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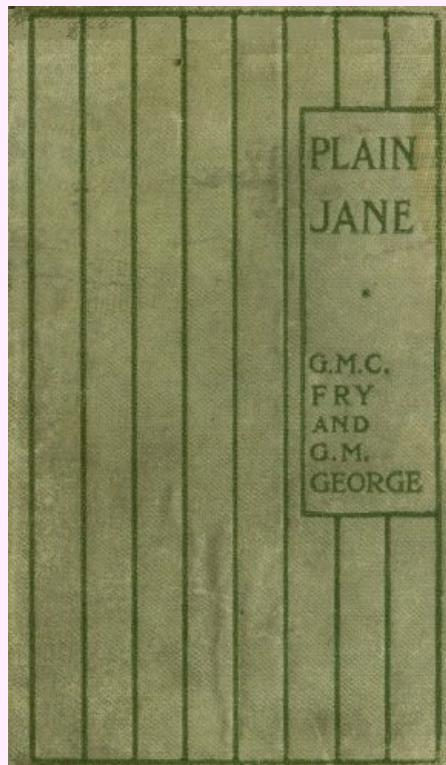
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27. Plain Jane



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## Plain Jane

Text by G. M. George

ILLUSTRATED  
BY G. M. C. FRY

*London:*  
GRANT RICHARDS  
1903



That model Miss, Jemima Jane  
Was very good, and very plain;  
Her parents noticed with delight  
How neat she was, and how polite.  
Sometimes her young companions came  
And begged she'd join them in a game.  
But it was never any use;  
She'd make some civil, quiet excuse,  
And, "Dear Mama," she'd whisp'ring say,  
"I love plain sewing more than play;  
I hope you'll always think of me  
As your own gentle, busy Bee!"  
Jane rose at five. "What for?" you ask;  
And I reply, "To con her task."  
She breakfasted on milk and bread,  
Nor ever asked for aught instead;  
"I like it best, because," said she,  
"'Tis wholesome for a child like me."  
She used to think it quite a treat,  
To put her bed and chamber neat;  
But she enjoyed—oh, better far!

Saying her tasks to her Mama.  
 She took the air when these were done,  
 But she would never romp and run;  
 Prim and sedate she walked about,  
 Her back quite straight, her toes turned out:  
 And all the people, seeing this,  
 Exclaimed, "Oh, what a model Miss!"



*Jane's Uncle*

Jane's Uncle, who lived far away,  
 Sent her Mama a note one day,  
 Explaining that he found he had  
 To spend a fortnight in Bagdad.  
 He had a daughter, and 'twas plain  
 He hoped that she might stay with Jane.  
 "She's a sad puss," he said, "I own;  
 But I can't leave the child alone."  
 "I think," Mama said, in a fuss,  
 "We can't have *her* to stay with us:  
 I do not like my Jane to mix  
 With children who have naughty tricks."  
 But Jane said, with a gentle smile,  
 Plying her needle all the while,  
 "Pray, let her come here, dear Mama,  
 With the permission of Papa;  
 I have a hope that she might be  
 Influenced for her good by me:  
 For I could show her that she would  
 Be happier if she were good."



*" She bought a rod that afternoon"*

At this her kind Mama relented,  
And, as her good Papa consented,  
That very day her mother wrote  
Her uncle quite a cordial note,  
Saying, "I think that it is clear  
Your Ann should spend your absence here"  
As she expected Ann quite soon,  
She bought a rod that afternoon.  
And sure enough, next Tuesday, Ann  
Was brought there by a serving-man.

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*" Ann was brought there by a serving man"*

Alas! alas! it soon was plain  
She was not in the least like Jane!  
She ran and laughed and romped about,  
And raised a hubbub and a shout.  
"Oh, fie!" said Jane, "Pray, cousin Ann,  
Do be more tranquil if you can."  
But Ann just laughed, and did not care,  
And tweaked her cousin by the hair.  
When they were out she climbed a tree,  
Which quite annoyed the "busy Bee."

