

JANE AND I

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She's too robust to play horse with now.

JANE and I were chums. Chubby Jane! Jane always was chubby; a cute, little “roly-boly butter-ball”! A good big chunk of butter now, to be sure; nevertheless, sweet, fresh, and wholesome, in temper and person.

We were children together, Jane and I. We played much and strenuously; ate much, and slept much—we had nothing else to do.

Jane had a father and I had a mother, so we bunched them, and we all went it sort of "pot-luck," "don't-worry" fashion, and were a very happy family.

When Jane's pa was away, Jane slept with me; and when ma was away, I slept with Jane—until we got big enough to know better.

Both families were blessed with sufficient property to keep us all out of the poor-house.

Our houses were right close together, two old Virginia homesteads.

Mr. Mayberry, Jane's father, was a rather quiet, prosy man of forty.

My mother was a comely woman, approximately the same age. She never would say exactly what her age was.

Everybody tried to marry the two families, and when they found they couldn't do that they talked about us, till Mr. Mayberry cowhided two or three of them. This

seemed to bring the whole neighborhood to its senses.

In after life Jane and I learned why ma and Mr. Mayberry didn't marry—love for the first mate in both cases. They agreed to wait and see if that same kind of love would blend in Jane and me.

Well, it blended; we amalgamated all right. We couldn't be pulled apart with a steam derrick, although neither one of us would take a prize at a beauty show at the present stage of the game.



I wanted to take Jane in my arms.

It's a pretty story.

I wanted to get Jane into my arms the first time I ever saw her, as a little pink ball of humanity, lying on a pillow in my mother's lap.

Jane is too big to play horse with now; but, oh! how the big sighs do bubble up when we talk of some of our old "play

places'' like the old ''crowfish pond''; the old ''sand lot''; the ''great divide,'' and the ''sweet-clover field.''

We kind of snuggle closer together when we remember the two happy, innocent youngsters, rollicking about, with never a thought of its ending.

Well, it has not wholly ended yet. We do get the ''rollicks'' occasionally now.

Jane's well-rounded legs haunt my memory like something lost, never to be found again.

I didn't know it then, but I have since recalled, a thousand times, how pretty, plump, and dimpled she was as a child. To be sure, she is dimpled still, but they are bigger now.

We seldom went beyond our own commodious environments and never had our travels been farther away from home than the nearby village, up to the day I left for college, excepting once.

My mother was a well-educated woman,

and she took delight in teaching us our first lessons.

Our "school-house" was the great forest, the beautiful fields, and the teeming garden.

Nature was kind to us and we learned our sweetest lessons by contact with her.

We were together quite all of the time, with no one to watch us, consequently we grew up natural and right.

As we grew, like two little sheep, we soon learned to put confidence in our strength and agility, and though we had many narrow escapes we never suffered broken bones or lasting scars.

I was four years Jane's senior, consequently she leaned on me. This leaning habit grew chronic, and, dear girl, she even now lurches toward me on the slightest provocation, though, literally, she is too robust to lean on me now.

When our conversation begins to border on "olden times" I always brace her up

well in the old “davenport.” Even then she flops about some.

To our sorrow, there is no little Jane upon whom to heap the love we bore for each other when childish playmates. Mr. Mayberry—I never could call him “pa” after the fight—says it’s because I’m a hybrid, and what a blessed thing it is for the race to die out.



"I wonder what is away out there?"

How Jane and I did long to know what was over and beyond the fence which marked the boundary line between our place and the "limitless beyond"—a view as far as the eye could reach.

We had been cautioned not to go over the fence and into the big world, because

“wild rams” and “vicious bulls” were roaming about out there, and they took especial delight in butting the brains out of curious little girls and hooking holes in undutiful boys.

This held us for a while.

We later discovered this story about the rams and bulls was no myth.

Well do I recall our first fall from grace—we were dutiful children.

Jane and I stood at the fence. We had worn grooves in two big rocks on which, looking and longing, we stood to elevate us. It wasn't a high fence, but the family edict made it appear forty feet, or so, high. We were extremely anxious to know something of the “great beyond” that day.

Shading her chubby face with her right fist and resting her left confidently upon my arm, she said, in an awed sort of whisper:

“I wonder what is away out there, in the big wide world?”

“Richmond” was the biggest thing I knew of, because I was once there with mother. I told Jane so.

“How I would like to see Richmond,” she sighed pathetically.

Jane’s longing stirred my own soul to action, and I proposed that we just stand on the other side of the fence and see if we could not get a glimpse of “Richmond.”

The resolution was unanimously adopted, and before you could say Jack Robinson we were prowling about in the “limitless beyond,” looking for Richmond — and trouble.

I got so busy catching June-bugs, I forgot all about Jane, and she strolled some distance away from me.



I only saw Jane's fat legs and arms.

THERE is nothing that I can recall quite so absorbing as catching the June-bug.

His hypnotic hum makes the average boy forget what he was sent for, and he does not fully recover his normal mental state, as a rule, till he feels the more material whiz of the birch limb about his tired legs.

After Jane and I had climbed out of the garden of Eden I forgot it was to look for Richmond when I chased after an unusually large basso profundo June-bug.

He alighted in the purple blossom of a huge iron-weed, and I was cautiously bringing the top down within the reach of my unerring cap, when I heard a yell fit to curdle an Indian's brain.

Looking in the direction from whence it came I could see only a cloud of fat legs and arms flying around, like flails, with an occasional glimpse of Jane's "pig-tail" as she frantically tore across the field, with a great big ram, having horns as big as conch shells, in hot pursuit.

She had found her "Richmond."

Jane was beating the ram by a city block, but this hot pace would soon tell on "roly-boly."

I let go my hold on the iron-weed, which flew up into the air, firing my big June-bug into space like a shot out of a catapult.

Seizing a pole which fortunately lay near at hand, I rushed to do battle for my lady-love.

I let Mr. Ram have a bat on the nose that kept him in a trance till we got over the fence.

Then we sat down to ponder the ways of the transgressor.

Jane and I came to our first understanding for self-protection.

We must tell ma we had been delving into the mysteries of the "great beyond." We had disobeyed her and ventured over the "divide."

I was to do the talking and Jane was to "say nothing and saw wood."



We remembered we had disobeyed you, ma.

WE had had enough excitement for one day.

The big ram had galloped all the play out of Jane.

Feeling that we had committed our first great sin, we began our first pilgrimage to repentance.

Ma met us at the gate, and in her sweet, gentle voice asked:

“Where have you been, children?”

Jane looked questioningly up into my face.

Ma had a wonderfully keen instinct. She seemed to know something was doing.

Maybe it was because we had come home earlier than usual, or perhaps our being so quiet had something to tell her; anyway, ma acted just as though she knew all.

In a spirit of bravado, and with an elaborate attempt to appear at ease, I answered her question in what I thought a careless, off-hand manner:

“Oh, all around; and say, ma, before we thought, we climbed over into the big field to catch the biggest June-bug we ever saw. Wasn’t it a whopper, Jane? And while we were trying to land him, sure enough, just as you always told us, the big ram got after us, and then, all at oncet, we remembered we had disobeyed you, ma, and then

we felt sorry and got over the fence in a hurry. Ha! ha! You should have seen Jane scramble over the fence! It would have made a brass monkey laugh.”

Jane’s face turned red. She looked at me in surprise and seemed ready to cry.

