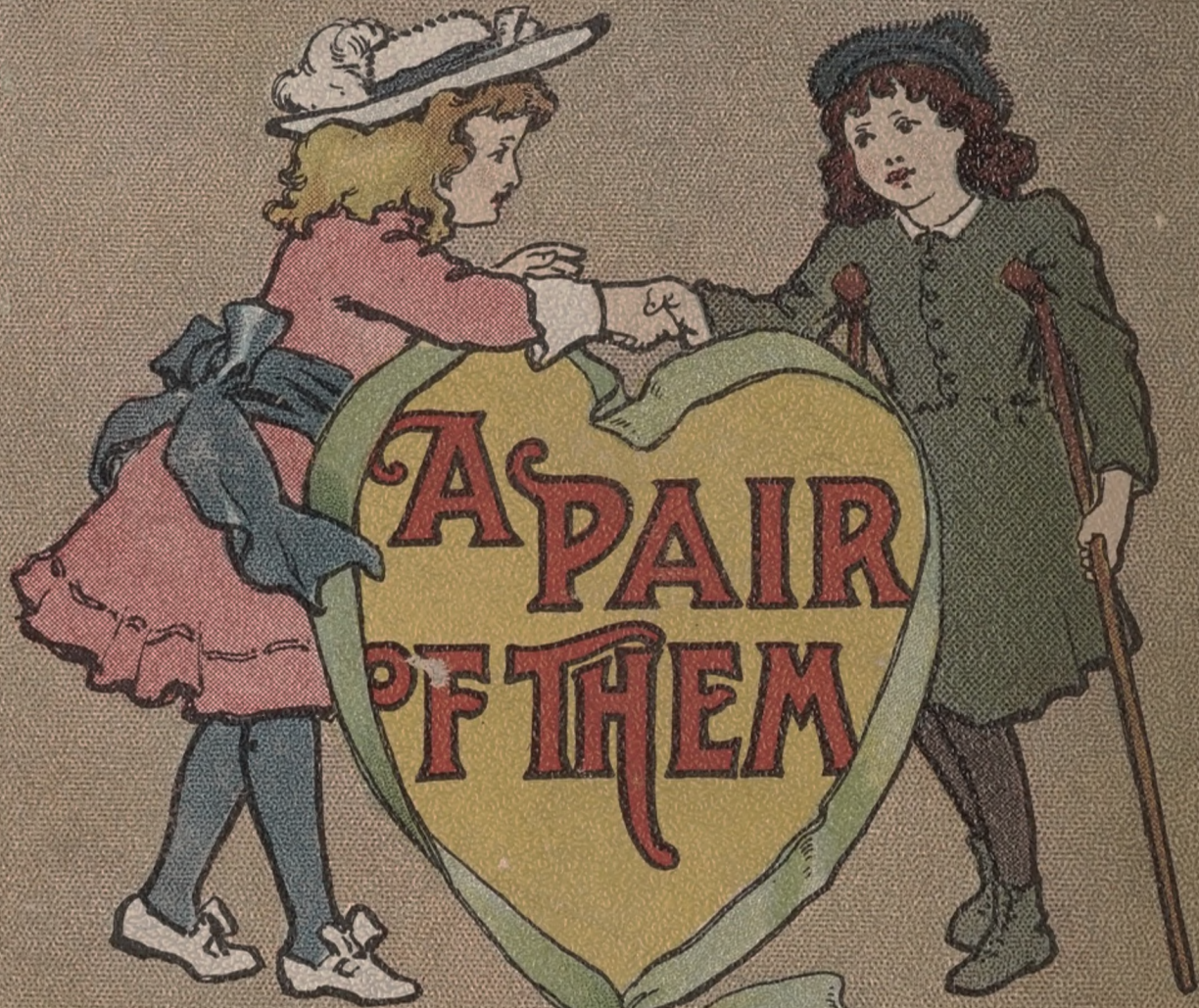


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# A Pair of Them

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NEW YORK

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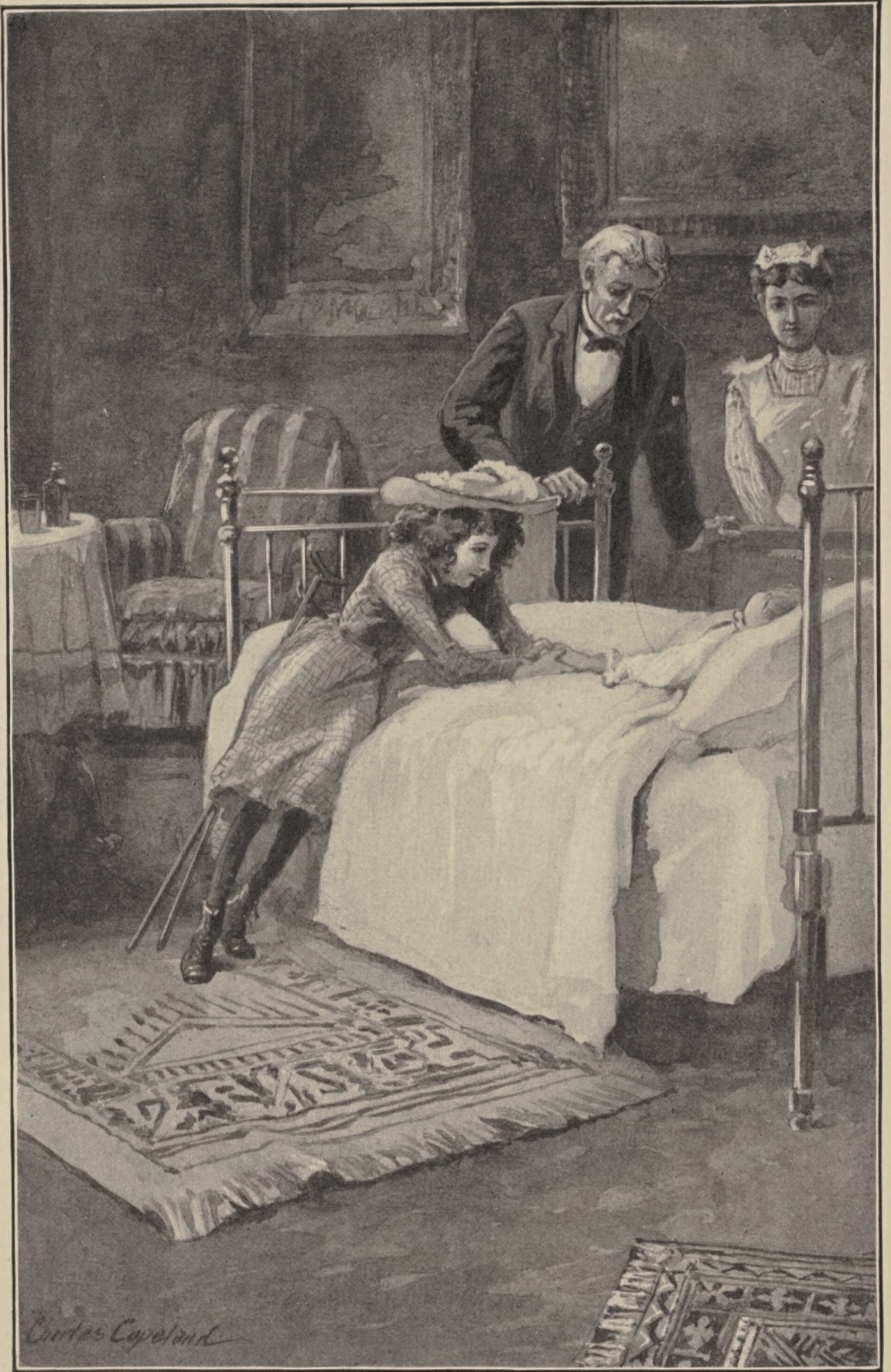
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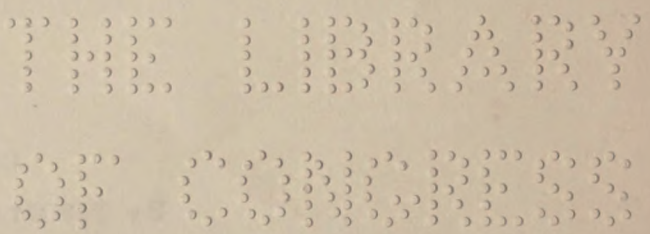


"WHY, YES, BONNY-GAY! I'VE COME." See page 77.



# A PAIR OF THEM

BY EVELYN RAYMOND



NEW YORK.  
Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.  
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## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. Where the Houses are Big.....	I
II. Where the Houses are Small.....	15
III. How the Pair Met.....	29
IV. Max Reappears .....	44
V. Mary Jane Goes Visiting.....	59
VI. The Flight and Fright of Mary Jane.....	78
VII. On the Way Home.....	85
VIII. Confidences .....	112
IX. By the Strength of Love.....	132
Afterward .....	150



# A PAIR OF THEM

## CHAPTER I

### WHERE THE HOUSES ARE BIG

“It’s a queer kind of a name, though it suits you,” observed the Gray Gentleman, thoughtfully. “How came you by it?”

Bonny-Gay flashed the questioner a smile, hugged Max closer and replied:

“I was born on a Sunday morning. That’s how.”

“Ah, indeed? But I don’t quite understand.”

“Don’t you? Seems easy. Let’s sit down here by ‘Father George’ and I’ll explain. If I can.”

The Gray Gentleman was very tall and dignified, yet he had a habit of doing whatever Bonny-Gay asked him. So he now doubled himself up and perched on the low curb sur-

rounding the monument, while the little girl and the big black dog dropped easily down beside him. Then he leaned his head back against the iron railing and gazed reflectively into the face of the big bronze lion, just opposite.

Both the child and the man were fond of the wonderful lion, which seemed a mighty guardian of the beautiful Place, and he, at least, knew it to be a world-famous work of art. Bonny-Gay loved it as she loved all animals, alive or sculptured, and with much the same devotion she gave to Max. The park without either of these four-footed creatures would have seemed strange indeed to her, for they were her earliest playmates and remained still her dearest.

“Now you can tell me,” again suggested the Gray Gentleman.

“It was Easter, too. All the people were going to the churches, the bells were ringing, the organs playing, and everything just beautiful. Nurse Nance began it, my mother says. ‘For the child that is born on the Sabbath Day is lucky, and bonny, and wise, and gay.’ But my father says there isn’t any ‘luck’ and a child like me isn’t ‘wise,’ so they had to leave



them out and I'm only Bonny-Gay. That's all."

"A very satisfactory explanation," said the Gray Gentleman, with one of his rare smiles, and laying his hand kindly upon the golden curls. "And now, my dear, one question more. In which of these beautiful houses do you live?"

As he spoke, the stranger's glance wandered all about that aristocratic neighborhood of Mt. Vernon Place, to which he had returned after many years of absence to make his own home. Since he had gone away all the small people whom he used to know and love had grown up, and he had felt quite lost and lonely, even in that familiar scene, till he had chanced to meet Bonny-Gay, just one week before. Since then, and her ready adoption of himself as a comrade, he had had no time for loneliness. She was always out in the charming Square, as much a part of it as the Washington monument, which the little folks called "Father George," or the bronzes, and the smooth lawns. She seemed as bright as the sunshine and almost as well-beloved, for the other children flocked about her, the keeper consulted her and the keeper's dog followed her like a shadow.

With a toss of her yellow locks she pointed her forefinger westward.

“There, in that corner one, all covered by vines, with places for the windows cut out, and the chimneys all green, and I think it’s the prettiest one in the whole place, when it has its summer clothes on. Don’t you?”

The Gray Gentleman’s glance followed the direction of the pointing finger.

“Yes. It is a very lovely home and a very big one. I hope you are not the only child who lives in it.”

“But I am. Why?”

“Why what?”

“Do you hope it?”

“You would be lonely, I should think.”

“Lonely? I? Why—why—I just never have a single minute to myself. There’s my thirteen dolls, and the parrot, and the two canaries, and the aquarium, and my pony, and—Oh! dear! you can’t guess. That’s why I have to come out here—to rest myself.”

“Ah, so! Well, I should judge that you spend the most of your time in ‘resting,’” commented the other. “Whenever I come out you’re always here.”

Bonny-Gay laughed; so merrily that Max lifted his head and licked her cheek. That reminded her of something and she asked:

“Have you seen him get his second dinner?”

“Not even his first!”

“You haven’t? How odd!” Bonny-Gay shook out her skirts and proceeded to enlighten her comrade’s ignorance. She took it for granted, or she had done so, that he knew as much about things as she herself; but if not, why, there was a deal to tell. Max’s history first. She began by declaring:

“He’s the smartest dog in the world. Everybody knows that. He’s lived in the Place nine years. That’s one year longer than I have. All the children’s big brothers and sisters have played with him, same’s we do now. He never lets a tramp come near. He never steps on a flower bed or lets us. If we forget and go on the grass he barks us off. He gets his first dinner at our house. When the clocks strike twelve he goes to the gardener and gets his basket. Then he walks to our back entrance, puts the basket down, stands up on his hind feet and pushes his nose against the ’lectric bell. That rings up the cook and—she’s a

man just now—he—she takes the basket and puts in some food. Then Max walks down that side street, about a square, and sits on the curb to eat it. ‘Just like a beggar,’ the gardener says, ‘cause he likes to feed his own dog his own self.’ I would, too, wouldn’t you?”

“If I owned the ‘smartest dog in the whole world’ I presume I should.”

“Max feels ashamed of it, too; don’t you, dear?”

The dog replied by dropping his black head from Bonny-Gay’s shoulder to the ground and by blinking in a deprecating way from that lowly position.

“Then, in a few minutes, he comes back to the gardener with the empty basket and stands and wags his tail as if he were the hungriest dog that ever was. Then the keeper says: ‘Yes. You may go, Max!’ And off he trots, away down the other way, to some place where his master lives and gets a second basket full. That he brings back here, and the man puts a paper on the ground under the bushes and he eats again. Just like folks to their own table, that time; don’t you, Max Doggie, smart doggie!”

The handsome animal shook his wavy fleece and sprang up, ready for a frolic and evidently aware that he had been the subject of discussion.

“No, not yet, sir. The best thing hasn’t been told. Listen, please, Mr.——”

The stranger waited a moment, then inquired:

“Mr. what, Bonny-Gay? I wonder if you know my name.”

“Not your truly one, but that doesn’t matter.”

“What do you happen to call me, if you ever speak of me when I’m not here?”

The little girl hesitated an instant, then frankly answered:

“Why, just the ‘Gray Gentleman.’ ’Cause you are all gray, you see. Your hair, and your moustache, and your eyes, and your clothes, and your hat, and your gloves, and—and—things.”

“Exactly. Trust a child to find an appropriate nickname. But I like it, little one. Go on, about Max and the best thing yet.”

“That splendid dog has—saved—his—

master's life! As true as true!" cried Bonny-Gay, impressively.

"Indeed! Wonderful! How was it?"

"It was pay-day night and Mr. Weems, that's his name, had a lot of money. And some bad men knew it. And they came, do you believe, right in the middle of that night, and broke a window in Mr. Weems's house; and Max heard them and flew—and flew—"

The Gray Gentleman stooped and searched for the dog's wings.

"Well, ran, then," laughed Bonny-Gay, "and he drove them all off and they had revolvers or something and one was shot and a policeman caught him and Max was shot and the gardener would have been killed—"

"Only he wasn't," interrupted somebody, coming from behind them.

So the child paused in her breathless description of a scene she had often pictured to herself and looked up into the face of the hero of the affair, himself.

"Why, Mr. Weems! you almost frightened me! and you please tell the rest."

But though the gardener smiled upon her he nodded his head gravely.

“Guess it won't do for me to think about that just now, or any other of our good times, old Max! Good fellow, fine fellow! Poor old doggie! It's going to be as hard on you as on me, I'm afraid.”

By this time Bonny-Gay saw that something was amiss. She half-fancied that there were tears in the keeper's eyes, and she always afterward declared that there were tears in his voice. As for Max, that sagacious animal sank suddenly upon his haunches, looked sternly into his master's face, and demanded by his earnest, startled expression to know what was wrong. Something was. He knew that, even more positively than did Bonny-Gay.

“It's an outrageous law. There ought to be exceptions to it. All dogs—Well, there's no other dog like Max. Ah! hum. Old doggie!”

The Gray Gentleman was tempted to ask questions, but the little girl was sure to do that; so he waited. In a few minutes she had gotten the whole sad story from her old friend, the gardener, and her sunny head had gone down upon the dog's black one in a paroxysm of grief.

A moment later it was lifted defiantly

“But he shan’t. He shall not! Nobody shall ever, ever take our Max away! Why—why—it wouldn’t be the Place without him! Why—why—the children—Oh! Nettie! oh! Tom!” and catching sight of a group of playmates Bonny-Gay darted toward them, calling as she ran: “They’re going to take him away! They’re going to take him away!”

Tom planted his feet wide apart upon the smooth path and obstructed her advance.

“Take who away, Bonny-Gay? Where to? When?”

“Max! Our Max! He can never come here any more. This is his last day in our park—his very last!” and the child flung herself headlong upon the shaven grass, for once regardless of rules.

Not so regardless was Max, the trusty. It didn’t matter to him that this was Bonny-Gay, his best-loved playmate, or that her frantic sorrow was all on his account. What he saw was his duty and he did it, instantly. From a distance the Gray Gentleman watched the dog race toward the prostrate little girl and shake her short skirts vigorously, loosing them now and then to bark at her with equal vigor.



Presently she sprang up and to the footpath, and again indulged in a wild embrace of the faithful canine. Indeed, he was at once the center of an ever-increasing company of small people, who seemed to vie with each other in attempts to hug his breath away and to outdo everybody in the way of fierce indignation. Finally, this assembly resolved itself into an advancing army, and with Tom and Bonny-Gay as leaders—each tightly holding to one of the dog's soft ears, as they marched him between them—they returned to the spot where the lion calmly awaited them, and Tom announced their decision:

“We won't ever let him go. There's no need for you nor the law-men nor nobody to interfere. This dog belongs to this park; and this park belongs to us children; and if anybody tries to—tries to—to—do—things—he won't never be let! So there! And if he is, we'll—we'll augernize; and we'll get every boy and girl in all the streets around to come, too; and we'll all go march to where the law-men live; and we won't never, never leave go talking at them till they take it all back. 'Cause Max isn't going to be took. That's the fact,

Mr. Weems, and you can just tell them so."

"Yes," cried Nettie, "and my big brother goes to the law school and he'll sue them. And my big sister's friends will help; and if he does have to, I'll never, never—NEVER—play in this hateful old park ever again. I will not!"