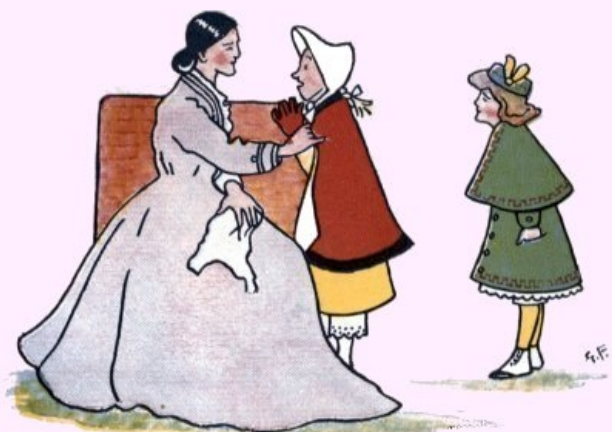
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"Fie, fie!" she cried. Ann said "Here goes:"  
And aimed an acorn at her nose!  
So Jane replied, "My good Mama  
Shall know how rude and rough you are."  
"Your good Mama!" said little Ann;  
"Well, if you want to tell, you can."  
She went away—went whistling too,  
Such a rude, boyish thing to do!



"Aimed an acorn at her nose"

They went home shortly after, so  
Jane told Mama her tale of woe.  
"I do not tell this tale from choice,"  
She said, in her most gentle voice;  
"I thought you ought to know, you see,  
How cousin Ann climbed up a tree;  
And when I chid in gentle fashion,  
She flew into a dreadful passion,  
And—dear Mama, indeed, *indeed*,  
I would much rather not proceed."  
But since her mother thought it best,  
She dutifully told the rest.  
—"She threw things at me, tore my hair,  
And *whistled* as she left me there!"



At this Mama looked grim and stern,  
And said that Ann had much to learn;  
And that she really felt unable  
To have such naughty girls at table.  
So when the others supped that day  
(Their stew smelt sav'ry by the way),  
Ann had to stand upon a seat,  
And did not get a thing to eat;  
While Jane kept slyly peeping round,  
And swallowed with a sucking sound.  
And there poor Ann was forced to stay  
When supper was all cleared away.  
Jane's good Papa began to read  
A very solid book indeed;  
Jane took her work, and sat near by,  
And pricked Ann's ankles on the sly.



*"Pricked Ann's ankles on the sly"*

And there in fact Ann had to wait  
Until the clock was striking eight,  
When Jane's Mama believed it time  
To say that ladies never climb,  
But that to fall into a pet,  
And fight, is more disgraceful yet!  
Her little loving, gentle Jane  
Should not be treated so again.  
She added more. At last she said  
Ann might come down, and go to bed.  
Jane gently whispered, "Dear, you would  
Be happier if you were good."  
Ann mutter'd "Pig!"—but no one heard  
Her use that most improper word.



*“Laughed at her look of pained surprise”*

It chanced that nearly every day  
The cousins quarrelled at their play.  
Good little Janie always ran  
And told Mama of naughty Ann;  
—Of how she tied Jane’s flaxen hair  
To the back portion of her chair,  
And when her cousin tried to rise,  
Laughed at her look of pained surprise.  
How she had torn Jane’s Sunday skirt,  
And squirted at her with a squirt!  
—And how another evening, she  
Slipped salt into Jane’s dish of tea;  
And many another naughty feat  
Did Ann perform and Jane repeat.

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*“Slipped salt into Jane’s dish of tea”*

When Ann called Jane a “Tell-tale-tit,”  
She went and told Mama of it.  
She sighed, “I wondered how she *could!*  
I long to help her to be good.”  
Jane’s kind Mama, I need not say,  
Behaved in the most prudent way;  
Correcting Ann in various ways



And giving Jane much well-earned praise.



*" Off she started at a run"*

Now in that village, every year  
The people held a cattle fair;  
And stalls and tents and swings were seen  
Set up upon the village green.  
Now when the fair came round that spring  
Ann longed to go like anything.  
"Oh, Aunt," she cried, "do let us go!"  
And pouted when her Aunt said "No."  
Next morning when out walking, Ann  
Concocted such a naughty plan!  
She had some money of her own,  
And she would see the fair alone!  
(I hope no other little miss  
Has ever made a scheme like this.)  
When she believed that no one saw,  
She slipped out at the big front door,  
And off she started at a run,  
To see the shows and all the fun.



*"Watching a big performing bear"*

Now little Jane sat prim and neat  
Upon the parlour window seat;  
And so she saw her cousin go,  
And guessed she meant to see the show.  
"Mama!" she murmured, with a sigh,  
"My cousin Ann has just run by;  
I sadly fear—but no! oh, no!  
It could not be to see the show."  
Mama at once sent Betsy out  
To see what Ann could be about:  
And Betsy found her at the fair  
Watching a big performing bear;  
And Betsy brought her to her Aunt,  
Altho' she fought and cried "I shan't!  
I shan't go back! I won't go in!"  
—And kicked poor Betsy on the shin.