I had never teased or kidded her, and she would not stand for it, even in a “careless conversation” to smooth ma’s ruffles and keep out of trouble.

Ma didn’t seem to appreciate the joke either. She didn’t even notice it, and then I knew she “was on.”

“Were you scared, Jane?” she asked, without showing any particular interest.

Sly mother, she wanted to know just how dangerous our encounter had been, and Jane told her, in spite of our agreement that she mustn’t talk.

In answer to ma’s question she said:

“Yes’m, zat big sheep was awful big. He butted at me, and runned right after me. But John hitted him wis a big stick, an’,

an', zen we gitted rite over ze big fence, and tum rite home to tell you all about it; didn't we, John? An' des so you wouldn't be steared, zat's all.'" Then she looked anxiously at me to see if she had done wrong.

Bless her innocent little soul, no one would have the heart to punish her after this serious little attempt to lighten her soul of its burden of fear.

Neither of us had ever been punished in our lives. The greatest punishment Jane or I could suffer was to know that we had displeased my ma.

Notwithstanding she smiled at Jane's story, we both knew ma was displeased, and our souls grew soggy with the tears which would not shed.



"I wonder how deep down they go?"

AFTER our adventure in the wilderness with the ram we wanted ma to know that we were sorry for having violated her instructions, therefore we played about the house for several days.

Occasionally we would get down into the sandy lot back of our garden, to watch the busy little ants digging out their nests and piling little heaps of sand about them.

How intently we did watch them, laying on our stomachs and kicking holes in the clean, dry sand with knees and toes.

“I wonder how deep down in the ground they go?” was one of Jane’s wise questions.

She had only to stimulate my mind with such questions to get me very busy, and by tying a silk thread to a big, healthy ant and sending him down into the nest I at once devised a way for answering her question.



I just yelled "run," and jumped out myself.

ON the fourth day the longing could not be appeased. We had tasted of the forbidden fruit and wanted more.

We again sought the "divide" and peeped through.

Seeing nothing dangerous in sight, we looked cautiously toward the house, then climbed over the fence. Again we had ventured to "tread the unknown."

For an hour we romped about without seeing hair or hide of ram or bull.

At last fate got her dates mixed and put us up against it, good and hard.

Jane's curious eyes saw a big bumble-bee disappear somewhere down in the long grass. She insisted she could hear the baby bumble-bees crying and she wanted to see them.

In spite of my warning cries and before I could get to her to pull her away, she had poked her fingers right down into the bumble-bee's nest, the biggest one I ever saw.

I just yelled "run!" and jumped out myself. For once I actually deserted Jane. Don't you believe it! She caught up to me, with the bumble-bees sticking all over her, boring holes in her with their stings.

They all seemed to leave her at once and jump on to me.

In all our lives nothing ever hurt our feelings quite as much.



We looked like Chinese gods.

WELL, that was the healthiest cradle full of babies Jane will ever see.

For a week we could not look each other in the face, simply because our eyes were closed.

Jane's legs looked as though a pint of horse-chestnuts had been poured into each stocking. Her poor little arms were a sight to behold.

We both got it all over the face, neck, and hands, several big ones paying especial attention to our noses and ears; and, would you believe it, we looked like a fresh importation of Chinese gods.

Not a morsel of solid food could we eat for three days.

Nor could we even tell where we got tangled up with the bumble-bees till we could talk intelligently, which was about the third day after the battle with the "babies."

To this day you can scare Jane into seven or eight kinds of spasms by imitating the buzz of a bee.

This trip held us down for a while.



Jane lost her June-bugs.

WE were the busiest pair of kids in Virginia.

While our fun was always innocent in its inception, it frequently terminated in disaster or ridiculous situations and accidents.

We literally kept ma busy hunting for her thread. We used it up by the spool,

tying the June-bugs, to hear their musical buzz about our ears.

One bright summer day I caught a large number of June-bugs. As I made each capture I tied a thread to his body and handed him to Jane to hold, until she looked like a toy-balloon peddler.

Jane was so hypnotized she forgot the business end of her job.

I was hotfooting it after a big fellow, when I heard a cry, and looking back saw her grabbing wildly at the air. Her chubby hands had forgotten to hold on and she had lost her whole bunch of June-bugs, and there they were, sailing away above her head, strings and all.



We loved to play in the mud.

A PRETTY stream cut through our grounds, and during freshets it spread out in places, and stagnant pools were left here and there.

Jane and I revelled in the mud. We especially loved to go hunt for crawfish, because it enabled us to bespatter ourselves with the black mud from head to heels. It took a week to scrub us up after the trips.

The time came when Jane's pretty round legs began to look too womanly when she was rolled up above her dimpled knees, and the crawfish game closed.

Mother found it quite a hardship to scrub us up two or three times a day during the hot weather, so to make it easy she bought an immense cask and had it cut into two parts. These she placed in the woodshed, with a tall wood partition between them.

She would make us pump the water into these tubs in the morning, to get warm during the day, and when we came home looking as though made of "stucco," she would throw us into the tubs to soak.



Jane was on her head in the mud.

As we grew larger we took to fishing with bob and sinker.

The last real good bat we had in the mud grew out of an accident. It culminated in a faultless rendition of the old play of Adam and Eve.

We were out fishing that day, and I had started for another point up the brook. I was in the lead. Not hearing the usual rumbling and snorting when Jane was in the wake, I looked back, and there she was standing on her head in the mud.

Rushing back, I pulled her out and laid her on the bank to dry.



I laundered Jane's clothes.

HER mouth, eyes, nose, ears, and hair were jammed full of mud.

We decided to wash her out.

While Jane washed the mud out of her hair, I laundered her clothes.

Though Jane and I were permitted to be children together longer than is usually

considered safe, no bad thoughts had ever entered our minds.

I was getting to be a good chunk of a lad at this time, and I can remember with a peculiar thrill how pretty and plump Jane looked that day, almost in the altogether, curled up on the bank shaking her thick brown hair in the sunlight.

We both realized the error of our way, for, without saying a word about it, we never went to such extreme again.

The old tubs in the wood-shed got so dry the hoops dropped off and their sides caved in.

I began to notice also that as Jane grew taller her skirts grew longer.

Ma knew her business — she noticed things a bit herself.



We loved to plant the flowers.

ONE day, when Jane was not about, she took me into her confidence and put me on my honor.

“John,” she said, “Jane is getting to be quite a big girl now. She is the only dear sweet sister we have. She is under your watchful care; guard her well; never do or

say anything to her that you would be ashamed to have me know. You may call her your sweetheart if you wish, and some day I hope your own dear wife. You must be more dignified in your play."

But somehow, in spite of ma's warning, we would drop into our old familiar ways. Our kites got tangled up in more ways than one.

I stuck by Jane and Jane stuck by me, and we got along bully together.

Our pastimes did take a more dignified and studious turn, however, for we were both being coached to go away to school.

We especially loved to plant the flowers in spring and watch them grow and blossom.

One liking of ours was to watch the busy little honey bees gathering their legs full of the materials for making the golden fluid which both of us delighted so much to smear on our bread, face, hands, and hair.



Old Boss hooked Jane into the trough.

JANE was a hugger, and always will be, I suppose. We have never yet been able to break her of the habit.

