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Title: Janice Day, the Young Homemaker

Author: Helen Beecher Long

Release date: January 1, 2001 [EBook #2483]

Most recently updated: April 4, 2015

Language: English

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Janice Day, The Young Homemaker

by Helen Beecher Long

January, 2001 [Etext #2483]

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Janice Day, The Young Homemaker

by Helen Beecher Long

CHAPTER I. WHEN MOTHER WAS A GIRL

"Why, that is Arlo Junior. What can he be doing out of doors so early? And look at those cats following him. Did you ever!" Janice Day stared wonderingly from her front bedroom window at the boy crossing the street in the dim pre-dawn light, with a cat and three half-grown kittens gamboling about him. Occasionally Arlo Junior would shake something out of a paper to the ground and the cats would immediately roll and frolic and slap playfully at one another, acting as the girl had never seen cats act before.

The pleasantly situated cottage belonging to Mr. Broxton Day stood almost directly across the way from the Arlo Weeks' place on Knight Street. Therefore Janice often said that, "the days and nights and weeks are very close together!"

Knight Street, as level as the palm of one's hand, led straight into Greensboro, where it crossed Market and Hammond Streets, making the Six Corners—actually the heart of the business district of this thriving mid-western town.

The Day cottage was a mile and a half from the Six Corners and the Farmers & Merchants Bank in which Mr. Broxton Day held an important salaried position. Besides his house and his situation in the bank, Mr. Day considered another of his possessions very important indeed, although he did not list it when he made out his tax return.

This that he so highly valued possessed the very brightest hazel eyes in the world, wore a wealth of free brown hair in two plaits over her shoulders, and was of a slender figure without bordering upon that unfortunate "skinniness" which nature abhors as she does a vacuum.

Janice possessed, also, even teeth that flashed when she smiled (and she smiled often), a pink and white complexion that the sun was bound to freckle if she was not careful, and a cheerful, demure expression of countenance that went a long way toward making her good to look upon, if not actually

good looking.

In a spick and span blue-checked bungalow apron, she stood at her window just as Dawn swept a brush of partially-hued color across the eastern horizon. Having had it in her mind when she went to bed the night before to arise early, she had of course awakened long before it was really time to get up to make sure that daddy, for once, got a proper breakfast.

For the Days, father and daughter, were dependent on hired service, and such service in the form of Olga Cedarstrom was about as incapable and stupid as fate had yet produced.

Having caught the first glimpse of that mischievous youngster, Arlo Weeks, Junior, with the cats, Janice raised her window softly as far as the lower sash would go, to peer out at the strange procession. The boy and the cats entered the Day's side gate and disappeared around the corner of the kitchen ell.

"Now! what can that rascal be about? If he does anything to bother Olga there will be trouble. And everything here goes crossways enough now, without Arlo Junior adding to it, I declare!"

Janice could very clearly remember when the cottage had been a real home instead of "just a place to stay"; for her mother had been dead only a year. The experiences of that year had been trying, both for the sorrowing widower and the girl who had been her mother's close companion and confidant.

Janice was old enough and well trained enough in domestic affairs to have kept house very nicely for her father. But she had to go to school, of course; an education was the most important thing in the world for her. And the kind of help that came into the Days' kitchen often balked at being "bossed by a slip of a gur-r-rl," as one recent incumbent of the position had said.

Olga Cedarstrom was stupid and often cross in the morning; and she was careless and slatternly in her ways. But she did not object when Janice came down early to get her father's breakfast, and serve it daintily, as her mother had taught her.

Only, Olga could not be taught to do these things. She did not want to learn. She said she had a "fella" and would be married soon; and under the circumstances she did not consider that she needed to learn anything more about domestic work!

Janice did not wish to go down into the kitchen so early, for that would awaken Olga who would come from her room, bleary-eyed with sleep and with her temper at a saw-tooth edge, to ask, "why she bane get oop in de middle of de night?"

Janice had washed and dressed and read her morning Bible chapter, which she always managed to find time for, even when she did not get up as early as on this occasion. For her age, and perhaps because of her mother's death, which still seemed recent to Janice, she was rather serious-minded. Yet she was no prig, and she loved fun and was as alert for good times as any girl of her age in Greensboro.

The talk she had had overnight with daddy had perhaps put her in a rather more serious mood than usual. The talk had been all about her mother and the hopes the mother and father had had and the plans they had made for their little girl's future.

To carry through those plans necessitated the proper schooling of Janice Day. She was already in the upper grade of the grammar school. Even if the household affairs were all "at sixes and at sevens," she must stick to her books, for she had ambitions. She was quite sure she wanted to teach when she grew up.

There was another reason that spurred Janice Day to the point of early rising, although daddy had not even hinted that he missed the comfortable, daintily served breakfasts which he used to enjoy when Mrs. Day was alive. It was something he had said about an entirely different matter that started this serious train of thought in the girl's mind.

She had expressed herself as so many of us do when we are in difficulties, or when we see conditions we would like to have changed: "Oh, if things were only different!"

Broxton Day had looked at her with his head held sideways and a quizzical smile in his eyes as well as on his lips.

"Different? Do you want to know how to bring about a change? Do something. Don't just talk, or think, or wonder, or wish, or hope; but do! It is all right to say that good things become a reality because somebody has a good thought. Actually, thinking does not bring things about. It is doing. Do something in the world, my dear. Don't wait for somebody else to set the example, or to lead. Do what you can yourself while you are waiting for a leader. Do something.

"Of course thought must precede action, and, furthermore, must accompany action if action is not to run wild. But in the end thought must become action and we must all of us—little girls, as well as adults—do something if the conditions we do not like are to be changed."

That was really what had got Janice Day out of bed so early on this morning. Poor daddy! He sometimes had most awful meals served to him. And the house was usually in a state of confusion if it was not actually dirty.

Olga had come straight from a peasant cottage in her

country, and her idea of scrubbing the kitchen floor was to dash pails of water over it and then sweep the water out of the back door with a broom.

There was a Swedish colony established around the pickle factories on the northern edge of the town, and Olga went over there with her "fella" to a dance or downtown or to a picture show almost every evening. No wonder she was not fit for work in the morning.

When Janice had come up to bed the previous evening she had brought with her the "treasure-box" which daddy usually kept in the wall safe in the living room. It contained certain heirlooms and trinkets that had been her mother's, and were now Janice's most sacred possessions.

She had had to beg daddy for the treasure-box, for he, too, prized its contents beyond words. But Janice was a careful girl, and daddy trusted her, and he knew, too, that the mementoes of her dead mother seemed to bring the woman closer to the little daughter; and so, in the end, he had allowed Janice to carry the treasure-box to her room to be kept for the night, but to be returned to its usual place after the girl had had it by her and looked at its contents for a while.

There were a few pieces of jewelry—more valuable for their associations than for their intrinsic worth, the gold framed photographs of Grandfather and Grandmother Avion, which clasped like a little book, and the miniature of Janice's mother painted on ivory when she was a girl by a painter who had since become very famous.

This last was the girl's dearest possession—the memento of her mother which she cared for above everything else. Daddy had put it into her keeping with a reverence that could not fail to impress Janice Day, young as she was. Broxton Day had worshipped his wife for her higher qualities as well as having loved her for her human attributes.

Something of this attitude toward his dead wife Janice, young as she was, understood. She knew, for instance, that there was no other woman in the world as a mate for Broxton Day now that her mother was gone. All the more must she try, therefore, to fill her mother's place in his life.

She had taken the miniature out of the treasure-box and was looking with dimming eyes at it by the window when, shifting her glance, she had seen Arlo Weeks, Junior, crossing the street. This was her mother when she was a girl! What a sweet, demure face it was. Janice did not realize that much of the expression of the countenance in this miniature was visualized in the flesh in her own face.

No wonder daddy had fallen in love with such a pretty, pretty girl! So thought Janice Day. And—

What was Arlo Junior, the mischievous torment of the neighborhood, doing with those cats? This sudden query shattered her dream completely. She returned the miniature to the treasure-box, and closed and latched the cover.

"Goodness knows," murmured Janice Day, "there are cats enough around this house without Arlo Junior bringing any more upon the premises. Sometimes I hear them squalling and fighting when I wake up in the night."

With the treasure-box in her hand, she opened her bedroom door and crossed the hall to the storeroom. The window of this room was over the back porch. She heard a step on the porch flooring. The door of the summer kitchen was seldom locked. Was Arlo Junior down there?

That boy was constantly getting into trouble with the neighbors. There was a regular feud between Olga Cedarstrom and Arlo Junior. Olga had chased him half a block only the other day, threatening him with a broom.

And the cats! Here they came from all directions—over the back yard fences and from the barn. Fat cats, lean cats, shabby "ash-barrel" cats, and pet cats with ribbons and collars. Amazedly, Janice Day owned to herself that she had never seen so many cats gathered in a more or less harmonious group before.

Instead of fighting or "mauling," they approached the back porch of the Day house as though on pleasure bent. Was that Arlo Junior giggling down there?

She put down the treasure-box and tried to open the window. But the sash stuck. She distinctly heard the door below close and footsteps receding from the porch.

Wishing to make sure that it was Arlo Junior who had been below, the girl ran back to her bedroom. Yes! there he was scuttling across the street in evident haste to get under cover.

"Now, isn't that odd?" murmured Janice. Suddenly a sound floated up from below—an echoing wail that seemed wrenched from the very soul of a tortured cat. The cry reverberated through the house in a most eerie fashion.

Fortunately her father slept in the front of the house and there was a closed door between the front and the back halls on both floors. But Janice heard Olga's big, flat feet land upon the floor almost instantly. That feline wail had evidently brought the Swedish girl out of her dreams, all standing.

That sound sent Janice out of the room on a run. She must reach the seat of trouble before Olga got to the place! Otherwise, the trouble was bound to increase and become—what? Even Janice's imagination, trained, as it was, by the succession of incompetent and unwilling kitchen helpers, could not picture that.

Before Janice Day could reach the hall, Olga was padding down the stairs to the kitchen. From the rear arose increasing howls. The cats may have mysteriously gathered in apparent amity; but so many of them shut up in that outer kitchen with no escape could not possibly dwell for long in harmony.

There certainly was no harmony in these mounting wails. The principle motif seemed to be furnished by the cat that had first voiced his complaint. But now, as Janice plunged down the stairs after Olga, the thin, high scream of the initial feline chorister was crossed, in warp and woof, by basset strains.

The sounds rose and fell, as though proceeding from cats in torment—an agonizing oratorio like nothing Janice had ever heard before. She screamed to the Swedish girl, but her voice was drowned by the caterwauling in the back kitchen. Olga wrenched open the door. Janice, arriving to look over her shoulder at the very moment she did so, saw the back kitchen practically filled with cats.

When one cat loses its temper it seems as though every other cat within hearing gets excited. In the corners, out of the way of the battlefield, kittens and tabbies were rolling and playing upon the dried twigs and leaves that Janice knew must be catnip that Arlo Junior had flung upon the floor to bait the cats into the kitchen. But the cats in the middle of the room were preparing for the representation of a busy day at Donnebrook Fair.

"Them cats! In de clean kitchen what I scrubbed last night only I bane kill them cats!" And there was not a cat in the lot as mad as Olga Cedarstrom.

There was a hod of coal beside her. Olga seized the good-sized lumps of stove coal, one after another, and began volleying with a strong overhand throw at the excited animals.

Olga proved to be an excellent shot. She hit a cat with almost every lump of coal she threw. But she could not, after all, have easily failed to do this, there were so many cats in the kitchen.

"Oh, don't! Don't, Olga! Stop!" shrieked Janice. "You will hurt them"

"Hurt them?" repeated the girl. "I bane mean to hurt dem" and, slam! went another lump of coal.

"But they can't get out!" gasped Janice.

"Den how dey get in, huh?" demanded Olga, and threw another lump with terrific force.

There was a howl, higher and more blood-curdling than any that had heretofore assailed their ears. One big cat scrambled up the wall, and up the window panes, seeking an exit. One of the creature's legs dragged limply.

"Olga Cedarstrom!" shrieked Janice, "you have broken that poor cat's leg."

"I bane break all his legs!" rejoined this quite ferocious girl.

"How dese cats coom here? I bane sure you know!"

She turned to glare at Janice Day so savagely, a lump of coal poised in her smutted hand, that the girl was really frightened. She backed away from the angry woman.

Then she thought of something she might do to save the cats and the back kitchen from complete wreck. Janice darted out of the room to the porch. In a moment she had unlatched the summer-kitchen door and flung it wide open.

Instantly there boiled out of the room cats big and cats little, cats of all colors and every degree of fright. One of the last to escape was the poor cat with the broken leg. There was nothing Janice Day could do for it. She did not dare to try to touch it.

She ventured back into the house to find Olga Cedarstrom still breathing out threatenings and slaughter. Olga was in her nightgown and a wrapper. She had not even stopped for slippers when she came from her bed. Now she padded to the back stairs, turning to shake her clenched fist at Janice and cry:

"I leave! I leave! I bane going to pack my troonk. The man pay me oop to last night, and I leave!"

"I am glad of it!" gasped Janice, finding her voice again. "It wasn't my fault, and it wasn't the poor cats' fault. I am glad you are going, so there!"

But she became more serious as she prepared the nice breakfast she had promised herself the night before her father should have. She heard Olga go to the telephone in the hall. She called a number and then talked in Swedish for several minutes to whoever answered.

Janice's father came into the dining room just as his little daughter brought in the breakfast. When he saw the steaming coffee pot and the covered dishes and toast-rack his face brightened. But he had to be told of the domestic catastrophe impending.

"Well," he said cheerfully, "we couldn't get anybody any worse than Olga, that is sure. I will see what they have at the intelligence office, and I may send a woman up after you get home from school this afternoon. I'll 'phone you first, daughter. I don't have to see Olga, do I? She was paid last night."

No, Janice told him, he need not bother about a servant who was on the point of going. Before it was time for Janice to leave for school, a taxicab appeared, driven by a man of Olga's own nationality. He went upstairs for the girl's trunk.

This he shouldered and carried out to the cab. Olga followed him, wearing the red hat with the green plume which had so amused Janice when the Swedish girl had arrived. She drove away in the cab without even looking back at Janice Day.

The latter had tidied up the kitchen and dining room. The back kitchen would have to remain as it was until later. And Janice felt that she would like to get hold of Arlo Weeks, Junior, and make him clean up that kitchen!

She changed to her school dress, strapped together the books she had studied the night before, put on her hat, and stood a moment in the hall, wondering if all would be right until she should return at three o'clock.

And then for the first time, and suddenly, Janice remembered the treasure-box.

She darted upstairs to her bedroom. How careless of her to have left it there! She knew the simple combination of the wall safe in the living room, and She determined to open the safe and put the box away.

But when she entered her bedroom she found that the treasure-box was not there. Instantly she remembered having taken it with her when she ran into the storeroom to see what Arlo Junior was doing with the cats.

In trying to open the window in the storeroom she had set the box down on a trunk—on Olga's trunk.

Startled, indeed alarmed and shaking, Janice Day went as fast as she could to, the storeroom. Olga's trunk was gone. She did not see the treasure-box anywhere in the room.

She searched the room diligently. She ran from room to room—Olga's, her own, even the other bedrooms. She halted at last in her own room, sobbing and alarmed.

The treasure-box was gone. Olga's trunk had gone. Olga herself had gone.

And the photographs of Grandfather and Grandmother Avion, the old-fashioned jewelry, the diary her mother had kept as a little girl, the miniature Janice thought so much of—all, all the keepsakes her father had entrusted her with the night before, seemed to have gone With Olga and the trunk.

CHAPTER II. THE HUNT FOR THE TREASURE-BOX

This was a very tragic happening in Janice Day's life. She had never been regardless of important matters; that was why daddy had not even warned her to be careful of the treasure-box.

He assumed that she would consider its precious contents and guard it accordingly. Why! He had not even mentioned it this morning, he had been so confident of her good sense.

And because of Arlo Junior and a bunch of cats she had forgotten all about her mother's miniature and all the other heirlooms in the treasure-box! Her tears were those of anger at herself as well as sorrow because of the disappearance of the heirlooms. Yet at the moment she did not fully appreciate the full weight of the happening.

Janice could not stand and cry about it. She had assured herself that the treasure-box was not where she had left it—was not in the storeroom at all, as far as she could see. Olga certainly had not picked it up and placed it in any of the rooms on this second floor, or anywhere else where it could be easily seen.

Janice could only believe that the Swedish girl, either by intention or in some involuntary way, had carried the treasure-box off with her. Yet it did not seem as though Olga Cedarstrom, bad temper and all, could be a thief! That was an awful thought.

"Maybe she has done it to plague me," Janice thought. "She is awfully mad at me. She thought it was my fault that the cats got into the back kitchen. And now she means to pay me back. She means to return it."

"But where has she gone? And what shall I do?" were the final queries formed in Janice Day's mind.

She must not stand idle. It was nearing school time. Nor could she neglect the matter until she came home from school at three o'clock. If Olga Cedarstrom were really dishonest, she might be getting farther and farther away from Greensboro while Janice remained inactive!

She must do something.

Janice went slowly downstairs. First Of all it was her duty to communicate with her father at the bank. She hated to tell him of this happening, for she realized keenly her fault in the matter. But not for a moment did the girl consider hiding the unfortunate affair from Broxton Day.

She went to the telephone and called the bank When she asked for Mr. Day. She could almost see him taking the receiver from the hook when the bell on his telephone rang.

"Yes?" Daddy's voice sounded clearly and courteously over the wire. "This is Day."

"Often when he said this over the telephone Janice would respond, giggling: "And this is Knight—Street! Number eight-forty-five."

But she did not feel at all like joking on this occasion. All in a rush she told him of the tragic happening.

"And I don't know what to do, Daddy," was the way in which she ended her story.

Even over the telephone the girl realized that her father was more startled than she expected him to be, His voice did not sound at all natural as he asked:

"Do you mean to tell me that everything that was in that box is lost, Janice? Everything?"

"Oh, Daddy!" choked the girl, "I put everything back before I closed the box—mamma's picture, and her diary, and all."

"There were other things—"

"Oh, yes! The jewelry and the photographs," said Janice.

"More than those," her father's hoarse voice said quickly. "I cannot explain to you now, my child. Didn't you know there was a false bottom in that box?"

"A false bottom to the treasure-box, Daddy?" she cried wonderingly. "A secret compartment."

"Oh! I didn't know—"

"No, of course not. I blame myself, my dear," he added, and she knew that he was striving to control

his voice. "Do not cry any more. I will explain when come home."

"Oh, Daddy!"

"Are you sure you have looked carefully for the box?" and he now spoke more moderately.

"Oh, yes, Daddy."

"Looked everywhere?"

"Indeed I have."

"Then, daughter, by the face of the clock in front of me, I advise you to hurry away to school. I will see what can be done. You say Olga went away in a taxicab?"

"Yes, Daddy."

"Of course, you did not notice the number of the car?"

"Oh, no, sir. But the man was a Swede like Olga. And he came in and carried down her trunk." '

"I will see what can be done. Go to school like a good girl and do not let anxiety spoil your recitations. Good-bye."

He hung up the receiver and Janice followed his example. There seemed nothing else she could do.

She would have been late for school had not Stella Latham driven by the Day cottage in her father's car just as Janice came out. Stella lived some distance out of town, her father being a well-to-do farmer, and she was driven in daily by either her brother or one of the farm hands.

Janice saw the automobile coming in the distance and soon recognized the Latham car.

"Dear me!" she sighed, "I hope Stella will not turn down Hester Street. If she comes this far she'll be sure to ask me to ride, and then I can get to school on time"

With rather anxious eyes Janice watched the oncoming car. Yes, it passed Hester Street and came on down Knight Street to make a later turn off toward the schoolhouse. The car almost shot past Janice before the girl inside saw her on the sidewalk. Then the girl suddenly leaned out of the swiftly moving car.

"Oh, Janice Day!" screamed Stella, warning her driver to stop with one hand while she beckoned to Janice with the other. "Hurry! You'll be late. Get in here."

Janice ran after the car, glad of the lift. Stella was a buxom girl, a year or two older than Janice, but in the latter's grade at school. "Ever so nice" Janice thought her. But, Janice thought most of her school friends were "nice." She was friendly toward them, so they had no reason to be otherwise than kind to her.

Not that Janice Day was either namby-pamby or stupid. She had opinions, and expressed them frankly; and she possessed a strong will of her own. But she not to hurt other people's feelings; and if she stood up for her opinions, she usually did so without antagonizing anybody.

"You're just the girl I wanted to see, anyway, Janice, before school," Stella said, as the younger girl hopped into the tonneau and the chauffeur let in the clutch again.

"Now you see—all of me!" said Janice brightly, trying to put the trouble of the lost treasure-box behind her.

Her eyelids were just a little red, and she took one more long, sobbing breath. But Stella was so very much interested in her own affairs that she noticed nothing at all strange about her friend.

"Oh, Janice!" Stella said, "I'm to have a birthday party. You know, I told you all about it before." "Yes, Stella, you told me," agreed Janice.

"Of course I did. And I want you to come. I couldn't really have a party without you, Janice. But I am not so sure about some of the girls."

"Oh, dear me!" murmured Janice. "If I was going to have a regular party I'd invite all the girls in our class—or else none at all."

"Now, that's just like you! You always are so quick. How did you know I didn't want to invite her?"

complained Stella, pouting.

"I didn't know. Whom do you mean to leave out?" Janice asked, smiling.

"There! That's what my mother says! You are always so shrewd and sly."

"Oh!" cried Janice not at all pleased, "does your mother think I am sly?"

"We-ell, she said you were shrewd," admitted Stella, changing color. "Now, don't get mad, Janice Day. I want you to help me."

"You go about it in a funny way," said Janice, rather piqued. "I am not sly enough to be of any use to you, I guess."

"Now, don't be angry!" wailed the other girl. "What I mean is, that you always see through things and can get out of difficulties."

"I didn't know I got into difficulties—not many anyway," Janice added, with a little sigh.

"Dear me, Janice! don't split hairs—please," said the very selfish and self-centered Stella. "I want your help. Do tell me how to get out of asking that girl to my party without offending her friends—for she has got friends, curiously enough."

"For goodness' sake!" gasped Janice. "What girl do you wish to snub, Stella?"

"There you go with your nasty insinuations!" exclaimed Stella, whiningly. "I don't want to snub anybody. But some people are impossible!"

"Meaning me?" Janice asked with twinkling eyes.

"Of course not. Why will you so misunderstand me? I wouldn't snub you, Janice Day. I am speaking of Amy Carringford."

"Oh! It is Amy you wish to snub, is it?" Janice said, with a change of tone.

Even Stella noted the change. She seized Janice's arm.

"Now, don't! You made me say that. I don't really want to snub her. I don't want to hurt her feelings. But, of course, I can't have those pauper children at my party—Amy and Gummy. 'Gummy!' What a frightful name! And his pants are patched at the knees. They wouldn't—either of them—have a decent thing to wear, of course."

Janice said nothing for a long minute. Stella's blue eyes, which were actually more staring than pretty, began to cloud ominously. Instinctively she sensed that Janice was not with her in this.

"Amy Carringford is a nice girl, I think," Janice Day said mildly. "And perhaps she has a party dress, Stella."

"There you go! Always standing up for anything mean or common," stormed Stella. "I might have known you wouldn't help me."

"Why did you ask me then?" Janice inquired with some rising spirit.

"Because you're always so sharp about things; and you can help me if you want to."

Stella Latham was certainly much more frankly spoken than politic. Janice Day excused her schoolmate to a degree. She usually found excuses for every one but herself.

"I was only trying to help you," Janice said slowly. "you haven't really anything against Amy, have you?"

"She's a pauper—a regular pauper."

"Why, that's not so," interrupted Janice. "A pauper must be one who is supported at the public expense. We had that word only the other day in our lesson, you know, Stella. And Amy Carringford—or her folks— aren't like that."

"Nobody knows what or who they are. They've only just come here and from goodness knows where. And they live in that little tumble-down house in Mullen Lane, and—"

"Oh, dear me, Stella!" interrupted Janice, with a sudden laugh. "That list of crimes will never send

anybody to jail. You are awfully critical. Amy has awfully pretty manners, and just wonderful hair. She sings and dances well, too. And Gummy—'Gumswith' is his full name—"

"Gumswith! Fancy!" ejaculated the farmers critical

daughter.

"Yes, isn't it awful?" returned Janice. "Anybody would be sorry for a boy with such a name. And he hasn't even a middle one they can call him by. You know it isn't his fault, Stella, that he has such a horrid name."

"No, I don't suppose it is. But—"

"And Amy is so nice. She is just about my size, Stella, and if you promise never to tell—"

"What is it? A secret?" eagerly demanded Stella, as Janice hesitated.

"Yes. Or it will be a secret if you promise."

"Cross my heart, Janice," declared Stella, who loved secrets.

"Well—now," said Janice Day, most seriously, "if you invite Amy, and she can't come because she hasn't any party dress, I'll lend her one of mine that was made for me just before my mother died. I am wearing only black and white. I've outgrown those new dresses that were made for me then, I guess. And Amy is just a weeny bit smaller than I am."

"But Janice Day! you—you're helping Amy Carringford. You're not helping me at all!"

"Why, yes I am helping you," said Janice warmly. "At least, I am trying to. If you will invite Amy with the rest of us girls, I'll see that she has a party dress. I should think that was helping you a whole lot, Stella Latham. You said you didn't want to hurt her feelings."

The car reached the schoolhouse. Janice was out of it like a flash with her schoolbooks and lunch. The bell was tolling.

"Now, isn't that just like Janice Day?" grumbled Stella, following her from the automobile. "She is a sly little thing!"

Mr. Broxton Day felt much more troubled than Janice possibly could feel about the disappearance of the treasure-box and the keepsakes it contained. Intrinsically, the value of the articles that she named was not very great, although nothing could replace the diary or the miniature of his dead wife. But as he had intimated to Janice over the telephone there was something else. There was that lost with the so-called treasure-box that meant more to him than the mementoes his daughter had known about.

During this lonely year that had passed since his wife's death, Mr. Day's experiences with domestic help had been disheartening as well as varied.

Olga Cedarstrom had been with them two months. She had come rather better recommended than some of her predecessors. Instead of obtaining her services through an agency, Mr. Day had found her in "Pickletown," as the hamlet at the pickle works was called.

There Olga, recently arrived in Greensboro, had been living with friends. Mr. Day went over there first of all to search for the girl.

But her whilom friends knew nothing about Olga since the previous evening. They did not know that she contemplated leaving Mr. Day. And she had not appeared at Pickletown after she had departed from eight hundred and forty-five Knight Street that morning.

Mr. Day did not wish to put the police on the trail of the absent Olga. In the first place there was no real evidence that the Swedish girl had stolen the box of mementoes.

If she had taken them at all, she must have done so just to pique Janice, not understanding how really valuable the contents of the box were. If possible, Mr. Day wished to recover the lost box without the publicity of going to the police, both for Olga's sake and for his own.

And then as Janice had told him, the taxicab driver had been in the house. He had gone upstairs to the storeroom for Olga's trunk—to the very room in which Janice had last seen the treasure-box.

It might be that the driver was the person guilty of taking the box. Olga might know nothing about it.

Yet her disappearance without informing her friends of her intention to leave Greensboro looked suspicious.

Mr. Day had to search further. He had two other persons to discover. One was Olga's "fella"; the other was the Swedish taxicab driver.

From people who knew Olga around the pickle factories it was easy to learn that Olga's friend was a hard working and estimable young man named Willie Sangreen. Just at this time Willie was away from home. They could tell Mr. Day nothing about Willie's absence either at his boarding-house, or where he was employed. But in both instances they were sure Willie would be back.

In hunting for the Swedish taxicab driver Mr. Day had even less good fortune. There were two taxicab companies in Greensboro and less than a dozen independent owners of cabs. Before noon he had learned, beyond peradventure, that there was not a cab driver in town of Swedish nationality.

He presumed that the cab must have come from out of town. Where it had come from, and where it had gone with Olga, and Olga's trunk, and, possibly, with the treasure-box, seemed a mystery insolvable.

If Olga or the cab driver had stolen the box of heirlooms it seemed that all trace of their whereabouts had been skillfully covered.

CHAPTER III. DELIA

In spite of her anxiety Janice fixed her mind upon her recitations with her usual success. During the past few months so many, many things had happened to trouble the home pool that the girl was pretty well used to seeing it ruffled.

"Help" came and went at the Day cottage on Knight Street in a procession of incompetents. Some incumbents of the domestic situation remained but a week. Olga Cedarstrom had been longer than any in Mr. Day's employ.

Often, when they were without a girl, Janice had spent her Saturday holiday trying to clean house and set things to rights, and when daddy had come home from the bank he had donned a kitchen apron and helped.

The house was by no means kept as it had been when Mrs. Day was alive. For she had been a trained housewife, and she knew how to make the domestic help do the work properly.

Now there was dust under the furniture and in the corners. Pots and pans were grimy. Because of the rough methods of cleaning pursued by Olga, the baseboards of the kitchen were streaked with a "high-tide" mark of soapy water.

The stove and the gas range were smeared with grease. Scarcely a cooking utensil but was sticky. The silver went unpolished. The yolk of egg ("the very stickingest thing there was" Janice declared,) could be found on the edges of plates and spoons.

And the laundry! The "wet wash," the "flat work" laundry, and the complete service laundry were all only a little worse than the attempts of the hired help to wash clothes properly.

Bed and table linen wore out twice as fast as it should, Janice knew. Nobody would wash and turn socks and stockings as they should be washed and turned. Fruit stains were never removed.

Either the girls used kerosene in boiling the clothes and the odor of it clung to them even after they were laid away in the bureau drawers, or she threw chloride of lime into the water which ate holes in the various fabrics. Mother used to make Javelle water to whiten the clothes, but Janice did not know how it was made, nor had she time to make it.

Indeed, with school-closing in the offing and lessons and examinations getting harder and harder, the girl scarcely had time to keep her own clothing neat and mended. She knew that right now daddy was wearing socks with holes in them.

So, when her mind was not fixed upon her lessons, it was not likely that even Stella Latham's birthday party occupied much of Janice's thought. She started home from school as soon as she was released, considering if she could get the back kitchen cleaned up before it was time to get supper for daddy. The lumps of soft coal Olga Cedarstrom had thrown at the cats had made an awful mess of the place, Janice very well knew.

As she turned the corner into Knight Street there was Arlo Weeks, Junior, just ahead of her. Arlo Junior, the cause of the morning's trouble! Arlo Junior, the cause of Olga's leaving the Days in the lurch! More, Arlo Junior, who was the spring of Janice Day's deeper trouble, for if it had not been for that mischievous wight, Olga Cedarstrom could not have run off with the treasure-box!

Arlo Junior had black, curly hair like his father. He had snapping brown eyes, too, and was quick and nervous in his movements. Of all the Weeks' children (Daddy said there was a "raft" of them!) Arlo Junior was the worst behaved. He was forever in trouble.

To report him to his parents was just like shooting cannon balls into a stack of feathers. His mother, tall, cadaverous, and of complaining voice and manner, only declared:

"He's too much for me. I tell Arlo that Junior ought to be locked up, or handcuffed, or something. And that's all the good it does."

To complain to Mr. Weeks of his namesake was quite as unsatisfactory.

"What? The young rascal!" Mr. Weeks would emphatically say. "Arlo did that? Well, I tell you what. If you catch him at any of his tricks, you thrash him. That's what you do—thrash him! You have my full permission to punish him as though he were your own boy. That's the only way to deal with a rascal like him."

So, you see, both parents shed responsibility, both for Arlo Junior's mischief and punishment, just as easily as a duck sheds rainwater. Under these circumstances, Arlo Junior usually went without punishment, no matter what he did.

And here he was, swaggering along the walk with some of his mates, hilariously telling them, perhaps, of how he had tolled all the cats of the neighborhood into the Days' back kitchen.

Janice Day was a very human girl indeed. The thought of Junior's trick and all it had brought about made her very, very angry. She rushed right into the group of boys, all fully as big as she was, soundly boxed Arlo Weeks' ears, and just as many times as she could do so before he outran her and left her, panting and still wrathful, on the curb.

The other boys backed away, leaving Arlo Junior to fight his own battle—or run, if that seemed to him the part of wisdom, as evidently it had.

"I hope that will teach you to bring cats into our kitchen, Arlo Junior!" Janice cried after him.

"No, 'twon't," declared the boy, rubbing the ear that had received the greater number of her blows. "I knew how to do it before, didn't I? My, Janice Day! but you can slam a fella."

"I wish I could hurt you more," declared the girl. "You've made me enough trouble."

She marched on, leaving the scattered crowd of urchins to gather again about Arlo Junior, but now in a scoffing rather than in an admiring crowd. The bubble of Arlo Junior's conceit had been punctured. He had been whipped by a girl!

"Now," thought Janice, as she went along home, "I would not want Daddy to know I did that. Fighting a boy on the street! I guess Miss Peckham, who is always peering through her blinds at what I do, if she had seen me would be sure to say I was misbehaving because I had no mother to make me mind. As though I wouldn't behave just as well for Daddy as I used to for dear mother!

"Only I haven't really behaved very well to-day," she went on, reviewing the matter to herself. "I don't care! Yes, I do too! No matter what Arlo Weeks, Junior, did, I oughtn't to have fought him on the street like that. Oh, dear!" mused the girl, "I don't know whether I am sorry I hit Arlo Junior or am sorry that I'm not sorry. It's awfully confusing."

She choked back a sob, dashed the tears from her eyes, and suddenly saw that the hazy object she had been looking at for the past minute was really a human figure squatting on the side porch steps of the Day's cottage.

"Why! who can that be?" thought Janice Day, staring with all her might at the odd-looking creature perched thus on the steps, with a bulging old-fashioned black oilcloth bag beside her.

It was a woman in a cheap, homemade calico dress, and with rows upon rows of flounces on the skirt. She sat on the next-to-the-top step of the porch while her shoes were planted flat-footed on the walk. She was very short-waisted, while her limbs, accentuated by the model of the flounced skirt seemed

enormously long.

Indeed, she looked like the halves of two people mysteriously glued together. Her nether limbs without doubt belonged to a giantess; her body although broad and sturdy, was almost dwarflike. Her arms were very short.

Above this strange figure was a fat, baby-like face, with staring, light-blue eyes and wisps of straw-colored hair laid flat to her, head under a close fitting hat.

"It's another one," groaned Janice, her heart sinking. "I know she must be from the intelligence office, because—well—she looks so unintelligent, I guess!"

Janice opened the gate and approached the ungainly woman doubtfully. Surely daddy could not have seen her before hiring this very peculiar-looking person. He must have accepted her services over the telephone, and "sight, unseen."

The newly hired girl wreathed her flabby face in a vacuous smile. She bobbed up from her seat, bringing the oilcloth bag with her, and towering over Janice Day in a most startling manner.

"How-de-do! I guess you are after bein' Mr. Day's little girl, heh?"

The voice from the giantess made Janice jump. It was high and squealing, like a bat's voice; and some people's ears are not attuned to the bat's cry and cannot hear it at all.

"Ye-es. I am Janice Day," admitted the girl.

"Well," squealed the newcomer, "I'm the lady your paw sent up to do the work. You're a right pretty little girl, ain't you?"

Janice ignored this bit of flattery as she mounted the steps and drew forth the door key.

"What is your name, please?" she asked the woman.

"Why, I'll tell you," said the other in a most confidential tone, blundering up the steps after Janice and stooping to get her lips near the girl's ear. "My real name is Mrs. Bridget Burns; but my friends all call me Delia. I don't like 'Bridget.' Would you mind callin' me Delia, or else Mrs. Burns, heh?"

"I think father would prefer to call you by your first name," Janice said, trying not to show her surprise and amusement. "We will call you Delia if that pleases you."

"You're a real nice little girl, I can see that," said Delia, with a huge sigh of satisfaction, following Janice, bag and all, into the house.

Janice led the way up the back stairs to the girl's room. It was just as Olga had left it—as untidy and "mussed up" as ever a room was.

Delia uttered a high, nasal ejaculation. "I guess your last girl wasn't very clean," she said. "Who was she?"

"She was a Swede," Janice replied wearily.

"Heh! Them Swedes!" sniffed Delia, voicing a pronounced national prejudice.

"She left in a hurry," Janice explained. "She—she got mad. One of the neighbor's boys played a trick on her and she left."

"Ye don't be tellin' me? Couldn't she spank the boy? Sure, 'tis no sinse them foreigners has."

"I hope you will not take offense so easily," Janice rejoined. "Here is clean linen for your bed. We send the flat work to the laundry. There is a broom and carpet sweeper in the storeroom, and plenty of dust cloths. You would better put your own room in order first. Then you can come down and I will show you about getting dinner."

"Sure, you is very young to be so knowin' about housework. Is your mother dead?"

"Yes."

"I didn't know but she'd gone off and left you and your

paw," observed this strange creature, "So many of them be's doin' that now."

"Oh!" gasped the girl.

"So that's why your paw did the hirin' through Murphy's Agency! Well, I like to work where there's no lady boss," said Delia. "You and me is goin' to get on fine."

Janice wondered if that were so. In no very enthusiastic frame of mind, she descended the stairs to put away her hat and coat and to place her books on the table in the living room.

CHAPTER IV. MORE TROUBLES THAN ONE

Janice dreaded to have this new houseworker look into that back kitchen and see its condition. What Olga had done with the soft coal ammunition was enough to make Delia depart before she had even taken up her new duties.

Yet Janice shrank from cleaning the room herself. She had a lot of home work to do for school, and she would have to show the new girl, too, just where everything was kept and what was expected of her.

