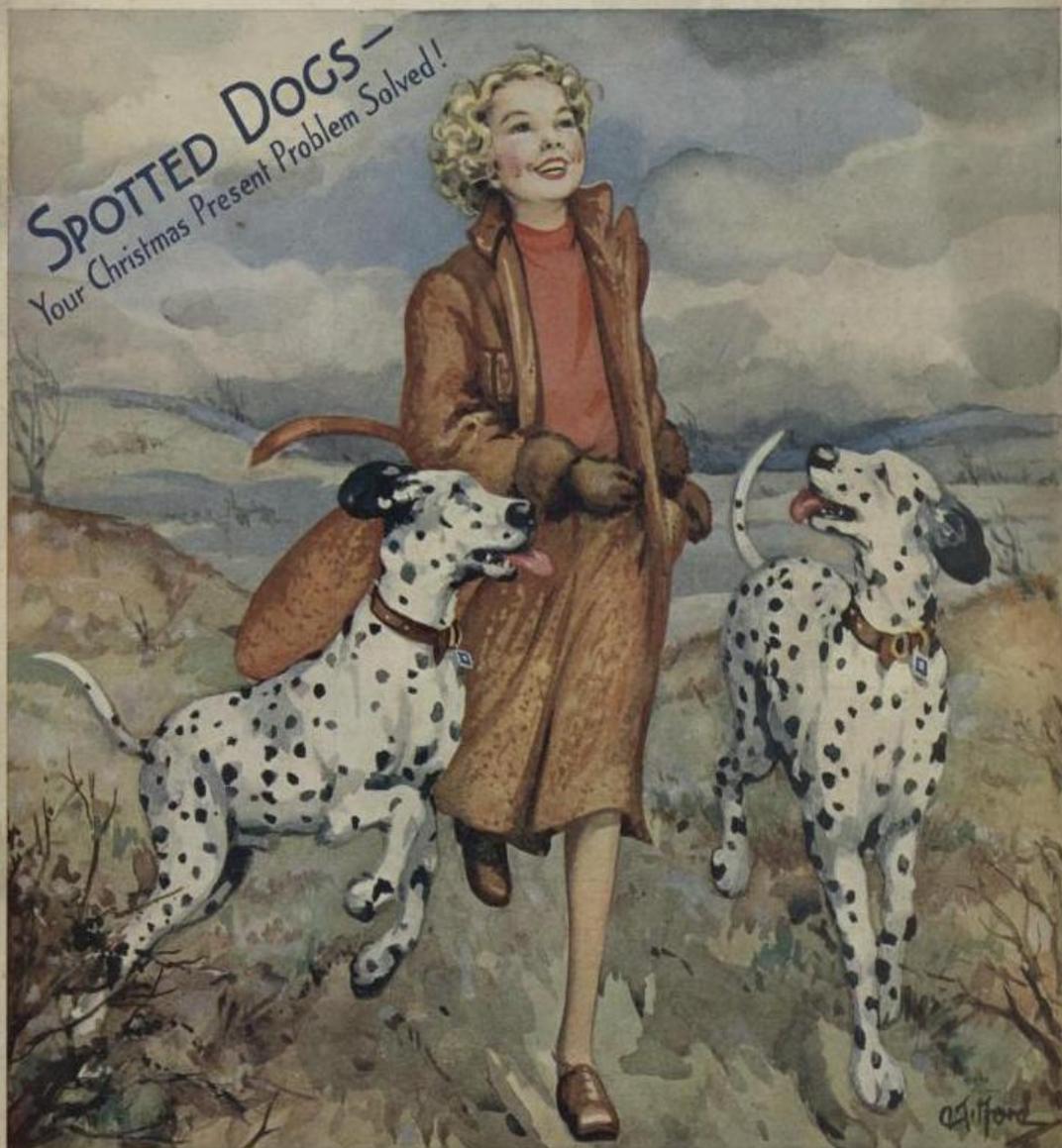


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Title: Janet's Rebellion

Date of first publication: 1938

Author: L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery (1874-1942)

Date first posted: Apr. 3, 2017

Date last updated: Apr. 3, 2017

Faded Page eBook #20170409

This ebook was produced by: Alex White & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

Janet's Rebellion

L. M. Montgomery

First published *Girl's Own Annual*, December 1938.

Illustrations by *Muriel Harris* have been omitted due to lack of death information.

I wonder, Jink," said Janet, "whose dress it will be this time. I almost wish I were like you and had just the one neat, furry, grey coat to wear all the time. You have the comfort of feeling that it is your own, Jink, haven't you? You don't have to wear other pussies' skins and know that all the other cats know it. I don't exactly wish I were a cat, Jink: it's a pretty nice thing to be a girl. I like being a girl—but oh, dear me, Jink, I *don't* like wearing other peoples' cast-off finery, even if it is pretty and becoming.