If you ever visit us, and intend to bring the baby, I will not be responsible if she hugs it until she breaks its back. She broke the back of a neighbor's dog and it

cost me fifty dollars. This is one reason why we have no pets.

When Jane used to hug me when we were children I was much larger than she and she could not hurt me, so she just practiced until she really did work up a muscular contraction of the arms quite Sandowish in its powers. When she becomes a bit strenuous in her affections something must rip, tear, or "bust."

She was always a lover and a hugger. She wanted to get her hooks on to anything she loved. The result of this habit was often disastrous.

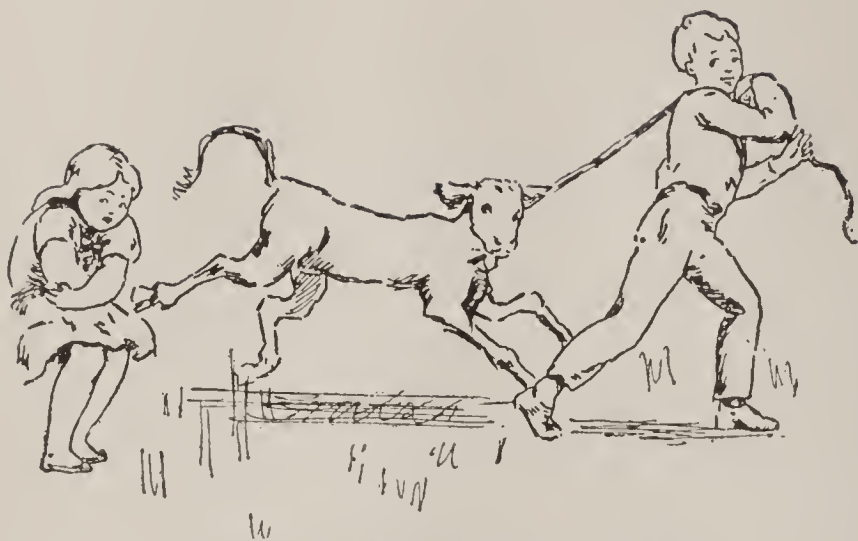
I might refer to her getting her fingers into the bumble-bees' nest, but I have a more appropriate illustration.

Our old cow, Boss, came home with a baby calf. Jane nearly tore the fence down getting at that calf to hug it.

Mrs. Boss only hooked her into the watering trough, to show her appreciation of the overgrown affection for her offspring.

Jane was a soft little butter-ball, apparently without bones, and you couldn't seriously hurt her without poking holes in her.

Boss's horns came dangerously near puncturing her tough little hide that time. She had two big blue spots—so ma said—for a month.



It kicked the wind out of Jane.

THIS same calf was a natural-born kicker. It kicked the wind out of Jane when it grew larger. Jane always seemed to get at the business end of anything that carried deadly weapons.

It was our duty to separate Boss and her baby each morning and put them in sep-

arate pastures, in order to give the balance of the family a show for enough milk for the coffee.

One morning Jane felt too strong and healthy for any use. I was pulling the calf along with a piece of clothes-line and Jane concluded she would push some. Grabbing the calf by the tail she put her hands against him—it was a him—and began to cut some funny capers, when Mr. Calfy cut loose with both hind legs, catching Jane with a double uppercut in the solar plexus, literally knocking her out.

It took one hour to bring Jane around so she could take a natural breath, and it took me a whole day to catch that fool calf.

The chase through the briars, thorns, and scrub bushes left about a pint of clothing upon me, and not much more cuticle, at the end of the day's game.



Jane witnessed her first bull-fight.

THIS calf caused more trouble than anything else that ever happened on our place.

It must have been the reincarnation of some famous Indian fakir, for by some mysterious power it could jump over, crawl under, or walk through a fence, no matter how constructed.

Every few minutes during the day, for a period of some months, Jane and I had to go separate Boss and her baby.

It was during one of these wrestling bouts that Jane witnessed her first bull fight.

I was the heroic matador, without the red sash, in this thrilling encounter.

A young bull had taken it into his horny head to champion the cause of the calf. He was always pawing about for a fight.

I was a big chunk of a lad and gave him battle, while Jane made a balloon-ascension dash over the fence. I hit the bull between the eyes with a pole, and while he was blinking to get his bulgy eyes back into their sockets, I made a grand-stand finish and joined the audience myself.



I left Jane up a tree.

JANE'S strongest point was, she was funny; sick or well, sunny or sad, always funny. In her most trying and dubious positions she was pathetically comical.

She needed no ornamentation to make her pretty, for she was the kind that is

prettiest when least decorated. She was ripening into a robust young girl, strong as an ox and good natured as a kitten; the best playfellow that ever was.

I was now old enough to begin to think a bit. My mother often delivered some very effective moral lectures to me, which bore much on my conduct toward Jane, and it told in my treatment of her. But once in a while the old devil would get a leg loose, and both of us would cut some of our old capers.

However, our efforts were gradually growing along more dignified lines.

We did love to be at sport alone together, and this was not denied us.

I played many scurvy tricks on Jane, but she was quite capable of "wiggling out."

One day, while out in the woodland, Jane forgot how big she had grown and she asked me to boost her up in a tree, where she could sit and watch me fish.

I boosted her up the tree and left her there.

Well, she tore nearly all her clothes off, and barked the inside of both her legs “shinning down.”

For a week she walked like a pig with blind staggers,—a bit wabbly,—but she was good natured about it. I was good to her for a long time after that.



Jane put the kettle on.

JANE took to domestic things beautifully. She begged mother to allow her to help peel the potatoes, make the jelly, mould the butter, and make the delightful home-made cheese.

When we would go in search of the fra-

grant May-apple, blackberries, or nuts, it was our delight to cook our own little luncheon in the woods. Jane would put the kettle on while I toasted the bread.

This is one of the pleasures we have not denied ourselves in after life. The old fragrance of those delightful events hovers about us when now we take a lark out into the cool woodlands about our own country home.

More than once we have heard the whisper, "What simple, plebeian people they are." Now let me whisper to those who think so:

"Had you the blue blood that runs in Jane's and my veins you would be doing exactly as we are doing, instead of wasting your energies in the desert air.

"Your turbulent life has no analogy with the love, peace, and comfort of simplicity, born of the early experience such as Jane and I had.

"We are extremely happy every hour of

our life. Why should we make ourselves unhappy to please the cold, selfish, indifferent world?

“We fail to see it that way, and we refuse to change our views of life, habits, and customs to suit the whims of those who do not agree with us.”



We wept while Boss ate Jane's new hat.

THE day was fast approaching when our beautiful day-dreams would come to an end.

I was first to realize this, I thought.

We had grown entirely out of childhood, and could have set right up to house-keeping—in India.

Jane was fourteen and I was eighteen. Ma said she just had to make us quit being children, then she mopped her eyes with her apron.

There was now some talk about my going to college and it had quite a depressing effect on our household.

Jane and I moped about, as though reluctant to start any new play.

It was a beautiful sunny day, that day when Jane and I took each other by the hand and strolled over to the "great divide."

Standing at the dear old fence, we looked away off in the distance. How far away it seemed to-day!

Jane drew close to me and I placed my arm about her plump waist.

"I'm going away, Jane," I said, without looking toward her.

To my surprise, she said not a word. She did not even take her gaze from the dim distance. Somehow, I felt she knew.

I patted her dear little back and also looked away off, but the while covertly watching her through the corner of my eye.