Fortunately the dinner-getting would be a simple matter. There was a roast already prepared for the oven, potatoes and another vegetable, and a salad. The latter were in the house. Olga had been no dessert maker, but there were canned pears in the refrigerator and some baker's cake (Daddy called it "sweetened sawdust") in the cupboard.

The girl would have to be told about these things. Fortunately they had not begun to use the summer kitchen as yet. It was true that Olga had only the day before cleaned the place, as well as she knew how, in preparation for the approaching warm weather.

But to put things to rights in that room again, and to remove all traces of the bombardment of the cats, would take half a day or more. And Janice Day shrank from the use of the scrubbing brush and strong soda-water.

She decided that the back kitchen could not be cleaned this afternoon. She put on her bungalow apron and took the salad from the icebox where it had lain on the ice in a cheesecloth bag. She usually prepared the salad herself, for daddy was fond of it and most of the itinerant help they had had considered "grass only fit for horses and cows."

She was decanting the oil, drop by drop, into the salad dressing when Delia appeared in the kitchen. There was one good point about the giantess; her face and hands looked as though they were familiar with soap and water. She had removed the ruffled monstrosity and had put on a more simple frock. It did not serve to make her look less ungainly; but nevertheless it, likewise, was clean.

"Are you doing the cooking?" asked the new incumbent, her weak, squeaky voice quite above high C. "An' do I help you?"

"I am fixing the salad because my father likes it prepared in a certain way. I will show you what, else there is to do, Delia."

Janice spoke in rather a grown-up way because she had had so much experience with a class of houseworkers only too willing to take advantage of her youth and inexperience.

"Isn't that nice!" sighed Delia, with her rather, foolish smile.

Janice wondered whether the woman was making fun of her, or if she was quite as silly as she appeared. But if Delia would only do the work and do it half-way right, Janice told herself she did not care if Delia was actually an idiot. At least the new girl seemed good-natured.

And she was not all thumbs! But Janice stuffed the end of a kitchen towel into her mouth more than once to stifle her giggles when she chanced to think Of how daddy would look when he caught his first glimpse of the gigantic Delia.

When the vegetables were peeled and on the stove, and the roast was cooking in the covered roaster, Janice led Delia through the lower part of the house. She tried to explain what there was to do on the morrow when Delia would be alone all day, with daddy at business and herself at school.

"Yes, ma'am," said Delia, after each item was explained. "And then what do I do?"

Her vacant face advertised to all beholders that she promptly forgot what she was told. One

particular formula for work drove the previously explained item immediately out of Delia's head.

"Isn't it a nice house?" was her final whistling comment as they came back to the kitchen. "And where does this door lead?"

She opened the back kitchen door. She stared at the coal-littered floor, at the streaked and smutted walls, at the overturned chairs and a broken flower-pot or two that had come to ruin during the bombardment.

"Sure! whatever struck the place?" asked Delia in her high, squeaking voice. "What happened?"

Janice told her. Delia shook her head and slowly closed the door—slowly but firmly. "If folks will hire them Swedes, 'tis all they can expect," was her comment.

There was a finality to this that was uncanny. Janice became sure, right then and there, that Mrs. Bridget Burns would never clear up the wreck Olga Cedarstrom had made of the back kitchen. The girl wished with all her heart that she had boxed Arlo Junior's ears harder.

Miss Peckham, her sharp chin hung upon the top rail of the boundary fence, called Janice just before daddy came home. As the Day house was on the corner of Love Street, Miss Peckham was the nearest neighbor.

She was a weazened little woman, with very sharp black eyes, who had assumed the censorship of the neighborhood years before. Living alone with her cats and Ambrose, her parrot, Miss Peckham rigidly adhered to the harshest precepts of spinsterhood.

Even Janice could understand that Miss Peckham considered daddy not at all fit to bring up, or have the sole care of, a daughter, and that Mr. Broxton Day was not to be altogether trusted.

Miss Peckham's nature overflowed with tenderness toward animals, and it was regarding one of her pets she now called to Janice about.

"You haven't seen him, have you, Janice? You haven't seen my Sam?"

"Your Sam?" murmured Janice, rather non-plussed for the moment. "You don't mean the dog you bought of the butcher, do you, Miss Peckham?"

"No, indeed. That's Cicero. But Sam, the cat. He's got black and yellow on him, Janice. You've seen him, I know."

And suddenly Janice remembered that she had seen him. He had been one of those cats tolled into the back kitchen by Arlo Junior. Worse than all, Sam was the cat Olga Cedarstrom had hurt with a lump of coal. She remembered that he was the last to escape when she opened the kitchen door, dragging his injured leg behind him.

How could Janice tell her of this awful thing that had happened to Sam? The poor cat had probably dragged himself off into some secret place to lick his wounds—to die, perhaps.

"You've seen him! I know you have, Janice Day," cried the shrewd maiden lady. "What have you done to poor Sam?"

"Why, Miss Peckham! I haven't done a thing to him," declared Janice

Miss Peckham, however, had read the girl's face aright. She saw that Janice knew something about the missing cat.

"You tell me what you know!" she stormed, her clawlike hands shaking the top rail of the fence. "I wouldn't trust none of you young ones in this neighborhood. You are always up to some capers."

"But really, honestly, I haven't done a thing to your Sam," Janice said, shrinking from telling all she knew about the injured animal.

"You know where he is?" Miss Peckham accused.

"Oh, I don't, either."

"When did you see him last?" probed the other, sharply.

"This—this morning."

"What time this morning?" "Before breakfast. Early," gasped Janice, wondering what she would say next.

"Humph! Something funny about the way you answer," said the suspicious spinster. "where was Sam when you saw him that early?"

"Running across our back yard," Janice gasped, telling the exact truth—but no more.

"Ha!" exploded the other, "What made him run?"

After all, Janice Day did not want to "tell on" Arlo Junior. Arlo Junior was the child of all others in the neighborhood whom Miss Peckham carried on guerrilla warfare with. She had threatened to go to the police station and have Arlo Junior locked up the very next time he crossed her path in a mischievous way.

Janice knew that Miss Peckham was a very active member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and if she knew that Arlo Junior had been in any way connected with Sam's injury, she would be all the more bitter toward the young rascal.

And really, after all, it was Olga Cedarstrom who had hurt the cat. But to tell Miss Peckham that, and how it all came about, would do little to pacify the spinster. So Janice kept silent. It seemed to her that she had gone about as far in the path of deceit as she could go.

"You saw him running; what made him run?" repeated Miss Peckham.

"He—he was frightened, I guess, Miss Peckham. There were other cats. It was early this morning before anybody else was up around here. The cats all ran out of our yard."

"And I warrant you'd done something to make 'em run," declared the tart-tongued neighbor. "Oh, I know all you young ones around here. You ain't no better than the rest of 'em, Janice Day."

"Oh, Miss Peckham!" murmured the girl.

"And if I find out that you done something outrageous to those cats—to my Sam, 'specially—it'll be the sorriest day of your life. Now, you see if 't isn't!"

She turned and flounced into her house. Janice came slowly back to the kitchen door where she found the new houseworker frankly listening.

"Guess she's a sharper, ain't she?" squeaked the woman. "Well, I won't tell her 'bout the cats in the back kitchen. But o' course, if folks will hire them Swede—"

CHAPTER V. FATHER AND DAUGHTER

It did seem to Janice Day at this time as though trouble after trouble was being heaped upon her young shoulders. Miss Peckham and her search for her Sam was, of course, a small matter compared to the loss of the treasure-box and the heirlooms in it.

Janice waited eagerly for daddy to come home and report on this matter; and his report, when he did come, sunk Janice's heart fathoms deep in an ocean of despair.

"Oh, Daddy, it can't be!" she cried, sobbing against his coat sleeve in the hall. "Olga wouldn't be so wicked! How could she?"

"It is pretty sure that she has left town and has left no address behind her. It looks as though she had deliberately tried to efface herself from the community," said Mr. Broxton Day slowly. "Are you sure, Janice, that the box cannot be found?"

"Oh, Daddy! I've looked everywhere. Dear Mamma's picture that I loved so much! And her, diary I"

"More than that, daughter, more than that," said her father, his own voice breaking. "I should have been more careful about allowing you to take the box. There was something else—"

"Oh, Daddy! what? I didn't know there was a secret compartment in the treasure-box," she added wonderingly.

"You would scarcely understand, my dear," he told her with a heavy sigh. "It was but a shallow place.

There were letters in it—letters which I treasured above everything else in the box. Letters your Mamma wrote me before you were born, when I was away from home and she thought she might never see me again. We were young, then, my dear; and we loved each other very much."

His voice trailed away into silence. The girl, young as she was, was awed by his grief. She suddenly realized that her own sorrow over the lost treasure-box was shallow indeed beside her father's despair.

It was some time later that she told him just how well she had searched for the missing box. She narrated, too, all the particulars of the early morning cat episode and the trouble brought about by the mischief-loving Arlo Junior, which she had been unable to tell him earlier in the day.

"It would seem, then," Mr. Day observed, not unamused by the account of the neighbors' boy's practical joke, "that if Olga took the box it was on the spur of the moment. She certainly had not planned to leave us, but lost her temper and went because she was in a rage."

"Yes, sir. I suppose so," admitted Janice. "And she was mad at me, too. I could see she thought I had shut the cats in the back kitchen."

"Yet Olga's going," said Mr. Broxton Day, still thoughtfully, "was skillfully planned—just as though she had everything arranged for it before the row this morning. Don't just understand that."

"Oh, Daddy! You don't suppose Olga was one of those awful crooks we read of in the papers?"

Mr. Broxton threw back his head and laughed in his very heartiest fashion.

"Whatever else she was," he said, finally, "I don't think she was a lady buccaneer. Olga Cedarstrom appeared to be almost as stupid a person as I ever saw. But she was bad tempered—no doubt of that."

"Yes, Daddy, her disposition was not very sweet,"

admitted Janice, with a sigh.

"But it looks queer," her father pursued. "Sending for an out-of-town taxi, and all I say, daughter which way did it drive?"

"The taxicab?"

"Yes."

"Toward town, Daddy. Right along Knight Street."

"Humph! might have gone right through town and taken the Napsburg pike. Yet, they could have turned off at Joyce Street and got into the Dover pike. Or gone to Clewitt, or Preston. Oh, well," finished Broxton Day, "that cab could have come from, and returned to, any one of a dozen places within a few miles of Greensboro."

"But how do you know she was not driven right to the railroad station, as long as you are sure she did not go to Pickletown?"

"I found out," said Mr. Day, quietly, "that there isn't a Swede in town who drives a taxi. And you say the driver was a Swede, and that it was a regular taxicab."

"Oh, yes, Daddy. He was one of her own kind of folks. I heard them talking together when he went up for her trunk. I wish I had taken the number of that cab!" cried Janice woefully.

"Never mind. Don't blame yourself too harshly, girly."

"But I do blame myself, Daddy," she cried, wiping her eyes. "Those dear pictures and the diary! And most of all mother's miniature! Why, Daddy Day! I'd give a million dollars rather than have lost the treasure-box."

"No use crying over the spilled milk," he said, reflectively. "It does seem to me as though Olga was not just the sort of person who would steal—I say! You told me she telephoned for the taxi?"

"Yes. At least, she telephoned and talked to somebody over the 'phone in Swedish."

"You don't say!" repeated Mr. Day thoughtfully using a Yankeeism that betrayed his birthplace if nothing else did, although he had long since come from New England to the Middle West. "Then in all probability she telephoned to a friend, and the friend sent the taxicab. I wonder if that Willie Sangreen is in this?"

"I tell you!" he exclaimed finally. "In the morning I will go and see the superintendent of our telephone exchange personally. Perhaps, when I explain the case, he will tell me the number Olga called up."

"Oh, Daddy! can you do that?"

"There is a record made of every call," he told her. "Now don't worry more than you can help, Janice. We'll do something about it. Never fear."

His encouraging "do something" was bound to cheer his little daughter. She hurried away to see if dinner was not ready, and caught Delia frankly listening at the door.

"Why, Delia, why didn't you knock or speak?" Janice asked.

But Delia was absolutely unruffled. She drawled:

"I didn't know but you wanted to talk to your Paw some more, and the dinner could wait."

When, a little later, they were seated at table and Delia appeared with the first hot dishes, it must be confessed that her appearance somewhat startled Mr. Broxton Day.

Their anxiety about the lost treasure-box had precluded his having asked any questions regarding the new houseworker; her appearance was as startling as though she had come straight from a sideshow.

Janice put her napkin to her lips to hide their trembling. But her eyes danced. Daddy's amazement was quickly smothered. He was silent, however, until Delia was out of the room again.

"What do you think of her, Daddy?" giggled the little girl.

"I certainly did not see her before hiring her. In fact, I did my business over the phone with the manager of the intelligence office. I gathered from him that

she was a woman of middle age, and "settled," whatever that may mean. If it means that she can work and stay settled here— But what a queer looking creature! How does she seem to take hold, Janice? Does she seem intelligent?"

"I haven't made up my mind yet," murmured his little daughter. "She doesn't look as though she knew anything at all. But maybe she does. You said yourself that we couldn't have anybody worse than Olga."

"I don't know about that," he retorted. "I may have to take that back. Sh! Here she comes again."

Aside from the fact that she served cold plates for the roast and vegetables, and hot ones for the salad; that from her great height she was almost certain to spill food on the table before she got a dish set down before them; and that she kept bouncing in and out of the dining room to ask them if they were ready for dessert; she managed to get through the meal without making Mr. Day and Janice any great discomfort.

In the living room, later, when Mr. Day was in his comfortable chair and Janice had her school books spread out upon the table under the reading lamp, the father said softly:

"Well, my dear, it is not the sort of life I hoped we would lead when we built this house. Your dear mother was such a wonderful housekeeper, and could manage so well. I never had a thought or a care about the housekeeping affairs. But now—"

"I know, Daddy," broke in Janice earnestly. "If only I didn't have to go to school!"

"That is something that cannot even be discussed," he rejoined, smiling at her gravely. "As I told you last night, my dear, what your mother and I planned regarding your education must be carried through if possible."

"But college is a long way ahead," said Janice wistfully. "And meanwhile you are not comfortable and the house is going to rack and ruin, just as Miss Peckham says."

"Did the old girl say that?" he wanted to know, with rather a rueful smile on his lips.

"Yes. She was in here the other day and she is so nosey. She was bound to go all through house, although I did not want her to. I know it doesn't look spick and span as it should—"

"That is not your fault, Janice," her father said quickly. "Don't let it worry you. You must stick to your books. And if we can get nobody better than this woman—or Olga—to help, we must expect things to be in rather bad shape about the house."

"I suppose there are good housekeepers for hire—somewhere. They certainly do not seem to be in Greensboro. And, then, I cannot afford to pay a very high wage. You see, my dear, we are not rich."

"No, Daddy," Janice agreed. "I quite know that. But we have enough, and to spare, I am sure."

"So far we have managed to pull along," he said smiling at her quizzically. "And perhaps we shall be even better off in time. I am up to my neck, as the boys say, in an investment in Mexican mines. I was able to get into it before your dear mother died, and she quite approved. Several Greensboro men have invested in the same string of mines and there is ore being got out—ore of good quality.

"But thus far there have been no dividends. Rather, we have had to put in more money for improvements. But when once we get started producing, you and I may have something like riches."

"Oh, won't that be nice, Daddy!" she exclaimed, wide-eyed and red-cheeked in her excitement. "To be really rich!"

"Well, we shall be able to engage somebody better fitted perhaps for the position of housekeeper," sighed Mr. Day, turning to his newspaper again.

"That's all right, Daddy," she said. "But meanwhile I am going to do all I can to make things go smoother. Just as you said last night, it can only be brought about by somebody's doing something. I'll do something, you see if I don't."

She made this declaration cheerfully. But when she closed her books, kissed daddy, and went up to bed, her countenance was overcast with an expression far from cheerful.

Only the evening before she had sat here and looked her treasures over. The diary which mother had kept when she was a little girl—all the innocent little secrets she had written on the pages which Janice so delighted to read!

And the lovely miniature, with mother in the very dress she wore the evening she and Broxton Day were betrothed. Janice knew all about that. Her mother had talked freely of her courtship and of what a splendid young man daddy had appeared to be in her eyes.

Her mother's frequently expressed admiration for the young man who came from New England to win his fortune in the Middle West was doubtless the foundation of Janice Day's unusual fondness for her father.

That by her carelessness she should have brought about the loss of the treasure-box and those things which both she and daddy considered of such personal value, was the thought that weighed most heavily on the girl's heart.

Without turning on her light, she went to the window and looked out into the soft spring darkness! Daddy's letters! Mother's miniature! The treasured old diary that Janice so loved!

Her troubled little heart overflowed. She flung herself down with her face hidden in her arms folded upon the window sill, while ungovernable sobs shook her body.

The loss of the treasure-box was a disaster for, which she could not easily forgive herself.

CHAPTER VI. THE CARRINGFORDS

Janice Day was a friendly little soul; but she was not a girl who made those close friendships that so many girls make during their schooldays. There was no one girl from whom she was almost inseparable.

Janice was just as good friends with Amy Carringford as she was with Stella Latham; only Amy had been attending the grammar school a much shorter time than had the farmer's daughter.

Now circumstances attending Stella's proposed birthday party caused Janice to become much better acquainted with Amy Carringford. In seeking to do something for Stella, Janice was determined to do something for Amy.

The Carringford family had taken up their residence during the winter in Mullen Lane; and it must be confessed that Mullen Lane was not considered an aristocratic part of the town. Of course, poor people have to live where living is cheap; but it was said that Mrs. Carringford, who was a widow, had bought the little cottage—not much better than a hut—in which she and her little family had taken up their dwelling.

Why people like the Carrington, manifestly well bred and intelligent, had chosen Mullen Lane to live in puzzled not only the busybodies, like Miss Peckham, of this part of Greensboro, but amazed other people as well.

Wherever Mrs. Carrington appeared—at church, Or in the neighborhood stores on Knight and Cassandra Streets—people saw that she was a well bred woman, though plainly, even shabbily, dressed.

There were several children besides Amy and the Unfortunately-named Gumswith, and they dressed poorly, too. But even if Gummy's trousers were patched at the knees, as Stella Latham had pointed out, they were patched neatly, and his linen was fresh.

Of course, nobody called on Mrs. Carrington; at least, almost nobody. The rickety little cottage in Mullen Lane did not attract callers by its outward appearance, that was sure. That it was a shelter for a family that had been sorely tried by fate, none of the neighbors knew.

It was Janice Day, when she made a frank attempt to know Amy Carrington better, who began first to learn particulars about the Carrington family. There was not much queer or mysterious about them; merely they were people who failed to advertise their private affairs to the community at large.

Janice had gained Stella Latham's promise that she would not tell the secret of the party dress, if Amy should consent to borrow it, before she sounded Amy as to whether she was going to accept the invitation to

the party or not. According to Stella, who was really very silly about such things, the birthday party was to be a very "dressy" affair. Stella talked about this phase of it in season and out.

First of all, Janice demanded that one of the highly ornate invitations Stella's mother had had printed in the Greensboro Bugle printing office should be sent to Amy. There should be no hedging, Janice determined, after that. Amy was to be asked like the other girls and boys of their grade.

"But if she hasn't got a decent dress?" murmured Stella, when she was mailing the invitation to Amy.

"I told you I'd see that she did have a party dress," Janice said sharply. "I can't agree to find whole trousers for Gummy," and she giggled; "so you needn't invite him if you don't want to. But Amy will be all right."

"Maybe she will be too proud to wear your dress, Janice Day!" exclaimed Stella.

"Then she won't come," rejoined Janice. "But you are not to tell a soul that the dress is mine, if she does wear it."

"We-ell," sighed Stella, somewhat relieved.

The farmer's daughter knew that there would be much comment if she left Amy off the invitation list. She was glad to leave the matter in Janice Day's hands. And she did not remark again, at least, not openly, upon Janice being "so sly."

Without being at all sly, Janice did go about doing something for Amy Carrington with considerable shrewdness. She had never walked home with Amy from school. She did not like the purlieu of Mullen Lane. But this afternoon she attached herself to Amy with all the power of adherence of a mollusk, and they were chattering too fast to stop abruptly when they came to the corner of Knight Street, where usually Janice turned off.

Mullen Lane touched Love Street at its upper end, so Janice could go all the way to the Carrington house without going much out of her way. She went on with Amy, swinging her books; and at first Amy did not seem to notice that Janice was keeping with her right into the muddy, littered lane on which she lived.

"Why, Janice!" said Amy, finally, "you are away out of your way."

"Oh, I can go up the lane to Love Street," returned Janice carelessly, and just as though she were used to doing that.

Amy, who was a pretty, blonde girl, gazed at her companion rather curiously; but Janice was quite calm.

"That is the house where I live," said Amy, in a changed tone, as they came in sight of the cottage.

"Oh, yes," replied Janice.

Aside from the fact that the house needed paint and new window shutters, and a new roof, and new planks for the piazza, and numerous other things, it was not such a bad looking house. Janice noticed something at first glance: it was only things that poor people could not get or that a boy could not tinker that was needed about the Carrington house to make it neat and comfortable.

The fences were on the line, had been braced, and there were no pickets missing. The gates hung true. The walks were neatly kept and there were brilliant flower beds in front, for flower seeds cost little. What the Carrington could do to make the place homelike without spending money, had certainly been done.

"It's an awful place to live," ventured Amy, still gazing sidewise at Janice.

"Oh," said the latter brightly, "you don't mean that! You are all together and are all well."

"Yes, there are a lot of us." And Amy said it with a sigh. "It seems as though there were an awful lot of children, now that father's dead."

"Did you lose your father recently—just as I did my mother?" asked Janice softly.

"Year and a half ago. That is why we came here, There was some insurance money. Somebody persuaded mother to buy a home for us with it. I don't know whether it was good advice or not; but she bought this place because it was cheap. And she could not pay for it all, at that; so I don't know but we're likely to lose the money she put into it, and the old shack, too."

Amy spoke rather bitterly. Janice, with natural tact, thought this was no time to probe deeper into the financial affairs of the Carringtons. She saw Gummy, who was a year older than Amy, in the yard. He had got home from school first, and he stared when he saw Janice.

"Hullo, Gummy!" the latter called to the boy with the patched trousers. "What are you doing there? Are you laying sod for a border to that garden-bed?"

"No. I'm trimming an opera cloak with green ermine," said the boy, but grinning. "What are you doing around here in Dirty-face Lane?"

"Oh, Gummy!" exclaimed Amy.

"What a name to call the street!" objected Janice.

"Well, that's what it is," returned the boy, continuing to pound the sod into place. "Nobody in this street ever washes his face."

"Why Gummy Carrington!" exclaimed his sister again.

"I'm sure Amy washes her face whether you do or not," chuckled Janice.

"Oh, me!" sniffed the boy, but his eyes still twinkling. "I'm always 'gummy'!"

Janice's laughter was a silver peal that brought three or four younger Carringtons, including the twins, to the side door. They peered out at their sister and the girl with her, but were bashful.

"What a jolly lot of little ones!" sighed Janice. "You know, Amy, I'm all alone. I haven't any brothers or sisters."

"Don't you want to adopt me?" asked Gummy, who overheard her.

"I certainly would have to change your name," declared Janice.

"No," and he shook his head, his freckled face becoming grave. "Got to stick to the old name—just like gum sticks."

"Oh, my dear, is that you?" cried Mrs. Carrington, coming to the door, her brown face flushing pink. "And one of your schoolmates?"

She came out on the porch. She had a very pleasant smile, Janice thought, and her brown eyes were as bright as a woodpecker's.

"This is Janice Day. She's in my class, Mother," said Amy, rather hesitatingly, it must be confessed.

"Yes, I know her name," said Mrs. Carrington, and now Janice was near enough to take the hand of Amy's mother. "How do you do, my dear? I have seen you before. I am always glad to meet Amy's

school friends."

Had it not been for the warmth of the good woman's greeting Janice would have felt that she was unwelcome at the little cottage on Mullen Lane. Amy seemed to hang back, and not invite her schoolmate into the house.

"Here is something the postman brought you, Amy," her mother went on briskly.

She reached inside the door to a shelf and brought forth an object that Janice recognized. It was the big white envelope containing the invitation to Stella Latham's party.

"Hi! I know what that is," cried Gummy, rising to look at the envelope. "Lots of the fellows got 'em. That Latham girl that lives out on the Dover pike is going to have a party. Crickey! I didn't suppose she would invite us."

"She hasn't invited you I guess," his mother told him. "It is addressed to your sister."

"Oh! I see."

Amy had flushed brightly, and her eyes sparkled. She was tearing open the envelope eagerly.

"Oh!" she sighed, "I didn't expect this. Did you get yours, Janice?"

"Yes, Stella asked me. But she didn't send out: all the invitations at once," said Janice slowly,

"You'll go of course, won't you?"

"Why—"

Then suddenly Amy's voice stopped. She looked at her mother. The glow went out of her face. She let one of the smaller children take the invitation out of her hand.

"I don't know," she said slowly. "I'll have to see."

"Won't you come in, Janice?" asked Mrs. Carringford, seeking to cover her daughter's embarrassment.

"I will for a minute, thank you," was Janice Day's smiling reply. "You know, I like Amy, Mrs. Carringford, and I have never been to her house before, and she has never been to mine."

Her speech helped to cover her friend's hesitation. Amy tripped in behind Janice and suddenly gave her a hearty squeeze.

"She's an awfully nice girl, Mumsy!" she said to her mother.

Janice laughed. But her bright eyes were taking in much besides the smiling expression on her friends' faces. The Carringford kitchen was like wax. Mrs. Carringford had been washing in one corner of the room, and there was a boiler drying behind the stove. But there was nothing sloppy or sudsy about the room. The woman had whisked off the big apron she had worn when Janice entered, and now the latter saw that her work dress was spotless.

"Oh, dear me!" thought Janice, "how nice it would be if our kitchen—and our whole house—were like this. How delighted Daddy would be."

But there was something else she did not at first see. She had to get acquainted with all the younger Carringfords. She must talk with Mrs. Carringford. Gummy came in after washing his hands and rubbing his shoes clean on the doormat to talk to the caller. Then Amy carried Janice off upstairs to her own tiny room under the eaves.

There was no carpet on the stairs. The matting on the floor of Amy's room was much worn. There was nothing really pretty in the room. Janice suddenly realized that this spelled "poverty."

Yet it was cheerful and speckless, and there were pictures of a kind, and little home-made ornaments and a few books.

The window curtains were of the cheapest, but they were looped back gracefully. There was a workbox and stand that Gummy had made for Amy, for the brother was handy with tools.

Altogether there was something about the room, and about the ugly little house as well, that Janice Day realized she did not have at home. She had had it once; but it was not present now in the Day

house. In the Carrington dwelling the magic wand of a true homemaker had touched it all.

The two girls chatted for almost an hour. It was mostly about school matters and their friends and the teachers. Amy talked, too, about friends in Napsburg, where the Carringtons had lived before moving to Greensboro. Janice was adroit in keeping the conversation on rather general topics, and did not allow the question of Stella's party to come to the fore and never once did she speak of what any of the girls would wear on that occasion.

The time to leave came, and then Janice felt she should enter the wedge which would afterwards gain for her the desired end.

"You'll go to Stella's party, won't you?" asked Janice as she prepared to go home.

"Oh, I don't know. I'll see," Amy hurriedly said.

"Of course you will go," Janice declared firmly. "I want you to go with me. I sha'n't feel like going at all if you stay away, Amy."

They kissed each other on the stairway, and then Janice ran home, swinging her books. She thought the Carringtons were very pleasant people. But there were several mysteries about them. First of all she wanted to know how Gummy came to have such an awful, awful name!

CHAPTER VII. ARLO JUNIOR AGAIN

Just as Janice was running in at the Love Street gate she was halted by Arlo Junior. Junior kept well out of the way at first, but his tone was confident well as ameliorating.

"Aw, I say, Janice?" he begged, "you ain't mad at me, are you?"

"Why shouldn't I be?" she demanded, her face flushing and the hazel eyes sparking in an indignant way.

"Well, I mean— Well, I hope you ain't," stammered Arlo Junior, unable entirely to smother a grin, and yet plainly anxious to pacify Janice. "You see, Janice, my mother was coming up from downtown and she saw you whacking me the other day."

"Oh!"

"Yes, she saw you," said Junior, nodding. "So I had to tell her something of what made you do it."

"Indeed?" demanded Janice scornfully. "And what did you tell her?"

"I told her about the cats. Anyway, I told her I left your back kitchen door open and that the cats got in there and fought. Oh, Je-mi-ma, how they did fight! didn't they? I heard 'em after I got back into the house that morning," and Junior began to giggle.

"They didn't fight," said Janice shortly. "What you heard was Olga pitching coal at 'em. And then she up and left us. We had to get another girl. And this new girl won't clean up the mess in the back kitchen. That's what you did Arlo Weeks and I've got to clean up that room because of you."

"Oh, Je-mi-ma!" gasped Junior, giggling no more now. "Is that how Miss Peckham's Sam-cat got hurt?"

"What do you know about that?" demanded Janice quickly.

"Miss Peckham's been all over the neighborhood talking about it. She found the cat with a broken leg. Got a veterinary. Put it in a plaster cast. Did you ever?"

"Well!" murmured Janice.

"I tell you what; don't let's say anything about it," begged Junior eagerly. "I tell you what I'll do. I'll come over Saturday and help you clean up all the mess the cats and the girl made. But don't say a word."

"Well," said Janice again.

"Now you promise, Janice," wheedled Junior. "If my mother learns all about the cat business, there will be a big row. And all I did—really—was to open that back kitchen door and then shut it again after

the cats got inside."

"They would never have gone in if you hadn't thrown the catnip in there," declared Janice warmly. "You know that very well, Junior."

"Well, you won't say anything about it, will you, Janice, if I come and clean up the kitchen?"

"Well," said Janice for a third time, "let's see you do it. I won't promise until the kitchen is cleaned."

But Arlo Junior went off with a grin on his face. He knew Janice would not tell if he kept his share of the agreement.

Janice was anxious to know how Delia, the new girl, was getting on with the housework. There was a strong smell of scorching vegetables the moment Janice opened the back door. The kitchen was empty, but the pots on the stove foretold the fact that dinner was in preparation at least two hours before it was necessary.

And the vegetables! Janice ran to save them. There was a roaring fire under them; but it was the water that had boiled over, after all. Delia knew nothing, it was evident, about simmering vegetables. Boiling them furiously was her way.

"Oh, dear," sighed the girl, "I wonder if anything else can happen to the Days! There must be something the matter with me or someone would sometime do something right in this house. Daddy's dinner will not be fit to eat.

"That book on dietary that I got out of the library and tried to read said that good cooking was most important. I don't know, for I guess I didn't understand much of the book—not even of that part I read—but I do know that a well-cooked meal tastes better than a dried-out one. Oh, dear!"

Janice shoved the pots back on the stove, and shut off the drafts so that the fire would die down. She wondered where Delia could be. She had not seen her outside the house. She ran up the back stairs and looked in the girl's room before she went to her own.

Delia was not upstairs. Janice could not see that much had been done in the way of housework—at least on the upper floor. Then, suddenly, she discovered where the new girl was.

From the living room came the loud drumming of the player piano. The instrument had not been much in use since the death of Janice's mother. Somehow it seemed to both Janice and daddy that they did not care to hear the piano that mother played so frequently for them in the evening.

But the instrument was in use now—no mistaking it. There are different ways of playing a mechanical piano. Delia's way was to get all the noise out of it that was possible.

Janice ran downstairs in some vexation. There was no particular crime in the new girl's using the instrument, even without asking permission. Yet when there was so much to do about the house and, as she saw plainly, there had been so little done, Janice was vexed enough to give Delia a good talking to.

And then she hesitated with her hand on the knob of the living-room door. If she got Delia angry the woman might leave as abruptly as Olga Cedarstrom had left. It was a thought suggesting tragedy. Janice waited to calm herself while the new girl pumped away on the piano in a perfect anvil chorus.

Janice opened the door. By the number of rolls spread out on the top of the piano it was plain that Delia had played more music than she had done housework. The Garibaldi March came to a noisy conclusion."

"Oh, my!" sighed Delia, in her squeaky voice, "ain't that wonderful?"

"I should say it was," Janice said quickly. "Wonderful, indeed!"

"Oh!" shrieked Delia, flopping around on the bench and glaring at Janice, one hand clutching at her bosom. "You scare't me."

"I think you ought to be scared. Your vegetables were boiling over, Delia."

"Oh, you came in so sudden!" gasped the big woman. "I—I've got a weak heart. You oughtn't to scare me so. I can see mebbe that Swede girl had a hard time here. There is more than cats is the matter. And that woman next door has been around to find out how her cat's leg come broke."

If a fluffy little kitten, chasing a ball of yarn, had suddenly turned around and attacked Janice, tooth

and nail, the girl would have been no more surprised.

"Why, Delia, I am sorry if I frightened you," Janice said. "But, you know, this is not your part of the house; and having put on the vegetables, even if it is too early, I should think you would remain in the kitchen and watch the pots."

The giantess arose and wiped an eye. She sniveled into the corner of her apron.

"Well, I didn't expect to be bossed by a child," she squeaked, "when I came to work here. I don't like it."

She flounced out of the room, leaving the piano open and the rolls strewn about.

"Oh, dear me! Now I have done it!" groaned Janice Day. "What will Daddy say if I have got Delia mad, and she goes? It is just awful!"

It really did seem to be a tragic situation. Janice shook her head and looked around the room. Everything was just as it had been the night before when they went to bed, save the opened music cabinet and littered piano.

There were daddy's cigar ashes in the tray; a cup with tea grounds in it as he had left it by his elbow. The smoking stand was not tidied nor the table. There was dust on everything, and a litter of torn papers on the rug.

Why had Delia not cleaned up the room, if she had so much time to play the piano?

"I suppose if I ask her why she did not sweep and dust in here she will tell me that she forgot whether I said to use the blue dustcloth or the pink," groaned Janice.

One girl they had had actually gave that excuse as

logical when the work was neglected. There was nothing laughable in this situation—nothing at all!

"Oh, if I could only do something myself," murmured the young girl.

After what had occurred she thought it best to say nothing more to Delia at the time. She hated to bother daddy again; but she wondered what he would do if he had to confront such circumstances at the bank.

"Of course, men's work is awfully important," Janice sighed; "but what would daddy do if confronted by these little annoying things that seem to be connected with the housework?"

There were a dozen things Janice would have preferred to do right now. But she could not have daddy come home and see such a looking living-room. She put on apron and cap and went to work immediately to do what Delia should have done earlier in the day.

In an hour or so the room was swept, dusted, and well aired. She had returned the music rolls to the cabinet and closed the piano. She wished there was a key to it so that Delia could not get at it again, for if the new girl was musically inclined Janice foresaw little housework done while she was at school and daddy was at work.

Then Janice ventured into the kitchen. Delia was not there. The vegetables were already cooked and were in the warmer where they would gradually become dried out. Janice had done the marketing on her way to school that morning, and had sent home a steak. The steak was already cooked and was on a platter, likewise in the warming oven. And it was yet an hour to dinner time.

Janice opened the door to the stairway. There was no sound from that part of the house. She went to the back door then, and there was Delia talking earnestly with Miss Peckham over the boundary fence.

The fact smote Janice like a physical blow. She remembered what Arlo Junior had said about the cat. Miss Peckham had found the poor creature and had sent for the veterinary doctor to treat him.

What Janice had already admitted regarding the cat, and what Delia might tell Miss Peckham, would breed trouble just as sure as the world! What should she do?

She might have been unwise enough to have run out and interfered in the back-fence conference. But just then she heard daddy's key in the front door and she ran to meet him.

"Oh, Daddy! Did you find out anything more about Olga and where she went?" the young girl cried as soon as she saw Broxton Day.

"I guess I have found nothing of importance," said her father, shaking his head gravely.

"Oh, my dear! Nothing?"

"Nothing that explains where the treasure-box went to, Janice," he said. "Nor much that explains any other part of the mystery."

"But the telephone number? Who did she call up?"

"Yes, I found out about that," he admitted, hanging up his coat and hat. "She called the public booths in the railroad station. There was somebody waiting there to answer her. And who do you suppose it was?"

"I couldn't guess, Daddy."

"Willie Sangreen. He is the young man who is checker at the pickle works, and who I told you was Olga's steady company. He has gone away, and nobody seems to know where."

"They have gone away together!" cried Janice, in despair.

"She knew where he was going to be at that hour, sure enough; she would probably have called him at the telephone in the railroad station, anyway. And the catastrophe," he smiled a little, "and Olga's getting so angry, may have changed their plans completely. Maybe he did meet her somewhere."

"Oh, Daddy! what kind of a looking man is Willie Sangreen?" cried Janice.

"I really could not tell you."

"But maybe it was he who drove the taxicab?" suggested the girl.

"That might be worth looking up," said her father. "And yet, it does not explain," he added, as they went into the living-room, "why Olga should have stolen the treasure-box. That seems to be the greatest mystery."

CHAPTER VIII. THEY COME AND GO

"Daddy, do you mind if we have dinner a little early this evening?" Janice asked.

"I have my appetite with me, if that is what you want to know," said Broxton Day, smiling down upon her.

"Well, Delia has it all ready, I think. Too early, of course."

"Bring it on!" cried her father jovially. "I can do it justice."

Janice wondered if he could. Already the food, she knew, was drying up in the warming oven. She hurried out into the kitchen. Delia had not come in from the backyard. Janice shrank from interfering with that back-fence conference; but she could not see daddy's dinner spoiled.

"Come, Delia!" she called, opening the door. "My father has come home."

"Oh, my! Is your paw arrived?" asked the giantess; coming lingeringly away from the fence.