"Whew!" whistled the Gray Gentleman, softly. "This looks serious. A children's crusade, indeed. Well, that should be irresistible." And this old lover of all little people looked admiringly over the group of flushed and indignant faces; and at the noble animal which was the very center of it, and whose silent protest was the most eloquent of all. His own heart echoed their indignation and he quietly resolved to make an effort on their and Max's behalf.

But the dire, unspoken threats of the children, and the silent resolution of the Gray Gentleman, were useless. For when upon the next morning the sun rose over the pleasant Place, and the monument and the lion began to cast their shadows earthward, there was no Max to gambol at their feet, and over the

heart of Bonny-Gay had fallen her first real grief.

She was out early, to see if the dreadful thing were true; and the Gray Gentleman met her and scarcely knew her—without the smiles.

When he did recognize her he said, hopefully:

“We’ll trust it’s all for the best, my dear. Besides, you will now have more time for the thirteen dolls, and the parrot, and the two canaries, and—”

“But they—they aren’t Max! He was the only! We loved him so and now he’ll just be wasted on strangers! Oh! it’s too bad, too bad!”

The Gray Gentleman clasped the little hand in sympathy.

“I am very sorry for your sorrow, Bonny-Gay, and yet I can’t believe that Max is ‘wasted.’ No good thing ever is. Besides that, I have a plan in my head. With your parents’ permission, I am going to take you this day to visit your twin sister.”

“My—twin—sister! Why there isn’t any. Don’t you remember? I told you. I’m the only, only one. There never was any other.”

“Nevertheless, I am obliged to contradict you. Very rude, I know, and I shouldn’t do so, if I were not so positive of what I claim. I hope you’ll love her and I think you will. After breakfast I’ll see you again. Good morning.”

With that he walked briskly away and Bonny-Gay saw him enter the big gray house in the middle of the Place. The house where the wooden shutters had always been up, ever since she could remember, until just this spring, when a few of the windows had been uncovered to let the sunlight in.

“My—twin—sister! How queer that is!” mused the watching child.

## CHAPTER II

### WHERE THE HOUSES ARE SMALL

MARY JANE dropped her crutches on the floor and readjusted the baby. He had a most trying habit of not staying "put," and sometimes the other children slapped him. Mary Jane never did that. She merely set him up again, gave his cheek a pat or a kiss, and went on about her business.

For, indeed, she was almost the very busiest small body in the world. Besides her own mother's five other children there were the neighbors' broods, big and little, with never a soul to mind them save their self-constituted nurse.

That very morning Mrs. Bump had paused in her washing to look up and exclaim:

"I never did see how the little things do take to her! She can do just wonders with them, that she can; and I reckon it was about the

best thing ever happened to her, that falling out the top window, like she did. Seemed to knock all the selfishness out of her. Maybe it's *that* settled in her poor body. Yes, maybe it's that, dear heart. Anyhow, her inside's all right. The rightest there ever was. If this world was just full of Mary Janes, what a grand place it would be!"

Then, after a regretful sigh for this beatific state of things, the mother thrust her strong arms again into the suds, with a splash and a rub-a-dub-dub which told plainly enough from whom Mary Jane inherited her energy.

Just then Mrs. Stebbins thrust her head out of the window, next door, to remark:

"There was fifty-four of them gardens given out. My boy's goin' to raise cabbages."

"You don't say! Now, ain't that fine? I wish I had a son to get one, but all my boys is girls, save the baby, and he don't count. Though he'll grow, won't he, mother's lamb? He'll grow just as fast as he can and get a playground garden, good's the next one, so he will, the precious!" chirruped Mrs. Bump, to the year-old heir of the house.

"Gah, gah!" cooed the baby; and em-

phasized his reply by losing his balance against the wall and rolling over on his face. He was too fat and too phlegmatic to right himself, so Mary Jane hopped back across the narrow room and set him up again, laughing as if this were the funniest thing she had ever seen.

“Pshaw, daughter! If I was you and you was me, I’d leave him lie that way a spell. He don’t ’pear to have the sense the rest of you had, no he don’t, the sweet! Maybe that’s because he’s a boy. But even a boy might learn something after a while, if he was let. Only you’re so right on hand all the time he expects you to just about breathe for him, seems.”

“Now, mother, now! And you know he’s the biggest, roundest—”

“Pudding-headedest!” growled a masculine voice, at the narrow doorway.

Mrs. Bump wheeled round so sharply that her rubbing-board fell out of the tub and scared the baby, who promptly began to scream.

“Why father! You home? It can’t be dinner-time, yet. What’s happened? Anything wrong?”

“Is anything ever right?” demanded the man, sulkily.

"Plenty of things," answered the wife, cheerfully, though her heart sank.

"One of the right things is my getting kicked out, I s'pose."

"Father! you don't mean it! No."

"I'm not much of a joker, am I?"

"No. That you're not. But tell me, man."

With a quiver in the usually cheerful voice, Mrs. Bump wiped the suds from her arms and went to her husband. Laying her hand kindly upon his shoulder she demanded, as was her right, to know the facts of the disaster that had befallen them.

"Twon't take long to tell, woman. The company's cuttin' down expenses and I was one of the expenses lopped off. That's all."

"Is that all—*all*, William Bump?"

The question was sternly put and the man cowered before it.

"It's the truth, any way. No matter how it happened, here I am and no work." With that he dropped his arms upon the window sill and his face upon his arms, and lapsed into a sullen silence.

Mrs. Bump caught her breath, whisked away a tear that had crept into her eye, and



returned to her tub. Mary Jane ceased staring at her parents, tipped the baby's home-made go-cart on end, rolled him into it, righted the awkward vehicle, threw its leather strap over her shoulders, called to the children: "Come!" and hopped away upon her crutches.

Though she paused, for just one second, beside her father and imprinted a hasty kiss upon the back of his bent head. A kiss so light it seemed he could scarcely have felt it, though it was quite sufficient to thrill the man's soul with an added sense of regret and degradation.

"We're off to the park, mother, and I've taken a loaf with me!" she called backward, as she clicked out of sight.

Again the woman idled for a moment, looking through the open doorway toward the small, misshapen figure of her eldest child as it swung swiftly forward upon its "wooden feet." The baby's soap-box wagon rattled and bumped along behind, bouncing his plump body about, and drawn by Mary Jane in the only manner possible to her—with a strap across her chest. She needed both her hands just then to support herself upon her crutches; for her lower limbs were useless and swung heavily be-

tween these crutches—a leaden weight from which she never could be free.

Even so, there were few who could travel as rapidly as Mary Jane and this morning she was especially eager to get on. Because down at the pretty park upon which her own dingy street terminated, the children's "Playgrounds" had been opened for the summer and the small gardens given out. She was anxious to see the planting and seed-sowing, by the tiny farmers of this free kindergarten, and down in her heart was a faint hope that even to her, a girl, might a bit of land be assigned; where she, too, could raise some of the wonderful vegetables which would be her very own when the autumn came and the small crops were harvested.

The hope was so deep and so intense, that she had to stop, turn about, shake up the baby and tell him about it.

"You see, Baby Bump, they don't give 'em out to just girls. Only I'm not a regular plain kind of girl, I'm a crippley sort. That might make a difference. Though there's Hattie Moran, she's lame, too. Not very lame, Baby, only a little lame. She doesn't have to have crutches, she just goes hoppety-pat, hoppety-

pat, easy like. Sophia Guttmacher, she's a hunchback, same's me, course, but she can walk. Besides that she doesn't want a garden and I do. As for Ernest Knabe, his foot's just twisted and that's all. Then, too, he's a boy. He could have one if he wanted. He'd have to dig one, I guess, if it wasn't for his foot. Oh! Baby dear. Do you s'pose I might—I might, maybe, get one?"

"Goo, goo," murmured the infant, encouragingly, and vainly trying to bring his own foot within reach of his mouth.

"Oh! you sweet! You can't do that, you know. You're far too fat. And I declare, all the other children have gone on while I've stood here just talking to you. That won't do, sir, much as I love you. Sit up, now, there's sister's little man, and I'll hurry up."

But just then, Baby made a final, desperate effort to taste his toes, lost his balance, and rolled forward out of his box, as a ball might have done.

Mary Jane, burst into a peal of laughter which recalled the other children to the spot and she explained between breaths:

"The cute little fellow was trying to make

'huckleberry-bread'; I do believe he was, the darling! Well, he's so round it doesn't matter which way he tumbles, and he's so soft nothing ever hurts him. Does it, precious?"

They all lent a hand in setting the infant right again. Several holding the soap-box level, a couple supporting Mary Jane without her crutches which left her arms free to lift and replace the dislodged baby. When things were once more in order the caravan started onward afresh.

By this time the small, dingy houses bordering the narrow unpaved street had given place to open lots and weedy patches, where the sun lay warmly and a fresh breeze blew. To the right of the open space was a railway embankment, and on the left there was the cling-clang-ing of a mighty steel structure, in process of building. The railway and the monster "sheds" belonged to the same company for which William Bump had toiled—when he felt inclined—and by which he had just been discharged.

Mary Jane had been accustomed to look for him, either along the rails, with the gang that seemed always to be replacing old "ties" by

new ones; or else serving the skilled workmen, who hammered, hammered, all day long upon the great metal girders. As she now caught the echo of these strokes a pang shot through her loving heart and for a moment her sunny face clouded. She need look no more, to either right or left, for the blue-shirted figure, which had been wont to wave a salutation to her as she passed with her brood of nurselings.

Fortunately, the baby was on hand to banish the cloud, which he promptly did in his accustomed manner—with a slight variation. For his small charioteer had not observed a big stone in the path, though the loose ricketty wheel of the wagon found and struck it squarely. This raised the soap-box in front and its occupant performed a backward somersault.

“Oh! my sake! Mary Jane—Mary Jane!” shrieked several small voices in wild reproach.

Mary Jane picked up the little one, who smiled, unhurt; and the others helped her shake him back to a normal condition and pose. After which, the park lying just before them, between the railway and the buildings, they scurried into it, and over the slope, and around to a sunny

spot where scores of other little people were hard at work or play.

“Hi! Mary Jane! Oh, Mary Jane!” shouted one and another; and the kind-faced “teachers” who guided the wee ones, also nodded their friendly welcome. For well they knew that there was no “assistant” in the whole city who could be as useful to them as this same humble little girl from Dingy street.

“Thirteen, Mary Jane! I’m thirteen! Come see. Cucumbers!” cried Bobby Saunders, dragging her forward so eagerly that the soap-box strap slipped up across her throat and choked her. But she quickly released herself now from her burden, certain that in the midst of so many friends no harm could befall her darling; and once freed from this incubus, she outstripped Bobby in reaching the long rows of well-prepared garden plots, wherein as yet was never a sign of any growing thing.

But oh! how soft and rich and brown the earth did look! How sweet the fragrance of it in Mary Jane’s nature-loving nostrils! And how, for once, she longed to be a boy! As straight-limbed, as strong, as unhindered at her toil, as any of these happy little lads who clus-

tered about, each interrupting his neighbor in his eagerness for her sympathy and interest.

“Fifty-one, Mary Jane!” cried Joe Stebins, pointing proudly to the numbered stick at the foot of his plot. “Cabbages—cabbages! The gardener’s bringing a box of plants this minute. I’ll give you one to bile when they get growed. Like that?”

“Prime!” answered the girl, her own face aglow.

“But I’m limas, Mary Jane. I’m Seven. Away over here. I’ve sowed ’em and to-morrow I’ll hoe ’em, I guess.”

“And I guess I wouldn’t till they sprout,” laughed she hopping along, at perilous speed, to inspect number seven.

“Don’t go so fast, Mary Jane! I can’t keep up with you. See. I’m right up front—number Three. I’m tomatuses, I am. Like ’em?” demanded Ned Smith, a seven-year old farmer.

“I’m potatoes. They’re the best for your money,” observed Jimmy O’Brien. “We’ll roast some in the ashes, bime-by. Does the baby like ’tatoes?”

“Don’t he? You just ought to see him eat

them—when we have them,” she added, cautiously.

“Oh! you’ll have ’em, plenty. When I dig my crop. Why, I s’pose there’ll be enough in my ‘farm’ to keep your folks and mine all winter; and I might have some to sell on the street,” observed Jimmy, casting a speculative glance upon the diminutive plot of ground over which he was now master.

“Might you; ain’t that splendid!” commented Mary Jane, delightedly. “Why, if you could give us all our potatoes, mother could easy wash for the rent and the bread and things. My sake! I ’most forgot the baby. Where’s he at? Can you see him?”

“He’s right in the middle of the sand-heap and the teacher has give him a little shovel. Say, what you bring him for? this ain’t no day-nursery, this ain’t. It’s a playground farm and one-year-olds don’t belong.”

“Maybe they don’t, but the baby belongs. That is if I do,” said the sister stoutly; “maybe you’ll say next I don’t.”

“No, I shan’t say that. Why, what could we do without you? And say, Mary Jane.”

“Well, say it quick. The girls are calling



me to swing on the Maypole. 'Cause that's one thing I can do without my crutches."

"Well, in a minute. But, say. Sometimes I used to let you hoe in my garden, last summer. Remember?"

"Course. I helped you a lot."

"Don't know about that. But you might this year. That is, maybe. If we went partners, you see; and if the teacher didn't get on to it; and if there was a medal give and you let me have it, 'cause I'm the one has the farm, course. What you say?"

"I say we couldn't do such a thing without the teacher knowing and I wouldn't if we could. And you'll never get a medal, you're too lazy. But you're real gen'rous, too, and I'll be so glad to help. Oh! I love it! I just feel 's if I could put my face right down on that crumbly ground and go to sleep. It's so dear."

"Huh! If you did I s'pose you'd get ear-wigs in your ears and—and angleworms, and—things. Maybe snakes. But I'll let you," concluded Jimmy, graciously.

Then they turned around and there was—what seemed to the beholders, a veritable small angel!

Mary Jane was so startled she dropped her crutches and, for an instant, quite forgot all about the baby. The apparition was clothed in white, so soft and fine and transparent that it seemed to enwrap her as a cloud; and above the cloud rose a face so lovely and so winning that it made Mary Jane's heart almost stand still in ecstasy.

## CHAPTER III

### HOW THE PAIR MET

BUT when things cleared a little, it was only Bonny-Gay! and the Gray Gentleman was supporting Mary Jane without her crutches—though she didn't realize that, at first. Afterward she was able to look up into his face and smile a welcome, because he and she were already quite close friends.

What had happened was this: the Gray Gentleman had sent his elderly black "boy" with a note to the vine-covered house in Mt. Vernon Place and had requested "the favor of Miss Beulah's company upon a drive, that morning. He intended to visit one of the 'Playgrounds' in the south-western part of the city, and he felt that the little girl whose society he so greatly enjoyed would find much to interest her, if she might be with him."

To this he had signed a name which was

quite powerful enough to secure Mrs. McClure's instant and delighted assent; and she had at once returned a very graceful note of acceptance by the "boy."

Then at ten o'clock precisely, the Gray Gentleman's carriage had gone around for "Miss McClure," and she had been lifted into it and to a seat beside her friend. A half-hour's drive followed; through streets and avenues which Bonny-Gay had never seen before, and which continually grew narrower and more crowded. Even the houses seemed to shrink in size, and the little girl had finally exclaimed:

"Why, it's like the buildings were so little that they just squeeze the folks out of them, upon the steps and through the windows. I never, never saw! Will they get to be just playhouses, by-and-by?"

"No, Bonny-Gay, I'm sure you never did. Yet it's the same city in which is your own big home, and they are just the same sort of human beings as you and I."

"Are they? It doesn't—doesn't just seem so, does it? And why do they all stare at us like that?"

"Because we do at them, maybe; and it's not

a common thing to see carriages with liveried attendants pass this way. I suppose you, in your dainty clothes, are as much a 'show' to them as they to you in their coarse attire, or rags."

Bonny-Gay looked thoughtfully at her frock. She would have preferred to wear a simpler one; and a comfortable "Tam" instead of the feathered hat which adorned her sunny head. But her mother had decided otherwise; since the Gray Gentleman had done her the honor of that morning it was but courtesy to show appreciation of it by a good appearance.

After a moment she looked up and observed:

"It's the queerest thing! I feel as if I ought to get out and walk; and as if I should give this hat to that little girl who hasn't any."

The Gray Gentleman smiled.

"That would be going to the other extreme, my dear, and would help neither you nor them. Besides, this is not all we came to see, and here we are!"

Then the street had suddenly ended and the carriage had turned in at a big gate, to roll almost silently onward till it stopped before a "Mansion," with ancient wooden shutters and

a clematis-draped porch. This was natural and quite suggestive to Bonny-Gay of her own beloved Druid Hill, wherein she was accustomed to take her stately drives in her father's own carriage; and when she heard the shouts and laughter of children from the tree-hidden "Playgrounds," her spirits rose to the normal again and she laughed in return.

Dancing along beside him, with her hand in his, she had demanded eagerly:

"Is it here I am to see my 'twin sister?' Oh! I want to find her—quick, quick!"

"Yes, it is here, and this is—she;" answered her guide, as they paused behind Jimmy and Mary Jane, toward whom he silently nodded.

This was how the pair met; and while Mary Jane saw what she fancied was an "angel" that which Bonny-Gay saw was a girl of her own age, with short, limp legs, very long arms, and a crooked back. But the dark head above the poor humped shoulders was as shapely as the "angel's" own; the dark eyes as beautiful as the blue ones; and from the wide, merry mouth flashed a smile quite as radiant and winning.

As soon as she saw the smile Bonny-Gay began to understand what the Gray Gentleman had meant, and she telegraphed him a glance that said she did. Then she laughed and held out her two hands to Mary Jane.

“I guess you’re the girl I’ve come to see: my ‘twin sister!’ How-de-do?”

“How-de-do?” echoed Mary Jane, too astonished to say more.

The Gray Gentleman quietly slipped her crutches under the cripple’s arms, and seizing Jimmy’s hand walked swiftly away.

Both girls looked after him with regret but he neither glanced back nor expected them to follow. Then they regarded each other with curiosity, till Mary Jane remembered she was the hostess.

“Let’s sit down,” she said pointing to the grass.

Bonny-Gay hesitated, and, seeing this, the other whisked off her apron and spread it for her guest. “You might spoil your dress, that’s so. Salt and lemon juice ’ll take out grass-stain. My mother uses that when there’s spots on the ‘wash.’”

“Does she? I wasn’t thinking of my frock,

though, but of *that*;" answered the visitor, pointing to a "Keep Off" sign behind them.