Presently I saw a big tear run right down her chubby cheek and drop off, like a big diamond.

I have thought ever since that some angel must have been weeping when diamonds were made. Probably she was being separated from a life-long companion. I could conceive of no greater cause for sorrow.

We had worn grooves in the big flat rocks, standing on them all these years, wondering what was away out in the big wide world.

Now, in our grief we squatted right down on them, and wept it out, while old Boss ate up Jane's new hat.

After we had exhausted two "fountains of grief," and washed up yards of vegetation about us with our copious tears, Jane—bless her little soul!—looked up into my

face and said, in the most tearful and pathetic way:

"I wish you wouldn't go. What will become of me when you are gone?"

"Jane, dear," I replied, drawing her closer to me, "I'm almost a man now. Mother is right. I must go to college if I expect to be any sort of man at all. I want to be somebody, for your sake. I want to marry you when I am through college, just as soon as ma says so. I can never marry any one else, Jane, but you."

"I should say not," she gulped.

"Well," I continued, "will you be my true sweetheart and wait for me?"

"I guess I'll have to," was her reply.

"I mean, Jane, I don't want you to forget when I am gone. You will soon be old enough to have young men calling on you. Don't forget you have always belonged to me, ever since you were a little pink and white baby. Ma and I raised you. You won't forget, will you?"

Her reply to this was a fresh shower of tears. She soaked my shirt front till I could feel my manly bosom getting soggy.



I said good by to Jane while ma packed.

As I remarked before, my ma was a wise woman. She knew there would be trouble when this day dawned.

She had long and carefully planned my going to Princeton, because my father had been a graduate of that college.

Jane and I were to write to each other every Sunday. At first we were to write

every day, but ma said that would take up too much time, besides, it would be difficult to find subjects for daily letters.

This awful day of my departure came at last.

I said good-by to Jane while ma packed.

Never since have I felt such anguish as I experienced on this eventful occasion.

It seemed as though my heart would surely break. Poor little Jane wept herself sick.



Ma, Jane and Fido saw me off.

IN the development of the country about us a railroad had come to the village, the station being located quite near our place.

My trunk was sent over to the small depot in advance, and ma, Jane, and the dog saw me off.

I could have gone to Princeton by steamer, in the tears we all shed, for we wept

copiously as we paraded along Indian file.

Ma was no iceberg herself. She cried as much as any of us. It was my first trip away from her watchful care.

She had thoroughly drilled into me what my conduct should be while at college.

I pride myself on being able to say I made a conscientious effort to do all mother told me to do. I owed her much more than I ever could hope to repay by mere exemplary conduct.

Jane's letters came as regular as the tick of our old family clock, and mine to her responded with equal promptitude.

I have her cunning letters among my treasures. You cannot tell one from another, excepting by reference to the date. They have the appearance of being struck off from a regular stereotyped form:

“Dear John:

“We miss you so much. We are so unhappy. Please come back soon. I can't

play any more. I love you and am still waiting.

“Yours with lots of kisses,
“JANE.”

Seven months passed, when suddenly Jane's letters ceased.

Ma wrote her usual Sunday letter, in which she said briefly:

“My dear boy:

“I know you will be disappointed to learn that Mr. Mayberry has leased his property here and gone to Europe. He has taken Jane with him. I did not know a thing about it until he was ready to say good-by.
MOTHER.”

I was puzzled beyond expression that Jane did not write me about so serious a matter. I did so cherish the memory of this dear, sweet girl. It was hard to reconcile her neglect with what I knew of her nature. I gave her the benefit of the doubt.

This took much of the spirit and ambition out of me, for the vision of Jane's sweet face was always before me when important things were to be decided, and now it seemed I would probably lose her.

Four years swiftly passed by. I was something of an athlete, and mother was very proud of my achievements, physical as well as mental. She would say, "A good, sound body is essential to a strong, healthy mind, John."



"No, I am a woman now, John."

I HAD almost completed my course at Princeton, and would graduate in June.

During the Christmas holidays I went home for my usual visit.

As I entered the door, mother greeted me with her usual cordiality. She always was very affectionate toward me; no more so, though, than she was toward Jane.

Mother stepped aside, and there stood Jane.

“Jane!” I yelled, and sprang toward her with outstretched arms, beaming with delight.

To my utter chagrin, mortification, shame, and humiliation, the beloved companion of my childhood, every inch of whose rosy person I had loved, petted, caressed and protected, put out her hands and kept me at arms’ length.

“No, I am a woman now, John,” she said, and then upon noticing my dejected and hurt appearance, she became as white as marble and turned her face away.

I did not understand, but mother did.



Who is that chap, Mother?

MOTHER walked over to the window and looked away off toward the “divide.”

Jane stood for a moment looking at the floor, in a hesitating sort of way.

Then I knew something was wrong. A jar might be dangerous.

I chose my mother, because she had been

a mother to both of us and she must know what is right.

I stepped to her side, drew her head down on my shoulder, and she silently wept as we both looked away off in the distance. Jane, with slow, reluctant step, passed out at the door.

As we stood, silent and thoughtful, a well-dressed young man passed by, reaching our gate just as Jane passed out.

He politely raised his hat, and as Jane approached near to him he essayed to take her arm. I distinctly saw her draw away, but I saw them walk along our old friendly path together.

“Who is that chap, mother?” I asked.

“You probably do not remember him,” she responded. “Can you recollect the butcher’s stand at the end of the bridge, as you go into the village, and that fat boy who used to deliver the sausages? Well, that is he, Booby Blatz.”

There was something vicious about the manner in which mother spoke this.

When my gentle mother displayed temper, something was doing, sure enough.

“Well, never mind, mother, it will keep,” I said, in an effort to calm her. “Remember, I am just home and we have hardly said howdy-do.”

“No, it won’t keep, John!” she exclaimed; “your coming home has much to do with it. Your vacation this time, I fear, will not be a pleasant one. Get straightened out and at dinner I will tell you the whole story.”

Mother told me all that had transpired from the beginning. Mayberry had developed a bad trait, a covetous streak. He had secretly discovered a vein of coal on his land and it ran over into our tract. Our land lay between his own and the only avenue by which he could establish profitable communication with the outer world. In

fact, he couldn't get a railroad branch to his coal without crossing our land.

For months he had tried to buy mother's land. He sent sneaky agents to buy both pieces. He expressed a "willingness" to sell his place "if mother would sell." He gave a fictitious option on his piece, at a very high figure, and tried to induce mother to do the same. My mother was no fool, not half as much as Mayberry was. She saw, about this time, some shining blocks of coal gradually accumulating about the yard of our neighbor. Greedy Mayberry didn't have sense enough to conceal this, and the fact that numerous well-dressed strangers were about his house, and prowling about with him over both pieces of land; nor had he honesty enough to offer a fair deal to mother.

She did not have to sell. While we were not wealthy, we had sufficient to keep us well fed and comfortably clothed. It is true, my education was an extra drain on

mother's purse, and I was not allowed much to spend. My clothes were the simplest and the cheapest that would pass muster, though I got along very well. Owing to these conditions, mother carefully concealed from my knowledge all the facts up to this time.

Suddenly Mayberry went abroad, taking Jane with him. They had only recently returned when I made my holiday visit home. There was much mystery about this trip, and now it was evident a strong effort was going to be made to bring things to an issue.