Janice saw Miss Peckham's snappy little eyes viewing her at the kitchen door with no pleasant expression. She felt that something was brewing—something that would not be pleasant. But the spinster retired without speaking to her.

"You have dinner ready very early, Delia," Janice said, as the big woman lumbered into the kitchen.

"Didn't you just say your paw had come?" demanded Delia in her squeaky voice.

"Yes. But you have everything ready at five o'clock instead of at six."

"Oh, yes. I don't never believe in keepin' folks waitin' for their victuals," said Delia, tossing her head. "You ain't got any call to be critical—no you ain't."

It was of no use! Janice saw that as plainly as she saw anything. This giantess has a dwarf's brain. As daddy said, when he became particularly "Yankeeified," "she didn't know beans!" It would be quite

useless to talk to her, or to expect her to remember what she was told to do.

"I will do all I can to hide the rough corners from Daddy," Janice thought. "I'll watch Delia before I go to school, and come home from school to straighten her out just as quickly as I can. I just won't run to him with every little household trouble."

But it was a wretched dinner. It was so badly cooked that daddy shook his head over it mournfully.

"It is a mystery to me how they manage to boil one potato to mush while another is so hard you can't stick your fork into it," he said. "And no seasoning! This steak now—or is it steak?"

"Now, Daddy!" said Janice, half laughing, yet feeling a good deal like crying.

"Well, I wasn't quite sure," said her father. "I wonder if these cooks think that meat grows, all seasoned, on 'the critter'? They must believe that. However, does she do the other work well?"

"I—I don't know yet," murmured Janice. "I'll help her all I can, Daddy, and tell her how, if she'll let me."

"Well, maybe we can make something of her," said Broxton Day, with his hearty and cheerful laugh. "Remember, Olga wanted to boil fresh pork chops for our breakfast when she first came."

"I do wish we knew where Olga had gone to," said Janice. "It doesn't seem as though that girl would deliberately steal. I can't believe it. And if we don't get back that treasure-box and what it contains, Daddy, my heart will—just—be—broken."

"There, there! Don't give way about it. There is a chance yet of finding Olga—and the box, too," said her father, trying to comfort his little daughter. "I will not give up the search. Willie Sangreen will of course come back to his job, and he must know what has become of Olga. Those Swedes are very clannish indeed, over there at Pickletown; but some of them bank with us, and I am sure they will be on the lookout for the

girl. Only, of course, I have not told them why I am so anxious to find her."

They finished dinner, and Delia came in to clear away, with her plump lips pouting and a general air about her of having been much injured. But Mr. Day, now so used to the vagaries of hired help, made no comment.

He and Janice went into the living-room. This, at least, was homelike and clean. He settled into his chair and picked up the paper. Just then there was a ring at the front doorbell.

Janice would have jumped up to answer it; but she heard the giantess going through the hall. There was a voice. Janice recognized it with a start. Then the giantess approached the living-room door, heavy footed, with a clatter of smaller bootheels behind her.

Delia threw open the door as Mr. Day dropped his paper to look up. Her fat face was wreathed in a triumphant smile, and she said:

"It's the nice lady from nex' door. I guess she come to see your paw about them cats."

Mr. Day looked puzzled.

Janice could have screamed as Miss Peckham marched in. Delia apparently intended to stand in the doorway and enjoy whatever there was to enjoy; but as Mr. Day rose from his seat to welcome the neighbor, he said firmly:

"Thank you, Delia. We shall not need you in here at present. You may go."

The giantess tossed her head and lumbered out of the room, slamming the door behind her with unnecessary violence.

"Good-evening, Miss Peckham," said the man, offering the spinster a chair. "I don't know just what Delia meant about cats; but I presume you will explain."

"Huh!" snapped Miss Peckham, "I guess that girl of yours hasn't told you about what she done to my Sam. No, indeed! I guess not!"

She was evidently working herself up into a violent state of mind, and Mr. Day, who knew his next door

neighbor very well, hastened to smooth the troubled waters.

"I had not heard anything about cats, Miss Peckham, save the misfortune of a cat convention in our back kitchen yesterday morning. Janice told me about that, of course; but she could scarcely be blamed for it."

"I don't know why she shouldn't be blamed!" ejaculated the angry woman. "And my Sam's got a broken leg."

"I am sorry if any of the cats were injured. It was a thoughtless joke of—" he caught Janice's eye and understood her meaning, "of one of the neighbor's boys. He meant no particular harm, I fancy."

"You needn't try an' lay it on no boy!" exclaimed Miss Peckham.
"'Twas a girl done it. My Sam—"

"You mean that a girl broke the cat's leg?" queried Mr. Day, quietly.

"I mean just that. 'Twas a girl. And that is the girl!" and she pointed an accusing finger at the flushed Janice.

"Oh, I never!" exclaimed the latter under her breath, and shaking her head vigorously.

Mr. Day gave her a smiling look of encouragement.

"I feel sure," he said, to Miss Peckham, "that if Janice had by chance injured an animal—a cat, or any other—she would have told me. But although it may have been a girl who broke your cat's leg, it was not Janice."

"You don't know anything about it!" cried Miss Peckham angrily. "You don't know what goes on here all day long while you are gone. I pity you, Mr. Day—I pity you from the bottom of my heart. You ought to have a woman here to manage this girl of yours. That's what you need!"

"Oh!" gasped Janice, her color receding now. She was very angry.

"Ah! don't you flout me, Janice Day!" exclaimed the spinster, eyeing Janice malevolently. "I know how bad you act. I don't live right next door for nothin'. An' 'tisn't only at home you act badly, but on the street. Fighting with boys like a hoodlum. Oh, I heard about it!"

"Wait! Wait!" exclaimed Mr. Day, with sternness. "I think you are out of bounds, Miss Peckham. I do not ask you to tell me how to take care of my little daughter. And I am sure I do not believe that you are rightly informed about her actions, even if you do live next door."

Miss Peckham sniffed harder and tossed her head. "Let us get back to the cats," he went on quietly. "Have you found that one of your cats has been hurt?"

"His leg's broke. The doctor said it was a most vicious blow. He's put it in a cast, and poor Sam is quite wild."

"But why do you blame Janice?"

"She done it!" exclaimed the spinster nodding her shawled head vigorously. "She ought to be looked after."

"No, Janice did not hurt the cat," said Mr. Day with assurance, "unfortunately the cat was hurt on our premises. But it was the girl working for us, not my little girl, who injured your cat."

"What do you mean?" demanded Miss Peckham sharply. "Not this big thing you've got here—the one that let me in?"

"The Swedish girl," explained Mr. Day. "The cats were shut into our back kitchen, and before Janice could open the door to let them out, Olga, I believe, pelted them with coal."

"But what did she shut 'em up in the kitchen for?" demanded Miss Peckham, still pointing and glaring at Janice.

"Oh, I didn't!" exclaimed the latter, shaking her head vigorously.

"That was not my daughter's doings," Mr. Day repeated. "As I tell you, your cat was undoubtedly hurt on our premises. If I can do anything to satisfy you—pay the doctor's bill, or the like—"

"I don't want money from you, Broxton Day," exclaimed

the woman rising. "I didn't come here for that purpose. I came here to tell you that your house is goin' to rack and ruin and that your girl needs a strong hand to manage her. That's what she needs. You ain't had no proper home here since your wife died."

"I fear that is only too true, Miss Peckham," replied Mr. Day.

"If Mrs. Day knew how things was goin' she'd turn in her grave, I do believe," went on the neighbor, perhaps not wholly in bitterness.

The man's face paled. Miss Peckham did not know how much she was adding to the burden of sorrow in the hearts of Broxton Day and his little daughter. Janice was sobbing now, with her face hidden.

"What you need is an intelligent woman to take hold," went on the neighbor, warming to her subject. "Take this creature you got now. Ugh! Big elephant, and don't scarcely know enough to come in when it rains, I do believe."

"The class of people one finds at the agencies is admittedly not of a high order of intelligence," said Mr. Day softly.

"I should say they weren't—if them you've had is samples," sniffed Miss Peckham. "Why don't you get somebody decent?"

"I wish you would tell me how to go about getting a better houseworker," sighed Mr. Day.

"Get a working housekeeper—one that's trained and is respectable. Somebody to overlook—"

"But I cannot afford two servants," the man hastened to submit.

"I ain't suggesting another servant. Somebody that respects herself too much to be called a servant. Of course it's hard to find the right party.

"However, some women can do it. And that is the kind you need, Broxton Day. Somebody who will be firm with your girl, here, too."

"I am afraid," said Janice's father quietly, "that the sort of person you speak of is beyond my means; perhaps such a marvel is not in the market at all," and he

smiled again. "Thank you for your interest, Miss Peckham."

He rose again to see her to the door. The spinster might have considered remaining longer and offering further advice; but daddy knew how to get rid of people quickly and cheerfully when their business was over.

"Oh, Daddy! what a dreadful woman she is," sobbed Janice, when he came back into the living-room.

"Not so bad as that," he said, chuckling, and patting her shoulder comfortingly. "It is her way to make much of a little. You see, she did not want anything for her injured cat, she merely wanted to come in and talk about it."

"But—but, Daddy," confessed Janice, blushing deeply, "I really did fight Arlo Junior on the street. I boxed his ears."

Mr. Day had great difficulty to keep from laughing, but Janice was too absorbed in her troubles to notice it.

"Well, well! Taking the law into your own hands, were you?"

"Yes, Daddy. I guess it wasn't very ladylike. But I'm not a hoodlum!"

"Why was it that you did not want me to mention Arlo Junior?" asked Mr. Day curiously.

"Well, you see, I sort of promised him I wouldn't tell about what he did to the cats, if he came in here Saturday and helped me clean that back kitchen."

"Ho, ho! I see. Well, perhaps you are quite right to shield the young scamp under those circumstances," said her father, with twinkling eyes.

Mr. Day talked to his daughter for a while longer. He asked her about her school work and her school pleasures, about what the girls and boys in her circle of friends were doing. He tried to keep in close touch with the motherless girl's interests, and especially did he not want her to go to bed with sad and troublous thoughts in her mind.

After a cheerful and happy half hour Janice kissed her

father good-night and went to her own room.

Janice did all she could the next morning before going to school to start Delia right in the housework. But the giantess was still sullen and had much to say about "it comin' to a pretty pass when children boss their elders."

This was an objection that Janice had contended with before. She only said, pleasantly:

"When you have once learned just how we do things here, I sha'n't have to tell you again, Delia. But wherever you go to work, you know, you will have to learn the ways of the house."

"I was doin' housework, I was, when you was in your cradle," declared the woman.

"But evidently not doing it just as we like to have it done here," insisted Janice cheerfully. "Now, try to please daddy, Delia. Everything will be all right then."

Delia only sniffed. She "sniffed" in a higher key than Janice had ever heard anybody sniff before. Certainly Mrs. Bridget Burns was not turning out to be as mild creature as Janice had first believed her to be. She could be stubborn.

When she got to school that morning Janice found that there was another disturbing incident in the offing. Amy Carringford squeezed her arm as they hurried in to grammar recitation, and smiled at her. But it was with gravity that she whispered in Janice's ear:

"I guess I shall have to refuse Stella's invitation."

"Oh, you must go!"

"No, I can't go."

"Don't dare say that, Amy!" responded Janice, earnestly. "You haven't told her you aren't coming, have you?"

"No-o."

"Don't you dare!" repeated Janice.

"But—but, I don't see how I can—"

"Wait! I'll tell you after school. Don't say a word to Stella about not going to the party. I tell you, if you don't go, I sha'n't!"

"Oh, Janice!"

There was no time for more whispering. Amy's big luminous eyes were fixed on her friend a good deal through the several recitations they both attended. It was evident she was puzzled.

At lunch hour Amy always ran home, for Mullen Lane— at least, the end on which she lived—was not far. And, perhaps, she did not care to join the girls who brought nice lunches in pretty baskets. So Janice could not talk with her new friend until school was out.

Janice had determined to make a friend of Amy Carringford. Oh, yes, when Janice Day made up her mind to a thing she usually did it. And she had conceived a great liking for Amy, as well as a deep interest in the whole Carringford family.

"Now, Janice, what did you mean?" Amy asked, as they set off from the schoolhouse with their books. "I just can't go to that party!"

"Daddy says that it is a mistake to say that the word can't is not in the dictionary, for it is—in the newer ones. But I am sure it ought not to be found in the 'bright lexicon of youth'—like 'fail,' you know," and Janice laughed.

"You are just talking," giggled Amy, clinging to Janice's arm.

"I don't know what you mean."

"You are going to know soon, my dear," returned Janice. "Come home with me. Your mother won't mind, will she?"

"No. I'll send word by Gummy."

"My, that sounds almost like swearing—'by Gummy!' exclaimed Janice, her hazel eyes dancing. "And there Gummy goes. Grab him quick. Tell him you'll stay to supper."

"Oh, no! I'll tell him I'll stay till supper," rejoined Amy, as she ran after her brother.

She caught up with Janice within half a block laughing and skipping. Never had Janice seen Amy so light-hearted. Even the thought that she could not go to the party at Stella Latham's house did not serve to make Amy sorrowful for long. And Janice guessed why.

Amy Carringford had been hungry for a close friend. Perhaps Janice was starved, too, for such companionship. At any rate, Amy responded to Janice's friendliness just as a sunflower responds to the orb of the day and turns toward it.

The two girls went on quite merrily toward the Day cottage at Eight Hundred and Forty-five Knight Street. There was plenty to chatter about without even touching on the coming party. Janice had plans about that.

When the two came in sight of the Day house those plans—and almost everything else—went out of Janice's head. There was a high, dusty, empty rubbish cart standing before the side gate of the Day premises; and from the porch a man in the usual khaki uniform of the Highway Department was bringing out a black oilcloth bag which Janice very well remembered.

"Oh, dear me! what can have happened?" Janice cried starting to run. "That is Delia's bag—the very one she brought with her."

She arrived at the gate just as the man came through the opening. He was a dusty-faced man, with a bristling mustache, and great, overhanging brows. He looked very angry, too.

"Oh, what is the matter?" asked Janice, as the man pitched the oilcloth bag into the cart, and turned back toward the house again.

But he was not regarding at all the girl or her chum who then ran up. He turned to bellow in through the open door:

"Hi! Come out o' that, Biddy Burns! Ye poor innocent! Sure, with your two little children home cryin' all day alone and me at work, ye should be ashamed of yerself, me gur-rl! If I was the kind of a feyther ye nade, I'd be wearin' a hairbrush out on ye, big and old as ye be. Come out o' that—or will I come in afther ye?"

"Mercy me!" gasped Amy.

"Oh! Oh!" exclaimed Janice, tugging at the man's sleeve, "what are you doing to Delia?"

"'Delia,' is it? More of her foolishness. She's Biddy Burns, and her husband is dead—lucky man that he is. And I'm her feyther and the grandfeyther of her two babies—Tessie and 'Melia. And if she don't come home this minute with me, I'll put the young ones in a home, so I will!"

Delia, in the flounced dress, and weeping, just then appeared. She stumbled down the steps and came to the gate, blubbering like a child.

"Sure, he says I've got to go ho-ome," sobbed the giantess. "'Tis me father—he tells the truth. But I wanted to earn money myself. He never lets me do nothing I want to do!"

"Ye big, foolish gur-rl!" ejaculated the man gruffly. "Was it workin' for you she was, Miss?"

"Yes," said Janice breathlessly.

"And they had a pianny," sobbed Delia;. "'Twas be-a-utiful!"

"You come home an' play on the washboard—that's the kind of a pianny you nade to play on," grumbled her father. "I'm sorry for ye," he added turning to Janice, "if your folks has to depend on the likes of her to do the work. Sure, it's not right good sinse she's got."

He came behind the giantess suddenly and boosted her with strong arms up to the seat at the front of the wagon. Then he climbed up himself and the turnout rattled away heavily along the street.

Delia's departure was one of the most astounding things that had happened to the Days during the

months of their dependence upon itinerant houseworkers.

CHAPTER IX . SHOCKS AND FROCKS

Janice found herself clinging tightly to Amy Carringford's hand and Amy clinging tightly to hers, as the rubbish wagon rattled away with Delia and her grim father perched on the high seat, while the black oilcloth bag rattled around in the otherwise empty body of the cart.

"Oh, Janice!" gasped Amy at last.

"Oh, Amy!" rejoined her friend. "And no dinner for daddy when he comes home!"

Amy could not comment on this catastrophe for the moment, for Miss Peckham (the only neighbor who seemed to have marked the departure of Delia) came swiftly into view. Miss Peckham's blinds were always bowed, and one never knew which blind she was lurking behind.

"Well!" she exclaimed (and Janice thought she said it quite cheerily), "so that one's gone, has she?"

"They—they just seem to come and go," Janice replied, almost in tears. "Oh, dear! Delia wasn't much; but I did hope she would stay a little longer."

"Much'!" sniffed Miss Peckham. "I should say she wasn't. And she isn't even sensible. I should think even a girl of your age could have seen she was more'n half crazy. Wouldn't expect your father to notice nothing. He's only a man."

"Oh! Really crazy, do you mean?" Amy Carringford burst out.

"She never was more'n half bright, that Biddy Garrity. That was her name before she married Tom Burns. And he died. Blowed up in the powder mill. That was old Garrity who came for her. She ain't got no right to run off and leave her two children and that old man to get along as best they can. But she does it—often. I thought there would be trouble just as soon as I seen her sitting on your steps t'other day."

"Well, I wish we'd known it," sighed Janice. "She— she did seem sort of funny. But she wasn't much worse than some of the others we've had."

"Humph!" sniffed Miss Peckham, "just what I told your father last night. You need a manager here—somebody to take hold"

"I shall have to take hold now and see about getting dinner for daddy," Janice responded, recovering a measure of her self-confidence. "Come on in, Amy, and watch me work."

"If I come in and help you," said her friend. "I guess you won't have to do it all."

A glance through the lower rooms proved that Delia had done little more toward straightening the house this day than the day before.

"Goodness, mercy me, Janice Day!" exclaimed Amy Carringford. "I'm awfully glad we don't have to have servants. It must be awful!"

"It just is," sighed Janice. "You never know when you come home from school whether you will find the girl or not. And you're 'most always sure to find that not half the work's been done. Well, I can get daddy some sort of a dinner myself tonight."

"What are you going to cook? Let me help," said Amy eagerly. "I know how to make lovely rolls—only you have to set the sponge the night before. And Judge Peters's pudding is just luscious! Only you have to have currants and citron and chopped nuts to go into it."

"We won't have either of those things for dinner, then," said Janice, with a cheerful laugh.

"Well, we don't have them nowadays," sighed Amy. "But we used to."

"I suppose you have had to give up lots of nice things since your father died," rejoined, her friend sympathetically. "But," and she giggled, "Gummy said yesterday he couldn't give up his name."

"The poor boy!" Amy declared, shaking her head. "Give me an apron, Janice. I am going to peel those potatoes and that turnip. Potatoes and turnip mashed together makes a nice dish. And Gummy can't

really give up his name."

"Gumswith! It's awful," murmured Janice. "How ever—"

"Well I'll tell you. Poor dear father had a half-brother who was lots older than he. Grandmother Carringford had been married before she married our grandfather, you see. And her first husband's name was Mr. Gumswith. John Gumswith. It's not so bad as a last name, you see."

"No," agreed Janice, her eyes twinkling. "Not when you say it quick."

Amy laughed again, busy peeling the vegetables. And she peeled them thin, Janice noticed. Amy had evidently been taught the fine points of frugal housekeeping.

"So poor Gummy got his name from John Gumswith, Junior. I guess father's half-brother was a queer man. He said he'd never marry, because he was always wandering about the world."

"Like a peddler?" ventured Janice.

"No. But he went to foreign countries. He always expected to earn a lot of money by some stroke of fortune, mother says. But none of us children ever saw him. Before Gummy was born Uncle John Gumswith started off for Australia, and mother and father never heard of him, or from him after that."

"But they named poor Gummy after him," commented Janice, busy with the onion she was chopping to season the hamburger roast, and trying to keep the juice of the onion out of her eyes.

"You see," Amy confessed confidentially, "when father and mother were married Uncle John gave them a little nest egg. You understand? He had some money, and he gave some of it to them. And then, he was father's only living relative; so they named the first baby 'Gumswith'—so that the family name should not die out you know."

"My goodness!" exclaimed Janice, but whether because of the saddling of Gummy Carringford with such a name, or because of the squirting of onion juice into her left eye, she did not explain at the moment.

"So Gummy is Gummy," sighed his sister. "Father didn't name him that just for the money's sake. Mother says a million dollars wouldn't really pay for such a name. But father thought a lot of Uncle John Gumswith.

"But when Gummy grows up, he will have to go through life, so he says, signing his name 'G. Carringford,'" and Amy began to giggle at this thought.

"It is really too bad," said Janice, but her mind was on another subject just then. "How quick you are, Amy! You know how to do everything, don't you?"

"No I don't. But what I know, I know well," said her friend in her quiet way. "Is your water hot? This turnip wants to go right on, for it takes longer to cook than the potatoes."

"Here you are," said Janice, seizing the pot and carrying it to the stove. There she poured boiling water over the turnip and set the pot where it would continue to simmer. "It's too early to put the roast in yet. Come on upstairs, Amy. I know that Delia neither made up my bed nor dusted my room. I did daddy's before I went to school this morning."

"Such a nice house!" murmured Amy, as she followed Janice upstairs by the way of the front hall.

"And not half kept," sighed Janice. "When dear mother was with us—"

She and Amy said no more until Janice's bedroom was all spick and span again. Janice hugged her friend heartily when at last the pillows were plumped up at the head of the bed.

"You're a dear!" she said. "You do like me, don't you, Amy?"

"Of course I do."

"Then you'll go to Stella's party with me, you?"

"Oh, but, Janice, I can't!"

"There's that word can't' again," said Janice lightly. "I don't believe in it—no ma'am! You can go if you want to."

"I—I haven't a thing nice enough to wear!" confessed Amy desperately, her face flaming and water

standing in her eyes. "As though that was a good reason! Let me show you what I am going to wear."

But the pretty black and white dress that Janice brought forth from her closet only made Amy shake her head.

"Yes. I know. But it is new—and very nice."

"I've never worn it yet," confessed Janice.

"And everything I've got is as old as the hills," groaned Amy Carringford.

"Well, look here—and here—and here!" Janice tossed as many frocks upon the bed. "What do you suppose is going to become of those?"

"Oh, Janice! how pretty they are. This pink and white one—"

"M-mm! my mother made them for me," said Janice, trying to speak bravely. "And now they are too small, anyway. I've grown a lot since a year ago."

"Oh, Janice!"

"So you are going to wear one of them to Stella's party," declared Janice confidently. "The pink and white one if you like."

"Oh, Janice, I can't. My mother wouldn't let me."

"I'm going to make her let you. I'm going to beg her on my knees!" declared Janice, laughing. "Do get into it, Amy, and see if it fits you."

"Wel-l-l!"

It did. There was no doubt but that Amy was just a wee bit smaller than Janice and that the frocks were an almost perfect fit.

"But—but to take a whole new dress from you—a gift! Oh, Janice! I know it isn't right. Mother will not hear of it"

"Mother's going to hear of it—and from me," declared Janice. "To-morrow's Saturday. After I get all the work done, and Arlo Junior helps me clean that back kitchen, I am going to bring this dress down to your house. I know when she once sees it on you, she won't have the heart to say 'No.'"

So, perhaps Janice Day was sly, after all.

CHAPTER X. OTHER PEOPLE'S TROUBLE

Daddy, of course, laughed. If it had not been for his sanguine temperament, and his ability to see the funny side of life, Janice often wondered what they should do.

"They say," she thought, "that every cloud has a silver lining. But to dear daddy there is something better than silver linings to our clouds. Something to laugh at! I wonder if, after all, being able to see the fun in things isn't the biggest blessing in the world. I am sure Miss Peckham isn't happy, and she never sees anything funny at all! But daddy—"

When she told him at dinner time how Delia had departed on the rubbish wagon with her angry father, Broxton Day laughed so that he could scarcely eat.

"But what are we going to do?" cried Janice.

"Don't be a little Martha, honey, troubled with many things. I would have given a good deal to have seen that departure. 'Good riddance to bad rubbish,' is an old saying back in Vermont where I was brought up, Janice. And Delia going in the rubbish wagon seems fitting, doesn't it?"

"It was funny," admitted his little daughter. "But what shall we do?"

"Why, try the next applicant," said Broxton Day easily. "I will look in at the agencies again."

"I'm afraid that won't do any good, Daddy," sighed Janice.
"Delia came from the agency, and you see what she was like. And

Olga—"

"No," interrupted Mr. Day, "Olga came direct from Pickletown."

"Well, it doesn't matter. There were plenty of others from the agencies, all as bad or worse than Olga and Delia," and Janice looked much downcast.

"Oh, little daughter, little daughter!" admonished Mr. Day, "don't give way like that. Some time, out of the lot, we'll find the right person."

"Well, maybe," agreed Janice, cheerful once more. "I guess we've already had all the bad ones. Those that are left to come to us must be just ordinary human beings with some good and some sense mixed in with the bad."

It proved to be a very busy day, indeed, for Janice— that Saturday. But she did not overlook her promise to Amy Carringford. Yet it was mid-afternoon when she started for Mullen Lane with the pink and white party dress in a neat package over her arm.

Janice could not overlook the poverty-stricken appearance of the Carringford cottage. It could not, indeed, be ignored by even the casual glance. But its cleanliness, and everybody's neatness about the little dwelling, portrayed the fact that here was a family putting its best foot forward. Mrs. Carringford was proud. Janice Day knew that she must be very cautious indeed if she would see Amy adorned with her own finery.

"Dear Mrs. Carringford," she whispered to her friend's mother, "I've got a surprise for you. I want Amy to come upstairs with me, and by and by, when we call you up, please come and look into her room."

Amy, according to agreement, had said nothing about the dress to her mother. She was eager, but doubtful just the same.

"I don't think it is right, Janice," she declared, over and over. "I don't see how I can accept the dress from you, when I have nothing to give in return."

"Oh, that is a very niggardly way to receive," cried Janice, shaking her head. "If we can't accept a present save when we can return it—why, daddy says that is the most selfish thought in the world."

"Selfish!"

"For sure! We are too selfish to allow other people to enjoy giving. Don't you see? It's fun to give."

"But it is not fun to be the object charity," complained Amy, with some sullenness.

"Why, my dear," exclaimed Janice Day, "you are not always going to be poor. Of course not. Some day you will be lots better off. Gummy will grow up and go to work, and then you will all be well off. And, besides, this sort of giving, between friends, isn't charity."

"Gummy wishes to go to work now," sighed Amy. "But mother wants to keep him at school."

"He might work after school and on Saturdays."

"Oh, that would be fine! But who would give him such a job? You see, we do not trade much with the storekeepers, and mother isn't very well known—"

"You wait!" exclaimed Janice. "I believe I know somebody who needs a boy."

"Oh, I hope you do, Janice."

Meanwhile Amy was getting into that lovely, dainty dress again.

"You do look too sweet for anything in it," Janice declared. The latter ran out to the stairs and called to Mrs. Carringford. "Oh, do come up and look! Do, Mrs. Carringford!"

She kept Amy's bedroom door shut, and held Mrs. Carringford for a moment at the top of the stairs.

"Oh, Mrs. Carringford," she murmured, "don't you want to make two girls just awfully happy?"

"Why, my dear child—"

"You know, I have been growing just like a weed this past year. Daddy says so. I have outgrown all the pretty clothes my—my mother made me for last summer, and which of course I could not wear. Amy is just a wee bit smaller than I "

"My dear!"

"Wait!" gasped Janice, almost in tears she was so much in earnest. "Just wait and see her! And I want her to go to the party. And there are stockings, and pumps, and a hat, and everything! Look at her!"

She flung open the bedroom door. Amy stood across the room from them, flushing and paling by turns, and looking really frightened, but, oh! so pretty.

"Why, Amy!" murmured Mrs. Carringford, her own cheeks flushing.

What mother can look at her little daughter when she is charmingly dressed without being proud of her? She turned questioningly to Janice.

"Does your father know about this?"

"Daddy quite approves," said Janice demurely. "I never could get any wear out of them. You can see that, Mrs. Carringford.

"And if you let Amy wear them, we'll both be so happy!"

Mrs. Carringford kissed her. "You are a sweet, good child," she said rather brokenly. "I don't blame Amy for loving you."

So it was agreed that Amy should wear the party dress. Janice had errands to do at the store, and she begged for the company of Gummy Carringford to help her carry the things she bought.

"You know, I can't carry them all, and sometimes Harriman's delivery doesn't get around until midnight and we have to get up and take the things in."

"Come on," said Gummy, who knew about the dress for his sister, "I'll carry anything you want."

But Janice really had another reason for getting Gummy Carringford to Harriman's store. She maneuvered to get Mr. Harriman himself to wait on her, and when Gummy was out of ear-shot she began to confide in the proprietor.

"Do you see that boy who is with me, Mr. Harriman?" she asked.

"Oh, yes. I've seen him before I guess. One of your neighbors?"

"He goes to our school. And he is a very nice boy."

"What's his name?"

"His name is 'G. Carringford'," Janice told demurely.

"Oh! 'G?'" queried Mr. Harriman. "Is that all?"

"Well, you know, it isn't his fault if he has dreadful name," she said. "And it doesn't really hurt him. He can work just as hard—and he wants work."

"I thought you said he went to school?"

"After school and on Saturdays," she explained. "He doesn't know you, Mr. Harriman, so I suppose he is bashful about speaking to you. But you know him now, because I introduced G. Carringford. Won't you try him?"

The outcome of this attempt to help the Carringfords was one of the many things Janice had to confide to daddy that evening. As she told him, she had put little dependence upon the hope of finding another houseworker easily. And that was well, for Mr. Day had found nobody at the agencies. He would not trust engaging a girl again, unseen.

"Perhaps next week will bring us good fortune, my dear," he said. "How did you get on to-day, all alone? I see the silver has been polished."

"Only some of it, Daddy. And I have been a busy bee, now I tell you."

"Bravo, my dear! The busy bee makes the honey."

"And has a stinger, too," she replied roguishly. "I guess Arlo Junior thinks so."

"So Junior came over according to promise?" said her father, interested.

"Yes, indeed. And he did work, Daddy! You should have seen him."

"The vision of Arlo Weeks, Junior, working really would be worth the price of admission," chuckled Broxton Day.

"That isn't the worst of it—for Arlo," said Janice gaily. "You see, his helping me clean up that back kitchen got him a bad reputation."

"Why, Janice! How was that?"

"Oh, he did the cleaning very well. As well as it could be done. That soft coal made marks on the walls that never will come off until they are painted again. It's awful smutchy—that coal."

"I know," agreed Broxton Day. "But about Arlo?"

"I'm coming to that," she said smiling. "You see, Arlo Junior was just about through when his mother come over looking for him. She wanted him to go on an errand. She saw what he had been doing for me, for he had an apron on and the broom in his hand."

"Caught with the goods, in other words?" chuckled Mr. Day.

"Yes. And we couldn't tell her why he was helping me. So she said right out:

"Why, Arlo Junior! If you can help Janice like this— and you and she were fighting the other day—you can come right home and clean out the woodshed. It needs it.'

"And—and," laughed Janice, "he had to do it. He worked pretty near all day to-day. And he scowled at me dreadfully this afternoon."

"He will be playing other tricks on you," warned her father.

"Well, there will be no Olga to make them worse," she sighed. "That is one sure thing. Oh, dear, Daddy, I wonder where she is—and the treasure-box! It is too, too hateful for anything!"

"I called up the pickle factory where Willie Sangreen works. They had heard nothing from him. It looks as though Olga and he must have gone away together. Stole a march on all their friends and got married, maybe."

"But why should she take my treasure-box?" cried Janice. "Oh, Daddy! I can never forgive myself for my carelessness."

"Don't worry, child. You could not really be blamed," he rejoined sadly.

"But that doesn't bring back mother's picture and the other things," murmured the anxious Janice, watching his clouding face.

As always when they were alone, daddy washed the supper dishes and Janice dried them. Daddy with an apron on and his sleeves rolled up, and a paper cap on his head (she made him wear that like a regular "chef"), made a picture that always pleased his daughter.

"I think you would make a very nice cook, Daddy dear? she often told him. "In fact, you seem to fit in almost anywhere. I guess it's because you are always ready to do something."

"Flattery! Flattery!" he returned, pinching her cheek.

"But it is so, you know, Daddy. You always know what to do—and you do it."

"That is what they tell me at the bank," said Mr. Day, with rather a rueful smile. "This Mexican mine business is developing some troubles, and they want me to go down there and straighten them out."

"Oh, Daddy!" she cried breathlessly.

"No," he said, shaking his head. "That is what I tell them. I cannot leave you alone."

"But take me!" she cried, almost dancing up and down.

"Can't be thought of, Janice. That is a rough country —and you've got to stick to school, besides. You know, my dear, we had already decided on that."

"Yes, I know," she sighed. "But of course you won't go away and leave me? We—we've never been separated since—since dear mamma died."

"True, my dear. And we will not contemplate such separation. I have told them at the bank it would be impossible." It was not of their own troubles that they talked mostly on this evening, however, but of some other people's troubles. After they were out of the kitchen and settled in the living-room, Janice began to tell him about the Carringfords. "They are just the nicest people you ever saw Daddy. Amy and Gummy are coming over here tomorrow after Sunday School so that you can meet them."

"Gummy!" ejaculated Mr. Day.

Janice told him all about that boy's unfortunate name.

"You see," she explained, "Mrs. Carringford told me herself this afternoon that his Uncle John Gumswith was a very nice man."

"Seems to me," said daddy, quite amused, "that doesn't make the boy's name any less unfortunate. And have they never even heard of the uncle since he went to Australia?"

"No, sir."

"Well," chuckled Mr. Day, "Gummy had better go to the Legislature and get his name changed. That's a handicap that no boy should have to shoulder."

"It is awful. And it makes Gummy shy, I think. He wanted to work after school hours and on Saturday. But he didn't seem to know how to get a job. So I," Janice proceeded quite in a matter-of-fact way, "got him one."

"You did!"

"Yes, Daddy. I went to Mr. Harriman, the grocer. You know we trade there. And I know that he can use a boy just as well as not. So I told him about Gummy—"

"Did you tell Harriman his name?" chuckled her father.

"I said he was 'G. Carringford,'" Janice replied, her eyes twinkling. "But you needn't laugh. Mr. Harriman did."

"Did what?"

"Laugh; I really wanted Gummy to take a nom de plume, or whatever it is they call 'em."

"An alias, I guess it would be, in Gummy's case," said her father. "And wouldn't he?"

"No," said Janice, shaking her head. "Gummy seems to think that he's in honor bound to stick up for his name. That is what he says."

"Amen! Some boy, that!"

"He's a nice boy," declared Janice. "You'll see. And he got the job."

"Oh, he did! So I see that my Janice is a real 'do something' girl."

"Why, yes, I hadn't thought of that," she agreed, all smiles at his praise. "I did do something, didn't I? Gummy is going to work for Mr. Harriman, and that'll help them. But it was about Amy and Stella Latham's party I wanted to tell you"

"Oh, was it, indeed?" her father murmured.

She related the circumstances attached to the coming party and Amy Carringford's reason for not being able to go.

"And you ought to see Amy in that pink and white dress. She's just too sweet for anything!"

"All right, daughter. I agree to give your little friend the frock if her mother is willing."

"I just made Mrs. Carringford agree," said Janice, bobbing her head earnestly. "They are awfully proud folks."

"With a proper pride, perhaps."

"I guess so. They are real nice anyway—even if Gummy does wear patched pants."

"And does he?" asked daddy, seriously. "Perhaps we had better look through my Wardrobe in his behest."

"But, Daddy! he can't wear your clothes. He'd be lost in them," Janice giggled.

"True. But his mother may know how to cut the garments down and make them over for the boy? You ask her, Janice. I will lay out a couple of suits that I will never be able to wear again."

And so they forgot their own troubles, for the time being, in seeking to relieve those of some other people.

CHAPTER XI. MRS. WATKINS

Although it was probable that most of the Day's neighbors felt more or less curiosity, if not interest, in their domestic misfortunes, it was only Miss Peckham who seemed to keep really close observation, in season and out, of all that went on in and about the Day house.

Janice could have wished that the spinster would give more of her attention to her cats and Ambrose, the parrot, and less to neighborhood affairs. For the child knew that not even a peddler came to the door that the sharp-visaged woman behind her bowed blinds did watch to see what Janice did.

"She watches every move I make, Daddy," complained the girl one day. "I don't see why she cares who comes to see me. She's the meanest thing—"

"Now, Janice, dear!"

"I don't care, Daddy, just this once! Why, this afternoon three of the girls were here, and after they left Miss Peckham called me over to the fence and asked me when the Beemans were going to Canada.

"The Beemans talk of going there before long, but are not certain about it; and Annette told the rest of us girls all about it as a great secret. Miss Peckham

deliberately listened at her window, and then, because she couldn't hear all we said, she tried to make me tell her the whole story. Now, isn't that mean?"

"Oh, well, Janice—"

"You wouldn't listen like that, Daddy Day, and you wouldn't let me, so there!"

"Maybe not, Janice. But then, you know, we do many things that Miss Peckham does not approve of—many things that she would not think of doing."

"Now, Daddy, you are joking! You know you are!"

"Maybe so—half way. But then we are responsible for ourselves, and not for Miss Peckham. But I am sorry, daughter, that she troubles you. Perhaps," he added more lightly, "we shall get things on a more satisfactory basis here before long, and then Miss Peckham will not think it necessary to look after us so much."

