? What did you do it for?" he persisted imperiously, although he knew the answer he would get.

Donald went on simply. "It was one o' the books she loved—and the last time—she left it there."

Now that the answer had come, Kenneth did not know how to meet it. He felt that he had been cutting a sorry figure, yet once in it, he had been at a loss how to get out of it otherwise, without seeming to countenance the

Playing so, the hardness went out of his heart, and with it the recklessness out of his young face.

Into the doorway, creeping warily past the danger-point, came Evelyn, again escaped from bed. Her face was roguish, and she had her finger on her lip as if to impress upon herself the idea of silence. She stood there until he had finished the familiar strain. Then she tiptoed cautiously toward him, with the careful concentration with which children always perform this hazardous act, balancing herself with her arms as if she were walking a tight-rope. But suddenly she darted and sprang upon him as he wheeled on the stool. He seized her in his arms and swept her far above his head. She caught her breath with delight and as he let her down to a level with his face, she wound her arms about his neck, half-laughing, half-crying. He hugged her to him passionately, himself between tears and laughter, and carrying her to the arm-chair, plumped her with a playful threat of violence down into its soft depths.

"Why aren't you in bed?" he said. "And in your bare feet, too!"

Evelyn raised her nightgown daintily and disclosed her other foot in its knit worsted slipper. "I couldn't find but one," she explained. She wriggled her bare pink toes gleefully. "How do you, my son John?"

"My son John?" asked Kenneth, mystified.

"One shoe off, one shoe on. Diddle, diddle, dumplin, my son John!"

she quoted, and doubled the whole pink row roguishly. "But why aren't you and your son John sound asleep by this time?" said Kenneth austere. "And your other son Peter?" he added, quite spoiling the effect of his paternal air.

"Peter?" cried Evelyn joyously. "Certainly," glibly returned Kenneth.

"The one that has the shoe looks neater, And so you call him my son Peter."

Now why didn't you tuck Peter and John into bed long ago? They'll never grow up if you don't give them their sleep."

"Well," said Evelyn speculatively, "they can't sleep unless their mother does, and I was just so wake-ful. When I'm that way I can't go to sleep unless some one tells me stories or sings to me; that is, I can't most always. Donald tells lovely stories, but his singing—" she laughed gaily in recollection. "It's all creaky and breaky. His singing is just so funny I laugh myself awake again."

She suddenly dived up at him in the chair. "Oh, Kenneth, I just *prayed* you'd come in. Tell me all about where you've been all this time, and everything."

Kenneth looked into her questioning eyes; the warm, flushed face with its tumbled hair was very near his own. "No, dearie," he answered; "you must go to bed again. It's verry late for little girls to be up."

"But, Kenneth," she coaxed, "I don't want to go to bed. And now, when I haven't seen you for years and years, I'm not a bit sleepy, not the littlest bit. Besides, I've just had a nap and I couldn't have one again for ever so long." She opened her eyes very wide and stared at him convincingly. But the sustained effort this required was too much for her, and she yawned in spite of herself. Kenneth laughed provokingly. "Oh, that was just 'cause—'cause I ought to be sleepy and I'm not," she explained in triumph. "And I just can't unless you tell me a story or sing to me!" This idea, dashed off in the hurry of extenuation, appealed to her. "Yes, just like mama used to do, in this very chair." She reached out her arms, put them about his neck and drew him gently toward her. "Oh, Kenneth," she said, as she snuggled her warm mouth just above his collar, "I miss mama so much."

He smoothed her hair, comforting her awkwardly. "And so do I, dearie," he said with an effort, for he was one of those whom emotion before others always shames. "Well, girly, if I tell you a story, will you promise to go straight to bed?"

She leaped with delight. "Yes, really and truly!" she declared. "If it's a good story it will put me to sleep, anyhow. And then," she added joyfully, "you'll carry me there." She untwisted Peter and John from

under her and, springing down from the chair, hurled herself upon him where he was half kneeling by its arm. "Oh, Kenneth! I'm so glad you came. I just *prayed* and *prayed* to God you would."

"And I am, too, dear," he said, gazing over her shoulder into the dying fire.

"It's awful lonesome with just Donald," she said wistfully. "Yes, dearie, I know it," her brother said hurriedly. "Now about the story."

"But you must tell it right in the big chair!" she cried. "Just as mama used to."

He lifted her and sat down with her on his lap. "All right. Now which shall it be?"

