HERE AND THERE WITH A WIDE-AWAKE GIRL

MARY JANE AT SCHOOL

CLARA INGRAM JUDSON

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Title: Mary Jane at School

Date of first publication: 1923

Author: Clara Ingram Judson

Date first posted: Apr. 5, 2016

Date last updated: Apr. 5, 2016

Faded Page eBook #20160405

This eBook was produced by: Stephen Hutcheson, Dave Morgan & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at http://www.pgdpcanada.net

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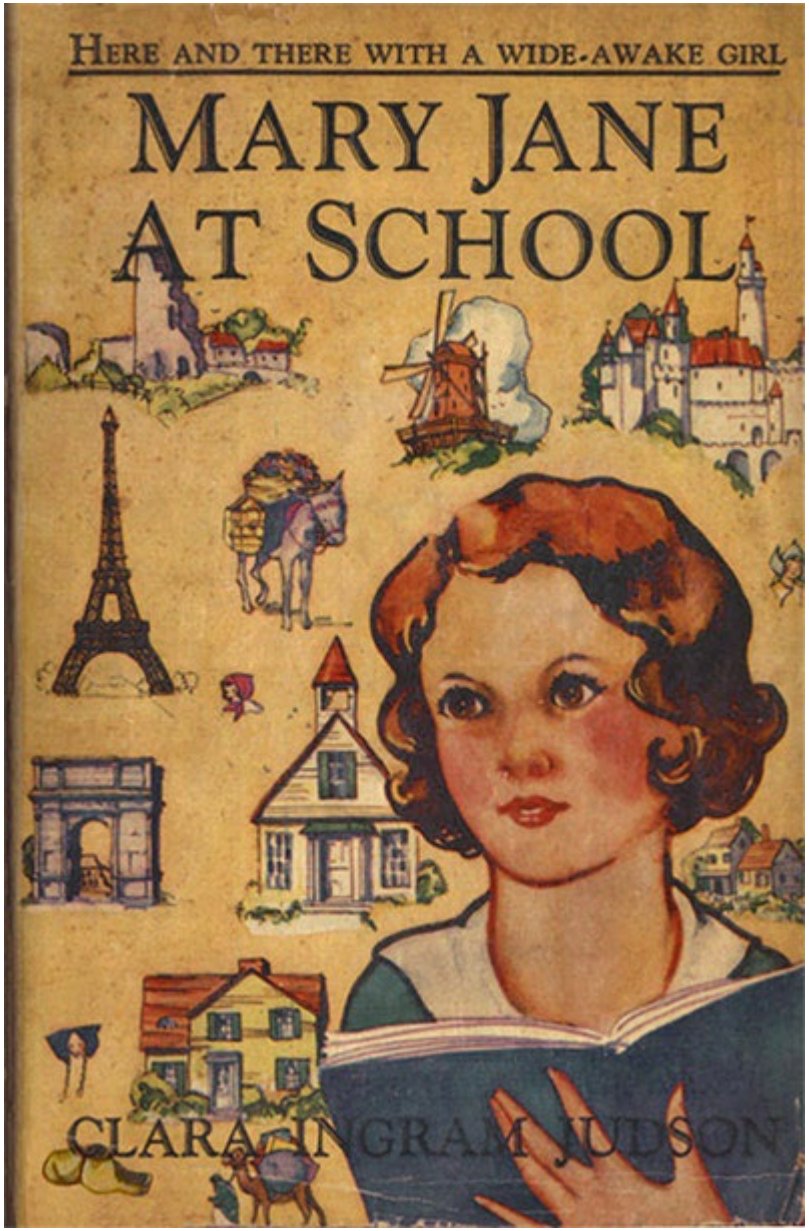

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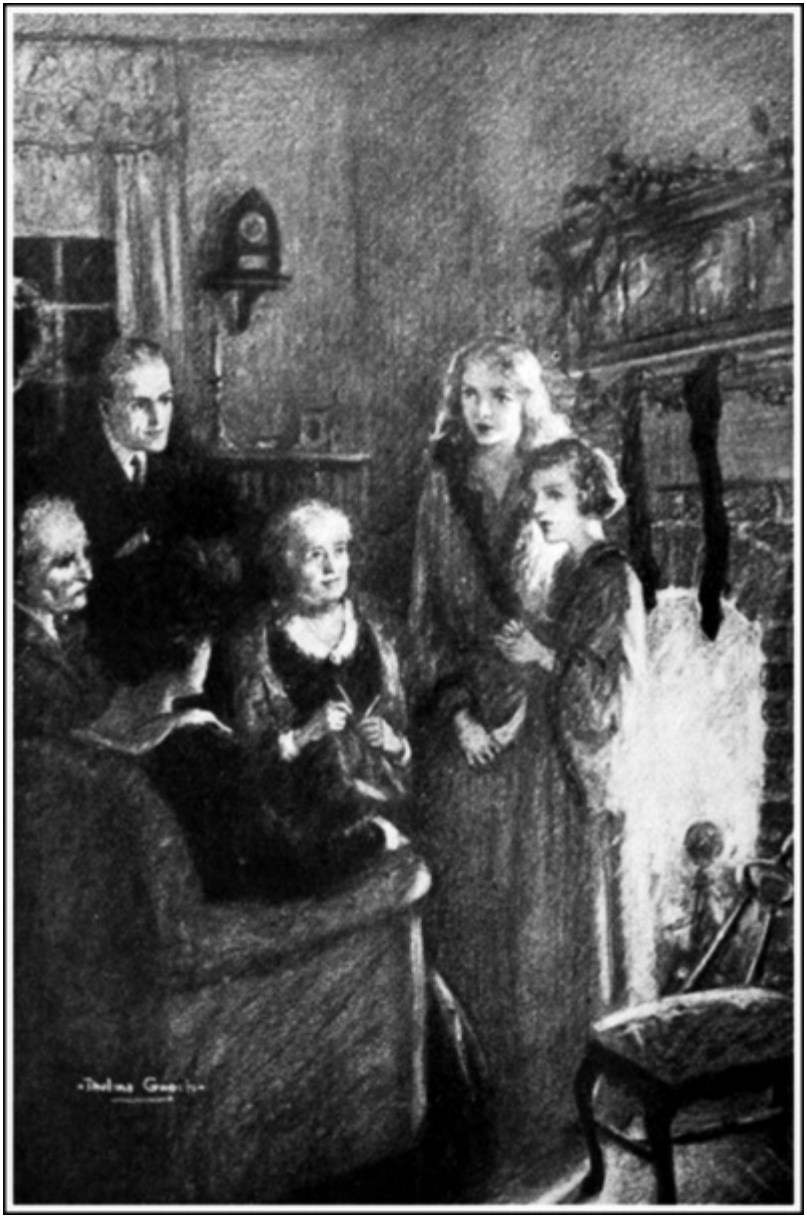

“It was the night before Christmas” (*See pp.* 192)

MARY JANE AT SCHOOL

BY
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GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

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By

BARSE & CO.

MARY JANE AT SCHOOL

Printed in the United States of America

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MARY JANE AT SCHOOL

OLD FRIENDS AND NEW

"BURR-RR-RR! Burr-rr-rr! Burr-rr-rr!"

Silence.

"Burr-rr-rr! Burr-rr-rr! Burr-rr-rr!"

Mary Jane sleepily rubbed her eyes and sat up in bed.

Whatever could be happening?

"Burr-rr-rr!"

"Mary Jane! Shut it off! Press the slide at the back as I told you to," called her mother's voice from the next room.

Instantly Mary Jane remembered. They weren't out in the country any more. That was the reason why she couldn't see trees and sky and squirrels when she sat up to look around. They were back in the city and this was the day school was to begin. And she had been so very afraid that the family would oversleep (though they never had) that she persuaded her mother to let her take the alarm clock to bed with her.

She grabbed it up, thrust it under the pillow to subdue it somewhat and then, with quick fingers, slid the little slide and shut off the noise. And Alice was still sleeping soundly. Just imagine sleeping with that noise going on in your very room!

Mary Jane slipped out of bed, pounced on her sister and gave

her a shake.

"Alice! Alice! Wake up, sleepy head!" she shouted. "Don't you remember this is the day to go to school?"

"Umm-m-m," mumbled Alice, turning over. Then she opened her eyes and remembered. And immediately she was wide awake. Of course! School!

So much had happened since the two Merrill girls had been in school that they had almost forgotten what it would be like.

First there was their trip east with the graduation festivities at Harvard and all the fun at the beach and visiting old historic places. The girls had loved that. Then, hardly had they reached home, before the family moved out to their brand new little summer home in the woods some twenty-five miles outside of Chicago. And in the fun and out-of-door work and play, both had grown strong and brown as Indians. They ought to be strong and well for their winter's work. But it certainly would seem queer to have to sit still at desks and to be indoors so much. No doubt about that!

"How do you s'pose my teacher will be?" wondered Mary Jane as she picked up her clothes ready to go to the bathroom for her morning tub. "I'll be sorry to be out of Miss Treavor's room, I will. But of course I passed."

"Well, they're all pretty nice, I think," said Alice philosophically, "and you have to have the one that's there, so no use worrying."

"I wasn't worrying," said Mary Jane, "I was wondering. And

when a person wonders they just wonder, they can't help it a bit."

By the time she was through her tub, Alice was ready for hers, so there was no more time for talk till they met in the kitchen. Alice's morning task was to fix the fruit while Mary Jane filled the glasses with water, carried in the cream, and saw to it that the sugar bowl was full.

"Oh, dear," sighed Mary Jane, as she scooped out the last, the very last scrap of melon she could find in her half portion, "I don't believe I want to go to school after all. I don't want to sit still and I don't want to be a grade below Betty, and I think I'd rather stay home and help you, mother."

"Why, Mary Jane," laughed Mrs. Merrill, "aren't you a funny little girl! Maybe you'll catch up with Betty some day. And, anyway, whether you are up with her or not, I'm sure you want to go and do what the other children want to. You'll——"

A call from out-of-doors interrupted.

"Mary Jane! Mary Jane! Mary Jane Merrill! Are you home?" It was Betty's voice, and she was calling from the yard just below the dining-room windows in the Merrill apartment.

Instantly all Mary Jane's troubles were forgotten and with a hurried, "Will you please excuse me, mother," she slid out of her chair and hurried to the little balcony overlooking the Holden yard.

"Hello, Betty," she called, "ready for school?"

"Yes, and I've a new dress to wear," announced Betty.

"So've I," replied Mary Jane; "anyway I have a new dress and I guess mother will let me wear it."

"Well, you'd better hurry up," announced Betty, "'cause it's almost eight now and I'm going in ten minutes so as to play in the yard. They have a new teeter—I saw it."

Betty danced along toward her house and Mary Jane dashed indoors.

"Betty has a new dress and she's going to wear it to school," she cried to her mother. "And please, mother, can I hurry and do my work so as to go with Betty, and please may I wear my new dress, too—that blue one with cross-stitch butterflies on it—mother, please may I?"

"But I thought you didn't want to go to school?" asked Mrs. Merrill, as though much puzzled.

"Why, mother!" exclaimed Mary Jane in amazement. "Of course I want to go to school! Who ever heard of a little girl who didn't want to go to school? Why, mother!"

"Well," laughed Mrs. Merrill, "I guess I must have been mistaken. And you may wear your new dress if you are careful in the playground."

"Goody!" cried Mary Jane happily, "you're the bestest mother ever was. Now I'll do my work quick fast."

She started clearing off the table so swiftly that Mrs. Merrill

feared for the safety of her cups and saucers. It isn't so comfortable when one hears favorite cups dancing gay little jigs on the saucers as they are carried from dining-room to kitchen, as most folks know.

"I'll tell you what to do, Mary Jane," she suggested. "Seeing it's the first morning and you want to get there early to play, you pick up your room and see that the waste-baskets are empty, and the pillows and papers in the living-room are picked up, and then you may change your dress and skip along. I have unpacking and so many odds and ends to do this morning, I won't mind doing a little more and tending to the breakfast work myself. So skip along, dear."

Mary Jane needed no second bidding. She hurried into her room, tidied it up the best she knew, then looked in the living-room waste-baskets—not a thing there—goody—that was because they had just got home, of course. Then she gave the pillows on the davenport a punch or two to make them look more interesting, and off she flew to her room for the new dress.

It was a very pretty frock of dark blue with bloomers to match, and dainty little fluttery cross-stitch butterflies perched on the front and on the left sleeve. Mary Jane felt awfully proud to be wearing it. Just as she settled the belt in place and looked in the glass to make sure it was all right, Betty rang the front door bell—Mary Jane knew it was Betty for it was one long ring and two short taps—their signal.

Mrs. Merrill came quickly to fix Mary Jane's hair ribbon and to kiss her good-by, and off Mary Jane scampered down the stairs.

"Where's your report card?" asked Betty, when she saw her little friend was empty-handed.

"My report card?" repeated Mary Jane, so surprised she was almost stupid. "Why—why—why—I don't know."

"Well, they'll put you back in the baby room again—Ed said so," announced Betty, in a tone that implied she was ready for the worst—indeed, was expecting it.

Mary Jane's eyes filled with tears. Wouldn't that be awful? The baby room! *Where* could her card be? What had she done with it? But, silly, of course her mother would know.

Up the stairs she hurried, ringing the little bell at the front door. Mrs. Merrill heard her coming and opened it quickly.

"Why, Mary Jane Merrill!" she exclaimed as she saw the tears, "What in the world is the matter, child! Did you hurt yourself?"

"No," said Mary Jane, "but I can't remember where my report card is, and Betty says I'll have to go into the baby room, if I don't have it."

"Betty, you shouldn't tease that way," reproved Mrs. Merrill. "She ought to have the card, and she might have to go into the baby room for a few hours if she didn't have it. But folks who have done the work in there don't have to stay, so that settles that. Now where *did* we put that card, Mary Jane!"

"I brought it home the last day before we went to Boston," Mary Jane reminded her, "and you put it——" but she couldn't

remember any further.

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Merrill, "I remember that far myself, only everything was so rushing busy getting off that day I can't recall. I suppose it's right here in my little desk drawer."

The two girls watched eagerly while she looked, but there was no report card there. She looked in the big drawers, in the little drawers, in her dresser, in the little drawer in the living-room table—where else could that thing be?

"I think you little folks had better run on," she finally decided. "Betty wants to play in the yard, and anyway it's nearly time for you to be starting. Alice is ready to go, I see, and of course she hasn't her card either."

"Yes I have, mother," called Alice. "Here it is in my geography, so I'm all right."

"Good," said Mrs. Merrill, "that's some comfort. Now, Mary Jane, don't let anyone worry you. You go right to the room where you know you belong, and tell your new teacher your mother will bring your card over soon."

Reluctantly Mary Jane started off with Betty. But she would have felt much better if she could have been clutching her card, as Betty was hers.

At the corner they met Ann Ellis, Betty's friend from last year, and Janny and another little girl who was with them.

"Her name's Ellyn," announced Ann, "and she's moved right over our apartment. She's in third grade, too."

"Everybody's in third grade," thought Mary Jane desperately; "Betty and Ann and now Ellyn. And I'll have to go back to the baby room—maybe!"

There wasn't much time left for play when they reached the school yard, partly because they had waited to hunt Mary Jane's card, and partly because they had walked very slowly along the street as they were talking together. But perhaps that was just as well for Mary Jane, as she certainly did not feel much like playing. She couldn't think of a thing but that lost card, and she kept looking and looking down the street in the hope that maybe her mother had found it and hurried over with it.

But no mother came. The bell rang, the children fell in line and marched upstairs, rather hit-or-miss fashion. Of course, they would learn better in a day or two.

Betty, Ann, and Ellyn proudly turned toward the third grade room, and Mary Jane went to the room that last year was second, high second.

She went into the cloakroom, even though she had no hat to hang up, for she wanted to put off talking to the teacher as long as ever she could. Every child, so far as she could see, was clutching a card—every single one. And Mary Jane felt very forlorn and lonely and miserable.

"If you please," she finally mustered up courage to say to her teacher, "my mother will bring my card over afterward, but this is my room."

"How do you know it's your room?" demanded the teacher, crossly. She was new and young, and the strain of getting used to

things was almost too much for her. “I can’t have a single child in my room who hasn’t a card. You must be a very careless little girl. Now you go straight to the office and stay there till the principal can see what to do about you.”

Mary Jane turned miserably and left the room. It was worse than she had feared. Worse than the baby room. To have to go to the principal’s office and stay there! Oh, dear! Down the stairs she went, her feet so heavy she could hardly move them. Along the hall—into the office. And there was the principal.

“Good morning,” said he pleasantly, “weren’t you one of our little girls last year? Of course, I remember. Your name is Merrill.”

Mary Jane smiled happily. That wasn’t such a bad beginning after all.

“It’s Mary Jane Merrill,” she told him. “And I’m sent down here——”

“To see what grade you should be in, of course,” said the principal promptly. Evidently he was awfully busy this first morning.

“Well, Mary Jane Merrill, you take that reader over there and read me page ten.” He pointed to a reader on the table.

Tremblingly Mary Jane picked it up, turned to page ten and began to read. She liked to read. Mother had her read books at home and she had a little magazine all her own, that she liked to read stories in, too. Reading wasn’t hard—not a bit.

"Well, that's fine," said the principal, when she had read a few sentences. "We'll make sure later, but I think you ought to be in third grade—anybody who can read as well as you can, Mary Jane." He scribbled something on a paper. "Now you take this up to Miss Montrow's room and tell her to try you in third for a few days. And if you can do the work, you're to stay. I thought last year, you'd be trying third this fall, but I waited to be sure."

With a pretty little thank-you, Mary Jane took the paper he handed her and walked out of the room. But she couldn't, simply couldn't, walk up the stairs! She ran, skipping along, and her feet and her heart were so light and happy you never would suppose they belonged to the same person who had walked down those stairs such a few minutes ago—never. Miss Montrow—that was the room where Ann and Betty and Ellyn were—wouldn't they be surprised, though? Well, just wait and see!

The door was shut. Mary Jane knocked firmly—she wasn't a bit frightened any more, only her heart did go "thump, thump!" as she heard the teacher's step across the room.

THE NEW ROOM

IT was a proud moment for Mary Jane when the door opened and she stood in the third grade room. To be sure she couldn't see the girls she knew—she was so excited that all the children seemed a blur of faces. But she knew perfectly well that *they* could see *her*, and she could guess just how surprised they would be.

Miss Montrow smiled and took the note Mary Jane handed her. While she read it, Mary Jane glanced around a bit. It was an attractive room; bowls of nasturtiums stood on the table and desk, a great bunch of marigolds was on the nearest window sill, and pretty pictures hung on the walls.