"Oh! that? Nobody minds that. You see, this is *our* park now. We play where we choose, only on the terraces and slopey places. You'd better use my apron though, it's such a splendid dress. Your mother would feel bad if you smirched it."

"I suppose she would. She's very particular."

"So's mine. They say she's the very neatest woman in Dingy street. The neighbors say it."

"And our cook says mine is the 'fussiest' one in the Place. That might be some of the 'sister' part, mightn't it?"

"It might. Only, course, he's just fooling."

"I don't believe the Gray Gentleman ever fools. He means things. He's made us children think a lot. More'n we ever did before. And he says things mean things, too, every single one. Even 'Father George,' and the lion, and Max, and—and everything."

After this exhausting speech Bonny-Gay removed her hat and laid it upon the grass, where



Mary Jane regarded it admiringly. It was so pretty she would have liked to touch it, just once. The hat's owner saw the admiration, and remarked:

"Put it on, Mary Jane. See if it will fit you."

"Oh! I daren't!" gasped the other. "I might hurt it."

Bonny-Gay lifted the hat and placed it upon the cripple's dark head, which was held perfectly motionless, while the face beneath the brim took on an expression of bewildered happiness.

"My! ain't it lovely! I should think you'd want to wear it all the time!"

"I don't, then. I like my 'Tam' better, and nothing best of all. You can wear it as long as I stay, if you wish."

"That's good of you. Some the other girls wouldn't even let me touch their best hats, they wouldn't."

"Must be selfish things, then. How old are you, Mary Jane?"

"How'd you know my name? and what's yours?"

Bonny-Gay stated it and explained:

“ I heard that Jimmy boy call you. How old did you say? ”

“ I didn't say, but I'm eight, going on nine. ”

“ Why, so am I. I'm a ' Sunday's bairn '. ”

“ And I! ” cried Mary Jane, breathlessly.

After that confidences were swift; and, presently, each little girl knew all about the other; till, in one pause for breath, the cripple suddenly remembered the baby. Then she caught up her crutches, swung herself upon them, and started off in pursuit of him.

Bonny-Gay watched her disappear in the midst of the crowd of children, who had all shyly held aloof from herself, saw how they clung about her and how some of the tiniest ones held up their faces to be kissed. She saw her stoop to tie the ragged shoe of one and button the frock of another; saw her pause to listen to the complaint of a sobbing lad and smartly box the ears of his tormentor. Then another glimmering of the Gray Gentleman's meaning, when he called these two “ sisters, ” came into Bonny-Gay's mind.

“ She has to take care of the children down here just as I do in our park. I suppose we two are the only ones have time to bother, but

how can she do it! Her face is so pretty—prettier, even, than Nettie's, but I dare not look at the rest of her. I just dare not. Poor little girl, how she must ache! Supposing I was that way. My arms stretched way down there, and my feet shortened way up here, and my back all scrouged up so! Oh! poor, poor Mary Jane! It hurts me just to make believe and she has it all the time. But here she comes back and I mustn't let her see I notice her looks. I mustn't, for anything. It's bad enough to have her body hurt, I mustn't hurt her feelings, too."

However, there was no sign of suffering about the little cripple as she returned to the side of her guest, dragging the soap-box wagon behind her and recklessly rolling the baby about in it, so eager was her advance. There were tears in Bonny-Gay's eyes for a moment, though, till she caught sight of the baby and heard Mary Jane exclaim:

"Did you ever see such a sight? What do you s'pose mother will say? The teacher set him in the sand-box and somebody gave him a stick of 'lasses candy, and he's messed from head to foot. But isn't he a dear?" and dropping to the ground she caught the little one to

her breast and covered his sandy, bedaubed countenance with adoring kisses.

“He’s the funniest thing I ever saw!” laughed Bonny-Gay, so merrily that the Gray Gentleman drew near to join in the fun. After him trailed an army of young “farmers” and in another moment the visitor had ceased to be a stranger to anybody there.

“Let’s see-saw!” cried Joe Stebbins, seizing her hand and drawing her to the playground. Then somebody swung Mary Jane and the baby upon the beam beside her, some other girls took the opposite end, and they all went tilting up and down, up and down, in the most exciting manner possible. Then there was the Maypole, furnished with ropes instead of ribbons, from the ends of which they hung and swung, around and around, till they dropped off for sheer weariness. And here Bonny-Gay was proud to see that Mary Jane could beat the whole company. Her arms were so long and so strong, they could cling and outswing all the others; and when she had held to her rope until she was the very last one left her laughter rang out in a way that was good to hear.

“Seems to me I never heard so much laugh-

ing in all my life!" exclaimed Bonny-Gay to the Gray Gentleman when, tired out with fun, she nestled beside him as he rested on a bench.

"Yes, it's a fine thing, a fine thing. And you see that it doesn't take big houses or rich clothes to make happiness. All these new friends of yours belong to those tiny homes we passed on our way down."

"They do! Even Mary Jane, my sister?"

"Even in an humbler. Dingy street is just what its name implies. But we'll drive that way back and what do you say to giving Mary Jane a ride thus far?"

"Oh! I'd love it! She's so jolly and friendly and seems never to think of her—her poor back and—things."

"You'll like her better and better—if you should ever meet again. She won my heart the first time I saw her, over a month ago. I met her dragging home a basket of her mother's laundry work, in that same soap-box wagon she utilizes for the baby. The family chariot it seems to be. I was taking a stroll this way, quite by myself, and thinking of other things than where I was walking when I stumbled and my hat flew off. Then I heard a rattle and

squeak of rusty small wheels, and there was Mary Jane hopping up to me on her 'wooden feet' and holding out my hat, with the most sympathetic smile in the world. 'Here it is, Mister, and I do hope it isn't hurt; nor you either,' said she; and in just that one glimpse I had of her I saw how sweet and brave and helpful she was. So I've been proud to call her my friend ever since."

Just then arose a cry so sudden and boisterous it could have been uttered by no lips except the baby's. For a teacher had tapped a bell, and somebody had cried 'Luncheon!' and he knew what that meant as well as anyone.

So Mary Jane swung round to where he lay upon his back in the sunshine and set him up against a rock, and thrust a piece of the loaf she had brought into his chubby fists, and cocked her head admiringly while she cried out:

"Did anybody ever see so cute a child as he!"

Then she remembered the visitors and with the truest hospitality proffered them the broken loaf.

"I ought to have given it to you the first, I know that, but he'd have yelled constant if I

hadn't tended him. It's wonderful, I think, how he knows that bell!"

"Wonderful!" echoed the Gray Gentleman, as he bowed and gravely broke a tiny portion from the small stale loaf.

Bonny-Gay was going to decline, but when she saw the Gray Gentleman's action, she checked her "No, I thank you" unspoken and also accepted a crumbly crust. After which Mary Jane distributed several other bits among some clamorous charges and finally sat down with the last morsel to enjoy that herself in their presence.

"I think dinner never tastes so good as it does out doors here, in our park," she remarked with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Dinner!" cried Bonny-Gay and looked into the Gray Gentleman's face. But from something she saw there she was warned to say no more; and she made a brave effort to swallow her own crust without letting her entertainer see how distasteful a matter it was.

After this the Gray Gentleman saw a cloud arising and though he did not fear a shower for himself he was anxious that Bonny-Gay should take no harm from her unusual outing. So he

called the coachman to bring up the carriage and had Mary Jane and the baby lifted in. Then Bonny-Gay sprang after them, and the master himself made his adieux to the teachers and followed, watched by the admiring, maybe envious, glances of many bright eyes.

However, one carriage, no matter how capacious, cannot hold a whole kindergarten, and neither could it carry the pleasant "Playgrounds" away; so if there was any envy it did not last long. Which was a good thing, too, seeing what happened so soon afterward.

The landau had not progressed far toward Dingy street and Mary Jane was still wearing the feather-trimmed hat, which her new friend had persuaded her to put on just to surprise Mrs. Bump, when there came a rush, a bark, a series of shrieks, and the high-spirited horses were off at a mad gallop; which grew wilder and wilder, and soon passed quite beyond control of coachman or even the Gray Gentleman, who had promptly seized the reins as they fell from the driver's hands, but had been powerless to do more than retain them in his tightly clutched fingers.

It seemed an age that the frantic beasts sped



onward, following their own will, before the crash came and they tore themselves free, leaving the hindering vehicle to go to ruin against the great post, where it struck. But it was, in reality, not more than half a moment, and when the reins were wrenched from his grasp the Gray Gentleman looked anxiously about him to learn if anyone was hurt.

Mary Jane and the baby were on the floor of the carriage, safe and sound. The terrified footman was clinging to his seat behind; the coachman had either leaped or been thrown out, but had landed upon his feet; but where was Bonny-Gay?

A white, motionless little figure lay face downward in the dust, a rod away, and over this bent a black, shaggy dog, whining and moaning in a way that was almost human.

“Max! Max! Was it you, was it you! Oh! wretched animal, what have you done!”

Max it was. But, at the sight of his silent playmate and the altered sound of a familiar voice, a cowed, unhappy Max; who crouched and slunk away as the Gray Gentleman lifted from the roadway the limp figure of his own beloved Bonny-Gay.

## CHAPTER IV

### MAX REAPPEARS

THERE was neither drug store nor doctor's office near, and the Gray Gentleman's instant decision was to carry Bonny-Gay to Mrs. Bump's house. Strong man though he was he felt almost faint with anxiety as he sprang from the carriage and without losing an instant of time lifted out Mary Jane and the baby. Then he dropped her crutches beside her and ran to the child in the roadway.

Five minutes later, Bonny-Gay was lying on Mrs. Bump's bed, and the Gray Gentleman had gone away in pursuit of aid, leaving a last injunction behind him as he disappeared:

“Do everything you can for her, I beg, but keep useless people out.”

Thus it was that, though curious faces peered in at the window, no person save Mrs. Stebbins crossed the threshold of their neighbor's house,

and the two women were left unhindered to minister to the injured child as best they knew how. They were not able, indeed, to restore the little girl to consciousness; but they had cleared the soil of the street from her face and clothing and had placed the inert figure in an easy posture, long before there was heard the rattle and dash of another approaching vehicle, and a doctor's phaeton drew up at the door.

The surgeon's examination showed that one of the child's legs was broken but this did not trouble him half so much as her continued unconsciousness. But he worked diligently to restore her and to prepare the injured limb for removal to her own home.

From a low seat in the corner and hugging the baby tight, to keep him quiet, Mary Jane watched the little sufferer upon her mother's bed, with wide, dry eyes and heaving breast.

"Oh! if I could only take it for her!" she thought, helplessly. "It wouldn't have mattered to anybody like me, 'cause I'm all crooked anyhow; but her! She was that straight and beautiful—my sake! It mustn't be—it mustn't! And she didn't mind. She let me wear her hat, me. Well, that didn't get hurt, any way.

It just tumbled off all safe. I had to wear it home, else I couldn't have dragged the baby, and I don't know not a thing whatever became of his wagon. Never mind that, though. If she only would open her eyes, just once, just once!"

But they had not opened even when, a half-hour later, another carriage paused before the Bumps' tenement, and a tall, pale lady descended, trembling so that she had almost to be carried by the Gray Gentleman who supported her.

This was Mrs. McClure and she had just been stepping into her own vehicle for a morning's shopping when hereached her door, bringing his unhappy message. So there was no time lost in securing a vehicle and the mother was soon at her child's bedside. At any other hour she might have shrunk from entering so poor a place but at that moment she had, for once, forgotten her own high station and thought only of her darling.

One glimpse of the lovely face, so still and unresponsive, banished the mother's last vestige of strength and she would have fallen where she stood, had not Mrs. Bump slipped an arm

about her and motioned Mrs. Stebbins to bring the one sound chair the room could boast. The doctor held a glass of water to her lips and the faintness passed.

“Is—she—alive?”

“Yes. She is still alive,” answered the physician, gravely, and Mrs. McClure turned faint again.

“Of course, she’s alive, lady; and what’s more it won’t be long, I reckon, before she’ll be asking a lot of questions all about what’s happened her. Oh! yes indeed. I’ve seen ’em a sight worst than she is, and up and around again as lively as crickets. Why, there’s my Mary Jane—”

But the cripple held up a warning finger and Mrs. Bump ceased speaking. Though not her helpful ministrations; for with a whisk to the stove she had seized a coarse brown teapot and poured from it a hot draught into a cup that had no handle, indeed, yet could serve as well as another to refresh an exhausted creature.

“Here, honey, just sip this. Strong, I know, and not the finest, but ’twill set you up, quick. I know. There, there.”

Moved by the same instinct which had made

Bonny-Gay accept her crust dinner, Mrs. McClure drank the scalding liquid and did, indeed, revive under it. Then the doctor and the Gray Gentleman lifted the injured child and placed her gently upon the carriage seat.

Seeing which, the mother hastily rose and followed, supported still, though unnoticed on her part, by the strong arms of the other mother whose sympathetic tears were now silently flowing; even while her cheery voice reiterated, much to the surgeon's disgust:

"Never you fear, dear lady. She'll be as right as a trivet. Aye, indeed; she'll be talking to you before you get to your own house. Yes, indeed. We poor folks see many an accident and mostly they don't amount to much; even my Mary Jane—"

But there was Mary Jane herself just as the carriage door was closing, thrusting something white and feather-trimmed into the pale lady's lap.

"Her hat, lady. Bonny-Gay's best hat!"

Mrs. McClure was as kind hearted as most, yet at that moment she was already unstrung, and the glimpse she caught of poor Mary Jane's deformity shocked her afresh. Without in-

tending it she did shrink away from contact with so "repulsive" a child and Mrs. Bump saw the movement. Her own face hardened and she withdrew her arm from supporting the stranger to clasp it about her own child.

But Mary Jane saw nothing, save that Bonny-Gay was being carried away without her beautiful headgear, and again she thrust it eagerly forward.

"Her hat! Her lovely hat! She mustn't go without her Sunday hat!"

It was the sweetest, most sympathetic of voices and almost startling to the rich woman, coming as it did from such a source. It made her take a second look at the cripple and this time, fortunately, the glance rested upon the child's fine, spiritual face. An instant regret for the repugnance she had first felt shot through Mrs. McClure's mind and leaning from the carriage window she dropped the hat upon Mary Jane's dark head.

"Keep it, little girl, as a gift from Bonny-Gay. It will delight her that you should have it. Quick now, coachman. Swift and careful!"

Then they were all gone and Mary Jane, be-decked in her unusual finery, stood leaning upon

her crutches, crying as if her heart would break. Her mother glanced at her hastily but thought it best to let "her have her cry out. She cries so seldom it ought to do her good," she reflected. Besides, there was the baby rolling on the floor, in imminent danger from a wash-boiler full of steaming water; and a whole hour wasted from her own exacting labors.

Presently, the hunchback felt something cold and wet touch her down-hanging hand and dashed the tears from her eyes to see what it might be. There sat a great black dog beside her, so close that he almost forced her crutch away. His eyes were fixed upon her face in a mute appeal for sympathy, and his whole bearing showed as much sorrow as her tears had done. Her first impulse was to shrink away from him, even to strike at him with the crutch, as she indignantly exclaimed:

"You're the very dog did it! You jumped into the wagon and scared the horses. If it hadn't been for you she wouldn't have been hurt. Go 'way! Go away off out of sight! You horrid, ugly, mean old dog!"

Mary Jane's vehemence surprised even herself and she shook her head so vigorously



that the feather-trimmed hat fell off into the dust.

Then was a transformation. Max—it was, indeed he!—had already dropped flat upon his stomach and crouched thus, whining and moaning in a manner that betokened such suffering that it quickly conquered the cripple's anger; and now, as the hat fell right before his nose, he began to smell of it and lick it with the most extravagant joy. A moment later he had sprung up, caught the hat in his teeth, and was gambolling all around and around Mary Jane, as if he were the very happiest dog in the world.

“My sake! How you act! And oh—oh—oh! I know you, I know you! You must be that Max-dog that she told me about. That she'd known all her life and wouldn't be let come any more to her park! I guess I can see the whole thing. I guess you run away from that man the gardener gave you to. Maybe you went right back to where 'Father George' and the lion are; and maybe you saw Bonny-Gay and the Gray Gentleman come away; and maybe you followed them. Maybe it was because you were so glad, and not bad, that you

jumped into the carriage and scared the horses. Oh! you poor doggie, if that is how it is!”

Which was, in fact, exactly what had happened; and it seemed that the intelligent animal, who had loved Bonny-Gay ever since she was first wheeled about the beautiful Place in her baby-carriage, had now a comprehension of the damage his delight at finding her again had done.

So Mary Jane hopped back into the house and called Max by that name to follow her. He did so, readily, and sat down very near to the foot of the bed on which she carefully placed his little mistress' hat.

“Well, daughter, this has been a morning, hasn't it? Now, these handkerchiefs are ready to iron and I've fixed your high seat right close to my tub, so whilst I wash you can iron away and tell me the whole story and all about it. Here comes father, too, and it'll pass the time for him to hear it. And, oh! William! you never could guess whatever has happened right here in this very kitchen, this very morning that ever was! But, I must work now, and Mary Jane'll talk.”

Talk she did and fast; and under her elo-

quence Bonny-Gay became quite the most wonderful child in the world:

“The beautifullest, the kindest, the friendliest that ever lived. It didn't 'pear to make a mite of difference that she was all so fixed up in her clothes; she played games as lively as the next one. She hung on to the Maypole ropes near as long as I did, and if I'd known what was coming I'd have dropped off quick and let her win the count. And my! how she did enjoy her dinner off my loaf! To see her little white hands hold it up to her lips and see her just nibble, nibble—Why, mother Bump! 'Twould have done your heart good!”

“Eat your dinner, did she? Wish to goodness it had choked her!” growled William Bump, from the doorstep.

“Why, father! W-h-y!” gasped Mary Jane, amazed.

The man replied only by whistling Max to him, and by stroking the dog's head when the whistle had been obeyed.

But when the cripple had reached that part of her story descriptive of the final accident, the father spoke again and this time with even a more vindictive earnestness than before.

“Broke her leg, did it? Glad of it. Never was gladder of anything in all my life. Hope she’ll suffer a lot. Hope—What better is she, his little girl, than you, my Mary Jane? Glad there is something that evens matters up. I hope his heart’ll ache till it comes as near breakin’ as mine—every time I look at your poor crooked shoulders, you poor miserable child! So I do!”

Both Mrs. Bump and Mary Jane were aghast at the awfulness of this desire. Even the baby had paused open-mouthed and silent, as if he, too, could comprehend the dreadful words and be shocked by them. Only Max remained undisturbed, even nestled the closer to the blue-shirted man, who in some manner reminded him of his old master, Mr. Weems.