Evelyn wriggled to him coyly. "Tell me about 'The Palace o' the King.'" Her little voice lowered itself gravely. "I haven't heard that since mama died."

"'The Palace o' the King?'" he repeated, as if to himself. "I'm—I'm afraid I've forgotten all about that, dearie."

"Why, Kenneth!" protested Evelyn earnestly; "of course you haven't. You just think you have, but you haven't. About how grand and fine it is and everything? Now just wait until I'm comfortable—and cover up my son John with your hand so he won't take cold."

He held her foot in his hand, while in the curve of his other arm she hollowed a place to her liking, and rooted with her head on his shoulder until she fitted it in snugly. "Now begin," she commanded.

Slowly, partly because he was trying to recall the words, and partly in the effort to steady a voice that would tremble in spite of himself, Kenneth began:

"It's a bonny, bonnie war! that we're livin' in the noo, And sunny is the lan' that now we aften traivel throo; But in vain we look for somethin' here to which oor hearts may cling, For—"

She prompted him—"Its beauty is as naethin' to—"

Go on!"

"For its beauty is as naethin' to—"

He stopped, and Evelyn finished for him, "'The Palace o' the King.' There! I knew it would all come back to you if you just *tried*!" She yawned pleasantly. "Now go on with the second verse."

Kenneth went on:

"We like the gilded Simmer wi' its merry, merry tread, An' we sigh when hoary Winter lays its beauties wi' the dead; For tho' bonnie are the snaw-flakes an' the down on Winter's wing, It's fine to ken it daurna touch the Palace o' the King."

"The Palace o' the King," repeated Evelyn sleepily. She snuggled up closer to him, drawing "my son John" out from under his hand and doubling her knees up under her nightgown. Kenneth was looking fixedly into the fire. She roused herself drowsily at the silence, and clutching his finger, closed her fist around it.

"Go on," she murmured.

More and more falteringly he continued:

"'Nae nicht shall be in heaven an' nae desolatin' sea, An' nae tyrant hoofs shall trample i' the city o' the free; There's wae everlastin' daylight—an' a—never-fadin' spring Where our God—is a' the glory in the Palace—o' the King.'"

His voice had broken into hushed sobs, and the words came out in little groups of threes and fours.

The tears flowed down his cheeks and dropped on the tousled head on his breast. Finally, his eyes blinded, he tried to brush them away; but Evelyn held his fingers fast, and, as he raised her arm in doing so, she murmured and nestled closer to him. The trivial, confiding movement of the child, so helpless in her sleep, lifted him suddenly out of his own emotion to a feeling which he had never had before—that he had a charge to keep, that he was responsible for her happiness, and that she was a part of himself. A passion of fondness, of protectiveness, swept him like a culminating wave. He leaned his wet cheek upon her tumbled hair.

"Ahh!" he cried in a yearning whisper. "Keep tight hold, little hand, and don't let me wander away again."

Donald had entered quietly while Kenneth was repeating the last verse, and, much stirred by the young man's emotion, and by memories and hopes of his own, had come up with his noiseless step behind the chair.

Now, feeling that he was in the presence of something too sacred to be spied upon, and fearing, also, lest the detection of his presence might spoil everything, he turned to steal away as softly as he had come.

But Kenneth heard him, and, rising carefully with Evelyn in his arms, saw him just before he left the room. He called to him in a low voice:

"Donald!"

The man paused, his worst fears allayed by the boy's tone; but, still apprehensive, he went toward him hesitatingly.

"Forgive me, Donald. I was very rude—and wrong—and—" He stopped chokingly, but he still looked firmly into the man's answering eyes. Then, forgetting Evelyn, he held out his hand to the butler.

The child, disturbed and finding the comfortable hollow of her nestling-place unaccountably changed, cuddled and twisted until she had made herself a new one.

Both men regarded the movement anxiously, fearing she would wake. Satisfied that she was asleep, Kenneth turned toward Donald again. But the butler's glance had fallen on the little bare foot, and, taking the missing slipper from his pocket, he put it on tenderly.

When this operation was finished, Kenneth stretched out his hand again. "And—I'm sorry, Donald," he said. The butler took it in a firm, moveless grip. "Whisht, mon!" he whispered, "dinna waken the bairn."



HE EYED HER WITH TRANSPARENT STERNNESS. "MISS EVELYN, WHAT ARE YE DOIN' THERE?"

COPYRIGHT, 1914

NEXT WEEK: "Daniel of the Lion's Den." By Carroll Watson Rankin