"My! I hope I can stay here," thought Mary Jane. "I'm going to try my best."

"Good morning, Mary Jane," said Miss Montrow, as she folded up the note, "we're glad to see you. You haven't any hat, so you may come right in and sit here on the front seat. We are just assigning seats now, so you are in time."

Mary Jane was glad to slip into the seat Miss Montrow pointed out, for she didn't much fancy standing there before everyone for long.

Miss Montrow finished calling the roll, collected cards—she didn't even speak to Mary Jane about hers—and then she had everyone stand up so she could see how tall they were. Big folks really had to sit toward the back as they could see over the

heads of the other folks. Mary Jane wasn't as tall as most, many of the children seemed older, so she had to stay near the front, which was lucky, as she wanted to do that anyway. Ann was right across the aisle, and Betty three seats back.

The first minute she had a chance to whisper, Betty said, "What you doing here, Mary Jane? Going to stay?"

Mary Jane thought it easy enough to say that she was going to school there, so she merely answered the last question with a nod of her head for yes. It wouldn't do to start off in a new room where she was only on approval by whispering first thing.

There wasn't much work that morning. Seats were assigned, lists of books to be brought before afternoon were on the board to be copied, and the roll was called twice so Miss Montrow could be sure about the names. Then the bell rang and the first session was over—just that soon.

It seemed good to get out-of-doors again and run in the yard. Betty was in no hurry, she wanted to hear how Mary Jane got to their room, and how long she was likely to stay, and Mary Jane was very happy and proud, too, to tell her all about it.

"Look what's here," shouted Ann, when she had heard the main part of the story. "First ride, first ride, first ride!"

She raced over to a corner of the yard where a new lot of playground equipment had been set up. There were slides and merry-go-rounds and a tall teeter-totter that one had to reach far, oh, so very far, to get hold of.

Ann grabbed one end of the swaying teeter, and Mary Jane

ran to the other. It was easy for Ann—she got hold while the thing was still in motion from the folks who had played on it just before. But Mary Jane couldn't anywhere near reach it, for Ann held it firmly by her end and made Mary Jane's end stick up too high in the air.

"I'll hold you," suggested Janny. She grabbed Mary Jane around the hips and lifted with all her strength. Mary Jane jumped too, and together they managed so she could touch the handle. One more try and she got her fingers firmly around the handle and lifted herself right out of Janny's arms.

Ugh! It felt queer when Ann dropped down and lifted Mary Jane high up. But it was fun to come down to the ground with a bang and send Ann screaming high as high could be. Up and down the girls went, screaming and laughing by turns till Betty, a bit impatient at not doing something herself, found how the new merry-go-round worked and sent it dashing round and round.

Ann heard her laughter and immediately wanted to do whatever Betty was doing, so she simply let go the teeter while Mary Jane was up high. Of course Mary Jane fell 'ksmash to the ground, the handles of the teeter bumping her loudly on the head.

"Mary Jane's killed! Look at Mary Jane!" shouted Janny in dismay. Tom, the janitor, came running; Miss Treavor, the first grade teacher, who happened to be at her window, hurried out, and everything was in commotion.

But Mary Jane wasn't as hurt as it appeared. She rubbed her bruised head, looked around rather dazedly, and then said,

“Well, anyway, it didn’t spoil my butterflies!” Those butterflies on her dress were her particular pride, as she had watched them grow under her mother’s skillful fingers.

“Are you sure you are all right?” asked Miss Treavor, passing her fingers carefully over Mary Jane’s head to make sure about bumps.

“Why, here’s a great big welt!” she exclaimed, as her sensitive fingers located a bruised swelling. “You come right in with me, dear, and we’ll put cold water on it.”

“And, Tom,” she added, as she tucked Mary Jane’s hand under her arm, “while we’re gone, please tell the children how to work that teeter. It’s what is called a ‘fire’ teeter. Listen carefully, every one of you, while Tom tells you about it.”

“You never get off,” began Tom, “without yelling ‘fire!’”

“But why do we want to yell ‘fire,’” asked practical Betty, “when there isn’t any fire?”

“That’s just the game,” laughed Tom, much puzzled as to how to explain. “You call ‘fire’ because you want to give a warning that you are getting off. You see, if somebody jumps off without a warning, the other fellow gets a fall just as Mary Jane did. But if Ann had called ‘fire!’ Mary Jane would have known she was letting go, and could have braced herself for a fall. Then she would have held tight and the handles wouldn’t have hit her either. Now you folks be sure to tell all the other girls that this is a ‘fire’ teeter, and they are never to get off without calling. Otherwise, we’ll have nothing but bumped heads from morning till night,” he added, as he walked off.

In the schoolhouse Mary Jane was being given first aid. Miss Treavor tied her own apron, that she brought to school to wear while tidying up desk or closet or doing board work, around Mary Jane's neck, so water wouldn't spill all around. Then she dipped a cloth in cold water, squeezed it out well and laid it on the bump. My! But it did feel good! For, by this time, Mary Jane's head was beginning to ache, and the bump to throb and feel very miserable. But Miss Treavor changed the cloth as fast as it got warm, and in five minutes Mary Jane felt fine as ever.

"Now I can run along," said Mary Jane, remembering that on the first day of school, Miss Treavor must have many duties. "I mustn't bother you too long."

"You're not bothering me one bit," replied Miss Treavor kindly, "but maybe you would rather I went on with my work. And you can hold the cloth and watch—both at the same time."

Miss Treavor checked over her list of pupils with the cards of admission. Then she wrote some letters on the board. Then she got out hand work for afternoon. And first thing either of them knew, Mary Jane had forgotten all about her hurt and the cold cloth and everything, and was helping pass hand work and having a beautiful time.

Suddenly there was a voice at the door, and Mary Jane, from the far corner of the room where as it happened she couldn't see the door, heard her mother say, "I'm sorry to bother you, Miss Treavor, but can you tell me how badly my little girl is hurt and where she is?" Anxiety was shown in her tense voice and excited manner.

"She isn't hurt at all—not any more," said Miss Treavor, while Mary Jane at the very same minute exclaimed, "Why, mother! How did you know?"

"Betty came running home," explained Mrs. Merrill, "and said Mary Jane had a fall and was so badly hurt she was taken into the schoolhouse, and I have hurried here as fast as ever I could."

"Betty was right as far as she knew," said Miss Treavor. "But before telling anyone, she should have found out the rest." Then she hastily explained about the fall from the new teeter, the bump and the cold water treatment. "And I think your little girl is about as good as new now, and she can take off her apron and run along with you. Thank you, Mary Jane, dear, for helping me so much. Be sure to tell your mother right away about your new grade."

Mary Jane and Mrs. Merrill bade Miss Treavor a grateful good-by, and then they went home together, Mary Jane chatting happily all the way.

Mrs. Merrill was glad to hear of Mary Jane's promotion, and was sure that if her little girl tried her hardest, she could stay in the new room.

"I don't want to hurry you through school, to be sure," she explained, "but I know how happy you will be to be with your friends. And I am sure you must be able to do the work—at least the reading, and that is very important—or the principal would not have sent you there. But what do you want to do now?" she asked, kindly, as Mary Jane hesitated before turning into the

door of their apartment.

"You know you've said, mother," began Mary Jane, doubtfully, "that it is very nice to let folks know you like things they do for you."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Merrill, "that's very true."

"And you know Miss Treavor was awfully nice," continued Mary Jane, "she couldn't have been any nicer if she had tried."

"I'm sure of that," said Mrs. Merrill.

"Then couldn't we send her a fern for her room?" asked Mary Jane. "She wants a fern so much. She had one last year and it was too big to take home to her house. So she paid Tom money to have him water it for her, and then when he was away in the summer, his helper forgot it and the fern died. Miss Treavor felt so sorry about it, she told me."

"I think that is a fine idea," said Mrs. Merrill, much pleased. "I'm glad to have you so thoughtful of the pleasure of others. Last spring there were very good ferns at that little greenhouse only two blocks away. We will walk right over there and order one before we get back to work."

Mary Jane loved going into a greenhouse—and this place was a real greenhouse, not a shop where only cut flowers were sold. The owner let his two customers go back where the ferns were growing and select one that should be exactly to Mary Jane's liking.

"Now may I take it to her this afternoon?" asked Mary Jane

when the selection was made.

"Goodness! No!" exclaimed Mrs. Merrill. "That's much too heavy for you to carry."

"But how will Miss Treavor know it is from me?" asked Mary Jane, worriedly.

"You will write on a card," said her mother.

"They are here," added the greenhouse man, pointing to a neat little card in the corner of the tiny office. "You write whatever you like and we take it with the fern."

Mary Jane sat down at the desk and wrote in her very best handwriting:

"For Miss Treavor. From the bump and butterfly girl."

"She will know who that is," she explained as her mother tucked the card in a tiny envelope and handed it to the man, "because she liked my butterflies and she cured my bump. Now may I go home and play with Betty?"

"We surely will go home at once," said Mrs. Merrill. "But don't you think a certain little girl had better unpack the tray of her trunk before lunch, and then be free to play this afternoon?"

"I just naturally forgot about my trunk," sighed Mary Jane. "Mother, would you guess we were coming in from the country only yesterday? It seems the longest time already!"

Mary Jane loved to unpack a trunk, or to pack one either, for

that matter. So soon she was busily occupied straightening ribbons into their proper places, sorting Georgiannamore's belongings, and getting her share of the room tidy. Alice had already been at work a half an hour, so it didn't take long to finish the job.

Not one minute after the last thing was in place, Mary Jane heard Betty call out back, so she ran to the little balcony to see what was wanted.

"My auntie got a letter this morning," began Betty, "and she's going to have a wedding. It's the auntie who was here last spring. And she's going to have us in it, Mary Jane. You'n'me, she is."

Mary Jane nearly tumbled over herself in her eagerness to get downstairs and hear all about such news.

MARY JANE RINGS A BELL

BETTY would not tell another thing till Mary Jane came and sat on the back steps, and till Betty's auntie came out and talked to them.

"Do you like to hear about a wedding?" asked Miss Howard. "So do I—and so do most of us. Well, Mary Jane, you see it's this way.

"I was going to be married on New Year's Day, and have a church wedding and everything. And now this morning, while I had come a-visiting, I got a letter saying that the man I am going to marry has been ordered to the Philippines—had anyone told you he is in the army? Well, he is. And he goes way off there in October. So, of course, I want to go, too."

The Philippines sounded rather far off to Mary Jane, who hadn't the faintest notion where they were, but going there couldn't be so *very* bad, for Miss Howard looked awfully pleased about it.

"So we're going to have a tiny wedding," Miss Howard went on.

"That's exactly what you are not going to have," said Mrs. Holden firmly. She had come out onto the porch just in time to hear that last sentence. "There's a whole month and if we all help, we can get out cards in a week, and you shall have a church wedding, with Betty and Mary Jane to be flower girls, and Alice and Frances to be ribbon-bearers, and all your girl

friends around you exactly as you had planned for New Year's Day."

"Oh, do you really think so?" exclaimed Miss Howard, happily.

As for Mary Jane, her eyes were fairly popping out—to be in a wedding! Wouldn't that be fun! And Alice, too. And carry a basket of flowers maybe, just like folks in pictures she had seen! It seemed much too wonderful to be true.

"Of course I think so," repeated Mrs. Holden. "Now you tell the girls what you had planned, and this afternoon we will tell Mrs. Merrill, and you can 'phone the four girls you had chosen for maids, and we'll start the ball to rolling in a jiffy."

Miss Howard was Mrs. Holden's only sister, and as their father and mother were not living, Miss Howard felt as though her sister's house was truly home. She taught at a school in Ohio and spent a part of every vacation with the Holdens. Of course, she had got acquainted with Mary Jane and Alice in the spring, and even though they had been away all summer, the Holdens had been away too, so fall and school brought them all back at once. Miss Howard had given up her school work as she needed the time to make ready for her wedding. She knew how Frances and Betty loved their neighbor chums and had planned to have the two Merrill girls share in the wedding.

Mary Jane and Betty kept as still as they could while the two sisters talked back and forth, making plans. The wedding was to be in the big stone church two blocks away, and would be in the evening. Mary Jane and Betty were to wear fluffy white dresses

over apricot-colored silk (Miss Howard had had it all planned) and Frances and Alice were to wear dainty frocks of green, pale green, silk and carry the loops of white satin ribbon.

Mary Jane was so interested that she forgot all about school till her mother called over the balcony, "Mary Jane! Mary Jane! Lunch is ready! Come quickly or you will be late!"

Mary Jane scrambled out of the back gate, up the stairs, and into the kitchen, where she announced breathlessly, "I'm getting married and it's apricot silk—Miss Howard said so. And Alice's is green, and please, mother, may we, please?"

"Whatever in the world?" cried Mrs. Merrill, in amazement.

"They're coming over this afternoon to tell you," added Mary Jane, as she found a bit of breath while she washed her hands. "It's Miss Howard and some place—some place—Phillip—something. And our church, where Alice and I go to Sunday School, and isn't she nice to ask us?"

Gradually, between bites of sandwiches and sips of iced cocoa, Mary Jane told Alice and her mother all about the plans, as she understood them, and Mrs. Merrill promised to be at home all afternoon so as not to miss Miss Howard should she come to call, and to let the girls accept if it seemed at all possible. Alice was so excited she could hardly eat, but as the clock pointed to one, the girls had to leave in a hurry, and further talk about weddings must wait till later.

As Mary Jane went to her room she passed Miss Treavor, and Miss Treavor was so very happy about her new fern which had been delivered half an hour before.

"You were a darling to think about it, Mary Jane," she said, "and I shall think of you all winter as I enjoy it daily. Thank you so much, and tell your mother 'thank you,' too. I shall write her a note this very evening."

When Mary Jane reached her own room she found Miss Montrow waiting at the door for her.

"I was watching for you, Mary Jane," she said, "because our principal wants this note taken around to every room, and I thought you would be a good one to do it. The note tells each teacher to announce how the new teeter is to be used. I hear you had a bad bump from the thing, and I thought you would be sure to know how important it is that every teacher, every single one in the building, gets this note at once. You may go as soon as the tardy bell rings."

First bell rang and the pupils in the room began to study the spelling lesson Miss Montrow had put on the board. Then tardy bell rang, and at a signal from her teacher, Mary Jane started on her journey through the school building. My, how big and deserted it did seem when all the folks were in their rooms and the doors shut tight! It reminded the little girl of the time she got lost, when she was strange and new, in that same big place. That seemed a long time ago—Mary Jane was sure she would never again get lost in the schoolhouse; dear me, no!

She went into one room, the first on the right from her own; then to the next, and the next, till every room on that floor had been visited and every teacher had carefully read the note. Then she wondered—should she go up to the third floor next, or down to the first? She decided on the first, and promptly visited each

and every room on the first floor. By this time it was nearly two o'clock. It certainly did take time to go into so many rooms as there were in that great schoolhouse.

Finally the first floor was finished and she climbed the two great flights of stairs to the third floor. She had never been up here before. There was an assembly hall somewhere, she had heard Alice tell about it, though the little folks' rooms always assembled in the gymnasium, so Mary Jane had never been in this one herself. Into the room on the left she went first; then to another; and then to another. Then she came to two double doors. This didn't seem like a room, but Miss Montrow had said "*every* room," so Mary Jane thought she had better look to make sure. She opened the door, stepped inside, and saw it was the assembly hall. Why not look at it? She might not have another chance till she was in fifth grade herself. She slipped into the hall, looked at the seats, set tier upon tier, each higher than the other, peeped out of the windows so high, very high from the sidewalk below, and turned to go out and continue her tour from room to room.

But the door was locked. It had a spring catch, evidently, and had shut behind her. Mary Jane was locked into the assembly hall.

She ran hurriedly over to the door on the opposite side and tried it. Locked tight. No hope there. A careful investigation of the room failed to disclose any sign of a way to get out. Of course she could stamp on the floor. Or she could call. Maybe someone could hear that. Of course she could shout out of the window. But Mary Jane hated to do anything so noisy and disorderly as that. Anyway, why should she have been in there?

How could she explain? Of course she was trying to make sure of getting into every room, but that was no reason for going on in when she saw at a glance there was no teacher there.

Up on a small platform at the front was a desk—a flat table desk, for the principal or teacher who was leading the assembly, apparently. Mary Jane idly looked it over, trying all the while to think up some way to get out without making a fuss.

A small electric button caught her eye. On the table desk, by a pile of books, was this small button, evidently connected with an electric bell. Why not ring that? Doubtless it was to call someone to the assembly hall. Perhaps someone would come and let her out. That was a much better plan than stamping or calling, or making a fuss and disturbing folks.

Eagerly she reached over and pressed the button a long ring. She waited a moment to make sure—yes it was ringing in the hall outside. Then partly because she was so excited and partly to make really sure that the bell was understood, she rang again —two short taps. Then she hurried over to the door and waited. She hadn't long to wait, though, for as she reached the door, Ed opened it and said, "This way out, please. Walk. Do not run." And he turned back to join a line forming in the hall. In very dignified order the children marched downstairs. Mary Jane slipped in behind the girls, noticing as she went down that every room was getting out, too.

"I didn't know it was recess time this soon," she thought as she marched down. "I guess I had better stop and give this paper to Miss Montrow. I might lose it in the yard." At the second floor, she slipped out of line and started down the hall toward

her own room, but a sharp voice called, “Stay in line, little girl! Keep your place!”

Startled, Mary Jane joined the line again and marched down the stairs and out into the yard.

“Where’s the fire?” shouted the boys. “Where’s the fire? I don’t see any smoke? Where’d you s’pose it is?”

“Fire, nothing!” said one of the bigger boys, “I’ll bet it’s a fake—a drill.”

Then Mary Jane noticed that the boys and girls were all together. They had not marched down as for recess, boys, one stairs; girls, another. They had marched down together, each room under the care of their teacher—that meant fire drill or a fire. Suppose it really was a fire? Suppose she had been locked up in the hall? Never again would she poke into doors and go where she had no business!

“How do you know it’s a fire?” anxiously asked one of the little girls who was new that day.

“That’s easy,” replied one of the bigger girls near at hand. “Didn’t you hear the bell? When that electric bell rings three—one long, pause, and two short—it’s fire drill. And out we come without stopping for a single thing.”

Mary Jane put her hands over her face to hide her shame. What had she done? What had she *done*? What *had* she done? Trying to get out of that hall without bothering folks—here she had rung the fire bell and brought the whole school out into the yard in the middle of the session! Could anything have been

worse? And what in the world should she do?

Meanwhile the teachers, though a bit surprised at having fire drill on the first day, were quietly giving orders for the children to return to their rooms. In a miserable daze of confusion, Mary Jane found herself back in her room with the paper still clutched tightly in her hand.