Then Mrs. Bump found her voice, and though she was a loyal wife she did not hesitate in this emergency to give her husband a very indignant reproof. So indignant, in fact, that she forgot the caution of many years, and with her hand on William’s shoulder, demanded fiercely:

“You say that, you? You! You dare to rejoice in the misfortunes of others when it

was by your own fault—your own fault, William Bump!—that our poor lass sits yonder a cripple for life. When I left her in your care that I might go and intercede for you to be given a fresh trial at the works, what was it but that you loved the drink better than the child? and left her on the high ledge while you slept—a human log! Yet you were sorry enough afterwards and you should take shame to yourself for your wickedness. It's the drink again that's in you, this day; and that has lost you another job and turned your once good heart into a cruel beast's! So that is what I think of you, and my—”

Then she turned and there sat Mary Jane, listening, horror-struck and broken-hearted!

Regret was useless. The secret, guarded so jealously for years, was now disclosed. Till then the hunchback had believed her affliction was hers from birth, and had never dreamed that it was the result of a terrible fall, due to her own father's carelessness. He had always seemed to love her so, with a sort of remorseful tenderness quite different from the attention he gave to his other, healthier children. But if it had all been by his fault!

Poor Mary Jane! Alas, alas! Far worse for her was the anger and hatred that at that moment sprang to life in her tortured heart. As in a picture she saw other little maids, her playmates, even this recent vision of Bonny-Gay, straight-limbed, strong, active, enjoying everything without aid of those hindering crutches or the heavy dragging limbs.

“ Oh! father! you did it? you! And I ought to have been like them—I ought—I ought!”

Nobody spoke after that. Mary Jane's head sank down upon the high table where stood her little flatiron, fast cooling. Mrs. Bump felt a new and deadly faintness seize her own vigorous body and sat weakly down. How could she undo the mischief she had wrought? Until now there had been between the father and the child such a wonderful affection that it had been a matter of constant comment among all the neighbors, and the mother had been proud that this was so. Now—what had she done, what had she done!

Presently, William Bump rose, put on his hat, whistled to Max, and walked out. At the door he paused, cast one miserable glance over the little room and his face was very white be-

neath its stains of toil and weather. His eyes seemed mutely to seek for one ray of pity, of forgiveness; but Mary Jane's head was still upon the table and her mother's face was hidden in her own labor-hardened palms.

Only the baby began to coo and gurgle in a way which, under ordinary circumstances, would have elicited admiring exclamations, but which now secured no response. So, then he rolled over and closed his eyes; and not even he saw when the man and the dog passed clear out of sight, across the open lots, and toward the marshy places which led to the water and the unknown country beyond.

By-and-by, the other children came home from the "Playgrounds," full of chatter about the day's delights and eager with questions concerning the wonderful happening of Mary Jane's ride. Then the mother roused and kept them from troubling their sister, and dispatched them to examine the wrecked carriage, away down the street.

By the time they returned Mary Jane's eyes were no longer red and there was nothing out of common in her manner. Mrs. Bump was ironing away as if her life depended on it, and

even humming the first strains of a hymn, "Lord, in the morning, Thou shalt, Thou shalt—Lord, in the morning Thou shalt hear." This always denoted an extra cheerfulness on the singer's part, and the children became boisterously happy in proportion.

When supper time came they "set a place for father," just as always; and though even by the end of the meal he had not appeared his unused plate was still left, as if he might come in at any moment.

Yet it was quite midnight when Mary Jane, for once unable to sleep, crept down to her mother's room and called, softly:

"Has he come, mother?"

"No dearie, not yet. But it's not late, you know for—him!" replied the wife, so cheerfully, that even her quick-witted daughter did not suspect the heartache beneath the cheerfulness, nor the tear-stained face upon the pillow.

"When he does, I wish you'd call me. I must tell him it's—it's all just right."

"Yes, darling. Trust mother and go to sleep now. I'll call you sure."

And neither guessed how long that call would be delayed.



## CHAPTER V

### MARY JANE GOES VISITING

BUT Mary Jane Bump was not the girl to be gloomy over anything for very long; least of all over anything so trifling as her own personal afflictions; and the morning saw her hopping about in her narrow home, as merry, as loving, and as helpful as ever. Even more helpful, it seemed to the conscience-stricken mother, than before she had felt the fierce anger of the previous day.

“Appears like she’d try to make even me forget she ever heard what I said, poor lamb! Well, I still think, what I’ve so often thought, that the Lord did bring sweet out of that bitter, when He made her so beautiful inside, even if she is crooked without. And more’n that, to me she don’t seem so misshaped. I almost forget she ain’t just like the rest. Aye, honey? What’s that you say?”

“If you can spare me, mother, after all the work is done, I’d like to go to Bonny-Gay’s house and find out about her. Oh! do you s’pose she will get well?”

“Sure, child.”

“I guess she will, too. Can I, mother? When the work’s all done?”

“Bless you, my lass, and that will never be. So there’s no use tarrying for such a time. And I don’t blame you for wanting to go. I’d admire to hear myself. But I guess it’s a long step from here and I don’t know the way, even I don’t. You’d have to ride in a street car and that costs money—which is one of the things I can least spare.”

At mention of the car, Mary Jane’s eyes sparkled.

On rare occasions—once when she went to market with her mother, at holiday time, and once when the wash had been too large and the patron’s home too distant for even her nimble crutches—she had enjoyed the luxury of travel by electricity. In imagination, she could still feel the swift rush of air against her cheek, could see the houses hurrying past, and hear the delightful ting-a-ling of the bell, as the

motorman stopped to let the passengers on or off. She had not dreamed that it would be necessary for her to ride, in order to pay the visit she desired; but if it were—Oh! felicity!

The light in the eyes she loved decided the mother upon the indulgence. A car-ride meant a nickel, or part of one, at least, for even little Mary Jane; and a nickel would buy a loaf, and many loaves were needful where there were seven mouths to fill, and every mouth a hungry one. More than that, if William were out of work—

Mrs. Bump considered no further. Mary Jane should have the pleasure—no matter what happened afterward.

“Of course, you’ll ride! Why not? Don’t suppose I’d let you start off a-foot for such a length, do you? I’ve a notion that this Mt. Vernon Place is away at the other end the city. Leastwise, it must be a good bit from Dingy street, ’cause I never heard of it before, and I’ve been around the neighborhood considerable, with the wash, you know. Yes, you may go. Fly round right smart and get your clothes changed. What a fine thing it is that your

other frock is clean, and I must say I did have good luck ironing it, last week. ”

“ You always do have good luck, mother Bump! You’re the very loveliest ironer in the world! ” and the wooden feet clicked across the room that their owner might hug this famous laundress.

“ And you’re a partial little girl, honey. ”

“ But, mother, dear, the work isn’t done—yet. There’s the steps to be scrubbed and that other pile of hank’chiefs, and—”

“ Well, I reckon we’ll live just as long if our steps ain’t done for one day in the year. Besides, I might let one the younger ones do them and see. They’re always teasing to, you know. Strange, how human nature loves to mess in a pail of soap and water. ”

“ Who’ll mind the baby, if I go? ”

“ I will, Mary Jane Bump! Seem to think the precious youngster ain’t hardly safe in his own mother’s hands, do you? Run along, run along, girlie, and fix yourself fine. ”

Away up the narrow stair swung happy Mary Jane; and in a very few moments down she swung again. She had exchanged her blue gingham for her pink print, had dusted off the

shoes which, alas! were so useless that they rarely wore out! and had brushed her dark wavy hair till it floated about her sweet face, as fine and fleece-like as it was possible for hair to be. In her hands she carried two hats; her own little plain "sailor," and the gift of Bonny-Gay.

"Oh! I wouldn't wear—" began Mrs. Bump, answering the question in Mary Jane's eyes; then seeing the disappointment which crept into them, hastily altered her original judgment to fit the case. "I wouldn't wear that old 'sailor' if I was a little girl that owned feathers like those. Indeedy, that I wouldn't."

Mary Jane's face rippled with smiles and for almost the first time in her life she did a coquetish thing. Standing upon her crutches before the tiny looking-glass, hung at an angle above the mantel, she adjusted and readjusted the pretty leghorn, until she had placed it as nearly in the position it had occupied on Bonny-Gay's yellow curls as she could. Then she wheeled about and asked:

"Does it look right, mother? Just as right as she would like to have it, when she sees me?"

“Perfect, honey! And though I maybe oughtn’t to say it before you, you’re the very sweetest little girl in Baltimore city!”

“Ah! but, mother Bump, you haven’t seen all the others,!” laughed the child.

“Now, here’s your money. Two nickels, dear. I’ve just given them a bit of a polish in the suds while you were up stairs. One is to go with, and one to come home. I’ve been puzzling it out, and the best thing is for you to go to the nearest car-line you find; then ask the conductor how nigh it will take you to the Place. He’ll be kind to you, I know. They’re always obliging, the conductors are, and when it’s anybody like you, why they just seem to tear themselves to pieces to be nice. You’ll have no trouble, honey, not a mite. And when you get there, don’t forget to make your manners, pretty, like I’ve taught you. Say everything to cheer the lady up, if she seems down-hearted a bit, and good-by, good-by. Bless you, Mary Jane!”

Mrs. Bump stood at her door-way and Mrs. Stebbins at hers, to watch the little figure hop away, and when it turned at the corner and they caught a glimpse of the radiant face beneath

the picture-hat, they smiled upon each other well satisfied.

“No harm’ll happen her!” said Mrs. Stebbins, confidently. “She’s one of the Lord’s own.”

“I’m not fearing! though I’m going to miss her powerful,” answered the mother, and retired to her tub.

Mary Jane’s heart beat so with excitement that she could hardly breathe. Here she was, going alone on an unknown journey, to ride in a car quite by herself, and to pay her own fare exactly as if she were a grown-up. She had to tightly clutch that corner of her little handkerchief wherein the nickles were tied, to make herself realize the delightful fact; and already, in her dutiful heart, she was planning how she could save, by not eating quite so much of her portion of food, and so, in time, make up to her mother for this unwonted extravagance.

Indeed, she thought so fast and deeply, that she stood on the corner and let the first car go by without signalling it. Then she brought her wits to the present and when the next one whizzed up she was ready for it, raising her

hand and motioning it to stop, as she had seen other people do.

It did stop, of course, and to such a little passenger, also, of course, the conductor was quite as kind as Mrs. Bump had prophesied he would be. He lifted Mary Jane into the very front seat of all and he would have been glad not to take a fare from her. But this his duty compelled him to do, and when he had received it he paused a moment beside her to inquire:

“Taking a ride, are you? Well, it’s a nice morning.”

“Isn’t it! Just beautiful. Yes, I’m going to Mt. Vernon Place.”

“Whew! you are? Well, this is the wrong car—Never mind. You can transfer. Mt. Vernon Place is a long way from here and quite the swellest part of the town; you know that, I suppose.”

“It’s where Bonny-Gay lives.”

“Oh! indeed. Well, don’t you worry. I’ll look out for you and pass you along. Company allows only one transfer, now, but I’ll fix it. It’ll be all right. Don’t worry.”

Mary Jane had not the slightest intention of worrying. That was something she had never



done until the night before, and then about her missing father. But in this brilliant sunshine, with the world all her own, so to speak, even that anxiety had disappeared. He would be sure to return and very soon. He loved them all so dearly, and even for herself, if there were none others, he would come. He couldn't live without her; he had often told her so. Therefore she merely hoped he was having as good a time, at that moment, as she was; and settled herself serenely in her place to enjoy everything.

She never forgot the first part of that day's ride. There were few passengers in the car and these were all men, quite able to look out for themselves; so the conductor remained near her and talked of the places they passed, pointing out this building and that, for Mary Jane's enlightenment. She bestowed upon each an attention that was quite flattering to her entertainer, till the car turned another corner and he had to move away. People came more frequently now and at every block of their advance, the men and women seemed to Mary Jane to crowd and hurry more and more. They almost crushed her own small person, climbing

past her, but she still clung sturdily to the outer corner of her seat, as her friend, the conductor, had bidden her.

“No need for you to move up, little girl. You’ll be changing after a bit, and it’ll be easier for them than you.”

Right in the very business part of the city the car stopped and he came back to her, thrusting a pale green slip of paper into her hand, and hurriedly lifting her out.

“That’s your transfer. Yonder’s your car. Give that paper to the other conductor. He’ll help you on. Say, Snyder!” he called to his co-laborer. “This kid’s for Vernon Place. Put her off at Charles street, will you? and pass her along. I’ll make it right with the company.”

Then he was gone and Mary Jane stood bewildered in the midst of a throng of vehicles, and street cars, and busy, rushing people. For an instant her head whirled, then she saw the impatient beckoning of conductor Snyder, and swung herself toward the waiting car. A man, into whose path she had hopped, caught her up and placed her on the platform, and again she was off.

But this time she was merely one of a crowd

and the ticket collecting kept Mr. Snyder too busy to bother with any single passenger. Indeed, some slight hindrance just as they reached Charles street put Mary Jane and her destination quite out of mind, and it was not until they had gone some blocks beyond and he had chanced to come near her again that she ventured to ask:

“Are we almost there?”

“Where’s there?”

“He—he said—Charles street,” she answered abashed by his brusque manner.

“Charles street! Why, that’s long back. Did you want to get off there? Oh! I forgot. You’re the child—Well, such as you ought not to be traveling alone. Here. I’ll put you off now, you can walk back. Ask anybody you meet, and they’ll direct you. Wait. I’ll give you another transfer. It’s against rules, but the other fellow’s responsible.”

This time it was a yellow slip Mary Jane received and again she was set down in the midst of a confusing crowd. She was in imminent danger of being run over, and saw that; so promptly retreated to the curbstone and from thence watched the unending procession of cars,

which followed one another without a moment's break. For just there it happened that many railway lines used the same tracks and it would have puzzled a much more experienced person than Mary Jane to distinguish between them.

Finally, she grew so tired and confused with the watching and the racket that she resolved to walk; and set out boldly in the direction from which she had come, scanning the street name-signs upon the corners. It seemed to her she would never come to that she sought, but she did, at last; and here a new difficulty presented.

"Which way shall I go? this—or that? Oh! dear! The time is going so fast and I don't get there. I'll have to ask somebody the way."

But though she made several shy little efforts to attract attention, not a passer-by paused to answer her low question. Almost all fancied her an unfortunate, petitioning alms; and some thought her a street merchant with something to sell. Many and many an one had gone by, till in the midst of all these men she saw a woman.

Only a scrub-woman, to be sure, on her way to some office to her daily labor; but she paused when the cripple spoke to her and looked with

feminine curiosity at the plainly clothed child in her expensive hat.

“ Mt. Vernon Place! Why, child alive, it’s miles from here! Away up yonder. This is Charles and it does run straight enough, that’s so, to where you want to go. But it’s so far, little girl. And you a cripple. You’d much best go back home and let some older person do your errand. Whatever was your ma thinkin’ of, to send you such a bout? ”

“ She didn’t send me, I came because I wished. Can you tell me which car is right? and will this yellow ticket pay my way? ”

The woman examined the transfer-slip, glanced at a clock on a near-by building, and shook her head.

“ That’s the car, all right, but that transfer’s no good. After fifteen minutes they won’t take ’em, and it’s half an hour or more. No. You’ll have to pay a second fare. I’ll help you on, if you like. Where do you live? ”

“ Ninety-seven, Dingy street. ”

“ The land! That’s almost the jumping off place of the city. Did they give you only money enough to ride twice. ”

“ My mother gave me ten cents, ” answered

Mary Jane, proudly, yet somehow, the fortune which had seemed so big, a little while before, now appeared very small and inadequate.

“Pshaw! If I had a cent I’d give it to you. I don’t know what you’d better do.”

“I know. I’ll walk. And thank you for telling me the way. If I keep right on this street, and go up and up, will I surely, surely get there.”

“Sure. I know, ’cause I used to clean up in that neighborhood. I hope you’ll have luck. Good-by.”

“Good-by,” answered Mary Jane, smilingly.

The momentary pause and conversation had rested her and she now felt wholly equal to any demands upon her strength. If she had merely to follow this one avenue till she came in sight of the monument and the lion, why! that was as easy as A, B, C! So she set out with fresh courage and full enjoyment of every novel sight or sound by the way; though, all the while, watchfully reading the street sign at every corner she reached.

It was almost two hours later that she came in sight of the Place. She knew it in a moment,

even though she had had but the one brief description of it from Bonny-Gay's lips, and she felt as if she had come into a new and wonderful world.

"How big and still and—and—finished it looks! And, oh! how tired I am. My arms ache like they never did before, and I can hardly hold my crutches. I'll get to that low stone round the monument—that's where she sits with the Gray Gentleman—and I'll get rested. Then I'll look all around and pick out her house. I shall know it because she said it was all covered with vines and there was a big yard behind, with trees and things. Oh! how good it is to sit down."

So good, indeed, that before she knew it the exhausted little maid had dropped her head upon the curbing and fallen fast asleep.

There Mr. Weems discovered her and would have roused her to send her home. But a second glance at her convinced him that this was no child of that locality, and that she seemed a very weary little girl, indeed. So he simply folded his own jacket and placed it under her head and left her to recover herself.

She awoke after a little time and sat up, con-

fused and rather frightened. Till she suddenly remembered where she was and, seeing a gardener at work upon a grass-plot near, decided at once that he must be the owner of Max. She saw, too, the coat which had formed her pillow and knew that he must have placed it there. With a glad cry she caught up her crutches and swung herself toward the keeper:

“ Oh! sir, I thank you. I was so tired and the coat was lovely soft. And I know you. You’re Mr. Weems, the gardener, and I’ve seen Max. He’s at our house, I mean he was—last night. And he will be again, ’cause he’s with father, who’ll fetch him back. Father just loves dogs and animals. And say, please, which is Bonny-Gay’s house? ”

“ Bless my soul! You don’t say? Then you must belong around here, though I didn’t think it. You’ve seen Max, and you ask for our Bonny-Gay! Well, you’ve struck trouble both times. He’s in trouble enough, but she in worse. That’s her home, yonder, on the west corner. The green house I call it; with those doctors’ carriages in front of it. ”

“ It is? Why, how funny. What’s all that straw for? ”



The gardener shook his head, sadly, and hastily flicked away at his eyes.