"You know better than that, Daddy Day. Miss Peckham will look after us till we are hundreds of years old," answered Janice. But now she spoke with a smile on her lips.

The disappointment of the coming and going of Bridget Burns made both father and daughter shrink from trying another houseworker unless she appeared more than ordinarily promising. So for a day or two daddy went personally to the agencies and looked the prospective workers over. His reports to Janice were not hopeful.

"Oh, dear me, Daddy!" Janice sighed, "I do wish I could do it all. Maybe I ought only to go to school part time—"

"No, my dear. We will scabble along as best we can. You must not neglect the studies."

"At any rate," she exclaimed, "it will soon be vacation time. I can do ever so much more in the house then."

"Nor do I believe that is a good plan," her father said, shaking his head. "The best thing that could happen to you would be for you to go away for a change. I have a good mind to send you back East. Your Aunt Almira—"

"Oh, Daddy! Never! You don't mean it?" cried the girl.

"Why, you'll like your Aunt Almira. Of course, Jase Day is not such an up-and-coming chap as one might wish; but he is a good sort, at that. And there is your cousin, Marty."

"But I don't know any of them," sighed Janice. "And I don't want to leave you."

"But if we cannot get any help—"

"I'll get along. What would you do in this house alone if I went away?" she demanded.

"I'd shut it up and go down to the Laurel House to board."

"Oh, that's awful!"

"No. I get my lunch there now. It's not very bad," said Broxton Day, smiling.

"I mean it's awful to think of shutting up our home for the summer. You haven't got to go away to Mexico, have you, Daddy?" she queried with sudden suspicion.

"Well, my dear, it may be necessary," he confessed.

"And you'd send me away to Vermont while you were gone?"

"I don't know what else to do—if the necessity arises. Jase Day is my half-brother—the only living relative I have. Your mother's people are all scattered. I wouldn't know what else to do with you, my dear."

"Mercy!" she sighed, winking back the tears, "it sounds as though I—I were what you call a 'liability' in your bank business. Isn't that it? Why, Daddy! I want to be an 'asset,' not a 'liability.'"

"Bless you, my dear, you are! A great, big asset!" he laughed. "But you must not neglect the necessary preparation for life which your studies give you. Nor must I let you overwork. Have patience—and hope. Perhaps we shall be able to find a really good housekeeper, after all."

When, on Wednesday afternoons Janice came home from school, she saw Miss Peckham beckoning to her from her front porch, the girl had no suspicion that the maiden lady was about to interfere in her and daddy's affairs. No, indeed!

"Now I wonder what she wants!" murmured Janice, going reluctantly toward the Peckham house. "And she's got company, too."

The spinster was sitting on her porch behind the honeysuckle vines, with her sewing table and the big parrot, Ambrose, chained to his perch beside her. There was, too, a second woman on the porch.

"Good afternoon, Miss Peckham," Janice said, swinging her books as she came up the walk from Miss Peckham's gate. "Hello, Polly!"

"Polly wants cracker!" declared the bird, flapping his wings and doing a funny little dance on his perch.

"Be still!" commanded Miss Peckham. With her sharp little black eyes she glanced from Janice to the other woman. "This is the girl," she said.

Janice, feeling as though she was under some important scrutiny looked at the second woman in curiosity. She found her a not unpleasant looking person. She was much wrinkled, yet her cheeks were rather pink and her lips very vivid. Janice wondered if it was possible that this color was put on by hand.

The woman sat in a rocking chair with her long hands folded idly in her lap. On the hands were white "half mits"—something Janice knew were long out of fashion but which were once considered very stylish indeed.

The woman's eyes were a shallow brown color—perhaps "faded" would be a better expression. It

seemed as though she were too languid even to look with attention at any one or anything.

"This is the girl, Sophrony," Miss Peckham repeated more sharply.

"Oh, yes," murmured the strange woman, as though awakened from a brown study. "Yes. Quite a pretty little girl."

"Pretty is as pretty does," scoffed Miss Peckham. "At any rate, she's healthy. Ain't you, Janice Day?"

"Ah—oh—yes, ma'am!" stammered Janice, "I guess I am."

"Well, I don't see the doctor going to your house none," said Miss Peckham, in her snappy way. "I guess I would ha' seen him if he'd called."

"Oh, yes," agreed Janice, "you would have seen him."

"Heh?" Miss Peckham stared at the little girl sharply. But she saw that Janice was quite innocent in making her comment. "Well," said the maiden lady, "this is Mrs. Watkins."

Considering this an introduction, Janice came forward and offered the faded looking woman her hand. Mrs. Watkins' own hand reminded Janice of a dead fish, and she was quite as glad to drop it as Mrs. Watkins seemed to be to have it dropped.

"Oh, yes," said the latter woman, "she is a pretty girl."

"Mrs. Watkins has come to see me," explained Miss Peckham. "She an' I have been friends for years and years. We used to go to school together when we were girls."

"Oh!" said Janice. But she could think of nothing else to say. She did not understand why she was being taken into Miss Peckham's confidence.

"Yes, Sophrony Watkins and I—Sophrony Shepley was her maiden name. She married Tom Watkins—and Tom was a shiftless critter, if there ever was one."

Janice was startled. Miss Peckham seemed to be unnecessarily plain spoken. But the languid Mrs. Watkins made no comment.

"And now Sophrony has come down to doin' for herself," went on the neighborhood censor. "I sent for her to come over here. She's been livin' in Marietteville. You tell your pa that we'll come into see him to-night after supper."

"Oh!" murmured Janice. Then she "remembered her manners," and said, smiling: "Please do, Miss Peckham. I will tell daddy you are coming."

Miss Peckham waved her hand to dismiss her young neighbor. "And if 'twas me," she said complacently to her companion, "first thing I'd do would be to cure that young one of calling her father 'daddy.' That's silly."

Even this remark did not forewarn Janice of what was coming. "I just believe," she thought, going on her way, "that that faded-out little woman is a book agent and will want to sell daddy a set of books he'll never in this world read."

But in getting dinner and tidying up the dining room and living room, Janice forgot all about Mrs. Sophronia Watkins. Janice was working very hard these days— much harder than any girl of her age should work. The evening before she had fallen asleep over her studies, and to-day her recitations had not been quite up to the mark.

The lack of system in the housekeeping made everything harder for her, too. It was all right for daddy to help wash the dinner dishes, and even to blacken the range and the gas stove as he did on this evening, but there were dozens of things going wrong every day in the house which neither Janice nor her father could help.

There were the provision bills. Janice knew very well that the butcher took advantage of her ignorance. She was always in a hurry in the morning, running to school; and she could not stop to see meat weighed, or vegetables properly picked out and measured.

At Mr. Harriman's, the grocer's, it was not so bad. There were certain articles of established standard that she knew her mother had always ordered; but in the matter of butter and cheese and eggs, she realized that she often ordered the best, and got second or third quality and first-quality prices.

Had she been able to spend the time marketing she would have conserved some of daddy's money and things would have been much better on the table. Yet, with the kind of houseworkers they had had, much of the good food that was bought was spoiled in the cooking.

Daddy sometimes said: "The Lord sends the food, but the cooks don't all come from heaven, that is sure, Janice."

He was vigorously polishing the cookstove on this Wednesday evening and they were cheerfully talking and joking, when the sound of bootheels on the side porch announced the coming of visitors.

"Oh, dear me! who can that be?" whispered Janice.

"Save me, My Lady—save me!" cried daddy, appearing to be very much frightened, and dodging behind the stove. "Don't let the neighbors in until I have got rid of this blacking brush and got on my vest and coat—"

But the caller who now hammered on the door with quick knuckles was no bashful person. Mr. Day had no chance to escape from the kitchen Miss Peckham turned the knob and walked right in.

"Come in, Sophrony," she said, over her shoulder, to the person who came behind her. "You can see well enough that this man and his gal need somebody to take hold for 'em. Come right in."

CHAPTER XII. THE FADED-OUT LADY

Janice was not as much surprised—at first as her father was by the appearance of the spinster and Mrs. Watkins. She remembered that Miss Peckham had said she would call this evening, although the girl had not expected her at the back door.

Their neighbor had managed to time her appearance at a rather inopportune moment, and when daddy rose up from behind the stove to confront the two women, in a voluminous apron and with a smutch across his cheek, Janice could not entirely smother her amusement.

"Oh! Oh!" she giggled. "Good evening, Miss Peckham! This—this is Mrs. Watkins, Daddy," and she directed her father's attention to the faded-out lady. "Ahem! I am glad to see you, Miss Peckham—and Mrs. Watkins," Mr. Day said, bowing in that nice way of his that Janice so much admired. Even with a blacking brush in one hand and a can of stove polish in the other, Mr. Broxton Day was very much the gentleman.

"You find us considerably engaged in domestic work," continued Mr. Day, a smile wreathing his lips and his eyes twinkling. "And if you don't mind, I'll finish my job before giving you my full attention. Janice, take

Miss Peckham and her friend into the living room."

"Oh, no. You needn't bother," said Miss Peckham shortly. "Here's chairs, and we can sit down. It's interesting to watch a man try to do housework, I've no doubt."

"You said something then, Miss Peckham," said Mr. Day, cheerfully, and began industriously daubing the stove covers.

"I brought Mrs. Watkins in here to see you, Mr. Day, 'cause I got your welfare and hers at heart," pursued the spinster.

That sounded rather ominous, and Mr. Day poised the dauber and stared doubtfully from his neighbor to the washed-out looking woman.

"Mrs. Watkins is a widow," went on Miss Peckham.

Mr. Day made a sympathetic sound with his lips, but fell to polishing now, making the stove covers rattle. Miss Peckham raised her voice a notch. "She's a widow, and she's seen trouble."

"We're born to it—as the sparks fly upward," observed Mr. Day, under his breath.

"Mrs. Watkins has come to an age when nobody can say she's flighty, I sh'd hope," continued Miss Peckham. "She's settled. And she's got to earn her livin'."

"Now, Marthy!" objected Mrs. Watkins.

"Well, 'tis so, Sophrony, ain't it?" demanded her friend.

"Oh, of course, expenses are heavy, and it's desirable that I should—should—well, add to my income. But I've come to no great age, Marthy Peckham, I'd have you know!"

"Oh, bosh, Sophrony!" ejaculated Miss Peckham. "Well, as I say, Mr. Day, Mrs. Watkins is a widow, and she needs a settled place."

"Just what are you trying to get at, Miss Peckham? I don't understand you," asked Mr. Day, his face actually getting rather pale.

Neither did Janice understand; but her father looked so funny that the girl giggled again. Miss Peckham gave her a reproving glance.

"I sh'd think you'd understand your need well enough, Broxton Day," she said sternly. "First of all that gal ought to be learned manners. But that's incidental, as you might say. What I am tellin' you is, that here's your chance to get a housekeeper that'll amount to something."

"Oh! Ah! I see!" exclaimed Mr. Day in staccato fashion, and evidently very much relieved. "Mrs. Watkins is looking for a position?"

"Well, she ought to be. But it does take a stick of dynamite to get her goin', seems to me. Speak up, Sophrony!"

"Why, I'm pleased to meet you, Mr. Day," said the faded-out lady, simpering. "I've been considerin' acceptin' a position such as you have. Of course, I ain't used to working out—"

"Oh, fiddlesticks? put in Miss Peckham, "He don't care nothin' about that, Sophrony. He can see you ain't no common servant."

"Assuredly I can see that, Mrs. Watkins," said Mr. Day, suavely. "But do you think you would care to accept such a position as I can offer you?"

"I should be pleased to try it," said Mrs. Watkins, with a sigh. "Of course, it would be a comedown for me—"

"Land's sake, Sophrony!" ejaculated her friend, "with me to sponsor you, I don't guess anybody in this neighborhood will undertake to criticize."

"Wait a moment," said Mr. Day, and Janice was delighted to see that he was not entirely carried off his feet. "Let us understand each other. I pay so much a month," naming a fair sum, "and I expect the cooking and all the housework except the heavy washing done by whoever takes the place."

"Well, now, Mr. Day," began Mrs. Watkins, "you see, I shouldn't expect to be treated just like an ordinary servant. Oh, no."

"That's what I tell her," snorted Miss Peckham.

"Folks that have had the off-scourings of the earth, like you have had, Broxton Day, in your kitchen, ain't used to having lady-help about the house."

"I hope Janice and I will appreciate Mrs. Watkins' efforts, if she wishes to try the place," Mr. Day said, in rather a bewildered tone.

"That gal herself can do a good deal I sh'd think, morning and night. She ain't helpless," said Miss Peckham, staring at Janice.

"Janice has her school work to do," said Mr. Day firmly. "She takes care of her own room and does other little things. But unless Mrs. Watkins wishes to undertake the full responsibility of the housework it would be useless for her to come."

He was firm on that point. The faded-out lady smiled feebly. "I am always willing to do as far as I can," she sighed. "The work for three people can't be so much. I am perfectly willing to try, Mr. Day. I'm sure nothin' could be fairer than that."

Daddy and Janice looked at each other for an instant. It flashed through both their minds that the faded-out lady did not sound very encouraging. Later when the two had gone, daddy put away the blacklug tools, saying:

"Well, it will be a new experience, Janice. She is different from anybody we have ever had before."

"Oh, Daddy! I think she's funny," gasped the girl.

He smiled at her broadly, shaking his head. "I presume she does seem funny to you. But at least she is a ladylike person. We must treat her nicely."

"Why, as though we wouldn't!" gasped Janice.

"But don't offend her by showing her you are amused," warned her father. "That may be hard, for it does strike me that Mrs. Sophronia Watkins is a character, and no mistake."

"I wouldn't hurt her feelings for the world," declared Janice. "But, Daddy, do you suppose it is rouge she has on her face? And does she use a lipstick?"

"For goodness' sake! Where did you hear about such things?" he laughed.

"Why, of course I know something about most everything," declared Janice, quite confidently. "And her face doesn't look just natural."

"Don't get too curious, Janice," he said laughing. "If she can cook and keep the house clean, as far as I am concerned she can paint herself like a Piute chief."

One shock, however, Mr. Broxton Day was not exactly prepared for. Mrs. Watkins came to the house the next day for a late breakfast—which she got herself, Janice and her father having already cooked their own and eaten it.

"I haven't been used to getting up very early," confessed the woman, preening a bit. "But, of course, I shall change my breakfast hour to conform with yours."

"I hope so," said Broxton Day, hurrying away to business.

He got the shock mentioned at night when he came to the dinner table. The table was very neatly set; but there were three places. The meal was not elaborate but the food seemed to be cooked all right. Mrs. Watkins brought in the dishes and then sat down with Mr. Day and Janice to eat.

Janice did not look at daddy, but her own face was rather red and she was uncomfortable.

"Your daughter," said Mrs. Watkins severely, informs me that you have not been in the habit of having anybody at your table at meal time but your two selves. Of course, I could only engage to assist you here with the understanding that I am to be considered one of the family."

"Why—er—yes; that will be all right," Janice's father said, though a bit doubtfully. "It would scarcely do to consider you, Mrs. Watkins, in the same category as the ordinary help Janice and I have had."

"I am glad you see it that way," said the faded-out lady. And she was quite colorless at the moment. It was evident that the rouge and lip-stick were used only on important occasions.

"I am glad you see it that way," she repeated. "I could consider no let-down as a lady, in accepting any position. Manual labor is no shame; but one must be true to one's upbringing."

"Quite so, Mrs. Watkins—quite so," agreed Mr. Day.

"Janice, child," said the woman quickly, "run out to the kitchen and get the rest of the potatoes. And see if the coffee is ready."

Her tone rather startled Janice; but she did as she was bade and that without even a glance at daddy.

"I never consider I have had a real dinner," Mrs. Watkins continued, "unless I have a bit of good cheese with it. I find none in the house, Mr. Day. Indeed," she added, "your pantry sadly needs stocking up."

"Why—er—that may be so. We have been living a good deal 'catch-as-catch-can,'" and he smiled upon her. "Give Janice a list of the things you need, and she will go to Harriman's for you in the morning."

"No. I prefer to do my own marketing, always. A child like Janice—thank you Janice, for the potatoes—can scarcely be expected to use judgment in the selection of provisions. You might telephone to the stores where you are in the habit of trading and inform them that I have charge of your household now. They will then expect me."

"Oh, well! All right," he said, but doubtfully.

"I have not yet brought my bag from Marthy's, next door. I will go after it when dinner is over, while

Janice clears the table. I will send for my trunk, which is at Marietteville, later."

"Suit yourself, Mrs. Watkins," said Mr. Day.

"Have you any choice as to which of the two empty bedrooms I consider mine?" the woman asked, heaping her plate a second time with food.

"What's that?" asked Mr. Day, rather non-plussed.

"Which chamber shall I sleep in?" she repeated, quite calmly.

"Why—I— Really, Mrs. Watkins, isn't the small room beyond Janice's quite sufficient for you?" he asked, a little color coming into his face now.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Day! I could not consider that for a moment. Why, that is the girl's room—merely a bedroom for the hired help. I could not possibly consider myself in the same class—"

"Except on pay-day, Mrs. Watkins?" asked the man bluntly. "We are glad to have you with us, of course; and we will consider your quite different status in the family, as you demand. But—"

"No, Mr. Day," Mrs. Watkins said with decision, interrupting him.

"I could not contemplate for a moment occupying the girl's room. Why you might want it again any time."

"Not while you are with us," said Mr. Day wonderingly. "I do not think I could afford to have two helpers."

"It does not matter," said the faded-out lady stubbornly. "Janice, get the coffee now. It does not matter. I refuse positively to sleep in that little, poked-up room. I prefer my windows opening to the east."

"But the east room is the one Mrs. Day always used," said the man, with sudden hoarseness. "I cannot allow you to use that one. The spare chamber on the other side of the hall, if you insist."

"Very well," said the woman with a small toss of her head. "Will you have a cup of coffee, Mr. Day?"

"No, Mrs. Watkins. I prefer a cup of tea at dinner time. A New England habit that has clung to me."

"Indeed? Janice, go and make your father a cup of tea, that's a good child."

"Never mind, Janice," said daddy quickly. "I do not wish it now. And, Mrs. Watkins."

"Yes, Mr. Day?" simpered the faded-out lady.

"I wish it distinctly understood that Janice is to give her complete attention to her school work between dinner and bedtime, unless she should chance to have more freedom during those hours than is usual. She will assist you as you may have need after school, and even in the morning before she goes to school. But the hours after dinner are for her school work. Do you quite understand me, Mrs. Watkins?"

Mrs. Watkins' pale, wrinkled face did not color in the least, nor did the washed-out brown eyes change their expression. But there was an added sharpness to the woman's voice:

"You object to Janice's giving me a hand with the lighter tasks, Mr. Day?" she queried.

"Not at all. But her education must not be neglected."

"Ah! I quite understand," sniffed Mrs. Watkins. "You object to my going out this evening then? But I really must have my bag with my toilet requisites."

"I have no wish to restrict your use of the evening, as long as your work is done," said Mr. Day, rising from the table. "Come, Janice, it is time you were at your books."

He led the way into the living room. Mrs. Watkins gave a violent sniff at their departure. Then she finished her coffee.

CHAPTER XIII. STELLA'S PARTY

It was not going to be altogether pleasant sailing with Mrs Watkins in the house. Broxton Day saw that to be the fact, plainly and almost immediately. Janice had realized it even before her father had occasion to mark Mrs. Watkins' most prominent characteristic.

She was a person who was determined to take advantage if she could. In the parlance of the section of the country from which Broxton Day hailed, she was one of those persons who "if you give 'em an inch they take an ell."

From the first she made a strong attempt to carry things with a high hand. Mr. Day was almost sorry he had allowed her to come into the house. Mrs. Watkins did most of the housekeeping from her station in a rocking chair on the porch where she sat, wearing the mitts aforementioned.

Her idea of keeping the house in order was to clean all the rooms that were not absolutely needed, and then close them up tight, draw the shades down and close the blinds, making of each an airless tomb into which Janice was made to feel she must not enter for fear of admitting a speck of dirt.

Most of the work was done on Saturday, when Janice was at home. There was no playtime now for the girl— none at all.

But Janice would not complain. Mrs. Watkins could be very mean and petty, indeed; but to daddy she showed her best side. And as far as he saw, the house was run much better than had been the case of late.

Mrs. Watkins was ladylike in her demeanor. They became used to her sitting at the table with them and quite governing the trend of conversation at meals, as she did. Neither Janice nor her father liked to have the woman bring her tatting, which was her usual evening employment, into the living-room after dinner, for that was the only time when daughter and father could be confidential. But they did not see how they could overcome this annoyance without offending the woman.

At the end of the month Mr. Day was startled by the increase in the household bills. Mrs. Watkins had served them rather better food, it was true, than they had been getting of late; but a good many cutlets, sweetbreads, chops and steaks, seemed never to have appeared on the dinner table.

"I always feel the need of a hearty lunch Mr. Day," sniffed Mrs. Watkins. "I really need it after doing the morning's work. To keep one's self in condition is a duty we owe ourselves don't you think?"

"You seem to have stocked up pretty well with canned goods, Mrs. Watkins," was Broxton Day's rejoinder, now scanning the long memorandum from Harriman's. "Dear, dear! French peas? And imported marmalade? And canned mushrooms? Do you use all these things, Mrs. Watkins?"

"Oh, they are most useful, Mr. Day. One never knows when one may have company or wish to make a special dish. I have been used to the best, Mr. Day. Of course, if you wish to limit my purchases—" and she sniffed.

"Humph! I am not a rich man. We are not in the habit of using imported provisions of this quality. I expect you to buy good food and all that is sufficient. But such luxuries as these we cannot afford."

Mrs. Watkins merely sniffed again. Broxton Day, when he paid the bills at the stores, pointed out to Mr. Harriman and to the butcher that the goods bought seemed to cost considerably more than they previously had.

"Why, Mr. Day, you are buying a different quality of goods from what you have been used to," said Harriman. "Here's butter, for instance. That is our best— print butter, seven cents a pound higher than the tub butter you used to buy. Those eggs are selected white Leghorns, come to us sealed in boxes, and are fifteen cents more a dozen than ordinary fresh eggs."

The butcher told him something else. "Yes, you are getting the best grade of everything we carry, Mr. Day. That lady at your house evidently knows what she wants."

"Look here!" exclaimed Broxton Day, with some heat. "I haven't suddenly become a millionaire. I can't stand these prices. When she comes in here to buy, give her the grade of meat we have always had. And remember that I can't, and won't, pay for sweetbreads at a dollar and a half a pair."

"Why, bless you!" said the butcher, grinning, "I've never seen the lady. She always telephones. She's some relative of yours, isn't she, Mr. Day? She certainly does order high-handed."

"And she wanted to do the marketing herself," groaned Broxton Day, as he went away after paying

the bill. "I wonder what I am up against? Things do go better at the house; but I wonder if I can stand the pressure."

He did not know how much Janice had to do with making things at the house go so much more smoothly. The little girl was determined that daddy should not be troubled by household matters if she could help it.

With Olga Cedarstrom or the half-foolish Delia in the house, it was impossible to keep from daddy's eyes the things that went wrong. Now it was different. Mrs. Watkins was very sly in making everything appear all right before Broxton Day. On the other hand Janice showed an equal amount of slyness (of which she had been previously accused!) in helping hide the numerous things that would have troubled daddy.

There was waste in the kitchen. Mrs. Watkins was a big eater, but a delicate eater. She never wished to see the same thing on the table twice. A poor family could have been fed fairly well from what the woman flung into the garbage.

Janice had never been used to seeing such recklessness, even when only an ignorant servant was doing the work. At those times food was bought with a less lavish hand. Now there was seldom anything left, so Mrs. Watkins said, from one meal to warm up for another.

"I don't know what to do—I really don't," Janice confessed to Any Carringford who, by this time, had become her very closest friend and confidante. "Daddy has many business troubles, I know. It bothers him greatly to be annoyed by household matters. And he ought not to be so annoyed. But that woman!"

"It is too bad, honey," Amy said. "I wish my mother could help you. She knows everything about housekeeping."

"I know that is so," agreed Janice. "I wish Mrs. Watkins was a lady like your mother, Amy. Then the house would go all right and daddy needn't be bothered at all. I feel I ought to do something; but I don't know what."

Aside from cooking the meals, which she did very nicely, it must be confessed, Mrs. Watkins gradually allowed most of the responsibility for the housework to slide on to Janice's young shoulders.

The young girl got up an hour earlier than usual, and she busied herself sweeping and dusting and making beds right up to the minute she had to seize her books and lunch and run to school. She was quite sure that Mrs. Watkins went back to bed after breakfast, and really did little towards keeping the house in order until afternoon.

And if there was any scrubbing, or hard work to do, that was left until Saturday. Nobody ever saw Mrs. Watkins on her knees, unless it was at her devotions!

However, Janice Day was too sanguine to be made melancholy by these affairs. She was of a naturally cheerful nature—an attribute she inherited from her father. It took more than the faded-out lady to cause the girl overwhelming anxiety.

The stroke that had been the hardest for her to bear since her mother's death was the loss of the treasure-box and the heirlooms in it. Whether or not the Swedish girl, Olga Cedarstrom, had carried the valuables away with her, Janice felt all the time that she had only herself to blame because of the loss. And she realized that the loss of the packet of letters had saddened daddy dreadfully.

"If I had not been careless! If I had put the box back into the wall-safe before I went to bed! If I had remembered when I saw Arlo Junior and the cats! Dear me," murmured Janice more than once, "'If,' 'if,' 'if!' If the rabbit hadn't stopped for a nap beside the track, the tortoise would not have won the race."

"But, what under the sun," Gummy Carringford asked, "could have become of Olga and her fella? That is certainly a mystery."

With Amy and her brother, the boy with the odd name, Janice often discussed the lost treasure-box. She and daddy did not speak so much together about it as at first. It seemed to be hopelessly lost.

With the Carringfords Janice had become very friendly, as has been said. In the first place, Mrs. Carringford very much liked Janice Day. And how could she and her children help but be grateful to the little girl who lived at Eight-forty-five Knight Street?

The birthday party at Stella Lathams' house was now at hand. Mrs. Carringford had not yet been able to make over Mr. Day's clothes to fit Gummy; and he was not invited to the party, anyway. He was one grade in advance of the three girls in school, and Stella considered this excuse enough for not inviting

him to her birthday fete. But Amy was radiant in the pink and white frock Janice had donated.

"Never mind," said Gummy, who was of a cheerful spirit, too. "I'm glad the party will be on Friday instead of Saturday night. I'll be out of the store early enough Friday night to come to the Latham place to beau you girls home."

"Maybe we'll have beaux of our own and won't want you," said Amy roguishly.

"Don't mind what she says, Gummy," cried Janice. "I won't have any beau but you. I shall expect you. So don't fail me."

Stella Latham's expectations had been high, indeed, regarding her party; nor was she disappointed. Her father and mother had done everything they thought would please their only daughter; and surely the cost had not been considered.

The house, and the grounds around it, were charmingly lighted—the outside lamps being those gaudy and curious forms containing lighted candles, and called Japanese lanterns.

The Latham place on the Dover pike, was one of the show places of the countryside. Mr. Latham was wealthy and could well afford to give his daughter's friends an entertainment that might better, perhaps, have been offered older guests.

Stella was growing up too fast. Because she was aping older and foolishly fashionable folk, she was becoming an exacting, precocious girl—not at all the innocent and joyous child she should have been at fourteen years of age.

Her mother feared that all was not right with Stella; yet she was too weak and easy-going a woman to correct her daughter with a strong hand. She had observed Janice Day on two occasions when the latter had come with other young friends of Stella's to the house, and had commented favorably upon Janice's character.

"There is a girl you might pattern after, Stella, and it would do you good," said the somewhat unwise Mrs. Latham.

"Humph! I don't see why you say that, Ma," said Stella. "Janice Day isn't half as pretty as Mary Pierce. And she dresses in half mourning because of her mother's death. She hasn't got any style about her."

"She is a very shrewd and sensible young person," declared Mrs. Latham. "I wish you were more like her."

It was from this remark that Stella had derived the statement that Janice was "sly." That term, quite justly, might have been applied to Stella. For Stella would have cared very little if neither Janice nor Amy Carringford had come to the birthday party.

Only Mr. Latham had insisted that his daughter should invite every girl in her grade at school. He was wiser than his wife.

"You don't want any ill-feelings among your mates," he told Stella.

Janice Day, therefore, whether "shrewd" or "sly," had helped Stella in the matter of fulfilling Mr. Latham's command. Amy, as sweet as a rose, appeared in the pretty pink and white dress that had been made by the dear fingers of Janice's mother.

At first Janice could scarcely look at her friend in the frock without feeling the tears start to her eyes. But, then, she knew that mother would have approved fully of this gift she had made. And Amy Carringford was good and attractive.

There was such a large number of young folks at the Latham place that evening that when it came time for the refreshments, every one of the farmer's hired help was called in, either as waiters or in the kitchen.

It took a good many waiters, too, for there were many steps to be taken back and forth to the kitchen. Mr. Latham had had a large canvas canopy stretched out in one corner of the yard, and under this were set the tables. And pretty, indeed, did they look under the soft lights of the numerous candles in their shiny whiteness of heavy napery, polished silver, dainty porcelain, and brilliant cutglass.

What appealed more, however, to the hearty appetites of the young people were the quantities of

sandwiches, the olives and pickles and the bowls of salad, the rich cakes, the heaps of ice-cream, the hot chocolate. The Lathams were lavish at all times, and when they gave a formal party the table was heaped with the richest and most delicious food they could provide. No wonder it took many hands to make things run smoothly.

"Goodness!" said Stella, within hearing of Janice and Amy, "there's such a crowd in that kitchen you've no idea! And some of the help are perfectly useless! You know, mother had the folks come up from both tenant houses to help, and one of the women—the Swedish one —has just broken one of mother's biggest cutglass dishes."

"I thought I heard a crash out there," said Janice.

"It is too bad," Amy added. "Of course the woman did not mean to."

"Well!" sniffed Stella, "that won't make the dish whole. It's worth money, too."

"Dear me," said Amy reflectively. "I guess Swedish girls must be bad luck. You know, it was a Swedish girl that stole that box from Janice."

"What box?" asked Stella, quickly. "A jewel box?"

"All the jewelry I owned," said Janice, with rather a rueful smile. "But more than that. Mother's miniature —and other things. At least, we suppose that Olga took the box when she left us so hurriedly."

"Olga!" exclaimed Stella. "Fancy! You don't mean that was her name?"

"Yes, 'Olga' she was called," Janice said wonderingly.

"That's the name Of this girl that broke the dish."

"Why, how funny!" exclaimed Amy

"That's not funny," rejoined Janice seriously. "Is she named Olga Cedarstrom?"

"Goodness! I don't know her last name. She comes from one of our tenant houses. It's far away. Mother sent her home with a flea in her ear, now I tell you, after she had broken that dish."

Janice was disturbed. "I wish you knew her last name. What sort of looking girl is she? Are you sure she has already left the house?"

"Come on!" cried Amy, jumping up. "Let's run around there and see. Take us to the kitchen door, Stella."

"Well, yes. We can look. But I guess she has gone," said the farmer's daughter.

They had been sitting on the front porch. Stella led them quickly around to the rear of the big house.

CHAPTER XIV. COULD IT BE OLGA?

It was a beautiful evening, this of Stella Latham's birthday party. It was not often that the climate gave the people of Greensboro, this early in the season, such a soft and temperate night.

There was no moon, but the stars plentifully besprinkled the heavens, and their light bathed the area surrounding the Latham house, beyond the radiance of the Japanese lanterns, sufficiently for the three girls to see objects at some distance.

Before they reached the back door of the farmhouse, Amy cried aloud:

"Oh, girls! What's that? A ghost?"

"Ghost your granny!" exclaimed Stella. "That is somebody running along the hedge in a white skirt."

"It is a woman or a girl," Janice agreed, staring at the rapidly moving figure. "Is there a path there?"

"That is the path to one tenant house. Wait till I ask Anna, the cook."

She hurried to the back door, and her two friends, waiting at the pasture-lane bars, heard her ask if

the woman who had broken the dish had gone.

"The awkward thing!" exclaimed Anna, the cook. "She's just this minute left."

"What is her name, Anna?" asked Stella, knowing that Janice was deeply interested.

"I don't know, Miss. Some outlandish Swedish name."

"Olga?"

"Humph! Maybe!"

"Olga Cedarstrom?"

"Goodness me! Don't ask me what else besides 'Olga' she is named," said the irritable cook, "for I couldn't tell you. I couldn't tell you my own name, scarcely, to-night. I'm that flurried."

Hearing all this plainly, Janice murmured to Amy: "I wish I dared follow her. Suppose it should be Olga?"

"Well, she is going right to that small house that belongs to Mr. Latham. Stella says she lives there, whoever she is."

Just then a figure popped up beside them. Gummy's cheerful voice demanded:

"What's the trouble, girls?"

"Oh!" cried Janice.

"Goodness!" said the boy's sister. "How you scare one, Gummy! Why, it isn't near time to go home."

"I got off earlier than I expected. So I came out and have been hanging around at the back here for half an hour."

"Oh. Gummy! did you see that woman?" Janice asked, seizing his jacket sleeve.

"What woman?"

"See there?" cried his sister, pointing. "That white thing going over the hill."

"Yes, I saw her. She came out of the kitchen, and she was crying. They had a row in there."

"Oh, Gummy! What did she look like?" murmured Janice.

"Yes, Gummy, tell us quick!" urged his sister.

"I tell you she was crying, and she had her handkerchief up to her face. So I did not see much of it. But her hair was 'lasses color, and she had it bobbed back so tight that I guess she couldn't shut her eyes until she undid it," chuckled Gummy.

"Oh, Amy!" ejaculated Janice, with clasped hands, "that is the way Olga used to do her hair."

"Not Olga, the Swede, who robbed you?" demanded the boy, interested at once.

"Yes. It might be Olga. If you had only seen her face—"

"I'll see her face all right," declared Gummy, starting off.

"I'll tell you just where she goes and what she looks like. Don't you girls go home without me."

He was gone on the track of the flying woman like a dart. He was out of sight, being in dark garments, before Stella came back from the kitchen door.

"Don't tell her about Gummy," whispered Amy quickly. "She'll think, maybe, that he's been hanging around like those strange boys over the fence in front."

"Not a word," agreed Janice, smiling. "I wouldn't give Gummy away."

"There isn't anybody in the kitchen who knows that girl very well," said Stella, who was really showing herself interested in Janice Day's trouble. "I asked them all. This girl, Olga, is staying with Mrs. Johnson. Mrs. Johnson has a little baby to care for and couldn't come to-night. So this friend of

hers came up to help. And she helped all right!" concluded Stella, with emphasis. "That dish is in a thousand pieces."

"Isn't it too bad?" said Amy, sympathetically.

"It's a mean shame," Stella declared. "I bet she'd steal. You'd better come over here tomorrow and find her. I'll bring you back in the auto with me after I go shopping, and we'll ride around by Mr. Johnson's house. He's one of father's farmers, you know."

"I'll tell daddy," Janice said, but in some doubt. "I'm awfully much obliged to you, Stella. You are real kind."

This pleased Stella Latham. She liked being praised, and as long as kindness did not cost her much of anything, she was glad to be kind.

The entertainment of her boy and girl friends continued gaily, despite the breaking of the big cutglass dish. It was almost eleven o'clock when the party broke up and the guests began to leave, shouting their congratulations to Stella as they went.

Janice and Amy Carringford found Gummy waiting for them at the front gate.

"Oh, Gummy!" whispered Janice, "did you see her?"

"Sure," declared the boy. "That's what I went after, wasn't it? A sight of the Swedish girl's phisamahogany?"

"Gummy!" remonstrated his sister.

"But was it Olga?" demanded Janice, too deeply interested in the subject of Olga to be patient with sisterly reproof.

"Oh, say! How can I be sure of that? I never saw her before."

"Tell us all about it, Gummy," urged Janice.

"Why, you see," said the excited boy. "I ran's hard as I could and I overbrook that girl at the took"

"What? What?" gasped Janice. "Say that again, Gummy."

"Oh—I—"

His sister went off into a gale of laughter. "Oh, Gummy!" she cried, "you 'overbrook' her at the 'took,' did you? Your tongue's twisted again."

"Oh, pshaw!" exclaimed Gummy. "Of course, I mean I overtook her at the brook."

"That's better," giggled Amy. "But you did get awfully 'gummed up,' Gummy, didn't you?"

"Huh!" he snorted.

"He's the most awful boy you ever saw, Janice. He is always getting twisted in his talk."

"Like the young man in church who asked the girl if he could 'occupew a seat in this pie?'"

"Even worse than that," cried Amy, much to her brother's disgust. "Why, years ago when we lived in Napsburg, where the twins were born, he made an awful mistake—and to our minister, too."

"Aw," objected Gummy, "can't you keep anything to yourself?"

"Go on," urged Janice.

"Now, I say!" again protested the boy.

"Listen, Janice!" giggled Amy. "It's awfully funny. The minister met Gummy on the street and asked him what we had decided to call the twins.

"You know, I expect to christen them, Gumswith,' he said to Gummy, 'and I want to be sure to get the names right. What are they?'

"And what do you suppose Gummy said?"

"I am sure I couldn't guess," Janice declared. "Let's see: the twins are Sydney and Kate, aren't they?"

"That is right," giggled Amy. "But Gummy told the minister we had decided to call them 'Kidney and Steak'!"

Janice herself was convulsed with laughter at this. Gummy was annoyed about it.

"Why don't you keep something to yourself once in a while, Amy?" he growled to his sister. "Janice will think I'm a perfect chump."

"Come on now, Gummy," Janice interrupted cheerily. "You are keeping something to yourself that I very much want to know."