"Did you get all through, Mary Jane?" asked Miss Montrow. "And don't let a little thing like a fire drill frighten you so," she added, noticing the child's white face. "You skip along and finish your rooms, and then hurry back, for we're going to do something interesting, and you want to be here."

That kindness only made Mary Jane feel worse. The idea! Everybody so good to her and she ringing a fire bell! What should she do?

First there were the rest of the rooms to visit. Mary Jane did that.

By that time she had made up her mind what to do. She marched straight to the door of the principal's office. She intended to tell exactly what she had done and face the consequences.

THE END OF THE FIRST DAY

"Come!"

The answer to Mary Jane's timid knock came in the principal's pleasant voice.

"Well, good afternoon, Mary Jane," he added kindly as he saw who his visitor was. "Can I do something for you this afternoon?" His desk 'phone rang at that minute, and he motioned Mary Jane to be seated on a bench close by.

"From the assembly hall?" Mary Jane heard him say "Are you sure? How could anyone have been up there? Are you sure your signal box is working right?"

Silence as he listened.

"Then one of those troublesome boys must have got into the hall and set about mischief. I'll talk with Miss Stevens at once. Please come immediately to my office. I may need you." Then he turned to Mary Jane and said, "Wait a few minutes, till I am through with this business." Mary Jane shivered as she noticed that his voice had become very stern.

Miss Stevens, the assistant principal, came, and a minute later Tom, the janitor, arrived. Evidently he was the one who had telephoned.

"I'm going to get to the bottom of this thing," the principal said, sternly, as he looked at his helpers. "And I count on you

both to help me. We can't start out the year with false fire signals and—"

"*Oh!*" cried Mary Jane in a tiny voice, so weak and so frightened the others didn't hear.

"When I find who did that trick," continued the principal, "I'll——"

"But I didn't know it was a fire signal," exclaimed Mary Jane, "truly I didn't!"

"What's that?" asked the principal, irritated at the interruption. "I'll talk to you in a *few minutes*, Mary Jane."

"Yes, but, I'm the one you're looking for," cried Mary Jane, bravely screwing up her courage to the talking point.

"I guess not," replied the principal with a sharp laugh. "I'm looking for the bad boy who rang that fire alarm, a few minutes ago, and got the whole school out the first day. I mean to find him in a jiffy, for doubtless at this very minute he is chuckling to himself at the success of his prank."

"But there isn't any boy—there's only just me," insisted Mary Jane. "I rang that bell."

"She got a bad bump this morning," said Tom, in a half whisper. "I reckon it's made her batty."

"She isn't any more batty than you or me, Tom," said Miss Stevens. "Come over here, little girl, and tell us what you are trying to say."

Much comforted, Mary Jane went over to the teacher and said, very low because she was so frightened, "I rang the bell because I didn't know how to get out. Course I didn't know it was a fire bell. I rang it once, and then I thought I'd better press it some more to make sure, that's what I did. And then Ed, he opened the door and everybody was going downstairs, and so I went, too. And I tried to go over and tell Miss Montrow, but they wouldn't let me—they said I had to go on out. And then it was a fire drill, and I didn't tell Miss Montrow after all, 'cause I was afraid."

"Where were you when you rang the bell?" asked the principal. So Mary Jane told about taking the note and looking into the assembly room, which she didn't know *was* an assembly room, of course. And then going in there to explore, and the door shutting behind her, and everything.

"I'm sorry," she ended. "I'm so sorry. I came right to tell you —that's because I'm sorry, I am."

Tears that she was too proud to shed stood glistening in her eyes as she looked first at the principal, then at Miss Stevens, and then at her old friend the janitor. What would they do? It was awfully hard to tell, sometimes, what grown folks might do.

The principal cleared his throat with a loud "Ahem!" Miss Stevens twisted her pocket handkerchief, and Tom looked out of the window. No one spoke.

Finally the principal said, "Well, Mary Jane, now that you have learned what the fire signal is, do you think you are likely to ring it again?"

"No!" said Mary Jane firmly. "Goodness no!" Such a funny question to ask!

"Then I think we will just forget this whole thing," said the principal. "It didn't hurt us to have the drill, which was well done. And as there was no wrong intent, I can't see any harm in overlooking it entirely. Can you forget it, Mary Jane?"

"Well," said Mary Jane, trying to be very honest, "I can try. And I will not say anything about it to anybody—anybody but my mother, of course. I think I could forget it better if I could tell her."

"That's a bargain," said the principal. "You may tell your mother, but no one else. And then you forget it as soon as ever you can."

"Then you won't put me back in second grade?" asked Mary Jane.

"Mercy, no, child," said Miss Stevens, "why should we? You were trying to do your best. To be sure you should not have gone into the room when you found it was the assembly hall. But we can forgive you that. And I am sure you won't go exploring any more, will you, dear?"

"'Deed I won't!" exclaimed Mary Jane, so promptly that the others all laughed, and Mary Jane felt much better.

"Now run along to your room," said the principal, "and start forgetting right away."

Of course, Mary Jane couldn't truly forget right away. But

pretty soon she got interested in her spelling lesson; then Miss Montrow began reading them a fine story, and first thing she knew it was time to go home. There was no recess that first day, and the whole school got out at half-past-two.

Mary Jane skipped off home as fast as ever she could. Fortunately mother was right there, and Mary Jane told her everything that had happened.

"I think the principal and Miss Stevens were very kind to you indeed," said Mrs. Merrill. "Lots of grown folks would not have understood so well. Now you must do exactly what he says, put it out of your mind so you don't talk about it to anyone. And do the very best work you can, so they will see you appreciate their kindness.

"Now how would you like to make some sandwiches so that we can take our dinner over by the beach this evening? We can 'phone father to meet us there, and I think a meal out-of-doors will taste pretty good—even if we have been home but one day."

Mary Jane scurried around for the picnic basket, plates, cups and forks which were kept in the pantry; Mrs. Merrill made sandwiches, 'phoned Mr. Merrill, and packed food. When Alice came home she was sent up to Fifty-fifth street for fruit and cookies—Mrs. Merrill had been far too busy unpacking and settling to do any baking as yet, of course.

Frances and Betty were invited, and as they wanted to bring something to the picnic too, they got rolls and wienies, so there would be a fire and, oh, such fun!

It was jolly fun to play in the sand again. The girls made castles, dug lakes, and laid out cities. They burned their fingers roasting wienies, and they ate till they couldn't eat another bite. Then they burned up plates and scraps, tidied the beach, and sat around playing a sitting-down ball game. Mr. and Mrs. Merrill wandered down the beach a way, in plain sight, to be sure, to inspect a new bathing pavilion that had been opened during the summer.

"Now let's play regular ball," suggested Betty, tired of being quiet even a few minutes.

"Yes, let's," agreed Alice. "I'll be pitcher first. I'll throw to you, Fran, and you throw to Betty, and—— girls! *Look!*"

She screamed as an automobile, which dashed careening along the broad boulevard, turned with a reckless twist, leaped over the sidewalk, and plowed through the sand directly toward the spot where the girls were.

There wasn't time to move—and anyway they were too startled to run. The mad machine came right at them; stopped short not ten feet away, and tossed a golden-haired little girl directly into the spot where the four girls had been sitting.

Alice made a grab for her and pulled her away from the fire embers, so close at hand. Mr. and Mrs. Merrill came running from down the beach; and the driver of the car climbed shakily from his seat—all much quicker than one can read about it.

"Why it's Ann!" exclaimed Mary Jane.

"To be sure," said the driver who had hurried to the little

girl's aid and was much relieved to find her not seriously hurt.

"Of course we know Ann," said Alice. "We found her when she was lost on the boat last spring, and my sister Mary Jane is in her room at school."

By that time Ann had picked herself up, the Merrills had come into the group, and everyone began talking at once. It seemed that the steering gear on the car had broken, and Mr. Ellis had been unable to guide it. It had all happened so suddenly as they were going rapidly along the boulevard, that he hadn't been able to stop, and a quick and firm application of the brakes, instead of stopping them short as he had intended, had turned him into the sand with a dash and sent Ann flying, head first, out from the front seat.

"I'd just like to see anybody have such an accident again and come out of it as easily as we did," he said, when he was really sure no harm was done. "Ann, I must say you did a good job. If you always hunt a sand pile to tumble out into, you'll not likely get hurt."

By this time a crowd had gathered, and Mrs. Merrill suggested that Ann go home with them, as they were just about to start anyway.

"No, I'll tell you a better plan, if you don't mind waiting a few minutes," suggested Mr. Ellis. "Suppose I go to the Liberty Building there, and get the garage on the 'phone. They'll come at once and tow me in. You people can ride in the car while she's being towed, and we go directly past your corner."

"Oh, goody!" cried Mary Jane, "I never was in a car when it

was towed. Please, mother, may we wait?"

Mrs. Merrill smilingly assented, and the five children climbed into the car, selected seats, and played happily till the garage man arrived with the ropes and tackle and turned them out till the car could be pulled out of the sand.

It was no easy matter to turn the car in the sand, drag it up the slope and get it out on the boulevard again. It had taken only a fraction of a minute for it to dash down there, but it took many minutes and much hard work to make the trip back.

Finally it was up on the pavement again, and the passengers climbed in, but even then they had to travel very, very slowly, as the steering apparatus worked so badly it wasn't safe to do more than crawl. But the children didn't mind, they enjoyed the fun. And all too soon their corner was reached and they had to climb out and say good-night.

"This has been the excitingest day," sighed Mary Jane as she climbed into bed. "School and weddings and fires—well, anyway, fire drills—picnics and automobiles, and everything. I just know I can't go to sleep before morning."

But she did. In exactly two minutes Mrs. Merrill came in to see that the girls were comfortable, and both were sound asleep —sound. And if Mary Jane was dreaming about things she wanted to remember and things she must forget, she didn't show it—not one bit.

MARY JANE MAKES A RESOLUTION

FORTUNATELY every day was not as exciting as that first day of school, and Mary Jane had time to play with her dolls, which had been woefully neglected during the summer when there was the whole out-of-doors to tempt her, gardening to do, and everything. She and Betty played each afternoon in Betty's backyard or on the porch, and then one day when an unexpected shower sent them skiting, they came upstairs and played in Mary Jane's dining-room and had tea—real tea with cream and sugar.

Mary Jane found the work in the third grade very interesting; and it wasn't a bit too hard. She had to laugh at Betty, who kept asking her and asking her each day if she didn't think it was awfully hard. Of course it wasn't! Bigger words in reading, to be sure, but most of them Mary Jane knew because she read books of her own at home; and harder problems in arithmetic, but not too hard. And as for the geography and writing and drawing and music—why it was just play, it was that easy!

Everything was all right but spelling. That really was hard, though Mary Jane would have been the last one to admit it. She studied her words over and over, from the minute they were put on the board, and she tried her very hardest to get one hundred every single day, just like Betty did. So far she had.

After school had been going a few days, and everybody in Miss Montrow's room had begun to feel pretty friendly and acquainted (all but Dick, and it seemed as though he never would get friendly with anyone, he was such a tease) Miss

Montrow put a long spelling lesson on the board.

"Oh, dear!" thought Mary Jane to herself, when she saw the long list of words. "How ever am I going to spell all those!" Then she began reading them over and over, and she saw that most of the words were ones they had had before, only Miss Montrow had mixed up five new words with the old ones. Mary Jane could pick them out as easy as pie, she knew the old ones so well.

She took out her tablet, the little scratch pad father had given her for just such use, and she wrote down the new ones, one after the other:

joy

every

chalk

happy

day.

She put the list aside and studied the other words, spelling each one twice to make sure she remembered it correctly. Then, when she was really sure about all them, she got out her list of new ones and began studying those. They were hard ones, no doubt of that—look at that *e v e r y* —wasn't that a tricky word though? Mary Jane studied it over and over, till reading class began and she had to clear off her desk and put away the paper.

After reading class Miss Montrow talked to them all about seed pods, and they studied the different kinds she had brought to school for them to see. Of course Mary Jane had looked at

seed pods all her life; and she had talked about them with her mother too, and knew lots more than some of the girls and boys did. But even so, those seed pods of Miss Montrow's were just as interesting as could be, and she forgot all about spelling and paid close attention to all that was said.

As she talked, Miss Montrow passed the seed pods one by one around the room, so that each child could see each different kind and study it close at hand. That would have been all right, if every one had been as interested as Mary Jane was—or as Ann and Betty and Charles and John were. Because they all looked hard at each pod and then carefully passed it on. But Dick was different. In fact, Dick was different about most things. He didn't like school. He didn't like his teacher. He didn't like to study, and he didn't want to learn anything. And of course that made it pretty hard for everybody concerned.

Especially was it hard for Mary Jane, as Dick sat right behind her. Now, as everyone who has ever been to school knows, it's all right to have disagreeable folks in front of one—no matter how many. But when a disagreeable person is behind—well, that certainly is too bad.

Mostly Dick didn't do anything more than pull her hair when Miss Montrow wasn't looking, or mark ink on her neck, or yank her hair ribbon out of place. Mary Jane could stand those things if she had to, and of course she never, never, never would think of such a thing as telling on him. Goodness! She would rather have a dozen hair ribbons spoiled and have a hundred ink marks on her neck, than be a tattle-tale. And as Dick was always very careful Miss Montrow shouldn't see his mischief, nobody stopped him.

When a lovely big milk-weed pod came around, he thought it just the very thing for tickling, so he slyly slipped it into his desk. As there were other milk-weed pods, Miss Montrow didn't miss that one. She collected all that were in sight, closed that lesson, and passed spelling papers for the lesson of the day.

Mary Jane wrote her name at the top of the paper in her very best hand. Then as the words were called, she wrote one after another. As she knew each one, she didn't have to worry about the letters, she could think about her writing, too, and make a neat paper that would be sure to get another hundred.

"Right."

"Class."

"Every."

"Seed."

Miss Montrow called one word after another, mixing up the new and the old ones just as on the board.

"Chalk," that was easy, she heard Dick mumbling it behind her. He was planning some mischief, she very well knew that. He always mumbled when he planned.

"Joy," said the teacher.

Just as Mary Jane started to write that simple word she felt a prick behind her ear. Of course it was Dick. She would pay no attention. But as she had jumped with the first prick, her hand shook and a very queer looking "j" was the result.

At the end of the lesson Miss Montrow had the papers exchanged and marked. When she got hers back, Mary Jane was heart-broken to find that one word was misspelled. There was no time to see which, for Miss Montrow had those who got a hundred stand up—and Mary Jane couldn't stand. There was Betty and Ann and Janny—everyone she knew was standing to-day, and Mary Jane felt so uncomfortable she could hardly endure it. Specially when Miss Montrow noticed, too, and said, "What's the matter with you to-day, Mary Jane? Hadn't you studied your lesson?"

Just as Mary Jane started to write that simple word she felt a prick behind her ear.

Mary Jane nodded, she couldn't speak a word, she was so miserable. So Miss Montrow said, "Bring your paper here and let's see which one you missed."

Instead of telling about the word as Mary Jane had expected, Miss Montrow said, “Go to the board and make a ‘j,’ Mary Jane. Let’s see if you know how.”

“Know how,” thought Mary Jane. “Of course I know how to make a j.” And sure enough she did. She made a nice great big one, nearly perfect.

“You do know, don’t you?” approved Miss Montrow. “Then why don’t you make it that way on your paper? You have spelled joy correctly, but you have made your j so poorly that the person who marked your paper didn’t know what that letter was.

“You shall have your hundred, as you spelled the word. But why in the world did you write so poorly? You know better.”

Mary Jane felt her face getting hotter and hotter and she didn’t know what in the world to do. She wouldn’t tell on Dick—imagine standing up there in front and saying, “Dick tickled me and made me do it!” Not for anything would she ever do that. But it wasn’t easy to have her teacher thinking she was as careless in writing as that word did look.

As she didn’t know what to say, she said nothing, which after all is about as good a rule to go by as one can find.

Miss Montrow gathered up the papers and said no more about it, and Mary Jane walked miserably back to her seat, glad to get more or less out of sight.

“You better not tell! You better not tell!” Dick whispered threateningly.

Mary Jane didn't deign to look around. Did he think she was a tattle-tale? Couldn't he see that if she meant to tell, she would have done so ere this?

Twice again that day Mary Jane felt the sharp prick of that milk-weed pod, and she was very glad when the closing bell sounded and she could slip off to the cloakroom to get her hat. By morning, perhaps Miss Montrow would have missed that seed pod and have found it, so it would make no more trouble.

Next morning, first thing, Mary Jane found that the seed pod had been missed, but Miss Montrow had only now started looking for it.

"Look in your desks, children," she said immediately after school began, "and see if you can find my milk-weed pod. It is missing and I know it can't be far away. Dick, is it in your desk?"

"No, Miss Montrow, you can come and see," he replied, promptly.

Miss Montrow did come and see, for one of the girls had looked as though they knew Dick had it, and she wanted to make sure. But the desk was as tidy as could be—and no pod.

Mary Jane didn't need to look in her desk, she knew the pod wasn't there, so she watched her teacher as she went from one to the other suspected person—but no pod was found.

"That is certainly very strange," said Miss Montrow, finally. "But we will take no more time now. Keep a watch, children, and if any of you see it, let me know.

"Get your drawing things out now," she added.

Mary Jane reached into her desk, pulled out her things for drawing and, as she took them out, a mass of beautiful white milk-weed silks floated from her desk.

"'Twas in her desk!" cried Dick, on his feet in a minute with the announcement. "See the feathers! She had it!"

There was no use for Mary Jane to deny it—the milk-weed pod was there. Moreover, it was broken and the dainty white feathery seeds were floating hither and yon in the breeze that blew in the open window.

"I didn't know!" she exclaimed hastily. "Truly, I don't know how it got there, Miss Montrow."

Miss Montrow looked at her keenly. No mistaking the straightforward honesty in Mary Jane's surprised look. So the teacher said, "Someone must have put it there then, Mary Jane. Perhaps some day we will find out who. In the meantime, we will excuse you from drawing while you pick up as many seeds as you can and wrap them in paper and put them in the waste-basket. We mustn't let the room get untidy."

It was a slow job picking up those things, and perhaps Mary Jane didn't hurry as much as she might. For one thing, the faster she moved the more the seeds fluttered out of her reach. The slower she moved, the better she could pick them up.

And for another thing, Mary Jane was thinking and a person can't think hard and work fast at the same time—at least Mary Jane couldn't.

Dick must have put that there. No doubt about it, as he was the one who had had it the day before. But why did he like to bother her so? And how did he get it there? And now that the seed pod was out of the way, what would he do next? Mary Jane seemed to feel perfectly certain that he would do *some*thing next, the only question was, what?