*"Jane fetched the rod"*

Her Aunt, on hearing all, looked grave,  
And said, "Is this how you behave?  
You disobeyed me, and you fought!  
—Go, Jane, and fetch the rod I bought."  
Jane joyfully laid down her book,  
And ran off with a merry look;  
While Ann stood looking pale and queer,  
And wishing that "Papa were here."  
"Miss, to your room!" Mama said; so  
Away poor Ann was forced to go.  
Jane fetched the rod, and said, "Oh, why  
Will my poor cousin be so sly?  
I cannot bear," the child confessed,  
"To see my dear Mama distressed."

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*"Jane's gentle smile grew quite sublime"*

Mama then took the rod, and went,  
Leaving her daughter well content:

Jane's gentle smile grew quite sublime,  
For her Mama was gone some time.  
When twenty minutes had expired  
She came in looking hot and tired;  
And very shortly after, she  
Went out to drink a dish of tea  
With several friends she long had known,  
Leaving her little girl alone.

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*"Hot and tired"*

Jane found it rather dull to read;  
She soon felt very dull indeed.  
How interesting Ann's tales had been  
About that circus she had seen.  
Jane wished Mama had let them go  
And see this cattle fair and show.  
She almost thought it would be fun  
To go alone, as Ann had done.  
"Twill be her fault, if I *do* go;  
*She* made me want to see the show.  
Mama will not suspect the plan  
Because I told her about Ann,"  
She said, as she decided on it,  
And went to fetch her beaver bonnet.  
Betsy the maid was busy, so  
Nobody saw Miss Janie go.  
Prim and particular and neat  
She minced along the village street,  
And safely reached the village green  
Unnoticed, and in fact unseen.

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*"With propriety"*

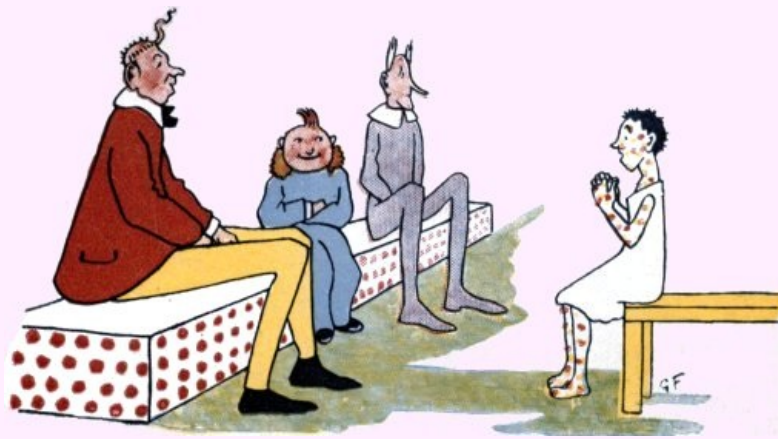
Once there, Miss Jane, I grieve to say,  
Behaved in quite a naughty way!  
—She even rode a wooden horse,  
Though with propriety, of course;  
She bought some sweetmeats at a stall  
And then sat down and ate them all;  
She saw the clowns and acrobats,  
And the performing dogs and cats.  
She thought them very clever, yet  
The pig-faced lady was her pet!



*"A woman saw her tears"*

Soon it grew dark, and little Jane  
Began to feel some drops of rain;  
Her gown would spot, if it got wet;  
And what a whipping she would get  
If kind Mama could ferret out  
What her dear child had been about.

If she got wet, they'd ask her "Why?"—  
 And here poor Jane began to cry.  
 A woman saw her tears—and saw  
 The pretty necklace which she wore.  
 "Come, come!" she said, "my little Miss,  
 Don't spoil your pretty eyes like this;  
 If you're afraid of getting wet  
 Come to my caravan, my pet,  
 And I'll be proud if Miss will take  
 A dish of tea and slice of cake."  
 Jane thought the woman kind and nice,  
 And so she followed her advice:  
 But after she had drunk her tea  
 She felt as drowsy as could be,  
 And so, although she tried to keep  
 Awake, she soon was fast asleep.