It seemed old man Blatz was now a big wholesale butcher at some place in New Jersey. He was reputed to be worth several millions and associated with the great Western packing houses.

His son, the boy called Booby, and the same one who delivered the sausages, I had only seen a few times when a child. The family left our village about that time.

Booby was much my senior, was now a man, and apparently a clever fellow, but he had a bad, lascivious face. He had grown into a smart-looking chap, and did rather lay me out with his extravagant clothes.

But I knew that here was a case where the bumps and cords of muscles on my shoulders, arms and back would make him look like thirty cents under proper circumstances, and I was just aching to have the proper circumstances manifest themselves. My football blood needed exercising.

I did not propose, though, to fight for a girl who did not want me for a champion.

I felt there was something wrong. Jane's actions were not like her, and I wanted so much to give her all the benefit of several doubts. I would wait.

I did wait, and nearly choked to death as a result of it. My heart has not gotten back into its normal position since.



Do you remember when we planted it, Jane?

It happened this way.

The day following my arrival at home was a bright and sunny one.

I was sore in heart and sad in mind. I walked out into the sunshine to get a breath of the old air on which I had been raised.

It did taste good and it revived my drooping spirits some, still it was not the same old place. The spirit, the life, the joy, were missing—the bright face of Jane, the dear little Jane who carried my umbrella to the depot when the household saw me off. If the tears we wept that day had been a shower from heaven, that umbrella would have been useful. It was useless now. I could not weep. My soul had sopped up all the tears in me.

I seated myself upon the old green wooden bench, and commenced to mark my thoughts in hieroglyphics upon the gravel walk with the small bamboo cane which Jane had given me when I first went away to college.

I did not see any one approach, but a shadow fell across the very spot on which I was making the grotesque figures and upon which I was so intently gazing.

Looking up, I saw Jane in all her youthful glory—the loveliest creature I had ever

looked upon. Her once “roly-boly,” bulgy form had developed longer curves and more graceful lines.

The crisp morning air had enhanced the color in her cheeks and she was simply one big ball of peaches and cream.

I made no attempt to conceal my joy.

She stood partially behind the friendly old seat, resting one hand carelessly over the back of it.

I took this hand and she did not draw it away.

“Good morning, Jane,” I said.

She did not look up, but just stood, in a droopy sort of way, kicking at the edge of the old walk, and plucking at a nearby rose-bush.

“Jane, dear,” I continued, “do you remember when we planted that rose-bush?”

This question brought her to her senses. She straightened up, closed her hand tightly on mine, and as the pink flooded her fair face and neck I saw, for a moment, my own

little playfellow, the only Jane I ever wanted to know and to keep.

Her eyes were brimming over with tears, the same bright diamonds, and her beaming face told me what her gulpy throat could not utter.

In another moment I would have had her in my arms right out there in the open, but at that critical period Booby Blatz bobbed up at the gate.



Jane walked off with Booby Blatz.

BOOBY was bold. He walked right in, with his squawky clothes; raised his hat to Jane, and looked inquiringly toward me.

“This is Mr. Blatz, Mr. Fairchild,” said Jane, introducing us.

We shook hands in a gingerly sort of way, and streams of jealousy and hatred went both ways.

We each felt suspicious of the other, and made little effort to conceal our contempt for one another.

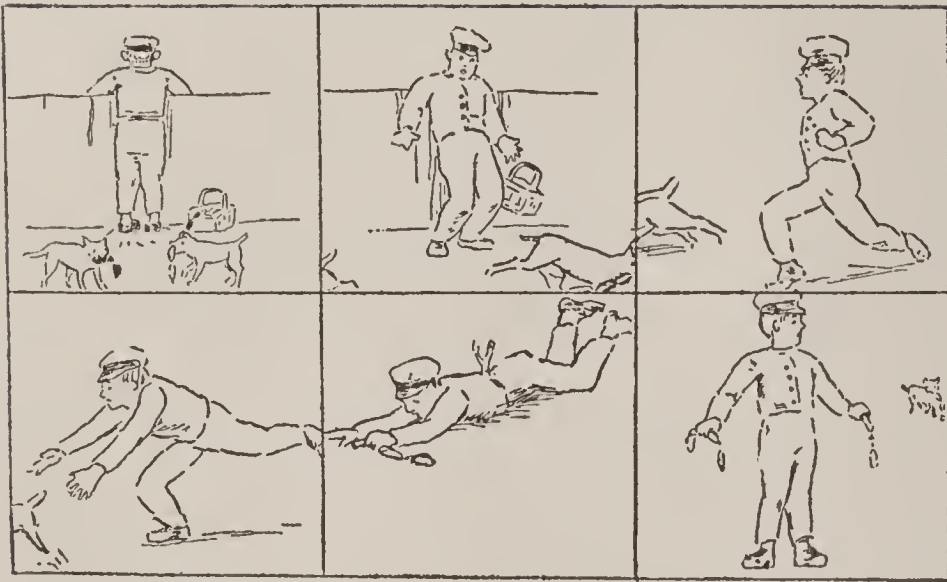
It looked dangerously like an early manifestation of the "opportune circumstances" for which I longed to enable me to reduce Booby's market price to thirty cents.

Physically, I felt bully that morning.

Jane seemed to anticipate something, for notwithstanding I had only been at home a few hours, and had almost melted her adamant heart but a minute before, she took this fellow's arm and strolled away with him, leaving me standing there like a fool.

I remember one time going down into our village and seeing a bright silver piece lying on the side-walk. As with eager joy I stooped to pick it up, it was swished away at the end of a cord by the brats who were working the game. This morning, as I saw Jane walk off with Booby, singular to say, this early experience was the first thing to pop into my mind, and the feeling of dis-

appointment and rage was identically the same, excepting it was on a larger scale this time.



Booby, the dogs and the sausages.

I WAS a bit dazed for a while. I sat thinking. I dared not look after them.

It was apparent to me that this young chap was laying siege to Jane's heart, which I felt certain now meant he was poaching on my preserves. There was

some strong influence at work in his favor, else Jane would not have walked away with him in that docile manner.

The Mayberry family was a proud, stiff-necked, old Virginia family, and to believe that Jane's father would permit her to marry Booby was to admit that he was selling her at some price. The thought made me boil. Jane was loyal to me at heart, and I knew it. I certainly would not give her up without a hard struggle.

I had defended her against the "ram" and the "bull" till she climbed over the fence, and I could surely hold off Booby till she could find a place of safety. I made up my mind to do so, if I had to put him in a hospital.

In my excitement I broke the bamboo cane and left the pieces lying on the old, weather-beaten bench.

It seemed Booby's father was at the head of the syndicate organized to exploit the

Mayberry coal lands, and this had brought Booby and Jane together.

I walked into the house. Finding mother, I told her what had happened. It seemed to make her furious. She hated Booby and his whole outfit.

“Mother, do you remember a little old maid, down in the village, who gave Jane and me a few lessons in drawing several years ago?” I asked.

“Why, yes,” she responded, “very well. Why do you ask?”

“Do you recall a funny set of pictures she once made, on the spot, for us, while looking out of her window—the boy, the two dogs, and the sausages?” I asked.

“Yes, I do! Yes, I do! sure enough,” she exclaimed. “Where are they now, I wonder? Oh, I suspect they are in the old oak desk up in the garret.”