Right there, Mary Jane had an idea—just that quickly. She would make him stop acting like that. She didn't know how. In fact she hadn't an idea *how*. But she would find a way, somehow. And she would make him stop.

The thing to discover was how?

And to that end, Mary Jane put her thinking cap on and planned.

UNEXPECTED FUN—AND A TUMBLE

BUT before she had anything planned, Friday afternoon came, and the minute Mary Jane got home from school, she found a delightful outing was on foot for Saturday.

Ever since they had come to Chicago, the Merrills had intended to spend a day at the dunes—the sand dunes in northern Indiana, so close to Chicago and yet so very different from the big city. They had heard about the lovely flowers, the shining sand hills, and the trees and vines that made everything beautiful. But just the right time for going never had seemed to come.

"You can't guess what we're doing to-morrow," exclaimed Mrs. Merrill, as Alice and Mary Jane arrived home from school.

"It's something nice," guessed Alice as she looked at her mother's happy face.

"It's a picnic!" cried Mary Jane, guessing the thing she wanted it to be.

"Right! Both of you!" laughed Mrs. Merrill, "only you would never guess where or how, so I'll tell you.

"Mr. and Mrs. Ellis have invited us to go with them and Ann to the dunes to-morrow—you know they have that wonderful big car, and it's just back from being overhauled and running fine, Mrs. Ellis says."

"Goody! Goody! Goody!" cried Mary Jane, jumping up and down and clapping her hands in her excitement. "And we'll take our lunch and make a fire and everything."

"Certainly," agreed Mrs. Merrill, "but you wait till I tell you the rest. As soon as I told Mrs. Holden we were going, they decided to go too—all of them. And we're going to put our things together and have a jolly big party. Now isn't that fun?"

You'd have thought so if you could have seen Mary Jane and Alice at that minute. It seemed just too good to be true—such a lovely plan did—and they could hardly believe it.

"Mayn't we start getting ready now?" asked Alice.

"Indeed, yes," replied Mrs. Merrill, "we must, for we are to start early to-morrow morning, and as I didn't even know about this till fifteen minutes ago, there are a lot of things to be done. You girls will love helping, for it's all the sort of work you like to do.

"Now here's a marketing list I had started to make. We'll read it over and finish it, and then you two may take a basket and go to the market on Fifty-fifth street, while I get at some baking. I promised to make a couple of loaves of nut bread ——"

"Oh, mother!" interrupted Mary Jane, "do let me fix the nuts."

"Well," said Mrs. Merrill, thoughtfully, "I want to stir up a cake, too; I can do that while you are gone and then make the nut bread later. Now we'll see about the list. Wienies—each family is to take wienies and rolls for their own members only. Then

we are each to take pickles and olives and nut bread and cake or cookies—one of any sort of thing like that, you see. We will only have one meal down there, unless we want a bite before we start back, for it gets dark early, you know, and we thought we'd better be home before dark."

"Then we are to buy wienies and rolls," said Alice, reading from the list.

"Yes, and put down a jar of pickles," added Mrs. Merrill, "as I haven't had a chance to put up any yet myself. And caramel sugar for the icing of the cake—I suppose that is what you want? And about three boxes of marshmallows for toasting, and—let's see—is there anything else? Wait till I make sure we have plenty of butter and sugar and things for my baking."

A hasty look at the cupboard showed that there was plenty of everything on hand, so the girls took their basket and hurried off for the marketing. It didn't take long, as they knew exactly where to go and what to get, and very shortly they were back at home and busy with the preparations there.

The alarm clock was set early the next morning, and that was a good thing, too, for no sooner was breakfast and a hasty doing of morning chores finished than Mr. Ellis's automobile horn honked out in front, and it was time to go.

Baskets were hustled down and stowed away, and their car went around to the Holdens' front entrance, where they found that family busily engaged stowing in folks and food so there would be room for all. Finally both cars were ready, and after a brief council between the two drivers as to routes, in case they

lost sight of each other, away they went.

"There now," said Mary Jane to herself, "I was going to make a plan about Dick to-day, and here I haven't even remembered about it till now."

But at that minute Mr. Ellis clamped on the emergency brakes because of arriving at an unexpected grade crossing exactly at the same time a freight train was passing. And in the jar and surprise all thought of Dick and school passed out of Mary Jane's head for the rest of the drive. Anyway, Monday was a long time away, so why worry?

Through South Chicago they went, past steel works and cereal mills and starch factories. Clattering over railroad tracks, scurrying around corners, passing trucks and motor busses and pleasure cars—it certainly was a busy road; through one town after another, all busy and full of folks. There was so much to see that Mary Jane finally gave up trying to see everything and settled herself to her side of the car. Fortunately, she sat in one of the little seats and could see out beautifully.

"This looks like the road," said Mr. Ellis, and they turned from the main highway off to the left and followed a little road through the woods down to the big lake a couple of miles away.

"What are you coming this way for?" shouted Mr. Holden's voice behind them as they pulled up in sight of the lake.

"It doesn't look much like the right place, does it?" admitted Mr. Ellis, as he looked around. "Where is the turn?"

"About two miles back—oh, maybe more than that," said Mr.

Holden.

"Then you take the lead," suggested Mr. Ellis, and back they went—but what are a few miles more or less? Very quickly they were back on the main highway, and this time Mr. Holden led them to the right turn.

After coming in sight of the big lake, the cars were pulled up at the side of the road and everybody got out.

"Here's a pail for water," said Mrs. Holden, "if anyone wants a drink."

"It isn't time for dinner *yet*, is it?" exclaimed Mrs. Ellis.

"It had better *not* be, for I'm going to have my swim first," said Mr. Holden.

"Swim!" exclaimed Alice, "why didn't anyone tell us to bring our suits?"

"Didn't you *know*?" cried Frances. "That's a shame!"

But her distress was soon changed to laughter when she saw that Mrs. Merrill, advised by Mrs. Holden, had tucked the suits in a basket and had said nothing about it so as to surprise the girls.

A small boy from a refreshment stand near at hand was engaged to watch the cars and the baskets, and the whole party hurried down to the bathhouses to change for swimming. It was a warm September day, with a gentle breeze from the south, so the water was still pleasantly warm. The grown folks went out

far, far into the lake to where the water was deep enough for real swimming, but Betty and Ann and Mary Jane stayed where it was about waist deep and had lots of fun. Ed made them some rafts, on which they pinned sails of leaves—pinned them with small sticks and thorns—and in the gentle breeze those tiny craft rode the small waves very successfully.

"But I wish those folks would come back," said John, and he looked out to where the grown folks were swimming. "They ought to look at the sun and see how late it is. I'm hungry!"

"And we've got to build a fire, and that means get sticks, and oh, dear! We *never will* have dinner, I know!" moaned Ed.

"Why don't we dress and start doing things," suggested Alice. "Have you any idea where we are going to eat?"

"Oh, yes," said Ed, "we always eat up there." He pointed to a hill just to the west. "It's a fine place. We have stones up there, and there is always plenty of wood. And we can see for miles."

"Then I'll beat you dressed and to the top of the hill," announced Alice, and following her lead the children scrambled out of the water.

"That's the first time I ever knew Ed to want to come out of the water," laughed Frances, as they went up the beach to the bathhouses.

"Well, I never was so hungry before, that's the reason," explained Ed. "And I'm going to spread my suit out on a bush and see if mother won't let me go in again this afternoon."

Climbing a sand hill was not as easy as Mary Jane had supposed it would be. Her shoes got full of sand and she slipped back many times before she finally got to the top. But it was a glorious feeling once you were up there—the great lake gleaming and sparkling on one side; a small lake lay mirror-like on the other; and miles of sandy hills, each as lovely as the one she stood on, stretched in between.

The Holden children, experienced in camping at the dunes, plunged into a whirl of activity so busy that Mary Jane didn't even notice when the grown folks arrived on the scene. She merely noticed suddenly that they were there and working, too.

There were the baskets to be brought up from the cars; the men and boys did that; and wood to be gathered and the fire started, sticks sharpened for toasting the wienies; and a great paper table cloth spread down, on which the baskets were unpacked. This last was not because of style, but as a precaution against getting sand into the food. Finally the coals were pronounced perfect, and cooking began.

The coffee-pot was set over two stones. Each person, except the three mothers, was armed with a toasting stick, and the wienies began their fragrant sizzling over the coals. As soon as one was browned to a turn, it was thrust into a buttered roll made ready by one of the mothers, and then the eating began. When everyone else had had one, Mrs. Holden and Mrs. Merrill and Mrs. Ellis were persuaded to stop and eat one, too. Then everybody began on their seconds.

After that, Mary Jane quite lost count. For not only were there plenty of wienies and rolls, but eggs-and-ham sandwiches and

cheese sandwiches—Mr. Ellis toasted one of those over the coals for her, and it was *so* good—and pickles and olives and cakes and peaches.

"I'm just so full up," Mary Jane at last announced, "I can't eat anything more. I'd like to, but I haven't any room."

"Then why don't you sit down hill, for a change," suggested Mr. Holden.

"Sit down hill?" asked Mary Jane, willing to try anything so comfortable sounding as sitting, but not knowing what he meant.

"Sitting down hill," explained Mr. Holden, "is sitting down at the top of the hill and letting yourself slide down—so!"

By way of illustration, he sat down on the side of the hill nearest the big lake, and there, right before Mary Jane's eyes, he slid down, down, down, over the shining sand till he was clear at the bottom.

"It's as easy as pie," cried Betty, as she wiped the last bit of frosting off her lips and prepared to follow her father. "See? Gather up your skirts—so. And wiggle to get started, and down you go."

Mary Jane plunked down at the top, gathered her brief skirts around her as shown, and wiggled just enough to get started, and —sure enough—down she went! Just like coasting down a snow-slide—not so fast to be sure, but getting there just the same.

"Now I'm going to do it again!" she announced the minute she

stopped at the bottom.

"Better take your time and go up slowly," suggested Mr. Holden. "That was a sizable dinner you ate, young lady."

"But I can climb, I can," replied Mary Jane, ambitiously, and she and Betty dashed up the slippery hill as fast as they could, leaving Mr. Holden for a more leisurely climb.

Of course, the boys wanted to slide too, and the children had races, and tried other slides, and had a beautiful time while the mothers tidied up the baskets, and the fathers enjoyed an after-dinner smoke.

"Let's hunt a new slide," suggested Betty after she had been down that first one several times. "I'll bet I can find a longer one."

She ran along the beach to the west, looking up at each slope critically.

"Here's a long one," she announced, and, after strenuously climbing, they reached the top and found the slide steep and long and exciting.

"I'm going to find one, too," decided Mary Jane. "Only I'm going to climb up here and look down to hunt. Then when I find one, I won't have to climb it first, I can just sit down and slide right away."

Up she went, close to the side of the slope she had just slid down, and along the crest of the hill she ran, hunting for a slide that should be better than Betty's.

Here was a good one—but not so straight. There was a straight one, but not so long. Why not look on the other side? Maybe there would be one going down to the little lake, that would be better.

Quickly running to the other side of the dune, she spied a wonderful slope—long, straight, smooth and wonderfully steep. A person would hardly have to wiggle to get started down that one! With a glad cry to Betty announcing her discovery and telling her to come too, Mary Jane started down her new slide.

Swifter and swifter she went, till near the bottom, where it was really too steep for sliding, she tumbled over head-first and lay in a surprised little heap at the bottom.

MARY JANE FINDS A WAY

"WELL," said Mary Jane to herself as she shook the sand out of her hair, brushed it off her face, and rubbed what she could out of her eyes. "Well, that went pretty fast. I guess Betty'll be surprised when she slides down, too."

She sat herself down at the bottom to wait for Betty. But Betty didn't come, and she didn't come. How was Mary Jane to know that Betty hadn't heard Mary Jane's cry of discovery and that at that very same minute, Betty was gaily sliding down a slope of her own discovering, on the very opposite side?

After waiting till she was tired, Mary Jane decided to climb back up and find Miss Betty. She was determined to have Betty have the surprise of going skiting down that steep slope. But it's one thing to slide *down* a steep slope and quite another thing to climb back up—as Mary Jane soon discovered. Try her hardest, she simply could not get up that hill; she slid down faster than she went up, and at the end of several minutes' very hard trying, she was exactly where she started—at the bottom.

"I guess I'd better try at another place," said Mary Jane to herself, and she wandered along the foot of the dunes, in search of an easier slope. But alas! On that side the slopes were not as gentle as on the lake side and poor little Mary Jane, wearied by her vigorous efforts at climbing, got very tired plodding through the heavy sand in search of a good climbing place.

The warm September sunshine, that had seemed so delightful out on the beach or on the hilltop, beat hotly on the yellow sand

and made Mary Jane so sleepy she could hardly see to watch for a good slope. Once or twice she tried to climb, but one time the slope was too steep, and the other time the trees and brush were so thick she couldn't make her way through.

"I guess I'll sit down and look around," she decided, tiredly. "Maybe I can see better sitting down." She picked out a nice shady place where the sand made a comfortable hollow and down she sat. But as for looking around for a good climbing place—she didn't do that at all. For the very first minute after she sat down she went to sleep—sound to sleep—and forgot all about slopes and slides and dunes and everything. And the old sun shone down and shone down and *shone* down, and if he thought anything about a little girl sleeping there so far away from her family, he didn't do anything about her—maybe he couldn't—except to shine all the harder, making her so snug and comfortable no telling when she *would* wake up.

"Where's Mary Jane?" asked Mrs. Merrill, as, the dinner all cleared away, the older boys and girls began to talk about another swim.

"She and Betty are sliding down hill," said Mr. Holden, smilingly; "that will keep them busy a long time, and they are safe as can be, for I started them sliding down the beach side of the dunes, so when we want them, all we have to do is wander down the beach a way and pick them up.

"Now about this swimming, folks," he continued. "It's a little too soon after dinner, say I. Didn't you want to show Alice the view from Lookout Mount? That's the highest dune around here, Alice, and quite a climb. You folks do that now. Ann may stay

with her mother. It's too long a climb for little girls, anyway. And then, in about an hour, we'll pick up Betty and Mary Jane and meet you on the beach."

That plan suited everyone but Ann, who wished desperately that she had started off when Betty and Mary Jane did. How was she to have known that stopping to toast one more marshmallow —which she didn't really need half as much as she thought she did at the time—would make her lose so much fun?

But anyway the older girls and boys with the men as guides started for Lookout, and Ann had to amuse herself as best she could with hunting lichens, finding a few bits of bittersweet and the like.

"I think we should be finding our little girls," suggested Mrs. Merrill, after about a half an hour's visiting. "They may have wandered farther than we think, and we will want them here if the others go in swimming."

So baskets were put in a pile where the men could easily find them to take them to the cars, and the three ladies, with Ann, tried sliding down the slope to the beach. They liked it as much as the children had, and it was a jolly, laughing group of four which wandered down the beach toward the west, in search of the little girls.

"There's Betty," said Mrs. Ellis, as she spied a little girl on ahead, "but I don't see Mary Jane."

"I suppose she's climbing the slope for one more slide," replied Mrs. Merrill laughing; "she never will get enough."

But laughter was soon changed to anxiety when, on getting nearer, they saw Betty was crying and running to them as fast as ever she could.

"Mary Jane's lost! Mary Jane's lost! Mary Jane's gone and got lost, she has!" sobbed the little girl.

"Nonsense, Betty," said Mrs. Holden, "how could she? She is probably hiding from you some way, thinking to tease you. Now take us back to where you saw her last and we will easily find her."

"But I don't know where it is I saw her last," said Betty between sobs. "We ran along the top there," and Betty pointed with a sweep of her arm that took in almost everything between them and distant Chicago. "And then she went to find a new slide and I did, too. And when I got back she wasn't there."

"Did you call?" asked Mrs. Merrill, anxiously.

"Yes, fifty times," said Betty. "No, I guess it was a hundred times. But she wasn't there. So I started home for you. And now I don't know where she is."

There was a problem indeed.

"Suppose you and Ann stay right here, in case she comes along this way," suggested Mrs. Holden to Mrs. Ellis. "Then her mother and I will climb the slope where Betty thinks they were, and start hunting. It won't be hard to find her, and no use bothering the others. We will have her long before they get back. I really think it is foolish to hunt, as she will come along any minute——"

"But we ought to be doing *something* toward finding her," interrupted Mrs. Merrill anxiously. "We'll hunt fifteen minutes and then come back here to see if she has come."

It wasn't so funny, climbing up the slippery sand with anxiety for Mary Jane tugging at their hearts, but both Mrs. Merrill and Mrs. Holden pretended they were not one bit anxious and kept bravely on. They reached the top, wandered along, looking at each bare slope they passed. But no sign of Mary Jane was to be seen anywhere.

In the meantime the little girl slept peacefully till her nap was out, then opened her eyes and saw standing before her—of all people—Dick, her schoolmate!

"Why, Dick Jones!" she exclaimed, exactly in the same instant that surprised Dick cried: "Why, Mary Jane Merrill!"

"I wish it was anybody else!" thought Mary Jane to herself in distress. "Now he will tease!" But of course she was too polite to say such a thing out loud.

But for some reason or other Dick didn't seem disposed to tease. And Mary Jane soon found out what that reason was. He was lost, too!

"How did you get here?" he asked abruptly.

"In an automobile," replied Mary Jane, "with Ann Ellis and some other folks and my mother and all." Then she asked back, "How did *you* get here?"

"On a train," he replied, "with a lot of folks from my Sunday

School. And I wanted to be Indian, so I came away, and then they all got lost."

"There *are* a lot of hills," admitted Mary Jane, looking around again.

"And I suppose they have gone home," said Dick, worriedly. For even though he felt like a very big, bad boy in school, one didn't seem so big there in the woods and queer sand hills—not nearly so big.

"There's a train," suggested Mary Jane, as she heard one whistle. "You could go to the train and ride home by yourself."

"But I haven't any money or ticket or anything," said Dick. "The teacher has all those things, so we wouldn't lose 'em."

Mary Jane didn't say anything for a minute, for a plan popped into her head and she had to think about it a minute to make sure.

"Would you like to ride home in an automobile?" she asked—just that way, as though she had a dozen waiting the other side of the hill.

"Sure I would," said Dick, brightening up, "got any?"

"We'll see," said Mary Jane, craftily. "How much do you want to go?"

"Oh," replied Dick, surprised, "why, a lot!"

"Enough to pay?" asked Mary Jane.

"But I told you the teacher took my money," he answered.

"Well, I know that," said Mary Jane, "but I mean to pay something else? How much will you pay?"