"Jink, listen sympathetically to my tale of woe. I went to Nora Marr's party in April and I wore Cousin Alice's last year's blue voile. It was pretty and almost as good as new, but everybody knew it was Alice's. I felt like a rag-picker. Then in May came the Veterans' concert and I had to sing. And I wore Cousin Theodora's last summer's yellow organdie, that she left for me when she went away. And everybody knew it was Cousin Theodora's. I didn't feel like Janet Stannard at all—I felt as if I were in the wrong body, Jink. I didn't sing half as well as I should have, and nobody knew why.

"And, Jink, it's always been the same. I've always had to wear my city cousins' dresses after they got through with them. They mean to be kind, Jink; I appreciate their good intentions and I love them dearly. But oh, I'd so much rather have just one plain, cheap new dress of my very own than a dozen lovely second-hands. How would you feel, Jink, if you were a girl sixteen years old and had never had a dress of your very own in your life?—That is, a nice dress, not counting a gingham or flannel once in a while for school wear? Fancy what it's like, every time you go anywhere, to know that people are scanning you to see whose dress you've got on now! And I can't say a word of protest, Jink. They would all think me so ungrateful and I wouldn't have them think that for the world. They've all been so good to me and I *am* grateful, but I can't help my poor little feelings.

"I've got rather used to wearing other girls' dresses to church and other places, where you're only one of a crowd, after all. But these special occasions will be the death of me, Jink. And there's another of them looming up now—Jennie Reeve's wedding. The invitations came to-day. I'm invited, too, Jink, and I don't know yet what I'm to wear. Alice's voile got stained at the party all across the front breadth. No, Jink, I did *not* do it accidentally on purpose. Polly Marsden ran into me with a cup of coffee, so that's out of the question. I've grown out of Theodora's organdie since May. It's too tight everywhere. Jink, it's my one beautiful hope—I'm growing so fast that some day I'll be bigger than anybody in the connection and then I can't wear their dresses. As for Jennie's wedding, Aunt Lena and Helen and Louise are holding solemn conclave in the breakfast room this very minute and my fate will soon

be settled. It has done me good to have this little growl to you, Jink. I feel ever so much better.”

Janet laughed, patted Jink’s sleek grey head, and ran downstairs. She was a tall girl with curly, reddish-brown hair and hazel eyes. All her life she had lived with her Uncle Charles and Aunt Lena Stannard and she had a very happy home. But money was sometimes scarce and her cousins, older than herself and out in society, needed so many things: and so the family habit, begun when Janet was a baby, was to fit her out with made-overs and cast-offs. They never thought Janet minded it. Her clothes were always pretty and much more costly and dainty than most of her girl friends wore. They would have been amazed and grieved had they known how Janet really felt about it.

Aunt Lena and Louise were, as Janet said, planning out their costumes for the wedding and Helen came in presently and joined in the discussion.

“What is Janet to wear?” asked Helen just as Janet came in.

Louise always settled such questions, so she looked at Janet critically.

“She has grown so tall I really think that lovely white muslin dress that Cousin Amy sent out in the box will be the very thing. It’s beautiful and I can easily fix the sleeves over with puffs. Janet has such pretty arms and elbows. She can wear your pale blue sash, Helen.”

Janet, making no sound outwardly, groaned in spirit. She had been afraid of this. That dress of Amy’s! Amy had worn it the preceding summer during her visit in Pinewood: everybody would recognise it, for it had attracted notice wherever it had been seen. It was a lovely dress, but Janet had hated it from the start, for she knew it would probably be left to her or sent to her when Amy had grown tired of it. Janet felt a sudden new, hot rebellion sweep over her. But she said nothing; and in the days following Louise got out the white muslin dress and pressed and puffed and altered the skirt; and it was a dream of a thing and suited Janet to perfection. But Janet could not bear the sight of it.

Just as the Stannards were going upstairs to dress on the day of Jennie Reeve’s wedding, all Uncle James’s folks arrived, having driven over from Milledge. Somebody must get them their meal and that somebody was Janet.

When the meal was over all the rest went to the Reeve’s, leaving Janet to dress alone.

“You’ll have plenty of time,” said Aunt Lena kindly. “There is an hour yet. We’ll go right over, for Mrs. Reeve wants Helen to help her and Louise promised to arrange Jennie’s veil. Never mind the dishes, just leave them in the pantry.”

Lingeringly Janet climbed the stairs to her room, Jink springing up before her with his striped tail erect. Rebellion was still smouldering in Janet's heart. It burst into fierce and sudden flame at sight of Amy's muslin dress spread out on her bed, with Helen's blue sash and Cousin Margaret's kid slippers. They were all so kind, the darlings, yet she couldn't wear it, no, she couldn't and she wouldn't! The recollection of how Cissy Carvel and Marjorie Street had laughed behind her back at Nora's party about her "second-handedness" swept over her with a flush of shame.

"I'd rather wear my gingham," she said bitterly; and then stopped short and glared so fixedly at Jink that Jink looked scared and shrank away.

Why not? Why not wear her gingham? It was new. It was neat. It was her very own. She would!