"Oh! About that Swede! Amy knocked it clear out of my head," declared the boy.

"Well, let us hear about it," urged Janice.

"Why, I overtook the girl at the brook," said Gummy, getting the statement right this time. "She might be just the girl you are looking for, from what you told me about her looks. I saw her face plainly when I passed her."

"Where did she go?"

"To that little house at the end of the farm road, just where it opens into the turnpike. Oh, I've seen the place before. I drove out past there the other day for Mr. Harriman."

"That must be the Johnson's house," Janice said. "That is what Stella said the tenant's name was."

"Well, she went in there," said Gummy. "She seemed in a dreadful hurry. She pounded on the door, and she called to them in Swedish. I waited behind the hedge until she got in and the family was quieted down again."

"That's good! It's 'most sure to be Olga, Janice, and you can see her to-morrow and get your box back—at least, find out where it is," said Amy encouragingly.

"Well, I'll tell daddy," sighed Janice. "It may be the same Olga. I hope so. And if she has got my box of treasures—well! I'll forgive her anything if I only get back mother's picture and daddy's letters."

CHAPTER XV. THE LOST TRAIL

Mr. Day had not yet gone to bed when the young folks reached the house; but Mrs. Watkins had long since retired. The light in the living room assured Janice that her father awaited her return, and bidding Amy and Gummy good-night at the gate, she ran into the house in great excitement.

"Oh, Daddy! Daddy! Guess!" she cried to him. "Just think! She broke a big cutglass dish, and I'm 'most sure it's Olga—"

"Wait!" exclaimed Mr. Day, putting up both hands. "Mercy, I pray, my dear. I don't know what you are talking about."

"But you know Olga, Daddy."

"To my sorrow," he groaned, "It can't be that you have found out anything about that Swedish girl? I have been searching Pickletown again this evening."

"Oh, Daddy!" she cried, "maybe Olga is just where you can find her to-morrow. And she did break one of Mrs. Latham's very best dishes, and—"

"Let us hear all about this in due order," laughed Broxton Day. "I can see that you are far too much excited to go promptly to bed. Explain yourself, my dear."

When he had heard it all, he did not appear to be as much impressed as Janice expected him to be. It was a small chance, in his opinion, that the girl who had broken Mrs. Latham's dish was the same Olga who had for two months held sway in the Day kitchen.

"But we will make a pilgrimage to the cottage on the back of the Latham farm," Daddy promised. "If I can get away from the bank early to-morrow afternoon, we will go. I know the place, and there is a

family of Swedish people living there. Of course, by chance, it might be Olga your friend Gummy followed home."

"Oh, no! It would be providential, Daddy," Janice declared, smiling. "You say yourself that Providence is not chance."

"True," he agreed, with gravity. "If we get back the treasure-box, with all in it, I shall be very, very thankful indeed, and shall consider it a Providential happening."

"Daddy, dear!" whispered Janice.

It was at these times, when they spoke of the lost treasures, that Janice was so heart-stricken because of daddy's expression of countenance. Those letters from her dear, dead mother, which her father prized so highly, were continually in Broxton Day's mind. She realized it was a loss that time would hardly mend.

"And all my fault! All my fault!" she sobbed when she was alone in her bedroom. "Had I not been so dreadfully careless Olga would never have got hold of that box when she was mad and run off with it. And suppose she doesn't think the things in it are worth much? She might throw them away!"

So, despite the good time they had had at Stella Latham's party, Janice went to bed in no happy frame of mind.

Saturday was bound to be a very busy day; and Janice did not wake up early. Daddy left a note for her on the table saying he would be at home with some kind of a conveyance not long after the bank closed at one o'clock.

She knew what that meant. They were to ride out to the Johnson house and make inquiries for the girl, Olga. Janice was sorry she had slept so late, for Mrs. Watkins expected her to do what she termed "her share" of the work.

"If your pa lets you sit up till all hours, so that you're not fit for anything in the morning, should I be blamed?" complained the faded-out lady. "I'm sure I have enough to do every day, and all day. I have got to have some help on Saturdays and that is all there is to it."

Janice knew well enough that the reason the work piled up so upon the last day of the week was because it was allowed to accumulate through the other days. But the kitchen floor did have to be scrubbed. It was a sight!

If the woman would only mop it every other day it would not be so bad; but it seemed to Janice that Mrs. Watkins would just wade through dirt to her knees in the kitchen before she would use either mop or scrubbing brush.

It was true that daddy did not often look into the kitchen, now that there was somebody supposedly capable of keeping the room, as well as the rest of the house, in order. And Janice was glad he did not look around the house much.

Such training as she had enjoyed under her mother's eye had made Janice thorough. Mrs. Day had been a thoroughly good housekeeper.

And she had always kept so well up with her housework that there were never any difficult jobs left to haunt one, and her house looked always neat. Nor was she obliged to keep half her prettily furnished rooms shut up to keep them clean!

Janice did all she could on this short Saturday morning. She had first of all to be sure that daddy's room was dusted—every bit. Then there were the halls and stairs to do. After those, the porches must be swept.

"For you know," sighed Mrs. Watkins, "it looks so much better for a child like you to be out sweeping the porch and paths than what it would me."

Janice could not quite understand this reasoning. But she knew it must be a deal easier for Mrs. Watkins to rock in a chair in the house than to wield the broom. That went without saying.

She did not think of lunch, although the faded-out lady did not neglect her own. Janice was down on her hands and knees, with scrubbing brush and pail, when the housekeeper carried some savory dish or other into the dining room.

"I presume since you had your breakfast so late you will not care to eat now," said the woman. To tell the truth, a tear or two dropped into the strong soda water in the pail.

"Though I don't believe salt will help start the grease-spots on this floor," Janice thought, rubbing her eyes with the wrist of one hand. "There! I am a regular cry-baby. I said I would do something to relieve daddy of bothering about the housework. And if scrubbing a floor is the best I can do—"

Suddenly a shadow appeared at the door. Janice looked up and squealed. There was daddy himself—at least an hour and a half too early.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Broxton Day, rather sternly, "what is the meaning of this?"

"Dirt on the floor boards—scrubbing brush—elbow grease," retorted his daughter, making vigorous explanatory motions. "Didn't you ever see a 'scrub lady' before, Daddy?"

"Humph! so there is a Cinderella in the house is there?" he said.

Mrs. Watkins opened the dining-room door. She was swallowing a mouthful which seemed to go down hard. Mr. Day's unexpected appearance disturbed her.

"Oh, Mr. Day," she cried, feebly, "have—have you had your lunch?"

"I have, Mrs. Watkins," he replied. Then to Janice: "No matter how much you may like to scrub floors, my dear, you will have to leave this one for Mrs. Watkins to finish. There is a car at the door. I have borrowed it for a couple of hours, and you must make haste and put on something different and come with me to look for Olga."

"Well," Janice got up from her knees slowly.

"Hurry," said daddy sternly. And he stood and waited until Janice went out of the room.

"So you will not have lunch, Mr. Day?" asked Mrs. Watkins coolly.

"No. But there is one thing I will have, Mrs. Watkins," he said sternly. "I will have you attend to your work, and not put it on Janice, while you remain here!"

"I do not understand you, sir," said the woman, her nose in the air.

"Let me make myself plain then," said Broxton Day. "I will not pay you wages to shift such work as this," pointing to the scrub-pail, "upon my daughter. I want that understood here and now. I can no longer give you carte blanche at the grocery and provision store. I will do the marketing myself hereafter. You will furnish the lists."

"Sir?" ejaculated Mrs. Watkins haughtily.

"I have kept tabs on the accounts this last week. In no seven days since I was married have the expenses for the table been half what they have been this week."

"I am not used to a poverty-stricken household, Mr. Day!" sneered Mrs. Watkins.

"But you soon will be," Broxton Day told her grimly, "if I let you have a free hand in this way. I am not a rich man, and I soon will be a poor one at this rate."

"I want you to understand, Mr. Day, that no lady can demean herself."

"Wait a moment," said the man, still grimly. "I did not hire you to be a lady. I hired you to do the housework. I can't have you here unless you keep your share of the contract. Please remember that, Mrs. Watkins."

He left her abruptly and walked through to the front of the house. He saw that at her place on the dining table was the remains of a broiled squab-chicken—a very tasty bit for a hard working woman like Mrs. Watkins.

"Are you ready, daughter?" he called up the stairway.

"Just a minute or two, Daddy," replied Janice.

She felt that they were in trouble again. All she had tried to do to keep him from knowing just how badly things about the house were going had been for naught.

But she winked back the tears and "practised a smile" in her looking glass before she ran down to

join daddy on the porch. There was a big touring car out in front. Janice knew it belonged to the vice-president of the Farmers and Merchants Bank.

"Oh, what a fine car, Daddy!" she whispered, clinging to his hand. "Let's play it is ours—while we are in it, of course."

"Would you like to have a car my dear?" he asked her, as they settled themselves in the tonneau, and the driver started the machine.

"Oh!" she cried. "I could just jump out of my skin when I think of it! Every time I ride with Stella Latham I'm just as covetous as I can be. I guess I am real wicked, Daddy."

"I shouldn't be surprised," he returned, smiling. "It would be nice to have all the comforts and the luxuries of the rich—without their troubles."

"M-mm!" said Janice. "But even their troubles can't be so bad. Not as bad as poor people's troubles."

"Like ours?" he returned, smiling down at her.

"It is a fact that we cannot keep a hired girl. We're not as lucky as the man I heard of who was boasting of having kept a cook a whole month. But it seemed that this month his house was quarantined for scarlet fever."

"Oh, Daddy!" giggled Janice. "Let's get a yellow, or a red, card from the Board of Health, and tack it up outside the door."

"And so keep Mrs. Watkins, whether or no? I am not sure that we can stand her, my dear."

"We-ell, there are worse," Janice confessed. "And we have had them," commented her father rather grimly. "Ah, that's the little house where the Johnsons live!"

"Oh, dear me! If it should be our Olga!"

"We'll know about that pretty soon," said Mr. Day comfortingly. "Stop here, Harry."

The car was halted, and Mr. Day jumped out and went up to the house. When he knocked a tall, pale woman, with a little baby in her arms, opened the narrow door. It took but a glance to reveal her nationality.

"You bane want my hoosban'?" asked the Swedish woman.

"No, Mrs. Johnson," replied Mr. Day. "I came to inquire about a young woman that I believe is staying here."

"No vooman here but me," declared the other, shaking her head vigorously.

"What? Haven't you a friend here named Olga?"

"Olga bane gone," declared the woman sullenly.

"Gone away? exclaimed Mr. Day. "Since last evening?"

"She bane gone."

"Are you Mrs. Johnson?" asked the man, earnestly.

"My name bane Yonson—yes," she agreed. "I don't know nottin' 'bout Olga. She bane gone. She did not mane to break dish, anyway."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Day, remembering what Janice had told him about the accident at the Latham's the evening before. "We have not come about the dish. It is for another matter entirely that we wish to find Olga."

"I not know where Olga bane go," pursued Mrs. Johnson, shaking her head vigorously.

"She went away this morning, then?"

"Yah. She bane go dis mornin'."

"Is her name Olga Cedarstrom?"

"No! No!" exclaimed Mrs. Johnson, shaking her head vigorously. "You not b'know dis Olga. She 'nudder girl."

"Where is your husband?" asked Mr. Day hopelessly. "Perhaps he can tell me more about her."

"Yon Yonson gone to Dover," declared his wife, suddenly shutting the door and leaving Mr. Broxton Day outside on the step.

CHAPTER XVI. A LETTER FROM POKETOWN

"It looks as though we had come upon a fool's errand," said Mr. Day, coming back to the car and his daughter. "Mrs. Johnson says that girl was not named Cedarstrom, and that she has already gone away."

"Do you suppose it is the truth, Daddy?" asked the anxious Janice.

"Well, it is probably the truth. All Olgas are not named 'Cedarstrom,' of course. And I fancy the girl was frightened because of the broken cutglass dish and escaped early this morning."

"Why? Would Mrs. Latham try to make her pay for it?"

"Perhaps. At least, this mysterious Olga thought she would be made to pay for the dish. Or perhaps she feared arrest. Sometimes these foreigners are very ignorant regarding our laws. She might easily have been frightened away."

"But if she is our Olga—"

"This woman here is stubborn. She will probably tell us nothing more about her friend. And she said flatly that the name was not Cedarstrom."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Janice, "it is too, too bad."

"It is too bad that the trail seems lost. I will try to see Mr. Johnson himself. We will make sure that the girl was not the one we are after. But, you see, we are inquiring for Olga for a reason that is likely to frighten her and her friends. I think some of those people over in Pickletown might tell me more than they do about Olga and that Willie Sangreen."

"It is just too bad!" half sobbed Janice. "I hoped we should find the treasure-box this time."

"Have patience. Rome was not built in a day," said her father.

"We're not building Rome," the girl retorted, but trying to smile again. "I guess even that was an easier job than finding a lost Swedish girl." "Don't worry, honey."

"But I can't help worrying," said Janice, sobbing again.

"You are overwrought, my dear. Don't let your mind run upon unpleasant things. That treasure-box. "Will never be found, Daddy!" cried his little daughter. "I am sure! And if it isn't found I don't—don't—know—what I—shall—do."

He put his arm about her and hugged Janice tight against his side. "Don't lose hope so easily. And see here! Here is something new I forgot to tell you."

"What is it, Daddy?" she asked, as he began to search an inner pocket of his coat.

"A letter. From your Aunt Almira. Just listen to it."

"Oh, Daddy! From Aunt Almira in—in Poketown?"

"Yes. My half-brother's wife—and a good soul she is."

He drew the letter from its envelope and unfolded it. He began to read the epistle with a smile wreathing his lips, for Aunt Almira's communication was unintentionally funny:

"Dear Brocky:

"Jase won't never get around to writing you, far as I see, so I had better do so before you get the suspicion that we are all dead. We might as well be and buried, too, here in Poketown—for it is right next door to a cemetery for deadness, I do believe. You know what it was when you was lucky enough to get out of it twenty years ago. Well, it is worse now. There has been nothing new in Poketown since you went away, excepting the town pump's been painted once.

"That time you came to see us with Laura, when Janice was a little girl—"

"Why, Daddy!" interrupted Janice, her eyes round with wonder, "I don't remember Poketown at all."

"You were too little to recall that visit. I have only been back there once since you and your dear mother and I visited Jase and Almira." Then he went on, reading aloud:

"You remember the house needed painting and the front gate hung by one hinge. Well, it still needs painting and that one hinge has give up the ghost now. So you see, there hasn't been many changes. You're the only Day, I guess, that ever had any "get up and get" to them.

"But my heart has been full of thoughts of you since we heard of poor Laura's death. We often speak of you and wonder how you and that little girl get on all stark alone. I know how I should feel if Jase and Marty was left as you and Janice be."

"Oh," gasped Janice, "she'd be dead!"

"Well," mused her father, "Almira, living in such a dead place as Poketown, evidently considers that she knows about how she would feel in her grave."

"Is it such an awful place, Daddy?" Janice asked seriously.

"What do you mean?" he inquired, in surprise. "Oh, Poketown, I mean, of course. "It is a lovely place. But it must be confessed that it is a good deal behind the times. It is not as bad as Aunt 'Mira makes it out to be, I guess. Only, the old Day house has pretty well gone to rack and ruin."

"Well. Let's hear the rest," urged Janice.

"Jase says to be mighty careful if you should have to go down to that Mexico place. He reads in his Ledger that sometimes there is shooting down there and that the Mexicaners don't care who they shoot."

"Oh, Daddy!" cried Janice, "you don't mean you are going to Mexico?"

"I wrote them when I thought it might be necessary," he confessed.

"And you would send me East if you went? Oh, Daddy, please!"

"Well, my dear, that seemed the wisest thing to do."

"Oh, Daddy!"

"Don't worry now. We have engaged a new superintendent at the mines, and I guess things will go on all right. Listen to what your Aunt 'Mira says:

"Of course, if you have to go down there on business, you send Janice right to us. I'm speaking for Jase as well as myself. We ain't rich, of course; but there's enough to fill another mouth yet awhile, so don't be bashful.

"Hoping this finds you and Janice in health, it leaving us all the same, I will close,

"Your, sister-in-law and Janice's aunt, "ALMIRA DAY."

"I hope you won't have to go, and that I won't have to go, Daddy!" exclaimed the girl anxiously.

"She's a good soul—Almira. She'd do her best by you."

"I don't want anybody to do their best by me—only you, Daddy."

"But you see, my dear, I couldn't leave you alone at home here. Certainly not with a woman like Mrs. Watkins."

"We-ell!"

"Why, she would be imposing upon you all the time. No, indeed. I feel that she is not the woman for our house, after all."

"Oh, dear, Daddy! isn't it funny how many people there are in the world who don't just fit?"

"Right you are, my dear," he agreed, laughing again. "'Round pegs in square holes.' The woods are full of them."

"That Mrs. Watkins never should have gone out to work."

"I guess not."

"And people like Mrs. Carrington have got their own families and their own troubles. So we can't get them."

"What put Amy's mother in your mind?"

"I wish you could see their house, Daddy."

"I have," he said, rather grimly. "And it is sight!"

"Not inside! Oh, not at all, Daddy!" she cried. "It is as neat as wax. Mrs. Carrington is just a love of a housekeeper. I wish you could see how neat everything is kept," and she sighed.

The automobile soon brought them to the house at Eight Hundred and Forty-five Knight Street. Mr. Day had become serious again as they came in sight of the cottage in which so much of a disturbing nature had happened of late.

For a few days, it was true, Broxton Day had hoped the new housekeeper would prove an efficient and trustworthy employee, but what he had seen on coming unexpectedly home this Saturday noon, had caused doubt to rise in his mind.

Experience had taught him that domestic servants are the most independent of laborers. To dare call one to account—especially one like Mrs. Watkins—was to court disaster.

He had felt this to be the case at the time, yet he was unwilling to see Janice made a drudge of by the too ladylike Mrs. Watkins. If the kitchen floor had to be scrubbed, and the houseworker would not scrub it, he would do it himself!

In this mood he entered his home. All was quiet. There was nobody in the living room or dining room. On the table in the latter room were the dirty dishes and the remains of Mrs. Watkins' lunch.

"Oh! where is she?" gasped Janice, following her father through the rooms.

Mr. Day led the way to the kitchen. The pail stood where Janice had left it, the scrubbing brush beside it. The fire in the range had gone out.

With a smothered cry Janice darted upstairs. In a moment her voice reached his expectant ear:

"Oh, Daddy, she's gone!" she cried.

CHAPTER XVII. MISS PECKHAM WASHES HER HANDS

"It seemed that Mrs. Sophronia Watkins had never sent for her trunk; so all she had to do was to pack her bag and walk out of the house. And she had done that very thing.

"'What can't be cured, must be endured,'" quoted Daddy. "Here is a nice little island of clean floor where you scrubbed, Janice. I will build the fire, heat water, and finish the job."

"Oh, no, Daddy! Let me. Your poor knees—" "My knees are not poor, I'd have you know," he retorted, laughing. "You dust around and make the house presentable for Sunday. 'Thus endeth the lesson.' No more 'lady' housekeepers, Janice, for us."

"No-o. I s'pose not. But who shall we get?"

"That is on the knees of the gods, my child," answered Daddy, who often used quotations that Janice did not altogether understand, but which she thought were very fine, just the same. "I guess you mean that nobody knows unless he's omniscient," she said now. "That's a big word, Daddy, but we had it in our lesson the other day. And I guess only somebody who knows everything could guess who will work

for us next. Oh, dear!"

"These three weeks have been an expensive experience," said her father, ruefully enough. "Besides the addition to our household bills, Mrs. Watkins asked me the other evening for her month's wages. 'Salary,' she called it. She was about ten days ahead of time; but I gave it to her.

"So we can figure that our month's expenses have been about doubled. We could not stand that for long, Janice. Perhaps it is a blessing that Mrs. Watkins has taken herself off."

"Just the same, Daddy, I'm sorry you came home and caught me scrubbing the floor," Janice sighed. "We were getting along without your being bothered—after a fashion."

"At your cost," he said grimly. "No; we'll hobble along somehow."

"But it's such a hobble, Daddy! It seems to me that I'm not much of a 'do something' girl or I'd manage better than I do." And Janice sighed.

"You do wonders, daughter, for a girl of your age. Maybe it is daddy who fails."

"Oh, Daddy, never!"

Janice hurried to do the things Mrs. Watkins had left undone. And so she forgot some little purchases that had to be made, until it was almost dark.

Remembering these, she put on her hat and jacket in haste, and telling her father where she was going, ran out to the street. There were the "Weeks' tribe," Junior in the lead, with most of the other children of the neighborhood, running through Love Street in a noisy and excited throng.

"What can be the matter now? A fire?" wondered Janice.

Her errand took her in an opposite direction. But she saw people standing at their gates and chatting to each other as though there was some neighborhood interest that she did not know about.

"What is the matter with everybody?" Janice asked one girl whom she met.

"Why, didn't you see it?" was the surprised answer.

"Maybe I did, only I didn't know what it was," laughed Janice.

"A dancing bear. A great, big, brown fellow. You never saw the like," said her acquaintance.

"Well," thought Janice, "we cannot hire a dancing bear to do our housework, that is sure. So I don't believe he interests me."

She did the errand and hastened home, for daddy and she had not yet had supper. She ran in at the side door, and as she did so she heard voices in the kitchen. She halted, listening; for one of the voices she recognized as Miss Peckham's and it was high-pitched and angry.

"I wash my hands of you both—I can tell you that? exclaimed the spinster from next door. "I don't know why I should have put myself out to help you, Broxton Day, in any case."

"I do not see why you should," Daddy replied rapidly. "Yet I believe you meant well, and I thank you."

"'Meant well'?" sniffed the visitor. "I don't know what that's got to do with it. I gave you both—both Sophrony and you—the chance of your lives. And neither of you appreciate it. I wash my hands of you. Janice pushed open the door quietly and stepped in, closing it after her. Miss Peckham, with flashing black eyes and more color in her face than usual, had drawn herself up commandingly in the middle of the kitchen floor and was staring at Mr. Day angrily.

"There's that gal!" exclaimed the spinster. "She's the one to blame."

"I assure you to the contrary, Janice was doing her best to hide Mrs. Watkins' shortcomings from me," said Mr. Day, smiling warmly at his daughter.

"It don't matter. 'Twas over her you and Sophrony quarreled. You admit it."

"I certainly do not admit that I quarreled with Mrs. Watkins," he said firmly. "She evidently took offense

at what I said to her, and she left. Now she cannot come back. Under no circumstances would I

consider it."

"Well, I wash my hands of you both!" exclaimed Miss Peckham again, and she turned sharply toward the back door—the door opposite the one by which Janice had just entered.

The matter of washing her hands seemed important, if only a figure of speech. She repeated it angrily as she jerked open the kitchen door. And then she uttered a strange, squeaking cry that startled Janice and her father before they caught sight of what had caused the woman's fright.

Miss Peckham seemed transfixed with terror. She threw up her hands stiffly and toppled over backward. She fell just as though she had not a joint in her body, and she fell so hard that her feet sprang up into the air when her shoulders and the back of her head struck the floor.

Standing upright, framed by the doorframe, was a huge, shaggy, ragged looking bear, and he was snuffling and whining as bears do when they want something. Really the bear was begging, but none of those in the kitchen for a moment realized that fact.

Mr. Day grabbed the poker. Janice squealed and hid behind him. But her single affrighted cry was all the sound Miss Peckham made. She really had collapsed in what Janice thought was a faint.

Before Mr. Day could attack the creature, a whining voice from the darkness behind the bear said:

"Bread-butter, please, Signore—Signora. Pietro no bite. He gooda bear. Give supper, please. Pietro lika bread-butter."

The bear came down upon his forepaws, still whining. They could see, then, the chain by which a very dark man, with little gold rings in his ears, held the animal in leash. The trainer smiled very broadly while Pietro snuffed curiously at the soles of Miss Peckham's shoes.

And Miss Peckham kicked the harmless Pietro on the nose.

CHAPTER XVIII. ALL IN THE DAY'S WORK

The huge brown bear whined again and seemed grieved that his innocent attentions should be so ungratefully received. The hysterical Miss Peckham kicked again and Pietro backed away and left space for his suavely smiling master in the doorway of the Day's kitchen.

"I—I wash my hands of you!" moaned the prostrate spinster.

"What—How did you come to bring that bear into my yard?" demanded Mr. Day, finally recovering his voice.

"Boy tella me you give Pietro supper," said the man with the very engaging smile. "Bread-butter. Pietro lika heem."

"That Arlo Weeks Junior!" cried Janice suddenly. "Oh, Daddy, there he is outside."

There was a loud explosion of laughter back of the bear and his trainer, on the dark porch, and then the clatter of running feet. Junior's proclivity for practical jokes was too well known for the Days to doubt his connivance in this most surprising happening.

"No maka troub', Signore," whined the Italian master of the bear in about the same tone Bruin himself had begged.

Mr. Day was helping the overwrought Miss Peckham to her feet.

"Of all things!" he muttered, "Take her out the other way, Janice—do."

"I wash my hands of you!" repeated the spinster, scarcely aware yet of what had happened. Then she suddenly descried the bear again. She shrieked in a most ear-piercing tone:

"There it is! I know Janice Day did that! Don't talk

to me! She's the plague of the neighborhood. No wonder Sophrony couldn't stand it here. Bringing bears into the house!"

"Oh! Oh, Miss Peckham! I never!" cried Janice.

"Don't deny it. You—you horrid child!" declared the spinster; and repeating again that she "washed her hands" of them all, she ran out of the house by the other door and quickly disappeared in the direction of her own cottage.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mr. Day, falling into a chair. Then he burst into uproarious laughter.

The Italian, who had been about to withdraw, and was tugging on the bear's chain, began to smile again. He foresaw leniency when the master of the house could laugh like this.

Janice gave way to merriment, too. It was funny. Much as she was sorry for Miss Peckham's fright, the situation altogether was one to amuse her.

Pietro waddled into the kitchen and sat up like a dog to beg. A bear is a foolish looking beast at best, unless it becomes ill-tempered; and this big brown thing, so his smiling master said, "had the heart of a child."

"And the stomach of an ostrich!" declared Janice, after almost every cold scrap in the house had followed several slices of "bread-butter" down Pietro's cavernous maw.

The old fellow was as good-natured as he could be. After the feast he went through his little repertoire of tricks with little urging.

He "played soldier" and went through his own particular manual of arms with his master's stick as a gun. He "played dead," but with his little pig-like eyes twinkling all the time.

Finally he danced with his master, and with such abandon, if not grace, that the dishes rattled on the shelves in the kitchen cupboard.

"There, that will do. He's paid for his supper. Next thing he'll have the house down about our ears," declared Mr. Broxton Day.

"Grazias, Signore; grazias, Signora," said the bear trainer, over and over again, and bowing deeply as he jerked Pietro by the chain toward the door.

His eyes, his teeth, and the little gold rings in his ears, all twinkled together. Janice thought he was a very polite man.

"And I hope he is always kind to Pietro," she said, when the foreigner and his strange pet were gone. "But, Daddy! Don't we have the greatest happenings in our house?"

"Right you are, my dear. An aristocratic lady has left us flat; the neighborhood censor has washed her hands of us; and we have entertained a highly educated bear, all in a single day. As you might say, all these astonishing happenings are 'all in the Days' work.' The Days certainly do entertain the most astonishing adventures."

"Oh, my! Don't we?" giggled his daughter.

"And now, if Pietro the bear has left us anything in the house to eat, let us have supper, Janice. I expect that hereafter Miss Peckham's opinion of us will be too acrimonious for speech."

"Oh, she never did like me much," sighed Janice. "And now Arlo Junior has made it worse again. Just think! The bear on top of the cats—"

"Scarcely that, my dear," laughed her father. "But if she really believes you introduced that bear for the praise of scaring her, her poor Sam's getting hurt over here will be a small incident compared with this ursine hold-up. The neighbors are going to hear about this, I feel sure."

Nor was he mistaken on that point. Before forty-eight

hours had elapsed it was noised around the neighborhood that "that very ladylike person, Mrs. Watkins" had been obliged to leave the Days and had returned to Marietteville, because of the treatment accorded her in "that house, which she had entered only as a favor."

It was told that Janice had invited a tramp with a dancing bear into the house and that "no lady who deemed herself such" could endure rudeness of that character. Somehow, the neighborhood censor did not figure in the story of the dancing bear; perhaps she feared to be ridiculed.

But Janice told Mrs. Carringford all about it. That good woman had serious troubles of her own; but she was not so selfish that she could not sympathize with Janice.

"I do wish I could do something to help you and your father, my dear," said the woman. "When people have as nice a house as you have Amy has told me all about it—it does seem too bad that it can't be kept as a home should be kept."

"Like yours, Mrs. Carringford," said Janice.

"My dear," sighed Mrs. Carringford, "I don't know how long we'll have our home, poor as it is. We owe a lot of money on it. I am afraid I did wrong in trying to buy this place," and she shook her head sadly.

Janice did not feel like asking the friendly woman pointblank what she meant; but Amy afterward explained.

"You see, Janice, Mr. Abel Strout, of Napsburg, owned this house. It was he who advised mother strongly to

buy a home with father's insurance money. We didn't know how much it cost to keep up a house after you get possession of it.

"Mr. Strout took part of our money in payment and mother gave a mortgage to him for the balance of the price. And that mortgage is troubling mother greatly."

"I guess mortgages are bad things," Janice observed, with a wise nod of her head.

"They are when poor folks have 'em, anyway. You see, mother held back some money to live on. But taxes and repairs and assessments have to come out of that, as well as the interest on the mortgage that comes due half-yearly. And that isn't all."

"No?" asked Janice, interested.

"Now it seems that Mr. Strout only wrote that mortgage

for a year and he can do what he calls 'call it in' a month from now. Of course, mother can't pay the mortgage; it is hard enough to pay the interest on it. And so Mr. Strout says he will just take the house back and we—we'll lose our money, and all," finished Amy with almost a sob.

"Why, I think that is too mean for anything!" cried her friend. "Can't he be stopped?"

"I don't know how. And I guess mother doesn't. He says he would accept a payment on the principal—that's the mortgage, you know. But mother doesn't dare give up any more of our money. There is nobody earning any but Gummy. And how far do you suppose his three dollars a week goes in buying food for all us children, for instance?"

Janice had no answer for this; but she determined to tell daddy the particulars of Mrs. Carringford's trouble. Besides, she had in her mind, and had had for a long time, a desire to bring her father and Amy's mother together. She wanted them to know each other, and for a very definite reason.

CHAPTER XIX. A FLARE-UP

At school the first of that week there was little talked about, of course, save the glories of Stella's party. No girl in the grammar grade had ever celebrated her birthday with such magnificence. The commendation she heard on all sides made Stella very proud.

Because so many of the girls tried to show her their appreciation of the nice time they had had at the Latham farm, Stella began to feel quite puffed up. She considered herself to be the most important person in her grade, at least, if not in the whole school.

It was a privilege to be taken up by the Latham car after school and set down at one's door; and Stella distributed such favors with no lack of shrewdness. She meant such rides to bring her popularity. Janice had often been the recipient of these kindnesses, and as she had told her father, it did delight her to ride in an automobile.

But since she had become so friendly with Amy Carringford, Janice had frequently walked home with her, or Amy had accompanied her to the Day house after school.

Stella was shallow enough when it came to displaying her own friendship for another girl; but suddenly it struck the farmer's daughter that a girl who had once been much in her company was

showing a preference for somebody else.

"That Janice Day is sly," she muttered to herself, passing Janice and Amy as they wended their chattering way homeward. "She thinks I don't notice what she's doing. I'll give it to her to-morrow, see if I don't!"

This threat she proceeded to put into practice. And it came most unexpectedly both to Janice and Amy.

Janice, of course, was perfectly innocent and quite unsuspecting of any attack, and Amy did not dream that Stella did not like her. Had not the farmer's daughter invited Amy to her party? In fact Amy was liked by almost everybody, teachers and pupils included.

In arithmetic Stella always was dull, and on this particular morning she was more than ordinarily careless in recitation. Miss Marble gave her a sharp word and propounded the same question to Amy Carringford. The latter returned the correct answer, and then gave the red-faced Stella a deprecatory smile.

"Don't you grin at me, you pauper!" hissed Stella, and so loudly that several of the girls near by heard her words.

Even Miss Marble took notice of Stella's speech, although she could not overhear what she said.

"No communicating during recitations, Stella," she said sharply.

Amy had paled to her very lips and the tears sprang to her eyes. Janice was too far away to understand; but she was interested—she could not fail to be.

None who heard the unkind remark of Stella Latham but felt sorry that one of their mates should be so rude and ungracious.

"Of course, we all know Amy Carringford is poor—just as poor as poverty," one of them said at recess. "But that is no reason for telling her so!"

This girl was quite energetic in saying this—and more—to the offending Stella.

"Just because you ride in an automobile, and your father owns a farm, you need not think that you are better than anybody else in our class—for you're not, Stella Latham! Amy Carringford is every whit as good as you are."

"Is that so?" snapped Stella. "She's a poverty stricken thing. She hasn't got a decent thing to wear—"

"What nonsense, Stella," drawled another and older girl, shrugging her shoulders. "I noticed particularly the other night. Amy had as pretty a frock on as anybody at your party."

"Yes! And where did she get it?" flared out Stella.

"Her mother made it, I fancy," said the same girl, laughing.

"That dress was given her by Janice Day. Amy couldn't have come to my party otherwise—so now! You just ask Janice if what I say isn't so," cried Stella, stamping her foot.

"I don't believe it," said the first speaker shortly.

"So I'm a story-teller, am I?" almost shrieked Stella. "You just ask Janice."

Just then Janice strolled into the room where the girls were gathered at this lunch hour. Amy, of course, had run home for her lunch—and run home in tears, Janice knew. The latter knew that Stella was the cause of Amy's trouble, but up to this point she had not discovered the exact reason for the flare-up.

"You think I don't tell the truth," pursued Stella, in a loud and angry voice. "I suppose you'll believe what Janice Day says. You just ask her who gave that nasty Amy Carringford the dress she wore to my party."

Janice stopped stock still for a moment. Her schoolmate's statement was like a blow in the face. Mean of disposition as she knew Stella Latham to be, she had not thought the girl would tell the secret of Amy's pretty dress.

After the ban of silence Janice had put upon the farmer's daughter, and the latter's promise to obey

that mandate and tell nobody about the pink and white frock, this deliberate breaking of Stella's word astounded Janice Day. Her face flushed, then paled, and she looked as though she were the person guilty of the outrage, rather than Stella.

"What nonsense!" exclaimed the older girl, but looking at Janice curiously. "Why put it on Janice, Stella? You are saying something you do not know anything about."

"Oh! I don't?" exclaimed the farmer's daughter. "You just ask Janice, I tell you."

"Do your own asking," said another. "Janice doesn't look very pleasant," and she laughed.

"You tell 'em!" commanded Stella, starting toward Janice threateningly. "Didn't you give Amy that dress so she could come to my party? Didn't you?"

Janice had begun to recover her confidence—and her good sense, too. She could not deny the accusation; but she determined to put Stella before her fellow schoolmates in just the right light.

"I do not know that it is a crime for one girl to help another," Janice said quietly, and still very pale. "If I did what Stella claims I did, it was nothing shameful I am sure—either for Amy or for me."

"Of course it wasn't!" murmured one of the other girls.

"Bully for you, Janice!" said another, in commendation.

"It really was only our business—Amy's and mine. But Stella knew about it. In fact, Stella came to me about Amy in the first place. She wanted to invite Amy and she feared—so she said—that Amy would not have a party dress. I undertook to find her one, and hard enough time I had getting Amy and her mother to agree to use the dress.

"But that," said Janice scornfully, "is a purely personal matter between them and me. I want to ask you girls, though, what you think of a person who, after having given her word to keep the matter a secret, deliberately taunts Amy with the fact that she took the dress from me? That is what I want to know."

The other girls were silent for the moment. Janice Day's scornful question was too pointed to be ignored. Stella broke out again in anger, her voice high and shrill:

"I don't care! So there! She is a dowdy little thing, and she had no business to come to my party, anyway."

"Stella," said the older girl grimly, "you're making yourself awfully ridiculous. And worse. You can't keep a secret. And you don't keep your word. I guess there will be more than Amy Carringford who will be sorry that they ever went to your old party. Now, stop yelling. Here comes Miss Marble."

The flare-up was only the beginning of a very unhappy time at school for Amy Carringford. Nor could Janice escape being unhappy, too, with her new friend.

That Stella was unable to raise any cabal against Janice and Amy, but quite the contrary, made the situation only a degree more bearable for the two friends. Although the other girls did not join Stella Latham in mourning the poor girl who lived in Mullen Lane, the latter felt deeply the fact that she was considered different from her schoolmates.

"Oh, I wish mother would let me go to work," Amy sighed, on more than one occasion, and to Janice's sympathetic ear. "I declare! I'd go out as a servant in somebody's home, if mother would let me. We need the money so."

"Goodness! Don't say such things," pleaded Janice. "We need a servant right now, bad enough. But you would not want to come and scrub and sweep and wash and iron even for daddy and me—you know you wouldn't."

"I don't care. Mother says she must go to work somewhere. I'll then have to come to school on part time only. Somebody must look after the twins and Edna May."

"Oh, Amy! what will your mother do?"

"She doesn't know. She has tried to get work to do at home. But all the sewing machine work she can obtain is so heavy. And so poorly paid! What do you suppose she gets for stitching those great, heavy motorman's coats—putting them all together except making buttonholes and sewing on buttons, which is done in the factory?"

"I have no idea," said Janice.