She had hardly gotten the words out of her mouth before I was on my way to the garret. After fifteen minutes’ search I

found a roll of dusty paper, fortunately covering the sheets, which rested snugly within, so they remained bright and clean.

We opened them and found six sketches of "Booby," which marked him for life.

"These will do some good," I remarked to mother. She only smiled.



It looked like a wrestling match.

THE next day Jane come over—to see mother.

She discovered, hanging on the wall, a new gilded frame containing the six awkward pictures of Booby.

I was not there, but mother said she laughed till the tears rolled down her

cheeks, then she suddenly stopped and asked:

“Where is John? I want to see him.”

A little later I came into the house.

From the hallway I could see Jane. She was trying to fit the two ends of my broken bamboo cane together.

As I entered the room she dropped them and bounded toward me with outstretched hands.

I saw in a moment all was off—in a bunch.

“Will you forgive me, John?” she cried. “I can stand it no longer, can you not see? O John, I love you still, true and good, more than ever! If you will forgive me for my ugly treatment of you I will feel so grateful, I will tell all. So do say I may be Jane to you again. Please do!”

Her pleading was due to the fact that I was so surprised for a moment I was speechless and actless—only for a moment though.

My mother was a very industrious

woman—sometimes. She was a very busy woman that day.

She didn't wait to see whether Jane and I were going to fight or hug each other, but wisely stepped out of the room while we had it out.

I soon had Jane in my arms, clear up to her chin.

Well, if Jane had been an octopus my name would have been Dennis.

It looked like a Graeco-Roman wrestling match for some minutes, both with a strangle hold.

Jane was sobbing as though her greedy little heart would split.

“There, there,” I said, patting her on the back of the head till I knocked half her hairpins on the floor, “don't cry any more; you shall always be my Jane.” Then I stuffed my handkerchief in my collar to keep the tears from literally running down my back. She certainly was the wettest woman I ever knew.

“You do feel like Jane,” I said; “the same dear Jane of yore.”

Suddenly she stopped sobbing, looked up and said, in a sharp, snappy voice:

“What did you break my cane for?”

I thought it safe, therefore I retaliated:

“Because you had broken my heart.”

“Then you did break it purposely!” she screamed; but she didn’t let go, which was a good sign.

“No, sweetheart, I would have broken my own leg first. It was purely an accident,” I said gently, and meant it too.

Then I tickled the fat ribs till she laughed and forgot all about the broken bamboo.



We just all hugged each other.

MA gave us about the time she thought we needed, then she began to bang things around to let us know she was coming.

When ma came in we just all hugged each other. Then we sat down for a serious talk.

After a while I whispered to Jane:

“Wouldn’t you like to take a turn over the old play-ground, girlie?”

“The best in the world,” was her hearty reply.

We walked out through the back porch way, through the old grape arbor, through the garden, stopping occasionally to point out some old landmark, a reminder of those rosy days of childhood; down through the sandy loam of the orchard, across the brook, and at last we again stood on the old “divide.”



Old Boss got busy.

It was the same old fence that day, but it mattered little to us what was beyond.

You could have put mother's improvised bath-tub over "all the world to us" at that moment.

We climbed to the top, and there we sat, for the good Lord only knows how long, ob-

livious of everything but the fact that we were together again, Jane and I—my sweet, confiding Jane once more.

While I held her close to me—so the wind wouldn't blow her away over into the "limitless beyond," to be butted by the "ram," hooked by the "bull," or stung by the "baby bumble-bees," she told me all.

Old Boss couldn't stand it any longer. She came up and said "good-morning," then got very busy trying to eat her old friend. She only chewed a piece off Jane's skirt as big as a bath towel.



A little bulgy, Jane.

WHEN we climbed down from the fence, Jane was scudding almost under bare poles. She grabbed frantically behind her, only to grab a handful of empty air; then she backed up against the fence and laughed as she pointed to the old cow, standing some

distance away calmly chewing a homespun cud, with a few yards trailing out of her greedy mouth.

It was a fact, Jane could not travel that way and be considered respectable, so I pulled off my coat, slipped it behind her and tied the sleeves in front.

Jane was no prude; besides, we were engaged, so she took it good naturedly. Turning around she asked, "How do I look behind, John?"

"A little bulgy, but that will help some," I replied.

Jane and I had reached an understanding. She was true to me. I was sure of it. I could trust her. Subsequent events vindicated me in this belief.

Her treatment of me the previous days was explained to my satisfaction, and we swore never again to doubt; but there was some clever work to be done now.

She gave us a clue to the contemplated

actions of the coal syndicate and I at once laid my own plans.

My graduation in June would almost complete also my study of law. I had already made arrangements to enter the law office of our friend and legal advisor, Judge Henry Banning, of New York.

Mother and Jane were to remain on guard at home while I got things right.

I was to leave the following day. Mr. Mayberry had intimated to Jane that he wanted her to marry Booby.

Mother and Jane promised to combat this with all their might.

Mayberry was proud of his lineage, therefore it must have been a struggle with his pride to make this concession. Something great must have been at stake.

He had not reached the point of force as yet, but it was apparent he was trying to wean Jane away from the old sympathies which bound her to us.

Jane loved her father, and at first made

a manful struggle to sacrifice herself, and incidentally to sacrifice us. It was only an experiment, however, and it would not work. Her heart was too healthy and sound. It rebelled against such unnatural treatment.



Go put on your sweater, John.

THE evening before my departure, mother, Jane, and I were to have a little dinner together.

Jane wanted to show me a “dream of an evening gown” which she had brought with her from Paris.

She said every time she put it on she felt like she had “mud in her hair.”

This was to be quite a swell affair. Mother was to dig up some of her "merry togs."

"But, mother," I said, "I have nothing to wear myself but my last year's dress-suit, and it is now so small I fear I cannot get into it."

"Never mind, John, only Jane and I will laugh at you. We have done that many times before," was her discouraging reply.

Well, it was just as I thought. I was afraid to sneeze for fear of splitting everything I had on. I had gained twenty-seven pounds since the evening suit was made.

The sleeves were at least two inches short, as also were the trousers. I never was quite so miserable in my life before.

Mother and Jane were standing in our little parlor, ready to "receive" me. When they saw me they fairly yelled with laughter.

"Go put on your sweater, John; you look like a jockey," laughingly cried Jane.

“You have reefed your sails too close,” said mother; and I did feel like a fool.

I added fuel to the fury by asking mother if she thought old Boss had had a try at my dress coat. This brought Miss Jane to her senses. She came over and put her beautiful arm on my shoulder and said in the most serious manner: “John, no matter what you have on that big back of yours, it is just the same to me. I would dance with you in a sweater at the charity ball, if it were necessary, and never blush for it, even though Mrs. Astor snubbed me for it.” Then she gave me a hearty kiss, as also did ma.



I enjoyed this dinner hugely.

I HAVE in my day dined under all conditions, but never before nor since have I enjoyed a dinner quite so much as I did this one with the two women I loved most—my mother and my Jane.

My mother was, early in life, a beautiful

woman, but she was breaking some now. Jane was radiant. My mother agreed with me that evening that Jane was the most beautiful young woman we had ever seen. Her magnificent shoulders, neck, and arms were truly ravishing. I kissed every square inch of her in sight, and that was quite a large area—from the waist line up.