Without another second of hesitation Janet flew to her closet. Out came the Alice-blue gingham made for school wear. On it went. Janet looked at herself in the glass with satisfaction. Her cheeks were crimson with excitement, her eyes starry and bright. She had never looked better in her life; and oh, how self-respecting she felt! Aunt Lena and the girls might be angry, but Janet was past caring for that. She couldn't, no, she *couldn't* wear Amy's dress. Sixteen years of patient second-handedness came to an end in that wild revolt of the blue gingham dress.

Janet was very nearly late. The bridal party were descending the Reeve staircase just as she turned into the dressing-room. She flung off her hat and coat and slipped down, taking a seat near the door of the big living-room. Aunt Lena and Louise were opposite her, across the room. The ceremony was over before Louise's eyes fell on Janet. Louise stared as if she couldn't believe her senses.

"Mother," she gasped in a low tone, "is that really Janet over there? Janet!"

Mrs. Stannard looked. "Yes, it is, Louise. In that blue gingham! What has happened? What can have possessed her?"

"She must have torn the muslin or something," groaned Louise. "But to come in that gingham! Oh, this is terrible. What will people think? What will they say? *What* shall we do? Janet must go home at once."

"We can't do anything now," said Mrs. Stannard. "She is here and every body has seen her. The only thing to do is to ignore the matter until we go home. Dear me, what possessed the child? I feel so mortified."

Meanwhile, Janet was beginning to enjoy herself. It was delightful to be able to go about with a single mind, with no dread of hearing somebody whisper behind her, "Amy Ladelle's last summer's muslin." She had never enjoyed a social function so

before. Ted Reeve took her into supper and didn't seem to mind the fact of her gingham frock at all. And afterwards Mrs. Reeve came up and asked her to sing.

Aunt Lena and Louise across the room knew what Mrs. Reeve was saying and fervently hoped Janet would have the sense to refuse. But Janet had forgotten all about her dress and consented at once. She stood up beside the piano, a tall, girlish figure: her eyes were shining and her cheeks were like roses; there was not a girl present, in muslin or silk or lace, as pretty as Janet Stannard in her plain blue dress.

She sang beautifully and was encored twice, the guests crowded around her to congratulate her; Mrs. Mayfair, the wealthy aunt of the Reeves', who lived in Toronto, asked to be introduced. Aunt Lena and Louise groaned in spirit. That child in her gingham dress! What would Mrs. Mayfair think?

The evening was a triumph for Janet. When it ended she slipped off home with a party of girl friends, and when Aunt Lena and her cousins came they found her sitting bolt upright on a living-room chair, waiting for the vials of family indignation to be poured out on her head. She didn't care; she had had a splendid time: she would do the same thing over again!

"Oh, Janet, how could you?" exclaimed Aunt Lena with a catch in her voice.

Janet's defiance crumpled up with a suddenness that left her limp. She had been prepared for anger, but this mild reproach was much worse. For the first time she looked at the matter through Aunt Lena's eyes. It had not occurred to her that people might make her gingham dress a hissing and a reproach to Aunt Lena—Aunt Lena, who had been so good to her!

"Oh, Auntie," she cried, with tears springing to her eyes, "oh, I'm sorry—I really am. I didn't think that it would make you feel badly. I forgot that it would reflect on you or I would never have done it."

"But why *did* you do it?" said Aunt Lena. "What happened to Amy's dress?"

"Nothing happened to it, only just that it *was* Amy's dress," answered Janet. "Oh, Aunt Lena, I was so tired of wearing other people's dresses, even if they were nice. And some of the girls make such fun of my 'second-handedness,' as they call it. I just felt that I couldn't wear Amy's dress to the wedding. So I put on my gingham because it was new and my own. But I'm sorry."

Aunt Lena said nothing for a few seconds. Then she said, very gently: "You should have told me how you felt about it, Janet."

"I—I couldn't," faltered Janet. "I was afraid you would think me ungrateful. Oh, please forgive me, Aunt Lena."

"Yes, yes, dear. Perhaps there is a little need for forgiveness on both sides. We didn't think, that was all. Don't cry any more, my dear. Run away to bed, you're

very tired.”

When Janet had gone Aunt Lena and Helen and Louise looked seriously at each other.

“The poor child,” said Louise. “I had no idea she felt so.”

“When you come to think of it,” said Helen, “we wouldn’t like it either if we were in her place. It was well enough when she was a child. But we have all forgotten, I think, that Janet is really growing up.”

“I’ve made a mistake,” said Aunt Lena, “and I’m glad my eyes are opened to it, even if it took a little mortification to open them. I’ll have a good talk with Janet in the morning and set myself straight with the child.”

“Oh, Jink,” said Janet to her pussy next day, “I’m so happy. Aunt Lena is going to get me a party dress of my very own and a new tweed suit. And she says I’ll never have to wear second-hands any more. Oh, Jink, I pity you because it isn’t possible for a cat to have an aunt like Aunt Lena.”

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *Janet's Rebellion* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]