"Thir-ty-sev-en-cents!" exclaimed Amy, tragically. "Think of it! And they almost kill her, they are so heavy to handle."

"Oh, my dear! I wouldn't let her do them."

"I guess we wouldn't—Gummy and I—if we could help it," sobbed Amy. "But something must be done by the Carringford family to help out. When Mr. Strout comes over from Napsburg next week he will make us pay off something on that mortgage, or turn us out of the house—such as it is."

"Dear Amy, I wish I could do something for you," sighed Janice.

She said nothing more than that at the time. But that very evening she did not at once open her schoolbooks when she and her father sat down finally in the living room, the supper dishes washed and put away and the kitchen swept.

They had remained without any help since the departure of Mrs. Sophronia Watkins. Mr. Day had gone every day to the intelligence offices and brought back the most discouraging reports.

"But, Daddy, isn't there any person in the whole of Greensboro or in the county any more who has to work for her living?" asked Janice.

"That man, Murphy, at whose office I engaged Delia, says that there are no good houseworkers any more. He says the girls who come to him for situations are all 'specialists,'" said daddy, gloomily enough.

"Special dunces, I guess," Janice rejoined rather tartly, "if Delia was a sample."

"But she wasn't," said daddy, with a smile. "At any rate, he tells me he has good cooks, and good chambermaids, and good laundresses; but he has no combinations of those trades."

"Oh!"

"Girls do not like to go out to service in families where 'general housework' is expected. It seems," he added grimly, "that to get good help we should engage two or three girls, and then have a lady, like Mrs. Watkins, to superintend."

"I guess we'll have to give up and go to boarding, then," sighed Janice. "Only I am sure I should just detest a boarding house, Daddy."

"I am afraid we should both dislike such a life as that. Your dear mother gave us too good and comfortable a home."

"But we ought to be used to the discomforts of housekeeping by this time," said Janice. "But, oh, Daddy! There are other folks who have worse times than we do."

"So I believe," he agreed, nodding, as he unfolded his paper.

"Wait, Daddy?" she begged. "I want to tell you."

"About other people's troubles?" he asked, with a quizzical smile.

"Yes, I do. It's about the Carringfords."

"Ah-ha! You were saying once that they were in trouble over their home, were you not? I looked that place up. A fellow named Strout—"

"And he's so mean!" declared Janice with vigor.

"Yes. That seems to be his middle name," agreed her father quietly. "I am afraid Mrs. Carringford got into the hands of a sharper when she undertook to buy that cottage in Mullen Lane of Abel Strout."

"Oh, dear, Daddy! isn't there any way of helping them out of their trouble?" Janice asked disappointedly.

"I cannot tell that until I know all the particulars."

"Oh! Let me tell you—"

"Do you know them, my dear?" he asked, interrupting her.

"Well, I know some of them," she confessed, with less vehemence.

"I think you had better ask Mrs. Carringford to come to see me. If she will tell me about it, I may be able to advise her, at least. I know Strout is a sharper."

"Oh, my dear! That is so good of you," Janice cried. "I'll tell her."

"She can bring her papers here, instead of to the bank," added Mr. Day on second thought. "Perhaps she will like that better. Any evening that she chooses, my dear."

Janice could scarcely wait until the next day to tell her friend, Amy what her father had said.

CHAPTER XX. STELLA KEEPS ONE SECRET

It was on this evening, too, that Daddy told Janice he had made a point of seeing and talking with Johnson, Mr. Latham's tenant. The man had a small account in the Farmers and Merchants Bank, for, like most of his nation, "Yon Yonson," as his wife had called him, was a frugal man.

"He came into the bank and I inquired about the girl who visited his wife and who broke Mrs. Latham's cutglass dish," said Mr. Day. "Johnson says he knows little about the girl—not even where she lives, or really who she is. Only he told me her last name was not Cedarstrom."

"So that, I fear," added Mr. Day, shaking his head, "is another lost trail. It does seem that the mystery of the disappearance of our treasure-box, Janice, is likely to remain a mystery.

"At least, that girl at the Latham's was another girl than our Olga. Johnson says she was only visiting his wife for a day or two. She was a friend of his wife's. I think they believe Latham wants to find the girl to make her pay for that broken dish, so they are less willing to talk about her than might otherwise be the case."

"Just the same," sighed Janice, "I do wish Gummy had known just how our Olga looked."

"How is that?"

"Then he would have known for sure whether it was Olga Cedarstrom or not. Just his seeing that her hair was strained back from her face doesn't prove anything."

"I should say it did not," laughed her father. "That manner of wearing the hair seems to be a common failing with these Swedish women. Besides, didn't I tell you that Johnson says that girl is not named 'Cedarstrom?'"

"We-ell, it is awfully funny, Daddy. It doesn't seem as though a girl could disappear so completely—wiped right off the map—"

"Vigorously expressed, I admit," her father interrupted. "But we must not begin to doubt everybody's word about it. I guess Johnson is honest."

"And those other people who knew her in Pickletown?"

"They simply don't know what has become of her. Or of Willie Sangreen, either," Daddy admitted. "That does seem strange. Of course the two have gone off somewhere to be married and have not told their friends."

"It proves that Olga did take dear mother's miniature —and—and those letters," said Janice excitedly. "Or she would not hide herself."

"Yes. I thought we had already agreed on that," her father said.

It was evident that he did not wish uselessly to discuss the matter of the lost keepsakes. Janice, young as she was, realized that her father was growing more grave and more serious every day. She did not believe that this change was altogether due to business anxieties, or even to their household vexations.

At night, after she was supposed to be in bed and sound asleep, the girl heard him walking back and forth the length of the living room; or, sometimes, now that the weather was so mild, he tramped up

and down the front porch until very, very late.

There was surely some trouble on his mind that he did not care to confide to his little daughter. Broxton Day sighed more often than had been his wont even during those hard, hard days immediately following the death of Janice's mother. His hearty laugh was not so spontaneous nor heard as often as before.

Janice could not speak about this change in her father. She believed she knew why he was so grave and why some of his nights were sleepless.

Broxton Day had loved his wife with a passionate devotion. He must miss her presence more and more as the days went on. In spite of all the companionship Janice could give him, the man's existence was a lonely one.

"And, too, her heart told her that she had been the unwitting cause of this new burden which had come upon daddy's mind. Those letters which Janice had never seen—the presence of which she had not even suspected in the secret compartment of the lost treasure-box—had been Broxton Day's most precious possession. Janice had lost them! Her carelessness had given the angry Olga the opportunity to take the box away with her.

The letters had been written at a time when Janice's father and mother were very close together in spirit, if not in actual contact. Even Janice could understand that Laura Day must have revealed her very soul to her husband in those epistles.

Oh, if she could only bring them back!

So sorrow began to be entertained in the Day house on Knight Street, as a continual guest. It did seem, too, that Janice could do very little to relieve her father of any of the embarrassments of their situation. She

worked as hard as she could before she went to school and after she came home, but she could not begin to do all that was needed to be done. And she was so tired sometimes after supper that she fell asleep over her homework.

Their meals became, too, a mere round of bacon-and-egg breakfasts and delicatessen suppers. Shop-cooked meats and potato salads were on the bill of fare too often to tempt the appetite of either Mr. Day or his daughter, and the latter began to depend a good deal upon "baker's stuff" for her lunch.

With the unfortunate experiences they had had with help, however, Janice did not wonder that daddy found nobody to suit him at the agencies. Olga, Delia, Mrs. Watkins—and all those who had come and gone before —were enough to fill the mind of any person with despair.

Janice did not forget to tell Mrs. Carringford what Mr. Day had said regarding her trouble, and that on the very next day.

"He'll be sure to see some way out for you, Mrs. Carringford," the girl assured her friend's mother, with much confidence. "Daddy is always doing things for folks. He doesn't just advise; he is sure to do something."

"Yes, I should not be surprised if Mr. Broxton Day was a do-something man," said Mrs. Carringford, smiling. "He must be when he has such a do-something daughter."

"And you really will come up to see him this evening?" urged Janice, blushing rosily at what she considered a compliment.

"I—I—well, my dear, I could not accept any financial favor from your father. I would not have a right to do so. The Carringfords must be independent."

"But, Mrs Carringford, you mustn't feel that way! I have no idea Daddy could give you much money, even if you, would let him. But, you see, he knows so much more about such things as mortgages, and loans, and real estate, that he can give you good advice. And he says that Mr. Abel Strout's middle name is 'Mean'!"

Mrs. Carringford laughingly agreed to that, and in the evening she came to the house with Gummy, Amy being left at home to take care of the little ones.

Mr. Day had already met and quite approved of Mrs. Carringford's two older children, Gummy and Amy, for he had seen them both at the house. But he had had no idea, in spite of Janice's enthusiastic praise, that Mrs. Carringford was quite the woman she was.

He saw now a very gentle, pretty woman whose soft, wavy hair was becoming prematurely gray, with an intelligent countenance and eyes that fixed one's attention almost immediately. Here, Mr. Day saw, was a capable, energetic spirit—a woman who would carry through whatever she undertook could it be carried through at all, yet who was not objectionably self-assertive-like Miss Peckham, for instance.

If Mrs. Carringford had made a mistake in her purchase of the property in Mullen Lane, it was because she had been badly advised, if not actually cheated, by the sly old fellow who had for years owned the property which he had taken for a bad debt.

Abel Strout had doubtless been glad to get rid of the Mullen Lane place, and for the first payment made upon it by Mrs. Carringford. But he had been foxy enough to make a hard and fast bargain with the widow. He had her tied up in a contract that, if she failed to meet her obligations in a small way, even, would enable him to walk in and take the place away from her.

And he had done more than that. For some reason best known to himself he had first transferred the property to one John Jamison—a farm hand of that section— and had then had this Jamison transfer the property to Mrs. Carringford, he paying the difference represented by the mortgage he held.

"He said Jamison had grown tired of his bargain a week after he bought it," Mrs. Carringford explained. "He wanted Mr. Strout to take it back. Strout said by making the transfer he would be aiding both Mr. Jamison and me."

And now a change was coming. Since the transfer Mullen Lane property had begun to look up. A factory was going to be built in the vicinity, and that part of Greensboro was likely to offer a better field for real estate operations.

Broxton Day knew all this, which Mrs. Carringford did not. He saw that what Strout wanted was to get the property back into his own hands again. He would refuse to renew the mortgage and frighten Mrs. Carringford into giving up her home.

The way the matter figured out, the expense of paying interest and taxes on the Mullen Lane property was no greater than rental would be elsewhere for the Carringford family. In the end, if the widow held on, the place might really be more valuable than it now was, and would sell for considerably more than she had agreed to pay Abel Strout for it.

"I tell you what you do," Broxton Day finally said, having thought the matter over. "Strout has told you he will accept a small payment on the mortgage, and will then renew the balance for another year."

"Yes. But ought I to spend any more of the little sum I have left in that way, when my children may need it for food?" asked the anxious widow.

"You show me by these papers that you are fixed fairly well for another year. You and your son will both earn something, of course, during the next twelve months. So if I were you, I would throw a sprat to catch a herring, and he smiled.

"You mean?" the widow asked doubtfully.

"I mean for you to offer him fifty dollars against the principal of the mortgage. No matter of whom you would get money, you would have to pay the same interest you pay Strout now and no matter whom I might get money from for you, so that you could pay off Strout and get rid of him, there would be the additional expense of making the new mortgage, and all that."

"But is he to be trusted?"

"Not at all. At the end of the year he will want more money, if he thinks you will have difficulty in getting it and there is a chance of your having to give up your home."

"Oh!"

"But a year from now I prophesy," said Mr. Day, "that your little house will be worth much more than it is to-day. At least it will be worth no less. It will be easier a year from now to raise another mortgage than it is right now. Just toll Strout along a little," and he laughed.

"Do you think I can do this, Mr. Day?" asked Mrs. Carringford doubtfully.

"You can to it for your children's sake, I have no doubt. And remember, in any case, if Strout demands the entire mortgage paid at once, within three days I will try to obtain for you a new mortgagee. You shall not lose your home, or what money you have already put into it, if I can help it."

"Oh, Mr. Day! exclaimed the woman, warmly. "If I can go home with this confident feeling—"

"You may. Of course, you are in debt. It is going to be a hard struggle for you to get along. But your children are growing up and in time will be able to shoulder a part of the burden which you have assumed for their sake. Take courage, Mrs. Carrington. Everything will turn out right in the end, I am sure."

It was plain that Mrs. Carrington was greatly comforted. When she left, Janice whispered to her father: "I'm awfully proud of you, Daddy. You do have such a way with you!"

But helping other people out of their troubles was not helping the Days out of their particular Slough of Despond. So many difficulties seemed reaching out to clutch at Janice and Daddy! The girl thought it was like walking through a briar-patch. Every step they took, trouble retarded them.

First and foremost the disappearance of that strange Olga Cedarstrom, and the loss of the box of heirlooms, was continually in Janice's mind. The girls at school knew about it, although only Amy knew just how serious the loss was to the Days.

The puzzle regarding the girl named Olga who had helped in the Latham's kitchen the night of Stella's birthday party, had been noised abroad among Janice's school friends, and more or less comment was made upon it.

"Say, Janice, did you ever find out what became of that Swede who broke Mrs. Latham's dish the night we were all there?" asked one of the girls one day. "Didn't you say she might be the very girl who ran away from your house?"

"Yes! I did think so. But it was not the same. Her friends said this girl was not named Cedarstrom."

"Well, who'd want such a name, anyway?" laughed another of the party.

Stella was herself one of those present; but at this time she was not speaking to Janice. She laughed maliciously when Janice Day had gone.

"What's the matter with you, Stella?" asked Bertha Warring.
"Your 'ha, ha' is like that of the villain in the melodrama.
What is the matter?"

"Oh, never mind," returned Stella, apparently very much enjoying her own secret thoughts.

"Tell us, Stella; then we'll all laugh," urged another.

"Oh, no. You girls say I can't keep a secret. But I'll

show you—and that Janice Day—that I can. I know something about the Olga-girl that she'd like to know; but Janice shall never learn it from me," and Stella laughed again maliciously.

CHAPTER XXI. THE CLOSING OF SCHOOL

Janice heard from Gummy and Amy just how Abel Strout acted and what he said when he came to see their mother about the renewal of the mortgage and the payment of the half year's interest. Gummy was very much excited over it.

"You strought to see that Stout man, anyway—"

"Oh, dear, me, Gummy, there you go again!" gasped Janice, with laughter, while the boy's sister giggled desperately, too.

"What's the matter now?" he demanded, in some surprise.

"Another lapsus linguae—I looked it up, and that is what they call it," said Janice.

"Say! Why don't you talk so people can understand you?" Gummy demanded. "Don't talk Latin to a fellow."

"And you sounded as though you were using 'pig-Latin,'" laughed Amy. "You said we 'strought' to see Mr. 'Stout'."

"Oh! Jicksy! Did I?" exclaimed the boy. "I'm always saying one thing and meaning another, aren't I? Is that a lapsus linguae?"

"It is in this case, Gummy. But go on—do."

"Well, Mr. Strout looks just like a piece of that green-speckled cheese Mr. Hardman has in his showcase—in the face, I mean."

"In the face of the showcase?" giggled Amy.

"Or the face of the cheese?" asked Janice demurely.

"Now, say, you girls go too far," complained Gummy, yet good-naturedly. "I mean Strout's face. It looks like the cheese, for he's all speckled. And the cheese is called Rockyford and tastes funnier than it looks."

"Oh, oh!" cried Janice, "you've got your cheese mixed with melons this time. It is Rockyford melons and Roquefort cheese."

"Jicksy! They sound pretty near the same," grumbled Gummy.

"Anyhow, that is how Abel Strout looks in the face—speckled. And he came in, in that yellow dust-coat of his, looking like a peeled sapling—so long and lean."

"My, what a wealth of description you have at your tongue's end," cried Janice, still in a gale of laughter. "A face like Roquefort cheese with a figure like a peeled sapling. Well!"

"You keep on you girls, and I won't ever get anywhere," complained Gummy.

"Go on, Gummy," urged Janice.

"Well, he was just as nasty-mean as he always is. The only time I ever saw him pleasant was when he was wheedling mother out of her money before she bought the house. But he started in real bossy this time."

"I should say he did," agreed Amy, feelingly.

"Well, Mrs. Carringford,' said Strout, 'I hope you are ready to take up that mortgage right now, without no hanging back.' He knew of course that mother didn't have a whole thousand dollars left—no, sir! He knows all right just what she had in the beginning, and that we've been living off it for more than a year," said Gummy.

"So mother told him she could not take up the mortgage. That she did not dare put any more money into the place—except the interest and the taxes—until prospects were brighter.

"Well,' he said—mean old hunks!—'money is dreadful tight right now, and I don't see how I can let you have a thousand any longer. 'Tain't in the bill of agreement.'

"Mother said: 'Mr. Strout, when you sold me the place you said I could have plenty of time to pay for it. You knew my children were small and that I could not do much toward paying the mortgage until they grew bigger and could help.'

"You got anything like that writ into your contract?' asked Mr. Strout.

"It was verbally understood,' said mother.

"That don't mean nothin' in business,' said Strout. 'I might tell you the moon was made o' green cheese, but I wouldn't guarantee it. Talk's one thing; a written guarantee is another. That mortgage is writ for a year, and the year is up.'

"Oh!" exclaimed Gummy hotly, "I could have hit him for speaking so mean to my mother."

"I don't blame you," Janice said sympathetically. "But never mind. Tell the rest."

"Why, all mother could say was what your father told' her to say. She said: 'You said when you were here several weeks ago that you would let me pay off some of the principal and let the mortgage stand.'

"How much?' he snapped at her—just like a hungry dog at a bone, you know," continued Gummy.

"I will spare fifty dollars,' said mother.

"Fifty fiddlestrings!' shouted Strout. 'Won't hear to it! Won't listen to it!'

"But already, you see," chuckled Gummy, "mother had pushed the interest money toward him across the table. He grabbed it. He couldn't keep his hands off real money, I guess—his own or anybody else's."

"Oh, Gummy!" murmured Amy.

"Well, didn't he just act so?" cried the boy. "Why, he counted that interest money just as hungrily! And he folded it and put it in his wallet."

"You tell it just as it was," sighed Amy. "Of course I do. Well, mother said: 'You can give me my receipt for that, Mr. Strout, if you don't mind.' And then he did go off the handle!" chortled Gummy. "You see, he had tricked himself."

"How was that, Gummy?" Janice asked wonderingly.

"He made mother pay interest on the note six months in advance. When he accepted that interest he—what do you call it?—Oh! He tacitly renewed the note, which runs what they call concurrently with the mortgage. So the mortgage is good for another year."

"Oh! Is that what daddy told your mother to do?" cried Janice. "Now I understand." exclaimed the delighted Gummy.

"Oh! Daddy didn't mean it as a trick—"

"Not a tricky trick," explained Gummy volubly. "Of course not. But mother just let Mr. Strout trick himself. When he saw what he had done he tried to hand the money back; but mother said:

"Oh, no, sir!, You can give me the written receipt or not, just as you please. Both of these children—that's Amy and me—'saw me give you the money and know its purpose. Their testimony is good in court.

You have refused any payment on the principal of the mortgage; but you have accepted interest for the ensuing six months. You have therefore renewed the note for a year, as it is written for a year.'

"Oh, wasn't Strout mad!" chuckled Gummy.

"And I was proud of mamma," added Amy.

"You bet! Strout said to mother: 'Somebody's been talking to you—I can see that.'

"Yes, they have,' she told him. 'And somebody who knows you very well, Mr. Strout.' Meaning your father, Janice, of course.

"So you think you will hold on to this shack and make something on it, do you?' he remarked.

"At least,' mother answered, 'I hope to keep it for a shelter for my children and not lose what I have put in it.'

"Well,' said he, in such a nasty tone! 'You just wait!' And then he stamped out of the house."

"Oh, but I am afraid of him," sighed Amy. "He spoke so threateningly."

"Yes, Momsy and Amy think he has something up his sleeve," said Gummy, carelessly. "But I think Abel Strout is licked, thanks to Mr. Day."

Janice was very careful to repeat the particulars of this scene Gummy had so vividly related to her father in the evening.

"Maybe he has something 'up his sleeve,' as Gummy says," Janice observed. "Can that be possible, do you think, Daddy?"

"Well, it is hard to say. Now that I have gone into this thing for Mrs. Carringford, I suppose I might go a little deeper. Do you know if she had the title to that property searched before she bought it?"

"I'll ask her, Daddy."

"Don't ask in a way to frighten her," advised Mr. Day, on second thought. "It may be all right. Just ask her who looked up the title. Tell her I will have the money ready for her to take up Strout's mortgage when it becomes due next time; but that meanwhile I shall have to have the title searched if that was

not done before."

"Oh, Daddy! do you believe there could be some—some—"

"Some flaw in it?" asked her father, supplying the word that Janice had heard but could not remember.

"Yes."

"There might be. This is an old part of Greensboro, and some of the old titles conflicted."

"But then Mrs. Carringford would not have to lose, would she? Wouldn't Mr. Strout have to give her back her money?"

"Perhaps not. Not if he could prove that he knew nothing about the flaw in the title. Or rather, not if Mrs. Carringford could not prove that Strout did know his title was fraudulent. Besides, the place might have been sold for taxes some time. That would invalidate the title in this state, unless the original owner, or his heirs, who owed the taxes, had quitclaimed."

"Dear me, Daddy Day? she cried, "it sounds awfully complicated."

"It is, for little girls. But we will see what we shall see," which to say the least, was not a very comforting statement.

Janice had found a colored woman who lived at the end of Love Street to take the washing home each week and who did it very satisfactorily. But the woman had small children and so could not go out to work.

Besides, such women as they had hired to come in to work by the day had been very unsatisfactory. Nobody seemed to take any interest in the work.

"Why," Janice thought, "we haven't even cleaned house properly this spring. And here it is June—and school almost closing!"

It was a fact that the last few days of the spring term were at hand. Janice was so busy that she did not know what to do. When she went to see Mrs. Carringford to ask her the question Daddy had told her to put, she broke down and cried, telling Amy's mother how bad she felt about the house.

"I got down the curtains and put them to soak; but I can't starch them and put them on the stretcher and hang them again," confessed Janice "The house looks so bare! And every inch of paint needs scrubbing—even in the rooms that Mrs. Watkins shut up so tight. She did not clean the paint."

"Can't you hire somebody to help you?" asked Mrs. Carringford.

"If you mean can daddy pay for it—he'd be glad to!" cried Janice. "But I just can't find anybody at all."

"I might come over and help you a couple of days, Janice," said Mrs. Carringford, doubtfully.

"Oh! Could you?"

"I can't come very early in the morning; but Amy can get supper for the children, so that I could stay until after your dinner at night, Janice."

"Mrs. Carringford! if you'll come and help us," gasped Janice, "I think I'll just cry for joy."

"Don't do that, my dear. Of course, this is only a stop-gap. But I will try to do what I can for you toward cleaning house and putting everything to rights again."

And a single day's work made such a difference Daddy came into the house toward evening without knowing what Janice had arranged with Mrs. Carringford, and began to "snuff" at once.

"Why, Janice, how clean everything smells!" he cried when the girl ran to meet him. "What is happening?"

"We are cleaning house. At least, she is."

"She'? Who?" he cried.

"You'll never guess."

"I—I—Surely none of the neighbors has taken pity on us and come in to clean?"

"That is exactly what has happened," Janice said. "Mrs. Carringford, Daddy!"

"Mrs Carringford!" he repeated. "Not come to work for us?"

"Oh, dear! I wish she was going to work for us all the time," confessed the girl with a sigh. "But she is going to put us all straight once more, at least. The children don't want her to go out to work; but she will do this for us."

"Well, 'small mercies thankfully received; larger ones in proportion,'" murmured daddy. "The whole house to be cleaned once more? And without my Janice to be dragging herself to death?"

"Oh, Daddy!"

"Well, I have been worried, dear," he confessed. "I wrote your Aunt Almira, half promising that you should go to see them after school closed."

"Oh, Daddy!" shrieked Janice again. "To Poketown?"

"You won't find it so bad. And you need a rest, I believe. This old house—"

"Oh! you sha'n't talk so about our beautiful home," gasped Janice.

"If it is going to be such a burden to you, my dear—"

"It isn't! It isn't " she cried excitedly, and actually stamping her feet. "You don't mean to shut up our home, Daddy? I won't hear to it," and she burst into a flood of tears.

Mrs. Carringford came into the living-room, neat, smiling, and very, very good to look upon, the man thought. It was a blessing to have a real housekeeper, and homemaker as well, in the house.

"Quite overwrought, Mr. Day," she said putting her arms about the sobbing Janice. "She works too hard and tries to do too much."

"I know it," he said, shaking his head.

"And, besides," said the good woman, "Janice is growing up. She is growing too fast, perhaps. And she does need, Mr. Day, something that no father—no matter how willing and thoughtful he may be—can give her."

"That is—?" asked the man, paling a little.

"The companionship of a woman, Mr. Day," said Mrs. Carringford. "She should be more with some woman whom you can trust. Not the women you have had here to work for you."

Janice had run away to bathe her eyes and make herself tidy. Broxton Day listened to this woman's advise with a serious countenance.

"I was just suggesting her going to spend a part of the summer with her aunt in Vermont. And she doesn't want to," he explained.

"That would take her a long way from you and from her home. She loves her home, Mr. Day. Janice is a born homemaker, I believe."

"What can I do, then?" exclaimed the man, at his wit's end.

"Were any people ever situated so unfortunately as Janice and I?"

"There have been thousands like you and your daughter," said Mrs. Carringford. "Janice will be all right after school closes, for she will not have so much to do. Let her books rest this summer. See that she plays instead of works. If you will, let her be a good deal with other girls."

"I would be willing to have her fill the house with them. Only that, too, adds to the work."

"Well, we'll see," sighed Mrs. Carringford, preparing to go back to the kitchen. "She can run over and see my Amy, and Amy can come here. They are about the same age, and like kittens they should play more than work. I will gladly do what I can for you, Mr. Day. You have been very kind to me and mine."

He wanted to tell her that that was not so. That he had really done nothing, and the favor was on the

other side. But she hurried away to attend to dinner.

And it was a nice dinner that was served at the Day table that evening. Like the faded-out lady, Mrs.

Carringford sat down to eat with them. But there was a different air about Mrs. Carringford. She was really a gentlewoman.

Janice recovered her spirits and chattered like a magpie; and Mr. Day himself found that for the first time in many months, he had really enjoyed a well-cooked meal and a social meal at his own table.

Mrs. Carringford came day after day until the entire house was cleaned. Daddy found a man to clean up the yard, cart away ashes, smooth the walks and dig over the flowerbeds. The local florist supplied growing plants for out of doors, and the Day place bloomed again as it was wont to do when Mrs. Day was alive.

Meanwhile Janice and her mates were just as busy as bees concluding the spring term at school. There were the final examinations which were now close at hand. Janice really trembled over these.

"My sakes, Amy! what if I shouldn't pass? I'm awfully shaky on physiology, especially."

"Goodness, Janice! you'll pass, of course. Anybody as bright and quick as you are!"

"It's awfully nice of you to say that. But my recitations have gone off like anything lately and I really am afraid of these exams."

Amy tried to comfort her friend, but with little success.

Then there were many outside pleasures, and Janice, in a happier mood this time, remarked that school really did interfere with the real business of life—such as the picnics that the beautiful spring days made so thoroughly pleasurable.

"Dear me, I'd like to go to a picnic every day," she sighed happily to Amy one Saturday afternoon, after jolly hours spent with the boys and girls of her circle of closest friends in the woods, now white with dogwood.

Some of the girls were going away for a part of the summer vacation. But Janice would not admit that she even contemplated such a change.

Stella Latham was one of those who expected to migrate. She was going to some relatives who had a summer place on the shore of one of the Great Lakes, and she talked a good deal about it.

But she did not talk to Janice. All she said in the latter's hearing was something that only puzzled and annoyed Daddy's daughter. "I guess if somebody who thinks she is so smart only knew what I know about that Swedish girl, Olga, she'd give her very eyes to have me tell her—so now!"

"I don't even know what she means," confessed Janice, wearily, to Amy.

"She just means to be mean—that's all!" said the practical Amy.

CHAPTER XXII. SOMETHING DOES HAPPEN

"I hope something will happen so I can't go to Poketown," was the thought continually rising to the surface of the troubled pool of Janice Day's mind.

She did not know what Mrs. Carringford had said to daddy, nor how much he had been influenced by that wise woman's observations regarding this very matter. So, as the days went by, Janice continued to fear the worst.

For the very worst that could happen, Janice thought, was for her to be separated from her father and from her home. When the possibility of his having to go to Mexico was first talked about, the thought of their separation had made a very deep impression on the girl's mind. She had never recovered—how could she?—from the going away of her mother. If her father went out of her life too, it seemed to Janice as though she would be an orphan indeed.

So, without knowing anything personally about her Aunt Almira or Uncle Jason or Marty, her cousin, the girl felt that their association could in no way replace that of daddy.

"I just wish something would happen so that I couldn't go to Poketown," was repeated over and over in her thought.

"Perhaps that is wicked," Janice told herself. "But wicked, or not, it does seem as though it would just kill me to leave home."

After Mrs. Carringford had finished cleaning house, the home seemed so much better and brighter that Janice loved it more than ever. She did not want to leave Eight Hundred and Forty-five Knight Street, even for a day.

"I don't care if Arlo Junior does toll cats into our back kitchen and we entertain dancing bears and that half-crazy Delia and folks like Mrs. Watkins or Olga Cedarstrom," she said to daddy. "This is just the nicest house in all the world. Don't you think so yourself, Daddy?"

"I never expect to have so much happiness in another house as I have had in this one, my dear," Mr. Day said. "And we will hope for more happiness here in the future. But my little girl must not try to do everything. It is all right to be a homemaker; but you must not try to do it all yourself. We must find somebody to help, regularly."

Secretly Janice was urging Mrs. Carringford to come every day to the house and keep it in that "neat as a new pin" condition in which the sweet-natured woman had left it when the extra cleaning was finished.

"But my dear child, how will my own house get along without me? Amy cannot do it all, even if it is vacation-time."

"But, dear Mrs. Carringford, just think!" begged Janice. "Kate and Sydney are both big enough to help Amy."

"And they are a team!" sighed Mrs. Carringford.

"They'll be good. They will do a good deal for me," said Janice frankly.

"You bribe the twins."

"Oh, they are only teeny, weeny bribes, and of course children expect pay when they do things for you. Look how eagerly Gummy works for his pay," for Gummy was working every day for Mr. Harriman now, and his wages had been doubled.

"Don't let him hear you catalogue him as a child," said the boy's mother, smiling. "I must do nothing to neglect my own brood. Yet I feel that I must earn money. Gummy's wages will not even feed us. And it will last only until September. He must go back to school again then."

"Then come and see daddy," urged Janice. "You know he'll be more than glad to have you. Why, it would be just heavenly for us."

"I must think about it," said the over-urged woman. "If I could get work in a store downtown I would have more regular hours perhaps. For a home cannot be kept on an eight-hour-a-day schedule."

But Janice hoped. To do something to bring about peace and comfort for daddy and herself had been her determination for weeks. If only Mrs. Carringford could be coaxed to agree, Janice foresaw plain sailing.

This had been her hope ever since she had seen how perfectly Amy's mother kept her own poor cottage. It had been her hope when she had first brought Mrs. Carringford and Mr. Day together. But would her hope come to fruition?

Nevertheless, she was happier now that she did not have to go to school. She had time to work out of doors in the flowerbeds and to get dainty little suppers, sometimes, for daddy.

Yet, at other times she was very tired. She showed daddy a cheerful countenance almost always. But there were occasions when Janice Day felt anything but cheerful "inside," as she expressed it.

Somehow daddy seemed to guess, however, when she was not quite herself during these sultry days, for often at breakfast he said:

"Daughter, dress yourself in your best bib and tucker and meet me at the corner of Joyce Street at four-thirty. I'll be on the Maplewood car and will save a seat for you. We will go out to the Branch Inn for supper."

Such excursions delighted Janice, especially with daddy. It made her feel positively grown up to be taken about by such a well-groomed and handsome man as Broxton Day.

And almost everywhere they went people seemed to know daddy. Even the managers and waiters at the inns and restaurants knew him, for Mr. Day often attended business conferences and luncheons with the bank's customers, at these places.

Sometimes very well dressed men came and sat down at their table and talked business with Broxton Day. They were always very kind and polite to Janice.

But whenever she heard Mexico and the Mexican mines mentioned, the girl was worried and listened attentively. She knew that those properties down beyond the Rio Grande in which her father was interested so deeply, were still in a very uncertain state. As yet dividends from her father's investment, she knew, had been very small.

She thought daddy watched her very closely at times. His keen glance seemed almost like that of a person "lying in wait" for one. That was the way Janice expressed it to herself.

She did not understand what these looks meant. Did he doubt that she was really quite as cheerful and happy as she would appear?

On her own part, after she had gone to bed, Janice Day listened often for his step, to and fro, hour after hour, on the honeysuckle-sheltered porch. Was he thinking about the lost letters? Would neither he nor his daughter ever be able to get over—to forget—the mementoes of dear mother, and their disappearance with Olga Cedarstrom?

Janice often cried herself to sleep thinking of this loss. But she cried quietly so that daddy should not hear her; and she was always very careful in the morning to remove all traces of tears or sleeplessness before appearing in his presence at the breakfast table.

"What's been done to-day, daughter?" was often daddy's question at night, accompanied by one of his keenly interrogating glances.

When she catalogued the day's industries sometimes he shook his head.

"But where is the fun? When do you play? What have you been doing to celebrate your freedom from the scholastic yoke?" he would demand.

"We-ell, you know, Daddy, I can't be a gadabout all the time—and with Miss Peckham watching me from behind her blinds every time I go out," and she giggled.

"Miss Peckham be eternally— Hem! I don't suppose I can use strong language in regard to the lady who has washed her hands of us, can I?"

"Not very strong language, Daddy," she rejoined, laughing aloud now.

"Well, in that case, we'll merely ignore our neighbor. That means you, too, Janice; and you must play a little more in spite of Miss Peckham."

"But, Daddy, I do play, as you call it. There was the picnic in Emmon's Woods, and the straw ride to Clewitt—"

"And the picnic on the Latham farm to which I found you did not go," interrupted daddy. "How about that, daughter?"

"Oh—oh—well, you know, Daddy, I—I—"

"What's all this stammering about, honey," asked daddy, putting his arm about his daughter.

"Daddy, Amy and I just couldn't go to that picnic. Of course, it was not given by Stella, but by all the boys and girls of our crowd, but it was on Stella's farm. And— Well, Daddy, Stella doesn't really like Amy and me just now. It's nothing—just about that dress Amy wore to Stella's party. I told you all about that. Stella promised not to tell, you know, and then she did. I'm not mad at Stella—I was, though, for a while—but she's still mad at me. She'll be all right in a little while, though, Daddy."

"I trust so, daughter. Do your best to make friends again. You will all be happier if you are on a friendly footing with your companions."

These first days of the long vacation were not really happy ones for Janice, although she tried to make believe they were. All the time she was hoping to herself that daddy would not insist on her visiting his

relatives in the East.

He had not really said that he contemplated sending her willy-nilly, to Aunt Almira. Yet the girl felt that daddy believed her health called for a change. And that was not what she needed. She was sure that the air of Poketown would never in this world make her feel any happier or healthier than she felt right here at home in Greensboro.

"I just hope something will happen to keep me from going to Poketown—or anywhere else," Janice repeated, over and over again.

And then, it did happen. Nothing that she had imagined, of course.

And this happening shocked Janice Day almost as much as anything could. It came in the afternoon, when she was getting dinner for daddy. She heard the clang of a gong, and an automobile stopped before the house. She ran to the window. It was a white painted ambulance— not from the City Hospital, but a private ambulance. And two men in white uniforms were preparing to take somebody on a stretcher out of the car.

CHAPTER XXIII. THE SILVER LINING TO A VERY BLACK CLOUD

Janice dropped the mixing spoon and the dishcloth and ran out upon the side porch, and from thence down the steps and the walk to the gate. Her heart beat so that she could scarcely get her breath.

The white uniformed men were drawing the stretcher out of the ambulance, and Janice, horrified and all but breathless, suddenly saw her father sitting up on the stretcher.

"Don't be scared, Janice. Be a brave girl," he cried. "It is only my leg."

"But—but what have they done to your leg, Daddy?" she cried, wringing her hands.

One of the uniformed men laughed. It was a cheerful laugh, and he was a jolly looking man. But Janice thought it was very easy indeed for him to laugh.

"It isn't his leg—or any of his relations" she thought.

"I tell you what they have done to him," he said, taking hold of both handles at the foot of the stretcher. "They have just set a compound fracture below the knee and put it into splints. Your daddy is going to have a glass leg for some time to come, and you must take good care of it. Where shall we carry him?"

While he spoke and the other man was taking hold of the other handles of the stretcher, Mr. Day lay down again. He did not groan, but he was very white. He gave Janice's hand a strong grip, however, when she got to him.

"Pluck up your courage, dear," he said. "This is no killing matter."

But now neighbors began to hurry to them. Children, of course, for Knight Street was well supplied with them. But Mrs. Arlo Weeks and Mrs. Peckinpaw came from across the street, while Miss Peckham appeared from her cottage.

"Dear me! Was he picked up that way?" asked Mrs. Weeks, in her high, strident tone. "My Arlo had a fit once—"

"Tain't a fit," said Mrs. Peckinpaw, who was a very old woman and who never spoke to Miss Peckham because of some neighborhood squabble which had happened so long before that neither of them remembered what it was about.