“That’s to deaden all the noise. Bonny-Gay is a very, very sick little girl and there’s about one chance in a thousand, folks think, for her to get well. She was in an accident, yesterday. Got thrown out a carriage. The gentleman that took her driving is almost crazy with grief about it and—What’s that? What’s that you say? You was with her? You? And that’s her hat—Upon my word, it is. She showed it to me, the very first day she had it, while she was out here waiting to go driving with her folks. And she’s the only one they’ve got. I reckon her poor father would give all his millions of dollars and not stop a minute to think about it, if he could make her well by doing it. Poor man, I pity him!”

“It was Max did it, you know. I’ve come to see her, and you mustn’t tell me she’s so sick as that. Why, she was that beautiful to me—I—I—”

Waiting not an instant longer, and despite the gardener’s warning, Mary Jane clicked across the smooth path, over the street, and up

to the very front door of the mansion, wherein lay a precious little form, incessantly watched by a crowd of nurses and friends.

The outer door was ajar, a footman standing just within, keeping guard and ready to answer in a whisper the constant string of inquiries which neighbors sent to make. Past him, while he was talking to another, slipped Mary Jane, her crutches making no sound upon the thick carpet. One thought possessed her, one only; and made her almost unconscious of the novel scenes about her. Bonny-Gay was ill. Bonny-Gay might die. Well, she would have one more glimpse of that beloved face, no matter who tried to stop her.

Her brain worked fast. Sick people were generally up-stairs; up-stairs she sped. Sick folks had to be quiet. She paused an instant and peered down the dim corridor. She saw that as the people passing along this hall approached a distant door they moved even more gently and cautiously. In that room, then, lay her darling!

It seemed like the passage of some bird, so swift she was and so unerring, for before even the most watchful of the nurses could intervene

she had entered the darkened chamber and crossed to a white cot in the middle of it. By that time it was too late to stop her. Any noise, any excitement, however trivial, might prove fatal, the doctors thought.

Bonny-Gay lay, shorn of her beautiful curls, almost as white as her pillows. But the small head moved restlessly, incessantly, and the silence of the night had given place to a delirious, rambling talk. All her troubled fancies seemed to be of the last scenes she had witnessed: the "Playgrounds," with the eager children crowding them. She was see-sawing with Jimmy O'Brien, and hoeing cabbages with the baby. She laughed at some inner picture of his absurd accidents, and finally, as some peril menaced him, raised her shoulders slightly and shrieked:

"Mary Jane! Oh! Mary Jane—come quick!"

All the watchers caught their breath—startled, fearful of the worst. Yet upon the silence that followed the cry, there rose the sweetest, the gladdest of voices:

"Why, yes, Bonny-Gay! I've come!"

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FLIGHT AND FRIGHT OF MARY JANE

AGAIN Mary Jane's thoughts had been swift. She recalled the fact that "when Joe Stebbins had the fever and talked crazy-like, the doctor said we must answer just as if 'twas the way he said. 'Twould have made him worse to argue him different," and with this reflection made her instant response.

Now Bonny-Gay had either been less ill than they fancied, or the crisis had been reached; for at that cheerful reply she opened her blue eyes and looked into the eager face so near them. For a brief time she said no more, seeming to seek for some explanation of those troubled dreams from the steadfast smile of her new friend; then she stretched out her hand and Mary Jane caught it rapturously between her own palms.

"You—you look nice in my hat. But I

thought—I thought—I was at your park. Yet it's home, isn't it, after all. How dark it is, and how tired I am. I guess I'll go to sleep a few minutes. Though I'm very pleased to see you, Mary Jane."

Through the hearts of all in the room shot a thrill of thankfulness, yet nobody moved as the injured child dropped at once into a quiet sleep which meant, the doctors knew, the saving of her life and reason.

Mrs. McClure had kept up bravely, till that moment, but now her strength was leaving her in the shock of her sudden relief and joy.

"Tell the girl not to move nor draw her hand away—till Bonny herself releases it;" she whispered, as an attendant led her noiselessly out of the chamber.

She did not know how long and difficult a task she had set the unwelcome visitor; for while she herself sank into a much needed rest the sick child still slept that deep, refreshing slumber which was to restore her to health.

The hours passed. The doctors went silently away. One nurse took up a watchful position near the bed and remained almost as motionless as the chair she occupied. A gray-haired man

appeared at the doorway, took one long, delighted look at the small figure on the cot, barely seeing the other child beside it, and went away again. This was the anxious father and he moved with the lightness of one from whom an intolerable burden has been removed.

Meanwhile, a second nurse took observation now and then of Mary Jane. The position into which the cripple had sprung, in her eager clasp of Bonny-Gay's hand, was a trying one. Half-bent forward, with no support for any portion of her body save that sidewise seat upon the foot of the cot, it was inevitable that muscles should stiffen and limbs ache, even in a stronger frame than Mary Jane's. Besides that, she was very hungry, almost faint. Her slight breakfast had been taken very early, and since then she had not tasted any food, though it was now midafternoon. Presently, she felt her head grow dizzy. Bonny-Gay's face upon the pillow appeared to be strangely contorted and the clasp of the small hand within her own to become vise-like and icy in its grip. She began to suffer tortures, all over, everywhere. Even her useless legs were prickling and "going to sleep," like any overtaxed limb. She feared

## The Flight and Fright of Mary Jane 81

she would fall forward, in spite of all her will, and that might mean—death to Bonny-Gay! She knew, of her own intuition, that she must not move, even without the whispered command of Mrs. McClure, and in her heart she began to say a little prayer for strength to hold herself steady till her task was at an end.

Then, all at once, she felt that the crutches resting against her side were being noiselessly lifted away. Somebody, who moved as if on air, was putting a rolled up pillow under her own tired chest; another at her side—her back; and beneath the heavy feet a great soft cushion that was like her own mother's lap, for restfulness.

She turned her head and looked up into the kind face of the trained nurse and smiled her most grateful smile, for she dared not speak. The white-capped woman smiled back and silently held forward a plate on which was some carefully cut up food. Then she forked a morsel and held it to Mary Jane's lips, which opened and closed upon it with an eagerness that was almost greedy, so famished was she.

“How queer it is!” thought the little girl, “that anybody should bother that way about

just me!" then swallowed another mouthful of the delicious chicken. A bit of roll followed the chicken, and after that a glass of milk. With every portion so administered, Mary Jane's fatigue and dizziness disappeared till, by the time the nurse had fed her all that the plate contained, she felt so rested and refreshed she fancied that she could have sat on thus forever, if Bonny-Gay had so needed.

"Oh! how good I feel!"

Bonny-Gay was awake at last, and, of her own accord, withdrew her hand from Mary Jane's clasp.

"Why—why, is that you, Mary Jane? Why doesn't somebody make it light in here? How came you—Oh! I remember. You came to see me and I went to sleep. I don't know what made me do that. Wasn't very polite, was it? Now, I'll get up and be dressed and then we'll play something."

But as she tried to rise she sank back in surprise.

"That's queer. There's something the matter with me. One of my legs feels—it doesn't feel at all. Seems as if it was a marble leg, like 'Father George's.'—Whatever ails me?"



## The Flight and Fright of Mary Jane 83

Mary Jane's answer was prompt enough, though the nurses would have suppressed it if they had had time.

"I guess it's broken. That's all."

"Broken! My leg? What do you mean?"

"Oh! I forgot. You haven't been real awake since it happened. Max—"

"Child!" interposed the nurse who had fed her.

"Oh! mustn't I tell?"

The two white-capped women exchanged glances. After all, their patient would have to learn about her own condition; and children had often ways of their own which proved wiser than grown folks thought.

"Ye-s, you may tell."

"You were thrown out the carriage. Don't you remember? Max had run away to find you, and when he did, he didn't stop to think of anything else. He just jumped right into the carriage, where you and the Gray Gentleman and the baby and I were all riding splendid. That made the horses afraid and they acted bad. You got tumbled out and broke your leg. That's all."

“That’s—all! Why, Mary Jane! You say it as if—as if—you didn’t care!”

Bonny-Gay began to cry, softly.

“Yes I did say that’s all, because that isn’t much. It’s a good job it wasn’t your head. A broken leg gets well quick; quicker’n ever if it’s only a little leg like yours. If it was your mother’s now, or your father’s, you might worry. But, my sake! I wouldn’t mind a little thing like that if I were you. To lie in this heavenly room, with all the pictures and pretty things, and folks to wait on you every minute, why—I’d think I was the best off little girl in the world if I were you.”

“But I can’t walk on it, nobody knows when. Nor go out-doors, nor—nor—I think you’re a mean girl, Mary Jane Bump!”

The cripple was too astonished to reply. She had pushed herself from her hard position upon the cot’s foot to a chair which the nurse had placed for her, and was leaning back in it with supreme content. In all her little life she had never sat upon anything so luxurious and restful. How could any child mind anything, who was as fortunate as the daughter of such a

## The Flight and Fright of Mary Jane 85

home? Astonishment, also, at finding that her new friend was not wholly the "angel" she had hitherto supposed her to be, kept her silent. But she was rather glad to find this out. It made the other girl seem nearer to her own level of imperfection, and she speedily reflected that sick people were often cross, yet didn't mean to be so.

Bonny-Gay herself swiftly repented her hard speech and looking around the room, inquired:

"Did I sleep very long?"

"Yes, dear, a long time. We are all so glad of that," answered the nurse, holding a spoon to the patient's lips, just as she had done to Mary Jane's, who laughed outright exclaiming:

"That was the funniest thing! When I was holding your hand, Bonny-Gay, she fed me just that way, too! Me! Mary Jane Bump! Chicken, and biscuit and milk! 'Twas prime, I tell you!"

"Fed you? Why?"

"'Cause I was holding your hand and couldn't feed myself. I s'pose she thought, maybe, I was hungry. I was, too."

“ Did you hold it all the time I was asleep, Mary Jane? ”

“ Yes. Course. You wasn't to be waked up till you did it yourself. ”

A moment's silence; then said Bonny-Gay:

“ I am too ashamed of myself to look at you. What must you think of me, Mary Jane? ”

“ I think I love you, dearly. ”

“ I don't see how you can, but I'm glad of it. Where is my mother, nurse? ”

Mrs. McClure bent over the cot and kissed her daughter, murmuring tender words of love and delight; and for a space neither remembered Mary Jane.

However, she had just remembered her own mother and the fact that she had been long from home. Also, that that home lay at the end of a long, strange and distracting journey, for one so ignorant of travel as she, and that through the window she could see that it was already twilight. She waited a bit, for a chance to bid good-night to Bonny-Gay and to say how glad she was that she was better, and to thank the nurse for being so kind to herself. But nobody seemed to have any thought for her just then.

## The Flight and Fright of Mary Jane 87

The gray haired father had come into the room and bent beside his wife over the cot where lay their one darling child; and, seeing the parents thus occupied with their own feelings, both nurses had considerately turned their backs upon the scene and were busying themselves in arranging the chamber for the night's watch.

"I dare not wait a minute longer! I should be afraid, I think, to get in the car alone at night. I was hardly ever out after dark. I'd like to make my manners pretty, as mother said, but I can't wait."

Moved by the same delicacy which had made the nurses turn their backs upon the group at the bedside, Mary Jane silently picked up her crutches and hopped away. Finding the way out was easier, even, than finding it in. The halls were now all lighted by wonderful lamps overhead and the same stately footman stood just within the outer entrance.

"However did such a creature as this get in and I not see her?" he wondered, as the little hunchback came swiftly toward him. "Well, better out than in, that's sure. No knowing what harm it would do the little

missy if she caught sight of an object like that!"

Which shows how little the people who live in one house may understand of each other's ideas; and explains the rapidity with which he showed Mary Jane through the door and closed it upon her.

After the lighted hallway the outside world seemed darker than ever, even though the days were yet long and twilight lingered. But tonight the sky was clouded and a storm impending. Already in the west there were flashes of lightning, and though, in ordinary, Mary Jane delighted in an electric storm, just then it made her think the more longingly of home and its security.

"Besides, if I should get my fresh clean dress all wet, that would make work for mother. I'm glad I forgot that hat, though. That'll have to be dry, anyway, now; and maybe after all, when Bonny-Gay gets well she may want it herself. It was her mother gave it to me, not her. Now which way—I guess this. Oh! I know! I'll find that gardener, Mr. Weems, and he's so nice and kind he'll show me the way to go. Maybe, after all, there is another car goes

## The Flight and Fright of Mary Jane 89

nearer to Dingy street than that one I took first and—There's a man. It might be him. I'll run and see."

But when she had clicked across the path to where the man stood he had already begun to move away, and she saw that he was not at all like the gardener. So she paused, irresolute, trying to recall by which of the several avenues leading from it she had entered the Place.

There were people hurrying homeward in each direction, and a few smart equipages were whirling past; but nobody paused to glance at her, save with that half-shudder of repugnance to which she was quite accustomed when she met strangers, and that had rarely wounded her feelings as it did just then and there.

"Well, I can't help that. And I don't mind it for myself, not now at all, since I know about poor father. He's the one feels worst for it. And that I shall tell him the very minute I see him. So let them look and turn away, if they wish. Looks don't hurt, really, and oh! dear! if I only could remember the street I ought to take. Charles, of course. I know that and there it is; but whether to go to that side or this—"

In the midst of her perplexity the electric current was turned on and the Place was suddenly and noiselessly flooded with a light as of day. Courage came back and after another hasty scrutiny of the streets, to discover some landmark that she could recall, she saw the monument and the lion, and ran toward them as if they had been old friends.

“Bonny-Gay loves them, and so does the Gray Gentleman, and they do look as quiet and peaceful as can be. I stopped there, I know, and maybe I’ll think it out better there.”

Yet even in that reposeful place Mary Jane could gain no new ideas as to her course, nor was anybody near to whom she could apply.

The gardener had long since gone home for the night, and in desperation, Mary Jane determined to appeal to the very first person who came by. This proved to be a young man, with a cane and eyeglasses; and he appeared to be extremely busy. The little girl thought he must also be one of the “aristocrats” of whom her father spoke so contemptuously, because when she had asked him to “please tell me the way to Dingy street?” he had scarcely



## The Flight and Fright of Mary Jane 91

glanced at her but, had haughtily replied: "Never heard of such a place."

"Hmm. Too bad. Father says they don't any of them know very much, and I'm sorry. Don't know where Dingy street is, indeed! when I know it myself, even a little girl like me and have lived there always. I mean ever since I was a baby and we left the country. That, mother says, was the mistake we made. In the country father didn't drink and lose his work. Well, we'll go again, some day, when I get big and strong, and can help more with the wash. We could earn a lot, mother and me together, if I was big."

She lost herself in her day dreams for a little and awoke from them with a start, to find the twilight altered to real night, while the electric gleams from the lamps overhead were brighter than ever and their shadows more like ink upon the pavement. Mary Jane had never seen such brilliancy as this, and again she forgot herself in studying her surroundings and enjoying the vivid green of the grass and shrubs.

A certain clump of flowers, glowing in the radiance, attracted her especially and she felt that she must put her face down on them, to

smell them, before she lost sight of them forever.

“For I don’t s’pose I’ll ever come this way again. I couldn’t expect it. Mother couldn’t spare the money even if she could me and—even if I ever get back to her again!” she concluded, with a frightened sigh. But the beautiful blossoms enticed her, and in her own down town park, which had been thrown open to whoever of the poor would enjoy them, there were few “Keep off” signs and the few quite disregarded. This she had explained to Bonny-Gay; and what was true of one park in the city should be true of all.

So she hopped nimbly over the velvet lawn to where the flowers gleamed scarlet and white and wonderful, and bending above them thrust her face deep down into their loveliness. Oh! how sweet they were! and so crisp and almost caressing in their touch upon her cheek.

“Dear flowers! I wouldn’t hurt you, you know that, don’t you! I wouldn’t break a single one of you, no, not for anything. Seems like you’d feel it if your stems were broken, poor things. But I’ll not harm you. No, indeedy. Only I wish—I wish I could just take

## The Flight and Fright of Mary Jane 93

one tiny, tiny piece home to mother. But I wouldn't break you, even for her!"

"Well, I guess you'd better not! What are you doing here? How dare you come on this grass? Can't you read the signs?"

Mary Jane looked up, and was immediately terrified. It was a policeman who held her arm, and all the wild stories she had heard of arrests and imprisonment flashed into her mind.

In Dingy street there was, also, a policeman; but a friendly soul whom all the children loved, and whose own home was close to theirs. It was he who had saved many a baby's life, from careless passing vehicles, when busy mothers had not the time to watch them as they should; and his blue uniform represented to Mary Jane's mind an all-powerful guardian, to whom appeal was never made in vain.

But this six-foot officer, with his glitter and dignity, his harsh voice and vise-like clutch—this was the majesty of law outraged.

"Oh! what have I done! I didn't mean it—I didn't—" gasped the frightened child, and wrenching herself loose swung away upon her crutches, faster even than the officer could have pursued her, even if he had been so minded.

He did not even attempt to follow her, but watched her flight, with a chuckle of amusement.

“Scared her well, that time, the little vagrant. Well, it’s right a lesson was given ’em. If every child who wanted to smell the bushes was let, what would our parks look like!”

“Like bits of Paradise, as they should;” answered a voice behind him, so suddenly that the policeman wheeled about to find himself face to face with a resident of the Place himself.

As for Mary Jane she neither saw whither she fled nor scarcely breathed before she had collided with a swiftly advancing figure, and found both herself and it thrown down. Captured after all! Her eyes closed with a snap, as there seemed to rise before them the vision of a station house, filled with frowning policemen, and herself in the midst, a helpless prisoner.

## CHAPTER VII

### ON THE WAY HOME

“WELL, upon my word!”

Mary Jane opened her eyes. Then she rubbed them to see more clearly. Indeed, she rubbed them twice before she made out her mistake and was able to say:

“Oh! I am so sorry! I—I didn’t mean—but I can’t be arrested! I can’t—my mother—I—.”

She scrambled up somehow, picked her crutches from the ground and set off again. She dared not look behind her but was quite sure that the hard-faced policeman was in full pursuit. Off she was, indeed, only to be brought to a sudden stop, while a shiver of fear ran through her. But she made no further outcry and rested quietly upon her wooden feet, to hear her doom.

“Why, you poor little girl! You look scared. You haven’t done any harm, not a

bit. In fact, you've saved me quite a chase. I'm not so swift as you are, hard as I tried to catch you."

Mary Jane shivered and still said nothing, nor could she lift her eyes from the ground. Their gaze rested idly upon the man's feet and she fancied that the gloss upon his shoes equalled the radiance of the electric light.

"And now that I have caught you, I want to thank you, with all my heart, for your kindness to my precious child. I believe the good Lord sent you, just in the nick of time, with your ready answer and your readier sympathy. Yet to think that, after all this, you should run away, at night and alone. You poor, brave little child."