Dick just stared at her in amazement. Weren't girls crazy? Pay when you had no money! The idea! But Mary Jane wasn't as muddled as he thought—he soon found that out. She knew exactly what she was driving at.

"I don't want money," she replied, scornfully, as he stared at her, "what else will you pay?"

"What do you want?" asked Dick, not willing to promise till he found what was expected.

"I want you to promise not to tease me any more," said Mary Jane, firmly.

Dick looked at her with new respect in his eye. This wasn't the prim little mother's baby girl he had thought Mary Jane was. This was a person to be reckoned with. Maybe she wasn't so silly after all! And if he could ride home in an automobile—Dick had never been in an automobile in his life, except a grocery truck once, though of course he wouldn't admit that now.

"Never?" he asked, just to spar for time.

"Never!" announced Mary Jane.

"All right," he said, "I wasn't going to tease you any more anyway, so there! And where's your old car?"

"It's over there," said Mary Jane. "But first we have to get unlost. Betty and I, we were sliding down toward the big lake, and then I came this way. Now where's the big lake?"

"On the other side from the little lake," suggested Dick, wisely.

"Why of course," laughed Mary Jane, "I remember. Then if we climb up here, we'll find it."

Up they started, slipping and sliding halfway down again, but going steadily upward all the time. Dick reached the top first, but he waited for Mary Jane.

"Now which way do we go?" he asked, on the lookout for that car he was to ride in.

"I don't know," said Mary Jane, honestly, as she looked this way and that through the trees. Then she spied the big lake.

"Let's slide down on this side and then we can find my family," she suggested.

So down they slid, landing almost under the very feet of Mrs. Holden and Mrs. Merrill, who were on the next dune.

There was a happy reunion and then Mary Jane explained about finding Dick—or rather about his finding her, she didn't quite know which it was. Dick listened anxiously, but was much relieved when she simply said, "I told him he could go home with us." And she didn't mention about his promise; even though Mary Jane was only a girl, she seemed to have some sense, he decided.

“We’ll go back and meet the others now,” said Mrs. Merrill, “they will be anxious.”

So they started back, picking up Mrs. Ellis and Ann and Betty on the way and meeting the others a few minutes later.

“Dick,” said Mrs. Holden, “I met your teacher back here, looking everywhere for you. Come on and we’ll take you to her.”

Dick’s heart felt like lead. Was he to miss his ride after all?

But Mary Jane was too good a sport to go back on her word.

“I promised him he could ride back with us,” she said; “he can sit in my seat and I’ll sit on the floor.”

“Then we’ll go back and tell his teacher we are taking him,” said Mr. Holden. He saw Mary Jane had a particular reason for wanting Dick to go with them, but the teacher should not be left in anxiety.

So they hunted up the teacher and the situation was explained to her, while Dick, very happy and proud as punch, stayed with his new friends.

Mary Jane’s way of making him stop teasing was certainly working well so far.

PLANS FOR THE WEDDING

THE week after the picnic at the dunes seemed to go by on wings.

For one thing, school was very much easier and happier for Mary Jane, now that Dick had stopped teasing her. Unfortunately, Dick had the reputation of being a bad boy and he worked early and late to sustain that name. But given half a chance, he wasn't bad at all, only mischievous. He certainly played fair enough with Mary Jane. He was so happy over his fine long ride home from the dunes that he couldn't do enough for the little girl who had made it possible for him.

As it turned out, Mary Jane had not had to sit on the floor of the car after all, for Mr. Ellis folded a big rug and stretched it across the two chairs and the three children, Ann, Mary Jane and Dick, sat together on that and there was plenty of room for all. Mary Jane insisted on sitting in the middle so Dick could see everything well, and he had a beautiful time. When they reached Chicago and their own neighborhood, Mr. Ellis had driven Dick home and he had the proud pleasure of getting out of the fine car in front of his own house.

He took off his cap and said good-by like a gentleman, and then, looking Mary Jane in the eye, said, "By, Mary Jane, and I won't forget."

And he didn't. All through the week that had gone by since that evening, Mary Jane had found her pencils sharpened as if by magic, her desk and books undisturbed, and school vastly more

comfortable than it had been before.

"I'm so glad I lost myself and found Dick," she said to her mother with a sigh of comfort one evening. "Dick really is a nice boy once he gets started being good."

Mrs. Merrill smiled and gave Mary Jane a loving hug. No use to explain that most folks are nice—only some never seem to get started being good—that's all the difference! Mary Jane would have to find that out for herself some day.

This Friday afternoon when the two Merrill girls came home from school another surprise awaited them—a surprise about as different from last week's as one could possibly imagine.

Miss Howard and Mrs. Holden were there, and plans for the wedding were being discussed.

"It seems a good deal to ask," Mrs. Holden was saying reluctantly, as the girls entered the room, "but if you care to, and the girls will enjoy it, we want so much to have your girls in the party."

"Oh, goody!" exclaimed Mary Jane, "is it a party? Wait! I'll get Betty."

"Betty will be over in a minute," laughed Mrs. Holden. "We left word for Ed to send them over the minute they came, for we wanted to plan together. But it isn't a regular party, dear," she explained, "it's a wedding party."

"What's that!" asked Mary Jane, in surprise.

“A wedding party is the group of folks who march up the aisle and help get people married,” explained Miss Howard, smilingly. “You know I told you the other day that I wanted you. And if your mother is willing, you and Alice are to help me get married. I shall like it so very much better if you are right there.”

“Oh, mother!” cried Alice in delight, “we may, mayn’t we—please?”

Mrs. Merrill thought a minute. Before, when the thing was suggested, she had not given it serious thought, as it seemed far away and indefinite, and now she did not wish to encourage her girls in anticipation of the fun and then have to find it impossible. But in a minute her face cleared and she nodded her head.

“Yes, dear,” she decided, “I think you may do it, since Miss Howard is so good as to want you. At first I didn’t quite see how I would manage two such nice new frocks, but it will be a wonderful experience for you, and I know we can manage some way if we try. Now listen while Miss Howard tells you what pretty dresses she has planned for you.”

Both girls crowded up to Miss Howard on the davenport and listened attentively while she outlined plans.

“The colors are apricot and pale green,” she said, “just as I told you the other day. Frances and Alice will wear the green, and with Frances’s reddish hair and Alice’s so pretty and golden, they ought to look very lovely.

“Then my two little flower maids,” she added as she slipped

her arm around Mary Jane, "will wear white organdy frocks over apricot silk—real fluffy frocks."

"With lace and sashes and things?" asked Mary Jane gleefully. No one loved pretty things more than she did.

"Indeed, yes," laughed Miss Howard, "that's the very kind you are to have. And then you shall carry French baskets with flowers—I think maybe we'll have chrysanthemums if we can get the right colors. If not, we'll have foxglove and roses—Ward roses, maybe. We can see about that later."

"Let's have chrysanthemums," said Alice, eagerly. "You know the kind, Miss Howard. So pink they're pink and then suddenly you see they're not pink at all, they're yellow!"

"You have the idea, Alice," said Miss Howard, much pleased with her enthusiasm. "That's the very kind we shall have. But now to frocks."

"Yes, that's why we came over this afternoon," said Mrs. Holden. "We wondered if you and your girls could meet sister and me downtown to-morrow and hunt frocks. We hope we can find some ready-made, as the time is so short and there is so much to be done yet for this hurried-up affair."

Mrs. Merrill thought they could meet at ten, so the two ladies went out, just as Betty and Frances hurriedly dashed into the room. They were late getting home and had got the message only a minute before.

"Let them stay a while," said Mrs. Merrill, as she saw the Holden girls didn't want to be going right off, "and the four of

them can find something interesting to do together."

That wasn't hard, especially as they were so busily thinking about weddings. They got all Mary Jane's dolls out on the balcony, and Frances and Alice made wedding finery while Mary Jane hunted gay scraps for materials and Betty dressed and undressed dolls for fittings. By the time the older girls had two bridesmaid frocks finished, Betty suddenly realized that Mary Jane's dolls were getting all the new clothes, so she slipped off home and got two of her own dolls to swell the doll wedding party. That was fair enough, especially as she brought back with her a piece of white veiling for the bride doll.

Next morning the Merrills went downtown and met their neighbors promptly at ten as planned. Miss Howard had gone down much earlier as she had so much to do.

The first store they went to didn't have a single pale-green dress such as was wanted for Alice and Frances, but at the second they had better success. Very charming dresses were shown them, and finally Miss Howard selected two very dainty frocks, very simple but nicely made and of soft, rich material.

"There," she said, "if those look as pretty on as they do off, your dresses are settled."

Frances and Alice went with the saleswoman into one of the dressing-rooms to try the dresses on, and Betty and Mary Jane waited with what little patience they could assume, till their sisters came out again.

"I hope we can go in there, too," said Betty. "I want to see what it looks like."

"Your turn will come," said Mrs. Merrill, "and while you are waiting, why don't you look around at some of the pretty things?"

But the girls didn't want that. They preferred to stay right there and see Alice and Frances the first minute they could.

In about five minutes both girls came out looking as pretty as pictures. The dresses were exactly right—no doubt about that.

"Now then," said Miss Howard, much pleased, "you slip those off, girlies, and we'll attend to the flower maids next." And she explained to the saleswoman what was wanted for the younger girls.

After a few minutes' search, she brought out a charming little organdy frock for which any color slip could be made, and everyone liked it at first sight.

"We seem to be lucky this morning," said Mrs. Holden. "Now, girlies, you try yours on, and then we're through."

But alas! After a very careful search, the saleswoman returned to announce that they had only one of that design dress in that size. They had several nines—but those were too big. And a half dozen fives—but those were too little. Mary Jane felt like Goldilocks with the three bears as she heard it all explained to her mother.

What should they do? Time was flying and it took so long to go from store to store.

"I'll tell you what let's do," suggested Mrs. Merrill, who all

the while had been looking hard at the little dress. “Let Betty try it on, and if you still like it so well, I will copy it for Mary Jane. We would have to make slips anyway and that dress would be fun to make.”

Instead of looking pleased, Mary Jane looked very unhappy; so very, very unhappy that folks couldn’t help but notice.

She felt very big and important in the little fitting room with the saleswoman.

“What in the world is the matter with my Mary Jane?” asked Miss Howard. “Don’t you like it, dear? Isn’t it a pretty dress?”

“Ye-s-s,” admitted Mary Jane sadly.

“And don’t you know your mother can make one exactly like it?”

“Oh, yes.” Mary Jane was sure of that.

“Then what ever is the matter?”

“I—I—I wanted to try it on in the little room,” said Mary Jane.

“Of course you do, and you shall,” said Miss Howard promptly. “We meant for you to do so anyway, for we must see that it is becoming to you, too. So you are not going to miss a single thing—don’t you worry.”

So Betty tried on the dress—and it was all right. Then Mary Jane tried it on, and it was all right, too, and she felt very big and important in the little fitting room with the saleswoman—and nobody else. She felt exactly like a grown-up lady.

After the dresses were decided upon, there were slippers to buy, pretty little silver ones for the older girls, and white ones for Betty and Mary Jane, and the silk for the slips, and stockings. That was all.

But it was enough, goodness knows, and the girls were tired and hungry when Mrs. Merrill suggested, “How about getting lunch and then stopping at the Art Institute before we start for

home?”

That plan suited beautifully, so Mr. Merrill was ’phoned to, and though he couldn’t come for lunch, he promised to meet them soon afterward, and the girls and Mrs. Merrill took the elevator for their favorite fountain room—and luncheon.

TUM-TUM-DE-TUM

IT was hard to settle down to work at school the day of the wedding.

Of course the girls, all four of them, had been to the rehearsal the evening before, and had practiced marching up and down the church aisles till they were certain sure no crowd of folks, however big, could possibly frighten them into forgetting their steps. With their eyes shut, they could have marched up that south aisle, taken their places on the steps in front, and turned at just the right time in the music. Then the minute the minister said "Amen!" (how carefully they had practiced so as not to forget) they were to turn again and watch the bride and groom start out. As soon as the bride's train was far enough away, Betty and Mary Jane were to walk behind her, with Frances and Alice and later the other maids following in turn.

Not till each person had done his or her part quite perfectly did Miss Howard let the little folks go home to get some beauty sleep, and the big folks, including herself, go to a party.

All through the next day at school, that march music kept running through Mary Jane's head—"tum-tum-de-tum!" that way, and when Miss Montrow asked her to spell "lost," she promptly said, "Tum-tum-de-tum—play!" much to her teacher's amazement.

And then Mary Jane saw what she had done and promptly corrected it.

Finally, much to Mary Jane's relief, school was over and she could run home and take a good look at her pretty dress laid out on the bed.

"You little girls can play out-of-doors for an hour," Mrs. Merrill told Betty and Mary Jane when they got home. "This fine October air is just the thing for you, and you will not be up so very late to-night, you know. Play where you could hear my bell and I'll call you at five."

They decided on Betty's backyard where Ed and John had a cabin. As the boys were not using it to-day Betty and Mary Jane decided to play keep house, and with cookies from the Holden pantry and apples from the Merrills' they had a very good time and all too soon the tinkle of a sweet-toned bell on the Merrill balcony ended the fun.

Mary Jane took a nice warm scrubbing bath and wrapped up in a warm bath-robe for an hour's nap. Then she had a brisk cold shower and a rub, and dinner was ready to eat. No little girl ever felt more rested and happy than she did just then.

She helped her mother tidy up the dinner things while Alice rested, for Alice had done her share before. Then, when everything in the kitchen was in order and the light put out, they all went in to dress.

With everything so beautifully planned and ready, getting dressed was fun, not work, and Mary Jane had a fine time putting on her own pretties and admiring Alice who looked so sweet and fresh in her dainty green silk.

"Now when do our flowers come?" asked Mary Jane, when

they both were ready.

"You are to get those at Miss Howard's," said Mrs. Merrill. "Wait till we let Daddah see you and then we will take you over there. They are to have some pictures and you are exactly on time."

Of course Mr. Merrill was pleased with his two girls, and then they got into wraps and went around the corner to the Holdens' house.

My! But there certainly was a lot going on there! The picture man was taking a picture of Miss Howard, who looked like a queen or an angel or something—Mary Jane didn't quite know what—in her lovely dress and floating veil. Then the girls were whisked into line, given their flowers and their picture was taken too—all just that quick, it seemed to Mary Jane.

Then they got into an automobile and rode to the church—and goodness! Did a person ever see so *many* folks? Mary Jane and Betty peeped through the tiny leaded glass windows in the door till one of the grown-up bridesmaids saw them and told them it wasn't nice to peek, so they stopped.

Mrs. Holden slipped into the vestibule to make certain everything was as it should be. She straightened a bow on the pretty flower-trimmed shepherd's crook Alice was carrying instead of a bouquet; showed Mary Jane and Betty an easier way to hold their baskets of flowers, and arranged her sister's veil a little better.

"Now, you all look lovely," she said, at last. "And be ready, for I'm going in and the minute I am seated the organist is to

begin the wedding march."

Mary Jane and Betty got into their places in line and stayed there. They meant to do their very best for their dearly loved Miss Howard.

Sure enough! In about two minutes the organ began the first, eager notes of the march and then the "tum-tum-de-tum" that had been ringing in Mary Jane's head all day was heard. The doors swung open—the wedding was beginning.

Of the march up the aisle, Mary Jane never had a very clear recollection. She could see eager faces smiling at her as she passed; hear whispered words; but she was so intent watching Alice and Frances just ahead so as to keep the right distance behind them, listening to the music and keeping step with Betty, that she couldn't really notice anything.

Up the aisle; around the front pew; across the front of the chancel—she had to go to the far side, while Betty stayed right there. Mary Jane knew they were doing it well and exactly as they were supposed to. Then the music changed and the minister began to talk. That meant Mary Jane could stand still a minute and look around.

She and Betty had been told not to stare at the guests, but if she kept her *head* looking toward the bride, Mary Jane was sure it was all right to let her *eyes* look anywhere they could—and she did so want to see her mother and father. There they were, near the front and smiling as though they wanted to tell her she had walked very nicely and was behaving well.

Mary Jane didn't pay any particular attention to the minister

—who would when there were flowers and candles and folks to look at? But suddenly she felt something was wrong—the talking had stopped and the bride looked so unhappy and the groom so dreadfully uncomfortable. What in the world could be the matter?

Mary Jane looked at herself—as much as she could see—but she seemed to be all right—stockings up—she could feel them —basket just so; toes pointed straight ahead. It must be something or someone else. She looked at Betty. Betty was standing there as primly and properly as though she went to weddings every evening and thought nothing of such things. But still there was something sadly wrong.

Maybe it was the bride—no, she was lovely. Or the candles? They were burning beautifully. She forgot about the request not to look at things and looked carefully around the bridal group. And then something caught her attention.

Of course it couldn't make any difference. But it was funny when the church ought to be cleaned up so well for a wedding—maybe, though, it was a gold piece? Something shiny gleamed from behind the group of palms in front of which Betty stood. Something that gleamed and glittered in the flickering candlelight.

The best man turned to go out—Mary Jane thought that very funny for the music had not changed, and Miss Howard had said *particularly* nobody was to walk away till the music changed. And as he turned, Mary Jane heard the bridegroom whisper to him, "Quick, borrow one. We can't find it and we've got to have a ring!"

Instantly, Mary Jane realized what had happened. They had lost the ring—of course this is where the ring part came in at the rehearsal last evening. And there was the ring in plain sight on the floor. If they hadn't all been so excited they would have found it as easy as not.

Letting go her basket, with one hand, she grabbed the sleeve of the best man as he passed her and pointed to the gleaming thing on the carpet. Quickly and relievedly he slipped over, picked it up, and was back in his place before most of the folks in the audience had had time to suspect that anything out of order had occurred.

And the wedding went on.

After it was over and she was marching with Betty down the aisle, Mary Jane was frightened as could be about that ring. The idea! Why hadn't she picked it up herself? Or seen it sooner? Or paid attention so she could have known sooner what had happened? She didn't suspect that the very fact that she wasn't interested was what gave her a chance to notice the gleam of gold the others had all overlooked.

Now they were almost out; here was the vestibule. Now! Mary Jane drew a long breath—it was over! She could stretch her neck and wiggle her arms and do as she pleased! While she and Betty were waiting a minute under the awning outside the church, she felt a gentle punch and turned—to look into the admiring face of Dick!

"Gee! You look swell, Mary Jane!" he said, sincerely.

Mary Jane flushed with pleasure and didn't even mind that he

had said “swell” which she had been taught was a very inelegant word to use that way.

But just then their car came and she and Betty got in with the maid-of-honor and the best man and were whisked off before there was time for a word.

“Well, stand up and let me have a look at you!” said a man’s voice. “Which is the young lady who saved my life—or at least my reputation as a best man?”