"Tain't a fit," she said acidly; "for then they foam at the mouth, or drool. I never knew he had anything the matter with him, chronic."

The jolly looking man laughed. Miss Peckham on the other side of the stretcher, and without looking at the other women, asked:

"Oughtn't he be took to the hospital? There's nobody here to take care of him but that fly-away young one."

"I won't have him taken to a hospital!" cried Janice stormily.

"You bring him right into the house—"

"Well, 'tain't fittin'," said Miss Peckham decidedly.

"I guess both Mr. Day and his daughter know what they want," said the cheerful looking man, decidedly. "He wanted to be brought home. Now, my little lady, where shall we put him? All ready, Bill?"

"All ready," said Bill, who had the handles at the head of the stretcher.

"But what's the matter with him?" demanded Mrs. Peckinpaw again. "Is it ketchin'?"

"He has a compound fracture of the tibia," declared the cheerful man.

"Oh! My mercy!" ejaculated Mrs. Peckinpaw, shrinking away from the stretcher. "I—I didn't know Mr. Day drank!"

She had evidently heard alcoholism called by so many queer sounding terms that anything she not understand she set down to that dread trouble. But Miss Peckham had run ahead into the house.

"Take him right up to his bedroom," she said commandingly to the men with the stretcher.

"Well, if that woman's goin' to take hold, they don't need me," said Mrs. Peckinpaw, snappishly, and she retained her stand upon the strictly neutral ground of the sidewalk.

Mrs. Arlo Weeks was "all of a quiver," as she herself said. She followed the men as far as the steps and there sank to a seat.

"My, my! I feel just like fainting," she murmured.

Meanwhile the two uniformed men were carrying Mr. Day into the house.

"Right up here!" cried Miss Peckham from the stairway.

"No," said Mr. Day, "put me on the couch in the living room. Fix it, Janice."

At this Janice awoke from her apathy. She rushed in ahead and fixed the pillows on the couch, and got a warm cover to put over him.

"I'm to be laid up some weeks," Mr. Day said courageously. "I don't want to be put upstairs where I don't know a thing about what's going on in the house. I'll stay downstairs."

"That couch ought to be made up like a bed for you, Mr. Day," said the cheerful man, as Janice dropped down the back which made it into a bed-lounge.

"Do that later," said Mr. Day. "Here! Where's Mrs. Weeks?"

Janice ran to call her. Miss Peckham was descending the stairs, her nose in the air. She seemed offended that she could not rule the proceedings.

"Mrs. Weeks," said Janice to the woman from across the street, "will you come in? Father wants to speak to you."

"I—I don't know as my legs will carry me," sighed Mrs. Weeks. "Have they put him to bed? Has he got his clo'es off?"

"He just wishes to speak to you," explained Janice. "Right in here."

She led the way into the living room. Miss Peckham was still "sniffing" in the doorway. The two ambulance men were preparing to depart.

"When Arlo Weeks comes home from business, tell him I want to see him," said Mr. Day to the woman. "He'll help me off with my clothes and get me into bed here. I shall be all right."

He spoke quite cheerfully now, and even Janice was recovering her self-possession.

"Oh, well, I'll tell him," murmured Mrs. Weeks. "I'm sick o' shock, myself. But we have to sacrifice when our neighbors needs us. Yes, Mr. Day, I'll send Arlo over."

She trailed out after the two men. Mrs. Peckham sniffed after her, too.

"Well," the spinster said, "I can make him some broth. He'll need nourishing victuals. And he ain't been gettin' anything of late, I guess, but what that child's messed up."

She departed kitchenward. Janice and daddy looked at each other hopelessly. Then together, and in chorus, they murmured:

"But I thought she had washed her hands of us!"

"I don't want broth," grumbled Broxton Day, after a minute. "I want my dinner. What have you got that's good, Janice?"

"Stew—lamb stew. Nice," she groaned. "And plenty of vegetables like you like."

"'Like you like' is almost as good as the stew will be," chuckled her father faintly. "We must get that woman out of the house, Janice. She will be an Old Man of the Sea."

"No, no!" giggled the girl. "An 'Old Maid of the Sea,' you mean."

"Maybe I do. But how to get rid of her—"

"I know! Wait!" Janice dashed out of the room and out of the house. A crowd of children was still at the gate.

"Arlo Junior!" she called into the dusk, "Come here! I want you."

"You want my pa. He ain't home yet," said Junior, drawing near slowly.

"I want you to do an errand for me," said Janice hastily. "Come here—close. I'll tell you. Your mother won't mind."

"All right," said Junior, offering an attentive ear.

"You know where Gummy Carringford lives?"

"Course I do."

"Well, you run there, and see his mother; and you tell her—"

Janice in whispers told the boy just what to say to Mrs. Carringford, and he repeated it before he darted off on the errand. Arlo Junior was a great boy to play tricks, but he would not play them at such a time as this.

Janice went back to her father's side and left Miss Peckham, whom she heard moving about the kitchen, strictly alone. Daddy told her all about the accident.

It seemed, when he came down the stairs from the Chamber of Commerce, where he had gone on an errand, a scrubwoman had left a cake of soap on the next to the top step."

"Of course, it was just my luck to find it for her," said Broxton Day, with rather a grim laugh. "Maybe she wanted that soap. But I did not. I kicked right up, Janice, and it is a wonder I did not break my back as well as my leg."

"Oh, Daddy!"

"I landed so hard at the bottom of the flight that I was unconscious for a few minutes. Luckily Dr. Bowles, the surgeon, has offices in that very building. They picked me up and carried me to him and he fixed up the leg. It will be as good as new, he says, after a while."

"Oh, dear, Daddy! you might have been killed," cried Janice, suddenly sobbing.

"Well, it's all over now—but the shouting," muttered Mr. Day, his face suddenly contorted with pain. "Don't fuss, my dear. This is something that can be mended, I am sure. Don't give way to tears."

"Oh, but, Daddy! I know! I know!" sobbed the girl, hiding her face in his shoulder. "But something did happen—and I—I wished for it!"

"Wished for me to break my leg?" gasped daddy.

"Oh, no! Oh, no! But I wished something would happen so that I would not have to go to live at Poketown this summer. And—now—something—has—happened."

"Quite true, my dear," said Mr. Day, after a moment's silence. "You got your wish. But as usual, you did not get it just as you wished it. Still, the very blackest cloud has its silver lining."

Janice could not imagine a silver lining to this cloud—not just at that moment. She only realized that daddy was suffering from an accident that it did seem her wish had brought to him. It was a very serious and disturbing thought for the girl

Janice did not want to go out into the kitchen to see what Miss Peckham was about. She had left the tender breast and shoulder of lamb for the stew simmering on the back of the stove, and the vegetables were all ready to put in it. What the spinster would do toward making broth Janice did not know. And daddy did not want broth.

Just now, however, the girl felt too much disturbed to entertain an argument with Miss Martha Peckham. Things would have to go on as they would, until—

Suddenly Janice heard voices in the kitchen— Miss Peckham's high-pitched voice and another. Janice saw that her father was quiet and did not notice, so she got up from his side and stole to the kitchen door to listen.

"Well, ma'am? exclaimed Miss Peckham, don't see as it's any more of your business than 'tis mine. I'm makin' this gruel—"

"And I will finish preparing the dinner, if you do not mind, Miss Peckham," said the soft voice Mrs. Carringford. "I see that Janice has it almost ready. Do you think, Miss Peckham, that a man with a broken leg needs gruel?"

"Well, I couldn't find nothing to make broth out of—"

"Or broth?" pursued Mrs. Carringford. "I know Mr. Day's appetite, and I do not believe that broken leg

has made it any the less hearty."

"Seems to me you know a good deal!" snapped Miss Peckham. "Specially about this kitchen."

"You know, I have been working here for some time," Mrs. Carringford said. "Thank you, Miss Peckham. You need not stay. If there is anything we need you for, I will let you know. Good-night."

The spinster banged out at the kitchen door without even coming into the front part of the house.

"Not even to 'wash her hands of us' again!" giggled Janice, who ran out into the kitchen with a cry of joy.

"Oh, Mrs. Carringford!" she said, throwing her arms about the woman's neck, "have you really come to stay?"

"I guess I shall have to, my dear. Daytimes, anyway," said Amy's mother, kissing her. "You'd soon go to rack and ruin here with the neighbors coming in and littering everything up. Yes, tell your father I will accept the offer he made me. And now, we'll have dinner just as soon as possible. How is he?"

"He says he is all right," gasped Janice, catching her breath. "And he says there is always a silver lining to the very blackest cloud. Now I know he's right. You are the silver lining to this cloud, Mrs. Carringford—you really, truly are!"

CHAPTER XXIV. "WHERE THERE'S SMOKE THERE'S FIRE."

If it had not been for Mrs. Carringford's presence in the house, this experience certainly would have been a very hard one for Janice Day. For although the trials of housekeeping had been serious for the young girl, they were not all that had so vexed her and weighted her mind with sorrow.

But her father's injury shocked her out of the mental rut which she had been following. She had to wait on him, hand and foot; and it gave her so many new thoughts and new things to do, that for a time at least Janice Day's old troubles were pretty much sloughed away.

They had managed to make Mr. Day comfortable on the living-room couch, and it was easier to care for him there than it would have been were he in his bedroom. Besides, he very much objected to "being invalided to the upper story" while he was tied down with a broken leg.

Mr. Arlo Weeks came in night and morning to help turn the injured man, and remake his bed. Mr. Weeks was, after all, a good neighbor; he was more helpful than anybody else who came to the Day house, save Mrs. Carringford.

The surgeon came now and then to restrap the broken leg. Some of Mr. Day's business associates called to see how he was getting on. The injured man was not hard to take care of. He could read, propped up on the couch, and although he suffered considerable pain he did not allow Janice to discover that he was uncomfortable.

But at first he did not sleep well at night, and he had some fever. Mrs. Carringford was careful in his diet; and she never seemed to contradict him or to thwart his wishes. She had a way with her that Janice could but admire and pattern after.

The girl saw that even daddy was not quite his very sensible self when he was an invalid. He had to be humored at times; and they did all that was possible to keep him from fretting.

Broxton Day had been a very active man. Business affairs of which he had sole charge were bound to go wrong when he could not wield power as he was wont. And these things all bothered him when the nagging pain of the broken leg increased, as it sometimes did, at night.

"Oh, what should I have done without you, Mrs. Carringford?" breathed Janice, often taking comfort in the kindly woman's arms for a momentary hug. I do think Amy and Gummy and the little ones are awfully nice not to make any more objection than they do to your being up here."

"Oh, they quarrel enough with me about it at times," laughed Mrs. Carringford. "But I tell them if it was not here, it would have to be somewhere else. I have got to work, my dear. I can see that plainly. Every day the appetites of my little family increase and their needs grow. The rate at which Kate and Edna May and Syd wear out shoes— Well!"

"Let them go barefooted," giggled Janice. "I know they are teasing you all the time about it"

"No!" cried Mrs. Carringford, with warmth. "I know we live in Mullen Lane and it is not always possible for me to dress my children as nicely as I wish; but they shall not run barefoot like the little hoodlums that live about us. And Syd bothers me to death about it."

But Janice could only laugh a bit at this. She herself sometimes ran barefooted around the house and yard, though she was growing too big for that now, and she did not blame the little Carringfords for wanting to do so.

At any rate, she was very, very grateful to Mrs. Carringford for stepping into the breach at this time and helping them—and grateful to Amy and Gummy, as well.

Amy was a smart little housewife, and she had a gentle but firm way with the smaller children that kept them well in hand when their mother was out of the way.

Gummy, driving Mr. Harriman's delivery wagon, was at the Day house once or twice a day to see his mother, and of course Mrs. Carringford was always at home by seven or eight o'clock at night. The Days had set forward their dinner hour while Mr. Day was held in the house.

Janice would not sleep upstairs herself at first, while her father so often needed her. She made up a bed on another couch that was drawn in from the dining room, and slept there. Often in the night daddy grew restless and was thankful for a glass of fresh water or for some other small comfort.

There was one night Janice knew she should never forget, no matter to what age she lived. It was soon after her father was brought home "an invalid," as he laughingly called it. He had been in much pain all day, and Janice knew it well enough, although he smothered his groans when she was within hearing.

But he could not smother his mutterings at night. Toward dark he grew feverish and very restless. And when one has a "glass leg," as the ambulance man had called it and cannot twist and toss to relieve that restless feeling, one's situation is, indeed, pitiful.

Janice put out the living-room light early. The light only made the night flying insects buzz and blunder at the window screens. And how is it that moth millers will get into the most closely screened house? This was a vexing mystery to Janice.

After it was dark and the insects went to buzz elsewhere daddy dropped to sleep. Janice had been upstairs to remove her clothing, and had come down again with a thin negligee over her nightgown.

She listened to her father's uneven breathing and to his restless murmurs. Before creeping into her own cot across the room, she went softly to daddy's side and knelt on the floor. His face was flushed and his thick hair wet with perspiration. The barber had not been to shave him for two days, and Janice just knew the "prickles" on his face must feed very uncomfortable.

His head rolled from side to side upon the pillow. She wished she could do something to relieve him. She did not want to wake him up; but if she could only lave his face and hands with cool water—

Suddenly his mutterings became intelligible. Janice was held there on her knees—absorbed and almost breathless.

"Laura!"

The name was uttered so passionately—so reverently—that Janice found the tears spring unbidden to her eyes. Daddy had spoken her dead mother's name in his sleep. Indeed, it seemed as though he called to the loved one who had gone from them never to return.

"Laura!"

"Daddy!" breathed the girl. "It's me, not mamma! I— I'm all that's left to you!"

He seemed, even in his sleep, to have heard Janice's murmured words.

"All that was left to me," Broxton Day sighed, repeating, as Janice thought, what she had said. Or did he repeat Janice's words? "Your dear thoughts— and gone! gone! If I could only find them again. The box—Olga." His mutterings trailed off into unrecognizable delirium. He muttered, and his inflamed face moved from side to side upon the pillow. He did not know her at all this heartsick, sobbing little daughter!

For Janice could understand at last what went on in his poor, troubled brain. He was dreaming of the packet of letters—the letters that were so precious to Broxton Day. In the secret compartment of the lost treasure-box. In the fever of the man's brain nothing else seemed so important to him as his lost wife's letters!

Of course, all of Janice Day's school friends did not go away from Greensboro for the summer vacation; or, if they did go away for a little visit, they were soon back again.

And when the girls heard that Janice's father had broken his leg and that Janice was tied to the house with him, they began to come to see her, and inquire about daddy, and cheer her up.

None of them realized that, with Mrs. Carringford at the head of housekeeping affairs, Janice had not felt so free and cheerful for some months as she did at this time.

Daddy soon grew better, and he began to sleep peacefully at night. The surgeon, Dr. Bowles, who came occasionally, said the bones were knitting all right. Mr. Weeks and Janice even got the patient up into a wheel chair which had an arrangement that made it possible for the broken leg to rest stiffly before daddy, and he could wheel himself out on the front

porch.

There was just the one thing to trouble the girl; that was the mystery of the lost treasure-box and the secret sorrow she felt because she had been careless with it. Without her carelessness, she told herself, Olga Cedarstrom would never have taken it out of the house—if that was really how the keepsakes had come to disappear.

It was Bertha Warring who chanced, when she first came to see Janice after her return from an exciting trip to Chicago, to mention that girl, Olga. At least she spoke of the "Olga" who had been at the Latham house and had broken Mrs. Lantham's glass dish the night of Stella's party.

"I meant to speak to you about what Stella said, Bertha remarked, "before I went away. But we went in such a hurry. You know, Stella can be awfully mean."

"Why, she's not always nice," admitted Janice whose opinion of the farmer's daughter had changed a good deal during the past few months.

"I must say you let Stella down easy when you say that," laughed Bertha.

"Oh, she gets mad, and says mean things. But I don't think—"

"Now, stop it, Janice Day!" exclaimed the other girl "You know very well that Stella is just as mean as a girl can be. See how she spoke of Amy Carrington. And Amy is an awfully nice girl."

"Yes, Amy is nice," admitted Janice, happily.

"Well, now, look here," said Bertha, earnestly. "Stella said something you did not hear once about that Swedish girl."

"Oh, I guess I am not particularly interested in that girl," Janice said slowly. "My father asked the Johnsons about her. You know that girl was staying with them at the time of the party. She ran away, I guess, because she was afraid Mrs. Latham would make trouble about the broken dish. But the Johnsons said her name was not Cedarstrom."

"Mercy, what a name!" laughed Bertha. "Just the same, there is something about that girl that Stella knows, and that she said you would give a good deal to know."

"Why, I can't imagine—"

"That's just it," said Bertha, quickly. "It sounded so mysterious. I ought to have told you about it there and then. But you know how jumbled up everything was, just the last days of school."

"That is so," admitted the puzzled Janice.

"But, you know, Stella and I went away on the same train together."

"No! Did you?"

"Yes. She changed cars before we got to Chicago; but she sat in the chair car with me for a long way. And I pumped her about what she meant when she spoke the way she did regarding that Swede."

"Yes?"

"Why, she giggled, and made fun, and wouldn't say anything much at first. But I hammered at her," said Bertha, "until I got her mad. You know Stella loses her temper and then—well, it's all off!" and Bertha laughed gaily.

"Oh, Bert!" admonished Janice warmly, "I don't think we ought to get her mad."

"Oh, she'll get glad again," said Bertha carelessly. "Don't worry about Stella, Miss Fussbudget."

Janice laughed then, herself. She did not mind Bertha Warring's sharp tongue.

"Well, as I was saying, I got her finally to say something more about that Olga. And what do you suppose she did say?"

"I could not guess," said the wondering Janice.

"Why, that it was very true her name was not Cedarstrom now. That is just the way she said it before she got up and flounced out of the car." "Oh, Bert!" gasped Janice.

"Do you see? I was some minutes catching on to it," Bertha said, rather slangily. "But you see, I guess. That girl had been known as 'Olga Cedarstrom' at some time or other, you mark my word. And Stella found it out and would not tell you."

"Then she must be married. Of course her name is not Cedarstrom now," murmured Janice.

"Oh! Is that it? I didn't know but she was a real crook," said Bertha, "and had what they call an 'alias.'"

"No-o, I don't believe so. The last daddy learned about her over at Pickletown, some of the Swedish people there thought she must have gone off to get married. She was going with a young man who works in one of the pickle factories. His name is Willie Sangreen."

"And what's become of him?" asked the interested Bertha.

"He went away, too."

"They ran off and got married! Of course!" cried the romance-loving Bertha. "And that Stella Latham found it out and wouldn't tell you. Maybe your father— Oh! but he can't go looking for them now that

he has a broken leg, can he?"

"I am afraid not. We'll have to wait. But do you really suppose, Bert, that Stella is sure of what she says? Perhaps she doesn't really know for sure about that Olga."

"Where there's so much smoke there must be some fire," Bertha said, with a laugh, as Janice walked out to the front gate with her. "I guess Stella knows— Oh, Janice! Talking about smoke," cried Bertha suddenly, looking back at the Day house and up at the roof, "what is all that smoke coming out of your kitchen chimney?"

Her startled friend looked in the direction indicated. Out of the chimney-mouth, and between the bricks, poured a vomit of black smoke. Then, as the girls looked, red flames darted out with the smoke — spouting four or five feet into the air above the top of the chimney.

CHAPTER XXV. ABEL STROUT AT THE ROOT OF IT

The shock of seeing the chimney on fire did not overcome Janice Day as much as the thought that daddy was lying down, resting, in the living room, and that she would never be able to get him up and into his wheelchair and out of doors before the whole house was in a blaze.

For those lurid flames darting out of the chimney looked very terrifying indeed. Bertha Warring ran out into the street, screaming; but Janice darted back into the house.

Somebody outside screamed. "Fire! Fire!" Janice believed it must have been Miss Peckham. Little ever got past the sharp eyes of that neighbor in the next cottage.

Janice heard her father ejaculate some exclamation, but she did not go to him first. She rushed, instead, to the telephone in the hall.

Seizing the receiver, she rattled the hook up and down, hoping to get a quick response.

"Janice!" she heard her father call.

"Yes, Daddy. I'm coming!" she cried. Then her ear came the leisurely question:

"Number, please?"

"Central! give me the Fire Department—please!" ejaculated the excited girl.

"Number, please?" again drawled the unruffled Central.

"Oh, quick! Quick!" cried Janice into the instrument. "Give me the Fire Department. Our house is on fire!"

"Great heavens!" ejaculated her father from the living room. He was awake and heard Janice now.

"Do be quick, Central!" cried Janice. "The Fire De—"

"Market, two, three hundred," said Central.

"It's a wonder," thought Janice, even in her present state of mind, "that she doesn't call 'Information!'"

"Janice! Where is the fire?" called her father.

"It's the chimney. Wait, Daddy! I'll come and help you. The kitchen chim— Oh!"

Somebody on the wire just then said crisply: "Central Fire Station. What's wanted?"

"Fire!" shouted Janice. "Our house! Eight-forty-five Knight Street!"

"I hear you!" exclaimed the man at the other end, and Janice almost threw the receiver back on the hook, and darted into the living room.

Mrs. Carringford happened to be out. Janice, now that Bertha Warring had deserted her, was all alone in the house with the injured man.

"Oh, Daddy!" she gasped, seeing him already in his chair.

"Give me a push, child. Where is the fire? This is something new—the first time the Days were ever burned out."

"It's the kitchen chimney. But I can't get you down the front steps—"

Meanwhile she was pushing him out on the porch. People were running toward the house now and many were shouting. But it did not look like a very helpful crowd.

Just then Janice saw a wagon being driven rather wildly along the street toward the house. It was not a part of the Fire Department equipment, although she looked eagerly for that. The nearest fire station was fully half a mile from the Day house.

The children in the street scattered as the horse's pounding feet on the macadam warned them of his approach. The driver stood up, his feet braced against the dashboard, yelling to the horse to stop as he swung back on the reins.

It was Gummy!

"Hi, Janice! Your chimneys on fire!" he shouted, when he had stopped the horse.

"Well, for goodness sake!" exclaimed Janice, "doesn't he suppose we know it, with all this crowd—and noise —and everything?"

Gummy tumbled out of the covered wagon. He came down on all fours, he was in such a hurry; but he was up again in a moment.

"Hi, Janice! I can put it out, if I can get out on to that ell roof through that little window up there." he cried.

"That's the hired' girl's room," gasped Janice.

"What's he going to do? Take pails of water out there and throw them down the chimney?"

"Give the boy a chance," said daddy. "Maybe he can do something." And to Janice's amazement, her father was smiling.

Gummy ran around to the back of the wagon. He dropped the tailboard, backed around, and got a bag on his shoulders. With this he staggered toward the house.

"Oh, Gummy!" screamed Janice, "what have you got in that sack?"

"Salt," replied the boy, panting up the steps. "Half a shushal of balt. I was takin' it out to Jones's.

"Salt?" gasped Janice, in her excitement not noticing at all that Gummy had again "gummed up his speech," to quote his own expression. "Why, what good is salt? That chimney is blazing."

"Salt will do the trick. Show me the way to that window. Salt will put out a fire in a chimney better than anything else."

"Let him have his way, Janice," said her father quickly.

She thought she heard the gong of some of the fire apparatus approaching; but she was not sure. She gave Gummy a hand, and they ran upstairs with the sack of salt between them.

Here was the small room. She flung open the door and Gummy flung up the lower sash of the window. He almost dived out upon the tinned roof of the kitchen ell.

"Quick! Give me that salt I" he cried reaching in for it.

Janice helped him lift the bag out of the window. He dragged it along the roof toward the chimney that now vomited black smoke and flames in a very threatening volume. Fortunately the light wind drifted it away from the main part of the house.

"Oh, Gummy, you'll be burned to death—and then what will your mother say?" cried Janice.

Gummy was so much in earnest that he did not even laugh at this. He dragged the sack of salt as close to the burning chimney as he dared. Then he got out his pocketknife and cut the string.

Everybody in the street below was yelling to him by this time, telling him what to do and how to do it.

Gummy gave them little attention.

The smoke choked him and occasionally a tongue of flame seemed to reach for him. But Gummy Carringford possessed a good deal of pluck, and he was strong and wary for so young a boy. Shielding his face as best he could from the heat and smoke, he began to cast double handfuls of salt into the chimney.

The chimney was fortunately not as high as his head and Gummy could do this as well as a man. The soot which had gathered in the chimney (perhaps it had not been cleaned out since the house was built) was mostly at the bottom, and the flames came from down there; but the hot bricks would soon set the roof on fire, if not the walls inside the house.

The salt smothered the fire wherever it landed. It was better than sand for such a purpose, for salt is damp and seems to possess smothering qualities all its own when rained upon the flames.

Before half the contents of the bag had been thrown down the chimney the flames no longer leaped above its top. The smoke continued to roll up, and Gummy had pretty well smothered it himself when the Fire Department apparatus came clanging up to the house.

One of the fireman with a portable extinguisher rushed upstairs, got out at the small window and reached Gummy's side quickly.

"Good boy, kid," he said. "Let's give it the lad," and he began to squirt the contents of the fire extinguisher down the chimney.

Gummy staggered back and sat down, coughing. His face and hands were pretty black and he was breathless. When he got back downstairs and the firemen had declared the conflagration entirely extinguished, Gummy found himself quite a hero.

The excitement had hurt nobody, after all. Janice was glad Mrs. Carringford was not there at the time, or she certainly would have been worried about Gummy.

"You are an awfully smart boy, Gummy," Janice declared, clinging to the boy's hand. "I won't ever make fun of you again when you get mixed up in talking."

Mr. Day overheard this and laughed heartily. He too, shook Gummy cordially by the hand.

"You have a head on you, son," he said. "How came you to think about the salt?"

"I saw a chimney on fire in the country once, and they put it out with salt," the boy replied. "I've got to hurry back to the store and get more salt for the Jones's now. I guess Mr. Harriman will be mad."

"Oh, no he won't. I'll call him up on the telephone and tell him to put this sack on my account. He won't scold you, I am sure," said Mr. Day.

In fact, everybody who heard about the matter praised Gummy Carringford. They began to say "that boy with the funny name is considerable of a boy," and things like that. Mr. Day gave him a little money, although Gummy did not want to take that.

"You treat your little brothers and sisters with it, Janice's father said laughing. "They didn't have the fun of seeing you put out the fire."

"We-ell," said the thoughtful boy, "I'll see what Momsy says about it first."

When Mrs. Carringford returned to the house Mr. Day himself told her of the fire and of what Gummy had done, and how proud she should be of him, too. And Mrs. Carringford was proud—Mr. Day could see that.

"Boys are awfully nice to have around the house, aren't they, Daddy?" Janice said that evening as they sat alone. "I never did think before that I'd care to have a brother. You see, you are just like a brother to me, Daddy."

"I see," said Daddy, chuckling. "When it comes to chimney fires and such excitement, a boy comes in handy, is that it?"

"Why—ye-es, Berta Warring ran away, crying, and I couldn't do much but squeal myself," said Janice gravely.

"And telephone for the Fire Department, and help me out, and aid Gummy to carry up the salt, and—"

"Oh, but, Daddy, those are all such little things!" sighed Janice.

Janice thought things were going pretty well after that. They were so glad to have their house saved from destruction, and so proud of Gummy, that everybody seemed all right. But there was trouble coming, and one afternoon Amy brought it to the Day house.

Amy, in tears, came to see her mother. Janice chanced to be in the kitchen when she entered from the Love Street gate. Amy had in tow a curly-haired dapper little man who looked too oily to be honest, and with little gimlet eyes that seemed to bore right through one.

"Oh, Mother!" gasped Amy, "this—this man's come to take our house away from us!"

"What is this now?" exclaimed Mrs. Carringford, in as much surprise as fear.

"Yes, he has. He said so. He's got papers, and all," sobbed Amy.

"Ahem! the young lady puts it very crassly indeed," said the curly-haired man. "You, I presume, are Mrs. Josephine Carringford," he went on, reading from a paper.

"Yes."

"I am serving you in the suit of Mrs. Alice G. Blayne, of Croydon, Michigan, my client, to recover a certain parcel of property situated on Mullen Lane and now occupied by you and your family, Mrs. Carringford," said the man glibly, and thrusting a paper into the woman's hand.

"But I bought my home through Mr. Abel Strout, of Napsburg," gasped Mrs. Carringford. She did not recognize Jamison, the farm hand, in the transaction at all. She now felt that man was but Abel Strout's tool.

"Oh! As to that, I have nothing to say," said the curly-haired lawyer, smiling in a way Janice did not like at all. "I merely represent my client. The property has been claimed by several people, I believe, and may have been sold a dozen times. That will not invalidate my client's claim."

"But I never even heard of this Mrs. Blayne," murmured Amy's mother.

"A poor widow, ma'am," said the lawyer blandly. "And one who can ill afford to lose her rights. She as heir of old Peter Warburton Blayne who lived in that house where you now reside for a great many years. He died. His heirs were not informed. The place was sold for taxes—for a nominal sum, ma'am. Of course, a tax-deed has no standing in court if the real owner of the property comes forward ready to pay the back taxes, accrued interest, and the fixed court charges."

"But I got a warranty deed!" cried Mrs. Carringford.

"That is a matter between you and the person you say you bought the house of," said the lawyer calmly. "If you consider that you have a case against him you will have to go to court with him. Ahem! An expensive matter, my dear madam, I assure you. Probably the man who sold to you had every reason to believe he had a clear title. It has passed through several hands since Peter Blayne died, as I say.

"I cannot advise you as to that, ma'am," pursued the lawyer. "Those papers are in regard to this suit that is already entered against you. Of course, it would be cheaper for you to settle the case out of court; but you will probably want to fight us. Most women do."

At this point Janice got to her feet and ran out of the room. She rushed in to where her father was writing on a lapboard across the arms of his chair.

Meanwhile Mrs. Carringford and Amy were clinging together and facing the dapper, voluble, little lawyer in the kitchen. Amy was sobbing excitedly; but her mother said firmly:

"Abel Strout is at the root of this—"

"I assure you," said the lawyer politely, "my client is Mrs. Blayne. I have nothing to do with Abel Strout."

"He is at the root of it, nevertheless," said Mrs. Carringford confidently. "I saw it in his eye when he was last in my house. He means to turn me and my children out, and ruin us!"

CHAPTER XXVI. THE CLOUDS LOWER

Janice was so excited she could scarcely speak intelligibly for a minute. But finally she made her father understand what was going on in the kitchen.

"And he's come to take their house right away from them," concluded the girl. "He's given her a paper, and she's got to give him the house—and everything!"

"Oh, no; not so bad as all that," said daddy, soothingly. "Things aren't done in just that way— not even by shyster lawyers. This is just a notice of suit he has given her. But you run, Janice, and tell them to come in here. I will hear what this man has to say."

So Janice ran back to the kitchen. She held the door open, and, with rather a commanding air for so young a girl, looking straight at the curly-haired man:

"You and Mrs. Carringford come into the living room. My father wants to see you."

"Hey?" said the man. "Who is this?"

"Mr. Broxton Day," said Mrs. Carringford, quietly. "I think we had better see Mr. Day before we go any farther in this matter."

"Oh, I have no interest in seeing anybody else, ma'am," said the lawyer hastily. "Of course, you can take advice if you wish to. Every move you make, however, will cost you money, as you'll find. It will be throwing good money after bad money, I assure you."

"Now if you feel like settling the matter out of court—"

"We will go in, and you can say all that before Mr. Day," said Mrs. Carringford firmly. "It seems to me I shall understand it better in front of him."

"Daddy is waiting for you," said Janice urgently. "He has a broken leg so he can't come here to get you," she added looking at the lawyer significantly.

Maybe the fact of this assurance—that Broxton Day was practically helpless physically—led the lawyer to take a chance in the living room. But he was manifestly very ill at ease from the moment he heard Mr. Day's name mentioned.

"Will you oblige me with your name, sir?" said daddy in his ever-courteous way.

The curly-haired man fumbled for a card and finally handed one to Mr. Day.

"Mr. Jonas Schrimpe," repeated daddy. "Are you practising at the bar here in Greensboro?" "My office is in Napsburg, Mr. Day. Three Forty-two Main Street."

"Ah! Are you acquainted with Mr. Abel Strout?"

"I have nothing to do with Mr. Strout," said the man, rather sharply. "I have already told the lady that. My client is Mrs. Blayne—"

"I understand," said Mr. Day suavely. "I merely asked you a question, Mr. Schrimpe. Do you know Mr. Strout?"

"Well—I know him by sight."

"Naturally. As I chance to remember his office is in the same building on Main Street as your own. I remember the number," said Mr. Day smiling. "Three Hundred and Forty-two Main Street."

Mr. Schrimpe fidgeted and turned very red in the face. Mr. Day went on quietly:

"Is this client of yours in Napsburg?"

"She lives in Croydon, Michigan."

"In Michigan! How came she to pick out you Mr. Schrimpe, for an attorney in this matter? Forgive the question; I am curious."

"Why—I—I was recommended to her."

"Ah! By a friend, I suppose."

"She—she heard of me down here, and wanted to put the case in a lawyer's hands on the spot."

"On the spot," repeated Mr. Day. "Why not in some lawyer's hands in Greensboro, rather than Napsburg?"

Mr. Schrimpe seemed very confused, as well as angry; but he did not dare to assert himself. Mr. Day held out his hand for the paper the lawyer had given to Mrs. Carringford.

"Just leave it to me, Mrs. Carringford," he said confidently. "I know just what to do. Possibly had I not broken my leg I would have been able to warn you of this."

"Then that Abel Strout is at the root of it, just as I said," she cried.

"Not a doubt of it," replied Mr. Day. "That John Jamison was but a dummy."

"I assure you," began the red-faced lawyer, but Mr. Day interrupted:

"Your assurances would not be accepted before this court, I am afraid, Mr.—ah Schrimpe. Now would you mind, as you are in town, calling upon Mrs. Carringford's legal adviser in regard to this affair?"

I—oh—"

"Oh, Mr. Day!" interjected Mrs. Carringford, "a lawyer's services cost so much."

"This man is my own lawyer," said Mr. Day promptly. "I assure you that he will look into this suit without charging you much, Mrs. Carringford. If Mr. Schrimpe—"

"Oh, if it's not out of my way as I go back to the railroad station," growled the curly haired man.

"Not at all. It is over the bank—the Farmers and Merchants Bank. Mr. Randolph E. Payne is the gentleman."

"Great Scott!" gasped Mr. Schrimpe, actually appearing to shrivel, "Mr. Payne?"

"Yes. He is known to you?"

"Everybody knows Mr. Payne."

"He is well known. As good a lawyer, I believe, as we have in this part of the State. You do not mind meeting him?"

"Er—will he see me, Mr. Day?"

"I will telephone to him at once. I assure you he will give you a hearing—and thank you. Good day, Mr. Schrimpe."

Although daddy could not leave his chair, Janice saw that he had a way of getting rid of visitors promptly when he wanted them to go. Mr. Schrimpe scuttled out in a hurry.

"Wheel me to the telephone, Janice," said Mr. Day cheerfully. "I hope Payne frightens that little shrimp out of a year's growth. If ever I saw a shyster lawyer, I saw one when that fellow came into the room."

"Oh, Mr. Day! but this suit? That summons? What shall I do?"

"Do nothing yet! assure you, Mrs. Carringford, you will have one of the best lawyers in the State to tell you what to do when the times comes. Of course, if the matter comes to court, you will have to go into court and meet them. But don't worry till that time comes. That is my advice."

"Then they can't take our home away from us?" cried Amy joyfully."

"Hold on!" advised Daddy. "I do not say that. I don't wish to encourage you with any false hopes—nor to discourage you, either. I know nothing—absolutely nothing—regarding the legal status of this case. I have my suspicions that Abel Strout is behind it."

"Oh, I am sure of that!" cried Mrs. Carringford.

"Nevertheless, it may be that there is an unsatisfied claimant of the old Peter Warburton Blayne property. This Mrs. Alice G. Blayne may be perfectly honest in her contention."

"But in that case won't Mr. Strout or Mr. Jamison give me my money back?" asked Mrs. Carringford.

"If there was much chance of that, do you think Strout would have stirred up any such suit as this?" asked Mr. Day quietly. "No. Strout at least thinks he sees his way to making you lose the house. Jamison was his dummy—used by him in order to keep, himself out of trouble."

"Oh, Mr. Day! Don't say that"

"I say he thinks he has a chance. But he may be mistaken. Strout is sly. This may be merely 'strike suit' started in the hope of scaring you into making a disastrous settlement with him. He wants to get the property back. The foundations for that factory are already being laid. Property values Mullen Lane are going up."

"Oh, dear me!" sighed Mrs. Carringford, starting back toward the kitchen, "this is a wicked world."

"Nothing the matter with the world," said Mr. Day, cheerfully.
"It's some of the folks in it."

He called Mr. Randolph E. Payne's office then and talked to the successful lawyer for some time. To Janice, afterward, he would say nothing more encouraging than he had said to the widow.

"When one mixes up with a sharper like Abel Strout, one is likely to be burned before he is through. Strout is always and forever trying little, nasty, legal tricks. And Schrimpe is an instrument fitted to Strout's hand.

"Perhaps they have found some ignorant woman who really was a relative of Peter Blayne, and who may have a small claim on the property. It is enough to invalidate the deed Mrs. Carringford has and yet she will be unable to prove that Strout and his man Jamison knew about the fault in the title.

"If he makes her sue to recover the thousand dollars she paid the legal fees will eat up that sum—and he can afford to hire lawyers and dribble along through the courts better than she can."

"Oh, Daddy!"

"Yes, I am afraid, if Strout—or, rather, Schrimpe— has a good case it will be better to settle it out of court."