Mother said I ought to be ashamed; but when I whispered in Jane's willing ear, "She should have been in the gallery when we laundered you out down in the old mud hole," she simply had to be held or she would have slid under the table.

That evening formed a partnership in more ways than one. After dinner we went up to mother's chamber and got our heads together.

Mother, Jane, and I then and there formed the "Fairchild Coal and Coke Company" to exploit the "key to the situation," and Jane became a traitor in the camp of her own father; but we all agreed that it

was for his protection and good, as well as our own, for recently symptoms of bad faith had manifested themselves in the ugly crowd with whom he was negotiating.

Mother was treasurer.

Jane was vice-president.

I was secretary, and we were to get some big New York man to be president, so his name would scare the enemy to death.



What do you think of that, Mother?

THE next morning I was taking my last look about, and incidentally waiting for Jane's rosy face to poke itself through the gate. When she did come she galloped through the gate and darted into the house without even "good-morning, sir." She had caught a glimpse of Booby.

L. of C.

Directly, mother came out, and at the same time Booby Blatz came rolling in through the gate.

He said good-morning to mother and extended his hand to me. I took it in a perfunctory way, but found it clammy and dropped it.

Without an invitation, he seated himself upon the wood seat and commenced to talk. Then the slobbery features of the butcher boy came back to me vividly. I recognized every line.

“Mr. Fairchild,” he began, “I understand you are to return to college to-day. I would like to have a little talk with you and your mother this morning about your property here. It is needless to say that we have been desirous of purchasing this property for some time. I speak for the syndicate of which my father is the head. Now, will you listen to a proposition or will you advance one yourselves to bring us to some understanding?”

I made short work of Mr. Blatz by saying:

“Mr. Blatz, had Mr. Mayberry or your syndicate shown an inclination to do my mother justice in the first place, you doubtless would be reaping a rich reward from this coal deposit at this time. On the contrary, you tried in every way to take advantage of a defenseless woman and defraud her out of her just dues. Those early efforts must bear their fruits before you can plant a new crop. I will say frankly to you now, in a very short time you will pay us our price for this property or sell your own to us at our price, whether you want to or not. This is all we care to say to you. We do not hold a very high opinion of you, and it is well for us to understand each other at once.”

Booby had arisen. He replied simply:

“I care nothing for your personal opinion of me—that matters little one way or the other. I only wanted to give you a fair

show, that is all. In thirty days we will begin to lay a railroad track across your property. Good-day.”

With this he strode away.

“Well, what do you think of that, mother!” I exclaimed.

She only sniffed contemptuously, saying nothing.



JANE, thinking the coast clear, came out to where mother and I were standing. Booby turned and looked back. Catching sight of Jane, he hesitated for a moment, then returned to the gate. There was no use for Jane to conceal herself longer, so she walked out and joined us. Booby motioned for her to come to the gate.

“If you have anything to say to me, come here and say it,” she called to him. He took the challenge and walked boldly to us.

“Come walk over to the house with me,” he said.

“I don’t care to go just now,” she replied.

“Oh, you prefer to rest in the camp of our enemy, do you? Very well, I shall so inform your father.”

That was as far as he got. I grabbed him by the lapel of his coat and slammed him down upon the old wooden bench so hard it broke one of its ancient legs; then I shook him good.

“Stand up and make humble apologies to these ladies!” I demanded.

I had tried my man and he was a putty ball.

He stood foolishly looking about for his hat and his cane.

“Speak out your apology, quickly!” I insisted, and he did, saying:

“Ladies, I do apologize for being the cause of this disgraceful scene.”

“Now listen to me,” I continued; “if I ever hear that you are annoying this young lady in the slightest manner, or further intruding your attentions upon her, I will search you out, wherever you may be, and you shall account to me for it. Now get off these grounds, and never enter that gate again.”

He went without a second invitation, and we all knew he would go direct to Mr. Mayberry.



I'll tell you what I think of you.

WE never dreamed that the usually silent and speechless Mr. Mayberry would muster courage to show open resentment or temper over this matter, but he did.

In about half an hour he came rushing into the house, raging like a lion.

“Where is Jane?” he demanded in a loud voice.

That industrious young woman was peeling potatoes in the kitchen.

“Where is my daughter?” he howled.

Hearing the loud talk, mother and Jane came into the room together.

“Go home!” yelled the father. “Go home this minute, and never enter this house again.”

With this, he started toward Jane with clenched hands.

Seizing him by the arm, I pushed him back, saying:

“Stop, Mr. Mayberry! You are not in your own house now.”

He viciously jerked away from me, and in an infuriated manner cried:

“You interfere in my private family affairs? You impudent upstart!” and he made a dive for my throat.

Mother and Jane stood, much frightened, and watched what followed.

We had a large old-fashioned family chair in the room. Seizing him around the

waist, I lifted him bodily into the air and sat him down in this chair with considerable force.

He was not a strong man and I easily subdued him by main strength.

When his struggles ceased, I warned him not to stir, then standing in front of him I delivered this lecture:

“Sit there, now, till I tell you what I think of you. I am justified in taking extreme measures. You have entered our home and assaulted the whole family right in our own house; but, Mr. Mayberry, for the sake of the old friendship which once made me call you ‘pa,’ and your little Jane call my mother ‘ma,’ I will not be harsher than is necessary.

“Once, Mr. Mayberry, you sat in that same chair and said to my mother in the presence of us children: ‘Fannie, I hope nothing may ever occur to mar the happiness of this family. I feel under life-long obligations to you for having been a mother

to my little daughter. I don't know what would have become of us without your assistance. I hope this boy may grow to be a big, strong man, to continue to safeguard her after we have grown old,' then you drew me over on your knee and caressed me.

"To-day you rush into the same room and assault us for desiring to do that same thing—protect Jane.

"Now, we are going to protect her to the end, and you cannot prevent it. You have insulted mother, and tried to defraud her, as a reward for her faithful watch over Jane.

"Your greed has taken the honor and manhood out of you. You desire to sell Jane, bodily, to that imbecile son of old butcher Blatz. You shall not do it. You might as well make up your mind to that, and turn these people out of your place, your house at least.

"If you do not promise never to allow

young Blatz to enter your home again, Jane never shall. Now answer, and answer quickly.”

He made no answer, but sat with his eyes staring at the floor for several minutes, then arising he walked out of the room.

It was some hours before my departure. Mother, Jane, and I fixed up a code to be used as a distress signal in the event that anything serious should happen in my absence. Jane then went over to her own home, with the understanding that she was to return before I left.

She did return, and told us that her father was not at all ill-natured toward her, but had patted her hands and said:

“That boy was right, but we’ll build a railroad across that land, just the same.”

I bade mother and Jane good-by, returned to Princeton, and the next week hurried over to New York to consult with Mr. Banning.

We enjoined them from making any en-

croachment upon my mother's land, greatly to their surprise and chagrin. Then we organized the "Fairchild Coal and Coke Company," Fairchild being my mother's name. Next we commenced to look about for a big man for president, and finally went to the office of Mr. Blake.

"Mr. Blake," said Mr. Banning, "we have just organized a coal company, and we need a scare-crow for president. Will you be it?"

"Well, I like that," answered Mr. Blake. Then they put their heads together.

I was kicking my heels on the radiator, when I heard Mr. Blake ask:

"Who are these Fairchilds?"