Betty laughed.

“It was Mary Jane,” she said. “What was it she saw?” For Betty had not understood all that had happened any more than Mary Jane had.

“You don’t mean to tell me, you youngsters didn’t see my blundering?” asked the best man in amazement. “Didn’t you see me drop that ring?”

“No, did you?” asked Mary Jane.

“Well, there’s comfort for you,” said the man, “maybe more folks didn’t see it either—here’s hoping. As a matter of fact, I dropped the ring just as I was handing it to my brother. I felt it hit my shoe but couldn’t see where it bounced. Katherine” (that was the bride) “is a good fellow and she would gladly have used another ring, but she had taken off her engagement ring and not one of us, not even the minister, had a ring of any sort. The minister said he must have one—I think he ought to carry a supply in his pocket—so I was about to slip out and borrow one somewhere, when you pulled my sleeve and showed me where

the thing was.

"Now what's your name?" he added. "And what do you want most of anything in the world?"

Goodness! Such a thing to decide offhand that way! Mary Jane couldn't guess what was happening to the man!

She thought a minute and then said, "A bird that sings and a cage with a stand under it. And a new cap for Dick. I think it would be easier for him to be good if he had a new cap. And my name is Mary Jane Merrill."

"That's beyond me," said the best man in amazement, "but you shall have your bird and we'll see about the cap later. You'll have to tell me all about it."

They reached the Holden home just then, and after that there was such a scramble and so much fun, Mary Jane didn't see him again. Everybody had ice cream and a piece of the beautiful bride's cake Betty admired so very much. Then the bride changed to her traveling dress and everything was so gay and mixed up! And Mary Jane *was* getting pretty sleepy—no doubt about that. She wasn't even sorry when her mother said, "Don't you think our little flower-maid had better go home and to bed?"

And would you believe it, she was so sleepy she forgot to tell her mother about the ring and the funny best man and all?

So when she came home from school the next day, she found her mother very much puzzled over a beautiful canary and a great, lovely cage (and a standard) which had been delivered an hour before to "Miss Mary Jane Merrill."

“That’s mine—from the best man,” explained Mary Jane. “He said he would send it, and I expect to-morrow he’ll send Dick’s cap too.” And he did—though that’s another story.

MARY JANE'S HIDING PLACE

THREE or four days after the wedding, Mary Jane found, on arriving home from school, a nice fat looking envelope addressed to her. Everyone likes to get mail and Mary Jane was quite thrilled as she hurried for the letter opener—not for anything would she have torn the envelope open and mussed it up. You know how she would feel.

When she slit it open she discovered it contained several things; first, a letter to her; second, some pictures of caps; and third, another envelope folded up and containing another letter. She hardly knew which to read first, but Alice urged her to begin with the letter to herself, so she did. Fortunately it was written on a typewriter, so it was easy to read and as it had no great big words, Mary Jane could read it all by herself—that's the advantage of going to school, you see. A person can read her own mail. It said:

> "My dear Mary Jane, don't think I have forgotten about that cap. I have been trying to get out to see you to find out just what it was you wanted. But now I am called away on business so I am sending this letter. You will find an order for the cap which you can give to Dick. (Wasn't that his name?) And he can take it downtown and get any cap he wants. I enclose pictures so you can help him pick one out, if you like. Thank you again for your help in finding the ring. Your friend, the best man."

Below was his really truly name, Reginald Worth, signed in such funny writing that Mrs. Merrill had to help figure out the

letters.

"Now think of that!" exclaimed Alice. "What shall she do, mother?"

"Look at the rest of the letter first," said Mrs. Merrill.

So they opened the envelope and found a regular order, "For one cap and pair of gloves of any the enclosed styles. Paid."

"That's why they sent the pictures," said Mary Jane. "Then Dick won't have to say how much does this cost? He can just pick out any one. Now, isn't that nice, mother?"

"Very, very nice, indeed it is, Mary Jane. I think you are very fortunate to have such an appreciative friend as Mr. Worth is," said Mrs. Merrill heartily. "You were only doing what you would wish to do for Miss Howard, and yet he takes it as a great favor for himself. You must remember, next time someone does something helpful to you, that appreciation seems very pleasant.

"Now, there are just two things to be done," she continued. "Give the gift to Dick and write Mr. Worth as nice a letter as you know how to write."

"But how shall I give this to Dick?" questioned Mary Jane.

"That is for you to decide," replied her mother. "There is no hurry, think it over and you will find a way. Now it is time to eat lunch if you are to be back for school."

All the time she was eating, Mary Jane was very thoughtful.

Getting a cap for Dick seemed very easy—until she was ready to do it. But would Dick like it? Not the cap, but getting it from her. Wasn't there some way she could give it to him without his knowing where it was from?

She didn't go around for Betty that noon. Something seemed to tell her that telling Betty would not help—so often telling Betty meant telling everyone, for Betty had a great fondness for telling all she knew—and sometimes more.

When she walked into her room at school, the way to give that cap suddenly popped into Mary Jane's head. Miss Montrow wasn't there. Nobody was there for Mary Jane was early. And on Dick's desk was his geography book, right there under her nose.

Quick as a flash, Mary Jane slipped the envelope into the book, shut the book up tight, and hurried back down to the yard, as fast as her little feet could carry her. And then, when she was safely down there without being discovered, how her heart did begin to beat! "Pit-pat! Pit-pat! Pit-pat! It's done! It's done! It's done!" Just that way.

Mary Jane was afraid to go upstairs after that, so she stayed and played a little till the regular line went up at the ringing of the bell.

No more had the children settled into their seats, when Dick raised his hand and said, "Miss Montrow! Somebody's lost a letter in my book!"

"I'll take it," said his teacher, holding out her hand.

But as soon as she saw it she said, smilingly, "You should learn to read, Dick! That letter is yours! Here, come and take it."

It was a very puzzled Dick who slowly walked back to her desk and took the letter. Sure enough, it *was* marked "Dick,"—but what in the world——

He opened the letter and read the order for a cap and pair of gloves. Now wasn't that a puzzle? He looked around the room. Mary Jane was hard at work studying her spelling—and anyway, she wouldn't know anything about *his* letters; Sam, his best friend, never could keep a secret and would have told ere this if there had been anything to tell. What should he do?

Miss Montrow helped him.

"If you don't know what it is, Dick," she said, "just take it home to your mother. She will know. And it's time to study spelling now."

Dick had a feeling his mother wouldn't know any more about it than he did, but he tucked the letter out of sight and went to work as suggested. And Mary Jane was more comfortable. With Dick looking around that way, no telling what might happen.

It was just as Dick suspected. His mother didn't know a thing about the letter. How could she?

"But it seems like a good letter," she said, turning it over and over in her hand. "Maybe it is an advertisement. We'll show it to your uncle to-night when he comes home." (Dick's father was dead and his mother's brother lived with them.) "And if he

thinks it is all right, I will go downtown with you after school to-morrow and get the cap. You surely need one. That old one you are wearing is so worn-out and much too small."

All the next day Dick was very quiet, trying to figure out some way to account for that cap. He hoped to hear something from someone, but he didn't learn one single thing about it. Of course! For Mary Jane was the only one who knew and she wouldn't tell.

The next morning he appeared at school with a fine new cap —just like the picture Mary Jane had liked best—and a nice warm pair of gloves.

He would need the gloves soon too, for the weather was getting colder.

As the days went by, the pupils in Miss Montrow's room began to make things for Hallowe'en. Black cats, cut from paper, started a parade around the room. Witches dangled from strings stretched across from opposite sides of the room. Pumpkin faces grinned foolishly from the window sills, and a great white ghost haunted the one dark corner of the blackboard.

"Going to have a party this year, Betty?" asked one of the girls.

"When's Hallowe'en?" asked Betty, before replying.

"Monday or Tuesday," she answered. "Now which was it?" She tried in vain to think. "But anyway," she added, "I know it is a school night and my mother said I couldn't go to any party, but maybe I might go out to play till seven o'clock if some other

girls were going to play, too."

"Then I'll ask my mother to let me go," decided Betty. "And, Mary Jane, you ask yours. And Ann can ask hers and Janny—and we'll have a fine time. Only my father said it wasn't nice to put soap on windows 'cause it made folks too much work. But maybe we can ring doorbells and scare folks or something."

"Let's be ghosts," suggested Ann. "I love to be a ghost, and folks always get so scared! I'd rather be a ghost and stay in a dark place and scare folks, than to ring doorbells."

"Well," said Betty doubtfully, "maybe so. But I love to ring doorbells. It gives you such a lovely scary feeling to hurry away and hide before folks get to the door."

At noon each little girl asked for permission to have Hallowe'en fun, and everyone brought back permission with two rules. First, they were all to be home at seven sharp. Second, some older girls must be along.

"Alice says she will," said Mary Jane.

"And Frances said she would," proclaimed Betty.

"That's all we need," said Janny, "'cause my mother said a couple, and that's two."

This was Friday, the Friday before Hallowe'en, and Miss Montrow let the children take home all the Hallowe'en favors and pretty things they had made. Mary Jane had place cards for dinner—four of them all cut and colored as pretty as could be. Then she had a pumpkin face for hanging in the window, and a

picture of a ghost.

"Now I'll know how to fix a sheet on me," she said, as she showed her mother this last thing. "For I may have a sheet to wear, may I not, mother?"

Mrs. Merrill promised that she would hunt up an old one that would look very ghostly and yet would not be a serious loss, if anything should happen to it.

Every chance they had during the day Monday, the girls made plans for the evening's fun. Where they would go, what they would wear, who they would scare and everything was planned with care.

Dinners were hurried through, sheets were hastily pinned into place, and soon the gay little group of ghosts assembled on Betty's front porch.

"My, but I am glad you met here!" exclaimed Mrs. Holden. "Just think how frightened I might be, if I saw you all parading on the street in the dark! Goodness!"

"But you know we aren't ghosts, and anyway we wouldn't scare you!" Ann was very fond of her dear friend, Mrs. Holden, and not for worlds would she have distressed her.

"Yes, I can't help but know, seeing you are here," admitted Mrs. Holden. "But there is no telling what I might think if I didn't know. Now skip along and have a good time, people," she added, "and come by here once in a while. I will put a light in the front window when it's ten minutes to seven, so you will know about when to come in."

The little ghosts sped down the walk and hurried around the corner.

There they saw two folks coming.

"Let's hide here in this vestibule and scare 'em," suggested Betty. "We can pop out and holler when they come by."

Such a scurrying into shelter! And no more were the ghosts hidden than out they popped again.

"Well, if it isn't little Betty Holden and her playmates," said the voice of one of Mrs. Holden's friends. And she wasn't scared a bit—not even a little bit.

"I'm going down to where folks don't know me," said Betty in disgust. "Little Betty Holden!" she added scornfully. "Grown folks are so stupid! Couldn't she see we were ghosts?"

So down to the next street the children went, dancing gayly along in high glee and utterly unmindful of dragging sheets that trailed behind them.

"Let's go down this alley," said Janny.

"I should say *not*!" exclaimed Ann, "let's just stay at the beginning of the alley and we can hide and scare folks just as well."

"Let's each hunt a place to hide," said Betty as they approached the end of an alley way. "And let's see who can get the best one."

Away the little ghosts scampered each to hunt a hiding place.

Betty darted up a few flights of steps; Ann took to the shelter of a telegraph pole; Janny stood behind a parked automobile. Where in the world should Mary Jane go?

Looking carefully though hastily around she spied a great box. In the dim light she couldn't see that it was marked "trash"—she only noticed that it was big and covered and very handy. Up she lifted the cover, over she climbed, and down into the trash bin she jumped, hidden safest of any of the girls.

And never once did she wonder how she would get out!

THE RESCUE

MARY JANE'S only thought when the cover of the big trash box shut down over her was, "Now nobody can find me!" It never once occurred to her that before ten minutes would be over, she would be wishing someone *could* find her—and would be in a hurry about it.

At first she was too busy congratulating herself on having found a safe place, to think of anything else. But as the minutes went by she began to get pretty uncomfortable. Sitting on your heels with your head bent far front so it doesn't bump the top is not very comfortable. If you doubt it, try it for yourself and see. Only never try it in a trash box. Mary Jane wouldn't want you to!

"Why doesn't Betty run out and scare somebody?" thought Mary Jane rebelliously. She had it all planned. Betty and the others were to try to scare some passerby and then, suddenly, Mary Jane was to hop out of the trash box—just like a toy Jack-in-the-box and scare *them*. It was a beautiful plan. The only trouble was it didn't work.

"I think she's stupid to wait so long," continued Mary Jane to herself, grumbling. "It isn't any fun just hiding all the time!" But of course, if she was to scare the girls, she would have to wait till they were thinking about someone else.

So she waited.

And she waited.

And nothing happened. Not a single thing.

How was Mary Jane to know that shut up tight in the box that way, she couldn't hear when the girls ran out? And that they found some other girls, also dressed up as ghosts, and that together they were running down the street to Jane Dorland's yard where great hedges would make a still better hiding place?

And how in the world, when there were so many little girls, all about the same size and all dressed in sheets, were her playmates to know that Mary Jane wasn't along? Everybody knows how much sheets look alike—even on folks.

After a very jolly play in the Dorland yard, Betty happened to think about time.

"Come now, folks," she announced, "let's run over to our house. I promised mother we would come by sometimes to see if the light was in the window."

So they ran over to Betty's house, which wasn't far away, and there was the light burning brightly and Mr. and Mrs. Holden out on the porch watching because it was three minutes past seven and high time third-grade folks were indoors on a Hallowe'en evening.

"Well, good-by," said Betty, when she saw it was time to go in, "see you to-morrow." And she reluctantly turned in to her own porch, while the little group of girls in front prepared to scatter to their homes close by.

"Where's Mary Jane?" said Mrs. Holden. "I wanted her to come in. Her mother is here and we have saved a hit of dessert

for you—you know, you didn't have time for it at dinner, Betty."

"I'll call her," said Betty, and she ran back toward the street, shouting, "Mary Jane, Mary Jane! Your mother's in here!" But though each little girl hesitated when Betty began calling, no one stopped when she heard the name.

"That's queer," said Mrs. Holden who was watching, "where is the child?"

"She's right there," replied Betty, her mind on her promised dessert. "You call her this time, and she'll hear."

So Mrs. Holden called, but no Mary Jane answered. How could she, when she wasn't there?

Frightened, Mrs. Holden called all the little girls back and asked them, one at a time, if Mary Jane was there. She wasn't. Then she had them take off their sheets so she could see for herself. But Mary Jane wasn't there.

"Betty!" called Mrs. Holden sharply, "call Mrs. Merrill! And then come to me. Now girls," she added as Betty, startled by her mother's voice, hurried indoors, "when did Mary Jane leave you?"

"I don't know," said one.

"I didn't know she was here," said another.

"We found them up at the alley on Fifty-fifth," explained Jane Dorland, "and we didn't know just who was there, only just the ones we heard through the sheets."

"When did you see Mary Jane last?" insisted Mrs. Holden.

The girls who had started out with Betty and Ann and Janny and Mary Jane put on their thinking caps and tried to remember. She was there at first—yes, they remembered that well enough. She was there when they talked about going down to Fifty-fifth. But no one remembered seeing her, after they hunted hiding-places in the alley.

By that time, of course, Mrs. Merrill had come out and was asking questions too, and was so frightened and distressed the girls felt sorry and very, very much ashamed to think they had let themselves get lost from their little friend.

"Up in the alley!" she exclaimed, "but what were you doing there?"

"We weren't really *in* the alley," said Betty, "we just went into the beginning of it so as to hide. You can't scare folks unless you hide first, you know."

"But wasn't it dark?" asked Mrs. Merrill, a cold fear clutching at her heart.

"Yes, it was," admitted Ann, "but that makes it so nice and spooky."

Mrs. Merrill had not waited for an answer. She ran around the corner and called Mr. Merrill, while Mrs. Holden called Mr. Holden, and together they met at the corner between their houses.

"Now, children," said Mr. Merrill, with what calmness he

could muster, "you are to take us up to the place where you saw Mary Jane last. And then we'll hunt. Probably she is hidden in some perfectly safe place," he added with an assumed confidence he was far from feeling, "and is just waiting for us to come and find her."

With very little talk on the part of the grown folks, and only frightened whispers from the children, the whole party hurried up to Fifty-fifth street and began hunting. Almost the first minute he glanced into the alley, Mr. Merrill spied the box where Mary Jane had hidden. Of course, it was just the kind of a place to hide! He ran over and lifted up the lid—no Mary Jane! With his electric flash light, he looked again—no Mary Jane there! Where had she gone?

In the meantime where *was* Mary Jane?

After waiting and waiting and *waiting* for what seemed to the little shut-up girl an unreasonably long time, she decided to climb out of that stuffy old box anyway, even if Betty wasn't going to scare anyone. So she reached up to open the cover—and it wouldn't budge!

She pushed and she pushed and she pushed, and it didn't even move, to say nothing of opening up wide enough for a person to climb out. Of course, being a little mixed up through being so long in the dark, Mary Jane didn't realize that she was pushing right up close where the hinges were fastened on, and no cover as big as the one on that trash box would go up when pushed there. Mary Jane should have tried at the outside edge.

Not knowing, she pushed and pushed some more but the cover

still failed to move.

By that time she was hot and sweaty and very frightened. Was she to be shut up in a box for all night? And then for the first time Mary Jane noticed that this was likely a trash box, for, now that she thought of it, it began to seem fearfully smelly and dusty. Not the least bit of a nice sort of place for a little girl to stay in all night—goodness, no!

She pushed and pushed again. Then, suddenly growing desperate, she began to pound on the sides of the box with her two fists. What did she care if she *did* tell the girls where her fine hiding place was? She would be glad to be discovered and let out.

Though her fists sounded very loud to her, and she pounded till her knuckles were sore, she really didn't make much noise. Nobody heard; so nobody answered.

"I can pound with my heels," she cried, almost tearfully. So she bent double and kicked out her heels against the box. That was hard work, for even though she was a little girl, she was a *big* little girl, and bending over that way in a trash box and kicking your heels is hard work.

She stood up straight and looked into the face of—
a—great—big—policeman.

For a minute no one answered or came. Then she heard a step. She mustn't stop to listen, though she very much wanted to. She must keep on pounding, and she did.

Suddenly the box cover opened, fresh air that smelled clean and good made her feel happier, and she stood up straight and looked into the face of—a—great—big—policeman.

"Well! For the love of Mike!" exclaimed the officer, "what are *you* doing here?"

"I'm hiding so as to scare somebody," said Mary Jane, surprised that a grown-up should ask such a stupid question on Hallowe'en night.