*"'Pray, sirs,' she asked, 'can this be right?'"*

When she awoke, her head felt fit  
 To fall to pieces, and to split;  
 Her necklace and her clothes were gone,  
 And she had next to nothing on.  
 Her hair was short, and was—alack!  
 No longer fair, but bluish black!  
 And she herself was—only think!  
 Spotted all over brown and pink!  
 Too scared to cry, she rose and saw  
 A giant, dwarf, and several more.  
 In fact, it soon was pretty plain  
 These wicked men had stolen Jane,  
 And meant to use her as a show,  
 Dressed as a "spotted child," you know.  
 She struggled hard to be polite;  
 "Pray, sirs," she asked, "can this be right?"  
 "You 'old your bloomin' row!" they said,  
 And rudely cuffed her on the head.



*"Quite fond of Ann"*

When Jane's Mama at length returned,  
How dreadful was the news she learned!  
Her child was gone!—And it was vain  
To seek and search and call for Jane!  
They hunted for her everywhere—  
They even sought her at the fair;  
But days went by, and then a week,  
So that it seemed no use to seek.  
Oddly enough—Mama began  
Really to feel quite fond of Ann,  
Now that there was no virtuous Jane  
To carry tales and to complain.  
And Ann felt sorry for her Aunt  
Altho' she said: "I really can't  
Conceive why it should cause her pain  
To lose a little pig like Jane!"  
Now that Ann's Aunt was left in peace  
She made excuses for her niece;  
If she were noisy at her play,  
She said, "I like to see her gay."  
And if she grew a trifle wild,  
She only shook her head and smiled.

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*"Proffered her a guinea-piece"*

When Ann's Papa returned, one day,

And came to fetch his child away,  
 Mama was grieved to lose her niece,  
 And proffered her a guinea-piece,  
 Saying: "You must stay longer, when  
 You come to visit me again."

Now all this time, poor Jane, we know,  
 Was made a laughing-stock and show.  
 They told her, did she dare explain  
 That she was only little Jane,  
 And not a spotted girl at all,  
 They'd beat her till she couldn't crawl.  
 She had to wait on all the rest,  
 And had to do her very best;  
 So that, she sometimes quite forgot  
 Whether her back was straight or not!  
 And even, so the story goes,  
 Sometimes forgot to point her toes!



*" She had to wait on all the rest"*

Jane found the children in the van  
 Were infinitely worse than Ann;  
 They punched her head and tore her hair,  
 And pinched and nipped her everywhere,  
 And when she said, "A little child  
 Ought to be tractable and mild!"  
 They only made an ugly face,  
 And pinched her in another place.  
 After a time this seemed to teach  
 Jane it was better not to preach:  
 And even now and then, she would  
 Forget that she was very good.  
 She wished it had not been her plan  
 Always to tell Mama of Ann.  
 After two months had passed away,  
 She even might be heard to say  
 That she had been a spiteful cat  
 To treat her Cousin Ann like that!





*“ Gravely passed from tent to tent ”*

Now Jane’s good parents went to stay  
With Ann’s Papa one autumn day;  
And while they both were staying there,  
The people held a kind of fair.  
“Pray, brother,” Jane’s Mama began,  
“Do let me take your little Ann;  
For she would like to see the show.”  
And he replied, “We all might go.”  
And so that afternoon they went,  
And gravely passed from tent to tent;  
And finally, the party stept  
Into the tent where freaks where kept.  
“Look at that child,” said one, “I’m sure  
Her spots are paint and nothing more.”  
Cried Ann: “I do not care a fig  
For looking at that spotted pig!”  
But at her voice, Jane shrieked and ran,  
And threw her arms round little Ann.  
“Save me! oh, save me!” she did plead;  
“I’m not a spotted pig, indeed!”



*"And threw her arms round little Ann"*

While her Mama screamed out, "You're not  
My Jane!"—and fainted on the spot.  
And her Papa desired to know  
Who was the master of the show?  
But he, as afterwards transpired,  
Had very modestly retired.  
Then everyone had much ado  
To bring Jane's fainting mother to:  
At last she sat up with a start,  
And pressed her darling to her heart.  
"My Jane!" she cried, "my Jane!! my Jane!!!"  
And seemed inclined to faint again.

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*"Fainted on the spot"*

When Jane regained her native hearth  
She had a very thorough bath:  
But tho' she used all soaps then known,

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And soda too, and pumice-stone,  
She sadly saw she still had got  
More than one noticeable spot!  
And so poor Miss Jemima Jane  
Tho' still more good, is still more plain.



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