"Why, you remember Fannie Barbour, the prettiest woman in the State of Virginia when you were a youngster? Well, it is she, and her son here. John, come here."

I walked over to where they were sitting,

having been previously introduced to Mr. Blake.

“Sit down here, now, and tell us all you know about this coal matter.”

We spent a couple of hours discussing the thing, and making it plain that we held the “key to the situation.”

Mr. Blake seemed to be a very good-natured man, else there was something unusually amusing about this which we could not see, for frequently he would lean back in his chair and laugh heartily.

At last Mr. Banning said:

“What the Devil is there so funny about this thing, Blake? What are you laughing at?”

“Well, in the first place,” answered Blake, “Fannie jilted me to marry Fairchild; and, in the second place, we control the road you want to tap. You have actually enjoined my road from building a branch on to the property, and then come to me and ask me to become president of

your company. Don't you think that would make a dead man laugh?"

Mr. Banning looked blank. It did look as though something was loose.

"However, Banning," continued Mr. Blake, "we will consider the matter. You can say to Fannie that my time for revenge has come, and, unless there are some complications to prevent it, I will accept the presidency and finance the enterprise, and I may yet get a chance to squeeze her."

In about thirty days it was announced that the "Fairchild Coal and Coke Company" had been duly incorporated and would at once begin operations.

Mayberry had been quite ill after my departure, and he and Jane had gone on a winter trip to the Mediterranean.



We were all tangled up.

JANE and her father did not return until September. In the meantime I had graduated and gone to New York.

Mother closed up the old house and joined me in a comfortable little apartment, and we were living as “snug as a bug in a rug.”

It seemed that something was holding up the coal company, and Judge Banning did not see fit to confide in me fully.

I learned, however, that negotiations were awaiting the return of Mayberry.

From the time of our arrival in New York, Mr. and Mrs. Blake took us in tow, and hardly a day passed that we were not all together.

Mr. Blake forgave mother for having jilted him in former years, saying:

“Fannie, a discriminating fate intended that I should get a woman that loved me more than you did.”

“Yes,” chipped in Mrs. Blake, “he never said that he loved me more than he did his first sweetheart.”

Mr. Blake just chuckled.

One evening in September I received a message from Mrs. Blake saying that I should dine with them that evening.

In the note she said, “John, I want you to look your best, for I am going to intro-

duce you to the sweetest, prettiest girl you ever saw.”

My heart jumped when I read this.

What would Jane think if she knew I was primping to meet another woman.

“No, I would look my worst, for Jane’s sake; but to please Mrs. Blake I would accept the introduction and make myself as agreeable as possible.”

I had a nice little dressing-room at the office, in order to remain there late and avoid going home to dress.

I arrived at Mrs. Blake’s residence a little early, and not caring to disturb any one, I told the butler, as I had frequently done before, not to announce me.

The evening was a bit chilly, and seeing a cozy wood fire back in the library, I walked into the room.

Great Scott! I could not be mistaken. That was Jane’s back and no mistake. No other woman ever had a back like that. She was standing, looking out of the window.

I must see her face at once. I made a little noise and she looked around, and it was Jane.

The shock which Mrs. Blake received fifteen minutes later nearly gave her heart disease.

Jane and I were curled up on the davenport, so entangled in arms we could not break, when Mrs. Blake entered.

With a little scream, she demanded to know the meaning of such unseemly conduct.

We just kept right on and gave her the merry ha! ha! until, fearing we might really offend her, we stood up, and I said:

“Mrs. Blake, allow me to present to you my fiancée, Miss Mayberry.”

Mrs. Blake only stood with her mouth open and her eyes bulged out, but finally she recovered her breath and said, in a gaspy sort of sputter:

“Fiancée! What do you mean? How long have you been engaged?”

“As long as we can remember,” I replied; and Jane backed this up with a big nod. She always did want to chip in when I was trying to explain things.

Mrs. Blake was regaining her courage.

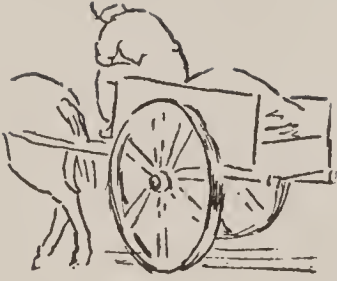
“How long have you been guilty of this conduct?” she demanded.

“Longer than we can remember, according to the family album,” I responded.

Fortunately my mother came in at this juncture and immediately took my place at hugging and kissing Jane.

“Well, this just takes my breath away!” exclaimed Mrs. Blake. “Here I had planned what I thought would be a delightful little surprise for you, and I must eat my own cake. Young man, you are to be congratulated, for this is the most lovely girl in New York to-day.”

“Oh, I ought to know that better than any one else, Mrs. Blake, for I raised her,” I answered. “There isn’t much about her that I’m not acquainted with.”



I take off my hat to a sand-wagon.

THERE isn't much more to tell. The coal netted mother and me nearly a million and Mayberry's share in the enterprise made Jane independently rich. Therefore, the wedding, which shortly thereafter occurred, was put down as "a love match of long standing—a romance of two old Virginia families."

Jane's father is the general manager of the Fairchild Coal and Coke Company.

I joined Judge Banning in his large law practice, the firm name now being Banning & Fairchild. We are the legal lights of the company.

I wonder if some people are just naturally born under a whole constellation of lucky stars. If so, surely I belong to that class. I am supremely happy and satisfied.

Many people say I am "foolish" and have such "crazy notions" about things. I am especially "daffy" about anything which recalls the sweet days of my youth.

Jane's memory is always coupled with my thoughts at such times.

I always take off my hat when a sand wagon passes. Maybe some of the precious grains have touched Jane's little pink toes.

A sand pile is to Jane as a red rag is to a bull. You can't hold her when she sees it. If she were on her way to church, in her best Sunday frock, she would sit down

in the sand pile, if a big policeman said no, and it would take a healthy one to play horse with Jane. She now weighs two hundred pounds and is as strong as an ox.



I always tip the toy balloon man.

I have formed the habit of tipping the toy balloon men, because they remind me of the time when Jane lost her bunch of June-bugs.

Perhaps the average man puts me down for a fool, but let me say to such people, "You have my heartiest sympathy, you

have missed the sweetest experiences of life." Most men, who think themselves very sane, do much more imbecilic things which they call smart, then go home and beat their wives.

No man who played in the sand, rolled in the mud, got stung by yellow-jackets, hornets, and bumble-bees, butted into the middle of next week by a ram, or hooked over the fence by the old cow, with his wife as a child playmate before they were married, will ever treat her ill. The heart is made sound and true by these companionships. Love is abiding and wholesome when based on such a beginning. I say to men and women, be children just as long and as often as you can. The sand pile is good for malaria. If there is not a sand pile convenient, fall off a fence; jump out of the window; slide down the stair banister or the rain-water spout; do anything to awaken the old feeling.



Our love is freshened up.

JANE and I have a nice little country place down in Old Virginia, where we spend much of our time.

We are not ashamed to say that, even now, some of our pranks look childish and foolish to those who do not understand.

We have tried to make our place resemble the dear old homestead.

When I see Jane fooling about the flowers, the old picture comes up before me of a bulgy-legged little girl planting flowers in the sand, and the flowers are watered with the old love. Somehow or other, at such times, the love that Jane and I have for each other seems freshened up a bit.