

**GOOD SPORTS**

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Good Sports by Olive Higgins Prouty

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**OLIVE HIGGINS PROUTY**

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BY  
OLIVE HIGGINS PROUTY

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"BOBBS, GENERAL MANAGER," "THE FIFTH WHEEL,"  
"THE STAR IN THE WINDOW," ETC.



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## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I CATALOGUES . . . . .	I
II PLUCK . . . . .	28
III "WHY" . . . . .	57
IV FROM MARS . . . . .	87
V FIFTEEN DOLLARS' WORTH . . . . .	123
VI BROKEN RIBS . . . . .	151
VII UNWANTED . . . . .	175
VIII STRATEGY . . . . .	204
IX WAR BRIDE . . . . .	230

# GOOD SPORTS

## I

### CATALOGUES

MARCUS BELDEN did not have a very high opinion of women. The Italian fruit-dealer at the corner polished his apples, and laid the best ones on the top of the basket. Women were a lot like them, Marcus said. Underneath their selected top layer of sometimes really glorious charms the size of soul ran small, green and undeveloped. It was easy enough to see the powder on their faces, the polish on their nails, the rouge on their lips, but Marcus had never been able to discover anything very solid or durable underneath this veneer.

Feeling as he did about the sex, it was one of the jokes of fate that he had had four daughters born to him, and not a son among them. It was a sore point with him. He scarcely ever mentioned his family to his business associates. They never met. He felt that there was some sort of

shame connected with the coincidence that, at the age of sixty, he found himself planted down irrevocably in a household infested by women, five of his own and three servants, eight in all.

Even Rhoda, the dog, was fat, fawning, and female! He believed his wife's canary was of the same sex too. He had never asked, but he had heard that females never sang, and certainly the smutty, yellow bird, to which were administered, daily, seeds and fresh water and a luke-warm morning bath, had not to his knowledge warbled a note in pay for its board and keep.

Being the only provider in the household, Marcus felt that it was only just that the form of government within the brick walls of the four-storied, brown-stone-front city house, which he had bought cheap when its former residents had been pushed out by the rush up-town of shops and noisy railways, should be that of an autocracy. What if the girls didn't like the neighbors in the block? He was paying the taxes. He was the one to be pleased. Every morsel of food that those girls of his put between their cherry lips, every garment they hung on their soft bodies, he paid for. Why shouldn't his word be law? Naturally, his taste ought to determine the seasoning of the food, the heat of his blood gauge the temperature of the rooms in winter, the whims of

J. G. V. M.



his moods govern the course of the conversation at dinner.

He wasn't a ruthless despot. His daughters were glorious, beautifully kept girls — well developed, small-hipped creatures with fine, pink skin, powdered to a velvety texture; nails professionally manicured; hair always perfectly coiffed and waved — that is, all but Ada's, and she, of course, was still a youngster. Marcus realized that it wasn't their fault that they were girls, possessed of feminine tastes, and governed by feminine instincts. As far as he was able, it was his intention that their perfectly natural desire for raiment and decoration should be gratified.

He was not an unaffectionate parent, either. He liked to find his daughters all gathered in the living-room, waiting for him when he blew in from his brisk walk from the elevated, after a busy day down-town; basking by the strong drop-lights he provided for them; their noses buried in the pages of the several evening papers taken for their benefit; sleek and smooth as a batch of freshly combed Pomeranians.

It was at this hour that he tweaked the pink lobes of their little ears, rubbed his rough chin against one of their velvety cheeks, bantered about their various lovers, tickled a silk-stockinged ankle, abruptly snatched off a satin slipper and hung

it out of reach on the corner of a picture-frame, slipped a lemon-drop inside a flimsy blouse, and enjoyed the music of shrill little shrieks and high squeals. The Belden girls were always at home at six o'clock. It was a great nuisance, since dancing in the afternoon had become so popular, but it was their father's wish, and almost no sacrifice was too great to avoid his displeasure.

To-night when Marcus came in, although all the girls were at home, there wasn't a spark of playfulness about him. Ada had again disregarded his orders. It was another of fate's jokes, he supposed, that Ada should be the daughter to cause him more trouble than the other three all put together. Ada had been the last chance that he and Mary had had for a boy. As a child she had been his favorite, too — actually companionable to him, in the pig-tail stage. And now she had become an irritation — a problem. He provided her with every luxury, but she wasn't contented. It wasn't enough. She always wanted something more — trips to Europe, courses in Current Events, fifty-dollar daubs in oil paint, and actually, if you'll believe it, a Century Dictionary a year ago! The other three had been satisfied with their one year of boarding-school, but not Ada. There was a regular scene when she had wanted to go to college a year ago. Of

course he had refused her. College! Humph! As if pretty, soft, little Ada had a brain of that sort!

The proof of her last offense he now carried in his inner pocket. As he entered the room where the girls and their mother, as usual, were gathered at this time of day, he gave them no greeting.

"Hello, dad," said Beatrice, the oldest daughter. She was a ripe thirty-two or three. She was like a piece of fruit grown for an exhibition.

"Home, puppa?" inquired Mary, from her rocking-chair in the bay-window. Mary was Marcus's wife. She was a drab, docile woman. She always sat in the bay-window. She liked to watch the people pass. Moreover, it was her only opportunity of catching an occasional glimpse of the young men who paid attention to her daughters. The Belden girls never entertained in their own home. Restaurants and hotels were provided for that.

Marcus made no response to the salutations made to him. He walked over to the center-table and took out from his pocket a sheet of blue paper.

"I want to know what this means." He held out the paper. "Who's been buying books to the tune of a hundred dollars?"