"Looks to me you are scaring yourself more than anybody else, it does," said the man shrewdly. "Didn't you know there's an ordinance against playing pranks on Hallowe'en night? I had me orders to arrest anybody doing mischief, I did."

Mary Jane stared. Orders to arrest—could that mean her?

"What's your name now?" continued the officer.

Mary Jane shook her head and for two reasons did not speak. One, she could hardly talk, she was getting such a curious lump in her throat, and the other, she suddenly decided that if she was to be arrested she must be very careful not to tell who she was —think how ashamed her dear mother would be!

So she shook her head, while the policeman, in the kindest possible way, coaxed and commanded.

"Then I'm going to take you down to the station," he finally said. "There's a woman there and maybe she can make ye talk." Picking her up in his arms, he walked down to the end of the alley, which was only a few steps away. There he hailed a passing automobile, set her inside, and they hurried off.

And not ten minutes after they left, Mr. Merrill opened the cover of that same trash box—and Mary Jane wasn't there.

"Now we must do two things," Mr. Merrill decided promptly. "First, we will telephone the police station, and second, some of us must stay right here where the girls saw Mary Jane last. She may have run some different way, got lost, and will wander back. We must be here to meet her. The rest of us will divide up and start hunting.

"But first," he added, "I'll 'phone the station."

He went to the corner drug store, and called for the nearest police station.

"Have you had any lost child reported?" he asked as soon as he got them on the wire.

"Yes," a voice answered, "we had a little girl here but she's gone now——"

And then the connection was suddenly broken, and though he rattled the hook and tried his best to get the station or central or something again—not a sound but a maddening roar could be heard.

Hurriedly he ran to another store and on the way, who should

he actually run into but a great, big policeman, who was helping Mary Jane out of an automobile.

Mr. Merrill grabbed his little girl, dirty sheet, and all, and held her so tight she could hardly breathe. It felt good though and Mary Jane liked it as well as he did.

"It's a good thing to find you," said the officer, much relieved. "She wouldn't tell the matron who she was, so we thought we'd better bring her back here, where someone would be hunting her."

"Wouldn't tell her name?" asked Mr. Merrill in surprise, "why not, pussy?"

Mary Jane looked hard at her father. She didn't seem ashamed or worried—not now. And the lump in her throat had mysteriously disappeared. So she told him all about it. How she had hidden in the box, and the policeman had found her, and she was just going to tell who she was when he talked about arresting her.

"Well, well! Think of that!" exclaimed the surprised officer. "And here I never even thought of arresting *her*! I was just a-talking."

Just as Mary Jane, who was beginning to feel quite like herself now that she had hold of her father's hand, began to gather up her trailing ghost costume, the Holdens, Mrs. Merrill and all the girls, spied them and came dashing down the street. There was a glad reunion then, you may be sure, and Mary Jane got hugged and kissed so much that even the policeman had to laugh at her.

"Now you don't have to tell me not to do that again, mother," said Mary Jane, when, a half an hour later, her mother sat down on the edge of her little bed as though for a talk. "I know I was a bad girl to hide in a box, and I know I'm not going to do it any more. Don't you ever be afraid. For even if I didn't get arrested and did get out to-night, I got my costume all dirtied up and smelly, and I worried everybody, and I'm not going to do it any more—ever." And she never did.

THE THANKSGIVING PAGEANT

"HOW many of you can have costumes made at home, if you are chosen for the play?" Miss Montrow asked the question soon after the opening of school, a day or two after Hallowe'en night.

"You see," she went on to explain, "Thanksgiving will be coming along one of these days, and we want to have a fine celebration here in the school. We teachers were thinking of having a Thanksgiving play, with Puritans and Indians and so on in it. Only we want to know first thing, how many can help us by dressing up?"

"That's fine!" she exclaimed, as she looked over the room and saw that nearly every hand was raised. "Of course we will make the costumes as easy as can be. Some of you boys have Indian costumes, I am sure. Puritan costumes for the girls are not hard to make. And we may want some girls to take the part of States. They would wear a white costume—a sheet would do, but a dress of white cambric would be better."

Mary Jane felt a little queer at the mention of sheet—she couldn't as yet quite forget her fright of Hallowe'en night. And she decided that if Miss Montrow would let her, she would be a Puritan. It would seem nicer—considering.

But as it turned out, she didn't even have to ask, for that very noon, Miss Montrow called her to the desk and said, "Mary Jane, can you learn things as well as I think you can?" And then she smiled so nicely, Mary Jane knew that meant, could she

learn things *well*.

"'Deed, I can, Miss Montrow," said Mary Jane, eagerly, "I can learn, oh, a lot and do it ever so quickly, too."

"That's the news I want to hear," approved Miss Montrow. "I talked with two of the teachers at recess," continued Miss Montrow, "and they both report that their children like the dressing-up idea as well as our folks did. So we are going to pitch right in and get our play started. And I want you to be Priscilla. You will have to have a plain little Puritan costume, and your part will be to tell about what the Puritans did, and who Priscilla was, and so on. You see, it will be more of a pageant than a real play, but the dressing up and that part will be just like a play."

Mary Jane was thrilled as could be—and to think she was going to be Priscilla! She knew the story of Priscilla very well; her mother had told it to her every year since she could remember, and of course that made it all the more interesting now.

After the bell rang and the children had marched upstairs and taken their seats, Miss Montrow announced what the pageant was to be, and you should have heard the children clap at that news! They thought it was going to be wonderful fun. Miss Montrow said that the pageant would be in the big assembly hall downstairs, the one where all but the first grade and kindergarten could be seated at the same time. And everyone who was willing to have a costume and to learn to do a part, whether it was acting or speaking or both, could be in it. Wasn't that a fine sort of pageant to have! A little play, with only six or

eight folks couldn't possibly be so much fun.

You may be sure that roomful of children was busy after that. They studied about the Indians so they could know just what they wore and what they did with the early settlers of this country. They studied about the Puritans, so as to know where they came from and why they moved to America, and how they dressed and lived after they got here. And then, when that was all learned, they studied about the States and how and when they were taken into this country,—that is, the Eastern States that made the first part of our country.

You can see, that was a great deal to have to learn, and the children in that room were so busy there was no time for mischief, and as for things happening, if anything besides good compositions or good reading lessons did happen, the children were so disgusted to be bothered that they paid little attention. Which after all is not such a bad way to have a Thanksgiving pageant work out.

Mary Jane hunted up a picture of Priscilla in a book she had at home and took it over to show Miss Montrow. It proved to be exactly what Miss Montrow thought Priscilla looked like, so it was decided that Mary Jane should copy her costume from that same picture.

Mrs. Merrill got soft gray material for the dress that hung in long, graceful folds clear down to the floor. After some hunting, Alice remembered a kerchief of her great-great-grandmother's that she was sure was packed in a trunk. Mrs. Merrill was sure too, so one afternoon after school, the three, Mrs. Merrill, Alice and Mary Jane, went downstairs to the basement trunk room to

hunt for it. Now a cellar in a house is a very interesting place. But a basement store-room under a big city apartment is not a nice place at all. In the first place it's sure to be dirty from the coal; and dark because of the small windows; and each little store-room is so small you nearly have to stay outside if you want to turn around. But that kerchief must be found. So trunks were moved about laboriously till the right one was set on top; the key was fitted in, the cover lifted up, and there right on top were the piled-up bits of linen that had been old grandmother Aldrich's years and years and years ago.

Mrs. Merrill put the light of the electric torch on them to make sure she had them all. Then she shut and locked the trunk, shut and locked the store-room, and they all groped up the dark backstairs to the apartment. It does get dark so early and so suddenly on a November afternoon.

"There, that job is finished," said Mrs. Merrill, as they reached their porch. "Now——"

But she stopped right there. For when she put her hand in her pocket to get the key to the apartment, there was no key to be found. It must have dropped out.

"I'll take the flashlight and go back and get it," said Alice. "It just dropped somewhere, and I won't be gone but a minute."

Down she hurried, and Mrs. Merrill and Mary Jane sat on the steps to wait.

But she didn't come and she didn't come, and they got tired and chilled waiting. Mary Jane's hands got so cold they almost hurt.

"Silly!" laughed her mother, when Mary Jane said her hands were so cold, "what are pockets for? Put your hands in your pockets, child. And if Alice doesn't come in a minute, I shall go and fetch her."

So Mary Jane put her hands into her pockets and there—plain as could be in her right-hand pocket, she felt the door-key. And then she remembered, and so did her mother. When they went down, they had given Mary Jane the key so as to keep it from getting mixed up with the storeroom key and the trunk key.

Mrs. Merrill opened the door, and Mary Jane went for Alice who was hunting carefully over every inch of floor in that big basement. By the time the girls had climbed the long flights of stairs again, Mrs. Merrill was making cocoa, and had got out some cookies, and they all had such a good time eating those and looking at Grandmother Aldrich's linens and deciding which one Mary Jane should wear, that they forgot all about basements and lost keys and being cold.

The costume, cap, kerchief and everything even to a dainty little reticule, was all ready when the day of the pageant arrived, and Mary Jane could hardly wait till afternoon came she was so eager to wear them all. Alice was Columbia, and was to wear a white dress and a gold crown with a star on the front, and a golden band across her dress with the word "Welcome!" written on it. She didn't come into the pageant till after Mary Jane went out, so she could see her sister, and Mary Jane could see her, which was very nice indeed.

Such a roomful of folks as there was when school assembled that afternoon! There was no recess, school would get out at

two-thirty. So everyone had worn their costume from home, and the pageant was to be right away. Really, if any stranger had been wandering in that neighborhood that noon, he would have been surprised indeed at the sights. For, apparently, there were no children going to school, only Indians in full war regalia of feathers and spears, and Puritan fathers and mothers, and stately ladies in white robes who would never have been recognized but for their crowns, which told the names of the States they represented.

The march music began, the performers fell into line and marched down to their place in the hall. Then, just before each room's turn came, they went back into the waiting-room just off the stage, so as to be ready for their turn.

Mary Jane's room came first of all, for of course the Indians were first in this country. After the Indians, led by Dick, had told all about their ways of living and their wigwams and food and canoes and everything, Priscilla, that was Mary Jane of course, was to come onto the stage.

But she didn't come. The Indians waited and stood on one foot and then the other, but no Priscilla.

"Better go and tell them," suggested Sam to Dick, in a loud whisper.

Dick strode across the stage in dignified fashion so it would look as though this were a part of the pageant, you see. He readied the door at one side, jerked it open, ready to whisper, "Hurry up, Mary Jane," when, as he flung the door open, Mary Jane actually fell right through and tumbled down onto the floor,

Priscilla costume, kerchief, reticule and all.

Of course she was up in a second. She rubbed her bruised knees, straightened her cap, walked to the front of the stage, and began her speech just as though falling through the door was the way she had meant to arrive. What had happened was that one of the older girls had shut the door tight, instead of only part way, and Mary Jane, not guessing that she should have opened it so as to listen better, had pressed up against it hoping she could hear what Dick was saying and know when to go on. But fortunately, some children were in front of the door and very few folks in the audience even suspected that anything amiss had occurred, thanks to Mary Jane's going right on with her part.

The whole pageant went as smoothly as could be, and all the teachers were so pleased and the children so happy that they went away wishing each other a happy Thanksgiving Day and expecting to have it.

Mary Jane took off her fine kerchief and helped Miss Montrow wrap up her flowers for vacation. There might not be good heat in the building all the time, and as the weather seemed to be getting colder, Miss Montrow wanted to wrap newspaper loosely around her favorite plants to keep them from getting too cold.

It was lots of fun to help. Mary Jane unfolded the papers and then held one side while Miss Montrow pinned and creased the paper into place. Mary Jane was sorry when the job was done, as she liked to talk to Miss Montrow, and there was always so much to say to such a nice person.

But presently it was all done, each plant had a shelter around it and Mary Jane must say good-by and go home. She went over to her desk to get her handkerchief—and it wasn't there! Great-great-grandmother Aldrich's fine linen handkerchief was gone.

THE CHRISTMAS JOURNEY

"WHERE did you put it, Mary Jane?" asked Miss Montrow, when Mary Jane made her understand what was missing. The little girl was so excited at first that she could hardly talk.

"Right there on my desk," pointed Mary Jane.

"Had you folded it up?" asked the teacher—not that folding it up made any difference, but she was trying to find some clue to the disappearance.

"No," answered Mary Jane, "I just laid it there. I didn't take time to fold it up, 'cause I wanted to help you. But it was right there—just a minute ago."

"Well, more than a minute ago," said Miss Montrow thoughtfully. "We've been working about fifteen minutes. And someone might have come in while we were talking and we might not have noticed. But whatever they would take a handkerchief for, is more than I can see. Now, where shall we begin to hunt?"

She looked thoughtfully over the desk, the table, the floor and the children's desks. Things like handkerchiefs don't just naturally get up and walk away. Someone had evidently been in the room without their noticing, or else she and Mary Jane had picked it up with the paper—hurriedly she inspected each plant they had covered. Of course no kerchief was there—she had known they would not be so careless.

"Hello, Mary Jane! Haven't you gone home yet?" It was Betty's cheerful voice and coming into the room, the little lady regarded the two distressed faces before her with amazement. "What's happened?" she demanded.

"My grandmother-several-times' handkerchief is gone!" cried Mary Jane. She couldn't remember to say great-great-grandmother.

"And no one has been in the room but ourselves," said Miss Montrow.

"Oh, but Miss Montrow, *he* has!" exclaimed Betty, "I saw Tom coming out just before I came in. He was down in the lower hall by then, but I asked him was our room open, and he said yes, and you were here fixing flowers."

"Tom wouldn't take a handkerchief," said Mary Jane, scornfully.

"Of course not, dear," agreed Miss Montrow, "but he might help us. Let's go right down and ask him if he saw anyone in the room or around anywhere."

They overtook Tom just as he was going into the furnace room in the basement.

"In a minute, Miss Montrow, in a minute," he said, as he went over toward the furnace.

"We'd like to speak to you right away," objected Miss Montrow; "it's very important, or I wouldn't bother you."

Reluctantly Tom set down the big basket of trash he was carrying to put into the furnace, and came over to the three who were waiting for him.

"We are very much puzzled over the disappearance of a valuable handkerchief, an heirloom, which Mary Jane wore today," Miss Montrow began. "She had taken it off and had laid it on her desk while helping me. As far as we know, no one was there besides ourselves, but when she went to get it, the kerchief was gone."

"I was there awhile ago, while you were wrapping up flowers," volunteered Tom.

"But you didn't see anyone else there?" asked the teacher.

"Not a person," said Tom. Then his eyes brightened.

"Wait, where do you sit, Mary Jane?" he asked.

"On the front seat of the first row nearest the door," she replied.

"By jingoes!" cried Tom, unhappily, "by jingoes! Didn't I nearly do it!"

He hurried over to his basket of trash, the one he had been just ready to throw into the fire when Miss Montrow stopped him, and dumped it onto the floor. Hastily searching through the papers he hesitated a second—and pulled out Mary Jane's precious handkerchief!

"Never had such a narrow escape in my life!" he cried,

wiping the perspiration off his face. "I was going along the hall," he explained, as Mary Jane hugged her treasure in great delight, "and I just thought I'd gather up your trash, too, as I went along. You two were busy, so I took your basket you had set by the door and emptied that; then I saw some white tissue paper on that first desk"—

Mary Jane interrupted breathlessly, "That was some Janny had—around her beaded Indian head-dress, and she didn't want it any more, so she tossed it to me to put in the waste-basket and I forgot."

"So I picked it up," continued Tom, "stuffed it in with the trash and here it is and the kerchief with it. But for you insisting I stop, that would have been burned up before I talked to you," he added in distress.

"Don't you worry about it, Tom," said Miss Montrow easily, "it was not lost, so everything is all right. You are usually so careful and it *is* exactly the color of white paper, so it's no wonder you failed to notice when you were in a hurry."

"I'm certainly glad you found it, Mary Jane," she added as she walked from the furnace room, the two little girls holding on to her hands. "Now skip along home, little folks, and don't eat too much turkey."

"Happy Thanksgiving to you, Miss Montrow!" the girls chorused and off they skipped toward home.

It was a happy day indeed for the Merrill family. They had decided to put their dinner in with the Holdens', so while at Betty's house the turkey was being stuffed and potatoes were

being peeled, at Mary Jane's cranberry sauce was put out to cool, mince pies were baking, and Alice was washing and wiping the lettuce for the grapefruit salad. My! But it was fun!

"It's more fun than any other way," said Mary Jane.

"Yes," agreed Alice, "for even though we know *about* what they are going to have, and they know *about* what we are going to bring over, still—you never can tell!"

"You certainly cannot," laughed Mrs. Merrill. "For instance, am I taking cucumber rings or spiced peaches for a relish?"

"The very idea!" cried Alice, "you are taking peaches, of course."

So the peaches went to the dinner party—and stayed there.

The dinner was a wonderful success from the soup at the beginning to the last nut and raisin at the end, and everybody had a beautiful time.

After Thanksgiving was passed, Christmas seemed to come all in a jiffy. Perhaps that was because the Merrills were going away for the holidays. Grandpa and Grandma could not come to Chicago, so Mary Jane and her father and mother and sister—all four of them—were going to Grandmother's. Mary Jane liked that. It always seemed as though Santa Claus belonged in the country where the rolling fields were covered with clean whiteness, instead of the dingy gray that snow gets to be so quickly in the city, and where there was a wide, lovely fireplace beside which to hang up a Christmas stocking.

Of course going away meant doing lots of things. There was the Christmas basket for a poor family—the Merrills wouldn't think of giving up that pleasure. Only, because of going away, they took it out two days before Christmas and helped the surprised and happy mother hide all the lovely things away in a closet where not a thing would be suspected till Christmas morning. Then there were gifts to buy for Grandpa and Grandma and of course something for Mother and Daddah and Alice—Mary Jane had been saving pennies for weeks for that. And a box of candy to take to Betty and Ann and Janny—and goodness knows how much else to do!

It's small wonder that by the time Mary Jane got into that train, the day before Christmas, she was glad the journey was long enough to rest awhile and to eat lunch in the diner. Getting ready for Christmas and a trip both at the same time is exciting business, surely.

In the early afternoon the snow began falling, thick and white.

"Goody! Goody! Goody!" cried Mary Jane, happily, "now it's a sure enough Christmas."

"Yes," agreed Mr. Merrill, "and it's a sure enough hard time Grandpa will have getting us home in his automobile over this soft snow. In two or three days it will be packed, but if it continues this way, I predict we'll have a hard time getting out to the house. But don't worry, folks," he added as he saw the girls' downcast looks. "Maybe Grandpa will have some plan—you know he is a great old fellow for making fine plans for folks."