Then she heard, through her puzzled understanding, another voice speaking in jesting surprise.

"Turn your back on an old friend, would you, Miss Bump! Well, we will have to see about that, indeed!"

Those were tones to banish fear! and now, in truth, Mary Jane's eyes were raised and she saw standing there and smiling down upon her none other than the Gray Gentleman.

The revulsion of feeling was too much for her self-control, and dropping her face against his hand she began to cry, with all the abandon of those who seldom weep.

“Why, little girl! What is it? Were you so badly frightened as all that? There, there. You’re with friends now, child, who love you and will take care of you.”

With that she felt herself lifted in the Gray Gentleman’s arms, and her head forced gently down upon his shoulder, while her crutches fell noisily to the stones. However, they were promptly picked up again by the other gentleman, who was also gray—as to hair and beard—and who made almost as much noise as the crutches, because he kept blowing his nose so vigorously. Then she heard him softly slap her own Gray Gentleman’s free shoulder and exclaim, in a husky voice:

“It’s all right, neighbor! The Lord has been good to us. Bonny-Gay is almost herself again and was laughing—actually laughing—to see me, her dignified daddy, run out of her room to try a race with Miss Mary Jane here. Oh! it’s too good to be true!” and again there was a tremendous flourish

of handkerchief, and a sound like a small fog horn.

“ Thank God ! ” murmured the Gray Gentleman, and Mary Jane felt him tremble. Instinctively she raised her head to comfort him and touched his thin cheek timidly with her lips.

But there was no timidity in the kiss he returned her as he set her upon the ground, and with all his usual cheerfulness, demanded :

“ Well, little traveler, how do you propose to get home again ? ”

“ I don't know ! ” The tone was a happy one and seemed to mean : “ And I don't care ! You are to find the way for me ! ”

“ You don't, eh ? But I'm thinking that good mother of yours will be hungry for a sight of your face, and it's time we remembered her. Mothers are queer bodies. They like to have their youngsters around them, be they never so bothersome. Yet, since she's waited so long, I think it will do no harm for her to wait a while longer. I'd like to have you pay me a little visit, as well as Bonny-Gay, and I'll invite you to my house to take supper with



a lonely old fellow who'll entertain you as well as he can."

It was hard to refuse, she would so much have liked to see the home of her friend, of the friend of all the children whom she knew. But the vision of her mother, waiting and anxious, was too much for her loyal heart, so she declined as prettily as she knew how, only requesting:

"Now, please, you are to tell me the quickest way home to Dingy street and I'll go. You must know it, for you've been there so often."

"Yes, I know it, and I'll take you at once. I'll do more. I'll invite myself to supper with you after I get there, since you can't stop with me."

"Very well," said Mary Jane, though not with much enthusiasm. She was afraid he would think her mother's supper a poor one. However, he was quite welcome to what they had, and she added more cordially: "I know mother'd think it an honor, only I'd have to stop at the baker's on the way."

She didn't quite understand why both gentlemen laughed so heartily. They now seemed in

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a mood, each one of them, to laugh at any and everything which happened, and Bonny-Gay's father teased the other a little about his great appetite, which required the contents of a bake-shop to satisfy. Then he added, with a manner that admitted of no denial:

“But you'll have to defer your visit, neighbor, till another time. I claim the privilege of conveying this young lady to her destination, and my man has already summoned a cab. Here it comes, now; for I'd rather trust a city cabby to find out odd places than my own coachman.”

Here came the cab, indeed, and from the vine-clad mansion on the corner also came a liveried servant bearing a big basket tightly covered.

“With the mistress' compliments, and Miss Bonny-Gay is sending this to the baby.”

“Good enough!” answered the happy father, and took Mary Jane from the Gray Gentleman's arms; who handed her crutches in after her, and himself closed the door of the cab with a cheerful snap.

“Some other time, then, Mary Jane, I'll expect a visit from you. My regards to your

mother and I will be down your way before long. Good-by."

Mary Jane's head whirled with the strangeness of it all. What a day it had been! And how simple and kind was this gray-haired father, who didn't look half so strong as her own absent one, but who talked so fast and asked so many questions that, before she at all realized what she was doing, the cripple had given him their whole family history. Save and excepting, of course, anything which related to her own affliction and its cause, or any possible fault of her beloved father.

"He works—I mean, he did work—for the B. & B. railroad folks. He—he— isn't working just now. He went away, for a little while, but I guess he's back again. Won't he be surprised to hear all that's happened to me? He'll be glad, after all, that she didn't—Oh! my sake! what am I saying!"

At mention of the Company, the gentleman beside her had given a little start of surprise, but Mary Jane fancied that the jolting of the cab had moved him. She expressed her regret for the accident and added:

"But I like it. I never rode in a carriage

but once before. That was yesterday when Bonny-Gay was hurt. But she'll soon be well, now, I think. Don't you?"

"So I trust. So I trust and believe. But, tell me a little further of your father. What sort of work did he do? I happen to know something about that company and am interested in the details of all its concerns."

"Sometimes he was helping along the tracks; straightening them, changing the ties, and such things. Sometimes he was over at the great sheds they're building—monstrous ones, they are, almost all of steel. You ought just to see them by daylight. Though I guess I can show them to you even to-night, 'cause they're not so very far from our house."

"Indeed! Did you say what street it was? I heard my neighbor give some directions to the driver for us, but paid little attention."

"Dingy street, number 97."

"Dingy street! You don't say! Why, I know that locality well. Very well, indeed. A great many of—of the Company's employees live around there."

"Most all of them do, I guess."

“ So your father’s out of work, just now? ”

“ Yes. But he’ll soon be ‘ on ’ again, I think. When he does work he gets real good wages. That is, if he isn’t ‘ docked.’ I reckon the Company is pretty strict. My mother says they don’t allow for anything. A man must do his task or leave it, and that’s the end.”

“ But that is quite right and just, is it not? ”

“ I—suppose—it is. Though poor men can’t always—I mean, they get discouraged sometimes. That makes them do and say things they wouldn’t else. It’s queer and unjust, my father says, for the Company to have so much money and their men so little. That’s what made him glad—I mean not so sorry—when—when—things happen.”

Mary Jane paused, confused. Twice she had nearly told this other father that her own father had been glad when Bonny-Gay had been hurt. She knew William Bump would not have said anything so cruel if he had not been drinking; she was sure of that, for he was generally so kind of heart. But even yet she did not imagine that her companion was himself the presi-

dent and head of that Company whose wages her father gladly accepted even when he talked against it most fiercely.

However, Mr. McClure greatly enjoyed listening to this frank story of the underworkings of his vast enterprises. He was not only a very wealthy and powerful man, he was also a wise and just one. He felt the responsibilities of his position, and made it his business to know all employees by name and character, so far as that was possible. Over this particular portion of his affairs, right in his own city, he had an almost daily supervision, and he knew William Bump, in some respects, much better than this loyal little daughter did. His opinion of the father was very poor, and he had himself given orders, on the previous day, that the said William was never again to be taken on by his managers, "not in any capacity whatsoever."

For some distance the gentleman made no response to Mary Jane's last remark, and the silence was broken only by the roll of their own wheels, the ordinary sounds of the streets through which they passed, and the increasing rumble of the thunder. The storm was draw-

ing nearer and he wished to escape it, if possible. He signalled the driver, after a while, and seeming to rouse himself from some deep thought, to: "Make haste!"

The cabman lashed his horses into a gallop, and remembering the accident of her one other ride, Mary Jane began to grow afraid. She was afraid now, also, of this silent gentleman beside her and longed for her journey to end. To pass the time she tried to count the lamps on the street corners as they flew past her in the gloom, and to watch for the illuminating flashes of lightning, which came faster and faster.

Suddenly, into this silence, Mr. McClure hurled a stern question, that compelled a truthful reply, whether she liked to give it or no.

"Mary Jane, of what was your father glad when that accident occurred?"

She caught her breath in alarm; then answered, frankly:

"He was glad because—because Bonny-Gay was hurt."

"Why?"

"Oh! I don't know. I mean—I guess he was so sorry about me—being like I am—and

he thought it wasn't fair. She was as beautiful and perfect as I was—was ugly; and her father had all the money and he had none. But it wasn't right and it wasn't him. Indeed, indeed, it wasn't. He didn't know you, of course, and he didn't dream that you could love her same as he loves me. But he'd be the first—the very first—to be sorry, after he came to himself."

"Hmm. No man, rich or poor, has a right ever to be other than himself."

"I suppose not. But things haven't gone right with father since we came from the country."

"Humph!" was the contemptuous comment, and the little girl said no more.

Oh! if they would only ever get to 97 Dingy street! Twice, now, she had been allowed the luxury of a carriage ride and each time how wretched she had been. At first she had liked Bonny-Gay's father almost as much as she had the Gray Gentleman, when she first knew that good friend. She had chattered away to him almost as freely; yet after awhile he had allowed her to keep up the chatter rather for his own information than because he had seemed



interested in her affairs. He was now become so stern and indifferent that she realized she had deeply offended him. To her relief, the cab turned sharply around the next corner and there she was, at last, in dear, familiar Dingy street, with its tiny houses that were yet homes; in one of which was mother Bump, her four sisters, and the wonderful baby! Possibly, also, her father; though of him she thought less, just then, than of the motherly face which was, to her, the comeliest in all the world.

The cab stopped with a jerk. The cabman leaped down and opened the door. Then he lifted out the covered basket, and afterward swung Mary Jane to the ground and supported her till the gentleman who remained inside the vehicle handed out her crutches.

The house door flew open, also, at the sound of wheels, and Mrs. Bump peered out into the night.

“What is it?” she called, her voice trembling with anxiety. That a carriage should stop before her humble home foreboded harm to some of her loved ones, and her first thought was of her crippled daughter.

“Here am I, Mother! Home at last;” answered that daughter’s voice, cheerily.

Then she turned to thank Mr. McClure for his kindness to her, but he did not hear her, apparently. The cab was already being whirled around, and the driver lashing his horses. A brilliant gleam of lightning, followed instantly by a terrific clap of thunder, startled them into a thought of shelter only. Mrs. Bump saw through the cab window that the gentleman raised his hat, then she seized the basket from the ground, and hurried Mary Jane indoors, just as the first great drops of a heavy shower came dashing down.

“Oh! mother Bump! I never saw such a lovely place as this dear old home! How glad I am to be here. Has father come yet?”

“Not yet, dearie. But he will soon, no doubt.”

“I hope he isn’t anywhere out in this storm; poor father.”

“Bless you, child! The man has sense, hasn’t he? Even dumb creatures know enough to go in when it rains. But tell me fast, darling, all that’s happened to you since you went away. My heart! this has been the longest

day I ever knew! have you had anything to eat? What made you so late? How came you to be riding home in such grand style? and where got you this basket?"

"It's the baby's, mother. Bonny-Gay sent it to him;" cried the happy girl, running to seize that crowing infant from his trundle-bed and to cover his face with kisses. Then she dropped her crutches and herself upon the floor, drew the baby to her lap, and from that lowly position began a swift, but rather mixed history of events since she had said good-by and hopped away in the morning.

The mother listened, losing never a word, and deftly simplifying matters now and then by a leading question, while at the same time she explored the big basket. It had evidently been filled in haste, and by the direction of Bonny-Gay, herself.

"This is for the *baby*, is it?" laughingly demanded Mrs. Bump, lifting out a great loaf of rich cake, carefully wrapped in waxed paper. "Fine food for a year-old, that is. And this? and this? My heart, but whoever filled this basket had a generous streak!"

A fine roasted chicken, mate to that of which

Mary Jane had already partaken, it might be, followed the cake. Then came a picture-book, a jumble of toys, a box of candy, and an odd mixture of the things nearest at hand, and of which the sick child could think.

But crowning all these gifts, and the only one packed with any attempt at care, was the beautiful leghorn hat, with its nodding ostrich plumes and its general air of elegance.

“The darling, the darling! She did mean me to keep it, then!” cried Mary Jane, so delightedly that the baby immediately pat-a-caked with noisy vigor.

Of course, even though they had long since enjoyed their ordinary supper, the watchful children were not to be put off without at least a taste of the baby's good things; so the mother cut and divided with exact equality; and after a feast so hilarious that it brought Joe Stebbins in from next door to see what was the matter, everybody was sent to bed; even the tired Mary Jane, whose heart seemed brim full of both joy and anxiety.

She had explained to her mother how she had chattered to Mr. McClure, hiding nothing,

even her unwise statement of William Bump's animosity toward the other, happier father.

Mrs. Bump had listened quietly, and she had pooh-poohed the little girl's regrets! but her heart sank. Mr. McClure was the name of the head of the Company. She knew that, though Mary Jane did not; and she realized that her husband's last chance of reinstatement in the Company's employ had been ruined by the very one who would have sacrificed her very self to do him good.

"Poor little daughter! But she must never know. Never. It would break her loving heart! And it matters little now whether William comes home or not!" sighed the troubled wife and mother, as she laid her own weary head on her pillow for the night.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONFIDENCES

“OH! I am so tired! If I could only just get up once!” sighed Bonny-Gay.

“Sick folks always have to stay in bed. How’d they look, sitting up, I’d like to know?” answered Mary Jane.

“But I’m not sick. I’m not sick one bit. I’m just as well as—as that parrot, yonder.”

“Tell the truth, tell the truth, tell the truth!” shrieked Polly.

Mary Jane laid down the thirteenth doll and clapped her hands to her sides. “That bird is the absurdest thing. He makes me laugh till I ache.”

“That’s a story, that’s a story!” corrected Poll.

“No, it isn’t! No, it isn’t! No, it isn’t!” mocked Mary Jane, gaily.

Bonny-Gay laughed, too, and cried out:

“Mary Jane, you’re the very nicest girl I know!”

“Thank you. That’s a dear thing for you to say. But you’re partial, like mother. Besides, there isn’t any other girl here, just now.”

“But I mean it. There isn’t another girl in the world would come here and be shut up in the house, day after day, just to amuse me, ’cause my leg’s broken, except you.”

“Yes, there is,” said Mary Jane, confidently.

“Who?”

“You!”

“Oh! you funny child!”

“Wouldn’t you? If you and I were each other—I mean changed places and I was the sick one, wouldn’t you?”

“Maybe. I don’t know. I never did like indoors and would never stay in if I could help it. Do you s’pose it will be very long now?”

“No, I guess not. Not if you’re good and lie still. Wait. I’ll bring all the playthings around to that other side the bed and that will rest you. You’ve been looking out this way a good while now.”

So Mary Jane industriously hopped around and transported the thirteen dolls, the bird

cages, and the parrot stand to a new position, and leaning on her crutches gently helped the sick child to turn about as far as she was permitted to do. A trained nurse was still always in the room, and Mrs. McClure herself passed in and out very frequently; but it was Mary Jane who did most for her friend; Bonny-Gay declaring that, "Next to Mamma" there was nobody who understood her whims and desires without being told them, as the little cripple did.

"That's because we're just an age, I guess. Queer, wasn't it? That you, up in this big house, and me down in my dear little one, should both be sent to our folks the very same day that ever was? 'Sunday bairns' should be the best ones in the world, my mother says. Only, I wasn't in my Dingy street house when I came. I was in the country;" and for some unexplained reason Mary Jane's sunny face clouded suddenly.

For weeks now, and because Bonny-Gay had "taken such an extreme fancy to her"—as Mrs. McClure had herself explained to Mrs. Bump, when she herself went to ask the favor of Mary Jane's attendance in the sick room—



the helpful child had spent the greater portion of each day there. It had become quite a matter of habit in Dingy street that a carriage should roll up to the door of 97 and that Mary Jane should go away in it; to be returned at six o'clock precisely, of the same afternoon. Dingy street felt itself proud of this state of things, and every householder held her head a bit higher because of it. Who'd ever have dreamed that their own small hunchback would get to be "carriage folks?" Well, there was no telling when such glory might not fall to their own lot, and she'd do them all credit wherever she went, she had such pretty, loving ways with her. That she had.

Now, it was sometimes an inconvenience to the McClure household that this trip must be made twice a day; and that very morning Mrs. McClure entered the chamber to speak with Mary Jane about it. She had now overcome her first repugnance at sight of the deformed little body and saw only the sweet face and helpfulness. She had, also, offered Mrs. Bump some compensation for her daughter's "services; just the same as any other nurse's;" but the poorer mother gently declined.

“ If the dear Lord has given her a chance to do something for your girl, whom she so loves, I guess He means it as a sort of compensation to her for her own afflictions. No, indeed, Mrs. McClure, I wouldn't like to taint the sympathy between those two by any thought of money.”

To this there could be no answer, and so the matter rested.

“ Mary Jane, we begin to feel almost as if you belonged with us, you have been so kind and good to Bonny-Gay; and what do you say to staying up here at night, now? At least for a few nights together, with then one at home? ” asked the lady, as she sat down beside the cot and watched the undressing of the china seventh doll, preparatory to its bath.

Mary Jane looked up quickly, with a sort of fear coming into her telltale face.

“ Oh! I shouldn't like that. I mean—of course, you're very kind—but I'd have to go home. I would, indeed.”

“ It's not kindness on my part, especially. I thought it might save trouble to both sides; but, never mind. We'll go on as usual, for the present; though I wish you would speak to your mother about it, when you see her, this

evening. Now, Bonny-Gay, I have to go out. Is there anything you fancy, that I can bring you? I shall be at market and do some shopping. Think and see, darling."

Bonny-Gay's eyes had rested searchingly upon Mary Jane's face. She would have been delighted herself if her playmate could have remained all the time in the Place, but she saw the sudden fear and was puzzled by it. Yet she did not urge the matter, and the only request she made of her indulgent mother was:

"Just bring something new for the baby."

Again Mary Jane's face was troubled and she exclaimed:

"Please, Bonny-Gay don't! He has too many things already, that you have sent him. I'd rather not, please."

"Very well," said Mrs. McClure, as she kissed her little girl and went away. But she was considerably annoyed. She felt that she did not exactly "know how to deal with that class of people," to which Mary Jane belonged. She wished that Bonny-Gay had not taken this absurd fancy of hers. She wished that the Gray Gentleman had never done that unwise thing of carrying her daughter into the region

and knowledge of Dingy street. It was all very well for him to devote his time still, as he had all his life and fortune, toward making the lives of poor children brighter. Everybody must have a hobby, and that was his, she supposed. Of course, he was a noble man, and his name was known far and wide as that of a philanthropist. Still—Hmm. It would soon end, anyway. Bonny-Gay was improving rapidly, and was so perfectly healthy that there was nothing to fear. And if she needed her own carriage that evening, and Mary Jane remained still obstinate, she must be sent home in a cab. That was all.