"But, dear Daddy! Mrs. Carringford has no money to pay lawyer's fees, or settle cases," urged Janice.

"True. And that is the unfortunate part of it. Let us wait and see what Mr. Payne advises after he has looked into the matter. Whatever he says, she would better do."

This ended the matter for the time being. But all the dark clouds of trouble seemed to have lowered upon the Carringfords again. Janice Day was sorry for them, but this was a case in which she positively could not "do something" to help. She could only offer her sympathy.

CHAPTER XXVII . INFORMATION THAT IS TOO LATE

During the days immediately succeeding the fire and the Carringford's poignant trouble, Janice Day had a mental problem to solve which occupied her thoughts a good part of the time.

Daddy's broken leg was getting along nicely. With the aid of crutches he could get around very well indeed. He had even gone down to the bank in an automobile.

So Janice did not have to give him quite the close care and attention that she previously had. Daddy declared she was making a mollycoddle of him, anyway—that she babied him too much.

She had more freedom of action, therefore, and now she proceeded to put a certain plan she had made into effect. Janice had not forgotten what Bertha Warring had said regarding the information Stella Latham had hidden from her, Janice, at the time school closed.

Could it be that, after all was said and done, the Olga who had broken Mrs. Latham's dish was the same Olga that had run away with the Day's treasure-box? Was it Olga Cedarstrom, with her name changed, and Stella had known it to be so, all the time?

Really, when Janice thought of this she felt exceedingly angry with Stella. She had intended, after Stella had acted so meanly toward Amy Carringford, to let the farmer's daughter strictly alone in the future. She would have as little to do with her as it was possible, considering that she had to go to school with her. That was at first. Then her anger had cooled. Now it was aflame again.

But if Stella knew positively that the Swedish girl who had visited Mrs. Johnson had been married, and therefore her name was no longer Cedarstrom, Janice was determined to find it out. Unpleasant as might be to ask Stella, Janice would do just this.

She knew Stella had returned from her visit to the lake shore resort. Janice had seen her flying past in the Latham car more than once within the week. Janice could not stop her at such times; she could not expect Stella to put herself out at all to give her any information. So she set forth one August morning to trudge through the heat and dust out to the Latham farm. There was no interurban car that would take her near there; and how she did wish daddy could afford an automobile!

Indeed, just as she turned up the road leading to the door of the Latham house a motor-car turned, too, into the road, powdering Janice with dust. The latter saw the malicious smile of Stella Latham, driving the car herself, as the farmer's daughter looked back over her shoulder at the pedestrian.

Janice kept grimly on; nor would she show Stella that she was hurt or ruffled in temper. Stella waited on the porch for her schoolmate to approach. A man came to take the car around to the garage.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Stella, when Janice came within hearing. "Are you begging more old clothes for that protegee of yours, Amy Carringford?"

"I have come on my own business, Stella," said Janice gently. "It is something that I want to know, and you can tell me."

Stella was smiling broadly; but it was by no means a pleasant smile. She was spiteful. She had found since coming back from her summer vacation that the girls had not forgotten her behavior toward Amy Carringford and some of them still resented it. She was nowhere near as popular as she had been; and even her father's motorcar could not regain the friendship of many of her schoolmates whom she wished to be chums with.

Stella laid all this to "that sly Janice Day." She dared not so speak of Janice before her mother; for Mrs. Latham liked Janice. Just now, however, Stella's mother was not at home, and she felt free treat Janice in any way she chose.

"Of course, you expect me to tell you everything you want to know, Janice Day," said Stella. "But I don't know why I should."

"You will tell me, won't you, Stella, if you really know that the Swedish girl who broke your mother's dish is the same girl who used to work for daddy and me?"

"Why should I?"

"Because it is the right thing to do, isn't it? You do not know what it means to us if we can find that girl—"

"And why should I care?" snapped Stella "You never did anything for me, Janice Day."

"I think I tried to—at least once," her schoolmate said mildly.

"Nothing of the kind! You did something for Amy Carringford—the pauper! You were spoons with her then, and you wanted to get her to my party. You begged an invitation for her and then dressed her up like a freak so she could come, and—"

"That is not so, Stella," Janice interrupted with some spirit. "But I want to talk about Olga, not about Amy."

"Go along with your old Olga!" cried the other angrily. "I wouldn't tell you anything about her if I knew."

"I shall go to Mrs. Johnson again then. And if Mrs. Johnson is not willing to tell me, I shall come back and see your mother."

"Oh! you will?" sneered Stella. "So you think the Johnsons will tell you about Olga's last name do you?"

"I will ask them."

"Good luck to you!" jeered Stella, as Janice went on through the Latham's yard. "You can ask anybody you like, but you'll get nothing out of me I assure you!"

Janice made no further reply. She was hurt to the quick, for she did not believe she deserved any such treatment from her schoolmate. And it did, too, worry Janice Day when she knew she had an enemy.

"Friends are so much nicer to make than enemies," was one of daddy's sayings; and his little daughter always bore that fact in mind when in contact with her schoolmates.

But really, one could do nothing with Stella Latham, once that suborn person had made up her mind to be "mad." Stella gloried in showing all the perversity with which she was cursed; so Janice sighed and gave it up.

"No use. I hope I won't have to ask Mrs. Latham. Then there will be trouble, I fear."

The walk over the hill and down the lane, crossing the brook Gummy Carrington had once spoken of, was a pleasant walk, after all. It was not dusty, and there were shade trees part of the way. By the time Janice came to the little house which her father and she had once visited to look for Olga, she was quite cool and collected again.

But as soon as she drew near to the tenant house the girl was startled. There was not a sign of life about it. There were no wagons or farm tools about the sheds or barnyard. There were no cattle in the stable, nor pigs in the pen, nor poultry in the wired run.

"Goodness me! have the Johnsons gone, too?" cried Janice.

She hurried to the little house. There were no curtains at the windows, and she could see right through the empty house.

"That's what Stella meant!" exclaimed Janice. "Oh, the mean, mean thing! To let me walk away over here without telling me that they had gone! And now she is waiting back there to laugh at me when I return!" Janice Day did not like to be laughed at any more than other people. And she particularly shrank from facing the sarcastic Stella on this occasion.

"At least, I will make some inquiries elsewhere, first," she thought, and set forth along the public highway, on which the little house fronted, toward another dwelling that was in sight.

There were people in this house, that was sure. There were children playing in the yard and a pleasant-faced woman on the front porch, sewing and keeping an eye on the children.

She did put out a somewhat forbidding air when Janice turned in at the gate; but then she saw the girl had no bag or sample case, so she brightened up again.

"You haven't anything to sell, I guess?" the woman began, even before Janice uttered a word.

"Oh, no," answered the girl.

"Come up and sit down," said the woman. Then she added: "Dear me, you are only a little girl. It's hot walking. Will you have a drink of water?"

"No, thank you. I got a drink at the well back there," and Janice pointed at the tenant house on Mr. Latham's place.

"Oh, yes; Latham's cottage."

"The Johnsons used to live there, did they not?" asked the caller.

"Swedes—yes," said the woman.

"I was looking for them."

"But goodness, you're not a Swede!" exclaimed the woman.

"Oh, no," laughed Janice. "But I wanted to see them about a friend of theirs—a girl who used to work for us."

"Oh! I thought you couldn't be a foreigner," said the woman. "Well," she added, "I'm afraid you'll have to go a long way to find out anything from the Johnsons."

"You don't mean—"

"I mean they've left the country," said the woman.

"Left this part of the country?"

"They have gone back to Sweden," said Janice's informant, nodding over her sewing. "Yes. They had a stroke of luck. Mrs. Johnson told me herself in her broken talk. Near's I could find out her grandfather had died and left her a bit of property, and she and her family were going back to the place they came from ten years ago, to attend to it. Lucky folks, some of them foreigners. I don't see for the life of me why they ever leave their homes and come over here, when they've got money and land comin' to them at home."

The woman talked on, even faster than Miss Peckham was wont to talk. But her volubility gave Janice a chance to recover her self-possession. She saw quite clearly that her errand had come to naught. Even if the Lathams positively knew the missing Olga had been named Cedarstrom before her marriage they probably did not know where Olga now was.

The people who were the more likely to know, these Johnsons, had gone back to their native land. Janice wondered, despairingly, if Olga had gone back to Sweden too.

But the girl was able to hide her trouble from this new acquaintance. The woman was glad to have her stay—and talk. Rather, the hostess did the talking. It was evident that she got little chance for conversation, living as she did on this rather lonely road.

Janice planned what she would do, however, while she listened. Rather than go back and perhaps have another quarrel with Stella, she decided she would go home and tell her father what she had found out. He might write to Mrs. Latham for information—if the farmer's wife had any—regarding Olga.

At least, it was one sure thing, that such information as Janice had obtained was much too late. An ocean separated her now from the Johnsons, Olga's friends.

CHAPTER XXVIII. GUMMY COMES INTO HIS OWN

Janice bade her new acquaintance good-bye with some difficulty. The woman by the roadside did love to talk. But when the girl was well rested she went on.

She remembered very clearly the way she and daddy had come to the little Johnson cottage in the automobile. So she knew she could find her way back. One thing she did not take into consideration, however; that was, that an automobile gets over the ground a great deal faster than one can walk.

An hour later, past mid-afternoon, dusty and footsore, she was still marching towards Greensboro along a very pleasant, but a very wearisome, road. She heard the rumble of wheels behind her, but she was too tired to turn to look.

Motor car after motor car had passed her while she was trudging along in the dust, and not one driver stopped to offer her a lift.

But a friendly voice now hailed her as a horse was drawn down to a walk. It reached Janice Day's ear like an angelic whisper:

"Don't you want to ride, Miss?"

She wheeled about with almost a scream of joy. "Gummy Carringford!"

"Jicksy! Is that you, Janice?" gasped the boy. "I'd never know it, you're so smothered in dust. What are you doing away out here? Get in—do!"

He offered her a hand and pulled her up to the high step into the front of the covered wagon. She almost fell to the seat.

"You are the best boy!" she gasped.

"Ain't I? They can't get along without me at my house. What under the sun are you wandering around for away out here?"

She told him in broken sentences, and he sympathized with her because of her disappointment.

"I could have told you the Johnsons had gone, if you'd asked me. But I did not suppose you were interested in them any more," he said.

"And daddy, being out of the bank, did not know that Mr. Johnson had withdrawn his account and sailed for Europe. Oh, dear me, it is so exasperating! Everything about that Olga, and connected with her, is so mysterious."

"I wonder if I couldn't find out something about her in Pickletown?" suggested Gummy.

"Daddy has been there often, I believe," she said doubtfully.

"But not of late."

"Why, no, I suppose not. He's been tied to the house with a 'glass leg,'" cried Janice laughing a little.

"You know I deliver orders over there twice a week for Mr. Harriman. A lot of those people can't even talk English. We've a Swede for a clerk in the store. They write down what they want for me, and he puts up the orders.

"But I know a lot of them to talk to—especially the boys that work in the pickle factories I'll begin by asking them," said Gummy, with eagerness, for he wanted to help.

"That will be nice of you, Gummy," Janice said. "You never do know when we might come across some news of her."

"And you say you think she's married?"

"It may be so. To Willie Sangreen. At least, she was going with a man by that name when she worked for us."

"Don't know any Sangreens over at Pickletown," said Gummy, shaking his head. "And of course I haven't seen your Olga."

"That is so, Gummy. But if the girl at Johnson's that night was really Olga Cedarstrom, you'd know her again, wouldn't you?"

"Guess I would if I saw her," declared the boy. "No fear about that. I'll keep my eyes open, Janice."

With this promise he chirruped to the horse, that jogged along without paying very much attention to Gummy. He knew the road better than the boy did, for he had been over it many more times.

"Do you suppose that lawyer that came to see my mother will cheat us out of our home, Janice?" asked the boy suddenly, showing where his thoughts were anchored.

"Not if it can be helped, Gummy," returned the girl sympathetically. "I know daddy's friend, Mr. Payne, will do all he can for her."

"He hasn't sent any word to her, or anything," sighed Gummy. "We just don't know what to do."

"All you can do is to sit tight and hold on, I guess," Janice said. "That is what daddy says he does when things look stormy for him."

"But, you see, it means so much to us," said the boy, shaking his head. "Jicksy! And me with such a miserable old name!"

"Why, Gummy!"

"How'd you like to be called Zerubbabelbubble, or something like that?" he demanded. "Nice enough for you. 'Janice!' That's a fancy name. But 'Gumswith!' Jicksy!"

"Why, Gummy!" exclaimed the girl again, didn't know you hated it so."

"I do. I don't talk about it. I know Pa gave it to me because he thought a heap of his half brother. And Uncle John Gumswith was a nice man, I guess. He set my father up in business in the first place, when he was married."

"Oh, is that so, Gummy?"

"Yes! Don't kick about the old name before Momsy. You see, I guess Uncle John wanted them to name a boy after him; and maybe they thought if they did so it might do me some good sometime."

"Oh, Gummy! That your uncle would give you money because you were named after him?"

"Yes," said Gummy, nodding. "I don't know. But—"

"And your uncle's never been heard from? You never saw him, even?"

"Nor he me," grinned Gummy. "He went off to Australia and never wrote. He was always traveling around the world, Pa said; and he never did write. Just walked in on his folks without announcing he was coming." "A regular wanderer," said Janice.

"And now, jicksy!" exclaimed Gummy, vigorously, "how I'd like to have him walk in on us now."

"Oh, Gummy" she said eagerly, catching the drift of his desire.
"With his pockets full of money!"

The boy nodded vigorously. "You see, Janice, it would be worth while being called 'Gumswith' then, sure enough."

Janice could not blame Gummy Carringford feeling as he did. He really should have something to pay him for being called by such an atrocious name! And Janice herself would be glad to have rich relative walk into the Day house and present daddy—with an automobile, for instance.

They came in sight of the house at Eight Hundred and Forty-five Knight Street just as the very kind of automobile Janice would have loved to own was drawing up before the front door—a handsome, great, big touring car, big enough for her to have taken most of her friends out riding in at once.

"Oh, who is that?" she cried.

"Man. Don't know him," said Gummy, cheerfully, as the single occupant of the tonneau stepped out of the car and entered the gate.

He was a well-dressed man, of more than middle age, and Janice's heart began to beat faster. It did seem as though something must be about to happen.

Daddy was on the porch and she could see him greet the gentleman without rising. The stranger took a seat at Mr. Day's request. And if Janice had been near enough to have heard the first words that passed between them, she would have suffered a great drop in the temperature of her excitement.

"How's the leg, Broxton?" asked the visitor.

"Coming on, Randolph. What's the news?"

"Well, yes, I have news," said the lawyer, nodding.

"I know it. Or you would not have found time to get up into this part of the town. Well, what can you tell Mrs. Carringford?"

"Nothing much about that Mullen Lane property, I fear, that she will want to hear."

"Too bad, too bad," said Broxton Day. "I am sorry for her. She is a hard working woman—and proud. No chance of helping her?"

"I can settle the case for five hundred dollars. I cannot connect Abel Strout with this shake-down—for that is what it is. The woman up in Michigan never heard of her great-uncle's property down here till this little Schrimpe told her. But we can't connect him with Strout. Strout's skirts are clear. And this Schrimpe had a perfect legal right to drum up trade. He's that kind of lawyer," said Mr. Payne, with disgust.

"Five hundred dollars—and she will still owe Abel Strout a thousand on the mortgage," sighed Mr. Day.

"Yes. But I suppose, in time, the property will be worth it."

"It's worth it now," said Mr. Day. "That is what is the matter with Strout. But Mrs. Carringford hasn't the money to spare. And at the present time nobody would put a second mortgage on the property."

"I suppose the woman up in Michigan gets about twenty-five—maybe fifty—dollars out of it. That would settle any quitclaim of this character. Half a dozen other heirs were bought off at the time; but she was overlooked. The rest of the five hundred Mrs. Carringford can raise it—will be split between Schrimpe and his principal."

"There are some mighty mean people in this world," said Broxton Day, grimly.

"You've said it," agreed the lawyer. "Now, maybe I'd better see Mrs. Carringford. I understand she is here?"

"Yes."

"Do you know much about her?"

"I know she is a fine woman. They came here from Napsburg after the husband died—"

"Alexander Carringford, wasn't he?" asked Mr. Payne, taking some papers from his pocket.

"I believe so."

"They came originally from Cleveland?"

"Maybe."

"A correspondent of mine in Cleveland has written me about a family of Carringfords, and I shouldn't be surprised if these were the same people. If they are—"

"What's all the mystery, Payne?" asked Broxton Day, with sudden interest, for he saw that the lawyer meant more than he had said.

"If this is Alexander Carringford's widow, I don't know but my news is in two pieces."

"Meaning?"

"Bad news, and good news. Let's call the woman."

At that moment Janice, who had gone into the house through the back way, appeared at the open door.

"This is my little housekeeper, Randolph," said Broxton Day, smiling proudly upon his daughter. "Janice, this is Mr. Payne."

The girl came forward without timidity, but without boldness, and accepted the visitor's hand.

"Is Mrs. Carringford out there?" asked Janice's father.

"Yes, Daddy. And Gummy."

"Gummy!" ejaculated the lawyer. "What's that? A game, or something to eat?"

Janice's dear laughter rang out with daddy's bass tones. "Oh, no, sir," she said. "Gummy is 'Gumswith Carringford.'"

"My soul!" ejaculated the lawyer, getting up quickly from his chair, "it is the right family. Come inside. Let's see Mrs. Carringford somewhere where we can talk without the neighbors seeing and hearing everything."

For he had noticed the bowed blinds of Miss Peckham's cottage only a few yards from the end of the porch.

"Tell her to come into the living room, Janice," said Mr. Day, rising slowly and reaching for his crutches. But it was evident that he understood the lawyer's excitement no more than Janice did.

The girl ran back to the kitchen and urged Mrs. Carringford to come in. "And Gummy, too," she said. "Maybe he wants you. It is Mr. Payne, and he is daddy's lawyer."

"It's about the home, Gummy!" ejaculated Mrs. Carringford.

"Oh, I hope he'll tell us how to beat out that Abel Strout!"

"Maybe it's to say that Mr. Strout can take our home," faltered Mrs. Carringford.

"Come on, Mommy!" said her big boy. "I'm not afraid. If worse comes to worst, it won't be so long before I can support you and the kids, anyway."

Now Janice thought that was a very nice speech and she remembered to tell daddy about it afterward.

They went into the living room and Mr. Day introduced Mrs. Carrington to his companion. The latter looked hard at Gummy.

"What is your name, boy?" he asked rather sternly.

"Carrington, too, sir," said Gummy, politely.

"The whole of it!" commanded the lawyer.

"Er—Gumswith Carrington," said the boy, with flashing eye but cheeks that would turn red.

"Indeed?" returned the lawyer, staring oddly at Gummy. "You are something of a boy, I take it." Then he wheeled to confront Mrs. Carrington.

"I am told," Mr. Payne said, "that your husband was Alexander Carrington, of Cleveland?"

The woman was somewhat surprised, but said that that statement was correct. She could not see, during the next few minutes' cross-examination, what these questions had to do with that little cottage in Mullen Lane, and whether her family was to be turned out of it or not.

After even his legal suspicion was satisfied as to Mrs. Carrington's identity, Mr. Payne said, again looking at Gummy:

"Did you and your husband name this boy after a certain relative named John Gumswith. Mrs. Carrington?"

"My husband's elder brother. Yes, sir. Gumswith is named after his Uncle John."

"Humph! I should consider it something of a punishment if I were the boy," muttered the lawyer. Then he asked:

"Have you heard from this relative—this John Gumswith—recently?"

"No, sir. Not for fifteen years," said Mrs. Carrington, her face suddenly paling.

"Do you know where he is?"

"I only know that he started for Australia fifteen years ago."

"Sit down, Mrs. Carrington," said Mr. Day softly. "I assure you this is nothing to worry about."

"I—should—say—not," agreed the lawyer. "Quite the opposite. And the boy need not look so scared, either. If he can stand that name he carries around with him—"

"Boy!" exclaimed Mr. Payne, "what would you say if somebody gave you two thousand pounds?"

"Er—what, sir?" gasped Gummy. "Two thousand pounds of what? Must be an elephant! That's a ton."

How Mr. Payne did laugh at that! But neither Gummy nor Janice saw anything funny in his speech. Mrs. Carrington was watching the lawyer's face, and she said nothing.

"I mean two thousand pounds in money. That is something like ten thousand dollars. How about it?" asked Mr. Payne again.

"Me?" exploded Gummy.

"Yes. Because your name is 'Gumswith Carrington.' Isn't it worth it?" chuckled the lawyer.

Gummy looked all around, paling and flushing by turn. Then he grinned widely and looked at Janice.

"Jicksy!" he murmured, "the old name is worth something, after all, isn't it?"

CHAPTER XXIX. "BUT WE LOSE"

It was such a happy surprise for Mrs. Carringford— and for Gummy as well—that they were well prepared for the piece of bad news which Mr. Payne had first told to Mr. Broxton Day. A five hundred dollar loss on the Mullen Lane property did not look so big when it was understood that, through Gummy, the Carringfords were going to get almost ten thousand dollars.

It seemed that more than a year before, Mr. John Gumswith, of Melbourne, Australia, had died, leaving a considerable fortune to friends he had made there and with whom he had lived for more than a dozen years. But he had left a legacy, too, "to any son that my brother, Alexander Carringford, of Cleveland, Ohio, U. S. A., may have had who has been duly christened 'Gumswith' after me, to perpetuate my family name."

"Of course," said Mr. Payne, dryly, "nobody challenged the will, and so it was probated. I should, myself, doubt the good sense of a man who would fasten such an ugly name upon a boy whom he had never seen, and who never did him any harm—"

"Mr. Payne," breathed Gummy, when he heard this, and earnestly, "for ten thousand dollars I'll let anybody call me anything he wants to. Names don't break any bones."

At that Mr. Payne and Mr. Day laughed louder than they had before. But Janice knew that Gummy was not selfish, nor did he think so much of money. He was delighted that he could help his mother in her sore need.

"At any rate," said Mr. Payne, "the administrator of Mr. John Gumswith's estate had his legal adviser communicate with Cleveland lawyers; and they traced the Carringford family to Napsburg. Then I was requested to find them, and—they have found me!" and he smiled.

"I congratulate you, madam. Of course, the courts will allow a proper amount to be used by you for Gumswith's support."

"I guess not!" said Gummy. "I'm almost supporting myself—am I not, Mother? The money's for you and the children."

"Oh, no, Gumswith, I—I cannot use your fortune," cried the mother quickly.

"I have not yet finished," resumed the lawyer, with a queer smile. "The boy has been left two thousand pounds for his name. The father receives a thousand pounds, payable either to him, or, if he be dead, to his widow. So you see there will be another five thousand dollars coming to you, Mrs. Carringford."

At that, Mrs. Carringford for the first time lost control of herself. She hugged Gummy and sobbed aloud.

"Pretty fine boy. Pretty fine boy," said Mr. Payne.

"He is that," agreed daddy, smiling across at Janice. "He put out the fire our chimney, didn't he Janice?"

So this made them all laugh and they were all right again. There was much to talk over before Mr. Payne went, besides the bad fortune about the Mullen Lane property. And Mrs. Carringford and the Days talked after Gummy had rushed out to drive back to Harriman's store. The dinner was late that night in the Day house.

Indeed, Janice forgot, in all the confusion and excitement, to tell her father where she had been that afternoon, what she had gone for, and how sadly she had been disappointed.

All this wonderful fortune for the Carringfords continued to create so much excitement at the Day house, as well as in the little cottage in Mullen Lane, that for several days Janice scarcely thought about Olga Cedarstrom and the lost treasure-box.

For out of the good luck of the Carringfords, bad fortune for the Days suddenly raised its head. Mrs. Carringford had a good deal of extra work to do, anyway, for she had to go to the lawyer's office and to the court, and interest herself in many things she had known little about before. She was fighting to save her home.

Indeed, Amy declared the Carringford family did not know "whether it was on its head or its heels." Only Gummy. Nothing seemed to disturb Gummy. And he would not give up his place with Mr.

Harriman.

"He keeps saying," Amy told Janice, laughing and sobbing together, "that the ten thousand dollars is for the family. He is going to keep on working until school begins, and even then after school and on Saturdays. Really, Janice, he is darling brother."

"I believe you," said Janice wistfully, for of late she had begun to realize that a household of just two people was awfully small.

It became quite shocking when she suddenly understood that Mrs. Carringford must give up looking after the Day household and attend thereafter strictly to her own family. Of course, Mr. Day had seen this from the first; but it came as a shock to his little daughter.

"Oh, but Amy, and Gummy, and the little ones get everything! They get their money and are going to own their home, and get their mother all the time, too. It is fine for them, Daddy, but we lose!"

"I am afraid we do," said her father, nodding soberly. "We shall have to go back to the mercies of the intelligence office, or go to boarding."

"No, no!" cried Janice to this last. "Not while vacation lasts, at any rate. Why! I've learned a lot from Mrs. Carringford, and we can get along."

"You are a dear little homemaker, Janice," he said. "When you get a few more years on your shoulders I have no doubt that we shall have as nice a home as we once had before dear mother went away. But you cannot do everything. We cannot afford two in service—a cook and a housemaid. We shall have to struggle along, 'catch as catch can,' for some time I fear."

"But no boarding-house," declared Janice. "No giving up our own dear home, Daddy."

"All right. I am going to get down tomorrow, crutches or no crutches, and I will make the rounds of the agencies."

"Oh, dear!" she sighed. Then suddenly, for she was looking out of the window: "Who do you suppose that is, Daddy, coming in at the side gate? Why! It's a black woman—awfully black. And she—"

Janice left off breathlessly and ran to the kitchen door. A woman of more than middle age but, as said herself, "still mighty spry," approached the porch.

Hers was not an unintelligent face. Her dark eye beamed upon Janice most kindly. Her white, sound teeth gleamed behind a triumphant smile. She carried a shabby bag, but she dropped that and put out both hands as she came to the door.

"Ma bressed baby!" she cried in a voice that shook with emotion. "Nobody's got to tell me who you is! You's your darlin' mamma's livin' image! Ma sweet Miss Laura, back a little chile ag'in!"

The dark eyes were suddenly flooded and the tears ran down the negro woman's plump cheeks. She was not wrinkled, and if her tight, kinky hair was a mite gray, she did not have the appearance of an old person in any way. Her voice was round, and sweet, and tender.

"You don' know me, honey. You kyan't 'member Mammy Blanche. But she done hol' you in her arms w'en you was a mite of a baby, jes' as she held you dear mamma—my Miss Laura. Ah was her mammy, an' she growed up right under ma eye. Don' you understun', honey? The Avions was mah white folks."

"When Mistah Day come co'tin' an' merried yo' mamma, and kerrled her off here to Greensboro, Ah come along, too. An' Ah nebber would o' lef' you, only ma crippled brudder, Esek, an' his crippled wife done need me to tak' care ob dem."

"But Esek's daid. An' here Ah is back, chile—Ma soul an' body! ef dar ain' Mistah Brocky Day on crutches!"

"Blanche! Mammy Blanche!" exclaimed the man with real warmth, as well as wonder, in his tone. "Is it really you?"

"It's mah own brack se'f!" cried the woman, as daddy came hobbling forward to meet her just as though she were the finest company that had ever come to the Day house.

"You couldn't be more welcome if you were a queen, Mammy Blanche," he cried. "You know—?"

He halted, and his own countenance fell. The old woman clung tightly to his hand with both of hers.

"Ah, yes; Ah got yo' letter long, long ago, Mistah Brocky. It nigh broke my heart. Ma lil' Miss Laura! But, glory!" and she turned suddenly to Janice, "here she is ober again!"

"I know it," said Broxton Day, wiping his eyes. "Come in and sit down, Mammy. Janice does not remember you, I suppose. But I remember well enough that we never had any housekeeping troubles when Mammy Blanche was on hand."

"Sho' not! Sho' not," chuckled the old woman. "And Mammy Blanche jest as spry now, an' able to do for you, as she used to be."

"What? Have you come to stay with us awhile, Mammy Blanche?" asked Broxton Day. "Your brother?"

"Esek is daid. His wife's gone back to her own people. Ah ain't got nobody, nor nohin' of mah own in dis here worl' Mistah Brocky, onless dey is under dis here roof. I has come to stay, sah, if you is of a min' to give mah ol' bones house room."

Janice had been breathless. But she had listened, and gradually she had begun to understand. She could remember a good deal that her dear mother had told her about Mammy Blanche. And this was she!

The girl put her hand confidently into that of the black woman's. She looked up at her father brightly.

"I take it all back, Daddy," she murmured. "I was ungrateful and suspicious of fate, wasn't I? We don't lose."

CHAPTER XXX. WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED

It took several days for Janice to understand thoroughly just what it meant to have Mammy Blanche in the house. Of course, Mrs. Carringford had been perfectly capable; yet she felt that she must ask Janice or Mr. Day once in a while about things.

Not Mammy Blanche! She knew what to do, and how to do it, and just what "the white folks" wanted. She remembered just as perfectly how Mr. Day liked things on the table, and what he was fond of, and even how he wanted his bed made, as though she had only been absent from the house a week instead of ten years.

"Why, bress your heart, honey," she said to Janice, "Ah come into dis here house when it was fust built. Ah cleaned it wid mah own han's. Ah put up de fust curtains at de windahs. Ah knowed where everything was in dem days. "But Ah spec' now you's had so many no-count folks in de house fixin' fo' you dat Ah can't find a bressed thing. Dars's dat old walnut wardrobe up in de sto'room. It come from de Avion place, it did. Ah bet de cobwebs ain't been swep' off de top o' dat wardrobe since yo' poor mamma died." "It was too tall for Mrs. Carringford or me to reach it," admitted Janice.

"Well, Ah's gwine to give dis place one fine over-haulin; come dis fall," went on Mammy Blanche. "Ah'll fix dem cobwebs."

It proved to be unnecessary for Janice to worry about the housekeeping in any particular. But she had not lost another worry, and in spite of all the wonderful things that had happened, and the interesting matters that were continually cropping up, the lost treasure-box containing the mementoes of her mother was continually fretting her mind.

The opening of school was drawing near, and Janice began to take exciting little "peeps" between the covers of textbooks. She loved study, and daddy had been insistent this summer that she should let lessons strictly alone.

She had plenty of time to sit in the kitchen while Mammy Blanche was at work there, listening to wonderful tales of her mother's childhood, and of the "doin's" on the Avion plantation on the other shore of the Ohio River.

"All gone now, chile," sighed Mammy Blanche. "Somebody else livin' in the Avion home."

But better than all, Janice, the homemaker learned many new and interesting things about housekeeping. Mammy Blanche had a "sleight," as she called it, in doing housework, and Janice might well copy her methods.

Amy came often to see her, of course; and Gummy was at the house almost every day with orders

from the store. One Saturday morning, while Janice was sweeping the porch, she saw Gummy driving toward the house almost as madly as he had the day the chimney caught fire.

"Why, Gummy!" she cried, running out to meet him as he drew up the horse at the curb, "what is the matter?"

"You'd never guess!" shouted the boy. "What do you suppose? I just saw that pickle-girl in Olga-town."

"What? gasped Janice.

"I—I mean I've seen that Pickletown in Olga—Oh, jicksy!. Do you know what I mean, Janice Day?"

"Yes! Yes!" she cried. "You've seen Olga."

"Then jump right in here and I'll drive you to her," said the boy, without running the risk of another lapsus linguae.

Without waiting even for a hat, and throwing her broom back over the fence, Janice scrambled in. But when Gummy started the horse she said to him:

"Don't think you are driving in a chariot race. You'll kill Mr. Harriman's poor old nag. Drive slower, Gummy. She won't get away, will she?"

"No. I think she's been living in that house some time. But I never go there for orders, and I never happened to see her before."

"Where is it?"

"Away down by the canal," said Gummy.

"Oh! Then it is a long way off."

"Yes."

"What will Mr. Harriman say?"

"There are not many orders this morning. And this is important, Janice."

"I guess it is," agreed the girl, her face pale but her eyes sparkling with excitement.

They did not say much after that until they came in sight of the house by the canal. Oh, if it should be Olga! Janice began to tremble. Should she have gone to daddy first about it?

But daddy was still on crutches and was not fit to come out in this delivery wagon, that was sure.

What should she say to Olga if it were she? Ought she to stop and ask a policeman to go with them to the house? And yet it was a fact that she absolutely did not know for sure whether Olga had taken the treasure-box or not.

Suddenly she uttered a little exclamation. Gummy glanced ahead, too.

"Yes," he said, "that's the woman. That's the one I saw that night at Stella Latham's.

"It—it is Olga Cedarstrom," murmured Janice. Gummy drew the old horse to a stop. Janice leaped down. The Swedish woman turned and looked into Janice's blazing countenance. Her own dull face lit up and she actually smiled.

"Vell!" she exclaimed, "iss it Janice Day? I bane glad to see you. Iss your fader well?"

"Oh, Olga!" gasped Janice.

"Huh? What iss it the matter?"

"We have looked everywhere for you!"

"For me? Why for me? I don't vork no more. I keep house for my hoosban'," and Olga smiled broadly.

"You—you are married to Mr. Sangreen?" asked Janice doubtfully.

"I bane married right away when I left you. We go to his folks—dey leev up in Michigan. He try vork

dere and I coom back on a veesit to Yon Yonson's wife. He vork for Misder Latham."

"Yes, I know!" cried Janice, anxiously.

"Now Willie bane coom back to his old job at de pickle vorks. And how is you? You look fine."

"Oh, Olga, we have been dreadfully worried. When— when you went away from our house did you see a little box—like a jewel box? I left it on your trunk in the storeroom."

"On my troonk?" repeated the woman. "Where it stood in de storeroom?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Janice clasping her hands.

It had suddenly impressed her that beyond any doubt, Olga was not a thief. Whatever had happened to the treasure-box, Olga did not knowingly have it in her possession. "I remember de leetle box. Yes! You t'ink I take it?"

"We haven't been able to find it since you left, Olga," cried Janice.

"Huh! I saw it. But—Here! This boy will drive us back mit him to your house?"

"Oh, yes, Olga!" cried Janice, with a glance at Gummy, who nodded.

"I'll go mit you," said the woman, and immediately she climbed to the high seat." Janice followed her. Gummy turned the horse about and away they went on the return journey.

On the way Janice thought it best to say nothing more about the lost treasure-box; but she told Olga of how she had tried to trace her through the Johnsons.

"My bad look!" cried Olga. "I break a dish by that Latham woman's house and she vant me to pay for it. Huh! People ought not to use such spensive dishes. Me, I use common chinnyware in my house."

When they arrived at the house on Knight Street, Olga jumped briskly down and followed Janice inside. Gummy called after them that he would wait. He was so excited and interested himself that he could not leave until the mystery was cleared up;

"Ve go oop to dot storeroom," declared Olga and proceeded to do so, with Janice trembling and hoping beside her.

Once in the room the woman seized a strong chair, climbed upon it, and, being tall herself, she could reach over the carved strip of woodwork on the front of the wardrobe to the space that lay behind. In a moment she brought something forth covered with dust and cobwebs that caused Janice to utter a shriek of delight. "That iss it, yes?" said Olga. "I be mad mit you dot morning I leaf here. The box was on my troonk and when Willie come up the stairs for it, I grab de box and pitch it up hyar. I don't know you vant it, Janice— and your fader."

"Well," sighed Broxton Day, when he heard the good news and had the treasure-box in his hands, "All's well that ends well.' But what a peck of trouble that Swedish girl made us!"

"No, no I" exclaimed Janice warmly. "I did it. It was my fault. I was the careless one, or the box would not have been where she could see it. But I am awfully glad, Daddy, that Olga proved not to be a thief."

Daddy showed her the tiny spring in the bottom of the box which, when released, enabled him to lift up the thin partition. He removed the thin packet of letters, and put them in a leather case, placing the case into the wall safe.

"I know where they are now, my dear. Do what you will with the other keepsakes and the treasure-box itself. I cannot tell you how glad I am to get these letters back."

But Janice thought she did know something about that.

"That Mexican mine business is not likely to cause us any more trouble until spring, anyway," said daddy one night at dinner.

"Oh, Daddy! then won't you have to go down there?" Janice cried.

"Not likely. Fact is, there is a big fight on in the mining country, and the mines have got to shut down. But the government promises us that we shall be able to open up again next spring. We might as well sit tight and hold on, as I tell them. I'm sorry that so much of our funds are tied up in the business,

however. Politics below the Rio Grande are 'mighty onsartain,' as Brother Jase would say."

"Now that Mammy Blanche is here with us, I would not have to go to Poketown, even if you did go to Mexico, Daddy. Would I?"

"M-mm! Well, that's hard telling," he replied, with twinkling eyes. "Let's not cross that bridge till we come to it."

So Janice saw nothing but a cheerful vista before her—with school coming soon, pleasure in study, plenty of fun between times, and such a fortunate state of affairs at Eight Hundred and Forty-five Knight Street that she did not have to worry about daddy's comfort or her own at all.

Mrs. Carringford had had no easy time of it with the shyster lawyer and the others who were making trouble for her over her property. But in the end her own lawyer triumphed; and then the mortgage on the place was cleared off, much to the satisfaction of both the Carringfords and the Days.

"It does seem," said Janice with an ecstatic sigh, to Amy Carringford one day when both girls had their sewing on the porch, "that everything always does turn out for the best for us Days."

"Humph!" returned Amy, threading her needle, "I guess they wouldn't turn out so 'right' if you and your father didn't do something to turn 'em out."

And, perhaps, that was so, too.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK JANICE DAY, THE YOUNG HOMEMAKER ***

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