Pretty soon their station was reached, and the Merrills, bag and baggage, got off—and walked right into Grandpa's plan.

There, close by the side of the little station they saw—yes and then they rubbed their eyes to make sure of what they saw—it was, it truly was a great two-seated sleigh, with horses stamping and bells a-jingling, waiting to drive them home!

"I just said to myself, the last time I had you up in the old barn, showing you this sleigh, Mary Jane," said Grandpa, joyfully noticing their glee, "that next time my girls came here for Christmas, they were going to ride in a sure-enough sleigh with sure-enough sleigh-bells and fur robes. So this fall I got it down and painted it up, and had the bells fixed, and here we are! I was worried some about the weather," he admitted with a chuckle, "until last night. It began to cloud. And says I to myself, 'there's my snow.' And this morning it came."

"Plenty of it too, Grandpa," cried Alice in great glee. "Now you tell us where to sit."

"You're going to sit with me," announced Grandpa. "And Mary Jane and her father and mother are going to sit in the back. We'll take the bags here, but I have to have plenty of elbow room when I am driving through this snow.

"Now in with you," he added, laughing, as he tucked up the great robes tightly. "And we're off!"

Through the little village they dashed, rounding corners on one runner, bells jingling, horses tossing snow hither and yon—oh, it was like a truly story book, only lots more fun!

Then Grandmother met them at the door—and after that it was just a round of fun and goodies till the last stocking was hung, and Mary Jane and Alice, wrapped up in warm bathrobes, stood before the crackling fire saying together:

"It was the night before Christmas!"

THE SPILL ON THE LAKE

"DO you know what I think is the very best part of school, Grandpa?" asked Mary Jane two or three mornings after Christmas. If Grandpa had only thought to look hard, he would have suspected that Mary Jane was playing a trick on him. But as he was looking at the paper the postman had just brought, of course he didn't see. So very seriously he replied, "No. What is it?"

"The best part of school is vacation," announced Mary Jane, positively. "You see," she went on to explain, "if I didn't go to school, any day would be just any day. But seeing I do go to school, any day I don't go, is vacation. I like vacation."

"But don't you like school?" asked Grandpa in surprise.

"Oh, yes, very much!" cried Mary Jane. "I love Miss Montrow and we have the bestest good times in our room. Only, I like vacation better, that's all."

"Well, to be sure," said Grandpa, understandingly, "I did too when I went to school. Now the thing I want to know is this." He put his paper down and looked at Mary Jane by this time. "What do you like best about vacation?"

Mary Jane thought hard. Goodness, but that was a question! She thought about the Christmas dinner and the stockings and the ride on the train—and oh, so many other things! Then suddenly she knew the answer.

“I like riding in the sleigh best of all,” she said.

“Just what I hoped you would say,” grinned Grandpa, approvingly. “Then what do you say to going out right now?”

Mary Jane clapped her hands and said her approval of that plan so hard, that Grandpa was in no doubt as to her pleasure in his suggestion.

“Get your warmest things on,” he said, “and I’ll get Grandma to heat the little foot warmer. And we’ll take a ride. Tell mother and Alice they may go if they like.”

Mary Jane skipped upstairs to deliver their invitation, while Grandpa went out to the garage to get the sleigh. Of course, Grandfather had automobiles—two of them, his little runabout that could go on any sort of a road, and his bigger car that he and Grandmother used when they went together. But he had some good horses too. When he had thought of fixing up the two-seated sleigh for the girls’ Christmas visit, he had kept the cutter right in the garage where he could easily tend to getting it in fine order without being out in the cold.

By the time he had it out, the horses harnessed and the robes ready, Mary Jane was at the door, bundled up for dear life and ready to go.

“They can’t anybody come,” she said, when Grandpa came within hearing. “Grandma says on account of her tea party for mother this afternoon, she has to stay home. And Alice and mother want to help. Alice is going to make some tea cakes.”

“Then we’ll go by ourselves,” said Grandpa, not a bit

disturbed. “We’ll snuggle under this biggest robe in the front seat and then you just watch us fly!”

No sooner said than done, and in one minute they were off, with Alice gayly waving good-by from the front door as they passed.

My, it was fun! Probably they did not go nearly as fast as if they had been in an automobile. But the flying snow kicked up by the horses, the crisp morning air so sweet and refreshing in the sunshine, and the gay jingle of the sleigh bells all combined to make their ride seem very, very fast and reckless.

They drove to town where Grandpa did an errand at the bank and one at a store. Then they went to a candy store and got each of them a cup of hot chocolate, and bought some little candies for the tea party.

“Now what are we going to do?” asked Mary Jane, as they tucked up under the warm robe again.

“We’re going home the long way,” announced Grandpa. “We’re going over the hill and drive—well, young lady, you just wait and see where we are going to drive.” He wouldn’t tell another thing, so Mary Jane had to wait to find out.

They drove a mile or two, then they climbed the hill road and from the top they could see below them the glitter of the ice on a small lake below.

“Look at the folks skating!” exclaimed Mary Jane. “May Alice and I come over here to-morrow and skate? Um-m! I’d like to be there now!”

"That's so?" asked Grandpa with a twinkle in his eye, and before Mary Jane's astonished eyes, he drove down the hill and —right straight *onto* the lake, on the ice!

"Mister! May we hang on?" boys and girls came running to ask.

"Hang on if you can!" laughed Grandpa, and he gave a little flick to the whip he carried mostly for looks and away went his horses—but not so fast but that five or six of the quickest folks had made a successful grab for the runners of the sleigh and were carried along on the rapid dash across the ice-covered lake.

One of the bigger boys who was left behind, started skating his best in the hope of beating the horses across. He was the fastest skater on the lake and the children eagerly watched the race. Now he was gaining; now he was abreast; yes, he was getting ahead—just a bit. Then he outstripped the horses and shot out directly in front of them—just to show he could do it.

"Why don't you move?" he shouted in a gay taunt, as he turned to wave victory.

But that turn spoiled the whole thing. As long as he watched his path, he was safe, for he was the best skater on the lake. But moving so swiftly, and looking behind him, he failed to see a rough place in the ice ahead. Hitting it he reeled, almost got his balance—lost it again—and went headlong, directly in the path of the racing horses so close behind.

Grandpa had no time to do anything—hardly—it all happened so quickly. But with a desperate pull at the right-hand line of the

harness, he just *barely* missed running over the fallen boy. But that wasn't all.

The horses, pulled suddenly out of their path when they were going so rapidly, lost balance, careened, slid, veered off more to the right, and dumped the sleigh with its fringe of folks sprawling, out on the ice.

Helter-skelter they went, robes, children, foot-warmer, horses, sleigh and all—they were spread over as far as they could slide.

For a second there wasn't a word said. And it *is* rather surprising, no doubt of that, to be coasting along over the lake and then suddenly to be sliding along on your back at full speed. Then folks began to pick themselves up, and to laugh gayly at the mishap. All but Mary Jane. She didn't move.

Grandpa rubbed his bruised shins, climbed clumsily to his feet, and hurried over to his little girl.

She was lying flat on her back, her eyes wide open, looking at the sky.

"Are you hurt?" asked Grandpa wildly, "where does it hurt you, dear?"

"It doesn't *hurt* me any place," replied the little girl slowly. "Only I don't see why they have stars all over the sky in daytime! I *thought* it was daytime."

How Grandpa did laugh at that, and with what relief!

He picked her up, brushed her off, set her hat on straight, all before Mary Jane was quite sure what had happened.

"You just see stars because you bumped your head on the ice, pussy," said he, comfortingly, "are they going away now?"

Mary Jane opened and shut her eyes solemnly.

"Yes," she decided, "they're all gone now. What happened?"

By that time everyone had picked himself or herself up, the skaters who had missed getting on Grandpa's runners had caught up, and everybody began telling everyone else how it all happened and that they weren't hurt, with a great clatter of talk and laughter.

"It wasn't exactly my fault," said Grandpa at last. "But it's going to be my treat. Only, young man, next time you turn around and fail to see where you are going, don't do it right in front of my fastest horses. Now, Mary Jane, you and I are going home and we are coming right straight back here with apples and doughnuts for the crowd. That's what we are going to do!"

Such a shout of approval! Evidently apples and doughnuts sounded good.

He tucked Mary Jane into the cutter, put the robes around himself, and off they went toward home. In a little over half an hour they were back, laden with shiny red apples and doughnuts so fresh and hot they fairly steamed. Alice came along this time, for the tea cakes were baked and cooling, ready to be iced, and she had the fun of helping Mary Jane pass out the goodies, and of riding across the lake at top speed.

Each day brought its surprises and fun, and the girls were sorry when New Year's morning came, for even though that meant another lovely big dinner with roast goose and baked apples, instead of turkey and chestnut stuffing, it also meant that it was time to go home. Late that same afternoon, when the dinner party was all over, Grandpa drove his visitors to the train.

"Now you're coming to see us this summer, Grandpa," said Mary Jane as the train pulled in. "You must, to show me how to make a garden."

It's no wonder the girls were not so much interested in the diner that trip! Who would be with Grandma's New Year feast just over? But when the last call for dinner was shouted through the train, Mr. Merrill suggested that they have a cup of tea and maybe some toast, so Mary Jane didn't have to miss her favorite treat after all.

Home again! Lights were shining in the Holden windows as the Merrills went by, but it was too late to stop. The girls would have to wait till morning to tell their friends all about their visit, and to hear about the Chicago Christmas fun.

It was hard work to get up promptly next morning, for the weather was gray and foggy—one of the mornings when you are certain sure the clock is wrong, and that instead of seven, it's way in the middle of the night. But finally the girls did get up, and they were ready for breakfast just in time to "eat and run," as mother called it—some of their regular duties would have to wait till noon to be done.

Once back at school, Mary Jane was ever so glad to see her old friends.

"I told my Grandpa a funny thing," she confessed to Miss Montrow at recess time. "I told him vacation was the best part of school." Mary Jane giggled at her own folly.

"And isn't it?" asked the teacher.

"'Deed no," said Mary Jane positively, "school's the best part of school, and vacation is—well, it's just vacation, *it* is!"

"And they are both pretty nice," approved Miss Montrow. "Now Mary Jane, will you please pass these papers?"

And of course Mary Jane was happy to do that very thing.

PLANS FOR SUMMER

AS the winter days went by, Mary Jane had a better time each week, or at any rate, she thought she did, which answered just as well. She liked her work, she liked her friends, and she had lots of good times both in school and out. Dick didn't tease her any more at all. He was good friends every day—and he was doing better work in school too.

"I always knew you were bright enough," said Miss Montrow to him one fine morning, "but you are working better than you used to, Dick."

Dick grinned all over his cheerful, freckled face, but if he realized the secret of the change, he certainly did not tell.

One noon as Mary Jane got home from school she found her mother much puzzled.

"Alice and I are invited out for afternoon tea with an old friend of mine who is visiting on the north side," she explained. "You know, Mary Jane, my old school friend Katherine, who has a daughter near Alice's age?"

Yes, Mary Jane remembered.

"And we can't possibly get back in time for dinner," continued her mother. "I can't get your father on the 'phone as he has gone out to South Chicago for the afternoon, and he will be coming back here for dinner and——"

"Goody! I know what to do!" interrupted Mary Jane, "let *me* get his dinner, and Daddah and I will keep house till you and Alice get home."

"I wonder—" mused Mrs. Merrill. "What could you get?"

"I can fix hashed-brown potatoes," said Mary Jane, planning quickly, "and lamb chops—don't you remember, I cooked them the last time we had them?"

"Yes, you did," admitted Mrs. Merrill.

"And salad and coffee," continued Mary Jane, and then she added recklessly, "Oh, I can cook anything he wants."

"My, what a helper I have!" said Mrs. Merrill approvingly. "I believe I'll let you do it, dear. It will be fun for you, and then Alice and I can have our fun too.

"Fortunately, I made an apple pie this morning, so you can have that with cheese and coffee. I will cook the potatoes this afternoon, so they will be ready for browning."

"I can fix the lettuce right now," said Mary Jane, "and it will be ready, and you taught me how to make dressing, French dressing. How about bread, mother! Could I cut with the big knife?"

"No, dear," said Mrs. Merrill promptly, "you must promise not to touch that knife. I know you would be careful, but I will feel better if I know you don't try to cut with it. I will leave you some money, and after school, you may go up to Fifty-fifth street and buy some nice fresh rolls. Then you won't have to bother

about bread."

Mary Jane was busy as a bee that noontime. She wanted to get everything done that she could, so her mother would not have to do any more than was really necessary.

"Don't you think I'm big to cook dinner for Daddah?" she asked, as she started off to school.

"Indeed you are!" said her mother proudly. "I'll declare, I won't have any little girl around here at all, if you keep on growing like this." And she gave Mary Jane an extra hug and kiss for good-by.

All through school that afternoon Mary Jane kept planning what she would do. And as soon as school was over, she got Betty to go up to Fifty-fifth street with her to buy the rolls. No use waiting till late, for then maybe all the rolls would be sold. Mary Jane wanted that dinner to be the very best possible to surprise her father.

At five o'clock she began work. She set the table—and how funny it did look set only for two! She chopped up the potatoes in the chopping bowl, and got them nice and fine. She floured the lamb chops just as she had seen mother do. Then she measured the coffee and the water, fixed the butter on the plate, put the bag of rolls in the oven, and got out the water pitcher.

"There now, that's all but the salad," she decided. It had been settled before that she was not to light any gas till Mr. Merrill arrived. He would light the burners for her, and the potatoes and chops could cook while he made himself tidy for dinner.

After the salad was fixed, Mary Jane looked at the clock. He would be there in about fifteen minutes, she decided. Was there anything else to do?

"Jam!" she thought, "nobody said what kind of jam we could have! Well, I know mother wants us to have some, so I'll just pick it out."

She pushed the kitchen stool into the pantry, climbed up and lit the light. Then she looked at the shelves of jam. My! So many goodies she hardly knew which to choose,—peach jam, pear honey, grape jelly, raspberry conserve, she could hardly decide which she would rather have. Of course, peach jam was always a *little* the best; still, the others were awfully good, too.

She picked out a raspberry, a grape, and an apple, she could tell which was which by the labels, and set them in a row along the front of the shelf.

"Now, I must choose," she said, looking at them hard and trying to decide.

But at that minute, she spied a jar of pickle, just back of the apple jelly she was looking at on the shelf.

"We'll have to have pickle," she said firmly, "Daddah always wants pickle. Then I can choose the jelly."

She reached high over the glasses she had set on the front of the shelf to get the pickle jar—reached high on her toes and—slipped off the stool and fell 'ksmash to the floor, pulling after her as she grabbed for a hold, the glasses of jam she had been looking at.

Well, that *was* a mess!

At first, Mary Jane hardly knew whether to cry or what to do. She rubbed her bumped elbow, remembered that there was no one to hear her cry anyway, so why be a baby? and got up. But jam oozed down all over the front of her apron.

"Whatever shall I do *now*?" she asked herself. "I ought to know."

And she did know just what to do, once she got to thinking. She gathered up her apron so more jam wouldn't spill down, slipped it off over her head and took it into the bathroom.

"Is it cold or is it hot, you take for jam?" she asked herself and decided to try hot which, of course, was exactly right. She dumped her apron into the wash-bowl, turned on the hot water, and found to her delight that the jam washed off much easier than she had supposed it would.

"There, now, that's pretty clean," she announced, as she hung up the apron to dry. "Now I better see about the pantry."

That was pretty messy, but not nearly as much so as Mary Jane had feared it would be, for only one glass of jam had really spilled, the jelly had only tipped over and had stayed in the glasses just as nice and properly as could be.

Mary Jane knew where her mother kept cleaning clothes and it wasn't hard to wipe up the spilled jam and make the cupboard orderly and tidy again.

She had just finished, and put the cloth to be washed, when

Daddah's key clicked in the front lock—dear me! But it sounded good!

Mary Jane rushed into the hall to tell him that she was his one and only cook this night, and wouldn't he please come and light the gas quickly.

Such a dinner as that was! Mary Jane had watched so carefully and turned the potatoes at just the right time, and the chops too, so they were browned to a turn, and tasted as good as they looked.

"I like being cook," said Mary Jane when she saw that the last speck of potato was gone. "I think when I get to be a big lady, I'll cook all the time."

"If you do as good a job as you have to-night," replied Mr. Merrill, "I'll engage you to stay and cook at my house as long as you like. That's settled."

When the dessert was finished, Mr. Merrill proposed that they surprise mother by having the dishes all done.

"Yes, let's," agreed Mary Jane, happily. "I can wash and wipe both."

"You go to work, then," said Mr. Merrill, "and I'll clear off the table." It was lots of fun. Mary Jane washed and wiped, and her father tidied the dining room and put the butter and cheese and things in the ice box, and then put the clean dishes away as fast as Mary Jane had them ready, and in a very short time the work was all finished and the kitchen as tidy as Mrs. Merrill herself could have made it.

"Now, then," said Mr. Merrill, "come into the living room. I have some pictures to show you."

That sounded jolly, so Mary Jane scrubbed her hands, dried them neatly, and hurried into the living room.

Mr. Merrill spread out folders on the table—great, long railroad folders covered with interesting pictures of places to see.

"Where's this?" asked Mary Jane, as she spied a beautiful picture of a great, great rock rising out of the side of a mighty river.

"That's the fort at Quebec, Canada," said Mr. Merrill.

"Let's go see it," said Mary Jane eagerly. "Could we climb up to the top?"

"Indeed you could," said Mr. Merrill, "you could climb right up here to where the flag is." He pointed right to a particular spot. "From here you can see the country for miles and miles around, and the great St. Lawrence River as it flows off toward the ocean."

"Then let's go, Daddah!" cried Mary Jane.

There was no time to answer, for Mrs. Merrill and Alice arrived home just then. But as soon as they had told of their good time, and had made sure that Mary Jane's dinner party was a success, Alice spied the folders.

"What are they, Daddah?" she asked as she looked from one

lovely picture to another.

"They are all pictures of Canada," explained Mr. Merrill. "Mary Jane and I have just decided that we are going to take a trip through Canada this very summer. Want to go along?"

Such a question! Of course they wanted to go along, who wouldn't?

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Transcriber's Note:

Punctuation has been standardised. Spelling and hyphenation have been retained as in the original publication except as follows:

Page 61
machine came right at
then *changed to*
machine came right at
them

Page 140
For one cap and pair
gloves *changed to*
For one cap and pair
of gloves

Page 165
Paragraph break inserted after "hunting.":
up and start hunting. "But first," he added

Page 207
you may go up to Fifty-fifth Street *changed to* you may go up to Fifty-fifth street

[The end of *Mary Jane at School* by Clara Ingram Judson]