With these thoughts she departed, but she had in some way left an altered atmosphere behind her. Her difficulty in understanding "that class of people" arose from the simple fact that she had, as yet, no real sympathy with them. It seemed to her that they were altogether different from herself; that they were duller, less capable of any true nobility. But she was, in reality, kind and good at heart, with many social cares to tax her nerves, and she was one day to have her present ignorance enlightened.

In the silence that followed her exit, Bonny-Gay's hand stole softly out and touched Mary Jane's cheek, down which a tear was rolling. And in the child's touch was that perfect sympathy which the mother's tone had lacked.

"Don't cry, Mary Jane. He'll come back."

Mary Jane's head lifted instantly and her face brightened.

"How'd you know 'twas that I was thinking about?"

"Oh! I knew. After a minute. Not just at first. Mother didn't understand. I don't s'pose she's heard yet that he was gone. Move up nearer. Fix yourself comf'table. Let's talk, instead of play dolls, now."

Mary Jane pushed her low chair to the side of the cot, so close now that she could rest her head against Bonny-Gay's own pillow.

"Tell the truth, tell the truth, tell the truth!" admonished Polly, and in their laughter at his opportune command they failed to hear that somebody had entered the room and sat down quite near them. This was Bonny-Gay's father, and he liked sometimes to surprise her by an unexpected visit of this sort, as well as to listen

to the innocent chatter of this pair of "Sunday bairns."

"How long is it, Mary Jane?"

"It was the very day you were hurt. Two whole weeks."

"Well. That's all right. Max is with him, isn't he?"

"I don't know. He went away with him. They both felt bad, I guess. That made them like to be together. Father's powerful fond of dogs, any way."

"And of the country, you said, too. I s'pose he's in the country somewheres."

"But where! I do want to see him so much. There is something I must tell him. Something he thinks is wrong, something that made him feel bad but should not. Something—Oh! I've seen all through things so clear, since he went. Every time he saw me I s'pose he was reminded that—My sake! What am I saying. But I'm so sorry about your mother not liking to send for me. I must have bothered her no end. I wouldn't have come only—"

"You wouldn't have come? Why, it was I who wanted you, who must have you. Don't you know, you are my 'twin sister?' It's all

right. Mother would give me anything to have me pleased. Don't think a thing about that. Let's talk about the rest. Say, Mary Jane, say!" Excitedly.

"There you are. Off you go! Have a care!" warned Polly.

"Oh! keep still, you bird. Listen, Mary Jane. You know I'm going to the country, don't you? We all are, just as soon as I get well."

"Yes. I think it will be just lovely for you."

"For you, too, you go with me and—find him!" almost shouted Bonny-Gay.

"Oh! you darling! Might I?"

"Course. Why shouldn't you? My father owns a lot of country. Ever and ever so much. He has so much he says it's a sin and shame it isn't doing anybody any good. But he's too busy to tend to it himself and he can't trust many folks. They would waste his money, dreadful. There's our big house and park, and all the gardens and things; and then there are fields and fields and fields. Miles of them, I guess. Just as like as not he's gone around there some place. Just supposing! If he has, why, pooh! You could find him in a minute.

Oh! you must go with me and look. It won't be so long, maybe. If this old leg would only get itself well. I love the country. It's all outdoors there."

Mary Jane said nothing, but her face was rapturous with anticipation. Finally, Bonny-Gay announced:

"I guess that's all settled, then. There's nothing to do about it only ask our folks. Let's make believe things. Let's pretend we had all the money in the world and could do just what we wanted to with it; what would you do, first?"

"Why, I wouldn't dare think. 'Cause it couldn't ever come true, you know."

"Supposing it couldn't? The things that don't come true are the sweetest things there are, I think. You begin."

Mary Jane drew a deep breath. Under the inspiration of this other more imaginative child, she was fast forgetting the hard, dry facts of life; and whether this were best or no, it was, at least, delightful.

"Well, I'd go to your father and I'd pay him money, and I'd get all those miles and miles of country to do with exactly as I pleased. Then



I'd take some more of the money and I'd get the men that build houses to make a house, right in the very prettiest spot there ever was. Where there was water if I could, 'cause my father, he's so fond of fishing. He's quit work, lots of times, to go fishing down the bay. I'd buy him a fish-pole and lines and hooks. I'd buy him and mother a cow and a horse and a market-wagon. They had a market-wagon once, but a man came along and told him he could make more money in the city; and he sold their things and lost the little farm and came. He'd be all right if he was back in that country, I guess. I'd like to see it, myself."

The eager speaker stopped short. Again she had almost revealed what no loyal daughter should,—a parent's fault. But Bonny-Gay was so interested, she seemed so to know beforehand what was in a body's mind that words slipped out of themselves.

"Have a care. Tell the truth!" adjured Polly.

"Of course I will," answered the cripple. "Now, Bonny-Gay, it's your turn. What would you do if you had all the money and could?"

The unseen father leaned forward a little. He was profoundly interested in any possible desires his darling might express, and, for the matter of that, she rarely did ask for anything. Maybe, because almost all desirable things came to her without the asking.

“ I hardly know. Yes, I do, too. I'd buy all the parks in this city and in every other one. I'd hunt up all the little children in the cities. I'd make free 'Playgrounds' for them, every one. Even the little girls should have their little cunning 'farms,' just the same. I guess they'd want to plant flowers, though, wouldn't they? instead of cabbages and limas. Then I'd take all the grown-ups who wanted to go into the country and couldn't, and I'd send them. And I'd let them stay a whole week, I guess. If I could. If there was room enough. And when Christmas came I'd have everybody that was poor come to my house, just like the Gray Gentleman does to the halls he hires, and I'd make them as happy as—I am. I wouldn't let anybody in the whole wide world be sick nor sorry; I wouldn't let anybody hurt nice dogs or turn them out of their own parks; and—Oh!

Mary Jane, do you s'pose we'll ever see dear old Max again?"

"Why, Bonny-Gay? Didn't you just make me feel 't he was right with father? Course, then, when father comes he'll come; and if you aren't well by that time I'll coax father to lead him up here to see you. If he'll be coaxed;" she added gravely.

The child on the cot glanced through the window. "There goes the Gray Gentleman, to see 'Father George' and the lion. I wish he'd come to see me; but he's afraid my mother blames him for taking me that day, I think, though nobody ever said so."

"I'll go ask him!"

Before she could be stopped, Mary Jane hopped across the room and down to the door. Mr. McClure rose with considerable noise and approached the cot. He had been deeply touched by the fact that neither of the two innocently dreaming "Sunday bairns" had planned anything for her own especial gratification. The witness of such unselfishness was refreshing in a world such as that wherein most of his waking hours were passed.

“ Well, little woman, how goes it? Getting well, fast? ”

Bonny-Gay held up her arms to be loved.

“ Fine, father dear. It won't be long before I'm out in the park again, watching for you to come home from business. ”

They found so much to say to each other that they quite forgot Mary Jane; who had, indeed, swung across the square to intercept the path of her friend. She had something of her own to say to the Gray Gentleman besides delivering her playmate's message. She was in trouble and knew that he would help her in some way too wise for her to think of.

“ Well, upon my word! If here isn't Mary Jane! I thought I heard a cheerful little clicke-e-ty-click, such as only one small energetic body could make. What's it now, Miss Bump? ”

“ I'd like to talk to you, please. ”

“ Don't doubt I need it. Yet if the ' talking to ' is to be very severe, I'd like to have the support of the lion. Let's rest against him. That's comfortable. Now, my child—talk! ”

“ First off, Bonny-Gay wants you to come and see her. ”

“ Shall be delighted, I’m sure. Please make my regards to Miss McClure and I will wait upon her at any hour she designates. ” Which dignified yet whimsical remark set Mary Jane to smiling.

“ I’m glad that’s fixed before I forgot. Because I’m in dreadful trouble, myself. ”

“ You look it! ” he exclaimed, smiling into her confiding face; then dropped his playful manner as he saw that she was really in earnest.

Whereupon she promptly told him about Mrs. McClure and why, in anticipation of her father’s possible return, she must, she must go home every night. “ And how can I? I mustn’t put them out—they are so good to me. I mustn’t stay away, if Bonny-Gay needs me. There’s all the dolls to be dressed, you see; and the canaries must be fed, or they’d die; and Polly is about as much care as the baby. She’s always dropping things and squawking till she gets them picked up for her—though she throws them right straight down again. I don’t see how Bonny-Gay can be so patient with that bird, do you? ”

“ I’m sure I shouldn’t be. ”

“ So, I couldn’t not come, course. And what

I want you to tell me, please, is there a shorter way I could come? So I could walk here? 'Cause I couldn't ride in the car. We couldn't afford that."

"If you would ride in the car I know, without asking, that Mrs. McClure would be more than glad to bear the expense."

"But father wouldn't like that. He never likes me to have rich folks do things for me. He—he seems to about hate them. He wouldn't let me go to the Empty Stocking Trees, 'cause he does. You're the only one he doesn't mind. And he likes the 'Playgrounds' 'cause they're not charity. They belong to the city and we do, same's the rich ones. They teach the children to work and learn farming, too. He likes that. But I couldn't take the money from her. I wouldn't so displease him, even if I had to stay away."

The Gray Gentleman pondered deeply. He would not offend the confiding child by offering himself to pay her car fare. He too greatly respected her honest pride and her loyalty to her father to do that. But, after a moment, he looked up.

"Miss Mary Jane Bump, once before I in-

vited you to call at my house and you declined. Now, I invite you again. I think I have something there that will solve your difficulties—and my own. May I have the pleasure? I'll detain you from the Poll parrot but a few moments."

"Oh! I'd love it!"

It was a very cheerful click the crutches gave now. The mere telling of her perplexities had half-banished them, and Mary Jane had implicit faith in the wisdom of this simple, true-hearted gentleman, who was, as Mrs. McClure had reflected, "the friend of all poor children everywhere."

The Gray Gentleman's big, empty, plainly furnished house, seemed very lonely to the little girl, whose own small home was so crowded; and she wondered at the slowness of the one colored "boy"—as gray as his master—who answered that master's ring.

"Boy, go upstairs, please, to my bedroom. Open the top drawer of the chiffonier and bring me all the socks you find there. You'd better use a basket—they are many in number."

The "Boy" half fancied that his master had lost his common sense, then leaped to the con-

clusion that this was probably one of their many pensioners upon whom the articles demanded were to be bestowed. He obeyed without comment, however, save by a respectful bow; and soon returned. Meanwhile Mary Jane had been shown the few pictures upon the walls and told their stories, and the place had begun to seem more cheerful to her.

The "Boy" was dismissed; the basket heaped with fine hosiery placed on the table beside the visitor, and herself bidden to look the contents over.

"What do you think of them, Mary Jane?"

"I never knew one person have so many stockings; and, my sake, there isn't a single pair but has a hole in it—not one single sock, even. I know. I guess you want me to mend them for you, don't you? I often help mother with the darning. She thinks I can do it quite well."

"I'm sure you can, and that is just what I do want. I cannot put on a ragged garment, poor old fellow though I am. They always come from the laundry, broken somewhere, and I am always buying new. That's how I



have so many. If you want to save my money for me you can do it."

"I'd love to! I'll take them home and fix them nights, after Bonny-Gay is through with me."

"Let's be business like, Miss Bump. What would be your charges, per pair?"

"My—charges? Nothing. I'd be so *glad* to do something for you, who have always been doing things for me."

"I've known you a few weeks, little girl, and I've done very little. Will five cents a pair be satisfactory?"

"I couldn't take so much. I couldn't take anything."

"That or nothing. I'm business. That would make you quite independent of all help except your own, and be a great benefit to me."

"Of course, then. And oh! thank you!"

"Now, pack up your work, little bread-winner, and let's back to Bonny-Gay."

## CHAPTER IX

### BY THE STRENGTH OF LOVE

THE days sped by. The summer heat deepened and there were thankful hearts in the vine-covered mansion in Mt. Vernon Place. For Bonny-Gay was well again; able to run about her beloved park, and to play in the shadow of the lion with the few children left still in that part of the city.

Nearly all the big houses were now closed, however, and their owners departed to seashore or mountain. The McClures themselves were making preparations for their own summer flitting to the great country house of which the little girls had talked. They would have still enjoyed being together, but that could no longer be.

A very few days after Mary Jane had made her business contract with the Gray Gentleman, and he had himself spoken to the conductors of

the cars upon which she would have to take her daily ride—so that everything was made easy and safe for her—those rides had ceased. William Bump returned as suddenly as he had departed, and, with all his old enmity against more fortunate folk, had immediately forbidden them.

But Mrs. Bump had herself gone to Mrs. McClure and explained enough of matters to prove that Mary Jane was neither ungrateful nor forgetful; and Mrs. McClure had accepted the explanation with great cheerfulness. It was a much easier way out of a difficult position than she had anticipated; because Bonny-Gay still talked about inviting Mary Jane with them to the country, and this her mother did not at all desire.

However, a compromise was effected. Mary Jane was to be asked to care for the thirteen dolls, the two canaries, the aquarium, and Polly; only the pony being allowed to accompany his little mistress on her summer outing. So, one morning, the carriage came around again and all these creatures were stowed in it, along with Bonny-Gay and a maid. They had been taken straight to Dingy street, where

they were left with many injunctions and much sage advice, as to their proper care. Then the two little "Sunday bairns" had kissed each other many times, and had torn themselves weeping from each other's embrace, while the dignified maid looked coldly on, urging:

"If you please, Miss McClure, you would much better be going. The train goes at two o'clock and there's much to pack, still."

"Very well, Hawkins. I'm coming. Good-bye, Mary Jane, dear, dear Mary Jane! I'll write you as soon as I get there and maybe, maybe, your father and my mother will let you come out to our house and make me a beautiful long visit. I'd teach you to ride on the pony just the same as if your legs were good, or in the goat cart or—"

"Come, come, Miss Bonny-Gay!" called Hawkins.

The coachman cracked his whip, there was a last glimpse of a bare sunny head thrust from the carriage window, the tossing of ecstatic kisses, and Bonny-Gay had passed out of Mary Jane's life, probably forever. That is, if the intentions of her parents could be carried out.

When they returned, in the autumn, a man could be dispatched for the dolls and things, if their owner still desired them. If not, they might remain the property of the small Bumps, and so well rid of them. The parrot had been misbehaving of late, and using expressions not wholly suited to the proprieties of Mt. Vernon Place. Originally owned and trained by a man of the "slums," she was returning to the rude speech of earlier years.

But she was well received in the Bump household, save by William, its head. He had frowned upon the coming into it of Bonny-Gay's treasures and only consented to the arrangement because of Mary Jane's disappointment. For ever since his return the father and daughter had been always together and each seemed doubly anxious to do nothing that would give the other pain. And after a time, even he became interested in the queer bird and joined his children in inciting it to talk; though his interest was not fully won until there sounded along the street a familiar cry, to which nobody paid much heed except Polly.

She was suddenly transformed. She flut-

tered her feathers, stretched her neck, cocked her head on one side, and in a tone that was almost human in its mimicry burst forth:

“Crab-crab-crab-crab—crab-crab-crab! Devil-devilled-devil-devilled-crabs! Heah’s-de-crab-man! Is yo’ hongry? Crab-man-goin’-to-baid-now! Dis yo’ las’ chance for yo’ nice-fried-hot-fried-devil-devilled-crabs! C-R-A-B-S! OU-OU-OUCH!”

After which remarkable exploit mistress Polly became the idol of Dingy street and even of William Bump.

The disposition of her new charges, so that they should not take up too much space in her little home, and the careful packing away in the top-cupboard of the food Bonny-Gay had provided for her pets, kept Mary Jane busy all morning; and her mother had dinner on the table before she observed how the time had flown. But when she heard the cheerful summons:

“Come, father. Come children!” and smelled the freshly cooked fish, she realized that she had given more attention than she meant to her new cares.

“Oh! mother, I didn’t think I was so long!”

And I wanted to get my part the ironing done; because I promised Bonny-Gay that I'd go to the park, if you could spare me, and watch her train go by. It's that fast express, that whizzes so; but she's to sit on the park side the parlor car, she called it, and she's to watch for me and I for her. She'll wave and I'll wave and that will be our really last good-by. Till she comes home again."

"That would be how-de-do? Wouldn't it, child? And the ironing's all right. I've done that so, if father wants to go watch the men this afternoon, you can go with him. Now eat your dinner and be thankful for all your blessings."

Everybody was always hungry at that table and the dinner was soon over. Then William Bump arose, put on his hat, whistled to a big black dog who lay on the door step and started off for his afternoon of loafing.

Mary Jane watched the pair with a pitying love.

"Those two seem just alike, some ways, don't they mother? Father lost his home and his work and so did Max. Dearly as Bonny-Gay loves that dog, ever since he got her hurt,

he doesn't want to be with her like he used. Didn't you notice, this morning? When she hugged him and bade him good-by, he was just a little pleased; yet he kept one eye on father and soon's he could walked back and lay down beside him. Father is dreadful good to Max, isn't he? He often says he'd never have come back if it hadn't been for—for us—"

"For you, daughter. Mostly for you, it was, dear."

"Well, Max helped. He staid right close and coaxing like. Oh! I do wish the Company would give father another try."

"It won't. But I'm in hopes, after awhile, he'll find something else to do. Meanwhile you stay close to him. Don't give him a chance to get down-hearted again and—you know. Didn't you say your Gray Gentleman was coming to the park to look at the 'farms' this very day? Why, maybe, child, maybe he'd know of a job somewhere. You might ask him."

"Yes, I might. I will. What's father going to do now? he's taken to the track."

"He says that, though he has no work there, there isn't any law forbids him sitting round,



watching his old friends who have. He likes to talk with men, you know; and if you're handy by he's quite satisfied. Father doesn't like to go wrong any better than we like to have him. He trusts you to watch out for him, honey. So, if I were you, instead of taking the baby and going along the street to the gate I'd go to the park by the railroad. You can climb up the embankment at an easy place, and stay near father. Then you'd be able to see everything. The children in the 'Playgrounds,' and the Gray Gentleman if he goes to them, and Bonny-Gay's train when it comes, and all. Only—only, Mary Jane—take care to give the cars plenty of room."

"Course I will. 'Look out for the cars when the bell rings!'" laughingly quoted the child. "And you look out for the parrot when the crab-man comes! I guess you're right. I'd better not take the baby. If I climb up the bank I might let him slip. Good-by. I'll make father all right and happy, don't you fear."

The mother watched her darling out of sight, thinking how sunshiny and helpful she was, then settled the baby safely among his new

playthings and resumed her endless toil. But she was wholly happy and contented now. They were poor, indeed, but they were not suffering, and her hopeful heart was sure that in some way a task would be found for her husband which would keep him out of idleness and evil company. She began her one hymn of cheerfulness: "Lord, in the morning Thou shalt, Thou shalt, Lord, in the morning Thou shalt hear, my voice ascending high."

Meanwhile, Mary Jane had hopped along the road till she came to a part of the railway embankment which she could climb, then scrambled to its top. Just before her the rails were laid over a long trestle above the deep bed of a stream, now almost dry. A little water still ran among the stones below but Mary Jane did not look down upon that. She made her way swiftly, yet cautiously, beside the track, pushed rapidly along the trestle, and reached her father's side, at the further end of it.

"Here am I, father. I'm going to watch for the train from here."

"All right, daughter."

A fellow workman looked up and remonstrated:

“You oughtn’t to let that girl walk that trestle, Bump. If her crutches slipped it—the bottom’s rough and deep down.”

“Oh! I’m not afraid. I don’t often, either, though I’ve played about this railroad ever since I was born. All the Dingy street children play there. How pretty the park looks, down yonder;” interrupted Mary Jane, anxious that her father should not be blamed, especially for what was not his doing.

“That’s right. You oughtn’t, daughter,” he said.

“I won’t again, then, father, if you don’t like. But I was safe enough. What’s that team for, that’s coming?”

“They’re going to haul off that pile of ties that have been taken up. Company gives ’em for the hauling. Only things it ever does give, too.”

“They ought to work faster. See. They keep dropping them on the track. If a train should come by it would get thrown off. Don’t they know that?”

“Oh, they know it all right, but they’ll be in time. They’re used to it.”

It was in this very hardihood of custom that the danger lay. A beginner at such a task

would have watched constantly for the approach of a train, but this "gang" did not. For the greater ease of handling they rolled the heap of heavy ties over upon the track, as the anxious girl had observed, and two men lifting leisurely placed the weighty, worn out timber upon the wagon. The mule team before the wagon stood half-over the edge of the embankment, heads dropped, themselves enjoying the rest regardless of position.

The men laughed and talked. William Bump joined in the chatter and forgot Mary Jane. The talk grew more interesting, to the speakers, and became a torture to the listening girl, though she paid no attention to the words. She realized, merely, that they were growing more and more indolent; the pile of ties upon the rails lessened very, very slowly. It was already long past noon, she knew that. She was familiar enough with the running of trains to know, also, that the through express was the next one due. It was upon this through express that Bonny-Gay would travel. She began to feel cold with her anxiety. She must speak to those men, even if it should displease her father, who hated interference of that sort.

So she moved forward a little way and touched the arm of the foreman.

“ Will you tell me the time, please? ”

“ Ten minutes to two, little girl. Pretty hot up here, isn't it? ” he answered, good naturedly.

“ Mary Jane, don't meddle. Children should be seen not heard. ”

“ Yes, father. Only ten minutes! Why, you've been ever and ever so long taking off less than half the ties. Can you finish in ten minutes? Can you? ” she demanded, eagerly.

“ Why, kid, what's the hurry? Got another job for us, eh? ”

“ The hurry? The train. The two o'clock express. It's almost due. ”

The foreman's face paled a trifle. Then he whistled.

“ Whew, sis, you're right! Jim, lead that team off the bank. We'll just roll the rest down to the bottom and drive round there to load up. Now, with a will! there ain't no time to spare! here she goes! ”

The mules were led away by one man while the others exerted themselves to clear the tracks in any and every manner possible. There was no longer any talking. There were no false

movements. They knew that there was no way of signalling the express, just there, even if there should be need. But there must be no need, the tracks must be cleared. Must be!

William Bump moved down upon the bank and watching from an apparently safe place called upon Mary Jane to follow him.

She did not hear him. She stood, resting upon her crutches, anxiously watching the toilers, straining forward, as if in that attitude she could help them, and listening—listening—with every nerve at tension. She did not see the Gray Gentleman, who had come into the park awhile before and having caught sight of his favorite's pink frock, crossed the level space from the "Playgrounds" to the embankment to see what so interested her. As he reached the spot below the end of the trestle he, also, began to comprehend what was passing in Mary Jane's mind and his own cheek whitened.

"Hark! It's coming—it's coming!" cried the girl. "Work—work!"

They did work with a will. There was no need for anybody to urge them. They, also, heard the low rumble of wheels along the distant track, the shiver and tremble of the rails.

The heavy ties rolled down—fast and faster. The way was almost clear. There was only one tie left and that—

A man turned to look over his shoulder. “The train! The train! It’s on us!”

The whole gang leaped to safety and waited. The one big timber still lay crosswise above the trestle. It meant destruction. They knew it, Mary Jane knew it. They could not move; but she could. That menacing log should not destroy!

Ah! but those long, strong, useful arms of hers stood her in good stead just then. All the strength of her body was in them. The crutches went, she knew not where. She was lying flat, forcing, pushing, compelling that last tie down, over the edge. The train was almost there. She knew that, also, but she felt no fear. She must do her task—she must—she could!

The men on the bank watched breathless, but not one went to her aid. Even William Bump seemed stricken to stone.

There came a crash. The log was over—the track was clear!

But where was Mary Jane?

As he rounded the curve just before the trestle the engineer had seen the child upon the track, but though he instantly reversed his engine the train could not be brought to a standstill till it had quite crossed the openwork space, and he stepped down from it with horror in his heart.

A horror which quickly changed to a shout of joy, though the peril was yet not over.

Again these long, strong arms had done their owner good service. As the train came upon the trestle she slipped down and dropped between the ties, clinging to one for her life. She scarcely heard now that rumble and roar above her; all her consciousness was fixed in the clutch of her fingers upon that cross-beam.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was the Gray Gentleman who first reached the spot and prostrating himself upon the roadbed reached down to clasp her arms and draw her up to safety.

“You precious child! You heroine!”

She opened her eyes at that, gave him one radiant smile, and promptly fainted away.



Which, she afterward declared, was a very foolish thing for a sensible girl to do.

She as promptly revived, however, and there was Bonny-Gay hugging and thanking her, but not saying good-by, at all! And there was Mrs. McClure, that proud and dignified lady, snatching the crooked little figure from the Gray Gentleman's arms, to enfold it in her own and to weep and cry over it in the most astonishing fashion.

"Oh! you darling, darling child! You've saved our lives, saved Bonny-Gay, who's more than life to us. Little did I guess how noble you are. Nobler, Mary Jane, than anybody I ever knew."

It was like a dream. The people, all the passengers and trainmen, crowding round to thank and bless the little hunchback, who now rested in her own father's arms, while he beamed upon her, proud and happy, but with soul-cleansing tears streaming down his softened face. And there was Mr. McClure, laying his hand kindly upon William Bump's shoulder and begging:

"For any injustice I've done you, for any injustice you've done me, let this hour make

amends. As man to man—trust me, William Bump.”

“Aye, Boss. I will, I will”; and the poor man looked into the face of the rich man and behold! it was as that of a brother.

“What’s all this to-do?” cried Mrs. Stebbins, to Mrs. Bump. “The express has stopped and there’s a crowd of people coming this way.”

“I don’t know, I’m sure. I just heard the train go by. I hope nothing’s wrong.”

“Not wrong, sure. The men are tossing their hats and cheering and the women—they’re laughing and talking like they’d struck a gold mine. They’re headed this way.”

But Mrs. Bump was too busy to look. She had a lot of clear-starching to do and she was engaged in a new, therefore interesting, task; she was teaching Polly to sing a hymn!

“Yes, you smart bird. If you can talk crab-man’s talk, that always sounds sort of wicked, though, of course, it isn’t, you can learn better things just as easy.”

“So I can, so I can. Tell the truth, tell the truth, tell the truth,” answered Polly.

“Oh! I’m telling it, never fear. Learn it you shall. Now begin—”

But the lesson was interrupted. The voices of the crowd were near at hand; were at the door; were in the very room! What did it mean? William was placing Mary Jane in her mother's arms, as if she had been the baby himself—helpful Mary Jane! And Mrs. McClure was clasping Mrs. Bump's neck, and sobbing and laughing on her shoulder.

Everybody was talking at once, but suddenly somebody cleared a space and placed a chair behind the startled mistress of the house. She sank into it gratefully, her knees now trembling too much to support her. But the facts had penetrated to her consciousness, at last, and with a cry that hushed all speech of others, she held her precious "Sunday bairn" to her heart with a thankfulness beyond words.

Suddenly, upon this sacred silence, there fell a voice which seemed neither bird nor human, yet strangely reverent and opportune:

"Lord, in the morning Thou shalt, Thou shalt,  
Lord, in the morning Thou shalt hear  
My voice ascending high."

At this interruption there were some who wept—but none who smiled.

## CONCLUSION

### AFTERWARD

OF course there was an afterward. There always is.

The fallow fields of the McClure estate no longer lie idle under the blue sky, a reproach to their owner. The property was not quite of the "miles and miles" in extent which Bonny-Gay had imagined, but it was still sufficient to set apart a goodly number of acres as a home for Mary Jane, who had never known how beautiful the country was until she was driven one day, along a smooth road, under over-hanging trees, and over bridges crossing here and there the prettiest trout stream in the world. The drive was interrupted, "to let the horses rest," where there was a fine view of a cottage, freshly painted in cream and white, and with the most inviting of piazzas extending from its sides.

Mary Jane had been allowed to make a little visit at the home of Bonny-Gay, and had been absent from Dingy street for one whole week. This day her absence was to end, even with this day; and she thought it a little odd that Bonny-Gay should seem so extravagantly happy, as if she were glad that the visit were over. Though, of course, the guest knew better than that. There was not the slightest doubt in the heart of either "Sunday bairn" concerning their mutual love.

"Oh! what a pretty house! We haven't come this way before, have we? Is it on the road to the station, Bonny-Gay? How happy the folks must be who live there. But I'm happy, too. Dingy street will seem perfectly lovely to me when I get there. Do you suppose the baby has grown much? I wonder if Polly has learned any new things. Mother's a master hand to teach, mother is. She taught me my letters while she was working round. She thinks I can, maybe, be spared to go to school—sometime. How I want to see her. Seems as if I could hardly wait."

"Oh! I'm so glad, so glad!" laughed Bonny-Gay, and even the old coachman's face

beamed with smiles, though in ordinary he felt that it was his business, when on duty, to conduct himself like an automaton.

“ I s’pose you’ll write to me, won’t you? You promised, that other time, before you started, you know. ”

“ No. I shall do no such thing. ”

“ Bonny-Gay! ” There was a volume of reproach in the tones.

“ No. Not a line. ”

“ Whose house is this, do you suppose? ”

“ I don’t ‘ suppose ’ when I know things. ”

“ Whose, then? ”

“ Let’s go ask. ”

“ Why Beulah Standish McClure! What would your mother say? If there’s anything she wants you to be it’s a lady. So I’ve heard her say, time and again. ”

“ So have I. I’m tired of hearing it. I mean, I’m trying to be one. She wouldn’t care. She’d do it herself, if she were here. ”

“ Never! She never, never would be so rude. ”

Bonny-Gay made a funny little grimace, then leaned sidewise and hugged her friend.

“ Do the Dingy street folks know better how to behave than the Place folks, missy? ”

“Yes, Bonny-Gay, I think they do”; answered Mary Jane with dignity. For she had now been associated with the McClure household long enough to get a fair idea of the proprieties; and she was sure that driving up to the doors of strange houses and inquiring their owners’ names, was not one. However, she could do nothing further, for it was Bonny-Gay’s carriage and not hers.

“Drive in, please.”

So the phaeton turned into the pretty driveway, bordered with shrubs, and around the lawn by a freshly prepared curve to the very front door itself. Mary Jane had turned her head away and utterly refused to look. She was amazed at Bonny-Gay, her hitherto model, but she’d be a party to no such impertinence; not she.

Then her head was suddenly seized by her mate’s hands and her face forced about toward that unknown doorway.

“Look, Mary Jane Bump! You shall look! You shall. If you don’t, you’ll break my heart. Look quick!”

Mary Jane’s lids flew open. Then she nearly tumbled off the seat. The Gray Gentleman was

coming down the steps, smiling and holding out his hand. Smiling and calling, too:

“They’ve come, Mrs. Bump! They’ve come!” Mary Jane, in her newly acquired ideas of etiquette, wondered to hear such a quiet person speak so loudly or jest upon such themes. She had instantly decided that this was some friend’s country house, where he, too, was visiting. Odd that his hostess’ name should be like her own.

But all her primness vanished when out from that charming cottage flew a woman with a baby in her arms. A woman in a print gown, clear-starched as only one laundress could do it, and a baby so big and round and rosy he had to be spelled with a capital letter.

“Mother! My mother and the Baby!”

“Welcome home, my child! Welcome home!”

And the Baby cooed and gurgled something that sounded very like “Ome,” without an H.

“Has everybody gone crazy?”

“Not quite!” answered William Bump, appearing from another corner. He was as washed and starched as his wife, and had done



for himself even something more, in honor of this great occasion—he was smoothly shaved. He looked years younger than his child had ever seen him and oh! how much happier and more self-respectful. He had found his right place again. He was once more a tiller of the soil; and there is nothing so conducive to true manliness as finding one's congenial task and feeling the ability to accomplish it.

Mary Jane's head buzzed with the strangeness and wonder and delight of it all. Yet the explanation was very simple and sensible.

It was impossible but that the McClures should do something to evince their gratitude to the little saver of their child's and their own lives and they did that which they knew would be most acceptable to her; they gave her this home in the country.

For the house, with its deed was made to Mary Jane Bump, herself; but over the wide fields surrounding it her father was made overseer and farmer, for his old "Boss," at good but not extravagant wages. The house had long stood empty, ever since the railroad magnate had dropped his former scheme of agriculture on a big scale, but it was in good repair

and quite large enough to accommodate even the household of Bump. A coat of paint made it like new and during the cripple's absence from Dingy street the flitting was accomplished.

Bonny-Gay's own summer home was near at hand, though she had driven Mary Jane to the cottage by such a roundabout way; and her delight had lain in her knowledge of the happiness that was coming to her friend.

This was a year ago. As yet no cloud has marred the perfect sunshine of Mary Jane's new life. She now rides to school in a smart little cart, drawn by the sedatest of piebald ponies. She is apt and ambitious and is learning fast. Indeed, she is confidently looking forward to a day in the future when, being both old and wise enough, she shall be matriculated at a certain famous woman's college; to don the cap and gown whose ample folds shall hide, at last, her physical deformity. God speed you, Mary Jane! and all your happy sisterhood!

THE END

July - 19. 1901

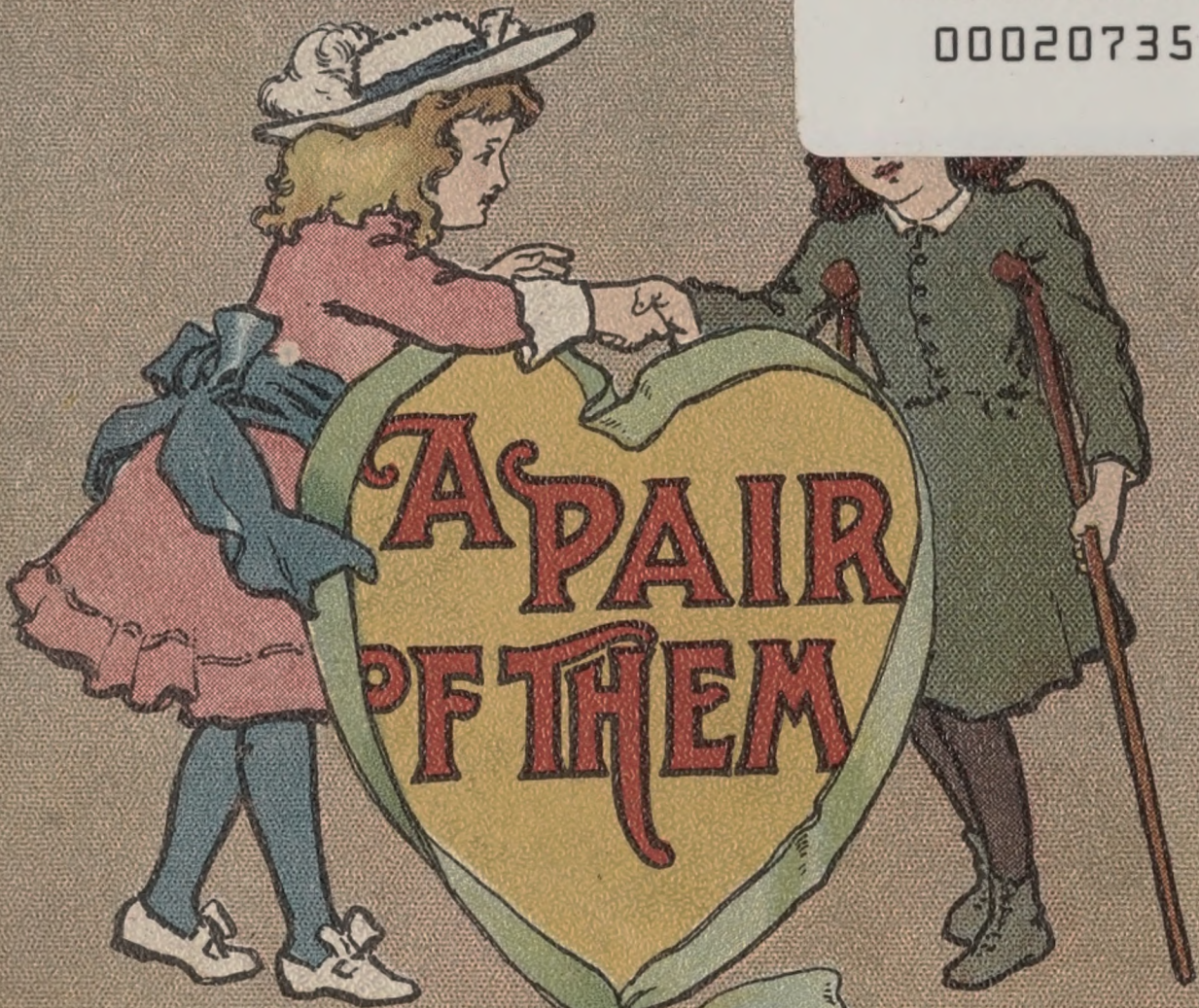




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